

Vs. 18: But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife and your sons' wives with you.

This is the first mention of *covenant* in the Bible (*beryth*) which is to play such an important role later in Israel's history. The take-off point, as it were, for such a covenant and from which all others take their source is Abraham: "And I will make my *covenant* between me and you and will multiply you exceedingly" [Gen 17.2]. Perhaps Abraham was familiar with stories of God's covenant with Noah.

In the verse at hand, *beryth* is used with the verb *qum* (*to establish*) which alternately means "to arise." The establishment of a covenant at this juncture just prior to the destruction of the world and the evil stemming from Adam hints at an increased remoteness between God and humanity which was absent in the Garden of Eden. The verse just noted with respect to Abraham ("between me"/"between you") heighten this distance all the more. Note that the covenant with Noah is not spelled out until 9.12, that is, the rainbow; here it lies in the future.

Immediately after mention of the covenant God commands Noah and his family to enter the ark to ensure propagation of the human race after the flood. "Sons" suggests this propagation will take place in accord with a patriarchal framework.

Vs. 19: And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female.

This verse echos the creation story which begins Genesis, a type of "day" not when living beings were created but kept alive in the ark. Note the preposition *of* (min, alternately as *from*) prefixed to (according to the Hebrew text) "*from* all living thing," "*from* all flesh," "two *from* all." Thus this choice of male and female to ensure future propagation of the first creation intimates that Noah had to make a correct choice, not just any "living thing of all flesh."

Vs. 20 specifies out "all flesh" into three categories: birds, animals, creeping things. All three were created on "day five" and "day six" respectively. The verse at hand (20) says that they are to be selected "according to their *kinds*" or *myn* which denotes form as well. *Myn* is mentioned with regard to clean and unclean animals in Leviticus, for example 11.15+.

"Shall come in to you:" these words intimate that the respective kinds make their way into the ark on their own accord. Noah's role is more specified in terms of his responsibility to "keep them alive...with you."

After the command to take animals into the ark, God bids Noah to take "every sort of food." The act of *storing it up* (*'asaph*) implies a collecting (alternate meaning of the verb) which is in accord with each type of bird, animal and creeping thing. God also bids Noah to lay up food for himself which extends to his family.

Vs. 22: Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

Noah's "doing" is in accord with God's *command* (*tsawah*, verb). This simple sentence connotes a

good deal of work in preparing for the flood. The important point is that such doing agrees with divine commanding, as though the two were carried out simultaneously without temporal disparity between the two.

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Chapter Seven

Vs. 1: Then the Lord said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation.

Household (beyth): although this term means a physical house, it can be used as here for one’s family. For a New Testament example, cf. Jn 4.53: “And he himself believed and all his *household*.” Note that this “house” is inserted into a larger structure or the ark.

Righteous (tsadyq): as in 6.9 (“Noah was a *righteous* man, blameless in his generation”). In the verse at hand, Noah is righteous “*before me*” (liphany; cf. 6.11). The unique quality of Noah’s righteousness is emphasized even further by “*in this generation*.” Cf. the following verse in the context of the New Testament where Noah is called a *herald* (kerux). More specifically, by God singling Noah out he is intended as a trumpet, so to speak, for future generations: “If he did not spare the ancient world but preserved Noah, a *herald* of righteousness, with seven other persons when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly” [2 Pt 2.5]. For another verse along line: “When the earth was flooded because of him, wisdom again saved it, steering the righteous man by a paltry piece of wood” [Wis 10.4].

Vs. 2: Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate; and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate;

“Take *with you*”: the preposition l- is used, more specifically, *to*; it almost intimates a kind of assimilation as well as assuming responsibility for both clean and unclean animals. God bids Noah to divide the two groupings of animals into *pairs*, a term lacking in the Hebrew text (both instances in this same verse) which literally reads “*seven seven*” (shevah). This adjective is used with regard to “day *seven*” [2.2] and connotes perfection as noted there.

For the first time in the Bible the animals are designated as *clean* (tahor) and *unclean* (same word with the particle lo’, *not*), that is, as opposed to the animals within the Garden of Eden. The Book of Leviticus details the use of the two types animals both for eating and sacrifice especially chapter eleven.

The word for *mate* is ‘ishah, the same for “wife” as in 2.23 when the man first beheld the woman after God took her from his side.

Vs. 3 continues with the same theme only applied to birds.

Vs. 4: For in seven days I will send rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground.”

The close of the lengthy address to Noah by God begun in vs. 1.

The Hebrew text lacks “days.” This *rain* (matar, verb) is not sent not for a beneficial purpose as in 2.5 but for *blotting out* (machah) life. Cf. 6.7 for another use of this verb: “I will *blot out* man whom I have created from the face of the ground” (in addition to all living things).

There is a connection between machah and *made* (hasah); it is also noted in 6.7 which is distinct from bara’ (*to create*). Again, as in that verse “face of the ground” presents an image of wiping the ground clear of all life.

Vs. 5 parallels the close of Chapter Six, vs. 22, with regard to preparing the ark. In both verses note the literal rendering of the Hebrew text: “*as* (ke-) God commanded him.” This “*as*” indicates an immediate putting into practice the divine mandates as soon as Noah hears them.

In the **RSV**, vss. 6-10 form a paragraph which recapitulates some of what had already been presented, the chief parts being outlined as follows:

- Noah’s age is 600 years; he lives for another 350 years after the flood (cf. 9.28).
- Noah and his extended family enter the ark to “escape” (this word is lacking in the Hebrew text) the flood or literally, “from the face of waters of the flood.”
- The animals go “two and two” with Noah into the ark or literally, “two two went to Noah to the ark.”
- “*as* (ke-) God had commanded Noah:” cf. remarks above, vs. 5.
- The flood comes in seven days, a period of time to make final preparations, a kind of “de-creation” to the divine creation which begins Genesis.

Vs. 11: In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened.

A very specific time for the beginning of the worldwide flood. The text presents this timing in light of Noah’s age, almost as if he (and his extended family) as sole human survivors were the standard by which time would be measured after the flood. The phrase “on that day” emphasizes the drama about to take place in addition to telling time.

Fountains (mahyn): compare with the earlier rain (vs. 4) which comes from the sky above. The mahyn lie both above and beneath the earth and is reminiscent of 1.7: “And God made the firmament and separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament.” Also vs. 6 says that this firmament was “in the midst of the waters.” Thus the flood resulting from these two-fold fountains withdraw, as it were, and allows the earth’s position “in the midst” to revert to chaos. In brief, verse 11 is a reverse type of creation or better, a destruction. For another use of mahyn but in a different sense, cf. Ps 84.6: “As they go through the valley of Baca they make it a place of *springs*.”

The association of fountains with chaos is enhanced by the “great *deep*” or tehom as in 1.2: “and

darkness was upon the face of the *deep*.”

This *tehom bursts forth* (*baqah*), literally, “cleaves open,” which is an accurate description of water gushing forth from beneath the ground. The following gives an striking use of this verb applied to the human body: “When they grasped you with the hand, you broke and *tore* all their shoulders; and when they leaned upon you, you broke and made all their loins to shake” [Ezk 29.7]. For a positive sense, cf. Is 48.21: “He made water flow for them from the rock; he *cleft* the rock and the water gushed out.”

“*Windows* (‘*arubah*) of the heavens:” as opposed to the just mentioned fountains which come from the earth. Compare ‘*arubah* with *tsohar* of 6.14 (*window* in the ark or literally, “light”). The former suggests an interwoven piece of work or lattice which is loosened that water may gush forth. “Therefore they shall be like the morning mist...or like smoke from a *window*” [Hos 13.3].

Such windows *were opened* (*patah*): for another use, cf. Gen 9.27, “God *enlarge* Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem.” Both the *deep* is in the active mode (“burst forth) whereas the windows are in the passive mode (“were opened”).

Vs. 12: And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

Rain (*geshem*): compare with *matar* of vs. 4; the word at hand connotes a violent storm whereas *matar* means rain in general. “Ask *rain* (*matar*) from the Lord in the season of the spring rain, from the Lord who makes the storm clouds, who gives men *showers* (*geshem*) of *rain* (*matar*), to every one the vegetation in the field” [Zech 10.1]. The destructive nature of this rain is enhanced by its duration of forty days, a biblical way of saying a long yet determined period. Compare with Moses on Mount Sinai and Jesus Christ fasting in the desert.

The verb “to fall” is lacking in the Hebrew text which literally reads, “rain was upon the *earth* (*‘eret*z).” The lack of a verb can suggest the total inundation and blotting out of all life.

Vss. 13-16 restate much of what has already been presented, namely, Noah and his extended family entering the ark along with the animals. “Enter”/“go in” is mentioned four times as if in contrast with the torrential flood which began “on the *very same* day (*hetsem*). This Hebrew word is akin to “bone” and implies strength (cf. use of this word in 2.23); thus *hetsem* suggests an intensity, almost a strength, which here shows the concurrence of Noah’s entry into the ark and the flood. Both in turn may be seen in line with the three-fold specification of Noah’s life (“six hundredth year,” “second month,” “seventeenth day of the month,” vs. 11).

The “*breath* (*ruach*) of life” may be contrasted with the destructive flood.

“And the Lord *shut* him *in* (*sagar*):” Cf. 2.21 for another use, “So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man...and *closed up* its place with flesh.”

Vs. 17: The flood continued forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth.

The Hebrew text lacks “continued” and has the simple “was.” Here the text has *flood* (mabul) whereas vs. 12 has *rain* (geshem): “And *rain* fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights.” Also vs. 17 simply mentions “forty days” as opposed to vs. 12’s “forty days and forty nights.” Nevertheless, the picture presented is that the water comes from both above and beneath, a way of expressing the intensity of the torrent.

As noted elsewhere, mabul is associated with water coming from beneath the earth’s surface which is consistent with “the waters increased.”

Two similar verbs to indicate the drama of this verse: *ravah* (*increased*, with regard to the waters) and *rose* (rum, with regard to the ark). Also, *earth* (‘eret) is mentioned twice as if in a last farewell to solid ground.

Vs. 18: The waters prevailed and increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark floated on the face of the waters.

The verbs in this verse with respect to the gradual domination of earth by water may be paralleled with the increase of human wickedness which brought on the flood (cf. 6.5).

Prevailed (gavar): alternately, “to be strong.” This verb can apply to human strength: “The Lord goes forth like a *mighty man* (gibor), like a man of war he stirs up his fury; he cries out, he shouts aloud, he *shows himself mighty* against his foes” [Is 42.13].

“*Increased greatly:*” another use of the verb *ravah* as in vs. 17.

“*Floated:*” in Hebrew, the simple verb for “to go” is used. Note that the ark “went” on the water’s surface which heightens the sense of its immunity from the destructive nature of this water as well as its separation from the evil on the earth.

The sequence of this verse beginning with an implied sense of a warrior-champion triumphing through the verb *gavar* (cf. the noun *gibor* in Is 42.13 above) connotes that this warrior first overcomes his adversaries and then dominates his newly conquered territory.

Vs. 19: And the waters prevailed so mightily upon the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered;

Another use of the verb *gavar* (*prevailed*) to continue the theme of a *gibor* or warrior triumphing.

So mightily (me’od me’od): this double use of the adverb which alternately means “exceedingly,” “very,” describes in almost exorbitant terms the thoroughly destructive nature of the flood. The same theme continues with the verb *covered* (kasah). This word pertains to putting on a garment or the like: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is *covered*” [Ps 32.1].

“*Whole heaven*” (shamaym): as in 1.8 which has the primary name of “firmament.” Note that this verse is preceded by God having separated waters above and below this firmament.

Vs. 20 continues the theme of the previous verse with a further use of the verb *gavar* (*prevailed*) with respect to mountains. The adverb *milmahlah* (*above*) demonstrates the extreme height to which the waters have reached. It is composed of two prepositions m-(in, *from*) and h-(al, *on*) prefixed to the verb *halah*, *to ascend*. This image is one of the waters above and below the firmament on the point of merging and returning to the primeval chaos before creation.

Cubit ('amah or "forearm"): as in 6.15-6 with respect to the ark's dimensions; here it refers to the waters' depth above the highest mountain peaks.

Vs. 21 says that "all flesh" had *perished* (*gawah*), thereby fulfilling God's words in vs. 17 which uses this same verb. The verb *moved* (*ramas*) is found in 1.21 & 28 with regard to creatures which dwell in the ocean; in the verse at hand, *ramas* has it with regard to land animals.

Vs. 22 has the noun *breath* ("of life") or *ruach* which simply adds to the already strong contrast between living beings and the catastrophic flood.

Vs. 23 uses the verb *machah* (*blotted out*) twice; cf. its first appearance in 6.7 when God first proposes the flood to destroy human wickedness. *Machah* has as its object all created land animals as well as the *ground* ('*adamah*) and *man* ('*adam*). Mention of 'adam and his source suggest a total and clean break with the past or the creation of the first man.

Was left (*sha'ar*): Noah and his extended family in the ark. "He that is *left* and is preserved shall die of famine" [Ezk 6.12]. The simple sentence concluding vs. 23 ("Only Noah was left and those that were with him in the ark") has a finality about it paralleled to 6.8, "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord."

Chapter Seven concludes with another use of *gavar* (*prevailed*), this time with respect to the duration of 158 days. Thus *gavar* has a temporal extension as well as a spacial one.

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Notes on the Book of Genesis, Part II (Chapters 8-22)

This section follows Part I and precedes Part III (from Chapters 22 to the end of Genesis; will be added later). Refer to the Introduction in Part I for detailed information as to the purpose of this text. From approximately Chapter Eight onwards many parts of Genesis deal with historical circumstances which fall outside the province of *lectio divina*, that is, as presented in the Introduction. For this reason some sections will be treated insofar as they have relevance with regard to the practice of *lectio*.

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Chapter Eight

Vs. 1: But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark.

And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided;

A significant use of the verb *zakar* (*to remember*); as noted in 1.28, *zakar* is the verbal root for “male.” It implies the propagation...the remembering...of one generation into another. In the verse at hand, *zakar* takes on special significance in that God is “remembering” Noah and the animals with him after the flood. Such recollection extends backwards and into future generations which will populate the earth after the flood. Actually, this is the first use of the verb and therefore assumes special importance. God uses *zakar* later in 9.15 with respect to the covenant and is a kind of propagation, if you will, of this covenant leading to the one given at Mount Sinai.

Wind (*ruach*): the same term for “spirit.” Noah, along with his extended family and animals, represents a new creation now floating over the destructive waters which may be paralleled with 1.2: “and the *Spirit* of God was moving over the face of the waters.” Thus the ark is a kind of *moving*...*rachaph*...not unlike this one. The motion of *ruach* is *across* (*havar*, verb) the *earth* or *’eret*. Note that earth is used in the context of a completely submerged world, so the *ruach* must be very strong to remove the waters of chaos back under the firmament and above the firmament (cf. 1.7).

Subsided (*shakak*): in addition to this verse, the English verb is used in vss. 8 & 11 whereas the Hebrew has *qalal*. *Shakak* denotes more an inclining or stooping. Its reference with regard to anger is revealing as in the following: “After these things, when the anger of King Ahasuerus had *abated*” [Est 2.1].

Vs. 2: the fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained,

A continuation of the next verse which follows through into vs. 4.

“Fountains of the *deep*” (*tehom*): a creation of sorts paralleling that of Genesis’ opening verses. In the verse at hand as well as 3 and four, note the verbs of constraint outlined as follows:

-*closed* (*sakar*), that is, the fountains and windows (of heaven) or water which issues forth from below and from above: “for the mouths of liars will be *stopped*” [Ps 63.11].

-*restrained* (*kala’*), that is, the *rain* or *geshem* noted in 7.12: “Therefore the heavens above you have *withheld* the dew, and the earth has *withheld* its produce” [Hag 1.10].

-*receded* (*shuv*, vs. 3): that is, the waters, in the sense of returning to their original place, most likely to places such as oceans and lakes. The adverb “continually” reads in the Hebrew text as a verb, *halak* (*to go*).

-*abated* (*chasar*): in the sense of lacking something or to be wanting. “Let your garments be always white; let not oil *be lacking* on your head” [Eccl 9.8]. *Chasar* is used with reference to a period of time, one hundred and fifty days. Better, the noun *qatsah* is used (*end*); it can be used in the context of space: “Make one cherub on the one *end* and one cherub on the other *end*” [Ex 25.19].

Vss. 4 and 5 give specific times as in 7.11 (beginning of the flood) with regard to the flood’s cessation ranging *upwards* or from a specific day->month->year. Compare with 7.11 with regard to the beginning of the flood which ranges *downwards* or from a specific year (Noah’s life)->month-

>day. The beginning of the flood coincides with time in this one person's life.

-*end* (qatsah): as in vs. 3 with respect to 150 days when the flood itself ceased. In the verse at hand (4) it is in the context of the *ark* (tevah) coming to *rest* (nuach) on the (plural) mountains of Ararat. Note the play on words: tevah and tanach, the latter being the form of nuach. Cf. 2.15 where this verb is used with another sense: "The Lord God took the man and *put* him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it."

-“continued to abate:” literally, “the waters were and *to go* (kal, infinite absolute) and *to abate*” (kal, infinite absolute); cf. vs. 3 above with similar constructions of the verbs halak and chasar.

-“tenth month->first day of the month.” The ark rested on the mountains of Ararat on the seventh month->on the seventeenth day. Thus the time span between the ark hitting solid ground until the mountain tops became visible is approximately three and a half months. A continuity of sorts may be posited from “but God remembered Noah” of vs. 1 to “tops of the mountains were seen” of vs. 5. I.e., such divine remembering had extended throughout this duration.

Vs. 6: At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made,

This verse introduces another time span, this one of forty days as used in 7.17, the duration of the flood waters upon the earth. Also, vs. 6 has another use of qatsah (*end*). It is the time when Noah opened the ark's (single) *window* or chalon; compare with 6.16: “Make a *roof* for the ark” where the word tsohar or *light* is used. Also, chalon may be found in 2 Kg 7.2: “If the Lord himself should make *windows* in heaven, could this thing be?” It derives from a verbal root meaning “to be perforated.”

Vs. 7: and sent forth a raven; and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth.

This and the previous verse form a unity; the act of Noah opening...of “perforating” (chalon)...the ark's window is significant in and by itself and sets the stage through vs. 12.

The bird which Noah sent forth is a *raven* or horev; from a verbal root with the basic meaning “to set” (also “evening” is derived from it) and thus suggesting the onset of darkness. “There is an outcry in the streets for lack of wine; all joy has *reached its eventide*” [Is 24.11]. As for the noun, cf. Ps 147.9: “He gives to the beasts their food and to the young *ravens* which cry.”

Went to and fro (yetse' yatsu'): the verb yatsa' being used (*to go forth*). Compare this departure from the ark with the dove in vs. 12; the raven departs “until the waters were dried up.” The Hebrew text has the verb shuv (*to return*) implying that the raven did return to the ark. Compare shuv with the similar sounding verb yavash, *to dry up*; it is as though the raven's act of returning was instrumental in effecting the water not simply to recede but to dry up which is emphasized by the Hebrew “from on the earth.”

Vs. 8: Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground;

A second example of *sending* (shalach), this time a *dove* or yonah. A parallel can be made between the dove's departure and the Spirit "moving over the face of the waters" [1.2] which uses the verb rachaph (*to brood over*) and can be associated with a bird cherishing its young. The **RSV** follows a literal translation of the Hebrew—"from him"—as opposed to raven of the previous verse; it is though the dove had a closer connection with Noah. The Song of Songs has several references to yonah, one of which is 1.15: "Behold, you are beautiful, my love; behold, you are beautiful; your eyes are *doves*."

Yonah is closely associated with the proper name Jonah who was cast into the sea, not unlike the waters of the flood: "So they took up Jonah and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging."

In the verse at hand, the dove has a mission, namely to determine whether or not the primordial flood waters have abated. In the previous verse, the raven is simply sent forth; it apparently flies back and forth effecting, as it were, the drying-up process.

Ground ('adamah): compare with vs. 7, 'eretz (*earth*).

Vs. 9: but the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put forth his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him.

To set (nuach): as in vs. 4: "the ark came to *rest* upon the mountains of Ararat." In the verse at hand, nuach concerns the dove unable to locate dry land even though the ark had hit upon Ararat. Compare the expression which reads in the Hebrew text, "soul of her foot" with Jos 3.13: "And when the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the Lord...shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be stopped from flowing."

Returned (shuv): as with the raven in vs. 7. Here is a two-fold shuv, to the ark and to Noah, because water still covered the *earth* ('eretz) as opposed to 'adamah in vs. 8.

Noah *put forth* (shalach) his hand to receive the dove; cf. vs. 8 for this verb. Two further actions are indicated: a taking in and bringing in of the dove. Both Noah and the dove enter the ark.

Vs. 10: He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark;

Waited (yachal): also connotes a sense of expectation, of hope as in Ps 130.7: "O Israel, *hope* in the Lord!" The period of seven days is not mentioned with regard to the earlier mission of the raven nor dove; it may be taken as in light of that special duration of time signified by "seven" when God rested from his creative work. The adverb hod (*another*) also means "again," "yet again."

Sent forth (shalach): the third use of this verb with respect to this episode, here with respect to the dove. The Hebrew text literally reads, "he continued to send."

Vs. 11: and the dove came back to him in the evening and lo, in her mouth a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth.

“To him:” yet another indication of the dove’s close affinity with Noah. The time of her return is *evening* or *herev*. “Each *evening* they come back, howling like dogs and prowling about the city” [Ps 59.6]. In the verse at hand, *herev* may be paralleled with the “cool of the day” [3.8].

Lo (*hineh*): signifies astonishment as in 1.31, the completion of creation.

Leaf (*haleh*, of an olive): despite the devastating nature of the flood, this particular fruit either survived or was the first to grow. The olive is an important source for oil for food as well as fuel and symbolic of prosperity. “Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table” [Ps 128.3].

The dove *plucked* the olive leaf or *taraph*, a verb which can have violent connotations: “Joseph is without doubt *torn to pieces*” [Gen 37.33]. For an example parallel to the use at hand yet which encompasses the verbal root, cf. Ps 111.5: “He provides *food* for those who fear him.”

Subsided (*qalal*): a verb used in reference to *earth* (*‘eretz*) whose fundamental meaning is “to be light;” it also means “to curse” in the sense of reckoning someone or something as light or insignificant. Compare with *shakak* in vs. 1: “and the waters *subsided*.”

Vs. 12: Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove; and she did not return to him anymore.

A further use of the adverb *hod* (*another*) in the sense of “again” (cf. vs. 10) with reference to the time frame of seven days, a type of *kairos* or special event. Noah had *yachal*...“hope”...in his *waiting* after which he *sent forth* (*shalach*) the dove.

Note the use of *yasaph* (*to add*) used in the literal translation of vs. 10, “he continued to send” which suggests that a prior action had been taken and which may or may not be taken in the future.

Anymore: (the negative particle *lo’* coupled with *hod*), the latter being used at the beginning of this same verse. Action concerns the dove’s *return* or *shuv*; cf. vss. 7 & 9.

Vs. 13: In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried from off the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked and behold, the face of the ground was dry.

The time frame presented here proceeds downwards from year to month to month’s first day which parallels the same method introducing the flood (cf. 7.11). There it was clearly in the context of “Noah’s life” which is lacking in the verse at hand but implied.

Were dried (*charav*): often used in the context of a drought and desolation but here in a positive context as returning the primeval waters to the positions above and below the firmament. The preposition *m-*(*min*, *from*) emphasizes this definitive retreat with respect to *‘eretz*. “I will lay waste mountains and hills and *dry up* all their herbage; I will turn the rivers into islands and *dry up* the

pools" [Is 42.15]. The word "sword" is derived from charav suggesting that this weapon dries up...lays waste.

Covering (mikseh): from the verbal root kasah which suggests a putting on as noted in 7.19 with respect to waters covering the earth. For another maritime use, cf. Ezk 27.7: "Blue and purple from the coasts of Elishah was your *awning*." Thus the mikseh of Noah's ark may be taken as an awning which was a shield against both rain and sun.

"Looked" followed by *behold* or hineh which as noted in vs. 11 can convey a sense astonishment or wonder. The object of Noah's wonder was the 'adamah being dry or charav; compare 'eretz used in the first part of this same verse.

Vs. 14 presents another time frame: second month and twenty-seventh day of the month. Here it pertains to 'eretz being *dry* or yavash which may be compared with charav of vs. 13. This verse suggests complete dryness throughout. "That the people of Israel may go on *dry ground* through the (Red) sea" [Ex 14.16].

Vss. 14 through 19 sets in motion a description of the departure from the ark which may be outlined as follows:

-*"and God said:"* the simple words which comprise vs. 16 and stand alone to accentuate the divine commission described in these verses.

-*Go forth* (yatsa'): as in vs. 7 when Noah sent out a raven; here it pertains to Noah, his wife, his sons and sons' wives. Note the phrase "with you;" the importance of Noah is stressed in his relationship with his extended family as they exit the ark. The text says nothing about the ark or its fate.

-*bring forth* (yatsa'): another use of this verb with a different meaning and affiliated with the phrase "with you" or with Noah; again, it shows Noah's role with respect to the new earth. Here "all flesh" are associated with Noah for a three-fold purpose: 1) *breed abundantly* (sharats) as in 1.20: "Let the waters bring forth *swarms* of living creatures." 2 & 3) *be fruitful* (parah) and *multiply* (ravah) as in 1.28: "*Be fruitful and multiply.*"

-Noah *went forth* or yatsa' with his extended family.

-*went forth* (yatsa'): "every beast, creeping thing, bird and everything that moves upon the earth." Note that this yatsa' is according to an order or *families* (mishpachah) as opposed to coming from the ark individually. This term can apply to a tribe as well. "And all the *families* of the nations shall worship before you" [Ps 22.27].

Vs. 20: Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

The type of altar—wood or stone—is not mentioned but perhaps the ark may have been used along the lines described in 1 Sam 6.14: "And they split up the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the Lord." This is the first mention of an *altar* or mizbeach which figures significantly in Exodus: "And Moses built an *altar* and called the name of it, 'The Lord is my banner'" [17.15].

The offerings upon this altar consist of *clean* animals (tahor) first given in 7.2 along with those which are unclean; this anticipates the Book of Leviticus which details the difference between the two types. “You are to distinguish between the holy and the common and between the unclean and the *clean*” [Lev 10.10]. Chapter Eleven goes into great detail as to the distinction between the two distinctions.

Burnt offerings (holah): coupled with the verb halah (*to offer*) which applies to anything lifted on high. “He shall lay his hand upon the head of the *burnt offering*, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him” [Lev 1.4].

“*On* (b-) the altar:” note the use of this preposition which fundamentally means “in.” I.e., a full union between the altar and offerings and the act of making this offering.

Vs. 21: And when the Lord smelled the pleasing odor, the Lord said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done.

Smelled (ruach)/*odor* (reyach): from the same verbal root meaning “to breathe” and from which “spirit” is derived. The picture presented here is the Lord inhaling...breathing in...Noah’s sacrifice of clean animals. For another sense of the same word, cf. Is 11.3: “And his *delight* shall be in the fear of the Lord.”

The odor is specified as *pleasing* or nychoach, a noun whose verbal root is nuach which is similar in sound to ruach/reych. The literal text in Hebrew reads “odor of rest;” the usual application is with respect to sweetness as in the verse at hand.

The reych or *odor* of vs. 21 passes through the Lord’s nostrils into his *heart* (lev); parallel with 6.5: “and it grieved him to his *heart*.” “It is an offering by fire, a *pleasing* odor to the Lord” [Lev 3.5]. Note that lev has the preposition ‘el-, *to*, in the sense of “towards which” indicating that Noah’s sacrifice reached the Lord directly.

Curse (qalal): cf. vs. 11 for another use of the same verb, “so Noah knew that the waters had *subsided* from the earth.” Qalal implies making light in the sense of regarding something as superficial. “Because he knew that his sons had brought a *curse* upon themselves” [1 Sam 3.13]. Consider the verse at hand in conjunction with 3.17: “*cursed* is the ground because of you.” Here the verb ‘arar is used which intimates the casting of a spell; both this verse and the one at hand deal with ‘adamah or *earth*. The former pertains to ‘adamah outside the Garden of Eden and the latter to ‘adamah after the purging effect of the flood.

Vs. 21 has ‘adam for *man* with respect to the curse which the Lord muses “in his heart;” it is as though he recalls having formed man from the ‘adamah in 2.7 and promises to himself that he will never apply the curse.

Imagination (yetser): as in 6.5: “that every *imagination* of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” In the verse at hand yetser is from man’s youth as opposed to “continually.”

Destroy (nakah): in the sense of striking and often with the intent of effecting correction. “And afterward the heart of David *smote* him” [1 Sam 24.6]. The verb ‘asaph is used with nakah which connotes continuous action and re-enforces the Lord’s intent not to “strike” humankind in the future. For the “as I have done,” cf. 6.7: “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the ground.”

Vs. 22: While the earth remains, seedtime and winter, day and night, shall not cease.”

The conclusion of God’s dialogue or “in his heart” of vs. 21.

“Remains” literally reads in the Hebrew text, “*so long as* (hod) all the days of the *earth* (‘eretz).” Note the use of ‘eretz after ‘adamah/‘adam of the previous verse; this earth implies land distinct from the man’s origins as in 2.7. “Days” can be seen as awareness of temporal succession in contrast to the Garden of Eden.

The two pairs (“seedtime and winter,” “day and night”) are different aspects of “days” and indicate clear awareness of time’s passage but as sustaining human existence in the time after the flood. The Lord promises to himself that they will not *cease* or shavath. From this verb is derived “sabbath;” consider in light of 2.2: “And on the seventh day (i.e., ‘day seven’) God finished his work, and he *rested* on the seventh day from all his work which he had done.”

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Chapter Nine

Vs. 1: And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

The beginning of God speaking with Noah which goes through vs. 17 and deals with the covenant he is about to establish.

Blessed (barak): the object being Noah along with his sons or male heirs as opposed to the women on board the ark (“them”).

Compare this second (post-flood) event which has elements both parallel and different from the first one of 1.28: “And God *blessed* them (the man and the woman), and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’” Both verses use the words parah (*be fruitful*), ravah (*multiply*) and fill (mala’), all similar in sound especially when used in the imperative. The object: ‘eretz as distinct from ‘adamah.

Vs. 2: The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the air, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered.

Fear (mora’): connotes reverence as in Mal 1.6: “And if I am a master, where is my *fear*?”

Dread (chat): from a verbal root meaning “to break, “to be confounded.” “They are *dismayed* and have turned backward” [Jer 46.5]. Both are used with respect to Noah and his sons (“you”) and apply to three different types of beings: birds, creeping things and fish. Such fear and dread find their full effect by a three-fold imposition, that is, *upon* (hal) these three categories of living beings.

Delivered (natan): alternately, “to give,” “to cause to receive.” Note the niphal, “*are delivered*,” although God is the one effecting this, it is presented in the passive mode as though the delivery which God imparts to Noah and his sons was one step removed. “Hand” can signify that Noah and his descendants can do with the animals whatever they wished.

Compare the struggle with created beings implied in this verse with Is 11.9: “They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” Reference to water/sea is interesting in light of the flood which had just receded.

Vs. 3: Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.

Moving thing (remes): first used in 1.26 which speaks of the “first dominion” and applied to “every *creeping thing* that creeps upon the earth.” Remes concerns reptiles; it also means sea creatures and can be extended to all land animals as in the verse at hand. “Yonder is the sea, great and wide, which *teems* with things (teeming things) innumerable, living things both small and great” [Ps 104.25].

There is an association between “moving things” and *green plants* (hesev) to which this verse alludes (1.30) or the “sixth day.” The words “as I gave you” of the verse at hand can be related to God’s statement in 1.31, “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.” That is to say, the original goodness of creation is to be extended to the post-flood era.

Note that 1.30 reads “everything that has the breath of life;” God does not give them for human consumption, just the green plants.

Compare the active “I give you” with the passive “they are given” of the previous verse.

Vs. 4: Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.

The (“only”) prohibition God gives to Noah and his sons with regard to food is not eating animals “with its life” or “blood.” This verse finds a kind of precedent in 4.11, of Cain’s murder of his brother Abel which is developed shortly afterwards: “And now you are cursed from the ground which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.” It also finds echo later in Acts 15.20: “to abstain from the pollutions of idols and from unchastity and from what is strangled and from blood.” Note the connection between idols, sexual misconduct and blood, all having to do with propagation in one way or another.

Vs. 5: For your lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning; of every beast I will require it and of man; of every man’s brother I will require the life of man.

“Your lifeblood” here in the Hebrew literally reads as “your blood *to* (l-) your *souls*,” nephesh. Blood’s fluid and vital character is identified with beings having the “breath of life” as noted under Gen 1.20: “Let the waters bring forth swarms of *living creatures*.” This phrasing is made all the more striking by *require a reckoning* or darash; an alternate meaning is “to inquire” with this verse’s sense of making a demand. “But his blood I will *require* at the watchman’s hand” [Ezk 33.6].

God’s reckoning is addressed to Noah but includes both beast and man. Although this reckoning does not apply in the common sense to a *beast* (chayah; applies to animals of all kinds), it may be seen in light of later ordinances with respect to animal sacrifices as described in Exodus 29. I.e., the sense of darash is bound up with *consecration* (qadash, verb) in the first verse of this chapter: “Now this is what you shall do to them to *consecrate* them, that they may serve me as priests.”

The notion of divine reckoning applies equally to the “*life of man*” or his nephesh noted in the first part of this verse.

Vs. 6: Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image.

Man or ‘adam, as used in the previous verse. Note the association between the “redness” implied in this word with the redness of blood.

Shed (shaphak): the first time this verb is used in Genesis, again intimating Cain’s murder of Abel. “Or if I send a pestilence into that land and *pour out* my wrath upon it with blood, to cut off from it man and beast” [Ezk 14.19]. A parallel may be made between the idea of shedding, of pouring out, with the recent destructive flood.

Here *image* or tselem is used minus the 1.26 addition of “likeness.” Perhaps mention of image or that which is indelible in human nature can imply that after the banishment from Eden and the flood its essential quality will endure. On the other hand, likeness is subject to dispersal and requires special effort to be in accord with image. After the banishment from Eden human beings find it more difficult to recover their image through their likeness.

Vs. 7 brings to a close God’s words addressed to Noah and his sons begun in vs. 1. It reiterates the four-fold divine command to increase: “be fruitful,” “multiply,” “bring forth abundantly” and “multiply.” This verse echos vs. 1 but adds *bring forth abundantly* or sharats; the basic meaning is “to creep,” “to crawl” and is used in 7.21: “all *swarming* creatures that *swarm* upon the earth.” Here the idea is that Noah’s descendants are to be like reptiles (the noun of this verbal root): not just reproduce but to do so almost with the blind vigor often associated with non-mammalian beings.

Vs. 8 is short, God addressing Noah and his sons; compare with vs. 1 which has God blessing them and then speaking with them through vs. 7.

Vs. 9: “Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you,

Vss. 9-17 describes the *covenant* or *beryth* first noted in 6.18: “But I will establish my *covenant* with you,” that is, before the flood. At that time Noah had no inkling of what this covenant would involve except the divine command to gather two pairs of every animal, etc. The promise to “establish” it occurs after the command to construct an ark, not before.

Behold (*hineh*): as first noted in 1.29 and often used as a kind of self-reflection on God’s part before taking action. The action in vs. 9 is present as opposed to the future: *establish* or *qum* which as noted with respect to 6.18 fundamentally means “to arise,” arise as though the covenant were in a process of continual growth.

Descendants (*zereh*): alternately, “seed” as in 3.15: “between your *seed* and her *seed*.” With the present use of *qum* as just noted, the divine covenant may be said to “rise” to these generations which lie in the future. I.e., vs. 9 has no distinction between present and future which can be reminiscent of the Garden of Eden.

The phrase “after you (Noah)” intimates the limited life span of Noah in the new creation. God’s relationship with humans from this point onwards takes place with a clear awareness of spacial and temporal limitations.

Vs. 10 is a kind of appendix to the previous one, that is, God includes under his covenant those animals which accompanied Noah in the ark. Obviously the covenant is one-way in that these animals are unaware of God’s intent; nevertheless, the notion of covenant embraces creation as a whole.

Vs. 11: I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

Establish (*qum*): as in vs. 9; here it has a different form which better reads “cause to establish,” again, in the present tense followed by two verbs in the future. Here the covenant is two-fold by nature:

1) “all *flesh*” or *basar* which can apply to humans as well as other animate beings. They will not be *cut off* (*karath*) by *flood waters* or *mabul*, the latter first being used in 6.17; the following verse parallels the one at hand, namely, “But I will *establish* my covenant with you (etc).” *Qum* is in the future tense before the flood occurred. A covenant is something which is “cut” and is often used with its establishment such as Ex 24.8: “Behold, the blood of the covenant which the Lord *has made* (‘has cut’) with you in accordance with all these words.” Thus in vs. 11 *karath* is negative and in the Exodus verse it is positive.

2) *Destroy* (*shachath*): as in vs. 11, “Now the earth was *corrupt* in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence.” Both verses deal with the ‘*eret*z instead of ‘*adamah*.”

Vs. 12: And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant which I make between me and between you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations:

Note the close connection between *sign* (‘*oth*) and *covenant* (*beryth*). The latter forms the essence of a concordance between God and the earth and here is presented as being subordinate to the

former. That is, the subject is not so much the covenant *per se* but tends to speak of it-as-sign. Keep in mind that 'oth—which is shortly put in terms of a rainbow—often connotes an object to be seen (cf. 1.14: “let them be for *signs* and for seasons and for days and for years”). Another use with respect to beryth: “This is a *sign* (keeping of sabbaths) between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord sanctify you” [Ex 31.13]. In the verse at hand, God *makes* (natan) this 'oth/beryth; action occurs in the present. The verb more specifically means “to give” as opposed to fabricating something. Thus action is on imparting the divine sign/covenant.

Between (beyn): used three times or with respect to “me” or God, “you” or Noah and those beings endowed with nephesh as in 1.30: “everything that has the *breath* of life.” There is a close connection between Noah and “every living creature,” that is, they are “with” him and thereby partake in the covenant.

The present *giving* (natan) of the sign/covenant is, as noted, in the present tense. However, it extends into the future or “all *future* (holam) generations.” Although holam has this meaning it can also refer to the distant past: “Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead as in the days *of old*” [Mic 7.14]. Thus holam starts with Noah and his family or after the flood and works from here into the future.

Vs. 13: I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

Bow (qesheth): the action of *setting* (natan) it is also in the present tense; another use of this verb as in vs. 12, “to give.” More often than not, this sign originates in a cloud and then extends to the earth. Furthermore, a rainbow sometimes has its two bases on the earth. Keep in mind the symbolism of a cloud at Mount Sinai, as the mysterious dwelling place of God. Bow has an essentially military application; one can then ask, if there is a bow, where is the arrow? “And the remainder of the *archers* of the mighty men of the sons of Kedar will be few” [Is 21.17]. For a verse in line with the one at hand, cf. Ezk 1.28: “Like the appearance of the *bow* that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about.” The “like” here pertains to a “human form” [vs. 26], more specifically, “the appearance of his loins” [vs. 27].

The bow is a kind of extension or the already noted sign/covenant of the previous verse. Now the verb is in the future tense, “it shall be.” Vs. 13 specifies the bow/sign/covenant as beyn God and beyn *earth* ('eretz). The picture presented here may be viewed in light of the heavenly Jerusalem's descent in Rev 21. Both are situated within the context of previous creations, the flood and “the first earth (which) had passed away” [vs. 1].

Vs. 14: When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds,

“Bring clouds:” two words in Hebrew, one is a noun and the other is a verb: hanan which fundamentally means “to cover.” It also applies to the practice of witchcraft: “You shall not *practice* augury or *witchcraft*” [Lev 19.26], that is, something done under cover or in secret.

“Is seen:” as opposed to something similar to “when you see.” In Hebrew, the niphal or passive is used. With the just described covenant in mind, the bow/sign/covenant (in that order) suggests that it came on the scene or manifested itself for all to see. Similarly, the covenant was made

between Noah and non-human creatures; it is therefore witnessed by all living beings.

Vs. 15: I will remember my covenant which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.

Vs. 14 flows directly into this one and sets the stage for divine *remembering* or *zakar*. Cf. 8.1: "But God *remembered* Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark." There it was pointed out that *zakar* is the verbal root for "male," suggesting propagation as well as the bestowal of names. In the verse at hand, God's remembering is in the future: apparently he sees the bow which reminds him of the (bow)/sign/covenant just delineated. Thus *zakar* is a kind of prompting to the all-inclusive "is seen" of vs. 14 or by Noah, his descendants and all living creatures. It also spills over to that *beyn* or between: "me," "you," "every living creature;" the last is specified as consisting of "all flesh" compared with vs. 12.

Three destructive elements: waters, flood, destroy, all mentioned in vs. 11. Since the rainbow heralds rain, the descendants of Noah could be fearful in that it foretold another flood; hence the divine prohibition against a second flood.

Vs. 16: When the bow is in the clouds, I will look upon it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth."

The bow's presence in clouds hearkens back to "is seen" of vs. 14. In vs. 13 God sets it there (i.e., in the sense of *giving*, *natan*). The verse at hand can imply a more independent working of natural operations as opposed to a direct intervention by God. Still, the divine connection remains and contains a two-fold future action which God will take: "look upon" and "remember." The Hebrew text literally reads, "will see it to remembrance." Thus divine vision effects the *zakar* of vs. 15; it flows directly into *zakar* by use of the preposition *l-* (*to*) prefixed to this word.

Here God's remembering with respect to the "everlasting covenant" is placed "between God" and "every living creature." That is, God seems to utter these words independently of himself.

Vs. 17 sums up what transpired since vs. 8; *establish* or *qum* is in the past tense compared with the present of vs. 11. In the verse at hand, the sign/covenant is refined a bit: between God and all flesh; Noah and his descendants are not mentioned in this covenant, almost as though the human element were intentionally omitted.

Vs. 19: These three were the sons of Noah; and from these the whole earth was peopled.

The previous verse lists the three sons of Noah as Shem, Ham and Japheth. Ham is singled out as being the father of Canaan whom Noah later (vs. 25) curses for having seen his nakedness. Note that vs. 19 has the three sons departing the ark. This going-out may be coupled with the *peopling* (*naphats*) of the 'erezt in order to re-establish human presence on it. The fundamental meaning of *naphats* is "to scatter," "to disperse;" cf. its use in 10.5: From these the coastland peoples *spread*." It is used negatively in 11.8: "So the Lord *scattered* them abroad from there over the face of all the earth." From this verbal root is derived the noun *cloudburst*: "And the Lord will cause his majestic voice to be heard...with a *cloudburst* and tempest and hailstones" [Is 30.30]. With this alternate

use, the “peopling” of the ‘erezt may be viewed as an inverse flood, that is, one of human beings.

Vs. 20: Noah was the first tiller of the soil. He planted a vineyard;

For a background to this verse, cf. 5.29: (Lamach) “called his name Noah, saying, ‘Out of the ground which the Lord has cursed this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands.’” Cain was a “*tiller* (hoved) of the *ground* (‘adamah) and was responsible for murdering his brother Abel. Similarly, Noah cultivated the ‘adamah but it is the ‘adamah after the flood. The Hebrew text lacks “tiller;” instead, it reads, “Noah *began* (chalal) a man the soil.” The notion behind this verb is piercing, opening, as if to signify that Noah perforated the ‘adamah as virgin territory after the flood. Compare with God compelling Adam to work the ‘adamah from which he had been taken (cf. 3.17-9).

The first act of Noah was to plant a *vineyard* or *karem* which may be paralleled with 2.8: “And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden.” Note the same verb (*natan*, *to plant*); Noah plants a vineyard for making wine; God plants a garden which may or may not include a vineyard. “My *vineyard*, my very own, is for myself” [Sg 8.12].

Vs. 21: and he drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent.

This is the first mention of *wine* (*yayn*), the natural product of the vineyard. Nothing is said of Noah’s ability with respect to husbandry, just that the immediate effect or abuse of wine which made him *drunk* (*shakar*). “And they shall be *drunk* with their own blood as with wine” [Is 51.26].

While in his drunken stupor Noah laid *uncovered* (*galah*) in his tent; this verb suggests nakedness, the removal of a cover: “He has *taken away* the covering of Judah” [Is 22.8]. Compare with the nakedness of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden: “And the man and his wife were both *naked* and were not ashamed” [2.25]. There the verb *harom* is used which as noted, suggests craftiness.

Noah laying naked in his tent may be compared with the garments God made for Adam and Eve just prior to their expulsion from Eden in 3.21; the latter, in turn, contrast with those Adam and Eve made for themselves in 3.7 to conceal their nakedness from God’s sight.

Vs. 22: And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside.

Even when Ham is singled out as being the “father of Canaan” in vs. 18, it portends his curse as delineated there with respect to vs. 25. Thus Canaan, while associated with sexual perversions (cf. Lev 18.24-30) in the context of Ham’s curse by Noah, is also the future inheritance of Israel after the Exodus: “I also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they dwelt as sojourners (reference to Gen 17.8)” [Ex 6.4].

Nakedness (*herwah*): from the root *harah*; compare with *harom* noted in vs. 22, i.e., 2.25. This noun connotes dishonor as in Is 20.4: “So shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians captives and the Ethiopians exiles...*naked* and barefoot, with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.” For a reference close to the meaning of the verse at hand: “You son of a perverse, rebellious

woman...to the shame of your mother's *nakedness*" [1 Sam 20.30]?

The father of Canaan told his brothers about Noah's nakedness/shame. Ham did so "outside;" He could have been in the same tent with his father or passed by and then entered.

Vs. 23: Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it upon both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness.

Apparently Ham, the father of Canaan, did not participate in this gesture by his two brothers. Another reference to *garment* or *salmah* is Mic 2.8: "but you rise against my people as an enemy; you strip the *robe* from the peaceful." Compare with the gesture noted in Rt 3.9: "Spread your skirt over your maidservant, for you are next of kin."

Both this walking backwards and turning away of face represents shame and respect for Noah's condition. It is not entirely unlike the human response to God's presence, for example, when Moses first encounter God: "And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God" [Ex 3.6].

Vs. 24 posits a unity between Noah *awaking* (*yaqats*) and *knowing* (*yadah*) from his drunken stupor. With regard to the former verb, compare its use in Gen 28.16: "Then Jacob *awoke* from his sleep and said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.'"

Vss. 25-7 contain a curse and a blessing by Noah upon his three sons which may be outlined as follows:

-Canaan or Ham; Noah addresses or curses him as a nation as opposed to his name Ham. *Cursed* or 'arar as in 8.21: "I will never again *curse* the ground because of man." The form of this curse is that Canaan/Ham will be a "*slave* (heved) of *slaves*" to his two brothers, Shem and Japheth, or be at the very bottom of the social status. The context may be summed up by Lev 18.30: "So keep my charge never to practice any of these abominable customs...and never to defile yourselves by them."

-*Blessed* (*baruk*): from the verbal root *barak*, here with respect to Shem. The Hebrew text reads, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem."

-*Enlarge* (*patah*): in the sense of spreading; also means "to persuade" in the sense of flattery: "But they *flattered* him with their mouths; they lied to him with their tongues" [Ps 78.36]. Note the connection between *patah* and the proper name *Japheth*, *Yepheth*. Noah desires that he *live* (*shakan*) "in the tents of Shem" or to maintain a relationship with him. For another reference with this verb: "He will *dwell* on the heights" [Is 33.16]. Noah also desires that Canaan/Ham be subjected as a slave to his two brothers as noted in vss. 26-7.

Chapter Nine concludes with a statement of Noah's longevity, 950 years, 350 of which were after the flood. This last mention of "flood" sets the stage for Chapter Ten's detailed description of the descendants of Noah's three sons, thereby setting the stage for the development of history "after the flood" [10.1].

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Chapter Ten

This chapter follows a genealogical table of peoples grouped more according to their historic and geographic contexts than according to their ethnic affinities. Words typical throughout are “sons,” “lands,” “language,” “father,” “land,” “city,” “territory,” “families” and “nations.” The very last verse (32) sums up this pattern: “These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, in their nations; and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood.” Not the connection between the nine (masculine) terms and *spread abroad* (parad); this verb is used in 2.10: “A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it *divided* and became four rivers.” For another use of parad, cf. Ps 92.9: “For, lo, your enemies, O Lord, for, lo, your enemies shall perish; all evildoers shall be *scattered*.”

As at the beginning of this chapter the end concludes with the words “after the flood” which sets the stage for the tower of Babel and genealogies of Abraham.

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Chapter Eleven

Vs. 1: Now the whole earth had one language and few words.

Despite the detailed genealogies of Chapter Ten, these various groupings were united as far as language goes. To demonstrate this unity, note the similarity between *whole earth* (kal-‘eret) and *one language* (saphah ‘echath). To counter this unity, cf. the following references in the previous chapter (10): “These are the sons of Japheth in their lands, each with his own *language*” [vs. 5]; “These are the sons of Ham, by their families, their *languages*” [vs. 20]; “These are the sons of Shem, by their families, their *languages*” [vs. 31]. Here is the first mention of *language* (lashon) in accord with Noah’s three sons. This term also means “tongue, “speech:” “A people of foreign *speech* (lashon) and hard *tongue*” [Ezk 3.5]. Saphah as used in 11.1 can mean “lip:” “But oh, that God would speak, and open his *lips* to you” [Job 11.5].

“Few words:” the adjective ‘echad which basically means “first,” “one;” the latter is used in 1.5: “And there was evening and there was morning, *one* day (or ‘day one’).”

The primeval unity of speech is soon to be lost; Christian tradition sees a recovery of this unity of speech in the Holy Spirit’s descent at Pentecost:” And how is it that we hear each of us in his own native language” [Acts 2.8]? Also cf. Rev 7.9-10: “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...crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb!’”

Vs. 2: And as men migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.

East (qedem): this direction is first mentioned in 2.8: “And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the *east*.” Also, it was the side of Eden from which God banished the man: “He drove out the

man; and at the *east* of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim (etc.).” Perhaps this migration...it took place after the flood when Eden was destroyed...can be taken as a sign of the innate human tendency to reside as close to paradise lost as possible.

Migrated (nasah): fundamentally, “to pull up” in the sense of breaking camp; it thus suggests temporary living as opposed to a permanent residence and here describes that movement from the east. I.e., people after the flood had been “camped” in the east and spread out to the three other cardinal points. “Then they *journeyed* from Bethel; and when they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel travailed, and she had hard labor” [35.16].

Plain (biqah): from a verbal root meaning “to cleave” and hence, something lying in between two mountains or hills; it can also apply to a valley. “I will open rivers on the bare heights and fountains in the midst of the *valleys*” [Is 41.18]. In the verse at hand, biqah is associated with the “land of Shinar” or Babylon; cf. 10.10: “The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech and Accad, all of them in the land of Shinar.” Reference here is to Nimrod, “the first on earth to be a mighty man” [10.8].

Settled (yashav): the opposite of nasah. Perhaps Shinar/Babylon was an approximation of the Garden of Eden even if dimly perceived. Note that 2.14 has one of the four branches of the river that flowed from Eden as the Euphrates (cf. 2.14), this area which had been chosen and can bridge the connection with Eden.

Vs. 3: And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone and bitumen for mortar.

“To one another” is literally expressed in the Hebrew text as “They said man to his neighbor” which signifies spontaneity or unity at the task about to be accomplished.

The exclamation “Come” signals that the migrants have reached a place to settle down permanently. This permanence is expressed by the elements necessary for constructing a building, bricks and mortar. Vs. 3 may be paralleled with the hard labor imposed upon the Israelites by the Egyptians in order to construct their buildings: “and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick and in all kinds of work in the field; in all their work they made them serve with rigor” [Ex 1.14]. In contrast to this slave labor, the “Come” of vs. 3 represents free service.

Vs. 4: Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.”

A continuation of the previous verse with another exhortation the newly arrived migrants expressed among each other, “Come.”

Now that these people had bricks and mortar available they set about the task of building a city and tower; the Hebrew reads, “let us build to ourselves” which further expresses the desire for a permanent dwelling place. This is the third mention in Genesis of a city, the first associated with Enoch (cf. 4.17) and the second (10.11): “(Nimrod) built Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is,

the great city.”

Tower (migdal): a structure erected along with the city, most likely in its center. This term is often used with regard to fortified cities and castles as well as a watchtower. “He built a *watchtower* in the midst of it and hewed out a wine vat in it” [Is 5.2].

Top (ro’sh): in the fundamental sense of “head” which extends into the heavens; the very first verse of Genesis has God making the heavens and the earth. Thus the heavens to can represent the attempt not so much to reach God by human means but the extreme or highest point of his creation. The plural “heavens” may be contrasted with the singular “heaven,” often used to denote God’s dwelling: “He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord has them in derision” [Ps 2.4]...a verse which easily applies to the one under consideration.

The construction of this city and tower has a two-fold purpose:

- 1) to obtain renown or “name:” “Children and the building of a city establish a man’s *name*, but a blameless wife is accounted better than both” [Sir 40.19].
- 2) to prevent the new migrants from reverting back to their nomadic way of life, that is, to avert being *scattered* (puts). Compare the use of this verb with 9.19: “These three were the sons of Noah; and from these the whole earth was *peopled*.”

Vs. 5: And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.

Came down (yarad): in the sense of making a descent; cf. Ex 3.8 for a parallel sense and with the same verse: “and I have *come down* to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land.” Both verses may be related to 3.8: “And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.” Here there is no divine descent; God is on the same horizontal plane, as it were, with Adam and Eve. Yarad suggests a greater distance from the human race; it is interesting to keep this verb in mind with regard to the upward-reaching tower which militates against the divine yarad.

“To see,” an action by God after his descent; it is as though God were walking through the city on the same level with it and gazing up at the tower which he perceived as an affront to his divinity.

“Sons of men:” as opposed to plain “men” as in vs. 2; “sons” intimates the earthly origins of the human race in comparison with God’s descent.

Vs. 6: And the Lord said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; and nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.

The opening words of this verb may be seen as God speaking to himself, a biblical way of expression internal self-reflection in an outward fashion. *Behold* or *hen* thus serves to introduce this divine reflection by way of exclamation.

One (’echad): as in “*few words*” of vs. 1 and the reference to 1.5 as to a fuller sense of this adjective.

In the verse at hand, 'echad is used with "people one" and "language one;" cf. vs. 1 for lashon or *language*.

Beginning (chalal): a verb is used here which reads in the Hebrew text, "this they *began* to do;" past tense in reference to the construction of a city and tower. Cf. 9.20 which uses chalal: "Noah was the *first* (i.e., 'began') tiller of the soil."

Propose (zamam): connotes murmuring, of proposing in an (often) negative sense: "The wicked *plots* against the righteous and gnashes his teeth at him" [Ps 37.12]. Zamam is bound up with the something difficult or *impossible* to effect (batar) as in Job 42.2 which follows the same structure but in a different sense: "I know that you (God) can do all things, and that no *purpose* of yours can be *thwarted*."

Vs. 7: Come, let us go down, and there confuse their language that they may not understand one another's speech."

The conclusion of God's address or self-reflection. Here we have the third and final "come:" 1) vs. 3 where men propose to make bricks; 2) vs. 4 where they propose to construct a city and tower and 3) the verse at hand.

Note that vs. 5 already has the Lord having come down and as present within the city. Vs. 7 continues this theme, as though he had returned to his own dwelling and returns again. "Let us" parallels that creative burst of 1.26, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Also cf. 18.21 which is more pertinent to the sentiment of the verse at hand: "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."

Confuse (balal): fundamentally, "to swallow down," "to devour." "You will not let me alone while I *swallow down* my spittle" [Job 7.19]. Balal also means *to destroy* as in Ps 21.10: "You will *destroy* their offspring from the earth and their children from among the sons of men."

The object of balal is "their *language*" or saphah which was one, 'echad (vs. 1). In a broader sense, this verb is the exact opposite of the harmonizing principle expressed through the adjective; it creates, as it were a flood, of languages after the flood of water from which Noah and his family had recently emerged.

Understand (shamah): literally, "to hear." Contrast this with the positive sense of hearing as in Dt 3.4, "*Hear* therefore, O Israel, the Lord our God is *one* (echad) Lord." The about to be effected confusion is enhanced by the literal Hebrew text which reads, "not hear man the language of his neighbor." I.e., the confusion is close and personal by this intimate form of human relationship.

Speech: another used of saphah; compare with "language" of vs. 1.

Vs. 8: So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city.

Scattered (puts): a verb with the same intent as "confuse" and "not understand" of vs. 7. Puts

brings to fulfillment of the people's fear which obliged them to build the city and tower, vs. 4: "lest we be *scattered abroad* upon the face of the whole earth." For another reference: "Strike the shepherd, that the sheep may be *scattered*" [Zech 13.7].

"From there" or the city and tower—two centers of unity and language—which are contrasted with "face of all the earth."

The verse at hand says that the people ceased construction of the city; no mention is made of the *tower* (*migdal*) but may be implied by the verb *left off* or *chadal* since both rhyme. "Shall I go to battle against Ramoth-Gilead, or shall I *forbear*" [1 Kg 22.6]?

The preposition *l-* (*to*) prefixed to the verb "to build" heightens the sense of disruption with regard to constructing the city.

Vs. 9: Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

Babel: the city's name, not necessarily applied to the tower. When people migrated to the land of Shinar (vs. 1) they did not give a name to their city. The **RSV** says that Babel is interpreted as "gate of God" and became synonymous with the *confusion* of language (vs. 7, *balal*).

Contrast "(language) of all the earth" with "face of all the earth," the latter being the place to which the Lord *scattered* (puts again) the builders of the city and tower. "Through Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify her strong height, yet destroyers would come from me upon her, says the Lord" [Jer 51.53]. Also, "So shall Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence and shall be found no more" [Rev 18.21].

Contrast this scattering with the divine injunction given to Noah and his sons right after the flood: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth."

Despite the scattering of people with one language, there is not mention that the city and tower are destroyed.

The remaining verses of Chapter Eleven (10-32) present the *descendants* (*toldoth*; cf. 6.9 regarding Noah) of Shem. Noah blessed Shem as well as his brother Japheth (cf. 9.26-7); the latter is implied as being submissive to the former: "and let him dwell in the tents of Shem." People descended from all three Noah's sons began with tents as the sole means of habitation and had "one language and few words" noted in 11.1. Then upon destruction of the city of Babel, people were scattered and presumably dwelt in tents again. On the other hand, Ham or Canaan was cursed (cf. 9.25) and became a slave to Shem and Japheth; Ham's descendants were ultimately responsible for founding Babel (cf. 10.10) which may intimate the eventual scattering of people from that city.

On the positive side, the genealogy of vss. 10-32 focuses upon Shem's descendants which narrows down to Terah's three sons (vs. 26) and hence to Abram (vs. 27) who is later described as migrating from his homeland and living in tents, again, in contrast to the city of Babel and his sojourn in Egypt (cf. 12.10-20).

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Chapter Twelve

Vs. 1: Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.

The call of Abram occurs after the extended genealogy of Shem begun in 11.10, the third genealogy after the flood as well as the dispersion after the confusion of tongues at Babel. God’s address to Abram continues through vs. 3.

Said-go (lek-leka): note the play on words, literally, “go to you,” indicating a specific form of departure.

This verse may be viewed in light of 11.31: “Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram’s wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan.” The command of God to Abram involves a three-fold departure which starts from a general area to a more specific household:

- 1) from Abram’s *country* or ‘*eret*z.
- 2) from Abram’s *kindred* or *moledeth*: from the verbal root *yadah* (*to give birth*) and signifies origin as in Est 2.10: “Esther had not made known her people or *kindred*, for Mordecai had charged her not to make it known.”
- 3) from the house of Abram’s father who is Terah (cf. 11.27).

The place of migration is an ‘*eret*z which God will *show* to Abram, *ra’ah*, the common verb “to see.” Two pertinent verses concerning the one at hand: 1) “Wisdom also...recognized the righteous man and preserved him blameless before God” [Wisd 10.5]. 2) “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go” [Heb 11.8].

Thus vs. 1 may be outlined as: *said*->*go*->*show*. Abram can get a handle on the first two but the third...of seeing...remains to be demonstrated.

Vs. 2: And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

This verse contains three future promises by God with a result; contrast with the forced exile of the man from the Garden of Eden (“He drove out the man,” 3.24). Vs. 2 may be outlined as follows:

- 1) “great *nation* (*goy*):” the common term for any grouping of people; *goy* is often contrasted with the nation of Israel: “I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the *nations*” [Is 42.6]: words echoed in Lk 2.32: “A light for revelation to the Gentiles (i.e., the *goy*) and for glory to your people Israel.”
- 2) *bless* (*barak*): “So then, those who are men of faith are *blessed* with Abraham who had faith”

[Gal 3.9].

3) *name* (shem): as inferred by Heb 11.12: “Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.”

The result of all future divine promises is directed for the purpose of making Abram a *blessing* or *berakah*. “May he give the *blessing* of Abraham to you and to your descendants with you, that you may take possession of the land of your sojournings which God gave to Abraham” [28.4]!

Vs. 3: I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves.”

Bless (barak) and *curse* (qalal): two opposite states which show the close identification between God and Abram. Cf. 8.21 for use of the latter: “I will never again *curse* the ground because of man.” Compare qalal in both cases with the verb ‘arar (which connotes the casting of a spell) as used in 3.14: “*Cursed* (the serpent) are you above all cattle and above all wild animals.”

The close connection between bless and curse applies to Abram and “him who curses you.” Note that the second half of vs. 3 mentions *families* or *mishpachah* as in 10.5: “each with his own language, by their *families*, in their nations.” This term can mean “tribe” and pertains to a smaller grouping of people (family in the extended sense) as opposed to a nation. Here the fate of being cursed does not seem to apply.

Barak as related to families reads in the Hebrew text, “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” which mirrors of God’s (active) blessing of Abram. Note the connection between “families” and *earth* or ‘adamah, i.e., not ‘eret.

Vs. 4: So Abram went as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

After God’s address in vss. 1-3, Abram follows up on the words “Go from your country->kindred->father’s house.” I.e., here we have two verses in harmony: 1) between the *halak* of vs. 1 and the *halak* of the verse at hand. 2) between that “the Lord *said* (‘amar)” and the *told* (davar) of the present one. The former involves “saying” and the latter, “speaking” which is more direct. Thus Abram perceives a unity between *going* and *speaking* or *halak/davar*.

Lot is first mentioned in 11.27: “Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran; and Haran was the father of Lot.” Lot is thus singled out along with Abram and remains secondary to the divine call. “And if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the licentiousness of the wicked” [2 Pt 2.7].

The advanced age of seventy-five—although considerably less than the post-flood generations—highlights the obedience of Abram to leave his country, kindred and father’s house (cf. vs. 1). His point of departure is Haran, the same name applied to Abram’s father as mentioned in the last paragraph.

The departure of Abram described in vs. 5 may be paralleled with Noah's preparation for his departure or entrance into the ark ("you, your sons, your wife and your sons' wives with you," 6.18). It is outlined as follows:

-Abram took Sarai his wife as well as Lot. Note that vs. 5 says he *took* Lot; vs. 4 says that "Lot went with him."

-*possessions* (rekush, vs. 5): in the sense of "substance," "wealth." "Passover offerings for all that were present, lambs and kids from the flock to the number of thirty thousand, and three thousand bulls; these were from the king's *possessions*" [2 Chron 35.7].

-*gathered* (rachash): the verbal root for rekush, *possessions*. The only other biblical references are 31.18, 36.6 and 46.6. Also people obtained in Haran, most likely slaves, are the object of this verb.

-Canaan: the destination of Abram, Lot and Sarai along with people from Haran, keeping in mind obedience to the divine summons of vs. 1. Canaan is first mentioned as a person in 8.18 ("Ham was the father of Canaan"); 12.5 first states this word as a place in 11.31 ("and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan"). Although Abram complied with God's summons, these earlier references to Canaan show that the collective journey was not to an unfamiliar place but one rooted in the wanderings of Abram's family. Thus "the land that I will show you" of vs. 1 is one that had already been shown to Abram, if it may be put this way.

Vs. 6: Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land.

Passed through (havar): also implies the sense of going beyond a given place or one in which a person is situated. The Hebrew text literally reads, "passed through *in* (b-) the land," use of this preposition can signify that Abram accomplished his havar within this broader context.

Although God's original command to Abram to forsake his native land lacked specific direction yet involved familiar territory as noted in the last section, his destination here is more explicit or two-fold:

-Shechem: cf. 33.18: "And Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem which is in the land of Canaan." Note that vs. 20 reads that "There he erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel" which translates as "God, the God of Israel." Jacob built this altar after his reconciliation with his brother Esau. Shechem is also found in Chapter Nine of Judges: "Abimelech, Gideon's half-Canaanite son, went there in an attempt to usurp kingship over Israel. "God has spoken in his sanctuary: 'With exultation I will divine up Shechem and portion out the Vale of Succoth" [Ps 69.6]. In the verse at hand, Shechem is specified even further as a *place* or maqom which alternately means "town," "village." "Will you then destroy the *place* and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it" [18.24]?"

-*oak of Moreh* ('elon): for another reference, cf. Dt 11.30: "Are they not beyond the Jordan, west of the road, toward the going down of the sun, in the land of the Canaanites who live in the Arabah, over against Gilgal, beside the *oak of Moreh*?" Reference here is to the blessing and curse of vs. 26.

-*at that time* ('az): Used to introduce the second sentence contained in vs. 6, that is, with respect to the Canaanites whom Israel later dispossessed. Refer back to Noah's curse of Canaan in 9.25. The presence of these people among whom Abram and his extended family migrated suggests danger and impending conflict.

Vs. 7: Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the Lord who had appeared to him.

Appeared (ra’ah): use of the common verb “to see.” Compare with vs. 1 which says that the Lord spoke to Abram; i.e., here in the land of Canaan the Lord first appears to him which is followed by a speaking (“said”).

The Lord’s words to Abram do not concern Abram himself but his *descendants* or *zereh* which as noted in 3.15 means “seed.” Compare with Moses who did not enter the Promised Land but viewed it from afar: “This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, ‘I will give it to your *descendants*’” [Dt 34.4].

Altar (mizbeach): this is the second mention of the term in Genesis, the first being in 8.20: “Then Noah built an *altar* to the Lord...and offered burnt offerings on the *altar*.” Nothing is said about sacrifices made here, simply that Abram erected the altar which could be taken as a memorial.

There (sham): a word meaning that which is specific and can refer to the oak of Moreh. Contrast it with ‘az of vs. 6 (*at that time*), another word of specification or when Canaanites were in the land.

Appeared (ra’ah) the second use of this verb in the same sentence. There is a close connection between Abram’s response to the Lord’s appearance (which re-enforces his willingness to follow divine summons) and his awareness that possession of Canaan lies not with him in the present but in the future. Again, cf. Jacob’s altar at Shechem (33.18) noted under vs. 6.

Vs. 8: Thence he removed to the mountain on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.

Removed (hataq): also connotes a setting free, obtaining freedom. “Those who are weaned from the milk, those *taken* from the breast” [Is 28.9]. As noted in vs. 2, east is associated with the Garden of Eden, of dwelling as closely as possible to its realization. In the verse at hand, the actual removal suggests the pulling up tents and heading eastward. “Thence” is Shechem and the oak of Moreh of vs. 6.

Bethel translates as “House of God” and by reason of its name shares in some of that symbolism of the east. Bethel is further specified as where Abram pitched his tent, i.e., “with Bethel” or akin to being as close to the Garden of Eden as possible.

Ai figures later in Joshua 7-8 with respect to the sin of Achan. After his victory over this city, Joshua “built an altar in Mount Eval to the Lord, the God of Israel” [8.30]. Construction of this altar may be paralleled with Abram doing the same in the verse at hand, as if he foresaw victory over Ai.

Name (shem): note the Hebrew text which literally reads, “called *in* (b-) the *name* of the Lord.”

The length of time Abram remains in this area is not stated. Perhaps his building of the altar is necessary for him to retain the original divine command of vs. 1, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house.”

Vss. 9-20 or to the conclusion of Chapter Twelve tells of an incident in Egypt with Abram’s wife Sarai. Before actually going there (which may be a kind of foretelling of Israel’s descent in chapter 46), Abram journeyed to the Negeb. Then a famine compels Abram to enter; compare with Joseph’s brothers who went to Egypt to purchase bread (cf. 42.1+).

Vs. 17: The Lord *afflicts* (nagah) Pharaoh, a verb which fundamentally means “to touch,” “to reach.” With this in mind, it is as though God actually reached out and touched Pharaoh or tormented him with plagues. “Saul also went to his home at Gibeah and with him went men of valor whose hearts God had *touched*” [1 Sam 10.26]. For a reference closely akin to the verse at hand, cf. Ex 11.1: “Yet one *plague* (negeph) more I will bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt,” namely, the death of the firstborn.

Chapter Twelve continues with Pharaoh sending Abram and his wife Sarai on their way which may be taken as in line with this chapter’s first verse, God’s summons that Abram leave his native place.

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Chapter Thirteen

Vs 1: The last verse of the last chapter has Pharaoh sending Abram and his family away, most likely to the border area of Egypt, for the verse at hand says that he “went up from Egypt” to the Negeb. According to 12.9, Abram journeyed to the Negeb after he built an altar to the Lord and called upon his name. Compare with the forced departure of Israel later on in Ex 12.31: “And he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, ‘Rise up, go forth from among my people, both you and the people of Israel.’”

Vs. 2: Abram is *rich* (kaved): the verb kavad is used here from which is derived kavod or *glory*, a term applied to the presence of God. The fundamental meaning is “to be heavy” in the sense of being weighted down. In the verse at hand, Abram is not simply rich but *very* much so, me’od, a term which means anything to excess. “The poor is disliked even by his neighbor, but the *rich* has many friends” [Prov 14.20].

The wealth consists in cattle, silver and gold. Most likely Abram acquired these possessions in Egypt, in a sense, a foreshadowing of Israel’s despoiling of that country: “For they had asked of the Egyptians jewelry of silver and of gold and clothing” [Ex 12.35].

Vs. 3: As in 12.9, no mention is made of Abram staying for an extended period in the Negeb. He continues to retrace his steps back from Egypt to Bethel or the House of God as though the altar of 12.8 were summoning him through all his journeys down and up from Egypt.

-*Beginning* (techilah): “I will restore your judges as at the first and your counselors as at the *beginning*” [Is 1.26]. Note this word’s association with maqom (*place*) and tent (‘ohel); it is interesting that Abram returns from Egypt, distinguished for its large, stable buildings in

preference for the impermanence of dwelling in a tent. After all, Abram was returning to the altar he had constructed before descending into Egypt.

Vs. 4: Mention of the *altar* or *mizbeach* (12.7) which Abram erected “at the *beginning*” (*ri’shon*). Reference is to just before Abram’s descent, but this phrase is interesting in that it suggests a kind of pre-Exodus descent into Egypt and a desire to recover such a beginning. After all, this beginning is where Abram “called on the name of the Lord” [vs. 4].

Vss. 5-7 speaks of the combined wealth of both Lot (the ancestor of Moab) and Abram, so much that “the land could not *support* them” which literally reads, “not raise them to dwell together.” The verb *yashav* (*support*) suggests that the land or Bethel was too confining for their large herds. -The *strife* or *ryv* is not so much between Abram and Lot but between their herdsmen or those who managed the primary wealth for these nomads, that is, cattle, which was more important than the silver and gold mentioned in vs. 2. “How can I bear alone the weight and burden of you and your *strife*” [Dt 1.12]?

Vs. 9: The *separation* (*parad*, verb used here) connotes scattering. “When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he *separated* the sons of men” [Dt 32.8]. In the verse at hand, the separation is intended to avert the strife already described. Compare *parad* with the words, “Is not the whole land before you (Lot)?”

Vs. 10: The lifting of Lot’s eyes to see this “whole land” may be contrasted with the dialogue he was having with Abram; i.e., he takes attention off the strife at Abram’s invitation. The land in question is the Jordan valley compared with the “*garden* (*gan*) of the Lord,” that is, Eden: “A river flowed out of Eden to water the *garden*, and there it divided and became four rivers” [2.10]. Lot may have had in mind tradition about the Garden of Eden or awareness of being made in the divine image and likeness which prompted him to compare the Jordan valley with Eden.

-Compare *parad* as *separation* with *parad* as *divided*...as though the strife between Lot and Abram were resolved in the single river being distributed. The word for *watered* is *shaqah* as in Ps 104.13: “From your lofty abode you *water* the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.” Note that the Jordan valley/Eden resembles Egypt, hence the Nile.

-Zoar: “Little” as noted in 19.20, the place to which Lot and his family fled to avoid the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Jordan valley, with its watered territory, was there to lead the way as if to foretell Lot’s escape route.

Vs. 11: *valley* (*kakar*): as in the previous verse; this word applies to the circumference of a given tract or as going around it: “And the sons of the singers gathered together from the *circuit* round Jerusalem” [Neh 12.28].

-Lot travels east, that is, the direction reminiscent of the Garden of Eden whose image (Jordan valley) was noted in vs. 10.

Vs. 12: Abram dwells in Canaan and Lot “*among* (*b-, in*) the cities of the valley.” Compare with later in this verse that Lot still apparently used tents which he moved to Sodom.

Vs. 13: Despite the Jordan valley resembling Eden, the inhabitants there were (literally) “wicked and sinners to the Lord *excessively* (*me’od*).”

Vss. 14-17 contain the Lord's address to Abram as to the promise first stated in 12.7, "to your descendants I will give this land." There it was noted that Abram's descendants will inherit the land; here Abram is included as well.

-“Lift up your eyes:” as in vs. 10 where Lot did the same.

-The *place* or maqom in which Abram was standing (Canaan, cf. vs. 12) extends to the four cardinal directions of north, south, east and west as opposed to the single direction Lot chose, east (cf. vs. 11).

Vs. 16: descendants as *dust* (haphar): used negatively with regard to the serpent in 3.14: “and *dust* you shall eat;” also the element from which the first man was made: “The Lord God formed man of *dust* from the ground.” Later in 28.14 the same promise is given to Jacob during his dream: “and your descendants shall be like the *dust* of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south.”

Vs. 17: After pointing out the four cardinal points Abram is to inherit, the Lord bids him first to arise (as though he were lying prostrate) and then walk through it. Two basic features of this land are its *length* (*orek*) and *breadth* (*rochav*). “To comprehend with all the saints (i.e., Abram's descendants) what is the *breadth* and *length* and height and depth” [Eph 3.18].

-Even though Abram is bidden to walk through the land's length and breadth, he still does not possess it (“I will give it to you”).

Vs. 18: “*oaks* (*elon*) of Mamre:” cf. 12.6, “Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the *oak* of Moreh: as in preparation for God manifesting himself later in 18.1: “And the Lord appeared to him by the *oaks* of Mamre.” In both Moreh and Mamre Abram built an altar to the Lord, the former in response to the promise of being given the land and the latter (which similarly includes this) after Abram walked through the land's length and breadth.

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Chapter Fourteen

The bulk of this chapter describes the alliance of four eastern kings who fought against Sodom and Gomorrah, having led into captivity Lot, “the son of Abram's brother” [vs. 12]. Vss. 13-17 recount Abram's defeat of these kings after which he encountered King Melchizedek of Salem. Salem is a name for Jeru(salem): “His abode has been established in Salem, his dwelling place in Zion” [ps 76.2]. Note that the king of Sodom went out to meet Abram along with Melchizedek. Naturally Sodom is associated with God's wrath and the destruction that is to take place several chapters later.

Vs. 18: Melchizedek *brought out* (*yatsa'*) bread and wine as offerings; he as a king left his native dwelling place to meet Abram which can be taken as assuming a subordinate position.

-*Priest* (*kohen*): the first mention of this office in the Bible. Although Melchizedek was associated with Canaan and not the yet-to-be established priesthood in Israel, nevertheless the verse says he was a priest of “God the Most High.” He may be compared with Jethro, the priest of Midian, to whom Moses had fled for refuge (cf. Ex 2.15-3.1). It with Jethro's flocks that Moses had his vision of

God and the revelation of the divine name.

-Although he was not specifically a priest, the diviner Balaam acknowledges the sovereignty of Israel's God: "The oracle of him who hears the words of God and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty" [Num 24.16].

-Chapter Seven of Hebrews discusses at great length the role of Melchizedek as foreshadowing the priesthood of Jesus Christ. Also: "You are priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" [Ps 110.4]. Cf. the **Notes on the Book of Hebrews** elsewhere on this Home Page which outlines the comparison between Melchizedek and Jesus Christ.

Vs 19: The previous verse states that Melchizedek is a "priest of God the Most High." In the verse at hand, he addresses Abram as blessed by "God Most High" and adds "maker of heaven and earth." I.e., Melchizedek submits his divine priesthood to Abram.

Vs. 20: *delivered* (magan): the object being Abram's enemies. The only other reference of this verb is Prov 4.9: "She will place on your head a fair garland; she will *bestow* on you a beautiful crown." From this verbal root comes the noun "shield."

Vss. 21-4 deal with the king of Sodom who, unlike Melchizedek, demands from Abram people with him, possibly as slaves. Compare with the inhabitants of Sodom who made the request just before that city's destruction, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them" [19.5].

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Chapter Fifteen

Vs. 1: After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great."

"After these *things*:" *hadevarym*, from the same verbal root as "word" which is noted immediately below.

"*Word* of the Lord:" *devar*, which parallels the Greek *logos*; from the common verbal root *davar*, *to speak*. Although the Lord has already spoken numerous times thus far in Genesis, this is the first instance where the common biblical phrase "word of the Lord" is used; usually it is associated with the prophets. "To whom (Jeremiah) the *word* of the Lord came in the days of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of Judah" [Jer 1.2].

"Came" is lacking in the Hebrew text which has instead, "was to Abram."

Vision (*machazeh*): the first mention of this term which later became a common means of divine communication; from the verbal root *chazah*, *to see* in the sense of beholding. The following contains both terms: "The oracle of him who hears the words of God, who *sees* the *vision* of the Almighty" [Num 24.4]. In the verse at hand, note that the divine *devar* is seen, almost as though it unraveled like a scroll for Abram to behold.

Since this is the first recorded vision, a means of divine communication unfamiliar to people, it is understandable that the Lord says “fear not” along with mentioning Abram by his proper name.

Shield (magen): mention of this protective device can be taken to make more sense to Abram after his recent defeat of the four kings in the previous chapter. Cf. 14.20 for the verbal root to this noun: “Blessed be god Most High, who has *delivered* your enemies into your hand!” For another reference to this noun commonly applied to God: “But you, O Lord, are a *shield* about me” [Ps 3.3].

Reward (sakar): from the verbal root meaning “to hire,” “to bribe:” “But he had pronounced the prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had *hired* him” [Neh 6.12]. The reward to Abram is “*very great*” or me’od as first noted in 1.31: “and behold, it was *very good*” in the sense of being excessively good.

Note the present tense or God-as-shield and the future tense connected with reward.

Vss. 2-6 relate the covenant God is about to make with Abram which may be outlined as follows:

Vs. 2: “Abram *said*!” ‘amar, the common verb which is interesting to compare after the “*word* (devar) of the Lord,” i.e., Abram’s response to the divine vision.

-*Childless* (haryry): from the verbal root meaning “to be bare.” “Write this man down as *childless*, a man who shall not succeed in his days” [Jer 22.30]. Stephen makes reference to Abram in Acts 7.5: “Yet he gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot’s length, but promised to give it to him in possession and to his posterity after him, though he had no child.”

-The Hebrew text lacks the word “heir;” instead it reads literally, “son of Damascus my house” referring to Eliezer, a slave.

Vs. 4: another coming (“was,” as in vs. 1) of the “devar of the Lord” as opposed to direct, one-on-one speaking between the Lord and Abram.

-*Heir* (yarash): the verb is used here as opposed to a noun. “But he who takes refuge in me shall possess the land and shall *inherit* my holy mountain” [Is 57.13].

Vs. 5: *outside* (chuts): as opposed to being inside which in this instance probably refers to a tent. In other words, the divine word/vision was uttered within Abram’s tent. “And the Lord appeared in the tent in a pillar of cloud; and the pillar of cloud stood by the door of the tent” [Dt 31.15].

-*Count* (saphar): the fundamental meaning of this verb is “to write.” “My tongue is like the pen of a ready *scribe* (noun)” [Ps 45.1]. It is almost as though Abram were bidden to write down on a tablet the multitude of stars. The same applies to the number of his *descendants* or zereh; cf. 9.9 where the alternate meaning of this word is noted as “seed.”

Vs. 6: *believed* (‘aman): the first use of this word in the sense of “faith.” Abram’s act of faith took place outside the tent, not inside, and during the night because only then were the stars visible for Abram to count.

-*Reckoned* (chashav): alternately as “to be accounted,” “to invent,” “to think.” “Why do you hide your face and *count* me as your enemy” [Job 13.24]? The object of the verb is *righteousness* or tsedaqah. For a New Testament development on this theme, cf. Chapter Four of Romans. The Greek translation (cf. Rom 4.32) has the words logizomai (chashav) which implies taking into

account and deliberation and dikaiosune (tsedaqah). Vs. 24 develops the notion of logizomai in light of faith in Jesus Christ “who was raised for our *justification* (dikaiosune).” Compare the righteousness of Abram with Noah: “Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are *righteous* before me in this generation” [7.1].

Vs. 7: This verse hearkens back to 11.31 when Terah, Abram’s father, took him and Lot from Ur of the Chaldeans to the land of Canaan in order to settle in Haran. No mention is made there of the Lord’s involvement in the migration. Perhaps vs. 7 is a revelation to Abram that the Lord had been active in this process and that Abram was unaware of it.

-*possess* (yarash): Note the two uses of the same word in the following: “You shall *inherit* their land, and I will give it to you to *possess*, a land flowing with milk and honey” [Lev 20.24]. This verb is the root for “heir.” In this verse the first word for *land* is ‘adamah; the second has ‘eret. The Lord first gives Abram the land who must then possess it. The next verse (8) has Abram asking for a sign to *know* (yadah) about this possession. Here he posits a question which may be compared with a lack of questioning when asked to leave his native home in 12.1.

Vs. 9: The form of knowledge, as it were, which God gives to Abram is in terms of five animals for a sacrifice: heifer, she-goat, ram, turtledove and a young pigeon.

Vs. 10: Abram brought these five offerings *to* (l-) the Lord. No specific place is given but keep in mind when God began speaking with Abram in a vision (vs. 1) and outside (the tent?, vs. 5). As commented with respect to the latter, Abram is bidden to count the stars which means this divine communication was at night and when (presumably) Abram brings the five sacrifices. However, cf. vs. 12 which says “As the sun was going down...”

-“*cut* (batar) them *in two* (batok):” this verb applies to sacrifices and can also mean a section or part of a land as in Sg 2.17: “Be like a gazelle or a young stag upon *rugged* mountains.” Note that the **RSV** has a footnote here, “the meaning of the Hebrew word is unknown.”

-“and laid each half over against the other:” the Hebrew text literally reads, “and gave man his cutting against his neighbor.”

-Abram does not *divide* or batar the birds (turtledove and young pigeon) in two, only the heifer, she-goat and ram.

Vs. 11: *birds of prey* (hayt): as in Is 46.11, “Calling a *bird of prey* from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country.” The verbal root refers to any violent onrush as in 1 Sam 25.14: “And he *railed* at them.”

Vs. 12: The sun was *going down* or bo’; this verb is often employed in the context of sunset as in Jdg 19.14: “The sun *went down* on them near Gibeah.” Bo’ commonly means “to enter,” “to come,” “to bring.”

-*deep sleep* (tardemah): as used in 2.21, “So the Lord God caused a *deep sleep* to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.” Cf. remarks there regarding the verbal root radam (*to sleep* or to snore heavily). Both verses use the verb naphal (*to fall*). In both cases the LXX has for tardemah the Greek word ekstasis which can translate as “ecstasy.” As noted with respect to vs. 10, the divine command to prepare the sacrifice can be taken as occurring at night whereas vs. 12 implies daylight, i.e., “the sun was going down.”

-naphal is used a second time in vs. 12 with respect to two states concerning Abram, the first being

tardemah:

1) *dread* ('eymah): as in Hab 1.7, "*Dread* and terrible are they; their justice and dignity proceed from themselves." The same word can apply to *idols*: "For it is a land of images, and they are mad over *idols*."

2) "great *darkness* (chashekah): usually in the negative sense as in Is 8.22: "And they will look to the earth but behold, distress and *darkness*, the gloom of anguish." In the verse at hand, this term can apply to God's presence as in Dt 5.23: "And when you heard the voice out of the midst of the *darkness*."

Vs. 13: Words from the Lord about Israel's forthcoming descent into Egypt and eventual liberation or Exodus. The words "Know of a surety" have in the Hebrew text a double use of the verb yadah, i.e., "know know" or take it to heart.

-the object of this "double" knowledge is the fate of Abram's *descendants* (zereh: cf. vs. 5, "so shall your *descendants...seed...be*") as *sojourners* or ger. This is the first occurrence of ger in the Bible which may be viewed in light of man's banishment from the Garden of Eden. For a reference in fulfillment of the verse at hand, cf. Ex 2.22: "She bore a son and he called his name (*Ger*)shom; for he said, 'I have been a *sojourner* in a foreign land.'"

-*slaves* (havad): in the Hebrew text the verb is used.

-*oppressed* (hanah): a verb which also connotes affliction as in Zech 10.2: "Therefore the people wander like sheep; they are *afflicted* for want of a shepherd." This prophecy seems to overlook the story of Joseph who brought Israel into Egypt.

Vs. 14: Both this and the preceding verses are to be seen in light of Ex 12.40-1: "The time that the people of Israel dwelt in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. And at the end of four hundred and thirty years, on that very day, all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt." Most likely Abram had in mind the words "on that very day."

-*Bring judgment* (dyn): connotes a sense of ruling, of condemning: "For by these he *judges* peoples; he gives food in abundance" [Job 36.31].

-*nation* (goy): a term normally used to distinguish Israel from other peoples but cf. 12.2: "I will make of you a great *nation*." The alien nature of goy is further emphasized by the verb havad, *to serve*.

-*"great possessions* (rekush):" cf. 13.6, "for their *possessions* were so great that they could not dwell together." "To seek from him (God) a straight way for ourselves, our children and all our *goods*" [Ezra 8.21]. The verse at hand refers to Ex 12.36: "And the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they spoiled the Egyptians."

Vs. 15: "Go to your fathers:" the first use of this common expression found, for example, throughout the Book of Kings: "And Rehoboam slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David" [1 Kg 14.31]. The ancestry of Abram was limited compared with later generations; certainly he must have had in mind Noah and before him the generations preceding the flood and hence Adam. Abram's departure is in *peace* or shalom, the first use of this term in the Bible.

-*old age* (seyvah): the first use of this term in the Bible. "A *hoary head* is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life" [Prov 16 31].

Vs. 16: *iniquity* (hawon): that is, belonging to the Amorites; cf. 9.25 to which this verse hearkens

back, “Cursed be Canaan; a slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers.” The iniquity at hand most likely alludes to sexual perversion. This word can also apply to guilt contracted by sinning: “visiting the *iniquity* of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me” [Ex 20.5].

-such iniquity requires four generations to achieve *completeness* or shalom, the verbal root for shalom noted in vs. 15.

Vs. 17: the second reference to sunset, the first being vs. 12 (“as the sun was going down”) or when Abram was overcome with that deep sleep. That is to say, the words addressed to him by God occurred in this special condition reminiscent of when God caused the same deep sleep to fall upon Adam in order to create Eve.

-*dark* (halatah): the only other three references are Ezk 12.6, 7, 12 which refer to Ezekiel going into (symbolic) exile: “I went forth in the *dark*, carrying my outfit upon my shoulder in their sight” [vs. 6]. This term implies not just darkness but one which is thick and impenetrable.

-“smoking *fire pot* (tanur):” more specifically, “oven,” “furnace.” “You will make them as a blazing *oven* when you appear” [Ps 21.9].

-“flaming *torch* (lapyd):” “His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming *torches*” [Dan 10.6].

-Both the fire pot and torch passed between the sacrificial *pieces* or gezer: from a verbal root meaning “to cut,” “to divide” and which alternately means “to decree.” “To him who divided the Red Sea *in sunder*, for his steadfast love endures forever” [Ps 136.13].

The images presented in the last two verses may be taken to prophesy Israel’s crossing of the Red Sea. “And the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them” in preparation for the Exodus, Ex 14.19. This concluding verse to Chapter Fifteen is made all the more pertinent by vs. 19’s references to two rivers, that of Egypt and the Euphrates. The ten peoples mentioned in vss. 19-20 live in between these two rivers. Cf. 1 Kg 4.21 as reference to King Solomon’s domain: “Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt.” The promise to inherit this region is given in Dt 11.24: “Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours; your territory shall be from the wilderness and Lebanon, and from the River, the river Euphrates to the western sea.”

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Chapter Sixteen

Vs 1: “*bore* him no children:” yalad; the Hebrew text lacks “children.” This conveys a greater sense of desperation with regard to Sarai’s infertility as it opens a new chapter in comparison with the previous chapter’s “To you descendants I give this land” [vs 18].

-*maid* (shiphchah) or Hagar the Egyptian. Cf. 1 Sam 25.41: “Behold, your *handmaid* is a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.” Shiphchah is used with ‘amah which more specifically applies to a female slave, so the former term does not necessarily apply to a woman in bondage.

Vs. 2: another use of yalad as with the previous verse, i.e., the Hebrew lacks “children.” Here Sarai attributes her infertility to the Lord who *prevents* (hatsar) her. This verb more specifically means

“to shut,” “to detain.” “And he *shut up* the heavens so that there be no rain” [Dt 11.17].

-*obtain children* (banah): this word fundamentally means “to build” as Ezr 4.2: “Let us *build* with you; for we worship your God as you do.”

-“*hearkened to the voice*” (of Sarai): use of shamah and qol to emphasize Abram paying close attention to his wife’s request.

Vs. 3: Note the contrast between Abram having dwelt ten years in Canaan with his becoming husband to Hagar. It may be taken as a temporal way of expressing Sarai’s infertility despite their move to Canaan at God’s bidding. In the verse at hand, Sarai acts as middleman in the sense that she gives Hagar to her husband Abram.

Vs. 4: *came* (bo’): a common word which denotes the sense of entering as in vs. 2 where it applies to sexual intercourse. “Coming” can be taken not so much as the physical act but the whole love-making process which is a kind of “approach” of one spouse to another.

-*saw/conceived*: note the play on words, tahar/tere’, which intimates a unity between them. In the Hebrew text, the word order is reversed; i.e., “conceive” precedes “see.”

-*looked with contempt*: composed of two words in the Hebrew, qalal and hayn or “treat lightly” and “eye.”

-*mistress* (gevereth): the feminine equivalent to *gever* or *hero*. “An unloved woman when she gets a husband, and a maid when she succeeds her *mistress*” [Prov 30.23].

Vs. 5: Sarai blames her husband for the contempt Hagar had shown her even though she had proposed that Abram get Hagar pregnant.

-*wrong* (chamas): alternately, “oppression.” Cf. 6.11: “Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with *violence*.”

-*embrace* (cheyq): “Let a young maiden be sought for my lord the king, and let her wait upon the king and be his nurse; let her lie in your *bosom*” [1 Kg 1.2].

-“looked with contempt:” cf. vs. 4 above with the two Hebrew verbs.

-Just as God is attributed as causing Sarai to be infertile (cf. vs. 2), so he is invoked to judge between the situation brought on by Sarai.

Vs. 6: *power* (yad): literally, “hand.”

-“as you please:” literally, “do to her good in your eyes.”

-*dealt harshly* (hanah): cf. 15.13 for another use of this verb: “and they will be *oppressed* for four hundred years.” Note the similarity of hanah with *eyes* which just preceded it, hayn...as though this harshness sprang directly from Sarai’s eyes (of contempt) towards Hagar.

Vs. 7: The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur.

This is the first mention of an *angel* (mal’ak), more specifically, one “of the Lord” perhaps to identify himself clearly. Here is the first such angelic encounter in the Bible. Mal’ak can apply to “messenger” or anyone who has been sent. “Behold, I send an *angel* before you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place which I have prepared” [Ex 23.20].

-“*spring* (heyn) of water:” alternately, “eye” due to the resemblance it has with a spring. “For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and *springs*”

[Dt 8.7]. This spring is located in the desert at Shur which is also noted in Ex 15.22: “Then Moses led Israel onward from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur.” Perhaps Hagar’s presence at Shur intimates her “crossing” the Red Sea which is symbolic of her offspring’s destiny which “cannot be numbered for multitude” [vs. 10].

Vs. 8: The angel of the Lord questions Hagar with respect to where she has come and to where she is going. Hagar has no definite place to go; she only says that she is fleeing Sarai.

Vs. 9: The angel of the Lord bids Hagar to return to Sarai and to *submit* (hanah) to her. This verb is the same as in vs. 6 (*dealt harshly*) only in another form. For a similar use of this form, cf. Dan 10.12: “that you have set your mind to understand and *humbled* yourself before your God.”

Vs. 10: The reason for Hagar’s submission to Sarai is not to resume the abusive treatment she had already experienced but to “greatly *multiply*” (rawah) her descendants. This verb is used twice to signify abundance.

-*descendants* (zereh): alternately, “seed” as in 3.15: “between your *seed* and her *seed*.”

-*counted* (saphar): as in 15.5, “Look toward heaven and *number* the stars, if you are able to number them.” In the verse at hand, saphar parallels the promise made to Abram, i.e., innumerable descendants.

Vs. 11: “Behold, you are with child and shall bear a son; you shall call his name Ishmael; because the Lord has given heed to your affliction.

This verse resembles Lk 1.31: “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.”

In the verse at hand, we have the beginning of an address by “the angel of the Lord” to Hagar which continues through vs. 12.

Behold (hinak): the form hineh with the pronoun -k (*you*) added to it and used as a form of getting one’s attention. Cf. 1.29: “*Behold*, I have given you every plant yielding seed.” Hagar knew she was pregnant (cf. vs. 5); acknowledgment of this fact by a divine representative or angel indicates that she and her offspring will be blessed.

Ishmael: the name is interpreted as “God hears.” 25.12 gives a list of his descendants. Compare the verb shamah (*to hear*) contained within the proper name with *given heed* (also shamah). In other words, the hearing by God of Hagar may be said as having been transferred to her son.

The object of this hearing is Hagar’s *affliction* or honiy which is prefixed by the preposition ‘el (*to, towards*) signifying close attention to her plight. “Seven days you shall eat it with unleavened bread, the bread of *affliction*” [Dt 16.3].

Gal 4.21-31 deals with Hagar and Sarai (or Sarah) in terms of allegorical representation. “Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar” [vs. 24]. Actually St. Paul does not mention Sarai; he refers to her as a “free woman” [vs. 30].

Vs. 12: He shall be a wild ass of a man, his hand against every man and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen."

The conclusion of the angel's address to Hagar begun in the previous verse. Again, the prophecy about Ishmael may be compared with Mary's concerning Jesus: "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High" [Lk 1.32].

Wild ass (pere'): A verse which can apply to Ishmael living in the wilderness: "They give drink to every beast of the field; the *wild asses* quench their thirst" [Ps 104.11]. The uncontrollable nature of Hagar's son signified by pere' is heightened by 'adam or *man*, almost as though he were some kind of centaur. The Hebrew could read, "wild ass man."

Dwell (yashav): This verb intimates a settled existence, i.e., one opposite the roaming nature of Ishmael and his descendants. At the same time yashav can apply to occupying a given region: "They (again, Ishmael's descendants) *dwelt* (shakan; more properly, "to lie down") from Havilah to Shur which is opposite Egypt in the direction of Assyria; he settled over against all his people" [25.18]. The Hebrew for "settled over" is a verb meaning *to fall* (naphal) which can signify the hostile relationship already noted.

Vs. 13: So she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, "You are a God of seeing;" for she said, "Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?"

Hagar *calls* (qara') on the Lord's *name* or shem, that is, as distinct from the Lord himself. At the time God did not reveal his proper divine name of YHWH although the Hebrew text uses it. In light of this, perhaps Hagar and those who lived prior to God's revelation of YHWH to Moses had an intimation of this term and alluded to it as "name." Compare with the first mention of this phrase in 12.8: "And there he (Abram) built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord."

The indirect perception of YHWH through shem responds to Hagar's calling. Note the curious words to her by this intermediate shem: "You are a *God of seeing* ('El roy'). As a footnote to the French edition of the **Jerusalem Bible** says, this could be a corruption of "le puits 'du Vivant qui me voit." It refers to 24.62: "Now Isaac had come from Beer-la'hai-roi and was dwelling in the Negeb;" also the next verse mentions this place-name. Perhaps roy' (*seeing*) as a noun and translated in English as a gerund (-ing) can signify a chief attribute of God, that of seeing in the sense of beholding; i.e., active and constant.

Hagar's response to this divine roy' is in terms of a question to herself concerning her having *seen* (ra'ah) *God*, that is 'El as opposed to YHWH.

"Alive" and "God" are lacking in the Hebrew text which literally reads, "not have I seen after seeing him?" It as though Hagar's capacity for seeing remained unchanged before and after her encounter with God. This verse is reminiscent of Ex 33.20: "You cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live." In the Garden of Eden the man and the woman enjoyed intimacy with God yet there is not indication that they "saw" God; rather, they "heard the sound of the Lord God" [3.8]. Perhaps

all other forms of address to God by them as well as others can be put in terms of this hearing as opposed to seeing.

Vs. 14: Therefore the well was called Beer-la'hai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered.

Cf. remarks under the heading of the previous verse with respect to the name of this well. The translation reads, "The well of one who sees and lives," namely Hagar. This verse is similar in meaning to Ex 24.11: "And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God and ate and drank." This is the only occasion where the place name Bered is mentioned; 1 Chron 7.20 has it as a proper name.

Vs. 15 shifts back to Abram, almost as though Hagar had not left him and his wife Sarai. That is to say, Hagar bears him a son whom he names Ishmael, the same Ishmael already noted. First the angel of the Lord communicates to Hagar this name followed by Abram bestowing it upon the child. It is as though both events occurred separately and in different places.

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Chapter Seventeen

Vs. 1: When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless.

An advanced age (99) but considerably shorter than those generations who lived not long after the flood.

Appeared (ra'ah): cf. 12.7, "Then the Lord *appeared* to Abram." Ra'ah was also noted in 16.13: "You are a God of *seeing*...Have I really *seen* God and remained alive after *seeing* him?" Note that this appearance occurs after the birth of Ishmael by Hagar when Abram was 86 years old, that is, 13 years earlier. Therefore Ishmael was well on his way to claiming his personal identity.

God Almighty ('El Shaday): the first revelation of this divine name which later is common throughout the Old Testament. Shaday can refer to any sovereign power and can mean something like "most powerful." Note the verb shadad (*to treat violently*), but the connection is uncertain. Compare this revelation with the fullness of the divine name's revelation in Ex 3.14: "I am who am."

Walk before (halak): the common verb for this action here in the hithpael (reflexive) suggesting that in addition to following a divine command, Abram "caused" himself to walk. Such walking is done in God's presence as a goal towards which Abram moves ("before me"). No special direction is given as in the case of proceeding to a given location.

Be blameless (tamam): connotes perfection or completion. The same word is applied to Abram's predecessor, Noah: "Noah was a righteous man, *blameless* in his generation; Noah walked with God" [6.9].

Vs. 2: The parallel between Abram and Noah is brought out further with the making of a *covenant*

(beryth) as in 6.18: “I will establish my *covenant* with you.” Such a covenant is ratified by the two “betweens,” namely, “between me” and “between you.”

-*Multiply* (ravah): as in 16.10 with respect to Ishmael’s descendants, “I will so greatly *multiply* your descendants (etc.).” Here the adverb me’od (*exceedingly*) is used; in the former it is lacking although the angel of the Lord said that Ishmael’s offspring “cannot be numbered.”

Vs. 3: an expression of worship (“fell on his face”) or laying prostrate on the ground. Only after having assumed such a position does God speak although vs. 1 has him speaking with Abram in an upright position, as it were. Compare with Moses’ response who removed the sandals from his feet (cf. Ex 3.5). Apparently Moses was unaware that the burning bush was a divine revelation and did not have a response similar to Abram.

Vs. 4: “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.

The continuation of God’s address to Abram begun in vs. 1 through vs. 2; resumed in vs. 5 through vs. 8.

Another use of *behold* (hineh) which as noted earlier, can apply to getting one’s attention or making an important statement; the latter is more applicable here.

Cf. 15.18 for first mention of a *covenant* (beryth) with Abram: “On that day the Lord made a *covenant* with Abram, saying, ‘To your descendants I give this land.’” The exact form of this covenant remains unknown until 17.9 where the act of circumcision is introduced for the first time. In the verse at hand, the essence of divine covenant is already present.

The only intimation of this covenant’s fulness is the statement that Abram will be not simply the father of *nations* (goy, singular) but a *multitude* (hamon) of them. In Israel’s history the former term is used concerning hostile nations and those peoples not chosen by God, i.e., “Gentiles.” For Abram to be designated as father of nations means that he is father not simply of the future Israel but of every human family perceived in terms of this term, an organized political entity.

Hamon suggests noise as in 1 Sam 4.14: “When Eli heard the sound of the outcry he said, ‘What is this *uproar*?’”

Vs. 5: The change of Abram’s name to Abraham. Vs. 4 has God saying that Abram *shall be* “father of a multitude of nations,” i.e., future tense. Vs. 5 has the same phrase but in the past tense, “For I *have made*...”

Vs. 6: “*exceedingly fruitful*” (parah): often with respect to a woman bearing a child and first used in 1.22: “Be *fruitful* and multiply.” In the verse at hand, parah is modified by me’od which as noted elsewhere suggests something excessive; here it has prefixed the preposition b- (*in*) signifying an almost extravagant fertility.

-This verse has two distinctions (lying in the future) with respect to the newly named Abraham: 1) God will make *nations* (goy again) from him, 2) and kings shall *come forth* (yatsa’) from him. Yet

another mention of Abraham's universality with respect to the human family.

Vs. 7: Another mention of the divine covenant, this time as being *established* (qum) not simply with Abraham but after him; this verb fundamentally means "to rise;" it can apply to an ongoing relationship through the covenant. "But I will *establish* my covenant with you (Noah)" [6.18]. A parallel may be seen between this qum and kings *coming forth* (yatsa').

-Not only is the covenant between God and Abraham but between generations; in the second instance it is *everlasting* (holam). Note its variation in 9.12: "This is the sign of the covenant...that is with you, for all *future* generations."

-Purpose of this covenant: that God is for Abraham (present) and for his descendants (future). Note the three uses of the preposition l- (*to, towards, for*) in the first instance: "to you," "to God," "to your descendants."

Vs. 8: The earlier verses centered around God creating a covenant with Abraham and his descendants. Equivalent to covenant is the possession of Canaan, a definite location; note that Canaan is also an "everlasting (holam) possession." Canaan is the land of Abraham's *sojournings* or magur. "Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my *pilgrimage*" [Ps 119.54].

The words "and I will be their God" is not an afterthought by a kind of ratification of the divine presence to Abraham's progeny. The Hebrew text literally reads, "and I will be *to them to God*;" another use of the preposition l-.

Vs. 9: And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.

A continuation of God's address to the newly named Abraham which continues through vs. 16 and may be outlined as follows:

-Vs. 9: The words, "And God said to Abraham" follow upon his words begun in vs. 1. This insertion may be taken as a kind of re-enforcement of the importance of what is being communicated here. "As for you" can tie into this notion, for God has already spoken with Abraham about the covenant. Note that God asks him to *keep* (shamar) it, a word often found in Ps 119 with regard to the Torah: "I will *keep* your Law continually, forever and ever" [vs. 44].

-Vs. 10: God presents some specifics regarding the covenant: another mention of "between me and between you" as well as shamar with respect to every male being *circumcised* or mul, the first instance of this physical sign in the Bible. "Christ became a servant to the *circumcised*" [Rom 15.8].

-Vs. 12: The male child is to be circumcised when he is eight days old. "And at the end of eight days when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb" [Lk 2.21]. Note that the covenant given to Abraham was simultaneous with his change of name. With Jesus, his name was bestowed upon him at his circumcision. During the eight days between this event and his birth he remained anonymous, as it were, or unnamed.

-Since Abraham is named “father of a multitude,” this title makes more sense as applied to those males “whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner.” That is, his paternity extends beyond his immediate physical descendants.

-Vs. 14: Any uncircumcised male is to be *cut off* (*karath*) from his people. This verb is also used for making (“cutting”) a covenant, only used here in the opposite sense. “On that day the Lord *made* a covenant with Abram” [15.18]. In the verse at hand, *nepshesh* (*soul*) is used for “he” which can signify the grievous nature of violation of the divine covenant.

-*Broken* (*parar*): As in Lev 26.15, “...so that you will not do all my commandments, but *break* my covenant.”

Vss. 15-21 continue with God speaking, that is, with Abraham, concerning his wife Sarai and his future son Isaac as well as Ishmael which may be outlined as follows:

-Vs. 15: Sarai’s name is changed to Sarah which means “princess,” a variation of Sarai.

-Vs. 16: The newly named Sarah will become a “mother of *nations* (*goy*)” as well as of kings; use of *goy* suggests that Sarah shares in the universal nature of her husband’s paternity.

-Vs. 17: Abraham addresses God saying that he is a hundred years old; compare with his being ninety-nine years old in vs. 1. It is as though a full year had transpired between God’s appearance to him and this point.

-Vs. 18: It is interesting that after the impartation of the divine covenant and promise to Sarah Abraham interjects with a petition on Ishmael’s behalf whom he bore by Hagar. *In your sight* or the preposition *lepneyka* connotes vision, with God watching Ishmael which parallels vs. 1, “Walk *before me*” (*lepny*), something which Abraham would desire for his son.

-Vs. 19: God declines the request of Abraham with regard to Ishmael; rather, he puts it off until the next verse. God bids Sarah’s son is to be called Isaac or “he who laughs.” Chapter Seventeen has gone into some detail about the covenant God made with Abraham. This verse has God *establishing* (*qum*; cf. vs. 7) a covenant with Isaac.

-Vs. 20: God returns to Ishmael after an initial rebuff by Abraham. Ishmael will be the “father of twelve princes” who are listed in 25.16+.

-Vs. 20: Even though God establishes a covenant with Ishmael (details are not given), he promises to do the same (*qum*) with Isaac.

Vss. 21-7 or through the end of Chapter Seventeen concern the implementation of the covenant. Vs. 21 has a contrast between God finishing his conversation with Abraham and his going up from him; in other words, a contrast between intimacy with God and his transcendence. The remaining verses relate how Abraham circumcises Ishmael, those of his household as well as himself.