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JUDGMENT AND GRACE IN THE WILDERNESS NARRATIVES

A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Theology

by
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May 1985

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The wilderness narratives of Exodus and Numbers are a partial record of forty years of Israel's history between departure from Egypt (Exod. 14:30) until they detoured around the land of Edom by way of the Sea of Reeds (Num. 21:4).¹ These narratives are varied in style and appear disconnected in contrast to other major sections of the Pentateuch which seem more closely related. While the history of the Patriarchs and the events in Egypt are told primarily in a continuous narrative, narratives of the wilderness period are interrupted by lengthy digressions on legal matters, explanations of cultic rituals and order of priesthood, and descriptions of the size and structure of Israel's camp, tent of meeting, and furniture within the tent. As a result these narratives do not convey the continuity exhibited by the materials concerning the Patriarchs or the sojourn in Egypt.

¹The time the wilderness wanderings begin is debated. G. W. Coats, "The Traditio-Historical Character of the Reed Sea Motif," Vetus Testamentum, 17 (1967):253-55 includes the crossing of the Sea in the Wilderness period. Brevard S. Childs, The Book of Exodus, The Old Testament Library, ed. Peter Ackroyd, et al. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), pp. 22-24, believes this wilderness period starts after the Sea of Reeds event.

Moreover, these narratives are presented in two blocks separated by the account of the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, blocks which seem to have radically different understandings of the wilderness experience and its significance. The narratives describing events before Sinai (Exod. 15:22-18:27) give a very positive interpretation of the wilderness period. Yahweh's presence and care for the people even though they question Yahweh and Moses and complain against the conditions in the wilderness is maintained. The narratives after the sojourn at Sinai relate the murmuring of the people of the wilderness, their spirit of discontent and rebelliousness against Yahweh and his chosen leaders, Moses and Aaron. Yahweh punished their lack of trust and obedience by sending fire or disease to their camp, by fiery serpents whose bites cause fever and death, and by denying to the generation that left Israel entrance to the promised land.

The difference in the central themes of these narratives has prompted the question: Why should Yahweh deal so very differently with the people before and after the Sinai event? Why should the earlier narratives stress Yahweh's helping care while the post-Sinai accounts emphasize his judgment and punishment? This is important. Writers in later generations, prophets and Psalmists interpret the wilderness period differently; some positively (Hos. 2:16-22 English, verse 14-20 ; Jer. 2:2; Ps. 105: 37-45), others negatively (Deut. 9:22-26; Psalm 78;

Ps. 106:16-30; Ezek. 20:10-26).

"Higher Criticism" has tried to solve the problem of the existence of positive and negative interpretation of the wilderness period by appealing to separate and distinct historical and literary traditions and methods.

A 'murmuring motif' has been identified in several narratives through the use of the verb יָגִד followed by לְיָגִד , "against." This formula is found but once outside the Pentateuch (Joshua 9:19). It occurs 12 times in the wilderness narratives (Exod. 15:24; 16:2,7,8; 17:3; Num. 14:2,27,29,36; 16:11; 17:6,20). The participle form is used as a noun in several murmuring situations (Exod. 16:7, 8,9,12; Num. 14:27; 17:20,25). This very limited use of the word has caused several problems for the traditio-historical scholar because the source analyst maintains that the verb יָגִד is used by the so-called Priestly Writer.² However, Exod. 15:24 is identified with the Yahwist and Exod. 17:3 is questionable as to source. Because the formula is already used by the theoretically early Yahwist

²The source of the traditions suggested are the Yahwist (J), from about the 9th century B.C., in which the name Yahweh is used. The Elohist source (E), from about the 8th or 7th century, with a Northern Kingdom origin, exclusively using the name Elohim. The Deuteronomist (D) is identified with the Book of Deuteronomy and the history of Joshua to Kings. The literary work is dated from about the time of the Josianic Reform, 620 B.C. The Priestly Writer (P) writes in a cultic framework, avoids the use of the name Yahweh until it is revealed to Moses, and is dated about the time of the Babylonian Captivity - or after, about 500 B.C. M. H. Segal, The Pentateuch (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1967), pp. 2-4.

source, the murmuring motif cannot be identified as an interpretation introduced by the late Priestly source. The tradition historian must recognize that the murmuring motif spans all the periods he has identified in the Old Testament scripture. The murmuring motif cannot be a warning introduced by the Old Testament writers only after the nation has lived in the occupied land and rebelled against Yahweh.

The methods used to search for the origin of the murmuring motif it seems, limits the scope and purpose of the wilderness narratives. When the tradition historian or literary critic has the freedom to remove entire sections and sentences to identify an original story and then claim all other details are the additions of interpreters of later generations, he or she takes away from the claim that Israel's faith is an historical faith of Yahweh's dealings with his people. It would seem that the question "What is the purpose and structure of the narrative?" would more fully explain the theological significance and implications of Israel's faith. Some theological significance is lost if the people at Taberah do not recognize the fires as a judgment of Yahweh. Their cry to Moses for help is meaningless if the judgment is a later interpretation (Num. 11:1-3). The generation that left Egypt must have felt the word denying them entry into the promised land had the impact of judgment because of their refusal to enter the land after the spies returned with their

report. If not, the reconsideration to invade the land would have been unrealistic and without purpose (Num. 14: 26-45).

Much of the discussion of the wilderness narratives has a starting point in Martin Noth's tradition history study in A History of Pentateuchal Traditions. Here "Guidance in the Wilderness" is one of five themes he identifies in the Pentateuch.³ In the process of assigning phrases and formulae to writers with differing theological perspectives, Noth has eliminated much of the historical character of these narratives. The stories, he claims, grew from local etiologies that are associated with the southernmost Israelite tribes, and the theme "Guidance in the Wilderness" was developed by the tribes who recall such experiences.⁴ The claim that the stories grow out of etiologies is difficult to substantiate, for,

³Martin Noth, A History of Pentateuchal Traditions, trans. Bernhard W. Anderson (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), pp. 58-59. The other themes are "Guidance out of Egypt"; "Guidance into the Arable Land"; "Promise to the Patriarchs"; "The Revelation at Sinai."

⁴Ibid. However, Zeev Meshel, "An Explanation of the Israelites in the Wilderness," Biblical Archeologist, 45 (Winter 1982):19-20 demonstrates how Bedouin life in the Sinai today resembles many features described in the Israelite Wanderings - alliances, constitution shepherding, skill in locating water wells, festivals, sacred places, etc. Rudolph Cohen, "New Light on the Date of the Petra-Gaza Road," Biblical Archeologist, 45 (Fall 1982):240-47 showed from archaeology that places in the desert were settled as fortresses as late as the Roman period, also by Nabateans prior to the Romans.

as John Bright has reminded readers, experiences form etiologies rather than etiologies forming stories.⁵

When dealing with the question of the origin of the murmuring motif within the "Guidance in the Wilderness" theme, Noth ultimately concludes that the origin of the motif can be placed in the story of the quails Yahweh provided when the people complained because there was no meat (Num. 11:18-23,31-34). In this narrative, according to his tradition history reconstruction, the giving of quail originally was a telling of Yahweh's gracious care. Because the people knew of a location etiologically called Kibroth-hatta-avah, and this points to a "craving" that could result from all manner of wilderness distresses and danger, the murmuring motif is a late traditio-historical development added to a story that originally dealt with the subject of a divine help.⁶ The murmuring motif then spreads from here to other narratives in the "Guidance in the Wilderness" theme. Thus, Noth argues in effect, that it is not the historical event which has a minimal basis for the narrative that is important, but rather the

⁵John Bright, "The School of Alt and Noth: A Critical Evaluation," Old Testament Issues, ed. Samuel Sandmel, in Harper Forum Books, ed. Martin Marty (New York, Evanston, London: Harper and Row, 1968), pp. 176-78.

⁶Noth, Pentateuchal Traditions, pp. 124-25. Or Martin Noth, Numbers, The Old Testament Library, ed. G. Ernest Wright, et al., trans. James D. Martin (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), p. 91 suggests "the quail story appears in a probably intentional advance on the manna story as an indication of "Yahwehic anger."

important thing is the way the individual writer developed the retelling of the story for his time and theology. According to Noth, the wilderness theme is a late addition to the Pentateuch and serves only to fill in the time space between the "Guidance out of Egypt" and the "Guidance into the Promised Land" themes.⁷ Through his tradition history method Noth has removed much of the historical character of the wilderness period.

The monograph of George Coats, published under the title Rebellion in the Wilderness, has as its goal to analyze the "murmuring motif in the Wilderness Traditions of the Old Testament."⁸ The negative factor receives primary concern because he believes the negative pole dominates the evaluation of this period. He ultimately concludes that the "motif of rebellion was lifted from its setting in the Dothan-Abiram tradition, systematized and amplified . . . and attached to the tradition of Yahweh's gracious aid in the wilderness."⁹ The murmuring tradition itself is shaped into a rebellion motif by the priests in the Jerusalem temple as a polemic against the northern kingdom to show it had forfeited its rights to Yahweh's election when the people rebelled in the wilderness period. Coats appeals to Ps. 78:67-72, a section that maintains

⁷Noth, Pentateuchal Traditions, p. 58.

⁸George W. Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness (Nashville, New York: Abingdon Press, 1968), p. 15.

⁹Ibid., p. 252.

that Yahweh rejected the northern kingdom, and elected the southern kingdom when he chose David to be the appointed king and Jerusalem the site for the temple.¹⁰ Coats also argues that the judgment of death on the first generation before entering the promised land points to a rejection of their rights as Yahweh's chosen people, "the final principle of Israel's rejection theology."¹¹ This must be challenged because the second generation does enter the land. Yahweh does not reject the covenant (Num. 14:21-35). There is chastening and purging, but not repudiation (Isa. 4:4).

Simon DeVries wrote a brief response to Coats in which he disposes of the argument that "the conclusion . . . that a tradition such as this (rebellion) was adaptable to a polemical purpose is no proof that it was created for that express purpose."¹² DeVries also emphasizes, and correctly, that Coats overlooks "the great variety of traditional elements" in the narratives.¹³ As an example,

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 251. But the influence of the priests at this time is not persuasive. The attempt to associate Psalm 78 and its anti-North theme does not preclude that the wilderness rebellion has the same purpose, or that it came into being at the same time. It would seem the poet of Psalm 78 would use the theme from the source material, not insert it into source material. The rebellion theme would seem most likely to arise during the difficult days of the wilderness.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Simon DeVries, "The Origin of the Murmuring Tradition," The Journal of Biblical Literature, 87 (1968):54.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 56-57.

he points out that even though judgment is made against the people, and the one generation will die in the wilderness because they refuse to enter the land, this is not repudiation. Rather, a blessing of Yahweh does surface as he detours the marchers away from the Amalakites and Canaanites in the direction of the Sea of Reeds (Num. 14:25). DeVries' conclusion regarding the origin of the "murmuring tradition" begins with the theory that a double tradition of conquest existed. The southern tribes knew a tradition of a conquest of Hebron by Caleb (Num. 14:24), but another conquest tradition existed in the central amphictyony that is recorded in the Book of Judges. Therefore, there is a "necessity for calibrating the southern conquest tradition with the already dominant tradition of the central amphictyony."¹⁴ DeVries, too, concludes the murmuring is not in the original narrative, but was added later.

Chr. Barth holds that three periods are apparent in the development and recording of the wilderness traditions,¹⁵ and in this way comes to explain the positive and negative interpretations of this period. He sees the wilderness period develop from a record of salvation history that focuses on Yahweh's salvation deeds, his divine assistance; the middle period focuses on an ideal fellowship

¹⁴Ibid., p. 58.

¹⁵Chr. Barth, "Zur Bedeutung der Wüstetradition," Supplement to Vetus Testamentum, 15 (1966):14-23.

between Yahweh and his people; and the third period on the end of the monarchy during which the nation declines. The people fail to worship Yahweh alone, they are disobedient to his commandments. This failure of the nation to serve Yahweh prompts the later Hebrew prophets and writers to point to a similar failure of the people to trust Yahweh in the wilderness period as the murmurings demonstrate. The lesson from the wilderness time is a terrifying warning for the generations that are facing a similar judgment of the overthrow of the nation.¹⁶ Although Barth recognizes that a negative element of murmuring does appear in narratives he associates with early traditions, he also holds that the narratives are expanded by later editors¹⁷ who want to either encourage the nation or to warn the people who are being addressed.

Richard Adamiak makes his contribution to the studies of the wilderness period by pursuing questions relating to justice and punishment in the narratives.¹⁸ When the subject of punishment arises, the question is asked, is the punishment of divine origin? Is it an act of justice imposed on an act of disobedience? Or is the

¹⁶Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁷"Later editors" is a general term to identify those whom critical scholars maintain have taken a basic story and added elements that would shift the focus of the narrative to their own theological viewpoint.

¹⁸Richard Adamiak, Justice and History in the Old Testament (Cleveland: John T. Zubal, 1982).

so-called punishment merely the natural result of erroneous behavior? The distinction can be recognized in the narrative of the quail. Was the sickness that led to the death of many people the result of a direct intervention of Yahweh? or was the sickness a consequence of gluttony on the part of the people (Num. 11:31-34)? Adamiak, following a literary and tradition history method of study, concludes that one theology of retribution is not consistently taught in the Old Testament. Rather, a divine punishment theology is developed over the years and in changing national and political situations. In the writings of the earlier prophets, the so-called Yahwist and Elohist, proclaim a collective, or national punishment that results from disobedience and failure to be loyal to Yahweh. The later theological viewpoint developed by the Priestly Writer(s) and the Deuteronomic Historian(s) affirms the individual is responsible for the action and is subject to personal punishment. The advocate of a multiple authorship of the Pentateuch uses this change in theology as one criterion to propose that the Priestly Writer would specifically stipulate that "not one shall come into the land where I swore that I would make you dwell. . . ." (Num. 14:30). Here it is the individual who stands before Yahweh to be judged for his actions.¹⁹ According to Adamiak, the wilderness narratives show gradual development in the

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 1-4.

theology of punishment. At the same time he recognizes that certain pre-exilic prophets and authors of specific Psalms describe the wilderness period as ideal. This period is seen as ideal because Yahweh's gracious acts with his people are emphasized rather than the people's acts of unbelief toward Yahweh.²⁰ Adamiak argues that the theology of punishment develops because the motivation to obedience to Yahweh begins as an expression of loyalty because of his saving acts, but later this obedience becomes a requirement based on the Sinaitic covenant. Ultimately a change in the nature of punishment also occurs. At one point the people are reminded Yahweh's care will be removed from them if they are not obedient (Exod. 15:25, 26), but later the people who rebelled are denied the covenant blessing of entry into the land (Num. 14:22,23).²¹ Adamiak does not confront the phenomenon of prophetic intercession before Yahweh on behalf of the people, nor the anthropomorphic description of Yahweh "repenting" of his decision to punish people which surface in Abraham's life (Gen. 18:22-33), at Sinai (Exod. 32:11-14), and in Amos' pleas in the vision (Amos 7:1-6). As a result he does not include these intercessions as an influence on the development of the theology of punishment.

It is ultimately the inclusion of the acts of Yahweh's

²⁰Ibid., pp. 35-42.

²¹Ibid., pp. 55-58. Also Moses and Aaron. Num. 20:12.

love toward Israel in the wilderness, and the contrasting judgment in times that closely parallel the saving acts, which prompt this study. In Lutheran terms this is known as gospel and law theology. The covenant made at Sinai seemingly distinguishes the way Yahweh approaches his people, and separates the narratives. The pre-Sinai narratives accentuate the gracious acts of Yahweh and the post-Sinai narratives emphasize his judgment and punishment. Considering this difference, the question is asked whether the murmurings of the people are the focal point for studies, as the emphases of Noth, Coats, DeVries and Barth would suggest. Or, is there another emphasis that needs to be studied? The murmurings of the people are constant. They occur in the pre-Sinai and post-Sinai series of narratives. It is Yahweh's response to these murmurings that changes. Therefore this study will be more concerned with Yahweh's mercy and judgment as he responds to the murmurings, and the somewhat parallel term "rebellion," in the wilderness period. Rather than categorically beginning with a thesis that Old Testament writers have differing concepts of the wilderness period, it seems more plausible to find the law and gospel emphases here just as this theology permeates the rest of Scripture. The goal is to determine that which unifies the interpretation of the period and thus draws Scripture together rather than dividing it by seeing Scripture as an accumulation of theological viewpoints collected into narratives, "all strung together by

late compilers on an artificial chronological thread."²²

The methodology we will follow is to study the narratives as a continuous whole, and to find the plan and purpose of each narrative. This plan and purpose is dependent upon the content of that story. The narratives of the wilderness period are a record of the past and a lesson for faith and life for the future of Israel. Therefore the content is of primary concern and the movement from the events to the response of Yahweh must be defined. The progression of the narrative must be determined. As an example, it seems hasty to determine that the two questions of Exod. 17:2 must be from different sources without considering the possibility that the second question carries a previous thought to completion. When questions do arise, as they do in the sequence in the dialogue of Exod. 16:6-12, determination must be made whether the question can be answered by merely concluding independent sources were inserted, and a mistake was made in collecting these sources, or is there evidence elsewhere in the Pentateuch or the remainder of the Old Testament of similar literary sequences.

Word studies and grammatical constructions will also be important to this study. Where applicable the grammar will be used to demonstrate the unity of the text. There will be an awareness of special meanings of words espe-

²²Segal, The Pentateuch, p. 22.

cially as these meanings are influenced by verb forms.

Themes of the Pentateuch will be carefully identified, especially covenant themes Yahweh makes with Abraham and the purpose these themes serve in the narratives. Of special concern will be the use Moses makes of the Abrahamic covenant in his intercessions. Ultimately this covenant theme leads to the revelation of the holiness of Yahweh. Here the mercy and judgment themes emerge as the result of the attribute of Yahweh. The critical scholars who search for the origin of themes and motifs in Israel's theology pass by the need of this people to know and experience Yahweh. They see the murmuring motif as a rather vague concept that can be inserted into narratives at the discretion of any of several writers. This principle of study weakens the faith that develops in Israel as the people experience the mercy and judgment of Yahweh. The faith of Israel is more effective and reliable when the experiences in the wilderness, and elsewhere, are viewed as a continuous whole. The methodology will be an historical-grammatical study.

The narratives that are included in this study are those in which the people find fault with the conditions in the wilderness and then murmur against Yahweh and his leadership. It is in these situations that the attributes of Yahweh's mercy and holiness come to the fore. Basically these are the same narratives that Brevard Childs includes in his analytic distinction of Pattern I and

Pattern II.²³ The narratives under consideration here include the sweetening of the water at Marah (Exod. 15:22-26), the water that is provided at Rephidim (Exod. 17:1-7), and the water provided at Meribah Kadesh;²⁴ the fire that burns at Taberah and the gift of meat (Num. 11:1-3, 10-14, 18-23, 31-35), and the incident of the fiery serpents (Num. 21:4-9).²⁵ In the series of Pattern I the narrative of the giving of manna (Exod. 16:1-12, 28, 29) has been added in this study because it contains a record of the murmuring of the people even though there is no intercession of Moses, a criterion of Childs' Pattern I. The incident of the refusal of the people to enter the promised land from the south is included in the narratives of judgment because the murmuring and rebellion motif is prominent even though Childs does not include this in his series of Pattern II because the punishment is not rescinded in spite of Moses' intercession.

²³Childs, Exodus, p. 258.

²⁴These are identified as Pattern I by Childs, Exodus, p. 258.

²⁵Childs, Exodus, p. 258 identifies these as Pattern II.

CHAPTER II

NARRATIVES OF NEEDS FULFILLED

The narratives examined in this chapter deal with the most basic needs of people, water and food. The rehearsal of these needs does not simply deal with the crisis of short term supply and the immediate fears and frustrations of the people. Laws, ordinances, and statutes are incorporated into Yahweh's response to need, and the people are tested as they live under the pressure of rules for life. Together with the physical need that arises, and Yahweh's response to the need, the laws and ordinances speak of the mercy and judgment of God in the wilderness tradition, another and greater need.

Exodus 15:22-26. The Bitter Waters at Marah

v. 22 Then Moses led Israel from the Sea of Reeds and they entered into the wilderness of Shur; they traveled three days in the desert, and they found no water.

v. 23 They came to Marah, where they were not able to drink the water from Marah because it was bitter. Therefore it was called Marah.

v. 24 And the people murmured against Moses, saying, 'What shall we drink?'

v. 25 And he cried unto Yahweh, and Yahweh showed him (instructed him about) a tree. Then he threw it into the water and the water became sweet. There he established (set) a statute and ordinance for him and there he tested him.

v. 26 And he said, 'If you will truly listen to the voice of Yahweh, your God, and do what is pleasing in his eyes, and prick up your ears to his commandments, and keep guard over his statutes, the totality of disease which I placed on the Egyptians I will not place upon you, for I am Yahweh, your healer.'

The most apparent textual problem is in verses 25 and 26. After Yahweh shows Moses the tree stump, the next verbs have no clearly defined subjects. 'He cast,' 'he set,' 'he tested him there.' The sequence is further confused by the change from the third singular masculine verb form, 'and he said, If you will truly be attentive to the voice of Yahweh,' to the first person singular verb, 'all the diseases I have placed on the Egyptians I will not place on you.' The Massorettes draw attention to a fault in the transmission of the text by means of a Pisqah be'emesa katub,¹ a break in the middle of the sentence. Many translators² have overcome the problem of identifying

¹Shemaryahu Talmon, "The Desert Motif in the Bible and in Qumran Literature," Biblical Motifs: Origins and Transformations, Vol. 3: Studies and Texts, Philip W. Lowndes, ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 46, n. 47. A similar transmission problem occurs in Num. 5:19.

²The Revised Standard Version identifies Yahweh as subject. The RSV, Jerusalem Bible, Today's English Version have "them," a plural object. H. Holzinger, Exodus, Kurzer HandCommentar zum Alten Testament, Vol. 2, ed. Karl Marti (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck] Publishers, 1900), p. 53, argues that Yahweh is the subject on the basis of Joshua 24:25b, a grammatical parallel to Exod. 15:25b. Bruno Baentsch, Exodus, Leviticus, Vol. 2, Handkommentar zum Alten Testament, ed. W. Nowack (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Rupprecht, 1903), p. 142, identifies Yahweh as subject because other references of Yahweh testing Israel occur, Exod. 16:4; 20:20; Deut. 8:2,16; 13:4. Nowhere does Moses test the people. If Yahweh is the subject of $\square \text{ו} \text{י}$ he must be also of $\text{ו} \text{י} \text{ו} \text{י}$.

the subject as Yahweh, and change the singular pronominal object to a plural, identifying 'the people' as the object. The singular pronoun is simply taken in a collective sense. Or, if the singular pronoun were retained, Moses could be recognized as the messenger who received the statutes and ordinances on behalf of the people.

The movement between the first and third person verb forms, '. . . hearken to the voice of your God . . . I will put none of the diseases,' in the same sentence structure is not uncommon, especially in covenant or legal forms.³ A similar exchange occurs in Hos. 8:11-14. The prophet is the spokesman. As Yahweh's spokesman he writes the laws, verse 12. The Lord would not delight in the ritual of sacrifice placed before obedience. 'He will remember their impurity,' verse 13, 'but I will send a fire upon his cities,' verse 14. The entire style is that of a divine communication or statement.⁴

In the Exodus pericope, verse 22, the Hiphil form יִשְׁמְרוּ is used in a unique way. Elsewhere the movement of Israel from place to place is recorded with an imperfect Qal, third person masculine plural of שָׁמַר, and the congregation of Israel, or the pronoun 'they' serves

³Joshua 4:7.

⁴James Luther May, Hosea, The Old Testament Library, ed. G. Ernest Wright and others (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), p. 152.

as the subject.⁵ In a similar setting of leading by the Shepherd, the Hiphil is used in Ps. 78:52. In this context the Psalmist recalls the plagues of Egypt and continues 'Then he led forth (יִצְאֵהוּ) his people like sheep and guided them. . . .' The immediate context speaks of Yahweh's gracious care over against Israel's infidelity. The "Yahweh as Shepherd" theme links together the Exodus event and the wilderness trek. The use of the theme demonstrates the utter dependence of the people upon their Lord. Again in Ps. 80:9 the Hiphil appears, 'Thou didst bring (יִצְאֵהוּ) a vine out of Egypt.' The Shepherd Theme of this Psalm is apparent from the address of verse one, "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel." At the first record of the wilderness tradition the writer continues the close relationship between Yahweh and people expressed on the shores of the Sea of Reeds, Exod. 14:31, "they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses." At the entrance into the wilderness, Exod. 15:22, Moses, servant of Yahweh, leads them. The theological point of shepherding is not unique nor is it forced into this pericope by a specific viewpoint of a theological school. Yahweh is initiating this move into the wilderness just as a shepherd guides and leads the flock on its course. The intentional use of the Hiphil of the verb יִצְאֵהוּ points to the care of Yahweh for Israel. From the beginning of the journey Israel

⁵Exod. 12:37; 13:20; 16:1; 17:1; Num. 10:12; and others, especially also the itinerary review in Exodus 33.

had cause for faith in the care of Yahweh.

A list of stopping places under Yahweh's direction began in Exod. 13:20 and Exod. 14:1-3. The narrative in Exod. 15:22 takes up the itinerary at the Sea of Reeds, and from there Israel went into the Wilderness of Shur.⁶ The time span is three days journey.⁷ The problem of a lack of water arises. At first they can find no water, and then the available water is unfit for human consumption. This situation gives opportunity to record a place-name, Marah.⁸ The people respond to the plight of no

⁶Several suggest that the name "Wilderness of Shur" derives from the fortified walls on the border of Egypt. Umberto Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Exodus, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnus Press, The Hebrew University, 1967), p. 183; Baentsch, Exodus, Leviticus, p. 141; George Beer, Exodus, Vol. 3, Handbuch zum Alten Testament, ed. Otto Eissfeldt (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck] Verlag, 1939), p. 85. The Wilderness of Shur probably was a caravan route to Kadesh-Barnea. J. Coert Rylaarsdam, "The Book of Exodus," in The Interpreter's Bible, 12 vols., ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1952) 1:947. Baentsch, p. 140. Num. 33:8 states Marah is located in the Wilderness of Etham. Exod. 14:20 places Etham before the Sea of Reeds. L. H. Grollenberg, Atlas of the Bible, trans. and ed. Joyce M. H. Reid and H. H. Rowley (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1963 reprinted), p. 48.

⁷Three days journey is a term to denote a longer period of time on a journey, but usually less than a week. Alexander Heidel, The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1963, Phoenix Books), p. 43, the journey of Keret and Enkidu in the Cedar Forest illustrates the term is a literary device of the Near East. See also Num. 10:33; Joshua 9:17; 2 Kings 2:17.

⁸Often this place is identified with 'Ain Hawarah', R. Alan Cole, Exodus, The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed. D. J. Wiseman (London and Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), p. 128. Cassuto, p. 183; Grollenberg, Atlas of the Bible, p. 156. Possible location

water by murmuring against Moses, and Moses cries to Yahweh. Yahweh responds by showing Moses a tree trunk which then is cast into the water, which suddenly becomes drinkable. The narrative takes a sharp twist in content as Yahweh gives Israel a commandment and statute to keep as a test for Israel. Has this people learned to live under the guidance and promise of Yahweh, her Healer? A summary statement of Yahweh's acts against the Egyptians is included in Yahweh's promise of aid.

The sequence of having a problem and then finding the solution in a gracious act often carries a special meaning for the Old Testament faithful. Abimelech of Gerar assures Isaac that Yahweh is with him, and immediately thereafter Isaac's servants bring him the good news that they have found water in the well being dug (Gen. 26:32). On the other hand, a sense of blessing from God is missing when Adam is in the garden, but "no helpmeet suitable for man was found by him" (Gen. 2:20). Finding a wife is especially regarded as a sign of divine favor (Prov. 18:22), "Favor in the eyes of Yahweh" in itself is something that is found (Gen. 6:8; Exod. 33:12,13,16,17;

is about 45 miles south of the Gulf of Suez. This location is a possibility when the Sinai location is in the South end of the Sinai Peninsula. Marah is an event separate from the Water-from-the Rock at Meribah, Exod. 17:7. The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, 4 vols., ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), s.v. "Route of the Exodus" by G. E. Wright. Hereafter this work will be cited as IDB.

34:9; Num. 11:11,15, and so forth). Finding something, successfully completing a search, is often a sign of Yahweh's favor.

Therefore, when the water is withheld, the people in the wilderness challenge their leader, "What shall we drink?" The fear of the people following the successful march through the Sea of Reeds and the belief in Yahweh and his servant Moses is short lived (Exod. 14:31).⁹

The problem of water at Marah brings to remembrance Yahweh's judgment upon Egypt, especially evident when the water of the Nile became unfit to drink. The words describing the two situations are the same, וְלֵאמֹר יְכֻלֵּי
לְשִׁבוֹת מַיִם סַן-גִּיְאֹר \ מִטָּרְחָה (Exod. 7:21;
15:23). The people who went into the desert under the leadership of Moses had to question whether they were under a punishment just as the Egyptians had been. When they directed the question about the water supply they were also coping with the reality of a divinely ordained leadership, and the responsibility of these leaders.

The formula that introduces the murmuring is וַיִּלְזְנוּ
-לְ, murmur against.¹⁰ In the Marah pericope the mur-

⁹Edmond Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament, trans. Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip J. Allcock (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. 288.

¹⁰The writer refers to the reaction of the people in this time of need as murmuring, a theme that becomes stereotyped in the wilderness wanderings. Exod. 15:24; 16:2,7,8; 17:3; Num. 14:2; 16:11,41; 17:5. The term is used outside the scope of the wilderness wanderings only once, Joshua 9:18 where it points to the rebellion of the

muring statement is followed by a question $\text{מָה נִשְׁתֵּי} - \text{נִשְׁתֵּי}$, "What shall we drink?" Coats argues "The question as it stands simply does not appear in the form of an accusation."¹¹ Therefore, he questions the nature of this rebellion because every other use of the formula stands in the context of an accusation. Ultimately he concludes that the combination of $\text{לָמָּה . . . יָבִיחַ}$ is used in a different meaning at this stage¹² because of the positive aid Yahweh gives to a legitimate complaint. In other contexts challenges occur following the לָמָּה-יָבִיחַ formula. In Exod. 16:2 the motive of Moses is challenged: "Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt . . . for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly. . . ." A similar challenge to motive appears after the formula in Num. 14:2: "Why does the Lord

people as they forget Yahweh's gifts, Ronald E. Clements, Exodus, The Cambridge Bible Commentary, ed. P. R. Ackroyd, A. R. C. Leaney, J. W. Packer (Cambridge: The University Press, 1972), p. 94. Cassuto, p. 94. The theme is central to the studies of George W. Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1968); Chr. Barth, "Zur Bedeutung der Wüstentradition," Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, 15 (1966):14-23 and Simon DeVries, "Origin of the Murmuring Tradition," Journal of Biblical Literature, 57 (1968):51-58. Interest in the theme was aroused by Martin Noth's treatment in the "Guidance in the Wilderness" and "The Murmuring of the People" discussed in A History of Pentateuchal Traditions, trans. Bernard W. Anderson (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), pp. 58,59 and 122-130.

¹¹Coats, p. 51. Cassuto, however, maintains Moses is blamed, p. 24.

¹²Coats, p. 52.

bring us into this land, to fall by the sword?" In Num. 17:6 (English 16:41) the congregation of the people of Israel bring the direct charge against Moses and Aaron, "You have killed the people of the Lord." In Joshua 9:18 the people of Israel grumbled against Joshua and the leaders of Israel because they will not attack the Gibeonites after this people tricked Israel into a dishonest treaty. The other two instances in which the murmuring formula is used, Moses is speaking, and therefore they are not applicable here. Perhaps Coats is correct that the question in Exod. 15:24 does not stand as an accusation, but it is a legitimate question to a need.

The narrative explains how Yahweh enters into the history of Israel. He "shows" a tree trunk to Moses and instructs him to cast it into the water.¹³ After Moses follows the instruction the waters become potable. A similar sequence of events is recorded in the Elisha cycle (2 Kings 2:19-22). Here the men of Jericho complain that a pleasant existence is disturbed by "bad water." Elisha

¹³It is better to read לְיִלְרְדוּ as the Hiphil of לְיִלְרַד rather than follow the Samaritan Pentateuch, לְיִלְרְדוּ and the Septuagint ἐδιδασκεν . Cassuto maintains the word has the meaning 'to teach,' 'instruction,' and is to prepare the people for the yoke of the Torah and precepts (p. 184). The intent of this interpretation is to make a bridge to the legal section, vv. 25,26. Jacob holds to a similar connection involving לְיִלְרְדוּ and לְיִלְרַד (p. 271). However, J. M. Myers, Grace and Tōrah (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 33, disagrees with the claim because he believes לְיִלְרַד more accurately signifies a way of life rather than a divine directive. It must be remembered the word לְיִלְרַד is not used in this pericope.

spreads salt on the spring and the water becomes wholesome. Yahweh's power and action is specifically stated, "Thus says the Lord, I have made this water wholesome" (2 Kings 2:21). Some political stories in Judges take the same format of problem for Israel, a cry and prayer for Yahweh's help, and Yahweh's assistance through one of the judges.¹⁴ This motif in various narratives of need, cry for help, and Yahweh's mercy would also lead us to conclude that the cry for help at Marah is a legitimate cry and should not be listed as rebellion on the part of Israel. Yahweh fills a legitimate need, and he performs an act of mercy when the people declare their dependence on him.

Clear, pure water symbolizes Yahweh's presence elsewhere in the Old Testament. The vision of Ezekiel (Ezek. 47:7-9) promises that stagnant waters will be purified when healthy waters flowing out of the temple flow through them. Life is once again sustained in them. The theological emphasis of the vision is the announcement that God dwells in his temple so that they may be holy (Ezek. 43:7-9). The miraculous stream is God's promise of his presence and he will be the source of blessing and healing. It is the active presence of Yahweh that brings about a purifying change in the life of his people. At Marah Israel is assured of Yahweh's power¹⁵ in making the bitter

¹⁴E.g. Judg. 3:1-4; 6:1-6.

¹⁵Cassuto, p. 184, sees Israel pass through a trial by water whereby Yahweh taught them that he is able to

waters sweet. Although the people living the experience may have thought of judgment when the water is not usable, Yahweh changes the thrust of the story to good, to help, to mercy by sweetening the water and making it drinkable.

What of the problem that develops in the abrupt change in verses 25a to 25b from narrative to legal document? This sequence has been examined in tradition history studies¹⁶ and commentaries.¹⁷ Yahweh¹⁸ announces he will test the people in the wilderness by giving them "statutes and ordinances," $\text{שׁוֹפְטֵי וְדִבְרֵי רִיב}$, which they are to keep. Our goal is not to decide whether this legal form is included in the earliest transmission of the tradition¹⁹ but to investigate the connection between the

save. Israel had to come to know the need for deliverance and the presence of the Guide from heaven.

¹⁶Noth, Pentateuchal Traditions, Coats, and Volkmar Fritz, Israel in der Wüste, no. 7, Marburger Theologische Studien, eds. Hans Grass and Werner George Kümmel (Marburg: N. G. Elwert verlag, 1970).

¹⁷Baentsch, Holzinger, Exodus, William Rudolph, Der "Elohists" von Exodus bis Joshua in Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, No. 68 (Berlin: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1938), p. 33.; J. Philip Hyatt, Commentary on Exodus, New Century Bible, ed. Ronald E. Clements and Matthew Black (London: Oliphants, 1971); Martin Noth, Exodus, The Old Testament Library, ed. G. Ernest Wright et al, trans. J. S. Bowden (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962).

¹⁸The pronouns are the subjects. No proper name precedes their usage. In this study Yahweh is considered to be the logical subject of the sentence, v. 25b.

¹⁹The majority of critical scholars maintain the legal section is a later addition of the so-called Deuteronomistic editor. Martin Noth, Exodus, p. 127-28; Hyatt, Exodus, p. 171; Beer, Exodus, p. 85; S. R. Driver,

narrative and the legal section.

The adverb וְשָׁם is strategically placed twice, at the beginning of each phrase in verse 25b, "There he gave a statute and an ordinance, and there he tested them." This emphasis must give special significance to the Marah site.²⁰ The letters וְשָׁם with a pronouncing change, appear a third time, and form the word describing Yahweh's law-giving activity.²¹ The letters וְשָׁם are in an emphatic position at the beginning of the clause in Num. 9:17: $\text{וְשָׁם יָשָׁבְנוּ יְהוָה יֹאמַר לְאַהֲרֹן בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל};$ at the announcement of the place of Aaron's death (Deut. 10:6); and when Israel remembers Yahweh's triumphs on her behalf (Judg. 5:11). Marah is not mentioned in Scripture outside of this pericope and the list of desert stops in Numbers 33.

Evidently Marah is singled out in Exodus 15 as a

An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Co., Meridian Books, 1956), p. 29 has Exod. 15:22-27 as a single unity. N. H. Snaith, Leviticus and Numbers, The Century Bible, Vol. 3, ed. Matthew Black and H. H. Rowley (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1967), p. 171.

²⁰ William Gesenius, Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures, trans. and rev. Samuel Prideaux Tregelles (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957), p. 832, points out וְשָׁם is also used to designate a time element, and traces the meaning through the Indo-Germanic languages, dann, then. The interpretation here is that it designates a place.

²¹ Similarly the word וְשָׁם occurs three times in verse 23, twice as the place name וְשָׁם , once as an adjective.

place of importance because "statute and ordinance" is given here. The miracle of bitter water made sweet is told without dramatization. The miracle is accomplished but the people do not react in any way. The giving of the statute and ordinance (verse 25b) is associated with the emphatic designation of place, $\square \psi$. Marah has a claim of importance as much for the statute and ordinance²² as for the miracle of the bitter water made sweet.

Two questions, then, are important to this study. What connection does exist between the narrative and the making of a statute and ordinance at Marah? And, is this legal section in the context of a covenant ceremony?

²²George Widengren, "What Do We Know About Moses?" Proclamation and Presence, ed. John I. Durham and J. R. Porter (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1970), p. 43, argues that this is a portion of the Kadesh traditions, and is connected with the Israelite tribe's celebration of the $\lambda \pi$, Exod. 5:1-3; 15:22,25b; 17:1b-7; and Num. 20:2-12. J. J. Stamm and M. E. Andrew, The Ten Commandments in Recent Research, Studies in Biblical Theology, Series 2 (London: SCM Press, 1967), p. 42 maintains "groups of the future people of Israel" fled to Kadesh from Egypt and there received a "primordial form of the Decalogue." He argues for such a pre-Decalogue on the basis of Exod. 34:27,28; 24:4,7,12; 20:1. He argues for a Kadesh location from Judg. 11:16-18. These select passages do suggest that certain codes and statutes did exist prior to the giving of the law at Sinai. The summary in Judges sets a more direct route to the promised land immediately after the Exodus from Egypt. The wilderness period, according to this summary, begins because the kings of Edom and Moab would not grant permission to Israel to pass through their lands. According to Num. 20:14-21 and 22:1-24:25 these confrontations happened at the end of the Wanderings. Artur Weiser, The Psalms, Old Testament Library Series, trans. Herbert Hartwell (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), p. 554 recognizes a Kadesh covenant "parallel to the Sinai tradition."

According to Martin Noth the unit in verses 25b and 26 is a deuteronomistic section which "is meant to do no more than create a foundation for the deuteronomistic warning in verse 26."²³ He passes over several problems of the text rather hurriedly as he promotes his assumption that the legal section is an insertion by a specific school of Pentateuch redactors. He does not explain the difficulties incorporated in the text.

The first problem arises because no identified subject of the sentence appears in verse 25b. Technically the subject of verse 25b is dependent upon the subject identified in $\text{וַיִּשְׁלֹךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאֲבָרֶת־הַזֶּה בַּיָּם}$, "and he cast into the water. . . ." However, the subject of this sentence is not altogether clear. Often it is taken for granted that Yahweh is the subject of "there he made for them a statute. . . ."²⁴ The continuation of the sentence "and there he proved them" does help to determine the subject of the sentence, not from a literary perspective, but from a theological one. This verb וַיִּבְחַן , he tested is used only in five passages outside the Pentateuch. In Judg. 2:22 Yahweh

²³Noth, Exodus, p. 129.

²⁴Some contemporary versions have incorporated the name "The Lord" in the text. The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version (Camden, NJ: Thomas Nelson and Sons. New Testament 1947. Old Testament 1952). Under Exod. 15:25. The New American Bible, trans. members of the Catholic Biblical Association of America (St. Paul: The Catholic Press, 1970). Good News Bible, the Bible in Today's English (New York: American Bible Society. Old Testament 1976).

tests Israel by not driving out the nations from the occupied land. The other passages speak of Israel testing Yahweh.²⁵ In four passages in the Pentateuch Yahweh tests Israel.²⁶ In two passages the people of Israel are charged with testing Yahweh.²⁷ Nowhere in the Old Testament are we told that Moses tested Israel. The only possibility in Exod. 15:24b, then, is that Yahweh tested Israel. If Yahweh is the subject of **נִצְתָּהוּ** he must also be the subject of **שָׁם**.²⁸

The second textual question arises from the changes from the third person suffix of the verb to the first person suffix in the direct speech of verse 26: **וְאָמַר אֲנִי-שָׁמַעַתְּ יְהוָה לְקוֹל יִתְוַדַּע אֵל לַיהוָה... כִּלְיָהוּ אֲנִי** **אֲנִי-שָׁמַעַתְּ יְהוָה לְקוֹל יִתְוַדַּע אֵל לַיהוָה... כִּלְיָהוּ אֲנִי** "If you will diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord your God . . . I will put none of the diseases upon you which I put on the Egyptians." Just as the majority of critical studies assign verses 25b and 26 to a later addition to the text, Beer sees these verses as a Deuteronomic sermon exhorting the people to true faithfulness to the law of God.²⁹

²⁵Isa. 7:12; Ps. 78:18,41,56.

²⁶Exod. 16:4; 20:20; Deut. 8:2,16.

²⁷Exod. 17:7; Num. 14:22.

²⁸Baentsch, Exodus, Leviticus, p. 142.

²⁹Beer, Exodus, p. 85-86.

Coats compares the verb suffix changes with those in Deut.

11:18 and says this phenomenon

undoubtedly reflects the speech of a leader in the community announcing divine conditions or laws, with the consequence for obedience (or disobedience) to those conditions set in a first person address from Yahweh.³⁰

The claim is that legal sections demanding obedience must be Deuteronomistic by their nature, and the strange speech form of verb suffix changes are common in Deuteronomy.³¹

The term "Deuteronomistic writer," or "historian," or "editor" should not dogmatically be associated with a "school" or a "person" who re-edited the Pentateuch during the years prior to and during the Fall of Jerusalem, 587 B.C. It is questionable whether theological emphases credited to this period originated first in the Josianic Reform. Assigning such a late date to such material does not take into account the full activity of the living God

³⁰George Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, pp. 49-50, credits the insight to H. Strack, Die Bücher Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus und Numeri, Kurzgefasster Kommentar zu den heiligen Schriften Alten und Neuen Testaments (Munich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1894), pp. 214-15. Coats identifies this as a deuteronomistic section. Others who identify this as a secondary addition to the text include C. A. Simpson, The Early Traditions of Israel (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1948), p. 188. Otto Eissfeldt, Hexateuch-Synopse (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1922), p. 139. Elias Auerbach, Moses (Amsterdam: G. J. A. Ruys, 1953), p. 78, note 1. J. Philip Hyatt, Commentary on Exodus, p. 172. Frank W. Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 310, identifies this as a fragment from an Elohistic source that was added to an original Yahwist story.

³¹Deut. 7:4; 11:13,14; 17:3; 28:20; 27:1-5.

described in Deuteronomy. The argument that similar stories are just the retelling of one event by different sources is conjecture (Exod. 17:1-7; Num. 20:1-13; also Gen. 12; 20; 26, and so forth). The term "Deuteronomic historian" can probably be well-identified with the theological bent that shaped judgment of the reign of the kings in the Early Prophets, for they were judged on the laws and statutes of Deuteronomy. If "Deuteronomic" related only to Deuteronomy and referred to the restatement of God's covenant and the covenant terminology, the designation would be appropriate.

A legal framework is evident in Exod. 15:25-26. The direct discourse of verse 26 beginning with $\square \aleph$, followed by the infinitive absolute and second singular imperfect verb forms a conditional phrase very common in law-giving contexts (Exod. 19:5; Deut. 11:13; 28:1). The conclusion that therefore this form is by its nature Deuteronomic has been questioned by Childs³² because the shift of the third person verb to the first person is the reverse order of that found in Deuteronomy. The Deuteronomic editor usually shifts from the first person to the third. Added to this, the preposition prefixing \aleph is usually \beth (Deut. 13:19; 15:5; 28:1; also Exod. 19:5; 23:22), while our passage has a \beth . Also the Deuteronomy references are to laws and ordinances, the plural form

³²Childs, The Book of Exodus, p. 267.

(Deut. 4:5,8,14), rather than the singular of Exodus 15:25. The laws are "commanded" (Deut. 6:1,20) "spoken" (Deut. 4:45), or "taught" (Deut. 5:28), but not "set" or "placed." Deuteronomy uses one verb for two or three commandments, statutes, or ordinances (Deut. 27:10; 26:17; 4:40) rather than a verb with each of Yahweh's orders. Finally, neither the place Marah nor the making of bitter waters into sweet is mentioned in Deuteronomy. Marah is listed only in the itinerary of Numbers 33 and in Exodus 15.³³ The challenge to the claim that in content and form this legal section is Deuteronomic in origin is justified.³⁴

To investigate further the relationship between the narrative and the legal section another question needs to be asked: Is there cause to question that this legal section simply is a call to obedience to the statutes and ordinances after God has demonstrated his presence and care? The answer to the question depends on the meaning of the

³³ Martin Noth, Numbers, The Old Testament Library, ed. G. Ernest Wright, et al., trans. James D. Martin (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), pp. 242-44 maintains the itinerary is a later, secondary element in the Pentateuch.

³⁴ George E. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Traditions," in The Biblical Archeologist, Reader 3, ed. Edward F. Campbell, Jr. and David Noel Freedman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Anchor Book, 1970), p. 93, note 40, points out the phenomenon of third person to first person grammatical switches occur in the prologue to the Hittite treaties and other oriental literature. Therefore such stylistic variations cannot establish conclusions in literary criteria.

"statute and ordinance."

The general meaning of $\rho\pi$ is "something prescribed." A lexicon will quickly demonstrate the wide variety of ways the word is used: it has the potential to describe the limit, or boundaries of forces in nature;³⁵ it is an enactment or decree to set boundaries for people. To go beyond it means that havoc, or destruction will result.³⁶ An ordinance or decree may be a means whereby Yahweh teaches people what actions might lead to insecurity and cares.

Used in tandem with $\rho\pi, \text{זָרָע}$ can also have less of a legal demand and be used more as a way of teaching. The burnt offerings are "according to the ordinance" (Lev. 9:16). In context the people's offering is killed, offered for sin "like the first sin offering."³⁷ Also David teaches his band of followers by statute and ordinance

³⁵Of the sea, Jer. 5:22; Prov. 8:29; 38:10; of waters, Job 26:10; heaven, Ps. 148:6; land of Israel, Micah 7:11. George Knight, Theology as Narration (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), p. 113, notes the word is derived from the verb meaning "to carve, cut into, chisel," and comments it "pictorializes the unshakeable reality of the mercy of God," but does not really explain how that demonstrates this attribute.

³⁶Note the use of the verb root in Job 13:27, a Job speech: "Thou puttest my feet in the stocks, and watchest all my paths; thou settest a bound, $\pi \rho \pi \tau \text{ך}$, to the soles of my feet."

³⁷The element of teaching by example is evident, rather than a bold, authoritarian "Do this" legal meaning. So also Lev. 5:10. The 'ordinance' is according to instructions given in verses 7-9, not in the sense of mandate.

that it is right that those who stay behind with the baggage share equally in the booty with those who go into battle (1 Sam. 30:25). The principle becomes a "statute and ordinance for Israel to this day." The order or regulation principle remains, to be sure, but a teaching purpose can also be recognized in these words. Certain customs and observances come into being as relationships develop and are understood.

Thus, Yahweh "tests" (נִסָּה) Israel with a statute and ordinance. The verb נִסָּה in itself is neutral in meaning³⁹ and does not automatically have the negative connotation of "test," "place on trial." At times Yahweh does bring events to pass which will show whether Israel is trusting in, faithful to, loyal to Yahweh (Exod. 16:4; Judg. 2:22; Deut. 33:8). At other times it appears that נִסָּה has an educative purpose for Israel.³⁹ At the base of Mount Sinai Moses assures Israel after they have been thoroughly terrified by thunder and lightning, "Do not fear; for God has come to prove (לְבַחֵךְ) you, and that the fear of him may be before your eyes, that you may not

³⁸L. Ruppert, "Das Motif der Versuchung durch Gott in Vordeuteronomischer Tradition," Vetus Testamentum, 22 (1972):55.

³⁹Cassuto, Exodus, p. 184 makes the testing process refer to the "trial by water" in the narrative. By means of sweetening the water Yahweh taught Israel he is able to save them from severe danger. The Massoretic space in the verse and the usage of statute and ordinance with legal formula leads to the interpretation that the testing and the instruction are the same.

sin" (Exod. 20:20). By his great deeds Yahweh shows Israel his majesty. Similarly Yahweh leaves some nations in the land occupied by Israel

to test (לִּיבּוֹן) by them, that is, all in Israel who had no experience of any war in Canaan; it was only that the generations of the people of Israel might know war, that he might teach war to such at least as had not known it before (Judg. 3:1,2).

In Deuteronomy, during his second discourse, Moses tells the people the experience with manna in the wilderness was "to humble you and to test you" (Deut. 8:16) and then interprets this as a teaching experience (Deut. 8:3). So also the giving of the statute and ordinance can be a means whereby Yahweh instructs Israel in the way to a full life. By means of the testing Yahweh is setting a behavior pattern that is subject to certain rules and regulations. At this point Israel is in the sphere of the cult.⁴⁰ In the New Testament God is not the author of temptation ($\text{\textit{\pi\textit{\tau}\textit{\epsilon}\textit{\lambda}\textit{\epsilon}\textit{\alpha}\textit{\zeta}\textit{\omicron}\textit{\mu}\textit{\alpha}\textit{i}}$, James 1:13). The Lord Jesus teaches disciples to pray that the Father would keep them from temptation (Matt. 6:13; Mark 11:4). In the New Testament $\text{\textit{\pi\textit{\tau}\textit{\epsilon}\textit{\lambda}\textit{\epsilon}\textit{\alpha}\textit{\zeta}\textit{\omicron}\textit{\mu}\textit{\alpha}\textit{i}}$ has the intent to bring about

⁴⁰Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, 2 vols., trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 1:242. von Rad is dealing with the more developed cult, the sacrifice and celebration in the temple. The cult can be applied to purposes of the legal forms of the wilderness tradition, and specifically at Marah, if this cultic phenomenon is recognized: "Finally, it is this presence (of Yahweh) which imposes upon man a quite definite behavior, and this behavior was one which, out of consideration for God's holiness, was subjected to particular rules and regulations demanding careful observance."

downfall.

The content of the statute and ordinance and the means by which Yahweh tested Israel is not explained clearly in the legal formula (verse 26). The terms "word of the Lord," "right," "commandments," and "statutes" are terms generally and widely used in the Old Testament which make it difficult to determine precisely their connotative meanings. A variety of Hebrew words also describe Israel's expected behavior toward Yahweh's words. These words are used in many different combinations in the Old Testament. Few conclusions about the content can be drawn. "If you diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord, your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give heed to his commandments, and keep all his statutes . . ." charges Israel to respond obediently and fully to God. Then they will have a full life with Yahweh.

C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch provide us with a different emphasis as they maintain

וְצִדְקָתוֹ רִי is to be taken with verses 23-25a. The leading of Israel to bitter waters, which their nature could not drink, and then the sweetening or curing of the water, were to be a רִי for Israel, i.e., an institution or law by which God would always guide and govern his people, and a וְצִדְקָה or right, inasmuch as Israel could always reckon upon the help of God, and deliverance from every trouble.⁴¹

The וְצִדְקָה and רִי, however, designate moral behavior

⁴¹C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. 2: the Pentateuch. Clark's Foreign Theological Library, trans. James Martin (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1891), p. 59.

and cultic service on Israel's part.⁴² It is necessary to associate the statute and ordinance clause with the legal formula of verse 26. The testing, or learning process is carried into this verse by means of the ׀ consecutive at the beginning of verse 26. In a similar way there was a "testing of Israel, to know whether they would obey the commandments of the Lord, וְיִשְׁמְרוּ אֶת־כִּצְוֹת־יְהוָה," after Israel occupied the promised land (Judg. 3:4).⁴³

The next step is to look at the structure and content of the legal form in verse 26 in order to determine its relationship to the narrative.

If you will diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases upon you which I put on the Egyptians; for I am the Lord your healer.

In law codes the Giver of the law or treaty usually identifies himself first, and then a specific edict or treaty stipulation follows. This order is illustrated in the Decalogue (Deut. 5:6-21; Exod. 20:1-17). Yahweh identifies himself as "your God who brought you out of the

⁴²See the distinction between ׀ and ׀ in the study of Jepsen in Eduard Nielsen, The Ten Commandments in New Perspective, ed. C. F. C. Moule et al., Studies in Biblical Theology, Second Series No. 7 (London: SCM Press, 1968), pp. 64-65. Also, IDB, s.v. "Law in the O.T." by Walter Harrelson proposes that ׀ points to categorical law while ׀ points to case law.

⁴³References to the ׀ are also in the activity of people toward Yahweh, 2 Kings 17:26; Jer. 5:4; 8:7.

land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." The specific commandments then follow. At the time of the covenant ceremony at Shechem (Joshua 24:2-4), Joshua identifies Yahweh, the God of Israel, as the One making the treaty. He further identifies him as the God of the patriarchs, and then reminds the people of the deliverance out of Egypt.⁴⁴ Only after this very lengthy identification/introduction does he admonish Israel to be faithful to this one God (verses 14,15).

At Marah the commandment form urges the people to hear, to do, to give heed to, and to keep the commandments and statutes. Specific obligations are not listed as they are in the Decalogue or in the charge at Shechem. The general call to faithfulness to Yahweh at Marah is followed by the promise of good health. The self-identification formula is placed at the very end of the form, and thus the order is reversed from the covenant ceremony form. A similar sequence of admonition followed by self-identification appears in Ps. 81:8-10 (Hebrew verses 9-11). This reversal of the Decalogue sequence has prompted the suggestion this order pre-dates that of

⁴⁴George Mendenhall identifies six parts in Mosaic law "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," pp. 32-36. The parts are The self-identification; historical background and benevolent action of the King; the stipulations (Exod. 2:2-3); deposited in the ark (Exod. 25:16); read at least every seven years (Deut. 31:9-13); list of blessings and curses (Deuteronomy 27-28). These six parts parallel the Hittite treaty. Also Charles F. Pfeiffer, Old Testament History (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), pp. 170-71.

the Decalogue⁴⁵ and suggests that some laws were administered before Sinai. The Psalm states: "You shall not bow down to a foreign god. I am the Lord, your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide and I will fill it." This passage adds credence to the view that Sinai was not the exclusive law-giving site in the Wilderness period.

The stipulations are introduced by a conditional sentence begun with וְאִם , a frequent form in law-giving. Usually the conditional particle is in the context of blessing and/or cursing.⁴⁶ The infinitive absolute and

⁴⁵Klaus Koch, Growth of the Biblical Tradition, trans. S. M. Cupitt (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), p. 47 points out the difference in wording of this Psalm and the formula in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. He also claims this Psalm is an older version of the law formula. George Widengren, "What Do We Know About Moses?" in Proclamation and Presence, ed. John I Durham and J. R. Porter (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1970), p. 43, sees this as the oldest and authentic tradition. It is the festival which Moses announces to Pharaoh, Exod. 5:23 and Moses serves as the Levite priest. Artur Weiser, Psalms, p. 554 suggests the order comes from a law tradition from Meribah-Kadesh, Deut. 33:8; 32:57; Exod. 15:25; 16:4; Num. 20:13; 27:14. The conclusions do not consider the differences that would appear in liturgical (Psalm 81) form over against the didactic (Deuteronomy 5; Exodus 20); the presupposition would have to be accepted that Exod. 15:25 and 16:4 are from the Kadesh cycle. The quotation of the commandments may be from an early source. The evidence is not conclusive. See also J. Wijngaards, " וְאִם and וְאִם : A Twofold Approach to the Exodus," Vetus Testamentum, 15 (1965):91-102. He identifies וְאִם as liturgical in form. He also identifies this as the first form that incorporates the Deliverance from Egypt to the granting of the new land.

⁴⁶Exod. 19:5; 23:22; Deut. 15:5; 28:1; with a promise attached, Zech. 6:15; Ezek. 2:5; with human stipulations, a request for compliance and a threat of consequences, Gen. 34:15; in the Holiness Code, Lev. 26:14; 8:27.

imperfect verb, **וְשָׁמַעְתָּ אֶת־קוֹל־יְהוָה**, emphasizes the condition on which the consequence depends and expresses the possibility of Israel's part for the future.⁴⁷ The sequence of hearing the voice of Yahweh, doing the upright thing, heeding commandments and keeping statutes is so varied throughout the Old Testament that it carries no special significance here.⁴⁸ The closest word parallel is in Deut. 13:19, a covenant context.

A variation in the use of the preposition occurs in **לְקוֹלֵךְ** (verse 26). When prefixed to "the voice of God" the preposition usually is **בְּ**.⁴⁹ The preposition **לְ** with **לְקוֹל** is normally used in context with humans: "To the voice of his wife" (Gen. 3:17); "To the voice of Sarah" (Gen. 16:2); "To the voice of his father" (1 Sam. 2:25). Or, it is used with material things: "To the voice of the shophar" (Jer. 6:17). Thus, Exod. 15:26 stands alone in using the phrase **לְקוֹלֵךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ**.⁵⁰

⁴⁷Gesenius-Kautzsch, Hebrew Grammar, rev. A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), 113-0, Q. The conjecture of D. M. G. Stalker, "Exodus," Peake's Commentary on the Bible, Old Testament ed. H. H. Rowley (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962), p. 223, par. 188a, observes that the future form of the verb "to hearken" makes it possible to harmonize this law-giving event with Sinai. It seems the formula, not a future event, dictates the verb form.

⁴⁸Exod. 19:5; 23:22; Deut. 25:5; 28:1; Lev. 26:14; Jer. 17:24; Mal. 2:2, and so forth.

⁴⁹Exod. 19:5; 23:22; Deut. 13:19; 11:13, 27, 28; 15:5, 6; 27:10.

⁵⁰Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia, ed. K. Elliger and W. Rudolph (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, c. 1967/1977), p. 172, in the critical apparatus points out

It is doubtful whether any special significance can be attached to this unique usage of the preposition.

What, then, is the significance of a rather vague record that Yahweh sets a "statute and ordinance" before the people in order to "prove them"? A rhythmic note sounds through the formulas as Israel is challenged to respond to a relationship with Yahweh. "If you hearken . . . the voice of Yahweh; do that which is right in his eyes, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes. . . ." Just as the people did not stand alone in the face of undrinkable water so shall they not be independent in their manner of life. Yahweh has demonstrated his power, majesty and presence in the healing of the water and the people are to acknowledge his healing by obedience. A promise of caring presence is implied in the giving of the drinkable water, and it is now conditioned by the giving of these statutes and customs.

Julius Wellhausen,⁵¹ Noth,⁵² G. Henton Davies,⁵³

the change in the Targum Secundum. A. Speiser, The Bible in Aramaic, vol. 1-3, 1959-1962, has corrected this to לְיָהוָה.

⁵¹ Julius Wellhausen, Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, Meridian Books, 1957), p. 343. First appeared in 1878 as The History of Israel.

⁵² Noth, Exodus, p. 127 identifies this as a "deuteronomic supplement to the older Pentateuch narrative."

⁵³ G. Henton Davies, Exodus, Introduction and Commentary, Torch Bible Commentaries, ed. John Marsh and Alan Richardson (London: SCM Press, 1967), p. 136 speaks of the Deuteronomic 'IF' in v. 26, וְאִם.

Coats,⁵⁴ Baentsch⁵⁵ and others declare that this legal section is quite isolated and only loosely connected with the narrative of the healing of the waters at Marah. Therefore, according to their claims, the law section is a Deuteronomic insertion that emphasizes this particular theological viewpoint of lawgiving. History and law come together in a "multitude of texts," according to Gerhard von Rad.⁵⁶ The entire Sinai cycle intermingles historical event with the giving of the law (Exod. 19-24). The giving of "my Torah" is basic in the story of the manna in Exod. 16:1-30. Artur Weiser maintains

Thus the Pentateuch also by conditioning 'history and law' exercises the fundamentals of salvation as the manifestation of their nature and will of God in the form which is typical of and valid for the Old Testament.⁵⁷

The insertion of commandment and response within a narrative is in the Pentateuchal creation record. In Eden Yahweh instructs the man

You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die (Gen. 2:16,17).

⁵⁴Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 49.

⁵⁵Baentsch, Exodus, Leviticus, p. 143.

⁵⁶Gerhard von Rad, "The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch," in The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays, trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1966), p. 15.

⁵⁷Artur Weiser, The Old Testament: Its Formation and Development, trans. Dorothea M. Barton (New York: Associated Press, 1957), p. 90.

Although the commandment is not in doing the legal requirement found in Exodus, it does demonstrate that history and law are expressed side by side in the Pentateuch.

At this point the question arises, What do we have, then, in Exod. 15:22-26? What is the relationship between the narrative of the bitter waters of Marah and the setting of statute and ordinance?

Israel had a great need within the first week of its venture into the desert. She realized the lack of drinkable water posed a threat to her existence and felt a legitimate need. But while Israel murmured against Moses as leader, she expressed dependence. But at this point the object of her dependence is unclear. While it could be directed to Moses, Moses himself demonstrates a different object of dependence. He called on Yahweh.

Yahweh, in turn, demonstrated his concern, his power and presence as he gave direction to Moses and ultimately changed the bitter water into sweet drinkable water. The people could not discover Yahweh's greatness, nor his care, nor the trust he expected without this act of self-revelation. Thus, in this narrative, Yahweh is shown giving an expression of grace, mercy and kindness and a demonstration of his nature. The legal material demonstrates the theological concern which is developing. Yahweh placed a law and ordinance before the people of Israel to teach them that they are responsible to Him who has performed this mighty act.

The legal forms in Scripture are presented in a variety of ways and for different purposes. The Decalogue (Exod. 20:1-17; Deut. 5:6-21) details the expected conduct of the people toward Yahweh and each other. God is to be honored alone, his name and worship are sacred. Specific conduct toward people in a variety of societal relationships are identified. The content of the law is emphasized. In a similar way the Book of the Covenant (Exod. 20:22-23:33) explains a variety of cultural regulations and cultic festivals. Joshua identifies the faithfulness to Yahweh alone as the specific commandment of importance (Joshua 24:14-15) and Ps. 89:9-10 reiterates these commandments. These examples demonstrate that the content of the law is of first importance.

In direct contrast to these legal codes, at Marah the people are called to faithfulness to God's statute and ordinance. However, while the content of the same is not identified,⁵⁸ a responsibility to Yahweh who gives the code and to the code itself is the clear theological concern. Just as Israel could not know the character of Yahweh and his divine aid without this mighty act, which dealt with an immediate, specific need, so Israel could not know of her responsibility to Yahweh without the statute and ordinance. Although a grammatical problem appears at the point where narrative is followed by the legal

⁵⁸Also Exod. 19:3-5.

section (Exod. 15:25) narrative and code show a uniformity of theological concern throughout the Pentateuch. As Weiser points out, "history and law" express the nature and will of Yahweh.⁵⁹ By showing God's nature and will, salvation history is presented.

The law codes joined to narratives form a part of the historical event or give a review of the historical event. The two accounts of the Decalogue begin "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exod. 20:2; Deut. 5:6).⁶⁰ Joshua reviews the narrative history from the patriarchs to the entrance into the land (Joshua 24:2-13); and Psalm 81 introduces the prime law with the reminder of deliverance from Egypt, the march through the sea, and the events at Meribah. This linking of narrative and law supports the position that history and law present the same theological viewpoint.⁶¹

⁵⁹Weiser, The Old Testament: Its Form and Development, p. 9.

⁶⁰See especially Herbert Huffmon, "The Exodus, Sinai, and the Credo," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 27 (1965), especially p. 108. He persuasively maintains the prologue to the Decalogue is a recital of Yahweh's mighty acts, the history. This is credo. This again is the basis of the law given. Huffmon effectively answers von Rad's claim that the Sinai tradition is an intrusion of traditions because it does not appear in other Old Testament credos by pointing out these are a recital of mighty acts. Sinai has no place here. Here the covenant is received, and thus differs from Yahweh's mighty deeds of deliverance or help.

⁶¹Brevard S. Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament As Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979),

The Book of the Covenant (Exodus 21-23), according to present scholarship, is placed in the narrative setting which establishes Moses as a legitimate interpreter of the law.⁶² Through narrative Yahweh demonstrates his care placed upon the people of Israel and through law he lays claim on them. He is pointing them to a new life. No longer is it bondage to a taskmaster, but rather security from a beneficent God.

The narrative and the protasis to the law section of the Marah event are both gospel. The two parts assure the people of Israel that Yahweh is present among them to heal their diseases, and also he lays his claim on them. This claim is not based upon, nor limited to, the time of Israel's obedience to Yahweh. Yahweh has already demonstrated that claim by his act of grace that originated in his nature, in his mercy and kindness. He opens before them the potential of new life with him as he calls for obedience to statute and ordinance. In the retelling of history and law future generations are to "set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments" (Ps. 78;7).

The protasis of the legal formula beginning with DX and the infinitive absolute and imperfect verb form expresses the possibility of obedience on the part of

pp. 173-74.

⁶²Ibid., p. 174.

Israel,⁶³ "if you will truly listen . . ." (verse 26). The apodosis, כָּל־פֶּסַח־לָג־אֲשֶׁר־שָׁמַתִּי בְּמִצְרַיִם לְאֶשְׁרֵי עַלְיָהּ, is in the imperfect and represents the time after the protasis has taken place. This apodosis places the object clause to the fore and thus emphasizes the past experience in Egypt. The people are directed more to the acts of Yahweh in the past in order to underscore the greatness of the deliverance at Marah (Exod. 9: 8-12; 11:4-6,29-32). This was Yahweh's response to Egypt because Pharaoh "hardens his heart" and will not let the people of Israel go out of the land as Yahweh has ordered (Exod. 7:16,23; 8:15,19,32; 9:7,12,35).

Another reference to Yahweh's action against Egypt, also in the context of a call to obedience to Yahweh's commands and a subsequent blessing to Israel, occurs in Exod. 19:4-6, "You have seen what I have done to the Egyptians . . . if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant . . . you shall be my possession."⁶⁴ This passage holds these points in common with Exod. 15:26: a) the reference to Yahweh's activity in Egypt; b) the statement to be obedient to the 'voice' and covenant commandments of Yahweh;

⁶³Gesenius-Kautzsch, Hebrew Grammar, p. 494, par. 1 and p. 496, par. 159q.

⁶⁴James Muilenberg, The Form and Structure of the Covenantal Formulations, Vetus Testamentum, 9 (1959):352 identifies the parts of Exod. 19:3-6 as: a) direct address, b) proclamation, c) urgent call to hearing, d) the stress upon the I and THOU relationship applies also to Exod. 15:25-26. The protasis and apodosis lies at the heart of the message here, too.

c) a promise of blessing. The similarity in content is important because of the claim that the Marah law-giving account is a Deuteronomic insertion.⁶⁵ Commentators are sharply divided in assigning the Exod. 19:4-6 passage both a date and a specific theological concern. Noth,⁶⁶ and J. Coert Rylaarsdam⁶⁷ assign this passage to a Deuteronomic editor while Walter Beyerlin,⁶⁸ S. R. Driver,⁶⁹ and James Muilenberg⁷⁰ identify it as a stylistic and linguistic version of a so-called Elohist source. The deductions based on linguistic evidence and tradition theory are in conflict with the theological concerns that arise at the very beginning of Israel's wilderness journey. Yahweh laid his claim on this people and established their responsibility to him. Such a pattern has precedent with the patriarchs Abraham (Gen. 12:1,2) and Jacob (Gen. 28:13-16).

⁶⁵ See notes 51, 52, 53, 54, 55. However, S. R. Driver, An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Co., Meridian Books, 1956), p. 29 identifies Exod. 15:22-27 as J, the Yahwist, and thus it is pre-deuteronomic.

⁶⁶ Noth, Exodus, p. 157, appeals to "deuteronomistic phrases, particularly in verse 5."

⁶⁷ J. Coert Rylaarsdam, "The Book of Exodus," IB, 1:971.

⁶⁸ Walter Beyerlin, Origins and History of the Oldest Sinaitic Traditions, trans. S. Rudman (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), p. 11.

⁶⁹ Driver, p. 31.

⁷⁰ Muilenberg, "The Form and Structure of the Covenantal Formulations," p. 351.

Apart from the vocabulary that is similar to other legal codes, the reference to Yahweh's judgment against the Egyptians is unique in the legal requirements of Exod. 15:26 and 19:4. In Deut. 5:6 and Exod. 20:2, the giving of the Decalogue, and at the Shechem ceremony (Joshua 24:1-13) Yahweh speaks of his mighty acts toward Israel. At the conclusion of the Book of the Covenant Yahweh refers to blessing Israel's bread and water, and the taking away of sickness from her as a response to her service (Exod. 23:25), but there is no reference to the judgment against Egypt. The reference to the Egyptians gives an added dimension to the legal form at Marah. It does make it distinct from the so-called Deuteronomic law-giving forms.

What purpose does this added dimension serve? The apodosis of the conditional sentence emphasizes what God did to Egypt in the past by giving it a priority position⁷¹ in the object clause. Fritz points out that this is not merely a Deuteronomic editorial, but it brings a reflection on the story of the plagues.⁷² Noth's tradition studies separate the story of the plagues, the Exodus, the Wilderness Wanderings, and Guidance into the Promised Land into individual segments.⁷³ If such a position would be tenable a cross reference between themes would not be

⁷¹Gen. 3:10,14; 8:17; 9:13; Prov. 3:16.

⁷²Volkmar Fritz, Israel in der Wüste, p. 7.

⁷³Martin Noth, A History of Pentateuchal Traditions, pp. 46-62.

possible until a much later compiling date. Noth has already done this by identifying this sentence as a "deuteronomistic supplement."⁷⁴ Such a late dating would weaken the principle that the faith of Israel from its beginning was based on the mighty acts of Yahweh. The laws are not "legalistic," but a response to a person not a code. The record is such that this faith unfolded and was proclaimed for Israel during the Mosaic period.

What is the nature of the faith that develops through the recalling of Yahweh's acts toward Egypt? God acts toward Egypt in a way directly opposite to that which he promises to the people of Israel. Disease,⁷⁵ מַחֲמַת, is a general term used sparingly (Exod. 23:25; 1 Kings 8:37; 2 Chron. 6:28). Yahweh claims to be the cause of the sickness as that came to Egyptians. Yahweh is king over the nations around Israel, and has them in his control.⁷⁶ Nothing is said about the reason the diseases were placed on the Egyptians. Knowledge of this evidently

⁷⁴Noth, Exodus, p. 127. The dating would probably be around the fall of Jerusalem, 587 B.C. for anyone who accepts multiple authorship of the Pentateuch. See D. N. Freedman, "The Deuteronomic History," IDB, Supplementary Volume, ed. Keith Crim, et al. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), p. 226 and the Summary, p. 228.

⁷⁵It is conjecture that the waters of Marah at the first caused disease to the people. Sickness and plague did take its toll in the wilderness, Num. 16:49 (Hebrew text, 17:14); 11:33.

⁷⁶The question of a monotheistic religion in the Mosaic age is directed especially to the concise statement of W. F. Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1957, Second Edition Doubleday Anchor Book), pp. 271-72.

is taken for granted because it was in the life-experience of those to whom Yahweh is speaking. In the context of the law-giving event, and the statement that ultimately Israel's future will depend on her diligence toward Yahweh's statute and ordinance, the inference here is that the diseases placed on the Egyptians were based on the judgment of Yahweh. The diseases sent on Egypt were the result of the conscious decision and action of Yahweh, not the coincidence of an unthinking fate. The question whether Yahweh was right or just is not open to debate⁷⁷ for justice is a part of His nature.

Yahweh's judgment toward Egypt was not involved in the order to let the people of Israel go. Judgment is the response to unfulfilled obedience. Judgment is God's word in action, the mighty acts of God were deeds of judgment.⁷⁸ He gives a command, and when that command is broken He will come in judgment. The plagues, that is, the diseases which came upon Egypt were the result of the Word Yahweh speaks through Moses. They are a visible sign of his power and of his judgment against Egypt. A direct relationship exists, therefore, between the unfulfilled command and the diseases. The center of the action is Yahweh. The people

⁷⁷Gen. 18:25 Abraham prays as Sodom is threatened, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" The last words of Moses, Deut. 32:4.

⁷⁸Leon Morris, The Biblical Doctrine of Judgment (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960), p. 7.

are to keep their minds fixed on him.⁷⁹

Noth considers the statute and ordinance admonition as tied to the reminder of Yahweh's deeds to Egypt to be a severe warning that Israel will be punished in the future.⁸⁰ Childs suggest that Israel is to learn that she already has been tested at Marah and failed the test.⁸¹ In each case the focus is upon the people of Israel. The narrative and the law both focus on Yahweh. Therefore, the apodosis, too, needs to focus on Yahweh. But what is its significance?

The Exodus event has always been basic to faith in Yahweh. Yahweh assures Israel that He will continue to fight against her enemies. He will do good for Israel. That good, however, will come if Israel is obedient to Yahweh. There are two sides to this terrifying behavior. He cares and keeps his people in great trouble. This was the lesson of the Marah narrative. He brings destruction upon his enemies.⁸² He blesses Israel. The element of

⁷⁹ Compare this with Abraham's prayer at Sodom, Gen. 18:23-25, where the question of punishment to all people because of the sins of a few is central.

⁸⁰ Noth, Exodus, p. 129.

⁸¹ Childs, The Book of Exodus, p. 70.

⁸² Judg. 5:11, the Song of Deborah, "There they repeat the triumphs of the Lord, the triumphs of his peasantry in Israel." This Song is of special interest in the light of Chr. Barth's caution that early Israel's views were not theologically partial. Chr. Barth, "Zur Bedeutung der Wüstetradition," Supplement to Vetus Testamentum 15 (1966):17. The Song of Deborah, however, is considered of early date. The literary units within

ethical demand certainly is a part of the legal form. But the first emphasis is on Yahweh and his deeds. If Israel loses sight of this, the punishment will come.

The phrase "I will put none of the diseases upon you which I put upon the Egyptians" has the characteristic of the Divine Saying, that is, Yahweh speaks directly to the people. Yahweh promises that he will, in the future, keep the diseases from Israel if Israel will be on guard and keep the commandments and statutes. Similar I-form speeches rehearse what Yahweh has done for Israel: the prologue of the Shechem covenant ceremony (Joshua 24:2-13); the angel of the Lord addresses the people at Bochim (Judg. 2:1); Yahweh sends a prophet to Israel when they weep before the Lord because of the "dirty tricks" of the Midianites (Judg. 6:8-10); Amos has a direct address by Yahweh (Amos 2:10-11) as does Hosea (Hos. 11:1); and Ezekiel records the "words of the Lord that came to me" (Ezek. 20:5). However, each of these Divine Speeches is followed by a citation against Israel that this people has been unfaithful to Yahweh's commandments. The exception is in Joshua 24:2-13, the covenant form. There is no condemnation over Israel's action at Marah; as a matter of fact there is no mention of Israel's reaction to any of Yahweh's

the Song point out its usage in the period of the Judges. See John Gray, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, The Century Bible ed. John Gray (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, New Edition, 1967), pp. 221, 222, and 275. Yahweh assures Israel of his aid. Also Micah 6:5.

action at Marah.

The I-style in the form of the Marah account emphasizes Yahweh's self-revelation. Israel is to know that Yahweh's activity indicates both that he has laid claim on her⁸³ and that he has also placed a responsibility on her by making a statute and ordinance for her.

A self-identification formula concludes this direct discourse of Yahweh, **כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה רֹפְאֶךָ**, "for I am Yahweh your healer." A quantitative difference is evident in the translation of the Revised Standard Version and the Jerusalem Bible. The Revised Standard Version translates "For I am the Lord your healer," while the Jerusalem Bible has "For it is I, Yahweh, who gives you healing." The question is, is this a reference to the one act which occurred in the Marah experience? or is there a promise here of future care?

The sentence has two nouns, apparently in apposition, **אֲנִי יְהוָה**. Walther Zimmerli has traced the short formula to the situation where law is presented which he calls a "self-presentation formula" (selbstvorstellung).⁸⁴ He maintains

⁸³The dissertation of R. Bach, "Die Erwählung Israel's in der Wüste," quoted by Barth, was not available. He maintains a "finding tradition" in which Yahweh stumbled upon Israel in the desert, after the symbolism of Ezek. 16:3-4.

⁸⁴Walther Zimmerli, "Ich bin Yahwe," Gottes Offenbarung, Gesammelte Aufsätze zum Alten Testament, Theologische Bücherei (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1969), p. 39.

One unnamed thus far stepped out of the ranks of unfamiliarity, in that he made himself recognized and identifiable in his name.⁸⁵

A longer formula in Exod. 15:25 adds רִפְּאֵה ; or another form is אֲבָרְכֶם לַיהוָה (Gen. 26:24; 28:13); or אֲלֵהֶם לַיהוָה (Lev. 18:2,5). This structure, a well known formula in Israel, expresses an intrinsic relationship between Yahweh and his people. It is used in a wide variety of ways and in many circumstances.

The self-identification formula is used in a law-giving context in Exod. 15:26. It follows the legal section. In the Decalogue the formula introduces the commandments (Exod. 20:2; Deut. 5:6). It is placed as a prelude. In the summary statement of the commandments in Ps. 81:9,10 the formula is placed after the commandment "there shall be no strange god among you; you shall not bow down to a foreign god. I am the Lord your God who brought you up out of the land of Egypt." Several of the individual commands in the "Holiness Code" conclude with the longer self-identification formula (Lev. 19:4,9,25, 31,34,36). When the shorter form is used, אֲנִי יְהוָה , it also follows the command (Lev. 19:11,13,16,18,30,32,37).

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 11. "Ein bisher Ungenannter tritt aus seiner Unbekanntheit heraus, indem er sich in seinem Eigennamen erkennbar und nennbar macht." Note, however, that Rudolph Rendtorff, "Die Offenbarungsvorstellungen im Alten Israel," Offenbarung als Geschichte (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 1963), p. 25, takes issue with Zimmerlie and states that a knowledge of God is presupposed. The title is to recall past acts of Yahweh to give authority to the present pronouncement. Therefore the term "self-identification" is preferred.

In each case the relationship is an abiding relationship. According to this formula usage, אֲנִי יְהוָה רֹפֵאֲךָ would focus on a healing relationship in the future, a stance Yahweh promises to Israel. Therefore it seems that the formula is a motivating phrase to encourage the people as they are in their initial stage of the wilderness sojourn.

Debate over the meaning of the revelatory formula has continued from medieval to modern times. Ramban, the modern Jewish Talmudic interpreter, maintains that this self-identification formula is a promise, and takes issue with Rashi's contention of the medieval era that this is a warning to Israel.⁸⁶ Ramban disagrees that אֲנִי יְהוָה is a noun-adjective, but rather "constitutes a promise that I will remove from you sickness that comes in the natural course of events, even as I healed the water (at Marah)."⁸⁷ He further contends that none of the divine assurances of the torah are expressed negatively, as Rashi suggests, if the meaning is "that the master should assure his servants that 'if you will do all my will and desire, I will not slay you with sore diseases'."⁸⁸

Rather, אֲנִי יְהוָה is a participle construed as a

⁸⁶Ramban (Nachmanides), "Exodus XV, Bashalach," Commentary on the Torah, Exodus, trans. Charles B. Chavel (New York: Shilo Publishing House), pp. 212-13.

⁸⁷Ibid. p. 213.

⁸⁸Ibid.

noun. The participle noun is used in a promissory, or motivating, context in the patriarchal history. In a vision Yahweh appears to Abraham (Gen. 15:1). The appearance replaces the יְהוָה יִצְּלֵנִי formula, and Yahweh declares יְהוָה יִצְּלֵנִי . The noun derives as the Hiphil participle of יָצַל , "defend." As a noun it becomes a "shield."⁸⁹ The promise that becomes a motivating force describes the action of Yahweh toward the people to whom the promise is given. It becomes more than a divine name.⁹⁰ In the context of the patriarchs the reminder of Yahweh's acts and intentions comes at a turning point, often when Yahweh is instructing the patriarch to go on a long journey because he has a blessing in store. With this pattern before us, the self-identification formula at Marah (Exod. 15:26) becomes a promise for Israel that is intended to motivate her to future obedience to Yahweh's commandments and statutes on the journey ahead. Opposed to such a viewpoint and convinced that this section is a legal

⁸⁹Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, Hebrew and English Lexicon, based on the lexicon of William Gesenius (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1907, reprinted and corrected 1962), p. 170, col.2-171, col. 1.

⁹⁰The position of Georg Fohrer, History of Israelite Religion, trans. David E. Green (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1972), p. 38, seems correct here that in the primitive names "each of the patriarchal clans has associated with it a term characterizing that particular deity in its relationship to the clan. These are not divine names, however." See also Gen. 18:25; 31:42; 49:24. In the later chapters of Isaiah the use of the participle-noun with a pronoun suffix is used very often: Isa. 41:10; 43:3; 48:17; 51:15; 55:5.

statement by a Deuteronomic redactory, Noth sees the statute and ordinance admonitions as a rather severe warning for the future that Israel will be punished.⁹¹ Childs suggests that the lesson is that Israel has already been tested by the Marah event and has failed the test.⁹²

It seems better to look at the self-identification clause as a motivating clause for Israel's future behavior because the opening ׀ signals an asseverative clause. A certainty for the fulfilled promise in the future is emphasized by the corroborative ׀.⁹³ Rather impressive signals point out the self-identification formula is intended to encourage the people of Israel to be obedient to the commandment and statute Yahweh set at Marah.

However, the translation of the Jerusalem Bible would point back to the sweetening of the waters at Marah as the focal point for this formula: "For it is I, Yahweh, who gave you healing." The קָנִיחַ form has a participle force. The participle has a verbal expression.. Again referring to the study done by Ernest Sellin, and reported by William Gesenius and E. Kautzsch, a participle when construed as a verb expresses a single and comparatively transitory act, or relates to particular cases, historical acts,

⁹¹Noth, Exodus, p. 129.

⁹²Childs, The Book of Exodus, p. 70.

⁹³Gesenius-Kautzsch, Hebrew Grammar, p. 498, par. 159ee.

and so forth.⁹⁴ A verbal participle, however, would not have a pronominal suffix.⁹⁵ In spite of this grammatical usage of the participle the translation of the Jerusalem Bible is upheld by Ronald Clements,⁹⁶ John McKenzie,⁹⁷ and J. R. Dummelow.⁹⁸ There is no clear promise that Yahweh's mercy will continue, and the people are not assured of future healing care.

Summary

The link of narrative and law in the Marah pericope has the theological concern that Israel is to recognize the grace of God and its nature (versus providence, and so forth). This grace is evident in the abiding presence demonstrated in his care. As surely as Yahweh is present to provide physical sustenance, so surely shall Israel know that he is concerned with moral fulfillment. Yahweh is present with Israel and cares for her. This concern for Yahweh's presence on Israel's part is reflected in the Moses/Yahweh dialogue at Sinai when the people are about

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 357, par. 116f.

⁹⁵J. Wash Watts, A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), p. 70.

⁹⁶Ronald E. Clements, Exodus, p. 95.

⁹⁷John L. McKenzie, The Old Testament Without Illusion (Chicago, IL: Thomas More Press, 1979), p. 82.

⁹⁸J. R. Dummelow, "Exodus," A Commentary on the Holy Bible (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1914), p. 62.

to leave that location (Exod. 33:12-23) as well as in the description of the cloud that leads the people from encampment to encampment (Num. 10:33-36). Israel is assured of Yahweh's presence and care through the miracle at the Marah spring and the giving of statute and ordinance.

The narrative addresses a need of the people, the lack of drinking water. After the need is stated and the people declare their dependence on Moses, and Moses declares his dependence to Yahweh, the remainder of the account deals with Yahweh's activity. There is no statement of the reaction of the people of Israel nor of Moses. The account addresses the grace of Yahweh, his care and compassion. In his love he instructs the people of their need to react to him. He gives statute and ordinance. He motivates the people of Israel to obedience by his self-identification. The narrative and legal section deal with the grace of Yahweh, especially in the face of need. There is no hint that the cry for help to have drinkable water is rebellion. In grace Yahweh does speak to Israel of the obedience he expects of them. It is a teaching experience, for the test lies in Yahweh's teaching.

If this principle holds fast, that Yahweh deals most graciously with Israel at Marah, then we can have a partial answer to the question of the wilderness times as a "honeymoon period" (Hos. 2:14), for Yahweh spoke tenderly, seeking to teach her and make her a lovely, devoted bride (Jer. 2:2-3). The positive view of the wilderness period

deals with Yahweh's teaching, training, and leading of Israel. The later critics saw the wilderness period in the light of a preconceived theological emphasis formed by compilers. The theological perspectives of these redactors hid the view of contemporary literary and tradition history proponents from the proposition that the works of Yahweh and the teaching of Yahweh are one and the same activity of grace. This hermeneutical principle is emphasized in Psalm 78:

We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generations the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders which he has wrought. He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, so that they should set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.

The wilderness period opens with a narrative and law-giving event which teaches Israel of Yahweh's nature and compassion. The future experiences in the wilderness will be judged on the basis of the lesson taught at Marah.

Exodus 17:1-7. Water Flows From the Rock

A second narrative tells of a lack of water for the people of Israel. However, a more serious confrontation occurs between Moses and the people over his leadership as well as his responsibilities.

v. 1 And all the congregation of the sons of Israel broke camp to move from the desert of Sin according to their station, upon the commandment of Yahweh. They camped in Rephidim. The people had no water to drink.

v. 2 And the people contended with Moses. They said:

'Give us water that we may drink.' Moses answered them, 'Why do you contend with me? And why do you test Yahweh?'

v. 3 And the people thirsted for water there, and the people murmured against Moses and said, 'Why did you bring us from Egypt to die, we and our sons, and our cattle, from thirst?'

v. 4 And Moses cried to Yahweh, 'What shall I do with this people? In a little while they will stone me.'

v. 5 And Yahweh said to Moses, 'Pass over before the people and take with you elders of Israel, and your staff with which you struck the Nile. Take it in your hand and go.'

v. 6 'Behold, I will stand before you there upon the Rock, upon Horeb. You strike upon the rock and water will come out of it, and the people can drink.' And Moses did thus in the sight of the elders of Israel.

v. 7 And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah because the sons of Israel contended and because they tested Yahweh, saying, 'Is Yahweh in our midst or not?'

The major grammatical difficulty in the text occurs in the direct discourse of verse three. The Massoretic text has a plural suffix, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt," which is followed by a singular pronoun, "to kill me and my sons, and my wealth (cattle)." A goodly number of versions have corrected the suffixes to plural forms. The translation above follows the note of the critical apparatus of the Hebrew text which indicates thirty-two manuscripts and versions include a \int introducing Moses' second question in verse two. This narrative \int would join the two questions into a cohesive unit.

Brevard Childs has perceived a consistent structure in the three wilderness narratives, Exod. 15:22-26; 17:1-7;

and Num. 20:1-13. Each narrative begins with a focus upon a need of the people; this is followed by a complaint, and a subsequent intercession of Moses. Yahweh then responds with a miraculous deed. This distinct pattern is labeled Pattern I by Childs.⁹⁹ However, Childs bypasses a teaching corrective that appears in Exod. 17:2. After the people quarrel with Moses, he points out by means of a double question that they are quarreling with the wrong person: "Why do you quarrel with me? And why do you test Yahweh?" The two questions appear to be an attempt on the part of Moses to teach the people that God is present. Until this point in the narrative there is no implication of Divine presence or leadership. The questions of Moses becomes a corrective, a reprimand, a warning to which the people should listen. The pattern Childs identifies is not static. The goal of the narrative is not just to relate an incident, but ultimately it is intended to bring the people to a greater trust in Yahweh. The narrative also contains an etiology that has been interpreted in a variety of ways, and with varying degrees of importance.

Critical scholars are almost unanimous in their opinion that several sources are included in the narrative.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹Childs, The Book of Exodus, p. 258. The same Pattern I occurs in Exod. 15:22-27 and Num. 20:1-13. In Pattern I the need is genuine, while in a similar Pattern II, which includes a record of Yahweh's anger and punishment, the complaint is illegitimate.

¹⁰⁰Martin Noth, Exodus, pp. 138-39; Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, pp. 53-56. James Plastaras, God of the

Noth argues that a so-called Priestly writer (dated about 550 B.C.) has added the itinerary in verse one as shown by the "clear doublet" which occurs in verses 1b-3. Two versions of the story are included in the material of 1b to verse three, but no criterion is discernible to single out these versions. The use of the Yahweh name in verse two and the vocabulary in verse three indicate the joining of the traditions.¹⁰¹ Coats modifies the analysis of Noth by proposing that the details in the text have been added in the pre-literary form of the tradition. This addition to the original text apparently involved an interweaving of two opposite motifs, "the etiology and the introduction of the legend of Israel's request for water with the murmuring motif entering at this point."¹⁰² The basic problem that Coats tries to solve is the dual name, Massah and Meribah, which are assigned to one place.

The study of this pericope begins at the point of the argument between Moses and the people. Noth finds his argument for one of the literary sources in the word לִי (verse 2). This catchword links verse one b (the statement of the problem of no water) with verse two (the notice

Exodus (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1966), pp. 293-94. Baentsch, Exodus, Leviticus, p. 157. Holzinger, Exodus, p. 55. Hyatt, Exodus, Century Bible, p. 181. Beer, Exodus, p. 91. Ronald Clements, Exodus, p. 101.

¹⁰¹Noth, Exodus, pp. 138-39.

¹⁰²Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 62. Childs, The Book of Exodus, agrees the attempt to find two literary strands is "unconvincing," p. 306.

that this resulted in a legal dispute with Moses) and with verse seven (the naming of the place Meribah because of the contention that arose).¹⁰³ Noth continues to argue that Massah and Meribah must be separate places with local traditions. Because Meribah derives from the word מֵרִיב (verse 2), this place receives priority over Massah. A story of Israel's fault-finding because of a lack of water is attached to these place names. They "must have described a definite place at which the Israelites arrived."¹⁰⁴ There is little of theological value in the record of the sources as Noth develops his hypothesis. At this level the narrative can only be an itinerary item. The presupposition that an etiology existed first, and then an Israelite narrative attaches to a place name poses too many unnecessary questions. Was the narrative, with the basic need for a מֵרִיב between Moses and the people manipulated in such a way to make this a legal dispute? Is the lack of water as described in the narrative of sufficient concern to enter into legal action and at Meribah "determine their disputes as law?"¹⁰⁵ An attempt to identify Meribah with a locale at Kadesh seems inconsistent with a lack of water problem. According to reports the neighborhood of Kadesh was "characterized by a number of

¹⁰³Noth, Exodus, p. 139.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 138.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 140.

strongly flowing springs which provided the necessary water both for a large number of men and for their cattle."¹⁰⁶

Coats places a great emphasis on the etiological purpose of the story and arrives at the conclusion that the location of this narrative is in a place where legal cases were resolved.¹⁰⁷ He continues to press the argument that here we have the לֵב-רִיב combination "as a technical term for legal process," and therefore this name is "tied closely to the legal character of the local etiology."¹⁰⁸ He furthermore argues that this is a "preofficial quarrel which is a (formal?) claim."¹⁰⁹ He seeks to strengthen his argument by appealing to Hans Walter Wolff's study of the use of the לֵב-רִיב as a legal dispute which "denotes the succession of the speeches before the court and thus the judicial procedure as a whole."¹¹⁰ The

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 56. He is favorably influenced by Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, 2:12, for Massah and Meribah probably are to be taken as places where "legal cases were investigated and decided by ordeal . . . Kadesh was therefore a well-known sanctuary where divine justice was administered and cases in dispute were held." However, the argument that this is a full-fledged court case rather than a quarrel between two parties is unconvincing.

¹⁰⁸Coats, p. 57.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

¹¹⁰Hans Walter Wolff, A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Hosea, ed. Paul D. Hanson, trans. Gary Stan-sill (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), p. 33.

argument is that the primary motif of this narrative was in a local etiology.¹¹¹ Although he goes into greater detail, his conclusion is similar to that of Noth.

The question that arises is this: Can a word-usage which appears in a narrative be unequivocally labeled the same as that used in an "allegorical speech"¹¹² shaped by a prophet? The judicial aspects in Hosea 4 are evident. The prophet stands as spokesman (prosecutor?) and presents a controversy of God with the "inhabitants of the land." Specific charges are leveled against the people of the land: "no faithfulness or kindness . . . no knowledge of God. . . . There is swearing, lying, killing, stealing and committing adultery, they break all bounds and murder follows murder" (Hos. 4:1,2).

The narrative at Meribah, on the other hand, is a face to face confrontation between Moses, the leader, and the people. No charges are made at this point. The people only make a demand, "Give us water to drink" (Exod. 17:2).¹¹³ The demand of the people places the obligation

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 62. Martin Noth, Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch, 2nd edition (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1948), p. 135, n. 348, maintains the etiology is only loosely connected, the murmuring motif was set previous to it. This seems more plausible.

¹¹²Wolff, p. 33, where the author has identified Hosea 4 in this way.

¹¹³A grammatical inconsistency appears. תַּן לָנוּ is Qal imperative plural, but Moses alone is identified as the addressee. Several manuscripts and the Samaritan Pentateuch change this to the singular תַּן לָנוּ. Cassuto, Commentary on Exodus, p. 201, states that the plural

to provide water on Moses. It does not appear that at this moment the lack of water has reached crisis proportions.

The demand on the part of the people receives Moses' attention. The text states that Moses responds with a double question. The question, and וְיָדַע is used instead of the וְיָדַעַתְּ , contains a warning.¹¹⁴ In the asking, Moses affirms that the problem of water is not his to bear. If his response ended here there would be little left except a shouting match between the two parties over the question of responsibility. If this were the case, it might (all other things being equal), be possible to agree with Coats that this narrative is a "basic aetiological saga" that has had "one or more legendary motifs" combined with it.¹¹⁵ The addition of this stopping place would be just another location on the itinerary with as little significance as Dophka and Alush, other place names mentioned immediately before Rephidim in Num. 33:13,14. A similar formula of a problem and place location occurs in Gen. 26:20,21.

The herdsman of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen ($\text{וַיִּקְרַב בּוֹ... עִם רֵעֵי יִצְחָק}$) saying, "The water is ours." So he called (וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמֵן) the name of the

equals "you and Aaron." The suggestion is weak because Aaron is not mentioned in the narrative.

¹¹⁴See Gesenius-Kautzsch, Hebrew Grammar, par. 150e, p. 474, "For what" equals "Why?"

¹¹⁵Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 56

well, Esek, because they contended with him. Then they dug another well, and they quarreled (יָרִיבוּ) over that also, so he called its name Sitnah.¹¹⁶

An itinerary of water-holes is listed. The names given to these locations derive from something that happened there. If the etiology is 'basic' to Exod. 17:7, then we have nothing more than a stopping place that is mentioned. However, the detail in the narrative gives evidence that the place name derives from the thing that happened here. There is no evidence that the name existed before the action of the newly arrived people.

There is little reason Meribah should be identified if it only is to be a stopping place in the pre-Sinai material. Place names without narrative material do appear in the itinerary of Numbers 33, but not in the pre-Sinai material in Exod. 15:22 to 18:27. At Elim a purpose and blessing is implied in the notice that the place had twelve springs and seventy palm trees (Exod. 15:27).

Possibly Noth and Coats have dismissed too hastily Exod. 17:2c, "Why do you put the Lord to the proof?"¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶The names of the places do not derive from the quarrel it is true, but in meaning they describe that which brought on the quarrels, "contention" and "enmity." Burke O. Long, The Problem of the Etiological Narrative in the Old Testament (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töpelman, 1968), pp. 30-31 admits "At best, a fragment containing a name tradition remains." Little can be said about the etiology because the last sentence, v. 7, "has no clear reference to the narrative material." Etiological names derive from the actions of the people (Exod. 17:7) or the problem of the area (Marah, Exod. 16:23).

¹¹⁷Noth, Exodus, p. 139 states "as the catchword 'find fault with' stands in the foreground of verse 2, the

as an integral part of the narrative. Is there any real need for the note in the context other than giving a name to an undefinable place? The critical apparatus of the Hebraica Stuttgartensia notes that a goodly number of manuscripts plus the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Greek Septuaginta, the Syriac and Targum Jonathan begin this question

וְלָמָּה אַתָּה מְרִיבֵנִי.

The immediately preceding question, "Why do you find fault with me?", a second masculine plural imperfect Qal verb form with nun paragogicum, is Moses' response to the demand of the people that he give them water. Moses' plea to Yahweh for help (verse 4) and the subsequent instruction to gather the elders of the people and to strike the rock does not flow as easily as Coats suggests.¹¹⁸ He contends that the murmuring motif does not harmonize with the וְלָמָּה pattern and therefore it is a secondary addition. Moses addresses his question to the people. Moses suggests no alternative to his leadership if the second question is a later addition, nor does he acknowledge the seriousness of the water crisis. This response to the people causes doubt that this tradition is on a "positive level of tradition associated with Marah," as Coats deduces.¹¹⁹ In

story was certainly originally directed towards the name 'Meribah'." Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 58, believes the reference to Massah is a secondary addition.

¹¹⁸Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 58.

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 58.

Coats' opinion the primary etiology is Marah.

The pericope needs to be studied as a whole rather than isolate several phrases and identify them with etiological names. Not only does Moses deny the right of the people to quarrel with him, but he declares their real quarrel is with Yahweh.¹²⁰ The dual question compares favorably¹²¹ with that of Job 15:12, וְלָמָּה יִשְׁׁרְךָ אֶל־יְהוָה ("Why does your heart carry you away, And why do your eyes flash that you turn your spirit against God?").¹²² Eliphaz the Temanite charges that Job does not take God into consideration in all things. Rather than indicating that the posed question

¹²⁰ Admittedly this line of argument rejects the pre-supposition that the etiologies of verse 7 are the primary reasons for the narrative. The contention here is that the etiology finds verification in the narrative. Israel's national tradition often emphasizes God's treatment of the people in spite of their faultfinding. For discussion of the prophetic concept of Israel's God summoning the people to trial and the Pentateuch's approach of the people contending with God, see B. Gemser, "The Rib - or Controversy - Pattern in Hebrew Mentality," Supplement to Vetus Testamentum, 3 (1955):129-33.

¹²¹ Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 58, compares the question "Why do you find fault with me?" with a response of Yahweh to Moses' plea for help at the Red Sea, "Why do you cry to me?" Exodus 14,15. This is followed by Yahweh's aid. However, at Meribah Moses later in the narrative cries to Yahweh for help and Yahweh responds. Verse 2 introduces Moses' challenge that the people are tempting Yahweh.

¹²² One unfavorable action is a warning of a deeper fault or grievance. Compare also Ps. 42:11 (Hebrew v.12) with successive אֲנִי אֵיךָ יְהוָה questions, and Judg. 11:7, an instance where two successive questions describe opposite attitudes. The question sequences are followed by promises of help.

of the tempting of Yahweh is secondary, the juxtaposed questions demonstrate a reproach by Moses that leads the people to know what they are really doing and, at the same time, points them to the real object of their displeasure. The response of Moses would be incomplete if it merely was a denial of the people's right to find fault with him. He must also correct the faulty thinking and the challenge against himself. Yahweh is the true leader, and any sign of displeasure on the part of the people is directed toward him. At a later time (Deut. 1:37; 3:2,6) Moses declares he is co-responsible with the people in their follies and bears the punishment for their behavior.¹²³

Since the $\text{ל}^{\prime}\text{ר}$ statement and the $\text{ל}^{\prime}\text{ר}$ statement stand together, it is not possible at this stage to place a priority on a Massah or a Meribah etiology. A confrontation between the people and their leader takes place and the cause is a very real desert need, the lack of water. Israel's history is written in the context of its faith and trust in God, or the failure of that faith and trust. Therefore the confrontation of the people with Moses, and Yahweh's response to the need, seems to be the concern of the narrative. The etiology is "loosely connected"¹²⁴ to

¹²³See Gemser, p. 133.

¹²⁴Noth, Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch, p. 135, n. 348. He, however, sees the great murmuring against Yahweh as the primary motif. Childs, The Book of Exodus, p. 307, recognizes Israel's need and Yahweh's help as the "earliest level of the tradition."

this narrative.

We still face the problem of verse three. Seemingly a second start occurs in the narrative¹²⁵ for the story continues $\text{וַיִּשְׁאַף אֶת־לִבָּם לְשׂוֹן מַיִם}$. Besides the statement of thirst, the verse includes the note that the people murmur against Moses. They question why he led them out of Egypt to die from thirst. This so-called doublet with verse two is viewed as evidence of multiple sources in the narrative. Coats, however, suggests that individual traditions on a preliterate level are interwoven at this point.¹²⁶ A question arises again about the real significance of the confrontation with Moses in verse two. Does the imperative $\text{וַיִּשְׁאַף אֶת־לִבָּם}$ center on the need for water, or on the fact the responsibility to provide it is incorporated in Moses' leadership? Relating the charge to Moses' leadership does not minimize the need for water, but it would maximize Moses' role. Verse three, then, would point to a deteriorating situation.¹²⁷ The lack of

¹²⁵Noth, Exodus, labels this the Elohist, p. 139; H. Holzinger, Exodus, vol. 2 of Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament, ed. Karl Marti (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], Publishers, 1900), p. 55; J. Philip Hyatt, Commentary on Exodus, p. 181; Bruno Baentsch, Exodus, Leviticus, p. 157; Wilhelm Rudolph, "Der Elohist von Exodus bis Josua," Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, No. 68 (Berlin: Verlag von Alfred Töpelman, 1938), p. 36, see v. 1b-7 as a unit, but includes a new beginning at v. 3; Also Fritz, Israel in der Wüste, p. 11.

¹²⁶Coats, p. 55.

¹²⁷Cassuto, p. 201, denies any recension or new source at this point. Rather, he calls it "the established

water became more critical, the people suffer from thirst. They are acutely aware of the possible result of their thirst - death. Their complaint is sharpened by a charge of Moses' ulterior motive.

The complaint against Moses at this point is that he led the people out of Egypt, $\text{לְמַדְּבָרֵי מִצְרַיִם}$ $\text{וְיָצֵאנוּ מִן־מִצְרַיִם}$. Coats rightly emphasized that the complaint is against Moses' authority,¹²⁸ whether it be usurped or has been given by Yahweh. This is the principle clause, while the problem of the thirst and its attendant circumstance, $\text{וְיָצֵאנוּ מִן־מִצְרַיִם}$, is carried in a dependent infinitive construct clause.¹²⁹ The question of Moses' authority and the entire matter of the exodus is at the fore. The problem of water is not the most critical issue, but it becomes the circumstance that arouses antagonism as the need for water grows critical. It then triggers the second confrontation of the narrative introduced by the thirst of the people. The Jerusalem Bible seems to express the effect of a deteriorating situation by the translation "but tormented by thirst, the people complained against Moses." With the וְ at the beginning of the sentence we have a narrative tense

literary practice, a detailed account after the general statement in v. 2 explaining the nature of the charges leveled by the people against Moses."

¹²⁸Coats, p. 60.

¹²⁹See Gesenius-Kautsch, Hebrew Grammar, par. 114g,f, p. 348: "If there is a special emphasis on the infinitive with וְ , it is placed, with its complement, before the governing verb, e.g. Gen. 42:9, 47:4" etc.

that continues the sequence of events from the preceding sentence.¹³⁰ The need of the people is real, their thirst. The sin of the people is their murmuring against the exodus from Egypt. The tension between the life in Egypt and the desert appears already at the Sea of Reeds. The living conditions in Egypt are to be preferred to the life in the desert. In two verses Egypt is mentioned five times, and the desert but once. Life with the hardships of Egypt is preferable to death in the wilderness (Exod. 14:11,12).

The laws against enmity and rebellion in the Near East emphasize the gravity of the sin of the people and show the point of tension in the narrative. Weeping, lamentation, and outcries are forbidden in many of the Near East treaties and therefore would be applicable to Israel in their relationship with Yahweh.¹³¹ Moses is the object of the murmuring.¹³² At this point there is no indication

¹³⁰Cassuto, Commentary on Exodus, holds the view that "from a thematic standpoint, we may see in this duplication (v. 2a and 3a) the intention to substantiate emphatically the tradition concerning the providential care that the Lord gave to the needs of the people in the wilderness. . . ." p. 204.

¹³¹Demonstrated in the "Epilogue, Lipit-Ishtar Law-code," Ancient Near Eastern Text Relating to the Old Testament, Third Edition with Supplement, ed. James B. Pritchard, trans. S. N. Kramer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 161. El Amarna letters No. 250 and 254, The Ancient Near East, An Anthology of Texts and Pictures, ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), pp. 264-66, have pledges of allegiance and faithfulness to the rulers.

¹³²This is in opposition to Martin Noth's view,

that the people have accepted his explanation that their conflict is with Yahweh and not with him. The Hiphil form of the verb לָאָץ is a technical term for the Exodus in the complaint here, and in Num. 21:5. It also appears in the acclamation of the people and Yahweh's charge against them in the Golden Calf narrative (Exod. 32:1,4,8,23) and at the time of Moses' appeal for guidance through the wilderness (Exod. 33:1,12). The term is used in a similar way in Num. 14:13; 16:13. The principle clause of the sentence is the Exodus from Egypt. This is the primary complaint. With this in mind, the mercy of God in the face of rebellion of the people looms much greater than a mercy that supplies water for a thirsting group of people.

The cry of Moses to Yahweh also gives evidence that the need for water is the immediate emotional avenue for discontent rather than the extreme problem. Moses fears for his life because the people are greatly discontented.¹³³ He does not intercede before Yahweh because the people may

Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch, p. 135, n. 348, that the murmuring against Moses, the human leader, is secondary to the great murmuring. In Num. 21:5 the people speak (וַיְדַבֵּר הָעָם) against "God and against Moses," and the charge again is that "you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness" $\text{דָּעַלְתָּנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם לָמוֹת בְּמִדְבָּר}$.

¹³³In structure the plea of Moses is the lament of a mediator. It is connected with a narrative, and thus differs from a Psalm of Lament. The structure that holds laments together has a) an incident involving the lamenter; b) God and the others; c) the people against whom the lamenter stands. C. Westermann, "Struktur und Geschichte der Klage im Alten Testament," Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, Band 66 (1954):46,47.

die from thirst but out of his own fear that the people 'will stone him.' In this dialogue Moses is not a mediator for the people. His question, "What shall I do? in a short time they will stone me?" reflects a problem of leadership.

Ultimately Yahweh tells Moses that the rock on Horeb will release its water and the people will drink. However, before this is possible Yahweh instructs Moses that certain procedures must be followed. The elders of Israel must go with Moses and he must take the miracle rod in his hand. If the goal is just to supply water this detail would be pointless. The success of a water supply would be obvious in the flow. Furthermore, the narrative proper concludes with the note that Moses followed the instructions in the presence of the elders of Israel. Why does this become a point at issue?

The $\Upsilon P.. \S$ of Israel originally was one who wears a beard. This would have the societal implications of a fully accredited adult in the national assembly.¹³⁴ This positive aspect of venerability is always at the fore. Elsewhere the elders are to accompany Moses before Pharaoh to make the request to let the people of Israel go into the wilderness to make sacrifice to the Lord God (Exod. 3:18);

¹³⁴G. Bornkamm, "Elders in the Constitutional History of Israel and Judah," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vols., ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromily (hereafter cited as TDNT) (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company), 6:655.

they receive the instruction to kill the passover lamb (Exod. 12:21); Moses sets before them the commands of Yahweh (Exod. 19:7); the seventy elders go to the mountain top to enter into Yahweh's presence, and thus to ratify the covenant (Exod. 24:1,9,14); they receive a special measure of the spirit (Num. 11:16); they are with Moses when Dathan and Abiram are punished (Num. 16:25). The elders have functioned with legal and judicial responsibilities.¹³⁵ The elders are the leaders of greater units during the period of the formation of the nation, and represent the people. When Yahweh instructs Moses to take these representatives of the people to the rock Horeb they are to be able to report not merely that water is being supplied, but that Yahweh is the One who is providing it. Yahweh's presence, with the assurance of his help, becomes apparent by means of the staff Moses is to carry and the witness of the elders who are privy to the details and method of the water supply.

The legal and judicial function of the elders must have a link with the problem previously developed in the narrative. According to verse two, "The people contended with Moses, and said, 'Give us water to drink'."¹³⁶ This

¹³⁵Noth, Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch, argues that originally the elders were the leaders, but when Moses was given a leading role they faded into the background, pp. 172-91.

¹³⁶A point can be made that these are two separate phrases. The verb in the first phrase is singular, וַיִּתְּנֵם, וַיִּתְּנֵם. In the second phrase it is plural, וַיִּתְּנֵם.

argument is not in a truly legal framework. The people make a demand. No charges are filed that need to be debated or decided upon by the elders. However, Moses' response directs the attention to the leadership, "Why do you contend with me? Why do you test Yahweh?" (verse 2). The narrative develops further from this point to a charge against Moses, "Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die . . .?" (verse 3). Moses' appeal to Yahweh is a plea to save himself from the consequences of these charges. In response to Moses' plea, the elders are summoned to act in a legal and judicial function. The question ultimately becomes, "Who led Israel out of Egypt and for what purpose?"

Moses is also instructed to use "your rod¹³⁷ with which you struck the Nile" (verse 5). This use of the rod is to identify Yahweh's presence and be evidence for the people that Yahweh is active among them.¹³⁸ This verification strengthens Moses' argument "Why do you put the Lord to the proof?" (verse 2). The response of Yahweh

but the subject remains $\text{וְיָדָה} \text{ } \text{וְיָדָה}$. Note the singular verbs with a common subject in verse 3.

¹³⁷The Vulgate and the Septuagint have "and the rod." The Revised Standard Version follows the Vulgate and Septuagint. The King James Version of 1611 translates "thy rod." The New American Standard Bible translates "your rod." Luther's German translation has "deinen Stab."

¹³⁸Similarly the presence of the Tent of Meeting, the ark, the pillar of cloud were visible signs of Yahweh's presence and caused expectations to mount among the people.

centers on the question of the leadership of the people.

Yahweh continues his speech to Moses with an often used Old Testament form, 'הִנְנִי, "Behold me. . . ." (Gen. 22:7; 27:18; 6:17; 20:3, and so forth). Although the personal pronoun suffix is regarded as accusative, it is the subject of the sentence in translation, "Behold, I will stand before you" (הִנְנִי עֹמֵד לְפָנֶיךָ). The finite verb is in the form of a participle and often describes a picture action. This literary form has been identified as an "old oracular form"¹³⁹ whereby Yahweh announces an event that He is soon to cause to happen.¹⁴⁰ The form appears in announcements of impending judgment (Gen. 6:17; 1 Sam. 3:11), and of Yahweh's promised care (Exod. 34:11; Num. 25:12). The writer places this as the opening clause of the sentence and thereby emphasizes its importance. The remaining clauses that describe the result are quickly given "you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people may drink." The original problem of the lack of water and the challenge to Moses responsibility

¹³⁹This evidently is the predecessor to the oracle speech of the prophets introduced by הִנְנִי אֵלֶיךָ, according to Johannes Hempel, "The Forms of Oral Tradition," Record and Proclamation, ed. H. Wheeler Robinson (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1938), p. 33.

¹⁴⁰The demonstrative particle with the 1st person pronominal suffix and a participle announces such coming events as the flood, Gen. 6:17; the Noahic Covenant, Gen. 9:9; the plague of locusts, Exod. 10:4; the covenant with Moses, Exod. 34:10 and very often. It is also called "Futurum instans," designating imminent action, at least from God's perspective.

to give them water is disposed of hurriedly. The details that the elders are to witness the event Yahweh will bring to pass, the staff that is symbolic of Yahweh's presence, and the literary formula whereby Yahweh assures Moses he is present all indicate the emphasis of the narrative is that Yahweh is acting and he is the leader of the group that left Egypt and is now in the desert.

The next question of this study deals with the period of time in which the question of Moses (verse 4) and the answer of Yahweh (verse 5) would appear in the record. A study by Johannes Hempel indicates that the direct speech forms appear already when the stories were retold by the people. Other narratives contain a question and answer sequence. When David is fleeing from Saul he asks Yahweh, "Will Saul come down as thy servant has heard?" and Yahweh responds, "He will come down" (1 Sam. 23:11). A similar question and answer exchange occurs between the king and the prophet Micaiah (1 Kings 22:15). Hempel furthermore points to the "marked concentration of expression" which was experienced at the event. Of specific concern is that אָזְכִּירָה is placed at the start of the clause. The participle is used to describe what will happen (verse 6 עֲשֵׂה) and the imperative gives direction (verse 6 אֲזַכֵּירָה).¹⁴¹ If we apply Hempel's study to the pericope from Exodus 17:1-7, the dialogue between Moses and Yahweh

¹⁴¹Hempel, pp. 33,34; an example in Judg. 4:22.

comes from the earliest period of oral transmission of the event, and is not a later addition. Although the need of the people for water is real, the true source of the water, Yahweh, receives the greater emphasis.

After determining that Yahweh's presence is the central message of the narrative, the next problem is to determine why this story of water flowing from the rock at Rephidim is included in the pre-Sinai series. Is it merely a sequence the writer is following? Or is there some other purpose also? Chronologically several negatives surface in the narrative. The people argue with Moses, and when he tries to convince them they actually are contending with Yahweh and testing him they murmur against Moses' leadership and charge him with ulterior motives. Moses appeals for personal help from Yahweh. Yahweh responds with a list of instructions that when followed, will bring water for the people. The positive element is that Moses is called upon to follow the instruction of Yahweh. The patriarchs had been given instructions they were to follow (Gen. 12:1,2; 15:5), and Isaac (Gen. 26:2-4), and Jacob (Gen. 28:15).

The question arises: What is the real purpose of Yahweh's instruction to Moses? Previously, on the basis of the emphasis of the sentence in verse five this study concluded that the priority of the narrative is Yahweh's leadership. Coats argues, however, that the elders who are assembled by Moses do not witness evidence which

establishes the authority for Moses' leadership. Therefore, he concludes that the leadership question is not foremost. Rather, these elders

seem to be representatives of the people who are present to witness the execution of a miracle which will fulfill their need for water. . . . The most obvious recourse in answering this question is to suggest that here Yahweh is responding not to a rebellion of the people, but to their positive request for water.¹⁴²

When Moses receives instruction the elders are to go along but their function is not explained. Does this minimize their place? Why would there be a special note made that Moses did this (וַיַּעַל) in the sight of the elders¹⁴³ of Israel (verse 6b)?

Consistent with the text, the only statement of water flowing from the rock is in the promise of Yahweh. Verse 6b shows that Moses did what Yahweh commanded in sight of the elders of Israel who were therefore witnesses to the obedience of Moses. Thus Moses was verified as the faithful servant of Yahweh, his representative leader. The narrative ends with the act of Moses. Without a reference to the water, it seems inconsistent to say that the role of the elders is to witness the flowing of water from the rock, as Coats deduces.

The role of the elders is to see the action of Moses

¹⁴²Coats, pp.61,62.

¹⁴³Septuaginta, Sixth edition, ed. Alfred Rahlfs (Stuttgart: Privileg. Württ. Bibelanstalt, 1959), p. 115, at Exod. 17:6 has ἑνώπιον τῶν ἑταίρων Ἰσραήλ.

with their eyes, $\text{לְעֵינֵי אֱלֹהֵי שָׂרָא}$. The לְעֵינֵי formula is used as a term of witness to an event. David dances naked before the ark of the covenant, before the eyes of the servants, and Michal delivers her contempt speech because she saw this happen (2 Sam. 6:20). The elders are to witness the accusation of a widow against "the man who does not build a brother's house," (Deut. 25:9). The elders witness Jeremiah's purchase of a plot at Anathoth because he believes Yahweh will restore the land to Israel even though the economic and political order is about to collapse in Judah (Jer. 32:12). In Exodus Moses strikes the Nile with his rod before Pharaoh, and Pharaoh's heart remained hardened in spite of what he has seen (Exod. 7:20). Again, Moses and Aaron spread ashes toward heaven and brought boils and sores on man and beast, but Pharaoh did not listen (Exod. 9:8-12). In each of these cases the people react to what they have seen in a positive or negative way. Thus, it would seem that the elders who see Moses' obedience at Rephidem are to be influenced and motivated to obedience to Yahweh.¹⁴⁴ The narrative becomes a corrective. It demonstrates the opposing position of the people testing Yahweh, as Moses points out, by pointing to the obedience of Moses in following the instruction of Yahweh. The elders are called

¹⁴⁴Hennig Graf Reventlow, "Die Völker als Jahwes Zeugen bei Ezeziel," Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 71 (1959):35,37.

on to witness what has been done and recognize Yahweh's leadership.

Theologically, Moses' acts are to serve Yahweh. When the people see the results, through the elders, they are to have an answer to the question that confronts them: "Is the Lord among us or not?" The narrative does not include a response of the people. Their behavior, obedience, and trust in the face of future crises in the wilderness will give the answer. The theological purpose of this narrative is to reveal Yahweh to Israel.¹⁴⁵ The people must first come to know him, experience his attributes of care and mercy. They cannot come to know Yahweh by themselves,¹⁴⁶ but through his deeds of grace. It is in the desert experiences that Israel continues to wonder about that question of the narrative: "Is the Lord among us or not?"

If the assurance of Yahweh's presence is basic to the narrative, what is the significance of the etiologies in verse seven? The search includes a textual study as well as a study of the texts where the Massah and Meribah

¹⁴⁵Coats lists this as a possible purpose of v. 4, but dismisses it because "there is no word in the response about the problem of Moses' authority in the Exodus; there is no indication of punishment," Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 61. The point seems to be that Yahweh is establishing his authority, and the people overlook this.

¹⁴⁶Brevard Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture, p. 174, sees the narrative material testify to the times God has made himself known.

names are mentioned together, or individually, and the contexts of the passages, in the Pentateuch. The problem is aggravated because scholars have not reached a consensus of the place and purpose of this etiology. Coats argues it is a prime factor of the story because the first motif is a word play depicting a local etiology. The story of Israel's request for water and the murmuring motif were attached to the etiology.¹⁴⁷ Noth tries to persuade that the etiology is only loosely connected with the narrative and is set only after the murmuring motif has been established.¹⁴⁸ Clement states

The story is intended to explain how the name arose by linking it with Israel's rebelliousness. . . . The explanations of their origin given here reflect a particular adaptation to Israel's recollection of its life in the wilderness.¹⁴⁹

Childs sees the point of the story as God's gracious provision of water for his people when none was available.¹⁵⁰

Because several different etiological literary forms are used in scripture, the specific form in Exod. 17:7 needs to be identified. It appears in the phrase וַיִּקְרָא

¹⁴⁷Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, pp. 55, 56, 62, 70. P. Hyatt, Commentary on Exodus, p. 181, and Hugo Gressman, Mose und seine Zeit, Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments, ed. Wilhelm Bousset and Hermann Gunkel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 1913), p. 149, identify this as an etiological story.

¹⁴⁸Noth, Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch, p. 135, n. 348.

¹⁴⁹Clements, Exodus, p. 102.

¹⁵⁰Childs, Exodus, p. 308.

וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמֵם מַסָּח וּמֵרִיבָה, "and he calls the name of the place Massah and Meribah." The form and constant elements are there, the act of naming Massah and Meribah, the etymological explanations, and the key words of the action that influenced the name.¹⁵¹ The unique feature of this text is in the motive. Here the word is עַל. Johannes Fichtner observes that a place-naming event usually follows the form עַל-בְּן-קָרָא.¹⁵² Here the verb is the imperfect קָרָא. Oftentimes this imperfect verb is used in the giving of a personal name (Gen. 3:20; 5:3,29; 16:15; 25:26; 38:3; Exod. 15:23, and so forth). However, there are sufficient instances of place-naming in Genesis and Exodus where the imperfect verb is used with ו consecutive, but there is either no motive clause (Gen. 26:21; 28:19; 32:3) or the motive clause is introduced by כִּי (Gen. 4:17; 26:22; 32:31; Num. 11:3,34). The unusual factor in Exod. 17:7 is that the imperfect verb is followed by עַל in the motive clause עַל-רִיב . . . וְעַל-נִפְתָּח. The other unique part of the form is that the second verb

¹⁵¹Burke O. Long, The Problem of the Etiological Narrative in the Old Testament, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 108 (1968):5-6.

¹⁵²Johannes Fichtner, "Die Theologische Bedeutung etymologischer Aetiologien im AT," Theologische Literaturzeitung, 81 (May-June, 1956):380-81. Personal name etiologies, Gen. 5:29; 3:20; 16:15; 20:9; 25:26; 35:10, etc. He does point out there are exceptions, but the form is used over-proportionately in the personal name etiology. Several of the exceptions appear in the Wilderness Tradition, Num. 11:3,34. The עַל-בְּן form appeared in Exod. 15:23.

is an infinitive with the 3rd plural suffix masculine. Although this is grammatically acceptable (Amos 1:3,6,9, 11,18) it is not found in the etiological formula, except here. Finally, Burke Long maintains the וַיִּסְרֹף clause really has no connection with the etiological material.¹⁵³ This conclusion does not seem valid since recognition of Yahweh's presence is at the heart of Moses' argument (verse 2). Although the characteristics of an etiology are evident in Exod. 17:7, the mixed form has led some critical scholars to believe segments have been added at a late date. On the other hand, this mixed form might be the evidence that all forms are not that deeply engraved in the Biblical literature, and were not always meticulously followed.

Another inconsistency occurs in the order of the names mentioned, and the succeeding motive clauses. The names Massah and Meribah are mentioned together, but then the clause for Meribah, "because the sons of Israel contended," וְיָרִיבוּ , separates the name Massah from its motive clause. Evidently somewhere in time one or the other name is inserted as a secondary addition.¹⁵⁴ The textual

¹⁵³Long, The Problem of the Etiological Narrative in the Old Testament, p. 30.

¹⁵⁴Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 62, argues that Meribah has the priority because of the connection with verse 2, a basic verse to the story, according to his position. Massah is the secondary addition, and the evidence is the interrupted position between the name Massah and its explanation. Heinrich Schneider, Exodus, Echter Bible, vol. 14, ed. Friedrich Nötscher (Würzburg:

difficulty does lead to the possible conclusion that the two names identify different localities, and possibly tell of somewhat parallel events of Israel murmuring for water and Yahweh graciously supplying it. A similar story of water from the rock arose in Num. 20:1-13. The several differences in detail in these stories, in location, in the instructions to Moses, and in the end result of Yahweh's action also give reason to believe that Exod. 17:1-7 and the similar circumstances of Num. 20:1-13 are two distinct events in the desert.¹⁵⁵ Because the narratives deal with a mighty act of Yahweh that provided water for a thirsty people, the names have become attached to both places. They commemorate an event of Yahweh's goodness more so than a place-name. John Bright has demonstrated the secondary factor of many etiological names in the legends of American history in his evaluation of the Alt-Noth school of interpretation.¹⁵⁶

Previously this study demonstrated that the narrative

Echter Verlag, 1952), p. 39, believes Massah is original and Meribah is the parallel addition, and is taken from the similarity with Exod. 15:23-25, Marah.

¹⁵⁵ Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 62. Otto Eissfeldt, The Old Testament, An Introduction, trans. Peter R. Ackroyd (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row Publishers, 1965), p. 186. E. W. Hengstenberg, Dissertations on the Genuineness of the Pentateuch, 2 vols., trans. J. E. Ryland (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1847), 2:310-14.

¹⁵⁶ John Bright, "The School of Alt and Noth," Old Testament Issues, ed. Samuel Sandmel (New York and London: Harper and Row Publishers, Harper Forum Books, 1968), pp. 172-86.

comes to a fitting conclusion only if Moses, in verse 2, tells the people they are not striving against him, but actually are testing Yahweh. This reminder points out the people are not aware of Yahweh's presence or guidance. A place-name etiology, according to Fichtner, is preserved to give testimony to the holiness of God over against some action of the people involved.¹⁵⁷ If this principle is applied to this narrative, the people contend with Moses (verse 2). The place-name Meribah is derived from the verb מִרִּב. At this point in the narrative the people are not contending with Yahweh, as the phrase "because of the fault-finding (מִרִּב) of the children of Israel" claims. It would apply to Moses. Without verse 2c the concept that Moses is Yahweh's representative is meaningless to the people. This etiology would do nothing to promote Yahweh's glory.

The second etiology form, "He called the name of the place Massah . . . because they put the Lord to the proof

¹⁵⁷Johannes Fichtner, "Die Etymologische Etiologie in den Namengebung der Geschichtlichen Bücher des Alten Testaments," Vetus Testamentum, 6 (1956):393-94. For examples of Yahweh's acts over against those of the people in etiological contexts, see Gen. 22:14, Abraham and Isaac on the mount, "The Lord will provide." Gen. 26:22, Isaac and Rehobath, for "the Lord has made room for us." Gen. 28:19, Jacob at Bethel. Gen. 32:2 (Hebrew, v. 3), Jacob at Manahaim, for "this is God's army." Gen. 32:20. (Hebrew v. 31), Jacob at Peniel. Num. 11:3, Fire at Taberah. Num. 11:34, Graves at Kibroth-Hattaavah. Num. 21:2, Destruction at Hormah. Joshua 5:9, Gilgal, Egypt's reproach removed. Each of these passages are with a מִרִּב form. See also Burke O. Long, The Problem of the Etiological Narrative in the Old Testament, p. 74.

by saying, 'Is the Lord among us or not?'" is a complete form by itself. The name Massah is derived from the verb מָסָה . The action of the people in their contending is corrected by Moses.¹⁵⁸ He tells them they are testing Yahweh. When the people turn to murmuring, וַיִּלְלִיכוּ , it still is against Moses. They have not acknowledged Yahweh's presence or guidance. Rather, they murmur against the entire Exodus event (verse 3). They come in conflict with Yahweh not just on the matter of water, but on the value of the deliverance from Egypt and the promise of the land. The test to which the people put Yahweh is expressed in the question "Is Yahweh among us or not?" In the context it does not appear to be an unprejudiced question but a negative cry of hopelessness. Again, the Massah etiology here takes the precedence over the Meribah etiology. The etiology grows out of Israel's murmuring and Yahweh's gracious care and providence. Yahweh's care becomes more surprising because of the attitude of the

¹⁵⁸Coats' arguments, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 63 concerning the use of מָסָה probably needs further study. Although his contention that מָסָה by itself as a neutral term can stand, it does have negative connotations when Israel tests Yahweh. It does become a challenge. His statement "Thus Deut. 6:16 and Ps. 95:8 are not so much concerned with the fact that the Israelites tested Yahweh, but with the fact that the object of the testing was Yahweh" must be put in context. Deut. 6:16 is in the context of law statements, "You shall not. . . ." which places the burden on Israel's acts. Ps. 95:8 is in the context of the plea "O that today you would hearken to his voice!" There is concern over Israel's acts, not just with the object of these acts, Yahweh.

people and places his grace in a wider perspective. In this wider perspective the people are to come to a greater knowledge of Yahweh's power and his concern for them. The etiology, the place-name, can be a reminder by its mere mention in the salvation history of the people.

Since the etiologies are a reminder of Israel's acts and Yahweh's response, the next step is to examine how this narrative and the place-names are used in later traditions and the expression of the salvation history. Meribah and Massah are mentioned side by side in Deut. 33:8 and Ps. 95:8. The later instance might be challenged by some. Massah is mentioned alone in Deut. 6:16 and 9:22. Meribah is identified alone, or as the waters of Meribah and Meribah Kadesh in Num. 20:13; 27:12-14; Deut. 32:51; and Ps. 81:7; 106:32. The place-names are mentioned outside the Pentateuch only in the Psalms and the measurement of the land section in the final chapters of Ezekiel's prophecy.

The text of Deut. 33:8 is difficult and unclear. It is Moses' Blessing of the tribe of Levi. וְיִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁמְרֵם
וְיִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁמְרֵם leaves a question concerning the identification of the Urim and Thummin. Sigo Lehming believes Yahweh is meant by the suffix¹⁵⁹ while A. H. J.

¹⁵⁹ Sigo Lehming, "Massa und Meriba," Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, NF 32 (1961):75. Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 65, concludes the subject of the testing is Yahweh, and Levi, the object of the testing, because positive results are given in the task of preserving and transmitting the sacred traditions.

Gunneweg states it is basically impossible to decide.¹⁶⁰ The end of the phrase, **לְאִישׁ אֶחָד מִלְוִיִּם**, also presents a problem. Who is this 'godly one'? The state of the present text¹⁶¹ offers little hope for a conclusive decision. The concern arises because of the uncertainty of identification of the testing one, and who is the one tested (verse 8b).

According to Ezra 2:63 all the Levites had access to the Thummim and Urim, but normally it was used by the high priest. As a Levite (Exod. 2:1), Moses was the pre-eminent member of this tribe, and thus would carry the Thummin and Urim (Exod. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; compare Joshua and the high priest, Num. 27:21; David and Abiathar, 1 Sam. 23:9-12). The suffix, **לְאִישׁ אֶחָד מִלְוִיִּם**, would refer to the Levites and the godly one to Moses. Then, as Gunneweg argues against Lehming,¹⁶² the **וְאֶחָד מִלְוִיִּם** of verse 8b governs

¹⁶⁰A. H. J. Gunneweg, "Leviten und Priester," Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments, 89, ed. Ernest Käsemann und Ernest Würthwein (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Rupprecht, 1965): 38-39.

¹⁶¹The Septuagint has inserted *ὁὶε λευει*, and several translations have adopted this addition: Revised Standard Version; The New American Bible, The King James Version and the Jerusalem Bible have remained closer to the Massoretic text, as well as Luther's German translation.

¹⁶²Lehming, "Massa und Meriba," holds that **בְּמַסָּה** and **עַל-מֵי מֵרִיבָה** are not place-names in retrospect, but rather describe the action. Of course, Lehming sees this as action against Yahweh. He maintains the misunderstanding of Massah and Meribah as place-names here accounts for all the references as place-names. There is no known locale for Massah, pp. 76-77.

both the verbs נִסְיָתוֹ and תִּרְיַבְהוּ, and Massah and Meribah are place-names rather than participles describing the actions of the people. However, he does have difficulty in identifying Moses as the "godly one" because Moses is not mentioned in the text. He rather recognizes the Levites at this point.¹⁶³ The poetic passages in Ps. 16:10, "let thy godly one (אֱלֹהֵי יְדִי) see the pit," and Ps. 89:20 (English, verse 19), "of old thou didst speak in a vision to thy faithful one" do not identify the "godly one" either. The problem that remains is to find justification for identifying the Levites as the testing and contending ones at Massah and Meribah. It would be a generality without foundation to suggest that this tribe stands as the representatives of all the contending tribes.

The Blessing of the tribe of Levi is unique among the listed blessings of the tribes and therefore poses further difficulties. The Levites are the only tribe whose past deeds are rehearsed in the Blessing of Moses (Deuteronomy 33). One might argue that the blessing of Gad (verse 20-21) is a rehearsal of the past, but it is not in the same vein as Levi's. Two opposing things, it seems, are credited to Levi and are blended together in the poetry.¹⁶⁴ They contended with Yahweh and tested him

¹⁶³Gunneweg, "Leviten und Priester," pp. 38-39.

¹⁶⁴P. Craigie, The Book of Deuteronomy, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, ed. R. K. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), p. 396, sees separate events blended together in

(verse 8) and they called Israel back to faithfulness toward the word and covenant (verse 9). Drawn together in the poetry style, the faithfulness and teaching function of verse 9 does not necessarily refer to the places Massah and Meribah. This is probably a reference to the culmination of the Golden Calf event (Exod. 32:25-29). Several separate incidents probably are reflected in the Blessing, and drawn together in one review.

Another possible time when Meribah and Massah are mentioned side by side is in Ps. 95:8, "Harden not your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness." The sequence of the names is changed: Meribah is mentioned first. The wilderness generation is accused of "hardening the heart," **תִּקְשָׁה לְבַבְכֶם**. The **רִיב** no longer plays a part. It seems legitimate to question whether Massah should be treated as a place-name rather than a participle that describes the fault. Verse 8b reads **כַּיּוֹם בַּיַּדְבָּר**, "as the day of testing in the wilderness." The difficulty arises in verse 9 where the verb **נִסִּיתִי**, introduced by **אֲשֶׁר**, is parallel to this verse. If **נִסִּיתִי** is a participle, a second form from the same verb root would be in the parallel verse. This is hardly likely because the Psalm shows a tendency to develop thought-patterns and word variations by identifying the

verses 8 and 9, specifically Rephidim (Exod. 17:7), Kadesh (Num. 20:1-13) and the Golden Calf event (Exod. 32:26-29).

tempting of God as ׁוְיִצְרָאֵל (verse 9b). At the same time this Psalm could hardly be cited as evidence that Meribah and Massah are the same locale, or that only one "water-from-the-rock" happening occurred in the desert wanderings or the same name applied to two events. By the time this Psalm was authored the traditions had been so closely intertwined and the wilderness seen as one extended event that individual narratives cannot be neatly identified. One narrative is blended into another. In the verse immediately after the mention of Meribah and Massah the Psalmist moves into the tradition of the forty year sojourn, a note that is far removed from the Meribah and Massah traditions. There is more concern for the parenetic purposes of the Psalm than for historical accuracy.

The idea of judgment surfaces in the Psalm, although it is not in the narrative of Exodus 17. In the cultus judgment becomes a link between history and law. The Psalm is a call to worship Yahweh, the rock of salvation (verse 1), the King (verse 3), the Creator (verses 4,5), and we are his people (verse 7). The positive confession is followed by a plea that this people will not deal negatively with Yahweh the way an unappreciative people did at Meribah and Massah. The two points of emphasis of Exod. 17:1-7 are in the Psalm. God has shown goodness and mercy to the people. The negative response of the people at Massah and Meribah is to be a warning that the people addressed

by the Psalmist do not repeat this hardening of heart. The inclusion of the word of judgment in the Psalm, "Therefore I swore in my anger that they should not enter my rest" suggests it may be connected with the putative Covenant Festival of Israel.¹⁶⁵

Massah stands alone in Deut. 6:16 and 9:20. The first passage is in the form of apodictic law, לֹא תִנְסֶהוּ, the negative with an imperfect verb. The same grammatical structure is used in the Ten Commandments (Deut. 5:8, 9, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 6:14 (לֹא יִתְּלוּן אֶתְּיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם (אֲדָרִים)). Deut. 6:14 is in an important context because faith in and faithfulness to Yahweh is the content of the law. The statement in verse 15 is "The Lord your God in the midst of you is a jealous God." "Yahweh among us" is the ultimate question of Exod. 16:7. In each of the passages, Exodus and Deuteronomy, the people are to react in faith to Yahweh's presence. The command to faithfulness is impressed even further by the negative commandment "You shall not put Yahweh your God to the test," תִּנְסֶהוּ, a Piel imperfect plural, "as you tested at Massah" (Deut. 6:16). No reference is made to a positive element of Yahweh's care in providing water. No statement is made to describe the nature of the testing.¹⁶⁶ These details are

¹⁶⁵ Artur Weiser, Psalms, p. 46. The judgment factor in the alleged covenant festival Psalms is apparent in Ps. 9:16-19; 11:4-7; 17:2-3; 17:15; 50:4; 68:1, etc.

¹⁶⁶ Gerhard von Rad, Deuteronomy, The Old Testament Library, ed. G. Ernest Wright, et al., trans. Dorothea

of no importance here. Faithfulness to Yahweh (verses 13, 14,15) and obedience to his commandments (verse 17) are the focal points of this verse. Moses uses the elements of the Massah narrative that will stress his point. There is no neutral meaning of testing at Massah as Coats would suggest.¹⁶⁷ It seems difficult to separate the testing from the object of that test, Yahweh, just as the positive law "You shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God" can hardly be divided into a statement of faithfulness and diligence and then have added to it a more intense thought of Yahweh your God. Deut. 6:16 is a negative statement, an accusing statement, directed against the wilderness generation, and becomes an exhortation to the hearers to behave well towards Yahweh. The character of Yahweh, his jealousy, $\text{X}\ddot{\text{P}}\text{R} \text{ } \ddot{\text{N}}\text{N}$, is the motivation for faithfulness, not the successive wonderful deeds he has performed for them.

In Deut. 9:22 Massah, without mention of Meribah, is listed among a series of stopping places, "At Taberah also, and at Massah, and at Kibroth-hattaavah you provoked the Lord to wrath." Again, Massah is seen in the negative light of the provocation. No mention is made of a true

Barton (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), p. 64: "Putting God to the test means letting his worship depend on a test, and this would be equivalent to a complete failure to appreciate God's claim, and hence a defiance on God." Tempting Yahweh is not a motif in Deuteronomy, and is used only in the Massah contexts.

¹⁶⁷Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 63.

need nor the nature of the provocation. In the face of threatened destruction (verse 25), Moses declares he had taken the stance of Mediator and had lain prostrate on the mountain praying that Yahweh would not destroy this people as he had threatened. A negative word of judgment appears that is not in the narrative material of Exod. 17:1-7. In the context of law and covenant reminders of Massah are limited to the action of the people and are negative.

In summary, although there is no word of judgment in the account of the water flowing from the rock (Exod. 17:1-7), the two references in Deuteronomy that mention Massah alone are in contexts that include a word of judgment against a rebellious people. In the original narrative Yahweh's gracious care predominates. Placed where it is,¹⁶⁸ in the pre-Sinai cycle, the original purpose probably concentrates on Yahweh making himself known to his people as a gracious, merciful God. However, when the people of Israel defect in later generations, the action

¹⁶⁸In Deut. 9:22 Massah is grouped with events that happen after the Sinai cycle. Taberah and Kibroth-hattaavah are unknown locations on the route. Although Taberah and Kibroth-hattaavah are in sequence and the refusal to invade the promised land from the south is mentioned immediately thereafter (Num. 11:13; Deut. 9:22-24), probably not too much weight can be placed on the insertion of Massah immediately after Taberah, and suggest a Kadesh location. Deuteronomy 9 is concerned with the topic of the rebellion of the people, and not with the sequence and itinerary. Possibly the same can be said of the stories of the pre-Sinai cycle - this is not a simple itinerary, but a concern that the people come to know Yahweh who leads them carefully, and will, in a short time, give them his laws to live by.

of the wilderness people predominates, and becomes a means to warn a generation that also fails to recognize God's care in the promised land.

Several instances in which Meribah is mentioned alone remain. In Num. 20:13; 27:14; Deut. 32:51 and Ps. 106:32 the designation is "the waters of Meribah." In Num. 27:14 and Deut. 32:51 these are waters located at Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin. In two instances the action of Moses is highlighted. He rebelled against Yahweh (Num. 27:12); he broke faith (Deut. 32:51). In Num. 20:13 and Ps. 106:32 Israel challenges Yahweh and angers him, but ultimately the ill falls to Moses. Previously it was concluded that somehow Meribah was associated with Massah in Exod. 17:1-7, but actually they were separated accounts and events. The Meribah location appears to be more closely associated with the springs of Kadesh in the area known as 'Ain Qadeis, just south of the Israelite border, in the wilderness of Zin.¹⁶⁹

One more set of poetic developments of the theme "water-from-the-rock" remains. The wonder is mentioned but not the place-names Massah and Meribah. In a word of encouragement to exiles of Babylon who are about to return to Jerusalem, Yahweh opened the rock and water gushed forth. It flowed through the desert like a river (Ps. 105:41); also the wilderness people did not thirst when he

¹⁶⁹IDB. s.v. "Kadesh, Kadesh-Barnea" by Simon Cohen.

led them through the desert (Isa. 48:21); Ezra prays Yahweh will bring water from the rock (Neh. 9:9); Yahweh turns the rock into a pool of water (Ps. 114:8); a definite statement is made that Yahweh will bring an abundance of water (Ps. 78:12,15). The one negative statement of the event is in the form of the question whether God who brought water from the rock can also spread a table in the wilderness (Ps. 78:19,20)?

The writers who interpret this event at a later time use the details of the narrative to suit their purposes. On the one hand they call attention to Yahweh's goodness and encourage the people to move on to the immediate future Yahweh has ordained. When the function of the story is to demonstrate faith, the instruction identifies Moses as obedient to Yahweh's commands. This call to faith is especially evident in the references that encourage the people of the new exodus after the Babylonian captivity to return to their homeland.

Other writers see the events of Massah and Meribah as examples of continuing rebellion by the people of Israel. The warning of rebellion is given primarily to the people living before the destruction of Jerusalem. The constant struggle with the native gods of Canaan gives rise to the warnings that rebellion and disobedience to God must cease, or the nation will be destroyed. The word of judgment is heard in its severe, punishing tones.

In the narrative of Exod. 17:1-7 the purpose is to

demonstrate Yahweh's goodness as he leads his people in the wilderness. There is no threat of punishment. It seems the writer is in the process of showing that compassion and longsuffering of Yahweh that compels him to reveal himself to the people. They must know him in order to be faithful to him and to follow his leadership fully trusting his compassion and power to lead them.

Numbers 20:1-13. The Denial of Moses

This is the third narrative that tells of the need for water. However, after Yahweh gives the water to a thirsty people he speaks a word of judgment to Moses and Aaron.

v. 1 The sons of Israel, all the congregation, came into the desert of Zin in the first month, and the people remained in Kadesh. And Miriam died there and she was buried there.

v. 2 And there was no water for the congregation, and they were gathered together against Moses and against Aaron.

v. 3 ~~And~~ the people contended with Moses and they said,¹⁷⁰ 'Would that we had breathed our last when our brothers died before Yahweh!

v. 4 'And why have you brought the congregation of Yahweh to this desert to die here, we and our cattle.

v. 5 'And why have you led us out of Egypt to bring us to this evil place, not a place for (of) sowing, or a fig tree, or a vine, or a pomegranate, and there is no water to drink.'

v. 6 And Moses and Aaron went into the door of the

¹⁷⁰ No evidence for the proposed reading in Biblia Hebraica, ed. Rudolph Kittel, 10th emended edition, (Stuttgart: Privilegierte Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1937), p. 126, "and they rebelled."

tent of assembly in the sight of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces. Then the glory of the Lord appeared to them.

v. 7 And Yahweh said to Moses,

v. 8 'Take the rod and call together the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will give its water, and you will bring out water for them from the rock and you will furnish drink for the congregation and their cattle.'

v. 9 And Moses took the rod from before Yahweh as he had commanded him.

v. 10 And Moses and Aaron called the congregation together before the rock and he said to them, 'Hear, now, rebels! Shall we bring water out of this rock for you?'

v. 11 And Moses lifted his hand and he struck the rock with his rod twice, and much water came out and the congregation and their cattle drank.

v. 12 And Yahweh said to Moses and to Aaron, 'Because you did not believe in me to sanctify me in the eyes of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not enter with this congregation into the land which I have given them.'

v. 13 These are the waters of Meribah where the sons of Israel contended with Yahweh, and he sanctified himself among them (he showed himself holy).

The time factor in the opening verse is defective insofar as no year is mentioned: "the people of Israel, . . . came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month. . . ." Oftentimes in Numbers the formula included the year, the month, and the day.

In the second year in the second month, on the twentieth day of the month, the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle of the testimony, and the people set out by stages from the wilderness of Zinai (Num. 10:11).¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹Also Num. 1:1,18; 9:1; 33:3; 33:38.

Either by some loss in the transmission of the text, or by an oversight of the narrator, the ingredients of the year and the day are missing in Num. 20:1.¹⁷² As a formula this text seems more closely aligned with the pattern setting the celebrations of annual festivals, "On the first day of the seventh month you shall have a holy convocation" (Num. 29:1 and several times in the chapter).

The other associations at the beginning of Numbers 20 are with the place-name Kadesh and the death of Miriam. Kadesh is almost at the southern border of the land of promise. Three springs are in the area, and possibly the Israelites used all three for their purposes, for they stayed here for an extended period of time (Numbers 13, 14, Deuteronomy 1). Only one of the springs, 'Ain el-Qudeirat, flows all year long.¹⁷³ This locale is identified with this narrative. In Num. 20:16 Kadesh is identified as a city.

The other point mentioned is the death of Miriam. Miriam is named in Exod. 15:20 as the leader of the

¹⁷²Von Rad, Old Testament Theology, 1:280, maintains "Israel returns to Kadesh in the fortieth year," and Ramban, Numbers, Commentary on the Torah, p. 210, argues this is the 40th year. R. Winterbotham, "Numbers," The Pulpit Commentary, vol. 2, ed. H. D. M. Spence and Joseph Exell (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1950 edition), p. 252, has the interesting, but textually absent observation that the individual tribes had dispersed and traveled, and now reassembled in the 40th year, the first month, at Kadesh.

¹⁷³"Kadesh-Barnea," The Biblical World, ed. Charles F. Pfeiffer (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1966), p. 334-35. IDB, s.v. "Kadesh-Barnea" by S. Cohen.

celebrating women after the crossing of the Sea of Reeds and again in Numbers 12 where, with Aaron, she challenges the leadership of Moses. She is struck with leprosy for seven days as her punishment. The people are delayed for one week in their movement through the desert because of Miriam's and Aaron's sin. Neither of the associations in Num. 20:1, the Kadesh location nor the death of Miriam, shed definite light on the time frame within the Wilderness Wanderings when the water flowed from the rock and supplied the people and their cattle with water.

A number of critical scholars are in agreement that the material in this narrative shares a common source with the spring narratives of Exod. 17:1-7 and possibly also Exod. 15:22-26.¹⁷⁴ However, the source material has been used at the discretion of individual authors identified as the Yahwist, the Elohist, and the Priestly Writers who teach from specific theological perspectives. These writers, it is claimed, can be identified by the theological viewpoint as well as the use of vocabulary that is characteristic to their individual life spans.

¹⁷⁴Martin Noth, Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuchs, p. 15, and Numbers, p. 144; Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 71; Fritz, Israel in der Wüste, p. 28; Lehming, "Massa und Meriba," p. 71; Otto Eissfeldt, The Old Testament: An Introduction, trans. Peter R. Ackroyd (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 186; George Widengren, "What Do We Know About Moses?" Proclamation and Presence, ed. John I. Durham and J. R. Porter (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1970), p. 44; Frank Cross, "The Priestly Work," Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 311.

The details of vocabulary and theological emphasis of the two narratives listed above seem to be too diverse to treat merely as expansions by several authors of one story. Certainly some phrases are verbatim, repeated in each text. Exod. 17:2 and Num. 20:3 are parallel, **וַיִּקְרָב** - **וַיִּשְׁפֹּךְ אֶת-הַמָּוֶל**. In Exod. 17:3 the complaint and charge against Moses is a joint cry by the people, 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die. . . ?' while in Num. 20:4 there is a spokesman who charges Moses with the injustice against the 'congregation of Israel.' In Num. 20:3 only the charge against Moses and Aaron is preceded by a groan of wishing introduced by an interjection, **וְלֹא גִוַעְנוּ בְּגֹלַע אֲרָצוֹת לְפָנָי; יִהְיֶה**. A similar phrase with a perfect verb form occurs in Num. 14:2. The verb is **מִתְנַו** and the circumstances of wished for death is in the land of Egypt or in the wilderness rather than in battle with the people from the Nephilim. Neither the literary form nor the vocabulary is limited to a specific time frame.¹⁷⁵ The voicing of the wish for death with the "brothers" must be different from anything expressed in Exod. 17:1-7 for the wilderness people had faced no such previous experience of multiple deaths up to that time.

¹⁷⁵Critical scholars have traditionally agreed that the word **גִּוַע** is usually limited to later authors. However, it is found in Ps. 104:29, a hymn dated in the monarchic, pre-exilic period, Mitchell Dahood, Psalms, 3 vols., The Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company 1970), 3:33.

Multiple deaths had occurred in Num. 11:33 at Kib'roth-hatta-avah and in connection with the Korah -- Dathan -- Abiram dispute in Num. 16:31,32,35. Although there is no conclusive statement that the reference is to these events, they are possibilities for the reference in Num. 20:3. While there is no parallel in Exod. 17:2,3 to this wish clause, Num. 20:3 has no parallel to Moses' statement that the people have no right to contend with him but rather they are testing Yahweh (Exod. 17:2).

The vocabulary, too, differs extensively between the two accounts. The rock Moses is to strike, according to Num. 20:8, is **דַּסְּלֵעַ**, while in Exod. 17:6 it is **אֲבָנֵי הַחַבְרֹן**. Each of these words can refer to cliffs or formations of rock as well as an individual rock. Aaron is mentioned in the Numbers narrative but not in Exodus. The cattle that will die with the humans are **וּבְנֵי הַבָּיִת** in the second narrative, and **מִקְנֵי** in the first.

The differences continue in the narratives. While the complaint in Exodus is confined to the fear of death by thirst, the complaint in Numbers is that this is a bad place,¹⁷⁶ not a place to grow crops of grain, figs, vines, pomegranates, plus the fact that water is lacking. The complaint suggests the people have been here for a long

¹⁷⁶ **אֲרֻמֵּי הַחַבְרֹן** refers to a place that cannot produce food. The spies are to see if the land is good or bad, Num. 13:19. The waters of Jericho are bad, undrinkable, 2 Kings 2:19; the bad figs are not edible, Jer. 24:2,3,8.

period of time, and at least have the thought forming that this may be a permanent residence. The evidence of a broader outlook on the alternatives suggests this is a separate event from that of Exod. 17:1-7.

The events surrounding the plea of the intercessor differ. While Moses, acting alone, voices his fear of the people, "they will stone me" (Exod. 17:4), the second narrative has Aaron going with Moses to the tent of meeting, the place of revelation, to gain direction from Yahweh (Num. 20:6). Here the 'glory of the Lord'¹⁷⁷ appears, and Yahweh gives instruction. The rod that is the sign of Yahweh's presence is Aaron's rod. It has been placed in the 'tent of testimony.' Now it is to be brought out as a sign that the murmuring of the people is against Yahweh (Num. 17:10, Hebrew, verse 26). Moses and Aaron are instructed to speak to the rock (Num. 20:8), but Moses receives explicit instruction to strike the rock in Exod. 17:6. While the elders are the witnesses to Yahweh's act of mercy in supplying the water in Exod. 17:6, the entire congregation is assembled, and Moses addresses them all as rebels in Num. 20:10.

The descriptive detail of the two narratives differs to such a degree that it is difficult to hold the viewpoint that these differences are only the skill of an author who

¹⁷⁷The **קְבוֹד יְהוָה** is used for theophanies in the wilderness period in Exod. 16:7,10; 24:16,17; 40:34,35; Lev. 9:6,23; Num. 14:10; 16:19; 17:7. Yahweh's **קְבוֹד** sanctifies the tent of meeting, Exod. 29:43.

seeks to build a specific theological viewpoint. It seems more realistic to consider the events as separate. The narratives show Yahweh's mercy as he gives water to a thirsting people in spite of their murmuring, Exod. 17:1-7, or in spite of the angry reaction of the chosen leaders, Num. 20:1-11. Yahweh's mercy grows from his compassion for his creation. It is the very nature of mercy that it flows out even when the recipients react negatively toward Yahweh. This lesson of mercy follows the pattern of the sweetening of the water at Marah (Exod. 15:22-26), and the supplying of the water by striking the rock at Massah and Meribah. Yahweh responds in love without rebuke, even though the people do 'contend' with Moses and they assemble against him and Aaron. The people are not charged with 'murmuring against' Yahweh.

What, then, is the unique feature of this narrative that gives an ultimate meaning different from Exod. 17:1-7? Yahweh speaks a negative word, a word of punishment against Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them" (verse 12). The statement denying them entry into the land is clear. The identification of the sin that merited the judgment has been called "one of the most difficult problems of the Torah."¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸Rabbi Moshe, quoted by Ramban (Nachmanides) in Numbers, A Commentary on the Torah, p. 213.

Noth thinks it necessary to reconstruct the text to find the answer to the question of Moses' and Aaron's sin. He would place the challenge of Moses to the people of Israel immediately after their contending with him (verses 5,6). The purpose of Moses' harsh words would be to put the congregation to a test.¹⁷⁹ Some factors make the suggestion attractive. Immediately after the complaint of the people Moses and Aaron go to the tent of meeting and the **קֶבֶד יִהְיֶה** appears. What does this appearance suggest? The only time the **קֶבֶד** appears before the Sinai sequence is in the Wilderness of Sin. The people of Israel murmur against Moses and Aaron. These leaders call them into the presence of Yahweh and the **קֶבֶד יִהְיֶה** appear in the desert. The **קֶבֶד** is a visible evidence of Yahweh's presence that gives credence to the words which follow. The words also are a means to give courage to the chosen leaders of the people.

The **קֶבֶד יִהְיֶה** is a "devouring fire" (Exod. 24:17) that is a warning to those in Yahweh's presence. Elsewhere it suddenly appears when Israel is at the point of rebellion (Num 14:10,21; 16:19). It also appears in a revelatory context (Exod. 34:35), and is an assurance, a demonstration of Yahweh's splendor, and a force in search of a response (Lev. 9:23).

The question is pertinent: For what purpose does the

¹⁷⁹Noth, Numbers, p. 147.

קָבַד appear when the people complain against Moses at Kadesh? If Moses' tirade against the congregation is placed immediately after their murmuring, the appearance of Yahweh could be as a warning to him and Aaron not to become angry. But if this is the case, the note in verse 11 makes little sense that Moses hit the rock twice,¹⁸⁰ in opposition to the command to speak to the rock (verse 8). The appearance of Yahweh as warning did not bring a positive response. At other times the appearance of the "glory of Yahweh" is followed by a dialogue between Yahweh and Moses (Num. 14:10) or by a plea of Moses for the people (Num. 16:19) even though the "fire of the Lord" consumes 250 people shortly thereafter (Num. 16:35).¹⁸¹

Attractive as Noth's reconstruction may seem on the surface, obstacles arise from the text. Furthermore, no manuscripts or versions support the reconstruction. It seems best to leave the text sequence as it is. The appearance of Yahweh in the tent of meeting is for the purpose of assurance and to give Moses instruction in the course to follow in the face of the contention of the people.

George Buchanan Gray, too, sees the need to

¹⁸⁰Noth's statement, Numbers, p. 146, that v. 11a is just "a fact taken from Ex. 17" seems a convenient way to arrive at his conclusion. There is more detail in Numbers 20 - the word for rock changes, emphasis is on the rock struck twice.

¹⁸¹The "glory of God" is a consuming fire. Exod. 24:17.

reconstruct the framework of the narrative in the text in order to come to grips with the question of Moses' sin. He favorably reviews C. H. Cornill's position which maintains the story is an open rebellion in which Moses took an active part, but a later editor reconstructed the Priestly Writer's original story to soften the tones and preserve Moses' integrity as the leader Yahweh had chosen.¹⁸² The original rebellion, according to Cornill and Gray, happened when Moses agreed with the people not to invade the promised land from Kadesh-Barnea.

The suggested reconstruction follows this pattern: Yahweh bids Moses and Aaron to address the rock to bring forth its water. Moses and Aaron refuse in the words addressed to Yahweh "Can we bring water for them out of this rock?" Yahweh replies, "Hearken to me, ye rebels, . . ." and then bids them strike the rock. After they do it, and the water comes forth, Yahweh pronounces the judgment of denial of entry into the land "because you did not believe. . . ."¹⁸³ The manipulation of the text with nothing more than the suggestion that an editor at a given period of time wanted to tone down negative reports about Moses is weak and unfounded. Moses receives the offer to

¹⁸²George Buchanan Gray, Numbers, The International Critical Commentary, ed. Charles Briggs, Samuel Driver, and Alfred Plummer (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1903), p. 262. Also Frederick V. Winnett, The Mosaic Tradition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1949), p. 150.

¹⁸³G. B. Gray, Numbers, p. 262.

be the progenitor of a new people Yahweh will take to himself in covenant (Num. 14:11). This promise at the time of the proposed invasion of the land from the south is more than a toning down of a rebellious spirit in Moses. It is a further acclaim of his leadership. Once again, there are no textual problems or manuscript variances that would validate such radical revision of the text and the characters of the narrative.

Coats has developed an intricate system of levels of the tradition that primarily was a murmuring against the Exodus from Egypt, but this theme was eventually replaced by the people's murmuring because of the lack of water. Eventually he concludes that Moses is denied entrance into the land because he suffers vicariously for the deserved punishment of the people.¹⁸⁴ Coats' conclusion is dependent upon his presupposition that only one spring narrative lies in the wilderness tradition and the individual stories are the narrator's reworking, adding details and motifs according to the individual will. A second presupposition is that the murmuring theme is basic to the wilderness traditions and must be worked into the theological scheme of the separate narratives rather than

¹⁸⁴Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, pp. 81-82. He thus bridges the passages that tell of Moses' vicarious suffering in Deut. 1:36; 3:26; 4:21. A. D. H. Mayes, Deuteronomy, The New Century Bible Commentary, ed. Ronald Clements and Andrew Black (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), p. 147, deduces that this is not a vicarious suffering, but Moses suffers the same fate as his people.

maintain that but one spring tradition has been repeated.¹⁸⁵

One more attempt to explain Moses' sin is made by Frederick Winnett. He concludes the narrative is entirely a Priestly composition "without any basis in the original tradition." It is "devised for the sole purpose of casting an aura of sanctity about the waters of 'Ain Kadis." The divine sentence barring Moses and Aaron from entry into the promised land belongs properly in the spy account of Numbers 14. As a result the narrator invents a special sin, Moses strikes the rock, and this becomes the basis for punishment.¹⁸⁶

Theological problems cannot be satisfactorily solved by declaring certain stories are fabricated and the cause for judgments are made on the basis of details which actually originate in other wilderness narratives. There is no satisfactory answer to the question why the writer "finds it necessary" to cast an aura of sanctity around 'Ain Kadis. This place has no impact on later Israelite history. The stories preserved are to have a meaning for

¹⁸⁵We cannot agree with Coats that the place of the elders in the manna narrative, Num. 11:16-18 is evidence that the whole people of Israel also witnessed the spring narrative of Exod. 17:5,6, and therefore only one spring event exists, p. 77. Nor can we agree that the emphasis on the Exodus is lost in Num. 20:1-13 because a so-called Priestly Writer "no longer understands the distinctive impact of that emphasis for the rebellion motif," p. 79.

¹⁸⁶Winnett, The Mosaic Tradition, pp. 150-51.

Israel as the nation struggles to live out a life of faithfulness to the merciful Yahweh (Ps. 78:1-9; 106:1-5; Deut. 29:5,6).

In order to determine the sin of Moses and Aaron that merited the strong judgment denying entry into the promised land, we begin with the charges as stated. Then we seek to determine what, in the narrative, most closely matches these charges.

Yahweh's accusation is "Because you did not believe in me to sanctify me . . ." (verse 12). The accusation is introduced by וְיַעֲזֹב followed by a divine statement beginning with וְיִשְׁמַע . The formula bears an affinity with the prophetic judgment speech except that these forms are introduced first by $\text{כִּי־יִשְׁמַע־יְהוָה־בְּעֵינֵי־יְהוָה}$. The judgment speech has a word of rebuke because of a past deed, followed by a prediction of the future.¹⁸⁷ The formula is also common. The word to Moses and Aaron is a formal accusation, and tentatively could be understood as the basis of the later developed prophetic judgment speech. A much more direct contact between Yahweh and Moses exists at this point in Israel's history than exists later between Yahweh and the people. Later on the prophet is the designated messenger of Yahweh to carry the message to the people. At Kadesh

¹⁸⁷ 1 Kings 14:7-10; 2 Kings 1:16; 21:12; 22:18,20; Isa. 29:13,14; 30:30; Jer. 19:6. At times the order is reversed. The divine declaration precedes the ground of the accusation: Judg. 10:13; 2 Kings 1:6; Amos 4:12; Isa. 5:13; 7:14; 10:24; 28:16; 29:22; 30:12; 37:33; Jer. 5:14; 6:21.

Yahweh speaks directly to Moses.

The first charge is "you did not believe in me,"

לֹא־אֱמַנְתָּם בִּי (Num. 20:12). The form is a Hiphil perfect, second person plural of אָמַן. The Semitic root means 'firm, reliable, trustworthy.'¹⁸⁸ The Hiphil form governs the usage of the verb when used in a religious context, and is a unique development of the Hebrews.¹⁸⁹ The Hiphil form occurs 51 times in the Old Testament, and in 31 of these the reference is to believing in God.¹⁹⁰ The majority of uses of אָמַן in relation to Yahweh occur in references to the days of Moses.¹⁹¹

A key phrase to capture the meaning of אָמַן occurs in Exod. 4:5, לֹא־אֱמַנְתָּ בִּי . "To believe in Yahweh" is not in the context that he exists, but rather to place trust, and confidence in him, and give obedience to him,¹⁹² as Abram responds to believing the promise (Gen. 15:16). Believing is a trust and confidence that shows itself in deeds of obedience (Num. 14:11; Deut. 9:23; 1:32; Ps. 78:32; 79:66). When the

¹⁸⁸Hans Wildberger, "'Glauben' Erwägungen zu אָמַן," Supplement to Vetus Testamentum, 16 (1967):372-73.

¹⁸⁹Ibid.

¹⁹⁰The preposition בִּי is used with אָמַן with references to Yahweh; בְּ is used when references are to people. Exceptions, Exod. 14:31; Isa. 43:10; Deut. 9:23.

¹⁹¹Exod. 4:8-9; 14:31; 19:9; Num. 14:11; 20:12; Deut. 1:32; 9:23; 2 Kings 17:4; Ps. 78:22,32; 106:12,24.

¹⁹²Wildberger, p. 385.

people of Israel hear the recital of Yahweh's deeds they believe with bowed head and worship (Exod. 4:31). Yahweh's deeds give credence to Moses' position before Israel (Exod. 19:9).

In his study of יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ , R. Smend declares that the concept of a faith that matters before God does not appear before Isaiah's time, specifically with the notion of steadfastness (Isa. 7:9). He does bring the usage down to a pre-deuteronomic date.¹⁹³ This already makes possible, even according to the schedule of the critical scholar, the dating of the narrative considerably earlier than the majority of them will allow. Most of them assign this portion of the narrative to the Priestly Writer.¹⁹⁴ Smend admits the literary origin of Exod. 4:1,5,8,9,31, each with references to believing, is controversial, but must come from a time only slightly after the oldest tradition.¹⁹⁵ Artur Weiser takes the usage of יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ back one step further when he states that because

most of the instances of יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ refer to relationship with God in the days of Moses . . . shows plainly enough the close connection between the special use of

¹⁹³R. Smend, "Zur Geschichte von יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ ," Supplement to Vetus Testamentum, 16 (1967):288-90. The Syro-Ephraemite war is from 735-732 B.C., Is. 7:5,6. The Deuteronomic editor is supposed to be dated at the time of the Josianic reform, 621 B.C.

¹⁹⁴See note 174. The Priestly editor (?) dates from the exilic or post-exilic period. Gray, Numbers, p. 264, states יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ is not used by P.

¹⁹⁵Smend, p. 289.

TDN and the sacral tradition, from the very beginning of Yahweh religion in Israel.¹⁹⁶

The concept of "believe in God" evidently covers all major periods of the Old Testament. There is nothing strange in the idea that Moses and Aaron are accused of not believing. The non-believing people receive the same verdict of denial of entry into the land (Num. 14:11) as is placed on the two chosen leaders. Yahweh judges the action of the leaders with the same measure of judgment he used on the congregation of Israel.

To "believe in Yahweh" is understood in relationship with the covenant. Yahweh will fulfill everything inherent in the covenant form "You have seen how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself" (Exod. 19:4). He also expected everything of Moses that he expected as a response of the people: "If you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples. . . ." (Exod. 19:5). Obedience to Yahweh's commands is grounded in his acts. "To believe in Yahweh" is a word for the future, always looking away from human ability or potential and accepting Yahweh's total claim on the nation or the individual. Moses and Aaron failed to believe, and therefore did not confess Yahweh's power to act, and denied his claim on the people.

The second part of the accusation against Moses and

¹⁹⁶Artur Weiser, "ΠΙΣΤΕΪΣ, The Old Testament Concept," TDNT., 6:191.

Aaron declares, "You did not sanctify me in the eyes of the people of Israel." The verb קִדַּשְׁתִּי is a Hiphil infinitive construct with a first person singular masculine suffix. The root of the verb is קִדַּשׁ . The cognate languages identify the original meaning as separation, or withdrawal.¹⁹⁷ The separation is between the sacred and the profane, and thus comes to mean "holy," "withdrawn from ordinary use."¹⁹⁸ It comes to mean "to regard, or treat as sacred."

The Hiphil form, "cause to be separated, treat as holy," is used in reference to Yahweh, to people, and to things. The causal force of the Hiphil shows that a person, or thing, is designated as holy, sacred, consecrated. Aaron and his sons are instructed to keep away from the holy things "which the people of Israel dedicate to me" (Lev. 22:2). Yahweh lays claim to, sets apart for himself "all the first born in Israel, both men and beast" (Num. 3:13; 8:17). The firstling males of the flock and herd are "consecrated to the Lord your God," and therefore "you shall do no work with the firstlings of your herd . . ." (Deut. 15:19).¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷Brown, Driver, Briggs, Hebrew Lexicon, p. 871a.

¹⁹⁸Walter Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, vol. 1 in Old Testament Library, ed. G. Ernest Wright et al., Trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), p. 270.

¹⁹⁹Things or people consecrated, Lev. 27:14,15,16; 1 Kings 9:13; Jer. 1:5.

The Hiphil form is used to designate Yahweh as holy, to treat him as holy. Yahweh is sanctified by the people because of his deeds. "For when he (Jacob, the northern kingdom after the destruction of 722 B.C.) sees his children, the work of my hands, in his midst, they will sanctify my name" (Isa. 29:22). The reaction of the people to the holy is fear and dread (Isa. 8:13; 29:23). The concept of making holy is bound to Yahweh in the Israelite religion more so than among the peoples of the non-biblical religions.²⁰⁰ The concept is that of a relationship of the people with Yahweh. A personal element is involved, over against the sphere of naturalistic power, or some figurative, spiritual ritual of the cultus.²⁰¹

Yahweh's accusation against Moses and Aaron is that they did not believe in him, that is, they broke a relationship of trust. They also broke a relationship of awe and fear, especially as this applies to the people, "you did not sanctify me in the eyes of the people" (verse 12). In some way, by their actions, they took away from Yahweh's majesty and transcendence.

The question that needs to be asked is: What actions of Moses and Aaron warranted such an accusation? After Moses and Aaron heard the complaints of the people, "Why have you brought the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness

²⁰⁰Von Rad, Old Testament Theology, 1:206.

²⁰¹Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, 1:272.

. . . ? And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place . . . ?" they fall on their faces in the tent of meeting; they follow the instruction to take the rod of Aaron out of the tent of meeting; in keeping with Yahweh's command they gather the people together before the rock; Moses addresses the people very antagonistically; he strikes the rock twice with his rod in spite of the fact that Yahweh instructed him just to speak to it. The two negative actions are the address to the people and the striking of the rock.

Moses addresses the people as "rebels," a participle of the verb סָרָה . It is an active verb form, and is used elsewhere to describe the action of the people of Israel in the wilderness history (Deut. 1:26; 1:43; 9:3; Ps. 78:8, 17,40; 106:7,33,43).²⁰²

The key, then, to the problem is to recognize that Yahweh's commands are to be obediently carried out. There is a marked divergence between the commands given and the actions taken. Unbelief is a failure to trust Yahweh's word of promise or command. Failure to carry out the

²⁰²Coats' evaluation that סָרָה is "in later texts which compose the murmuring motif," פֶּסַח 78, needs to be tested. In Psalm 78 it is used with being refractory, refusing to submit, forgetting Yahweh's words, v. 11; testing, v. 18, etc. In Psalm 106 there is movement between believing and forgetting his works. In Ezekiel 20 the wilderness is a pattern of the coming judgment, not a murmuring emphasis, von Rad, Old Testament Theology, 1:283. Noth observes that the etiology, Meribah, contend, does not lead naturally to the idea of murmuring, and therefore the murmuring was not a primary, necessary ingredient to this story, Pentateuch Tradition, p. 123.

command of Yahweh brings the same judgment against the leaders that the unbelieving people receive in the spy narrative (Num. 14:28-30).²⁰³ Moses' and Aaron's disobedience in striking the rock demonstrates an unbelief on their part also.

The second part of the accusation is the word of anger spoken against Israel. Moses asks, "From this rock shall we bring forth water for you?"²⁰⁴ The question does not consider Yahweh's power to perform a miracle, of his care, his trust toward Israel. They did not make clear that Yahweh's holiness manifests itself in mighty wonders. By the word Moses is taking credit for himself and Aaron, and the eyes of the people are not directed to the Lord Yahweh. Yahweh is robbed of some of the fear due him²⁰⁵ and the people do not take joy in his presence. When the

²⁰³Gordon Wenham, Numbers, The Tyndale Old Testament Commentary series, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL.:Inter Varsity Press, 1981), p. 15, states a similar view. Also John Marsh, "The Book of Numbers," The Interpreter's Bible, 12 vols. ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1952), 2:239 states this is a "hypothetical accusation."

²⁰⁴Arnold Goldberg, Das Buch Numeri, Die Welt Der Bibel, ed. Willibrand Hillmann et al. (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1970), p. 90, suggests this question is the basis for understanding the sin, probably correctly.

²⁰⁵Gray, Numbers, p. 263. Rambran, Numbers, p. 216, also considers this the best explanation. Moses and Aaron should inform the people the "Eternal" will do wonders, not their own wisdom. See Ps. 114:7,8. Not stated quite this forcefully, but see also Keil-Delitzsch, 3:130-1; Eugene Arden, "How Moses Failed God," Journal of Biblical Literature, 76 (1957):50-52, concludes Moses blasphemes because he takes credit for providing water.

word comes to Moses that Aaron is to be taken to the fathers, the accusation is that "you rebelled," these two chose to take upon themselves the authority to provide water (Num. 20:24; 27:14). The rebellion accusation is placed parallel to the failure "to sanctify me at the waters of Meribah." Moses' and Aaron's sin seems to be twofold - the failure to follow the command to speak to the rock and the attempt to demonstrate their own ability to bring water from the rock rather than credit the miracle of mercy to Yahweh. For whatever purpose, to chide, to antagonize, or to take personal credit for providing the water, Moses and Aaron obstructed the sacredness of Yahweh, his glory and his holiness in the eyes of the people.

The narrative speaks a word of judgment against the leaders of Israel to demonstrate Yahweh's wrath against all disobedience. At the same time the narrative shows Yahweh's grace to the people of Israel. This grace stands in spite of the complaint of the people about the dreadful conditions at Kadesh. Even though the complaint is not directly addressed to Yahweh, the charge of dubious leadership focuses on Yahweh's chosen leaders. Moses and Aaron bring the complaint to the tent of meeting, and thus lay it before Yahweh.

The narrative closes with the statement "Yahweh sanctified himself among them," (Num. 20:13). In the Niphal the emphasis is that Yahweh proves himself holy in spite of the fact that Moses and Aaron failed to manifest it.

Yahweh's action gains him honor and fear in the giving of water. The giving of water in spite of the complaining posture of the people multiplies God's grace. But Yahweh's actions also denote the punishment, "You shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them (verse 12). A similar Niphal in a context of punishment appears in the narrative of the unholy fire of Nadab and Abihu. The fire devours these two and Moses says to Aaron, "This is what the Lord has said, 'I will show myself holy among those who are near me, **בְּקִרְבִי אֶפְתָּח**, and before all the people I will be glorified, **אֲפָאֵר בְּעֵינֵי כָל הָעָם**'" (Lev. 10:3). Yahweh shows himself holy also in judgments of wrath against the evil deeds of people. The punishment to Moses and Aaron accomplishes that which these two would take away from him, his holiness before the people.²⁰⁶ By means of his deeds Yahweh sets himself apart from the earthly, from all that is human. The mercy in giving the water to a needy people is such a mighty act. By doing this he puts the complaining, unbelieving people to shame. At the same time the judgment of his wrath against Moses and Aaron sets him above the human wisdom, and punishes them for the weakness of faith.²⁰⁷

The emphasis in the narrative is the judgment of Yahweh against Moses and Aaron. They shall not enter the land

²⁰⁶Isa. 5:16; Ezek. 28:20; 36:23.

²⁰⁷Keil-Delitzsch, 3:131.

given to the congregation of Israel. The question needs still to be asked, How do later Scripture references interpret the sin of Moses and Aaron? Do later references interpret this event at Kadesh differently?

Previously reference was made to the announcement at Mount Hor that Aaron's death is imminent "because you rebelled against my command at the waters of Meribah" (Num. 20:24). The verb is **קִרְיִתֶם**, a Qal perfect, second person masculine plural of **קָרָה**, denoting that the divine command of Yahweh was rejected. It is possible that the charge of rebellion stems from Moses' angry words against the people. He calls them rebels (verse 10). Counteracting Moses, Yahweh is emphasizing who the real rebels were at Kadesh.

The same word, **קִרְיִתֶם**, is used in the announcement to Moses that he shall die before entering the land (Num. 27:14), but with a little more detail added. Here mention is made of the strife of the congregation in the complaint about the evil place, and that in the rebellion Moses did not make Yahweh holy in the eyes of the people.²⁰⁸ Again the sin is not specifically identified, nor is the

²⁰⁸ Deut. 32:51: Moses is led up to Mt. Nebo to die. Here the charge is "You broke faith with me," **קִרְיִתֶם**. In the Pentateuch **קָרָה** is used in a law context, breaking specific commandments, Num. 5:6,12,27; Lev. 5:15,25. Also Joshua 7:1; 22:16,20,31. In each case the second clause is a further explanation of the sin. Thus, the breaking of faith is that "you did not revere me as holy," Deut. 32:51. In this instance it seems the weight would be that Moses did not give credit to Yahweh for providing the water.

matter of unbelief included. Here the sin could be the burst of anger Moses showed toward God's people; it could be the incident of striking the rock twice instead of speaking to it; or it could include both of these as a personal wavering in the faith whether God would satisfy the need for water and an angry act of a defiant leader against a contending people. The theme of lack of faith and failure to trust Yahweh appears in the midst of the reference to the manna and meat review (Ps. 78:22). Here death is the punishment (verse 31) for לֹא־אֱמָנוּהוּ , they did not have faith. The judgment that follows the sin of the people is also the judgment against the leaders. Judgment is a theocentric act in the narrative (Num. 20:8-13) as well as in the Psalmist's interpretation (Ps. 78:21-31).²⁰⁹

Neither Moses' nor Aaron's death can be included as examples for the view of Klaus Koch that the Old Testament writers do not have a doctrine of retribution, but rather speak from the viewpoint of fate-producing deeds.²¹⁰ The use of the Niphal לֹא־אֱמָנוּהוּ in the narrative (Num. 20:13) and the indictment that the congregation of Israel did not trust and had no faith (Ps. 78:22) point out that the judgment is to restore Yahweh to his full and rightful place,

²⁰⁹John G. Gammie, "The Theology of Retribution in the Book of Deuteronomy," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 32 (1970):9, discusses this as one view in Deuteronomy.

²¹⁰Klaus Koch, "Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im Alten Testament," Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, 52 (1955):13.

that people will see his glory (Isa. 6:3) and all the earth shall be filled with it (Num. 14:20).²¹¹ This giving of glory can be accomplished through the fulfillment of threats to the disobedient as well as the showing of mercy to those to whom Yahweh will show mercy. Yahweh is active in judging and he does so for his purposes.²¹² His separateness will be safeguarded. Although disobedient people are the objects of ultimate judgment, Yahweh's majesty is of the higher value than people's pain, illustrated by the concluding statement, and Yahweh "sanctified himself among them" (Num. 20:13).

Another question arises concerning the cause of the denial of the entrance into the land because Moses states in Deuteronomy, "The Lord was angry with me also on your account, and said, 'You shall not go in there'" (Deut. 1:37). Moses suffers a vicarious penalty. Similar statements appear in Deut. 3:26 and Deut. 4:21. It is evident that the behavior of people does have an effect on Yahweh's action. John Gammie's study of retribution in Deuteronomy demonstrates this aspect of Old Testament teaching.²¹³ In one area anthropocentricity underlies blessing and

²¹¹ Leon Morris, The Biblical Doctrine of Judgment (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1960), p. 21, points to this on the basis of L. Koehler, Old Testament Theology, trans. A. S. Todd (London: Lutterworth Press, 1953), p. 218.

²¹² Ezek. 28:20; 36:22; Isa. 5:16.

²¹³ Gammie, "The Theology of Retribution in the Book of Deuteronomy," pp. 7-9.

punishment. It must be understood also that at times Yahweh's forgiveness alone brings blessing.

The single English phrase "on account of you" is expressed by three different Hebrew words in three different contexts. At one point the term is בְּגַלְלֵיכֶם , from the verb גָּלַל , to roll (Deut. 1:36). A second, derived meaning is the circumstance, the cause, the reason, because of you. On the other hand, בְּמַעַןְכֶּם (Deut. 3:26) has a meaning of purpose, or intention, on your account, for your benefit, your welfare. Gesenius points out that the idea is not to understand the event, but the intent.²¹⁴ In this context Yahweh's punishment was for Israel's benefit, insofar that by it Yahweh was sanctified among them (Num. 20:13). The third word used is $\text{עַל-דֵּבַר יְרֵמֶם}$ (Deut. 4:21), with the meaning of cause, on account of, and thus parallels the meaning of בְּגַלְלֵיכֶם . The people's deeds are the cause of Moses' punishment.

The three references in Deuteronomy speak to the purpose of Moses in the leadership of the people. Yahweh's anger is directed toward Moses so that the people will see Yahweh's holiness. Position in life does not exempt anyone from punishment. Yahweh's holiness will be exhibited. Sin, whether it be rebellion or lack of faith, destroys wholeness with God. Restoration of this wholeness is not in man's power. Yahweh holds to his intentions

²¹⁴Gesenius, Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon, p. 496a.

so that the people will learn. Intercession is not the way of return to wholeness, even though it may be instrumental in bringing about a change of mind in Yahweh. There is a limitation to Moses' mediatorship. And, the grace of God is not dependent on Moses' mediatorship. The new generation will enter the land even though Moses does not enter. The blessing to the people is not nullified by Moses' weaknesses of unbelief. "On your account" is intended to be the lesson to Israel that God is the keeper and dispenser of his grace.

In the opening chapter of Deuteronomy Moses rehearses select events of the wilderness journey. Yahweh's promise of the land prompts the people to leave Horeb (verses 6-8). Moses reviews his own inadequacies and reminds how helpers were chosen to hear the disputes that arose among the people (verses 9-18). The featured reminder is the spy incident, the rebellion of the people and the refusal to invade the land from the south (verses 19-33). Yahweh was angry and responded with the judgment that none of the generation should enter the land that was promised. The anger of Yahweh is the central thought. Even though the time and place is different when the word of denial is spoken also to Moses (Num. 20:12), he reminds the people that Yahweh's judgment covers all. At the same time Moses has reminded them that he bears "alone the weight and burden" of their strife (Deut. 1:12). Their strife at Kadesh caused him to be angry and to speak the rash words that uncovered the

unbelief within him (Num. 20:10). The sequence of unbelief in the face of fear in spite of Yahweh's promise and care was reviewed (Deut. 1:31-33) as a part of Israel's experience. In this sense Moses can speak of the complaining and threatening language (Num. 20:3-5) of the people as the contributing cause for his failure to believe in Yahweh's leadership. Thus the charge of unbelief and failure to sanctify Yahweh before the people is the cause of the judgment.

In Deut. 4:21 the word is **עַל-דְּבָרָם**. Here Moses is encouraging the people to remain faithful to Yahweh, and not be guilty of idol worship. He reminds them of the Exodus (verse 20). The charge comes because Moses will not be with them to encourage them; he has already been denied the right to enter the land. The reminder that it was on their account that he will not be with them is the reminder that they are susceptible to falling into sin when temptation and trouble are imminent. Once again the actions of the people, on account of their deeds, is a contributing cause for Moses' unbelief, and ultimate demise. Moses does not only suffer vicariously, but as leader of the people he suffers with them for the sin of rebellion.²¹⁵

One more reference to the denial of Moses needs to

²¹⁵Mayes, Deuteronomy, p. 147. However, it is not just the communal guilt of which Mayes speaks. Moses does bear his guilt for unbelief.

be considered. In Ps. 106:32-33 the poet includes this reference in a series of wilderness wandering incidents: "They angered him at the waters of Meribah, and it went ill with Moses on their account (**וַיִּצְבּוּ וַיִּרְסוּ**); for they made his spirit bitter, and he spoke words that were rash." The sin of Moses is laid upon the people by the Hiphil usage in the word **פִּי־דָבַר וְאֵגְרוּהוּ**. This interpretation of the Psalmist strengthens the above argument that the two passages in Deuteronomy (1:37; 4:21) do not speak of a vicarious substitution of Moses, but rather declare there is a correlation between the contending of the people (Num. 20:3) and the accusing and unbelieving words of Moses (Num. 20:10). Because of the bitter spirit Moses spoke "rash words" **וַיִּבְרַשׁ בְּשִׁפְתָיו**. The action of Moses is emphasized by the meaning of **נָטַף**, to babble, talk idly, talk inconsiderately. Both parties, the congregation of Israel and Moses, are guilty and bear the punishment. There is no need to rely on hypothetical independent tradition sources in the Pentateuch, each with a separate theological bent, to explain a seeming discrepancy between Numbers and Deuteronomy concerning the cause of the denial of Moses to enter the land given to Israel.²¹⁶

²¹⁶The advocate of several sources in the Pentateuch basically suggests that the Deuteronomist is protecting Moses, and thus holds him to be rather pure and unstained, Deut. 1:37; 4:21. The Priestly writer, the suggested writer of Num. 20:10-13, counteracts the positive picture of Moses in Deuteronomy and lays the guilt of unbelief and misconduct on him. This misconduct is needed to justify the divine decision to deny him entry into the land. Thus

Moses' weakness to unbelief in Num. 20:10-11 prompts the question, What is the position that is given to Moses in those passages in Deuteronomy that have a tendency to picture him as Israel's substitute (Deut. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21)? In each case the statement is "The Lord was angry with me on your account" The relationship in question is between Moses and Yahweh. The judgment of anger is against Moses and the way he carries out the function Yahweh has assigned to him.

The point under consideration is the position of the mediator and vicarious suffering. When the people sin (or are in need) Moses intercedes for them - at the Golden Calf incident (Exodus 32); at the time of refusal to enter the land (Numbers 14); at Taberah (Num. 11:1-3); at Kibroth-hatta'avah (Num. 11:13,14). The Mediator acts on behalf of the people and this is the source of his suffering. Deuteronomy stresses the mediatorship (Deut. 10:10; 9:8-12,18,19). The covenant Mediator lays before God the urgent needs of the people for love and forgiveness in spite of their sins. This is not an expiatory function. Moses could not bring about atonement for himself or the people. Moses' role is that of intercessor.²¹⁷ In

Martin Noth, History of Pentateuchal Traditions, p. 170, n. 479; Numbers, pp. 44-146. Thomas Mann, "Theological Reflections on the Denial of Moses," Journal of Biblical Literature, 98 (December 1979):494. von Rad, Theology of the Old Testament, 1:296.

²¹⁷Th. C. Vriezen, Outlines of Old Testament Theology, trans. S. Neuijrn (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), p. 301.

this sense Moses is the type of the ultimate intercessor, Jesus, the Christ. Jesus took the fullest step of Mediator, that of dying in our stead, not just functioning on our account. He was challenged to save, and in his truly substitutionary death his faithful are pronounced holy,²¹⁸ and received into that holy land. He wins back, makes whole, sinners for himself (Hebrews, especially chapters 2 and 3).

On the other hand, at Kadesh-Meribah (Num. 20:10-12) it is apparent that Moses does not associate with sin voluntarily,²¹⁹ but it is demanded by Yahweh so that the precious grace of God can be apparent. Moses falls short where Christ later succeeds and brings the grace of God to people.²²⁰ The people caused his sin by their quarrelling, and the judgment of Yahweh fell on him. Moses does fall short of his mediatorial calling as a type of the Messianic Mediator who is always perfectly submissive to his Father's will.²²¹ The two seemingly different approaches of Numbers and Deuteronomy stems from the difference between the narrative, where the word of judgment is spoken within the

²¹⁸H. Cunliffe-Jones, Deuteronomy: Introduction and Commentary, Torch Bible Commentaries, ed. John Marsh and Alan Richardson (London:SCM Press, 1960), p. 43.

²¹⁹Ibid.

²²⁰Keil-Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: Pentateuch 3:290.

²²¹Meredith G. Kline, Treaty of the Great King (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), p. 54.

context of the event and is a teaching event. In Deuteronomy Moses is in the role of a teacher and explaining the lesson to be learned. Education is intended. The stress is on the mediatorship of Moses. In Numbers the word is faithfulness to Yahweh in the role of mediator. In Deuteronomy Moses is explaining his role on behalf of the people before Yahweh. He suffers in his intercession for the people and in receiving the same judgment the people received because of their sin.

The sentence given to Moses and Aaron by Yahweh is a sentence of divine wrath. In the narrative of Num. 20: 1-13 the people receive mercy as Yahweh gives them the water for which they contend with Moses. There is no mention of their vigorous complaint against Moses. In Deuteronomy, as well as Ps. 106:32,33, the people are reminded that their gathering against Moses and contending with him were contributing factors to his sin, and therefore they, too, bear the guilt.

No etiological formula is used in the narrative. The term "meribath" appears, and the place-name of Kadesh is identified in verse 1. Some attempt to show a correlation between this place-name and the note in verse 13 that Yahweh shows himself holy, שׁוֹרֵי קִדְשׁוֹ . This can be a possibility, but is hardly likely. Rather than specifying a geographical place designating these as a place-name, is it not feasible to see that the term the "waters of contention" would be a better translation? This would be a

reminder of the deed, the great separation that took place between themselves and Yahweh's chosen leader. This reminder would stand them in good stead. In spite of the sentence of judgment, Yahweh continues to bring the power of his mercy upon contending people, and shows himself to be holy among them. The judgment and mercy themes, the law and gospel of Scripture, are demonstrated in the narrative.

Exodus 16:1-12,25-29. The Manna

In identifying two distinct patterns in the wilderness narratives that include the murmuring theme, Childs has identified the first formula as including a specific need, followed by a complaint, then an intercession by Moses, and finally an intervening act of mercy by Yahweh.²²² The three narratives already studied in this chapter (Exod. 15:22-26; 17:1-6; Num. 20:1-13) have this formula. The narrative of the manna (Exod. 16:1-12,25-29) is not technically included in the theme of murmuring, but it is included here because it does give a positive interpretation of the wilderness period.²²³

v. 1 And they set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the sons of Israel came into the desert of Sin which is between Elim and Sinai on the fifteenth day of the second month after their going out from the land of Egypt.

²²² Childs, Exodus, p. 258.

²²³ Ibid., p. 256.

v. 2 And all the congregation of the sons of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron in the desert.

v. 3 Then the sons of Israel said to them, 'Would that our death had been by the hand of Yahweh in the land of Egypt, while we were sitting at the pots of the flesh, while we were eating bread to abundance; but you brought us out to this desert to put all this congregation to death by famine.'

v. 4 And Yahweh said to Moses, 'Behold, I will shower down bread for you²²⁴ from heaven, and the people shall go out and gather a day's supply daily that I may prove them if he will walk in my torah or not.

v. 5 'When they make preparation on the sixth day, what they bring in, it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.'

v. 6 And Moses and Aaron said to all the sons of Israel, 'At evening you shall know that Yahweh led you out from the land of Egypt.

v. 7 'and in the morning you shall see the glory of Yahweh; in his hearing your murmurings are against Yahweh; and we? who are we that you murmur against us?'

v. 8 And Moses said, 'When Yahweh gives you flesh to eat in the evening, and bread in the morning to fully satisfy (you shall know) Yahweh has heard your murmuring which you are murmuring against him. And we, what (are we)? You²²⁵ are not murmuring against us but against Yahweh.'

v. 9 And Moses said to Aaron, 'Say to all the

²²⁴A preposition with a second masculine plural suffix. It must either identify Moses and Aaron, or preferably the whole congregation, but then the preferred form would be $\text{אֲנִי} \text{ וְאַהֲרֹן}$.

²²⁵Verse 8 presents problems of an incomplete sentence. The double use of the infinitive construct causes difficulty. Possibly with verse 7 here is a dittograph, Childs, Exodus, p. 273. In the translation the verb "you shall know" is adapted from verse 6, where Yahweh is identified as the One who led Israel out of Egypt rather than Moses. Here Yahweh shall be recognized as the One hearing the murmurings.

congregation of the sons of Israel, Draw near before Yahweh, for he has heard your murmurings.'

v. 10 As Aaron was speaking to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, they looked to the desert, and behold, the glory of Yahweh appeared in a cloud.

v. 11 And Yahweh said to Moses,

v. 12 'I have heard the murmurings of the sons of Israel. Say to them, Between the evenings you shall eat flesh and in the morning you shall have bread to satisfy, and you shall know that I am Yahweh, your God.'

v. 25 And Moses said, 'Eat it today, for today it is a sabbath to Yahweh; today you shall not find it in the field.

v. 26 'Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, a sabbath, it shall not be in it.'

v. 27 When some of the people went out to gather, they found none.

v. 28 Yahweh said unto Moses, 'How long do you refuse to listen to my commandments and my torah?

v. 29 'See, Yahweh has given to you the sabbath. Therefore he is giving to you on the sixth day bread for two days. Remain, abide everyone in his place. Let no man go out from his place on the seventh day.'

v. 30 Then the people rested on the seventh day.

In spite of the fact that several major inner tensions are evident in the text, the critical apparatus has only minor changes to suggest. In verse two the kethib is וַיִּלְוּנוּ , a Hiphil, but the gere points it as Niphal, וַיִּלְוּנוּ ,²²⁶ but in verse seven the forms are reversed between the kethib and the gere. The order in which the gift of bread from Yahweh is cast, verses 6 to 12, has

²²⁶See also the Niphal, plene written, Exod. 15:24.

caused basic problems. The sequence moves from the charge of murmuring against Yahweh to the promise of food, to the instruction to promise food (verse 12). The question whether the term "bread" includes the wider meaning of food has posed some questions. Ultimately the narrative moves on to the principle of the sabbath, an emphasis that augments the lessons of Israel's confidence that Yahweh provides food according to the needs of the day.

In the itinerary of Num. 33:10-14, Dophkah and Alush are camping places in the wilderness of Sin between the stay at Elim and Rephidim. Ramban points to rabbinic tradition which states the miracle of the manna began at Alush.²²⁷ The itinerary is the narrator's way of establishing a change in the availability of food as the people move away from the well-watered, well-wooded oasis of Elim²²⁸ to the desert environment of the wilderness of Sin. The area is adjacent to what has been identified as Mount Sinai.

The discontent of the wilderness people is introduced by the announcement "all the congregation of the sons of

²²⁷Ramban, Exodus, p. 218. He also points to the exact chronology, second month, fifteenth day, as the clue to the "hidden miracle." Israel had been out of Egypt one month, 31 days. This meant that 61 meals, two per day, were provided by the dough they took out of Egypt. The first meal of the trip had been eaten in Egypt. Thus the total of 62 meals.

²²⁸Jean Simmons, The Geographical and Topographical Texts of the Old Testament (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959), p. 252.

Israel" (verse 2) murmur against Moses and Aaron. No mention is made of a lack of water or supplies that caused the murmuring. Previous narratives had introduced a specific need (Exod. 15:22; 17:1; Num. 20:2). Yet the action in the wilderness of Sin is described as murmuring (verse 2; compare Exod. 15:24; 17:3). The full compliment of the people, "all the congregation of the sons of Israel," participate in the murmuring against both leaders. However, Yahweh addresses Moses alone (verse 4), an indication that he is ultimately the leader-in-charge of the people.

The actual words of the murmuring are in a wish clause introduced with the frequently used words מִיָּדָיִךָ (verse 3). The clause has become stereotyped in desiderative sentences. Here it is used with the accusative of the infinitive.²²⁹ "Who will give our death by the hand of Yahweh in the land of Egypt . . ." is equivalent to "Would that we had died by the hand of Yahweh in Egypt . . ." A similar death wish is expressed in the spy account (Num. 14:2), and in an account where water is scarce (Num. 20:3). In these instances the particle is וְיָ . Parallel forms are used to express the same death wish in three separate wilderness narratives. Coats argues that because "the normal attitude of the Israelite, . . . anticipates a long and full life," this death wish "accents the serious nature of the rebellion." He further

²²⁹Gesenius-Kautzsch, Hebrew Grammar, p. 477, par. 151a.

argues the death wish is really expressed in opposition to the Exodus, not just as a release from the impending crisis in the wilderness.²³⁰ Although long life is a promise and expressed desire to Israelites (1 Kings 3:11; 2 Chron. 1:11; Ps. 61:6; 91:16; Ecc. 7:15; Prov. 3:2; 4:10; 9:11), the Israelite also expressed the desire that life would be shortened because of the course of events (Num. 14:2; 20:3; Joshua 7:7; 2 Sam. 18:23; Job 3:11; 1 Kings 19:3). If the crisis had not occurred in each instance, if the circumstance were advantageous, there would be no complaint. Therefore, the rebellion is not necessarily against the Exodus per se, but against the contrasting life-styles in Egypt and the wilderness. The causal factor separating the life-style is introduced by לָּךְ, "for you led us out" (verse 3). The object of the action, the purpose or aim, is expressed in the infinitive construct with לְהַמִּיתָּנוּ, "to kill us." Thus the "leading out" is the means to fulfill the purpose. The way this will be done, בְּרָעָב, "with hunger," becomes apparent in the wilderness conditions that stand in contrast to the diet they had in Egypt.²³¹

²³⁰Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, pp. 88-89.

²³¹Noth, Exodus, points out "After the rich oasis of Elim the wilderness of Sin was the first stopping place in which the lack of sustenance in the desert would have made itself felt." He also points out the desert people probably saw their life in Egypt in "too rosy a light" because the slave labor would have hardly had the "flesh pots" as daily fare, p. 133.

The second person masculine plural Hiphil (אֵצֶינֶם) is the classic word that tells of Moses leading the people out of Egypt. It does deal with leadership. There is a suggestion here that Moses assumed it apart from Yahweh's leadership. The supply of delicate food gives the people assurance that Yahweh is still in Egypt. There they would rather die. The lack of food in the wilderness is their evidence that Moses has led them away from Yahweh.

Coats argues persuasively that the narrative emphasizes the objection of the people to the Exodus. He argues that the וְעַתָּה clause (verse 3b) serves the same function as the accusations in question form against Moses (Exod. 17:3; Num. 20:4,5). He then jumps to verses six to eight to demonstrate further the emphasis on the Exodus from Egypt. He singles out the phrase Yahweh "brought you out of the land of Egypt" (verse 6) and the revelatory formula כִּי אֵצֶינֶם יְהוָה .²³² Coats, however, has the stated purpose in his dissertation to find the source of the "murmuring motif" in the wilderness narratives. In his approach the crisis situations are only the setting for the murmuring motif.²³³ It would seem that there is a need to look more deeply into the narratives and see other purposes that surface rather than focus on only one theme.

²³²Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, pp. 90,91.

²³³Ibid., p. 250.

The abrupt jump to verses six and seven, to the exclusion of verses four and five, overlooks the theology of Yahweh's care for Israel, and his search for Israel's response to this care. The position in the study is that verses three and four are not separate literary units,²³⁴ but verse four is Yahweh's response to the people's complaint.²³⁵ Then the way is clear to demonstrate that Yahweh does not only show love and mercy, but he also looks for the response of devotion from his people.²³⁶ The response of Yahweh begins with the demonstrative particle הַזֶּה with the first person singular suffix. The intent is to draw attention to that which Yahweh is about to do. The word is the corrective that stands against the people's accusation that Moses and Aaron are the cause the people of Israel left Egypt. At another time Moses complains to the people about this mistaken assumption (Exod. 17:2). By the declaration that he will care for the wants²³⁷ of the

²³⁴Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, pp. 83,84; Noth, A History of Pentateuchal Traditions, p. 32, n. 119; Fritz, Israel in der Wüste, p. 9.

²³⁵Winnett, The Mosaic Tradition, p. 129.

²³⁶The promise of loyalty and care to a subject, and expectation of obedience is prevalent in Near East treaty stipulations. "Treaty of Mursilis and Duppi Tessub," The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament, ed. James B. Pritchard, Second Edition with Supplement (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 203.

²³⁷The "wants" of the people stand opposite to the real needs. It is difficult to understand C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, The Pentateuch, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, 3 vols., Trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951) 2:64, who state that

people as he cares for their needs, Yahweh is laying claim to the office of leadership and head of the people. Thus Yahweh is giving assurance that he himself is responsible for the people.

The revelatory clause that carries the promise of bread from heaven is followed by the explicit instruction from Yahweh "The people shall go out and gather the needs for the day" (verse 4b). A play on the verb נִקְטְוּ is evident. The people complained that Moses led them into the desert where the future seemed to lead to death. Now Yahweh instructs them to go out one day at a time and be concerned with that one day, without projecting into the future. The promise of Yahweh speaks to the fear of death expressed in the murmuring, and the revelatory aspect of נִקְטְוּ speaks to the question of leadership.

The clause which begins with the conjunction וְעַתָּה remains (verse 4b). It is a substantive that speaks to the purpose and intent of the person making the promise. The problem for the people is not that of survival at this point. The question of survival comes up as an expressed complaint because the people felt hardship. An imperfect verb (וְעַתָּה) follows that identifies the purpose, "To the intent that, to the end that," "if they will walk in

the complaint is on account of the "want of food," and the "want of food really existed." Does the "want of food" equal the "need of food?" It would seem that Yahweh supplies the want of the people means that he not only provides that which will make them survive, but he also supplies preferences of food, Ps. 78:18,19; Num. 11:4,5.

my torah or not." Yahweh would know the extent of the obedience that relies on him, or murmurs because of his leadership. The clause of intent speaks to the mistaken understanding of leadership.

The language and style of Exod. 16:4 closely resemble the announcement of Yahweh's action against the Egyptians in order to teach them that it is Yahweh's plan to lead Israel out of the land (Exod. 9:18). A similar emphasis appears in Deut. 8:2 when Moses emphatically states that Yahweh led Israel in the wilderness, and one of the ways Israel was to show that they accepted this leadership was whether they "kept his commandments or not."²³⁸ In language style and in parallel thought patterns the leadership of Yahweh is prominent in the manna narrative. The people of Israel are to accept the leadership of Yahweh by following his instructions. The general statement of Yahweh's care and the call for Israel's obedience are briefly told here,²³⁹ but are set in the fuller context of the murmuring in verses six to eight.

A unity of purpose, to challenge the people of Israel to live in obedience to Yahweh, is apparent in the narrative of the manna (Exod. 16:4) and the narrative of the water of Marah (Exod. 15:25b).²⁴⁰ In Exod. 16:4 Yahweh is

²³⁸In Deut. 8:2 the phrase is, *יְהוָה יְצַדֵּק אֶת אִשְׂרָאֵל*, and in Exod. 16:14, *יְהוָה יִצְדַּק אֶת אִשְׂרָאֵל*.

²³⁹Keil-Delitzsch, The Pentateuch, 2:65.

²⁴⁰Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 83,

placing certain rules and regulations that have cultic bearing on the sabbath observance upon the people.²⁴¹

Winnet suggests that

Yahweh is testing the people, trying them out with a few laws, before he issues his full set of rules and regulations for them to observe. The incidents before the arrival at the mountain are regarded by the author as a progressive education of the people, designed to prepare them for the revelation of the divine manna.²⁴²

This is appealing, and coincides with the previous conclusions of the study of the word נִסָּה .²⁴³ The educative process is apparent.²⁴⁴ It seems a bit limiting to add "before he issues his full set of rules and regulations for them to observe." The giving of the torah is a

concludes that the use of the word נִסָּה attaches to Exod. 17:2, and suggests "this quarter-verse should be labeled a deuteronomistic gloss," and thus follows Noth, A History of Pentateuchal Traditions, p. 31, n. 109. Arguing on the basis of word usage to justify a multiple authorship position seems weak, especially since ch. 17 speaks of Israel's testing, ch. 15 and 16 of Yahweh's testing.

²⁴¹The תּוֹרָה can designate a manner of life, but its usage does include specific laws, Exod. 13:19; Deut. 17:11; Lev. 6:2,7,8; Num. 5:29,30, etc. A. R. Johnson, The Cultic Prophet in Ancient Israel (Cardiff: Univ. of Wales Press, 1962), p. 7 sees the torah as directive in matters of ceremonial observances that eventually, through experience, become a part of civil and ceremonial law.

²⁴²Winnett, The Mosaic Tradition, p. 131.

²⁴³This includes the use of the word נִסָּה , together with נִסָּה in Exod. 15:25.

²⁴⁴Compare the study of Moshe Greenberg, "נִסָּה in Exodus 20:20 and the Purpose of the Sinaitic Theophany," Journal of Biblical Literature, 79 (1960):273-76. He concludes that in Exod. 20:20 נִסָּה means God has come in order to give you experience.

divine directive. The bread from heaven connected with the giving of the torah is not intended to bring relief to the people who have murmured. Gathering the bread from heaven is the means whereby the people comply with torah.

If the basic ingredients of the narrative, the dissatisfaction with the desert prospects, and the failure to accept the leadership of Yahweh, are already in the early verses of the narrative (verses 3,4), what contribution do the later verses (verses 6-12) make to the narrative? The question is especially valid because of the unexpected sequence of the direct speeches (verses 6-12). Moses and Aaron speak of the promise of bread and meat to the people; the congregation is called to assembly in order to give them the message (verses 9,10), and they experience the theophany; in direct discourse Yahweh tells Moses what he will do for the people and the educative purpose of the doing (verses 11,12).

The critical scholars dismiss the problem with the standard answer that a different source is apparent in these verses.²⁴⁵ A so-named Yahwist (J) source contributes to the narrative (verses 5,6) and the source identified as the Priestly Writer adds the latter section (verses

²⁴⁵ Noth, Exodus, pp. 131-32. A History of Pentateuchal Traditions, pp. 31 and 18. Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 84. Fritz, Israel in der Wüste, pp. 9,10. Beer, Exodus, p. 87. Gerhard von Rad, Genesis, The Old Testament Library, ed. G. Ernest Wright et al., trans. John H. Marks (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), p. 18. Hyatt, Commentary on Exodus, p. 173. Baentsch, Exodus, Leviticus, p. 148.

6-12). To correct the sequence of events some of the critical scholars suggest that the discourse of Yahweh (verses 11,12) needs to follow after verse three.²⁴⁶ In order to have this section follow verse three, verses four and five are dismissed as a Yahwist addition. Neither of the two suggestions to the problem, the use of multiple sources or the rearranging of the text, seem convincing.

Brevard Childs has approached the problem of the narrative sequence in another way. He sees a parallel literary sequence occurring in the narrative of the spies, and the subsequent events after the spies return²⁴⁷ (Numbers 14). After hearing the report of the spies the narrative continues with the note that the people weep in the night and murmur against Moses and Aaron (Num. 14:1-3). Caleb and Joshua, members of the spy party, address the people and tell them of the greatness of the land, and that Yahweh will make their entry into it successful. They will overcome the present inhabitants (verses 6-9).²⁴⁸ The אֵלֹהִים appears, there is a theophany at the tent of meeting (verse 10). Then a divine oracle is addressed to Moses which describes Yahweh's anger and his response to the unbelief and murmuring of the people (verses 11,12,

²⁴⁶Baentsch, Exodus, Leviticus, p. 148. Hyatt, Exodus, p. 173.

²⁴⁷Childs, The Book of Exodus, pp. 279-80.

²⁴⁸Especially noteworthy for parallel purposes is the use of כֵּי לֶחֶם מֵנֵנוּ אֵינָם, "for they are bread for us," v. 9.

26-35). The one additional feature is the role of Moses as he becomes the intercessor for the people before Yahweh. The addition is necessary because the oracle is one of negative judgment, and Moses attempts to dissuade Yahweh. Rather than an importunate mixing of sources in Exod. 16:4-12, there is evidence of a literary pattern in the illogical sequence.

What are the specific points of similarity? In the narrative of Exod. 16:6,7 Moses and Aaron touch on several things mentioned in the murmuring. Yahweh will provide bread and meat, but the real point of dispute arises in the closing phrase "What are we that you murmur against us?" The same emphasis appears in the fragmented eighth verse, "the Lord has heard your murmuring which you murmur against him - what are we? Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord." The dispute deals with the leadership of the people, not with the Exodus from Egypt as such. The answer of Caleb and Joshua (Num. 14:7-9) answers questions posed by the murmuring people. The people ask "Why does the Lord bring us into the land, to fall by the sword?" (verse 3). The response is "If the Lord delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us. . . . Only do not rebel against the Lord and do not fear the people of the land . . ." (verses 8,9). Here again the argument disputes the fears the people express in their murmuring. In each narrative the theophany appears, in the wilderness (Exod. 16:10) and at the tent of

meeting (Num. 14:10) and in the sight of the people. The theophany is followed by the oracle addressed to Moses. In Exod. 16:11,12 the oracle gives a promise of bread. In Num. 14:11,12,26-35 it is a judgment against the people's refusal to follow Yahweh's leadership. The divine oracle has two parts: the first address is instruction to Moses (Exod. 16:11-12; Num. 14:27), and then it commissions Moses to address the people with the word "say to them" (Exod. 16:12; Num. 14:28). One more parallel of the divine oracle is striking. In each case the word is spoken, "I have heard the murmuring of the people" (Exod. 16:12; Num. 14:27). Neither account mentions that Moses carried out the command of Yahweh. A similar pattern shapes the narrative of Korah, Dathan, Abiram and company against Moses and Aaron (Num. 16:1-12). Korah assembles a band of followers and the group lodges a complaint against the leadership, authority, and priestly position of Moses and Aaron (verses 2,3). Moses shows the sign of shock by falling on his face, and then responds by telling of Yahweh's forthcoming action, "In the morning the Lord will show who is his . . ." (verses 4,5). Moses also makes the statement that the crowd is gathering against Yahweh, for Aaron is a priest and does not have the authority to set the orders or levels of priesthood (verse 11). Another parallel occurs in the words of abasement, "What is Aaron . . ." (verse 11) and the disputation which is included. Once again the pattern appears in narratives dealing with the

recognition of authority and leadership and the subsequent murmurings. The narrative includes the incident of Dathan and Abiram as co-agitators, especially insofar as they refuse to come up to Moses when he calls them (verses 11, 12). These two men issue the charge that Moses led them out of a fertile land to kill them, and he has not kept the promise to lead them to a land of milk and honey. Again Moses instructs Korah and his company, together with Aaron, to gather in the morning for the test of fire on the censor (verses 15,16). When all the participants assembled, the glory of Yahweh appeared (verse 19). The divine oracle instructs Moses and Aaron to separate themselves from the congregation so that Yahweh can consume the people who revolted (verse 21). The principle parts of the pattern are present: The murmuring of the people, the instruction by Moses (which includes a disputation), the appearance of the glory of Yahweh, and Yahweh's speech. The outcome in this narrative is different from that in Exod. 16:1-12 because it is a judgment of punishment. The Korah narrative does not mention the outcome of the test by fire on the censors. The outcome becomes obvious only because of Yahweh's instruction to Moses and Aaron to separate themselves from the group of people he is about to destroy (verse 21).

What conclusions can be reached from the comparison of the narrative flow in Exod. 16:1-12; Num. 14:1-35; and Num. 16:1-24? In the first two the special corrective is

vital - the people are to understand their murmuring is against Yahweh, not against Moses and Aaron. In the Korah narrative the corrective is that Moses and Aaron have not placed themselves in a position above the people, but that Yahweh has chosen them for a special task. The real authority is with Yahweh, for he chooses his special priests. The pattern that places an announcement of Yahweh's actions before Yahweh's instruction to the leader appears in the narratives that deal with attitudes against the leadership. The murmuring theme is not basic to the Korah rebellion. Here the action of the people in conflict is described by the verb $\text{קָמוּ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא}$, "they rose up" against Moses (Num. 16:2). This Qal has the meaning of "revolt." A second term used is $\text{סָבְרוּ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא}$, "they assembled against" Moses (verse 19). The murmuring theme is mentioned in passing. Moses asks, "What is Aaron that you murmur against him?" (verse 11). The pattern is identified with leadership themes.

The narrative of the bread (Exodus 16), it seems, should center on the activity of Yahweh toward the people. In some way the bread, too, will focus attention on Yahweh, the leader²⁴⁹ rather than on the murmuring of the people. The gracious activity of Yahweh in sending the bread is emphasized because it comes in spite of the murmuring of the people. The question of the stated purpose of the

²⁴⁹Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 96 concludes "This narrative is dominated by the murmuring motif." He centers the message on the action of the people, but Israel's faith is centered on the activity of Yahweh.

bread in the narrative needs to be faced.

The bread, according to the people of Israel, is something of which they are deprived, and thus becomes a specific point of their complaint to Moses (verse 3). Bread is that which Yahweh will rain from heaven and the people are to gather (verse 4). It is announced as the morning gift of Yahweh (verse 8), and will be provided adequately (verse 12). Moses tells them the unidentified substance on the ground in the morning is the bread Yahweh has promised (verse 15). On the sixth day they gathered a double portion of the bread (verse 22). Yahweh repeats to Moses he has given a double portion of bread on the sixth day, and the people refuse to obey his commandments by going out on the seventh day in search of the bread (verse 20). Ultimately the house of Israel called "its" name manna (verse 31). An omer is kept so that future generations may see the bread that was the wilderness food (verse 32).

Is there a movement from the complaint of the people over the lack of bread (verse 3) to Yahweh's promise to shower bread from heaven (verse 4)? Childs states that "God's address to Moses takes only indirect notice of the people's craving for meat and bread," although he also points out the importance of the verses for understanding the whole chapter.²⁵⁰ However, the revelatory significance

²⁵⁰Childs, Commentary on Exodus, p. 285. Although Noth, Exodus, p. 138 subscribes to the multiple source

of וַיִּשְׁמַע is important to the formation of a direct flow between the two verses. If the real question that is evolving deals with knowing and understanding who is leading this wilderness journey (verses 4b,6,12,28,29), then the address does deal with the craving of the people for bread,²⁵¹ but the emphasis is on the One who responds to the murmuring of the people and not necessarily to the need.

However, if the craving of the people is verbalized because they miss the diet of Egypt, and this probably is more wishful fantasy than the actual daily fare they enjoyed while in bondage, and if Yahweh is responding to the cry of a "deprived" people, we might expect Yahweh to make a statement that he hears the cry of the people and he is doing something about it.²⁵² But the announcement that he will send bread from heaven begins with the particle and suffix, וַיִּשְׁמַע, followed by a participle, שֹׁמֵעַ.

theory here, he also maintains Yahweh's reply in v. 4 is a response to the complaint of the people.

²⁵¹This may be a needed emphasis because Moses evidently had moments when he thought himself to be the provider. See the narrative, Water from the Rock, Num. 20:10. Note in Exod. 16:3 Moses makes no appeal to Yahweh when the congregation murmurs against him. Compare Exod. 15:25; Exod. 17:4, passages in the immediate contexts. It is only after the word from Yahweh that Moses speaks the self-effacing words "who are we" (vv. 7,8), and insists the people will come to know that Yahweh brought them out of Egypt (v. 6).

²⁵²Exod. 3:7,8. Here the statement of Yahweh begins with an infinitive absolute followed by the finite verb in the perfect. The use expresses the emphasis.

(verse 4). He describes a new situation that will exist and thus announces his actions. This is followed by Yahweh's instruction to the people to gather a day's supply every day. A motive clause follows the explanation of Yahweh's action and the people's response, וַיִּמְצְאוּ. When we might anticipate that Yahweh in mercy will respond in a way to satisfy the murmuring people, he acts, instead, to find out the attitude of the people toward himself and the way he has led them. Yahweh will test them whether they will go in his torah or not.

An interrogative particle shapes the indirect question, וְהָאֵלֹהִים. A real alternative to walking in the torah is expressed. The same interrogative particle describes the mission given to the spies (Num. 13:18b,19a) to see whether the people of the land are few or many, strong or weak, and whether the land itself is good or bad.²⁵³ Real alternatives exist for the people, and the bread is rained down from heaven in order to be the means to decide between the alternatives. Yahweh's purpose, as he explains it to Moses, is not merely to demonstrate his power and compassion, but to ask the people of Israel to give evidence of their relationship with him. The way this bread will serve to show Israel's trust in Yahweh is by following the instruction to gather sufficient for one day

²⁵³Gen. 24:21, Eliezer gazes at Rebekah to see if his trip is successful or not; Gen. 27:21, Isaac wants to touch, to see if the son is Esau or not; Gen. 37:32; Num. 11:23; Deut. 8:2; Judg. 2:22.

at a time, and on the sixth day to gather enough for two days. The fuller detail of the trust in Yahweh to provide the needs for the day in that day is given in verses 16 to 18. The reality of the alternative, not walking in the torah of Yahweh, is detailed in verses 27 to 29.

Yahweh's response to Moses is directed to the complaint of the people against the leadership, not to the uncertain diet and food supply in the desert. Bruce Malina gathered sections of this chapter together under a system of grouping characters²⁵⁴ and these groupings identify the several narratives that actually appear in this chapter. He ends up with four separate narratives. He finds the unity of the narratives in a chronological framework that stretches into a "liturgical procession" arriving to observe the sabbath. The murmuring, the promise of theophany, the manna and quail, and the gathering process covers a week's time and ultimately the people come to the double portion on the sixth day and the observance of the sabbath rest on the seventh day. The manna is of secondary interest, and the sabbath theophany and sabbath precept is primary.²⁵⁵ Brevard Childs believes there are weaknesses

²⁵⁴Bruce J. Malina, The Palestinian Manna Tradition, *Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Späteren Judentums und des Urchristentums*, 7 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), p. 3 assembles four narratives from these character groupings: a) Moses, Aaron and the whole congregation; b) Moses and the children of Israel; c) Moses and they; d) Moses and Aaron.

²⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 19.

in Malina's system because he relies too heavily on such abstractions as 'unclear words' in verses to draw them together, and at the same time he minimizes some of the primary themes, such as the murmuring of the people.²⁵⁶ Malina's premise that the group originally was assembling to observe the sabbath removes much of the wilderness historicity because there is no indication in the text that sabbath rest²⁵⁷ was observed before this time. He lifts the narrative into a liturgical context that can exist only after the Sinai period. The text, it seems, introduces the concept of the sabbath to the people of Israel while they are in the desert.²⁵⁸ Although Noth does not state the introduction of the sabbath rest is the primary purpose of this narrative, he proposes that the manna story

²⁵⁶Childs, Commentary on the Exodus, p. 277.

²⁵⁷Sabbath rest is identified with torah. Elsewhere, sabbath rest stems from the creation account, Exod. 20:11; from the deliverance from Egypt, Deut. 5:15.

²⁵⁸A sabbath rest is known in the Near East. Originally it probably was an evil day, a taboo. The sabbath as a day to worship Deity is of Hebrew origin. Cassuto, Exodus, pp. 190-91 recognizes the sabbath difficulty and suggests a) the event actually takes place after Sinai, or b) the Israelites already are acquainted with sabbath customs, and now follow the instruction expecting a new innovation. Hyatt, Exodus, p. 174 also emphasizes this should be after the Sinai section, but argues on the basis of Exod. 16:32-34. Martin Buber, "The Sabbath," in Moses, the Revelation and the Covenant (New York: Harper and Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1958), pp. 80-81, states Moses "renews something old," recognizing a universal law. On the other hand, C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, The Pentateuch, 2:69, come to the doubtful conclusion that Israel was not acquainted with the sabbatical observance at this time, but this is the practical beginning. The legal manifestation is in the decalogue.

reaches its climax²⁵⁹ in the divine gift of the sabbath rest. These ways of explaining the emphasis on the manna and on the torah diminish the suggested point that this narrative deals primarily with the question "Who is leading us?"

Is there a basic theme that links together the verses that specifically connect the gathering of the bread from heaven with the torah? In verse five, by means of the alternative particle $\text{וְאֵלֶּיךָ} . . . \text{יְיָ}$, Yahweh tells Moses he is testing the people's trust in him. At the conclusion of narrative (verses 28,29), Yahweh reacts to the group of people who go out on the seventh day in search of the bread from heaven.

The closing verses (verses 28,29) have the characteristics of a divine saying. The introduction states that Yahweh addresses Moses, but then the statement of Yahweh's acts are given in the third person, $\text{וְעָשָׂה} . . . \text{יְיָ}$.²⁶⁰ The saying begins with a question formed by a preposition and adverb of time, $\text{עַד-כִּי} . . . \text{יְיָ}$. The cause of Yahweh's indignation is stated in the perfect tense, $\text{וַיַּעַשׂ} . . . \text{יְיָ}$,²⁶¹ and relates to that which was already done by the people. The specific fault, $\text{לְשֹׂמְרֵי מִצְוֹתַי וְתוֹרֹתַי}$, is connected

²⁵⁹Noth, Exodus, p. 135.

²⁶⁰Exod. 15:25-26.

²⁶¹This is used several times in the context of refusing to obey commands: Pharaoh, Exod. 4:23; 7:14; 10:3. Compare also Ps. 78:10, regarding the Ephraimites and war.

with the test which Yahweh gives to Israel. The expectation is that Israel is to walk in the torah. The sequence deals with the question of Israel's obedience to the leadership expectations of Yahweh. By means of torah Yahweh strives to teach Israel to understand this leadership. Verses 28 and 29 are a reproach speech in which Yahweh asks: "How long will you follow a wrong course of action?"²⁶² The accusation is followed by an imperative, ׀ נ ׀, that becomes stereotyped as an interjection (Deut. 1:8). It has the force of a summons to a mental observation. It is the notice that something new is in force, and carries the obligation of obedience. Obedience to Yahweh is basic to Israel's faith (Gen. 12:4), and Yahweh's response at this point is the first indication of his impatience and anger with the people in the wilderness. There is no indication of punishment at this point.

Obedience is the issue that connects verses 2,3,4,5, 28,29, and this is related to the question of leadership. Leadership means a trust that Yahweh will supply the needs of the day. The narrative, then, is a call to faith, and a part of that faith is this walk in Yahweh's torah. This means a minute by minute surrender to the Lord²⁶³ without

²⁶²A reproach speech in 1 Sam. 16:1.

²⁶³Martin Buber, "The Sabbath," p. 83. A similar trust toward the suzerain appears in treaties between vassal and suzerain in the Near East. George Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms," p. 34. Israel is not bound to obey Moses, but they are bound to obey the stipulations of Yahweh. In this narrative Moses never addresses Yahweh. He is the

a security guarantee.²⁶⁴ Bread from heaven is in response to the cry of the people, not because of need, but because they avoided the reality that Yahweh was in charge of this wilderness expedition. They were totally dependent on him. The fears they experienced as they faced the desert limitations were increased because they addressed their murmuring to Moses with his human limitations. Therefore Yahweh makes plain, by means of the bread from heaven, that he can supply their needs, but they must live in the faith that Yahweh is Sovereign. This means obedience to his every direction. To live in faith means there must be unflinching trust to follow him on this way out of Egypt (verse 3).

Previously the problem of the narrative sequence was addressed, and the conclusion reached that Exod. 16:6-12 demonstrates a literary pattern found in other narratives centering on the question of leadership. As a result, the popular solution of the critical scholars that this is a segment credited to the Priestly Writer is not accepted here.²⁶⁵ The question that does need to be asked is "What is the basic thrust of these verses?" The predominant

messenger of Yahweh to the people.

²⁶⁴ Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, 1:282.

²⁶⁵ Noth, Exodus, pp. 131-32; Rudolph, Der Elohist, p. 34; Baentsch, Exodus, Leviticus, p. 145 (with glosses, especially v. 8 added); Hyatt, Exodus, Century Bible, 2:173; von Rad, Genesis, p. 18; Beer, Exodus, p. 87; Coats Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 84.

characters are Aaron and Moses, and Moses is central. Other material things are the bread and quail, and the **כְּבוֹד**.²⁶⁶ Other factors that recur are the murmuring of the people, the self-abasing words of Moses, and the revelatory formula that Yahweh led all the sons of Israel out of Egypt and he is manifesting his presence by bringing the bread to the people of Israel and the flesh they will eat at twilight.

The opening statement of Moses and Aaron to the people is revelatory: "At evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt. And in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord" (verses 6,7). The time factors of evening and morning occur again in verses 8,12,13. These two in combination occur quite frequently in Scripture. The activity of the cloud that led Israel at times "remains from evening until morning," and dictates the movement of the people (Num. 9:21). In a variety of contexts the phrase suggests an idea of completion, or fullness. In time of destruction and in oracles of doom it seems to carry a symbol of the completeness of the judgment inflicted (Deut. 28:67; Isa. 17:14; Ezek. 14:18), or it might announce the coming of release, or the fulfillment (Ezek. 33:22; Ps. 30:6; 90:5,6); and in the law it is an explanation of the fulfillment of the law of the burnt offering (Lev. 6:13; 1 Chron. 16:40; 2 Chron. 2:3;

²⁶⁶The **כְּבוֹד** is classed as material only because it becomes visible.

13:11; 31:3; Ezra 3:3); and describes the completion of the obligations of the concubine to the king (Esth. 2:14). With this wide usage, then, it would seem the thing predicted points to a completion. This would be further demonstrated by the notice that the sons of Israel will "know" that is, they will be able to perceive completely²⁶⁷ from what happens, that Yahweh has brought them out of the land of Egypt. A full cycle appears that should identify Yahweh as the Deliverer from Egypt. What that great event will be is not yet revealed, but it is in the context of the murmuring of the people that laid the burden of the Exodus on Moses and Aaron. This emphasis on the correct identification of the Leader occurs also in the self-abasement statement "and we, who are we that you murmur against us?" (verse 7). The revelatory formula $\text{קִי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתַי}$ is used again in verse 12. The קִי בֹרֵךְ יְהוָה will be evident in the evening and morning experience, and the presence of Yahweh makes a visible appearance in the wilderness.²⁶⁸ The major

²⁶⁷Walther Zimmerli, "Erkenntnis Gottes nach dem Buche Ezeziel," in Gottes Offenbarung: Gesammelte Aufsätze zum Alten Testament, Theologische Bücherei Series, No. 19 (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1969), p. 59, n. 31: "in v. 6 ist wieder die schöne Paralleletat von קִי אֲנִי יְהוָה und קִי בֹרֵךְ יְהוָה zu beachten."

²⁶⁸Rylaarsdam, "Exodus," p. 952. The glory of the Lord". . . remains the mark or sign of the presence. In this case the cloud and the glory are perhaps the same in the sense that the former is the mark that constitutes the latter (Num. 16:19,42)." Also Herbert C. Alleman and Elmer E. Flack, "The Book of Exodus," Old Testament Commentary, ed. Herbert Alleman and Elmer Flack (Philadelphia: Muehlenberg Press, 1948), p. 223.

emphasis of the narrative is not the event, but the lesson the event should teach, the presence of Yahweh as the Leader.

The sentence structure of verse 6 places **יְיָ יְהוָה** at the beginning of the direct speech, the place of emphasis. If, as Coats maintains, the primary murmuring is against the Exodus as such,²⁶⁹ we might expect a statement such as "because you murmured against Moses and Aaron that they brought you out of Egypt . . ." to give the emphasis to the Exodus. But rather the emphasis is on the recognition of Yahweh. In the second half of the sentence the "glory of Yahweh" is in the emphatic first position of the clause rather than the murmuring of the people.

Once the leadership of Yahweh is established the marvelous act of Yahweh is explained (verse 12). "At twilight you shall eat flesh, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread." Yahweh's act meets the thrust of the murmuring head on. The way in which the bread is supplied in the morning, the explanation of the name manna, and the instruction to gather the manna one day's supply at a time, is described (verses 13-16). The lesson of total surrender to Yahweh's providence becomes another lesson (verses 17-21). An obedience that lives minute by minute without security

²⁶⁹Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 90 ". . . the substance of the rebellion clearly lies in the problem of the Exodus . . . the fact that they have left Egypt at all."

must be the response of the people.²⁷⁰ E. M. Yamauchi equates Israel's faith with the daily apportionment Yahweh gives, for Israel is to move out into the desert with no more security than Yahweh's promise and his act of kindness in the face of their murmuring.²⁷¹ The didactic character of the narrative eliminates any expectation of punishment here.

Our conclusion, then, is that the emphasis of verses 6-12 is the same as that in verses 4,5,28,29. These verses also center on the leadership of Yahweh. This faith in Yahweh's leadership demands the response of obedience to the instruction about the sabbath. Yahweh becomes angry because of their disobedience (verse 28). In the verses 6-12 the remainder of Israel's murmuring appears in the instruction of Moses to the people and the instruction of Yahweh to Moses. The leadership of Yahweh remains at the center. The response of the people was again to gather a day's supply. The disobedience of the people who tried to gather more than a day's need and store it for tomorrow comes to light when the manna breeds worms and becomes inedible. At this point Moses grows angry with the disobedience of the people.

What, then, is the relationship between verses 4,5,28

²⁷⁰ Deut. 8:3; Noth, Exodus, p. 135, nothing to be kept out of worry or anxiety.

²⁷¹ E. M. Yamauchi, "'The Daily Bread' Motif in Antiquity," Westminster Theological Journal, 28 (1966):154-56.

and verses 6-12,16-20? The emphasis is the same. The second section gives a more detailed description of the announcement that Yahweh will be doing a great thing. This portion describes the ingredient, how it comes to the people and what it looks like. With this in mind it could be understood as an expanded description of verses 4,5,28, 29.²⁷² On the other hand, the expanded story also has a few more details, namely, the relationship of the act of Yahweh with the murmuring of the people and the need of the visual appearance of Yahweh in the cloud. The inclusion of providing the "flesh" is abrupt. The detail of the amount of manna needed for a day's supply, an omer, seems more than an expansion of the original story. It may be another detail added at the time of the writing. As a result, it may be that Moses incorporated details in the written version²⁷³ that are more of an explanation. In this sense they are additions to the wilderness narrative as it happened.

The gift of Yahweh to the people is first called $\text{מַנָּה} \text{וְלֶחֶם} \text{וְשֶׁמֶן}$, and then just מַנָּה , and finally in the etiological form the question is asked $\text{מִיָּהּ} \text{וְלֶחֶם}$, from which evidently comes the ultimate name מַנָּה (verse 31). It is usually assumed that the manna is the sticky,

²⁷² See Fritz, Israel in der Wüste, p. 10. He sees vv. 9-27 as an expanded account on the basis of parallel verses with vv. 3-5.

²⁷³ Buber, Moses, p. 80.

gummy secretion of the tamarisk tree,²⁷⁴ or the excretion of any number of plant lice and scale insects.²⁷⁵ The substance of either of these seemingly are more of a confectionary nature (Exod. 16:31) and would not serve the diet of the wilderness Israelites. Although the manna was short-lived, "When the sun grew hot it melted" (Exod. 16:21), it still had a consistency that made it possible to beat it, mill it, boil it, and make cake from it (Num. 11:7,8). The point is that the natural phenomenon of manna in the Sinai area does not really meet the practical need the manna of the wilderness wanderings provided.²⁷⁶ The existence of the manna even today does demonstrate the potential Yahweh has in his store to provide miraculously²⁷⁷ for this wilderness people.

Nothing definitive on the origin of the sabbath can be deduced from this narrative. The sabbath is mentioned in the four law codes of Israel and it is reasonable to

²⁷⁴Baentsch, Exodus, Leviticus, p. 150; Noth, Exodus, p. 132; Holzinger, Exodus, p. 57.

²⁷⁵F. S. Bodenheimer, "The Manna of Sinai," The Biblical Archaeologist Reader, ed. David Noel Freedman and G. Ernest Wright (Garden City, NY.: Doubleday and Company, Anchor Books, 1961), pp. 77-80.

²⁷⁶This seems a necessary conclusion in spite of the fact that Bodenheimer, "The Manna of Sinai," p. 78, states "Priestly materials which were added hundreds of years later and which are based on conjectures or on misinterpretations of the oral tradition, show definite divergences." The descriptions of the manna in the wilderness narratives are more contemporary.

²⁷⁷Keil-Delitzsch, The Pentateuch, 2:67.

assume the sabbath is a well-known institution.²⁷⁸ From the mention of the sabbath, the first such mention in Scripture, we might state that the Israelites knew of the sabbath, and therefore it may have existed in some form, but not cultic, in pre-Mosaic times. In the early history no acts of worship are demanded on the sabbath.²⁷⁹ The cultic rituals develop as Israel's needs change and increase.²⁸⁰

The theme of Yahweh sending bread from heaven to the wilderness people is used elsewhere in Scripture, and the poetic language arouses the imagination. The poet who composed Psalm 78 places the rebellions, testings, and murmurings of the people opposite the mercy and grace of God. In spite of the fact Yahweh became angry over the bad actions of the people "he rained down on them manna to eat" (verse 24). This is poetically described as "grain from heaven," possibly because it was "milled" (Num. 11:8). The gourmet character of the food, or other-worldly substance, is poetically described "Man ate of the bread of

²⁷⁸ Cultic Calendar, Exod. 34:21a; Book of the Covenant, Exod. 23:12; Decalogue, Deut. 5:6-18; Exod. 20:2-7; Holiness Code, Lev. 19:3a,30.

²⁷⁹ H. H. Rowley, The Faith of Israel (London: SCM Press, 1956; paperback edition, 1961), p. 142 suggests worship of Yahweh on the sabbath existed before the age of Moses.

²⁸⁰ Martin Noth, The History of Israel, trans. P. R. Ackroyd (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1960), p. 297; Hans-Joachim Kraus, Worship in Israel, trans. Geoffrey Buswell (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1966), p. 80.

angels" (verse 25). Although this heavenly food-source is obvious to see, the poetic description fills the mind with thoughts of a most gracious God. The poet sees the manna as a very special act of the Almighty. Ps. 105:40 proclaims Yahweh sent the "bread from heaven in abundance" in answer to the prayers of the people²⁸¹ in the wilderness. In Neh. 9:15 the "bread from heaven" Yahweh supplies simply appears as a mighty deed of Yahweh for the wilderness people. Note must be made that the reference to the "bread from heaven" follows the statement that God made known his "holy sabbath."

Paul in the New Testament, too, reminds the Jews of Corinth that God fed the people who passed through the sea with "supernatural food"²⁸² (1 Cor. 10:13). When the people ask of Jesus a sign that they may see and believe that he came from God, the inquirers reminded him that God gave their fathers "bread from heaven to eat" (John 6:31). Again the entire context speaks of the power of God to do the supernatural and the mercy of God to care for his people. If the request is for a sign of bread, it is a sign quite understandable if they thought of Jesus as a Prophet like

²⁸¹Cassuto, Exodus, p. 192, states rather arbitrarily on the basis of Exod. 17:7, אָזְנוֹתַי אֶשְׁמָע is understood as Yahweh hearing prayers, not in the sense of murmurings being an affront to God's glory.

²⁸²The translation of The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version. The Greek is Πνευματικὸν βρῶμα.

unto Moses (John 6:14).²⁸³ The misunderstanding of the source of the bread from heaven persists, and Jesus clarifies popular thinking: "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven" (John 6:32).

In a pericope that contrasts Yahweh's dealing with the Egyptians over against his care of the people of Israel, the Wisdom of Solomon 16:20-21, adds to the wonder of the bread from heaven.

You gave them the food of angels, from heaven untiringly, sending them bread already prepared, containing every delight, satisfying every taste. And the substance you gave demonstrated your sweetness toward your children, for, conforming to the taste of whoever ate it, it transformed itself into what each eater described.²⁸⁴

The description is not in keeping with the complaint against the manna in Num. 11:6. It is intended to magnify Yahweh in the eyes of the reader.

In summary, the narrative of the bread from heaven has certain difficulties with which the exegete must deal. The seeming discrepancy in the sequence of events in verses 6 to 12 can be explained as a literary technique that parallels the order in Numbers 14 and 16. If the conclusion is legitimate that the primary problem revolves around the

²⁸³ Raymond Brown, The Gospel According to St. John, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1966), pp. 265-66 reviews Midrashic material of the Bread from Heaven and the age of the redeemer.

²⁸⁴ From The Jerusalem Bible, ed. Alexander Jones (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1966, 1967, 1968 Reader's Edition), p. 895.

leadership in the wilderness wanderings, and its purpose is to teach that Yahweh is the true leader, and that the people must place complete trust in him and be obedient to him, then the problem of the continuity of the story disappears. The trust factor is apparent as the lesson moves into the truth of Yahweh's loving, knowing, and caring leadership. The trust in Yahweh will have its response in the obedience of the people to his torah and commands.

Knowing Yahweh is not merely to recognize him in a face to face meeting. Yahweh's attributes, especially those of love and mercy, of kindness and goodness, must be apparent to Israel. Through the act of showering bread from heaven they are to know him as a God of mercy for his goodness comes to his people in spite of their complaints, keeping with their needs. The most pressing problem of the desert is to sustain life. The stories under this Pattern I deal with food and water. The question of continued supply is asked in the context of the previous experiences in Egypt. Yahweh would teach these wilderness people that their trust must lie in him even now when the desert conditions confront them. It is this emphasis on Yahweh's mercy and the obedience he expected from the people that ultimately is the source of the positive attitude toward the wilderness period as viewed by Hosea and Jeremiah.

At the same time, the people of Israel are to know him as a God of judgment. Although no punishment follows the murmuring or failure to walk in torah, Yahweh speaks

sternly; "How long do you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws?" He is making a negative judgment on the actions of those who, in spite of instruction otherwise, go out to gather the bread from heaven on the seventh day. Yahweh is a God of mercy and of judgment.

Summary

The pre-Sinai narratives must be understood within the salvation history of Israel. The deeds of Yahweh move Israel toward the fulfillment of the covenant of land promised to Abraham. The Exodus is a step in this direction. The Exodus from Egypt would not have been possible without Yahweh's help, for he insisted the Egyptians let these people go. The wilderness, too, stood as a barrier to the people. It did instill fear and discontent in the wilderness generation. In order to lead the people forward, Yahweh worked signs that were intended to teach the people that he was taking them through this fearful place.

It is important, even primary, in these pre-Sinai narratives that the people come to know Yahweh as a giving, providing God. Yahweh leads them to know him as such a God of mercy as he provides even in the times of murmuring. The giving of water or the bread from heaven was not just to relieve the need of a moment, but also to create trust that Yahweh would fulfill his promises in the future. Each narrative includes a revelatory formula that is associated with the gracious deeds. At the sweetened waters of Marah

Yahweh gives the promise in the self-revelatory formula that diseases will not come upon this people if they are obedient to his commandments (Exod. 15:26). In the wilderness of Sin, at Rephidim, the revelatory form is his promise to stand on the rock Horeb from which the water will flow to relieve the needs of the people. Here ^איְיָיְיָיְיָ is the revelatory word (Exod. 17:6), and the great deed shall be done in the sight of the elders to verify it is Yahweh's deed. The emphasis on Yahweh's presence is also evident in the question "Is the Lord among us or not?" (verse 7). Similarly at Kadesh, the wilderness of Zin, another story of the lack of water develops. Yahweh appears in the ^איְיָיְיָיְיָ, a sign of his presence. By means of the rod the people also are to recognize Yahweh is present in his attributes of grace and power (Num. 20:6,7). Finally, the revelation of Yahweh's goodness is apparent as he demonstrates that the people shall know it is Yahweh who provides the manna (Exod. 16:12,10,6). The people of the wilderness could learn of Yahweh only through the acts of goodness he did for them. They could not come to know this by themselves.

Understanding this emphasis on the revelatory acts of Yahweh, it is then possible to understand the emphasis the eighth century prophet Hosea and seventh century prophet Jeremiah placed on the wilderness period. These prophets saw the wilderness as a positive experience. Now also Yahweh could teach the rebellious people of their generation the word of the law and the spirit of obedience by leading

them into a new wilderness experience. The miracles of divine care and grace were intended to teach Israel to trust in Yahweh and obey him. There was no place in these pre-Sinai narratives for punishment. It was a time of Yahweh's teaching. His people needed to know that he is the Lord God, long-suffering and gracious. The people Yahweh would take to himself in the special Sinai covenant had no way to know this except through the experience of his divine instruction, care and torah that enriched their life.

CHAPTER III

NARRATIVES OF JUDGMENT

While the previous chapter studied wilderness narratives which Brevard Childs identified as Pattern I with positive results from Yahweh, Exod. 15:22-25; 17:1-6; Num. 20:1-13,¹ plus the added narrative not included in this listing, Exod. 16:1-12,25-29, the present chapter will consider the narratives Childs designates as using the formula of Pattern II. In this Pattern there is an initial complaint, followed by God's anger and punishment, then an intercession by Moses, and finally a reprieve from the punishment² (Num. 11:1-3; 17:6-15; 16:41-48; 21:4-10). Childs' categories are limited to those narratives that specifically mention the "murmuring" of the people. It seems a close tie exists between Num. 11:1-3 and 4-35, and the mercy and judgment theme is better observed by treating Numbers 11 as one unit. Likewise the spy narrative seems basic to the wilderness period, and therefore the dialogues

¹Brevard Childs, The Book of Exodus (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), p. 258.

²Ibid. However, the term "reprieve of the punishment" is hardly accurate, Num. 11:1. The fire burns in the camp, a punishment does result. Moses' intercessions bring an end to the punishment.

of Numbers 14 are included in this study. On the other hand, because Num. 17:6-15 (Hebrew) is an isolated instance resulting from the action toward Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, the narrative is omitted from our study, even though it has a basic murmuring motif. The study will include the Fiery Serpent narrative (Num. 21:4-9).

Numbers 11:1-3. Fire at Taberah

This narrative begins the second half of the wilderness journey that is marked by rebellions and defections of the people that ultimately led to punishment at the hand of Yahweh. Moses' intercession for the people is not to bring needed supplies of water or food but now becomes a plea that Yahweh's hand of judgment may be stayed.

v. 1 The people were complaining about evil conditions in the hearing of Yahweh. And Yahweh heard and his anger burned, and the fire of Yahweh burned among them, and consumed on the outskirts of the camp.

v. 2 And the people cried out to Moses, and Moses interceded with Yahweh, and the fire died out.

v. 3 And he called the name of that place Taberah because the fire of Yahweh burned among them.

The **ד** (verse 1) follows the designation of a kaph veritatis, the people extended the complaint unduly. The Hithpolal participle **דָּבַרְתֶּם נִזְנִי** causes difficulty because the verb is used only one other place in Scripture, the unclear passage of Lam. 3:39. In focusing his attention on the murmuring tradition in the wilderness, Coats appeals to Deut. 9:22 to substantiate the position that "here the principal part of the tradition has been reduced

to one word."³ However, he does not consider the context that begins with Yahweh's threat to "destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven" (Deut. 9:14). After the threat Taberah, Massah and Kib'roth-hatta'avah are mentioned only as places where Israel provoked Yahweh's wrath and thus justified his threat (Deut. 9:22). Some other emphases also need to be investigated to clarify the purpose of the narrative. The fact that the nature of the complaint raised by the people is not described suggests that this is merely the setting for an event that follows in the narrative, rather than just a "later stage in the history of a basic rebellion tradition."⁴ The murmuring is an important factor in the narrative, but is that the purpose of the narrative?

A second segment of the narrative that needs to be researched is the note that Yahweh heard the complaint against the evil things, and his anger burned, וַיִּחַר אַפּוֹ. The theme of Yahweh's anger is picked up from Exod. 32:9, 12, Yahweh's response to the people of Israel making the Golden Calf, וַיִּחַר אַפּוֹ, and Moses' mediation, שָׁגַב מִפְּנֵי אַפּוֹ. The anger of Yahweh burns in the face of idolatry, a rejection of Yahweh as the God of the people. The anger of Yahweh burns⁵ once again in Num. 11:10

³George W. Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 126.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Yahweh's anger: Num. 23:4; 32:10; Deut. 13:17;

when the people weep at the door of the tents because they have grown tired of the manna. A sequence of events suggests a close connection between the two narratives. The Golden Calf incident is followed by the command of Yahweh to Moses to take the people up out of the Sinai territory (Exod. 33:1-6). The complaining event at Taberah is preceded by Moses' request to Hobab to be the guide through the desert wastelands when the people leave the mount of the Lord (Num. 10:29-33). It seems valid to align the Sinai pericope with Taberah. A tension caused by the uncertainty of Yahweh's presence and blessing hovers over the series. The "anger of Yahweh" theme which appears in each narrative also gives evidence of concern over Yahweh's attitude at this time.⁶

But what would cause the anger of Yahweh to burn so intently? The nature of the complaint (Num. 11:1) is not described. Shortly after Yahweh is aware of the "weeping" of the people (Num. 11:10) because they have grown tired of the diet of manna. There is no evidence that the disapproval of the daily fare is also the cause of the complaint at Taberah (verse 1).

The studies of such scholars as George Mendenhall,⁷

29:24,27,28; 32:22, etc.

⁶Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 124, sees this story of the ark (Num. 10:35,36), Taberah, and the quail story as separate units with no primary connection.

⁷George Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," The Biblical Archaeologist, Reader 3,

Delbert Hillers⁸ and Dennis McCarthy⁹ have reached the conclusion that the Sinai Covenant has much in common with the vassal treaties of the Near East. In the stipulations of the Near East treaties it is totally out of harmony for anyone to utter unfriendly words toward the king.¹⁰ Lipit-Ishtar, the son of Enlil "made weeping, lamentations, outcries . . . taboo."¹¹ In a covenant relationship it was considered a breach of covenant to speak "evil words" against the king.¹²

It is therefore in the light of Near East treaties that this first moment of complaining after leaving the mount of the Lord (Num. 10:33) causes Yahweh's anger to burn. The relationship of God and people had been set (Exod. 19:4-6), and the covenant stipulations of faithfulness to Yahweh and trust in him were established (Exodus 20). He would send an angel to guard them on the way to

ed. E. F. Campbell, Jr. and David Noel Freedman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Anchor Books, 1970), pp. 3,25-53.

⁸Delbert Hillers, Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969).

⁹Dennis J. McCarthy, Old Testament Covenant (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1972. Fourth Printing, 1976).

¹⁰See Hillers, "The Words of the Sun," Covenant, pp. 32,33.

¹¹"Lipit-Ishtar Law Code," Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969. Third Edition with Supplement, 1969), p. 161.

¹²Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," p. 40.

the place he had prepared (Exod. 23:20). Any violation against his instruction would be classed as rebellion, $\text{יְבַרְכֶם אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל}$ (Exod. 23:21). Now when the desert faced them, the trust collapsed and the people complained. Yahweh responded by sending the fire. Yahweh had chosen this people in his grace. They had not won a place of favor with him (Deut. 7:6-8). Thus the statement that the people complained is not as barren of content¹³ as some would suggest if it is set in the context of the Sinai covenant. Yahweh permits the wilderness generation to experience his grace and mercy in the pre-Sinai history. When the covenant stipulations are broken the judgment of the law must follow. Yahweh is a jealous God visiting iniquity with punishment. A covenant theology of obligation at Sinai (Exod. 23:20-33) replaces the non-obligatory Abrahamic covenant of the land (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:17-26).

The Taberah story at this very early time in the Wilderness Wanderings expressed a faith in an active, dynamic God of judgment.¹⁴ The sequence in the narrative material,

¹³Volkmar Fritz, Israel in der Wüste, No. 7 in Marburger Theologische Studien, ed. Hans Grass and Werner George Kümmel (Marburg: N. G. Elwert Verlag, 1970), p. 68. "Ihrem Inhalt nach ist die Erzählung dürftig. . . ."

¹⁴Against the expressed view of Wolfhardt Pannenberg, "Redemptive Event and History," Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics, ed. Claus Westermann, trans. James Luther Mays (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1969, Fourth Printing), p. 318 who states that promise only controls history to the time of the Succession History. Also Hans Walter Wolff, "The Kerygma of the Yahwist," Interpretation, 20 (April 1965):156-57, dates retributive theology to Jeremiah.

"The people complained . . . in the ears of Yahweh . . . and Yahweh heard . . . and he became angry . . . and the fire of Yahweh burned among them and consumed on the fringes of the camp" (Num. 11:1-3), has the burning of the fire of Yahweh as a consequence of the complaining. This burning of the fire is that dynamic action of judgment on the part of Yahweh. It can hardly be understood as Yahweh's permission to have an evil deed reach its normal fulfillment.¹⁵ Fire in camp would not be the actual sequel to a complaint. Rather it is the punishing reaction of Yahweh to the evil deed¹⁶ of complaining on the part of the people (Ps. 78:21,

¹⁵Klaus Koch, "Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im Alten Testaments?" Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, 52 (1955):13. It is understood that Koch deals only with Proverbs 25-29, Hosea, Psalms, and what is termed as the Deuteronomistic History. Under the scheme of source hypothesis, the deuteronomistic writer(s) (ca. 550 B.C.) theoretically incorporates a theology in the Book of Deuteronomy and the former prophets that seeks to explain the cause for the demise of Northern Israel in 722 B.C. and Judah in 586 B.C. The source process, in the matter of mercy and judgment under study here, certainly does not substantiate the concept that judgment appears late in Israelite religion. A judgment word appears in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil sequence of Gen. 2:17. The most enthusiastic of source hypothesis critical scholars agree this is early material. Otto Eissfeldt, The Old Testament: An Introduction, trans. Peter Ackroyd (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row Publishers, 1965), p. 194 places this in the L source; S. R. Driver, An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, Meridian Books, 1956, Ninth Printing, 1967), p. 14, assigns this to the early J (Yahwist) author. Ernest Sellin and Georg Fohrer, Introduction to the Old Testament, trans. David E. Green (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1968), p. 147 assigns this to the J (N) stratum. In this study it is understood as Mosaic.

¹⁶John G. Gammie, "The Theology of Retribution in the Book of Deuteronomy," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly,

22). In Israel's faith judgment is a divine activity.¹⁷ It is more readily recognized as such an activity when seen in the context of a covenant people that owes allegiance and trust to Yahweh. The Taberah event interprets the Wilderness narratives now under the terms of apostasy and disobedience which provoke Yahweh's anger and lead to punishment.

Just as the murmurings and complaints of the people are interpreted differently under the terms of the Sinai covenant, so also the role of Moses changes. The change actually begins on Sinai, during the unfolding of the Golden Calf narrative. Previous to Sinai Moses interceded on behalf of the people that the desert would not swallow them up (Exod. 15:22-26; 16:1-30; 17:1-7). When Israel "corrupted themselves" and "turned aside quickly

32 (1970):6. With Gammie, it should be recognized that retribution is seen in many ways in Scripture. The point is that in Num. 11:1 it is seen as Yahweh's reaction to human sin.

¹⁷ Leon Morris, The Biblical Doctrine of Judgment, the Tyndale Biblical Theology Lecture, 1960 (Grand Rapids; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960) stresses the dynamic action, the healing action, the working of his mercy and wrath, pp. 17-25. Although we may not agree with the source hypothesis method and terminology, we do agree with Richard Adamiak, Justice and History in the Old Testament (Cleveland: John T. Zubal, 1982), p. 1. "If retributive theology is construed to be a consistent normative system, ascribed to a divinity, enjoining some actions, and prohibiting others, with a consistent corresponding system of rewards and punishments, then such a system is demonstrably present in JE . . . with regard to the Wilderness, it is as consistent and or comprehensive in its theological interpretation of the phenomena it records."

out of the way" which Yahweh commanded them, and now were in danger of being consumed by the hot anger of Yahweh, Moses turns to intercede for them before Yahweh. He pleads that Yahweh will spare them and the covenant promise made with Abraham will supersede the covenant of obligation made on Sinai. At this time, Moses' appeal is to the election themes of the God of the Patriarchs. The salvation, Yahweh's grace evident in the help of the Exodus (Exod. 3:6-8), is in the oath of Yahweh to the patriarchs.¹⁸ Because he cannot be unfaithful to that oath when Israel needs deliverance from the Egyptian bondage, so also he cannot be unfaithful now when they are in danger of destruction because of their defection and disobedience in the event of the Golden Calf. Although Yahweh "repented (וַיִּנְחַם) of the evil he thought to do to his people," the covenant of obligation remains in effect, for Moses is summoned to the top of Mount Sinai again to have the previously broken tablets replaced (Exod. 34:1,2).

An entire change of circumstances arises in the first narrative after Sinai (Num. 11:1-3). Before the Sinai pericope the people murmur, וַיִּמְרֹדוּ , against Moses (Exod. 15:24), and again they murmur, וַיִּמְרֹדוּ , against Moses and Aaron (Exod. 16:2), and they contend, וַיִּתְּגַדְּפוּ , with Moses (Exod. 17:2). When the fire breaks in on them in the camp they cry, וַיִּצְעַקוּ , to Moses in the hope of deliverance.

¹⁸Kurt Gallig, Die Erwählungstraditionen Israels (Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1928), p. 61.

The word פָּצַח does not carry a connotation of repentance, only a recognition that trouble is at hand (Exod. 8:8; 14:10,15; 15:25; 17:4). It is a term invoking the supreme power of Yahweh.¹⁹ Only in the narrative of the Fiery Serpents do we have another time the people of the Wilderness come to Moses, without a confrontation, to seek his help (Num. 21:7). Moses' reaction to the cry of the people is to pray to Yahweh, a third person masculine imperfect Hithpael form of פָּצַח . In this form it has the meaning of intercession, to pray for someone. The Hithpael form is used elsewhere in the Pentateuch in Num. 21:7, the Fiery Serpent incident, and Deut. 9:20,26. Moses prays for Aaron because of his part in the Golden Calf defection and for the people of the same event that Yahweh would not destroy them.²⁰ The usage is rare in the Pentateuch. Moses' role becomes that of Mediator for a people in danger of extinction because of their disobedience and defection.²¹

¹⁹ Albert E. Glock, "Early Israel as the Kingdom of Yahweh," Concordia Theological Monthly, 41 (October 1970): 595. פָּצַח differs from פָּצַח in this, that the latter is a technical term, an appeal to Yahweh to overthrow a decision of a lower court.

²⁰ It is used in the Hithpael in Gen. 20:17, Abraham will pray for Abimelech, and in the Piel form it appears in Gen. 48:11.

²¹ Intercession by the later prophets finds culmination in Jeremiah's prayers, Jer. 18:19,20; 27:18; 37:3. It is the prophetic responsibility to intercede for the people. R. B. Y. Scott, The Relevance of the Prophets (London: The Macmillan Company, Revised Edition, 1969), p. 97. Jesus Christ sets the example for intercessory prayer, John 17; for Simon, Luke 22:31; for the crowds, Luke 23:34.

He feels the weight of the divine judgment, and this finds its expression on his lips. The actual word Moses speaks is not the focal point, just as the nature of the complaint was not vital at the beginning of the narrative. The theme is the grace of God in granting deliverance, even when his punishment has begun. Yahweh does interrupt the course of events that are leading a people to destruction and he does call a halt to preserve his own people.

The judgment of Yahweh on a defecting people, tempered by his mercy as a response to intercessory prayer, is the apparent goal of the brief narrative at Taberah. It does have an etiology, but, because Taberah does not appear in the listings of camp sites, and is only mentioned in connection with the people provoking Yahweh (Deut. 9:22), it seems the event is remembered more than the geographical location. The notice that this is three days after Sinai seems to be an emphasis that a new and different attitude toward the people is being introduced.²² The behavior and trust of the people is to be in keeping with the Sinai covenant, and Yahweh will respond also on the basis of this covenant. But even when the covenant is violated, and judgment is in progress, Yahweh can be appealed to for mercy, and he does hear. This, too, is

²²The wilderness event begins with "they went three days into the wilderness" (Exod. 15:22), and now the changed outlook is introduced when they "set out from the mount of the Lord three days' journey" (Num. 10:33).

Israel's faith.

Numbers 11:4-35. The Quail

The narrative of the complaint because of unspecified misfortunes is followed by a specific complaint about the monotonous eating of manna and the craving for fish and vegetables common in Egypt. The "rabble that was among them" (Num. 11:4)²³ are identified as the initiators of the strong craving, and the people weep, and speak their discontent. After this introduction the heart of the narrative is in the dialogues of Yahweh and Moses (verses 10-16; 18-23), plus the greed of the people and the punishment when they gorge themselves with quail (verses 31-35). The insertion of the story of the seventy elders chosen to help Moses causes a problem of continuity in the chapter (verses 16,17,24-30). However, Otto Eissfeldt has pointed out the structure of Pentateuchal narratives includes double stories, or interweaving of stories, where a thread is taken up, dropped, and taken up again.²⁴

The basic concern in this study will be the dialogues between Yahweh and Moses, and the supply of meat and the greed of the people (verses 10-15, 18-23, 31-34).

v. 10 Moses heard the people weeping in their tribes, a man at the entrance of his tent. And Yahweh was

²³See Exod. 12:38.

²⁴Eissfeldt, The Old Testament: Introduction, pp. 187-88 points to Gen. 12:6-8; 13:2,7-18 Abraham and Lot at Bethel; Gen. 12:10-13:1 Abraham and Sarah in Egypt.

very angry. It was displeasing in the eyes of Moses.

v. 11 And Moses said to Yahweh, 'Why have you dealt evilly with your servant, and why do I not find grace in your eyes, to place the burden of all this people upon me?

v. 12 'Have I conceived all this people or have I brought it forth that you should say to me, Lift them up in your bosom as the foster-father lifts the baby, to the land which you have promised by oath to their fathers.

v. 13 'There is not meat at my disposal (from the non-existence of meat to me) to give to all this people, for they weep to me: Give us meat that we may eat.

v. 14 'I am not able to carry all this people by myself for it is too heavy for me.

v. 15 'And if you are doing thus with me, please kill me, if I find grace in²⁵ your eyes, so that I will not see my wretchedness.'

v. 18 'And say unto the people, Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat flesh for you have wept in the hearing of Yahweh, saying, who will give us meat to eat? It was better for us in Egypt. For Yahweh will give you meat, and you shall eat.

v. 19 'You will not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days.

v. 20 'But a month of days until it comes out from your nostrils, until it becomes to you a loathsome thing, because you have rejected Yahweh who is in your midst, and you wept before him saying, Why did we come out of Egypt?'

v. 21 And Moses said: 'The people with me (Whom I am in its midst) number six hundred thousand on foot, and you have said, I will give them flesh that they may eat a month of days!

v. 22 'Shall a flock and a herd be slaughtered for them and one find enough for them? or shall all the fish of

²⁵The preferred reading should follow the interpretation of the Tiqqune Sopherim, בְּרַצְוֹתֶיךָ, your wretchedness.

the sea be gathered for them and one find enough for them.'

v. 23 And Yahweh said to Moses, 'Is the hand of Yahweh shortened? You shall see whether my word shall be fulfilled or not.'²⁶

v. 31 A wind sprang up from Yahweh and it brought over quails from the sea and let them lie by the camp according to a day's journey on one side and a day's journey on the other side around the camp and two cubits deep upon the face of the earth.

v. 32 And the people rose all that day and all the night and all the day following and they gathered the quail, and the least gathered ten omers and they spread them out for themselves, spreading around the camp.

v. 33 The flesh was still between their teeth, not yet chewed, that the anger of Yahweh burned against the people and Yahweh struck the people with a very great plague.

v. 34 And he called the name of that place Kib'roth-hatta'avah because there they buried the people who had the craving.

Certain problems have been created in the first speech of Moses because critical scholars attempt to divide the speech into several source categories. Martin Noth regards verses 10 to 13 and 14 to 17 as holding two separate thoughts.²⁷ The first verses apply to the problem of the weeping people, and the second verses introduce the need for the elders' help for Moses. George Coats

²⁶Reading an emphatic וַיִּשְׁמַע with the Samaritan Pentateuch, and the proposal of וַיִּשְׁמַע for וַיִּשְׁמַע in the critical apparatus of the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia.

²⁷Martin Noth, Numbers, The Old Testament Library, ed. Ernest Wright et al., trans. James D. Martin (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, English copyright, 1968), pp. 86-87.

quarters verse 10 and finds difficulty in unifying the verse. He questions the anger of Yahweh because no mention is made that Yahweh heard the weeping people. He questions the seriousness of the weeping.²⁸ Volkmar Fritz plucks verse 13 from this section and confines the story of the meat craving to verses 4-10,13,18-24a and the remainder, verses 11,12,14-17,24b-30 to the narrative of the choosing of the seventy elders.²⁹ As a result, Fritz sees the story of the quail tell of Yahweh's power and might, without the murmuring and defection of Israel appearing in the original story.³⁰ H. Seebass has an even more selective group of verses to identify the two stories that are intertwined. The story of the ordaining of the seventy elders includes 4a,b,10b-11,14-16a,17,24b-25a, 30,33b-34. The story of the quails includes verses 4b,8, 10a,12-13,18a,19-20a,21-23a,24a,31-33a. The remaining verses are reworkings of the deuteronomist.³¹

The first consideration must be given to verse 10. What is the background for the direct discourse of Moses in verse 11? Coats seems to be begging a point when he

²⁸George W. Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1968), p. 102. The segmenting of the verse has overlooked any unity in the chapter.

²⁹Fritz, Israel in der Wüste, p. 16.

³⁰Ibid., p. 73.

³¹H. Seebass, "Num. XI, XII und die Hypothese des Jahwisten," Vetus Testamentum, 28 (1978):214-223.

concludes that Moses' overheard the weeping at the door of the tent of each family. Because it was not in a public gathering the idea of a rebellion or murmuring is downplayed.³² He does not link the previous weeping (verse 4) to the moment Moses overhears the crying. If Coats is correct, the weeping is an isolated event and would hardly warrant Moses' request to Yahweh. However, he overlooked the statement that ultimately the weeping is "in the hearing of the Lord," $\text{בְּאָזְנוֹי יְהוָה}$ (Num. 11:18). This is unique usage of the term weeping. It runs parallel to Num. 11:1 when the people "complain in the hearing of Yahweh." Although בְּמִתְּ אֲזָנוֹי is used but twice in the Old Testament, Coats concludes it is equivalent to murmuring,³³ but he distinguishes between the meaning of בִּזְכוֹ in Num. 11:10 and 20. The narrative does include the statement that Yahweh, as well as Moses, heard the weeping, and this does arouse the anger of Yahweh.

A greater question arises in the notation that Moses thinks a certain action is evil, $\text{בְּעֵינָי כִּשְׂפָה רָע}$ (Num. 11:10).³⁴ The antecedent is not clear. Does it refer to

³²Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 101.

³³Also, Lam. 3:29.

³⁴A change in Moses' attitude is apparent. Previously he prayed for the people, Exod. 15:22-26; or was Yahweh's messenger to the people, Exod. 16:6-12; or asked for Yahweh's help, Exod. 17:4. Now he voices his displeasure against Yahweh. See Arnold M. Goldberg, Das Buch Numeri, Die Welt der Bibel, Kleinkommentar zur Heiligen Schrift, ed. Willibord Hillmann et al. (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1970), p. 55.

the crying of the people, or to fact that Yahweh becomes angry? The verb is לָלַץ, and with the adjective derivatives it is used three times in quick succession (Num. 11: 1,10,11). In verse 1 the people complain about their misfortunes, and since Yahweh led them to this place (Num. 10:33,34,35), the complaint must be against Yahweh. In verse 10 Moses charges Yahweh directly with treating him evilly. If there is any consistency in the use of לָלַץ in the chapter, verse 10 would also state that Moses judged Yahweh's actions evilly rather than interpreting this as his reaction against the people. Although the reliability of the interpretation of the Tiqqune Sopherim can be questioned, the variant in verse 15 would likewise suggest that Moses' judgment of evil is against Yahweh for, with this reading, Moses would prefer to have death come than to see the wretchedness of Yahweh, וְיָצַדְתָּ. The wretchedness would be the withholding of aid in the care for the people. Although no positive conclusion is possible, there is validity in interpreting Moses' displeasure as directed against Yahweh.

The unity of Moses' address (Num. 11:11-15) to Yahweh is usually challenged. As stated, critical scholars have dissected this complaint of Moses into sections which refer either to the quail narrative or to the narrative of the seventy elders.³⁵ Is there justification for such a

³⁵ See the above on Noth, Fritz and Seebass. Also H. Holzinger, Numeri, Kurzer Handcommentar zum Alten

a division or should the address be taken as a unit?

Moses begins with a double question introduced by $\pi\theta\zeta$. Now, however, he does not plead for the needs or wants of the people, but he challenges Yahweh's action toward him personally.³⁶ Gordon Wenham has demonstrated a balance to Moses' complaint by pointing to the link between the people's demand for food and Moses' plea for aid. Within Num. 11:10-15 these opposites appear. They apply to Moses' dependence on Yahweh to function in a leadership role.

A: deal ill (v. 11)	B: found favor (v. 11)
C: burden of this people (v. 11)	D: all this people (v. 12)
E: carry them to this land (v. 12)	F: where am I to get meat (v. 13)
D: all this people (v. 13)	C: carry all this people (v. 14)
B: find favor (v. 15)	A: wretchedness (v. 15) ³⁷

The complaint (some have identified this as a prayer³⁸)

Testament, ed. Karl Marti (Tübingen and Leipzig: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck] 1903), p. XV.

³⁶Moses challenges Yahweh's "evil" actions toward the people in Egypt, Exod. 5:22. Elijah challenges God in an intercessory prayer, stating the death of the widow's son is Yahweh's evil deed, 1 Kings 17:20. Mediators took the risks, challenging Yahweh to explain his actions.

³⁷Gordon Wenham, Numbers, The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Leicester, England and Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981), p. 108. He calls this the "Palistropic Pattern." Noth, Numbers, p. 87 sees the people "as a burden to be borne" as the introduction of a new thought. He does not see the parallels of the closing verses with the opening verses.

³⁸Wenham, p. 108, identifies this as a prayer and

returns to the point of its beginning, in opposite order. The parallelism speaks against the attempts to disrupt the order by designating certain verses to separate narratives.

James Muilenberg has discussed the literary value of repeating crucial lines in a study of Moses' words with Yahweh in Exod. 33:12-17. He notes the use of motifs is "frequent in Ugaritic texts as well as within the Old Testament."³⁹ In Num. 11:12-15 grace and favor are repeated, as well as evil and wretchedness. The number of the people and the burden of the people on Moses is repeated. This repetition reveals where the stress lies. Muilenberg also points to the strategic literary use of particles and related words.⁴⁰ Similarly the double usage of אִי־יָדָע (Num. 11:10) announces expectation for a different response. The interrogative particle אִי־יָדָע and the succeeding particle וְאֵיךְ build toward a justification of Moses' complaint (Num. 11:12). The skillful use of the particle וְאֵיךְ builds the tension as Moses itemizes the expectation of Yahweh to bring this people to the land promised and offsets this with the expectations of the people (Num. 10:12,13,14). The two are incompatible. The final וְאֵיךְ clause contains

also H. H. Rowley, Worship in Ancient Israel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), p. 163, n. 6, lists this as an intercessory prayer.

³⁹James Muilenberg, "The Intercessions of the Covenant Mediator (Exodus 33:12-17)," in Words and Meanings, ed. Peter Ackroyd and Barnabas Lindars (Cambridge: University Press, 1968), p. 169.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 169-70.

the plea for death if the positive plea for grace is not forthcoming (Num. 11:15).

The literary style gives the clue to investigate any other parallels that might become apparent. A parallel occurs in Exodus 33.⁴¹ Laying the pericopes side by side, this pattern appears:

Numbers 11	Exodus 33
v.11: have not found favor	v.17: You have found favor in my sight
v.11: The burden of the people on me	v.14: I will give you rest, my presence will go with you.
v.12: Did I conceive this people? Did I bring them forth?	v.13: Consider, too, that this nation is thy people.
	v.16: I and thy people
v.14: I am not able to carry it	v.19: I will make my goodness pass before you
v.15: If thou wilt deal thus with me, kill me at once, if I find favor in thy sight that I may not see my wretchedness.	
v.12: Why hast thou dealt ill with thy servant?	v.12,17: You have said, I know you by name (possession), and you also have found favor in my sight.

⁴¹Gerhard von Rad, "The Sinai Tradition in the Hexateuch," The Problem of the Hexateuch, trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1966), p. 17, regarding Exodus 32 and 33 sees "nothing in common with what precedes and follows (i.e., the theophany and covenant of Sinai) it except that these events, too, take place at Sinai." Exod. 33:13 is covenant language, and should be placed in a covenant context, just as Exodus 32, the Golden Calf event, is debilitating because of the covenant.

A contrast of the attitude of the people between Numbers 11 and Exodus 33 must also be noted.

Numbers 11:10:

Moses heard the people weeping . . . every man at the door of his tent.

Exodus 33:10:

All the people would rise up and worship, every man at his tent door.

What conclusion can be drawn from Num. 11:11-15 and Exod. 33:12-19? The recurring theme that follows the notice that Israel is to leave Sinai is Moses' plea that Yahweh go with them. The point of tension of Exod. 33:12-19 is whether Yahweh will leave his habitation on the Sacred Mountain and accompany Israel in the next phase of the journey to the land of promise.⁴² Each petition of Moses is followed by a response that brings assurance.⁴³ The ultimate response is that the word will be fulfilled, "This very thing that you have spoken, I will do . . ." (Exod. 33:17).

Moses' charge that Yahweh has treated him evilly is based on the promise given with the marching order to leave Sinai⁴⁴ (Exod. 33:1-3). His search to find favor with

⁴²Muilenberg, "Intercessions of the Covenant Mediator," p. 174.

⁴³Exod. 33:12-13 - The plea: let me know who will lead, the way; v. 15: Response: My presence will go with you. vv. 15-16: The plea: How will I know? v. 17: Response: The word fulfilled.

⁴⁴Martin Noth, A History of Pentateuchal Traditions, trans. Bernhard W. Anderson (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), p. 145, declares Exodus 33 has been added "organically in the course of time," and is the result of "reflections" at a much later period in Israel's history. In the light of the parallels with Numbers 11

Yahweh is a part of the covenant promise. A bond between the Sinai Covenant and the wilderness journey had to be woven, but for Moses it also had to be experienced.⁴⁵ Moses challenges Yahweh to bring that experience to him.

What response is there to Moses' complaint? The response is two-fold.⁴⁶ On the one hand, a favorable response is given to Moses because seventy elders are appointed with him. There is no description of their purpose or function except that "they shall bear the burden of the people with you" (Num. 11:17). They evidently served no function in the future (Num. 11:25).

The other response deals with the complaint of the people about the food. Yahweh's first instruction is that the people consecrate themselves, וְיִקְדְּשׁוּ , a Hithpael masculine plural imperative from קָדַשׁ . This was a ritual of cleanliness and sexual continence (Exod. 19:10) which would be in preparation for a divine act, either blessing

this is unlikely.

⁴⁵Muilenberg, "The Intercessions of the Covenant Mediator," pp. 176-80 tells of the significance of יָדָע in the ancient Near East Treaties, the knowledge necessary, the personal relationship implied and the word of grace involved. Moses pleads that he would "know" in Exod. 33:12,13,16. Without this mutuality of knowing Moses pleads that the people should stay at the mountain. Also the study of Herbert B. Huffmon, "The Treaty Background of Hebrew YADA'," Bulletin of the American Society of Oriental Research, No. 181 (February 1966), especially pages 35-37.

⁴⁶With Wenham, Numbers, p. 108, linking the demand for food with Moses' plea for aid in the challenge to Yahweh casts doubt on the idea that two divergent stories appear in Num. 11:4-35.

or judgment. The first impression is that only blessing will come, for Yahweh promises "You shall eat meat." The promise is different from the pre-Sinai pericopes of providing aid. There the promise was introduced by a revelatory formula $\text{וְיִצְחָקְךָ} \text{ וְיִשְׂמְחֶיךָ}$ (Exod. 16:4); and $\text{וְיִצְחָקְךָ} \text{ וְיִשְׂמְחֶיךָ}$ (Exod. 17:6); or accompanied by such a formula, $\text{וְיִצְחָקְךָ} \text{ וְיִשְׂמְחֶיךָ}$ (Exod. 15:26, also 16:12). The contention of Coats and Fritz that originally Numbers 11 was a positive statement of Yahweh filling a need does not meet the previously set form.⁴⁷

Yahweh now bypasses Moses and his challenge and addresses the action of the people. The first notice is that the people "wept in the hearing of Yahweh" (verse 18). The weeping evidently was accompanied by the reminiscences that things were well in Egypt. This weeping violates specific prohibitions listed in certain Near East vassal treaties.⁴⁸ The differences between the words of Yahweh and these vassal treaties is that a specific act of the people is introduced, while in vassal treaties there are warnings to serve as deterrents to unfaithfulness or breach of promise. Yahweh tells the people what they have done. They may not have considered their acts to have violated

⁴⁷Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 99; Fritz, Israel in der Wüste, p. 73.

⁴⁸F. C. Fensham, "Clauses of Protection in Hittite Vassal-Treaties and the Old Testament." Vetus Testamentum, 13 (1963):137, points to prohibitions "not to do any improper thing to Ashurbanipal" in the treaties of Esarhaddon, "and not to listen to any rebellious words."

responsibility. The word begins with a recognition of the situation, "You have rejected the Lord who is among you and have wept before him" (verse 20).

The structure of Yahweh's words to be delivered to the people moves from a seeming divine favor to a penalty.⁴⁹ You will have meat, but it will become a loathsome thing to you.⁵⁰ That which you desired will be לֶחֶם זָרָה , a feminine noun rooted in זָרָה . It is used only here in the Old Testament. The Septuagint translates the word $\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \chi\omicron\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\epsilon\alpha\nu$, and the Vulgate translates in nauseam, denoting sickness.⁵¹ The judgment on Israel is announced first, before the accusation.

The accusation is formed by a conjunction, וְעַתָּה , followed by the main verb, $\text{וְרִשְׁתֶּם$, "you have rejected," and the object $\text{אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם}$. This basic accusation is followed by an explanatory phrase which begins with מֵאַשְׁמֹרֶת . The form follows that of a prophetic judgment speech often used,⁵² except that in Num. 11:18-20 the effect, the punishment, precedes the cause. A divine saying of

⁴⁹Similar to sequence of Gen. 12:1-3; Situation - Go to the land; announcement of divine providence, make of you a great nation; ultimate verdict, blessing or curse.

⁵⁰Henry Liddell and Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, revised and augmented by Henry Stuart Jones (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, N.D.), s.v. $\chi\omicron\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\epsilon\alpha$ "a disease in which the tumours of the body are violently discharged by vomiting or the stool."

⁵¹The Samaritan Pentateuch form זָרָה , with the meaning of being scattered, makes little sense in the context.

⁵²1 Kings 13:21; 21:29; Isa. 3:16; 7:5; 8:6; 29:13.

judgment often is begun by יָצַן-פִּי.

Fritz has identified the quail narrative as a display of Yahweh's wonder and mercy toward Israel by eliminating verse 20b, the accusation against the people. He identifies verses 18 to 20 as the oldest level of the tradition. By eliminating a portion of verse 20 he is able to identify the story of the quail as a positive story in its original form. He appeals to the notice that a great amount of quail are provided (Num. 11:31,32).⁵³ He also sees the notice of the leading of the ark of the covenant, the visual sign of Yahweh's presence (Num. 10:33,35,36) as the preface to the murmuring of Num. 11:1-3.⁵⁴ He thus makes a connection between Mount Sinai and the Numbers 11 narrative. Yahweh fulfills the promise (Exod. 33:17).

Prior to leaving Mount Sinai, Moses repeatedly pleaded for Yahweh's presence for the journey. In the accusation Yahweh emphasizes that it is not he who has reneged on the promise to be present, but that the people, by their weeping in the hearing of Yahweh have forsaken (וְיָצַן-פִּי)⁵⁵ him (Num. 11:20). They have spoken ill

⁵³Fritz, Israel in der Wüste, p. 73.

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 15,16.

⁵⁵Otto Baab, The Theology of the Old Testament (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1949), p. 17 says regarding , "These words convey also the idea of a contemptuous dismissal of God's claims for men." In context of people rejecting Yahweh this is seen as rebellion. 1 Sam. 8:6,7, in wanting a king Israel is going elsewhere for help. 1 Sam. 10:49.

thoughts against Yahweh by complaining that the diet of Egypt was better than that in the desert. Yahweh also charges them with asking "Why did we come out of Egypt?" They are not content with his covenant care.⁵⁶

What is Moses' position at this point? At Sinai he pleaded for Yahweh's presence (Exod. 33:12-17) to accompany the wilderness people. He received a favorable reply. In Num. 11:13 he complains "Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they weep before me and say, Give us meat, that we may eat."⁵⁷ Moses, too, has fallen under the accusation of rejecting Yahweh, although he is not specifically mentioned.

Moses' response to Yahweh's accusation further builds a case that to some degree he shared the disillusionment

⁵⁶This is against Martin Noth, A History of Pentateuchal Traditions, pp. 122-24 who holds regarding the punishment of Num. 11:4-35, "here one cannot disregard this narrative element (the punishment) without at the same time giving up the entire story." At the same time he argues "the story did not require the narrative motif of the murmuring of the people." Furthermore he states "the narrative element of the murmuring of the people is most firmly rooted in a particular individual story and can be derived without difficulty from the tradition-historical source of a particular name-etiology."

⁵⁷Coats', Rebellion in the Wilderness, pp. 101-103 technique of splitting the text into "quarter-verses" and drawing such conclusion at one point that the weeping of the people (Num. 11:4-6) is "a petition which is not addressed to any person" (p. 101) but then declares v. 13 is "In contrast to the text in vss. 4b-6, the crying is now done in the presence of Moses . . ." (p. 103), can hardly be accepted. From his viewpoint every quarter-verse must be judged on its value alone, and all were assembled into a narrative at some point in time. There seems little left of history, or the art of story-telling.

of the people in their weeping. After telling of the great number of people that needed to be fed, and the mammoth project of providing meat, a play on words occurs. Yahweh had said $\text{אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבְּנֵם}$. Yahweh is in the midst of this people (Num. 11:20), and now Moses declares אֲנִי בְּקִרְבּוֹ , "I am in its midst" (verse 21). At this point Moses is claiming leadership of the people and in effect questioning, if not outright challenging, God of his association with them. The place of Moses is emphasized by the use of the first person pronoun, placed at the beginning of the clause, rather than a verb in a first singular setting. Moses' shared guilt can be deduced from his attitude toward Yahweh's ability to help and his impudent claim that he is in the midst of this people with the responsibility of leader and provider (verse 21).

Yahweh's announcement of judgment, yearned for meat turning to a loathsome thing in its eating, provokes the question of the cause for judgment. Is this development an act of Yahweh, or is it just a result of gluttony? The narrative merely says "You shall eat . . . until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you" (Num. 11:18-20). This could be a prediction of events that are no more than the consequence of the human deed. To be sure, God sees the event, and he permits it to follow a normal course without his interference.⁵⁸ But is that the

⁵⁸This would follow the argument of Klaus Koch, "Gibt es Ein Vergeltungsdogma im Alten Testament?", p. 140. Koch

description here? Yahweh's words continue with what we have identified as a judgment clause similar to the formula of the prophets, "דָּוָן - יָצָו". The change from that which was desired to the loathsome thing takes place, not because of gluttony on the part of the people, the natural order, but because the people rejected Yahweh who was in their midst. They also spoke evilly and rebelled against Yahweh by weeping and doubting the sustaining care of Yahweh after the people left Egypt (Num. 11:20). The narrative describes the "loathsome thing" as punishment sent by Yahweh.

Another area must also be considered. What is the outcome of the plea of the people for meat, the complaint of Moses that the burden is heavy, and the announcement that Yahweh will provide meat, but it will become loathsome? This outcome is announced in Num. 11:31-34. Specific mention is made that the wind that brought the quails "went forth from the Lord" (verse 31). There is no conflict between a specific action of Yahweh and the course of a natural event.⁵⁹ In the faith of Israel Yahweh has the power

also argues that because the ordinary understanding of retribution is punitive, rather than recompense, it cannot be from Yahweh because he primarily seeks to establish healing and salvation, p. 160.

⁵⁹The emergence of quail as a natural event on the Sinai peninsula has been discussed often. Noth, Numbers, p. 91; Exodus, trans. J. S. Bowden (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), p. 32; Fritz, Israel in der Wüste, p. 73; Seebass, "Num. XI, XII und die Hypothese des Jahwisten," p. 220. Thought goes to Yahweh's answer to Job out of the whirlwind and the faith that Yahweh is behind all of nature, Job 38:39; or Jesus' words to Nicodemus, John 3:5-8.

over all of nature. The greatness of Yahweh's deed is demonstrated by the description of quail all around the camp (Num. 11:31-32). However, now the detail:

While the meat was yet between their teeth, before it was consumed, the anger of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague (Num. 11:33).

This differs from the announcement of Yahweh (verses 19, 20) that the people will have so much meat they will get sick of it, or that in their gluttony they become sick. Instead, the narrative concludes with the fulfillment of Yahweh's words.⁶⁰ The plague strikes **תִּבְשָׁר עוֹדְנוּ גַיִן**. The substantive **עוֹדְנוּ** with its suffix, describes the flesh "going around" between the teeth, the chewing action is still going on. The next action is in the Niphal singular masculine form of **כָּרַת**, to cut down. The adverb of time, **טָרַם**, says the chewing action is in process when the anger of the Lord brings the plague on the people, **בָּעַם מִכָּה רַבָּה וְטָרַם אִמְרָה**. The plague-term, **מִכָּה**, derived from **כָּרַת**, strike, smite, gives a primary meaning to the noun, of a "blow, wound, or slaughter" according to the Brown, Driver and Briggs lexicon.⁶¹

⁶⁰William Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, 2 vols., The Old Testament Library, ed. G. Ernest Wright et al., trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), 1:44-45 points to the "terrifying power of God" which brings plagues to his own people, as Yahweh's response to broken covenant.

⁶¹Francis Brown, S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius, trans. Edward Robinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907; reprinted with

The meaning, then, includes a plague, especially a disease inflicted by Yahweh as punishment. Diseases become Yahweh's instrument of punishment for a nation that is not obedient (Deut. 28:59,61). Foreigners will see the plagues in a land and wonder what the people have done (Deut. 29:21). Moses warns Israel on Mount Sinai Yahweh will bring plagues upon the people who will not listen to him (Lev. 26:21). And the Philistines feared the God of Israel who struck the Egyptians with all manner of plagues (1 Sam. 4:8). The consistent use of אָדָּמָה as a plague demonstrates that it is an action of Yahweh whereby he punishes wrongdoers. In the wilderness era Yahweh brings judgment on the people because of their sin, just as Leon Morris contends is the case in other sections of Scripture.⁶² When Yahweh acts in judgment his purposes are righteous.

One question concerning the activity of Yahweh in this narrative still needs to be answered. Moses had challenged Yahweh's statement that the people will eat meat, and in a derisive manner asked whether "the flocks and herds" should be slaughtered or if "all the fish of the sea" will be gathered (Num. 11:22). At this point Yahweh responds "Is the Lord's hand shortened?" (Num. 11:23). The phrase "a shortened hand" is used as the opposite to Yahweh's power: "Is my hand shortened that it cannot

corrections, 1962), pp. 646-47.

⁶²Morris, The Biblical Doctrine, pp. 20-23.

redeem?" (Isa. 50:2), and "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save" (Isa. 59:1). On the other hand, "the outstretched arm" of Yahweh is pictured as the instrument of deliverance and judgment (Deut. 4:34; 5:15; 26:8; Ps. 136:12; 1 Kings 8:42 and so forth). Together with this word of power Yahweh reminds Moses that he will be faithful to his task. On Mount Sinai Moses asked "How will I know" your presence goes with us? (Exod. 33:15). Ultimately Yahweh responds that this will come through the fulfillment of the promises (Exod. 33:17; Isa. 55:11). Now Yahweh declares this giving of meat will be the fulfillment of promise, and Moses will know it is Yahweh who holds the leadership of the people.⁶³

The narrative concludes with the etiology of what might be understood as a place-name. The question that is asked is: What is the meaning of the place-name קְבֵרוֹת
הַיְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ?

It is immediately apparent that the formula is the same as that often used in etiologies לְיִקְרָא אֶת-שֵׁם
הַיְיָ קוֹם הַיְיָ.⁶⁴ The impression is made that the name stems

⁶³Ludwig Köhler, Old Testament Theology, trans. A. S. Todd (London: Lutterworth Press, 1953), p. 218, says judgment is a "restoration of the honor and holiness of God," and therefore, as it relates to God, is also intended as salvation.

⁶⁴Exod. 17:7. However the pronoun הַיְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ is omitted, Num. 11:3. The simple form includes the act of naming, followed by the etymological explanation; and the mention of the key word which is assurant to the name given. Burke O. Long, The Problem of Etiological Narrative in the Old

from an event described in the narrative. In Exod. 17:7 the names Massa and Meriba are associated with activities ascribed to the people. They tested Yahweh, they contended with Moses (Exod.17:2).⁶⁵ In the narrative presently under consideration the place-name, a noun form, also describes an activity of the people, וְיִמְצְאוּ מַיִם, "the desire". This refers back to the point of introducing the problem (Num. 11:4); וְיִמְצְאוּ מַיִם מִן־הַר. The Hithpael changes a basic, legitimate desire to a lusting, craving desire. However, the activity of the inordinate desire is placed on the mixed multitude (וְיִמְצְאוּ מַיִם מִן־הַר) in their midst.⁶⁶ The notice is that "The sons of Israel also wept" (Num. 11:4), and this seems to have a different meaning and negative value than the strong craving of the others. But that may not have been in the mind of the writer, because the weeping of the people is followed by a weeping at the tent door (verse 10), and this in turn is followed by Yahweh's reaction of anger, and Moses' confrontation with Yahweh. The crying of the people is followed by the spoken complaint וְיִמְצְאוּ מַיִם מִן־הַר. This interrogative clause with

Testament (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töpelmann, 1968), pp. 5,6. Because Num. 11:33 incorporates the act of "burying" the people with a craving, Long maintains this is a mixed etiological form, pp. 43,44.

⁶⁵This differs from Exod. 15:23, where the place-name describes a condition of a place, Marah = bitter water. In Num. 20:13, "these are the waters of Meribah" is a place identification.

⁶⁶Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 109.

an imperfect is a mood of "that which is desired,"⁶⁷ a wish clause. By means of the interrogative clause the "sons of Israel" are described as participating in the same activity⁶⁸ as the mixed multitude.

The point is also made that "the anger of Yahweh" is against וַיִּזְעַק , and Yahweh struck וַיִּכּוּת with the plague. The term בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל is often used to identify the wilderness people as a group, especially in this chapter (Num. 11:1,2,8, 11,12,13,14,17,18,21,24,24,32). The mixed multitude is not singled out as the people hurt by the plague, but rather it comes to all the people.

A problem exists with any attempt to harmonize the stated effect the giving of meat will have on the people (Num. 11:19,20) with the description of what actually happened (Num. 11:33). Yahweh seemingly points out that the people will become sick of the meat because of overeating. That is the suggested meaning of וַיִּזְעַק and וַיִּכּוּת . The sickness is a result of gluttony. But in the final verse of narrative, the plague comes upon the people while the meat is still in the process of being chewed (Num. 11:33). This plague is the direct action of Yahweh who burns

⁶⁷Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar, edited and enlarged by E. Kautzsch, 2nd English Edition, ed. A. E. Cowley (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1910), p. 476, par. 151a 1 and note 3.

⁶⁸Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, pp. 110-11 argues the two terms "Desiring" and "weeping," cannot be described as the same kind of event. He does not identify, or evaluate, the interrogative sentence, v. 4.

with anger against the people. The punishment described at the close of the narrative is an act of Yahweh's will, not a natural consequence of the people's gluttony. The punishment comes as a result of craving, of lusting. The punishment of death is inherent in the word קָבַר, especially as its meaning is emphasized by קָבַר הַיָּמָד.⁶⁹ The act of burying in the wilderness also precludes death to a number of people⁷⁰ and specifically in the etiology the death is the result of the exaggerated craving, זַרְעֵי תַּבְאִיִּים. The visual reminder of the event is the graves that were dug for the people who did the craving.⁷¹ The event to be remembered is the sin that merited the judgment of death to many.

The name Kib'roth-hatta'avah appears only here and in Deut. 9:22, in a series of three events identified as places where the people "provoked the Lord to wrath,"

⁶⁹Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 112, argues that although Israel's rebellion "seems to demand some form of punishment, the punishment (of plague) does not find its proper expression here." Seemingly, Coats argues that since all are involved in a rebellion, all should die. When, in Israel's history, did a plague sent as punishment wipe out a total population?

⁷⁰Ps. 106:15 identifies the "lustful longing in the wilderness" וְיִתְּאוּרָה, and by this they tempted God. No location except the wilderness is identified.

⁷¹Noth, Numbers, pp. 84-85, suggests the translation "graves of craving" is forced and artificial and is not the original meaning. Rather, he suggests the place has the name before the wilderness people arrived, and could be originally translated "the graves at the boundary" or "the graves of the Ta'awa tribe." There is little support among scholars for Noth's position.

Taberah, Massah and Kib'roth-hatta'avah. Of the three, only Kib'roth-hatta'avah appears in the camping list (Num. 33:16-17). It has been suggested that it is the locale of a caravan stopping place about ten hours on foot from Mount Sinai, called "Rueis el-Ebeirij."⁷² The name given here is primarily intended to remember the event that happened. Although the craving did take place at a specific time and place, the purpose ultimately is to call to mind Israel's sin of lusting for delicacies rather than to trust in the providing care of Yahweh. The reminder is that Yahweh judges the actions of the people whom he has drawn to himself in covenant. His call to trust him and to be obedient to his will is serious and places a responsibility that cannot be violated on those whom he has called his own. The "I - THOU"⁷³ relationship established in covenant on Mount Sinai will be a factor with which to measure mercy and judgment. This does not exclude the attribute of power and personal decision⁷⁴ of Yahweh. The critical scholars with a tradition history methodology, arrive at the conclusion that the story of the quail in fact is a

⁷²The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, 4 vols., ed. George Arthur Buttrick et al. (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), s.v. "Kibroth-Hattaavah," by J. L. Mihelic. Hereafter this work will be cited as IDB. John D. Davis, "Kib'roth-hat-ta'avah," The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible, revised and rewritten by Henry S. Gehman (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1944), p. 9.

⁷³Exod. 19:4-6; 20:2,3; 34:10,11.

⁷⁴Exod. 33:19.

positive story of Yahweh's divine providence.⁷⁵ By coming to the conclusion that Yahweh's negative judgments have been inserted by later generations these scholars believe the prophets use the narratives as warnings of punishment because Yahweh expects obedience and trust from the people. The prophets do not merely stress Yahweh's constant gracious dealing with his people in the wilderness. Chr. Barth's⁷⁶ reminder needs to be heeded that there was no "wilderness tradition" without a negative aspect because the wilderness period was a time of Yahweh's self-revelation, a revelation of his holiness and his great wrath. Just in this ambivalent revelation we do have a true "salvation history."

Numbers 14:11-35. Israel's Refusal to Enter the Land

Several "spy stories" appear in the days Israel⁷⁷ was being formed into a nation. Each of these has a basic outline first identified by Siegfried Wagner⁷⁸ and

⁷⁵Noth, Numbers, p. 91; A History of Pentateuchal Tradition, p. 123. Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 108. Fritz, Israel in der Wüste, p. 73.

⁷⁶Chr. Barth, "Zur Bedeutung der Wüstentradiation," Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, 15 (1966):23. Barth, however, does also use the tradition history and source analysis methodology. Israel needed Yahweh's acts of self-revelation in order to discover Yahweh. Brevard Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 174.

⁷⁷Joshua 2:7; Judges 18:5-10; Num. 21:13-14.

⁷⁸Siegfried Wagner, "Die Kundschättergeschichten im Alten Testament," Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 76 (1964):261-62.

restated by George Coats. The stylized outline includes 1) The spies are designated; 2) They are dispatched with careful instructions; 3) The mission is executed; 4) The spies return and give their report.⁷⁹ The spy story of Numbers 13 and 14 departs from the usual content insofar as it gives a negative report about the possibility of occupation in spite of the fact the land itself is fertile and favorable (Num. 13:26,27,32,33). This is followed by the refusal of the people to enter the land, in spite of an encouraging and trusting word by Joshua and Caleb (Num. 14:7-10). Yahweh responds to this refusal with the threat to destroy this people. Moses intercedes, and Yahweh answers with the final word that those who reject him shall not see the land promised to the fathers (Num. 14:11-35). The last section remembers the promises of an eternal covenant, and speaks of Caleb and Joshua, and the "little ones" who will not come under the judgment of death in the wilderness.

The direct speeches of Moses and Yahweh as they apply to the problem of judgment and mercy in the spy accounts are under study here.

v. 11 And Yahweh said unto Moses, 'How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me in spite of all the signs which I have done in their (her) midst?

v. 12 'I will strike them with the plague, and I will disown them, and I will make you into a nation greater

⁷⁹Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 140.

and stronger than they.'

v. 13 And Moses said to Yahweh: 'The Egyptians will hear that you brought this people up in your strength from her midst.

v. 14 'And they will say to⁸⁰ the inhabitants of this land (who) have heard that you, Yahweh, are in the midst of this people, for you are seen eye to eye, Yahweh, and your cloud stands over them, and in a pillar of cloud you are going before them by day and in a pillar of fire by night.

v. 15 'And if you kill this people as one man, then the nations who have heard of your fame will say,

v. 16 'Yahweh was not able to bring this people unto the land which he swore to them, and he killed them in the desert.

v. 17 'And now, let the strength of the Lord be great as you have spoken, saying,

v. 18. 'Yahweh is slow to anger, and great in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and certainly he will not absolve the guilty, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto a third and unto a fourth (generation).

v. 19 'Forgive, I pray, the sin of this people according to the greatness of your steadfast love, and as you have forgiven this people from Egypt even until now.'

v. 20 And Yahweh said, 'I have forgiven according to your word.

v. 21 'But truly, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Yahweh,

v. 22 'If all the men who have seen my glory and my signs which I did in Egypt and in the desert, and they have tested me these ten times, and they did not hearken to my voice,

v. 23 'If they shall see the land which I swore to their fathers, and all of those who despised me (all my despisers) shall not see it.

⁸⁰The LXX omits " - לְאֵלֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ ".

v. 24 'But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit within him, and he wholly follows after me, I will bring him unto the land which he entered (there) and his descendants shall possess it.

v. 25 'Because the Amalekites and the Canaanites live in the valley, tomorrow turn and set out toward the wilderness by the way of the Sea of Reeds.'

v. 26 And Yahweh said unto Moses and Aaron, saying:

v. 27 'How long shall this wicked congregation murmur against me . . . ? The murmuring of the sons of Israel which they are murmuring against me I have heard.

v. 28 'Say unto them, As I live, the oracle of Yahweh, if it shall not be as they have spoken in my ears, thus I will do to them.

v. 29 'In this desert their carcasses shall fall, and all your numbered, to all of their numbered from the sons of twenty years and upward who have murmured against me.

v. 30 'But you shall not enter into the land which I lifted up my hand (I took an oath) to make you dwell in it, except Caleb, the son of Jephuneh and Joshua, the son of Nun.

v. 31 'And your little ones whom you said shall be a booty of Yahweh, and I will bring them in, and they shall know the land which you have despised (it).

v. 32 'But your carcasses, you, shall fall in this desert.

v. 33 'But your children shall be shepherds in the desert forty years, and they shall bear your faithlessness, until your carcasses are in the desert.

v. 34 'According to the number of the days which you spied out the land, forty days, a day for a year, a day for a year you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my frustration.⁸¹

v. 35 'I, Yahweh, have spoken. Thus I will do to all this wicked congregation that has conspired against me.

⁸¹According to Raphael Loewe, "Divine Frustration Exegetically Frustrated - Numbers 14:34 תַּנְוִתִּי" in Words and Meanings, ed. Peter C. Ackroyd and Barnabas Lindars (Cambridge: The University Press, 1968), pp. 137-58.

In this desert they shall come to a full end, and there they shall die.'

The Samaritan Pentateuch, an edition of the Septuagint, and the Syriac hexaplaris transfer the introduction of the spy account in Deut. 1:20-23a to Num. 13:1. By doing this the concept of invasion from the south is a plan that Moses proposes to the people after they arrive at Kadesh-barnea. The motivation of Moses is the promise of Yahweh to give the land to the people. The people propose the reconnaissance of the spies.⁸² There is no conclusive evidence that such an introduction ever appeared in the Numbers 13 account.

The direct speech of Yahweh (Num. 14:11-12) follows a murmuring event of the people in which they state a defeatist attitude, complaining that they are about to die in the desert. It seems a foregone conclusion to them because of the negative report given by the majority of the spies. The people suggest to one another that the wiser action would be to choose a leader to take Moses' place and then return to Egypt.⁸³ Joshua and Caleb call for a

⁸²Some critical scholars have used the variances mentioned to point to the development of the text through sources. The mentioned introduction is thought to be an original form of the so-called Yahwist source (about 900 B.C.) G. B. Gray, Numbers, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1903), p. 129. S. R. Driver, Deuteronomy, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902, 3rd edition), pp. 22-23

⁸³Contrary to Noth, Numbers, p. 107, who suggest Num. 14:4 means the people want to "act defiantly, and of our own free will."

confidence in Yahweh and an obedience to enter into the fruitful land. The congregation refuses this counsel and is ready to stone Joshua and Caleb. Yahweh's response is in this setting.

Yahweh's response to the threat of the people to return to Egypt and to put the believing spies to death begins with a preposition, an adverb of time, and an imperfect verb, $\text{וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה וַיִּזְעַק}$. The third person plural imperfect verb expresses an action over a longer period of time, and which from all appearances is not yet completed. Here it becomes a question that serves as a form of accusation. The actual accusation is that "they spurn, despise me."

The verb שָׂנֵא indicates the gravity of the situation. The verb is used in the Piel form twelve times in the Old Testament, and in each of these instances the despising relates to Yahweh, or something very precious to Yahweh.⁸⁴ The inference is that the covenant relationship with Yahweh is also rejected.

The relationship with the covenant is especially apparent in Deut. 31:20. The community of Israel will follow

⁸⁴In Num. 14:11,23. Ps. 74:10, the enemy reviles Yahweh's name; Jer. 23:17, false prophets revile the word of the Lord; Isa. 60:14, those who despise Israel; Num. 16:30, the punished despised the Lord; Deut. 31:20, Israel will despise Yahweh; Isa. 1:4, sinful nation rejects Holy One of Israel; Ps. 10:3, greedy man renounces the Lord; v. 13, evil one renounces God; Isa. 5:24, exiled people have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel; 1 Sam. 2:17, Eli's sons despised the offerings of the Lord.

other gods after they enter the land flowing with milk and honey, and by doing this "they despise me and break my covenant," וַיִּנְאַצְוּנִי וַיִּקְרְבוּ אֶת־בְּרִיתִי. Yahweh consistently includes the word of punishment to those whom he has charged with breaking covenant (Isa. 5:24; Jer. 23:16,17). It may tentatively be assumed that since נֶאֱצַו carries such a weight it includes the idea of punishment in this accusation. Further usage of נֶאֱצַו suggests the punishment prescribed cannot be called back, for the sins of the sons of Eli cannot be covered by sacrifice or offering (1 Sam. 3:14), and although David himself will not die because of the sin against Uriah death will come to David's house because of the sin (2 Sam. 12:10-14).⁸⁵ Repentance does not cancel the punishment for the sin of "despising Yahweh."

Yahweh emphasizes the people's sin of "despising" him by paralleling a similar question of accusation: "How long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs which I have wrought among them?" (Num. 14:11).⁸⁶ Again the question consists of the preposition and adverb of time, and the imperfect verb of נֶאֱצַו, this time in the Hiphil form. The parallel nature of the two sentences strengthens the accusation of the sin, and the second

⁸⁵The Qal form of נֶאֱצַו is used here.

⁸⁶Noth, Numbers, p. 108, calls this an "awkward and still later insertion," but it seems rather to be an explanation of the charge that the people despised Yahweh.

sentence moves on to say they had cause to believe, but did not, in the signs Yahweh performed in Egypt. A similar side by side accusation occurs in Ps. 106:24.⁸⁷ Parallel sentence structures are common in Scripture, and cannot be evidence that separate sources have been incorporated into one narrative.⁸⁸

Yahweh's charge that the people do not believe is based on their failure to understand his work on their behalf in the Exodus. Believing is basic for Israel (Exod. 4:5,8,9; 14:31), but this is never a demand, or law in itself. Believing is always combined with signs, events that occurred to demonstrate Yahweh's presence. The people are called on to believe Moses because they see the signs that Yahweh sent them (Exod. 4:1,5,8,9,31). After they see the events at the Sea of Reeds the people believed (Exod. 14:31). A thick cloud is a sign that will bring the people to believe (Exod. 19:9). Yahweh's presence and his care are evidenced in the signs. And now, when seemingly the fulfillment of the promise and of the goal given when leaving Egypt can be grasped, the people fail in their trust of Yahweh, they show contempt for the promises he has given.

⁸⁷The word here is אָמַן . See also Hans Wildberger, "'Glauben' Erwägungen zu אָמַן ," Supplement to Vetus Testamentum, 16 (1967):380.

⁸⁸Noth, Numbers, p. 108; History of Pentateuchal Traditions, p. 31; Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 139; Katherine Sakenfeld, "The Problem of Divine Forgiveness in Numbers 14," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 37 (1975): 320. Parallel statements, positive or negative, occur in Exod. 14:31; Ps. 106:12.

This lack of trust is expressed in the desire to elect a new leader to take them back to Egypt. The covenant Yahweh made with the fathers and the people when leaving Egypt (Exod. 3:7,8) is renounced. The despising of Yahweh (פָּנִי) is explained by the subsequent clause (יִקְנֵאֲנִי).

There seems to be evidence that the verb פָּנִי precludes a punishment, but the extent of that punishment is dependent on individual circumstances. The origin and the nature of the judgment when the people murmur at the idea of entering the promised land, is told in the first singular masculine imperfect Hiphil verb form of יִקְנֵאֲנִי, with a third person plural suffix. Yahweh will smite the despisers with a plague and raise a new nation from Moses. The national existence is at stake. The threat to destroy this people and the promise to begin a new nation from Moses' family has its counterpart in the story of the "Golden Calf" (Exod. 32:7-10). The means of destruction is to be a pestilence, יִקְנֵאֲנִי. The majority of times יִקְנֵאֲנִי is designated as Yahweh's means to punish nations or individuals for disobedience (Exod. 5:3; 9:15; Deut. 28:21; 2 Sam. 24:13,15; Amos 4:10). The pestilence is always in Yahweh's control, and therefore the faithful need not fear it (Ps. 91:3,6), or they can pray to Yahweh to have it removed (1 Kings 8:37,39; 2 Chron. 7:23; 20:9). Prayer will not be effective to bring the pestilence to a halt if the people continue in evil ways (Jer. 14:12). An affirmative answer to the question whether Israel has a dogma of

retribution, or judgment, would weigh heavily toward the conclusion that Yahweh does bring judgment,⁸⁹ rather than maintain that the misfortunes come because people themselves have started a chain of events that led to these misfortunes.⁹⁰

What is the extent of the judgment that Yahweh threatens will come to this people who lack the trust to enter the land? In the similar passage following the making of the golden calf Yahweh states "that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them" (Exod. 32:10). The verb is וַאֲכַלֵּם. The inference would be total destruction. In Num. 14:12 Yahweh follows the word about the plague with וְאֶלֶּךְ־נָפְתִי, a first person singular imperfect Hiphil form of the verb נָפַח. The Revised

⁸⁹Richard Adamiak, Justice and History in the Old Testament, p. 1. Leon Morris, The Biblical Doctrine of Judgment, pp. 8,17,18,22. John G. Gammie, "The Theology of Retribution in the Book of Deuteronomy," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly 32 (1970):12. Even for those who want to distinguish a Yahwist (J) source, retributive justice is declared in their source, Exod. 32:35.

⁹⁰Klaus Koch, "Gibt es ein Vergeltungsdogma im Alten Testament," pp. 148,160. Others maintain that retributive theology does not begin until the so-called Deuteronomistic history, dated about 621 B.C. Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, 2 vols., trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 1:109,125. Hans Walter Wolff, "The Kerygoma of the Yahwist," The Vitality of Old Testament Traditions, ed. Walter Brueggemann and Hans Walter Wolff (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), pp. 59,61,62. W. Pannenberg, "Redemptive Event and History," Essays in Old Testament Hermeneutics, ed. Klaus Westermann (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1963), p. 318. Frank M. Cross, "Ideologies of Kingship in the Era of the Empire," Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 264.

Standard Version of the Holy Bible and the Jerusalem Bible translate this as "disinheriting" and "disowning" them. On the other hand, the Brown, Driver, Briggs lexicon suggests this should mean "bring to ruin, destroy." This suggestion is followed in The New American Bible translation "and wipe them out." The Septuagint translates ἀπολώ ἀυ+οὺς, and interprets the threat as a complete destruction. The use of the pestilence, רָצַח, is never intended to be a complete annihilation. The only other time Brown, Driver and Briggs advocate the Hiphil form of שָׁרַח to mean such destruction is in the Song of the Sea תִּוְרִישׁ מוֹרָתִי (Exod. 15:9). Because the breach of the covenant relates to the land "flowing with milk and honey" (Num. 14:8), and taking the land involves covenant trust, it seems preferable to interpret the word of punishment as a retraction of covenant promise by Yahweh. The concluding statement that Yahweh would make of Moses' offspring a great nation⁹¹ suggests that this nation, then, would be received into the covenant relationship.

The difference in Yahweh's response to the murmurings of the people appears in this narrative of failure on the part of the people to enter the land. Just as in the case of the judgment by fire at Taberah (Num. 11:1-3),⁹² the murmuring of the people does not involve a need, but rather

⁹¹A similar statement concludes the word of punishment in Exod. 32:10.

⁹²See Fritz, Israel in der Wüste, pp. 69-70.

arises from dissatisfaction with the state of affairs. This cause of murmuring differs from that in the pre-Sinai narratives when the murmuring revolved around the need for water and food (Exod. 15:22-25; 16:1-30; 17:1-7). In Numbers 14 Yahweh's wrath is incurred because basic covenant promises are at stake. Yahweh has promised to give this land, and when the promise is about to be fulfilled, Israel demonstrates the lack of faith and trust.

The tension mounts when the word of destruction and disinheritance is spoken against Israel because the same threat to the nation existed previously (Exod. 32:9,10). Moses intercedes on behalf of the people and Yahweh "repented ($\square \pi \dot{\jmath} \dot{\imath} \dot{\imath} \dot{\imath}$) of the evil," and the nation was spared. However, a plague does strike the people (Exod. 32:35).

A similar intercession follows Yahweh's threat against the people who refused to enter the promised land (Num. 14:13-21). It is readily recognized that the appeal has basically the same arguments as a wider scope of material dealing with the similar situation on Mount Sinai. It differs from the normal form of intercession in this that there is no address to Yahweh at the opening of the plea (Exod. 32:11; Numb. 16:22), but pleadings to Yahweh are incorporated in the prayer (verse 14).

What is the basis of Moses' intercession? What does he expect of Yahweh? The first argument is the reaction of the Egyptians. Moses emphasizes a basic point of the pre-Sinai narratives: Yahweh is in the midst of this people

(Exod. 17:7), demonstrated by the revelatory signs (Exod. 15:26; 16:4-8; 17:6) and the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night (Exod. 13:21; Num. 10:34). This can now become a word of disgrace and defamation on the lips of the Egyptians. Yahweh's fame among the nations recurs in Israel's theology. Moses appeals to Israel's loyalty to Yahweh by pointing out that no other god ever took a nation to himself and cared for them through trial and wonder. This is the evidence Moses presents that Yahweh is God (Deut. 4:34,35). In a similar way Joshua declares that all the signs of wonder and power are evidences to the nations of the earth that Yahweh is mighty God (Joshua 4:24). The trustworthiness of Yahweh and the fulfillment of the patriarchal covenant are the arguments of Moses when Yahweh threatens to consume the people at Mount Sinai (Exod. 32:11-14).

The confrontation with Yahweh up to this point seemingly deals with covenant issues. The "Yahweh in your midst" parallels the "I will be your God" promise. The promise of the land is in the patriarchal covenant and reiterated in Egypt (Exod. 3:8) and again at Sinai (Exod. 33:1-3). The innuendos of the argument of Moses are to counteract the references to the covenant relationship that Yahweh presented when he charged the people with "despising him," and "not believing" on him (verse 11). Yahweh will cause others to think less of him if covenant promises are not upheld. Moses was chosen to be the Mediator of the

Covenant,⁹³ to stand before Yahweh and a trembling people to hear what Yahweh had to say (Exod. 20:19). Now he stands as intercessor of the people on behalf of the same covenant, and pleads for faithfulness of Yahweh's part to the same covenant.⁹⁴ Here he is closely bound to the people.⁹⁵

A further close association with the Sinai pericope becomes apparent when Moses uses an evidently liturgical form that is a part of the Sinai Covenant (Exod. 34:6,7).

And now, I pray thee, let the power of the Lord be great as thou hast promised saying 'The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation' (Num. 14:17,18).

It is clear the reference is to Exod. 34:6,7. Although the quotation is not verbatim, the true basis of Moses' intercession becomes apparent, the chesed of Yahweh. Moses asks for forgiveness $\text{יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ}$. Steadfast love is manifested in forgiveness.⁹⁶ This "abounding love" is a concrete action that is taken on behalf of a person

⁹³Herbert Schmid, "Der Stand der Moseforschung," Judaica, 20 (1964):205,206.

⁹⁴Josef Scharbert, "Heilsmittler im Alten Testament und im Alten Orient," Quaestiones Disputatae, vol. 23/24, ed. Karl Rahner and Heinrich Schlier (Freiburg, Basel and Wien: Herder, 1964), p. 85.

⁹⁵Moses stands between Yahweh and the people. Only twice does he use a "we/us" formula, Exod. 33:16; 34:9. The liturgical form is evident from the word of Moses "as thou has promised," Num. 14:17. See Sakenfeld, "The Problem of Divine Forgiveness in Numbers 14," p. 323.

⁹⁶Ps. 103:11; 145:8; Exod. 15:13.

with whom a relationship exists.⁹⁷ The need that calls forth such action is serious, deep seated, rather than casual. It is not in the realm of the material, but rather is the presupposition for the covenant (Exod. 20:6; 34:6).⁹⁸ Furthermore רַחֲמֵי is always that given by the superior to the inferior person, and therefore always suggests that the person showing רַחֲמֵי is free to make the choice to fill another person's need. There never is the opportunity for reprisal if the deed of love is not shown. The word, with its Old Testament meaning as it relates to Yahweh, is interested in the nature of his work rather than his character.⁹⁹

The request for רַחֲמֵי is made in a parallel statement that Yahweh is "slow to anger."¹⁰⁰ The רַחֲמֵי of Yahweh can be exercised in a variety of circumstances. It is not limited to the act of forgiveness in its full meaning. Therefore רַחֲמֵי cannot be equated with forgiveness.

⁹⁷Sakenfeld, "The Problem of Divine Forgiveness in Numbers 14," p. 323.

⁹⁸Hans Joachim Stroebe, "Wortes HASAH," Vetus Testamentum, 2 (1952), p. 250.

⁹⁹Edmund Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament, trans. Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip J. Allcock (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. 107.

¹⁰⁰In Exod. 34:6, the full liturgical formula is "slow to anger, merciful and gracious . . . faithfulness." For liturgical usage see Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Neh. 9:17. See also on this passage G. Ernest Wright, God Who Acts, Studies in Biblical Theology No. 8, ed. C. F. D. Moule et al. (London: SCM Press, 1952), p. 85, "The emphasis . . . is upon the gracious, loyal and forgiving nature of God... ."

The attribute of "slow to anger" gives credence to the plea for forgiveness,¹⁰¹ for there is no characteristic of the people that can be the basis of the plea.

The נָשָׂא also is used in conjunction with נָשָׂא וְנָשָׂא . The verb is a participle Qal form of נָשָׂא . With a basic meaning of "to lift," "lift up" anything from a standard, a person's feet, a person's eyes, it also has the meaning to bear, or carry a burden. Then ultimately it comes to mean "take away," "carry off," with a specific area of meaning to "carry off," take away guilt and iniquity (Gen. 50:17; Exod. 32:32; 10:17; 34:7; 1 Sam. 15:25; Hos. 14:3). The noun is the obvious object of the verb. Again Moses appears as the Mediator of the Covenant and places the covenant promise before Yahweh.

The structure of Moses' plea that Yahweh act with רַחֲמֵי toward this people leads to a solution to the question of forgiveness rendered on one hand, but entry into the promised land denied, on the other hand. The רַחֲמֵי is that act which is favorable toward one who deserves no favor. It is not a material blessing, such as the giving of the land. Rather, רַחֲמֵי is the power whereby Yahweh remains in relationship with his people. In spite of the murmuring, Yahweh still is with them. He does not destroy

¹⁰¹Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 147, identifies the patience of Yahweh with the note in Ps. 78:38 that Yahweh was compassionate and forgiving to the wilderness people. He does not mention the covenant relationship at Sinai, Exod. 34:6, nor the liturgical use of the formula.

them immediately, but he is with them with his acts and wonders. The **סָלַח** is that act within Yahweh that gives impetus to the pardon. Yahweh alone is responsible for it. The people cannot put pressure on Yahweh to offer it. It is actually far more than they can expect from Yahweh.

God responds directly to Moses' plea "I have pardoned, according to your word" (Num. 14:20). Immediately there is a recognition of Moses' place as Mediator of the Covenant and intercessor for the people. It is through him that the sinful, covenant-breaking people gain forgiveness.¹⁰² It is not the result of an act of repentance on the part of the people.¹⁰³

Yahweh responds, **סָלַחְתִּי**, "I have forgiven."¹⁰⁴ The problem that arises is that as quickly as he says "I have forgiven" he also adds

none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs . . . and yet have put me to the proof these ten times and have not hearkened to my voice, shall see the land which I swore to give to their fathers (Num. 14:22,23).

The word is always used of God forgiving the sinner.

¹⁰²Scharbert, "Heilsmittler im Alten Testament und im Alten Orient," p. 89. Norman Habel, Literary Criticism of the Old Testament, Old Testament Series (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), p. 62, "the grace of God is won by the bold word of a hero."

¹⁰³A similar situation occurred at Sinai, Exod. 32: 11-14, 30-34; 34:9-10.

¹⁰⁴The Deut. 1:26-40 passage does not mention the forgiveness theme, but Num. 14:11b-23a is labeled a "'deuteronomistic' insertion" by Noth, Numbers, p. 109; Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 148.

It is important to know the content of Moses' request. In pleading for the continuation of this people that despised Yahweh, in contrast to accepting the suggestion that a new nation be started from his own family, Moses was appealing that the covenant remain in effect. He asked that the relationship between Yahweh and this people continue and the promise of the land become a reality. A certain sense of indulgence on the part of Yahweh toward the sinner is evident in the term $\pi\lambda\eta\tau$, as is evident in Naaman's plea that the God of Israel understands if in the course of his court duties he is called on to pay homage to another Yahweh (2 Kings 5:18).¹⁰⁵ Jacob also maintains that pardon is kept within certain boundaries, a bit less than complete.

If in the main this pardon consists in a limited - and renewable - act, the Old Testament also gives a more profound notion of pardon which does not consist in a removal of a fault, but in a single, definite act which will allow man to have normal relationships with God.¹⁰⁶

This is the first term of the covenant and is the response to Moses' plea that $\pi\lambda\eta\tau$ be the basis of forgiveness. As Sakenfeld points out, "Forgiveness is understood basically as preservation of the community."¹⁰⁷ This is possible

¹⁰⁵The word also holds a strong sense of pardon at the end of time, Jer. 31:34; 33:8; 50:20.

¹⁰⁶Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament, p. 291.

¹⁰⁷Sakenfeld, "The Problem of Divine Forgiveness in Numbers 14," p. 327.

only insofar as Yahweh is willing to keep his relationship with the people in tact.¹⁰⁸

But what can be said regarding the statement that none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs which I wrought in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the proof these ten times and have not hearkened to my voice, shall see the land which I swore to give to their fathers; and none of those who despised me shall see it" (Num. 14:22-23)?

The statement is preceded by a double oath form that evidently expresses surety, certainty. "As I live," אֲנִי חַי, is a statement of the reality of Yahweh's existence,¹⁰⁹ and speaks to a person's reaction when coming face to face with a power imposing itself.¹¹⁰ The oath is used only three times in the Pentateuch, twice in this narrative (verses 21,28) and once in the Song of Moses (Deut. 32:40). Here the oath to bring judgment on the adversaries is accompanied by the sign of the oath, "I lift up my hand to heaven." The word actually is a surety that something will

¹⁰⁸Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, pp. 147,148 does not consider the covenant implications in the narrative. He sees complete fulfillment of the threat, denial of entrance into the land, Num. 14:23b, as the only answer to forgiveness. In his estimation forgiveness plays only a minor role in the murmuring tradition. A calculated methodology centering in literary criticism has emptied the narrative of the very point of Moses' intercession, אֲנִי חַי. Some who do follow the tradition-history methodology place the so-called insertion of Num. 14:11b-23a as Yahwist material. Fritz, Israel in der Wüste, p. 20.

¹⁰⁹Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, 1, p. 213.

¹¹⁰Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament, p. 38.

take place. A second such word is used when Yahweh identifies as a positive action what Moses saw as a deterrent. "All the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (verse 21). The forthcoming events will be to the praise of Yahweh, who will gain glory, and not be seen in weakness and inability to fulfill his covenant (verses 15,16).¹¹¹ The succeeding events will be recognized as the activity of the living Yahweh, and this is in contrast to the inactivity of the gods of the nations round about. The way in which this will be carried out is explained in detail (Num. 14:26-35).

The granting of forgiveness does not mean that the full scope of punishment is rescinded. Although the absolute character of the punishment may be the acceptable course according to the people's way of justice (2 Sam. 12:5-12; 24:10), Yahweh speaks a word of pardon, but still "because of the deed you have scorned the Lord, the child that is born to you shall die" (2 Sam. 12:14,15). In repentance for the sin of numbering the people, David repents of his sin and chooses to "fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercy is great" (2 Sam. 24:14). The sinful people that failed to enter the land will have a constant reminder

¹¹¹ Compare this purpose with the time of vengeance in the Vassal-Treaty of Essarhaddon, VTE 423-427, in M. Weinfeld, "Traces of Assyrian Treaty Formula in Deut.," Biblica, 46 (1965):419, "May Ninurta, the first among the gods, fill you with his swift arrow; may he fill the desert with your corpses; may he feed your flesh to the eagle and the jackal."

of what it means to thwart the purpose of Yahweh (Num. 14:35).¹¹² The problem over a seeming contradiction between the announcement of forgiveness and the imposed sentence of death in the wilderness is a problem that arises because a solution is sought "in the nature of Yahweh's aid or a local legend which might give it a setting."¹¹³ The theology of the Old Testament grew out of words and acts of Yahweh and the response of the people, not in the liturgical ritual that was built into a simulated historical event. The theology is a consistent theology that teaches that Yahweh, by his free will, the depth of his steadfast love, and his great power will pronounce forgiveness and thus keep his relationship with a people or a person intact. At the same time he can also pronounce sentence upon the person or nation for the deed. Mercy and judgment stand side by side in the theology of the Old Testament. Adam and Eve are cast from the Garden of Eden, and they receive garments to hide their shame (Gen. 3:21-24). Cain is sentenced to be a wanderer but receives a mark to protect him from those who would seek vengeance (Gen. 4:14-15). The people in the wilderness and David are further examples. The plea of Moses to forgive the people is answered by Yahweh's words: "I have forgiven."¹¹⁴ The sentence pronounced

¹¹²Raphael Loewe, "Divine Frustration Exegetically Frustrated - Numbers 14:34 תַּנּוּחַ תַּי," pp. 141-42.

¹¹³Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 149.

¹¹⁴Parents forgive a disobedient child. The punishment

does not cast doubt on the actuality of forgiveness.

The narrative of the spies is understood in the context of the covenant relationship between Yahweh and the people. In this post-Sinai event the people are expected to act in the faith and trust in Yahweh's presence and leadership and enter the promised land without fear. The fear and refusal of the people to do this is interpreted by Yahweh as a rejection of him and a lack of trust in his promises. It is a breaking of covenant. The sin can be forgiven only by an act of Yahweh that comes freely from him, without coercion. This is Yahweh's רָצוֹן . Yahweh continues to be in a living relationship with this people as he announces that he forgives them. Moses stands between Yahweh and the people as Mediator of the Covenant and intercessor for the people. The theology demonstrates that even though God forgives, he can, and does, still pass sentence on lack of faith that leads to the people despising him. Judgment and mercy lie side by side in the tension of life because the problem of sin asks how God can live with the sinner, and the experience of judgment causes human questions about full forgiveness. In judgment and mercy Yahweh acts freely from the power and authority within himself. He consistently asks the people in covenant with him to see the signs and wonders and to listen to his voice (Num. 14:22).

does not demonstrate that a rejection takes place. A forgiven criminal may still be sentenced.

Numbers 21:4-9. The Fiery Serpents

Although the episode of the fiery serpents is late in the itinerary of Wilderness Wanderings, and happens during the time of the detour around Edom, it is included in this study because judgment and mercy are apparent. The narrative does not include the formula that the people "murmured," but they did speak against God and Moses, and God responds to this negative attitude.

v. 4 From Mount Hor they set out on the way of the Sea of Reeds to go around the land of Edom. The spirit of the people became impatient on the way.

v. 5 The people spoke against God and against Moses: 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness, for (the non-existence of) there is no bread and there is no water, and our spirit is disgusted with the worthless bread'

v. 6 Then Yahweh sent the fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and many people of Israel died.

v. 7 The people came to Moses and said: 'We have sinned, for we have spoken against Yahweh and against you. Pray to Yahweh and let him turn aside the serpents from us.' And Moses prayed for the people.

v. 8 And Yahweh said to Moses, 'Make a fiery serpent and place it upon a standard and when any of those who have been bitten sees it, he shall live.'

v. 9 And Moses made the serpent of copper, and he placed it upon the standard, and when the serpent bit a man, and he looked upon the copper snake, he lived.

This narrative causes problems for those who look for sources within the story. The words that are intended to identify separate sources do not follow accepted patterns in this narrative, for example, the names of לִיְהוָה and לִיְהוָה are used without any other clue of narrative overlays.

A variety of names for the serpents (verse 6 דָּגַן־אֲשֵׁרִי ; verse 7 דָּגַן־אֲשֵׁרִי ; verse 8 שֵׁרֵפִי ; verse 9 דָּגַן־אֲשֵׁרִי) cause some to raise questions of parallel accounts. The lack of consensus demonstrates that fast bound rules are not dependable when trying to establish sources.¹¹⁵

Questions that confront us at the start are: What is the nature of the narrative? And what purpose does it serve? Does it lead to an understanding of the judgment and mercy themes? The narrative begins with a note on the itinerary, "From Mount Hor they set out on the way of the Sea of Reeds to go around the land of Edom" (verse 4). The sentence places this narrative in continuity with the record of the death of Aaron (Num. 20:22-26).

The first point describing the action of the people is that they were impatient, רָצַץ (verse 4). The verb describes the spirit of the people on the way. A noun of this root is used in Exod. 6:9 to describe the spirit of the people still in servitude in Egypt. Brown, Driver and Briggs suggest the meaning of the verb when associated with שָׂרֵץ should be "be impatient." The basic meaning evidently is "short." Elsewhere Yahweh is described as becoming

¹¹⁵Noth, Numbers, p. 156, maintains it is E; Holzinger, Numeri, p. 89; Cuthbert A. Simpson, "The Early Traditions of Israel," A Critical Analysis of the Pre-deuteronomiac Narrative of the Hexateuch (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1948), p. 250; IDB, 1976 Supplementary vol., s.v. "Elohism," by T. E. Fretheim, p. 262. Others identify it as the Yahwist, Fritz, Israel in der Wüste, p. 96; Coats, Rebellion in the Wilderness, p. 117 concludes that "source identification here cannot be solved with certainty."

"indignant over the misery of Israel" (Judg. 10:16). Samson is pressed hard about his strength by Delilah, and the translation reads "his soul was vexed to death" (Joshua 16:16). In Micah Yahweh chastises because of Israel's sin, not "Yahweh's impatience" (Micah 6:15). Yahweh becomes shepherd of the sheep "but I became impatient with them" (Zech. 11:8). And Job asks "Why should I not be impatient?" (Job 21:4). The word is consistently used to describe an attitude. Near the end of the Wilderness Wanderings the people are described as impatient.

This impatience shows itself in speaking against Yahweh and Moses. The term "murmuring" (רָגַז) is not used, nor the previously used "assembled against Moses and Aaron" (Num. 16:3; 20:2). The object against which the people are speaking is the Exodus from Egypt.

The outline of the story parallels a much more briefly told incident at Taberah (Num. 11:1-3). These parallels are apparent: the itinerary (Num. 10:33 and 21:4); the complaining attitude of the people (Num. 11:1 and 21:4); the punishment of Yahweh (Num. 11:1b and 21:6); the plea of the people to Moses (Num. 11:2a and 21:7); the curtailment of the punishment (Num. 11:3 and 21:8,9).¹¹⁶ It is obvious that the narrative of the bronze serpent is told in greater detail than the story of the fire at Taberah.

The story differs from others in that it points to no

¹¹⁶Fritz, Israel in der Wüste, p. 93 points to these parallels.

special, single need. Rather, the impatience of the people causes a problem. This is further described in the complaint of the people, "Why have you brought us out into the wilderness to die?" This complaint denies Yahweh's intent to deliver them, "I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry . . . and I have come to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians . . ." (Exod. 3:7,8).

The second complaint claims there is "no food" (אֵין לָנוּ אֵשֶׁת) and "no water" (וְאֵין טָרִם). This complaint strikes at the heart of Yahweh's care in the wilderness. The signs of bread and water are to reveal Yahweh's presence, an emphasis of the pre-Sinai narratives (Exod. 15:26; 16:12; 17:7). The manna, described as מַן אֲשֶׁר מִן שָׁמַיִם, and the water provided in miraculous fashion (Exod. 15:23; 17:6; Num. 20:11) are not received thankfully as gifts from Yahweh. The attitude of an ungrateful people, even though the conditions were austere, is at the center of the final narrative of the Wilderness Wanderings¹¹⁷ and demonstrates the consistent rebellion, murmuring and complaining of this generation of people.

The complaint against the basic issues of deliverance from bondage and care in the wilderness stems from a failure

¹¹⁷Against Noth, Numbers, pp. 155-56, who sees here just a description of "the circumstances of life in the wilderness." If this is salvation history it must have deeper meaning than just an etiology for the temple cult serpent, 2 Kings 18:4. Noth, History of Pentateuchal Traditions, pp. 121-23.

to believe Yahweh's goodness and faithfulness. The complaint is against Yahweh and Moses, but the narrative makes it plain that "Yahweh sent fiery serpents among the people" (verse 6) as punishment. The verb שָׁלַח is an imperfect Piel, third masculine singular form. The meaning is to "send," "depute," a normal use of the Qal. A distinctive use of the Piel occurs when Yahweh sends a plague or calamity on anyone. The preposition prefixed to the person or thing to whom the judgment is sent is a ל (Deut. 7:20; 32:24; 2 Kings 17:25; Ps. 78:45). In using the Piel form and the ל prefix the writer makes plain the judgment on the sin is sent by Yahweh.¹¹⁸ In the wilderness period the people do experience Yahweh's judgment when they fail to trust him.

The response of the people to the punishment is that they confess their sin, $\text{אָנָּה$. The specific meaning is that they have missed the mark, wandered from the way, or stumbled on the path that was right. The same word was used in the only other confession of sin during the wilderness period (Num. 14:40) when the people tried to rectify their failure to invade the land from the south by massing for an attack after the word of punishment had been spoken.

The choice of forming a serpent instead of some other

¹¹⁸ See reference to Leon Morris, The Biblical Doctrine of Judgment, p. 22. John Gammie, "The Theology of Retribution in the Book of Deuteronomy," p. 9. Although the references are to Deuteronomy passages, the principle applies in Num. 21:4-9.

object is rather obvious because it is the imitation figure of the evil-bringing pests. However, the snake is also a religious symbol in the Near East, and the question must be raised whether this wide-spread usage would influence this choice of the figure of a snake. The snake could be viewed as another magical charm and thus would negate any act of mercy on Yahweh's part if its choice was dictated by a belief in magical charms.

Karen Joines¹¹⁹ has done extensive research to gather data through archaeology and ancient literature. In the Egyptian Book of the Dead a life and death synthesis that parallels this story includes the sentence "Thou art wavering between loving and hating the gods . . ." ¹²⁰ In Egypt the serpent is associated with wisdom and sovereignty.¹²¹ The serpent plays an important part in the contacts of Moses with Pharaoh (Exod. 7:8-12). Eichrodt has suggested that Moses' staff had the figure of a snake entwined around it as a sign of Yahweh's presence.¹²² Archaeologists have found in the Arabian desert the figures of serpents that have been pierced so that they can be worn

¹¹⁹Karen Joines, Serpent Symbolism in the Old Testament (Haddonfield, NJ: Haddonfield House, 1974).

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 97.

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, 1:112. Hugo Gressmann, Mose und seine Zeit, in Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten Testaments, ed. William Boussett and Herman Gunkel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1913), p. 451, had made the observation earlier.

as pendants.¹²³ It is not beyond conjecture or belief that Moses did carry a bronze serpent, and its use for healing is described here.

Archaeology has evidenced the use of the serpent as a cult object in ancient Palestine. N. H. Snaith refers to the bronze cobra found at Gezer, serpent ornaments at Bethshan, the "house of the snake," and Enhattanim, "the Serpent's Spring,"¹²⁴ as significant data supporting a serpent cult. Serpent figures from the late bronze age (1400-1200 B.C.) have been found in Hazor and Shechem.¹²⁵ The serpent cult extended beyond the borders of Palestine as is evidenced by the archaeological discovery in a Hittite shrine in Northern Syria of a bronze statue of a god holding a staff in one hand and a serpent in the other. Other evidences have been found through archaeological research.¹²⁶ The wide usage of serpent figures in religious connotations make this narrative of theological import to the Israelites.¹²⁷

¹²³Joines, Serpent Symbolism in the Old Testament, p. 91.

¹²⁴N. H. Snaith, Leviticus and Numbers, vol. 3 of The Century Bible, ed. H. H. Rowley and Matthew Black (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1967), p. 229.

¹²⁵Joines, Serpent Symbolism in the Old Testament, pp. 62-63.

¹²⁶Ibid., p. 20.

¹²⁷Oskar Grether and Johannes Fichtner, "The Serpent in the OT.", Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 10 vol., ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. in

In the Old Testament the serpent is usually viewed with aversion and alarm. It can be deceptive toward man (Gen. 3:14). It is dangerous because of its bite and poison (Deut. 32:24; Amos 5:19). God's protection is pictured as he guards the righteous man against the serpent (Ps. 91:3). The present fear of the snake is used to impress the future peace of the Messianic age, for peace will exist between man and snake (Is. 11:18).¹²⁸ In spite of the negative manner in which the serpent is viewed, G. Wintermute proposes a "reverence may be concealed in the persistent traditions about the serpent of Moses."¹²⁹

The snake image is basically an object of worship in the Near East. The instruction Yahweh gives to Moses in the wilderness is "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live" (Num. 21:8). A healing power is involved¹³⁰ but

English by Geoffrey W. Bromily (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967), 5:575.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 5:573.

¹²⁹ IDB, 1976 Supplement vol., s.v. "Serpent," by G. Wintermute, p. 816. The proposal that the serpent was the tribal god of the Levites is not convincing. Helmer Ringgren, Israelite Religion, trans. David Green (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 37. Theophil J. Meek, Hebrew Origins (Revised Edition; New York, Evanston, and London: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1950), pp. 36, 123. Aelred Cody, A History of Old Testament Priesthood in Analecta Biblica, No. 35 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969), p. 30.

¹³⁰ The belief that images could ward off evil and disease is evident in the golden tumors made by the Philistines, 1 Sam. 6:14.

that is not inherent in the bronze image. The bronze serpent comes into existence because Yahweh has commanded, "וַיִּשְׂרָף" (wayyisraf), an imperative form, that it be made. It is not the result of a decision of a superstitious people. The unique thing about this serpent fashioned by Moses is that it did not help every person spontaneously, like the manna or water miracles, or even the stoppage of the plague in the camp by Aaron's censor. Only those who look at the bronze serpent are protected from the poison of the serpents' bites. It is not a magical power that is inherent in the bronze object, but the gracious means of help that has been established by Yahweh's words.¹³¹ Within the narrative the bronze serpent is to be a sign of Yahweh's presence and care. It is a means whereby Yahweh fulfills a covenant responsibility to be the protecting Lord of his people. At the same time he calls for a total trust on the part of this people as a covenant response. The sequence of the confession of sin by the people, the request for Moses' prayer, and the command of Yahweh to raise the copper serpent identifies this object as one used by Yahweh for his purposes. This recognition of Yahweh's care which acts in mercy separates it from the superstition that the serpent raised on the standard is a magical charm.

The only other Old Testament reference to the bronze serpent made by Moses is during the reign of Hezekiah, "He

¹³¹Grether and Fichtner, p. 575.

removed the high places and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made" (2 Kings 18:4).¹³² The reform of Hezekiah was aimed at destroying cult objects that had been introduced through the popular Canaanite religion and practices and now were threatening the very existence of Yahwism. Even in the report of its destruction a certain legitimacy of the serpent image can be detected because Moses is credited with making it. It did become an object of veneration. The added note "for until these days the people of Israel had burned incense¹³³ to it; it was called Nehushtan" (2 Kings 18:4), reinforces the belief that the serpent cult flourished in Jerusalem for a period of time. The name "Nehushtan," with an etymology from נִחְשְׁתָן, or נִחְשָׁתָן, adds to the conjecture that this serpent cult tried to legitimize the practice from this narrative of the wilderness era.

Cult objects are mentioned in various periods of Israel's history, and then they disappear from the scene. An ephod, often with an oracular significance, was a cult object during the days of Gideon for "all Israel played the

¹³²It is tenuous to limit the reference to serpents and scorpions in Deut. 8:15 to this one event. It seems more likely to refer to a constant desert problem.

¹³³L. H. Grollenberg, Atlas of the Bible, trans. and ed. Joyce M. H. Reid and H. H. Rowley (New York and Toronto: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1963), p. 70, Plate 193 has a vessel from the Canaanite temple of Beth-Shan that might be such an incense burner. A serpent figure winds around the vessel. See also Herbert Schmid, "Gottesbild, Gottesschau, und Theophanie," Judaica 23, (1967):250.

harlot after it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family" (Judg. 8:27). The molten image in the house of Micah is a cult object.¹³⁴ However, the serpent is not mentioned as a cult object brought to Jerusalem when the ark is transported there (2 Samuel 6). Although possible, there is no conclusive evidence that the serpent of Moses is the same object destroyed in Hezekiah's reform.

The etymological connection between the שֶׁרָפָה Moses was instructed to make (Num. 21:8) and the שֶׁרָפָיִם in the call of Isaiah (Isa. 6:2) also gives evidence of a serpent-bodied figure in Israel's cult. Contemporary scholarship believes the serpent came to the Israelite cult by way of the Jebusite priesthood, possibly transferred to the Jerusalem sanctuary by Zadok, David's appointed priest.¹³⁵ Possibly just as valid an argument is presented by Karen Joines¹³⁶ who suggests the actual emergence of the serpent in the temple itself came through the Phoenecian craftsmen who included it in the ornamentation¹³⁷ in the temple

¹³⁴Georg Fohrer, History of Israelite Religion, trans. David E. Green (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1972), p. 82, observes that moral lapses from the law forbidding images occurred, probably under the influence of Canaanite practices.

¹³⁵Snaith, p. 279; Gray, p. 608; H. H. Rowley, Worship in Ancient Israel, p. 87. Andrew C. Tunyogi, The Rebellions of Israel (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1969), p. 59.

¹³⁶Joines, p. 101.

¹³⁷See G. Ernest Wright, The Old Testament Against Its Environment in Studies in Biblical Theology, ed. C. F. D. Moule et al. (London: SCM Press, 1950), No. 2, 24:

building, of course on the orders of Solomon.

The insertion of the note that the serpent is of Mosaic origin may have come after the defeat of the Northern Israelite territory in 721 B.C. Some of the northern traditions were probably brought south at this time and practices of the north and south were merged.¹³⁸ A narrative of the serpents in the wilderness may have spurred the note that Hezekiah "broke in pieces the bronze serpent Moses had made" (2 Kings 18:4). It was possibly an attempt in some way to legitimize it as a temple object, and even justify the continuance of the cult. However, in the wilderness narrative (Num. 21:4-9) no further mention is made of the use of this object.

The wilderness narrative and the word of Yahweh within the narrative do demonstrate Yahweh's gracious care for Israel, his means of help,¹³⁹ and thus presents the theme of Yahweh, the covenant Lord of Israel. Just as other visible signs of Yahweh's presence - the ark, the pillar of cloud - this bronze serpent is to assure Israel that through Yahweh's power they, too, can have victory over hostile forces.¹⁴⁰ However, this victory over the hostile forces

"there is no image or deity ever mentioned . . . nor in the temple of Solomon." In a footnote he adds "the Brazen Serpent" may be an exception.

¹³⁸Fretheim, p. 261.

¹³⁹Fichtner, 5:575.

¹⁴⁰Eichrodt, 1:113. See also von Rad, Old Testament Theology, 1:219, that the cultic images demanded no

his commands and bring the word of deliverance to the people. He is the suzerain's representative to speak judgment and grace. Israel remains in Yahweh's kingdom as she remains loyal to him. Through the mediatorship of Moses Yahweh tells the people the relationship remains. It existed at the beginning, when they first moved out of Egypt (Exod. 3:7). He calls them "My people." When the people speak against Yahweh and Moses at the end of the Wilderness Wanderings they do not break the covenant bond as they might suspect when Yahweh sends them the judgment of the fiery serpents. Yahweh demonstrates his love and grace when he instructs Moses to make the bronze serpent and calls on the people to live out their trust in him by looking at this serpent that they might live. Jesus Christ places the narrative within the Gospel framework and identifies the believing factor that makes it possible for a person to gain the blessing of life from God.

CHAPTER IV

THE WILDERNESS THEME IN THE PROPHETS

The people of Israel gained their religious experience as they lived out their pilgrimage in the wilderness. Here they came to know the goodness and judgment of Yahweh. Here they were taught how Yahweh evaluated their response to his mercy. The wilderness narratives of Exodus and Numbers record this religious experience and this record helped shape the faith that was proclaimed by the religious leaders of the succeeding generations. The experiences of the past, including those in the wilderness, were applied by these religious leaders as they interpreted the events the people were experiencing in their respective generations, and they were interpreted as a word of warning or a promise of hope. As the prophets and religious leaders were calling the people of their generation to be faithful to Yahweh, they referred to the people of the wilderness period to demonstrate a time of Yahweh's grace or to articulate a warning because of rebellion.

The prophets Hosea and Jeremiah speak very positively of the wilderness period,¹ while Ezekiel is rather negative

¹Hosea 2:14-16 (Hebrew vv. 16-18); Jer. 2:2,3. Amos does not give a clear estimate of the period, but he speaks

in his evaluation.² This dual evaluation has led to numerous scholarly studies. By what criterion can a judgment be made on this period of Israel's history? Our interest focuses on the juxtaposition of mercy and judgment in the wilderness narratives. The study of the wilderness narratives in this dissertation, compared with the interpretation of the wilderness era by the later prophets, will lead to an understanding of the divergent views of this period. However, the evaluation of this wilderness experience begins already in the book of Deuteronomy. For continuity Moses' evaluation must precede that of the later prophets.

On the plains of Moab (Deut. 34:1) Moses rehearsed the good things Yahweh had done for the people, and he recounted sins of the people that Yahweh punished. What criterion did Moses use to identify the good things? He uses descriptive words to speak of the wilderness, and in this way he emphasizes the grace of Yahweh. The wilderness is "terrible," **וְהָיָה גִּזְרָא**, a Hiphil participle form of **גָּרַע** (Deut. 5:19,31; 8:15). The same word is used of judgment day (Joel 2:11; 3:4), and to describe Yahweh as a "great and terrible God" (Deut. 7:21; 10:17). The problems that confronted the people are often described as

highly of it, as a time when Yahweh showed himself to Israel, 2:10. Compare Ps. 136:16.

²Ezekiel 20. Nehemiah has a dual outlook, 9:6-21. Compare Psalm 106 and Psalm 78.

"great" (גִּדְּוֹלָה), but a second adjective is added: "great and fortified cities" (Deut. 2:7), "great people and many" (Deut. 2:10), "great and goodly cities" (Deut. 6:10), "great and grievous signs and wonders" (Deut. 6:11). By inference the great acts of Yahweh that made traveling through the wilderness a possibility became even greater because of the threats before them (Deut. 1:19,31). The purpose of Yahweh's goodness is that the people might come to know him and obey his commandments (Deut. 8:2), and that the people might know themselves by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord (Deut. 8:3). Yahweh's activity is the basis of the positive description of the wilderness era in Deuteronomy (Deut. 8:15; 32:10).

The words and works of Yahweh were not always accepted in the spirit they were given. The people of Yahweh had their actions toward Yahweh evaluated. Moses declares Israel's sin is that they "provoked the Lord to wrath, they rebelled against the commandments of the Lord," they "did not believe or obey his voice," and this is summarized in the rebuke "you have been rebellious against the Lord" (Deut. 9:22-24). This rating is concentrated on the behavior pattern of the people at Taberah, Massah, Kib'roth-hatta'avah, and Kadesh-barnea. A similar indictment grows from the review of the activity of the people at Horeb when Yahweh gave the decalogue and the people made the molten image (Deut. 9:12).

The double evaluation of the Wilderness period does

not cause the problem. The interpreter needs to clearly identify the main participants in the wilderness and recognize the evaluations are directed toward the deeds of Yahweh or the responses of the people. Yahweh responds to needs of the people, and strives to teach them of his love and care. His motivation is to lead them to a life of obedience and dependence on him. At other times the response of the people is evaluated as rebellion, disobedience, and unbelief. The purpose of the parnetic section (Deut. 6:11) is exhortatory, a call to obedience for the people of Yahweh.

The estimate of the wilderness period by the eighth century prophet Hosea is a positive one. The basic description is in Hos. 2:14-16 (Hebrew, verses 16-18). The pericope is a prophetic saying that begins with וְיִשְׂרָאֵל . The same particle is used at the beginning of verses 9 and 14 (Hebrew, verses 8,11,16). The particle often introduces a prophetic saying that "generally introduces the announcement of some action Yahweh is about to take in response to man's deeds or his sufferings"³ (compare Num. 20:12). In verse six (Hebrew, verse 8) וְיִשְׂרָאֵל is followed immediately by the revelatory form יְיָ . The word calls attention to Yahweh, the listener is to give heed. It is not a call to be attentive to the historical deed but to Yahweh's

³Hans Walter Wolff, Hosea, Hermeneia Series, ed. Paul D. Hanson, trans. Gary Stansell (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), p. 161.

personal action. It is his own coming.⁴ The same revelatory form is a part of the pre-Sinai narratives because, in its purpose, it is concerned to have the people know that Yahweh is showing great mercy by providing manna, by giving a law to live by (Exod. 16:4), and by providing water to supply a true need (Exod. 17:6). Although different in form, a revelatory term, **כִּי אֶנִּי יְהוָה**, is used to lead the people to know that Yahweh sweetens the water and provides statutes and commandments to govern the life whereby the people are to live (Exod. 15:26). The sequence of the use of the particle **לֵכֶן** in Hosea (chapter 12) identifies the same revelatory purpose. Yahweh proclaims his revelatory action toward Israel, **לֵכֶן אֶנְזַנֶּנּוּ** (verse 6. Hebrew, verse 8) to put obstacles in the way of Israel as she goes after false lovers. The "lack of knowledge" theme on Israel's part is emphasized as Yahweh points out Israel's idolatry grows because they think the false lovers "give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink" (verse 5. Hebrew, verse 7) and therefore "she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil and who lavished upon her silver and gold which they used for Baal" (verse 8. Hebrew, verse 10). A similar situation of not knowing Yahweh exists in Israel as existed with the wilderness generation.

To rectify this situation of "not knowing," Yahweh

⁴Ibid., p. 4.

announces his intended action through Hosea, "I will hedge up her way with thorns" (Hos. 2:8), "I will take her back" (Hos. 2:11). The prophetic announcement is introduced by לִכְן in each verse, but the revelatory form הִנְנִי is not included in verse 11. Its force continues from verse 8. The third time לִכְן is used, now with the variation of the revelatory form הִנְנִי מֵנְדָה, marks the explanation of how the previously hedging up and taking Israel back will take place, "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her" (Hos. 2:14. Hebrew, verse 16).⁵ Thus Yahweh is declaring his new era when he will bring new deeds of mercy and grace to Israel. Yahweh's grace, demonstrated in the wilderness era, would now be magnified. His deeds are a restoration of his grace, not a reward for Israel's activity. The parallel of not knowing Yahweh which exists between the wilderness people and those of Hosea's generation leads Yahweh to act in such a way that the people will come to know him as the One who provides for all their needs. Barth has observed that Hosea is concerned with the gracious acts of Yahweh in the wilderness, and not with the negative behavior of the people,⁶ and this is the basis of the positive evaluation of the wilderness era.

⁵The language of courtship, הִנְנִי עֲלֵי-קַדְדָה. Compare Gen. 34:3; Ruth 2:13; Isa. 40:2; Judg. 19:3).

⁶Chr. Barth, "Zur Bedeutung der Wüstentradiation," Supplement to Vetus Testamentum, 15 (1966):17,18.

At several points in his prophetic work Hosea records the words in which Yahweh expresses his love for Israel, and therefore, in spite of the sins of the people, he cannot cast them off permanently (Hos. 6:4; 1:1,8,11; 14:1,4,8). Yahweh addressed Hosea's generation in the name of the "Lord your God from the land of Egypt" (Hos. 12:9). The same words are used in a reference to the wilderness period in a brief review of salvation history (Hos. 13:4,5). The two generations separated by time are joined by covenant theology. The statement "you know no other God but me" (Hos. 13:4) is closely connected with the first commandment,⁷ and speaks to the problem Hosea faces, a nation that does not know Yahweh's goodness, but has identified the Baal as their provider (Hos. 2:7,8). Hosea is concerned that the people return to the covenant relationship established in the wilderness generation and that they look to Yahweh's goodness to them.⁸ Other references to the wilderness generation allude to gracious, loving care: "Like grapes in the wilderness I found Israel. Like

⁷Especially pertinent is the covenant usage of the word יְהוָה , the recognition of the vassal of his sovereign, and as it applies to the Sinai Covenant. Herbert Huffman, "Treaty Background of the Hebrew YADA'," Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, 181 (1966): 31-36. Walter Brueggeman, Tradition for Crisis: A Study in Hosea (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1968), pp. 13-105 discusses the use of the covenant by the prophets.

⁸Against Richard Adamiak, Justice and History in the Old Testament (Cleveland: John T. Zubal, 1982), p. 34, who holds Hosea does not see the wilderness period as one of the great saving acts which form the basis of the obligation to obey.

the first fruit on the fig tree in its first season I saw your fathers" (Hos. 9:10). The "reflective manner of speech"⁹ carries into the remembrances "when Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. . . . Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk. I took them up in my arms" (Hos. 11:1,3). There is a "much more intensive historical retrospect"¹⁰ that includes the theological use of the wilderness. Here Yahweh taught Israel to be a nation and provided for her needs (verses 3,4). Hosea's word to Israel is of Yahweh's love and grace which would build them into a nation, not a word of judgment that would end in their destruction.

The other eighth century prophet who had a direct reference to the wilderness period is Amos (2:10). Here the wilderness period is a norm for Yahweh's care. Amos refers to the 40 years (also 5:25) of wandering, not as a punishment, but an extension of care. "Also I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite" (Amos 2:10).

From the argument of silence Amos is interpreted as knowing nothing either of the covenant of Sinai nor the murmuring tradition of the wilderness period. Instead, the claim is made that the obligation of obedience on the part

⁹Wolff, Hosea, p. 161.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 193.

of the people is based on the saving acts of Yahweh in the wilderness.¹¹ Amos identifies the wilderness period as normative, but it is normative for Yahweh's care, not Israel's action. (Amos 2:10). The pronoun "I" is prominent. Yahweh is the source of the action. The passage is inserted within a listing of Israel's transgressions committed against the innocent, the needy, the poor, the afflicted, the maiden, and a notice of the drunkenness of the people (Amos 2:6-8). These are sins identified in the legal section of the covenant relationship, especially the Book of the Covenant (Exod. 20:21-23:33). The notice of the wilderness norm is followed by an accusation that the people have silenced the voice of the prophets (Amos 2:12). The indictment of Israel, then, is based on covenant law. It is followed by a word of punishment Yahweh will inflict upon them (Amos 2:13-16). The point at issue is that the eighth century Israelites have disobeyed covenant law, and they are to be punished on that basis. The normative factor of the wilderness is that Yahweh's deeds should create trust. He fulfills the word he promised. He destroyed as he promised the Amorite who stood in the way (Exod. 3:8,17). The normative factor is extended to include another act of Yahweh's caring, "I raised up some of your sons for prophets . . ." (Amos 2:11), prophets the people silenced. The issue is not obedience to law because of Yahweh's goodness,

¹¹Adamiak, Justice and History in the Old Testament, p. 33.

but a trust in Yahweh's promise that the prophets raised among them were to be a blessing. If obedience on the basis of Yahweh's care would be the issue, then the eighth century Israelites would be held responsible to Yahweh on the basis of the same normative care of the wilderness. Instead of this, however, the failure to keep covenant obligations is the cause for Israel's punishment.

The argument from silence has been used elsewhere to attempt to establish the theory that certain sections of Scripture are later additions to the Pentateuch.¹² John Bright shows fallacies in the argument from silence, especially as it is imposed in creedal statements. The same argumentation he uses applies in cases where very specific intentions of the author can be identified. Bright brings the example of the major creeds of the Christian churches, The Nicene and Apostolic. Because these creeds do not mention the Lord's Supper or the Sacrament of Holy Baptism is no evidence that the worshipping communities in which the creeds originated had no knowledge of the sacraments.¹³ The argument that Amos knew nothing of the covenant in the wilderness period nor the murmuring of the people motif

¹²Gerhard von Rad, "The Form Critical Problem of the Hexateuch," The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), pp. 7,8.

¹³John Bright, "The School of Alt and Noth, A Critical Evaluation," Old Testament Issues, ed. Samuel Sandmel, Harper Forum Books, ed. Martin Marty (New York, Evanston and London: Harper and Row Publishers, 1968), p. 188.

cannot be conclusive from the argument of silence. The reference to the wilderness period (Amos 2:10) is directed toward Yahweh's actions. No reference is made to the actions of the people. The sequence of events listed, the conquest of the Amorite, the care in the wilderness, and the raising up of prophets all tell of Yahweh's goodness. The sin Amos speaks of is that the people have silenced the prophets (Amos 2:12) which Yahweh raised up for them. The revelatory form $\text{וְיִשְׂרָאֵל יָדָעַתְּ$ follows. This is the further announcement that a new thing is to come, not Yahweh's care, but Yahweh's punitive judgment (Amos 2:13-16).

Much of Amos' theology is succinctly summarized (Amos 3:1,2; 9:7). He begins from the old confession that Yahweh has brought the people out of Egypt. Covenant overtones are evident because these words also open the Decalogue (Exod. 20:2) and the election theme is evident in the statement "you only have I known of all the families of the earth" (Amos 3:2). An announcement of punishment follows immediately, and this implies that anyone who accepts the covenant of Yahweh's promise and love also accepts the standards that must be met, and knows he serves under a demanding Master.¹⁴ Although Amos does not give a positive or negative evaluation of the wilderness period, he does refer to it to proclaim Yahweh's grace. Once having

¹⁴Henry McKeating, The Books of Amos, Hosea, and Micah, The Cambridge Bible Commentary, ed. P. R. Ackroyd, A. R. L. Leaney, J. W. Packer (Cambridge: The University Press, 1971), p. 26.

entered into the covenant the nation exposes itself to the judgment of Yahweh. Amos seeks to destroy the sense of security of the covenant of care,¹⁵ and uses the single reference of election to declare that the judgment of Yahweh also comes because of disobedience. At this point there is a theology of retribution for Amos¹⁶ (also 3:13-15; 2:5,13-16).

Jeremiah's classic evaluation of the wilderness period declares

I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness in a land not sown. Israel was holy to the Lord, the first fruits of his harvest. All who ate of it became guilty; evil came upon them, says the Lord (Jer. 2:2,3,4).

The evaluation closely resembles that of Hosea. The wilderness period is the ideal time when the nation follows Yahweh faithfully. The gracious care of Yahweh is emphasized in the description of the wilderness. It is a place of extreme danger, a place "of deserts and pits . . . drought and deep darkness . . . a land that none passes through, where no man dwells" (Jer. 2:6). And Yahweh successfully brought the people through to a "plentiful land" (verse 7). At this point Jeremiah thinks a cared-for people needs to remember the gracious love of Yahweh, and to be obedient

¹⁵James M. Ward, Amos and Isaiah, Prophets of the Word of God (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1969) p. 81.

¹⁶Amos does not trace every misfortune to judgment. Some are to be acknowledged as historical fact, the causes not apparent to people. See Ward, Amos and Isaiah, p. 73.

to him.¹⁷ The goodness Yahweh has shown in leading them to the plentiful land was not a reward for their faithfulness, but the outgrowth of Yahweh's grace.¹⁸ Such words as אֲדַרְכֶּנּוּ , אֲנִי יְהוָה , and לְקַחֲנִי imply that Israel follows Yahweh because of his behavior toward them, not because of covenant stipulation.

Jeremiah's description of the early wilderness relationship between Yahweh and Israel gives the impression that it is not intended primarily to declare a loyalty of former days as it is to lay the groundwork for the indictment and punishment of the later Israel (Jer. 2:4-4:4). Once again, then, the emphasis of the wilderness period for the prophets is the great acts of Yahweh. This stands in contrast to the sinful behavior, so often associated with idolatry, of the people who are contemporary with the prophet. The reminder of the murmuring of the people would have no power to recall a sinning nation to give up its sinful ways. The identification of forms of a tradition "will inevitably to some degree control its evaluation and interpretation. . . . But it cannot pass final judgment on historicity."¹⁹ Jeremiah is aware that the ideal period

¹⁷This in agreement with Adamiak, Justice and History in the Old Testament, p. 37, and the list of references with the same conclusion in note 152.

¹⁸Barth, "Zur Bedeutung der Wüstentradiation," p. 18.

¹⁹Bright, "The School of Alt and Noth: A Critical Evaluation," p. 171. The same limitation assesses the value of literary form.

was extended throughout the wilderness period, "from the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to this day . . . they did not listen to me, or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck" (Jer. 7:25,26). The wilderness period was identified by this prophet as a time of mercy and judgment, sin and grace. The theology of Israel grew from the words and acts of God and the behavior patterns of the people. The way the prophets applied the total theology must be measured by the problems that arose in the nation, on the custom and usage of the period, and the understanding of Yahweh's expectations in the milieu of the prophet.²⁰ It becomes evident that the prophet used the material relating to the wilderness period to demonstrate and illustrate Yahweh's grace, on the one hand, and the validity of Yahweh's punishment, on the other hand. He always reminded the people that God's grace was still there for them (Jer. 3:15,22; 4:1-14; 31:1-6).

The prophet Ezekiel writes a very negative evaluation of the wilderness people. This is the "realistic" or "pessimistic" view, as Barth classifies it.²¹ According to Ezekiel there is no good wilderness generation. Their worship of false gods began already in Egypt (Ezek. 20:5-8),

²⁰Walther Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, 2 vols., The Old Testament Library Series, ed. G. Ernest Wright et al., trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), 1:52,53.

²¹Barth, "Zur Bedeutung der Wüstentradiation," p. 20.

a detail not described in Exodus, but alluded to elsewhere (Joshua 24:14,15). By using covenant language, "when I chose Israel . . . I am the Lord your God" (Ezek. 20:5), Ezekiel also traces the covenant concept back to the days in Egypt. In the recounting of the wilderness period Ezekiel differs from the other prophets by concentrating on the behavior of the people (Ezek. 20:13,16,21,24) and the behavior pattern was in violation of Yahweh's statutes and ordinances (Ezek. 20:7,11,12,16,19,20,25) and certainly not a response of Israel's devotion because of Yahweh's saving acts. Ezekiel's purpose in retelling the story was to give a spiritual account of the repetitive character of human history and people's behavior.²² Even as he pronounces his word of judgment on the acts of the people, he also gives a hint of Yahweh's mercy in that he did not utterly destroy the nation (Ezek. 20:17). Ezekiel does not refer to the instances of murmuring, but rather describes the total action of the people as "rebellious," רִיבֹנִים (Ezek. 20:8,13,21). He does not itemize instances of retribution for sins, but alludes to a general punishment. The retraction of punishment does not result from repentance by the people, nor is it gained through intercession. Full punishment was not inflicted because Yahweh "acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in

²²Peter C. Craigie, Ezekiel, The Daily Study Bible, ed. John C. L. Gibson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983), p. 147.

the sight of the nations among whom they dwelt" (Ezek. 20: 9,14,22). This is a reminder of Moses' prayer at the time the people refused to enter the land from the south (Num. 14:15,16), and is in contrast to the response of Yahweh that in punishment his glory will fill all the earth (Num. 14:21,22). Just as Ezekiel emphasizes the punishment theme that controls the wilderness narratives in Numbers, so does he also emphasize the revelatory theme prominent in the pre-Sinai narratives (Ezek. 20:5,9,12).

In spite of the very negative view of every generation, even of the wilderness period, as rebellious toward God, Ezekiel also uses the wilderness as a paradigm for the repossession of the land after the exile of the sixth century.

I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out; and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face. As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you, says the Lord God. I will make you pass under the rod and I will let you go in by number (Ezek. 20:34-37).

The story the people of Israel loved to tell, of idyllic days in the wilderness, suddenly is reshaped. It is not now a story of grace, but of judgment.²³ Ezekiel has a view of the wilderness that appears to be the direct opposite of earlier prophets.

Why does such a difference exist between the earlier

²³Craigie, Ezekiel, p. 144.

prophets and Ezekiel? Are they following different traditions that have been handed down? It would seem plausible that the prophets use that material which meets their individual goals and needs. Hosea and Amos are living in the latter days of the Northern Kingdom (before 722 B.C.). The overthrow of the Northern Kingdom seems imminent, but for Hosea there still seems to be a hope that catastrophe can be averted. He appeals to the great acts of Yahweh to call the people to repentance. Amos, it seems, does not have the hope to avoid calamity, but he, too, reminds Israel that Yahweh is the God of grace whose gracious acts have been directed to Israel. He does see the clue for a remnant of the faithful (Amos 3:12) and holds out hope for restoration (Amos 9:13). Jeremiah looks for a time of cleansing and healing at one stage of his career. He has been called to bring a nation to repentance. As a result he hopes for success in the mission. This, of course, fades at the end of his career. These prophets speak of the power of God's grace that always is new, and still can be the motivation to bring the people back to Yahweh.

Ezekiel lives at the moment of Israel's overthrow and experiences the meaning of the Babylonian Exile. One deportation is past. Further defections of Israel are only guaranteeing more catastrophe. The history the people loved to tell, the story of Yahweh's deliverance, did not accomplish its goals. The nation only became more firmly established in the belief they were the chosen of Yahweh.

No matter what evil they did, no evil would come to them. Ezekiel tells them the full reality. Even when Yahweh cared so lovingly, he also punished because of disobedience and rebellion. History is not to be rewritten, but the story is told to include the theological matters that had previously not been drawn out.

The wilderness period was treated by the prophets according to the religious and political situation confronting them in their own era. The story they tell does not change. The historical events are still at the heart and core. The retelling is not in the form of narrative, as it is told in the Pentateuch. The story is told with theological insight and applied to the needs of the people as the prophets understood they had to be applied. They applied the teachings of mercy and judgment, sin and grace, Law and Gospel.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This study was begun to determine the extent of the judgment and mercy themes in the wilderness narratives and the influence they would have on later Old Testament writings. Other recent studies had attempted to find the sources of traditions, and in this way try to develop a system whereby an interpretation of the wilderness narratives could be established. This system seems to end in a rather endless maze that reaches little conclusion except that the theology of Israel developed, and the revelatory nature of this theology is diminished.

The methodology followed here is a careful word study to determine the meaning of the words, especially the verbs in their individual forms. The grammatical structure guided the study to determine the relationship of successive sentences. The study of the forms and phrases used, together with the word study and grammatical structure helped to determine the primary lesson of the text. A case in point is the succession of questions that arise in the story of Massah and Meribah. Higher criticism scholars had identified these as two separate questions from separate traditions. However, by means of structure and word

analysis the basic lesson of the text showed a lack of understanding by the people of Yahweh as leader in the wilderness (Exod. 17:2). The revelatory character of the narrative, then, was a part of the pattern of the other two pre-Sinai narratives of Marah and the giving of manna (Exod. 15:22-26; 16:1-12,27-30).

By this method of study a synthesis of the narratives can be recognized rather than beginning with the preconceived idea that the narratives are loosely connected segments. The purpose of the methodology of reaching an understanding of sentence structure is to determine whether there is a plan in the structure and sequence of the narratives.

The pre-Sinai narratives record the three miracles of Yahweh, the sweetening of water (Exod. 15:22-26), the giving of the manna (Exod. 16:1-12,27-30), and the providing of water (Exod. 17:1-7). Of significance in these three narratives is that Yahweh does not become angry even though the people have murmured. Moses shows his fear (Exod. 17:4). The specific point that recurs in the pre-Sinai narratives is that the people do not know that Yahweh is their leader. The point is made by the revelatory form יְהוָה יִנְיֵן , or a parallel phrase יִנְיֵן יְהוָה constantly appearing in the narratives. As the act of Yahweh is introduced, the people are reminded that they are to see Yahweh in the act, not the act itself. The unifying theme of the pre-Sinai narratives is that in grace Yahweh will lead Israel to

know and trust in him. The continuous theme of these narratives is that Yahweh is revealing himself to his people so that they might come to know him, and trust in him for the remainder of the wilderness wanderings.

The analytic method of attempting to determine sources within these narratives, and focusing on the murmuring of the people, approaches Scripture with the theory that several centuries were needed to develop a theological emphasis. The narratives are weakened because Yahweh no longer is the center, the Revealer of himself and his will. Understanding develops only after centuries of experience. Then only are the prophets able to interpret and record what has happened. This approach eliminates much of the concept of revealed religion.

The pre-Sinai narratives shape the prophetic evaluation that was called "ideal." Yahweh was the teacher who revealed himself, who revealed his covenant. This is the ideal to which the prophets Hosea and Jeremiah refer. Their generation of Israelites lived with the same lack of knowledge of Yahweh as the wilderness people, and therefore Yahweh's act of grace would parallel this act of leading Israel to know him.

The lengthy stay at Sinai, the giving of the laws and cultic regulations, and the defection of the people when they made the golden calf, seems to signal a change in Yahweh's attitude. A link is established between the stay at Sinai and the remaining narratives of the wilderness

wanderings. Moses has had a lengthy discourse with Yahweh about his continued presence with Israel in the wilderness (Exod.33:12-23) and Yahweh never assures him of the divine presence, but does promise help. The plea for guidance is resumed between Moses and Hobab (Num. 10:29-32) and is followed by the announcement that the people continue the march in the wilderness guided by the "cloud of the Lord" and the ark (Num. 10:33-35). The first narrative tells of a complaining people that suddenly feel the anger of Yahweh in the form of fire burning on the outer fringes of the camp (Num. 11:1-3). The narratives continue with the same structure of discontent, murmuring, and punishment. Yahweh's judgment comes against the people after they have experienced his mercy in the pre-Sinai narratives and have been given the laws that were to govern their lives.

The place of Moses in the post-Sinai narratives also leads to the suggestion that the law-giving is a determining factor in understanding the contrasting emphasis in the narratives. On the one hand Moses enters into debate with Yahweh about his own position with these people. Yahweh, too, is emphatic in making Moses know his place, and therefore demonstrates to Moses that he cares for this people as he gives them the meat for which they are crying (Num. 11:18,19,23). Moses is only Yahweh's instrument. When the people fail to invade the promised land from the south, and Yahweh threatens to destroy the nation, Moses

pleads for the people before Yahweh on the basis of the covenant made on Sinai. The language of the plea is covenant language that was used on Mount Sinai (Num. 14:17-19; Exod. 33:19; 34:6). A distinction is made between forgiveness and judgment. Forgiveness does not necessarily eliminate a judgment against the people (Num. 14:20-23,26-35).

The methodology of determining unifying themes and phrases seems much more rewarding than using an analytic approach that identifies phrases with eras in Israel's history. Tradition history and literary criticism reduce the wilderness period to a mass of fragments that separate the elements of the Pentateuch rather than unify it. Our study understood the wilderness period to be a connected whole, and as a result we discovered, not arbitrarily, to be sure, that the grace that is so prominent in the pre-Sinai narratives was Yahweh's means to lead the people to come to know him and trust in his care. By means of divine care and providing the needs of the wilderness Yahweh was building a trust so that the people would also live according to the commandments he gave at Sinai. The grace of God was to build trust. Trust was not commanded or callously demanded by a Sovereign.

But this trust had to be lived out in complete dependence on Yahweh. When the people failed to live in this trust and murmured and rebelled (Num. 11:1-3; 11:4-35; 14:8-35; 21:4-9) Yahweh sent the variety of punishments. The narratives make plain that judgment is an act of Yahweh,

a means of punishment, and not just a circumstance that follows ill-advised or wrong decisions and actions of people. Judgment is a dogma that is substantiated by the wilderness narratives. Higher criticism methodology would conclude that the dogma of judgment developed in stages in Israel's theology. If this were true some of the historicity of the wilderness narratives would disappear.

The later writers do not have contrasting viewpoints of the wilderness period as some would propose. Rather, they use the time of grace to demonstrate that this same grace is available for their generation (Hosea, Jeremiah) and the deeds of judgment demonstrate the holiness of Yahweh and his expectations for his people (Ezekiel). The later prophets use the wilderness period to illustrate Yahweh's deeds in the situations in which they find themselves. A unified approach to the Pentateuch leads to this understanding rather than an analytic approach that searches for sources of the traditions.

The next step prompted by this unified approach asks for further study of these wilderness narratives. What is the unifying factor that links the narratives, especially those in Numbers, with the lengthy legal sections (Num. 15: 18,19)? Such a study would incorporate the significant legal and cultic material from the Mount Sinai stay narrated in Exodus and the Holiness Code in Leviticus (chapters 17-26). It would seem at this point that the judgment in the narratives of Numbers are closely aligned to the

holiness of Yahweh and the wilderness people sinned against this holiness. Yahweh's expectation was that they, too, should be holy. Their rebellions were the sins against this holiness.

The movement from grace to judgment in the wilderness narratives is not the product of greater understanding that develops in the history of Israel, nor is it a theological development over the centuries. It is the story of God's Law and Gospel, of teaching and judging, of mercy and punishment that winds as a thread throughout all of Scripture.

The faith of Israel is thus centered on history not on chronicle, and still less . . . on myth.¹

¹J. Alberto Soggin, Introduction to the Old Testament, The Old Testament Library, ed. Peter Ackroyd et al., trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, Revised Edition, 1976. 1980), p. 39.

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