

28 July, Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

20) Then the Lord said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, 21) I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry which has come to me; and if not, I will know." 22) So the men turned from there and went toward Sodom; but Abraham still stood before the Lord. 23) Then Abraham drew near, and said, "Will you indeed destroy the righteous with the wicked? 24) Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will you then destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? 25) Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" 26) And the Lord said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake." 27) Abraham answered, "Behold, I have taken upon myself to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. 28) Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?" And he said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there." 29) Again he spoke to him, and said, "Suppose forty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of forty I will not do it." 30) Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Suppose thirty are found there." He answered, "I will not do it if I find thirty there." 31) He said, "Behold, I have taken upon myself to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it." 32) Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once. Suppose ten are found there." He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it." Genesis 18.20-32

Excerpt is from **Expansions on the Book of Genesis** also on this homepage.

In vs. 17 there's a shift to a singular speaker (the Lord) from vs. 16 ('the men set out'). Such alteration, as had been pointed out, is understandable given Abraham's dim vision and the semi-darkness of the evening hours. "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?" This question addressed to himself as well as rhetorically continues into the next verse. Just the fact of asking such a question means that the Lord is tempted to blurt out his intent to Abraham. Although on a number of occasions the Lord had promised Abraham that his descendants will become great, here he refers to Abraham himself becoming such, this at ninety-nine years of age, a seemingly impossible task. The Lord continues musing to himself—this as he is about to set off to Sodom—that he will not reveal his intent. Better to have Abraham's descendants evolve into a "great and mighty nation" instead of swelling him up, if you will, to this status prior to its realization. With respect to this vs. 19 reads "No, I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him." The Hebrew text has "know" instead of "chosen" (*yadah*) which is more intimate. This divine knowledge is transmitted to future generations by the task set before Abraham, namely, to charge both his children and household. The verb for

“charge” is *tsawah* or to order, command. “He will give his angels charge over you” [Ps 91.11]. This statement is unique in that it includes the household which is comprised not of family members but of people like Hagar and Eliezer of Damascus (cf. 15.2). Although closely bound up with Abraham’s family, chances are that never did the two groups intermarry, let alone associate with each other except for necessary chores, etc.

As for the *tsawah* at hand (vs. 19), it consists of two parts, the first “keeping the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice.” The verb at hand is *shamar* which had been noted several times earlier, the first in conjunction with man and his relationship with the garden, a theme easily carried over to a *shamar*...a cultivation...of the Torah: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it” [2.15]. In the verse at hand, *shamar* pertains to the “way (*derek*) of the Lord,” this being the common term for a road or highway. Abraham’s experience of *derek* related to things divine was quite problematic, that is, repeated promises in a land not his own. Although Abraham is uniquely qualified for this type of *shamar*, he’s hesitant because not many will be able to hold out as long as he and Sarah had done, including a change of names in their old age. The two qualifications for this are righteousness and justice, more or less equivalent. The next time we see this open-ended type of *shamar* with a long gestation period relative to a nation is when Israel came into Egypt and remained there some four hundred years followed by forty years of wandering in the Sinai desert.

Vs. 20 continues with the singular Lord speaking within the context of the plural men (vs. 16) and changes tone quite abruptly (it continues into vs. 21): “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave.” This is what the Lord wishes to get off his chest to Abraham, not discussing his descendants, that old and familiar topic which could turn him off because he heard it repeatedly. By bringing up the wickedness of these two cities—and surely Abraham heard about it, even as early as his uneasy encounter with the king of Sodom (14.17)—the Lord wished to bring them before Abraham as a vivid reminder of how his descendants should not comport themselves. This outcry (*zahaqah*) is suggestive of sorrow or the cry for aid, not specifically one demanding retribution. “I cried with a loud and bitter cry” [Est 4.1]. Note that *zahaqah* is not from the cities themselves but against them though the Hebrew lacks a preposition. Since Abraham had been dwelling in Canaan about ten years, he too must have joined in on this *zahaqah*, again having encountered the king of Sodom. As for the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, it is unspecified but apparently was well known. Given the location of both cities close to the lowest place on earth, the *zahaqah* funneled up and spread throughout the surrounding area, reverberating against the mountains. It was not unlike the “smoke of the land that went up like the smoke of a furnace” [19.28] that was to occur shortly. The sin is “very grave,” the verb *kavad* (to be heavy) being used. And so the cry which funnels up and spreads around returns down to Sodom and Gomorrah, thereby compounding the sin. Hence, everyone

had a tacit knowledge of what was going on down there at the lowest point of the earth's surface, a fitting image of the underworld.

“I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry which has come to me; and if not, I will know” [vs. 21]. Anyplace in Canaan relative to Sodom and Gomorrah is down, that is, near the Dead or Salt Sea. So despite the *zehaqah* which had penetrated every corner of the territory, the Lord wants to find out for himself. It's akin to 11.5 when the Lord decided to check out the city in the land of Shinar: “And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.” That city fared much better than the impending fate of Sodom and Gomorrah. At least the inhabitants weren't destroyed, just their language having been confused, something they could remedy.

Vs. 22 shifts back to the plural or “men” who headed down to Sodom while “Abraham still stood before the Lord.” By now it was past twilight and fully dark with only the stars to guide them. The distance wasn't great, and the three men wanted to reach the outskirts of Sodom before dawn in order to reconnoiter the place before entering. At least most people would be sleeping, so they would make a discreet arrival. Besides, sinning is often associated with the cover of darkness, and the majority of people would be stone-drunk, not up until much later in the morning. While the three set off Abraham remained before the Lord even though the same Lord had left for Sodom. Abraham was preparing himself for to intercede for the cities which begins in the next verse and continues to the end of the chapter. He must have been privy to the sin of the two cities both from his visitors as well as persistent rumors. Though his nephew Lot had separated himself some time earlier (cf. Chapter Fourteen), surely they remained in touch. That's why Abraham is persistent for divine mercy toward Sodom and Gomorrah: not just because of Lot and his family but for the people there about whose lives he had greater acquaintance.

“Then Abraham drew near” [vs. 23], the verb being *nagash* which also can refer to the bringing forth of an offering. “Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel” [Am 5.25]? In the case at hand, this *nagash* occurred as Abraham “stood before the Lord.” At first glance you'd think this *nagash* was sufficient but such is not the case. That means Abraham had to move—if not physically then spiritually—to get at another side of the Lord, if you will, one where he would beseech him for Sodom and Gomorrah. At ninety-nine years of age, he had nothing to loose, so why not? Abraham had the advantage of dealing with the Lord since his arrival in Canaan, including his diversion into Egypt. Thus he was familiar with how often the Lord puts people off in order to test them, almost to the point of taunting them. “Will you indeed destroy the righteous with the wicked?” Before Abraham posed this question he side-stepped the niceties of obeisance and came right out with showing his confidence and familiarity with the Lord. *Saphah* is the verb which suggests a scraping together as well as putting into a

heap. “He shall descend into battle and perish” [1Sam 26.10]. By the way, the Bible has approximately forty-seven different verbs for “to destroy.” As intimated earlier, Abraham got this information about Sodom and Gomorrah through contacts with Lot; thus he did not succumb to the common temptation to blot out the cities, knowing that there had to be at least one righteous (*tsadyq*) person within them (tragically, that turned out different).

Abraham now commences his process of bargaining with the Lord over the *tsadyqim* or righteous ones commencing with fifty and ending with ten in vs. 32. Fifty seems a low enough number to start off with: twenty-five for Sodom and twenty-five for Gomorrah. While the text is concerned with the outcry against two cities (cf. vs. 20), throughout the bargaining process one city is mentioned and that isn’t specified until vs. 26 as Sodom. Surely Abraham must have had in mind those *tsadyqim* who were subject to the tyrannical rule of their king as intimated in 14.17-24 when he came in contact with the man himself. Note the position of these supposed *tsadyqim*: first as “within the city” and followed by those “who are in it” [vs. 24]. The first position is *betok* and the second, *qerev*. The former refers to in the middle (not necessarily the geographic center) of something or of persons whereas the latter to in the midst as in the sense of at the heart of something or someone. Thus the fifty *tsadyqim* are in the middle and heart of Sodom (again, Gomorrah not mentioned). Should they be missing, the city has no reason to exist. As for their presence—and this applies to Abraham starting out with fifty *tsadyqim* and ending with ten—the number is less important than the two-fold position. All shouldn’t be thought of as gathered together under one roof but scattered throughout the city unbeknownst to each other. In vs. 24 Sodom is described as a “place” or *maqom* which as noted earlier, is an inhabited area and can extend beyond the city proper to what we’d call today suburbs. As Abraham starts his bargaining process, this larger expanse of territory seems smaller than first glance, i.e., Sodom and satellite areas, and thus a larger population mass.

“Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked. Far be that from you! Shall not the judge of the earth do right” [vs. 25]? Abraham is putting words into the Lord’s mouth, even to the point of a rebuke. *Chalylah* is the interrogative used here (‘far be it from you’) and *davar* is the noun for “thing,” a word whose verbal root is to speak. Thus that which is done and exists out there had been spoken, and that implies a source...a speaker...if you will. In this sentence Abraham is reminding the Lord that he is judge of all the earth, presupposing that he will have mercy or better, “do right” or *misphpat* (judgment). To his surprise, the Lord responds immediately: “I will spare the whole city for their (the fifty) sake” [vs. 26]. These fifty are to be found *betok* or in the middle, not necessarily *qerev* or in the city’s heart (cf. vs. 24). As in vs. 24, the Lord says that he would spare the city if fifty men were found *qerev* it, the verb there as here being *nasa’* which means “to raise” and was found in 13.6: “the land was not able to bear them.”

And so Abraham discovers that the Lord will “raise” Sodom (again, no mention of Gomorrah) for fifty *tsadyqim*, righteous men. Instead of proceeding downward in number, Abraham must have wished he had started with a higher number...perhaps a hundred or even more. Nevertheless, he is stuck with this reduced number, so the only way he can proceed is by diminution, not increase. With regard to Sodom, the Lord says the “whole place” (*maqom* again) which includes surrounding areas. How to continue now? Abraham figures that a decrease by five *tsadyqim* is adequate; any more would be outright presumption. *Ya'al* is the verb for “take upon” which Abraham uses when speaking with the Lord. It applies to that which comes first and to be willing. “Because it has pleased the Lord” [1Sam 12.22]. Thus *ya'al* is a deferential word, allowing the person addressed to make up his or her mind. The respect implied is enhanced by Abraham calling himself “dust and ashes.” That may be true, but he remains quite presumptuous of divine compassion. Such deference is a lead into asking the Lord if he’ll spare the city if forty-five *tsadyqim* are “there,” *betok* not being used. Abraham speaks not directly of sparing Sodom but of the Lord not destroying it, *shachath* being the verb first noted in 6.11: “Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight.” Use of *shachath* was a clever ploy on Abraham’s part because it reminded the Lord of that incident just before the flood. If Abraham persuaded the Lord not to repeat this worldwide flood, generations after him would consider him their greatest hero. Neither the Lord nor Abraham wish to pursue this, so the Lord allows him to continue his bargaining, now at forty *tsadyqim* [vs. 29]. The pace of bargaining picks up now, Abraham being anxious at how things turn out, at what number the Lord will relent. The downward process is interrupted by introduction of the words “I have taken upon myself to speak to the Lord,” that is, another use of *ya'al* which reveals Abraham’s tongue-in-cheek deference. It’s that way because while sincere, he is desirous to get the bargaining over with and find out exactly how merciful is the Lord. The Lord, of course, knew this from the beginning yet plays along because of the exceptional situation of Sodom and Gomorrah.

As an introduction to Abraham’s final bargaining with the Lord—he stops at ten *tsadyqim*, figuring that number is more than enough—he bids him not to be angry. The amazing thing about the entire process beginning with vs. 23 is that we don’t pick up even the slightest trace of divine anger. Abraham instinctively knows that he has pushed it as far as he dares, so he relents. That’s why vs. 33 says “And the Lord went his way.” The Hebrew reads literally, “went the Lord as finished to speak to Abraham.” So the entire fate of Sodom and Gomorrah seems up in the air, unresolved. While Abraham started off with fifty *tsadyqim* and went to ten, all the while his mysterious visitors “set out from there” [vs. 16], that is, they set out to Sodom. This advance which begins with twilight and continues into the night hours is the back-drop to Abraham’s bargaining with the Lord. This last verse of Chapter Eighteen, a prelude to the fearful destruction of two cities, ends with “and

Abraham returned to his place.” That place or *maqom* was not distance from where he had gone and is to be read in the context of vs. 23, “Then Abraham drew near.” Thus Abraham retreats, if you will, not to a physical *maqom* but to one characterized by his aloneness with Sarah by the tent under the oaks of Mamre. Does he communicate any of this to Sarah? Perhaps not for fear of being made a fool. Sarah had embarrassed herself earlier when she laughed at the prospect of giving birth at an advanced age, so why bother to make things worse? Oh that we had been privy to the conversation both had in their tent that night!

4 August, Eighteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Vs. 2: Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity...20) So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun 21) because sometimes a man who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave all to be enjoyed by a man who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. 22) What has a man from all the toil and strain with which he toils beneath the sun? 23) For all his days are full of pain, and his work is a vexation; even in the night his mind does not rest. This also is vanity. Ecclesiastes 1.2 & 2.20-23

Excerpt is from **Notations on the Book of Ecclesiastes** also on this homepage.

Vs. 2: Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

-Vanity (*hevel*): the theme of Ecclesiastes which occurs five times in this verse alone. This noun comes from a verbal root meaning to breathe, to exhale and commonly suggests anything transitory. For another sense, cf. two references:

- 1) Job 7.16: “Let me alone, for my days are a breath.”
- 2) Is 30.7: “For Egypt’s help is worthless and empty.”

Compare the outward breathing of *hevel* with *ruach* (breath, spirit) which is close in meaning. However, the latter seems to imply breathing from the nostrils as opposed to the mouth and alternately can mean to smell.

-All or everything both in nature and in human affairs which sets the stage for a distinction between these things and that which endures as symbolized in vs. 4 by “the earth remains forever.”

Vs. 20: So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun,

-Turned about (*savav*): connotes a going around, encompassing. “So all the people whom Ishmael had carried away captive from Mizpah turned about and came back” [Jer 41.14].

The verse at hand is reminiscent of King Hezekiah in his despair: “Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord” [2 Kg 20.2].

-Heart (*lev*): also as mind as in 1.13, “And I applied my mind.”

-Despair (*ya’ash*): “You were wearied with the length of your way but you did not say, ‘It is hopeless’” [Is 57.10].

Vs. 21: because sometimes a man who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave all to be enjoyed by a man who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil.

-Continuation and conclusion of the sentence begun in the previous verse.

-Skill (*kishron*): only found in Ecclesiastes; as well as 4.4 & 5.11 (as goods). This word derives from a verbal root meaning to be right.

-“For it.” The Hebrew text has the preposition *b-*, literally, in.

-Great evil (*raha*): cf. vs. 17 for the adjective (*rah*): “because what is done under the sun was grievous to me.” “But I cannot flee to the hills lest the disaster overtake me and I die” [Gen 19.19].

Vs. 22: What has a man from all the toil and strain with which he toils beneath the sun?

-“What has a man.” The Hebrew text literally reads, “What is to a man.”

-Strain (*rahyon*): cf. vs. 11, “all was vanity and a striving after wind.”

Vs. 23: For all his days are full of pain, and his work is a vexation; even in the night his mind does not rest. This also is vanity.

-“Full of pain (*makovym*):” the Hebrew text lacks “full of.” “Man is also chastened with pain upon his bed and with continual strife in his bones” [Job 33.19].

-Work (*hinyn*): first found in 1.13, “It is an unhappy business that God has given to the sons of men;” also cf. vs. 26.

-Vexation (*kahas*): cf. 1.18, “For in much wisdom is much vexation.”

-Rest (*shakav*): alternately, “to lie down.” “But before they lay down, the men of the city” [Gen 19.4].

-Mind (*lev*): as often noted, heart.

-This verse is reminiscent of Job 7.4, “When I lie down I say, ‘When shall I arise?’ But the night is long, and I am full of tossing until the dawn.”

11 August, Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

6) That night was made known beforehand to our fathers so that they might rejoice in sure knowledge of the oaths in which they trusted. 7) The deliverance of the righteous and the destruction of their enemies were expected by thy people. 8) For by the same means by which you punished our enemies you called us to yourself and glorify us. 9) For

in secret the holy children of good men offered sacrifices, and with one accord agreed to the divine law, that the saints would share alike the same things, both blessings and dangers; and already they were singing the praises of the fathers. Wisdom 18.6-9

Reference, of course, is to the Exodus of which Israel's fathers had a certain pre-knowledge, *progignosko*. It's so important that can go by the phrase "that night" which lends a deserved sense of mystery. Although fathers aren't mentioned by name, obviously there comes to mind Moses and his brother Aaron who must have communicated what they heard from the Lord to the people. Thus every participant in the Exodus may be considered as a father since they were of that generation to witness Israel's greatest saving event. As for the night at hand, on numerous occasions before the Exodus the Lord said that he was to deliver his people. It was virtually impossible to hide this fact in the context of the extended back-and-forth between Moses, Aaron and pharaoh. Then we have the plagues, visible signs of something ominous about to happen.

The text at hand suggests that even before the actual event the fathers rejoiced as if already it had happened. Such joy, in turn, was communicated to the people because it was no small thing to motivate them to get up and leave Egypt all at once. The verb indicative of this rejoicing is *ep euthumeo* which is comprised of the preposition *epi-* and the adverbial form *eu-*, upon and well (*euthumeo* being a verb unto itself). In the verse at hand the object of the verb is *orkros* or oath which is modified by the adjective *asphales*, literally safe from falling. In such oaths which are safe-from-falling, Israel's fathers, notably Moses and Aaron, had put their trust, *pisteuo* also as to have faith.

Expectation of *soteria* or deliverance (also means salvation) is presented almost as an understatement in light of what was said above. *Prosdechomai* or to admit, be capable of, is intensified by the preposition *pros-* prefaced to the verbal root, direction towards-which. You'd have to be deaf, dumb and blind not to know that something big...very big...was in the works. *Apoleia* or destruction in the utter sense is at hand for the Egyptians which perhaps many didn't expect but would welcome as a byproduct...byproduct insofar as their chief desire was to be from of Egyptian tyranny and to serve the Lord. As for the expectation at hand, it was so palpable that people could touch it.

Note the parallel found in vs. 8: the punishment of enemies (*timoreo* and *hupenantios*) one one hand and on the other hand, called and glorify (*proskaleo* and *doxazo*) us or the Israelites. *Timoreo* means to exact vengeance towards *hupenantios*, *hupo-* or those who literally are set over and against. The two work in favor for the Israelites, that is, being transformed into the Lord the *pros-* or *proskaleo* suggestive of directness and *doxazo*, to magnify or to extol.

The offering of sacrifices is made by children who are holy, the offspring of those who are good. That is to say, it's done in secret (*kruptos*, hidden) which can parallel "that night" of vs 6, the Passover when all Israelites *were* assembled in their homes with the blood of sheep or goats covering their door lintels to ward off destruction as the Lord passes by. In other words, these people are literally of one mind (*homonoiios*) or one *nous* with the *nomos* or law.

As for the saints or those who are holy (*hagios*), they could be descendants of such holy children (*hosios*). *Hagios* applies to those who are devoted directly to the Lord whereas *hosios* applies more to being sanctioned by the law, those who are devout and pious. In other words, the *hosios* of the Passover generation becomes the *hagios* of later generations who celebrate the same Passover. I.e., both share the same reality, *metalambano*, *meta-* here as indicative of with-ness.

This excerpt concludes with the saints (*hagios*) singing praises of their fathers, those who are *hosios*. The verb is *proanamelo* which has two prepositions prefaced to the root meaning to celebrate with song and dance: *pro-* and *ana-*, before or in front of and upon. That is to say, such praise will be intense and most likely enduring.

15 August, Assumption of the Virgin Mary

11.19. 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... 12.1) 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; 2) she was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth in anguish for delivery. 3) And another portent appeared in heaven; behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns and seven diadems upon his heads. 4) 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; 5) 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, 6) 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...10) 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

Excerpted from **Notations on the Book of Revelation**, also on this homepage.

Vs. 19: Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple; and there were flashes of lightening, loud noises, peals of thunder, and earthquake and heavy hail.

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*) which 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 (*'eyn*) 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.'"

Vs. 1: 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.

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.

Vs. 2: She was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery.

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].

Vs. 3: And another portent appeared in heaven; behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns and seven diadems upon his heads.

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 ‘*adom*, 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.

Vs. 4: 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.

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 (*derkomai*) 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].

Katesthio 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.

Vs. 5: 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.

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 *rahaḥ*. 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 *goyim*), 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."

Vs. 6: 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.

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]. 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* 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.

Vs. 10: 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.

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].

Four 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 (*katagoreo*) “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.

18 August, Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

4) *Then the princes said to the king, "Let this man be put to death, for he is weakening the hands of the soldiers who are left in this city and the hands of all the people by speaking such words to them. For this man is not seeking the welfare of this people but their harm."* 5) *King Zedekiah said, "Behold, he is in your hands; for the king can do nothing against you."* 6) *So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the cistern of Malchiah, the king's son, which was in the court of the guard, letting Jeremiah down by ropes. And there was no water in the cistern but only mire, and Jeremiah sank in the mire.* 7) *When Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, a eunuch, who was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah into the cistern—the king was sitting in the Benjamin Gate—8) Ebed-me'ech went from the king's house and said to the king, 9) "My Lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they did to Jeremiah the prophet by casting him into the cistern; and he will die there of hunger, for there is no bread left in the city." 10) Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, "Take three men with you from here and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the cistern before he dies." Jeremiah 38.4-10*

The following is from **Expansions on the Book of Jeremiah**, also on this homepage. The entire set of notations on this chapter is included.

This new chapter is part of a larger whole dealing with Jeremiah's imprisonment which is why vs. 1 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "now," the usual sign of a close connection between an event that had transpired and one about to take place. Four men are mentioned by name in this opening verse who most likely were visitors, even associates, to see Jeremiah. The text at hand takes pains to say that they had heard (*shamah*, cf. 37.1) the *davar* which their friend had been speaking, *shamah* being the first word of this opening chapter. Such rare obedience suffices to mention their names: Shephatiah, Gedaliah, Jucal and Pashhur. This is joined with the usual "Thus says the Lord." As applied to just four people, *shamah* stands in sharp contrast to the entire nation of Israel not listening to the divine *davar*. I.e., a hint, if you will, at the notion of a remnant that many of the prophets speak of.

The *davar* as treasured by these four men are worth mentioning by reason of their *shamah*. Anyone who remains within Jerusalem shall perish, but whoever goes out to the Chaldeans shall live, his life being a "prize of war," *shalal* as in 21.9. In other words, they will become spoil or booty. It's a foregone conclusion ("Thus says the Lord" again in vs. 3) that Jerusalem will be taken by the Babylonians.

Vs. 4 has the princes asking King Zedekiah for Jeremiah to be put to death because his *davar* were in danger of weakening the resolve of the soldiers defending Jerusalem, *rapha'* (cf. 33.7) implying to be slack, to let down. They were, of course, playing on the king's fear

and how Jeremiah had foretold how the Babylonians would capture him. In reality they were more fearful of their own lives. At once Zedekiah concedes, saying that he's unable to do anything against them, for the princes had him just where they wanted him. Right away (this is conveyed by the conjunctive *v-* translated as 'so' in vs. 6) they took Jeremiah and cast him into a cistern dramatically described as empty of water but full of mud into which he had sunk. Nothing is said of a stench, but surely it must have been awful.

However, a eunuch by the name of Ebed-melech sympathetic to Jeremiah and perhaps associated with his four friends mentioned in vs. 1, heard of this. He rushed off to King Zedekiah and begged for Jeremiah's rescue. He relented, telling the eunuch to go ahead with his plan. Apparently Zedekiah had a change of heart somewhere along the line which must have enraged the princes. After all, he said in vs. 5 "the king can do nothing against you."

Vs. 14 begins with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated, intimating that King Zedekiah rushed to see Jeremiah at the third entrance of the temple, a supposedly secret place away from the princes' prying eyes. He posed a question which he had longed to ask to which Jeremiah gave one condition, that he not be put to death. Zedekiah concurred, and Jeremiah responded in vs. 17 with "Thus says the Lord." By now the king was familiar—too much so for his taste—with these words which brought up old, familiar scenarios from the past, ones he'd rather leave there. As he feared, Jeremiah told him to surrender to the king of Babylon who will spare not just his life but those in Jerusalem. The alternative, of course, does not have to be made known. It was very obvious. Zedekiah was thinking primarily of his own life and blurted out that he was more afraid of the Jews who had deserted to the Chaldeans than the Chaldeans themselves. Jeremiah reassured the king, provided that he obey or *shamah* (cf. vs. 1) the voice of the Lord, *qol* (cf. 32.23) being used as a more emphatic expression of *davar*. Again, we have an example of the importance of *shamah* vis-a-vis *davar*, of hearing/obeying the word of the Lord.

In vs. 21 Jeremiah presents King Zedekiah with the option he was aware of fully, that failure to be attentive to this *shamah* will lead to a vision he had which interestingly is put in terms of a *davar*, again stressing the importance of *shamah*. The *davar* consists of women in the house of the king of Judah who were led out to the king of Babylon. Most likely they were concubines very much prone to gossip and palace intrigue. This is reflected in a ditty they expressed in vs. 22, namely, that the king's trusted friends had deserted him, and his feet were stuck in mire, most likely referring to Jeremiah's experience in the cistern. Nothing could be more embarrassing for the king when such women publicly announced what supposedly had been kept secret. Everyone knew, of course, but now it was being played out before everyone.

In vs. 23 Jeremiah gets personal. King Zedekiah's wives and sons will be taken by the Chaldeans as prophesied earlier. Then the king told the prophet to keep quiet about all this in order that the princes discover their meeting. However, should they find out, Jeremiah is to say that the king responded to his plea that he wouldn't return him to the house of Jonathan to die. Obviously the princes got wind of the conversation—it was virtually impossible to hide even under the conditions of a siege—and things worked out well for Jeremiah. However, the Chaldeans were at the gate while this drama was being played out. In the meanwhile, the king, princes and everyone inside Jerusalem were holding their breath awaiting the fate in store for them.

25 August, Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

18) "For I know their works and their thoughts, and I am coming to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and shall see my glory, 19) and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Put and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off that have not heard my fame or seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the nations. 20) And they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as an offering to the Lord, upon horses and in chariots and in litters and upon mules and upon dromedaries to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the Lord, just as the Israelites bring their cereal offering in a clean vessel to the house of the Lord. 21) And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the Lord. Isaiah 66.18-21

Excerpted from **Notations on the Book of Isaiah**, also on this homepage.

65-Vs. 18: But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy.

Sus and *gyl* or “be glad and rejoice” are both found together in 61.10 with respect to God's creative activity, *bara'* as in the previous verse. The Lord speaks of this first in a general way followed by its application to Jerusalem with two nouns derived from *sus* and *gyl*, *gylah* (cf. 35.2) and *masus* (cf. 60.15).

65-Vs. 19: I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress.

This verse contains another instance of the pair *sus* and *gyl* or “rejoice and be glad” only with respect to the Lord himself, singling out Jerusalem and his people as in the previous verse. Cry and distress are reminiscent of Rev 21.4 which is in the same context of a citing from that book in vs. 17: “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

65-Vs. 20: No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the child shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.

This verse hearkens back to the extended life span enjoyed by people after the expulsion of the first man from Eden (cf. Chapter Five of Genesis). Despite this, it is in terms of length of days compared being made “in the likeness of God” which is part of 5.1 in the context at hand.

65-Vss. 21-23: They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. (22) They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. (23) They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the Lord, and their children with them.

These three verses can be taken as one since they deal with laboring but not “in vain” or *ryq* (cf. 49.4). In other words, this building, planting and begetting children will be as what takes place within the Garden of Eden prior to the first man’s expulsion. “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it” [Gn 2.15].

1 September, Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

17) My son, perform your tasks in meekness; then you will be loved by those whom God accepts. 18) The greater you are, the more you must humble yourself; so you will find favor in the sight of the Lord. 20) For great is the might of the Lord; he is glorified by the humble...28) The affliction of the proud has no healing, for a plant of wickedness has taken root in him. 29) The mind of the intelligent man will ponder a parable. Sirach 3.17-20 & 28-29

Teknon or son is the conventional manner of address used by a Jewish teacher compared with *huios*, more along the lines of a biological relationship. The person addressed is bidden to carry out his tasks (*ergon*, that which is wrought), the verb *diexago* comprising of two prepositions, *dia-* and *ex-* or through and from which intimate thoroughness. This is to be coupled with meekness or *prautes*, also as softness, gentleness enhanced by the thoroughness implied by *dia-* and *ex-*. It will not go unnoticed but loved, the verbal root *agapao* for the well-known *agape*. However, such *agapao* is specified as coming from those persons whom God accepts, the adjective being *dektos*.

A contrast between two adjectives, *megas* and *tapeinos* or great and humble. Favoring the latter results in *charis* or grace (also as favor) from the Lord. Compare *megas* as presented negatively with that belonging to the Lord who is glorified (*doxazo*) by those who are *tapeinos*. Thus the Lord has, if you will, *tapeinos* as *megas*...humble as great...a pattern to be transferred to human behavior.

The text skips to vss. 28-29 contrasting two types of people, the proud and intelligent or *huperephanos* and *sunetos*. Note the two prepositions used as prefixes which are a give-away to their meaning: *huper-* or beyond, over and *sun-* or with which connotes cooperation. They stand in contrast to each other where a comparison is made between wickedness and parable. At first the latter seems less specific or indirect. However, the pondering or *dianoeo* (literally as to think through, *dia-*) of a *parabole*, that which is juxtaposed where a comparison can be drawn, precludes the taking root of a plant of wickedness. Such *poneria* is a condition of badness and hence something that is more permanent. That is to say, the affliction cannot be removed and is intimated by the verb *rhizoo*, to take root. *Epagoge* is the noun for affliction (literally a bringing upon, *epi-*) which conveys this permanence which also is put in terms of a lack of healing, *iasis*.

8 September, Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

13) For what man can learn the counsel of God? Or who can discern what the Lord wills? 14) For the reasoning of mortals is worthless, and our designs are likely to fail, 15) for a perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthy tent burdens the thoughtful mind. 16) We can hardly guess at what is on earth, and what is at hand we find with labor; but who has traced out what is in the heavens? 17) Who has learned your counsel, unless you have given wisdom and sent your holy Spirit from on high? 18) And thus the paths of those on earth were set right, and men were taught what pleases you and were saved by wisdom." Wisdom 9.13-18

This passage contains a series of four rhetorical questions not meant to be answered but to foster wonder and awe, ultimately leading to worship of the Lord. They are outlined as follows:

#1: The shortest question of the four; *gignosko* and *boule* or to know and the counsel of God, the latter also as device, plan.

#2: *Enthumeomai* and *thelo* or to discern and to will. The former as to place in (*en-*) the heart or *thumos* (heart, mind, temper, will) and to wish. The first and second rhetorical questions are spelled out accordingly:

Reasoning is worthless or *logismos* and *deilos*. The former connotes machinations which are harmful.

Designs are bound to fail. Note two uses of the preposition *epi-* or upon which is prefaced to two words: the noun *epinoia*, literally a thinking upon, purpose or intent and the adjective *episphales*, prone to fall.

Body and soul or *soma* and *psuche*, the former weighing down the latter or *baruno* also as to oppress.

Body as presented as an earthly (*geodes*) tent or that which is transitory is a burden to a mind (*nous*) which literally is much-thinking, *poluphrontes*. The verb is *britho* (similar to *baruno* just above) or to weigh down as well as to prevail.

#3: This rhetorical question is prefaced, as it were, by a statement as to guessing or *eikazo*, to represent by a likeness as applicable to what is on earth. Even that is filled with labor, *ponos* or hard work. The actual question (in light of of this) is with respect to tracing out that which is in the heavens, *exichniazo*, the preposition *ex-* or from, tracing-from.

#4: Learning the divine counsel (*gignosko* and *boule* as in #1) is dependent upon wisdom and the Spirit, *sophia* and *Pneuma* (also as breath). Note that the former is given whereas the latter is sent, *didomi* and *pempo*, the latter being more personal and hence representative of the sender.

All four rhetorical questions are summed up by paths being set aright, *tribos* suggestive of a well-worn track with the verb *diorthoo*, literally to set through, the preposition *dia-* prefaced to the verb implying thoroughness. This setting-through enables persons to be taught as to what is pleasing (*arestos*, also as acceptable) and to be saved (*sozo*) by wisdom.

15 September, Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

7) And the Lord said to Moses, "Go down; for your people whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves; 8) they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them; they have made for themselves a molten calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, `These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'" 9) And the Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people; 10) now therefore let me alone that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; but of you I will make a great nation." 11) But Moses besought the Lord his God and said, "O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 12) Why should the Egyptians say, `With evil intent did he bring them forth, to slay them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against your people. 13) Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, your servants, to whom thou swore by your own self, and said to them, `I will multiply your descendants as the

stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever." 14) And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do to his people. Exodus 32.7-14

The follow is taken from **Expansions on the Book of Exodus**, also on this homepage.

“And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Go down; for your people whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves’ [vs. 7]. One gets the impression that Moses made himself quite at home in the cloud; finally the Lord bade him to return to his people “whom you brought up,” not the Lord, as though he were shifting responsibility away from himself onto Moses. Surely Moses must have been affronted by this statement but realized something was up, and it wasn’t good. It turned out that they “have corrupted themselves,” *shachat* also meaning to act wickedly. “When a man strikes the eye of his slave, male of female, and destroys it, he shall let the slave go free for the eye’s sake” [21.26].

Vs. 8 continues seamlessly with “they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them” and continues with the fact that Israel had made a molten calf which they worshiped. In other words, the Lord lets Aaron off the hook, at least his direct involvement. Rightly does the Lord observe how quickly Israel abandoned him, *derek* being the “way” which is more than a passage through the desert but the revelation on Sinai. The second half of vs. 8 has the Lord quoting Israel, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!” That’s why in the previous verse the Lord said to Moses, “your people whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt.” So Moses has to leave the security of the cloud on Mount Sinai and deal with this near mutiny.

“And the Lord said to Moses, ‘I have seen this people and behold, it is a stiff-necked people’ [vs. 9]. “I have seen” suggests that after spending some time with Moses concerning the ark, the Israelites grabbed his attention rather suddenly. In fact, he seems shocked at this sudden apostasy put as “stiff-necked” or *qasheh*, an adjective meaning hard as well as heavy. The Lord repeats this in Dt 9.6: “for you are a stubborn people.”

“Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; but of you I will make a great nation” [vs. 10]. The words “now let me alone” come from the Lord who is both hurt and angered, a mood which can have ominous consequences. The verb here is *nuach* last noted in 23.12 with respect to resting on “day seven” after six days of work. Instead of this use of *nuach*, the Lord wishes to be let alone that he may vent his “wrath” or ‘*aph* which fundamentally means nostrils. “The anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses” [4.14]. *Charah* is the verb for “may burn hot” as also found in 4.14...so hot that they will be cooked for eating (‘consume’). In this verse the Lord is making a distinction between the Israelites and Moses (‘of you I will make a great

nation’). That means all the Israelites will be exterminated leaving Moses alone with his wife and son, Zipporah and Gershom, going back to the days when he had been in the same area of Sinai at the service of Jethro. Surely the Lord had this in mind, that Moses would not have to migrate, just stay where he was at the foot of Mount Sinai. After all, it was the place he besought Pharaoh to go in order to make sacrifice. Perhaps the Lord might even invite him to return to the cloud along with his family.

“But Moses besought the Lord his God and said, ‘O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people whom you have brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand” [vs. 11]? *Chalah* is the verb for “besought” which has multiple meanings such as to be sick and to stroke. The general sense of *chalah* is related to rubbing. Another reference with a related meaning is 45.12: “The people of Tyre will sue your favor with gifts.” Moses obviously had first hand experience with the Israelites all the way back when they had been in slavery and disorganized. He had overcome those obstacles as well as having led the people into the desert where they tried him sorely. If the Lord went back on his word, so reasoned Moses, not only would Israel be destroyed, but he would be an object of mockery among the Egyptians. That’s why the next verse (12) continues with “Why should the Egyptians say, ‘With evil intent did he bring them forth, to slay them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth.’” The Hebrew text lacks “intent” and has the adjective “evil,” *rasah* which is more a forceful and direct threat of being insulted, if you will. Vs. 12 continues with a second sentence: “Turn from your fierce wrath and repent of this evil against your people.” *Nacham* is the verb for “repent” as noted in 13.17: “Lest the people repent when they see war and return to Egypt.”

“Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel your servants to whom you swore by your own self.” This first half of vs. 13 contains the argument on Moses’ part which won over the Lord, even more so than the fear of being mocked by the Egyptians. Such an appeal goes all the way back to before the Israelites had migrated to Egypt, of mentioning the three patriarchs with whom the Lord had dealt. Note that Moses slyly uses the name Israel instead of Jacob; while both are interchangeable, the latter was more commonly used in Exodus. In this way Moses would be mentioning the patriarch and the people in one breath. As for swearing (*shavah*) “by your own self,” the Hebrew reads simply *bak* or “in you.” Vs. 13 continues with the promise the Lord himself had made in Gn 22.17: “I will indeed multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore. As for this plea by Moses, its location should not be forgotten, the desert or an in-between-land, neither Egypt nor Canaan but in a place where anything can happen. With all that in mind, “the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do to his people” [vs. 14]. As for the verb “thought,” it is the familiar *davar* used throughout Exodus which means to speak. So Moses succeeded in “silencing” the Lord for the very first time, far

more significant than any miracle or deed done thus far or that he will ever do. In fact, to silence the divine *davar* by presenting a formidable, cogent argument is Moses' victory and the real secret, if you will, that the Book of Exodus contains.

22 September, Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

4) Hear this, you who trample upon the needy and bring the poor of the land to an end 5) saying, "When will the new moon be over that we may sell grain? And the sabbath, that we may offer wheat for sale, that we may make the ephah small and the shekel great and deal deceitfully with false balances 6) that we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals and sell the refuse of the wheat?" 7) The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob: "Surely I will never forget any of their deeds. Amos 8.4-7

This passage begins with a command to hear or *shamah* after which the Lord launches into an accusation toward those who act unjustly, putting it in terms of two rhetorical questions that can't be answered but instead are meant to first shame and then convert. As for hearing of "this," it isn't given but presumed to be what the Lord said in the first few verses of the chapter at hand. That pertains to the end or *qyts* which also means harvest of fruits. Compare with the noun *qayits* in the same verse, basket of summer fruit. In other words, the Lord is about to punish his people, making them wail and casting them into silence.

Obviously the people are aware of this and do not want to *shamah* or to hear. They fail to grasp that despite the dire warning, the Lord continues to speaking on their behalf. Still, they are unable to grasp this fact. The *shamah* is directed toward those who treat poorly the needy and poor, *'evyon* and *hany*. The first is more general whereas the latter is associated more with those who are in this condition which is marked by a certain piety and reverence for the Lord.

These two types of people symbolize the impatience of those whom the Lord is addressing. That is to say, they are forced to wait for the celebration of the new moon and sabbath to be over. Bot celebrations have hindered their deceitful activity, of manipulating the price and distribution of grain. Although there's no direct connection between this and the two types of unfortunate people mentioned, surely it exists. And so the passage ends with the two rhetorical questions gone unanswered. While they are being presented, we can imagine the needy and poor listening in. however, they know better to remain silent and see what happens.

29 September, Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

1) *"Woe to those who are at ease in Zion and to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria, the notable men of the first of the nation, to whom the house of Israel come!*
2) *Pass over to Calne, and see; and then go to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are they better than these kingdoms? Or is their territory greater than your territory,* 3) *O you who put far away the evil day and bring near the seat of violence?* 4) *"Woe to those who lie upon beds of ivory and stretch themselves upon their couches and eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall;* 5) *who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp and like David invent for themselves instruments of music;* 6) *who drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the finest oils but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!* 7) *Therefore they shall now be the first of those to go into exile, and the revelry of those who stretch themselves shall pass away."* Amos 6.1-7

This passage may be divided into two sections determined by “woe” or *hoy* which is more expressive in the Hebrew: verses 1-3 and verses 4-7. The first group is outlined as follows:

1) At ease or *sha'an* which is an adjective meaning to be quiet or tranquil and has nine other biblical references, most of which are negative with two exceptions, Is 32.9 and 33.20. The idea in the verse at hand as well as those others can apply to laxity with regard to temple worship, this allowing for idolatry to take hold and flourish in Zion.

2) Those who are secure upon the mountain of Samaria, the verb being *batach* meaning to trust. As for Samaria, refer to 4.1: “Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are in the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy.” The next two verse continue with reference to greedy women of that place who are as guilty as their husbands. Those whom the Lord is addressing are notables who also are first of the nation, the participle *naqav* meaning those who are specified as being such.

The two groups (actually they could be one and the same, just with two different specifications) are to go to three difference places to determine whether or not they are equivalent to what they possess already. This is put as a rhetorical questions not intending to receive an answer but simply to put those to whom it's addressed on the spot. A second rhetorical question is with regard to those who put away the evil day and bring dear the seat of violence. The two verbs are *nadah* and *nagash*. The first is suggestive of casting out and has one other biblical reference, Is 66.5. The second is simply as it is, to approach. If the first (evil day) is removed, automatically the second (seat or source of violence) takes its place. In other words, it fills this vacant place.

The second group is outlined as follows and engage in three evil types of activity:

1) Lounging (*shakav*, to rest) upon beds of ivory and indulging in all sorts of debauchery.

2) They tend to associate themselves with King David which is blasphemous, he being considered the author of the Psalter. That is to say, they imitate him and thereby bring condemnation upon themselves.

3) Drink wine while not grieving over the ruin of Joseph: “Seek the Lord and live lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph [5.6].

The last verse of this excerpt says that both the first and second groups will suffer the same fate, that is, exile while their revelry will pass away. The two verbs are *sur* and *galah*. The former also means to depart or to withdraw from. The second also means to be naked, as though those going into exile are stripped bare for all to see and to mock.

6 October, Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

1) In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; 2) but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son whom he appointed the heir of all things through whom also he created the world. 3) He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,...2) For if the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, 3) how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him 4) while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will. Hebrews 1.1-3; 2.2-4

The following is taken from **Notes on the Letter to the Hebrews**, also posted on this homepage.

Vs. 1: In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets.

Two similar words prefaced by the adjective *polus*, much, many, which starts off Hebrews: they are the root adjectives *meros* and *tropos* which come from the nouns part and way. Implied are diverse manners as opposed to a fixed, almost exclusive form of divine revelation. Both are situated in the past, *palai* (of old). This past is specified as belonging to two groups, fathers and prophets. The latter is obvious reference to prophetic books such as Isaiah and Jeremiah; the former is more general in the sense of Dt 1.8: “A land which the Lord swore to your fathers.” Vs. one literally reads “to fathers in (*en*) the prophets” as if to say the general grouping of the former are situated in the particular “prophets” and maintain their paternity through them.

Vs. 2: but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

A continuation of vs. 1; “but” is lacking in the Greek text. Note the preposition *epi* (upon) which also has the sense of through which follows from the earlier preposition *en*. It is as if to say this divine “inness” flows outward to the period of time the author has in mind. Such “inness” proper to the prophets may be said to be transferred to the “inness” of the Son, *en huio*, thereby coming to fulfillment. There is a definite connection between the Son and last days (*eschatos*), this adjective being closely associated with the immanent expectation of Jesus Christ. “He was destined before the foundation of the world but as made manifest at the end of the times for your sake” [1 Pt 1.20].

It’s interesting that in Hebrews the (plural) noun day is used, i.e., a twenty-four hour period as opposed to a week, month or year which intimates that time is short and therefore can be measured in a more manageable framework.

For another use of *eschatos*, cf. Acts 2.17 with regard to Pentecost, citing the prophet Joel: “And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.” Note the use of *eschatos* here as pertaining to the Holy Spirit in distinction to the Son in Hebrews.

Vs. 1 one has “God spoke” whereas vs. 2 has “he has spoken,” the latter use of *laleo* being more definitive or specific, that is, with regard to the Son. This speaking is done literally “to us” (dative case without preposition) “in the Son.” Such is the word order of this verse.

Kleronomos: heir, which may be seen in light of fathers and prophets, the obvious successor and inheritor to these two groups. “And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” [Rom 8.17]. The third noun has the preposition *sug/sun* (with) prefixed to it. In Hebrews the heir has all things which can include people as well as objects.

The uniqueness of this divine heir is shown by the fact that through (*dia*) him God created the world or *aion* (plural). In distinction to *kosmos*, this term is related to ages or long yet limited stretches of time, so the Son-as-heir receives not just persons and object but successions of time or ages. For another use, cf. Rom 12.2: “Do not be conformed to this world.”

Vs. 3: He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

This is obviously the same he as the Son and heir of the previous verse, so it is interesting to keep in mind these two characteristics transferred to the verse at hand. The verb “to reflect” is lacking in the Greek which has the present participle *hon*, (being); it is connected with the noun *apaugasma*, radiance, in the sense of a reflected brightness. This is the only New Testament use of the word and suggests Jn 12.45: “And he who sees me sees

him who sent me.” Here John uses the verb *thereo* from which is derived the noun *theoria*. I.e., such *theoria* is a kind of participation in the nature of *apaugasma*.

Connected with *apaugasma* is God’s glory or *doxa*, the Greek term for the Hebrew *kavod* as associated with Moses’ vision: “The glory of God settled on Mount Sinai” [Ex 24.16]. *Kavod* derives from a verbal root meaning to be heavy and implies that the divine presence “dropped” from heaven to earth by reason of its weight.

Very stamp or *charakter*: used with the verb *phero*, to bear, almost in the sense of transporting something. This noun refers to a mark or figure which either had been stamped or burned, that is, having become made permanent and visible to all. For a use in the LXX, cf. Lev 13.28: “For it is the scar of the burn.”

Charakter is used in conjunction with *hupostasis* (nature), the substantial quality of a person. “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” [Heb 11.1]. Thus *charakter* is a kind of deep impression of this divine nature which is borne (*phero*) or carried about from place to place, almost as though it had mobility.

As noted, the verb *phero* is used with reference to a “static” divine nature. In the same sentence it applies to the universe (*ta panta*), literally the all. Here is a shift from imagery of brightness to that of speech which is less discernible in the sense of it being available for perception: *rhema* (word) and *dunamis* (power). The former means anything uttered by the living voice or a sound which has a definite meaning (also from the human voice). It differs from *lego* (from which comes *logos*) in the sense of being the subject of speech. Christ is presented as the *Logos* of God, not the *Rhema* of God. “So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ” [Rom 10.17]. In the verse at hand, *dunamis* naturally flows from *rhema* and supports “the all” which keeps in line with its Stoic application. “For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power” [1 Cor 4.20].

The second sentence of 1.3 is a shift from the cosmic role of the Son/heir to the human sphere, more specifically, to that of purification or *katharismos*, as if the two principles of the first sentence (the visibility of glory and the sound of word) came to bear as one force upon the newly introduced subject of purification. “And when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord” [Lk 2.22]. *Katharismos* with respect to sins almost appears as secondary to the primary sitting down at God’s right hand or *en dexia*, “in the right hand.”

The phrase on high (*en hupselois*, plural) contains a second “in” as if to emphasize that Christ was thoroughly situated above the sphere of human activity despite having made purification. Most likely purification here pertains to his suffering and death. Cf. Ps 110.1 (of which Hebrews in many ways is a commentary): “The Lord said to my lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.’” The Greek text of the LXX has instead of the preposition *en*, *ek* (out, from), as if to show the derivative nature of this

sitting. The Hebrew text has the preposition *l-* prefixed to “right hand,” showing direction-towards-which.

Compare *megalosune* (majesty) with Heb 8.1: “We have such a high priest, one who is seated at (*en*) the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven.”

Vs. 2: For if the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution.

This verse is a prelude to the question of the next verse.

Logos: message which to the sensitive reader suggests Jesus Christ as

Logos...Word...as expression of the Father: “the very stamp of his nature” [1.3].

Two pertinent references with regard to angels: “You received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it” [Acts 7.53]. “And it (the offspring promised) was ordained by angels through an intermediary” [Gal 3.19]. The divine Law or Torah was handed to Israel through Moses as mentioned in Deuteronomy and as given on Mount Sinai.

In the verse at hand, the *logos* can be taken as fulfillment of Torah, that is, as being valid (*bebaios*) or trustworthy. “That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants” [Rom 4.16]. This verse may be perceived as taking *logos* and associate it with grace (*charis*) to establish the new order as distinct from Judaism.

Transgression (*parabasis*): literally, a going over or besides (*para*), suggesting parallel action or one imitating the other to a certain degree without participating in its reality. “Why then the Law? It was added because of transgressions” [Gal 3.19], because of “goings over.” Such attempts are not so much at being at directly odds with the divine Torah but of paralleling it, as it were, by perverse practices as idolatry.

Disobedience (*parakoe*): a second *para* word, here a “hearing aside” or beside, which can be one of over-hearing or an unwilling to hear. “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church” [Mt 18.17]. Note this refusal is with reference to an entity larger than an individual, the church or *ekklesia*.

Just retribution (*misthapodosia*): a term composed of *misthos* and *apodidomai*; here it means the sense of payment of wages or recompense, reward as well as punishment. Cf. Heb 10.35 & 11.26. This term is applied to the transgression and disobedience or those forms of activity “running beside (*para*)” what God had ordained and proclaimed through the manifestation of Jesus Christ.

Vs. 3: how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him.

The answer to a rhetorical question posed in vs. 3. It is interesting to consider the verb escape (*ekpheugo*) as the natural consequence of those two *para* words noted in the last section: transgression and disobedience. Here the notion of flight results by neglecting (*ameleo*) salvation; not so much rejecting it but by being unmindful of its reality. Salvation

or *soteria* is equivalent to the person of Jesus Christ or the content of that “message declared by angels.” Again, it may be seen in light of the parallel realities of *para-basis* and *para-koe*.

The salvation at hand is *telikautos*, such (a) great, an adjective usually referring to bulk or duration.

In the second sentence of vs. 3 note the connection between declaring (*laleo*: the common term for speaking or talking) and at first (*archen labousa*), literally, “having received a beginning (to be spoken).” Here the noun *arche* is used which designates the first principle or origin of all things and is freighted with divine meaning. Such divine origins is all the more prominent by the Lord (*Kurios*); in the verse at hand the preposition *dia* (through) is used.

The time signified by “at first” is not specified but reference to “us” as applied to those who heard Jesus can mean those churches founded by the apostles. Note the emphasis upon hearing which attests (*bebaioo*) to salvation. This verb connotes fastness and stability. “And they went forth and preached everywhere while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it” [Mk 16.20].

Vs. 4: while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will.

At the same time the previous verse has the Lord declaring salvation, the verse at hand has the concurrent reality of God bearing witness or *sunepimartureo*. This verb contains two prepositions as prefixes: *sun* (with) and *epi* (upon) which give extra force to the root *martureo*. I.e., God not only bears witness but does so with and upon at the same time or from the two directions of horizontal and vertical. “It is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God” [Rom 8.16].

This *sun + epi-martureo* is effected by four means which may be outlined as follows. Keep in mind this dual prepositional relationship with all four and that they are related to the Holy Spirit:

1) signs (*semeion*): pointing to a reality beyond the sign itself. “Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers” [1 Cor 14.22].

2) wonder (*teras*): in the sense of a prodigy or something unusual. In the New Testament this word is found in the plural and joined with *semeion*. “Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe” [Jn 4.48].

3) miracle (*dunamis*): more properly, strength, and concerned with the result of a given event. “And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed” [Acts 8.13]. Note that *dunamis* is not used in the New Testament as pertaining to Christ’s miracles.

4) In the Greek text “gift” is not used; distributed (*merismos*) or division seems more attune to the Holy Spirit’s nature as at Pentecost: “tongues as of fire,

distributed and resting on each one of them” [Acts 2.3]. The verb here is *diamerizo*: a “dividing through (*dia*).”

All four are in accord with God’s will or *thelesis*, the only use of this term in the New Testament, *thelema* being the more common word.

13 October, Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

14) So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. 15) Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and he came and stood before him; and he said, "Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel; so accept now a present from your servant." 16) But he said, "As the Lord lives whom I serve, I will receive none." And he urged him to take it, but he refused. 17) Then Naaman said, "If not, I pray you, let there be given to your servant two mules' burden of earth; for henceforth your servant will not offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god but the Lord. Second Kings 5.14-17

The following is from Expansions on Second Kings, also posted on this homepage.

Note that upon arrival Naaman didn’t find Elisha who sent a messenger to him, *mal’ak* also as angel as found in 1.3 but not noted there. It even could have been Gehazi, his personal servant. Given Elisha’s status as a prophet, we could intimate that this *mal’ak* indeed was an angel. Anyway, it’s unclear whether Elisha was in the house. If so, he wished to test Naaman’s sincerity who just might be putting on a show of showering him with unwanted gifts, etc. In other words, he wanted to get right down to business and show that the Lord was central to all this. The message was clear and simple. Naaman is to wash in the Jordan River seven times, after which he’ll be cured of his leprosy. The reasoning behind it is to show that Elisha is not a healer; only the Lord can work such a cure.

Upon hearing this from Elisha’s messenger, Naaman went away in a huff, *qatsaph* connoting a rage. “Then the man of God was angry with him” [13.19]. When vs. 11 says that Naaman went away, he did so with those horses and chariots which must have created a terrifying noise echoing Naaman’s anger. It’s obvious now that Elisha foresaw this which is why he remained inside his house and had a messenger...angel...deal with Naaman.

When he had gone some distance and calmed down a bit, Naaman exclaimed with disdain that he expected Elisha to perform some grand gesture to cure his leprosy. When thinking that the prophet would call on the Lord and wave his hand over the leprosy, Naaman had in mind something like Elijah on Mount Carmel. Naaman then blurts out that the rivers of his own nation are just as good if not better than the Jordan. He went off in a rage,

chemah being a good word to describe his mood, for it also means poison or venom. “For great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us” [22.13]. In light of this Elisha feared—and rightly so—that Naaman might take out his wrath not just on him but on other Israelites. After all, he was Syria’s best general and now being in Israel, could do some severe damage before being stopped.

Fortunately cooler heads prevailed. Naaman’s servants approached him saying that if the prophet commanded something difficult to do, he would have gone through with it. So without waiting further, Naaman returned to the Jordan River and washed in it seven times “according to the *davar* of the Lord.” Each of the six times he must have entertained some doubts which were dispelled upon emerging from the water the seventh time. Now his flesh was that of a little child or *nahar* (cf. 4.12). This openness to suggestions is Naaman’s strong point and ended by saving his life.

As with many verses, vs 15 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then.” It’s important insofar as it shows the excitement that overtook Naaman and his desire to contact Elisha. This reveals another positive side to his character. Instead of rushing home as he could have done, Naaman wanted to give thanks to the man responsible for his cure as well as to acknowledge his sudden spurt of anger. With some flair Naaman returns to Elisha with “all his company” or *machaneh* also as camp, army and host (cf. 3.24 but not noted there). The verb *hamad* (cf. vs. 9) or stood is used suggesting that this formidable military array took up its position with awe at the entrance to Elisha’s house. This time, of course, Elisha knew it was safe to come outside...i.e., no need for a messenger/angel.

Naaman begins his address grandly with *hineh* (cf. 2.11) or “behold” followed immediately by an acknowledgment of the God of Israel, music to Elisha’s ears. If Syria’s greatest general says this, indeed raids into Israelite territory just might come to a stop and eventually peace be established between the two nations. Now Naaman gives a present or *berakah* which usually translates as blessing could apply in this instance. “Make your peace with me and come out to me” [18.31]. As for the present/blessing at hand, nothing is said, but it must have quite grand. As expected, Elisha declines the offer despite Naaman’s urging, *patsar* being the verb which connotes force. It’s found in 2.17 but not noted there. While obviously done in the name of the Lord, Elisha must be thinking of the “sons of the prophets” with whom he’s associated, wanting to set an example. Though there’s no mention of him here, Gehazi must have been present and burning with rage and jealousy. What happens to him follows shortly.

Now Naaman asks Elisha’s permission to take home with him two mule loads of earth, ‘*adamah* found next in 17.23 with its other meaning as land. For a general who posed such a serious threat to Israel no better gesture could be carried out. Naaman then states that

he'll offer burnt offerings or sacrifices (*holah* and *zevach*, 3.27 and 10.19 respectively) only to the Lord. Although the text doesn't mention it, Naaman will do this on the 'adamah itself, an island surrounded, if you will, by the sea of Syria and its pagan deities. The appealing, straight-forward, honest way of how Naaman comports himself is revealed further by requesting from Elisha one concession, that when his master (i.e., the king of Syria) worships Rimmon, he'll have to bow down along with him. In other words, he asks through Elisha that the Lord pardon him for this, *salach* also as to forgive. "For he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the Lord would not pardon" [24.4]. Elisha concurs which shows his willingness to help in such an awkward situation. After the brief incident with Gehazi which follows Naaman disappears from the scene altogether. We're left wondering how he got along with the king of Syria such as going through a *pro forma* worship of Rimmon. Also he must have cherished and protected those two mule loads of 'adamah with his life.

Naaman heads back home, cherishing the two mule loads of 'adamah far more than the expensive gifts he had brought for Elisha. As soon as he departed we have Gehazi revealing his true colors. His innate greed prevented him from despising his master for refusing Naaman's generous gifts and simply was incapable of getting over it. So if Naaman is returning with these gifts, why not run after him and ask for some? Surely to Gehazi's greedy eyes the Syrian general was a fool lugging that 'adamah back home. If he had his way, he'd rip open the bags and let the 'adamah flow out. Anyway, Naaman saw Gehazi running after him which made him alight from his chariot, asking if all was well. Now Gehazi came off with his prepared lie about two "sons of the prophets" who had just arrived, and that they could use a talent of silver and two festal garments. Obviously Naaman was glad to comply, throwing in an extra talent of silver.

20 October, Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

8) Then came Amalek and fought with Israel at Rephidim. 9) And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose for us men and go out, fight with Amalek; tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." 10) So Joshua did as Moses told him and fought with Amalek; and Moses, Aaron and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 11) Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. 12) But Moses' hands grew weary; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat upon it, and Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side and the other on the other side; so his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. 13) And Joshua mowed down Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. Exodus 17.8-13

The following excerpt is lifted from **Expansions on the Book of Exodus**, also on this homepage.

“Then came Amalek and fought with Israel at Rephidim” [vs. 8]. Amalek can be taken as an individual or tribe first recorded in Gen 14.7. While Moses resided with Jethro in Midian after he slew the Egyptian, he must have had some contact with these desert nomads who understandably resented the presence of such a multitude of people encroaching upon their territory with its limited resources. It turned out that Rephidim was a place more trying than lack of water. However, once word got out—how could such a miracle of water springing from a rock be kept quiet?—Amalek quickly drew near to this abundant source of water which had appeared miraculously. Not only did that tribe come but others must have attempted to take advantage of such a boon.

In vs. 9 Moses for the first time addresses Joshua, his eventual successor, someone who had not been mentioned before though he must have played some role when Moses had dealt with Pharaoh. Moses bade Joshua to pick men to fight with Amalek. “Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.” Obviously Moses had seen Amalek approaching far off which gave him, Joshua and the elders time to prepare. They had to do this quickly, for since they had left Egypt in such haste, chances are they brought as little as possible, let alone weapons with which to do battle. Joshua had faith in Moses, that is, when he bore that rod (*mateh*) which had just struck the *tsur* to produce water and even more important, the one which Moses used to divide the Red Sea (cf. 14.16). Most likely that the hill (*givhah*) forms part of that *tsur* or rock upon which the Lord had stood. That’s why Moses spontaneously said to Joshua that he was going there, not leading men into battle, something Joshua understood from his earlier experience with him. Better to be close to the Lord which would insure victory in battle. How could Moses not succeed? He would be on top of the *tsur* which he had struck with his rod, the same rod which hopefully will smite Amalek. Accompanying Moses was his brother Aaron and Hur, the first mention of this man whose identity isn’t clear but apparently one of the elders of Israel. “Behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a cause, let him go to them.”

“Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed” [vs. 11]. The issue is one of prevailing, *gavar* fundamentally meaning to be strong or to confirm. “When our transgressions prevail over us, you forgive them” [Ps 65.3]. Nothing is said about the *mateh* or rod, but presumably it was in Moses’ hand because one hand is mentioned. Since it was an issue of becoming tired of holding one hand (with the *mateh*), this could not continue for long, so both Aaron and Hur made Moses sit down on a rock (*even*: a stone of any kind) after which they held up both of Moses’ hands, that is, one with the *mateh* and the other without. “So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun” [vs. 12]. The adjective “steady” is a noun in Hebrew (*emunah*) which means faithfulness (‘amen’ is derived from it). “A God of truth and without iniquity” [Dt 32.4]. No time is given as to when this battle with Amalek began, just that it lasted until

sunset. That means Moses, along with Aaron and Hur as his support, had his hands (and rod) extended in “faithfulness” for the bulk of the day, especially during the afternoon heat. “And Joshua mowed down Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword” [vs. 13]. Here a distinction is made between Amalek (the leader or king) and his people, not noted earlier. The verb for “mowed down” is *chalash* which means to prostrate, to vanquish and to waste away. Two other references are found in the Bible (Job 14.10 and Is 14.12), the latter being cited here: “How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low!” Obviously the Israelites engaged in battle had attention upon their foe whereas Joshua made an agreement with Moses to occasionally glance up on the rock to see if Moses’ hand and rod were extended. Once Joshua saw Aaron and Hur supporting him, he knew victory was assured.

27 October, Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

12) Do not offer him a bribe, for he will not accept it; and do not trust to an unrighteous sacrifice; for the Lord is the judge and with him is no partiality. 13) He will not show partiality in the case of a poor man; and he will listen to the prayer of one who is wronged. 14) He will not ignore the supplication of the fatherless nor the widow when she pours out her story. 15) Do not the tears of the widow run down her cheek as she cries out against him who has caused them to fall? 16) He whose service is pleasing to the Lord will be accepted, and his prayer will reach to the clouds. 17) The prayer of the humble pierces the clouds, and he will not be consoled until it reaches the Lord; he will not desist until the Most High visits him and does justice for the righteous and executes judgment. 18) And the Lord will not delay, neither will he be patient with them till he crushes the loins of the unmerciful and repays vengeance on the nations; till he takes away the multitude of the insolent and breaks the scepters of the unrighteous. Sirach 35.12-18

This text opens with the presumed and false equivalent of a bribe with a sacrifice, the person involved trying to pull a fast one over the Lord. Of course he won’t accept it, he having no partiality, the preposition *para* being used to show as if this partiality were beside or near him which it is not. The noun here is *krites*, also judge or decider, and as for the sacrifice, more specifically, it is not righteous, *adikos* also as wrongly done. As for partiality (that is, the noun, it’s *prosopon* which reads as face, countenance and in this context, reads literally as “will not take hold of or apprehend (*lambano*) his face upon the poor.” The same solicitude is shown to others who are not fortunate.

The noun for service is *therapeuo* which is a verb fundamentally as to be an attendance or to wait upon. If it happens to be pleasing to the Lord or literally, is received in satisfaction or approval, this prayer (*deesis*, also as entreaty) will reach the clouds. The verb here is

sunapto which means literally to join together, not just touching but having this union of what is down with what is above established permanently.

Similar to the *sunapto* or touching together of opposites (earth and heaven) we have the prayer of the helpless. *Proseuche* is more a beseeching compared with the just mentioned *deesis*, the preposition *pros-* as prefaced to the noun indication of motion towards-which by reason of its direct-ness. This type of prayer is proper to one who is *tapeinos* or humble whereas *deesis* is associated with *ptochos*, poor in the more generic sense. It's destined to pierce the clouds, the verb *dierchomai* not as dramatic but fundamentally means to go through (*dia-*).

Note the intense resolve of the e person who is *tapeinos*. He won't rest a moment, that is, will refuse consolation (*parakaleo*, literally as to summon beside or near, *para-*) until his *proseuche* or that *pros-*, if you will, draws near to the Lord. The verb here is *suneggiszo*, to draw not only near but to be with, *sun-*.

The verb *aphistemi* (to stand off or from, *apo-*) is yet another indication of this same person's resolve. That is to say, he will not stand off or tolerate any *apo-*, if you will, from the Lord until he literally looks down upon or regard (*episkopeo*) him. In sum, his attention is focused totally towards above until the Lord who resides there reciprocates. He will do this by taking vengeance upon those who had afflicted the man so focused upon him for so long. It's something he cannot refuse to do, simple as that.

1 November, All Saints

2) 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 3) saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads." 4) And I heard the number of the sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel, 5) twelve thousand sealed out of the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand of the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand of the tribe of Gad, 6) twelve thousand of the tribe of Asher, twelve thousand of the tribe of Naphtali, twelve thousand of the tribe of Manasseh, 7) twelve thousand of the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand of the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand of the tribe of Issachar, 8) twelve thousand of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve thousand of the tribe of Joseph, twelve thousand sealed out of the tribe of Benjamin. 9) 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 10) and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the

Lamb!" 11) 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, 12) saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen." 13) Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and whence have they come?" 14) 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 7.2-14

The following is excerpted from **Notes on the Book of Revelation**, also on this homepage.

Vs. 2: 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.

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 perhaps 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 in 5.1, the scroll sealed with seven seals, only in vs. 2 it is more specific, as belonging to the "living God" (*zao*), that is, God who is actively engaged in what is going on. Such a seal indicates that God has property rights, so to speak, over his creation, but this emblem is not further designated. Perhaps it is more like a standard for all to behold much like the sun as it comes over the horizon. This particular 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. "For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality" [Col 3.25].

Vs. 3: saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads."

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.” Although not specified as on Cain’s forehead, this mark or ‘*oth* is a sign of favor clearly visible to people. Another reference: “It shall be upon Aaron’s forehead” [Ex 28.38], that is, referring to a signet with the engraving “Holy to the Lord” [vs. 36]. Such a sign is *zontos* or living to correspond with the “living God” of vs. 2.

Vs. 4: And I heard the number of the sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand sealed, out of every tribe of the sons of Israel.

Note the verb hear (*akouo*)...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 (also cf. 14.1 & 3). The twelve tribes can trace their origins back to Jacob as their father in Gen 49 where he blesses each one. In the context of this story, Joseph plays the most important role in that as virtual king of Egypt, he was responsible for burying his father Jacob not in that country but in Canaan, the future promised land (cf. 50.12).

Vs. 9: 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.

Another use of “after this,” “look” and “behold” which connotes temporal extension of John’s vision which took place outside the confines of space and time. Cf. back to 1.10: “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.”

Ochlos or crowd as in Mt 15.33: “Where are we to get bread enough in the desert to feed so great a crowd?” In the verse at hand, such a multitude is beyond counting; three general categories of human society are enumerated: tribe, people and tongue. Note emphasis upon tribe (*phule*), the basic division of Israel as recounted in vss. 5-8. Compare with Acts 2.5: “Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven.” 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.

“White robes” or stole as in 6.11; here *periballo* is used for clothed, more specifically, to be cast about in the color white as though these people were permeated by it. In addition to these garments, they hold palm branches or *phoinix* in their hands. “So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel’” [Jn 12.13]! Note that this fabulous bird, the phoenix, is the same term, perhaps due to the branches’ resemblance to plumage. This mythical bird died in the fire after which it rose, a symbol which can be applied to Jesus Christ in this triumphal procession into Jerusalem.

Vs. 10: and crying with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb!”

An exclamation similar to the one noted in the previous verse, that is, 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. (Cf. elsewhere on this Home Page for an article entitled “The Name of *Yeshuhah* and the Psalms” which gives a full list of those this word and its verbal root which forms the basis of the name Jesus. It is located under “Part Four”).

Vs. 11: 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.

Around or *kuklos* as in 5.11. Here the angels form a circle not only around the throne but the elders and four living creatures, that is, forming 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.

Vs. 12: saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

Observe how this verse begins and ends with Amen, a term commonly used to conclude a prayer. Its situation at both ends, as it were, 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.

Vs. 14: 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.

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 this elder 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. Cf. vs. 4: “but you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book until the time of the end.” Such rolling up of the scroll/book makes knowledge grow: “Many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall increase.”

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]?

2 November, All Souls

1) But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. 2) In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be an affliction, 3) and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace. 4) For though in the sight of men they were punished, their hope is full of immortality. 5) Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good because God tested them and found them worthy of himself; 6) like gold in the furnace he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them. 7) In the time of their visitation they will shine forth and will run like sparks through the stubble. 8) They will govern nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord will reign over them for ever. 9) Those who trust in him will understand truth, and the faithful will abide with him in love because grace and mercy are upon his elect, and he watches over his holy ones. Wisdom 3.1-9

Being tucked away in God's hand obviously means that the souls of the righteous (*dikaïos*) are protected, especially against any torment, *basanizo* also as to examine closely. Their situation consists in a kind of being examined closely but vastly different from those to whom this verb pertains. So while the *dikaïoi* are enjoying divine protection, outside God's hand are the foolish or *aphron* which connotes being without sense or downright silly. Those in this group misread this protect as death and affliction, *kakosis* essentially distress, neglect and ill-treatment. In sum, they consider their departure (*exodos*) as destruction, *suntrimma* which is more along the lines of a fracture or abrasion.

The *dikaïoi* are presented as having been punished and disciplined, the verbs being *kolazo* and *paideuo*. The former suggests being put within boundaries as well as chastised while the latter applies to the rearing of a child. Both are in stark contrast to being *aphron* or without sense. In fact, those who are such may have a certain envy of the *dikaïoi* being so treated, that they were the beneficiaries of divine goodness. As vs. 5 has it, they'd like to be found worthy (*axios*) of God and placed in God's hand which is not unlike Abraham's bosom. Lk 16.22+ has the parable of Lazarus versus the rich man where we have those in God's hand and those outside gazing in.

What scares to death the *aphron* is that the *dikaïoi* have been tested as gold and having become a burnt offering. That means fire is involved, again not unlike the rich man who exclaimed "I am in anguish in this flame" [Lk 16.24].

Vs. 7 speaks of a time of visitation with regard to the *dikaïoi*, a *kairos* (special occasion or divine intervention) as it pertains to *episkope*, literally a watching over which appears different though similar to being in God's hand. The shining forth (*analampo* (connotes being caught on fire)) will be among those likened to stubble, another way of speaking of the *aphron*. The *dikaïoi* will rule nations with the Lord reigning over them. It sounds impressive but such nations are in fact consist of stubble.

This excerpt concludes with the *dikaïoi* abiding with the Lord (that is, still in his hand), *prosmeno* where the preposition *pros* suggests direction toward-which as it pertains to love, the untranslatable *agape*. Pretty much equivalent to the remaining-toward is the Lord watching over his elect, *eklektos* equivalent to *dikaïos*. This is put in terms of *charis* and *eleos* (grace and mercy. As for the *eklektoi*, they trust in the Lord and understand truth, the two verbs being *peitho* and *sunistemi*. The former also means to persuade, to prevail upon with the preposition *epi*, literally "upon him" (the Lord). The latter literally means to come or to be together, here with regard to the truth (*aletheia*).

3 November, Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

22) Because the whole world before you is like a speck that tips the scales and like a drop of morning dew that falls upon the ground. 23) But you are merciful to all, for you can do all things, and you overlook men's sins, that they may repent. 24) For you love all things that exist and have loathing for none of the things which you have made, for you would not have made anything if you hadn't hated it. 25) How would anything have endured if you had not willed it? Or how would anything not called forth by you have been preserved? 26) You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord who love the living. 12.1) For your immortal spirit is in all things. 2) Therefore you correct little by little those who trespass, and remind and warn them of the things wherein they sin that they may be freed from wickedness and put their trust in you, O Lord. Wisdom 11.22-12.2

Kosmos is the noun for world which implies a harmonious order, almost as a decoration which despite its beauty is as a speck of dust and dew drop before the Lord. As for the former, literally it reads “as an inclination of the scales (balance).” Despite this, the Lord is merciful, the verb *eleeo* connoting pity. Despite the puniness of the two images with regard to humanity, this divine mercy has as its aim repentance, *eis* or into with regard to *metanoia*, literally after-thought...into after-thought, if you will. Obviously part of this includes people being aware of the two images relative to their insignificance.

Another way of putting the Lord's love (*agapeo*) for everything—his disinterested attention toward—is by a lack of loathing, *bdelussomai* which also means to become nauseous. If the latter were true, the Lord wouldn't have engaged in the created process which can imply the six days of Genesis culminating in the fashioning of the first man and woman.

Vs. 25 puts forth two rhetorical questions after this contrast between *agapeo* and *bdelussomai*. The first pertains to the endurance (*meno*, to remain) in being of what God had created. The second pertains to the preservation of what he had summoned, *diatero* also as to watch closely, to observe where *dia* or through suggests this attentiveness.

An essential manifestation of divine *agapeo* is sparing what had been created, *pheidomai* implying not destroying. Parallel to yet similar to *agapeo* is the adjective *philosuchos*, loving one's soul where the *philos* connotes friendship in distinction to *agapeo*.

God's spirit or *pneuma* (breath) is *aphthartos*, literally incorruptible which enables him to correct those who go astray. The verb is *elegcho*, also as to cross examine or censure with regard to persons who *parapipto*, literally fall by the side (of the road). Note that it isn't done all at once by *kat' oligon*, literally “according to small.” Similar to this *elenchos* or cross-examination is putting forth a reminder of sin, the verb *hupomimnesko* literally as a reminding that comes from beneath, *hupo*. Such a reminding from below is quite thorough

and results in being freed from wickedness (*kakia*), the verb *apallasso* also as to release (*apo-* or from). Once this happens, those to whom it's directed can trust in the Lord, *pisteuo* (also as to believe) literally "upon (*epi*) the Lord."

10 November, Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

1) It happened also that seven brothers and their mother were arrested and were being compelled by the king under torture with whips and cords to partake of unlawful swine's flesh. 2) One of them, acting as their spokesman, said, "What do you intend to ask and learn from us? For we are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our fathers"...9) And when he was at his last breath he said, "You accursed wretch, you dismiss us from this present life, but the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life because we have died for his laws." 10) After him, the third was the victim of their sport. When it was demanded, he quickly put out his tongue and courageously stretched forth his hands 11) and said nobly, "I got these from Heaven, and because of his laws I disdain them, and from him I hope to get them back again." 12) As a result the king himself and those with him were astonished at the young man's spirit, for he regarded his sufferings as nothing. 13) When he too had died, they maltreated and tortured the fourth in the same way. 14) And when he was near death he said, "One cannot but choose to die at the hands of men and to cherish the hope that God gives of being raised again by him. But for you there will be no resurrection to life!" Second Maccabees 7.1-2 & 9-14

"It happened" or *sumbaino*, literally to go with (*sum-*), to come together. It's an apt verb to introduce what by far is the Bible's goriest account of not just one death but seven brothers. What makes it more horrendous is that their mother had to look on, one by one, until it was her turn. This excerpt (gratefully) leaves out the bloody details, stating the reason for the inhumane treatment of an entire family. All were forced to eat pork which, of course, was against the Jewish law, *athemistos*. They knew what was in store for them which made one of the brothers throw back to the king a rhetorical question what he hopes to gain (*manthano*, to learn) from torturing them. As for the king's presence, it seems unusual for him to be present while the torture is being applied, most likely because he considered all brothers or at least one might break and set a precedent. If so, it would be an example for the entire nation of Israel. This, of course, was what their mother feared the most.

Vs. 9 has the first brother call the king an accursed wretch for the Greek *alastor* which can be rendered as a kind of avenging angel or a plague. Despite the torments, this brother (all plus the mother are equally brave) has an intuition that while the king may deprive him and his family of life, the King of the universe (*Basileus* and *kosmos*) will raise them up to a renewal of life which isn't temporary but everlasting (*eis aionion* or into the ages).

As for the verb *anistemi*, it's the same one as applied to Jesus' resurrection. The reason for such hope lies in dying for the divine laws (*nomos*).

After offering his limbs to be cut off...and don't forget, this is repeated eight times!...the first brother expresses his hope of having them restored. Even the sadistic king as well as those doing his dirty work were astonished, *ekplesso* meaning to strike out of, to drive away.

The brother (and we can assume the same applies to them all) expresses his firm hope in *anistemi*. He has the last word by saying that the king will be deprived of this resurrection or *anastasis* to which are added the words *eis zoen*, literally "into life."

17 November, Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

1) "For behold, the day comes, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. 2) But for you who fear my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings. You shall go forth leaping like calves from the stall. 3) And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the Lord of hosts. 4) "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and ordinances that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. 5) "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. 6) And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse." Malachi 4.1-6 (3.19-24 in the Hebrew)

This is the last official Sunday of the liturgical year in the sense of it bringing to completion Ordinary Time which started in June a few Sundays after Pentecost. Not only have we come off an extended period of time—the longest stretch in a given liturgical year—but leave off from when the days are longest to when we're a few weeks before the shortest day of the year. Furthermore, the Book of Malachi is the last book before the New Testament; not only that, the excerpt is at the end of this book.

In light of the last paragraph, the opening words "behold, the day comes" adds to the sense of completion at hand. "Behold" or *hineh* is a way of grabbing one's attention to an important matter about to be communicated which is the "day," *yom* equivalent to a *kairos* event. This will be a day unlike the one with which we're familiar. Measurement of time will not apply as it pertains to the burning of an oven. *Tanor* also means a furnace, not a little oven in a home used for cooking. "You will make them as a blazing oven when you appear" [Ps 21.9]. Keeping in mind the image of a conventional day, we could say that

its dawn resembles the door to this oven/furnace. Suddenly it opens wide and allows the heat to blast forth, consuming everything present. In other words, no root nor branch will be left as vs. 1 says.

Continuing with this image of a door to an oven thrown open, the alternate image of a door may be applied to the rising of the sun of righteousness (*tsedaqah*). It contains wings not unlike a cherub upon which is healing or *marpe'*. This will be before those who fear (the verb *yare'* also connotes respect) the Lord's name and will not blast forth like the oven's heat. Instead, the flapping of the wings, if you will, will transmit such healing. Actually this image plus the one of an oven just described can be considered as the way two types of people are treated through the medium of one event...one *yom* or *kairos* event...completely opposite to each other.

The effect of this healing? It will make those fearing the Lord to leap like calves, this leaping taking on the form of treading down the wicked. In other words, a joyous, spontaneous action simultaneously perceived as one of destruction.

Vs. 4 comes off with an admonition, again keeping in mind this is the close of the so-called Old Testament. The Israelites are bidden to remember the law (*Torah*) of the Lord's servant Moses given at Mount Horeb. Note Dt 5.4 which has special meaning in the context of the passage at hand: "The Lord spoke with you face to face at the mountain, from the midst of the fire." We could say the fire in light of the image of the oven and the fire as transformed into healing has its source here.

Right after this pivotal reminder Malachi adds that the Lord will send Elijah, the prophet who had ascended into heaven in a chariot of fire, again the image of fire. Elijah will return in this same chariot and reconcile fathers and their children. Then comes the clincher which many don't expect. The very last words of Malachi...the Old Testament...offer a severe warning. If this reconciliation doesn't happen, the Lord will literally come off with a "ban the of utter destruction." *Cheren* is the noun here, a kind of holy curse applied to things reserved solely for the Lord. Such a *cherem* Joshua applied to Jericho. To violate it means that the person responsible for this *cherem* will end up like Achan. Not only he was stoned but his entire family and possessions.

24 November, Christ the King

1) Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Behold, we are your bone and flesh. 2) In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was you that led out and brought in Israel; and the Lord said to you, 'You shall be shepherd of my people Israel,

and you shall be prince over Israel." 3) So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron; and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel. Second Samuel 5.1-3

It's appropriate that after the extended period of Ordinary Time the liturgical year concludes with a parallel between King David and Jesus Christ who, as we know, did not proclaim himself as king. However, the two are connected by lineage.

It should be remembered that David is the second king, his predecessor being Saul who got off on wrong foot. Actually embarking upon this entire venture which changed Israel's direction had an inauspicious beginning. The people demanded a king instead of the Lord. "Give us a king to govern us" [1Sam 8.6]. It's significant that after the tragedy of Saul's reign, death and prior to David's misdeeds that the people approached David acknowledging that they are literally part of his physical body ('your bone and flesh'). This is not mere formal talk but a genuine devotion to David who just recently had established his rule and still was on shaky ground.

The people remind David of how he had comported himself when Saul was still king, again keeping in mind words they'd rather forget than remember: "Give us a king to govern us" (instead of the Lord). Thus the people, elders and David himself were ever mindful of this uncomfortable response to the fact that the people "have rejected me from being king over them" [1Sam 8.7]. These words were bound to echo not just through the reigns of Saul and David but throughout Israel's history. David hoped it would be somehow swept under the rug by establishing a covenant at Hebron specified as being "before the Lord." In that way the Lord might...though there was no hard-fast guarantee he'd swallow it...forget those poignant words of rejection and accept what the people of Israel had opted for, a human king over a divine king.

As so the liturgical year concludes on this somewhat uneasy note, a lesson applicable to Christ as King where people are invited to accept him or not.

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