

17 July, Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked and behold, three men stood in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth and said, "My Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought and wash your feet and rest yourselves under the tree while I fetch a morsel of bread that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it and make cakes." And Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good and gave it to the servant who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate. They said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "She is in the tent." The Lord said, "I will surely return to you in the spring, and Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. Genesis 18.1-10

NB: This excerpt is lifted from *Expansions on the Book of Genesis* posted on this home page.

“And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day” [vs. 1]. This simple word (‘and’ or *v*) prefaced to the verb *ra’ah* (to see) was noted earlier as an indication of continuous action and here has special meaning for Abraham. It serves to tie in a “seeing” by the Lord, one of a number thus far, with that which the future patriarch has become very familiar. That is to say, his private thoughts, akin to “here-we-are-again-with-another-divine-promise-not-fulfilled,” caught him at a place where he had built an altar to the Lord: “and he came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre which are at Hebron” [13.18]. Perhaps by returning to the altar Abraham might renew one of his earlier contacts with the Lord and see what would happen. So here was Abraham sitting at the entrance to his tent staring at the altar with all the earlier memories of divine encounters passing through his mind. Sarah isn’t mentioned but was within the tent; undoubtedly she had similar thoughts of past events and was not pregnant despite a divine promise. The two didn’t wish to talk with each other, let alone be in each other’s presence, hence the separation. Abraham might have quarreled with his wife about all this so decided that the heat outside the tent was better than the heat inside which their argument had produced. Between his building of the altar and the present Abraham had moved about Canaan, sticking pretty close to Mamre; he was almost a hundred years old and not in a position to move about as freely as before. As with earlier appearances, the Lord had to make himself known—seen (*ra’ah*)—quite clearly due to Abraham’s failing eyesight. As for the “door,” the Hebrew *petach* refers to an entrance and not necessarily a physical door, something not associated with a tent.

“Heat of the day” applies to the time between noon and four in the afternoon, a time when desert dwellers seek refuge from the sun. During these mid-afternoon hours mirages appear on the horizon, so Abraham may have thought the Lord appearing to him was such a mirage. The earlier divine appearances at this point must have appeared equivalent to a mirage both to

Abraham and Sarah simply because they weren't fulfilled. They were too elderly to return to Haran and were stuck in this foreign land of Canaan and worst of all, without an heir. In order to make sure Abraham didn't mistake the appearance for a mirage, the Lord came in the form of three men who "stood in front of him" [vs. 2]. One would have been taken as a mirage and two as seeing double but three was an unmistakable physical presence. First of all, Abraham "lifted up his eyes"...he lifted up his now ancient eyes, barely able to see, a difficulty compounded by the sun shimmering all around him at the hottest time of day. While making this gesture, Abraham "looked" which is the verb *ra'ah* as used in vs. 1, "appeared." Immediately afterwards comes "behold" or *hineh* which had been noted earlier as applicable to a sudden astonishment. *Hineh* serves to introduce the three visitors who stood "in front of him," the preposition being *hal* or better, "upon him." *Hal* gives the impression that Abraham was pressed down and had to raise his eyes (literally) to see them on top of him. Vs. 2 continues with a second sentence: "Abraham ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth." What was Abraham thinking when he ran? His first thought was to distinguish reality from a mirage, and the running suggests that he favored the first. It was unusual to see people out and about during this time with the sun directly overhead. Bowing to the ground was a customary greeting and in this particular instance, with the shimmering heat and Abraham's dim vision, acknowledgment that the visitors were no mirage. *Shachah* is the verb at hand and often used for worship of God: "they bowed their heads and worshiped" [Ex 4.31].

Vs. 3 follows as part of the previous verse with "My lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant." Abraham uses the singular *'adony* for "lord" despite three men being present. Some Christian commentators say that this applies to the one Lord and three persons of the Trinity but chances are it's due, as noted above, to the time of day when mirages and reality can be confused with reality. While face down on the ground Abraham bids him...them...not to pass by but to stay. In addition to *shachah* as a sign of respect, it might reveal some fear and doubt concerning the three men. Who would be walking in the desert at the hottest time of day? Were they up to no good? Secretly Abraham was wishing the men would pass him by and go somewhere else, but desert hospitality compelled him to act otherwise. To play it safe, Abraham bids his unexpected visitors "to rest under the tree." Sarah was alone inside the tent, and he didn't want her to be exposed to these suspicious men in case they posed a threat. While Abraham busied himself getting some refreshment, he had one ear cocked to the tree in an attempt to listen in on their conversation but to no avail. They remained silent as where they came from and to where they were going; Abraham complied with their silence and let it go at that. As for his invitation to take some rest, the verb is *sahad* which connotes a propping up or upholding. "You have given me the shield of your salvation and your right hand supported me" [Ps 18.35]. The image fits well, for it's easy to imagine the three visitors under the tree leaning on their traveling staffs.

Vs. 5 continues with Abraham saying tongue-in-cheek "and after that you may pass on." In other words, I will take care of you during this the hottest time of day but will be delighted when you leave both me and my wife Sarah. To his relief they said, "Do as you have said." In other words, "prepare us some refreshment after which we will be on our way." That's why

Abraham went to such great lengths at having Sarah and a servant prepare a meal despite the intense heat: cakes, a tender calf, curds and milk. To do this was no mean feat on sudden notice which meant the three men had to wait in the tree's shade a good part of the afternoon. During that time Abraham kept himself busy—not so much that because others were doing the work—with a feigned busyness so as to avoid contact with his visitors as much as possible. We don't hear about Hagar nor her son Ishmael at this point, but both must have been in the vicinity. Hagar could have approached the mysterious visitors and asked if they knew that angel who intervened on her behalf (cf. 16.7). Perhaps it was one of them. Surely one was responsible but wished to keep this secret from Abraham lest he find out and make life miserable for her. As for the hasty preparation of food, it concludes with “he (Abraham) stood by them under the tree while they ate” [vs. 8]. Abraham was hovering over the three men with one eye on the clock, if you will, hoping they would eat quickly and be on their way. By this time it must have been evening, for to arrange the preparations was no mean feat despite the help. Abraham was hoping the men would get on the road and not stay the night which would have made it more inconvenient for him and his wife.

After the rush of preparing food the men came out with the dreaded words: “Where is your wife” [vs. 9]? During this time Sarah was inside the tent listening in on the conversation with an occasional furtive glance outside the covering. She was trapped in the tent for some time, really, and was eager to escape and get an ear about what was going on. Even though Abraham went inside the tent (vs. 6), it was very quick, just ample time to tell her what to do. Of course, Abraham was in a bind; the men saw him go inside the tent but didn't realize Sarah was present. Now he was afraid they would enter and do her harm, the time being close to sunset. So after an interval which must have seen a very long time, Abraham was surprised at what happened next. Three men came to visit him but now the text reads (vs. 9), “The Lord said.” Here we have a repetition as in vss. 2-3 (three men and the address ‘My lord’) only now instead of the shimmering heat which Abraham's failing eyesight could have confused with a mirage, the present form of address remains basically the same. Abraham uses the singular address for three men because it was close to dark meaning that all the time these visitors were under the tree. They were disguised in the shade, for shade and intense desert sunlight can confuse one's vision. Throughout the duration Abraham didn't know if he had been serving one or three men. Essentially the same confusion would happen later with his son Isaac when he confused Jacob and Esau, 27.22.

As for this singular lord, he said that he will return in the spring “and Sarah your wife shall have a son” [vs. 10]. The Hebrew for “spring” is *heth chayah*, literally “time of life” or the time when life returns to the earth after the passage of winter and its rains. For Sarah, this phrase intimates more than the coming spring season but the time of birth for her future son so often promised to Abraham by the Lord. This time it was different, a definite time when Sarah will give birth, which was nine months away. However, to the aged Sarah it was long and full of doubt as she “was listening at the tent door behind him” or behind her husband. That means the tent was close to the tree under which the three visitors had rested and took their meal. “So Sarah laughed to herself” [vs. 12]. The verb is *tsachaq* and reflects the same attitude of Abraham in 17.17: “Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed.” However, it intimates the

name of his future son, Isaac. “To her self” is *beqirbah*, literally, “in her midst” or deep within herself. Immediately Sarah adds “shall I have pleasure (*hednah*)?” This is the only form in the Bible yet is related to the proper name Eden, *Heden*.

24 July, Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Then the Lord said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, 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." So the men turned from there, and went toward Sodom; but Abraham still stood before the Lord. Then Abraham drew near and said, "Will you indeed destroy the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will you then destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from thee to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" And the Lord said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake." Abraham answered, "Behold, I have taken upon myself to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?" And he said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there." Again he spoke to him and said, "Suppose forty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of forty I will not do it." Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Suppose thirty are found there." He answered, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there." He said, "Behold, I have taken upon myself to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it." Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once. Suppose ten are found there." He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it." And the Lord went his way when he had finished speaking to Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place. Genesis 18.20-32

NB: This excerpt is lifted from *Expansions on the Book of Genesis* posted on this home page. Also, vs. 33 is added since it's the end of a chapter.

IVs. 20 continues with the singular Lord speaking within the context of the plural men (vs. 16) and changes tone quite abruptly (it continues into vs. 21): “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave.” This is what the Lord wishes to get off his chest to Abraham, not discussing his descendants, that old and familiar topic which could turn him off because he heard it repeatedly. By bringing up the wickedness of these two cities—and surely Abraham heard about it, even as early as his uneasy encounter with the king of Sodom (14.17)—the Lord wished to bring them before Abraham as a vivid reminder of how his descendants should not comport themselves. This outcry (*zahaqah*) is suggestive of sorrow or the cry for aid, not specifically one demanding retribution. “I cried with a loud and bitter cry” [Est 4.1]. Note that *zahaqah* is not from the cities themselves but against them though the Hebrew lacks a preposition. Since Abraham had been dwelling in Canaan about ten years, he too must have joined in on this *zahaqah*, again having encountered the king of Sodom. As for the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, it is unspecified but apparently was well known. Given the

location of both cities close to the lowest place on earth, the *zeḥaqah* funneled up and spread throughout the surrounding area, reverberating against the mountains. It was not unlike the “smoke of the land that went up like the smoke of a furnace” [19.28] that was to occur shortly. The sin is “very grave,” the verb *kavad* (to be heavy) being used. And so the cry which funnels up and spreads around returns down to Sodom and Gomorrah, thereby compounding the sin. Hence, everyone had a tacit knowledge of what was going on down there at the lowest point of the earth’s surface, a fitting image of the underworld.

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

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

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

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

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

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

And so Abraham discovers that the Lord will “raise” Sodom (again, no mention of Gomorrah) for fifty *tsadyqim*, righteous men. Instead of proceeding downward in number, Abraham must have wished he had started with a higher number...perhaps a hundred or even more.

Nevertheless, he is stuck with this reduced number, so the only way he can proceed is by diminution, not increase. With regard to Sodom, the Lord says the “whole place” (*maqom* again) which includes surrounding areas. How to continue now? Abraham figures that a decrease by five *tsadyqim* is adequate; any more would be outright presumption. *Ya'al* is the verb for “take upon” which Abraham uses when speaking with the Lord. It applies to that which comes first and to be willing. “Because it has pleased the Lord” [1Sam 12.22]. Thus *ya'al* is a deferential word, allowing the person addressed to make up his or her mind. The respect implied is enhanced by Abraham calling himself “dust and ashes.” That may be true, but he remains quite presumptuous of divine compassion. Such deference is a lead into asking the Lord if he'll spare the city if forty-five *tsadyqim* are “there,” *betok* not being used. Abraham speaks not directly of sparing Sodom but of the Lord not destroying it, *shachath* being the verb first noted in 6.11: “Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight.” Use of *shachath* was a clever ploy on Abraham's part because it reminded the Lord of that incident just before the flood. If Abraham persuaded the Lord not to repeat this worldwide flood, generations after him would consider him their greatest hero. Neither the Lord nor Abraham wish to pursue this, so the Lord allows him to continue his bargaining, now at forty *tsadyqim* [vs. 29]. The pace of bargaining picks up now, Abraham being anxious at how things turn out, at what number the Lord will relent. The downward process is interrupted by introduction of the words “I have taken upon myself to speak to the Lord,” that is, another use of *ya'al* which reveals Abraham's tongue-in-cheek deference. It's that way because while sincere, he is desirous to get the bargaining over with and find out exactly how merciful is the Lord. The Lord, of course, knew this from the beginning yet plays along because of the exceptional situation of Sodom and Gomorrah.

As an introduction to Abraham's final bargaining with the Lord—he stops at ten *tsadyqim*, figuring that number is more than enough—he bids him not to be angry. The amazing thing about the entire process beginning with vs. 23 is that we don't pick up even the slightest trace of divine anger. Abraham instinctively knows that he has pushed it as far as he dares, so he relents. That's why vs. 33 says “And the Lord went his way.” The Hebrew reads literally, “went the Lord as finished to speak to Abraham.” So the entire fate of Sodom and Gomorrah seems up in the air, unresolved. While Abraham started off with fifty *tsadyqim* and went to ten, all the while his mysterious visitors “set out from there” [vs. 16], that is, they set out to Sodom. This advance which begins with twilight and continues into the night hours is the back-drop to Abraham's bargaining with the Lord. This last verse of Chapter Eighteen, a prelude to the fearful destruction of two cities, ends with “and Abraham returned to his place.” That place or *maqom* was not distance from where he had gone and is to be read in the context of vs. 23, “Then Abraham drew near.” Thus Abraham retreats, if you will, not to a physical *maqom* but to one characterized by his aloneness with Sarah by the tent under the oaks of Mamre. Does he communicate any of this to Sarah? Perhaps not for fear of being made a fool. Sarah had embarrassed herself earlier when she laughed at the prospect of giving birth at an advanced age, so why bother to make things worse? Oh that we had been privy to the conversation both had in their tent that night!

31 July Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity...So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun because sometimes a man who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave all to be enjoyed by a man who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. What has a man from all the toil and strain with which he toils beneath the sun? For all his days are full of pain, and his work is a vexation; even in the night his mind does not rest. This also is vanity. Ecclesiastes 1.2; 2.21-23

This excerpt is from Notes on the *Book of Ecclesiastes* also posted on this home page.

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

-Vanity (*hevel*): the theme of Ecclesiastes which occurs five times in this verse alone. This noun comes from a verbal root meaning “to breathe,” “to exhale” and commonly suggests anything transitory. For another sense, cf. two references: 1) Job 7.16: “Let me alone, for my days are a breath.” 2) Is 30.7: “For Egypt’s help is worthless and empty.” Compare the outward breathing of *hevel* with *ruach* (breath, spirit) which is close in meaning. However, the latter seems to imply breathing from the nostrils as opposed to the mouth and alternately can mean “to smell.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- “Full of pain (*makovym*):” the Hebrew text lacks “full of.” “Man is also chastened with pain upon his bed and with continual strife in his bones” [Job 33.19].
- Work (*hinyn*): first found in 1.13, “It is an unhappy business that God has given to the sons of men;” also cf. vs. 26.
- Vexation (*kahas*): cf. 1.18, “For in much wisdom is much vexation.”
- Rest (*shakav*): alternately, “to lie down.” “But before they lay down, the men of the city” [Gen 19.4].
- Mind (*lev*): as often noted, “heart.”
- This verse is reminiscent of Job 7.4, “When I lie down I say, ‘When shall I arise?’ But the night is long, and I am full of tossing until the dawn.”

7 August, Nineteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

That night was made known beforehand to our fathers so that they might rejoice in sure knowledge of the oaths in which they trusted. The deliverance of the righteous and the destruction of their enemies were expected by your people. For by the same means by which you punished our enemies called us to yourself and glorify us. For in secret the holy children of good men offered sacrifices and with one accord agreed to the divine law, that the saints would share alike the same things, both blessings and dangers; and already they were singing the praises of the fathers. Wisdom 18.6-9

This passage is a reflection, if you will, on the first Passover just before Israel departed Egypt in the middle of the night. It begins by saying that this night of nights had been made known beforehand, the verb being *progignosko* as referring mostly to chapter twelve of Exodus. For example, the phrase “that night” occurs in vs. 12: “I (the Lord) will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt.” Later in vs. 14 we have mention of “this day” which can refer to not just to the night of Passover but subsequent events as one unit of time, a *kairos*, with the intent of commemorating it by future generations: “This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord.” In sum, the theme at hand is to insert the most decisive moment in Israel's history into her collective memory. Once that has been accomplished, it's up to future generations to keep it alive yearly throughout the vicissitudes of history.

The text at hand speaks of oaths or *horkos* which most likely refer to the Passover and its observance. Such oaths aren't to be observed blindly nor out of fear but with joy as indicated by the verb *epenthumeo*. It's comprised of the preposition *epi* (upon) and adverbial form *eu-* indicative of wellness prefaced to root *thumos*, a difficult to translate word which means mind, temper or will. Such upon-well-desiring (to put it very literally) is to be done in a knowledge which is sure or *asphales*, that is, safe from falling down. The verb at hand for the noun “knowledge” is *eido* meaning to know which implies a seeing or perceiving.

As for the departure from Egypt or the Exodus, it's put in terms of a deliverance, *soteria* (i.e., a salvation), which the Israelites had expected, *prosdechomai* meaning to receive favorably or to

admit, the preposition *pros* indicative of direction towards-which. The Exodus text itself describing the actual event seems to omit prior knowledge of their salvation (*soteria*); the same applies even to Moses who went from one event to another with some hesitation: "Why do you cry to me" [14.15]? as the Lord said at a critical moment when the Egyptians were about to overtake the Israelites by the Red Sea.

When the text uses the words "same means" it refers to two opposite actions the Lord effects at one time. That is to say, he punished (*timoreo*: to be an avenger) the Egyptians and called as well as glorified Israel. The second verb is *proskaleo* with the preposition *pros* (direction toward-which as with *prosdechomai* in the last paragraph) and the third verb is *doxazo* which also means to form or to hold an opinion.

The sacrifices noted most likely refer to the Passover as pertaining not just to Israelites but to good men in general, *pais* being the noun commonly as child or son and thus intimating succeeding generations. They offered these in secret or *krupto* being a verb, to do in secret, which not necessarily refers to something esoteric but done quietly so as not to rouse suspicion among unbelievers or later as the Canaanites among whom the Israelites were living. They offered sacrifices and continued to do so both with one accord and in agreement with the divine law or Torah, *homonoia* meaning oneness of mind (*nous*).

The offerings just mentioned are not intended for the Israelites only doing them right now but for the saints or those who are holy (*hagios*). This is another way of stressing the importance of celebrating the Passover as a memorial, something inserted into Israel's collective memory. Once celebration of the Passover is firmly embedded in this single memory of the nation, the saints are sharing in the same things, *metalambano* the preposition *meta* suggestive of this with-ness. These same things consist of both blessings (*agathos*: adjective meaning good) and dangers (*kindunos*: hazard, venture).

The text at hand concludes with the saints singing their fathers' praises, an act of celebration (as with the Passover) uniting the past, present and future generations. The verb here consists of two preposition prefaced to the verbal root *melpo* (to celebrate with song and dance), *pro* and *ana* or before and upward, thereby indicating the dynamic nature of this celebration. The insertion of past events as a living memory is intimated by the small word "already," *hede*, which here embraces all dimensions of space and time and makes a reality fully present without the restrictions of both past and the future.

14 August, Twentieth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Then the princes said to the king, "Let this man be put to death, for he is weakening the hands of the soldiers who are left in this city and the hands of all the people by speaking such words to them. For this man is not seeking the welfare of this people but their harm." King Zedei'ah said, "Behold, he is in your hands; for the king can do nothing against you." So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the cistern of Malchiah, the king's son, which was in the court of

the guard, letting Jeremiah down by ropes. And there was no water in the cistern but only mire, and Jeremiah sank in the mire. When Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, a eunuch who was in the king's house heard that they had put Jeremiah into the cistern—the was sitting in the Benjamin Gate—Ebed-melech went from the king's house and said to the king, "My Lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they did to Jeremiah the prophet by casting him into the cistern; and he will die there of hunger, for there is no bread left in the city." Then the king commanded Ebed-melech, the Ethiopian, "Take three men with you from her, and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the cistern before he dies." Jeremiah 38.4-10

The reason for the princes demanding from King Zedekiah Jeremiah's death is found in vs. 3 where he urges what amounts to treason. That is to say, he bids the people to leave Jerusalem and go over to the Chaldeans who already have it under siege. They put their demand vividly, that Jeremiah is weakening the soldiers' hands, *rapha* meaning to droop or let down. Already their hands were weakened due to the famine caused by the siege, so to advocate what amounts to treason is justified. Also they claim that Jeremiah isn't seeking the welfare of the inhabitants. Faced with a situation that allows no wiggle-room, if you will, Zedekiah complies. However, he sees some value which they don't in Jeremiah's words. Therefore he doesn't give in fully but bids Jeremiah to be put in an empty cistern. No question about it. While Jeremiah was sinking in this mire he was as close to despair as he had ever been. A bit later an Ethiopian eunuch in the king's court, that is a foreigner, intervened successful to have Jeremiah which did happen.

This incident shows the tension between divine prophecy and those for whom it is intended. In the case at hand it goes across all common sense...Jerusalem under siege by its arch enemy, Babylon...and a leading voice in Israel who advocates surrender. In the middle of all this is a leader, the king, who sees both sides and himself is caught on the horns of a dilemma. If he supported Jeremiah outrightly before his princes, chances are they'd be a mutiny on the spot, he joining the prophet at the bottom of the cistern.

As it turned out, Jeremiah was taken captive but treated well and spared going into exile because from the Babylonian point of view, he advocated coming over to their side. However, King Zedekiah fled Jerusalem, was taken captive and his eyes put out after the king of Babylon slew his sons. Apparently the princes fared no better when Jerusalem fell. Note, however, that in vs. 10 the Babylonian captain of the guard left some of the poor alone and even gave them vineyards and fields. Although Jeremiah's words provoked disaster, this small remnant comprised of simple, uneducated folk remained faithful. This template would prove true at other times in the future where a small minority is saved. We could say that Jeremiah had these nearly destitute people the future greatness of Jerusalem. And these people kept alive the memory of the prophet by reason of his prophecy.

15 August, Assumption

And David assembled all Israel at Jerusalem to bring up the ark of the Lord to its place which he had prepared for it. And David gathered together the sons of Aaron and the Levites...And the Levites carried the ark of God upon their shoulders with the poles as Moses had commanded according to the word of the Lord. David also commanded the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their brethren as the singers who should play loudly on musical instruments, on harps and lyres and cymbals, to raise sounds of joy...And they brought the ark of God, and set it inside the tent which David had pitched for it; and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before God. And when David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord. First Chronicles 15.3-4; 15-16 & 16.1-2

Qahal is the verb for “assembled” with respect to the people, this verb suggestive of a solemn, religious gathering. Note that it involves “all Israel,” that is, no exceptions, to come to Jerusalem which must have made the city bursting at the seams. The purpose of this *qahal* is to bring the ark of the Lord to its “place,” *maqom* connoting a habitation which is not yet the temple, for that would be constructed later: “Why have you not built me a house of cedar” [17.6]? But before this was to happen, David had made ready a place for the ark in Jerusalem, the place not being specified but most likely near the site of the proposed temple. He decided to pitch a tent (cf. vs. 1) here at the end of its travels to remind the people from where they had come. In fact, David may have considered making the temple in the form of such an ark. As for the Lord, he must have been relieved that this would be the last tent he would inhabit, something David intuited.

Vs. 4 has a verb different from *qalah* with respect to the sons of Aaron and Levites, *yasaph* meaning to gather which suggests that such people of the priestly class were singled out from the larger *qahal* of “all Israel.” The Levites' duty was to bear the ark of God much as they had done throughout the forty years of wandering in the Sinai wilderness which reached its climactic point when crossing the Jordan River under the leadership of Joshua. These priests knew it was the last time they would perform such a duty, their minds filled with a certain nostalgia of the past and knowledge that the duty their forefathers had performed was coming to an end. Their office was now about to change, that is to say, from being divine porters to stable ministers in Jerusalem.

The excerpt at hand omits the incident of Saul's daughter Michal who saw David dancing before the ark practically naked and “despised him in her heart” [15.26], a way of saying that Saul's lineage was at its end. It thus paved the way for David to function as king without fear of rivals from the past.

Once the Levites set the ark within the tent, they made both “burnt offerings and peace offerings,” the latter consisting of the word for peace, *shalom*. Following this, David appointed some of the Levites as ministers before the ark implying that others were similarly appointed for other functions. Although nothing of a permanent dwelling is mentioned at this point, everyone was wondering if the tent would continue to house the Lord, for that is what the Israelites had been accustomed to. Rumors must have swirled around Jerusalem and among the

Israelites as they drifted back to their homes upon conclusion of this dramatic ceremony. At the beginning of Chapter Seventeen David says to Nathan the prophet that he dwells in a house of cedar while the Lord's ark is in a tent. Rumors of this disparity must have had a role in prompting David to ask this, hence the question the Lord posed to Nathan in a dream noted above.

Before any permanent house of worship could be constructed, David had to contend with a number of conflicts as with the Philistines. Only when he was able to provide a modicum of security for Israel was he able to entrust the building of a temple to his son, Solomon (cf. 22.6).

21 August, Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

The following has been lifted from *Expansions on Isaiah* also on this home page.

The Hebrew text lacks “I know” and has instead the first person singular pronoun. Thus it reads literally “For (conjunctive *v-*) I their works and thoughts.” The former is *mahaseh* (cf. 32.17) and the latter is *machasheveth* (cf. 65.2).

The Lord says nothing about the time of his coming, an indirect way to warn the people, almost a veiled type of threat. The purpose: to “gather” or *qavats* (cf. 60.7) every nation on earth. The same verb used by the Lord as “coming” or *bo'* (cf. 46.11) applies to them in order to see the Lord's “glory” or *kavod* (cf. vs. 11).

'Oth (cf. 55.13) is “sign” which the Lord will “set” or *sum* (cf. 62.7) not so much among the nations but literally “in (*b-*) them.” We have no details about this sign, but the next sentence within the same verse ominously puts it in context. That is, it speaks of “survivors” or *palyt* which has one other biblical reference, Num 21.29: “He has made his sons fugitives.”

These survivors are those who weren't slain by Israel and naturally will be relatively small. Having been so chastened, they will fan out over the entire region in order to “declare” or *nagad* (cf. 48.20) the Lord's “glory” or *kavod* (cf. vs. 18) literally “in (*b-*) the nations.” His in-ness will correspond to the same in-ness pertaining to the sign.

The *'oth* or “sign” is becoming more evident both to Israelites and non-Israelites, that is, the survivors of the previous verse have a mission which is turn return Israelites who have been scattered and sent into exile. They will follow a pattern (i.e., a clearer interpretation of *'oth*), namely, the ritual bringing of “cereal offering” or *minchah* (cf. 1.13 though in vs. 3 but not noted there) which must be in a clean or purified vessel. The destination, of course, is the temple or “house of the Lord.”

Note that those destined to become priests and Levites are not Israelites who have remained at home but those who had lived abroad forcefully for an extended period of time. Perhaps awareness of their absence created a longing for Israel and Jerusalem not shared by their fellow countrymen.

28 August, Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

Here the listener is called a son or *teknon* which also means a child. He is to carry out his tasks in meekness (*prautes*) or more accurately, *diexago*, which has two prepositions prefaced to the root, *dia-* and *ex-* or through and from...to perform through-from. If he carries this out, it will result in being loved (the verbal root of *agape*) by being accepted (*dektos*) by God who isn't mentioned in the Greek. So divine *agape* comes to a person, provided that he's meek, not directly but mediated by those accepted by God. Thus there's a direct correlation between God through *agape* and meekness.

After some time this son will become great which requires an equal amount of humility put as the adjective *tapeinos* suggestive of being abased but not necessarily in the negative sense. Automatically this leads to *charis* or favor by the Lord which the son will discover.

Despite God's might or *dunasteia* which is applicable to lordship or sovereignty, he prefers the humble, that is, to be glorified (*doxazo*) by them. Such transference, if you will, comes about by an association of works (*ergon*) done in that meekness already noted, so it has a practical effect.

Opposite to this son urged to pursue meekness in his work is a person marked by pride or *huperephanos*, a strong adjective meaning overweening or arrogant, the preposition *hyper-* suggestive of being beyond the norm. Apparently this extreme condition causes affliction both to himself and to others, *epagoge* literally meaning a bringing-upon (*epi-*) and immune to any

sort of healing. The reason? Wickedness (*poneria* connotes baseness and cowardice) is presented as a plant which has rooted itself in such a person.

So this basic advice on the relationship between meekness in action and divine *agape* mediated by others results in speaking of a man (the noun isn't present but may be compared with the *teknon* or son which opens this excerpt) who is intelligent or *sunetos*. This adjective consists of the preposition *sun-* or with prefaced to the root *histemi*, to stand...to stand-with. It is used with *kardia* or heart, the heart of the intelligent man. Such a person will use his *nous* or mind to reflect, this noun being contained with the verb *dianoeo*, to have in mind, suppose. The preposition *dia-* or through is prefaced to the verb, to think-through, This is done by means of a parable, *parabole*, the intent of which is to put beside (*para-*) two things in order to draw a comparison. In addition to such a person is someone (and he can be the same person) who has an ear which is attentive, *akroatos* or ready to listen. This is related directly the desire of someone who is wise (sophos, *endowed* with know-how), the noun being *epithumia*, literally as intense desire-upon (*epi-*).

4 September, Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

This except contains four rhetorical questions, the first two coming in rapid succession. Note the distinction between counsel and will: *boule* and *ethelo*, a noun and a verb. The former suggests consultation and deliberation before making a decision which ends up in the willing part. So temporarily speaking, God takes some time to come up with decision and then puts it into action. With *boule* is associated human learning, *gignosko* meaning to know. With *ethelo* is *enthumeomai*, to take to heart or be concerned. The root is *thumos*, a word difficult to translate, involving heart, mind and desire as well as wrath; the verb is prefaced with the preposition *en-* or in for further intensification. Thus the two rhetorical questions can be taken as one with regard to the impossibility to both know and lay to heart concerning things divine.

The author moves on to an observation about human reasoning or *logismos* which translates as reckoning and within a religious context, various sorts of machinations as opposed to seeking God's presence. He labels them as *deilos*, cowardly or wretched. The same dismal picture concerns our designs or *epinoia*, the power or thought or inventiveness which is not unlike *logismos*. The preposition *epi-* or upon is similar to *en-* with regard to *enthumeomai*, suggestive of an intensification, futile in light of God's purposes. What essentially hinders recognition of God is summed up by two verbs with a similar meaning, *baruno* and *britho*, to

weigh down and the same with more emphasis upon heaviness or its continued weight. The first applies to our *psuche* or soul and the second to our mind or *nous* (cf *epinoia*, same root) which is thoughtful or *poluphrontidos*, not unlike *logismos*, meaning literally full of thought. It's equivalent to an earthly tent which can be taken as representative of impermanence and constantly moving around.

It appears that our *logismos* and being *poluphrontidos* resemble guessing about physical reality, let alone that which is divine. Two verbs here are pertinent: *eikazo*, to liken or compare and *exichniazo*, to trace out (*ex-* or from). The first pertains to what is on earth and the latter, in the heavens. *Exichniazo* can intimate divining the future with regard to the stars, etc.

There is, however, a way out of this apparent boxed-in feeling about human existence, wisdom and the Holy Spirit or *sophia* and *Pneuma*. The former suggests a certain know-how but not along the lines of getting information about God. In the case at hand, *sophia* implies humility which a means to learning (*gignosko* again) counsel (*boule*, also again). Both don't originate upon earth, the place where human endeavors take place, but come from above or literally from the heights (*hupsiston*) or better, are sent and thus are received. Now such words as *logismos*, etc., are re-ordered. That is to say, they are set aright and men are taught, *diorthoo* and *didasko*; the former has the preposition *dia-* or through prefaced to it suggestive of thorough penetration. To the latter applies what pleases the Lord, *arestos* also applicable to what is sufficient and satisfactory. Finally, *sophia* steps in...that divine know-how, if you will...and saves men. In other words, *sophia* takes the place of learning, discerning, reasoning, designs and guessing has outlined above.

11 September, Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

And the Lord said to Moses, "Go down; for your people whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves; they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them; they have made for themselves a molten calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'" And the Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people; now therefore let me alone that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; but of you I will make a great nation." But Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, "O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, 'With evil intent did he bring them forth to slay them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel your servants to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it for ever.'" And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do to his people. Exodus 32.7-14

This excerpt is taken from *Expansions on the Book of Exodus* also on this homepage.

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

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

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

“Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; but of you I will make a great nation” [vs. 10]. The words “now let me alone” come from the Lord who is both hurt and angered, a mood which can have ominous consequences. The verb here is *nuach* last noted in 23.12 with respect to resting on “day seven” after six days of work. Instead of this use of *nuach*, the Lord wishes to be let alone that he may vent his “wrath” or *’aph* which fundamentally means nostrils. “The anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses” [4.14]. *Charah* is the verb for “may burn hot” as also found in 4.14...so hot that they will be cooked for eating (‘consume’). In this verse the Lord is making a distinction between the Israelites and Moses (‘of you I will make a great nation’). That means all the Israelites will be exterminated leaving Moses alone with his wife and son, Zipporah and Gershom, going back to the days when he had been in the same area of Sinai at the service of Jethro. Surely the Lord had this in mind, that Moses would not have to migrate, just stay where he was at the foot of Mount Sinai. After all, it was the place he besought Pharaoh to go in order to make sacrifice. Perhaps the Lord might even invite him to return to the cloud along with his family.

“But Moses besought the Lord his God and said, ‘O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people whom you have brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power

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

18 September, Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

This passage is situated within the broader context of the Lord telling Amos about his indictment of Israel, and narrows down to the maltreatment of those less fortunate, the needy and poor or *‘evyon* and *hany*. Both fall under the category of those who are oppressed, the latter traditionally identified with a certain sense of piety and held in honor within Israel. Most likely the Lord is addressing the political and religious leaders on the lookout for illicit gain. Already they have hatched their plots but are hindered by religious celebrations, the new moon and sabbath. The former takes place once a month whereas the latter, each week. With this in mind, the *‘evyon* and *hany* are squeezed into a situation from which they have no escape except the two reoccurring holy days.

As for the second group or the poor, vs. 6 mentions them again, but the Hebrew has *dai* which connotes powerlessness. While the Lord is observing all this he decides to swear an oath, *shavah*, a verb from which the sacred number seven is derived. The sabbath is day seven when the Lord rested from creation as described in Genesis which gives added weight to the severity of violating the sabbath as noted in vs. 5. Not only does the Lord *shavah* but does so by (literally ‘in’ or *b-*) the pride of Jacob, that is to say, by himself. The word for “pride” here is *ge’on* also means sublimity or majesty as well as redemption. Refer to 6.8 where the Lord echoes in ironic fashion the *ge’on* of Jacob in comparison to swearing by himself: “The Lord

God has sworn by himself...“I abhor the pride of Jacob and hate his strongholds; and I will deliver up the city and all that is in it.”

The concluding verse of this excerpt fleshes out the *shavah* by the Lord, namely, that he will keep in mind the deeds of those who have afflicted the ‘*evyon*, *hany* and *dal*. Not to forget is of supreme importance, for the heritage of Israel as well as other nations rests upon cultivation of past deeds and how they impinge upon the present and thus the future. Although he comes from a different tradition, Plato calls the faculty responsible for this recollective faculty *anamnesis* which is more than memory. It is the deposit of education and all that is good, true and beautiful.

25 September, Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

Hoy or *woe* which applies to both Zion and Samaria, the first being at ease and the second feeling secure or *sha'an* and *batach*. The first means to be quiet or to live in tranquility and the second to be secure or to trust. Both are fine in and by themselves but here apply to a blatant self-complacency. The third group applies to notable men which is the participle of *naqav*, here as to separate or to distinguish. It is to such officials that the people of Israel comes basically to re-enforce their *sha'an* and *batach*. They do this both out of compulsion and duty expecting something in return. Also the Lord bids the officials in their complacency to visit three places: Calneh, Hamath and Gath that they compare themselves with them, basically to heap scorn on them if not outwardly but by their attitude. The Lord says that such officials essentially are digging their own grave. That is to say, they are putting off the evil day and bringing near the seat of violence. The verb for the former is *nadah* meaning to flee or cast out and has the preposition *l-* (to) prefaced to “day” reading literally, “put away to the evil day,” this preposition intimating that they are shoving it as far removed as possible. The latter verb is just the opposite, *nagas* meaning to urge or to impel. As for the seat of violence (*chamas*), it can be taken as the just mentioned three entities of Calneh, Hamath and Gath which some day in the near future will take up residence...their seat (of violence)...in Israel thereby making violence permanent.

The Lord continues with his condemnation of a second batch of people, again most likely Israel's officials allied with those at ease and feeling secure. They're described as laying and stretching, *shakav* and *sarach*, the latter more vivid in that it implies a pouring or a hanging over. Their complete indifference primes them for being the first to go into exile while those engaged in the just mentioned *sarach* will perish. Those responsible for sending these dissolute people into exile are the rulers of Calneh, Hamath and Gath or peoples whom the rulers of Israel despise. While they may not be directly responsible for this exile, nations larger than them with which they are allied will do the job.

Because such words are uttered during Israel's newly recovered prosperity, chances are they are not just ignored but someone like Amos who makes them known is persecuted. The officials living in the lap of luxury is one thing which Amos could tolerate. What upsets him deeply can be intimidated by eating lambs and calves which symbolize the possessions of those less fortunate. Such is their basis for being *sha'an* and *batach*.

2 October, Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

The following are lifted from *Notes to the Letter to the Hebrews* also on this home page.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.2-4: Vs. 2: For if the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution.

This verse is a prelude to the question of the next verse. *Logos*: message which to the sensitive reader suggests Jesus Christ as Logos...Word...as expression of the Father: “the very stamp of his nature” [1.3].

Two pertinent references with regard to angels: “You received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it” [Acts 7.53]. “And it (the offspring promised) was ordained by

angels through an intermediary” [Gal 3.19]. The divine Law or Torah was handed to Israel through Moses as mentioned in Deuteronomy and as given on Mount Sinai.

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

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

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

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

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

The answer to a rhetorical question posed in vs. 3. It is interesting to consider the verb escape (*ekpheugo*) as the natural consequence of those two *para* words noted in the last section: transgression and disobedience. Here the notion of flight results by neglecting (*ameleo*) salvation; not so much rejecting it but by being unmindful of its reality. Salvation or *soteria* is equivalent to the person of Jesus Christ or the content of that “message declared by angels.” Again, it may be seen in light of the parallel realities of *para-basis* and *para-koe*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 1) signs (*semeion*): pointing to a reality beyond the sign itself. “Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers” [1 Cor 14.22].
- 2) wonder (*teras*): in the sense of a prodigy or something unusual. In the New Testament this word is found in the plural and joined with *semeion*. “Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe” [Jn 4.48].
- 3) miracle (*dunamis*): more properly, “strength,” and concerned with the result of a given event. “And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed” [Acts 8.13]. Note that *dunamis* is not used in the New Testament as pertaining to Christ’s miracles.
- 4) In the Greek text “gift” is not used; distributed (*merismos*) or “division” seems more attune to the Holy Spirit’s nature as at Pentecost: “tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them” [Acts 2.3]. The verb here is *diamerizo*: a “dividing through (*dia*).”

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

9 October, Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

Although this excerpt is midway through the dramatic cure of the arch-enemy of Israel, Naaman, or the commander of the king of Syria’s forces, it has the advantage of dropping us off in the thick of the narrative. The preliminaries have taken place, that is, the king had sent Naaman to Israel. Interestingly, the decision by this, the most powerful man in the world at the time (Naaman being second), was done at the suggestion of an anonymous Israelite girl who had been taken captive. Despite her age, she was thoroughly familiar with the healing powers

of Elisha. Thus a major event turned upon the intervention of someone who is completely anonymous and who passes off the scene as soon as she had appeared.

It turned out that Naaman came to Elisha which is equivalent to the most important and reviled military leader entering enemy territory. Perhaps the slave girl had more to say about Elisha which had gone unrecorded, hence this unprecedented visit which someone uninformed could interpret as a prelude to an invasion.

Another intervention not unlike the anonymous slave girl brought Naaman to his senses after Elisha told him to bathe in the Jordan River instead of coming off with a dramatic cure in front of a crowd. These people are Namaan's servants who said "If the prophet had commanded you to do some great thing, would you not have done it?" Perhaps they also had in mind that if Naaman left Israel in a rage of anger, it could be interpreted as an invasion which was not the intent of the Syrian king. So a whole bunch of thoughts and emotions came flooding into Naaman's mind as he was about to ride off with his flesh decaying from leprosy.

Originally Naaman had a present for Elisha which he didn't give during their first inauspicious contact. However, Namaan insisted that Elisha take it once he had been cured. We can imagine that the anonymous slave girl and the equally anonymous attendants of Namaan were standing on the banks of the Jordan as Naaman took his first steps into the water with some hesitation and even thoughts of potential revenge not only against Elisha but Israel as a whole. At least he would have a pretense to ask his master for permission to turn his visit into what the Israelites feared most, an invasion. Apparently Namaan had the forces to do it, for "company" (vs. 15) can mean an army as well as an encampment.

As for the excerpt itself, it centers more upon the give and take of a gift from Namaan and Elisha. Namaan comes to the conclusion that "there is no God in all the earth but in Israel" which suggests that he believed in multiple gods, obviously not uncommon for the time. Although Namaan acknowledges this, he retains belief in his own god (Rimmon) but only to save face when he enters the temple of that god with the king of Syria. Namaan asks for "two mules' burden of earth" or *'adamah*. That would form sufficient base, if you will, to stand upon when he offers sacrifice either in the temple or Rimmon or near it. Compare *'adamah* (the actual soil) with *'erets* or "earth" as in his remarks, "no God in all the *'erets*." Thus *'adamah* and *'erets* are one and the same, the latter being an extension in the land of Syria the presence of Israel and therefore of the Lord. We don't have any information how this worked out in future years or after the death of Namaan. Perhaps some Syrians did carry on the tradition of holding this *'adamah* as sacred, a tiny but significant memorial within their own *'erets*. As for the anonymous slave girl, she could have returned to Syria and in later years been responsible for maintaining this bit of *'adamah* in her land of exile.

16 October, Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

This excerpt is lifted from *Expansions on the book of Exodus* posted on this same homepage.

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

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

"Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed" [vs. 11]. The issue is one of prevailing, *gavar* fundamentally meaning to be strong or to confirm. "When our transgressions prevail over us, you forgive them" [Ps 65.3]. Nothing is said about the *mateh* or rod, but presumably it was in Moses' hand because one hand is mentioned. Since it was an issue of becoming tired of holding one hand (with the

mateh), this could not continue for long, so both Aaron and Hur made Moses sit down on a rock (*even*: a stone of any kind) after which they held up both of Moses' hands, that is, one with the *mateh* and the other without.

“So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun” [vs. 12]. The adjective “steady” is a noun in Hebrew (*emunah*) which means faithfulness (‘amen’ is derived from it). “A God of truth and without iniquity” [Dt 32.4]. No time is given as to when this battle with Amalek began, just that it lasted until sunset. That means Moses, along with Aaron and Hur as his support, had his hands (and rod) extended in “faithfulness” for the bulk of the day, especially during the afternoon heat. “And Joshua mowed down Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword” [vs. 13]. Here a distinction is made between Amalek (the leader or king) and his people, not noted earlier. The verb for “mowed down” is *chalash* which means to prostrate, to vanquish and to waste away. Two other references are found in the Bible (Job 14.10 and Is 14.12), the latter being cited here: “How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low!” Obviously the Israelites engaged in battle had attention upon their foe whereas Joshua made an agreement with Moses to occasionally glance up on the rock to see if Moses' hand and rod were extended. Once Joshua saw Aaron and Hur supporting him, he knew victory was assured.

23 October, Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

12) *Amuse yourself there and do what you have in mind, but do not sin through proud speech.* 13) *And for these things bless him who made you and satisfies you with his good gifts.* 14) *He who fears the Lord will accept his discipline, and those who rise early to seek him will find favor.* 15) *He who seeks the law will be filled with it, but the hypocrite will stumble at it.* 16) *Those who fear the Lord will form true judgments, and like a light they will kindle righteous deeds.* 17) *A sinful man will shun reproof and will find a decision according to his liking.* 18) *A man of judgment will not overlook an idea, and an insolent and proud man will not cower in fear.* Sirach 32.12-18

Sirach gives a series of exhortations in the context of a banquet (i.e., ‘there’) to which one is invited and takes delight in being present, *paizo* meaning to dance as well as to enjoy oneself amorously. While there, one can follow through according to what one wills, *enthumema* meaning thought but has a richer meaning in that it's derived from *thumeo*, to desire passionately. At the same time *Sirach* counsels that proud speech not be the cause of sin, *huperephanos* connoting arrogance.

It seems that while among notables at the banquet a person having a relationship with the Lord should bless him for having bestowed gifts, *methusko* being an unusual way of putting it. That is to say, this verb means to drink freely or to be filled with food. Take in the context of a banquet, it makes more sense, that is, to move from such a human banquet to the bounty bestowed upon oneself by God in his own banquet.

Vs. 14 has the pair consisting of fearing the Lord and rising early to seek him. Thus we could say that the latter equals the former as both pertain to divine discipline or *paideia*. This noun refers to the whole process of education from birth to adulthood consisting not just in academic training but in how to practice *arete* or virtue. In the verse at hand, such extended *paideia* is fulfilled in divine favor or *eudokia*, also as satisfaction or approval.

Vs. 15 has a contrast between a person seeking the law (Torah, if you will) and a hypocrite who stumbles on this same Torah. The former will be filled with the Torah, *empleroo* being the verb with the preposition *em-* meaning “in:” “being filled in the Torah.” This same Torah is the stumbling block for a hypocrite which is rendered by the participle *hupokrinomai*, to reply, to play a part with the idea of exaggerating.

Vss. 16-17 together form a contrast between fearing the Lord and shunning reproof. A quick note about such fear. It may be viewed in light of two Hebrew verbs, *rahaḥ* and *yare'*, to see and to fear. While both appear distinct, often their varying forms are similar and suggestive of each other, of being interchanged. So, if you will, to fear = to see and to see = to fear. So fear is consistent with discovering (*heurisko*: to find) judgment and setting fire to deeds which are righteous. Thus we have two words relative to a similar notion, judgments and righteous deeds or *krima* and *dikaioma*. On the other hand, someone who is sinful will reject reproof (*elegmos*), the verb *ekklino* suggestive of turning from (*ek-*). This inclining-from, as it were, will make him find (*heurisko* again) or go after that which is in accord with what he likes. *Sugkrima* is the noun for decision and also means a body found by combination (i.e., a compound) while *thelema* means will. Thus these two are one and the same.

Vs. 18 contrasts a man of judgment and someone who is both insolent and proud. The noun for judgment here is *boule* meaning counsel...someone not afraid to take advice. On the other hand, we have a man who is literally alien, *allotrios*, as well as *huperephanos* noted in vs. 12 as with regard to speech being proud. The rest of vs. 18 is, according to a footnote in the RSV, “uncertain.” It has the verb *kataptasso* meaning to cower beneath with the noun *phobos* or fear. In other words, fear won't make him cower which brings to mind the above mentioned fear of the Lord which forms true judgments and kindles righteous deeds.

30 October, Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

22) *Because the whole world before you is like a speck that tips the scales and like a drop of morning dew that falls upon the ground.* 23) *But you are merciful to all, for you can do all things, and you overlook the sins of men that they may repent.* 24) *For you love all things that exist, and loathe none of the things which you have made, for you would not have made anything if you hated it.* 25) *How would anything have endured if you had not willed it? Or how would anything not called forth by you have been preserved?* 26) *You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord, who loves the living.* 1) *For your immortal spirit is in all things.* 2) *Therefore you correct little by little those who trespass and remind and warn them of the*

things wherein they sin, that they may be freed from wickedness and put their trust in you, O Lord. Wisdom 11.22-12.2

Kosmos is the noun for world which basically signifies good order here depicted as a speck and drop of morning dew. Despite the smallness of this *kosmos* which can include the firmament perceived as a dome, this doesn't detract from its beauty, another aspect of this word. Despite the hugeness of the *kosmos*, even larger is God's mercy, *eleao* connoting pity, which overlooks human sinfulness, *parorao* being the verb which connotes looking aside (*para-*) or askance without being detracted from what's going on. The goal, of course, is repentance which is rendered by the phrase reading literally "into repentance" or *metanoia*, change of heart.

In vs. 24 we have a contrast between God loving the *kosmos*, the verb *agapao* being used from which is derived the famous *agape*. It contrasts with loathing, something alien to God, the verb being *bdelussomai* which connotes giving off a stink. This is prevented from happening because divine willing is equivalent to divine preserving of the *kosmos*, *kataskeuazo* meaning to build or to represent, *kata-* suggestive of following a plan or form. This verb fits in well with *kosmos*, suggesting that it's constructed in accord with a wonderful plan in mind.

Vs. 25 sees a parallel between God in his continuous act of willing which enables things to continue in existence (*meno* or to remain and *eleao* or to pity), again the smallness which, as noted above, doesn't detract from the beauty of the *kosmos* both the earth and the firmament. Things which thus remain in existence are described similarly as being preserved, *diatereo* meaning to keep with the preposition *dia-* prefaced to it, to keep-through and hence signifies a thorough keeping. As for the sparing involved (vs. 26), it's not unlike God overlooking sin as in vs. 23, for in the verse at hand the adjective *philopsuchos* is rendered as "loves the living" and literally means loving one's life (or soul, *psuche*).

The next chapter opens with reference to God's *pneuma* or spirit not being subject to corruption, *aphthartos*, this enabling it to be...to be blow-in, for *pneuma* means wind...in all things. This presence-in isn't spelled out here but obviously pertains to the sustenance of creation. *Dio* or "therefore" in the next verse intimates a transition from this sustenance by *pneuma*, by being breathed-in, to correcting or *elegcho* which involves cross examination or questioning. Here it's presented as occurring discreetly, *kat' ologon*, or literally "according to small" or done in small steps instead of happening all at once. Such examining, if you will, is done with both God reminding and warning people, *hupomimnesko* and *noutheteo*: literally as to remind-under and to place in the mind (*nous*). Should this three-fold divine action take root, it results in being freed from (*apallasso*: to remove, cease) evil and trust in God.

1 November, All Saints

1) *After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth holding back the four winds of the earth that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree.* 2) *Then I saw another angel ascend from the rising of the sun with the seal of the living God, and he called*

with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea 3) saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads." 4) And I heard the number of the sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand sealed, out of every tribe of the sons of Israel...After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands 10) and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb!" 11) And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12) saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen." 13) Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these clothed in white robes, and whence have they come?" 14) I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Book of Revelation 7.1-4; 9-14

The following is taken from Notes on the Book of Revelation also posted on this home page.

Vs. 1: After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. "After this," a phrase which indicates an interlude between the sixth and seventh seals. Note the correspondence between the four angels and four corners of the earth. *Gonia* or corners which have four parts can represent the four cardinal directions and four elements of earth, air, fire and water; in brief, the sum of physical creation or as indicated more specifically in vs. 1, the source of these elements. *Gonia* also represents a cornerstone: "The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the *corner*" [Mt 21.42, quoting Ps 118.23-3]. The Hebrew word here is *pinah* which also means a battlement: "Against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements" [Zeph 1.16].

The verse at hand speaks of four winds (*anemos*) as in Mt 24.31: "and he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Perhaps Christ had in mind the four angels of Revelation. Vs. 1 has the angels restraining (*krateo*) these winds in order not to harm creation. The preposition *epi* (upon) is used with respect to earth, sea and trees. Compare this restrain or implied tranquility with 8.1: "there was silence in heaven for about half an hour."

Vs. 2: Then I saw another angel ascend from the rising of the sun with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea.

Compare two similar forms of movement as though both were equivalent: the angel ascending (*anabaino*) and the "rising (*anatole*) of the sun." Implied is that the angel precedes sunrise or perhaps foretells it much as twilight before dawn. He may be paralleled with the Magi of Mt 2.1: "Behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem" inquiring about the birth

of Christ. I.e., they came just prior to sunrise or before his birth. Also vs. 2 contains *anatole*: “We have seen his star in the East.”

Seal or *sphragis* as in 5.1, the scroll sealed with seven seals, only in vs. 2 it is more specific, as belonging to the “living God” (*zao*), that is, God who is actively engaged in what is going on. Such a seal indicates that God has property rights, so to speak, over his creation, but this emblem is not further designated. Perhaps it is more like a standard for all to behold much like the sun as it comes over the horizon. This particular angel transmits the seal, as it were, to the four angels just mentioned, that is, those endowed with the power to harm (*adikeo*), a verb which also means to treat unjustly. “For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality” [Col 3.25].

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

Note the first person plural, “we,” which includes the four angels as well as the angel with the seal in the previous verse. Also, this angel mentions the servants (*doulos*) of “our” God: he acknowledges their subjection to God in the same fashion as his fellow angelic beings.

Forehead or *metopon*: a verse reminiscent of Gen 4.15: “And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who came upon him should kill him.” Although not specified as on Cain’s forehead, this mark or *’oth* is a sign of favor clearly visible to people. Another reference: “It shall be upon Aaron’s forehead” [Ex 28.38], that is, referring to a signet with the engraving “Holy to the Lord” [vs. 36]. Such a sign is *zontos* or living to correspond with the “living God” of vs. 2.

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

Note the verb hear (*akouo*)...John did not see this number as he did with regard to four angels and the other angel in vss. 1 & 2. This number (144,000) was already present rolled up, as it were, and is now fully revealed. As vss. 5-8 describe, this number can signify perfection since it is divisible by the number twelve and pertains to each of the twelve tribes of Israel (also cf. 14.1 & 3). The twelve tribes can trace their origins back to Jacob as their father in Gen 49 where he blesses each one. In the context of this story, Joseph plays the most important role in that as virtual king of Egypt, he was responsible for burying his father Jacob not in that country but in Canaan, the future promised land (cf. 50.12).

2Vs. 9: After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands.

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

Ochlos or crowd as in Mt 15.33: “Where are we to get bread enough in the desert to feed so great a crowd?” In the verse at hand, such a multitude is beyond counting; three general

categories of human society are enumerated: tribe, people and tongue. Note emphasis upon tribe (*phule*), the basic division of Israel as recounted in vs. 5-8. Compare with Acts 2.5: "Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven." The next few verses recounts the wide variety of foreigners at Jerusalem who observed the disciples as they spoke after having been filled with the Holy Spirit. The "great multitude" of vs. 9 can be taken as those who were made disciples and baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (cf. Mt 28.19).

The redeemed are depicted as before the throne, an inverse image of the tower of Babel: "because the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth" [Gen 11.9]. Also note the distinction in vs. 9 between throne and Lamb.

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

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

An exclamation similar to the one noted in the previous verse, that is, Jn 12.13. There the crowd welcomed Christ as he entered Jerusalem; here they acknowledge him as having entered, as it were, for he is by God the Father on the throne. *Soteria* or salvation which in Hebrew is *yeshuhah*, the proper name and function of Jesus Christ. Note here that such *yeshuhah* is first attributed to God (the Father) on the throne and then to Jesus the Lamb; i.e., both share in this salvation which is being disclosed as Revelation continues. (Cf. elsewhere on this Home Page for an article entitled "The Name of Yeshuhah and the Psalms" which gives a full list of those this word and its verbal root which forms the basis of the name Jesus. It is located under "Part Four").

Vs. 11: And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God.

Around or *kuklos* as in 5.11. Here the angels form a circle not only around the throne but the elders and four living creatures, that is, forming an outer circumference embracing these other groups. It is as though their praise were directed through the elders and creatures towards the throne, rather before (*enopion*) it. They manifest praise by falling on their faces, a common act of submission. "Then Abram fell on his face" [Gen 17.3]. Note the two prepositions used in vs. 11: upon (*epi*) and worship (*proskuneo*), that is on and then towards.

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

Observe how this verse begins and ends with Amen, a term commonly used to conclude a prayer. Its situation at both ends, as it were, shows that praise of God has no beginning nor end. Seven attributes are given to God; all are joined by "and" as if to show that one flows into another.

Vs. 14: I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "these are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

In vs. 13 one of the twenty-four elders asks if John knows the identity and source of those persons first mentioned in vs. 9. Most likely this elder acts as an interpreter for much of John's vision and continues to speak through vs. 17, the conclusion of chapter seven. John defers to the elder who begins to give the source, the pothen (whence, vs. 13 and *ek*, from, vs. 14), which is the "great tribulation" (*thlipsis*): "For then there will be great tribulation such as not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be" [Mt 24.21]. This verse has its precedent in Dan 12.1 in conjunction with "Michael, the great prince." Those who destined to be delivered from this cataclysm are "written in the book," that is, they are rolled up, so to speak, much like the scrolls of Revelation. Cf. vs. 4: "but you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book until the time of the end." Such rolling up of the scroll/book makes knowledge grow: "Many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall increase."

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

2 November, All Souls

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

The word "but" which introduces this new chapter serves to contrast the righteous souls with those pleasure seekers in Chapter Two who start off innocently enough but devolve into

persecuting the righteous man (cf. vs. 12). It's a classic tale of self-indulgence leading to self-loathing and then to projecting this to someone who's completely innocent. As for the souls in God's hand, use of "soul" (*psuche*) is a lead to say that the just mentioned self-indulgent people had slain those who stood as reminders of their folly. Their death did happen, but it was a death only in the eyes of the foolish, *aphronon* meaning those who lack sense, a good way to describe the pleasure seekers who brought about this tragedy. So despite outward appearances, the righteous souls are at peace.

Apart from yet including the self-indulgent people responsible for afflicting the just are the rest of humanity put as being "in the sight of men" where this affliction is perceived as a punishment, *kolazo* also meaning to prune, to keep within bounds. On the other hand, the righteous person who has been slain have a hope, invisible to everyone else, which is not only immortal but full of it. Even if they could explain the reason for such hope, those whom they were addressing wouldn't comprehend it.

Vs. 5 presents what appears a tragedy in terms of a test, the verb *paideuo* being used which fundamentally means a training as well as education. It starts very young and continues into adulthood with the hope it will pervade one's entire life. Intimately joined with this *paideuo* is God testing those at hand, *dokimazo* a verb which involves examining and approving. The specific religious dimension is added by mention of a sacrifice which God accepts, *prosdechomai* meaning to receive favorably, the preposition *pros-* suggestive of direction towards-which.

Vs. 7 speaks of a "time of visitation," that is, a *kairos* (special event or circumstance) coupled with *episkope*, literally a watching over (*epi-* as upon). There doesn't seem to be a distinction between the sacrificial offering and this special time or *kairos*; presumably it occurs at some indefinite time in the future. Those who've experienced it will assume some form of fire (sparks) and rush through the rubble, another way of speaking of the pleasure seekers turned murderers noted earlier. Furthermore, the just will become rulers over nations but won't do this on their own, for the Lord will reign over them.

This section concludes with what could be taken as four different yet similar groups of people:

- 1) Those who trust in God, the preposition *epi* being used, literally as "upon God." They will understand truth, *suniem* meaning literally to bring or set together (*sun-* as with).
- 2) The faithful who will abide with the Lord in love, the well known word *agape* being used with the verb *prosmeno*. As noted above the preposition *pros-* signifies direction towards-which, here a remaining in a specific direction, of always aiming toward God.
- 3) The elect who are accompanied by grace and mercy, *charis* and *eleos*, the dative case being used.
- 4) The holy ones where the **RSV** has a note saying "the text of this line is uncertain, and it is omitted here."

6 November, Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

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

Perhaps this excerpt or more precisely, those verses which are omitted, is one of the most horrific passages in the Bible when it comes to human suffering. The opening words "It happened also" intimate something out of the ordinary is about to take place which unfortunately does. The verb here is *sumbaino*, literally as to go with, *sum-* or to join together.

The seven brothers along with their mother were arrested and tortured. During their ordeal one of the brothers became the common spokesman, *proegoros* which also means a defender or advocate, *pro-* suggestive of on behalf of. While he certainly knew the king's purpose, he says somewhat defiantly as to what this ruler intends and hopefully will learn from him, his brothers and mother. And without waiting for a response—again he knew he was in a helpless situation—this brother said he and the others are ready to die instead of violating their fathers' laws, the verb *parabaino* meaning to go beside or to set these laws aside, *para-*.

The excerpt mercifully (!) passes over the next few verses of detailed torture and picks up with the brothers' spokesman at his last breath, *pnoe* often associated with a sharp exhalation. Jumping ahead to vs. 39, the terrible treatment may be summed up by "The king fell into a rage and handled him (youngest brother) worse than the others," words leaving what happens up to the reader's imagination. Vs. 9 has the brother at hand calling the king an "accursed wretch" or *alastor* meaning someone who does what merits vengeance. At the point where the brother's *pnoe* is about to expire he boldly proclaims that the king of this world (*kosmos*) will raise up him, his brothers and mothers into eternal life. Obviously reference to God's kingship over the world infuriates the earthly king even further. The two verbs *anabioo* and *anistemi* (return to life and raise up) have the preposition *ana-* prefaced to them signifying a kind of twofold return. Essential to both is fidelity to God's laws meaning in essence the Torah.

This passage concludes with the fourth brother's martyrdom, that is, with three brothers to go plus their mother. He exclaims that death is to be preferred with expectation, *prosdokao* being the verb which implies the setting of one's mind on the future, *pros-* as direction towards-being indicative of this. And the object, of course, is the hope of God raising him and the others to life. Then he concludes with saying that the king, by reason of his behavior, lacks this. As for the remaining brothers and mother, they too scorn the king, singling out the mother as "especially admirable and worthy of honorable memory" [vs. 20]. The words describing her are *huperagontos* and *thaumastos*, the adverb meaning exceedingly and the adjective, full of awe or wonder.

As for the remaining three brothers, they too expressed their trust in God. We don't know the names of the seven and their mother, a preferential omission, if you will, for it's indicative of the poignant expressions of their faith. Somehow memory of it wouldn't stick as long in our memories if we knew their identities, for as a footnote in the RSV says, "This story is the principal subject of 4 Maccabees." The entire drama concludes with vs. 42: "Let this be enough, then, about the eating of sacrifices and the extreme tortures."

13 November, Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

1) *"For behold, the day comes, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. 2) But for you who fear my name the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go forth leaping like calves from the stall. Malachi 3.19-20 (4.1-2)*

This passage comes towards the end of Malachi and begins with *hineh* or behold, a way of gaining attention to what is about to be set forth, and that involves the immediate coming of the oven. *Hineh* is in reference not just to a day but to the day, a *kairos* event, to borrow a New Testament term for a special time. The day at hand isn't limited to a twenty-four hour cycle; instead, it can extend indefinitely into the future which is intimated here. Also this end doesn't seem to have an end.

The day at hand is burning or *bahar*, to consume by fire which obviously is associated with an oven or *tanur*, something like a large earthen jar which is portable. How it comes isn't specified, that is, from heaven above, earth blow or from one of the earth's four cardinal directions. Due to this oven's portability, easily it will blast into stubble those who are described as arrogant and evildoers.

The same verse (1) makes a distinction between the day at hand and the over. That is to say, the day itself will burn these people, *lahat* connoting a blowing action which feeds flames. Also it's very thorough; this *lahat* will not only consume the two types of persons just noted but will get at their roots and branches. In other words, something akin to a firestorm leveling the earth as well as getting beneath it.

Obviously the oven is associated with fire and burning. On the other hand, vs. 2 speaks of another object of the same nature, the sun of righteousness, *tsadaqah*. Apparently at the same time the oven (and the day) make its appearance, this sun which is different from the physical one, comes on the scene. But since it doesn't shine as from above, its manifestation will be less evident but nonetheless real. Such a sun will arise not for the arrogant and evildoers of vs. 1 but for those who fear the Lord's name or have been fearing it all along while the two types of evil persons had been active. The hidden way this sun operates is intimated by mention of wings which has healing or *marpe*, the verbal root of which also means to let down as in drooping. In other words, the healing presented suggests a letting down of one's guard against those who earlier had been a threat. Hence the reason for those fearing the Lord's name to leap as calves, *push* as associated with such young animals as they're set free from their confinement, that is, stalls.

The remainder of Chapter Four and hence Malachi consists of four verses concluding with the sending of the prophet Elijah "before the great and terrible day of the Lord." This seems to be the same day described above as a portable oven. He will bring about a reconciliation, most likely among those who fear the Lord, not the arrogant and evildoers of vs. 1. The last words conclude with something of a threat, namely, that the Lord will have to intervene and according to the Hebrew, impose a ban of utter destruction, *cherem*, which, for example, had been imposed against Jericho: "And the city and all that is in it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction." Then as this verse continues, the prostitute Rahab who had welcomed the Israelite spies will be spared.

20 November, Christ the King

1) Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Behold, we are your bone and flesh. 2) In times past when Saul was king over us, it was you that led out and brought in Israel; and the Lord said to you, 'You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel.'" 3) So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron; and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel. Second Samuel 5.1-3

This new chapter is preceded by some gory details of how David treated those who slew Saul's sons, thinking they had done him a favor by wiping out any threat to his still tenuous grasp on the throne. Such an incident shows the importance of the conjunctive "then" (v-) with respect to all Israel coming to David at Hebron. Any dissenters just might end up the same by having their hands and feet cut off. So when the Israelites say to David that they are his bone and flesh—part of his body as king—they uttered these words under some duress and fear. As for the words they utter to show allegiance, they echo those of the first man when he had seen his wife for the first time: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" [Gen 2.23].

Vs. 2 gives the second reason for the Israelites giving allegiance to David, that is, Saul had begun so well his role of military leader. However, it devolved by reason of him having not entreated the Lord when faced with an overwhelming force of Philistines. This enraged the prophet Samuel who had anointed him: “You have done foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God...now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever” [1Sam 13.13]. So when the people say that David is the one who led out and brought in Israel, they were present with him, part of his body (bone and flesh) as he was doing this.

The people are also quick to add that David is their new shepherd, a common word for king, and has special application here since he had been a shepherd of sheep beforehand. Everyone knew this before his victory over Goliath, so it was a natural association in his case. In addition to this role, the people acclaim David as prince or *nagyá*, a more or less general word for a leader.

Note that in vs. 1 all the tribes assembled at Hebron whereas vs. 3 has the elders coming to him, as though there were a distinction between the two. Before David had been anointed king Israel was pretty much torn apart by the civil strife when some showed allegiance to him and others to Saul. Perhaps memories of this lingering fear and residual hatred prevented the elders from coming along with their respective tribes. Whether or not this was the case, David overlooked it and made a covenant, the exact nature of which isn't spelled out but seemed sufficient to establish peace. Right afterward they anointed David as king, the person doing this not being specified as had been the case with Samuel and Saul. This sets the stage for David eventually capturing Jerusalem and building a temple to the Lord.

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