

# The History of Israel

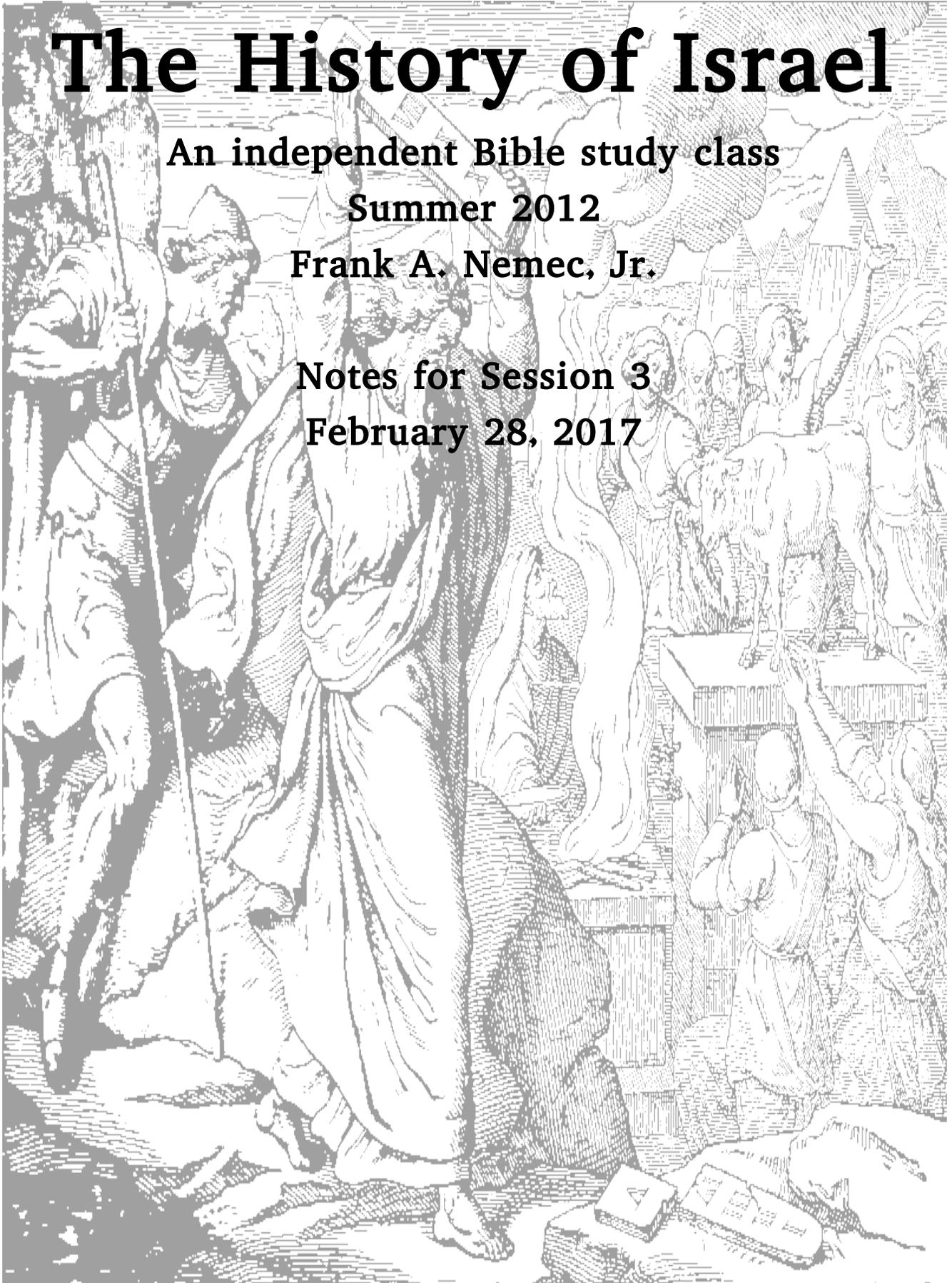
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Frank A. Nemec, Jr.

Notes for Session 3

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Frank A. Nemeck, Jr.

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## Numbers

Numbers continues where Exodus stops, and is often considered a continuation of Exodus from the Priestly source. As noted in the syllabus, I'll use a date of 1220 CE for the exodus. Fragments of Numbers derive from the Yahwist and Elohist sources, but the bulk derives from the Priestly source. That's why it fits so well where it is in our Bible, right after Leviticus. In that sense, it's more accurate to say it continues Leviticus rather than Exodus. It covers the next 40 years and includes two more sets of laws. The Jewish calendar began with what event? Passover. It is now a year and a month later. Since their covenant obligations have been freshly dictated to them, the covenant is very much on their minds. What are the terms?

Num 1 Was this census optional? Note that it is done by clans, by the father's houses. It was fully patriarchal. Here, a man was defined by male, over 20, and able to go to war. The latter two are somewhat redundant. Who chose the representatives? How do you know? Why is Levi separate? The priesthood was the line of Aaron, not all of Levi. None of Levi went to war.

Num 3:1-4 gives the generations of Aaron and Moses (brothers). 3:13-29 gives the generations of Levi. Where do Moses and Aaron fit in? Israel, Levi, Kohath, Amram (who married his father's sister Jochebed). Presumably this was before the law was given.

Num 3:13 is a key transition! See Ex 32:25-29 and my notes. The **golden calf** seems to be the reason given for the transition. From Exodus 11:4-15, each firstborn of the cattle was to be sacrificed and each firstborn son was to be dedicated to sanctuary service. The transition in Numbers 3:11-13 is probably saying that, because of the golden calf incident (Ex 32), the firstborn of Israel were no longer worthy, only the sons of Levi (Ex 32:36). That seems to be the explanation by this source. Num 3:46 shows this as a redemption transaction. The firstborn males of Israel are being redeemed by the male Levites. Because the former outnumbered the latter by 274, the difference is made up in cash. Now all of the service of the tabernacle is genetic. We'll be able to tell who is qualified to serve.

The Aaronic line is not only dedicated to the priesthood, it is given ruling authority over all the line of Levi. It is described as ownership, even as slavery (3:9). Num 4 is the inventory of this property. Again, the golden calf is the justification. We finally see a purpose of the telling of that golden calf story. 3:17-20 says the priests give orders to the Kohathites, with imperfect obedience to those orders punishable by death imposed by God.

Num 3:38 is an order to impose capital punishment, whereas 4:15 and 20 is a death threat by God.

### Statistical Abstract of Numbers 3

603,550	Males (excluding Levi) from age 20 years (from Numbers 1:46)
22,273	Firstborn males from age 1 month
3.69%	Percent of males which are firstborn (approximately)
27	Average male children per mother

A common practice of Israel and others might help explain this apparent extreme data. They often slaughtered all the males of a conquered tribe, and then took all the females for themselves. Still, with a birth rate like this, they should have no trouble making their quota of sands of the sea / stars in the sky.

Num 5 begins by evicting the lepers. Next quantifies restitution of 120% for violations of civil law (someone wronged). 5:11-31 instructs a man who suspects his wife of infidelity. It seems likely from the rest of the passage that she is pregnant. This arguably (but not definitively) portrays the wife as the property of the husband. She is required to call down a curse of barrenness (childlessness, perhaps also miscarriage) upon herself if she is guilty. How do you know whether she was guilty? If she later bears children, she wasn't guilty. If she has a miscarriage, she was guilty. How do you think and feel about this? Note that there is no problem if it's the husband who goes astray. See Genesis 20:17-18. Like a placebo, a curse has precisely the power over you that you grant to it. The potion may not be quite so harmless. Perhaps it's just the dirt that people and their animals walk on. Perhaps it's from where the bloody sacrifices are offered. If 'guilty', she becomes an oath and a curse. That is, her name would be used as an example of a wicked woman. Perhaps this does represent moral progress, since the husband can't simply kill his wife if he suspects her of adultery.

Num 6 discusses the (apparently voluntary) Nazirite vow for a specified time. Verse 2 says it could be

a man or a woman, but the rest of the text is all 'he'. The chapter ends with Aaron's blessing:

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;  
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

Bless refers to the blessings (benefits) of the covenant. Keep (guard) refers to the specific parts about protection from your enemies and from wild animals. The face talks about Leviticus 26:11, "I will make my dwelling<sup>1</sup> among you, and my soul shall not abhor you." Peace is a broad term of general well-being. It also is a general term for the benefits of the covenant.

Num 7 refers to the construction, anointing, and consecration of the tabernacle. The offering is described in mind-numbing detail. The wagons and oxen were the moving vans for the tabernacle and all its accoutrements. 7:9 makes it clear the holy things must be carried by hand. It looks like a fixed offering per tribe, independent of the size of the tribe. As one example, at an August 2014 silver price of \$22/oz, the silver in the 130 shekel plate (11 grams per shekel) would be worth about \$1100 today. It's much easier to mine and refine today. 7:89 leaves no doubt that Moses heard the voice of Yahweh in the tent of meeting.

Ex 8 sets up the lampstand (**menorah**), about 4.5 feet tall. The cleansing and consecration of the non-Aaronic Levites uses water sprinkling. That reminds all non-Baptist Christians of baptism. These Levites receive a full-body shave. At this point, none of them have taken the Nazirite vow. The text repeats the explanation of the consecration of the first-born, and the substitution of the Levites for them. 8:23-26 limits Levitical service of the tabernacle to ages 25-50. I suspect this is a compassionate retirement provision from the heavy duty of moving the tabernacle. I think it also suggests they expected the tabernacle to be always moving, following the tribes of nomadic herdsmen. Presumably they didn't yet know they would be wandering the wilderness for 40 years. Instead, this suggests they expected to be wandering forever.



Num 9 shows the first instance of the Passover remembrance celebration. Each memorializes the original event in Egypt, with the death of the firstborn of Egypt. 9:5, "according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so the people of Israel did.", is yet one more of myriad places where we are told that the people of Israel obeyed Torah. Again, it was not impossible! In 9:6, Moses is presented with another what-if situation. Law can never be complete. It must always be applied and interpreted by people. This issue probably progressed through the delegates to be resolved by Moses. As usual, Yahweh speaks to Moses, with no witnesses. The result is that those on long journeys and those who happen to be unclean by contact with a dead body to have their own Passover celebration a month later.

Num 9:13 sentences anyone breaking this law without excuse to be 'cut off from his people'. I now think this means they are kicked out of the tribes of Israel. I think it's a way to deal with an individual breaking the terms of the Mosaic Covenant to be excluded, so that the remaining tribe can still be viewed as keeping the covenant. The covenant is defined in corporate terms, not individual.

From here, look occasionally at the resource, Parallels between Exodus and Numbers, on page 5.

## **Pillar of Cloud and Appearance of Fire**

Numbers 9 describes the cloud (which took on the nighttime appearance of fire) as a form of on and as an indication of the presence of Yahweh in their midst. I think it might have been the smoke from the menorah and the incense and other offerings, and the light from the menorah and other lamps. It told them when to pack up and move and when to stay put. In Numbers 12, it participates in the divination of judgment against Miriam.

Num 10:11 Israel finally leaves Sinai. It has been almost a year (cf Ex 19:1). 10:8 also shows their expectation of a perpetually nomadic lifestyle. 11:2 shows only Moses prayed. In Numbers 11, everybody is complaining! Moses then embarks on a woe-is-me rant to God. He receives no criticism for this. This, like the tone of the imprecatory Psalms, were typical Jewish forms of speech. They were not at all considered improper. As noted in the section below on The Spirit, 11:25 shows a partial and temporary delegation of the role of prophet.

### *The Spirit*

As Yahweh commands (authorizes) Moses to delegate in Numbers 11, he describes what will happen. Moses is to choose 70 elders (all male, of course). “And I will come down and talk with you there. And I will take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you may not bear it yourself alone.” Compare this to the delegation of Exodus 18.

Most Christian translations (but no Jewish translations) capitalize Spirit, presenting not the text, but an interpretation of the text. The claim, of course, is that it refers to the Christian idea of the Holy Spirit. The Hebrew word הרוח (ruwach, Strong's 7307) means wind, breath, life, anger, and many other meanings by extension including spirit of a rational being. In Torah, when you see 'spirit', it's nearly always this word, and if you see 'breath' it's often this word.

Usage of this word in Torah is exemplified in Genesis 1, “the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said ...” (again with Christian translators presenting the same interpretation). Better interpretation would be the life of God, or the action of God. The paradigm throughout Genesis 1 is God speaking with authority, causing action.

This is an extended example of a process of understanding what a Bible text means.

Now look at the context of Numbers 11. Yahweh heard the complaints of the people. As noted earlier, the path was likely by way of Moses. Throughout Torah, the data path is always Yahweh – Moses – [usually Aaron] – the people (and less often, the reverse). Moses complains about the burden of that task. What is that task? Conveying the words (breath) from Yahweh to the people (and back). That's what Moses is delegating. That's what Yahweh is authorizing these 70 [a favorite number] elders to do. Moses had the original assignment, and that assignment was permanent, lasting until he died. Verse 25 shows that the assignment to the elders was somehow not permanent. Perhaps that meant the

delegation was not permanent. That's consistent with the rest of Tanakh. Perhaps it just meant that the authority of a particular elder was not permanent. More likely it meant that in the future, prophets would be appointed by Yahweh on a case-by-case basis, rather than by a board of elders. [Think about this in the context of church organization.] The rest of the chapter introduces and uses a name for that role: prophet. Verse 29 makes clear what was meant by Yahweh putting his spirit upon men, "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put his Spirit [sic] on them!" This was appointing and authorizing them to act in the role of prophet. The term prophet is used in an analogy in Exodus 7:1. The data path of Moses – Aaron – Pharaoh is like that of Yahweh – Moses – the people. As Deuteronomy 34 describes the death of Moses, it shows the role of primary prophet of Israel being passed on to Joshua. It also reiterates and explains why no one else saw Yahweh face-to-face, and in general, why no one else could command signs and wonders.

Numbers 11:26 shows that 70 were registered and called to the camp, but only 68 showed up. The other two are still authorized. We see an early view of Joshua, called only son of Nun. Num 13:8 shows Nun to be of the tribe of Ephraim. Joshua could never be a priest. This poses a challenge for those who believe Jesus (Joshua) was a priest, such as (only?) the author of Hebrews.

Numbers 11:31 shows the "answer to prayer" for meat. From the ESV notes, "Quail (small partridges) migrate north across the Sinai Peninsula in the spring and return in the fall." This was a natural phenomenon. The passage portrays this event as supernatural, caused by the direct intervention of Yahweh. The smallest gathering was about 60 bushels. Be careful what you ask for. They got the quail, but Yahweh "struck down the people with a very great plague". So much so that they named the place *graves of craving*. The plague was selective, killing only the 'rabble' who were craving. I think (as do the authors of the ESV cross-references) this refers to the mixed multitude of Exodus 12:38, Leviticus 24:10, and Nehemiah 13:3. Again, I think things like this killing of people who angered Yahweh is the image invoked by the phrase "fear of Yahweh". It meant fear. They move on to Hazeroth, perhaps somewhere around the western shore of the Red Sea (now called the Gulf of Aqaba), right across that gulf from Midian.

Numbers 12 shows the conflict (perhaps between different exodus traditions) about who was the prophet, Moses or Aaron. This unique text shows Yahweh speaking face-to-face with all three, Moses, Aaron, and Miriam (a woman, no less!). It shows how Yahweh communicates through prophets, and how Moses was unique. "Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the Lord." Moses wins this round. After they wait for Miriam to become clean (7 days), they resume their trek to the wilderness of Paran, probably at the northern tip of the Gulf of Aqaba.

Num 13 shows Caleb making an optimistic report, while the other spies bring exaggerated reports of the dangers. 13:33 says they saw the Nephilim (sons of Anak) of Genesis 6:4. Since the Nephilim (who might be the descendants of the gods mating with humans) should have been wiped out by the flood, the spies might simply be drawing an analogy between the fierce warriors they saw and the legendary god/man figures. Or, the Yahwist tradition believed some Nephilim survived, but the flood story (woven from both Yahwist and Priestly sources) has them wiped out.

Num 14 begins with more complaining. In 13:10, the glory of Yahweh appears to all the people. This also is new. Yahweh over-reacts and responds with a threat to destroy them all and start over again with Moses. Moses intercedes on the basis of the reputation of Yahweh. The judgment of 14:22, “none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers.”, explains why there were no witnesses to the exodus, and why no one has seen the glory of Yahweh. All died in the wilderness. Future generations would just have to believe what Caleb told them. This is another instance of poetic justice. Let the punishment fit the crime. They liked the number 40. 14:19 is also an example of an age of accountability. Those age 20 and over were punished. The use of the word *maggelah* (plague) shows the bad spies (all but Joshua and Caleb) were killed by an act of God, just as the Egyptians were. The chapter concludes with an object lesson for what happens if they don't follow the divination of the cloud/fire. It explains their defeat by Amalekites and Canaanites. They are driven to [Hormah](#), on the southern border of Canaan (Joshua 15:30), probably in the land of the Amorites, 30 miles southeast of the bottom of the Salt Sea (Sea of Arabah).

Num 15 begins with a review about sacrifices, perhaps with some new instructions. It continues with provisions for atonement for unintentional sins. There are some differences from Lev 4, though both are likely from the Priestly source. Verses 30 and 31 cover intentional sin, “But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the Lord, and that person shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has despised the word of the Lord and has broken his commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be on him.” Again, I think this meant they were evicted from the tribes of Israel, allowing the corporate body to remain obedient to the covenant despite individual violations. The divination of verses 32-36 show this excommunication was not intended to lessen severe penalties (the death penalty) for things like breaking Sabbath. Though Exodus 31:15 prescribed the death penalty, the previous verse allowed for some ambiguity in interpretation. The immediate instructions on tassels show they were intended as reminders of the threat of death. This shows what the fear of the LORD really meant, not the euphemisms we like to make of it. That will be emphasized in chapter 16. The chapter ends with the now-familiar declaration that Yahweh and Elohim are the same god.

The judgment in Num 16 against Korah, Dathan, and On is an example of divination to demonstrate who the official priests really are, and a threat to any who would usurp this role. It's how the priests stay in power. Legend and bluffing about things like this can be as powerful as action. The next chapter shows the unsurprising result of the divination. The man in power wins.

The leader from Levi seemed to receive greater punishment than the other three, from Reuben. This is another example of the principle we saw earlier. If evildoers are removed from the congregation by either death or excommunication, the remnant can remain pure. Malachi warns the priests that this could happen again in 3:3-4 with, “he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.”

## *Bearing Their Iniquity*

Num 18:1 uses a puzzling expression. Similarly, 18:23, “But the Levites shall do the service of the tent of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity.” The expression is used in Exodus 28:38. This seems to be a self-imprecation. If the priests or Levites do something wrong, they (not the people) will be punished. By implication, if they are not punished by God, they aren't doing anything wrong. It sounds like, “May God strike me dead if I'm lying.” Perhaps in Ex 28:38, it means they are bearing (carrying) the guilt of the people which is being covered by their sacrifices. Leviticus 10:17 seems to support that. See also Ezekiel 18:20. As introduced in Isaiah 51:17, the priests and prophets (Jerusalem) receive the punishment for the iniquities of the people (53:5-6 and 53:11), echoing this idea from Numbers 18.

In Num 16:20-24, Yahweh threatens to destroy the entire congregation. Moses and Aaron successfully plead on the basis of verse 22, “shall one man sin, and will you be angry with all the congregation?” Moses then proclaims his own authority by condemning only the wrongdoers and their families to death by being swallowed up by the earth, and then 250 carrying incense. When the people complain about these killings, Yahweh again threatens the entire congregation with destruction. After Moses and Aaron again plead for compassion, Yahweh answers by killing another 14,700 by plague. The survivors are supposed to be glad it wasn't complete genocide of the tribes. In 17:13, the people express their natural fear, “Are we all to perish?”

I think that sets the context for chapter 18 as Yahweh says to Aaron, “You and your sons and your father's house with you shall bear iniquity connected with the sanctuary, and you and your sons with you shall bear iniquity connected with your priesthood.” That does seem to be saying that, from this point forward, Yahweh will direct his punishments onto the priests rather than onto the entire population (verse 5). 18:23 extends this to the Levites as well as the priests.

Num 18:8 shows Aaron held the purse strings. By showing that only the clean may eat the best of the offerings, 18:11 expresses the idea reiterated in the Beatitudes, “Blessed are ye pure.”

In any other context, Numbers 19, the ashes of the red heifer and how they were to be used, would be considered superstition. Hebrews 9:13 is a reference to this.

Num 20:1 **Miriam** dies at Kadesh. She is arguably the leading woman of Israel. “It has often been noted that the leading woman of the NT was also called Miriam (English, Mary).” (ESV notes) There are about 18 archaeological sites people believe might be Kadesh.

Num 20:14 Moses requests passage through Edom; denied. From Gen 32:9, it's where Esau settled. The Kenite Hypothesis suggests the worship of Yahweh originated in this area of southern Canaan, including also Moab and Midian.

Num 20:10 Because the people complained, Moses and Aaron would be punished. 20:22-29 Aaron dies. 27:14 Moses passes the reins to Joshua.

Num 21:2 “Israel vowed a vow to Yahweh” This took me by surprise. We have seen Moses and Aaron as the chief actors in the drama. Now suddenly it's Israel? My first thought: This is probably a change in source. Lo and behold, it is. 21-24 are from the Yahwist source.

The chapter begins with an incident demonstrating behavior considered morally deplorable by modern civilization. If you give us victory over the people of this land we are invading, we promise to slaughter them. Israel had advanced beyond this heinous behavior by at least the fifth century BCE. Morality is a societal construct. People's standards change. The name Hormah means destruction. Israel had already been defeated in this area, Num 14:45.

Next is another incident of people complaining honestly that there is no food or water, complaining probably about manna, people punished by serpents, Moses intercedes. Under instructions from Yahweh, Moses makes a bronze (probably copper) serpent image and sets it on a pole. John 3:14-15 almost certainly refers to this. Apparently Israel came to worship this image, 2 Kings 18:4. I thought they were told not to make images, perhaps in a different source.

Israel has now invaded and conquered most of the habitable land east of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. They sing about their conquests and slaughters. More of the same. This seems a good point to reiterate the complete absence of archaeological confirmation of this conquest of Canaan. We see Israel setting initially in Shittim, near the Jordan and Jericho.

Num 22 Moabites and Midianites fear the hoards of Israel so they try to pay a shaman to invoke curses on Israel. An eighth century BCE inscription found in Jordan reads, “Balaam the son of Beor, the man who was a seer of the gods.” A fascinating dialog ensues. From Midian, it's no surprise that his god is Yahweh (v. 8), but then Elohim tells him not to do the curse. A seer shouldn't be surprised to get a vision from a different god, especially from the god of this invading mob. This account might be presented here to reiterate a major message of Torah, that Yahweh and Elohim are the same god. The angel (messenger) of Yahweh intercedes more forcefully, sword in hand. The context gives no basis for interpreting this as a theophany rather than a more routine vision / dream. More altars and sacrifices and repeated attempts. The sage Balaam makes many oracular proclamations, all favoring Israel. The final (uninvited) oracle comes in Num 24, where Balaam predicts that Israel will conquer them all. We soon see that happening. We are given no clue how Israel knew about any of this.

Num 25 reverts to the Priestly source for the rest of the text except chapter 32. Accordingly, the focus shifts from battle to worship. It shows people of Israel 'whoring' with the daughters of Moab. This directly and primarily refers to their worship of the gods of the Moabites, most particularly Baal of Peor. Baal was the chief fertility god of Canaan. Since only men were punished, there is some chance the men had sexual involvement with the temple prostitutes of Baal. Verse 8 shows severe punishment for bringing a Midianite woman into a family. The Yahwist source shows no such hostility to Moses when he does the same in Exodus 2. Acting on his own initiative, Phinehas murders both the man and woman. His punishment is lavish praise from Yahweh and the promise of an eternal priesthood for his descendants. He is one of the two surviving sons of Aaron.

Num 26 Yahweh demands another census (thus more money into the priestly coffers). Judah is the

biggest. The total of men age 20 and over is 601,730 from verse 51. Presumably attrition of the 603,550 of Num 1:46 from death and battle and slaughter by Yahweh are fully compensated by birth, perhaps intermarriage from neighbors (unlikely), and conquest of slaves. But slaves probably wouldn't be counted in that number. Verses 64-65 tell us that everyone who had been condemned to death in the wilderness (Num 14:22) has already died. With 27:13-14, this confirms that Israel is poised to enter their promised land. I don't see a specific time reference here for the traditional 40 years. Next, Yahweh orders Moses to apportion the land among the tribes, with size proportional to the population from this census.

In Numbers 27, I see a powerful example of moral progress by a society. Since so many men of Manasseh were slaughtered in the Kohath affair, this tribe, and especially these women, would receive a disproportionately small inheritance. Remember, the census was of men. These innocent women were being (inadvertently) penalized for the sins of the men. When a good society discovers inequity in its traditions, it changes them, and finds a way to rationalize the change. Here, Moses is still around to consult with Yahweh, who generalized the situation and gives them a body of law as a solution. Demonstrating another axis of moral progress, daughters (women) are at the head of the succession order. To this point, we have not seen women with this degree of privilege in a very patriarchal society.

In 27:12, Moses is reminded of his own punishment. He gets to see the land but not enter it. Apparently accepting his fate, Moses asks for a successor leader for the congregation. Yahweh orders Moses to commission Joshua son of Nun as his successor. Presumably his own sons Gershom and Eliezer are ineligible because they died in the wilderness. We never hear anything about them. Joshua receives only some of the authority of Moses. The era described in Num 12:8 comes to an end, "With him [Moses] I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the LORD." The death of Moses is noted in Deuteronomy 34:5. At the time of that Deuteronomistic writing, there had not been another like Moses. That text implies the passage of a significant amount of time between the death of Moses and this Deuteronomistic writing. From here on, Eleazar the priest carries the sole responsibility for divination, using the Urim (and presumably also the Thummim). These were mentioned in Ex 28:30 and Lev 8:8, and will be discussed more at 1 Samuel 14:41-42.

With Num 28-29, the context suddenly jumps to offerings. They seem to be combined here into a single schedule. I leave as an exercise for the student the task of confirming that all the details of these offerings are consistent with the earlier specifications. Perhaps these are the last instructions from Moses to his successors, to make sure they properly complete their most important tasks, the sacrifices. The presumption is a land rich enough to fund this sacrificial system. From ESV notes, the total annual national sacrifice was 113 bulls, 1,086 lambs, over a ton of flour, and 1,000 bottles of oil and wine!

In Num 30, Moses instructs tribal leadership (civil government) with some arcane rules about vows. His final act in Num 31 is to preside over the attack on Midian. They killed every male (including the kings) without a single casualty (v. 49), enslaved the women and children, and plundered the cattle, flocks, and goods. Then they burned all the cities and encampments. Oh, remember that sage of the gods who refused to curse Israel? They killed him too. Some gratitude. His prediction was correct. Not fully satisfied with the slaughter, Moses ordered the execution of all the survivors except for the

young virgin girls, which they could keep alive as slaves. They had to ceremonially purify all the booty.

Num 32 is probably from the Yahwist source. Now we see the 40-year tradition. Perhaps this is a flashback? Perhaps only the southern tribes had this fixation on the number 40. The tribes of Gad and Reuben settle east of the Jordan, but the men still go to war. More conquering.

Num 33 back to the Priestly source for their brief version of the exodus, joining the 40-year party. Be sure to destroy the symbols of their religions. Drive out ALL the inhabitants. Borders are defined in Num 34. See the ESV map on page 320 for an estimate of how these borders might work out. This is the first division of the land by tribe. In verse 13, Moses commands that the land be divided using the lot as a tool for divination. 2.5 tribes have already petitioned for their allocation and received it. Verse 16 shows Yahweh appoint specific men to perform the land division. Here, Canaan is used to refer only to the land west of the Jordan.

Num 35 is where the Levites, denied a tribal region, are given cities with surrounding pasture land. After all, they are required to raise the animals for the sacrifices. Perhaps they are isolated to preserve purity. Anyone outside the walls but within 1000 cubits is in Levitical pastureland. These cities are dispersed, and include the cities of refuge. I think this also acknowledges the fact that, before Josiah, religion wasn't centralized. Joshua 21 reports the completion of the establishment of these cities. The distinction between murder and manslaughter is made here. The avenger of blood (see Deut 19) is the go'el ha-dam, the next of kin responsible for imposing the death penalty for murder. These cities of refuge were a form of self-imposed imprisonment, with the term limited by the lifespan of the high priest. This is an example of moral progress within Israel. This legal structure declares manslaughter a lesser crime than murder. It provides a judicial process (the congregation with witnesses) to decide guilt, and protects the accused. It limits vigilante justice by the family of the victim.

Num 36 concludes the book with more accommodations to the daughters of Zelophehad. This seemingly isolated and irrelevant topic has a couple of interesting features. Daughters as heirs is new. Usually it's sons, with the eldest son getting the biggest share. The judgment prefers incest to transfer of wealth between tribes. Why doesn't this account show Moses consulting Yahweh? Was that assumed? Or, since this was a civil rather than religious matter, was a consultation unnecessary? Yet the congregation considered this ruling as a proclamation by Yahweh. Perhaps this is an early indication (or an anachronism) of priests speaking for Yahweh.

## ***Deuteronomy***

This book marks our first foray into the **Deuteronomistic** texts. The Deuteronomistic history refers to Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. Deuteronomistic redactions probably occurred in Jeremiah, Amos and Hosea. The English name is a transliteration of the Greek name meaning second law, which was a mistranslation of the Hebrew from 17:18.

The ESV notes show how this book fits the structure of a vassal suzerainty treaty. My notes in Session 1 on the Mosaic Covenant cover this in detail. This section is organized according to that structure. Many think it was written (not just 'discovered') by **Josiah** (641-609 BCE) during late seventh century

BCE. Final edits likely occurred after the return from Babylonian captivity in the sixth century BCE. The legal code is reorganized into four distinct components: religious, governance, civil, and criminal. The boundaries in the texts aren't strict. The law for the sanctuary supersedes that in Exodus 20:24, suggesting Deuteronomy was written long after the exodus. Its law includes the reforms of Josiah, suggesting it was written to grant divine sanction to Josiah's reform actions. A major aspect of these reforms was the centralization of worship (therefore power) in Jerusalem, discussed at Deut 12. Some of the reforms are noted in 2 Kings 23.

My objective is an understanding of this central idea of Jewish religion and philosophy, the Mosaic Covenant, as they understood it, and as they expressed it. It's their law, their contract, their religion, so they are authoritative on the subject.

## **Preamble and Historical Prologue**

The title of the superior party is always the unification title from Exodus 20:2a and many other places, "I am Yahweh your Elohim" (Exodus 20:2a). The scene for the presentation of this covenant is set in the conquest narrative, as a pause before crossing the Jordan into Canaan. This literary work weaves presentation of the treaty into that conquest narrative. The brief mention in verse 4 of the conquests they had already made assure the party of the second part that the party of the first part is capable of fulfilling its obligations. See Joshua 9 and Exodus 20:2b, "... who brought you out of the land of Egypt ...". This is also an example of Yahweh keeping his part of the Abrahamic Covenant. Throughout the history of Israel, the leaders need to keep reminding the people that Yahweh is capable of keeping his end of the contract. This claim will be repeatedly challenged by events on the ground, over their entire history.

## **Deuteronomic Legal Code**

These regulations and stipulations typically form the bulk of such a treaty. Chapters 12-26 cover this. They typically require loyalty of the vassal to the lord, and restricts additional alliances. The **Decalogue** (the **Ten Commandments**) of Exodus 20:3-6 and Deuteronomy 5 is a concise, memorable excerpt. A concise overview can be found at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deuteronomic\\_Code](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deuteronomic_Code).

### ***Religious Law (12-16)***

#### ***Governance (16-18)***

For most of Torah, little is said about governance. We know the earliest cultures of the ANE were those of nomadic herdsman tribes. Their society was strongly patriarchal. Whatever the patriarch says must be obeyed. That was universal, thus unnecessary to explicitly state in the writings. We see evidence of that throughout the writings. Moses imposed a new regime. He became the autocratic dictator. The basis of his power was the direct transmission of information and commands from Yahweh (though there were no witnesses). We already noted an impending change. Joshua is given a subset of the roles played by Moses, that of general or chief executive officer. He would lead the military conquest. The religious roles had already been delegated to the Aaronic priesthood (for the Deuteronomistic source, the Levitical priesthood). At the advice of his father-in-law, Moses had delegated most of the interpretation of religious law, though he retained the supreme court role when needed. Part of Israel's acceptance of the covenant was the acceptance of rule by the priests. From the

introduction to the offering and acceptance of that covenant in Exodus 19:5-6, “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.” In a way, the priests would be the kings.

An outsider observing the Hebrew society would describe the patriarch of each tribe as its king. Moses had authority over all of them. Earlier empires of Assyria and Persia used this governing structure. Daniel 2:37 applies the term to Nebuchadnezzar. “You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory ...” That term, of course, is king of kings.

Deuteronomy 1 formalizes a hierarchical structure of military and political leadership, as well as a judicial system charged with impartiality. Moses still retains the role of supreme court. “Choose for your tribes wise, understanding, and experienced men, and I will appoint them as your heads. ....’ So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and experienced men, and set them as heads over you, commanders of thousands, commanders of hundreds, commanders of fifties, commanders of tens, and officers, throughout your tribes.”

### ***Civil Law (22-24)***

### ***Criminal Law (22-25)***

## **Safe Deposit and Public Readings**

Deuteronomy 10, Yahweh orders Moses to write the Decalogue on replacement stone tablets to keep in a wooden ark. The order for public readings is given in 31:10-13, “At the end of every seven years ... you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing.” Joshua 24 shows this reading used as a formal renewal ceremony.

## **Witnesses**

Typically these are the gods of all the parties. Given the jealousy of the God of Israel, the Mosaic Covenant uses the people as both signatories and witnesses, and also monuments like stones. This is covered in Deuteronomy 32, with another example in Joshua 24.

## **Blessings and Curses**

Deuteronomy 7:11-24 and 28:1 vs. 28:15ff are summaries, while chapters 27-28 cover the subject. Exodus 23:22, “But if you carefully obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.” Throughout my notes, I show texts describing events as examples of the blessings. Later, the prophets will proclaim the curses.

## **Deuteronomy Notes by Chapter**

Deut 1 includes delegation similar to those of Ex 18:18-26 and Num 11:14. This part includes tribal leadership and judicial practice. Moses retains ultimate authority.

Deut 2 begins with explicit reference to Esau and his descendants (Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites).

Deut 4:15-24 attempts a rationale for the prohibition against making images. The people did not see Yahweh at Horeb (the name for Sinai in the Elohist and Deuteronomist sources). By implication, you don't know what Yahweh looks like. So don't make any image. From the context, the specifics are likely typical images used by their neighbors to represent their gods. Deut 4:25-31 continues with a threat and a promise. Did any of this ever happen? How do the Assyrian captivity of Israel and the Babylonian captivity of Judah fit this picture? This text was written to explain that part of Israel's history. Yahweh your Elohim is next compared to the other gods. 4:39 restates the identity, Yahweh is Elohim. "In his Aramaic translation, Onkelos paraphrases this verse to avoid potential misconceptions on the part of the reader. ... Onkelos clarifies that it is G-d's shechinah ("presence") that is in Heaven and rules on the Earth below." (Orthodox Union, <https://www.ou.org/torah/nach/oneone/deuteronomy-439/>) The context immediately before makes it clear that this is not a statement of monotheism. That came later.

Next follows the part of the preamble describing the declaration of the covenant in the past. See p. 325 in the ESV Study Bible. Chapters 5-11 are General Stipulations.

Deut 5:4 clearly says Yahweh spoke with Israel face to face; 5:25 explains why Yahweh no longer does this. The people asked him not to. These two chapters are the Deuteronomist explanation for why no one since Moses has ever seen or heard God. See also Exodus 20:19 and Deut 18:16. 5:29 clearly expresses the covenant mindset, "that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever!"

**Deuteronomy 5-6** form a concise and memorable overview of the law. The unification of Yahweh and Elohim is stated no less than 14 times in chapter 6 alone. Chapter 5 includes the explanation for why no one (after Moses) ever saw or heard God. The **Shema** of verse 4 is recited twice daily (mitzvah) by observant Jews.

Verse 4:

שְׁמַע, יִשְׂרָאֵל: יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְהוָה אֶחָד.

The complete Shema includes verses 4-9, Deut 11:13-21 (consequences of obedience vs. disobedience), and Numbers 15:37-41 (the prayer shawl (tallit) with four fringes (tzitzit), and is read weekly.

The chapter gives the reasons for obeying: longevity; prosperity; population increase; land. Conspicuous by its absence are protection from, and victory over, your enemies. Israel was done with their conquest phase. Especially in Diaspora, they learned that political independence was not essential to the preservation of their religion and culture. They would forget that lesson by late first century, and pay dearly for it.

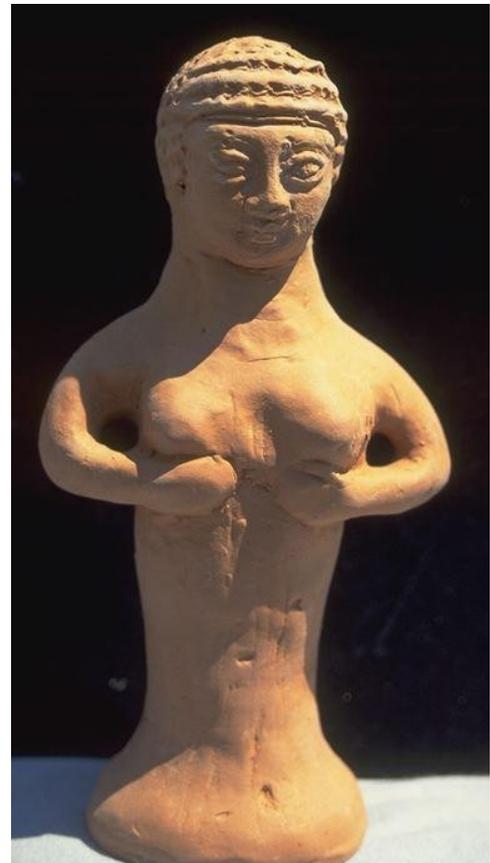
While the entire book covers the entire scope of the Mosaic Covenant as a vassal suzerainty treaty, this chapter focuses exclusively on the obligations of Israel expressed as commandments. Israel must know these commandments and do them. They were to immerse themselves in learning and rehearsing the rules throughout each day, not just weekly or annually. No Christian does this. Note that this was specific to Torah.

Israel considered this covenant to be permanent, unchangeable. Genesis 17:9, 'And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations.'" This idea is sealed in 12:32, "Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.", as well as in 4:2. In the civilized world, the legal principle of rule of law is: Obey the law, as amended. Central to something even as broad as the US Constitution is recognition of the need to amend it, and a formal process for doing so. That's how we were able to abolish slavery, permit women's suffrage, address other voting disparities, and even experiment with social engineering (prohibition). It lets us correct our mistakes. Prohibition was the only amendment to be repealed. With a moral code as part of their religion, and a written form of the code, it was difficult for Israel to improve their moral standards. Yet they found ways.

The jealousy of Yahweh is emphasized. Only Israel was monolatrous. In 6:20, the people are given a rationale to offer to their children as encouragement to follow their instructions. In this text, credit for Egypt goes strictly to Yahweh, with Elohim notorious in its absence. 6:25 defines righteousness, "And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us." That was their understanding. Righteousness was obeying Torah.

Deut 7 begins with another enumeration of the nasty 7. See 'The Ethnic Cleansing' in my notes on Session 1 about why Israel didn't like them. "then you must devote them to complete destruction." (7:2). Other sources show that they had already been intermarrying with these tribes (including no less than Moses). The **Asherim** were wooden poles or trees, cult objects for the worship of the fertility goddess **Asherah**, consort of Baal and/or Yahweh. Moses and Aaron likely carried her sacred poles (the staff of power) until she was purged from Hebrew scriptures around 500-400 BCE. People of Israel worshiped the goddess Asherah for a very long time, despite the objections of Josiah. 7:10 destruction if you hate (disobey) me. There was to be no sickness. "There shall not be male or female barren among you or among your livestock."

In Deut 8, another entire chapter is devoted to promotional material about why they should obey Torah. Is this the first instance of a death threat if they don't obey? They will live if they do obey. Shortly (verse 20) the threat becomes more explicit. Verse 11, "Take care lest you forget the Lord your



God”, what would it mean to forget? The answer is here (not keeping the commandments and rules) and in verse 19, “go after other gods and serve them and worship them.”

Deuteronomy 9 expresses three major ideas many think are uniquely Christian. See if you can spot them before reading on here.

The Anakim of Deut 9 (the giants of chapter 1) are likely the Nephelim. Apparently the Deuteronomistic source doesn't think the flood fully wiped them out. Israel is charged with finishing the job. Deut 9:5 diverts blame for the impending genocide (חרם, *ḥērem*) away from the people of Israel. “it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is driving them out before you.” It's also an early expression of the Jewish idea of grace. Their righteousness isn't what is giving them the land. Their very existence after Horeb and Sinai are mercy. The involvement of Moses in preventing their destruction is mercy. Verse 9 quotes Moses as saying, “I remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water.” That length without food is plausible, but not without water. Terminal dehydration happens within a few weeks, and usually within several days. 9:18 exacerbates the absurdity, saying he did another 40 days, presumably without even an intervening meal. He continues, “And the Lord gave me the two tablets of stone written with the finger of God, and on them were all the words that the Lord had spoken with you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly.” There's no way Moses (especially a dehydrated Moses) could have carried stone tablets containing all of the law, so most think this refers to the ten commandments of 5:22 and 10:4. I think they were simple, symbolic reminders, since it's unlikely these tribes had writing at that time. Indications of Hebrew writing can be found around 1000 BCE at the earliest. The prominence of the popular number 40 is another indication that this literary account is legendary. Verse 12 shows the apparent contradiction of Israel in trouble for breaking a commandment they had not yet received. Legend is never expected to be thoroughly comprehensive and consistent.

### *Golden Calf*

The **Golden Calf** incident deserves a separate section to emphasize its significance. The priests of Yahweh / Elohim were monolatrous; the people of Israel weren't. We'll see that throughout the history of Israel. Otherwise the writers wouldn't need to keep waving this flag. If you haven't figured it out already, we are reading the writings of the priests. But not just the priests, the Deuteronomistic priests. This text presents their side of the story. The Elohist and Priestly sources had their say in the Exodus account.

The Deuteronomist [an abbreviation for the author(s) of the Deuteronomistic texts] wrote Aaron almost completely out of their history. Deut 9:20a, “And the Lord was so angry with Aaron that he was ready to destroy him.” Except for his death (10:6 and 35:20), Aaron is never again mentioned. The priesthood is always described as Levitic, never Aaronic. 18:1 is an example. The Deuteronomist here presents his explanation for that. Aaron lost his credibility and his role because of his participation in this incident. This may have been the primary justification for the Deuteronomistic 'reforms'.

Deut 9:20b, “I prayed for Aaron also at the same time.” The natural inference is that it took nothing less than the pleading of Moses to save you. Don't expect this to happen again. Part of the appeal to

Yahweh was, “Think of your reputation.” We never see anyone else praying. Only prophets or shamans do this. It's not for the common people. Much later, in Diaspora, Jews began to consider prayers as a form of replacement for sacrifices.

Deut 10:8 cites the sanctification (setting apart) of the Levites, but adding a specific duty, carrying the ark. 10:16 is an analogy, not a replacement for physical circumcision, see 30:6 . The emphasis in v. 17ff on social justice is new to the Deuteronomistic source. Genesis 46:27 does say that only 70 people (not counting slaves) of Israel entered Egypt with Joseph. 10:22 declares that the population component of the Abrahamic Covenant has been completed.

Deut 11-12 continue the persuasion to obey Torah. 11:13 emphasizes the conditional nature of the Mosaic Covenant. Israel always had a choice. 12:8, “You shall not do according to all that we are doing here today, everyone doing whatever is right in his own eyes,” is not anarchy. It's just the original decentralized worship. Likely each tribe managed its own sacrifices.

### *Jerusalem*

Deut 12:13-14 portends the centralization of worship in **Jerusalem** by **Josiah**, king of Judah 641-609 BCE. Conquered by David from Jebusites around 1000 BCE, later expanded by Solomon, Jerusalem would fit easily on Valley Church property of 4.28 acres. It didn't reach 1/3 of an acre until around 1540 (now called Old Jerusalem). The summary of the three major week-long feasts in Deut 16 required the annual attendance of all (adult?) males, or perhaps everyone but the wives. From the exodus accounts, that ranges from 600,000 to 2,000,000 people. To fit into Jerusalem, they would need to stand tightly packed 5-20 people high. All of Israel was about the size of the US state of New Jersey, our 4<sup>th</sup> smallest state. The state with the highest population density, NJ houses 8.9 million today. In the more agrarian economy of 1790, it housed only 184,000 people. They could pack onto Valley Church property without stacking. No record of Josiah exists outside of Tanakh.

Verse 21 is a concession to those far from Jerusalem. Verse 22 says don't deny food to someone ceremonially unclean. Verse 30 says don't even learn about the competition.

Christian Bibles end chapter 12 with verse 32, “Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.” I have read that Jewish Bibles have this instead as the first verse of the next chapter. In that position, it would show our chapter 13 as expansion of the idea to not add to, or take from, the commandments of Moses. If you were a serious, observant Jew of Second Temple Judaism, with this idea as a key part of your religious philosophy, how would you respond to the ideas you were beginning to hear about this new religion about Jesus? Of the many popular portrayals of Jesus, and things said about him, what ideas would you entertain and what would you reject? This would easily explain why Jews refused to worship Jesus as a god. By the first century, they were firmly monotheistic. Paul would certainly have been found guilty of this.

That command prevents them from ever changing the law. We also saw this in Deuteronomy 4. Moses, who defined the law, is about to die, so he seals the law from future changes. “And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go

in and take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you. You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you.” Be alert to ways that Israel, over the course of their history, managed to raise their standards of moral conduct, choosing not to follow parts of this law, while maintaining their position that this treaty remains in effect. Note how they rationalize their choices.

Deut 13 includes a familiar test of a prophet or a 'dreamer of dreams' with an unfamiliar twist. Even if they pass the prediction test, reject them if they promote other gods. If that happens, it's a test from your god. So kill that pawn of Yahweh. Oh, and even if a close friend or relative tries to sell you the competition, kill him. Many atheists, often more knowledgeable of the Bible than Christians, offer this as a prime example, saying, “If this is the nature of the god you serve, I want nothing to do with him.” That was also a complaint of the Marcionites, who therefore concluded that Jesus must have been a god different from the God of Israel. Oh, and if it happens in one of your cities, slaughter every human and animal in that city and burn it, and never rebuild it.

Imagine Paul on trial for violating Deuteronomy 13. As the prosecuting attorney, how would you accuse him? As the defense attorney, how would you defend him?

### *Son of God*

Deut 14:1 is one of several texts in Tanakh referring to Israel as sons of God or children of God. Others include Exodus 4:22-23, Psalm 80:15 Psalm 89:27, Isaiah 1:2 and Hosea 1:10 and 11:1. 2 Samuel 7:14 uses this term to refer to Solomon. The idea is referenced in Psalm 2:7, where a king of Israel threatens foreign kings who would dare challenge Israel. This is bravado, like the stories of the conquest of Canaan.

To be called a son of God was by no means an attribution of deity.

Deut 14 forbids Israel from the ceremonial / cultic practices of its peers. Kosher laws are stuck in the middle of these, suggesting to me they may have had a similar origin. Why is this restriction in Deuteronomy 14:21, "You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk."? How does the greater context of this sentence help you interpret it? 14:22 (reiterating 12:6) begins the description of my favorite tithe, also new with Deuteronomistic law. Spend 10% of your annual income on a big party. Invite the Levites, since they don't own land. That one will have to be in the place where Josiah will centralize worship (Jerusalem). Every 3 years, take another tithe and hold a party in your own local area for the Levites, the sojourners, the fatherless, and the widows. You had better do it, if you want Yahweh your Elohim to bless you.

This seems to conflict with the provisions for the firstborn sacrifice in Exodus 11:4 and Numbers 3:11-13. Do you sacrifice it or do you eat it yourself? Perhaps Josiah changed only the venue where the donor's share is to be eaten, and makes it a big communal party. See also Deut 12:15-16.

Deut 15:4, “But there will be no poor among you;” is part of the common motif of Utopian descriptions of the future benefits of obedience. Mark 14:7 shows Jesus acknowledging that it didn't work out that way, “For you always have the poor with you.” But, see Deut 15:11.

How do the economic/legal reforms of Deuteronomy 15 define neighbor? 15:12 limits the length of servitude of a Hebrew slave. Unless of course he or she wants to stay your slave forever. 15:18 is an interesting economic data point. The effective wages of a slave were half those of a worker. Perhaps that is just the amortized purchase price.

Deut 16:18 commands Israel to implement a civil judicial system. A very large share of the later rants of the prophets will be about violations of this one little section of Deuteronomistic law. We see some similar moral principles in Exodus 22-23. There, conflict resolution seems to be left to the priesthood. Deut 16 seems to replace this with a secular legal system. See my notes above on Deut 7 about the Asherah. Deut 17 prescribes stoning for serving the competition. Take note as you read the histories, to see if this was ever put into practice. Deut 17:8 prescribes an appeals court or supreme court (the priests). Disobeying a priest carries the death penalty. We see who held ultimate power in Israel. Jerusalem was thus the center of criminal judicial power as well as religious power.

The section beginning at Deut 17:14 about kings is very interesting. I think it was most likely written after Israel had kings, probably even to counter the extremes we will see by David and Solomon. It requires literacy, also an anachronism. It was post-facto permission. This reflects the 'reforms' of Josiah. Note that Josiah is the one who is said to have found these ancient texts, presumably lost or misplaced. More likely he is the one responsible for getting them written in the first place.

Deut 18 specifies the priesthood's share of the taxes (the sacrifices). Variations in these details show that their sacrificial practices varied over time. 18:8 says the priests can also receive income from the 'sale of his patrimony'. No one knows exactly what this meant. Some suggest it was whatever he could earn from his personal property and perhaps his personal labors outside of priestly duties. 18:10 codifies the new prohibition against child sacrifice, and new rules against divination, fortune-telling, and so on. Thus they could no longer use the urim and thummim. This, and much of what we see in Deuteronomy, resulted from the reforms of Josiah, some of which are noted in 2 Kings 23. Now I'm beginning to wonder whether even the very practice of monolatry began with Josiah.

Deut 18:15 Moses describes his successor (**Joshua**) without naming him. The transition happens in Deut 31 and 34:9-12. The book of Joshua begins with Joshua acting the role of prophet. He reiterates the reason no one ever hears God speak except for the designated prophet. See Deut 4-5. Two tests of a prophet are mentioned. If he speaks in the name of other gods, or if what he says does not happen, then kill him.

Deut 19 chronicles the continuing moral progress of Israel as they further restrict revenge. **Manslaughter** is defined. The penalty is self-imposed imprisonment in specific cities of refuge. See also Numbers 35. Murder still incurs the death penalty. 19:14 introduces **land property rights**. These would be meaningless for nomadic tribesmen. 19:15 covers **false witness**. The text makes clear this is more than simple dishonesty or lying. The earlier restriction on revenge (eye for eye) is restated.

Deut 20 covers **rules of warfare**. Since the priest here is acting in the role of a prophet, if you are defeated, you should kill the priest. That's not specified here, but seems implied by chapter 18. Within

Canaan, slaughter everything living. Outside of Canaan, offer peace first. Here, 'peace' means slavery instead of slaughter and plunder. No justification is given for attacking someone outside of Canaan, but if it happens, it's something God is giving you. But don't kill the food trees.

Deut 21 covers paying for unsolved murders. The nearest city must offer a new heifer in a ceremony to appease Yahweh. 21:10 covers taking a wife from your captives. This was another form of legal intermarriage with people outside of Israel, but only women. 21:15 protects the rights of the firstborn, even if it's from one of his wives that he no longer loves. 21:18 death penalty for a stubborn and rebellious son, disobedient to his parents. I wonder if rebellious daughters get a free pass. Or whether killing a rebellious daughter was so routine and accepted that it didn't need to be mentioned.

Deut 23 defines the outcasts. In context, to enter the assembly meant to become part of Israel (rather than a foreigner or just a sojourner). As we saw earlier, many violations of Torah could get you kicked out of the assembly. Israel viewed the 'assembly' as meaning those people participating in the Mosaic Covenant. They would be entitled to the blessings. But if they disobeyed, all Israel risks being punished. They were understandably selective about whom they allowed into the assembly. The crushed testicles and cut-off male organ of verse 1 most likely refers to those who were made eunuchs as part of the worship of some other gods. The Edomites were said to be descendants of Esau. The 'evil thing' of verse 9 probably refers only to ceremonial cleanness. Your Porta-Potty must be outside the camp, but only for solids. Women can be prostitutes, but not cult prostitutes. The 'wages of a dog' may refer to a male prostitute. Charge interest only to foreigners. Once again, verse 20 gives the reason for following all these rules. Hint: It's not because it's morally right. Eat your neighbor's grapes and grain (by hand), but don't take them with you. This may have helped foster social cohesion.

Deut 24 begins with a tiny bit of protection for the woman in divorce. Don't miss the significance of the first few words, "When a man takes a wife and marries her..." You never see a woman taking a husband. Generally, women have no choice in these matters. The divorcing husband can't take her back later, because she is now damaged goods. This is more like a model for slavery than for what we think of as a marriage. Verse 7 is too late for the brothers of Joseph. Verse 16 parallels the change in their view that God does not punish someone for the sins of his ancestors. Neither should you. The chapter ends with a bit about gleaning. They imposed rule of law, with justice and fair business dealings. That makes for a good society. Historically, Israel has had one of the best. There are notable modern exceptions, though.

Deut 25:17 The remark about Amalek attacking the laggards from the rear is not in the Exodus 17 account. Call him a bad guy, and blot out his memory. But as we shall see later, his tribe was not eradicated.

Deut 26 Indoctrinate your children and each other every year. Another re-affirmation of the covenant.

Deut 27:10 seems to mark the entry into Canaan as the beginning of the covenant period. Just like a modern real estate transaction, the people needed to sign every line, with witnesses. 27:11 sets up a dramatic antiphonal chorus. The children of Jacob (Israel) are split across two mountains (Gerizim and Ebal) with the people below. Blessings and curses are shouted from the mountains, as prescribed in

11:29. The people respond to each with ‘Amen’, probably meaning so be it. If these mountains are where we today think they are, they are about 2 miles apart, too far for the staging of this drama. The sons of Israel don’t seem to be divided by mother. It’s a strange mix of curses, so I suspect this story is not meant to be a comprehensive restatement of the law. I think this is the first we see of **cursings on individuals**, not on Israel as a whole. This is likely another change in ideas during Diaspora.

Deut 28 Here we go again! Obedience: blessings:: disobedience: cursings. Read all the details. This was Israel’s understanding of the Mosaic Covenant. At least, according to the Deuteronomistic source. It was also the philosophical foundation of the later prophetic worldview.

These chapters talk much more about the cursings than about the blessings (54 to 14 in verse count in chapter 28). They may be a precursor to Jewish prophetic and apocalyptic literature. Or they may be a rewriting of those worldviews into this nominally historical narrative. Or they are simply anachronisms.

Deut 31 covers the transition of power and the role of prophet to Joshua. 31:9 contains the single anachronistic statement upon which all claims of Mosaic authorship of Torah are based. This would be the ‘writing’ that Josiah said he ‘discovered’ but likely actually wrote.

But why Joshua? Moses had two sons. Gershom, the firstborn, meant sojourner. Despite the stories explaining why they should listen to Moses (a Midianite), Israel may still not have thought of Moses as one of their own genetic descent. Zipporah was daughter of a Midianite priest. Both Gershom and Eliezer promptly disappear from the written tradition.

Deut 32 begins with the swan song of Moses. This Song of Moses could well be the oldest material in the Bible, perhaps dating to the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century BCE. In the oldest ms we have of this text, verses 8-9 read, “When Elyon divided the nations, when he separated the sons of Adam, he established the borders of the nations according to the number of the sons of the gods. Yahweh’s portion was his people, [Israel] his allotted inheritance.” Some early mythology of the region said Yahweh was a son of El.

## **Review**

How much of this is instructions to all the people (versus just the priests)? How does the answer differ among the accounts in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy? For the people, how hard or complicated was it to keep? Is any of this impossible to keep? How much of this law was civil and how much ceremonial? Can you make a defensible case that none of this was superstition? Can you formulate a clear definition of sin as the word is used in this book? How does that differ from common modern Christian definitions of sin? What happens to Israel if they keep the terms? If they don't? How does this affect an afterlife?

This contract was with the tribes, not with individuals. If you are part of the tribe, by birth, marriage, purchase, or otherwise, you are bound by it. The contract specifies what the God of Israel expects from you if you choose to be part of the tribe. Christians say they worship the God of Israel. Explain and justify how what the God of Israel expects from you is any different from this.

After you have considered these questions, test your answers with a quick read through Leviticus and see if your answers are consistent with the text. Justify any remaining differences and/or adjust your answers.

## Resources

### Parallels between Exodus and Numbers

From the ESV Study Bible. J source on the left, P source on the right.

Ex. 18:1	Advice from Moses' father-in-law	Advice to Moses' father-in-law	Num. 10:29
Ex. 15:22	Three-day journey to Sinai	Three-day journey from Sinai	Num. 10:33
Ex. 15:22-26	Complaint about water	Unspecified complaint	Num. 11:1-3
Exodus 16	Manna and quail	Manna and quail	Num. 11:4-15, 31-35
Exodus 18	Leaders appointed to assist Moses	Leaders appointed to assist Moses	Num. 11:16-30
Ex. 15:20-21	Miriam's song of praise	Miriam and Aaron rebel	Numbers 12
Ex. 17:8-16	Israel defeats Amalek	Israel defeated by Amalek	Num. 14:39-45
Ex. 17:1-7	Water from rock	Water from rock	Num. 20:1-13
Ex. 32:6	People sacrifice to other gods	People sacrifice to other gods	Num. 25:2
Ex. 32:27	Killing of apostates demanded	Killing of apostates demanded	Num. 25:5
Ex. 32:28-29	Levites' status enhanced	Levites' (Phinehas's) status enhanced	Num. 25:6-13
Ex. 32:35	Plague on the people	Plague on the people	Num. 25:9