

## 5 April, Easter Sunday

NB: Vss. 35 & 36 included though not in the official excerpt of this passage.

*And Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the word which he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), the word which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. And we are witnesses to all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and made him manifest; not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness that every one who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." Acts 10.34; 37-43*

The scene of this address is Caesarea where Cornelius had been bidden by a "man in shining clothes" [vs. 30] to have Peter speak with a gathering of "kinsmen and close friends" [vs. 24]. In other words, it is a gathering of sincere, welcoming people which should make Peter feel comfortable. The passage at hand begins with the conjunctive *kai* ('and') which, as noted in the Palm Sunday entry, reveals swiftness and connectedness of action. It is as though the mysterious man appeared to Cornelius after which immediately Peter came on the scene. Perhaps Cornelius thought Peter was that man but never let on his thoughts about it. Peter himself didn't know about the existence of this mysterious man but wasn't surprised to hear about him. He had no interest inquiring about his identity or any such information. All that mattered was to get the message of the Gospel proclaimed to as many people as possible.

"And Peter opened his mouth." Similar words are found in Mt 5.2 where Jesus begins to speak about the beatitudes. Everyone was assembled around the apostle ready to listen to what he was about to say, knowing full well that he had been associated with Jesus Christ. Therefore he had pertinent information about a rumor that Jesus had risen from the dead. Some may have known how Peter betrayed Jesus which made the opening of his mouth all the more dramatic, filling his listeners with great suspense. Perhaps they were expecting him to explain his actions in a human sort of way, but no. The tone of Peter's speech is far from it. Objectively speaking it sounds impersonal but is not the case. Certainly he isn't preachy. Behind his matter-of-fact, confident approach is the primacy of a message and transformation by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost which his audience must have heard about. This is borne out after Peter speaks, for "the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message" [vs. 44].

Peter's transformation is revealed in his first word, "perceive" or *katalambano* which literally means a taking (*lambano*) or better, a seizing in accord with (*kata-*) something such as an idea or plan. At Pentecost the Spirit descended upon the disciples, and people from various lands heard them speaking in their own tongues. It had made such an impression upon the disciples that no small wonder Peter blurts out "God has no partiality" or *prosopolemptes*. This noun means literally "acceptor or faces" or persons and contains the just mentioned verbal root *lambano*.

Peter continues by recognizing the familiarity which his audience has with the new Christian movement, "You know the word," which here is *logos* and can be tied in with Jesus Christ as the *Logos*. Such *logos*

about the *Logos* originated in Galilee after John baptized Jesus and then grew in voice or loudness, if you will, by Jesus' healing activity. Peter continues with a brief summary of Jesus' central mission which culminates in his resurrection. He is careful to include himself as a witness to this event not out of boastfulness nor for having a special prerogative but in order to make sure his listeners would know the manner by which the resurrection would be preached. That would be through the agency of the church. Surely once Peter had finished some asked him personal questions about the resurrection and how the other disciples reacted to it. That may have taken place but is secondary to the intent of the passage at hand. Peter simply brushed off these questions which were irrelevant to the urgency of getting the Gospel proclaimed.

After having enjoyed his visit at Cornelius' house and once his listeners received the Holy Spirit after the pattern of Pentecost, Peter has them baptized. While that is less dramatic than this mini-Pentecost, it is more important and lasting. Chapter Ten concludes with "Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days." Most likely Peter sensed his hosts wanted details about Jesus' resurrection to satisfy curiosity. Instead, he must have focused upon the significance of their recent baptism, of how it tied in with John the Baptist's prefiguration, and that it was the most essential component of what it meant to be a Christian. Once that was established, the people in the house could form the nucleus of a new community or church at Caesarea. From this church would flow "forgiveness of sins through his name."

## 12 April, Second Sunday of Easter

*Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need. Acts 4.32-35*

*Plethos* is the noun for "company" which fundamentally applies to a multitude, so used here at the beginning of the church right after Pentecost suggests not so much that there were many members but can be taken to imply it has the seed for quick advancement to include a wide variety of people.

"Heart and soul" or *kardia* and *psuche* as applicable to the *plethos* or multitude, if you will. Provided this twofold reality is present and cultivated, the church will grow. The manifestation of this unity is represented by the literal reading, "all things to them were in common (*koinos*)."

The adjective *megalos* ('great') is used twice: with respect to the apostles' "power" and "grace," that is, *dunamis* and *charis*. The former refers to power, facility or capacity and the latter to favor and even thankfulness. Thus both have a wider meaning than commonly understood and work together, especially with regard to giving "testimony" to Jesus' resurrection, *marturion*, which literally means witness.

We don't have details as to how the disciples actually laid out their *marturion*. They had to do it concretely because if not, it would be of no value. Their approach can take a twofold path: first the disciples had been in the company of Jesus after his resurrection. Anyone could tell if they were faking it which wasn't the case here even if some doubted their words. Because society was tightly knit and everyone knew everything that was going on, most people got wind of how the disciples abandoned Jesus when he was arrested. Obviously this is shameful and to speak with boldness about the same Jesus

shortly afterward was unheard of. The two are so contrary to each other that they could not coexist. One had to give way to the other which is clear by how the disciples were not comporting themselves.

The second appeal refers to the disciples' audience as primarily Jews, many of whom had knowledge of their tradition. Therefore the disciples went through scripture, verse by verse, book by book, as they searched out prefigurements, if you will, of Jesus' resurrection. This wasn't something they fabricated which, like their personal *marturion*, would have fallen flat among a wider audience.

From the unity of *kardia* and *psuche* among the early church after Pentecost there was no poverty or lack of resources. Although it's well known that the early Christians shared possessions among each other and helped the poor, it's amazing how rapidly and spontaneously this occurred. To relinquish possessions in a society which lacked ideas of social welfare is the most remarkable *marturion* to that unity of *kardia* and *psuche*.

### 19 April, Third Sunday of Easter

*The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate when he had decided to release him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you and killed the Author of life whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And his name, by faith in his name, has made this man strong whom you see and know; and the faith which is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all. "And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance as did also your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets that his Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and turn again that your sins may be blotted out that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. (and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old). Acts 3.13-19*

Vss. 20-21 form one sentence and are included in parentheses in order to complete the full sentence begun in vs. 19.

The opening verse says it all, is quoted often in various forms throughout the Bible, and requires closer examination in order to get at the identity of this God with whom Peter claims Jesus Christ has a particular relationship. In other words, we have the three major patriarchs whose story unfolds within the Book of Genesis. All three were wanderers or on the move not in an alien land but within the promised land of Canaan. Despite divine promises of inheritance, never did they manage to settle down. To top this off, their descendants in the person of Israel came into Egypt at the invitation of Joseph. Thus all the wanderings and strange contacts with the Lord in Canaan must have seemed as naught to these dwellers in Egypt. In other words, what was it for? Could this God be trusted? Were the gods of Egypt more agreeable? The text, both Genesis and Exodus, is silent on the matter, but the suggestion is latent.

So between the lives of these three patriarchs and the Israelites in Egypt some four hundred years has passed. Apparently their memory had been kept alive, for the Lord himself speaks of them when conversing with Moses for the first time: "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob" [Ex 3.6]. In light of the apparent failure of these three patriarchs, a divinity identifying himself with them was partly consoling. Surely the collective memory of Israel had in mind

the Lord's abandonment of the settlement project in Canaan and normally would be hesitant to do it again. That's what happened eventually, so the Israelites can't take full blame for their distrust of God and his chosen leader, Moses. Such an attitude was bound to affect their relation with the Lord, their wrestling with religious conversion, at various stages in their history and all the rest.

As for the patriarchs, "God" is added to each of the three pretty much for emphasis although shortly the Lord will shift his approach and define himself through verbal means, if you will, "I am who am" [vs. 14]. Coupled with Israel's inherent distrust of this God who abandoned the enterprise begun by their three renowned patriarchs and this strange revelation, it's a genuine miracle that the Israelites consented to follow Moses not just from Egypt but for forty years in the Sinai wilderness. Surely when growing up and engaged in his ministry Jesus himself must have pondered this to see if there was any parallel. One conclusion he came to pretty early on is that all are characterized by experiencing a certain distance from God, even abandonment. That therefore would be part of his life as well.

The distance between God and Israel's patriarchs has to be bridged in a way that is more effective than in the past. This is hinted at in terms of glorification, that is, God "glorified his servant Jesus," *doxazo* being the verb which also means to have an opinion (*doxa*). Glorification is put in terms of direct responsibility to the people whom Peter is addressing. He wishes to make a connection between past experiences associated with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the people alive right now which is consistent with Israel's give-and-take relationship with the Lord down the centuries. So when they heard themselves as being responsible for killing the "author of life," it was nothing new, really. Peter alludes to this by referring to the prophets who foretold "that his Christ should suffer." It happened before and would happen again if not Jesus Christ had revealed himself.

And so as in the past, so is in the present where the offer or repentance or *metanoia* is offered only here it is bound up with "times of refreshing." The first word is the familiar *kairos* which pertains more to an event, an eruption of the holy into the human sphere. Note, however, that *kairos* is plural whereas usually it's the singular. The second word is *anapsuche* which translates literally as *psuche* (soul) prefaced with the preposition *ana* or up, upwards. Thus *anapsuche* can imply a lifting up...an exalting...of the *psuche* to a realm normally unfamiliar to it which is "from the presence of the Lord," *prosopon* also meaning a person.

St. Peter had begun this address when going with John to the temple and having encountered a man who had been born lame. Vs. 20 (it forms part of the previous verse) with reference to the prophets as he had done in vs. 18. This is intended to bring full round the "God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob" which begins the excerpt at hand.

## **26 April, Fourth Sunday of Easter**

*Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a cripple, by what means this man has been healed, be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well. This is the stone which was rejected by you builders but which has become the head of the corner. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Acts 4.8-12*

The small word *tote* or “then” is pivotal in that it reveals a shift in the account concerning Peter who is in the company of John. Both had just been arrested for having healed a man and preaching about Jesus Christ, the word *pleroo* or “filled” intimating the recent descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Thus *tote* signifies the continued working of the Holy Spirit or more accurately, a crucial test when it assists Peter in a difficult situation right after Pentecost. More precisely, when Peter was speaking with the religious authorities, he was conscious of himself as human being as well as being *pleroo* with regard to the Spirit's utterance. There was no question of how to reconcile the two; they just worked together in harmony.

Peter comes right out and says that the religious leaders had been responsible for putting Jesus to death, this a very recent occurrence muddled all the more because of some rumor that he was alive. This inability to get a handle on Jesus was what troubled them. When questioning Peter as well as the other disciples they couldn't help but be aware of their transformation. Just about everyone was familiar, albeit in passing fashion, of their association with Jesus and how they had deserted him in his greatest hour of need. Putting all this together seemed an impossible task. If these associates of Jesus could be reconciled with what they had done as shown in public fashion by their new attitude, they were bound to attract followers.

Peter claims Jesus to be “the head of the corner” or the *kephale*, pretty much a keystone in between two forces working towards each other yet being held apart. He quotes from Ps 118.22: “The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner.” The psalm says nothing of a particular building project, if you will, but possibly has in mind the temple at Jerusalem. Stonemasons were busy sorting out the proper stones for each part, paying special attention to those that would be essential in bearing immense pressure. They must have gone through many stones which for one reason or another didn't fit. With this image in mind, Jesus had been rejected by the temple builders which happened to work out just fine. He himself was the new temple and hence required not being assessed nor determined by anyone else.

### 3 May, Fifth Sunday of Easter

*And when he had come to Jerusalem he attempted to join the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles, and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists, but they were seeking to kill him. And when the brethren knew it, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him off to Tarsus. So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit it was multiplied. Acts 9.26-31*

If you read behind the opening words of this excerpt you can get a glimpse into Saul's character. That is to say, he was feeling quite guilty after his conversion yet didn't lose his zeal manifested by his attempt to associate with the disciples, *kollaomai* fundamentally meaning to glue. In other words, Saul tried to stick himself to them rashly and somewhat desperately in an overwhelming desire to prove himself and to disavow his previous life. He knew how to single out the leaders...disciples...since as a recent persecutor of Christians, easily they were identifiable. This also took some courage on his part because of his savage reputation. Nevertheless, Saul came away from his experience on the Damascus road fully aware that he had been made a disciple, by not means a small claim and one that astounded Jesus' closest followers who

now were leaders of the fledgling church. To say that “all were afraid of him” indeed is an understatement. We have no record of what relatives of those whom Saul put death had to say, but they must have been incredulous as well as unforgiving.

Note that it was Barnabas, not one of the original disciples hearkening back to the days with Jesus, who took Saul under his wing. He, not Saul, recounted the Damascus road conversion, which to the disciples sounded familiar because it resembled a Pentecost experience. If they with their failings or abandonment of Jesus in his hour of need could be forgiven, why not Saul? However, unlike them, he was educated and had been in a position of power. Thus they were confronted with a double threat, if you will.

Barnabas also mentions (actually twice) how Saul had preached “boldly,” the verb being *parresiazomai* from which the noun *parresia* is derived. This word is difficult to translate and originally refers to the right and privilege the citizen of a Greek city state has to express himself. Apparently Saul had gone out on his own without consultation or guidance, still eager...too much at this early stage perhaps...to prove himself. The immediate response? People sought to kill him on the spot. This reveals not so much the Good News but the manner in which Saul presented it. He could have gone at it a bit more slowly and easily, but that wasn't his style revealed here early on and to continue throughout the rest of his life.

The leaders of the early church quickly got wind of Saul's *parresia*. While impressed and convinced that he was the genuine article, instinctively they knew he would be a difficult case to handle in the future. Even Peter knew from the very beginning Saul would be a thorn in his side. Not even Peter as leader had the smarts to debate with the Hellenists.

This passage concludes on an upbeat note, namely, that the church was at peace, was “built up,” walked in divine fear and in the “comfort of the Holy Spirit.” *Oikodomeo* literally means to build a house and *parakesis* means help or encouragement not unlike the similar word Paraclete as applied to the Holy Spirit. While true, everyone knew they were in for an interesting few years of development with Saul among them and eventually leading the charge on behalf of the new faith.

### 10 May, Sixth Sunday of Easter

*When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am a man"...And Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him...While Peter was still saying this, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who came with Peter were amazed because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, "Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days. Acts 10.25-6, 34-5 & 44-8*

Note that the Easter Sunday excerpt is from Acts 10.34; 37-43 and has some overlapping with regard to the following passage, that is, Peter and the centurion Cornelius.

This passage takes place shortly after Peter had his vision of a “great sheet” [vs. 11] from heaven containing all kinds of animals. Cornelius was a “centurion, an upright and God-fearing man” [vs. 22] who was

directed by an angel to invite Peter to his house, and upon Peter's entry, "fell down at his feet and worshiped him." This was understandable because Cornelius had been "directed" [vs. 22] by an angel to invite Peter, the verb being *chrematizo* which fundamentally means to transact business or to give a response to an oracle. In other words, Cornelius was giving to Peter the same reverence as he had to this angel. Although Peter mildly rebuked Cornelius, this highly respected centurion knew that his guest was a man, not an angel. Both men must have laughed gently over this confusion, fully knowing their human condition which didn't preclude them from getting on straightaway with far more important matters.

The next few verses has Peter saying that it's unlawful for a Jew to associate with non-Jews though God had revealed to him this essentially posed no problem. Surely Cornelius was aware of this as well. At the same time Peter knew Cornelius was "well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation" [vs. 22], no small compliment from a nation occupied by a foreign power regarding an officer of that regime.

Now it was time for what everyone was waiting for. Peter "opened his mouth" signifying that the formalities of people greeting each other had been taken care off, and it was time to get out as quickly and as convincingly the good news of the Gospel. There must have been a few moments of silent, eager expectation before Peter spoke and when this body of "close friends" gathered around a table, for example, awaiting what this special guest was about to say. Nothing is said as to their identity. Chances are they were both Jew and Gentile, given this man's sterling reputation who even before the Spirit's intervention was able to pave the way for reconciling the two. This must have had much to do with Peter feeling comfortable about speaking of his newly found discovered that "God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean." Obviously he had in mind the clean and unclean animals of his recent vision but didn't let on to that among his guests.

Those in Cornelius' house had known about Peter and his association with Jesus, especially the recent rumors about Jesus' rising from the dead and the Jewish authorities strong resistance with regard to those who subscribed to it. In essence, everyone wanted to know whether or not this rumor was true or false as well as how Peter, having betrayed Jesus, got to become leader of the fledgling church. Then, of course, another rumor was making its rounds, of the Holy Spirit having descending at Pentecost. If this weren't enough, everyone was riveted by the story of the newly converted Saul who had reeked such ravage on the first Christians. Such is what the gathering expected from the opening of Peter's mouth, and rightly they deserved clarification of all these confusing events.

As noted in the Easter entry Peter comes to realize that "God has no partiality" or *prosopelemptes*. This noun means literally "acceptor or faces" or persons and contains the just mentioned verbal root *lambano*.

Perhaps the most amazing aspect of Peter at Cornelius' house is a Jew associating freely with Gentiles. There had occurred a mini-Pentecost while Peter continued to open his mouth, that is, while he "was still saying this" [vs. 44], that is, about Jesus as ordained by God. Note that the Spirit "fell" upon all who heard the "word" or *logos*, the *logos* about the *Logos*. The verb is *epiipto* which may be compared with the actual Pentecost event where the Spirit "filled all the house" [2.2], the verb being *pleroo*. Couple this with tongues of fire "resting on each one of them" [vs. 3], the verb being *kathiemmi*. Both are more gentle than the more sudden *epiipto*, showing the difference between the two events.

The remarkable event of a Jew among Gentiles dealing with God who shows no partiality to either concludes with those in Cornelius' house to be baptized. However, the people who had invited Peter were not going to let him off easily. "they asked him to remain for some days" which means he continued to

open his mouth and speak about Jesus. Most likely Peter got quite personal about his personal experience, especially his betrayal. That hit home like nothing else among his listeners, making him all the more appealing to them.

### 17 May, Seventh Sunday of Easter

*In those days Peter stood up among the brethren (the company of persons was in all about a hundred and twenty) and said, "Brethren, the scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas who was guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was numbered among us, and was allotted his share in this ministry...For it is written in the book of Psalms, 'Let his habitation become desolate, and let there be no one to live in it'; and 'His office let another take.' So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection." And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus and Matthias. And they prayed and said, "Lord, you who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside, to go to his own place." And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was enrolled with the eleven apostles. Acts 1.15-17; 20-26*

The phrase “in those days” refer to the relatively short interval between Jesus' ascension and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Thinking of such “days” in the temporal sense is secondary; more importantly they represent an interval when Peter and the disciples knew of the Spirit's descent but weren't certain when this would occur. More precisely, “in those days” takes into close consideration the assembly of the small band of disciples “in the room where they were staying” [vs. 13]. Surely Peter had in mind the intimate sharing which transpired there when he speaks to the “brethren.”

In the last entry we have Peter opening his mouth with everyone sitting around him in eager expectation of what he was about to say. Here Peter stands up first and then begins to speak ('said'). This standing up is similar but more authoritative. In sum, both the opening of mouth and standing up as belonging to Peter can be linked to his primacy among the apostles and thus the early church. As for the standing up, it is “among” the brethren” or *en meso* or perhaps better as in their midst as in the center of a circle, some 120 people set equally around him.

While Jesus was among his disciples frequently we ran across words like “that the scriptures may be fulfilled.” In the case at hand we have the first post-resurrection reference, all the more remarkable because it takes place before Pentecost when Peter and the disciples received full knowledge of the relationship of the scriptures concerning Jesus. The reference is Ps 41.9: “Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted his heel against me.” Obviously the disciples had much explaining to do with regard to Judas' betrayal which set the whole arrest and death of Jesus in motion.

The excerpt at hand lacks vss. 1-18 about the death of Judas and continues with Peter citing two other passages strung together or Ps 69.25 and 109.8 (the Hebrew texts are given here): “May their camp be a desolation, let no one dwell in their tents.” “May his days be few; may another seize his goods!” Peter knew that a scriptural basis had to be put forth to explain the role of Judas and that another disciple had to be chosen to restore the sacred number twelve to the group, twelve being representative of the tribes of Israel. This had to be done as quickly as possible after Jesus' ascension to prepare for the coming



descent of the Holy Spirit. Peter knew it was going to happen though not sure as to the details. His first task as leader was to ensure the completion of the apostolic group. It may be thought that the Spirit should have a hand in the choice of this twelfth disciple. While a valid consideration, his coming needed the full complement of disciples on which to descend, otherwise something would be missing.

The chief qualification of being a disciple was to have been with Jesus who “went in and out among us” [vs. 21], a way of showing how he had action with his chosen band. Such words can be taken as Jesus at one time being with the band and at other times apart from it. Note that Peter stipulates the new candidate had to have been with Jesus since the day he was baptized, that is, since the beginning when he had called his disciples. This implies that while Jesus had chosen the twelve by name there must have been a number of associates, if you will, who similarly followed Jesus throughout his career. However, Jesus did not go in and out among them as he had done with the twelve. Such associates, if you will, may have been with the group for such and such a time; they left for one reason or another and similarly returned. In other words, their situation precluded full-time discipleship. Besides, Jesus chose only twelve for this role despite the many able candidates.

Furthermore, the elected person must be “a witness to his resurrection” which means he was present on one or more occasion when Jesus had manifested himself to the twelve. The two (no mention of them is made in the Gospels) are Matthias and Barsabbas. After some prayer, the former was chosen. We don't know how Barsabbas felt about this...admittedly disappointed and even jealous...but the issue here is to get the choice over as quickly as possible to hasten, if you will, what everyone knew was coming even if they weren't quite sure what it was. As for the enrollment, the verb *sugkakapsephizo* literally means to be chosen by a vote which consisted of a pebble representing one's choice. This word suggests some kind of ceremony which was the first as well as the last ever performed and most likely consisted of scriptural readings as from the Psalms. Since Peter had quoted verses from two Psalms about Judas, it was easy for him to mentally search for any relative to the happy event at hand.

By way of conclusion, the way Peter as well as others and the authors of the Gospels pick out Old Testament verses seems as if they did it spontaneously. This may be difficult for us moderns to accept, but the ancients relied upon their faculty of memory far more than us meaning they had the ability to pick out such passages even if they weren't educated. Besides, the disciples were observant Jews who, despite their obscurity, still received training in the Torah while young.

## **24 May, Pentecost**

The obvious choice for today would be the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost from Acts. However, the church's liturgical calendar gives Genesis 11.1-9 as an excerpt for the Vigil Mass, and that is included here as excerpted from another text on Genesis posted on this same home page.

The purpose of constructing the tower of Babel? That the people who settled in the plain of Shinar decided to “make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.” At first glance this sounds reasonable because the people had a tenuous grip on the land after their recent migration from the east. The presumption of reaching “in the heavens” noted just above is based in the fact that the people didn't realize the value of their “one language and few words” (vs. 1), that this unity was sufficient to sustain them in their newly settled territory. If they assumed the onerous task of making a name, surely others would recognize it. As for these supposed others, if they weren't in the general vicinity of the plain of Shinar, the tower's great height was bound to catch their attention. This making of

a name as embodied in the tower, so the people presumed, would prevent their being scattered, *puts* being the verb which implies being broken into pieces: “And let your enemies be scattered” [Num 10.35]. *Puts* conveys the notion of scattering not unlike *naphats* of 9.19: “and from these (Noah’s sons) the whole earth was peopled.” The builders of the tower had in mind this sudden and alarming scattering from the newly landed ark, hence they wished to prevent their dispersal from getting out of hand before distance would destroy that one language and few words. That’s why we have the words “upon the face of the whole earth:” not just the area close to the ark’s landing site but the entire globe. So instead of attempting to gain control over the new territory laid out before them, they should have copied their descendants’ father, Noah, that is, his walking with God. That would have precluded building a lofty structure “in the heavens,” and God would have obliged gladly. Noah was the man the people of Shinar should have held up as an example, not his sons, who were simply transmitters of the human race from the pre-to-post flood worlds. To follow their example would get them nowhere as they soon will discover.

“And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built” [vs. 5]. This is the first of two descents, the second being described in vs. 7. What does this coming down (*yarad*) consist of? Did anyone witness it? Chances are the descent took place on the city’s outskirts away from prying eyes. Actually, this is the first time the Lord appeared on earth since having walked with Noah in the pre-flood days, 6.9. It must have been strange for him experiencing a new yet at the same time old place as he compared the post with the pre-flood earth. Nothing is explicit about this walking, let alone his manner of descent and later, his ascent. Curiosity got the best of the Lord, so he wanted to see what was going on in the plain of Shinar. If he didn’t disguise himself, the sight of divine splendor would have dazzled people. The Lord must have pondered the dramatic words of Ps 19.9ff (‘He bowed the heavens and came down; thick darkness was under his feet’) and realized that approach clearly was out of the question. And so the Lord had to assume a disguise to prevent his recognition which involved somehow contracting himself to fit within the confines of space and time. That’s tough enough, let alone the disguise itself. The one he settled upon was as an ordinary man, the best way to go incognito among the people. Some of the descendants of Shem, Ham and Japheth might have been able to pick him out from among the crowd, having recalled that their ancestor Noah walked with God, and were familiar with his disguise. If they did, they kept quiet; even if they had pointed him out, the people wouldn’t believe them.

When the Lord came upon the first man and woman in the garden of Eden, they hid themselves. Here in the city of Shinar there wasn’t any need to express shame while the Lord was among the people because they were pre-occupied with wild celebrations and congratulating themselves for such an accomplishment (as for the name Babel, that doesn’t happen until vs. 9). Note the words upon which this festivity rests, namely, “had built,” as referring to both city and tower. Just as Moses came down from Mt. Sinai (cf. Ex 32.7ff) at the Lord’s request and heard the “sound of singing” (Ex 32.18), something similar must have gotten the Lord’s attention which compelled him to descend to the city of Shinar. Even though he had been walking freely about the people there—certainly not as he had done with Noah and Enoch earlier—it was easy to hide right out in the open because people were more concerned about celebrating. Such dissolute behavior amazed the Lord as everyone about him celebrated in “one language and few words.”

Unfortunately Shinar turned out to be a precursor of Sodom and Gomorrah. So at long last the people who migrated from the east to the plain of Shinar founded not just a city but a tower which emulated the mountain on which the garden of Eden was located. The only thing it lacked was the cherubim and flaming, revolving sword (cf. 3.24). The people conveniently left them out of their plan so nothing would block their ascent to their new tower and prevent them from glorying in their achievement. With all this commotion about him, the Lord decided to do something and do it quickly else the people would come to

ruin. So why not hit them where they were most vulnerable? The target? Their common language with few words. Easily we could read into the Lord's mind something like Jesus said in a parable, "For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it" [Lk 14.28]? The people who did erect their tower failed to follow any divine plan as Noah had done when building the ark.

"And behold, they are one people, and they have all one language" [vs. 6]. *Hen* ('behold; similar to *hineh* as in 6.12) is a sign of astonishment which reveals the Lord's state of mind when he came down to the city. Of course, he was aware of what was transpiring from his perch in heaven yet couldn't get a first-hand view—one from that of a human being—unless he descended and walked incognito among the people. As noted above, the people did have one language, the first thing that struck the Lord, and that was vital for ease of communication. Unfortunately, much of this language was used in either shouting or profanity, given the timing of the Lord's arrival. Note that the Lord himself says these words starting with *hen* and continuing for the rest of vs. 6. He was stating the obvious which got people's attention immediately. That intimates he was a stranger, one who didn't share their language, and had to do something as quickly as possible. Was he a spy sent to report on their city and tower? We don't have any reaction simply because by now the Lord knew his disguise was wearing thin and couldn't keep it up much longer.

Vs. 6 continues with "this is only the beginning of what they will do; and nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them." The word expressing the Lord's astonishment (*hen* or behold) now comes to an observation based upon reason, not emotion. The verb *chalal* is used for the noun "beginning" which had been commented upon earlier, essentially conveying the idea of to perforate, pierce through. Thus *chalal* is a perforation or an opening which, in turn, signals the start of an event. It's different from *re'shyth* as in 1.1 ('In the beginning'), the first of any kind. *Chalal* is appropriate because it intimates an opening—let's say a small one—not unlike a nozzle behind which tremendous water pressure has been building up, so with its release, there's no telling how powerful it will be and what manifestation it'll assume. *Batsar* is the verb for the English "impossible" which can be rendered as to restrain as well as to cut off. It's the opposite to *chalal*, that is, that there will be no means of cutting off this *chalal* once it is unleashed. The Hebrew thus reads "now nothing will be cut off from them all which they propose to do." As for the verb "propose," it's *zamam* which suggests laying in wait, to plot. "As they plot to take my life" [Ps 31.13]. While out and about in the city, the Lord got wind of this *zamam*, that what the people were celebrating was the start of future, even grander projects. If they could construct such a city and erect such a tower which was as high as the mountain on which lay the garden of Eden, there was no limit what they could accomplish. The next tower would pierce the heavens which is really why the Lord had decided to come down and check things out. Use of the verb *zamam* is telling: because it applies more to scheming as opposed to planning, truly what the Lord heard in the streets was alarming. After all, the one language and few words the people enjoyed enabled information and therefore their building plans to be processed much more quickly without writing them down but passing them from mouth to mouth.

Vs. 7 restates the Lord's descent in vs. 5: "Come, let us go down (*yarad*) and there confuse their language." *Havah* is an adverb of exhortation ('come') as used in vs. 4 when the inhabitants of the city rallied themselves together for building both the city and the tower. Here is a second descent by the Lord, the first one being in vs. 5. He saw how raucous was the celebration over completion of their impressive works, this being the first city built since the one constructed by Cain and named after his son, Enoch (cf. 4.17). The Lord didn't come down to that city since it wasn't raised imitation of the garden of Eden on the mountaintop and posed no threat of usurpation. He wanted to compare the both cities, the former having no tower. As for the first person plural ('Come, let us go down'), two suggestions: a spontaneous

desire on the Lord's part to check things out. The Lord is not so much uttering these words aloud as pondering them, so there's no one around to hear what he intends. Then again, it could refer to Moses, author of the Book of Genesis. The Lord wished Moses to come in order to make an accurate report of his findings.

Vs. 7 continues with "and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." The Lord determined this course of action during his first *yarad* (descent) when he saw the people's wild celebration. He was struck especially by the unity of language which, as noted above, was a key factor enabling the people to complete the city and tower in record time. The verb for "confuse" is *balal* which means to mix or mingle, pour and doesn't necessarily have a bad connotation. For example, the Book of Leviticus has it a number of times with reference to flour mingled with oil: "fine flour, mingled with oil" [2.4]. So if the people who came from the east had this "one language and few words," what did this mingling consist of? It was a jumbling of the existing language which at this stage remained one yet instead of a "few words," the Lord mingled them up to such an extent that the people couldn't understand each other. It was a reverse Pentecost. Instead of the Lord descending this second time in the guise of a human being, he assumed the form of a wind...a *ruach*...which blew reversely, if you will, compared with the Holy Spirit who blew upon the disciples of Jesus Christ in the upper room. As for the resulting confusion or mingling, the Hebrew of vs. 7 reads literally, "(each) man could not hear the speech (*saphah* as in vs. 1) of his neighbor." And so hearing became just as confused as speaking, another indicator of how necessary it was for Pentecost many years later to reverse this curse.

"So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city" [vs. 8]. *Puts* is the verb for "scatter abroad" used in vs. 4, the fear of being broken into pieces (the fundamental sense of *puts*) and the rationale behind constructing both the city and tower to emulate the garden of Eden. The Lord effected this scattering by the breathe of his mouth, his *ruach*, blowing them like so many leaves over the earth from the plain of Shinar. Vs. 8 concludes with "they left off building the city," *chadal* being the verb which means just this, they ceased their work. When the Lord first descended under the guise of a man, both the city and tower were complete; more work remained with finishing and the city, even entertaining thoughts to go beyond the limits originally laid down. Nothing is said of the tower. It remained there for many years afterward as a reminder to the former inhabitants' hubris. The structure was so lofty that no matter where the people were scattered they could see it looming in the horizon as a reminder of their vain efforts. While looking back at it, everyone were unable to express their frustration; although they retained the one language, many words had been injected into it instead of the original few.

### 31 May, Trinity Sunday

*For ask now of the days that are past which were before you since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other whether such a great thing as this has ever happened or was ever heard of. Did any people ever hear the voice of a god speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard and still live? Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation by trials, by signs, by wonders and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and by great terrors according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?...know therefore this day and lay it to your heart that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other. Therefore you shall keep his statutes and his commandments which I command you this day that it may go well with you, and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the Lord your God gives you forever. Deuteronomy 4:32-34 & 39-40*

This passage contains a certain simplicity and joy on God's part as he addresses his people, daring them to be bold enough to ask for their hearts' desire. After all, they are wandering around in the Sinai wilderness after having escaped oppression in Egypt. The people are to ask (*sha'al*) of him in two ways:

1) With regard to “days that are past” or days that are *ri'shon*, more literally as days that are first. In other words, the people are urged to hearken back to the Book of Genesis which goes by the Hebrew word *re'shyth* or beginning. Genesis opens with this very word or *bere'shyth*, “in the beginning.” Note the importance of the preposition *b-* ('in') which situates the reader of the book right with God in his creative action which will transpire over the course of six days followed by one of rest. Such are the days of the past made present here and now. A parallel text worth consulting is Chapter Eight of Proverbs, especially vss. 22-36 or to the end. There wisdom speaks as a prophetess or a “master workman” [vs. 30], *'amon* being the word which means a little child and derived from the verbal root *'aman* from which comes the noun “faith.” Although the Genesis text doesn't document it, we could say that Wisdom had been present with God during the six days of creation. If Wisdom can do this, so can the readers of *Bere'shyth*.

2) To ask “from one end of heaven to the other” which, if taken literally, means all across the “firmament” or *raqyah* of Gn 1.7. This literally means that which is spread out not unlike a sheet in which are situated the sun, moon and stars. The *raqyah* is a dome covering the earth all around, so this asking which the Lord bids is not unlike giving voice within a giant chamber where the sound echos all around the earth. This image is appropriate for the people here in the desert where at night the *raqyah* stands out with special clarity. No reply is expected in the conventional sense. After asking aloud, the response comes back from all the created entities in the *raqyah*. It is not unlike the stars' response to the Lord in Bar 3:34: “the stars shone in their watches and were glad; he called them, and they said, 'Here we are!'”

The rest of the passage at hand deals with the Lord recounting his care in the Sinai wilderness and rescue from the Egyptians. So following the two-fold *sha'al* above, the people are to “know therefore this day,” *yadah* being the verb which pertains to intimate, even sexual knowledge. Such *yadah* is specified as belonging to the day when the Lord is speaking, that is, right now and thus lacks extension in space and time but is present eternally. The people are to “lay” this *yadah* to (*'el-*) their hearts or *shuv* which connote a sense of returning. *Shuv* thus intimates that the people have forgotten the Lord's intervention on their behalf and have to return to memory of it which is located within their hearts. That's why the passage concludes with the Lord having concern for future generations. And so the two-fold *yadah* and *shuv* relate to the people being aware of the Lord both above in heaven and below on the earth. In other words, this is the *raqyah* where they are told to ask concerning days that are past and from one end of the heaven to the other. Such asking and the Lord being above and below form one reality, if you will.

The Lord speaks of “this day” a second time which also involves a keeping of his commandments which he imparts at that very time. The verb *shamar* for keeping involves maintaining watch as found in the Torah as noted frequently in lengthy Psalm 119. The *shamar* is to have a specific place, the “land” or *'adamah* which the Lord is going to give Israel. In other words, Israel has not yet entered Canaan which here goes by a word pertaining to the ground itself or better, arable land compared with the desert environment in which the people are wandering.

The notes concerning this excerpt dealt briefly with the people hearkening back to the Book of Genesis or more literally, the “Book of in the Beginning” which also speaks of the firmament, *raqyah*. The two types of asking in that context take on a more formal or more durable reality as the Lord's statutes and

commandments which are to be passed on to future generations on that (arable) land or *'adamah* compared with the desert.

## 7 June, Corpus Christi

*Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, "All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do." And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. And he rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the people of Israel who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins and half of the blood he threw against the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." And Moses took the blood and threw it upon the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words."*  
Exodus 24.3-8

The following is taken from *Expansions on the Book of Exodus* posted on this home page.

“Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and said, ‘All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do’” [vs. 3]. We don’t know whether Aaron, his two sons and seventy elders were privy to what the Lord had communicated to Moses, but the time on the summit seems to have been very brief. The same applies to the length of time the Lord spoke with Moses which should not be measured according to the passage of conventional time. The whole event could have lasted a few seconds or even less, shorter being more likely than longer. Actually it turned out a bit later that Moses did not communicate much to the people; instead, he constructed an altar and made an offering. As for the people’s spontaneous response, it must have been on the spur of the moment without much reflection of what they were willing to do. One can imagine the people thronging about at the base of Sinai and enveloping Moses, Aaron, his sons and the elders, pressing them all with interminable questions.

“And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. And he rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel” [vs. 4]. As just noted, not much as far as written directions or commands had been imparted to Moses on his recent ascent. That would come later when he ascended a second time and received detailed instructions as to divine worship. Nevertheless, Moses had to unpack what he was imparted to him in a virtual instance and put it down upon a scroll. While in his tent, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and some of the seventy elders must have stood guard about it so he could accomplish this in peace without the people rushing upon him. This standing guard must have continued throughout the night until the people gave up and retired to their tents which is why Moses “rose early in the morning” or well before they returned. Although Moses had been instructed to build an altar (*mizbeach*) in 20.24, nothing is said of its actual construction, just that such an altar should be erected. The only *mizbeach* we know for sure that Moses had built is in 17.15: “And Moses built an altar and called the name of it the Lord is my banner.” There it was noted that this *mizbeach* could have been more as a monument.

In addition to the *mizbeach*, Moses set up twelve pillars or *matsevah*, this term first found in 13.21: “And the Lord went before them by day in a *matsevah* of cloud...by night in a *matsevah* of fire to give them light.” Actually vs. 4 has “tribes” (*shevet*) for the first time in Exodus. Jacob’s twelve sons had come into

Egypt at Joseph's invitation (plus that of Pharaoh) and dwelt their four centuries. Apparently they retained their tribal identity in a foreign land over an extended period of time, no mean feat, which Moses now wishes to bring to Israel's attention in the desert at the foot of Mount Sinai. Israel had been assembled together as a unit for some time since the Red Sea miracle and used their tribal division as a form of identity. This identity was a communal reminder of their presence long ago in Canaan as well as a reminder that Israel would re-enter Canaan according to this twelve-fold division. How Moses arranged the twelve pillars is not mentioned, but given the nature of that number, it could have been a square with four pillars on each side with the altar in the center.

"And he sent young men of the people of Israel who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord" [vs. 5]. Here we have a continuation of that recent revelation on Sinai which Moses wrote down but does not refer to, if you will, as following an instruction manual. Moses just speaks out what needs to be done and it is effected. The means of selecting these young men (*nahar*) is not given, but the seventy elders-judges must have played a role in determining that they came from worthwhile families. After all, these men were close to the people and had intimate acquaintance with their affairs. *Shelem* is the noun for "peace offerings" last noted in 20.24 (NB: there mention is made of an altar to be built compared with the one that actually was built in 17.15, so the altar under consideration is that one comprised of earth, 20.24).

"And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins and half of the blood he threw against the altar" [vs. 6]. The noun for "basins" is *agan* which refers to a trough for washing or a cup; two other biblical references exist, one of which is Sg 7.2: "Your navel is a rounded bowl that never lacks mixed wine." *Zaraq* is the verb for "threw" which more properly means to scatter or sprinkle and thus has sacrificial overtones. For another use, see 9.8: "Take handfuls of ashes from the kiln and let Moses throw them toward heaven in the sight of Pharaoh."

"Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient'" [vs. 7]. This is the second reference to "book" (*sepher*) in Exodus, the first being what seems to be a different one: "Write this as a memorial in a book and receive it in the ears of Joshua, that I will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." The *sepher* under consideration applies to the "covenant" or *beryth* as in 6.4 though no identity between the two has been encountered. Perhaps they refer to the words Moses wrote down upon return from Mount Sinai in vs. 4, and the *sepher* obviously is a scroll, not a tablet. They could include the instructions imparted to Moses in Chapters Twenty and Twenty-One. Given the six hundred thousand men, not including women and children, Moses could not have read to them all. That's where the seventy elders stepped into assist, for they had been on top of Sinai and despite not drawing near to the Lord (cf. vs. 2), were close enough to be eye witnesses. As had been the case when Moses communicated the words and ordinances a short time ago (cf. vs. 3), the people readily consented perhaps more out of enthusiasm than expressing genuine fealty. As for the verb "will be obedient," it is *shamah* or hear...the people will hear what the Lord had spoken through Moses.

"And Moses took the blood and threw it upon the people and said, 'Behold, the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words'" [vs. 8]. Here we have a second instance of *zaraq* (to sprinkle), the first being in vs. 6. *Zaraq* serves to identify the people with the altar, the two being one. Moses deliberately uses the word "behold" or *hineh* (noted above several times) as a way of getting the people's attention. Because of Israel's huge population mentioned in the last paragraph, most could not see this but had to relay upon those towards the front in order to receive the

information. Perhaps others got blood from Moses and similarly sprinkled those further back. So in the verse at hand, blood from oxen (cf. vs. 5) is identified with the *beryth* (covenant) and the words Moses has communicated to the people.

#### 14 June, Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

*Thus says the Lord God: "I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out; I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I myself will plant it upon a high and lofty mountain; on the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bring forth boughs and bear fruit and become a noble cedar; and under it will dwell all kinds of beasts; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest. And all the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord bring low the high tree and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. I the Lord have spoken, and I will do it. Ezekiel 17.22-24*

Today is the first Sunday in Ordinary Time since 15 February, almost exactly four months to the day. That means we have come through the Lenten-Easter-Pentecost-post-Pentecost cycle, the most important part of the liturgical year or one third of the calendar year. Ordinary Time flows both to and from this multi-phase cycle which we commence (or re-commence) to day. From the end of that period to the beginning of Advent or the new liturgical year we have some five and a half months of Ordinary Time. From the post-Christmas season to Ash Wednesday or the beginning of that multi-phase cycle we have approximately two months, depending. In other words, this part of Ordinary Time is the longer of the two. This is mentioned here in order to reflect upon the two modes of time in which we function as well as alternate, liturgical and secular time or circular and linear time. Of course, when you speak of time that involves space...liturgical (sacred) space and secular time.

The allegory of the cedar parallels the imagery found in 31.1-9.

Chapter Seventeen has two instances of "the word of the Lord" with the passage at hand beginning in similar fashion, "thus says the Lord," all referring to Ezekiel. This passage concludes accordingly, "I the Lord have spoken." In light of this, the divine *davar* or Word, equivalent to the Greek *logos*, suggests expression. The Lord feels the need to repeat phrases similar to these throughout much of his prophecy not for his own benefit but that the people's attention does not stray from him. If that happens, memory of the past is forgotten with amazing rapidity, and the Bible provides numerous instances where it had happened. And so there is a direct correspondence between *davar* and memory, the two working hand-in-hand as indicated by the word "came" as it did to Ezekiel. In sum, the task is to sustain this coming not just for Ezekiel but for the people whom he is addressing.

As soon as the word "cedar" is mentioned thoughts about Lebanon come to mind although that isn't mentioned here though most likely implied. It was King Hiram of Tyre who furnished cedars for Solomon's construction of the temple at Jerusalem (cf. Chapter Five of Second Kings). "Set (it) out" is the common verb *natan* meaning to give and here applies to a setting down or placing.

Although the mountains of Lebanon are higher than anything within Israel's borders, nevertheless the "mountain height" belonging to the latter is higher, spiritually speaking. Here the text refers to Israel as a nation, not just the temple at Jerusalem which certainly is included. Once the sprig has been taken from one of these Lebanon cedars, it will provide food and shelter for "all kinds of beasts," an image



reminiscent of Chapter Twenty-Two of Revelation concerning the tree of life. Reference to the “trees of the field” can be taken as other nations which will acknowledge Israel.

## 21 June, Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

*Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind..(Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me. Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements--surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk or who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?) Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst forth from the womb; when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band and prescribed bounds for it and set bars and doors and said, "Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed?" Job 38.1, 8-11*

The reading for today does not include vss. 2-7 but are included in parentheses by reason of getting a better grasp if the text and its context.

These verse come towards the end of the book and contain God's response to Job. However, chapters 32 through 37 contain discourses by one of his friends, Elihu, which means Job is out of the picture for some time. As for Job, he completes his public statements at the end of Chapter Thirty-One where we have “The words of Job are ended.” The Lord had appeared in a “whirlwind” or *seharah* although there is no mention of this phenomenon at either the end of Job's words or those of Elihu. Elijah the prophet was taken up in such a *seharah*: “And as they still went on and talked, behold, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven” [2Kg 2.11].

Compare the words of 1Kg 19.11 when Elijah did not perceive the Lord in a similar circumstance: “but the Lord was not in the wind.” Instead, he was in a “still small voice” [vs. 12]. Nevertheless, in both instances the Lord speaks by any means possible. In the passage at hand, God descends in a *seharah* and doesn't take up Job but uses this dramatic whirling phenomenon not unlike a tornado to speak with Job. Actually the violent, contracted whirling itself was the means of communication which Job was able to decipher and make sense.

The verses not included in the reading contain four questions impossible for Job or anyone else to ask. Since they come after Elihu's discourses, chances are the Lord has in mind him and his friends more than Job himself, rebuking them for their long-winded speeches and exhortations.

The final verses consist of one long sentence with regard to the boundaries of both the sea and clouds which acted as its garment. In addition to this generic type of garment we have the confining swaddling band. This can intimate that the Lord was responding to everything said by Job and his friends not even as the talk of a child but the babbling of an infant not being able to speak. In other words, what they uttered was a whole series of grunts and groans, nothing consistent, when it comes to things divine.

So here we have Job whom the Lord addresses directly with his friends looking on as they listen to the whirlwind and decipher its loud, whirring sound. Later on at the conclusion of the Lord's response we have Job's answer: “Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes” [42.6]. Although the Lord restored Job to favor—not just that but “twice as much” [vs. 10]—surely it must have not been as the same with his family and possessions which had been wiped out utterly.

## 28 June, Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

*Do not invite death by the error of your life nor bring on destruction by the works of your hands; because God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living. For he created all things that they might exist, and the generative forces of the world are wholesome, and there is no destructive poison in them; and the dominion of Hades is not on earth. For righteousness is immortal...for God created man for incorruption and made him in the image of his own eternity, but through the devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his party experience it.* Wisdom 1.13.15 & 2.23-24

The first verse isn't included in the excerpt but added since vs. 2 begins as part of that verse.

This passage begins with the cautionary *me zeloute* or literally, “do not be jealous” with regard to allowing death into one's life through the committing of an “error” or *plane* which translates as wandering. This verb also connotes being eager and here obviously applies to what is not wholesome. *Plane* or wandering effects death which most likely refers to being over curious resulting in “destruction,” *olethros* being a word for death which is mentioned here (*thanatos*). Yet another word for death is *apoleia* which implies loss in which God takes no “delight,” *terpo* used with the preposition *epi* or upon...literally, “upon death.”

Note the two verbs *poieo* and *ktizo*, the former suggestive of making or creating and the latter of founding or establishing. *Poieo*: “did not make death” and *ktizo*: “created all things.”

*Genesis* as “generative forces” applies to the act of coming into being which here are wholesome, *soterios* or saving, delivering. They belong to the “world,” *kosmos* suggestive of a decoration or ornament, that which is set in proper order. Within this *kosmos* is no “poison,” a *pharmakon* which is a drug or healing remedy lacking the capacity to be destructive or *olethros*, the same word in vs. 12 as “destruction.” If this were to come about, then Hades or the underworld would be upon or *epi* the world (cf. *epi* as 'upon death' above) instead of below, its proper place.

In the text at hand, 1.15 begins with “For righteousness (*dikaiousune*) is immortal” or *athanatos*, literally as no-death and leads into man being created for “incorruption” or no-corruption (*aphtharsia*), two words with alpha privative.

The pair *ktizo* and *poieo* or creating and making are found a second time: “God created man” and “made him in the image (*eikon*) of his own eternity.” The Greek text lacks “eternity” but reads literally as “own peculiar nature” or *idiotes*. Despite this, the text says that the devil did not enter the world but his “envy” or *phthonos* which here seems to have almost an entity of its own. The verb *eiserchomai* is used for “entered” along with the preposition *eis* or into, literally “entered into.”

*Meris* means “party” or part, portion and refers to those persons who have come under the influence of the devil's envy. In other words, they “experience” it, the verb being *peirazo* suggestive of making a proof or a trial.

**This is the end of the second file. Start a new one (third file, that is) from this point below for the lectio divina home page.**

## 5 July, Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

*And he said to me, "Son of man, stand upon your feet, and I will speak with you." And when he spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me upon my feet; and I heard him speaking to me. And he said to me, "Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels, who have rebelled against me; they and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day. The people also are impudent and stubborn: I send you to them; and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God.' And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that there has been a prophet among them." Ezekiel 2.2-5*

Although vs. 1 is lacking in today's reading, it is included.

The very first word is the conjunctive *v-* ('and') which presents a seamless connection between Ezekiel's vision of the throne-chariot in Chapter One to his commission of preaching to Israel. Ezekiel had been prostrate on the ground after beholding the vision not knowing what to do next. As soon as the Lord began speaking with Ezekiel, his "Spirit" or *Ruach*...breath or wind...entered him. No details as to this entry of the Spirit are given, presumably through his ears because the Lord is in conversation with him. Once the divine *Ruach* entered Ezekiel, he was better able to hear the Lord much more clearly although he had been able to do so just a minute beforehand. Now it is as though the Lord were addressing himself...his *Ruach*...within Ezekiel.

Ezekiel knew Israel was a nation of "rebels" but heard it first hand from the Lord, the verbal root *marad* being used and referring to apostasy which had brought about the exile from Jerusalem (cf. Jer 2.29). The preposition *b-* or "in" is used for force, if you will, reading literally "in me." Not only are the present inhabitants guilty but their fathers who have "transgressed" against the Lord, *pashah* meaning to break away, a word often applicable to breaking the covenant. Note the phrase "this very day." Although the fathers had transgressed in the past, in the Lord's eyes this misconduct is just as present as the people's misconduct to whom Ezekiel is being sent.

The Lord spells out further the *marad* or rebelliousness of the people by calling them both "impudent and stubborn," *qasheh* and *chazaq*. The former more specifically means hard and is used with face, literally, hard of face. The latter means strong or stiff and used with the noun *lev*, heart, literally, hard of heart. To them the Lord is about to send Ezekiel who certainly is familiar with this condition but is in a position not to bargain with the conditions of being a prophet.

To start off his next-to-impossible mission Ezekiel is to say to the people "Thus says the Lord God," a traditional form of address used by most prophets. Everyone will hear, of course, but only a few will respond positively. The Lord ends this section by saying that despite the high probability of failure, Ezekiel is to carry out his task. To him the Lord's words about the people knowing a prophet having been among them isn't especially comforting because it can intimate being put to death at their hands.

## **12 July, Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

*And Amaziah said to Amos, "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah and eat bread there and prophesy there; but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom." Then Amos answered Amaziah, "I am no prophet nor a prophet's son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, and the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'" Amos 7.12-15*

The RSV identifies Amaziah as the official priest of the royal sanctuary at Bethel. Despite the importance of this position, he recognizes the calling of Amos as a “seer” or *chozeh* which more specifically means to see in the sense of gaze uninterrupted. Other references in the Bible indeed connote this, but the word seems to be of lesser stature than a prophet. Nevertheless, Amos comes out straightaway with his denial of being a prophet.

Amaziah's command to Amos to flee from Bethel is followed by a vision of the latter in vs. 7 concerning a wall with a plumb line intended to measure the people of Israel. Amaziah knows full well that both he and the people do not measure up, the reason for dismissing Amos. The excuse of Bethel being the king's sanctuary and temple seem weak, and Amaziah knows it full well. Even that holy place would not be true to the divine plumb line.

Amos protests to Amaziah, albeit in a kind of rhetorical fashion, knowing full well that he is more a man of God. When Amos describes his humble background, especially as tending flocks, he must have had in mind King David, the model of kingship *par excellence* in Israel. Samuel had anointed David as king even though Saul was the first legitimate one (cf. 1Sam 10). Amos was hoping Amaziah got wind of this allusion...most likely he did...even though continued in his forced refusal not unlike Saul who had sought to kill David.

Amos holds true to his calling in the face of official denial and continues with his prophecy for the rest of Chapter Seven, concluding with words Amaziah would not wish to hear, namely, that Israel “shall surely go into exile from its land.”

### 19 July, Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

*Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!" says the Lord. Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people: "You have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the Lord. Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, says the Lord. "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'* Jeremiah 23.1-6

This chapter begins with the dramatic cry of *hoy* or “woe” and sets the tone for what will follow. The Lord has in his sights shepherds who seem to be both political and religious leaders bent upon destroying and scattering the sheep entrusted to them. The second verse has the verb *rahah* rendered as “care for” which is the same verbal root for “shepherds.” In other words, the two—those in charge and those under their charge—are one and the same. If one part is disturbed, the other part automatically becomes disturbed.

Not unlike *rahah* in this context is the verb *paqad* for “attended.” It has a fairly wide variety of meanings yet fundamentally has military connotations such as to muster troops. Since the shepherds—those whose job is to *rahah*—fail in their important task, the Lord will “attend” to their flock, the second use of

*paqad*. Here *paqad* can be said to have a more specific military application, for the Lord will take action against these shepherds. Obviously those in charge are afraid and ashamed while those in their care are thrilled at this divine intervention.

It seems the shepherds have mismanaged Israel's affairs so badly that out of desperation the Lord decided to scatter them throughout various countries: "out of all the countries where I have driven them." To do this shows how terribly the shepherds have failed in their duty. While they are looking on after this deliberate exile, they will see only a remnant returning. In other words, of all those whom the Lord forced into a saving kind of exile, just a handful made it back home under his guidance. That means the trip to these various countries and how they were treated (rather, mistreated) reduced their numbers drastically.

Perhaps this return is the attending by the Lord or his *paqad* towards the shepherds. They were forced to watch the remnant return, knowing full well that they had been responsible for this disaster. Once back at home, the remnant is disinclined to take vengeance but be content to be under shepherds whom the Lord appoints and "care" for them, the verb being *rahah*.

These shepherds are a kind of intermediary or stop-gap measure, if you will. That is to say, they will perform their task faithfully until the Lord will raise up a "righteous Branch" or a *tsemach* which is *tsadyq*, that is to say something like a sprout which at first is barely visible out of the ground. Nothing is said when this will happen except that the "days are coming." Also no information is given about this person's identity, but he will be raised up "for David" meaning he will be a king. He will "deal wisely, execute justice and righteousness" or *sakal*, make *misphat* and *tседаqah*. The first means to be prudent and to give success, the second applies to judgment and the third pertains to what is right as well as pious. Emphasis upon righteousness is vital because that will be the title of the coming king, *tsedeq*.

## 26 July, Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

*A man came from Ba'al-shal'ishah, bringing the man of God bread of the first fruits, twenty loaves of barley, and fresh ears of grain in his sack. And Elisha said, "Give to the men that they may eat." But his servant said, "How am I to set this before a hundred men?" So he repeated, "Give them to the men that they may eat, for thus says the Lord, 'They shall eat and have some left.'" So he set it before them. And they ate, and had some left, according to the word of the Lord.* Second Kings 4.42-44

As for Ba'al-shal'ishah (the only biblical reference of this place name), see 1Sam 9.4: "So he passed through the hill country of Ephraim and through the area around Shalisha, but they did not find them." That is to say, it concerns Saul and his companions in their search for their lost asses.

In several crucial instances an anonymous person will step and change the course of events as is the case at hand and as in the next chapter with the servant girl in possession of Na'aman the Syrian commander who was a leper. The man in the story at hand comes on the scene after the incident of a man associated with Elisha's prophets who accidentally poisoned the pot of pottage. The anonymous man may or may not have been associated with Elisha as he brought to him "first fruits" or *bikor*, a term often associated with grain or animals to be sacrificed to God. However, Elisha bids this donor, if you will, to give to his followers or prophets the *bikor* to eat. Some may have been skeptical after the pottage incident but overcame their reluctance when their master gave the go-ahead.

Once the anonymous man distributed the barley and ears of grain—we have no idea of how many were present—they ate and had enough left over. Note that such leftovers are special insofar as they are “according to the *davar* (word) of the Lord,” *davar* being used frequently and connotes the idea of expression. That is to say, this divine *davar* effected the multiplication of barley and grain which has precedent in the manna which the Israelites had in the Sinai wilderness (cf. Ex 16.13-21). It also foreshadows Jesus' multiplication of five loaves and two fish: “he looked up to heaven and blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds” [Mt 14.19]. However, nothing is said of the multiplication of the two fish.

## 2 August, Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

*And the whole congregation of the people of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness and said to them, "Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt when we sat by the fleshpots and ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." Then the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law or not..." I have heard the murmurings of the people of Israel; say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat flesh, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.'" In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning dew lay round about the camp. And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as hoarfrost on the ground. When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat. Exodus 16.2-4, 12-15*

The notations here are taken from “Expansions on the Book of Exodus” posted on this home page.

1“*And the whole congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.*” Vs. 2 is an incomplete sentence and spills over into the next verse which is fairly long. Compare with 15.24 when the people—compared with the “whole congregation of the people”—murmured against Moses at Marah. That is to say, the entire *hedah*, not just part of it, is named in vs. 2 as the one doing this *lun* (murmuring). Note that *lun* is used with the preposition *hal* (on, upon) to show the hostility behind it as in 15.24; that is to say, the text literally reads as “upon Moses and upon Aaron.” Though the *lun* here at threshold of the wilderness of Sin doesn't seem as intense as that of Marah, it does reveal the tense situation among the people and their inability to trust in the Lord. They hadn't even entered Sin yet the terrifying vast waste made them balk. It does have the advantage of setting the context for the rest of the chapter about how the Lord provide manna and quails. In sum, their progress from Egypt up to this point was painfully slow though on the whole they deserve credit, given the huge amount of people under such hostile conditions.

“*Would that we have died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt when we sat by the fleshpots and ate bread to the full*” [vs. 3]. While traditionally this wishful longing has been taken as lack of trust in the Lord—essentially true—it's easy to lose sight that close to a three-quarter million people find themselves in a desert environment; not only that but they were relatively unprepared. In fact, they were told to depart their homes by the Lord himself: “they were thrust out of Egypt and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any provisions” [12.29]. In other words, this lack of human preparation quickly made itself be felt. As for the verse at hand, the Hebrew has the verb “give” inserted at the beginning which reads something like “who would give that we have died,” a way of expressing frustration and anger. Such longing for death is at the Lord's hand (*b-* or literally ‘in’) being prefaced to “hand” at

least shows that the Israelites would prefer this rather than being slain by Pharaoh. Perhaps the death they had in mind was twofold: when the Lord had slain the first born during the Passover as well as the forced labor to which they had been subjected. This death ironically would have taken place by the “fleshpots” or *syr basar*, *syr* meaning pot as well as thorns or briars, so called from the idea of boiling or bubbling up or the crackling sound made when the briars were being burned. “Sooner than your pots can feel the heat of thorns” [Ps 58.9]. The idea of *syr basar* seems to represent the abundance of food....meat...which the Israelites had despite their afflictions, and *syr* can be taken as thorns, symbolic of these afflictions. In contrast to such abundance under harsh conditions the Israelites complain (again in vs. 4) to Moses that “you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.” Here the word *qahal* is used for “assembly,” not *hedah*, as in vs. 3; both are used (respectively) in 12.6: “the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel.” So when the Israelites say they are a *qahal*, they are referring to themselves as a people as a whole.

“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you’” [vs. 4]. Actually this verse is quite important because it continues through the rest of the chapter. As at Marah with the bitter water, the first instance of the people complaining (*lun*) against Moses, the Lord responds immediately and in a matter-of-fact way, taking into account their vast numbers in a desolate place. He doesn’t give Moses time to inquire about how the Lord will help, just that he will so by providing food. At Marah the Lord did not speak to Moses at first as here where he begins with “behold” or *hineh* which was noted elsewhere above, often used as a way of getting one’s attention before saying what is on your mind. *Hineh* also acts as a sign that an important utterance is about to be imparted, contrasting as it does against virtually every sentence in Exodus (as well as Genesis before it) which begins with the connective *w-* (and, then, but). This is done deliberately in order to show continuous action. For example, the last use of *hineh* is 10.4: “behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your country.”

Vs. 4 continues with “and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law or not.” Having bread drop down from the sky is the easiest way to give it, almost too good to be true. But the people aren’t to hoard the bread; instead, they are to gather a “portion” in accord with the needs for one day, *davar* being the noun as in 2.14: “Surely the thing is known.” The verbal root (same spelling) is to speak or to utter and possibly has something to do with a verbal agreement as to the portion at hand. As for the words in this verse, they read literally “the portion of a day in his day.” There follows the important *lemahan* or “in order that” with respect to proving the Israelites, *nasah* being the verb as found recently in 15.25: “and there he proved them.” That *nasah* offers an opportunity for the Lord to ask the people to follow his commandments and thus avoid diseases he set upon the Egyptians. The *nasah* at hand, however, is to see whether or not the Israelites will walk (*halak*, the simple verb ‘to go’) in his law or Torah last noted in 13.9: “that the law of the Lord may be in your mouth.” Mention of Torah is important at this early stage of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, for it helps prime them for impartation of Torah on Sinai. As for observance of the Torah at hand, surely the 13.9 reference is important, let alone Torah as pertaining to circumcision in 12.49. Despite these two references, it is unclear at this juncture as to what Torah actually means, certainly a general moral code which will shortly reach fulfillment with the Ten Commandments. “Walking” as pertaining to Torah means active observance of it, not just give lip service.

Now vs. 12 shifts to the Lord speaking to Moses from the cloud presumably while Aaron continues his address to the people and more or less repeats vs. 8 only substituting “twilight” for “evening.” The phrase *beyn haharbaym* which reads literally “between the evenings” as in 12.6, time of sacrifice for the Passover lamb. So if taken as such, the time for “eating flesh” is from one twilight through the night into the next

day and on to the time just prior to the next twilight. While that is going on, “in the morning you shall be filled with bread” or midway in between the two evenings. Only upon being satiated will the Israelites “know that I am the Lord your God,” not when they are hungry.

“In the evening quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning dew lay round about the camp” [vs. 13]. Note that the quails or *salah* “came up” (*halah*) during the twilight when it was difficult to see them fully and when most likely they were searching for a place to settle down for the night. *Halah* might refer to the quails arriving from the south or being blown off course into the center of the Sinai peninsula. *Salah* occurs three other times, twice in Numbers. “They asked, and he brought quails and gave them bread from heaven in abundance” [Ps 105.40]. The Israelites had to gather these quails before light disappeared altogether not just to obtain sustenance but to prevent wild animals from entering the camp in search of food. Once accomplished, on the next morning they found dew around the camp...not on the camp but around (*savyv*) it. Vs. 14 continues with a description of this dew: “there was on the face of the wilderness a flake-like thing, fine as hoarfrost on the ground.” *Daq* is an adjective meaning that which is beaten small, minute and can apply to a dust particle. “Two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small” [Lev 16.12]. It modifies the noun or better, the passive participle *mechuspas* which is derived from the unused verbal root *chasaph* (to strip off, to peel). And so the image presented here is something very thin and delicate held together by the cold of the desert night like *kephor* (hoarfrost) so-called because it covers (*kaphar*) the ground. “He scatters hoarfrost like ashes” [Ps 147.16].

“When the people saw it, they said to one another, ‘What is it’” [vs. 15]? Quails were easy to identify even if they might be unfamiliar to the Israelites after having lived in Egypt over four hundred years. This other material which appeared as hoarfrost in the morning twilight was quite another thing which is why they said *man hu* which translates into a question, “What is it?” Apparently this hoarfrost-like substance was new despite having spent a fairly good number of nights in the wilderness. To their puzzled inquiry Moses responded “It is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat.” So what appeared as frozen wafers turns out to be bread, something which had been revealed beforehand by the Lord to Moses.

### 9 August, Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

*But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree; and he asked that he might die, saying, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am no better than my fathers." And he lay down and slept under a broom tree; and behold, an angel touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat." And he looked and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank, and lay down again. And the angel of the Lord came again a second time and touched him and said, "Arise and eat, else the journey will be too great for you." And he arose and ate and drank and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. First Kings 19.4-8*

Reference is to Elijah shortly after his dramatic contest with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. The immediate reason for this day long journey is to escape the fury of Jezebel who frightened him more than this formidable array, that is, her strong words: “So may the gods do to me and more also if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow” [vs. 2]. And so we have quite a contrast. The array of prophets on Carmel whom Elijah slays and that of King Ahab's wife under whose patronage these prophets had operated, for she seemed completely undaunted by what Elijah had done to them.



Elijah heads off into the wilderness with no particular destination in mind, a further indication of his fear of Jezebel. Even in the desert's isolation her words kept echoing in his ears, impossible to get rid of. Given the ability for people of the time to cover considerable ground in one day, Elijah could have traveled quite a distance. When evening arrived, he gives voice to what had been on his mind since he had set out: "he asked that he might die" is rendered literally as "he asked his soul (*nephesh*) to die." *Nephesh* is used again for "take away my life." Although Elijah compares himself with his fathers, that he is the same as them, it's uncertain with whom he is comparing himself. Is he referring to more immediate predecessors such as prophets or to people like Moses and the like? Then again, he could be blurting out these words in frustration which later he must have regretted after his sudden flight from Jezebel's wrath.

After Elijah had undergone such a traumatic experience followed by a hasty, day long walk in the desert under the broiling sun, he goes to sleep for the night. An angel wakes him up by touching him which reads literally "touched in (*b-*) him." The verb *nagah* has some force because an alternate meaning is to smite. Thus the angel didn't give Elijah a gentle nudge but shook him up from sleep. Because of the darkness Elijah hadn't a clue as to who this unidentified being was. Anyway, he knew he was friendly, for otherwise there wouldn't be the cake and water nearby.

After the angel woke Elijah and told him to get up and eat, he departed before he could make his identity known. He comes a second time which could be later in the night or the night after when Elijah continued his walk in the desert with no clear destination in mind. Elijah was sufficiently fortified by the second incident, so much that he walked for forty days and nights to Horeb which is called "the mount of God," this time symbolic of a time set aside for reflection and the like with regard to the Lord. Thus the food and water were more endowed with divine strength for such a journey.

Once at Horeb, the Lord asked why he he come there (cf. vs. 9) which he repeats in vs. 13 more to test the prophet. The second question is after the Lord revealed himself in a "still small voice" [vs. 12]. The first is an adjective, *daq* which means small or fine as dust and the second is a noun, *demamah* which connotes a sense of dumbness. From this experience which is more fortifying than the bread and water provided by the angel, Elijah regains his composure and heads off to anoint Hazael as king of Syria as well as Elisha to take his place.

## 15 August, Assumption

*Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple; and there were flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, an earthquake and heavy hail...And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun with the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars; she was with child, and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery. And another portent appeared in heaven; behold, a great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven diadems upon his heads. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, that he might devour her child when she brought it forth; she brought forth a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness where she has a place prepared by God in which to be nourished for one thousand two hundred*

and sixty days...And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. Revelation 11.19, 12.1-6 & 10

The following is taken from "Notations on the Book of Revelation" which is posted on this home page.

11.19: An apt conclusion for Chapter Eleven which has the heavenly temple (*naos*) opened in heaven, implying that the one in Jerusalem has been closed or destroyed. The same applies to the ark (*kibotos*). *Kibotos* also applies to Noah: "until the day when Noah entered the ark" [Mt 24.38]. Consider this verse in light of Lk 23.45: "and the curtain of the temple was torn in two." The verse at hand does not specify who or what opens the temple; it is as though a self-actuated motion effects this. The same applies to the ark which remains closed and its contents unseen. King Solomon was the one who brought the ark into the temple which replaced the tent: "Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord to its place, in the inner sanctuary, underneath the wings of the cherubim" [1 Kg 8.6].

The ark contained "nothing except the two tables of stone which Moses put there at Horeb (cf. Dt 10.2), where the Lord made a covenant with the people of Israel when they came out of the land of Egypt" [1 Kg 8.9]. The use of nothing (*éyn*) is interesting as if to negate human curiosity. It also serves to focus attention upon the stone tables given at Horeb, also known as Sinai. God descended upon this mountain God, and the opening of the temple to make the ark visible in vs. 19 may be seen as fulfilling this manifestation. "On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightening and a thick cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled" [Ex 19.16]. The dramatic elements belonging to the heavenly and earthly manifestations of God may be perceived as a barrier: "The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai; for you yourself did charge us saying, 'Set bounds about the mountains and consecrate it'" [Ex 19.23]. Such boundary making hearkens back to John at the beginning of Chapter Eleven: "Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff and I was told, 'Rise and measure the altar and those who worship there.'"

12.1: Woman or *gune* appears in Revelation a total of nineteen times, this being the first occasion. She seems symbolic of God's people and/or Israel; Catholic tradition often identifies her with the Virgin Mary. Here *gune* is a portent or *semeion*. In light of Jn 4.48, this word can refer to supernatural events: "Jesus therefore said to him, 'Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.'" In the verse at hand, *semeion* has a specific location, heaven. Several times earlier it was noted that events unfold in a passive way, this being yet another example: appeared or *orao* in the sense of having been seen.

*Semeion-as-gune* may be outlined with three additional features, all of which connote a certain luminosity attributable to the woman:

- 1) sun with which she is clothed (*periballo*, cf. 7.9) or fully enveloped. "In them he has set a tent for the sun" [Ps 19.4].
- 2) moon (*selene*): "Behold...the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me (Joseph, Gen 37.9)." In the verse at hand, the sun is the dominant image; the moon and crown are subordinate.
- 3) crown (*stephanos*): compare with 4.4: 'twenty-four elders clad in white garments with golden crowns upon their heads.'" Note use of *periballo* regarding the woman so clothed with the sun. The "twelve stars" may represent the twelve tribes of Israel and twelve disciples; for the latter, cf. Acts 1.14: "All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, with his brothers." Here Mary is seated with the disciples just before the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

12.2: Keeping in mind the reference to the Virgin Mary and Pentecost in the last verse, the mother of Jesus may be seen in light of being in “pangs of birth” with respect to the Holy Spirit’s descent. The verse at hand reads “with child” as “having something in (her) stomach” (*gaster*).

“Writhe and groan, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail; for now you shall go forth from the city and dwell in the open country; you shall go to Babylon” [Mic 4.10]. Here Revelation’s woman clearly parallels Zion about to leave Israel for Babylon, traditional place of exile. This verse is similar to the woman’s crying out (*krazo*) and anguish (*odino*). For the former: “And Jesus cried again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit” [Mt 27.50]. For the latter: “My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you” [Gal 4.19]! Such forming or *morphoo* is Paul’s wish for the *morphe* of Christ be present in his listeners. “Though he was in the form of God” [Phil 2.6].

12.3: Another use of *orao* (appeared): note the similar location (heaven, which here as in vs. 2 can be taken as the sky above) of the “great red dragon” identified in vs. 9 as Satan. *Drakon* (dragon) is derived from the verb *derkomai*, to see clearly, most likely having in mind the way a reptile stares without blinking as is the case with mammals. This Greek word translates the Hebrew *tannin* as found in Ex 7.10: “Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent.” This dragon could also have a connection with the serpent of Gen 3.1: “Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made.” With this verse in mind, we have a clue regarding the dragon’s character, subtle or *haram*; the verbal root connotes nakedness or an uncovering, most likely to reveal malevolence. “They lay crafty plans against your people” [Ps 83.3]. Note that *therion* is the LXX translation for wild creature as found in 11.7: “the beast that ascends from the bottomless pit.”

Four characteristics of this dragon:

1) red or *purros* in the sense of being fiery in color. Cf. 6.4: “And out came another horse, bright red.” Also cf. Sg 5.10 where this word is used in the LXX: “My beloved is all radiant and ruddy.” The Hebrew adjective is *’adam*, closely related to *’adam* or man and referring to the earth’s color from which he had been formed.

2) “seven heads” or *kephale*. Frequent reference had been made in these Notes with regard to the sacred number seven, mostly in connection with the seven churches and as well as with regard to Jericho. *Kephale* can represent the source of authority, and here is the exact opposite of Jesus Christ’s authority over his church (of which seven were noted in Revelation): “He is the head of the body, the church” [Col 1.18].

3) “ten horns” or *keras*. “A fourth beast, terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong...different from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns” [Dan 7.7]. The Chaldean word *qarnayn* closely resembles the Hebrew *qeren* which connotes strength and power. Horns were also used as part of the altar of sacrifice: “And you shall make horns for it on its four corners” [Ex 27.2].

4) “seven diadems” or *diadema*. Another “anti-seven” number to the seven churches of Revelation. Compare with *stephanos* (crown) in 3.11: “so that no one may seize your crown.” *Diadema* differs from *stephanos* in the sense that it represents royal authority; the latter can apply to derived authority. In the verse at hand, *diadema* may signify that the beast shared his authority in imitation (in the sense of mockery) of the seven churches. That is, this authority is essentially fractured into “seven heads” with one body of a dragon.

12.4: This verse reveals the enormous size of the dragon who apparently is positioned on earth by reason of his proximity to the woman. *Oura* or tail is the source of its power. “And the prophet who teaches lies is the tail” [Is 9.15], that is, once the Lord has severed head and tail from Israel (cf. vs. 14).

The dragon brings down one third of the stars to earth; *suro* is the verb used here which implies a dragging. “Saul...dragged off men and women and committed them to prison” [Acts 8.3]. A result of such dragging is a casting of the stars (literally) “into (*eis*) earth,” that is, making them fall and impact the earth similar to meteorites. For a comparable reference: The little horn “cast down to the ground some of the host of the stars and trampled upon them” [Dan 8.10].

Since the dragon had destroyed part of the firmament, we may assume that this occurred at night. Perhaps this is why he was able to be present when the woman was about to give birth; it was easy for him to sneak up on her. As the verbal root for dragon (*derkomaï*) suggests, this beast...with all seven heads...is staring at the woman in anticipation of her son’s birth. “Before she was in labor she gave birth; before pain came upon her she was delivered of a son” [Is 66.7]. Contrast the dragon and these stars with the Magi and the singular star at Jesus’ birth: “For we have seen his star in the east and have come to worship him” [Mt 2.2].

*Katethio* or to devour: the opposite to the Magi’s act of worship. “Who devour widows’ houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation” [Mk 12.40]. King Herod, who inquired about the birth of Jesus Christ from the Magi, is a type of dragon ready to devour him.

12.5: Compare this verse to Christ’s birth: “And she gave birth to her first-born son” [Lk 2.7]. This verse calls Jesus *prototokos* as in Col 1.15: “He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.” *Prototokos* is closely related to Christ as *eikon* (image) of God who remains invisible. Such an image mirrors the activity of the invisible God which in the context of vs. 5 is to rule or *poimaino*; this verb fundamentally means to shepherd (cf. Lk 17.7). This sense is lacking in the context of vs. 5 which is partly lifted from Ps 2.9: “You shall break them with a rod of iron.” Here the LXX uses *poimaino* for to break which in Hebrew is *rahah*. In light of this, consider Ps 23.4: “Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” Here rod or *shevet* can mean tribe; staff or *mishhan* implies a support of any kind.

In the verse at hand, *rabdos* (rod) signifies rule as found in the LXX of Ps 45.6: “Your royal scepter is a scepter of equity.” Its composition of iron shows that such rule is harsh with respect to the nations (*ethnos* or *goym*), traditional foes of Israel.

The verb *arpazo* (to snatch) is in the aorist passive, another instance where action is taken with respect to the person or object at hand (here, the male child) to indicate divine intervention. Note the two-fold direction of this snatching: “to (*pros*) God” and “to (*pros*) the throne;” compare with the ascent of Elijah (2 Kg 2.11) and Enoch (Gen 5.24) as well as Christ’s ascension (Acts 1.9).

*Thronos* (throne) is the place from which this child will wield his “rod of iron.” Cf. Rev 3.21: “He who conquers I will grant him to sit with me on my throne as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.”

12.6: The woman’s flight happens after her son was born, the immediacy of this flight signified by “and” which connects this verse with the previous one. Compare her escape with the Holy Family’s descent into Egypt: “And he (Joseph) rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and

remained there until the death of Herod" [Mt 2.14]. As noted with regard to vs. 4, the action took place at night; the same may apply to the woman which parallels that of the Holy Family.

*Eremos* or wilderness in the sense of an uninhabited region. "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness" [Jn 1.23], that is, I, John the Baptist am a voice in an uninhabited region. *Eremos* is comparable to the Hebrew *midbar*: "that they may serve me in the wilderness" [Ex 7.16]. This word is derived from the verbal root *davar*, to speak; implied is the wilderness is a place of speaking, where God communicates himself to prophets, etc. In the verse at hand, *eremos* is a special place (*topos*) "prepared (*etoimazo*) by God" or as this word connotes, a place which stands ready waiting to receive the woman. In conjunction with *eremos* and John the Baptist, cf. Mt 3.3: "Prepare the way of the Lord."

This prepared place is also one of nourishing (*trepho*), a verb commonly associated with infants. "Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly father feeds them" [Mt 6.26]. Perhaps the woman, like John the Baptist, was nourished in the *midbar*...the place of speaking...by the voice which was crying in that spot. Such nourishing has a temporal duration, 1260 days, the same amount of time (in the sense of *kairos*, a special event or occasion) as the two witnesses who prophesied, 11.3. Thus the woman shares in this capacity of prophesying, again hearkening back to John the Baptist.

12.10: Here John interjects himself as witness, the first time since 11.1 when he was given a measuring rod to measure the temple. The source of this "loud (*megalos*, in the sense of great) voice" is not specified, either coming from God or an angel. Compare this indeterminate voice with the one at Christ's transfiguration: "and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son" [Mt 17.5].

Five elements which "have come," that is, after the dragon has been cast down to earth:

- 1) salvation (*soteria*): "For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed" [Rom 13.11].
- 2) power (*dunamis*) in the sense of might: "You will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven" [Mk 14.62].
- 3) kingdom (*basileia*): "Receive the kingdom of God like a child" [Mk 10.15].
- 4) authority (*exousia*): "For I have not spoken on my own authority" [Jn 12.49].

The first three belong to God whereas the fourth belongs to Christ. What effects them is that the "accuser (*kategor*) of our brethren" or the dragon has been cast down (*ballo*, another passive use of a verb). Note the first person plural here as with "our God." The dragon-as-*kategor* accuses (*kategoreo*) "our brethren" continuously. He does this "before (*enopion*) God." "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them" [Job 1.6]. The Hebrew for among is *betok* which signifies being right in the midst of a group. The Hebrew for before is *hal*, literally on or right at the presence of someone.

## 16 August, Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

*Wisdom has built her house, she has set up her seven pillars. She has slaughtered her beasts, she has mixed her wine, she has also set her table. She has sent out her maids to call from the highest places in the town, "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!" To him who is without sense she says, "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Leave simpleness, and live, and walk in the way of insight."*  
Proverbs 9.1-6

The following is taken from “Expansions on the Book of Proverbs” which is posted on this home page.

Vs. 1: We don’t have the speaker identified at the beginning of this new chapter after wisdom herself had held forth, but presumably it is King Solomon reflecting back upon the role of wisdom in his life and for which he is famous.

The verbal root for “has built” is *banah* from which “house” is derived, *beyth* (cf. 3.33). For the former, cf. 14.1: “Wisdom builds her house, but folly with her own hands tears it down” (NB: the Hebrew of this verse opens with ‘wisdom of women’).

*Chatsav* is the verb for “has set up” which fundamentally means to cut, to hew and is the only use of the term in Proverbs. “That you have hewn here a tomb for yourself, you who hew a tomb on the height” [Is 22.16]? Thus *chatsav* with reference to the seven pillars means they are carved out as from stone. In the verse at hand, this verb pertains to the seven “pillars” or *hamud*, the only reference in Proverbs. “His legs are pillars of marble” [Sg 5.15]. The number seven can refer to the seven days of creation which in wisdom’s house, is representative of these days. Nothing is said as to the house’s shape but can be taken as a round structure with the seventh pillars representing the day on which the Lord had rested from his creation.

Vs. 2: Here wisdom prepares a feast to be held in her house of seven pillars consisting of three parts:

1) “Slaughtered” or *tavach*, the only use of this verb in Proverbs which can apply to the offering of a sacrifice. “In the day of your anger you have slain them, slaughtering without mercy” [Jer 2.21].

“Beasts” or *tevach* is a noun derived from this verbal root and noted last in 7.22.

2) “Mixed” or *masak* occurs next in vs. 5, “Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed.” There are three other biblical references to this noun. In the two verses, such mixing or mingling concerns “wine” or *yayn* found last in 4.17 but not noted there.

3) “Set” or *harak* which means to put in order or to place together, the only use of this verb in Proverbs. “I have prepared a lamp for my anointed” [Ps 132.17]. In the verse at hand, *harak* pertains to wisdom’s “table” or *shulchan*, the only use of this noun in Proverbs and suggests something spread out as food, implements to eat it as well as any decorations. “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies” [Ps 23.5].

Vs. 3: Wisdom remains in her house of seven pillars and sends out representatives instead of herself going out as at the beginning of Chapter Eight.

*Shalach* is the verb for “has sent out” noted last in 6.19 and here refers to wisdom’s “maids” or *naharah*. “There will be enough goats’ milk for your food, for the food of your household and maintenance for your maidens” [27.27].

Like wisdom had done at the beginning of Chapter Eight, her maiden representatives *qara’* or “call” (cf. 8.4) on the highest “places” or *gaph*, this word having two other biblical references, both in Exodus (21.3 & 4) with the former being cited: “If he comes in single, he shall go out single.” Here *gaph* is “himself” which means the back or body, hence one’s self. Since the maids sought out these highest places—and wisdom picked them out beforehand—they had to cry out much more loudly than wisdom had done at the gates and portals. Surely their presence on such heights (presumably the Jerusalem temple fit that condition) would draw attention.

*Qereth* is the noun for “town” and has three other references in Proverbs plus another in Job. “By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked” [11.11]. Chances are *qereth* is derived from the verbal root *qara’* noted in the verse at hand.

Vs. 4: Apparently these are the only words the maidens shout out from the *gaph* of vs. 3, for this verse refers to “she” who does the talking through vs. 6.

*Pety* is the adjective for “simple” as in 8.5 when wisdom was out and about in the city, and the maids are simply echoing her original summons. It is used here with the verb *sur* (‘turn in’) noted last in 5.7 with “here” being not the high places of the town but wisdom’s house with its seven pillars.

Wisdom commences her address after the brief summons by her maids addressing the person “without sense” or literally “lacking heart.” The verb is *chasar* and the noun is *lev* (6.11 and 8.5, respectively). Wisdom speaks without fanfare or without that *qara’* or calling done by her maids.

Vs. 5: *Lakah* is the common verb for “come” with the invitation to “eat” wisdom’s bread. The verb *lachim* (cf. 4.17) is the verbal root for *lechem* (cf. 6.8) or “bread.”

*Shatah* is the verb for “drink” noted last in 4.17. In the verse at hand, such drinking is that “wine” (*yayn*, cf. vs. 2) that wisdom had “mixed” or *masak* (cf. vs. 2). *Yayn* is prefaced with the preposition *b-* or “in” reading “drink in the wine.”

Vs. 6: This verse completes the short address by wisdom begun in the previous verse. *Hazav* is the verb for “leave” noted last in 4.6 and used here with “simpleness” or *peta’ym*, the alternate form of *pety* noted last in vs. 4.

### 23 August, Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

*Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Your fathers lived of old beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods...And if you be unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.'" Then the people answered, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods; for it is the Lord our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went and among all the peoples through whom we passed; and the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land; therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God."* Joshua 24: 1.2, 15-18

This passage is towards the end of the book and is preceded by Joshua having summoned “all Israel, their elders and heads, their judges and officers” in 23.2. That is to say, he knew death was not far off and wished to address everyone by way of encouragement as to the settlement of Canaan which was still in the process of being subdued. In the opening words of the passage Joshua “gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem” to make a covenant. In other words, we have two gatherings: the first has the verb *qara’* or

to call in the sense of summons and is more formal. The second uses the verb *yasaph* which fundamentally means to add or to increase to an existing amount or number. It suggests that the people had been scattered throughout Canaan and needed to be together as one. Both mention Israel but are at pains to list tribal officials, etc., which is perhaps Joshua's real intent. That is to say, he wishes to communicate to them what he wishes which they will pass on to those under them. That will be an easy task since all Israel is present. While this is taking place in a still semi-hostile environment (Canaan hasn't been subjected totally as yet), those present in both instances must have been on continuous guard against attack.

The place of the first summons isn't listed whereas the second is at Shechem. Given the close connection between the just mentioned *qara'* and *yasaph*, the two could have been at the same place and at the same time or at least very close together. After all, everyone knew Joshua was on the point of death. Perhaps that's why the two aren't distinguished that clearly.

For both Joshua and Israel Shechem was important by reason of being the burial place of Joseph (cf. 24.32): "it (Shechem) became an inheritance of the descendants of Joseph." Everyone present knew this hearkened back to the revered memory of Joseph who invited his father and brothers into Egypt where they remained for some four hundred years. Actually Joseph saved the people single-handedly, and the people owed their lives to him. The people were gathered around his remains in the land that once belonged to them, was lost for four centuries, and now was in the process of being not so much conquered but reclaimed. Joshua doesn't speak in these terms but means it. Actually, it's something he didn't have to say since every Israelite was fully aware of the situation.

The people responded vigorously yet with some undisclosed shame to Joshua's most important desire, namely, whether the people will serve the Lord or "the gods your fathers served" [vs. 15]. That had been and will continue to be a bone of contention, and everyone knew they were caught in between these two forms of worship. Although the people shouted out with one voice *chalylah* or "far be it from us" (it derives from a verbal root meaning to profane), Joshua and those saying it knew it was half-hearted. Nevertheless, this was the best they could do. Immediately after the collective *chalylah* the people blurted out the familiar words of how the Lord brought them from Egypt. They go on for the rest of the passage which essentially must have bored Joshua.

At least at this stage of his life he could see a glimmer of hope for the future though given past experiences, that was tentative. On top of Joshua's mind was a worthy successor, for he had performed in outstanding fashion after Moses. Given the large assembly of people, the Canaanites weren't dumb. They knew something was afoot by all Israel making its way to Shechem and must have inserted some spies to see what was going on. They too knew Israel's struggle between worship of the Lord and the temptation to adapt to local deities. They reasoned that instead of outright military confrontation, wearing away at the reason Israel returned to Canaan—to worship the one Lord—might be the best way to bring them down.

### **30 August, Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**

By way of convenience, vss. 3-5 are included in the following passage.

*And now, O Israel, give heed to the statutes and the ordinances which I teach you and do them that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, gives you.*



*You shall not add to the word which I command you nor take from it; that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. Your eyes have seen what the Lord did at Baal-peor; for the Lord your God destroyed from among you all the men who followed the Baal of Peor; but you who held fast to the Lord your God are all alive this day. Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land which you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them; for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there that has statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day?*

Deuteronomy 4:1-2 & 6-8

Chronologically speaking, this passage should be before the previous one.

What is recounted here comes on the heels of the Lord's refusal to have Moses enter the Promised Land although he was granted permission to view it from atop Mount Pisgah. Interestingly, Moses speaks of this favor on one hand and punishment on the other towards the beginning of the Book of Deuteronomy. However, historically speaking, the incident takes place at the end of Moses' life and is recorded towards the end of Deuteronomy. While this may appear to be a contradiction, the most basic elements of existence—space and time—are relegated to secondary importance. Secondary with regard to what Moses is about to say concerning the primacy of divine ordinances, precepts, law and their observance through learning or *lamad* and the Torah. It's as though Moses is preparing the people to form one giant yeshiva, to use a term from later in Jewish history. Within this yeshiva...the land of Canaan...the people will be free to study Torah.

It was Joshua, however, whom the Lord allowed to lead his people into Canaan. With this in mind, the small *hatah* or “now” takes on special significance, as though Moses (who is speaking) wishes to turn attention away from himself and hasten the people along to their final destiny. Most stories about invasion or conquest center up strategy and motives, important in themselves, although the major difference between them and Israel doesn't concern such matters. Instead, Moses reminds the people of the “statutes and ordinances” which he teaches (present tense) the Israelites, *lamad* being a verb involving chastising as well as getting accustomed to something. Thus *lamad* is more comprehensive in scope than mere learning as it applies to things divine.

Although the Lord has intended the people to return to their homeland after four hundred years in Egypt and after forty years of wandering in the Sinai wilderness, the land of Canaan is secondary. The primary task is to focus upon *lamad* which could take place just about anywhere else. But since *lamad* is bound up intimately with the Promised Land, to engage in *lamad* within it is like nothing else. In other words, *lamad*, the people doing it and the land are one.

A refinement on the statutes and ordinances is the “word” or *davar* which Moses imparts. That is to say, the people are neither to add nor subtract from this divine *davar* (word as expression) which is why the practice of *lamad* is so important. From the singular *davar* flow the plural commandments.

Skipping to vs. 6 of the passage at hand, Moses says “keep them and do them” which has the verb *shamar* for the former with abundant references in lengthy Psalm 119 concerning the Law or Torah. In other words, to understand what *shamar* means in the Deuteronomy passage, read this psalm with attention to

the occurrences of *shamar* in Psalm 119. Note that *shamar* in vs. 6 follows “to take possession of it” (the land) in vs. 5, *yarash* which also means to inherit...and to inherit something means that another person such as a parent had it before you did. In this case the parent would be traced back to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob or before the tribes entered Egypt at Joseph's invitation. And so the notion of *yarash* as possess/inherit with regard to physical territory is bound up with *shamar* of divine precepts which ultimately means the Torah. Such is a further spelling out, if you will, of *lamad* and the Promised Land above.

Although the passage at hand deals outwardly with the conquest or re-taking of the Promised Land or Canaan, the people whom Israel is now confronting don't necessarily have to be destroyed. Moses can't hammer home enough the idea that Israel is coming into Canaan not to conquer but to have it as a place...a yeshiva...to *lamad* the Torah. If non-Israelites can see this (and unfortunately they don't; often the same applies to Israel herself), the *lamad* so carefully laid out will make the Canaanites stand in admiration of Israel's practice of it. That's why in vs. 6 Moses puts into their mouths the words “Surely this nation is a wise and understanding people.” Also in vs. 8 Moses says, “as all this law (*torah*) which I set before you this day.”

### 6 September, Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

*Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes. Isaiah 35.4-7*

The following is excerpted from “Expansions on the Book of Isaiah” also posted on this home page.

35-Vs. 4: Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you."

*Mahar* is the participle for “fearful” and fundamentally means to be hasty or rash as in 32.4. Instead of this attitude the Lord bids the exiles to be “strong” and not to “fear,” *chazaq* (cf. vs. 3) and *yare'* (cf. 25.3).

The Lord will come with “vengeance” or *naqam* (cf. 34.8) as well as “recompense” or *gemul* (cf. 3.11).

*Yashah* is the verb for “save” noted last in 33.22. Note that all three are to happen in the indeterminate future as with all the promises in this chapter.

35-Vs. 5: Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

Note the similarity of the two verbs, “opened and unstopped” or *paqach* and *patach*. The former more specifically refers to eyes as is the case at hand and found next in 37.17: “Open your eyes, O Lord, and see.” The latter is more suggestive of loosening and found last in 26.2 but not noted there.

35-Vs. 6: then shall the lame man leap like a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert;

Three words of special force: 1) *dalag* or “leap” as in Sg 2.8: “Behold, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills,” 2) *ranan* or “sing for joy” (cf. vs. 2) and 3) *baqah* (cf. 7.6). With respect to #3, *midbar* and *haravah* are mentioned (cf. vs. 1).

35-Vs. 7: the burning sand shall become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

A similarity between “pool and “springs” or *‘agam* (cf. 19.10) and *mabuah*, the latter having two other biblical references one of which is 49.10 but not noted there: “by springs of water will guide them.” Jackals are mentioned last in 34.23.

### 13 September, Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

*The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I turned not backward. I gave my back to the smiters and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been confounded; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up.* Isaiah 50.5-9

The following is excerpted from “Expansions on the Book of Isaiah” also posted on this home page. The notations are somewhat abbreviated because they are situated within the larger context of that document to which reference should be made.

50-Vs. 5: The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I turned not backward.

The Lord opening the servant’s ear concerns what is expressed in the previous verse. *Lamad* has the affect of not making one “rebellious” or *marah* (cf. 3.8) nor of turning backward, *sug* (cf. 42.17).

50-Vs. 6: I gave my back to the smiters and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

Such words are the result of the servant having paid attention to the Lord as in the last two verses. In other words, he has perfected the art of *lamad*, if you will, which leads to misunderstanding and abuse by the majority of people to whom he is sent.

50-Vs. 7: For the Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been confounded; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame;

*Hazar* (cf. 49.8) is the direct result of *lamad* which serves not to confound the servant, *kalam* (cf. 45.17). Compare *kalam* with *bosh* (cf. 49.23) in this verse, “put to shame.”

50-Vs. 8: he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me.

*Tsadaq* is the verb for “vindicates” (cf. 45.25) and pertains to being made righteous. This, of course, is the Lord who is “near” or *qarov* (cf. 33.13). Compare with *nagash* or “come near” (cf. 49.20) which is a challenge for anyone to approach this divine *qarov*, if you will.

The servant imitates the Lord, if you will, by asking two rhetorical questions impossible for anyone to answer except the Lord. *Ryv* or “contend” (cf. 49.25) is his challenge which takes place after having suffered as depicted in vs. 6 though that verse says nothing about him being put to death.

*Bahal mishpat* or “adversary” means literally here “master (of) judgment.”

50-Vs. 9: Behold, the Lord God helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up.

*Hen* or “behold” (cf. 49.16) is intended more for those whom the servant is addressing as in the last verse. With divine help (*hazar* being the verb, vs. 7), no person can declare the servant guilty, *rashah* (cf. 48.22).

The second sentence is reminiscent of Ps 39.11: “When you chasten man with rebukes for sin, you consume like a moth what is dear to him; surely every man is a mere breath.”

## 20 September, Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

*Let us lie in wait for the righteous man because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions; he reproaches us for sins against the law and accuses us of sins against our training...Let us see if his words are true, and let us test what will happen at the end of his life; for if the righteous man is God's son, he will help him and will deliver him from the hand of his adversaries. Let us test him with insult and torture that we may find out how gentle he is and make trial of his forbearance. Let us condemn him to a shameful death, for, according to what he says, he will be protected. Thus they reasoned, but they were led astray, for their wickedness blinded them, and they did not know the secret purposes of God nor hope for the wages of holiness nor discern the prize for blameless souls; for God created man for incorruption and made him in the image of his own eternity, but through the devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his party experience it. Wisdom 2.12 & 17-20*

NB: vss. 21-4 are included though they are not included in today's excerpt.

The Wisdom of Solomon begins with a contrast between those who love wisdom (*sophia*) and those who do not, hence a plot by the latter to slay the righteous man. Actually their machinations begin in 2.1 with the words, “For they reasoned unsoundly,” the verb *logizomai* meaning to calculate or reckon with the adverb (not) *orthos* which fundamentally means uprightly or correctly. Such *logizomai* is the theme of today's passage and flows over into *enedreuo*, the verb for “lay in wait” or to set an ambush. On the other hand, a righteous person is exactly opposite to these calculating people, that is to say, he is “inconvenient” or *duschrestos*, literally hard to use and hence hard to manipulate or fit into the picture of *logizomai* and all that involves. This is manifested by his opposition to their “actions” or *ergon* which has a variety of meanings such as business and the result of work or effort.

The “law” (*nomos*: also as usage, custom) is the divine Torah which the righteous man uses as a means to rebuke the “training” of those opposing him, *paideia* meaning education which begins in youth and

continues well into adulthood. In other words, *paideia* represents a way of living...a lifetime pursuit...which in the case at hand has become perverted due to *logizomai* or the desire to calculate and scheme.

Despite the opposition of the conspirators or those who engage in *logizomai* as a result of an ill-conceived *paideia* throughout their lives, they have acquired a certain patience which the righteous man may be lacking in his zeal for Torah. That's why they can wait as manifested by their mutual injunction, "Let us see" or let's wait if his words against us prove true. They decide upon murder by considering the "end" of his life, *exbasis* meaning literally a going forth or out. Such *exbasis* has a parallel, *exodus* or path out which also applies not just to death but a going to heaven. Because the righteous man is so identified with the Torah, it's natural to consider him as God's son which means that God will come to his assistance if his life is threatened.

Now the *logizomai* of the wicked moves into action after they have deliberated among themselves for some time. They decide upon testing the righteous man with "insult and torture" or *hubris* and *basanos* (wanton violence including outrage and inquiry by causing pain). In this way they hope to uncover his gentleness and forbearance, *epieikeia* and *anexikakia*, that is to say, his reasonableness and (literally) ability to sustain evil. Their putting him to death in an ignominious fashion parallels the scheming of Jezebel, wife of King Ahab, with regard to the innocent Naboth (cf. 1Kg 21.13). These conspirators are taking a gamble going against the just man's "words" or *logoi*—words of expression—claiming that he will be "protected" or *episkope* (a watching over or *epi*-, visitation).

Vs. 21 brings up again the verb *logizomai* or "thus they reasoned" or thus they calculated. However, such *logizomai* results unwittingly to being led astray, *planao* connoting a wandering about in aimless fashion. It takes the form of being ignorant of God's "secret purposes" or *musterion* which here is a secret revealed by God known only to the person who has been initiated into it. Thus the fundamental idea of initiation is diametrically opposed to *logizomai* as used throughout this drama.

*Logizomai* also fails to account for God having made man for "incorruption" or *aphtharsia* which is used with the preposition *epi* or "upon." The alpha privative signifying lack of corruption is equivalent to being made in the "image" or *eikon* (cf. Gn 1.26, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness') of divine "eternity" which here is rendered literally as "his own own-ess," the noun *idiotes* meaning one's own peculiar nature. In contrast to this, the except concludes with reference to the devil who is the exemplar of *logizomai*. He is moved by "envy" or *phthonos* (also as ill-will) to introduced death into the world, and those who concur with him may be said to belong to his "party" or *meris* (part, portion) and hence "experience" death, *peirazo* meaning to be put to the test. Such is the experience exactly opposite to the *hubris* and *basanos*...the "insult and torture"...inflicted upon the righteous man who lived in accord with the Torah.

## 27 September, Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

*Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him and took some of the spirit that was upon him and put it upon the seventy elders; and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did so no more. Now two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad and the other named Medad, and the spirit rested upon them; they were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. And a young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are*

*prophesying in the camp." And Joshua the son of Nun, the minister of Moses, one of his chosen men, said, "My Lord Moses, forbid them." But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!" Numbers 11.25-29*

Vs. 14 sets the tone for this excerpt when Moses blurted out to the Lord, "I am not able to carry all this people alone, the burden is too heavy for me." The Lord responds immediately by saying that he will appoint seventy elders. Then he bids the people to consecrate themselves in preparation for eating meat (cf. vs. 28) after which Moses complained about the impossibility of feeding such a multitude. And so the incident at hand takes place in the context of the most basic problem of them all, how to satisfy hunger...not only that but to provide food in the desert for a huge number of people.

Now it is time for Moses to pick out seventy elders. These men had proved themselves since their departure from Egypt and came recommended by the people...*katav* or "registered" as noted below concerning Eldad and Medad. Next Moses "placed them round about the tent" [vs. 24], that is, the tent of meeting. All along the Lord was watching this, and once Moses had the seventy form a circle around the tent, he entered the tent as was his custom to commune with the Lord. It was difficult if not impossible to keep this concealed from the people, even though the tent is situated outside the camp (cf. vs. 26). Nevertheless, they couldn't help but be drawn by the descent of the cloud which stood out starkly against the deep blue sky of the desert. Once inside the tent, the Lord spoke (*davar*; the noun connotes word as expression) with Moses, the substance of which was not revealed. Most likely the Lord was both consoling and rebuking Moses for having whined about his inability to govern the people effectively.

All the while the seventy elders were outside the tent not exactly knowing why they had been summoned. Curiosity must have gotten the best of them and were tempted to listen in. However, they were prevented by the cloud's presence which acted as a shield. Finally after a conversation which must have lasted longer than usual—by now both the elders and people were familiar the Lord visiting Moses in the tent—the Lord "took some of the spirit" that was "upon" Moses. The verb here is *'atsal* which has four other biblical references and means to join or connect much like roots of a tree under the ground. With this in mind, we could say that the Lord didn't so much take any of the *ruach* or spirit that already was upon (*hal-*) Moses but connected it...strung it along, if you will...to the seventy elders. As for the *ruach* being upon Moses, there doesn't seem to be any direct earlier references though there was no question that the Lord had chosen Moses as leader of Israel. Moses was aware of this, of course, but perhaps not as much as he should have been until this juncture. The taking (or extending, *'atsal*) of the *ruach* meant that the Lord was extending what was already his...something like God taking God which cannot be divided as wind or *ruach* cannot be divided.

The immediate consequence of this *'atsal*—extension of the divine *ruach* from Moses—was that the elders began to prophesy, *nava'* being the verb which fundamentally means to bubble up or pour forth (words). Then for some reason or other it came to an abrupt stop as the elders remained around the tent of meeting. The Lord informed Moses about this, that it is a fine gift but not limited to them alone. That's why two others, Eldad and Medad are mentioned or upon whom the divine *ruach* had "rested," *nuach* which connotes a residing or taking up residence. In other words, what began as a stringing out or weaving a connection, that is, an *'atsal*, becomes a permanent abiding. Note that Eldad and Medad were in the camp. Apparently Moses foresaw the Lord's descent only for seventy chosen elders as a potential problem, so he moved the tent quickly as not to arouse attention. These two men had been "registered" (*katav* meaning to write down) or made official representatives of the people just like the elders had been

though that is not explicit. So when Eldad and Medad began to prophesy within the camp, not outside it as with the seventy elders, people turned attention from the tent outside with the cloud resting upon it to these two men. As for their prophesying (the seventy elders included), we have no information as to what they uttered, perhaps indistinct words or another unknown language. However, everyone recognized that it came from the Lord.

Joshua was alarmed at all this and rushed outside the camp to the tent of meeting, bursting in even though the cloud was overhead, angered that Eldad and Medad has the audacity, if you will, to prophesy. Moses knew that Joshua had potential for leadership so refused to shut him up. Instead he rebuked Joshua as a lesson for the future which must have deeply impressed him. The verse (30) right after this excerpt simply says that “Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.” Perhaps Joshua remained by the tent of meeting both chastened and educated. Without anyone having to tell him to do so, he proceeded to take down the tent and bring it back to the camp. The biggest regret (as well as lesson learned) for Joshua was that he did not receive the divine *ruach*. However, that would change later when the Lord said to Moses, “Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the *ruach*, and lay your hands upon him.” That is to say, the Lord appreciated the zeal Joshua had demonstrated and did not wish to see this wasted.

#### 4 October, Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

*Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle and to the birds of the air and to every beast of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper fit for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.* Genesis 2.18-24

The following is taken from “Expansions on the Book of Genesis” already posted on this homepage.

“It is not good that the man should be alone.” *Lavad* is the word for “alone” and is comprised of the preposition *l* (to, toward) prefaced to *bad*, separation. This preposition serves to intensify the sense of aloneness as well as exclusiveness and is used only with regard to the man. Presumably this being alone didn’t apply to all which had been created earlier and were content to go along their merry way. It seems that the man, who has not yet spoken but was the subject of divine action, did not communicate that he was alone. Somehow God perceived it which is why he placed him in the garden, away from created beings and from among all the trees, that he may feel this aloneness or separation more intensely. God’s idea to make a “helper” or *hezer* suggests not making an equal to man but to assist with the tilling and keeping of the garden. That might be fine but does not suit the desire for union with the woman which takes place not in the garden but outside it (cf. 4.1). And so *hezer* is presented as such, neither as male nor female, but that will be resolved shortly. This *hezer* is “fit” for the man, that is, *neged*. *Neqed* is not an adjective to describe *hezer* but a preposition meaning “before, in front of, over against.” In other words, *neqed* evokes a being similar to man who will be before him, always in his presence. As for God planning all this, he doesn’t disclose his intent to the man but is talking aloud or better, sharing his

thoughts with Moses who was beside him. God may have gotten the idea of *hezer* from Moses insofar as Moses was *neged*...before...God as both shared the same drama.

In order to get the creation of a helper just right, God brings a multitude of creatures to man to see what he would call them (cf. Vs. 19). Such creatures had been accounted for in earlier days of creation, so this group appears to be of a wholly different order: “So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast (etc.)” *Hezer* as helper could apply to some of the animals, especially the four-footed ones, for they would be valuable in tilling the ground and hauling stuff around. The man would have not lost sight of that. God’s good intention is twofold: first, he formed them “out of the ground.” That is to say, he *yatsar* these creatures (beasts of the field and birds of the air), a verb not used as to their coming into existence but to man alone as in vs. 7: “God formed man of dust from the ground.” As we have seen, *yatsar* involves fashioning an object much like a potter compared with creation as *bara’* or to chisel. So instead of *bara’* these creatures, God *yatsar* them as he had done with man. Secondly, God made them from the ground or *’adamah*, the same matrix from which man (*’adam*) had been fashioned. A good attempt by God when he presents them to the man...like-to-like...but the man remains unsatisfied (cf. vs. 20). God must have been testing the man, presenting one species (animal) to another (man) to see what would happen. To his relief, God found that the man rejected them. Then we have Moses watching all this, perhaps in amazement and even more fearful than God that the man might pick an animal for his *hezer*. We shouldn’t be surprised that Moses was wiser than God, having keener insight into man’s need for a woman to complement him, simply not to be a helper. God must have gotten the drift of what Moses thought just by seeing the disapproval on his face.

God was extremely curious to see what the man would call the creatures, for that would give good insight into how he would comport himself in the garden as well as demonstrate whether or not his new creation was successful. First, God had to gather the animals (NB: there are two sets of creatures: those made outside the garden (*bara’* being the verb) and those he brings to the man inside the garden or those which he formed, *yatsar* being the verb). Though the two types of creation may appear identical, in truth they are different by reason not only of their coming into existence but because God brings the second group to man for naming them. On the other hand, the others—despite their priority in time—have a shadowy type of existence, one neither here nor there. Not only did God want to see what would happen but Moses did as well. Before this would come to pass, however, God had to go around the garden to gather the animals. Second comes their presentation to the man “to see what he would call them.” This calling is different from bestowing a name, for that is a permanent gesture insofar it identifies a person, place or thing for future generations. The calling (*qara’*) is more often applied to summoning a group of people together. Important as the animals may be, they do not share the same nature as the man. Hence God’s curiosity to see what the man would call...*qara’*...them. We don’t have any list nor mention of them between this point and the expulsion from the garden, let alone God’s response. What’s crucial is the use of *nephesh* for “creature” which suggests breathing and applies to the human soul as well as the animating principle of living creatures. When the man was giving names to each animal—and that must have taken a very long time—surely he had in mind his being made by God who “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” [vs. 7]. All the animals must have been disappointed as they passed by and were rejected at not being chosen as a *hezer*. The four-footed ones must have tried putting on a more impressive show since they knew they would be useful in the garden. The brothers of David must have felt quite similar when Samuel examined them as candidates for king of Israel. Each of the eleven passed by Samuel who, at God’s prompting, rejected them all (cf. 1Sam 16.6-13).



As we had seen, the divine breathing which brought the man to life is different, and the man didn't want to confuse the two, hence the word *nephesh*. Despite the delightful image of God bringing animals to the man, there's an intimation that something isn't quite right. "But for the man there was not found a helper fit for him." Here is a clear disappointment for God for which Moses must have rebuked him. After all, what was God up to? Crossing species in an attempt to come up with some weird cross-breed? Then again, *hezer* necessarily doesn't apply to a marriage partner but someone to help out in the garden, a slave or a hireling. God seems to get the idea that a *hezer* isn't what the man wants but keeps it quiet from him. I.e., one could say that both God and the man were clueless at this point. Now God decides to create something unique but with a precedent. As the other days of creation reveal, the animals had to have been created as male and female and paired off as such, so God followed that model. He recalled having made not just the man, an image of the human race, but two persons distinct in sex (cf. 1.27). That case was different, however, Day Six of creation. Both the man and woman were not put inside the garden; the mention of such a place at this juncture was unknown, let alone Eden. That means both dwelt on *'erets*, the earth, as opposed to the welcoming confines of the garden. There they could eat animals (cf. 1.30) as opposed to fruit from trees alone. There's no mention of the man and woman having to do work; that was assumed on Day Six whereas on Day Seven (Sabbath), the garden is to be tilled and kept (cf. 2.15). Such activity on Sabbath is not prohibited, for nothing can be considered as toil on Day Seven.

In order to solve the dilemma of the man not having a helpmate, God comes up with a novel idea. He puts the man to sleep and fashions a woman from one of his ribs. This is a radical departure from previous acts of creation, even having made the singular man in 1.26 followed by the division into male and female, novel in itself. In that instance their coming into existence, along with other beings on the various days of creation, were effected with ease. All God had to do was to speak and behold, there they were. Of course, Moses was present watching all this and wanted to see if God, who by now was in the habit of making something from nothing, could make something from something. To humans that sounds easy but for God, so used to speaking things into existence, did not yet have the challenge of making something from something. That says something about God; he was humble enough to take a human approach though it must have been fraught with risks (which it turned out to be, unfortunately). However, eventually he corrected it with the Incarnation of his Son. God didn't want to stray too far away from the creative challenge offered by Moses, so he stuck with something safe yet at the same time satisfying for the man. Hence the reason for the physical similarity between man and woman. This newly created being was far from being a helper. As for God, we don't have man's response to him for the woman; he was too taken-aback at what was before him. Because the woman is one step removed from God and the object of man's attention, perhaps God was jealous, hence he brought it about that the serpent would seduce her and in turn, the man. Better to get someone indirectly than directly which God had done, stealthily employing both the serpent and the woman. So if tradition considers the serpent as symbolic of deviousness, it pales in comparison with God's.

Once all the animals had paraded by the man and went their way not unlike disappointed suitors and the rejected brothers of David, God decided enough was enough. Instead of speaking the woman into existence he decided to form her; that is, from the man's rib (That's keeping in line with creating something from something). First, however, God had to perform a physical operation on the man, so he "caused a deep sleep to fall upon (him)." The verb *naphal* (to fall) is hiphael or causative: God doesn't make the fall happen directly to man but brings it on indirectly, a kind of action-at-a-distance. This intimates a certain distance between God and man, God knowing that in a short while the man will be infatuated totally with the woman. As for the "deep sleep," the noun is *tardemah* derived from the verbal

root *radam*, to sleep heavily. Not only that, *radam* means to snore, a sure sign that the man is out cold. The noun can be taken negatively as in Is 20.10: “For the Lord has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep and has closed your eyes, the prophets and covered your heads, the seers.” *Tardemah* is intensified by use of the preposition *hal* (on, upon), as though this sleep hit the man like a ton of bricks.

*Tardemah* is followed by “while he (the man) slept,” the verb being the common *yashan*. The former certainly is much deeper—not your common night’s rest—but the equivalent of being out cold from too much to drink; having been anaesthetized is another example. While in the condition of absolute oblivion, God removed a rib from which he fashioned the woman. The verb here is *banah* (to build), the first time it’s used in the Bible, so it brings a new slant to God’s grand creative enterprise we’ve witnessed thus far. So with *banah* God takes an approach different from the already mentioned speaking things into existence, even different even from the breathing or *naphach* of vs. 7 (actually the two aren’t that different). Now to build something is unique for God because this is his first attempt. As always, Moses was there to offer advice: on Mt. Sinai he had received the plan to build the ark to carry the Lord and so forth, so God may have gotten the idea of *banah* from him. To build something requires a plan, and that plan was man laying there in *tardemah*. His being out cold had the added benefit of allowing God to thoroughly examine him inside and out, and so obtain insight as how to proceed. Yes, God didn’t stray far off his plan or first venture of making something from something. However, he revealed a brilliant though arguably controversial addition to creation, human sexuality.

Upon completing this new person, the very first woman, God brought her to the man just as he had brought the animals to him in vs. 19. In the first instance God had to wait until every last one passed by the man to see the results. Here it was a different story. The man recognized the woman instantly by blurting out—there’s no better way to put it—the words, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” It is better to read, “bone from my bone and flesh from my flesh” or not from any created being apart from me whether animate or inanimate. The words “at last” are in Hebrew *paham* which means a step, or the striking an anvil. The idea seems to be that *paham* connotes that which hits or has been hit and had been done suddenly as is the case with the man who called her “woman” (*ishah*) “because she was taken from man (*ish*).” Not a very creative name, but what else could you expect upon awaking from the profound sleep of *tardemah*? If there was anything that would awake him fully from the deepest of all sleeps, it was the sight of the very first woman who was like the man in all respects except sexually. The phrase *zo’th hapaham* (includes the just mentioned *paham*) sums up the man’s astonishment and can be rendered as “this the strike.” *Ishah* as representing that which has been taken out of man forever will remind him of that *tardemah* from which he had just awoke. One wonders what God must have been thinking at this moment. Surely he was proud of his first attempt to create something from something. On the other hand, he must have had a tinge of regret that the woman will come between him and the man, an unwanted melange-a-trois. As for the woman, no record is given as to how she responded to seeing the man. Perhaps she looked at God for a brief wistful moment before noticing the man which conveyed to God what she was thinking both about him and the man. She knew that as the second human being in the garden she was a threat to God’s attention. Not only must the woman vie for affection with the man but with God.

The suddenness conveyed by *zo’th paham* in vs. 23 is spelled out, as it were, with vs. 24: “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.” Here’s yet another insult to God, for the man directs his entire attention to the woman. As for leaving father and mother, obviously they didn’t exist yet. Moses was responsible for these words which reflect how God felt after the man abandoned him with the same suddenness for newly created person. By mentioning father and

mother, Moses had in mind a good number of generations where the strong, direct attraction between man and woman has played itself out. The verb *hazav* is “leaves” which is more an abandoning—even a forsaking—which keeps in line with *zo’th paham*. As for the historical context of a father and mother, *hazav* of them occurs with Cain and Abel, brothers and first human offspring, who claim the man and woman as their parents. As a side note, we have no mention of the first humanly begotten woman. However, it is mentioned in 4.17, “Cain knew his wife,” but that’s all.

*Hazav* or abandonment of one’s parents is intensified by the cleaving of the man to his wife, that is to say, his *davaq*, a word which intimates being glued. So to unglue this *hazav* is the most difficult thing in the world. Actually, the *davaq*, an action between two physical bodies, makes the man and woman one flesh. The Hebrew way of stating “one flesh” is not unlike stating the seven days just recounted, that is to say, the man and the woman became “Flesh One.” The man is described as having abandoned his parents though in reality he had none; nothing of the like is said pertaining to the woman. However, having been fashioned from the man’s rib, her attraction to the man was greater. She had been taken from him and wants to go back into him which is her way of realizing *davaq*. Both man and woman were *harum* (naked), from a verbal root with the alternate meaning to be crafty, cunning. In fact, a slightly different alteration of this adjective is used to describe the serpent in 3.1: “Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made.” Perhaps the shared quality of nakedness between the woman and the serpent is what did him in a bit later. And so, Chapter Two concludes on the positive note that the man and women were not ashamed of being naked. That can signify that arousal and manifestation of their sexual organs was done right out there in the garden. God, along with his companion Moses were witnessing this, yet we don’t see even the slightest hint of shame or disgrace.

## 11 October, Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

*Therefore I prayed, and understanding was given me; I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came to me. I preferred her to scepters and thrones, and I accounted wealth as nothing in comparison with her. Neither did I liken to her any priceless gem because all gold is but a little sand in her sight, and silver will be accounted as clay before her. I loved her more than health and beauty, and I chose to have her rather than light because her radiance never ceases. All good things came to me along with her, and in her hands uncounted wealth.* Wisdom 7.7-11

This excerpt forms part of King Solomon's prayer which is found also in 1Kg 3.6-15 shortly after which comes the famous judgment where he was about to cut a baby in half. In the verse at hand *euchomai* is the verb for “prayed” which expresses longing with respect to governing his people. That is to say, he asks for divine “understanding and wisdom,” *phronesis* and *sophia*, the former as a minding to do something, a purpose or intent, and the latter applicable to skill or a talent. Note that *phronesis* was given to Solomon (a gift, if you will) whereas *sophia* or better, it’s “spirit” or *pneuma* (also as breath) came on its own to him but only after he had besought God. The verb here is *epikaleo*, to call upon, *epi-* as “upon” which is indicative of intense desire.

Solomon prefers “her” which seems to apply to *sophia*, although *phronesis* is also feminine. In other words, Solomon didn't have a need to prefer *phronesis* (it can apply to practical wisdom as well) because it had been given to him and hence was more interiorized. Because *phronesis* was a part of him he no reason to desire it. It simply was there all the time.

Solomon “preferred” *sophia* to worldly rule which he has already, these words suggesting that at the beginning of his reign he wasn't desirous of being king. The verb here is *prokrino*, literally as to choose before (*pro-*) others. Due to his acquaintance with *sophia* as well as *phronesis*, albeit it seems a short period of time from the text, Solomon was unable to “liken” (*homoioo*) her to any physical object of value. That is to say, he received a discerning capacity, the skill side of *sophia* if you will, enabling him to continually draw comparisons between her and everything else. No small reason did Solomon love *sophia*, *agapao* meaning not just to love but to do so with great affection. Also keep in mind that *phronesis* was always present, perhaps the agent within Solomon doing the *agapao*, if we could put it that way. Thus his ability to liken things to *sophia* is the same as *phronesis* having *agape* for it.

Solomon intuits that *sophia* has divine light which transcends anything created. That's why he compares physical “light” with wisdom's “radiance” or *pheggos* over *phos*. The former is more a kind of splendor which includes joy and glory and “never ceases.” These two words are rendered by the adjective *akoimetos*, literally as not sleeping.

### 18 October, Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

*Yet it was the will of the Lord to bruise him; he has put him to grief; when he makes himself an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand; he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities.* Isaiah 53.10-11

The following is taken from “Expansions on the Book of Isaiah” posted elsewhere on this home page.

Vs. 10: As with the previous verse, the one at hand begins with the conjunctive *v-* or “yet,” indicative of continuing action.

*Chaphets* (cf. 42.21) is a verb for the English noun “will” which reads literally, “It pleased the Lord” which here is to “bruise” or *daka'* the servant. This verse is found in vs. 5 but has no mention of the Lord as doing this bruising. Also in that verse is the verb *chalal* which translates as “put to grief.”

Without the people knowing it, the servant takes it on himself to become an “offering” for sin, *'asham*, with *nephesh* (cf. 51.23 and literally as soul; also cf. vs. 11). “But God will shatter the heads of his enemies, the hairy crown of him who talks in his guilty ways” [Ps 68.21].

Although the verse at hand doesn't speak of the servant's death—it's implied as connected with vs. 9—the servant will see his children and length of days. In other words, the divine *chaphets* (second mention) will make him “prosper,” *tsaleach* (cf. 48.15) which connotes a going over or through. More specifically, this *tsaleach* will be in the Lord's hand which is indicative of future action, possibly even beyond death.

Vs. 11: *Hamal* or “travail” (cf. 10.1) pertains to what is heavy and used without the English “fruit.” Seeing (*ra'ah*, cf. vs. 2) this travail...heaviness...will satisfy the servant, *savah* (cf. 9.20). Apparently it will happen once the servant dies and returns to life, the means by which this happens is not being spelled out here.

The servant is called “righteous one” or *tsadyq* (cf. 49.24) used with the verb *tsadaq* (cf. 50.8), “be accounted righteous.” In other words, he will possess a kind of “knowledge” or *dahath* (cf. 47.10) which will take from his *tsadyq* and transfer it to other persons. Nevertheless, he will continue to suffer on behalf of these people, bearing (*saval*, cf. 53.4) their “iniquities” or *havon* (cf. vs. 6).

### 25 October, Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

*For thus says the Lord: "Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob and raise shouts for the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, 'The Lord has saved his people, the remnant of Israel.' Behold, I will bring them from the north country and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her who is in travail, together; a great company, they shall return here. With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back, I will make them walk by brooks of water; in a straight path in which they shall not stumble; for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born. Jeremiah 31.7-9*

This passage celebrates the homecoming, if you will, of exiles from Babylon to Israel beginning with the Lord commanding his people to be joyful over the occasion. Note three words of joyous exclamation: *ranan*, *simchah* and *tsahal*. The first is a verb connoting the emitting of a loud, vibrating voice with the noun for joy. In between this and the second "for Jacob" or literally "to (*L*) Jacob," in his direction, if you will. The third also means to cause to shine and applies to the "chief" of the nations, *ro'sh* meaning the the head or top. It is reminiscent of Dt 26.19: "he will set you high above all nations that he has made." Here *ro'sh* doesn't apply to military or political influence but primacy by reason of having been chosen by the Lord.

Closely allied to the just mentioned three words are three others, namely, *shamah*, *halal* and *'amar*. The first fundamentally means to hear and reads something like "cause to hear" which is a way of expressing proclamation. In other words, emphasis is upon hearing compared with seeing, the most effective way of communicating. *Halal* or praise fundamentally means to be clear or brilliant as it pertains to the giving of an utterance. Finally, *'amar* has to do with what this passage is all about, that the the people are to say that Lord has "saved" Israel, *yashah* being the verb (also the verbal root for the proper name Jesus). As for this *'amar*, it is in imitation of the *'amar* which begins this passage, "thus *'amar* the Lord."

The Lord will create a "path" or *derek* which is "straight" or *yashar*, this being a noun commonly applied to a journey as well as the road on which it takes place. The adjective also refers to someone who is just or righteous. Note the two verbs applicable to the Lord with regard to this return: "lead and walk" or *yaval* and *halak*. The former means to flow as in the case of water whereas the latter is a common verb but it reads as "make walk." This can intimate that the Lord has to use some force or motivation for the people to set out and continue on their journey which in some way resembles the Exodus from Egypt. In both instances they require some coaxing, else they'd be tempted to return to a secure, known environment.

Note that Lord first mentions people followed by "remnant" or *sh'eryth*, those who not only survived the conflict with Babylon but the exile there. The size of this remnant isn't given though doesn't have to be necessarily small since the Israelites had managed to flourish in Babylon, some perhaps being reluctant to return to a desolate city and land.

The Lord singles out the "north" country (*tsaphon*) which seems to refer to part of Assyria (cf. 3.11; 'Go, proclaim this message toward the north') compared to the "farthest" parts of the earth, *yarkah* meaning a side which could include the other cardinal direction of south, east and west. While some of the people may be scattered in those three regions, the Lord is more focused upon the north where the bulk of the remnant is situated. *Qavats* is the verb for "gather" which means to take by the hand, among who are those whom the Lord considers most vulnerable. In sum, they will form part of a great "company" or *qahal*, this noun usually referring to a solemn assembly and applicable to the identity of Israel as a nation.

The Lord concludes by saying that he is father to Israel and singles out Ephraim as his first-born which hearkens back to Gn 28.5. That is to say, Ephraim and Manasseh, children of Joseph, were born in Egypt before the arrival of the Israelites from Canaan. Ephraim, along with Manasseh which tribe isn't mentioned in the passage at hand, was a native of a foreign country and would be returning to Israel which in essence wasn't his country but was so by reason of blood, not so much by place of birth.

**1 November, All Saints** (falls on a Sunday this year)

*Then I saw another angel ascend from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads."..After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb!" And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen." Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these clothed in white robes, and whence have they come?" I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Revelation 7.2-4, 9-14*

Compare two similar forms of movement as though both were equivalent: the angel ascending (*anabaino*) and the "rising (*anatole*) of the sun." Implied is that the angel precedes sunrise or foretells it much as twilight before dawn. He may be paralleled with the Magi of Mt 2.1: "Behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem" inquiring about the birth of Christ. I.e., they came just prior to sunrise or before his birth. Also vs. 2 contains *anatole*: "We have seen his star in the East."

Seal or *sphragis* as belonging to the "living God" intimates that by its use God has property rights, so to speak, over his creation, but this the nature of this emblem is not designated. The angel transmits the seal, as it were, to the four angels just mentioned, that is, those endowed with the power to harm (*adikeo*), a verb which also means to treat unjustly. Note the first person plural, "we," which includes the four angels as well as the angel with the seal in the previous verse. Also, this angel mentions the servants (*doulos*) of "our" God: he acknowledges their subjection to God in the same fashion as his fellow angelic beings.

Forehead or *metopon*: a verse reminiscent of Gen 4.15: "And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who came upon him should kill him."

Note the verb hear: John did not see this number as he did with regard to four angels and the other angel in vss. 1 & 2. This number (144,000) was already present rolled up, as it were, and is now fully revealed. As vss. 5-8 describe, this number can signify perfection since it is divisible by the number twelve and pertains to each of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Note the sequence, "look and "behold" which connote temporal extension of John's vision as having taken place outside the confines of space and time. Cf. back to 1.10: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." As

for the crowd or *ochlos*, it's beyond counting and includes three general categories of human society: tribe, people and tongue. Note emphasis upon tribe (*phule*), the basic division of Israel.

The next few verses recounts the wide variety of foreigners at Jerusalem who observed the disciples as they spoke after having been filled with the Holy Spirit. The "great multitude" of vs. 9 can be taken as those who were made disciples and baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (cf. Mt 28.19). The redeemed are depicted as before the throne, an inverse image of the tower of Babel: "because the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth" [Gen 11.9]. Also note the distinction in vs. 9 between throne and Lamb.

Those clad in white robes hold palm branches or *phoinix* in their hands. "So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying, 'Hosanna!'" [Jn 12.13]! Note that this fabulous bird, the phoenix, is the same term, perhaps due to the branches' resemblance to plumage. It died in the fire after which it rose, a symbol which can be applied to Jesus Christ in this triumphal procession into Jerusalem.

"Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb:" An exclamation similar to the one just noted, Jn 12.13. There the crowd welcomed Christ as he entered Jerusalem; here they acknowledge him as having entered, as it were, for he is by God the Father on the throne. *Soteria* or salvation which in Hebrew is *yeshuhah*, the proper name and function of Jesus Christ. Note here that such *yeshuhah* is first attributed to God (the Father) on the throne and then to Jesus the Lamb; i.e., both share in this salvation which is being disclosed as Revelation continues.

Around or *kuklos* pertains to the angels who form a circle not only around the throne but the elders and four living creatures, that is, an outer circumference embracing these other groups. It is as though their praise were directed through the elders and creatures towards the throne, rather before (*enopion*) it. They manifest praise by falling on their faces, a common act of submission. "Then Abram fell on his face" [Gen 17.3]. Note the two prepositions used in vs. 11: upon (*epi*) and worship (*proskuneo*), that is, on and then towards-which (*pros-*).

Vs. 12 begins and ends with Amen, a term commonly used to conclude a prayer which shows that praise of God has no beginning nor end. Seven attributes are given to God; all are joined by "and" as if to show that one flows into another.

In vs. 13 one of the twenty-four elders asks if John knows the identity and source of those persons first mentioned in vs. 9. Most likely he acts as an interpreter for much of John's vision and continues to speak through vs. 17, the conclusion of chapter seven. John defers to the elder who begins to give the source, the *pothen* (whence, vs. 13 and *ek*, from, vs. 14), which is the "great tribulation" (*thlipsis*): "For then there will be great tribulation such as not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be" [Mt 24.21]. This verse has its precedent in Dan 12.1 in conjunction with "Michael, the great prince." Those who destined to be delivered from this cataclysm are "written in the book," that is, they are rolled up, so to speak, much like the scrolls of Revelation.

Those clothed in white have come out (*ek*) of the great *thlipsis*, the location where they had washed their robes (*pluno*). This is a special type of washing: whiteness derives from redness, of blood, and is akin to baptism: "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized" [Mk 10.38]?

## 8 November, Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

*So he arose and went to Zarephath; and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks; and he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink." And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." And she said, "As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar and a little oil in a cruse; and now, I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die." And Elijah said to her, "Fear not; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me and afterward make for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord the God of Israel, 'The jar of meal shall not be spent, and the cruse of oil shall not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth.'" And she went and did as Elijah said; and she and he and her household ate for many days. The jar of meal was not spent, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord which he spoke by Elijah. First Kings 17.10-16*

Elijah is bidden by the Lord (vs. 8) to dwell in Zarephath and does so without hesitation by reason of the *davar* or “word” which not only came to him but dwelt in him as a companion. Upon reaching the city, Elijah finds a widow at the city gate which most likely was just outside where some scrub trees and the like were left after others had gotten the better wood. And so the scene was very bleak, more so by reason of the sole widow against the city walls. Obviously she didn't have the strength to go out earlier and compete with men who were stronger as they too sought to gather as much wood as locally as possible.

Elijah or rather the accompanying *davar* within him bade the widow to fetch some water and then bread which she did immediately. Her readiness to listen is remarkable, given the dire circumstance she as well as the city's inhabitants were in. This demonstrates that the widow was just as receptive to the *davar* as Elijah.

Once the widow confided in Elijah that after she finished gathering firewood, she'd cook some food, feed it to her son and then die. Perhaps she was intimating that she intended first to kill her son and then herself. After all, she was a widow which meant no one was around to look after her. Elijah perceives this and uses her desperate situation to effect a miracle of uninterrupted meal and oil which will last throughout the drought. However, the widow would have to do this discreetly because the town's inhabitants were suffering equally from the drought. In fact this drought showed no signs of relenting by reason of the words “for many days.” During that time she pretty much confined herself to her house lest others see her healthy condition while they were withering away. Then again, the widow may have given some meal and oil to relatives and friends surreptitiously so as not to arouse suspicion that she was hoarding vital food supplies.

And so the *davar* which impelled Elijah to go to Zarephath and which found an echo in the widow continues its effect, if you will, by continuing to provide food which is implied in “according to the *davar* of the Lord.”

Immediately afterward the widow's son became gravely ill and perhaps was dead...so immediate that it seems to have happened while Elijah was nearby. She found this to be a cruel divine trick and without delay summoned the prophet to restore her son to life which he did. Thus the reason why the Lord bade Elijah not just to go to Zarephath but to “dwell” there.

## 15 November, Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time



*At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble such as never has been since there was a nation till that time; but at that time your people shall be delivered, every one whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. Daniel 12.1-3*

These notations have been taken from “Expansions on the Book of Daniel” posted on this homepage.

The heavenly being who has “the appearance of a man” [10.18] continues to speak with Daniel, having begun back in that verse and continues throughout Chapter Eleven dealing with mostly historical events that will occur in the future. Now with Chapter Twelve the tone is changed, that is, non-historical elements are introduced as pertaining to the “the end,” vs. 13 or the concluding verse.

This concluding chapter begins with the now familiar phrase “at that time” or at that *heth* (cf. 11.40). So when Daniel hears all this, especially the various references, he is obliged to store them up in his memory and once his vision is over, sort them all out. However, the text does not end with Daniel bringing a conclusion to his vision, if it may be put that way. So what comes next leaves us in suspense. Will Daniel return to Israel along with his fellow exiles? That would be a huge sacrifice not unlike Moses, perhaps more, since Daniel was well established in the court of Babylon. The same happened to John the Evangelist; nothing is said of his personal fate upon completion of his vision in the Book of Revelation.

Michael is first introduced in 10.13 as “one of the chief princes” whereas here he is “the great (*gadal*; verbal root in 11.37) prince.” This being, just as mysterious as all those heavenly beings with whom Daniel has spoken, is “in charge” of the Israelites, the verb being *hamad* (to stand; cf. 11.32) with the preposition *hal-*. Literally it reads “standing upon your people” pretty much like a guardian which must have given Daniel great comfort in all that he has experienced thus far. So when the time arises (*hamad*), Michael will “stand” (*hamad*) upon his people. I.e., a double standing, if you will.

*Heth* is used a second time as one of “trouble” or *tsarah* which connotes distress, this one which will be unprecedented and universal. During this *heth* Daniel’s people or the Israelites who have been in exile...chiefly in Babylon but in other lands as well...“shall be delivered” or *malat* (cf. 11.41 which connotes escape). That is to say, they will escape the lands of their exile and return home. However, some (and this could be a sizeable number) will opt to stay where they are. They have put down roots and have accommodated themselves to foreign gods not entirely unlike the Israelites during their four hundred years in Egypt. Perhaps that’s the reason for mention of a book (cf. 10.21 for ‘book of truth’), to keep an accurate record of those who will escape.

Note that those who are asleep are not just in the earth but in the “dust” of the earth (*haphar*) which suggests mortality and origin as summed up by Gn 2.7: “Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.” From this dust those asleep “shall awake” or *quts*, a verb which implies arousing. “And sleep a perpetual sleep and not wake, says the Lord” [Jer 51.39]. Perhaps this reminded Daniel of Ezekiel (cf. Ezk 37.1-14) prophesying over the dry bones though no explicit mention of awaking is present. Anyway, this part of the vision deals with the resurrection of the dead, something new in revelation

Note the use of *holam* or “everlasting” (cf. 9.24) as it pertains to both life and “contempt” or *dera’on*, the only use of the word in the Bible which implies something abominable. In addition to this is “shame” or

*cherpah* (cf. 11.18) which isn't everlasting. Those being referred to seems to apply to every person though the context of vs. 1 as pertaining to the Israelites can be kept in mind.

*Sakal* is the verb for "wise" which connotes a looking at or a beholding. Thus the wisdom within these persons—presumably they are those who will awake to "everlasting life"—will then "shine" or *zahar*, a verb which connotes brilliance, not just the giving off of light. More generally, though, this verb means to admonish or to give a warning. "Moreover by them (divine ordinances) is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward" [Ps 19.11]. The brightness at hand is unlike anything upon earth which is why it's compared to the "firmament" or *raqyah* which applies to something that is spread out. "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters" [Gn 1.6]. While this spreading-out is visible both by day and by night, stars are seen only at night. The verb "turn to righteousness" is *tsadaq* noted last in 8.14. In other words, those who do this conversion are more worthy of honor than those who are turned.

## 22 November, Christ the King

*I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.* Daniel 7.13-14

These notations have been taken from "Expansions on the Book of Daniel" posted on this homepage.

As far as Daniel's dream goes, it is the last time he uses the verb *chazah* ('saw') which implies that while asleep, his heart and mind were awake to divine communication through "night visions." Now Daniel sees...*'aru* ('behold,' vs. 7)...a person resembling the "son of man." This is the first (and last) time such a man appears in the Book of Daniel, perhaps the person who will restore the exiled Israelites in Babylon to their homeland. Note the word "like" which means Daniel had an inkling of this son of man, perhaps a messiah or sorts. In 8.17 Daniel himself is addressed as such: "Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end."

This mysterious person arrives on the scene "with the clouds of heaven," that is, he descends to the court after the four beasts had been judged and dispensed with. There comes to mind the appearance of Jesus Christ in Mt 24.30: "and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." This appearance is preceded by people seeing the "sign" of the Son of man in heaven, *semeion* be taken as a signal or token. It is not described but intimated, possibly the cross, because once seen, everyone "will mourn."

The son of man in Daniel presents himself at court and then approaches the Ancient of Days (capital letters in the **RSV**). While drawing near, he has the full attention of the thousands and ten of thousands, all focused on what was to transpire although they knew the reason for his coming. Upon reaching the throne, the son of man is "presented" or *qerev* (cf. 6.20), a verb which means to draw near but in the sense of being escorted by some of the vast assembly present. Nothing verbal is communicated here and in the following verses which describe the interaction taking place.

Vs. 14 begins with "was given," passive mode, which suggests someone else is doing the giving, that it did not originate from the son of man himself. Involved here are "dominion, glory and kingdom" or *shaltan* (cf. vs. 12), *yeqar* (cf. 4.36) and *maliku* (cf. 6.26). Another group of threes follows, namely, "peoples,

nations and languages” whose duty is to “serve” the son of man. However, in the previous verse he is presented to the Ancient of Days who has authority over him. With this in mind, chances are the former acted as mediator for the latter although both shared in the subjection of all peoples.

From among these three attributes “dominion” or *shaltan* is singled out which connotes having mastery and therefore contains the other two. This is emphasized by the adjective *halam* ('everlasting,' cf. 2.20).

*Hadah* is the verb for “shall (not) pass away” (cf. 6.8) and connotes a sense of departing. Close to its meaning here is *chaval* (cf. 2.44) which implies a spoiling or corrupting.

With this ends Daniel's more immediate account of the dream possibly taken down by a scribe and later recounted to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. He will take up the various images and explain them in fuller detail until he reaches “the end of the matter” [vs. 28].