

Old Testament Theology



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Introduction to Old Testament Theology

Old Testament theology is the branch of Biblical theology that seeks theological insight within the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible. It explores past and present theological concepts as they pertain to God and God's relationship with creation. While the field started out as a Christian endeavor written mostly by men and aimed to provide an objective knowledge of early revelation, in the twentieth century it became informed by other voices and views, including those of feminist and Jewish scholars, which provided new insights and showed ways that the early work was bound by the perspectives of their authors.

1. Defining Theology and Old Testament Theology

St. Anselm of Canterbury famously coined a meaning of theology in his motto "faith seeking understanding." (*fides quaerens intellectum*) which "means something like an active love of God seeking a deeper knowledge of God."¹ For those who love the Lord, this indeed is our goal in theology, and in studying the Bible as God's Word.

What is Theology?

- o Theology means 'knowledge about God', *theos, logos*
- o For a secular academic, theology is the systematic study of the thought of e.g., in the Old Testament or a certain text
- o For us, theology *is* the knowledge about God

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Ø Theology is not only knowing what someone else said about God—even if that is interesting, it is 1) knowing *about* God and 2) knowing God.

§ However, we believe that we get to know God basically through the Bible—and the sacraments.

o In scholarly exegetical work, we study what the Bible says about him.

Thus, theology is also a human intellectual work: we formulate questions (What is the Old Testament theology of atonement? Of covenant? etc); we make exegetical investigations (e.g., word study, analyses of the overarching ideas, historical background study) to answer those questions.

“Work with the Word of the Lord” (Acts 6:3) has happened from the first day of the Church, and you who are called to the ministry has to become a work (wo)man of the Word (2Tim 2:15). Paul sets for us an example of a worker in ‘Old Testament Theology’: Paul studied hard. The ‘scrolls’ and text Paul had to study from was the Jewish Bible, our Old Testament. (2 Tim 3:16: Acts 26:24). He had a lifestyle of study (2Tim 4:13), at the same time as he nurtured a close relationship with God. That is, there is a dialectic between study of the Bible and life in the Spirit.

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Although we as Christians divide the Bible into New Testament theology and Old Testament theology, we must remember the Bible is one complete, unified book. Biblical theology, deals with the whole Bible as one document through which God has revealed himself to us.

What is the difference between New Testament theology and Old Testament theology? Biblical theology, basically, systematizes the entire Biblical material into one system. New Testament theology systematizes the theologies of New Testament authors individually and together. New Testament theology tries to see what's 'new' in the revelation about God, that was often a mystery or a shadow in the Old Testament (Eph 3:8-11; Heb 8:4), written for our instruction and hope (Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 10:6-11). New does not mean that it never was there, only that it has been revealed (*apo-kaluptō*). Old Testament theology systematizes the Old Testament themes and ideas in the different books of the OT separately, and together part of the whole canon of Scripture.

Old Testament Theology and Jewish Theology

Much of Christian Theology has held the New Testament as more important than the Old Testament for various reasons, or has treated the Old Testament as unnecessary for reading or interpreting the NT, sometimes producing anti-Jewish readings of both the OT and NT. Marvin Sweeney states, "Fundamentally, Judaism is committed to a relationship with G-d as defined through divine Torah whereas Christianity is committed to the notion that its relationship with G-d is defined through Jesus Christ."²

- Jewish canon reflects the Jewish commitment to the Torah as the foundation of divine relationship with God. The Former Prophets (Historical Books) disrupts the ideal of this divine relationship, for which the Latter Prophets lament, rebuke, call for return, and for see the ideal. The Writings attempt to restore the ideal embodied in the Torah, begin with the Psalms which is structured into 5 Books that recall the Torah, and end with Chronicles and a return to the Land of Promise, "let them go up!" to the Land.

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- The Christian canon reflects the Christian commitment to the coming and second coming of Jesus Christ, ending with the Minor Prophets who, while warning, look to “that day” and end with Malachi “the sun of righteousness will arise with healing in his wings ...”-
- The structure of the Old Testament points historically and prophetically to the revelation of Jesus Christ as the culmination of human history. Sweeney observes:

Pentateuch recounts the early history of the world from creation through the patriarchs. **Historical Books** recount Israel’s later history from Exodus to Promised Land to Exile (Joshua through the Persian Empire). **The Wisdom** and Poetic Books address “an eternal present in which the questions of the meaning of life and worship of the divine are addressed”. **The Prophets** speak of Israel’s punishment for disobedience and “look forward to the time of redemption.”³

Importance of Old Testament

Many times people would ask , why do we study old testament theology, being the people of New covenant, why we still focus on the old covenant theology and praxis/ Here we try to expose the reasons.

1. The Bible is incomplete without the Old Testament

Both the Old and New Testaments make up the Word of God. The New Testament was never given to replace the Old Testament but rather to complete its story. Genesis 3:14-19 records how a curse came upon humanity because of sin. Revelation 22:3 completes the story by recording how God, through the redemptive work of Jesus, has removed the curse. The theme of God’s redemptive work

would be incomplete without both Testaments revealing the beginning and end of the curse.

2. The Old Testament presents great truths about God and humanity.

In the first five books of the Bible (the Torah), God reaches out to humanity and introduces Himself. God introduces Himself as the Creator (Gen. 1-2), the Savior of His people (Exod. 13-14), the Holy One (Lev. 19:2), the God of wrath and judgment on sin (Num. 14), and a God of love (Deut. 7). It is in the Hebrew Bible that God reveals to Moses His attributes (Exod. 34:6-7). We would not know God as well as we do apart from the revelation of the Old Testament.

3. The Old Testament provides the historical setting out of which Christianity and the New Testament emerged.

Christianity didn't emerge from a vacuum. God was moving among the people of Israel to bring forth the Messiah who would provide redemption from the judgment that came on humanity because of sin. The early New Testament preachers like Stephen (Acts 7) and Paul (Acts 13:16-41) made frequent use of the Hebrew Bible to declare God's plan for salvation. The story line of God's work in salvation begins in the Hebrew Bible and then continues its flow through the New Testament.

4. The Old Testament instructs believers concerning the person and work of Jesus, the promised Messiah.

His birth, His death, His resurrection, His return and His kingdom are all revealed in the Hebrew Bible (Luke 24:44-46). If you want to get to know Jesus, the Lamb of God, you cannot neglect the prophecies found in the Old Testament.

5. The Old Testament presents spiritual truths and lessons that are applicable for Christians.

Paul illustrates this in 1 Corinthians 10:6-10, where he recounts for the church at Corinth a number of incidents that took place during Israel's wilderness wanderings. Then he writes, "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." Paul clearly intended for the Corinthians to learn from the lessons taught in the Hebrew Bible (see also Rom. 15:4).

6. The Old Testament lays the foundation for biblical prophecy.

It is in the Hebrew Bible that we find the revelation about God's covenant promises. In the Abrahamic Covenant God promises a land, a nation, and blessing that will extend from Israel to all the nations of the earth (Gen. 12:2-3). In the Davidic Covenant God promises that David will have a descendant who will sit on his throne and rule and reign forever (2 Sam. 7:12-16). The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel reveal how the blessing promised to Abraham and his descendants will be further developed and ultimately realized through the person and work of Jesus (Jer. 31:31-34, Ezek. 36:25-28).

7. The Old Testament is "God-breathed and profitable."

Paul declares that "all Scripture is "God-breathed and profitable for teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). When he wrote these words he was referring to the Hebrew Bible. If Christians neglect the study of the Old Testament they won't be as proficient in the service of our Lord as they would otherwise be through a working knowledge and practical application of the Hebrew Bible.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains:

The Old Testament is an indispensable part of Sacred Scripture. Its books are divinely inspired and retain a permanent value, for the Old Covenant has never been revoked. Indeed, “the economy of the Old Testament was deliberately so oriented that it should prepare for and declare in prophecy the coming of Christ, redeemer of all men.” “Even though they contain matters imperfect and provisional,” the books of the Old Testament bear witness to the whole divine pedagogy of God’s saving love: these writings “are a storehouse of sublime teaching on God and of sound wisdom on human life, as well as a wonderful treasury of prayers; in them, too, the mystery of our salvation is present in a hidden way.” Christians venerate the Old Testament as true Word of God. The Church has always vigorously opposed the idea of rejecting the Old Testament under the pretext that the New has rendered it void (Marcionism) (CCC 121-123).

A proper “understanding” of the OT will lead one to hear in it a message of the Messiah and the mission his life would generate. Similarly, Paul taught “nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:22–23). As an OT preacher, he could declare: “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). If you want to know Jesus more, read the OT. “The Old Testament is indispensable in understanding the New... the New Testament is the climax to a story, if you don’t know the first part of a story then the ending doesn’t mean that much” - Bishop Robert Barron. The Old Testament is an indispensable part of Sacred Scripture. Its books are divinely inspired

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Types of Biblical Theology

Biblical Theology as Historical Description

It is purely historical and descriptive. No concern for application or relation to the present day faith or Christian practice. It is purely looking to discover and describe what the biblical text meant in its original, historical context (or, its assumptions or conclusions about what the original historical context may have been). The goal is to seek and describe the theology, beliefs, and practices of the people “back, then,” within their time, language, and culture. A canonical approach is not part of this method, nor a literary approach which considers the Bible as a whole, unified text. The Old Testament and New Testament are not considered in light of each other.

Biblical Theology as the History of Redemption

- * This approach looks to history as it unfolds through Scripture to reveal the purposes of God in a progressive process of revelation through time.
- * Primary interest is the overall theological message of the Bible for the church. Requires sensitivity to literary reading. Christocentric focus. Requires view of the Bible as a unified narrative whole.
- * Although this type is strongly historical, it is rooted in the concept of redemptive history of the entire biblical canon. This approach follows the linear, or chronological, development of the history of the story of redemption book by book through the Bible.

- * The major themes often followed in this approach may include creation, sin, covenant, land, kingdom, redemption, and restoration, traced through the biblical text.

Biblical Theology as Theological Construction

- * This is a prescriptive approach that fits postmodern concerns.
- * There is no interest or concern for the biblical passage's ancient location or circumstance.
- * The predominant focus of this methodology is application by the church for the confessing community, outside of the academy.
- * Three basic approaches: the “revelational” approach, in which the text is read for eternal truths regardless of the original context; the “textual” approach looks for the symbolic world of the Bible as a framework for understanding the contemporary world; and the “functional” approach places the interpretation of the text into the hands of the contemporary believing community – reader-response methodology – to give the text significance.
- * Problems with this approach is subjectivity, and opening the door to individual interpretations that may be far removed from the intent of the author or contextual purpose of the text.

2 Inspiration of the Old Testament

Inspiration is “a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given Divine trustworthiness.” Three factors must constantly be kept in mind in defining the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture. First, there is the primary efficient, *Cause*, the Holy Spirit, who acts upon man. Secondly, there is the subject of inspiration, man, the *agent*, upon whom the Holy Spirit acts directly. Finally, there is

the *result of inspiration, a written revelation once for all given and thoroughly accredited*, attested by miracle and fulfilled prophecy.

The Bible is unique among books. It claims to come from God. Other religious books may claim to come from God, but they always prove inferior in their message and reliability. Books like the Koran, the Book of Mormon, or the Hindu Vedas cannot match the Bible for its sublimity nor for its consistent ability to penetrate the depths of the human heart. The Bible alone gives voice to man's greatest aspirations of worship of the living God, and the Bible alone gives God's answer for man's greatest need of reconciliation with a holy God. The Bible's singleness of purpose and its consistent treatment of man's condition and God's nature set it apart from other religious guides. The Bible's message is the same from the beginning of history to its closing pages that foretell the culmination of history. For a book that was written over a period of 1500 years, its unity is remarkable.

2.1 From Sacred Message to Sacred Scriptures

The writing of the Old Testament spanned a millennium from the days of Moses to the days of Maccabees. Before Moses and even before the flood there were God-fearing souls who preserved the stories of their encounters with God, as well as His revelations and promises to them. These early accounts were preserved in an era of exacting oral tradition that carefully related the details and substance of the message from generation to generation. With God's founding of a holy nation at Sinai to worship and serve Him, God would give a written record of His will. There Moses transcribes from God the Book of the Covenant. It contains the Ten Commandments and the civil and religious code that Israel would live by in union with God.

Forty years later, Moses wrote down the amplified version of God's law code for the generation coming up out of the wilderness.

So sacred was this covenant law that it was deposited inside the ark of the covenant in the house of God's dwelling. In effect, this covenant law from God was the holy nation's constitution. More than that, it was God's infallible word of revelation to a chosen people. The Biblical teaching of the divine inspiration of Scriptures begins with Moses' deposit of the record that he had transcribed from God. The two facts that covenant document was given by God through His mediator, Moses, and that it was preserved in a sacrosanct place speak of the special nature of that law. Added to this beginning was the warning that none should add to God's word in that document nor take away from them. They accurately reflected the perfect will of God.

The deposit of the sacred writings in the sacred place was the beginning of the recognition of the sacred Scriptures. It set a precedent in the minds of God's people that what God had spoken through His mediator, Moses, could and should be preserved in writing for review by future generations. Following on the heels of the written constitution came the subsequent sacred history written by Joshua and other recognized mediators after him. God was continuing to do wonders, and His prophets were confirming His message with predictions that could be verified. Because of the organic unity of God's workings, it was an easy step from receiving the Torah as God's scripture to receiving the scrolls of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, et. al., as the continuing sacred record.

2.3 Prophetic Predictions

A key element that argues for the divine nature of the Bible is prophetic prediction. A stream of predictions is given in the Hebrew

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Scriptures, some short-term, and others with a longer horizon. Sometimes short and long-term predictions are uttered in the same message in order to confirm the surety of the distant prophecy when the near prophecy is fulfilled. In either case predictive prophecies are given by God's servants to verify the validity of their prophetic message. This test is necessary because of false prophets who may claim God's sanction but who really are leading people away from God. Therefore God gives the necessary test of early religious leaders proving their credentials: When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him. Predictions recorded through the Bible, likewise, confirm the authenticity of the Bible's message. The approximately 200 predictive passages of the OT, many of which were fulfilled before and at the first coming of Christ, are offered as rational proof of the supernatural nature of these Scriptures. The Old Testament, like the New Testament, offers its own falsification test to verify itself and to discredit counterfeits. Other religious books cannot and do not make the same kind of detailed predictions that the Holy Scriptures do.

2.4 How the OT Viewed Itself

From the days of Moses the writers of the OT had a self-conscious knowledge of the divine origin of their message. The prophetic writers may not always have understood the timing or the end of their message from God, but they faithfully transmitted it. God's people received it as the voice of majesty, and the angels contemplated the mystery of grace. God's prophetic messengers did not generally rush to become mediators of God's Word. Jeremiah is illustrative of the sentiment of others like Moses and Amos when he relates the

difficulty and even human opposition in preaching and conveying God's Word: "Then I said, 'I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name.' But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not." Jeremiah recorded God's Word even though his disobedient king might destroy it in the fire. The prophets and canonical writers persevered in their calling of putting God's Word to paper. It was not their inspired message, but God's. Anyone who reads the Old Testament will find more than 2,000 occurrences of the introductory formula, "Thus saith the Lord." Without controversy, the biblical writers understood that God was the author of the message.

The sweet Psalmist of Israel gives one of the clearest expressions of a writer consciously channeling God's Word. David claims, "The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me...." This passage (2 Sam 23:1-3) is doubly interesting because the Psalm found in the preceding chapter, 2 Samuel 22, is nearly the verbatim form of Psalm 18. In 2 Samuel 23 the Psalmist comments on the divine nature of the Psalms (like Psalm 18) that were appointed for God's temple praise. Some Psalms may have arisen out of the Psalmist's life experience, but the end result of the Psalm came by God's Spirit speaking through the Psalmist.

OT claims of God's superintendence of His canonical prophets, does not prove conclusively that the Old Testament was inspired. These matter-of-fact claims, just the same, are strong indications of how the writers understood and explained their cohesive message that spanned the centuries before Christ.

2.5 How the NT Writers Viewed the OT

The concept of the sacred canon was established well before NT times. By Daniel's time there is reference to the "Scripture of truth" to describe a heavenly revelation. The word for "Scripture" may be translated "writing," but the New Testament commonly uses this word in a technical, theological sense. "Scripture" and "scriptures" in the NT are used in a matter of fact way to reference the canonical writings of the Old Testament.

Jesus taught the authority and inspiration of the OT because the stream of the OT canon led to Him as God's Messiah. After His resurrection He walked incognito with two of His disciples; to them He "expounded" the Scriptures, He "opened" the Scriptures, and finally He "opened their understanding" so that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

Jesus and the NT writers often spoke of the [OT] Scripture being fulfilled. The OT was not an outdated, dead message nor a dark message with lucky predictions; it was a living message that looked for a terminus of fulfillment in the Messiah. It was full of life when God breathed it into existence, much as God gave life to Adam by His own breath.

It was the law that Jesus lived by while on earth; He insisted that God's law to the smallest part would be fulfilled by Himself. The language of Matthew 5:18, where Jesus speaks of the smallest part of Hebrew alphabet ("jot") and even the smallest part of a Hebrew letter ("tittle"), implies that the very words of the divine record that contained the law were intentional. Jesus' words here support the doctrine of verbal inspiration. His high view of OT Scripture, from

its parts to its purpose, is expressed in His statement, "...the Scripture cannot be broken.

Peter believed his Master's teaching about the OT canon. It was nothing less than God's inspired Word. It is not inferior to the New Testament; rather it was the corpus of writing that shaped the thought and words of Jesus and His apostles. In his final own canonical message, Peter affirmed that "The prophecy [of the OT prophetic Scriptures] came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Any other words apart from God's canonical Word can never have the same power of God's Spirit to change lives and move the world and tease angels.

3 Question of the Canon of OT

Before the huge variety of Bible versions and translations, a very normal question that any student can raise is which one these are more authentic or does exist many Bibles. The answer to this question is very clear, there is only one Bible that one is preserved by the Catholic Church for 2000 years. The Word of God has been entrusted to her. The Catholic canon was set at the Council of Rome (382), the same Council commissioned Jerome to compile and translate those canonical texts into Latin (Vulgate), under Pope St. Damasus, St. Jerome and St. Ambrose, the council gave a complete list of the canonical books of both the Old Testament and the New Testament (it is also known as the *Decretum Gelasianum* - 'Gelasian Decree' because it was reproduced by Gelasius in 495), which is identical with the list given by Trent council.

Catholic Bible has 73 books – 46+27 (7 books known as Deutro-canonical) whereas Protestant and reformation churches use a so

called Bible consisted of 66 Books -39+27. Now we may address the question of authentic canon of the Bible. The reformation churches only after 1825 excluded the following seven books calling apocryphal. The Catholic Church, from the period of Apostles and Church Fathers hold them as Word of God and Inspired books. In the present Catholic Canon they are called deutro-canonical books:

Deutro- Canonical Books:

- ◆ The *Book of Tobit*
- ◆ The *Book of Judith*
- ◆ The *First Book of Maccabees*, also called *1 Maccabees*
- ◆ The *Second Book of Maccabees*, also called *2 Maccabees*
- ◆ The *Wisdom of Solomon*, also called *The Book of Wisdom*
- ◆ The *Book of Sirach*, also called *Ecclesiasticus*
- ◆ The *Book of Baruch*, with the *Letter of Jeremiah* as its last chapter
- ◆ Parts of the *Book of Daniel* and the *Book of Esther*

§ Early Christians read the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint. It included the seven deuterocanonical books. There is only one Bible which from the apostolic period is preserved by the Catholic Church. Protestant Bible is a 16th century aberration of Scripture. If Catholics added the deuterocanonical books in 1546, then Martin Luther beat us to the punch: He included them in his first German translation, published before the Council of Trent. They can also be found in the first King James Version (1611) and in the first Bible ever printed, the Gutenberg Bible (a century before Trent). In fact, these books were included in almost every Bible until the Edinburgh Committee of the British Foreign Bible Society excised them in 1825. Until then, they had been included at least in an appendix of Protestant Bibles. It is historically demonstrable that

Catholics did not add the books, Protestants took them out. Martin Luther makes a pertinent observation in the sixteenth chapter of his *Commentary on St. John* "We are obliged to yield many things to the papists [Catholics]—that they possess the Word of God which we received from them, otherwise we should have known nothing at all about it."

4 Major Theological Themes of the Old Testament

4.1 God

In the Old Testament and Judaism, God has been conceived in a variety of ways. Traditionally, Judaism holds that Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the national god of the Israelites, delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, and gave them the Law of Moses at biblical Mount Sinai as described in the Torah.

According to the rationalist stream of Judaism articulated by Maimonides, which later came to dominate much of official traditional Jewish thought, God is understood as the absolute one, indivisible, and incomparable being who is the creator deity and cause of all existence. God is omnipresent and incorporeal. Maimonides affirmed Aristotle's conception of God as the unmoved mover,^[2] while denying several of the latter's views such as denial of God as creator and affirmation of the eternity of the world. Traditional interpretations of Judaism generally emphasize that God is personal yet also transcendent, while some modern interpretations of Judaism emphasize that God is a force or ideal. The names of God used most often in the Hebrew Bible are the Tetragrammaton (*YHWH* Hebrew: יהוה) and Elohim. The name of God used most often in the Hebrew Bible is

the Tetragrammaton (YHWH Hebrew: יהוה). Jews traditionally do not pronounce it, and instead refer to God as *HaShem*, literally “the Name”. In prayer the Tetragrammaton is substituted with the pronunciation Adonai, meaning “My Lord”.

4.1.1 Some Names of God in the Old Testament

- ◆ Elohim (Gen 1)
- ◆ El Shaddai (God Almighty; Gen 35:11; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; Exod 6:3)
- ◆ El Elyon (God Most High; Gen 14:18-19)
- ◆ Yahweh Elohim Emet (LORD God of Truth; Jeremiah 10:10)
- ◆ El Gibor (The Mighty God; Isa 9:6)
- ◆ El ‘Olam (The Everlasting God; Gen 21:33; Isa 40:28)
- ◆ El Qannah (The Jealous/Zelous God; Deut 6:15 – will not tolerate us serving any god but Him)
- ◆ Father (Isa 9:6 – Everlasting Father; Psalm 68:5)
- ◆ Adonai (Lord, Master; Psalm 8:1)
- ◆ Melek, Melek Olam (1 Sam 8:7 – Israel rejected God as being king over them; King of the Universe; Jer 10:10)
- ◆ Yahweh Elohim (LORD God; Genesis 2:4; Deut 6:4-9)
- ◆ Yahweh (LORD, Covenant God; Exodus 3:11-15) 🚩 -Nissi (The LORD my Banner; Exod 17:15)
 - Roi (- Who Sees /provides; Gen 22:14; earlier Hagar in the wilderness identified El Roi in Gen 16:13, the God Who sees me)
 - Ro‘iy (- my Shepherd; Psalm 23:1)
 - Tzidkenu (-our Righteousness; Jeremiah 23:6)
 - Meqoddishchem (-Who Sanctifies you: Exod 31:13; Leviticus 20:8)
 - Yireh (-Who Sees, or Who will Provide; Gen 22:14)

- Tsebaoth (-of Hosts/Armies/Heavenly hosts: Isa 22:14;
Zechariah 1:3; Haggai 2:9)

4.1.2 The Unity of God

One of the central prayers in Judaism, the Shema, expresses the most profound tenet of Judaism: the belief in monotheism. “Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one” (Deut.6:4). Within the Hebrew Bible the struggle against polytheism is a dominant and continuing theme. According to the biblical book of Genesis, the universe owes its existence to the one God, the creator of heaven and earth. God alone is to be worshiped. God’s deeds may vary, but God does not change. It is the whole God, and the same God, who expresses God self in different ways on different occasions, or it is we who perceive different aspects or attributes of God. It is always the same God, the whole God, the one God, who acts in many diverse ways, but who always remains changeless and constant and the same. Nearly 2,000 years ago Rabbi Akiba said that because God is unique in the universe, God knows the character of every single creature and their minds. The extraordinarily important twelfth-century Jewish philosopher, Moses Maimonides, asserted in the *Guide for the Perplexed* that human language is completely inadequate to describe God and that even human efforts to describe God’s positive attributes impinge upon God’s absolute unity. Judaism is vitally concerned with maintaining God’s otherness from human beings; as a result, any physical representations or descriptions of God are forbidden.

4.1.3 God’s Transcendence and Immanence

For Jews, God is both the transcendent creator of the universe, above, beyond, and more than the universe, and at the same time an

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active and personal presence in the world linked by a perpetual covenant with the Jewish people. One of the ways the Talmud addresses this apparent paradox is to make the analogy of the relation of God to the world with the relation of the soul to the body:

As God fills the whole world, so also the soul fills the whole body. As God sees, but cannot be seen, so also the soul sees, but cannot be seen. As God nourishes the whole world, so also the soul nourishes the whole body. As God is pure, so also the soul is pure. As God dwells in the inmost part of the Universe, so also the soul dwells in the inmost part of the body. (Berakot 10a)

God's transcendence is evident in Genesis, when God creates heaven and earth, in the prophet Isaiah's declaration that God is beyond human comprehension, and in Job's assertion that God's motives transcend human understanding:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isa. 40:21-2).

Can you find out the limit of the Almighty? It is higher than heaven—what can you do? Deeper than Sheol—what can you know? Its measure is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. (Job 11:7-9)

God's immanence is apparent through God's action in history as when God liberates the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt, as well as in the doctrine of the Shekhinah, God's continuing presence in the world. We read in the Talmud:

Come and see how beloved Israel is before God; for wherever they went into exile, the Shekhinah went with them; in Babylon, the

Shekhinah was with them and in the future, when Israel will be redeemed, the Shekhinah will be with them.

According to Jewish tradition, God is not only transcendent but is also personal, concerned, and responsive. God is near and hears the prayers of humankind, the Shekhinah is among Jews when they study Torah and is present when people behave justly. Further, there is no need for a mediator between God and humans since people can actively address and seek God directly with their prayers.

4.1.4 God's Eternity, Omnipotence, and Omniscience

Throughout the Hebrew Bible God is described as having neither a beginning nor an end. The Psalmist declared:

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting thou art God. (Ps. 90:2) God is described as the Eternal God (Gen. 21:33) who lives forever (Deut. 32:40) and reigns forever (Exod. 15:18, Ps. 10:16).

The Divine is the living God and everlasting Sovereign (Jer. 10:10) whose counsel and mercy endure forever (Ps. 33:11, 106:1). God's eternal existence is understood to be different from the rest of creation: God exists permanently without beginning or end.

While God's timelessness is, for most Jews, an impenetrable mystery, the belief in God's eternity is a major feature of Jewish theology. Similarly, the belief in God's omnipotence has been a central feature of Judaism since biblical times. In Genesis, Sarah expressed astonishment at the suggestion that she could bear a child at the age of ninety, and she was criticized: "The Lord said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh, and say "Shall I indeed bear a child now that I am old?"' Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Gen. 18:13-3). The

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Jewish view is that there is nothing that God cannot do: what appears impossible is within God's power. In spite of the difficulties that are presented by proclaiming an omnipotent God and yet acknowledging the existence of evil in the world, Judaism rejects any limits to God's power. Although God is all-powerful, the close relationship of God and humanity—and according to Judaism, especially in the close relationship of God and the Jewish people—the actions of humanity affect God. Jews throughout the ages have affirmed that God is not only omnipotent but also all-knowing. In the Hebrew Bible we read:

The Lord looks down from heaven, God sees all of humanity. . . God who fashions that hearts of them all, and observes all their deeds. (Ps. 33:13,15)

Thou knowest when I sit down and when I rise up; thou discernest my thoughts from afar. Thou searchest out my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. (Ps. 139:2-3)

Following biblical teachings, rabbinic Judaism asserts that God's knowledge is not limited by space and time. Rather, nothing is hidden from God. However, the rabbis declared that God's omniscience does not deprive human beings of free will. We read in the Talmud: "All is in the hands of Heaven, but the fear of Heaven." It is a crucial tenet of Jewish belief that while God knows past, present, and future, human beings have free will or freedom of choice in their own lives.

4.1.5 The God of Justice and Mercy

Judaism teaches that God is a God of both justice and mercy. According to the Talmud: God says, "All I do, I do in justice. If I sought to pass beyond justice but once, the world could not endure," as it says in Isaiah 26:4, "If I were to overstep justice by a single step, I should set all on fire, and the world would be burnt up."

(Tanhuma, Mishpatim 41b)

The rabbis constantly emphasize the mercy of God, stressing that God's compassion outweighs God's justice. Human beings are warned against presuming too much upon this compassion and love. Frequent use is made of Job 33:23-5 in rabbinic interpretations of God's mercy:

Even though there be nine hundred and ninety-nine accusers against a person, and only one who ascribes to that person merit, God, as it were, inclines [the scale] to merit. (Pesikta Rabbati 38b)

Also cited frequently is Psalm 5:4, "You are not a God that has pleasure in wickedness." This psalm is interpreted to mean that God has no pleasure in condemning any creature. On the contrary, God has pleasure in pronouncing creatures righteous and in forgiving them. As a result, Judaism teaches that the divine attribute of mercy takes precedence over the attribute of justice. As Claude G. Montefiore, the British Jewish scholar, writes: "So far from the ordinary view being accurate that the Jewish God is a God of stern justice, the very opposite would be nearer the truth. The Rabbinic God is a God of tender compassion. Unrepentant and high-handed must be the sinner whom God finally and irretrievably condemns." Professor David Blumenthal of Emory University has written: "[In Judaism, ffaithfulness and unmerited love are located in real contexts of history and human living—in peoplehood, in land, in Torah, in study, in ethics, in prayer."

Concluding Remarks

Judaism teaches that the Jewish people entered into an eternal covenant with God at Mt. Sinai following the Exodus from Egypt. As a result of this covenant, God is frequently referred to as *elohay*

Yisrael, the God of Israel. This name represents an intimate, albeit complex relationship between divinity and a particular people in history. Belief in a universal transcendent God who is also the God of Israel represents a singular tenet of Jewish belief.

4.2 Creation

There are four important features of the doctrine of creation that emerge from the Bible:

1. The God-world relationship is distinguished from other rival views. According to the Bible, the world is not divine or otherwise an emanation from God. It comes into being by the will and word of God.
2. The world is good, and its goodness is not limited to a pre-fall Eden. While this generates a problem of evil for our understanding, the Bible seems to embrace this problem rather than diminishing either the power of God or the goodness of the world.
3. Building further on this, creation is imperfect and incomplete. The world is only the first of God's creative works, setting in motion a narrative that has its focus on the coming of Jesus Christ.
4. The making of the world is a cause of celebration and praise

The Old Testament teaches that God is responsible for the creation of the Earth and universe. *ahweh* who made the earth, *Yahweh* who formed it to establish it—*Yahweh* is his name (Jeremiah 33:2). When Jonah wants to identify himself and his God, he tells the men on the ship, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear *Yahweh*, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land” (Jonah 1:9). And this

knowledge was not limited to the Hebrews: Hiram the king of Tyre in Solomon's day recognized that Israel's God was the Creator: "Blessed is Yahweh God of Israel, who made heaven and earth" (2 Chronicles 2:12). When Scripture wants to emphasize the authority of Yahweh's words, the prophets often appeal to God's creative power:

Thus says Yahweh, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—Yahweh of hosts is his name (Jeremiah 31:35; see also Zechariah 12:1).

4.2.1 Creation in the Book of Genesis

In the first two chapters of the Book of Genesis, we see "creation accounts belonging to two traditions, call "Priestly and Yahwistic. The creation stories presented "by these two biblical traditions had been influenced by "other non-Israelite creation stories such as the Enuma "Elish account. The two creation stories in the Bible "present, in two different ways, the origin of the world "and all living beings in it. According to the first creation "story of the Priestly Tradition (Gen 1:1-2:4a), God is "the Creator who created the world from chaos and "nothingness through His Word. Creating a perfectly "ordered world, he then gave shape to man as male and female in his own image and likeness (Gen 1:27:51: "9.6). The whole creation process is presented here a "taking place in six days. God is presented as resting "on the seventh day, i.e., the Sabbath day. According "to Pope Benedict XVI, man's creation in the image "and likeness of God signifies relationality, ie, man's "ability to relate himself to God consciously. Gen 2-4b-25 gives the second creation account of the Bible; it comes from the Yahwistic tradition, which is more ancient than the Priestly tradition. This account presents the creation of man

(male) in the first part (Gen 2-4b-14) and the creation of woman (female) in the second part (Gen 2:15-25).

The Jewish presentation of creation was also influenced by non-Jewish stories and traditions. The second account of creation by the Yahwistic author presents God anthropomorphically rather than highlighting his transcendence. Here God is presented as a potter giving shape to man from clay and breathing the breath of life into his nostrils. It was from the side of the first man that God created the first woman to be his life companion. Creation stories from the Bible are not scientific explanations of the origin of the world and of humankind, but rather, popular religious traditions that highlight the human relationship with God. The first 11 chapters of Genesis are Israelite collections of 'stories about the pre-historic world. The term 'pre history itself refers to a period before history was recorded in any form. Imaginative stories and religious traditions tried to throw light on the unknown period of pre-history. These are not to be taken literally or as divine revelations on the actual origin of the world. While non-Jewish traditions spoke of several gods, Jewish traditions insisted on a single God behind the creation of the world and everything in it. Reinterpreting pagan stories about the origin of the world, the Israelites presented their belief in the only God who created everything. The two creation stories of the Bible themselves make it clear that they are not to be taken literally. In secular education, the origin of the world is presented as coming from a big bang and all living beings, including human beings, coming through evolution. Biblical stories of creation do not reject scientific explanations of the origin of the world. The only message of biblical creation stories is about the only God who is behind the world and everything in it.

4.2.2 The Genesis account of Creation some observations

(1) God created. The Universe is not eternal and did not create itself from nothingness; rather, as the opening statement of Genesis declares, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the Earth” (Genesis 1:1). This is a breathtaking affirmation.

First, it denies the eternity of the creation. The expression, “In the beginning” (Hebrew *beresit*), pinpoints the commencement of the material Universe. Though the Universe began, God always was (cf. Psalm 90:2)! The New Testament re-cords: “In the beginning was [en, the Greek imperfect form of the verb meaning “to exist,” thus, “always was existing”] the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was “God” (John 1:1).

Second, the Cause is identified—“God.” The name “God” here is *Elohim*. Watson wrote: “*Elohim* seems to be the general appellation by which the Triune Godhead is collectively distinguished in Scripture” (1881, p. 1024). Thus, the plural *Elohim* suggests that multiple personalities within the Godhead created (*bara*—a singular verb stressing the unity of their action) the Universe. The Godhead is further alluded to by the use of plural pronouns in the narrative (cf. Genesis 1:26). Attempts to explain such references as a divine accommodation to human terminology, like when kings say “we” to indicate the fullness of their power, are weak, for as Watson correctly observed, the words in Genesis 1 “were spoken before the creation of any of these mortals whose false notions of greatness and sublimity of the Almighty is thus impiously supposed to adopt” (1881, p. 1025). In addition to God the Father, the Bible clearly teaches that both Christ (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:10) and the Holy

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Spirit (Genesis 1:2; Psalm 104:30; Job 33:4) operated in the creative process.

(2) The creation was out of nothing. Moses declares that the Universe was “created” (*bara*). Though *bara* does not necessarily demand *creatio ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing) in some contexts (e.g., Genesis 1:27 where God created (*bara*) male and female [a definite reference to physical mankind]), in many passages such a concept is demanded contextually. Thus is the case of Genesis 1:1. Gesenius, the father of modern Hebrew lexicography, wrote: “That the first v[erse] of Genesis teaches that the original creation of the world in its rude, chaotic state was from nothing, while in the remainder of the chapter, the elaboration and distribution of matter thus created is taught, the connection of the whole section shows sufficiently clearly.” C.F. Keil declared that when *bara* is in the Qal (Kal) stem in Hebrew, as in Genesis 1:1:

It always means to create, and is only applied to a divine creation, the production of that which had no existence before. It is never joined with an accusative of material, although it does not exclude a pre-existent material unconditionally, but is used for the creation of man (ver. 27, ch. v. 1-2), and of everything new God creates, whether in the kingdom of nature (Numbers 16:30) or of that of grace (Exodus 34:10; Psalm 51:10, etc.). In this verse, however, the existence of any primeval material is precluded by the object created: “the heavens and the earth” (1971, p. 47).

Moses also employed the term *asa* (“made”) in Genesis 1:7,16,25, etc. This word is a synonym for *bara*, and its usage affords not a shred of evidence for an alleged “gap of billions of years,” along with a subsequent “remaking” of the Earth (Genesis 1:1-1:2), as advanced by some to accommodate an evolutionary view of Earth

history. Weston W. Fields noted that “asa and bara must be regarded as interchangeable, particularly when describing the general creative action of God” (1976, p. 74) [cf. Genesis 2:4, Exodus 20:11, and Nehemiah 9:6]

There are further affirmations of a creation ex nihilo. The writer of Hebrews announces: “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear” (Hebrews 11:3). The term “worlds” is *aionas* and it denotes the time-space universe. “The point of this key verse on creationism is that visible material substances did not exist in any form whatsoever, other than in the mind of an omniscient God, until He spoke the creative Word” (Whitcomb, 1972, p. 41).

4.3 Concept of Man in the Old Testament

God gave clear instructions regarding the scope and the limitations of the authority and responsibility given to his appointed representative.

§ **Three major points** of Gen 1:26-28 are: (1) our identity, (2) our purpose before God, and (3) our responsibility before God and to the world.²⁵

o **The first point which speaks to our identity is the image and likeness terminology itself:** According to v. 26, God began the creation of human beings by proclaiming, “Let us make humankind in our *image* (Hb. *tselem*) as our *likeness* (Hb. *d^emut*), . . .” (v. 26a).

- ◆ The term “likeness” appears 21 times in the Old Testament in addition to the three times it refers to our “likeness” to God (Gen 1:26; 5:1, 3).

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- ◆ From Egypt through Mesopotamia, statues of kings and governors have been found at the entrance of their cities or lands. Where ever the statue was, that represented the rule, the land, the laws, and the authority of the ruler.
- ◆ Similarly, where ever we are, as God’s living statues, we are to be representing His rule, establishing His land, laws, and upholding the authority of God’s kingdom.
- ◆ The statue itself functioned to represent the king before his god in the place where the statue was set up.
- ◆ We have been set up in the midst of God’s creation to represent him and his interests. It is not that we look like God physically, but that we are physical beings who stand within the physical creation as God’s stewards. We stand before God to serve as his authoritative representatives on this earth “in his image as his likeness.” We have been put in charge and made responsible for how things go here.”

○ **The second major point speaks to our purpose before God.** It is related to the first, and arises from the grammar of the second clause in v. 26: “Let us make humankind in our image as our likeness, *so that they may rule* over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, all the (wild animals of the) earth, and all the crawling animals that crawl on the earth.” The second clause gives the purpose for our creation in the image and likeness of God.

Our understanding of our image and likeness needs to be seen in direct connection with our purpose, which is to rule over all the earth on God’s behalf (i.e., as God’s “image”) in a way that is somehow similar to the way God rules over all of everything (i.e., as God’s “likeness”).

o **The third major feature speaks to our responsibility before God and in the world:**

- ◆ All humanity created in the image of God

We were created as relational beings by a relational God.

Genesis 9:6 makes this clear when God declares us once again to be those made by him in his own image

To disrespect the image is to disrespect the one whom the image represents.

§ **In Summary**, God's created design for us humans is

o **Physical:** being created in God's image as his likeness is primarily a physical matter, not in terms of looking like God in some physical way, but rather that we are physical beings who stand within the physical creation as God's "statue."

o **Actively representational:** as God's "statues" our purpose is to stand for him, his authority, and his divine purposes amid the whole creation. We are called to "rule" as managers of his creation. We represent him in this world. This is our function. It is our responsibility to do this, and to do it well; that is, according to God's character and creative design.²⁶

Relational: God made us to represent him not just individually, but together, as male and female, and in the ways we relate to one another.

o **Relational:** God made us to represent him not just individually, but together, as male and female, and in the ways we relate to one another.

The first unit of Genesis (Gen 1:1-2:3) closes then, with God resting, not because he was tired, but because he had completed the “very good” work of creation, unopposed, having appointed his royal regents, male and female, and given them the authority, and presumably the power, to take their position of carrying out God’s plan and purposes in the earth.

o God holds us accountable to Himself for the way we treat one another.

Our ‘image of God,’ as cited in Gen 1:26-28, was not lost after the ‘Fall.’ The image of God remains, as shown by Gen 5:1-2, and 9:6. To strike another human is to strike at God. On this basis, all wrongs done to others, God takes personally..

o God knew that we humans would fail. That we would not represent God well, or use our power rightly. He knew that we would need someone to show us how to do this! Someone to help us carry out God’s plan. God knew that we would make a royal mess of things, a mess so huge, that only God in His own Person and Power could solve for us. Even before humanity’s first big mess, God knew that His provision for us would be Himself.

4.4 The Fall

What is sin, or fall of humanity? We can look for an explanation in the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis. Here the seemingly endless struggle between good and evil is described in the imagery of the serpent tempting Adam and Eve with the forbidden fruit.⁴

God said to them, “You are free to eat from any of the trees of the garden except the tree of knowledge of good and bad. From that tree you shall not eat; the moment you eat from it, you are surely doomed to die” (Gn 2:16-17). The tempter, however, said,

“You certainly will not die! No, God knows well that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is good and what is bad” (Gn 3:4-5). Adam and Eve chose their own desires, based on a lie, over God’s will and plan. Sin entered the world through this decision to choose themselves over God and his plan.

Through the Fall of Adam and Eve, the harmony of creation was also destroyed. If we continue to read the Book of Genesis, we see how Adam and Eve became aware of their sinful condition, were driven out of the garden, and were forced to live by the sweat of their brow. The beauty and harmony of God’s creative plan was disrupted. This was not the way it was meant to be. Once sin entered into life and into our world, all harmony with God, with self, with each other, and with the world around us was shattered. We call the Fall and its results “Original Sin.”

Each one of us is heir to Adam and Eve. Their sin shattered God’s created harmony, not only for them but also for us. We experience the effects of Original Sin in our daily life. This explains why it is so difficult to do good or to do what we should.

Scripture uses figurative language in describing the account of the Fall in Genesis 3 but affirms an event that took place at the beginning of human history. The language is figurative, but the reality is not a fantasy. The gift of freedom, given to the first man and woman, was meant to draw them closer to God, to each other, and to their destiny. God asked them—as he asks us—to recognize their human limits and to trust in him. In the temptation, they were lured into trying to surpass their being human. “You will be like gods” (Gn 3:5). They abused their freedom, failed to trust God, and disobeyed his command. They lost paradise and its gifts. And death became

part of the human experience. For the people of ancient Israel, sin was a spiritual death that leads to separation from God, the source of life, and consequently, to the death of the body.

The sin of Adam and Eve has been called Original Sin since the time of St. Augustine (AD 354-430). But the Church's belief in an ancient alienation from God was part of Revelation from the start.

What is Original Sin? It is a deprivation, a loss of the original holiness and righteousness with which our first parents were created. When God made them, he filled Adam and Eve with all the grace and virtue they would ever need, and they experienced a close relationship with God beyond our ability to know. Because of the unity of the human race, everyone is affected by the sin of our first parents, just as, in turn, humanity is restored to a right relationship with God by Jesus Christ. "Just as through one person sin entered the world, and by sin, death and . . . just as through the disobedience of one person the many were made sinners, so through the obedience of one the many will be made righteous. . . . Where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more" (Rom 5:12, 19, 20b). Though Original Sin has had far-reaching consequences, of greater consequence has been God's mercy to us through the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

4.4.1 Sin and Punishment

Human sin and God's punishment are a major theme spread throughout the Bible. Although several remedial actions were undertaken during the Old Testament period, none of them was capable of liberating humankind from sin. Hence God sent His own Son to redeem humankind from sin. Sin and Punishment in Primeval History (Gen 1-11) Fair beginnings and foul endings can be seen in

several events in the Bible, such as the story of Adam and Eve in Paradise (Gen 3:8-15). Soon after providing the first human beings with the beautiful garden of Paradise, God's plan is presented as thwarted by the first sin of the first human creatures through the intervention of the serpent (Gen 3:1-7). Resulting from that sin, all those involved were punished by God: the serpent was cursed (Gen 3:14-15); the curse fell on Eve (Gen 3:16); and on Adam (Gen 3:17-19) Adam and Eve were ousted from the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:23-24). However, with this punishment, sin did not disappear. The Bible presents a further growth of sin when Cain killed Abel his brother (Gen 4:8). As punishment God cursed Cain (Gen 4:9-14). According to scholars, this story developed over the traditional conflict between farmers and shepherds. The root cause of the conflict is explained through the story of Cain and Abel. Theologically the story unfolds the pattern of sin-punishment-God's mercy. The Bible again presents widespread sin on the earth (Gen 6:5-7, 11-13) until punishment came in the form of the flood (Gen 7:11-24; 8:13-14). The Gilgamesh Epic story of a flood (2000-1000 BC) is similar to the flood story in Genesis. Two originally different accounts of the flood are put together here as one in chs 6- 9. The message of the flood story for the Yahwistic author is: 'God punishes and saves. For the priestly author, God's covenant with Noah is the central point and the sign of the covenant is the rainbow. The themes of the creation account in the Priestly tradition are repeated in the blessing of Noah: man created in the image of God (Gen 1:27; 9:6b); blessing to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:28; 9:7). The next account of sin in the Bible is that of the pride of Babel (Gen 11:3-4). Its punishment is reported in Gen 11:8-9. This is a Yahwistic account of the continuation of sin in the world even after the flood, punishment for sin. This arose from the tall towers in Babylon, about 200 feet high,

known as which was a or temple towers, made for their gods. For the Yahwistic author it was a symbol of idolatry and ziggurat human pride and he uses this to form an etiological story to explain the diversity of languages in the world.

4.4.1.2 Sin and Punishment in Genesis 12 to Numbers 36

Several more instances of sin and punishment are reported in the Bible between Genesis 12 and Numbers 36. i) Sodom and Gomorrah (18:16-19:38). ii) Conflict (Gen 25:23) between Esau (Edom - Gen 36:8) and Jacob (Israel Gen 32:28). Here we see Esau selling his birthright (25:27-34; P) and Jacob stealing Isaac's blessing of Esau through treachery (Gen 27; J). iii) Joseph's story (Gen 37; 39-47:27): the brothers' sin of jealousy; the punishment of humiliation for them; sexual indulgence and false accusation. iv) Pharaoh's sin of resisting the will of Yahweh; consequently plagues are sent as punishments (Ex 7-11; Ps 78:44-51; Ps 105:28-36). v) Sins of Israel on the way to the Promised Land and God's punishment: lack of trust in Yahweh's providence; complaint (about thirst - Ex 16:23-24; 17:3; Num 20:2ff; 21:4-9); about hunger - Ex 16:2-3; Num 11:4ff.); discontent (Ex 16:3); apostasy, idolatry and punishment (Ex 32:1-6.19-29); Sin of Aaron and Miriam and punishment (Num 12:1-16); rebellion and punishment (Num 14:1-38; 16:1-35). Sin and Punishment in Deuteronomistic Theology i) Lack of faith (Deut 1, 33); rebellion (Deut 9, 22-29) ii) Sin of Achan (Josh 7:1) iii) Sin-punishment-people's cry-God's forgiveness: the story of judges (Judg 3-16). iv) Sins of the sons of Eli, the priest (1 Sam 3); request for a king (1 Sam 8, 5); Saul's disobedience (1 Sam 15); David's sin of adultery and murder (2 Sam 11-12) v) Ceasing to pray for the people is sin (1 Sam 12,23) vi) Solomon's apostasy (1Kings 11) vii) Paganism (1 Kings 18) viii) Sin of greed

and murder of Naboth (1 Kings 21) ix) Unfaithful kings and their fate Disobedience of Israel and God's punishment: x) sending Israel into exile (2 Kings 24-25). Sin and Punishment in the Prophetic Books i) Amos: against the sin of injustice ii) Hosea: against infidelity to Yahweh iii) Isaiah: against lack of faith in Yahweh's promises; against cultic abuses iv) Micah: against all forms of corruption and greed v) Zephaniah: universal judgement on account of sin vi) Nahum: retribution of Yahweh against the wicked; and destruction of Nineveh because of sin. vii) Habakkuk: the righteous will live by faith despite temporary triumph of the wicked viii) Jeremiah: against infidelity to Yahweh ix) Ezekiel: times against losing fidelity to God in hard. X) Second Isaiah: against idolatry and loss of faith in the true God xi) Third Isaiah: against cultic abuses xii) Obadiah: against crimes of Edom xiii) Haggai: against lack of interest in temple reconstruction xiv) Zechariah: against lack of interest in religious concerns like rebuilding the temple xv) Malachi: against divorce and disloyalty in marriage xvi) Joel: call to repentance xvii) Jonah: against Jewish narrow-mindedness

4. 5 The Concept Redemption

Everyone is in need of redemption. Redemption is a Biblical term which means "a purchase" or "a ransom". Historically, redemption was used in reference to the purchase of a slave's freedom. A slave was "redeemed" when the price was paid for his freedom. In the Old Testament God spoke of the journey of the people of Israel this way: "I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment" (Ex 6:6). The use of redemption in the New Testament includes this same idea. Every person is a slave to sin;

only through the price Jesus paid on the cross is a sinful person redeemed from sin and death. 1 “„Redemption means to deliver by paying a price. The work of Christ fulfilling the O.T. types and prophecies of redemption is set forth in three principal Greek words: (1) AgorazO, to buy in the market (from agora, market). Man is viewed as a slave ‘sold...to sin’ (Rom 7:14) and under sentence of death (Ezek 18:4; Jn 3:18-19; Rom 6:23) but subject to redemption by the purchase price of the blood of the Redeemer (1 Cor 6:20; 7:23; 2 Pet 2:1; Rev 5:9; 14:3-4). (2) ExagorazO, to buy out of the market, i.e., to purchase and remove from further sale (Gal 3:13; 4:5; Eph 5:16; Col 4:5), speaking of the finality of the work of redemption. (3) lutroO, to loose or set free (Lk 24:21; Ti 2:14; 1 Pet 1:18), noun form, lutroOsis (Lk 2:38; Heb 9:12). Compare also ‘redeemed’ (lit. to make redemption, Gk epoiEsen lutroOsin, Lk 1:68), and ‘deliverance’ (intensive form, apolutroOsis) used commonly to indicate release of a slave (Lk 21:28; Rom 3:24; 8:23; 1 Cor 1:30; Eph 1:7, 14; 4:30; Col 1:14; Heb 9:15; 11:35). Redemption is by sacrifice and by power (Ex 14:30); Christ paid the price, the Holy Spirit makes deliverance actual in experience (Rom 8:2).”

4.5.1 Redemption in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, the liberating action of Yahweh serves as a model and reference for all others in the Exodus from Egypt, “the house of bondage. “When God rescues his people from hard economic, political and cultural slavery, he does so in order to make them..., “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. 19:6).”³ Thus the book of Exodus depicts Israel’s basic historical experience, her experience of deliverance from Egyptian oppression, of covenant and communion with God.

§ The biblical story of redemption takes the creation of humanity and our identity as the image and reflection of God through four stages:

- o Our original identity in creation as the image of God (Genesis 1-2)
- o The loss of our divine identity through our identification with the world (Genesis 3)
- o Beginning of God's program of redemption and restoration: covenant relationship
- o Ultimate Goal: redemption and restoration
 - ◆ The restoration of our identity in Christ, the perfect image of God
 - ◆ The transformation our lives as God's representatives through our new life, and renewing of our minds to this new life in Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17-5:21)

4.5.2 The Liberator God: The Experience of Exodus

The first chapter of Exodus describe the state of bondage endured by the Israelites in Egypt, in “that place of slavery” (Ex. 13: 2; 20: 2); in their oppression (Ex. 1: 10-11), their hard labours (Ex. 5: 6-14) and their humiliations (Ex. 1: 13-14). In Exodus a God is revealed as the one who hears the outcry of the oppressed: “I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry... I know well what they are suffering” (Ex. 3: 7-8), a God living and taking part in historical moments of liberation. Here “the true essence of God is revealed in the sense that God clearly shows us who he will be in the history of humankind: that is, the one who hears the cries of those living in oppression and who is determined to do something about it.⁴ “Again, “I have seen the miserable state of my

people in Egypt. I have heard their cry to be free of their slave drivers. Yes, I am well aware of their suffering. I mean to deliver them out of the land of their oppressors” (Ex. 3: 7-9). Thus God is He who comes out of Himself, who ransoms and redeems Israel.

The experience of the Exodus contains, above all, a bodily and material dimension of liberation: the step from slavery and alienation. But in Exodus we also see another dimension: the service of God. “Exodus recounts, definitively, the step from servitude to the service of the living God: „when you bring my people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this very mountain.”⁵ In other words, freedom from bondage flows into and becomes, in effect, the covenant of the people with God on Sinai (Ex. 24). In this way, the deliverance from Egypt and the covenant are two phases of the same event, which leads to the encounter with God, to serving and adoring Him. This dual aspect of the liberating God is best reflected in Exodus 6: 6 ff: “I am Yahweh; I will free you from the forced labour of the Egyptians and will deliver you from their slavery. I will rescue you by my outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgement. I will take you as my own people, and you shall have me as your God... I will bring you into the land, which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I will give it to you for your own possessions.” In short we can see that the Exodus was the birth of Israel as a nation. It established Israel’s identity in its relationship with Yahweh. And so throughout the conquest and its subsequent life, Israel used the Exodus event as model and imagery to signify who Yahweh was and who Israel was. “Yahweh begets Israel as a father not in creation, but in the act of deliverance, which was Israel’s creation: “when Israel was a child I loved him and out of Egypt I called my son” (Hos. 11: 1). Further, if Yahweh had become their father by delivering them, then he would deliver them from future oppression.”

Conclusion

The theme of redemption and liberation is very central to the Scripture. As we have tried to see, God is very much concerned about the well being of his people throughout the history of humankind. He always made a preferential option by taking the side of the poor, the oppressed, the outcast and the marginalized of the society. Thus in the Old Testament He became the go el in redeeming the people from the „house of bondage . In the New Testament we see a God who incarnates to share the human condition. St. John brings out this idea very well in his gospel: “God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son so that anyone who believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it” (Jn. 3: 16-17). Therefore all of Christ’s life, his preaching, his miracles, his controversies, his death and resurrection have the value of redemption – liberation. The message, ministry and mission of Jesus were oriented towards the liberation or redemption of his people, especially those neglected and despised by the community of his time. This redemptive mission of Christ has challenged and inspired many men and women and it still continues to challenge and inspire many more in the world, and it is they who continue the redemptive work of Christ in the world today, in various forms and ways. In fact the call of each Christian is to recognise this challenge and to respond to it positively.

4.6 Covenant

§ Covenant and Relationship: the Covenants of God (Noah, Abraham-Israel, Moses, David, Jesus, Church)

o Definition: A covenant is a means of expressing and/or a method of establishing and defining a relationship.

Old Testament Theology

= to establish (or determine) the obligations (or stipulations) of a relationship between two persons or groups of persons.

Our focus is on biblical covenants between God and man (vertical).

But the same customs and terminology are used in the Bible to establish relational obligations between men (horizontal)

◆ Customs associated with making a covenant:

Swearing an oath—focuses on the relational commitment Eating a meal together—focuses on relational involvement All covenants have promises and obligations.

Covenants play a prominent role in OT life—socially, politically, and religiously. In form, a *covenant* is an agreement between two people and involves promises on the part of each to the other. The concept of a covenant between God and His people is one of the central themes of the Bible. In the Biblical sense, a covenant implies much more than a contract or a simple agreement between two parties. The meaning of the Hebrew term *berit* is more obscure. Originating from the root (barah), the word has several suggested meanings. Some associate the term with the Akkadian baru, “to bind, fetter,” pointing to Ezekiel 20:37 for support: “And I shall make you pass under the rod, and I shall bring you into the bond of the covenant” A possible parallel may exist with the Hittite dynastic suzerainty treaties, in which a vassal would enter into an oath of loyalty toward the king in return for past favors and future protection. On occasion, the root is used in the sense of “food, eating,” suggesting that *berit* may speak of making a mutual alliance or obligation while sharing a meal.

The word for “covenant” in the Old Testament also provides additional insight into the meaning of this important idea. It comes

from a Hebrew root word that means “to cut.” This explains the strange custom of two people passing through the cut bodies of slain animals after making an agreement (cf. Jer. 34:18). A ceremony such as this always accompanied the making of a covenant in the Old Testament. Sometimes those entering into a covenant shared a meal, such as when Laban and Jacob made their covenant (Gen. 31:54). Abraham and his children were commanded to be circumcised as a “sign of covenant” between them and God (Gen. 17:10-11). At Sinai, Moses sprinkled the blood of animals on the altar and upon the people who entered into covenant with God (Exo. 24:3-8). The Old Testament contains many examples of covenants between people who related to each other as equals. For example, David and Jonathan entered into a covenant because of their love for each other- this agreement bound each of them to certain responsibilities (1 Sam. 18:3). The remarkable thing is that God is holy, omniscient, and omnipotent; but He consents to enter into covenant with man, who is feeble, sinful, and flawed.

Covenant Signs: Another occasional feature was the sign of the covenant. Though similar to a pledge or gift, which was given when enacting a human covenant, the sign of a divine covenant was generally a repeatable memorial. God placed a rainbow in the sky for Noah and subsequent generations, promising that He would never again. God commanded circumcision as a perpetual reminder to Abraham and his descendants (Gen 17:9-10, 13-14). Later, He instituted the Sabbath at Mt. Sinai as a sign of His covenant with Israel (Exod 31:13; Ezek 20:12, 20).

Covenant Witnesses: Frequently, covenants between individuals were said to be divinely witnessed. David’s covenant with Jonathan was made “before the LORD” (1 Sam 23:18; cf. 1 Sam 20:8).

Laban, when making a covenant with Jacob, repeatedly reminded his son-in-law that though “no man is with us, God is witness between you and me” (Gen 31:50; cf. v. 53).²⁶ Calling God to witness a covenant agreement may be the reason why many covenant oaths between individuals were solemnized in the house of the LORD (e.g., 2 Kgs 11:4; 2 Chr 23:3; Jer 34:15).

Covenant Consequences: The consequences attached to the covenants, whether human or divine in origin, could be either positive or negative. Regardless of whether the covenant was motivated by friendship (as with Jonathan and David [1 Samuel 18]), suspicion (as with Laban and Jacob [Genesis 31]), or God’s loving choice (as with Israel), fidelity to the covenant is its most fundamental anchor and constitutes the essence of it. Covenants were to be remembered and kept, and blessings awaited those who did. God’s covenants began with blessings, with even greater blessings to follow. His covenants were “front-loaded,” so to speak, with divine blessings, holly undeserved and unmerited, and secured with promises of eternal fidelity. But they could also be rejected and broken,³¹ transgressed,³² and forsaken.³³ And the gravity of failing to honor the stipulations could be severe. Violators of the divine covenant are promised the “curses of the covenant” (Deut 29:21) and divine “vengeance” (Lev 26:25). In the case of a covenant between individuals, walking between the pieces of the sacrifice (e.g., Gen 15:12-18) provided a visual threat of similar dismemberment should the covenant obligations go unmet- a consequence ultimately realized in Judah’s capture by Babylon (Jer 34:18-20). The formula, “may God do so to me and more also” (Ruth 1:17; 1 Sam 3:17; 20:13; 2 Kgs 6:31) probably has its origin in the reference to those who consummate a covenant by walking between a divided carcass.

Covenant Conditionality: Conditionality was an integral aspect of every bilateral covenant. Failure of one of the parties to carry out the specified conditions rendered the agreement null and void. Unilateral covenants, on the other hand, wherein the LORD is the sole party responsible to carry out its obligations, are unconditional, depending totally on His faithfulness for their fulfillment.³⁵ Scripture gives five of these covenants: the Noahic, Abrahamic, Priestly (or Levitical), Davidic, and the New. Scripture has no evidence of any obligations required of the recipients of these five covenants. It should be noted, however, that this does not deny the possible need for consequent obedience. But it does establish the fact that obedience is not a contingency for its fulfillment. Furthermore, God may bring judgment (or blessing) locally when there is disobedience or obedience (as in Genesis 12:3, “I will bless those who bless you and the one treating you lightly I will curse”). Waltke notes, “God’s grant of seasonal harvest and blessing are in space and time universally irrevocable, but locally and temporarily conditional upon moral behavior or providential acts.”³ Though God’s unilateral, one-directional covenant making may contain similarities with man’s covenant-making, there are essential differences. Like man’s covenants, God’s covenants are in His self-interest; but God’s covenants are in the best interests of man as well—an attribute that is often lacking in man’s covenants.

4.6.1 God’s Covenant with Noah

Noah lived at a time when the whole earth was filled with violence and corruption—yet Noah did not allow the evil standards of his day to rob him of fellowship with God. He stood out as the only one who “walked with God” (Gen. 6:9), as was also true of his great-grandfather Enoch (Gen. 5:22). “Noah was a just man, perfect in

his generations” (Gen. 6:9). The Lord singled out Noah from among all his contemporaries and chose him as the man to accomplish a great work. When God saw the wickedness that prevailed in the world (Gen. 6:5), Noah is listed among the heroes of faith. “By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith” (Heb. 11:7). Peter reminds us of how God “did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly” (2 Pet. 2:5). Noah preached for 120 years, apparently without any converts. At the end of that time, “when ... the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah ... eight souls were saved through water” (1 Pet. 3:20).

Lord promised Noah and his descendants that He would never destroy the world again with a universal flood (Gen. 9:15). The Lord made an everlasting covenant with Noah and his descendants, establishing the rainbow as the sign of His promise (Gen. 9:1-17). Another part of the covenant involved the sanctity of human life, i.e., that “whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man” (Gen. 9:6). Every time we see a rainbow today we are reminded of that agreement- this covenant has not been done away with. As long as God still sends rainbows after a storm, capital punishment will still be a part of God’s law for the human race.

The Sign: As a sign of the covenant, God placed a rainbow in the cloud (Gen 9:13, 14, 16, 17). As with other covenant signs, this too was a repeatable evidence (cf. discussion above) of God’s promise to Noah. Strikingly, the sign itself incorporated an element of the

judgment; it was taken from nature itself. While circumcision (Gen 17:11) and the Sabbath (Exod 31:13-17; Ezek 20:12, 20), as signs of a covenant, were intended to remind man of God's covenant requirements, this sign is said to be for the purpose of reminding God (Gen 9:15, 16). The use of the rainbow as a sign of the promise that the earth would not again be destroyed by a flood, according to Keil, "presupposes that it appeared then for the first time in the vault and clouds of heaven." It is possible, however, that rainbows had appeared earlier and that now they were merely given covenantal significance. The Promise Two aspects stand preeminent in the promise made to Noah—the essence of the promise and the extent of the promise. God promises that "all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth" (Gen 9:11). Though the two phrases are essentially parallel, the former focuses more specifically on physical life (both human and animal) while the latter focuses on the destruction of the earth itself. Floods on a smaller scale may destroy many and cause considerable devastation, but never again will He permit worldwide destruction by means of a flood.

The promise is spoken of as an "everlasting covenant" *Berit olam*. This covenant with Noah is the first of five divinely originated covenants in Scripture explicitly described as "everlasting." The other four include the Abrahamic (Gen 17:7), Priestly (Num 25:10 -13), Davidic (2 Sam 23:5), and the New (Jer 32:40). The Mosaic Covenant, though divinely initiated, is not described as everlasting. Some view this covenant as a development of one specific aspect of the priestly legislation given in the Mosaic Covenant, lacking the same epoch-making character as the others mention above. The term can speak of "time without end" (i.e., eternity), but it is not

always so intended. “The implication of the terminology is that these agreements are not temporary, not stopgap, nor on a trial basis. They are permanent in the sense that no other alternative arrangement to serve that purpose is envisioned.” In other words, this covenant will continue until the earth is destroyed by fire (2 Pet 3:10-11; Rev 21:1). Furthermore, the impact of the Noahic Covenant on other covenants should not be overlooked. The certainty of other covenants is, at times, anchored in the order of nature promised in this first covenant. In Jer 33:20-21, God employs the unfailing regularity of the natural order as a guarantee of the covenant with David (2 Samuel 7) and the covenant with Levi (Numbers 17; 25:10-13). Even God’s covenant of unfailing kindness and peace toward Israel is hereby assured (Isa 54:9- 10).

4.6.2 God’s Covenant with Abraham

In making a covenant with Abraham, God promised to bless his descendants and make them His own special people—in return, Gen. 12:1-3). Abraham’s story begins with his passage with the rest of his family from Ur of the Chaldeans in ancient southern Babylonia (Gen. 11:31). He and his family moved north along the trade routes of the ancient world and settled in the prosperous trade center of Haran, several hundred miles to the northwest.

While living in Haran, at the age of 75, Abraham received a call from God to go to a strange, unknown land that God would show him. The Lord promised Abraham that He would make him and his descendants a great nation (Gen. 12:1-3). The promise must have seemed unbelievable to Abraham because his wife Sarah was childless (Gen. 11:30-31; 17:15). Abraham obeyed God with no hint of doubt or disbelief.

Abraham took his wife and his nephew, Lot, and went toward the land that God would show him. Abraham moved south along the trade routes from Haran, through Shechem and Bethel, to the land of Canaan. Canaan was a populated area at the time, inhabited by the war-like Canaanites; so, Abraham's belief that God would ultimately give this land to him and his descendants was an act of faith.

The circumstances seemed quite difficult, but Abraham's faith in God's promises allowed him to trust in the Lord. In Genesis 15, the Lord reaffirmed His promise to Abraham. The relationship between God and Abraham should be understood as a covenant relationship—the most common form of arrangement between individuals in the ancient world. In this case, Abraham agreed to go to the land that God would show him (an act of faith on his part), and God agreed to make Abraham a great nation (Gen. 12:1-3).

In Genesis 15 Abraham became anxious about the promise of a nation being found in his descendants because of his advanced age—and the Lord then reaffirmed the earlier covenant. A common practice of that time among heirless families was to adopt a slave who would inherit the master's goods. Therefore, because Abraham was childless, he proposed to make a slave, Eliezer of Damascus, his heir (Gen. 15:2). But God rejected this action and challenged Abraham's faith: "'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be'" (Gen. 15:5).

Abraham's response is the model of believing faith: "And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). The rest of Genesis 15 consists of a ceremony between

Abraham and God that was commonly used in the ancient world to formalize a covenant (Gen. 15:7-21). God repeated this covenant to Abraham's son, Isaac (Gen. 17:19). Stephen summarized the story in the book of Acts 7:1-8.

4.6.3 The Mosaic Covenant

The Israelites moved to Egypt during the time of Joseph. A new Pharaoh came upon the scene and turned the Israelites into common slaves. The people cried out to the God of their forefathers. "So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" (Exod. 2:24). After a series of ten plagues upon the land of Egypt, God brought the Israelites out "of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand" (Exod. 32:11).

Three months after leaving the land of Egypt, the children of Israel camped at the base of Mount Sinai (Exod. 19:1). God promised to make a covenant with the Israelites (Exod. 19:3-6). Before they even knew the conditions of the contract, the people agreed to abide by whatever God said (Exod. 19:8). This covenant was between God and the people of Israel—you and I are not a party in this contract (and never have been). The Ten Commandments are the foundation of the covenant, but they are not the entirety of it. presence of God to hear the rest of the covenant (Exod. 20:21). After receiving the Law, Moses spoke the words of the covenant to all of the people, and the people agreed to obey (Exod. 24:4).

Moses then wrote the conditions of the covenant down, offered sacrifices to God, and then sprinkled both the book and the people with blood to seal the covenant (Exod. 24:8). This covenant between God and the people of Israel was temporary—God promised a

day when He would make a new covenant, not only with Israel but also with all mankind. “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Jer. 31:31-34).

4.6.4 The Davidic Covenant 2 Sam 7:8-16 (cf. 1 Chr 17:7-14)

God’s establishment of His covenant with David represents one of the theological high points of the OT Scriptures. This key event builds on the preceding covenants and looks forward to the ultimate establishment of God’s reign on the earth. The psalmists and prophets provide additional details concerning the ideal Davidite who will lead God’s chosen nation in righteousness. The NT applies various OT texts about this Davidite to Jesus Christ (cf. Matt 1:1-17; Acts 13:33-34; Heb 1:5; 5:5; et al). In the Book of Revelation, John addresses Him as the “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (Rev 19:16). Walter Kaiser suggests at least four great moments in biblical history that supply both the impetus for progressive revelation and the glue for its organic and continuous nature: (1) the promise given to Abraham in Genesis 12, 15, 17; (2) the promise declared to David in 2 Samuel 7; (3) the promise outlined in the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31, and (4) the day when many of these promises found initial realization in the death and resurrection of Christ.⁵ Ronald Youngblood’s understand is that 2 Samuel 7 is “the center and focus of . . . the Deuteronomic history itself.” Walter Brueggemann regards

it as the “dramatic and theological center of the entire Samuel corpus” and as “the most crucial theological statement in the Old Testament.”⁶

In his covenant with David, Yahweh presents David with two categories of promises: 14 those that find realization during David’s lifetime (2 Sam 7:8-11a)¹⁵ and those that find fulfillment after his death (2 Sam 7:11b-16).

Promises that find realization during David’s lifetime (7:9-11a)

A Great Name (v. 9; cf. 8:13). As He had promised Abraham (Gen 12:2), the Lord promises to make David’s name great (2 Sam 7:9).¹⁷ In Abraham’s day, God’s making Abraham’s name great stood in clear contrast to the self-glorifying boasts of the builders of the tower of Babel (Gen 11:4). The same is true in David’s day. Although David’s accomplishments as king cause his reputation to grow (2 Sam 8:13), Yahweh was the driving force in making David’s name great. He is the One who orchestrated David’s transition from being a common shepherd to serving as the king over Israel (2 Sam 7:8).

A Place for the People (v. 10). The establishment of the Davidic Empire relieved a major concern involved in God’s providing a “place” for Israel (7:9). the “place” that Yahweh will appoint for Israel probably highlights the idea of permanence and security.

Rest (v. 11). David’s “rest” from his enemies mentioned in 7:1 sets the historical and conceptual stage for the promise of rest in verse eleven. Though the absence of ongoing hostilities provided the window of opportunity for David to move the ark to Jerusalem and consider building a Temple for Yahweh, that “rest” only foreshadowed the “rest” to which Yahweh refers.²¹ Even after all

of David's accomplishments, level of security and prosperity was yet unattained by the kingdom, a rest that is still future.

Promises that find realization after David's death (7:11b-16)

A House (v. 11). Dumbrell suggests that 2 Samuel 6 provides the theological preparation for chapter seven. The divinely approved movement of the ark to the city of Jerusalem represents God's choice of Jerusalem as the future site for the Temple, i.e., a "house" for the ark of the covenant. In 2 Samuel 7 Yahweh had to first establish the "house" of David before He would permit the building of a "house" of worship by David's son, Solomon. The juxtaposition of "house" with "kingdom" suggests that it deals with a royal dynastic line (7:16) and the presence of "forever" with reference to this "house" in three verses (7:16, 25, 29) and mention of "distant future" in another verse (7:19) suggests a duration that exceeds most family lineages.

A Seed (v. 12). Although this term 39HG' (zera'), "seed" can signify a collective meaning of posterity (Gen 3:15; 12:7; 13:15), it occurs only once in 2 Samuel 7 and refers to Solomon, to all the royal descendants of David, and ultimately to the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Solomon would be the guarantee for the rest of David's descendants and would erect the Temple (7:13). Yahweh also guarantees that Davidic descendant would always be available to sit on the royal throne.³⁰ Yahweh states that He will set up or raise up (. {8, qûm) this seed.

A Kingdom (v. 13). Various passages in the Pentateuch anticipated that Israel would one day have a king (Gen 17:6, 16; 35:11; Deut 17:14-20) and constitute a kingdom (Num 24:7, 19). However, this kingdom which God promises to establish through David does not replace the theocracy. It is regarded as God's throne/

kingdom (1 Chr 28:5; 2 Chr 9:8; 13:8). In fact, the Davidic ruler is called “the Lord’s anointed” (1 Sam 24:6; 2 Sam 19:21). In verse 12 the Lord spoke of raising up the descendant or seed of David and in verse 13 declared that this descendant would erect His “house” or Temple. The reader immediately thinks of Solomon, David’s son and heir to the throne who constructed the first glorious Temple in Jerusalem. Yahweh then affirms that David’s dynasty (“house”) and throne/kingdom would be eternal (7:13 16). This statement in verses 13 and 16 vaults this portion of God’s oath beyond the time frame of Solomon’s reign (which ceased to exist immediately after his death). This incongruity between divine prophecy and human history invited the NT writers to await a different son of David who would rule eternally.

Importance of the Covenants

Let no one underestimate the importance and significance of a correct understanding of the divine covenants. It is much more than an intellectual pursuit. They provide a most foundational theological anchor for understanding God’s working in human history. In the Noahic Covenant, God showed His gracious mercy toward all mankind, both redeemed and unredeemed, causing it to rain on the just and the unjust and assuring the ongoing, uninterrupted cycle of seasons. In it He demonstrated His unwillingness to allow the sinfulness of man to derail His plan set forth in Genesis 3:15, His unwillingness to allow the sinfulness of man to abrogate the pre-fall command to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth,” a command reiterated after the flood to Noah.

In the Abrahamic Covenant, God demonstrated His unmerited favor and unilateral choice of Israel as “the apple of His eye,” a special people called out from among the nations through whom the

Messiah would come. In the Priestly Covenant, God promised the perpetual priesthood of the line of Phinehas that carries all the way through to serving in the LORD's earthly millennial temple. In the Mosaic Covenant, God revealed His holiness and the heinousness of sin. The daily sacrifices provided a constant reminder of the need for the shedding of blood for the remission of sin, for the propitiating of God's wrath. In the Davidic Covenant, God promised the perpetual reign of the descendants of David, ultimately fulfilled in the Messiah and His reign. In the New Covenant, God evidenced anew His continual pouring out of grace, a promise through which He would put His law within His people, writing it on their hearts. Understanding these covenants will shape a person's understanding of Scripture. It will reflect a hermeneutical course that will determine the pitch of one's eschatological sails. Careful attention to these six covenants will bear an overwhelming abundance of fruitfulness. When God enters into a unilateral covenant guaranteed only by His own faithfulness; when God enters into a covenant void of any human requirements to keep it in force; when God establishes a covenant that will continue as long as there is day and night and summer and winter, then great care must be taken not to erect man-made limitations that would bankrupt the heart and soul of these covenants and annul the glorious full realization of all that He promised through them. Their significance cannot be overestimated.

4.7 Sacrificial System

The language of worship pervades the book, with the various components of worship expressed in key terms: the term sacrifice occurs about 42 times, priest about 189 times, blood about 86 times, holy about 87 times, and atonement about 45 times.

❖ **Covenantal Relationship:** The very heart of the covenant-relationship - fellowship between Yahweh and His people and the means of achieving it are spelled out in the opening statement of Leviticus where, with respect to the burnt offering, Yahweh says, “He must present it at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting so that he will be acceptable to Yahweh” (Lev 1:3). The fact that the covenant between Yahweh and Israel was modelled after those of the ancient Near East in both form and function allows one to understand the many cultic details recorded in the Pentateuch. In the case of the Book of Leviticus, the sacrificial offerings were designed to demonstrate the subservience of Israel to her Sovereign, to atone for her offenses against Him, and to reflect the harmoniousness and peaceableness of the relationship thus established or reestablished. In this regard, the burnt offering (Lev 1) and the grain offering (Lev 2) serve to identify the offerer as a servant (vassal) of the King (Suzerain), and as one who dared not come before his king empty-handed. The sin offering (Lev 4) and the trespass, or guilt, offering (Lev 5) serve to restore a relationship that had become disrupted because of the servant’s disobedience. They were his recompense to an offended lord. The peace, or fellowship offerings (Lev 3) constituted an expression of thanksgiving by the vassal for a state of fellowship that currently existed. They were freewill, non-obligatory testimonies to a heart filled with thanksgiving and praise for the benevolence and goodness of Yahweh.

Important from the New Testament’s perspective is the fact that it describes Christ’s death in terms of Old Testament sacrifices. For example, 1 John 1:2 declares that Christ is “the atoning sacrifice for our sins,” and Hebrews 9:22 states that “without the

shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” Further, significant sections of the Book of Hebrews draws upon the ceremonies and rituals of Leviticus to explain the work of Christ, including specific reference to the sin offering (see, Heb 13:11-12).

- ❖ **The Concept of Sacrifice:** According to Harrison (1985:599), the general principle undergirding the concept of an offering appears to have been that of property (2 Sam 24:24). However, whereas it was legitimate to sacrifice domesticated animals and birds, which were in a sense the property of man through his own enterprise, it was not permissible for wild animals to be sacrificed, since they were regarded as already belonging to God (see, for example, Ps 50:10). The basic theme of property was more evident in the case of vegetable and grain offerings since they would have been produced as a result of human labor.

The concept of sacrifice, or offering is clearly important to understanding the Levitical system of worship and sacrifice. One of the basic terms found in the Old Testament which expresses the concept of “offering” is the Hebrew term qorban which is derived from the verb meaning “to bring near.” Qorban is a generic term for anything presented to God when one approaches (karav) His sanctuary. A qorban might consist of artifacts and vessels, votive objects, or sacrificial victims. When sacrifices were offered, the individual came to draw near to God, with the hope that the sacrifice would be accepted and that his sin would then be atoned for. Since it aroused the wrath of God, the sacrifice was presented to appease the wrath of a holy God. Thus the goal of the worshiper was to be reconciled with Yahweh through the offering of a sacrifice.

Sin must be judged, and God reckons that judgment on the sacrifice as a substitute for the sinner, and He accepts the death of the sacrifice as a ransom for sin. God introduced this idea of redemption in conjunction with the Exodus where the death of the Passover lamb served as a substitute to redeem the life of the first-born. Here in Leviticus, the concept of redemption from sin is made more clear through the blood sacrifice of the animal. The animal sacrifice serves as the type pointing to the anti-type, Christ, the ultimate and perfect sacrifice for sin. Isaiah 53 provides clear revelation that God poured out His wrath on this “sacrifice to come” because of the iniquity of His people. Thus the animal sacrifice typified the ultimate sacrifice that Christ would make on the cross, and while it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin, Christ, having offered Himself once as a sacrifice for sin, perfected for all time those who are sanctified (Heb 10:1-18).

- ❖ **The Role of the Worshiper:** With few exceptions (such as a sin offering for the whole congregation or the offering of small birds by a poor person), the ritual, as LaSor (1990:153) has observed, up to the point of placing the sacrifice on the altar, is the same for all offerings. The worshiper, he notes, was to present his offering personally at the altar or the door of the Tent of Meeting. In this context, the offering was to represent the worshiper’s own life—an animal he had raised or grain he had grown—and was to be of superior value (generally a male animal without blemish, or fine flour, or the best of first fruits). In all situations, the economic status of the worshiper was taken into consideration.

In this exchange, the worshiper then placed his hands on the head of the sacrifice, likely indicating personal identification, a sign that the animal was dying in his place (1:4). Since the ritual of the Day of Atonement clearly stipulates that confession was to be made with the laying on of hands, it seems reasonable to conclude that this was a part of every ritual of sacrifice which involved the laying on of hands. In the cases of the sin and guilt sacrifices specific sins are mentioned, and it is reasonable to conclude here that the worshiper was required to confess the specific sin that he was aware of as he laid hands on the victim. It was then the responsibility of the offerer to slaughter the animal near the altar of burnt offering in the courtyard, and prepare the sacrifice by cutting it in pieces.

- ❖ **The Role of the Priest:** As the worshiper slaughtered the animal, the priest caught the blood in a basin, sprinkled some of the blood on the altar, and poured the rest around its base. Depending on the kind of sacrifice, the priest burned all or part of the animal, Yahweh's portion, on the altar of burnt offering. The fat, which was considered the best part, was always burned (3:16). Except for the burnt offering and certain parts of the sin offering, part of the animal could be eaten by the priest, the offerer, or both. The role of the priests in mediating these sacrificial offerings is also an integral part of the sacrificial system. The priest, though functioning as a mediator between the worshiper and Yahweh, was also a vassal and likewise subject to the same demands and even more so for he had to follow proper protocol in his ministry on behalf of the people. He carried out the prescribed ritual relative to the various offerings as a special servant of Yahweh, and as such he had special responsibilities as well as special privileges. As a special servant of Yahweh the priest enjoyed a portion of the

tribute for himself (7:28-36). As a special servant of Yahweh, he was appointed and consecrated (Lev 8), instructed in the appropriate means of sacrificial intercession (Lev 9) and was held strictly accountable to the laws of the Levitical system (10:1-3). Though his office was privileged, his ministry required unique canons of integrity and conduct (10:8-15). The priest was to be a holy man serving a holy God on behalf of a holy people. The essence of the priestly ministry is articulated in Leviticus 10:10-11: “. . . to make a distinction between the holy and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean, and so as to teach the sons of Israel all the statutes which Yahweh has spoken to them through Moses.”

- ❖ **The Significance of the Blood:** It is clear from the text of Leviticus that in all the laws of the offerings the blood of the sacrifice is emphasized. The physical significance of the blood is evident from the text; the shedding of the blood means the death of the victim - “the life of the flesh is in the blood” (17:11a). The theological significance of the blood is explicitly stated in the text; the blood was given to make atonement - “I (Yahweh) have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement” (17:11b). Since it is the blood of the sacrifice that effects atonement, the death of the animal becomes efficacious for the one offering the sacrifice. This transfer takes place as the one making the sacrifice identifies himself with the victim through the laying on of hands. Thus the death of the offering is understood as a substitute for the death of the worshiper - the penalty for sin is death, but the animal dies in the place of the sinner. The theological significance of the blood, then, is to effect atonement

by substitution, a theological concept known as substitutionary atonement.

Significance of OT Sacrifice: The Concept of Atonement

Lindsey (1985:164) has noted that under the Levitical law, sacrifice was given by God as the only sufficient means for the sons of Israel to approach Him and to remain in harmonious fellowship with Him. The effective means by which this was accomplished was through the principle of atonement through substitutionary sacrifice (see, for example, 1:3-5; 4:4-5:13; 5:14-18; 16:5-27). The traditional view that the sacrifices only “covered” sin fails to do justice to the real forgiveness that was granted by God (see, for example, 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18; 6:7).

Lindsey (1985:174) adds that the purpose of the sacrificial enactment, as defined in Leviticus, was to effect “atonement” on behalf of the person offering the sacrifice. The Hebrew verb *kipper*, translated into English as meaning “to atone,” has been related to the comparatively late Arabic word *kafara*, “to cover”; to the Akkadian term *kuppuru*, “to wipe away,” and to the Hebrew noun *kopher*, “ransom.” The latter term best suits the specific purpose of Israelite sacrifice theory as elaborated in Leviticus 17:11, which identified the life with the blood and laid down the principle that the blood “makes atonement by reason of the life.” The animal victim thus constituted a substitute for the human sinner, and the offering of its life in sacrifice effected a vicarious atonement for sin. The Hebrew sacrificial system must, however, always be envisaged against a background of the Covenant principle of divine grace. In this context the emphasis upon the categories of personal relationship with God can only be properly understood within the theological

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framework of a theory of substitution where the chosen victim dies in the place of the human sinner.

It is not easy to decide from the text if the sacrificial offering was meant to be a propitiation of divine anger as well as an expiation for human sin, for while there are undoubtedly some instances where the verb signifies “propitiation” (Exod 32:30; Num 16:41 ff.), there are others where it simply means “to cleanse,” as, for example, with the furnishings of the Tabernacle (Exod 29:37; Ezek 43:20). Yet it seems that where it is used to refer to atonement with respect to man, there is always in the background the fact of divine wrath. Thus, it would seem that of necessity the atonement effected through substitutionary sacrifice involves not only expiation of the sin, but also the propitiation of the divine Lawgiver in order that the relationship between God and man be restored. It would seem, therefore, that expiation had the effect of making propitiation - turning away divine wrath by a satisfactory, substitutionary sacrifice. This understanding seems valid in light of Paul’s declaration that man is justified by God’s grace through faith in the redemption which is in Christ, whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation (Rom 3:21-25). What is very clear from Leviticus is that man as a sinner incurs divine wrath, that God has provided the sacrificial system in order that human transgressors might return in penitence to fellowship with Him, and that God has graciously permitted the death of a sacrificial victim as a substitute for the death of the sinner.

Finally, it should be noted that the Hebrew sacrificial system was not by any means, Lindsey (1985:165) says, to be a complete and final scheme whereby all forms of sin could be removed. Much of the atonement procedure was concerned with sins accidentally committed, sins inadvertently committed, or sins of omission; there was no

forgiveness for sins committed as a result of sheer human stubborn persistence in wrong doing (Num 15:30), which by definition placed a man outside the range of Covenant mercies (see, for example, Lev 20). In the main, it can be stated that for breaches of the Covenant agreement no form of sacrifice was of any avail. It is in the light of this latter consideration that the cultic denunciations of the prophets and their rejection of sacrifice need be interpreted (see, for example, Isa 1:11-14). Although the prophets sometimes gave the impression that sacrifices were useless, the purpose of such preaching was to shake the people out of their lethargy. Ritual for ritual sake was wrong (see, for example, 1 Sam 15:22). What was required was for the worshiper to bring a sacrifice with a repentant heart (Isa 1:16-18).

The Sacrificial Offerings

Five offerings were included in the so-called Levitical law which Yahweh revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai. One of these, always referred to in the plural as the “peace offerings,” consisted of three somewhat different offerings; the thank offering, the votive offering, and the freewill offering. Hence, there were seven offerings in all. Since all but the “grain offering” involved the killing of an animal, these offerings are often referred to as (blood) “sacrifices.”

The Burnt Offering

The burnt offering - the concept coming from the Hebrew verb ‘olah meaning “that which goes up” (probably so called because the whole sacrifice “went up” in smoke to God) - was distinct in that it was totally consumed on the altar except for the hide or the crop of the bird (Lindsey 1985:173). This seems to be the oldest designated sacrifice (see, for example, Gen 8:20) and the most frequent form of Israel’s sacrifices. Lindsey has noted that, like all

the Levitical sacrifices, the underlying purpose of the burnt offering was to secure atonement for sins (1:4; see also, for example, Num 15:24-25), though its more immediate purpose was to express total dedication to Yahweh. The verbal picture of a “sweet aroma” ascending to God’s nostrils is figurative language describing God’s pleasure with the offering and His acceptance of the individual approaching Him (1:9). Although burnt offerings were prescribed for regular daily, weekly, and monthly occasions (see, for example, Exod 29:38-42; Num 28:9-10, 11-15), and as part of the sacrifices offered on the occasion of annual festivals (see, for example, Lev 23), they could also be brought voluntarily by an individual (see, for example, Lev 14:19-20; 15:14-15; 22:17-20).

The Grain Offering

The grain offering - the *minhah*, which outside of the Levitical system could refer to any gift or offering; see, for example, Gen 4:3-5; Judges 6:18; 1 Sam 2:17, 29; Mal 2:13), was normally a coarsely ground grain, either wheat or barley, mixed with olive oil and topped with frankincense (Lindsey 1985:176). This offering was to be free of leaven and honey (2:11), but was to be salted like all offerings for the altar (2:13). While a grain offering could be offered by itself as a distinct sacrifice (e.g., 2:14-16; 6:14; Num 5:15), its more common use was as an accompaniment to either a burnt or a peace offering. In particular, it always accompanied peace offerings (7:12-14; see, for example, Num 15:4) and normally accompanied burnt offerings, especially the calendrical offerings (Num 28-29). Behind the idea of the grain offering was the recognition that as grain was the primary food for maintaining life, so God was the true source of life and substance and therefore everything the worshiper had belonged to God. From this concept comes the idea that the

grain offering was the worshiper's dedication offering, dedicating everything he had to Yahweh from whom it all had come.

The Peace Offerings

The peace offerings - generally described in Leviticus collectively by the Hebrew term *shelamim* - a derivative of the term *shalom* meaning "completeness," "soundness," "welfare," "peace" - always appears in the plural and has been traditionally translated "peace offerings." These offerings are further quantified in Leviticus by the Hebrew term *zevah* which in English means a "sacrifice." *Zevah* is the common and most ancient sacrifice whose essential rite was eating the flesh of the victim at a feast in which the god of the clan shared by receiving the blood and fat pieces. Thus, *zevah*, the general name for all sacrifices which are eaten at feasts, qualifies the peace offerings as including a communal meal as part of the rite.

Since the Hebrew concept of peace includes health, prosperity, and peace with God, some translate it as a sacrifice of "well-being," while others understand it as a "fellowship" offering because of its distinctive feature of the communal meal after the sacrifice. The peace offering parallels the burnt offering in form but, apparently, not in function as no mention is made of the peace offering effecting atonement, although this might be implied in the normal laying on of hands, the slaying of the animal, the manipulation of the blood, and the burning of the fat portions on the altar, which is virtually identical with the ritual of the sin offering which is the most explicit atoning sacrifice. Lindsey (1985:178) observes that the proper classification of the peace offerings (and its sub-categories discussed below) is that of communal offering because of the communal meal which climaxed the sacrifice. The peace offering was a time of great rejoicing

before Yahweh (Dt 12:12, 18-19; 27:7; 1 Kings 8:64-65). It was a time in which the worshipers, their families, and a Levite from their community (and also the poor during the Feast of Weeks, Dt 16:11) shared a major portion of the sacrificial meal together before Yahweh (7:11-36).

While the peace offering was primarily an optional sacrifice. It had its function in other aspects of the Levitical system (Lindsey 1985:178). For example, the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) was the only annual festival for which peace offerings were prescribed (23:19-20). But this offering was also prescribed for certain special ceremonies of covenant initiation (Exod 24:5) or renewal (Dt 27:7), consecration (see, for example, Exod 29:19-34; Lev 8:22-32; 9:8-21; 1 Kings 8:63) or de-consecration (fulfillment of a Nazarite vow, Num 6:14, 17), as well as for other occasions such as a successful military campaign (1 Sam 11:15). Three subcategories of the peace offering (Lev 7:11-16) suggest occasions or motivations for bringing this sacrifice (Lindsey 1985:178).

- ❖ One is a thanksgiving offering - in Hebrew, *thetodah*, meaning “confession” or “acknowledgment” - was the most common type (7:12-15; 22:9), almost synonymous with the peace offering itself (see, for example, 2 Chron 29:31; 33:16; Jer 17:26). This offering was brought as an acknowledgment to other individuals of God’s deliverance or blessing bestowed in answer to prayer (see, for example, Ps 56:12-13; 107:22; 116:17-19; Jer 33:11).
- ❖ Another type is the votive (vow) offering - in Hebrew, the *neder* - was a ritual expression of a vow (7:16; see, for example, 27:9-10), or the fulfillment of a vow (see, for example, Num 6:17-20).

- ❖ A third type is the freewill offering - in Hebrew, *thenedavah* - was brought to express devotion or thankfulness to God for some unexpected blessing (7:16; 22:18-23).

The Sin Offering

It is important to recognize, as Lindsey (1985:180) points out, that although the sin offering and the guilt offering, subsequently discussed, are distinguishable, they clearly have some definite similarities. This is especially the case with regards to their primary function as both can best be described as expiatory offerings. Not all sins could be atoned for by means of a sin offering. Only sins committed unintentionally (these could be sins of omission as well as sins of commission; see, for example, Num 15:22-23) could be atoned for with a sin offering. The sin offering, however, did not cover were sins committed with a defiant attitude (see, for example, Num 15:30 which literally means “with a high hand”) - that is, sin with a purpose of being disobedient to God. For such cases as these, no sin offering could be brought by an individual (Lindsey 1985:180). The only hope for cleansing from such sins lay in the Day of Atonement ritual which provided yearly cleansing from “all their sins” (16:20), “so that they will be clean from all [their] sins” (16:30). The sin offering, therefore, was applicable only for sin not done in a spirit of rebellion against Yahweh and His covenant stipulations, whether they were sins of ignorance (Lev 4), sins without conscious intent (Lev 5), or intentional but non-defiant sins (such as for manslaughter where the act is committed without premeditation).

The Guilt Offering

The guilt or trespass offering - (*asham*), observes Lindsey (1985:183), was required whenever someone committed a

“violation” - an act of misappropriation or denial to another (whether God or man) of his rightful due (see, for example, Num 5:12, 19; Josh 7:1; 22:20; 2 Chron 26:16, 18; 28:22-23). This offering covered violations such as defrauding someone, or trespassing upon another’s rights. When such acts came to light and were confessed, the wrong had to be made right with appropriate compensation. For example, if the violation could be assessed for monetary compensation, then the offender was required to bring the ram for the guilt offering as well as compensation in property or silver plus a 20 percent fine (5:16; 6:5). The violations covered by the laws of the guilt offering, pertain, Lindsey (1985:183) writes, to intentional misappropriation of sacred property (5:14-16) and service (see, for example, 14:12, 24), suspected transgressions of divine commands (5:17-19), and the violation of the property rights of others (6:1-7; see also, for example, 19:20-22; Num 5:6-10). The common denominator of the guilt offering, therefore, was an offense that caused damage or loss whether unintentional or deliberate, and either against God or man. The guilt offering, however, is also usually involved with ceremonial defilement and is associated with such ceremonies as the cleansing of a leper (14:1 ff.) or the purification of a woman after childbirth (12:1 ff.).

4.8 The Temple

The English word “temple” (from the Latin *templum*) is defined as ‘a building used for the worship of a god.’¹ The English term does not normally mean that the structure is the actual residence of the god. The Hebrew and Greek terms, on the other hand, as well as the Biblical context, do imply that the structure was viewed as God’s residence. The six most common terms for ‘God’s abode’ in the Old Testament are Mishkan- tabernacle, Olah-tent, Olah Moed-

tent of meeting, Mikqodosh-Sanctry, Baith-house and Haikol-temple. After seeing the various terms used to denote the Devine presence in the OT, now we move to analyze the progression of the Old Testament concept of temple. This long period of progression can be listed into two: 1) period from alter to tabernacle; 2) period from tabernacle to temple.

From Eden to Altar

According to biblical narration, it is the Garden of Eden men experienced at the very first time God's presence (Gen 2:8, 15; 3:8, 10). In this sense one can call the Garden of Eden as a primordial temple. Meredith Kline calls Eden as "a temple garden and archetypical holy mountain of God." Genesis used גֶּן־עֵדֶן for garden of Eden. The term גֶּן־עֵדֶן , means 'garden, enclose,' for Garden and LXX translated it into $\delta\acute{\alpha}\nu\eta\alpha\acute{\alpha}\acute{\alpha}\acute{\alpha}\acute{\alpha}\acute{\alpha}\acute{\alpha}$, 'enclosure.' Besides the book of Genesis we have two other references of Eden, Ezek 3:8, 9 where Eden is called as גֶּן־עֵדֶן - 'the garden of God.' God's presence in Eden is presented in Gen 3:8 as "And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden" and later this is used to depict the Devine presence in the midst of Israel (Lev 26:11; Deut 23:14). Hence, the history of temple begins from the Garden of Eden. Its next development is found in the form of altar.

From Altar to Tabernacle

In the book of Genesis we read that the patriarchs- Abraham, Isaac and Jacob set up alter (Hebrew: אֹלֶת , "altar" derived from the verb עָלָה , "slaughter for sacrifice," LXX: $\epsilon\acute{\alpha}\lambda\acute{\alpha}\sigma\acute{\alpha}\nu$, "alter") in the places like Shechem, Bethel and Beersheba where God appeared and spoke to them. The God of the patriarchs was

with sons of Jacob-Israel, who descended to Egypt and when they were reduced to slavery by Egyptians, God sent Moses to rescue them and to led them to the land of their fathers. God revealed himself to Moses on Mount Sinai and ordered him to build for him a sanctuary (יֵאֵלֹהִים אֶת־הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, “sacred place,” LXX ἁγίασιον, “sanctuary”) so that He might dwell among them (Ex 25:8). God also gave instructions to Moses to construct the tabernacle (יֵאֵלֹהִים אֶת־הַמִּשְׁכָּן) Ex 26:1. The Ark of the Covenant was placed in the אֲרוֹן הַבְּרִית – of the Tabernacle (Ex 29:3). Then we also find the tent of meeting – אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד (אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד, ὁ ἁγίος ὄρειος ἱερόσουλῶν (LXX), where the golden lamp stand is placed, and is separated with a curtain from the Ark of the Covenant (Ex 27:21, 29:43-44). After the Aronic priesthood is being established and after the first apostasy of the people, Moses placed the tent of meeting outside the camp (Ex 33:7), and there God used to speak to Moses face to face Ex 33:11).

When the people entered Canaan, other new sacred places were erected. After crossing Jordan, Joshua placed the Ark in Gilgal (Josh 4:19). Then the tent of meeting was set up in Shiloh (Josh 18:1) where Eli was the priest and people went to offer sacrifices (1Sam 1:3). But after retaking the Ark from the hands of Philistines, it was taken to kiriath-jearim (1sam 4:1-11) and it stayed there until the time of David. Other sacred places at the time of Judges are; Mizpah- which was in the territory of Benjamin, were the Israelites consulted the will of the Lord (Judg 20:13; 21:1,5,8); Orpha- where the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon (Judg 6:11-24); Dan, erected in the north by the tribe of Dan (Judg 17:18). The Ark was dwelt in a tent, and King David set out to bring it to Jerusalem (1Kgs 14:26-30) but it was his son Solomon built a house for God. 2 Sam 7:13. Now we have thus the first period of progression of the concept of Devine presence, from alter to Tabernacle.

permanent residence of God. This quick survey led us to see how God's initiative to reveal himself to man was met with the human attempt to commemorate His presence by making a place of manifestation a sacred one: an altar, a tent, finally a temple.

The Feasts

The demands of holiness in approach to Yahweh also require strict adherence to the times of holy convocations appointed by Yahweh. These included the weekly Sabbath (23:3), and the yearly festivals of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (23:4-8), the Feast of First Fruits (23:9-14), the Feast of Pentecost (23:15-22), the Feast of Trumpets (23:23-25), the Day of Atonement (23:26-32), and the Feast of Tabernacles (23:33-44). In the context of the need to be a holy nation to Yahweh in covenant-relationship, Israel needed to be reminded of the unique set of circumstances by which they were called to that relationship. While the purpose of these convocations was multidimensional, it would seem that a major reason for them was to remind Israel of the historical basis for their worship, and to provide a context within which worship could be expressed to Yahweh for what He had done, was doing, and was yet going to do for Israel.

All of these festivals were associated with the agricultural season. To properly appreciate the importance of the seasonal associations of these festivals it is necessary to know at least the essentials of the climatic conditions of the Land of Israel. The wet season began late in the seventh month of Tishri with the early rains. Plowing began in the eighth month followed in the ninth month of Kislev by the planting of the grain crops (wheat and barley). The winter season was

therefore a time of crop growth. The latter rains occur in about the first month of Abib/Nisan and end in the second month which begins the dry season. Harvesting began during the dry season—first barley and then wheat. The summer crops - grapes, olives, and fruits - ripened during the rain-less summer months and were gathered in before the early rains in the fall, which began the agricultural cycle all over again. A tabular summary, derived in part from Hannah (1985:127), is presented below in Chart 3 showing the relationship between the Hebrew calendar months, festivals, and agricultural seasons.

1. The Passover

The Passover (pesah) was the first of three annual pilgrimage festivals and was celebrated on the 14th of Nisan (post-Exilic; formerly Abib, Exod 13:4), thereafter continuing as the Feast of Unleavened Bread from the 15th to the 21st. Nisan marked the beginning of the religious or sacred new year (Exod 12:2). The Hebrew term pesah is from a root meaning “to pass (or spring) over,” and signifies the passing over (sparing) of the house of Israel when the firstborn of Egypt were slain (Exod 12). The Passover itself refers only to the paschal supper on the evening of the 14th, whereas the following period, 15th to the 21st, is called the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exod 12; 13:1-10; Lev 23:5-8; Num 28:16-25; Dt 16:1-8).

Institution and Celebration: The purpose for its institution was to commemorate the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage and the sparing of Israel’s firstborn when God smote the firstborn of Egypt. In observance of the first Passover, on the 10th of Nisan the head of each family sets apart a lamb without blemish. On the evening of the 14th the lamb was slain and some of its blood sprinkled on

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the door posts and lintel of the house in which they ate the Passover as a seal against the coming judgment upon Egypt. The lamb was then roasted whole and eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Any portion remaining was to be burned the next morning. Each was to eat in haste with loins girded, shoes on the feet, and staff in hand.

Later Observance: After the establishment of the priesthood and Tabernacle, the celebration of the Passover differed in some particulars from the Egyptian Passover. These distinctions were:

- the Passover lamb was to be slain at the sanctuary rather than at home (Dt 16:5-6);
- the blood was sprinkled upon the altar instead of the door posts;
- besides the family sacrifice for the Passover meal, there were public and national sacrifices offered each of the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Num 28:16-24);
- the meaning of the Passover was recited at the feast each year (Exod 12:24-27);
- the singing of the Hallel (Pss. 113-118) during the meal was later instituted;
- a second Passover on the 14th day of the second month was to be kept by those who were ceremonially unclean or away on a journey at the time of its regular celebration on the 14th of Nisan (Num 9:9-12).

The Passover was one of the three feasts in which all males were required to come to the sanctuary. They were not to appear empty-handed, but were to bring offerings as the Lord had prospered them

(Exod 23:14-17; Dt 16:16-17). It was unlawful to eat leavened food after midday of the 14th, and all labor, with few exceptions, ceased. After appropriate blessings a first cup of wine was served, followed by the eating of a portion of the bitter herbs. Before the lamb and the unleavened bread were eaten, a second cup of wine was provided at which time the son, in compliance with Exodus 12:26, asked the father the meaning and significance of the Passover feast. An account of the Egyptian bondage and deliverance was recited in reply. The first portion of the Hallel (Pss. 113-114) was then sung and the paschal supper eaten, followed by the third and fourth cups of wine and the second part of the Hallel (Pss. 115-118).

2. The Feast of Unleavened Bread

Both the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which immediately followed, commemorated the Exodus, the former in remembrance of God's "passing over" the Israelites when He slew the firstborn of Egypt, and the latter, to keep alive the memory of their afflictions and God's bringing them out in haste from Egypt ("bread of affliction" Dt 16:3). The first and last days of this feast were Sabbaths in which no servile work could be done, except the necessary preparation of food. The Passover season marked the beginning of the grain harvest in Palestine.

3. The Feast of First Fruits

On the second day of Unleavened Bread (16th Nisan), a sheaf of the first fruits of the barley harvest was to be presented as a wave offering (23:9-11). The ceremony came to be called "the omer ceremony" from the Hebrew for sheaf, omer.

4. The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost)

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The Feast of Weeks was to be observed fifty days (seven weeks) after the Passover (Exod 34:22; Lev 23:15-22; Dt 16:9-10) and for this reason came to be known in New Testament times as “Pentecost” (see, for example, Acts 2:1). It is also called the “Feast of Harvest” (Exod 23:16) and the “Day of First-fruits” (Num 28:26).

The Feast of Weeks was a one-day festival in which all males were to appear at the sanctuary, and a Sabbath in which all servile labor was suspended. The central feature of the day was the offering of two loaves of bread for the people from the first fruits of the wheat harvest (23:17). As the omer ceremony signified the harvest season had begun, the presentation of the two loaves indicated its close. It was a day of thanksgiving in which freewill offerings were made (Dt 16:10-12). The festival day signified the dedication of the harvest to God as the provider of all blessings. Although it was a day of “sacred assembly” (23:21) in which there were an assortment of blood sacrifices, the Feast of Weeks was also a time to “rejoice before Yahweh” and to share with family members and with the poor the abundant provisions of food (Dt 16:10-12) that Yahweh had provided.

The Old Testament does not specifically give any historical significance for the day, the Feast of Weeks being the only one of the three great agricultural feasts which does not commemorate some event in Jewish history. Later tradition, on the basis of Exodus 19:1, taught that the giving of the law at Sinai was fifty days after the Exodus and Passover, and as a result shabu’ot has also become known as the Torah festival. The Book of Ruth, which describes the harvest season, is read at the observance of the Feast of Weeks. The significance of this day for the New Testament is set forth in Acts

2, when on the day of Pentecost the Church had its beginning with the pouring out of the Spirit on the believers gathered in Jerusalem.

5. The Feast of Trumpets

The new moon of the seventh month (1st of Tishri) constituted the beginning of the civil new year and was designated as ro'sh hashshana, "the first of the year," or yom teru'a, "day of sounding" (the trumpet). The blowing of the shofar, or ram's horn, occupied a significant place on several other occasions, such as the monthly new moon and the Year of Jubilee, but especially so at the beginning of the new year, hence its name - Feast of Trumpets. The Hebrew calendar actually began with the moon of Nisan in the spring at the beginning of the month (Exod 12:2), but since the end of the seventh month, Tishri, usually marked the beginning of the rainy season in Palestine when the year's work of plowing and planting began, Tishri was constituted as the beginning of the economic and civil year. Business transactions, sabbatical years and jubilee years were all determined from the first of the seventh month.

The day was observed as a sabbatical feast day with special sacrifices, and looked forward to the solemn Day of Atonement ten days later.

6. The Day of Atonement

The annual Day of Atonement (yom hakkippurim) is set forth in Leviticus 16; 23:27-32 as the supreme act of national atonement for sin. It took place on the 10th day of the seventh month, Tishri, and fasting was commanded from the evening of the 9th day until the evening of the 10th day, in keeping with the unusual sanctity of the day. On this day an atonement was effected for the people, the

priesthood, and for the sanctuary itself because it “dwelled with them in the midst of their uncleanness” (16:16).

This ritual was divided into two acts, one performed on behalf of the priesthood, and one on behalf of the nation Israel. The high priest, who had moved a week previous to this day from his own dwelling to the sanctuary, arose on the Day of Atonement, and having bathed and laid aside his regular high priestly attire, dressed himself in holy white linen garments, and brought forward a young bullock for a sin offering for himself and for his house. The other priests who on other occasions served in the sanctuary on this day took their place with the sinful congregation for whom atonement was to be made (16:17). The high priest slew the sin offering for himself and entered the holy of holies with a censor of incense, so that a cloud of incense might fill the room and cover the ark in order that he would not die. Then he returned with the blood of the sin offering and sprinkled it upon the mercy seat on the east, and seven times before the mercy seat for the symbolic cleansing of the holy of holies which was defiled by its presence among the sinful people. Having made atonement for himself, he returned to the court of the sanctuary.

The high priest next presented the two goats, which had been secured as the sin offering for the people, to the Lord at the door of the Tabernacle and cast lots over them; one lot marked to Yahweh, and the other for the scapegoat. The goat upon which the lot had fallen for Yahweh was slain, and the high priest repeated the ritual of sprinkling the blood as before. In addition, he cleansed the holy place by a seven-fold sprinkling, and lastly, cleansed the altar of burnt offering.

The high priest then took the live goat, the scapegoat, which had been left standing at the altar, and, laying hands upon it, confessed over it all the sins of the people. After that, the scapegoat was sent into an uninhabited wilderness bearing the iniquity of the nation of Israel, thus symbolizing the removal of Israel's sins.

7. The Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles (hag hassukkot), the third of the pilgrimage feasts, was celebrated for seven days from the 15th to 21st day of Tishri, the seven month. It was followed by an eighth day of holy convocation with appropriate sacrifices (Lev 23:33 ff.; Num 29:12-38; Dt 16:13-15). It was also called "the Feast of Ingathering" (Exod 23:16) for the autumn harvest of the fruits and olives, with the ingathering of the threshing floor and the wine press, which occurred at this time (Lev 23:39; Dt 16:13). It was the outstanding feast of rejoicing in the year, in which the Israelites, during the seven day period, lived in booths or huts made of boughs in commemoration of their wilderness wanderings when their fathers dwelt in temporary shelters. The whole family was to recall the hardships of the past and to give thanks for the abundance of Canaan, the land in which their joy could "be complete" (Dt 16:25). According to Numbers 29:12-34, a large number of burnt offerings and one sin offering were sacrificed each day. Sacrifices were more numerous during this feast than at any other, consisting of the offering of 189 animals for the seven day period.

When the feast coincided with a sabbatical year, the law was read publicly to the entire congregation at the sanctuary (Dt 31:10-13). As Josephus and the Talmud indicate, new ceremonies were gradually added to the festival, chief of which was the *simhat bet hasho'ebah*, "the festival of the drawing of water." In this ceremony

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a golden pitcher was filled from the pool of Siloam and returned to the priest at the Temple amid the joyful shouts of the celebrants, after which the water was poured into a basin at the altar (see, for example, John 7:37-38). At night the streets and temple court were illuminated by innumerable torches carried by the singing, dancing pilgrims. The booths were dismantled on the last day, and the eighth day which followed was observed as a sabbath day of holy convocation. The feast is mentioned by Zechariah as a joyous celebration in the Millennium (Zech 14:16).

On the twenty-second of the month a holy convocation brought to an end not only the Feast of Tabernacles but the whole cycle of feasts starting with the Passover. God had blessed His people both materially and spiritually, and they were never to forget all of His benefits (see, for example, Dt 8:10-14).

Sabbatical Year

The *shenat shabbaton*, "year of rest" or sabbatical year, like the weekly sabbath, was designed by God with a benevolent purpose in view. Every seventh year the land was to lie fallow, the uncultivated increase to be left to the poor Israelite. Further, as noted in Deuteronomy 15:1, all debts were to be canceled in the sabbatical year.

According to II Chr 36:21, observance of the sabbatical year had been neglected for about 500 years. As a consequence the captivity of Judah in Babylon was decreed to be seventy years long allowing the land to enjoy its neglected Sabbaths - "for as long as it lay desolate it kept sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years". After the period of captivity, the people under Nehemiah bound themselves to the faithful observance of the seventh year, covenanting that "we

would forego the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt” (Neh 10:31).

Year of Jubilee

Seven sabbatical cycles of years (i.e., 49 years) terminated in the Year of Jubilee. The fiftieth year is called “the year of liberty” (deror) in Ezekiel 46:17 (see, for example, Jer 34:8, 15,17) on the basis of Leviticus 25:10 - ”and you shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land ... it shall be a jubilee unto you.”

According to Leviticus 25:9, the Year of Jubilee was announced by the sounding of rams’ horns throughout the land on the tenth day of the seventh month, which was also the great Day of Atonement. The Year of Jubilee was not, as some have thought, the forty-ninth year, and thus simplify a seventh sabbatical year, but was, as Leviticus 25:10 states, the fiftieth year, thus providing two successive sabbatical years in which land would have rest. Certain regulations were issued to take effect during the Year of Jubilee. They are:

- ▶ Rest for the land (25:11-12). As in the preceding sabbatical year, the land was to remain uncultivated and the people were to eat of the natural increase. To compensate for this, God promised: “I will command my blessings upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years” (25:21).
- ▶ Hereditary lands and property were to be restored to the original family without compensation in the Year of Jubilee (25:24-34). In this manner all land and its improvements would eventually be restored to the original holders to whom God had given it, for He said, “The land shall not be sold in perpetuity; for the land is mine” (25:23).

- ▶ Freedom of bond-servants was to be effected in the Year of Jubilee. Every Israelite who had, because of poverty, subjected himself to bondage was to be set free (25:29 ff.).

4.9 Theology of Land

The land and state of Israel are intricately related, one cannot examine the covenant of Israel with God, if no account is taken of the place of land. The basic idea is that the land is Yahweh's land (Ps. 24:1). In Genesis chapters 1-2 we see how a relationship between God, people and the earth develops. He is the creator who made everything from nothing and has ownership rights over everything he created. We can observe that;

§ Creation is seen to be good.

§ Humans were created from the dust of the earth, in the image of God and were given the responsibility to rule over the rest of creation.

§ Israel's place in the plan of God

Throughout the book of Joshua chapters 13-19, land is first and foremost an inheritance given to Israel by Yahweh, a gift to be passed on from generation to generation. The idea that God owns the land has not only theological significance but also sociological meaning. Land in Israel was not conceived of as private property; instead it was a trust or "loan" administered by Israel on behalf of Yahweh. Land was the inheritance of the tribe, and the tribe apportioned the land to the families. The plot each family received was their participation in the tribal inheritance.

§ Each family enjoyed lasting rights to the use of the land, but never a commodity that could be bought or sold for private

gain. Their portion was family property and they managed it on behalf of the entire tribe.

§ The land was an inheritance and was required to be used in ways faithful to Yahweh. This meant that the laws of the Old Testament accounted to the administering of social justice in the community.

§ Thus in Psalms 16:5-6 & 142:5 “portion” is equated with Yahweh ‘Gods’ presence.

§ Leviticus: 25, family land that had been lost was to be returned to its original owner in the year of Jubilee.

§ The Law also required that debts be pardoned (Deut. 15:1-3) and that Hebrew slaves and bonded servants be set free in the year of Jubilee.

§ Deuteronomy 24: 19-22 stated emphatically that a part of the harvest be left for the poor.

Managing the land involved social justice so that ancient Israel could stay united. **The land and promise**

Understanding Israel’s taking of the land as the fulfilment of God’s promise is important throughout the book of Deuteronomy. From the first mention in 1:8 through to the last words of Moses in 34:4 God states “This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; I will give it to your descendents”. Brueggeman (1978:48) asserts that “Deuteronomy reflects early that Israel cannot and does not need to secure its own existence, for it is done by the same “One” who gave manna, quail, and water.

The land as a gift

The theme of the land being a gift and draws out several important implications for Israel:

§ Firstly the land being a gift was a declaration that Israel depended upon God and that therefore God was dependable. There was no sense of righteousness on Israel's part.

“It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going to take possession of the land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations” (Deut.9:5).

§ For Israel the land is the means by which other promises are also to be fulfilled, every aspect of material and economic life is attached to this (Deut.8:17-18).

§ The land gift reflects Israel's unique relationship with God as his treasured possession (Deut.7:6-7).

§ As a consequence of God fulfilling his promises, “Israel knew that they were the people of Yahweh because he had given them the land. This theme or relationship or more particularly a covenant relationship is central to understanding the significance of this gift.

The land and covenant

Wright (2004:85-86) is of the view that entering into the land is not “entry into a safe space but into a context of covenant”. Davies (1989:364) is in agreement and states that “it was clearly an integral part of the relationship established between Yahweh and his people”. Deuteronomy 28 confirms the terms of this covenant relationship. Clement (1968:57-58) summarises;

“Because the God who gave the land is the God of the covenant with its laws, there is a relationship between the land and the moral demands of God. It is not surprising; therefore, that the threat of losing possession of the land and its fruits is the fundamental punishment that is envisaged should Israel disobey. Possession of the land is the sign of Israel’s nationhood and the continuing evidence of the goodness of God. A breach of the covenant is naturally seen to have its consequences in expulsion from the land, which is gods special gift”.

He develops this theme further and argues that the moral behaviour of Israel not only affects their continuing possession of the land, but could lead to the ‘desecration’ of the land itself. Mayes (1979:78) suggest that the land is the place which “Israel cannot possess unless she obeys the law”. von Rad agrees and asserts that “Israel is to observe the commandments in order that they may enter the good land”. In Deuteronomy from the Ten Commandments (5:1-21) to the various social laws, the link between being “careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may greatly increase in a land flowing with milk and honey” is affirmed further in chapter 28, where God declares “obedience leads to blessing and disobedience to cursing.

5 Life after Death in the Old Testament

The book of Genesis refers to the afterlife. Even in the first few chapters, we read about the opportunity to “live forever” (Gen. 3:22). Later in Genesis 5, we find a rather grueling genealogy of Adam and Eve’s descendants, reading the repeated refrain: “And he died... And he died... And he died...” Yet one man doesn’t die in this account. In the midst of this repetition, we read, “Enoch walked

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with God; and he was not, *for God took him*” (Gen. 5:24). Where did he go? The Bible doesn’t say, but we know that he didn’t die—like the others. Later in the Bible, we read that the prophet Elijah “went up by a whirlwind to heaven” (2 Kin. 2:11). If there is no afterlife in the OT, then where did these two men go? Did God take them only to annihilate them? Such an answer hardly explains these passages.

Job said, “I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. ²⁶ Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God; ²⁷ whom I myself shall behold, and whom my eyes will see and not another” (Job 19:25-27). In just a few short verses, *Job* emphasizes how he will “see God” three times. Elsewhere, *Job* states,

Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him. (Job 13:15)

If only you would hide me in [Sheol] and conceal me till your anger has passed! If only you would set me a time and then remember me! ¹⁴ If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait for my renewal to come. ¹⁵ You will call and I will answer you; you will long for the creature your hands have made. ¹⁶ Surely then you will count my steps but not keep track of my sin. ¹⁷ My offenses will be sealed up in a bag; you will cover over my sin. (Job. 14:13-17 NIV)

The Psalms refer to the afterlife in a variety of ways:

You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever. (Ps. 16:10-11)

I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake. (Ps. 17:15)

You make him most blessed forever; You make him joyful with gladness in Your presence. (Ps. 21:6)

God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, for He will receive me. (Ps. 49:15)

With Your counsel You will guide me, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. (Ps. 73:24-26)

Isaiah wrote about the resurrection of the dead: “Your dead will live; their corpses will rise” (Isa. 26:19). He also wrote of a time where God “will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces” (Isa. 25:8). Paul understood this passage to refer to the afterlife (1 Cor. 15:54).

Daniel also wrote, “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2). Nelson writes, “Daniel 12:2 is the first undisputed, unambiguous teaching on the resurrection of individuals from the dead in the Bible.”^[3] Jesus surely interpreted this passage in this way (Jn. 5:28-29; Mt. 25:46).

We discover the Jewish belief in the afterlife through indirect ways as well. For instance, when people of faith died in the OT, they went “to [their] fathers in peace” (Gen. 15:15) or were “gathered to [their] people” (Gen. 25:8; cf. 35:29; 49:33; Deut. 32:50). David viewed this message as comforting in grieving the loss of his newborn son (2 Sam. 11:23).

Saul—the first king of Israel—made the grievous error of trying to contact the dead prophet Samuel (1 Sam. 28). Of course, God strictly forbid “one who calls up the dead” (Deut. 18:11), but Saul did it anyway. While much could be said about this strange passage, it shows that the Jewish people believed in life after death. After all, why would the king of Israel even try to contact the dead, if the Jewish people didn’t believe in the afterlife? Morey comments, “What is absolutely clear is that Saul believed Samuel was still consciously alive in Sheol. That the King of Israel would believe in an afterlife while the rest of the nation did not is totally unreasonable.”¹

The OT teaches that humans have Immortal Souls

The OT teaches that humans have a spiritual component to them. The Hebrew word for a “soul” is *nephesh*. In some contexts, this word simply means “throat, neck, or breath,” but it can also be translated as “living being, people, personality, life, or soul.”⁶ Consider just a few examples:

God has a soul (nephesh). Of course, the Jewish people didn’t believe that God was a physical being. Yet God swears by his *nephesh* (Jer. 51:14; Amos 6:8). He promises that his “soul” (*nephesh*) will not reject the people (Lev. 26:11). Later in context, the human “soul” can reject God (Lev. 26:15). God’s “soul” (*nephesh*) can “abhor” (Lev. 26:30; Isa. 1:14), and he has desires in his “soul” (1 Sam. 2:35).

Humans have a soul (nephesh). We are to put the words of God “on [our] soul” (Deut. 11:18). Samson’s soul was “annoyed” (Judg. 16:16). The “soul” of Jonathan was “knit to the soul of David” (1 Sam. 18:1). Hannah “poured out [her] *soul* before the LORD” (1 Sam. 1:15). Moreover, the “soul” (*nephesh*) can experience

sorrow (Lev. 26:16), distress (Gen. 42:21), hate (2 Sam. 5:8), bitterness (1 Sam. 1:10; Isa. 38:15), misery (Judg. 10:16), grief (1 Sam. 2:33), trouble (2 Kings 4:27), trembling (Isa. 15:4), or alienation (Ezek. 23:17-18). Finally, death occurs when the “soul” (*nephesh*) leaves the body (Gen. 35:18; 1 Kings 17:21-22), and life occurs when the “soul” enters the body (1 Kings 17:21-22). The “soul” is contrasted with mere “life” (2 Sam. 11:11). It is parallel with our “spirit” (*ruah*; Isa. 26:9; 42:1).

For these reasons, almost all ancient Jewish believers affirmed the existence of an afterlife and the immortality of the soul. While the Sadducees denied the existence of the afterlife,^[8] Josephus records that all other Jews believed “the souls are immortal, and continue forever” and were subject to reward or “eternal punishment.

Nature of the afterlife in the OT

Before Jesus paid for sins, people waited in *Sheol*. We might think of Sheol as a temporary holding tank before Heaven was opened. The OT mentions Sheol 65 times. It is said to be in the depth of the Earth (Ps. 63:9; 86:13; Isa. 14:9; Num. 16:30). The afterlife was a place of darkness (Job 10:21-22) and silence (Ps. 94:17; 115:17), but it was also considered a conscious existence (Isa. 14:9-10; Ezek. 32:21-31; Deut. 18:11; 1 Sam. 28:11-15). While both the righteous and unrighteous dead went to Sheol, the righteous are said to “enter into *peace*” (Isa. 57:2). By contrast, the unrighteous dead went to “the lowest part of Sheol” (Deut. 32:22; c.f. Isa. 14:15; Ezek. 32:23).

The descriptions of Sheol often confuse us. For instance, David writes about the “terrors of death” (Ps. 55:4), and elsewhere we read about the “terrors of Sheol” (Ps. 116:3). Yet these pictures are

resolved when we remember that people before Christ didn't have the security we have now. It wasn't until *after* the Cross that people could conquer their fear of death. Through his death, Jesus broke the "power of death" and "set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying" (Heb. 2:14-15 NLT). Before the payment had transferred, their fate in Sheol was still open ended: Would God pay for their sins or not? After the Cross, we never need to worry about this question ever again.

Before Jesus died, these OT believers waited for him to actually pay for sin. For instance, when Moses and Elijah visited Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, what was their topic of conversation? Luke tells us that they were "speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem" (Lk. 9:31). Everything was on the line for Moses and Elijah. If Jesus didn't take up the Cross, they would be lost.

Why doesn't the OT teach more about the afterlife?

God didn't reveal everything about Heaven all at once. Like every theological topic, God slowly revealed his truth over millennia. In fact, even with a completed Bible, we still don't know everything about Heaven. Since all cultures believe in some sort of life after death, it would be remarkably strange if the Jewish people denied the existence of the afterlife. Theologian Charles Hodge writes, That the Hebrews... should be the only nation on the face of the earth, in whose religion the doctrine of a future state had no place, would be... absolutely incredible, for it supposes human nature in the case of the Hebrews to be radically different from what it is in other men.

Endnotes

¹"Saint Anselm," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, revised Sept 25, 2007.

²Marvin A. Sweeney, *Tanak: A Theological and Critical Introduction to the Jewish Bible*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2012.

³Ibid.

⁴Sin is present in human history; any attempt to ignore it or to give this dark reality other names would be futile. To try to understand what sin is, one must first recognize the profound relation of man to God, for only in this relationship is the evil of sin unmasked in its true identity as humanity's rejection of God and opposition to him, even as it continues to weigh heavy on human life and history. Ccc386

⁵Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Blessing of David: The Charter for Humanity," *The Law and the Prophets: Old Testament Studies Prepared in Honor of Oswald Thompson Allis*, ed. John H. Skilton (Philadelphia, 1974) 298.

⁶Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel* (Louisville: John Knox, 1990) 253, 259.

⁷B. MEISTERMANN, "Temple of Jerusalem", in *Catholic Encyclopedia*, (New York, NY: 1912), 219.

⁸JOSEPHUS, *Jewish antiquities*, 15:9.3.; 15:11,1.