

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
Copyright © 2001 by the Rabbinical Assembly

Copyright © 2001 by The Rabbinical Assembly

Hebrew text, based on Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia,

© 1999 by The Jewish Publication Society

English translation © 1985, 1999 by The Jewish Publication Society

First edition. All rights reserved

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, except for brief passages in connection with a critical review, without permission in writing from:

The Rabbinical Assembly

3080 Broadway

New York, NY 10027

Blessings for the Torah and haftarat have been adapted from

Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals, © 2000 by The Rabbinical Assembly.

Maps © by Oxford University Press, supplied by Oxford Cartographers. Used by permission of Oxford University Press.

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

whoever sought the LORD would go out to the Tent of Meeting that was outside the camp. ⁸Whenever Moses went out to the Tent, all the people would rise and stand, each at the entrance of his tent, and gaze after Moses until he had entered the Tent. ⁹And when Moses entered the Tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the Tent, while He spoke with Moses. ¹⁰When all the people saw the pillar of cloud poised at the entrance of the Tent, all the people would rise and bow low, each at the entrance of his tent. ¹¹The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one man speaks to another. And he would then return to the camp; but his attendant, Joshua son of Nun, a youth, would not stir out of the Tent.

¹²Moses said to the LORD, “See, You say to me, ‘Lead this people forward,’ but You have not made known to me whom You will send with me. Further, You have said, ‘I have singled you out by name, and you have, indeed, gained My favor.’ ¹³Now, if I have truly gained Your favor, pray let me know Your ways, that I may know You and continue in Your favor. Con-

מועד והיה כל־מבקש יהוה יצא אל־
אהל מועד אשר מחוץ למחנה: ⁸ והיה
בצאת משה אל־האהל יקומו כל־העם
ונצבו איש פתח אהלו והביטו אחרי
משה עד־באו האהלה: ⁹ והיה כבא
משה האהלה ירד עמוד הענן ועמד
פתח האהל ודבר עם־משה: ¹⁰ וראה
כל־העם את־עמוד הענן עמד פתח
האהל וקם כל־העם והשתחויו איש
פתח אהלו: ¹¹ ודבר יהוה אל־משה פנים
אל־פנים באשר ידבר איש אל־רעהו
ושב אל־המחנה ומשרתו יהושע בן־נון
נער לא ימיש מתוך האהל: ^ס

שלישי ¹² ויאמר משה אל־יהוה ראה אתה אמר
אלי העל את־העם הזה ואתה לא
הודעתני את אשר־תשלח עמי ואתה
אמרת ידעתיה בשם וגם־מצאת חן
בעיני: ¹³ ועתה אם־נא מצאתי חן
בעיניך הודעני נא את־דרכך ואדעך

9. at the entrance of the Tent Not inside the tabernacle, where the divine Presence is said to rest continuously and where God converses with Moses from within the Holy of Holies. The place of communication here is at the entrance, where God’s self-manifestation is intermittent.

11. face to face The same expression is used in Deut. 34:10, whereas in Num. 12:6–8 it is said that God communicated with Moses “mouth to mouth.” This figurative language is intended to convey the pre-eminence and uniqueness of Moses as a prophetic figure who experiences a special mode of revelation. His experience is personal and direct, not mediated through visions or dreams, and the message always is plain and straightforward, free of cryptic utterances.

Joshua He remained inside the tent and did not share in Moses’ direct experience with God.

DIALOGUE WITH GOD (vv. 12–23)

This section depicts how Moses and God engage in the intimate talk mentioned in verse 11.

12. Moses now reverts to the subject matter of 32:34 and 33:1–3—the order to proceed to the Promised Land without the tabernacle, the token of God’s immediate presence in the camp of Israel. He complains that the aforementioned “angel” is unidentified. Is it to be human or celestial? Is God’s name to “be in him,” as is promised in 23:21, or not?

I have singled you out by name Literally, “I know you by name.” This Hebrew idiom, with God as the subject, is applied to no one else in the Bible. It signifies a close, exclusive, and unique association with God.

13. let me know Your ways Moses asks for comprehension of God’s essential being—the attributes that guide His actions in dealing with humankind, the norms by which He operates in His governance of the world. “Ways” here is a play on the literal and the figurative meanings of Hebrew word *derekh*; it means both the right path through the wilderness and also God’s way of acting, His nature.

sider, too, that this nation is Your people.”
 14And He said, “I will go in the lead and will lighten your burden.” 15And he said to Him, “Unless You go in the lead, do not make us leave this place. 16For how shall it be known that Your people have gained Your favor unless You go with us, so that we may be distinguished, Your people and I, from every people on the face of the earth?”

17And the LORD said to Moses, “I will also do this thing that you have asked; for you have truly gained My favor and I have singled you out by name.” 18He said, “Oh, let me behold Your Presence!” 19And He answered, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim before you the name LORD, and the grace that I grant and the compassion that I show. 20But,” He said, “you cannot see My face, for man may

לְמַעַן אֲמַצְאֶחֶן בְּעֵינַיִךָ וְרֵאָה כִּי עִמָּךָ
 הִגִּוִי הַזֶּה: 14 וַיֹּאמֶר פָּנַי יֵלְכוּ וְהִנַּחְתִּי
 לָךְ: 15 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אִם־אֵין פְּנִיךָ הַלְכִים
 אֶל־תֵּעַלְנוּ מִזֶּה: 16 וּבַמָּה | יוֹדַע אִפּוֹא
 כִּי־מִצְאָתִי חֵן בְּעֵינַיִךָ אֲנִי וְעַמֶּךָ הֲלוֹא
 בְּלִכְתָּךְ עִמָּנוּ וְנִפְלִינוּ אֲנִי וְעַמֶּךָ מִכָּל־
 הָעַם אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה: פ

רביעי 17 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה גַם אֶת־הַדְּבָר
 הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ אֶעֱשֶׂה כִּי־מִצְאָתִי חֵן
 בְּעֵינַי וְאֶדְעָךָ בְּשֵׁם: 18 וַיֹּאמֶר הֲרָאִנִי נָא
 אֶת־פְּנִיךָ: 19 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי אֶעְבִּיר כָּל־טוֹבֵי
 עַל־פְּנִיךָ וְקָרָאתִי בְשֵׁם יְהוָה לְפָנֶיךָ
 וְחִנַּתִּי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אֲחֹן וְרַחֲמֹתַי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר
 אֶרְחַם: 20 וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא תוּכַל לִרְאֹת אֶת־

this nation Moses stresses that the people Israel, and none other, constitute God’s people. He wants to extend God’s favor to embrace Israel as well as himself.

14. God does not yet respond to Moses’ last point but addresses only his immediate personal concerns.

lighten your burden Literally, “I will give you rest.” This phrase is normally found in a context of giving relief from national enemies, especially in relation to the occupation of the Land. The Hebrew word for “rest,” *m’nuhab*, probably means “camping places,” a pun on Hebrew for “camp” (*mahaneh*) (see Num. 10:33).

15–16. Moses, sensitive to God’s omission of any mention of Israel, reacts immediately by stressing the people’s interests, thereby affirming once again that he sees his own reputation inextricably bound up with the fate of his people. Note his repetition of “us” and “Your people.”

we may be distinguished Israel’s distinctive-ness lies in its unique relationship with God.

18. Oh, let me behold Your Presence! Hebrew: *kavod* (Presence); one of the most impor-

tant concepts in biblical theology. See Comment to 16:7. Here Moses is pleading for an exclusively individual experience, one close at hand and immediate, as a response to his personal request there and then.

19. all My goodness This refers to the compassionate attributes that God reveals in dealing with His creatures (see 34:6–7).

proclaim . . . the name LORD This name is *YHVH*; see Comment to 3:14. This clause parallels the immediately preceding one—“I will make all My goodness pass before you.” It reaffirms God’s intention of voluntarily disclosing to Moses His defining characteristics. This is fulfilled in 34:5.

and the grace Literally, “I shall be gracious to whomever I am gracious and I shall show mercy to whomever I show mercy.” The syntax indicates indefiniteness, as in 3:14. God is reminding Moses that He is a free agent. There is no magical practice that is automatically effective in influencing His behavior.

20. Moses’ second plea is only partially granted. By virtue of their humanity, human beings, in-

CHAPTER 33

19. I will make all My goodness pass before you We encounter the reality of God when we experience goodness in the world, from the gift of life itself to the discovery of the capacity

to do good in our own souls, and the love and generosity of people around us whom God has inspired to do good.

20–23. What does it mean that a human being cannot see God’s face—but can see God’s back? In the words of the Ḥatam Sofer, we can-

not see Me and live.”²¹ And the LORD said, “See, there is a place near Me. Station yourself on the rock²² and, as My Presence passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock and shield you with My hand until I have passed by.²³ Then I will take My hand away and you will see My back; but My face must not be seen.”

34 The LORD said to Moses: “Carve two tablets of stone like the first, and I will inscribe upon the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you shattered.² Be ready by morning, and in the morning come up to Mount Sinai and present yourself there to Me, on the top of the mountain.³ No one else shall come up with you, and no one else shall be seen

cluding Moses, cannot directly and closely observe God.

21. on the rock At the top of Mount Sinai (see 34:2). For a similar scene, see 1 Kings 19.

22. My Presence passes by Rashbam notes that God’s action is characteristic of covenant making, as in Gen. 15:17 and Jer. 34:18,19. The manifestation of God here would then be a ceremony that signals renewal of the Covenant.

פָּנַי כִּי לֹא־יִרְאֵנִי הָאָדָם וְחַי: ²¹ וַיֹּאמֶר
יְהוָה הִנֵּה מְקוֹם אֲתִי וְנִצַּבְתָּ עַל־הַצּוּר:
וְהָיָה בְּעֵבֶר כַּבְּדִי וְשָׁמַתִּיךָ בְּנִקְרַת
הַצּוּר וְשָׁכַתִּי כַּפֵּי עַלְיֶךָ עַד־עֲבָרִי:
²³ וְהִסְרַתִּי אֶת־כַּפְּי וְרָאִיתָ אֶת־אֲחֵרַי
וּפָנַי לֹא יִרְאוּ: ס

לד חמישי
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה פֶּסֶל־לְךָ
שְׁנֵי־לְחֹת אֲבָנִים כְּרֵאשֹׁנִים וְכַתְּבַתִּי עַל־
הַלְּחֹת אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ עַל־הַלְּחֹת
הָרֵאשֹׁנִים אֲשֶׁר שָׁבַרְתָּ: ² וְהָיָה נֶכּוֹן
לְבַקֵּר וְעַלִּיתָ בְּבִקְרֵךְ אֶל־הָרַר סִינַי וְנִצַּבְתָּ
לִי שָׁם עַל־רֹאשׁ הָהָר: ³ וְאִישׁ לֹא־יַעֲלֶה
עִמָּךָ וְגַם־אִישׁ אֶל־יִרְאָ בְּכָל־הָהָר גַּם־

23. My back This daring human image for God, contrasted with the usual biblical term *panim*, “face, presence,” refers to the traces of the divine Presence, the afterglow of His supernatural radiance.

must not be seen No human being can ever penetrate the ultimate mystery of God’s Being. Only a glimpse of the divine reality is possible, even for Moses.

RENEWAL OF THE COVENANT (34:1–35)

PREPARATORY MEASURES (vv. 1–3)

Moses, assured that God will manifest His Presence privately to him, is instructed to prepare for the experience, which actually initiates the reinstatement of the Covenant.

1. Carve God had given the first set to Moses. **words** They are identified as the Decalogue in verse 28.

3. No one else This time Aaron is excluded, because of his role in the episode of the Golden Calf.

not see God directly. We can only see the difference that God has made after the fact. We can recognize God’s reality by seeing the difference God has made in people’s lives.

CHAPTER 34

1. The first set of tablets was fashioned by God alone. Moses passively received them. The second set will be a joint divine–human effort (Y. Nissenbaum). This second set was written with a greater knowledge of human weakness, at the hand of an imperfect human being,

rather than by a perfect deity. Heschel taught that God revealed the Torah to Moses in all its fullness; and Moses, a finite human being, wrote down what he could comprehend. The Talmud tells us that the fragments of the first set of tablets were carried in the Ark along with the replacement set (BT Ber. 8b). That which was once holy retains its holiness even when it is broken. So too the elderly, the senile, and the infirm may not be cast aside. They must be accorded the reverence they have earned in their lives.

anywhere on the mountain; neither shall the flocks and the herds graze at the foot of this mountain.”

⁴So Moses carved two tablets of stone, like the first, and early in the morning he went up on Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, taking the two stone tablets with him. ⁵The LORD came down in a cloud; He stood with him there, and proclaimed the name LORD. ⁶The LORD passed before him and proclaimed: “The LORD! the LORD! a God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and faithfulness, ⁷extending kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet He does not remit all punishment, but visits the iniquity of parents upon children and children’s children, upon the third and fourth generations.”

GOD’S SELF-DISCLOSURE (vv. 4–9)

5. stood . . . proclaimed The text is ambiguous. The subject of the two verbs may be either Moses, as verses 2 and 33:21 indicate, or God, as the first clause and 33:19 would suggest. Or perhaps the first verb is governed by Moses and the second by God.

THE DIVINE RESPONSE (vv. 6–7)

These verses are the divine response to Moses’ two requests—that he “know” God’s ways (33:13) and that he “behold” God’s Presence (33:18). God’s mysterious passing before Moses answers to the second; the recital of the divine attributes, to the first. God’s self-disclosure is confined to a proclamation of His moral qualities. To “know” them is to achieve a higher conception of Deity.

6. The LORD! the LORD! The Hebrew text also allows the first *YHVH* to be taken as the subject of the antecedent verb; thus “And the LORD proclaimed.”

6–7. These two verses contain a passage recited and chanted on the High Holy Days and the Festivals. This summary of God’s compassionate qualities is known as the “Thirteen Attributes of God” or the “Covenant of the Thirteen” (*b’rit sh’losh esrei*).

visits the iniquity of parents upon children and children’s children Bothered by the ap-

הִצָּאן וְהִבָּקֵר אֶל-יָרְעוֹ אֶל-מֹול הַהָר הַהוּא :

וַיִּפְסֹל⁴ שְׁנֵי-לֶחֶת אֲבָנִים כְּפָרָאשֵׁנִים וַיֵּשֶׁבם מֹשֶׁה בְּבִקְרָ וַיַּעַל אֶל-הָר סִינַי כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֹתוֹ וַיִּקַּח בְּיָדוֹ שְׁנֵי לֶחֶת אֲבָנִים :⁵ וַיֵּרֶד יְהוָה בְּעָנָן וַיִּתְיַצֵּב עִמּוֹ שָׁם וַיִּקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה :⁶ וַיַּעֲבֹר יְהוָה | עַל-פָּנָיו וַיִּקְרָא יְהוָה | יְהוָה אֵל רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן אַרְךָ אַפַּיִם וְרַב-חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת :⁷ נִצְרָ* חֶסֶד לְאֱלֹפִים נִשָּׂא עֵינָן וּפָשַׁע וְחַטָּאָה וְנִקְהָ לֹא יִנְקָה פִקְדֹן | עֵינָן אֲבוֹת עַל-בָּנִים וְעַל-בְּנֵי בָנִים עַל-שְׁלֵשִׁים וְעַל-רִבְעִים :

v. 7. נ' רבתי לפי נוסחים מקובלים

compassionate and gracious In the Decalogue (20:5–6) the order of attributes, unlike here, presents judgment before kindness. Emphasis and priority are here given to God’s magnanimous qualities rather than to His judgmental actions.

kindness and faithfulness The Hebrew words *hesed v’emet* appear frequently together to express a single concept. *Hesed* involves acts of beneficence and obligation that flow from a legal relationship. See Comment to 15:13. *Emet*, usually translated “truth,” encompasses the notions of reliability, durability, and faithfulness. When used together, the two words express God’s absolute and eternal dependability in dispensing His benefactions.

7. extending kindness The phrase may express either God’s continuous *hesed* or the idea that merit for the *hesed* that people perform endures beyond their own generation.

He does not remit Divine mercy does not mean that sinners can expect wholly to escape the consequences of their wrongs.

parent unfairness of the text, a Hasidic interpretation takes it to mean that God holds parents responsible for not giving their children a proper religious and moral upbringing. We recognize the unfairness of such punishment, yet it is true that the bad habits of parents are too often repeated by their children, for whom parents are the primary role models.

⁸Moses hastened to bow low to the ground in homage, ⁹and said, “If I have gained Your favor, O Lord, pray, let the Lord go in our midst, even though this is a stiffnecked people. Pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for Your own!”

¹⁰He said: I hereby make a covenant. Before all your people I will work such wonders as have not been wrought on all the earth or in any nation; and all the people who are with you shall see how awesome are the LORD’s deeds which I will perform for you. ¹¹Mark well what I command you this day. I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ¹²Beware of making a covenant with the inhabitants of the land against which you are advancing, lest they be a snare in your midst. ¹³No, you must tear down their altars, smash their pillars, and cut down their sacred posts; ¹⁴for you must not worship any other god, because the LORD, whose name is Impassioned, is an impassioned

8 וַיִּמְהַר מֹשֶׁה וַיִּקְדוּ אַרְצָה וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ:
9 וַיֹּאמֶר אֶם־נָא מִצָּאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲדֹנָי
יִלְחַנְנָא אֲדֹנָי בְּקִרְבָּנוּ כִּי עַם־קָשָׁה־
עָרְף הוּא וְסָלַחְתָּ לְעֹונֵינוּ וּלְחַטָּאתָנוּ
וַיַּחֲלֵתָנוּ:

שׁי 10 וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי כֹרֶת בְּרִית נֹגֵד
כָּל־עַמָּךְ אֲעֲשֶׂה נִפְלְאוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־נִבְרָאוּ
בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל־הַגּוֹיִם וְרָאָה כָּל־הָעַם
אֲשֶׁר־אִתָּה בְּקִרְבּוֹ אֶת־מַעֲשֵׂה יְהוָה כִּי־
נִרְאָה הוּא אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי עֹשֶׂה עִמָּךְ: 11 שְׁמַר־
לְךָ אֶת אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מִצְוֶךָ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה
גֵּרֶשׁ מִפְּנֵיךָ אֶת־הָאֱמֹרִי וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַחִתִּי
וְהַפְּרִזִי וְהַחִוִּי וְהַיְבוּסִי: 12 הִשְׁמַר לְךָ
פֶּן־תִּכְרֹת בְּרִית לְיוֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אִתָּה
כִּי עָלֶיךָ פֶּן־יִהְיֶה לְמוֹקֵשׁ בְּקִרְבְּךָ:
13 כִּי אֶת־מִזְבְּחֹתָם תִּתְּצוּן וְאֶת־מִצְבְּתָם
תִּשְׁבְּרוּן וְאֶת־אֲשֵׁרֵי תִּכְרֹתוֹן: 14 כִּי לֹא
תִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לְאֵל אֲחֵר* כִּי יְהוָה קָנָא שְׁמוֹ

v. 14. ר' רבתי לפי נוסחים מקובלים

9. Moses emphasizes God’s merciful qualities in asking that the punishment in 33:3 be set aside. *even though* Allow for human frailty.

INAUTHENTIC AND AUTHENTIC WORSHIP (vv. 10–26)

This section concentrates on two fundamental issues that flow directly from the people’s sin: false modes of worship (vv. 10–17) and the legitimate festivals and ritual obligations to God (vv. 18–26).

APOSTASY (vv. 10–17)

Mindful of the act of apostasy, the renewed covenant contains stricter admonitions than those

given before (23:23,24) regarding the inroads of foreign forms of worship into the religion of Israel. If the people Israel is to be “distinguished . . . from every people on the face of the earth” (33:16), they must make themselves unique by exclusive loyalty to their covenantal relationship with God.

13. sacred posts Hebrew: *asherim* (singular *asherah*); pagan objects of worship often mentioned in the Bible. These wooden poles derive their name from the Canaanite fertility goddess Asherah, whom they symbolized.

14. any other god This Hebrew phrase in the singular—*el aher*—appears nowhere else in the

10. The Decalogue proclaims universal laws applicable to all humanity. This supplemental covenant deals with the specific rituals of the Israelite people. Our calendar and our kitchens would keep the Jewish people distinctive.

13. Why this troubling emphasis on destroying the holy places of the Canaanites and shunning their sacrificial occasions? The

Israelites were a young, impressionable nation, and the Torah is concerned that the highly sexualized, orgiastic fertility cult of the Canaanites would be irresistibly seductive for them (as the incident of Baal-peor in Num. 25 attests). Even decent people can be vulnerable to sexual temptation, which is why the Torah speaks out in such extreme, uncompromising terms against the Canaanite cult.

God. ¹⁵You must not make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, for they will lust after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and invite you, and you will eat of their sacrifices. ¹⁶And when you take wives from among their daughters for your sons, their daughters will lust after their gods and will cause your sons to lust after their gods.

¹⁷You shall not make molten gods for yourselves.

¹⁸You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread—eating unleavened bread for seven days, as I have commanded you—at the set time of the month of Abib, for in the month of Abib you went forth from Egypt.

¹⁹Every first issue of the womb is Mine, from all your livestock that drop a male as firstling, whether cattle or sheep. ²⁰But the firstling of an ass you shall redeem with a sheep; if you do not redeem it, you must break its neck. And you must redeem every first-born among your sons.

None shall appear before Me empty-handed.

אל קנא הוא: ¹⁵ פן־תִּכְרַת בְּרִית לְיוֹשְׁבֵי
הָאָרֶץ וְזָנּוּ | אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וּזְבַחֻ
לְאֱלֹהֵיהֶם וְקָרָא לָךְ וְאָכַלְתָּ מִזְבָּחֹ:
¹⁶ וְלָקַחְתָּ מִבְּנֹתֵי זָנָו בְּנֹתֵי אַחֲרֵי
אֱלֹהֵיהֶן וְהִזְנוּ אֶת־בְּנֵיךָ אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהֵיהֶן:
¹⁷ אֱלֹהֵי מִסְכָּה לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה־לָּךְ:

¹⁸ אֶת־חַג הַמִּצּוֹת תִּשְׁמֹר שִׁבְעַת יָמִים
תֹּאכַל מִצּוֹת אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתְךָ לְמוֹעֵד
חֹדֶשׁ הָאָבִיב בִּי בְּחֹדֶשׁ הָאָבִיב יֵצְאָתָּ
מִמִּצְרָיִם:

¹⁹ כָּל־פֶּטֶר רֶחֶם לִי וְכָל־מִקְנֶךָ תִּזְכֹּר פֶּטֶר
שׂוֹר וְשֵׂה: ²⁰ וּפֶטֶר חֲמוֹר תִּפְדֶּה בְּשֵׂה
וְאִם־לֹא תִפְדֶּה וְעִרְפָּתוֹ כָּל בְּכוֹר בְּנֵיךָ
תִּפְדֶּה

וְלֹא־יֵרָאוּ פָנַי רִיקִים:

Bible. The Hebrew word *aper* in the text of the Torah has an enlarged letter *resh* to avoid confusion with the similar-looking letter *dalet*, which would make the word read *ehad*, meaning “one.”

impassioned Emphasis on the punitive aspect of the divine personality is prompted by the apostasy of the Golden Calf.

16. lust after The Hebrew verb זָנָה, literally “to engage in prostitution,” is often used figuratively to express the people’s infidelity to the covenant with God. Its use here may allude to the sexual immorality often associated with pagan worship, particularly with the popular excesses in connection with the Golden Calf, as mentioned in 32:6.

17–28. The laws that follow are referred to by scholars as “The Cultic Decalogue,” though they differ among themselves as to the precise enumeration of the laws. Like the actual Decalogue (Exod. 20:2–14), these laws are considered to be terms of the Covenant (v. 27). Unlike them, they incorporate the requirement of observing the three pilgrimage festivals.

17. molten gods The warnings against idolatry in all its forms conclude with this prohibition

because the Golden Calf is frequently referred to in the Bible as a molten image.

FESTIVALS AND RELATED RELIGIOUS OBLIGATIONS (vv. 18–26)

The topics in this section are associated with those of the preceding because the narrative about the Golden Calf recounts that a “festival of the LORD” was proclaimed and burnt offerings and sacrifices were brought (32:5–6). Hence, there is now a need to restate briefly the list of the legitimate festivals of the Israelites, previously set forth in 23:12–19.

18. Feast of Unleavened Bread The list begins with this feast rather than with *Shabbat* because the Golden Calf had been identified with the God of the Exodus and because the beginning of the ancient Israelite calendar occurs in the spring. See Comment to 12:2.

19–20. The law of the firstborn follows because it too is grounded in the Exodus (13:2,11–15). The text presupposes our familiarity with that passage. See Comments to 13:13 and 22:29.

None shall appear See Comment to 23:15.

²¹Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall cease from labor; you shall cease from labor even at plowing time and harvest time.

²²You shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the first fruits of the wheat harvest; and the Feast of Ingathering at the turn of the year. ²³Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Sovereign LORD, the God of Israel. ²⁴I will drive out nations from your path and enlarge your territory; no one will covet your land when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times a year.

²⁵You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with anything leavened; and the sacrifice of the Feast of Passover shall not be left lying until morning.

²⁶The choice first fruits of your soil you shall bring to the house of the LORD your God.

You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

²⁷And the LORD said to Moses: Write down

21 שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי תִשְׁבֹּת בְּחָרִישׁ וּבִקְצִיר תִּשְׁבֹּת:

22 וְחַג שָׁבֻעַת תַּעֲשֶׂה לָּךְ בְּבוּרֵי קֶצֶיר חֹטִים וְחַג הָאָסִיף תִּקּוּפַת הַשָּׁנָה:

23 שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה יִרְאֶה כָּל־זְכוּרְךָ אֶת־פְּנֵי הָאֵדֶן | יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

24 כִּי־אוֹרִישׁ גּוֹיִם מִפְּנֶיךָ וְהִרְחַבְתִּי אֶת־גְּבוּלְךָ וְלֹא־יִחַמְדוּ אִישׁ אֶת־אַרְצְךָ בְּעֶלְתְּךָ לְרֵאוֹת אֶת־פְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה:

25 לֹא־תִשְׁחַט עַל־חֶמֶץ דָּם־זִבְחֵי וְלֹא־יֵלֵן לְבַקֵּר זֶבַח חַג הַפֶּסַח:

26 רֵאשִׁית בְּבוּרֵי אֲדָמְתְךָ תָּבִיא בֵּית יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

לֹא־תִבְשֹׁל גְּדִי בְחֵלֶב אִמּוֹ: פ

27 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה כְּתֹב־לְךָ אֶת־שְׁבִיעֵי

As Rashi notes, this statement is a separate injunction, unconnected to the law of the firstborn. It belongs after verse 23.

21. The inclusion of the law of *Shabbat* here, after *Pesah* and the firstborn, presupposes a view that the institution of *Shabbat* is based on the Exodus, as in Deut. 5:15, and not on Creation, as in Exod. 20:11.

work The soil.

even at plowing time and harvest time The busiest times of the agricultural year must give way to the commandment to observe sacred time. This sacrifice becomes a true test of faith.

22. Feast of Weeks See Comment to 23:16.

23. See Comment to 23:17. The formulation in the verse here is an expansion of the parallel text.

24. Another test of faith. This injunction clearly does not refer to local shrines but assumes the existence of some central or, at least, regional

sanctuary that, for many, will be far from home and will require a pilgrimage.

covet See Comment to 20:14.

when you go up It is assumed that the central shrine will be situated on an elevation.

25. sacrifice of the Feast of Passover See Comment to 12:11.

26. See Comment to 23:19.

EPILOGUE: MOSES REACHES THE PINNACLE OF EMINENCE (vv. 27–35)

The narrative returns to the role and the status of Moses. The episode of apostasy began with a disparaging reference to him in verse 32:1; it closes with an account of his glorification. Apparently, Moses is instructed to write down the commandments contained in the foregoing (vv. 11–26), just as, following the original covenant, he wrote down “all the commands of the LORD” (24:4).

24. no one will covet your land The verb translated as “covet” is the same one used in the 10th commandment (Exod. 20:14), lead-

ing some scholars to surmise that in both locations it refers to seizing by force rather than simply envy.

to the LORD, ¹⁷and on the fifteenth day of that month a festival. Unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days. ¹⁸The first day shall be a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations. ¹⁹You shall present a gift, a burnt offering, to the LORD: two bulls of the herd, one ram, and seven yearling lambs—see that they are without blemish. ²⁰The grain offering with them shall be of choice flour with oil mixed in: prepare three-tenths of a measure for a bull, two-tenths for a ram; ²¹and for each of the seven lambs prepare one-tenth of a measure. ²²And there shall be one goat for a purification offering, to make expiation in your behalf. ²³You shall present these in addition to the morning portion of the regular burnt offering. ²⁴You shall offer the like daily for seven days as food, a gift of pleasing odor to the LORD; they shall be offered, with their libations, in addition to the regular burnt offering. ²⁵And the seventh day shall be a sacred occasion for you: you shall not work at your occupations.

²⁶On the day of the first fruits, your Feast of Weeks, when you bring an offering of new grain to the LORD, you shall observe a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations. ²⁷You shall present a burnt offering of pleasing odor to the LORD: two bulls of the herd, one ram, seven yearling lambs. ²⁸The grain offering with them shall be of choice flour with oil mixed

לְחֹדֶשׁ פֶּסַח לַיהוָה: ¹⁷וּבַחֲמִישֵׁי עָשָׂר יוֹם לְחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה חַג שִׁבְעַת יָמִים מִצּוֹת יֹאכְל: ¹⁸בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן מִקְרֵא-קֹדֶשׁ כָּל-מְלֹאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: ¹⁹וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם אִשָּׁה עֹלָה לַיהוָה פָּרִים בְּנֵי-בָקָר שְׁנַיִם וְאֵיל אֶחָד וְשִׁבְעָה כִּבְשִׂים בְּנֵי שָׁנָה תְּמִימִם יִהְיוּ לָכֶם: ²⁰וּמִנְחָתָם סֶלֶת בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן שְׁלֹשָׁה עֶשְׂרִים לָפָר וּשְׁנֵי עֶשְׂרִים לְאֵיל תַּעֲשׂוּ: ²¹עֶשְׂרוֹן עֶשְׂרוֹן תַּעֲשֶׂה לַכֹּפֶשׁ הָאֶחָד לְשִׁבְעַת הַכִּבְשִׂים: ²²וְשַׁעִיר חֲטָאת אֶחָד לְכַפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם: ²³מִלֶּבֶד עֹלֹת הַבָּקָר אֲשֶׁר לְעֹלֹת הַתָּמִיד תַּעֲשׂוּ אֶת-אֵלֶּה: ²⁴כְּאֵלֶּה תַעֲשׂוּ לַיּוֹם שִׁבְעַת יָמִים לֶחֶם אִשָּׁה רֵיחַ-נִיחֹחַ לַיהוָה עַל-עֹלֹת הַתָּמִיד יַעֲשֶׂה וְנִסְכּוֹ: ²⁵וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִקְרֵא-קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כָּל-מְלֹאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: ²⁶וּבַיּוֹם הַבְּפוּרִים בְּהִקְרִיבְכֶם מִנְחָה חֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה בְּשִׁבְעַת יָמֵיכֶם מִקְרֵא-קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כָּל-מְלֹאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ: ²⁷וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם עֹלָה לְרֵיחַ נִיחֹחַ לַיהוָה פָּרִים בְּנֵי-בָקָר שְׁנַיִם אֵיל אֶחָד שִׁבְעָה כִּבְשִׂים בְּנֵי שָׁנָה: ²⁸וּמִנְחָתָם סֶלֶת בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן שְׁלֹשָׁה עֶשְׂרִים

even though it is a private sacrifice (see Exod. 12:1–11) indicates that by this time the two festivals had become fused.

17. festival Both the paschal sacrifice and the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread are observed at the sanctuary, precisely as instituted by Deut. 16:1–6.

18. occupations Hebrew: *m'lekhet avodah*; literally, “laborious work,” of the sort that is forbidden on the festivals. This is in contrast to “any work” (*kol m'lakhal*), which is forbidden on *Shabbat* and *Yom Kippur* (Num. 29:7; Lev. 23:3,28). The nonlaborious work permitted (by implication) on the festivals is not defined, except for the explicit permission to pre-

pare food on the first and last days of *Pesah* (Exod. 12:16).

FEAST OF WEEKS (vv. 26–31)

This festival, which marks the start of the wheat harvest, does not depend on the lunar calendar. It occurs seven weeks after the beginning of the barley harvest (Lev. 23:15–16). In this regard it is like *Shabbat*, which is also independent of the lunar calendar.

26. day of the first fruits This day is also called “the Feast of the Harvest” (*Hag ha-Katzir*) in Exod. 23:16, and “the Feast of Weeks” (*Hag [ha-]Shavu-ot*) in Exod. 34:22, Deut. 16:10,16, and 2 Chron. 8:13.

הַפְטָרָה לְשַׁבַּת חוֹל הַמוֹעֵד פֶּסַח

HAFTARAH FOR PESAH, INTERMEDIATE SHABBAT

EZEKIEL 37:1–14

The promises of national regeneration and repopulation and of a revival of the people's life and spirit from the doom of exile form the focus of this *haftarah*. Thus, it could be dated sometime after 597 B.C.E., when the first contingent of Judeans, including Ezekiel, was deported to Babylon (see 2 Kings 24:8–16; Ezek. 1:1–2).

A famous image—the figure of dry bones—gives the prophecy a dramatic focus. In this figure an envisaged resurrection and embodiment offer the promise of new national life. God's work of salvation is underscored in this image by use of the verb understood here as “to act” (*asah*, Ezek. 37:14). The climax of this redemption is God's return of the people to their homeland (37:13–14). This new exodus from exile is announced for the future. The recollection of the Egyptian Exodus during *Pesah* quickens this hope.

“The hand of the LORD came upon me,” the sentence at the beginning of chapter 37, should be understood as introducing a trancelike experience, just as it is to be understood elsewhere in the book (see 1:3ff., 3:12ff., 8:1ff., 40:1ff.). The spectacle reported by Ezekiel is his memory of an ecstatic vision, shared with the people to generate hope in God's acts of redemption to come. In a talmudic discussion about resurrection, Judah judged the content of Ezekiel's vision to be “really only a parable,” a view opposed by Eliezer, who regarded the events depicted to be literally true (BT Sanh. 92b). This division of opinion continued in the following centuries.

RELATION OF THE HAFTARAH TO THE CALENDAR

The reason why Ezekiel's vision of resurrection was chosen for reading on *Pesah* is somewhat ob-

scure. Rashi offers a terse remark that “they came out of Egypt before the (set) time,” apparently implying that the resurrected bones were those of Israelites from the time of the Exodus. His point is fleshed out by an Aramaic Targum in which we are told that the bones belonged to those Ephraimites who, according to an old rabbinic tradition, left Egypt before the proper time owing to a miscalculation of how long their bondage was to last (BT Sanh. 92b). These individuals, killed on their way out of Egypt by the Philistines, are now revived as a sign of the future resurrection.

Another reason for reading Ezek. 37:1–14 focuses on the resurrection motif itself, rather than on the identification of the people involved. There is a striking Jewish tradition that the patriarch Isaac was bound on the altar at the *Pesah* season (see Jubilees 18:18–19; Exod. R. 15:11). In this tradition, divine dewdrops revived him when he died on the altar “in the grip of fear” (Mid. Lekaḥ Tov, Gen. 31:42) or upon being sacrificed (*Shibbolei Ha-Leket* 9a–b). Connecting springtime, (sacrificial) offerings, and resurrection is an ancient theme in the history of religions. The conjunction of this complex of motifs with one classic Jewish theme (the binding of Isaac) may explain why the *haftarah* about resurrection is recited at the onset of springtime, at precisely the season when the prayer for dew (associated with fertility and resurrection) is chanted (beginning at the *Musaf* service on the first day of *Pesah*). Also, the intermediate *Shabbat* of *Pesah* is the time when the Song of Songs, with its springtime associations, is publicly recited. Recitation of the promise of resurrection during *Pesah* thus preserves and perpetuates a timeless association between earthly and human rebirth.

37 The hand of the LORD came upon me. He took me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the valley. It was full of bones. ²He led me all around them; there were very many of them spread over the valley, and they were very dry. ³He said to me, “O mortal, can these bones live again?” I replied, “O Lord God, only You know.” ⁴And He said to me, “Prophecy over these bones and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! ⁵Thus said the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you and you shall live again. ⁶I will lay sinews upon you, and cover you with flesh, and form skin over you. And I will put breath into you, and you shall live again. And you shall know that I am the LORD!”

⁷I prophesied as I had been commanded. And while I was prophesying, suddenly there was a sound of rattling, and the bones came together, bone to matching bone. ⁸I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had grown, and skin had formed over them; but there was no breath in them. ⁹Then He said to me, “Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, O mortal! Say to the breath: Thus said the Lord GOD: Come, O breath, from the four winds, and breathe into these slain, that they may live again.” ¹⁰I prophesied as He commanded me. The breath entered them, and they came to life and stood up on their feet, a vast multitude.

¹¹And He said to me, “O mortal, these bones are the whole House of Israel. They say, ‘Our

Ezekiel 37:1. The hand of the LORD came upon me A characteristic expression for overwhelming prophetic inspiration in the Book of Ezekiel (1:3, 3:14, 8:1, 40:1); it is also found elsewhere (e.g., Isa. 8:11).

spirit Hebrew: *ru-ah*, generally translated as “wind” except in the Book of Ezekiel. In this verse, it is the “spirit of prophecy” (see Targum to 37:1). Elsewhere in Ezekiel, it is the “spirit of the LORD” (11:5) or “of God” (11:24).

לֹא הִיְתָה עָלַי יַד־יְהוָה וַיּוֹצֵאֲנִי בְרוּחַ יְהוָה וַיְנַיְחֵנִי בְּתוֹךְ הַבְּקָעָה וְהִיא מְלֵאָה עֲצָמוֹת׃² וַהֲעִבִירֵנִי עֲלֵיהֶם סָבִיב | סָבִיב וְהִנֵּה רַבּוֹת מְאֹד עַל־פְּנֵי הַבְּקָעָה וְהִנֵּה יְבֻשׁוֹת מְאֹד׃³ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי בֶּן־אָדָם הֲתַחְיֶינָה הָעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְאָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה אַתָּה יִדְעֵת׃⁴ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי הַנְּבֵא עַל־הָעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם הָעֲצָמוֹת הַיְבֻשׁוֹת שְׁמְעוּ דְבַר־יְהוָה׃⁵ כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה לְעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה הִנֵּה אֲנִי מֵבִיא בְכֶם רוּחַ וְחַיִּיתֶם׃⁶ וְנָתַתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם גְּדִים וְהִעַלְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם בָּשָׂר וְקִרְמְתִי עֲלֵיכֶם עוֹר וְנָתַתִּי בְכֶם רוּחַ וְחַיִּיתֶם וַיִּדְעַתֶּם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה׃⁷ וַנִּבְּאֵתִי כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי וַיְהִי־קוֹל כְּהִנְבְּאֵי וְהִנֵּה־רֹעֵשׂ וַתִּקְרְבוּ עֲצָמוֹת עֵצֶם אֶל־עֲצָמוֹ׃⁸ וַרְאִיתִי וְהִנֵּה־עֲלֵיהֶם גְּדִים וּבָשָׂר עָלָה וַיִּקְרַם עֲלֵיהֶם עוֹר מִלְמַעְלָה וְרוּחַ אֵין בָּהֶם׃⁹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי הַנְּבֵא אֶל־הָרוּחַ הַנְּבֵא בֶן־אָדָם וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶל־הָרוּחַ כֹּה־אָמַר | אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה מֵאַרְבַּע רוּחוֹת בְּאֵי הָרוּחַ וּפְחֵי בְהַרוּגִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיַּחֲיוּ׃¹⁰ וְהִנְבְּאֵתִי כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי וַתָּבוֹא בָהֶם הָרוּחַ וַיַּחֲיוּ וַיַּעֲמֵדוּ עַל־רַגְלֵיהֶם כִּיל גָּדוֹל מְאֹד־מְאֹד׃¹¹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי בֶּן־אָדָם הָעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה כֹּל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵמָּה הִנֵּה אֲמֹרִים

3. only You know This should be supplemented with “for You created them” (Eliezer of Beaugency).

5–10. The rebirth imagery is but one of the images Ezekiel uses to prophesy national renewal. In an earlier oracle, the nation is promised “a new heart and a new spirit” for the time of their resettlement in the Land (Ezek. 36:26–28).

bones are dried up, our hope is gone; we are doomed.’¹²Prophesy, therefore, and say to them: Thus said the Lord God: I am going to open your graves and lift you out of the graves, O My people, and bring you to the land of Israel.¹³You shall know, O My people, that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves and lifted you out of your graves.¹⁴I will put My breath into you and you shall live again, and I will set you upon your own soil. Then you shall know that I the LORD have spoken and have acted”—declares the LORD.

יִבְשׁוּ עַצְמוֹתַיִנוּ וְאָבְדָה תְּקוּתָנוּ נִגְזְרָנוּ
 לָנוּ: ¹² לְכֵן הִנְבֵּא וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם כֹּה-
 אָמַר אֲדַנְי יְהוִה הִנֵּה אֲנִי פֹתֵחַ אֶת-
 קְבֻרוֹתֵיכֶם וְהֵעֵלִיתִי אֶתְכֶם מִקְבְּרוֹתֵיכֶם
 עִמִּי וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל-אֲדָמַת
 יִשְׂרָאֵל: ¹³ וְיִדְעֶתֶם כִּי-אֲנִי יְהוָה
 בְּפִתְחֵי אֶת-קְבֻרוֹתֵיכֶם וּבְהֵעֵלֹתִי אֶתְכֶם
 מִקְבֻרוֹתֵיכֶם עִמִּי: ¹⁴ וְנָתַתִּי רוּחִי בְּכֶם
 וְחִיִּיתֶם וְהִנַּחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם עַל-אֲדָמַתְכֶם
 וְיִדְעֶתֶם כִּי-אֲנִי יְהוָה דְּבַרְתִּי וְעָשִׂיתִי
 נְאֻם-יְהוָה: פ

14. I the LORD have spoken and have acted “know” that the Lord fulfills prophecies, i.e., that
 As a result of national restoration, the nation will God is trustworthy and effective.