

עץ חיים

ETZ HAYIM

TORAH AND COMMENTARY

THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY
THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM



Produced by THE JEWISH PUBLICATION SOCIETY

Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary
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3080 Broadway
New York, NY 10027*

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Illustrations of the tabernacle and its furnishings by Joe Sikora.*

*Composition by VARDA Graphics, Skokie, Illinois
Design by Adrienne Onderdonk Dudden
Manufactured in the United States of America*

09 10 10 9 8

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bible. O.T. Pentateuch. Hebrew. 2001.

Etz Hayim: Torah and commentary / senior editor, David L. Lieber; literary editor, Jules Harlow; sponsored by the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

p. cm.

Text of the Pentateuch in Hebrew and English; commentary in English.

Includes the haftarat and commentary on them, p'shat and d'rash commentaries, comments on Conservative halakhic practice, topical essays, and other material.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-10: 0-8276-0712-1 ISBN-13: 978-0-8276-0712-5

1. Bible. O.T. Pentateuch—Commentaries. 2. Haftarat—Commentaries. 3. Bible. O.T. Pentateuch—Theology. 4. Conservative Judaism—Customs and practices. I. Lieber, David L. II. Harlow, Jules. III. United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. IV. Rabbinical Assembly. V. Bible. O.T. Pentateuch. English. Jewish Publication Society, 2001. VI. Title.

BS1222 .L54 2001

222'.1077—dc21

2001029757

8 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²Speak to Aaron and say to him, “When you mount the lamps, let the seven lamps give light at the front of the lampstand.” ³Aaron did so; he mounted the lamps at the front of the lampstand, as the LORD had commanded Moses.—⁴Now this is how the lampstand was made: it was hammered work of gold, hammered from base to petal. According to the pattern that the LORD had shown Moses, so was the lampstand made.

ח וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ² דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו בְּהֶעֱלִיתְךָ אֶת־הַנֵּרוֹת אֶל־מִוֶּלֶת פְּנֵי הַמְּנוֹרָה וְאִירוּ שִׁבְעַת הַנֵּרוֹת: ³ וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן אַהֲרֹן אֶל־מִוֶּלֶת פְּנֵי הַמְּנוֹרָה הֵעֲלָה נִרְתִּיָּהּ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה: ⁴ וְזֶה מַעֲשֵׂה הַמְּנִרָה מִקְשֵׁה זָהָב עַד־יְרִכָּה עַד־פְּרָחָהּ מִקְשֵׁה הוּא כַּמְרָאָה אֲשֶׁר הִרְאָה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה כִּן עָשָׂה אֶת־הַמְּנִרָה: ^פ

The Generation of the Exodus: The Wilderness Camp (continued)

FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR USE OF THE TABERNACLE (continued)

LIGHTING THE M'NORAH (8:1–4)

The *m'norah* had to be lit each night and tended each morning (Exod. 30:7–8). Instructions are given on how to light and position the lamps.

2. Aaron Only the high priest performed the service inside the tent.

4. hammered from base to petal The entire *m'norah* was made of a single piece of hammered gold. The lamps were detachable.

CHAPTER 8

The *m'norah*, originally one among many objects in the Tent of Meeting, has become one of the most familiar symbols of Judaism. More than 1000 years after the time of Aaron, the *m'norah* became the symbol of Aaron's descendants, the Hasmoneans, who reclaimed the temple of Jerusalem after the Maccabees' victory. (Today we use an eight-branched *m'norah*—now known more precisely as a *hanukkiyyah*—to commemorate the eight days of the *Hanukkah* miracle; the *m'norah* described here is seven branched.) The *m'norah*, carried off by Roman soldiers in a victory parade, is featured in a carving on the Arch of Titus in Rome, which celebrates the defeat of the Jews in 70 C.E.; 19 centuries later, the seven-branched *m'norah* became the seal of the State of Israel. Recalling the bush that burned but was not consumed, the light of the *m'norah* would never be permanently extinguished.

Isaac Luria taught that the six branches of the *m'norah* represent the several scientific and academic disciplines, whereas the center stalk represents the light of the Torah. Secular

learning and faith are not rivals; each has its own concerns and addresses its own set of questions. They shed light on each other and together they illumine our world.

Why does the Torah lay such emphasis on the *m'norah* among all the furnishings of the Tent of Meeting? “As I shined a light on Israel, making them conspicuous among the nations, let them shine a light on Me” (Num. R. 15:5). God has no visible form. Only when Jews live by the values of the Torah do they embody what God stands for and make God manifest in the world. “For the modern traditional Jew, the doctrine of the election and covenant of Israel offers a purpose for Jewish existence which transcends narrow self-interest. . . . It obligates us to build a just and compassionate society throughout the world and especially in the land of Israel, where we may teach by both personal and collective example what it means to be a covenant people, a light to the nations” (*Emet Ve-Emunah*).

3. Aaron did so Day after day, year after year, Aaron's attitude never changed. His work never became routine or boring. He approached each day with the same sense of reverence he brought to his first day (Vilna Gaon).

⁵The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ⁶Take the Levites from among the Israelites and purify them. ⁷This is what you shall do to them to purify them: sprinkle on them water of purification, and let them go over their whole body with a razor, and wash their clothes; thus they shall be purified. ⁸Let them take a bull of the herd, and with it a grain offering of choice flour with oil mixed in, and you take a second bull of the herd for a purification offering. ⁹You shall bring the Levites forward before the Tent of Meeting. Assemble the whole Israelite community, ¹⁰and bring the Levites forward before the LORD. Let the Israelites lay their hands upon the Levites, ¹¹and let Aaron designate the Levites before the LORD as an elevation offering from the Israelites, that they may perform the service of the LORD. ¹²The Levites shall now lay their hands upon the heads of the bulls; one shall be offered to the LORD as a purification offering and the other as a burnt offering, to make expiation for the Levites.

¹³You shall place the Levites in attendance upon Aaron and his sons, and designate them as an elevation offering to the LORD. ¹⁴Thus you shall set the Levites apart from the Israelites, and

PURIFICATION OF THE LEVITE WORKFORCE (vv. 5–22)

Before the levitical workforce is permitted to dismantle and handle the tabernacle and the other sacred objects, it must be purified.

6. purify them The purpose of the ceremony is purification. It is Moses who must see to it that the ritual is accomplished, but its execution is carried out mainly by Aaron.

7. sprinkle Moses performs this first step in the rite of purification.

water of purification Hebrew: *mei hattat*, the mixture of ashes of the “red” cow and ordinary fresh water that is sprinkled on any person or object contaminated by the dead (chap. 19).

8. you take a second bull From the Levites. The purification offering works expiation only for its offerer. It requires a bull for the high priest (Lev. 16:6) or the community—in this instance, the levitical workforce. Bathing cleanses them

⁵וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ⁶קַח אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם מִתּוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְטַהַרְתָּ אֹתָם: ⁷וְכֹה־תַעֲשֶׂה לָהֶם לְטַהֲרֵם הַיּוֹם עֲלֵיהֶם מִי חֲטָאת וְהִעֲבִירוּ תֵעַר עַל־כָּל־בְּשָׂרָם וְכִבְּסוּ בְּגֵדֵיהֶם וְהִטְהָרוּ: ⁸וְלָקַחוּ פֶּר בֶּן־בִּקָּר וּמִנְחָתוֹ סֹלֶת בָּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן וּפְר־שְׁנֵי בֶן־בִּקָּר תִּקַּח לְחֲטָאת: ⁹וְהִקְרַבְתָּ אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם לִפְנֵי אֱהֹל מוֹעֵד וְהִקְהַלְתָּ אֶת־כָּל־עַדְת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: ¹⁰וְהִקְרַבְתָּ אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְסִמְכוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־יְדֵיהֶם עַל־הַלְוִיִּם: ¹¹וְהִנִּיף אֶהֱרֹן אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם תְּנוּפָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה מֵאֵת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָיוּ לְעֹבֵד אֶת־עֲבֹדַת יְהוָה: ¹²וְהַלְוִיִּם יִסְמְכוּ אֶת־יְדֵיהֶם עַל רֹאשׁ הַפָּרִים וְעָשָׂה אֶת־הָאֶחָד חֲטָאת וְאֶת־הָאֶחָד עֹלָה לַיהוָה לְכַפֵּר עַל־הַלְוִיִּם:

¹³וְהִעֲמַדְתָּ אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם לִפְנֵי אֶהֱרֹן וּלְפָנֵי בְנָיו וְהִנַּפְתָּ אֹתָם תְּנוּפָה לַיהוָה: ¹⁴וְהִבַּדְלַתָּ אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם מִתּוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

of minor impurities, and the *hattat* waters and sacrifice cleanse them of severe impurities that might have affected the sanctuary and polluted its altar.

10. Israelites lay their hands upon the Levites This rite was conducted by the elders. The Levites are designated as Israel’s “sacrifice,” their representatives in the sanctuary. They now assume all of Israel’s responsibility for transporting the tabernacle.

11. designate the Levites . . . as an elevation offering It must be presumed that this ritual was executed only in symbolic form.

from the Israelites The Levites are transferred from the ranks of the Israelites to the property of the Lord through this ritual.

service That is, the work of removal.

12. shall be offered to make expiation Here, Aaron officiates. The ritual purification of the Levites by means of sacrificial expiation follows immediately upon their physical cleansing.

the Levites shall be Mine. ¹⁵Thereafter the Levites shall be qualified for the service of the Tent of Meeting, once you have purified them and designated them as an elevation offering. ¹⁶For they are formally assigned to Me from among the Israelites: I have taken them for Myself in place of all the first issue of the womb, of all the first-born of the Israelites. ¹⁷For every first-born among the Israelites, man as well as beast, is Mine; I consecrated them to Myself at the time that I smote every first-born in the land of Egypt. ¹⁸Now I take the Levites instead of every first-born of the Israelites; ¹⁹and from among the Israelites I formally assign the Levites to Aaron and his sons, to perform the service for the Israelites in the Tent of Meeting and to make expiation for the Israelites, so that no plague may afflict the Israelites for coming too near the sanctuary.

²⁰Moses, Aaron, and the whole Israelite community did with the Levites accordingly; just as the LORD had commanded Moses in regard to the Levites, so the Israelites did with them. ²¹The Levites purified themselves and washed their clothes; and Aaron designated them as an elevation offering before the LORD, and Aaron made expiation for them to purify them. ²²Thereafter the Levites were qualified to perform their service in the Tent of Meeting, under Aaron and his sons. As the LORD had commanded Moses in regard to the Levites, so they did to them.

16. formally assigned That is, “assigned as subordinates.” By this ritual, the Levites are assigned to the Lord, who then reassigns them to the priests.

18. Now I take That is, formally, through this ritual, although the intention was declared previously in 3:12.

19. make expiation for Better: “ransom”;

וְהָיוּ לִי הַלְוִיִּם: ¹⁵ וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן יָבֹאוּ הַלְוִיִּם לְעַבְדָּתְךָ אֶת־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְטַהַרְתָּ אֹתָם וְהִנַּפְתָּ אֹתָם תְּנוּפָה: ¹⁶ כִּי נְתָנִים נְתָנִים הִמָּדָה לִי מִתּוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תַּחַת פְּטֻרָתְךָ כָּל־רֶחֶם בְּכוֹר כֹּל מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְקַחְתִּי אֹתָם לִי: ¹⁷ כִּי לִי כָל־בְּכוֹר בְּבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאָדָם וּבַבְּהֵמָה בְּיוֹם הַפְּתִי כָל־בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם הִקְדַּשְׁתִּי אֹתָם לִי: ¹⁸ וְאַקַּח אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם תַּחַת כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: ¹⁹ וְאַתָּנָה אֶת־הַלְוִיִּם נְתָנִים לְאַהֲרֹן וּלְבָנָיו מִתּוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעַבְדָּתְךָ עֲבֹדָת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וּלְכַפֵּר עַל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא יִהְיֶה בְּבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל נֶגֶף בְּגֹשֶׁת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ:

²⁰ וַיַּעַשׂ מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן וְכָל־עֲדַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לַלְוִיִּם כְּכָל אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה לַלְוִיִּם כִּי עָשׂוּ לָהֶם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: ²¹ וַיִּתְחַטְּאוּ הַלְוִיִּם וַיִּכְבְּסוּ בְּגָדֵיהֶם וַיִּנָּף אֹהֲרֹן אֹתָם תְּנוּפָה לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וַיִּכַּפֵּר עֲלֵיהֶם אֹהֲרֹן לְטַהָרֵם: ²² וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן בָּאוּ הַלְוִיִּם לְעַבְדָּתְךָ עֲבֹדָתְךָ בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לִפְנֵי אֹהֲרֹן וּלְפָנֵי בְנָיו כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה עַל־הַלְוִיִּם כִּי עָשׂוּ לָהֶם: ס

the Levites will assume responsibility for any Israelite encroachment on the sacred area.

plague God’s angry response to idolatry and rebellion (see Exod. 20:5).

coming too near That is, encroaching on.

21. washed their clothes Bathing is implied whenever laundering is required.

19. so that no plague May all their visits to the sanctuary be for reasons of joy, not for calamity (Meir of Peremishlan). May all their memories of these visits be pleasant ones.

²³The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²⁴This is the rule for the Levites. From twenty-five years of age up they shall participate in the work force in the service of the Tent of Meeting; ²⁵but at the age of fifty they shall retire from the work force and shall serve no more. ²⁶They may assist their brother Levites at the Tent of Meeting by standing guard, but they shall perform no labor. Thus you shall deal with the Levites in regard to their duties.

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: ²⁴זֹאת אֲשֶׁר לַלְוִיִּם מִבֶּן חָמֵשׁ וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְמַעְלָה יָבוֹא לְצִבָּא וְצִבָּא בַעֲבֹדַת אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד: ²⁵וּמִבֶּן חֲמִשִּׁים שָׁנָה יָשׁוּב מִצִּבָּא הָעֹבְדָה וְלֹא יַעֲבֹד עוֹד: ²⁶וְשִׂרְתָּ אֶת־אָחִיו בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לְשֹׁמֵר מִשְׁמֶרֶת וְעֹבְדָה לֹא יַעֲבֹד כִּכָּה תַעֲשֶׂה לַלְוִיִּם בְּמִשְׁמֶרְתָּם: פ

9 The LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, on the first new moon of the second year following the exodus from the land of Egypt, saying: ²Let the Israelite people offer the passover sacrifice at its set time: ³you shall offer it on the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight, at its set time; you shall offer it in accordance with all its rules and rites.

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְבַר־סִינַי שְׁלִישִׁי בַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁנִיית לְצֵאתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בַּחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן לֵאמֹר: ²וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַפֶּסַח בְּמוֹעֵדוֹ: ³בְּאַרְבָּעָה עֶשְׂרִיּוֹם בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה בֵּין הָעֶרְבִים תַּעֲשׂוּ אֹתוֹ בְּמוֹעֵדוֹ כְּכֹל־חֻקֹּתָיו וְכִכָּל־מִשְׁפָּטָיו תַּעֲשׂוּ אֹתוֹ: שְׁלִישִׁי

AGE LIMITS FOR LEVITICAL DUTIES (vv. 23–26)

When he reaches the age of 50, a Levite must no longer participate in the arduous task of removing the tabernacle. He does not withdraw into retirement, however, but continues to perform guard duty, the other main levitical function.

24. twenty-five years The tradition here differs from that in 4:3, which states that the service begins at age 30.

participate in the work force in the service of That is, qualify to serve in the workforce.

26. labor Porterage in the wilderness.

duties That is, guard duty.

FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR DEPARTURE (9:1–10:10)

The Israelites make ready to depart from the wilderness of Sinai. Chapters 9 and 10 tell of their final preparations.

THE SECOND PESAH (9:1–14)

Pesah falls on the 14th day of the month, after the erection and dedication of the tabernacle, the

altar dedication, and the purification of the Levites.

2. at its set time Even if it coincides with *Shabbat*.

3. at twilight Literally, “between the two settings.” That is, between sunset and darkness.

in accordance with all its rules and rites

26. See Comment to 4:3.

CHAPTER 9

When the Israelites were leaving Egypt (Exod. 12), the events of the first *Pesah* were aspects of the Exodus itself, things that had to be done by them before leaving. They included the sacrifice of a lamb and the eating of *matzah*. The

commandment here is something different—an annual commemoration or re-enactment of that first Exodus, to recall what happened that night in Egypt. That event is so central to Jewish self-understanding that we are told to summon up the memory of it every spring and to look on every *Shabbat* and holiday as “a remembrance of the Exodus.”

⁴Moses instructed the Israelites to offer the passover sacrifice; ⁵and they offered the passover sacrifice in the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight, in the wilderness of Sinai. Just as the LORD had commanded Moses, so the Israelites did.

⁶But there were some men who were impure by reason of a corpse and could not offer the passover sacrifice on that day. Appearing that same day before Moses and Aaron, ⁷those men said to them, “Impure though we are by reason of a corpse, why must we be debarred from presenting the LORD’s offering at its set time with the rest of the Israelites?” ⁸Moses said to them, “Stand by, and let me hear what instructions the LORD gives about you.”

⁹And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ¹⁰Speak to the Israelite people, saying: When any of you or of your posterity who are defiled by a corpse or are on a long journey would offer a passover sacrifice to the LORD, ¹¹they shall offer it in the second month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight. They shall eat it

4 וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת הַפֶּסַח: 5 וַיַּעֲשׂוּ אֶת־הַפֶּסַח בְּרֵאשׁוֹן בְּאַרְבַּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ בֵּין הָעַרְבִים בְּמִדְבַר סִינַי כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה כִּן עָשׂוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

6 וַיְהִי אֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ טְמֵאִים לְנַפְשׁ אָדָם וְלֹא־יָכְלוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת־הַפֶּסַח בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וַיִּקְרְבוּ לִפְנֵי מֹשֶׁה וּלְפָנֵי אַהֲרֹן בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא: 7 וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים הֲהֵמָּה אֵלֵינוּ אֲנַחְנוּ טְמֵאִים לְנַפְשׁ אָדָם לָמָּה נִגְרַע לְבַלְתִּי הַקָּרֵב אֶת־קִרְבָּן יְהוָה בְּמַעֲדוֹ בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: 8 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם מֹשֶׁה עֲמְדוּ וְאִשְׁמְעָה מִה־יִצְוָה יְהוָה לָכֶם: פ

9 וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: 10 דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר אִישׁ אִישׁ כִּי־יִהְיֶה־טְמֵא | לְנַפְשׁ אוֹ בְּדֶרֶךְ רְחֹקָה* לָכֶם אוֹ לְדַרְתֵיכֶם וְעָשָׂה פֶסַח לַיהוָה: 11 בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי בְּאַרְבַּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם בֵּין הָעַרְבִים יַעֲשׂוּ אֹתוֹ עַל־מִצּוֹת וּמִרְרִים

v. 10. נקוד על ה'

The blood of the first *pesah* sacrifice was smeared on the doorposts and lintels of the Israelite homes in Egypt. This time, in the wilderness of Sinai, the blood is to be smeared on the entrances to their tents.

7. debarred Their fear is that they would be excluded from the national festival.

8. Stand by At the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.

10. defiled by a corpse According to the Sages, this specific impurity includes all other causes of impurity. Any kind of impurity disqualifies an individual from partaking of the *pesah* sacrifice (Lev. 7:20–21).

6–12. People who were ritually impure felt deprived at not being able to share in this central national reaffirmation. They brought their problem to Moses, who in turn brought it before God. God acknowledges their sincerity and grants them a “second *Pesah*” one month later. To the sincere individual, life often does offer second chances for spiritual fulfillment

that may have been missed when the opportunities first presented themselves.

10. or . . . on a long journey The Hebrew can also mean “or far off.” The Talmud understands the phrase to include a person who is spiritually distant from God and from the Jewish people on the holiday (JT Pes. 9:2). Such a person need not feel permanently exiled. Even

HALAKHAH L'MA·ASEH

9:11. with unleavened bread and bitter herbs This verse is the source for the “Hillel sandwich”—in which the *maror* (bitter herb) is eaten with *matzah* during the *Pesah Seider* (BT Pes. 115a).

with unleavened bread and bitter herbs,¹² and they shall not leave any of it over until morning. They shall not break a bone of it. They shall offer it in strict accord with the law of the passover sacrifice.¹³ But if a man who is pure and not on a journey refrains from offering the passover sacrifice, that person shall be cut off from his kin, for he did not present the LORD's offering at its set time; that man shall bear his guilt.

¹⁴And when a stranger who resides with you would offer a passover sacrifice to the LORD, he must offer it in accordance with the rules and rites of the passover sacrifice. There shall be one law for you, whether stranger or citizen of the country.

¹⁵On the day that the Tabernacle was set up, the cloud covered the Tabernacle, the Tent of the Pact; and in the evening it rested over the Tabernacle in the likeness of fire until morning.¹⁶ It was always so: the cloud covered it, appearing as fire by night.¹⁷ And whenever the cloud lifted from the Tent, the Israelites would set out accordingly; and at the spot where the cloud set-

יֹאכְלָהוּ: ¹² לֹא־יִשְׁאֲרוּ מִמֶּנּוּ עַד־בֹּקֶר וְעֶצֶם לֹא יִשְׁבְּרוּ־בּוּ בְכָל־חֻקַּת הַפֶּסַח יַעֲשׂוּ אֹתוֹ: ¹³ וְהָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־הוּא טָהוֹר וּבְדַרְךָ לֹא־הָיָה וְחָדַל לַעֲשׂוֹת הַפֶּסַח וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהִוא מֵעַמִּיהָ כִּי אֶקְרַב יְהוָה לֹא הַקְרִיב בְּמַעְדּוֹ חֲטָאוֹ יִשְׂאֵהָ אִישׁ הַהוּא:

¹⁴ וְכִי־יִגֹּוֹר אֶתְכֶם גֹּוֹר וְעָשָׂה פֶסֶח לִיהוָה בְּחֻקַּת הַפֶּסַח וּכְמִשְׁפָּטוֹ בֵּן יַעֲשֶׂה חֻקָּה אַחַת יְהוָה לָכֶם וְלַגֵּר וְלֹא־זָרַח הָאָרֶץ: פ

¹⁵ וּבַיּוֹם הַקִּיִּים אֶת־הַמִּשְׁכָּן כֶּסֶה הָעֲנָן אֶת־הַמִּשְׁכָּן לְאֹהֶל הָעֵדוּת וּבַעֲרֵב יְהוָה עַל־הַמִּשְׁכָּן כְּמִרְאֵה־אֵשׁ עַד־בֹּקֶר: ¹⁶ בֵּן יְהוָה תָּמִיד הָעֲנָן יִכְסֶּנּוּ וּמִרְאֵה־אֵשׁ לַיְלָה: ¹⁷ וּלְפִי הָעֲלוֹת הָעֲנָן מֵעַל הָאֹהֶל וְאֶחְרֵי־כֵן יִסְעוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבַמְּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר

12. not break a bone of it The animal must be retained in its wholeness (see Exod. 12:46).

13. The paschal sacrifice is the only holiday observance whose willful neglect is punishable by the divine penalty of *karet* (being “cut off” from one’s kin). This metaphor derives from the image of a tree cut off from its roots. Elsewhere, it includes a series of related punishments by God, including premature death. The paschal sacrifice, as a commemoration of the Exodus, is a reaffirmation of the covenant struck by God with Israel at the beginning of its national existence. Failure to participate in the rite—except under the circumstances stipulated here—is equivalent to a breach of the covenant.

14. The resident alien male may participate

in the paschal offering if he is circumcised (Exod. 12:48).

THE FIRE-CLOUD (vv. 15–23)

Israel’s movement in the wilderness, interrupted by the Sinaitic legislation (Exod. 19–Num. 9), is now resumed. God leads Israel in its march by an appointed sign, a cloud-encased fire.

15. On the day The first day of the first month of the second year (Exod. 40:17).

the Tabernacle, the Tent of the Pact The tent shrine, not the entire enclosure.

17. Tent The tabernacle, God’s earthly presence, moved only when God so desired.

settled Presumably, the spot under the cloud marked the center of the camp, where the taber-

the wicked child of the *Haggadah* should always feel that a return is possible.

14. Current Jewish practice endorses inviting non-Jews to the *Seider*.

16. The function of religion is often to in-

trude a cloud on our bright days, reminding us of suffering in the world (as breaking a glass at a wedding recalls the destruction of the Temple), and to send light into our darkest nights, keeping us from despair.

tled, there the Israelites would make camp.¹⁸ At a command of the LORD the Israelites broke camp, and at a command of the LORD they made camp: they remained encamped as long as the cloud stayed over the Tabernacle.¹⁹ When the cloud lingered over the Tabernacle many days, the Israelites observed the LORD's mandate and did not journey on.²⁰ At such times as the cloud rested over the Tabernacle for but a few days, they remained encamped at a command of the LORD, and broke camp at a command of the LORD.²¹ And at such times as the cloud stayed from evening until morning, they broke camp as soon as the cloud lifted in the morning. Day or night, whenever the cloud lifted, they would break camp.²² Whether it was two days or a month or a year—however long the cloud lingered over the Tabernacle—the Israelites remained encamped and did not set out; only when it lifted did they break camp.²³ On a sign from the LORD they made camp and on a sign from the LORD they broke camp; they observed the LORD's mandate at the LORD's bidding through Moses.

יִשְׁפֹּן-שָׁם הָעֶנָן שָׁם יִחַנוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל :
 18 עַל-פִּי יְהוָה יִסְעוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל-פִּי
 יְהוָה יִחַנוּ כָּל-יְמֵי אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁפֹּן הָעֶנָן
 עַל-הַמִּשְׁכָּן יִחַנוּ :¹⁹ וּבְהָאֲרִיף הָעֶנָן עַל-
 הַמִּשְׁכָּן יָמִים רַבִּים וְשָׁמְרוּ בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל
 אֶת-מִשְׁמַרְתּוֹ יְהוָה וְלֹא יִסְעוּ :²⁰ וַיֵּשׁ
 אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה הָעֶנָן יָמִים מְסֻפָּר עַל-הַמִּשְׁכָּן
 עַל-פִּי יְהוָה יִחַנוּ וְעַל-פִּי יְהוָה יִסְעוּ :
 21 וַיֵּשׁ אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה הָעֶנָן מֵעֶרֶב עַד-בֹּקֶר
 וְנִעְלָה הָעֶנָן בִּבְקֶר וְנִסְעוּ אוֹ יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה
 וְנִעְלָה הָעֶנָן וְנִסְעוּ :²² אוֹ-יָמִים אוֹ-חֹדֶשׁ
 אוֹ-יָמִים בְּהָאֲרִיף הָעֶנָן עַל-הַמִּשְׁכָּן
 לִשְׁפֹּן עֲלֵיו יִחַנוּ בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא יִסְעוּ
 וּבְהִעָלְתוֹ יִסְעוּ :²³ עַל-פִּי יְהוָה יִחַנוּ
 וְעַל-פִּי יְהוָה יִסְעוּ אֶת-מִשְׁמַרְתּוֹ יְהוָה
 שְׁמְרוּ עַל-פִּי יְהוָה בְּיַד-מֹשֶׁה : פ

10 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:² Have two silver trumpets made; make them of hammered work. They shall serve you to summon the community and to set the divisions in motion.³ When both are blown in long blasts, the whole community shall assemble before you at

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר :² עֲשֵׂה
 לָךְ שְׁתֵּי חֲצוֹצְרוֹת כֹּסֶף מְקֻשָּׁה תַעֲשֶׂה
 אֹתָם וְהָיוּ לָךְ לְמִקְרָא הָעֵדָה וּלְמַסַּע
 אֶת-הַמַּחֲנֹת :³ וְתִקְעוּ בָהֶן וְנוֹעְדוּ אֵלַיךְ

nacle was to be erected. As soon as that task was completed, the cloud would descend to envelop the Tent.

18. It must be assumed that when the cloud lifted, it proceeded to the head of the column, and that the tabernacle was reassembled beneath it wherever it stopped. The Israelites' march to the Promised Land was conducted at the direction of God, not by mortals.

19–22. The cloud, not the fire, decided the line of march, which means that Israel marched only by day.

21. cloud . . . from evening to morning It had the appearance of fire at night.

TRUMPETS (*HATZOTZ'ROT*) (10:1–10)

At God's command, the trumpets sound and the people assemble in marching formation. The use of the trumpets is Israel's response to the divine signal given by the fire-cloud.

2. hammered work The trumpets probably were molded by hammering the metallic foil over a model.

the entrance of the Tent of Meeting; ⁴and if only one is blown, the chieftains, heads of Israel's contingents, shall assemble before you. ⁵But when you sound short blasts, the divisions encamped on the east shall move forward; ⁶and when you sound short blasts a second time, those encamped on the south shall move forward. Thus short blasts shall be blown for setting them in motion, ⁷while to convoke the congregation you shall blow long blasts, not short ones. ⁸The trumpets shall be blown by Aaron's sons, the priests; they shall be for you an institution for all time throughout the ages.

⁹When you are at war in your land against an aggressor who attacks you, you shall sound short blasts on the trumpets, that you may be remembered before the LORD your God and be delivered from your enemies. ¹⁰And on your joyous occasions—your fixed festivals and new moon days—you shall sound the trumpets over your burnt offerings and your sacrifices of well-being. They shall be a reminder of you before your God: I, the LORD, am your God.

כָּל־הַעֲדָה אֶל־פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד: ⁴ וְאִם־בְּאַחַת יִתְקְעוּ וְנוֹעְדוּ אֵלֶיךָ הַנְּשִׂאִים רֹאשֵׁי אֲלֵפֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: ⁵ וְתִקְעֶתֶם תְּרוּעָה וְנָסְעוּ הַמַּחֲנֹת הַחֲנִיִּים קִדְמָה: ⁶ וְתִקְעֶתֶם תְּרוּעָה שְׁנִית וְנָסְעוּ הַמַּחֲנֹת הַחֲנִיִּים תִּימְנָה תְּרוּעָה יִתְקְעוּ לְמַסְעֵיהֶם: ⁷ וּבִהְקֵהִיל אֶת־הַקְּהָל תִּתְקְעוּ וְלֹא תִרְיעוּ: ⁸ וּבְנִי אֶהְרֹן הַכֹּהֲנִים יִתְקְעוּ בַּחֲצֹצְרוֹת וְהָיוּ לָכֶם לְחֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם:

⁹ וְכִי־תִבָּאוּ מִלְחָמָה בְּאֶרְצְכֶם עַל־הַיָּצֵר הַיָּצֵר אֶתְכֶם וְהִרְעַתֶם בַּחֲצֹצְרוֹת וְנִזְפַּרְתֶּם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְנוֹשַׁעְתֶּם מֵאִיְבֵיכֶם: ¹⁰ וּבְיוֹם שְׂמֵחַתְכֶם וּבְמוֹעֲדֵיכֶם וּבְרֵאשֵׁי חַדְשֵׁיכֶם וְתִקְעֶתֶם בַּחֲצֹצְרוֹת עַל עֲלֹתֵיכֶם וְעַל זִבְחֵי שְׁלָמֵיכֶם וְהָיוּ לָכֶם לְזִכְרוֹן לִפְנֵי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: פ

חמישי ¹¹ וַיְהִי בַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁנִית בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי

¹¹In the second year, on the twentieth day of

- 4. assemble before you** At the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.
- 6. them** The remaining divisions.
- 8. priests** In the ancient Near East, priests were

an integral part of a military force (see Deut. 20:2). **throughout the ages** The perpetual use of the trumpets is meant for assembly and for war, not for breaking camp (Ibn Ezra).

The Generation of the Exodus: The March to Transjordan (10:11–22:1)

The march takes about 40 years. Israel and its leaders are wondrously led and fed by God—but

respond with rebellion. This section is concerned mostly with the opening and the closing months.

FROM SINAI TO KADESH (10:11–12:16)

THE ORDER OF THE MARCH (10:11–28)

11. the cloud The ascending and descending

cloud was the divine sign indicating when to break and when to make camp; its movement determined the direction of the march.

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH
10:5–7. short blasts . . . long blasts These verses are the basis for the Talmud's rule that in blowing the *shofar* on *Rosh ha-Shanah*, the *t'ki-ah* and the *t'ru-ah* are different sounds, and that every *t'ru-ah* must be preceded and followed by a *t'ki-ah* (BT RH 34a).

the second month, the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle of the Pact ¹²and the Israelites set out on their journeys from the wilderness of Sinai. The cloud came to rest in the wilderness of Paran.

¹³When the march was to begin, at the LORD's command through Moses, ¹⁴the first standard to set out, troop by troop, was the division of Judah. In command of its troops was Nahshon son of Amminadab; ¹⁵in command of the tribal troop of Issachar, Nethanel son of Zuar; ¹⁶and in command of the tribal troop of Zebulun, Eliab son of Helon.

¹⁷Then the Tabernacle would be taken apart; and the Gershonites and the Merarites, who carried the Tabernacle, would set out.

¹⁸The next standard to set out, troop by troop, was the division of Reuben. In command of its troop was Elizur son of Shedeur; ¹⁹in command of the tribal troop of Simeon, Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai; ²⁰and in command of the tribal troop of Gad, Eliasaph son of Deuel.

²¹Then the Kohathites, who carried the sacred objects, would set out; and by the time they arrived, the Tabernacle would be set up again.

²²The next standard to set out, troop by troop, was the division of Ephraim. In command of its troop was Elishama son of Ammihud; ²³in command of the tribal troop of Manasseh, Gamaliel son of Pedahzur; ²⁴and in command of the tribal troop of Benjamin, Abidan son of Gideoni.

²⁵Then, as the rear guard of all the divisions, the standard of the division of Dan would set

בְּעֶשְׂרִים בַּחֹדֶשׁ נִעְלָה הָעֶנָן מֵעַל מִשְׁכַּן הָעֵדוּת: ¹² וַיִּסְעוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִסְעֵיהֶם מִמִּדְבַּר סִינַי וַיִּשְׁכְּן הָעֶנָן בְּמִדְבַּר פָּאֲרָן: ¹³ וַיִּסְעוּ בְּרֵאשֹׁנָה עַל־פִּי יְהוָה בְּיַד־מֹשֶׁה: ¹⁴ וַיִּסַּע דָּגֹל מַחֲנֵה בְנֵי־יְהוּדָה בְּרֵאשֹׁנָה לְצַבְאוֹתָם וְעַל־צָבָאוֹ נָחֲשׁוֹן בֶּן־עַמִּינָדָב: ¹⁵ וְעַל־צָבָא מִטֵּה בְנֵי יִשְׁשַׁכָּר נֹתְנָאֵל בֶּן־צוּעֵר: ¹⁶ וְעַל־צָבָא מִטֵּה בְנֵי זְבוּלֹן אֵילִיָּאֵב בֶּן־חֵלּוֹן: ¹⁷ וְהוֹרֵד הַמִּשְׁכָּן וְנִסְעוּ בְנֵי־גֵרְשׁוֹן וּבְנֵי מְרָרִי נֹשְׂאֵי הַמִּשְׁכָּן: ¹⁸ וְנִסַּע דָּגֹל מַחֲנֵה רְאוּבֵן לְצַבְאוֹתָם וְעַל־צָבָאוֹ אֵלִיָּצוּר בֶּן־שְׂדִיאוֹר: ¹⁹ וְעַל־צָבָא מִטֵּה בְנֵי שְׁמֵעוֹן שְׁלֵמִיאֵל בֶּן־צוּרִי שְׂדִי: ²⁰ וְעַל־צָבָא מִטֵּה בְנֵי־גָד אֵלִיסָף בֶּן־דְּעוּאֵל:

²¹ וְנִסְעוּ הַקְּהָתִים נֹשְׂאֵי הַמִּקְדָּשׁ וְהַקִּימוּ אֶת־הַמִּשְׁכָּן עַד־בָּאֵם: ²² וְנִסַּע דָּגֹל מַחֲנֵה בְנֵי־אֶפְרַיִם לְצַבְאוֹתָם וְעַל־צָבָאוֹ אֵלִישַׁמֶּע בֶּן־עַמִּיהוּד: ²³ וְעַל־צָבָא מִטֵּה בְנֵי מְנַשֶּׁה גַמְלִיאֵל בֶּן־פְּדָה־צוּר: ²⁴ וְעַל־צָבָא מִטֵּה בְנֵי בִנְיָמִן אַבִּידָן בֶּן־גִּידְעוֹנִי: ²⁵ וְנִסַּע דָּגֹל מַחֲנֵה בְנֵי־דָן מֵאִסָּף לְכָל־הַמַּחֲנֹת לְצַבְאוֹתָם וְעַל־צָבָאוֹ אַחִיעֶזֶר

12. set out The root is נסע (pull up stakes), a term from nomadic travel, in which journeys begin by pulling up tent pins.

wilderness of Paran Probably not a place of encampment but the general name for the northern half of the Sinai Peninsula, between Midian (in Transjordan) and Egypt.

13. through Moses Even though the ascending cloud was visible to the entire people, Moses

alone determined when the march would resume.

14. its That is, the tribe of Judah's.

17. Gershonite and Merarite Levites transported the tabernacle by wagon ahead of the Kohathites. When the latter entered the new encampment bearing the sacred objects on their shoulders, they would find the tabernacle reassembled and ready to receive these objects.

out, troop by troop. In command of its troop was Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai; ²⁶in command of the tribal troop of Asher, Pagiel son of Ocran; ²⁷and in command of the tribal troop of Naphtali, Ahira son of Enan.

²⁸Such was the order of march of the Israelites, as they marched troop by troop.

²⁹Moses said to Hobab son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are setting out for the place of which the LORD has said, 'I will give it to you.' Come with us and we will be generous with you; for the LORD has promised to be generous to Israel."

³⁰"I will not go," he replied to him, "but will return to my native land." ³¹He said, "Please do not leave us, inasmuch as you know where we should camp in the wilderness and can be our guide. ³²So if you come with us, we will ex-

בְּ-עַמֵּי שְׂדֵי: ²⁶וְעַל-צְבָא מִטֵּה בְּנֵי אֲשֶׁר
פָּגְעִיאל בֶּן-עֶכְרָן: ²⁷וְעַל-צְבָא מִטֵּה בְּנֵי
נַפְתָּלִי אַחִירַע בֶּן-עֵינָן:
²⁸אֵלֶּה מִסְעֵי בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל לְצַבְאָתָם
וַיִּסְעוּ: ח

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְחֹבָב בֶּן-רְעוּאֵל הַמִּדְיָנִי
חֲתָן מִשָּׁה נְסֻעִים | אֲנַחְנוּ אֶל-הַמְּקוֹם
אֲשֶׁר אָמַר יְהוָה אֲתוּ אַתָּן לָכֶם לְכֹה
אֲתָנוּ וְהִטַּבְנוּ לָךְ כִּי-יְהוּדָה דְּבַר-טוֹב
עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו לֹא אֵלָךְ כִּי אִם-אֶל-אֶרְצִי
וְאֶל-מִוְלַדְתִּי אֵלָךְ: ³¹וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-נָא
תַעֲזֹב אֲתָנוּ כִּי | עַל-כֵּן יָדַעְתָּ חֲנֻתָנוּ
בְּמִדְבָּר וְהֵייתָ לָנוּ לְעֵינָיִם: ³²וְהָיָה כִּי-

28. marched troop by troop The Israelites marched in military formation.

GUIDANCE IN THE WILDERNESS:
HOBAB (vv. 29–32)

Moses, certain that only a short journey lies ahead, asks Hobab to serve as Israel's guide in the wilderness.

29. Hobab son of Reuel This is one of three ancient traditions concerning the name of Moses' father-in-law (cf. Exod. 2:18; 18:1).

We are setting out Immediately, for the Promised Land. Moses had no premonition of the catastrophic episode of the scouts (chaps. 13–14),

which would result in 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.

to be generous Hobab will be awarded territory with Israel in the Promised Land. Scripture confirms that the tribe of Hobab indeed settled in the southern region of the tribe of Judah (Judg. 1:16, 4:11).

30. native land Hobab lived in the vicinity of the Gulf of Aqaba and thus would be in the direction of Israel's march.

31. know Some ancient translations understand this as "have known"; that is, Hobab is rewarded for past services.

32. Hobab's reply is not given, but the later

CHAPTER 10

25. The tribe of Dan brought up the rear in the marching order. The Torah describes Dan as "gatherer" (*m'assef*), prompting Rashi to speculate that Dan's task was to gather up lost objects that had been dropped on the way and return them to their owners. They would also gather in straying individuals who had become lost or had fallen behind. One source suggests that the tribe of Dan was chosen for this role because, even though its members were weak in religious faith (the territory of Dan would

later become a site of idol worship), they were strong in their love for their fellow Israelites. There is a need in today's community for people who express their religious faith by caring for the left-behind.

29. The Israelites have a cloud to lead them by day and a pillar of fire to illumine their path by night. Why does Moses plead with his non-Israelite relative to be their guide? Because one may never assume that a miracle will occur. God sends miracles when God chooses to, not necessarily when we request or require them.

tend to you the same bounty that the LORD grants us.”

³³They marched from the mountain of the LORD a distance of three days. The Ark of the Covenant of the LORD traveled in front of them on that three days' journey to seek out a resting place for them; ³⁴and the LORD's cloud kept above them by day, as they moved on from camp.

³⁵When the Ark was to set out, Moses would say:

Advance, O LORD!

May Your enemies be scattered,

And may Your foes flee before You!

³⁶And when it halted, he would say:

Return, O LORD,

You who are Israel's myriads of thousands!

תֵּלֶךְ עִמָּנוּ וְהָיָה | הַטּוֹב הַהוּא אֲשֶׁר
יִיטִיב יְהוָה עִמָּנוּ וְהִטְבְּנוּ לָךְ:

³³וַיִּסְעוּ מֵהָר יְהוָה דְּרֹךְ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים
וְאָרוֹן בְּרִית־יְהוָה נָסַע לִפְנֵיהֶם דְּרֹךְ
שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים לְתוֹר לָהֶם מְנוּחָה: ³⁴וַעֲנַן
יְהוָה עָלֵיהֶם יוֹמָם בְּנִסְעֵם מִן־
הַמַּחֲנֶה: ז' * ס

ששי ³⁵וַיְהִי בְּנִסְעַת הָאָרֶן וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה

קוּמָה | יְהוָה

וַיִּפְצֹל אֵיבֹיךָ

וַיִּנָּסוּ מִשְׁנֵאֵיךָ מִפְּנֵיךָ:

וּבִנְחָה וּבְנַחְוָה יֹאמֶר ³⁶

שׁוּבָה יְהוָה

רַבְבוֹת אֲלֵפֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: ז' * פ

v. 35. סימנית מנוזרת וגם נקראת נ' הפוכה

v. 36. סימנית מנוזרת וגם נקראת נ' הפוכה

presence of his descendants in the Holy Land indicates that his response was in the affirmative.

GUIDANCE IN THE WILDERNESS:

THE ARK (vv. 33–36)

The first stage of the march is a three-day journey to Taberah in the wilderness of Paran.

33. mountain of the LORD Only here does this phrase designate Mount Sinai. After the Temple is built in Jerusalem, “mountain of the LORD” refers to the Temple Mount.

a distance of three days To their first station.

The Ark . . . traveled in front This contradicts 2:17, where we are told the Ark traveled in the midst of the Israelites. According to Ibn Ezra, during this initial stage the Ark did indeed precede the marchers, because the people were fearful of the dangers in the wilderness. Actually, we have

here an ancient tradition (echoed in 1 Sam. 4:3ff.) about the role of the Ark, attested to also outside of Israel.

34. the LORD's cloud kept above them Some explain that the Ark served as a guide while the cloud was suspended over them as shade and protection. Others claim the reverse: The cloud was the guide, and the Ark was carried in the center of the marching columns.

36. You who are Israel's God is declared equivalent to the armies of Israel. An ancient Sage understood this to mean that just as the divine Presence rules above with many thousands of myriads, so the divine Presence rules below.

myriads of thousands An astronomically large number. The Hebrew word *elef* (construct form: *alfei*) involves a play on words; it means both “thousands” and “clans.”

35–36. During our years of wandering, exile, and persecution, when we were vulnerable to those who sought to do us harm, our prayer was “Advance, O LORD! May Your enemies be scattered!” During tranquil times, when the danger is not persecution but assimilation, our prayer is a homiletic interpretation of verse 36:

“O LORD, return the thousands of Israel who have strayed.” These verses are familiar from the service of taking the Torah from the Ark and returning it to the Ark before and after the Torah reading. Does God have enemies? Anyone who hates the Jewish people because we strive to do the will of God is an enemy of God (*Sifrei*).

11 The people took to complaining bitterly before the LORD. The LORD heard and was incensed: a fire of the LORD broke out against them, ravaging the outskirts of the camp. ²The people cried out to Moses. Moses prayed to the LORD, and the fire died down. ³That place was named Taberah, because a fire of the LORD had broken out against them.

⁴The riffraff in their midst felt a gluttonous craving; and then the Israelites wept and said, "If only we had meat to eat! ⁵We remember the fish that we used to eat free in Egypt, the

יא וַיְהִי הָעַם כְּמִתְאַנְנִים רַע בְּאָזְנֵי יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה וַיִּחַר אַפּוֹ וַתִּבְעַר־בָּם אֵשׁ יְהוָה וַתֹּאכַל בְּקֶצֶה הַמַּחֲנֶה: ² וַיִּצְעַק הָעַם אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוָה וַתִּשְׁקַע הָאֵשׁ: ³ וַיִּקְרָא שְׁם־הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא תִבְעָרָה כִּי־בִעְרָה בָּם אֵשׁ יְהוָה: ⁴ וְהָאִסְפָּסְפָּ* אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבּוֹ הִתְאַוּוּ תֹאֲוָה וַיִּשְׁבוּ וַיִּבְכּוּ גַם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ מִי יֵאָכְלֵנוּ בָּשָׂר: ⁵ וַזְכֵּרְנוּ אֶת־הַדָּגָה אֲשֶׁר־

א' נחח v. 4.

THE COMPLAINT AT TABERAH (11:1–3)

1. took to complaining Hebrew: *k'mit-on'nim*; the emphatic letter *kaf* at the beginning gives a sense of complaining bitterly. The basis for the complaint is not stated. According to Rashbam, the people objected to the forced marches. An additional complaint may have been a lack of water.

before the LORD Literally, "in the ears of the LORD." They voiced their complaints directly, brazenly, to God.

fire of the LORD Probably lightning (see Exod. 9:23–24, 19:18).

THE COMPLAINT AT KIBROTH-HATTA'AVAH (vv. 4–35)

The craving for meat was previously voiced

after the Israelites crossed the Sea of Reeds (Exod. 16:3), and the divine answer came in the form of manna and quail, which arrived together (Exod. 16:13–14,31). In this narrative, the quail constitute a new element, whereas the manna in verse 6 is regarded as a familiar phenomenon.

4. riffraff This translation conveys the word-play in the sound of the Hebrew (*asafsuf*). The term refers to non-Israelites who joined the Israelites' break for freedom (cf. "eirev rav" in Exod. 12:38).

meat The next verse indicates that the "meat" desired by the Israelites was fish, an abundant and inexpensive food in Egypt.

5. used to eat The food supply was endless.

CHAPTER 11

This chapter introduces a theme that will characterize much of the remaining narrative in the Book of Numbers. Chapters 11–25 contain a series of refusals to accept authority, including Miriam's unwillingness to be subordinated to Moses (in chapter 12). The Israelites complain about the unpleasantness of their journey, exasperating both God and Moses. Moses grows ever more impatient with the people, beginning with this chapter and culminating with the incident of his striking the rock in chapter 20. Forgotten are the vows at the Sea of Reeds and at Mount Sinai. Ramban takes 10:33 ("They marched from the mountain of the LORD") to imply a spiritual or emotional distancing from the Sinai event as well as a geographic one. "They fled the mountain like a child running from school" lest God give them

any more commandments or prohibitions.

1. The LORD . . . was incensed The Torah often describes God as angry, especially in these next several chapters. It portrays God as a passionate God, a God who cares deeply about what we do and how we live. "The God of Aristotle is the Unmoved Mover, the God of Israel is the most-moved Mover" (Heschel), moved to anger by human cruelty, corruption, disloyalty, and ingratitude.

outskirts of the camp One Sage takes this to mean that the complainers were marginal Israelites, the ones least enthusiastic from the outset about the prospects of freedom and a life based on Torah. Another Sage connects "katzeḥ" (outskirts) with *katzin* (leader), commenting that it was the leaders' attitude that caused the people's sullen mood (*Sifrei*).

5. the fish that we used to eat free in Egypt This is the trick that memory plays to

cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. ⁶Now our gullets are shriveled. There is nothing at all! Nothing but this manna to look to!”

⁷Now the manna was like coriander seed, and in color it was like bdellium. ⁸The people would go about and gather it, grind it between millstones or pound it in a mortar, boil it in a pot, and make it into cakes. It tasted like rich cream. ⁹When the dew fell on the camp at night, the manna would fall upon it.

¹⁰Moses heard the people weeping, every clan apart, each person at the entrance of his tent. The LORD was very angry, and Moses was dis-

6. shriveled Literally, “dry.”

MANNA (vv. 7–9)

This detailed description of manna refutes each point of the people’s complaint (see Exod. 16:31).

7. coriander An herb, the seeds (and leaves) of which are used in flavoring.

color That is, appearance.

bdellium An aromatic resin that is pale yellow or white.

8. millstones A common household utensil, still in use today among the Arab Bedouin.

rich cream Hebrew: *lashad* (literally, “cream of oil or fat”); the upper layer of the first pressing of olive oil.

נֹאכַל בְּמִצְרִים חָנָם אֶת הַקִּשְׁאִים וְאֶת
הָאֲבִטְחִים וְאֶת־הַחֲצִיר וְאֶת־הַבְּצָלִים
וְאֶת־הַשּׁוּמִים: ⁶ וְעַתָּה נִפְשָׁנוּ יְבֹשָׁה אֵין
כֹּל בְּלִתי אֶל־הַמָּן עֵינֵינוּ:

⁷ וְהַמָּן כְּזֵרַע־גֹּד הוּא וְעֵינֵנוּ כְּעֵין הַבְּדֵלֶח:
⁸ שָׁטוּ הָעָם וְלָקְטוּ וְטָחְנוּ בְרִחִים אֹ דָכוּ
בְּמַדְכָּה וּבְשָׁלוּ בַפְּרוּר וְעָשׂוּ אֹתוֹ עֲגוֹת
וְהָיָה טַעְמוֹ כְּטַעַם לֶשֶׁךְ הַשָּׁמַן: ⁹ וּבִרְדַּת
הַטַּל עַל־הַמַּחֲנֶה לַיְלָה יֵרֵד הַמָּן עָלָיו:

¹⁰ וַיִּשְׁמַע מֹשֶׁה אֶת־הָעָם בֹּכֶה
לְמִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ אִישׁ לְפָתַח אֹהֶלוֹ וַיַּחֲרֹאֶף

MOSES COMPLAINS
TO GOD (vv. 10–15)

Moses can neither supply Israel with sufficient food nor shoulder the burden of leadership. Exhausted physically and psychologically, he requests that his life be terminated.

10. Israel’s complaint leads to Moses’ demoralization and self-pity.

every clan apart The weeping was everywhere.

at the entrance That is, openly, defiantly. Their weeping constituted a public demonstration.

was very angry Literally, “His nostrils flared,” an idiom for rage.

make life bearable. We remember the good and forget the painful (N. Leibowitz). The Midrash doubts whether the Egyptians really gave them free food. It understands “free” to mean “free of moral obligations,” as an infant is fed without anything being expected in return (*Sifrei*). In the view of the Sages, it was not the physical discomfort of the wilderness that really provoked Israel’s complaints. It was the burden of morality, to which they had not yet become accustomed, that left them nostalgic for the days in Egypt. That is why God responds to their complaints first by pouring the divine spirit onto the people, quenching their spiritual hunger (vv. 24–25), only later sending the quail to ease their physical hunger (v. 31ff.) (Hirsch).

6. Why did the people complain about the

manna, when the Torah makes a point of telling us how delicious it was? To feel prosperous, it is not enough for a person to have everything that is needed. One must have more than one’s neighbors have. The manna was psychologically unsatisfying because everyone had it in abundance (Eybeschütz).

10. This shows the greatness of Moses as a leader. In one interpretation, the people wept and complained in the privacy of their homes, yet Moses sensed their unhappiness and understood its cause. Maimonides claims that the phrase “the LORD was very angry” occurs only as a divine response to instances of idolatry. This grumbling is perceived not as a comment about the food but as a rebellion against God’s providence.

tressed. ¹¹And Moses said to the LORD, “Why have You dealt ill with Your servant, and why have I not enjoyed Your favor, that You have laid the burden of all this people upon me? ¹²Did I conceive all this people, did I bear them, that You should say to me, ‘Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries an infant,’ to the land that You have promised on oath to their fathers? ¹³Where am I to get meat to give to all this people, when they whine before me and say, ‘Give us meat to eat!’ ¹⁴I cannot carry all this people by myself, for it is too much for me. ¹⁵If You would deal thus with me, kill me rather, I beg You, and let me see no more of my wretchedness!”

¹⁶Then the LORD said to Moses, “Gather for Me seventy of Israel’s elders of whom you have experience as elders and officers of the people, and bring them to the Tent of Meeting and let

יְהוָה מָאֵד וּבְעֵינַי מִשָּׁה רָע׃ ¹¹ וַיֹּאמֶר
מִשָּׁה אֶל־יְהוָה לָמָּה הִרְעַתָּ לְעַבְדְּךָ
וּלְמִדָּה לֹא־מִצַּתִּי* חֵן בְּעֵינַיִךְ לָשׁוּם אֶת־
מִשָּׂא כָּל־הָעָם הַזֶּה עָלַי׃ ¹² הֲאֵנֹכִי
הִרִיתִי אֶת כָּל־הָעָם הַזֶּה אִם־אֲנֹכִי
יִלְדַתִּיהוּ כִּי־תֹאמַר אֵלַי שְׂאֵהוּ בְּחִיקְךָ
כַּאֲשֶׁר יִשָּׂא הָאִמּוֹן אֶת־הַיֶּלֶךְ עַל הָאֲדָמָה
אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאַבְתָּיו׃ ¹³ מֵאֵין לִי בָשָׂר
לְתַת לְכָל־הָעָם הַזֶּה כִּי־יִבְכּוּ עָלַי לֵאמֹר
תְּנֵה־לָּנוּ בָשָׂר וְנֹאכְלָה׃ ¹⁴ לֹא־אוּכַל
אֲנֹכִי לְבַדִּי לְשַׂאת אֶת־כָּל־הָעָם הַזֶּה כִּי
כָבֵד מִמֶּנִּי׃ ¹⁵ וְאִם־כָּכָה | אֶת־עֲשֵׂה לִי
הֲרַגְנִי נָא הֲרֹג אִם־מִצַּאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינַיִךְ
וְאֶל־אַרְצָה בְּרַעְתִּי׃ פ
¹⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אִסְפֵּה־לִּי
שִׁבְעִים אִישׁ מִזִּקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יֹדְעַת
כִּי־הֵם זִקְנֵי הָעָם וְשִׁטְרֵיו וְלִקְחַתְּ אֹתָם
אֶל־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְהִתִּיצְבוּ שָׁם עִמָּךְ׃

v. 11. חסר א'

distressed Moses was extremely worried.

11. Why have You dealt ill with Your servant

Moses’ selfless concern for his people is no longer evident.

this people Rather than “my people”; also used in verses 12 and 14. This contrasts with the Golden Calf episode, where it is God who uses the term “this people” derisively (Exod. 32:9, 33:12) and it is Moses who argues that “this people” is “Your people” (Exod. 33:13).

12. Did I Hebrew: *he-anokhi*, which emphasizes the “I,” as if to say, “I am not the father of this people. You, God, are.”

14. carry . . . by myself Moses may be asking for divine rather than human assistance.

much Literally, “heavy.” The weight of the people is too much to bear.

15. As the author of Moses’ wretchedness, God might as well finish the job by taking his life.

GOD’S SOLUTION FOR MOSES: 70 LEADERS

(vv. 16–17)

Like 7, the number 70 is symbolic (see Exod. 24:1). It is not meant to be taken as an exact number but as an approximation of a large group of people.

16. seventy of Israel’s elders The institution of a council of 70 attached to a ruler is well attested in the ancient Near East. The Sages, sensitive to the fact that Moses already had an advisory council of 70 elders at Sinai, claim that those elders, guilty of unseemly conduct at Taberah (vv. 1–3), were destroyed by the divine fire.

to the Tent of Meeting At any other site, observers might attribute the miracle not to the invisible God but to the visible Moses. Only at the tent on which the divine cloud descends can God’s Presence leave no doubt concerning the source of the spirit.

12. as a nurse carries an infant Even if the infant hits the nurse or soils her clothing,

she does not reject the child (*Ha-amek Davar*).

them take their place there with you. ¹⁷I will come down and speak with you there, and I will draw upon the spirit that is on you and put it upon them; they shall share the burden of the people with you, and you shall not bear it alone. ¹⁸And say to the people: Purify yourselves for tomorrow and you shall eat meat, for you have kept whining before the LORD and saying, 'If only we had meat to eat! Indeed, we were better off in Egypt!' The LORD will give you meat and you shall eat. ¹⁹You shall eat not one day, not two, not even five days or ten or twenty, ²⁰but a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you. For you have rejected the LORD who is among you, by whining before Him and saying, 'Oh, why did we ever leave Egypt!'"

²¹But Moses said, "The people who are with me number six hundred thousand men; yet You say, 'I will give them enough meat to eat for a whole month.' ²²Could enough flocks and herds be slaughtered to suffice them? Or could all the fish of the sea be gathered for them to suffice them?" ²³And the LORD answered Moses, "Is there a limit to the LORD's power? You shall

17. speak with you But not with the elders. Neither the purpose nor the content of God's speech is stated here. The content may not have been significant; but the purpose may have been to speak to Moses to assure him that he would continue to serve as God's intermediary.

draw upon Two explanations are possible. The divine spirit will be drawn from Moses, thereby diminishing him, or the divine spirit that has been bestowed on Moses will now also rest on the elders.

share the burden of the people God's answer incorporates the very wording of Moses' plea in verse 14.

GOD'S SOLUTION FOR THE PEOPLE:
MEAT (vv. 18–23)

The gift of quail, given in anger, will result in

וַיְרַדְתִּי וְדַבַּרְתִּי עִמָּךְ וְאָצִילְתִּי 17
מִן־הָרוּחַ אֲשֶׁר עָלֶיךָ וְשָׁמַתִּי עֲלֵיהֶם
וְנָשָׂאוּ אִתָּךְ בְּמִשְׁאֵ הָעָם וְלֹא־תִשָּׂא
אִתָּה לְבַדְּךָ: 18 וְאָל־הָעָם תֹּאמַר
הִתְקַדְּשׁוּ לַמָּחָר וְאִכַּלְתֶּם בָּשָׂר כִּי
בְּכִיתֶם בְּאֶזְנֵי יְהוָה לֵאמֹר מִי יֵאכְלֵנוּ
בָּשָׂר כִּי־טוֹב לָנוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם וְנָתַן יְהוָה
לָכֶם בָּשָׂר וְאִכַּלְתֶּם: 19 לֹא יוֹם אֶחָד
תֹּאכְלוּן וְלֹא יוֹמִים וְלֹא חֲמִשָּׁה יָמִים
וְלֹא עֶשְׂרֵה יָמִים וְלֹא עֶשְׂרִים יוֹם: 20 עַד
חֹדֶשׁ יָמִים עַד אֲשֶׁר־יֵצֵא מֵאַפְּכֶם וְהָיָה
לָכֶם לְזָרָא יַעַן כִּי־מָאַסְתֶּם אֶת־יְהוָה
אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבְּכֶם וַתִּבְכוּ לְפָנָיו לֵאמֹר לָמָּה
זֶה יֵצְאֵנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם:

21 וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה שְׁש־מֵאוֹת אֶלֶף רַגְלֵי
הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי בְּקִרְבּוֹ וְאַתָּה אָמַרְתָּ
בָּשָׂר אֶתָּן לָהֶם וְאִכְלוּ חֹדֶשׁ יָמִים:
22 הֲצֵאֵן וּבִקֵּר יִשְׁחַט לָהֶם וּמִצָּא לָהֶם
אִם אֶת־כָּל־דְּגֵי הַיָּם יֵאָסֵף לָהֶם וּמִצָּא
לָהֶם: פ 23 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה הִיֵּד

many fatalities. God's words expose the real reason behind the complaint: The craving for meat expresses a disguised desire to return to Egypt and is tantamount to a rejection of God.

18. Purify yourselves Sanctify yourselves by the rite of laundering and bathing that precedes a sacrifice.

20. nostrils Ibn Ezra took this to mean: For causing God's anger, the stench from the meat will fill the people's noses—a fitting punishment.

21. men Hebrew: *ragli*; literally, "footmen, infantry."

22. flocks and herds They had enough meat at hand, but they were looking for a pretext to complain.

sea "The Great Sea," the Mediterranean (Targ. Jon.).

23. Is there a limit to the LORD's power?

17. I will come down God tells Moses, "Given the mood of the people, I don't expect them to rise toward Me. I will come down to shorten the distance between us" (Hirsch).

soon see whether what I have said happens to you or not!”

²⁴Moses went out and reported the words of the LORD to the people. He gathered seventy of the people's elders and stationed them around the Tent.²⁵Then the LORD came down in a cloud and spoke to him; He drew upon the spirit that was on him and put it upon the seventy elders. And when the spirit rested upon them, they spoke in ecstasy, but did not continue.

²⁶Two men, one named Eldad and the other Medad, had remained in camp; yet the spirit rested upon them—they were among those recorded, but they had not gone out to the Tent—and they spoke in ecstasy in the camp.

Literally, “Is the LORD's hand too short?”

what I have said Hebrew: *d'vari*; literally, “my word.” God's word (*davar*), once uttered, must be fulfilled.

THE SPIRIT IS GIVEN TO THE ELDERS,
ELDAD, AND MEDAD (vv. 24–30)

The elders, gathered around Moses' tent, are possessed by God's spirit, a sign that their selection by Moses is ratified by God. At the same time, Eldad and Medad, two of the elders designated as Moses' administrative assistants (for unknown reasons), remain behind in the camp. Nevertheless, they too are overcome by ecstasy, a state of rapture or trance. The prophesying of the selected elders is ecstatic and temporary and thus differs markedly from Moses' prophetic gifts. Moses' selflessness reaches its height in this passage.

25. they . . . did not continue Yet Onkelos translates, “they did not cease,” i.e., they did continue. What happens to people who have felt the spirit of God enter them? Are their lives permanently changed or do they revert to being the same people they were before?

26–29. Commentators differ over Eldad and Medad. Were they heroes of humility and people to be emulated (Num. R. 15:19) or were they people who cautiously waited to see what effect the ecstatic seizures would have on the others before they opened themselves up to the experience? (Perhaps there is a place in the community for people who are not pi-

יְהוָה תִּקְצֹר עֵתָהּ תִּרְאֶה הֲיִקְרָךְ דְּבָרֵי אִם-לֹא:

²⁴וַיֵּצֵא מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר אֶל-הָעָם אֶת דְּבָרֵי יְהוָה וַיֹּאסֹף שְׁבַעִים אִישׁ מִזִּקְנֵי הָעָם וַיַּעֲמֵד אֹתָם סְבִיבֹת הָאֹהֶל: ²⁵וַיֵּרֶד יְהוָה | בְּעֵנָן וַיְדַבֵּר אֵלָיו וַיֹּאצֵּל * מִן-הָרוּחַ אֲשֶׁר עָלָיו וַיִּתֵּן עַל-שְׁבַעִים אִישׁ הַזִּקְנִים וַיְהִי כְנֹוֹחַ עֲלֵיהֶם הָרוּחַ וַיִּתְנַבְּאוּ וְלֹא יָסְפוּ:

²⁶וַיִּשְׁאָרוּ שְׁנֵי-אֲנָשִׁים | בְּמַחֲנֶה שֵׁם הָאֶחָד | אֶלְדָּד וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִי מִיָּדָד וַתִּנַּח עֲלֵהֶם הָרוּחַ וְהֵמָּה בְּכַתְּבִים וְלֹא יֵצְאוּ

v. 25. א' נחה

24. went out From the tabernacle, where God would speak with him.

words of the LORD Concerning meat.

around the Tent In contrast to Moses, who entered the tent.

25. This is the fulfillment of the promise given in verse 17.

spoke to him To distinguish Moses from the elders.

spoke in ecstasy Which functions to provide divine validation for their selection as leaders.

26. Eldad The name means “God loves.”

the spirit Of God.

recorded Although selected by Moses among the 70 elders, they declined to come out because of their feelings of inadequacy (Rashi).

out to the Tent According to this tradition, the tent was stationed outside the camp.

oneers but are willing to follow in the footsteps of the authentic pioneers once they see where they lead.) The Torah describes Eldad and Medad as “acting like prophets” (*mitnab-im*; v. 27). The words of Moses reflect the ambivalence of the narrative by expressing the wish that all Israelites would be authentic prophets (*n'vi-im*). Joshua, who knows what a burden the role of prophet has been for his master, is suspicious of these “instant prophets.” Moses' response, however, shows that he is a leader not to feed his own ego but to serve God's needs and the needs of God's people.

27A youth ran out and told Moses, saying, “Eldad and Medad are acting the prophet in the camp!” 28And Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ attendant from his youth, spoke up and said, “My lord Moses, restrain them!” 29But Moses said to him, “Are you wrought up on my account? Would that all the LORD’s people were prophets, that the LORD put His spirit upon them!” 30Moses then reentered the camp together with the elders of Israel.

31A wind from the LORD started up, swept quail from the sea and strewed them over the camp, about a day’s journey on this side and about a day’s journey on that side, all around the camp, and some two cubits deep on the ground. 32The people set to gathering quail all that day and night and all the next day—even he who gathered least had ten *homers*—and they spread them out all around the camp. 33The meat was still between their teeth, not yet chewed, when the anger of the LORD blazed

27. A youth One of Moses’ attendants.

28. Joshua The presence of Joshua with Moses in the tent is presumed and requires no explanation.

restrain them They did not cease prophesying as did the elders. Also, their spirit, stemming directly from God, must have been of a higher quality than that of the elders.

29. Moses proclaims his fervent wish that all Israelites be prophets.

that the LORD But not I, Moses.

His spirit But not Moses’, again emphasizing that it was not the spirit of Moses that was transmitted to Eldad and Medad but the Lord’s.

upon them The Lord does not restrict spiritual gifts to particular individuals or classes.

THE QUAIL (vv. 31–35)

On the migration of quail, see Comment to Exod. 16:13.

הָאֵלֶּה וַיִּתְנַבְּאוּ בַּמַּחֲנֶה: 27 וַיֵּרֶץ הַנְּעָר וַיִּגֵּד לְמֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶלְדָּד וּמִדְּדָד מִתְנַבְּאִים בַּמַּחֲנֶה: 28 וַיַּעַן יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נֹון מִשְׁרַת מֹשֶׁה מִבְּחָרָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי מֹשֶׁה כָּלֵאָם: 29 וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מֹשֶׁה הַמִּקְנָא אֶתְּהָ לִּי וּמִי יִתֵּן כָּל־עַם יִהְיֶה נְבִיאִים כִּי־יִתֵּן יְהוָה אֶת־רוּחוֹ עֲלֵיהֶם: 30 וַיֵּאָסֶף מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הַמַּחֲנֶה הוּא וְזֻקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

31 וְרוּחַ נֹסַע | מֵאֵת יְהוָה וַיִּגְזוּ שְׁלֹוִים מִן־הַיָּם וַיִּטֹּשׁ עַל־הַמַּחֲנֶה כְּדָרְךָ יוֹם כֹּה וּכְדָרְךָ יוֹם כֹּה סְבִיבוֹת הַמַּחֲנֶה וּכְאֲמַתָּיִם עַל־פְּנֵי הָאָרֶץ: 32 וַיִּקְּמוּ הָעָם כָּל־הַיּוֹם הַהוּא וְכָל־הַלַּיְלָה וְכָל | יוֹם הַמַּחֲרָת וַיֵּאָסְפוּ אֶת־הַשְּׁלֹוֹ הַמִּמַּעִיט אָסֶף עֲשָׂרָה חֲמֵרִים וַיִּשְׁטְחוּ לָהֶם שְׁטוּחַ סְבִיבוֹת הַמַּחֲנֶה: 33 הַבֶּשֶׂר עוֹדֵנוּ בֵּין שְׁנֵיהֶם טָרֵם יִפְרָת וְאָף יְהוָה חָרָה בָּעָם

31. wind Hebrew: *ru-ab* (spirit, wind). God’s “spirit” on Moses has been shared by the elders. Now God’s “wind” brings meat to the people.

sea Either the Gulf of Aqaba or the Mediterranean.

strewed them over The quail fell outside the camp, whereas God’s food, the manna, fell within the camp. This distinction between the camp, which contains the Lord’s Presence, and the impure zone outside indicates that the quail are a curse, not a blessing.

32. homers See Comment to Lev. 27:16.

spread them out In the sun, to cure them by drying. It is also implied that they ate the meat uncooked. They were so lustful for meat that as soon as they slaughtered the birds they gorged themselves on the raw flesh.

33. plague From overeating, according to Ibn Ezra. Perhaps they choked on the meat, or became ill from eating rancid meat. Others regard

29. Are you wrought up on my account? Freud wrote that everyone is jealous of another’s success. The Talmud states that everyone is jealous of another’s success, except a father

of his child and a teacher of his pupil (BT Sanh. 105b). Moses’ humble response here serves to set the stage for the incident that follows in chapter 12.

forth against the people and the LORD struck the people with a very severe plague. ³⁴That place was named Kibroth-hattaavah, because the people who had the craving were buried there.

³⁵Then the people set out from Kibroth-hattaavah for Hazeroth.

12 When they were in Hazeroth, ¹Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman he had married: “He married a Cushite woman!”

²They said, “Has the LORD spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?” The LORD heard it. ³Now Moses was a very humble man, more so than any other man on earth. ⁴Suddenly the LORD called to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, “Come out, you three, to the Tent of Meeting.” So the three of them went out. ⁵The LORD came down in a pillar of cloud,

the punishment as a supernatural affliction stemming from God for their unjustified complaint against the manna.

THE UNIQUENESS OF MOSES (12:1–16)

Moses, as God’s intimate confidant, is proclaimed the most excellent of prophets.

1. spoke against Hebrew: *va-t’dabber*, the feminine singular, indicating that Miriam initiated the rebellion against Moses. This would explain why she alone was punished.

Cushite That is, from either Nubia or Ethiopia. It may also refer to Cushan, a Midianite tribe (see Hab. 3:7); hence some Sages’ view that the woman is Zipporah.

2. Miriam and Aaron are really after a share in Moses’ leadership. This is the true reason for their harsh complaint; the previous complaint was only a pretext.

וַיִּפְּץ יְהוָה בְּעַם מִצְרַיִם רַבָּה מְאֹד: ³⁴ וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שֵׁם־הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא קִבְרוֹת הַתְּאֵוָה כִּי־שָׁם קָבְרוּ אֶת־הָעָם הַמְתַּאֲוִים:

³⁵ מִקְבְּרוֹת הַתְּאֵוָה נָסְעוּ הָעָם חֲצֵרוֹת

יב וַיְהִי בַחֲצֵרוֹת: ¹ וַתְּדַבֵּר מִרְיָם וְאַהֲרֹן בְּמִשְׁחָה עַל־אֲדוֹת הָאִשָּׁה הַכַּשִּׁיטִית אֲשֶׁר לָקַח כִּי־אִשָּׁה כַּשִּׁיטִית לָקַח: ² וַיֹּאמְרוּ הֲרָק אַרְבַּם־מִשְׁחָה דְבַר יְהוָה הֲלֹא גַם־בָּנֵנו דְבַר וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה: ³ וְהָאִישׁ מִשְׁחָה עָנּוּ עָנּוּ מְאֹד מִכָּל הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה: ⁴ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה פְּתָאֵם אֶל־מִשְׁחָה וְאַל־אַהֲרֹן וְאַל־מִרְיָם צְאוּ וַיִּצְאוּ שְׁלֹשָׁתְכֶם אֶל־אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וַיִּצְאוּ שְׁלֹשָׁתָם: ⁵ וַיֵּרֶד יְהוָה בְּעַמּוּד עָנָן וַיַּעֲמֹד

us The fact that Miriam and Aaron are Moses’ siblings may have spurred them to claim prophetic equality with their brother.

The LORD heard it But not Moses.

3. humble Hebrew: *anav* (humble, trusting).

As such, it applies to the weak and the exploited. It never means “meek.”

4. Suddenly That is, at once, or unexpectedly, or while they were speaking about Moses, to prevent Miriam and Aaron from saying that Moses had complained to God.

Come out . . . went out Again, indicating that the Tent of Meeting was located outside the camp.

you three Moses was summoned together with Miriam and Aaron because, for the sake of fairness, all litigants must appear before the bar of justice at the same time (B’khor Shor).

CHAPTER 12

1. Rashi imagines Miriam criticizing Moses for neglecting his wife in order to be available at any hour, should God summon him (based on a comment in *Sifrei*). In Rashi’s view, Miriam was motivated more by concern for

Moses’ wife than by feelings of jealousy or rivalry. Nonetheless, what she is punished for is speaking to others about Moses rather than confronting him directly.

3. Now Moses Literally, “the man Moses.” It is so worded, perhaps, to emphasize that he was only human.

stopped at the entrance of the Tent, and called out, “Aaron and Miriam!” The two of them came forward; ⁶and He said, “Hear these My words: When a prophet of the LORD arises among you, I make Myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream. ⁷Not so with My servant Moses; he is trusted throughout My household. ⁸With him I speak mouth to mouth, plainly and not in riddles, and he beholds the likeness of the LORD. How then did you not shrink from speaking against My servant Moses!” ⁹Still incensed with them, the LORD departed.

¹⁰As the cloud withdrew from the Tent, there was Miriam stricken with snow-white scales! When Aaron turned toward Miriam, he saw that she was stricken with scales. ¹¹And Aaron said to Moses, “O my lord, account not to us

5. “Aaron and Miriam!” An ironic twist. The Lord—who in verse 8 claims to speak directly only to Moses—here avoids him and speaks directly to Aaron and Miriam.

6–8. These words of poetry describe God’s relationship with other prophets and extraordinary communication with Moses, who is set apart from his prophetic counterparts in that God confides in him alone.

Hear these My words The opening of the poem.

in a dream Dreams are frequently mentioned together with prophecy as authentic channels of God’s revelation, although the classical prophets attempt to distinguish between them (see Jer. 23:28).

Not so Moses is set apart from prophets like Aaron and Miriam even though all three share the same title.

trusted Of all the individuals in God’s household, Moses is the most trusted; he alone has direct access to God and can obtain an audience at will.

My household This may refer to the divine court to which Moses and other prophets had access (see 1 Kings 22:19ff.).

פָּתַח הָאֱהָל וַיִּקְרָא אֶהֱרֹן וּמִרְיָם וַיֵּצְאוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם: ⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמַעוּנָא דְבָרַי אִם-יְהִיֶה נְבִיאְכֶם יְהוָה בְּמִרְאֵה אֱלֹהֵי אֲתוּדָע בְּחִלּוּם אֲדַבְּרֶבוּ: ⁷ לֹא-כֵן עִבְדֵי מֹשֶׁה בְּכָל-בֵּיתִי נֶאֱמָן הוּא: ⁸ פֶּה אֶל-פֶּה אֲדַבְּרֶבוּ וּמִרְאֵה וְלֹא בְּחִידֹת וּתְמִנֹת יְהוָה יִבִּיט וּמִדוּעַ לֹא יֵרְאֶתֶם לְדַבֵּר בְּעִבְדֵי בְּמֹשֶׁה: ⁹ וַיִּחַר-אַף יְהוָה בָּם וַיִּלָּךְ:

וַהֲעֵזָן סָר מֵעַל הָאֱהָל וְהִנֵּה מֵרִים מִצְרַעַת כְּשֹׁלֵג וַיִּפֹּן אֶהֱרֹן אֶל-מֵרִים וְהִנֵּה מִצְרַעַת: ¹¹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֶהֱרֹן אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בִּי

mouth to mouth Traditional commentators explain this to mean by direct revelation (Ibn Ezra), while fully conscious (Sforno). The image here is that of a royal household in which only the most trusted servant has regular access to the monarch.

plainly Moses’ visions require no interpretation, unlike the visions (or dreams, or riddles) of other prophets.

riddles Enigmatic, perplexing statements.

9. Still incensed with them The displacement of the anger to this verse means that God’s anger did not abate but only increased during the confrontation (which began in v. 2).

the LORD departed God’s departure from Miriam and Aaron suggests that their prophetic gifts have come to an end. Thus in verses 12–13 Aaron will plead that Moses intercede with God, a basic prophetic function. This implies that he, Aaron, no longer can do so.

10. snow-white scales Literally, “scaly as snow.” Leprosy was considered a punishment for offenses against the deity in Israel and elsewhere in the ancient Near East.

he saw Because Aaron was a priest, his seeing Miriam’s condition confirmed the diagnosis.

5. God calls Miriam and Aaron away from Moses to speak Moses’ praises out of his hearing. “One gives praise only partially in a person’s presence, but utters all the praise in his

or her absence” (Gen. R. 32:3).

10. The connection between malicious gossip (*motzi ra*) and leprosy (*m’tzora*) is suggested in rabbinical commentaries to Lev. 13.

the sin which we committed in our folly. ¹²Let her not be as one dead, who emerges from his mother's womb with half his flesh eaten away." ¹³So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "O God, pray heal her!"

¹⁴But the LORD said to Moses, "If her father spat in her face, would she not bear her shame for seven days? Let her be shut out of camp for seven days, and then let her be readmitted." ¹⁵So Miriam was shut out of camp seven days; and the people did not march on until Miriam was readmitted. ¹⁶After that the people set out from Hazereth and encamped in the wilderness of Paran.

אֲדוֹנֵי אֱלֹהֵי תָשֶׁת עָלֵינוּ חֲטָאת אֲשֶׁר
נוֹאֲלָנוּ וְאֲשֶׁר חָטָאנוּ: ¹² אֱלֹהֵי תְהִי כַּמֶּת
אֲשֶׁר בְּצֵאתוֹ מֵרֶחֶם אִמּוֹ וַיֹּאכַל חֲצִי
בְשָׂרוֹ: ¹³ וַיִּצְעַק מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוָה לֵאמֹר
יְאֵל נָא רַפָּא נָא לָהּ: פ

¹⁴ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶבִּיחָהּ יֶרֶק יֶרֶק
מִפְטִיר בְּפִנְיָהּ הֲלֹא תִפְלֵם שְׂבַעַת יָמִים תִּסְגָּר
שְׂבַעַת יָמִים מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה וְאַחַר תֵּאָסֵף:
¹⁵ וְתִסְגָּר מֵרִים מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה שְׂבַעַת
יָמִים וְהָעָם לֹא נִסְעוּ עַד־הָאֶסְף מֵרִים:
¹⁶ וְאַחַר נִסְעוּ הָעָם מִחֻצוֹת וַיִּחַנוּ
בְּמִדְבַר פָּאֲרָן: פ

11. This appeal for Moses' intercession has ironic implications. Only he whom Miriam and Aaron have wronged can help them.

my lord Aaron acknowledges Moses' superiority by using the title that one bestows upon a superior, whether mortal or God. It constitutes Moses' final vindication. Aaron, who had denied Moses' supremacy, is now forced to acknowledge it.

committed in our folly Aaron tries to diminish the seriousness of the wrong, claiming that, because it was not done with malice, it could be atoned for by intercession.

12. Let her not be as one dead According to talmudic interpretation, the leper was regarded as a dead person.

half his flesh eaten away When a fetus that has died in the womb is delivered, its skin flakes off.

13. Moses is caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, Miriam had spoken openly against him and deserved to be punished. On the other hand, as his sister, she evoked his compassion. The result is this terse prayer. Its brevity seems to reveal Moses' lack of enthusiasm and minimal compliance with Aaron's plea.

14. spat in her face In the ancient Near East, it was thought that spittle possesses magical powers. In the Bible, however, where this magical background has been uprooted, spitting is simply a matter of causing humiliation.

bear her shame for seven days A human father's rebuke by spitting entails seven days of banishment. Should not the leprosy rebuke of the Heavenly Father require at least the same banishment? Miriam's penalty is sharply reduced to a seven-day exclusion from camp. Here too an additional concession is made, for an ordinary case of leprosy lasts a minimum of 14 days (Lev. 13:5). Miriam's exclusion from camp probably has nothing to do with the laws of leprosy but with the norms of shame. Furthermore, the analogy of Miriam's condition to that of the daughter is now clarified. Miriam's white (and hence, non-contagious, pure) leprosy is equivalent to the daughter who is spat on. Both are ostracized because they are humiliated, not because they are impure.

15. people did not march All of Israel pays a penalty for Miriam's sin. Their march to the Promised Land must be delayed a full week.

12. as one dead Miriam saved Moses from perishing as a newborn infant (Exod. 2). Now it is Moses' turn to save her from a fate similar to that of a doomed infant. Because of the urgency of the situation, Moses keeps his prayer brief. Others interpret the brevity of his prayer as concern lest the Israelites say, "For his sister, he pleads with God at length, but were we in her place, he would offer only a few words" (*Sifrei*). Might we speculate that,

because Miriam's affliction was caused by her feeling alienated from her brother, the knowledge of his praying for her generated the healing potential within her?

The *parashah* ends on a positive note, with Miriam's reintegration into the camp. However, the vision of a harmonious people inspired at Mount Sinai to follow God through a wilderness has been compromised, and it will be even further diminished in subsequent chapters.

הפטרות בהעלתך

HAFTARAH FOR B'HA·ALOT'KHA

ZECHARIAH 2:14–4:7

The first part of the Book of Zechariah (chaps. 1–8), in which this *haftarah* is found, opens with the second year of Darius I's reign as king of Persia (520 B.C.E.). Darius continued the foreign policy of Cyrus who, one year after his conquest of Babylon, had issued an edict (in 538 B.C.E.) enabling all subject populations to return to their national religious practices. As a result of Cyrus's policy, exiles had returned to Judah with permission to rebuild the Temple, destroyed nearly fifty years earlier by the Babylonians.

Work on the new temple was postponed, however, when local adversaries prevented the people of Judah from rebuilding (Ezra 4:1–3). In the second year in the reign of Darius, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah exhorted the people in God's name to resume the building effort (Ezra 4:4–5, 24, 5:1–2). Construction would be completed in four years.

This *haftarah* begins with God's promise of a return to Zion. It continues with the purification and investiture of the high priest, Joshua, and a declaration of God's forgiveness for the people's sins in the Land. This is followed by the prophet's vision of the lampstand (*m'norah*) to be used in the temple and words affirming that communal success will be achieved through the spirit of God.

Priestly concerns and details dominate the *haftarah*, such as: God's "holy habitation" (temple) in heaven; the "Holy Land" on earth; priestly vestments (robe, diadem, and sacred stone) and instructions; and the removal of the "guilt" of Joshua and of the Land. It ends with a vision of the lampstand and lamps in the Jerusalem temple. Nevertheless, the notion of a dual leadership prompted references within the priestly context to the royal "Branch" and to the secular leader,

Zerubbabel, himself (3:8, 4:6–9). The two leaders are referred to as "Joshua the high priest" and "Zerubbabel the governor of Judea" in the Book of Haggai (1:1, 2:2), and as the two anointed dignitaries (literally, "sons of oil") in Zech. 4:14.

RELATION OF THE *HAFTARAH* TO THE *PARASHAH*

Both the *parashah* and the *haftarah* give special attention to the ceremonial object of the *m'norah* and its lamps. In the Torah, the context is God's instruction concerning the kindling of lights in the tabernacle. In Zechariah's prophecy, the imagery is included in a vision of the future temple and its leaders.

Both texts also deal with the ritual celebrants of the shrine. In the *parashah*, the status of the Levites is singled out, with emphasis placed on physical purification and the cleanliness of their garments (Num. 8:7). Their duty to keep God's charge is also stressed (v. 24). Similar concerns and language are found in the *haftarah*, which depicts the purification of the high priest Joshua and his divine charge (Zech. 3:4–6).

The meaning of the *m'norah* and its lamps in the Torah is not spelled out there. However, the continuation of Zechariah's vision explains that the candelabrum symbolizes God, and the lights His eyes, roving providentially over the whole earth (Zech. 4:10–14). In later texts, including Jewish Hellenistic sources and Midrash, the lamps of the *m'norah* also symbolized the seven heavenly bodies (sun, moon, and five visible planets). This gave a cosmic dimension to divine providence and added a transcendent aspect to God's immanent Presence in the shrine.

2 ¹⁴Shout for joy, Fair Zion! For lo, I come; and I will dwell in your midst—declares the LORD. ¹⁵In that day many nations will attach themselves to the LORD and become His people, and He will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that I was sent to you by the LORD of Hosts.

¹⁶The LORD will take Judah to Himself as His portion in the Holy Land, and He will choose Jerusalem once more.

¹⁷Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD!

For He is roused from His holy habitation.

3 He further showed me Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel of the LORD, and the Accuser standing at his right to accuse him. ²But [the angel of] the LORD said to the Accuser, “The LORD rebuke you, O Accuser; may the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! For this is a brand plucked from the fire.” ³Now Joshua was clothed in filthy garments when he stood before the angel. ⁴The latter spoke up and said to his attendants, “Take the filthy garments off him!” And he said to him, “See, I have removed your guilt from you, and you shall be clothed in [priestly] robes.” ⁵Then

ב ¹⁴רָנִי וְשִׂמְחִי בַת־צִיּוֹן כִּי הִנְנִי־בָא וְשִׁכְנֹתִי בְתוֹכְךָ נְאֻם־יְהוָה: ¹⁵וְנָלוּ גוֹיִם רַבִּים אֶל־יְהוָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וְהָיוּ לִי לְעָם וְשִׁכְנֹתִי בְתוֹכְךָ וַיְדַעַתְּ כִּי־יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֶיךָ:

¹⁶וְנָחַל יְהוָה אֶת־יְהוּדָה חֶלְקוֹ עַל אֲדַמַּת הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבָחַר עוֹד בִּירוּשָׁלַם:

¹⁷הִס כָּל־בָּשָׂר מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה

כִּי יַעֲוֹר מִמַּעוֹן קִדְשׁוֹ: ס

ג וַיִּרְאֵנִי אֶת־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל עֹמֵד לִפְנֵי מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה וְהַשָּׁטָן עֹמֵד עַל־יְמִינוֹ לְשַׁטְנוֹ: ²וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־הַשָּׁטָן יִגְעַר יְהוָה בְּךָ הַשָּׁטָן וַיִּגְעַר יְהוָה בְּךָ הַבַּחֵר בִּירוּשָׁלַם הֲלוֹא זֶה אוֹד מִצֶּל מֵאֵשׁ: ³וַיְהוֹשֻׁעַ הָיָה לְבָשׁ בְּגָדִים צוּאִים וְעֹמֵד לִפְנֵי הַמַּלְאָךְ: ⁴וַיַּעַן וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־הָעֹמְדִים לִפְנָיו לֵאמֹר הֲסִירוּ הַבְּגָדִים הַצְּאִים מֵעַלְיוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו רְאֵה הֲעִבְרַתִּי מֵעַלְיָךְ עֹנֶךָ וְהִלְבַּשׁ אֶתְךָ מַחְלָצוֹת: ⁵וַאֲמַר יִשְׁיִמוּ צַנִּיף טָהוֹר עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ וַיִּשְׁיִמוּ

Zechariah 2:14. I will dwell in your midst God is roused to return to Zion from “His holy habitation” in heaven. The language of indwelling (*v’shakhanti v’tokbekh*) derives from the old tabernacle traditions (Exod. 25:8). It was used to express God’s dwelling in the temple of Solomon (1 Kings 6:13) and the return of God to the post-exilic temple by Ezekiel (Ezek. 43:9). In the Deuteronomic tradition the verb for “dwell” (*shakken*) is used to express the indwelling of God’s name, not His divine being (cf. Deut. 12:11, 14:23). Two distinct theological positions thus express the nature and character of divine immanence: One position speaks of God’s immediate and direct presence; the other suggests that this presence is mediated by the divine name.

The Sages turned God’s providential Presence

into the noun *Sh’khinah*, and the concept came to include divine involvement in Israel’s fate both outside the Temple and outside the Land. In the Midrash, the *Sh’khinah* suffers with Israel in exile and will return with it at the time of redemption.

16. The LORD will take Judah . . . as His portion This notion is first found in Deut. 32:9 (speaking of Jacob). Zechariah’s prophecy then adds a striking dimension to the idea that God will return to this people and this place, by speaking about the chosen land as “the Holy Land.” That formulation, claiming sanctity for the land of Israel as a whole, is unique in the Bible.

Zechariah 3:1–2. In this vision of a heavenly court, God is the judge, the high priest Joshua is the defendant, and the angel and the Accuser (Heb. *satan*) are the defense and the prosecuting

he gave the order, “Let a pure diadem be placed on his head.” And they placed the pure diadem on his head and clothed him in [priestly] garments, as the angel of the LORD stood by.

⁶And the angel of the LORD charged Joshua as follows: ⁷“Thus said the LORD of Hosts: If you walk in My paths and keep My charge, you in turn will rule My House and guard My courts, and I will permit you to move about among these attendants. ⁸Hearken well, O High Priest Joshua, you and your fellow priests sitting before you! For those men are a sign that I am going to bring My servant the Branch. ⁹For mark well this stone which I place before Joshua, a single stone with seven eyes. I will execute its engraving—declares the LORD of Hosts—and I will remove that country’s guilt in a single day. ¹⁰In that day—declares the LORD of Hosts—you will be inviting each other to the shade of vines and fig trees.”

4 The angel who talked with me came back and woke me as a man is wakened from sleep. ²He said to me, “What do you see?” And I answered, “I see a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl above it. The lamps on it are seven in number, and the lamps above it have seven pipes; ³and by it are two olive trees, one on the right of the bowl and one on its left.” ⁴I, in turn, asked the angel who talked with me, “What do those things mean, my lord?” ⁵“Do you not know what those things mean?” asked the angel who

attorneys, respectively. Presumably the Accuser has contended that the priest is unfit for office. The Accuser is now rebuked by God.

8. I am going to bring My servant the Branch Elsewhere in Zechariah and in Ezra, the high priest Joshua is paired with Zerubbabel (descendant of King Jehoiachin and thus in the direct Davidic line), representing priestly and royal leadership, respectively. But here, who or what “the Branch” signifies is unspecified, giving rise to in-

הַצִּנִּיף הַטְּהוֹר עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ וַיִּלְבָּשֶׁהוּ בְּגָדִים
וּמִלְאָךְ יְהוָה עֵמֶד:
6 וַיַּעַל מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה בִּיהוֹשֻׁעַ לֵאמֹר:
7 כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אִם־בְּדַרְכֵי תִלְךָ
וְאִם אֶת־מִשְׁמְרֹתַי תִּשְׁמֹר וְגַם־אֶתְּהָ
תִּנְדִּין אֶת־בֵּיתִי וְגַם תִּשְׁמֹר אֶת־חֲצֵרִי
וְנָתַתִּי לְךָ מֵהַלְכִים בֵּין הָעַמֻּדִים הָאֵלֶּה:
8 שְׁמַע־נָא יְהוֹשֻׁעַ | הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל אֶתְּהָ
וְרַעֲיֶךָ הַיֹּשְׁבִים לְפָנֶיךָ כִּי־אֲנֹשִׁי מוֹפֵת
הָמָּה כִּי־הִנְנִי מֵבִיא אֶת־עַבְדִּי צֶמַח:
9 כִּי | הִנֵּה הָאֶבֶן אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְפָנַי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ
עַל־אֶבֶן אַחַת שְׁבַעֶה עֵינַיִם הִנְנִי מִפְתִּיחַ
פְּתָחָהּ נְאֻם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וּמִשְׁתִּי אֶת־עַנְן
הָאֶרֶץ־הַהִיא בְּיוֹם אֶחָד: ¹⁰ בְּיוֹם הַהוּא
נְאֻם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת תִּקְרָאוּ אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ
אֶל־תַּחַת גִּפְּוֹן וְאֶל־תַּחַת תְּאֵנָה:

ד וַיָּשֶׁב הַמִּלְאָךְ הַדֹּבֵר בִּי וַיַּעֲרִינִי
כַּאֲשֶׁר־יַעֲוֹר מִשְׁנֹתוֹ: ² וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי
מַה אַתָּה רֹאֶה וַיֹּאמֶר רְאִיתִי |
וְהִנֵּה מְנוֹרַת זָהָב כְּלָהּ וְגִלְגָּה עַל־רֹאשָׁהּ
וְשִׁבְעָה נִרְתִּיָּהּ עָלֶיהָ שְׁבַעֶה וְשִׁבְעָה
מוֹצְקוֹת לְנֵרוֹת אֲשֶׁר עַל־רֹאשָׁהּ: ³ וּשְׁנַיִם
זֵיתִים עָלֶיהָ אֶחָד מִימִין הַגִּלְגָּה וְאֶחָד
עַל־שְׂמֹאלָהּ: ⁴ וַאֲעַן וַאֲמַר אֶל־הַמִּלְאָךְ
הַדֹּבֵר בִּי לֵאמֹר מַה־אֵלֶּה אֲדָנָי: ⁵ וַיַּעַן
הַמִּלְאָךְ הַדֹּבֵר בִּי וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי הֲלוֹא יָדַעְתָּ

terpretations of messianic expectancy. The metaphor of a branch (*tzemah*) used to depict a future king is found in Isaiah (4:2). It was first developed fully in Jeremiah’s oracles about a descendant of David whom God will establish to bring victory and to rule in justice (23:5–6, 33:14–16).

The 15th benediction of the *Amidah* is a messianic prayer known as “the benediction of David.” It begins with a petition that God cause “the Branch of David (*tzemah David*) to flourish.”

talked with me; and I said, “No, my lord.”⁶ Then he explained to me as follows:

“This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit—said the LORD of Hosts.⁷ Whoever you are, O great mountain in the path of Zerubbabel, turn into level ground! For he shall produce that excellent stone; it shall be greeted with shouts of ‘Beautiful! Beautiful!’”

מִהֶ־הֵמָּה אֱלֹהִים וְאָמַר לֹא אֲדַנִּי: ⁶ וַיַּעַן
וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי לֵאמֹר
זֶה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־זְרֻבָּבֶל לֵאמֹר לֹא
בְחֵיל וְלֹא בְכֹחַ כִּי אִם־בְּרוּחִי אָמַר יְהוָה
עֲבָאוֹת: ⁷ מִי־אַתָּה הַר־הַגָּדוֹל לִפְנֵי
זְרֻבָּבֶל לְמִישֹׁר וְהוֹצִיא אֶת־הָאֶבֶן
הַרְאֵשָׁה תִשְׁאֹת תֵּן חֵן לָהּ: פ