

Genesis

The Creation of the World

1:1 In the beginning¹ God² created³ the heavens and the earth.⁴

1 tn The translation assumes that the form translated “beginning” is in the absolute state rather than the construct (“in the beginning of,” or “when God created”). In other words, the clause in v. 1 is a main clause, v. 2 has three clauses that are descriptive and supply background information, and v. 3 begins the narrative sequence proper. The referent of the word “beginning” has to be defined from the context since there is no beginning or ending with God.

sn In the beginning. The verse refers to the beginning of the world as we know it; it affirms that it is entirely the product of the creation of God. But there are two ways that this verse can be interpreted: (1) It may be taken to refer to the original act of creation with the rest of the events on the days of creation completing it. This would mean that the disjunctive clauses of v. 2 break the sequence of the creative work of the first day. (2) It may be taken as a summary statement of what the chapter will record, that is, vv. 3-31 are about God’s creating the world as we know it. If the first view is adopted, then we have a reference here to original creation; if the second view is taken, then Genesis itself does not account for the original creation of matter. To follow this view does not deny that the Bible teaches that God created everything out of nothing (cf. John 1:3) – it simply says that Genesis is not making that affirmation. This second view presupposes the existence of pre-existent matter, when God said, “Let there be light.” The first view includes the description of the primordial state as part of the events of day one. The following narrative strongly favors the second view, for the “heavens/sky” did not exist prior to the second day of creation (see v. 8) and “earth/dry land” did not exist, at least as we know it, prior to the third day of creation (see v. 10).

2 sn God. This frequently used Hebrew name for God (אֱלֹהִים, *’elohim*) is a plural form. When it refers to the one true God, the singular verb is normally used, as here. The plural form indicates majesty; the name stresses God’s sovereignty and incomparability – he is the “God of gods.”

3 tn The English verb “create” captures well the meaning of the Hebrew term in this context. The verb בָּרָא (*bara’*) always describes the divine activity of fashioning something new, fresh, and perfect. The verb does not necessarily describe creation out of nothing (see, for example, v. 27, where it refers to the creation of man); it often stresses forming anew, reforming, renewing (see Ps 51:10; Isa 43:15, 65:17).

4 tn Or “the entire universe”; or “the sky and the dry land.” This phrase is often interpreted as a merism, referring to the entire ordered universe, including the heavens and the earth and everything in them. The “heavens and the earth” were completed in seven days (see Gen 2:1) and are characterized by fixed laws (see Jer 33:25). “Heavens” refers specifically to the sky, created on the second day (see v. 8), while “earth” refers specifically to the dry land, created on the third day (see v. 10). Both are distinct from the sea/seas (see v. 10 and Exod 20:11).

5 tn The disjunctive clause (conjunction + subject + verb) at the beginning of v. 2 gives background information for the following narrative, explaining the state of things when “God said...” (v. 3). Verse one is a title to the chapter, v. 2 provides information about the state of things when God spoke, and v. 3 begins the narrative per se with the typical narrative construction (vav [ו] consecutive followed by the prefixed verbal form). (This literary structure is paralleled in the second portion of the book: Gen 2:4 provides the title or summary of what follows, 2:5-6 use disjunctive

1:2 Now⁵ the earth⁶ was without shape and empty,⁷ and darkness⁸ was over the surface of the watery deep,⁹ but the Spirit of God¹⁰ was moving¹¹ over the

clause structures to give background information for the following narrative, and 2:7 begins the narrative with the vav consecutive attached to a prefixed verbal form.) Some translate 1:2a “and the earth became,” arguing that v. 1 describes the original creation of the earth, while v. 2 refers to a judgment that reduced it to a chaotic condition. Verses 3ff. then describe the re-creation of the earth. However, the disjunctive clause at the beginning of v. 2 cannot be translated as if it were relating the next event in a sequence. If v. 2 were sequential to v. 1, the author would have used the vav consecutive followed by a prefixed verbal form and the subject.

6 tn That is, what we now call “the earth.” The creation of the earth as we know it is described in vv. 9-10. Prior to this the substance which became the earth (= dry land) lay dormant under the water.

7 tn Traditional translations have followed a more literal rendering of “waste and void.” The words describe a condition that is without form and empty. What we now know as “the earth” was actually an unfilled mass covered by water and darkness. Later תהו (*tohu*) and בֹהוּ (*bohu*), when used in proximity, describe a situation resulting from judgment (Isa 34:11; Jer 4:23). Both prophets may be picturing judgment as the reversal of creation in which God’s judgment causes the world to revert to its primordial condition. This later use of the terms has led some to conclude that Gen 1:2 presupposes the judgment of a prior world, but it is unsound method to read the later application of the imagery (in a context of judgment) back into Gen 1:2.

8 sn Darkness. The Hebrew word simply means “darkness,” but in the Bible it has come to symbolize what opposes God, such as judgment (Exod 10:21), death (Ps 88:13), oppression (Isa 9:1), the wicked (1 Sam 2:9) and in general, sin. In Isa 45:7 it parallels “evil.” It is a fitting cover for the primeval waste, but it prepares the reader for the fact that God is about to reveal himself through his works.

9 tn The Hebrew term תְהוֹם (*’thom*, “deep”) refers to the watery deep, the salty ocean – especially the primeval ocean that surrounds and underlies the earth (see Gen 7:11).

sn The watery deep. In the Babylonian account of creation Marduk killed the goddess Tiamat (the salty sea) and used her carcass to create heaven and earth. The form of the Hebrew word for “deep” is distinct enough from the name “Tiamat” to deny direct borrowing; however, it is possible that there is a polemical stress here. Ancient Israel does not see the ocean as a powerful deity to be destroyed in creation, only a force of nature that can be controlled by God.

10 tn The traditional rendering “Spirit of God” is preserved here, as opposed to a translation like “wind from/breath of God” (cf. NRSV) or “mighty wind” (cf. NEB), taking the word “God” to represent the superlative. Elsewhere in the OT the phrase refers consistently to the divine spirit that empowers and energizes individuals (see Gen 41:38; Exod 31:3; 35:31; Num 24:2; 1 Sam 10:10; 11:6; 19:20, 23; Ezek 11:24; 2 Chr 15:1; 24:20).

11 tn The Hebrew verb has been translated “hovering” or “moving” (as a bird over her young, see Deut 32:11). The Syriac cognate term means “to brood over; to incubate.” How much of that sense might be attached here is hard to say, but the verb does depict the presence of the Spirit of God moving about mysteriously over the waters, presumably preparing for the acts of creation to follow. If one reads “mighty wind” (cf. NEB) then the verse describes how the powerful wind begins to blow in preparation for the creative act described in vv. 9-

surface⁴ of the water.² 1:3 God said,³ “Let there be⁴ light.”⁵ And there was light! 1:4 God saw⁶ that the light was good,⁷ so God separated⁸ the light from the darkness. 1:5 God called⁹ the light

“day” and the darkness¹⁰ “night.” There was evening, and there was morning, marking the first day.¹¹

1:6 God said, “Let there be an expanse¹² in the midst of the waters and let it separate water¹³ from water.” 1:7 So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it.¹⁴ It was so.¹⁵ 1:8 God called the expanse “sky.”¹⁶ There was evening, and there was morning, a second day.

1:9 God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place¹⁷ and let dry ground appear.”¹⁸ It was so. 1:10 God called the dry ground “land”¹⁹ and the gathered waters he called “seas.” God saw that it was good.

10. (God also used a wind to drive back the flood waters in Noah’s day. See Gen 8:1.)

¹ **tn** *Heb* “face.”

² **sn** *The water.* The text deliberately changes now from the term for the watery deep to the general word for water. The arena is now the life-giving water and not the chaotic abyss-like deep. The change may be merely stylistic, but it may also carry some significance. The deep carries with it the sense of the abyss, chaos, darkness – in short, that which is not good for life.

³ **tn** The prefixed verb form with the *vav* (ו) consecutive introduces the narrative sequence. Ten times in the chapter the decree of God in creation will be so expressed. For the power of the divine word in creation, see Ps 33:9, John 1:1-3, 1 Cor 8:6, and Col 1:16.

sn *God said.* By speaking, God brings the world into existence. The efficacious nature of the word of the LORD is a prominent theme in this chapter. It introduces the Law, the words and commandments from the LORD that must be obeyed. The ten decrees of God in this chapter anticipate the ten words in the Decalogue (Exod 20:2-17).

⁴ **tn** “Let there be” is the short jussive form of the verb “to be”; the following expression “and there was” is the short preterite form of the same verb. As such, *וַיְהִי* (*yehi*) and *וַיִּהְיֶה* (*vayehi*) form a profound wordplay to express both the calling into existence and the complete fulfillment of the divine word.

⁵ **sn** *Light.* The Hebrew word simply means “light,” but it is used often in scripture to convey the ideas of salvation, joy, knowledge, righteousness, and life. In this context one cannot ignore those connotations, for it is the antithesis of the darkness. The first thing God does is correct the darkness; without the light there is only chaos.

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “And God saw the light, that it was good.” The verb “saw” in this passage carries the meaning “reflected on,” “surveyed,” “concluded,” “noted.” It is a description of reflection of the mind – it is God’s opinion.

⁷ **tn** The Hebrew word *טוֹב* (*tov*) in this context signifies whatever enhances, promotes, produces, or is conducive for life. It is the light that God considers “good,” not the darkness. Whatever is conducive to life in God’s creation is good, for God himself is good, and that goodness is reflected in all of his works.

⁸ **tn** The verb “separate, divide” here explains how God used the light to dispel the darkness. It did not do away with the darkness completely, but made a separation. The light came alongside the darkness, but they are mutually exclusive – a theme that will be developed in the Gospel of John (cf. John 1:5).

sn The idea of separation is critical to this chapter. *God separated* light from darkness, upper water from lower water, day from night, etc. The verb is important to the Law in general. In Leviticus God separates between clean and unclean, holy and profane (Lev 10:10, 11:47 and 20:24); in Exodus God separates the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place (Exod 26:33). There is a preference for the light over the darkness, just as there will be a preference for the upper waters, the rain water which is conducive to life, over the sea water.

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “he called to,” meaning “he named.”

sn *God called.* Seven times in this chapter naming or blessing follows some act of creation. There is clearly a point being made beyond the obvious idea of naming. In the Babylonian creation story *Enuma Elish*, naming is equal to creating. In the Bible the act of naming, like creating, can be an indication of sovereignty (see 2 Kgs 23:34). In this verse God is sovereign even over the darkness.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “and the darkness he called night.” The words “he called” have not been repeated in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹¹ **tn** Another option is to translate, “Evening came, and then morning came.” This formula closes the six days of creation. It seems to follow the Jewish order of reckoning time: from evening to morning. Day one started with the dark, continued through the creation of light, and ended with nightfall. Another alternative would be to translate, “There was night and then there was day, one day.”

sn *The first day.* The exegetical evidence suggests the word “day” in this chapter refers to a literal twenty-four hour day. It is true that the word can refer to a longer period of time (see Isa 61:2, or the idiom in 2:4, “in the day,” that is, “when”). But this chapter uses “day,” “night,” “morning,” “evening,” “years,” and “seasons.” Consistency would require sorting out how all these terms could be used to express ages. Also, when the Hebrew word *יוֹם* (*yom*) is used with a numerical adjective, it refers to a literal day. Furthermore, the commandment to keep the sabbath clearly favors this interpretation. One is to work for six days and then rest on the seventh, just as God did when he worked at creation.

¹² **tn** The Hebrew word refers to an expanse of air pressure between the surface of the sea and the clouds, separating water below from water above. In v. 8 it is called “sky.”

sn *An expanse.* In the poetic texts the writers envision, among other things, something rather strong and shiny, no doubt influencing the traditional translation “firmament” (cf. NRSV “dome”). Job 37:18 refers to the skies poured out like a molten mirror. Dan 12:3 and Ezek 1:22 portray it as shiny. The sky or atmosphere may have seemed like a glass dome. For a detailed study of the Hebrew conception of the heavens and sky, see L. I. J. Stadelmann, *The Hebrew Conception of the World* (AnBib), 37-60.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “the waters from the waters.”

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “the expanse.”

¹⁵ **tn** This statement indicates that it happened the way God designed it, underscoring the connection between word and event.

¹⁶ **tn** Though the Hebrew word can mean “heaven,” it refers in this context to “the sky.”

¹⁷ **sn** *Let the water...be gathered to one place.* In the beginning the water covered the whole earth; now the water was to be restricted to an area to form the ocean. The picture is one of the dry land as an island with the sea surrounding it. Again the sovereignty of God is revealed. Whereas the pagans saw the sea as a force to be reckoned with, God controls the boundaries of the sea. And in the judgment at the flood he will blur the boundaries so that chaos returns.

¹⁸ **tn** When the waters are collected to one place, dry land emerges above the surface of the receding water.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “earth,” but here the term refers to the dry ground as opposed to the sea.

1:11 God said, “Let the land produce vegetation:¹ plants yielding seeds according to their kinds,² and³ trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds.” It was so. 1:12 The land produced vegetation – plants yielding seeds according to their kinds, and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. God saw that it was good. 1:13 There was evening, and there was morning, a third day.

1:14 God said, “Let there be lights⁴ in the expanse⁵ of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them be signs⁶ to indicate seasons and days and years, 1:15 and let them serve as lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth.” It was so. 1:16 God made two great lights⁷ –

1 tn The Hebrew construction employs a cognate accusative, where the nominal object (“vegetation”) derives from the verbal root employed. It stresses the abundant productivity that God created.

sn *Vegetation.* The Hebrew word translated “vegetation” (נֶשֶׁן, *deshe*) normally means “grass,” but here it probably refers more generally to vegetation that includes many of the plants and trees. In the verse the plants and the trees are qualified as self-perpetuating with seeds, but not the word “vegetation,” indicating it is the general term and the other two terms are sub-categories of it. Moreover, in vv. 29 and 30 the word *vegetation/grass* does not appear. The Samaritan Pentateuch adds an “and” before the fruit trees, indicating it saw the arrangement as bipartite (The Samaritan Pentateuch tends to eliminate asyndetic constructions).

2 sn *After their kinds.* The Hebrew word translated “kind” (מִיָּד, *min*) indicates again that God was concerned with defining and dividing time, space, and species. The point is that creation was with order, as opposed to chaos. And what God created and distinguished with boundaries was not to be confused (see Lev 19:19 and Deut 22:9-11).

3 tn The conjunction “and” is not in the Hebrew text, but has been supplied in the translation to clarify the relationship of the clauses.

4 sn *Let there be lights.* Light itself was created before the light-bearers. The order would not seem strange to the ancient Hebrew mind that did not automatically link daylight with the sun (note that dawn and dusk appear to have light without the sun).

5 tn The language describing the cosmos, which reflects a prescientific view of the world, must be interpreted as phenomenal, describing what appears to be the case. The sun and the moon are not *in* the sky (below the clouds), but from the viewpoint of a person standing on the earth, they appear that way. Even today we use similar phenomenological expressions, such as “the sun is rising” or “the stars in the sky.”

6 tn The text has “for signs and for seasons and for days and years.” It seems likely from the meanings of the words involved that “signs” is the main idea, followed by two categories, “seasons” and “days and years.” This is the simplest explanation, and one that matches vv. 11-13. It could even be rendered “signs for the fixed seasons, that is [explicative vav (ו)] days and years.”

sn *Let them be for signs.* The point is that the sun and the moon were important to fix the days for the seasonal celebrations for the worshipping community.

7 sn *Two great lights.* The text goes to great length to discuss the creation of these lights, suggesting that the subject was very important to the ancients. Since these “lights” were considered deities in the ancient world, the section serves as a strong polemic (see G. Hasel, “The Polemical Nature of the Genesis Cosmology,” *EvQ* 46 [1974]: 81-102). The Book of Genesis is affirming they are created entities, not deities. To underscore this the text does not even give them names. If used here, the usual names for the sun and moon [*Shemesh* and *Yarikh*, respectively] might have carried pagan connotations, so they are simply described as greater and lesser lights. Moreover, they serve in the capacity that God gives them, which would not be

the greater light to rule over the day and the lesser light to rule over the night. He made the stars also.⁸ 1:17 God placed the lights⁹ in the expanse of the sky to shine on the earth, 1:18 to preside over the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness.¹⁰ God saw that it was good. 1:19 There was evening, and there was morning, a fourth day.

1:20 God said, “Let the water swarm with swarms¹¹ of living creatures and let birds fly¹² above the earth across the expanse of the sky.”

1:21 God created the great sea creatures¹³ and every living and moving thing with which the water swarmed, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. God saw that it was good. 1:22 God blessed them¹⁴ and said, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”¹⁵ 1:23 There was evening, and there was morning, a fifth day.

the normal function the pagans ascribed to them. They merely divide, govern, and give light in God’s creation.

8 tn *Heb* “and the stars.” Now the term “stars” is added as a third object of the verb “made.” Perhaps the language is phenomenological, meaning that the stars appeared in the sky from this time forward.

9 tn *Heb* “them”; the referent (the lights mentioned in the preceding verses) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

10 sn In days one to three there is a naming by God; in days five and six there is a blessing by God. But on day four there is neither. It could be a mere stylistic variation. But it could also be a deliberate design to avoid naming “sun” and “moon” or promoting them beyond what they are, things that God made to serve in his creation.

11 tn The Hebrew text again uses a cognate construction (“swarm with swarms”) to emphasize the abundant fertility. The idea of the verb is one of swift movement back and forth, literally swarming. This verb is used in Exod 1:7 to describe the rapid growth of the Israelite population in bondage.

12 tn The Hebrew text uses the Polel form of the verb instead of the simple Qal; it stresses a swarming flight again to underscore the abundant fruitfulness.

13 tn For the first time in the narrative proper the verb “create” (בָּרָא, *bara*) appears. (It is used in the summary statement of v. 1.) The author wishes to underscore that these creatures – even the great ones – are part of God’s perfect creation. The Hebrew term תַּמְנִינִים (*tamnimim*) is used for snakes (Exod 7:9), crocodiles (Ezek 29:3), or other powerful animals (Jer 51:34). In Isa 27:1 the word is used to describe a mythological sea creature that symbolizes God’s enemies.

14 tn While the translation “blessed” has been retained here for the sake of simplicity, it would be most helpful to paraphrase it as “God endowed them with fruitfulness” or something similar, for here it refers to God’s giving the animals the capacity to reproduce. The expression “blessed” needs clarification in its different contexts, for it is one of the unifying themes of the Book of Genesis. The divine blessing occurs after works of creation and is intended to continue that work – the word of blessing guarantees success. The word means “to enrich; to endow,” and the most visible evidence of that enrichment is productivity or fruitfulness. See C. Westermann, *Blessing in the Bible and the Life of the Church* (OBT).

15 sn The instruction God gives to creation is properly a fuller expression of the statement just made (“God blessed them”), that he enriched them with the ability to reproduce. It is not saying that these were rational creatures who heard and obeyed the word; rather, it stresses that fruitfulness in the animal world is a result of the divine decree and not of some pagan cultic ritual for fruitfulness. The repeated emphasis of “be fruitful – multiply – fill” adds to this abundance God has given to life. The meaning is underscored by the similar sounds: בָּרַךְ (*barakh*) with בָּרָא (*bara*), and פָּרָה (*parah*) with רָבָה (*ravah*).

1:24 God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: cattle, creeping things, and wild animals, each according to its kind.”¹ It was so. 1:25 God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the cattle according to their kinds, and all the creatures that creep along the ground according to their kinds. God saw that it was good.

1:26 Then God said, “Let us make²

humankind³ in our image, after our likeness,⁴ so they may rule⁵ over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the cattle, and over all the earth,⁶ and over all the creatures that move⁷ on the earth.”

1:27 God created humankind⁸ in his own image,
in the image of God he created them,⁹
male and female he created them.¹⁰

¹ **tn** There are three groups of land animals here: the cattle or livestock (mostly domesticated), things that creep or move close to the ground (such as reptiles or rodents), and wild animals (all animals of the field). The three terms are general classifications without specific details.

² **sn** The plural form of the verb has been the subject of much discussion through the years, and not surprisingly several suggestions have been put forward. Many Christian theologians interpret it as an early hint of plurality within the Godhead, but this view imposes later trinitarian concepts on the ancient text. Some have suggested the plural verb indicates majesty, but the plural of majesty is not used with verbs. C. Westermann (*Genesis*, 1:145) argues for a plural of “deliberation” here, but his proposed examples of this use (2 Sam 24:14; Isa 6:8) do not actually support his theory. In 2 Sam 24:14 David uses the plural as representative of all Israel, and in Isa 6:8 the LORD speaks on behalf of his heavenly court. In its ancient Israelite context the plural is most naturally understood as referring to God and his heavenly court (see 1 Kgs 22:19-22; Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6; Isa 6:1-8). (The most well-known members of this court are God’s messengers, or angels. In Gen 3:5 the serpent may refer to this group as “gods/divine beings.” See the note on the word “evil” in 3:5.) If this is the case, God invites the heavenly court to participate in the creation of humankind (perhaps in the role of offering praise, see Job 38:7), but he himself is the one who does the actual creative work (v. 27). Of course, this view does assume that the members of the heavenly court possess the divine “image” in some way. Since the image is closely associated with rulership, perhaps they share the divine image in that they, together with God and under his royal authority, are the executive authority over the world.

³ **tn** The Hebrew word is אָדָם (*adam*), which can sometimes refer to man, as opposed to woman. The term refers here to humankind, comprised of male and female. The singular is clearly collective (see the plural verb, “[that] they may rule” in v. 26b) and the referent is defined specifically as “male and female” in v. 27. Usage elsewhere in Gen 1-11 supports this as well. In 5:2 we read: “Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and called their name ‘humankind’ (אָדָם).” The noun also refers to humankind in 6:1, 5-7 and in 9:5-6.

⁴ **tn** The two prepositions translated “in” and “according to” have overlapping fields of meaning and in this context seem to be virtually equivalent. In 5:3 they are reversed with the two words. The word תְּצַלֵּם (*tselem*, “image”) is used frequently of statues, models, and images – replicas (see D. J. A. Clines, “The Etymology of Hebrew *selem*,” *JNSL* 3 [1974]: 19-25). The word דְּמוּת (*demut*, “likeness”) is an abstract noun; its verbal root means “to be like; to resemble.” In the Book of Genesis the two terms describe human beings who in some way reflect the form and the function of the creator. The form is more likely stressing the spiritual rather than the physical. The “image of God” would be the God-given mental and spiritual capacities that enable people to relate to God and to serve him by ruling over the created order as his earthly vice-regents.

sn In our image, after our likeness. Similar language is used in the instructions for building the tabernacle. Moses was told to make it “according to the pattern” he was shown on the mount (Exod 25:9, 10). Was he shown a form, a replica, of the spiritual sanctuary in the heavenly places? In any case, what was produced on earth functioned as the heavenly sanctuary does, but with limitations.

⁵ **tn** Following the cohortative (“let us make”), the prefixed verb form with *vav* (ו) conjunctive indicates purpose/result (see Gen 19:20; 34:23; 2 Sam 3:21). God’s purpose in giving humankind his image is that they might rule the created order on behalf of the heavenly king and his royal court. So the divine image, however it is defined, gives humankind the capacity and/or authority to rule over creation.

⁶ **tc** The MT reads “earth”; the Syriac reads “wild animals” (cf. NRSV).

⁷ **tn** Heb “creep” (also in v. 28).

⁸ **tn** The Hebrew text has the article prefixed to the noun אָדָם, *ha’adam*. The article does not distinguish man from woman here (“the man” as opposed to “the woman”), but rather indicates previous reference (see v. 26, where the noun appears without the article). It has the same function as English “the aforementioned.”

⁹ **tn** The third person suffix on the participle אֵת (*et*) is singular here, but collective.

¹⁰ **sn** The distinction of “humankind” as “male” and “female” is another point of separation in God’s creation. There is no possibility that the verse is teaching that humans were first androgynous (having both male and female physical characteristics) and afterward were separated. The mention of male and female prepares for the blessing to follow.

1:28 God blessed¹ them and said² to them, “Be fruitful and multiply! Fill the earth and subdue it!³ Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every creature that moves on the ground.”⁴ 1:29 Then God said, “I now⁵ give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the entire earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.⁶ 1:30 And to all the animals of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to all the creatures that move on the ground – everything that has the breath of life in it – I give⁷ every green plant for food.” It was so.

1:31 God saw all that he had made – and it was very good!⁸ There was evening, and there was morning, the sixth day.

2:1 The heavens and the earth⁹ were completed with everything that was in them.¹⁰ 2:2 By¹¹ the seventh day God finished the work that he had been doing,¹² and he ceased¹³ on the seventh day all the work that he had been doing. 2:3 God blessed the seventh day and made it holy¹⁴ because on it he ceased all the work that he¹⁵ had been doing in creation.¹⁶

The Creation of Man and Woman

2:4 This is the account¹⁷ of the heavens and

¹ **tn** As in v. 22 the verb “bless” here means “to endow with the capacity to reproduce and be fruitful,” as the following context indicates. As in v. 22, the statement directly precedes the command “be fruitful and multiply.” The verb carries this same nuance in Gen 17:16 (where God’s blessing of Sarai imparts to her the capacity to bear a child); Gen 48:16 (where God’s blessing of Joseph’s sons is closely associated with their having numerous descendants); and Deut 7:13 (where God’s blessing is associated with fertility in general, including numerous descendants). See also Gen 49:25 (where Jacob uses the noun derivative in referring to “blessings of the breast and womb,” an obvious reference to fertility) and Gen 27:27 (where the verb is used of a field to which God has given the capacity to produce vegetation).

² **tn** *Heb* “and God said.” For stylistic reasons “God” has not been repeated here in the translation.

³ **tn** Elsewhere the Hebrew verb translated “subdue” means “to enslave” (2 Chr 28:10; Neh 5:5; Jer 34:11, 16), “to conquer,” (Num 32:22, 29; Josh 18:1; 2 Sam 8:1; 1 Chr 22:18; Zech 9:13; and probably Mic 7:19), and “to assault sexually” (Esth 7:8). None of these nuances adequately meets the demands of this context, for humankind is not viewed as having an adversarial relationship with the world. The general meaning of the verb appears to be “to bring under one’s control for one’s advantage.” In Gen 1:28 one might paraphrase it as follows: “harness its potential and use its resources for your benefit.” In an ancient Israelite context this would suggest cultivating its fields, mining its mineral riches, using its trees for construction, and domesticating its animals.

⁴ **sn** The several imperatives addressed to both males and females together (plural imperative forms) actually form two commands: reproduce and rule. God’s word is not merely a form of blessing, but is now addressed to them personally; this is a distinct emphasis with the creation of human beings. But with the blessing comes the ability to be fruitful and to rule. In procreation they will share in the divine work of creating human life and passing on the divine image (see 5:1-3); in ruling they will serve as God’s vice-regents on earth. They together, the human race collectively, have the responsibility of seeing to the welfare of that which is put under them and the privilege of using it for their benefit.

⁵ **tn** The text uses הִנֵּה (*hinneh*), often archaically translated “behold.” It is often used to express the dramatic present, the immediacy of an event – “Look, this is what I am doing!”

⁶ **sn** G. J. Wenham (*Genesis* [WBC], 1:34) points out that there is nothing in the passage that prohibits the man and the woman from eating meat. He suggests that eating meat came after the fall. Gen 9:3 may then ratify the postfall practice of eating meat rather than inaugurate the practice, as is often understood.

⁷ **tn** The phrase “I give” is not in the Hebrew text but has been supplied in the translation for clarification.

⁸ **tn** The Hebrew text again uses הִנֵּה (*hinneh*) for the sake of vividness. It is a particle that goes with the gesture of pointing, calling attention to something.

⁹ **tn** See the note on the phrase “the heavens and the earth” in 1:1.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “and all the host of them.” Here the “host” refers to all the entities and creatures that God created to populate the world.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “on/in the seventh day.”

¹² **tn** *Heb* “his work which he did [or “made”].”

¹³ **tn** The Hebrew term שָׁבַת (*shabbat*) can be translated “to rest” (“and he rested”) but it basically means “to cease.” This is not a rest from exhaustion; it is the cessation of the work of creation.

¹⁴ **tn** The verb is usually translated “and sanctified it.” The Piel verb קָדַשׁ (*qiddesh*) means “to make something holy; to set something apart; to distinguish it.” On the literal level the phrase means essentially that God made this day different. But within the context of the Law, it means that the day belonged to God; it was for rest from ordinary labor, worship, and spiritual service. The day belonged to God.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “God.” The pronoun (“he”) has been employed in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “for on it he ceased from all his work which God created to make.” The last infinitive construct and the verb before it form a verbal hendiadys, the infinitive becoming the modifier – “which God creatively made,” or “which God made in his creating.”

¹⁷ **tn** The Hebrew phrase אֵלֶּה תוֹלְדוֹת (*’elle toledot*) is traditionally translated as “these are the generations of” because the noun was derived from the verb “beget.” Its usage, however, shows that it introduces more than genealogies; it begins a narrative that traces what became of the entity or individual mentioned in the heading. In fact, a good paraphrase of this heading would be: “This is what became of the heavens and the earth,” for what follows is not another account of creation but a tracing of events from creation through the fall and judgment (the section extends from 2:4 through 4:26). See M. H. Woudstra, “The *Toledot* of the Book of Genesis and Their Redemptive-Historical Significance,” *CTJ* 5 (1970): 184-89.

sn The expression *this is the account of* is an important title used throughout the Book of Genesis, serving as the organizing principle of the work. It is always a heading, introducing the subject matter that is to come. From the starting point of the title, the narrative traces the genealogy or the records or the particulars involved. Although some would make the heading in 2:4 a summary of creation (1:1–2:3), that goes against the usage in the book. As a heading it introduces the theme of the next section, the particulars about this creation that God made. Genesis 2 is not a simple parallel account of creation; rather, beginning with the account of the creation of man and women, the narrative tells what became of that creation. As a beginning, the construction of 2:4-7 forms a fine parallel to the construction of 1:1-3. The subject matter of each תוֹלְדוֹת (*toledot*, “this is the account of”) section of the book traces a decline or a deterioration through to the next beginning point, and each is thereby a microcosm of the book which begins with divine blessing in the garden, and ends

the earth¹ when they were created – when the LORD God² made the earth and heavens.³

2:5 Now⁴ no shrub of the field had yet grown on the earth, and no plant of the field⁵ had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground.⁶ **2:6** Springs⁷ would well up⁸

with a coffin in Egypt. So, what became of the creation? Gen 2:4–4:26 will explain that sin entered the world and all but destroyed God's perfect creation.

1 tn See the note on the phrase “the heavens and the earth” in 1:1.

sn This is the only use of the Hebrew noun תּוֹלְדוֹת (*tol'dot*) in the book that is not followed by a personal name (e.g., “this is the account of Isaac”). The poetic parallelism reveals that even though the account may be about the creation, it is the creation the LORD God made.

2 sn Advocates of the so-called documentary hypothesis of pentateuchal authorship argue that the introduction of the name Yahweh (LORD) here indicates that a new source (designated J), a parallel account of creation, begins here. In this scheme Gen 1:1-2:3 is understood as the priestly source (designated P) of creation. Critics of this approach often respond that the names, rather than indicating separate sources, were chosen to reflect the subject matter (see U. Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis*). Gen 1:1-2:3 is the grand prologue of the book, showing the sovereign God creating by decree. The narrative beginning in 2:4 is the account of what this God invested in his creation. Since it deals with the close, personal involvement of the covenant God, the narrative uses the covenantal name Yahweh (LORD) in combination with the name God. For a recent discussion of the documentary hypothesis from a theologically conservative perspective, see D. A. Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis*. For an attempt by source critics to demonstrate the legitimacy of the source critical method on the basis of ancient Near Eastern parallels, see J. H. Tigay, ed., *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism*. For reaction to the source critical method by literary critics, see I. M. Kikawada and A. Quinn, *Before Abraham Was*; R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 131-54; and Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, 111-34.

3 tn See the note on the phrase “the heavens and the earth” in 1:1; the order here is reversed, but the meaning is the same.

4 tn Heb “Now every sprig of the field before it was.” The verb forms, although appearing to be imperfects, are technically preterites coming after the adverb בְּרֵמָה (*terem*). The word order (conjunction + subject + predicate) indicates a disjunctive clause, which provides background information for the following narrative (as in 1:2). Two negative clauses are given (“before any sprig...”, and “before any cultivated grain” existed), followed by two causal clauses explaining them, and then a positive circumstantial clause is given – again dealing with water as in 1:2 (water would well up).

5 tn The first term, שִׂיחַ (*siakh*), probably refers to the wild, uncultivated plants (see Gen 21:15; Job 30:4, 7); whereas the second, עֵשֶׂב (*esev*), refers to cultivated grains. It is a way of saying: “back before anything was growing.”

6 tn The two causal clauses explain the first two disjunctive clauses: There was no uncultivated, general growth because there was no rain, and there were no grains because there was no man to cultivate the soil.

sn The last clause in v. 5, “and there was no man to cultivate the ground,” anticipates the curse and the expulsion from the garden (Gen 3:23).

7 tn The conjunction וַאֲנִי (vav) introduces a third disjunctive clause. The Hebrew word אֶדֶן (*eden*) was traditionally translated “mist” because of its use in Job 36:27. However, an Akkadian cognate *edu* in Babylonian texts refers to subterranean springs or waterways. Such a spring would fit the description in this context, since this water “goes up” and waters the ground.

8 tn Heb “was going up.” The verb is an imperfect form,

from the earth and water⁹ the whole surface of the ground.¹⁰ **2:7** The LORD God formed¹¹ the man from the soil of the ground¹² and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,¹³ and the man became a living being.¹⁴

2:8 The LORD God planted an orchard¹⁵ in the east,¹⁶ in Eden,¹⁷ and there he placed the man he had formed.¹⁸ **2:9** The LORD God made all

which in this narrative context carries a customary nuance, indicating continual action in past time.

9 tn The perfect with וַאֲנִי (vav) consecutive carries the same nuance as the preceding verb. Whenever it would well up, it would water the ground.

10 tn The Hebrew word אֲדָמָה (*adamah*) actually means “ground; fertile soil.”

sn Here is an indication of fertility. The water would well up from the earth (אֶרֶץ, *eret*) and water all the surface of the fertile soil (אֲדָמָה). It is from that soil that the man (אָדָם, *adam*) was made (Gen 2:7).

11 tn Or “fashioned.” The prefixed verb form with וַאֲנִי (vav) consecutive initiates narrative sequence. The Hebrew word יָצַר (*yatsar*) means “to form” or “to fashion,” usually by plan or design (see the related noun יָצִיר [*yetsar*] in Gen 6:5). It is the term for an artist's work (the Hebrew term יוֹצֵר [*yotser*] refers to a potter; see Jer 18:2-4.)

sn Various traditions in the ancient Near East reflect this idea of creation. Egyptian drawings show a deity turning little people off of the potter's wheel with another deity giving them life. In the Bible humans are related to the soil and return to it (see 3:19; see also Job 4:19, 20:9; and Isa 29:16).

12 tn The line literally reads “And Yahweh God formed the man, soil, from the ground.” “Soil” is an adverbial accusative, identifying the material from which the man was made.

13 tn The Hebrew word נְשָׁמָה (*neshamah*, “breath”) is used for God and for the life imparted to humans, not animals (see T. C. Mitchell, “The Old Testament Usage of *Neshama*,” VT 11 [1961]: 177-87). Its usage in the Bible conveys more than a breathing living organism (נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּיָה, *nefesh khayyah*). Whatever is given this breath of life becomes animated with the life from God, has spiritual understanding (Job 32:8), and has a functioning conscience (Prov 20:27).

sn Human life is described here as consisting of a body (made from soil from the ground) and breath (given by God). Both animals and humans are called “a living being” (נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּיָה) but humankind became that in a different and more significant way.

14 tn The Hebrew term נֶפֶשׁ (*nefesh*, “being”) is often translated “soul,” but the word usually refers to the whole person. The phrase נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּיָה (*nefesh khayyah*, “living being”) is used of both animals and human beings (see 1:20, 24, 30; 2:19).

15 tn Traditionally “garden,” but the subsequent description of this “garden” makes it clear that it is an orchard of fruit trees.

sn The LORD God planted an orchard. Nothing is said of how the creation of this orchard took place. A harmonization with chap. 1 might lead to the conclusion that it was by decree, prior to the creation of human life. But the narrative sequence here in chap. 2 suggests the creation of the garden followed the creation of the man. Note also the past perfect use of the perfect in the relative clause in the following verse.

16 tn Heb “from the east” or “off east.”

sn One would assume this is east from the perspective of the land of Israel, particularly since the rivers in the area are identified as the rivers in those eastern regions.

17 sn The name Eden (עֵדֶן, *eden*) means “pleasure” in Hebrew.

18 tn The perfect verbal form here requires the past perfect translation since it describes an event that preceded the event described in the main clause.

kinds of trees grow from the soil,¹ every tree that was pleasing to look at² and good for food. (Now³ the tree of life⁴ and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil⁵ were in the middle of the orchard.)

2:10 Now⁶ a river flows⁷ from Eden⁸ to

¹ **tn** Heb “ground,” referring to the fertile soil.

² **tn** Heb “desirable of sight [or “appearance].” The phrase describes the kinds of trees that are visually pleasing and yield fruit that is desirable to the appetite.

³ **tn** The verse ends with a disjunctive clause providing a parenthetical bit of information about the existence of two special trees in the garden.

⁴ **tn** In light of Gen 3:22, the construction “tree of life” should be interpreted to mean a tree that produces life-giving fruit (objective genitive) rather than a living tree (attributive genitive). See E. O. James, *The Tree of Life* (SHR); and R. Marcus, “The Tree of Life in Proverbs,” *JBL* 62 (1943): 117-20.

⁵ **tn** The expression “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” must be interpreted to mean that the tree would produce fruit which, when eaten, gives special knowledge of “good and evil.” Scholars debate what this phrase means here. For a survey of opinions, see G. J. Wenham, *Genesis* (WBC), 1:62-64. One view is that “good” refers to that which enhances, promotes, and produces life, while “evil” refers to anything that hinders, interrupts or destroys life. So eating from this tree would change human nature – people would be able to alter life for better (in their thinking) or for worse. See D. J. A. Clines, “The Tree of Knowledge and the Law of Yahweh,” *VT* 24 (1974): 8-14; and I. Engnell, “‘Knowledge’ and ‘Life’ in the Creation Story,” *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East* [VTSup], 103-19. Another view understands the “knowledge of good and evil” as the capacity to discern between moral good and evil. The following context suggests the tree’s fruit gives one wisdom (see the phrase “capable of making one wise” in 3:6, as well as the note there on the word “wise”), which certainly includes the capacity to discern between good and evil. Such wisdom is characteristic of divine beings, as the serpent’s promise implies (3:5) and as 3:22 makes clear. (Note, however, that this capacity does not include the ability to do what is right.) God prohibits man from eating of the tree. The prohibition becomes a test to see if man will be satisfied with his role and place, or if he will try to ascend to the divine level. There will be a time for man to possess moral discernment/wisdom, as God reveals and imparts it to him, but it is not something to be grasped at in an effort to become “a god.” In fact, the command to be obedient was the first lesson in moral discernment/wisdom. God was essentially saying: “Here is lession one – respect my authority and commands. Disobey me and you will die.” When man disobeys, he decides he does not want to acquire moral wisdom God’s way, but instead tries to rise immediately to the divine level. Once man has acquired such divine wisdom by eating the tree’s fruit (3:22), he must be banned from the garden so that he will not be able to achieve his goal of being godlike and thus live forever, a divine characteristic (3:24). Ironically, man now has the capacity to discern good from evil (3:22), but he is morally corrupted and rebellious and will not consistently choose what is right.

⁶ **tn** The disjunctive clause (note the construction conjunction + subject + predicate) introduces an entire paragraph about the richness of the region in the east.

⁷ **tn** The Hebrew active participle may be translated here as indicating past durative action, “was flowing,” or as a present durative, “flows.” Since this river was the source of the rivers mentioned in vv. 11-14, which appear to describe a situation contemporary with the narrator, it is preferable to translate the participle in v. 10 with the present tense. This suggests that Eden and its orchard still existed in the narrator’s time. According to ancient Jewish tradition, Enoch was taken to the Garden of Eden, where his presence insulated the garden from the destructive waters of Noah’s flood. See *Jub.* 4:23-24.

⁸ **sn** *Eden* is portrayed here as a source of life-giving rivers (that is, perennial streams). This is no surprise because its orchard is where the tree of life is located. Eden is a source

water the orchard, and from there it divides⁹ into four headstreams.¹⁰ 2:11 The name of the first is Pishon; it runs through¹² the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. 2:12 (The gold of that land is pure;¹² pearls¹³ and lapis lazuli¹⁴ are also there). 2:13 The name of the second river is Gihon; it runs through¹⁵ the entire land of Cush.¹⁶ 2:14 The name of the third river is Tigris; it runs along the east side of Assyria.¹⁷ The fourth river is the Euphrates.

2:15 The LORD God took the man and placed¹⁸ him in the orchard in¹⁹ Eden to care for it and to maintain it.²⁰ 2:16 Then the LORD God commanded²¹ the man, “You may freely eat²² fruit²³ from every tree of the orchard, 2:17 but²⁴ you must not eat²⁵ from the tree of the knowledge

of life, but tragically its orchard is no longer accessible to humankind. The river flowing out of Eden is a tantalizing reminder of this. God continues to provide life-giving water to sustain physical existence on the earth, but immortality has been lost.

⁹ **tn** The imperfect verb form has the same nuance as the preceding participle. (If the participle is taken as past durative, then the imperfect would be translated “was dividing.”)

¹⁰ **tn** Or “branches”; Heb “heads.” Cf. NEB “streams”; NASB “rivers.”

¹¹ **tn** Heb “it is that which goes around.”

¹² **tn** Heb “good.”

¹³ **tn** The Hebrew term translated “pearls” may be a reference to resin (cf. NIV “aromatic resin”) or another precious stone (cf. NEB, NASB, NRSV “bdellium”).

¹⁴ **tn** Or “onyx.”

¹⁵ **tn** Heb “it is that which goes around.”

¹⁶ **sn** *Cush*. In the Bible the Hebrew word כוש (*kush*, “Kush”) often refers to Ethiopia (so KJV, CEV), but here it must refer to a region in Mesopotamia, the area of the later Cassite dynasty of Babylon. See Gen 10:8 as well as E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (AB), 20.

¹⁷ **tn** Heb “Asshur” (so NEB, NIV).

¹⁸ **tn** The Hebrew verb נָחַד (*nuakh*, translated here as “placed”) is a different verb than the one used in 2:8.

¹⁹ **tn** Traditionally translated “the Garden of Eden,” the context makes it clear that the garden (or orchard) was in Eden (making “Eden” a genitive of location).

²⁰ **tn** Heb “to work it and to keep it.”

sn Note that man’s task is to *care for and maintain* the trees of the orchard. Not until after the fall, when he is condemned to cultivate the soil, does this task change.

²¹ **sn** This is the first time in the Bible that the verb *tsavah* (צָוָה, “to command”) appears. Whatever the man had to do in the garden, the main focus of the narrative is on keeping God’s commandments. God created humans with the capacity to obey him and then tested them with commands.

²² **tn** The imperfect verb form probably carries the nuance of permission (“you may eat”) since the man is not being commanded to eat from every tree. The accompanying infinitive absolute adds emphasis: “you may freely eat,” or “you may eat to your heart’s content.”

²³ **tn** The word “fruit” is not in the Hebrew text, but is implied as the direct object of the verb “eat.” Presumably the only part of the tree the man would eat would be its fruit (cf. 3:2).

²⁴ **tn** The disjunctive clause here indicates contrast: “but from the tree of the knowledge....”

²⁵ **tn** The negated imperfect verb form indicates prohibition, “you must not eat.”

of good and evil, for when¹ you eat from it you will surely die.”²

2:18 The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone.³ I will make a companion⁴ for him who corresponds to him.”⁵ **2:19** The LORD God formed⁶ out of the ground every liv-

1 tn Or “in the very day, as soon as.” If one understands the expression to have this more precise meaning, then the following narrative presents a problem, for the man does not die physically as soon as he eats from the tree. In this case one may argue that spiritual death is in view. If physical death is in view here, there are two options to explain the following narrative: (1) The following phrase “You will surely die” concerns mortality which ultimately results in death (a natural paraphrase would be, “You will become mortal”), or (2) God mercifully gave man a reprieve, allowing him to live longer than he deserved.

2 tn Heb “dying you will die.” The imperfect verb form here has the nuance of the specific future because it is introduced with the temporal clause, “when you eat...you will die.” That certainty is underscored with the infinitive absolute, “you will surely die.”

sn The Hebrew text (“dying you will die”) does not refer to two aspects of death (“dying spiritually, you will then die physically”). The construction simply emphasizes the certainty of death, however it is defined. Death is essentially separation. To die physically means separation from the land of the living, but not extinction. To die spiritually means to be separated from God. Both occur with sin, although the physical alienation is more gradual than instant, and the spiritual is immediate, although the effects of it continue the separation.

3 tn Heb “The being of man by himself is not good.” The meaning of “good” must be defined contextually. Within the context of creation, in which God instructs humankind to be fruitful and multiply, the man alone cannot comply. Being alone prevents the man from fulfilling the design of creation and therefore is not good.

4 tn Traditionally “helper.” The English word “helper,” because it can connote so many different ideas, does not accurately convey the connotation of the Hebrew word עֲזָרָה (*‘ezer*). Usage of the Hebrew term does not suggest a subordinate role, a connotation which English “helper” can have. In the Bible God is frequently described as the “helper,” the one who does for us what we cannot do for ourselves, the one who meets our needs. In this context the word seems to express the idea of an “indispensable companion.” The woman would supply what the man was lacking in the design of creation and logically it would follow that the man would supply what she was lacking, although that is not stated here. See further M. L. Rosenzweig, “A Helper Equal to Him,” *Jud* 139 (1986): 277-80.

5 tn The Hebrew expression כְּנֶגְדּוֹ (*k^onegdo*) literally means “according to the opposite of him.”⁶ Translations such as “suitable [for]” (NASB, NIV), “matching,” “corresponding to” all capture the idea. (Translations that render the phrase simply “partner” [cf. NEB, NRSV], while not totally inaccurate, do not reflect the nuance of correspondence and/or suitability.) The man’s form and nature are matched by the woman’s as she reflects him and complements him. Together they correspond. In short, this prepositional phrase indicates that she has everything that God had invested in him.

6 tn Or “fashioned.” To harmonize the order of events with the chronology of chapter one, some translate the prefixed verb form with *vav* (ו) consecutive as a past perfect (“had formed,” cf. NIV) here. (In chapter one the creation of the animals preceded the creation of man; here the animals are created after the man.) However, it is unlikely that the Hebrew construction can be translated in this way in the middle of this pericope, for the criteria for unmarked temporal overlay are not present here. See S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew*, 84-88, and especially R. Buth, “Methodological Collision between Source Criticism and Discourse Analysis,” *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, 138-54. For a contrary viewpoint see *IBHS* 552-53 §33.2.3 and C. J. Collins, “The *Wayyiqtol* as ‘Pluperfect’: When and Why,”

ing animal of the field and every bird of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would⁷ name them, and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. **2:20** So the man named all the animals, the birds of the air, and the living creatures of the field, but for Adam⁸ no companion who corresponded to him was found.⁹ **2:21** So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep,¹⁰ and while he was asleep,¹¹ he took part of the man’s side¹² and closed up the place with flesh.¹³ **2:22** Then the LORD God made¹⁴ a woman from the part he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. **2:23** Then the man said,

“This one at last¹⁵ is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called¹⁶ ‘woman,’

TynBul 46 (1995): 117-40.

7 tn The imperfect verb form is future from the perspective of the past time narrative.

8 tn Here for the first time the Hebrew word אָדָם (*‘adam*) appears without the article, suggesting that it might now be the name “Adam” rather than “[the] man.” Translations of the Bible differ as to where they make the change from “man” to “Adam” (e.g., NASB and NIV translate “Adam” here, while NEB and NRSV continue to use “the man”; the KJV uses “Adam” twice in v. 19).

9 tn Heb “there was not found a companion who corresponded to him.” The subject of the third masculine singular verb form is indefinite. Without a formally expressed subject the verb may be translated as passive: “one did not find = there was not found.”

10 tn Heb “And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on the man.”

11 tn Heb “and he slept.” In the sequence the verb may be subordinated to the following verb to indicate a temporal clause (“while...”).

12 tn Traditionally translated “rib,” the Hebrew word actually means “side.” The Hebrew text reads, “and he took one from his sides,” which could be rendered “part of his sides.” That idea may fit better the explanation by the man that the woman is his flesh and bone.

13 tn Heb “closed up the flesh under it.”

14 tn The Hebrew verb is בָּנָה (*banah*, “to make, to build, to construct”). The text states that the LORD God built the rib into a woman. Again, the passage gives no indication of precisely how this was done.

15 tn The Hebrew term הַפְּתָאִים (*happa’am*) means “the [this] time, this place,” or “now, finally, at last.” The expression conveys the futility of the man while naming the animals and finding no one who corresponded to him.

16 tn The Hebrew text is very precise, stating: “of this one it will be said, ‘woman’.” The text is not necessarily saying that the man named his wife – that comes after the fall (Gen 3:20).

sn Some argue that naming implies the man’s authority or ownership over the woman here. Naming can indicate ownership or authority if one is calling someone or something by one’s name and/or calling a name over someone or something (see 2 Sam 12:28; 2 Chr 7:14; Isa 4:1; Jer 7:14; 15:16), especially if one is conquering and renaming a site. But the idiomatic construction used here (the Niphal of בָּרָא, *qara’*, with preposition לָמַד [ל, *l^e]*) does not suggest such an idea. In each case where it is used, the one naming discerns something about the object being named and gives it an appropriate name (See 1 Sam 9:9; 2 Sam 18:18; Prov 16:21; Isa 1:26; 32:5; 35:8; 62:4, 12; Jer 19:6). Adam is not so much naming the woman as he is discerning her close relationship to him and referring to her accordingly. He may simply be anticipating that she will be given an appropriate name based on the discernible similarity.

for she was taken out of² man.²²

2:24 That is why³ a man leaves⁴ his father and mother and unites with⁵ his wife, and they become a new family.⁶ 2:25 The man and his

wife were both naked,⁷ but they were not ashamed.⁸

The Temptation and the Fall

3:1 Now⁹ the serpent⁴⁰ was more shrewd¹¹

¹ tn Or “from” (but see v. 22).
² sn This poetic section expresses the correspondence between the man and the woman. She is bone of his bones, flesh of his flesh. Note the wordplay (paronomasia) between “woman” (אִשָּׁה, *ishah*) and “man” (אִישׁ, *ish*). On the surface it appears that the word for woman is the feminine form of the word for man. But the two words are not etymologically related. The sound and the sense give that impression, however, and make for a more effective wordplay.
³ tn This statement, introduced by the Hebrew phrase עַל־כֵּן (*al-ken*, “therefore” or “that is why”), is an editorial comment, not an extension of the quotation. The statement is describing what typically happens, not what will or should happen. It is saying, “This is why we do things the way we do.” It links a contemporary (with the narrator) practice with the historical event being narrated. The historical event narrated in v. 23 provides the basis for the contemporary practice described in v. 24. That is why the imperfect verb forms are translated with the present tense rather than future.
⁴ tn The imperfect verb form has a habitual or characteristic nuance. For other examples of עַל־כֵּן (*al-ken*, “therefore, that is why”) with the imperfect in a narrative framework, see Gen 10:9; 32:32 (the phrase “to this day” indicates characteristic behavior is in view); Num 21:14, 27; 1 Sam 5:5 (note “to this day”); 19:24 (perhaps the imperfect is customary here, “were saying”); 2 Sam 5:8. The verb translated “leave” (עָזַב, *‘azab*) normally means “to abandon, to forsake, to leave behind, to discard,” when used with human subject and object (see Josh 22:3; 1 Sam 30:13; Ps 27:10; Prov 2:17; Isa 54:6; 60:15; 62:4; Jer 49:11). Within the context of the ancient Israelite extended family structure, this cannot refer to emotional or geographical separation. The narrator is using hyperbole to emphasize the change in perspective that typically overtakes a young man when his thoughts turn to love and marriage.
⁵ tn The perfect with vav (ו) consecutive carries the same habitual or characteristic nuance as the preceding imperfect. The verb is traditionally translated “cleaves [to]”; it has the basic idea of “stick with/to” (e.g., it is used of Ruth resolutely staying with her mother-in-law in Ruth 1:14). In this passage it describes the inseparable relationship between the man and the woman in marriage as God intended it.
⁶ tn Heb “and they become one flesh.” The perfect with vav consecutive carries the same habitual or characteristic nuance as the preceding verbs in the verse. The retention of the word “flesh” (בָּשָׂר, *basar*) in the translation often leads to improper or incomplete interpretations. The Hebrew word refers to more than just a sexual union. When they unite in marriage, the man and woman bring into being a new family unit (וְיָהָיָה, *hayah* + *lamed* preposition means “become”). The phrase “one flesh” occurs only here and must be interpreted in light of v. 23. There the man declares that the woman is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. To be one’s “bone and flesh” is to be related by blood to someone. For example, the phrase describes the relationship between Laban and Jacob (Gen 29:14); Abimelech and the Shechemites (Judg 9:2; his mother was a Shechemite); David and the Israelites (2 Sam 5:1); David and the elders of Judah (2 Sam 19:12); and David and his nephew Amasa (2 Sam 19:13, see 2 Sam 17:2; 1 Chr 2:16-17). The expression “one flesh” seems to indicate that they become, as it were, “kin,” at least legally (a new family unit is created) or metaphorically. In this first marriage in human history,

the woman was literally formed from the man’s bone and flesh. Even though later marriages do not involve such a divine surgical operation, the first marriage sets the pattern for how later marriages are understood and explains why marriage supersedes the parent-child relationship.
⁷ tn Heb “And the two of them were naked, the man and his wife.”
⁸ sn Naked. The motif of nakedness is introduced here and plays an important role in the next chapter. In the Bible nakedness conveys different things. In this context it signifies either innocence or integrity, depending on how those terms are defined. There is no fear of exploitation, no sense of vulnerability. But after the entrance of sin into the race, nakedness takes on a negative sense. It is then usually connected with the sense of vulnerability, shame, exploitation, and exposure (such as the idea of “uncovering nakedness” either in sexual exploitation or in captivity in war).
⁹ tn The imperfect verb form here has a customary nuance, indicating a continuing condition in past time. The meaning of the Hebrew term בּוֹשֵׁת (*bosh*) is “to be ashamed, to put to shame,” but its meaning is stronger than “to be embarrassed.” The word conveys the fear of exploitation or evil – enemies are put to shame through military victory. It indicates the feeling of shame that approximates a fear of evil.
¹⁰ tn The chapter begins with a disjunctive clause (conjunction + subject + predicate) that introduces a new character and a new scene in the story.
¹¹ sn Many theologians identify or associate the serpent with Satan. In this view Satan comes in the disguise of a serpent or speaks through a serpent. This explains the serpent’s capacity to speak. While later passages in the Bible may indicate there was a satanic presence behind the serpent (see, for example, Rev 12:9), the immediate context pictures the serpent as simply one of the animals of the field created by God (see v. 1, 14). An ancient Jewish interpretation explains the reference to the serpent in a literal manner, attributing the capacity to speak to all the animals in the orchard. This text (*Jub.* 3:28) states, “On that day [the day the man and woman were expelled from the orchard] the mouth of all the beasts and cattle and birds and whatever walked or moved was stopped from speaking because all of them used to speak to one another with one speech and one language [presumed to be Hebrew, see 12:26].” Josephus, *Ant.* 1.1.4 (1.41) attributes the serpent’s actions to jealousy. He writes that “the serpent, living in the company of Adam and his wife, grew jealous of the blessings which he supposed were destined for them if they obeyed God’s behests, and, believing that disobedience would bring trouble on them, he maliciously persuaded the woman to taste of the tree of wisdom.”
¹² tn The Hebrew word עָרוּם (*‘arum*) basically means “clever.” This idea then polarizes into the nuances “cunning” (in a negative sense, see Job 5:12; 15:5), and “prudent” in a positive sense (Prov 12:16, 23; 13:16; 14:8, 15, 18; 22:3; 27:12). This same polarization of meaning can be detected in related words derived from the same root (see Exod 21:14; Josh 9:4; 1 Sam 23:22; Job 5:13; Ps 83:3). The negative nuance obviously applies in Gen 3, where the snake attempts to talk the woman into disobeying God by using half-truths and lies.
¹³ sn There is a wordplay in Hebrew between the words “naked” (עָרֹם, *‘arummin*) in 2:25 and “shrewd” (עָרוּם, *‘arum*) in 3:1. The point seems to be that the integrity of the man and the woman is the focus of the serpent’s craftiness. At the beginning they are naked and he is shrewd; afterward, they will be covered and he will be cursed.

than any of the wild animals⁴ that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Is it really true that² God³ said, ‘You must not eat from any tree of the orchard?’”⁴ **3:2** The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat⁵ of the fruit from the trees of the orchard; **3:3** but concerning the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the orchard God said, ‘You must not eat from it, and you must not touch it,⁶ or else you will die.’”⁷ **3:4** The serpent said to the woman, “Surely you will not die,⁸ **3:5** for God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will open⁹ and you will

be like divine beings who know¹⁰ good and evil.”¹¹ **3:6** When¹² the woman saw that the tree produced fruit that was good for food,¹³ was attractive¹⁴ to the eye, and was desirable for making one wise,¹⁵ she took some of its fruit and ate it.¹⁶ She also gave some of it to her husband who was with her, and he ate it.¹⁷ **3:7** Then the eyes

¹ **tn** *Heb* “animals of the field.”

² **tn** *Heb* “Indeed that God said.” The beginning of the quotation is elliptical and therefore difficult to translate. One must supply a phrase like “is it true”: “Indeed, [is it true] that God said.”

³ **sn** *God*. The serpent does not use the expression “Yahweh God” [LORD God] because there is no covenant relationship involved between God and the serpent. He only speaks of “God.” In the process the serpent draws the woman into his manner of speech so that she too only speaks of “God.”

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “you must not eat from all the tree[s] of the orchard.” After the negated prohibitive verb, מִכְּלֹ (mikkol, “from all”) has the meaning “from any.” Note the construction in Lev 18:26, where the statement “you must not do from all these abominable things” means “you must not do any of these abominable things.” See Lev 22:25 and Deut 28:14 as well.

⁵ **tn** There is a notable change between what the LORD God had said and what the woman says. God said “you may freely eat” (the imperfect with the infinitive absolute, see 2:16), but the woman omits the emphatic infinitive, saying simply “we may eat.” Her words do not reflect the sense of eating to her heart’s content.

⁶ **sn** *And you must not touch it*. The woman adds to God’s prohibition, making it say more than God expressed. G. von Rad observes that it is as though she wanted to set a law for herself by means of this exaggeration (*Genesis* [OTL], 86).

⁷ **tn** The Hebrew construction is פֶּן (pen) with the imperfect tense, which conveys a negative purpose: “lest you die” = “in order that you not die.” By stating the warning in this way, the woman omits the emphatic infinitive used by God (“you shall surely die,” see 2:17).

⁸ **tn** The response of the serpent includes the infinitive absolute with a blatant negation equal to saying: “Not – you will surely die” (לֹא בֹרֵא תִּמְוֹתֵי, lo’ bor’ei mutun). The construction makes this emphatic because normally the negative particle precedes the finite verb. The serpent is a liar, denying that there is a penalty for sin (see John 8:44).

⁹ **sn** *Surely you will not die*. Here the serpent is more aware of what the LORD God said than the woman was; he simply adds a blatant negation to what God said. In the account of Jesus’ temptation Jesus is victorious because he knows the scripture better than Satan (Matt 4:1-11).

⁹ **tn** Or “you will have understanding.” This obviously refers to the acquisition of the “knowledge of good and evil,” as the next statement makes clear.

¹⁰ **tn** Or perhaps “like God, knowing.” It is unclear how the plural participle translated “knowing” is functioning. On the one hand, יֹדְעִי (yod’ei) could be taken as a substantival participle functioning as a predicative adjective in the sentence. In this case one might translate: “You will be, like God himself, knowers of good and evil.” On the other hand, it could be taken as an attributive adjective modifying אֱלֹהִים (’elohim). In this case אֱלֹהִים has to be taken as a numerical plural referring to “gods,” “divine beings,” for if the one true God were the intended referent, a singular form of the participle would almost certainly appear as a modifier. Following this line of interpretation, one could translate, “You will be like divine beings who know good and evil.” The following context may favor this translation, for in 3:22 God says to an unidentified group, “Look, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil.” It is probable that God is addressing his heavenly court

(see the note on the word “make” in 1:26), the members of which can be called “gods” or “divine beings” from the ancient Israelite perspective. (We know some of these beings as messengers or “angels.”) An examination of parallel constructions shows that a predicative understanding (“you will be, like God himself, knowers of good and evil,” cf. NIV, NRSV) is possible, but rare (see Gen 27:23, where “hairy” is predicative, complementing the verb “to be”). The statistical evidence strongly suggests that the participle is attributive, modifying “divine beings” (see Ps 31:12; Isa 1:30; 13:14; 16:2; 29:5; 58:11; Jer 14:9; 20:9; 23:9; 31:12; 48:41; 49:22; Hos 7:11; Amos 4:11). In all of these texts, where a comparative clause and accompanying adjective/participle follow a copulative (“to be”) verb, the adjective/participle is attributive after the noun in the comparative clause.

¹¹ **sn** *You will be like divine beings who know good and evil*. The serpent raises doubts about the integrity of God. He implies that the only reason for the prohibition was that God was protecting the divine domain. If the man and woman were to eat, they would enter into that domain. The temptation is to overstep divinely established boundaries. (See D. E. Gowan, *When Man Becomes God* [PTMS], 25.)

¹² **tn** *Heb* “And the woman saw.” The clause can be rendered as a temporal clause subordinate to the following verb in the sequence.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “that the tree was good for food.” The words “produced fruit that was” are not in the Hebrew text, but are implied.

¹⁴ **tn** The Hebrew word תְּאוֹהָה (ta’avaah, translated “attractive” here) actually means “desirable.” This term and the later term נִחְמָד (nekhmad, “desirable”) are synonyms.

sn *Attractive (Heb “desirable”)...desirable*. These are different words in Hebrew. The verbal roots for both of these forms appear in Deut 5:21 in the prohibition against coveting. Strong desires usually lead to taking.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “that good was the tree for food, and that desirable it was to the eyes, and desirable was the tree to make one wise.” On the connection between moral wisdom and the “knowledge of good and evil,” see the note on the word “evil” in 2:9.

sn *Desirable for making one wise*. The quest for wisdom can follow the wrong course, as indeed it does here. No one can become like God by disobeying God. It is that simple. The Book of Proverbs stresses that obtaining wisdom begins with the fear of God that is evidenced through obedience to his word. Here, in seeking wisdom, Eve disobeys God and ends up afraid of God.

¹⁶ **tn** The pronoun “it” is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied (here and also after “ate” at the end of this verse) for stylistic reasons.

sn *She took...and ate it*. The critical word now discloses the disobedience: “[she] ate.” Since the LORD God had said, “You shall not eat,” the main point of the divine inquiry will be, “Did you eat,” meaning, “did you disobey the command?” The woman ate, being deceived by the serpent (1 Tim 2:14), but then the man ate, apparently willingly when the woman gave him the fruit (see Rom 5:12, 17-19).

¹⁷ **sn** This pericope (3:1-7) is a fine example of Hebrew narrative structure. After an introductory disjunctive clause that introduces a new character and sets the stage (3:1), the narrative tension develops through dialogue, culminating in the action of the story. Once the dialogue is over, the action is told in a rapid sequence of verbs – she took, she ate, she gave, and he ate.

of both of them opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

The Judgment Oracles of God at the Fall

3:8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God moving about¹ in the orchard at the breezy time² of the day, and they hid³ from the LORD God among the trees of the orchard. **3:9** But the LORD God called to⁴ the man and said to him, “Where are you?”⁵ **3:10** The man replied,⁶ “I heard you moving about⁷ in the orchard, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.” **3:11** And the LORD God⁸ said, “Who told you that you were naked?⁹ Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”¹⁰ **3:12** The man said, “The woman whom you gave me, she gave¹¹ me some

fruit¹² from the tree and I ate it.” **3:13** So the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this¹³ you have done?” And the woman replied, “The serpent¹⁴ tricked¹⁵ me, and I ate.”

3:14 The LORD God said to the serpent,¹⁶ “Because you have done this, cursed¹⁷ are you above all the wild beasts and all the living creatures of the field! On your belly you will crawl¹⁸ and dust you will eat¹⁹ all the days of your life. **3:15** And I will put hostility²⁰ between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring;²¹

1 tn The Hitpael participle of הָלַךְ (*halakh*, “to walk, to go”) here has an iterative sense, “moving” or “going about.” While a translation of “walking about” is possible, it assumes a theophany, the presence of the LORD God in a human form. This is more than the text asserts.

2 tn The expression is traditionally rendered “cool of the day,” because the Hebrew word רוּחַ (*ruakh*) can mean “wind.” U. Cassuto (*Genesis: From Adam to Noah*, 152-54) concludes after lengthy discussion that the expression refers to afternoon when it became hot and the sun was beginning to decline. J. J. Niehaus (*God at Sinai* [SOTBT], 155-57) offers a different interpretation of the phrase, relating יוֹם (*yom*, usually understood as “day”) to an Akkadian cognate *unu* (“storm”) and translates the phrase “in the wind of the storm.” If Niehaus is correct, then God is not pictured as taking an afternoon stroll through the orchard, but as coming in a powerful windstorm to confront the man and woman with their rebellion. In this case הוֹרָה קוֹל יְהוָה (*qol y^hvahv*, “sound of the LORD”) may refer to God’s thunderous roar, which typically accompanies his appearance in the storm to do battle or render judgment (e.g., see Ps 29).

3 tn The verb used here is the Hitpael, giving the reflexive idea (“they hid themselves”). In v. 10, when Adam answers the LORD, the Niphal form is used with the same sense: “I hid.”

4 tn The Hebrew verb קָרָא (*qara*’, “to call”) followed by the preposition אֶל or לְ (*el-* or *le*’, “to, unto”) often carries the connotation of “summon.”

5 sn *Where are you?* The question is probably rhetorical (a figure of speech called erotesis) rather than literal, because it was spoken to the man, who answers it with an explanation of why he was hiding rather than a location. The question has more the force of “Why are you hiding?”

6 tn Heb “and he said.”

7 tn Heb “your sound.” If one sees a storm theophany here (see the note on the word “time” in v. 8), then one could translate, “your powerful voice.”

8 tn Heb “and he said.” The referent (the LORD God) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

9 sn *Who told you that you were naked?* This is another rhetorical question, asking more than what it appears to ask. The second question in the verse reveals the LORD God’s real concern.

10 sn The Hebrew word order (“Did you from the tree – which I commanded you not to eat from it – eat?”) is arranged to emphasize that the man’s and the woman’s eating of the fruit was an act of disobedience. The relative clause inserted immediately after the reference to the tree brings out this point very well.

11 tn The Hebrew construction in this sentence uses an independent nominative absolute (formerly known as a *casus pendens*). “The woman” is the independent nominative absolute; it is picked up by the formal subject, the pronoun “she” written with the verb (“she gave”). The point of the construction is to throw the emphasis on “the woman.” But what

makes this so striking is that a relative clause has been inserted to explain what is meant by the reference to the woman: “whom you gave me.” Ultimately, the man is blaming God for giving him the woman who (from the man’s viewpoint) caused him to sin.

12 tn The words “some fruit” here and the pronoun “it” at the end of the sentence are not in the Hebrew text, but are supplied for stylistic reasons.

13 tn The use of the demonstrative pronoun is enclitic, serving as an undeclined particle for emphasis. It gives the sense of “What in the world have you done?” (see R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 24, §118).

14 sn The Hebrew word order puts the subject (“the serpent”) before the verb here, giving prominence to it.

15 tn This verb (the Hiphil of נָשָׂא; *nasha*) is used elsewhere of a king or god misleading his people into false confidence (2 Kgs 18:29 = 2 Chr 32:15 = Isa 36:14; 2 Kgs 19:10 = Isa 37:10), of an ally deceiving a partner (Obad 7), of God deceiving his sinful people as a form of judgment (Jer 4:10), of false prophets instilling their audience with false hope (Jer 29:8), and of pride and false confidence producing self-deception (Jer 37:9; 49:16; Obad 3).

16 sn Note that God asks no question of the serpent, does not call for confession, as he did to the man and the woman; there is only the announcement of the curse. The order in this section is chiasitic: The man is questioned, the woman is questioned, the serpent is cursed, sentence is passed on the woman, sentence is passed on the man.

17 tn The Hebrew word translated “cursed,” a passive participle from אָרַר (*arar*), either means “punished” or “banished,” depending on how one interprets the following preposition. If the preposition is taken as comparative, then the idea is “cursed [i.e., punished] are you above [i.e., more than] all the wild beasts.” In this case the comparative preposition reflects the earlier comparison: The serpent was more shrewd than all others, and so more cursed than all others. If the preposition is taken as separative (see the note on the word “banished” in 4:11), then the idea is “cursed and banished from all the wild beasts.” In this case the serpent is condemned to isolation from all the other animals.

18 tn Heb “go”; “walk,” but in English “crawl” or “slither” better describes a serpent’s movement.

19 sn *Dust you will eat.* Being restricted to crawling on the ground would necessarily involve “eating dust,” although that is not the diet of the serpent. The idea of being brought low, of “eating dust” as it were, is a symbol of humiliation.

20 tn The Hebrew word translated “hostility” is derived from the root אָוֵב (*av*, “to be hostile, to be an adversary [or enemy]”). The curse announces that there will be continuing hostility between the serpent and the woman. The serpent will now live in a “battle zone,” as it were.

21 sn The Hebrew word translated “offspring” is a collective singular. The text anticipates the ongoing struggle between human beings (the woman’s offspring) and deadly poisonous snakes (the serpent’s offspring). An ancient Jewish interpretation of the passage states: “He made the serpent, cause of the deceit, press the earth with belly and flank, having bitterly driven him out. He aroused a dire enmity between them. The

her offspring will attack¹ your head, and² you³ will attack her offspring's heel.⁴

one guards his head to save it, the other his heel, for death is at hand in the proximity of men and malignant poisonous snakes." See *Sib. Or.* 1:59-64. For a similar interpretation see Josephus, *Ant.* 1.1.4 (1.50-51).

1 tn *Heb* "he will attack [or "bruise"] you [on] the head." The singular pronoun and verb agree grammatically with the collective singular noun "offspring." For other examples of singular verb and pronominal forms being used with the collective singular "offspring," see Gen 16:10; 22:17; 24:60. The word "head" is an adverbial accusative, locating the blow. A crushing blow to the head would be potentially fatal.

2 tn Or "but you will..."; or "as they attack your head, you will attack their heel." The disjunctive clause (conjunction + subject + verb) is understood as contrastive. Both clauses place the subject before the verb, a construction that is sometimes used to indicate synchronic action (see Judg 15:14).

3 sn *You will attack her offspring's heel.* Though the conflict will actually involve the serpent's offspring (snakes) and the woman's offspring (human beings), v. 15b for rhetorical effect depicts the conflict as being between the serpent and the woman's offspring, as if the serpent will outlive the woman. The statement is personalized for the sake of the addressee (the serpent) and reflects the ancient Semitic concept of corporate solidarity, which emphasizes the close relationship between a progenitor and his offspring. Note Gen 28:14, where the LORD says to Jacob, "Your offspring will be like the dust of the earth, and you [second masculine singular] will spread out in all directions." Jacob will "spread out" in all directions through his offspring, but the text states the matter as if this will happen to him personally.

4 tn *Heb* "you will attack him [on] the heel." The verb (translated "attack") is repeated here, a fact that is obscured by some translations (e.g., NIV "crush...strike"). The singular pronoun agrees grammatically with the collective singular noun "offspring." For other examples of singular verb and pronominal forms being used with the collective singular "offspring," see Gen 16:10; 22:17; 24:60. The word "heel" is an adverbial accusative, locating the blow. A bite on the heel from a poisonous serpent is potentially fatal.

sn The etiological nature of v. 15 is apparent, though its relevance for modern western man is perhaps lost because we rarely come face to face with poisonous snakes. Ancient Israelites, who often encountered snakes in their daily activities (see, for example, Eccl 10:8; Amos 5:19), would find the statement quite meaningful as an explanation for the hostility between snakes and humans. (In the broader ancient Near Eastern context, compare the Mesopotamian serpent omens. See H. W. F. Saggs, *The Greatness That Was Babylon*, 309.) This ongoing struggle, when interpreted in light of v. 15, is a tangible reminder of the conflict introduced into the world by the first humans' rebellion against God. Many Christian theologians (going back to Irenaeus) understand v. 15 as the so-called *protevangeli*um, supposedly prophesying Christ's victory over Satan (see W. Witfall, "Genesis 3:15 – a Protevangeli^{um}?" *CBO* 36 [1974]: 361-65; and R. A. Martin, "The Earliest Messianic Interpretation of Genesis 3:15," *JBL* 84 [1965]: 425-27). In this allegorical approach, the woman's offspring is initially Cain, then the whole human race, and ultimately Jesus Christ, the *offspring* (*Heb* "seed") of the woman (see Gal 4:4). The *offspring* of the serpent includes the evil powers and demons of the spirit world, as well as those humans who are in the kingdom of darkness (see John 8:44). According to this view, the passage gives the first hint of the gospel. Satan delivers a crippling blow to the Seed of the woman (Jesus), who in turn delivers a fatal blow to the Serpent (first defeating him through the death and resurrection [1 Cor 15:55-57] and then destroying him in the judgment [Rev 12:7-9; 20:7-10]). However, the grammatical structure of Gen 3:15b does not suggest this view. The repetition of the verb "attack," as well as the word order, suggests mutual hostility is being depicted, not the defeat of the serpent. If the serpent's defeat were being portrayed, it is odd that the alleged description of his death comes

3:16 To the woman he said,
"I will greatly increase⁵ your labor pains;⁶
with pain you will give birth to children.
You will want to control your husband,⁷
but he will dominate⁸ you."

first in the sentence. If he has already been crushed by the woman's "Seed," how can he bruise his heel? To sustain the allegorical view, v. 15b must be translated in one of the following ways: "he will crush your head, even though you attack his heel" (in which case the second clause is concessive) or "he will crush your head as you attack his heel" (the clauses, both of which place the subject before the verb, may indicate synchronic action).

5 tn The imperfect verb form is emphasized and intensified by the infinitive absolute from the same verb.

6 tn *Heb* "your pain and your conception," suggesting to some interpreters that having a lot of children was a result of the judgment (probably to make up for the loss through death). But the next clause shows that the pain is associated with conception and childbirth. The two words form a hendiadys (where two words are joined to express one idea, like "good and angry" in English), the second explaining the first. "Conception," if the correct meaning of the noun, must be figurative here since there is no pain in conception; it is a synecdoche, representing the entire process of childbirth and child rearing from the very start. However, recent etymological research suggests the noun is derived from a root *חרר* (*hrr*), *חרר* (*hrh*), and means "trembling, pain" (see D. Tsumura, "A Note on *חרר* (Gen 3:16)," *Bib* 75 [1994]: 398-400). In this case "pain and trembling" refers to the physical effects of childbirth. The word *עִנְיָוֹן* (*'atsavon*, "pain"), an abstract noun related to the verb *עִנְיָו* (*'atsav*), includes more than physical pain. It is emotional distress as well as physical pain. The same word is used in v. 17 for the man's painful toil in the field.

7 tn *Heb* "and toward your husband [will be] your desire." The nominal sentence does not have a verb; a future verb must be supplied, because the focus of the oracle is on the future struggle. The precise meaning of the noun *תְּשׁוּקָה* (*'shuqah*, "desire") is debated. Many interpreters conclude that it refers to sexual desire here, because the subject of the passage is the relationship between a wife and her husband, and because the word is used in a romantic sense in Song 7:11 HT (7:10 ET). However, this interpretation makes little sense in Gen 3:16. First, it does not fit well with the assertion "he will dominate you." Second, it implies that sexual desire was not part of the original creation, even though the man and the woman were told to multiply. And third, it ignores the usage of the word in Gen 4:7 where it refers to sin's desire to control and dominate Cain. (Even in Song of Songs it carries the basic idea of "control," for it describes the young man's desire to "have his way sexually" with the young woman.) In Gen 3:16 the LORD announces a struggle, a conflict between the man and the woman. She will desire to control him, but he will dominate her instead. This interpretation also fits the tone of the passage, which is a judgment oracle. See further Susan T. Foh, "What is the Woman's Desire?" *WTJ* 37 (1975): 376-83.

8 tn The Hebrew verb *מָשַׁל* (*mashal*) means "to rule over," but in a way that emphasizes powerful control, domination, or mastery. This also is part of the baser human nature. The translation assumes the imperfect verb form has an objective/indicative sense here. Another option is to understand it as having a modal, desiderative nuance, "but he will want to dominate you." In this case, the LORD simply announces the struggle without indicating who will emerge victorious.

sn This passage is a judgment oracle. It announces that conflict between man and woman will become the norm in human society. It does not depict the NT ideal, where the husband sacrificially loves his wife, as Christ loved the church, and where the wife recognizes the husband's loving leadership in the family and voluntarily submits to it. Sin produces a conflict or power struggle between the man and the woman, but in Christ man and woman call a truce and live harmoni-

3:17 But to Adam¹ he said,
 “Because you obeyed² your wife
 and ate from the tree about which I com-
 manded you,
 ‘You must not eat from it,’
 cursed is the ground³ thanks to you;⁴
 in painful toil you will eat⁵ of it all the
 days of your life.
 3:18 It will produce thorns and thistles for
 you,
 but you will eat the grain⁶ of the field.
 3:19 By the sweat of your brow⁷ you will
 eat food
 until you return to the ground,⁸
 for out of it you were taken;
 for you are dust, and to dust you will
 return.”⁹

ously (Eph 5:18-32).

¹ **tn** Since there is no article on the word, the personal name is used, rather than the generic “the man” (cf. NRSV).

² **tn** The idiom “listen to the voice of” often means “obey.” The man “obeyed” his wife and in the process disobeyed God.

³ **sn** For the ground to be *cursed* means that it will no longer yield its bounty as the blessing from God had promised. The whole creation, Paul writes in Rom 8:22, is still groaning under this curse, waiting for the day of redemption.

⁴ **tn** The Hebrew phrase בְּעִבְיֶיךָ (*ba'avurekha*) is more literally translated “on your account” or “because of you.” The idiomatic “thanks to you” in the translation tries to capture the point of this expression.

⁵ **sn** *In painful toil you will eat*. The theme of eating is prominent throughout Gen 3. The prohibition was against eating from the tree of knowledge. The sin was in eating. The interrogation concerned the eating from the tree of knowledge. The serpent is condemned to eat the dust of the ground. The curse focuses on eating in a “measure for measure” justice. Because the man and the woman sinned by eating the forbidden fruit, God will forbid the ground to cooperate, and so it will be through painful toil that they will eat.

⁶ **tn** The Hebrew term עֵשֶׂב (*esev*), when referring to human food, excludes grass (eaten by cattle) and woody plants like vines.

⁷ **tn** The expression “the sweat of your brow” is a metonymy, the sweat being the result of painful toil in the fields.

⁸ **sn** *Until you return to the ground*. The theme of humankind’s mortality is critical here in view of the temptation to be like God. Man will labor painfully to provide food, obviously not enjoying the bounty that creation promised. In place of the abundance of the orchard’s fruit trees, thorns and thistles will grow. Man will have to work the soil so that it will produce the grain to make bread. This will continue until he returns to the soil from which he was taken (recalling the creation in 2:7 with the wordplay on Adam and ground). In spite of the dreams of immortality and divinity, man is but dust (2:7), and will return to dust. So much for his pride.

⁹ **sn** In general, the themes of the curse oracles are important in the NT teaching that Jesus became the cursed one hanging on the tree. In his suffering and death, all the motifs are drawn together: the tree, the sweat, the thorns, and the dust of death (see Ps 22:15). Jesus experienced it all, to have victory over it through the resurrection.

3:20 The man¹⁰ named his wife Eve,¹¹ because¹² she was the mother of all the living.¹³ 3:21 The LORD God made garments from skin¹⁴ for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. 3:22 And the LORD God said, “Now¹⁵ that the man has become like one of us,¹⁶ knowing¹⁷ good and evil, he must not be allowed¹⁸ to stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” 3:23 So the LORD God expelled him¹⁹ from the orchard in Eden to cultivate the ground from which he had been taken. 3:24 When he drove²⁰ the man out, he placed on the eastern side²¹ of the orchard in Eden angelic

¹⁰ **tn** Or “Adam”; however, the Hebrew term has the definite article here.

¹¹ **sn** The name *Eve* means “Living one” or “Life-giver” in Hebrew.

¹² **tn** The explanatory clause gives the reason for the name. Where the one doing the naming gives the explanation, the text normally uses “saying”; where the narrator explains it, the explanatory clause is typically used.

¹³ **tn** The explanation of the name forms a sound play (paronomasia) with the name. “Eve” is חַוְוָה (*khavvah*) and “living” is חַי (*khay*). The name preserves the archaic form of the verb חָיָה (*khayah*, “to live”) with the middle *vav* (ו) instead of *yod* (י). The form חַי (*khay*) is derived from the normal form חָיָה (*khayah*). Compare the name *Yahweh* (יְהוָה) explained from חָיָה (*hayah*, “to be”) rather than from חָוָה (*havah*). The biblical account stands in contrast to the pagan material that presents a serpent goddess *hawait* who is the mother of life. See J. Heller, “Der Name Eva,” *ArOr* 26 (1958): 636-56; and A. F. Key, “The Giving of Proper Names in the OT,” *JBL* 83 (1964): 55-59.

¹⁴ **sn** *The LORD God made garments from skin*. The text gives no indication of how this was done, or how they came by the skins. Earlier in the narrative (v. 7) the attempt of the man and the woman to cover their nakedness with leaves expressed their sense of alienation from each other and from God. By giving them more substantial coverings, God indicates this alienation is greater than they realize. This divine action is also ominous; God is preparing them for the more hostile environment in which they will soon be living (v. 23). At the same time, there is a positive side to the story in that God makes provision for the man’s and woman’s condition.

¹⁵ **tn** The particle הֵן (*hen*) introduces a foundational clause, usually beginning with “since, because, now.”

¹⁶ **sn** *The man has become like one of us*. See the notes on Gen 1:26 and 3:5.

¹⁷ **tn** The infinitive explains in what way the man had become like God: “knowing good and evil.”

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “and now, lest he stretch forth.” Following the foundational clause, this clause forms the main point. It is introduced with the particle פֶּן (*pen*) which normally introduces a negative purpose, “lest....” The construction is elliptical; something must be done lest the man stretch forth his hand. The translation interprets the point intended.

¹⁹ **tn** The verb is the Piel preterite of שָׁלַח (*shalakh*), forming a wordplay with the use of the same verb (in the Qal stem) in v. 22: To prevent the man’s “sending out” his hand, the LORD “sends him out.”

²⁰ **tn** The verb with the *vav* (ו) consecutive is made subordinate to the next verb forming a temporal clause. This avoids any tautology with the previous verse that already stated that the LORD expelled the man.

²¹ **tn** Or “placed in front.” Directions in ancient Israel were given in relation to the east rather than the north.

sentries⁴ who used the flame of a whirling sword² to guard the way to the tree of life.

The Story of Cain and Abel

4:1 Now³ the man had marital relations with⁴ his wife Eve, and she became pregnant⁵ and gave birth to Cain. Then she said, "I have created⁶ a man just as the LORD did!"⁷ **4:2** Then she

gave birth⁸ to his brother Abel.⁹ Abel took care of the flocks, while Cain cultivated the ground.¹⁰

4:3 At the designated time¹¹ Cain brought some of the fruit of the ground for an offering¹² to the LORD. **4:4** But Abel brought¹³ some of the

¹ **tn** The Hebrew word is traditionally transliterated "the cherubim."

sn *Angelic sentries* (Heb "cherubim"). The cherubim in the Bible seem to be a class of angels that are composite in appearance. Their main task seems to be guarding. Here they guard the way to the tree of life. The curtain in the tabernacle was to be embroidered with cherubim as well, symbolically guarding the way to God. (See in addition A. S. Kapelrud, "The Gates of Hell and the Guardian Angels of Paradise," *JAOS* 70 [1950]: 151-56; and D. N. Freedman and M. P. O'Connor, *TDOT* 7:307-19.)

² **tn** Heb "the flame of the sword that turns round and round." The noun "flame" is qualified by the genitive of specification, "the sword," which in turn is modified by the attributive participle "whirling." The Hitpa'el of the verb "turn" has an iterative function here, indicating repeated action. The form is used in Job 37:12 of swirling clouds and in Judg 7:13 of a tumbling roll of bread. Verse 24 depicts the sword as moving from side to side to prevent anyone from passing or as whirling around, ready to cut to shreds anyone who tries to pass.

³ **tn** The disjunctive clause (conjunction + subject + verb) introduces a new episode in the ongoing narrative.

⁴ **tn** Heb "the man knew," a frequent euphemism for sexual relations.

⁵ **tn** Or "she conceived."

⁶ **tn** Here is another sound play (paronomasia) on a name. The sound of the verb יָרָא (qaniiti, "I have created") reflects the sound of the name Cain in Hebrew (קַיִן, qayin) and gives meaning to it. The saying uses the Qal perfect of יָרָא (qanah). There are two homonymic verbs with this spelling, one meaning "obtain, acquire" and the other meaning "create" (see Gen 14:19, 22; Deut 32:6; Ps 139:13; Prov 8:22). The latter fits this context very well. Eve has created a man.

⁷ **tn** Heb "with the LORD." The particle אִתּוֹ ('et) is not the accusative/object sign, but the preposition "with" as the ancient versions attest. Some take the preposition in the sense of "with the help of" (see BDB 85 s.v. אִתּוֹ; cf. NEB, NIV, NRSV), while others prefer "along with" in the sense of "like, equally with, in common with" (see Lev 26:39; Isa 45:9; Jer 23:28). Either works well in this context; the latter is reflected in the present translation. Some understand אִתּוֹ as the accusative/object sign and translate, "I have acquired a man – the LORD." They suggest that the woman thought (mistakenly) that she had given birth to the incarnate LORD, the Messiah who would bruise the Serpent's head. This fanciful suggestion is based on a questionable allegorical interpretation of Gen 3:15 (see the note there on the word "heel").

sn Since Exod 6:3 seems to indicate that the name Yahweh (יהוה, YHWH, translated LORD) was first revealed to Moses (see also Exod 3:14), it is odd to see it used in quotations in Genesis by people who lived long before Moses. This problem has been resolved in various ways: (1) Source critics propose that Exod 6:3 is part of the "P" (or priestly) tradition, which is at odds with the "J" (or Yahwistic) tradition. (2) Many propose that "name" in Exod 6:3 does not refer to the divine name per se, but to the character suggested by the name. God appeared to the patriarchs primarily in the role of El Shaddai, the giver of fertility, not as Yahweh, the one who fulfills his promises. In this case the patriarchs knew the name Yahweh, but had not experienced the full significance of the name. In this regard it is possible that Exod 6:3b should not be translated as a statement of denial, but as an affirmation followed by a rhetorical question implying that the patriarchs did indeed know God by the name of Yahweh, just as they knew him as

El Shaddai. D. A. Garrett, following the lead of F. Andersen, sees Exod 6:2-3 as displaying a paneled A/B parallelism and translates them as follows: (A) "I am Yahweh." (B) "And I made myself known to Abraham...as El Shaddai." (A') "And my name is Yahweh"; (B') "Did I not make myself known to them?" (D. A. Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis*, 21). However, even if one translates the text this way, the LORD's words do not necessarily mean that he made the name Yahweh known to the fathers. God is simply affirming that he now wants to be called Yahweh (see Exod 3:14-16) and that he revealed himself in prior times as El Shaddai. If we stress the parallelism with B, the implied answer to the concluding question might be: "Yes, you did make yourself known to them – as El Shaddai!" The main point of the verse would be that El Shaddai, the God of the fathers, and the God who has just revealed himself to Moses as Yahweh are one and the same. (3) G. J. Wenham suggests that pre-Mosaic references to Yahweh are the product of the author/editor of Genesis, who wanted to be sure that Yahweh was identified with the God of the fathers. In this regard, note how Yahweh is joined with another divine name or title in Gen 9:26-27; 14:22; 15:2, 8; 24:3, 7, 12, 27, 42, 48; 27:20; 32:9. The angel uses the name Yahweh when instructing Hagar concerning her child's name, but the actual name (Ishma-el, "El hears") suggests that El, not Yahweh, originally appeared in the angel's statement (16:11). In her response to the angel Hagar calls God El, not Yahweh (16:13). In 22:14 Abraham names the place of sacrifice "Yahweh Will Provide" (cf. v. 16), but in v. 8 he declares, "God will provide." God uses the name Yahweh when speaking to Jacob at Bethel (28:13) and Jacob also uses the name when he awakens from the dream (28:16). Nevertheless he names the place Beth-el ("house of El"). In 31:49 Laban prays, "May Yahweh keep watch," but in v. 50 he declares, "God is a witness between you and me." Yahweh's use of the name in 15:7 and 18:14 may reflect theological idiom, while the use in 18:19 is within a soliloquy. (Other uses of Yahweh in quotations occur in 16:2, 5; 24:31, 35, 40, 42, 44, 48, 50, 51, 56; 26:22, 28-29; 27:7, 27; 29:32-35; 30:24, 30; 49:18. In these cases there is no contextual indication that a different name was originally used.) For a fuller discussion of this proposal, see G. J. Wenham, "The Religion of the Patriarchs," *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives*, 189-93.

⁸ **tn** Heb "And she again gave birth."

⁹ **sn** The name Abel is not defined here in the text, but the tone is ominous. Abel's name, the Hebrew word אֵבֶל (*hevel*), means "breath, vapor, vanity," foreshadowing Abel's untimely and premature death.

¹⁰ **tn** Heb "and Abel was a shepherd of the flock, and Cain was a worker of the ground." The designations of the two occupations are expressed with active participles, רֹעֵה (*ro'eh*, "shepherd") and עֹבֵד (*oved*, "worker"). Abel is occupied with sheep, whereas Cain is living under the curse, cultivating the ground.

¹¹ **tn** Heb "And it happened at the end of days." The clause indicates the passing of a set period of time leading up to offering sacrifices.

¹² **tn** The Hebrew term מִנְחָה (*minkhah*, "offering") is a general word for tribute, a gift, or an offering. It is the main word used in Lev 2 for the dedication offering. This type of offering could be comprised of vegetables. The content of the offering (vegetables, as opposed to animals) was not the critical issue, but rather the attitude of the offerer.

¹³ **tn** Heb "But Abel brought, also he...." The disjunctive clause (conjunction + subject + verb) stresses the contrast between Cain's offering and Abel's.

firstborn of his flock – even the fattest¹ of them. And the LORD was pleased with² Abel and his offering, 4:5 but with Cain and his offering he was not pleased.³ So Cain became very angry,⁴ and his expression was downcast.⁵

4:6 Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why is your expression downcast? 4:7 Is it not true⁶ that if you do what is right, you will be fine?⁷ But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching⁸ at the door. It desires to dominate you, but you must subdue it.”⁹

1 tn Two prepositional phrases are used to qualify the kind of sacrifice that Abel brought: “from the firstborn” and “from the fattest of them.” These also could be interpreted as a hendiadys: “from the fattest of the firstborn of the flock.” Another option is to understand the second prepositional phrase as referring to the fat portions of the sacrificial sheep. In this case one may translate, “some of the firstborn of his flock, even some of their fat portions” (cf. NEB, NIV, NRSV).

sn Here are two types of worshipers – one (Cain) merely discharges a duty at the proper time, while the other (Abel) goes out of his way to please God with the first and the best.

2 tn The Hebrew verb שָׁחָה (*sha'ah*) simply means “to gaze at, to have regard for, to look on with favor [or “with devotion”].” The text does not indicate how this was communicated, but it indicates that Cain and Abel knew immediately. Either there was some manifestation of divine pleasure given to Abel and withheld from Cain (fire consuming the sacrifice?), or there was an inner awareness of divine response.

3 sn The Letter to the Hebrews explains the difference between the brothers as one of faith – Abel *by faith* offered a better sacrifice. Cain’s offering as well as his reaction to God’s displeasure did not reflect faith. See further B. K. Waltke, “Cain and His Offering,” *WTJ* 48 (1986): 363-72.

4 tn *Heb* “and it was hot to Cain.” This Hebrew idiom means that Cain “burned” with anger.

5 tn *Heb* “And his face fell.” The idiom means that the inner anger is reflected in Cain’s facial expression. The fallen or downcast face expresses anger, dejection, or depression. Conversely, in Num 6 the high priestly blessing speaks of the LORD lifting up his face and giving peace.

6 tn The introduction of the conditional clause with an interrogative particle prods the answer from Cain, as if he should have known this. It is not a condemnation, but an encouragement to do what is right.

7 tn The Hebrew text is difficult, because only one word occurs, שָׁחָה (*s'eh*), which appears to be the infinitive construct from the verb “to lift up” (שָׁחָה, *na'as*). The sentence reads: “If you do well, uplifting.” On the surface it seems to be the opposite of the fallen face. Everything will be changed if he does well. God will show him favor, he will not be angry, and his face will reflect that. But more may be intended since the second half of the verse forms the contrast: “If you do not do well, sin is crouching...” Not doing well leads to sinful attack; doing well leads to victory and God’s blessing.

8 tn The Hebrew term translated “crouching” (רֹבֵץ, *rovets*) is an active participle. Sin is portrayed with animal imagery here as a beast crouching and ready to pounce (a figure of speech known as zoomorphism). An Akkadian cognate refers to a type of demon; in this case perhaps one could translate, “Sin is the demon at the door” (see E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* [AB], 29, 32-33).

9 tn *Heb* “and toward you [is] its desire, but you must rule over it.” As in Gen 3:16, the Hebrew noun “desire” refers to an urge to control or dominate. Here the desire is that which sin has for Cain, a desire to control for the sake of evil, but Cain must have mastery over it. The imperfect is understood as having an obligatory sense. Another option is to understand it as expressing potential (“you can have [or “are capable of having”] mastery over it.”). It will be a struggle, but sin can be defeated by righteousness. In addition to this connection to Gen 3, other linguistic and thematic links between chaps. 3 and 4 are discussed by

4:8 Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.”¹⁰ While they were in the field, Cain attacked¹¹ his brother¹² Abel and killed him.

4:9 Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?”¹³ And he replied, “I don’t know! Am I my brother’s guardian?”¹⁴ 4:10 But the LORD said, “What have you done?”¹⁵ The voice¹⁶ of your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground! 4:11 So now, you are banished¹⁷ from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. 4:12 When you try to cultivate¹⁸ the

A. J. Hauser, “Linguistic and Thematic Links Between Genesis 4:1-6 and Genesis 2-3,” *JETS* 23 (1980): 297-306.

10 tc The MT has simply “and Cain said to Abel his brother,” omitting Cain’s words to Abel. It is possible that the elliptical text is original. Perhaps the author uses the technique of aposiopesis, “a sudden silence” to create tension. In the midst of the story the narrator suddenly rushes ahead to what happened in the field. It is more likely that the ancient versions (Samaritan Pentateuch, LXX, Vulgate, and Syriac), which include Cain’s words, “Let’s go out to the field,” preserve the original reading here. After writing אָחִיו (*akhiyv*, “his brother”), a scribe’s eye may have jumped to the end of the form בַּשָּׂדֶה (*basadeh*, “to the field”) and accidentally omitted the quotation. This would be an error of virtual homoioteleuton. In older phases of the Hebrew script the sequence י (yoḏ-vav) אָחִיו is graphically similar to the final ה (he) בַּשָּׂדֶה.

11 tn *Heb* “arose against” (in a hostile sense).

12 sn The word “brother” appears six times in vv. 8-11, stressing the shocking nature of Cain’s fratricide (see 1 John 3:12).

13 sn *Where is Abel your brother?* Again the LORD confronts a guilty sinner with a rhetorical question (see Gen 3:9-13), asking for an explanation of what has happened.

14 tn *Heb* “The one guarding my brother [am] I?”

sn *Am I my brother’s guardian?* Cain lies and then responds with a defiant rhetorical question of his own in which he repudiates any responsibility for his brother. But his question is ironic, for he is responsible for his brother’s fate, especially if he wanted to kill him. See P. A. Riemann, “Am I My Brother’s Keeper?” *Int* 24 (1970): 482-91.

15 sn *What have you done?* Again the LORD’s question is rhetorical (see Gen 3:13), condemning Cain for his sin.

16 tn The word “voice” is a personification; the evidence of Abel’s shed blood condemns Cain, just as a human eyewitness would testify in court. For helpful insights, see G. von Rad, *Biblical Interpretations in Preaching*; and L. Morris, “The Biblical Use of the Term ‘Blood,’” *JTS* 6 (1955/56): 77-82.

17 tn *Heb* “cursed are you from the ground.” As in Gen 3:14, the word “cursed,” a passive participle from אָרַר (*arar*), either means “punished” or “banished,” depending on how one interprets the following preposition. If the preposition is taken as indicating source, then the idea is “cursed (i.e., punished) are you from [i.e., “through the agency of”] the ground” (see v. 12a). If the preposition is taken as separative, then the idea is “cursed and banished from the ground.” In this case the ground rejects Cain’s efforts in such a way that he is banished from the ground and forced to become a fugitive out in the earth (see vv. 12b, 14).

18 tn *Heb* “work.”

ground it will no longer yield⁴ its best² for you. You will be a homeless wanderer³ on the earth.”
4:13 Then Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment⁴ is too great to endure!⁵ **4:14** Look! You are driving me off the land⁶ today, and I must hide from your presence.⁷ I will be a homeless wanderer on the earth; whoever finds me will kill me.” **4:15** But the LORD said to him, “All right then,⁸ if anyone kills Cain, Cain will be avenged seven times as much.”⁹ Then the LORD put a special mark¹⁰ on Cain so that no one who found him would strike him down.¹¹ **4:16** So Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and lived in the land of Nod,¹² east of Eden.

The Beginning of Civilization

4:17 Cain had marital relations¹³ with his wife, and she became pregnant¹⁴ and gave birth to Enoch. Cain was building a city, and he named the city after¹⁵ his son Enoch. **4:18** To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad was the father¹⁶ of Mehujael. Mehujael was the father of

Methushael, and Methushael was the father of Lamech.

4:19 Lamech took two wives for himself; the name of the first was Adah, and the name of the second was Zillah. **4:20** Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the first¹⁷ of those who live in tents and keep¹⁸ livestock. **4:21** The name of his brother was Jubal; he was the first of all who play the harp and the flute. **4:22** Now Zillah also gave birth to Tubal-Cain, who heated metal and shaped¹⁹ all kinds of tools made of bronze and iron. The sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah.

4:23 Lamech said to his wives,
 “Adah and Zillah! Listen to me!
 You wives of Lamech, hear my words!
 I have killed a man for wounding me,
 a young man²⁰ for hurting me.
4:24 If Cain is to be avenged seven times
 as much,
 then Lamech seventy-seven times!”²¹

4:25 And Adam had marital relations²² with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son. She named him Seth, saying, “God has given²³ me another child²⁴ in place of Abel because Cain killed him.”
4:26 And a son was also born to Seth, whom he named Enosh. At that time people²⁵ began to worship²⁶ the LORD.

1 tn Heb “it will not again (תִּכְרַת, *tosef*) give (תַּת, *tet*),” meaning the ground will no longer yield. In translation the infinitive becomes the main verb, and the imperfect verb form becomes adverbial.

2 tn Heb “its strength.”

3 tn Two similar sounding synonyms are used here: נָדָד (*na' vanad*, “a wanderer and a fugitive”). This juxtaposition of synonyms emphasizes the single idea. In translation one can serve as the main description, the other as a modifier. Other translation options include “a wandering fugitive” and a “ceaseless wanderer” (cf. NIV).

4 tn The primary meaning of the Hebrew word אָוֹן (*avon*) is “sin, iniquity.” But by metonymy it can refer to the “guilt” of sin, or to “punishment” for sin. The third meaning applies here. Just before this the LORD announces the punishment for Cain’s actions, and right after this statement Cain complains of the severity of the punishment. Cain is not portrayed as repenting of his sin.

5 tn Heb “great is my punishment from bearing.” The preposition מִן (*min*, “from”) is used here in a comparative sense.

6 tn Heb “from upon the surface of the ground.”

7 sn I must hide from your presence. The motif of hiding from the LORD as a result of sin also appears in Gen 3:8-10.

8 tn The Hebrew term לָכֵן (*lakhen*, “therefore”) in this context carries the sense of “Okay,” or “in that case then I will do this.”

9 sn The symbolic number seven is used here to emphasize that the offender will receive severe punishment. For other rhetorical and hyperbolic uses of the expression “seven times over,” see Pss 12:6; 79:12; Prov 6:31; Isa 30:26.

10 tn Heb “sign”; “reminder.” The term “sign” is not used in the translation because it might imply to an English reader that God hung a sign on Cain. The text does not identify what the “sign” was. It must have been some outward, visual reminder of Cain’s special protected status.

11 sn God becomes Cain’s protector. Here is common grace – Cain and his community will live on under God’s care, but without salvation.

12 sn The name Nod means “wandering” in Hebrew (see v. 12, 14).

13 tn Heb “knew,” a frequent euphemism for sexual relations.

14 tn Or “she conceived.”

15 tn Heb “according to the name of.”

16 tn Heb “and Irad fathered.”

17 tn Heb “father.” In this passage the word “father” means “founder,” referring to the first to establish such lifestyles and occupations.

18 tn The word “keep” is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation. Other words that might be supplied instead are “tend,” “raise” (NIV), or “have” (NRSV).

19 tn The traditional rendering here, “who forged” (or “a forger of”) is now more commonly associated with counterfeit or fraud (e.g., “forged copies” or “forged checks”) than with the forging of metal. The phrase “heated metal and shaped [it]” has been used in the translation instead.

20 tn The Hebrew term נָעַר (*veled*) probably refers to a youthful warrior here, not a child.

21 sn Seventy-seven times. Lamech seems to reason this way: If Cain, a murderer, is to be avenged seven times (see v. 15), then how much more one who has been unjustly wronged! Lamech misses the point of God’s merciful treatment of Cain. God was not establishing a principle of justice when he warned he would avenge Cain’s murder. In fact he was trying to limit the shedding of blood, something Lamech wants to multiply instead. The use of “seventy-seven,” a multiple of seven, is hyperbolic, emphasizing the extreme severity of the vengeance envisioned by Lamech.

22 tn Heb “knew,” a frequent euphemism for sexual relations.

23 sn The name Seth probably means something like “placed”; “appointed”; “set”; “granted,” assuming it is actually related to the verb that is used in the sentiment. At any rate, the name שֵׁת (*shet*) and the verb שָׁת (*shat*, “to place, to appoint, to set, to grant”) form a wordplay (paronomasia).

24 tn Heb “offspring.”

25 tn The word “people” is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation. The construction uses a passive verb without an expressed subject. “To call was begun” can be interpreted to mean that people began to call.

26 tn Heb “call in the name.” The expression refers to worshipping the LORD through prayer and sacrifice (see Gen 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; 26:25). See G. J. Wenham, *Genesis* (WBC), 1:116.

From Adam to Noah

5:1 This is the record¹ of the family line² of Adam.

When God created humankind,³ he made them⁴ in the likeness of God. 5:2 He created them male and female; when they were created, he blessed them and named them “humankind.”⁵

5:3 When⁶ Adam had lived 130 years he fathered a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and he named him Seth. 5:4 The length of time Adam lived⁷ after he became the father of Seth was 800 years; during this time he had⁸ other⁹ sons and daughters. 5:5 The entire lifetime¹⁰ of Adam was 930 years, and then he died.¹¹

5:6 When Seth had lived 105 years, he became the father¹² of Enosh. 5:7 Seth lived 807 years after he became the father of Enosh, and he had¹³ other¹⁴ sons and daughters. 5:8 The entire lifetime of Seth was 912 years, and then he died.

5:9 When Enosh had lived 90 years, he became the father of Kenan. 5:10 Enosh lived 815 years after he became the father of Kenan, and he had other sons and daughters. 5:11 The entire lifetime of Enosh was 905 years, and then he died.

5:12 When Kenan had lived 70 years, he became the father of Mahalalel. 5:13 Kenan lived 840 years after he became the father of Mahalalel, and he had other sons and daughters. 5:14 The entire lifetime of Kenan was 910 years, and then he died.

5:15 When Mahalalel had lived 65 years, he became the father of Jared. 5:16 Mahalalel lived 830 years after he became the father of Jared, and he had other sons and daughters. 5:17 The entire lifetime of Mahalalel was 895 years, and then he died.

5:18 When Jared had lived 162 years, he became the father of Enoch. 5:19 Jared lived 800 years after he became the father of Enoch, and he had other sons and daughters. 5:20 The entire lifetime of Jared was 962 years, and then he died.

5:21 When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. 5:22 After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God¹⁵ for 300 years,¹⁶ and he had other¹⁷ sons and daughters. 5:23 The entire lifetime of Enoch was 365 years. 5:24 Enoch walked with God, and then he disappeared¹⁸ because God took¹⁹ him away.

5:25 When Methuselah had lived 187 years, he became the father of Lamech. 5:26 Methuselah lived 782 years after he became the father of Lamech, and he had other²⁰ sons and daughters. 5:27 The entire lifetime of Methuselah was 969 years, and then he died.

5:28 When Lamech had lived 182 years, he had a son. 5:29 He named him Noah,²¹ saying, “This one will bring us comfort²² from our labor

¹ **tn** Heb “book” or “roll.” Cf. NIV “written account”; NRSV “list.”

² **tn** Heb “generations.” See the note on the phrase “this is the account of” in 2:4.

³ **tn** The Hebrew text has אָדָם (*adam*).

⁴ **tn** Heb “him.” The Hebrew text uses the third masculine singular pronominal suffix on the accusative sign. The pronoun agrees grammatically with its antecedent אָדָם (*adam*). However, the next verse makes it clear that אָדָם is collective here and refers to “humankind,” so it is preferable to translate the pronoun with the English plural.

⁵ **tn** The Hebrew word used here is אָדָם (*adam*).

⁶ **tn** Heb “and Adam lived 130 years.” In the translation the verb is subordinated to the following verb, “and he fathered,” and rendered as a temporal clause.

⁷ **tn** Heb “The days of Adam.”

⁸ **tn** Heb “he fathered.”

⁹ **tn** The word “other” is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied for stylistic reasons.

¹⁰ **tn** Heb “all the days of Adam which he lived”

¹¹ **sn** The genealogy traces the line from Adam to Noah and forms a bridge between the earlier accounts and the flood story. Its constant theme of the reign of death in the human race is broken once with the account of Enoch, but the genealogy ends with hope for the future through Noah. See further G. F. Hasel, “The Genealogies of Gen. 5 and 11 and their Alleged Babylonian Background,” *AUSS* 16 (1978): 361-74; idem, “Genesis 5 and 11,” *Origins* 7 (1980): 23-37.

¹² **tn** Heb “he fathered.”

¹³ **tn** Heb “he fathered.”

¹⁴ **tn** Here and in vv. 10, 13, 16, 19 the word “other” is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied for stylistic reasons.

¹⁵ **sn** With the seventh panel there is a digression from the pattern. Instead of simply saying that Enoch lived, the text observes that he “walked with God.” The rare expression “walked with” (the Hitpael form of the verb הָלַךְ, *halakh*, “to walk” collocated with the preposition אִתּוֹ, *et*, “with”) is used in 1 Sam 25:15 to describe how David’s men maintained a cordial and cooperative relationship with Nabal’s men as they worked and lived side by side in the fields. In Gen 5:22 the phrase suggests that Enoch and God “got along.” This may imply that Enoch lived in close fellowship with God, leading a life of devotion and piety. An early Jewish tradition, preserved in 1 *En.* 1:9 and alluded to in Jude 14, says that Enoch preached about the coming judgment. See F. S. Parnham, “Walking with God,” *EvQ* 46 (1974): 117-18.

¹⁶ **tn** Heb “and Enoch walked with God, after he became the father of Methuselah, [for] 300 years.”

¹⁷ **tn** The word “other” is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied for stylistic reasons.

¹⁸ **tn** The Hebrew construction has the negative particle אֵין (*en*, “there is not,” “there was not”) with a pronominal suffix, “he was not.” Instead of saying that Enoch died, the text says he no longer was present.

¹⁹ **sn** The text simply states that God took Enoch. Similar language is used of Elijah’s departure from this world (see 2 Kgs 2:10). The text implies that God overruled death for this man who walked with him.

²⁰ **tn** The word “other” is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied for stylistic reasons.

²¹ **sn** The name Noah appears to be related to the Hebrew word נוֹחַ (*nuakh*, “to rest”). There are several wordplays on the name “Noah” in the story of the flood.

²² **tn** The Hebrew verb נָחַם (נָחַם, *nakhameru*) is from the root נָחַם (*nakham*), which means “to comfort” in the Piel verbal stem. The letters נ (nun) and כ (khet) pick up the sounds in the name “Noah,” forming a paronomasia on the name. They are not from the same verbal root, and so the connection is only by sound. Lamech’s sentiment reflects the oppression of living under the curse on the ground, but also expresses the hope for relief in some way through the birth of Noah. His words proved to be ironic but prophetic. The relief would come with a new beginning after the flood. See E. G. Kraeling, “The Interpretations of the Name Noah in Genesis 5:29,” *JBL*

and from the painful toil of our hands because of the ground that the LORD has cursed.” 5:30 Lamech lived 595 years after he became the father of Noah, and he had other⁴ sons and daughters. 5:31 The entire lifetime of Lamech was 777 years, and then he died.

5:32 After Noah was 500 years old, he² became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

God's Grief over Humankind's Wickedness

6:1 When humankind³ began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born⁴ to them,⁵ 6:2 the sons of God⁶ saw that the daughters of humankind were beautiful. Thus they took wives for themselves from any they chose. 6:3 So the LORD said, “My spirit will not remain in⁷ hu-

mankind indefinitely,⁸ since⁹ they¹⁰ are mortal.¹¹ They¹² will remain for 120 more years.”¹³

6:4 The Nephilim¹⁴ were on the earth in those days (and also after this)¹⁵ when the sons of God were having sexual relations with¹⁶ the daughters of humankind, who gave birth to their children.¹⁷ They were the mighty heroes¹⁸ of old, the famous men.¹⁹

48 (1929): 138-43.

1 **tn** The word “other” is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied for stylistic reasons.

2 **tn** *Heb* “Noah.” The pronoun (“he”) has been employed in the translation for stylistic reasons.

3 **tn** The Hebrew text has the article prefixed to the noun. Here the article indicates the generic use of the word אָדָם (*adam*): “humankind.”

4 **tn** This disjunctive clause (conjunction + subject + verb) is circumstantial to the initial temporal clause. It could be rendered, “with daughters being born to them.” For another example of such a disjunctive clause following the construction וַיְהִי־וַיִּבֶן (*vayehi* and it came to pass when”), see 2 Sam 7:1.

5 **tn** The pronominal suffix is third masculine plural, indicating that the antecedent “humankind” is collective.

6 **sn** The Hebrew phrase translated “sons of God” (בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים, *bene-ha'elohim*) occurs only here (Gen 6:2, 4) and in Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7. There are three major interpretations of the phrase here. (1) In the Book of Job the phrase clearly refers to angelic beings. In Gen 6 the “sons of God” are distinct from “humankind,” suggesting they were not human. This is consistent with the use of the phrase in Job. Since the passage speaks of these beings cohabiting with women, they must have taken physical form or possessed the bodies of men. An early Jewish tradition preserved in 1 *En.* 6-7 elaborates on this angelic revolt and even names the ringleaders. (2) Not all scholars accept the angelic interpretation of the “sons of God,” however. Some argue that the “sons of God” were members of Seth’s line, traced back to God through Adam in Gen 5, while the “daughters of humankind” were descendants of Cain. But, as noted above, the text distinguishes the “sons of God” from humankind (which would include the Sethites as well as the Cainites) and suggests that the “daughters of humankind” are human women in general, not just Cainites. (3) Others identify the “sons of God” as powerful tyrants, perhaps demon-possessed, who viewed themselves as divine and, following the example of Lamech (see Gen 4:19), practiced polygamy. But usage of the phrase “sons of God” in Job militates against this view. For literature on the subject see G. J. Wenham, *Genesis* (WBC), 1:135.

7 **tn** The verb form יָדִין (*yadon*) only occurs here. Some derive it from the verbal root דָּן (*din*, “to judge”) and translate “strive” or “contend with” (so NIV), but in this case one expects the form to be יָדִין (*yadin*). The Old Greek has “remain with,” a rendering which may find support from an Arabic cognate (see C. Westermann, *Genesis*, 1:375). If one interprets the verb in this way, then it is possible to understand נַאֲכָה (*naakh*) as a reference to the divine life-giving spirit or breath, rather than the LORD’s personal Spirit. E. A. Speiser argues that the term is cognate with an Akkadian word meaning “protect” or “shield.” In this case, the LORD’s Spirit will not always protect humankind, for the race will suddenly be destroyed (E. A. Speiser, “YDWN, Gen. 6:3,” *JBL* 75 [1956]: 126-29).

8 **tn** Or “forever.”

9 **tn** The form בְּשֵׁנִים (*beshagan*) appears to be a compound of the preposition בְּ (*beth*, “in”), the relative שֶׁ (*she*, “who” or “which”), and the particle גַּם (*gam*, “also, even”). It apparently means “because even” (see BDB 980 s.v. שֶׁ).

10 **tn** *Heb* “he”; the plural pronoun has been used in the translation since “man” earlier in the verse has been understood as a collective (“humankind”).

11 **tn** *Heb* “flesh.”

12 **tn** See the note on “they” earlier in this verse.

13 **tn** *Heb* “his days will be 120 years.” Some interpret this to mean that the age expectancy of people from this point on would be 120, but neither the subsequent narrative nor reality favors this. It is more likely that this refers to the time remaining between this announcement of judgment and the coming of the flood.

14 **tn** The Hebrew word נְפִילִים (*nephilim*) is simply transliterated here, because the meaning of the term is uncertain. According to the text, the Nephilim became mighty warriors and gained great fame in the antediluvian world. The text may imply they were the offspring of the sexual union of the “sons of God” and the “daughters of humankind” (v. 2), but it stops short of saying this in a direct manner. The Nephilim are mentioned in the OT only here and in Num 13:33, where it is stated that they were giants (thus KJV, TEV, NLT “giants” here). The narrator observes that the Anakites of Canaan were descendants of the Nephilim. Certainly these later Anakite Nephilim could not be descendants of the antediluvian Nephilim (see also the following note on the word “this”).

15 **tn** This observation is parenthetical, explaining that there were Nephilim even after the flood. If all humankind, with the exception of Noah and his family, died in the flood, it is difficult to understand how the postdiluvian Nephilim could be related to the antediluvian Nephilim or how the Anakites of Canaan could be their descendants (see Num 13:33). It is likely that the term Nephilim refers generally to “giants” (see HALOT 709 s.v. נְפִילִים) without implying any ethnic connection between the antediluvian and postdiluvian varieties.

16 **tn** *Heb* “were entering to,” referring euphemistically to sexual intercourse here. The Hebrew imperfect verbal form draws attention to the ongoing nature of such sexual unions during the time before the flood.

17 **tn** *Heb* “and they gave birth to them.” The masculine plural suffix “them” refers to the “sons of God,” to whom the “daughters of humankind” bore children. After the Qal form of the verb יָלַד (*yalad*, “to give birth”) the preposition לְ (*le*, “to”) introduces the father of the child(ren). See Gen 16:1, 15; 17:19, 21; 21:2-3, 9; 22:23; 24:24, 47; 25:2, etc.

18 **tn** The parenthetical/explanatory clause uses the word חַיֵּיבוֹרִים (*haggiBORim*) to describe these Nephilim. The word means “warriors; mighty men; heroes.” The appositional statement further explains that they were “men of renown.” The text refers to superhuman beings who held the world in their power and who lived on in ancient lore outside the Bible. See E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (AB), 45-46; C. Westermann, *Genesis*, 1:379-80; and Anne D. Kilmer, “The Mesopotamian Counterparts of the Biblical Nephilim,” *Perspectives on Language and Text*, 39-43.

19 **tn** *Heb* “men of name” (i.e., famous men).

6:5 But the LORD saw¹ that the wickedness of humankind had become great on the earth. Every inclination² of the thoughts³ of their minds⁴ was only evil⁵ all the time.⁶ 6:6 The LORD regretted⁷ that he had made humankind on the earth, and he was highly offended.⁸ 6:7 So

the LORD said, “I will wipe humankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth – everything from humankind to animals,⁹ including creatures that move on the ground and birds of the air, for I regret that I have made them.”

6:8 But¹⁰ Noah found favor¹¹ in the sight of¹² the LORD.

The Judgment of the Flood

6:9 This is the account of Noah.¹³ Noah was a godly man; he was blameless¹⁴

¹ sn The Hebrew verb translated “saw” (רָאָה, *ra’ah*), used here of God’s evaluation of humankind’s evil deeds, contrasts with God’s evaluation of creative work in Gen 1, when he observed that everything was good.

² tn The noun יָצַר (*yetsar*) is related to the verb יָצַר (*yatsar*, “to form, to fashion [with a design]”). Here it refers to human plans or intentions (see Gen 8:21; 1 Chr 28:9; 29:18). People had taken their God-given capacities and used them to devise evil. The word יָצַר (*yetsar*) became a significant theological term in Rabbinic literature for what might be called the sin nature – the evil inclination (see also R. E. Murphy, “Yeser in the Qumran Literature,” *Bib* 39 [1958]: 334-44).

³ tn The related verb חָשַׁב (*hashav*) means “to think, to devise, to reckon.” The noun (here) refers to thoughts or considerations.

⁴ tn Heb “his heart” (referring to collective “humankind”). The Hebrew term לֵב (*lev*, “heart”) frequently refers to the seat of one’s thoughts (see BDB 524 s.v. לֵב). In contemporary English this is typically referred to as the “mind.”

⁵ sn Every inclination of the thoughts of their minds was only evil. There is hardly a stronger statement of the wickedness of the human race than this. Here is the result of falling into the “knowledge of good and evil”: Evil becomes dominant, and the good is ruined by the evil.

⁶ tn Heb “all the day.”

sn The author of Genesis goes out of his way to emphasize the depth of human evil at this time. Note the expressions “every inclination,” “only evil,” and “all the time.”

⁷ tn Or “was grieved”; “was sorry.” In the Niphal stem the verb נָחַם (*nakhham*) can carry one of four semantic meanings, depending on the context: (1) “to experience emotional pain or weakness,” “to feel regret,” often concerning a past action (see Exod 13:17; Judg 21:6, 15; 1 Sam 15:11, 35; Job 42:6; Jer 31:19). In several of these texts נִי (*ki*, “because”) introduces the cause of the emotional sorrow. (2) Another meaning is “to be comforted” or “to comfort oneself” (sometimes by taking vengeance). See Gen 24:67; 38:12; 2 Sam 13:39; Ps 77:3; Isa 1:24; Jer 31:15; Ezek 14:22; 31:16; 32:31. (This second category represents a polarization of category one.) (3) The meaning “to relent from” or “to repudiate” a course of action which is already underway is also possible (see Judg 2:18; 2 Sam 24:16 = 1 Chr 21:15; Pss 90:13; 106:45; Jer 8:6; 20:16; 42:10). (4) Finally, “to retract” (a statement) or “to relent or change one’s mind concerning,” “to deviate from” (a stated course of action) is possible (see Exod 32:12, 14; 1 Sam 15:29; Ps 110:4; Isa 57:6; Jer 4:28; 15:6; 18:8, 10; 26:3, 13, 19; Ezek 24:14; Joel 2:13-14; Am 7:3, 6; Jonah 3:9-10; 4:2; Zech 8:14). See R. B. Chisholm, “Does God ‘Change His Mind’?” *BSac* 152 (1995): 388. The first category applies here because the context speaks of God’s grief and emotional pain (see the following statement in v. 6) as a result of a past action (his making humankind). For a thorough study of the word נָחַם, see H. Van Dyke Parunak, “A Semantic Survey of *NHM*,” *Bib* 56 (1975): 512-32.

⁸ tn Heb “and he was grieved to his heart.” The verb עָצַב (*atsav*) can carry one of three semantic senses, depending on the context: (1) “to be injured” (Ps 56:5; Eccl 10:9; 1 Chr 4:10); (2) “to experience emotional pain”; “to be depressed

emotionally”; “to be worried” (2 Sam 19:2; Isa 54:6; Neh 8:10-11); (3) “to be embarrassed”; “to be offended” (to the point of anger at another or oneself); “to be insulted” (Gen 34:7; 45:5; 1 Sam 20:3, 34; 1 Kgs 1:6; Isa 63:10; Ps 78:40). This third category develops from the second by metonymy. In certain contexts emotional pain leads to embarrassment and/or anger. In this last use the subject sometimes directs his anger against the source of grief (see especially Gen 34:7). The third category fits best in Gen 6:6 because humankind’s sin does not merely wound God emotionally. On the contrary, it prompts him to strike out in judgment against the source of his distress (see v. 7). The verb וַיִּתְעַצֵּב (*vayyit’atsev*), a Hitpael from עָצַב, alludes to the judgment oracles in Gen 3:16-19. Because Adam and Eve sinned, their life would be filled with pain, but sin in the human race also brought pain to God. The wording of v. 6 is ironic when compared to Gen 5:29. Lamech anticipated relief (נָחַם, *nakhham*) from their work (מַעֲשֵׂה, *ma’aseh*) and their painful toil (עֲצִיב, *its’von*), but now we read that God was sorry (נָחַם, *nakhham*) that he had made (עָשָׂה, *asah*) humankind for it brought him great pain (עָצַב, *atsav*).

⁹ tn The text simply has “from man to beast, to creatures, and to birds of the air.” The use of the prepositions מִן ... עַד (*min...ad*) stresses the extent of the judgment in creation.

¹⁰ tn The disjunctive clause (conjunction + subject + verb) is contrastive here: God condemns the human race, but he is pleased with Noah.

¹¹ tn The Hebrew expression “find favor [in the eyes of]” is an idiom meaning “to be an object of another’s favorable disposition or action,” “to be a recipient of another’s favor, kindness, mercy.” The favor/kindness is often earned, coming in response to an action or condition (see Gen 32:5; 39:4; Deut 24:1; 1 Sam 25:8; Prov 3:4; Ruth 2:10). This is the case in Gen 6:8, where v. 9 gives the basis (Noah’s righteous character) for the divine favor.

¹² tn Heb “in the eyes of,” an anthropomorphic expression for God’s opinion or decision. The LORD saw that the whole human race was corrupt, but he looked in favor on Noah.

¹³ sn There is a vast body of scholarly literature about the flood story. The following studies are particularly helpful: A. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and the Old Testament Parallels*; M. Kessler, “Rhetorical Criticism of Genesis 7,” *Rhetorical Criticism: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg* (PTMS), 1-17; I. M. Kikawada and A. Quinn, *Before Abraham Was*; A. R. Millard, “A New Babylonian ‘Genesis Story’,” *TynBul* 18 (1967): 3-18; G. J. Wenham, “The Coherence of the Flood Narrative,” *VT* 28 (1978): 336-48.

¹⁴ tn The Hebrew term תָּמִים (*tamim*, “blameless”) is used of men in Gen 17:1 (associated with the idiom “walk before,” see 24:40); Deut 18:13 (where it means “blameless” in the sense of not guilty of the idolatrous practices listed before this; see Josh 24:14); Pss 18:23, 26 (“blameless” in the sense of not having violated God’s commands); 37:18 (in contrast to the wicked); 101:2, 6 (in contrast to proud, deceitful slanderers; see 15:2); Prov 2:21; 11:5 (in contrast to the wicked); 28:10; Job 12:4.

among his contemporaries.¹ He² walked with³ God. 6:10 Noah had⁴ three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

6:11 The earth was ruined⁵ in the sight of⁶ God; the earth was filled with violence.⁷ 6:12 God saw the earth, and indeed⁸ it was ruined,⁹ for all living creatures¹⁰ on the earth were sinful.¹¹ 6:13 So God said¹² to Noah, “I have de-

¹ **tn** *Heb* “Noah was a godly man, blameless in his generations.” The singular “generation” can refer to one’s contemporaries, i.e., those living at a particular point in time. The plural “generations” can refer to successive generations in the past or the future. Here, where it is qualified by “his” (i.e., Noah’s), it refers to Noah’s contemporaries, comprised of the preceding generation (his father’s generation), those of Noah’s generation, and the next generation (those the same age as his children). In other words, “his generations” means the generations contemporary with him. See BDB 190 s.v. דֹּר.

² **tn** *Heb* “Noah.” The proper name has been replaced with the pronoun in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³ **tn** The construction translated “walked with” is used in Gen 5:22, 24 (see the note on this phrase in 5:22) and in 1 Sam 25:15, where it refers to David’s and Nabal’s men “rubbing shoulders” in the fields. Based on the use in 1 Sam 25:15, the expression seems to mean “live in close proximity to,” which may, by metonymy, mean “maintain cordial relations with.”

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “fathered.”

⁵ **tn** Apart from Gen 6:11-12, the Niphal form of this verb occurs in Exod 8:20 HT (8:24 ET), where it describes the effect of the swarms of flies on the land of Egypt; Jer 13:7 and 18:4, where it is used of a “ruined” belt and “marred” clay pot, respectively; and Ezek 20:44, where it describes Judah’s morally “corrupt” actions. The sense “morally corrupt” fits well in Gen 6:11 because of the parallelism (note “the earth was filled with violence”). In this case “earth” would stand by metonymy for its sinful inhabitants. However, the translation “ruined” works just as well, if not better. In this case humankind’s sin is viewed as having an adverse effect upon the earth. Note that vv. 12b-13 make a distinction between the earth and the living creatures who live on it.

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “before.”

⁷ **tn** The Hebrew word translated “violence” refers elsewhere to a broad range of crimes, including unjust treatment (Gen 16:5; Amos 3:10), injurious legal testimony (Deut 19:16), deadly assault (Gen 49:5), murder (Judg 9:24), and rape (Jer 13:22).

⁸ **tn** Or “God saw how corrupt the earth was.”

⁹ **tn** The repetition in the text (see v. 11) emphasizes the point.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “flesh.” Since moral corruption is in view here, most modern western interpreters understand the referent to be humankind. However, the phrase “all flesh” is used consistently of humankind and the animals in Gen 6-9 (6:17, 19; 7:15-16, 21; 8:17; 9:11, 15-17), suggesting that the author intends to picture all living creatures, humankind and animals, as guilty of moral failure. This would explain why the animals, not just humankind, are victims of the ensuing divine judgment. The OT sometimes views animals as morally culpable (Gen 9:5; Exod 21:28-29; Jonah 3:7-8). The OT also teaches that a person’s sin can contaminate others (people and animals) in the sinful person’s sphere (see the story of Achan, especially Josh 7:10). So the animals could be viewed here as morally contaminated because of their association with sinful humankind.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “had corrupted its way.” The third masculine singular pronominal suffix on “way” refers to the collective “all flesh.” The construction “corrupt one’s way” occurs only here (though Ezek 16:47 uses the Hiphil in an intransitive sense with the preposition בְּ [bet, “in”] followed by “ways”). The Hiphil of שָׁחַת (*shakhat*) means “to ruin, to destroy, to corrupt,” often as here in a moral/ethical sense. The Hebrew term דֶּרֶךְ (*derekh*, “way”) here refers to behavior or moral character, a sense that it frequently carries (see BDB 203 s.v. דֶּרֶךְ 6.a).

¹² **sn** On the divine style utilized here, see R. Lapointe,

cided that all living creatures must die,¹³ for the earth is filled with violence because of them. Now I am about to destroy¹⁴ them and the earth. 6:14 Make¹⁵ for yourself an ark of cypress¹⁶ wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover¹⁷ it with pitch inside and out. 6:15 This is how you should make it: The ark is to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high.¹⁸ 6:16 Make a roof for the ark and finish it, leaving 18 inches¹⁹ from the top.²⁰ Put a door in the side of the ark, and make lower, middle, and upper decks. 6:17 I am

“The Divine Monologue as a Channel of Revelation,” *CBQ* 32 (1970): 161-81.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “the end of all flesh is coming [or “has come”] before me.” (The verb form is either a perfect or a participle.) The phrase “end of all flesh” occurs only here. The term “end” refers here to the end of “life,” as v. 3 and the following context (which describes how God destroys all flesh) make clear. The statement “the end has come” occurs in Ezek 7:2, 6, where it is used of divine judgment. The phrase “come before” occurs in Exod 28:30, 35; 34:34; Lev 15:14; Num 27:17; 1 Sam 18:13, 16; 2 Sam 19:8; 20:8; 1 Kgs 1:23, 28, 32; Ezek 46:9; Pss 79:11 (groans come before God); 88:3 (a prayer comes before God); 100:2; 119:170 (prayer comes before God); Lam 1:22 (evil doing comes before God); Esth 1:19; 8:1; 9:25; 1 Chr 16:29. The expression often means “have an audience with” or “appear before.” But when used metaphorically, it can mean “get the attention of” or “prompt a response.” This is probably the sense in Gen 6:13. The necessity of ending the life of all flesh on earth is an issue that has gotten the attention of God. The term “end” may even be a metonymy for that which has prompted it – violence (see the following clause).

¹⁴ **tn** The participle, especially after הִנֵּה (*hinneh*) has an imminent future nuance. The Hiphil of שָׁחַת (*shakhat*) here has the sense “to destroy” (in judgment). Note the wordplay involving this verb in vv. 11-13: The earth is “ruined” because all flesh has acted in a morally “corrupt” manner. Consequently, God will “destroy” all flesh (the referent of the suffix “them”) along with the ruined earth. They had ruined themselves and the earth with violence, and now God would ruin them with judgment. For other cases where “earth” occurs as the object of the Hiphil of שָׁחַת, see 1 Sam 6:5; 1 Chr 20:1; Jer 36:29; 51:25.

¹⁵ **sn** The Hebrew verb is an imperative. A motif of this section is that Noah did as the LORD commanded him – he was obedient. That obedience had to come from faith in the word of the LORD. So the theme of obedience to God’s word is prominent in this prologue to the law.

¹⁶ **tn** A transliteration of the Hebrew term yields “gopher wood” (so KJV, NAB, NASB). While the exact nature of the wood involved is uncertain (cf. NLT “resinous wood”), many modern translations render the Hebrew term as “cypress” (so NEB, NIV, NRSV).

¹⁷ **tn** The Hebrew term כָּפַר (*kafar*, “to cover, to smear” [= to caulk]) appears here in the Qal stem with its primary, non-metaphorical meaning. The Piel form כִּפֵּר (*kippēr*), which has the metaphorical meaning “to atone, to expiate, to pacify,” is used in Levitical texts (see HALOT 493-94 s.v. כִּפֵּר). Some authorities regard the form in v. 14 as a homonym of the much more common Levitical term (see BDB 498 s.v. כִּפֵּר).

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high.” The standard cubit in the OT is assumed by most authorities to be about 18 inches (45 cm) long.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “a cubit.”

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “to a cubit you shall finish it from above.” The idea is that Noah was to leave an 18-inch opening from the top for a window for light.

about to bring¹ floodwaters² on the earth to destroy³ from under the sky all the living creatures that have the breath of life in them.⁴ Everything that is on the earth will die, **6:18** but I will confirm⁵ my covenant with you. You will enter⁶ the ark – you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. **6:19** You must bring into the ark two of every kind of living creature from all flesh,⁷ male and female, to keep them alive⁸ with you. **6:20** Of the birds after their kinds, and of the cattle after their kinds, and of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every kind will come to you so you can keep them alive.⁹ **6:21** And you must take¹⁰ for yourself every kind of food¹¹ that is eaten,¹² and gather it together.¹³ It will be food for you and for them.

6:22 And Noah did all¹⁴ that God commanded him – he did indeed.¹⁵

7:1 The LORD said to Noah, “Come into the ark, you and all your household, for I consider you godly among this generation.¹⁶ **7:2** You must take with you seven¹⁷ of every kind of

clean animal,¹⁸ the male and its mate,¹⁹ two of every kind of unclean animal, the male and its mate, **7:3** and also seven²⁰ of every kind of bird in the sky, male and female,²¹ to preserve their offspring²² on the face of the earth. **7:4** For in seven days²³ I will cause it to rain²⁴ on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the ground every living thing that I have made.”

7:5 And Noah did all²⁵ that the LORD commanded him.

7:6 Noah²⁶ was 600 years old when the floodwaters engulfed²⁷ the earth. **7:7** Noah entered the ark along with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives because²⁸ of the floodwaters. **7:8** Pairs²⁹ of clean animals, of unclean animals, of birds, and of everything that creeps along the ground, **7:9** male and female, came into the ark to Noah,³⁰ just as God had commanded him.³¹ **7:10** And after seven days the floodwaters engulfed the earth.³²

7:11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month – on that day all the fountains of the great deep³³ burst open and the floodgates of the

¹ tn The Hebrew construction uses the independent personal pronoun, followed by a suffixed form of הִנֵּה (*hinneh*, “look”) and the participle used with an imminent future nuance: “As for me, look, I am going to bring.”

² tn Heb “the flood, water.”

³ tn The verb שָׁחַת (*shakhat*, “to destroy”) is repeated yet again, only now in an infinitival form expressing the purpose of the flood.

⁴ tn The Hebrew construction here is different from the previous two; here it is רִיחַ חַיִּים (*ruakh khayyim*) rather than נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה (*nefesh khayyah*) or נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים (*nishmat khayyim*). It refers to everything that breathes.

⁵ tn The Hebrew verb וַהֲקִימֹתִי (*vahaqimoti*) is the Hiphil perfect with a וַיִּ (vav) consecutive (picking up the future sense from the participles) from קָוַם (*qum*, “to rise up”). This may refer to the confirmation or fulfillment of an earlier promise, but it is more likely that it anticipates the unconditional promise made to humankind following the flood (see Gen 9:9, 11, 17).

⁶ tn The perfect verb form with וַיִּ (vav) consecutive is best understood as specific future, continuing God's description of what will happen (see vv. 17-18a).

⁷ tn Heb “from all life, from all flesh, two from all you must bring.” The disjunctive clause at the beginning of the verse (note the conjunction with prepositional phrase, followed by two more prepositional phrases in apposition and then the imperfect verb form) signals a change in mood from announcement (vv. 17-18) to instruction.

⁸ tn The Piel infinitive construct לְהַחְיֹת (*le'hakhayot*, here translated as “to keep them alive”) shows the purpose of bringing the animals into the ark – saving life. The Piel of this verb means here “to preserve alive.”

⁹ tn Heb “to keep alive.”

¹⁰ tn The verb is a direct imperative: “And you, take for yourself.” The form stresses the immediate nature of the instruction; the pronoun underscores the directness.

¹¹ tn Heb “from all food,” meaning “some of every kind of food.”

¹² tn Or “will be eaten.”

¹³ tn Heb “and gather it to you.”

¹⁴ tn Heb “according to all.”

¹⁵ tn The last clause seems redundant: “and thus (כֵּן, *ken*) he did.” It underscores the obedience of Noah to all that God had said.

¹⁶ tn Heb “for you I see [as] godly before me in this generation.” The direct object (“you”) is placed first in the clause to give it prominence. The verb “to see” here signifies God's evaluative discernment.

¹⁷ tn Or “seven pairs” (cf. NRSV).

¹⁸ sn For a study of the Levitical terminology of “clean” and “unclean,” see L. E. Toombs, *IDB* 1:643.

¹⁹ tn Heb “a male and his female” (also a second time at the end of this verse). The terms used here for male and female animals (אִישׁ, *ish*) and אִשָּׁה, *ishah*) normally refer to humans.

²⁰ tn Or “seven pairs” (cf. NRSV).

²¹ tn Here (and in v. 9) the Hebrew text uses the normal generic term for “male and female” (זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה, *zakhar un'qevah*).

²² tn Heb “to keep alive offspring.”

²³ tn Heb “for seven days yet,” meaning “after [or “in”] seven days.”

²⁴ tn The Hiphil participle מֹמְטֵיר (*mamtir*, “cause to rain”) here expresses the certainty of the act in the imminent future.

²⁵ tn Heb “according to all.”

²⁶ tn Heb “Now Noah was.” The disjunctive clause (conjunction + subject + predicate nominative after implied “to be” verb) provides background information. The age of Noah receives prominence.

²⁷ tn Heb “and the flood was water upon.” The disjunctive clause (conjunction + subject + verb) is circumstantial/temporal in relation to the preceding clause. The verb הָיָה (*hayah*) here carries the nuance “to come” (BDB 225 s.v. הָיָה). In this context the phrase “come upon” means “to engulf.”

²⁸ tn The preposition מִן (*min*) is causal here, explaining why Noah and his family entered the ark.

²⁹ tn Heb “two two” meaning “in twos.”

³⁰ tn The Hebrew text of vv. 8-9a reads, “From the clean animal[s] and from the animal[s] which are not clean and from the bird[s] and everything that creeps on the ground, two two they came to Noah to the ark, male and female.”

³¹ tn Heb “Noah”; the pronoun has been used in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³² tn Heb “came upon.”

³³ tn The Hebrew term תְּהוֹם (*tehom*, “deep”) refers to the watery deep, the salty ocean – especially the primeval ocean that surrounds and underlies the earth (see Gen 1:2).

sn The watery deep. The same Hebrew term used to describe the watery deep in Gen 1:2 (תְּהוֹם, *tehom*) appears here. The text seems to picture here subterranean waters coming from under the earth and contributing to the rapid rise of water. The significance seems to be, among other things, that in this judgment God was returning the world to its earlier condition of being enveloped with water – a judgment involving the reversal of creation. On Gen 7:11 see G. F.

heavens¹ were opened. 7:12 And the rain fell² on the earth forty days and forty nights.

7:13 On that very day Noah entered the ark, accompanied by his sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, along with his wife and his sons' three wives.³ 7:14 They entered,⁴ along with every living creature after its kind, every animal after its kind, every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind, everything with wings.⁵ 7:15 Pairs⁶ of all creatures⁷ that have the breath of life came into the ark to Noah. 7:16 Those that entered were male and female,⁸ just as God commanded him. Then the LORD shut him in.

7:17 The flood engulfed the earth for forty days. As the waters increased, they lifted the ark and raised it above the earth. 7:18 The waters completely overwhelmed⁹ the earth, and the ark floated¹⁰ on the surface of the waters. 7:19 The waters completely inundated¹¹ the earth so that even¹² all the high mountains under the entire sky were covered. 7:20 The waters rose more than twenty feet¹³ above the mountains.¹⁴ 7:21 And all living things¹⁵ that moved on the earth died, including the birds, domestic animals, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all humankind. 7:22 Everything on dry

land that had the breath of life¹⁶ in its nostrils died. 7:23 So the LORD¹⁷ destroyed¹⁸ every living thing that was on the surface of the ground, including people, animals, creatures that creep along the ground, and birds of the sky.¹⁹ They were wiped off the earth. Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark survived.²⁰ 7:24 The waters prevailed over²¹ the earth for 150 days.

8:1 But God remembered²² Noah and all the wild animals and domestic animals that were with him in the ark. God caused a wind to blow over²³ the earth and the waters receded. 8:2 The fountains of the deep and the floodgates of heaven were closed,²⁴ and the rain stopped falling from the sky. 8:3 The waters kept receding steadily²⁵ from the earth, so that they²⁶ had gone down²⁷ by the end of the 150 days. 8:4 On the seventeenth day of the seventh month, the ark came to rest on one of the mountains of Ararat.²⁸ 8:5 The waters kept on receding²⁹ until the tenth

¹⁶ tn Heb "everything which [has] the breath of the spirit of life in its nostrils from all which is in the dry land."

¹⁷ tn Heb "and he"; the referent (the LORD) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁸ tn Heb "wiped away" (cf. NRSV "blotted out").

¹⁹ tn Heb "from man to animal to creeping thing and to the bird of the sky."

²⁰ tn The Hebrew verb שָׁאַר (*sha'ar*) means "to be left over; to survive" in the Niphal verb stem. It is the word used in later biblical texts for the remnant that escapes judgment. See G. F. Hasel, "Semantic Values of Derivatives of the Hebrew Root *s'r*," AUSS 11 (1973): 152-69.

²¹ sn The Hebrew verb translated "prevailed over" suggests that the waters were stronger than the earth. The earth and everything in it were no match for the return of the chaotic deep.

²² tn The Hebrew word translated "remembered" often carries the sense of acting in accordance with what is remembered, i.e., fulfilling covenant promises (see B. S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel* [SBL], especially p. 34).

²³ tn Heb "to pass over."

²⁴ tn Some (e.g., NIV) translate the preterite verb forms in this verse as past perfects (e.g., "had been closed"), for it seems likely that the sources of the water would have stopped before the waters receded.

²⁵ tn The construction combines a Qal preterite from שׁוּב (*shuv*) with its infinitive absolute to indicate continuous action. The infinitive absolute from הָלַךְ (*halakh*) is included for emphasis: "the waters returned...going and returning."

²⁶ tn Heb "the waters." The pronoun ("they") has been employed in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁷ tn The *vav* (ו) consecutive with the preterite here describes the consequence of the preceding action.

²⁸ tn Heb "on the mountains of Ararat." Obviously a boat (even one as large as the ark) cannot rest on multiple mountains. Perhaps (1) the preposition should be translated "among," or (2) the plural "mountains" should be understood in the sense of "mountain range" (see E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* [AB], 53). A more probable option (3) is that the plural indicates an indefinite singular, translated "one of the mountains" (see GKC 400 §124.o).

sn *Ararat* is the Hebrew name for Urartu, the name of a mountainous region located north of Mesopotamia in modern day eastern Turkey. See E. M. Yamauchi, *Foes from the Northern Frontier* (SBA), 29-32; G. J. Wenham, *Genesis* (WBC), 1:184-85; C. Westermann, *Genesis*, 1:443-44.

²⁹ tn Heb "the waters were going and lessening." The perfect verb form הָיָה (*hayah*) is used as an auxiliary verb with the infinitive absolute חָסַר (*khasor*, "lessening"), while the infinitive absolute הָלַךְ (*halakh*) indicates continuous action.

Hasel, "The Fountains of the Great Deep," *Origins* 1 (1974): 67-72; idem, "The Biblical View of the Extent of the Flood," *Origins* 2 (1975): 77-95.

¹ sn On the prescientific view of the sky reflected here, see L. I. J. Stadelmann, *The Hebrew Conception of the World* (An-Bib), 46.

² tn Heb "was."

³ tn Heb "On that very day Noah entered, and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and the wife of Noah, and the three wives of his sons with him into the ark."

⁴ tn The verb "entered" is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁵ tn Heb "every bird, every wing."

⁶ tn Heb "two two" meaning "in twos."

⁷ tn Heb "flesh."

⁸ tn Heb "Those that went in, male and female from all flesh they went in."

⁹ tn Heb "and the waters were great and multiplied exceedingly." The first verb in the sequence is וַיִּגְבְּרוּ (*vayyigb'ru*, from גָּבַר, *gavar*), meaning "to become great, mighty." The waters did not merely rise; they "prevailed" over the earth, overwhelming it.

¹⁰ tn Heb "went."

¹¹ tn Heb "and the waters were great exceedingly, exceedingly." The repetition emphasizes the depth of the waters.

¹² tn Heb "and."

¹³ tn Heb "rose fifteen cubits." Since a cubit is considered by most authorities to be about eighteen inches, this would make the depth 22.5 feet. This figure might give the modern reader a false impression of exactness, however, so in the translation the phrase "fifteen cubits" has been rendered "more than twenty feet."

¹⁴ tn Heb "the waters prevailed fifteen cubits upward and they covered the mountains." Obviously, a flood of twenty feet did not cover the mountains; the statement must mean the flood rose about twenty feet above the highest mountain.

¹⁵ tn Heb "flesh."

month. On the first day of the tenth month, the tops of the mountains became visible.¹

8:6 At the end of forty days,² Noah opened the window he had made in the ark³ **8:7** and sent out a raven; it kept flying⁴ back and forth until the waters had dried up on the earth.

8:8 Then Noah⁵ sent out a dove⁶ to see if the waters had receded⁷ from the surface of the ground. **8:9** The dove could not find a resting place for its feet because water still covered⁸ the surface of the entire earth, and so it returned to Noah⁹ in the ark. He stretched out his hand, took the dove,¹⁰ and brought it back into the ark.¹¹ **8:10** He waited seven more days and then sent out the dove again from the ark. **8:11** When¹² the dove returned to him in the evening, there was¹³ a freshly plucked olive leaf in its beak! Noah knew that the waters had receded from the earth. **8:12** He waited another seven days and sent the dove out again,¹⁴ but it did not return to him this time.¹⁵

8:13 In Noah's six hundred and first year,¹⁶ in the first day of the first month, the waters had dried up from the earth, and Noah removed the

covering from the ark and saw that¹⁷ the surface of the ground was dry. **8:14** And by the twenty-seventh day of the second month the earth¹⁸ was dry.

8:15 Then God spoke to Noah and said, **8:16** "Come out of the ark, you, your wife, your sons, and your sons' wives with you. **8:17** Bring out with you all the living creatures that are with you. Bring out¹⁹ every living thing, including the birds, animals, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. Let them increase²⁰ and be fruitful and multiply on the earth!"²¹

8:18 Noah went out along with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives. **8:19** Every living creature, every creeping thing, every bird, and everything that moves on the earth went out of the ark in their groups.

8:20 Noah built an altar to the LORD. He then took some of every kind of clean animal and clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.²² **8:21** And the LORD smelled the soothing aroma²³ and said²⁴ to himself,²⁵ "I will never again curse²⁶ the ground because of humankind, even though²⁷ the inclination of their minds²⁸ is evil from childhood on.²⁹ I will never again destroy everything that lives, as I have just done.

¹ tn Or "could be seen."

² tn The introductory verbal form וַיָּהִי (*vayyehi*), traditionally rendered "and it came to pass," serves as a temporal indicator and has not been translated here.

³ tn Heb "opened the window in the ark which he had made." The perfect tense ("had made") refers to action preceding the opening of the window, and is therefore rendered as a past perfect. Since in English "had made" could refer to either the ark or the window, the order of the phrases was reversed in the translation to clarify that the window is the referent.

⁴ tn Heb "and it went out, going out and returning." The Hebrew verb נָפַח (*yatsa'*), translated here "flying," is modified by two infinitives absolute indicating that the raven went back and forth.

⁵ tn Heb "he"; the referent (Noah) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁶ tn The Hebrew text adds "from him." This has not been translated for stylistic reasons, because it is redundant in English.

⁷ tn The Hebrew verb קָלַל (*qalal*) normally means "to be light, to be slight"; it refers here to the waters receding.

⁸ tn The words "still covered" is supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁹ tn Heb "him"; the referent (Noah) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁰ tn Heb "it"; the referent (the dove) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹¹ tn Heb "and he brought it to himself to the ark."

¹² tn The clause introduced by *vav* (ו) consecutive is translated as a temporal clause subordinated to the following clause.

¹³ tn The deictic particle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*) draws attention to the olive leaf. It invites readers to enter into the story, as it were, and look at the olive leaf with their own eyes.

¹⁴ tn The word "again" is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁵ tn Heb "it did not again return to him still." For a study of this section of the flood narrative, see W. O. E. Oesterley, "The Dove with the Olive Leaf (Gen VIII 8-11)," *ExpTim* 18 (1906/07): 377-78.

¹⁶ tn Heb In the six hundred and first year." Since this refers to the six hundred and first year of Noah's life, the word "Noah's" has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

¹⁷ tn Heb "and saw and look." As in v. 11, the deictic particle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*) invites readers to enter into the story, as it were, and look at the dry ground with their own eyes.

¹⁸ tn In v. 13 the ground הָאָדָמָה (*ha'adamah*) is dry; now the earth (הָאָרֶץ, *ha'arets*) is dry.

¹⁹ tn The words "bring out" are not in the Hebrew text, but are supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁰ tn Following the Hiphil imperative, "bring out," the three perfect verb forms with *vav* (ו) consecutive carry an imperatival nuance. For a discussion of the Hebrew construction here and the difficulty of translating it into English, see S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew*, 124-25.

²¹ tn Heb "and let them swarm in the earth and be fruitful and multiply on the earth."

²² sn Offered burnt offerings on the altar. F. D. Maurice includes a chapter on the sacrifice of Noah in *The Doctrine of Sacrifice*. The whole burnt offering, according to Leviticus 1, represented the worshiper's complete surrender and dedication to the LORD. After the flood Noah could see that God was not only a God of wrath, but a God of redemption and restoration. The one who escaped the catastrophe could best express his gratitude and submission through sacrificial worship, acknowledging God as the sovereign of the universe.

²³ tn The LORD "smelled" (וַיַּחֲוֶה, *vayyarahk*) a "soothing smell" (רִיחַ הַנְּחִיחוֹתֵי, *reakh hannihhoakhi*). The object forms a cognate accusative with the verb. The language is anthropomorphic. The offering had a sweet aroma that pleased or soothed. The expression in Lev 1 signifies that God accepts the offering with pleasure, and in accepting the offering he accepts the worshiper.

²⁴ tn Heb "and the LORD said."

²⁵ tn Heb "in his heart."

²⁶ tn Here the Hebrew word translated "curse" is קָלַל (*qalal*), used in the Piel verbal stem.

²⁷ tn The Hebrew particle כִּי (*ki*) can be used in a concessive sense (see BDB 473 s.v. כִּי), which makes good sense in this context. Its normal causal sense ("for") does not fit the context here very well.

²⁸ tn Heb "the inclination of the heart of humankind."

²⁹ tn Heb "from his youth."

8:22 “While the earth continues to exist,¹ planting time² and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night will not cease.”

God’s Covenant with Humankind through Noah

9:1 Then God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. 9:2 Every living creature of the earth and every bird of the sky will be terrified of you.³ Everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea are under your authority.⁴ 9:3 You may eat any moving thing that lives.⁵ As I gave you⁶ the green plants, I now give⁷ you everything.

9:4 But⁸ you must not eat meat⁹ with its life (that is,¹⁰ its blood) in it.¹¹ 9:5 For your lifeblood¹² I will surely exact punishment,¹³ from¹⁴ every living creature I will exact punishment. From each person¹⁵ I will exact punishment for

the life of the individual¹⁶ since the man was his relative.¹⁷

9:6 “Whoever sheds human blood,¹⁸ by other humans¹⁹ must his blood be shed; for in God’s image²⁰ God²¹ has made humankind.”

9:7 But as for you,²² be fruitful and multiply; increase abundantly on the earth and multiply on it.”

9:8 God said to Noah and his sons,²³ 9:9 “Look! I now confirm²⁴ my covenant with you and your descendants after you²⁵ 9:10 and with every living creature that is with you, including the birds, the domestic animals, and every living creature of the earth with you, all those that came out of the ark with you – every living creature of the earth.²⁶ 9:11 I confirm²⁷ my covenant with you: Never again will all living things²⁸ be wiped out²⁹ by the waters of a flood;³⁰ never again will a flood destroy the earth.”

9:12 And God said, “This is the guarantee³¹ of the covenant I am making³² with you³³ and

¹ **tn** *Heb* “yet all the days of the earth.” The idea is “[while there are] yet all the days of the earth,” meaning, “as long as the earth exists.”

² **tn** *Heb* “seed,” which stands here by metonymy for the time when seed is planted.

³ **tn** *Heb* “and fear of you and dread of you will be upon every living creature of the earth and upon every bird of the sky.” The suffixes on the nouns “fear” and “dread” are objective genitives. The animals will fear humans from this time forward.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “into your hand are given.” The “hand” signifies power. To say the animals have been given into the hands of humans means humans have been given authority over them.

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “every moving thing that lives for you will be for food.”

⁶ **tn** The words “I gave you” are not in the Hebrew text, but are supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁷ **tn** The perfect verb form describes the action that accompanies the declaration.

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “only.”

⁹ **tn** Or “flesh.”

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “its life, its blood.” The second word is in apposition to the first, explaining what is meant by “its life.” Since the blood is equated with life, meat that had the blood in it was not to be eaten.

¹¹ **tn** The words “in it” are supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

sn *You must not eat meat with its life...in it.* Because of the carnage produced by the flood, people might conclude that life is cheap and therefore treat it lightly. But God will not permit them to kill or even to eat anything with the lifeblood still in it, serving as a reminder of the sanctity of life.

¹² **tn** Again the text uses apposition to clarify what kind of blood is being discussed: “your blood, [that is] for your life.” See C. L. Dewar, “The Biblical Use of the Term ‘Blood,’” *JTS* 4 (1953): 204-8.

¹³ **tn** The word “punishment” is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarification. The verb דָּרַשׁ (*darash*) means “to require, to seek, to ask for, to exact.” Here it means that God will exact punishment for the taking of a life. See R. Mawdsley, “Capital Punishment in Gen. 9:6,” *Cent-Bib* 18 (1975): 20-25.

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “from the hand of,” which means “out of the hand of” or “out of the power of” and is nearly identical in sense to the preposition מִן (*min*) alone.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “and from the hand of the man.” The article has a generic function, indicating the class, i.e., humankind.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “of the man.”

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “from the hand of a man, his brother.” The point is that God will require the blood of someone who kills, since the person killed is a relative (“brother”) of the killer. The language reflects Noah’s situation (after the flood everyone would be part of Noah’s extended family), but also supports the concept of the brotherhood of humankind. According to the Genesis account the entire human race descended from Noah.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “the blood of man.”

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “by man,” a generic term here for other human beings.

²⁰ **sn** See the notes on the words “humankind” and “likeness” in Gen 1:26, as well as J. Barr, “The Image of God in the Book of Genesis – A Study of Terminology,” *BJRL* 51 (1968/69): 11-26.

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “he”; the referent (God) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²² **sn** The disjunctive clause (conjunction + pronominal subject + verb) here indicates a strong contrast to what has preceded. Against the backdrop of the warnings about taking life, God now instructs the people to produce life, using terms reminiscent of the mandate given to Adam (Gen 1:28).

²³ **tn** *Heb* “to Noah and to his sons with him, saying.”

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “I, look, I confirm.” The particle הִנְנִי (*hinni*) used with the participle בֹּקִיעַ (*meqim*) gives the sense of immediacy or imminence, as if to say, “Look! I am now confirming.”

²⁵ **tn** The three pronominal suffixes (translated “you,” “your,” and “you”) are masculine plural. As v. 8 indicates, Noah and his sons are addressed.

²⁶ **tn** The verbal repetition is apparently for emphasis.

²⁷ **tn** The verb וְהִתְקַדְּשִׁיתִי (*vahaqimoti*) is a perfect with the *vav* (ו) consecutive and should be translated with the English present tense, just as the participle at the beginning of the speech was (v. 9). Another option is to translate both forms with the English future tense (“I will confirm”).

²⁸ **tn** *Heb* “all flesh.”

²⁹ **tn** *Heb* “cut off.”

³⁰ **tn** *Heb* “and all flesh will not be cut off again by the waters of the flood.”

³¹ **tn** *Heb* “sign.”

³² **sn** On the making of covenants in Genesis, see W. F. Albright, “The Hebrew Expression for ‘Making a Covenant’ in Pre-Israelite Documents,” *BASOR* 121 (1951): 21-22.

³³ **tn** *Heb* “between me and between you.”

every living creature with you, a covenant¹ for all subsequent² generations: **9:13** I will place³ my rainbow⁴ in the clouds, and it will become⁵ a guarantee of the covenant between me and the earth. **9:14** Whenever⁶ I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, **9:15** then I will remember my covenant with you⁷ and with all living creatures of all kinds.⁸ Never again will the waters become a flood and destroy⁹ all living things.¹⁰ **9:16** When the rainbow is in the clouds, I will notice it and remember¹¹ the perpetual covenant between God and all living creatures of all kinds that are on the earth.”

9:17 So God said to Noah, “This is the guarantee of the covenant that I am confirming between me and all living things¹² that are on the earth.”

The Curse of Canaan

9:18 The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Now Ham was the father of Canaan.)¹³ **9:19** These were the sons of Noah, and from them the whole earth was populated.¹⁴

9:20 Noah, a man of the soil,¹⁵ began to plant a vineyard.¹⁶ **9:21** When he drank some of the wine, he got drunk and uncovered himself¹⁷ inside his tent. **9:22** Ham, the father of Canaan,¹⁸ saw his father’s nakedness¹⁹ and told his two brothers who were outside. **9:23** Shem and Japheth took the garment²⁰ and placed it on their shoulders. Then they walked in backwards and covered up their father’s nakedness. Their faces were turned²¹ the other way so they did not see their father’s nakedness.

¹ **tn** The words “a covenant” are supplied in the translation for clarification.

² **tn** The Hebrew term עולם (*‘olam*) means “ever, forever, lasting, perpetual.” The covenant would extend to subsequent generations.

³ **tn** The translation assumes that the perfect verbal form is used rhetorically, emphasizing the certainty of the action. Other translation options include “I have placed” (present perfect; cf. NIV, NRSV) and “I place” (instantaneous perfect; cf. NEB).

⁴ **sn** The Hebrew word קשת (*qeshet*) normally refers to a warrior’s bow. Some understand this to mean that God the warrior hangs up his battle bow at the end of the flood, indicating he is now at peace with humankind, but others question the legitimacy of this proposal. See C. Westermann, *Genesis*, 1:473, and G. J. Wenham, *Genesis* (WBC), 1:196.

⁵ **tn** The perfect verbal form with *vav* (ו) consecutive here has the same aspectual function as the preceding perfect of certitude.

⁶ **tn** The temporal indicator (וְהָיָה, *v^hhayah*, conjunction + the perfect verb form), often translated “it will be,” anticipates a future development.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “which [is] between me and between you.”

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “all flesh.”

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “to destroy.”

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “all flesh.”

¹¹ **tn** The translation assumes that the infinitive לִזְכֹּר (*lizkor*, “to remember”) here expresses the result of seeing the rainbow. Another option is to understand it as indicating purpose, in which case it could be translated, “I will look at it so that I may remember.”

¹² **tn** *Heb* “all flesh.”

¹³ **sn** The concluding disjunctive clause is parenthetical. It anticipates the following story, which explains that the Canaanites, Ham’s descendants through Canaan, were cursed because they shared the same moral abandonment that their ancestor displayed. See A. van Selms, “The Canaanites in the Book of Genesis,” *OTS* 12 (1958): 182-213.

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “was scattered.” The verb פָּצַח (*patsah*, “to scatter” [Niphal, “to be scattered”]) figures prominently in story of the dispersion of humankind in chap. 11.

¹⁵ **sn** The epithet *a man of the soil* indicates that Noah was a farmer.

¹⁶ **tn** Or “Noah, a man of the soil, was the first to plant a vineyard”; *Heb* “and Noah, a man of the ground, began and he planted a vineyard.”

¹⁷ **tn** The Hebrew verb גָּלַח (*galah*) in the Hitpael verbal stem (וַיִּגְלַח, *vayyitgal*) means “to uncover oneself” or “to be uncovered.” Noah became overheated because of the wine and uncovered himself in the tent.

¹⁸ **sn** For the second time (see v. 18) the text informs the reader of the relationship between Ham and Canaan. Genesis 10 will explain that Canaan was the ancestor of the Canaanite tribes living in the promised land.

¹⁹ **tn** Some would translate “had sexual relations with,” arguing that Ham committed a homosexual act with his drunken father for which he was cursed. However, the expression “see nakedness” usually refers to observation of another’s nakedness, not a sexual act (see Gen 42:9, 12 where “nakedness” is used metaphorically to convey the idea of “weakness” or “vulnerability”; Deut 23:14 where “nakedness” refers to excrement; Isa 47:3; Ezek 16:37; Lam 1:8). The following verse (v. 23) clearly indicates that visual observation, not a homosexual act, is in view here. In Lev 20:17 the expression “see nakedness” does appear to be a euphemism for sexual intercourse, but the context here, unlike that of Gen 9:22, clearly indicates that in that passage sexual contact is in view. The expression “see nakedness” does not in itself suggest a sexual connotation. Some relate Gen 9:22 to Lev 18:6-11, 15-19, where the expression “uncover [another’s] nakedness” (the Piel form of גָּלַח, *galah*) refers euphemistically to sexual intercourse. However, Gen 9:22 does not say Ham “uncovered” the nakedness of his father. According to the text, Noah uncovered himself; Ham merely saw his father naked. The point of the text is that Ham had no respect for his father. Rather than covering his father up, he told his brothers. Noah then gave an oracle that Ham’s descendants, who would be characterized by the same moral abandonment, would be cursed. Leviticus 18 describes that greater evil of the Canaanites (see vv. 24-28).

sn *Saw the nakedness*. It is hard for modern people to appreciate why seeing another’s nakedness was such an abomination, because nakedness is so prevalent today. In the ancient world, especially in a patriarchal society, seeing another’s nakedness was a major offense. (See the account in Herodotus, *Histories* 1.8-13, where a general saw the nakedness of his master’s wife, and one of the two had to be put to death.) Besides, Ham was not a little boy wandering into his father’s bedroom; he was over a hundred years old by this time. For fuller discussion see A. P. Ross, “The Curse of Canaan,” *BSac* 137 (1980): 223-40.

²⁰ **tn** The word translated “garment” has the Hebrew definite article on it. The article may simply indicate that the garment is definite and vivid in the mind of the narrator, but it could refer instead to Noah’s garment. Did Ham bring it out when he told his brothers?

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “their faces [were turned] back.”

9:24 When Noah awoke from his drunken stupor¹ he learned² what his youngest son had done³ to him. 9:25 So he said,

“Cursed⁴ be Canaan!⁵
The lowest of slaves⁶
he will be to his brothers.”

9:26 He also said,

“Worthy of praise is⁷ the LORD, the God
of Shem!

May Canaan be the slave of Shem!⁸

9:27 May God enlarge Japheth’s territory
and numbers!⁹

May he live¹⁰ in the tents of Shem
and may Canaan be his slave!¹¹”

9:28 After the flood Noah lived 350 years.

9:29 The entire lifetime of Noah was 950 years,
and then he died.

The Table of Nations

10:1 This is the account¹² of Noah’s sons
Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Sons¹³ were born¹³ to

¹ tn Heb “his wine,” used here by metonymy for the drunken stupor it produced.

² tn Heb “he knew.”

³ tn The Hebrew verb עָשָׂה (*asah*, “to do”) carries too general a sense to draw the conclusion that Ham had to have done more than look on his father’s nakedness and tell his brothers.

⁴ sn For more on the curse, see H. C. Brichto, *The Problem of “Curse” in the Hebrew Bible* (JBLMS), and J. Scharbert, *TDOT* 1:405-18.

⁵ sn *Cursed be Canaan*. The curse is pronounced on Canaan, not Ham. Noah sees a problem in Ham’s character, and on the basis of that he delivers a prophecy about the future descendants who will live in slavery to such things and then be controlled by others. (For more on the idea of slavery in general, see E. M. Yamauchi, “Slaves of God,” *BETS* 9 [1966]: 31-49). In a similar way Jacob pronounced oracles about his sons based on their revealed character (see Gen 49).

⁶ tn Heb “a servant of servants” (עֶבֶד עֲבָדִים, *‘eved ‘avadim*), an example of the superlative genitive. It means Canaan will become the most abject of slaves.

⁷ tn Heb “blessed be.”

⁸ tn Heb “a slave to him”; the referent (Shem) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁹ tn Heb “may God enlarge Japheth.” The words “territory and numbers” are supplied in the translation for clarity.

sn There is a wordplay (paronomasia) on the name *Japheth*. The verb יָפַת (*yafit*, “may he enlarge”) sounds like the name יָפֶתֶת (*yefet*, “Japheth”). The name itself suggested the idea. The blessing for Japheth extends beyond the son to the descendants. Their numbers and their territories will be enlarged, so much so that they will share in Shem’s territories. Again, in this oracle, Noah is looking beyond his immediate family to future generations. For a helpful study of this passage and the next chapter, see T. O. Figart, *A Biblical Perspective on the Race Problem*, 55-58.

¹⁰ tn In this context the prefixed verbal form is a jussive (note the distinct jussive forms both before and after this in vv. 26 and 27).

¹¹ tn The title אֵלֶּה הַדּוֹרוֹת (*‘elle toledot*, here translated as “This is the account”) here covers 10:1-11:9, which contains the so-called Table of Nations and the account of how the nations came to be dispersed.

¹² sn *Sons were born to them*. A vertical genealogy such as this encompasses more than the names of sons. The list includes cities, tribes, and even nations. In a loose way, the names in the list have some derivation or connection to the three ancestors.

¹³ tn It appears that the Table of Nations is a composite

them after the flood.

10:2 The sons of Japheth¹⁴ were Gomer,¹⁵ Magog,¹⁶ Madai,¹⁷ Javan,¹⁸ Tubal,¹⁹ Meshech,²⁰ and Tiras.²¹ 10:3 The sons of Gomer were²² Ashkenaz,²³ Riphath,²⁴ and Togarmah.²⁵ 10:4 The sons of Javan were Elishah,²⁶ Tarshish,²⁷ the Kittim,²⁸ and the Dodanim.²⁹ 10:5 From these the coastlands of the nations were separated into their lands, every one according to its language, according to their families, by their nations.

10:6 The sons of Ham were Cush,³⁰ Mizraim,³¹ Put,³² and Canaan.³³ 10:7 The sons of

of at least two ancient sources: Some sections begin with the phrase “the sons of” (בְּנֵי, *b’ne*) while other sections use “begot” (יָלַד, *yalad*). It may very well be that the “sons of” list was an old, “bare bones” list that was retained in the family records, while the “begot” sections were editorial inserts by the writer of Genesis, reflecting his special interests. See A. P. Ross, “The Table of Nations in Genesis 10 – Its Structure,” *BSac* 137 (1980): 340-53; idem, “The Table of Nations in Genesis 10 – Its Content,” *BSac* 138 (1981): 22-34.

¹⁴ sn The Greek form of the name Japheth, *Iapetos*, is used in Greek tradition for the ancestor of the Greeks.

¹⁵ sn *Gomer* was the ancestor of the Cimmerians. For a discussion of the Cimmerians see E. M. Yamauchi, *Foes from the Northern Frontier* (SBA), 49-61.

¹⁶ sn For a discussion of various proposals concerning the descendants of *Magog* see E. M. Yamauchi, *Foes from the Northern Frontier* (SBA), 22-24.

¹⁷ sn *Madai* was the ancestor of the Medes, who lived east of Assyria.

¹⁸ sn *Javan* was the father of the Hellenic race, the Ionians who lived in western Asia Minor.

¹⁹ sn *Tubal* was the ancestor of militaristic tribes that lived north of the Black Sea. For a discussion of ancient references to Tubal see E. M. Yamauchi, *Foes from the Northern Frontier* (SBA), 24-26.

²⁰ sn *Meshech* was the ancestor of the people known in Assyrian records as the *Musku*. For a discussion of ancient references to them see E. M. Yamauchi, *Foes from the Northern Frontier* (SBA), 24-26.

²¹ sn *Tiras* was the ancestor of the Thracians, some of whom possibly became the Pelasgian pirates of the Aegean.

²² sn The descendants of *Gomer* were all northern tribes of the Upper Euphrates.

²³ sn *Ashkenaz* was the ancestor of a northern branch of Indo-Germanic tribes, possibly Scythians. For discussion see E. M. Yamauchi, *Foes from the Northern Frontier* (SBA), 63.

²⁴ sn The descendants of *Riphath* lived in a district north of the road from Haran to Carchemish.

²⁵ sn *Togarmah* is also mentioned in Ezek 38:6, where it refers to Til-garimmu, the capital of Kammanu, which bordered Tabal in eastern Turkey. See E. M. Yamauchi, *Foes from the Northern Frontier* (SBA), 26, n. 28.

²⁶ sn The descendants of *Elishah* populated Cyprus.

²⁷ sn The descendants of *Tarshish* settled along the southern coast of what is modern Turkey. However, some identify the site Tarshish (see Jonah 1:3) with Sardinia or Spain.

²⁸ sn The name *Kittim* is associated with Cyprus, as well as coastlands east of Rhodes. It is used in later texts to refer to the Romans.

²⁹ tc Most of the MT MSS read “Dodanim” here, but 1 Chr 1:7 has “Rodanim,” perhaps referring to the island of Rhodes. But the Qere reading in 1 Chr 1:7 suggests “Dodanim.” Dodona is one of the most ancient and revered spots in ancient Greece.

³⁰ sn The descendants of *Cush* settled in Nubia (Ethiopia).

³¹ sn The descendants of *Mizraim* settled in Upper and Lower Egypt.

³² sn The descendants of *Put* settled in Libya.

³³ sn The descendants of *Canaan* lived in the region of Phoenicia (Palestine).

Cush were Seba,¹ Havilah,² Sabtah,³ Raamah,⁴ and Sabteca.⁵ The sons of Raamah were Sheba⁶ and Dedan.⁷

10:8 Cush was the father of⁸ Nimrod; he began to be a valiant warrior on the earth. **10:9** He was a mighty hunter⁹ before the LORD.¹⁰ (That is why it is said, “Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD.”) **10:10** The primary regions¹¹ of his kingdom were Babel,¹² Erech,¹³ Akkad,¹⁴ and Calneh¹⁵ in the land of Shinar.¹⁶ **10:11** From that land he went¹⁷ to Assyria,¹⁸ where he built Nineveh,¹⁹ Rehoboth-Ir,²⁰ Calah,²¹ **10:12** and Resen, which is between Nineveh and the great city Calah.²²

10:13 Mizraim²³ was the father of²⁴ the Ludites,²⁵ Anamites,²⁶ Lehabites,²⁷ Naphtuhites,²⁸

10:14 Pathrusites,²⁹ Casluhites³⁰ (from whom the Philistines came),³¹ and Caphtorites.³²

10:15 Canaan was the father of³³ Sidon his firstborn,³⁴ Heth,³⁵ **10:16** the Jebusites,³⁶ Amorites,³⁷ Girgashites,³⁸ **10:17** Hivites,³⁹ Arkites,⁴⁰ Sinites,⁴¹ **10:18** Arvadites,⁴² Zemarites,⁴³ and Hamathites.⁴⁴ Eventually the families of the Canaanites were scattered **10:19** and the borders of Canaan extended⁴⁵ from Sidon⁴⁶ all the way to⁴⁷ Gerar as far as Gaza, and all the way to⁴⁸ Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, as far as Lasha. **10:20** These are the sons of Ham, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, and by their nations.

10:21 And sons were also born⁴⁹ to Shem (the older brother of Japheth),⁵⁰ the father of all the sons of Eber.

¹ sn The descendants of Seba settled in Upper Egypt along the Nile.

² sn The Hebrew name *Havilah* apparently means “stretch of sand” (see HALOT 297 s.v. הַיְלִיָּה). Havilah’s descendants settled in eastern Arabia.

³ sn The descendants of *Sabtah* settled near the western shore of the Persian Gulf in ancient Hadhramaut.

⁴ sn The descendants of *Raamah* settled in southwest Arabia.

⁵ sn The descendants of *Sabteca* settled in Samudake, east toward the Persian Gulf.

⁶ sn Sheba became the name of a kingdom in southwest Arabia.

⁷ sn The name *Dedan* is associated with ‘Ula in northern Arabia.

⁸ tn Heb “fathered.” Embedded within Cush’s genealogy is an account of Nimrod, a mighty warrior. There have been many attempts to identify him, but none are convincing.

⁹ tn The Hebrew word for “hunt” is צַיִד (*tsayid*), which is used on occasion for hunting men (1 Sam 24:12; Jer 16:16; Lam 3:15).

¹⁰ tn Another option is to take the divine name here, לִפְנֵי יְהוָה (*lifne yehvah*, “before the LORD [YHWH]”), as a means of expressing the superlative degree. In this case one may translate “Nimrod was the greatest hunter in the world.”

¹¹ tn Heb “beginning.” E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (AB), 67, suggests “mainstays,” citing Jer 49:35 as another text where the Hebrew noun is so used.

¹² tn Or “Babylon.”

¹³ sn *Erech* (ancient Uruk, modern Warka), one of the most ancient civilizations, was located southeast of Babylon.

¹⁴ sn *Akkad*, or ancient Agade, was associated with Sargon and located north of Babylon.

¹⁵ tn No such place is known in Shinar (i.e., Babylonia). Therefore some have translated the Hebrew term כַּלְנֵה (*khalneh*) as “all of them,” referring to the three previous names (cf. NRSV).

¹⁶ sn *Shinar* is another name for Babylonia.

¹⁷ tn The subject of the verb translated “went” is probably still Nimrod. However, it has also been interpreted that “Ashur went,” referring to a derivative power.

¹⁸ tn Heb “Asshur.”

¹⁹ sn *Nineveh* was an ancient Assyrian city situated on the Tigris River.

²⁰ sn The name *Rehoboth-Ir* means “and broad streets of a city,” perhaps referring to a suburb of Nineveh.

²¹ sn *Calah* (modern Nimrud) was located twenty miles north of Nineveh.

²² tn Heb “and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; [i.e., Calah] is the great city.”

²³ sn *Mizraim* is the Hebrew name for Egypt (cf. NRSV).

²⁴ tn Heb “fathered.”

²⁵ sn The *Ludites* were African tribes west of the Nile Delta.

²⁶ sn The *Anamites* lived in North Africa, west of Egypt, near Cyrene.

²⁷ sn The *Lehabites* are identified with the Libyans.

²⁸ sn The *Naphtuhites* lived in Lower Egypt (the Nile Delta

region).

²⁹ sn The *Pathrusites* are known in Egyptian as *P-to-reshi*; they resided in Upper Egypt.

³⁰ sn The *Casluhites* lived in Crete and eventually settled east of the Egyptian Delta, between Egypt and Canaan.

³¹ tn Several commentators prefer to reverse the order of the words to put this clause after the next word, since the Philistines came from Crete (where the Caphtorites lived). But the table may suggest migration rather than lineage, and the Philistines, like the Israelites, came through the Nile Delta region of Egypt. For further discussion of the origin and migration of the Philistines, see D. M. Howard, “Philistines,” *Peoples of the Old Testament World*, 232.

³² sn The *Caphtorites* resided in Crete, but in Egyptian literature Caphtor refers to “the region beyond” the Mediterranean.

³³ tn Heb “fathered.”

³⁴ sn Sidon was the foremost city in Phoenicia; here *Sidon* may be the name of its founder.

³⁵ tn Some see a reference to “Hittites” here (cf. NIV), but this seems unlikely. See the note on the phrase “sons of Heth” in Gen 23:3.

³⁶ sn The *Jebusites* were the Canaanite inhabitants of ancient Jerusalem.

³⁷ sn Here *Amorites* refers to smaller groups of Canaanite inhabitants of the mountainous regions of Palestine, rather than the large waves of Amurru, or western Semites, who migrated to the region.

³⁸ sn The *Girgashites* are an otherwise unknown Canaanite tribe, though the name is possibly mentioned in Ugaritic texts (see G. J. Wenham, *Genesis* [WBC], 1:226).

³⁹ sn The *Hivites* were Canaanite tribes of a Hurrian origin.

⁴⁰ sn The *Arkites* lived in Arka, a city in Lebanon, north of Sidon.

⁴¹ sn The *Sinites* lived in Sin, another town in Lebanon.

⁴² sn The *Arvadites* lived in the city Arvad, located on an island near the mainland close to the river El Kebir.

⁴³ sn The *Zemarites* lived in the town Sumur, north of Arka.

⁴⁴ sn The *Hamathites* lived in Hamath on the Orontes River.

⁴⁵ tn Heb “were.”

⁴⁶ map For location see Map1-A1; JP3-F3; JP4-F3.

⁴⁷ tn Heb “as you go.”

⁴⁸ tn Heb “as you go.”

⁴⁹ tn Heb “And to Shem was born.”

⁵⁰ tn Or “whose older brother was Japheth.” Some translations render Japheth as the older brother, understanding the adjective הַגְּדוֹל (*haggadol*, “older”) as modifying Japheth. However, in Hebrew when a masculine singular definite attributive adjective follows the sequence masculine singular construct noun + proper name, the adjective invariably modifies the noun in construct, not the proper name. Such is the case here. See Deut 11:7; Judg 1:13; 2:7; 3:9; 9:5; 2 Kgs 15:35; 2 Chr 27:3; Neh 3:30; Jer 13:9; 36:10; Ezek 10:19; 11:1.

10:22 The sons of Shem were Elam,¹ Asshur,² Arphaxad,³ Lud,⁴ and Aram.⁵ **10:23** The sons of Aram were Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.⁶ **10:24** Arphaxad was the father of⁷ Shelah,⁸ and Shelah was the father of Eber.⁹ **10:25** Two sons were born to Eber: One was named Peleg because in his days the earth was divided,¹⁰ and his brother's name was Joktan. **10:26** Joktan was the father of¹¹ Almodad,¹² Sheleph,¹³ Hazarmaveth,¹⁴ Jerah,¹⁵ **10:27** Hadoram, Uzal,¹⁶ Diklah,¹⁷ **10:28** Obal,¹⁸ Abimael,¹⁹ Sheba,²⁰ **10:29** Ophir,²¹ Havilah,²² and Jobab. All these were sons of Joktan. **10:30** Their dwelling place was

from Mesha all the way to²³ Sephar in the eastern hills. **10:31** These are the sons of Shem according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, and according to their nations.

10:32 These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, by their nations, and from these the nations spread²⁴ over the earth after the flood.

The Dispersion of the Nations at Babel

11:1 The whole earth²⁵ had a common language and a common vocabulary.²⁶ **11:2** When the people²⁷ moved eastward,²⁸ they found a plain in Shinar²⁹ and settled there. **11:3** Then they said to one another,³⁰ "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly."³¹ (They had brick instead of stone and tar³² instead of mortar.)³³ **11:4** Then they said, "Come, let's build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens³⁴ so that³⁵ we may make a name for ourselves. Otherwise³⁶ we will be scattered³⁷ across the face of the entire earth."

¹ **sn** The Hebrew name *Elam* (עֵלָם, 'elam) means "high-land." The Elamites were a non-Semitic people who lived east of Babylon.

² **sn** *Asshur* is the name for the Assyrians. Asshur was the region in which Nimrod expanded his power (see v. 11, where the name is also mentioned). When names appear in both sections of a genealogical list, it probably means that there were both Hamites and Shemites living in that region in antiquity, especially if the name is a place name.

³ **sn** The descendants of *Arphaxad* may have lived north-east of Nineveh.

⁴ **sn** *Lud* may have been the ancestor of the Ludbu, who lived near the Tigris River.

⁵ **sn** *Aram* became the collective name of the northern tribes living in the steppes of Mesopotamia and speaking Aramaic dialects.

⁶ **tc** The MT reads "Mash"; the LXX and 1 Chr 1:17 read "Meshech."

sn *Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash*. Little is known about these descendants of Aram.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* "fathered."

⁸ **tc** The MT reads "Arphaxad fathered Shelah"; the LXX reads "Arphaxad fathered Cainan, and Cainan fathered Sala [= Shelah]." The LXX reading also appears to lie behind Luke 3:35-36.

⁹ **sn** Genesis 11 traces the line of Shem through Eber (עֵבֶר, 'ever) to Abraham the "Hebrew" (עִבְרִי, 'ivri).

¹⁰ **tn** The expression "the earth was divided" may refer to dividing the land with canals, but more likely it anticipates the division of languages at Babel (Gen 11). The verb פָּלַג (palag, "separate, divide") is used in Ps 55:9 for a division of languages.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* "fathered."

¹² **sn** The name *Almodad* combines the Arabic article *al* with *modad* ("friend"). Almodad was the ancestor of a South Arabian people.

¹³ **sn** The name *Sheleph* may be related to Shilph, a district of Yemen; Shalph is a Yemenite tribe.

¹⁴ **sn** The name *Hazarmaveth* should be equated with Hadramawt, located in Southern Arabia.

¹⁵ **sn** The name *Jerah* means "moon."

¹⁶ **sn** *Uzal* was the name of the old capital of Yemen.

¹⁷ **sn** The name *Diklah* means "date-palm."

¹⁸ **sn** *Obal* was a name used for several localities in Yemen.

¹⁹ **sn** The name *Abimael* is a genuine Sabeian form which means "my father, truly, he is God."

²⁰ **sn** The descendants of *Sheba* lived in South Arabia, where the Joktanites were more powerful than the Hamites.

²¹ **sn** *Ophir* became the name of a territory in South Arabia. Many of the references to Ophir are connected with gold (e.g., 1 Kgs 9:28, 10:11, 22:48; 1 Chr 29:4; 2 Chr 8:18, 9:10; Job 22:24, 28:16; Ps 45:9; Isa 13:12).

²² **sn** *Havilah* is listed with Ham in v. 7.

²³ **tn** *Heb* "as you go."

²⁴ **tn** Or "separated."

²⁵ **sn** *The whole earth*. Here "earth" is a metonymy of subject, referring to the people who lived in the earth. Genesis 11 begins with everyone speaking a common language, but chap. 10 has the nations arranged by languages. It is part of the narrative art of Genesis to give the explanation of the event after the narration of the event. On this passage see A. P. Ross, "The Dispersion of the Nations in Genesis 11:1-9," *BSac* 138 (1981): 119-38.

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* "one lip and one [set of] words." The term "lip" is a metonymy of cause, putting the instrument for the intended effect. They had one language. The term "words" refers to the content of their speech. They had the same vocabulary.

²⁷ **tn** *Heb* "they"; the referent (the people) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁸ **tn** Or perhaps "from the east" (NRSV) or "in the east."

²⁹ **tn** *Heb* "in the land of Shinar."

sn *Shinar* is the region of Babylonia.

³⁰ **tn** *Heb* "a man to his neighbor." The Hebrew idiom may be translated "to each other" or "one to another."

³¹ **tn** The speech contains two cohortatives of exhortation followed by two participial cognate accusatives: "let us brick bricks" (נִלְבְּנֵה לְבָנִים, *nilbbenah l'venim*) and "burn for burning" (נִשְׂרָפֵה לִשְׂרָפָה, *nishrafah lisrefah*). This stresses the intensity of the undertaking; it also reflects the Akkadian text which uses similar constructions (see E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* [AB], 75-76).

³² **tn** Or "bitumen" (cf. NEB, NRSV).

³³ **tn** The disjunctive clause gives information parenthetical to the narrative.

³⁴ **tn** A translation of "heavens" for שָׁמַיִם (*shamayim*) fits this context because the Babylonian ziggurats had temples at the top, suggesting they reached to the heavens, the dwelling place of the gods.

³⁵ **tn** The form וְנַעֲשֶׂה (v'na'aseh, from the verb עָשָׂה, "do, make") could be either the imperfect or the cohortative with a vav (ו) conjunction ("and let us make..."). Coming after the previous cohortative, this form expresses purpose.

³⁶ **tn** The Hebrew particle כִּן (*pen*) expresses a negative purpose; it means "that we will not be scattered."

³⁷ **tn** The Hebrew verb פָּרַץ (*pavats*, translated "scatter") is a key term in this passage. The focal point of the account is the dispersion ("scattering") of the nations rather than the Tower of Babel. But the passage also forms a polemic against Babylon, the pride of the east and a cosmopolitan center with a huge ziggurat. To the Hebrews it was a monument to the judgment of God on pride.

11:5 But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the people¹ had started² building. **11:6** And the LORD said, “If as one people all sharing a common language³ they have begun to do this, then⁴ nothing they plan to do will be beyond them.⁵ **11:7** Come, let’s go down and confuse⁶ their language so they won’t be able to understand each other.”⁷

11:8 So the LORD scattered them from there across the face of the entire earth, and they stopped building⁸ the city. **11:9** That is why its name was called⁹ Babel¹⁰ – because there the LORD confused the language of the entire world, and from there the LORD scattered them across the face of the entire earth.

The Genealogy of Shem

11:10 This is the account of Shem.

Shem was 100 years old when he became the father of Arphaxad, two years after the flood. **11:11** And after becoming the father of Arphaxad, Shem lived 500 years and had other¹¹ sons and daughters.

11:12 When Arphaxad had lived 35 years, he became the father of Shelah. **11:13** And after he

became the father of Shelah, Arphaxad lived 403 years and had other¹² sons and daughters.¹³

11:14 When Shelah had lived 30 years, he became the father of Eber. **11:15** And after he became the father of Eber, Shelah lived 403 years and had other¹⁴ sons and daughters.

11:16 When Eber had lived 34 years, he became the father of Peleg. **11:17** And after he became the father of Peleg, Eber lived 430 years and had other sons and daughters.

11:18 When Peleg had lived 30 years, he became the father of Reu. **11:19** And after he became the father of Reu, Peleg lived 209 years and had other sons and daughters.

11:20 When Reu had lived 32 years, he became the father of Serug. **11:21** And after he became the father of Serug, Reu lived 207 years and had other sons and daughters.

11:22 When Serug had lived 30 years, he became the father of Nahor. **11:23** And after he became the father of Nahor, Serug lived 200 years and had other sons and daughters.

11:24 When Nahor had lived 29 years, he became the father of Terah. **11:25** And after he became the father of Terah, Nahor lived 119 years and had other sons and daughters.

11:26 When Terah had lived 70 years, he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

The Record of Terah

11:27 This is the account of Terah.

Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran. And Haran became the father of Lot. **11:28** Haran died in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans,¹⁵ while his father Terah was still alive.¹⁶ **11:29** And Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. The name of Abram’s wife was

¹ **tn** *Heb* “the sons of man.” The phrase is intended in this polemic to portray the builders as mere mortals, not the lesser deities that the Babylonians claimed built the city.

² **tn** The Hebrew text simply has בָּנָה (*banu*), but since v. 8 says they left off building the city, an ingressive idea (“had started building”) should be understood here.

³ **tn** *Heb* “and one lip to all of them.”

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and now.” The foundational clause beginning with הֵן (*hen*) expresses the condition, and the second clause the result. It could be rendered “If this...then now.”

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “all that they purpose to do will not be withheld from them.”

⁶ **tn** The cohortatives mirror the cohortatives of the people. They build to ascend the heavens; God comes down to destroy their language. God speaks here to his angelic assembly. See the notes on the word “make” in 1:26 and “know” in 3:5, as well as *Jub.* 10:22-23, where an angel recounts this incident and says “And the LORD our God said to us.... And the LORD went down and we went down with him. And we saw the city and the tower which the sons of men built.” On the chiasmic structure of the story, see G. J. Wenham, *Genesis* (WBC), 1:235.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “they will not hear, a man the lip of his neighbor.”

⁸ **tn** The infinitive construct לִבְנֹת (*livnot*, “building”) here serves as the object of the verb “they ceased, stopped,” answering the question of what they stopped doing.

⁹ **tn** The verb has no expressed subject and so can be rendered as a passive in the translation.

¹⁰ **sn** *Babel*. Here is the climax of the account, a parody on the pride of Babylon. In the Babylonian literature the name *bab-ili* meant “the gate of God,” but in Hebrew it sounds like the word for “confusion,” and so retained that connotation. The name “Babel” (בָּבֶל, *bavel*) and the verb translated “confused” (בָּלַל, *balal*) form a paronomasia (sound play). For the many wordplays and other rhetorical devices in Genesis, see J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis* (SSN).

¹¹ **tn** The word “other” is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied for stylistic reasons.

¹² **tn** The word “other” is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied for stylistic reasons.

¹³ **tc** The reading of the MT is followed in vv. 11-12; the LXX reads, “And [= when] Arphaxad had lived thirty-five years, [and] he fathered [= became the father of] Cainan. And after he fathered [= became the father of] Cainan, Arphaxad lived four hundred and thirty years and fathered [= had] [other] sons and daughters, and [then] he died. And [= when] Cainan had lived one hundred and thirty years, [and] he fathered [= became the father of] Sala [= Shelah]. And after he fathered [= became the father of] Sala [= Shelah], Cainan lived three hundred and thirty years and fathered [= had] [other] sons and daughters, and [then] he died.” See also the note on “Shelah” in Gen 10:24; the LXX reading also appears to lie behind Luke 3:35-36.

¹⁴ **tn** Here and in vv. 16, 19, 21, 23, 25 the word “other” is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied for stylistic reasons.

¹⁵ **sn** The phrase of the *Chaldeans* is a later editorial clarification for the readers, designating the location of Ur. From all evidence there would have been no Chaldeans in existence at this early date; they are known in the time of the neo-Babylonian empire in the first millennium B.C.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “upon the face of Terah his father.”

Sarai,⁴ and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah;² she was the daughter of Haran, the father of both Milcah and Iscah. **11:30** But Sarai was barren; she had no children.

11:31 Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot (the son of Haran), and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and with them he set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. When they came to Haran, they settled there. **11:32** The lifetime³ of Terah was 205 years, and he⁴ died in Haran.

The Obedience of Abram

12:1 Now the LORD said⁵ to Abram,⁶

“Go out⁷ from your country, your relatives, and your father's household to the land that I will show you.⁸

12:2 Then I will make you⁹ into a great nation, and I will bless you,¹⁰

¹ **sn** The name *Sarai* (a variant spelling of “Sarah”) means “princess” (or “lady”). *Sharratu* was the name of the wife of the moon god Sin. The original name may reflect the culture out of which the patriarch was called, for the family did worship other gods in Mesopotamia.

² **sn** The name *Milcah* means “Queen.” But more to the point here is the fact that *Malkatu* was a title for Ishtar, the daughter of the moon god. If the women were named after such titles (and there is no evidence that this was the motivation for naming the girls “Princess” or “Queen”), that would not necessarily imply anything about the faith of the two women themselves.

³ **tn** *Heb* “And the days of Terah were.”

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “Terah”; the pronoun has been substituted for the proper name in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁵ **sn** The LORD called Abram while he was in Ur (see Gen 15:7; Acts 7:2), but the sequence here makes it look like it was after the family left to migrate to Canaan (11:31-32). Genesis records the call of Abram at this place in the narrative because it is the formal beginning of the account of Abram. The record of Terah was brought to its end before this beginning.

⁶ **tn** The call of Abram begins with an imperative (לֵךְ-לְךָ *lekh-l'kha*, “go out”) followed by three cohortatives (v. 2a) indicating purpose or consequence (“that I may” or “then I will”). If Abram leaves, then God will do these three things. The second imperative (v. 2b, literally “and be a blessing”) is subordinated to the preceding cohortatives and indicates God's ultimate purpose in calling and blessing Abram. On the syntactical structure of vv. 1-2 see R. B. Chisholm, “Evidence from Genesis,” *A Case for Premillennialism*, 37. For a similar sequence of volitive forms see Gen 45:18.

⁷ **sn** It would be hard to overestimate the value of this call and this divine plan for the theology of the Bible. Here begins God's plan to bring redemption to the world. The promises to Abram will be turned into a covenant in Gen 15 and 22 (here it is a call with conditional promises) and will then lead through the Bible to the work of the Messiah.

⁸ **tn** The initial command is the direct imperative (לֵךְ *lekh*) from the verb לָלַךְ (*halakh*). It is followed by the *lamed* preposition with a pronominal suffix (לְךָ *l'kha*) emphasizing the subject of the imperative: “you leave.”

⁹ **sn** *To the land that I will show you.* The call of Abram illustrates the leading of the LORD. The command is to leave. The LORD's word is very specific about what Abram is to leave (the three prepositional phrases narrow to his father's household), but is not specific at all about where he is to go. God required faith, a point that Heb 11:8 notes.

¹⁰ **tn** The three first person verbs in v. 2a should be classified as cohortatives. The first two have pronominal suffixes, so the form itself does not indicate a cohortative. The third verb form is clearly cohortative.

¹¹ **sn** *I will bless you.* The blessing of creation is now car-

ried forward to the patriarch. In the garden God blessed Adam and Eve; in that blessing he gave them (1) a fruitful place, (2) endowed them with fertility to multiply, and (3) made them rulers over creation. That was all ruined at the fall. Now God begins to build his covenant people; in Gen 12:22 he promises to give Abram (1) a land flowing with milk and honey, (2) a great nation without number, and (3) kingship.

and I will make your name great,¹¹ so that you will exemplify divine blessing.¹² **12:3** I will bless those who bless you,¹³ but the one who treats you lightly¹⁴ I must curse, and all the families of the earth will bless one another¹⁵ by your name.”

¹¹ **tn** Or “I will make you famous.”

¹² **tn** *Heb* “and be a blessing.” The verb form בְּרַחֵם (*h'ryeh*) is the Qal imperative of the verb בָּרַחַם (*hayah*). The *vav* (h) with the imperative after the cohortatives indicates purpose or consequence. What does it mean for Abram to “be a blessing”? Will he be a channel or source of blessing for others, or a prime example of divine blessing? A similar statement occurs in Zech 8:13, where God assures his people, “You will be a blessing,” in contrast to the past when they “were a curse.” Certainly “curse” here does not refer to Israel being a source of a curse, but rather to the fact that they became a curse-word or by-word among the nations, who regarded them as the epitome of an accursed people (see 2 Kgs 22:19; Jer 42:18; 44:8, 12, 22). Therefore the statement “be a blessing” seems to refer to Israel being transformed into a prime example of a blessed people, whose name will be used in blessing formulae, rather than in curses. If the statement “be a blessing” is understood in the same way in Gen 12:2, then it means that God would so bless Abram that other nations would hear of his fame and hold him up as a paradigm of divine blessing in their blessing formulae.

¹³ **tn** The Piel cohortative has as its object a Piel participle, masculine plural. Since the LORD binds himself to Abram by covenant, those who enrich Abram in any way share in the blessings.

¹⁴ **tn** In this part of God's statement there are two significant changes that often go unnoticed. First, the parallel and contrasting participle מְקַלְלִים (*m'eqallekha*) is now singular and not plural. All the versions and a few Masoretic MSS read the plural. But if it had been plural, there would be no reason to change it to the singular and alter the parallelism. On the other hand, if it was indeed singular, it is easy to see why the versions would change it to match the first participle. The MT preserves the original reading: “the one who treats you lightly.” The point would be a contrast with the lavish way that God desires to bless many. The second change is in the vocabulary. The English usually says, “I will curse those who curse you.” But there are two different words for curse here. The first is קָלַל (*qalal*), which means “to be light” in the Qal, and in the Piel “to treat lightly, to treat with contempt, to curse.” The second verb is אָרַר (*arar*), which means “to banish, to remove from the blessing.” The point is simple: Whoever treats Abram and the covenant with contempt as worthless God will banish from the blessing. It is important also to note that the verb is not a cohortative, but a simple imperfect. Since God is binding himself to Abram, this would then be an obligatory imperfect: “but the one who treats you with contempt I must curse.”

¹⁵ **tn** Theoretically the Niphal can be translated either as passive or reflexive/reciprocal. (The Niphal of “bless” is only used in formulations of the Abrahamic covenant. See Gen 12:2; 18:18; 28:14). Traditionally the verb is taken as passive here, as if Abram were going to be a channel or source of blessing. But in later formulations of the Abrahamic covenant (see Gen 22:18; 26:4) the Hitpaal replaces this Niphal form, suggesting a translation “will bless [i.e., “pronounce blessings on”] themselves [or “one another”].” The Hitpaal of “bless” is used with a reflexive/reciprocal sense in Deut 29:18; Ps 72:17; Isa 65:16; Jer 4:2. Gen 12:2 predicts that Abram will be held up as a paradigm of divine blessing and that people will use his

12:4 So Abram left,¹ just as the LORD had told him to do,² and Lot went with him. (Now³ Abram was 75 years old⁴ when he departed from Haran.) **12:5** And Abram took his wife Sarai, his nephew⁵ Lot, and all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired⁶ in Haran, and they left for⁷ the land of Canaan. They entered the land of Canaan.

12:6 Abram traveled through the land as far as the oak tree⁸ of Moreh⁹ at Shechem.¹⁰ (At that time the Canaanites were in the land.)¹¹ **12:7** The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants¹² I will give this land.” So Abram¹³ built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

12:8 Then he moved from there to the hill country east of Bethel¹⁴ and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and wor-

shipped the LORD.¹⁵ **12:9** Abram continually journeyed by stages¹⁶ down to the Negev.¹⁷

The Promised Blessing Jeopardized

12:10 There was a famine in the land, so Abram went down to Egypt¹⁸ to stay for a while¹⁹ because the famine was severe.²⁰ **12:11** As he approached²¹ Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, “Look,²² I know that you are a beautiful woman.²³ **12:12** When the Egyptians see you they will say, “This is his wife.” Then they will kill me but will keep you alive.²⁴ **12:13** So tell them²⁵ you are my sister²⁶ so that it may go

name in their blessing formulae. For examples of blessing formulae utilizing an individual as an example of blessing see Gen 48:20 and Ruth 4:11.

¹ **sn** So Abram left. This is the report of Abram’s obedience to God’s command (see v. 1).

² **tn** *Heb* “just as the LORD said to him.”

³ **tn** The disjunctive clause (note the pattern conjunction + subject + implied “to be” verb) is parenthetical, telling the age of Abram when he left Haran.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “was the son of five years and seventy year[s].”

sn Terah was 70 years old when he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran (Gen 11:26). Terah was 205 when he died in Haran (11:32). Abram left Haran at the age of 75 after his father died. Abram was born when Terah was 130. Abram was not the firstborn – he is placed first in the list of three because of his importance. The same is true of the list in Gen 10:1 (Shem, Ham and Japheth). Ham was the youngest son (9:24). Japheth was the older brother of Shem (10:21), so the birth order of Noah’s sons was Japheth, Shem, and Ham.

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “the son of his brother.”

⁶ **tn** For the semantic nuance “acquire [property]” for the verb עָשָׂה (*asah*), see BDB 795 s.v. עָשָׂה.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “went out to go.”

⁸ **tn** Or “terebinth.”

⁹ **sn** The Hebrew word *Moreh* (מוֹרֵה, *moreh*) means “teacher.” It may well be that the place of this great oak tree was a Canaanite shrine where instruction took place.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “as far as the place of Shechem, as far as the oak of Moreh.”

¹¹ **tn** The disjunctive clause gives important information parenthetical in nature – the promised land was occupied by Canaanites.

¹² **tn** The same Hebrew term זָרַע (*zera*) may mean “seed” (for planting), “offspring” (occasionally of animals, but usually of people), or “descendants” depending on the context.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “he”; the referent (Abram) has been supplied in the translation for clarification.

¹⁴ **tn** *Map* for location see Map4-G4; Map5-C1; Map6-E3; Map7-D1; Map8-G3.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “he called in the name of the LORD.” The expression refers to worshipping the Lord through prayer and sacrifice (see Gen 4:26; 13:4; 21:33; 26:25). See G. J. Wenham, *Genesis* (WBC), 1:116, 281.

¹⁶ **tn** The Hebrew verb נָסַע (*nasa*) means “to journey”; more specifically it means to pull up the tent and move to another place. The construction here uses the preterite of this verb with its infinitive absolute to stress the activity of traveling. But it also adds the infinitive absolute of הָלַךְ (*halakh*) to stress that the traveling was continually going on. Thus “Abram journeyed, going and journeying” becomes “Abram continually journeyed by stages.”

¹⁷ **tn** Or “the South [country].”

sn Negev is the name for the southern desert region in the land of Canaan.

¹⁸ **sn** Abram went down to Egypt. The Abrahamic narrative foreshadows some of the events in the life of the nation of Israel. This sojourn in Egypt is typological of Israel’s bondage there. In both stories there is a famine that forces the family to Egypt, death is a danger to the males while the females are preserved alive, great plagues bring about their departure, there is a summons to stand before Pharaoh, and there is a return to the land of Canaan with great wealth.

¹⁹ **tn** The Hebrew verb נָוַח (*gur*), traditionally rendered “to sojourn,” means “to stay for a while.” The “stranger” (traditionally “sojourner”) is one who is a temporary resident, a visitor, one who is passing through. Abram had no intention of settling down in Egypt or owning property. He was only there to wait out the famine.

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “heavy in the land.” The words “in the land,” which also occur at the beginning of the verse in the Hebrew text, have not been repeated here in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “drew near to enter.”

²² **tn** The particle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*, “look”) is deictic here; it draws attention to the following fact.

²³ **tn** *Heb* “a woman beautiful of appearance are you.”

²⁴ **tn** The Piel of the verb חָיָה (*khayah*, “to live”) means “to keep alive, to preserve alive,” and in some places “to make alive.” See D. Marcus, “The Verb ‘to Live’ in Ugaritic,” *JSS* 17 (1972): 76-82.

²⁵ **tn** *Heb* “say.”

²⁶ **sn** Tell them you are my sister. Abram’s motives may not be as selfish as they appear. He is aware of the danger to the family. His method of dealing with it is deception with a half truth, for Sarai really was his sister – but the Egyptians would not know that. Abram presumably thought that there would be negotiations for a marriage by anyone interested (as Laban does later for his sister Rebekah), giving him time to react. But the plan backfires because Pharaoh does not take the time to negotiate. There is a good deal of literature on the wife-sister issue. See (among others) E. A. Speiser, “The Wife-Sister Motif in the Patriarchal Narratives,” *Oriental and Biblical Studies*, 62-81; C. J. Mullo-Weir, “The Alleged Hurrian Wife-Sister Motif in Genesis,” *GOT* 22 (1967-1970): 14-25.

well¹ for me because of you and my life will be spared² on account of you.”

12:14 When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. **12:15** When Pharaoh’s officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. So Abram’s wife³ was taken⁴ into the household of Pharaoh,⁵ **12:16** and he did treat Abram well⁶ on account of her. Abram received⁷ sheep and cattle, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels.

12:17 But the LORD struck Pharaoh and his household with severe diseases⁸ because of Sarai, Abram’s wife. **12:18** So Pharaoh summoned Abram and said, “What is this⁹ you have done to me? Why didn’t you tell me that she was your wife? **12:19** Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her¹⁰ to be my wife?¹¹ Here is your wife!¹² Take her and go!”¹³ **12:20** Pharaoh gave his men orders about Abram,¹⁴ and so they expelled him, along with his wife and all his possessions.

Abram’s Solution to the Strife

13:1 So Abram went up from Egypt into the Negev.¹⁵ He took his wife and all his possessions

with him, as well as Lot.¹⁶ **13:2** (Now Abram was very wealthy¹⁷ in livestock, silver, and gold.)¹⁸

13:3 And he journeyed from place to place¹⁹ from the Negev as far as Bethel.²⁰ He returned²¹ to the place where he had pitched his tent²² at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai. **13:4** This was the place where he had first built the altar,²³ and there Abram worshiped the LORD.²⁴

13:5 Now Lot, who was traveling²⁵ with Abram, also had²⁶ flocks, herds, and tents. **13:6** But the land could²⁷ not support them while they were living side by side.²⁸ Because their possessions were so great, they were not able to live²⁹ alongside one another. **13:7** So there were quarrels³⁰ between Abram’s herdsmen and Lot’s herdsmen.³¹ (Now the Canaanites and the Perizzites were living in the land at that time.)³²

13:8 Abram said to Lot, “Let there be no quarreling between me and you, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are close relatives.³³ **13:9** Is not the whole land be-

1 tn The Hebrew verb translated “go well” can encompass a whole range of favorable treatment, but the following clause indicates it means here that Abram’s life will be spared.

2 tn Heb “and my life will live.”

3 tn Heb “and the woman.” The word also means “wife”; the Hebrew article can express the possessive pronoun (R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 19, §86). Here the proper name (Abram) has been used in the translation instead of a possessive pronoun (“his”) for clarity.

4 tn The Hebrew term *vattuqqakh* (“was taken”) is a rare verbal form, an old Qal passive preterite from the verb “to take.” It is pointed as a Hophal would be by the Masoretes, but does not have a Hophal meaning.

5 tn The Hebrew text simply has “house of Pharaoh.” The word “house” refers to the household in general, more specifically to the royal harem.

6 sn *He did treat Abram well.* The construction of the parenthetical disjunctive clause, beginning with the conjunction on the prepositional phrase, draws attention to the irony of the story. Abram wanted Sarai to lie “so that it would go well” with him. Though he lost Sarai to Pharaoh, it did go well for him – he received a lavish bride price. See also G. W. Coats, “Despoiling the Egyptians,” *VT* 18 (1968): 450-57.

7 tn Heb “and there was to him.”

8 tn The cognate accusative adds emphasis to the verbal sentence: “he plagued with great plagues,” meaning the LORD inflicted numerous plagues, probably diseases (see Exod 15:26). The adjective “great” emphasizes that the plagues were severe and overwhelming.

9 tn The demonstrative pronoun translated “this” adds emphasis: “What in the world have you done to me?” (R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 24, §118).

10 tn The preterite with *vav* (ו) consecutive here expresses consequence.

11 tn Heb “to me for a wife.”

12 tn Heb “Look, your wife!”

13 tn Heb “take and go.”

14 tn Heb “him”; the referent (Abram) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

15 tn Or “the South [country]” (also in v. 3).

sn Negev is the name for the southern desert region in the land of Canaan.

16 tn Heb “And Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all which was his, and Lot with him, to the Negev.”

17 tn Heb “heavy.”

18 tn This parenthetical clause, introduced by the *vav* (ו) disjunctive (translated “now”), provides information necessary to the point of the story.

19 tn Heb “on his journeys”; the verb and noun combination means to pick up the tents and move from camp to camp.

20 map For location see Map4-G4; Map5-C1; Map6-E3; Map7-D1; Map8-G3.

21 tn The words “he returned” are supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

22 tn Heb “where his tent had been.”

23 tn Heb “to the place of the altar which he had made there in the beginning” (cf. Gen 12:7-8).

24 tn Heb “he called in the name of the LORD.” The expression refers to worshiping the Lord through prayer and sacrifice (see Gen 4:26; 12:8; 21:33; 26:25). See G. J. Wenham, *Genesis* (WBC), 1:116, 281.

25 tn Heb “was going.”

26 tn The Hebrew idiom is “to Lot...there was,” the preposition here expressing possession.

27 tn The potential nuance for the perfect tense is necessary here, and supported by the parallel clause that actually uses “to be able.”

28 tn The infinitive construct *לשבת* (*lashevet*, from *שָׁב*, *yashav*) explains what it was that the land could not support: “the land could not support them to live side by side.” See further J. C. de Moor, “Lexical Remarks Concerning Yahad and Yahdaw,” *VT* 7 (1957): 350-55.

29 tn The same infinitive occurs here, serving as the object of the verb.

30 tn The Hebrew term *רִיב* (*rib*) means “strife, conflict, quarreling.” In later texts it has the meaning of “legal controversy, dispute.” See B. Gemser, “The *rib* – or Controversy – Pattern in Hebrew Mentality,” *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East* [VTSup], 120-37.

31 sn Since the quarreling was between the herdsmen, the dispute was no doubt over water and vegetation for the animals.

32 tn This parenthetical clause, introduced with the *vav* (ו) disjunctive (translated “now”), again provides critical information. It tells in part why the land cannot sustain these two bedouins, and it also hints of the danger of weakening the family by inner strife.

33 tn Heb “men, brothers [are] we.” Here “brothers” describes the closeness of the relationship, but could be misunderstood if taken literally, since Abram was Lot’s uncle.

fore you? Separate yourself now from me. If you go¹ to the left, then I'll go to the right, but if you go to the right, then I'll go to the left.”

13:10 Lot looked up and saw² the whole region³ of the Jordan. He noticed⁴ that all of it was well-watered (before the LORD obliterated⁵ Sodom and Gomorrah)⁶ like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt,⁷ all the way to Zoar. **13:11** Lot chose for himself the whole region of the Jordan and traveled⁸ toward the east.

So the relatives separated from each other.⁹ **13:12** Abram settled in the land of Canaan, but Lot settled among the cities of the Jordan plain¹⁰ and pitched his tents next to Sodom. **13:13** (Now¹¹ the people¹² of Sodom were extremely wicked rebels against the LORD.)¹³

¹ tn The words “you go” have been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons both times in this verse.

² tn Heb “lifted up his eyes and saw.” The expression draws attention to the act of looking, indicating that Lot took a good look. It also calls attention to the importance of what was seen.

³ tn Or “plain”; Heb “circle.”

⁴ tn The words “he noticed” are supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁵ sn Obliterated. The use of the term “destroy” (שָׁחַת, *shakhet*) is reminiscent of the Noachic flood (Gen 6:13). Both at the flood and in Sodom the place was obliterated by catastrophe and only one family survived (see C. Westermann, *Genesis*, 2:178).

⁶ tn This short temporal clause (preposition + Piel infinitive construct + subjective genitive + direct object) is strategically placed in the middle of the lavish descriptions to sound an ominous note. The entire clause is parenthetical in nature. Most English translations place the clause at the end of v. 10 for stylistic reasons.

⁷ sn The narrative places emphasis on what Lot saw so that the reader can appreciate how it aroused his desire for the best land. It makes allusion to *the garden of the LORD* and to *the land of Egypt* for comparison. Just as the tree in the garden of Eden had awakened Eve's desire, so the fertile valley attracted Lot. And just as certain memories of Egypt would cause the Israelites to want to turn back and abandon the trek to the promised land, so Lot headed for the good life.

⁸ tn Heb “Lot traveled.” The proper name has not been repeated in the translation at this point for stylistic reasons.

⁹ tn Heb “a man from upon his brother.”

sn Separated from each other. For a discussion of the significance of this event, see L. R. Helyer, “The Separation of Abram and Lot: Its Significance in the Patriarchal Narratives,” *JSTOT* 26 (1983): 77-88.

¹⁰ tn Or “the cities of the plain”; Heb “[the cities of] the circle,” referring to the “circle” or oval area of the Jordan Valley.

¹¹ tn Here is another significant parenthetical clause in the story, signaled by the *vav* (ו) disjunctive (translated “now”) on the noun at the beginning of the clause.

¹² tn Heb “men.” However, this is generic in sense; it is unlikely that only the male residents of Sodom were sinners.

¹³ tn Heb “wicked and sinners against the LORD exceedingly.” The description of the sinfulness of the Sodomites is very emphatic. First, two nouns are used to form a hendiadys: “wicked and sinners” means “wicked sinners,” the first word becoming adjectival. The text is saying these were no ordinary sinners; they were wicked sinners, the type that cause pain for others. Then to this phrase is added “against the LORD,” stressing their violation of the laws of heaven and their culpability. Finally, to this is added מְאֹד (*m'e'od*, “exceedingly,” translated here as “extremely”).

13:14 After Lot had departed, the LORD said to Abram,¹⁴ “Look¹⁵ from the place where you stand to the north, south, east, and west. **13:15** I will give all the land that you see to you and your descendants¹⁶ forever. **13:16** And I will make your descendants like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone is able to count the dust of the earth, then your descendants also can be counted.¹⁷ **13:17** Get up and¹⁸ walk throughout¹⁹ the land,²⁰ for I will give it to you.”

13:18 So Abram moved his tents and went to live²¹ by the oaks²² of Mamre in Hebron, and he built an altar to the LORD there.

The Blessing of Victory for God's People

14:1 At that time²³ Amraphel king of Shinar,²⁴ Arioch king of Ellasar, Kedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations²⁵ **14:2** went to war²⁶ against Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is,

¹⁴ tn Heb “and the LORD said to Abram after Lot separated himself from with him.” The disjunctive clause at the beginning of the verse signals a new scene.

¹⁵ tn Heb “lift up your eyes and see.”

sn Look. Earlier Lot “looked up” (v. 10), but here Abram is told by God to do so. The repetition of the expression (Heb “lift up the eyes”) here underscores how the LORD will have the last word and actually do for Abram what Abram did for Lot – give him the land. It seems to be one of the ways that God rewards faith.

¹⁶ tn Heb “for all the land which you see to you I will give it and to your descendants.”

¹⁷ tn The translation “can be counted” (potential imperfect) is suggested by the use of יוּכַל (*yukhal*, “is able”) in the preceding clause.

¹⁸ tn The connective “and” is not present in the Hebrew text; it has been supplied for purposes of English style.

¹⁹ tn The Hitpa'el form הִתְיַחֵזַק (*hitthalekhi*) means “to walk about”; it also can carry the ideas of moving about, traversing, going back and forth, or living in an area. It here has the connotation of traversing the land to survey it, to look it over.

²⁰ tn Heb “the land to its length and to its breadth.” This phrase has not been included in the translation because it is somewhat redundant (see the note on the word “throughout” in this verse).

²¹ tn Heb “he came and lived.”

²² tn Or “terebinths.”

²³ tn The sentence begins with the temporal indicator יָמֵי (vay'hi) followed by “in the days of.”

²⁴ sn Shinar (also in v. 9) is the region of Babylonia.

²⁵ tn Or “king of Goyim.” The Hebrew term גּוֹיִם (*goyim*) means “nations,” but a number of modern translations merely transliterate the Hebrew (cf. NEB “Goyim”; NIV, NRSV “Goiim”).

²⁶ tn Heb “made war.”

sn Went to war. The conflict here reflects international warfare in the Early and Middle Bronze periods. The countries operated with overlords and vassals. Kings ruled over city states, or sometimes a number of city states (i.e., nations). Due to their treaties, when one went to war, those confederate with him joined him in battle. It appears here that it is Kedorlaomer's war, because the western city states have rebelled against him (meaning they did not send products as tribute to keep him from invading them).

Zoar).⁴ **14:3** These last five kings² joined forces³ in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea).⁴ **14:4** For twelve years⁵ they had served Kedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year⁶ they rebelled.⁷ **14:5** In the fourteenth year, Kedorlaomer and the kings who were his allies came and defeated⁸ the Rephaites in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzites in Ham, the Emites in Shaveh Kiriathaim, **14:6** and the Horites in their hill country of Seir, as far as El Paran, which is near the desert.⁹ **14:7** Then they attacked En Mishpat (that is, Kadesh) again,¹⁰ and they conquered all the territory of the Amalekites, as well as the Amorites who were living in Hazazon Tamar.

14:8 Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zebaiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out and prepared for battle. In the Valley of Siddim they met¹¹ **14:9** Kedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of nations,¹² Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar. Four kings fought against¹³ five. **14:10** Now the Valley of

Siddim was full of tar pits.¹⁴ When the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, they fell into them,¹⁵ but some survivors¹⁶ fled to the hills.¹⁷ **14:11** The four victorious kings¹⁸ took all the possessions and food of Sodom and Gomorrah and left. **14:12** They also took Abram's nephew¹⁹ Lot and his possessions when²⁰ they left, for Lot²¹ was living in Sodom.²²

14:13 A fugitive²³ came and told Abram the Hebrew.²⁴ Now Abram was living by the oaks²⁵ of Mamre the Amorite, the brother²⁶ of Eshcol and Aner. (All these were allied by treaty²⁷ with Abram.)²⁸ **14:14** When Abram heard that his nephew²⁹ had been taken captive, he mobilized³⁰

14 tn Heb "Now the Valley of Siddim [was] pits, pits of tar." This parenthetical disjunctive clause emphasizes the abundance of tar pits in the area through repetition of the noun "pits."
sn The word for "tar" (or "bitumen") occurs earlier in the story of the building of the tower in Babylon (see Gen 11:3).

15 tn Or "they were defeated there." After a verb of motion the Hebrew particle שָׁמָּה (*sham*) with the directional *heh* (הֵּן), *shammah*) can mean "into it, therein" (BDB 1027 s.v. שָׁמָּה).

16 tn Heb "the rest."

17 sn The reference to the *kings of Sodom and Gomorrah* must mean the kings along with their armies. Most of them were defeated in the valley, but some of them escaped to the hills.

18 tn Heb "they"; the referent (the four victorious kings, see v. 9) has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

19 tn Heb "Lot the son of his brother."

20 tn Heb "and."

21 tn Heb "he"; the referent (Lot) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

22 tn This disjunctive clause is circumstantial/causal, explaining that Lot was captured because he was living in Sodom at the time.

23 tn Heb "the fugitive." The article carries a generic force or indicates that this fugitive is definite in the mind of the speaker.

24 sn E. A. Speiser (*Genesis* [AB], 103) suggests that part of this chapter came from an outside source since it refers to *Abram the Hebrew*. That is not impossible, given that the narrator likely utilized traditions and genealogies that had been collected and transmitted over the years. The meaning of the word "Hebrew" has proved elusive. It may be related to the verb "to cross over," perhaps meaning "immigrant." Or it might be derived from the name of Abram's ancestor Eber (see Gen 11:14-16).

25 tn Or "terebinths."

26 tn Or "a brother"; or "a relative"; or perhaps "an ally."

27 tn Heb "possessors of a treaty with." Since it is likely that the qualifying statement refers to all three (Mamre, Eshcol, and Aner) the words "all these" have been supplied in the translation to make this clear.

28 tn This parenthetical disjunctive clause explains how Abram came to be living in their territory, but it also explains why they must go to war with Abram.

29 tn Heb "his brother," by extension, "relative." Here and in v. 16 the more specific term "nephew" has been used in the translation for clarity. Lot was the son of Haran, Abram's brother (Gen 11:27).

30 tn The verb וַיִּקְרָא (*vayyareq*) is a rare form, probably related to the word רֵיק (*req*, "to be empty"). If so, it would be a very figurative use: "he emptied out" (or perhaps "unsheathed") his men. The LXX has "mustered" (cf. NEB). E. A. Speiser (*Genesis* [AB], 103-4) suggests reading with the Samaritan Pentateuch a verb *diq*, cognate with Akkadian *deku*, "to mobilize" troops. If this view is accepted, one must assume that a confusion of the Hebrew letters ד (*dalet*) and ר (*resh*) led to the error in the traditional Hebrew text. These two letters are easily confused in all phases of ancient Hebrew script development. The present translation is based on this view.

1 sn On the geographical background of vv. 1-2 see J. P. Harland, "Sodom and Gomorrah," *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader*, 1:41-75; and D. N. Freedman, "The Real Story of the Ebla Tablets, Ebla and the Cities of the Plain," *BA* 41 (1978): 143-64.

2 tn Heb "all these," referring only to the last five kings named. The referent has been specified as "these last five kings" in the translation for clarity.

3 tn The Hebrew verb used here means "to join together; to unite; to be allied." It stresses close associations, especially of friendships, marriages, or treaties.

4 sn The *Salt Sea* is the older name for the Dead Sea.

5 tn The sentence simply begins with "twelve years"; it serves as an adverbial accusative giving the duration of their bondage.

6 tn This is another adverbial accusative of time.

7 sn The story serves as a foreshadowing of the plight of the kingdom of Israel later. Eastern powers came and forced the western kingdoms into submission. Each year, then, they would send tribute east – to keep them away. Here, in the thirteenth year, they refused to send the tribute (just as later Hezekiah rebelled against Assyria). And so in the fourteenth year the eastern powers came to put them down again. This account from Abram's life taught future generations that God can give victory over such threats – that people did not have to live in servitude to tyrants from the east.

8 tn The Hebrew verb נָכַח (*nakhah*) means "to attack, to strike, to smite." In this context it appears that the strike was successful, and so a translation of "defeated" is preferable.

9 sn The line of attack ran down the eastern side of the Jordan Valley into the desert, and then turned and came up the valley to the cities of the plain.

10 tn Heb "they returned and came to En Mishpat (that is, Kadesh)." The two verbs together form a verbal hendiadys, the first serving as the adverb: "they returned and came" means "they came again." Most English translations do not treat this as a hendiadys, but translate "they turned back" or something similar. Since in the context, however, "came again to" does not simply refer to travel but an assault against the place, the present translation expresses this as "attacked... again."

11 tn Heb "against."

12 tn Or "Goyim." See the note on the word "nations" in 14:1.

13 tn The Hebrew text has simply "against." The word "fought" is supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

his 318 trained men who had been born in his household, and he pursued the invaders¹ as far as Dan.² **14:15** Then, during the night,³ Abram⁴ divided his forces⁵ against them and defeated them. He chased them as far as Hobah, which is north⁶ of Damascus. **14:16** He retrieved all the stolen property.⁷ He also brought back his nephew Lot and his possessions, as well as the women and the rest⁸ of the people.

14:17 After Abram⁹ returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet Abram¹⁰ in the Valley of Shaveh (known as the King's Valley).¹¹ **14:18** Melchizedek king of Salem¹² brought out bread and wine. (Now he was the priest of the Most High God.)¹³ **14:19** He blessed Abram, saying,

“Blessed be Abram by¹⁴ the Most High God, Creator¹⁵ of heaven and earth.¹⁶

14:20 Worthy of praise is¹⁷ the Most High God, who delivered¹⁸ your enemies into your hand.”

Abram gave Melchizedek¹⁹ a tenth of everything.

14:21 Then the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the people and take the possessions for yourself.” **14:22** But Abram replied to the king of Sodom, “I raise my hand²⁰ to the LORD, the Most High God, Creator of heaven and earth, and vow²¹ **14:23** that I will take nothing²² belonging to you, not even a thread or the strap of a sandal. That way you can never say, ‘It is I²³ who made Abram rich.’ **14:24** I will take nothing²⁴ except compensation for what the young men have eaten.²⁵ As for the share of the men who went with me – Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre – let them take their share.”

1 tn The words “the invaders” have been supplied in the translation for clarification.

2 sn The use of the name Dan reflects a later perspective. The Danites did not migrate to this northern territory until centuries later (see Judg 18:29). Furthermore Dan was not even born until much later. By inserting this name a scribe has clarified the location of the region.

3 tn The Hebrew text simply has “night” as an adverbial accusative.

4 tn Heb “he”; the referent (Abram) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

5 tn Heb “he divided himself...he and his servants.”

6 tn Heb “left.” Directions in ancient Israel were given in relation to the east rather than the north.

7 tn The word “stolen” is supplied in the translation for clarification.

8 tn The phrase “the rest of” has been supplied in the translation for clarification.

9 tn Heb “he”; the referent (Abram) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

10 tn Heb “him”; the referent (Abram) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

11 sn The King's Valley is possibly a reference to what came to be known later as the Kidron Valley.

12 sn Salem is traditionally identified as the Jebusite stronghold of old Jerusalem. Accordingly, there has been much speculation about its king. Though some have identified him with the preincarnate Christ or with Noah's son Shem, it is far more likely that Melchizedek was a Canaanite royal priest whom God used to renew the promise of the blessing to Abram, perhaps because Abram considered Melchizedek his spiritual superior. But Melchizedek remains an enigma. In a book filled with genealogical records he appears on the scene without a genealogy and then disappears from the narrative. In Psalm 110 the LORD declares that the Davidic king is a royal priest after the pattern of Melchizedek.

13 tn The parenthetical disjunctive clause significantly identifies Melchizedek as a priest as well as a king.

sn It is his royal priestly status that makes Melchizedek a type of Christ: He was identified with Jerusalem, superior to the ancestor of Israel, and both a king and a priest. Unlike the normal Canaanites, this man served “God Most High” (אֱלֹהֵי עֵלְיוֹן, *el'elyon*) – one sovereign God, who was the creator of all the universe. Abram had in him a spiritual brother.

14 tn The preposition לְ (*lamed*) introduces the agent after the passive participle.

15 tn Some translate “possessor of heaven and earth” (cf. NASB). But cognate evidence from Ugaritic indicates that there were two homonymic roots קָנָה (*qanah*), one meaning “to create” (as in Gen 4:1) and the other “to obtain, to acquire, to possess.” While “possessor” would fit here, “Creator” is the more likely due to the collocation with “heaven and earth.”

16 tn The terms translated “heaven” and “earth” are both

The Cutting of the Covenant

15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram! I am your shield²⁶ and the one who will reward you in great abundance.”²⁷

objective genitives after the participle in construct.

17 tn Heb “blessed be.” For God to be “blessed” means that he is praised. His reputation is enriched in the world as his name is praised.

18 sn Who delivered. The Hebrew verb מִיָּגַעַן (*miggen*, “delivered”) foreshadows the statement by God to Abram in Gen 15:1, “I am your shield” (מָגֵן, *magen*). Melchizedek provided a theological interpretation of Abram's military victory.

19 tn Heb “him”; the referent (Melchizedek) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

20 tn Abram takes an oath, raising his hand as a solemn gesture. The translation understands the perfect tense as having an instantaneous nuance: “Here and now I raise my hand.”

21 tn The words “and vow” are not in the Hebrew text, but are supplied in the translation for clarification.

22 tn The oath formula is elliptical, reading simply: “...if I take.” It is as if Abram says, “[May the LORD deal with me] if I take,” meaning, “I will surely not take.” The positive oath would add the negative adverb and be the reverse: “[God will deal with me] if I do not take,” meaning, “I certainly will.”

23 tn The Hebrew text adds the independent pronoun (“I”) to the verb form for emphasis.

24 tn The words “I will take nothing” have been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

25 tn Heb “except only what the young men have eaten.”

26 sn The noun “shield” recalls the words of Melchizedek in 14:20. If God is the shield, then God will deliver. Abram need not fear reprisals from those he has fought.

27 tn Heb “your reward [in] great abundance.” When the phrase הַרְבֵּה בְּחַיִּים (*harbeh m'od*) follows a noun it invariably modifies the noun and carries the nuance “very great” or “in great abundance.” (See its use in Gen 41:49; Deut 3:5; Josh 22:8; 2 Sam 8:8; 12:2; 1 Kgs 4:29; 10:10-11; 2 Chr 14:13; 32:27; Jer 40:12.) Here the noun “reward” is in apposition to “shield” and refers by metonymy to God as the source of the reward. Some translate here “your reward will be very great” (cf. NASB, NRSV), taking the statement as an independent clause and understanding the Hiphil infinitive absolute as a substitute for a finite verb. However, the construction הַרְבֵּה בְּחַיִּים is never used this way elsewhere, where it either modifies a noun (see the texts listed above) or serves as an adverb in relation to a finite verb (see Josh 13:1; 1 Sam 26:21; 2 Sam 12:30; 2 Kgs 21:16; 1 Chr 20:2; Neh 2:2).

sn Abram has just rejected all the spoils of war, and the LORD promises to reward him in great abundance. In walking by

15:2 But Abram said, “O sovereign LORD,¹ what will you give me since² I continue to be³ childless, and my heir⁴ is⁵ Eliezer of Damascus?”⁶ 15:3 Abram added,⁷ “Since⁸ you have not given me a descendant, then look, one born in my house will be my heir!”⁹

15:4 But look,¹⁰ the word of the LORD came to him: “This man¹¹ will not be your heir,¹² but instead¹³ a son¹⁴ who comes from your own

body will be¹⁵ your heir.”¹⁶ 15:5 The LORD¹⁷ took him outside and said, “Gaze into the sky and count the stars – if you are able to count them!” Then he said to him, “So will your descendants be.”

15:6 Abram believed¹⁸ the LORD, and the LORD¹⁹ considered his response of faith²⁰ as proof of genuine loyalty.²¹

faith and living with integrity he cannot lose.

1 tn The Hebrew text has אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה (*adonay yehviah*, “Master, LORD”). Since the tetragrammaton (YHWH) usually is pointed with the vowels for the Hebrew word אֲדֹנָי (*adonay*, “master”) to avoid pronouncing the divine name, that would lead in this place to a repetition of אֲדֹנָי. So the tetragrammaton is here pointed with the vowels for the word אֱלֹהִים (*elohim*, “God”) instead. That would produce the reading of the Hebrew as “Master, God” in the Jewish textual tradition. But the presence of “Master” before the holy name is rather compelling evidence that the original would have been “Master, LORD,” which is rendered here “sovereign LORD.”

2 tn The *vav* (ו) disjunctive at the beginning of the clause is circumstantial, expressing the cause or reason.

3 tn *Heb* “I am going.”

4 tn *Heb* “the son of the acquisition of my house.”

sn For the custom of designating a member of the household as *heir*, see C. H. Gordon, “Biblical Customs and the Nuzu Tablets,” *Biblical Archaeologist Reader*, 2:21-33.

5 tn The pronoun is anaphoric here, equivalent to the verb “to be” (R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 23, §115).

6 sn The sentence in the Hebrew text employs a very effective wordplay on the name *Damascus*: “The son of the acquisition (בֶּן מִשְׁעָה, *ben-mesheq*) of my house is Eliezer of Damascus (אֱלִיעֶזֶר דַּמְשֶׁק, *dammesheq*.)” The words are not the same; they have different sibilants. But the sound play gives the impression that “in the nomen is the omen.” Eliezer the Damascusene will be Abram’s heir if Abram dies childless because “Damascus” seems to mean that. See M. F. Unger, “Some Comments on the Text of Genesis 15:2-3,” *JBL* 72 (1953): 49-50; H. L. Ginsberg, “Abram’s ‘Damascene’ Steward,” *BA-SOR* 200 (1970): 31-32.

7 tn *Heb* “And Abram said.”

8 tn The construction uses הֵן (*hen*) to introduce the foundational clause (“since...”), and וְהִנֵּה (*shinneh*) to introduce the main clause (“then look...”).

9 tn *Heb* “is inheriting me.”

10 tn The disjunctive draws attention to God’s response and the particle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*, translated “look”) mirrors Abram’s statement in v. 3 and highlights the fact that God responded to Abram.

11 tn The subject of the verb is the demonstrative pronoun, which can be translated “this one” or “this man.” That the LORD does not mention him by name is significant; often in ancient times the use of the name would bring legitimacy to inheritance and adoption cases.

12 tn *Heb* “inherit me.”

13 tn The Hebrew כִּי־יָאֵם (*ki-im*) forms a very strong adverbative.

14 tn *Heb* “he who”; the implied referent (Abram’s unborn son who will be his heir) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

15 tn The pronoun could also be an emphatic subject: “whoever comes out of your body, he will inherit you.”

16 tn *Heb* “will inherit you.”

17 tn *Heb* “he”; the referent (the LORD) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

18 tn The nonconsecutive *vav* (ו) is on a perfect verbal form. If the composer of the narrative had wanted to show simple sequence, he would have used the *vav* consecutive with the preterite. The perfect with *vav* conjunctive (where one expects the preterite with *vav* consecutive) in narrative contexts can have a variety of discourse functions, but here it probably serves to highlight Abram’s response to God’s promise. For a detailed discussion of the *vav* + perfect construction in Hebrew narrative, see R. Longacre, “*Weqatal* Forms in Biblical Hebrew Prose: A Discourse-modular Approach,” *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, 50-98. The Hebrew verb אָמַן (*aman*) means “to confirm, to support” in the Qal verbal stem. Its derivative nouns refer to something or someone that/who provides support, such as a “pillar,” “nurse,” or “guardian, trustee.” In the Niphal stem it comes to mean “to be faithful, to be reliable, to be dependable,” or “to be firm, to be sure.” In the Hiphil, the form used here, it takes on a declarative sense: “to consider something reliable [or “dependable”].” Abram regarded the God who made this promise as reliable and fully capable of making it a reality.

19 tn *Heb* “and he”; the referent (the LORD) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

20 tn *Heb* “and he reckoned it to him.” The third feminine singular pronominal suffix refers back to Abram’s act of faith, mentioned in the preceding clause. On third feminine singular pronouns referring back to verbal ideas see GKC 440-41 §135.p. Some propose taking the suffix as proleptic, anticipating the following feminine noun (“righteousness”). In this case one might translate: “and he reckoned it to him – [namely] righteousness.” See O. P. Robertson, “Genesis 15:6: A New Covenant Exposition of an Old Covenant Text,” *WTJ* 42 (1980): 259-89.

21 tn Or “righteousness”; or “evidence of steadfast commitment.” The noun is an adverbial accusative. The verb translated “considered” (*Heb* “reckoned”) also appears with צִדְקָה (*ts’daqah*, “righteousness”) in Ps 106:31. Alluding to the events recorded in Numbers 25, the psalmist notes that Phinehas’ actions were “credited to him as righteousness for endless generations to come.” Reference is made to the unconditional, eternal covenant with which God rewarded Phinehas’ loyalty (Num 25:12-13). So צִדְקָה seems to carry by metonymy the meaning “loyal, rewardable behavior” here, a nuance that fits nicely in Genesis 15, where God responds to Abram’s faith by formally ratifying his promise to give Abram and his descendants the land. (See R. B. Chisholm, “Evidence from Genesis,” *A Case for Premillennialism*, 40.) In Phoenician and Old Aramaic inscriptions cognate nouns glossed as “correct, justifiable conduct” sometimes carry this same semantic nuance (*DNWSI* 2:962).

sn This episode is basic to the NT teaching of Paul on justification (Romans 4). Paul weaves this passage and Psalm 32 together, for both use this word. Paul explains that for the one who believes in the LORD, like Abram, God credits him with righteousness but does not credit his sins against him because he is forgiven. Justification does not mean that the believer is righteous; it means that God credits him with righteousness, so that in the records of heaven (as it were) he is declared righteous. See M. G. Kline, “Abram’s Amen,” *WTJ* 31 (1968): 1-11.

15:7 The LORD said¹ to him, “I am the LORD² who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans³ to give you this land to possess.” 15:8 But⁴ Abram⁵ said, “O sovereign LORD,⁶ by what⁷ can I know that I am to possess it?”

15:9 The LORD⁸ said to him, “Take for me a heifer, a goat, and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.” 15:10 So Abram⁹ took all these for him and then cut them in two¹⁰ and placed each half opposite the other,¹¹ but he did not cut the birds in half. 15:11 When birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

15:12 When the sun went down, Abram fell sound asleep,¹² and great terror overwhelmed him.¹³ 15:13 Then the LORD said to Abram, “Know for certain¹⁴ that your descendants will be strangers¹⁵ in a foreign country.¹⁶ They will be enslaved and oppressed¹⁷ for four hundred years. 15:14 But I will execute judgment on the nation that they will serve.¹⁸ Afterward they will come out with many possessions. 15:15 But as

for you,¹⁹ you will go to your ancestors²⁰ in peace and be buried at a good old age.²¹ 15:16 In the fourth generation²² your descendants²³ will return here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its limit.”²⁴

15:17 When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking firepot with a flaming torch²⁵ passed between the animal parts.²⁶ 15:18 That day the LORD made a covenant²⁷ with Abram: “To your descendants I give²⁸ this land, from the river of Egypt²⁹ to the great river, the Euphrates River – 15:19 the land³⁰ of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, 15:20 Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, 15:21 Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.”³¹

The Birth of Ishmael

16:1 Now Sarai,³² Abram’s wife, had not given birth to any children,³³ but she had an

¹ tn Heb “And he said.”

² sn I am the LORD. The LORD initiates the covenant-making ceremony with a declaration of who he is and what he has done for Abram. The same form appears at the beginning of the covenant made at Sinai (see Exod 20:1).

³ sn The phrase of the *Chaldeans* is a later editorial clarification for the readers, designating the location of Ur. From all evidence there would have been no Chaldeans in existence at this early date; they are known in the time of the neo-Babylonian empire in the first millennium B.C.

⁴ tn Here the *vav* carries adversative force and is translated “but.”

⁵ tn Heb “he”; the referent (Abram) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁶ tn See note on the phrase “sovereign Lord” in 15:2.

⁷ tn Or “how.”

⁸ tn Heb “He”; the referent (the LORD) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁹ tn Heb “he”; the referent (Abram) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁰ tn Heb “in the middle.”

¹¹ tn Heb “to meet its neighbor.”

sn For discussion of this ritual see G. F. Hasel, “The Meaning of the Animal Rite in Genesis 15,” *JSOT* 19 (1981): 61-78.

¹² tn Heb “a deep sleep fell on Abram.”

¹³ tn Heb “and look, terror, a great darkness was falling on him.”

¹⁴ tn The Hebrew construction is emphatic, with the Qal infinitive absolute followed by the imperfect from יָדָע (*yada*, “know”). The imperfect here has an obligatory or imperatival force.

¹⁵ tn The Hebrew word גֵּר (*ger*, “sojourner, stranger”) is related to the verb גָּר (*gur*, “to sojourn, to stay for awhile”). Abram’s descendants will stay in a land as resident foreigners without rights of citizenship.

¹⁶ tn Heb “in a land not theirs.”

¹⁷ tn Heb “and they will serve them and they will oppress them.” The verb עָבַד (*’imnu*, a Piel form from עָבַד, *’anah*, “to afflict, to oppress, to treat harshly”), is used in Exod 1:11 to describe the oppression of the Israelites in Egypt.

¹⁸ tn The participle דָּן (*dan*, from דָּן, *din*) is used here for the future: “I am judging” = “I will surely judge.” The judgment in this case will be condemnation and punishment. The translation “execute judgment on” implies that the judgment will certainly be carried out.

¹⁹ tn The *vav* with the pronoun before the verb calls special attention to the subject in contrast to the preceding subject.

²⁰ sn You will go to your ancestors. This is a euphemistic expression for death.

²¹ tn Heb “in a good old age.”

²² sn The term *generation* is being used here in its widest sense to refer to a full life span. When the chronological factors are considered and the genealogies tabulated, there are four hundred years of bondage. This suggests that in this context a generation is equivalent to one hundred years.

²³ tn Heb “they”; the referent (“your descendants”) has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

²⁴ tn Heb “is not yet complete.”

sn The sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its limit. The justice of God is apparent. He will wait until the Amorites are fully deserving of judgment before he annihilates them and gives the land to Israel.

²⁵ sn A smoking pot with a flaming torch. These same implements were used in Mesopotamian rituals designed to ward off evil (see E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* [AB], 113-14).

²⁶ tn Heb “these pieces.”

²⁷ tn Heb “cut a covenant.”

²⁸ tn The perfect verbal form is understood as instantaneous (“I here and now give”). Another option is to understand it as rhetorical, indicating certitude (“I have given” meaning it is as good as done, i.e., “I will surely give”).

sn To your descendants I give this land. The LORD here unconditionally promises that Abram’s descendants will possess the land, but he does not yet ratify his earlier promises to give Abram a multitude of descendants and eternal possession of the land. The fulfillment of those aspects of the promise remain conditional (see Gen 17:1-8) and are ratified after Abraham offers up his son Isaac (see Gen 22:1-19). For a fuller discussion see R. B. Chisholm, “Evidence from Genesis,” *A Case for Premillennialism*, 35-54.

²⁹ sn The river of Egypt is a wadi (a seasonal stream) on the northeastern border of Egypt, not the River Nile.

³⁰ tn The words “the land” are supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³¹ tn Each of the names in the list has the Hebrew definite article, which is used here generically for the class of people identified.

³² tn The disjunctive clause signals the beginning of a new episode in the story.

³³ sn On the cultural background of the story of Sarai’s childlessness see J. Van Seters, “The Problem of Childlessness in Near Eastern Law and the Patriarchs of Israel,” *JBL* 87 (1968): 401-8.

Egyptian servant¹ named Hagar.² 16:2 So Sarai said to Abram, “Since³ the LORD has prevented me from having children, have sexual relations with⁴ my servant. Perhaps I can have a family by her.”⁵ Abram did what⁶ Sarai told him.

16:3 So after Abram had lived⁷ in Canaan for ten years, Sarai, Abram’s wife, gave Hagar, her Egyptian servant,⁸ to her husband to be his wife.⁹ 16:4 He had sexual relations with¹⁰ Hagar, and she became pregnant.¹¹ Once Hagar realized she was pregnant, she despised Sarai.¹² 16:5 Then Sarai said to Abram, “You have brought this wrong on me!¹³ I allowed my servant to have sexual relations with you,¹⁴ but when she realized¹⁵ that she was pregnant, she despised me.¹⁶ May the LORD judge between you and me!”¹⁷

16:6 Abram said to Sarai, “Since your¹⁸ servant is under your authority,¹⁹ do to her whatever you think best.”²⁰ Then Sarai treated Hagar²¹ harshly,²² so she ran away from Sarai.²³

16:7 The LORD’s angel²⁴ found Hagar near a spring of water in the desert – the spring that is along the road to Shur.²⁵ 16:8 He said, “Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?” She replied, “I’m running away from²⁶ my mistress, Sarai.”

16:9 Then the LORD’s angel said to her, “Return to your mistress and submit²⁷ to her authority. 16:10 I will greatly multiply your descendants,” the LORD’s angel added,²⁸ “so that they will be too numerous to count.”²⁹ 16:11 Then the LORD’s angel said to her,

“You are now³⁰ pregnant and are about to give birth³¹ to a son. You are to name him Ishmael,³² for the LORD has heard your painful

1 tn The Hebrew term שִׁפְחָה (*shifkhah*, translated “servant” here and in v. 2, 3, 5, 6, and 8) refers to a menial female servant.

2 sn The passage records the birth of Ishmael to Abram through an Egyptian woman. The story illustrates the limits of Abram’s faith as he tries to obtain a son through social custom. The barrenness of Sarai poses a challenge to Abram’s faith, just as the famine did in chap. 12. As in chap. 12, an Egyptian figure prominently. (Perhaps Hagar was obtained as a slave during Abram’s stay in Egypt.)

3 tn Heb “look.” The particle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*) introduces the foundational clause for the imperative to follow.

4 tn Heb “enter to.” The expression is a euphemism for sexual relations (also in v. 4).

sn The Hebrew expression translated *have sexual relations with* does not convey the intimacy of other expressions, such as “so and so knew his wife.” Sarai simply sees this as the social custom of having a child through a surrogate. For further discussion see C. F. Fensham, “The Son of a Handmaid in Northwest Semitic,” *VT* 19 (1969): 312-21.

5 tn Heb “perhaps I will be built from her.” Sarai hopes to have a family established through this surrogate mother.

6 tn Heb “listened to the voice of,” which is an idiom meaning “obeyed.”

sn *Abram did what Sarai told him.* This expression was first used in Gen 3:17 of Adam’s obeying his wife. In both cases the text highlights weak faith and how it jeopardized the plan of God.

7 tn Heb “at the end of ten years, to live, Abram.” The prepositional phrase introduces the temporal clause, the infinitive construct serves as the verb, and the name “Abram” is the subject.

8 tn Heb “the Egyptian, her female servant.”

9 sn *To be his wife.* Hagar became a slave wife, not on equal standing with Sarai. However, if Hagar produced the heir, she would be the primary wife in the eyes of society. When this eventually happened, Hagar become insolent, prompting Sarai’s anger.

10 tn Heb “entered to.” See the note on the same expression in v. 2.

11 tn Or “she conceived” (also in v. 5)

12 tn Heb “and she saw that she was pregnant and her mistress was despised in her eyes.” The Hebrew verb קָלַל (*qalal*) means “to despise, to treat lightly, to treat with contempt.” In Hagar’s opinion Sarai had been demoted.

13 tn Heb “my wrong is because of you.”

14 tn Heb “I placed my female servant in your bosom.”

15 tn Heb “saw.”

16 tn Heb “I was despised in her eyes.” The passive verb has been translated as active for stylistic reasons. Sarai was made to feel supplanted and worthless by Hagar the servant girl.

17 tn Heb “me and you.”

sn *May the LORD judge between you and me.* Sarai blamed Abram for Hagar’s attitude, not the pregnancy. Here she expects to be vindicated by the LORD who will prove Abram responsible. A colloquial rendering might be, “God will get you for this.” It may mean that she thought Abram had encouraged the servant girl in her elevated status.

18 tn The clause is introduced with the particle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*), introducing a foundational clause for the coming imperative: “since...do.”

19 tn Heb “in your hand.”

20 tn Heb “what is good in your eyes.”

21 tn Heb “her”; the referent (Hagar) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

22 tn In the Piel stem the verb אָנַח (*anah*) means “to afflict, to oppress, to treat harshly, to mistreat.”

23 tn Heb “and she fled from her presence.” The referent of “her” (Sarai) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

24 tn Heb “the messenger of the LORD.” Some identify the angel of the LORD as the preincarnate Christ because in some texts the angel is identified with the LORD himself. However, it is more likely that the angel merely represents the LORD; he can speak for the LORD because he is sent with the LORD’s full authority. In some cases the angel is clearly distinct from the LORD (see *Jdg* 6:11-23). It is not certain if the same angel is always in view. Though the proper name following the noun “angel” makes the construction definite, this may simply indicate that a definite angel sent from the LORD is referred to in any given context. It need not be the same angel on every occasion. Note the analogous expression “the servant of the LORD,” which refers to various individuals in the OT (see *BDB* 714 s.v. עֲבָדָה).

25 tn Heb “And the angel of the LORD found her near the spring of water in the desert, near the spring on the way to Shur.”

26 tn Heb “from the presence of.”

27 tn The imperative הִתְעַנֵּי (*hit’anni*) is the Hitpaal of אָנַח (*anah*, here translated “submit”), the same word used for Sarai’s harsh treatment of her. Hagar is instructed not only to submit to Sarai’s authority, but to whatever mistreatment that involves. God calls for Hagar to humble herself.

28 tn Heb “The LORD’s angel said, ‘I will greatly multiply your descendants...’” The order of the clauses has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.

29 tn Heb “cannot be numbered because of abundance.”

30 tn The particle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*) focuses on her immediate situation: “Here you are pregnant.”

31 tn The active participle refers here to something that is about to happen.

32 sn The name *Ishmael* consists of the imperfect or jussive form of the Hebrew verb with the theophoric element added as the subject. It means “God hears” or “may God hear.”

groans.¹

16:12 He will be a wild donkey² of a man. He will be hostile to everyone,³ and everyone will be hostile to him.⁴ He will live away from⁵ his brothers.”

16:13 So Hagar named the LORD who spoke to her, “You are the God who sees me,”⁶ for she said, “Here I have seen one who sees me!”⁷ **16:14** That is why the well was called⁸ Beer Lahai Roi.⁹ (It is located¹⁰ between Kadesh and Bered.)

16:15 So Hagar gave birth to Abram’s son, whom Abram named Ishmael.¹¹ **16:16** (Now¹² Abram was 86 years old¹³ when Hagar gave birth to Ishmael.)¹⁴

The Sign of the Covenant

17:1 When Abram was 99 years old,¹⁵ the LORD appeared to him and said,¹⁶ “I am the sovereign God.¹⁷

¹⁵ *tn* Heb “the son of ninety-nine years.”

¹⁶ *tn* Heb “appeared to Abram and said to him.” The proper name has been replaced by the pronoun (“him”) and the final phrase “to him” has been left untranslated for stylistic reasons.

¹⁷ *tn* The name אֱלֹהֵי שַׁדְדַי (*el shadday*, “El Shaddai”) has often been translated “God Almighty,” primarily because Jerome translated it *omnipotens* (“all powerful”) in the Latin Vulgate. There has been much debate over the meaning of the name. For discussion see W. F. Albright, “The Names *Shaddai* and *Abram*,” *JBL* 54 (1935): 173-210; R. Gordis, “The Biblical Root *sd-y-sd*,” *JTS* 41 (1940): 34-43; and especially T. N. D. Mettinger, *In Search of God*, 69-72. Shaddai/El Shaddai is the sovereign king of the world who grants, blesses, and judges. In the Book of Genesis he blesses the patriarchs with fertility and promises numerous descendants. Outside Genesis he both blesses/protects and takes away life/happiness. The patriarchs knew God primarily as El Shaddai (Exod 6:3). While the origin and meaning of this name are uncertain (see discussion below) its significance is clear. The name is used in contexts where God appears as the source of fertility and life. In Gen 17:1-8 he appeared to Abram, introduced himself as El Shaddai, and announced his intention to make the patriarch fruitful. In the role of El Shaddai God repeated these words (now elevated to the status of a decree) to Jacob (35:11). Earlier Isaac had pronounced a blessing on Jacob in which he asked El Shaddai to make Jacob fruitful (28:3). Jacob later prayed that his sons would be treated with mercy when they returned to Egypt with Benjamin (43:14). The fertility theme is not as apparent here, though one must remember that Jacob viewed Benjamin as the sole remaining son of the favored and once-barren Rachel (see 29:31; 30:22-24; 35:16-18). It is quite natural that he would appeal to El Shaddai to preserve Benjamin’s life, for it was El Shaddai’s miraculous power which made it possible for Rachel to give him sons in the first place. In 48:3 Jacob, prior to blessing Joseph’s sons, told him how El Shaddai appeared to him at Bethel (see Gen 28) and promised to make him fruitful. When blessing Joseph on his deathbed Jacob referred to Shaddai (we should probably read “El Shaddai,” along with a few Hebrew MSS, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the LXX, and Syriac) as the one who provides abundant blessings, including “blessings of the breast and womb” (49:25). (The direct association of the name with “breasts” suggests the name might mean “the one of the breast” [i.e., the one who gives fertility], but the juxtaposition is probably better explained as wordplay. Note the wordplay involving the name and the root שָׁדַד [*shaddad*, “destroy”] in Isa 13:6 and in Joel 1:15.) Outside Genesis the name Shaddai (minus the element “El” [“God”]) is normally used when God is viewed as the sovereign king who blesses/protects or curses/brings judgment. The name appears in the introduction to two of Balaam’s oracles (Num 24:4, 16) of blessing upon Israel. Naomi employs the name when accusing the Lord of treating her bitterly by taking the lives of her husband and sons (Ruth 1:20-21). In Ps 68:14; Isa 13:6; and Joel 1:15 Shaddai judges his enemies through warfare, while Ps 91:1 depicts him as the protector of his people. (In Ezek 1:24 and 10:5 the sound of the cherubs’ wings is compared to Shaddai’s powerful voice. The reference may be to the mighty divine warrior’s battle cry which accompanies his angry judgment.) Finally, the name occurs 31 times in the Book of Job. Job and his “friends” assume that Shaddai is the sovereign king of the world (11:7; 37:23a) who is the source of life (33:4b) and is responsible for maintaining justice (8:3; 34:10-12; 37:23b). He provides abundant blessings, including children (22:17-18; 29:4-6), but he can also discipline, punish, and destroy (5:17; 6:4; 21:20; 23:16). It is not surprising to see the name so often in this book, where the theme of God’s justice is primary and even called into question (24:1; 27:2). The most likely proposal is that the name means “God, the one of the mountain” (an Akkadian cognate means “mountain,” to which the Hebrew שָׁדַד [*shad*, “breast”] is probably related). For

¹ *tn* Heb “affliction,” which must refer here to Hagar’s painful groans of anguish.

² *sn* This clause gives the explanation of the name *Ishmael*, using a wordplay. Ishmael’s name will be a reminder that “God hears” Hagar’s painful cries.

³ *tn* Heb “His hand will be against everyone.” The “hand” by metonymy represents strength. His free-roaming life style would put him in conflict with those who follow social conventions. There would not be open warfare, only friction because of his antagonism to their way of life.

⁴ *tn* Heb “And the hand of everyone will be against him.”

⁵ *tn* Heb “opposite, across from.” Ishmael would live on the edge of society (cf. NASB “to the east of”). Some take this as an idiom meaning “be at odds with” (cf. NRSV, NLT) or “live in hostility toward” (cf. NIV).

⁶ *tn* Heb “God of my seeing.” The pronominal suffix may be understood either as objective (“who sees me,” as in the translation) or subjective (“whom I see”).

⁷ *tn* Heb “after one who sees me.”

⁸ *sn* For a discussion of Hagar’s exclamation, see T. Booij, “Hagar’s Words in Genesis 16:13b,” *VT* 30 (1980): 1-7.

⁹ *tn* The verb does not have an expressed subject and so is rendered as passive in the translation.

¹⁰ *sn* The Hebrew name *Beer Lahai Roi* (בְּאֵר לַחַי רֹאִי, *b^eer lakhay ro’i*) means “The well of the Living One who sees me.” The text suggests that God takes up the cause of those who are oppressed.

¹¹ *tn* Heb “look.” The words “it is located” are supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹² *tn* Heb “and Abram called the name of his son whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.”

¹³ *sn* *Whom Abram named Ishmael*. Hagar must have informed Abram of what the angel had told her. See the note on the name “Ishmael” in 16:11.

¹⁴ *tn* The disjunctive clause gives information that is parenthetical to the narrative.

¹⁵ *tn* Heb “the son of eighty-six years.”

¹⁶ *tn* The Hebrew text adds, “for Abram.” This has not been included in the translation for stylistic reasons; it is somewhat redundant given the three occurrences of Abram’s name in this and the previous verse.

Walk¹ before me² and be blameless.³ 17:2 Then I will confirm my covenant⁴ between me and you, and I will give you a multitude of descendants.”⁵

17:3 Abram bowed down with his face to the ground,⁶ and God said to him,⁷ 17:4 “As for me,⁸ this⁹ is my covenant with you: You will be the father of a multitude of nations. 17:5 No longer will your name be¹⁰ Abram. Instead, your name will be Abraham¹¹ because I will make you¹² the

father of a multitude of nations. 17:6 I will make you¹³ extremely¹⁴ fruitful. I will make nations of you, and kings will descend from you.¹⁵ 17:7 I will confirm¹⁶ my covenant as a perpetual¹⁷ covenant between me and you. It will extend to your descendants after you throughout their generations. I will be your God and the God of your descendants after you.¹⁸ 17:8 I will give the whole land of Canaan – the land where you are now residing¹⁹ – to you and your descendants after you as a permanent²⁰ possession. I will be their God.”

17:9 Then God said to Abraham, “As for you, you must keep²¹ the covenantal requirement²² I am imposing on you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. 17:10 This is my requirement that you and your descendants after you must keep.²³ Every male among you must be circumcised.²⁴ 17:11 You must circumcise the flesh of your foreskins. This will be a reminder²⁵ of the covenant between me and you. 17:12 Throughout your generations every male among you who is eight days old²⁶ must be circumcised, whether born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not one of your descendants. 17:13 They must indeed be circumcised,²⁷ whether born in your house or bought with money. The sign of

a discussion of proposed derivations see T. N. D. Mettinger, *In Search of God*, 70-71. The name may originally have depicted God as the sovereign judge who, in Canaanite style, ruled from a sacred mountain. Isa 14:13 and Ezek 28:14, 16 associate such a mountain with God, while Ps 48:2 refers to Zion as “Zaphon,” the Canaanite Olympus from which the high god El ruled. (In Isa 14 the Canaanite god El may be in view. Note that Isaiah pictures pagan kings as taunting the king of Babylon, suggesting that pagan mythology may provide the background for the language and imagery.)

1 tn Or “Live out your life.” The Hebrew verb translated “walk” is the *Hitpael*; it means “to walk back and forth; to walk about; to live out one’s life.”

2 tn Or “in my presence.”

3 tn There are two imperatives here: “walk...and be blameless [or “perfect”].” The second imperative may be purely sequential (see the translation) or consequential: “walk before me and then you will be blameless.” How one interprets the sequence depends on the meaning of “walk before”: (1) If it simply refers in a neutral way to serving the LORD, then the second imperative is likely sequential. (2) But if it has a positive moral connotation (“serve me faithfully”), then the second imperative probably indicates purpose (or result). For other uses of the idiom see 1 Sam 2:30, 35 and 12:2 (where it occurs twice).

4 tn Following the imperative, the cohortative indicates consequence. If Abram is blameless, then the LORD will ratify the covenant. Earlier the LORD ratified part of his promise to Abram (see Gen 15:18-21), guaranteeing him that his descendants would live in the land. But the expanded form of the promise, which includes numerous descendants and eternal possession of the land, remains to be ratified. This expanded form of the promise is in view here (see vv. 2b, 4-8). See the note at Gen 15:18 and R. B. Chisholm, “Evidence from Genesis,” *A Case for Premillennialism*, 35-54.

5 tn Heb “I will multiply you exceedingly, exceedingly.” The repetition is emphatic.

6 tn Heb “And Abram fell on his face.” This expression probably means that Abram sank to his knees and put his forehead to the ground, although it is possible that he completely prostrated himself. In either case the posture indicates humility and reverence.

7 tn Heb “God spoke to him, saying.” This is redundant in contemporary English and has been simplified in the translation for stylistic reasons.

8 tn Heb “I.”

9 tn Heb “is” (הִנֵּה, *hinneh*).

10 tn Heb “will your name be called.”

11 sn *Your name will be Abraham.* The renaming of Abram was a sign of confirmation to the patriarch. Every time the name was used it would be a reminder of God’s promise. “Abram” means “exalted father,” probably referring to Abram’s father Terah. The name looks to the past; Abram came from noble lineage. The name “Abraham” is a dialectical variant of the name Abram. But its significance is in the wordplay with אֲבִרָהָם (*av-hamon*, “the father of a multitude,” which sounds like אֲבִרָהָם, *avraham*, “Abraham”). The new name would be a reminder of God’s intention to make Abraham the father of a multitude. For a general discussion of renaming, see O. Eissfeldt, “Renaming in the Old Testament,” *Words and Meanings*, 70-83.

12 tn The perfect verbal form is used here in a rhetorical manner to emphasize God’s intention.

13 tn This verb starts a series of perfect verbal forms with *vav* (ו) consecutive to express God’s intentions.

14 tn Heb “exceedingly, exceedingly.” The repetition is emphatic.

15 tn Heb “and I will make you into nations, and kings will come out from you.”

16 tn The verb קָוַם (*qum*, “to arise, to stand up”) in the Hiphil verbal stem means “to confirm, to give effect to, to carry out” (i.e., a covenant or oath; see BDB 878-79 s.v. קָוַם).

17 tn Or “as an eternal.”

18 tn Heb “to be to you for God and to your descendants after you.”

19 tn The verbal root is גָּוַר (*gur*, “to sojourn, to reside temporarily,” i.e., as a resident foreigner). It is the land in which Abram resides, but does not yet possess as his very own.

20 tn Or “as an eternal.”

21 tn The imperfect tense could be translated “you shall keep” as a binding command, but the obligatory nuance (“must”) captures the binding sense better.

22 tn Heb “my covenant.” The Hebrew word בְּרִית (*b^erit*) can refer to (1) the agreement itself between two parties (see v. 7), (2) the promise made by one party to another (see vv. 2-3, 7), (3) an obligation placed by one party on another, or (4) a reminder of the agreement. In vv. 9-10 the word refers to a covenantal obligation which God gives to Abraham and his descendants.

23 tn Heb “This is my covenant that you must keep between me and you and your descendants after you.”

24 sn For a discussion of male circumcision as the sign of the covenant in this passage see M. V. Fox, “The Sign of the Covenant: Circumcision in the Light of the Priestly ‘ot Etiologies,” *RB* 81 (1974): 557-96.

25 tn Or “sign.”

26 tn Heb “the son of eight days.”

27 tn The emphatic construction employs the Niphal imperfect tense (collective singular) and the Niphal infinitive.

my covenant¹ will be visible in your flesh as a permanent² reminder. **17:14** Any uncircumcised male³ who has not been circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin will be cut off⁴ from his people – he has failed to carry out my requirement.⁵

17:15 Then God said to Abraham, “As for your wife, you must no longer call her Sarai;⁶ Sarah⁷ will be her name. **17:16** I will bless her and will give you a son through her. I will bless her and she will become a mother of nations.⁸ Kings of countries⁹ will come from her!”

17:17 Then Abraham bowed down with his face to the ground and laughed¹⁰ as he said to himself:¹¹ “Can¹² a son be born to a man who is a hundred years old?¹³ Can Sarah¹⁴ bear a child at the age of ninety?”¹⁵ **17:18** Abraham said to God, “O that¹⁶ Ishmael might live before you!”¹⁷

17:19 God said, “No, Sarah your wife is going to bear you a son, and you will name him

Isaac.¹⁸ I will confirm my covenant with him as a perpetual¹⁹ covenant for his descendants after him. **17:20** As for Ishmael, I have heard you.²⁰ I will indeed bless him, make him fruitful, and give him a multitude of descendants.²¹ He will become the father of twelve princes;²² I will make him into a great nation. **17:21** But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this set time next year.” **17:22** When he finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.²³

17:23 Abraham took his son Ishmael and every male in his household (whether born in his house or bought with money)²⁴ and circumcised them²⁵ on that very same day, just as God had told him to do. **17:24** Now Abraham was 99 years old²⁶ when he was circumcised;²⁷ **17:25** his son Ishmael was thirteen years old²⁸ when he was circumcised. **17:26** Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised on the very same day. **17:27** All the men of his household, whether born in his household or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

Three Special Visitors

18:1 The LORD appeared to Abraham²⁹ by the oaks³⁰ of Mamre while³¹ he was sitting at the entrance³² to his tent during the hottest time of the day. **18:2** Abraham³³ looked up³⁴ and

¹ *tn* *Heb* “my covenant.” Here in v. 13 the Hebrew word בְּרִית (*bʿrit*) refers to the outward, visible sign, or reminder, of the covenant. For the range of meaning of the term, see the note on the word “requirement” in v. 9.

² *tn* Or “an eternal.”

³ *tn* The disjunctive clause calls attention to the “uncircumcised male” and what will happen to him.

⁴ *tn* *Heb* “that person will be cut off.” The words “that person” have not been included in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁵ *sn* The meaning of “cut off” has been discussed at great length. An entire tractate in the Mishnah is devoted to this subject (tractate *Keritot*). Being ostracized from the community is involved at the least, but it is not certain whether this refers to the death penalty.

⁶ *tn* *Heb* “he has broken my covenant.” The noun בְּרִית (*bʿrit*) here refers to the obligation required by God in conjunction with the covenantal agreement. For the range of meaning of the term, see the note on the word “requirement” in v. 9.

⁷ *tn* *Heb* “[As for] Sarai your wife, you must not call her name Sarai, for Sarah [will be] her name.”

⁸ *sn* *Sarah*. The name change seems to be a dialectical variation, both spellings meaning “princess” or “queen.” Like the name Abram, the name Sarai symbolized the past. The new name Sarah, like the name Abraham, would be a reminder of what God intended to do for Sarah in the future.

⁹ *tn* *Heb* “she will become nations.”

¹⁰ *tn* *Heb* “peoples.”

¹¹ *sn* *Laughed*. The Hebrew verb used here provides the basis for the naming of Isaac: “And he laughed” is יִצְחָק (*yitskhag*); the name “Isaac” is יִצְחָק (*yitskhag*), “he laughs.” Abraham’s (and Sarah’s, see 18:12) laughter signals disbelief, but when the boy is born, the laughter signals surprise and joy.

¹² *tn* *Heb* “And he fell on his face and laughed and said in his heart.”

¹³ *tn* The imperfect verbal form here carries a potential nuance, as it expresses the disbelief of Abraham.

¹⁴ *tn* *Heb* “to the son of a hundred years.”

¹⁵ *sn* It is important to note that even though Abraham staggers at the announcement of the birth of a son, finding it almost too incredible, he nonetheless calls his wife Sarah, the new name given to remind him of the promise of God (v. 15).

¹⁶ *tn* *Heb* “the daughter of ninety years.”

¹⁷ *tn* The wish is introduced with the Hebrew particle לוֹ (*lu*), “O that.”

¹⁸ *tn* Or “live with your blessing.”

¹⁸ *tn* *Heb* “will call his name Isaac.” The name means “he laughs,” or perhaps “may he laugh” (see the note on the word “laughed” in v. 17).

¹⁹ *tn* Or “as an eternal.”

²⁰ *sn* The Hebrew verb translated “I have heard you” forms a wordplay with the name *Ishmael*, which means “God hears.” See the note on the name “Ishmael” in 16:11.

²¹ *tn* *Heb* “And I will multiply him exceedingly, exceedingly.” The repetition is emphatic.

²² *tn* For a discussion of the Hebrew word translated “princes,” see E. A. Speiser, “Background and Function of the Biblical *Nasi*,” *CBQ* 25 (1963): 111-17.

²³ *tn* *Heb* “And when he finished speaking with him, God went up from Abraham.” The sequence of pronouns and proper names has been modified in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁴ *sn* *God went up from him*. The text draws attention to God’s dramatic exit and in so doing brings full closure to the scene.

²⁵ *tn* *Heb* “Ishmael his son and all born in his house and all bought with money, every male among the men of the house of Abraham.”

²⁶ *tn* *Heb* “circumcised the flesh of their foreskin.” The Hebrew expression is somewhat pleonastic and has been simplified in the translation.

²⁷ *tn* *Heb* “the son of ninety-nine years.”

²⁸ *tn* *Heb* “circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin” (also in v. 25).

²⁹ *tn* *Heb* “the son of thirteen years.”

³⁰ *tn* *Heb* “him”; the referent (Abraham) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³¹ *tn* Or “terebinths.”

³² *tn* The disjunctive clause here is circumstantial to the main clause.

³³ *tn* The Hebrew noun translated “entrance” is an adverbial accusative of place.

³⁴ *tn* *Heb* “he”; the referent (Abraham) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³⁵ *tn* *Heb* “lifted up his eyes.”

saw⁴ three men standing across² from him. When he saw them³ he ran from the entrance of the tent to meet them and bowed low⁴ to the ground.⁵

18:3 He said, “My lord,⁶ if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by and leave your servant.⁷ **18:4** Let a little water be brought so that⁸ you may all⁹ wash your feet and rest under the tree. **18:5** And let me get¹⁰ a bit of food¹¹ so that you may refresh yourselves¹² since you have passed by your servant’s home. After that you may be on your way.”¹³ “All right,” they replied, “you may do as you say.”

18:6 So Abraham hurried into the tent and said to Sarah, “Quick! Take¹⁴ three measures¹⁵

of fine flour, knead it, and make bread.”¹⁶ **18:7** Then Abraham ran to the herd and chose a fine, tender calf, and gave it to a servant,¹⁷ who quickly prepared it.¹⁸ **18:8** Abraham¹⁹ then took some curds and milk, along with the calf that had been prepared, and placed the food²⁰ before them. They ate while²¹ he was standing near them under a tree.

18:9 Then they asked him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” He replied, “There,²² in the tent.” **18:10** One of them²³ said, “I will surely return²⁴ to you when the season comes round again,²⁵ and your wife Sarah will have a son!”²⁶ (Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, not far behind him.²⁷ **18:11** Abraham and Sarah were old and advancing in years;²⁸ Sarah had long since passed menopause.)²⁹ **18:12** So Sarah laughed to herself, thinking,³⁰ “After I am worn

1 tn Heb “and saw, and look.” The particle הִינֵה (*hinneh*) draws attention to what he saw. The drawn-out description focuses the reader’s attention on Abraham’s deliberate, fixed gaze and indicates that what he is seeing is significant.

2 tn The Hebrew preposition עַל (*‘al*) indicates the three men were nearby, but not close by, for Abraham had to run to meet them.

3 tn The pronoun “them” has been supplied in the translation for clarification. In the Hebrew text the verb has no stated object.

4 tn The form וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ (*vayyishtakhu*, “and bowed low”) is from the verb הִשְׁתַּחֲוָה (*hishṭakhavah*, “to worship, bow low to the ground”). It is probably from a root חָוָה (*khavah*), though some derive it from שָׁחָה (*shakhah*).

5 sn The reader knows this is a theophany. The three visitors are probably the LORD and two angels (see Gen 19:1). It is not certain how soon Abraham recognized the true identity of the visitors. His actions suggest he suspected this was something out of the ordinary, though it is possible that his lavish treatment of the visitors was done quite unwittingly. Bowing down to the ground would be reserved for obeisance of kings or worship of the LORD. Whether he was aware of it or not, Abraham’s action was most appropriate.

6 tc The MT has the form אֲדֹנָי (*‘adonay*, “Master”) which is reserved for God. This may reflect later scribal activity. The scribes, knowing it was the LORD, may have put the proper pointing with the word instead of the more common אֲדֹנָי (*‘adoni*, “my master”).

7 tn Heb “do not pass by from upon your servant.”

8 tn The imperative after the jussive indicates purpose here.

9 tn The word “all” has been supplied in the translation because the Hebrew verb translated “wash” and the pronominal suffix on the word “feet” are plural, referring to all three of the visitors.

10 tn The Qal cohortative here probably has the nuance of polite request.

11 tn Heb “a piece of bread.” The Hebrew word לֶחֶם (*lekhem*) can refer either to bread specifically or to food in general. Based on Abraham’s directions to Sarah in v. 6, bread was certainly involved, but v. 7 indicates that Abraham had a more elaborate meal in mind.

12 tn Heb “strengthen your heart.” The imperative after the cohortative indicates purpose here.

13 tn Heb “so that you may refresh yourselves, after [which] you may be on your way – for therefore you passed by near your servant.”

14 tn The word “take” is supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons. In the Hebrew text the sentence lacks a verb other than the imperative “hurry.” The elliptical structure of the language reflects Abraham’s haste to get things ready quickly.

15 sn Three measures (Heb “three seahs”) was equivalent to about twenty quarts (twenty-two liters) of flour, which would make a lot of bread. The animal prepared for the meal was far more than the three visitors needed. This was a banquet for royalty. Either it had been a lonely time for Abraham and the presence of visitors made him very happy, or he sensed this

was a momentous visit.

16 sn The bread was the simple, round bread made by bedouins that is normally prepared quickly for visitors.

17 tn Heb “the young man.”

18 tn The construction uses the Piel preterite, “he hurried,” followed by the infinitive construct; the two probably form a verbal hendiadys: “he quickly prepared.”

19 tn Heb “he”; the referent (Abraham) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

20 tn The words “the food” are supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons. In the Hebrew text the verb has no stated object.

21 tn The disjunctive clause is a temporal circumstantial clause subordinate to the main verb.

22 tn The particle הִינֵה (*hinneh*) often accompanies a gesture of pointing or a focused gaze.

23 tn Heb “he”; the referent (one of the three men introduced in v. 2) has been specified in the translation for clarity. Some English translations have specified the referent as the LORD (cf. RSV, NIV) based on vv. 1, 13, but the Hebrew text merely has “he said” at this point, referring to one of the three visitors. Aside from the introductory statement in v. 1, the incident is narrated from Abraham’s point of view, and the suspense is built up for the reader as Abraham’s elaborate banquet preparations in the preceding verses suggest he suspects these are important guests. But not until the promise of a son later in this verse does it become clear who is speaking. In v. 13 the Hebrew text explicitly mentions the LORD.

24 tn The Hebrew construction is emphatic, using the infinitive absolute with the imperfect tense.

sn I will surely return. If Abraham had not yet figured out who this was, this interchange would have made it clear. Otherwise, how would a return visit from this man mean Sarah would have a son?

25 tn Heb “as/when the time lives” or “revives,” possibly referring to the springtime.

26 tn Heb “and there will be (הִנֵּה, *hinneh*) a son for Sarah.”

27 tn This is the first of two disjunctive parenthetical clauses preparing the reader for Sarah’s response (see v. 12).

28 tn Heb “days.”

29 tn Heb “it had ceased to be for Sarah [after] a way like women.”

30 tn Heb “saying.”

out will I have pleasure,¹ especially when my husband is old too?”²

18:13 The LORD said to Abraham, “Why³ did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really⁴ have a child when I am old?’ **18:14** Is anything impossible⁵ for the LORD? I will return to you when the season comes round again and Sarah will have a son.”⁶ **18:15** Then Sarah lied, saying, “I did not laugh,” because she was afraid. But the LORD said, “No! You did laugh.”⁷

Abraham Pleads for Sodom

18:16 When the men got up to leave,⁸ they looked out over⁹ Sodom. (Now¹⁰ Abraham was walking with them to see them on their way.)¹¹ **18:17** Then the LORD said, “Should I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?”¹² **18:18** After all, Abraham¹³ will surely become¹⁴ a great and powerful nation, and all the nations on the earth will pronounce blessings on one another¹⁵ using

his name. **18:19** I have chosen him¹⁶ so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep¹⁷ the way of the LORD by doing¹⁸ what is right and just. Then the LORD will give¹⁹ to Abraham what he promised²⁰ him.”

18:20 So the LORD said, “The outcry against²¹ Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so blatant²² **18:21** that I must go down²³ and see if they are as wicked as the outcry suggests.²⁴ If not,²⁵ I want to know.”

18:22 The two men turned²⁶ and headed²⁷ toward Sodom, but Abraham was still standing before the LORD.²⁸ **18:23** Abraham approached and said, “Will you sweep away the godly along with the wicked? **18:24** What if there are fifty godly people in the city? Will you really wipe it out and not spare²⁹ the place for the sake of the fifty godly people who are in it? **18:25** Far be it

¹ **tn** It has been suggested that this word should be translated “conception,” not “pleasure.” See A. A. McIntosh, “A Third Root ‘adah in Biblical Hebrew,” *VT* 24 (1974): 454-73.

² **tn** The word “too” has been added in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³ **tn** *Heb* “Why, this?” The demonstrative pronoun following the interrogative pronoun is enclitic, emphasizing the LORD’s amazement: “Why on earth did Sarah laugh?”

⁴ **tn** The Hebrew construction uses both הֲתֵאֵף (*ha’af*) and אֲמַנָּם (*umnam*): “Indeed, truly, will I have a child?”

⁵ **tn** The Hebrew verb פָּלַא (*pala’*) means “to be wonderful, to be extraordinary, to be surpassing, to be amazing.”

⁶ **sn** Sarah will have a son. The passage brings God’s promise into clear focus. As long as it was a promise for the future, it really could be believed without much involvement. But now, when it seemed so impossible from the human standpoint, when the LORD fixed an exact date for the birth of the child, the promise became rather overwhelming to Abraham and Sarah. But then this was the LORD of creation, the one they had come to trust. The point of these narratives is that the creation of Abraham’s offspring, which eventually became Israel, is no less a miraculous work of creation than the creation of the world itself.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “And he said, ‘No, but you did laugh.’” The referent (the LORD) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “And the men arose from there.”

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “toward the face of.”

¹⁰ **tn** The disjunctive parenthetical clause sets the stage for the following speech.

¹¹ **tn** The Piel of שָׁלַח (*shalakh*) means “to lead out, to send out, to expel”; here it is used in the friendly sense of seeing the visitors on their way.

¹² **tn** The active participle here refers to an action that is imminent.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “And Abraham.” The disjunctive clause is probably causal, giving a reason why God should not hide his intentions from Abraham. One could translate, “Should I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation?”

¹⁴ **tn** The infinitive absolute lends emphasis to the finite verb that follows.

¹⁵ **tn** Theoretically the Niphal can be translated either as passive or reflexive/reciprocal. (The Niphal of “bless” is only used in formulations of the Abrahamic covenant. See Gen 12:2; 18:18; 28:14.) Traditionally the verb is taken as passive here, as if Abram were going to be a channel or source of blessing. But in later formulations of the Abrahamic covenant (see Gen 22:18; 26:4) the Hitpaal replaces this Niphal form, suggesting a translation “will bless [i.e., ‘pronounce blessings upon’] themselves [or ‘one another’].” The Hitpaal of “bless”

is used with a reflexive/reciprocal sense in Deut 29:18; Ps 72:17; Isa 65:16; Jer 4:2. Gen 18:18 (like 12:2) predicts that Abraham will be held up as a paradigm of divine blessing and that people will use his name in their blessing formulae. For examples of blessing formulae utilizing an individual as an example of blessing see Gen 48:20 and Ruth 4:11.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “For I have known him.” The verb יָדָע (*yada’*) here means “to recognize and treat in a special manner, to choose” (see Amos 3:2). It indicates that Abraham stood in a special covenantal relationship with the LORD.

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “and they will keep.” The perfect verbal form with *vav* consecutive carries on the subjective nuance of the preceding imperfect verbal form (translated “so that he may command”).

¹⁸ **tn** The infinitive construct here indicates manner, explaining how Abraham’s children and his household will keep the way of the LORD.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “bring on.” The infinitive after מְבִיאֵן (*me’bian*) indicates result here.

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “spoke to.”

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “the outcry of Sodom,” which apparently refers to the outcry for divine justice from those (unidentified persons) who observe its sinful ways.

²² **tn** *Heb* “heavy.”

²³ **tn** The cohortative indicates the LORD’s resolve.

sn I must go down. The descent to “see” Sodom is a bold anthropomorphism, stressing the careful judgment of God. The language is reminiscent of the LORD going down to see the Tower of Babel in Gen 11:1-9.

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “[if] according to the outcry that has come to me they have done completely.” Even the LORD, who is well aware of the human capacity to sin, finds it hard to believe that anyone could be as bad as the “outcry” against Sodom and Gomorrah suggests.

²⁵ **sn** The short phrase *if* not provides a ray of hope and inspires Abraham’s intercession.

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* “And the men turned from there.” The word “two” is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied here for clarity. Gen 19:1 mentions only two individuals (described as “angels”), while Abraham had entertained three visitors (18:2). The implication is that the LORD was the third visitor, who remained behind with Abraham here. The words “from there” are not included in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁷ **tn** *Heb* “went.”

²⁸ **tc** An ancient Hebrew scribal tradition reads “but the LORD remained standing before Abraham.” This reading is problematic because the phrase “standing before” typically indicates intercession, but the LORD would certainly not be interceding before Abraham.

²⁹ **tn** *Heb* “lift up,” perhaps in the sense of “bear with” (cf. NRSV “forgive”).

from you to do such a thing – to kill the godly with the wicked, treating the godly and the wicked alike! Far be it from you! Will not the judge¹ of the whole earth do what is right?”²

18:26 So the LORD replied, “If I find in the city of Sodom fifty godly people, I will spare the whole place for their sake.”

18:27 Then Abraham asked, “Since I have undertaken to speak to the Lord³ (although I am but dust and ashes),⁴ **18:28** what if there are five less than the fifty godly people? Will you destroy⁵ the whole city because five are lacking?”⁶ He replied, “I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there.”

18:29 Abraham⁷ spoke to him again,⁸ “What if forty are found there?” He replied, “I will not do it for the sake of the forty.”

18:30 Then Abraham⁹ said, “May the Lord not be angry¹⁰ so that I may speak!¹¹ What if thirty are found there?” He replied, “I will not do it if I find thirty there.”

18:31 Abraham¹² said, “Since I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty are found there?” He replied, “I will not destroy it for the sake of the twenty.”

18:32 Finally Abraham¹³ said, “May the Lord not be angry so that I may speak just once more. What if ten are found there?” He replied, “I will not destroy it for the sake of the ten.”

18:33 The LORD went on his way¹⁴ when he had finished speaking¹⁵ to Abraham. Then Abraham returned home.¹⁶

The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

19:1 The two angels came to Sodom in the evening while¹⁷ Lot was sitting in the city’s gateway.¹⁸ When Lot saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face toward the ground.

19:2 He said, “Here, my lords, please turn aside to your servant’s house. Stay the night¹⁹ and wash your feet. Then you can be on your way early in the morning.”²⁰ “No,” they replied, “we’ll spend the night in the town square.”²¹

19:3 But he urged²² them persistently, so they turned aside with him and entered his house. He prepared a feast for them, including bread baked without yeast, and they ate. **19:4** Before they could lie down to sleep,²³ all the men—both young and old, from every part of the city of Sodom – surrounded the house.²⁴ **19:5** They shouted to Lot,²⁵ “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so we can have sex²⁶ with them!”

¹⁷ **tn** The disjunctive clause is temporal here, indicating what Lot was doing at the time of their arrival.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “sitting in the gate of Sodom.” The phrase “the gate of Sodom” has been translated “the city’s gateway” for stylistic reasons.

sn The expression *sitting in the city’s gateway* may mean that Lot was exercising some type of judicial function (see the use of the idiom in 2 Sam 19:8; Jer 26:10; 38:7; 39:3).

¹⁹ **tn** The imperatives have the force of invitation.

²⁰ **tn** These two verbs form a verbal hendiadys: “you can rise up early and go” means “you can go early.”

²¹ **sn** The *town square* refers to the wide street area at the gate complex of the city.

²² **tn** The Hebrew verb *פָּצַח* (*patsar*, “to press, to insist”) ironically foreshadows the hostile actions of the men of the city (see v. 9, where the verb also appears). The repetition of the word serves to contrast Lot to his world.

²³ **tn** The verb *שָׁכַב* (*shakhav*) means “to lie down, to recline,” that is, “to go to bed.” Here what appears to be an imperfect is a preterite after the adverb *לָמָחָר* (*terem*). The nuance of potential (perfect) fits well.

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, from the young to the old, all the people from the end [of the city].” The repetition of the phrase “men of” stresses all kinds of men.

²⁵ **tn** The Hebrew text adds “and said to him.” This is redundant in English and has not been translated for stylistic reasons.

²⁶ **tn** The Hebrew verb *יָדַע* (*yada*, “to know”) is used here in the sense of “to lie with” or “to have sex with” (as in Gen 4:1). That this is indeed the meaning is clear from Lot’s warning that they not do so wickedly, and his willingness to give them his daughters instead.

sn The sin of the men of Sodom is debated. The fact that the sin involved a sexual act (see note on the phrase “have sex” in 19:5) precludes an association of the sin with inhospitality as is sometimes asserted (see W. Roth, “What of Sodom and Gomorrah? Homosexual Acts in the Old Testament,” *Explor* 1 [1974]: 7-14). The text at a minimum condemns forced sexual intercourse, i.e., rape. Other considerations, though, point to a condemnation of homosexual acts more generally. The narrator emphasizes the fact that the men of Sodom wanted to have sex with men: They demand that Lot release the angelic messengers (seen as men) to them for sex, and when Lot offers his daughters as a substitute they refuse them and attempt to take the angelic messengers by force. In addition the wider context of the Pentateuch condemns homosexual acts as sin (see, e.g., Lev 18:22). Thus a reading of this text within its narrative context, both immediate and broad, condemns not only the attempted rape but also the attempted homosexual act.

¹ **tn** Or “ruler.”

² **sn** *Will not the judge of the whole earth do what is right?* For discussion of this text see J. L. Crenshaw, “Popular Questioning of the Justice of God in Ancient Israel,” *ZAW* 82 (1970): 380-95, and C. S. Rodd, “Shall Not the Judge of All the Earth Do What Is Just?” *ExpTim* 83 (1972): 137-39.

³ **tn** The Hebrew term translated “Lord” here and in vv. 30, 31, 32 is *אֲדֹנָי* (*adonay*).

⁴ **tn** The disjunctive clause is a concessive clause here, drawing out the humility as a contrast to the LORD.

⁵ **tn** The Hebrew verb *שָׁחַת* (*shakhat*, “to destroy”) was used earlier to describe the effect of the flood.

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “because of five.”

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “he”; the referent (Abraham) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁸ **tn** The construction is a verbal hendiadys – the preterite (“he added”) is combined with an adverb “yet” and an infinitive “to speak.”

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “he”; the referent (Abraham) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “let it not be hot to the LORD.” This is an idiom which means “may the LORD not be angry.”

¹¹ **tn** After the jussive, the cohortative indicates purpose/result.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “he”; the referent (Abraham) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “he”; the referent (Abraham) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “And the LORD went.”

¹⁵ **tn** The infinitive construct (“speaking”) serves as the direct object of the verb “finished.”

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “to his place.”

19:6 Lot went outside to them, shutting the door behind him. 19:7 He said, “No, my brothers! Don’t act so wickedly!¹ 19:8 Look, I have two daughters who have never had sexual relations with² a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do to them whatever you please.³ Only don’t do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection⁴ of my roof.”⁵

19:9 “Out of our way!”⁶ they cried, and “This man came to live here as a foreigner,⁷ and now he dares to judge us!⁸ We’ll do more harm⁹ to you than to them!” They kept¹⁰ pressing in on Lot until they were close enough¹¹ to break down the door. 19:10 So the men inside¹² reached out¹³ and pulled Lot back into the house¹⁴ as they shut the door. 19:11 Then they struck the men who were at the door of the house, from the youngest to the oldest,¹⁵ with blindness. The men outside¹⁶ wore themselves out trying to find the door. 19:12 Then the two visitors¹⁷ said to Lot, “Who else do you have here?¹⁸ Do you have¹⁹ any sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or other relatives in

the city?²⁰ Get them out of this²¹ place 19:13 because we are about to destroy²² it. The outcry against this place²³ is so great before the LORD that he²⁴ has sent us to destroy it.”

19:14 Then Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law who were going to marry his daughters.²⁵ He said, “Quick, get out of this place because the LORD is about to destroy²⁶ the city!” But his sons-in-law thought he was ridiculing them.²⁷

19:15 At dawn²⁸ the angels hurried Lot along, saying, “Get going! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here,²⁹ or else you will be destroyed when the city is judged!”³⁰ 19:16 When Lot³¹ hesitated, the men grabbed his hand and the hands of his wife and two daughters because the LORD had compassion on them.³² They led them away and placed them³³ outside the city. 19:17 When they had brought them outside, they³⁴ said, “Run³⁵ for your lives! Don’t look³⁶ behind you or stop anywhere in the valley!³⁷ Escape to the mountains or you will be destroyed!”

¹ *tn Heb* “may my brothers not act wickedly.”
² *tn Heb* “who have not known.” Here this expression is a euphemism for sexual intercourse.
³ *tn Heb* “according to what is good in your eyes.”
⁴ *tn Heb* “shadow.”
⁵ *sn* This chapter portrays Lot as a hypocrite. He is well aware of the way the men live in his city and is apparently comfortable in the midst of it. But when confronted by the angels, he finally draws the line. But he is nevertheless willing to sacrifice his daughters’ virginity to protect his guests. His opposition to the crowds leads to his rejection as a foreigner by those with whom he had chosen to live. The one who attempted to rescue his visitors ends up having to be rescued by them.

⁶ *tn Heb* “approach out there” which could be rendered “Get out of the way, stand back!”
⁷ *tn Heb* “to live as a resident foreigner.”
⁸ *tn Heb* “and he has judged, judging.” The infinitive absolute follows the finite verbal form for emphasis. This emphasis is reflected in the translation by the phrase “dares to judge.”
⁹ *tn* The verb “to do wickedly” is repeated here (see v. 7). It appears that whatever “wickedness” the men of Sodom had intended to do to Lot’s visitors – probably nothing short of homosexual rape – they were now ready to inflict on Lot.
¹⁰ *tn Heb* “and they pressed against the man, against Lot, exceedingly.”
¹¹ *tn Heb* “and they drew near.”
¹² *tn Heb* “the men,” referring to the angels inside Lot’s house. The word “inside” has been supplied in the translation for clarity.
¹³ *tn* The Hebrew text adds “their hand.” These words have not been translated for stylistic reasons.
¹⁴ *tn Heb* “to them into the house.”
¹⁵ *tn Heb* “from the least to the greatest.”
¹⁶ *tn Heb* “they”; the referent (the men of Sodom outside the door) has been specified in the translation for clarity.
¹⁷ *tn Heb* “the men,” referring to the angels inside Lot’s house. The word “visitors” has been supplied in the translation for clarity.
¹⁸ *tn Heb* “Yet who [is there] to you here?”
¹⁹ *tn* The words “Do you have” are supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁰ *tn Heb* “a son-in-law and your sons and your daughters and anyone who (is) to you in the city.”
²¹ *tn Heb* “the place.” The Hebrew article serves here as a demonstrative.
²² *tn* The Hebrew participle expresses an imminent action here.
²³ *tn Heb* “for their outcry.” The words “about this place” have been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.
²⁴ *tn Heb* “the LORD.” The repetition of the divine name has been replaced in the translation by the pronoun “he” for stylistic reasons.
²⁵ *sn* The language has to be interpreted in the light of the context and the social customs. The men are called “sons-in-law” (literally “the takers of his daughters”), but the daughters had not yet had sex with a man. It is better to translate the phrase “who were going to marry his daughters.” Since formal marriage contracts were binding, the husbands-to-be could already be called sons-in-law.
²⁶ *tn* The Hebrew active participle expresses an imminent action.
²⁷ *tn Heb* “and he was like one taunting in the eyes of his sons-in-law.” These men mistakenly thought Lot was ridiculing them and their lifestyle. Their response illustrates how morally insensitive they had become.
²⁸ *tn Heb* “When dawn came up.”
²⁹ *tn Heb* “who are found.” The wording might imply he had other daughters living in the city, but the text does not explicitly state this.
³⁰ *tn* Or “with the iniquity [i.e., punishment] of the city” (cf. NASB, NRSV).
³¹ *tn Heb* “he”; the referent (Lot) has been specified in the translation for clarity.
³² *tn Heb* “in the compassion of the LORD to them.”
³³ *tn Heb* “brought him out and placed him.” The third masculine singular suffixes refer specifically to Lot, though his wife and daughters accompanied him (see v. 17). For stylistic reasons these have been translated as plural pronouns (“them”).
³⁴ *tn* Or “one of them”; *Heb* “he.” Several ancient versions (LXX, Vulgate, Syriac) read the plural “they.” See also the note on “your” in v. 19.
³⁵ *tn Heb* “escape.”
³⁶ *tn* The Hebrew verb translated “look” signifies an intense gaze, not a passing glance. This same verb is used later in v. 26 to describe Lot’s wife’s self-destructive look back at the city.
³⁷ *tn* Or “in the plain”; *Heb* “in the circle,” referring to the “circle” or oval area of the Jordan Valley.

19:18 But Lot said to them, “No, please, Lord!¹
19:19 Your² servant has found favor with you,³ and you have shown me great⁴ kindness⁵ by sparing⁶ my life. But I am not able to escape to the mountains because⁷ this disaster will overtake⁸ me and I’ll die.⁹ **19:20** Look, this town¹⁰ over here is close enough to escape to, and it’s just a little one.¹¹ Let me go there.¹² It’s just a little place, isn’t it?¹³ Then I’ll survive.”¹⁴

19:21 “Very well,” he replied,¹⁵ “I will grant this request too¹⁶ and will not overthrow¹⁷ the town you mentioned. **19:22** Run there quickly,¹⁸ for I cannot do anything until you arrive there.” (This incident explains why the town was called Zoar.)¹⁹

19:23 The sun had just risen²⁰ over the land as Lot reached Zoar.²¹ **19:24** Then the LORD rained down²² sulfur and fire²³ on Sodom and Gomorrah. It was sent down from the sky by the LORD.²⁴ **19:25** So he overthrew those cities and all that region,²⁵ including all the inhabitants of the cities and the vegetation that grew²⁶ from the ground. **19:26** But Lot’s²⁷ wife looked back longingly²⁸ and was turned into a pillar of salt.

19:27 Abraham got up early in the morning and went²⁹ to the place where he had stood before the LORD. **19:28** He looked out toward³⁰ Sodom and Gomorrah and all the land of that region.³¹ As he did so, he saw the smoke rising up from the land like smoke from a furnace.³²

19:29 So when God destroyed³³ the cities of

¹ **tn** Or “my lords.” See the following note on the problem of identifying the addressee here. The Hebrew term is אֲדוֹנָי (*’adonay*).

² **tn** The second person pronominal suffixes are singular in this verse (note “your eyes,” “you have made great,” and “you have acted”). Verse 18a seems to indicate that Lot is addressing the angels, but the use of the singular and the appearance of the divine title “Lord” (אֲדוֹנָי, *’adonay*) in v. 18b suggests he is speaking to God.

³ **tn** *Heb* “in your eyes.”

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “you made great your kindness.”

⁵ **sn** The Hebrew word חֶסֶד (*khesed*) can refer to “faithful love” or to “kindness,” depending on the context. The precise nuance here is uncertain.

⁶ **tn** The infinitive construct explains how God has shown Lot kindness.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “lest.”

⁸ **tn** The Hebrew verb דָּבַק (*davaq*) normally means “to stick to, to cleave, to join.” Lot is afraid he cannot outrun the coming calamity.

⁹ **tn** The perfect verb form with *vav* consecutive carries the nuance of the imperfect verbal form before it.

¹⁰ **tn** The Hebrew word עִיר (*’ir*) can refer to either a city or a town, depending on the size of the place. Given that this place was described by Lot later in this verse as a “little place,” the translation uses “town.”

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “Look, this town is near to flee to there. And it is little.”

¹² **tn** *Heb* “Let me escape to there.” The cohortative here expresses Lot’s request.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “Is it not little?”

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “my soul will live.” After the cohortative the *vav* conjunctive here indicates purpose/result.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “And he said, ‘Look, I will grant.’” The order of the clauses has been rearranged for stylistic reasons. The referent of the speaker (“he”) is somewhat ambiguous: It could be taken as the angel to whom Lot has been speaking (so NLT; note the singular references in vv. 18-19), or it could be that Lot is speaking directly to the LORD here. Most English translations leave the referent of the pronoun unspecified and maintain the ambiguity.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “I have lifted up your face [i.e., shown you favor] also concerning this matter.”

¹⁷ **tn** The negated infinitive construct indicates either the consequence of God’s granting the request (“I have granted this request, so that I will not”) or the manner in which he will grant it (“I have granted your request by not destroying”).

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “Be quick! Escape to there!” The two imperatives form a verbal hendiadys, the first becoming adverbial.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “Therefore the name of the city is called Zoar.” The name of the place, צוֹר (*’tso’ar*) apparently means “Little Place,” in light of the wordplay with the term “little” (קָטָן, *mits’ar*) used twice by Lot to describe the town (v. 20).

²⁰ **sn** *The sun had just risen.* There was very little time for Lot to escape between dawn (v. 15) and sunrise (here).

²¹ **tn** The juxtaposition of the two disjunctive clauses indicates synchronic action. The first action (the sun’s rising) occurred as the second (Lot’s entering Zoar) took place. The disjunctive clauses also signal closure for the preceding scene.

²² **tn** The disjunctive clause signals the beginning of the next scene and highlights God’s action.

²³ **tn** Or “burning sulfur” (the traditional “fire and brimstone”).

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “from the LORD from the heavens.” The words “It was sent down” are supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

sn The text explicitly states that the sulfur and fire that fell on Sodom and Gomorrah was sent down from the sky by the LORD. What exactly this was, and how it happened, can only be left to intelligent speculation, but see J. P. Harland, “The Destruction of the Cities of the Plain,” *BA* 6 (1943): 41-54.

²⁵ **tn** Or “and all the plain”; *Heb* “and all the circle,” referring to the “circle” or oval area of the Jordan Valley.

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* “and the vegetation of the ground.”

²⁷ **tn** *Heb* “his”; the referent (Lot) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁸ **tn** The Hebrew verb means “to look intently; to gaze” (see 15:5).

sn *Longingly.* Lot’s wife apparently identified with the doomed city and thereby showed lack of respect for God’s provision of salvation. She, like her daughters later, had allowed her thinking to be influenced by the culture of Sodom.

²⁹ **tn** The words “and went” are supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³⁰ **tn** *Heb* “upon the face of.”

³¹ **tn** Or “all the land of the plain”; *Heb* “and all the face of the land of the circle,” referring to the “circle” or oval area of the Jordan Valley.

³² **tn** *Heb* “And he saw, and look, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace.”

sn It is hard to imagine what was going on in Abraham’s mind, but this brief section in the narrative enables the reader to think about the human response to the judgment. Abraham had family in that area. He had rescued those people from the invasion. That was why he interceded. Yet he surely knew how wicked they were. That was why he got the number down to ten when he negotiated with God to save the city. But now he must have wondered, “What was the point?”

³³ **tn** The construction is a temporal clause comprised of the temporal indicator, an infinitive construct with a preposition, and the subjective genitive.

the region.¹ God honored² Abraham's request. He removed Lot³ from the midst of the destruction when he destroyed⁴ the cities Lot had lived in.

19:30 Lot went up from Zoar with his two daughters and settled in the mountains because he was afraid to live in Zoar. So he lived in a cave with his two daughters. **19:31** Later the older daughter said⁵ to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is no man anywhere nearby⁶ to have sexual relations with us,⁷ according to the way of all the world. **19:32** Come, let's make our father drunk with wine⁸ so we can have sexual relations⁹ with him and preserve¹⁰ our family line through our father."¹¹

19:33 So that night they made their father drunk with wine,¹² and the older daughter¹³ came and had sexual relations with her father.¹⁴ But he was not aware that she had sexual relations with him and then got up.¹⁵ **19:34** So in the morning the older daughter¹⁶ said to the younger, "Since I had sexual relations with my father last night, let's make him drunk again

tonight.¹⁷ Then you go and have sexual relations with him so we can preserve our family line through our father."¹⁸ **19:35** So they made their father drunk¹⁹ that night as well, and the younger one came and had sexual relations with him.²⁰ But he was not aware that she had sexual relations with him and then got up.²¹

19:36 In this way both of Lot's daughters became pregnant by their father. **19:37** The older daughter²² gave birth to a son and named him Moab,²³ He is the ancestor of the Moabites of today. **19:38** The younger daughter also gave birth to a son and named him Ben Ammi.²⁴ He is the ancestor of the Ammonites of today.

Abraham and Abimelech

20:1 Abraham journeyed from there to the Negev²⁵ region and settled between Kadesh and Shur. While he lived as a temporary resident²⁶ in Gerar, **20:2** Abraham said about his wife Sarah, "She is my sister." So Abimelech, king of Gerar, sent for Sarah and took her.

20:3 But God appeared²⁷ to Abimelech in a dream at night and said to him, "You are as good as dead²⁸ because of the woman you have taken, for she is someone else's wife."²⁹

20:4 Now Abimelech had not gone near her. He said, "Lord,³⁰ would you really slaughter an innocent nation?³¹ **20:5** Did Abraham³² not say

¹ **tn** Or "of the plain"; *Heb* "of the circle," referring to the "circle" or oval area of the Jordan Valley.

² **tn** *Heb* "remembered," but this means more than mental recollection here. Abraham's request (Gen 18:23-32) was that the LORD not destroy the righteous with the wicked. While the requisite minimum number of righteous people (ten, v. 32) needed for God to spare the cities was not found, God nevertheless rescued the righteous before destroying the wicked.

sn God showed Abraham special consideration because of the covenantal relationship he had established with the patriarch. Yet the reader knows that God delivered the "righteous" (Lot's designation in 2 Pet 2:7) before destroying their world – which is what he will do again at the end of the age.

³ **sn** God's removal of Lot before the judgment is paradigmatic. He typically delivers the godly before destroying their world.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* "the overthrow when [he] overthrew."

⁵ **tn** *Heb* "and the firstborn said."

⁶ **tn** Or perhaps "on earth," in which case the statement would be hyperbolic; presumably there had been some men living in the town of Zoar to which Lot and his daughters had initially fled.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* "to enter upon us." This is a euphemism for sexual relations.

⁸ **tn** *Heb* "drink wine."

⁹ **tn** *Heb* "and we will lie down." The cohortative with *vav* (ו) conjunctive is subordinated to the preceding cohortative and indicates purpose/result.

¹⁰ **tn** Or "that we may preserve." Here the cohortative with *vav* (ו) conjunctive indicates their ultimate goal.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* "and we will keep alive from our father descendants."

sn For a discussion of the cultural background of the daughters' desire to preserve our family line see F. C. Fensham, "The Obliteration of the Family as Motif in the Near Eastern Literature," *AION* 10 (1969): 191-99.

¹² **tn** *Heb* "drink wine."

¹³ **tn** *Heb* "the firstborn."

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* "and the firstborn came and lied down with her father." The expression "lied down with" here and in the following verses is a euphemism for sexual relations.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* "and he did not know when she lay down and when she arose."

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* "the firstborn."

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* "Look, I lied down with my father. Let's make him drink wine again tonight."

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* "And go, lie down with him and we will keep alive from our father descendants."

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* "drink wine."

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* "lied down with him."

²¹ **tn** *Heb* "And he did not know when she lied down and when she arose."

²² **tn** *Heb* "the firstborn."

²³ **sn** The meaning of the name *Moab* is not certain. The name sounds like the Hebrew phrase "from our father" (מֵאֲבִינוּ, *me'avinu*) which the daughters used twice (vv. 32, 34). This account is probably included in the narrative in order to portray the Moabites, who later became enemies of God's people, in a negative light.

²⁴ **sn** The name *Ben Ammi* means "son of my people." Like the account of Moab's birth, this story is probably included in the narrative to portray the Ammonites, another perennial enemy of Israel, in a negative light.

²⁵ **tn** Or "the South [country]"; *Heb* "the land of the Negev."

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* is the name for the southern desert region in the land of Canaan.

²⁷ **tn** *Heb* "and he sojourned."

²⁸ **tn** *Heb* "came."

²⁹ **tn** *Heb* "Look, you [are] dead." The Hebrew construction uses the participle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*) with a second person pronominal particle הָיָה (*hinneh*) with the participle. It is a highly rhetorical expression.

³⁰ **tn** *Heb* "and she is owned by an owner." The disjunctive clause is causal or explanatory in this case.

³¹ **tn** The Hebrew term translated "Lord" here is אֲדֹנָי (*adonay*).

³² **tn** Apparently Abimelech assumes that God's judgment will fall on his entire nation. Some, finding the reference to a nation problematic, prefer to emend the text and read, "Would you really kill someone who is innocent?" See E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (AB), 149.

³³ **tn** *Heb* "he"; the referent has been specified in the translation for clarity.

to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said,¹ 'He is my brother.' I have done this with a clear conscience² and with innocent hands!"

20:6 Then in the dream God replied to him, "Yes, I know that you have done this with a clear conscience.³ That is why I have kept you⁴ from sinning against me and why⁵ I did not allow you to touch her. **20:7** But now give back the man's wife. Indeed⁶ he is a prophet⁷ and he will pray for you; thus you will live.⁸ But if you don't give her back,⁹ know that you will surely die¹⁰ along with all who belong to you."

20:8 Early in the morning¹¹ Abimelech summoned¹² all his servants. When he told them about all these things,¹³ they¹⁴ were terrified. **20:9** Abimelech summoned Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? What sin did I commit against you that would cause you to bring such great guilt on me and my kingdom?¹⁵ You have done things to me that should not be done!"¹⁶ **20:10** Then Abimelech asked¹⁷ Abraham, "What prompted you to do this thing?"¹⁸

20:11 Abraham replied, "Because I thought,¹⁹ 'Surely no one fears God in this place. They will kill me because of²⁰ my wife.' **20:12** What's more,²¹ she is indeed my sister, my

father's daughter, but not my mother's daughter. She became my wife. **20:13** When God made me wander²² from my father's house, I told her, 'This is what you can do to show your loyalty to me:²³ Every place we go, say about me, "He is my brother."'"

20:14 So Abimelech gave²⁴ sheep, cattle, and male and female servants to Abraham. He also gave his wife Sarah back to him. **20:15** Then Abimelech said, "Look, my land is before you; live wherever you please."²⁵

20:16 To Sarah he said, "Look, I have given a thousand pieces of silver²⁶ to your 'brother.'²⁷ This is compensation for you so that you will stand vindicated before all who are with you."²⁸

20:17 Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, as well as his wife and female slaves so that they were able to have children. **20:18** For the LORD²⁹ had caused infertility to strike every woman³⁰ in the household of Abimelech because he took³¹ Sarah, Abraham's wife.

¹ tn Heb "and she, even she."

² tn Heb "with the integrity of my heart."

³ tn Heb "with the integrity of your heart."

⁴ tn Heb "and I, even I, kept you."

⁵ tn Heb "therefore."

⁶ tn Or "for," if the particle is understood as causal (as many English translations do) rather than asseverative.

⁷ sn For a discussion of the term *prophet* see N. Walker, "What is a Nabhi?" ZAW 73 (1961): 99-100.

⁸ tn After the preceding jussive (or imperfect), the imperative with *vav* conjunctive here indicates result.

sn He will pray for you that you may live. Abraham was known as a man of God whose prayer would be effectual. Ironically and sadly, he was also known as a liar.

⁹ tn Heb "if there is not you returning." The suffix on the particle becomes the subject of the negated clause.

¹⁰ tn The imperfect is preceded by the infinitive absolute to make the warning emphatic.

¹¹ tn Heb "And Abimelech rose early in the morning and he summoned."

¹² tn The verb *qara* (qara) followed by the preposition *l* (lamed) means "to summon."

¹³ tn Heb "And he spoke all these things in their ears."

¹⁴ tn Heb "the men." This has been replaced by the pronoun "they" in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁵ tn Heb "How did I sin against you that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin?" The expression "great sin" refers to adultery. For discussion of the cultural background of the passage, see J. J. Rabinowitz, "The Great Sin in Ancient Egyptian Marriage Contracts," JNES 18 (1959): 73, and W. L. Moran, "The Scandal of the 'Great Sin' at Ugarit," JNES 18 (1959): 280-81.

¹⁶ tn Heb "Deeds which should not be done you have done to me." The imperfect has an obligatory nuance here.

¹⁷ tn Heb "And Abimelech said to."

¹⁸ tn Heb "What did you see that you did this thing?" The question implies that Abraham had some motive for deceiving Abimelech.

¹⁹ tn Heb "Because I said."

²⁰ tn Heb "over the matter of."

²¹ tn Heb "but also."

²² tn The Hebrew verb is plural. This may be a case of grammatical agreement with the name for God, which is plural in form. However, when this plural name refers to the one true God, accompanying predicates are usually singular in form. Perhaps Abraham is accommodating his speech to Abimelech's polytheistic perspective. (See GKC 463 §145.i.) If so, one should translate, "when the gods made me wander."

²³ tn Heb "This is your loyal deed which you can do for me."

²⁴ tn Heb "took and gave."

²⁵ tn Heb "In the [place that is] good in your eyes live!"

²⁶ sn A thousand pieces [Heb "shekels"] of silver. The standards for weighing money varied considerably in the ancient Near East, but the generally accepted weight for the shekel is 1.15 grams (0.4 ounce). This makes the weight of silver here 11.5 kilograms, or 400 ounces (about 25 pounds).

²⁷ sn To your 'brother.' Note the way that the king refers to Abraham. Was he being sarcastic? It was surely a rebuke to Sarah. What is amazing is how patient this king was. It is proof that the fear of God was in that place, contrary to what Abraham believed (see v. 11).

²⁸ tn Heb "Look, it is for you a covering of the eyes, for all who are with you, and with all, and you are set right." The exact meaning of the statement is unclear. Apparently it means that the gift of money somehow exonerates her in other people's eyes. They will not look on her as compromised (see G. J. Wenham, *Genesis* [WBC], 2:74).

²⁹ tn In the Hebrew text the clause begins with "because."

³⁰ tn Heb had completely closed up every womb." In the Hebrew text infinitive absolute precedes the finite verb for emphasis.

sn The LORD had closed up every womb. This fact indicates that Sarah was in Abimelech's household for weeks or months before the dream revelation was given (20:6-7). No one in his household could have children after Sarah arrived on the scene.

³¹ tn Heb "because of." The words "he took" are supplied in the translation for clarity.

The Birth of Isaac

21:1 The LORD visited¹ Sarah just as he had said he would and did² for Sarah what he had promised.³ **21:2** So Sarah became pregnant⁴ and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the appointed time that God had told him. **21:3** Abraham named his son – whom Sarah bore to him – Isaac.⁵ **21:4** When his son Isaac was eight days old,⁶ Abraham circumcised him just as God had commanded him to do.⁷ **21:5** (Now Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.)⁸

21:6 Sarah said, “God has made me laugh.⁹ Everyone who hears about this¹⁰ will laugh¹¹ with me.” **21:7** She went on to say,¹² “Who would¹³ have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have given birth to a son for him in his old age!”

21:8 The child grew and was weaned. Abraham prepared¹⁴ a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.¹⁵ **21:9** But Sarah noticed¹⁶ the son

of Hagar the Egyptian – the son whom Hagar had borne to Abraham – mocking.¹⁷ **21:10** So she said to Abraham, “Banish¹⁸ that slave woman and her son, for the son of that slave woman will not be an heir along with my son Isaac!”

21:11 Sarah’s demand displeased Abraham greatly because Ishmael was his son.¹⁹ **21:12** But God said to Abraham, “Do not be upset²⁰ about the boy or your slave wife. Do²¹ all that Sarah is telling²² you because through Isaac your descendants will be counted.²³ **21:13** But I will also make the son of the slave wife into a great nation, for he is your descendant too.”

21:14 Early in the morning Abraham took²⁴ some food²⁵ and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He put them on her shoulders, gave her the child,²⁶ and sent her away. So she went

¹ **sn** The Hebrew verb translated “visit” (בָּקַדַּ, *paqad*) often describes divine intervention for blessing or cursing; it indicates God’s special attention to an individual or a matter, always with respect to his people’s destiny. He may visit (that is, destroy) the Amalekites; he may visit (that is, deliver) his people in Egypt. Here he visits Sarah, to allow her to have the promised child. One’s destiny is changed when the LORD “visits.” For a more detailed study of the term, see G. André, *Determining the Destiny* (ConBOT).

² **tn** Heb “and the LORD did.” The divine name has not been repeated here in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³ **tn** Heb “spoken.”

⁴ **tn** Or “she conceived.”

⁵ **tn** Heb “the one born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac.” The two modifying clauses, the first introduced with an article and the second with the relative pronoun, are placed in the middle of the sentence, before the name Isaac is stated. They are meant to underscore that this was indeed an actual birth to Abraham and Sarah in fulfillment of the promise.

⁶ **tn** Heb “Isaac his son, the son of eight days.” The name “Isaac” is repeated in the translation for clarity.

⁷ **sn** Just as God had commanded him to do. With the birth of the promised child, Abraham obeyed the LORD by both naming (Gen 17:19) and circumcising Isaac (17:12).

⁸ **tn** The parenthetical disjunctive clause underscores how miraculous this birth was. Abraham was 100 years old. The fact that the genealogies give the ages of the fathers when their first son is born shows that this was considered a major milestone in one’s life (G. J. Wenham, *Genesis* [WBC], 2:80).

⁹ **tn** Heb “Laughter God has made for me.”

¹⁰ **tn** The words “about this” are supplied in the translation for clarification.

¹¹ **sn** Sarah’s words play on the name “Isaac” in a final triumphant manner. God prepared “laughter” (צִחָק, *yisḥoq*) for her, and everyone who hears about this “will laugh” (צִחָק, *yitsḥaq*) with her. The laughter now signals great joy and fulfillment, not unbelief (cf. Gen 18:12-15).

¹² **tn** Heb “said.”

¹³ **tn** The perfect form of the verb is used here to describe a hypothetical situation.

¹⁴ **tn** Heb “made.”

¹⁵ **sn** Children were weaned closer to the age of two or three in the ancient world, because infant mortality was high. If an infant grew to this stage, it was fairly certain he or she would live. Such an event called for a celebration, especially for parents who had waited so long for a child.

¹⁶ **tn** Heb “saw.”

¹⁷ **tn** The Piel participle used here is from the same root as the name “Isaac.” In the Piel stem the verb means “to jest; to make sport of; to play with,” not simply “to laugh,” which is the meaning of the verb in the Qal stem. What exactly Ishmael was doing is not clear. Interpreters have generally concluded that the boy was either (1) mocking Isaac (cf. NASB, NIV, NLT) or (2) merely playing with Isaac as if on equal footing (cf. NAB, NRSV). In either case Sarah saw it as a threat. The same participial form was used in Gen 19:14 to describe how some in Lot’s family viewed his attempt to warn them of impending doom. It also appears later in Gen 39:14, 17, where Potiphar accuses Joseph of mocking them.

sn Mocking. Here Sarah interprets Ishmael’s actions as being sinister. Ishmael probably did not take the younger child seriously and Sarah saw this as a threat to Isaac. Paul in Gal 4:29 says that Ishmael persecuted Isaac. He uses a Greek word that can mean “to put to flight; to chase away; to pursue” and may be drawing on a rabbinic interpretation of the passage. In Paul’s analogical application of the passage, he points out that once the promised child Isaac (symbolizing Christ as the fulfillment of God’s promise) has come, there is no room left for the slave woman and her son (who symbolize the Mosaic law).

¹⁸ **tn** Heb “drive out.” The language may seem severe, but Sarah’s maternal instincts sensed a real danger in that Ishmael was not treating Isaac with the proper respect.

¹⁹ **tn** Heb “and the word was very wrong in the eyes of Abraham on account of his son.” The verb רָעָה (*ra’a*) often refers to what is morally or ethically “evil.” It usage here suggests that Abraham thought Sarah’s demand was ethically (and perhaps legally) wrong.

²⁰ **tn** Heb “Let it not be evil in your eyes.”

²¹ **tn** Heb “listen to her voice.” The idiomatic expression means “obey; comply.” Here her advice, though harsh, is necessary and conforms to the will of God. Later (see Gen 25), when Abraham has other sons, he sends them all away as well.

²² **tn** The imperfect verbal form here draws attention to an action that is underway.

²³ **tn** Or perhaps “will be named”; Heb “for in Isaac offspring will be called to you.” The exact meaning of the statement is not clear, but it does indicate that God’s covenantal promises to Abraham will be realized through Isaac, not Ishmael.

²⁴ **tn** Heb “and Abraham rose up early in the morning and he took.”

²⁵ **tn** Heb “bread,” although the term can be used for food in general.

²⁶ **tn** Heb “He put upon her shoulder, and the boy [or perhaps, “and with the boy”], and he sent her away.” It is unclear how “and the boy” relates syntactically to what precedes. Perhaps the words should be rearranged and the text read, “and he put [them] on her shoulder and he gave to Hagar the boy.”

wandering⁴ aimlessly through the wilderness² of Beer Sheba. **21:15** When the water in the skin was gone, she shoved³ the child under one of the shrubs. **21:16** Then she went and sat down by herself across from him at quite a distance, about a bowshot⁴ away; for she thought,⁵ “I refuse to watch the child die.”⁶ So she sat across from him and wept uncontrollably.⁷

21:17 But God heard the boy’s voice.⁸ The angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and asked her, “What is the matter,⁹ Hagar? Don’t be afraid, for God has heard¹⁰ the boy’s voice right where he is crying. **21:18** Get up! Help the boy up and hold him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.” **21:19** Then God enabled Hagar to see a well of water.¹¹ She went over and filled the skin with water, and then gave the boy a drink.

21:20 God was with the boy as he grew. He lived in the wilderness and became an archer. **21:21** He lived in the wilderness of Paran.¹² His mother found a wife for him from the land of Egypt.¹³

21:22 At that time Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, said to Abraham, “God is with you¹⁴ in all that you do. **21:23** Now swear to me right here in God’s name¹⁵ that you will

not deceive me, my children, or my descendants.¹⁶ Show me, and the land¹⁷ where you are staying,¹⁸ the same loyalty¹⁹ that I have shown you.”²⁰

21:24 Abraham said, “I swear to do this.”²¹ **21:25** But Abraham lodged a complaint²² against Abimelech concerning a well²³ that Abimelech’s servants had seized.²⁴ **21:26** “I do not know who has done this thing,” Abimelech replied. “Moreover,²⁵ you did not tell me. I did not hear about it until today.”

21:27 Abraham took some sheep and cattle and gave them to Abimelech. The two of them made a treaty.²⁶ **21:28** Then Abraham set seven ewe lambs apart from the flock by themselves. **21:29** Abimelech asked Abraham, “What is the meaning of these²⁷ seven ewe lambs that you have set apart?” **21:30** He replied, “You must take these seven ewe lambs from my hand as legal proof²⁸ that I dug this well.”²⁹ **21:31** That is why he named that place³⁰ Beer Sheba,³¹ because the two of them swore³² an oath there.

21:32 So they made a treaty³³ at Beer Sheba. Then Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, returned³⁴ to the land of the

¹ tn Heb “she went and wandered.”

² tn Or “desert,” although for English readers this usually connotes a sandy desert like the Sahara rather than the arid wasteland of this region with its sparse vegetation.

³ tn Heb “threw,” but the child, who was now thirteen years old, would not have been carried, let alone thrown under a bush. The exaggerated language suggests Ishmael is limp from dehydration and is being abandoned to die. See G. J. Wenham, *Genesis* (WBC), 2:85.

⁴ sn A bowshot would be a distance of about a hundred yards (ninety meters).

⁵ tn Heb “said.”

⁶ tn Heb “I will not look on the death of the child.” The hortative verbal form (note the negative particle אֵל, *al*) here expresses her resolve to avoid the stated action.

⁷ tn Heb “and she lifted up her voice and wept” (that is, she wept uncontrollably). The LXX reads “he” (referring to Ishmael) rather than “she” (referring to Hagar), but this is probably an attempt to harmonize this verse with the following one, which refers to the boy’s cries.

⁸ sn God heard the boy’s voice. The text has not to this point indicated that Ishmael was crying out, either in pain or in prayer. But the text here makes it clear that God heard him. Ishmael is clearly central to the story. Both the mother and the LORD are focused on the child’s imminent death.

⁹ tn Heb “What to you?”

¹⁰ sn Here the verb *heard* picks up the main motif of the name Ishmael (“God hears”), introduced back in chap. 16.

¹¹ tn Heb “And God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water.” The referent (Hagar) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹² sn The wilderness of Paran is an area in the east central region of the Sinai peninsula, northeast from the traditional site of Mt. Sinai and with the Arabah and the Gulf of Aqaba as its eastern border.

¹³ tn Heb “And his mother took for him a wife from the land of Egypt.”

¹⁴ sn God is with you. Abimelech and Phicol recognized that Abraham enjoyed special divine provision and protection.

¹⁵ tn Heb “And now swear to me by God here.”

¹⁶ tn Heb “my offspring and my descendants.”

¹⁷ tn The word “land” refers by metonymy to the people in the land.

¹⁸ tn The Hebrew verb means “to stay, to live, to sojourn” as a temporary resident without ownership rights.

¹⁹ tn Or “kindness.”

²⁰ tn Heb “According to the loyalty which I have done with you, do with me and with the land in which you are staying.”

²¹ tn Heb “I swear.” No object is specified in the Hebrew text, but the content of the oath requested by Abimelech is the implied object.

²² tn The Hebrew verb used here means “to argue; to dispute”; it can focus on the beginning of the dispute (as here), the dispute itself, or the resolution of a dispute (Isa 1:18). Apparently the complaint was lodged before the actual oath was taken.

²³ tn Heb “concerning the matter of the well of water.”

²⁴ tn The Hebrew verb used here means “to steal; to rob; to take violently.” The statement reflects Abraham’s perspective.

²⁵ tn Heb “and also.”

²⁶ tn Heb “cut a covenant.”

²⁷ tn Heb “What are these?”

²⁸ tn Heb “that it be for me for a witness.”

²⁹ sn This well. Since the king wanted a treaty to share in Abraham’s good fortune, Abraham used the treaty to secure ownership of and protection for the well he dug. It would be useless to make a treaty to live in this territory if he had no rights to the water. Abraham consented to the treaty, but added his rider to it.

³⁰ tn Heb “that is why he called that place.” Some translations render this as an impersonal passive, “that is why that place was called.”

³¹ sn The name Beer Sheba (בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע, *b^eer shava*) means “well of the oath” or “well of the seven.” Both the verb “to swear” and the number “seven” have been used throughout the account. Now they are drawn in as part of the explanation of the significance of the name.

³² sn The verb forms a wordplay with the name Beer Sheba.

³³ tn Heb “cut a covenant.”

³⁴ tn Heb “arose and returned.”

Philistines.¹ **21:33** Abraham² planted a tamarisk tree³ in Beer Sheba. There he worshiped the LORD,⁴ the eternal God. **21:34** So Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines for quite some time.⁵

The Sacrifice of Isaac

22:1 Some time after these things God tested⁶ Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!” “Here I am!” Abraham⁷ replied. **22:2** God⁸ said, “Take your son – your only son, whom you love, Isaac⁹ – and go to the land of Moriah!¹⁰ Offer him up there as a burnt offering¹¹ on one of the mountains which I will indicate to¹² you.”

22:3 Early in the morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey.¹³ He took two of his young servants with him, along with his son Isaac. When he had cut the wood for the burnt offering, he started out¹⁴ for the place God had spoken to him about.

22:4 On the third day Abraham caught sight of¹⁵ the place in the distance. **22:5** So he¹⁶ said to

his servants, “You two stay¹⁷ here with the donkey while¹⁸ the boy and I go up there. We will worship¹⁹ and then return to you.”²⁰

22:6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and put it on his son Isaac. Then he took the fire and the knife in his hand,²¹ and the two of them walked on together. **22:7** Isaac said to his father Abraham,²² “My father?” “What is it,²³ my son?” he replied. “Here is the fire and the wood,” Isaac said,²⁴ “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” **22:8** “God will provide²⁵ for himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son,” Abraham replied. The two of them continued on together.

22:9 When they came to the place God had told him about, Abraham built the altar there²⁶ and arranged the wood on it. Next he tied up²⁷ his son Isaac and placed him on the altar on top of the wood. **22:10** Then Abraham reached out his hand, took the knife, and prepared to slaughter²⁸ his son. **22:11** But the LORD’s angel²⁹ called to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!” “Here I am!” he answered. **22:12** “Do not harm

¹ **sn** The *Philistines* mentioned here may not be ethnically related to those who lived in Palestine in the time of the judges and the united monarchy. See D. M. Howard, “Philistines,” *Peoples of the Old Testament World*, 238.

² **tn** *Heb* “and he”; the referent (Abraham) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³ **sn** The planting of the *tamarisk tree* is a sign of Abraham’s intent to stay there for a long time, not a religious act. A growing tree in the Negev would be a lasting witness to God’s provision of water.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “he called there in the name of the LORD.” The expression refers to worshiping the LORD through prayer and sacrifice (see Gen 4:26; 12:8; 13:4; 26:25). See G. J. Wenham, *Genesis* (WBC), 1:116, 281.

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “many days.”

⁶ **sn** The Hebrew verb used here means “to test; to try; to prove.” In this passage God tests Abraham to see if he would be obedient. See T. W. Mann, *The Book of the Torah*, 44-48. See also J. L. Crenshaw, *A Whirlpool of Torment* (OBT), 9-30; and J. I. Lawlor, “The Test of Abraham,” *GTJ* 1 (1980): 19-35.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “he”; the referent (Abraham) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “he”; the referent (God) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁹ **sn** *Take your son...Isaac*. The instructions are very clear, but the details are deliberate. With every additional description the commandment becomes more challenging.

¹⁰ **sn** There has been much debate over the location of *Moriah*; 2 Chr 3:1 suggests it may be the site where the temple was later built in Jerusalem.

¹¹ **sn** A whole *burnt offering* signified the complete surrender of the worshiper and complete acceptance by God. The demand for a human sacrifice was certainly radical and may have seemed to Abraham out of character for God. Abraham would have to obey without fully understanding what God was about.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “which I will say to.”

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “Abraham rose up early in the morning and saddled his donkey.”

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “he arose and he went.”

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “lifted up his eyes and saw.”

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “And Abraham.” The proper name has been replaced in the translation by the pronoun (“he”) for stylistic reasons.

¹⁷ **tn** The Hebrew verb is masculine plural, referring to the two young servants who accompanied Abraham and Isaac on the journey.

¹⁸ **tn** The disjunctive clause (with the compound subject preceding the verb) may be circumstantial and temporal.

¹⁹ **tn** This Hebrew word literally means “to bow oneself close to the ground.” It often means “to worship.”

²⁰ **sn** It is impossible to know what Abraham was thinking when he said, “we will...return to you.” When he went he knew (1) that he was to sacrifice Isaac, and (2) that God intended to fulfill his earlier promises through Isaac. How he reconciled those facts is not clear in the text. Heb 11:17-19 suggests that Abraham believed God could restore Isaac to him through resurrection.

²¹ **sn** *He took the fire and the knife in his hand*. These details anticipate the sacrifice that lies ahead.

²² **tn** The Hebrew text adds “and said.” This is redundant and has not been translated for stylistic reasons.

²³ **tn** *Heb* “Here I am” (cf. Gen 22:1).

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and he said, ‘Here is the fire and the wood.’” The referent (Isaac) has been specified in the translation for clarity. Here and in the following verse the order of the introductory clauses and the direct discourse has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁵ **tn** *Heb* “will see for himself.” The construction means “to look out for; to see to it; to provide.”

²⁶ **sn** *God will provide* is the central theme of the passage and the turning point in the story. Note Paul’s allusion to the story in Rom 8:32 (“how shall he not freely give us all things?”) as well as H. J. Schoeps, “The Sacrifice of Isaac in Paul’s Theology,” *JBL* 65 (1946): 385-92.

²⁷ **sn** *Abraham built an altar there*. The theme of Abraham’s altar building culminates here. He has been a faithful worshiper. Will he continue to worship when called upon to make such a radical sacrifice?

²⁸ **sn** *Then he tied up*. This text has given rise to an important theme in Judaism known as the *Aqedah*, from the Hebrew word for “binding.” When sacrifices were made in the sanctuary, God remembered the binding of Isaac, for which a substitute was offered. See D. Polish, “The Binding of Isaac,” *Jud* 6 (1957): 17-21.

²⁹ **tn** *Heb* “in order to slaughter.”

³⁰ **sn** *Heb* “the messenger of the LORD” (also in v. 15). Some identify the angel of the LORD as the preincarnate Christ because in some texts the angel is identified with the LORD himself. However, see the note on the phrase “the LORD’s angel” in Gen 16:7.

the boy!”¹ the angel said.² “Do not do anything to him, for now I know³ that you fear⁴ God because you did not withhold your son, your only son, from me.”

22:13 Abraham looked up⁵ and saw⁶ behind him⁷ a ram caught in the bushes by its horns. So he⁸ went over and got the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. **22:14** And Abraham called the name of that place “The LORD provides.”⁹ It is said to this day,¹⁰ “In the mountain of the LORD provision will be made.”¹¹

22:15 The LORD’s angel called to Abraham a second time from heaven **22:16** and said, “I solemnly swear by my own name,¹² decrees the LORD,¹³ ‘that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, **22:17** I will indeed bless you,¹⁴ and I will greatly multiply¹⁵ your descendants¹⁶ so that they will be as countless as the stars in the sky or the grains of

sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession¹⁷ of the strongholds¹⁸ of their enemies. **22:18** Because you have obeyed me,¹⁹ all the nations of the earth will pronounce blessings on one another²⁰ using the name of your descendants.”

22:19 Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set out together²¹ for Beer Sheba where Abraham stayed.²²

22:20 After these things Abraham was told, “Milcah²³ also has borne children to your brother Nahor – **22:21** Uz the firstborn, his brother Buz, Kemuel (the father of Aram),²⁴ **22:22** Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel.” **22:23** (Now²⁵ Bethuel became the father of Rebekah.) These were the eight sons Milcah bore to Abraham’s brother Nahor. **22:24** His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore him children – Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

The Death of Sarah

23:1 Sarah lived 127 years.²⁶ **23:2** Then she²⁷ died in Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan. Abraham went to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.²⁸

¹ **tn** Heb “Do not extend your hand toward the boy.”

² **tn** Heb “and he said, ‘Do not extend...’”; the referent (the angel) has been attention in the context for clarity. The order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³ **sn** For now I know. The text was designed to see if Abraham would be obedient (see v. 1).

⁴ **sn** In this context *fear* refers by metonymy to obedience that grows from faith.

⁵ **tn** Heb “lifted his eyes.”

⁶ **tn** Heb “and saw, and look.” The particle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*, “look”) draws attention to what Abraham saw and invites the audience to view the scene through his eyes.

⁷ **tc** The translation follows the reading of the MT; a number of Hebrew MSS, the LXX, Syriac, and Samaritan Pentateuch read “one” (אֶחָד, *’ekhad*) instead of “behind him” (אַחֵרֵי, *’akhar*).

⁸ **tn** Heb “Abraham”; the proper name has been replaced by the pronoun (“he”) in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁹ **tn** Heb “the LORD sees” (יִרְאֶה יְהוָה, *yir’eh*, traditionally transliterated “Jehovah Jireh”; see the note on the word “provide” in v. 8). By so naming the place Abraham preserved in the memory of God’s people the amazing event that took place there.

¹⁰ **sn** On the expression to *this day* see B. Childs, “A Study of the Formula ‘Until this Day,’” *JBL* 82 (1963): 279-92.

¹¹ **sn** The saying connected with these events has some ambiguity, which was probably intended. The Niphal verb could be translated (1) “in the mountain of the LORD it will be seen/provided” or (2) “in the mountain the LORD will appear.” If the temple later stood here (see the note on “Moriah” in Gen 22:2), the latter interpretation might find support, for the people went to the temple to appear before the LORD, who “appeared” to them by providing for them his power and blessings. See S. R. Driver, *Genesis*, 219.

¹² **tn** Heb “By myself I swear.”

¹³ **tn** Heb “the oracle of the LORD.” The phrase refers to a formal oracle or decree from the LORD.

¹⁴ **tn** The use of the infinitive absolute before the finite verbal form (either an imperfect or cohortative) emphasizes the certainty of the blessing.

¹⁵ **tn** Here too the infinitive absolute is used for emphasis before the following finite verb (either an imperfect or cohortative).

¹⁶ **sn** I will greatly multiply. The LORD here ratifies his earlier promise to give Abram a multitude of descendants. For further discussion see R. B. Chisholm, “Evidence from Genesis,” *A Case for Premillennialism*, 35-54.

¹⁷ **tn** The Hebrew term זָרַע (*zera’*) occurring here and in v. 18 may mean “seed” (for planting), “offspring” (occasionally of animals, but usually of people), or “descendants” depending on the context.

¹⁷ **tn** Or “inherit.”

¹⁸ **tn** Heb “gate,” which here stands for a walled city. To break through the gate complex would be to conquer the city, for the gate complex was the main area of defense (hence the translation “stronghold”).

¹⁹ **tn** In the Hebrew text this causal clause comes at the end of the sentence. The translation alters the word order for stylistic reasons.

²⁰ **sn** Because you have obeyed me. Abraham’s obedience brought God’s ratification of the earlier conditional promise (see Gen 12:2).

²¹ **tn** Traditionally the verb is taken as passive (“will be blessed”) here, as if Abraham’s descendants were going to be a channel or source of blessing to the nations. But the Hitpael is better understood here as reflexive/reciprocal, “will bless [i.e., pronounce blessings on] themselves/one another” (see also Gen 26:4). Elsewhere the Hitpael of the verb “to bless” is used with a reflexive/reciprocal sense in Deut 29:18; Ps 72:17; Isa 65:16; Jer 4:2. Gen 12:2 predicts that Abram will be held up as a paradigm of divine blessing and that people will use his name in their blessing formulae. For examples of blessing formulae utilizing an individual as an example of blessing see Gen 48:20 and Ruth 4:11. Earlier formulations of this promise (see Gen 12:2; 18:18) use the Niphal stem. (See also Gen 28:14.)

²² **tn** Heb “and they arose and went together.”

²³ **tn** Heb “and Abraham stayed in Beer Sheba. This has been translated as a relative clause for stylistic reasons.

²⁴ **tn** In the Hebrew text the sentence begins with הִנֵּה (*hinneh*, “look”) which draws attention to the statement.

²⁵ **sn** This parenthetical note about Kemuel’s descendant is probably a later insertion by the author/compiler of Genesis and not part of the original announcement.

²⁶ **tn** The disjunctive clause gives information that is important but parenthetical to the narrative. Rebekah would become the wife of Isaac (Gen 24:15).

²⁷ **tn** Heb “And the years of Sarah were one hundred years and twenty years and seven years, the years of the life of Sarah.”

²⁸ **tn** Heb “Sarah.” The proper name has been replaced in the translation by the pronoun (“she”) for stylistic reasons.

²⁹ **sn** Mourn...weep. The description here is of standard mourning rites (see K. A. Kitchen, *NBD*³ 149-50). They would have been carried out in the presence of the corpse, probably in Sarah’s tent. So Abraham came in to mourn; then he rose up to go and bury his dead (v. 3).

23:3 Then Abraham got up from mourning his dead wife¹ and said to the sons of Heth,² 23:4 “I am a temporary settler³ among you. Grant⁴ me ownership⁵ of a burial site among you so that I may⁶ bury my dead.”⁷

23:5 The sons of Heth answered Abraham,⁸ 23:6 “Listen, sir,⁹ you are a mighty prince¹⁰ among us! You may bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will refuse you his tomb to prevent you¹¹ from burying your dead.”

23:7 Abraham got up and bowed down to the local people,¹² the sons of Heth. 23:8 Then he said to them, “If you agree¹³ that I may bury my dead,¹⁴ then hear me out.¹⁵ Ask¹⁶ Ephron the son of Zohar 23:9 if he will sell¹⁷ me the cave of Machpelah that belongs to him; it is at the end of his field. Let him sell it to me publicly¹⁸ for the full price,¹⁹ so that I may own it as a burial site.”

23:10 (Now Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth.) Ephron the Hethite²⁰ replied to

Abraham in the hearing²¹ of the sons of Heth – before all who entered the gate²² of his city – 23:11 “No, my lord! Hear me out. I sell²³ you both the field and the cave that is in it.²⁴ In the presence of my people²⁵ I sell it to you. Bury your dead.”

23:12 Abraham bowed before the local people 23:13 and said to Ephron in their hearing, “Hear me, if you will. I pay²⁶ to you the price²⁷ of the field. Take it from me so that I may²⁸ bury my dead there.”

23:14 Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, 23:15 “Hear me, my lord. The land is worth²⁹ 400 pieces of silver,³⁰ but what is that between me and you? So bury your dead.”

23:16 So Abraham agreed to Ephron’s price³¹ and weighed³² out for him³³ the price³⁴ that Ephron had quoted³⁵ in the hearing of the sons of Heth – 400 pieces of silver, according to the standard measurement at the time.³⁶

23:17 So Abraham secured³⁷ Ephron’s field in Machpelah, next to Mamre, including the field, the cave that was in it, and all the trees that were in the field and all around its border, 23:18 as his property in the presence of the sons of

¹ *tn* *Heb* “And Abraham arose from upon the face of his dead.”

² *tn* Some translate the Hebrew term “Heth” as “Hittites” here (also in vv. 5, 7, 10, 16, 18, 20), but this gives the impression that these people were the classical Hittites of Anatolia. However, there is no known connection between these sons of Heth, apparently a Canaanite group (see Gen 10:15), and the Hittites of Asia Minor. See H. A. Hoffner, Jr., “Hittites,” *Peoples of the Old Testament World*, 152-53.

³ *tn* *Heb* “a resident foreigner and a settler.”

⁴ *tn* *Heb* “give,” which is used here as an idiom for “sell” (see v. 9). The idiom reflects the polite bartering that was done in the culture at the time.

⁵ *tn* Or “possession.”

⁶ *tn* Following the imperative, the cohortative with the prefixed conjunction expresses purpose.

⁷ *tn* *Heb* “bury my dead out of my sight.” The last phrase “out of my sight” has not been included in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁸ *tn* *Heb* “answered Abraham saying to him.”

⁹ *tn* *Heb* “Hear us, my lord.”

¹⁰ *tn* *Heb* “prince of God.” The divine name may be used here as a means of expressing the superlative, “mighty prince.” The word for “prince” probably means “tribal chief” here. See M. H. Gottstein, “*Nasi* ‘*elohim*’ (Gen 23:6),” *VT* 3 (1953) 298-99; and D. W. Thomas, “Consideration of Some Unusual Ways of Expressing the Superlative in Hebrew,” *VT* 3 (1953) 215-16.

¹¹ *tn* The phrase “to prevent you” has been added in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹² *tn* *Heb* “to the people of the land” (also in v. 12).

¹³ *tn* *Heb* “If it is with your purpose.” The Hebrew noun **צָדָה** (*nefesh*) here has the nuance “purpose” or perhaps “desire” (see BDB 661 s.v. **צָדָה**).

¹⁴ *tn* *Heb* “bury my dead out of my sight.” The last phrase “out of my sight” has not been included in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁵ *tn* Or “hear me.”

¹⁶ *tn* *Heb* “intercede for me with.”

¹⁷ *tn* *Heb* “give.” This is used here (also a second time later in this verse) as an idiom for “sell”; see the note on the word “grant” in v. 4.

¹⁸ *tn* *Heb* “in your presence.”

¹⁹ *tn* *Heb* “silver.”

²⁰ *tn* Or perhaps “Hittite,” but see the note on the name “Heth” in v. 3.

²¹ *tn* *Heb* “ears.” By metonymy the “ears” stand for the presence or proximity (i.e., within earshot) of the persons named.

²² *sn* On the expression *all who entered the gate* see E. A. Speiser, “‘Coming’ and ‘Going’ at the City Gate,” *BASOR* 144 (1956): 20-23; and G. Evans, “‘Coming’ and ‘Going’ at the City Gate: A Discussion of Professor Speiser’s Paper,” *BASOR* 150 (1958): 28-33.

²³ *tn* *Heb* “give.” The perfect tense has here a present nuance; this is a formal, legally binding declaration. Abraham asked only for a burial site/cave within the field; Ephron agrees to sell him the entire field.

²⁴ *tn* The Hebrew text adds “to you I give [i.e., sell] it.” This is redundant in English and has not been translated for stylistic reasons.

²⁵ *tn* *Heb* “in the presence of the sons of my people.”

²⁶ *tn* *Heb* “give.”

²⁷ *tn* *Heb* “silver.”

²⁸ *tn* After the imperative, the cohortative with the prefixed conjunction expresses purpose or result.

²⁹ *tn* The word “worth” has been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³⁰ *sn* *Four hundred pieces of silver.* The standards for weighing money varied considerably in the ancient Near East, but the generally accepted weight for the shekel is 11.5 grams (0.4 ounce). This makes the weight of silver here 4.6 kilograms, or 160 ounces (about 10 pounds).

³¹ *tn* *Heb* “listened to Ephron.”

³² *tn* *Heb* “and Abraham weighed out.”

³³ *tn* *Heb* “to Ephron.” The proper name has been replaced by the pronoun (“him”) in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³⁴ *tn* *Heb* “silver.”

³⁵ *tn* *Heb* “that he had spoken.” The referent (Ephron) has been specified here in the translation for clarity and for stylistic reasons.

³⁶ *tn* *Heb* “passing for the merchant.” The final clause affirms that the measurement of silver was according to the standards used by the merchants of the time.

³⁷ *tn* *Heb* “And it was conveyed.” The recipient, Abraham (mentioned in the Hebrew text at the beginning of v. 18) has been placed here in the translation for stylistic reasons.

Heth before all who entered the gate of Ephron's city.¹

23:19 After this Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave in the field of Machpelah next to Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan. **23:20** So Abraham secured the field and the cave that was in it as a burial site² from the sons of Heth.

The Wife for Isaac

24:1 Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years,³ and the LORD had blessed him⁴ in everything. **24:2** Abraham said to his servant, the senior one⁵ in his household who was in charge of everything he had, "Put your hand under my thigh⁶ **24:3** so that I may make you solemnly promise⁷ by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of the earth: You must not acquire⁸ a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living. **24:4** You must go instead to my country and to my relatives⁹ to find¹⁰ a wife for my son Isaac."

24:5 The servant asked him, "What if the woman is not willing to come back with me¹¹ to this land? Must I then¹² take your son back to the land from which you came?"

24:6 "Be careful¹³ never to take my son back there!" Abraham told him.¹⁴ **24:7** "The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and the land of my relatives,¹⁵ promised me with a solemn oath,¹⁶ 'To your descendants I will give this land.' He will send his angel¹⁷ before you so that you may find¹⁸ a wife for my

son from there. **24:8** But if the woman is not willing to come back with you,¹⁹ you will be free²⁰ from this oath of mine. But you must not take my son back there!" **24:9** So the servant placed his hand under the thigh of his master Abraham and gave his solemn promise he would carry out his wishes.²¹

24:10 Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed with all kinds of gifts from his master at his disposal.²² He journeyed²³ to the region of Aram Naharaim²⁴ and the city of Nahor. **24:11** He made the camels kneel down by the well²⁵ outside the city. It was evening,²⁶ the time when the women would go out to draw water. **24:12** He prayed, "O LORD, God of my master Abraham, guide me today.²⁷ Be faithful²⁸ to my master Abraham. **24:13** Here I am, standing by the spring,²⁹ and the daughters of the people³⁰ who live in the town are coming out to draw water. **24:14** I will say to a young woman, 'Please lower your jar so I may drink.' May the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac reply, 'Drink, and I'll give your camels water too.'³¹ In this way I will know that you have been faithful to my master."³²

24:15 Before he had finished praying, there came Rebekah³³ with her water jug on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah (Milcah was the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor).³⁴ **24:16** Now the young woman

¹⁹ tn Heb "to go after you."

²⁰ sn You will be free. If the prospective bride was not willing to accompany the servant back to Canaan, the servant would be released from his oath to Abraham.

²¹ tn Heb "and he swore to him concerning this matter."

²² tn Heb "and every good thing of his master was in his hand." The disjunctive clause is circumstantial, explaining that he took all kinds of gifts to be used at his discretion.

²³ tn Heb "and he arose and went."

²⁴ tn The words "the region of" are not in the Hebrew text, but are supplied in the translation for clarity.

sn Aram Naharaim means in Hebrew "Aram of the Two Rivers," a region in northern Mesopotamia.

²⁵ tn Heb "well of water."

²⁶ tn Heb "at the time of evening."

²⁷ tn Heb "make it happen before me today." Although a number of English translations understand this as a request for success in the task (cf. NASB, NIV, NRSV) it is more likely that the servant is requesting an omen or sign from God (v. 14).

²⁸ tn Heb "act in loyal love with" or "show kindness to."

²⁹ tn Heb "the spring of water."

³⁰ tn Heb "the men."

³¹ sn I will also give your camels water. It would be an enormous test for a young woman to water ten camels. The idea is that such a woman would not only be industrious but hospitable and generous.

³² tn Heb "And let the young woman to whom I say, 'Lower your jar that I may drink,' and she says, 'Drink and I will also give your camels water,' - her you have appointed for your servant, for Isaac, and by it I will know that you have acted in faithfulness with my master."

³³ tn Heb "Look, Rebekah was coming out!" Using the participle introduced with הִנֵּה (*hinneh*, "look"), the narrator dramatically transports the audience back into the event and invites them to see Rebekah through the servant's eyes.

³⁴ tn Heb "Look, Rebekah was coming out - [she] who was born to Bethuel, the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, the brother of Abraham - and her jug [was] on her shoulder." The

¹ tn Heb "his city"; the referent (Ephron) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

sn See G. M. Tucker, "The Legal Background of Genesis 23," *JBL* 85 (1966):77-84; and M. R. Lehmann, "Abraham's Purchase of Machpelah and Hittite Law," *BASOR* 129 (1953): 15-18.

² tn Heb "possession of a grave."

³ tn Heb "days."

⁴ tn Heb "Abraham." The proper name has been replaced in the translation by the pronoun ("he") for stylistic reasons.

⁵ tn The Hebrew term זָקֵן (*zaqen*) may refer to the servant who is oldest in age or senior in authority (or both).

⁶ sn Put your hand under my thigh. The taking of this oath had to do with the sanctity of the family and the continuation of the family line. See D. R. Freedman, "Put Your Hand Under My Thigh - the Patriarchal Oath," *BAR* 2 (1976): 2-4, 42.

⁷ tn Following the imperative, the cohortative with the prefixed conjunction indicates purpose.

⁸ tn Heb "because you must not take."

⁹ tn Heb "for to my country and my relatives you must go."

¹⁰ tn Heb "and take."

¹¹ tn Heb "to go after me."

¹² tn In the Hebrew text the construction is emphatic; the infinitive absolute precedes the imperfect. However, it is difficult to reflect this emphasis in an English translation.

¹³ tn Heb "guard yourself."

¹⁴ tn The introductory clause "And Abraham said to him" has been moved to the end of the opening sentence of direct discourse in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁵ tn Or "the land of my birth."

¹⁶ tn Heb "and who spoke to me and who swore to me, saying."

¹⁷ tn Or "his messenger."

¹⁸ tn Heb "before you and you will take."

was very beautiful. She was a virgin; no man had ever had sexual relations with her.¹ She went down to the spring, filled her jug, and came back up. **24:17** Abraham's servant² ran to meet her and said, "Please give me a sip of water from your jug." **24:18** "Drink, my lord," she replied, and quickly lowering³ her jug to her hands, she gave him a drink. **24:19** When she had done so,⁴ she said, "I'll draw water for your camels too, until they have drunk as much as they want." **24:20** She quickly emptied⁵ her jug into the watering trough and ran back to the well to draw more water until she had drawn enough for all his camels. **24:21** Silently the man watched her with interest to determine⁶ if the LORD had made his journey successful⁷ or not.

24:22 After the camels had finished drinking, the man took out a gold nose ring weighing a beka⁸ and two gold bracelets weighing ten shekels⁹ and gave them to her.¹⁰ **24:23** "Whose daughter are you?" he asked.¹¹ "Tell me, is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?"

24:24 She said to him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, whom Milcah bore to Nahor.¹² **24:25** We have plenty of straw and feed," she added,¹³ "and room for you¹⁴ to spend the night."

24:26 The man bowed his head and worshiped the LORD, **24:27** saying "Praised be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his faithful love¹⁵ for my master! The LORD has led me¹⁶ to the house¹⁷ of my master's relatives!"¹⁸

24:28 The young woman ran and told her mother's household all about¹⁹ these things. **24:29** (Now Rebekah had a brother named Laban.)²⁰ Laban rushed out to meet the man at the spring. **24:30** When he saw the bracelets on his sister's wrists and the nose ring²¹ and heard his sister Rebekah say,²² "This is what the man said to me," he went out to meet the man. There he was, standing²³ by the camels near the spring. **24:31** Laban said to him,²⁴ "Come, you who are blessed by the LORD!²⁵ Why are you standing out here when I have prepared²⁶ the house and a place for the camels?"

24:32 So Abraham's servant²⁷ went to the house and unloaded²⁸ the camels. Straw and feed were given²⁹ to the camels, and water was provided so that he and the men who were with him could wash their feet.³⁰ **24:33** When food was served,³¹ he said, "I will not eat until I have said what I want to say."³² "Tell us," Laban said.³³

order of the clauses has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹ **tn** Heb "And the young woman was very good of appearance, a virgin, and a man she had not known." Some argue that the Hebrew noun translated "virgin" (בְּתוּלָה, *b'tulah*) is better understood in a general sense, "young woman" (see Joel 1:8, where the word appears to refer to one who is married). In this case the circumstantial clause ("and a man she had not known") would be restrictive, rather than descriptive. If the term actually means "virgin," one wonders why the circumstantial clause is necessary (see Judg 21:12 as well). Perhaps the repetition emphasizes her sexual purity as a prerequisite for her role as the mother of the covenant community.

² **tn** Heb "and the servant." The word "Abraham's" has been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³ **tn** Heb "and she hurried and lowered."

⁴ **tn** Heb "when she had finished giving him a drink." This has been simplified in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁵ **tn** Heb "and she hurried and emptied."

⁶ **tn** Heb "to know."

⁷ **tn** The Hebrew term צָלַח (*tsalah*), meaning "to make successful" in the Hiphil verbal stem, is a key term in the story (see vv. 40, 42, 56).

⁸ **sn** A *beka* weighed about 5-6 grams (0.2 ounce).

⁹ **sn** A *shekel* weighed about 11.5 grams (0.4 ounce) although weights varied locally, so these bracelets weighed about 4 ounces (11.5 grams).

¹⁰ **tn** The words "and gave them to her" are not in the Hebrew text, but are implied.

¹¹ **tn** Heb "and he said, 'Whose daughter are you?'" The order of the introductory clause has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹² **tn** Heb "whom she bore to Nahor." The referent (Milcah) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹³ **tn** Heb "and she said, 'We have plenty of both straw and feed.'" The order of the introductory clause has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁴ **tn** Heb The words "for you" are not in the Hebrew text, but are implied.

¹⁵ **tn** Heb "his faithfulness and his commitment."

¹⁶ **tn** Heb "As for me - in the way the LORD led me."

¹⁷ **tn** Here "house" is an adverbial accusative of termination.

¹⁸ **tn** Heb "brothers."

¹⁹ **tn** Heb "according to."

²⁰ **tn** The parenthetical disjunctive clause introduces the audience to Laban, who will eventually play an important role in the unfolding story.

²¹ **tn** Heb "And it was when he saw the nose ring and the bracelets on the arms of his sister." The word order is altered in the translation for the sake of clarity.

²² **tn** Heb "and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying."

²³ **tn** Heb "and look, he was standing." The disjunctive clause with the participle following the particle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*) invites the audience to view the scene through Laban's eyes.

²⁴ **tn** Heb "and he said." The referent (Laban) has been specified and the words "to him" supplied in the translation for clarity.

²⁵ **sn** Laban's obsession with wealth is apparent; to him it represents how one is *blessed by the LORD*. Already the author is laying the foundation for subsequent events in the narrative, where Laban's greed becomes his dominant characteristic.

²⁶ **tn** The disjunctive clause is circumstantial.

²⁷ **tn** Heb "the man"; the referent (Abraham's servant) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁸ **tn** Some translations (e.g., NEB, NASB, NRSV) understand Laban to be the subject of this and the following verbs or take the subject of this and the following verbs as indefinite (referring to an unnamed servant; e.g., NAB, NIV).

²⁹ **tn** Heb "and [one] gave." The verb without an expressed subject may be translated as passive.

³⁰ **tn** Heb "and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him."

³¹ **tn** Heb "and food was placed before him."

³² **tn** Heb "my words."

³³ **tc** Some ancient textual witnesses have a plural verb, "and they said."

tn Heb "and he said, 'Speak.'" The referent (Laban) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

24:34 “I am the servant of Abraham,” he began. 24:35 “The LORD has richly blessed my master and he has become very wealthy.¹ The LORD² HAS GIVEN HIM SHEEP AND CATTLE, SILVER AND GOLD, MALE AND FEMALE SERVANTS, AND CAMELS AND DONKEYS. 24:36 My master’s wife Sarah bore a son to him³ when she was old,⁴ and my master⁵ has given him everything he owns. 24:37 My master made me swear an oath. He said, “You must not acquire a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, 24:38 but you must go to the family of my father and to my relatives to find⁶ a wife for my son.” 24:39 But I said to my master, “What if the woman does not want to go⁷ with me?”⁸ 24:40 He answered, “The LORD, before whom I have walked,⁹ will send his angel with you. He will make your journey a success and you will find a wife for my son from among my relatives, from my father’s family. 24:41 You will be free from your oath¹⁰ if you go to my relatives and they will not give her to you. Then you will be free from your oath.” 24:42 When I came to the spring today, I prayed, “O LORD, God of my master Abraham, if you have decided to make my journey successful,¹¹ may events unfold as follows.¹² 24:43 Here I am, standing by the spring.¹³ When¹⁴ the young woman goes out to draw water, I’ll say, “Give me a little water to drink from your jug.” 24:44 Then she will reply to me, “Drink, and I’ll draw water for your camels too.” May that woman be the one whom the LORD has chosen for my master’s son.”

24:45 “Before I finished praying in my heart,¹⁵ along came Rebekah¹⁶ with her water jug on her shoulder! She went down to the spring and drew water. So I said to her, ‘Please give me a drink.’ 24:46 She quickly lowered her jug from her shoulder and said, ‘Drink, and I’ll give your camels water too.’ So I drank, and she also gave the camels water. 24:47 Then I asked her, ‘Whose daughter are you?’ She replied, ‘The daughter of Bethuel the son of Nahor, whom Milcah bore to Nahor.’¹⁷ I put the ring in her nose and the bracelets on her wrists. 24:48 Then I bowed down and worshiped the LORD. I praised the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me on the right path to find the granddaughter¹⁸ of my master’s brother for his son. 24:49 Now, if you will show faithful love to my master, tell me. But if not, tell me as well, so that I may go on my way.”¹⁹

24:50 Then Laban and Bethuel replied, “This is the LORD’s doing.²⁰ Our wishes are of no concern.²¹ 24:51 Rebekah stands here before you. Take her and go so that she may become²² the wife of your master’s son, just as the LORD has decided.”²³

24:52 When Abraham’s servant heard their words, he bowed down to the ground before the LORD. 24:53 Then he²⁴ brought out gold, silver jewelry, and clothing and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave valuable gifts to her brother and to her mother. 24:54 After this, he and the men who were with him ate a meal and stayed there overnight.²⁵

When they got up in the morning, he said, “Let me leave now so I can return to my

¹ **tn** Heb “great.” In this context the statement refers primarily to Abraham’s material wealth, although reputation and influence are not excluded.

² **tn** Heb “and he.” The referent (the LORD) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³ **tn** Heb “to my master.” This has been replaced by the pronoun “him” in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁴ **tn** Heb “after her old age.”

⁵ **tn** Heb “and he.” The referent (the servant’s master, Abraham) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁶ **tn** Heb “but to the house of my father you must go and to my family and you must take a wife for my son.”

⁷ **tn** The imperfect is used here in a modal sense to indicate desire.

⁸ **tn** Heb “after me.”

⁹ **tn** The verb is the Hitpael of **הָלַךְ** (*halakh*), meaning “live one’s life” (see Gen 17:1). The statement may simply refer to serving the LORD or it may have a more positive moral connotation (“serve faithfully”).

¹⁰ **tn** Heb “my oath” (twice in this verse). From the Hebrew perspective the oath belonged to the person to whom it was sworn (Abraham), although in contemporary English an oath is typically viewed as belonging to the person who swears it (the servant).

¹¹ **tn** Heb “if you are making successful my way on which I am going.”

¹² **tn** The words “may events unfold as follows” are supplied in the translation for clarification and for stylistic reasons.

¹³ **tn** Heb “the spring of water.”

¹⁴ **tn** Heb “and it will be.”

¹⁵ **tn** Heb “As for me, before I finished speaking to my heart.” The adverb **תֵּרַם** (*terem*) indicates the verb is a preterite; the infinitive that follows is the direct object.

¹⁶ **tn** Heb “Look, Rebekah was coming out.” As in 24:15, the particle **הִנֵּה** (*hinneh*, “look”) is used here for dramatic effect.

¹⁷ **tn** Heb “whom Milcah bore to him.” The referent (Nahor) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁸ **tn** Heb “daughter.” Rebekah was actually the granddaughter of Nahor, Abraham’s brother. One can either translate the Hebrew term **בַּת** (*bat*) as “daughter,” in which case the term **אָח** (*akh*) must be translated more generally as “relative” rather than “brother” (cf. NASB, NRSV) or one can translate **בַּת** as “granddaughter,” in which case **אָח** may be translated “brother” (cf. NIV).

¹⁹ **tn** Heb “and I will turn to the right or to the left.” The expression apparently means that Abraham’s servant will know where he should go if there is no further business here.

²⁰ **tn** Heb “From the LORD the matter has gone out.”

²¹ **tn** Heb “We are not able to speak to you bad or good.” This means that Laban and Bethuel could not say one way or the other what they wanted, for they viewed it as God’s will.

²² **tn** Following the imperatives, the jussive with the prefixed conjunction indicates purpose or result.

²³ **tn** Heb “as the LORD has spoken.”

²⁴ **tn** Heb “the servant”; the noun has been replaced by the pronoun (“he”) in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁵ **tn** Heb “And they ate and drank, he and the men who [were] with him and they spent the night.”

master.”¹ **24:55** But Rebekah’s² brother and her mother replied, “Let the girl stay with us a few more days, perhaps ten. Then she can go.” **24:56** But he said to them, “Don’t detain me – the LORD³ has granted me success on my journey. Let me leave now so I may return⁴ to my master.” **24:57** Then they said, “We’ll call the girl and find out what she wants to do.”⁵ **24:58** So they called Rebekah and asked her, “Do you want⁶ to go with this man?” She replied, “I want to go.”

24:59 So they sent their sister Rebekah on her way, accompanied by her female attendant, with Abraham’s servant and his men. **24:60** They blessed Rebekah with these words:⁷

“Our sister, may you become the mother⁸ of thousands of ten thousands!
May your descendants possess the strongholds⁹ of their enemies.”

24:61 Then Rebekah and her female servants mounted the camels and rode away with¹⁰ the man. So Abraham’s servant¹¹ took Rebekah and left.

24:62 Now¹² Isaac came from¹³ Beer Lahai Roi,¹⁴ for¹⁵ he was living in the Negev.¹⁶ **24:63** He¹⁷ went out to relax¹⁸ in the field in the early evening.¹⁹ Then he looked up²⁰ and saw that²¹

there were camels approaching. **24:64** Rebekah looked up²² and saw Isaac. She got down from her camel **24:65** and asked²³ Abraham’s servant,²⁴ “Who is that man walking in the field toward us?” “That is my master,” the servant replied.²⁵ So she took her veil and covered herself.

24:66 The servant told Isaac everything that had happened. **24:67** Then Isaac brought Rebekah²⁶ into his mother Sarah’s tent. He took her²⁷ as his wife and loved her.²⁸ So Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.²⁹

The Death of Abraham

25:1 Abraham had taken³⁰ another³¹ wife, named Keturah. **25:2** She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. **25:3** Jokshan became the father of Sheba and Dedan.³² The descendants of Dedan were the Asshurites, Letushites, and Leummites. **25:4** The sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoah, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were descendants³³ of Keturah.

25:5 Everything he owned Abraham left to his son Isaac. **25:6** But while he was still alive, Abraham gave gifts to the sons of his concubines³⁴ and sent them off to the east, away from his son Isaac.³⁵

¹ tn Heb “Send me away to my master.”

² tn Heb “her”; the referent (Rebekah) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³ tn The disjunctive clause is circumstantial, indicating a reason for the preceding request.

⁴ tn After the preceding imperative, the cohortative with the prefixed conjunction indicates purpose or result.

⁵ tn Heb “and we will ask her mouth.”

⁶ tn The imperfect verbal form here has a modal nuance, expressing desire.

⁷ tn Heb “and said to her.”

⁸ tn Heb “become thousands of ten thousands.”

sn *May you become the mother of thousands of ten thousands.* The blessing expresses their prayer that she produce children and start a family line that will greatly increase (cf. Gen 17:16).

⁹ tn Heb “gate,” which here stands for a walled city. In an ancient Near Eastern city the gate complex was the main area of defense (hence the translation “stronghold”). A similar phrase occurs in Gen 22:17.

¹⁰ tn Heb “And she arose, Rebekah and her female servants, and they rode upon camels and went after.”

¹¹ tn Heb “the servant”; the word “Abraham’s” has been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹² tn The disjunctive clause switches the audience’s attention to Isaac and signals a new episode in the story.

¹³ tn Heb “from the way of.”

¹⁴ sn The Hebrew name *Beer Lahai Roi* (בְּאֵר לַחַי רֹאִי, *b^eer lakhay ro’i*) means “The well of the Living One who sees me.” See Gen 16:14.

¹⁵ tn This disjunctive clause is explanatory.

¹⁶ tn Or “the South [country].”

sn *Negev* is the name for the southern desert region in the land of Canaan.

¹⁷ tn Heb “Isaac”; the proper name has been replaced by the pronoun (“he”) in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁸ tn The meaning of this Hebrew term is uncertain (cf. NASB, NIV “to meditate”; NRSV “to walk”).

¹⁹ tn Heb “at the turning of the evening.”

²⁰ tn Heb “And he lifted up his eyes.” This idiom emphasizes the careful look Isaac had at the approaching caravan.

²¹ tn Heb “and look.” The clause introduced by the particle

הִנֵּה (*hinneh*, “look”) invites the audience to view the scene through Isaac’s eyes.

²² tn Heb “lifted up her eyes.”

²³ tn Heb “and she said to.”

²⁴ tn Heb “the servant.” The word “Abraham’s” has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

²⁵ tn Heb “and the servant said.” The order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁶ tn Heb “her”; the referent has been specified here in the translation for clarity.

²⁷ tn Heb “Rebekah”; here the proper name was replaced by the pronoun (“her”) in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁸ tn Heb “and he took Rebekah and she became his wife and he loved her.”

²⁹ tn Heb “after his mother.” This must refer to Sarah’s death.

³⁰ tn Or “took.”

sn *Abraham had taken another wife.* These events are not necessarily in chronological order following the events of the preceding chapter. They are listed here to summarize Abraham’s other descendants before the narrative of his death.

³¹ tn Heb “And Abraham added and took.”

³² sn The names *Sheba* and *Dedan* appear in Gen 10:7 as descendants of Ham through Cush and Raamah. Since these two names are usually interpreted to be place names, one plausible suggestion is that some of Abraham’s descendants lived in those regions and took names linked with it.

³³ tn Or “sons.”

³⁴ tn Heb “the sons of the concubines who [belonged] to Abraham.”

³⁵ tn Heb “And he sent them away from upon Isaac his son, while he was still living, eastward to the land of the east.”

25:7 Abraham lived a total of¹ 175 years. 25:8 Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man who had lived a full life.² He joined his ancestors.³ 25:9 His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah⁴ near Mamre, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar, the Hethite. 25:10 This was the field Abraham had purchased from the sons of Heth.⁵ There Abraham was buried with his wife Sarah. 25:11 After Abraham's death, God blessed⁶ his son Isaac. Isaac lived near Beer Lahai Roi.⁷

The Sons of Ishmael

25:12 This is the account of Abraham's son Ishmael,⁸ whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's servant, bore to Abraham.

25:13 These are the names of Ishmael's sons, by their names according to their records:⁹ Nebaioth (Ishmael's firstborn), Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, 25:14 Mishma, Dumah, Massa, 25:15 Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. 25:16 These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names by their settlements and their camps – twelve princes¹⁰ according to their clans.

25:17 Ishmael lived a total of¹¹ 137 years. He breathed his last and died; then he joined his ancestors.¹² 25:18 His descendants¹³ settled from

Havilah to Shur, which runs next¹⁴ to Egypt all the way¹⁵ to Asshur.¹⁶ They settled¹⁷ away from all their relatives.¹⁸

Jacob and Esau

25:19 This is the account of Isaac,¹⁹ the son of Abraham.

Abraham became the father of Isaac. 25:20 When Isaac was forty years old, he married Rebekah,²⁰ the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram and sister of Laban the Aramean.²¹

25:21 Isaac prayed to²² the LORD on behalf of his wife because she was childless. The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. 25:22 But the children struggled²³ inside her, and she said, "If it is going to be like this, I'm not so sure I want to be pregnant!"²⁴ So she asked the LORD,²⁵ 25:23 and the LORD said to her,

"Two nations²⁶ are in your womb,

¹⁴ tn Heb "which is by the face of," or near the border. The territory ran along the border of Egypt.

¹⁵ tn Heb "as you go."

¹⁶ sn The name Asshur refers here to a tribal area in the Sinai.

¹⁷ tn Heb "he fell."

¹⁸ tn Heb "upon the face of all his brothers." This last expression, obviously alluding to the earlier oracle about Ishmael (Gen 16:12), could mean that the descendants of Ishmael lived in hostility to others or that they lived in a territory that was opposite the lands of their relatives. While there is some ambiguity about the meaning, the line probably does give a hint of the Ishmaelite-Israelite conflicts to come.

¹⁹ sn This is the account of Isaac. What follows for several chapters is not the account of Isaac, except briefly, but the account of Jacob and Esau. The next chapters tell what became of Isaac and his family.

²⁰ tn Heb "And Isaac was the son of forty years when he took Rebekah."

²¹ sn Some valuable information is provided here. We learn here that Isaac married thirty-five years before Abraham died, that Rebekah was barren for twenty years, and that Abraham would have lived to see Jacob and Esau begin to grow up. The death of Abraham was recorded in the first part of the chapter as a "tidying up" of one generation before beginning the account of the next.

²² tn The Hebrew verb *עָתַר* (*atar*), translated "prayed [to]" here, appears in the story of God's judgment on Egypt in which Moses asked the LORD to remove the plagues. The cognate word in Arabic means "to slaughter for sacrifice," and the word is used in Zeph 3:10 to describe worshipers who bring offerings. Perhaps some ritual accompanied Isaac's prayer here.

²³ tn The Hebrew word used here suggests a violent struggle that was out of the ordinary.

²⁴ tn Heb "If [it is] so, why [am] I this [way]?" Rebekah wanted to know what was happening to her, but the question itself reflects a growing despair over the struggle of the unborn children.

²⁵ sn Asked the LORD. In other passages (e.g., 1 Sam 9:9) this expression refers to inquiring of a prophet, but no details are provided here.

²⁶ sn By metonymy the two children in her womb are described as two nations of which the two children, Jacob and Esau, would become the fathers. The language suggests there would be a struggle between these nations, with one being stronger than the other. The oracle reveals that all of Jacob's scheming was unnecessary in the final analysis. He would have become the dominant nation without using deception to steal his brother's blessing.

¹ tn Heb "and these are the days of the years of the lifetime of Abraham that he lived." The normal genealogical formula is expanded here due to the importance of the life of Abraham.

² tn Heb "old and full."

³ tn Heb "And he was gathered to his people." In the ancient Israelite view he joined his deceased ancestors in Sheol, the land of the dead.

⁴ sn The cave of Machpelah was the place Abraham had purchased as a burial place for his wife Sarah (Gen 23:17-18).

⁵ tn See the note on the phrase "sons of Heth" in Gen 23:3.

⁶ sn God blessed Isaac. The Hebrew verb "bless" in this passage must include all the gifts that God granted to Isaac. But fertility was not one of them, at least not for twenty years, because Rebekah was barren as well (see v. 21).

⁷ sn Beer Lahai Roi. See the note on this place name in Gen 24:62.

⁸ sn This is the account of Ishmael. The Book of Genesis tends to tidy up the family records at every turning point. Here, before proceeding with the story of Isaac's family, the narrative traces Ishmael's family line. Later, before discussing Jacob's family, the narrative traces Esau's family line (see Gen 36).

⁹ tn The meaning of this line is not easily understood. The sons of Ishmael are listed here "by their names" and "according to their descendants."

¹⁰ tn Or "tribal chieftains."

¹¹ tn Heb "And these are the days of the years of Ishmael."

¹² tn Heb "And he was gathered to his people." In the ancient Israelite view he joined his deceased ancestors in Sheol, the land of the dead.

¹³ tn Heb "they"; the referent (Ishmael's descendants) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

and two peoples will be separated from within you.
One people will be stronger than the other,
and the older will serve the younger.”

25:24 When the time came for Rebekah to give birth,¹ there were² twins in her womb. **25:25** The first came out reddish³ all over,⁴ like a hairy⁵ garment, so they named him Esau.⁶ **25:26** When his brother came out with⁷ his hand clutching Esau’s heel, they named him Jacob.⁸ Isaac was sixty years old⁹ when they were born.

25:27 When the boys grew up, Esau became a skilled¹⁰ hunter, a man of the open fields, but Jacob was an even-tempered man, living in tents.¹¹

25:28 Isaac loved Esau because he had a taste for fresh game,¹² but Rebekah loved¹³ Jacob.

25:29 Now Jacob cooked some stew,¹⁴ and

when Esau came in from the open fields, he was famished. **25:30** So Esau said to Jacob, “Feed¹⁵ me some of the red stuff – yes, this red stuff – because I’m starving!” (That is why he was also called¹⁶ Edom.)¹⁷

25:31 But Jacob replied, “First¹⁸ sell me your birthright.” **25:32** “Look,” said Esau, “I’m about to die! What use is the birthright to me?”¹⁹ **25:33** But Jacob said, “Swear an oath to me now.”²⁰ So Esau²¹ swore an oath to him and sold his birthright²² to Jacob.

25:34 Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and lentil stew; Esau ate and drank, then got up and went out.²³ So Esau despised his birthright.²⁴

Isaac and Abimelech

26:1 There was a famine in the land, subsequent to the earlier famine that occurred²⁵ in the days of Abraham.²⁶ Isaac went to Abimelech

¹ tn Heb “And her days were filled to give birth.”

² tn Heb “look!” By the use of the particle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*, “look”), the narrator invites the audience to view the scene as if they were actually present at the birth.

³ sn Reddish. The Hebrew word translated “reddish” is אָדְמוּנִי (*admoni*), which forms a wordplay on the Edomites, Esau’s descendants. The writer sees in Esau’s appearance at birth a sign of what was to come. After all, the reader has already been made aware of the “nations” that were being born.

⁴ tn Heb “all of him.”

⁵ sn Hairy. Here is another wordplay involving the descendants of Esau. The Hebrew word translated “hairy” is שְׁעָרִי (*se’ar*); the Edomites will later live in Mount Seir, perhaps named for its wooded nature.

⁶ tn Heb “And they called his name Esau.” The name “Esau” (שְׂעָוִי, *esav*) is not etymologically related to שְׁעָרִי (*se’ar*), but it draws on some of the sounds.

⁷ tn The disjunctive clause describes an important circumstance accompanying the birth. Whereas Esau was passive at birth, Jacob was active.

⁸ tn Heb “And he called his name Jacob.” Some ancient witnesses read “they called his name Jacob” (see v. 25). In either case the subject is indefinite.

sn The name Jacob is a play on the Hebrew word for “heel” (קָעָה, *aqev*). The name (since it is a verb) probably means something like “may he protect,” that is, as a rearward, dogging the heels. It did not have a negative connotation until Esau redefined it. This name was probably chosen because of the immediate association with the incident of grabbing the heel. After receiving such an oracle, the parents would have preserved in memory almost every detail of the unusual births.

⁹ tn Heb “the son of sixty years.”

¹⁰ tn Heb “knowing.”

¹¹ tn The disjunctive clause juxtaposes Jacob with Esau and draws attention to the striking contrasts. In contrast to Esau, a man of the field, Jacob was civilized, as the phrase “living in tents” signifies. Whereas Esau was a skillful hunter, Jacob was calm and even-tempered (טַם, *tam*), which normally has the idea of “blameless.”

¹² tn Heb “the taste of game was in his mouth.” The word for “game,” “venison” is here the same Hebrew word as “hunter” in the last verse. Here it is a metonymy, referring to that which the hunter kills.

¹³ tn The disjunctive clause juxtaposes Rebekah with Jacob and draws attention to the contrast. The verb here is a participle, drawing attention to Rebekah’s continuing, enduring love for her son.

¹⁴ sn Jacob cooked some stew. There are some significant words and wordplays in this story that help clarify the points of the story. The verb “cook” is צִיד (*zid*), which sounds like the word for “hunter” (צַיִד, *tsayid*). This is deliberate, for the hunt-

er becomes the hunted in this story. The word צִיד means “to cook, to boil,” but by the sound play with צַיִד it comes to mean “set a trap by cooking.” The usage of the word shows that it can also have the connotation of acting presumptuously (as in boiling over). This too may be a comment on the scene. For further discussion of the rhetorical devices in the Jacob narratives, see J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis* (SSN).

¹⁵ tn The rare term לָעֵט (*la’at*), translated “feed,” is used in later Hebrew for feeding animals (see Jastrow, 714). If this nuance was attached to the word in the biblical period, then it may depict Esau in a negative light, comparing him to a hungry animal. Famished Esau comes in from the hunt, only to enter the trap. He can only point at the red stew and ask Jacob to feed him.

¹⁶ tn The verb has no expressed subject and so is given a passive translation.

¹⁷ sn Esau’s descendants would eventually be called Edom. Edom was the place where they lived, so-named probably because of the reddish nature of the hills. The writer can use the word “red” to describe the stew that Esau gasped for to convey the nature of Esau and his descendants. They were a lusty, passionate, and profane people who lived for the moment. Again, the wordplay is meant to capture the “omen in the nomen.”

¹⁸ tn Heb “today.”

¹⁹ tn Heb “And what is this to me, a birthright?”

²⁰ tn Heb “Swear to me today.”

²¹ tn Heb “and he”; the referent (Esau) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²² sn And sold his birthright. There is evidence from Hurler culture that rights of inheritance were occasionally sold or transferred. Here Esau is portrayed as a profane person who would at the moment rather have a meal than the right to inherit. He will soon forget this trade and seek his father’s blessing in spite of it.

²³ sn The style here is typical of Hebrew narrative; after the tension is resolved with the dialogue, the working out of it is recorded in a rapid sequence of verbs (“gave”; “ate”; “drank”; “got up”; “went out”). See also Gen 3:1-7 for another example.

²⁴ sn So Esau despised his birthright. This clause, which concludes the episode, is a summary statement which reveals the underlying significance of Esau’s actions. “To despise” means to treat something as worthless or with contempt. Esau’s willingness to sell his birthright was evidence that he considered it to be unimportant.

²⁵ tn Heb “in addition to the first famine which was.”

²⁶ sn This account is parallel to two similar stories about Abraham (see Gen 12:10-20; 20:1-18). Many scholars do not believe there were three similar incidents, only one that got borrowed and duplicated. Many regard the account about Isaac as the original, which then was attached to the more important person, Abraham, with supernatural elements being

king of the Philistines at Gerar. **26:2** The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, “Do not go down to Egypt;¹ settle down in the land that I will point out to you.² **26:3** Stay³ in this land. Then I will be with you and will bless you,⁴ for I will give all these lands to you and to your descendants,⁵ and I will fulfill⁶ the solemn promise I made⁷ to your father Abraham. **26:4** I will multiply your descendants so they will be as numerous as the stars in the sky, and I will give them⁸ all these lands. All the nations of the earth will pronounce blessings on one another using the name of your descendants.⁹ **26:5** All this will come to pass¹⁰

because Abraham obeyed me¹¹ and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.”¹² **26:6** So Isaac settled in Gerar.

26:7 When the men of that place asked him about his wife, he replied, “She is my sister.”¹³ He was afraid to say, “She is my wife,” for he thought to himself,¹⁴ “The men of this place will kill me to get¹⁵ Rebekah because she is very beautiful.”

26:8 After Isaac¹⁶ had been there a long time,¹⁷ Abimelech king of the Philistines happened to look out a window and observed¹⁸ Isaac caressing¹⁹ his wife Rebekah. **26:9** So Abimelech summoned Isaac and said, “She is really²⁰ your wife! Why did you say, ‘She is my sister’?” Isaac replied, “Because I thought someone might kill me to get her.”²¹

26:10 Then Abimelech exclaimed, “What in the world have you done to us?”²² One of the

added. For a critique of such an approach, see R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 47-62. It is more likely that the story illustrates the proverb “like father, like son” (see T. W. Mann, *The Book of the Torah*, 53). In typical human fashion the son follows his father’s example of lying to avoid problems. The appearance of similar events reported in a similar way underscores the fact that the blessing has now passed to Isaac, even if he fails as his father did.

1 sn *Do not go down to Egypt.* The words echo Gen 12:10, which reports that “Abram went down to Egypt,” but state the opposite.

2 tn *Heb* “say to you.”

3 tn The Hebrew verb נָזַר (*gur*) means “to live temporarily without ownership of land.” Abraham’s family will not actually possess the land of Canaan until the Israelite conquest hundreds of years later.

4 tn After the imperative “stay” the two prefixed verb forms with prefixed conjunction here indicate consequence.

sn *I will be with you and I will bless you.* The promise of divine presence is a promise to intervene to protect and to bless.

5 tn The Hebrew term זֶרַע (*zera*) occurring here and in v. 18 may mean “seed” (for planting), “offspring” (occasionally of animals, but usually of people), or “descendants” depending on the context.

sn *To you and to your descendants.* The Abrahamic blessing will pass to Isaac. Everything included in that blessing will now belong to the son, and in turn will be passed on to his sons. But there is a contingency involved: if they are to enjoy the full blessings, they will have to obey the word of the LORD. And so obedience is enjoined here with the example of how well Abraham obeyed.

6 tn The Hiphil stem of the verb קָוַם (*qum*) here means “to fulfill, to bring to realization.” For other examples of this use of this verb form, see Lev 26:9; Num 23:19; Deut 8:18; 9:5; 1 Sam 1:23; 1 Kgs 6:12; Jer 11:5.

7 tn *Heb* “the oath which I swore.”

sn *The solemn promise I made.* See Gen 15:18-20; 22:16-18.

8 tn *Heb* “your descendants.”

9 tn Traditionally the verb is taken as passive (“will be blessed”) here, as if Abraham’s descendants were going to be a channel or source of blessing to the nations. But the Hitpaal is better understood here as reflexive/reciprocal, “will bless [i.e., pronounce blessings on] themselves/one another” (see also Gen 22:18). Elsewhere the Hitpaal of the verb “to bless” is used with a reflexive/reciprocal sense in Deut 29:18; Ps 72:17; Isa 65:16; Jer 4:2. Gen 12:2 predicts that Abram will be held up as a paradigm of divine blessing and that people will use his name in their blessing formulae. For examples of blessing formulae utilizing an individual as an example of blessing see Gen 48:20 and Ruth 4:11. Earlier formulations of this promise (see Gen 12:2; 18:18) use the Niphal stem. (See also Gen 28:14.)

10 tn The words “All this will come to pass” are not in the Hebrew text, but are supplied for stylistic reasons.

11 tn *Heb* “listened to my voice.”

12 sn *My charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.* The language of this verse is clearly interpretive, for Abraham did not have all these laws. The terms are legal designations for sections of the Mosaic law and presuppose the existence of the law. Some Rabbinic views actually conclude that Abraham had fulfilled the whole law before it was given (see *m. Qiddushin* 4:14). Some scholars argue that this story could only have been written after the law was given (C. Westermann, *Genesis*, 2:424-25). But the simplest explanation is that the narrator (traditionally taken to be Moses the Lawgiver) elaborated on the simple report of Abraham’s obedience by using terms with which the Israelites were familiar. In this way he depicts Abraham as the model of obedience to God’s commands, whose example Israel should follow.

13 sn Rebekah, unlike Sarah, was not actually her husband’s sister.

14 tn *Heb* “lest.” The words “for he thought to himself” are supplied because the next clause is written with a first person pronoun, showing that Isaac was saying or thinking this.

15 tn *Heb* “kill me on account of.”

16 tn *Heb* “and he”; the referent (Isaac) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

17 tn *Heb* “and it happened when the days were long to him there.”

18 tn *Heb* “look, Isaac.” By the use of the participle הִינֵה (*hinneh*, “look”), the narrator invites the audience to view the scene through Abimelech’s eyes.

19 tn Or “fondling.”

sn The Hebrew word מְצַחֵק (*metsakheq*), from the root צַחֵק (*tsakhaq*, “laugh”), forms a sound play with the name “Isaac” right before it. Here it depicts an action, probably caressing or fondling, that indicated immediately that Rebekah was Isaac’s wife, not his sister. Isaac’s deception made a mockery of God’s covenantal promise. Ignoring God’s promise to protect and bless him, Isaac lied to protect himself and acted in bad faith to the men of Gerar.

20 tn *Heb* “Surely, look!” See N. H. Snaith, “The meaning of Hebrew ‘ak,’” *VT* 14 (1964): 221-25.

21 tn *Heb* “Because I said, ‘Lest I die on account of her.’” Since the verb “said” probably means “said to myself” (i.e., “thought”) here, the direct discourse in the Hebrew statement has been converted to indirect discourse in the translation. In addition the simple prepositional phrase “on account of her” has been clarified in the translation as “to get her” (cf. v. 7).

22 tn *Heb* “What is this you have done to us?” The Hebrew demonstrative pronoun “this” adds emphasis: “What in the world have you done to us?” (R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 24, §118).

men¹ might easily have had sexual relations with² your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us!” **26:11** So Abimelech commanded all the people, “Whoever touches³ this man or his wife will surely be put to death.”¹⁴

26:12 When Isaac planted in that land, he reaped in the same year a hundred times what he had sown,⁵ because the LORD blessed him.⁶ **26:13** The man became wealthy.⁷ His influence continued to grow⁸ until he became very prominent. **26:14** He had⁹ so many sheep¹⁰ and cattle¹¹ and such a great household of servants that the Philistines became jealous¹² of him. **26:15** So the Philistines took dirt and filled up¹³ all the wells that his father’s servants had dug back in the days of his father Abraham.

26:16 Then Abimelech said to Isaac, “Leave us and go elsewhere,¹⁴ for you have become much more powerful¹⁵ than we are.” **26:17** So Isaac left there and settled in the Gerar Valley.¹⁶ **26:18** Isaac reopened¹⁷ the wells that had been dug¹⁸ back in the days of his father Abraham, for the Philistines had stopped them up¹⁹ after

Abraham died. Isaac²⁰ gave these wells²¹ the same names his father had given them.²²

26:19 When Isaac’s servants dug in the valley and discovered a well with fresh flowing²³ water there, **26:20** the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled²⁴ with Isaac’s herdsmen, saying, “The water belongs to us!” So Isaac²⁵ named the well²⁶ Esek²⁷ because they argued with him about it.²⁸ **26:21** His servants²⁹ dug another well, but they quarreled over it too, so Isaac named it³⁰ Sitnah.³¹ **26:22** Then he moved away from there and dug another well. They did not quarrel over it, so Isaac³² named it³³ Rehoboth,³⁴ saying, “For now the LORD has made room for us, and we will prosper in the land.”

26:23 From there Isaac³⁵ went up to Beer Sheba. **26:24** The LORD appeared to him that night and said, “I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham.” **26:25** Then Isaac built an altar there and worshiped³⁶ the LORD. He pitched his tent there, and his servants dug a well.³⁷

¹ tn Heb “people.”

² tn The Hebrew verb means “to lie down.” Here the expression “lie with” or “sleep with” is euphemistic for “have sexual relations with.”

³ tn Heb “strikes.” Here the verb has the nuance “to harm in any way.” It would include assaulting the woman or killing the man.

⁴ tn The use of the infinitive absolute before the imperfect makes the construction emphatic.

⁵ tn Heb “a hundredfold.”

⁶ tn This final clause explains why Isaac had such a bountiful harvest.

⁷ tn Heb “great.” In this context the statement refers primarily to Isaac’s material wealth, although reputation and influence are included.

⁸ tn Heb “and he went, going and becoming great.” The construction stresses that his growth in possessions and power continued steadily.

⁹ tn Heb “and there was to him.”

¹⁰ tn Heb “possessions of sheep.”

¹¹ tn Heb “possessions of cattle.”

¹² tn The Hebrew verb translated “became jealous” refers here to intense jealousy or envy that leads to hostile action (see v. 15).

¹³ tn Heb “and the Philistines stopped them up and filled them with dirt.”

¹⁴ tn Heb “Go away from us.”

¹⁵ sn You have become much more powerful. This explanation for the expulsion of Isaac from Philistine territory foreshadows the words used later by the Egyptians to justify their oppression of Israel (see Exod 1:9).

¹⁶ tn Heb “and he camped in the valley of Gerar and he lived there.”

sn This valley was actually a wadi (a dry river bed where the water would flow in the rainy season, but this would have been rare in the Negev). The water table under it would have been higher than in the desert because of water soaking in during the torrents, making it easier to find water when digging wells. However, this does not minimize the blessing of the LORD, for the men of the region knew this too, but did not have the same results.

¹⁷ tn Heb “he returned and dug,” meaning “he dug again” or “he reopened.”

¹⁸ tn Heb “that they dug.” Since the subject is indefinite, the verb is translated as passive.

¹⁹ tn Heb “and the Philistines had stopped them up.” This clause explains why Isaac had to reopen them.

²⁰ tn Heb “and he”; the referent (Isaac) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²¹ tn Heb “them”; the referent (the wells) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²² tn Heb “called names to them according to the names that his father called them.”

²³ tn Heb “living.” This expression refers to a well supplied by subterranean streams (see Song 4:15).

²⁴ tn The Hebrew verb translated “quarreled” describes a conflict that often has legal ramifications.

²⁵ tn Heb “and he”; the referent (Isaac) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁶ tn Heb “and he called the name of the well.”

²⁷ sn The name Esek means “argument” in Hebrew. The following causal clause explains that Isaac gave the well this name as a reminder of the conflict its discovery had created. In the Hebrew text there is a wordplay, for the name is derived from the verb translated “argued.”

²⁸ tn The words “about it” are supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁹ tn Heb “they”; the referent (Isaac’s servants) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³⁰ tn Heb “and he called its name.” The referent (Isaac) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³¹ sn The name Sitnah (שִׁטְנָה, *sinah*) is derived from a Hebrew verbal root meaning “to oppose; to be an adversary” (cf. Job 1:6). The name was a reminder that the digging of this well caused “opposition” from the Philistines.

³² tn Heb “and he”; the referent (Isaac) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³³ tn Heb “and he called its name.”

³⁴ sn The name Rehoboth (רְהוֹבוֹת, *rehovot*) is derived from a verbal root meaning “to make room.” The name was a reminder that God had made room for them. The story shows Isaac’s patience with the opposition; it also shows how God’s blessing outdistanced the men of Gerar. They could not stop it or seize it any longer.

³⁵ tn Heb “and he went up from there”; the referent (Isaac) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³⁶ tn Heb “called in the name of.” The expression refers to worshipping the LORD through prayer and sacrifice (see Gen 4:26; 12:8; 13:4; 21:33). See G. J. Wenham, *Genesis* (WBC), 1:116.

³⁷ tn Heb “and they dug there, the servants of Isaac, a well.”

26:26 Now Abimelech had come¹ to him from Gerar along with² Ahuzzah his friend³ and Phicol the commander of his army. **26:27** Isaac asked them, “Why have you come to me? You hate me⁴ and sent me away from you.” **26:28** They replied, “We could plainly see⁵ that the LORD is with you. So we decided there should be⁶ a pact between us⁷ – between us⁸ and you. Allow us to make⁹ a treaty with you **26:29** so that¹⁰ you will not do us any harm, just as we have not harmed¹¹ you, but have always treated you well¹² before sending you away¹³ in peace. Now you are blessed by the LORD.”¹⁴

26:30 So Isaac¹⁵ held a feast for them and they celebrated.¹⁶ **26:31** Early in the morning the men made a treaty with each other.¹⁷ Isaac sent them off; they separated on good terms.¹⁸

26:32 That day Isaac’s servants came and told him about the well they had dug. “We’ve found water,” they reported.¹⁹ **26:33** So he named it Shibah;²⁰ that is why the name of the city has been Beer Sheba²¹ to this day.

1 tn The disjunctive clause supplies pertinent supplemental information. The past perfect is used because the following narrative records the treaty at Beer Sheba. Prior to this we are told that Isaac settled in Beer Sheba; presumably this treaty would have allowed him to do that. However, it may be that he settled there and then made the treaty by which he re-named the place Beer Sheba. In this case one may translate “Now Abimelech came to him.”

2 tn Heb “and.”

3 tn Many modern translations render the Hebrew term מְרַעֵה (*mera’*) as “councillor” or “adviser,” but the term may not designate an official position but simply a close personal friend.

4 tn The disjunctive clause is circumstantial, expressing the reason for his question.

5 tn The infinitive absolute before the verb emphasizes the clarity of their perception.

6 tn Heb “And we said, ‘Let there be.’” The direct discourse in the Hebrew text has been rendered as indirect discourse in the translation for stylistic reasons.

7 tn The pronoun “us” here is inclusive – it refers to the Philistine contingent on the one hand and Isaac on the other.

8 tn The pronoun “us” here is exclusive – it refers to just the Philistine contingent (the following “you” refers to Isaac).

9 tn The translation assumes that the cohortative expresses their request. Another option is to understand the cohortative as indicating resolve: “We want to make.”

10 tn The oath formula is used: “if you do us harm” means “so that you will not do.”

11 tn Heb “touched.”

12 tn Heb “and just as we have done only good with you.”

13 tn Heb “and we sent you away.”

14 tn The Philistine leaders are making an observation, not pronouncing a blessing, so the translation reads “you are blessed” rather than “may you be blessed” (cf. NAB).

15 tn Heb “and he”; the referent (Isaac) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

16 tn Heb “and they ate and drank.”

17 tn Heb “and they got up early and they swore an oath, a man to his brother.”

18 tn Heb “and they went from him in peace.”

19 tn Heb “and they said to him, ‘We have found water.’”

The order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.

20 sn The name *Shibah* (שִׁבָּה, *shiv’ah*) means (or at least sounds like) the word meaning “oath.” The name was a reminder of the oath sworn by Isaac and the Philistines to solidify their treaty.

21 sn The name *Beer Sheba* (בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע, *b’e’er shava’*) means

26:34 When²² Esau was forty years old,²³ he married²⁴ Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, as well as Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. **26:35** They caused Isaac and Rebekah great anxiety.²⁵

Jacob Cheats Esau out of the Blessing

27:1 When²⁶ Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he was almost blind,²⁷ he called his older²⁸ son Esau and said to him, “My son!” “Here I am!” Esau²⁹ replied. **27:2** Isaac³⁰ said, “Since³¹ I am so old, I could die at any time.³² **27:3** Therefore, take your weapons – your quiver and your bow – and go out into the open fields and hunt down some wild game³³ for me. **27:4** Then prepare for me some tasty food, the kind I love, and bring it to me. Then³⁴ I will eat it so that I may bless you³⁵ before I die.”

27:5 Now Rebekah had been listening while Isaac spoke to his son Esau.³⁶ When Esau went

“well of an oath” or “well of seven.” According to Gen 21:31 Abraham gave Beer Sheba its name when he made a treaty with the Philistines. Because of the parallels between this earlier story and the account in 26:26-33, some scholars see chaps. 21 and 26 as two versions (or doublets) of one original story. However, if one takes the text as it stands, it appears that Isaac made a later treaty agreement with the people of the land that was similar to his father’s. Abraham dug a well at the site and named the place Beer Sheba; Isaac dug another well there and named the well Shibah. Later generations then associated the name Beer Sheba with Isaac, even though Abraham gave the place its name at an earlier time.

22 tn The sentence begins with the temporal indicator (“and it happened”), making this clause subordinate to the next.

23 tn Heb “the son of forty years.”

24 tn Heb “took as a wife.”

25 tn Heb “And they were [a source of] bitterness in spirit to Isaac and to Rebekah.”

26 tn The clause begins with the temporal indicator (“and it happened”), making it subordinate to the main clause that follows later in the sentence.

27 tn Heb “and his eyes were weak from seeing.”

28 tn Heb “greater” (in terms of age).

29 tn Heb “he”; the referent (Esau) is specified in the translation for clarity.

30 tn Heb “he”; the referent (Isaac) is specified in the translation for clarity.

31 tn The participle הִינֵה (*hinneh*, “look”) here introduces a logically foundational statement, upon which the coming instruction will be based.

32 tn Heb “I do not know the day of my death.”

33 tn The Hebrew word is to be spelled either צִיד (*tsayid*) following the marginal reading (Qere), or צִידָה (*tsedah*) following the consonantal text (*Kethib*). Either way it is from the same root as the imperative צִידוּהָ (*tsudah*, “hunt down”).

34 tn Following the imperative, the cohortative (with the prefixed conjunction) indicates purpose or result.

35 tn Heb “so that my soul may bless you.” The use of נַפְשִׁי (*nafshi*, “my soul”) as the subject emphasizes that the blessing will be made with all Isaac’s desire and vitality. The conjunction “so that” closely relates the meal to the blessing, suggesting that this will be a ritual meal in conjunction with the giving of a formal blessing.

36 tn The disjunctive clause (introduced by a conjunction with the subject, followed by the predicate) here introduces a new scene in the story.

out to the open fields to hunt down some wild game and bring it back.¹ 27:6 Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “Look, I overheard your father tell your brother Esau, 27:7 ‘Bring me some wild game and prepare for me some tasty food. Then I will eat² it and bless you³ in the presence of the LORD⁴ before I die.’ 27:8 Now then, my son, do⁵ exactly what I tell you!⁶ 27:9 Go to the flock and get me two of the best young goats. I’ll prepare⁷ them in a tasty way for your father, just the way he loves them. 27:10 Then you will take⁸ it to your father. Thus he will eat it⁹ and¹⁰ bless you before he dies.”

27:11 “But Esau my brother is a hairy man,” Jacob protested to his mother Rebekah, “and I have smooth skin!¹¹ 27:12 My father may touch me! Then he’ll think I’m mocking him¹² and I’ll bring a curse on myself instead of a blessing.” 27:13 So his mother told him, “Any curse against you will fall on me,¹³ my son! Just obey me!¹⁴ Go and get them for me!”

27:14 So he went and got the goats¹⁵ and brought them to his mother. She¹⁶ prepared some tasty food, just the way his father loved it. 27:15 Then Rebekah took her older son Esau’s best clothes, which she had with her in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob. 27:16 She put the skins of the young goats¹⁷ on his hands¹⁸

¹ **tc** The LXX adds here “to his father,” which may have been accidentally omitted in the MT.

² **tn** Following the imperative, the cohortative (with the prefixed conjunction) indicates purpose or result.

³ **tn** The cohortative, with the prefixed conjunction, also expresses logical sequence. See vv. 4, 19, 27.

⁴ **tn** In her report to Jacob, Rebekah plays down Isaac’s strong desire to bless Esau by leaving out נִפְשִׁי (*nafshi*, “my soul”), but by adding the phrase “in the presence of the LORD,” she stresses how serious this matter is.

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “listen to my voice.” The Hebrew idiom means “to comply; to obey.”

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “to that which I am commanding you.”

⁷ **tn** Following the imperative, the cohortative (with the prefixed conjunction) indicates purpose or result.

⁸ **tn** The form is the perfect tense with the *vav* (ו) consecutive. It carries forward the tone of instruction initiated by the command to “go...and get” in the preceding verse.

⁹ **tn** The form is the perfect with the *vav* (ו) consecutive; it carries the future nuance of the preceding verbs of instruction, but by switching the subject to Jacob, indicates the expected result of the subterfuge.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “so that.” The conjunction indicates purpose or result.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, ‘Look, Esau my brother is a hairy man, but I am a smooth [skinned] man.’” The order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “Perhaps my father will feel me and I will be in his eyes like a mocker.” The Hebrew expression “I will be in his eyes like” means “I would appear to him as.”

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “upon me your curse.”

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “only listen to my voice.”

¹⁵ **tn** The words “the goats” are not in the Hebrew text, but are supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “his mother.” This has been replaced by the pronoun “she” in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁷ **tn** In the Hebrew text the object (“the skins of the young goats”) precedes the verb. The disjunctive clause draws attention to this key element in the subterfuge.

¹⁸ **tn** The word “hands” probably includes the forearms

and the smooth part of his neck. 27:17 Then she handed¹⁹ the tasty food and the bread she had made to her son Jacob.

27:18 He went to his father and said, “My father!” Isaac²⁰ replied, “Here I am. Which are you, my son?”²¹ 27:19 Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau, your firstborn. I’ve done as you told me. Now sit up²² and eat some of my wild game so that you can bless me.”²³ 27:20 But Isaac asked his son, “How in the world²⁴ did you find it so quickly,²⁵ my son?” “Because the LORD your God brought it to me,”²⁶ he replied.²⁷ 27:21 Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Come closer so I can touch you,²⁸ my son, and know for certain if you really are my son Esau.”²⁹ 27:22 So Jacob went over to his father Isaac, who felt him and said, “The voice is Jacob’s, but the hands are Esau’s.” 27:23 He did not recognize him because his hands were hairy, like his brother Esau’s hands. So Isaac blessed Jacob.³⁰ 27:24 Then he asked, “Are you really my son Esau?” “I am,” Jacob³¹ replied. 27:25 Isaac³² said, “Bring some of the wild game for me to eat, my son.³³ Then I will

here. How the skins were attached is not specified in the Hebrew text; cf. NLT “she made him a pair of gloves.”

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “gave...into the hand of.”

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “and he said”; the referent (Isaac) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²¹ **sn** *Which are you, my son?* Isaac’s first question shows that the deception is going to require more subterfuge than Rebekah had anticipated. Jacob will have to pull off the deceit.

²² **tn** *Heb* “get up and sit.” This may mean simply “sit up,” or it may indicate that he was to get up from his couch and sit at a table.

²³ **tn** *Heb* “so that your soul may bless me.” These words, though not reported by Rebekah to Jacob (see v. 7) accurately reflect what Isaac actually said to Esau (see v. 4). Perhaps Jacob knew more than Rebekah realized, but it is more likely that this was an idiom for sincere blessing with which Jacob was familiar. At any rate, his use of the precise wording was a nice, convincing touch.

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “What is this?” The enclitic pronoun “this” adds emphasis to the question, which is comparable to the English rhetorical question, “How in the world?”

²⁵ **tn** *Heb* “you hastened to find.” In translation the infinitive becomes the main verb and the first verb becomes adverbial.

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* “caused to meet before me.”

²⁷ **tn** *Heb* “and he said, ‘Because the LORD your God...’” The order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁸ **tn** Following the imperative, the cohortative (with prefixed conjunction) indicates purpose or result.

²⁹ **tn** *Heb* “Are you this one, Esau, my son, or not?” On the use of the interrogative particle here, see BDB 210 s.v. ׀.

³⁰ **tn** *Heb* “and he blessed him.” The referents of the pronouns “he” (Isaac) and “him” (Jacob) have been specified in the translation for clarity.

³¹ **tn** *Heb* “he”; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³² **tn** *Heb* “and he said”; the referent (Isaac) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³³ **tn** *Heb* “Bring near to me and I will eat of the wild game, my son.” Following the imperative, the cohortative with the prefixed conjunction indicates purpose or result.

bless you.”¹ So Jacob² brought it to him, and he ate it. He also brought him wine, and Isaac³ drank. **27:26** Then his father Isaac said to him, “Come here and kiss me, my son.” **27:27** So Jacob⁴ went over and kissed him. When Isaac caught the scent⁵ of his clothing, he blessed him, saying,

“Yes,⁶ my son smells like the scent of an open field which the LORD has blessed. **27:28** May God give you the dew of the sky⁷ and the richness⁸ of the earth, and plenty of grain and new wine. **27:29** May peoples serve you and nations bow down to you. You will be⁹ lord¹⁰ over your brothers, and the sons of your mother will bow down to you.¹¹ May those who curse you be cursed, and those who bless you be blessed.”

27:30 Isaac had just finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had scarcely left¹² his father’s¹³ presence, when his brother Esau returned from the hunt.¹⁴ **27:31** He also prepared some tasty food and brought it to his father. Esau¹⁵ said to him, “My father, get up¹⁶ and eat some of your son’s wild game. Then you can bless me.”¹⁷ **27:32** His father Isaac asked,¹⁸ “Who are you?” “I am your

firstborn son,”¹⁹ he replied, “Esau!” **27:33** Isaac began to shake violently²⁰ and asked, “Then who else hunted game and brought it to me? I ate all of it just before you arrived, and I blessed him.²¹ He will indeed be blessed!”

27:34 When Esau heard²² his father’s words, he wailed loudly and bitterly.²³ He said to his father, “Bless me too, my father!” **27:35** But Isaac²⁴ replied, “Your brother came in here deceitfully and took away²⁵ your blessing.” **27:36** Esau exclaimed, “‘Jacob’ is the right name for him!²⁶ He has tripped me up²⁷ two times! He took away my birthright, and now, look, he has taken away my blessing!” Then he asked, “Have you not kept back a blessing for me?”

27:37 Isaac replied to Esau, “Look! I have made him lord over you. I have made all his relatives his servants and provided him with grain and new wine. What is left that I can do for you, my son?” **27:38** Esau said to his father, “Do you have only that one blessing, my father? Bless me too!”²⁸ Then Esau wept loudly.²⁹

27:39 So his father Isaac said to him,

“Indeed,³⁰ your home will be away from the richness³¹ of the earth, and away from the dew of the sky above.

27:40 You will live by your sword but you will serve your brother.

When you grow restless, you will tear off his yoke from your neck.”³²

1 tn Heb “so that my soul may bless you.” The presence of נַפְשִׁי (*nafshi*, “my soul”) as subject emphasizes Isaac’s heartfelt desire to do this. The conjunction indicates that the ritual meal must be first eaten before the formal blessing may be given.

2 tn Heb “and he brought”; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

3 tn Heb “and he drank”; the referent (Isaac) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

4 tn Heb “and he”; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

5 tn Heb “and he smelled the smell”; the referent (Isaac) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

6 tn Heb “see.”

7 tn Heb “and from the dew of the sky.”

8 tn Heb “and from the fatness.”

9 tn Heb “and be.” The verb is an imperative, which is used rhetorically in this oracle of blessing. It is an invitation to exercise authority over his brothers and indicates that he is granted such authority by the patriarch of the family. Furthermore, the blessing enables the recipient to accomplish this.

10 tn The Hebrew word is גִּבּוּר (*gevur*, “lord, mighty one”). The one being blessed will be stronger and therefore more powerful than his brother. See Gen 25:23. The feminine form of this rare noun means “mistress” or “queen-mother.”

11 tn Following the imperative, the prefixed verbal form (which is either an imperfect or a jussive) with the prefixed conjunction indicates purpose or result.

12 tn The use of the infinitive absolute before the finite form of the verb makes the construction emphatic.

13 tn Heb “the presence of Isaac his father.” The repetition of the proper name (“Isaac”) was replaced by the referent (“his father’s...”) for stylistic reasons.

14 tn Heb “and Esau his brother came from his hunt.”

15 tn Heb “and he said to his father”; the referent of “he” (Esau) has been specified in the translation for clarity, while the words “his father” have been replaced by the pronoun “him” for stylistic reasons.

16 tn Or “arise” (i.e., sit up).

17 tn Heb “so that your soul may bless me.”

18 tn Heb “said.”

19 tn Heb “and he said, ‘I [am] your son, your firstborn.’” The order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse has been rearranged for stylistic reasons.

20 tn Heb “and Isaac trembled with a great trembling to excess.” The verb “trembled” is joined with a cognate accusative, which is modified by an adjective “great,” and a prepositional phrase “to excess.” All of this is emphatic, showing the violence of Isaac’s reaction to the news.

21 tn Heb “Who then is he who hunted game and brought [it] to me so that I ate from all before you arrived and blessed him?”

22 tn The temporal clause is introduced with the temporal indicator and has the infinitive as its verb.

23 tn Heb “and he yelled [with] a great and bitter yell to excess.”

24 tn Heb “and he said”; the referent (Isaac) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

25 tn Or “took”; “received.”

26 tn Heb “Is he not rightly named Jacob?” The rhetorical question, since it expects a positive reply, has been translated as a declarative statement.

27 sn He has tripped me up. When originally given, the name Jacob was a play on the word “heel” (see Gen 25:26). The name (since it is a verb) probably means something like “may he protect,” that is, as a rearguard, dogging the heels. This name was probably chosen because of the immediate association with the incident of grabbing the heel. Esau gives the name “Jacob” a negative connotation here, the meaning “to trip up; to supplant.”

28 tn Heb “Bless me, me also, my father.” The words “my father” have not been repeated in the translation for stylistic reasons.

29 tn Heb “and Esau lifted his voice and wept.”

30 tn Heb “look.”

31 tn Heb “from the fatness.”

32 sn You will tear off his yoke from your neck. It may be that this prophetic blessing found its fulfillment when Jerusalem

27:41 So Esau hated¹ Jacob because of the blessing his father had given to his brother.² Esau said privately,³ “The time⁴ of mourning for my father is near; then I will kill⁵ my brother Jacob!”

27:42 When Rebekah heard what her older son Esau had said,⁶ she quickly summoned⁷ her younger son Jacob and told him, “Look, your brother Esau is planning to get revenge by killing you.⁸ **27:43** Now then, my son, do what I say.⁹ Run away immediately¹⁰ to my brother Laban in Haran. **27:44** Live with him for a little while¹¹ until your brother’s rage subsides. **27:45** Stay there¹² until your brother’s anger against you subsides and he forgets what you did to him. Then I’ll send someone to bring you back from there.¹³ Why should I lose both of you in one day?”¹⁴

27:46 Then Rebekah said to Isaac, “I am deeply depressed¹⁵ because of these daughters of Heth.¹⁶ If Jacob were to marry one of these

daughters of Heth who live in this land, I would want to die!”¹⁷

28:1 So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed him. Then he commanded him, “You must not marry a Canaanite woman!¹⁸ **28:2** Leave immediately¹⁹ for Paddan Aram! Go to the house of Bethuel, your mother’s father, and find yourself a wife there, among the daughters of Laban, your mother’s brother. **28:3** May the sovereign God²⁰ bless you! May he make you fruitful and give you a multitude of descendants!²¹ Then you will become²² a large nation. **28:4** May he give you and your descendants the blessing he gave to Abraham²⁴ so that you may possess the land²⁵ God gave to Abraham, the land where you have been living as a temporary resident.”²⁶ **28:5** So Isaac sent Jacob on his way, and he went to Paddan Aram, to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean and brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.

28:6 Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him off to Paddan Aram to find a wife there.²⁷ As he blessed him,²⁸ Isaac commanded him, “You must not marry a Canaanite woman.”²⁹ **28:7** Jacob obeyed his father and mother and left for Paddan Aram. **28:8** Then Esau realized³⁰ that the Canaanite women³¹ were displeasing to³² his father Isaac. **28:9** So Esau went to Ishmael and married³³ Mahalath, the sister of Nebaioth and daughter of Abraham’s son Ishmael, along with the wives he already had.

fell and Edom got its revenge. The oracle makes Edom subservient to Israel and suggests the Edomites would live away from the best land and be forced to sustain themselves by violent measures.

¹ **tn** Or “bore a grudge against” (cf. NAB, NASB, NIV). The Hebrew verb *שָׂטַם* (*satam*) describes persistent hatred.

² **tn** Heb “because of the blessing which his father blessed him.”

³ **tn** Heb “said in his heart.” The expression may mean “said to himself.” Even if this is the case, v. 42 makes it clear that he must have shared his intentions with someone, because the news reached Rebekah.

⁴ **tn** Heb “days.”

⁵ **tn** The cohortative here expresses Esau’s determined resolve to kill Jacob.

⁶ **tn** Heb “and the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah.”

⁷ **tn** Heb “she sent and called for.”

⁸ **tn** Heb “is consoling himself with respect to you to kill you.” The only way Esau had of dealing with his anger at the moment was to plan to kill his brother after the death of Isaac.

⁹ **tn** Heb “listen to my voice.”

¹⁰ **tn** Heb “arise, flee.”

¹¹ **tn** Heb “a few days.” Rebekah probably downplays the length of time Jacob will be gone, perhaps to encourage him and assure him that things will settle down soon. She probably expects Esau’s anger to die down quickly. However, Jacob ends up being gone twenty years and he never sees Rebekah again.

¹² **tn** The words “stay there” are supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹³ **tn** Heb “and I will send and I will take you from there.” The verb “send” has no object in the Hebrew text; one must be supplied in the translation. Either “someone” or “a message” could be supplied, but since in those times a message would require a messenger, “someone” has been used.

¹⁴ **tn** If Jacob stayed, he would be killed and Esau would be forced to run away.

¹⁵ **tn** Heb “loathe my life.” The Hebrew verb translated “loathe” refers to strong disgust (see Lev 20:23).

¹⁶ **tn** Some translate the Hebrew term “Heth” as “Hittites” here (see also Gen 23:3), but this gives the impression that these people were the classical Hittites of Anatolia. However, there is no known connection between these sons of Heth, apparently a Canaanite group (see Gen 10:15), and the Hittites of Asia Minor. See H. A. Hoffner, Jr., “Hittites,” *Peoples of the Old Testament World*, 152-53.

¹⁷ **tn** Heb “If Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth, like these, from the daughters of the land, why to me life?”

¹⁸ **tn** Heb “you must not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan.”

¹⁹ **tn** Heb “Arise! Go!” The first of the two imperatives is adverbial and stresses the immediacy of the departure.

²⁰ **tn** Heb “El Shaddai.” See the extended note on the phrase “sovereign God” in Gen 17:1.

²¹ **tn** Heb “and make you fruitful and multiply you.” See Gen 17:6, 20 for similar terminology.

²² **tn** The perfect verbal form with *vav* (ו) consecutive here indicates consequence. The collocation *הָיָה* + preposition *לְ* (*hayah* + *l*) means “become.”

²³ **tn** Heb “an assembly of peoples.”

²⁴ **tn** Heb “and may he give to you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your offspring with you.” The name “Abraham” is an objective genitive here; this refers to the blessing that God gave to Abraham.

²⁵ **tn** The words “the land” have been supplied in the translation for clarity.

²⁶ **tn** Heb “the land of your sojournings,” that is, the land where Jacob had been living as a resident foreigner, as his future descendants would after him.

²⁷ **tn** Heb “to take for himself from there a wife.”

²⁸ **tn** The infinitive construct with the preposition and the suffix form a temporal clause.

²⁹ **tn** Heb “you must not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan.”

³⁰ **tn** Heb “saw.”

³¹ **tn** Heb “the daughters of Canaan.”

³² **tn** Heb “evil in the eyes of.”

³³ **tn** Heb “took for a wife.”

Jacob's Dream at Bethel

28:10 Meanwhile Jacob left Beer Sheba and set out for Haran. **28:11** He reached a certain place¹ where he decided to camp because the sun had gone down.² He took one of the stones³ and placed it near his head.⁴ Then he fell asleep⁵ in that place **28:12** and had a dream.⁶ He saw⁷ a stairway⁸ erected on the earth with its top reaching to the heavens. The angels of God were going up and coming down it **28:13** and the LORD stood at its top. He said, "I am the LORD, the God of your grandfather Abraham and the God of your father Isaac.⁹ I will give you and your descendants the ground¹⁰ you are lying on. **28:14** Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth,¹¹ and you will spread out¹² to the west,

¹ **tn** Heb "the place." The article may indicate simply that the place is definite in the mind of the narrator. However, as the story unfolds the place is transformed into a holy place. See A. P. Ross, "Jacob's Vision: The Founding of Bethel," *BSac* 142 (1985): 224-37.

² **tn** Heb "and he spent the night there because the sun had gone down."

³ **tn** Heb "he took from the stones of the place," which here means Jacob took one of the stones (see v. 18).

⁴ **tn** Heb "and he put [it at] the place of his head." The text does not actually say the stone was placed under his head to serve as a pillow, although most interpreters and translators assume this. It is possible the stone served some other purpose. Jacob does not seem to have been a committed monotheist yet (see v. 20-21) so he may have believed it contained some spiritual power. Note that later in the story he anticipates the stone becoming the residence of God (see v. 22). Many cultures throughout the world view certain types of stones as magical and/or sacred. See J. G. Fraser, *Folklore in the Old Testament*, 231-37.

⁵ **tn** Heb "lay down."

⁶ **tn** Heb "and dreamed."

⁷ **tn** Heb "and look." The scene which Jacob witnessed is described in three clauses introduced with הִינֵה (hinneh). In this way the narrator invites the reader to witness the scene through Jacob's eyes. J. P. Fokkelman points out that the particle goes with a lifted arm and an open mouth: "There, a ladder! Oh, angels! and look, the LORD himself" (*Narrative Art in Genesis* [SSN], 51-52).

⁸ **tn** The Hebrew noun סֻלָּם (*sullam*, "ladder, stairway") occurs only here in the OT, but there appears to be an Akkadian cognate *simmiltu* (with metathesis of the second and third consonants and a feminine ending) which has a specialized meaning of "stairway, ramp." See H. R. Cohen, *Biblical Hapax Legomena* (SBLDS), 34. For further discussion see C. Houtman, "What Did Jacob See in His Dream at Bethel? Some Remarks on Genesis 28:10-22," *VT* 27 (1977): 337-52; J. G. Griffiths, "The Celestial Ladder and the Gate of Heaven," *ExpTim* 76 (1964/65): 229-30; and A. R. Millard, "The Celestial Ladder and the Gate of Heaven," *ExpTim* 78 (1966/67): 86-87.

⁹ **tn** Heb "the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac." The Hebrew word for "father" can typically be used in a broader sense than the English word, in this case referring to Abraham (who was Jacob's grandfather). For stylistic reasons and for clarity, the words "your father" are supplied with "Isaac" in the translation.

¹⁰ **tn** The Hebrew term אֶרֶץ ('*erets*) can mean "[the] earth," "land," "region," "piece of ground," or "ground" depending on the context. Here the term specifically refers to the plot of ground on which Jacob was lying, but at the same time this stands by metonymy for the entire land of Canaan.

¹¹ **tn** This is the same Hebrew word translated "ground" in the preceding verse.

¹² **tn** The verb is singular in the Hebrew; Jacob is addressed

east, north, and south. All the families of the earth will pronounce blessings on one another¹³ using your name and that of your descendants.¹⁴ **28:15** I am with you!¹⁵ I will protect you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I promised you!"

28:16 Then Jacob woke up¹⁶ and thought,¹⁷ "Surely the LORD is in this place, but I did not realize it!" **28:17** He was afraid and said, "What an awesome place this is! This is nothing else than the house of God! This is the gate of heaven!"

28:18 Early¹⁸ in the morning Jacob¹⁹ took the stone he had placed near his head²⁰ and set it up as a sacred stone.²¹ Then he poured oil on top of it. **28:19** He called that place Bethel,²² although the former name of the town was Luz. **28:20** Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God is with me and protects me on this journey I am taking and gives me food²³ to eat and clothing to wear, **28:21** and I return safely to my father's home,²⁴

as the representative of his descendants.

¹³ **tn** Theoretically the Niphal stem can be translated either as passive or reflexive/reciprocal. (The Niphal of "bless" is only used in formulations of the Abrahamic covenant. See Gen 12:2; 18:18; 28:14.) Traditionally the verb is taken as passive here, as if Jacob were going to be a channel or source of blessing. But in other formulations of the Abrahamic covenant (see Gen 22:18; 26:4) the Hitpaal replaces this Niphal form, suggesting a translation "will bless (i.e., pronounce blessings upon) themselves/one another." The Hitpaal of "bless" is used with a reflexive/reciprocal sense in Deut 29:18; Ps 72:17; Isa 65:16; Jer 4:2. Gen 28:14 predicts that Jacob will be held up as a paradigm of divine blessing and that people will use his name in their blessing formulae (see Gen 12:2 and 18:18 as well, where Abram/Abraham receives this promise). For examples of blessing formulae utilizing an individual as an example of blessing see Gen 48:20 and Ruth 4:11.

¹⁴ **tn** Heb "and they will pronounce blessings by you, all the families of the earth, and by your offspring."

¹⁵ **tn** Heb "Look, I [am] with you." The clause is a nominal clause; the verb to be supplied could be present (as in the translation) or future, "Look, I [will be] with you" (cf. NEB).

¹⁶ **tn** Heb "woke up from his sleep." This has been simplified in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁷ **tn** Heb "said."

¹⁸ **tn** Heb "and he got up early...and he took."

¹⁹ **tn** Heb "he"; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁰ **tn** See the note on this phrase in v. 11.

²¹ **tn** Heb "standing stone."

²² **tn** *Sacred stone*. Such a stone could be used as a boundary marker, a burial stone, or as a shrine. Here the stone is intended to be a reminder of the stairway that was "erected" and on which the LORD "stood." (In Hebrew the word translated "sacred stone" is derived from the verb translated "erected" in v. 12 and "stood" in v. 13. Since the top of the stairway reached the heavens where the LORD stood, Jacob poured oil on the top of the stone. See C. F. Graesser, "Standing Stones in Ancient Palestine," *BA* 35 (1972): 34-63; and E. Stockton, "Sacred Pillars in the Bible," *ABR* 20 (1972): 16-32.

²³ **tn** The name *Bethel* means "house of God" in Hebrew (see v. 17).

²⁴ **map** For location see Map4-G4; Map5-C1; Map6-E3; Map7-D1; Map8-G3.

²³ **tn** Heb "bread," although the term can be used for food in general.

²⁴ **tn** Heb "and I return in peace to the house of my father."

then the LORD will become my God. 28:22 Then this stone⁴ that I have set up as a sacred stone will be the house of God, and I will surely² give you back a tenth of everything you give me.”³

The Marriages of Jacob

29:1 So Jacob moved on⁴ and came to the land of the eastern people.⁵ 29:2 He saw⁶ in the field a well with⁷ three flocks of sheep lying beside it, because the flocks were watered from that well. Now⁸ a large stone covered the mouth of the well. 29:3 When all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds⁹ would roll the stone off the mouth of the well and water the sheep. Then they would put the stone back in its place over the well’s mouth.

29:4 Jacob asked them, “My brothers, where are you from?” They replied, “We’re from Haran.” 29:5 So he said to them, “Do you know Laban, the grandson¹⁰ of Nahor?” “We know him,”¹¹ they said. 29:6 “Is he well?”¹² Jacob asked. They replied, “He is well.¹³ Now look, here comes his daughter Rachel with the sheep.” 29:7 Then Jacob¹⁴ said, “Since it is still the middle of the day,¹⁵ it is not time for the flocks to be gathered. You should water the sheep and then go and let them graze some more.”¹⁶ 29:8 “We can’t,” they said, “until all the flocks are gath-

ered and the stone is rolled off the mouth of the well. Then we water¹⁷ the sheep.”

29:9 While he was still speaking with them, Rachel arrived with her father’s sheep, for she was tending them.¹⁸ 29:10 When Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of his uncle Laban,¹⁹ and the sheep of his uncle Laban, he²⁰ went over²¹ and rolled the stone off the mouth of the well and watered the sheep of his uncle Laban.²² 29:11 Then Jacob kissed Rachel and began to weep loudly.²³ 29:12 When Jacob explained²⁴ to Rachel that he was a relative of her father²⁵ and the son of Rebekah, she ran and told her father. 29:13 When Laban heard this news about Jacob, his sister’s son, he rushed out to meet him. He embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his house. Jacob²⁶ told Laban how he was related to him.²⁷ 29:14 Then Laban said to him, “You are indeed my own flesh and blood.”²⁸ So Jacob²⁹ stayed with him for a month.³⁰

29:15 Then Laban said to Jacob, “Should you work³¹ for me for nothing because you are my relative?³² Tell me what your wages should be.” 29:16 (Now Laban had two daughters,³³ the

¹ **tn** The disjunctive clause structure (conjunction + noun/subject) is used to highlight the statement.

² **tn** The infinitive absolute is used before the finite verb for emphasis.

³ **tn** *Heb* “and all which you give to me I will surely give a tenth of it to you.” The disjunctive clause structure (conjunction + noun/object) highlights this statement as well.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and Jacob lifted up his feet.” This unusual expression suggests that Jacob had a new lease on life now that God had promised him the blessing he had so desperately tried to gain by his own efforts. The text portrays him as having a new step in his walk.

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “the land of the sons of the east.”

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “and he saw, and look.” As in Gen 28:12-15, the narrator uses the particle *hinneh*, “look!” here and in the next clause to draw the reader into the story.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “and look, there.”

⁸ **tn** The disjunctive clause (introduced by the noun with the prefixed conjunction) provides supplemental information that is important to the story.

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “they”; the referent (the shepherds) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “son.”

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “and they said, ‘We know.’” The word “him” is not in the Hebrew text, but has been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons. In the translation several introductory clauses throughout this section have been placed after the direct discourse they introduce for stylistic reasons as well.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “and he said to them, ‘Is there peace to him?’”

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “peace.”

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and he”; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “the day is great.”

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “water the sheep and go and pasture [them].” The verbal forms are imperatives, but Jacob would hardly be giving direct orders to someone else’s shepherds. The nuance here is probably one of advice.

¹⁷ **tn** The perfect verbal forms with the *vav* (ו) consecutive carry on the sequence begun by the initial imperfect form.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “was a shepherdess.”

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “Laban, the brother of his mother” (twice in this verse).

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “Jacob.” The proper name has been replaced by the pronoun (“he”) in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “drew near, approached.”

²² **tn** *Heb* “Laban, the brother of his mother.” The text says nothing initially about the beauty of Rachel. But the reader is struck by the repetition of “Laban the brother of his mother.” G. J. Wenham is no doubt correct when he observes that Jacob’s primary motive at this stage is to ingratiate himself with Laban (*Genesis* [WBC], 2:231).

²³ **tn** *Heb* “and he lifted up his voice and wept.” The idiom calls deliberate attention to the fact that Jacob wept out loud.

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “declared.”

²⁵ **tn** *Heb* “that he [was] the brother of her father.”

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* “he”; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁷ **tn** *Heb* “and he told to Laban all these things.” This might mean Jacob told Laban how he happened to be there, but Laban’s response (see v. 14) suggests “all these things” refers to what Jacob had previously told Rachel (see v. 12).

²⁸ **tn** *Heb* “indeed, my bone and my flesh are you.” The expression sounds warm enough, but the presence of “indeed” may suggest that Laban had to be convinced of Jacob’s identity before permitting him to stay. To be one’s “bone and flesh” is to be someone’s blood relative. For example, the phrase describes the relationship between Abimelech and the Shechemites (*Judg* 9:2; his mother was a Shechemite); David and the Israelites (2 *Sam* 5:1); David and the elders of Judah (2 *Sam* 19:12.); and David and his nephew Amasa (2 *Sam* 19:13; see 2 *Sam* 17:2; 1 *Chr* 2:16-17).

²⁹ **tn** *Heb* “and he”; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³⁰ **tn** *Heb* “a month of days.”

³¹ **tn** The verb is the perfect with the *vav* (ו) consecutive; the nuance in the question is deliberative.

³² **tn** *Heb* “my brother.” The term “brother” is used in a loose sense; actually Jacob was Laban’s nephew.

³³ **tn** *Heb* “and to Laban [there were] two daughters.” The disjunctive clause (introduced here by a conjunction and a prepositional phrase) provides supplemental material that is important to the story. Since this material is parenthetical in nature, vv. 16-17 have been set in parentheses in the translation.

older one was named Leah, and the younger one Rachel. 29:17 Leah's eyes were tender,¹ but Rachel had a lovely figure and beautiful appearance.)² 29:18 Since Jacob had fallen in love with³ Rachel, he said, "I'll serve you seven years in exchange for your younger daughter Rachel." 29:19 Laban replied, "I'd rather give her to you than to another man.⁴ Stay with me." 29:20 So Jacob worked for seven years to acquire Rachel.⁵ But they seemed like only a few days to him⁶ because his love for her was so great.⁷

29:21 Finally Jacob said⁸ to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my time of service is up.⁹ I want to have marital relations with her."¹⁰ 29:22 So Laban invited all the people¹¹ of that place and prepared a feast. 29:23 In the evening he brought his daughter Leah¹² to Jacob,¹³ and Jacob¹⁴ had marital relations with her.¹⁵ 29:24 (Laban gave

his female servant Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her servant.)¹⁶

29:25 In the morning Jacob discovered it was Leah¹⁷ So Jacob¹⁸ said to Laban, "What in the world have you done to me!¹⁹ Didn't I work for you in exchange for Rachel? Why have you tricked²⁰ me?" 29:26 "It is not our custom here,"²¹ Laban replied, "to give the younger daughter in marriage²² before the firstborn. 29:27 Complete my older daughter's bridal week.²³ Then we will give you the younger one²⁴ too, in exchange for seven more years of work."²⁵

29:28 Jacob did as Laban said.²⁶ When Jacob²⁷ completed Leah's bridal week,²⁸ Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife.²⁹ 29:29 (Laban gave his female servant Bilhah to

¹ tn Heb "and the eyes of Leah were tender." The disjunctive clause (introduced here by a conjunction and a noun) continues the parenthesis begun in v. 16. It is not clear what is meant by "tender" (or "delicate") eyes. The expression may mean she had appealing eyes (cf. NAB, NRSV, NLT), though some suggest that they were plain, not having the brightness normally expected. Either way, she did not measure up to her gorgeous sister.

² tn Heb "and Rachel was beautiful of form and beautiful of appearance."

³ tn Heb "Jacob loved."

⁴ tn Heb "Better my giving her to you than my giving her to another man."

⁵ tn Heb "in exchange for Rachel."

⁶ sn But they seemed like only a few days to him. This need not mean that the time passed quickly. More likely it means that the price seemed insignificant when compared to what he was getting in the bargain.

⁷ tn Heb "because of his love for her." The words "was so great" are supplied for stylistic reasons.

⁸ tn Heb "and Jacob said."

⁹ tn Heb "my days are fulfilled."

¹⁰ tn Heb "and I will go in to her." The verb is a cohortative; it may be subordinated to the preceding request, "that I may go in," or it may be an independent clause expressing his desire. The verb "go in" in this context refers to sexual intercourse (i.e., the consummation of the marriage).

¹¹ tn Heb "men."

¹² tn Heb "and it happened in the evening that he took Leah his daughter and brought her."

sn His daughter Leah. Laban's deception of Jacob by giving him the older daughter instead of the younger was God's way of disciplining the deceiver who tricked his older brother. D. Kidner says this account is "the very embodiment of anticlimax, and this moment a miniature of man's disillusion, experienced from Eden onwards" (Genesis [TOTC], 160). G. von Rad notes, "That Laban secretly gave the unloved Leah to the man in love was, to be sure, a monstrous blow, a masterpiece of shameless treachery...It was certainly a move by which he won for himself far and wide the coarsest laughter" (Genesis [OTL], 291).

¹³ tn Heb "to him"; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁴ tn Heb "he"; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁵ tn Heb "went in to her." The expression "went in to" in this context refers to sexual intercourse, i.e., the consummation of the marriage.

¹⁶ tn Heb "and Laban gave to her Zilpah his female servant, to Leah his daughter [for] a servant." This clause gives information parenthetical to the narrative.

¹⁷ tn Heb "and it happened in the morning that look, it was Leah." By the use of the particle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*, "look"), the narrator invites the reader to view the scene through Jacob's eyes.

¹⁸ tn Heb "and he said"; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁹ tn Heb "What is this you have done to me?" The use of the pronoun "this" is enclitic, adding emphasis to the question: "What in the world have you done to me?"

²⁰ sn The Hebrew verb translated *tricked* here (רָמָה, *ramah*) is cognate to the noun used in Gen 27:35 to describe Jacob's deception of Esau. Jacob is discovering that what goes around, comes around. See J. A. Diamond, "The Deception of Jacob: A New Perspective on an Ancient Solution to the Problem," VT 34 (1984): 211-13.

²¹ tn Heb "and Laban said, 'It is not done so in our place.'" The order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²² tn Heb "to give the younger." The words "daughter" and "in marriage" are supplied in the translation for clarity and for stylistic reasons.

²³ tn Heb "fulfill the period of seven of this one." The referent of "this one" has been specified in the translation as "my older daughter" for clarity.

sn Bridal week. An ancient Hebrew marriage ceremony included an entire week of festivities (cf. Judg 14:12).

²⁴ tn Heb "this other one."

²⁵ tn Heb "and we will give to you also this one in exchange for labor which you will work with me, still seven other years."

sn In exchange for seven more years of work. See C. H. Gordon, "The Story of Jacob and Laban in the Light of the Nuzi Tablets," BASOR 66 (1937): 25-27; and J. Van Seters, "Jacob's Marriages and Ancient Near Eastern Customs: A Reassessment," HTR 62 (1969): 377-95.

²⁶ tn Heb "and Jacob did so." The words "as Laban said" are supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁷ tn Heb "and he"; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁸ tn Heb "the seven of this one." The referent of "this one" has been specified in the translation as Leah to avoid confusion with Rachel, mentioned later in the verse.

²⁹ tn Heb "and he gave to him Rachel his daughter for him for a wife." The referent of the pronoun "he" (Laban) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

his daughter Rachel to be her servant.)¹ **29:30** Jacob² had marital relations³ with Rachel as well. He loved Rachel more than Leah, so he worked for Laban⁴ for seven more years.⁵

The Family of Jacob

29:31 When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved,⁶ he enabled her to become pregnant⁷ while Rachel remained childless. **29:32** So Leah became pregnant⁸ and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben,⁹ for she said, “The LORD has looked with pity on my oppressed condition.¹⁰ Surely my husband will love me now.”

29:33 She became pregnant again and had another son. She said, “Because the LORD heard that I was unloved,¹¹ he gave me this one too.” So she named him Simeon.¹²

29:34 She became pregnant again and had another son. She said, “Now this time my husband will show me affection,¹³ because I have given birth to three sons for him.” That is why he was named Levi.¹⁴

29:35 She became pregnant again and had another son. She said, “This time I will praise the LORD.” That is why she named him Judah.¹⁵ Then she stopped having children.

¹ **tn** *Heb* “and Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his female servant, for her for a servant.”

² **tn** *Heb* “and he”; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³ **tn** *Heb* “went in also to Rachel.” The expression “went in to” in this context refers to sexual intercourse, i.e., the consummation of the marriage.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “him”; the referent (Laban) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “and he loved also Rachel, more than Leah, and he served with him still seven other years.”

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “hated.” The rhetorical device of overstatement is used (note v. 30, which says simply that Jacob loved Rachel more than he did Leah) to emphasize that Rachel, as Jacob’s true love and the primary object of his affections, had an advantage over Leah.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “he opened up her womb.”

⁸ **tn** Or “Leah conceived” (also in vv. 33, 34, 35).

⁹ **sn** The name *Reuben* (רְאוּבֵן, *r^euven*) means “look, a son.”

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “looked on my affliction.”

¹¹ **sn** Leah’s explanation of the name Reuben reflects a popular etymology, not an exact one. The name means literally “look, a son.” Playing on the Hebrew verb “look,” she observes that the LORD has “looked” with pity on her oppressed condition. See further S. R. Driver, *Genesis*, 273.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “hated.” See the note on the word “unloved” in v. 31.

¹³ **sn** The name *Simeon* (שִׁמְעוֹן, *shim'on*) is derived from the verbal root שָׁמַע (*shama'*) and means “hearing.” The name is appropriate since it is reminder that the LORD “heard” about Leah’s unloved condition and responded with pity.

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “will be joined to me.”

¹⁵ **sn** The name *Levi* (לֵוִי, *levi*), the precise meaning of which is debated, was appropriate because it sounds like the verb לָוָה (*lavah*, “to join”), used in the statement recorded earlier in the verse.

¹⁵ **sn** The name *Judah* (יְהוּדָה, *h^udah*) means “he will be praised” and reflects the sentiment Leah expresses in the statement recorded earlier in the verse. For further discussion see W. F. Albright, “The Names ‘Israel’ and ‘Judah’ with an Excursus on the Etymology of *Todah* and *Torah*,” *JBL* 46 (1927): 151-85; and A. R. Millard, “The Meaning of the Name Judah,” *ZAW* 86 (1974): 216-18.

30:1 When Rachel saw that she could not give Jacob children, she¹⁶ became jealous of her sister. She said to Jacob, “Give me children¹⁷ or I’ll die!” **30:2** Jacob became furious¹⁸ with Rachel and exclaimed, “Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from having children?”¹⁹ **30:3** She replied, “Here is my servant Bilhah! Have sexual relations with²⁰ her so that she can bear²¹ children²² for me²³ and I can have a family through her.”²⁴

30:4 So Rachel²⁵ gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob had marital relations with²⁶ her. **30:5** Bilhah became pregnant²⁷ and gave Jacob a son.²⁸ **30:6** Then Rachel said, “God has vindicated me. He has responded to my prayer²⁹ and given me a son.” That is why³⁰ she named him Dan.³¹

30:7 Bilhah, Rachel’s servant, became pregnant again and gave Jacob another son.³² **30:8** Then Rachel said, “I have fought a desperate

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “Rachel.” The proper name has been replaced by the pronoun (“she”) in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “sons.”

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “and the anger of Jacob was hot.”

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb.”

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “go in to.” The expression “go in to” in this context refers to sexual intercourse.

²¹ **tn** After the imperative, the prefixed verbal form with the conjunction indicates the immediate purpose of the proposed activity.

²² **tn** The word “children” is not in the Hebrew text but has been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²³ **tn** *Heb* “upon my knees.” This is an idiomatic way of saying that Bilhah will be simply a surrogate mother. Rachel will adopt the child as her own.

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and I will be built up, even I, from her.” The prefixed verbal form with the conjunction is subordinated to the preceding prefixed verbal form and gives the ultimate purpose for the proposed action. The idiom of “built up” here refers to having a family (see Gen 16:2, as well as Ruth 4:11 and BDB 125 s.v. בָּנָה).

²⁵ **tn** *Heb* “and she”; the referent (Rachel) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* “went in to.” The expression “went in to” in this context refers to sexual intercourse.

²⁷ **tn** Or “Bilhah conceived” (also in v. 7).

²⁸ **tn** *Heb* “and she bore for Jacob a son.”

²⁹ **tn** *Heb* “and also he has heard my voice.” The expression means that God responded positively to Rachel’s cry and granted her request.

³⁰ **tn** Or “therefore.”

³¹ **sn** The name *Dan* means “he vindicated” or “he judged.” The name plays on the verb used in the statement which appears earlier in the verse. The verb translated “vindicated” is from דָּן (*din*, “to judge, to vindicate”), the same verbal root from which the name is derived. Rachel sensed that God was righting the wrong.

³² **tn** *Heb* “and she became pregnant again and Bilhah, the servant of Rachel, bore a second son for Jacob.”

struggle with my sister, but I have won.”¹ So she named him Naphtali.²

30:9 When Leah saw that she had stopped having children, she gave³ her servant Zilpah to Jacob as a wife. **30:10** Soon Leah’s servant Zilpah gave Jacob a son.⁴ **30:11** Leah said, “How fortunate!”⁵ So she named him Gad.⁶

30:12 Then Leah’s servant Zilpah gave Jacob another son.⁷ **30:13** Leah said, “How happy I am,⁸ for women⁹ will call me happy!” So she named him Asher.¹⁰

30:14 At the time¹¹ of the wheat harvest Reuben went out and found some mandrake plants¹² in a field and brought them to his mother Leah. Rachel said to Leah, “Give me some of your son’s mandrakes.” **30:15** But Leah replied,¹³ “Wasn’t it enough that you’ve taken away my husband? Would you take away my son’s mandrakes too?” “All right,”¹⁴ Rachel said, “he may sleep¹⁵ with you tonight in exchange for your son’s mandrakes.” **30:16** When Jacob came in from the fields that evening, Leah went out to

meet him and said, “You must sleep¹⁶ with me because I have paid for your services¹⁷ with my son’s mandrakes.” So he had marital relations¹⁸ with her that night. **30:17** God paid attention¹⁹ to Leah; she became pregnant²⁰ and gave Jacob a son for the fifth time.²¹ **30:18** Then Leah said, “God has granted me a reward²² because I gave my servant to my husband as a wife.”²³ So she named him Issachar.²⁴

30:19 Leah became pregnant again and gave Jacob a son for the sixth time.²⁵ **30:20** Then Leah said, “God has given me a good gift. Now my husband will honor me because I have given him six sons.” So she named him Zebulun.²⁶

30:21 After that she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah.

30:22 Then God took note of²⁷ Rachel. He paid attention to her and enabled her to become pregnant.²⁸ **30:23** She became pregnant²⁹ and gave birth to a son. Then she said, “God has taken away my shame.”³⁰ **30:24** She named him

¹ **tn** *Heb* “[with] a mighty struggle I have struggled with my sister, also I have prevailed.” The phrase “mighty struggle” reads literally “struggles of God.” The plural participle “struggles” reflects the ongoing nature of the struggle, while the divine name is used here idiomatically to emphasize the intensity of the struggle. See J. Skinner, *Genesis* (ICC), 387.

² **sn** The name *Naphtali* (נַפְתָּלִי, *naftali*) must mean something like “my struggle” in view of the statement Rachel made in the preceding clause. The name plays on this earlier statement, “[with] a mighty struggle I have struggled with my sister.”

³ **tn** *Heb* “she took her servant Zilpah and gave her.” The verbs “took” and “gave” are treated as a hendiadys in the translation: “she gave.”

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and Zilpah, the servant of Leah, bore for Jacob a son.”

⁵ **tc** The statement in the *Kethib* (consonantal text) appears to mean literally “with good fortune,” if one takes the initial ב (bet) as a preposition indicating accompaniment. The *Qere* (marginal reading) means “good fortune has arrived.”

⁶ **sn** The name *Gad* (גָּד, *gad*) means “good fortune.” The name reflects Leah’s feeling that good fortune has come her way, as expressed in her statement recorded earlier in the verse.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “and Zilpah, the servant of Leah, bore a second son for Jacob.”

⁸ **tn** The Hebrew statement apparently means “with my happiness.”

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “daughters.”

¹⁰ **sn** The name *Asher* (אָשֵׁר, *asher*) apparently means “happy one.” The name plays on the words used in the statement which appears earlier in the verse. Both the Hebrew noun and verb translated “happy” and “call me happy,” respectively, are derived from the same root as the name *Asher*.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “during the days.”

¹² **sn** *Mandrake plants* were popularly believed to be an aphrodisiac in the culture of the time.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “and she said to her”; the referent of the pronoun “she” (Leah) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “therefore.”

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “lie down.” The expression “lie down with” in this context (here and in the following verse) refers to sexual intercourse. The imperfect verbal form has a permissive nuance here.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “must come in to me.” The imperfect verbal form has an obligatory nuance here. She has acquired him for the night and feels he is obligated to have sexual relations with her.

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “I have surely hired.” The infinitive absolute precedes the finite verbal form for emphasis. The name *Issachar* (see v. 18) seems to be related to this expression.

¹⁸ **tn** This is the same Hebrew verb (שָׁכַב, *shakhav*) translated “sleep with” in v. 15. In direct discourse the more euphemistic “sleep with” was used, but here in the narrative “marital relations” reflects more clearly the emphasis on sexual intercourse.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “listened to.”

²⁰ **tn** Or “she conceived” (also in v. 19).

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “and she bore for Jacob a fifth son,” i.e., this was the fifth son that Leah had given Jacob.

²² **tn** *Heb* “God has given my reward.”

²³ **tn** The words “as a wife” are not in the Hebrew text, but are supplied for clarity (cf. v. 9).

sn Leah seems to regard the act of giving her servant Zilpah to her husband as a sacrifice, for which (she believes) God is now rewarding her with the birth of a son.

²⁴ **sn** The name *Issachar* (יִשָּׁכָר, *yishakhar*) appears to mean “man of reward” or possibly “there is reward.” The name plays on the word used in the statement made earlier in the verse. The Hebrew noun translated “reward” is derived from the same root as the name *Issachar*. The irony is that Rachel thought the mandrakes would work for her, and she was willing to trade one night for them. But in that one night Leah became pregnant.

²⁵ **tn** *Heb* “and she bore a sixth son for Jacob,” i.e., this was the sixth son that Leah had given Jacob.

²⁶ **sn** The name *Zebulun* (זְבֻלֹן, *zevulun*) apparently means “honor.” The name plays on the verb used in the statement made earlier in the verse. The Hebrew verb translated “will honor” and the name *Zebulun* derive from the same root.

²⁷ **tn** *Heb* “remembered.”

²⁸ **tn** *Heb* “and God listened to her and opened up her womb.” Since “God” is the subject of the previous clause, the noun has been replaced by the pronoun “he” in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁹ **tn** Or “conceived.”

³⁰ **tn** *Heb* “my reproach.” A “reproach” is a cutting taunt or painful ridicule, but here it probably refers by metonymy to Rachel’s barren condition, which was considered shameful in this culture and was the reason why she was the object of taunting and ridicule.

Joseph,¹ saying, “May the LORD give me yet another son.”

The Flocks of Jacob

30:25 After Rachel had given birth² to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, “Send³ me on my way so that I can go⁴ home to my own country.⁵ **30:26** Let me take my wives and my children whom I have acquired by working for you.⁶ Then I’ll depart,⁷ because you know how hard I’ve worked for you.”⁸

30:27 But Laban said to him, “If I have found favor in your sight, please stay here,⁹ for I have learned by divination¹⁰ that the LORD has blessed me on account of you.” **30:28** He added, “Just name your wages – I’ll pay whatever you want.”¹¹

30:29 “You know how I have worked for you,” Jacob replied,¹² “and how well your livestock have fared under my care.¹³ **30:30** Indeed,¹⁴ you had little before I arrived,¹⁵ but now your possessions have increased many times over.¹⁶ The LORD has blessed you wherever I worked.¹⁷ But now, how long must it be before I do something for my own family too?”¹⁸

30:31 So Laban asked,¹⁹ “What should I give you?” “You don’t need to give me a thing,”²⁰ Jacob replied,²¹ “but if you agree to this one condition,²² I will continue to care for²³ your flocks and protect them: **30:32** Let me walk among²⁴ all your flocks today and remove from them every speckled or spotted sheep, every dark-colored lamb,²⁵ and the spotted or speckled goats.²⁶ These animals will be my wages.²⁷ **30:33** My integrity will testify for me²⁸ later on.²⁹ When you come to verify that I’ve taken only the wages we agreed on,³⁰ if I have in my possession any goat that is not speckled or spotted or any sheep that is not dark-colored, it will be considered stolen.”³¹ **30:34** “Agreed!” said Laban, “It will be as you say.”³²

30:35 So that day Laban³³ removed the male goats that were streaked or spotted, all the female goats that were speckled or spotted (all that had any white on them), and all the dark-colored lambs, and put them in the care³⁴ of his sons. **30:36** Then he separated them from Jacob by a

¹ **sn** The name *Joseph* (יֹסֵפִי, *yoseph*) means “may he add.” The name expresses Rachel’s desire to have an additional son. In Hebrew the name sounds like the verb (יָסַף, *asaf*) translated “taken away” in the earlier statement made in v. 23. So the name, while reflecting Rachel’s hope, was also a reminder that God had removed her shame.

² **tn** The perfect verbal form is translated as a past perfect because Rachel’s giving birth to Joseph preceded Jacob’s conversation with Laban.

³ **tn** The imperatival form here expresses a request.

sn For Jacob to ask to leave would mean that seven more years had passed. Thus all Jacob’s children were born within the range of seven years of each other, with Joseph coming right at the end of the seven years.

⁴ **tn** Following the imperative, the cohortative with the prefixed conjunction indicates purpose or result.

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “to my place and to my land.”

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “give my wives and my children, for whom I have served you.” In one sense Laban had already “given” Jacob his two daughters as wives (Gen 29:21, 28). Here Jacob was asking for permission to take his own family along with him on the journey back to Canaan.

⁷ **tn** Following the imperative, the cohortative with the prefixed conjunction indicates purpose or result.

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “for you, you know my service [with] which I have served you.”

⁹ **tn** The words “please stay here” have been supplied in the translation for clarification and for stylistic reasons.

¹⁰ **tn** Or perhaps “I have grown rich and the LORD has blessed me” (cf. NEB). See J. Finkelstein, “An Old Babylonian Herding Contract and Genesis 31:38f.,” *JAOS* 88 (1968): 34, n. 19.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “set your wage for me so I may give [it].”

¹² **tn** *Heb* “and he said to him, ‘You know how I have served you.’” The order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons, and the referent of the pronoun “he” (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “and how your cattle were with me.”

¹⁴ **tn** Or “for.”

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “before me.”

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “and it has broken out with respect to abundance.”

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “at my foot.”

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “How long [until] I do, also I, for my house?”

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “and he said.” The referent (Laban) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁰ **tn** The negated imperfect verbal form has an obligatory nuance.

²¹ **tn** The order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²² **tn** *Heb* “If you do for me this thing.”

²³ **tn** *Heb* “I will return, I will tend,” an idiom meaning “I will continue tending.”

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “pass through.”

²⁵ **tn** Or “every black lamb”; *Heb* “and every dark sheep among the lambs.”

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* “and the spotted and speckled among the goats.”

²⁷ **tn** *Heb* “and it will be my wage.” The referent collective singular pronoun (“it”) has been specified as “these animals” in the translation for clarity.

²⁸ **tn** *Heb* “will answer on my behalf.”

²⁹ **tn** *Heb* “on the following day,” or “tomorrow.”

³⁰ **tn** *Heb* “when you come concerning my wage before you.”

sn Only the wage we agreed on. Jacob would have to be considered completely honest here, for he would have no control over the kind of animals born; and there could be no disagreement over which animals were his wages.

³¹ **tn** *Heb* “every one which is not speckled and spotted among the lambs and dark among the goats, stolen it is with me.”

³² **tn** *Heb* “and Laban said, ‘Good, let it be according to your word.’” On the asseverative use of the particle לו (*lu*) here, see HALOT 521, s.v. לו.

³³ **tn** *Heb* “he”; the referent (Laban) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and he gave [them] into the hand.”

three-day journey,¹ while² Jacob was taking care of the rest of Laban's flocks.

30:37 But Jacob took fresh-cut branches from poplar, almond, and plane trees. He made white streaks by peeling them, making the white inner wood in the branches visible. **30:38** Then he set up the peeled branches in all the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink. He set up the branches in front of the flocks when they were in heat and came to drink.³ **30:39** When the sheep mated⁴ in front of the branches, they⁵ gave birth to young that were streaked or speckled or spotted. **30:40** Jacob removed these lambs, but he made the rest of the flock face⁶ the streaked and completely dark-colored animals in Laban's flock. So he made separate flocks for himself and did not mix them with Laban's flocks. **30:41** When the stronger females were in heat,⁷ Jacob would set up the branches in the troughs in front of the flock, so they would mate near the branches. **30:42** But if the animals were weaker, he did not set the branches there.⁸ So the weaker animals ended up belonging to Laban⁹ and the stronger animals to Jacob. **30:43** In this way Jacob¹⁰ became extremely prosperous. He owned¹¹ large flocks, male and female servants, camels, and donkeys.

Jacob's Flight from Laban

31:1 Jacob heard that Laban's sons were complaining,¹² "Jacob has taken everything that belonged to our father! He has gotten rich¹³ at our father's expense!"¹⁴ **31:2** When Jacob saw the look on Laban's face, he could tell his attitude toward him had changed.¹⁵

31:3 The LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers¹⁶ and to your relatives. I will be with you."¹⁷ **31:4** So Jacob sent a message for Rachel and Leah¹⁸ to come to the field¹⁹ where his flocks were.²⁰ **31:5** There he said to them, "I can tell that your father's attitude toward me has changed,²¹ but the God of my father has been with me. **31:6** You know that I've worked for your father as hard as I could,²² **31:7** but your father has humiliated²³ me and changed my wages ten times. But God has not permitted him to do me any harm. **31:8** If he said,²⁴ 'The speckled animals²⁵ will be your wage,' then the entire flock gave birth to speckled offspring. But if he said, 'The streaked animals will be your wage,' then the entire flock gave birth to streaked offspring. **31:9** In this way God has snatched away your father's livestock and given them to me.

¹² **tn** *Heb* "and he heard the words of the sons of Laban, saying."

¹³ **sn** The Hebrew word translated "gotten rich" (כָּבֹד, *cavod*) has the basic idea of "weight." If one is heavy with possessions, then that one is wealthy (13:2). Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph all became wealthy when they left the promised land. Jacob's wealth foreshadows what will happen to Israel when they leave the land of Egypt (Exod 12:35-38).

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* "and from that which belonged to our father he has gained all this wealth."

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* "and Jacob saw the face of Laban, and look, he was not with him as formerly." Jacob knew from the expression on Laban's face that his attitude toward him had changed - Jacob had become *persona non grata*.

¹⁶ **tn** Or perhaps "ancestors" (so NRSV), although the only "ancestors" Jacob had there were his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac.

¹⁷ **sn** *I will be with you*. Though Laban was no longer "with him," the LORD promised to be.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* "sent and called for Rachel and for Leah." Jacob did not go in person, but probably sent a servant with a message for his wives to meet him in the field.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* "the field." The word is an adverbial accusative, indicating that this is where Jacob wanted them to meet him. The words "to come to" are supplied in the translation for clarification and stylistic reasons.

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* "to his flock."

²¹ **tn** *Heb* "I see the face of your father, that he is not toward me as formerly."

²² **tn** *Heb* "with all my strength."

²³ **tn** This rare verb means "to make a fool of" someone. It involves deceiving someone so that their public reputation suffers (see Exod 8:25).

²⁴ **tn** In the protasis ("if" section) of this conditional clause, the imperfect verbal form has a customary nuance - whatever *he would say* worked to Jacob's benefit.

²⁵ **tn** *Heb* "speckled" (twice in this verse). The words "animals" (after the first occurrence of "speckled") and "offspring" (after the second) have been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons. The same two terms ("animals" and "offspring") have been supplied after the two occurrences of "streaked" later in this verse.

¹ **tn** *Heb* "and he put a journey of three days between himself and Jacob."

sn *Three days' traveling distance from Jacob*. E. A. Speiser observes, "Laban is delighted with the terms, and promptly proceeds to violate the spirit of the bargain by removing to a safe distance all the grown animals that would be likely to produce the specified spots" (Genesis [AB], 238). Laban apparently thought that by separating out the spotted, striped, and dark colored animals he could minimize the production of spotted, striped, or dark offspring that would then belong to Jacob.

² **tn** The disjunctive clause (introduced by the *vav* with subject) is circumstantial/temporal; Laban removed the animals while Jacob was taking care of the rest.

³ **sn** *He put the branches in front of the flocks...when they came to drink*. It was generally believed that placing such "visual aids" before the animals as they were mating, it was possible to influence the appearance of their offspring. E. A. Speiser notes that "Jacob finds a way to outwit his father-in-law, through prenatal conditioning of the flock by visual aids - in conformance with universal folk beliefs" (Genesis [AB], 238). Nevertheless, in spite of Jacob's efforts at animal husbandry, he still attributes the resulting success to God (see 31:5).

⁴ **tn** The Hebrew verb used here can mean "to be in heat" (see v. 38) or "to mate; to conceive; to become pregnant." The latter nuance makes better sense in this verse, for the next clause describes them giving birth.

⁵ **tn** *Heb* "the sheep." The noun has been replaced by the pronoun ("they") in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁶ **tn** *Heb* "and he set the faces of."

⁷ **tn** *Heb* "and at every breeding-heat of the flock."

⁸ **tn** *Heb* "he did not put [them] in." The referent of the [understood] direct object, "them," has been specified as "the branches" in the translation for clarity.

⁹ **tn** *Heb* "were for Laban."

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* "the man"; Jacob's name has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* "and there were to him."

31:10 “Once¹ during breeding season I saw² in a dream that the male goats mating with³ the flock were streaked, speckled, and spotted. **31:11** In the dream the angel of God said to me, ‘Jacob!’ ‘Here I am!’ I replied. **31:12** Then he said, ‘Observe⁴ that all the male goats mating with⁵ the flock are streaked, speckled, or spotted, for I have observed all that Laban has done to you. **31:13** I am the God of Bethel,⁶ where you anointed⁷ the sacred stone and made a vow to me.⁸ Now leave this land immediately⁹ and return to your native land.’”

31:14 Then Rachel and Leah replied to him, “Do we still have any portion or inheritance¹⁰ in our father’s house? **31:15** Hasn’t he treated us like foreigners? He not only sold us, but completely wasted¹¹ the money paid for us!¹² **31:16** Surely all the wealth that God snatched away from our father belongs to us and to our children. So now do everything God has told you.”

31:17 So Jacob immediately put his children and his wives on the camels.¹³ **31:18** He took¹⁴ away all the livestock he had acquired in Paddan Aram and all his moveable property that he had

accumulated. Then he set out toward the land of Canaan to return to his father Isaac.¹⁵

31:19 While Laban had gone to shear his sheep,¹⁶ Rachel stole the household idols¹⁷ that belonged to her father. **31:20** Jacob also deceived¹⁸ Laban the Aramean by not telling him that he was leaving.¹⁹ **31:21** He left²⁰ with all he owned. He quickly crossed²¹ the Euphrates River²² and headed for²³ the hill country of Gilead.

31:22 Three days later Laban discovered Jacob had left.²⁴ **31:23** So he took his relatives²⁵ with him and pursued Jacob²⁶ for seven days.²⁷ He caught up with²⁸ him in the hill country of Gilead. **31:24** But God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream at night and warned him,²⁹ “Be careful³⁰ that you neither bless nor curse Jacob.”³¹

31:25 Laban overtook Jacob, and when Jacob pitched his tent in the hill country of Gilead, Laban and his relatives set up camp there too.³²

¹ **tn** The sentence begins with the temporal indicator, “and it happened at the time of.”

² **tn** *Heb* “in the time of the breeding of the flock I lifted up my eyes and I saw.”

³ **tn** *Heb* “going up on,” that is, mounting for intercourse.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “lift up (now) your eyes and see.”

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “going up on,” that is, mounting for intercourse.

⁶ **map** For location see Map4-G4; Map5-C1; Map6-E3; Map7-D1; Map8-G3.

⁷ **sn** You anointed the sacred stone. In Gen 28:18 the text simply reported that Jacob poured oil on top of the stone. Now that pouring is interpreted by the LORD as an anointing, Jacob had consecrated the place.

⁸ **sn** And made a vow to me. The second clause reminds Jacob of the vow he made to the LORD when he anointed the stone (Gen 28:20-22). God is now going to take him back to the land, and so he will have to fulfill his vow.

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “arise, leave!” The first imperative draws attention to the need for immediate action.

sn Leave this land immediately. The decision to leave was a wise one in view of the changed attitude in Laban and his sons. But more than that, it was the will of God. Jacob needed to respond to God’s call – the circumstances simply made it easier.

¹⁰ **tn** The two nouns may form a hendiadys, meaning “a share in the inheritance” or “a portion to inherit.”

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “and he devoured, even devouring.” The infinitive absolute (following the finite verb here) is used for emphasis.

sn He sold us and...wasted our money. The precise nature of Rachel’s and Leah’s complaint is not entirely clear. Since Jacob had to work to pay for them, they probably mean that their father has cheated Jacob and therefore cheated them as well. See M. Burrows, “The Complaint of Laban’s Daughters,” *JAOS* 57 (1937): 250-76.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “our money.” The word “money” is used figuratively here; it means the price paid for Leah and Rachel. A literal translation (“our money”) makes it sound as if Laban wasted money that belonged to Rachel and Leah, rather than the money paid for them.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “and Jacob arose and he lifted up his sons and his wives on to the camels.”

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “drove,” but this is subject to misunderstanding in contemporary English.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “and he led away all his cattle and all his moveable property which he acquired, the cattle he obtained, which he acquired in Paddan Aram to go to Isaac his father to the land of Canaan.”

¹⁶ **tn** This disjunctive clause (note the pattern conjunction + subject + verb) introduces a new scene. In the English translation it may be subordinated to the following clause.

¹⁷ **tn** Or “household gods.” Some translations merely transliterate the Hebrew term תְּרַפִּיּוֹת (*terafim*) as “teraphim,” which apparently refers to household idols. Some contend that possession of these idols guaranteed the right of inheritance, but it is more likely that they were viewed simply as protective deities. See M. Greenberg, “Another Look at Rachel’s Theft of the Teraphim,” *JBL* 81 (1962): 239-48.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “stole the heart of,” an expression which apparently means “to deceive.” The repetition of the verb “to steal” shows that Jacob and Rachel are kindred spirits. Any thought that Laban would have resigned himself to their departure was now out of the question.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “fleeing,” which reflects Jacob’s viewpoint.

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “and he fled.”

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “he arose and crossed.” The first verb emphasizes that he wasted no time in getting across.

²² **tn** *Heb* “the river”; the referent (the Euphrates) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²³ **tn** *Heb* “he set his face.”

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and it was told to Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled.”

²⁵ **tn** *Heb* “his brothers.”

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* “him”; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁷ **tn** *Heb* “and he pursued after him a journey of seven days.”

²⁸ **tn** *Heb* “drew close to.”

²⁹ **tn** *Heb* “said to him.”

³⁰ **tn** *Heb* “watch yourself,” which is a warning to be on guard against doing something that is inappropriate.

³¹ **tn** *Heb* “lest you speak with Jacob from good to evil.” The precise meaning of the expression, which occurs only here and in v. 29, is uncertain. Since Laban proceeded to speak to Jacob at length, it cannot mean to maintain silence. Nor does it seem to be a prohibition against criticism (see vv. 26-30). Most likely it refers to a formal pronouncement, whether it be a blessing or a curse. Laban was to avoid saying anything to Jacob that would be intended to enhance him or to harm him.

³² **tn** *Heb* “and Jacob pitched his tent in the hill country, and Laban pitched with his brothers in the hill country of Gilead.” The juxtaposition of disjunctive clauses (note the pattern conjunction + subject + verb in both clauses) indicates synchronism of action.

31:26 “What have you done?” Laban demanded of Jacob. “You’ve deceived me¹ and carried away my daughters as if they were captives of war!² 31:27 Why did you run away secretly³ and deceive me?⁴ Why didn’t you tell me so I could send you off with a celebration complete with singing, tambourines, and harps?⁵ 31:28 You didn’t even allow me to kiss my daughters and my grandchildren⁶ good-bye. You have acted foolishly! 31:29 I have⁷ the power to do you harm, but the God of your father told me last night, ‘Be careful⁸ that you neither bless nor curse Jacob.’⁹ 31:30 Now I understand that¹⁰ you have gone away¹¹ because you longed desperately¹² for your father’s house. Yet why did you steal my gods?”¹³

31:31 “I left secretly because I was afraid!”¹⁴ Jacob replied to Laban. “I thought¹⁵ you might take your daughters away from me by force.¹⁶ 31:32 Whoever has taken your gods will be put

to death!¹⁷ In the presence of our relatives¹⁸ identify whatever is yours and take it.”¹⁹ (Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.)²⁰

31:33 So Laban entered Jacob’s tent, and Leah’s tent, and the tent of the two female servants, but he did not find the idols.²¹ Then he left Leah’s tent and entered Rachel’s.²² 31:34 (Now Rachel had taken the idols and put them inside her camel’s saddle²³ and sat on them.)²⁴ Laban searched the whole tent, but did not find them.²⁵ 31:35 Rachel²⁶ said to her father, “Don’t be angry,²⁷ my lord. I cannot stand up²⁸ in your presence because I am having my period.”²⁹ So he searched thoroughly,³⁰ but did not find the idols.

31:36 Jacob became angry³¹ and argued with Laban. “What did I do wrong?” he demanded of Laban.³² “What sin of mine prompted you to chase after me in hot pursuit?”³³ 31:37 When you searched through all my goods, did you find anything that belonged to you?³⁴ Set it here before my relatives and yours,³⁵ and let them settle the dispute between the two of us!³⁶

¹ *tn* *Heb* “and you have stolen my heart.” This expression apparently means “to deceive” (see v. 20).

² *tn* *Heb* “and you have led away my daughters like captives of a sword.”

³ *tn* *Heb* “Why did you hide in order to flee?” The verb “hide” and the infinitive “to flee” form a hendiadys, the infinitive becoming the main verb and the other the adverb: “flee secretly.”

⁴ *tn* *Heb* “and steal me.”

⁵ *tn* *Heb* “And [why did] you not tell me so I could send you off with joy and with songs, with a tambourine and with a harp?”

⁶ *tn* *Heb* “my sons and my daughters.” Here “sons” refers to “grandsons,” and has been translated “grandchildren” since at least one granddaughter, Dinah, was involved. The order has been reversed in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁷ *tn* *Heb* “there is to my hand.”

⁸ *tn* *Heb* “watch yourself,” which is a warning to be on guard against doing something that is inappropriate.

⁹ *tn* *Heb* “from speaking with Jacob from good to evil.” The precise meaning of the expression, which occurs only here and in v. 24, is uncertain. See the note on the same phrase in v. 24.

¹⁰ *tn* *Heb* “and now.” The words “I understand that” have been supplied in the translation for clarity and for stylistic reasons.

¹¹ *tn* The infinitive absolute appears before the perfect verbal form to emphasize the certainty of the action.

¹² *tn* The infinitive absolute appears before the perfect verbal form to emphasize the degree of emotion involved.

¹³ *sn* *Why did you steal my gods?* This last sentence is dropped into the speech rather suddenly. See C. Mabee, “Jacob and Laban: The Structure of Judicial Proceedings,” *VT* 30 (1980): 192-207, and G. W. Coats, “Self-Abasement and In-sult Formulas,” *JBL* 91 (1972): 90-92.

¹⁴ *tn* *Heb* “and Jacob answered and said to Laban, ‘Because I was afraid.’” This statement is a not a response to the question about Laban’s household gods that immediately precedes, but to the earlier question about Jacob’s motivation for leaving so quickly and secretly (see v. 27). For this reason the words “I left secretly” are supplied in the translation to indicate the connection to Laban’s earlier question in v. 27. Additionally the order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁵ *tn* *Heb* “for I said.”

¹⁶ *tn* *Heb* “lest you steal your daughters from with me.”

¹⁷ *tn* *Heb* “With whomever you find your gods, he will not live.”

¹⁸ *tn* *Heb* “brothers.”

¹⁹ *tn* *Heb* “recognize for yourself what is with me and take for yourself.”

²⁰ *tn* The disjunctive clause (introduced here by a *vav* [h] conjunction) provides supplemental material that is important to the story. Since this material is parenthetical in nature, it has been placed in parentheses in the translation.

²¹ *tn* No direct object is specified for the verb “find” in the Hebrew text. The words “the idols” have been supplied in the translation for clarification.

²² *tn* *Heb* “and he went out from the tent of Leah and went into the tent of Rachel.”

²³ *tn* The “camel’s saddle” was probably some sort of basket-saddle, a cushioned saddle with a basket bound on. Cf. NAB “inside a camel cushion.”

²⁴ *tn* The disjunctive clause (introduced by a *vav* [h] conjunction) provides another parenthetical statement necessary to the storyline.

²⁵ *tn* The word “them” has been supplied in the translation for clarification.

²⁶ *tn* *Heb* “she”; the referent (Rachel) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁷ *tn* *Heb* “let it not be hot in the eyes of my lord.” This idiom refers to anger, in this case as a result of Rachel’s failure to stand in the presence of her father as a sign of respect.

²⁸ *tn* *Heb* “I am unable to rise.”

²⁹ *tn* *Heb* “the way of women is to me.” This idiom refers to a woman’s menstrual period.

³⁰ *tn* The word “thoroughly” is not in the Hebrew text, but is implied.

³¹ *tn* *Heb* “it was hot to Jacob.” This idiom refers to anger.

³² *tn* *Heb* “and Jacob answered and said to Laban, ‘What is my sin?’” The proper name “Jacob” has been replaced by the pronoun (“he”) in the translation and the order of the introductory clause and direct discourse rearranged for stylistic reasons.

³³ *tn* *Heb* “What is my sin that you have hotly pursued after me.” The Hebrew verb translated “pursue hotly” is used elsewhere of soldiers chasing defeated enemies (1 Sam 17:53).

³⁴ *tn* *Heb* “what did you find from all the goods of your house?”

³⁵ *tn* *Heb* “your relatives.” The word “relatives” has not been repeated in the translation here for stylistic reasons.

³⁶ *tn* *Heb* “that they may decide between us two.”

31:38 “I have been with you for the past twenty years. Your ewes and female goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten rams from your flocks. **31:39** Animals torn by wild beasts I never brought to you; I always absorbed the loss myself.¹ You always made me pay for every missing animal,² whether it was taken by day or at night. **31:40** I was consumed by scorching heat³ during the day and by piercing cold⁴ at night, and I went without sleep.⁵ **31:41** This was my lot⁶ for twenty years in your house: I worked like a slave⁷ for you – fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flocks, but you changed my wages ten times! **31:42** If the God of my father – the God of Abraham, the one whom Isaac fears⁸ – had not been with me, you would certainly have sent me away empty-handed! But God saw how I was oppressed and how hard I worked,⁹ and he rebuked you last night.”

31:43 Laban replied¹⁰ to Jacob, “These women¹¹ are my daughters, these children are my grandchildren,¹² and these flocks are my flocks. All that you see belongs to me. But how can I harm these daughters of mine today¹³ or the children to whom they have given birth? **31:44** So now, come, let’s make a formal agreement,¹⁴ you and I, and it will be¹⁵ proof that we have made peace.”¹⁶

31:45 So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a memorial pillar. **31:46** Then he¹⁷ said to his rela-

tives, “Gather stones.” So they brought stones and put them in a pile.¹⁸ They ate there by the pile of stones. **31:47** Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha,¹⁹ but Jacob called it Galeed.²⁰

31:48 Laban said, “This pile of stones is a witness of our agreement²¹ today.” That is why it was called Galeed. **31:49** It was also called Mizpah²² because he said, “May the LORD watch²³ between us²⁴ when we are out of sight of one another.²⁵ **31:50** If you mistreat my daughters or if you take wives besides my daughters, although no one else is with us, realize²⁶ that God is witness to your actions.”²⁷

31:51 “Here is this pile of stones and this pillar I have set up between me and you,” Laban said to Jacob.²⁸ **31:52** “This pile of stones and the pillar are reminders that I will not pass beyond this pile to come to harm you and that you will not pass beyond this pile and this pillar to come to harm me.²⁹ **31:53** May the God of Abraham and the god of Nahor,³⁰ the gods of their father, judge between us.” Jacob took an oath by the God whom his father Isaac feared.³¹ **31:54** Then

¹⁸ sn The Hebrew word for “pile” is גַּל (gal), which sounds like the name “Galeed” (גַּלְעָד, gal’ed). See v. 48.

¹⁹ sn Jegar Sahadutha. Laban the Aramean gave the place an Aramaic name which means “witness pile” or “the pile is a witness.”

²⁰ sn Galeed also means “witness pile” or “the pile is a witness,” but this name is Canaanite or Western Semitic and closer to later Hebrew. Jacob, though certainly capable of speaking Aramaic, here prefers to use the western dialect.

²¹ tn Heb “a witness between me and you.”

²² tn Heb “and Mizpah.”

²³ sn The name Mizpah (מִצְפָּה, mitspah), which means “watchpost,” sounds like the verb translated “may he watch” (יִשְׁפֹּט, yitsef). Neither Laban nor Jacob felt safe with each other, and so they agreed to go their separate ways, trusting the LORD to keep watch at the border. Jacob did not need this treaty, but Laban, perhaps because he had lost his household gods, felt he did.

²⁴ tn Heb “between me and you.”

²⁵ tn Heb “for we will be hidden, each man from his neighbor.”

²⁶ tn Heb “see.”

²⁷ tn Heb “between me and you.”

²⁸ tn Heb “and Laban said to Jacob, ‘Behold this heap and behold the pillar which I have set between me and you.’” The order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁹ tn Heb “This pile is a witness and the pillar is a witness, if I go past this pile to you and if you go past this pile and this pillar to me for harm.”

³⁰ tn The God of Abraham and the god of Nahor. The Hebrew verb translated “judge” is plural, suggesting that Laban has more than one “god” in mind. The Samaritan Pentateuch and the LXX, apparently in an effort to make the statement monotheistic, have a singular verb. In this case one could translate, “May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us.” However, Laban had a polytheistic world view, as evidenced by his possession of household idols (cf. 31:19). The translation uses “God” when referring to Abraham’s God, for Genesis makes it clear that Abraham worshiped the one true God. It employs “god” when referring to Nahor’s god, for in the Hebrew text Laban refers to a different god here, probably one of the local deities.

³¹ tn Heb “by the fear of his father Isaac.” See the note on the word “fears” in v. 42.

¹ tn The imperfect verbal form indicates that this was a customary or typical action.

² tn Heb “from my hand you exacted it.” The imperfect verbal form again indicates that this was a customary or typical action. The words “for every missing animal” are supplied in the translation for clarity; the following clause in Hebrew, “stolen by day or stolen by night,” probably means “stolen by wild beasts” and refers to the same animals “torn by wild beasts” in the previous clause, although it may refer to animals stolen by people. The translation used here, “missing,” is ambiguous enough to cover either eventuality.

³ tn Or “by drought.”

⁴ tn Heb “frost, ice,” though when contrasted with the *khorev*, “drought, parching heat”) of the day, “piercing cold” is more appropriate as a contrast.

⁵ tn Heb “and my sleep fled from my eyes.”

⁶ tn Heb “this to me.”

⁷ tn Heb “served you,” but in this accusatory context the meaning is more “worked like a slave.”

⁸ tn Heb “the fear of Isaac,” that is, the one whom Isaac feared and respected. For further discussion of this title see M. Malul, “More on *pahad yitschaq* (Gen. 31:42,53) and the Oath by the Thigh,” VT 35 (1985): 192-200.

⁹ tn Heb “My oppression and the work of my hands God saw.”

¹⁰ tn Heb “answered and said.”

¹¹ tn Heb “daughters.”

¹² tn Heb “children.”

¹³ tn Heb “but to my daughters what can I do to these today?”

¹⁴ tn Heb “cut a covenant.”

¹⁵ tn The verb *hayah* (הָיָה) followed by the preposition *le* (לֵ) means “become.”

¹⁶ tn Heb “and it will become a witness between me and you.”

¹⁷ tn Heb “Jacob”; the proper name has been replaced by the pronoun (“he”) in the translation for stylistic reasons.

Jacob offered a sacrifice¹ on the mountain and invited his relatives to eat the meal.² They ate the meal and spent the night on the mountain.

31:55 (32:1)³ Early in the morning Laban kissed⁴ his grandchildren⁵ and his daughters goodbye and blessed them. Then Laban left and returned home.⁶

Jacob Wrestles at Peniel

32:1 So Jacob went on his way and the angels of God⁷ met him. **32:2** When Jacob saw them, he exclaimed,⁸ “This is the camp of God!” So he named that place Mahanaim.⁹

32:3 Jacob sent messengers on ahead¹⁰ to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the region¹¹ of Edom. **32:4** He commanded them, “This is what you must say to my lord Esau: ‘This is what your servant¹² Jacob says: I have been staying with Laban until now. **32:5** I have oxen, donkeys, sheep, and male and female servants. I have sent¹³ this message¹⁴ to inform my lord, so that I may find favor in your sight.’”

32:6 The messengers returned to Jacob and said, “We went to your brother Esau. He is coming to meet you and has four hundred men with him.” **32:7** Jacob was very afraid and upset. So he divided the people who were with him into two camps, as well as the flocks, herds, and

camels. **32:8** “If Esau attacks one camp,”¹⁵ he thought,¹⁶ “then the other camp will be able to escape.”¹⁷

32:9 Then Jacob prayed,¹⁸ “O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, O LORD, you said¹⁹ to me, ‘Return to your land and to your relatives and I will make you prosper.’²⁰ **32:10** I am not worthy of all the faithful love²¹ you have shown²² your servant. With only my walking stick²³ I crossed the Jordan,²⁴ but now I have become two camps. **32:11** Rescue me,²⁵ I pray, from the hand²⁶ of my brother Esau,²⁷ for I am afraid he will come²⁸ and attack me, as well as the mothers with their children.²⁹ **32:12** But you³⁰ said, ‘I will certainly make you prosper³¹ and will make³² your descendants like the sand on the seashore, too numerous to count.’”³³

¹ **tn** The construction is a cognate accusative with the verb, expressing a specific sacrifice.

² **tn** *Heb* “bread, food.” Presumably this was a type of peace offering, where the person bringing the offering ate the animal being sacrificed.

³ **sn** Beginning with **31:55**, the verse numbers in the English Bible through **32:32** differ by one from the verse numbers in the Hebrew text (*BHS*), with **31:55** ET = **32:1** HT, **32:1** ET = **32:2** HT, etc., through **32:32** ET = **32:33** HT. From **33:1** the verse numbers in the ET and HT are again the same.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and Laban got up early in the morning and he kissed.”

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “his sons.”

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “to his place.”

⁷ **sn** The phrase *angels of God* occurs only here and in Gen 28:12 in the OT. Jacob saw a vision of angels just before he left the promised land. Now he encounters angels as he prepares to return to it. The text does not give the details of the encounter, but Jacob’s response suggests it was amicable. This location was a spot where heaven made contact with earth, and where God made his presence known to the patriarch. See C. Houtman, “Jacob at Mahanaim: Some Remarks on Genesis XXXII 2-3,” *VT* 28 (1978): 37-44.

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “and Jacob said when he saw them.”

⁹ **sn** The name *Mahanaim* apparently means “two camps.” Perhaps the two camps were those of God and of Jacob.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “before him.”

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “field.”

¹² **sn** *Your servant*. The narrative recounts Jacob’s groveling in fear before Esau as he calls his brother his “lord,” as if to minimize what had been done twenty years ago.

¹³ **tn** Or “I am sending.” The form is a preterite with the *vav* consecutive; it could be rendered as an English present tense – as the Hebrew perfect/preterite allows – much like an epistolary aorist in Greek. The form assumes the temporal perspective of the one who reads the message.

¹⁴ **tn** The words “this message” are not in the Hebrew text, but have been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “If Esau comes to one camp and attacks it.”

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “and he said, ‘If Esau comes to one camp and attacks it.’” The Hebrew verb אָמַר (*amar*) here represents Jacob’s thought or reasoning, and is therefore translated “he thought.” The order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “the surviving camp will be for escape.” The word “escape” is a feminine noun. The term most often refers to refugees from war.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “said.”

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “the one who said.”

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “I will cause good” or “I will treat well [or “favorably].” The idea includes more than prosperity, though that is its essential meaning. Here the form is subordinated to the preceding imperative and indicates purpose or result. Jacob is reminding God of his promise in the hope that God will honor his word.

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “the loving deeds and faithfulness” (see 24:27, 49).

²² **tn** *Heb* “you have done with.”

²³ **tn** *Heb* “for with my staff.” The Hebrew word מַגֵּל (*magel*), traditionally translated “staff,” has been rendered as “walking stick” because a “staff” in contemporary English refers typically to the support personnel in an organization.

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “this Jordan.”

²⁵ **tn** The imperative has the force of a prayer here, not a command.

²⁶ **tn** The “hand” here is a metonymy for “power.”

²⁷ **tn** *Heb* “from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau.”

²⁸ **tn** *Heb* “for I am afraid of him, lest he come.”

²⁹ **sn** *Heb* “me, [the] mother upon [the] sons.” The first person pronoun “me” probably means here “me and mine,” as the following clause suggests.

³⁰ **tn** *Heb* “But you, you said.” One of the occurrences of the pronoun “you” has been left untranslated for stylistic reasons.

³¹ **sn** Some commentators have thought this final verse of the prayer redundant, but it actually follows the predominant form of a lament in which God is motivated to act. The primary motivation Jacob can offer to God is God’s promise, and so he falls back on that at the end of the prayer.

³² **tn** Or “will certainly deal well with you.” The infinitive absolute appears before the imperfect, underscoring God’s promise to bless. The statement is more emphatic than in v. 9.

³³ **tn** The form is the perfect tense with a *vav* (ו) consecutive, carrying the nuance of the preceding verb forward.

³⁴ **tn** *Heb* “which cannot be counted because of abundance.” The imperfect verbal form indicates potential here.

32:13 Jacob¹ stayed there that night. Then he sent² as a gift³ to his brother Esau **32:14** two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, **32:15** thirty female camels with their young, forty cows and ten bulls, and twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. **32:16** He entrusted them to⁴ his servants, who divided them into herds.⁵ He told his servants, “Pass over before me, and keep some distance between one herd and the next.” **32:17** He instructed the servant leading the first herd,⁶ “When my brother Esau meets you and asks, ‘To whom do you belong?’⁷ Where are you going? Whose herds are you driving?’⁸ **32:18** then you must say,⁹ ‘They belong¹⁰ to your servant Jacob.¹¹ They have been sent as a gift to my lord Esau.¹² In fact Jacob himself is behind us.’”¹³

32:19 He also gave these instructions to the second and third servants, as well as all those who were following the herds, saying, “You must say the same thing to Esau when you meet him.¹⁴ **32:20** You must also say, ‘In fact your servant Jacob is behind us.’”¹⁵ Jacob thought,¹⁶

“I will first appease him¹⁷ by sending a gift ahead of me.¹⁸ After that I will meet him.¹⁹ Perhaps he will accept me.”²⁰ **32:21** So the gifts were sent on ahead of him²¹ while he spent that night in the camp.²²

32:22 During the night Jacob quickly took²³ his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven sons²⁴ and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.²⁵ **32:23** He took them and sent them across the stream along with all his possessions.²⁶ **32:24** So Jacob was left alone. Then a man²⁷ wrestled²⁸ with him until day-break.²⁹ **32:25** When the man³⁰ saw that he could not defeat Jacob,³¹ he struck³² the socket of his hip so the socket of Jacob’s hip was dislocated while he wrestled with him.

32:26 Then the man³³ said, “Let me go, for

¹ **tn Heb** “and he”; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

² **tn Heb** “and he took from that which was going into his hand,” meaning that he took some of what belonged to him.

³ **sn** The Hebrew noun translated *gift* can in some contexts refer to the tribute paid by a subject to his lord. Such a nuance is possible here, because Jacob refers to Esau as his lord and to himself as Esau’s servant (v. 4).

⁴ **tn Heb** “and he put them in the hand of.”

⁵ **tn Heb** “a herd, a herd, by itself,” or “each herd by itself.” The distributive sense is expressed by repetition.

⁶ **tn Heb** “the first”; this has been specified as “the servant leading the first herd” in the translation for clarity.

⁷ **tn Heb** “to whom are you?”

⁸ **tn Heb** “and to whom are these before you?”

⁹ **tn** The form is the perfect tense with the *vav* (ו) consecutive; it has the nuance of an imperfect of instruction.

¹⁰ **tn** The words “they belong” have been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹¹ **tn Heb** “to your servant, to Jacob.”

¹² **tn Heb** “to my lord, to Esau.”

¹³ **tn Heb** “and look, also he [is] behind us.” The referent of the pronoun “he” (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁴ **tn Heb** “And he commanded also the second, also the third, also all the ones going after the herds, saying: ‘According to this word you will speak when you find him.’”

¹⁵ **tn Heb** “and look, your servant Jacob [is] behind us.”

¹⁶ **tn Heb** “for he said.” The referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity. The Hebrew word מַחְשַׁבְתּוֹ (*maḥshevto*), traditionally represents Jacob’s thought or reasoning, and is therefore translated “thought.”

¹⁷ **tn Heb** “I will appease his face.” The cohortative here expresses Jacob’s resolve. In the Book of Leviticus the Hebrew verb translated “appease” has the idea of removing anger due to sin or guilt, a nuance that fits this passage very well. Jacob wanted to buy Esau off with a gift of more than five hundred and fifty animals.

¹⁸ **tn Heb** “with a gift going before me.”

¹⁹ **tn Heb** “I will see his face.”

²⁰ **tn Heb** “Perhaps he will lift up my face.” In this context the idiom refers to acceptance.

²¹ **tn Heb** “and the gift passed over upon his face.”

²² **tn** The disjunctive clause is circumstantial/temporal.

²³ **tn Heb** “and he arose in that night and he took.” The first verb is adverbial, indicating that he carried out the crossing right away.

²⁴ **tn** The Hebrew term used here is יָלֵד (*veled*) which typically describes male offspring. Some translations render the term “children” but this is a problem because by this time Jacob had twelve children in all, including one daughter, Dinah, born to Leah (Gen 30:21). Benjamin, his twelfth son and thirteenth child, was not born until later (Gen 35:16-19).

²⁵ **sn** Hebrew narrative style often includes a summary statement of the whole passage followed by a more detailed report of the event. Here v. 22 is the summary statement, while v. 23 begins the detailed account.

²⁶ **tn Heb** “and he sent across what he had.”

²⁷ **sn** Reflecting Jacob’s perspective at the beginning of the encounter, the narrator calls the opponent simply “a man.” Not until later in the struggle does Jacob realize his true identity.

²⁸ **sn** The verb translated “wrestled” (וַיִּצְרַח, *vayye’aveq*) sounds in Hebrew like the names “Jacob” (יַעֲקֹב, *ya’aqov*) and “Jabbok” (יַבְבֹּק, *yabboq*). In this way the narrator links the setting, the main action, and the main participant together in the mind of the reader or hearer.

²⁹ **tn Heb** “until the rising of the dawn.”

³⁰ **tn Heb** “he”; the referent (the man) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³¹ **tn Heb** “him”; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³² **tn** Or “injured”; traditionally “touched.” The Hebrew verb translated “struck” has the primary meanings “to touch; to reach; to strike.” It can, however, carry the connotation “to harm; to molest; to injure.” God’s “touch” cripples Jacob – it would be comparable to a devastating blow.

³³ **tn Heb** “he”; the referent (the man) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

the dawn is breaking.”¹ “I will not let you go,” Jacob replied,² “unless you bless me.”³ **32:27** The man asked him,⁴ “What is your name?”⁵ He answered, “Jacob.” **32:28** “No longer will your name be Jacob,” the man told him,⁶ “but Israel,⁷ because you have fought⁸ with God and with men and have prevailed.”

32:29 Then Jacob asked, “Please tell me your name.”⁹ “Why¹⁰ do you ask my name?” the man replied.¹¹ Then he blessed¹² Jacob¹³ there.

¹ **tn** *Heb* “dawn has arisen.”

² **tn** *Heb* “and he said, ‘I will not let you go.’” The referent of the pronoun “he” (Jacob) has been specified for clarity, and the order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³ **sn** Jacob wrestled with a man thinking him to be a mere man, and on that basis was equal to the task. But when it had gone on long enough, the night visitor touched Jacob and crippled him. Jacob’s request for a blessing can only mean that he now knew that his opponent was supernatural. Contrary to many allegorical interpretations of the passage that make fighting equivalent to prayer, this passage shows that Jacob stopped fighting, and then asked for a blessing.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and he said to him.” The referent of the pronoun “he” (the man who wrestled with Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁵ **sn** *What is your name?* The question is rhetorical, since the LORD obviously knew Jacob’s identity. But since the LORD is going to change Jacob’s name, this question is designed to bring focus Jacob’s attention on all that his name had come to signify.

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “and he said.” The referent of the pronoun “he” (the man who wrestled with Jacob) has been specified for clarity, and the order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁷ **sn** The name *Israel* is a common construction, using a verb with a theophoric element (אֱלֹהִים, ‘el) that usually indicates the subject of the verb. Here it means “God fights.” This name will replace the name Jacob; it will be both a promise and a call for faith. In essence, the LORD was saying that Jacob would have victory and receive the promises because God would fight for him.

⁸ **sn** *You have fought.* The explanation of the name Israel includes a sound play. In Hebrew the verb translated “you have fought” (פָּרַצְתָּ, *sarita*) sounds like the name “Israel” (יִשְׂרָאֵל, *yisra’el*), meaning “God fights” (although some interpret the meaning as “he fights [with] God”). The name would evoke the memory of the fight and what it meant. A. Dillmann says that ever after this the name would tell the Israelites that, when Jacob contended successfully with God, he won the battle with man (*Genesis*, 2:279). To be successful with God meant that he had to be crippled in his own self-sufficiency (A. P. Ross, “Jacob at the Jabboq, Israel at Peniel,” *BSac* 142 [1985]: 51-62).

⁹ **sn** *Tell me your name.* In primitive thought to know the name of a deity or supernatural being would enable one to use it for magical manipulation or power (A. S. Herbert, *Genesis* 12-50 [TBC], 108). For a thorough structural analysis of the passage discussing the plays on the names and the request of Jacob, see R. Barthes, “The Struggle with the Angel: Textual Analysis of *Genesis* 32:23-33,” *Structural Analysis and Biblical Exegesis* (PTMS), 21-33.

¹⁰ **tn** The question uses the enclitic pronoun “this” to emphasize the import of the question.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “and he said, ‘Why is it that you ask my name?’” The referent of the pronoun “he” (the man who wrestled with Jacob) has been specified for clarity, and the order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹² **tn** The verb here means that the LORD endowed Jacob with success; he would be successful in everything he did, including meeting Esau.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “him”; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in

32:30 So Jacob named the place Peniel,¹⁴ explaining,¹⁵ “Certainly¹⁶ I have seen God face to face¹⁷ and have survived.”¹⁸

32:31 The sun rose¹⁹ over him as he crossed over Penuel,²⁰ but²¹ he was limping because of his hip. **32:32** That is why to this day²² the Israelites do not eat the sinew which is attached to the socket of the hip, because he struck²³ the socket of Jacob’s hip near the attached sinew.

Jacob Meets Esau

33:1 Jacob looked up²⁴ and saw that Esau was coming²⁵ along with four hundred men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two female servants. **33:2** He put the servants and their children in front, with Leah and her children behind them, and Rachel and Joseph behind them.²⁶ **33:3** But Jacob²⁷ himself went on ahead of them, and he bowed toward the ground seven times as he approached²⁸ his brother. **33:4** But Esau ran to meet him, embraced him, hugged his neck, and kissed him. Then they both

the translation for clarity.

¹⁴ **sn** The name *Peniel* means “face of God.” Since Jacob saw God face to face here, the name is appropriate.

¹⁵ **tn** The word “explaining” is supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁶ **tn** Or “because.”

¹⁷ **sn** *I have seen God face to face.* See the note on the name “Peniel” earlier in the verse.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “and my soul [= life] has been preserved.”

¹⁹ **sn** *I have survived.* It was commonly understood that no one could see God and live (*Gen* 48:16; *Exod* 19:21, 24:10; and *Judg* 6:11, 22). On the surface Jacob seems to be saying that he saw God and survived. But the statement may have a double meaning, in light of his prayer for deliverance in v. 11. Jacob recognizes that he has survived his encounter with God and that his safety has now been guaranteed.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “shone.”

²⁰ **sn** The name is spelled *Penuel* here, apparently a variant spelling of *Peniel* (see v. 30).

²¹ **tn** The disjunctive clause draws attention to an important fact: He may have crossed the stream, but he was limping.

²² **sn** On the use of the expression to *this day*, see B. S. Childs, “A Study of the Formula ‘Until This Day,’” *JBL* 82 (1963): 279-92.

²³ **tn** Or “because the socket of Jacob’s hip was struck.” Some translations render this as an impersonal passive. On the translation of the word “struck” see the note on this term in v. 25.

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and Jacob lifted up his eyes.”

²⁵ **tn** Or “and look, Esau was coming.” By the use of the particle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*, “look”), the narrator invites the reader to view the scene through Jacob’s eyes.

²⁶ **sn** This kind of ranking according to favoritism no doubt fed the jealousy over Joseph that later becomes an important element in the narrative. It must have been painful to the family to see that they were expendable.

²⁷ **tn** *Heb* “and he”; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁸ **tn** *Heb* “until his drawing near unto his brother.” The construction uses the preposition with the infinitive construct to express a temporal clause.

wept. **33:5** When Esau¹ looked up² and saw the women and the children, he asked, “Who are these people with you?” Jacob³ replied, “The children whom God has graciously given⁴ your servant.” **33:6** The female servants came forward with their children and bowed down.⁵ **33:7** Then Leah came forward with her children and they bowed down. Finally Joseph and Rachel came forward and bowed down.

33:8 Esau⁶ then asked, “What did you intend⁷ by sending all these herds to meet me?”⁸ Jacob⁹ replied, “To find favor in your sight, my lord.” **33:9** But Esau said, “I have plenty, my brother. Keep what belongs to you.” **33:10** “No, please take them,” Jacob said.¹⁰ “If I have found favor in your sight, accept¹¹ my gift from my hand. Now that I have seen your face and you have accepted me,¹² it is as if I have seen the face of God.¹³ **33:11** Please take my present¹⁴ that was brought to you, for God has been generous¹⁵ to me and I have all I need.”¹⁶ When Jacob urged him, he took it.¹⁷

33:12 Then Esau¹⁸ said, “Let’s be on our way!¹⁹ I will go in front of you.” **33:13** But Jacob²⁰ said to him, “My lord knows that the children are young,²¹ and that I have to look

after the sheep and cattle that are nursing their young.²² If they are driven too hard for even a single day, all the animals will die. **33:14** Let my lord go on ahead of his servant. I will travel more slowly, at the pace of the herds and the children,²³ until I come to my lord at Seir.”

33:15 So Esau said, “Let me leave some of my men with you.”²⁴ “Why do that?” Jacob replied.²⁵ “My lord has already been kind enough to me.”²⁶

33:16 So that same day Esau made his way back²⁷ to Seir.**33:17** But²⁸ Jacob traveled to Succoth²⁹ where he built himself a house and made shelters for his livestock. That is why the place was called³⁰ Succoth.³¹

33:18 After he left Paddan Aram, Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem in the land of Canaan, and he camped near³² the city. **33:19** Then he purchased the portion of the field where he had pitched his tent; he bought it³³ from the sons of Hamor, Shechem’s father, for a hundred pieces of money.³⁴ **33:20** There he set up an altar and called it “The God of Israel is God.”³⁵

²² tn Heb “and the sheep and the cattle nursing [are] upon me.”

²³ tn Heb “and I, I will move along according to my leisure at the foot of the property which is before me and at the foot of the children.”

²⁴ tn The cohortative verbal form here indicates a polite offer of help.

²⁵ tn Heb “and he said, ‘Why this?’” The referent of the pronoun “he” (Jacob) has been specified for clarity, and the order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁶ tn Heb “I am finding favor in the eyes of my lord.”

²⁷ tn Heb “returned on his way.”

²⁸ tn The disjunctive clause contrasts Jacob’s action with Esau’s.

²⁹ sn But Jacob traveled to Succoth. There are several reasons why Jacob chose not to go to Mt. Seir after Esau. First, as he said, his herds and children probably could not keep up with the warriors. Second, he probably did not fully trust his brother. The current friendliness could change, and he could lose everything. And third, God did tell him to return to his land, not Seir. But Jacob is still not able to deal truthfully, probably because of fear of Esau.

³⁰ tn Heb “why he called.” One could understand “Jacob” as the subject of the verb, but it is more likely that the subject is indefinite, in which case the verb is better translated as passive.

³¹ sn The name *Succoth* means “shelters,” an appropriate name in light of the *shelters* Jacob built there for his livestock.

³² tn Heb “in front of.”

³³ tn The words “he bought it” are supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons. In the Hebrew text v. 19 is one long sentence.

³⁴ tn The Hebrew word קִשְׁטָה (*q̄s̄itah*) is generally understood to refer to a unit of money, but the value is unknown. (However, cf. REB, which renders the term as “sheep”).

³⁵ tn Heb “God, the God of Israel.” Rather than translating the name, a number of modern translations merely transliterate it from the Hebrew as “El Eloe Israel” (cf. NIV, NRSV, REB). It is not entirely clear how the name should be interpreted grammatically. One option is to supply an equative verb, as in the translation: “The God of Israel [is] God.” Another interpretive option is “the God of Israel [is] strong [or ‘mighty’].” Buying the land and settling down for a while was a momentous step for the patriarch, so the commemorative naming of the altar is significant.

¹ tn Heb “and he”; the referent (Esau) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

² tn Heb “lifted up his eyes.”

³ tn Heb “and he”; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁴ tn The Hebrew verb means “to be gracious; to show favor”; here it carries the nuance “to give graciously.”

⁵ tn Heb “and the female servants drew near, they and their children and they bowed down.”

⁶ tn Heb “and he”; the referent (Esau) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁷ tn Heb “Who to you?”

⁸ tn Heb “all this camp which I met.”

⁹ tn Heb “and he”; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁰ tn Heb “and Jacob said, ‘No, please.’” The words “take them” have been supplied in the translation for clarity, and the order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse rearranged for stylistic reasons.

¹¹ tn The form is the perfect tense with a vav (ו) consecutive, expressing a contingent future nuance in the “then” section of the conditional sentence.

¹² tn The verbal form is the preterite with a vav (ו) consecutive, indicating result here.

¹³ tn Heb “for therefore I have seen your face like seeing the face of God and you have accepted me.”

sn This is an allusion to the preceding episode (32:22-31) in which Jacob saw the face of God and realized his prayer was answered.

¹⁴ tn Heb “blessing.” It is as if Jacob is trying to repay what he stole from his brother twenty years earlier.

¹⁵ tn Or “gracious,” but in the specific sense of prosperity.

¹⁶ tn Heb “all.”

¹⁷ tn Heb “and he urged him and he took.” The referent of the first pronoun in the sequence (“he”) has been specified as “Jacob” in the translation for clarity.

¹⁸ tn Heb “and he”; the referent (Esau) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁹ tn Heb “let us travel and let us go.” The two cohortatives are used in combination with the sense, “let’s travel along, get going, be on our way.”

²⁰ tn Heb “he”; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²¹ tn Heb “weak.”

Dinah and the Shechemites

34:1 Now Dinah, Leah's daughter whom she bore to Jacob, went to meet¹ the young women² of the land. **34:2** When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, who ruled that area, saw her, he grabbed her, forced himself on her,³ and sexually assaulted her.⁴ **34:3** Then he became very attached⁵ to Dinah, Jacob's daughter. He fell in love with the young woman and spoke romantically to her.⁶ **34:4** Shechem said to his father Hamor, "Acquire this young girl as my wife."⁷ **34:5** When⁸ Jacob heard that Shechem⁹ had violated his daughter Dinah, his sons were with the livestock in the field. So Jacob remained silent¹⁰ until they came in.

34:6 Then Shechem's father Hamor went to speak with Jacob about Dinah.¹¹ **34:7** Now Jacob's sons had come in from the field when they heard the news.¹² They¹³ were offended¹⁴

1 tn Heb "went out to see." The verb "to see," followed by the preposition *ב* (*bē*), here has the idea of "look over." The young girl wanted to meet these women and see what they were like.

2 tn Heb "daughters."

3 tn Heb "and he took her and lay with her." The suffixed form following the verb appears to be the sign of the accusative instead of the preposition, but see BDB 1012 s.v. *שָׁבַב*.

4 tn The verb *הָאָחַז* (*anah*) in the Piel stem can have various shades of meaning, depending on the context: "to defile; to mistreat; to violate; to rape; to shame; to afflict." Here it means that Shechem violated or humiliated Dinah by raping her.

5 tn Heb "his soul stuck to [or "joined with"]." meaning Shechem became very attached to Dinah emotionally.

6 tn Heb "and he spoke to the heart of the young woman," which apparently refers in this context to tender, romantic speech (Hos 2:14). Another option is to translate the expression "he reassured the young woman" (see Judg 19:3, 2 Sam 19:7; cf. NEB "comforted her").

7 tn Heb "Take for me this young woman for a wife."

8 tn The two disjunctive clauses in this verse ("Now Jacob heard...and his sons were") are juxtaposed to indicate synchronic action.

9 tn Heb "he"; the referent (Shechem) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

10 sn The expected response would be anger or rage, but Jacob remained silent. He appears too indifferent or confused to act decisively. When the leader does not act decisively, the younger zealots will, and often with disastrous results.

11 tn Heb "went out to Jacob to speak with him." The words "about Dinah" are not in the Hebrew text, but are supplied in the translation for clarity.

12 tn Heb "when they heard." The words "the news" are supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

13 tn Heb "the men." This sounds as if a new group has been introduced into the narrative, so it has been translated as "they" to indicate that it refers to Jacob's sons, mentioned in the first part of the verse.

14 tn The Hebrew verb *אָסַף* (*atsav*) can carry one of three semantic nuances depending on the context: (1) "to be injured" (Ps 56:5; Eccl 10:9; 1 Chr 4:10); (2) "to experience emotional pain; to be depressed emotionally; to be worried" (2 Sam 19:2; Isa 54:6; Neh 8:10-11); (3) "to be embarrassed; to be insulted; to be offended" (to the point of anger at another or oneself; Gen 6:6; 45:5; 1 Sam 20:3, 34; 1 Kgs 1:6; Isa 63:10; Ps 78:40). This third category develops from the second by metonymy. In certain contexts emotional pain leads to embarrassment and/or anger. In this last use the subject sometimes directs his anger against the source of grief (see especially Gen 6:6). The third category fits best in Gen 34:7 because Jacob's sons were not merely wounded emotionally. On the contrary, Shechem's action prompted them to strike

and very angry because Shechem¹⁵ had disgraced Israel¹⁶ by sexually assaulting¹⁷ Jacob's daughter, a crime that should not be committed.¹⁸

34:8 But Hamor made this appeal to them: "My son Shechem is in love with your daughter.¹⁹ Please give her to him as his wife. **34:9** Intermarry with us.²⁰ Let us marry your daughters, and take our daughters as wives for yourselves.²¹ **34:10** You may live²² among us, and the land will be open to you.²³ Live in it, travel freely in it,²⁴ and acquire property in it."

34:11 Then Shechem said to Dinah's²⁵ father and brothers, "Let me find favor in your sight, and whatever you require of me²⁶ I'll give.²⁷ **34:12** You can make the bride price and the gift I must bring very expensive,²⁸ and I'll give²⁹ whatever you ask³⁰ of me. Just give me the young woman as my wife!"

out in judgment against the source of their distress.

15 tn Heb "he"; the referent (Shechem) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

16 tn Heb "a disgraceful thing he did against Israel."

17 tn Heb "by lying with the daughter of Jacob." The infinitive here explains the preceding verb, indicating exactly how he had disgraced Jacob. The expression "to lie with" is a euphemism for sexual relations, or in this case, sexual assault.

18 tn Heb "and so it should not be done." The negated imperfect has an obligatory nuance here, but there is also a generalizing tone. The narrator emphasizes that this particular type of crime (sexual assault) is especially reprehensible.

19 tn Heb "Shechem my son, his soul is attached to your daughter." The verb means "to love" in the sense of being emotionally attached to or drawn to someone. This is a slightly different way of saying what was reported earlier (v. 3). However, there is no mention here of the offense. Even though Hamor is speaking to Dinah's brothers, he refers to her as their daughter (see v. 17).

20 tn Heb "form marriage alliances with us."

sn Intermarry with us. This includes the idea of becoming allied by marriage. The incident foreshadows the temptations Israel would eventually face when they entered the promised land (see Deut 7:3; Josh 23:12).

21 tn Heb "Give your daughters to us, and take our daughters for yourselves." In the translation the words "let...marry" and "as wives" are supplied for clarity.

22 tn Heb The imperfect verbal form has a permissive nuance here.

23 tn Heb "before you."

24 tn The verb seems to carry the basic meaning "travel about freely," although the substantial participial form refers to a trader (see E. A. Speiser, "The Verb *sh̄r* in Genesis and Early Hebrew Movements," BASOR 164 [1961]: 23-28); cf. NIV, NRSV "trade in it."

25 tn Heb "her"; the referent (Dinah) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

26 tn Heb "whatever you say."

27 tn Or "pay."

28 tn Heb "Make very great upon me the bride price and gift." The imperatives are used in a rhetorical manner. Shechem's point is that he will pay the price, no matter how expensive it might be.

29 tn Heb The cohortative expresses Shechem's resolve to have Dinah as his wife.

30 tn Heb "say."

34:13 Jacob's sons answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully when they spoke because Shechem¹ had violated their sister Dinah. **34:14** They said to them, "We cannot give² our sister to a man who is not circumcised, for it would be a disgrace³ to us. **34:15** We will give you our consent on this one condition: You must become⁴ like us by circumcising⁵ all your males. **34:16** Then we will give⁶ you our daughters to marry,⁷ and we will take your daughters as wives for ourselves, and we will live among you and become one people. **34:17** But if you do not agree to our terms⁸ by being circumcised, then we will take⁹ our sister¹⁰ and depart."

34:18 Their offer pleased Hamor and his son Shechem.¹¹ **34:19** The young man did not delay in doing what they asked¹² because he wanted Jacob's daughter Dinah¹³ badly. (Now he was more important¹⁴ than anyone in his father's household.)¹⁵ **34:20** So Hamor and his son Shechem went to the gate¹⁶ of their city and spoke to the men of their city, **34:21** "These men are at peace with us. So let them live in the land and travel freely in it, for the land is wide enough¹⁷ for them. We will take their daughters for wives, and we will give them our daughters to marry.¹⁸ **34:22** Only on this one condition will these men consent to live with us and become one people:

They demand¹⁹ that every male among us be circumcised just as they are circumcised. **34:23** If we do so,²⁰ won't their livestock, their property, and all their animals become ours? So let's consent to their demand, so they will live among us."

34:24 All the men who assembled at the city gate²¹ agreed with²² Hamor and his son Shechem. Every male who assembled at the city gate²³ was circumcised. **34:25** In three days, when they were still in pain, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword²⁴ and went to the unsuspecting city²⁵ and slaughtered every male. **34:26** They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the sword, took Dinah from Shechem's house, and left. **34:27** Jacob's sons killed them²⁶ and looted the city because their sister had been violated.²⁷ **34:28** They took their flocks, herds, and donkeys, as well as everything in the city and in the surrounding fields.²⁸ **34:29** They captured as plunder²⁹ all their wealth, all their little ones, and their wives, including everything in the houses.

34:30 Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought ruin³⁰ on me by making me a foul odor³¹ among the inhabitants of the land – among the Canaanites and the Perizzites. [I³² am few in number; they will join forces against me and attack me, and both I and my family will be

¹ *tn Heb* "he"; the referent (Shechem) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

² *tn Heb* "we are not able to do this thing, to give." The second infinitive is in apposition to the first, explaining what they are not able to do.

³ *tn* The Hebrew word translated "disgrace" usually means "ridicule; taunt; reproach." It can also refer to the reason the condition of shame or disgrace causes ridicule or a reproach.

⁴ *tn Heb* "if you are like us."

⁵ *tn* The infinitive here explains how they would become like them.

⁶ *tn* The perfect verbal form with the *vav* (ו) consecutive introduces the apodosis of the conditional sentence.

⁷ *tn* The words "to marry" (and the words "as wives" in the following clause) are not in the Hebrew text, but are supplied in the translation for clarity.

⁸ *tn Heb* "listen to us."

⁹ *tn* The perfect verbal form with the *vav* (ו) consecutive introduces the apodosis of the conditional sentence.

¹⁰ *tn Heb* "daughter." Jacob's sons call Dinah their daughter, even though she was their sister (see v. 8). This has been translated as "sister" for clarity.

¹¹ *tn Heb* "and their words were good in the eyes of Hamor and in the eyes of Shechem son of Hamor."

¹² *tn Heb* "doing the thing."

¹³ *tn Heb* "Jacob's daughter." The proper name "Dinah" is supplied in the translation for clarity.

¹⁴ *tn* The Hebrew verb *קָבַד* (*kaved*), translated "was...important," has the primary meaning "to be heavy," but here carries a secondary sense of "to be important" (that is, "heavy" in honor or respect).

¹⁵ *tn* The parenthetical disjunctive clause explains why the community would respond to him (see v. 20-24).

¹⁶ *sn* *The gate.* In an ancient Near Eastern city the gate complex was the location for conducting important public business.

¹⁷ *tn Heb* "wide on both hands," that is, in both directions.

¹⁸ *tn* The words "to marry" are not in the Hebrew text, but are supplied in the translation for clarity.

¹⁹ *tn Heb* "when every one of our males is circumcised."

²⁰ *tn* The words "If we do so" are not in the Hebrew text, but are supplied in the translation for clarity and for stylistic reasons.

²¹ *tn Heb* "all those going out the gate of his city."

²² *tn Heb* "listened to."

²³ *tn Heb* "all those going out the gate of his city."

²⁴ *tn Heb* "a man his sword."

²⁵ *tn Heb* "and they came upon the city, [which was] secure." In this case "secure" means the city was caught unprepared and at peace, not expecting an attack.

²⁶ *tn Heb* "came upon the slain." Because of this statement the preceding phrase "Jacob's sons" is frequently taken to mean the other sons of Jacob besides Simeon and Levi, but the text does not clearly affirm this.

²⁷ *tn Heb* "because they violated their sister." The plural verb is active in form, but with no expressed subject, it may be translated passive.

²⁸ *tn Heb* "and what was in the city and what was in the field they took."

²⁹ *tn Heb* "they took captive and they plundered," that is, "they captured as plunder."

³⁰ *tn* The traditional translation is "troubled me" (KJV, ASV), but the verb refers to personal or national disaster and suggests complete ruin (see Josh 7:25, Judg 11:35, Prov 11:17). The remainder of the verse describes the "trouble" Simeon and Levi had caused.

³¹ *tn* In the causative stem the Hebrew verb *בָּאֵשׁ* (*ba'ash*) means "to cause to stink, to have a foul smell." In the contexts in which it is used it describes foul smells, stench, or things that are odious. Jacob senses that the people in the land will find this act terribly repulsive. See P. R. Ackroyd, "The Hebrew Root *בָּאֵשׁ*," *JTS* 2 (1951): 31-36.

³² *tn* Jacob speaks in the first person as the head and representative of the entire family.

destroyed!” 34:31 But Simeon and Levi replied,⁴ “Should he treat our sister like a common prostitute?”

The Return to Bethel

35:1 Then God said to Jacob, “Go up at once² to Bethel³ and live there. Make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.”⁴ 35:2 So Jacob told his household and all who were with him, “Get rid of the foreign gods you have among you.⁵ Purify yourselves and change your clothes.⁶ 35:3 Let us go up at once⁷ to Bethel. Then I will make⁸ an altar there to God, who responded to me in my time of distress⁹ and has been with me wherever I went.”¹⁰

35:4 So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods that were in their possession¹¹ and the rings that were in their ears.¹² Jacob buried them¹³ under the oak¹⁴ near Shechem 35:5 and they started on their journey.¹⁵ The surrounding cities were afraid of God,¹⁶ and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob.

35:6 Jacob and all those who were with him arrived at Luz (that is, Bethel)¹⁷ in the land of

Canaan.¹⁸ 35:7 He built an altar there and named the place El Bethel¹⁹ because there God had revealed himself²⁰ to him when he was fleeing from his brother. 35:8 (Deborah,²¹ Rebekah’s nurse, died and was buried under the oak below Bethel; thus it was named²² Oak of Weeping.)²³

35:9 God appeared to Jacob again after he returned from Paddan Aram and blessed him. 35:10 God said to him, “Your name is Jacob, but your name will no longer be called Jacob; Israel will be your name.” So God named him Israel.²⁴ 35:11 Then God said to him, “I am the sovereign God.²⁵ Be fruitful and multiply! A nation – even a company of nations – will descend from you; kings will be among your descendants!²⁶ 35:12 The land I gave²⁷ to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you. To your descendants²⁸ I will also

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “and Jacob came to Luz which is in the land of Canaan – it is Bethel – he and all the people who were with him.”

¹⁹ **sn** The name *El-Bethel* means “God of Bethel.”

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “revealed themselves.” The verb גָּלוּ (niglu), translated “revealed himself,” is plural, even though one expects the singular form with the plural of majesty. Perhaps אֱלֹהִים (elohim) is here a numerical plural, referring both to God and the angelic beings that appeared to Jacob. See the note on the word “know” in Gen 3:5.

²¹ **sn** *Deborah*. This woman had been Rebekah’s nurse, but later attached herself to Jacob. She must have been about one hundred and eighty years old when she died.

²² **tn** “and he called its name.” There is no expressed subject, so the verb can be translated as passive.

²³ **tn** Or “Allon Bacuth,” if one transliterates the Hebrew name (cf. NEB, NIV, NRSV). An oak tree was revered in the ancient world and often designated as a shrine or landmark. This one was named for the weeping (mourning) occasioned by the death of Deborah.

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and he called his name Israel.” The referent of the pronoun “he” (God) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

sn The name *Israel* means “God fights” (although some interpret the meaning as “he fights [with God]”). See Gen 32:28.

²⁵ **tn** The name אֱלֹהֵי שַׁדְדָי (‘el shaddai, “El Shaddai”) has often been translated “God Almighty,” primarily because Jerome translated it *omnipotens* (“all powerful”) in the Latin Vulgate. There has been much debate over the meaning of the name. For discussion see W. F. Albright, “The Names *Shaddai* and *Abram*,” *JBL* 54 (1935): 173-210; R. Gordis, “The Biblical Root *shd-y-sd*,” *JTS* 41 (1940): 34-43; and especially T. N. D. Mettinger, *In Search of God*, 69-72. *Shaddai*/El Shaddai is the sovereign king of the world who grants, blesses, and judges. In the Book of Genesis he blesses the patriarchs with fertility and promises numerous descendants. Outside Genesis he both blesses/protects and takes away life/happiness. The patriarchs knew God primarily as El Shaddai (Exod 6:3). While the origin and meaning of this name are uncertain its significance is clear. The name is used in contexts where God appears as the source of fertility and life. For a fuller discussion see the note on “sovereign God” in Gen 17:1.

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* “A nation and a company of nations will be from you and kings from your loins will come out.”

sn *A nation...will descend from you*. The promise is rooted in the Abrahamic promise (see Gen 17). God confirms what Isaac told Jacob (see Gen 28:3-4). Here, though, for the first time Jacob is promised kings as descendants.

²⁷ **tn** The Hebrew verb translated “gave” refers to the Abrahamic promise of the land. However, the actual possession of that land lay in the future. The decree of the Lord made it certain, but it has the sense “promised to give.”

²⁸ **tn** *Heb* “and to your offspring after you.”

¹ **tn** *Heb* “but they said.” The referent of “they” (Simeon and Levi) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

² **tn** *Heb* “arise, go up.” The first imperative gives the command a sense of urgency.

³ **map** For location see Map4-G4; Map5-C1; Map6-E3; Map7-D1; Map8-G3.

⁴ **sn** God is calling on Jacob to fulfill his vow he made when he fled from...Esau (see Gen 28:20-22).

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “which are in your midst.”

⁶ **sn** The actions of removing false gods, becoming ritually clean, and changing garments would become necessary steps in Israel when approaching the Lord in worship.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “let us arise and let us go up.” The first cohortative gives the statement a sense of urgency.

⁸ **tn** The cohortative with the prefixed conjunction here indicates purpose or consequence.

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “day of distress.” See Ps 20:1 which utilizes similar language.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “in the way in which I went.” Jacob alludes here to God’s promise to be with him (see Gen 28:20).

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “in their hand.”

¹² **sn** On the basis of a comparison with Gen 34 and Num 31, G. J. Wenham argues that the *foreign gods* and the *rings* could have been part of the plunder that came from the destruction of Shechem (*Genesis* [WBC], 2:324).

¹³ **sn** *Jacob buried them*. On the burial of the gods, see E. Nielson, “The Burial of the Foreign Gods,” *ST* 8 (1954/55): 102-22.

¹⁴ **tn** Or “terebinth.”

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “and they journeyed.”

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “and the fear of God was upon the cities which were round about them.” The expression “fear of God” apparently refers (1) to a fear of God (objective genitive; God is the object of their fear). (2) But it could mean “fear from God,” that is, fear which God placed in them (cf. NRSV “a terror from God”). Another option (3) is that the divine name is used as a superlative here, referring to “tremendous fear” (cf. NEB “were panic-stricken”; NASB “a great terror”).

¹⁷ **map** For location see Map4-G4; Map5-C1; Map6-E3; Map7-D1; Map8-G3.

give this land.” **35:13** Then God went up from the place¹ where he spoke with him. **35:14** So Jacob set up a sacred stone pillar in the place where God spoke with him.² He poured out a drink offering on it, and then he poured oil on it.³ **35:15** Jacob named the place⁴ where God spoke with him Bethel.⁵

35:16 They traveled on from Bethel, and when Ephrath was still some distance away,⁶ Rachel went into labor⁷ – and her labor was hard. **35:17** When her labor was at its hardest,⁸ the midwife said to her, “Don’t be afraid, for you are having another son.”⁹ **35:18** With her dying breath,¹⁰ she named him Ben Oni.¹¹ But his father called him Benjamin instead.¹²

¹ **tn** *Heb* “went up from upon him in the place.”

² **tn** *Heb* “and Jacob set up a sacred pillar in the place where he spoke with him, a sacred pillar of stone” (see the notes on the term “sacred stone” in Gen 28:18). This passage stands parallel to Gen 28:18-19, where Jacob set up a sacred stone, poured oil on it, and called the place Bethel. Some commentators see these as two traditions referring to the same event, but it is more likely that Jacob reconsecrated the place in fulfillment of the vow he had made here earlier. In support of this is the fact that the present narrative alludes to and is built on the previous one.

³ **tn** The verb נָסַךְ (*nasakh*) means “to pour out, to make libations,” and the noun נֶסֶךְ (*nesekh*) is a “drink-offering,” usually of wine or of blood. The verb יָצַק (*yatsaq*) means “to pour out,” often of anointing oil, but of other elements as well.

⁴ **sn** *Called the name of the place.* In view of the previous naming of Bethel in Gen 28:19, here Jacob was confirming or affirming the name through an official ritual marking the fulfillment of the vow. This place now did become Bethel, the house of God.

⁵ **tn** The name *Bethel* means “house of God” in Hebrew.

map For location see Map4-G4; Map5-C1; Map6-E3; Map7-D1; Map8-G3.

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “and there was still a stretch of the land to go to Ephrath.”

⁷ **tn** Normally the verb would be translated “she gave birth,” but because that obviously had not happened yet, it is better to translate the verb as ingressive, “began to give birth” (cf. NIV) or “went into labor.”

⁸ **tn** The construction uses a Hiphil infinitive, which E. A. Speiser classifies as an elative Hiphil. The contrast is with the previous Piel: there “she had hard labor,” and here, “her labor was at its hardest.” Failure to see this, Speiser notes, has led to redundant translations and misunderstandings (*Genesis* [ABJ], 273).

⁹ **sn** *Another son.* The episode recalls and fulfills the prayer of Rachel at the birth of Joseph (Gen 30:24): “may he add” another son.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “in the going out of her life, for she was dying.” Rachel named the child with her dying breath.

¹¹ **sn** The name *Ben Oni* means “son of my suffering.” It is ironic that Rachel’s words to Jacob in Gen 30:1, “Give me children or I’ll die,” take a different turn here, for it was having the child that brought about her death.

¹² **tn** The disjunctive clause is contrastive.

sn *His father called him Benjamin.* There was a preference for giving children good or positive names in the ancient world, and “son of my suffering” would not do (see the incident in 1 Chr 4:9-10), because it would be a reminder of the death of Rachel (in this connection, see also D. Daube, “The Night of Death,” *HTR* 61 [1968]: 629-32). So Jacob named him *Benjamin*, which means “son of the [or “my”] right hand.” The name Benjamin appears in the Mari texts. There have been attempts to connect this name to the resident tribe listed at Mari, “sons of the south” (since the term “right hand” can also mean “south” in Hebrew), but this assumes a different reading of the story. See J. Muilenburg, “The Birth of Benjamin,” *JBL* 75 (1956): 194-201.

35:19 So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).¹³ **35:20** Jacob set up a marker¹⁴ over her grave; it is¹⁵ the Marker of Rachel’s Grave to this day.

35:21 Then Israel traveled on and pitched his tent beyond Migdal Eder.¹⁶ **35:22** While Israel was living in that land, Reuben had sexual relations with¹⁷ Bilhah, his father’s concubine, and Israel heard about it.

Jacob had twelve sons:

35:23 The sons of Leah were Reuben, Jacob’s firstborn, as well as Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun.

35:24 The sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin.

35:25 The sons of Bilhah, Rachel’s servant, were Dan and Naphtali.

35:26 The sons of Zilpah, Leah’s servant, were Gad and Asher.

These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan Aram.

35:27 So Jacob came back to his father Isaac in Mamre,¹⁸ to Kiriath Arba¹⁹ (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had stayed.²⁰ **35:28** Isaac lived to be 180 years old.²¹ **35:29** Then Isaac breathed his last and joined his ancestors.²² He died an old man who had lived a full life.²³ His sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

¹³ **sn** This explanatory note links the earlier name *Ephrath* with the later name *Bethlehem*.

map For location see Map5-B1; Map7-E2; Map8-E2; Map10-B4.

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “standing stone.”

¹⁵ **tn** Or perhaps “it is known as” (cf. NEB).

¹⁶ **sn** The location of *Migdal Eder* is not given. It appears to be somewhere between Bethlehem and Hebron. Various traditions have identified it as at the shepherds’ fields near Bethlehem (the Hebrew name *Migdal Eder* means “tower of the flock”; see Mic 4:8) or located it near Solomon’s pools.

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “and Reuben went and lay with.” The expression “lay with” is a euphemism for having sexual intercourse.

sn Reuben’s act of having *sexual relations with Bilhah* probably had other purposes than merely satisfying his sexual desire. By having sex with Bilhah, Reuben (Leah’s oldest son) would have prevented Bilhah from succeeding Rachel as the favorite wife, and by sleeping with his father’s concubine he would also be attempting to take over leadership of the clan – something Absalom foolishly attempted later on in Israel’s history (2 Sam 16:21-22).

¹⁸ **tn** This is an adverbial accusative of location.

¹⁹ **tn** The name “Kiriath Arba” is in apposition to the preceding name, “Mamre.”

²⁰ **tn** The Hebrew verb גִּיר (*gur*), traditionally rendered “to sojourn,” refers to temporary settlement without ownership rights.

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “And the days of Isaac were one hundred and eighty years.”

²² **tn** *Heb* “and Isaac expired and died and he was gathered to his people.” In the ancient Israelite view he joined his deceased ancestors in Sheol, the land of the dead.

²³ **tn** *Heb* “old and full of years.”

The Descendants of Esau

36:1 What follows is the account of Esau (also known as Edom).¹

36:2 Esau took his wives from the Canaanites:² Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Oholibamah the daughter of Anah and granddaughter³ of Zibeon the Hivite, **36:3** in addition to Basemath the daughter of Ishmael and sister of Nebaioth.

36:4 Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau, Basemath bore Reuel, **36:5** and Oholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. These were the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan.

36:6 Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, all the people in his household, his livestock, his animals, and all his possessions which he had acquired in the land of Canaan and went to a land some distance away from⁴ Jacob his brother **36:7** because they had too many possessions to be able to stay together and the land where they had settled⁵ was not able to support them because of their livestock. **36:8** So Esau (also known as Edom) lived in the hill country of Seir.⁶

36:9 This is the account of Esau, the father⁷ of the Edomites, in the hill country of Seir.

36:10 These were the names of Esau's sons:

Eliphaz, the son of Esau's wife Adah, and Reuel, the son of Esau's wife Basemath.

36:11 The sons of Eliphaz were:

Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz.

36:12 Timna, a concubine of Esau's son Eliphaz, bore Amalek to Eliphaz. These were the sons⁸ of Esau's wife Adah.

36:13 These were the sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These were the sons⁹ of Esau's wife Basemath.

36:14 These were the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah the daughter of Anah and granddaughter¹⁰ of Zibeon: She bore Jeush, Jalam, and Korah to Esau.

36:15 These were the chiefs¹¹ among the descendants¹² of Esau, the sons of Eliphaz, Esau's firstborn: chief Teman, chief Omar, chief Zepho, chief Kenaz, **36:16** chief Korah,¹³ chief Gatam, chief Amalek. These were the chiefs descended from Eliphaz in the land of Edom; these were the sons¹⁴ of Adah.

36:17 These were the sons of Esau's son Reuel: chief Nahath, chief Zerah, chief Shammah, chief Mizzah. These were the chiefs descended from Reuel in the land of Edom; these were the sons¹⁵ of Esau's wife Basemath.

36:18 These were the sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah: chief Jeush, chief Jalam, chief Korah. These were the chiefs descended from Esau's wife Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah.

36:19 These were the sons of Esau (also known as Edom), and these were their chiefs.

36:20 These were the sons of Seir the Horite,¹⁶ who were living in the land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, **36:21** Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. These were the chiefs of the Horites, the descendants¹⁷ of Seir in the land of Edom.

36:22 The sons of Lotan were Hori and Homam;¹⁸ Lotan's sister was Timna.

36:23 These were the sons of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho,¹⁹ and Onam.

36:24 These were the sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah (who discovered the hot springs²⁰ in the wilderness as he pastured the donkeys of his father Zibeon).

36:25 These were the children²¹ of Anah: Dishon and Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah.

36:26 These were the sons of Dishon:²² Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Keran.

¹ **sn** Chapter 36 records what became of Esau. It will list both his actual descendants as well as the people he subsumed under his tribal leadership, people who were aboriginal Edomites. The chapter is long and complicated (see further J. R. Bartlett, "The Edomite King-List of Genesis 36:31-39 and 1 Chronicles 1:43-50," *JTS* 16 [1965]: 301-14; and W. J. Horowitz, "Were There Twelve Horite Tribes?" *CBQ* 35 [1973]: 69-71). In the format of the Book of Genesis, the line of Esau is "tidied up" before the account of Jacob is traced (37:2). As such the arrangement makes a strong contrast with Jacob. As F. Delitzsch says, "secular greatness in general grows up far more rapidly than spiritual greatness" (*New Commentary on Genesis*, 2:238). In other words, the progress of the world far out distances the progress of the righteous who are waiting for the promise.

² **tn** *Heb* "from the daughters of Canaan."

³ **tn** *Heb* "daughter," but see Gen 36:24-25.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* "from before."

⁵ **tn** *Heb* "land of their settlements."

⁶ **tn** Traditionally "Mount Seir," but in this case the expression בְּהַר שֵׁעִיר (*b^hhar se'ir*) refers to the hill country or highlands of Seir.

⁷ **sn** The term *father* in genealogical records needs to be carefully defined. It can refer to a literal father, a grandfather, a political overlord, or a founder.

⁸ **tn** Or "grandsons" (NIV); "descendants" (NEB).

⁹ **tn** Or "grandsons" (NIV); "descendants" (NEB).

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* "daughter," but see Gen 36:24-25.

¹¹ **tn** Or "clan leaders" (so also throughout this chapter).

¹² **tn** Or "sons."

¹³ **tc** The Samaritan Pentateuch omits the name "Korah" (see v. 11 and 1 Chr 1:36).

¹⁴ **tn** Or "grandsons" (NIV); "descendants" (NEB).

¹⁵ **tn** Or "grandsons" (NIV); "descendants" (NEB).

¹⁶ **sn** The same pattern of sons, grandsons, and chiefs is now listed for *Seir the Horite*. "Seir" is both the name of the place and the name of the ancestor of these tribes. The name "Horite" is probably not to be identified with "Hurrian." The clan of Esau settled in this area, intermarried with these Horites and eventually dispossessed them, so that they all became known as Edomites (Deut 2:12 telescopes the whole development).

¹⁷ **tn** Or "sons."

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* "Hemam"; this is probably a variant spelling of "Homam" (1 Chr 1:39); cf. NRSV, NLT "Heman."

¹⁹ **tn** This name is given as "Shephi" in 1 Chr 1:40.

²⁰ **tn** The meaning of this Hebrew term is uncertain; Syriac reads "water" and Vulgate reads "hot water."

²¹ **tn** *Heb* "sons," but since a daughter is included in the list, the word must be translated "children."

²² **tn** *Heb* "Dishan," but this must be either a scribal error or variant spelling, since "Dishan" is mentioned in v. 28 (see also v. 21).

36:27 These were the sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan.

36:28 These were the sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran.

36:29 These were the chiefs of the Horites: chief Lotan, chief Shobal, chief Zibeon, chief Anah, **36:30** chief Dishan, chief Ezer, chief Dishan. These were the chiefs of the Horites, according to their chief lists in the land of Seir.

36:31 These were the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king ruled over the Israelites.¹

36:32 Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom; the name of his city was Dinhabah.

36:33 When Bela died, Jobab the son of Zerah from Bozrah reigned in his place.

36:34 When Jobab died, Husham from the land of the Temanites reigned in his place.

36:35 When Husham died, Hadad the son of Bedad, who defeated the Midianites in the land of Moab, reigned in his place; the name of his city was Avith.

36:36 When Hadad died, Samlah from Masrekah reigned in his place.

36:37 When Samlah died, Shaul from Rehoboth on the River² reigned in his place.

36:38 When Shaul died, Baal-Hanan the son of Achbor reigned in his place.

36:39 When Baal-Hanan the son of Achbor died, Hadad³ reigned in his place; the name of his city was Pau.⁴ His wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Me-Zahab.

36:40 These were the names of the chiefs of Esau, according to their families, according to their places, by their names: chief Timna, chief Alvah, chief Jetheth, **36:41** chief Oholibamah, chief Elah, chief Pinon, **36:42** chief Kenaz, chief Teman, chief Mibzar, **36:43** chief Magdiel, chief Iram. These were the chiefs of Edom, according to their settlements⁵ in the land they possessed. This was Esau, the father of the Edomites.

Joseph's Dreams

37:1 But Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed,⁶ in the land of Canaan.⁷

¹ **tn** Or perhaps "before any Israelite king ruled over [them]."

² **tn** Typically the Hebrew expression "the River" refers to the Euphrates River, but it is not certain whether that is the case here. Among the modern English versions which take this as a reference to the Euphrates are NASB, NCV, NRSV, CEV, NLT. Cf. NAB, TEV "Rehoboth-on-the-River."

³ **tc** Most mss of the MT read "Hadar" here; "Hadar" is the reading found in some Hebrew mss, the Samaritan Penta-teuch, and Syriac (cf. also 1 Chr 1:50).

⁴ **tn** The name of the city is given as "Pai" in 1 Chr 1:50.

⁵ **tn** Or perhaps "territories"; *Heb* "dwelling places."

⁶ **tn** *Heb* "the land of the sojournings of his father."

⁷ **sn** The next section begins with the heading *This is the account of Jacob* in Gen 37:2, so this verse actually forms part of the preceding section as a concluding contrast with Esau and his people. In contrast to all the settled and expanded population of Esau, Jacob was still moving about in

37:2 This is the account of Jacob.

Joseph, his seventeen-year-old son,⁸ was taking care of⁹ the flocks with his brothers. Now he was a youngster¹⁰ working with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives.¹¹ Joseph brought back a bad report about them¹² to their father.

37:3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons¹³ because he was a son born to him late in life,¹⁴ and he made a special¹⁵ tunic for him. **37:4** When Joseph's¹⁶ brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them,¹⁷ they hated Joseph¹⁸ and were not able to speak to him kindly.¹⁹

the land without a permanent residence and without kings. Even if the Edomite king list was added later (as the reference to kings in Israel suggests), its placement here in contrast to Jacob and his descendants is important. Certainly the text deals with Esau before dealing with Jacob – that is the pattern. But the detail is so great in chap. 36 that the contrast cannot be missed.

⁸ **tn** *Heb* "a son of seventeen years." The word "son" is in apposition to the name "Joseph."

⁹ **tn** Or "tending"; *Heb* "shepherding" or "feeding."

¹⁰ **tn** Or perhaps "a helper." The significance of this statement is unclear. It may mean "now the lad was with," or it may suggest Joseph was like a servant to them.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* "and he [was] a young man with the sons of Bilhah and with the sons of Zilpah, the wives of his father."

¹² **tn** *Heb* "their bad report." The pronoun is an objective genitive, specifying that the bad or damaging report was about the brothers.

sn Some interpreters portray Joseph as a tattletale for bringing back a *bad report about them* [i.e., his brothers], but the entire Joseph story has some of the characteristics of wisdom literature. Joseph is presented in a good light – not because he was perfect, but because the narrative is showing how wisdom rules. In light of that, this section portrays Joseph as faithful to his father in little things, even though unpopular – and so he will eventually be given authority over greater things.

¹³ **tn** The disjunctive clause provides supplemental information vital to the story. It explains in part the brothers' animosity toward Joseph.

sn The statement *Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons* brings forward a motif that played an important role in the family of Isaac – parental favoritism. Jacob surely knew what that had done to him and his brother Esau, and to his own family. But now he showers affection on Rachel's son Joseph.

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* "a son of old age was he to him." This expression means "a son born to him when he [i.e., Jacob] was old."

¹⁵ **tn** It is not clear what this tunic was like, because the meaning of the Hebrew word that describes it is uncertain. The idea that it was a coat of many colors comes from the Greek translation of the OT. An examination of cognate terms in Semitic suggests it was either a coat or tunic with long sleeves (cf. NEB, NRSV), or a tunic that was richly embroidered (cf. NIV). It set Joseph apart as the favored one.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* "his"; the referent (Joseph) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* "of his brothers." This is redundant in contemporary English and has been replaced in the translation by the pronoun "them."

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* "him"; the referent (Joseph) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* "speak to him for peace."

37:5 Joseph⁴ had a dream,² and when he told his brothers about it,³ they hated him even more.⁴ 37:6 He said to them, “Listen to this dream I had:⁵ 37:7 There we were,⁶ binding sheaves of grain in the middle of the field. Suddenly my sheaf rose up and stood upright and your sheaves surrounded my sheaf and bowed down⁷ to it!” 37:8 Then his brothers asked him, “Do you really think you will rule over us or have dominion over us?”⁸ They hated him even more⁹ because of his dream and because of what he said.¹⁰

37:9 Then he had another dream,¹¹ and told it to his brothers. “Look,”¹² he said. “I had another dream. The sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.” 37:10 When he told his father and his brothers, his father rebuked him, saying, “What is this dream that you had?¹³ Will I, your mother, and your brothers really come and bow down to you?”¹⁴ 37:11 His brothers were jealous¹⁵ of him, but his father kept in mind what Jo-

1 tn Heb “and he”; the referent (Joseph) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

2 tn Heb “dreamed a dream.”

3 sn Some interpreters see Joseph as gloating over his brothers, but the text simply says he told his brothers about it (i.e., the dream). The text gives no warrant for interpreting his manner as arrogant or condescending. It seems normal that he would share a dream with the family.

4 tn The construction uses a hendiadys, “they added to hate,” meaning they hated him even more.

5 tn Heb “hear this dream which I dreamed.”

6 tn All three clauses in this dream report begin with הִנֵּה (v^h*hinneh*, “and look”), which lends vividness to the report. This is represented in the translation by the expression “there we were.”

7 tn The verb means “to bow down to the ground.” It is used to describe worship and obeisance to masters.

8 tn Heb “Ruling, will you rule over us, or reigning, will you reign over us?” The statement has a poetic style, with the two questions being in synonymous parallelism. Both verbs in this statement are preceded by the infinitive absolute, which lends emphasis. It is as if Joseph’s brothers said, “You don’t really think you will rule over us, do you? You don’t really think you will have dominion over us, do you?”

9 tn This construction is identical to the one in Gen 37:5.

10 sn The response of Joseph’s brothers is understandable, given what has already been going on in the family. But here there is a hint of uneasiness – they hated him because of his dream and because of his words. The dream bothered them, as well as his telling them. And their words in the rhetorical question are ironic, for this is exactly what would happen. The dream was God’s way of revealing it.

11 tn Heb “And he dreamed yet another dream.”

12 tn Heb “and he said, ‘Look.’” The order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons. Both clauses of the dream report begin with הִנֵּה (*hinneh*, “look”), which lends vividness to the report.

13 sn The question *What is this dream that you had?* expresses Jacob’s dismay at what he perceives to be Joseph’s audacity.

14 tn Heb “Coming, will we come, I and your mother and your brothers, to bow down to you to the ground?” The verb “come” is preceded by the infinitive absolute, which lends emphasis. It is as if Jacob said, “You don’t really think we will come...to bow down...do you?”

15 sn Joseph’s brothers were already *jealous of him*, but this made it even worse. Such jealousy easily leads to action, as the next episode in the story shows. Yet dreams were considered a form of revelation, and their jealousy was not only of the favoritism of their father, but of the dreams. This is why

seph said.¹⁶

37:12 When his brothers had gone to graze their father’s flocks near Shechem, 37:13 Israel said to Joseph, “Your brothers¹⁷ are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I will send you to them.” “I’m ready,”¹⁸ Joseph replied.¹⁹ 37:14 So Jacob²⁰ said to him, “Go now and check on²¹ the welfare²² of your brothers and of the flocks, and bring me word.” So Jacob²³ sent him from the valley of Hebron.

37:15 When Joseph reached Shechem,²⁴ a man found him wandering²⁵ in the field, so the man asked him, “What are you looking for?” 37:16 He replied, “I’m looking for my brothers. Please tell²⁶ me where they are grazing their flocks.” 37:17 The man said, “They left this area,²⁷ for I heard them say, ‘Let’s go to Dothan.’” So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

37:18 Now Joseph’s brothers²⁸ saw him from a distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. 37:19 They said to one another, “Here comes this master of dreams!²⁹ 37:20 Come now, let’s kill him, throw him into one of the cisterns, and then say that a wild³⁰ animal ate him. Then we’ll see how his dreams turn out!”³¹

Jacob kept the matter in mind.

16 tn Heb “kept the word.” The referent of the Hebrew term “word” has been specified as “what Joseph said” in the translation for clarity, and the words “in mind” have been supplied for stylistic reasons.

17 tn The text uses an interrogative clause: “Are not your brothers,” which means “your brothers are.”

18 sn With these words Joseph is depicted here as an obedient son who is ready to do what his father commands.

19 tn Heb “and he said, ‘Here I am.’” The referent of the pronoun “he” (Joseph) has been specified in the translation for clarity, and the order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse has been rearranged for stylistic reasons.

20 tn Heb “he”; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

21 tn Heb “see.”

22 tn Heb “peace.”

23 tn Heb “he”; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

24 tn Heb “and he [i.e., Joseph] went to Shechem.” The referent (Joseph) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

25 tn Heb “and a man found him and look, he was wandering in the field.” By the use of הִנֵּה (v^h*hinneh*, “and look”), the narrator invites the reader to see the action through this unnamed man’s eyes.

26 tn The imperative in this sentence has more of the nuance of a request than a command.

27 tn Heb “they traveled from this place.”

28 tn Heb “and they”; the referent (Joseph’s brothers) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

29 tn Heb “Look, this master of dreams is coming.” The brothers’ words have a sarcastic note and indicate that they resent his dreams.

30 tn The Hebrew word can sometimes carry the nuance “evil,” but when used of an animal it refers to a dangerous wild animal.

31 tn Heb “what his dreams will be.”

37:21 When Reuben heard this, he rescued Joseph¹ from their hands,² saying,³ “Let’s not take his life!”⁴ **37:22** Reuben continued,⁵ “Don’t shed blood! Throw him into this cistern that is here in the wilderness, but don’t lay a hand on him.”⁶ (Reuben said this⁷ so he could rescue Joseph⁸ from them⁹ and take him back to his father.)

37:23 When Joseph reached his brothers, they stripped him¹⁰ of his tunic, the special tunic that he wore. **37:24** Then they took him and threw him into the cistern. (Now the cistern was empty,¹¹ there was no water in it.)

37:25 When they sat down to eat their food, they looked up¹² and saw¹³ a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were carrying spices, balm, and myrrh down to Egypt.¹⁴ **37:26** Then Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is there if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? **37:27** Come, let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites, but let’s not lay a hand on him,¹⁵ for after all, he is our brother, our own flesh.” His brothers agreed.¹⁶ **37:28** So when the Midianite¹⁷ merchants passed by, Joseph’s brothers pulled¹⁸ him¹⁹ out of the cistern and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. The Ishmaelites²⁰ then took Joseph to Egypt.

37:29 Later Reuben returned to the cistern to find that Joseph was not in it!²¹ He tore his clothes, **37:30** returned to his brothers, and said, “The boy isn’t there! And I, where can I go?” **37:31** So they took Joseph’s tunic, killed a young goat,²² and dipped the tunic in the blood. **37:32** Then they brought the special tunic to their father²³ and said, “We found this. Determine now whether it is your son’s tunic or not.”

37:33 He recognized it and exclaimed, “It is my son’s tunic! A wild animal has eaten him!²⁴ Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!” **37:34** Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth,²⁵ and mourned for his son many days. **37:35** All his sons and daughters stood by²⁶ him to console him, but he refused to be consoled. “No,” he said, “I will go to the grave mourning my son.”²⁷ So Joseph’s²⁸ father wept for him.

37:36 Now²⁹ in Egypt the Midianites³⁰ sold Joseph³¹ to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh’s officials, the captain of the guard.³²

Judah and Tamar

38:1 At that time Judah left³³ his brothers and stayed³⁴ with an Adullamite man³⁵ named Hirah.

¹ **tn** Heb “him”; the referent (Joseph) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

² **sn** From their hands. The instigators of this plot may have been the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah (see v. 2).

³ **tn** Heb “and he said.”

⁴ **tn** Heb “we must not strike him down [with respect to] life.”

⁵ **tn** Heb “and Reuben said to them.”

⁶ **sn** The verbs translated *shed*, *throw*, and *lay* sound alike in Hebrew; the repetition of similar sounds draws attention to Reuben’s words.

⁷ **tn** The words “Reuben said this” are not in the Hebrew text, but have been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁸ **tn** Heb “him”; the referent (Joseph) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁹ **tn** Heb “from their hands” (cf. v. 21). This expression has been translated as “them” here for stylistic reasons.

¹⁰ **tn** Heb “Joseph”; the proper name has been replaced by the pronoun (“him”) in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹¹ **tn** The disjunctive clause gives supplemental information that helps the reader or hearer to picture what happened.

¹² **tn** Heb “lifted up their eyes.”

¹³ **tn** Heb “and they saw and look.” By the use of *וַיִּבְרֹךְ* (*v^hhinneh*, “and look”), the narrator invites the reader to see the event through the eyes of the brothers.

¹⁴ **tn** Heb “and their camels were carrying spices, balm, and myrrh, going to go down to Egypt.”

¹⁵ **tn** Heb “let not our hand be upon him.”

¹⁶ **tn** Heb “listened.”

¹⁷ **sn** On the close relationship between *Ishmaelites* (v. 25) and *Midianites*, see Judg 8:24.

¹⁸ **tn** Heb “they drew and they lifted up.” The referent (Joseph’s brothers) has been specified in the translation for clarity; otherwise the reader might assume the Midianites had pulled Joseph from the cistern (but cf. NAB).

¹⁹ **tn** Heb “Joseph” (both here and in the following clause); the proper name has been replaced both times by the pronoun “him” in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁰ **tn** Heb “they”; the referent (the Ishmaelites) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²¹ **tn** Heb “and look, Joseph was not in the cistern.” By the use of *וַיִּבְרֹךְ* (*v^hhinneh*, “and look”), the narrator invites the reader to see the situation through Reuben’s eyes.

²² **sn** It was with two young goats that Jacob deceived his father (Gen 27:9); now with a young goat his sons continue the deception that dominates this family.

²³ **tn** Heb “and they sent the special tunic and they brought [it] to their father.” The text as it stands is problematic. It sounds as if they sent the tunic on ahead and then came and brought it to their father. Some emend the second verb to a Qal form and read “and they came.” In this case, they sent the tunic on ahead.

²⁴ **sn** A wild animal has eaten him. Jacob draws this conclusion on his own without his sons actually having to lie with their words (see v. 20). Dipping the tunic in the goat’s blood was the only deception needed.

²⁵ **tn** Heb “and put sackcloth on his loins.”

²⁶ **tn** Heb “arose, stood”; which here suggests that they stood by him in his time of grief.

²⁷ **tn** Heb “and he said, ‘Indeed I will go down to my son mourning to Sheol.’” Sheol was viewed as the place where departed spirits went after death.

²⁸ **tn** Heb “his”; the referent (Joseph) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁹ **tn** The disjunctive clause formally signals closure for this episode of Joseph’s story, which will be resumed in Gen 39.

³⁰ **tc** The MT spells the name of the merchants as *מִדְיָנִים* (*m^edanim*, “Medanites”) rather than *מִדְיָנִים* (*midyanim*, “Midianites”) as in v. 28. It is likely that the MT is corrupt at this point, with the letter *yod* (י) being accidentally omitted. The LXX, Vulgate, Samaritan Pentateuch, and Syriac read “Midianites” here. Some prefer to read “Medanites” both here and in v. 28, but Judg 8:24, which identifies the Midianites and Ishmaelites, favors the reading “Midianites.”

³¹ **tn** Heb “him”; the referent (Joseph) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³² **sn** The expression *captain of the guard* might indicate that Potiphar was the chief executioner.

³³ **tn** Heb “went down from.”

³⁴ **tn** Heb “and he turned aside unto.”

³⁵ **tn** Heb “a man, an Adullamite.”

38:2 There Judah saw the daughter of a Canaanite man¹ named Shua.² Judah acquired her as a wife³ and had marital relations with her.⁴ 38:3 She became pregnant⁵ and had a son. Judah named⁶ him Er. 38:4 She became pregnant again and had another son, whom she named Onan. 38:5 Then she had⁷ yet another son, whom she named Shelah. She gave birth to him in Kezib.⁸

38:6 Judah acquired⁹ a wife for Er his firstborn; her name was Tamar. 38:7 But Er, Judah's firstborn, was evil in the LORD's sight, so the LORD killed him.

38:8 Then Judah said to Onan, "Have sexual relations with¹⁰ your brother's wife and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her so that you may raise¹¹ up a descendant for your brother."¹² 38:9 But Onan knew that the child¹³ would not be considered his.¹⁴ So whenever¹⁵ he had sexual relations with¹⁶ his brother's wife, he withdrew prematurely¹⁷ so as not to give his brother a descendant. 38:10 What he did was evil in the LORD's sight, so the LORD¹⁸ killed him too.

38:11 Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Live as a widow in your father's house until Shelah my son grows up." For he thought,¹⁹ "I don't want him to die like his brothers."²⁰ So Tamar went and lived in her father's house.

38:12 After some time²¹ Judah's wife, the daughter of Shua, died. After Judah was consoled, he left for Timnah to visit his sheepshearers, along with²² his friend Hirah the Adullamite. 38:13 Tamar was told,²³ "Look, your father-in-law is going up²⁴ to Timnah to shear his sheep." 38:14 So she removed her widow's clothes and covered herself with a veil. She wrapped herself and sat at the entrance to Enaim which is on the way to Timnah. (She did this because²⁵ she saw that she had not been given to Shelah as a wife, even though he had now grown up.)²⁶

38:15 When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute²⁷ because she had covered her face. 38:16 He turned aside to her along the road and said, "Come on! I want to have sex with you."²⁸ (He did not realize²⁹ it was his daughter-in-law.) She asked, "What will you give me in exchange for having sex with you?"³⁰ 38:17 He replied, "I'll send you a young goat from the flock." She asked, "Will you give me a pledge until you send it?"³¹ 38:18 He said, "What pledge should I give you?" She replied, "Your seal, your cord, and the staff that's in your hand." So he gave them to her and had sex with her.³²

¹ tn Heb "a man, a Canaanite."

² tn Heb "and his name was Shua."

³ tn Heb "and he took her."

⁴ tn Heb "and he went to her." This expression is a euphemism for sexual intercourse.

⁵ tn Or "she conceived" (also in the following verse).

⁶ tc Some mss read this verb as feminine, "she called," to match the pattern of the next two verses. But the MT, "he called," should probably be retained as the more difficult reading.

tn Heb "and he called his name." The referent (Judah) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁷ tn Heb "and she added again and she gave birth." The first verb and the adverb emphasize that she gave birth once more.

⁸ tn Or "and he [i.e., Judah] was in Kezib when she gave birth to him."

⁹ tn Heb "and Judah took."

¹⁰ tn Heb "go to." The expression is a euphemism for sexual intercourse.

¹¹ tn The imperative with the prefixed conjunction here indicates purpose.

¹² sn Raise up a descendant for your brother. The purpose of this custom, called the levirate system, was to ensure that no line of the family would become extinct. The name of the deceased was to be maintained through this custom of having a child by the nearest relative. See M. Burrows, "Levirate Marriage in Israel," *JBL* 59 (1940): 23-33.

¹³ tn Heb "offspring."

¹⁴ tn Heb "would not be his," that is, legally speaking. Under the levirate system the child would be legally considered the child of his deceased brother.

¹⁵ tn The construction shows that this was a repeated practice and not merely one action.

sn The text makes it clear that the purpose of the custom was to produce an heir for the deceased brother. Onan had no intention of doing that. But he would have sex with the girl as much as he wished. He was willing to use the law to gratify his desires, but was not willing to do the responsible thing.

¹⁶ tn Heb "he went to." This expression is a euphemism for sexual intercourse.

¹⁷ tn Heb "he spoiled [his semen] to the ground." Onan withdrew prematurely and ejaculated on the ground to prevent his brother's widow from becoming pregnant.

¹⁸ tn Heb "he"; the referent (the LORD) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁹ tn Heb "said."

²⁰ tn Heb "Otherwise he will die, also he, like his brothers."

sn I don't want him to die like his brothers. This clause explains that Judah had no intention of giving Shelah to Tamar for the purpose of the levirate marriage. Judah apparently knew the nature of his sons, and feared that God would be angry with the third son and kill him as well.

²¹ sn After some time. There is not enough information in the narrative to know how long this was. The text says "the days increased." It was long enough for Shelah to mature and for Tamar to realize she would not have him.

²² tn Heb "and he went up to the shearers of his sheep, he and."

²³ tn Heb "And it was told to Tamar, saying."

²⁴ tn The active participle indicates the action was in progress or about to begin.

²⁵ tn The Hebrew text simply has "because," connecting this sentence to what precedes. For stylistic reasons the words "she did this" are supplied in the translation and a new sentence begun.

²⁶ tn Heb "she saw that Shelah had grown up, but she was not given to him as a wife."

²⁷ tn Heb "he reckoned her for a prostitute," which was what Tamar had intended for him to do. She obviously had some idea of his inclinations, or she would not have tried this risky plan.

²⁸ tn Heb "I will go to you." The imperfect verbal form probably indicates his desire here. The expression "go to" is a euphemism for sexual intercourse.

²⁹ tn Heb "for he did not know that."

³⁰ tn Heb "when you come to me." This expression is a euphemism for sexual intercourse.

³¹ tn Heb "until you send."

³² tn Heb "and he went to her." This expression is a euphemism for sexual intercourse.

She became pregnant by him. **38:19** She left immediately,¹ removed her veil, and put on her widow's clothes.

38:20 Then Judah had his friend Hirah² the Adullamite take a young goat to get back from the woman the items he had given in pledge,³ but Hirah⁴ could not find her. **38:21** He asked the men who were there,⁵ "Where is the cult prostitute⁶ who was at Enaim by the road?" But they replied, "There has been no cult prostitute here." **38:22** So he returned to Judah and said, "I couldn't find her. Moreover, the men of the place said, 'There has been no cult prostitute here.'" **38:23** Judah said, "Let her keep the things⁷ for herself. Otherwise we will appear to be dishonest.⁸ I did indeed send this young goat, but you couldn't find her."

38:24 After three months Judah was told,⁹ "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has turned to prostitution,¹⁰ and as a result she has become pregnant."¹¹ Judah said, "Bring her out and let her be burned!" **38:25** While they were bringing her out, she sent word¹² to her father-in-law: "I am pregnant by the man to whom these belong."¹³ Then she said, "Identify¹⁴ the one to whom the seal, cord, and staff belong." **38:26** Judah recognized them and said, "She is more upright¹⁵ than I am,

because I wouldn't give her to Shelah my son." He did not have sexual relations with her¹⁶ again.

38:27 When it was time for her to give birth, there were twins in her womb. **38:28** While she was giving birth, one child¹⁷ put out his hand, and the midwife took a scarlet thread and tied it on his hand, saying, "This one came out first." **38:29** But then he drew back his hand, and his brother came out before him.¹⁸ She said, "How you have broken out of the womb!"¹⁹ So he was named Perez.²⁰ **38:30** Afterward his brother came out – the one who had the scarlet thread on his hand – and he was named Zerah.²¹

Joseph and Potiphar's Wife

39:1 Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt.²² An Egyptian named Potiphar, an official of Pharaoh and the captain of the guard,²³

¹ **tn** *Heb* "and she arose and left," the first verb in the pair emphasizing that she wasted no time.

² **tn** *Heb* "sent by the hand of his friend." Here the name of the friend ("Hirah") has been included in the translation for clarity.

³ **tn** *Heb* "to receive the pledge from the woman's hand."

⁴ **tn** *Heb* "he"; the referent (Judah's friend Hirah the Adullamite) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁵ **tn** *Heb* "the men of her place," that is, who lived at the place where she had been.

⁶ **sn** The Hebrew noun translated "cult prostitute" is derived from a verb meaning "to be set apart; to be distinct." Thus the term refers to a woman who did not marry, but was dedicated to temple service as a cult prostitute. The masculine form of this noun is used for male cult prostitutes. Judah thought he had gone to an ordinary prostitute (v. 15), but Hirah went looking for a cult prostitute, perhaps because it had been a sheep-shearing festival. For further discussion see E. M. Yamauchi, "Cultic Prostitution," *Orient and Occident* (AOAT), 213-23.

⁷ **tn** The words "the things" have been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁸ **tn** *Heb* "we will become contemptible." The Hebrew word **בוז** (*buz*) describes the contempt that a respectable person would have for someone who is worthless, foolish, or disreputable.

⁹ **tn** *Heb* "it was told to Judah, saying."

¹⁰ **tn** Or "has been sexually promiscuous." The verb may refer here to loose or promiscuous activity, not necessarily prostitution.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* "and also look, she is with child by prostitution."

¹² **tn** *Heb* "she was being brought out and she sent." The juxtaposition of two clauses, both of which place the subject before the predicate, indicates synchronic action.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* "who these to him."

¹⁴ **tn** Or "recognize; note." This same Hebrew verb (**נָכַר**, *nakhar*) is used at the beginning of v. 26, where it is translated "recognized."

¹⁵ **tn** Traditionally "more righteous"; cf. NCV, NRSV, NLT "more in the right."

¹⁶ **sn** She is more upright than I. Judah had been irresponsible and unfaithful to his duty to see that the family line continued through the levirate marriage of his son Shelah. Tamar fought

for her right to be the mother of Judah's line. When she was not given Shelah and Judah's wife died, she took action on her own to ensure that the line did not die out. Though deceptive, it was a desperate and courageous act. For Tamar it was within her rights; she did nothing that the law did not entitle her to do. But for Judah it was wrong because he thought he was going to a prostitute. See also Susan Niditch, "The Wronged Woman Righted: An Analysis of Genesis 38," *HTR* 72 (1979): 143-48.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* "and he did not add again to know her." Here "know" is a euphemism for sexual intercourse.

¹⁷ **tn** The word "child" has been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* "Look, his brother came out." By the use of the particle **הִנֵּה** (*hinneh*, "look"), the narrator invites the reader to view the scene through the midwife's eyes. The words "before him" are supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* "How you have made a breach for yourself!" The Hebrew verb translated "make a breach" frequently occurs, as here, with a cognate accusative. The event provided the meaningful name Perez, "he who breaks through."

²⁰ **sn** The name Perez means "he who breaks through," referring to Perez reaching out his hand at birth before his brother was born. The naming signified the completion of Tamar's struggle and also depicted the destiny of the tribe of Perez who later became dominant (Gen 46:12 and Num 26:20). Judah and his brothers had sold Joseph into slavery, thinking they could thwart God's plan that the elder brothers should serve the younger. God demonstrated that principle through these births in Judah's own family, affirming that the elder will serve the younger, and that Joseph's leadership could not so easily be set aside. See J. Goldin, "The Youngest Son; or, Where Does Genesis 38 Belong?" *JBL* 96 (1977): 27-44.

²¹ **sn** Perhaps the child was named Zerah because of the scarlet thread. Though the Hebrew word used for "scarlet thread" in v. 28 is not related to the name Zerah, there is a related root in Babylonian and western Aramaic that means "scarlet" or "scarlet thread." In Hebrew the name appears to be derived from a root meaning "to shine." The name could have originally meant something like "shining one" or "God has shined." Zerah became the head of a tribe (Num 26:20) from whom Achan descended (Josh 7:1).

²² **tn** The disjunctive clause resumes the earlier narrative pertaining to Joseph by recapitulating the event described in 37:36. The perfect verbal form is given a past perfect translation to restore the sequence of the narrative for the reader.

²³ **sn** Captain of the guard. See the note on this phrase in Gen 37:36.

purchased him from¹ the Ishmaelites who had brought him there. **39:2** The LORD was with Joseph. He was successful² and lived³ in the household of his Egyptian master. **39:3** His master observed that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made everything he was doing successful.⁴ **39:4** So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal attendant.⁵ Potiphar appointed Joseph⁶ overseer of his household and put him in charge⁷ of everything he owned. **39:5** From the time⁸ Potiphar⁹ appointed him over his household and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed¹⁰ the Egyptian's household for Joseph's sake. The blessing of the LORD was on everything that he had, both¹¹ in his house and in his fields.¹² **39:6** So Potiphar¹³ left¹⁴ everything he had in Joseph's care;¹⁵ he gave no thought¹⁶ to anything except the food he ate.¹⁷

Now Joseph was well built and good-looking.¹⁸ **39:7** Soon after these things, his mas-

ter's wife took notice of¹⁹ Joseph and said, "Have sex with me."²⁰ **39:8** But he refused, saying²¹ to his master's wife, "Look, my master does not give any thought²² to his household with me here,²³ and everything that he owns he has put into my care."²⁴ **39:9** There is no one greater in this household than I am. He has withheld nothing from me except you because you are his wife. So how could I do²⁵ such a great evil and sin against God?" **39:10** Even though she continued to speak²⁶ to Joseph day after day, he did not respond²⁷ to her invitation to have sex with her.²⁸

39:11 One day²⁹ he went into the house to do his work when none of the household servants³⁰ were there in the house. **39:12** She grabbed him by his outer garment, saying, "Have sex with me!"³¹ But he left his outer garment in her hand and ran³² outside.³² **39:13** When she saw that he had left his outer garment in her hand and had run outside, **39:14** she called for her household servants and said to them, "See, my husband brought³³ in a Hebrew man³⁴ to us to humiliate us.³⁵ He tried to have sex with

¹ tn Heb "from the hand of."

² tn Heb "and he was a prosperous man." This does not mean that Joseph became wealthy, but that he was successful in what he was doing, or making progress in his situation (see 24:21).

³ tn Heb "and he was."

⁴ tn The Hebrew text adds "in his hand," a phrase not included in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁵ sn The Hebrew verb translated *became his personal attendant* refers to higher domestic service, usually along the lines of a personal attendant. Here Joseph is made the household steward, a position well-attested in Egyptian literature.

⁶ tn Heb "him"; the referent (Joseph) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁷ tn Heb "put into his hand."

⁸ tn Heb "and it was from then."

⁹ tn Heb "he"; the referent (Potiphar) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁰ sn The Hebrew word translated *blessed* carries the idea of enrichment, prosperity, success. It is the way believers describe success at the hand of God. The text illustrates the promise made to Abraham that whoever blesses his descendants will be blessed (Gen 12:1-3).

¹¹ tn Heb "in the house and in the field." The word "both" has been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹² sn The passage gives us a good picture of Joseph as a young man who was responsible and faithful, both to his master and to his God. This happened within a very short time of his being sold into Egypt. It undermines the view that Joseph was a liar, a tattletale, and an arrogant adolescent.

¹³ tn Heb "he"; the referent (Potiphar) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁴ sn The Hebrew verb translated *left* indicates he relinquished the care of it to Joseph. This is stronger than what was said earlier. Apparently Potiphar had come to trust Joseph so much that he knew it was in better care with Joseph than with anyone else.

¹⁵ tn Heb "hand." This is a metonymy for being under the control or care of Joseph.

¹⁶ tn Heb "did not know."

¹⁷ sn The expression *except the food he ate* probably refers to Potiphar's private affairs and should not be limited literally to what he ate.

¹⁸ tn Heb "handsome of form and handsome of appearance." The same Hebrew expressions were used in Gen 29:17 for Rachel.

¹⁹ tn Heb "she lifted up her eyes toward," an expression that emphasizes her deliberate and careful scrutiny of him.

²⁰ tn Heb "lie with me." Here the expression "lie with" is a euphemism for sexual intercourse.

²¹ sn The story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife has long been connected with the wisdom warnings about the strange woman who tries to seduce the young man with her boldness and directness (see Prov 5-7, especially 7:6-27). This is part of the literary background of the story of Joseph that gives it a wisdom flavor. See G. von Rad, *God at Work in Israel*, 19-35; and G. W. Coats, "The Joseph Story and Ancient Wisdom: A Reappraisal," *CBQ* 35 (1973): 285-97.

²² tn Heb "and he said."

²³ tn Heb "know."

²⁴ tn The word "here" has been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁵ tn Heb "hand." This is a metonymy for being under the control or care of Joseph.

²⁶ tn The nuance of potential imperfect fits this context.

²⁷ tn The verse begins with the temporal indicator, followed by the infinitive construct with the preposition בְּ (*ké*). This clause could therefore be taken as temporal.

²⁸ tn Heb "listen to."

²⁹ tn Heb "to lie beside her to be with her." Here the expression "to lie beside" is a euphemism for sexual intercourse.

³⁰ tn Heb "and it was about this day."

³¹ tn Heb "the men of the house."

³² tn Heb "he fled and he went out." The construction emphasizes the point that Joseph got out of there quickly.

³³ sn For discussion of this episode, see A. M. Honeyman, "The Occasion of Joseph's Temptation," *VT* 2 (1952): 85-87.

³⁴ tn The verb has no expressed subject, and so it could be treated as a passive ("a Hebrew man was brought in"; cf. NIV). But it is clear from the context that her husband brought Joseph into the household, so Potiphar is the apparent referent here. Thus the translation supplies "my husband" as the referent of the unspecified pronominal subject of the verb (cf. NEB, NRSV).

³⁵ sn A Hebrew man. Potiphar's wife raises the ethnic issue when talking to her servants about what their boss had done.

³⁶ tn Heb "to make fun of us." The verb translated "to humiliate us" here means to hold something up for ridicule, or to toy with something harmfully. Attempted rape would be such an activity, for it would hold the victim in contempt.

me,¹ but I screamed loudly.² **39:15** When he heard me raise³ my voice and scream, he left his outer garment beside me and ran outside.”

39:16 So she laid his outer garment beside her until his master came home. **39:17** This is what she said to him:⁴ “That Hebrew slave⁵ you brought to us tried to humiliate me,⁶ **39:18** but when I raised my voice and screamed, he left his outer garment and ran outside.”

39:19 When his master heard his wife say,⁷ “This is the way⁸ your slave treated me,”⁹ he became furious.¹⁰ **39:20** Joseph’s master took him and threw him into the prison,¹¹ the place where the king’s prisoners were confined. So he was there in the prison.¹²

39:21 But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him kindness.¹³ He granted him favor in the sight of the prison warden.¹⁴ **39:22** The warden put all the prisoners under Joseph’s care. He was in charge of whatever they were doing.¹⁵ **39:23** The warden did not concern himself¹⁶ with anything that was in Joseph’s¹⁷ care because the LORD was with him and whatever he was doing the LORD was making successful.

The Cupbearer and the Baker

40:1 After these things happened, the cupbearer¹⁸ to the king of Egypt and the royal

¹ **tn** *Heb* “he came to me to lie with me.” Here the expression “lie with” is a euphemism for sexual intercourse.

² **tn** *Heb* “and I cried out with a loud voice.”

³ **tn** *Heb* “that I raised.”

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and she spoke to him according to these words, saying.”

⁵ **sn** *That Hebrew slave*. Now, when speaking to her husband, Potiphar’s wife refers to Joseph as a Hebrew slave, a very demeaning description.

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “came to me to make fun of me.” The statement needs no explanation because of the connotations of “came to me” and “to make fun of me.” See the note on the expression “humiliate us” in v. 14.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “and when his master heard the words of his wife which she spoke to him, saying.”

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “according to these words.”

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “did to me.”

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “his anger burned.”

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “the house of roundness,” suggesting that the prison might have been a fortress or citadel.

¹² **sn** The story of Joseph is filled with cycles and repetition: He has two dreams (chap. 37), he interprets two dreams in prison (chap. 40) and the two dreams of Pharaoh (chap. 41), his brothers make two trips to see him (chaps. 42-43), and here, for the second time (see 37:24), he is imprisoned for no good reason, with only his coat being used as evidence. For further discussion see H. Jacobsen, “A Legal Note on Potiphar’s Wife,” *HTR* 69 (1976): 177.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “and he extended to him loyal love.”

¹⁴ **tn** Or “the chief jailer” (also in the following verses).

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “all which they were doing there, he was doing.” This probably means that Joseph was in charge of everything that went on in the prison.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “was not looking at anything.”

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “his”; the referent (Joseph) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁸ **sn** The Hebrew term *cupbearer* corresponds to the Egyptian *wb*, an official (frequently a foreigner) who often became a confidant of the king and wielded political power (see K. A. Kitchen, *NBD*³ 248). Nehemiah held this post in Persia.

baker¹⁹ offended²⁰ their master, the king of Egypt. **40:2** Pharaoh was enraged with his two officials,²¹ the cupbearer and the baker, **40:3** so he imprisoned them in the house of the captain of the guard in the same facility where Joseph was confined. **40:4** The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be their attendant, and he served them.²²

They spent some time in custody.²³ **40:5** Both of them, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison, had a dream²⁴ the same night.²⁵ Each man’s dream had its own meaning.²⁶ **40:6** When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were looking depressed.²⁷ **40:7** So he asked Pharaoh’s officials, who were with him in custody in his master’s house, “Why do you look so sad today?”²⁸ **40:8** They told him, “We both had dreams,²⁹ but there is no one to interpret them.” Joseph responded, “Don’t interpretations belong to God? Tell them³⁰ to me.”

40:9 So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph.³¹ “In my dream, there was a vine in front of me. **40:10** On the vine there were three branches. As it budded, its blossoms opened and its clusters ripened into grapes. **40:11** Now Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand, so I took the grapes, squeezed them into his³² cup, and put the cup in Pharaoh’s hand.”³³

40:12 “This is its meaning,” Joseph said to him. “The three branches represent³⁴ three days. **40:13** In three more days Pharaoh will reinstate

¹⁹ **sn** The *baker* may be the Egyptian *rethi*, the head of the bakers, who had privileges in the royal court.

²⁰ **sn** The Hebrew verb translated *offended* here is the same one translated “sin” in 39:9. Perhaps there is an intended contrast between these officials, who deserve to be imprisoned, and Joseph, who refused to sin against God, but was thrown into prison in spite of his innocence.

²¹ **tn** The Hebrew word סריס (*saris*), used here of these two men and of Potiphar (see 39:1), normally means “eunuch.” But evidence from Akkadian texts shows that in early times the title was used of a court official in general. Only later did it become more specialized in its use.

²² **sn** *He served them*. This is the same Hebrew verb, meaning “to serve as a personal attendant,” that was translated “became [his] servant” in 39:4.

²³ **tn** *Heb* “they were days in custody.”

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “dreamed a dream.”

²⁵ **tn** *Heb* “a man his dream in one night.”

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* “a man according to the interpretation of his dream.”

²⁷ **tn** The verb זָקַף (*za’af*) only occurs here and Dan 1:10. It means “to be sick, to be emaciated,” probably in this case because of depression.

²⁸ **tn** *Heb* “why are your faces sad today?”

²⁹ **tn** *Heb* “a dream we dreamed.”

³⁰ **tn** The word “them” is not in the Hebrew text, but has been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³¹ **tn** The Hebrew text adds “and he said to him.” This has not been translated because it is redundant in English.

³² **tn** *Heb* “the cup of Pharaoh.” The pronoun “his” has been used here in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³³ **sn** The cupbearer’s dream is dominated by sets of three: three branches, three stages of growth, and three actions of the cupbearer.

³⁴ **tn** *Heb* “the three branches [are].”

you⁴ and restore you to your office. You will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just as you did before² when you were cupbearer. **40:14** But remember me³ when it goes well for you, and show⁴ me kindness.⁵ Make mention⁶ of me to Pharaoh and bring me out of this prison,⁷ **40:15** for I really was kidnapped⁸ from the land of the Hebrews and I have done nothing wrong here for which they should put me in a dungeon."

40:16 When the chief baker saw that the interpretation of the first dream was favorable,⁹ he said to Joseph, "I also appeared in my dream and there were three baskets of white bread¹⁰ on my head. **40:17** In the top basket there were baked goods of every kind for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating them from the basket that was on my head."

40:18 Joseph replied, "This is its meaning: The three baskets represent¹¹ three days. **40:19** In three more days Pharaoh will decapitate you¹² and impale you on a pole. Then the birds will eat your flesh from you."

40:20 On the third day it was Pharaoh's birthday, so he gave a feast for all his servants.

He "lifted up"¹³ the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker in the midst of his servants. **40:21** He restored the chief cupbearer to his former position¹⁴ so that he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand, **40:22** but the chief baker he impaled, just as Joseph had predicted.¹⁵ **40:23** But the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph – he forgot him.¹⁶

Joseph's Rise to Power

41:1 At the end of two full years¹⁷ Pharaoh had a dream.¹⁸ As he was standing by the Nile, **41:2** seven fine-looking, fat cows were coming up out of the Nile,¹⁹ and they grazed in the reeds. **41:3** Then seven bad-looking, thin cows were coming up after them from the Nile,²⁰ and they stood beside the other cows at the edge of the river.²¹ **41:4** The bad-looking, thin cows ate the seven fine-looking, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.

41:5 Then he fell asleep again and had a second dream: There were seven heads of grain growing²² on one stalk, healthy²³ and good. **41:6** Then²⁴ seven heads of grain, thin and burned by the east wind, were sprouting up after them. **41:7** The thin heads swallowed up the seven healthy and full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up and realized it was a dream.²⁵

1 tn Heb "Pharaoh will lift up your head." This Hebrew idiom usually refers to restoring dignity, office, or power. It is comparable to the modern saying "someone can hold his head up high."

2 tn Heb "according to the former custom."

3 tn Heb "but you have remembered me with you." The perfect verbal form may be used rhetorically here to emphasize Joseph's desire to be remembered. He speaks of the action as already being accomplished in order to make it clear that he expects it to be done. The form can be translated as volitional, expressing a plea or a request.

4 tn This perfect verbal form with the prefixed conjunction (and the two that immediately follow) carry the same force as the preceding perfect.

5 tn Heb "deal with me [in] kindness."

6 tn The verb זָכַר (*zakhar*) in the Hiphil stem means "to cause to remember, to make mention, to boast." The implication is that Joseph would be pleased for them to tell his story and give him the credit due him so that Pharaoh would release him. Since Pharaoh had never met Joseph, the simple translation of "cause him to remember me" would mean little.

7 tn Heb "house." The word "prison" has been substituted in the translation for clarity.

8 tn The verb גָּנַב (*ganav*) means "to steal," but in the Piel/Pual stem "to steal away." The idea of "kidnap" would be closer to the sense, meaning he was stolen and carried off. The preceding infinitive absolute underscores the point Joseph is making.

9 tn Heb "that [the] interpretation [was] good." The words "the first dream" are supplied in the translation for clarity.

10 tn Or "three wicker baskets." The meaning of the Hebrew noun חֹרִי (*khori*, "white bread, cake") is uncertain; some have suggested the meaning "wicker" instead. Comparison with texts from Ebla suggests the meaning "pastries made with white flour" (M. Dahood, "Eblaite *ha-ri* and Genesis 40,16 *hōri*," *BN* 13 [1980]: 14-16).

11 tn Heb "the three baskets [are]."

12 tn Heb "Pharaoh will lift up your head from upon you." Joseph repeats the same expression from the first interpretation (see v. 13), but with the added words "from upon you," which allow the statement to have a more literal and ominous meaning – the baker will be decapitated.

13 tn The translation puts the verb in quotation marks because it is used rhetorically here and has a double meaning. With respect to the cupbearer it means "reinstate" (see v. 13), but with respect to the baker it means "decapitate" (see v. 19).

14 tn Heb "his cupbearing."

15 tn Heb "had interpreted for them."

sn The dreams were fulfilled exactly as *Joseph had predicted*, down to the very detail. Here was confirmation that Joseph could interpret dreams and that his own dreams were still valid. It would have been a tremendous encouragement to his faith, but it would also have been a great disappointment to spend two more years in jail.

16 tn The *wayyiqtol* verbal form here has a reiterative or emphasizing function.

17 tn Heb "two years, days."

18 tn Heb "was dreaming."

19 tn Heb "And look, he was standing by the Nile, and look, from the Nile were coming up seven cows, attractive of appearance and fat of flesh." By the use of the particle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*, "look"), the narrator invites the audience to see the dream through Pharaoh's eyes.

20 tn Heb "And look, seven other cows were coming up after them from the Nile, bad of appearance and thin of flesh."

21 tn Heb "the Nile." This has been replaced by "the river" in the translation for stylistic reasons.

22 tn Heb "coming up."

23 tn Heb "fat."

24 tn Heb "And look."

25 tn Heb "And look, a dream."

sn Pharaoh's two dreams, as explained in the following verses, pertained to the economy of Egypt. Because of the Nile River, the land of Egypt weathered all kinds of famines – there was usually grain in Egypt, and if there was grain and water the livestock would flourish. These two dreams, however, indicated that poverty would overtake plenty and that the blessing of the herd and the field would cease.

41:8 In the morning he¹ was troubled, so he called for² all the diviner-priests³ of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams,⁴ but no one could interpret⁵ them for him.⁶ 41:9 Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, “Today I recall my failures.⁷ 41:10 Pharaoh was enraged with his servants, and he put me in prison in the house of the captain of the guards – me and the chief baker. 41:11 We each had a dream one night; each of us had a dream with its own meaning.⁸ 41:12 Now a young man, a Hebrew, a servant⁹ of the captain of the guards,¹⁰ was with us there. We told him our dreams,¹¹ and he interpreted the meaning of each of our respective dreams for us.¹² 41:13 It happened just as he had said¹³ to us – Pharaoh¹⁴ restored me to my office, but he impaled the baker.”¹⁵

41:14 Then Pharaoh summoned¹⁶ Joseph. So they brought him quickly out of the dungeon; he shaved himself, changed his clothes, and came before Pharaoh. 41:15 Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I had a dream,¹⁷ and there is no one who can interpret¹⁸ it. But I have heard about you, that¹⁹ you can interpret dreams.”²⁰ 41:16 Joseph replied to Pharaoh, “It is not within my power,²¹ but

God will speak concerning²² the welfare of Pharaoh.”²³

41:17 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “In my dream I was standing²⁴ by the edge of the Nile. 41:18 Then seven fat and fine-looking cows were coming up out of the Nile, and they grazed in the reeds.²⁵ 41:19 Then²⁶ seven other cows came up after them; they were scrawny, very bad-looking, and lean. I had never seen such bad-looking cows²⁷ as these in all the land of Egypt! 41:20 The lean, bad-looking cows ate up the seven²⁸ fat cows. 41:21 When they had eaten them,²⁹ no one would have known³⁰ that they had done so, for they were just as bad-looking as before. Then I woke up. 41:22 I also saw in my dream³¹ seven heads of grain growing on one stalk, full and good. 41:23 Then³² seven heads of grain, withered and thin and burned with the east wind, were sprouting up after them. 41:24 The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven good heads of grain. So I told all this³³ to the diviner-priests, but no one could tell me its meaning.”³⁴

41:25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “Both dreams of Pharaoh have the same meaning.³⁵ God has revealed³⁶ to Pharaoh what he is about to do.³⁷ 41:26 The seven good cows represent seven years, and the seven good heads of grain represent seven years. Both dreams have the same meaning.³⁸ 41:27 The seven lean, bad-looking cows that came up after them represent seven years, as do the seven empty heads of grain burned with the east wind. They represent³⁹ seven years of famine. 41:28 This is just what I told⁴⁰ Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh

¹ tn Heb “his spirit.”

² tn Heb “he sent and called,” which indicates an official summons.

³ tn The Hebrew term *khartom* (חֲרֹתִים) is an Egyptian loanword (*hyr-tp*) that describes a class of priests who were skilled in such interpretations.

⁴ tn The Hebrew text has the singular (though the Samaritan Pentateuch reads the plural). If retained, the singular must be collective for the set of dreams. Note the plural pronoun “them,” referring to the dreams, in the next clause. However, note that in v. 15 Pharaoh uses the singular to refer to the two dreams. In vv. 17-24 Pharaoh seems to treat the dreams as two parts of one dream (see especially v. 22).

⁵ tn “there was no interpreter.”

⁶ tn Heb “for Pharaoh.” The pronoun “him” has been used in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁷ tn Heb “sins, offenses.” He probably refers here to the offenses that landed him in prison (see 40:1).

⁸ tn Heb “and we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he, each according to the interpretation of his dream we dreamed.”

⁹ tn Or “slave.”

¹⁰ tn Heb “a servant to the captain of the guards.” On this construction see GKC 419-20 §129.c.

¹¹ tn The words “our dreams” are supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹² tn Heb “and he interpreted for us our dreams, each according to his dream he interpreted.”

¹³ tn Heb “interpreted.”

¹⁴ tn Heb “he”; the referent (Pharaoh) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁵ tn Heb “him”; the referent (the baker) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁶ tn Heb “and Pharaoh sent and called,” indicating a summons to the royal court.

¹⁷ tn Heb “dreamed a dream.”

¹⁸ tn Heb “there is no one interpreting.”

¹⁹ tn Heb “saying.”

²⁰ tn Heb “you hear a dream to interpret it,” which may mean, “you only have to hear a dream to be able to interpret it.”

²¹ tn Heb “not within me.”

²² tn Heb “God will answer.”

²³ tn The expression *shelom par'oh* (שְׁלוֹם פַּרְעֹה) is here rendered “the welfare of Pharaoh” because the dream will be about life in his land. Some interpret it to mean an answer of “peace” – one that will calm his heart, or give him the answer that he desires (cf. NIV, NRSV, NLT).

²⁴ tn Heb “In my dream look, I was standing.” The use of the particle *hinneh* (הִנֵּה) here (and also in vv. 18, 19, 22, 23) invites the hearer (within the context of the narrative, Joseph, but in the broader sense the reader or hearer of the Book of Genesis) to observe the scene through Pharaoh’s eyes.

²⁵ tn Heb “and look, from the Nile seven cows were coming up, fat of flesh and attractive of appearance, and they grazed in the reeds.”

²⁶ tn Heb “And look.”

²⁷ tn The word “cows” is supplied here in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁸ tn Heb “the seven first fat cows.”

²⁹ tn Heb “when they went inside them.”

³⁰ tn Heb “it was not known.”

³¹ tn Heb “and I saw in my dream and look.”

³² tn Heb “And look.”

³³ tn The words “all this” have been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³⁴ tn Heb “and there was no one telling me.”

³⁵ tn Heb “the dream of Pharaoh is one.”

³⁶ tn Heb “declared.”

³⁷ tn The active participle here indicates what is imminent.

³⁸ tn Heb “one dream it is.”

³⁹ tn Heb “are.” Another option is to translate, “There will be seven years of famine.”

⁴⁰ tn Heb “it is the word that I spoke.”

what he is about to do. **41:29** Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the whole land of Egypt. **41:30** But seven years of famine will occur¹ after them, and all the abundance will be forgotten in the land of Egypt. The famine will devastate² the land. **41:31** The previous abundance of the land will not be remembered³ because of the famine that follows, for the famine will be very severe.⁴ **41:32** The dream was repeated to Pharaoh⁵ because the matter has been decreed⁶ by God, and God will make it happen soon.⁷

41:33 “So now Pharaoh should look⁸ for a wise and discerning man⁹ and give him authority¹⁰ over all the land of Egypt. **41:34** Pharaoh should do¹¹ this – he should appoint¹² officials¹³ throughout the land to collect one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt¹⁴ during the seven years of abundance. **41:35** They should gather all the excess food¹⁵ during these good years that are coming. By Pharaoh’s authority¹⁶ they should store up grain so the cities will have food,¹⁷ and they should preserve it.¹⁸ **41:36** This food should be held in storage for the land in preparation for the seven years of famine that will occur throughout the land of Egypt. In this way the land will survive the famine.”¹⁹

¹ **tn** The perfect with the *vav* consecutive continues the time frame of the preceding participle, which has an imminent future nuance here.

² **tn** The Hebrew verb *כָּלַה* (*kalah*) in the Piel stem means “to finish, to destroy, to bring an end to.” The severity of the famine will ruin the land of Egypt.

³ **tn** Heb “known.”

⁴ **tn** Or “heavy.”

⁵ **tn** Heb “and concerning the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh two times.” The Niphal infinitive here is the object of the preposition; it is followed by the subjective genitive “of the dream.”

⁶ **tn** Heb “established.”

⁷ **tn** The clause combines a participle and an infinitive construct: God “is hurrying...to do it,” meaning he is going to do it soon.

⁸ **tn** Heb “let Pharaoh look.” The jussive form expresses Joseph’s advice to Pharaoh.

⁹ **tn** Heb “a man discerning and wise.” The order of the terms is rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁰ **tn** Heb “and let him set him.”

¹¹ **tn** Heb The imperfect verbal form has an obligatory nuance here. The Samaritan Pentateuch has a jussive form here, “and let [Pharaoh] do.”

¹² **tn** Heb “and let him appoint.” The jussive form expresses Joseph’s advice to Pharaoh.

¹³ **tn** Heb “appointees.” The noun is a cognate accusative of the preceding verb. Since “appoint appointees” would be redundant in English, the term “officials” was used in the translation instead.

¹⁴ **tn** Heb “and he shall collect a fifth of the land of Egypt.” The language is figurative (metonymy); it means what the land produces, i.e., the harvest.

¹⁵ **tn** Heb “all the food.”

¹⁶ **tn** Heb “under the hand of Pharaoh.”

¹⁷ **tn** Heb “[for] food in the cities.” The noun translated “food” is an adverbial accusative in the sentence.

¹⁸ **tn** The perfect with *vav* (ו) consecutive carries the same force as the sequence of jussives before it.

¹⁹ **tn** Heb “and the land will not be cut off in the famine.”

41:37 This advice made sense to Pharaoh and all his officials.²⁰ **41:38** So Pharaoh asked his officials, “Can we find a man like Joseph,²¹ one in whom the Spirit of God is present?”²² **41:39** So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Because God has enabled you to know all this, there is no one as wise and discerning²³ as you are! **41:40** You will oversee my household, and all my people will submit to your commands.²⁴ Only I, the king, will be greater than you.²⁵

41:41 “See here,” Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I place²⁶ you in authority over all the land of Egypt.”²⁷ **41:42** Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his own hand and put it on Joseph’s. He clothed him with fine linen²⁸ clothes and put a gold chain around his neck. **41:43** Pharaoh²⁹ had him ride in the chariot used by his second-in-command,³⁰ and they cried out before him, “Kneel down!”³¹ So he placed him over all the land of Egypt. **41:44** Pharaoh also said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, but without your permission³² no

²⁰ **tn** Heb “and the matter was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants.”

²¹ **tn** Heb “like this,” but the referent could be misunderstood to be a man like that described by Joseph in v. 33, rather than Joseph himself. For this reason the proper name “Joseph” has been supplied in the translation.

²² **tn** The rhetorical question expects the answer “No, of course not!”

²³ **tn** Heb “as discerning and wise.” The order has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁴ **tn** Heb “and at your mouth (i.e., instructions) all my people will kiss.” G. J. Wenham translates this “shall kowtow to your instruction” (*Genesis* [WBC], 2:395). Although there is some textual support for reading “will be judged, ruled by you,” this is probably an attempt to capture the significance of this word. Wenham lists a number of references where individuals have tried to make connections with other words or expressions – such as a root meaning “order themselves” lying behind “kiss,” or an idiomatic idea of “kiss” meaning “seal the mouth,” and so “be silent and submit to.” See K. A. Kitchen, “The Term *Nsq* in Genesis 41:40,” *ExpTim* 69 (1957): 30; D. S. Sperling, “Genesis 41:40: A New Interpretation,” *JANESCU* 10 (1978): 113-19.

²⁵ **tn** Heb “only the throne, I will be greater than you.”

²⁶ **tn** The translation assumes that the perfect verbal form is descriptive of a present action. Another option is to understand it as rhetorical, in which case Pharaoh describes a still future action as if it had already occurred in order to emphasize its certainty. In this case one could translate “I have placed” or “I will place.” The verb *נָתַן* (*natan*) is translated here as “to place in authority [over].”

²⁷ **sn** Joseph became the grand vizier of the *land of Egypt*. See W. A. Ward, “The Egyptian Office of Joseph,” *JSS* 5 (1960): 144-50; and R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 129-31.

²⁸ **tn** The Hebrew word *שֵׁשׁ* (*shesh*) is an Egyptian loanword that describes the fine linen robes that Egyptian royalty wore. The clothing signified Joseph’s rank.

²⁹ **tn** Heb “he”; the referent (Pharaoh) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³⁰ **tn** Heb “and he caused him to ride in the second chariot which was his.”

³¹ **tn** The verb form appears to be a causative imperative from a verbal root meaning “to kneel.” It is a homonym of the word “bless” (identical in root letters but not related etymologically).

³² **tn** Heb “apart from you.”

one¹ will move his hand or his foot² in all the land of Egypt.” 41:45 Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah.³ He also gave him Asenath⁴ daughter of Potiphera, priest of On,⁵ to be his wife. So Joseph took charge of⁶ all the land of Egypt.

41:46 Now Joseph was 30 years old⁷ when he began serving⁸ Pharaoh king of Egypt. Joseph was commissioned by⁹ Pharaoh and was in charge of¹⁰ all the land of Egypt. 41:47 During the seven years of abundance the land produced large, bountiful harvests.¹¹ 41:48 Joseph¹² collected all the excess food¹³ in the land of Egypt during the seven years and stored it in the cities.¹⁴ In every city he put the food gathered from the fields around it. 41:49 Joseph stored up a vast amount of grain, like the sand of the sea,¹⁵ until he stopped measuring it because it was impossible to measure.

41:50 Two sons were born to Joseph before the famine came.¹⁶ Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, was their mother.¹⁷ 41:51 Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh,¹⁸

saying,¹⁹ “Certainly²⁰ God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father’s house.” 41:52 He named the second child Ephraim,²¹ saying,²² “Certainly²³ God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.”

41:53 The seven years of abundance in the land of Egypt came to an end. 41:54 Then the seven years of famine began,²⁴ just as Joseph had predicted. There was famine in all the other lands, but throughout the land of Egypt there was food. 41:55 When all the land of Egypt experienced the famine, the people cried out to Pharaoh for food. Pharaoh said to all the people of Egypt,²⁵ “Go to Joseph and do whatever he tells you.”

41:56 While the famine was over all the earth,²⁶ Joseph opened the storehouses²⁷ and sold grain to the Egyptians. The famine was severe throughout the land of Egypt. 41:57 People from every country²⁸ came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain because the famine was severe throughout the earth.

¹ tn Heb “no man,” but here “man” is generic, referring to people in general.

² tn The idiom “lift up hand or foot” means “take any action” here.

³ sn The meaning of Joseph’s Egyptian name, *Zaphenath-Paneah*, is uncertain. Many recent commentators have followed the proposal of G. Steindorff that it means “the god has said, ‘he will live’” (“Der Name Josephs *Saphenat-Pa-neach*,” ZAS 31 [1889]: 41-42); others have suggested “the god speaks and lives” (see BDB 861 s.v. נִשְׁחַתָּה); “the man he knows” (J. Vergote, *Joseph en Égypte*, 145); or “Joseph [who is called] *ʾIp-ʾankh*” (K. A. Kitchen, NBD³ 1262).

⁴ sn The name *Asenath* may mean “she belongs to the goddess Neit” (see HALOT 74 s.v. אֲסַנַּת). A novel was written at the beginning of the first century entitled *Joseph and Asenath*, which included a legendary account of the conversion of Asenath to Joseph’s faith in Yahweh. However, all that can be determined from this chapter is that their children received Hebrew names. See also V. Aptowitz, “Asenath, the Wife of Joseph – a Haggadic Literary-Historical Study,” *HUCA* 1 (1924): 239-306.

⁵ sn On (also in v. 50) is another name for the city of Heliopolis.

⁶ tn Heb “and he passed through.”

⁷ tn Heb “a son of thirty years.”

⁸ tn Heb “when he stood before.”

⁹ tn Heb “went out from before.”

¹⁰ tn Heb “and he passed through all the land of Egypt”; this phrase is interpreted by JPS to mean that Joseph “emerged in charge of the whole land.”

¹¹ tn Heb “brought forth by handfuls.”

¹² tn Heb “he”; the referent (Joseph) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹³ tn Heb “all the food.”

¹⁴ tn Heb “of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt and placed food in the cities.”

¹⁵ tn Heb “and Joseph gathered grain like the sand of the sea, multiplying much.” To emphasize the vast amount of grain he stored up, the Hebrew text modifies the verb “gathered” with an infinitive absolute and an adverb.

¹⁶ tn Heb “before the year of the famine came.”

¹⁷ tn Heb “gave birth for him.”

¹⁸ sn The name *Manasseh* (מְנַשֶּׁה, *mⁿnasheh*) describes God’s activity on behalf of Joseph, explaining in general the

significance of his change of fortune. The name is a Piel participle, suggesting the meaning “he who brings about forgetfulness.” The Hebrew verb נָשַׁחַתָּה (*nashani*) may have been used instead of the normal נִשְׁחַתָּה (*nishani*) to provide a closer sound play with the name. The giving of this Hebrew name to his son shows that Joseph retained his heritage and faith; and it shows that a brighter future was in store for him.

¹⁹ tn The word “saying” has been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁰ tn Or “for.”

²¹ sn The name *Ephraim* (אֶפְרַיִם, *ʾefrayim*), a form of the Hebrew verb פָּרָה (*parah*), means “to bear fruit.” The theme of fruitfulness is connected with this line of the family from Rachel (30:2) on down (see Gen 49:22, Deut 33:13-17, and Hos 13:15). But there is some difficulty with the name “Ephraim” itself. It appears to be a dual, for which F. Delitzsch simply said it meant “double fruitfulness” (*New Commentary on Genesis*, 2:305). G. J. Spurrell suggested it was a diphthongal pronunciation of a name ending in *-an* or *-am*, often thought to be dual suffixes (*Notes on the text of the book of Genesis*, 334). Many, however, simply connect the name to the territory of Ephraim and interpret it to be “fertile land” (C. Fontinoy, “Les noms de lieux en *-ayim* dans la Bible,” *UF* 3 [1971]: 33-40). The dual would then be an old locative ending. There is no doubt that the name became attached to the land in which the tribe settled, and it is possible that is where the dual ending came from, but in this story it refers to Joseph’s God-given fruitfulness.

²² tn The word “saying” has been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²³ tn Or “for.”

²⁴ tn Heb “began to arrive.”

²⁵ tn Heb “to all Egypt.” The name of the country is used by metonymy for the inhabitants.

²⁶ tn Or “over the entire land”; Heb “over all the face of the earth.” The disjunctive clause is circumstantial-temporal to the next clause.

²⁷ tc The MT reads “he opened all that was in [or “among”] them.” The translation follows the reading of the LXX and Syriac versions.

²⁸ tn Heb “all the earth,” which refers here (by metonymy) to the people of the earth. Note that the following verb is plural in form, indicating that the inhabitants of the earth are in view.

Joseph's Brothers in Egypt

42:1 When Jacob heard¹ there was grain in Egypt, he² said to his sons, “Why are you looking at each other?”³ **42:2** He then said, “Look, I hear that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy grain for us⁴ so that we may live⁵ and not die.”⁶

42:3 So ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. **42:4** But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers,⁷ for he said,⁸ “What if some accident⁹ happens¹⁰ to him?” **42:5** So Israel's sons came to buy grain among the other travelers,¹¹ for the famine was severe in the land of Canaan.

42:6 Now Joseph was the ruler of the country, the one who sold grain to all the people of the country.¹² Joseph's brothers came and bowed down¹³ before him with¹⁴ their faces to the ground. **42:7** When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger¹⁵ to them and spoke to them harshly. He

asked, “Where do you come from?” They answered,¹⁶ “From the land of Canaan, to buy grain for food.”¹⁷

42:8 Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. **42:9** Then Joseph remembered the dreams he had dreamed about them, and he said to them, “You are spies,¹⁸ you have come to see if our land is vulnerable!”¹⁹

42:10 But they exclaimed,²⁰ “No, my lord! Your servants have come to buy grain for food! **42:11** We are all the sons of one man; we are honest men! Your servants are not spies.”

42:12 “No,” he insisted, “but you have come to see if our land is vulnerable.”²¹ **42:13** They replied, “Your servants are from a family of twelve brothers.²² We are the sons of one man in the land of Canaan. The youngest is with our father at this time,²³ and one is no longer alive.”²⁴

42:14 But Joseph told them, “It is just as I said to you.²⁵ You are spies! **42:15** You will be tested in this way: As surely as Pharaoh lives,²⁶ you will not depart from this place unless your youngest brother comes here. **42:16** One of you must go and get²⁷ your brother, while²⁸ the rest of you remain in prison.²⁹ In this way your words may be tested to see if³⁰ you are telling the truth.³¹ If not, then, as surely as Pharaoh

¹ tn Heb “saw.”

² tn Heb “Jacob.” Here the proper name has been replaced by the pronoun (“he”) in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³ sn Why are you looking at each other? The point of Jacob's question is that his sons should be going to get grain rather than sitting around doing nothing. Jacob, as the patriarch, still makes the decisions for the whole clan.

⁴ tn Heb “and buy for us from there.” The word “grain,” the direct object of “buy,” has been supplied for clarity, and the words “from there” have been omitted in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁵ tn Following the imperatives, the prefixed verbal form with prefixed vav expresses purpose of result.

⁶ tn The imperfect tense continues the nuance of the verb before it.

⁷ tn Heb “But Benjamin, the brother of Joseph, Jacob did not send with his brothers.” The disjunctive clause highlights the contrast between Benjamin and the other ten.

⁸ tn The Hebrew verb אמר (amar, “to say”) could also be translated “thought” (i.e., “he said to himself”) here, giving Jacob's reasoning rather than spoken words.

⁹ tn The Hebrew noun אסון (ason) is a rare word meaning “accident, harm.” Apart from its use in these passages it occurs in Exodus 21:22-23 of an accident to a pregnant woman. The term is a rather general one, but Jacob was no doubt thinking of his loss of Joseph.

¹⁰ tn Heb “encounters.”

¹¹ tn Heb “in the midst of the coming ones.”

¹² tn The disjunctive clause either introduces a new episode in the unfolding drama or provides the reader with supplemental information necessary to understanding the story.

¹³ sn Joseph's brothers came and bowed down before him. Here is the beginning of the fulfillment of Joseph's dreams (see Gen 37). But it is not the complete fulfillment, since all his brothers and his parents must come. The point of the dream, of course, was not simply to get the family to bow to Joseph, but that Joseph would be placed in a position of rule and authority to save the family and the world (41:57).

¹⁴ tn The word “faces” is an adverbial accusative, so the preposition has been supplied in the translation.

¹⁵ sn But pretended to be a stranger. Joseph intends to test his brothers to see if they have changed and have the integrity to be patriarchs of the tribes of Israel. He will do this by putting them in the same situations that they and he were in before. The first test will be to awaken their conscience.

¹⁶ tn Heb “said.”

¹⁷ tn The verb is denominative, meaning “to buy grain”; the word “food” could simply be the direct object, but may also be an adverbial accusative.

¹⁸ sn You are spies. Joseph wanted to see how his brothers would react if they were accused of spying.

¹⁹ tn Heb “to see the nakedness of the land you have come.”

²⁰ tn Heb “and they said to him.” In context this is best understood as an exclamation.

²¹ tn Heb “and he said, ‘No, for the nakedness of the land you have come to see.’” The order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse has been rearranged in the translation for clarity.

²² tn Heb “twelve [were] your servants, brothers [are] we.”

²³ tn Heb “today.”

²⁴ tn Heb “and the one is not.”

²⁵ tn Heb “to you, saying.”

²⁶ tn Heb “[By] the life of Pharaoh.”

sn As surely as Pharaoh lives. Joseph uses an oath formula to let the brothers know the certainty of what he said. There is some discussion in the commentaries on swearing by the life of Pharaoh, but since the formulation here reflects the Hebrew practice, it would be hard to connect the ideas exactly to Egyptian practices. Joseph did this to make the point in a way that his Hebrew brothers would understand. See M. R. Lehmann, “Biblical Oaths,” ZAW 81 (1969): 74-92.

²⁷ tn Heb “send from you one and let him take.” After the imperative, the prefixed verbal form with prefixed vav (ו) indicates purpose.

²⁸ tn The disjunctive clause is here circumstantial-temporal.

²⁹ tn Heb “bound.”

³⁰ tn The words “to see” have been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³¹ tn Heb “the truth [is] with you.”

lives, you are spies!” **42:17** He imprisoned¹ them all for three days. **42:18** On the third day Joseph said to them, “Do as I say² and you will live,³ for I fear God.⁴ **42:19** If you are honest men, leave one of your brothers confined here in prison⁵ while the rest of you go⁶ and take grain back for your hungry families.⁷ **42:20** But you must bring⁸ your youngest brother to me. Then⁹ your words will be verified¹⁰ and you will not die.” They did as he said.¹¹

42:21 They said to one other,¹² “Surely we’re being punished¹³ because of our brother, because we saw how distressed he was¹⁴ when he cried to us for mercy, but we refused to listen. That is why this distress¹⁵ has come on us!” **42:22** Reuben said to them, “Didn’t I say to you, ‘Don’t sin against the boy,’ but you wouldn’t listen? So now we must pay for shedding his blood!”¹⁶ **42:23** (Now¹⁷ they did not know that Joseph could understand them,¹⁸ for he was speaking through an interpreter.)¹⁹ **42:24** He turned away from them and wept. When he turned around

and spoke to them again,²⁰ he had Simeon taken²¹ from them and tied up²² before their eyes.

42:25 Then Joseph gave orders to fill²³ their bags with grain, to return each man’s money to his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. His orders were carried out.²⁴ **42:26** So they loaded their grain on their donkeys and left.²⁵

42:27 When one of them²⁶ opened his sack to get feed for his donkey at their resting place,²⁷ he saw his money in the mouth of his sack.²⁸

42:28 He said to his brothers, “My money was returned! Here it is in my sack!” They were dismayed;²⁹ they turned trembling one to another³⁰ and said, “What in the world has God done to us?”³¹

42:29 They returned to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan and told him all the things that had happened to them, saying, **42:30** “The man, the lord of the land, spoke harshly to us and treated us³² as if we were³³ spying on the land. **42:31** But we said to him, ‘We are honest men; we are not spies! **42:32** We are from a family of twelve brothers; we are the sons of one father.³⁴ One is no longer alive,³⁵ and the young-

¹ **sn** The same Hebrew word is used for Joseph’s imprisonment in 40:3, 4, 7. There is some mirroring going on in the narrative. The Hebrew word used here (אָסַף, *’asaf*, “to gather”) is not normally used in a context like this (for placing someone in prison), but it forms a wordplay on the name Joseph (יֹסֵף, *yosef*) and keeps the comparison working.

² **tn** Heb “Do this.”

³ **tn** After the preceding imperative, the imperative with *vav* (ו) can, as here, indicate logical sequence.

⁴ **sn** For *I fear God*, Joseph brings God into the picture to awaken his brothers’ consciences. The godly person cares about the welfare of people, whether they live or die. So he will send grain back, but keep one of them in Egypt. This action contrasts with their crime of selling their brother into slavery.

⁵ **tn** Heb “bound in the house of your prison.”

⁶ **tn** The disjunctive clause is circumstantial-temporal.

⁷ **tn** Heb “[for] the hunger of your households.”

⁸ **tn** The imperfect here has an injunctive force.

⁹ **tn** After the injunctive imperfect, this imperfect with *vav* indicates purpose or result.

¹⁰ **tn** The Niphal form of the verb has the sense of “to be faithful; to be sure; to be reliable.” Joseph will test his brothers to see if their words are true.

¹¹ **tn** Heb “and they did so.”

¹² **tn** Heb “a man to his neighbor.”

¹³ **tn** Or “we are guilty”; the Hebrew word can also refer to the effect of being guilty, i.e., “we are being punished for guilt.”

¹⁴ **tn** Heb “the distress of his soul.”

¹⁵ **sn** The repetition of the Hebrew noun translated *distress* draws attention to the fact that they regard their present distress as appropriate punishment for their refusal to ignore their brother when he was in distress.

¹⁶ **tn** Heb “and also his blood, look, it is required.” God requires compensation, as it were, from those who shed innocent blood (see Gen 9:6). In other words, God exacts punishment for the crime of murder.

¹⁷ **tn** The disjunctive clause provides supplemental information that is important to the story.

¹⁸ **tn** “was listening.” The brothers were not aware that Joseph could understand them as they spoke the preceding words in their native language.

¹⁹ **tn** Heb “for [there was] an interpreter between them.” On the meaning of the word here translated “interpreter” see HALOT 590 s.v. מְדַבֵּר and M. A. Canney, “The Hebrew *meilis* (Prov IX 12; Gen XLII 2-3),” *AJSL* 40 (1923/24): 135-37.

²⁰ **tn** Heb “and he turned to them and spoke to them.”

²¹ **tn** Heb “took Simeon.” This was probably done at Joseph’s command, however; the grand vizier of Egypt would not have personally seized a prisoner.

²² **tn** Heb “and he bound him.” See the note on the preceding verb “taken.”

²³ **tn** Heb “and they filled.” The clause appears to be elliptical; one expects “Joseph gave orders to fill...and they filled.” See GKC 386 §120.f.

²⁴ **tn** Heb “and he did for them so.” Joseph would appear to be the subject of the singular verb. If the text is retained, the statement seems to be a summary of the preceding, more detailed statement. However, some read the verb as plural, “and they did for them so.” In this case the statement indicates that Joseph’s subordinates carried out his orders. Another alternative is to read the singular verb as passive (with unspecified subject), “and this was done for them so” (cf. NEB, NIV, NRSV).

²⁵ **tn** Heb “and they went from there.”

²⁶ **tn** Heb “and the one.” The article indicates that the individual is vivid in the mind of the narrator, yet it is not important to identify him by name.

²⁷ **tn** Heb “at the lodging place.”

²⁸ **tn** Heb “and look, it [was] in the mouth of his sack.” By the use of the particle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*, “look”), the narrator invites the reader to look through the eyes of the character and thereby draws attention to the money.

²⁹ **tn** Heb “and their heart went out.” Since this expression is used only here, the exact meaning is unclear. The following statement suggests that it may refer to a sudden loss of emotional strength, so “They were dismayed” adequately conveys the meaning (cf. NRSV); NIV has “Their hearts sank.”

³⁰ **tn** Heb “and they trembled, a man to his neighbor.”

³¹ **tn** Heb “What is this God has done to us?” The demonstrative pronoun (“this”) adds emphasis to the question.

³² **tn** Heb “made us.”

³³ **tn** The words “if we were” have been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³⁴ **tn** Heb “twelve [were] we, brothers, sons of our father [are] we.”

³⁵ **tn** Heb “the one is not.”

est is with our father at this time⁴ in the land of Canaan.’

42:33 “Then the man, the lord of the land, said to us, ‘This is how I will find out if you are honest men. Leave one of your brothers with me, and take grain² for your hungry households and go. **42:34** But bring your youngest brother back to me so I will know³ that you are honest men and not spies.⁴ Then I will give your brother back to you and you may move about freely in the land.’”⁵

42:35 When they were emptying their sacks, there was each man’s bag of money in his sack! When they and their father saw the bags of money, they were afraid. **42:36** Their father Jacob said to them, “You are making me childless! Joseph is gone.⁶ Simeon is gone.⁷ And now you want to take⁸ Benjamin! Everything is against me.”

42:37 Then Reuben said to his father, “You may⁹ put my two sons to death if I do not bring him back to you. Put him in my care¹⁰ and I will bring him back to you.” **42:38** But Jacob¹¹ replied, “My son will not go down there with you, for his brother is dead and he alone is left.¹² If an accident happens to him on the journey you have to make, then you will bring down my gray hair¹³ in sorrow to the grave.”¹⁴

The Second Journey to Egypt

43:1 Now the famine was severe in the land.¹⁵ **43:2** When they finished eating the grain they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, “Return, buy us a little more food.”

43:3 But Judah said to him, “The man solemnly warned¹⁶ us, ‘You will not see my face¹⁷ unless your brother is with you.’ **43:4** If you send¹⁸ our brother with us, we’ll go down and buy food for you. **43:5** But if you will not send him, we won’t go down there because the man said to us, ‘You will not see my face unless your brother is with you.’”

43:6 Israel said, “Why did you bring this trouble¹⁹ on me by telling²⁰ the man you had one more brother?”

43:7 They replied, “The man questioned us²¹ thoroughly²² about ourselves and our family, saying, ‘Is your father still alive? Do you have another brother?’”²³ So we answered him in this way.²⁴ How could we possibly know²⁵ that he would say,²⁶ ‘Bring your brother down?’”

43:8 Then Judah said to his father Israel, “Send the boy with me and we will go immediately.²⁷ Then we will live²⁸ and not die – we and you and our little ones. **43:9** I myself pledge security²⁹ for him; you may hold me liable. If I do not bring him back to you and place him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all

¹⁶ **tn** The infinitive absolute with the finite verb stresses the point. The primary meaning of the verb is “to witness; to testify.” It alludes to Joseph’s oath, which was tantamount to a threat or warning.

¹⁷ **tn** The idiom “see my face” means “have an audience with me.”

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “if there is you sending,” that is, “if you send.”

¹⁹ **tn** The verb may even have a moral connotation here, “Why did you do evil to me?”

²⁰ **tn** The infinitive construct here explains how they brought trouble on Jacob.

²¹ **tn** The word “us” has been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²² **tn** The infinitive absolute with the perfect verbal form emphasizes that Joseph questioned them thoroughly.

²³ **sn** The report given here concerning Joseph’s interrogation does not exactly match the previous account where they supplied the information to clear themselves (see 42:13). This section may reflect how they remembered the impact of his interrogation, whether he asked the specific questions or not. That may be twisting the truth to protect themselves, not wanting to admit that they volunteered the information. (They admitted as much in 42:31, but now they seem to be qualifying that comment.) On the other hand, when speaking to Joseph later (see 44:19), Judah claims that Joseph asked for the information about their family, making it possible that 42:13 leaves out some of the details of their first encounter.

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and we told to him according to these words.”

²⁵ **tn** The infinitive absolute emphasizes the imperfect verbal form, which here is a historic future (that is, future from the perspective of a past time).

²⁶ **tn** Once again the imperfect verbal form is used as a historic future (that is, future from the perspective of past time).

²⁷ **tn** *Heb* “and we will rise up and we will go.” The first verb is adverbial and gives the expression the sense of “we will go immediately.”

²⁸ **tn** After the preceding cohortatives, the prefixed verbal form (either imperfect or cohortative) with the prefixed conjunction here indicates purpose or result.

²⁹ **tn** The pronoun before the first person verbal form draws attention to the subject and emphasizes Judah’s willingness to be personally responsible for the boy.

¹ **tn** *Heb* “today.”

² **tn** The word “grain” is not in the Hebrew text, but has been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³ **tn** After the imperative, the cohortative with prefixed *vav* indicates purpose/result.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “that you are not spies, that you are honest men.”

⁵ **sn** Joseph’s brothers soften the news considerably, making it sound like Simeon was a guest of Joseph (*Leave one of your brothers with me*) instead of being bound in prison. They do not mention the threat of death and do not at this time speak of the money in the one sack.

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “is not.”

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “is not.”

⁸ **tn** The nuance of the imperfect verbal form is desiderative here.

⁹ **tn** The nuance of the imperfect verbal form is permissive here.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “my hand.”

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “he”; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹² **sn** The expression *he alone is left* meant that (so far as Jacob knew) Benjamin was the only surviving child of his mother Rachel.

¹³ **sn** The expression *bring down my gray hair* is figurative, using a part for the whole – they would put Jacob in the grave. But the gray head signifies a long life of worry and trouble.

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “to Sheol,” the dwelling place of the dead.

¹⁵ **tn** The disjunctive clause gives supplemental information that is important to the storyline.

my life.¹ 43:10 But if we had not delayed, we could have traveled there and back² twice by now!”

43:11 Then their father Israel said to them, “If it must be so, then do this: Take some of the best products of the land in your bags, and take a gift down to the man – a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachios and almonds. 43:12 Take double the money with you;³ you must take back⁴ the money that was returned in the mouths of your sacks – perhaps it was an oversight. 43:13 Take your brother too, and go right away⁵ to the man.⁶ 43:14 May the sovereign God⁷ grant you mercy before the man so that he may release⁸ your other brother⁹ and Benjamin! As for me, if I lose my children I lose them.”¹⁰

43:15 So the men took these gifts, and they took double the money with them, along with Benjamin. Then they hurried down to Egypt¹¹ and stood before Joseph. 43:16 When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the servant who was over his household, “Bring the men to the house. Slaughter an animal and prepare it, for the men will eat with me at noon.” 43:17 The man did just as Joseph said; he¹² brought the men into Joseph’s house.¹³

43:18 But the men were afraid when they were brought to Joseph’s house. They said, “We are being brought in because of¹⁴ the money that was returned in our sacks last time.¹⁵ He wants

to capture us,¹⁶ make us slaves, and take¹⁷ our donkeys!” 43:19 So they approached the man who was in charge of Joseph’s household and spoke to him at the entrance to the house. 43:20 They said, “My lord, we did indeed come down¹⁸ the first time¹⁹ to buy food. 43:21 But when we came to the place where we spent the night, we opened our sacks and each of us found his money – the full amount²⁰ – in the mouth of his sack. So we have returned it.²¹ 43:22 We have brought additional money with us to buy food. We do not know who put the money in our sacks!”

43:23 “Everything is fine,”²² the man in charge of Joseph’s household told them. “Don’t be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks.²³ I had your money.”²⁴ Then he brought Simeon out to them.

43:24 The servant in charge²⁵ brought the men into Joseph’s house. He gave them water, and they washed their feet. Then he gave food to their donkeys. 43:25 They got their gifts ready for Joseph’s arrival²⁶ at noon, for they had heard²⁷ that they were to have a meal²⁸ there.

43:26 When Joseph came home, they presented him with the gifts they had brought inside,²⁹ and they bowed down to the ground before him. 43:27 He asked them how they were doing.³⁰ Then he said, “Is your aging father well, the one you spoke about? Is he still alive?” 43:28 “Your servant our father is well,” they replied.

¹ sn I will bear the blame before you all my life. It is not clear how this would work out if Benjamin did not come back. But Judah is offering his life for Benjamin’s if Benjamin does not return.

² tn Heb “we could have returned.”

³ tn Heb “in your hand.”

⁴ tn Heb “take back in your hand.” The imperfect verbal form probably has an injunctive or obligatory force here, since Jacob is instructing his sons.

⁵ tn Heb “arise, return,” meaning “get up and go back,” or “go back immediately.”

⁶ sn The man refers to the Egyptian official, whom the reader or hearer of the narrative knows is Joseph. In this context both the sons and Jacob refer to him simply as “the man” (see vv. 3-7).

⁷ tn Heb “El Shaddai.” See the extended note on the phrase “sovereign God” in Gen 17:1.

⁸ tn Heb “release to you.” After the jussive this perfect verbal form with prefixed vav (ו) probably indicates logical consequence, as well as temporal sequence.

⁹ sn Several Jewish commentators suggest that the expression your other brother refers to Joseph. This would mean that Jacob prophesied unwittingly. However, it is much more likely that Simeon is the referent of the phrase “your other brother” (see Gen 42:24).

¹⁰ tn Heb “if I am bereaved I am bereaved.” With this fatalistic sounding statement Jacob resolves himself to the possibility of losing both Benjamin and Simeon.

¹¹ tn Heb “they arose and went down to Egypt.” The first verb has an adverbial function and emphasizes that they departed right away.

¹² tn Heb “the man.” This has been replaced in the translation by the pronoun “he” for stylistic reasons.

¹³ sn This verse is a summary statement. The next verses delineate intermediate steps (see v. 24) in the process.

¹⁴ tn Heb “over the matter of.”

¹⁵ tn Heb “in the beginning,” that is, at the end of their first visit.

¹⁶ tn Heb “to roll himself upon us and to cause himself to fall upon us.” The infinitives here indicate the purpose (as viewed by the brothers) for their being brought to Joseph’s house.

¹⁷ tn The word “take” has been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁸ tn The infinitive absolute is used for emphasis before the finite verbal form.

¹⁹ tn Heb “in the beginning” (see the note on the phrase “last time” in v. 18).

²⁰ tn Heb “in its weight.”

²¹ tn Heb “brought it back in our hand.”

²² tn Heb “and he said, ‘peace to you.’” Here the statement has the force of “everything is fine,” or perhaps even “calm down.” The referent of “he” (the man in charge of Joseph’s household) has been specified in the translation for clarity, and the order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse has been rearranged for stylistic reasons.

²³ sn Your God and the God of your father... This is the first clear reference in the story to the theme of divine providence – that God works through the human actions to do his will.

²⁴ tn Heb “your money came to me.”

²⁵ tn Heb “the man.”

²⁶ tn The construction uses the infinitive construct after the preposition, followed by the subjective genitive.

²⁷ tn The action precedes the action of preparing the gift, and so must be translated as past perfect.

²⁸ tn Heb “eat bread.” The imperfect verbal form is used here as a historic future (future from the perspective of the past).

²⁹ tn Heb “into the house.”

³⁰ tn Heb “concerning peace.”

“He is still alive.” They bowed down in humility.¹

43:29 When Joseph looked up² and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother’s son, he said, “Is this your youngest brother, whom you told me about?” Then he said, “May God be gracious to you, my son.”³ **43:30** Joseph hurried out, for he was overcome by affection for his brother⁴ and was at the point of tears.⁵ So he went to his room and wept there.

43:31 Then he washed his face and came out. With composure he said,⁶ “Set out the food.” **43:32** They set a place for him, a separate place for his brothers,⁷ and another for the Egyptians who were eating with him. (The Egyptians are not able to eat with Hebrews, for the Egyptians think it is disgusting⁸ to do so.)⁹ **43:33** They sat before him, arranged by order of birth, beginning with the firstborn and ending with the youngest.¹⁰ The men looked at each other in astonishment.¹¹ **43:34** He gave them portions of the food set before him,¹² but the portion for Benjamin was five times greater than the portions for any of the others. They drank with Joseph until they all became drunk.¹³

The Final Test

44:1 He instructed the servant who was over his household, “Fill the sacks of the men with as much food as they can carry and put each man’s money in the mouth of his sack. **44:2** Then put¹⁴ my cup – the silver cup – in the mouth of the youngest one’s sack, along with the money for his grain.” He did as Joseph instructed.¹⁵

44:3 When morning came,¹⁶ the men and their donkeys were sent off.¹⁷ **44:4** They had not gone very far from the city¹⁸ when Joseph said¹⁹ to the servant who was over his household, “Pursue the men at once!²⁰ When you overtake²¹ them, say to them, ‘Why have you repaid good with evil? **44:5** Doesn’t my master drink from this cup²² and use it for divination?²³ You have done wrong!’”²⁴

44:6 When the man²⁵ overtook them, he spoke these words to them. **44:7** They answered him, “Why does my lord say such things?²⁶ Far be it from your servants to do such a thing!²⁷ **44:8** Look, the money that we found in the mouths of our sacks we brought back to you from the land of Canaan. Why then would we steal silver or gold from your master’s house? **44:9** If one of us has it,²⁸ he will die, and the rest of us will become my lord’s slaves!”

¹ **tn** *Heb* “and they bowed low and they bowed down.” The use of synonyms here emphasizes the brothers’ humility.

² **tn** *Heb* “and he lifted his eyes.” The referent of “he” (Joseph) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

³ **sn** Joseph’s language here becomes warmer and more personal, culminating in calling Benjamin *my son*.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “for his affection boiled up concerning his brother.” The same expression is used in 1 Kgs 3:26 for the mother’s feelings for her endangered child.

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “and he sought to weep.”

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “and he controlled himself and said.”

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “them”; the referent (Joseph’s brothers) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁸ **tn** Or “disgraceful.” The Hebrew word *תועבה* (*to’evah*, “abomination”) describes something that is loathsome or off-limits. For other practices the Egyptians considered disgusting, see Gen 46:34 and Exod 8:22.

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “and they set for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians who were eating with him by themselves, for the Egyptians are not able to eat food with the Hebrews, for it is an abomination for the Egyptians.” The imperfect verbal form in the explanatory clause is taken as habitual in force, indicating a practice that was still in effect in the narrator’s time.

sn That the Egyptians found eating with foreigners disgusting is well-attested in extra-biblical literature by writers like Herodotus, Diodorus, and Strabo.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth.”

¹¹ **sn** The brothers’ *astonishment* indicates that Joseph arranged them in this way. They were astonished because there was no way, as far as they were concerned, that Joseph could have known the order of their birth.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “and he lifted up portions from before his face to them.”

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “and they drank and were intoxicated with him” (cf. NIV “drank freely with him”; NEB “grew merry”; NRSV “were merry”). The brothers were apparently relaxed and set at ease, despite Joseph’s obvious favoritism toward Benjamin.

¹⁴ **tn** The imperfect verbal form is used here to express Joseph’s instructions.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “and he did according to the word of Joseph which he spoke.”

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “the morning was light.”

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “and the men were sent off, they and their donkeys.” This clause, like the preceding one, has the subject before the verb, indicating synchronic action.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “they left the city, they were not far,” meaning “they had not gone very far.”

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “and Joseph said.” This clause, like the first one in the verse, has the subject before the verb, indicating synchronic action.

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “arise, chase after the men.” The first imperative gives the command a sense of urgency.

²¹ **tn** After the imperative this perfect verbal form with *vav* consecutive has the same nuance of instruction. In the translation it is subordinated to the verbal form that follows (also a perfect with *vav* consecutive): “and overtake them and say,” becomes “when you overtake them, say.”

²² **tn** *Heb* “Is this not what my master drinks from.” The word “cup” is not in the Hebrew text, but is obviously the referent of “this,” and so has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

²³ **tn** *Heb* “and he, divining, divines with it.” The infinitive absolute is emphatic, stressing the importance of the cup to Joseph.

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “you have caused to be evil what you have done.”

²⁵ **tn** *Heb* “and he”; the referent (the man who was in charge of Joseph’s household) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* “Why does my lord speak according to these words?”

²⁷ **tn** *Heb* “according to this thing.”

²⁸ **tn** *Heb* “The one with whom it is found from your servants.” Here “your servants” (a deferential way of referring to the brothers themselves) has been translated by the pronoun “us” to avoid confusion with Joseph’s servants.

44:10 He replied, “You have suggested your own punishment!¹ The one who has it will become my slave,² but the rest of³ you will go free.”⁴
44:11 So each man quickly lowered⁵ his sack to the ground and opened it. **44:12** Then the man⁶ searched. He began with the oldest and finished with the youngest. The cup was found in Benjamin’s sack! **44:13** They all tore their clothes! Then each man loaded his donkey, and they returned to the city.

44:14 So Judah and his brothers⁷ came back to Joseph’s house. He was still there,⁸ and they threw themselves to the ground before him. **44:15** Joseph said to them, “What did you think you were doing?⁹ Don’t you know that a man like me can find out things like this by divination?”¹⁰

44:16 Judah replied, “What can we say¹¹ to my lord? What can we speak? How can we clear ourselves?¹² God has exposed the sin of your servants!¹³ We are now my lord’s slaves, we and the one in whose possession the cup was found.”

44:17 But Joseph said, “Far be it from me to do this! The man in whose hand the cup was

found will become my slave, but the rest of¹⁴ you may go back¹⁵ to your father in peace.”

44:18 Then Judah approached him and said, “My lord, please allow your servant to speak a word with you.¹⁶ Please do not get angry with your servant¹⁷ for you are just like Pharaoh.¹⁸ **44:19** My lord asked his servants, ‘Do you have a father or a brother?’ **44:20** We said to my lord, ‘We have an aged father, and there is a young boy who was born when our father was old.¹⁹ The boy’s²⁰ brother is dead. He is the only one of his mother’s sons left,²¹ and his father loves him.’

44:21 “Then you told your servants, ‘Bring him down to me so I can see²² him.’²³ **44:22** We said to my lord, ‘The boy cannot leave his father. If he leaves his father, his father²⁴ will die.’²⁵ **44:23** But you said to your servants, ‘If your youngest brother does not come down with you, you will not see my face again.’ **44:24** When we returned to your servant my father, we told him the words of my lord.

44:25 “Then our father said, ‘Go back and buy us a little food.’ **44:26** But we replied, ‘We cannot go down there.²⁶ If our youngest brother is with us, then we will go,²⁷ for we won’t be permitted to see the man’s face if our youngest brother is not with us.’

44:27 “Then your servant my father said to us, ‘You know that my wife gave me two sons.²⁸ **44:28** The first disappeared²⁹ and I said, ‘He has surely been torn to pieces.’” I have not seen him

¹ *tn* Heb “Also now, according to your words, so it is.” As the next statement indicates, this does mean that he will do exactly as they say. He does agree with them the culprit should be punished, but not as harshly as they suggest. Furthermore, the innocent parties will not be punished.

² *tn* Heb “The one with whom it is found will become my slave.”

³ *tn* The words “the rest of” have been supplied in the translation for clarification and for stylistic reasons.

⁴ *tn* The Hebrew word נָקִי (*naqi*) means “acquitted,” that is, free of guilt and the responsibility for it.

sn The rest of you will be free. Joseph’s purpose was to single out Benjamin to see if the brothers would abandon him as they had abandoned Joseph. He wanted to see if they had changed.

⁵ *tn* Heb “and they hurried and they lowered.” Their speed in doing this shows their presumption of innocence.

⁶ *tn* Heb “and he”; the referent (the man who was in charge of Joseph’s household) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁷ *sn* Judah and his brothers. The narrative is already beginning to bring Judah to the forefront.

⁸ *tn* The disjunctive clause here provides supplemental information.

⁹ *tn* Heb “What is this deed you have done?” The demonstrative pronoun (“this”) adds emphasis to the question. A literal translation seems to contradict the following statement, in which Joseph affirms that he is able to divine such matters. Thus here the emotive force of the question has been reflected in the translation, “What did you think you were doing?”

¹⁰ *tn* Heb “[is] fully able to divine,” meaning that he can find things out by divination. The infinitive absolute appears before the finite verb for emphasis, stressing his ability to do this.

¹¹ *tn* The imperfect verbal form here indicates the subject’s potential.

¹² *tn* The Hitpael form of the verb יִסְדֵּעַ (*isadeq*) here means “to prove ourselves just, to declare ourselves righteous, to prove our innocence.”

¹³ *sn* God has exposed the sin of your servants. The first three questions are rhetorical; Judah is stating that there is nothing they can say to clear themselves. He therefore must conclude that they have been found guilty.

¹⁴ *tn* The words “the rest of” have been supplied in the translation for clarification and for stylistic reasons.

¹⁵ *tn* Heb “up” (reflecting directions from their point of view – “up” to Canaan; “down” to Egypt).

¹⁶ *tn* Heb “Please my lord, let your servant speak a word into the ears of my lord.”

¹⁷ *tn* Heb “and let not your anger burn against your servant.”

¹⁸ *sn* You are just like Pharaoh. Judah’s speech begins with the fear and trembling of one who stands condemned. Joseph has as much power as Pharaoh, either to condemn or to pardon. Judah will make his appeal, wording his speech in such a way as to appeal to Joseph’s compassion for the father, whom he mentions no less than fourteen times in the speech.

¹⁹ *tn* Heb “and a small boy of old age,” meaning that he was born when his father was elderly.

²⁰ *tn* Heb “his”; the referent (the boy just mentioned) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²¹ *tn* Heb “he, only he, to his mother is left.”

²² *tn* The cohortative after the imperative indicates purpose here.

²³ *tn* Heb “that I may set my eyes upon him.”

²⁴ *tn* Heb “he”; the referent (the boy’s father, i.e., Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁵ *tn* The last two verbs are perfect tenses with *vav* consecutive. The first is subordinated to the second as a conditional clause.

²⁶ *tn* The direct object is not specified in the Hebrew text, but is implied; “there” is supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁷ *tn* Heb “go down.”

²⁸ *tn* Heb “that two sons my wife bore to me.”

²⁹ *tn* Heb “went forth from me.”

since. **44:29** If you take¹ this one from me too and an accident happens to him, then you will bring down my gray hair² in tragedy³ to the grave.⁴

44:30 “So now, when I return to your servant my father, and the boy is not with us – his very life is bound up in his son’s life.⁵ **44:31** When he sees the boy is not with us,⁶ he will die, and your servants will bring down the gray hair of your servant our father in sorrow to the grave. **44:32** Indeed,⁷ your servant pledged security for the boy with my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, then I will bear the blame before my father all my life.’

44:33 “So now, please let your servant remain as my lord’s slave instead of the boy. As for the boy, let him go back with his brothers. **44:34** For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I couldn’t bear to see⁸ my father’s pain.”⁹

The Reconciliation of the Brothers

45:1 Joseph was no longer able to control himself before all his attendants,¹⁰ so he cried out, “Make everyone go out from my presence!” No one remained¹¹ with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. **45:2** He wept loudly;¹² the Egyptians heard it and Pharaoh’s household heard about it.¹³

45:3 Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?” His brothers could not answer him because they were dumbfounded before him. **45:4** Joseph said to his brothers, “Come closer to me,” so they came near. Then he said, “I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. **45:5** Now, do not be upset and do not be angry with yourselves because you sold me here,¹⁴ for God sent me¹⁵

ahead of you to preserve life! **45:6** For these past two years there has been famine in¹⁶ the land and for five more years there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. **45:7** God sent me¹⁷ ahead of you to preserve you¹⁸ on the earth and to save your lives¹⁹ by a great deliverance. **45:8** So now, it is not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me an adviser²⁰ to Pharaoh, lord over all his household, and ruler over all the land of Egypt. **45:9** Now go up to my father quickly²¹ and tell him, ‘This is what your son Joseph says: “God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not delay! **45:10** You will live²² in the land of Goshen, and you will be near me – you, your children, your grandchildren, your flocks, your herds, and everything you have. **45:11** I will provide you with food²³ there because there will be five more years of famine. Otherwise you would become poor – you, your household, and everyone who belongs to you.”’ **45:12** You and my brother Benjamin can certainly see with your own eyes that I really am the one who speaks to you.²⁴ **45:13** So tell²⁵ my father about all my honor in Egypt and about everything you have seen. But bring my father down here quickly!”²⁶

45:14 Then he threw himself on the neck of his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. **45:15** He kissed all his brothers and wept over them. After this his brothers talked with him.

45:16 Now it was reported²⁷ in the household of Pharaoh, “Joseph’s brothers have arrived.” It pleased²⁸ Pharaoh and his servants. **45:17** Phar-

¹ **tn** The construction uses a perfect verbal form with the vav consecutive to introduce the conditional clause and then another perfect verbal form with a vav consecutive to complete the sentence: “if you take...then you will bring down.”

² **sn** The expression *bring down my gray hair* is figurative, using a part for the whole – they would put Jacob in the grave. But the gray head signifies a long life of worry and trouble. See Gen 42:38.

³ **tn** *Heb* “evil/calamity.” The term is different than the one used in the otherwise identical statement recorded in v. 31 (see also 42:38).

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “to Sheol,” the dwelling place of the dead.

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “his life is bound up in his life.”

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “when he sees that there is no boy.”

⁷ **tn** Or “for.”

⁸ **tn** The Hebrew text has “lest I see,” which expresses a negative purpose – “I cannot go up lest I see.”

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “the calamity which would find my father.”

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “all the ones standing beside him.”

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “stood.”

¹² **tn** *Heb* “and he gave his voice in weeping,” meaning that Joseph could not restrain himself and wept out loud.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “and the Egyptians heard and the household of Pharaoh heard.” Presumably in the latter case this was by means of a report.

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “let there not be anger in your eyes.”

¹⁵ **sn** *You sold me here, for God sent me.* The tension remains as to how the brothers’ wickedness and God’s intentions work together. Clearly God is able to transform the ac-

tions of wickedness to bring about some gracious end. But this is saying more than that; it is saying that from the beginning it was God who sent Joseph here. Although harmonization of these ideas remains humanly impossible, the divine intention is what should be the focus. Only that will enable reconciliation.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “the famine [has been] in the midst of.”

¹⁷ **sn** *God sent me.* The repetition of this theme that God sent Joseph is reminiscent of commission narratives in which the leader could announce that God sent him (e.g., Exod 3:15).

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “to make you a remnant.” The verb, followed here by the preposition *l’* (ל), means “to make.”

¹⁹ **tn** The infinitive gives a second purpose for God’s action.

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “a father.” The term is used here figuratively of one who gives advice, as a father would to his children.

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “hurry and go up.”

²² **tn** The perfect verbal form with vav consecutive here expresses instruction.

²³ **tn** The verb כולל (*kul*) in the Pilpel stem means “to nourish, to support, to sustain.” As in 1 Kgs 20:27, it here means “to supply with food.”

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “And, look, your eyes see and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that my mouth is the one speaking to you.”

²⁵ **tn** The perfect verbal form with the vav consecutive here expresses instruction.

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* “and hurry and bring down my father to here.”

²⁷ **tn** *Heb* “and the sound was heard.”

²⁸ **tn** *Heb* “was good in the eyes of.”

aoh said to Joseph, “Say to your brothers, ‘Do this: Load your animals and go¹ to the land of Canaan! 45:18 Get your father and your households and come to me! Then I will give you² the best land in Egypt and you will eat³ the best⁴ of the land.’ 45:19 You are also commanded to say,⁵ ‘Do this: Take for yourselves wagons from the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives. Bring your father and come. 45:20 Don’t worry⁶ about your belongings, for the best of all the land of Egypt will be yours.’”

45:21 So the sons of Israel did as he said.⁷ Joseph gave them wagons as Pharaoh had instructed,⁸ and he gave them provisions for the journey. 45:22 He gave sets of clothes to each one of them,⁹ but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five sets of clothes.¹⁰ 45:23 To his father he sent the following:¹¹ ten donkeys loaded with the best products of Egypt and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, food, and provisions for his father’s journey. 45:24 Then he sent his brothers on their way and they left. He said to them, “As you travel don’t be overcome with fear.”¹²

45:25 So they went up from Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan.¹³ 45:26 They told him, “Joseph is still alive and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt!” Jacob was stunned,¹⁴ for he did not believe them. 45:27 But when they related to him everything Joseph had said to them,¹⁵ and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to transport him, their father Jacob’s spirit revived. 45:28 Then Israel said, “Enough! My son Joseph is still alive! I will go and see him before I die.”

The Family of Jacob goes to Egypt

46:1 So Israel began his journey, taking with him all that he had.¹⁶ When he came to Beer Sheba¹⁷ he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. 46:2 God spoke to Israel in a vision during the night¹⁸ and said, “Jacob, Jacob!” He replied, “Here I am!” 46:3 He said, “I am God,¹⁹ the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. 46:4 I will go down with you to Egypt and I myself will certainly bring you back from there.²⁰ Joseph will close your eyes.”²¹

46:5 Then Jacob started out²² from Beer Sheba, and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob, their little children, and their wives in the wagons that Pharaoh had sent along to transport him. 46:6 Jacob and all his descendants took their livestock and the possessions they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and they went to Egypt.²³ 46:7 He brought with him to Egypt his sons and grandsons,²⁴ his daughters and granddaughters – all his descendants.

46:8 These are the names of the sons of Israel who went to Egypt – Jacob and his sons:

Reuben, the firstborn of Jacob.

46:9 The sons of Reuben:

Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.

46:10 The sons of Simeon:

Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar, and Shaul (the son of a Canaanite woman).

46:11 The sons of Levi:

Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

46:12 The sons of Judah:

Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah (but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan).

The sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul.

¹ tn Heb “and go! Enter!”

² tn After the imperatives in vv. 17-18a, the cohortative with vav indicates result.

³ tn After the cohortative the imperative with vav states the ultimate goal.

⁴ tn Heb “fat.”

⁵ tn The words “to say” have been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁶ tn Heb “let not your eye regard.”

⁷ tn Heb “and the sons of Israel did so.”

⁸ tn Heb “according to the mouth of Pharaoh.”

⁹ tn Heb “to all of them he gave, to each one, changes of outer garments.”

¹⁰ tn Heb “changes of outer garments.”

¹¹ tn Heb “according to this.”

¹² tn Heb “do not be stirred up in the way.” The verb means “stir up.” Some understand the Hebrew verb רָגַז (*ragaz*, “to stir up”) as a reference to quarreling (see Prov 29:9, where it has this connotation), but in Exod 15:14 and other passages it means “to fear.” This might refer to a fear of robbers, but more likely it is an assuring word that they need not be fearful about returning to Egypt. They might have thought that once Jacob was in Egypt, Joseph would take his revenge on them.

¹³ tn Heb “and they entered the land of Canaan to their father.”

¹⁴ tn Heb “and his heart was numb.” Jacob was stunned by the unbelievable news and was unable to respond.

¹⁵ tn Heb “and they spoke to him all the words of Joseph which he had spoke to them.”

¹⁶ tn Heb “and Israel journeyed, and all that was his.”

¹⁷ sn Beer Sheba. See Gen 21:31; 28:10.

¹⁸ tn Heb “in visions of the night.” The plural form has the singular meaning, probably as a plural of intensity.

¹⁹ tn Heb “the God.”

²⁰ tn Heb “and I, I will bring you up, also bringing up.” The independent personal pronoun before the first person imperfect verbal form draws attention to the speaker/subject, while the infinitive absolute after the imperfect strongly emphasizes the statement: “I myself will certainly bring you up.”

²¹ tn Heb “and Joseph will put his hand upon your eyes.” This is a promise of peaceful death in Egypt with Joseph present to close his eyes.

²² tn Heb “arose.”

²³ tn Heb “and they took their livestock and their possessions which they had acquired in the land of Canaan and they went to Egypt, Jacob and all his offspring with him.” The order of the clauses has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁴ tn The Hebrew text adds “with him” here. This is omitted in the translation because it is redundant in English style (note the same phrase earlier in the verse).

46:13 The sons of Issachar:
Tola, Puah,¹ Jashub,² and Shimron.

46:14 The sons of Zebulun:
Sered, Elon, and Jahleel.

46:15 These were the sons of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob in Paddan Aram, along with Dinah his daughter. His sons and daughters numbered thirty-three in all.³

46:16 The sons of Gad:
Zephon,⁴ Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli.

46:17 The sons of Asher:
Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah, and Serah their sister.

The sons of Beriah were Heber and Malkiel.

46:18 These were the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter. She bore these to Jacob, sixteen in all.

46:19 The sons of Rachel the wife of Jacob:
Joseph and Benjamin.

46:20 Manasseh and Ephraim were born to Joseph in the land of Egypt. Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On,⁵ bore them to him.

46:21 The sons of Benjamin:⁶
Bela, Beker, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Mupim, Hupim and Ard.

46:22 These were the sons of Rachel who were born to Jacob, fourteen in all.

46:23 The son of Dan: Hushim.⁷

46:24 The sons of Naphtali:
Jahziel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem.

46:25 These were the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to Rachel his daughter. She bore these to Jacob, seven in all.

46:26 All the direct descendants of Jacob who went to Egypt with him were sixty-six in number. (This number does not include the wives of Jacob's sons.)⁸ **46:27** Counting the two

sons⁹ of Joseph who were born to him in Egypt, all the people of the household of Jacob who were in Egypt numbered seventy.¹⁰

46:28 Jacob¹¹ sent Judah before him to Joseph to accompany him to Goshen.¹² So they came to the land of Goshen. **46:29** Joseph harnessed his chariot and went up to meet his father Israel in Goshen. When he met him,¹³ he hugged his neck and wept on his neck for quite some time.

46:30 Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die since I have seen your face and know that you are still alive."¹⁴ **46:31** Then Joseph said to his brothers and his father's household, "I will go up and tell Pharaoh.¹⁵ 'My brothers and my father's household who were in the land of Canaan have come to me. **46:32** The men are shepherds;¹⁶ they take care of livestock.¹⁷ They have brought their flocks and their herds and all that they have.' **46:33** Pharaoh will summon you and say, 'What is your occupation?' **46:34** Tell him, 'Your servants have taken care of cattle¹⁸ from our youth until now, both we and our fathers,' so that you may live in the land of Goshen,¹⁹ for everyone who takes care of sheep is disgusting²⁰ to the Egyptians."

Joseph's Wise Administration

47:1 Joseph went and told Pharaoh, "My father, my brothers, their flocks and herds, and all that they own have arrived from the land of

dants (including Dinah) listed in vv. 8-25 minus Er and Onan (deceased), and Joseph, Manasseh, and Ephraim (already in Egypt).

⁹ **tn** The LXX reads "nine sons," probably counting the grandsons of Joseph born to Ephraim and Manasseh (cf. 1 Chr 7:14-20).

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* "And the sons of Joseph who were born to him in Egypt were two people; all the people belonging to the house of Jacob who came to Egypt were seventy."

¹¹ **sn** The number seventy includes Jacob himself and the seventy-one descendants (including Dinah, Joseph, Manasseh, and Ephraim) listed in vv. 8-25, minus Er and Onan (deceased). The LXX gives the number as "seventy-five" (cf. Acts 7:14).

¹² **tn** *Heb* "and he"; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* "to direct before him to Goshen."

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* "and he appeared to him."

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* "after my seeing your face that you are still alive."

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* "tell Pharaoh and say to him."

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* "feeders of sheep."

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* "for men of livestock they are."

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* "your servants are men of cattle."

²⁰ **sn** So that you may live in the land of Goshen. Joseph is apparently trying to stress to Pharaoh that his family is self-sufficient, that they will not be a drain on the economy of Egypt. But they will need land for their animals and so Goshen, located on the edge of Egypt, would be a suitable place for them to live. The settled Egyptians were uneasy with nomadic people, but if Jacob and his family settled in Goshen they would represent no threat.

²¹ **tn** *Heb* "is an abomination." The Hebrew word *to'evah*, "abomination" describes something that is loathsome or off-limits. For other practices the Egyptians considered disgusting, see Gen 43:32 and Exod 8:22.

¹ **tc** The MT reads "Puvah" (cf. Num 26:23); the Samaritan Pentateuch and Syriac read "Puah" (cf. 1 Chr 7:1).

² **tc** The MT reads "lob," but the Samaritan Pentateuch and some LXX MSS read "Jashub" (see Num 26:24; 1 Chr 7:1).

³ **tn** *Heb* "all the lives of his sons and his daughters, thirty-three."

⁴ **tc** The MT reads "Ziphion," but see Num 26:15, the Samaritan Pentateuch and the LXX, all of which read "Zephon."

⁵ **sn** On is another name for the city of Heliopolis.

⁶ **sn** *The sons of Benjamin.* It is questionable whether youthful Benjamin had ten sons by the time he went into Egypt, but it is not impossible. If Benjamin was born when Joseph was six or seven, he was ten when Joseph was sold into Egypt, and would have been thirty-two at this point. Some suggest that the list originally served another purpose and included the names of all who were in the immediate family of the sons, whether born in Canaan or later in Egypt.

⁷ **tn** This name appears as "Shuham" in Num 26:42. The LXX reads "Hashum" here.

⁸ **tn** *Heb* "All the people who went with Jacob to Egypt, the ones who came out of his body, apart from the wives of the sons of Jacob, all the people were sixty-six."

⁹ **sn** The number sixty-six includes the seventy-one descen-

Canaan. They are now¹ in the land of Goshen.” 47:2 He took five of his brothers and introduced them to Pharaoh.²

47:3 Pharaoh said to Joseph’s³ brothers, “What is your occupation?” They said to Pharaoh, “Your servants take care of flocks, just as our ancestors did.”⁴ 47:4 Then they said to Pharaoh, “We have come to live as temporary residents⁵ in the land. There⁶ is no pasture for your servants’ flocks because the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. So now, please let your servants live in the land of Goshen.”

47:5 Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Your father and your brothers have come to you. 47:6 The land of Egypt is before you; settle your father and your brothers in the best region of the land. They may live in the land of Goshen. If you know of any highly capable men⁷ among them, put them in charge⁸ of my livestock.”

47:7 Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob and presented him⁹ before Pharaoh. Jacob blessed¹⁰ Pharaoh. 47:8 Pharaoh said to Jacob, “How long have you lived?”¹¹ 47:9 Jacob said to Pharaoh, “All¹² the years of my travels¹³ are 130. All¹⁴ the years of my life have been few and painful;¹⁵ the years of my travels are not as long as those of my ancestors.”¹⁶ 47:10 Then Jacob

blessed Pharaoh and went out from his presence.¹⁷

47:11 So Joseph settled his father and his brothers. He gave them territory¹⁸ in the land of Egypt, in the best region of the land, the land of Rameses,¹⁹ just as Pharaoh had commanded. 47:12 Joseph also provided food for his father, his brothers, and all his father’s household, according to the number of their little children.

47:13 But there was no food in all the land because the famine was very severe; the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan wasted away²⁰ because of the famine. 47:14 Joseph collected all the money that could be found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan as payment²¹ for the grain they were buying. Then Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh’s palace.²² 47:15 When the money from the lands of Egypt and Canaan was used up, all the Egyptians²³ came to Joseph and said, “Give us food! Why should we die²⁴ before your very eyes because our money has run out?”

47:16 Then Joseph said, “If your money is gone, bring your livestock, and I will give you food²⁵ in exchange for²⁶ your livestock.” 47:17 So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them food in exchange for their horses, the livestock of their flocks and herds, and their donkeys.²⁷ He got them through that year by giving them food in exchange for livestock.

47:18 When that year was over, they came to him the next year and said to him, “We cannot hide from our²⁸ lord that the money is used up and the livestock and the animals belong to our lord. Nothing remains before our lord except our bodies and our land. 47:19 Why should we die before your very eyes, both we and our land?”

¹ **tn** Heb “Look they [are] in the land of Goshen.” Joseph draws attention to the fact of their presence in Goshen.

² **tn** Heb “and from the whole of his brothers he took five men and presented them before Pharaoh.”

³ **tn** Heb “his”; the referent (Joseph) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁴ **tn** Heb “both we and our fathers.”

⁵ **tn** Heb “to sojourn.”

⁶ **tn** Heb “for there.” The Hebrew uses a causal participle to connect what follows with what precedes. The translation divides the statement into two sentences for stylistic reasons.

⁷ **tn** Heb “men of skill.”

⁸ **tn** Heb “make them rulers.”

sn Put them in charge of my livestock. Pharaoh is, in effect, offering Joseph’s brothers jobs as royal keepers of livestock, a position mentioned often in Egyptian inscriptions, because the Pharaohs owned huge herds of cattle.

⁹ **tn** Heb “caused him to stand.”

¹⁰ **sn** The precise meaning of the Hebrew verb translated “blessed” is difficult in this passage, because the content of Jacob’s blessing is not given. The expression could simply mean that he greeted Pharaoh, but that seems insufficient in this setting. Jacob probably praised Pharaoh, for the verb is used this way for praising God. It is also possible that he pronounced a formal prayer of blessing, asking God to reward Pharaoh for his kindness.

¹¹ **tn** Heb “How many are the days of the years of your life?”

¹² **tn** Heb “the days of.”

¹³ **tn** Heb “sojournings.” Jacob uses a term that depicts him as one who has lived an unsettled life, temporarily residing in many different places.

¹⁴ **tn** Heb “the days of.”

¹⁵ **tn** The Hebrew word רָע (*ra’*) can sometimes mean “evil,” but that would give the wrong connotation here, where it refers to pain, difficulty, and sorrow. Jacob is thinking back through all the troubles he had to endure to get to this point.

¹⁶ **tn** Heb “and they have not reached the days of the years of my fathers in the days of their sojournings.”

¹⁷ **tn** Heb “from before Pharaoh.”

¹⁸ **tn** Heb “a possession,” or “a holding.” Joseph gave them a plot of land with rights of ownership in the land of Goshen.

¹⁹ **sn** The land of Rameses is another designation for the region of Goshen. It is named Rameses because of a city in that region (Exod 1:11; 12:37). The use of this name may represent a modernization of the text for the understanding of the intended readers, substituting a later name for an earlier one. Alternatively, there may have been an earlier Rameses for which the region was named.

²⁰ **tn** The verb לָהָה (*lahah*, = לָאָה, *la’ah*) means “to faint, to languish”; it figuratively describes the land as wasting away, drooping, being worn out.

²¹ **tn** Or “in exchange.” On the use of the preposition here see BDB 90 s.v. אָ.

²² **tn** Heb “house.”

²³ **tn** Heb “all Egypt.” The expression is a metonymy and refers to all the people of Egypt.

²⁴ **tn** The imperfect verbal form has a deliberative force here.

²⁵ **tn** The word “food” has been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

²⁶ **tn** On the use of the preposition here see BDB 90 s.v. אָ.

²⁷ **tn** The definite article is translated here as a possessive pronoun.

²⁸ **tn** Heb “my.” The expression “my lord” occurs twice more in this verse.

Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we, with our land, will become¹ Pharaoh's slaves.² Give us seed that we may live³ and not die. Then the land will not become desolate."⁴

47:20 So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh. Each⁵ of the Egyptians sold his field, for the famine was severe.⁶ So the land became Pharaoh's. **47:21** Joseph⁷ made all the people slaves⁸ from one end of Egypt's border to the other end of it. **47:22** But he did not purchase the land of the priests because the priests had an allotment from Pharaoh and they ate from their allotment that Pharaoh gave them. That is why they did not sell their land.

47:23 Joseph said to the people, "Since I have bought you and your land today for Pharaoh, here is seed for you. Cultivate⁹ the land. **47:24** When you gather in the crop,¹⁰ give¹¹ one-fifth of it to Pharaoh, and the rest¹² will be yours for seed for the fields and for you to eat, including those in your households and your little children." **47:25** They replied, "You have saved our lives! You are showing us favor,¹³ and we will be Pharaoh's slaves."¹⁴

47:26 So Joseph made it a statute,¹⁵ which is in effect¹⁶ to this day throughout the land of Egypt: One-fifth belongs to Pharaoh. Only the land of the priests did not become Pharaoh's.

47:27 Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen, and they owned land there.

They were fruitful and increased rapidly in number.

47:28 Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years; the years¹⁷ of Jacob's life were 147 in all. **47:29** The time¹⁸ for Israel to die approached, so he called for his son Joseph and said to him, "If now I have found favor in your sight, put your hand under my thigh¹⁹ and show me kindness and faithfulness.²⁰ Do not bury me in Egypt, **47:30** but when I rest²¹ with my fathers, carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place." Joseph²² said, "I will do as you say."

47:31 Jacob²³ said, "Swear to me that you will do so."²⁴ So Joseph²⁵ gave him his word.²⁶ Then Israel bowed down²⁷ at the head of his bed.²⁸

Manasseh and Ephraim

48:1 After these things Joseph was told,²⁹ "Your father is weakening." So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim with him. **48:2** When Jacob was told,³⁰ "Your son Joseph has just³¹ come to you," Israel regained strength and sat up on his bed. **48:3** Jacob said to Joseph, "The sovereign God³² appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me. **48:4** He said to me, 'I am going to make you fruitful³³ and will multiply you.³⁴ I will make you into a group

¹ **tn** After the imperative, the prefixed verbal form with *vav* here indicates consequence.

² **sn** *Pharaoh's slaves*. The idea of slavery is not attractive to the modern mind, but in the ancient world it was the primary way of dealing with the poor and destitute. If the people became slaves of Pharaoh, it was Pharaoh's responsibility to feed them and care for them. It was the best way for them to survive the famine.

³ **tn** After the imperative, the prefixed verbal form with *vav* here indicates purpose or result.

⁴ **tn** The disjunctive clause structure (*vav* [!] + subject + negated verb) highlights the statement and brings their argument to a conclusion.

⁵ **tn** The Hebrew text connects this clause with the preceding one with a causal particle (*כִּי*, *ki*). The translation divides the clauses into two sentences for stylistic reasons.

⁶ **tn** The Hebrew text adds "upon them." This has not been included in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* "and he"; the referent (Joseph) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁸ **tc** The MT reads "and the people he removed to the cities," which does not make a lot of sense in this context. The Samaritan Pentateuch and the LXX read "he enslaved them as slaves."

⁹ **tn** The perfect verbal form with the *vav* consecutive is equivalent to a command here.

¹⁰ **tn** The words "the crop" have been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹¹ **tn** The perfect form with the *vav* (י) consecutive is equivalent to an imperfect of instruction here.

¹² **tn** *Heb* "four parts."

¹³ **tn** *Heb* "we find favor in the eyes of my lord." Some interpret this as a request, "may we find favor in the eyes of my lord."

¹⁴ **sn** *Slaves*. See the note on this word in v. 21.

¹⁵ **tn** On the term translated "statute" see P. Victor, "A Note on *Hoq* in the Old Testament," VT 16 (1966): 358-61.

¹⁶ **tn** The words "which is in effect" have been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* "the days of the years."

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* "days."

¹⁹ **sn** On the expression *put your hand under my thigh* see Gen 24:2.

²⁰ **tn** Or "deal with me in faithful love."

²¹ **tn** *Heb* "lie down." Here the expression "lie down" refers to death.

²² **tn** *Heb* "he"; the referent (Joseph) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²³ **tn** *Heb* "he"; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* "swear on oath to me." The words "that you will do so" have been supplied in the translation for clarity.

²⁵ **tn** *Heb* "he"; the referent (Joseph) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* "swore on oath to him."

²⁷ **sn** The Hebrew verb normally means "bow down," especially in worship or prayer. Here it might simply mean "bend low," perhaps from weakness or approaching death. The narrative is ambiguous at this point and remains open to all these interpretations.

²⁸ **tc** The MT reads מִיְתָה (*mittah*, "bed, couch"). The LXX reads the word as מַטֵּה (*matteh*, "staff, rod") and interprets this to mean that Jacob bowed down in worship while leaning on the top of his staff. The LXX reading was used in turn by the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews (Heb 11:21).

²⁹ **tn** *Heb* "and one said." With no expressed subject in the Hebrew text, the verb can be translated with the passive voice.

³⁰ **tn** *Heb* "and one told and said." The verbs have no expressed subject and can be translated with the passive voice.

³¹ **tn** *Heb* "Look, your son Joseph."

³² **tn** *Heb* "El Shaddai." See the extended note on the phrase "sovereign God" in Gen 17:1.

³³ **tn** *Heb* "Look, I am making you fruitful." The participle following הִינְנֶה (*hinneh*) has the nuance of a certain and often imminent future.

³⁴ **tn** The perfect verbal form with *vav* consecutive carries on the certain future idea.

of nations, and I will give this land to your descendants¹ as an everlasting possession.²

48:5 “Now, as for your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, they will be mine.³ Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine just as Reuben and Simeon are. **48:6** Any children that you father⁴ after them will be yours; they will be listed⁵ under the names of their brothers in their inheritance.⁶ **48:7** But as for me, when I was returning from Paddan, Rachel died – to my sorrow⁷ – in the land of Canaan. It happened along the way, some distance from Ephrath. So I buried her there on the way to Ephrath” (that is, Bethlehem).⁸

48:8 When Israel saw Joseph’s sons, he asked, “Who are these?” **48:9** Joseph said to his father, “They are the⁹ sons God has given me in this place.” His father¹⁰ said, “Bring them to me so I may bless them.”¹¹ **48:10** Now Israel’s eyes were failing¹² because of his age; he was not able to see well. So Joseph¹³ brought his sons¹⁴ near to him, and his father¹⁵ kissed them and embraced them. **48:11** Israel said to Joseph, “I never expected¹⁶ to see you¹⁷ again, but

now God has allowed me to see your children¹⁸ too.”

48:12 So Joseph moved them from Israel’s knees¹⁹ and bowed down with his face to the ground. **48:13** Joseph positioned them;²⁰ he put Ephraim on his right hand across from Israel’s left hand, and Manasseh on his left hand across from Israel’s right hand. Then Joseph brought them closer to his father.²¹ **48:14** Israel stretched out his right hand and placed it on Ephraim’s head, although he was the younger.²² Crossing his hands, he put his left hand on Manasseh’s head, for Manasseh was the firstborn.

48:15 Then he blessed Joseph and said, “May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked – the God who has been my shepherd²³ all my life long to this day,

48:16 the Angel²⁴ who has protected me²⁵ from all harm – bless these boys.

May my name be named in them,²⁶ and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac.

May they grow into a multitude on the earth.”

48:17 When Joseph saw that his father placed his right hand on Ephraim’s head, it displeased him.²⁷ So he took his father’s hand to move it from Ephraim’s head to Manasseh’s head. **48:18** Joseph said to his father, “Not so, my father, for this is the firstborn. Put your right hand on his head.”

¹ **tn** The Hebrew text adds “after you,” which has not been included in the translation for stylistic reasons.

² **tn** The Hebrew word אֲחֻזָּה (*akhuzzah*), translated “possession,” describes a permanent holding in the land. It is the noun form of the same verb אָחַז, (*akhaz*) that was used for the land given to them in Goshen (Gen 47:27).

³ **sn** *They will be mine.* Jacob is here adopting his two grandsons Manasseh and Ephraim as his sons, and so they will have equal share with the other brothers. They will be in the place of Joseph and Levi (who will become a priestly tribe) in the settlement of the land. See I. Mendelsohn, “A Ugaritic Parallel to the Adoption of Ephraim and Manasseh,” *IJ* (1959): 180-83.

⁴ **tn** Or “you fathered.”

⁵ **tn** Heb “called” or “named.”

⁶ **sn** *Listed under the names of their brothers in their inheritance.* This means that any subsequent children of Joseph will be incorporated into the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

⁷ **tn** Heb “upon me, against me,” which might mean something like “to my sorrow.”

⁸ **map** For location see Map5-B1; Map7-E2; Map8-E2; Map10-B4.

⁹ **tn** Heb “my.”

¹⁰ **tn** Heb “and he”; the referent (Joseph’s father) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹¹ **tn** The cohortative with prefixed vav (ו) indicates purpose after the imperative.

¹² **tn** Heb “heavy.”

sn The disjunctive clause provides supplemental information that is important to the story. The weakness of Israel’s sight is one of several connections between this chapter and Gen 27. Here there are two sons, and it appears that the younger is being blessed over the older by a blind old man. While it was by Jacob’s deception in chap. 27, here it is with Jacob’s full knowledge.

¹³ **tn** Heb “he”; the referent (Joseph) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁴ **tn** Heb “them”; the referent (Joseph’s sons) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁵ **tn** Heb “and he”; the referent (Joseph’s father) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁶ **tn** On the meaning of the Hebrew verb פָּלַל (*palal*) here, see E. A. Speiser, “The Stem *pll* in Hebrew,” *JBL* 82 (1963): 301-6. Speiser argues that this verb means “to estimate” as in Exod 21:22.

¹⁷ **tn** Heb “your face.”

¹⁸ **tn** Heb “offspring.”

¹⁹ **tn** Heb “and Joseph brought them out from with his knees.” The two boys had probably been standing by Israel’s knees when being adopted and blessed. The referent of the pronoun “his” (Israel) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁰ **tn** Heb “and Joseph took the two of them.”

²¹ **tn** Heb “and he brought near to him.” The referents of the pronouns “he” and “him” (Joseph and his father respectively) have been specified in the translation for clarity.

²² **tn** The disjunctive clause is circumstantial-concessive here.

²³ **tn** Heb “shepherded me.” The verb has been translated as an English noun for stylistic reasons.

²⁴ **sn** The Samaritan Pentateuch reads “king” here, but the traditional reading (“angel”) may be maintained. Jacob closely associates God with an angelic protective presence. This does not mean that Jacob viewed his God as a mere angel, but it does suggest that he was aware of an angelic presence sent by God to protect him. Here he so closely associates the two that they become virtually indistinguishable. In this culture messengers typically carried the authority of the one who sent them and could even be addressed as such. Perhaps Jacob thought that the divine blessing would be mediated through this angelic messenger.

²⁵ **tn** The verb גָּאֵל (*ga’al*) has the basic idea of “protect” as a near relative might do. It is used for buying someone out of bondage, marrying a deceased brother’s widow, paying off debts, avenging the family, and the like. The meanings of “deliver, protect, avenge” are most fitting when God is the subject (see A. R. Johnson, “The Primary Meaning of גָּאֵל,” *Congress Volume: Copenhagen, 1953* [VTSup], 67-77).

²⁶ **tn** Or “be recalled through them.”

²⁷ **tn** Heb “it was bad in his eyes.”

48:19 But his father refused and said, “I know, my son, I know. He too will become a nation and he too will become great. In spite of this, his younger brother will be even greater and his descendants will become a multitude¹ of nations.”

48:20 So he blessed them that day, saying,

“By you² will Israel bless,³ saying,
‘May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.’”

So he put Ephraim before Manasseh.⁴

48:21 Then Israel said to Joseph, “I am about to die, but God will be with you⁵ and will bring you back to the land of your fathers. 48:22 As one who is above your⁶ brothers, I give to you the mountain slope,⁷ which I took from the Amorites with my sword and my bow.”

The Blessing of Jacob

49:1 Jacob called for his sons and said, “Gather together so I can tell you⁸ what will happen to you in the future.⁹

49:2 “Assemble and listen, you sons of Jacob;
listen to Israel, your father.

49:3 Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength, outstanding in dignity, outstanding in power.

49:4 You are destructive¹⁰ like water and will not excel,¹¹ for you got on your father’s bed,¹² then you defiled it – he got on my couch!¹³

49:5 Simeon and Levi are brothers, weapons of violence are their knives!¹⁴

49:6 O my soul, do not come into their council, do not be united to their assembly, my heart,¹⁵

for in their anger they have killed men, and for pleasure they have hamstring oxen.

49:7 Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their fury, for it was cruel.

I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel!¹⁶

¹⁰ tn The Hebrew noun פַּחַז (pakhaz) only occurs here in the OT. A related verb occurs twice in the prophets (Jer 23:32; Zeph 3:4) for false prophets inventing their messages, and once in Judges for unscrupulous men bribed to murder (Judg 9:4). It would describe Reuben as being “frothy, boiling, turbulent” as water. The LXX has “run riot,” the Vulgate has “poured out,” and Tg. Onq. has “you followed your own direction.” It is a reference to Reuben’s misconduct in Gen 35, but the simile and the rare word invite some speculation. H. Pehlke suggests “destructive like water,” for Reuben acted with pride and presumption; see his “An Exegetical and Theological Study of Genesis 49:1-28” (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1985).

¹¹ tn Heb “Do not excel!” The Hiphil of the verb יָתַר (yatar) has this meaning only here. The negated jussive is rhetorical here. Rather than being a command, it anticipates what will transpire. The prophecy says that because of the character of the ancestor, the tribe of Reuben would not have the character to lead (see 1 Chr 5:1).

¹² sn This is a euphemism for having sexual intercourse with Jacob’s wives (see Gen 35:22).

¹³ tn The last verb is third masculine singular, as if for the first time Jacob told the brothers, or let them know that he knew. For a discussion of this passage see S. Gevirtz, “The Reprimand of Reuben,” *JNES* 30 (1971): 87-98.

¹⁴ tn The meaning of the Hebrew word מַכְרֵהָ (m^kkherah) is uncertain. It has been rendered (1) “habitations”; (2) “merchandise”; (3) “counsels”; (4) “swords”; (5) “wedding feasts.” If it is from the verb כָּרַת (karat) and formed after noun patterns for instruments and tools (maqtil, miqtil form), then it would refer to “knives.” Since the verb is used in Exod 4:25 for circumcision, the idea would be “their circumcision knives,” an allusion to the events of Gen 34 (see M. J. Dahood, “MKRTYHM” in Genesis 49.5,” *CBQ* 23 [1961]: 54-56). Another explanation also connects the word to the events of Gen 34 as a reference to the intended “wedding feast” for Dinah which could take place only after the men of Shechem were circumcised (see D. W. Young, “A Ghost Word in the Testament of Jacob (Gen 49:5)?” *JBL* 100 [1981]: 335-422).

¹⁵ tn The Hebrew text reads “my glory,” but it is preferable to reposit the form and read “my liver.” The liver was sometimes viewed as the seat of the emotions and will (see *HALOT* 456 s.v. II כֶּבֶד) for which the heart is the modern equivalent.

¹⁶ sn *Divide...scatter.* What is predicted here is a division of their tribes. Most commentators see here an anticipation of Levi being in every area but not their own. That may be part of it, but not entirely what the curse intended. These tribes for their ruthless cruelty would be eliminated from the power and prestige of leadership.

¹ tn Heb “fullness.”

² tn The pronoun is singular in the Hebrew text, apparently elevating Ephraim as the more prominent of the two. Note, however, that both are named in the blessing formula that follows.

³ tn Or “pronounce a blessing.”

⁴ sn On the elevation of Ephraim over Manasseh see E. C. Kingsbury, “He Set Ephraim Before Manasseh,” *HUCA* 38 (1967): 129-36; H. Mowley, “The Concept and Content of ‘Blessing’ in the Old Testament,” *BT* 16 (1965): 74-80; and I. Mendelsohn, “On the Preferential Status of the Eldest Son,” *BASOR* 156 (1959): 38-40.

⁵ tn The pronouns translated “you,” “you,” and “your” in this verse are plural in the Hebrew text.

⁶ tn The pronouns translated “your” and “you” in this verse are singular in the Hebrew text.

⁷ tn The Hebrew word שֵׁבַע (sh^kkhem) could be translated either as “mountain slope” or “shoulder, portion,” or even taken as the proper name “Shechem.” Jacob was giving Joseph either (1) one portion above his brothers, or (2) the mountain ridge he took from the Amorites, or (3) Shechem. The ambiguity actually allows for all three to be the referent. He could be referring to the land in Shechem he bought in Gen 33:18-19, but he mentions here that it was acquired by warfare, suggesting that the events of 34:25-29 are in view (even though at the time he denounced it, 34:30). Joseph was later buried in Shechem (Josh 24:32).

⁸ tn After the imperative, the cohortative with prefixed vav (h) indicates purpose/result.

⁹ tn The expression “in the future” (אַחֲרַיִת הַיָּמִים, *’akharit hayyamim*, “in the end of days”) is found most frequently in prophetic passages; it may refer to the end of the age, the eschaton, or to the distant future. The contents of some of the sayings in this chapter stretch from the immediate circumstances to the time of the settlement in the land to the coming of Messiah. There is a great deal of literature on this chapter, including among others C. Armerding, “The Last Words of Jacob: Genesis 49,” *BSac* 112 (1955): 320-28; H. Pehlke, “An Exegetical and Theological Study of Genesis 49:1-28” (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1985); and B. Vawter, “The Canaanite Background of Genesis 49,” *CBQ* 17 (1955): 1-18.

49:8 Judah,¹ your brothers will praise you.
 Your hand will be on the neck of your enemies,
 your father's sons will bow down before you.
 49:9 You are a lion's cub, Judah, from the prey, my son, you have gone up.
 He crouches and lies down like a lion; like a lioness – who will rouse him?
 49:10 The scepter will not depart from Judah,
 nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,²
 until he comes to whom it belongs;³ the nations will obey him.⁴
 49:11 Binding his foal to the vine, and his colt to the choicest vine, he will wash⁵ his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes.
 49:12 His eyes will be dark from wine, and his teeth white from milk.⁶
 49:13 Zebulun will live⁷ by the haven of the sea
 and become a haven for ships; his border will extend to Sidon.⁸
 49:14 Issachar is a strong-boned donkey lying down between two saddlebags.

49:15 When he sees⁹ a good resting place, and the pleasant land, he will bend his shoulder to the burden and become a slave laborer.¹⁰
 49:16 Dan¹¹ will judge¹² his people as one of the tribes of Israel.
 49:17 May Dan be a snake beside the road,
 a viper by the path, that bites the heels of the horse so that its rider falls backward.¹³
 49:18 I wait for your deliverance, O LORD.¹⁴
 49:19 Gad will be raided by marauding bands,
 but he will attack them at their heels.¹⁵
 49:20 Asher's¹⁶ food will be rich,¹⁷ and he will provide delicacies¹⁸ to royalty.
 49:21 Naphtali is a free running doe,¹⁹ he speaks delightful words.²⁰

¹ **sn** There is a wordplay here; the name *Judah* (יְהוּדָה, *yehudah*) sounds in Hebrew like the verb translated *praised* (יָדַח, *yodukha*). The wordplay serves to draw attention to the statement as having special significance.

² **tn** Or perhaps "from his descendants," taking the expression "from between his feet" as a euphemism referring to the genitals. In this case the phrase refers by metonymy to those who come forth from his genitals, i.e., his descendants.

³ **tn** The Hebrew form שִׁילֹחַ (*shiloh*) is a major interpretive problem. There are at least four major options (with many variations and less likely alternatives): (1) Some prefer to leave the text as it is, reading "Shiloh" and understanding it as the place where the ark rested for a while in the time of the Judges. (2) By reporting the text others arrive at the translation "until the [or "his"] ruler comes," a reference to a Davidic ruler or the Messiah. (3) Another possibility that does not require emendation of the consonantal text, but only reporting, is "until tribute is brought to him" (so NEB, JPS, NRSV), which has the advantage of providing good parallelism with the following line, "the nations will obey him." (4) The interpretation followed in the present translation, "to whom it [belongs]" (so RSV, NIV, REB), is based on the ancient versions. Again, this would refer to the Davidic dynasty or, ultimately, to the Messiah.

⁴ **tn** "and to him [will be] the obedience of the nations." For discussion of this verse see J. Blenkinsopp, "The Oracle of Judah and the Messianic Entry," *JBL* 80 (1961): 55-64; and E. M. Good, "The 'Blessing' on Judah," *JBL* 82 (1963): 427-32.

⁵ **tn** The perfect verbal form is used rhetorically, describing coming events as though they have already taken place.

⁶ **tn** Some translate these as comparatives, "darker than wine...whiter than milk," and so a reference to his appearance (so NEB, NIV, NRSV). But if it is in the age of abundance, symbolized by wine and milk, then the dark (i.e., red or perhaps dull) eyes would be from drinking wine, and the white teeth from drinking milk.

⁷ **tn** The verb שָׁכַן (*shakhan*) means "to settle," but not necessarily as a permanent dwelling place. The tribal settlements by the sea would have been temporary and not the tribe's territory.

⁸ **map** For location see Map1-A1; JP3-F3; JP4-F3.

⁹ **tn** The verb forms in this verse ("sees," "will bend," and "[will] become") are preterite; they are used in a rhetorical manner, describing the future as if it had already transpired.

¹⁰ **sn** The oracle shows that the tribe of Issachar will be willing to trade liberty for the material things of life. Issachar would work (*become a slave laborer*) for the Canaanites, a reversal of the oracle on Canaan. See C. M. Carmichael, "Some Sayings in Genesis 49," *JBL* 88 (1969): 435-44; and S. Gevirtz, "The Issachar Oracle in the Testament of Jacob," *Erlsr* 12 (1975): 104-12.

¹¹ **sn** The name *Dan* (דָּן, *dan*) means "judge" and forms a wordplay with the following verb.

¹² **tn** Or "govern."

¹³ **sn** The comparison of the tribe of *Dan* to a venomous *serpent* is meant to say that Dan, though small, would be potent, gaining victory through its skill and shrewdness. Jewish commentators have linked the image in part with Samson. That link at least illustrates the point: Though a minority tribe, Dan would gain the upper hand over others.

¹⁴ **sn** I wait for your deliverance, O LORD. As Jacob sees the conflicts that lie ahead for Dan and Gad (see v. 19), he offers a brief prayer for their security.

¹⁵ **tc Heb** "heel." The MT has suffered from misdivision at this point. The initial *mem* on the first word in the next verse should probably be taken as a plural ending on the word "heel."

sn In Hebrew the name *Gad* (גָּד, *gad*) sounds like the words translated "raided" (גָּדְדוּ, *gudennu*) and "marauding bands" (גָּדוּד, *g'dud*).

¹⁶ **tc Heb** "from Asher," but the initial *mem* (מ) of the MT should probably be moved to the end of the preceding verse and taken as a plural ending on "heel."

¹⁷ **tn** The Hebrew word translated "rich," when applied to products of the ground, means abundant in quantity and quality.

¹⁸ **tn** The word translated "delicacies" refers to foods that were delightful, the kind fit for a king.

¹⁹ **tn Heb** "a doe set free."

²⁰ **tn Heb** "the one who gives words of beauty." The deer imagery probably does not continue into this line; Naphtali is the likely antecedent of the substantival participle, which is masculine, not feminine, in form. If the animal imagery is retained from the preceding line, the image of a talking deer is preposterous. For this reason some read the second line "the one who bears beautiful fawns," interpreting אִמְרֵי (*imre*) as a reference to young animals, not words (see *HALOT* 67 s.v. אִמְרֵי).

sn Almost every word in the verse is difficult. Some take the imagery to mean that Naphtali will be swift and agile (like a doe), and be used to take good messages (reading "words of beauty"). Others argue that the tribe was free-spirited (*free running*), but then settled down with young children.

49:22 Joseph is a fruitful bough,¹
 a fruitful bough near a spring
 whose branches² climb over the wall.
 49:23 The archers will attack him,³
 they will shoot at him and oppose him.
 49:24 But his bow will remain steady,
 and his hands⁴ will be skillful;
 because of the hands of the Mighty One
 of Jacob,
 because of⁵ the Shepherd, the Rock⁶ of
 Israel,
 49:25 because of the God of your father,
 who will help you,⁷
 because of the sovereign God,⁸
 who will bless you⁹
 with blessings from the sky above,
 blessings from the deep that lies below,
 and blessings of the breasts and womb.¹⁰
 49:26 The blessings of your father are
 greater
 than¹¹ the blessings of the eternal moun-
 tains¹²
 or the desirable things of the age-old hills.
 They will be on the head of Joseph
 and on the brow of the prince of his
 brothers.¹³
 49:27 Benjamin is a ravenous wolf;
 in the morning devouring the prey,
 and in the evening dividing the plunder.”

49:28 These¹⁴ are the twelve tribes of Israel.
 This is what their father said to them when he
 blessed them. He gave each of them an appropri-
 ate blessing.¹⁵

49:29 Then he instructed them,¹⁶ “I am about
 to go¹⁷ to my people. Bury me with my fathers in
 the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite. 49:30 It
 is the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre
 in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought for
 a burial plot from Ephron the Hittite. 49:31 There
 they buried Abraham and his wife Sarah; there
 they buried Isaac and his wife Rebekah; and there
 I buried Leah. 49:32 The field and the cave in it
 were acquired from the sons of Heth.”¹⁸

49:33 When Jacob finished giving these in-
 structions to his sons, he pulled his feet up onto
 the bed, breathed his last breath, and went¹⁹ to his
 people.

The Burials of Jacob and Joseph

50:1 Then Joseph hugged his father’s face.²⁰
 He wept over him and kissed him. 50:2 Joseph in-
 structed the physicians in his service²¹ to embalm
 his father, so the physicians embalmed Israel.
 50:3 They took forty days, for that is the full time
 needed for embalming.²² The Egyptians mourned²³
 for him seventy days.²⁴

50:4 When the days of mourning²⁵ had passed,
 Joseph said to Pharaoh’s royal court,²⁶ “If I have
 found favor in your sight, please say to Pha-
 raoh,²⁷ 50:5 ‘My father made me swear an oath.
 He said,²⁸ ‘I am about to die. Bury me²⁹ in my
 tomb that I dug for myself there in the land of
 Canaan.’ Now let me go and bury my father;
 then I will return.’” 50:6 So Pharaoh said, “Go

¹ **tn** The Hebrew text appears to mean “[is] a son of fruitfulness.” The second word is an active participle, feminine singular, from the verb פָּרָה (*parah*, “to be fruitful”). The translation “bough” is employed for בֵּן (*ben*, elsewhere typically “son”) because Joseph is pictured as a healthy and fruitful vine growing by the wall. But there are difficulties with this interpretation. The word “son” nowhere else refers to a plant and the noun translated “branches” (*Heb* “daughters”) in the third line is a plural form whereas its verb is singular. In the other oracles of Gen 49 an animal is used for comparison and not a plant, leading some to translate the opening phrase בֵּן פָּרָה (*ben parah*, “fruitful bough”) as “wild donkey” (JPS, NAB). Various other interpretations involving more radical emendation of the text have also been offered.

² **tn** *Heb* “daughters.”

³ **tn** The verb forms in vv. 23-24 are used in a rhetorical manner, describing future events as if they had already taken place.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “the arms of his hands.”

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “from there,” but the phrase should be revocalized and read “from [i.e., because of] the name of.”

⁶ **tn** Or “Stone.”

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “and he will help you.”

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “Shaddai.” See the note on the title “sovereign God” in Gen 17:1. The preposition אֶת (*et*) in the Hebrew text should probably be emended to אֵל (*el*, “God”).

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “and he will bless you.”

¹⁰ **sn** Jacob envisions God imparting both agricultural (*blessings from the sky above, blessings from the deep that lies below*) and human fertility (*blessings of the breasts and womb*) to Joseph and his family.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “have prevailed over.”

¹² **tn** One could interpret the phrase הַרְרֵי (*horay*) to mean “my progenitors” (literally, “the ones who conceived me”), but the masculine form argues against this. It is better to emend the text to הַרְרֵי (*harare*, “mountains of”) because it forms a better parallel with the next clause. In this case the final *yod* (י) on the form is a construct plural marker, not a pronominal suffix.

¹³ **tn** For further discussion of this passage, see I. Sonne, “Genesis 49:24-26,” *JBL* 65 (1946): 303-6.

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “All these.”

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “and he blessed them, each of whom according to his blessing, he blessed them.”

¹⁶ **tn** The Hebrew text adds “and he said to them,” which is not included in the translation because it is redundant in English.

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “I am about to be gathered.” The participle is used here to describe what is imminent.

¹⁸ **tn** Some translate the Hebrew term “Heth” as “Hittites” here (see also Gen 23:3), but this gives the impression that these people were the classical Hittites of Anatolia. However, there is no known connection between these sons of Heth, apparently a Canaanite group (see Gen 10:15), and the Hittites of Asia Minor. See H. A. Hoffner, Jr., “Hittites,” *Peoples of the Old Testament World*, 152-53.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “was gathered.”

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “fell on.” The expression describes Joseph’s unrestrained sorrow over Jacob’s death; he probably threw himself across the body and embraced his father.

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “his servants the physicians.”

²² **tn** *Heb* “and forty days were fulfilled for him, for thus are fulfilled the days of embalming.”

²³ **tn** *Heb* “wept.”

²⁴ **sn** *Seventy days*. This probably refers to a time of national mourning.

²⁵ **tn** *Heb* “weeping.”

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* “the house of Pharaoh.”

²⁷ **tn** *Heb* “in the ears of Pharaoh.”

²⁸ **tn** *Heb* “saying.”

²⁹ **tn** The imperfect verbal form here has the force of a command.

