Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary

Deuteronomy



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Table of Contents

How to Use This eBook
Acknowledgments
Methodology: An Introductory Essay
General Bibliography
Abbreviations

Deuteronomy

Eugene E. Carpenter

- Preamble (1:1–5)
- Historical Prologue (1:6–3:29)
- Introduction to the Stipulations (4:1–49)
- Basic Stipulations (5:1–33)
- Detailed Stipulations (6:1–11:32)
- Detailed Stipulations: Purity and Unity (12:1–26:19)
- Ceremonies (27:1–10)
- Blessings and Curses (27:11–28:68)
- Covenant Renewal, Oaths, Restoration, Charges to the Nation (29:1–30:20)
- Succession, Deposition, and Recitation of Text (31:1–29)
- Song of Moses (31:30–32:47)
- Instructions Concerning Moses' Death (32:48–52)
- Blessings of Moses on Israel (33:1–29)
- Death of Moses; Commissioning of Joshua (34:1–12)

Picture Index
The New International Version Appendix

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The ebook edition for this title contains a special New International Version Appendix, which contains the full text of the book(s) of the Bible that are the topic of this commentary.

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- Chapter links go directly to the beginning of the chapter associated with a book.
- Use the device's "Next Page/Previous Page" buttons or functions to scroll through the verses in each chapter.
- Every Bible book and chapter hyperlink in the Bible text returns or goes back to the full chapter listing at the beginning of the Appendix. Or, use the device's "back" button or function to go back to the last selection.

Throughout the main text, all Scripture references to the Bible text that appears in the Appendix are hyperlinked to the specific chapter or verse referenced. Use the device's "back" button or function to go back to the last selection.

Footnotes are marked with small, hyperlinked superscript numbers "[1]".

- Select the hyperlinked superscript number in the main text to go to the corresponding footnote.
- Select the hyperlinked number to the left of the footnote(s) and you are returned to the main text, or use the device's "back" button or function to go back to the last selection.

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John H. Walton

General Editor

Methodology: An Introductory Essay

John H. Walton

Comparative Studies

For over a century, studies comparing the OT and the ancient Near East have hovered on the fringe of hermeneutics and exegesis. Since these studies were at times exploited by critical scholars for polemical attacks against the biblical text, evangelicals were long inclined to avoid or even vilify them. They viewed the idea that the OT borrowed or adapted ancient Near Eastern ideas or literature as incompatible with Scripture's inspiration. Even as evangelicals in recent decades have grown more interested in tapping into the gold mine of comparative data, the results have often been considered tangential to the ultimate theological task. The influence from the ancient world has been identified with all that Israel was supposed to reject as they received the revelation from God that would purge their worldview from its pagan characteristics. Comparative studies served only as a foil to the theological interpretation of the text.

Consequently, comparative studies have been viewed as a component of historical-critical analysis at best, and more often as a threat to the uniqueness of the literature of the Bible. In contrast, today more and more biblical scholars are exploring the positive uses of comparative studies. As a result of half a century of the persistent scholarship of Assyriologists, Hittitologists, Egyptologists, and Sumerologists, we are now in a position to add significant nuances to the paradigms for studying the impact of the ancient Near East on the authors and editors of the Hebrew Bible. The end result is a more thorough and comprehensive understanding of the text.

Ever since the discovery of the Babylonian flood and creation accounts, critical scholarship has been attempting to demonstrate that the OT is derivative literature, a disadvantaged step-sister to the dominant cultures of the ancient Near East. These scholars have attempted to reduce the OT to converted mythology, whose dependency exposes its humanity. For confessing orthodoxy, however, there is no room for the conclusion that the OT is man-made theology. If the Flood is simply a human legend invented by people and borrowed into Israelite thinking, if the covenant is merely Israel's way of expressing their optimism that God has specially favored them through a treaty agreement with them, if the prophets never heard the voice of God but simply mimicked their ancient Near Eastern counterparts, then Christians are greatly to be pitied for having been duped in what would have to be considered the greatest hoax in

history. It is no surprise, then, that evangelicals have often rejected the claims of these critical schools of thought.

There is, however, nothing inherently damaging to orthodox theology and beliefs about the Bible *if its authors were interacting at various levels with the literature current in the culture*. All literature is dependent on the culture in which it arises—it must be, if it intends to communicate effectively. Even when a text engages in polemic and correction of culture, it must be aware of and interact with current thinking and literature.

If we think about the example of creation texts, we realize that if God were to reveal his work of creation in our modern culture, he would have to explain how it related to the Big Bang theory or to evolution. His revelation would focus on the origins of the physical structure of the universe because that is what is important in our cultural perspective. In the ancient world, though, physical structure was relatively insignificant. People at that time were much more interested in the aspect of bringing order out of chaos and the divine exercise of jurisdiction demonstrated in giving everything a role and a purpose. In this context, any account of origins would of necessity have to be presented with these ancient ideas in mind.

The biblical text, in other words, formulated its discussion in relation to the thinking found in the ancient literature. It should be no surprise, then, if areas of similarity are found. This is far different from the contention that Israelite literature is simply derivative mythology. There is a great distance between borrowing from a particular piece of literature (as has been claimed in critical circles) and resonating with the larger culture that has itself been influenced by its literatures. When Americans speak of the philosophy of “eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die,” they are resonating with an idea that has penetrated society rather than borrowing from the writings of Epicurus.

Another area where we must be sensitive to cultural issues is in the way we understand literary genres. It should be no surprise that OT genres need to be compared to genres in the larger culture. Whether we are looking at wisdom literature, hymnic literature, historical literature, or legal literature, we find generous doses of both similarities and differences. Understanding the genre of a piece of literature is necessary if we desire to perceive the author’s intentions. Since perceiving such intentions is essential to our theological interpretation of a text, we recognize that understanding genre contributes to legitimate theological interpretation. Some genres will operate differently in the ancient world than they do in our own culture, so we must become familiar with the mechanics of the genres represented in the ancient Near East.

Where there are similarities, they help us to understand the genre parameters and characteristics as they existed in the ancient mind. What defined historical writing in the ancient world? How close was it to the journalistic approach of today, which relies heavily on eyewitness accounts? How did genealogies function in OT times? Were they compiled for the same purpose that we compile them for?

Occasionally comparisons within genres reveal close similarities between the biblical and ancient Near Eastern literatures on the level of content. Such similarities do not jeopardize inspiration. Even if the OT had the very same law or the very same proverb that was found in the ancient Near East, inspiration would be involved in the author choosing to incorporate that law or proverb into the canonical collection and to nuance it properly in appropriate context.

Where there are differences, it is still important to understand the ancient Near Eastern genres because the theological points will often be made by means of contrast. The theology behind the book of Job, for example, is built primarily on the distinctives of the ancient Near Eastern view (represented in the arguments of Job's friends), which was based on an appeasement mentality. The book's message is accomplished in counterpoint. If we are unaware of the contrasts, we will miss some of the nuances.

In fact, then, we must go beyond the simple identification of similarities and differences to articulate the relationships on a functional level. Similarities could exist because Israel adapted something from ancient Near Eastern culture or literature, or, as previously mentioned, because they simply resonated with the culture. Differences could reflect the Israelites' rejection of the ancient Near Eastern perspective, or they might emerge in explicit Israelite polemics against the views of their neighbors. In all such cases, the theology of the text may be nuanced by the cultural context.

In light of all of this, it may be logically concluded that without the guidance of comparative studies, we are bound to misinterpret the text at some points. A text is a complex of ideas linked by threads of writing. Each phrase and each word communicates by the ideas and thoughts that they will trigger in the reader or hearer. We can then speak of these underlying ideas as gaps that need to be filled with meaning by the audience. The writer or speaker assumes that those gaps will be filled in particular ways based on the common worldview he shares with his audience. Interpreters have the task of filling in those gaps, and when interpreting authoritative texts, it is theologically essential that we fill them appropriately.

For example, the Tower of Babel is described as being built “with its head in the heavens.” Without the benefit of ancient Near Eastern backgrounds, early interpreters were inclined to provide the theological explanation that the builders were trying to build a structure that would allow them to launch an attack on the heavens. Comparative studies have allowed modern interpreters to recognize that this is an expression used to describe the ziggurats of Mesopotamia, which were intended to serve as a bridge or portal between heavens and earth. Such an understanding leads to an alternative, and arguably more accurate, interpretation of the text. In conclusion, then, as our interpretation of the text requires us to fill in the gaps, we have to be careful to consider the option of filling those gaps from the cultural context before we leap to fill them with theological significance.

As we make this transition in our thinking, we must expand the focus of our comparative studies. Too often in the past, comparative studies have been limited either to individual features (e.g., birds sent out from the ark) or to the literary preservation of traditions (e.g., creation accounts, vassal treaties) and have been conducted with either apologetics (from confessional circles) or polemics (against confessional traditions) in mind. As those interested in the interpretation of the text, we should recognize in addition the importance of comparative studies that focus on conceptual issues, conducted with illumination of the cultural dynamics behind the text in mind.

We can now create a spectrum to define the varieties of differences and similarities that can classify these nuances. The spectrum extends from differences to similarities while the matrix takes account of three categories: individual elements, worldview concepts, and literary preservation. This is represented in the following chart:

Relationships	**Elements**	**Concepts**	**Literature**
Totally ignores and presents different view	Sexual activity of gods	Theogony	Apotropaic rituals
Hazy familiarity leading to caricature and ridicule	Napping gods	Making of idols	Tammuz literature
Accurate knowledge resulting in rejection	Monogenesis/polygenesis	Divine needs	Omen texts
Disagreement resulting in polemics, debate, or contention	Ziggurats	Theomachy; Flood	Cosmology texts

Awareness leading to adaptation or transformation	Circumcision	Kingship ideology; Classical prophecy	Words of the wise; Song of Songs
Conscious imitation or borrowing	Covenant-treaty format	Calf/bull image	Psalm 29
Subconscious shared heritage	Use of lots	Netherworld conditions; temple ideology	Proverbs

In conclusion, there are ten important principles that must be kept in mind when doing comparative studies:

1. Both similarities and differences must be considered.
2. Similarities may suggest a common cultural heritage rather than borrowing.
3. It is common to find similarities at the surface but differences at the conceptual level and vice versa.
4. All elements must be understood in their own context as accurately as possible before crosscultural comparisons are made.
5. Proximity in time, geography, and spheres of cultural contact all increase the possibility of interaction leading to influence.
6. A case for literary borrowing requires identification of likely channels of transmission.
7. The significance of differences between two pieces of literature is minimized if the works are not the same genre.
8. Similar functions may be performed by different genres in different cultures.
9. When literary or cultural elements are borrowed, they may in turn be transformed into something quite different.
10. A single culture will rarely be monolithic, either in a contemporary cross-section or in consideration of a passage of time.[1]

Successful interpreters must try to understand the cultural background of the ancient Near East just as successful missionaries must learn the culture, language, and worldview of the people they are trying to reach. This is the rationale for us to study the Bible in light of the ancient Near East. What we contend, then, is that comparative studies has three goals in mind:

1. We study the *history* of the ancient Near East as a means of recovering knowledge of the events that shaped the lives of people in the ancient world.
2. We study *archaeology* as a means of recovering the lifestyle reflected in the material culture of the ancient world.
3. We study the *literature* of the ancient Near East as a means of penetrating the heart and soul of the people who inhabited the ancient world that Israel shared.

These goals are at the heart of comparative studies and will help us understand the OT better.

Comparative Studies in the Pentateuch

A wide array of literature from the ancient Near East provides information that is helpful for interpreting the Pentateuch. Ancient Near Eastern mythology reflects ideas about creation.[2] Though they provide accounts of creation from Mesopotamia[3] and Egypt[4] and in the process provide insight into the creator deities and their roles, they also provide important information concerning how the ancients thought about the cosmos.[5] Consequently, in addition to talking about cosmic and human origins, we learn about their perspectives on cosmic geography,[6] on what is entailed in bringing something into existence (i.e., creation), and what constitutes creative acts.[7]

The patriarchal narratives can be read against the background of family archives from the ancient Near East that explain customs and legal traditions[8] and the religious practice and beliefs of the patriarchs.[9] Ritual descriptions can be illuminated by ritual texts available in wide variety.[10] Covenant documents can be read in light of treaties between countries.[11] Laws can be compared to a variety of law collections from the second millennium. Such comparison can focus on the form[12] or content[13] of the individual laws, but more importantly expands to a study of the source of law and the literary functions of law collections.[14]

Historical and archaeological studies can provide background information to help understand the situation in Canaan during the patriarchal period and try to resolve basic questions such as the historical setting of Israel's slavery in Egypt and the date of the Exodus.[15] Of particular importance are all of the archaeological studies that try to bring further understanding to the Egyptian backdrop of these events.[16] Geographical studies continue to address issues such as the identification of the body of water that the Israelites crossed and the location of Mount Sinai.[17]

Sociological studies can comment on the concept of sacred space and the variety of institutions that exist in a society to manage sacred space, from priests to sanctuaries to rituals.[18] Additional studies in religion also help us to understand some of the ways that Israel was to be distinct from the people around them. As we learn about the perception of deity and the way that perception is reflected in ancient Near Eastern ideas about pantheons, images, divination, and magic, we can understand more clearly some of what Israel is to guard against.[19] This general survey indicates just a few of the ways that comparative and cultural studies will be seen to impact and illuminate our study of the Pentateuch in this

volume.

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Handbook to Life in Ancient Mesopotamia. Ed. S. Bertman. New York: Facts on File, 2003.

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SBLWAW 6: M. Roth. *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*.

SBLWAW 7: G. Beckman. *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*.

SBLWAW 9: S. Parker. *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*.

SBLWAW 11: I. Singer. *Hittite Prayers.*

SBLWAW 12: M. Nissinen. *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*.

SBLWAW 16: N. C. Strudwick. *Texts from the Pyramid Age.*

SBLWAW 19: J.-J. Glassner. *Mesopotamian Chronicles.*

SBLWAW 20: H. Vanstiphout. *Epics of Sumerian Kings: The Matter of Aratta*.

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Abbreviations

AAA *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology*

AASOR Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research

AB Anchor Bible

AB *Assyriologische Bibliothek*

ABC *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles.* A. K. Grayson. TCS 5. Locust Valley, New York, 1975

ABD *Anchor Bible Dictionary.* D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992

ABL *Assyrian and Babylonian Letters Belonging to the Kouyunjik Collections of the British Museum*. R. F. Harper. 14 vols. Chicago, 1892–1914

ABR *Australian Biblical Review*

ABRL Anchor Bible Reference Library

AbrN *Abr-Nahrain*

ABS Arab Background Series

ACCS Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture

ACEBT *Amsterdamse Cahiers voor Exegese en bijbelse Theologie*

ADD *Assyrian Deeds and Documents*. C. H. W. Johns. 4 vols. Cambridge, 1898–1923

AEL *Ancient Egyptian Literature.* M. Lichtheim. 3 vols. Berkeley, 1971–1980

AfO *Archiv für Orientforschung*

AfOB Archiv für Orientforschung: Beiheft

ÄgAbh Ägyptologische Abhandlungen

AHw *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch.* W. von Soden. 3 vols. Wiesbaden, 1965–81

AJA *American Journal of Archeology*

AJBA *Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology*

AJSLL *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature*

AMD Ancient Magic and Divination

AnBib Analecta biblica

ANEP *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament*. J. B. Pritchard. Princeton, 1954

ANET *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. J. B. Pritchard. 3rd ed. Princeton, 1969

ANF *Ante-Nicene Fathers*

AnOr Analecta orientalia

AnSt *Anatolian Studies*

AO Antiquités orientales

AO *Der Alte Orient*

AOAT Alter Orient und Altes Testament

AOB *Altorientalische Bilder zum Alten Testament*

AOS American Oriental Series

AOTC Abingdon Old Testament Commentary

AOTS *Archaeology and Old Testament Study*. D. W. Thomas. Oxford, 1967

APOT *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*. Ed. R. H. Charles. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1913

ARAB *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*. Daniel David Luckenbill. 2 vols. Chicago, 1926–1927

Arch *Archaeology*

ARI *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions.* A. K. Grayson. 2 vols. RANE. Wiesbaden, 1972–1976

ARM Archives royales de Mari

ARMT Archives royales de Mari, transcrite et traduite

ArtH *Art History*

ARW *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*

AS Assyriological Studies

ASJ *Acta Sumerologica (Japan)*

ASOR American Schools of Oriental Research

ASORDS American Schools of Oriental Research Dissertation Series

ASTI *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute*

ATJ *Ashland Theological Journal*

AThR *Anglican Theological Review*

ATSDS Andrews Theological Seminary Dissertation Series

AuOr *Aula orientalis*

AUSDS Andrews University Seminary Dissertation Series

AUSS *Andrews University Seminary Studies*

AUU Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis

BA *Biblical Archaeologist*

BAIAS *Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archeological Society*

BAR *Biblical Archaeology Review*

BARead *Biblical Archaeologist Reader*

BASOR *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*

BASORSup Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research: Supplement Series

BAW Bayerischen Akademie der Wissen

BBB Bonner biblische Beiträge

BBET Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie

BBR *Bulletin for Biblical Research*

BBVO Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient

BCOTWP Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms

BDB Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Oxford, 1907

BeO *Bibbia e oriente*

BES *Bes*

BETL Bibliotheca epheremeridum theologicarum lovaniensium

BETS *Bulletin of the Evangelical Society*

BHH *Biblisch-historisches Handwörterbuch*. B. Reicke and L. Rost. Göttingen, 1962–1966

Bib *Biblica*

BibOr Biblica et orientalia

BibSem Biblical Seminar

BibRes *Biblical Research*

BiOr *Biblioteca Orientalis*

BJRL *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*

BJS Brown Judaic Studies

BM British Museum

BN *Biblische Notizen*

BO *Bibliotheca orientalis*

BR *Biblical Research*

BRev *Bible Review*

BRM Babylonian Religion and Mythology

BSac *Bibliotheca sacra*

BSC Bible Student's Commentary

BSOAS *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*

BT *Bible Translator*

BTB *Biblical Theology Bulletin*

BWL *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*. W. G. Lambert. Oxford, 1960; reprinted Eisenbrauns, 1996

BZ *Biblische Zeitschrift*

BZABR Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte

BZAW Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

CAD *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.* Chicago, 1956–

CAH *Cambridge Ancient History*

CahRB Cahiers de la Revue biblique

CANE *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. J. Sasson. 4 vols. New York, 1995

CAT Commentaire de l'Ancien Testament

CAT *Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places*. M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartin. Munster, 1997

CBC Cambridge Bible Commentary

CBET Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology

CBQ *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*

CBQMS Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series

CH Code of Hammurabi

CHANE Culture and History of the Ancient Near East

CHI Cambridge History of Iran. 7 vols. 1968–91

CIS Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum

CIS *Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum*

CJ *Classical Journal*

CL Code of Lipit-Ishtar

CML *Canaanite Myths and Legends*. G. R. Driver. Edinburgh, 1956. J. C. L. Gibson, 19782

CNI Carsten Niebuhr Institute

ConBOT Coniectanea biblica: Old Testament Series

COS *The Context of Scripture.* W. W. Hallo. 3 vols. Leiden, 1997–2002

CT *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum*

CTA *Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques découvertes à Ras Shamra-Ugarit de 1929 à 1939*. A. Herdner. Mission de Ras Shamra 10. Paris, 1963

CTH Catalogue des textes hittites

CTU *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani, and Other Places*. M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín. Münster, 1995

CU Code of Ur-Nammu

CurTM *Currents in Theology and Mission*

DANE *Dictionary of the Ancient Near East*

DBAT *Dielheimer Blätter zum Alten Testament*

DBI *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery.* T. Longman and L. Ryken. Downers Grove, 1998

DCH *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. D. J. A. Clines. Sheffield, 1993–

DDD *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*. K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, and P. W. van der Horst. Leiden, 1995. 2nd ed., Grand Rapids, 1998

DISO Dictionnaire des inscriptions sémitiques de l'ouest. Ch. F. Jean and J. Hoftijzer. Leiden, 1965

DNWSI Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions. J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling. 2 vols. Leiden, 1995

DOTHB *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books*

DOTP *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*. T. D. Alexander and D. W. Baker. Downers Grove,

2003

DOTT *Documents from Old Testament Times*. D. W. Thomas, London, 1958

DSB Daily Study Bible

EA El-Amarna tablets. According to the edition of J. A. Knudtzon. *Die el-Amarna-Tafeln.* Leipzig, 1908–1915. Reprint, Aalen, 1964. Continued in A. F. Rainey, *El-Amarna Tablets, 359–379.* 2nd revised ed. Kevelaer, 1978

EA *Epigraphica anatolica*

EAEHL Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land. M. Avi-Yonah. 4 vols. Jerusalem, 1975

EBC *Expositor's Bible Commentary*

ECC Eerdmans Critical Commentary

EPRO Études préliminaires aux religions orientales

ErIsr *Eretz-Israel*

ET *Evangelische Theologie*

ETS Evangelical Theological Society

ETSS Evangelical Theological Society Studies

EvQ *Evangelical Quarterly*

EvTh *Evangelische Theologie*

FAOS Freiburger altorientalische Studien

FAT Forschungen zum Alten Testament

FB Forschungen zur Bibel

FCI Foundations in Contemporary Interpretation

FOTL Forms of the Old Testament Literature

GKC *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. E. Kautzsch. Translated by A. E. Cowley. 2nd ed. Oxford, 1910

GM *Göttinger Miszellen*

GTTOT *The Geographical and Topographical Texts of the Old Testament.* J. J. Simons. Studia Francisci Scholten memoriae dicata 2. Leiden, 1959

HALOT *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament.* L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm. Translated and edited under the supervision of M. E. J. Richardson. 4 vols. Leiden, 1994–1999

HANEL *History of Ancient Near Eastern Law.* R. Westbrook. 2 vols. Leiden, 2003

HAR *Hebrew Annual Review*

HAT Handbuch zum Alten Testament

HBD *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*

HBS Herders Biblische Studien

HCOT Historical Commentary on the Old Testament

HDR Harvard Dissertations in Religion

HKM *Hethitische Keilschrifttafeln aus Masat*. Ed. Sedat Alp. Ankara: Turk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1991

HL Hittite Laws

HO Handbuch der Orientalistik

HS *Hebrew Studies*

HSM Harvard Semitic Monographs

HSS Harvard Semitic Studies

HTR *Harvard Theological Review*

HUCA *Hebrew Union College Annual*

IB *Interpreter's Bible*. G. A. Buttrick et al. 12 vols. New York, 1951–1957

IBC Interpretation Bible Commentary

IBD *Illustrated Bible Dictionary.* J. Douglas. 3 vols. Leicester, 1980

IBHS *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. B. K. Waltke and M. O'Connor. Winona Lake, 1990

ICC International Critical Commentary

IDB *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible.* G. A. Buttrick. 4 vols. Nashville, 1962

IDBSup *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume.* K. Crim. Nashville, 1976

IEJ *Israel Exploration Journal*

IOS *Israel Oriental Society*

IrAnt *Iranica Antiqua*

Iraq *Iraq*

IRT Issues in Religion and Theology

ISBE *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.* G. W. Bromiley. 4 vols. Grand Rapids, 1979–1988

IVPBBC-OT *IVP Bible Background Commentary on the OT*. J. H. Walton, V. H. Matthews, and M. W. Chavalas. Downers Grove, 2000

JAGNES *Journal of the Association of Graduate Near Eastern Studies* (University of Berkeley)

JANESCU *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University*

JAOS Journal of the American Oriental Society

JB Jerusalem Bible

JBL *Journal of Biblical Literature*

JCS *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*

JDS Judean Desert Studies

JEA *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*

JEOL *Jaarbericht van het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Gezelschap (Genootschap) Ex oriente lux*

JESHO *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*

JETS *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*

JJS *Journal of Jewish Studies*

JNES *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*

JNSL *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*

JPS Jewish Publication Society

JPSTC JPS Torah Commentary

JQR *Jewish Quarterly Review*

JR *Journal of Religion*

JRAS *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*

JSem *Journal of Semitics*

JSJ *Journal for the Study of Judaism (in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods)*

JSOT *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*

JSOTSup Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series

JSS *Journal of Semitic Studies*

JSSEA *Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities*

JTS *Journal of Theological Studies*

KAH *Keilshrifttexte aus Assur historischen Inhalts*

KAI *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften.* H. Donner and W. Röllig. 2nd ed. Wiesbaden, 1966–1969

KAR *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts*. E. Ebeling. Leipzig, 1919–1923

KAT Kommentar zum Alten Testament

KBo *Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi*

KHC Kurzer Hand-Kommentar zum Alten Testament

KTU *Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit.* M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín. AOAT 24/1. Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1976. 2nd enlarged ed. of *KTU: The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani, and Other Places.* M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín. Münster, 1995 (= *CTU*)

KUB *Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi*

LAE *Literature of Ancient Egypt*. W. K. Simpson. 3rd ed. New Haven, 2003

LAPO Litteratures anciennes du Proche-Orient

LBI Library of Biblical Interpretation

LCL Loeb Classical Library

LE Laws of Eshunna

Levant *Levant*

LH Laws of Hammurabi

LIMC *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae*. Edited by H. C. Ackerman and J.-R. Gisler. 8 vols. Zurich, 1981–1997

LL Laws of Lipit-Ishtar

LU Laws of Ur-Nammu

LXX Septuagint

Maarav *Maarav*

MAL Middle Assyrian Laws

MANE Monographs of the Ancient Near East

MAOG Mitteilungen der Altorientalischen Gesellschaft

MCAAS Memoires of the Connecticut Academy of Arts & Sciences

MARI *Mari: Annales de recherches interdisciplinaires*

MDOG Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft

MGWJ *Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*

MOS Midden-Oosten Studies

MSJ *The Master's Seminary Journal*

Muses *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature*. Benjamin R. Foster. 2 vols. Bethesda, 1993

MVAG Mitteilungen der Vordersasiatisch-ägyptischen Gesellschaft. Vols. 1–44. 1896–1939

NAC New American Commentary

NBD *New Bible Dictionary*. J. D. Douglas and N. Hillyer. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, 1982

NBL Neo-Babylonian Laws

NCB New Century Bible

NCBC New Century Bible Commentary

NEA *Near Eastern Archaeology*

NEAEHL The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land. E. Stern. 4 vols. Jerusalem, 1993

NEB New English Bible

NERT *Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. W. Beyerlin. OTL. London, 1978

NGTT *Nederduitse gereformeerde teologiese tydskrif*

NIBC New International Bible Commentary

NIBCOT New International Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament

NICOT New International Commentary on the Old Testament

NIDBA *New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology.* E. M. Blaiklock and R. K. Harrison. Grand Rapids, 1983

NIDOTTE *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis.* W. A. VanGemeren. 5 vols. Grand Rapids, 1997

NIV New International Version

NIVAC NIV Application Commentary

NJPS Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation according to the Traditional Hebrew Text

NRSV New Revised Standard Version

NSBT New Studies in Biblical Theology

NTOA Novum Testamentum et orbis antiquus

OBC Orientalia biblica et christiana

OBO Orbis biblicus et orientalis

OCD *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth. 3rd ed. Oxford, 1996

OEAE *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*. D. Redford. 3 vols. New York, 2001

OEANE *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*. E. M. Meyers. 5 vols. New York, 1997

OIP Oriental Institute Publications

OLA Orientalia lovaniensia analecta

OLP Orientalia lovaniensia periodica

OLZ *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*

Or *Orientalia* (NS)

OrAnt *Oriens antiquus*

OS Oudtestamentische studiën

OTE *Old Testament Essays*

OTG Old Testament Guides

OTL Old Testament Library

OTP *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. J. H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. Garden City, 1983, 1985

OTS Old Testament Studies

OTWSA Ou-Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap van Suid-Afrika

OtSt *Oudtestamentische Studiën*

PAPS Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society

PBS Publications of the Babylonian Section

PEQ *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*

POTT *Peoples of Old Testament Times*. D. J. Wiseman. Oxford, 1973

POTW *Peoples of the Old Testament World*. A. Hoerth, G. Mattingly and E. Yamauchi. Grand Rapids, 1994

PRU *Le palais royal d'Ugarit*

PT Pyramid Texts

RA *Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale*

RAI Recontre assyriologique internationale

RANE Records of the Ancient Near East

RANE *Readings from the Ancient Near East*. B. Arnold and B. Beyer. Grand Rapids, 2002

RB *Revue biblique*

RevB *Revue de Qumran*

RevistB *Revista bíblica*

RGG *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. K. Galling. 7 vols. 3rd ed. Tübingen, 1957–65

RHA *Revue hittite et asianique*

RHPR Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuse

RHR *Revue de l'histoire des religions*

RIDA *Revue internationale des droits de l'antiquité*

RIM The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Project. Toronto

RIMA The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods

RIMB The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Babylonian Periods

RIME The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods

RISA Royal Inscriptions of Sumer and Akkad. G. A. Barton. New Haven, 1929

RivB *Rivista biblica italiana*

RlA *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*. Erich Ebeling et al. Berlin, 1928–

RQ *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte*

RS Ras Shamra

RSP *Ras Shamra Parallels*

SAA State Archives of Assyria

SAALT State Archives of Assyria Literary Texts

SAAS State Archives of Assyria Studies

SAOC Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilizations

SBAB Stuttgarter biblische Aufsatzbände

SBAW Sitzungsberichte der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften

SBB Stuttgarter biblische Beiträge

SBC Student Bible Commentary

SBFLA *Studii biblici Franciscani liber annus*

SBH *Sumerische-babylonische Hymnen nach Thonafeln griechischer Zeit*. G. A. Reisner. Berlin, 1896

SBLABS Society of Biblical Literature Archaeology and Biblical Studies

SBLDS Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series

SBLMS Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series

SBLRBS Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study

SBLSP *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers*

SBLSymS Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series

SBLWAW Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World

SBONT Sacred Books of the Old and New Testament

SBS Suttgarter Bibelstudien

SBT Studes in Biblical Theology

SBTS Sources for Biblical and Theological Study

SC Sources chrétiennes. Paris, 1943–

ScrHier Scripta hierosolymitana

SDOAP Studia et Documenta ad Iura Orientis Antiqui Pertinentia

SE Studies in Egyptology

SemeiaSt Semeia Studies

SHANE Studies in the History of the Ancient Near East

SHCANE Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East

SHJPLI Studies in the History of the Jewish People and the Land of Israel

SHR Studies in the History of Religion

SJLA Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity

SJOT *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*

SNN Studia Semitica Neerlandica

SO Symbolae osloenses

SOTSMS Society for Old Testament Studies Monograph Series

SSI *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions*. 3 vols. Oxford, 1971–82

SSN Studia semitica neerlandica

SSS Semitic Study Series

ST *Studia theologica*

StBoT Studien zu den Boghazkoi Texten

StudOr Studia orientalia

Sumer *Sumer: A Journal of Archaeology and History in Iraq*

SWBA Social World of Biblical Antiquity

Syr *Syria*

TA *Tel Avi*

TAD *Textbook of Aramaic Documents*. B. Porten and A. Yardeni. 4 vols. Jerusalem, 1986–99

TAPS Transactions of the American Philosophical Society

TB Theologische Bücherei

TBC Texts from the Babylonian Collection (Yale)

TCL Textes cunéiforms. Musée du Louvre

TCS Texts from Cuneiform Sources

TDOT *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament.* G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren. Translated by J. T. Willis, G. W. Bromiley, and D. E. Green. 15 vols. Grand Rapids, 1974–

TGUOS Transactions of the Glascow University Oriental Society

Them *Themelios*

TJ *Trinity Journal*

TLOT *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament.* E. Jenni, with assistance from C. Westermann. Translated by M. E. Biddle. 3 vols. Peabody, Mass., 1997

TOB *Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible*

TOTC Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries

Transeu *Transeuphratène*

TS *Theological Studies*

TSF *Bulletin Theological Student's Fellowship Bulletin*

TSTT Toronto Semitic Texts and Studies

TWOT *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament.* R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer Jr. 2 vols. Chicago, 1980

TynBul *Tyndale Bulletin*

TZ *Theologische Zeitschrift*

UBL Ugaritisch-biblische Literatur

UCOP University of Cambridge Oriental Publications

UF *Ugarit-Forschungen*

UNP Ugaritic Narrative Poetry. Simon B. Parker. SBLWAW 9. Atlanta, 1997

UT *Ugaritic Textbook*. C. H. Gordon. AnOr 38. Rome, 1965

VAB Vorderasiatische Bibliothek

VAT Vorderasiatische Abteilung Tontafel. Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin

VB Vorderasiatische Bibliothek

VT *Vetus Testamentum*

VTE Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon

VTSup Vetus Testamentum Supplements

WBC Word Biblical Commentary

WHJP World History of the Jewish People

WO *Die Welt des Orients*

WOO Wiener Offene Oreintalistik

WTJ *Westminster Theological Journal*

WVDOG Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der deutschen Orientgesellschaft

WZKM *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*

YNER Yale New Eastern, Researches

YOS Yale Oriental Series, Texts

ZA *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*

ZABR *Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtgeschichte*

ZÄS *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*

ZAW *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

ZDMG Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft

ZDPV *Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*

ZKT *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*

ZNW Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft

ZPEB *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*. M. C. Tenney. 5 fvols. Grand Rapids, 1975

ZTK *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

Deuteronomy

by Eugene E. Carpenter



Plowing with donkey and ox.

Jim Monson, Bible Backgrounds

Introduction

Historical Setting

In three powerful speeches, Moses expounds the law (*tôrâ*, 1:5) forty years after the Lord has delivered Israel from Egypt. The people have "wandered" forty years in the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula, including spending a year at Mount Sinai, where God made a covenant with his people (Ex. 19–24). At this time Egypt is weakening, but still ruled the ancient Near East. The pharaohs have stopped major expeditions into the land of Canaan, which now allows Israel a providential opportunity to gain a foothold in the land.

The larger historical-cultural milieu for Israel's experiences with Egypt was the New Kingdom Empire (ca. 1550–1069 B.C., Dynasties 18–20). After a decline in the New Kingdom after Ramesses II (1279–13 B.C.), a brief revival occurred under Ramesses III (1185–1154); but thereafter the Egyptian influence declined into the late periods of the nation (Dynasties 21–30).[1]

The date of the Exodus fixes the date of these three speeches of Moses. Two approximate dates vie for recognition currently: an early date (ca. 1446 B.C.) and

a late date (ca. 1269 B.C.). Allowing forty years for the wilderness wanderings places Moses in the Plains of Moab at about 1406 or 1229. Thutmose III (1479–25 B.C.) and Amenophis II (1427–1396) would have been in power during an Eighteenth Dynasty exodus, while Seti I (Sethos, 1294–79 B.C.) and Ramesses II (1279–13) would likely have been in power during a Nineteenth Dynasty exodus event.[2] The next pharaoh, Merneptah (1213–1203 B.C.), erected a stele in western Thebes that records many of his victories. In a small section, he mentions Israel, as a people, already in Canaan in 1209 B.C. While he claims to have wiped out the seed of Israel, ironically his stele is the earliest extrabiblical witness to their presence in the land of Palestine.[3]

Moses' exposition of the Sinai covenant occurs in the plains of Moab, which is just north-northeast of the northern tip of the Dead Sea and on the eastern side of the Jordan River. Moses views the future extent of Israel's promised inheritance from Mount Nebo.[4]

New Kingdom Kings (1550–1069)	
Early Exodus: Eighteenth Dynasty (1550–1295)	
Thutmose III	1479–1425
Amenhotep II	1427–1400
Thutmose IV	1400–1390
Late Exodus: Nineteenth Dynasty (1295–1186)	
Seti I (Sethos)	1294–1279
Ramesses II	1279–1213
Merneptah	1213–1203
Wilderness Wanderings	c. 1446–1406 or 1269–1229
Merneptah Stele	1209
Moses' Exposition of Law	1406 or 1229

Literary Setting

Deuteronomy shares many affinities with literature from the ancient Near East. The most evident is its relationship to the various law collections or "codes" that have been recovered.[5] These collections have come from as early as 2000 B.C.

and before—e.g., Sumerian Laws of Ur Nammu (2064–46), Lipit-Ishtar (1875–64), Old Babylonian Laws from Eshnunna (ca. 1850), and Hammurabi king of Babylon (1792–50). The Old Testament contains both comparison and contrast with these collections in subcategories of types of laws, such as case law, apodictic law, laws involving curses, motive clauses, and so on.[6]

Deuteronomy displays a form and structure that reflects a close relationship with suzerain-vassal treaties.[7] The parallels extend to the variety and flexibility of these ancient documents and the covenants and treaties in the Old Testament. The set structures of these treaties are reflected in Deuteronomy and the basic elements are clearly evident (see commentary). Kitchen and McCarthy both make the important point that these treaties were hybrids as well, adapting their form and structure as needed to accommodate differing situations. The basic structure of a suzerain-vassal treaty is best placed within the years 1400–1200 B.C.[8]

There are many other types of parallels in Deuteronomy, which set it squarely within it ancient Near Eastern cultural context. Oaths were a feature of ancient Near Eastern covenantal documents. The poetry of chapters 32–33 reflects poetic features, style, and theological content found in the literature of Ugarit (Ras Shamra) near the Mediterranean coast. The curses and blessings of Deuteronomy reflect relationships with ancient Near Eastern traditions of such literature reaching to the third millennium B.C. The centrality of love for the suzerain and among the great kings of the Near East, expressed in religious ritual and covenantal and literary documents, reflects the supreme commandment of love in Deuteronomy for the Lord and for one's fellow human being.[9]

Religious Setting

Deuteronomy celebrates covenant renewal, specifically the renewal of the covenant at Sinai (see Exodus and Leviticus). If Israel are to claim and retain the land promised to them, they must maintain this covenant. The covenant is renewed again in Joshua 24. In each case, the call to worship and to commitment is paramount; in each case the form and content of the covenantal renewals reflect ancient Near Eastern suzerain-vassal treaty/covenant patterns with necessary changes made to fit special circumstances.

Preamble (1:1–5)

These are the words Moses spoke (1:1). The traditions of the Israelites contained in the Hebrew Bible witness to Moses, the extraordinary leader of ancient Israel. Many ancient leaders are known only through written or oral traditions that have been left behind. Historians of the ancient Near East are finding real history lying behind these stored memories.[10] Scholars have noted that if Moses had not lived, he would have to be invented. He stands between God and the people to deliver the Lord's words. He delivers a covenant that reflects, but also adapts and goes beyond other ancient Near Eastern treaties and covenants. Mediators were common in ancient Near Eastern treaty processes, but they always stood outside of the covenant itself. Moses is the chosen mediator, but also a member of the covenant community.

The true sovereign in Israel is the Lord God himself, the suzerain.[11] The scenario that Israel experiences during this historical era could have called forth just such a leader as Moses.[12]



Tafileh

Todd Bolen/www.BiblePlaces.com

Desert east of the Jordan (1:1). This area is in the Arabah, the Jordan Rift Valley, usually limited to the valley from the south end of the Dead Sea to the

Gulf of Aqaba (though the Arabah also refers to the Jordan Rift Valley from the Gulf of Aqaba to the southern end of the Sea of Galilee). The locations mentioned in verse 1 are situated in various places along Israel's travels from Egypt to the plains of Moab.

The location of Suph is not known. Paran seems to be located south of Israel, west of Edom, and north of Sinai, but exactly where is not known. Tophel has possibly been correctly identified with et-Tafileh (twenty miles southeast of the Dead Sea). Laban has not been located for certain, but the village may have been the sixth encampment of Israel after leaving Egypt (Num. 33:20–21). Hazeroth probably lay about forty miles north of traditional Sinai, Jebel Musa (Mountain of Moses), at the ʿAin el-Khadra. The location of Dizahab is not certain, but Dhahab may be Dizahab, located on the southwest side of the Gulf of Aqaba.[13]

The author's list of geographical locations here seems to reflect an itinerary (see Num. 33 for a schematized itinerary), including locations where the words of Moses were delivered before, during, and after Sinai—words that are now to be expounded on the plains of Moab.

From Horeb to Kadesh (1:2). It took eleven days,[14] traveling about fifteen miles per day, to journey from the traditional site of Horeb[15] at Jebel Musa, in southern Sinai, to Kadesh (ca. 170 miles). Kadesh is called Kadesh Barnea and Kadesh in the Old Testament.[16] See sidebar on "Kadesh."

Kadesh

Kadesh means "holy place." It lay on the southern boundary of Canaan and later served as a southern boundary marker of Judah. It was about fifty miles southwest of Beersheba in the Wilderness of Zin. Its modern archaeological designation places it near Ein el-Qudierat,[A-1] where a large spring supplied (and still does) an abundance of water that encouraged the growth of vegetation.[A-2]

Archaeologists have uncovered three levels of fortresses at Kadesh dating from about the tenth century B.C. to the seventh or sixth century B.C. Only six miles away, ʿAin Qadis has also been proposed. Perhaps this general area is what the biblical writer has in mind.[A-3] At least two significant trade routes ran through this area.

The Israelites did not encamp en masse at this spot for

forty years. They had been barred from the land of Canaan and sentenced to wander some years in this desert area.[A-4] The archaeological evidence indicates that they would need to move about in this area to obtain sufficient sustenance to live. Probably they often returned to Kadesh, using it as a base camp.[A-5] Israel's use of tents[A-6] left no definitive evidence of their wanderings in the vicinity.[A-7]



Kadesh Barnea region

Z. Radovan/www.BibleLandPictures.com

Mount Seir road (1:2). This ancient travel and trade route ran from the Gulf of Aqaba north through the area of Seir (Edom), a mountainous region east of the Arabah. The route intersected the trade route coming east from Kadesh Barnea and continued north across the Brook Zered and into Moab (see 1:44).

In the fortieth year (1:3). Ancient chronology had no fixed points for dating purposes. Events were related to various key events (e.g., see Amos 1:1 and the dating formula, "before the earthquake").[17] The Exodus birthed the people of Israel as a nation and the proclamation of the Torah; these words in Deuteronomy took place in the fortieth year after Israel came out of Egypt, whether in the fifteenth century or thirteenth century B.C.[18] Solomon laid the foundation of the temple 480 years after the exodus (1 Kings 6:1). The "eleventh month" in Israel's calendar is Tebet, which overlaps with our modern December–January.

This was after he had defeated Sihon … Og (1:4). These battles refer to Israel's defeat of relatively petty kingdoms located in the Transjordanian territory.[19] The chief city of the Amorites, Heshbon, was located northeast of the northern tip of the Dead Sea. Only Heshbon has been excavated.

Canaan

Canaan encompassed the Mediterranean coast from the Brook of Egypt to Mount Hor just north of Byblos with a southern border running from this brook along Kadesh and Tammar to Zoar on the Dead Sea. Its eastern border was the Jordan and then east to just south of Salecah. It turned north then to Hazarenan and west to Zedad and Lebo-Hamath and on to Mount Hor on the coast.[A-8] Later Egyptian references seem to refer more to southern Palestine.



Canaan

The Canaanites were the original inhabitants of Canaan, with ethnic groups assimilated among these natives. Texts from ancient Ugarit (Ras Shamra), 130 miles north of Canaan, suggest much about these peoples with their pantheon, rituals, festivals, practices, and worldviews. L. L. Grabbe has, however, rightly cautioned about explaining the references in the Old Testament to Canaanite religious issues by appealing to the Ugaritic texts indiscriminately as if they were Canaanite texts.[A-9] Texts from Ras Ibn Hani also describe more about the culture of this people, as do Ebla materials (Tell Mardikh).[A-10] There are texts from Egypt and later inscriptions from Carthage and Phoenicia as well. Archaeological artifacts, such as temples, images, cultic sites, altars, and other cultural remains have been uncovered in Canaan. Many of these discoveries help to some extent to differentiate Israelites and Canaanites from each other.[A-11] The name was used sometimes to describe all the inhabitants of Canaan. Canaanite/Amorite appears to be interchangeable in some cases.[A-12]

But although Ugarit is located just north of Canaanite boundaries, their beliefs probably reflect much of the life and times of the Canaanites.[A-13] Based on hundreds of cuneiform documents found at ancient Ugarit near the Syrian coast, we catch at least some glimpses about these people.

The Canaanite worldview(s) included a cult of the dead, the worship of many gods, especially El (the high god) and Baal. Female goddesses abounded (Anat, Asherah). Many high places, sacred prostitutes, and possibly Molek cults (human sacrifice?) are evidenced. The Canaanites or West Semitic peoples developed the alphabet much earlier than previously thought[A-14] and greatly influenced Israel’s cult and several other areas as well.



Proto-Canaanite inscription

The Schøyen Collection MS 5180, Oslo and London

The “Amorites” (Sumerian, *Martu*; Akkadian, *Amurru*) migrated from Syria into Canaan as far back as about 2500 B.C.[20] Other scholars place them in Canaan by the Middle Bronze Age II (1800–1650 B.C.). They featured a tribal structure that reached beyond the city-state system, for a “council of the Amorites” is noted in a letter.[21] A text from Mari on the Euphrates mentions Canaan/Canaanites and refers to an ethnic or geographical group/area.[22] The name is in Amarna texts, texts from Ugarit,[23] and Egyptian texts in about 1430–1400 B.C.[24] It is present in the Merneptah Stele (1209 B.C.).[25]

Bashan was situated east-northeast of the Sea of Galilee and north of the Yarmuk River. The modern Golan area in Israel covers some of this territory, but in ancient times Bashan extended to Mount Hermon in the north and to the Yarmuk River in the south, and was bounded on the west by the Jordan Valley and on the east by the great eastern desert. It was lush and fertile and noted for its rich grazing lands. The city of Edrei was located in south central Bashan and is identified with modern Darʿa. Ashtaroth, Og’s capital, was due east of Galilee

on one of the tributaries of the Yarmuk River. It was mentioned in Egyptian, Assyrian, and possibly Ugaritic texts[26] and is designated as Tell ʿAshtarah today. Bashan was plundered later in history by Shalmaneser III of Assyria (858–34 B.C.).[27] See 1:7; 2:24; 3:1.



Ashtaroth being captured by Tiglath-pileser III

Z. Radovan/www.BibleLandPictures.com

Historical Prologue (1:6–3:29)[28]

Long enough at this mountain (1:6). Israel camped at Sinai ("this mountain") for about eleven months. They arrived at Sinai three months after exiting Egypt (Ex. 19:1) and departed from Sinai one year and two months after leaving Egypt (Num. 10:11).

Advance into the hill country of the Amorites (1:7). This description of Canaan recalls the description of the land given in Genesis 15:18–21. Palestine divides into four longitudinal regions running north-south: a coastal plain that stretches from beyond the northern city of Tyre south along the Mediterranean Sea to the El-Arish (River of Egypt); a central mountain range that runs north from the Negev beyond Upper Galilee into Lebanon and is crossed only by the Jezreel Valley near Megiddo; a Jordan Rift Valley (Arabah) that runs from the southern end of the Sea of Galilee south to the Gulf of Aqaba; a Transjordanian mountain range that rises parallel to and east of the Jordan Rift Valley (see 1:25).[29]

At the time the Israelites entered Palestine, the Amorites occupied much of the Transjordanian mountain area just north of the Arnon River. Historically they had lived on both sides of the Jordan in the hill country (Num. 13:29).[30] Thus, the entire land of Palestine may be in mind here or only the Transjordanian hill country.[31]

The "Arabah" refers to the eastern edge of the Dead Sea and the Jordan Rift Valley running up to the Sea of Galilee. The "mountains" evidently refer to the central hill country running along the western side of the Jordan Rift Valley and up to the southern end of the Sea of Galilee and into Upper Galilee. The "western foothills" (Shephelah) are the low-lying areas of the central mountain range that extend down to the Mediterranean coastal plain.

The "Negev" served as the southern border of Judah; it was essentially desert and extended east from Beersheba to the southern end of the Dead Sea and west to Gaza near the coast. Its southern extensions merged with the highlands of the Sinai Peninsula and reached to the Gulf of Aqaba. Its eastern border was the Arabah running from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba.

"The land of the Canaanites" stretched at various times from the River of Egypt (Wadi El-Arish) to Lebo Hamath north of Damascus. Strong textual evidence indicates that there were both a geographical area called Canaan and a people there who were called Canaanites, earlier possessors of Palestine.[32] In this context its northern territory is in mind and probably the coastal area there.[33]

"Lebanon," which ran parallel to the Phoenician coast, indicates a northeast boundary of the land. The northwestern branch of the Euphrates River served as the northeastern border of the area. Similar clichés for boundary markers were common in the ancient Near East, e.g., "from the Euphrates to the great sea where the sun sets."[34]



Topographical Zones of Canaan

I charged your judges at that time (1:9). The recollection of the establishment of Israel's judicial structures begins here (1:9–18; but cf. also Ex. 18:13–27; Deut. 16:18–29; 17:6–2).[35] Israel's judicial system, though not always the laws per se or the motivations for the laws, was fairly common in the ancient Near East.[36]

Three spheres of government "housed" the constitutional and administrative law: the divine (gods, king, and dynasty), state, and local authorities.[37] Outside of Israel the king was at the top of the pyramid in constitutional and administrative law and judicial procedures. Kingship originated from heaven (the gods) and was passed on to the king, who could claim to be ruler of the world and as such could promulgate laws.[38] He was ultimately the head of any legislative group and

acted as supreme judge, who especially championed the cause of the widow, the orphan, the poor, and the oppressed.

There was typically some kind of central administration as well as provincial or city-state administrative structures. The courts recognized the king as supreme judge along with supportive royal judges under him, and there were evidently local judges as well.[39] A "commissioner" (*mashkim*) functioned, who researched legal or economic matters. He came from among the common people, for he could be a scribe, barber, or the manager of an estate.[40]

In Mesopotamia levels of the judicial system are evident. A town assembly of elders was established. Then additional local, temple, or royal officials could get involved, often serving as witnesses. The parties involved in a case represented themselves, for there were no lawyers or professionals involved.[41]

In Egypt the king and his royal staff administered justice and ruled the land. An "eloquent peasant" could appeal to Pharaoh himself, if necessary, to seek justice.[42] The king derived his authority from the gods. D. Lorton asserts that there was no group of legal professionals in Egypt before 700 B.C. or legal theory per se that has yet been uncovered.[43] Egyptian law codes have not been uncovered, but royal decrees or edicts have been.[44] But references in ancient writings imply that such laws did exist, at least to some extent.[45] There were "judges" and supporting court personnel.[46] There was a scribal class who functioned as "quasi-lawyers," and court and legal procedure functioned in rudimentary form.[47] *Maʾat* represented a natural abstract concept of universal order and harmony. Justice was available to the poor as well as the rich. Some persons (judges) were charged to see that "law" (*maʾat*) was used to the good of all humanity.[48]

We have records of Hittite instructions to officers in the thirteenth century (Tudhalias IV). Officers are classified as commanders of thousands, designated as majors, and so on. Officers in the military served as judges. The king, however, was the one who gave out the commands and instructions. Extremely difficult cases for the various judges could be refused; justice was to be passed in all cases to those involved, with no partiality shown for the rich or the poor. In Egypt similar actions are recorded in a fourteenth-century Stele of Horemheb, where we read that he sought out men of integrity and excellent character to serve as judges. Thutmose III gave similar instructions to the new vizier, Rekhmire, who was to "regard him whom you know like him whom you do not know."[49]

Among the Hittites the king served in the highest court, the royal court, which

was also a court of appeals. He was the steward of the land of Hatti under the creator storm-god,[50] who owned the land, just as Yahweh owned the land in Israel. The king also served as the chief priest of the gods.[51]

Israel's tribal organization is possibly reflected in Egyptian texts and designated *shasu* (*sh sw*) (nomads, wanderers; cf. Arameans, people of Seir, Edom).[52] At Mari documents refer to a pastoral population of West Semitic elements featuring tribal aspects that parallel Israel's earliest tribal features.[53] In early Israel the tribal system served as a foundation and source for the development of a justice system (1:23; 29:18).[54]



Stela of Horemheb showing him worshipping Re-Horakhty, Thoth, and Maat

HIP/Art Resource, NY, courtesy of the British Museum

The Valley of Eshcol (1:24). This valley was probably a fertile wadi, housing a vineyard, located just north of Hebron (Num. 13:22–25), a city renowned for its viticulture and olive production. Perhaps its ancient name is still evident in the Wadi Burj Haskeh, situated two miles north of Hebron, where grapes, grapevines, and related products were and are cultivated and harvested.[55] Viticulture was vital to Israel's national prosperity. To create and nurture a prosperous viticulture took many years and a stable community.[56] Cultivation of the vine and its products flourished as early as the third millennium on the Levant.[57] Hillside terraces had to be planted, but were grown from plant cuttings and shoots. The vines were manicured and manipulated in many ways (cf. Isa. 5:1–7).

The viticulturist harvested early grapes in June/July and harvested the best grapes in August/September. Grapes were cut in clusters from the vine with sharp knives. Winepresses were used to tread on the grapes with bare feet (beam presses were used later). The wine was received into a lower receptacle, collected, and stored in a cool place. Grapes were dried in the sun to make raisins and "dibs," a honey produced from fruit.

It is a good land that the LORD our God is giving us (1:25). The land in general was well endowed with agricultural potential,[58] but it was not rich in natural resources, although the Dead Sea provided some salt and bitumen and small amounts of iron have been found. Some turquoise is present in the Negev.[59] Large desert areas were neither fruitful nor fertile. Certain regions were suited to produce wine, grain, and olive oils in abundance (Gen. 27:28; Deut. 7:13); some regions were capable of sustaining cattle, flocks, and herds in great numbers, such as Gilead.[60] The Mediterranean coastal area, the Sea of Galilee, and the Jordan River provided an abundance of fish. Other features of the land offered many challenges to its inhabitants. See sidebar on "Climate and Agriculture."

Climate and Agriculture

Climate varied from north to south and from east to west. In general the rainfall decreased as one moved from the north to the south and from the west to the east. It increased with higher elevations and was greater on the western sides of the central and Transjordanian mountains than on the eastern side. Some areas experienced abundant rainfall; others received only enough rain for subsistence living, and some areas were scorching, unproductive desert.[A-15]

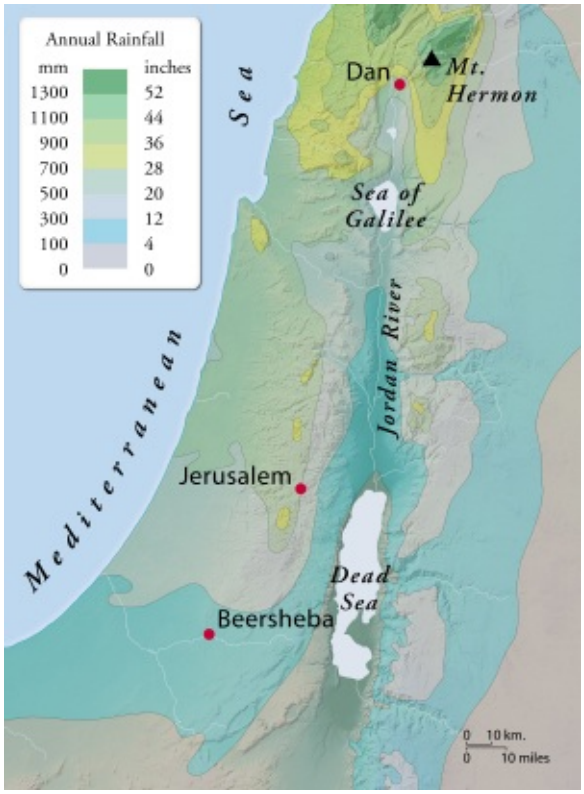
The annual rainfall varied considerably, from forty inches in Upper Galilee to two inches in the desert areas, such as the Negev and the Judean Desert. A year featured two main seasons, a wet season (October–March/April) during which early autumnal rains from October–December fell, and late, spring rains, in January–April. Crops were planted, cultivated, and ripened during this time. The harvest began in April–June (barley, wheat) and continued through the summer (fruits, grapes, olives) into August or early fall. The summer or dry season settled in during late May and continued until October. During this dry period dew supplemented the rain (32:8), especially in the southern Negev.

But this rhythm of nature was not guaranteed. Drought, disease, or locusts could destroy the produce of an entire year or more.[A-16] The land featured a diversity of topography and climatic conditions that were, and are, hardly equaled anywhere else on earth. It was a land of contrasts.[A-17] While Mount Meron rises to almost four thousand feet in Upper Galilee, the Dead Sea lies thirteen hundred feet below sea level. It and its desert setting support little life.

Agricultural activity varied with the seasons of the year, the geography of the land, and the yearly rainfall. Two areas of economic activity made up Israel's economy: agrarian and pastoral pursuits. The central mountain regions favored pastoral pursuits; the lower, broader valleys and plains provided productive farming areas. Agrarian activity produced wheat and barley (April–June), fruits of various kinds (summer), and grapes and olives (late summer, early fall). From these raw materials bread, wine, and oil were produced. Heavy summer dew made the cultivation of cucumbers, melons, and grapes possible. Legumes such as lentils, fava beans, and chickpeas were produced along with onions, leeks, and garlic.[A-18]

The pastoralists raised cattle, sheep, and goats, from which wool, hair, milk, and meat came.[A-19] Farmers terraced the narrow slopes of the mountainous regions and could cultivate trees (olive, date palm, pomegranate, fig, and

sycamore) and vines.



Rainfall in Israel

The Anakites (1:28). Egyptian Execration Texts (from about 1860, 1830, 1780 B.C.) may refer to the Anakites (also termed Anakim).[61] Kitchen believes it is probable that the city of Yaʾanaq, mentioned in all three main series of these texts, is to be tied to the Anakim of the Old Testament (esp. Josh. 11:21–22). Yaʾanaq has three rulers mentioned. In Joshua two groups of three cities (Hebron, Debir, Anab; Gaza, Gath, Ashdon) are mentioned where Anakites dwelt. Perhaps the biblical "triplets" suggest an ancient tradition.[62] In a thirteenth-century Egyptian papyrus (Anastasi I), Bedouin in Canaan are cited as nearly nine feet tall.[63]

In fire by night and in a cloud by day (1:33). This flame or fire was probably covered by a cloud in the day, but was visible at night.[64] Niehaus concludes that the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire represented both a messenger of God and God himself.[65] Speculations that this biblical phenomenon was the result of local volcanic activity or that it is to be tied to the smoke and fire signals that "led" caravans are far off the mark.[66]

Mann observes the “remarkable similarities” between the poetic language and specific imagery given here and a vanguard motif in various ancient Near Eastern texts. In the Tukulti-Ninurta Epic, Assur leads the vanguard with devouring flame. The gods Enlil and Adad accompany also with burning fire and flood respectively.[67] In Akkadian texts Erra designates the god Ishum as the torch who precedes and leads the others as a fire and a torch that went ahead and behind the heavenly army.[68]

Ugaritic texts employ the word "cloud" (ʿ*nn*) in contexts featuring deities and use the word as a substitute for the name/presence of a deity, such as Hadad or Athirat.[69] The cloud at Ugarit as storm imagery indicates divine guidance and the god’s presence, as the cloud and fire designate the Lord.[70] Ugaritic texts depict messengers of fire of the god Yam, who appear like two flames of fire. A light accompanies Baal.[71] The god Shapshu serves as the luminary of the gods.[72] In the Mesopotamian Epic of Gilgamesh, Humbaba uses rays of light/fire (*melammu*) to subdue his attackers.[73] The storm-god of the Hittites casts forth his destructive thunderbolts to destroy the enemy of the Great King.[74]

The great Egyptian god Amon, his standard leading the way, went forth in a mighty presence before the armies of both Thutmose III and Ramesses III.[75] In an Egyptian literary composition, the writer used simile to describe the wise scribe, choice of heart, who uses his wisdom to give guidance (“light”) to the Egyptian troops (ca. 1280 B.C.) as a “torch” at the head of the army.[76] This powerful imagery assured the Israelites of God’s guidance and presence, as it also served to exalt Yahweh.



Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I

British Museum; © James C. Martin.

Red Sea (1:40). The rendering "Red Sea" comes from the LXX. The Hebrew text reads *yam sûp* ("Sea of Reeds"). This term refers, depending on context, to three areas: the Gulf of Aqaba (Num. 21:4), the Gulf of Suez (Num. 33:10–11), or the place where Israel crossed or encountered the Red Sea.[77] The reference here is to the Gulf of Aqaba,[78] since Israel backtracks on the route in the Desert of Paran that had led them to Kadesh Barnea.[79]

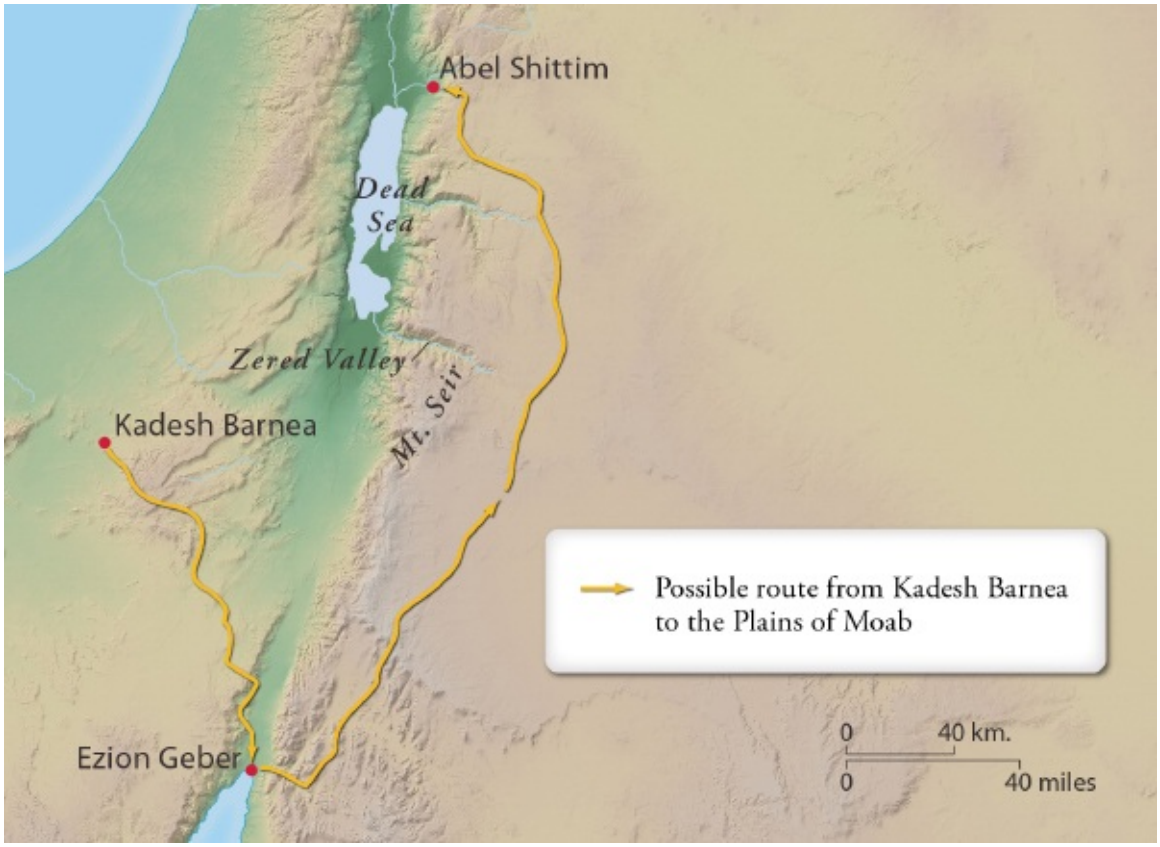
We have sinned (1:41). Israel's collective confession of guilt here and in verse 45 (cf. Ex. 33:6; Lev. 16) is also found in the extrabiblical world—e.g., by Ugaritians and Hittites,[80] and by various other peoples of Mesopotamia[81] and Sumer.[82] These cities lament the divine displeasure because of events that led to the destruction of the city. Confession of sin and laments by individuals, including kings, are well represented, and there are analogues in lamentations, psalms, and individual laments found in the Old Testament.

The Hittite king Mursili II performs a confessional in which he not only presents his own sins but the sins of his people, of his father, and of his own court officials.[83] At Ugarit, sacrifices were presented to regain one's virtue or to atone for offensive behavior or words: "Deliver (it) up (to sacrifice), O son/daughter of Ugarit, that we may be fair again, O Gates of Ugarit [and fourfold/twice more, with different vocatives], whether your virtue ["fair (nature)"] is spoilt, like a Qatian."[84] Communal laments over Sumer and specific

city-states such as Ur, Uridu, Nippur, and Uruk were recorded, as were personal laments.[85] These have been analyzed as to genre (classic city laments, *balags*, *ershemmas*).[86]

From Seir all the way to Hormah (1:44). Hormah's exact location is not certain, but it is generally located about eight miles from Beersheba. Its modern designation is generally accepted as Tell Masos or Tell el-Khuweilfeh.[87] Seir, first mentioned in the ancient Near East before 1350 B.C. in Letter 88 from Amarna in Egypt,[88] is found in other Egyptian texts.[89] Seir, although it usually refers to territory south of the Dead Sea and along its southeastern shore, clearly indicates hill country to the west of the Jordan Rift Valley and west of the Arabah, as far as or beyond the city of Arad.[90] Seir may refer, more specifically but less likely here, to a landmark on the border of Judah (Josh. 15:10).[91]

The desert along the route to the Red Sea … hill country of Seir (2:1). Israel's retreat took them back through the Desert of Paran west of the Arabah leading down to the modern Gulf of Aqaba, but here designated as the "Red Sea" (see comment on 1:40). They traveled from the northwest area of the mountains in Seir southeast to the Gulf of Aqaba, and later ranged throughout the western and southern borders of Seir (Edom) for thirty-eight years (cf. 2:7).



Now turn north (2:3). Israel now traveled from Kadesh Barnea east across the Arabah into Seir by the Wadi Murra and Varb es-Sultan, where the Edomites lived. At Punon or Wadi Ghurveir they caught a road coming from the Gulf of Aqaba. Then they turned northeast to complete their trek around central Edom and headed north on the eastern fringes of Edom and Moab. They passed by watering areas Gudgodah and Jotbathah (Deut. 10:8), Zalmonah (unknown at present), Punon (Feinan/Wadi Feinan), on the east side of the Wadi Arabah,[92] as they then moved on north to Oboth and Iye-Abarim to the northern border of Edom (Num. 33:41–44).[93]

Pay them in silver for the food you eat (2:6). Silver was the preferred medium of payment in the time of the divided monarchy. But the use of silver (usually), gold, or electrum (mixture of gold and silver) goes back to the eighteenth century B.C. The Late Bronze Age to Iron Age II (1400–600 B.C.) reveals silver as a medium of exchange. Often scrap pieces were weighed out in a balance pan and balanced by (a) stone weight(s) in another pan attached to a balance beam.[94] Long before coins (silver ingots were used as coinage in some Neo-Hittite city-states in the eighth century B.C.), pieces of silver properly weighed (or gold or copper), therefore, served as payment for various commodities.[95] This “scrap metal” has been termed *hacksilber*. These mediums of exchange existed alongside the standard means of exchange, such as bartering, in Canaan, Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt (cf. Ex. 21:32; Josh. 7:21). Weights were carefully monitored to prevent cheating.[96]



Silver coils from which appropriate weight would be cut for payment

Kim Walton, courtesy of the Oriental Institute Museum

Descendants of Esau, who live in Seir (2:8). Esau’s descendants lived in Seir and formed, with other elements, the tiny tribal kingdom of Edom. Edom was sparsely settled and virtually no Late Bronze Age (1400–1200 B.C.) settlements

are present. However, people did inhabit the region during the Late Bronze Age,[97] for Egyptian records from about the thirteenth to the tenth centuries (Ramesses I-III; Merneptah) first mention this territory/people and groups of *Shasu* (nomads) from Edom/Seir.[98] "Shasu" parallels "Seir" in these texts; these nomads are a major part of Edom's population.

Travel and commerce existed between Egypt and Edom very early.[99] Inhabitants of Edom were probably "tent dwellers" as well as pastoralists in some sense.[100] Later references to them come from Assyrians and Babylonians. Adad-nirari III of Assyria (810–783 B.C.) was the first one to deal with Edom as a vassal state. Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 B.C.) subjugated Edom. Nabonidus nearly destroyed Edom in about 550 B.C. (Mal. 1:1–2), but it grew healthy under Persian rule. Edom enjoyed a special "brotherly," nonconfrontational relationship to Israel in general, even in areas of religious worship.[101]

Moab

The kingdom of Moab, featuring tribalism rather than "statehood" per se, had a significant population and presence during the Late Bronze Age (1550–1200 B.C.). This was not always the case. Some sites not mentioned in the biblical text indicate a Late Bronze Age occupation, while some sites in the biblical text do not (see 2:24, for Heshbon). Moab is mentioned in Egyptian texts from the time of Ramesses II (ca. 1270 B.C.), and a Moabite king may be represented in a stele from the Late Bronze Age.[A-20] Dibon, one of Moab's capital cities, based on irrefutable evidence,[A-21] existed in 1270 B.C. References from Ebla (southwest of Aleppo; twenty-fifth century B.C.) and from southern Moab (tenth to ninth century B.C.) mention the chief Moabite god Chemosh. The name is also in the ritual texts at Ugarit (fourteenth century) and is present in theophoric names at Ebla, such as the city name Carchemish (Kar-Kamish).[A-22] Mesha, a Moabite king, is identified on the Moabite Stone (ca. 830 B.C.) found at Dibon (cf. 2 Kings 3). Babylon crippled Moab in 582–581 B.C.,[A-23] but it seems to have limped into Hellenistic times. By the time of Rome, Ammon, Moab, and Edom were gone.[A-24]

Several cities, areas, and peoples are mentioned in this

text (2:9–33). The designation Ar may refer to a city, area, or to all of Moab.[A-25] Here and in verse 29 below, the word refers to a region or to the entire land of Moab.[A-26] The location of Ar is placed at competing locations in Moab, Khirbet el-Balu being the most probable.[A-27]



Arnon Gorge

Bible Scene Multimedia/Maurice Thompson

Desert road of Moab (2:8). This road ran in a north-northeast direction after separating from the Arabah road, along the eastern border of Edom and Moab. The road stayed on the desert fringe of Moab as Israel traveled from the upper Zered River to the upper Arnon (Wadi Mujib). They camped at Kedemoth (Deut. 2:26).



Major Highway Systems of Syria-Palestine

Elath and Ezion Geber (2:8). Elath was located just north of Aqaba. Ezion Geber was also located on the Gulf of Aqaba, west of Elath. Archaeologists have identified its site as Tell al-Halifa. Other authorities suggest, less likely, the tiny island of Jazirat Farʾum.[102] The city was built by David according to B. Mazar (1975).[103] Some scholars see evidence that Israel came south to these two cities and traveled east-northeast around Edom (see 2:3).

Ar to the descendants of Lot as a possession (2:9). Evidence, though scarce, establishes the presence of the Moabites east of the Dead Sea. Jalul in the northern section of the Madaba area appears to have an occupational history from the Lower Bronze Age into the Iron Age. There were, however, sedentary

villages in Moab during this time.[104] See sidebar on "Moab."

Emites (2:10). Unknown outside the Old Testament, the Emites were also called Rephaites, but in Moabite they were called Emites. The name "Emim" seems to be connected with a Hebrew root *ʿymh*, meaning fear, dread, and terror. Hence, Emites means "terrible/fearful ones." They were huge in size like the Rephaites (Rephaim) and Anakites (Anakim).[105]

Rephaites (2:11). This was an aboriginal race of giants from Bashan, a powerful people at one time, but at the time Israel was entering Canaan there was only a remnant left. Og, a giant king of Bashan, was one of the last (Josh. 12:4). Argob was another name for his kingdom. Half of the tribe of Manasseh settled in Bashan on the northeastern side of the Jordan River (Deut. 3:13). The Rephaites also inhabited Moabite territory. While they originated as an ethnic group, they became a people and a nation that exercised power from Mount Hermon to as far as Moab. The Ugaritic Tale of Aqhat refers to them (fourteenth century?), for Dan(i)el, the Ugaritic hero, is called the "man of Rapaʿu."[106]

The term "Rephaites" also refers to spirits of the dead, especially spirits of kings and heroes of old, perhaps chariot warriors.[107] Ugaritic literature[108] indicates that certain rites were held for the Rephaites of the land (earth),[109] and the term applies to heroes who were considered divine. The term refers to the chief god of Ugarit (or some person?) who inhabited the same territory and cities as Og, king of Bashan—that is, Ashtaroth and Edrei. The word applies to ancient warrior heroes who served the god Baal.[110]

The OT refers to the spirits of "the dead" as *rᵉpāʾîm* (Ps. 88:11–12; Isa. 14:9; 26:14, 19;[111] see also Prov. 2:18; 9:18; 21:16). The Rephaites as spirits of the elite dead is also found in Phoenician and Punic-Latin texts/inscriptions.[112] The sarcophagus inscriptions of Tabnit use the term to describe the "shades/spirits" of the common person.[113] It is fair to say that the Rephaites in both categories are still puzzling. O. Loretz argues with some effectiveness that Israel historicized this latter view of the Rephaites.[114]

For Anakites see comments on 1:28. Verse 11 here indicates that the Anakites were also considered Rephaites, as were the Emites. The fear felt by the Israelites had some basis in fact, based on what the names of these peoples suggest.

The Ammonites also dispossessed the Rephaites, whom they named the Zamzummites. Hence, the basic stock of giants in these areas were called Emites by the Moabites, but Zamzummites by the Ammonites and were all huge like the Anakites.

Horites (2:12). Horites inhabited the territory of Seir. Some scholars have closely tied them to the Hurrians, a non-Semitic people. These people located in various places, such as Mitanni, Syria, Anatolia, and Palestine. They were found in Syria and Palestine, and they had spread there from territory east of the Tigris River in Mesopotamia.[115] This identification is still held by some,[116] but other scholars recently strongly disavow the identity of the Horites and the Hurrians, asserting that the resemblance of names is only incidental.[117] The name "Horites" may be derived from Hebrew *hor* ("cave") and, hence, refers to mountainous cave dwellers in the regions of Seir, which both the geology and geography of the region would support.[118] See comments on Hivites at 7:1.

Zered Valley (2:13). The Brook (Heb. *naḥal*) Zered (cf. Num. 21:12) flowed through and gave its name to this valley. The valley extends from its southeastern origin westward for about thirty-six miles to the southeast corner of the Dead Sea, where its small stream enters the Dead Sea.[119] Today it is identified as the Wadi-el-Hesa. The valley averages about three and one-half miles in width at its widest. It provided a natural boundary between Moab to the north and Edom to the south. The Zered Brook and tributaries drained the northern area of the Jebel esh-Shera as it descended 3,900 feet to sea level. Israel crossed it and ceased wandering (Num. 21:12), entering a new territory and a new era for her.



Wadi Zered

Todd Bolen/www.BiblePlaces.com

The LORD's hand was against them (2:15). The "hand of the LORD" or "his hand" is a biblical and ancient Near Eastern expression. In Akkadian literature it often refers to the punishing, destructive, or threatening hand of a particular god. The poor sufferer of I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom can complain of his god that "heavy was his hand [upon me], I could not bear it."[120] In biblical texts it stood for the power/might of Israel's God (Ex. 3:20; 9:15; Deut. 3:24; 7:8). In Egyptian documents (annals, historical texts, oracles, and prophecies) the expressions "hand of Pharaoh" or the "strong arm of Pharaoh" were metaphors for the power/might of Egypt (Ex. 3:8; 18:9). The equivalent expression "outstretched arm" (Ex. 6:6; Deut. 4:34; 11:2) was often used in and even combined with the "mighty hand of the LORD" (4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 9:29; 11:2; 26:8).



Pharaoh with arm raised to strike enemy

Olga Sorokoletova

These terms are found ubiquitously in Egyptian literature since Pharaoh was known as “lord of the strong arm” (*Neb Khopesh*).[121] Ramesses II affirmed that his god Seth had made Ramesses’ arm “mighty to the height of heaven and my strength to the width of the earth!”[122] In Egypt “man in the hand of the God,” an equivalent expression, occurs.[123] The phrase is found in literature at Mari as well.[124] The Hittite king Mursili conquered the enemy “with [his strong] arm.”[125] These idioms were also used in Canaan as evidenced by the Amarna letters.[126] It is considered an “Egyptianism” in Hebrew.[127]

Ammonites (2:19). The Ammonites were related to the Israelites through Lot

(Gen. 19:38) and so the Lord gave them territory in Transjordan, from the Arnon River to the Jabbok River, covering a north-south distance of about thirty-nine miles. Archaeology shows the Ammonites as a people before the Neo-Assyrians arose. Early Bronze (3100–2650 B.C.), Middle Bronze (1800–1650 B.C.), and Late Bronze (1500–1200 B.C.) materials testify to this. The national god Molech is mentioned in texts at Ebla (twenty-fifth century B.C.) and also at Ugarit, where he is equated to the god Rpu (Rapiʾu). Ugaritic texts and Egyptian texts mention the city of ʿAshtarot, an earlier cultic location for the worship of Molech/Rapiʾu.[128] The capital city was Rabbah (modern Amman). There is sufficient evidence at Transjordanian sites (e.g., Tell Safut) to suggest that the Iron Age Ammonites continued the Late Bronze Age people.[129]

In the reign of Tiglath-Pileser, the Neo-Assyrian annals refer to the Land of Benammanu (KUR.Benammana) and the House of Ammon (Bit-Ammon).[130] Ammonite kings are known from Assyrian records kept by kings, including Shalmaneser III (853 B.C., Qarqar), Sennacherib (704–681 B.C.), and Esarhaddon (680–669 B.C.). The Ammonites, as a mini-power, ceased to exist in around 582–581 B.C., when the Babylonians defeated them. They continued to play minor but troublesome roles in Israel's history down to the second century.[131]

Zamzummites (2:20). The Zamzummites are the same as the Zuzites in Genesis 14:5. "Rephaites" (shades, ghosts), "Emim" (frightful ones), and this word all indicate dread or discomfort surrounding their appearance (see comments on 2:10).[132] The LXX renders "Zamzummites" as "mighty ones," an even closer fit to the other two words. Ullendorf and Christensen identify this as the use of a foreign word in Hebrew.[133] The personal name Zammabu is found in an Old Babylonian king list.

Avvites (2:23). The Avvites lived south of the key Philistine city, Gaza, both before and after the conquest of Palestine (Josh. 13:3). The LXX renders this word as "Hivites." Perhaps they were a part of the displaced Sea Peoples who landed in or migrated to this area. Some scholars tie the Avvites to the Hyksos settlements that were followed later by the Aegean Sea peoples.[134] Their dwellings (*ḥ^{a}ṣērîm*; NIV "villages") are understood to have been small unwalled villages or even seminomadic tent encampments.[135]

Caphtorites (2:23). The Caphtorites may have been a part of the Philistines at an early stage (Jer. 47:4; Amos 9:7). They stemmed from Crete rather than Cyprus, as some have argued.[136] Caphtor (Heb. *kaptôr*) is ancient Kaptara (Crete), and Mari texts from the second millennium mention a king of Hagor who sent gifts to Kaptara. Egyptian texts mention *kefl(i)u*, a variant of Kaptara.[137]

Arnon Gorge … Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon (2:24). The Arnon Gorge, identified as Wadi el-Mujib today, is a perennial stream that opens into the east side of the Dead Sea almost opposite Ein-Gedi. It is about thirty miles long, with breathtaking canyon views. It served once as a heavily fortified border area[138] of Ammon (Ammonites) and of Moab (Deut. 3:12, 16; Judg. 11:18–19). It functioned as the southern border of the tribe of Reuben. It is mentioned in the Mesha Stone (Moabite Stone) dating from about 830 B.C. Mesha (ca. 849 B.C.), mentioned in 2 Kings 3:4, claims to have retaken Moabite territory formerly conquered by Israel, including the Arnon Gorge, and claims that he made a road for travel in the Arnon.[139]

Sihon, the king of Heshbon, was also king of the Amorites (Num. 21:21–31). A poetic piece (Num. 21:27) celebrates the takeover of Heshbon from Sihon and Israel's subsequent rebuilding of it. Sihon's petty kingdom centered around Heshbon, but Amorites over a larger area were affected (Deut. 3:6–8). The origin of Heshbon goes back to the thirteenth century B.C.[140] The modern site of Heshbon is possibly Tell Hesban and excavations show that it was inhabited from at least the twelfth century. Heshbon may, however, prove to be a Bronze Age city represented by Tell el-Jalul or Tell el-Umeiri.[141]



Tell el-Jalul excavations

Todd Bolen/www.BiblePlaces.com

Terror and fear of you (2:25). The peoples and kings of the nations will be terrified of Israel, a special people. In Egyptian literature the terror of Amun, god of Egypt, overwhelmed the enemy. Hittite, Assyrian, and Babylonian texts feature divine warriors and armies who struck fear into the enemy. The king led the army in the Old Babylonian era, but he was amply supported by the gods, whose will was discerned through diviners. In the Middle Babylonian eras and throughout the Assyrian epochs, the divine hosts helped to overwhelm the enemy. These gods accompanied and supported their troops.[142] A similar situation functioned in Hittite military activity.[143]

Desert of Kedemoth (2:26). There was a Transjordanian city of Kedemoth north of the Arnon and a wilderness area around it to the southeast and southwest, here translated as "Desert of Kedemoth."[144] The city was allotted to the tribe of Reuben (Josh. 13:18). Its identification is not certain, but it is usually considered to be ʿAleiyan, es-Saliyeh, or er-Remeil. The second of these suggestions may be the best option since it lies on the edge of the desert.[145]

The act of sending messengers reflects common ancient Near Eastern practice,[146] for they were employed by Sumerians, Babylonians, Akkadians, Hittites, Ugaritians, and Egyptians, among whom Israel had lived. They were part of the fabric of ancient Near Eastern military protocol. Messengers were especially important in order to spot the military presence of a people, especially in Sumer and Egypt.[147]

When Sihon … came out to meet us in battle at Jahaz (2:32). The Israelites defeated Sihon and the Amorites at Jahaz in Transjordan (cf. Num. 21:21–31; Deut. 2:30–35; 3:5; Judg. 11:20).[148] The Moabite Stone describes it (ca. 830 B.C.) as a city taken back from the Israelite king who had rebuilt or fortified it.[149] It was given to Reuben and became a Levitical city (Josh. 21:36; 1 Chron. 6:78). Prophetic oracles mention it (Jer. 48:34), and it is possibly to be identified with Khirbet el-Medeiniyeh.

Completely destroyed them (2:34). This agrees with the practice of devoting things to destruction (*ḥerem*) in the Old Testament, especially during times of war. To violate this instruction was a serious offense, punishable by death.[150] The practice of *ḥerem* was practiced elsewhere in the ancient Near East. King Mesha of Moab took the city of Nebo from Israel and devoted all in it to destruction to his god Ashtar-Chemosh.[151] The ban as already noted functioned at Mari,[152] where a nearly equivalent phrase was "eating the taboo" (*asakkan akālum*). The "taboo" belonged to a god or king and to "eat it" violated its holy/cursed or special nature. The *asakkum* concept functioned at Mari as in Israel for the Israelite soldiers. Soldiers could not take any spoils of war to themselves, for

these items were the *asakku* of the gods Adad and Shamash.[153]

Aroer on the rim of the Arnon Gorge (2:36). Aroer was located on the northern rim of the Arnon Gorge (Wadi el-Mujib; see also 4:48). It was a fortified city (Num. 32:34) and served as a natural border checkpoint with Moab (Deut. 4:48; Josh. 2:2). It is located by modern ʿ*araḥir*, about three miles southeast of biblical Dibon. The Syrian king Hazael controlled it in the ninth century. It is mentioned in the Moabite Stone by King Mesha (ca. 830 B.C.) as a city that Mesha fortified or "built."[154]

Gilead (2:36). This area of central Transjordan has yielded an abundance of archaeological data from the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age.[155] The name appears in extrabiblical texts at Ugarit and in Assyria at Nimrud both as a name of a place and of a person.[156] The area flourished in the Late Bronze Age (1550–1200 B.C.), with a fortress attributed to Mesha.[157] Temples and inscriptions were discovered at Ammon and Deir ʿAlla.[158] Gilead marked the boundary of the Ammonites to the north and the Moabites to the south. It included the area of Transjordan north of Sihon's kingdom and northwest of the Ammonites and extended to Bashan, spanning the Jabbok River. Sihon's central authority was exercised from the Arnon River to the Jabbok River (Num. 21:24).[159]

Course of the Jabbok (2:37). The Jabbok, located about twenty-five miles north of the Dead Sea, becomes a swift-flowing stream by the time it enters the Jordan River. Its modern name is Wadi Zerqa. It begins near Rabbah of the biblical Ammonites, flows east and north, and then descends westward into the Jordan.



Penuel and fords of Jabbok from south

Todd Bolen/www.BiblePlaces.com

Og king of Bashan (3:1). This king is not attested outside of the Bible. A note in 3:11 refers to a tradition that he was a Rephaite (cf. 2:10) and that his bedstead or "sarcophagus of basalt" (*ʿereś barzel*) was on display at Rabbah, the Ammonite capital. Many sarcophagi have been recovered in Bashan and may (1) favor this translation of the phrase and (2) support a historical basis for this tradition.[160] Millard has presented a cogent argument for considering the bed as a piece of furniture, a decorated, gilded bed with iron, based on its purported Late Bronze Age origin, a time when iron was scarce and therefore highly valued.[161]

Argob (3:4). This refers to a confederation of cities within the larger Bashan area or to a region to the east of the Jordan. In 3:13 it is described as bounded by the Maacathites and Geshurites to the northeast and east respectively. A small Geshurite kingdom lay due east of the Sea of Kinnereth (see 3:12–17). Later Argob is included in the sixth Solomonic administrative district (1 Kings 4:19) and comprised the fertile land north of the Yarmuk River.[162]

All these cities were fortified (3:5). Fortified cities were a feature of the culture of Mesopotamia, Aram/Syria, Palestine, and Egypt across the centuries

and millennia in the ancient Near East. See sidebar on “Ancient Fortified Cities.”

Ancient Fortified Cities

Troy, in Anatolia, still witnesses to the massive fortifications produced there.[A-28] The multiplication of cities in ancient Mesopotamia created competition between them, and they became heavily fortified for protection and security purposes as early as 2800 B.C. Palaces housed the political and military machinery of the cities. Here too walls, gates, and moats encircled the cities.[A-29] Arsenals were located near city walls. Siege and warfare were part of life in ancient Mesopotamia.

In the Levant military fortifications developed rapidly (Megiddo, Jericho, Taanach, Arad, Ai) and walls, buttresses, bastions, glacis, gates, and towers proliferated. The same is true for Egypt, although archaeological remains are fewer. In the early and middle second millennium, powerful fortified cities appeared in Syria and Palestine. Moats were often a part of Middle Bronze Age fortifications (ca. 1800–1550 B.C.).[A-30] They appear in pictures and are mentioned in texts of the Late Bronze Age/Iron Age II.[A-31] Ramparts were constructed on one or both sides of massive walls (or no wall!) to hinder an attacking enemy, although scholars interpret the function of ramparts differently.[A-32] City gates were constructed to serve as a vital part of these fortified cities.[A-33]

In the Late Bronze Age fortified cities continued, but a dramatic reduction of them occurred because of Egypt’s oppressive policies at the end of the Middle Bronze Age.[A-34] Egyptian records mention these fortified sites encountered in Palestine. In the Iron Age (1200–800 B.C.) the Philistine cities of Ekron, Ashkelon, and even Ashdod featured huge city gates and massive walls.[A-35] These urban features of Palestine, much abated, continued into the Iron Age.[A-36] The presence of these cities and towns struck fear into the Israelites. As noted above, recent archaeological and demographic/social studies have indicted that there was a

decided depletion of fortified cities, centers of concentrated power, in the Late Bronze Age that controlled large rural areas as well.[A-37] Walls were only one possible component used to fortify a city (e.g., Jericho); powerful cities without walls existed. Thus, Israel faced other threats of fortified cities as they entered the land in the Late Bronze Age.[A-38]



Iron Age fort at Arad showing intimidating walls
Kim Walton

Arnon Gorge as far as Mount Hermon (3:8). Mount Hermon (Jebal ash-Shaykh), the highest peak (9,200 ft.) on the Anti-Lebanon Range, sat at the northern extent of Israel's conquests. The discovery of numerous temples around and on it reveals its sacred character for the inhabitants of the area.[163] The sources of the Jordan originate in its western slopes. The Sidonian name Sorion was used by the scribes of Ugarit[164] and is found in Egyptian texts[165] of the eighteenth century. Shalmaneser II (858–24 B.C.) called Mount Hermon "Senir" when he encountered Hazael of Damascus in battle.[166] Mursilis II, a Hittite king, refers to it as *Sariyana*,[167] and it is mentioned in Old Babylonian fragments of the Gilgamesh Epic.[168]



Mount Hermon

Bible Scene Multimedia/Maurice Thompson

It is still in Rabah (3:11). Huge objects such as this bedstead (sarcophagus) and the giant sword of Goliath were kept as a memorial that recalled these ancient giants (1 Sam. 21:9), along with the victory the Lord gave Israel over them.

The land that we took over at that time (3:12). A number of cities are noted here (cf. Num. 32; Josh. 12:1–6; 13:8–32). Relatively recent archaeological surveys have increased our knowledge of these areas. In general Late Bronze II–Iron IA levels of occupation are present.[169] See previous references for most of these sites and features of Transjordanian territory allotted to Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh.

Geshurites inhabited a tiny kingdom of Aramaeans north-northeast of the Sea of Kinnereth (Galilee). Mazar cites probable references to Geshur in the Amarna letters.[170] Gilead was at their southern border; Bashan was on their eastern boundary, and Mount Hermon was to the north of them (Josh. 13:11). Their relationship to Israel was ambivalent. Some of their cities were taken by Manasseh, but later recovered (1 Chron. 2:22–33). David took a Geshurite wife, Maacah, from whom Absalom was born.[171] The Maacathites were a small Aramaean kingdom south of Mount Hermon whose land went to the half-tribe of

Manasseh (Josh. 12:5; 13:11). They lived north of the Geshurites, northeast of the Sea of Kinnereth, west of the Jordan Rift Valley. Mount Hermon was far to the north.

Both of these peoples and territories lay within the high plateau area of Bashan. Tadmor now rejects a possible mention of Abel Beth-Maacah in the annals of Tiglath-pileser III as unsustainable. Abel-shittim is suggested instead.[172] Egyptian execration texts refer to Maacah.[173] Israel did not conquer it. They had a checkered relationship with King David, but eventually became his vassals (2 Sam. 10:6; 1 Chron. 19:7).

Its western border was the Jordan in the Arabah (3:17). The Kinnereth and the Sea of the Arabah refer to the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea (Salt Sea) respectively. Kinnereth indicates the shape of a lyre, a musical instrument; the lake resembles the instrument. It is located in the Jordan Rift Valley. Today it is thirteen miles long by seven miles wide. It lies about 700 feet below sea level and is 160 feet deep on average; it is rich in various kinds of fish and other products. It was a northern boundary for Israelite territory in its early stages of settlement. The ancient Jewish writer Josephus gives a description of the lake and refers to it by several different names.[174]

The LORD your God has given you this land to take possession of it (3:18). This phrase refers to God's giving of the land to Israel, but it also describes his parceling out of land to the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites. In the ancient Near East a nation's god/gods were the ones who gave the land to its inhabitants. From the Moabite point of view Chemosh, god of Moab, gave the land of Moab back to the Moabites after Israel, under Yahweh, had captured it.[175]

Pisgah (3:27). Pisgah is a peak in a mountain in a range (Abarim) of several mountains formed out of the high tableland of Transjordan that also included Mount Nebo. If Pisgah, in fact, refers to a peak named Ras es-Siaghah today, it is located slightly northwest of Mount Nebo.[176] Both peaks are located on Jebel/Shayhan.[177] But its identity is not certain. Other scholars consider Pisgah to be the summit of Mount Nebo or even the same mountain.[178] Pisgah always occurs in the Hebrew text with the definite article, indicating that it was well known. Balaam tried to offer sacrifices and curse Israel from this peak (Num. 23:14). Pisgah, if correctly located, is 2,329 feet high; Nebo is over four hundred feet higher at 2,740 feet.[179]



Pisgah is a peak in the Abarim range to the northwest of Nebo. As this picture looks northwest from Nebo, Pisgah, about 400 feet lower in elevation, is near the center left.

Todd Bolen/www.BiblePlaces.com

Beth Peor (3:29). Beth Peor (meaning “house of Peor”) was located almost due east of the northern tip of the Dead Sea, in or next to the plains of Moab, southwest of Heshbon in Transjordan.[180] Modern Khirbet (city) el-Meḥaṭṭa is its probable site, although some prefer Khirbet ʿAyunmusa,[181] located about a mile north of Mount Nebo. Decades ago Vernes presented a case for the recognition of Beth Peor as a Moabite sanctuary, a position that is still firm.[182] The name “Peor” was the name of a mountain in northwest Moab and served as a short name of the god Baal Peor.

Introduction to the Stipulations (4:1–49)

Hear now, O Israel, the decrees and laws I am about to teach you (4:1). This call to Israel introduces the stipulations of the Sinai covenant as renewed in Deuteronomy.[183] Features of ancient Near Eastern treaties are clearly discernible in this chapter.[184] Israel's laws shared in both the literary tradition of the laws, treaties, and covenants in the ancient Near East and, to a lesser but important extent, in its content and legal presentations.[185] Westbrook notes, however, that the biblical law differs chiefly from cuneiform law in its firm presentation of a "voice of dissent." It is not a mere rubber stamp of the establishment.[186]

Nine law "codes" have been discovered, some intact and some only in part. In the ancient Near East seven are now identifiable: Ur-Nammu (CU), Lipit Ishtar (CL), Eshnunna (CE), Hammurabi (CH), Assyrian Laws (AL), Hittite Laws (HL), and Neo-Babylonian Laws (NBL). Two "codes" are found in the Bible: Exodus (21:1–22:16) and Deuteronomy (chs. 12–26). Deuteronomy 4 serves as the introduction to the covenantal stipulations (ch. 5=basic; chs. 6–11, 12–26=specific), following the pattern of Hittite treaties from 1400–1200 B.C.[187]

The decrees and laws I am about to teach you (4:1). The basic stipulations in the Sinai Covenant, as it forms the framework for Deuteronomy, are found in chapter 4 and fit into the ancient Near Eastern pattern of treaties between 1400–1200 B.C. This chapter introduces basic stipulations and accompanying exhortations.[188] While the form of the covenant between Israel and their God has many ancient Near Eastern analogues, the enactment of a covenant between a god and that god's people featuring divinely imparted laws in even subsequent promulgations and revisions has not, so far, been evidenced in detail. The extent and depth to which covenant, history, and law are combined is not matched in the ancient Near Eastern materials.[189]

Take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving to you (4:1). "The God of your fathers" is a key Old Testament concept within Israel's worldview (cf. Ex. 3:13–16; Deut. 1:11, 21). Such terminology has turned up in the Mari documents.[190] Kings of the cities of Aleppo and Qatna use the phrase. On the familial level this kind of god was inherited/passed on from father to sons, sons to grandsons, and, interestingly, the god named on a family seal served to identify the family rather than an individual person. The father's seal passed on in the family bore the name of the father's god. "The god mentioned in the father's seal was also his son's, not because the son had decided it that way, but by virtue of his membership (and now leadership) of the family."[191]

Family gods tended to stay in the family (e.g., Adad). This practice is traceable back to 2500 B.C.[192] The family god was not exclusive to the particular family, for "family god" does not occur in the terminology. These gods were effective beyond the boundaries of the family, as was Israel's God, the God of the fathers.[193]

Do not add … do not subtract (4:2). This "canonical formula" (cf. 13:1–3) is common to ancient Near Eastern treaty literature. It is found essentially in Egyptian scribal guidelines and in Assyria (Esarhaddon) as warnings against changing any part of a covenant/treaty.[194] Hammurabi included this charge in his epilogue[195] and called down curses on anyone who would change his laws. The same language obtains in the prologue/epilogue of the Lipit-Ishtar law code.[196]

Baal Peor (4:3). Baal Peor was, in addition to a geographical location, a major deity of Moab, Ammon, and Midian.[197] Israel played the (religious) harlot at Baal Peor (Num. 25:1–5) while camped at Shittim. "Baal" as used here refers to a local manifestation of the Canaanite god or gods, Baal, a fertility/weather god.[198]

I have taught you decrees and laws … so that you may follow them (4:5). The creation and collection of law(s) in the ancient Near East was, as here, considered proof of wisdom in those law codes and clearly stated as such. Hammurabi asserted that his laws would be an object of splendor to the wise man, and he threatened those who did not heed them with curses and with dispersion.[199] The various laws of the different nations reflected their character and culture in some basic national worldviews (e.g., polytheism vs. monotheism).[200] Underlying axioms to some extent were imbedded and emphasized in the laws.[201]

You stood before the LORD your God at Horeb (4:10). Horeb refers to Sinai once in Deuteronomy (1:6), but elsewhere it refers to a desert region called Horeb.[202] In 33:2 only Sinai is used.[203] Horeb/Sinai is most likely located in southern Sinai. Some argue for other locations, such as Midian, Mount Bisher, northwest Saudi Arabia, and Edom.[204] Most scholars prefer a southern location for Sinai at Jebel Musa, Jebel Serbal, or Ras Safsafah.[205]



Jebel Musa, traditional Mount Sinai

Z. Radovan/www.BibleLandPictures.com

He declared to you his covenant … and then wrote them on two tablets (4:13). Israel's distinctiveness was their God and the acts and words he established with only them. He assigned other beings to guide the other nations (see 4:19–20; 32:8–9). While the external form of the Lord's covenant with Israel reflects ancient Near Eastern covenant/treaty traditions, there is a flavor, a spirit, a monotheistic view, and a unique God involved. How God and his people patterned and emphasized the ideas of God/people, covenant/law/history, is the key to Israel's unique covenant and worldview with its two foundational tablets of ten laws (words).[206]

Ancient Near Eastern Treaties and Covenants

Covenantal thinking and documents constituted a vital component of ancient Near Eastern culture and functioned in manifold ways. The Bronze Age (3500–1200 B.C.) produced many treaties. The treaty between Hattusilis/Ramesses II (ca. 1280 B.C.) displays a treaty form and model that fits the treaty form at Sinai (Ex. 19–24) and

its various renewals in Deuteronomy (chs. 1–28) and Joshua (chs. 24). Covenants with similar treaty components stem from even earlier times, such as Early Bronze (3500–2300 B.C.) at Byblos. Late Bronze Age (1550–1200 B.C.) examples are abundant. The key features of these treaties were:

1. Title
2. Historical prologue
3. Stipulations
4. Provision for the deposition and public reading of the treaty text
5. List of witnesses to the treaty
6. Listing of blessings and curses.[A-39]

Feature 2 is notably missing in the late Neo-Assyrian treaties of the seventh century B.C., as well as the blessings of feature 6.

The Iron Age (1200–ca. 539 B.C.) documents display a covenantal structure and content different from those of the Late Bronze Age. Iron Age loyalty oaths/treaties varied in style and content. Usually they included:

1. Preamble
2. Identification of the Assyrian ruler(s)
3. Invocation of deities
4. Definition of responsibilities of a vassal (which, if not observed, brought curses)
5. Curses brought on an unfaithful vassal[A-40]

It is evident that the cultural, historical, and literary connections of the covenant at Sinai, as reiterated in Deuteronomy, are closely connected with the Late Bronze covenants. Those from the Iron Age and later lack either a preamble or blessings, as well as some technical vocabulary found in earlier documents. The covenant concept in Israel was evidently early.[A-41] Covenantal ideas were already hundreds of years old and common in the ancient Near East

when Israel's God established his covenant.[A-42]

K. A. Kitchen has cogently demonstrated the connection between Israel's Sinai covenant and Hittite treaties/covenants.[A-43] The Hittite body of treaties and the Sinai covenant are probably to be placed within the years 1400–1200 B.C. and nowhere else, according to Kitchen. At the very least this parallel establishes the fact that the covenantal idea and actual covenants similar in form to the Sinai covenant were in the ancient Near East by the time of Moses.[A-44] Within the broader issue of historiography, it is clear that this covenant form allowed and encouraged a story-type of historiography (preamble, etc.) in Hittite documents[A-45] as it also did when used on a much more expanded and developed way by the author-editor of Deuteronomy.



Treaty between Ramesses II and the Hittites from the battle of Qadesh engraved on temple wall at Karnak

Todd Bolen/www.BiblePlaces.com

No form (4:15). The Hebrew word translated “form” (*t^{e}mûnâ*) is found in a Phoenician text describing Astarte, a female goddess,[207] represented by an image resembling a man/woman, a practice forbidden in Israel. The Egyptian pantheon was symbolically filled with animal representations for all the key gods. The dung-beetle, cow (Hathor), baboon, falcon, and more were used to represent Egypt’s gods.[208]

Beyond the world of Israel, I. Cornelius has noted the many faces of the gods, the varied representations of the divinity.[209] Egypt, Amarna, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and Syria-Palestine each had their way of depicting the gods. The puzzling and shocking presentation of Egyptian gods is informative as well as surreal. Hornung asserts—probably correctly—that the presentation of a god(s) with various human and/or animal features at one time gives “allusions to essential parts of the nature and function of deities.”[210] Hence, the goddess Hathor may be depicted with human and bovine features, for she possessed the tenderness of motherly care and the essence of a human person. As partially snake, she was sly, wise, and mysterious; bearing horns she reflected strength; and as a lion she portrayed power. It seems that while these mixed features were suggestive of the deity, still the true form of the deity remained hidden.[211]

Out of the fire (4:15). Yahweh speaks to Israel “out of the fire” eight times in Deuteronomy.[212] In the ancient Near East, at Ugarit, the messengers for the god Yam (sea) were pictured as two flames of fire like burnished swords.[213] In the Babylonian Creation Epic, the god Ea takes the halo or bright *melammu* (“divine fire”) of the god Apsu and encloses himself with it. At Ugarit *pd* was Baal’s garment, signifying divine brilliance, and was essential to his royalty and kingship. Yam sought to remove it in order to dethrone Baal.[214] The gods gave protective rays of light (*melammu*) to Humbaba, enemy of Gilgamesh.[215] Both Marduk and Humbaba were divested at some point of their rays or mantles and became weak.[216] The *melammu* was not separate from the gods but emanated from them as a part of their awesome presence.



Animal-headed judges of the underworld from tomb painting of Queen Nefertari

Werner Forman Archive/E. Strouhal

The sun, the moon and the stars (4:19). These heavenly bodies were considered gods all across the ancient Near East. See sidebar on "Astrology in the Ancient Near East."

Astrology in the Ancient Near East

Re was the sun god in Egypt, Shamash was the sun god in Mesopotamia, while Sin was the moon god and Ishtar a "star goddess" associated with Venus.[A-46] The god Sin was dominant in the city of Ur from which Abraham came.[A-47] The text does not reveal exactly why Yahweh apportioned these being/bodies to the nations (see 32:8). Herein lies a dimension of Israel's distinctiveness, at least partially.[A-48]

Astrology, the recognition of celestial deities in the ancient Near East, became a major stumbling block to Israel. This worldview that considered the heavenly bodies as "divine" was ultimately intertwined with "science" in, for example, Mesopotamia.[A-49] "Astronomers" and "astrologers" were one and the same. In Mesopotamia the *tupsharru* served as the chief official over divination; his position was paralleled in Sumer. The usual meaning of *tupsharru* was

"scribe, secretary."[A-50] In the Assyrian period mantics uttered or interpreted omens and were a significant part of the king's policies.[A-51] A manual or source book entitled *Enuma Anu Enlil* ("When the god(s) Anu and Enlil") recorded close tracings of the sun, moon, planets, fixed stars, and even weather patterns or earthquakes.[A-52]

Prognostications of the future based on celestial observations ran throughout Babylonian history. The Old Babylonian, Kassite, New/Late Babylonian, and Neo-Assyrian periods witnessed this activity that became more and more refined and technical.[A-53] A preamble to one of Esarhaddon's treaties (ca. 672 B.C.) lists six planets before a long list of ancient deities. Evidently these planets could help bring blessings or curses on those who would transgress the treaty.[A-54] This danger lurked in Israel, where Yahweh was never to be considered in any way a part of the creation (cf. Job 31:26–28), nor were his people to use astrology to gain guidance from their God.[A-55] The Lord's written and oral guidance was sufficient.



Boundary stone with astral symbols representing Babylonian deities

Z. Radovan/www.BibleLandPictures.com

The iron-smelting furnace, out of Egypt (4:20). Metallic ores were smelted during the Bronze and Iron Ages. Smelting furnaces have been found at Beth Shemesh, Tell Quasileh, Gaza, Tell Jemmeh, and Megiddo across varying eras. The word used here (*kûr*) refers to a furnace, pot, or crucible for smelting metals, but Weinfeld discusses it as if it meant "iron blast furnace." Crucibles could be placed in an oven (*tānnûr*, large pottery kiln), which is what is probably in mind here.[217] Copper smelting in crucibles or furnaces was performed from the time of the fourth millennium B.C. Iron ore was present on the surface of the ground in

stones (8:9), while copper was mined from deep in the ground.[218]



Bronze workshop in Tell Qasile

Kim Walton, courtesy of the Eretz Israel Museum

Consuming fire (4:24). God as a consuming fire (cf. Ex. 24:17) indicates his propensity to consume that which is dross or unholy in his presence or to consume his enemies, as the phrase “like a fire consuming” is used in a ninth-century Phoenician text (where the beard and hand of the enemy was burned).[219] Those who break God’s laws are rebels. God is a covenant prosecutor, a function of ancient Near Eastern gods. They reigned down fire on the earth just as Yahweh had at Sodom and Gomorrah.

Inanna destroyed covenant breakers during the time of Sargon of Akkad (2329–2274 B.C.). Foreign rebels were subdued by thunderbolts from a Hittite god or goddess, such as the sun goddess of Arina in the time of Mursilis II (ca. 1325 B.C.). In Akkadian texts Assur sends biting flames, and a burning flame comes from Enlil.[220] The Mesopotamian god Nergal, a warrior god and god of plagues, carried a fiery-like glance that consumed enemies in battle.[221] Ishkur, a storm god in Mesopotamia, radiated lightning as a weapon. A destroying fire

accompanied the warrior king Thutmose III.[222]

Jealous God (4:24). This attribute of God with respect to his people is unique to Israel's God in the ancient Near East,[223] while it seems to contrast with the Lord as merciful and compassionate (4:31). Yahweh was a jealous or impassioned God (*ʾēl qannāʾ*) for the marital relationship he formed with his own people at Sinai,[224] an exclusive relationship that excluded other gods.[225] At Sinai the Lord's people were married to him, for the covenantal ceremonies have features of a marriage celebration.[226] Israel was to walk after the Lord, their God and husband; the goal of the covenant was fidelity. The people were to "to follow passionately"[227] after their God. But even a betrayed husband and covenantal partner could be reconciled. Both Hittite and Assyrian kings showed mercy to offending vassals.[228]

I call heaven and earth as witnesses (4:26). The Sumerian Noah sees a "swearing of oaths by heaven and earth" in the Eridu Genesis text (1600 B.C.).[229] Some Akkadian political decrees from Ugarit called the heavens and earth as gods to be witnesses to treaties.[230] The Aramaic Sefire treaty (ca. 900 B.C.) employed this phraseology in the presence of both political deities and "Heaven and Earth the (Abysmal) Springs and Sources and Day and Night."[231] The invocation of the heavens and earth as witnesses was an ancient custom in covenants from Sefire and in Hittite treaties.[232] The heavens and earth are called as witnesses against covenant offenders, not to praise God as creator. This is a common feature paralleled in ancient Near Eastern treaties and covenants.[233]

The LORD will scatter you among the peoples (4:27). Exile and dispersion was a reality for many peoples in the ancient Near East long before this assertion in Deuteronomy. This way of dealing with whole peoples occurred at Mari (1800/1700 B.C.), among the Hittites (16th and 14th centuries), and in Egypt (15th, 13th, and 12th centuries). Much more could be added. Exile and dispersion were realities of the ancient Near East.[234]

There you will worship man-made gods of wood and stone (4:28). This bold statement is reinforced years later by the prophets. Saggs summarizes the essential truth of this assertion in Babylonian religion.[235] The "divine" image itself was cut and carved from a piece of wood, decorated with precious stones, or made from metals. At the time of a ceremony called Opening the Mouth,[236] the divinity actually began to dwell in the statue. The ceremony took two days and was performed alongside a river bank. The human workers asserted that not they, but the craft-god had made the idol. The wood became a special bright wood, which was connected to both the underworld and the heavens. Later Esarhaddon, a Neo-Assyrian king, believed that the craftsmen who made the images were

themselves divinely chosen. Diviners were employed to choose the lucky workers.

Gods could abandon their idols or be humbled by injuries sustained by the statues. The idols could become famished without food. Supposedly these idols in certain ceremonies or festivals could dine on beer, honey, fruit, and meat served up on golden platters. Neither Moses nor the later prophets would have any of this foolishness (Isa. 44:10–20).[237]

For the LORD your God is a merciful God (4:31). From hoary antiquity the concept of a compassionate/merciful god was present in the ancient Near East. This assertion is made about the god El, "the gracious, the merciful," at Ugarit.[238] Even within the brutal Assyrian kingdom favor and grace were not unknown. The great king Assurbanipal, representing his great Assyrian god Assur, claimed to have extended grace and favor toward some of his rebellious vassals at Qedar and at other locations.[239] In these texts the attitude of the king is a reflection of the god as well. In this case the Assyrian god would be the great god Assur, Mullissu, and Nabu, to whom Assurbanipal had prayed passionately for mercy.[240]

Has anything so great as this ever happened, or has anything like it ever been heard of? (4:32). Ancient Near Eastern gods intervened in history, in the lives and affairs of their subjects over whom they ruled.[241] Egypt touted the antiquity of her nation, her ancient past, and her famous heroes.[242] "From the day it was founded" is probably an Egyptianism, as Couroyer has argued.[243]

However, in at least several ways, the Lord's actions toward Israel seem unparalleled in the ancient Near East. (1) Yahweh took his people out *from another nation* (v. 34); (2) the *means* he used to accomplish this was unparalleled in variety, quality, intensity, and purpose; (3) the rescue/taking of a people was only one component in a long-term plan stretching over centuries, even millennia.[244] The "migrations" of the Sea Peoples, while acts of God, did not bring about the results of the exodus of Israel.[245] The purpose of God's actions was made clear by his word/act in the past, present, and future. History was covenantally driven (teleology) in Israel, and the ultimate goal was Yahweh enthroned among his own people.

Then Moses set aside three cities east of the Jordan (4:41). "Bezer" may refer to modern el-ʾAmad, northeast of Medeba; the name is found in the Mesha Stele (ca. 830 B.C.) as a city of Mesha, king of Moab,[246] who rebuilt it. This may refer to Bezer in the mountains of Bashan or to Bezer (Tell Jabul) east of Medeba.[247] "Ramoth" is modern Tell Ramith between the upper Yarmuk and Jabbok rivers. Others suggest a Ramoth in the Argob region in Bashan. "Golan"

is modern Sahm el-Jolan; it is east of Galilee by about seventeen miles.[248]

Basic Stipulations (5:1–33)

Hear, O Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today (5:1). No concentrated collection of laws from the ancient Near East matches this crystallization of "ten words," the Decalogue.[249] Yet these words and commands are at home in their broader ancient Near Eastern setting,[250] which illuminates their structure and even content.[251] These commands are apodictic in form and state unequivocal prescriptions and proscriptions, but they do not define the penalties for breaking them.[252] Ancient Near Eastern law collections do not feature this type of law, but rather use, like most biblical law, case law (casuistic law).

Covenantal and treaty stipulations featured apodictic law, indicating that these "ten words" of instructions were to function as part of a covenant (see sidebar on "Ancient Near Eastern Treaties and Covenants" at 4:13). Apodictic formulation is also found in the wisdom literature of the ancient Near East, and in Israel divinely given wisdom often centers around the instructions of the Ten Commandments and the larger Torah. Apodictic instruction is used in the Instructions of Shuruppak (2600–1100 B.C.): "Do not steal something; do not kill yourself";[253] in the Instructions of Ur-Ninurta: The god-fearing man "keeps … swearing away from his house";[254] in the Counsels of Wisdom: "May you pay attention to the words of your mother as to the words of your god";[255] and in Egyptian literature: "Do not set your heart on wealth."[256]



Hammurabi’s collection of legal sayings

Z. Radovan/www.BibleLandPictures.com

The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb (5:2). The basic stipulations of Israel’s ancient Sinai Covenant reflect significant aspects of ancient Near Eastern covenants. The eternal validity and ongoing application of its apodictic law is hinted at in other ancient Near Eastern treaties/covenants, though Israel’s covenant was uniquely monotheistic and powerfully futuristically oriented.[257] Esarhaddon’s Assyrian treaty (ca. 680–69 B.C.) included persons who would live in the future: “your sons who will live after this treaty.”[258] Assur, the great Assyrian god, transacted a covenant with some West Semitic peoples, an eternal covenant with them, including the divine sons of El and all of the divine council and with the heavens and earth.[259]

The LORD spoke to you face to face out of the fire (5:4). The ancient Near Eastern king was the immediate source and author of their laws. Hammurabi, commissioned by the god of justice, Shamash, put forth his laws as expressions of his own words. Shamash met “face to face” with Hammurabi on the eight-

feet-high stele on which a prologue, 282 laws, and an epilogue were inscribed. The laws of Lipit-Ishtar were his own.[260] The laws express cosmic order that lies in a matrix behind or beyond the gods, but the king, at the top of the social pyramid,[261] promulgates laws to prosper the people, establish justice, and stabilize his government.[262] But in Israel the Lord is the origin and author of the laws, their transcendent source.

I am the LORD your God … out of the land of slavery (5:6). This assertion identifies Yahweh as the liberator of Israel, the Great King and Creator, of this covenant. It parallels the preambles found in many ancient Near Eastern covenants and treaties, especially those involving the Hittites and their vassals (ca. 1400–1200 B.C.). The Great King Sumilumiuma says in his preamble that he has "taken you, Aziru, as my subject" (cf. v. 9).[263]

You shall have no other gods before me (5:7). The central requirement of the covenant is total allegiance, unfeigned covenant love, to Yahweh alone. The exclusivity of Yahweh is vaguely paralleled in other ancient Near Eastern treaty texts, but in the form of an allegiance of the human vassal to his human suzerain and his many gods. Yahweh alone is God; he does not function in or with a community of gods, as the gods of the other nations did.[264] Idols were hardly separate from their gods in the ancient Near East,[265] and idols in Israel became a problem because a "god" was somehow tied to his idol (see comment on 4:28).



Procession of Hittite gods mounted on their emblem animals

Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY, courtesy of Vorderasiatisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany

You shall not make for yourself (5:8–10). It follows that no images are to be used to represent or mediate the Lord.[266] The power of art forms to carry religious messages and to communicate ideology, class status, and so on was utilized abundantly in the ancient Near East.[267] But Yahweh's form was never revealed to Israel. An Egyptian papyrus at Thebes from the close of the reign of Ramesses II asserts that Amun's real appearance was unknown even to the other gods, for Amun (meaning "hidden") hid himself from them.[268] Yet the sun was an emanation of Amun, and its worship flourished in Egypt.[269]

Aniconism in the Ancient Near East

Deuteronomy 5:8–10 is central to biblical theology.[A-56] From the beginning aniconism (which means "without idols"; the worship of gods is done via symbols rather than through icons") was a feature of Israel's religion at Sinai, a position that resonates with recent studies that argue that standing

stones (*maṣṣēbôt*) with aniconic functions originated in the Negev and deserts of Sinai.[A-57] This was a move toward monotheism and God as Spirit.



Horned crown regularly used to represent the god Anu

Rama/Wikimedia Commons, courtesy of the Louvre

In a similar vein this concept is found in certain eras and in certain ways in other nations. In Egypt an experiment with monotheism, a "strict practical monotheism," was recognized by some persons under Akhenaten (ca. 1380 B.C.) with respect to the deity Aten, and a relative aniconism with respect to Amun.[A-58] Some scholars hold that this universalistic flavor and trend toward monotheism was in the air before Akhenaten and the Amarna Revolution in Egypt.[A-59]

Aniconic elements may also be found in the Kassite era of Mesopotamia and perhaps in the cult of Assur in Assyria. In Syria (Bronze Age) and Anatolia aniconic features of religious cults are found. But standing stones (*maṣṣēbôt*) that represented deities are featured in this era, thought these standing stones are probably de facto aniconic themselves.[A-60]

No programmatic, theologically reasoned literary source repudiating iconism or affirming aniconism in a systematic way has been found or deciphered. This law sets off Israel

firmly from her ancient Near Eastern neighbors.[A-61] The self-presentation of the Lord (v. 9) as found here is common to royal inscriptions in the ancient Near East: "I am Yawmelk, king of Byblos," or "I am Kulamuwa, son of Ḥayya."[A-62] So also, Mesha king of Moab introduces himself: "I am (ʿ*nk*) Mesha the son of … the king of Moab."



Seal depicts a bearheaded priest before divine symbols of the goddess Ishtar (star) and the god Sin (moon crescent) set on altars.

Werner Forman Archive/The British Museum

Sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generations (5:9). The third and fourth generations of a family covers the generations in a family that a person normally sees during their lifetime. It was also recognized in the ancient Near East (cf. Job 42:16). In a seventh-century inscription from Nerab, a priest of Sahr in Nerab had inscribed on his sepulcher that he had lived long enough to see "children of the fourth generation."[270] The mother of Babylonian king Nabonidus, in a sixth-century text, relates that she either lived for 104 years or saw her descendants to the fourth generation.[271] The anger of kings and gods to effect family punishment toward those who sin and threaten national and familial solidarity is well illustrated by Hittite literature. These ancient Near Eastern texts indicate that the biblical writer is stressing the duration of God's anger here.

During the reign of the Hittite king Mursilis II (1339–1306 B.C.) a devastating plague ravaged his land.[272] The king believed that his father Suppiluliumas had "sinned" against the word of a storm god, breaking covenant and angering the

storm god. The plague rendered divine retribution for that fault. Mursilis II admits *his own* guilt as a result of his father's failures, praying that the pestilence will cease: "It is only too true, however, that the father's sin falls upon the son. So my father's sin has fallen upon me." In so acting Mursilis both confesses his father's sins and his *own* sin even though he had "not sinned in any respect."[273]

Showing love to a thousand generations (5:10). A thousand generations is metaphorical in this assertion, and the reality of the unlimited extent and degree of God's love is asserted and celebrated. In other ancient Near Eastern nations love was also paramount—both the love of the gods for humans, their own creation, and the love of persons toward their gods, their creators and providers. The gods (e.g., Egyptian gods such as Ptah, Amun, Osiris, Anat) loved the ones who loved them.[274] The god Ptah loves his image (mankind), his flock.[275] The worshipers of the god(s) displayed their love by devotion, technical performance in the cult, trust, feasts, sacrifice, and obedience; the gods reciprocated by providing guidance, protection, security, and love.[276]

You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God (5:11). The act of perjury presented in the loyalty oaths of Neo-Assyrian contracts echoes this command.[277] Based on strong ancient Near Eastern texts that illuminate this command, this prohibition is aimed at preventing any false or frivolous use of the Lord's name. The name of the deity expressed the essence of the god.[278] Huffmon presents illustrations from ancient materials. Persons guilty of this offense confess: "I frivolously [*galliṣ*] uttered a solemn oath by you(r name)," "one who uttered the hallowed name of his personal god frivolously."

Oaths taken in the name of a god and then broken were a false use of the "name." To swear by a god's name and then break it was "worthy of death."[279] The name of Re, the sun god, was used to effect the magical expulsion of poison from a person bitten by a scorpion or snake.[280] But the Lord's name was not to be spoken to bring life to the lifeless.

Observe the Sabbath day (5:12). Israel's law of the Sabbath remains unparalleled in the ancient Near East.[281] No day has yet turned up that functions as Israel's holy Sabbath, not even the Neo-Babylonian *ṣitpu* offering on day 7, 14, 21, and 28 of the month—days tied to phases of the moon. As Hallo asserts, the sabbatical idea permeated biblical legislation.[282]

Israel's method of counting time also goes without ancient Near Eastern parallels or foundations. Supposed roots or antecedents have been put forth referring to Gudea's seven-day dedication festival for his temple at Lagash or to a seven-day ritual at Larsa. Mesopotamia arranged its work time by the month,

not the week.[283] Suggestions have been put forth for grounding the biblical week in Assyrian sources, but this has proven to be a false analogy.[284]

The seven-day cycles at Ugarit were literary conventions, and currently evidence for a seven-day week as a foundation stone for the biblical week is not convincing; Israel's Sabbath is unique.[285] The Lord commanded Israel to observe this day, for they had been slaves in Egypt, to observe it as a break in the daily work schedule (Ex. 16), and to observe it as an imitation of the creation process (20:11).[286]



Middle Babylonian almanac listing 12 months of the calendar along with favorable days on which one can expect successful outcomes

The Schøyen Collection MS 2781, Oslo and London

Honor your father and your mother (5:16). Honor and hospitality were part of the fabric of ancient Near Eastern culture. Gods honored gods, minor deities honored the higher deities,[287] and children were to honor parents.[288] According to the Counsel of the Wise, children were to honor their mother and father on a par with their attitude toward their gods.[289] Sons were to care for and treat their parents humanely, not only in Israel but also throughout the various ancient Near Eastern cultures. At Emar sons were to support their parents in old age as well as honor them. Otherwise, their parents could disinherit them.[290]

One text from Alalakh orders a son to support his father as long as he lives.[291] In the era of the New Kingdom in Egypt a son could be disinherited for filial neglect.[292] In the Old Babylonian period a son who struck his father had his hand cut off,[293] while in the Old Assyrian period children had to care for their parents in their old age, including their burial.[294] Tablets at Nuzi instructed the children to mourn the parents.[295]

In Scripture this is the first commandment with a promise: “so that you may live long” (cf. 5:33; 11:9; 17:20; 22:7). This reward was often connected to faithful service to a god or gods. Agbar, an Assyrian priest of the god Sin, asserts from his grave that because he did righteousness in life, demonstrating faithful service to Sakar, his god had prolonged his life. He had lived to see the fourth generation of his children.[296] In a vassal treaty of Esarhaddon (680–669 B.C.), old age was to be withheld from a covenant breaker.[297]

In Israel ancestor worship or cults were prohibited, but in most areas of the ancient Near East an honorable son, usually the oldest son, was to present regular offerings to the ancestors, especially his own father.[298] After the death of a father, the oldest son became the head of the family. Daughters normally did not attain this position.[299]



Woman mourning by husband’s mummy

Mary Evans Picture Library

You shall not commit adultery (5:18). In Israel the one who committed

adultery was considered to be sinning against the Lord (Num. 15:30).[300] Hence, adultery was considered a crime punishable by death because the divine will had been flaunted.[301] In the ancient Near East adultery was considered a grave offense, "a great sin," against the husband, the gods, and the order of society.[302] Similar responses were used in many places to deal with this problem.[303] Ancient Near Eastern law permitted a pardon for the adulterer/adulteress in some cases.[304]

A married woman who had sexual relations with another man was an adulteress; for the husband, this did not normally follow. He was perhaps punishable only if the illicit affair was with a married woman. There were exceptions to these basic conditions.[305] The Babylonians, Assyrians, and Hittites permitted the husband to exact punishment or to give clemency to his wife. Pardon for the wife meant pardon for the man as well. This great sin angered the gods. Adultery was an "abomination" to Marduk in Babylon and considered a breach of trust, abandonment, and a failure of reciprocation.[306] In Hittite law the husband could kill his wife and paramour (if caught in the act) and go free. In Assyrian laws (MAL) the husband could effect castration, disfigurement, or death on the guilty parties.[307] The king as the giver of law in the ancient Near East could pardon persons in capital cases. Not so in Israel.[308]

You shall not steal (5:19). This prohibition against stealing was directed against a wide variety of thefts in the ancient Near East, including kidnapping (cf. Gen. 37:22–28; Deut. 22:1–4; 24:7). Common "stealing" of property or robbery is in view also and includes theft from sanctuary, state, an ordinary citizen, or a business. In the Code of Hammurabi, death is most often prescribed (e.g., Laws 6–7, 9–10, 22, 25).[309] This could be avoided in some cases (Law 6) if the thief had the means to do so. In other cases a fine was permitted (Laws 25–26, 265).[310]

The Middle Assyrian Laws (ca. 1100–400 B.C.) on theft (e.g., Laws 3–6) call for a variety of punishments depending on the parties involved. Punishments included death, waiver of punishment, or horrible disfigurements.[311] Hittite laws treat a variety of thefts of animals and related actions.[312] Ordinary theft called for restitution as did most other types of theft (fraudulently keeping something, finder's keeper deception).[313] Key laws on theft and stealing are discussed in the Lipit-Ishtar Code (Law 9) and the Laws of Eshnunna (Laws 12–13).[314]



Spell 125 from the Egyptian Book of the Dead contains a long list of crimes and misdeeds that the individual claims have not been committed. Some coincide with prohibitions in the Ten Commandments.
Mary Evans Picture Library

You shall not give false testimony (5:20). Bearing false witness was a serious breach of covenant faith in Israel. It was a basic fault in the rest of the ancient Near East as well. In a Sumerian proverb failing to keep a promise makes a person a liar,[315] and a person who speaks in a case but knows nothing about it is an abomination.[316]

In Mesopotamian laws if false testimony or witness was born and discovered, it was nullified, as in the Lipit-Ishtar Code (Law 17).[317] In Hammurabi's Code (Laws 1–4, 11), out of five laws, four condemn the guilty person to death. Only in a case dealing with grain or money was the guilty person able to pay a penalty instead.[318]

Truth in Egyptian Society

The Egyptian goddess/god Maat represented truth, which was also a deified concept: order. This order was to be sought and maintained by the pharaoh in the divine and human/social realms. Maat nourished even Re, the sun god. In the human realm the goal was harmonious social

cohesion; in the divine realm, since the king was divine, social stability and solidarity of the pharaonic state was the goal. The pharaoh was responsible for the temples and communicated with the gods and goddesses, always seeking harmony—*maʿat*.[A-63]

The triumph of the god Horus was a time when *maat* would prevail on earth, a time of peace and well-being.[A-64] In this sense *maat* was an ultimate goal, a present condition to be realized, not an abstract concept or goal toward which all things were moving. The gods had established truth and justice, and every pharaoh was to maintain or, if necessary, restore *maat*. Hence, a false witness disabled justice.[A-65] Faithfulness and trust was necessary among persons; therefore, false testimony was not an option among a covenant people.[A-66]



Horus and Maat

Werner Forman Archive/The Egyptian Museum, Cairo

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife (5:21). This commandment prohibits an internal motivation or condition that desires (*ḥmd*, stimulated by vision) what a person is prohibited from having—the wife of another man. A different word is used (*ʿwh*, inner need) to prohibit taking of things. The verb *ḥmd* in this context has the connotation of "to appropriate" as well. The phrase

“covet this city” occurs in a Phoenician text.[319] The commandment lies behind previous commands that destroy relationships.

The phrase “his land [field]” is coupled with “house” and is used in legal documents in the ancient Near East, especially at Ugarit.[320] In an Egyptian document recording the negative confessions of a deceased person, the deceased denies that he had been covetous. The fabled wise Egyptian Ptah-Hotep inveighed against covetousness as a deadly vice. In the Ramesside era the covetous person was considered a fool and covetousness a sin. Wealth, a poor man’s possessions, a nobleman’s wealth—none of these were to be coveted.[321]

The now famous Eloquent Peasant of Egypt expected a leader to be free from covetousness, and a covetous person would not enjoy success. One’s own house should fill all of one’s needs.[322] The inwardness of these admonitions is paramount, for the heart was regarded as “the god who dwells in man.”[323] This central concept seems to be absent from Mesopotamian law; there is an emphasis on the act of appropriation, which was condemned.[324] In ancient wisdom literature, “coveting murders” and is an abomination to the gods Ninurta and Enlil.[325]

Two stone tablets (5:22). See comments on 4:13.



Proto-Canaanite inscription shows a form of writing from this period in this region

Z. Radovan/www.BibleLandPictures.com

We have heard his voice from the fire (5:24). See comments on 1:33.

Then tell us whatever the LORD our God tells you (5:27). On the one hand, Moses plays a typical ancient Near Eastern role as a covenant mediator,[326] chosen by a god and/or a people. On the other hand, his role and the Lord’s role are uniquely adapted to the Lord’s covenant with his people.[327] It was customary to seek out the proper sacred officials of the temple or other sacred precincts in

the ancient Near East so that a relevant answer could be given to a concerned inquirer.[328] The will of the deity was revealed in this way. Pharaoh Akhenaten was a mediator of his god's will in a unique sense, one that approaches Moses' position.[329]

Be careful to do what the LORD our God has commanded you (5:32). The people involved in the covenant/treaty processes and ceremonies are to pledge and respond at the conclusion of the covenant or treaty ceremony. Responses are to be from the whole heart in words expressing a treaty commitment and conclusion. In an eighth-century Aramaic treaty made between Bar-gaḥayah, king of KTK, and Matiḥel of Arpad, the words "you do swear" appear; they also appear in vassal treaties of Esarhaddon.[330] One of his treaties with a vassal includes a loyalty oath involving words, lips, and heart.[331] The same can be said of a Hittite text that contains ratification responses concerning Hatti and Hurrians represented by their king Kurtiwaza.[332] Those pledging were to assert in essence, as the Israelites did at Sinai, "we will listen and obey" (5:27).

Detailed Stipulations (6:1–11:32)

Flowing with milk and honey (6:3). This phrase occurs often (e.g., 11:9; 26:9, 15; 27:13; 31:20; cf. Ex. 3:8; Lev. 20:24; Num. 13:27). It is closely paralleled in Ugaritic poetry. “The heavens fat did rain, The wadies flow with honey!”[333] Milk and fat are mentioned as a blessed feature of the world ordered by Enki, who determined Sumer’s destiny.[334] This hyperbolic metaphorical phrase stresses both the richness of Canaan and the special favor God has bestowed on it as the dwelling place for his people.

The LORD is one (6:4). This uniqueness of Yahweh is diametrically opposed to the multiplicity of gods in Canaan. Even the one god Ptah in Egypt could be referred to as “the one god in nineness.”[335] Yahweh is the one and only God, not one god among many.[336]



Nash Papyrus

His special character is safeguarded in this assertion.[337] Ancient Near Eastern scholars have suggested reading this as "Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is 'One'" or perhaps, "Yahweh our God is the Unique."[338] But there is only one unique God by definition. In the ancient Near East there were many gods, which created all kinds of confusion for they often opposed one another. Not Israel's One, Unique God![339] In a Sumerian inscription, Enlil was declared to be king alone (his oneness);[340] likewise, Baal or the god Mot asserted "I am one," but also ruled over other "gods."[341] It appears that one god was supreme and ruled over other divine beings, "gods."

Several scholars in different fields of expertise have recently demonstrated that monotheism in a recognizable form, practical and conceptual, was around at least as early as the fifteenth to fourteenth centuries B.C.[342] In Egypt a hymn to Amun (ca. 1500/1400 B.C.), well before Akhenaten's religious revolution in Egyptian religion (1350–1340), sets forth Amun as "creator" of the other gods.[343] Akhenaten attempted to establish the sun-god Aten as the god, demoting all other gods to nongods.

Baines recognizes the monotheism of Akhenaten in Egypt as perhaps the only case of real monotheism.[344] Propp cogently but cautiously argues a monotheistic presence in the second millennium. He rejects arguments that Israelite monotheism was a product of the postexilic era after 586 B.C.[345] Egyptian religion in general rejected Akhenaten's attempt to deny the reality of a multiplicity of deities and accepted what Assmann calls the Ramesside approach, in which the multiplicity of deities reflects, in fact, various forms and manifestations of the one single transcendent god.[346] Amun was the "apogee of religious thought in ancient Egypt. He was the fashioner of himself who formed his own body, the first creator who was never born, without parallel and who oversees all."[347]



Aten pictured as sun disk with hands reaching Akhenaton and his family

Gerard Ducher/Wikimedia Commons, courtesy of the Cairo Museum

Love the LORD your God with all your heart (6:5). God's command to love him demands a single-minded love, a heart focused and centered on him alone as God. The concept of the heart is central to the theological anthropology of the ancient Near East. In a hymn to Aten, the pharaoh says, "Thou art in *my heart* and there is no other that knows thee."[348] In Egypt the heart was nothing less than "the god who dwells in man." The heart itself dwelt in its shrine.[349] A righteous Egyptian worshiper was said "to hold Amun in his heart."[350]

The Great King, the suzerain, in a suzerain-vassal treaty in the ancient Near East expected his vassal to love him, not merely in a legal way but with fervor and emotional commitment. Correspondence between the great kings of that era is replete with expressions of love toward one another. Kings of Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Hatti, Mitanni, and doubtless others—the "club" of royal brothers—exude mutual brotherhood, loyalty, and love to one another.[351] In Hittite parlance

the vassal and his lord were to love each other as they loved themselves. Love unto death, the greatest love, was expected toward the suzerain from the vassal.[352] And love was expected of those surrounding the king (e.g., Esarhaddon, Assurbanipal), as they loved their own lives.[353] The vassal was to hate the enemy of his lord and the lord was to hate the enemy of his vassal. The subjects of the king, his people, were to love him.[354]

Upon your hearts (6:6). Heart in the sense of reason and cognitive functions is by far the most important bodily organ mentioned in the Old Testament.[355] In Ugaritic literature the heart is often paired with the liver as the internal organs of joy and laughter.[356] Its use in Gibson's translation portrays the heart as the seat of emotions and feeling.[357] In the Memphite Theology of Egypt the heart of the god Ptah functions both as a center of conceptual thinking and feeling through the senses. The heart is paired with the tongue and the control of all limbs. The tongue repeats what the heart formulates, while the heart gathers information from all of the senses.[358]

Putting words on one's heart and soul is expressed in loyalty oaths of the ancient Near East, as in Hittite treaties of Mursilis II and oaths of allegiance to Assyrian king Esarhaddon.[359] In an intimate didactic wisdom text (ca. 900–500 B.C.), a father, Ka-nakht, instructs his son to give ear to his words, "to put them in their heart."[360] The heart of the pharaoh was the key to his thinking and behavior and is mentioned hundreds of times in ancient Egypt literature.[361]

Impress them on your children (6:7). The inculcation of moral principles and wisdom in youth was practiced widely in the ancient Near East. See sidebar on "Education of Youth."

Education of Youth

In Egypt teaching and instruction were used from at least 2500 B.C. up until the time of the Ptolemies (ca. 300 B.C.).[A-67] Rules of conduct and learning were prepared for sons. From moral issues to royal protocol children were trained in the home or in the king's palace. Order, truth, and justice (all together equaled Egyptian *maat*) were important.

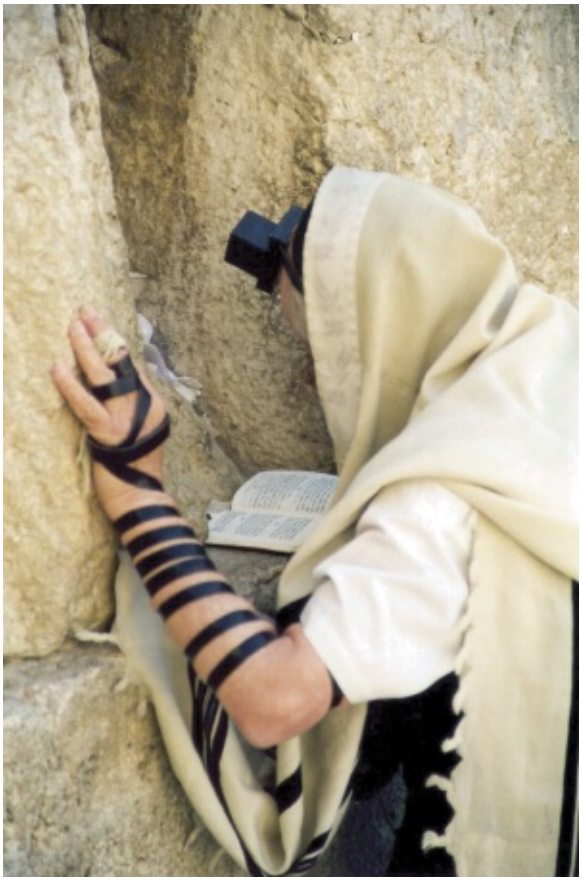
Proverbs 1–9 present a wisdom that resembles Egyptian *maat*. An especially close relationship exists between Proverbs 22–23 and the teaching of Amenemope.[A-68] In Mesopotamia likewise, Sumerian literature includes the

advice of a father to his son.[A-69] Several famous works of a didactic nature come from Mesopotamia.[A-70] The Words of Ahiqar, although extant in texts from ca. 500 B.C., was certainly composed far earlier than the time of Esarhaddon (680–669).[A-71] Repetition by mouth and copying texts and strict discipline (the rod!) were the two main pedagogical means of "impressing" a desired curriculum on a student or child. This was done both in the home and in any place of learning available.[A-72]

Covenantal conditions and stipulations were passed on so that following generations would know and pursue them diligently—and, of course, for political purposes. Esarhaddon declared a curse on anyone who would not pass on the traditions and conditions of his vassal treaties: "If you … do not transmit it to your sons who will live after this treaty.…" He continues, "May your sons and grandsons because of this fear, in the future, your god Assur and your lord, the crown prince designate Assurbanipal."[A-73]

Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads (6:8). "Your forehead" is literally "between your eyes" (cf. 11:18). This picturesque phrase is found in Ugaritic texts referring to the forehead of Judge River (Nahar)—that is, between the eyes of Nahar.[362] It was an obvious vital and vulnerable spot where an accurately placed blow could kill a person or disable a god. The forehead was considered a prominent location where some balm, the hairs of a dog, might be placed to help someone recover from drunkenness,[363] and it is mentioned as a place where a birth deformity might appear in omen texts.[364]

In the Aqhat Legend at Ugarit the appearance of Dan(i)el's forehead revealed worry and stress.[365] The Egyptian pharaoh wore a Ureaus, a protective serpent, on his forehead, a symbol also worn by the gods.[366] In Egypt during the New Kingdom, children wore cylindrical amulets containing strips of papyrus. Inscriptions on the tiny papyrus strips protected them from various dangers. No ambiance of magic surrounded an Israelite's display of God's law; this symbol reminded them to follow the covenant stipulations.[367]



Modern Jew wearing phylacteries

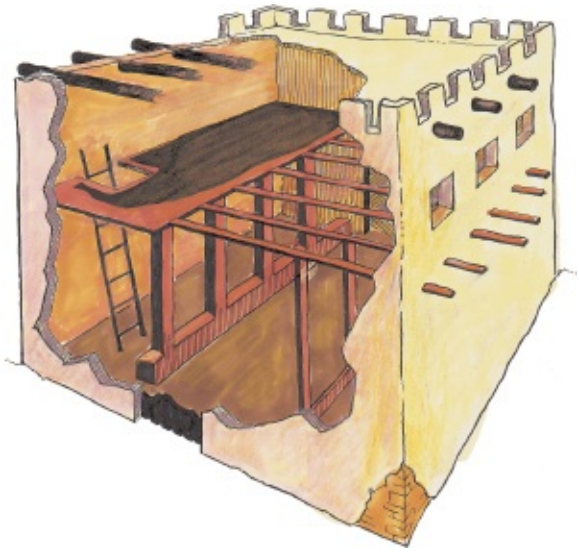
Jack Hazut

Write them on the doorframes of your house, and on your gates (6:9). Doorposts or doorframes seem to be related to Akkadian *manzazu* ("stand, position, door, socket").[368] Silver plaques written in ancient Hebrew script have been unearthed (eighth or seventh century B.C.).[369] All types of materials and writing surfaces were used to display important written materials, including silver amulets in Egypt,[370] with textual material on them. They were fastened to a person's arm, hand, or neck and bore important messages.

Plastered walls and doorways, more germane to this biblical text, were used at Kuntillet ʿAjrud (eighth century B.C.). Gates of cities also provided exposure for important notices. Papyrus, stone, copper, bronze, arrowheads, seals (clay), waxed wood boards, and leather—all of these were employed in writing.[371] These materials and the inscriptions on them provided an opportunity to tie a person to a god who protected them and whom they wanted to constantly revere, as well as to serve as a memorial sign in the presence of the deity.[372]

A land with large flourishing cities (6:10–11). In many cases these "cities"

were taken over, not built for the first time. This was common in the ancient Near East where whole peoples and nations could be uprooted and their land and cities taken over by intruders[373] or conquerors.



Typical four-room house
Alva Steffler/Susanna Vagt

Stager describes what we know about the ancient Canaanite “houses” that Israel took over,[374] including the building materials used to construct them. A typical rectilinear house may have featured: (1) two, three, or four rooms, (2) three rooms formed by rows of longitudinal pillars that created a central large room, and (3) a back room or broad room for storage. Small windows were left in the walls. Ceramic lamps, flax wicks, and olive oil for fuel created artificial light in the houses. The door pivoted in sockets. The lintel over the doorframe was supported by two doorposts. The threshold was usually a single block of stone. Wooden bolts and tumble locks were used in the doors of palaces, temples, granaries, storage facilities, and domestic houses. Houses supported by pillars always had roofs. In some cases stairs led up to the roof. The “typical” four-room pillared Israelite house has been found outside of Israel and may have been simply a common Canaanite house, not an innovation by Israel.

“Wells” (*bôrôt*) were used from ancient times, as far back as the sixth millennium. Wells at Lachish, Tell Sheva, existed in biblical times. Water shafts were connected to springs at Hazor, Megiddo, Gibeon, and Jerusalem. Over one hundred wells were located at the Philistine city of Ashkelon. Pools were constructed around wells for watering animals. Some translate this word as “cisterns”—that is, artificial reservoirs of water. These were normally hewn out

of bedrock.[375]



Well at Lachish
Steven Voth

Take your oaths in his name (6:13). Oaths were common in ancient Near Eastern treaties. This fact appears in the essentials of its literary form, namely, the promulgation of terms of the treaty or covenant and some adumbration of an oath in the list of gods invoked as witnesses or in the curses or blessings. The enactment of the curses or blessings was dependent on the fidelity or infidelity of the covenantal parties to the oath.[376]

Oaths were a part of treaties and covenants from the earliest times in Sumer and Elam (third millennium B.C.), Mesopotamia, Ebla, Mari, and especially among the Hittites (parity or vassal treaties), Syria (seventeenth century), and Assyria. Oaths were sworn in Akkadian to the life of the king or to the life of a god,[377] also in Egypt,[378] and in the Canaanite-Phoenician milieu.[379] A ruler in Arpad or Damascus set up a stele to Melquart, patron deity of the city of Tyre in Phoenicia, and made a vow to him.[380] Soldiers took solemn oaths to serve the king, the nation, and its gods. To break this oath could lead to death, abject humility, and shaming.[381]

Do not follow … the gods of the peoples around you (6:14). All the nations around Israel had multiple gods. See sidebar on "Gods in the Ancient Near East."

Gods in the Ancient Near East

A profile of Canaanite religion in the ancient Near East is taking shape for us in texts coming from Ugarit, a coastal city not far from Canaanite territory to the south.[A-74] Religion there was largely mythological and assumed that the forces of nature manifested the gods and were controlled by the gods. In the cult priestly personnel and their subordinates made appeal to these divine beings through rituals. El was the purported head of the Canaanite pantheon, and he had a consort, Asherah (Athirat). As father of the pantheon, he was rather distant from the common worshiper and even the priests in Ugarit.



Resheph

Z. Radovan/www.BibleLandPictures.com

The god Baal was in touch with the people and the one through whom the forces of nature and divinity worked. He was recognized under other names, such as Hadad and Dagan, and he manifested himself in various locations, taking to himself the name of that location (e.g., Baal Peor, Baal Berith, Baal Zebul). Hadad was son of Dagan, according to sources from upper Mesopotamia. Possibly Hadad, the storm god from Mari, became Baal elsewhere in Canaan.

Baal achieved hegemony among the other gods in Canaan, such as El, Yam (Sea), Nahar (River), Mot (Death), and Anat (Baal's sister). For Baal, rain was thought to be his semen, impregnating the earth; Asherah, his wife, was goddess of fertility. Asherim (poles, green trees, divine symbols) and sacred stones (*maṣṣēbôt*) marked sacred places and even gods. Israel's "great sin" was that she whored after the gods of Canaan (Judg. 2:17).[A-75]

The neighbors of Israel delighted in their multiplicity of gods: Ammonites (Milcom, chief god, plus nine others), Moabites (Chemosh [Kemosh], Ashtar-Chemosh, both mentioned in the Moabite Stone); Edom (Qaws, chief god; Baal, Hadad, and an unnamed goddess); Byblos (Baal Shemayin, chief deity; Baal Dor, Baal, Baʾalat gbl, "lady of Byblos); Sidon (Eshmun, Astarte, Resheph, Rehaim), Tyre (Melkart). The list goes on for Serepta and Ugarit (at least three goddesses). A divine council of gods functioned in most areas.[A-76] Chthonic deities (earth/underworld gods) were also common at Ebla, Ugarit, and some Transjordanian areas.



Edomite deity, perhaps Qaws

Z. Radovan/www.BibleLandPictures.com

Massah (6:16). Massah was located near Horeb (Sinai) and Rephidim (cf. Ex. 17:1) but cannot be pinpointed on a biblical map. Since the name is given to the events there, not the location, it is possible that Massah is Rephidim and the occasional name is not a separate location (cf. also Ps. 95:8).[382]

Drives out before you many nations (7:1). This list features seven nations Israel was to drive out of Canaan. Egypt designated her traditional enemies as the "Nine Bows."[383] This idiom designated the peoples that she conquered and kept in subjection. It is even found in the names of the pharaohs.[384]

Hittites (7:1). The New Kingdom of Hatti, a people who inhabited and ruled in the area of Anatolia and Syria, began under Tudhaliya I (ca. 1430–1410 B.C.) and expanded until Hattushili III (ca. 1239). They concluded a treaty with Egypt in the twenty-first year of Ramesses II. The Hittite empire lasted from about 1239–1180 B.C.[385] The Hittites vied with Egypt for rule over Canaan and southern Syria, especially the area around Kedesh on the Orontes. They immigrated into upper Syro-Palestine and spread south into upper Canaan. They adapted to

Canaanite life and culture. Significant cultural and literary parallels between the texts of the Old Testament and Hittite literature have been addressed.[386]

There is only circumstantial evidence for Hittites in Canaan in the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1600–1200). They were in Emar in Syria.[387] Kitchen argues for Hittites in Israelite territory in the eighteenth century.[388] The migration of the Sea Peoples undoubtedly swept many people along with it or before it into Canaan in about 1220–1200 B.C. or earlier, including Hittites.[389]

Girgashites (7:1). The Girgashites were a subgroup of Canaanites. They descended from Ham (Gen. 10:15–16). At Ugarit the name Girgash and the phrase "son of *Grgs*" are present, suggesting that the name was at least known in early Israel.[390] Some suggest they came from Asia Minor.[391]

Amorites, Canaanites (7:1). See comments on 1:7.

Perizzites (7:1). In the Old Testament the Perizzites are located in the hill country of northern Canaan (Josh. 11:3). Additional references suggest other areas farther south and certain regions of Carmel. Archaeologists and philologists are divided over whether they were possibly Hurrians or a subgroup of Amorites.[392] The personal name Perissi or Perizzi (Hurrian) describes an envoy from Mitanni in both cuneiform and Egyptian texts.[393]

Hivites (7:1). The Hivites "originated" in the areas bordering Egypt and the Hittite empire (ca. twelfth century B.C.). However, some scholars connect them to the Luwians from the area of Cilicia; others identify the Hivites with the Horites/Hurrians (cf. Deut. 2:12, 20).[394] They are found as far south as Edom/Seir.

Jebusites (7:1). The Jebusites were located in the hill country of Canaan and, at least later, inhabited Jerusalem in the twelfth to eleventh centuries. Their origin is obscure except for circumstantial biblical evidence, which suggests (weakly) that they were from the land of the Hittites. Some scholars continue to tie them to the Hurrians and note the similarities between worship in Jerusalem and the rituals of the Hittites/Hurrians.[395] The Amarna Tablets contain the name of a king of Jerusalem, Abdu-Heba, who would reasonably have been a Jebusite.[396] Only under David were these people finally conquered and the Israelites took over the city.



Figure from the City of David that could be a Jebusite. Jebusites are also perhaps mentioned in a Mari text.
Z. Radovan/www.BibleLandPictures.com

Destroy them totally (7:2). See comments on 2:34.

Smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles (7:5). Sacred stones, images, and idols (7:25–26) were found in Hazor from the Late Bronze Age at the time Israel was there.[397] Standing stones,[398] altars,[399] and symbols (poles, trees, figures) of Asherah were part of the furnishings of the cults and rituals in Canaan from 1200–930 B.C.,[400] as were idols/images. The Asherahs (sacred symbols) represented the female aspect of deity.[401]



Twelfth-century bronze model from Susa with stylized trees in worship setting
Rama/Wikimedia Commons, courtesy of the Louvre

At Ugarit Athirat depicts the wife of El, head of the pantheon. In Mesopotamia (ca. 1830–1531 B.C.) the female deity Ašratum is equivalent to Athirat at Ugarit. The name of the goddess Asherah appears in kings' names at Amurru, such as in Abdi-Ashirta. This king's name appears in the Amarna letters several times.[402] This word also denoted a symbolic tree or pole.[403] In Egypt the goddess *Qdš* parallels Asherah/Athirat/Ašratum, especially since this name for Asherah is found at Ugarit.[404] Ašertu, a Hittite goddess, certainly represents Asherah[405] of the Bible as well. From about 750 B.C. and 800 B.C. respectively we have references to "Asherah of YHWH" from Kuntillet ʿAjrud (ca. forty miles south of Kadesh Barnea) and from Khirbet el-Qom, nine miles west of Hebron.[406] This plethora of cultic female imagery and goddesses, along with potentially sexually charged sacred stones, drove the need for the biblical authors and Israel to contend against seductive and tempting religious objects.



Stele of Qadesh, a Syrian goddess accompanied by Resheph and Amon-Ra, Nineteenth–Twentieth Dynasty
Rama/Wikimedia Commons, courtesy of the Louvre

Treasured possession (7:6). Israel's depiction as God's "special possession" translates *s^{e}gullâ* (used eight times in the Old Testament). This term occurs in the ancient Near East from the first part of the second millennium. In Old Babylonian Akkadian the word *sikiltu* is found in Hammurabi's laws as well as at Alalakh, reflecting eighteenth-century usage. It is found at fifteenth-century Nuzi. At Ugarit the cognate word *sglt* is present, but thereafter, its use was minimal in the ancient Near Eastern documents that we have.[407] The use of these words points to someone who is a special personal possession of his own god. Its meaning shades over into "beloved" and thus singles out[408] Israel before Yahweh. In Hittite texts the word refers to a special position of status for the king at

Ugarit based upon a covenant relationship with Hatti.

But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath (7:8). The theme of the Lord's love for Israel justifies her special place before Yahweh. This concept has some partial analogues in the ancient Near Eastern literature. In this material apologies or justifications are given for certain individuals, especially rulers, who took power under unusual circumstances.[409] Whole cities such as Babylon fall within this purview, for the Babylonian creation account justifies and proclaims Babylon as the favored of Marduk.[410] Individuals who enjoyed a chosen status, among others, included Hattusilus III of Hatti and Nabonidus of Babylon.[411]

Grain, new wine and oil (7:13). These three products of an agricultural land are often found together in the Old Testament and are present in other ancient Near Eastern literature as well, such as materials from Ugarit.[412] Likewise the increase of herds and flocks as stereotyped expressions (28:4, 18) occurs in Ugaritic literature.[413] These crops and produce were clearly a common feature of the territory.

Disease (7:15). The sicknesses and medicines of Egypt were a part of Israel's historical memory (cf. Ex. 15:26). These diseases are described amply in many ancient Near Eastern texts.[414] The etiology of disease in Egypt traced many illnesses to internal decay; hence, the use of purgatives and enemas was common. Defecation was a process and product that was watched carefully. Hygienic processes were prescribed and followed to thwart possible diseases. Diseases that were certainly present included dental problems (attrition and cavities), broken bones, bone cancer, arthritis, obesity, baldness, and less certain, smallpox, polio, and malaria. Epidemics occurred because of poor sanitation. From a study of Egyptian art, dwarfs, hunchbacks, clubfeet, hernias, and emaciation were the result of poor health conditions in the ancient world. Persons rarely lived beyond forty or fifty years. "Drugs" from vegetables, animals, and minerals constituted an Egyptian pharmacopoeia.[415]



Relief from causeway of Unas at Saqqara shows victims of famine.
Werner Forman Archive/The Louvre

Hornet (7:20). "Hornet" may be a metaphor standing for panic or depression.[416] Or the phrase could be shorthand for invading peoples or armies, as is "flies" or "bees" (Isa. 7:18–19). Rendsburg notes in the latter case that it is interesting that the Egyptian hieroglyphic signs used to designate the pharaoh could be a hornet (*ṣirʿâ*) and may imply the centuries-long military and political involvement of the Egyptians in Canaan. The city-states of the Middle Bronze and Late Bronze Ages were weakened, providentially, by Yahweh during Egypt's hegemony, so that Israel could enter the land successfully.[417] However, a literal meaning is possible, for insects were used as agents of war in the ancient Near East.[418]

Deliver them over to you (7:23–24). The statement that Yahweh is giving Israel's enemies into her power (hand), often so that Israel can "wipe them out"

(ʾ *ābad*), occurs many times in Deuteronomy. This divine activity on behalf of Israel parallels other ancient Near Eastern literature.[419] In the Amarna letters a king of Mitanni tells Amenophis III (ca. 1403–1364 B.C.) that Teshub (a god of Mitanni) has given his enemies into his hand so that he may destroy them.[420] Nebuchadnezzar asserts that Marduk has given many peoples into his hand and he has subdued them. The same divine activity in history is attributed to the sun goddess of Arinna on behalf of a Hittite king, Mursulis I (1330–1295 B.C.).[421]

Israel is to annihilate the Canaanites (Ex. 17:14–16), for Yahweh has given them into her hand. She too had been the object of planned genocide, both in Egypt and in Canaan at the hands of Merneptah (1209 B.C.). He thought that he had decimated the *seed* of the people Israel.[422]

Feeding you with manna (8:3). The Hebrew word *hammān* ("manna"), meaning "What is it?" conveys the inability of Israel to explain what this phenomenon was. "Tamarisk manna," secreted by an insect and gathered in large amounts in northern Iraq by Kurds for food in May-June, may parallel this at a natural level. It could have been produced in Sinai in the mid-thirteenth century in amounts sufficient to feed a large number of people.[423] But such naturalistic explanations are inadequate at this point in the light of the biblical text. Israel's King-God fed them; God's people had access to the King's table and stood in his grace. The manna-food, though small in amount, was eminently sufficient. Israel would live off of God's "words" primarily, not material provisions.

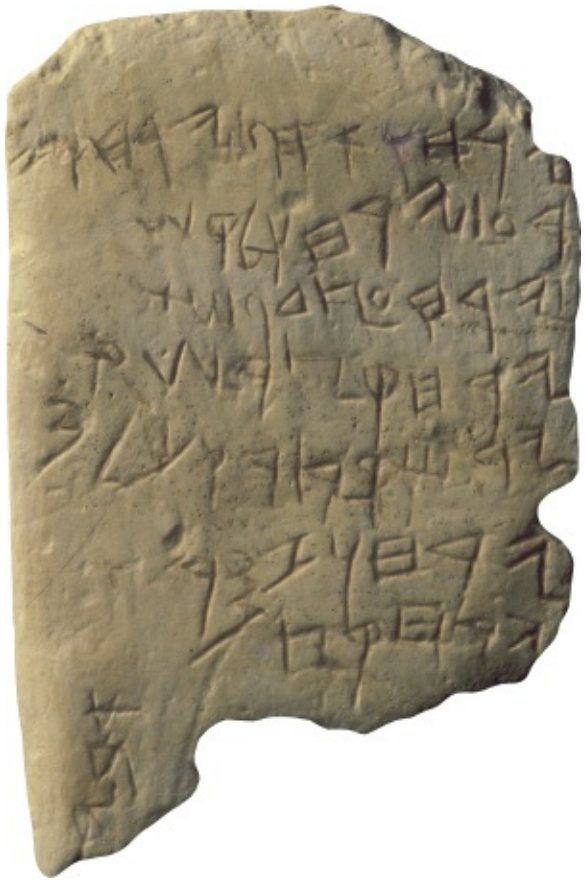
Eating at the king's table and tasting "the food of the gods" was part of the culture of the ancient Near East. In the last Babylonian era of 900–705 B.C., an already-old tradition is recorded concerning Adad-Nirari III, which permitted the kings to eat "remnants" of divine meals offered to the gods.[424] Perhaps the analogue here is one of a royal, priestly nation, each and every person receiving food from the table of the Great King.

Your clothes did not wear out (8:4). In the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh (11:244–46), Utnapishtim, the "Babylonian Noah," puts forth a prayer and hope for Gilgamesh. The hero was encouraged when told that until he finishes his journey to acquire his goal of finding a life-giving plant, his cloak will not have moldy cast but will remain wholly new.[425] In Deuteronomy this is clearly an idiom for expressing God's watchful care over his people Israel, until they reach their goal, the Promised Land, where life will be abundant.[426]

A land with wheat and barley … bread (8:8). Certain political ancient Near Eastern covenants contained a land grant description with features as are found here,[427] but it is also found in treaties.[428] The essential difference between political

treaties and land grant treaties was that in the latter the master obligated himself freely to the vassal or grantee. In the former the vassal was obligated to his master. The land grant is held in perpetuity even if the vassal broke faith and the stipulations of the grant. His descendants would retain the land/property granted.[429] The historical prologues of political treaties could contain land grant features that included careful descriptions of the land in question.[430]

A failure of barley and wheat was a major disaster in time of drought to an agricultural community. When this crop flourished, the god of the nation was given credit.[431] In a good year wheat and barley were produced in abundance by the latter spring rains.[432] A school boy's writing exercise, the Gezer Calendar, contains a record of the months of barley and wheat planting.[433] The land is described similarly in the Egyptian story of Sinuhe (ca. 1960 B.C.), a fugitive from Egypt residing in the land of Canaan. He describes the land as "a good land" producing figs, grapes, abundance of wine, honey, olives, fruit trees, barley, and emmer, and it was full of cattle. The land flowed with an abundance of milk.[434]

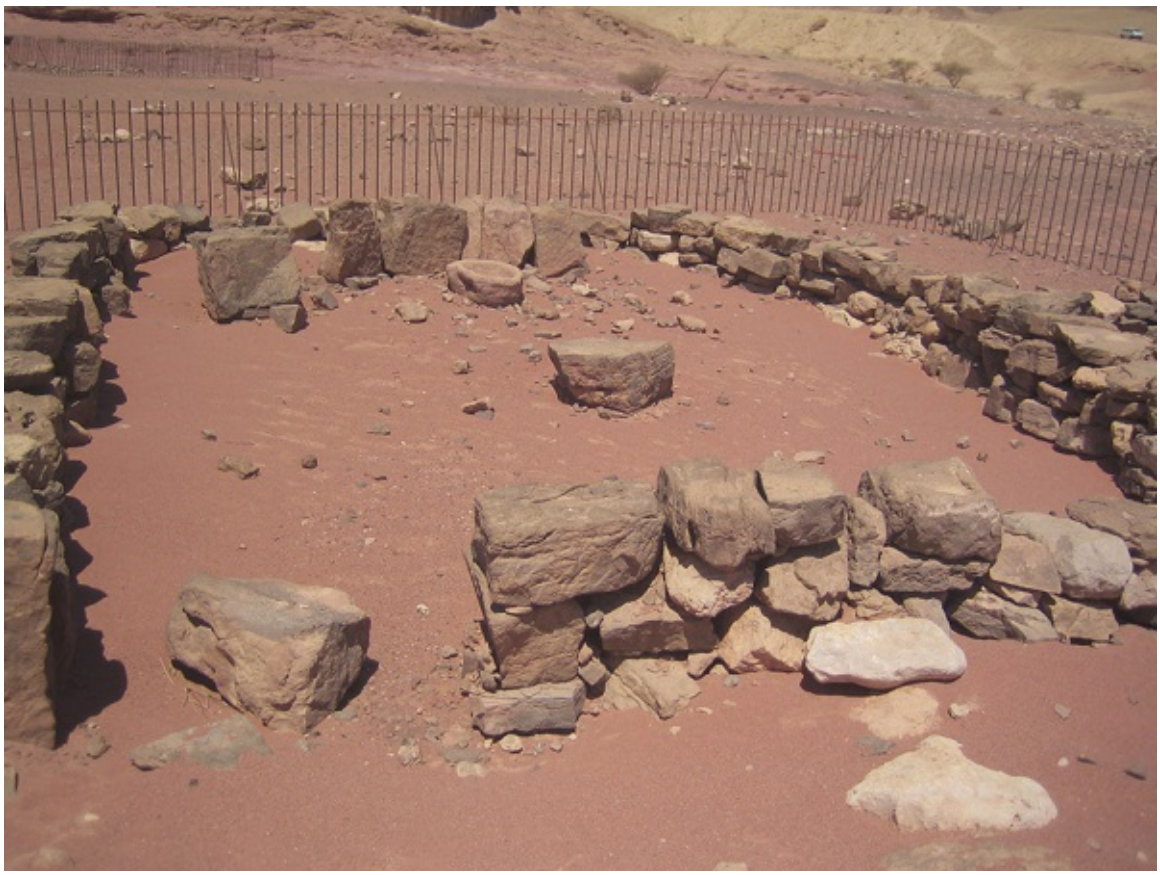


Gezer calendar

Z. Radovan/www.BibleLandPictures.com

A land where the rocks are iron … dig copper out of the hills (8:9). Copper and iron were found in the Arabah, especially from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba and possibly in Transjordan.[435] This expression reveals the author's view of the extent of the Promised Land.[436] Copper was the first metal used in the ancient world and was mined deep in the ground in the Beersheba Valley as far back as the fourth millennium. Copper metallurgy was practiced in Arad, but most of the metal objects found there came from the Early Bronze II Age.

Copper ores were also used at Timnaʾ on the eastern border of the Arabah.[437] Tin (10 percent) and copper (80 percent) were combined to produce bronze. The ancient sources of tin are uncertain. Iron was, however, scarce in Palestine. Small amounts of surface iron ore deposits are north of the Jabbok River. Significant deposits of iron were found at several other places, such as the Ajlun Hills and ironsmith shops located in Tell Deir ʿAllah and Tell Qasile. Because of the high temperature need, it was not possible to produce cast iron in antiquity.[438]



Timnaʾ copper mine

Christine Thompson

Inscribed by the finger of God (9:10). This bold anthropomorphism is an

example of synecdoche, letting a part stand for the whole. God was the author of the ten words (cf. Ex. 31:18). In Egyptian mythology the finger of the Egyptian God Seth had been used to damage the "Eye of Horus." Until it was removed, Horus's eye would not heal. The phrase "finger(s) of the god(s)" is also found in Mesopotamian texts. In two Babylonian texts Döller notes the outstretched finger of the ritualist while sealing an oath as a sign in that context of danger or threat from the god.[439] This metaphor suggests that divine presence and power wrote the Ten Words. Most likely each tablet contained a full copy of the Ten Words.[440]

Taberah, Massah and Kibroth Hattaavah (9:22). Taberah ("burning"; Num. 11:13) and then Kibroth Hattaavah were the first camping sites after Sinai (Num. 11:34; 33:16). Their locations are not certain. At Taberah quail brought on a plague. Both places lay between Hazeroth (Num. 11:35) and Sinai. Kitchen suggests a location around Wadi Saʾl on to Wadi Marra.[441]

Ark out of acacia wood (10:3). The ark of the covenant was a wooden chest carried by poles inserted into rings attached to the corners of the chest. Similar construction patterns have been uncovered in Egypt from the tomb of Tutankhamon (1336–27 B.C.).[442] Kitchen describes the tabernacle in which the ark was housed as a Bronze Age production and presents an example of a portable tabernacle.[443]

Acacia was a primary wood in Egypt for various kinds of carpentry. It grew in the Sinai area and was fairly common in the thirteenth century B.C. It was relatively light but strong and hard, making it ideal for furniture.[444] Sources of acacia today are only a fraction of what was available in antiquity. Hoffmeier has shown convincingly that the use of acacia wood for the ark fits the date of events at Sinai.[443] All of the features of the ark (portable shrine, carrying poles, priestly care for it, winged creatures, gilded wood) were present in Egypt (1479–1069).[446] The compound wooden bow made of this material was in use then and was bound together by smaller pieces of wood and glue.[447] The strong gates at Lachish were made of acacia wood.[448]

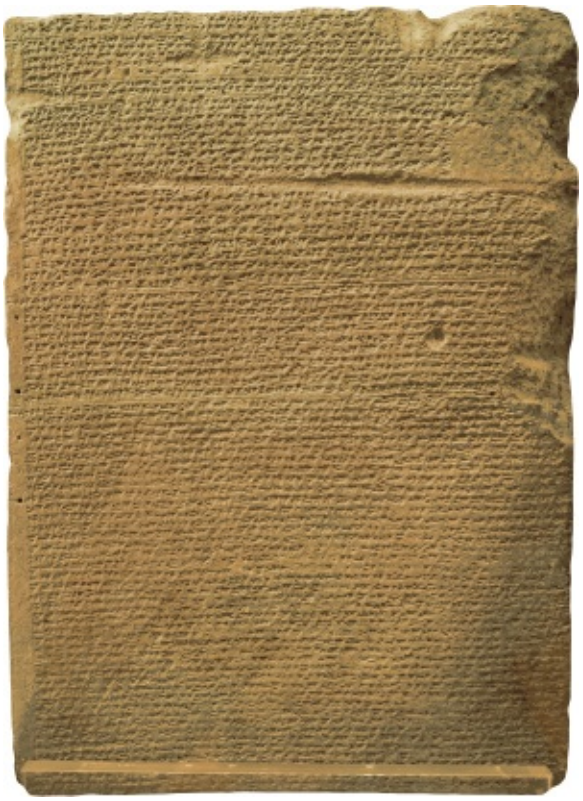


Acacia tree

Kim Walton

Jaakanites … Moserah … Gudgodah … Jotbathah (10:6–7). The location of the Jaakanites is not certain, but the name possibly relates them to the family of Akan (Gen. 36:27). The location of Moserah is still uncertain; it is near to or the same as Mount Hor.[449] Gudgodah is possibly Bir Taba located on the west side of the Arabah, south of the Dead Sea.[450] Jotbathah was then in the same area, but east of Gudgodah. Both places were probably watering locations. The locations may have been respectively at Ain el-Gattar and Ain el-Weibah, on the east side of the Arabah about twenty miles south of the Dead Sea.[451]

Itineraries similar to this one are known from Mesopotamia (e.g., the annals of Tukulti-Ninurta II, 890–84 B.C.).[452] In fact, such itineraries and geography are found throughout antiquity in the ancient Near East:[453] Old Babylonian itineraries of the eighteenth century,[454] Mari itineraries, and Egyptian itineraries constituting the military directions for New Kingdom pharaohs (sixteenth–fifteenth centuries),[455] with some toponymn lists coming from the Late Bronze Age.[456] This passage and other itineraries in the Old Testament were part and parcel of the ancient Near Eastern world.[457]



Itinerary from the Annals of Tukulti-Ninurta II

Marie-Lan Nguyen/Wikimedia Commons, courtesy of the Louvre

Circumcise your hearts … do not be stiff-necked (10:16). The metaphorical concept of the heart was and is central to biblical anthropology, spirituality, and theology (see comments on 6:5–6). The heart was the focus of moral fortitude and character development and was considered as a gift of the gods; hence, it was metaphorically referred to as a "god."[458] A circumcised heart responded, panting after the law of the Lord and his covenant. It trusted in the moral, ethical, religious, and spiritual guidance of the covenant and the Torah. It communed within its chamber with the "law of the LORD" and his presence "day and night" (cf. Ps. 1:2).

Circumcision was practiced in the ancient Near East by many peoples. The Egyptians practiced circumcision as early as the third millennium.[459] West Semitic peoples, such as Israelites, Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites performed circumcision. Eastern Semitic peoples did not (e.g., Assyrians, Babylonians, Akkadians). Nor did the Philistines, an Aegean or Greek people.[460] However, while the Hebrews amputated the prepuce of the penis, the Egyptians merely incised the foreskin and so exposed the glans penis.[461] To circumcise one's heart in order to become a part of the Lord's covenant people was the internal equivalent of covenantal commitment to the Lord, observable by God, not a

human being. A circumcised Israel loved God from the inside out, and God sustained their trust in him.

The great God, mighty and awesome (10:17). This powerful language recalls the God of the exodus and urges the reader to make the connection (cf. 10:20). Titles were popular in the ancient Near East, especially royal titles. The title "lord of kings" is in a Philistine letter to Pharaoh and also found as a title in Phoenician. The exact title "lord of lords" is present in Assyrian texts, usually occurring before the late kings of Assyria. The "mighty and awesome" god is an epithet also at Ugarit (*mlk rb*).[462]

He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow (10:18). This language is a mainstay in the laws and the prologues/epilogues in the ancient Near East (e.g., Hammurabi's Law Code; also those found at Ugarit in the Aqhat Epic). Lipit-Ishtar's prologue and epilogue (1934–24 B.C.) imply this act of justice. The concern is expressed among the Hittite kings as well, as kings and gods gave special attention and protection to these groups of people.[463]



Lipit-Ishtar collection of legal sayings

Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY, courtesy of the Louvre

Seventy (10:22). The number “seventy” has a rich use in the Bible and in the ancient Near East, primarily in the northwest Semitic and Egyptian areas.[464] The multiplication from seventy persons (literal) who migrated to Egypt into an unlimited host (metaphorical) describes Israel’s amazing multiplication into an innumerable number.

Seventy expresses totality. Panamuwa slew seventy of his brothers (all of them) to become king.[465] It indicates potential (cf. Ex. 1:1–7). ʿAnatu slew an innumerable number of sacrificial animals for the god Baal in the Baal Myth at Ugarit—seventy at a time.[466] The seventy sons (divine) of Athirat are mentioned in texts at Ugarit.[467] In Egyptian literature the phrase “seventy kings in seventy days” may refer to the seventy “creative forces” in Heliopolitan cosmology.[468] The Lord was Israel’s sole creative force at creation and in procreation.

Horses and chariots (11:4). Chariots in the ancient Near East for millennia trumped cavalry. Until the Eighteenth or Nineteenth Dynasty, Egypt did not use cavalry except to serve the chariots in battle. In the time of Shalmaneser III (858–824 B.C.) and Tiglath-Pileser III (744–727 B.C.) cavalry began to play a greatly expanded role in warfare.[469]

Irrigated it by foot (11:10). In Egypt agriculture depended on irrigation systems of some kind. By contrast, the land of Palestine soaked up the rain and produced crops over a large area and in many settings.[470] Small channels dug by one's foot watered the small ribbon of irrigated land in Egypt.[471] Land not covered by the annual Nile flood had to be irrigated manually. Watering a plot of land was a constant chore in Egypt and so depicted in the Egyptian Satire on the Trades, for the gardener had to water the vegetables daily or they would fail: "In the morning he waters vegetables, the evening he spends with the herbs."[472] In the fertile land of Canaan, rain sent by the Lord watered the land, a condition depicted by the Egyptian fugitive Sinuhe.[473]

Some scholars detect a bit of mockery in the phrase "irrigated it by foot" by taking the Hebrew phrase as a euphemistic idiom referring to urination, "waters of the feet." In Egypt land plots were relatively small so that one owner could have watered it by urination.[474] In any case, the potential multiple resources for water in Canaan exceeded those in Egypt.

So if you fully obey … be careful or you will be enticed to turn away (11:13–16). In ancient Near Eastern treaties the gods rewarded fealty to a treaty or covenant; failure to keep such incurred the wrath of the gods who had been entreated to judge the participants of the document according to the oaths they had taken. Rain was absolutely necessary to the land of Palestine. The Lord would send both early and latter rain to prosper Israel's crops, if she carefully kept the covenant stipulations.[475]

But in Israel, spiritual/moral beliefs merged to a degree not evident in other ancient Near Eastern laws or worldviews.[476] The visitation of pestilence and drought were signs of the displeasure of the god(s), as in the time of a devastating drought in the reign of the Hittite King Mursilis in Hatti (ca. 1330–1295 B.C.) and in Israel in the days of Elijah (ca. 870 B.C.). In Canaan Baal could be the source of devastations. The Egyptian god Seth could create drought conditions in Hatti. The anger of Pharaoh Ramesses II could keep rain from the Hittites.[477] Threats to shut down rain were among the curses in Hittite treaties.[478]

From the desert to Lebanon, and from the Euphrates River to the western sea (11:24). Hittite and Assyrian treaties have similar descriptive

approaches for their territories as are depicted in verses 23–25. The Assyrian king Adad-Nirari boasted that his conquered territory stretched "as far as the Great Sea of the Rising Sun (and) from the banks of the Euphrates."[479] The Euphrates River and Mount Lebanon were favorite ancient Near Eastern territorial markers. The "Euphrates my rear line and Mount Lebanon my border"[480] is found in Hittite documents.

I am setting before you a blessing and a curse (11:26). Threats of blessings or curses were tied to covenant fealty in a prophetic utterance found at Mari.[481] A theology of the heart was imbedded within its formal ancient Near Eastern covenant/treaty form. Likewise, Israel's faithfulness to her covenant God determined whether she received a curse or a blessing.

Mount Gerizim … Mount Ebal (11:29). Mount Ebal, just north of Shechem, stands 3,080 feet high; Mount Gerizim, just south of Shechem, towers 2,849 feet. These mountains, situated on the main north-south road, and the valley between them form an east-west entrance into Canaan. The curses and blessings of the covenant could be recited antiphonally by the participants, positioned in the narrowest part of the valley, opposite each other (cf. 27:13–26).

At Mount Ebal (Jebel Islamiyeh today), two archaeological strata are present, one dating (II) from ca. 1240–1200 B.C. and the other (I) from about 1200–1130 B.C. Excavator A. Zertal is convinced that a cult center is present.[482] Finds from Stratum II possibly include many bones of sacrificial animals. Two Egyptian scarabs dating to the last part of the reign of Ramesses II are present, as is a stone seal dating from the same era. A large altar for burnt offerings (beginning of Stratum 1B, 1200 B.C.) suggests a connection with Israelites and Mesopotamia. Enclosures, evidently imported, suggest a multi-tribal society.[483] It has non-Canaanite elements.

Other interpreters disagree strongly. Kempinski maintains that it is an Iron Age I watchtower, while Dever suggests that it may be a farmhouse.[484] Perhaps it is the precursor to Shiloh.[485] A. Mazar tentatively accepts the cultic character of the site, maintaining that the old traditions in the biblical text go back to the Israelite settlement era.[486]

Mount Gerizim (Jebel et-Tur today) was excavated in 1968 on its lower north slope. A structure built in the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 1650–1540 B.C.) and serving as a temple, was unearthed, an indication of the religious significance of the mountain for Israel.[487]



Structure on Mount Ebal considered an altar by many

Z. Radovan/www.BibleLandPictures.com

Detailed Stipulations: Purity and Unity (12:1–26:19)

Laws you must be careful to follow (12:1). Westbrook argues that the biblical laws do not follow entirely the categories of other ancient Near Eastern law collections. He finds Israel's laws reflecting a riddle pattern of arrangement (cf. Prov. 30:18–19, 21–23).[488] Others disagree. At any rate, the laws given in chapters 12–26 find many apparent parallels in other ancient Near Eastern legal materials. See sidebar on "Israel's Law and Other Ancient Near Eastern Laws."

Israel's Law and Other Ancient Near Eastern Laws

Millard notes that the laws of Moses compare favorably with the Code of Hammurabi, so that the common legal traditions of the ancient Near East become evident, though there are also important Israelite "distinctions." One striking differences between Hammurabi's Code and the Mosaic corpus is that in Israelite law persons are clearly more valuable than property or possessions. Crimes against persons or property receive similar punishment in Hammurabi's Code. In biblical law crimes against persons carry physical penalties, while offenses concerning possessions carry monetary or material penalties.[A-77] But in both situations, these so-called codes provide general principles that can be applied in specific cases.

Rendsburg brings attention to the clear relationship between Israel's laws and the Mesopotamian collection in both content and form.[A-78] In addition to what has been said above, he insists that Israel's laws were generated as a reaction against the legal practices of her Canaanite neighbors. Some of these specific issues are noted in the various laws discussed below (e.g., 17:6; 23:16–17; 23:18).[A-79]

Westbrook asserts that the real difference between biblical law and ancient cuneiform law is that biblical law allows for and fosters dissent rather than acquiescence to establishment practice and theory. Israelite kings were condemned for not establishing justice, while ancient Near Eastern kings

praised themselves for doing so.[A-80] Many scholars consider the tie between divine covenant and divine law from a *divine* Lawgiver to be unique to Israel.[A-81]

Places on the high mountains and on the hills and under every spreading tree (12:2). In a Sumerian Disputation between Ewe and Wheat, a primordial sacred location is depicted, the Hill of Heaven and Earth. There the "godlings" were generated by An and there they lived and worked. Ewe and Wheat came down to emerge from the Holy Hill. From such ancient Near Eastern texts the mountains and hills were recognized as prime spots for worship and ritual.[489]

The phrase "hilltop" is linked with sites featuring leafy green trees and sometimes simply means "everywhere."[490] Trees and mountains were often endowed with a sacred aura in the ancient Near East, both in Israel (Gen. 2:9; 3:22, 14; Prov. 3:18) and in other nations. Mount Hermon was a sacred mountain to many of the nations and their gods. A mountain located near ancient Ugarit was the site of a shrine to Baal,[491] and Ziusudra, the Sumerian Noah, was placed on a Mount Dilmun, far in the east, over the mountains, a faraway and somewhat mythical place.[492] The names of foreign/pagan deities at all these locations were to be erased by destroying all of these objects and removing the names of the deities.

In Hatti the gods assembled under a hawthorne tree.[493] A tree or trees could represent fertility goddesses. The "tree of life for the sunfolk" is mentioned in the Great Cairo Hymn of Praise to Amun-Re.[494] The goddess Asherah was connected to a sacred tree or pole, a symbol of fertility and a "place of worship."[495] Being in the presence of a deity was awe-inspiring (cf. Ex. 3:5; 24:9–11) and religious objects at these locations threatened Israel (see Deut. 7:5). Israel was not to worship like the prior inhabitants of the land at the high hills and green trees.[496]



Cultic platform at Tel Dan

Todd Bolen/www.BiblePlaces.com

Worship … in their way (12:4). We now know a fair amount about how the nations of Canaan worshiped, including their mythology and cultic practices.[497] Without exception they were polytheistic with royal pantheons. See sidebar on "Ancient Near Eastern Worship."

Ancient Near Eastern Worship

Ancient Near Eastern people were much concerned with the care and feeding of the gods.[A-82] At Ugarit (thirteenth century), on the northern edge of Canaan, there were temples, one for Baal and one for Dagan. The Baal temple is typical of the Middle Bronze Age in Syria and has typical features for that era.[A-83] Most of the cultic furniture has been unearthed as well. The palace chapel was the most conspicuous part of the royal cult. It was a raised construction to which the many gods "go up"[A-84] and was

dedicated to Dagan and Baal.[A-85] Altars of crafted masonry were found with steps leading up to them, a violation of Israel's practice (Ex. 20:26).



Temple of Baal at Ugarit

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There was a temple at Shechem as well (twelfth century B.C.). The high god El in Canaan was connected with the bull symbol and was considered the creator of the earth and human race, as well as the progenitor of the gods, while Athirat was the progenitress.[A-86] But Baal, who came to rival Yahweh in Israel, was the most active and popular god. He manifested himself in various places and his name appeared in various locations, thus binding him to that location. He controlled rain, lightning, and thunder.[A-87]

The people at Ugarit worshiped Anat, goddess and consort of Baal.[A-88] A yearly schedule of sacrifices was scheduled at the various temples, including "holocausts" (whole burnt offerings), peace/well-being offerings, and libation offerings. Often the king had a part in the ceremonies.[A-89] Gods visited these temples during worship. A full temple staff functioned in Ugarit, offering sacrifices for various types of sin(s). Confession of sins occurred at both Ugarit and among Hittite kings. The collective guilt of a

people or community could be expressed.[A-90] A Ugaritic "Day of Atonement" is described, and a day of purification for the king.[A-91] Most Hebrew offerings are analogous to those in the cult at Ugarit and/or Egypt.[A-92]

In temples at larger cities like Emar, Ebla, and Hazor (thirteenth to twelfth centuries) seven-year cycles were observed. High priestesses were part of the temple personnel, and a nine-day ritual from Emar recounts the installation of the high priestess of the storm god and the removal of a previous high priestess. A seven-day feast is celebrated during this time.[A-93]

Official cultic prostitution is considered by some to have been a part of worship at Ugarit, but the evidence for it is not definitive.[A-94] Most recent studies conclude that there probably was no cultic prostitution at Ugarit. The term *qdšt* (consecrated female holy person) does not occur at Ugarit, but *qdš* (consecrated male holy person) does, as does *qdšm* (masculine plural).[A-95]

Divination at Ugarit employed models of livers, as it did in many parts of Canaan. Omens were read when unusual births, deformed births, and the unusual behavior of animals took place.[A-96] This latter practice recalls similar practices in the Babylonian text *Shuma izbu*[A-97] and many other Mesopotamian divination texts.[A-98] Prayer for national safety and well-being went up at Ugarit, a common theme in all royal divination systems.[A-99]

Farther south in Canaan no written rituals are extant, but remains of more and better-preserved temples have been unearthed. At Lachish, a mud-brick altar is located near a thirteenth-century temple, which was rebuilt twice by 1230 B.C. Divine images were housed in niches in a rear wall, where gifts also could be deposited.[A-100] Entire assemblages of the remains of offerings and ritual texts have been unearthed. Among the remains are various animal bones, bird bones, and complex processes. Incense was used in rituals.[A-101] High places, however, are more scarcely attested.[A-102]

Archaeology suggests that child sacrifice was practiced,

but it cannot prove that it did occur in Mesopotamia, Syria, or Palestine. But the Old Testament witnesses to child sacrifice and high places among the Canaanites.[A-103] Later classical authors mentioned child sacrifice among the Phoenicians. Divination, sacred prostitution, a cult of the dead,[A-104] prayer, and a kingly role in the cult are all witnessed to, in part at least, by extant texts and archaeological indicators. The shades of the dead (*r^{e}pā ʾ îm*) were deified and even worshiped at Ugarit. Some scholars now believe that all uses of the term *r^{e}pā ʾ îm* refer to the deified dead, often kings.[A-105]

While much of this ritual and cult helps us see the commonly shared aspects of Israel and her world, polytheism, mythology, nature worship, divination, divine kingship, omens, necromancy, ancestor worship, and idolatry all stand in sharp contrast to the way Israel was to worship before her God.[A-106]



Baal Epic, *CTA* 6, the account of Baal's death and his victory over Mot

Rama/Wikimedia Commons, courtesy of the Louvre

Put his Name there (12:5). The names of pagan gods were attached to the places where they appeared or were connected to a given location, especially a cultic location or shrine.[498] As a result of this practice, God instructs Israel that he will put his name at those places where he chooses to be recognized and worshiped. The name of a deity in the ancient Near East defined in an essential way the character and nature and function of a deity. Hence, when a god's name was "placed" somewhere (e.g., Baal Peor), the god was there. S. L. Richter shows that the language source for the term "to place his name there" (*lāśûm et šᵉmô šâm*) was the equivalent Akkadian idiom *šuma šakânu*. The Lord claimed the Promised Land by placing his name there as the previous kings of Mesopotamia and Canaan had. The conquered kings, whose names were then "removed," are gone.[499]

But you must not eat the blood (12:16). Proper worship involved the character and attitude of the worshiper, not the sacrifice per se. However, certain things were to be observed, and eating blood was prohibited. Certain words in ancient Near Eastern literature are found in pairs, as they are in the Hebrew Bible. Blood and life are two such words, and they are found in Israelite, Ugaritic, and Akkadian inscriptions or literature;[500] hence, drinking or eating blood was equivalent to consuming life. The blood was properly drained from a slain animal before it could be eaten (cf. 12:21; 14:21). Wine was the "blood" (life) of the grape (32:14).[501]

Enemy soldiers facing a terrifying defeat at the hands of the Assyrian king Assurbanipal slit the stomachs of their camels and drank the blood.[502] Perhaps there was some kind of parallel between the "water of life," special drink or food, and the interplay of life/blood in the Old Testament.[503] The Babylonian creation epic describes human beings as made from the shed blood of the god Qingu (Kingu), who had stirred up war. Abusch argues that this accounts for the concept of blood as "life," the blood of a god.[504] In the Atraḫasis Epic a god is slain and humans made by mixing his "flesh" and blood with clay.[505] These insights may be helpful, but at a deeper level there is as yet no parallel to Israel's view and use/nonuse of blood.[506]



Atraḫasis Epic

The Schøyen Collection MS 5108, Oslo and London

They … burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods (12:30–31). In a study of human sacrifice in the ancient Near East, A. Green concludes that the ritual took various expressions. In Mesopotamia there was ritual killing of attendants to important people, as well as building foundation sacrifices and adult substitute sacrifices for kings. In Syria-Palestine expiatory sacrifices in times of crises took place and also propitiatory sacrifices on special occasions.[507] More recently Heider has reviewed the evidence for child sacrifice carefully and concludes that there is good reason to believe that religious child sacrifice was practiced in Mesopotamia, but absolute proof is lacking.[508] However, human sacrifice in late texts at Carthage (Punic) is certain.[509]

F. M. Cross has argued that a text from Idalion mentions child sacrifice (ca. 350–300 B.C.), and so may the Mit Rahineh urn.[510] In current scholarship the opinion that the practice took place in Syria-Palestine is high.[511] However, the evidence for cremation and strong involvement in rituals for the dead has been proven in both Syria-Palestine and Mesopotamia, and this may be what is being condemned here.[512]



The Tophet at Carthage

BishkekRocks/Wikimedia Commons

A prophet, or one who foretells by dreams (13:1). This section treats the problem of disloyalty to Yahweh. Dreams were a means of obtaining knowledge/wisdom from the gods across the ancient Near East and were also recognized channels of revelation in Israel.[513] No dream could supersede the covenantal laws given by the Lord at Sinai. Immorality and unfaithfulness to divine moral precepts were condemned by all wisemen outside or inside Israel. Instructions to Merikare in Egypt (ca. 1450–1400 B.C.) assert, "More acceptable is the character [or, loaf] of the upright than the ox of the wrongdoer" (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22).[514] While the prophets of Assyria might condone a violation of morality, a righteous people or city was extolled, such as the city of Nippur or Borsippa in Babylon.[515] It is clear that "basic forms as well as basic motifs of classical prophecy are rooted in ancient Near Eastern literature."[516] See sidebar on "Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy."

Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy

Prophecy in the ancient Near Eastern style was well developed by the time Israel appeared on the scene, but Israel's monotheism and covenantal constitution transformed and modified the key aspects, character, function, and content of prophecy at its core. Contrasts between ancient Near Eastern prophetic parallels with biblical prophecy are as important as likenesses. Biblical prophecy can be helpfully contrasted with ancient Near Eastern omens and other means of divination that also served to guide the behavior of its hearers.[A-107] This is clearer now that the evidence for an extrabiblical presence of prophecy has become clear. Even cognate analogues of the Hebrew terms for prophets/prophecy have come to light.[A-108]

In the Old Babylonian era and the late second millennium at Emar, Egypt, and Byblos, prophetic activity included predictive assertions by "the ancients."[A-109] So it goes for Syria, Palestine, Hamath,[A-110] and Jordan in the first part of the first millennium. From the Neo-Assyrian era of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal (seventh century B.C.) oracles/prophecies are extant. Some touch on Esarhaddon's rise to power or Assurbanipal's rise to kingship as well as his wars. Bel declares to Esarhaddon, "I will deliver all the countries into your hands."[A-111]

"False prophecy" meant what did not agree with, or spoke against, the official ideology of the king or state. A prophet at Mari dared to speak on his own;[A-112] this occurred rarely in Assyrian circles.[A-113] Prophetic assertions were often written down not only for preservation,[A-114] but to test the fulfillment of prophecies.[A-115] While much remains to be examined from divination texts, ritual texts, and sociological settings of the prophets,[A-116] by the time of Israel's prophets there was a common prophetic tradition in the ancient Near East. This tradition from the past gave Israel's prophetic activity a historical integrity within and outside of Israel.[A-117]

Although the materials have not yet been published (2003), at Ebla, Syria, the word *nabiʾtum* (cognate to Heb. *nābiʾ*, "prophet") is found. Fleming holds that newer texts at Mari and Emar indicate that there a prophet was one who

actively invoked or called forth the gods, not "one who was called or invoked (passive)" by the gods.[A-118] Huehnergard has responded that, among other things, the Hebrew active form (Qatēl) never indicates active agent nouns.[A-119]

In the Old Babylonian era at Eshnunna, King Ibalpiel II received prophetic words from Kititum, the local "Ishtar," who probably spoke through prophets in the local temple.[A-120] Prophets were active at Mari (Tell el-Hariri, nineteenth to eighteenth centuries B.C.) on the Euphrates. Lemaire notes significant geographical parallels, linguistic features, and ethno-sociological features between the Old Testament and the materials at Mari.[A-121] At Mari prophetic messages could be delivered by an ordinary person, man or woman. Aspects of prophecy there included intercession for other persons, especially for a king; acting as a spokesperson (male/female) for another person, and the like. The spokesperson spoke "as moved" or in response to others. The respondents were termed *apilu*.

Prophets spoke of victory, healing/death, and wise counsel, and they gave consultation. Kings could be warned, though rarely, about their actions or words. Prophets sometimes warned kings of Assyria, Mari, and Egypt concerning their sins (cf. Dan. 4:24). This confused mix of divination, omens, and various devices served to check the truth of a given prophecy.

This scenario holds in the Egyptian and the Hittite empires. Both true and false prophets operated in Egypt (e.g., the prophecy of Neferti). In the Egyptian documents Instruction for Merikare (ca. 2000 B.C.) and Admonitions of Ipuwer (1900–1800 B.C.), "predictive" prophecy is present. The speaker presents his messages based on their faithfulness to the central religious ideology of the state and/or the words of a god imparted to him. An Aramaic text (seventh century B.C.) in Deir ʿAlla in Jordan reflects a tradition tied to Balaam, a biblical pagan prophet.[A-122] In the end, Israel's prophets had only the Lord's revealed national and royal "ideology" as their absolute reference point to pursue and promulgate. They could not create their own

ideology with its messages, nor could they deviate from Israel's religious worldview as housed in their divine covenant and laws.

Stone him to death (13:10). Execution by stoning is prescribed in the Hadad Inscription to deal with a possible assassin or murderer, whether male or female.[517] Hittite, Aramaic, and Assyrian treaties deal openly and gravely with sedition and rebellion.[518] Levinson has argued convincingly for both a text-critical and cuneiform ancient Near Eastern background for this harsh verse, dealing primarily with rebellion, apostasy, and disloyalty to Israel's God. Stoning a person clearly means to execute the guilty party.[519]

Esarhaddon's succession treaty deals with the possibility of disloyalty to himself or his son Assurbanipal. Disloyalty is treated severely by immediate and summary execution of a disloyal subject or anyone in the royal house when the king's life is endangered by such an act. In this case even the relatives of a rebel were to be executed. This conclusion is further supported by the stipulations in the Zakatu Treaty.[520] Hence, execution of a false prophet who foments disloyalty toward the Lord falls into place in its ancient Near Eastern setting.

Gather all the plunder of the town into the middle of the public square and completely burn the town (13:15–16). This constitutes a typical ancient Near Eastern covenantal curse/threat.[521] A city was burned so that it would not be rebuilt from the same materials. Ruin reflects the Hebrew word *tel* (Arab. *tell*), meaning a heap, ruin. This ultimate curse could befall a city—to become a ruin instead of a place of joyful habitation.[522] The ancient city of Ur (ca. 2000 B.C.) was laid waste and became a ruin because of the anger of the gods toward it.[523] The Sefire treaty inscription (ca. 750 B.C.) between Bargaḥah and Matiḥel records curses against Matiḥel, king of Arpad, if he breaks the covenant, including: "And may Arpad become a mound [ruin] to [house the desert animal]. … May [this] city not be mentioned."[524]

These ruins through time became hills or huge mounds of successive layers of debris from the destruction of cities and villages across the centuries and millennia. In this case the city was to remain so permanently. The threat of a flood could likewise turn a city and its land into an uninhabitable ruin.[525] The treaty of Ushshur-Nerari II with the Hittite king records a threat against the Hittites if they are disloyal: "Then may Assur, father of the gods, who grants kingship, turn your land into a battlefield, your people to devastation, your cities into mounds, and your houses into ruins."[526] In the Ugaritic Baal Myth two ruin-

mounds (mountains) seem to set off the land of the dead from the land of the living, thus making a plausible parallel between those mythological constructs and historical cities that lay dead in ruins.[527]



Beersheba with large, open courtyard just inside gate

Kim Walton

Do not cut yourselves or shave the front of your heads for the dead (14:1). For a discussion of this passage, see the sidebar on "Ancient Funerary Rites."

Ancient Funerary Rites

Not surprisingly ancient Near Eastern parallels to the rites mentioned in 14:1 are found at Ugarit, since there was a cult of the dead there.[A-123] Ugaritic kings were divinized after their death and became *rpʾm* (*rᵉpā ʾ îm*).[A-124] Interaction with spirits of the dead was often tied to the use of a pit (Heb. *bôr*) in both ancient Near Eastern and Greek settings.[A-125] But also the family at Ugarit was obliged to care for their

deceased in order to stabilize the family.[A-126]

In a mourning rite El lacerates himself with a stone, cutting off his locks and making furrows in his cheeks and skin with a knife.[A-127] Lewis understands the text describing El's mourning over Baal's death as an illustration of the fact that "the parallels from Ugarit clearly show that the mourning ritual involving self-laceration was a Canaanite practice and, hence, outlawed by normative Yahwism."[A-128] In the Aqhat Legend professional mourners cut or possibly bruised their skin.[A-129] An Akkadian text from Ugarit describes persons who lacerate themselves on behalf of a dying righteous person.[A-130]

In Mesopotamian texts a cult of the dead is evident,[A-131] and abundant funerary offerings are required to sustain the dead.[A-132] Monthly sacrifices were presented to the dead at Mari,[A-133] as many types of texts support offerings to various classes of deceased people, even the common person.[A-134] West Semitic texts describe offerings and the care of dead kings.[A-135] In Egypt a cult of the dead, involving ancestor worship, functioned; in the Old Kingdom only the king and nobles could take part in it. It featured elaborate rituals and sacrifices.[A-136] In Canaanite culture these rituals could obtain blessings and favors from the dead—and placate the dead as well.[A-137] Because of her separation to Yahweh, Israel was not to foster any such rituals.[A-138]

Pig (14:8). Why Israel was not to eat pigs is unclear.[528] Some level of Egyptian society considered pigs unclean. The god Seth injured Horus's eye, transformed himself into a black pig/boar, and injured it further. The god Re healed the eye and then pronounced the pig an abomination (*bwt*) for Horus's sake. This spell explained why, according to the gods, the pig was an abomination to Horus. The concept became a part of Egyptian culture, though pork was eaten in Egypt by at least the lower classes of the land,[529] and it was a staple of the working class at Amarna in the Egyptian New Kingdom. In certain dream oracles if a person copulated with a pig it was a bad sign, indicating that the person would lose their property.[530] Pigs do not endure arid conditions and so Israel would certainly not have herded pigs through the Sinai Desert.[531]

In the ancient Near East the pig was cheap, contemptible, and not, evidently, eaten in rituals.[532] They were a part of Hittite rituals that were tied to chthonic deities,[533] especially the Sun Goddess of the Earth,[534] connected to the dead in some way,[535] and they were considered unclean. A pig could be sacrificed to settle a domestic quarrel.[536] Mesopotamian religion rarely used pigs as food or as sacrifices. In general it was unclean and "not fit for a temple … an offense to all the gods."[537]

The pig and wild boar were probably used in Canaanite and/or Syrian rituals, and perhaps the Israelites did not use them partly because of a connection with these nearby pagan nations.[538] There is no definite evidence in Canaan for a cultic use of pigs in the Bronze Age (3500–1200 B.C.). In the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 2000–1550) in Syria and Palestine pig remains decrease near cities, especially large cities, but remains are found in rural areas. Philistines living on or near the coastal areas herded pigs, but the herding and eating of pigs were basically taboo in the highlands of Canaan where Israel settled.[539] The herding and production of pigs actually competed with more productive and profitable agricultural activities. Perhaps this also helps to explain the biblical prohibition.[540]



Pig remains excavated at Tell es-Safi

Joshua Walton, courtesy of the Tell es-Safi excavations

Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk (14:21). This prohibition (cf. Ex. 23:19; 34:26) still puzzles exegetes; even after the discovery of the Ugaritic texts that were thought to contain a significant parallel, Moses Maimonides may have the last say when he noted correctly that something is prohibited that was practiced among the heathen nations.[541] The Ugaritic text that supposedly throws some light upon this text is highly suspect.[542] J. Milgrom argues that the writer is forbidding the practice of a foreign cult, probably from Ugarit.[543]

The use of milk for cooking in Canaan is described in the Tale of Sinuhe (ca. 1960 B.C.).[544] Schäfers long ago noted the common use of milk in ancient Canaan,[545] but Gibson notes that the claimed parallels with 14:21 are not likely based on syntax, context, and diction of the two texts. The verbs "slaughter" (Ugar.)/"boil" (Heb.) do not match.[546] Perhaps this prohibition was to protect the immigrating Israelites from this (for some reason) practice of the Ugaritians and surrounding peoples, including Canaanites farther south.[547]

At the end of every seven years you must cancel debts (15:1). A cycle of seven years occurs in the Ugaritic calendar, but it may reflect mere literary convention. It was tied to the agricultural year and agricultural prosperity, not to debt release.[548] Some debt-release regulation is practically ubiquitous in the ancient Near East. Westbrook notes that "the broadest and most complex form of legislation was debt-release decrees, which cancelled not only taxes and debts owed to the crown but also debts arising out of private transactions, as well as persons pledged, sold, or enslaved in direct consequence of debt."[549] Decrees releasing debts were promulgated by kings in many locations: Aleppo, Alalakh, Emar, Babylon, and Assyria.[550]

In the Old Babylonian period, for example (which had Sumerian antecedents), *mešarum* edicts were issued by the kings, the guardians of social justice, to cancel debts;[551] they canceled debts, released some hostages or slaves, and helped the oppressed and impoverished persons in Babylonian society. Land reverted to its original owners. The most outstanding example is the one issued by Ammisaduqa, the tenth king in the dynasty of Hammurabi (ca. 1646–1626 B.C.).[552] Assurbanipal claims to have been created by the gods with these features, *kittum u mišarum*.[553] The close Hebrew cognate is *mêšārîm*.

These *mešarum* were issued at "fairly regular" intervals at the word of a particular king.[554] They were general royal decrees, while *anduraru* was a particular state or occurrence of release.[555] Some scholars argue that Israelites adapted this policy as the Sabbatical Year (Lev. 25; Deut 15:1–4) for the covenantal community of Yahweh.[556] However, there is more contrast between the relevant texts than comparison with Israel's weekly Sabbath, Sabbatical Year,

and Jubilee (see comment on 15:7). Hallo sums up two key contrasts: sabbatical cycles versus lunar calendars; divine instruction versus royal whim.[557]



Edict of Ammisaduqa

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If there is a poor man among your brothers (15:7). The homeless, powerless, or disadvantaged in the ancient Near East were ideally defended and supported in various ways by righteous kings.[558] In Sumerian hymns the goddess Nanshe is lifted up as a goddess who cares for and "knows" the widow, the poor, the orphan (a mother of the orphan), the oppressed debtor, and the weak.[559]

Justice and righteousness for these persons was the special "task of the king."[560] Concern for the poor, along with the alien and the widow, is emphasized in the prologues and/or epilogues of the law codes from Mesopotamia (e.g., Hammurabi, Ur-Nammu, Lipit-Ishtar of Isin). Hammurabi cared for the poor, as did Babylonian kings Urukagina and Ur-Nammu in the third millennium B.C.[561] Sinuhe, an Egyptian returned home, exalts the pharaoh with, "You deliver the poor from harm."[562] Canaanite documents from Ugarit and Egyptian tomb inscriptions prescribe special care and concern for these persons.[563]

But only Israel actually constructs legislation directly on behalf of the poor and other groups in her laws, as opposed to grandiose assertions in prologues/epilogues. Ideally, in Israel God, the divine King, is in charge. His will prevails and the poor are to be taken care of without fail. Ancient Near Eastern

kings usually issued these decrees at the beginning of their reigns, but only sporadically thereafter.

If a fellow Hebrew, a man or a woman, sells himself to you and serves you six years (15:12). Servitude was a permanent and endemic part of ancient Near Eastern society, providing a social safety for some persons. Over the centuries laws were crafted to deal with the situation. The Laws of Hammurabi (ca. 1728–1686 B.C.) established three years of servitude as the maximum time a slave was to serve. During these years a noble/free man was able to work off a debt or other obligation. The same time limit applied to a wife, son, or daughter, if they should fall into servitude.[564] Enslavement often occurred because of indebtedness.[565]

The term "servant for life" (perpetual slave) is found in Ugaritic literature and carries a positive connotation.[566] While Middle Assyrian laws allowed a husband to send forth a divorced wife "empty-handed," the same phrase describes how a slave is not to be handled in this situation.[567] Ancient Near Eastern kings put forth decrees sporadically to remove debts, which had possibly caused persons to be enslaved. Israel's jurisprudence system attempted to make freeing of slaves a central and regular part of legal social justice.[568]

Take an awl and push it through his ear lobe into the door (15:17). Hurowitz finds a suggestive parallel in Akkadian texts that indicates that piercing the ear of a slave in Israel may have indicated a declaration of ownership of the slave in a public and permanent manner. The Akkadian ritual called for a "parallel" activity in which a peg was driven into the mouth of a small statue of the slave.[569] This act symbolized the slave's becoming the property of his new owner.[570]

In Hammurabi's Law Code (Laws 280, 282) only the slave who disavowed his master is mentioned. The slave had been brave enough to declare that "you are not my master." The master could bring charges and proofs against such a "rebellious" slave to prove that he was his slave. If the master successfully established his claim over the slave, he could cut off the slave's ear and the person became an *unwilling* slave for the rest of his life.[571] In Israel the slave who desired to pledge perpetual love/obedience to his master, because he loved his master, is highlighted. The master happily "adopts" him forever. The mark on the Israelite's ear was a sign of mutually desired ownership, a relationship between slave/master forever. The Great Hittite King Hattusili I (Old Kingdom, ca. 1650–1620 B.C.) urged his subject nobles to be of a single liver (emotions), lungs (life), and single ear (obedience, intelligence, knowledge).[572]

Hired hand (15:18). This law concerns native Israelites and recognizes their inherently superior value, contrasting the service received with that of a mere hired hand. The Code of Hammurabi treats native slaves, male or female, with respect to their native owners of the slaves, more than for the slaves themselves and their well-being. A slave purchased in a foreign land by someone could be redeemed without cost to their former master(s), if the masters were both natives of the same country.[573] The biblical text rather says a word on behalf of the native Israelite slave.

Month of Abib (16:1). The Old Testament contains certain names of the months that the Israelites shared with or borrowed from their Canaanite neighbors. Four are so used: Abib, the first month; Ziv, the second month; Ethanim, the seventh month; Bul the eighth month. Abib and Ziv have been found in Canaanite or Phoenician sources. In later centuries Israel borrowed Babylonian calendar names: Nisan (1), Sivan (3), Elul (6), Chislev (9), Tebet (10), Shebat (11), Adar (12).[574] The Babylonian Nisanu is equivalent to Hebrew Nisan, which was equal to the older Canaanite Abib, for the first month.[575]



List of month names including the extra thirteenth month

Do not pervert justice or show partiality (16:19). In Mesopotamia an important concept of justice grew up across the centuries. A major part of the king's mission was to establish justice and to liberate the oppressed—a high calling. Nevertheless, justice was elusive and almost inaccessible to the lower classes. The ideal of the king remained.[576]

Social reforms were put into place in Mesopotamia and Egypt to see that justice was rendered, especially with respect to the weak in society.[577] In Mesopotamia various "law codes" (Ur-Nammu, 2064–2046 B.C.; Lipit-Ishtar 1875–1864; Eshnunna, 19th century) were promulgated to "establish justice (*nig-si-sa*)" in the lands.[578] Akkadian anthologies of jurisprudence were compiled by Hammurabi and Eshnunna. Even in societies with three-tiered structures of persons (*awilum* [patrician]; *mukenum* [plebian]; *wardum* [slave]) these efforts tended to protect the less powerful and help the poor and others who were less fortunate.[579]

This socio-theological activity was to enable the kings' servants to serve the gods properly.[580] The kings could issue special proclamations of mercy as needed.[581] In Egypt the king or pharaoh likewise maintained *maat*, order and justice. The vizier, second in command, and his secretary were to see that uprightness was carried out.[582] This theme is carried through into the New Kingdom and beyond (1570–1070 B.C.).[583] Even in the chaotic intermediate periods the attempt to preserve justice was important. Pharaoh Khety says, "[I did] what people love and gods praise: I gave bread to the hungry, clothes to the naked; I listened to the plea of the widow, I gave a home to the orphan."[584] Nordoni finds these same emphases in Egyptian "popular religion."[585] In Canaan the righteous Dan(i)el of Ugarit pursued justice for all.[586]

Defect or flaw (17:1). Neither the Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions nor sacrificial instructions at Ugarit describe conditions of a sacrificial animal.[587] Certain texts may imply a strong concern for a high quality of sacrificial animals, unblemished, in the rituals of the cult.[588] Gudea, a king of ancient Lagash (ca. 2094–47 B.C.), while praising his god Ningirsu, was careful to present only a perfect ox and a perfect he-goat.[589] Scurlock reports a Mesopotamian text in which Anu of Uruk offers "fine, fattened, ritually pure sheep that had eaten barley for two years."[590] The cultic purity of animals is praised in an imagined world by an Akkadian diviner.[591]

City gate (17:5). Disputes and legal trials were handled by the elders of a village or city (cf. 21:19). The righteous Dan(i)el at Ugarit processed justice and

carried out judgment at the city gate.[592] The problems and issues of the town were discussed and justice meted out at the city gate(s), where the elders congregated.[593] Cuneiform documents from Babylonia indicate that these classes of society dealt with the administration of justice: the elders, the priests, and the king, and his officials.[594]

The central public gate was a place of assembly, business, and legal transactions (cf. Amos 5:15). Impressive flagstone pavement was used to garnish the gate at Tell Dan.[595] Offerings during festivals were sometimes presented at city gates to honor the gods at the Zukru festival at Emar. In this case the name of the gate was the Gate of the Upright Stones (for the storm god and Hebat, his consort).[596] The gate area constituted special space in the ancient Near East that separated the city from tilled ground; hence, it was the center of many religions and social activities.[597] At Megiddo over four hundred people could gather just outside its central gate.[598]



Iron Age gate at Bethsaida

Todd Bolen/www.BiblePlaces.com

On the testimony of two or three witnesses a man shall be put to death

(17:6). Certain Middle Assyrian laws possibly required a minimum of two witnesses (secs. A 12, 17, 40), although this is not certain. The law has a plural form for witnesses and does not limit them explicitly to two, and this seems to suggest what we have in this Mosaic text. In Middle Assyrian Law 41 the number of witnesses needed was five or six,[599] in order to establish the validity of a woman's claim to be a man's principal wife.

Take them to the place the LORD your God will choose (17:8). In the second millennium there were locations where cases were examined and judgments rendered, as well as specific places where judgments were enacted. See sidebar on "Ancient Court Systems."

Ancient Court Systems

Egypt had persons entitled "overseer of the law courts" that continued from the Old Kingdom. They served evidently at the "six great houses." They could cite the laws issued by Pharaoh or his close attendant(s). A group called "the thirty" acted as "judges." Judgment was pronounced at the gates or entrances of temples or palaces.[A-139] The New Kingdom featured great courts where high-ranking members served and lesser courts functioned under them. The vizier oversaw both town and temple courts. Justice also was meted out at temple gates, palaces, porticos, or forecourts.[A-140]

In the Old Babylonian period a mayor and elders governed a city and served as court functionaries. Wards were established in the city. The king was the highest court and the authority of final appeal. The palace functioned somewhat as a supreme court building.[A-141] Similar structures and personnel operated in the Middle Babylonian, Middle Assyrian, and Nuzi eras.[A-142] The Hittites, as well as cities such as Emar, Alalakh, and Ugarit, and much of Syria-Palestine had many of these same features.[A-143]

In Canaanite city-states kings acted as judges, as did also priests. At Sidon (ca. 500 B.C.) the king was also called "priest of Astarte." The elders in Israel and at Ugarit pronounced judgments and took oaths.[A-144] The elders were especially important in Israel, but also at Alalakh, Ugarit,

and in texts from El-Amarna. At Alalakh the elders were involved in international cases as well as local affairs.[A-145] In an El-Amarna text a city elder appeals to the pharaoh of Egypt.[A-146] In Mesopotamia some elders engaged in areas of specialization and rendered decisions.[A-147] In Israel as in Mesopotamia, the temple and tabernacle were places where oaths were taken by various persons, including accusers, accused, elders, priests, and others.[A-148]

Let us set a king over us like all the nations (17:14). Israel does ask for this king in 1 Samuel 8:4–5. Samuel sets before the people the political, military, and economic reality they are asking for. The real cost of a king like the kings of the nations is enormous. The state machinery of a monarchy demands crops and personal property, to say nothing of "state enslavement" for cheap labor. Mari, Ugarit, Alalakh, and later cities and mini-kingdoms should have made Israel aware of the cost of kingship.[600] In times of war oppression intensified beyond imagination.[601] The model put forth here tries to control major abuses beforehand and to set Israel's kingship within a Yahwistic covenantal framework that circumscribes its practice and ideology over against the current Realpolitik and its abuses.[602]

Models of kingship abound in the literature of the ancient world. In Egypt the god-king-priest was central and was to imitate, control, guarantee, and communicate the order of the cosmos and society, as well as regulate religious, moral, political, and military issues. In Mesopotamia, Assyrian and Babylonian kings ate the food of the gods and were to provide a paragon of rulership and virtue.[603] Prior to human kings, gods had purportedly ruled,[604] but then they had subsequently lowered kingship down to humans at Ur[605] for finite periods of rulership.[606]



Antediluvian king list

The Schøyen Collection MS 2855, Oslo and London

The king the LORD your God chooses (17:15). In the ancient Near East the king was invariably chosen by the chief god(s) of a nation, picked to lead the people and honor the god(s) who had chosen him. For a king to be successful a legitimate chain of approval, including connections with the chief god and the people, was necessary.[607] If no immediate link or legitimacy existed for the new king, it had to be created. The gods put the right king on the throne—which had to be the case.[608]



Pharaoh crowned by gods

Frederick J. Mabie

Hattusilis III (1275–45 B.C.) was chosen by the goddess Shaushga to be the Great King of the Hittites. Sargon, king of Agade (2296–2240 B.C.), was anointed and given kingship by Enlil and Anu (sky god). Hammurabi was chosen by the sun god Shamash and Marduk, Babylon's patron god.[609] Likewise, Assyrian kings (e.g., Tiglath-pileser, 1114–1076 B.C.) were chosen by the gods and Neo-Babylonian and Persian kings were chosen by their gods.[610]

Do not place a foreigner over you (17:15). Neither Israel nor Judah ever had a "foreign ruler." Given the way foreign rulers tended to oppress the native populations in the ancient Near East, it was to Israel's advantage, during the monarchy or during the twin kingdoms, not to have had one. Egypt suffered under the foreign rule of the Hyksos (shepherd-kings or possibly "rulers of foreign lands," ca. 1649–1540 B.C.). Their rule was oppressive in certain areas. The ancient historian of Egypt, Manetho, described this period: "A blast of god smote us."[611] The Egyptians finally cast off this foreign element under Ahmose (ca. 1552–1527 B.C.).

A foreign ruler would most likely be an enemy of the god of the conquered land, as when the Elamites conquered Babylon, carried the god Enlil to Elam, and installed a ruler who was not of Babylonian descent.[612] Because of Israel's

theocracy it was imperative that her king be of Davidic descent. A foreign king was simply theologically and biologically impossible in Israel.

In Mesopotamia, Babylonian kings gave way to the Kassites, a people from the Zagros Mountains area, east of the Tigris.[613] They held power for about four hundred years (ca. 1530–1155 B.C.). Although they were relatively successful rulers, the Babylonians removed them and seized their own destiny. Both the Kassites and the Hyksos became acculturated to some extent in the countries they conquered. But they remained a foreign element, separate from the peoples they had subjugated. They powerfully influenced the culture and religion of those over whom they ruled. While they adopted the gods of the nations they controlled, they also changed and added to their pantheons. Such an action was strictly forbidden in Israel.

Assyrians ruled Babylon several times by placing an Assyrian on the throne, thus creating practically a dual monarchy.[614] This empire greatly influenced the Babylonians since the position of king included the charge to represent the people and the gods over whom he ruled.



Kamose Stele from Karnak describes Hyksos being driven out

Todd Bolen/www.BiblePlaces.com

Horses (17:16). The animal of consummate prestige was the horse, and its appearance fostered the development of the chariot and chariotry warfare. It appeared in Egypt in the Second Intermediate era (ca. 1674–1553 B.C.).[615] The privileged elite of the military classes valued the horse. The god Shamash is depicted riding a horse. Shamash, the Assyrian god Assur, and the Babylonian god Marduk cultivated their own herds of horses to pull their chariots or to ride. Assur preferred white horses; Marduk chose his own horses as royal divine horses and they were cared for accordingly.[616] Israel was to trust in her God for victory, not horsemen, war horses, or chariots (Ps. 20:7).

In time mounted cavalry made up a part of ancient warfare (ca. 900 B.C.).[617] Instruction manuals about horses, their care and handling, including discussions of horse diseases, have been found in Hittite, Ugaritic, and in partial Akkadian

inscriptions.[618] A hippiatric text at Ugarit highlights the care and cure of horses.[619] Hittites purified horse chariots in a special ceremony.[620] Kassite, Mitannian, and Cappadocian records refer to horses.

The Hyksos rulers of Egypt (18th–16th centuries B.C.) produced the first references to horses in the eastern Mediterranean world,[621] and Egyptians bred horses during the second millennium. Ramesses II sent horses to the Hittite king, as did the king of Babylon. Pharaoh Osorkon IV sent horses to Sargon II of Assyria (ca. 622 B.C.).[622] Israel did not rely greatly on horses until Solomon's reign, when kingship and horses became central.[623]



So-called stables at Hazor

Dr. Tim Bulkeley, www.eBibleTools.com

Wives (17:17). Creation theology presents the familial state as a united male and female, one man one woman. In the present verse the prohibition was political and intended to keep Israel from striking covenants with foreign nations. This injunction forbids marriages for political purposes for they might bring devastating religious consequences and were a means of filling the king's harem. The history of the ancient Near East is replete with these arrangements between nations and royal dynasties.

A few sample illustrations can be offered, but the point could be multiplied many times over. Each foreign wife represented a connection to a foreign god as well as to a pagan political entity. The king's wives, in effect, made up a royal harem that had its own living quarters in or near the royal palace. Amenophis III of Egypt (1403–1364 B.C.) offered to marry the daughter of Arzawa in a shrewd

political move against the Hittites.[624] He would recognize the gods of King Tarhumdaradu of Arzawa and that king would reciprocate, thus sealing a religious-political-military coup by a treaty cemented through marriage. Amenophis also married the daughter of Tushratta, Taduhepa of Mitanni.

Similarly, the Great King of Hatti strengthened his relationship with his subjects by giving the subject rulers a female relation of the Great King as wife.[625] A Mitannian princess married Thutmose IV to demonstrate both friendship and agreement between the two kings.[626] Babylon and Assyria sealed their rapprochement by way of the daughter of Assur-uballit given to the son of Burnaburiash II.[627] Elam and Babylon, Assyria and smaller states, secured their treaties and friendships with dynastic marriages.[628]

Silver and gold (17:17). The accummulation of large amounts of silver and gold threatened to turn a king's heart from the Lord to the glitter of his wealth. All Solomon's wealth certainly did not foster his trust in the Lord. The kings of the Near East prided themselves in the accumulation of wealth. Solomon's cache was actually modest compared to the wealth of other kings in Egypt or the Midas of legendary fame. Solomon's twenty tons of gold (666 talents, 1 Kings 10:14) was pocket change compared to the wealth of Pharaoh Osorkon I, who presented 383 tons of gold as offerings to the gods and temples of Egypt. Persian wealth of over one thousand tons of gold was taken by Alexander the Great out of one capital alone: Susa.[629]



Donation stele of Osorkon I

Keith Schengili-Roberts/Wikimedia Commons, courtesy of the Metropolitan museum

Write for himself on a scroll (17:18). Some kings in the ancient Near East could write, and writing was highly developed in Alalakh, Emar, and Ugarit. Much further back, Shulgi (2094–47 B.C.), king during the Third Dynasty of Ur, claimed to be a superb writer of tablets and boasted that he had attended the "tablet-house" for training.[630] Ancient Ebla witnesses to the activity of writing in northern Syria as early as 2300 B.C. Administrative texts, legal texts, letters, and literature attest to this well-established fact.[631]

Kings received praise in ancient Near Eastern texts for their skill in writing, in royal hymns, and in other settings.[632] Trevor Bryce has studied the letters the great kings of the ancient Near East passed among themselves.[633] Texts from Amarna are mostly from the strongly populated areas in the Late Bronze Age in Canaan. Amarna letters of Jerusalem display a sophisticated style addressed to the pharaoh.[634] Hess demonstrates the presence of writing in Jerusalem well before David, as well as during the entire Iron Age.[635] A strong tribal tradition was likely in Jerusalem, capital of David's empire.

Material from Transjordan features a list of curses (cf. 28:15–68).[636] The Hittite king Mursilis II (ca. 1300 B.C.) expressed himself in such a personal way; many

believe that he did write, although he may have dictated to scribes.[637] This injunction (cf. 27:2) reflects epigraphic practice and convention reaching far back into antiquity. However, the hubris and divine claims of these kings stand in stark contrast to the humility expected of Israel's king (17:18–20).

Read it all the days of his life (17:18–19). In the ancient Near East instructions for future kings or leaders were recorded in various works of wisdom literature. In Egypt, Ptahhotep instructed his son about how to be a successful vizier over Egypt.[638] Instructions by Amenemope with an emphasis on inwardness[639] come from the time of the Ramesside kings. Pharaoh Amenemhet I (ca. 1960 B.C.), the first pharaoh of the Twelfth Dynasty, left written instructions for his son and successor to read and study.[640] More words of instruction for a successor come from a pharaoh of the Twenty-Second Dynasty. Among other things he enjoins the future king to "advance the great men, so that they may carry out thy laws," and further to "copy thy fathers and thy ancestors."[641]

According to ancient Sumerian wisdom, the king who implemented justice in his land and faithfully observed the worship of his gods would enjoy long life.[642]

The priests, who are Levites (18:1). Priests were the ones who were allowed to approach the gods and perform rituals; some performed priestly menial tasks.[643]

In Egypt the pharaoh was king and high priest, "lord of priests." Under him were those set apart to serve the gods—special state officials who, among other things, cared for the divine images.[644] They observed purity in all aspects of their duties, such as washing several times daily. The pharaoh appointed the priests,[645] of which there were two main levels: (1) servants of god (prophets) and (2) pure ones. The *ḥm nṯr* priest cared for the cult image in the holy place, and other pure priests (*wʿb*) were below him.[646]

In Mesopotamia all temple workers were priests, but the Sanga was the foremost official. The *en* priest served a city god as his or her spouse.[647] Certain priests were allowed to open the mouths of the gods.[648] Then came singers and musicians.[649]

Various kinds of priests functioned among the Hittites.[650] The king and queen were high priests; the Great King, a ritual expert, was also high priest and was obliged to seek purity at all times. There was also a mother-of-god priestess. "Men of the temple" followed an instruction manual, and a large support staff aided this basic structure. The use of "priestly guards" at Hittite sanctuaries paralleled the function of priests and Levites in Israel who oversaw religious sanctuaries.[651]

Priestly activity was supported by offerings set apart for this purpose.[652] In the West Semitic areas of Ugarit and Phoenicia there were analogous personnel: priests, chief priests (*rb khnm*), and "consecrated ones" (*qdshm*; lit., "holy ones"). A lower group was known as "servants of the gods."[653] At Emar there were lists of priestly personnel including a *baru*, a diviner, and a female "wife or concubine of the god." Priestesses were also part of the personnel.

If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place (18:22). If God, who hates deception, was the source of prophecy, it had to be true and sound. In Mari, this principle was recognized; prophecies were "tested" to evaluate their validity by getting another opinion. Royal written records were kept about prophecies in order to check their fulfillment or nonfulfillment.[654] This practice was followed in Nineveh as well.[655] In this way prophecies could be tested over a long period of time if necessary.

False prophecy often confirmed a shrewd political maneuver. In Egypt, Amenemhet I (1990–1960 B.C.), founder of the Egyptian Twelfth Dynasty, was supported by a *vaticana ex eventu* ("prophecy after the event"), the prophecy of Neferti.[656] This prophecy was set forth originally in the time of Snefru, Fourth Dynasty (2600 B.C.); it predicted Amenenhet I as a redeemer figure for the current era. Similarly, false prophecy is found in Tales of the Magicians.[657] In the story of The Shipwrecked Sailor a prognostication concerning the weather is featured.[658]

The avenger of blood might pursue him in a rage (19:6). Because of the kin-based social structure of Israel, the relative (*gō ʾ ēl haddām*) of a slain person was authorized to avenge/reclaim the blood of his relative. To control this volatile situation Israel set up a unique institution in the ancient Near East, cities of refuge. These cities, not paralleled in the ancient Near East, provided protection for the person who had slain another person. Cities of refuge were not paralleled in Babylon or Assyria at the familial level because of different social, political, religious, and economic factors.[659] See sidebar on "Dealing with Homicide."

Dealing with Homicide

The Treaty of Sefire (3.9–14) calls for the assassination of a ruler or any relative to be avenged by a treaty partner. The ruler would avenge a slain fellow ruler, a grandson would avenge a slain grandson of the ruler, and so on. Surprisingly,

the “slayer” or guilty party to be slain could be a city as well as an individual.

The Babylonian king Burnaburiash (fourteenth century) demanded that the Egyptian pharaoh Amenophis IV apprehend and slay certain murderers who had killed Babylonians in Egypt on business.[A-149] Outside of Israel, a “lord of blood” (*bēl damê*), referring to both the slayer and the representative from the family of the slain person, seems to have operated among the royal families. In a proclamation the Hittite king Telipinu, in order to ensure proper dynastic succession, declares that the “lord of the blood” would determine whether any guilty person would live or die, except that a person who had slain a king would die without recourse.[A-150]

In the laws of Mesopotamia the formal jurisdiction of the state dealt with homicide and blood feuds and the families of both the slain and the slayer were involved. Thus, cities of refuge were not needed.[A-151] In this milieu biblical and Mesopotamian law (and the rest of the ancient Near East) differed greatly. In Mesopotamia there were no “blood avengers,” for state institutions, including the king or other judges, remedied certain homicide cases. Assyria permitted a role for the family of the slayer and the victim.[A-152]



An axhead that flies off the handle and kills someone is used as an example of accidental homicide. This axhead is from Iron Age II A.

Kim Walton, courtesy of the Oriental Institute Museum

If a man hates his neighbor and lies in wait for him, assaults and kills him (19:11). Killing a person with prior intent defined murder and is reflected in the

Mesopotamian laws of Ur-Nammu and in some Hittite laws.[660] In the Hittite Laws (e.g., 1–2) there is an assumption of intent to kill a person even though it is during a "quarrel."[661] As Haase indicates, there is a clear concern for intent here.[662] In the Old Babylonian period premeditated killing was punished by death.[663] In the case of premeditation the guilty person could not find asylum by fleeing to a city of refuge like the person who had committed manslaughter, a crime committed without prior intent.[664]

Do not move your neighbor's boundary stone (19:14). Stones (*kuddurus*) often marked boundaries and they were not to be moved under threat of heavy penalties. Inscriptions on them appealed to divine sanction and divine protection for the owner's rights. The first such stones are found after the time of Hammurabi (ca. 1600 B.C.). They appear in the eleventh and tenth centuries in Babylon. Some features of these stones reflect Israel's covenantal forms/content.[665]

Some Hittite laws of the Old Kingdom (1650–1500 B.C.) concern boundaries and property rights (e.g., Law 168). They assert that the one who takes even a furrow of another's field will, as a penalty, pay a fine and lose a section of his own field to the owner of the field he has violated. In Law 169 a violator confesses his guilt and presents an offering to the sun god or storm god.[666]

A Babylonian inscription (ca. 893 B.C.), similar to a *kudurru* stone, engraved on a hard black stone, records a royal grant of land and income to a priest.[667] The movement of a boundary marker was worthy of a curse (27:17). The wisdom saying in chapter 6 of the Egyptian Work of Amenemope, who determined the boundaries of the land,[668] forbade carrying off landmarks of arable land or encroachment.



Babylonian boundary stone

Todd Bolen/www.BiblePlaces.com

Malicious witness (19:16–19). In this type of case, according to the Code of Hammurabi, the person committing perjury "shall be put to death."[669] The Laws of Lipit-Ishtar (ca. 1934–1924) state that an accuser of another person who is not knowledgeable about the malicious accusation he is making and cannot establish the accusation must endure the penalty the person he has wrongly charged would have had to suffer, had that person been culpable.[670] On the other hand, the Code of Ur-Nammu instructs that a person guilty of perjury merely be fined fifteen shekels of silver.[671]

Eye for eye (19:21). This law should be read in the light of the principle set out in 19:16–19: the malicious accuser will suffer the penalty he wished upon his potential victim. This tit-for-tat principle was applied in the Code of Hammurabi, but only when the two persons were of the same socioeconomic standing. If a seignior injured someone in the aristocratic class, he would receive poetic justice (e.g., eye for eye, Law 196; bone for bone, Law 192; tooth for tooth, Law 200). But a seignior would receive a lesser penalty if the victim was a commoner (a

commoner's eye put out: penalty to seignior, one mina of silver; eye of a slave put out: penalty, one-half slave's value).[672]

Shared cultural class and experience explains many parallels in these laws in the ancient Near East. Some prefer to see them as examples used in common in a "scholastic tradition."[673] The eye, tooth, foot, bone, finger, hand, nose, and collarbone are mentioned in the various law codes.[674] In the Hittite Laws an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth was not followed, but compensation of twenty or forty shekels of silver was paid and the injured person was cared for.[675] The Laws of Ur-Nammu (2112–2095 B.C.) record more humane treatments; for example, ten shekels is the penalty "if a man cuts off the foot of another man."[676]

When you go to war against your enemies (20:1). In the ancient Near East war at the command of a god was common. Priests (*barum*) sought the signs that indicated whether a nation should go to war, using various methods (e.g., divination, omens, oracles, dreams, and magic). A frequently sought formulaic answer was "god X delivers the enemy into the hand of X."[677] The king in the ancient Near East performed as leader of the army and often as priest. Scribes were in the vanguard of ancient Near Eastern armies to render encouragement to the troops, to record battles, and to serve as experts on the technicalities of military procedure.[678]

The god was the divine warrior (cf. Ex. 15:3), and war was part of the divine plan, especially according to Egyptian thinking. A pharaoh engaged in war by divine commission only. Divine warriors in Mesopotamia and Hatti included the gods Ninurta or Teshub respectively. Among Hittites and Mesopotamians war could be a lawsuit with the god serving as judge-warrior. The gods in the ancient Near Eastern worldview were invoked to participate in warfare and even the battle itself in Egypt and Mesopotamia from the earliest ages (ca. 2500 B.C.). The Hittite king won battles only with the aid of his divine warrior god.

The conquered enemy became the property of the god, the divine warrior. Among the Hittites they were subject to *ḥerem* ("total destruction").[679] Victory was always attributed to the divine warrior gods, never to the king alone, and the enemies engaged were ultimately the enemies of the gods. Divine wars and victories were then remembered in cult rituals and were recorded in the annals of the state. Moreover, the playback in the "ritual battle is beyond the actual historicity of the battle, even though the battle was rooted in a historical event."[680]



Stele of Naram-Sin

Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY, courtesy of the Louvre

The officer shall say to the army (20:5). Military officers also announced acceptable conditions under which some soldiers could refrain from going to battle. Gilgamesh, the great Sumerian hero, finds fifty men to help him accomplish his journey to the distant land of the living. He allows only single males to accompany him; those who have a house or a mother can go to their house or mother.[681] He requests that only soldiers stout of heart accompany him against Kish.[682]

As many as seven ranks of officers were used in the Hittite army, and the highest level of officers was even allowed to function in place of the king to direct military operations.[683] Officers also kept rituals that bolstered the morale of

the Hittite army when needed.[684]

Siege (20:12). Siege warfare was a terrifying experience. A city was literally starved, humiliated, and battered into submission. Ugaritic literature contains a prayer for a city under siege.[685] The siege usually was planned to begin just before the city could harvest its ripened grains, thus cutting them off from their lifeline of food supply.

In Hittite siege warfare, when an offer of surrender was refused, the exits of the city were blocked, cutting off supplies and reinforcements. No communications from the city were permitted. The gates of the city were watched closely and eventually seized. Night attacks were especially effective. Any wood in the walls or gates of a city were set on fire, and battering rams were constructed and used to loosen and weaken walls and gates. Sappers tunneled under walls, loosening bricks and weakening the foundations of the walls. Siege towers threatened the walls, while great ramps of earth were built to reach the tops of the walls or to cross over moats.

Psychological warfare created a “fifth column” within the ranks of the enemy. Starvation of the city set in, and the atrocious conditions of plague, pestilence, internal dissension, and incessant violence and death began.[686]



Battering ram on Balawat Gate

Z. Radovan/www.BibleLandPictures.com

You may take these as plunder for yourselves (20:14). Warfare was endemic in the ancient Near East. Hittite military procedures illustrate this

devastating horror. In general a conquered city was looted and torched. The leaders may have been spared, but usually they were executed and the common people were perhaps spared. Sometimes the Hittites respected the deities of a conquered city so that they were moved to spare it. Normally various valuables, herds, and people were collected and used to augment the wealth and strength of the conquering nations. Some of these persons ended up as slaves, some as new faithful subjects of their conquerors. Others ended up serving on the estates of the pagan deities of the Hittites.

The site of the destroyed city might be sown with fennel weeds to erase its previous existence. Certain conquered cities could be offered treaties that would be confirmed by oracles. Tribute was imposed on defeated peoples and their cities.[687] This basic scenario played out repeatedly in Egypt, Syria-Palestine, and Mesopotamia.[688] This picture of doom and gloom can be lightened only slightly by reports of certain humane actions towards conquered enemies.[689]

Do not destroy its trees by putting an ax to them (20:19). The flora in the land of Canaan was vital to the survival of its inhabitants. Over fifteen species of trees are mentioned in Scripture. Nearly every part of a date palm tree (34:3) was used in daily life. Pomegranates, fig trees, grape vines, sycamore trees, almond trees, and pistachio trees were crucial to life.[690]

The Lord did not instruct Israel to follow a scorched-earth policy. Egypt's warrior king, Thutmose III (1490–36 B.C.), often pursued just such a policy, cutting down all kinds of trees in his Asiatic campaigns. In the Barkal Stele he records that he cut down all the fruitful groves: "I took away the *very sources of life*, for I cut down their grain and felled all their groves and their pleasant trees."[691] He used the wood to construct siege equipment.[692] Hasel argues that this lone reference fits the second millennium milieu.[693]

In the first millennium B.C. it is clear that the Assyrians cut down fruit trees. Hasel argues that it happened only after a city had been destroyed, but never for the purpose of building siege works from the wood. The Assyrian Shalmaneser attacked Hazael of Damascus and in his annals records, "I cut down his orchards."[694]



Egyptians cutting down the trees of a defeated enemy in the upper left hand corner of the relief.
Lenka Peacock

If a man is found slain (21:1). In Old Kingdom Hittite laws, if a dead person is found in a field in the open country, designated persons (village elders, councils, civil officials, priests, local judges, etc.) measured out a radius of three miles in every direction. The village(s) that fell within that radius were forced to present payments to the heir of the dead person. If no village lay within that area the heir forfeited his claim.[695] In the case of robbery, the city and governors in whose territory the robbery took place made up the lost property or paid one mina to the relative(s) of a person who was killed.[696] Blood spilled on the ground at Ugarit threatened the fertility of the ground.[697] In the Aqhat Legend, Dan(i)el locates the place where his son was murdered and curses the unknown murderer and the cities near the crime.[698] At Nuzi likewise the nearest town was held responsible for any unsolved crime.[699]

Shall take a heifer (21:3). The purpose of killing the heifer was to atone for the death of the victim beside a flowing stream and at an area of land not cultivated. This served to eliminate the bloodguilt created by the crime from the community, while killing a cow reenacted the murder as well. Both Hittite and Mesopotamian texts seem to suggest likewise. These rites "remove pollution from the community or inhabited area to an area uninhabited or separate from the community's concerns."[700]

Wright cites Hittite rituals that dispose of impurity in seas, rivers, enemy lands, mountains, and open country (e.g., the Ambazzi ritual and the Tunnavi ritual). A female ritualistic priestess would throw combs used to cull evil from a patient into a river nearby.[701] In Mesopotamia the Akitu festival and the Shurpu rituals contained rites that removed evil from a person by taking it into open country. A priest decapitated a ram and eventually threw its carcass in the river. The same was done with the ram's head. Before this slaughter the room was wiped with the carcass of the dead ram and incantations of exorcism were carried out.[702]

Our hands did not shed this blood (21:7). An exculpatory oath is also found in Ugarit where it concerns a woman whose husband was murdered in the city of Arzigana. The local leaders must declare, "We did not kill the husband of the woman, brother of x, in the city. We do not know who killed him."[703]

Rights of the firstborn (21:16). In Israel the firstborn son received a double portion of the inheritance.[704] See sidebar on "Inheritance Practices in the Ancient Near East."

Inheritance Practices in the Ancient Near East

Primogeniture functioned in the ancient Near East, but not everywhere, nor was it, if present, always observed.[A-153] In Hammurabi's Code (Law 165) other divisions of property are allowed.[A-154] In Lipit-Ishtar's Laws the inheritance goes equally to the children of two wives; in Hammurabi's Code the first wife's firstborn receives a preferential share.[A-155] Thus the ancient provenance and some shared features of Israel's law are evident.

At Mari a legal decision granted a double portion to the natural firstborn son; at Nuzi (fifteenth century) the same provision was followed.[A-156] At Alalakh on the Orontes a

father was aware of but did not have to recognize the law of primogeniture in his will. He could designate a first son for inheritance purposes.[A-157] Primogeniture was recognized at Emar where the son received an "extra share." Each son first claimed a bride price from the inheritance.[A-158] A daughter could rarely be an equal heir with the sons in Mesopotamia.[A-159]

In Egypt by the Middle Kingdom the law of primogeniture could be disregarded by the dying person; property could be willed to a brother.[A-160] In the New Kingdom era the oldest son was the expected heir, but the entire family or an appointed trustee could become the heir.[A-161] In the Tale of Sinuhe, a fugitive Egyptian in Canaan, upon departing from Egypt, turned over all of his possessions to his family, both men and property to be given to his firstborn son.[A-162]

In Neo-Babylonian laws the sons of a first wife received two-thirds of the inheritance while the sons of the second wife received one-third.[A-163] Sons who were different in status might fare differently, since sons of the first and main wife could receive the major inheritance. Among sons, in a Middle Assyrian law the oldest son inherited the largest portion; the rest of the inheritance was divided according to set instructions.[A-164] In some cases the kind of property to be divided up determined how it could be distributed.[A-165]

A stubborn and rebellious son (21:18). In a West Semitic Hadad inscription from near Zenjirli death by stoning was administered to persons, male or female, who had committed an assassination, an understandable penalty for such a crime.[705] Rebellion against established authority was the major issue, whether against the royal house of king Panamuwa I of Samʾal or the parental line of authority set up by God in Israel. The Code of Hammurabi discusses a son who commits a grave offense against his parents and sets forth the penalty as disinheritance.[706] Penalties elsewhere involved enslavement, mutilation, or disinheritance.[707]

The parallel law in Exodus 21:15 requires the death penalty for a son who strikes his parents, an act that is probably included in the rebelliousness in mind

in this passage.[708] In Israel rebellion against one's parents was equivalent to rebellion against the Lord. In the ancient Near East it was basically a societal issue, but still was a grave offense.

You must not leave his body on the tree overnight (21:23). The burial of the dead was important for several reasons in the ancient Near East, and improper burial was a catastrophe as far back as ancient Sumer. Improper burial could lead to baneful consequences involving ghosts, demons, and other evils.[709] The Assyrians used the practice of hanging a person on a tree in a time of war instead of burying them so that birds would eat the corpse. The dead bodies of the enemy were also mutilated, fed to animals, and finally removed.[710] The threat of not being buried continued into the Persian era and even later.[711]

In Babylonian anthropological thinking the physical body provided the habitation for the dead person's ghost (*etemmu*) to be received by the community of the dead. The body was to be buried. Burial of the body maintained the identity of the deceased. Rites that would feed and renew the memory of them then provided for the dead. Destroying a person's corpse deprived the person of a future identity among the dead. Burning, mutilation, or the consumption of a body by animals also destroyed the person's identity and future life. Those whose bodies were not buried had a gruesome chaotic existence to face.[712]

At the city of Emar the dead were referred to as divine beings or "gods." According to certain Sumerian texts the dead should be buried within "the shade of one's house," so that they would enjoy their new lives among the dead in this vicinity.[713] Within this religious and cognitive kind of thinking it is easy to see why in Israel a dead body desecrated the Lord's land, both literally and symbolically.[714]



Impaled captive from Khazazu on the Balawat Gates of Shalmaneser III

Werner Forman Archive/The British Museum

If you see your brother's ox or sheep straying (22:1). Rather than envy the property of their neighbors, the Lord instructs the Israelites to be their brother's helper and keeper (vv. 1–4). Israelite houses had a stable area on the ground floor where animals were kept and cared for. A lost animal was to be treated as one's own.[715] The Hittite Laws of the Old Kingdom (ca. 1650–1500 B.C.) instructed a person who found a stray animal (ox, horse, mule) to take it to the gate of the king or to the elders of the nearest town. The finder could use the animal until the owner happened to locate it with the finder. The finder would be considered a thief if he were not to turn the animal over to the owner.[716] The Code of Hammurabi has near parallels, but they are in a different context and the issue is more clearly theft by the finder.[717]



Caring for cow

Frederick J. Mabie

A woman must not wear men's clothing (22:5). Transvestism was prohibited in the ancient Near East, except as punishment. In the Epic of Aqhat at Ugarit, after Aqhat's murder, his sister Pughat seeks revenge against his murderer Anat, goddess of love and war. She dresses as a male, using cosmetics, clothing, and other male paraphernalia. She covers all of this by putting on a woman's clothing.[718] It is not clear whether this is transvestism, and the reaction to it in the Ugaritic texts is not clear. Is it heroic or perverted action? It is a weak rendition of the power goddess Ishtar, "who was androgynous, marginal, ambiguous"—androgynous both psychologically and physiologically.[719] She shatters the boundaries of male/female, war/love, divine/human, and more.[720] Known also as Inannu-Ishtar, she breaks all gender and socioeconomic distinctions.

Israel would have none of this. Therefore, some scholars suggest that Israel's reaction to this type of description/perversion was to prohibit its occurrence in Israel. Mentioning the woman first with respect to this issue in Israel's law may be simply a reflection of the Ugaritic text, for elsewhere in Israel's laws the male is addressed first.

Hittite texts illuminate the larger issue of gender confusion as abnormal and

depict it as a shaming technique in certain circumstances.[721] In Ritual and Prayer to Ishtar of Nineveh, males captured by the Hittites have their manhood shamefully insulted and removed by dressing them like women. A scarf worn by women is placed on them and they are forced to do women's work with a distaff and spindle in their hand.[722] This act is equivalent to making males/male soldiers into women.[723] Turning them into women punished soldiers who broke an oath of allegiance to the king.[724] The "scarf" noted above may be pictured in the famous Beni Hasan painting in Egypt.[725] Lambert records some wisdom texts that refer to homosexual or tranvestism practices apparently by Amorites.[726]



Ashurbanipal's lion hunt relief shows hunters returning with a dead lion, but also pictured is one hunter carrying a nest of baby birds in one hand and grasping the mother bird in the other hand. This brings to mind the exhortation in Deut 22:6.

Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY

Make a parapet around your roof (22:8). An Israelite is to fulfill his responsibilities toward the safety of others when they are on his property. Law 58 of Eshnunna indicates that when a wall collapses and causes the death of a freeman, it is a capital offense and must be brought before the highest legal authority in the land, the king.[727] Westbrook notes that a specific punishment is not set here in Deuteronomy, but he suggests that "the guilt of bloodshed" may refer to polluting the building or making it unclean, or to actually bringing bloodguilt on the household. The penalty for the latter could be execution.[728] In Hittite Law 6, a general case refers to a fine of a portion (cubit?) of the owner's property.[729]

Do not plant two kinds of seed in your vineyard (22:9). The rationale for the prohibitions in verses 9–11 is not clear. Certain mixtures of foodstuffs were not acceptable legally (Lev. 19:19; Ezek. 4:9); the same idea may be in effect here.[730] The principle may go back to creation and to attempts to keep "creation distinctions" clear and functioning, "holy" and separated unto Yahweh and his created order.[731] Old Kingdom Hittite laws forbade, on pain of death, one man to sow his seed on another man's seed; the penalty was later mitigated.[732]

Do not plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together (22:10). Ancient Sumerian laws (prior to 2500–2342 B.C.) were reformed by Uruinimgina (2351–2342), but the laws had formerly permitted the *šanga*-priests to yoke together goring oxen and donkeys as teams.[733]

Do not wear clothes of wool and linen (22:11). At a Midianite tent shrine at Timnah colored cloth of mixed wool and linen was found, but this was permissible for priests in the sphere of the holy.[734] Persons at Kuntillet ʿAjrud wove forbidden fabrics by mixing woolen threads and linen threads,[735] but this probably involved a sacerdotal activity, not a common everyday usage (where it was prohibited).[736]

Make tassels on the four corners of the cloak you wear (22:12). Tassels were attached to the "outer garment" (*kᵉsût*; cf. Num. 15:37–41) used by Israelite men. Both men and women wore an outer cloak and wrapped it around their bodies or draped it over the shoulder. A belt secured it to protect a person from inclement weather. It functioned as a cover during the night and was considered valuable enough to secure a debt (Exod. 22:26–27; Deut. 24:10–13). The Black Obelisk (ca. 820 B.C.) contains a picture of King Jehu of Israel with a fringed outer garment laid over his left shoulder.[737]



Tassels on clothing

Kim Walton, courtesy of the Oriental Institute Museum

If a man takes a wife and, after lying with her, dislikes her (22:13). A man could take a wife and subsequently divorce her, but not without being challenged in many instances. He could not slander or impugn her. A Babylonian dossier from the reign of Samsu-iluna (ca. 1749–1712 B.C.) touches on a provision in the Code of Hammurabi involving a charge of the Ama-sukkal against his bride of not being a virgin when he married her. His charge was not sustained.[738] Charges against a virgin in the laws of Lipit-Ishtar also failed.[739] It was of great value to a woman, her father, and her family for her to be a virgin at marriage.[740] Cases at Mari and Nippur indicate that a betrothed woman who was penetrated before marriage had broken her vow and could be divorced.[741]

There the men of her town shall stone her to death (22:21). This penalty is not paralleled in the ancient Near East, if the sexual activity is understood to have taken place before a betrothal. This legal equality between a married woman and a betrothed woman is mirrored in various laws of the ancient Near East. In the Laws of Eshnunna (Law 26) a man who rapes a betrothed daughter is executed.[742] The woman's death by stoning demonstrated that this was not a "sacrificial" act.[743]

If a man is found sleeping with another man's wife (22:22). The laws in verses 22–29 treat in three scenarios sexual sins that can dissolve a marriage or betrothal covenant or pledge. Adultery was termed the "great sin" in various documents in Egypt and Ugarit and in the ancient Near East in general.[744] Code of Hammurabi Law 129 parallels verse 22 and assigns the penalty for both of the persons involved; they were to be bound and drowned. The husband could show mercy to his wife; if so, then the guilty man could be set free also.[745]

Parallels between Hammurabi's Code and the Bible

Hammurabi's Code	Topic	Mosaic Law
# 1	False witness	Deut. 19:16–21
# 14	Kidnapping	Deut. 24:7
# 15	Fugitive slaves	Deut. 23:16–17
# 117	Servitude	Deut. 15:12–18
# 129	Adultery	Deut. 22:22
# 130	Rape of virgin	Deut. 22:23–27
# 141	Marital discord/violence	Deut. 22:13–19
## 154–58	Incestual relationships	Deut. 27:20–23

Hittite laws and Middle Assyrian laws[746] recognize these same conditions. In Hittite laws the manner of execution is not given.[747] In Egypt adultery was prominent in legal cases, but there was evidently no officially enforced death penalty. Adulterers were rebuked or possibly beaten, sometimes in public. A betrayed husband was urged to get a new wife. In a famous list of sins confessed by deceased persons, they asserted that they did not commit adultery.[748]

Extramarital activities by the husband were not punishable offenses in ancient Mesopotamia, but an adulterous wife was put to death.[749] Drowning and impalement were vicious punishments, but forgiveness from the husband was possible, and both the offending wife and her paramour could go free. In the case of adultery by the wife, the sins and accusations set forth in the case invariably involved more that adultery: sorcery, deceit, and slander were included in the charges. In Israel it appears that adultery was considered a religious crime against the Lord.[750] There is little from Ugarit on adultery.[751]

If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married (22:23). The circumstances of rape/adultery helped determine blame and penalty in each case in Israel and in the ancient Near East. This text discusses a betrothed virgin (fiancée). Similar conditions for a married woman are noted in Hittite laws, where the woman is culpable if the rape is in a populated area and she does not cry out.[752] Law 150 in the Code of Hammurabi describes a situation in which a man clearly overpowers and holds down a betrothed virgin who is still living in her father's household. The rapist is executed; she is set free and is

not considered guilty.[753]

In the Laws of Ur-Nammu the "violation" of a betrothed "virgin wife" resulted in the criminal's execution.[754] According to Middle Assyrian Law 55 (fifteenth century), the father could have the rapist's wife ravished and could even take her to himself as an additional wife. But he could allow his daughter to marry the one who raped her. The rapist must pay the father a dowry of the price of a virgin, and he could not divorce her. Or the father could keep the money and marry his daughter to whomever he desired.[755] According to the Laws of Eshnunna (ca. 1766 B.C.), in the case of a man who brings a bride's offering to obtain a man's daughter without her parents' consent, then abducts and ravishes her, the one who abducted her is executed.[756]

If out in the country a man happens to meet a girl pledged to be married (22:25). In this case a betrothed woman has clearly been subjected to forced rape. The man, as in other ancient Near Eastern law codes, is to be executed.[757] The Code of Hammurabi prescribed death for the man alone. A woman seized and raped in the mountains of the land of Hatti was likewise allowed to go free, and her attacker was executed.[758]

He shall pay the girl's father fifty shekels of silver (22:29). The amount of money paid equaled the *mōhar* ("bride price").[759] In the Sumerian Laws of Ur-Nammu, if a man divorced his wife of first rank, he had to pay a penalty of sixty shekels. Silver was weighed out since coins were not minted.[760] In this case the daughter was not yet pledged in marriage, but this law protected her and any possible child from being abandoned without support. In some school-text laws it is recorded that a man who had deflowered a virgin daughter in the city, whose parents were free citizens and who did not know that she was "in the street," could be forced to marry their daughter whom he had raped.[761]

A man is not to marry his father's wife (22:30). This prohibition is common among the sexual taboos of the ancient Near East.[762] The Code of Hammurabi prohibits this relationship, as do the Hittite Laws. In Babylonian documents the penalty is the death of both persons by burning. Such deviant acts involving a person's mother or daughter, or a father with his own son, were capital crimes.[763] In case a father was already dead, a son cohabiting with his stepmother was disinherited only.[764]

Emasculated (23:1). Hoffner and Weinfeld consider the exclusion of physically injured or disfigured persons from access to the cultic centers of worship to be a widespread phenomenon in the ancient Near East.[765] For more on this verse, see sidebar on "Eunuchs."

Eunuchs

In certain cases of adultery or sodomy in the Middle Assyrian era, the guilty parties were turned into eunuchs by having their testicles crushed.[A-166] Hittite texts attest to the presence of eunuchs in the "house of the king,"[A-167] indicating that eunuchs played a major role in the royal structure of the ancient Near East and in Hittite administration,[A-168] but they did not serve in the military. Anuwanze, a eunuch, served as supervisor over the scribes who wrote/copied a Hittite New Kingdom text concerning the founding of a new temple.[A-169] Their presence at Mari is well attested mostly as elite military troops.[A-170]

In Assyria eunuchs were disqualified from serving as priests, but they served in lower capacities. They could serve as a treasurer of the temple or (rarely) as a temple administrator. The Chief Eunuch[A-171] was a high-ranking military leader, and eunuchs held other high military positions.[A-172] Eunuchs were normally made, not born. At an early age a child was castrated or their testicles were crushed. Captives from war or persons given in tribute were the main source for eunuchs.[A-173] The mother goddess Ninmah created some from birth, according to ancient Sumerian tradition.[A-174] In Israel emasculation disqualified a priest from serving and from offering animals for sacrifice (Lev. 21:20; 22:24). Sacrificial animals should be without defect, with a few exceptions in Israel as listed.

Hittite documents record the attempt of scribes and priests and other temple officials in an unusual situation to discover the reason for the anger of the gods and the occurrence of unfavorable omens. Several possible solutions to this dilemma included the fact that two "deficient and mutilated people" had entered the temple. This required the performance of a rite by an old Hittite woman with respect to the god involved. Among other possible reasons for the unfavorable situation was the fact that a dog had approached the table, once knocking the sacrificial bread off of its table and at another time eating portions of sacrificial bread.[A-175]



Eunuchs

Kim Walton, courtesy of the Oriental Institute Museum

Balaam (23:4). See comments on Numbers 22–24.

Keep away from everything impure (23:9). This prohibition included physical cleanliness that crossed over into cultic and religious spheres according to Israel's worldview. To let human excrement remain uncovered was an "abomination" and "indecent" in the Lord's eyes. The tool used to cover human excrement is the Hebrew word *yātēd* (v. 13) and refers to a dibble (similar to a gardener's pointed tool for planting seeds) or trowel.[766] It perhaps points to a tool mentioned in Ugaritic texts that is itself uncertain in meaning (*hrmtt*-tool), but it may refer to a device with different purposes (cf. 23:25, "sickle"; Heb. *ḥermēš*), but of similar shape.[767]

If a slave has taken refuge with you (23:15). This series of miscellaneous laws reveals both contrast and positive comparison between Israel's laws and those of her ancient Near Eastern neighbors. Verses 15–17, in contrast to the rest of the ancient Near East, provide refuge in Israel for a fugitive slave. Israel's fugitive status in Egypt and in Canaan sensitized her toward such humane issues.

Harboring a runaway slave was a capital offense in Babylonia (Code of Hammurabi Laws 15–20).[768]

Treaties between Hatti and Egypt and Hatti and Amurru mandate the mutual extradition of slaves. If the policy was not followed, the treaty was considered broken.[769] In treaties from Alalakh fugitive slaves had to be returned to the land of their owner(s). If the elders of a city or country where slaves were found misrepresented the situation and harbored a fugitive slave, their hands were cut off and a fine of six thousand shekels exacted.[770]

Shrine prostitute (23:17). If cultic prostitution did function in Israel, this legislation would have cut off a significant source of income for the temple and cult in Israel; the activity was possibly approved in some ancient Near Eastern cultic activities in Mesopotamia.[771] Some scholars conclude that Old Testament evidence and ancient Near Eastern evidence does not establish the long-held assumption of cultic prostitution. Cultic prostitution indicates an activity fostered officially by the religious and state authorities in the sanctuary or its vicinity in order to support the sanctuary itself and to carry out effective religious rituals and ceremonies.

Prostitution in general was legally and socially tolerated in the ancient Near East, although it was ridiculed.[772] Its cultic function was prohibited in Israel. It appears that the *qadishtu* or "holy ones" were not cultic prostitutes at Ugarit (as formerly argued).[773] However, internal textual biblical arguments do suggest that the *qᵉdēšîm* in Israel did perform sexual rituals (Gen. 38; Deut. 23:17–19).[774] Marsman concludes, based on ancient Near Eastern texts (Mesopotamia, Ugarit), that cultic prostitution is yet to be proven. Neither the female *qadishtu* nor the *naditu* (in Mesopotamia) qualifies.[775] Phyllis Bird also rejects the reality of the male cult prostitute (*qādēš*, *qᵉdēšîm*).[776]

The holy persons, male or female (*qādeš*, *qᵉdēšâ*), while considered holy outside Israel, were not recognized in official Yahwism.[777] Although these "holy" personnel (*qdšm*) were active in Babylonian religion in some nonofficial way, men scoffed at them as unsuitable to marry. Rendsburg notes that these functionaries were outlawed in Israel, whatever their real roles were.[778] In 23:18 the biblical text reads literally "wages of a dog [*keleb*]," which some suggest refers to the presence of a healing cult associated with dogs, as was present in Ashkelon, Mesopotamia, and Phoenicia.[779] Thus, the statement may be taken literally, as noted, or as a reference to an officiant (*qādēš*) at a pagan shrine.[780]

Interest (23:19). Interest was charged regularly and widely in the ancient Near East (23:19–20).[781] The laws of Eshnunna and Hammurabi were the first

law codes to provide for interest.[782] Rates of interest were sometimes expressed; the rate charged was normally 20 percent for most loans, but 33 1/3 percent for grain crops.[783] However, “excessive” interest was frowned upon.[784] Israel condemned taking interest from a fellow Israelite because of covenantal compassion.[785]

Loans at high rates of interest were extended throughout the ancient Near East, and temples were often the most used creditors.[786] In some cases interest could be forfeited, such as if a catastrophe struck the debtor.[787] Since the purpose of a loan was to help the poor or someone in a crisis situation, it was unjust to exact interest from the debtor.[788] The excessive rates charged reached 25 percent or more a year, with additional demands tacked on. Certain Assyrian Aramaic inscriptions (ca. 650 B.C.) had this provision.[789]

Especially in a time of need or crisis among the people of Israel interest was not to be placed on fellow Israelites, but Israelites could charge interest to foreigners. In Ugarit class-conscientious free men did not charge each other interest.[790] Persons could stand in pledge and serve as laborers in place of interest.[791] Surety for debt was firmly exacted.[792]

Vows (23:21). Vows in Israel could involve sacrifice before a certain event occurred or afterward. Both situations are covered in this instruction. Old Babylonian vows are recorded in royal inscriptions and in literary texts. One involves offering the image of a dog to the goddess Narina for a future blessing. The other vow offering, a sculpture of a dog to Nintinuga, goddess of healing, expects healing by dogs (licking wounds). Dogs were sacred to Nintinuga.[793]

Cartledge recognizes the function of vow offerings in many sources across the ancient Near East: Sumerian, Akkadian, Egyptian, Hittite, Ugaritic, Old Aramaic, Punic, and Neo-Punic. The function of these offerings reflects uniformly similar usage and purposes as are present in Israel.[794] He observes that vows from the ancient Near East were everywhere (including Egypt) made to a god and conditioned. Fulfillment of vows was public, and prompt performance of vows was often necessary, motivated by personal and/or possibly national distress.[795]



The goddess of healing, Gula, was often portrayed as a dog.
Marie-Lan Nguyen/Wikimedia Commons, courtesy of the Louvre

If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him (24:1). In the ancient Near East divorce was taken seriously. See sidebar on “Divorce.”

Divorce

According to the Old Testament, a husband apparently could divorce his wife simply for personal reasons or for economic purposes. The husband could declare, “You are not my wife,” in an appropriate legal setting.[A-176] By contrast, it was difficult for the wife to divorce her husband or to leave a marriage. A wife does not appear to have had a right to divorce her husband in Mesopotamia.[A-177]

All of the grandiose rituals performed during a marriage ceremony were reversed in divorce proceedings. The husband cut the hem of his wife’s clothing, thus separating them and making it possible for them to remarry. The wife could lose her dowry in this process, though in the case of a blameless wife, her dowry might be returned. A husband could divorce his wife if she could not bear children[A-178] or possibly simply because he wanted to end a marriage relationship and start a new one. In serious cases where the wife had committed an egregious offense, she could be stripped naked and forced out of her house. Divorce became more complex once children were born. The husband

became liable to stiffer penalties to help curb divorce and to protect the wife and offspring economically.[A-179]

Hittite law permitted a husband to divorce a wife and sell her for twelve shekels of silver. Because part of the text is missing, what she may have done to merit her husband's action is not clear.[A-180] In a Late Bronze Age text from Alalakh, a prenuptial agreement states reasons for a divorce: if the wife does not bear children within seven years, a second wife may be taken, and abuse by a husband may be grounds for divorce.[A-181]

The first husband is not permitted to remarry his ex-wife. This may be a restriction placed on a practice that had been taking place in Israel.[A-182] An "abomination to God" clearly indicates "what God hates" (e.g., 23:19). The actions of the husband become perilously close to mirroring adultery in this case,[A-183] according to many commentators and legal experts.[A-184] The act of taking a wife back under these circumstances unfairly humiliates the woman who declared her deficiency publicly (*huttammāʾâ*, "she has been made to declare herself unclean," v. 4). Walton has demonstrated that the causative aspect of the Hebrew verb is a key to understanding this law (vv. 1–4) in context.[A-185] A similar concept of what God hates is inscribed in coffin texts of Tabneh, priest of Astoreth and king of Sidon. The ritual abominations extended to sexual relations.[A-186]



Divorce decree

The Schøyen Collection MS 1955/1, Oslo and London

Recently married (24:5). The joy of a new marriage is respected and adulated. The possibility of producing a child and heir in the family is highest during the first year in the cultural milieu and age spans of the ancient Near East.[796] Note that a military exemption could be suspended in unusual circumstances.[797] This custom was observed at Ugarit, but it was waived in the case of war undertaken on behalf of King Keret in the Ugaritic epic texts.[798]

Millstones (24:6). Millstones were necessary for a household to produce groats, meal, or flour for cooking and food preparation, usually operated by women, slaves, or servants (cf. Ex. 11:5; Isa. 47:2). Two stones were used, so that to take one as a pledge or guarantee removed a family's means of sustenance and livelihood. This insensitive seizing of property was an exception to what the creditor could normally do with property of a debtor.[799]

Millstones were used in homes, and the officials of the state in milling houses used large millstones. The millhouse existed as a part of Mesopotamian culture. Two stone slabs were used, one concave lower stone and an upper stone shaped like a loaf. Grain was placed on the lower stone to be ground. The upper stone was moved up and down by hand on the lower stone to grind the grain between them. Sixteen grindstones have been found in place at Ebla.[800]



Upper and lower millstone for grinding grain
Z. Radovan/www.BibleLandPictures.com

Kidnapping (24:7). Kidnapping was a form of theft and murder because by removing a person from the community, it cut off a fellow Israelite from the community of God's people and from the promised covenant land itself.[801] Kidnapping dealt with persons as if they were merchandise. Code of Hammurabi Law 14 says that the person who kidnapped a young man must be executed. In the Old Babylonian period kidnapping slaves and free persons for enslavement was common.[802]

In Hittite laws, kidnapping did not carry a death penalty. Depending on who the abductor was and who was abducted, the abductor was subject to various penalties: the abductor's house could be taken, six persons in place of the abducted person as restitution might be exacted, twelve shekels of silver paid, or the abducted male slave returned with no further penalty.[803] The purpose of kidnapping in Deuteronomy was probably to enslave the victim or to reap a monetary gain.[804] In ancient law codes, even a betrothed woman could be kidnapped and then married to her kidnapper, who then paid to the previously promised groom any expenses he had paid out before the kidnapping (Law 28). Outright "eloping" occurs with subsequent marriage (Law 37). This act was, however, illegal.

Leprous diseases (24:8). Ancient diseases, since they are known only by the descriptions given, are notoriously difficult to diagnose. A leprocy-like disease was possibly active in Old Babylonian times based on an interpretation of an ancient tablet recording an omen. Sumerian texts describe skin diseases or inflammations as far back as the third millennium B.C., but a correct diagnosis of the disease is impossible.

"Leprosy" was well known in Egypt from the time of the Old Kingdom (ca. 2700–2400 B.C.). Still, a diagnosis of this disease in Egypt as leprosy is not certain. Early claims of leprosy in the Ebers Papyrus (sixteenth century B.C.) have been disproven.[805] Hulse concludes that biblical leprosy is not what is meant by the modern term "leprosy."[806] He prefers to translate the biblical term (*ṣāraʿat*) as "a repulsive scaly skin disease."[807] Scurlock and Andersen claim to have found a definite description of true leprosy (Hansen's Disease) in a Mesopotamian text. Whether it is the biblical disease is, however, not certain.[808]

Lucretius, the famous Roman author (99–55 B.C.), writing very late for our purposes, claims that leprosy originated in Egypt. Well-respected archaeologist Stager considers leprosy to be an erroneous translation of the word *ṣāraʿat*. The word did refer, however, to various skin disorders. He believes that leprosy was unknown in Palestine before the Hellenistic Age.[809]

Return his cloak (24:13). The confiscation of a worker's garment in texts from Ugarit is reported. The action was hotly contested by the owner of the clothing, a farm worker.[810] A duly registered complaint written in biblical Hebrew (ninth century B.C.) on an ostracon records a field hand's vehement charge that his garment had been unjustly seized. Allegedly it was taken because he failed to meet his expected quota of grain. He sought redress through the military governor, Hoshaiah, attempting to have his garment returned.[811] A similar incident involving the return of a cloak is reported in some Syrian Semitic

texts.[812] Keeping these garments humiliated the owner.



Yabneh-yam ostracon (*mesad hashavyahu*)
Z. Radovan/www.BibleLandPictures.com

Do not take advantage of a hired man (24:14). The Hammurabi Code records the pay of a hired man, who received a daily ration of six barleycorns of silver (.279g) for the first five months of the year and five barleycorns of silver (.233g) for the remaining seven months of the year. In Mesopotamia a shekel was equal to about 8.4 grams.[813] One shekel equaled 180 barleycorns (one barleycorn = 1/180 of a shekel).[814] A worker received, therefore, less than .78 of a shekel per month for five months (.279g x 28 days) and only .65 of a shekel per month for seven months (.233 g. x 28 days)—total is nine shekels of silver per year.

Weighing procedures in ancient Mesopotamia allowed for a margin of error of three percent or more, and the absolute value of an ancient shekel in not certain.[815] Skilled craftsmen were hired at a rate of four to five barleycorns of silver per day, but they probably worked fewer hours. The hired man depended on his daily wage to survive and to care for his family.[816] The Bible strongly condemns any failure to pay the wages of a day laborer.[817]

Fathers shall not be put to death for their children (24:16). In Middle Assyrian law a husband and children could not suffer a penalty for a wife who had blasphemed.[818] This seems to refer to the disallowance of vicarious liability

for the act of a wife/woman only, for a woman was responsible for any debts, crimes, or offenses of her husband.[819]

In the Code of Hammurabi several laws (e.g., Laws 230–32) stipulate a talion (eye for eye) mentality in the punishments. If faulty construction of a house resulted in the death of the owner's son or slave, the builder's son or slave was to be put to death. If the house caused the destruction of property or goods, they must be replaced. Greenberg maintains that Israel's laws differed from other ancient Near Eastern laws that allowed vicarious punishment and maintains that a principle of individual responsibility was both early in Israel and governed all biblical law.[820]

Alien (24:17). This powerful injunction of social justice is widespread and found in documents at Ugarit, in Akkadian texts, and in texts from Nuzi.[821] A common social and legal concern for this class of persons was part of the ancient Near Eastern culture, but nowhere as it was in Israel.[822] Four classes of persons outside the normal safety nets of these ancient societies are highlighted: widow, orphan, alien (*gēr*),[823] and poor.[824] The alien is not mentioned along with the other three in the law collections outside Israel.[825]

The Moabite Stone records the death of *grn* and *grt*, male and female sojourners, among those whom Mesha, the king of Moab, killed in his war against Israel.[826] All four groups were vulnerable and subject to abuse. Israel had experienced firsthand what it was to be an alien in a strange land and culture, and thus the alien was specifically written into her laws. Showing hospitality to the stranger was far from providing for them in the laws of a nation.[827] These aliens were resident in various countries but did not enjoy citizenship; hence, they were denied significant legal rights. Israel's God heard their cry.

Widow (24:17). The widow throughout the ancient Near East was often cared for by special legislation.[828] See sidebar on "Widows, Orphans, and the Poor."

Widows, Orphans, and the Poor

Assyrian laws required sons to care for their mothers.[A-187] A creditor could not seize a widow's cloak.[A-188] In the ancient Near East kings were supposed to be guarantors of social righteousness, and a righteous king did not deliver up a widow or orphan to abuse. The ancient reform laws of Uruinimgina (ca. 2400 B.C.), Hammurabi (1728–1686), and Ur-Nammu all contained a provision similar to this. Judicial

reforms and special acts of concern by the king were also embedded in the matrix of society to protect these classes of persons when necessary. The king's own royal subordinates were to follow his example.[A-189]

As in Israel, a king's reign or his own life could be extended if he protected this group.[A-190] Such righteous action pleased the gods. The gods themselves (e.g., Shamash, Ningirsu, Amon, Re, Ptah) were expected to care for these classes of individuals. The wisdom literature of the ancient Near East expressed its concern about the welfare of these persons.

In Mesopotamian wisdom literature (e.g., Babylonian Theodicy, ca. 1000 B.C.), concern and care for the weak is stressed. In Egyptian literature the poor, the widow, and the orphan were the objects of special care of kings and monarchs from at least the time of the twelfth dynasty (ca. 1991–1000). In such works as the Eloquent Peasant,[A-191] Instructions of Merikare, Instructions of Amenemhet, and Instructions of Amenemope, concern is evident. Ramesses III boasts to the god Ptah of caring for widows and orphans.[A-192]

At Ugarit the famous righteous man Dan(i)el set himself to judge diligently the cause of the widow and orphan.[A-193] In Israel one Lord, not multiple gods, exercised justice and was the source of righteous laws protecting the widow, orphan, poor, or alien. To abuse the rights of any of these persons led to a curse from the Lord. The Supreme Judge set forth the way and all others were to follow that lead.[A-194]



Emaciated man holding a bowl

Werner Forman Archive/The Egyptian Museum, Berlin

Flogged in his presence … not give him more than forty lashes (25:2–3). This law seeks to protect a guilty party from being destroyed emotionally and spiritually by excessive humiliation. The Code of Hammurabi (Law 202) limits the number of lashes to sixty for insubordination. Note also the New Testament, where thirty-nine lashes were prescribed to ensure that the law not be broken (2 Cor. 11:24).[829] The "lashes" were likely administered with something like a rod (cf. Ex. 21:20). In the Hammurabi Code an oxtail whip was used in public to administer punishment. In the Middle Assyrian Laws flogging normally entailed from thirty to a hundred lashes.[830] Fifty lashes was the most often prescribed penalty, though the total range was from five to a hundred.

Tablet A (57) instructs the punishment to be done “in the presence of the judges.”[831] This provision guaranteed that the penalty was administered and was delivered as prescribed. According to the status of the guilty person and what the offense had been, an appropriate penalty was framed. A harlot who was spotted in the street wearing a veil to disguise herself was flogged fifty times with staves or rods, and hot pitch was poured on her head.[832]

Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain (25:4). In Israel work animals were to be treated with compassion (cf. 5:14, 19).[833] The ox was an immensely important piece of property and an invaluable work animal throughout the ancient Near East (cf. Ex. 21:28–32, 35–36).[834] It was the primary work animal in agriculture. Oxen pulled sledges that had been outfitted with studs of flint or basalt embedded into wooden boards. They pulled these across the grain to loosen the grain from the stalks. In Sumerian laws, later reformed by Uruinimgina (ca. 2351–2342 B.C.), the “oxen of the gods” plowed the onion garden of the king. These were oxen dedicated to temple service and its holy precincts.[835]

Oxen were watched carefully, controlled, and properly contained according to Hittite law (prior to ca. 1650 B.C.; cf. Ex. 21:26–36) and according to the Laws of Eshnunna.[836] Specific laws governed the rental of an ox for hire.[837] The seemingly ubiquitous case of a goring ox is now also known at Nuzi,[838] but is not yet paralleled in Egyptian texts. However, an Egyptian relief pictures an ox that has stopped to eat grain and it has no muzzle on it.[839]



Ox treading grain in Egyptian wall painting
Manfred Näder, Gabana Studios, Germany

Duty of a brother-in-law (25:5). Hebrew *yābām* refers to "brother-in-law," while Latin *levir* means "husband's brother." See sidebar on "Issues in Levirate Marriage."

Issues in Levirate Marriage

The practice described here (still followed among some Arabs today) was well known in the ancient Near East. The family was perpetuated and the inheritance was kept in the family.[A-195] Levirate marriage was practiced at Ugarit, at least at the royal level of society (ca. 1345–1336 B.C.), with reference to the childless Arhalba and his brother Niqmepa.[A-196] Hittite laws and possibly laws at Nuzi recognized this marriage practice.[A-197] In Hittite law a widowed wife may, if necessary, marry her brother-in-law, her father-in-law, or the son of her brother-in-law.[A-198]

In some Hittite and Assyrian laws the issue is not whether the deceased had sons, but rather the need to support the widow in whom the father had a large investment through the bride price.[A-199] More recent textual finds from Emar emphasize the desire of legislation like this to keep property within the family.[A-200] Concern for the preservation of seed and inheritance is found[A-201] late into the time of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (273/272 B.C.).

In the more ancient Middle Assyrian laws the wife of a son who died could be given by the son's father to another of his sons, even if he were betrothed to someone else but not yet married. But if the father of that betrothed daughter does not agree to this, the father of the deceased son may proceed as planned and give the betrothed bride to his son. Or he may withdraw from the entire process. If a betrothed daughter dies before the marriage, her father may give his prospective son-in-law another daughter, or the betrothed groom may withdraw.

If a wife's husband dies while they are living in her

father's house, if she has borne no children, her father-in-law may marry her to the son of his choice, or she could be given in marriage by her father to her father-in-law. This option was not permitted in Israel (cf. Gen. 38:26). If her husband and father-in-law both died, she became a widow and was free to do as she pleased. If the wife had borne children, she was free to live in a house for her and her son in her father's household.[A-202]

The Family of the Unsandaled (25:10). Sandals of various types were worn in Canaan, Syria, and Mesopotamia from the most ancient times. They could be used in a symbolic way at Nuzi, perhaps as token payments.[840] At Nuzi the seller removed his foot from a piece of land he was selling and placed the buyer's foot in its place. Then shoes were transferred. A pair of shoes and garments is presented as a fictitious payment to "accommodate" some unusual transactions.[841] The brother-in-law (25:10) who refused to honor his dead brother by preserving his seed and inheritance brought shame on himself and his house. Honor, shame, and covenant relations were central concerns in the ancient Near East.[842]

If two men are fighting (25:11). The harshness of the penalty in this law is surprising.[843] In the Middle Assyrian Laws, if in a fight between two men, a woman intervenes and crushes a testicle of one of them, one of her fingers is cut off. If the man suffers the damage or loss of the other testicle because of complications, then the woman's eyes were torn out (or, possibly, both nipples were ripped off).[844] In the second case, in both Deuteronomy and the Middle Assyrian Laws, the penalty approaches lex talionis and the offender suffers punishment according to her deed.



Fighting men

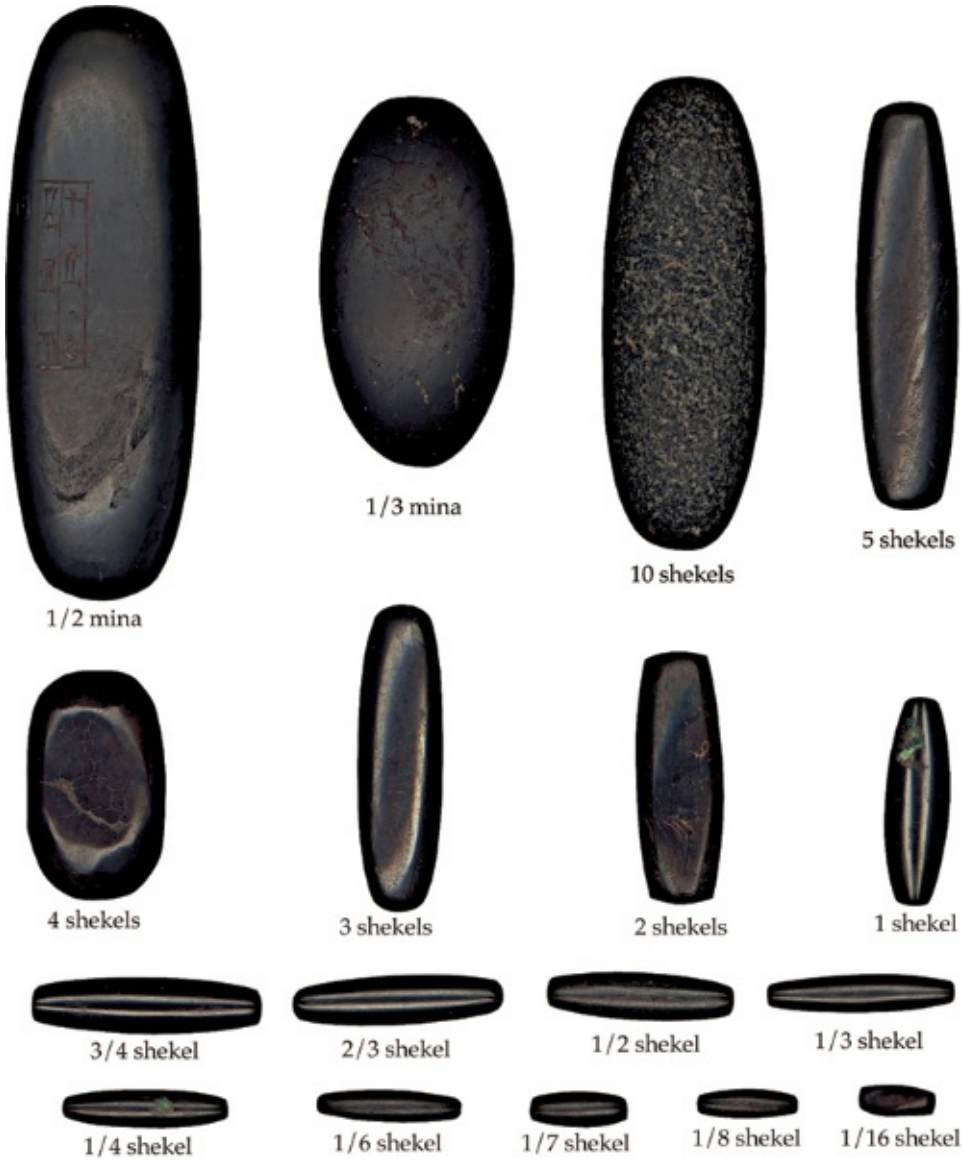
Manfred Näder, Gabana Studios, Germany

Differing weights (25:13). Israel's God loved honesty and hated deception. In the ancient Near East the king was especially responsible to see that the weights used in business or personal transactions were fair and that everyone used the same set of weights. Unfortunately a uniform universal system of weights was not adopted in ancient times, but whatever system was used to begin a transaction had to be used to complete it. A lender could potentially sell using one set of weights, but receive payment using another set.[845] In the Laws of Ur-Nammu (2112–2095 B.C.) a faltering attempt was made to standardize weights and measures.[846]

In the Egyptian Instruction of Amenemope, the falsification of weights was prohibited, as well as "leaning" on them. Measuring devices were not to be tampered with, and the god Thoth had his sacred ape (or baboon) that watched constantly over the system of scales in use.[847] In the document relating the "negative confession of sins," the confessor asserts that he has not "added to … the balance" or "tampered with … plummet of the scales."[848] The Elegant Peasant in Egypt mentions the evil practice of "tipping the scales" in one's favor.[849]

In Mesopotamia a specific provision in a contract could stipulate that a certain standard be employed, such as the mina of Shamash (i.e., the system of balances

employed in transactions in the temple of Shamash).[850] A cheating merchant, if caught, could forfeit everything due to him.[851] In a hymn to the god Shamash, it is asserted that Shamash was especially wary of a misuse of honest weights and measures.[852]



Complete set for weighing precious metals in the palace

The Schøyen Collection MS 5088/1–55, Oslo and London

Amalek (25:19). The Amalekites were nomadic/seminomadic people and were descendants of Esau. It was not only Israel who blotted out memories of whole peoples at the command of her God, such as Amalek (Ex. 17:14–16), who had, in fact, first tried to destroy Israel at her birth at the exodus. Pharaoh Merneptah (1209 B.C.) laid down his claim that he had stamped out the seed of

Israel—"its seed is not."[853] The irony of the claim is that it is, in fact, presently our major ancient Near Eastern unequivocal witness to the existence of Israel's "seed" in the land of Canaan at this early date!

Wandering Aramean (26:5). The Arameans are attested as early as the fourteenth century (Amenophis III, 1380; Merneptah, 1200 B.C.) on the west bend of the Euphrates River. They then appear in Syria, to the west and south.[854] The Israelites clearly recognized a biological and geographical connection between themselves and the Arameans. Nahor, Bethuel, and Laban had remained in Aram as Arameans. Wives of Isaac and Jacob came from this Aramaic branch of the family (Gen. 24:28). Hence, Deuteronomy 26:5 seems justified, as an assertion of origin for Israel, as a particular branch of the much larger classification of people known as Arameans (cf. Gen. 10:22–23). Some scholars prefer to see "Aramean" as primarily a geographical term rather than an ethnic term.[855]

It is not possible to write a comprehensive history of the Arameans, but Lemaire thinks this verse probably indicates a genuine connection of Israel with those Arameans who appear in the Mari texts (ca. 1100–960 B.C.). Assyrian royal inscriptions mention them, and the oldest Aramaic inscriptions are located in the second half of the ninth century. Fleming suggests that "Israelites who settled the north-central hill country during the Iron I period carried with them the tradition of Syrian origins."[856] He suggests that these Aramean connections could have been imbedded in persistent social or political institutions across time.[857]



Faience tile of Asiatic from Tell el-Yehudiyeh

Guillaume Blanchard/Wikimedia Commons, courtesy of the Louvre

Tenth of all your produce in the third year (26:12). God's people were to care for each other. By giving a tithe ("tenth") of their produce for the needy they demonstrated their compassion for their neighbor. Social concern and charity have been evidenced by archaeological finds at Arad in the Negev. There "mixing bowls" were found in which food had been placed for a poor man.[858] Israel was enjoined to care for the widow, orphan, and poor. The Levite, a central player in Israel's cultic and ritual activities, lived off of the cult and produce from the levitical cities. "Holy" bowls dedicated to the priests have been found and were used by priests with respect to their portion of sacrificial foods (cf. Lev. 22:14–16).

Then say to the LORD your God (26:13–14). After a positive affirmation of obedience to protocol, a negative confession in verse 14 disavows any sacrifice to the dead, a ritual prescribed by even the wise Ahikar: "My son, pour out the wine upon the graves of the righteous and do not drink it with iniquitous men."[859] In this instruction it is possible to see a reference to giving a part of one's tithe to Baal, the "Dead One," who, however, was purportedly resurrected again and again in the spring according to the fertility rites recorded in the Baal Epic at Ugarit.[860] This is also, of course, a reference to the fact that a funerary cult was to be avoided that involved feeding, nourishing, and communicating with the dead of a family.

Such tasks were passed on within the family at Nuzi, Emar, and perhaps at Ugarit. Mari and Ebla seem to lack these practices.[861] This negative confession formula was also spoken in Egypt, and the confessor specifically disavowed ever having been guilty of any sins with respect to the temple, gods, or other holy things, including foods.[862]



Mourning procession

Werner Forman Archive/E. Strouhal

You have declared this day.… And the LORD has declared this day … (26:16–19). Assyrian kings and their vassals exchanged oaths.[863] Various ancient Near Eastern treaties/covenants reflect this clearly. Later Assyrian treaties include the assertions by the vassal that the vassal "does swear" to the terms of the treaty; later vassal treaties include actions by word and ceremony that were to effect the treaty.

Earlier Hittite treaties/covenants featured this as well. Extensive ratification rites are included in the Hittite treaty between Kurtiwaza and Suppiluliumas. In this case "Hatti proclaims the form and content of the oath [r. 11–34] and

Kurtiwaza [vassal] himself [‘I’] then actually pronounces the oath for himself and his Hurrian subjects … then the Hurrians themselves get into the act.”[864] In the expanded covenant/treaty of Deuteronomy these verses connect the material in chapter 26 to chapter 28.[865] Even the gods exchanged oaths in marriage, as when Dumuzi and Inanna were married.[866]

Ceremonies (27:1–10)

Set up some large stones and coat them with plaster (27:2). Some Syrian-Palestinian treaty/covenant sections provided engraved blessings and cursings.[867] These stones were whitewashed with an application of lime plaster, and then laws were written on them (cf. Dan. 5:5).[868] Several such inscriptions are known at Succoth and Kuntillet ʿAjrud. Many other stone inscriptions are well known from the ancient Near East.[869]

This method and type of writing and this peculiar preparation reflects Egyptian influence (cf. Josh. 24:27). In Egypt black ink was used, especially for decorative flourishes or headings. Red ocher or red oxide was substituted for the carbon. In Egypt and Syria-Palestine stone was used for permanence and for public display. Plaster was used to improve the writing quality of the stone.[870]

A. Zertal argues that a stone ruin he uncovered on Mount Ebal on the upper part of the northeast part of the mountain should be tied to Deuteronomy 27:1–26 and Joshua 8:30–35.[871] Yet no part of the inscribed stones has been recovered to date, so no final verdict on Zertal's claim is yet possible. Zertal considers the location, type of site, and the probable period of the site as highly suggestive in a positive sense to tie it to this passage.[872] Kempinski challenged Zertal's interpretation of his finds on Mount Ebal, claiming that Zertal has found an Iron Age I watchtower.[873]



Stone altar from Megiddo

Z. Radovan/www.BibleLandPictures.com

Blessings and Curses (27:11–28:68)

These tribes shall stand on Mount Gerizim (27:12). The ceremonial ritual that celebrates Israel's entrance into the land and seals the covenant includes an actual ceremony and recitation of curses and a full inscription of the blessings (28:1–14) and curses (28:15–68). Kitchen lists the oaths (29:12–15) and ceremonies (ch. 27) as additional features of the adapted covenant form employed in Deuteronomy.[874]

Mount Gerizim (2849 ft.) and Mount Ebal (1405 ft.) are twin mountains situated in the central Samarian hills. Mount Ebal is slightly north of Gerizim, and the city of Shechem (modern Nablus) lies slightly east at the base of these mountains. East-west access into the hill country of Samaria/Ephraim is through these mountains. Today a Samaritan community has a synagogue in Nablus and celebrates Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles every year on Gerazim.[875]



Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal from east

Todd Bolen/www.BiblePlaces.com

To bless the people … to pronounce curses (27:12–13). These introductory verses and the ceremony reciting key curses constitute a ritual that Israel was to carry out when she entered the land. The list of curses and blessings of the renewal of the Sinai covenant is contained in Deuteronomy 28. The presence of blessings *and* curses argues strongly for a Late Bronze Age (ca. 1550–1200 B.C.)

origin for the treaty form of Deuteronomy itself.

Kitchen has shown that there are (1) ancient Near Eastern parallels for nearly every curse in Deuteronomy 28, and (2) most parallels (ca. thirty treaties examined dated before 1200 B.C.) link up to the second millennium much better than with the seventh century. But, significantly, there are "links" with both. Kitchen's claims and results are based on his summary of eighty to ninety documents available for study. He demonstrates parallels to the curses in texts and inscriptions from Zimri-Lim, Eshnunna, Hammurabi, Hittite documents (various kings and vassals), Arameans, Mari, Neo-Assyrian, and Kudurrus (so-called boundary stones from Babylonia). He finds parallels of varying significance to all verses in Deuteronomy 28:16–63. Verses 64–68 repeat and expand on earlier verses.[876] The curses in 27:15–26 are sometimes unique to Israel; sometimes they reflect a common ancient Near Eastern body of laws and curses.

The Levites are to recite and the people are to respond. A text recounting the birth of a "double deity" at Ugarit contains a ceremonial type of rubric. It seems to reflect a cultic-ceremonial usage: "Seven times they are to pronounce (these verses) next to the ʿO-room and those who enter respond."[877]

Leads the blind astray (27:18). The blind were to be treated with care and compassion.

Blindness was relatively common in the ancient Near East (see 10:18; 24:17 and comments). The Egyptian Teaching of Amenemope (ca. 1300 B.C.) prohibits laughing at a blind person or a dwarf or doing injury to a lame person. Blindness could, however, be visited on a mortal who has offended a god in some way.[878] In the myth of Enki, god of wisdom, and Ninmah, the mother goddess, various kinds of handicapped persons are created. Enki gave them appropriate roles. The one born blind was placed before the king in a place of honor as the chief musician. Each disabled person is placed appropriately.[879]



Image shows detail of a relief from the tomb of Meryre. The temple musicians are depicted with deformed eyes, a possible indication of blindness.

Werner Forman Archive

Sleeps with father's wife (27:20). The accursed sexual behaviors mentioned in verses 20–23 are condemned in several ancient law codes. A plethora of punishments were meted out to the persons involved, such as banishment, drowning, monetary restitution, loss of dowry and potential daughter-in-law, burning, or disinheritance.[880] Hittite laws considered sexual relations with one's mother, daughter, or son to be a capital crime, but the king could spare the offender's life.[881] Having sexual relations with a living brother's wife was a capital crime.[882] Bestiality was permitted with certain animals, especially in the Hittite laws. The penalty for lying carnally with cattle, a pig, dog, or sheep was death, but, strangely, not so with a horse or mule (no punishment). But the king could spare the guilty person's life.

Kills his neighbor (27:24). Murder of whatever kind was usually punishable by blood revenge or compensation. In Assyria both options were available in all the periods for which we have texts.[883] Interestingly, among the Hittites only compensatory penalties were in place except for a royal murder, which was still able to be settled by compensation or blood revenge. Hoffner believes that the relatives of a murdered person could demand the death penalty for the murderer if they so desired.[884] In Babylonia, evidence suggests that the death penalty was an option, at least for wives and their accomplices who were involved in murdering husbands.[885]

Bribe (27:25). The one who took a bribe was usually a judge or official of

some kind (cf. 16:18–20), so it is probable that a judge is in mind here.[886] Tigay perceives a reference here to a corrupt death penalty rendered by the judge. In the Code of Hammurabi if a judge who has officially decided a case and rendered a sealed judgment changes his decision, that judge is condemned and ejected from the assembly and place of judgment permanently. Bribery may have blinded him to act perversely.

A text found in Assurbanipal's library (668–663 B.C.), but which undoubtedly has a much earlier origin, praises the universal sun god, Shamash. Shamash punished a person who accepted bribes, because he was perverting justice. This text notes that a person who rejects bribes would likewise intercede for the weak, who could be innocent victims.[887]

Carefully follow all his commands (28:1). Verses 1–3 state the conditions under which the following blessings will be received, a feature common to other ancient Near Eastern lists of blessing. But it is the king whose honor is primary, not the honor of the particular god involved, as it is in Israel. The king implores that those who observe his laws and respect his inscriptions may receive the pleasure and blessing of a god or gods. For example, Lipit-Ishtar, king of the First Dynasty of Isin (1934–1924 B.C.), offers these blessings for the one who respects his laws, promotes his stele, and does not place his name over the kings (pseudepigraphy was strongly condemned centuries before the intertestamental era): "May he be granted life and breadth of long days; may he raise his neck to heaven in the Ekur temple; may the god Enlil's brilliant countenance be turned upon him from above."[888]

Hammurabi implores that those who follow his laws may have their reign lengthened and may shepherd their people with justice by the help of Shamash, god of justice. The kings of Egypt and Hatti wished goodwill on those who kept their treaty/covenant. Hundreds are called upon to bless any Egyptian or Hittite who keeps the Hittite treaty.[889]

All these blessings will come upon you … if you obey the LORD your God (28:2). The blessings of the covenantal document are all paralleled to some extent in other ancient Near Eastern documents, but no document presents them in their entirety in one place or in the order presented in the biblical text.[890] Blessings are found in ancient, archaic treaties of the third millennium (ca. 2500–2300 B.C.), such as in the Naram-Sin materials; in early law "codes" that were sometimes part of a treaty/covenant from the third millennium into the early second millennium (ca. 2100–1700), such as Ur-Nammu, Lipit-Ishtar, Hammurabi; in treaties/covenants of the late second millennium (ca. 1400–1200), such as Hittite treaties. In Aramaic or Assyrian treaties from about 900–

650 blessings are not featured. The Sinai covenant and its renewals with blessings (short) and curses (long) best fit the era 1400–1200 B.C.[891]

Blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out (28:6). The far-ranging blessings of 28:3–6 are covered in a summary way in a treaty hoping for peace, health, happiness, and success on persons and their country in Hittite and Egyptian/Hittite treaties.[892] The higher echelons of society and government receive special emphasis. Suppiluliuma (1370–1330 B.C.) implores that Kutiwaza may return to its high place among the nations that it had before, and that it may prosper and expand.

However, mixed with the blessings for Israel from her God is a clear recognition and realization that she is his holy people, if they keep his covenantal laws. This overarching theological concept is not paralleled in the blessings of the other ancient Near Eastern treaties. To breach or break a covenant or treaty, which was, in fact, an act of unfaithfulness by a covenant partner, brought down terrible curses on an offending party. The Hittite king Mursilis II (ca. 1330–1295 B.C.) attributed a terrible plague upon his people during his reign to the people's failure and the failure of Suppiluliuma I (ca. 1370–1330) to keep a treaty with the Egyptians even though it had been enacted under a previous king.[893]

Whatever one makes of the dating of Deuteronomy and other critical issues involved, it is clear that Israel at some levels functioned as any other ancient Near Eastern nation, but at the significant level of a theological worldview, ethics, and life she was wholly other, a people holy unto their own exclusive God. Exile was the ultimate covenant threat (28:36, 41, 48, 63, 64–68). She would, in fact, in shame and humility retrace her history and birth (v. 68). There is no essential parallel to this overall phenomenon.

The sky over your head will be bronze (28:23). The depiction of a drought featuring a bronze sky and iron ground is matched in a canonical West Semitic inscription that may go back to the seventh century B.C.: "The earth was bronze, the heavens, of iron, the sod, in a bad/arid state."[894] Esarhaddon's vassal treaty curses mention the soil being turned to iron and the sky to copper.[895]

Boils … tumors (28:25–29). Verses 25–29 encompass curses that result in Israel's complete defeat and humiliation at the hands of her enemies, in addition to a terrifying buffeting by plagues from the Lord because she has broken the covenant (cf. Ex. 15:22–24).[896] Parallels exist in Aramaic and Akkadian with curses listed in the vassal treaties of Esarhaddon, but only partially and not in the same order. This is the situation with most of the curses found in this chapter.

Ugaritic, Aramaic, and Akaddian texts speak of blindness as a curse because of murder.[897] The epilogue in the Code of Hammurabi contains relatively close parallels concerning dispersion and exile, defeat by enemies (v. 25), boils, tumors, itch (v. 27), blindness, and mental confusion (vv. 28–29).[898]

Eat the fruit of the womb (28:53). Ugaritic texts describe prayers offered on behalf of a city under siege.[899] Sumerian texts record deaths from famine at the time of the destruction of Ur and Sumer.[900] The horrors of siege warfare often resulted in unbelievable acts of human cannibalism. The ancient story of Atraḫasis contains a description of cannibalism in a city oppressed with hunger.[901]

These conditions were also set forth in the vassal treaties of Esarhaddon (ca. 690 B.C.): "Mother shall [bar the door to] her daughter, may you eat in your hunger the flesh of your children … let dogs and pigs eat your flesh, and may your spirit have no one to take care of and pour libations to him."[902] A similar description of a kind and gentle person, as given here, depicts the king of Babylon.[903]

Covenant Renewal, Oaths, Restoration, Charges to the Nation (29:1–30:20)

Terms of the covenant (29:1).[904] This chapter, as previous chapters, indicates that Israel was to seal this covenant with an oath. The source of this covenant is the Lord God, not Moses, its human mediator. In Syria the god Assur made a covenant with this people, as recorded on an amulet found at ancient Hadattu, Syria, dating to the seventh century B.C. and written in a local Canaanite dialect using Aramaic script. The text, of course, invokes other gods, such as sons of El, leaders of a group of Holy Ones, Baʾal, and even the heavens and eternal earth.[905] This text involves incantations against demons and other potentially harmful beings, including a demon (the Wolf) that carried off children in the night. On the basis of this eternal covenant with Assur, the person appeals to Assur and his covenant for protection and security. The covenant/incantation ritual is sealed with an oath.

But to this day the LORD has not given you a mind that understands (29:4). God created human beings with the ability to see and hear (Ex. 4:11–12), but spiritual, moral, and intellectual perception is in mind here. All these functions work together in the Egyptian Ennead of gods: "eyes see, the ears' hearing … to the heart [which] causes every conclusion to emerge."[906] Ears and eyes that function properly inform the heart (*lēb*), which produces knowledge, speech, and action that is also morally and ethically discerning. This is expressed in the action of the Egyptian god Ptah, creator of the world. The sight of the eyes, the hearing of the ears, and the sense of smell are connected to Ptah's heart, understanding, and intelligence.[907]

For Israel to truly "hear" with their whole being they needed to keep the covenant, but they had not done so. Only faithful obedience to the Lord and his covenant could open an epistemological channel leading to God's giving them an understanding mind (*lēb*; cf. 6:4).

I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way (29:19). The vassal treaty of Esarhaddon (690–669 B.C.), with the god Assur as witness, puts forth similar conditions: "If you, as you stand on the soil where this oath (is sworn), swear the oath with *words and lips (only)*, do not swear with your entire heart, do not transmit it to your sons … if you take this curse upon yourselves but do not plan to keep the treaty of Esarhaddon."[908] Duplicity and deceit were not acceptable to Assur or to Esarhaddon. How much more so to the Lord of Israel, the God and true King of Israel, who alone was the source of his

covenants and knew human hearts.

Salt and sulfur (29:23). Burning, salting, and weeds (?) are mentioned in inscriptions from Sefire in a treaty context as curses on those who break the treaty or covenant.[909] Salt and sulfur wither and dry up vegetation. The cities of Jericho and Shechem experienced this kind of devastation.[910]

It is because this people abandoned the covenant of the LORD (29:25). Assurbanipal records that all of the kings he set up in his provinces rebelled and broke their covenant and oaths. Therefore, he proceeded to punish them with the curses contained in the treaties.[911] Covenant rebels were given their due—the curses of their respective treaties or covenants. The gods involved were the covenant prosecutors and executioners through the legal and military machinery of the suzerain whom the vassals had betrayed.

In the case of Assurbanipal (668–633 B.C.) the treaty language, as in Deuteronomy, anticipates the questions of an astonished rebel vassal who asks, "On account of what have these calamities befallen Arabia?" He himself responds, "Because we did not keep the solemn oaths (sworn by) Assur, because we offended the friendliness of Assurbanipal, the king, beloved of Enlil."[912] The guilty vassals could not claim lack of knowledge, for the terms of the covenant or treaty and the will of the gods and suzerain stood in the publicly accessible document that had been sworn by all the parties involved (cf. 29:29).



Vassal treaty of Esarhaddon

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What I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach (30:11). The ancient hero Gilgamesh sought to discover the secret to life by seeking out Utnapishtim (Babylonian Noah). Gilgamesh asserts, "I traversed difficult mountains, and I rowed all the seas,"[913] in order to gain the secret of life from Utnapishtim.[914] He further declares that "man, the tallest, cannot stretch to heaven."[916] The origin of this magnificent epic lies far back into hoary antiquity (ca. 2000 B.C. or earlier). It has Sumerian analogues and predecessors.

Ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature found it impossible to discover the way to life. Hidden was the reasoning and the intentions of the gods, as the Righteous Sufferer declares.[916] In the Babylonian Theodicy the friend of a sufferer indicates that people cannot grasp the divine purpose.[917] The pessimist of Babylonian wisdom asked, "Who is tall enough to ascend to heaven?"[918] The Babylonians believed that mortals who dwell on earth could not attain the wisdom of the gods, who dwell in heaven.[919] Not so for the Israelites, whose God had clearly and publicly set forth what was right in his eyes for his people to follow.

See, I set before you today life and prosperity (30:15). To live was to receive the blessings; to die was to encounter the divine displeasure through the curses. Thus, two ways are set before Israel—life or death. The Babylonian Noah, Utnapishtim, was encouraged to seek life by following the words of the gods, with the result that prosperity and health would follow.[920] Pharaoh Akenaten, who alone knew the Aten (sun disk/god), believed that to follow him was to experience life.[921] The king's heart was to stay focused on his god.[922]

The victory stele of Piye (ca. 734 B.C.), king of Egypt, reports that as he approached a town he sent messengers saying, "Look, two ways are before you; choose as you wish. Open, you live; close, you die." Those who follow the word of his lord prolong their life, but shorten it if they rebel.[923] Moral behavior was a key to a good and long life in Egyptian thinking.[924]

I call heaven and earth as witnesses (30:19). Calling out witnesses and writing down a list of divine witnesses to a covenant or treaty in the Late Bronze Age Hittite documents was tedious but necessary in order to activate the covenant. In the treaty between the Hittite king Mursilus and Duppi-Teshub the list of deities and witnesses begins, "Let the thousand gods stand by for this oath! Let them observe and listen!"[925] The list runs for forty lines and concludes with "mountains, rivers, springs, great sea, heaven and earth, winds, clouds. Let these be witnesses to the treaty and to the oath!"[926] For the king and country, but also for the king's agents who were faithful, a blessing of long life was extended.[927] In addition to life, health, multitudes of years, and length of days were rewards for the faithful covenant keeper.

Succession, Deposition, and Recitation of Text (31:1–29)

I am now a hundred and twenty years old (31:2). Old age was a blessing from the gods in the thinking of the ancient Near East.[928] The kings before the flood in the Sumerian King List were attributed heroic lives of thousands of years.[929] The age of one hundred and ten represented a fulfilled life in Egypt.[930] Ramesses II lived to be about ninety. Moses reaches the biblical ideal of one hundred and twenty years (Gen. 6:3; cf. 50:26).

Ptah-Hotep, one of Egypt's ancient viziers and wise men, instructed his son concerning how to live and think in order to enjoy a successful and long life. He himself attained to one hundred and ten years through the favor of the king and the god Horus.[931] In more recent texts found at Emar the ideal age of one hundred and twenty years has surfaced and was already known in Enlil and Namzitara.[932] The average lifespan in the ancient Near East was, in fact, only about forty-five years.[933] Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Joshua, Job, and a high priest named Jehoida were the only persons beyond Genesis who lived to one hundred years or more.

Various phrases used to describe old age, such as "length of days," have been found outside the Old Testament at Kuntillet ʿAjrud (ninth to eighth century B.C.). Ancient Near Eastern parallels in West Semitic and Akkadian occur.[934] Nabonidus, a king of the Neo-Babylonian era, had a mother who was made famous for her old age by the god Sin, who extended her life and, more importantly, maintained her full mental capacity and reasoning powers.[935] Nabonidus himself prayed to Sin for a "present life of long days."[936]

At the end of every seven years … you shall read this law (31:10–11). As elsewhere in the ancient Near East, the Lord required a regular reading of the covenant. See sidebar on "Reading the Covenant Document."

Reading the Covenant Document

Hittite treaties provided for the deposition of treaty/covenant documents (of whatever material: iron, bronze, clay, stone, silver, etc.). It was desirable to have a copy of these documents on file, but also to make future public periodic reading possible. The document was deposited "before the god" and was read in the presence of the king and the "sons of the Hatti country." Curses were declared against anyone who would be so bold as to remove, damage, destroy, or

deface the treaty or covenant document. Curses were set forth for the person who would change the document.[A-203]

At Emar in Syria a *zukru* festival[A-204] reflects a number of significant parallels between it and certain features of the covenant in Deuteronomy. A covenant renewal ceremony was held every seven years, which parallels the seven-year cycle of covenant reading and covenant renewal laid out in 31:10–11 at the Feast of Booths. The ritual calendar of this religious festival began on the first full moon of the year.[A-205] This *zukru* festival included all those who functioned as the essential parties in the festival. The king was there, though he was not the key participant, as was the practice in Israel (v. 12). The seventh year was also special in Ugarit.[A-206]

Seven-year cycles with a preparatory period in the sixth year are also found.[A-207] In the sixth year preparations were made for the seventh year.[A-208] The *zukru* festival was directed to the gods, a total of seventy, and involved a treaty or covenant bond between Emar and its god Dagan (grain god).[A-209]

Present yourselves at the Tent of Meeting (31:14). This Tent of Meeting (*ʾōhel môʿēd*; cf. 1:2) refers to the portable sanctuary that the Lord instructed Israel to build and where he met with them to communicate through Moses and the appointed priests (Ex. 25–31; 35–40). In keeping with the small size of portable Near Eastern sanctuaries, Friedman has argued that it was quite small, only 10.5 meters long and 6–8 meters wide.[937] Other scholars have demurred.[938] Tents were ubiquitous in the ancient Near East, and at Ugarit a tent served as the dwelling place of the high god El.[939] The word "assembly" in Akkadian (*puʿuru*) is combined with the Akkadian Hebrew cognate (*môʿidi*) to express "the gathering of the (divine) assembly."[940]

The camp of Ramesses II in the mid-thirteenth century is currently the closest analogue to the tabernacle and its setting in Exodus 25–31; 35–40. It appears on a temple wall at the Abu Simbel temple.[941] Key terminology used of the wilderness tabernacle is present at Mari five hundred years earlier.[942]

Rest with your fathers (31:16). Archaeological evidence in Egypt at the Dothan ancestral tomb suggests that the ancient Near Eastern world thought of the deceased as being reunited with their ancestors upon burial in the family

tomb(s). This tomb held levels[943] of interment from 1400–1100 B.C. Pottery, various vessels, furnishings, and personal possessions accompanied a burial and were placed around the body. Everyday needs were provided. The tomb was a temporary "way station" for the deceased on their journey to the netherworld. Burial objects were not added or disturbed until the body had totally decomposed. Then the bones were moved and the process repeated for the next corpse.

This activity and function of the family grave may add some light to the biblical phrase "rest with your fathers."[944] In Mesopotamia families were to care for their dead through a daily cult. A pious son presented regular daily offerings (*kispu ginû*) to his father and other ancestors after their death.[945] Elaborate monthly ceremonies were also observed,[946] along with a yearly "All Souls' Day." This cult preserved the names and identity of ancestors, tying the living to the past—an important function of Israel's traditions.

Sumerian O. B. Texts and texts at Emar indicate that in some shadowy sense the dead were "divine," living among the gods.[947] Although much later, archaeological evidence indicates that family burial in the ancestral graves in Israel was integral to maintaining the family inheritance. Post-mortem care for the dead was important and procured benefits for the living,[948] but this was condemned by official Israelite belief.

Now write down for yourselves this song (31:19). Foster provides a study of Egyptian hymns, prayers, and songs directed to kings, gods, the dead, life, love, and the living.[949] The flexibility of the ancient treaty/covenant forms permitted additional sections to be added. Here the biblical author places witnesses following the blessings and curses, a feature found in Hittite treaties, especially between Tudkhalia IV and Kurunta. There the required deposition of the treaty documents is located between stipulations, and other stipulations are added after the curses and blessings as well as a list of sanctions.[950] The Hittites, Syrians, and Assyrians adjusted treaties depending on whether they were dealing with individuals, "peoples," or kingdoms. Terminology, structure, and tone could vary with the purpose of the treaty.[951]

Moses wrote down this song that day and taught it to the Israelites (31:22, 30). The interplay between writing and literacy is well illustrated here. Ancient Israel was not a modern literate nation, but she was acquainted with writing. She used it to help disseminate knowledge and wisdom by repeating or teaching it to the people first of all orally, not by the production of a thousand copies of the Song of Moses or the Book of the Law or the Blessings of Moses.

What is clear in these two verses is the oral-literate interplay that was featured. The written words are to be repeated and spoken. The oral world elaborates and gives them a "living" context.[952] Other literature, archives, and libraries in the ancient Near East seem to foster a vibrant interaction between "oral and written mentalities."[953] Ancient Near Eastern materials, such as some letters of Arad, a Deir ʿAlla inscription, the Gezer Calendar, an Izbet Sartah inscription, inscriptions at Kuntillet ʿAjrud, Lachish letters, the Mesha Inscription, and so forth, all reflect the interesting interaction of orality and the written word.[954] Kitchen sets forth a plausible explanation of how the ancient materials of Deuteronomy could have been updated, as was done with other ancient Near Eastern documents from as early as ca. 2500 B.C. to the Greco-Roman culture.[955]

In a covenant between the Hittites and King Kurtiwaza in Mitanni, the covenantal documents were deposited before the gods or goddesses for periodic reading. An inscribed public monument could serve the same function.[956] A copy was placed before the goddess Arina in Hatti and one was placed before Teshub in Mitanni mainly for safe keeping by both parties. But the ancients also considered the words of the text and their reading to aid in keeping the agreement in force. Moses considers the written document to be a divine instrument that has power in its very reading, since it was a word from Israel's living God.[957]

The Tablet of Destinies

The Tablet of Destinies appears in numerous texts.[A-210] Some scholars believe that *shimtu* (fate) in Mesopotamia was partially expressed through this tablet, and fate was always tied to the gods. It never functioned as an independent force.[A-211] The Tablet of Destinies as mentioned in the Babylonian Creation Epic (ca. 1500 B.C.) was presented to the god Anu by the great god Marduk, who had taken possession of it.[A-212] When Marduk grew weak and old, Erra, a young god, obtained and exercised power through the Tablet of Destinies and would not give it to anyone else.[A-213]

In a Sumerian-Babylonian dialogue "the bowl of Marduk" contained a list of men's deeds.[A-214] Enlil exercised his Enlil-ship—that is, his royal cosmic authority as shown in the Myth of Zu—by possessing the Tablet of Destinies,

until Anzu stole it.[A-215] Through the Tablet of Destinies the successes or failures of peoples and kings were set forth as in vassal treaties of Esarhaddon.[A-216]

A royal Assyrian text describes the Assyrian god Assur as the possessor of the Tablet of Destinies, by which he decrees the course of Sennacherib's reign. The tablet hung over Assur's heart, bearing his seal and signifing his power, to grant a successful reign to Sennacherib. The tablet functioned as a bond (*markas*) or means (*riksu*) by which the power and relationship between heaven and earth were recognized.[A-217]

In the Sumerian Hymn to Inlil, Enlil, and Ninlil, Enlil decreed the fates. No god could challenge Enlil's proclaimed destinies. In a hymn to Ninurta, god of wrath, the god's judgment was fixed; not even a god could question it.[A-218] Less often noted is the Egyptian text Instruction of Amenemope, where the "plans of the gods" as given in written oracles is no less than "Fate and Destiny" decreed by the gods.[A-219] Israel knew the essential plans of her God and what he desired in order to please him, for it was near her, in her mouth and in her heart (30:14).



Anzu

Marie-Lan Nguyen/Wikimedia Commons, courtesy of the Louvre

Song of Moses (31:30–32:47)

O heavens … O earth (32:1). Moses sets forth a powerful picture of the future of Israel. Israel's Lord alone, as revealed in the Old Testament, is the sole source for insights like this. Her future, however, hinges on her moral-ethical response of faith or lack thereof toward the Lord and his covenant. In the ancient Near East the future of human beings and nations was decreed by the gods and recorded in the Tablet of Destinies. See sidebar on "The Tablet of Destinies."

Is he not your Father, your Creator? (32:6). The fatherhood of the gods was a common theological feature of the peoples of the ancient Near East and contributed to the idea, for example, that Enlil (Sumer) "was a friendly, fatherly deity who watches over the safety and well-being of all humans, *particularly* the inhabitants of Sumer."[958] However, the overall concept is somewhat jumbled because of the seemingly contradictory way the material is presented and the strangeness of the worldview being propounded.

There were many "father gods." In Sumer (e.g., An, Enlil, Utu), Egypt (Atum, Ptah, Re, Geb), and Ugarit (El, Baal), father gods were involved in the production and creation of the cosmos as well as other gods.[959] As an example, in the Ugaritic myths (ca. 1350 B.C.), Baal, the Bull, is described as the creator of even the gods.[960] In Egypt Amun was the ultimate source and cause of the gods and the cosmos.[961] This language is echoed in the designation of even a subordinate ruler such as Azatiwata, "mother and father" of the Danua people.[962] In the Emar *zukru* festival Dagan (god of grain; storm god) is referred to as the "lord of creation."[963]

Which god fathered what and whom and how this all is to be tied together systematically are practically hopeless until more complete materials are available. In Israel, however, there is no confusion, for the one and only God, Yahweh, was God and Father of everything that exists in heaven and on earth.

When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind (32:8–9). The Hebrew text followed by the NIV reads "according to the sons of Israel." Many scholars prefer the reading of the LXX and some Dead Sea Scrolls, which read "according to the sons of God."[964] This text is closely connected to Genesis 10, where seventy nations are listed, but Israel is not included among them. It is possible that, according to the LXX, God divided (*prd*, in both Gen. 10 and here) the disobedient nations among seventy subordinate, created, divine beings as punishment for their rebellion against the Lord (Gen. 11).[965]

At any rate, some scholars perceive a Ugaritic background to this text that refers to the "seventy sons of Athirat," sired by El,[966] and his council of divine beings.[967] Seventy gods are mentioned at Emar.[968] A divine council of gods was common in the ancient Near East.[969] A Phoenician (also Hittite) inscription refers to the whole "group of the children of the gods" (El). In general in other Babylonian literature we read of the gods distributing the cosmos among themselves, but not the nations.[970] Gods in the ancient Near East could give gifts of cities, as at Ugarit or in Sumer.[971]

This is part of the broader context, but these verses are intended to contrast the fact that the Lord has set Israel *apart unto himself* from among all the nations, and Israel is not numbered with them. The nations have their own "gods," who are mortal, but they do not have Yahweh, who alone does not die and is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent.[972] The great Egyptian god Re grows old with millions of years, suffering from divine age.[973] Marduk chooses Babylon as his chief city where the gods will live with him.[974] Kronos, a chief Greek god, although much later in history, assigns the rulership of Attica to Athena, Byblos to Baaltis, Berytus to Poseidon, and all of Egypt to Tauthos.[975]

Like an eagle (32:11). The Epic of Lugalbanda has relevant imagery.[976] The story of Etana, a quasi-historical king of Kish mentioned in the Sumerian King List, rode upon an eagle that cared for him as it carried Etana on his back.[977] Etana ascends on an eagle's back on a cylinder seal of the twenty-third century B.C. This is probably the literary source behind the imagery here, although the actual bird in mind is often considered to be the griffon vulture.[978]



Cylinder seal of the twenty-third century B.C. shows Etana ascending on an eagle's back.

Z. Radovan/www.BibleLandPictures.com

The storyline in the Etana Myth is helpful. It depicts an eagle as the instrument through whom Etana successfully gets a son. The eagle imagery here and in Exodus 19:4 is tied to the Lord's rescue of his son Israel on eagles' wings. Etana beseeches the eagle to "change my destiny"; the eagle obliges,[979] but only after giving Etana a magnificent but dangerous ride toward heaven and back down to earth. The eagle drops but retrieves Etana at three miles, two miles, one mile, and one meter above the ground.[980]

The parallel with the biblical text is not dependent on naturalists observing certain behavior patterns of eagles with their young, but on the storyline of the Etana text. It took an eagles' wings for Etana's goal to be met: his acquisition of a son. God brought Israel to the mountain of God, Sinai, and birthed/nurtured his only son (cf. 32:8). Some believe that the eagles' wings protective imagery originated in Egypt and moved throughout the ancient Near East. Winged figures with Egyptian features appear in art work found in the Levant as well.[981]



Image is a statue of King Chephren. The god Horus in the shape of a falcon is sitting on the back of the throne protecting the king with his outstretched wings.

Werner Forman Archive/The Egyptian Museum, Cairo

Sacrificed to demons (32:17). Demon possession goes back to a Babylonian worldview and world order.[982] The Sumerian *udug* demon was evil, the Akkadian *šedu* could act as either a demon or a protective spirit. A *rābisu* being was a spy for good or evil. *Dimme* (Sumerian) was a demon who murdered children according to Babylonian and Assyrian thinking. In Babylonian religion demons were sent against a person who sinned. The *āšipu/mašmašu* priest often sent incantations against these demons.[983]

The Hebrew word for demons in this verse is *šēdîm*, a plural (sing. *šēd*). Israel had rebelled by sacrificing to a god(s) *šdym*, "demons" (cf. 32:17; Ps. 106:37; cf. Akk. *šedū*). It appears that the *šdyn*, the Aramaic equivalent to the Hebrew word, were gods worshiped in Transjordan and Canaan and are the same gods referred

to in the biblical texts.[984] Whatever they were, they were not worthy of worship. These beings were "no gods."

A uniformly sinister history accompanies these beings. The cognate Akkadian word *šedu* describes only minor deities, if deities at all (cf. Ps. 106:36–38),[985] and the word in Akkadian is connected to spirits of the dead.[986] This word for gods has turned up in Aramaic texts at Deir ʿAlla, and they use the Aramaic word for these gods, *šdyn*.[987] The synonym *šgr* is also used. In these texts these "gods" sit in the divine assembly with other gods and decree a catastrophe on the earth, but these gods inform Balaam of this by a dream or vision (cf. Num. 22:8–9, 12, 19). Hence, as noted, Chavalas and Adamthwaite conclude that these gods were worshiped in Transjordan and possibly Canaan,[988] and they are the gods whom Israel wrongly served (32:17; Ps. 106:37). Their evil intent in these texts tends to support this.



Demon Pazazu

Z. Radovan/www.BibleLandPictures.com

I will hide my face from them (32:20). When God "goes away" or hides his face, he is displeased with his people and catastrophe strikes them. In a famous Egyptian theological treatise a deceased person expresses despair that he can no longer see the face of Atum: "It is too much for me, my Lord, not to see your

face."[989] In rituals involving the deity Amun at Karkak, the official's face had to be protected from the god.[990]

When the great god Erra (Nirgal) was enthroned, the other gods "began to look at his face."[991] Telipinu, a weather or storm god of sorts at Hatti, turned his face away and left his people because of their insolence toward him. When he left, he took with him all kinds of blessings, especially fertility. People could not conceive nor could they, if pregnant, give birth. The hills dried up, trees withered, and the grass died. Hunger set in. An incantation finally resulted in the god's return, and subsequent blessings at his return ensued because he was again with his people. The royal house prospered.[992]

The abandonment of a people by its god occurred several times during Babylon's history. In the Tukulti-Ninurta Epic the gods abandon the Kassite Babylonian king because he had broken his covenant with Assyria.[993] The third-century B.C. priest-historian Manetho reported that the Hyksos invasion of Egypt (seventeenth century B.C.) was a result of "God's displeasure upon us."[994] Cyrus the Great (538 B.C.) proclaimed that Marduk, Babylon's chief god, gave Babylon into his power because the last king, Nabonidus, forsook the cult of Marduk and worshiped other gods.[995]

I will heap calamities upon them (32:23). Curses are found in various texts in the ancient Near East. At Ugarit the god Resheph, a storm god, was a god of war[996] and a god of pestilence.[997] These threats became realities in warfare. The support of a national god was crucial for a king, such as Hadad of northern Syria. In this case Panamuwa, son of the king of *yʾdy*, Qarli, claimed support from many gods: Hadad, for whom a statue was erected, but also El, Rashap, Rakib-El, and Shamash.[998] Fulfilled curses include vivid descriptions of a besieged city, such as Sumer and Ur.[999] In several ancient treaties a specific stipulation was followed by a specific curse administered by a particular god.[1000]

Instructions Concerning Moses' Death (32:48–52)

Abarim Range to Mount Nebo (32:49). The Abarim mountain range sits northeast of the Dead Sea. Mount Nebo (ca. 1,435 ft.) is a part of this range (cf. Num. 27:12; 33:47–48).[1001] It is located near the city Nebo (32:3), and the area forms a northwestern rim of the tableland of Moab.[1002] Mount Nebo (cf. Deut. 34:1) is closely connected to Mount Pisgah, which is tied to descriptions of southern Gilead. The Spring of Moses on the north and the Wadi Afirt help frame the mountain.

The view from Nebo is panoramic, including the Dead Sea, Jordan Valley, and Jordan Desert from Tekoa to Jerusalem. Even the mountains of Samaria are visible from it. In the Mesha Stele of Moab (ca. 830 B.C.) Nebo is considered an Israelite city conquered by the Moabites.[1003]



Mount Nebo and Abarim Range

Todd Bolen/www.BiblePlaces.com

Mount Hor (32:50). The location of this mountain, mentioned twelve times in the Old Testament (cf. Num. 20:22; 33:38–9), is not certain. Bible maps suggest a location northeast of Kadesh Barnea. It may have been located at modern Jebel Madurah.[1004] The Hebrew definite article is always used with this name,

indicating that the mountain area or ridge is well known. The reference to Aaron's death at Moserah (Deut. 10:6) refers to the punishment rendered by God's judgment there, not to a geographical location.[1005]

Meribah Kadesh in the Desert of Zin (32:51). The geographical location of this event of "strife" is not certain, since it describes an episode, not a physical location. Evidently it was located at or very near Kadesh Barnea (ʾEin Qudeiret). The Desert of Zin is located in the Negev on the border of southern Canaan. It is referred to as the Desert of Kadesh in Psalm 29:8 and was part of "that vast and dreadful desert." It demarcated the boundaries of parts of Judah (cf. Num. 34:3–4). The eastern border extended to Edom and its western extent reached to Kadesh and beyond. An east-west line touching the southern tip of the Dead Sea points out its northern border. Its southern edge merged with the Desert of Paran.[1006]

Blessings of Moses on Israel (33:1–29)

The blessing that Moses the man of God pronounced (33:1). For this chapter compare the blessings of Isaac (Gen. 27) and the blessings of Jacob (Gen. 48–49). Outside of the Old Testament there are similar final blessings recorded in the second millennium, especially in texts at Nuzi. Green finds many features of Yahweh presented in this chapter paralleled by descriptions of the great storm god in the ancient Near East, especially under his name Baal.[1007] In general the Canaanite setting of several tribes is depicted just before Moses' death. There are close connections with Canaanite mythology, as evidenced in the literary style, language, and vocabulary of the poem. Language reminiscent of the storm gods of the ancient Near East depicts the Lord's kingship and his theophany (see esp. vv. 2–3, 13–16, 26–29).[1008]

Mount Paran (33:2–3). This is clearly a Hebrew poetic parallel with Sinai and Seir (Edom area). Sinai is the primary referent, which is near or possibly in the Desert of Paran.[1009]

The entire theophany here of God's awesome appearance shares features with, among others, texts from Ugarit (Baal) and Mesopotamia (e.g., Assur).[1010] El "shines forth" in a text in Hebrew (Phoenician script) from Kuntillet ʿAjrud.[1011] In Ugaritic texts Baal marches forth.[1012] The divine allies of Baal and ancient Near Eastern storm gods parallel Yahweh's "myriads." A divine assembly to perform the bidding of the chief god is present in Canaanite and similar mythological texts[1013] in Assyrian, Assyrian-Babylonian, and Hittite texts.

Thummim and Urim (33:8). The Urim and Thummim were an ancient means of drawing lots in Israel; the results were determined by the Lord.[1014] The terms probably mean "lights" and "perfections" respectively.[1015] C. van Dam finds no essential parallels to this practice in Mesopotamia, Hatti, Ugarit, or Egypt.[1016] See also sidebar on "The Assyrian Incantation Ritual of Two Stones."

The Assyrian Incantation Ritual of Two Stones

The closest parallel to Urim and Thummim comes from an incantation ritual text from Assur. The Assyrian ritual process is clearly one of divination by using a black stone (hematite) and a white stone (alabaster). The process is called psephomancy, divination by pebbles. The will of seven gods is sought by lifting up one of these stones.[A-220]

In order to perceive that will,[A-221] Shamash, the god of oracles, is addressed, offerings are made, and two stones are put into the hem of the ritualist's garment to be retrieved at the right time. The ritualist writes the names of seven gods on the ground and then lifts up a stone; a judgment is rendered and a revelation given, if the god so desires (yes). If no revelation or judgment is received, a stone of no desire (no) is given. It is not certain what the "jumping up of a stone" implies. Perhaps it merely refers to the process of picking up the stone by the ritualist. Nor is it stated explicitly which stone stands for desirable/not desirable, but based on other ancient Near Eastern divination texts, white is probably the yes stone, black the no stone.[A-222]

Evidently the ritualist repeats the process three times to confirm the answer given, as was somewhat common in rituals.[A-223] The process involved, the stones involved (light, truth), the binary options available, the technical terms used, the option of no answer, the drawing of stones from a garment, and the types of questions addressed all suggest that the Urim and Thummim, and this process may be related.[A-224]

Guarded your covenant (33:9). This phrase has ancient parallels from documents of the second millennium and beyond in Akkadian (*mamitu/ade* or *riksa nas(c)aru*, "to guard the oath or treaty"). Both Kitchen and Weinfeld show the antiquity of this concept.[1017]

Offers incense (33:10). Incense altars from Lachish (ca. 586–538 B.C.) suggest the importance of these cultic objects.[1018] Egyptian kings could offer incense and carry out important functions as shown in the First Beth Shan Stele (ca. 1294 B.C.).[1019]

About Joseph he said (33:13–17). In essence Yahweh fulfills the functions performed by the chief fertility god, Baal, in Canaan.[1020] The "deep waters" are tied to the "abyss" in both Ugaritic liturgy texts and mythological texts.[1021] The bull imagery used in verse 17 has similarities with Ugaritic materials in which Mot and Baal "gore like wild oxen" and El is called "the bull."[1022] A Hittite document describes the strength of the bull that moved a mountain.[1023] Even Horus in Egypt, however, is pictured as a young, strong bull.[1024]

Who rides on the heavens … clouds (33:26). This language closely resembles language used to depict Baal.[1025] He is presented as a warrior god who prepares to smash his enemies and to take his everlasting kingdom and dominion (cf. Ps. 68:5).[1026] However, Baal was also the bringer of rain.[1027] A bit less striking, but still helpful, is the depiction in a Sumerian myth of the weather god, Ishkur, Enki and the Ordering of the World.[1028] In this case Ishkur is put in charge of the entire weather system. In the case of Yahweh, Israel's God shows that he is in control of all of this to destroy Israel's enemy.

Trample down their high places (33:29). Exactly what high places were is still debated. This discussion accepts the translation of *bāmôtêmô* as "high place."[1029] Several high places (*bāmôt*) have recently been uncovered. These were possibly places where local shrines were situated and pagan religious rites were practiced.[1030] Zevit understands a high place to be a place where *maṣṣēbôt* (standing stones) were located; it was available to the public.[1031] Grintz argues that *bāmôt* originated in Moab.[1032] To Israel's detriment, these places fostered syncretism and enticed Israel to become involved in forbidden worship. Asherim (sacred poles or trees), *maṣṣēbôt*, and altars were featured. These high places often had *liška*, a room for sacred meals, connected to them.[1033]

Death of Moses; Commissioning of Joshua (34:1–12)

Moses climbed Mount Nebo (34:1). From Mount Nebo one enjoys an impressive view of Jericho, a city of great antiquity (before 6000 B.C.). It was important and powerful in the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 2300–1550) and even into the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1550–1200). The "City of Palms" (v. 3) refers to the date palm trees that grow there even today in the Jordan Valley, the Arabah region, and in some areas of the coast. The city is located just west of the Jordan about ten miles north of the northern tip of the Dead Sea. The large fresh water spring ʾAin es-Sultan was active in antiquity and watered the area even as it does today. Later Jericho served as a border town between Ephraim and Benjamin. This impressive city would fall to Israel to begin her long conquest of the Promised Land.[1034]

Moses' view of the Promised Land scans the horizon and mentions only key points of focus. The view given here surveys the scene by looking straight ahead (north) and then to the left (west). Zoar was probably located at the southern tip of the Dead Sea (cf. Gen. 13:10). This description was possibly written later to present what Moses saw according to the later distribution of the land. Thus the author describes a view of the land that assumes tribal territories yet to be assigned. The city and tribe of Dan was located just south of Mount Hermon, about one hundred miles distant.



Area of Jericho viewed from the top of Mount Nebo
Todd Bolen/www.BiblePlaces.com

And Moses the servant of the LORD died (34:5). The description of Moses as "the servant of the LORD" has connotations of intimacy and of obedience. The legendary King Keret in the Ugaritic literature is depicted as "the beloved, Lad of El," "the Servant of El [3x]," with the context of each occurrence implying the care and concern of El for his chosen servant.[1035]

A hundred and twenty years old (34:7). Moses' eyesight and vigor are still not gone at 120 years of age. No wonder! In the ancient Near East "the face of a god radiated light and life to those fortunate enough to gaze upon it."[1036] Only kings could, however, claim this blessing. Moses had lived in the presence of God forty days and nights and then conversed with the Lord without his veil for an indefinite period of time. In some ancient Near Eastern traditions the radiant faces of the gods (e. g., Enlil, Assur, Ninlil) strengthened the kings they looked upon. The faces of the gods were both radiant and life-giving, a belief recorded in a Samsiluna inscription (ca. 1749–1712 B.C.), grandson of Hammurabi.[1037] The word referring to "strength" or virility (*lḥh*) is found in Ugaritic texts, where it likely means "sexual power."[1038]

Because Moses had laid his hands on him (34:9). This action probably

points out Joshua as the object of God's Spirit, who imparted wisdom (cf. Ex. 35:31). The laying on of hands is employed in a Hittite ritual text discussed by D. P. Wright.[1039] The parallel is only suggestive. Hands are placed upon a sacrifice, but how this act illuminates the present text is doubtful; it may suggest that Joshua should be understood as the subject of the process. As a result he receives of Moses' spirit—that is, his wisdom, imparted to Moses by God.[1040]

Face to face (34:10). Moses' excellence was dependent on his being in the presence of God, face to face. The Assyrian king Assurbanipal (668–27 B.C.) enjoyed the gaze of Assur and Ninlil and returned it to his benefit.[1041]

Hittite Law	Topic	Law in Deuteronomy
1–2, 4–5	Murder/killing	5:17; 19:11–13; 27:25
3	Mansluaghter	19:5–6
6	Unsolved murder	21:1–2
7	Eye for eye mitigated	19:21
19–21	Kidnapping	24:7
22–23	Fugitive slaves	23:15
26, 31	Divorce	24:1–4
44B, 111	Sorcery	18:10–14
45, 71	Stealing	5:21
71	Lost animals	27:1
151–152	Hire of animals	19:11–13
166	Two kinds of seed	22:9
168–169	Boundary stones	19:14; 27:17
173A	Judges, officials	16:18
187, 188, 199, 200	Bestiality	27:21
189–191, 194	Incest	22:20

193	Levirate marriage	25:5–10
197	Rape	22:25–26
197–198	Adultery	22:23–24
Telipinu Edict (49)	Murder	5:17; 19:11–13

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Chapter Notes

Main Text Notes

1. K. A. Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant* (Mississauga, Ont.: Benben, 1982), 238–39.
2. For a discussion of the issues involved concerning the exodus event, see M. W. Chavalas and M. R. Adamthwaite, "Archaeological Light on the Old Testament," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies*, ed. D. W. Baker and B. T. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 78–90; J. K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996), 122–26; K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 307–10.
3. *COS*, 2.6.
4. A. R. Rainey and Z. Safrai, *The Macmillan Bible Atlas*, 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 49, #53.
5. J. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989).
6. See esp. W. Von Soden, *The Ancient Orient*, trans. D. G. Schley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 131–44; J. H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature*, 69–94; A. Hill and J. H. Walton, *Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 52–53; H. J. Boecker, *Law and the Administration of Justice in the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East*, trans. J. Moiser (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980), 66–176; Kitchen, *Reliability*, 283–306.
7. Kitchen, *Reliability*, esp. 289; D. J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant* (AnBib 21a; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1981), 122–53.
8. Kitchen, *Reliability*, 287–88.
9. See esp. T. Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings of the Ancient Near East* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 76–94, esp. 76–78; W. L. Moran, "The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy," in *Essential Papers on Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. F. E. Greenspahn (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1991), 103–15.
10. A. Millard, *Treasures from Bible Times* (London: Lion, 1985), 80; Kitchen, *Reliability*, 295–99. See these and the items listed below for strong historical/archaeological/cultural suggestive evidence for the probable rise of a leader like Moses, most likely during the time of the New Kingdom in Egypt; cf. D. M. Beegle, "Moses," *ABD*, 4:909–18; J. Hoffmeier, "Moses," *ISBE*, 3:415–25; K. A. Kitchen, "Egyptians and Hebrews, from Ra'meses to Jericho," in *The Origin of Early Israel—Current Debate*, ed. S. Ahituv and E. D. Oren, (Ben Gurion Univ.: Negev Press, 1998), 88–91; F. Yurco, "Merenptah's Canaanite Campaign and Israel's Origins," in *Exodus: The Egyptian Evidence* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 27–55. Yurco claims to present visual, pictorial evidence of the Israelites in Egypt. Note also A. Rainey's negative response in the same article (40).
11. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 261, 264–65, 273–75; esp. 294.
12. See J. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, esp. 52–163; now see idem, *Israel in Sinai* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005), passim, esp. 177–78.
13. See *ABD* for a brief discussion and bibliography of all these place names; see also C. G. Rasmussen, *Zondervan NIV Atlas of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), for a clear and easy-to-read atlas with narrative; Kitchen, *Reliability*, 268–73, 627–31. This is a masterful resource for the Old Testament and its ancient Near Eastern contexts. See for Dizahab = Dhahab, Kitchen, *Reliability*, 559, n. 64; 680, fig. 30.
14. G. Davies, "The Significance of Deuteronomy 1:2 for the Location of Mount Horeb," *PEQ* 111 (1979): 87–101; B. Beitzel, "Travel and Communication (OT World)," *ABD*, 6:646; discussion in Hoffmeier, *Sinai*, 118–20.
15. For a full discussion of the location of Sinai see Kitchen, *Reliability*, 265–72.
16. D. N. Manor, "Kadesh-Barnea," *ABD*, 2:1–3; Kitchen, *Reliability*, 272–73, 627.
17. J. H. Walton, V. H. Matthews, and M. W. Chavalas, *The Intervarsity Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 170–71.
18. For a thorough review of the current dating of the exodus, see I. Provan, V. P. Long, and T. Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 129–32; Kitchen, *Reliability*, 307–12; cf. J. K. Hoffmeier, "NSAP Excavations at Tell el-Borg," in *The Future of Biblical Archaeology*, ed. J. K. Hoffmeier and A. Millard (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 57; Walton, "Exodus, Date of," in *Intervarsity Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. D. Alexander and D. W. Baker (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 269.
19. The strategy and wisdom of attacking Sihon is clear. See C. Herzog and M. Gichon, *Battles of the Bible*, (Mechanicsburg, Pa.: Stackpole, 1997), 43; Provan, Long, and Longman, *Biblical History of Israel*, 136.
20. G. E. Mendenhall, "Amorites," *ABD*, 1:199–202.
21. J. J. M. Roberts, "The Ancient Near Eastern Environment," in *The Bible and The Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 11.
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World (Jerusalem: Carta, 2006), 100 (excursus 8.1).

24. *ANET*, 246.
25. *ANET*, 378.
26. J. Day, "Ashtaroth," *ABD*, 1:491.
27. M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 180; *ARAB*, 1:243.
28. For all the treaties see G. Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, 2d ed. (SBLWAW 7; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 11–114; for a convenient chart of passages that feature a covenant/covenant renewal format see most recently Kitchen, *Reliability*, 284–85.
29. Rasmussen, *NIV Atlas*, 17.
30. Schoville, "Canaanites and Amorites," 166.
31. A. R. Millard, "Amorite," *NBD*, 31–32; M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 132.
32. L. Younger, "Early Israel," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies*, ed. D. W. Baker and B. T. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 187–88, esp. n. 58.
33. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 133.
34. From an inscription of Assyrian king Adad-Nirari, about 800 B.C., *ANET*, 281; for more examples see Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 133–34.
35. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 140–41, with bibliography listed there; for detail see idem, "Judge and Officer in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East," *IOS* 7 (1977): 65–88; S. Alp, "Military Instructions of the Hittite King Tuthaliya," *Belleten* 11 (1947): 403–14; R. O. Faulkner, "The Installation of the Vizier," *JEA* 41 (1955): 18–29.
36. Walton, *Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context*, 69–93.
37. R. Westbrook, "The Character of Ancient Near Eastern Law," *HANEL*, 25.
38. Clause Wilcke, *Early Ancient Near Eastern Law: A History of its Beginning: Early Dynastic and Sargonic Periods* (BAW 2; München: Beck, 2003), 29–30; Westbrook, *HANEL*, 26.
39. Westbrook, *HANEL*, 30.
40. Wilcke, *Early Ancient Near Eastern Law*, 31–40; to see how this all works out see W. Hallo, "A Model Court Case Concerning Inheritance," in *Riches Hidden in Secret Places*, ed. T. Abusch (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 141–54.
41. *CANE*, 473.
42. *ANET*, 407–10; *COS*, 1.43, B1 31–51, B2 91–115.
43. *CANE*, 354–55.
44. R. Jasnow, "New Kingdom," *HANEL*, 289.
45. See R. Versteeg, *Law in Ancient Egypt* (Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 2002), 9, plus nn. 37–9; 17; Jasnow, "New Kingdom," 289–90.
46. Versteeg, *Law*, 56–62.
47. Ibid., 94.
48. Ibid., 36.
49. As quoted in Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 141.
50. See A. R. W. Green, *The Storm-God in the Ancient Near East* (BJS 8; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003), for a full study.
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52. Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*, excursus 8.3.
53. Shmuel Ahituv, "The Origins of Ancient Israel—The Documentary Evidence," in *The Origin of Early Israel*, 136–37.
54. A. Lemaire, "Mari, the Bible, and the Northwest Semitic World," *BA* 47 (1984): 103.
55. King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 98–101.
56. Ibid., 98.
57. M. A. Powell, "Wine and the Vine in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Cuniform Evidence," in *The Origins and Ancient History of Wine*, ed. P. E. McGovern, S. J. Fleming, and S. H. Katz (Amsterdam: Overseas Publishers, 1995), 97–122, esp. 121; C. E. Walsh, *The Fruit of the Vine: Viticulture in Ancient Israel* (HSM 60; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000); for terracing see L. E. Stager, "The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel," *BASOR* 260 (Fall/November 1985): 5–9 with pictures.
58. *ANET*, 19. Sinuhe describes the land as "a good land, named Yaa. Figs were in it, and grapes. It had more wine than water." He adds honey, olives, fruit, trees, barley, emmer, and cattle to his catalogue of praise for the land of Palestine.
59. G. W. Ahlstrom, *The History of Ancient Palestine* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 70–71.
60. For a pictorial presentation of the produce see further, J. Rogerson, *Atlas of the Bible* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1985), 63, or Aharoni and Avi-Yonah, *Macmillan Bible Atlas*, 19.
61. *ANET*, 328–29; for details see Kitchen, *Reliability*, 333–34, 572, n. 64.
62. Kitchen, *Reliability*, 334.
63. R. S. Hess, "Nephilim," *ABD*, 4:1072–73; idem, *Joshua* (TOTC; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 218, n. 5; for text

see E. Wente, *Letters from Ancient Egypt* (SBLWAW; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 107–8; for discussion see Provan, Long, and Longman, *Biblical History of Israel*, 339, n. 95; M. W. Chavalas and M. R. Adamthwaite, "Archaeological Light on the Old Testament," 81.

64. Walton, Matthews, and Chavalas, *IVPBBC-OT*, 89–90.
65. J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 195.
66. See esp. G. A. Lee, "Pillar of Cloud and Pillar of Fire," *ISBE*, 3:871.
67. T. W. Mann, *Divine Presence and Guidance in Israelite Traditions: The Typology of Exaltation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1977), 130–31.
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69. Mann, *Divine Presence*, 104, 132–33; G. Mendenhall, *The Tenth Generation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1973), 55; Cyrus Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965), 458, #1885.
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71. M. Weinfeld, "Divine Intervention in War," in *History and Interpretation*, ed. H. Tadmor and M. Weinfeld (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1983), 125, 133–34.
72. *COS*, 1.86, *CTA*, 4.vi.28.
73. Weinfeld, "Divine Intervention," 134.
74. Ibid., 139.
75. *ANET*, 235b, 236a, n. 25; Weinfeld, "Divine Intervention," 124–26, 131–33.
76. *ANET*, 476.
77. Hoffmeier, *Sinai*, 75–109; J. R. Huddleston, "Red Sea," *ABD*, 5:633, 635–42; Kitchen, *Reliability*, 261–63.
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79. Ibid., 272, 630, fig. 30; esp. now Hoffmeier, *Sinai*, fig. 1.
80. Ibid., 404–5.
81. Paul W. Ferris Jr., *The Genre of Communal Lament in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (SBLDS 127; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 17–61.
82. W. W. Hallo, "Lamentations and Prayers in Sumer and Akkad," *CANE*, 1872–79, 1881.
83. *COS*, 1.60; *ANET*, 394–96; see Kitchen, *Reliability*, 405, 586, n. 64, for discussion and additional bibliography.
84. As quoted by Kitchen, *Reliability*, 404–5, 587, n. 63; *KTU*, 1.40.
85. *COS*, 1.166; 1.164, 165; 1.119
86. Ferris, *Communal Lament in the Bible and the ANE*, 21–25, 48–52; see also Xuan Huong Thi Pham, *Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup 202; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 16–17.
87. Several other sites are possible. See Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*, 122; J. M. Hamilton, "Hormah," *ABD*, 3:288–89.
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89. J. R. Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites* (JSOTSup 77; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 41–42.
90. Ibid., 43–44; cf. also Josh. 11:17; 12:7.
91. Rasmussen, *NIV Atlas*, 92, 250.
92. B. MacDonald, *East of the Jordan* (ASOR 6; Boston: ASOR, 2000), 83–84.
93. Kitchen, *Reliability*, 193–94, nn. 93–96; esp. B. MacDonald, *East of the Jordan*, 82–83; D. Baly, *Geography of the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Guildford & London: Lutterworth, 1974), 235–36; cf., however, Rasmussen, *NIV Atlas*, 92.
94. See Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When?* 221–28 for discussion, esp. 228; J. W. Betlyon, "Coinage," *ABD*, 1:1076–84.
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96. King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 194–95, 199.
97. O. S. Bianca and R. Younker, "The Kingdoms of Ammon, Moab and Edom," in *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, ed. Thomas Levy (New York: Facts on File, 1995), 399–415, 407–8; B. MacDonald, "Early Edom: The Relation between the Literary and Archaeological Evidence," in *Scripture and Other Artifacts*, ed. M. Coogan, J. Exum, and L. Stager (Louisville: John Knox, 1994), 230–33, 242–43.
98. Ibid.
99. K. A. Kitchen, "Egyptians and Hebrews, from Raamses to Jericho," in *The Origins of Early Israel—Current Debate* (Beer-sheva: Negev [Ben Gurion Univ.], 1998), 74.
100. S. Ahituv, "The Origins of Ancient Israel—The Documentary Evidence," in *The Origins of Early Israel—Current Debate* (Beer-sheva: Negev [Ben Gurion Univ.], 1998), 136.
101. K. G. Hoglund, "Edomites," *POTW*, 335–47, for excellent resource notes.
102. M. Lubetski, "Ezion Geber," *ABD*, 2:723–26; see Ian Wilson, *The Bible Is History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999),

132–33 for a photograph of the island.

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104. Ø. S. LaBianca and R. Younker, "The Kingdoms of Amon, Moab and Edom: The Archaeology of Society in Late Bronze/Iron Age Transjordan," in *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, ed. T. E. Levy (New York: Facts on File, 1995), 399.

105. G. L. Mattingly, "Emim," *ABD*, 2:497; R. Hess, "Nephilim," *ABD*, 4:1072–73.

106. *COS*, 1.103, 19:iv 179; *ANET*, 149d and n. 2.

107. C. E. L'Hereux, *Rank Among the Canaanite Gods El, Baal, and the Repha'im* (HSM 21; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1979), 126–27.

108. See Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*, Excursus 8.1 on Kingdom of Ugarit.

109. S. B. Parker, *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (SBLWAW 9; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 196–205; RSP 34:126; *COS*, 1.86, *CTA*, 5.vi 42–44.

110. Parker, *Ugaritic Poetry*, 201; *CTA*, 22B, ll. 7–9.

111. *ANET*, 182, translates as "shades."

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113. *COS*, 2.56, 8.

114. O. Loretz, "Das Paradigma des Mythos von der *rpum*—Rephaim," in *Ugarit and Bible* (UBL; Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 1994), 191–93.

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116. Cf. Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*, 27, 61, 114; Kitchen, *Reliability*, 175.

117. Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*, 114; E. A. Knauf, "Horites," 3:288.

118. D. L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1–21:9* (WBC 6A; Nashville: Nelson, 2002), 43, bibl. 35–36.

119. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 163; G. A. Herion, "Zered," *ABD*, 6:1082; Rasmussen, *NIV Atlas*, 17–18; Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*, 38, 41; Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1–21:9*, 42.

120. *ANET*, 436.

121. Kitchen, *Reliability*, 253–54. For a full discussion of this ancient Near Eastern idiom see further chap. 6, n. 15 of Kitchen; esp. J. D. Hoffmeier, "The Arm of God versus the Arm of Pharaoh in the Exodus Narrative," *Bib* 67 (1986): 378–87. The phrase is in other ancient Near Eastern literature: Ugaritic texts (*UT*, 54:13), and Akkadian texts (EA 35:37). In Amarna letters see 286:12; 287:27.

122. *ANET*, 257; cf. 443.

123. J. J. M. Roberts, "The Hand of Yahweh," in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 99.

124. *ANET*, 623.

125. Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East ca. 3000–330 B. C.* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 2:245.

126. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 212, and references there; e.g., EA 286:12.

127. J. Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 154–55; Hoffmeier, "The Arm of God," 378–87; Roberts, "Hand of Yahweh," 95.

128. Gordon and Rendsburg, *Eblaitica*, 86.

129. Randall Younker, "Ammonites," *POTW*, 293, 303–4.

130. *ANET*, 282a, 287b, 294a; J -M. de Tarrogon, "Ammon," *ABD*, 1:194–6; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 164.

131. J. A. Thompson, "Ammonites," *ISBE*, 1:111–12.

132. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 164.

133. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1–21:9*, 1:44; E. Ullendorf, "The Knowledge of Languages in the Old Testament," *BJRL* 44 (1962): 455–65.

134. S. E. McGarry, "Avvites," *ABD*, 1:531–32;

135. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 164.

136. R. S. Hess, "Caphtorites," *ABD*, 1:869–90; Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 113; Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1–21:9*, 43; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 165.

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139. *COS*, 2.23, ll 26–7; *ANET*, 320; *DOTT*, 195–98.

140. R. F. Johnson, "Sihon," *IDB*, 4:351.

141. Kitchen, *Reliability*, 195–6, esp. 546, n. 100; J. C. Slayton, "Sihon," *ABD*, 6:22; M. Chavalas and M. Adamthwaite, "Archaeological Light on the O.T.," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 82–3; G. Mattingly, "Moabites," *POTW*, 322–3.

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143. R. H. Beal, “Hittite Military Organization,” *CANE*, 546–48, 550, 1552.

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163. Ami Arav, “Hermon,” *ABD*, 3:159; discussion in Hoffmeier, *Sinai*, 111–13.

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168. *ANET*, 504b.

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745. Chavalas and Younger Jr., *Mesopotamia and the Bible*, 159; *ANET*, 171d, Law 129.

746. *COS*, 2.132, Laws 12–13; for a succinct summary of adultery in the Old Testament/ancient Near East, see Greengus, “Law,” *ABD*, 4:247.

747. Hoffner, “Social Institutions,” *CANE*, 557–58.

748. G. Pinch, “Private Life in Ancient Egypt,” *CANE*, 376.

749. *COS*, 2.130, Law 28.

750. Phillips, “Adultery,” 19; Greenberg, “Postulates,” 337–38.

751. Marsman, *Women in Ugarit*, 168–77; 710–11; J. P. Vita, “The Society of Ugarit,” in *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*, ed. W. G. E. Watson and N. Wyatt (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 476–77.

752. *ANET*, 196–97; for discussion of rape in ancient Near East see Greengus, “Law,” *ABD*, 4:247. See also Hoffner, “Social Institutions,” *CANE*, 557–58.

753. *COS*, 2.131, Law 130.

754. *COS*, 2.131, Law 6.

755. *ANET*, 185; cf. relevant laws listed on 181b also.

756. *COS*, 2.130, Law 26.

757. *COS*, 2.131, Laws 130, 141; 2.132, Law 12; see also Middle Assyrian laws (ca. 15th century B.C.); see *COS*, 2.132, Law 55; *ANET*, 162.

758. *COS*, 2.19, Law 199.

759. V. P. Hamilton, “Marriage,” *ABD*, 4:560–62; King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 60.

760. *COS*, 3.59, n. 16; P. B. van Alfen, “Filthy Lucre,” *Archaeology Odyssey* 7/5 (Sept/Oct 2004): 6–7.

761. See further *ANET*, 525–26; Greengus, “Law,” *ABD*, 4:247.

762. Greengus, “Law,” *ABD*, 4:250–51.

763. *ANET*, 172, Law 57; 196, Law 189.

764. *ANET*, 172, Law 190; but cf. *COS*, 2.158, Law 158.

765. H. A. Hoffner Jr., “Ancient Israel’s Literary Heritage Compared with Hittite Textual Data,” in *The Future of Biblical Archaeology*, ed. J. K. Hoffmeier and Alan Millard (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 188.

766. D. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12* (WBC; Nashville: Nelson, 2002), 538, 543; also J. Tigay as noted, 538.

767. *COS*, 1.93, n. 17.

768. *ANET*, 167; Rendsburg, *Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 156; Greengus, “Law,” 4:250–51.

769. *COS*, 2.82, 19b–20; *ANET*, 201, 204b.

770. *ANET*, 531, Law 3; Chavalas and Lawson, *Mesopotamia and the Bible*, 214; Richard Hess, “Alalakh Studies and the Bible: Obstacle or Contribution,” in *Scripture and Other Artifacts*, ed. M. D. Coogan, J. C. Exum, and L. E. Stager (Louisville: John Knox, 1994), 201.

771. C. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 481, who holds that the prostitutes in vv. 17–18 are common prostitutes.

772. E. A. Goodfriend, “Prostitution (OT),” *ABD*, 5:506; *ANET*, 160, Law 27; 183–85, Laws 40, 49, 52; cf. *ANET*, 170, Law 117.

773. Goodfriend, “Prostitution,” 5:507, 511.

774. Ibid., 511; K. van der Toorn, “Female Prostitution in Payment of Vows in Ancient Israel,” *JBL* 108 (1989): 193–95, 199; cf. Marsman, *Women in Ugarit*, 598–99.

775. Marsman, *Women in Ugarit*, 497–501; Brenner, *The Israelite Woman* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1994).

776. P. Bird, “The End of The Male Cult Prostitute: A Literary Historical and Sociological Analysis of Hebrew *qādēš*, *q^{a}dēšîm*,” in *Congress Volume: Cambridge 1995*, ed. J. A. Emerton (VTSup 65; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 37, 40, 43–44, 74–75.

777. Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 301, n. 22.

778. Rendsburg, *Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 160.

779. King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 83.

780. Goodfriend, “Prostitution,” 5:506.

781. P. Maloney, “Usury and Restrictions on Interest-Taking in the Ancient Near East,” *CBQ* 36 (1974): 1; King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 20; R. J. Williams, “Interest,” *ISBE*, 2:860–61.

782. Maloney, “Usury and Restrictions,” 2; see 6–10 for laws (18A, 19–21).

783. Ibid., 12.
784. Ibid., 3.
785. *ANET*, 162, 168–70, Law 90.
786. Maloney, "Usury and Restrictions," 12–20, 22.
787. *ANET*, 168, Law 48.
788. H. Gamoran, "The Biblical Law against Loans on Interest," *JNES* 30 (1971): 127–34, esp. 30–31.
789. *COS*, 3.56; 3.57.
790. *ANET*, 629a, n. 73.
791. *COS*, 3.116.
792. R. Westbrook and R. Jasnow, eds., *Security and Debt in Ancient Near Eastern Law* (CHANE 9; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1–5.
793. *COS*, 2.143.
794. Cartledge, *Vows in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 73. See 73–136 for the ancient Near Eastern context of vows.
795. Cartledge, *Vows*, 134–36.
796. King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 37; *ANET*, 48b.
797. Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 306, n. 5.
798. *CML*, 84, ll. 100–102.
799. Westbrook, *Biblical and Cuneiform Law*, 21.
800. K. van der Toorn, "Mill, Millstone," *ABD*, 4:831; King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 94–95; R. Amiran, "The Millstone and the Potter's Wheel," *EI* 4 (1956): 46–49 (Heb).
801. Westbrook, *HANEL*, 650; Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 573; Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 307.
802. Westbrook, *HANEL*, 421.
803. *COS*, 2.19, Laws 19–21.
804. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 224.
805. E. V. Hulse, "The Nature of Biblical 'Leprosy' and the Use of Alternative Medical Terms in Modern Translations of the Bible," *PEQ* 107 (1975): 87; however, see W. Westendorf, *Handbuch der Altägyptischen Medizin* (HOS 630.1; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 311, for possible words used for it.
806. Ibid., 91; see also Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 817.
807. Hulse, "Biblical Leprosy," 104; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 224,
808. J. Scurlock and B. Andersen, *Diagnoses in Assyrian and Babylonian Medicine* (Urbana, Ill.: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2005), 70–73.
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815. Ibid., 83, 88.
816. *COS*, 2.131, Laws 273–274.
817. Westbrook, *Bible and Cuneiform Law*, 20, and n. 55.
818. *ANET*, 180, Law 1; *COS*, 2.19.
819. *ANET*, 182, Law 32; *COS*, 2.19; Yaron, "The Middle Assyrian Laws and the Bible," 551.
820. Greenberg, "Postulates," 344–45; Greengus, "Law," 4:249.
821. *KTU*, 1:40:18, 35–36; *RS*, 18.115; *PRU*, 4.158–59; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 308.
822. C. Van Houten, *The Alien in Israelite Law* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 25.
823. *ANET*, 151a, 178a, 408d, 415c, 425c; in general see J. R. Spencer, "Sojourner," *ABD*, 4:250–51.
824. *COS*, 1.181, 45–50.
825. Van Houten, *The Alien*, 35.
826. Spencer, "Sojourner," 103; *COS*, 2.23, 14–18.
827. W. Fields, *Sodom and Gomorrah* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 27–53.
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830. *ANET*, 183, 185–88; Roth, *Law Collections*, 167–69, 175, 178–81, 183–91.

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832. *COS*, 2.132, Law 40.

833. Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 313, n. 5.

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835. *COS*, 2.152.

836. *COS*, 2.131.

837. Code of Hammurabi Laws 241–49; see *COS*, 2.131; cf. also 2.131, Laws 268–71.

838. *COS*, 3.121.

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847. *ANET*, 423, Law 16.

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849. *COS*, 1.43, 2:104–10.

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851. *COS*, 2.131, gap #x; Roth, *Law Collections*, 98.

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873. Kempinski, "Iron Age I Watchtower," 42.

874. Kitchen, *Reliability*, 284; see also McCarthy for the flexibility of the ancient Near Eastern treaty/covenantal forms, *Treaty and Covenant*, chs. 7 (basic unity) and 8 (diversity).

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879. *COS*, 1.159, ll. 63–64.

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881. *ANET*, 196b; *COS*, 2.19, Law 189.

882. *ANET*, 196, Law 195; *COS*, 2.19.

883. *ANET*, 181, AL.A10; 185, B2.

884. H. A. Hoffner, “Legal and Social Institutions of Hittite Anatolia,” *CANE*, 556.

885. Greengus, “Law,” 4:29; see *ANET*, 189, 542 (homicide), 547 (homicide).

886. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 663.

887. *ANET*, 388b, “Hymn to the Sun God.”

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889. *COS*, 2.131, 47–79; *ANET*, 201, 204–6.

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900. *COS*, 1.166, 225–40, 260–64; 3.45X, 22–39.

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913. *ANET*, 91b, 92d, 716, 726.

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916. *COS*, 1.153, 2; *ANET*, 604a.

917. *COS*, 1.154.

918. *ANET*, 438d.

919. *ANET*, 93a, l. 10. Cf. Dan. 2 and 5.

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921. *ANET*, 371; *COS*, 1.27; 1.28.

922. Ibid.

923. COS, 2, 59, 2–6, Aramaic inscription (ca. 690 B.C.).

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949. Foster, *Hymns, Prayers, and Songs.*

950. Beckman, *Diplomatic Texts*, 108, 114; Kitchen, *Reliability*, 288.

951. See further McCarthy's discussion of the basic unity of treaties compared to their evident diversity, *Treaty and Covenant*, chs. 7–8; see also chs. 3–6 for illustrations.

952. So S. Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 86–87, 99–107, 104.

953. Ibid., 68.

954. Ibid., 166, for list of sources; for a cogent critique of her helpful but excessive claims see Hess, "Literacy in Iron Age Israel," 83.

955. Kitchen, *Reliability*, 304–5.

956. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 102.

957. Ibid., 102–3 and n. 55.

958. Kramer, as quoted in D. R. Tasker, *Ancient Near Eastern Literature and the Hebrew Scriptures About The Fatherhood of God* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 28; emphasis mine.

959. For a thorough review of this fascinating topic see ibid., 28, 32, 48, 67, 86, 107, 204.

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961. *COS*, 2.21, 1–75, nn. 10–13; 2.31.

962. *COS*, 1:25, 149.

963. *COS*, 1:434, 436.

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966. *ANET*, 134c; 1336; *UT*, 51 IV:50–1; VI:46; cf. D. Block, *The Gods of the Nations: Studies in ANE National Theology* (Winona

Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1988), 21–22; Machinist, “Distinctiveness,” 434, n. 30; Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 378, n. 18; Heiser, “Deuteronomy 32:8 and the Sons of God,” 54.

967. Heiser, “Deuteronomy 32:8 and the Sons of God,” 59–73.

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972. Baal dies at Ugarit; Qingu dies in Babylon, both gods; see *COS*, 1.111, 6:30–39; *COS*, 1.86, 5:14–15.

973. *COS*, 1.22; 1.24.

974. *COS*, 1.111, 5.124–30; *ANET*, 502.

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976. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, 797; C. Wilcke, *Das Lugalbandae Epos* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1969), 94–95; H. Vanstiphout, *Epics of Sumerian Kings* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).

977. *COS*, 1.131.

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980. *COS*, 1.131, 3:457a.

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982. Saggs, *Greatness*, 487.

983. Von Soden, *Ancient Orient*, 199–200; *COS* 1.168.

984. Chavalas and Adamthwaite, “Archaeological Light,” 93–94.

985. For protective spirits see F. A. M. Wiggerman, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits* (Cuneiform Monographs 1; Groningen: Styx, 1992), 105–88, The Shedu is listed also as an evil demon represented by a human-headed bull in the Neo-Assyrian period, 219; Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 306.

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987. J. Hoftizger and G. van der Kooij, *Aramaic Texts from Deir ʿAlla* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 179–82; A. Lemaire, “Fragments from the Book of Balaam Found at Deir ʿAlla,” *BAR* 11/5 (1985): 33–34.

988. Chavalas and Adamthwaite, “Archaeological Light,” 92–94; Chavalas and Hostetter, “Epigraphic Light on the Old Testament,” 46–47.

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998. *COS*, 2:156 (ca. 750 B.C.).

999. *COS*, 1.166, 260–64.

1000. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 111.

1001. Rasmussen, *NIV Atlas*, 18, 24, 224, 246.

1002. A. J. Ferch, “Avarim,” *ABD*, 1:6–7.

1003. *ANET*, 320; M. Piccirillo, “Mount Nebo,” *ABD*, 4:1057.

1004. Rasmussen, *NIV Atlas*, 92; Aharoni and Avi-Yonah, *Macmillan Bible Atlas*, 46.

1005. R. L. Roth, “Hor,” *ABD*, 3:287; Coogan, Exum, and Stager, *Scripture and Other Artifacts*, 90.

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1007. Green, *Storm-God in the Ancient Near East*, 258–59.

1008. Ibid., 266–69; cf. Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 396, plus nn.

1009. Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 393, n. 7; Rasmussen, *NIV Atlas*, 84, 89.

1010. Greenberg, "Ezekiel's Vision," in *History, Historiography, and Interpretation*, 162–63; *ANEP*, 536.

1011. *COS*, 2.47D, 1–2.

1012. *CML*, 64; Green, *Storm-God in the Ancient Near East*, 268.

1013. *COS*, 1.57, A iii 28–34; Green, *Storm-God in the Ancient Near East*, 268, for this and nn. 200–201.

1014. Beyerlin, *Near Eastern Religious Texts*, 166; I. Mendelsohn, "Urim and Thummim," *IDB*, 4:739–40; H. G. May, "Ephod and Ariel," *AJSL* 56 (1939): 44–69.

1015. Hallo, "Before Tea Leaves," 34, 37.

1016. C. Van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 45–80.

1017. Kitchen, *Reliability*, 294, plus n. 116; M. Weinfeld, "Covenant vs. Obligation," *Bib* 56 (1975): 120–28; cf. *CAD* N/2, 43, 44; *CAD* R, 353.

1018. Beyerlin, *Near Eastern Religious Texts*, 250–51; cf. *COS*, 1:306.

1019. *COS*, 2.4B; for a grammatical tie to "the loins of …" see Gibson, *CML*, 150.

1020. Green, *Storm-God in the Ancient Near East*, 267–68, n. 197.

1021. *COS*, 1.94, plus n. 2.

1022. Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 397, n. 27; *COS*, 1.73.

1023. *COS*, 1.88, 26–36; King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 32–33.

1024. *COS*, 2.4D.

1025. Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 402, n. 47; Beyerlin, *Near Eastern Religious Texts*, 198, 210.

1026. *CML*, 43, 2:iv:6–10; *COS*, 1.86, iv. 7–20; 2:iv. 28–30.

1027. *COS*, 1.86, n. 56; 3:ii, 5.

1028. *COS*, 1.160, iv; Beyerlin, *Near Eastern Religious Texts*, 78–79.

1029. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10–34:12*, prefers to read this as "their backs" (858, n. 29dd).

1030. J. T. Whitney, "*Bamoth* in the Old Testament," *TynBul* 30 (1979): 125–47; M. D. Fowler, "The Israelite *bāmâ*: A Question of Interpretation," *ZAW* 94 (1982): 203–13.

1031. Zevit, *Religions*, 262.

1032. J. M. Grintz, "Some Observations on the 'High Place' in the History of Israel," *VT* 27 (1977): 111–13; *COS*, 2.23, l. 3.

1033. King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 320–21.

1034. Millard, *Treasures*, 96–97; T. A. Holland and Ehud Netzer, "Jericho," *ABD*, 3:723–40.

1035. *ANET*, 143–45, ll. 40, 153, 155, 299; *COS*, 1.102.

1036. Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 228.

1037. Ibid., 120–24.

1038. W. F. Albright, "The 'Natural Force' of Moses in the Light of Ugaritic," *BASOR* 12 (1944): 32–35.

1039. D. P. Wright, "The Gesture of Hand Placement in the Hebrew Bible and in Hittite Literature," *JAOS* 106 (1986): 433–46.

1040. Ibid., 436, 446.

1041. Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 123–24, nn. 43–44, for *CAD* refs. & detail (*CAD* Q, 320).

Sidebar and Chart Notes

A-1. I. Beit-Arieh and R. Gophna, "The Early Bronze Age II Settlement at ʿAin el-Quiderat (1980–1981)," *Tel Aviv* 8 (1981): 12–35; idem, "Early Bronze Age II Sites in Wadi el-Qudeirat (Kadesh-Barnea)," *Tel Aviv* 3 (1976): 142–50.

A-2. A. Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 444–46; Y. Aharoni, "Kadesh Barnea and Mount Sinai," in *God's Wilderness Discoveries in Sinai*, ed. B. Rothenberg (New York: Nelson, 1961), 137.

A-3. For a discussion of the options, see Hoffmeier, *Sinai*, 123–24.

A-4. Ibid., 153–59, for an up-to-date discussion of the number of Israelites in the Exodus.

A-5. Kitchen, *Reliability*, 190–93.

A-6. For tents in the ancient Near East and in Egypt see Hoffmeier, *Sinai*, 196–98; D. Wiseman, "They Lived in Tents," in *Biblical and Near Eastern Studies: Essays in Honor of William Sanford LaSor*, ed. Gary Tuttle (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 195–200; A Poebel, "The Khorsabad King List," *JNES* 1 (1942): 251.

A-7. Kitchen, *Reliability*, 191, see 545, n. 86, for up-to-date resources.

A-8. For full discussion and literature see Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*, 33–36, with map on 34; P. J. King and L. E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 302, 352.

A-9. L. Grabbe, "Ugaritic and 'Canaanite': Some Methodological Observations," in *Ugarit and the Bible*, ed. G. J. Brooke, A. H. W. Curtis, and J. F. Healey (UBL 11; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1994), 116–17.

A-10. King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 302, 352.

A-11. W. G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 114–18.

A-12. K. Schoville, "Canaanites and Amorites," in *POTW*, 166–67.

A-13. Millard, *Treasures*, 88–89.

A-14. Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*, 59, 426, discusses the West Semitic alphabet; A. Lemaire, "Writing and Writing Materials," *ABD*, 6:1000. The details of the formation and development of the alphabet are still not entirely clear; it may be as early as 2100 B.C. per J. Darnell, "Journey to the Valley of Terror," *Chicago House Bulletin, Epigraphic Survey of the Oriental Institute 2* (April 1994): 1–2. For some discussion see Hoffmeier, *Sinai*, 179–81.

A-15. The following books are helpful: J. M. Miller and J. H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 40–53; P. J. King and L. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 85–112; R. P. Martin, "Food," *NBD*, 383–87; Rasmussen, *NIV Atlas of the Bible*, 25–26; H. T. Frank, *Atlas of the Bible Lands* (Maplewood, N.J.: Hammond, 1997), 7.

A-16. J. Kelso, "Agriculture," *NBD*, 20–21; King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 86–101.

A-17. Miller and Hayes, *History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, 51.

A-18. King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 94.

A-19. Ibid., 112–22.

A-20. Gerald Mattingly, "Moabites," *POTW*, 323–24.

A-21. Kitchen, *Reliability*, 195.

A-22. R. R. Stieglitz, "Ebla and the Gods of Canaan," in *Eblaitica: Essays on the Ebla Archives and Eblaite Language*, ed. C. H. Gordon and G. A. Rendsburg (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 2:83, 85–86.

A-23. Mattingly, "Moabites," 325.

A-24. LaBianca and Younker, "The Kingdoms of Ammon, Moab and Edom," 403, 405, 407, 411.

A-25. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 161–62.

A-26. Peter Craigie, *Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 110.

A-27. G. Mattingly, "Ar," *ABD*, 1:131; Rainey and Notley, *Sacred Bridge*, 123, 203.

A-28. For a helpful discussion see M. Suano, "The First Trading Empires: Prehistory to c. 1000 B.C.," in *The Mediterranean in History*, ed. D. Abulafia (Los Angeles: Getty, 2003), 70–71, 82–83, 303; 71 with picture.

A-29. E. C. Stone, "The Development of Cities in 'Ancient Mesopotamia,'" *CANE*, 236, 241, 1524.

A-30. D. Oredsson, *Moats in Ancient Palestine* (ConBOT 48; Stockholm: Almquist & Wiksell, 2000), an excellent resource.

A-31. Ibid., 175–83.

A-32. Z. Herzog, "Cities," *ABD*, 1:1035.

A-33. Tina Haettner Blomquist, *Gates and Gods* (CBOTS 46; Stockholm: Almquist & Wiksell, 1999), 11–21; Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When?* 198–200.

A-34. R. Gonen, "Urban Canaan in the Late Bronze Period," *BASOR* 253 (Winter 1984): 61–73.

A-35. Stone, *CANE*, 244–45.

A-36. Herzog, "Cities," 1036–38.

A-37. S. Bunimovitz, "On the Edge of Empires—Late Bronze Age (1500–1200 B.C.)," in *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, ed. T. Levy (New York: Facts on File, 1995), 324–29; M. W. Chavalas and M. R. Adamthwaite, "Archaeological Light on the Old Testament," in *Face of Old Testament Studies*, 81; K. Kochavi, "The Israelite Settlement in Canaan in the Light of Archaeological Surveys," in *Biblical Archaeology Today*, ed. J. Aviram (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1985), 54–60; J. M. Miller, "Archaeology and the Israelite Conquest of Canaan: Some Methodological Observations," *PEQ* 109 (1977): 87–93.

A-38. Gonen, "Urban Canaan," 70; Walton, "Exodus, Date of," 269.

A-39. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, esp. 1–24, 37–85, 106–21; see Beckman, *Diplomatic Texts*, 16–114 for translation of all texts; Kitchen, *Reliability*, 284–89.

A-40. *ANET*, 277–301.

A-41. G. E. Mendenhall and G. A. Herion, "Covenant," *ABD*, 1:1187; E. Merrill, "Archaeology and Biblical History," in *Giving the Sense*, 94–95.

A-42. So A. F. Campbell in his review of Paul Kalluveettil in *Declaration and Covenant: A Comprehensive Review of Covenant Formulas from the O.T. and the ANE* (AnBib 88; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1982), 134. He sees the Ten Commandments as "summarizing the stipulations"; cf. Kitchen, *Reliability*, 284.

A-43. Kitchen, *Reliability*, 284–89.

A-44. Provan, Long, and Longman III, *Biblical History*, 134.

A-45. H. Güterbock, "Hittite Historiography," in *History, Historiography and Interpretation*, ed. H. Tadmor and M. Weinfeld (Jerusalem/Leiden: Magnes/Brill, 1986), 29.

A-46. See Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1–21:9*, 87; H. W. F. Saggs, *The Greatness That Was Babylon* (New York: Hawthorne, 1962),

314–29; Millard, *Treasures*, 50–53; del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion*, 43–44, 87, 213, 324–25.

A-47. Millard, *Treasures*, 50–53.

A-48. Machinist, "Distinctiveness," 429.

A-49. For a recent discussion of magic and divination see L. Ciraolo and J. Seidel, eds., *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World* (Ancient Magic and Divination 2; Leiden: Brill, 2002), esp. 7, 41, 47–49, 57–59, 83–84.

A-50. J. Lindsay, *Origins of Astrology* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1971), 42; see esp. H. Hunger, ed., *Astrological Reports to Assyrian Kings* (SAA 8; Helsinki: Helsinki Univ. Press, 1992).

A-51. Ciraolo and Seifel, *Divination*, 45–49.

A-52. W. Farber, "Witchcraft, Magic, and Divination in Ancient Mesopotamia," *CANE*, 1907–8.

A-53. F. Rochberg, "Astronomy and Calendars in Ancient Mesopotamia," *CANE*, 1925–40.

A-54. Lindsay, *Astrology*, 42; Hunger, *Astrological Reports*, passim.

A-55. H. W. F. Saggs, "The Divine in History," in *Essential Papers on Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. F. Greenspahn (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1991), 41–42.

A-56. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1–21:9*, 111–12.

A-57. U. Avner, "Sacred Stones in the Desert," *BAR* 27/3 (2001): 39.

A-58. T. Mettinger, *No Graven Image* (CBOTS 42; Stockholm: Almquist & Wiksell, 1995), 55–56.

A-59. See discussion in Hoffmeier, *Sinai*, 239–40.

A-60. U. Avner, "Sacred Stones," 40; idem, "Ancient Cult Sites in the Negev and Sinai Deserts," *Tel Aviv* 11 (1984): 115–31.

A-61. Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 154–55.

A-62. *COS*, 2.29; 2.30; for more examples see Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 285.

A-63. C. Teaunecker, *The Gods of Egypt* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 2001), 96–99.

A-64. J. Assman, *The Search for God in Ancient Egypt*, trans. D. Lorton (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 2001), 141.

A-65. *ANET*, 251.

A-66. Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 162.

A-67. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 340–41.

A-68. *ANET*, 412–20, 921–25; *COS*, 1:115–22.

A-69. R. E. Murphy, "Wisdom in the Old Testament," *ABD*, 6:929.

A-70. *ANET*, 589–91, 600–604.

A-71. J. Vanderkam, "Ahiqar," *ABD*, 1:113–14; 6:929–30; *ANET*, 427–30.

A-72. M. Civil, "Education," *ABD*, 2:301–12; G. Pinch, "Private Life in Ancient Egypt," *CANE*, 379, 492, 644.

A-73. *ANET*, 538 (34).

A-74. In general see M. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1990); R. M. Seltzer, *Religions of Antiquity*, ed. R. M. Seltzer (New York: Macmillan, 1989).

A-75. See Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 159–61, for a brief summary of Canaanite religion; for detail see del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion*, 1–388; Smith, *The Early History of God*; essays in Seltzer, *Religions of Antiquity*.

A-76. M. S. Smith, "Myth and Mythmaking in Canaan and Ancient Israel," *CANE*, 2034, and chart; see Deut. 32:9; e.g., *COS*, 2.29, ll. 1–3.

A-77. Millard, *Treasures*, 181–83.

A-78. Rendsburg, *Bible and Ancient Near East*, 153–61; see also Eckart Otto, "Town and Rural Countryside in Ancient Israelite Law: Reception and Redaction in Cuneiform and Israelite Law," *JSOT* 57 (1993): 3–22. Otto concludes that the literary form of ancient Near Eastern and biblical laws and even content to a lesser degree show a dependency on common features of ancient Near Eastern laws (esp. 20–22).

A-79. Ibid., 153–61.

A-80. Westbrook, *Biblical and Cuneiform Law*, 133–35.

A-81. Greengus, "Law," *ABD*, 4:245b; see 242–51 for a helpful overview of comparisons *and* contrasts between Israel's laws and the legal tradition of the rest of the ancient Near East.

A-82. K. van der Toorn, "Theology, Priests, and Worship in Canaan and Ancient Israel," *CANE*, 2053.

A-83. Del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion*, 28–29, has a description of both.

A-84. Ibid., 32. For the Ugaritic pantheon see 43–86; Hill and Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 470, for a helpful chart.

A-85. Kitchen, *Reliability*, 403.

A-86. J. Day, "Religion of Canaan," *ABD*, 1:831.

A-87. *COS*, 1.86, *CTA*, 4.V. 64–73.

A-88. Ibid., 1:831–32.

A-89. Kitchen, *Reliability*, 404.

A-90. Ibid., 405.

A-91. Del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion*, 37; W. G. E. Watson and N. Wyatt, eds., *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 564–65.

A-92. Ibid., 38–39.

A-93. *COS*, 1.122.

A-94. J. Day, "Religion of Canaan," *ABD*, 1:834.

A-95. See discussion in Marsman, *Women in Ugarit*, esp. 415–19, 433–35, 497–99, 570, 598–99, 728.

A-96. *COS*, 1.90; 1.91; 1.92; 1.93; cf. 1.94; 1.96.

A-97. *COS*, 1.90, Introd; 1.120, 8–15; P. Xella, "The Omen Texts," in *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*, ed. W. G. E. Watson and N. Wyatt (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 353–54; also 56, 163–64; M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sammartin, *The Cuniform Alphabetic Texts*, 2nd ed. (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995), 117–20, 136, 143; *KTU*, 1.103; 1.145; 1.140; 1.124.

A-98. *COS*, "Divination," 1:421–22; 1.120; W. W. Hallo, "Before Tea Leaves: Divination in Ancient Babylonia," *BAR* 31.2 (March/April 2005): 33–39.

A-99. Day, "Canaanite Religion," *ADB*, 1:834; Hallo, "Before Tea Leaves," 35–36.

A-100. See Kitchen, *Reliability*, 406–7, for a full description of the Lachish temple, its contents, and its rituals.

A-101. Ibid., 409.

A-102. For a review of the current knowledge in this area see ibid., esp. 403–9.

A-103. G. C. Heider, *The Cult of Molek* (JSOTSup 43; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1985), 101, 113, 146, 164–68, 200, 222; see also A. R. W. Green, *The Role of Human Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East* (ASOR Dissertation 1; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1975).

A-104. Del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion*, 39; Day, "Canaanite Religion," 1:834.

A-105. Day, "Canaanite Religion," 1:833–36.

A-106. Watson and Wyatt, *Handbook*, 560–64, 576–78, 580.

A-107. *ANET*, 417; *COS*, 1.35, 129; Hallo, "Compare and Contrast," 12–13; A. Malamat, "A Forerunner of Biblical Prophecy," in *Essential Papers on Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. F. Greenspahn (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1991), 153, 156–69; Greene, *Role of Messenger*, 232–66, compares the Heb. prophet with ancient Near Eastern and Hebrew messengers.

A-108. Most of what follows is illustrated well in Kitchen, *Reliability*, 383–93; H. B. Huffmon, "Prophecy (ANE)," *ABD*, 5:477–81, for a succinct summary of ancient Near Eastern prophecy.

A-109. R. K. Ritner, "Ecstatic Episode from 'The Report of Wenamon,'" in *Prophets and Prophecy in the ANE*, ed. M. Nissinen (SBLWAW 12; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2005), 220.

A-110. B. Uffenheimer, "Hamath in Northern Syria," in *Early Prophecy in Israel* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1999), 32–38.

A-111. M. Nissinen, *References to Prophecy in Neo-Assyrian Sources* (SAAS 7; Helsinki: Univ. of Helsinki, 1998), 96.

A-112. Weinfeld, *Prophecy*, 90–91.

A-113. Nissinen, *References to Prophecy*, 166–67.

A-114. Weinfeld, "Patterns," 84–101; Kitchen, *Reliability*, 389–93.

A-115. A. R. Millard, "La prophétie et l'écriture Israël, Aram, Assyrie," *RHR 202* (1985): 125–45.

A-116. See Roberts, "Ancient Near Eastern Environment," 19, for discussion and references.

A-117. Cf. also Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 227, and Additional Note; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomic School*, 100, claims "proof" for the seventh-century date of the biblical laws, which is certainly not the case.

A-118. *COS*, 1.126, The Consecration Day, ll 9–10; D. Fleming, "The Etymological Origins of the Hebrew 'nabi'," *CBQ* 55 (1993): 220–24.

A-119. J. Huehnergard, "On the Etymology and Meaning of Hebrew '*navi*,'" *EI* 26 (1999): 89, 88–93.

A-120. Nissinen, *References to Prophecy*, 93–94.

A-121. Lemaire, "Mari," 102.

A-122. D. Baker, "Israelite Prophets and Prophecy," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 274–75.

A-123. M. Pope, "The Cult of the Dead at Ugarit," in *Ugarit in Retrospect*, ed. G. D. Young (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 159–79.

A-124. D. Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit* (SBLWAW 10; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 195–210.

A-125. H. A. Hoffner Jr., "Second Millennium Antecedents to the Hebrew *bôr*," *JBL* 86 (1967): 385–401.

A-126. C. A. Kennedy, "Cult of the Dead," *ABD*, 2:106; B. S. Levine and J.-M. de Terragon, "Dead Kings and Rephaim: The Patrons of the Ugaritic Dynasty," *JAOS* 104 (1984): 649–59; P. Xella, "Death and Afterlife in Canaanite and Hebrew Thought," *CANE*, 2060–66; *COS*, 1.105.

A-127. Beyerlin, *Near Eastern Religious Texts*, 215.

A-128. T. J. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 100; cf. *CML*, 73, 5:18–20; 19:169–79.

A-129. *COS*, 1.103; Lewis, *Cults of the Dead*, 100–101.

A-130. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead*, 101.

A-131. *ANET*, 98.

A-132. *CANE*, 888–89.

A-133. B. Arnold, "Religion in Ancient Israel," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies*, ed. D. W. Baker and B. T. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 414–15. See for a brief summary and bibliography.

A-134. B. R. Schmidt, *Israel's Beneficent Dead* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 27–41.

A-135. *COS*, 2.36, ll. 15b–18; 2.37, ll. 17–19.

A-136. Rendsburg, *Bible and Ancient Near East*, 55–56.

A-137. King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 376.

A-138. Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 230–31; he refers esp. to *CTA*, 5.VI.14–18 (=*UT* 67); *CTA*, 19.IV.173, 184 (=*UT* 1 Aqht); Parker, *Ugaritic Poetry*, 149; *CML*, 19.4.184–87; J. Nougoyrol, "Textes suméro-accadiens des archives et bibliothèques privées d'Ugarit," *Ugaritica* 5 (1968): 265–73; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, 156.

A-139. Westbrook, *HANEL*, 264–65; *COS*, 1.38, 1.248–50; 1.43, ll. 183–85.

A-140. Ibid., 302–6.

A-141. Ibid., 439.

A-142. Ibid., 489–90, 572–74, 569–71.

A-143. Ibid., 628–30, 658–61, 695–97, 720–22, respectively.

A-144. Greengus, "Legal and Social Institutions," *CANE*, 621–27; H. Reviv, *The Elders in Ancient Israel* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1989), 146–47.

A-145. Westbrook, *HANEL*, 143–44.

A-146. Ibid., 145.

A-147. Ibid., 159–60, 161–91.

A-148. Greengus, "Legal and Social Institutions," 622.

A-149. S. D. Spealing, "Avenger of Blood," *ABD*, 1:764; EA 8:26–29.

A-150. *COS*, 1.76, Law 49.

A-151. For the development of these cities in biblical perspective, see Barmash, *Homicide*, 71–93.

A-152. P. Barmash, "Blood Feud and State Control: Differing Legal Institutions for the Remedy of Homicide during the Second and First Millennia B.C.E.," *JNES* 63 (2004): 183–99.

A-153. F. E. Greenspahn, "Primogeniture in Ancient Israel," in *Go to the Land I Will Show You*, ed. J. Coleson and V. Matthews (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 72–73.

A-154. *ANET*, 160; Roth, *Law Collections*, 112.

A-155. Cf. *ANET*, 546.

A-156. *ANET*, 220a; Roth, *Law Collections*, 113.

A-157. Westbrook, *HANEL*, 710, 712.

A-158. Ibid., 678.

A-159. Ibid., 544.

A-160. Westbrook, *HANEL*, 276–77.

A-161. Ibid., 333–34.

A-162. Cf. *ANET*, 185d; Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 283, n. 19; *COS*, 1.38, 235–45; cf. in general 3.63, 17–37.

A-163. Kitchen, *Reliability*, 326, 570, nn. 41–43.

A-164. *ANET*, 185d; Westbrook, *HANEL*, 58.

A-165. Cf. *COS*, 3.63, 17–54.

A-166. Roth, *Law Collections*, 158, 160, Laws 15, 20; *ANET*, 181, would also include Laws 18–19 in this category by castration; *COS* and Roth translate as "cut off their beard/hair."

A-167. J. S. Hawkins, "Eunuchs Among the Hittites," in *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East*, ed. S. Parpola and R. M. Whiting (Part 1; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2002), 229, 231–33.

A-168. K. Deller, "The Assyrian Eunuchs and Their Predecessors," in *Priests and Officials in the Ancient Near East*, ed. K. Watanabe (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1999), 303–12.

A-169. *COS*, 1.70, Law 32.

A-170. Ibid., 309–11.

A-171. H. Tadmor, “Rab-saris and Rab-shakeh in 2 Kings 18,” in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of D. N. Freedman*, ed. C. L. Meyers and M. O’Connor (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 279–82, nn. 10, 17. These were titles of the Chief Eunuch.

A-172. A. K. Grayson, “Eunuchs in Power: Their Role in the Assyrian Bureaucracy,” in *Vom Alten Orient zum Alten Testament: Festschriften fürWolfram Freiherrn von Soden zum 85 Geburtstag am 19 Juni 1993*, ed. M. Dietrich and O. Loretz (AOAT 240; Kevalaer/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Butzon & Bercker/Neukirchener Verlag, 1995), 93–94.

A-173. Ibid., 95.

A-174. *COS*, 1.159, ll. 75–9.

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Picture Index

This is an index to all the pictures used in the fourteen e-book volumes of *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary—Old Testament*. This index lists the approximate location of each picture by Bible book and chapter. Each entry should be easy to locate within a page or two of where the comments on each Bible chapter begin.

Altars and High Places

Arad Altar, Josh. 8; 2 Kings 5; 2 Chron. 3

Beersheba Altar, Ex. 29; Jer. 17; Amos 3

Bethsaida High Place, Isa. 15; Amos 7

Boat Shrine, Ps. 132

Cultic Site in Golan, Josh. 4

Dan High Place, **Deut. 12**; Josh. 22; Ps. 78; Amos 8

Hazor Altar, Judg. 6w

Hazor High Place, Ezek. 6

Hittite Altar, Ex. 32

Horn of Altar, Judg. 2

Incense Altar (model), Ex. 30

Megiddo Altar, 1 Kings 1

Megiddo Circular Stone Altar, **Deut. 27**; Hos. 12

Megiddo Incense Altar, Lev. 4; Judg. 2

Mt. Ebal Altar, **Deut. 11**; Josh. 8; 1 Kings 3

Shrine of Tutankhamun, 2 Chron. 3

Taanach Cult Stand, 1 Chron. 13; Ezek. 8; Hos. 1

Taanach Incense Altar, 1 Kings 11

Votive Altar (Astarte), 1 Kings 11

Amulets

Ketef Hinnom, 1 Chron. 16; Neh. 13

Lamashtu, Job 2; Ezek. 14

Phylacteries (modern), **Deut. 6**; Prov. 3

Ancient Maps

Babylonian Map of the World, Ps. 24; Ezek. 38; Zeph. 2

Egyptian Map, Job 28

Madaba Map, Gen. 13; 14; Josh. 4

Map of Canals, Prov. 21
Map of the City of Umma, Ezek. 4

Animals

Animals, Gen. Introduction; Num. 18; **Deut. 4**; **5**; 1 Kings 20; Isa. 56; Job 1; Ps. 82; Ps. 147
Baboon, Prov. Introduction; Eccl. 3
Bird Hunting, Num. 11; Ezek. 13
Boar, Ps. 80
Bull, Ex. 21; 29; 32; Lev. 1; Num. 25; 33; 1 Sam. 1; 2; 1 Kings 12; 2 Kings 10; Job 36; 39; Ps. 106; Zech. 9
Bull Slaughtering, Ps. 51
Calf, Ex. 23; Judg. 17; 1 Kings 12; 2 Chron. 11; Hos. 1; 8
Camel, Gen. 24; Judg. 5; 1 Sam. 30; 1 Chron. 1; 2 Chron. 21; Isa. 21; 60
Cattle, Ex. 22
Cattle Sacrifice, Ps. 50
Cow, **Deut. 22**; Isa. 55; Amos 4
Cows Following Calf, 1 Sam. 6
Crocodile, Job 40; Ps. 58; Ezek. 29
Deer, Ps. 42
Dog, Lev. 17; **Deut. 23**; Ps. 140
Donkey, Gen. 12; Num. 22; 1 Sam. 9; Zech. 9
Duck, Job 31
Eagle, **Deut. 32**; 2 Kings 2; Job 30
Falcon, **Deut. 32**
Fish, Jonah 1
Fishing, Isa. 19
Flocks, Num. 31; 1 Sam. 25
Goats, Gen. 32
Hippopotamus, Job 40; Ezek. 29
Horse, 2 Kings 23; Est. 1; 6; Ps. 80; Isa. 1; 22; Mic. 1; Zech. 14
Hunting, Gen. 10; 1 Sam. 17; 2 Sam. 23; 1 Chron. 11; Job 18; 29; Ps. 22; 45; Jer. 22; 27; Nah. 2
Ibex, 1 Sam. 24
Jackal, Judg. 15; Job 30; Jer. 8
Lamb, Ex. 12; 2 Sam. 12
Leopard, Jer. 13
Lion, Gen. 6; Judg. 2; 14; 1 Kings 12; 2 Kings 17; Ezra 7; Ps. 15; Isa. 11; Jer. 2; Ezek. 22; Dan. 6; Amos 3; Zeph. 3
Lion Attack, 1 Kings 13; Isa. 31; Jer. 16; Ezek. 19

Lion Attacking Bull, Isa. 5
Lion Hunting, Gen. 10; 1 Sam. 17; 2 Sam. 23; 1 Chron. 11; Ps. 45; Jer. 22; 27; Nah. 2
Lion Scepter, Gen. 49
Lions after Hunt, 2 Kings 21
Locusts, Ex. 10; Isa. 33; Joel 1
Lord of Animals, Gen. 2
Mollusk, Ex. 25
Monkeys, Jer. 24
Murex Snail, Isa. 1; Ezek. 26
Ostrich, Job 39; Mic. 1
Ostrich Eggs, Lam. 4
Ox Butchering, Gen. 9
Oxen, 2 Kings 6
Pig Remains, **Deut. 14**; Neh. 10; Isa. 66
Quail, Ex. 16
Ram, Gen. 22; 30; 2 Chron. 32
Sheep, Gen. 12; 30; 1 Sam. 16; Isa. 32; Amos 1; Mic. 2
Snail, Gen. 49
Snake, Serpent, Gen. 3; Ex. 4; Num. 21; 2 Kings 18; Ps. 58; 140; Eccl. 10; Isa. 22; 30; 37; Jer. 7; Jon. 2
Vulture, Ex. 19; Job 15; Ezek. 17; Mic. 1

Anointing

Anointing of Pharaoh, 1 Sam. 2; 10; 1 Kings 1; 1 Chron. 11; Isa. 45
Anointing Vessel, Lev. 8; 1 Sam. 10; 16

Banquet

Ashurbanipal Banquet, Est. 5; Ps. 23
Banquet, 1 Sam. 25; Isa. 5; Obad.; Job 21; Ps. 110
Beer Drinking, Prov. 20
Standard of Ur, Gen. Introduction; 1 Kings 10; 2 Chron. 1; Job 1

Boundary Stones

Astral Symbols, **Deut. 4**
Babylonian Land Grant (Nabu-apla-iddina), Gen. 13; Josh. Introduction; 1 Sam 22
Chaos Creature, Gen. 1; Ps. 75
Eanna-shum-iddina, Prov. 23
Gezer, Ruth 2
Marduk, Isa. 46
Marduk Temple, **Deut. 19**

Marduk-zakir-shumi, 2 Chron. 24
Melishihu, Dan. 8
Meli-shipak, Num. 28; Ps. 84; Isa. 13
Merodach-baladan, 2 Kings 20; Isa. 39
Michaux Stone, Job 24
Nabu-apla-iddina, 1 Sam. 22
Nature Gods, Isa. 43
Senusret III's Boundary Marker, Isa. 19
Setting Up Boundary Stone, Hos. 5
Shamash, Judg. 13
Sippar, 2 Kings 9
Unfinished Kudurru, Job 9; Ps. 104; Jonah 2

Bowing/Lifted Hands

Ashkelon relief (Merneptah), Lev. 9; Judg. Introduction; 2 Sam. 1; 2 Kings 3
Bowing backwards, Lev. 9
Bowing before Ruler, 1 Sam. 16; Est. 3
Bowing Captives, **Deut. 20**
Bowing in Lachish, 2 Sam. 10; Neh. 8; Ps. 95; Isa. 66
Bowing Servant, Isa. 60
Elamite Captive Bowing, Ps. 2
Hands Raised, Isa. 1; Job 11
Hazor Stone, 1 Kings 8
Kneeling Man, Jer. 7
Kneeling Pharaoh, 2 Chron. 6
Lady Taperet, Ps. 28
Praying Priest, 1 Kings 8; Ps. 44
Shalmaneser III's Black Obelisk, 1 Sam. 24
Worshiper Seal, Amos 5

Burial

Abraham's Tomb, Gen. 25
Absalom's Tomb, 2 Sam. 18
Achaemenid Tombs, Ezra 4
Ahiram's Sarcophagus, Gen. 37; 2 Kings 19; Jer. 4
Aspathines' Tomb, 1 Chron. 18
Burial Cairn, Josh. 7
Cyrus' Tomb, Neh. 2; Dan. 6
David's Tomb, Neh. 3

Embalming, Gen. 50

Eshmunazor II Sarcophagus, 1 Sam. 5

Funerary Stela, Josh. 6

Giza Pyramids, Ex. Introduction

Infant, Gen. 22

Ketef Hinnom, Lev. 21; Ruth 1

Kidron Valley Tombs, 1 Kings 2

Rachel's Tomb, Gen. 35

Roman Sarcophagus, Jonah 4

Sennedjem's Tomb, Isa. 19

Shaft Tomb, Gen. 23

St. Etienne's Tombs, 2 Sam. 2; 2 Kings 13

Terracotta Soul House, Job 4

Tomb of the Kings, Judg. 16

Tophet at Carthage, **Deut. 12**

Tumulus, 2 Chron. 16; Jer. 34

Xerxes' Tomb, Est. Introduction

Chaos Creature

Apophis, Gen. 3

Boundary Marker, Gen. 1; Ps. 75

Illuyankas, Job 7

Narmer Palette, Num. 23

Slaying of Chaos Creature, Job 7

Two Dogs, Lev. 17

Unfinished Kudurru, Job 9; Jonah 2

City Gate

Balawat Gates, Judg. 16; Isa. 45

Beersheba Gate, Judg. 19

Bench, Arad, Ruth 4; Prov. 8

Bench, Beersheba, Gen. 19; 1 Chron. 11

Bench, Dan, Josh. 20

Bethsaida, **Deut. 17**; 1 Kings 14

Dan Gate, Num. 22; Josh. 20; Judg. 8; 18; Ruth 1; 2 Sam 18; 19; 1 Kings 20; 1 Chron. 26; Jer. 1; Amos 5

Gate Socket, Judg. 16

Gezer Gate, 1 Kings 9

Hazor Gate, 1 Kings 9

Ishtar Gate Drawing, Dan. 4
Ishtar Gate Model, Jer. 50
Megiddo Gate, 2 Sam. 3; 1 Kings 9
Megiddo Gate Drawing, 2 Sam. 18
Megiddo Gate Model, 2 Chron. 35
Nineveh Gate, Jonah 3
Shechem Gate, Josh. 20
Ugarit Gate, Nah. 3

Coins

Antiochus Epiphanes Coin, Dan. 8; 11
Coins, Ex. 30
Daric, Ezra 2
Persian Daric, 1 Chron. 29
Tetradrachma of Lysimachus, Dan. 8

Composite Creatures

Anzu, **Deut. 31**; Ps. 139; Ezek. 3; Dan. 7
Calah Bull, 2 Kings 8
Cherub, Ex. 25; 1 Kings 6; 7; Ezek. 10; 41
Cherub Throne, 1 Sam. 4; 1 Kings 10; 2 Kings 19; Ps. 99; Isa. 6; 20
Composite Creatures (drawing), Ezek. 1
Composite Creatures Pectoral, Ezek. 1
Eagle Headed Spirit, Ezek. 17
Fish Men, Job 15; Ps. 38
Genie, Gen. 3; 1 Sam. 2; Ezek. 28; Zech. 5
Goat-Fish, Ps. 106
Lamashtu, Ezek. 14
Lion/Hippopotamus/Crocodile Monster, Ezek. 32
Seraph; Winged Serpents, Isa. 6
Seven Headed Beast, Ps. 74; Isa. 11; Amos 9
Snake Dragon, Ps. 104
Sphinx, Gen. 3; Ex. 6; 17; 1 Kings 11; 2 Chron. 3; Ps. 36; Eccl. 1; Isa. 37; Jer. 36; Amos 3
Taanach Cult Stand, 1 Chron. 13; Ezek. 8; Hos. 1
Winged Bull, Num. 3; Isa. 37
Winged Caprid, Dan. 8
Winged Lion, Ps. 18; Dan. 7

Deities

Adad, Num. 25
Ahriman, Zech. Introduction
Ahuramazda, Ezr. Introduction; Isa. 45; Ezek. 10; Zech. Introduction; Mal. 4
Amun, Gen. 1; 2 Chron. 32; Isa. 57; Jer. 13; Ezek. 39
Amun-Re, Genesis Introduction; Ex. 10; Job 6; Jer. 46
Anubis, Prov. 16; Hag. 2
Apis, Ex. 9
Apophis, Genesis Introduction; Ex. 7
Asherah, Judg. 2; 1 Sam. 1; Lam. 1; Hos. 4
Ashur, Judg. 4; Job 38; Ps. 7; 18
Astraea, Dan. 2
Aten, **Deut. 6**; 2 Chron. 9; Ps. 86; Isa. 35
Atum, Gen. 1
Baal, Judg. 2; 6; 1 Sam. 1; 7; 1 Kings 16; 2 Kings 1; Prov. 15; Isa. 43; Jer. 2; Dan. 2; Hos. 2
Chemosh, Judg. 11; Jer. 48
Dagon, 1 Sam. 5
Divine Council, Job 1
Ea, Joel 3; Ps. 139
Egyptian Cosmology, Gen. Introduction; Gen. 1
El, Gen. 14; Judg. 8; 1 Kings Introduction; 1 Chron. 20; Ps. 96; Jer. 2; Dan. 7
Enki, Gen. 2; Ex. 34; Job 26; Ezek. 28; 47
Ennead, Ex. 10
Etana, 2 Kings 2
Four-Faced God, Ezek. 1
Geb, Genesis Introduction; Job 22; Isa. 42
Gula, **Deut. 23**
Hadad, 1 Kings 12; Job 36
Hapy, Ex. 8
Hathor, Ex. 9; Est. 3; Song 4; Isa. 57
Heket, Ex. 8
Hemen, Isa. 30
Horus, 2 Sam. 14; Job 3; Ps. 36; 58; 104; 110; Isa. 49
Inanna, Jonah 3
Ishtar, Est. 2; Prov. 9; Isa. 6; Jer. 7; 44; Ezek. 16; Joel 3
Ishtar of Arbela, Isa. 11
Isis, Ruth 2; Job 3; Isa. 49; 57
Khnum, Gen. 2; Job 10; Isa. 43
Lama, Gen. 12
Lamashtu, Ex. 22; Ps. 113

Maʿat, Genesis Introduction; **Deut. 1**; **5**; Ps. 89; Prov. 3; Isa. 40

Marduk, Gen. 1; Isa. 46

Meretsteger, Ps. 140

Min, Isa. 65

Mut, Hab. 2

Nabu, 1 Chron. 17

Nanaya, Num. 28; Ps. 84

Nanna, Ezek. 40

Nekhbet, Lam. 4

Nergal, Gen. 49; Ex. 12; Ezek. 11

Ninurta, Isa. 42

Nut, Genesis Introduction; Job 22; Ps. 8; 72; Isa. 24; 42; Ezek. 31

Osiris, Genesis Introduction; Ruth 2; Isa. 1; 24; Ps. 72

Pazazu, **Deut. 32**; Ps. 91

Ptah, Ezek. 30

Qadesh, **Deut. 7**; 2 Kings 18

Qaws, **Deut. 6**; Obad.

Qedesh, Job 6

Ra, Ex. 7; Ps. 28

Re-Horakhty, **Deut. 1**; Job 11; Isa. 1

Resheph, **Deut. 6**; Job 6

Sebek-Re, Ex. 20

Sekhmet, Isa. 53

Seshat, Zech. 2

Seth, Genesis Introduction; 2 Sam. 14

Shamash, Gen. 1; Ex. 18; Lev. 19; Judg. 13; 1 Sam. 8; Job 31; Ps. 29; 72; Isa. 1; 8; 66; Joel 1; 3; Mal. 4

Sharruma, 2 Chron. 1; Ps. 84; Isa. 41

Shu, Genesis Introduction; Job 22; Ps. 8

Sin, Num. 28; Job 31

Snake Goddess, Eccl. 10

Storm God, Ex. 9; 25; Judg. 4; 1 Sam. 2; Isa. 29

Tanit, Judg. 11

Thoth, Genesis Introduction; **Deut. 1**; Prov. Introduction; 16; Eccl. 3

Tiamat, Gen. 1

Utu, Job 26

Wadjet, Ex. 7

Warrior God (Assyrian), Ex. 25

Zeus, Dan. 11

Divination

Divination Letter, 1 Kings 14
Diviner Drawing, Dan. 2
Dream Book (Egypt), Gen. 40
Dream omen tablet (Sippar), Dan. 1
Extispicy tablet, 2 Kings 16
Izbu Omens, Dan. 7
Liver Model, Lev. 19; Judg. 1; 2 Kings 16; 1 Chron. 14; Isa. 2; Ezek. 21
Lunar Eclipse Tablet, Jer. 10
Reading Entrails, 1 Chron. 14; Jer. 31
Omens from Sheep's Stomach, Dan. 1
Sheep Intestines, Judg. 6

Drawings

Ahuramazda Drawing, Mal. 4
Chariot of Fire, 2 Kings 2
Cosmos, Job 9; Ps. 104; Isa. 40
Dagon Defeated, 1 Sam. 5
Diviner, Lev. 19; Dan. 2
Egyptian Cosmology, Gen. 1
Egyptian Gods, Gen. Introduction
Ezekiel's Vision, Ezek. 1
House, **Deut. 6**
Ishtar Gate Drawing, Dan. 4
Jerusalem, 1 Kings 7
Khorsabad, Eccl. 2
Lachish Siege, Ezek. 26
Lampstand, Zech. 4
Leviathan, Job 41
Maltaya Divine Council, Job 1
Megiddo Gate, 2 Sam. 18
Priest's Clothes, Ex. 29
Siege of Jerusalem, Jer. 21
Solomon's Temple, Jer. 27
Temple of Dagan, Judg. 16
Ziggurat, Gen. 11

Excavations

"Stables" Hazor, **Deut. 17**

"Stables" Megiddo, 1 Kings 4; 2 Chron. 1; Mic. 5

Gibeah Palace, 1 Sam. 10

Samaria Palace (Omri/Ahab), 1 Kings 20; 2 Chron. 18; Mic. 1

Zimri-Lim's Palace, 2 Kings 3

Excavations, Jerusalem

Gihon Towers, 1 Kings 1

House of Ahiel, Neh. 11

House of Bullae, 2 Chron. 36

Rock Quarry, Isa. 51

Stepped Stone/Millo, 1 Kings 7; 1 Chron. 11; Neh. 2; Mic. 4

David's Palace, 2 Sam. 11; 1 Chron. 14

Broad Wall, 2 Kings 18; Neh. 3; Lam. 2; Zeph. 1

Wall of Nehemiah, Neh. 6

Flowing Water

Ashurbanipal's Garden, Gen. 2; Zech. 14

Ea Seal, Joel 3

Enki, Gen. 1; Gen. 2; Job 26; Ezek. 28; 47

Gudea, Ps. 87

Inanna Temple, Gen. 2; Ezek. 47

Mari Fresco, Gen. 2; Ezek. 47

Mari Goddess, Ezek. 47

Nabu temple guardian, 1 Chron. 9

Shamash Plaque, Gen. 1

Stone water basin from temple of Assur, Gen. 4; Job 15

Water by Shrine, Ps. 46

Food and Food Production

Bakery, Lev. 2; Judg. 16; Hos. 7

Beer Jug, Judg. 14

Beer Making, Num. 6

Bread, Gen. 18; 1 Sam. 21; 2 Chron. 2

Bread Making, Gen. 40; Isa. 47

Churn, Job 10; Isa. 7

Cooking Meat, Mic. 3

Fig Gathering, Jer. 24

Fruit Bearing, Num. 13
Gleaning, Ruth 2
Grain, Ex. 21; Jer. 31
Grain Harvesting, Ruth 2; Isa. 17
Grain Mill, Ex. 11
Grain Offering, Lev. 2
Grain Piles, Ruth 3
Grain Threshing, 1 Sam. 23; Mic. 4
Grain Treading, **Deut. 25**
Grapes, Jer. 31
Iron Plow, Joel 3
Millstone, **Deut. 24**; Judg. 9; 2 Sam. 11
Oil Press, Josh. 24; Job 24; Hos. 2; 12
Olives, Jer. 31
Oven, Gen. 15
Pomegranates, 2 Chron. 3
Produce, Num. 11; Hos. 2
Threshing Floor, Ruth 3; 2 Sam. 24; 2 Chron. 3
Threshing Sledge, Ruth 3; 2 Sam. 24; Amos 1
Wheat, Judg. 15
Winnowing Grain, Ruth 2; Isa. 41; Jer. 15

Horns

Horned Alexander, Dan. 8
Horned Gods and Helmets, Ex. 34; **Deut. 5**; **20**; 1 Sam. 2; Ps. 18; Isa. 14; Dan. 7; Obad.; Zech. 1

House

Four Room House, **Deut. 6**; Josh. Introduction; Josh. 7; Judg. 11; 19

Idols and Figurines

Baal, Judg. 2; 6; 1 Sam. 1; Ps. 135; Prov. 15; Jer. 2; Dan. 2
Canaanite Deity, Josh. 23; Isa. 44
Cult Figurine, Job 10
El, Gen. 14; Judg. 8; 1 Kings Introduction; Ps. 96
Fertility Figure, Gen. 11; Judg. 13; 1 Sam. 1
Idol Making, Ex. 20; Isa. 40; Jer. 10
Lama, Gen. 12
Molds for Goddess Images, Judg. 17; Jer. 44

Pillar Figurine, 1 Kings 16; Hos. 4
Qatna Idol, Isa. 2
Sebek-Re, Ex. 20
Sumerian Votive Statues, Lev. 27
Syrian God, Amos 2
Teraphim, Gen. 31

Ivory

Anointing Horn, 1 Sam. 16
Asherah, Judg. 2; Lam. 1
Cain and Abel, Gen. 4
Calf, Ex. 23
Cherubim, 1 Kings 7
Hazael, 1 Kings 19
Ishtar (“Mona Lisa”), Jer. 44
Lion Attack, 1 Kings 13
Lion Box, Amos 3
Megiddo Ivory, 1 Sam. 4; 1 Kings 10; Isa. 20; Ps. 99
Pomegranate, 1 Kings 7
Samaria Ivory, Ezek. 10
Sphinx, Amos 3
Warrior, Ps. 45
Woman, 1 Kings 22
Woman at the Window, Judg. 5; 1 Kings 6; 2 Kings 9

Jewelry

Ankle Bracelets, Isa. 3
Armband, Neh. 5
Bracelet, Gen. 24
Earring, Judg. 8
Finery, Isa. 3
Hathor Ring, Est. 3
Jewelry, Mic. 6
Necklace of Flies, Gen. 9
Ring, Jer. 22; Dan. 6; Hag. 2
Rings of Silver, Gen. 33
Silver, Isa. 1

Kings and Queens

Adad-nirari III, Jonah 3

Ahkenaten, Ex. 20; Num. 30; 2 Sam. 7; Song 1; Isa. 35
Alexander the Great, Dan. 8; 11
Amenhotep I, Ex. Introduction; Ps. 23
Antiochus Epiphanes IV, Dan. 8; 11
Apries, Jer. 36; 44
Ashurbanipal, 1 Sam. 8; 30; 2 Kings 21; Est. 5; Ps. 23; Isa. 28; 52; Zech. 3
Ashur-bel-kala, Gen. 9
Ashurnasirpal II, Judg. 4; 1 Sam. 9; 2 Chron. 33; Ps. 7; 45; Isa. 1; Ezek. 23
Bar-Rakib, 2 Kings 14
Bel-harran-bel-usur, 2 Sam. 5
Chephren, **Deut. 32**
Darius, Hag. 1; Zech. 1
Esarhaddon, 2 Kings 19; 2 Chron. 15; Isa. 37; Ezek. 11
Eshmunazor II, 1 Sam. 5
Etana, **Deut. 32**; Job 30
Gudea, Gen. 2; 1 Chron. 28; Ps. 87; 132; Zech. introduction
Hadadezer, 1 Kings 11
Hammurabi, Gen. Introduction; 10; 1 Sam. 8; Job 31; Ps. 19; 72; Isa. 1; 10
Hatshepsut, 1 Kings 2; Ps. 144; Jer. 13; Zech. 2
Hazael, 1 Kings 19
Horemheb, **Deut. 1**; Ps. 110
Idrimi, 1 Sam. 22
Jehu, 2 Kings 9
Khumban-khaltash III, 2 Chron. 33
Marduk-zakir-shumi, 2 Chron. 24
Meli-shipak II, Num. 28; Ps. 84; Isa. 13
Merneptah, Ex. 12
Merodach Baladan, 2 Kings 20; Isa. 39
Nabu-apla-iddina, Gen. 13
Napirasu, Est. 5
Naram Sin, Gen. 37; **Deut. 20**; Isa. 14
Necho, Jer. Introduction
Ombo, 1 Sam. 2
Osorkon, **Deut. 17**; Isa. 36
Ptolemy I, Dan. 11
Ptolemy VI, Dan. 11
Ramesses II, Ex. 1; 6; 9; 37; Josh. Introduction; Ps. 2; 82; Isa. 42; Ezek. 34; Hos. 1
Sargon II, 1 Sam. Introduction; 1 Kings Introduction; Isa. 6; 20; Joel 1

Sennacherib, 2 Kings 17; Ps. 51; Isa. 36; 47; Lam. 5; Jonah 3
Senusret III, Gen. 41
Sesostris, Num. 17
Seti I, Ex. 5; 13; Ps. 104
Shabako, Isa. 19
Shalmaneser III, 2 Kings 8; 9; 2 Chron. 21; Isa. 6
Shamshi-Adad V, Jonah Introduction
Taharqa, 2 Kings 19; 2 Chron. 32; Isa. 30; 37
Teumman, 2 Kings 8
Thutmose III, Ex. Introduction; Josh. 10
Tiglath-pileser III, 2 Kings 15; 1 Chron. 5; 2 Chron. 28; Isa. 1; 7; Jer. 23; Hos. Introduction; Jonah Introduction
Tudhaliya IV, 2 Chron. 1; Ps. 84; Isa. 41
Tukulti-Ninurta I, Isa. 46
Tutankhamun, 2 Chron. 9; Song Introduction
Ur-Nammu, Ezek. 40
Ur-Nanshe, Ex. 40; Hag. 1
Xerxes, Est. 4
Yerah Azar, 2 Chron. 27; Jer. 49
Zimri-Lim, Gen. 2; Ezek. 47

Lamp

Lamp, Job 18; Ps. 119; Jer. 25; Zech. 4
Lampstand, Zech. 4
Menorah, Ex. 25; Num. 8

Laws

Eshunna Laws, Ex. 22; 2 Sam. 2
Hammurabi's Code, **Deut. 5**; 2 Kings 4; 8; Ps. 19; 72; Prov. 28; Isa. 1; Ezek. 34
Hittite Laws, Gen. 38
Lipit-Ishtar Law Code, **Deut. 10**; 2 Chron. 10
Middle Assyrian Laws, Ex. 22; Ruth 1; Hos. 2
Ur-Nammu Laws, Ex. 20; Lev. Introduction; Prov. 5
Uru-inimgina/ Urukagina Reforms, Lev. 19; Ezek. 22

Maps

Abram's Travels, Area of, Gen. 11
Ancient Mesopotamia, Gen. 10
Ancient Near East in the Iron Age, 1 Sam. Introduction

Ancient Near East in the Seventh Century, Zeph. Introduction
Ancient Trade Routes, 2 Chron. 9
Aram Naharaim, Gen. 24
Aramean Invasion, 1 Kings 15
Ararat, Location of, Gen. 8
Ark's Travels, Area of, 1 Chron. 13
Army Routes from Genesis 14, Gen. 14
Arnon to Jabbok Region, Judg. 11
Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Empires, Jer. Introduction
Assyrian Control in the Ninth and Eighth Centuries BC, Jonah Introduction
Assyrian Invasion, Itinerary for, Isa. 10
Benjamin and Dan, Regions, Josh. 18
Benjamin's Modest Size, 1 Sam. 9
Bethlehem, Judah and Ancient Routes, 1 Sam. 16
Calneh, Hamath and Gath, Amos 6
Canaan, Gen. 12; **Deut. 1**
Canaan in the Iron Age, Judg. 3
Canaan, Late Bronze Age, Ex. 6
Canaan, Territorial Boundaries of the Land, Num. 34
Central Campaign, Region, Josh. 8
Cities of Refuge, Josh. 20
Cities of the Plain, Gen. 13
Cities of Zechariah 9, Zech. 9
Cities Subject to Assyria, Isa. 10
Coalition against David, 2 Sam. 10
Cushites, Philistines and Arameans, Amos 9
Dab'a, Tell ed-, Region, Gen. 45
Danite Scouts, Judg. 18
David and Absalom, Movements of, 2 Sam. 15
David and the Ammonites, 1 Chron. 19
David, Ishbosheth and the Philistines, 2 Sam. 2
David's "Mini-Empire", 2 Sam. 8
David's Exile, Region, 1 Sam. 22
David's Flight, 1 Sam. 23
David's Jerusalem, 2 Sam. 5
David's Pursuit of the Philistines, 2 Sam. 5
David's Raids, 1 Sam. 27
David's Revenge on the Amalekites, 1 Sam. 30
Divided Kingdom, 2 Chron. 10

Division of the Kingdom, 1 Kings 12
Dothan Region, Gen. 37
Edom, Obad. Introduction
Edom, Seir and Arabia, Isa. 21
Egypt around 600 BC, Ezek. 29
Egypt in the Late Bronze Age, Ex. 1
Elijah and Elisha, 2 Kings 2
Elisha's Area of Activity, 2 Kings 4
Empires at the End of the Seventh Century, Lam. Introduction
Ephraim and Manasseh, Territories, Josh. 16
Exodus, Possible Routes, Ex. 12
Four "Successor Kingdoms", Dan. 8
Four Corners of the World, Isa. 11
Geography of the Ancient Near East, Gen. Introduction
Geshur, 2 Sam. 13
Gibeah, Bezek and Jabesh Gilead, 1 Sam. 11
Gibeon, Region, Josh. 9
Gideon's Battles, Judg. 6
Gilead, Judg. 10
Hatti Land, Judg. 1
Hazael's Campaign, 2 Kings 12
International Boundaries in the Sixth Century, Jer. 51
Iron Age Hill Country Sites, Josh. Introduction
Israel and Moab, Ruth 1
Israel in the Eighth Century BC, 2 Kings 16
Israel under David and Solomon, 1 Kings Introduction
Israel, Expansion of, Obad.
Israel, Land of, Judg. 1
Israelite Itinerary in the Wilderness, Num. 33
Jeremiah's Cup of Wrath, Areas Experiencing, Jer. 25
Jeroboam II and Uzziah, Kingdoms of, 2 Chron. 26
Jeroboam's Expansion, 2 Kings 14
Jerusalem at the Time of Nehemiah, Neh. 11
Jerusalem Water Systems, 2 Sam. 5
Journey from Beersheba to Bethel, Gen. 28
Judah and Jerusalem, Isa. Introduction
Judah, Edom and Moab, 2 Kings 3
Judah, Territory, Josh. 15
King's Highway, Num. 20
Kings of the East, Regions, Gen. 14

Lebanon and the Coastal Regions, Josh. 13
Levant and the Settlement, Josh. 13
Levant in the Early Sixth Century, Jer. 35
Levant in the Second Millennium, Josh. 1
Levitical Cities, Josh. 21
Levitical Cities and Cities of Refuge, Num. 35
Libnah, 2 Kings 8
List of Lands That Remain, Josh. 13
Locations and Movements of People and Groups, Judg. 4
Major Highway Systems of Syria-Palestine, **Deut. 2**
Major Parties and Cities in the Syro-Ephraimite War, Hos. 5
Manassite Territories, 1 Chron. 7
Midian, Ex. 2
Mitanni and Hittite Kingdoms, Josh. 3
Moab, Judg. 11; Isa. 15
Moabites and Ammonites, Gen. 19
Mount Sinai, Possible Locations, Ex. 19
Nations in Amos, Amos 1
Nations Targeted in Isaiah's Prophecies, Isa. 13
Near East in the Ninth Century BC, 2 Kings 7
Necho's Advance, 2 Kings 23
Neo-Assyrian Campaigns in Israel and Judah, 2 Chron. 28
Neo-Babyolonian Empire, Dan. Introduction
Northern Campaign, Region, Josh. 11
Northern Kingdom of Israel under Assyrian Rule, Isa. 9
Northern Tribes, Regions, Josh. 19
Persian Advance on Babylon, Dan. 5
Persian Empire, Dan. 6
Persian Empire in the Time of Darius I, Zech. 1
Persian Empire, Satrapies, Hag. 1
Persian Empire: India to Cush, Est. 1
Persian Provinces, Ezra 5
Philistia, Shephelah and Samson's Travels, Judg. 14
Philistine Area and Region of Moriah, Gen. 22
Philistine Raiding Parties, 1 Sam. 13
Philistine Territory, 1 Sam. 4
Philistines and Israelites, 1 Sam. 17
Places in Joshua 12, Josh. 12
Pool of Gibeon, Battle at, 2 Sam. 2

Province of Yehud, Ezra 2
Psalm 60, Cities and Regions in, Psa. 60
Ptolemy I and Seleucus I, Realms, Dan. 11
Rainfall in Israel, **Deut. 1**
Re(e)d Sea, Possible Locations, Ex. 13
Rehoboam, Cities Fortified by, 2 Chron. 11
Rivers of Eden, Gen. 2
Samaria and the Coastal Highway, 2 Kings 1
Samaria, Region, Josh. 17
Samuel's Circuit, 1 Sam. 7
Saul's Last Stand, 1 Sam. 28
Shalmaneser III, Area of the Invasion of, 2 Kings 9
Shephelah, Mic. 1
Shephelah, Border Towns, 1 Sam. 23
Sinai Peninsula and the Book of Numbers, Num. Introduction
Solomon's Districts, 1 Kings 4
Solomon's Kingdom, 2 Chron. 7
Sorek Valley, Judg. 13
Southern Campaign, Region, Josh. 10
Sumer, Gen. 11
Syro–Ephraimite War, Parties in the, Isa. 7
Table of Nations, Gen. 10
Territories in Ezekiel 38, Ezek. 38
Tiglath-pileser III, Area Absorbed by, 2 Kings 15
Tribal Activities, Areas of, Judg. 1
Ziklag, Possible Sites, 1 Sam. 27

Metal

Gold Mining Map, Job 28
Gold Production, Job 28
Gold Weighing, Lev. 19
Metal Shop, Prov. 17
Metalworkers, Prov. 11; Isa. 40
Silver, Isa. 1; Jer. 32; Mic. 6
Silver Refining, Ps. 12; Isa. 48; Mal. 3
Silver Rings, Gen. 33; Prov. 2

Mourning

Dust on Head, 2 Sam. 13; Est. 4; Job 2

Mourners, 2 Sam. 1; Isa. 15; Lam. 1; Ezek. 24

Mourning Procession, **Deut. 26**

Mourning Women, **Deut. 5**; Jer. 2; 9; Lam. Introduction

Sackcloth, Gen. 37; Jer 4

Music

Cymbals, 1 Chron. 15; Ps. 150

Flute, Judg. 5; 1 Kings 1; Dan. 3

Harp, Gen. 4; Ex. 34; 1 Chron. 15; Lam. Introduction; Dan. 3; Amos 6

Harpist, 1 Chron. 25; Ps. 49; 96; 137; 150; Eccl. 9

Lute Player, 1 Sam. 16; Ps. 96

Musical Notation, Ps. Introduction; 150

Musicians, 1 Sam. 4; 10; 2 Sam. 6; 1 Kings 10; Neh. 12; Job 21; Ps. 99; Eccl. 1; Isa. 5; 20; 30; 40

Shofar, Josh. 6; Judg. 3; 7

Tambourine, Ex. 15; Judg. 11; 1 Chron. 15; Jer. 31

Trumpet, Num. 10; 1 Chron. 15; Ps. 98; Dan. 3

Net

Animals and Enemies, Hab. 1

Bird Hunting, Num. 11; Ps. 124; Ezek. 13

Fishing, Isa. 19

Hunting, Job 18

Hunting Nets, Ps. 140

Prisoners in Net, 2 Sam. 22; Job 19; Isa. 8; Ezek. 17

Offerings

Anthropoidic Terracotta Cult Stand, Mal. 1

Balawat, 1 Chron. 14

Bread, Lev. 24

Bull, Ex. 29; Lev. 1; Num. 6; 1 Sam. 1; 13; Ps. 50; 51

Cult Stand, 2 Chron. 4; Isa. 17

Cult Stand, Ashdod, 1 Sam 10

Cult Stand, Pella, 2 Kings 13

Cult Stand, Snake, Jer. 7

Cult Stand, Taanach, Ex. 25; 1 Chron. 13; Ezek. 8; Hos. 1

Egyptian Priest, Lev. 16

Food Offering, Lev. 3; Isa. 1; Hag. 2; Mal. 1

Goat, Judg. 13

Grain Offering, Lev. 2; Josh. 5

Incense, Isa. 1
Incense censer, Num. 16
Incense Offering, Lev. 10; Num. 16; 2 Kings 3; 2 Chron. 2
Iuny Stele, 2 Chron. 2
King Making Offering, 1 Sam. 13
Libation, 1 Sam. 7; Ps. 20
Libation after Lion Hunt, 2 Kings 21
Libation Stele, Isa. 57
Libation Vessel, 1 Kings 18; Ezra 1
Offering for Osiris, Num. 18
Offering Table, 1 Sam. 28
Offering to the Dead, Isa. 57
Osorkon, **Deut. 17**
Sebek-Re, Ex. 20
Shovel, 1 Kings 7
Snake Vase, Isa. 27
Stands, Movable, 1 Kings 7; 2 Chron. 4
Thigh Offering, Num. 6
Votive Dog, **Deut. 23**
Votive Figure, Ps. 23
Votive Rodent, 1 Sam. 6
Votives, Num. 30
War Camp Sacrifice, 1 Sam. 7
Wave Offering, Num. 18; 2 Chron. 6; Isa. 30

Pedestal

Animals, **Deut. 5**; Job 1; Ps. 82
Bull, Num. 25; 1 Sam. 2; 1 Kings 12; Job 36; Zech. 9
Calf, 2 Chron. 11
Crocodiles, Ps. 58
Eagle, **Deut. 32**
Lion, **Deut. 7**; Isa. 11
Winged Sphinx, Gen. 3; Exod. 25; Isa. 6; Ps. 18

Plants

Acacia Tree, Ex. 27; **Deut. 10**
Almond Tree, Jer. 1

Balm, Jer. 8
Broom Tree, 1 Kings 19
Calamus, Isa. 43
Cedars, 1 Kings 5; Ps. 29; Ezek. 17; 26; 27
Fig Tree, Mic. 4
Flax, Josh. 2; Isa. 19
Hyssop, Ex. 12; Lev. 14; Ps. 51
Lotus, Song 5
Lulav, Ezra 3
Mandrake, Gen. 30
Myrtle, Est. 2
Olive Tree, Gen. 8; Jer. 11; Josh. 24
Palm Tree, 1 Chron. 9; 2 Chron. 3; Ps. 92; Song 7
Papyrus, Job 8
Tamarisk Tree, 1 Sam. 22
Thorn Bush, Judg. 9
Tree Stump, Isa. 11
Wheat, Judg. 15

Pottery

Potter, Jer. 18
Potter Model, Jer. 18
Pottery, Ex. 15; 29; Josh. Introduction; Judg. 7; 14; 1 Sam. 16; 26; 1 Kings 17; Isa. 7; Jer. 19; Jer. 32
Pottery Kiln, Gen. 15

Reconstructions

Bakery, Lev. 2; Judg. 16; Isa. 28; Hos. 7
Breastplate of High Priest, Ex. 28
Brewery, Isa. 28
Dan Gate, Judg. 8
Four Room House, Josh. Introduction
Incense Altar, Ex. 30
Ishtar Gate Model, Jer. 50
Jerusalem Model, 2 Kings 11
Livestock Counting, Num. 18; Judg. 3
Megiddo Gate Model, 2 Chron. 35
Menorah, Num. 8
Nineveh Model, Jonah 3
Nineveh Walls, Nah. Introduction
Phoenician Ship Model, 2 Chron. 8

Susa Model, Est. 1
Tabernacle, Ex. 27; Num. 1
Ur, Gen. 11
Weaver's Workshop, Judg. 16; Isa. 19
Ziggurat Model, Dan. 1

Reliefs, Anatolian

Boghaz-Koy Altar, Ex. 32
Chariot Trampling, Ps. 66
Illuyankas, Job 7
Hittite God protecting King, 2 Chron. 1; Ps. 84; Isa. 41
Hittite Storm God, Ex. 9; Isa. 29
Maltaya Procession of Gods, **Deut. 5**
Musical Procession, 2 Sam. 6
Shofar, Judg. 7; Ps. 98; Dan. 3

Reliefs/Paintings, Egyptian

Abu Simbel, 1 Kings 20; 2 Chron. 18; Ps. 47; 82; Jer. 5
Abydos King List, Ex. Introduction
Akhenaten, Ex. 20; Song 1
Amenemhet, Eccl. 4
Amenhotep I, Ps. 23
Amenhotep III, Job 19
Amun, Gen. 1
Amun-Re, Ex. 10; Jer. 46
Ankh for Pharaoh, Ps. 72
Ankhmahor Tomb, Gen. 17; Ex. 20; Josh. 5; Ps. 12
Anointing of Pharaoh, 1 Sam. 2; 10; 1 Kings 1; 1 Chron. 11; Isa. 45
Anubis, Hag. 2
Apis, Ex. 9
Apophis, Gen. 3
Aten, **Deut. 6**
Beer Drinking, Prov. 20
Beer Making, Num. 6
Beni Hassan, Gen. 12; 37; **Deut. 22**; 1 Sam. 16
Bird Hunting, Ps. 124; Ezek. 13
Birthing Stool, Ex. 1
Boundary Stone, Hos. 5
Breath of Life, Lam. 4

Bull, Lev. 1; 1 Sam. 1
Bull Palette, Ex. 21
Butehamun Sarcophagus, Isa. 42
Cattle Sacrifice, Ps. 50
Chariot, 2 Chron. 1
Clapping Hands, Ps. 47
Cow, **Deut. 22**
Cows Following Calf, 1 Sam. 6
Cutting Down Trees, **Deut. 20**
Dancing, 1 Chron. 15; Ps. 149
Decimation of Army, 1 Sam. 14
Defeated Enemies, Gen. 10
Deir el Bahri, Ps. 74; Isa. 2; 62
Deity Conferring Authority, Num. 27
Dendera, Isa. 66
Donkeys, 1 Sam. 9
Ear Tablet, Gen. 35; Isa. 6; Ps. 116
Edfu, Ex. 25; Ezek. 18; Hab. 1
Edfu Birth House, Isa. 49
Egyptian Produce, Num. 11
Enemies as Footstool, Ps. 110
Ennead, Ex. 10
Esna, 2 Sam. 14; Isa. 45
Faience Tiles, Num. 13
Fig Gathering, Jer. 24
Fighting Men, **Deut. 25**
Food Offering, Lev. 3
Fruit Bearing, Num. 13
Gleaning, Ruth 2
Gods Giving Life, 2 Sam. 7
Gold Production, Job 28
Grain Harvesting, Isa. 17
Grain Treading, **Deut. 25**
Gua, Job 33
Hapy, Ex. 8
Harpist, 1 Chron. 25
Hathor, Ex. 9
Hathor, Isis, and Amun, Isa. 57

Hatshepsut, Num. 16; 2 Sam. 7; Ps. 20; 132; Zech. 2

Hesire, Ps. 45

Horemheb Stele, **Deut. 1**

Horemheb Tomb, Lev. 9

Idol Making, Isa. 40

Incense Burner, Lev. 10

Inherka Tomb, Ex. 6

Investiture of Vizier Paser, Gen. 41

Ity Tomb, Gen. 9; Ex. 29

Iuny Stele, Lev. 24

Karnak, 2 Sam. 1; 1 Kings 1; 14; 1 Chron. Introduction; 2 Chron. 12; Ps. 2; 18; Isa. 9; Jer. 13

Khnum, Gen. 2; Job 10

Kom Ombo, Lev. 23; 1 Sam. 2; 1 Chron. 11; Isa. 62

Lady Taperet, Ps. 28

Lamb, Ex. 12

Libation Stele, Isa. 57

Luxor, Gen. 2; 1 Sam. 7; 13; 1 Kings 3; Isa. 5; 28

Maʿat, **Deut. 5**; Isa. 40

Maya Tomb, Jer. 10

Medinet Habu, Ex. 15; 19; 37; Josh. 3; Judg. 3; 8; 1 Sam. 4; 6; 17; 2 Sam. 2; Job 12; Ps. 84

Memphis, Lam. 1

Menna Tomb, Ex. 2; Ruth 2; 3; 1 Sam. 23; Prov. 29; Song 3; Jer. 15; Mic. 4

Mereruka Mastaba, Isa. 19

Mereruka Tomb, Ex. 10; Prov. 17; Isa. 48; Mal. 3

Merneptah, Judg. Introduction; 2 Kings 3

Meryre Tomb, **Deut. 27**

Min, Isa. 65

Mourning Procession, **Deut. 26**

Mourning Woman, 2 Sam. 13; Est. 4; Job 2; Jer. 2

Musicians, Isa. 5

Nakht Tomb, Gen. 9; Judg. 6; Ruth 2; Eccl. 1; Isa. 10; Jer. 25

Narmer Palette, Ex. 17

Nebamun Tomb, Ex. 22; Job 8; 21

Nefertari Tomb, **Deut. 4**; Ezek. 23

Nefertiabt Stele, Lev. 2

Nekhbet, Lam. 4

Nespawershepi Coffin, Ex. 7; Job 22; Ps. 72; Prov. 16; Isa. 24

Nikaure, Ruth 1

Nubian Warriors, Jer. 46

Nursing Tree, Isa. 57

Nut and Shu, Ps. 8

Offering for Osiris, Num. 18

Offering to the Dead, Isa. 57

Ounsu Tomb, Ex. 21

Panekhmen Tomb, Lev. 19; Prov. 11

Papyrus Boat, Isa. 18

Perfumer's Workshop, Ps. 133

Petosiris Tomb, Num. 6

Pharaoh before Gods, 1 Sam. 24

Pharaoh Crowned by Gods, **Deut. 17**

Pharaoh on Chariot, Ex. 14

Pharaoh Selected by Gods, Josh. 1

Pharaoh Smiting, Num. 24; **Deut. 2**; Neh. 13; Ezek. 30

Ptahhotep, Hos. 14

Qenamun Tomb, Gen. 40

Quail, Ex. 16

Queen of Punt, 2 Chron. 9

Ramesses II, Ex. 9; 26; 2 Sam. 8; 2 Chron. 11; Ps. 2; Isa. 42; Ezek. 8

Ramesses III, Josh. 12

Ramesses VI Tomb, Isa. 26; Job 7; Ps. 147

Ramose Tomb, Ps. 86; Isa. 15; Jer. 9

Re-Horakhty, Job 11

Rekhmere Tomb, Ex. 1

Saqqara, Ex. 15; Num. 11; **Deut. 7**; Judg. 11; 1 Kings 10; 2 Kings 6; 1 Chron. 15; Job 9; 40; Prov. 3; Isa. 55; Jer. 31; Lam. Introduction; Ezek. 29; Jonah 1

Sebekhotep Tomb, 1 Sam. 16; Jer. 13

Sebek-Re, Ex. 20

Sennedjem Tomb, Gen. 50; Ps. 1; Prov. 1; Isa. 19; 38

Sesostris, Num. 17; Isa. 9

Seti I, Gen. 15; 36; Ex. 13; Ps. 104

Seti I and Ramesses II, Ex. 7

Sickle Sword, Josh. 8

Sidelocks, Lev. 19

Snake Heads, Gen. 3

Snake Standing, Ex. 7

Syrian Prisoner, Judg. 5

Taharqa, 2 Kings 19

Tassels, Num. 15

Telloh, Lev. 16

Thigh Offering, Num. 6

Thutmose III, Num. 33; Josh. 10; Ezek. 37

Trampling of Shasu, Judg. 5

Tutankhamun, Judg. 1; Song Introduction

Unas Tomb, Job 19; Ezek. 5

Userhet Tomb, Jer. 13; Ezek. 5; Hos. 2

Votive Offering, Num. 30

Wadjet, Ex. 7

War Standard, Num. 1

Wave Offering, Num. 18

Wine Offering, 2 Chron. 6

Winged Sun, Num. 9

Women Mourning, **Deut. 5**

Reliefs, Mesopotamian

Ahuramazda and Ahriman, Zech. Introduction

Archer, Ps. 11

Ashurbanipal, Gen. 2; 1 Sam. 8; 30; 2 Kings 15; 21; 1 Chron. 1; 2 Chron. 21; Est. 5; Job 18; Ps. 23; Isa. 21; 30; Jer. 4; 46; 51; Ezek. 12; Nah. 3; Zech. 14

Ashur-bel-kala, Gen. 9

Ashurnasirpal II, Judg. 3; 4; 1 Kings 18; 20; 1 Chron. 14; Ps. 7; 45; Prov. 3; Isa. 1; 52; Ezek. 29; Amos 3

Assyrian Scribes, Hab. 2

Assyrian Slave Labor, 2 Chron. 2

Balawat, **Deut. 20**; **21**; Judg. 1; 5; 1 Sam. 13; 31; 2 Sam. 4; 1 Chron. 10; 14; 2 Chron. 21; 24; Isa. 2; 23; 45; Jer. 29; Lam. 1; Ezek. 22; 26; Amos 2; Mic. 1; Nah. 1

Bowing Before Ruler, Est. 3

Captured Flocks, Num. 31

Cedar Transport, 2 Sam. 7; 1 Kings 6; 2 Chron. 2

Chariot, 1 Kings 1; 1 Chron. 18

Cupbearer, Neh. 1

Cutting Trees, Isa. 1

Darius, Jer. 2; Dan. 7

Ebla, Ps. 110

Egyptian Fortress, Jer. 46

Elamite King, 2 Kings 8; 2 Chron. 33

Elamite Prisoners, 1 Sam. 17; Ps. 2

Esarhaddon, 2 Chron. 15

Eunuch, **Deut. 23**; Est. 1; Isa. 39

Garden, Ps. 1

Genie, 1 Sam. 2; Ezek. 17; 28; Zech. 5

Hard Labor, 2 Sam. 3

Harpist, Ps. 137; Eccl. 9

Heads, 1 Sam. 17; 2 Kings 10; Ps. 23; Jer. 34; Nah. 3

Hero and Lion, Gen. 6

Hunting, Job 29

Hunting Tools, Ps. 140

Inanna Temple, Gen. 2

Lachish, Num. 25; 1 Sam. 7; 2 Sam. 10; 20; 21; 1 Kings 16; 2 Kings 6; 18; 1 Chron. 28; 2 Chron. 28; 32; Ezra 9; Neh. 8; Est. 2; Ps. 95; 107; Isa. Introduction; 13; 22; 23; 36; 47; 66; Jer. 6; 8; 38; Nah. 2; Hab. 1

Lion Hunting, 1 Sam. 15; 17; 2 Sam. 23; 1 Chron. 11; Jer. 22; 27; Nah. 2

Mourners, Ezek. 24

Nimrud, Isa. 18; 40; 42; 51; 59; Dan. 6; Zech. 5

Nineveh, Isa. 7

Persepolis, Neh. 2; 12; Job 32; Isa. 5; 13; Zech. 1

Persian Immortals, Est. 9; Jer. 49

Plundering, 2 Chron. 36

Prisoners, 1 Kings 20; Ezra 9; Jer. 13; 39; Lam. Introduction

Reading Entrails, 1 Chron. 14; Jer. 31

Sacred Tree, Ex. 25

Sargon II, 1 Sam. Introduction; 2; Ps. 25; Isa. 6; 20; 36; Joel 1

Scribes, Ezek. 2

Sennacherib, Isa. 36; 47; Jer. 34; Lam. 5; Ezek. 27; Jonah 3

Servants, **Deut. 22**

Shalmaneser III, Judg. 3; 1 Sam. 24; 2 Sam. 8; 2 Kings 9; Ps. 68; Isa. 31; 60; Lam. 5; Ezek. 16

Shamash, Isa. 66

Shamash Plaque, Gen. 1

Siege, Jer. 21; Ezek. 4

Spinner, Prov. 31

Spoil, Obad.

Stone Basin Reliefs, Gen. 4; Job 15

Susa, 1 Chron. 9; Ezek. 39

Swimming, 1 Chron. 12

Tell Halaf, Gen. 24; Josh. 6; 1 Sam. 17; Isa. 6, Job 41

Tiglath-pileser III, **Deut. 1**; Josh. 8; 1 Sam. 5; 1 Kings 20; 2 Chron. 25; Job 1; Ps. 48; Isa. 7; 46; Hos. 10

Til Barsip, Isa. 11; Ezek. 23

Til-Tuba, 1 Sam. 4; 22; 2 Sam. 21; Ps. 79; Ezek. 32

Ugallu, Ezek. 13

Ur-Nanshe, Ex. 40

Uruk, Gen. 10

Vulture, Jer. 48; Ezek. 17

Vulture with Intestines, 1 Kings 14

Warrior on Cherub, Ex. 25

Water by Shrine, Ps. 46

Water Supply Cut Off, Jer. 8

Xerxes, Est. 4

Sacred Tree

Cherub and Tree, Gen. 3; 1 Kings 7; Ezek. 41

God as Tree, Dan. 4

Nursing Tree, Isa. 57; Ezek. 31

Sacred Tree, Ex. 25; 1 Sam. 10; 1 Kings 8; 2 Chron. 11; 14; Prov. 3; Isa. 1; Jer. 17; Ezek. 17; 28; Mic. 1; Zech. 5

Stylized Tree (Asherah Pole?), **Deut. 7**; 2 Chron. 14; Jer. 17

Scribes

Assyrian Scribes, 1 Chron. 34; Jer. 17; 36; Ezek. 2; Dan. 1; Hab. 2

Baboon and Scribe, Prov. Introduction

Egyptian Scribes, 1 Chron. 2; Ezra 7; Est. 8; Prov. Introduction; Jer. 13; 30; 36; 45

Scribal Kit, Isa. 8

Writing Board, Ezek. 37

Seals and Seal Impressions

Adaniyahu, 1 Kings 18

Ahuramazda, Ezek. 10

Amos, Amos 1

Anzu, Ps. 139

Astral Symbols, **Deut. 5**; ; Job 9; 38; Amos 5; Zeph. 12

Baalis, Jer. 40

Banquet, Isa. 5; Obad.

Baruch, Jer. 32

Bashmu, Gen. 3

Divine Council, Ps. 82

Ea, Joel 3

Elhanan, Job 14
Enki, Gen. 2; Ex. 34; Job 26; Ezek. 28; 47
Etana, 2 Kings 2; Job 30
Gedaliah, Jer. 40
Genies and Sacred Tree, Gen. 3
Gilgamesh & Bull of Heaven, Gen. 2
Gilgamesh & Huwawa, Jonah Introduction
Glowing Deity, Isa. 2; Hab. 3
Grain Offering, Josh. 5
Hezekiah, 2 Chron. 32; Isa. 6; 10
Hoshayahu, Hos. Introduction
Ishtar, Isa. 6
Jaazaniah, Neh. 5
Jezebel, 1 Kings 16
Lachish Scarabs, Gen. 38
LMLK Seal, 2 Kings 18
Lord of Animals, Gen. 2
Lord of the Ostriches, Job 39
Marduk over Tiamat, Gen. 1
Muršili II, Lev. 26
Mushezib-Ninurta, 1 Sam. 10
Nergal, Ex. 12
Palm Tree, Judg. 4
Pedayah, 1 Chron. 3
Presentation to Deity, Ps. 42
Sacred Tree, Mic. 1
Shema Servant of Jeroboam, Judg. 2; 1 Kings 12
Shepherd, Isa. 40
Shining God, Ex. 40
Sin, Job 31
Storm Deity on Griffin, Ex. 25
Yishmael, Ps. 42
Yohoahaz, Zeph. 1
Ziggurat, Gen. 11

Sea Peoples

Ekron Inscription, 1 Kings 2
Medinet Habu, Ex. 15; Judg. 3; 1 Sam. 4; 6; 17; 2 Sam. 21
Philistine Beer Jug, Judg. 14
Philistine Cult Stand, 1 Sam. 10

Philistine Jug, 1 Sam. 16
Philistine Ship, Jonah 1
Philistine Temple, Judg. 16; 1 Sam. 5

Ships

Balawat, Judg. 5; Isa. 23; Ezek. 26; Amos 2
Egyptian Ship, Gen. 6; 1 Kings 10
Floating Cedars, 2 Sam. 5; 1 Kings 6; 2 Chron. 2
Medinet Habu, 2 Sam. 21
Papyrus Boat, Isa. 18; Job 9
Philistine Ship, Jonah 1
Phoenician Ship, 2 Chron. 8; Isa. 33; Ezek. 27
Ramesses VI Tomb, Ps. 147
Sailors, Jonah 1
Sacred Barque, Ex. 7; 25; Ps. 2; 19; 132
Trading Ship, Isa. 2; 5

Sites

Abusir, Eccl. 11
Acco, Dan. 11
Adam, Judg. 12; Hos. 6
Adullam, 1 Chron. 11
Ai (et-Tell), Josh. 7
Aijalon, Judg. 1
Aijalon Valley, 1 Sam. 14
Akrabim, Josh. 15
Amman, Plain North of, Num. 21
Anathoth, Jer. 1
Aphek, 1 Sam. 4; 1 Kings 20
Arad, **Deut. 3**; 1 Sam. 10; 1 Chron. 18; 2 Chron. 3; Prov. 8; Isa. 32
Araq el-Emir, Neh. 2
Ararat, Gen. 8
Arnon, **Deut. 2**
Arnon, Nahal, 1 Kings 17
Aroer, Jer. 48
Ashdod, 1 Sam. 5; Zech. 9
Ashdod Yam, Neh. 4
Ashkelon, Judg. 1; 14; Jer. 47
Azekah, Josh. 10; Jer. 34

Baal Meon, Ezek. 25
Bab-edh Dhra (Sodom?), Gen. 19
Babylon, 2 Kings 17; Isa. 13
Banias, Ps. 42; Dan. 11
Bashan, Josh. 12; Jer. 50
Beersheba, Gen. 22; **Deut. 13**; Josh. 2; 7; Judg. 19; 1 Sam. 8; 1 Kings 19; 2 Chron. 26; Neh. 11
Beitin (Bethel), Gen. 12; Josh. 8
Benjamin, 1 Kings Introduction
Besor, Nahal, 1 Sam. 30
Bet Netofa Valley, Josh. 18
Beth Horon, Josh. 10; 1 Chron. 7; 14; 2 Chron. 8
Beth Shean, 1 Sam. 31; 1 Chron. 10
Beth Shemesh, Judg. 1; 14; 1 Sam. 6; 2 Kings 14; 2 Chron. 25
Bethel (see Beitin), Judg. 1; Hos. 4
Bethlehem, 1 Sam. 16; Ruth 1; Mic. 5
Bethsaida, **Deut. 17**; 1 Kings 14
Bezek Region, 1 Sam. 11
Bornat, Tell (Libnah), Josh. 10
Bozrah, Judg. 5; Isa. 34; Jer. 49
Caesarea, Dan. 9
Carmel, 1 Sam. 25
Chinnereth, Josh. 11
Daba', Tell ed-, Gen. 47
Dan, Num. 22; **Deut. 12**; 2 Sam. 18; 1 Kings 6; 12; 20; 1 Chron. 26; Ps. 78; Isa. 2; Jer. 4; Amos 5; 8
Debir, Josh. 10
Deir ʿAlla (Succoth), Gen. 33; Judg. 8
Delta and Nile Valley, Ex. 1
Dothan, Gen. 37; 2 Kings 6
Ebla, 1 Kings 6
Edom, Job 1
Ein Hatzeva, Mal. 1
Ein Musa, Ex. 15
Ekron, Josh. 13
Elah Valley, 1 Sam. 17; 2 Kings 18
Elath, Amos 1
Elephantine, Ezra 10; Jer. 43; Ezek. 30
En Gedi, 1 Sam. 23; Jer. 17
En Rogel, 1 Kings 1
Endor, 1 Sam. 28

Ephraim, Judg. 17
Eshtaol, Judg. 13
Et-Tell (Ai), Josh. 7
Euphrates, Jer. 2
Ezion Geber, 1 Kings 9
Gath, 1 Sam. 5; Mic. 1
Gaza, Judg. 16
Geba, 1 Sam. 10
Gerar, Gen. 20; 2 Chron. 14
Geshur, 1 Chron. 5
Gezer, Josh. 10; 1 Kings 9
Gibeah, Judg. 19; 1 Sam. 10
Gibeon, Josh. 9; 2 Sam. 2; 1 Kings 3; 1 Chron. 16; 2 Chron. 1; Jer. 41; 48
Gilead, Gen. 31; Num. 32; Jer. 22
Haran, Gen. 11
Harod Spring, Judg. 7
Harod Valley, 1 Sam. 29
Hattin, Horns of, Josh. 11
Hazor, **Deut. 17**; Josh. 11; Judg. 4; 1 Kings 9; Ezek. 20; Dan. 9
Hebron, Gen. 25; Num. 13; Josh. 14; 2 Sam. 2; 1 Chron. 3
Heshbon, Num. 32; Judg. 11; Song 7
Hinnom Valley, 2 Chron. 28; Jer. 7
Huleh Valley, Judg. 18
Jabbok River, Gen. 32; **Deut. 2**; 1 Kings 12
Jabesh-Gilead, Judg. 21; 1 Sam. 11; 1 Chron. 10
Jalul, Tell el-, **Deut. 2**
Jarmuth, Josh. 10
Jericho, **Deut. 34**; Josh. 2; 4; 6; Judg. 3; 2 Kings 2
Jericho Road, 2 Kings 25; Jer. 52
Jerusalem, 2 Sam. 5; 1 Kings 7; 1 Chron. 15; 21; Ps. 48; Lam. 4
Jezreel, 1 Kings 21; 2 Chron. 22; Hos. 1
Jezreel Valley, Josh. 19; 2 Kings 23; Jer. 46
Jokneam, Josh. 12
Joppa, Jonah 1
Jordan near Jericho, Judg. 3
Jordan River, Josh. 3; 1 Kings 12; 2 Kings 2; Jer. 12
Judean Hills, Jer. 5
Kadesh-Barnea, Num. 13; **Deut. 1**

Karnak, Ps. 84
Keilah, 1 Sam. 23
Kerak (Kir Hareseth), 2 Kings 3
Kidron Valley, 2 Kings 23; Jer. 26
Kir Hareseth (el-Kerak), 2 Kings 3
Kiriath-jearim, Josh. 9; 1 Sam. 6; 1 Chron. 13
Kishon River, Judg. 4
Lachish, 1 Kings 14; 2 Chron. 32; Neh. 2; Jer. 33; 34; Mic. 1
Lebanon Mountains, Ezek. 17
Libnah, (Tell Bornat), Josh. 10
Luxor, Prov. 9
Mahanaim, Gen. 32; 2 Sam. 2
Malhatah, Tel, Num. 21
Mamre, Gen. 13
Maresha, 1 Chron. 4; Jer. 38
Mari, 2 Kings 3
Masada, 1 Sam. 22; Jer. 6
Masos, Tell, Num. 14; 1 Sam. 15
Megiddo, Josh. 12; 1 Kings 4; 9; 2 Kings 9; 23; 2 Chron. 1; 35; Mic. 5
Michmash, 1 Sam. 13
Miryam, Tell, Josh. 7
Mizpah, Judg. 20; 1 Sam. 7; 2 Chron. 16; Jer. 25; 40
Moab Plains, Ruth 1
Moresheth Gath, Mic. 1
Mt. Carmel, 1 Kings 18; Isa. 35
Mt. Ebal, **Deut. 27**; Josh. 8; Judg. 9; 1 Kings 3
Mt. Gerizim, **Deut. 27**; Judg. 9
Mt. Gilboa, 1 Sam. 31; 1 Chron. 10
Mt. Hermon, **Deut. 3**; Judg. 3; Ps. 29; Song 4; Jer. 18
Mt. Moreh, Judg. 7; 1 Sam. 28
Mt. Nebo, **Deut. 32**
Mt. Olives, Zech. 14
Mt. Tabor, Judg. 4
Mt. Zion, Jer. 31
Nebi Samwil, 1 Kings 3; 1 Chron. 16
Negev, Gen. 12; 1 Sam. 26; Jer. 17
Nile River, Ex. 1; Isa. 19
Nineveh, Jonah 3; Nah. Introduction

Ophrah, Judg. 8

Paran Wilderness, Num. 10

Penuel, **Deut. 2**; Judg. 8; 1 Kings 12

Perath (Ein Parat), Jer. 13

Persepolis, Est. Introduction; 1; 2

Pisgah, **Deut. 3**

Pithom (Tell el-Retabeh), Ex. 1

Punon, 2 Chron. 4

Rabbah, 1 Chron. 20

Ramah, 1 Sam. 1

Ramoth Gilead, 1 Kings 22

Rephaim Valley, Josh. 15; Isa. 17

Retabeh, Tell el- (Pithom), Ex. 1

Rogem Hiri, Josh. 7

Sa'idiyeh, Tell es-, (Zarethan), Josh. 3

Samaria, 1 Kings 16; 20; 2 Chron. 18; Isa. 58; Mic. 1

Sela, Isa. 16; 42; Obad.; Mal. 1

Sharon Plain, Isa. 33

Shechem, Gen. 12; **Deut. 27**; Josh. 20; 24; Judg. 9; 2 Chron. 10

Shiloh, Josh. 18; Judg. 18; 1 Sam. 1; 1 Kings 14; Jer. 7

Shunem, 1 Sam. 28

Sidon Area, Judg. 3

Sinai, Ex. 3; 17; 19; **Deut. 4**; Isa. 33; Mal. 4

Sinai Wilderness, Lev. Introduction

Sodom(?), Bab-edh Dhra, Gen. 19

Sorek Valley, Judg. 13

Succoth (Deir 'Alla), Gen. 33; Judg. 8

Susa, Est. 2; 5

Taanach, Josh. 12

Tadmor, 2 Chron. 8; Hos. 2

Tafileh, **Deut. 1**

Taiyibeh, Tell et-, Mic. 1

Tekoa, Amos 1

Timnah, Num. 31; **Deut. 8**; Judg. 1; 14; 1 Chron. 16

Tirzah, 1 Kings 14; Hos. Introduction

Tishbe, 1 Kings 17

Tyre, Isa. 23; Amos 1

Ugarit, **Deut. 12**; Nah. 3
Ur, Gen. 11; 2 Chron. 2
Valley of Kings, Ex. 5
Wadi es-Sir, Num. 25; Judg. 11
Wadi Qilt, Hos. 2
Wadi Rum, Jer. 49
Wadi Swenit, 1 Sam. 14
Wadi Tumilat, Ex. 12
Yarmuk Valley, Josh. 13
Yurza, Ezek. 25
Zaphon, Judg. 12
Zarethan (Tell es-Sa'idiyeh), Josh. 3
Zered, Num. 20; **Deut. 2**
Ziklag, 1 Sam. 27
Zin Wilderness, Num. 13
Zin, Nahal, Gen. 21
Ziph Wilderness, 1 Sam. 23
Ziz, Ascent of, 2 Chron. 20
Zorah, Judg. 13

Standard

Deir el-Bahri, Ps. 74; Isa. 62
Narmer Palette, Ex. 17
Snake Standard, Num. 21
Standard of Mari, Amos 5
Standard of Ur, Gen. Introduction; Lev. 1; Josh. 3; 1 Kings 10; 2 Chron. 1; Job 1; Ps. 96
War Standards, Num. 1

Standing Stones

Arad, 2 Kings 3
Bethsaida, 1 Kings 14; Isa. 15; Amos 7
Dan, **Deut. 12**; Josh. 22; 1 Kings 22; Ps. 78; Amos 8
Gezer, Gen. 28; Lev. 26; 2 Kings 12
Hazor, 1 Kings 8; 2 Kings 18; Ezek. 16; Mic. 5
Shechem, Gen. 12; Josh. 24; Judg. 9; 2 Chron. 10
Susa Model, Jer. 17

Stela

Adad-Nirari III, 2 Kings 10; Jonah 3

Amenhotep III Stele, Ex. 17
Amun Stele, Ezek. 39
Baal, Judg. 3; 1 Sam. 7; 1 Kings 16; 2 Kings 1; Isa. 43; Hos. 2
Balua Stele, Judg. 3
Bel-harran-bel-usur Stele, 2 Sam. 5
Bull, Num. 33
Chemosh, Judg. 11; Jer. 48
Dan, Tel Stele (House of David), 2 Kings 9; Isa. 7; Amos 1
Dream Stele of Thutmose IV, Ex. 6; Eccl. 1
Ear Tablet, Gen. 35; Isa. 6; Ps. 116
Elamite Victory Stele, Ezek. 39
Esarhaddon Stele, 2 Kings 19; Isa. 37; Ezek. 11
Gebel Barkal Stele, Judg. 5
Hadad Inscription, Lev. 24
Hammurabi, **Deut. 5**; 1 Sam. 8; 2 Kings 4; Ps. 19; 72; Prov. 28; Isa. 1; 10
Horemheb Stele, **Deut. 1**
Horus Stele, Ps. 58
Iuny Stele, 2 Chron. 2
Kamose Stele, **Deut. 17**
Kurkh Stele of Shalmaneser III, 2 Kings 1
Lady Taperet, Ps. 28
Libation Stele, Isa. 57
Merneptah Stele, Ex. 12; Josh. 10; Judg. 5
Mesha Stele (Moabite Stone), 1 Sam. 15; 2 Kings 1; Jer. 48; Nah. 1
Naram-Sin, **Deut. 20**; Isa. 14; Ps. 18
Nefertiabt Grain Offering, Lev. 2
Osorkon, **Deut. 17**
Qadesh Stele, **Deut. 7**; Job 6
Remi Stele, Lev. 21; 2 Sam. 4
Sargon Victory Stele, Ps. 25
Sennacherib Stele, 2 Kings 17
Senusret III's Boundary Marker, Isa. 19
Seti I, Ex. 5; Judg. 3
Shabako Stele, Isa. 19
Shamash-res-usur, Judg. 10
Sheshonq Stele, 2 Chron. 12
Si'gabbar Funerary Stele, Isa. 53

Sin zir Ibni Stele, Josh. 6
Tanit Stele, Judg. 11
Udjahorresnet Stele, Neh. 5
Ugarit Land Stele, Gen. 31
Ur-nammu Stele, Ezek. 40
Vulture Stele, Job 15; Ps. 5; Ezek. 17
Yehimilik (Yehawmilk) Stele, I Kings 7
Ziggurat Stele, Gen. 11

Temples and Sanctuaries

Ain Dara Temple, 1 Kings 6; Ps. 77; Ezek. 40; 43; Mic. 1
Arad, Josh. 8; 2 Kings 5; 3; 2 Chron. 3
Baal Shamin Temple (Tadmor), Hos. 2
Bethshean Temple, 1 Sam. 31
Bethshean Temple (Dagan), Judg. 16
Cosmos, Gen. 1
Dan, **Deut. 12**; 1 Kings 6; 1 Kings 12; Ps. 26; Amos 8
Ebla Temple, 1 Kings 6
Edfu, Ezek. 18
Ein Hatzeva Shrine, Mal. 1
Herodium Synagogue, Neh. 9
Hibis Temple of Amun, Ezra 6
Inanna Temple, Gen. 2; Ezek. 47
Karnak Temple, Josh. 21
Laver, Ps. 26
Shechem Temple, Judg. 9; 2 Chron. 10
Solomon’s Temple Drawing, Jer. 27
Tel Miqne (Reconstruction), 1 Sam. 5
Tel Qasile, Judg. 16; 1 Sam. 5
Timnah, Ex. 26; 1 Chron. 16
Water by Shrine, Ps. 46
Ziggurat of Ur, Gen. 11; Gen. 28; 2 Chron. 2
Ziggurat Model, Dan. 1

Texts (Anatolia)

Arnuwandas Prayer, Ps. 44
Bronze Treaty Tablet (Tudhaliya IV and Karunta), Josh. 13
Deeds of Anitta, Judg. 9
Hattusili Apology, 1 Sam. 17

Hittite Laws, Gen. 38

Hittite/Egyptian Treaty, Josh. 1; 1 Chron. 19

Laqipum and Hatala Marriage Contract, Gen 16

Letter from Ramsses II to Hattusili III, Judg. 14

Muršili II, (seal on Ugaritic tablet), Lev. 26

Muršili II, Plague Prayer, Josh. 7

Shuppiluliuma Vassal treaty with Hakkuana, Josh. 24

Soldier's Oath, 2 Chron. 13

Substitute King, Isa. 53

Ullikummi Song, Job 3

Texts (Egyptian)

Amarna Letter, Gen. 33; Ex. 17; Josh. 10; Judg. 8; 1 Sam. 4; 25; 2 Chron. 2

Amenemhet, Wisdom, Prov. Introduction

Amenemope, Instruction of, Lev. 19; Prov. 22

Amenhotep III Stela, Ex. 17

Amennakht, Instruction, Prov. Introduction

Amon-Re, Hymn, Amos 4

Aten Hymn, Ps. 104

Book of the Dead, Gen. 6; Ex. 8; **Deut. 5**; 1 Sam. 2; Job 3; 30; 31; Ps. 31; Isa. 5; 14; Ezek. 32; Amos 8

Cairo Calendar, Ex. 12; Job 3

Chester Beatty Papyrus, Song 1

Dispute between a Man and His Soul, Ps. 31

Divination Letter, 1 Kings 14

Dream Book, Gen. 40

Dream Stele of Thutmose IV, Ex. 6; Eccl. 1

Ear Tablet, Gen. 35; Ps. 55

Ebers Papyrus Medical Text, Ex. 4

Elephantine Papyri, Ezra 6; Jer. 31; Mal. 3

Eloquent Peasant, Mic. 7

Execration Figurine, Ps. 2; Isa. 1

Execration Text, Gen. 14; Ex. 15; Judg. 1; Jer. 46

Famine Inscription, Gen. 41

Gebel Barkal Stela, Judg. 5

Harris Magical Papyrus, Ex. 3

Hittite/Egyptian Treaty, **Deut. 4**; 1 Chron. 19

Horemheb Stele, **Deut. 1**

Ipuwer, Admonition of, Prov. 30; Isa. 19

Kom Ombo Festival List, Lev. 23
London Medical Papyrus, Ex. 4
Love Song (Chester Beatty), Song 1
Magician and Crocodile, Ex. 7
Medical Incantations, Isa. 48
Memphite Theology, Gen. 1; Ps. 33; Isa. 42
Merneptah Stele, Ex. 12; Josh. 10; Judg. 5
Osiris, Hymn, Ps. 95
Osorkon I Inscription, Isa. 36
Papyrus Anastasi, Ex. 1; Josh. 18
Papyrus Leiden, Gen. 1
Prisse Papyrus, Prov. 11
Proto-Sinaitic Inscription, Gen. 21; Ex. 17
Qadesh Victory, Ps. 18
Ramsses II Letter to Hattusili III, Judg. 14
Senusret III's Boundary Marker, Isa. 19
Seti I Stele, Ex. 5; Judg. 3
Shabako Stone, Memphite Theology, Gen. 1; Ps. 33; Isa. 42
Sheshonq Inscription, 1 Kings 11; 2 Chron. 12
Sinuhe, Gen. Introduction; Isa. 19
Tale of Two Brothers, Gen. 39
Thutmose III's Annals, Josh. 10; 1 Chron. Introduction
Wayward Son, Prov. 31
Westcar Papyrus, Ex. 7; 14

Texts (Levant)

Abecedary from Tel Zayit, Judg. 8
Amarna Letter, Gen. 33; Ex. 17; Josh. 10; Judg. 8; 1 Sam. 4; 25; 2 Chron. 2
Ammonite Citadel Inscription, 1 Sam. 11
Aqhat Epic, Gen. 17; Judg. 13; 2 Kings 5
Arad Ostraca, Jer. 7; 37; Ezek. 1
Azatiwada Inscription, Zec. 3
Baal Epic, **Deut. 14**; 1 Kings 16; 2 Kings 1; Job 18; Ps. 29; Isa. 27; Hag. 2
Bar-Rakib, 2 Kings 14; Dan. 2
Birth of the Gracious Gods, Job 38
Chemosh Inscription, 1 Kings 11
Damascus Document, Ezra 10
Dan Inscription (Zoilos), Judg. 18
Dead Sea Scroll, 2 Sam. 17; Ezra 10; Neh. 8; Isa. Introduction; Ezek. 2

Deir ʿAlla Inscription, Num. 22; Josh. 8; Ezek. 7; Mic. 6

Divorce Decree, **Deut. 24**

Ekron Inscription, 1 Sam. 5; 1 Kings 2

Emar Inscription, 2 Kings 4

Esther Scroll, Est. 9

Gezer Calendar, **Deut. 8**; Ruth 1; Amos 7

Hadad Inscription, Lev. 24

Idrimi, 1 Sam. 22

Ivory Pomegranate, 1 Kings 7

Ketef Hinnom Silver Scrolls, Num. 6; 1 Chron. 16; Neh. 13

Khirbet el-Qom Inscription, 2 Kings 13

Kilamuwa Inscription, 2 Kings 8; Isa. 7

Kuntillet ʻAjrud, Ex. 3; 34; Judg. 3; Hos. 1

Lachish Bulla, 2 Kings 25

Lachish Ewer, Hos. 4

Lachish Ostraca, 2 Kings 24; Jer. 1; 29; 34; Ezek. 33

LMLK Handles, 1 Sam. 23; 2 Kings 18

Marzeah Text, Ezek. 8

Mesha Stele (Moabite Stone), 1 Sam. 15; 2 Kings 1; Jer. 48; Nah. 1

Nash Papyrus, **Deut. 6**

Ophir Ostracon (Qasile), 2 Chron. 8; Job 22

Osorkon I Inscription, Isa. 36

Proto-Canaanite Inscription, **Deut. 1**; **5**

Proto-Sinaitic Inscription, Gen. 21; Ex. 17

Qasile Ostracon, 2 Chron. 8; Job 22

Qumran War Scroll, 2 Sam. 17

Royal Steward Inscription (Shebna), 2 King 10; Isa. 22

Samaria Ostraca, Josh. 17; Hos. 2; Mic. 1

Shebna Inscription, 2 King 10; Isa. 22

Si'gabbar Funerary Stele, Isa. 53

Siloam Tunnel Inscription, 2 Kings 20; Isa. 36

Silver Scrolls, Ketef Hinnom, Num. 6; 1 Chron. 16; Neh. 13

Sundial Inscription, 2 Kings 20

Tel Dan Stele (House of David), 2 Sam. 8; 2 Kings 9; Isa. 7; Amos 1

Tell Fekheriye, Gen. 1

Tell Siran Inscription, 1 Sam. 11

Three Shekel Ostracon, Neh. 10

Trumpet Inscription, Neh. 13

Ugaritic List of Gods, Jer. 2
Ugaritic List of Temple Officers, Ezra 2
Uzziah Reburial, Isa. 6
Widow's Plea, 2 Kings 4
Yabneh-Yam Ostracon, **Deut. 24**; Neh. 5; Amos 2
Yehimilik Stele, 1 Kings 7
Zakkur Inscription, 1 Sam. 3; 1 Kings 22; 2 Kings 5; Ps. 21

Texts (Mesopotamia)

Adad-nirari Inscription, 2 Kings 18
Akitu Tablet, Lev. 16; Joel 2
Almanac, Babylonian, **Deut. 5**
Ashurbanipal's Court Scholars, Prov. 25
Assyrian Prophecy, Jonah 3
Atrahasis Epic, Gen. 1; **Deut. 12**; Ezek. 5
Babylonian Chronicle, 2 Kings 24; Jer. Introduction; Ezek. 33; Nah. 1
Babylonian Land Grant (Nabu-apla-iddina), Gen. 13; Josh. Introduction
Balag Lament, Lam. Introduction
Behistun Inscription, Ezra 4
Calah Bull Inscription, 2 Kings 8
Cuneiform Tablet with Envelope, Isa. 8
Curse of Agade, 1 Chron. 17; Lam. 5; Nah. 1
Cyrus Cylinder, Ezra 1; Isa. 44; Dan. Introduction; Hab. 1
Cyrus Tomb Inscription, Ezra Introduction
Descent of Inanna, 2 Chron. 23; Joel 1
Descent of Ishtar, Ps. 49
Dream Omens, Dan. Introduction
Dumuzi and Enkimdu, Gen. 4
East India House Inscription, 1 Kings 8; Dan. 4
Enki and Ninmah, 1 Kings 18; Ps. 103
Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta, Gen. 11
Enuma Elish, Gen. 1; Ps. 89; Dan. 7
Esarhaddon Prism, Ezek. 10
Esarhaddon Restoration of Babylon, 2 Kings 19; Ezek. 11
Esarhaddon and his Mother, Restoration of Babylon, 2 Chron. 15
Esarhaddon Stele, 2 Kings 19; Isa. 37
Esarhaddon Vassal Treaty, **Deut. 28**
Eshunna Laws, Ex. 22; 2 Sam. 2

Etana, Gen. 5
Extispicy Tablet, 2 Kings 16
Foundation Tablets, Neh. 6; Zech. 4
Gilgamesh Epic, Gen. 6; 41; Judg. 7; 2 Sam. 1; 1 Kings 12; Eccl. Introduction; Ezek. 18
Gudea Cylinders, Gen. 2; 2 Sam. 7; 1 Kings 6; 1 Chron. 17; Jer. 23; Hag. 2
Gudea Map, 1 Chron. 28; Ps. 132; Zech. Introduction
Hammurabi's Geneaology, Gen. 10; 1 Chron. 1
Hammurabi's Laws, **Deut. 5**; 2 Kings 4; 8; Ps. 19; 72; Prov. 28; Isa. 1; 10; Ezek. 34
Iddin-Dagan, Hymn, 2 Chron. 5
Ishtar Hymn, Ps. Introduction
Izbu Omens, Dan. 7
Jehoiachin Ration Tablets, 2 Kings 25; Dan. 1
King List, Antediluvian, **Deut. 17**; Ps. 90
King List, Assyrian, 1 Chron. 1
King List, Larsa, 1 Kings Introduction
King List, Sumerian, Gen. 5
Kurkh Stele of Shalmaneser III, 2 Kings 1
Lagash/Larsa Calendar, **Deut. 16**
Lamentation for Ur, 2 Kings 25; Ps. 74; Lam. Introduction
Land Grant (Nabu-apla-iddina), Gen. 13; Josh. Introduction
Land Sale, Ex. 32
Lexical List, 1 Kings 4; 2 Chron. 1
Lipit-Ishtar Law Code, **Deut. 10**; 2 Chron. 10
Lot of Yahali, Est. 3
Love Song, Song 1
Ludlul bel Nemeqi, Job Introduction
Lunar Eclipse Tablet, Jer. 10
Man and His God, Job Introduction
Map of Canals, Prov. 21
Map of the City of Umma, Ezek. 4
Map of the World, Ps. 24; Ezek. 38; Zeph. 2
Medical Text, Gen. 12; Ps. 38
Middle Assyrian Laws, Ex. 22; Ruth 1; Hos. 2
Musical Notation, Ps. Introduction; 150
Nabonidus Chronicle, Jer. 50
Nabonidus Inscription, 1 Kings Introduction; 1 Chron. Introduction; 2 Chron. 1; Jer. 1; Dan. 5
Nabonidus Sippar Cylinder, Zech. Introduction
Nabonidus Stele, Obad. Introduction

Nabopolassar Brick, Jer. 20
Nebo-sarsekim Tablet, Jer. 39
Nebuchadnezzar Cylinder, Dan. 1
Nebuchadnezzar East India House Inscription, 1 Kings 8; Dan. 4
Nippur Debt Note, Neh. 5
Nungal Hymn, Isa. 42
Nur Adad Ground Plan, Isa. 49
Nuzi Texts, Gen. 25
Omens from Sheep's Stomach, Dan. 1
Oracle Request, 1 Kings 17
Praise of Pickax, Gen. 1
Sacred Marriage, Ezek. 16; Song 1
Sargon Birth Legend, Ex. 2; Ezek. 16
Sargon II, 1 Kings Introduction; 2 Kings 17; Isa. 20
Satrapies of the Persian Empire List, Est. 1
Sennacherib Stele, 2 Kings 17; Ps. 51
Sennacherib's Prism, Josh. 12; 2 Kings 18; 2 Chron. 32; Isa. 36
Shalmaneser III's Foundation Tablet, Neh. 6
Shulgi Hymn, Ps. 110
Shurpu Text, Isa. 6; Mal. 3
Shuruppak Instruction, Ex. 20; Prov. Introduction
Sin-shar-ishkun's Letter, 2 Chron. 35
Sumerian God List, 1 Chron. 1
Sumerian Proverbs, Prov. Introduction
Sumerian Schooldays, Prov. 13
Synchronistic History, 2 Kings 1
Tammuz Text, Ezek. 8
Teima Inscription, Ezra Introduction
Temple of Ningishzida Measurements, Ezek. 40
Tiglath-pileser I Annals, Judg. 1; 1 Kings 14
Tiglath-pileser III Annals, 2 Kings 15; Ezek. 3
Tobias Inscription, Neh. 2
Tukulti-Ninurta II Annals, **Deut. 10**; 2 Kings 1
Ur-Nammu Hymn, Zech. 10
Ur-Nammu Laws, Ex. 20; Lev. Introduction; Prov. 5
Ur-Nanshe Temple Plaque, Ex. 40; Hag. 1
Uru-inimgina/ Urukagina Reforms, Lev. 19; Ezek. 22
Venus Tablet, Isa. 14
Xerxes Daiva Text, Neh. 1

Zimri-Lim Ice House, Prov. 25

Ziusudra (Sumerian Flood Story), Gen. 6

Tools

Awl, Gen. 4

Axe Head, **Deut. 19**; 2 Kings 6

Cubit Rod, Ezek. 40

Farm Tools, Isa. 2

Fork, 1 Sam. 2

Iron Plow, Joel 3

Mallet, Judg. 4

Mortal and Pestle, Est. 2

Olive Press, Josh. 24; Job 24; Hos. 2; 12

Ox Goad, Judg. 3

Peg, Judg. 4

Plumb Line, Amos 7

Razor, Judg. 13; Isa. 7

Rope, Eccl. 4

Shovels, 1 Kings 7

Sickle Blades, Ruth 2

Stake, Judg. 4

Threshing Sledge, Ruth 3; 2 Sam. 24; Amos 1

Viticulture and Brewing

Beer Making, Num. 6

Brewery Model, Isa. 28

Vineyard, Gen. 9; Judg. 21; Amos 9

Wine Cellars, Jer. 48

Winepress, Num. 6; Judg. 6; 2 Kings 6; Isa. 5; Jer. 25; Lam. 1

Wineskin, Job 32; Jer. 13

Warfare

Army of Pharaoh, 2 Chron. 11

Balawat, **Deut. 21**; Judg. 1; 1 Sam. 31; 2 Sam. 4; 1 Chron. 10; 2 Chron. 24; Ps. 144; Ezek. 22

Camel Warfare, 1 Sam. 30; 1 Chron. 1; 2 Chron. 21; Isa. 21

Capture of Ashkelon, 2 Sam. 1

Corpses in the River, 1 Sam. 18

Corpses impaled, Num. 25; **Deut. 21**; Josh. 8; 2 Sam. 21; Est. 2; Isa. 1; Jer. 8

Decimation of Army (Karnak), 1 Sam. 14

Flaying, Ezra 9; Isa. 13
Hand to Hand Combat, 2 Sam. 2
Heads Hung, 1 Sam. 31; 1 Chron. 10; Ps. 23
Lachish, 2 Kings 18; Isa. 23
Medinet Habu, Ex. 15; 2 Sam. 21
Mutilation, Judg. 1; 2 Sam 4; 1 Chron. 10; Ezek. 22
Naram Sin Stela, **Deut. 20**
Nubian Army, 2 Chron. 25
Papyrus Boat, Job 9
Sappers, 1 Kings 20; Ps. 144; Lam. 2
Siege, Lam. 2
Tiglath-pileser III, Josh. 8
Til-Tuba, 1 Sam. 4; 22; 2 Sam. 21; 2 Kings 8; Ps. 79

Warfare: Archers and Slingers

Archer, Josh. 8; Ps. 11
Ashurbanipal, 2 Kings 21; Ps. 7; Nah. 3; Amos 3
Bow Case, 1 Chron. 18
Chariot, 1 Chron. 18; 2 Chron. 1
Chariot Trampling Enemy, Judg. 1
Immortals, Jer. 49
Lachish Relief, 2 Kings 18; Isa. 23; 36; Jer. 6; Hab. 1
Lachish Siege Drawing, Ezek. 26
Lion Hunting, Gen. 10
Pharaoh, Ex. 14
Slinger, 1 Sam. 17; Job 41
Slingstones, Judg. 20

Warfare: Body Parts

Cutting off Head, 1 Sam. 31; 2 Sam. 20
Hands, Judg. 8
Head, 1 Sam. 17; 31; 2 Kings 10; 1 Chron. 10; Ps. 23; Jer. 34; Nah. 3
Phalli, 1 Sam. 18

Warfare: Cavalry

Cavalry, Jer. 46
Lion Hunting, Nah. 2
Scythian Horseman, Zeph. Introduction
Til-Tuba, Ezek. 32

Warfare: Chariot

Ashurbanipal, 1 Sam. 8; Isa. 52; Zech. 14

Ashurnasirpal II, Judg. 4; 1 Kings 18; 1 Chron. 14; Ps. 7; 45

Balawat, **Deut. 21**; Judg. 1; 5; 1 Sam. 13; 1 Chron. 10; Isa. 2; 23; Ezek. 22; 26; Amos 2

Chariot, 1 Kings 1; 1 Chron. 18; 2 Chron. 1

Chariot of Tutankhamun, 2 Chron. 1

Chariot Trampling Enemy, Judg. 1

Gods in a Chariot, Hab. 3

Lachish, 1 Chron. 28

Lion Hunting, Jer. 27; Nah. 2

Megiddo Ivory, 1 Sam. 4; 1 Kings 10; Ps. 99; Isa. 20

Pharaoh, Ex. 14

Sargon II, 1 Kings Introduction; Isa. 20

Seti I, Ex. 13

Standard of Ur, 2 Chron. 1

Tiglath-pileser III, Isa. 7

Til-Tuba, Ezek. 32

Trampling of Shasu, Judg. 5

Tutankhamun in Chariot, Song 1

Warfare: Enemies under Feet

Abu Simbel, Ps. 47

Darius, Ezra 6

Enemies as Footstool, Ps. 110

Decapitated Enemies Trampled, Nah. 3

Netjerikhet, 1 Kings 5; Ps. 83

Nimrud, Isa. 51

Ramesses III, Josh. 12

Sandals, Lam. 3

Warfare: Exiles and Prisoners

Abu Simbel, 1 Kings 20; Jer. 5

Ashtaroth, Ezra 9

Ashurbanipal, 2 Kings 15; Ezek. 12; Nah. 3

Balawat, **Deut. 21**; Judg. 1; 1 Chron. 10; Jer. 29; Lam. 1; Ezek. 22; Amos 2; Mic. 1; Nah. 1

Elamite Prisoners, 1 Sam. 17; Ps. 2

Esarhaddon Stele, 2 Kings 19; Isa. 37; Ezek. 11

Exiles, Ps. 147

Khumban-khaltash III, 2 Chron. 33

Lachish, Num. 25; 2 Sam. 21; 2 Kings 6; 18; 2 Chron. 28; Ezra 7; Neh. 8; Est. 2; Ps. 95; 107; Isa. Introduction; 13; 36; 47; Jer. 8; 38; Hab. 1

Lachish Siege Drawing, Ezek. 26

Medinet Habu, Job 12

Megiddo Ivory, 1 Sam. 4; 1 Kings 10; Ps. 99; Isa. 20

Nineveh, Isa. 7

Prisoner with Hook, 2 Kings 19; Isa. 37; Ezek. 11; 19; Amos 4

Prisoners, Num. 13; 2 Chron. 36; Jer. 13; 39; Lam. 5

Prisoners in Net, 2 Sam. 22; Job 19; Isa. 8; Ezek. 17; Hab. 1

Prisoners on Sandals, Lam. 3

Ramesses II, 2 Sam. 8

Sargon II, Ps. 25

Sea People, Ex. 15; Judg. 3; 1 Sam. 4; 6; 17; 2 Sam. 21

Shasu, Gen. 36

Syrian Prisoner, Judg. 5

Thutmose III, Num. 33

Tiglath-pileser III, Josh. 8; 1 Kings 20

Warfare: Mighty Arm

Karnak, Isa. 9

Narmer Palette, Isa. 9

Pharaoh, Ex. 6; Num. 24; **Deut. 2**; Josh. 8; Neh. 13; Ps. 2; Ezek. 30

Ramesses II, Ezek. 8

Ramesses III, Josh. 12; Judg. 6

Thutmose III, Josh. 10

Warfare: Plunder and Tribute

Assyrians Plundering, 2 Chron. 36

Balawat, Judg. 5

Captured Animals, Num. 31; Job 1

Gods, 1 Sam. 5; 2 Chron. 25; Isa. 46; Hos. 10

Sebekhotep Tomb, 1 Sam. 16

Shalmaneser III, Judg. 3; 2 Sam. 8; Ps. 68; Isa. 60; Ezek. 16

Spoil, 1 Sam. 30; Ezek. 2; 29; Obad.; Hab. 2

Weighing Tribute, Isa. 40

Warfare: Shields

Lachish, Nah. 2

Shields, 2 Sam. 23; Ps. 3; 5; Jer. 46

Soldiers, 2 Sam. 1

Til-Tuba, 1 Sam. 4

Warship, Ezek. 27

Warfare: Siege Engines

Ashurnasirpal, Amos 3

Battering Ram, **Deut. 20**

Lachish, 2 Sam. 20; 2 Kings 18; Isa. 23; 36; Jer. 6; Hab. 1

Lachish Siege Drawing, Ezek. 26

Siege Engines, 2 Kings 6; Ezek. 4

Tiglath-pileser III, Josh. 8

Warfare: Trampling

Ashurnasirpal II, Ps. 7

Balawat, 1 Sam. 13

Chariot Trampling Enemy, Judg. 1; Ps. 66

Naram-Sin, **Deut. 20**; Isa. 14; Ps. 18

Pharaoh on Chariot, Ex. 14

Soldiers Trampling, Nah. 3

Trampling of Shasu, Judg. 5

Tutankhamun, Song 1

Warfare: Vulture

Battlefield and Birds, 2 Sam. 21; Ps. 79; Isa. 18; Ezek. 39

Battlefield Palette, Jer. 16

Chariot Trampling Enemy, Judg. 1

Vulture Accompanying, Jer. 48

Vulture Stele, Job 15; Ps. 5; Ezek. 17

Vulture with Intestines, 1 Kings 14

Warfare: Weapons and Armor

Armor, 1 Sam. 17; 1 Kings 22; Isa. 59

Arrowhead, Ps. 127

Axe, 2 Kings 6; Ezek. 21

Bow, 2 Sam. 8

Dagger, Judg. 3

Flint Knife, Gen. 22; 1 Sam. 14; Isa. 56

Sickle Sword, Josh. 8

Slingstones, Judg. 20

Spear, 1 Sam. 26; 2 Sam. 1

Spear Butt, 2 Sam. 2

Spear Heads, 1 Sam. 26; Isa. 2.

Sword, Ps. 45; Ezek. 21

Water Systems

Cistern, Arad, Gen. 37

Cistern, Beersheba, Jer. 2

Gihon Spring, 2 Sam. 5

Hezekiah's Tunnel, 2 Kings 20; 2 Chron. 32; Isa. 22

Pool of Bethesda, Neh. 3

Pool of Gibeon, 2 Sam. 2; Jer. 28

Pool of Heshbon, Song 7

Pool of Shiloh, Isa. 22

Siloam Channel, Isa. 8

Warren's Shaft, 2 Sam. 5

Winged Sun

Egyptian, Num. 9; Ps. 84; 86; 139

Persian (Ahuramazda), Ezr. Introduction; Isa. 45; Ezek. 10; Mal. 4

Neo-Assyrian (Ashur or Shamash), Gen. 3; Judg. 4; 1 Sam. 10; 1 Chron. 14; Ps. 7; 18; Prov. 3; Isa. 1; 8; 52; Mal. 4

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The New International Version Appendix

Deuteronomy

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34

Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy 1

The Command to Leave Horeb

[1]These are the words Moses spoke to all Israel in the wilderness east of the Jordan—that is, in the Arabah—opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth and Dizahab. [2](It takes eleven days to go from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea by the Mount Seir road.)

[3]In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses proclaimed to the Israelites all that the LORD had commanded him concerning them. [4]This was after he had defeated Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, and at Edrei had defeated Og king of Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth.

[5]East of the Jordan in the territory of Moab, Moses began to expound this law, saying:

[6]The LORD our God said to us at Horeb, “You have stayed long enough at this mountain. [7]Break camp and advance into the hill country of the Amorites; go to all the neighboring peoples in the Arabah, in the mountains, in the western foothills, in the Negev and along the coast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the Euphrates. [8]See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land the LORD swore he would give to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—and to their descendants after them.”

The Appointment of Leaders

[9]At that time I said to you, “You are too heavy a burden for me to carry alone. [10]The LORD your God has increased your numbers so that today you are as numerous as the stars in the sky. [11]May the LORD, the God of your ancestors, increase you a thousand times and bless you as he has promised! [12]But how can I bear your problems and your burdens and your disputes all by myself? [13]Choose some wise, understanding and respected men from each of your tribes, and I will set them over you.”

14 You answered me, “What you propose to do is good.”

15 So I took the leading men of your tribes, wise and respected men, and appointed them to have authority over you—as commanders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens and as tribal officials. 16 And I charged your judges at that time, “Hear the disputes between your people and judge fairly, whether the case is between two Israelites or between an Israelite and a foreigner residing among you. 17 Do not show partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike. Do not be afraid of anyone, for judgment belongs to God. Bring me any case too hard for you, and I will hear it.” 18 And at that time I told you everything you were to do.

Spies Sent Out

19 Then, as the LORD our God commanded us, we set out from Horeb and went toward the hill country of the Amorites through all that vast and dreadful wilderness that you have seen, and so we reached Kadesh Barnea. 20 Then I said to you, “You have reached the hill country of the Amorites, which the LORD our God is giving us. 21 See, the LORD your God has given you the land. Go up and take possession of it as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, told you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”

22 Then all of you came to me and said, “Let us send men ahead to spy out the land for us and bring back a report about the route we are to take and the towns we will come to.”

23 The idea seemed good to me; so I selected twelve of you, one man from each tribe. 24 They left and went up into the hill country, and came to the Valley of Eshkol and explored it. 25 Taking with them some of the fruit of the land, they brought it down to us and reported, “It is a good land that the LORD our God is giving us.”

Rebellion Against the LORD

26 But you were unwilling to go up; you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God. 27 You grumbled in your tents and said, “The LORD hates us; so he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us. 28 Where can we go? Our brothers have made our hearts melt in fear. They say, ‘The people are stronger and taller than we are;

the cities are large, with walls up to the sky. We even saw the Anakites there.’ ”

29Then I said to you, “Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. 30The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, 31and in the wilderness. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place.”

32In spite of this, you did not trust in the LORD your God, 33who went ahead of you on your journey, in fire by night and in a cloud by day, to search out places for you to camp and to show you the way you should go.

34When the LORD heard what you said, he was angry and solemnly swore: 35“No one from this evil generation shall see the good land I swore to give your ancestors, 36except Caleb son of Jephunneh. He will see it, and I will give him and his descendants the land he set his feet on, because he followed the LORD wholeheartedly.”

37Because of you the LORD became angry with me also and said, “You shall not enter it, either. 38But your assistant, Joshua son of Nun, will enter it. Encourage him, because he will lead Israel to inherit it. 39And the little ones that you said would be taken captive, your children who do not yet know good from bad—they will enter the land. I will give it to them and they will take possession of it. 40But as for you, turn around and set out toward the desert along the route to the Red Sea.”

41Then you replied, “We have sinned against the LORD. We will go up and fight, as the LORD our God commanded us.” So every one of you put on his weapons, thinking it easy to go up into the hill country.

42But the LORD said to me, “Tell them, ‘Do not go up and fight, because I will not be with you. You will be defeated by your enemies.’ ”

43So I told you, but you would not listen. You rebelled against the LORD’s command and in your arrogance you marched up into the hill country. 44The Amorites who lived in those hills came out against you; they chased you like a swarm of bees and beat you down from Seir all the way to Hormah. 45You came back and wept before the LORD, but he paid no attention to your weeping and turned a deaf ear to you. 46And so you stayed in Kadesh many days—all the time you spent there.

Deuteronomy 2

Wanderings in the Wilderness

[1]Then we turned back and set out toward the wilderness along the route to the
Red Sea, as the LORD had directed me. For a long time we made our way
around the hill country of Seir.

[2]Then the LORD said to me, [3]"You have made your way around this hill
country long enough; now turn north. [4]Give the people these orders: 'You are
about to pass through the territory of your relatives the descendants of Esau,
who live in Seir. They will be afraid of you, but be very careful. [5]Do not
provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land, not even
enough to put your foot on. I have given Esau the hill country of Seir as his
own. [6]You are to pay them in silver for the food you eat and the water you
drink.' "

[7]The LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He
has watched over your journey through this vast wilderness. These forty
years the LORD your God has been with you, and you have not lacked
anything.

[8]So we went on past our relatives the descendants of Esau, who live in
Seir. We turned from the Arabah road, which comes up from Elath and Ezion
Geber, and traveled along the desert road of Moab.

[9]Then the LORD said to me, "Do not harass the Moabites or provoke them
to war, for I will not give you any part of their land. I have given Ar to the
descendants of Lot as a possession."

[10](The Emites used to live there—a people strong and numerous, and as
tall as the Anakites. [11]Like the Anakites, they too were considered Rephaites,
but the Moabites called them Emites. [12]Horites used to live in Seir, but the
descendants of Esau drove them out. They destroyed the Horites from before
them and settled in their place, just as Israel did in the land the LORD gave
them as their possession.)

[13]And the LORD said, "Now get up and cross the Zered Valley." So we
crossed the valley.

[14]Thirty-eight years passed from the time we left Kadesh Barnea until we
crossed the Zered Valley. By then, that entire generation of fighting men had

perished from the camp, as the LORD had sworn to them. 15The LORD's hand was against them until he had completely eliminated them from the camp.

16Now when the last of these fighting men among the people had died, 17the LORD said to me, 18"Today you are to pass by the region of Moab at Ar. 19When you come to the Ammonites, do not harass them or provoke them to war, for I will not give you possession of any land belonging to the Ammonites. I have given it as a possession to the descendants of Lot."

20(That too was considered a land of the Rephaites, who used to live there; but the Ammonites called them Zamzummites. 21They were a people strong and numerous, and as tall as the Anakites. The LORD destroyed them from before the Ammonites, who drove them out and settled in their place. 22The LORD had done the same for the descendants of Esau, who lived in Seir, when he destroyed the Horites from before them. They drove them out and have lived in their place to this day. 23And as for the Avvites who lived in villages as far as Gaza, the Caphtorites coming out from Caphtor destroyed them and settled in their place.)

Defeat of Sihon King of Heshbon

24"Set out now and cross the Arnon Gorge. See, I have given into your hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his country. Begin to take possession of it and engage him in battle. 25This very day I will begin to put the terror and fear of you on all the nations under heaven. They will hear reports of you and will tremble and be in anguish because of you."

26From the Desert of Kedemoth I sent messengers to Sihon king of Heshbon offering peace and saying, 27"Let us pass through your country. We will stay on the main road; we will not turn aside to the right or to the left. 28Sell us food to eat and water to drink for their price in silver. Only let us pass through on foot— 29as the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir, and the Moabites, who live in Ar, did for us—until we cross the Jordan into the land the LORD our God is giving us." 30But Sihon king of Heshbon refused to let us pass through. For the LORD your God had made his spirit stubborn and his heart obstinate in order to give him into your hands, as he has now done.

31The LORD said to me, "See, I have begun to deliver Sihon and his country over to you. Now begin to conquer and possess his land."

[32]When Sihon and all his army came out to meet us in battle at Jahaz, [33]the LORD our God delivered him over to us and we struck him down, together with his sons and his whole army. [34]At that time we took all his towns and completely destroyed them—men, women and children. We left no survivors. [35]But the livestock and the plunder from the towns we had captured we carried off for ourselves. [36]From Aroer on the rim of the Arnon Gorge, and from the town in the gorge, even as far as Gilead, not one town was too strong for us. The LORD our God gave us all of them. [37]But in accordance with the command of the LORD our God, you did not encroach on any of the land of the Ammonites, neither the land along the course of the Jabbok nor that around the towns in the hills.

Deuteronomy 3

Defeat of Og King of Bashan

[1]Next we turned and went up along the road toward Bashan, and Og king of Bashan with his whole army marched out to meet us in battle at Edrei. [2]The LORD said to me, “Do not be afraid of him, for I have delivered him into your hands, along with his whole army and his land. Do to him what you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon.”

[3]So the LORD our God also gave into our hands Og king of Bashan and all his army. We struck them down, leaving no survivors. [4]At that time we took all his cities. There was not one of the sixty cities that we did not take from them—the whole region of Argob, Og’s kingdom in Bashan. [5]All these cities were fortified with high walls and with gates and bars, and there were also a great many unwalled villages. [6]We completely destroyed them, as we had done with Sihon king of Heshbon, destroying every city—men, women and children. [7]But all the livestock and the plunder from their cities we carried off for ourselves.

[8]So at that time we took from these two kings of the Amorites the territory east of the Jordan, from the Arnon Gorge as far as Mount Hermon. [9](Hermon is called Sirion by the Sidonians; the Amorites call it Senir.) [10]We took all the towns on the plateau, and all Gilead, and all Bashan as far as Salekah and Edrei, towns of Og’s kingdom in Bashan. [11](Og king of Bashan was the last of the Rephaites. His bed was decorated with iron and was more than nine cubits long and four cubits wide. It is still in Rabbah of the Ammonites.)

Division of the Land

[12]Of the land that we took over at that time, I gave the Reubenites and the Gadites the territory north of Aroer by the Arnon Gorge, including half the hill country of Gilead, together with its towns. [13]The rest of Gilead and also all of Bashan, the kingdom of Og, I gave to the half-tribe of Manasseh. (The whole region of Argob in Bashan used to be known as a land of the Rephaites. [14]Jair, a descendant of Manasseh, took the whole region of Argob as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maakathites; it was named after

him, so that to this day Bashan is called Havvoth Jair.) [15]And I gave Gilead to Makir. [16]But to the Reubenites and the Gadites I gave the territory extending from Gilead down to the Arnon Gorge (the middle of the gorge being the border) and out to the Jabbok River, which is the border of the Ammonites. [17]Its western border was the Jordan in the Arabah, from Kinnereth to the Sea of the Arabah (that is, the Dead Sea), below the slopes of Pisgah.

[18]I commanded you at that time: "The LORD your God has given you this land to take possession of it. But all your able-bodied men, armed for battle, must cross over ahead of the other Israelites. [19]However, your wives, your children and your livestock (I know you have much livestock) may stay in the towns I have given you, [20]until the LORD gives rest to your fellow Israelites as he has to you, and they too have taken over the land that the LORD your God is giving them across the Jordan. After that, each of you may go back to the possession I have given you."

Moses Forbidden to Cross the Jordan

[21]At that time I commanded Joshua: "You have seen with your own eyes all that the LORD your God has done to these two kings. The LORD will do the same to all the kingdoms over there where you are going. [22]Do not be afraid of them; the LORD your God himself will fight for you."

[23]At that time I pleaded with the LORD: [24]"Sovereign LORD, you have begun to show to your servant your greatness and your strong hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works you do? [25]Let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan—that fine hill country and Lebanon."

[26]But because of you the LORD was angry with me and would not listen to me. "That is enough," the LORD said. "Do not speak to me anymore about this matter. [27]Go up to the top of Pisgah and look west and north and south and east. Look at the land with your own eyes, since you are not going to cross this Jordan. [28]But commission Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, for he will lead this people across and will cause them to inherit the land that you will see." [29]So we stayed in the valley near Beth Peor.

Deuteronomy 4

Obedience Commanded

[1]Now, Israel, hear the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. [2]Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you.

[3]You saw with your own eyes what the LORD did at Baal Peor. The LORD your God destroyed from among you everyone who followed the Baal of Peor, [4]but all of you who held fast to the LORD your God are still alive today.

[5]See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the LORD my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. [6]Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.” [7]What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? [8]And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?

[9]Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them. [10]Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when he said to me, “Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children.” [11]You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain while it blazed with fire to the very heavens, with black clouds and deep darkness. [12]Then the LORD spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice. [13]He declared to you his covenant, the Ten Commandments, which he commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets. [14]And the LORD directed me at that time to teach you the decrees and laws you are to follow in the land that you are crossing

the Jordan to possess.

Idolatry Forbidden

15 You saw no form of any kind the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb
out of the fire. Therefore watch yourselves very carefully, 16 so that you do
not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol, an image of any shape,
whether formed like a man or a woman, 17 or like any animal on earth or any
bird that flies in the air, 18 or like any creature that moves along the ground or
any fish in the waters below. 19 And when you look up to the sky and see the
sun, the moon and the stars—all the heavenly array—do not be enticed into
bowing down to them and worshiping things the LORD your God has
apportioned to all the nations under heaven. 20 But as for you, the LORD took
you and brought you out of the iron-smelting furnace, out of Egypt, to be the
people of his inheritance, as you now are.

21 The LORD was angry with me because of you, and he solemnly swore
that I would not cross the Jordan and enter the good land the LORD your God
is giving you as your inheritance. 22 I will die in this land; I will not cross the
Jordan; but you are about to cross over and take possession of that good land.
23 Be careful not to forget the covenant of the LORD your God that he made
with you; do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the
LORD your God has forbidden. 24 For the LORD your God is a consuming
fire, a jealous God.

25 After you have had children and grandchildren and have lived in the land
a long time—if you then become corrupt and make any kind of idol, doing
evil in the eyes of the LORD your God and arousing his anger, 26 I call the
heavens and the earth as witnesses against you this day that you will quickly
perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess. You will not
live there long but will certainly be destroyed. 27 The LORD will scatter you
among the peoples, and only a few of you will survive among the nations to
which the LORD will drive you. 28 There you will worship man-made gods of
wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or eat or smell. 29 But if from there
you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you seek him with all
your heart and with all your soul. 30 When you are in distress and all these
things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the LORD
your God and obey him. 31 For the LORD your God is a merciful God; he will

not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your ancestors, which he confirmed to them by oath.

The LORD Is God

[32]Ask now about the former days, long before your time, from the day God created human beings on the earth; ask from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything so great as this ever happened, or has anything like it ever been heard of? [33]Has any other people heard the voice of God speaking out of fire, as you have, and lived? [34]Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?

[35]You were shown these things so that you might know that the LORD is God; besides him there is no other. [36]From heaven he made you hear his voice to discipline you. On earth he showed you his great fire, and you heard his words from out of the fire. [37]Because he loved your ancestors and chose their descendants after them, he brought you out of Egypt by his Presence and his great strength, [38]to drive out before you nations greater and stronger than you and to bring you into their land to give it to you for your inheritance, as it is today.

[39]Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other. [40]Keep his decrees and commands, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the LORD your God gives you for all time.

Cities of Refuge

[41]Then Moses set aside three cities east of the Jordan, [42]to which anyone who had killed a person could flee if they had unintentionally killed a neighbor without malice aforethought. They could flee into one of these cities and save their life. [43]The cities were these: Bezer in the wilderness plateau, for the Reubenites; Ramoth in Gilead, for the Gadites; and Golan in Bashan, for the Manassites.

Introduction to the Law

[44]This is the law Moses set before the Israelites. [45]These are the stipulations, decrees and laws Moses gave them when they came out of Egypt [46]and were in the valley near Beth Peor east of the Jordan, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon and was defeated by Moses and the Israelites as they came out of Egypt. [47]They took possession of his land and the land of Og king of Bashan, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan. [48]This land extended from Aroer on the rim of the Arnon Gorge to Mount Sirion (that is, Hermon), [49]and included all the Arabah east of the Jordan, as far as the Dead Sea, below the slopes of Pisgah.

Deuteronomy 5

The Ten Commandments

1 Moses summoned all Israel and said:

Hear, Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them. 2 The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. 3 It was not with our ancestors that the LORD made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today. 4 The LORD spoke to you face to face out of the fire on the mountain. 5 (At that time I stood between the LORD and you to declare to you the word of the LORD, because you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain.) And he said:

6 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

7 "You shall have no other gods before me.

8 "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 9 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 10 but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

11 "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

12 "Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. 13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 14 but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do. 15 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an

outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

16 “Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

17 “You shall not murder.

18 “You shall not commit adultery.

19 “You shall not steal.

20 “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

21 “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbor’s house or land, his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

22 These are the commandments the LORD proclaimed in a loud voice to your whole assembly there on the mountain from out of the fire, the cloud and the deep darkness; and he added nothing more. Then he wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me.

23 When you heard the voice out of the darkness, while the mountain was ablaze with fire, all the leaders of your tribes and your elders came to me. 24 And you said, “The LORD our God has shown us his glory and his majesty, and we have heard his voice from the fire. Today we have seen that a person can live even if God speaks with them. 25 But now, why should we die? This great fire will consume us, and we will die if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer. 26 For what mortal has ever heard the voice of the living God speaking out of fire, as we have, and survived? 27 Go near and listen to all that the LORD our God says. Then tell us whatever the LORD our God tells you. We will listen and obey.”

28 The LORD heard you when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me, “I have heard what this people said to you. Everything they said was good. 29 Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!

30 “Go, tell them to return to their tents. 31 But you stay here with me so that I may give you all the commands, decrees and laws you are to teach them to follow in the land I am giving them to possess.”

32 So be careful to do what the LORD your God has commanded you; do

not turn aside to the right or to the left. [33]Walk in obedience to all that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.

Deuteronomy 6

Love the LORD Your God

[1]These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, [2]so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. [3]Hear, Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, promised you.

[4]Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. [5]Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. [6]These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. [7]Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. [8]Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. [9]Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

[10]When the LORD your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you—a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, [11]houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant—then when you eat and are satisfied, [12]be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

[13]Fear the LORD your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name. [14]Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; [15]for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land. [16]Do not put the LORD your God to the test as you did at Massah. [17]Be sure to keep the commands of the LORD your God and the stipulations and decrees he has given you. [18]Do what is right and good in the LORD's sight, so that it may go well with you and you may go in and take over the good land the LORD promised on oath to your ancestors, [19]thrusting out all your enemies before

you, as the LORD said.

[20]In the future, when your son asks you, “What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the LORD our God has commanded you?” [21]tell him: “We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. [22]Before our eyes the LORD sent signs and wonders—great and terrible—on Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. [23]But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land he promised on oath to our ancestors. [24]The LORD commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the LORD our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today. [25]And if we are careful to obey all this law before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness.”

Deuteronomy 7

Driving Out the Nations

[1]When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you— [2]and when the LORD your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. [3]Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, [4]for they will turn your children away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you. [5]This is what you are to do to them: Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles and burn their idols in the fire. [6]For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

[7]The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. [8]But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. [9]Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments. [10]But

> those who hate him he will repay to their face by destruction;
> he will not be slow to repay to their face those who hate him.

[11]Therefore, take care to follow the commands, decrees and laws I give you today.

[12]If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the LORD your God will keep his covenant of love with you, as he swore to your

ancestors. [13]He will love you and bless you and increase your numbers. He will bless the fruit of your womb, the crops of your land—your grain, new wine and olive oil—the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks in the land he swore to your ancestors to give you. [14]You will be blessed more than any other people; none of your men or women will be childless, nor will any of your livestock be without young. [15]The LORD will keep you free from every disease. He will not inflict on you the horrible diseases you knew in Egypt, but he will inflict them on all who hate you. [16]You must destroy all the peoples the LORD your God gives over to you. Do not look on them with pity and do not serve their gods, for that will be a snare to you.

[17]You may say to yourselves, “These nations are stronger than we are. How can we drive them out?” [18]But do not be afraid of them; remember well what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt. [19]You saw with your own eyes the great trials, the signs and wonders, the mighty hand and outstretched arm, with which the LORD your God brought you out. The LORD your God will do the same to all the peoples you now fear. [20]Moreover, the LORD your God will send the hornet among them until even the survivors who hide from you have perished. [21]Do not be terrified by them, for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a great and awesome God. [22]The LORD your God will drive out those nations before you, little by little. You will not be allowed to eliminate them all at once, or the wild animals will multiply around you. [23]But the LORD your God will deliver them over to you, throwing them into great confusion until they are destroyed. [24]He will give their kings into your hand, and you will wipe out their names from under heaven. No one will be able to stand up against you; you will destroy them. [25]The images of their gods you are to burn in the fire. Do not covet the silver and gold on them, and do not take it for yourselves, or you will be ensnared by it, for it is detestable to the LORD your God. [26]Do not bring a detestable thing into your house or you, like it, will be set apart for destruction. Regard it as vile and utterly detest it, for it is set apart for destruction.

Deuteronomy 8

Do Not Forget the LORD

[1]Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may
live and increase and may enter and possess the land the LORD promised on
oath to your ancestors. [2]Remember how the LORD your God led you all the
way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to
know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.
[3]He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna,
which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does
not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the
LORD. [4]Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during
these forty years. [5]Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son,
so the LORD your God disciplines you.

[6]Observe the commands of the LORD your God, walking in obedience to
him and revering him. [7]For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good
land—a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the
valleys and hills; [8]a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees,
pomegranates, olive oil and honey; [9]a land where bread will not be scarce and
you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper
out of the hills.

[10]When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for
the good land he has given you. [11]Be careful that you do not forget the LORD
your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I
am giving you this day. [12]Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when
you build fine houses and settle down, [13]and when your herds and flocks
grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied,
[14]then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God,
who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. [15]He led you
through the vast and dreadful wilderness, that thirsty and waterless land, with
its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock.
[16]He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something your ancestors had
never known, to humble and test you so that in the end it might go well with
you. [17]You may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands

have produced this wealth for me.” [18]But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.

[19]If you ever forget the LORD your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed. [20]Like the nations the LORD destroyed before you, so you will be destroyed for not obeying the LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 9

Not Because of Israel's Righteousness

[1]Hear, Israel: You are now about to cross the Jordan to go in and dispossess
nations greater and stronger than you, with large cities that have walls up to
the sky. [2]The people are strong and tall—Anakites! You know about them
and have heard it said: "Who can stand up against the Anakites?" [3]But be
assured today that the LORD your God is the one who goes across ahead of
you like a devouring fire. He will destroy them; he will subdue them before
you. And you will drive them out and annihilate them quickly, as the LORD
has promised you.

[4]After the LORD your God has driven them out before you, do not say to
yourself, "The LORD has brought me here to take possession of this land
because of my righteousness." No, it is on account of the wickedness of these
nations that the LORD is going to drive them out before you. [5]It is not
because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take
possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations,
the LORD your God will drive them out before you, to accomplish what he
swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. [6]Understand, then, that it
is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you
this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people.

The Golden Calf

[7]Remember this and never forget how you aroused the anger of the LORD
your God in the wilderness. From the day you left Egypt until you arrived
here, you have been rebellious against the LORD. [8]At Horeb you aroused the
LORD's wrath so that he was angry enough to destroy you. [9]When I went up
on the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant that
the LORD had made with you, I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty
nights; I ate no bread and drank no water. [10]The LORD gave me two stone
tablets inscribed by the finger of God. On them were all the commandments
the LORD proclaimed to you on the mountain out of the fire, on the day of
the assembly.

[11]At the end of the forty days and forty nights, the LORD gave me the two stone tablets, the tablets of the covenant. [12]Then the LORD told me, “Go down from here at once, because your people whom you brought out of Egypt have become corrupt. They have turned away quickly from what I commanded them and have made an idol for themselves.”

[13]And the LORD said to me, “I have seen this people, and they are a stiff-necked people indeed! [14]Let me alone, so that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven. And I will make you into a nation stronger and more numerous than they.”

[15]So I turned and went down from the mountain while it was ablaze with fire. And the two tablets of the covenant were in my hands. [16]When I looked, I saw that you had sinned against the LORD your God; you had made for yourselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. You had turned aside quickly from the way that the LORD had commanded you. [17]So I took the two tablets and threw them out of my hands, breaking them to pieces before your eyes.

[18]Then once again I fell prostrate before the LORD for forty days and forty nights; I ate no bread and drank no water, because of all the sin you had committed, doing what was evil in the LORD’s sight and so arousing his anger. [19]I feared the anger and wrath of the LORD, for he was angry enough with you to destroy you. But again the LORD listened to me. [20]And the LORD was angry enough with Aaron to destroy him, but at that time I prayed for Aaron too. [21]Also I took that sinful thing of yours, the calf you had made, and burned it in the fire. Then I crushed it and ground it to powder as fine as dust and threw the dust into a stream that flowed down the mountain.

[22]You also made the LORD angry at Taberah, at Massah and at Kibroth Hattaavah.

[23]And when the LORD sent you out from Kadesh Barnea, he said, “Go up and take possession of the land I have given you.” But you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God. You did not trust him or obey him. [24]You have been rebellious against the LORD ever since I have known you.

[25]I lay prostrate before the LORD those forty days and forty nights because the LORD had said he would destroy you. [26]I prayed to the LORD and said, “Sovereign LORD, do not destroy your people, your own inheritance that you redeemed by your great power and brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. [27]Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Overlook the stubbornness of this people, their wickedness and their sin. [28]Otherwise, the

country from which you brought us will say, ‘Because the LORD was not able to take them into the land he had promised them, and because he hated them, he brought them out to put them to death in the wilderness.’ [29]But they are your people, your inheritance that you brought out by your great power and your outstretched arm.”

Deuteronomy 10

Tablets Like the First Ones

[1]At that time the LORD said to me, “Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones and come up to me on the mountain. Also make a wooden ark. [2]I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. Then you are to put them in the ark.”

[3]So I made the ark out of acacia wood and chiseled out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I went up on the mountain with the two tablets in my hands. [4]The LORD wrote on these tablets what he had written before, the Ten Commandments he had proclaimed to you on the mountain, out of the fire, on the day of the assembly. And the LORD gave them to me. [5]Then I came back down the mountain and put the tablets in the ark I had made, as the LORD commanded me, and they are there now.

[6](The Israelites traveled from the wells of Bene Jaakan to Moserah. There Aaron died and was buried, and Eleazar his son succeeded him as priest. [7]From there they traveled to Gudgodah and on to Jotbathah, a land with streams of water. [8]At that time the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister and to pronounce blessings in his name, as they still do today. [9]That is why the Levites have no share or inheritance among their fellow Israelites; the LORD is their inheritance, as the LORD your God told them.)

[10]Now I had stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights, as I did the first time, and the LORD listened to me at this time also. It was not his will to destroy you. [11]“Go,” the LORD said to me, “and lead the people on their way, so that they may enter and possess the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.”

Fear the LORD

[12]And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, [13]and to observe the LORD’s commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own

good?

14To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens,
the earth and everything in it. 15Yet the LORD set his affection on your
ancestors and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the
nations—as it is today. 16Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be
stiff-necked any longer. 17For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord
of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and
accepts no bribes. 18He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow,
and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing.
19And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were
foreigners in Egypt. 20Fear the LORD your God and serve him. Hold fast to
him and take your oaths in his name. 21He is the one you praise; he is your
God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with
your own eyes. 22Your ancestors who went down into Egypt were seventy in
all, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars in
the sky.

Deuteronomy 11

Love and Obey the LORD

[1]Love the LORD your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws
and his commands always. [2]Remember today that your children were not the
ones who saw and experienced the discipline of the LORD your God: his
majesty, his mighty hand, his outstretched arm; [3]the signs he performed and
the things he did in the heart of Egypt, both to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to
his whole country; [4]what he did to the Egyptian army, to its horses and
chariots, how he overwhelmed them with the waters of the Red Sea as they
were pursuing you, and how the LORD brought lasting ruin on them. [5]It was
not your children who saw what he did for you in the wilderness until you
arrived at this place, [6]and what he did to Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab
the Reubenite, when the earth opened its mouth right in the middle of all
Israel and swallowed them up with their households, their tents and every
living thing that belonged to them. [7]But it was your own eyes that saw all
these great things the LORD has done.

[8]Observe therefore all the commands I am giving you today, so that you
may have the strength to go in and take over the land that you are crossing
the Jordan to possess, [9]and so that you may live long in the land the LORD
swore to your ancestors to give to them and their descendants, a land flowing
with milk and honey. [10]The land you are entering to take over is not like the
land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you planted your seed and
irrigated it by foot as in a vegetable garden. [11]But the land you are crossing
the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks
rain from heaven. [12]It is a land the LORD your God cares for; the eyes of the
LORD your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its
end.

[13]So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today—to love
the LORD your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your
soul— [14]then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and
spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and olive oil. [15]I
will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be
satisfied.

[16]Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods
and bow down to them. [17]Then the LORD's anger will burn against you, and
he will shut up the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield
no produce, and you will soon perish from the good land the LORD is giving
you. [18]Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols
on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. [19]Teach them to your
children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along
the road, when you lie down and when you get up. [20]Write them on the
doorframes of your houses and on your gates, [21]so that your days and the
days of your children may be many in the land the LORD swore to give your
ancestors, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth.

[22]If you carefully observe all these commands I am giving you to follow—
to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him and to hold fast to
him— [23]then the LORD will drive out all these nations before you, and you
will dispossess nations larger and stronger than you. [24]Every place where you
set your foot will be yours: Your territory will extend from the desert to
Lebanon, and from the Euphrates River to the Mediterranean Sea. [25]No one
will be able to stand against you. The LORD your God, as he promised you,
will put the terror and fear of you on the whole land, wherever you go.

[26]See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse— [27]the blessing
if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you
today; [28]the curse if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God and
turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which
you have not known. [29]When the LORD your God has brought you into the
land you are entering to possess, you are to proclaim on Mount Gerizim the
blessings, and on Mount Ebal the curses. [30]As you know, these mountains are
across the Jordan, westward, toward the setting sun, near the great trees of
Moreh, in the territory of those Canaanites living in the Arabah in the vicinity
of Gilgal. [31]You are about to cross the Jordan to enter and take possession of
the land the LORD your God is giving you. When you have taken it over and
are living there, [32]be sure that you obey all the decrees and laws I am setting
before you today.

Deuteronomy 12

The One Place of Worship

[1]These are the decrees and laws you must be careful to follow in the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has given you to possess—as long as you live in the land. [2]Destroy completely all the places on the high mountains, on the hills and under every spreading tree, where the nations you are dispossessing worship their gods. [3]Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and burn their Asherah poles in the fire; cut down the idols of their gods and wipe out their names from those places.

[4]You must not worship the LORD your God in their way. [5]But you are to seek the place the LORD your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go; [6]there bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. [7]There, in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the LORD your God has blessed you.

[8]You are not to do as we do here today, everyone doing as they see fit, [9]since you have not yet reached the resting place and the inheritance the LORD your God is giving you. [10]But you will cross the Jordan and settle in the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and he will give you rest from all your enemies around you so that you will live in safety. [11]Then to the place the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name—there you are to bring everything I command you: your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, and all the choice possessions you have vowed to the LORD. [12]And there rejoice before the LORD your God—you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levites from your towns who have no allotment or inheritance of their own. [13]Be careful not to sacrifice your burnt offerings anywhere you please. [14]Offer them only at the place the LORD will choose in one of your tribes, and there observe everything I command you.

[15]Nevertheless, you may slaughter your animals in any of your towns and eat as much of the meat as you want, as if it were gazelle or deer, according

to the blessing the LORD your God gives you. Both the ceremonially unclean and the clean may eat it. [16]But you must not eat the blood; pour it out on the ground like water. [17]You must not eat in your own towns the tithe of your grain and new wine and olive oil, or the firstborn of your herds and flocks, or whatever you have vowed to give, or your freewill offerings or special gifts. [18]Instead, you are to eat them in the presence of the LORD your God at the place the LORD your God will choose—you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levites from your towns—and you are to rejoice before the LORD your God in everything you put your hand to. [19]Be careful not to neglect the Levites as long as you live in your land.

[20]When the LORD your God has enlarged your territory as he promised you, and you crave meat and say, “I would like some meat,” then you may eat as much of it as you want. [21]If the place where the LORD your God chooses to put his Name is too far away from you, you may slaughter animals from the herds and flocks the LORD has given you, as I have commanded you, and in your own towns you may eat as much of them as you want. [22]Eat them as you would gazelle or deer. Both the ceremonially unclean and the clean may eat. [23]But be sure you do not eat the blood, because the blood is the life, and you must not eat the life with the meat. [24]You must not eat the blood; pour it out on the ground like water. [25]Do not eat it, so that it may go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is right in the eyes of the LORD.

[26]But take your consecrated things and whatever you have vowed to give, and go to the place the LORD will choose. [27]Present your burnt offerings on the altar of the LORD your God, both the meat and the blood. The blood of your sacrifices must be poured beside the altar of the LORD your God, but you may eat the meat. [28]Be careful to obey all these regulations I am giving you, so that it may always go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is good and right in the eyes of the LORD your God.

[29]The LORD your God will cut off before you the nations you are about to invade and dispossess. But when you have driven them out and settled in their land, [30]and after they have been destroyed before you, be careful not to be ensnared by inquiring about their gods, saying, “How do these nations serve their gods? We will do the same.” [31]You must not worship the LORD your God in their way, because in worshiping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the LORD hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in

the fire as sacrifices to their gods.

[32]See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it.

Deuteronomy 13

Worshiping Other Gods

[1]If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a sign or wonder, [2]and if the sign or wonder spoken of takes place, and the prophet says, “Let us follow other gods” (gods you have not known) “and let us worship them,” [3]you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. [4]It is the LORD your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him. [5]That prophet or dreamer must be put to death for inciting rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. That prophet or dreamer tried to turn you from the way the LORD your God commanded you to follow. You must purge the evil from among you.

[6]If your very own brother, or your son or daughter, or the wife you love, or your closest friend secretly entices you, saying, “Let us go and worship other gods” (gods that neither you nor your ancestors have known, [7]gods of the peoples around you, whether near or far, from one end of the land to the other), [8]do not yield to them or listen to them. Show them no pity. Do not spare them or shield them. [9]You must certainly put them to death. Your hand must be the first in putting them to death, and then the hands of all the people. [10]Stone them to death, because they tried to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. [11]Then all Israel will hear and be afraid, and no one among you will do such an evil thing again.

[12]If you hear it said about one of the towns the LORD your God is giving you to live in [13]that troublemakers have arisen among you and have led the people of their town astray, saying, “Let us go and worship other gods” (gods you have not known), [14]then you must inquire, probe and investigate it thoroughly. And if it is true and it has been proved that this detestable thing has been done among you, [15]you must certainly put to the sword all who live in that town. You must destroy it completely, both its people and its livestock.

[16]You are to gather all the plunder of the town into the middle of the public square and completely burn the town and all its plunder as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God. That town is to remain a ruin forever, never to be rebuilt, [17]and none of the condemned things are to be found in your hands. Then the LORD will turn from his fierce anger, will show you mercy, and will have compassion on you. He will increase your numbers, as he promised on oath to your ancestors— [18]because you obey the LORD your God by keeping all his commands that I am giving you today and doing what is right in his eyes.

Deuteronomy 14

Clean and Unclean Food

[1]You are the children of the LORD your God. Do not cut yourselves or shave the front of your heads for the dead, [2]for you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession.

[3]Do not eat any detestable thing. [4]These are the animals you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, [5]the deer, the gazelle, the roe deer, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope and the mountain sheep. [6]You may eat any animal that has a divided hoof and that chews the cud. [7]However, of those that chew the cud or that have a divided hoof you may not eat the camel, the rabbit or the hyrax. Although they chew the cud, they do not have a divided hoof; they are ceremonially unclean for you. [8]The pig is also unclean; although it has a divided hoof, it does not chew the cud. You are not to eat their meat or touch their carcasses.

[9]Of all the creatures living in the water, you may eat any that has fins and scales. [10]But anything that does not have fins and scales you may not eat; for you it is unclean.

[11]You may eat any clean bird. [12]But these you may not eat: the eagle, the vulture, the black vulture, [13]the red kite, the black kite, any kind of falcon, [14]any kind of raven, [15]the horned owl, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk, [16]the little owl, the great owl, the white owl, [17]the desert owl, the osprey, the cormorant, [18]the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe and the bat.

[19]All flying insects are unclean to you; do not eat them. [20]But any winged creature that is clean you may eat.

[21]Do not eat anything you find already dead. You may give it to the foreigner residing in any of your towns, and they may eat it, or you may sell it to any other foreigner. But you are a people holy to the LORD your God.

Do not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk.

Tithes

[22]Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. [23]Eat

the tithe of your grain, new wine and olive oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name, so that you may learn to revere the LORD your God always. [24]But if that place is too distant and you have been blessed by the LORD your God and cannot carry your tithe (because the place where the LORD will choose to put his Name is so far away), [25]then exchange your tithe for silver, and take the silver with you and go to the place the LORD your God will choose. [26]Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice. [27]And do not neglect the Levites living in your towns, for they have no allotment or inheritance of their own.

[28]At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, [29]so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

Deuteronomy 15

The Year for Canceling Debts

[1]At the end of every seven years you must cancel debts. [2]This is how it is to be done: Every creditor shall cancel any loan they have made to a fellow Israelite. They shall not require payment from anyone among their own people, because the LORD's time for canceling debts has been proclaimed. [3]You may require payment from a foreigner, but you must cancel any debt your fellow Israelite owes you. [4]However, there need be no poor people among you, for in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you, [5]if only you fully obey the LORD your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today. [6]For the LORD your God will bless you as he has promised, and you will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. You will rule over many nations but none will rule over you.

[7]If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward them. [8]Rather, be openhanded and freely lend them whatever they need. [9]Be careful not to harbor this wicked thought: "The seventh year, the year for canceling debts, is near," so that you do not show ill will toward the needy among your fellow Israelites and give them nothing. They may then appeal to the LORD against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. [10]Give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. [11]There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land.

Freeing Servants

[12]If any of your people—Hebrew men or women—sell themselves to you and serve you six years, in the seventh year you must let them go free. [13]And when you release them, do not send them away empty-handed. [14]Supply them liberally from your flock, your threshing floor and your winepress. Give

to them as the LORD your God has blessed you. [15]Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you. That is why I give you this command today.

[16]But if your servant says to you, “I do not want to leave you,” because he loves you and your family and is well off with you, [17]then take an awl and push it through his earlobe into the door, and he will become your servant for life. Do the same for your female servant.

[18]Do not consider it a hardship to set your servant free, because their service to you these six years has been worth twice as much as that of a hired hand. And the LORD your God will bless you in everything you do.

The Firstborn Animals

[19]Set apart for the LORD your God every firstborn male of your herds and flocks. Do not put the firstborn of your cows to work, and do not shear the firstborn of your sheep. [20]Each year you and your family are to eat them in the presence of the LORD your God at the place he will choose. [21]If an animal has a defect, is lame or blind, or has any serious flaw, you must not sacrifice it to the LORD your God. [22]You are to eat it in your own towns. Both the ceremonially unclean and the clean may eat it, as if it were gazelle or deer. [23]But you must not eat the blood; pour it out on the ground like water.

Deuteronomy 16

The Passover

[1]Observe the month of Aviv and celebrate the Passover of the LORD your God, because in the month of Aviv he brought you out of Egypt by night. [2]Sacrifice as the Passover to the LORD your God an animal from your flock or herd at the place the LORD will choose as a dwelling for his Name. [3]Do not eat it with bread made with yeast, but for seven days eat unleavened bread, the bread of affliction, because you left Egypt in haste—so that all the days of your life you may remember the time of your departure from Egypt. [4]Let no yeast be found in your possession in all your land for seven days. Do not let any of the meat you sacrifice on the evening of the first day remain until morning.

[5]You must not sacrifice the Passover in any town the LORD your God gives you [6]except in the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name. There you must sacrifice the Passover in the evening, when the sun goes down, on the anniversary of your departure from Egypt. [7]Roast it and eat it at the place the LORD your God will choose. Then in the morning return to your tents. [8]For six days eat unleavened bread and on the seventh day hold an assembly to the LORD your God and do no work.

The Festival of Weeks

[9]Count off seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain. [10]Then celebrate the Festival of Weeks to the LORD your God by giving a freewill offering in proportion to the blessings the LORD your God has given you. [11]And rejoice before the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name—you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, the Levites in your towns, and the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows living among you. [12]Remember that you were slaves in Egypt, and follow carefully these decrees.

The Festival of Tabernacles

[13]Celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles for seven days after you have gathered the produce of your threshing floor and your winepress. [14]Be joyful at your festival—you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levites, the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns. [15]For seven days celebrate the festival to the LORD your God at the place the LORD will choose. For the LORD your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete.

[16]Three times a year all your men must appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose: at the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Weeks and the Festival of Tabernacles. No one should appear before the LORD empty-handed: [17]Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the LORD your God has blessed you.

Judges

[18]Appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes in every town the LORD your God is giving you, and they shall judge the people fairly. [19]Do not pervert justice or show partiality. Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the innocent. [20]Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the LORD your God is giving you.

Worshiping Other Gods

[21]Do not set up any wooden Asherah pole beside the altar you build to the LORD your God, [22]and do not erect a sacred stone, for these the LORD your God hates.

Deuteronomy 17

[1]Do not sacrifice to the LORD your God an ox or a sheep that has any defect or flaw in it, for that would be detestable to him.

[2]If a man or woman living among you in one of the towns the LORD gives you is found doing evil in the eyes of the LORD your God in violation of his covenant, [3]and contrary to my command has worshiped other gods, bowing down to them or to the sun or the moon or the stars in the sky, [4]and this has been brought to your attention, then you must investigate it thoroughly. If it is true and it has been proved that this detestable thing has been done in Israel, [5]take the man or woman who has done this evil deed to your city gate and stone that person to death. [6]On the testimony of two or three witnesses a person is to be put to death, but no one is to be put to death on the testimony of only one witness. [7]The hands of the witnesses must be the first in putting that person to death, and then the hands of all the people. You must purge the evil from among you.

Law Courts

[8]If cases come before your courts that are too difficult for you to judge—whether bloodshed, lawsuits or assaults—take them to the place the LORD your God will choose. [9]Go to the Levitical priests and to the judge who is in office at that time. Inquire of them and they will give you the verdict. [10]You must act according to the decisions they give you at the place the LORD will choose. Be careful to do everything they instruct you to do. [11]Act according to whatever they teach you and the decisions they give you. Do not turn aside from what they tell you, to the right or to the left. [12]Anyone who shows contempt for the judge or for the priest who stands ministering there to the LORD your God is to be put to death. You must purge the evil from Israel. [13]All the people will hear and be afraid, and will not be contemptuous again.

The King

[14]When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, “Let us set a king over us

like all the nations around us,” [15]be sure to appoint over you a king the LORD your God chooses. He must be from among your fellow Israelites. Do not place a foreigner over you, one who is not an Israelite. [16]The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the LORD has told you, “You are not to go back that way again.” [17]He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.

[18]When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the Levitical priests. [19]It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees [20]and not consider himself better than his fellow Israelites and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel.

Deuteronomy 18

Offerings for Priests and Levites

[1]The Levitical priests—indeed, the whole tribe of Levi—are to have no allotment or inheritance with Israel. They shall live on the food offerings presented to the LORD, for that is their inheritance. [2]They shall have no inheritance among their fellow Israelites; the LORD is their inheritance, as he promised them.

[3]This is the share due the priests from the people who sacrifice a bull or a sheep: the shoulder, the internal organs and the meat from the head. [4]You are to give them the firstfruits of your grain, new wine and olive oil, and the first wool from the shearing of your sheep, [5]for the LORD your God has chosen them and their descendants out of all your tribes to stand and minister in the LORD's name always.

[6]If a Levite moves from one of your towns anywhere in Israel where he is living, and comes in all earnestness to the place the LORD will choose, [7]he may minister in the name of the LORD his God like all his fellow Levites who serve there in the presence of the LORD. [8]He is to share equally in their benefits, even though he has received money from the sale of family possessions.

Occult Practices

[9]When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. [10]Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, [11]or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. [12]Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD; because of these same detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you. [13]You must be blameless before the LORD your God.

The Prophet

[14]The nations you will dispossess listen to those who practice sorcery or
divination. But as for you, the LORD your God has not permitted you to do
so. [15]The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from
among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him. [16]For this is
what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly
when you said, “Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this
great fire anymore, or we will die.”

[17]The LORD said to me: “What they say is good. [18]I will raise up for them
a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my
words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him. [19]I myself
will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet
speaks in my name. [20]But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name
anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of
other gods, is to be put to death.”

[21]You may say to yourselves, “How can we know when a message has not
been spoken by the LORD?” [22]If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the
LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not
spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously, so do not be alarmed.

Deuteronomy 19

Cities of Refuge

[1]When the LORD your God has destroyed the nations whose land he is
giving you, and when you have driven them out and settled in their towns and
houses, [2]then set aside for yourselves three cities in the land the LORD your
God is giving you to possess. [3]Determine the distances involved and divide
into three parts the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance,
so that a person who kills someone may flee for refuge to one of these cities.

[4]This is the rule concerning anyone who kills a person and flees there for
safety—anyone who kills a neighbor unintentionally, without malice
aforethought. [5]For instance, a man may go into the forest with his neighbor to
cut wood, and as he swings his ax to fell a tree, the head may fly off and hit
his neighbor and kill him. That man may flee to one of these cities and save
his life. [6]Otherwise, the avenger of blood might pursue him in a rage,
overtake him if the distance is too great, and kill him even though he is not
deserving of death, since he did it to his neighbor without malice
aforethought. [7]This is why I command you to set aside for yourselves three
cities.

[8]If the LORD your God enlarges your territory, as he promised on oath to
your ancestors, and gives you the whole land he promised them, [9]because you
carefully follow all these laws I command you today—to love the LORD
your God and to walk always in obedience to him—then you are to set aside
three more cities. [10]Do this so that innocent blood will not be shed in your
land, which the LORD your God is giving you as your inheritance, and so
that you will not be guilty of bloodshed.

[11]But if out of hate someone lies in wait, assaults and kills a neighbor, and
then flees to one of these cities, [12]the killer shall be sent for by the town
elders, be brought back from the city, and be handed over to the avenger of
blood to die. [13]Show no pity. You must purge from Israel the guilt of
shedding innocent blood, so that it may go well with you.

[14]Do not move your neighbor’s boundary stone set up by your
predecessors in the inheritance you receive in the land the LORD your God is
giving you to possess.

Witnesses

[15]One witness is not enough to convict anyone accused of any crime or offense they may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

[16]If a malicious witness takes the stand to accuse someone of a crime, [17]the two people involved in the dispute must stand in the presence of the LORD before the priests and the judges who are in office at the time. [18]The judges must make a thorough investigation, and if the witness proves to be a liar, giving false testimony against a fellow Israelite, [19]then do to the false witness as that witness intended to do to the other party. You must purge the evil from among you. [20]The rest of the people will hear of this and be afraid, and never again will such an evil thing be done among you. [21]Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

Deuteronomy 20

Going to War

[1]When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you. [2]When you are about to go into battle, the priest shall come forward and address the army. [3]He shall say: “Hear, Israel: Today you are going into battle against your enemies. Do not be fainthearted or afraid; do not panic or be terrified by them. [4]For the LORD your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory.”

[5]The officers shall say to the army: “Has anyone built a new house and not yet begun to live in it? Let him go home, or he may die in battle and someone else may begin to live in it. [6]Has anyone planted a vineyard and not begun to enjoy it? Let him go home, or he may die in battle and someone else enjoy it. [7]Has anyone become pledged to a woman and not married her? Let him go home, or he may die in battle and someone else marry her.” [8]Then the officers shall add, “Is anyone afraid or fainthearted? Let him go home so that his fellow soldiers will not become disheartened too.” [9]When the officers have finished speaking to the army, they shall appoint commanders over it.

[10]When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace. [11]If they accept and open their gates, all the people in it shall be subject to forced labor and shall work for you. [12]If they refuse to make peace and they engage you in battle, lay siege to that city. [13]When the LORD your God delivers it into your hand, put to the sword all the men in it. [14]As for the women, the children, the livestock and everything else in the city, you may take these as plunder for yourselves. And you may use the plunder the LORD your God gives you from your enemies. [15]This is how you are to treat all the cities that are at a distance from you and do not belong to the nations nearby.

[16]However, in the cities of the nations the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. [17]Completely destroy them—the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—as the LORD your God has commanded you. [18]Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their

gods, and you will sin against the LORD your God.

19When you lay siege to a city for a long time, fighting against it to capture it, do not destroy its trees by putting an ax to them, because you can eat their fruit. Do not cut them down. Are the trees people, that you should besiege them? 20However, you may cut down trees that you know are not fruit trees and use them to build siege works until the city at war with you falls.

Deuteronomy 21

Atonement for an Unsolved Murder

[1]If someone is found slain, lying in a field in the land the LORD your God is
giving you to possess, and it is not known who the killer was, [2]your elders
and judges shall go out and measure the distance from the body to the
neighboring towns. [3]Then the elders of the town nearest the body shall take a
heifer that has never been worked and has never worn a yoke [4]and lead it
down to a valley that has not been plowed or planted and where there is a
flowing stream. There in the valley they are to break the heifer's neck. [5]The
Levitical priests shall step forward, for the LORD your God has chosen them
to minister and to pronounce blessings in the name of the LORD and to
decide all cases of dispute and assault. [6]Then all the elders of the town
nearest the body shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was
broken in the valley, [7]and they shall declare: "Our hands did not shed this
blood, nor did our eyes see it done. [8]Accept this atonement for your people
Israel, whom you have redeemed, LORD, and do not hold your people guilty
of the blood of an innocent person." Then the bloodshed will be atoned for,
[9]and you will have purged from yourselves the guilt of shedding innocent
blood, since you have done what is right in the eyes of the LORD.

Marrying a Captive Woman

[10]When you go to war against your enemies and the LORD your God
delivers them into your hands and you take captives, [11]if you notice among
the captives a beautiful woman and are attracted to her, you may take her as
your wife. [12]Bring her into your home and have her shave her head, trim her
nails [13]and put aside the clothes she was wearing when captured. After she
has lived in your house and mourned her father and mother for a full month,
then you may go to her and be her husband and she shall be your wife. [14]If
you are not pleased with her, let her go wherever she wishes. You must not
sell her or treat her as a slave, since you have dishonored her.

The Right of the Firstborn

15 If a man has two wives, and he loves one but not the other, and both bear
him sons but the firstborn is the son of the wife he does not love, 16 when he
wills his property to his sons, he must not give the rights of the firstborn to
the son of the wife he loves in preference to his actual firstborn, the son of the
wife he does not love. 17 He must acknowledge the son of his unloved wife as
the firstborn by giving him a double share of all he has. That son is the first
sign of his father's strength. The right of the firstborn belongs to him.

A Rebellious Son

18 If someone has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his
father and mother and will not listen to them when they discipline him, 19 his
father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders at the
gate of his town. 20 They shall say to the elders, "This son of ours is stubborn
and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a glutton and a drunkard." 21 Then
all the men of his town are to stone him to death. You must purge the evil
from among you. All Israel will hear of it and be afraid.

Various Laws

22 If someone guilty of a capital offense is put to death and their body is
exposed on a pole, 23 you must not leave the body hanging on the pole
overnight. Be sure to bury it that same day, because anyone who is hung on a
pole is under God's curse. You must not desecrate the land the LORD your
God is giving you as an inheritance.

Deuteronomy 22

[1]If you see your fellow Israelite's ox or sheep straying, do not ignore it but be sure to take it back to its owner. [2]If they do not live near you or if you do not know who owns it, take it home with you and keep it until they come looking for it. Then give it back. [3]Do the same if you find their donkey or cloak or anything else they have lost. Do not ignore it.

[4]If you see your fellow Israelite's donkey or ox fallen on the road, do not ignore it. Help the owner get it to its feet.

[5]A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing, for the LORD your God detests anyone who does this.

[6]If you come across a bird's nest beside the road, either in a tree or on the ground, and the mother is sitting on the young or on the eggs, do not take the mother with the young. [7]You may take the young, but be sure to let the mother go, so that it may go well with you and you may have a long life.

[8]When you build a new house, make a parapet around your roof so that you may not bring the guilt of bloodshed on your house if someone falls from the roof.

[9]Do not plant two kinds of seed in your vineyard; if you do, not only the crops you plant but also the fruit of the vineyard will be defiled.

[10]Do not plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together.

[11]Do not wear clothes of wool and linen woven together.

[12]Make tassels on the four corners of the cloak you wear.

Marriage Violations

[13]If a man takes a wife and, after sleeping with her, dislikes her [14]and slanders her and gives her a bad name, saying, "I married this woman, but when I approached her, I did not find proof of her virginity," [15]then the young woman's father and mother shall bring to the town elders at the gate proof that she was a virgin. [16]Her father will say to the elders, "I gave my daughter in marriage to this man, but he dislikes her. [17]Now he has slandered her and said, 'I did not find your daughter to be a virgin.' But here is the proof of my daughter's virginity." Then her parents shall display the cloth before the

elders of the town, [18]and the elders shall take the man and punish him. [19]They shall fine him a hundred shekels of silver and give them to the young woman's father, because this man has given an Israelite virgin a bad name. She shall continue to be his wife; he must not divorce her as long as he lives.

[20]If, however, the charge is true and no proof of the young woman's virginity can be found, [21]she shall be brought to the door of her father's house and there the men of her town shall stone her to death. She has done an outrageous thing in Israel by being promiscuous while still in her father's house. You must purge the evil from among you.

[22]If a man is found sleeping with another man's wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel.

[23]If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married and he sleeps with her, [24]you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death—the young woman because she was in a town and did not scream for help, and the man because he violated another man's wife. You must purge the evil from among you.

[25]But if out in the country a man happens to meet a young woman pledged to be married and rapes her, only the man who has done this shall die. [26]Do nothing to the woman; she has committed no sin deserving death. This case is like that of someone who attacks and murders a neighbor, [27]for the man found the young woman out in the country, and though the betrothed woman screamed, there was no one to rescue her.

[28]If a man happens to meet a virgin who is not pledged to be married and rapes her and they are discovered, [29]he shall pay her father fifty shekels of silver. He must marry the young woman, for he has violated her. He can never divorce her as long as he lives.

[30]A man is not to marry his father's wife; he must not dishonor his father's bed.

Deuteronomy 23

Exclusion From the Assembly

[1]No one who has been emasculated by crushing or cutting may enter the assembly of the LORD.

[2]No one born of a forbidden marriage nor any of their descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, not even in the tenth generation.

[3]No Ammonite or Moabite or any of their descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, not even in the tenth generation. [4]For they did not come to meet you with bread and water on your way when you came out of Egypt, and they hired Balaam son of Beor from Pethor in Aram Naharaim to pronounce a curse on you. [5]However, the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam but turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loves you. [6]Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them as long as you live.

[7]Do not despise an Edomite, for the Edomites are related to you. Do not despise an Egyptian, because you resided as foreigners in their country. [8]The third generation of children born to them may enter the assembly of the LORD.

Uncleanness in the Camp

[9]When you are encamped against your enemies, keep away from everything impure. [10]If one of your men is unclean because of a nocturnal emission, he is to go outside the camp and stay there. [11]But as evening approaches he is to wash himself, and at sunset he may return to the camp.

[12]Designate a place outside the camp where you can go to relieve yourself. [13]As part of your equipment have something to dig with, and when you relieve yourself, dig a hole and cover up your excrement. [14]For the LORD your God moves about in your camp to protect you and to deliver your enemies to you. Your camp must be holy, so that he will not see among you anything indecent and turn away from you.

Miscellaneous Laws

15 If a slave has taken refuge with you, do not hand them over to their
master. 16 Let them live among you wherever they like and in whatever town
they choose. Do not oppress them.

17 No Israelite man or woman is to become a shrine prostitute. 18 You must
not bring the earnings of a female prostitute or of a male prostitute into the
house of the LORD your God to pay any vow, because the LORD your God
detests them both.

19 Do not charge a fellow Israelite interest, whether on money or food or
anything else that may earn interest. 20 You may charge a foreigner interest,
but not a fellow Israelite, so that the LORD your God may bless you in
everything you put your hand to in the land you are entering to possess.

21 If you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not be slow to pay it, for
the LORD your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of
sin. 22 But if you refrain from making a vow, you will not be guilty.
23 Whatever your lips utter you must be sure to do, because you made your
vow freely to the LORD your God with your own mouth.

24 If you enter your neighbor’s vineyard, you may eat all the grapes you
want, but do not put any in your basket. 25 If you enter your neighbor’s
grainfield, you may pick kernels with your hands, but you must not put a
sickle to their standing grain.

Deuteronomy 24

[1]If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds
something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives
it to her and sends her from his house, [2]and if after she leaves his house she
becomes the wife of another man, [3]and her second husband dislikes her and
writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his
house, or if he dies, [4]then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed
to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the
eyes of the LORD. Do not bring sin upon the land the LORD your God is
giving you as an inheritance.

[5]If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any
other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring
happiness to the wife he has married.

[6]Do not take a pair of millstones—not even the upper one—as security for
a debt, because that would be taking a person's livelihood as security.

[7]If someone is caught kidnapping a fellow Israelite and treating or selling
them as a slave, the kidnapper must die. You must purge the evil from among
you.

[8]In cases of defiling skin diseases, be very careful to do exactly as the
Levitical priests instruct you. You must follow carefully what I have
commanded them. [9]Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam
along the way after you came out of Egypt.

[10]When you make a loan of any kind to your neighbor, do not go into their
house to get what is offered to you as a pledge. [11]Stay outside and let the
neighbor to whom you are making the loan bring the pledge out to you. [12]If
the neighbor is poor, do not go to sleep with their pledge in your possession.
[13]Return their cloak by sunset so that your neighbor may sleep in it. Then
they will thank you, and it will be regarded as a righteous act in the sight of
the LORD your God.

[14]Do not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether
that worker is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner residing in one of your towns.
[15]Pay them their wages each day before sunset, because they are poor and are
counting on it. Otherwise they may cry to the LORD against you, and you
will be guilty of sin.

16 Parents are not to be put to death for their children, nor children put to
death for their parents; each will die for their own sin.

17 Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak
of the widow as a pledge. 18 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the
LORD your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do
this.

19 When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not
go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so
that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.
20 When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a
second time. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the
widow. 21 When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the
vines again. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the
widow. 22 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I command
you to do this.

Deuteronomy 25

[1]When people have a dispute, they are to take it to court and the judges will
decide the case, acquitting the innocent and condemning the guilty. [2]If the
guilty person deserves to be beaten, the judge shall make them lie down and
have them flogged in his presence with the number of lashes the crime
deserves, [3]but the judge must not impose more than forty lashes. If the guilty
party is flogged more than that, your fellow Israelite will be degraded in your
eyes.

[4]Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.

[5]If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his
widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take
her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. [6]The first son
she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not
be blotted out from Israel.

[7]However, if a man does not want to marry his brother's wife, she shall go
to the elders at the town gate and say, "My husband's brother refuses to carry
on his brother's name in Israel. He will not fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law
to me." [8]Then the elders of his town shall summon him and talk to him. If he
persists in saying, "I do not want to marry her," [9]his brother's widow shall go
up to him in the presence of the elders, take off one of his sandals, spit in his
face and say, "This is what is done to the man who will not build up his
brother's family line." [10]That man's line shall be known in Israel as The
Family of the Unsandaled.

[11]If two men are fighting and the wife of one of them comes to rescue her
husband from his assailant, and she reaches out and seizes him by his private
parts, [12]you shall cut off her hand. Show her no pity.

[13]Do not have two differing weights in your bag—one heavy, one light.
[14]Do not have two differing measures in your house—one large, one small.
[15]You must have accurate and honest weights and measures, so that you may
live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. [16]For the LORD your
God detests anyone who does these things, anyone who deals dishonestly.

[17]Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you
came out of Egypt. [18]When you were weary and worn out, they met you on

your journey and attacked all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God. [19]When the LORD your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land he is giving you to possess as an inheritance, you shall blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget!

Deuteronomy 26

Firstfruits and Tithes

[1]When you have entered the land the LORD your God is giving you as an
inheritance and have taken possession of it and settled in it, [2]take some of the
firstfruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land the LORD your
God is giving you and put them in a basket. Then go to the place the LORD
your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name [3]and say to the priest in
office at the time, “I declare today to the LORD your God that I have come to
the land the LORD swore to our ancestors to give us.” [4]The priest shall take
the basket from your hands and set it down in front of the altar of the LORD
your God. [5]Then you shall declare before the LORD your God: “My father
was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people
and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous. [6]But the
Egyptians mistreated us and made us suffer, subjecting us to harsh labor.
[7]Then we cried out to the LORD, the God of our ancestors, and the LORD
heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression. [8]So the LORD
brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with
great terror and with signs and wonders. [9]He brought us to this place and
gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; [10]and now I bring the
firstfruits of the soil that you, LORD, have given me.” Place the basket
before the LORD your God and bow down before him. [11]Then you and the
Levites and the foreigners residing among you shall rejoice in all the good
things the LORD your God has given to you and your household.

[12]When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the
third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the foreigner,
the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be
satisfied. [13]Then say to the LORD your God: “I have removed from my
house the sacred portion and have given it to the Levite, the foreigner, the
fatherless and the widow, according to all you commanded. I have not turned
aside from your commands nor have I forgotten any of them. [14]I have not
eaten any of the sacred portion while I was in mourning, nor have I removed
any of it while I was unclean, nor have I offered any of it to the dead. I have
obeyed the LORD my God; I have done everything you commanded me.

15 Look down from heaven, your holy dwelling place, and bless your people
Israel and the land you have given us as you promised on oath to our
ancestors, a land flowing with milk and honey.”

Follow the LORD’s Commands

16 The LORD your God commands you this day to follow these decrees and
laws; carefully observe them with all your heart and with all your soul. 17 You
have declared this day that the LORD is your God and that you will walk in
obedience to him, that you will keep his decrees, commands and laws—that
you will listen to him. 18 And the LORD has declared this day that you are his
people, his treasured possession as he promised, and that you are to keep all
his commands. 19 He has declared that he will set you in praise, fame and
honor high above all the nations he has made and that you will be a people
holy to the LORD your God, as he promised.

Deuteronomy 27

The Altar on Mount Ebal

[1]Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people: “Keep all these
commands that I give you today. [2]When you have crossed the Jordan into the
land the LORD your God is giving you, set up some large stones and coat
them with plaster. [3]Write on them all the words of this law when you have
crossed over to enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, a land
flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your ancestors,
promised you. [4]And when you have crossed the Jordan, set up these stones on
Mount Ebal, as I command you today, and coat them with plaster. [5]Build
there an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones. Do not use any iron
tool on them. [6]Build the altar of the LORD your God with fieldstones and
offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God. [7]Sacrifice fellowship
offerings there, eating them and rejoicing in the presence of the LORD your
God. [8]And you shall write very clearly all the words of this law on these
stones you have set up.”

Curses From Mount Ebal

[9]Then Moses and the Levitical priests said to all Israel, “Be silent, Israel,
and listen! You have now become the people of the LORD your God. [10]Obey
the LORD your God and follow his commands and decrees that I give you
today.”

[11]On the same day Moses commanded the people:

[12]When you have crossed the Jordan, these tribes shall stand on Mount
Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph and
Benjamin. [13]And these tribes shall stand on Mount Ebal to pronounce curses:
Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali.

[14]The Levites shall recite to all the people of Israel in a loud voice:

> [15]“Cursed is anyone who makes an idol—a thing
> detestable to the LORD, the work of skilled hands—and sets
> it up in secret.”

Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

16“Cursed is anyone who dishonors their father or mother.”

Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

17“Cursed is anyone who moves their neighbor’s boundary stone.”

Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

18“Cursed is anyone who leads the blind astray on the road.”

Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

19“Cursed is anyone who withholds justice from the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow.”

Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

20“Cursed is anyone who sleeps with his father’s wife, for he dishonors his father’s bed.”

Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

21“Cursed is anyone who has sexual relations with any animal.”

Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

22“Cursed is anyone who sleeps with his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother.”

Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

23“Cursed is anyone who sleeps with his mother-in-law.”

Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

24“Cursed is anyone who kills their neighbor secretly.”

Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

25“Cursed is anyone who accepts a bribe to kill an innocent person.”

Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

26“Cursed is anyone who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out.”

Then all the people shall say, “Amen!”

Deuteronomy 28

Blessings for Obedience

[1]If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his
commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all
the nations on earth. [2]All these blessings will come on you and accompany
you if you obey the LORD your God:

> [3]You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country.
> [4]The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of
> your land and the young of your livestock—the calves of
> your herds and the lambs of your flocks.
> [5]Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed.
> [6]You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when
> you go out.

[7]The LORD will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be
defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from
you in seven.
[8]The LORD will send a blessing on your barns and on everything you put
your hand to. The LORD your God will bless you in the land he is giving
you.
[9]The LORD will establish you as his holy people, as he promised you on
oath, if you keep the commands of the LORD your God and walk in
obedience to him. [10]Then all the peoples on earth will see that you are called
by the name of the LORD, and they will fear you. [11]The LORD will grant
you abundant prosperity—in the fruit of your womb, the young of your
livestock and the crops of your ground—in the land he swore to your
ancestors to give you.
[12]The LORD will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send
rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will
lend to many nations but will borrow from none. [13]The LORD will make you
the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the LORD your
God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at

the top, never at the bottom. [14]Do not turn aside from any of the commands I give you today, to the right or to the left, following other gods and serving them.

Curses for Disobedience

[15]However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come on you and overtake you:

> [16]You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country.
>
> [17]Your basket and your kneading trough will be cursed.
>
> [18]The fruit of your womb will be cursed, and the crops of your land, and the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks.
>
> [19]You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out.

[20]The LORD will send on you curses, confusion and rebuke in everything you put your hand to, until you are destroyed and come to sudden ruin because of the evil you have done in forsaking him. [21]The LORD will plague you with diseases until he has destroyed you from the land you are entering to possess. [22]The LORD will strike you with wasting disease, with fever and inflammation, with scorching heat and drought, with blight and mildew, which will plague you until you perish. [23]The sky over your head will be bronze, the ground beneath you iron. [24]The LORD will turn the rain of your country into dust and powder; it will come down from the skies until you are destroyed.

[25]The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You will come at them from one direction but flee from them in seven, and you will become a thing of horror to all the kingdoms on earth. [26]Your carcasses will be food for all the birds and the wild animals, and there will be no one to frighten them away. [27]The LORD will afflict you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors, festering sores and the itch, from which you cannot be cured. [28]The LORD will afflict you with madness, blindness and confusion of mind. [29]At midday you will grope about like a blind person in the dark. You will be unsuccessful in everything you do; day after day you will be oppressed and

robbed, with no one to rescue you.

30You will be pledged to be married to a woman, but another will take her
and rape her. You will build a house, but you will not live in it. You will plant
a vineyard, but you will not even begin to enjoy its fruit. 31Your ox will be
slaughtered before your eyes, but you will eat none of it. Your donkey will be
forcibly taken from you and will not be returned. Your sheep will be given to
your enemies, and no one will rescue them. 32Your sons and daughters will be
given to another nation, and you will wear out your eyes watching for them
day after day, powerless to lift a hand. 33A people that you do not know will
eat what your land and labor produce, and you will have nothing but cruel
oppression all your days. 34The sights you see will drive you mad. 35The
LORD will afflict your knees and legs with painful boils that cannot be cured,
spreading from the soles of your feet to the top of your head.

36The LORD will drive you and the king you set over you to a nation
unknown to you or your ancestors. There you will worship other gods, gods
of wood and stone. 37You will become a thing of horror, a byword and an
object of ridicule among all the peoples where the LORD will drive you.

38You will sow much seed in the field but you will harvest little, because
locusts will devour it. 39You will plant vineyards and cultivate them but you
will not drink the wine or gather the grapes, because worms will eat them.
40You will have olive trees throughout your country but you will not use the
oil, because the olives will drop off. 41You will have sons and daughters but
you will not keep them, because they will go into captivity. 42Swarms of
locusts will take over all your trees and the crops of your land.

43The foreigners who reside among you will rise above you higher and
higher, but you will sink lower and lower. 44They will lend to you, but you
will not lend to them. They will be the head, but you will be the tail.

45All these curses will come on you. They will pursue you and overtake
you until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the LORD your God
and observe the commands and decrees he gave you. 46They will be a sign
and a wonder to you and your descendants forever. 47Because you did not
serve the LORD your God joyfully and gladly in the time of prosperity,
48therefore in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and dire poverty, you will serve
the enemies the LORD sends against you. He will put an iron yoke on your
neck until he has destroyed you.

49The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the ends

of the earth, like an eagle swooping down, a nation whose language you will not understand, [50]a fierce-looking nation without respect for the old or pity for the young. [51]They will devour the young of your livestock and the crops of your land until you are destroyed. They will leave you no grain, new wine or olive oil, nor any calves of your herds or lambs of your flocks until you are ruined. [52]They will lay siege to all the cities throughout your land until the high fortified walls in which you trust fall down. They will besiege all the cities throughout the land the LORD your God is giving you.

[53]Because of the suffering your enemy will inflict on you during the siege, you will eat the fruit of the womb, the flesh of the sons and daughters the LORD your God has given you. [54]Even the most gentle and sensitive man among you will have no compassion on his own brother or the wife he loves or his surviving children, [55]and he will not give to one of them any of the flesh of his children that he is eating. It will be all he has left because of the suffering your enemy will inflict on you during the siege of all your cities. [56]The most gentle and sensitive woman among you—so sensitive and gentle that she would not venture to touch the ground with the sole of her foot—will begrudge the husband she loves and her own son or daughter [57]the afterbirth from her womb and the children she bears. For in her dire need she intends to eat them secretly because of the suffering your enemy will inflict on you during the siege of your cities.

[58]If you do not carefully follow all the words of this law, which are written in this book, and do not revere this glorious and awesome name—the LORD your God— [59]the LORD will send fearful plagues on you and your descendants, harsh and prolonged disasters, and severe and lingering illnesses. [60]He will bring on you all the diseases of Egypt that you dreaded, and they will cling to you. [61]The LORD will also bring on you every kind of sickness and disaster not recorded in this Book of the Law, until you are destroyed. [62]You who were as numerous as the stars in the sky will be left but few in number, because you did not obey the LORD your God. [63]Just as it pleased the LORD to make you prosper and increase in number, so it will please him to ruin and destroy you. You will be uprooted from the land you are entering to possess.

[64]Then the LORD will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods—gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your ancestors have known. [65]Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot.

There the LORD will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart. [66]You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life. [67]In the morning you will say, “If only it were evening!” and in the evening, “If only it were morning!”—because of the terror that will fill your hearts and the sights that your eyes will see. [68]The LORD will send you back in ships to Egypt on a journey I said you should never make again. There you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you.

Deuteronomy 29

Renewal of the Covenant

[1]These are the terms of the covenant the LORD commanded Moses to make with the Israelites in Moab, in addition to the covenant he had made with them at Horeb.

[2]Moses summoned all the Israelites and said to them:

Your eyes have seen all that the LORD did in Egypt to Pharaoh, to all his officials and to all his land. [3]With your own eyes you saw those great trials, those signs and great wonders. [4]But to this day the LORD has not given you a mind that understands or eyes that see or ears that hear. [5]Yet the LORD says, "During the forty years that I led you through the wilderness, your clothes did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet. [6]You ate no bread and drank no wine or other fermented drink. I did this so that you might know that I am the LORD your God."

[7]When you reached this place, Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan came out to fight against us, but we defeated them. [8]We took their land and gave it as an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh.

[9]Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do. [10]All of you are standing today in the presence of the LORD your God—your leaders and chief men, your elders and officials, and all the other men of Israel, [11]together with your children and your wives, and the foreigners living in your camps who chop your wood and carry your water. [12]You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the LORD your God, a covenant the LORD is making with you this day and sealing with an oath, [13]to confirm you this day as his people, that he may be your God as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. [14]I am making this covenant, with its oath, not only with you [15]who are standing here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God but also with those who are not here today.

[16]You yourselves know how we lived in Egypt and how we passed through the countries on the way here. [17]You saw among them their detestable images

and idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold. [18]Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison.

[19]When such a person hears the words of this oath and they invoke a blessing on themselves, thinking, “I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way,” they will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry. [20]The LORD will never be willing to forgive them; his wrath and zeal will burn against them. All the curses written in this book will fall on them, and the LORD will blot out their names from under heaven. [21]The LORD will single them out from all the tribes of Israel for disaster, according to all the curses of the covenant written in this Book of the Law.

[22]Your children who follow you in later generations and foreigners who come from distant lands will see the calamities that have fallen on the land and the diseases with which the LORD has afflicted it. [23]The whole land will be a burning waste of salt and sulfur—nothing planted, nothing sprouting, no vegetation growing on it. It will be like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboyim, which the LORD overthrew in fierce anger. [24]All the nations will ask: “Why has the LORD done this to this land? Why this fierce, burning anger?”

[25]And the answer will be: “It is because this people abandoned the covenant of the LORD, the God of their ancestors, the covenant he made with them when he brought them out of Egypt. [26]They went off and worshiped other gods and bowed down to them, gods they did not know, gods he had not given them. [27]Therefore the LORD’s anger burned against this land, so that he brought on it all the curses written in this book. [28]In furious anger and in great wrath the LORD uprooted them from their land and thrust them into another land, as it is now.”

[29]The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.

Deuteronomy 30

Prosperity After Turning to the LORD

[1]When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come on you and
you take them to heart wherever the LORD your God disperses you among
the nations, [2]and when you and your children return to the LORD your God
and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to
everything I command you today, [3]then the LORD your God will restore your
fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the
nations where he scattered you. [4]Even if you have been banished to the most
distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather
you and bring you back. [5]He will bring you to the land that belonged to your
ancestors, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more
prosperous and numerous than your ancestors. [6]The LORD your God will
circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may
love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live. [7]The LORD
your God will put all these curses on your enemies who hate and persecute
you. [8]You will again obey the LORD and follow all his commands I am
giving you today. [9]Then the LORD your God will make you most prosperous
in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of
your livestock and the crops of your land. The LORD will again delight in
you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your ancestors, [10]if you
obey the LORD your God and keep his commands and decrees that are
written in this Book of the Law and turn to the LORD your God with all your
heart and with all your soul.

The Offer of Life or Death

[11]Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or
beyond your reach. [12]It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, “Who
will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?”
[13]Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, “Who will cross the sea to
get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” [14]No, the word is very near
you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.

[15]See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. [16]For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

[17]But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, [18]I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

[19]This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live [20]and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Deuteronomy 31

Joshua to Succeed Moses

[1]Then Moses went out and spoke these words to all Israel: [2]"I am now a hundred and twenty years old and I am no longer able to lead you. The LORD has said to me, 'You shall not cross the Jordan.' [3]The LORD your God himself will cross over ahead of you. He will destroy these nations before you, and you will take possession of their land. Joshua also will cross over ahead of you, as the LORD said. [4]And the LORD will do to them what he did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, whom he destroyed along with their land. [5]The LORD will deliver them to you, and you must do to them all that I have commanded you. [6]Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."

[7]Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the LORD swore to their ancestors to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. [8]The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."

Public Reading of the Law

[9]So Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the Levitical priests, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. [10]Then Moses commanded them: "At the end of every seven years, in the year for canceling debts, during the Festival of Tabernacles, [11]when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose, you shall read this law before them in their hearing. [12]Assemble the people—men, women and children, and the foreigners residing in your towns—so they can listen and learn to fear the LORD your God and follow carefully all the words of this law. [13]Their children, who do not know this law, must hear it and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess."

Israel’s Rebellion Predicted

14 The LORD said to Moses, “Now the day of your death is near. Call
Joshua and present yourselves at the tent of meeting, where I will
commission him.” So Moses and Joshua came and presented themselves at
the tent of meeting.

15 Then the LORD appeared at the tent in a pillar of cloud, and the cloud
stood over the entrance to the tent. 16 And the LORD said to Moses: “You are
going to rest with your ancestors, and these people will soon prostitute
themselves to the foreign gods of the land they are entering. They will
forsake me and break the covenant I made with them. 17 And in that day I will
become angry with them and forsake them; I will hide my face from them,
and they will be destroyed. Many disasters and calamities will come on them,
and in that day they will ask, ‘Have not these disasters come on us because
our God is not with us?’ 18 And I will certainly hide my face in that day
because of all their wickedness in turning to other gods.

19 “Now write down this song and teach it to the Israelites and have them
sing it, so that it may be a witness for me against them. 20 When I have
brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, the land I promised
on oath to their ancestors, and when they eat their fill and thrive, they will
turn to other gods and worship them, rejecting me and breaking my covenant.
21 And when many disasters and calamities come on them, this song will
testify against them, because it will not be forgotten by their descendants. I
know what they are disposed to do, even before I bring them into the land I
promised them on oath.” 22 So Moses wrote down this song that day and
taught it to the Israelites.

23 The LORD gave this command to Joshua son of Nun: “Be strong and
courageous, for you will bring the Israelites into the land I promised them on
oath, and I myself will be with you.”

24 After Moses finished writing in a book the words of this law from
beginning to end, 25 he gave this command to the Levites who carried the ark
of the covenant of the LORD: 26 “Take this Book of the Law and place it
beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God. There it will remain as
a witness against you. 27 For I know how rebellious and stiff-necked you are.
If you have been rebellious against the LORD while I am still alive and with
you, how much more will you rebel after I die! 28 Assemble before me all the
elders of your tribes and all your officials, so that I can speak these words in

their hearing and call the heavens and the earth to testify against them. [29]For I know that after my death you are sure to become utterly corrupt and to turn from the way I have commanded you. In days to come, disaster will fall on you because you will do evil in the sight of the LORD and arouse his anger by what your hands have made."

The Song of Moses

[30]And Moses recited the words of this song from beginning to end in the hearing of the whole assembly of Israel:

Deuteronomy 32

[1]Listen, you heavens, and I will speak;
hear, you earth, the words of my mouth.
[2]Let my teaching fall like rain
and my words descend like dew,
like showers on new grass,
like abundant rain on tender plants.

[3]I will proclaim the name of the LORD.
Oh, praise the greatness of our God!
[4]He is the Rock, his works are perfect,
and all his ways are just.
A faithful God who does no wrong,
upright and just is he.

[5]They are corrupt and not his children;
to their shame they are a warped and crooked generation.
[6]Is this the way you repay the LORD,
you foolish and unwise people?
Is he not your Father, your Creator,
who made you and formed you?

[7]Remember the days of old;
consider the generations long past.
Ask your father and he will tell you,
your elders, and they will explain to you.
[8]When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance,
when he divided all mankind,
he set up boundaries for the peoples
according to the number of the sons of Israel.
[9]For the LORD’s portion is his people,
Jacob his allotted inheritance.

[10]In a desert land he found him,
in a barren and howling waste.

He shielded him and cared for him;
he guarded him as the apple of his eye,
11 like an eagle that stirs up its nest
and hovers over its young,
that spreads its wings to catch them
and carries them aloft.
12 The LORD alone led him;
no foreign god was with him.

13 He made him ride on the heights of the land
and fed him with the fruit of the fields.
He nourished him with honey from the rock,
and with oil from the flinty crag,
14 with curds and milk from herd and flock
and with fattened lambs and goats,
with choice rams of Bashan
and the finest kernels of wheat.
You drank the foaming blood of the grape.

15 Jeshurun grew fat and kicked;
filled with food, they became heavy and sleek.
They abandoned the God who made them
and rejected the Rock their Savior.
16 They made him jealous with their foreign gods
and angered him with their detestable idols.
17 They sacrificed to false gods, which are not God—
gods they had not known,
gods that recently appeared,
gods your ancestors did not fear.
18 You deserted the Rock, who fathered you;
you forgot the God who gave you birth.

19 The LORD saw this and rejected them
because he was angered by his sons and daughters.
20 “I will hide my face from them,” he said,
“and see what their end will be;
for they are a perverse generation,
children who are unfaithful.

21 They made me jealous by what is no god
and angered me with their worthless idols.
I will make them envious by those who are not a people;
I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding.
22 For a fire will be kindled by my wrath,
one that burns down to the realm of the dead below.
It will devour the earth and its harvests
and set afire the foundations of the mountains.

23 "I will heap calamities on them
and spend my arrows against them.
24 I will send wasting famine against them,
consuming pestilence and deadly plague;
I will send against them the fangs of wild beasts,
the venom of vipers that glide in the dust.
25 In the street the sword will make them childless;
in their homes terror will reign.
The young men and young women will perish,
the infants and those with gray hair.
26 I said I would scatter them
and erase their name from human memory,
27 but I dreaded the taunt of the enemy,
lest the adversary misunderstand
and say, 'Our hand has triumphed;
the LORD has not done all this.' "

28 They are a nation without sense,
there is no discernment in them.
29 If only they were wise and would understand this
and discern what their end will be!
30 How could one man chase a thousand,
or two put ten thousand to flight,
unless their Rock had sold them,
unless the LORD had given them up?
31 For their rock is not like our Rock,
as even our enemies concede.

[32]Their vine comes from the vine of Sodom
and from the fields of Gomorrah.
Their grapes are filled with poison,
and their clusters with bitterness.
[33]Their wine is the venom of serpents,
the deadly poison of cobras.

[34]“Have I not kept this in reserve
and sealed it in my vaults?
[35]It is mine to avenge; I will repay.
In due time their foot will slip;
their day of disaster is near
and their doom rushes upon them.”

[36]The LORD will vindicate his people
and relent concerning his servants
when he sees their strength is gone
and no one is left, slave or free.
[37]He will say: “Now where are their gods,
the rock they took refuge in,
[38]the gods who ate the fat of their sacrifices
and drank the wine of their drink offerings?
Let them rise up to help you!
Let them give you shelter!

[39]“See now that I myself am he!
There is no god besides me.
I put to death and I bring to life,
I have wounded and I will heal,
and no one can deliver out of my hand.
[40]I lift my hand to heaven and solemnly swear:
As surely as I live forever,
[41]when I sharpen my flashing sword
and my hand grasps it in judgment,
I will take vengeance on my adversaries
and repay those who hate me.
[42]I will make my arrows drunk with blood,
while my sword devours flesh:

the blood of the slain and the captives,
the heads of the enemy leaders.”

43Rejoice, you nations, with his people,
for he will avenge the blood of his servants;
he will take vengeance on his enemies
and make atonement for his land and people.

44Moses came with Joshua son of Nun and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people. 45When Moses finished reciting all these words to all Israel, 46he said to them, “Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. 47They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.”

Moses to Die on Mount Nebo

48On that same day the LORD told Moses, 49“Go up into the Abarim Range to Mount Nebo in Moab, across from Jericho, and view Canaan, the land I am giving the Israelites as their own possession. 50There on the mountain that you have climbed you will die and be gathered to your people, just as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people. 51This is because both of you broke faith with me in the presence of the Israelites at the waters of Meribah Kadesh in the Desert of Zin and because you did not uphold my holiness among the Israelites. 52Therefore, you will see the land only from a distance; you will not enter the land I am giving to the people of Israel.”

Deuteronomy 33

Moses Blesses the Tribes

[1]This is the blessing that Moses the man of God pronounced on the Israelites
before his death. [2]He said:

"The LORD came from Sinai
and dawned over them from Seir;
he shone forth from Mount Paran.
He came with myriads of holy ones
from the south, from his mountain slopes.
[3]Surely it is you who love the people;
all the holy ones are in your hand.
At your feet they all bow down,
and from you receive instruction,
[4]the law that Moses gave us,
the possession of the assembly of Jacob.
[5]He was king over Jeshurun
when the leaders of the people assembled,
along with the tribes of Israel.

[6]"Let Reuben live and not die,
nor his people be few."

[7]And this he said about Judah:

"Hear, LORD, the cry of Judah;
bring him to his people.
With his own hands he defends his cause.
Oh, be his help against his foes!"

[8]About Levi he said:

"Your Thummim and Urim belong
to your faithful servant.
You tested him at Massah;

you contended with him at the waters of Meribah.
9 He said of his father and mother,
'I have no regard for them.'
He did not recognize his brothers
or acknowledge his own children,
but he watched over your word
and guarded your covenant.
10 He teaches your precepts to Jacob
and your law to Israel.
He offers incense before you
and whole burnt offerings on your altar.
11 Bless all his skills, LORD,
and be pleased with the work of his hands.
Strike down those who rise against him,
his foes till they rise no more."

12 About Benjamin he said:

"Let the beloved of the LORD rest secure in him,
for he shields him all day long,
and the one the LORD loves rests between his shoulders."

13 About Joseph he said:

"May the LORD bless his land
with the precious dew from heaven above
and with the deep waters that lie below;
14 with the best the sun brings forth
and the finest the moon can yield;
15 with the choicest gifts of the ancient mountains
and the fruitfulness of the everlasting hills;
16 with the best gifts of the earth and its fullness
and the favor of him who dwelt in the burning bush.
Let all these rest on the head of Joseph,
on the brow of the prince among his brothers.
17 In majesty he is like a firstborn bull;
his horns are the horns of a wild ox.

With them he will gore the nations,
even those at the ends of the earth.
Such are the ten thousands of Ephraim;
such are the thousands of Manasseh.”

18 About Zebulun he said:

“Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out,
and you, Issachar, in your tents.
19 They will summon peoples to the mountain
and there offer the sacrifices of the righteous;
they will feast on the abundance of the seas,
on the treasures hidden in the sand.”

20 About Gad he said:

“Blessed is he who enlarges Gad’s domain!
Gad lives there like a lion,
tearing at arm or head.
21 He chose the best land for himself;
the leader’s portion was kept for him.
When the heads of the people assembled,
he carried out the LORD’s righteous will,
and his judgments concerning Israel.”

22 About Dan he said:

“Dan is a lion’s cub,
springing out of Bashan.”

23 About Naphtali he said:

“Naphtali is abounding with the favor of the LORD
and is full of his blessing;
he will inherit southward to the lake.”

24 About Asher he said:

“Most blessed of sons is Asher;

let him be favored by his brothers,
and let him bathe his feet in oil.
25The bolts of your gates will be iron and bronze,
and your strength will equal your days.

26“There is no one like the God of Jeshurun,
who rides across the heavens to help you
and on the clouds in his majesty.
27The eternal God is your refuge,
and underneath are the everlasting arms.
He will drive out your enemies before you,
saying, ‘Destroy them!’
28So Israel will live in safety;
Jacob will dwell secure
in a land of grain and new wine,
where the heavens drop dew.
29Blessed are you, Israel!
Who is like you,
a people saved by the LORD?
He is your shield and helper
and your glorious sword.
Your enemies will cower before you,
and you will tread on their heights.”

Deuteronomy 34

The Death of Moses

[1]Then Moses climbed Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab to the top of Pisgah, across from Jericho. There the LORD showed him the whole land—from Gilead to Dan, [2]all of Naphtali, the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Mediterranean Sea, [3]the Negev and the whole region from the Valley of Jericho, the City of Palms, as far as Zoar. [4]Then the LORD said to him, “This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when I said, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not cross over into it.”

[5]And Moses the servant of the LORD died there in Moab, as the LORD had said. [6]He buried him in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is. [7]Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone. [8]The Israelites grieved for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days, until the time of weeping and mourning was over.

[9]Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the LORD had commanded Moses.

[10]Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, [11]who did all those signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. [12]For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.