

**A Redemptive-Historical Reading of Corporate and Representative Prayer in  
the Pentateuch: Towards a Covenantal Christopraxis for Baptist Churches**

By

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BTh (Hons)

A Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of requirements of the degree

**MASTERS OF THEOLOGY (M.Th.)**

In Biblical Theology

In the Department of Old Testament

At the

**BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA**

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October 2021

## DECLARATION

I declare that

**“A Redemptive-Historical Reading of Corporate and Representative Prayer in the Pentateuch: Towards a Covenantal Christopraxis for Baptist Churches”**  
is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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## DEDICATION

In loving memory of my father, Dhanaseelan “Dan” Venkatasami, the man who modelled what it meant to, “call upon the name of the Lord.”

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The subject at hand has reminded me once again of the grace and mercy of God. I am so thankful to the Lord who has called me by name. It is for this reason, and this reason alone, that I am able to call upon his name. I hope that the words herein may bring glory to his name through the prayers of his people.

I am incredibly thankful to the Baptist Theological College for the opportunity to pursue post-graduate studies. Also, to Prof G. C. "Piff" Pereira for your input and guidance throughout this endeavour.

A special thank you to my dear wife, Bronwen, and my little boy, Micah, for your patience, love and endurance while I completed my studies. Your warm smiles after a long day in the study encouraged me to persevere.

My sincere appreciation to our precious friends Mike and Gill Marsland who stepped in at the last minute to help with the final editing.

And lastly, to the saints at Wychwood Baptist Church who have spent hours with me in prayer. May the Lord be pleased to answer us in his good timing and according to his perfect wisdom.

## ABSTRACT

Corporate Prayer has, historically, held a position of prominence in the life of the Church. However, the contemporary Church appears as but a shadow of its former self. More prestigious theological doctrines attract a far greater deal of attention when held up against corporate prayer. In order to provide some remedy to the *status quo*, I will present a redemptive-historical reading of corporate and representative prayer in the Pentateuch with a view to helping Baptist churches move towards a covenantal Christopraxis.

In Chapter 2 I define a three-legged approach to biblical interpretation. This is what I have called a historical-linguistic-redemptive framework. This multifaceted approach enables the interpreter to better understand what God was saying to his covenant people at a particular time and in a particular context, as well as understand a passage in the light of the completed redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 3 applies the redemptive-historical hermeneutic to select passages in the Pentateuch. Each pericope in the Pentateuch reveals, albeit in part, a facet of the person and work of Christ. These facets, however, do not stand in isolation from the larger covenantal structure in which they are found. The shadow of Christ, as will be observed, is presented to us within the framework of Biblical covenants.

Chapter 4 attempts to demonstrate that Christ, in his person and work, is the teleological fulfilment of Biblical covenants. This covenantal consummation, however, does not terminate with Jesus, but has great implications for the corporate identity of the Church by way of her union with Christ. The new covenant people of God do not merely have a new status, but they also possess a new identity.

In Chapter 5, I demonstrate that the movement from right doctrine to right practice must be supported and empowered by Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. The relationship between right doctrine and right practice must not be reduced to a logical one, but instead viewed as a theological relationship. Understood in this way, Christopraxis is the continuation of the ministry of Christ through the Church as it is enabled by the Holy Spirit.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AV</b>	The Holy Bible: King James Version
<b>BDAG</b>	A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian literature
<b>BDB</b>	Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon
<b>DBI</b>	Dictionary of Biblical Imagery
<b>ESV</b>	The English Standard Version
<b>GHCLLOT</b>	Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures
<b>HALOT</b>	The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament
<b>IVP</b>	InterVarsity Press
<b>LBC</b>	The London Baptist Confession of Faith
<b>LXX</b>	The Septuagint
<b>MT</b>	The Masoretic Text
<b>NASB</b>	The New American Standard Bible
<b>NIV</b>	The New International Version
<b>NKJV</b>	The New King James Version
<b>NRSV</b>	The New Revised Standard Version
<b>PDBS</b>	Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies
<b>TLOT</b>	Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament
<b>WCF</b>	The Westminster Confession of Faith

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Motivation and Rationale

Corporate prayer held a prominent position in the life of the early Church. As one surveys the book of Acts, it quickly becomes apparent that corporate prayer was a vital component in the life of God's new covenant people. Corporate prayer actively engages with the will of God (Acts 1:12-14), corporate prayer discerns the will of God for Church leaders (Acts 1:15-24; 13:1-3), corporate prayer is a prominent feature of corporate worship (Acts 2:42), corporate prayer emboldens evangelistic witness (Acts 4:23-31), and corporate prayer is an expression of filial love (Acts 20:36; 21:5).

In stark contrast, "A lack of prayer is so characteristic of today's world," wrote Houston (1989:11) a number of years ago. The contemporary Church appears as but a shadow of its former self. Theological doctrines, which are perceived as more prestigious, attract a far greater deal of attention and solicit far greater expressions of zeal when held up against corporate prayer. Bible conferences on the inerrancy of Scripture, sanctification, and eschatology are bursting at the seams, while the prayer meeting lies in disarray. Moreover, the axiom of individualism found in society has crept into the Church, such that prayer time alone is considered a viable and perhaps even preferred option amongst believers.

If corporate prayer is ever to regain its place of vitality, the Church needs to turn back to the Scriptural understanding of its practice. As the leaders of the Jesus movement within the early Church were ethnic Jews, one can assume a familiarity with both the Old Testament Scriptures as well as its cultic practices. The foundations of corporate prayer, therefore, must lie somewhere within the framework of Old Testament's redemptive history. The concern of this research dissertation is to explore the redemptive-historical motif of Old Testament corporate and representative<sup>1</sup> prayer within the Pentateuch, how this theme is fulfilled in the person and work of the Messiah, and the implications this fulfilment ought to have on the contemporary Church.

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<sup>1</sup> While some distinction does exist, I will use the terms "corporate prayer" and "representative prayer" interchangeably.

## 1.2. Current Views

O’Kennedy (1996:421) in his paper entitled, *Prayer: An Integral Part of the Old Testament* pointed out that the investigation of prayer in Old Testament theology was neglected. Even in instances where prayer was considered, very few regarded it as an integral part of the Old Testament. Sadly, these works also displayed a neglect of non-Psalmic prayers and even created a dichotomy between “cultic prayers” and “private prayers.” Furthermore, these works went so far as to affirm that prayer has no literary or theological function. There have been a number of contributions made in more recent years to help the Church develop a biblical theology of corporate prayer.

The publication of Graeme Goldsworthy’s, *Prayer and the Knowledge of God, What the Whole Bible Teaches* (2003), endeavoured to examine the subject from both a systematic and biblical theological perspective. Goldsworthy’s approach was to first begin by considering the intra-Trinitarian relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Trinity is eternally and ontologically communal, even before there were human beings to speak to. Being made in the image of God, mankind possesses a natural instinct to relate with the God who speaks. Prayer, then, becomes the means by which believers are drawn in to experience intimacy with the Triune God because of their union with Christ. “As those who are in Christ,” Goldsworthy (2003:109) affirms, “we also respond to the word of God in prayer.”

Goldsworthy goes on to observe, however, that as one begins to chronologically work through the biblical material, it becomes apparent that humanity does not follow this trajectory. The very first recorded words of Adam speaking to God is in defiance and self-justification. Cain likewise, responds destructively to God’s word. As the Old Testament progresses, two major emphases with regard to prayer become apparent. The first is tied to the covenant relationship between a gracious God and his people. The second is the emphasis on the role of the key representatives as intercessors. Abraham intercedes for Sodom (Gen 18:22-33), and as an intercessor he is called a prophet (Gen 20:7). Moses emerges in the prophetic role not only to speak the word of God to people, but also to represent the people in speaking on their behalf to God. These two emphases, according to Goldsworthy, lay the foundations of the theology of prayer in the New Testament.

More recently, J. Gary Millar's book, *Calling on the Name of the Lord: A Biblical Theology of Prayer* (2016), utilises a slightly different framework. Millar pays particular attention to the phrase לְקַרְא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה (to call upon the name of the Lord) and traces its occurrence throughout Scripture. Prayer, for Millar, is grounded upon God's covenant promises to his people. However, Millar makes little connection, in comparison to Goldsworthy, to the believer's identity in Christ.

Turning to the New Testament, two works deserve careful attention. Firstly, Grant Osborne's article, *Moving Forward on our Knees: Corporate Prayer in the New Testament* (2010), is perhaps the most helpful on the subject of corporate prayer. He recognises that the two focal points of biblical worship – Scripture and prayer – are increasingly neglected in the popular Church movement. He begins his survey by considering the life of Jesus within the structure of Second Temple Judaism. Even though Jesus rebuked the religious authorities and cleansed the temple, it did not mean that Yahweh was no longer present with his people.

Furthermore, Osborne uncovers the role of prayer and worship in the ministry of Jesus. He observes that Jesus not only prayed at crucial times during his ministry, but that prayer was a part of his communion with God. Moreover, Jesus did not simply model prayer privately, but corporately as well. This can be seen by his regular attendance in the Synagogue and the Temple – the places where prayer was expected.

Secondly, John Onwuchekwa's book, *Prayer: How Praying Together Shapes the Church* (2018), brings helpful clarity to the context of the Lord's Prayer. This, he maintains, is within a corporate setting, and not behind closed doors, as has often been interpreted. He recognises that God has not merely called the believer into a personal relationship with himself, but has also placed the believer in a community of people who have the same access to God. Prayer, therefore, must also be a collective exercise. This book pleads with churches to rediscover the importance of meeting together for the sole purpose of praying.

### 1.3. Research Topic Title

## A Redemptive-Historical Reading of Corporate and Representative Prayer in the Pentateuch: Towards a Covenantal Christopraxis for Baptist Churches

### 1.3.1. A Redemptive Historical Reading

Bridging the gap between the Old Testament historical and literary features is often fraught with complexity. As the biblical reader strives to apply the context of Scripture to their own lives, too quickly the result is reduced to moralism. Biblical narratives in general, and Old Testament stories in particular, are interpreted as examples of how the people of God should (or should not) live their lives. Old Testament believers are held up as examples (or anti-examples) of how New Testament believers should conduct themselves. Greidanus (1970 cited in Kaiser 2013:14) wrote of this concern, “Preachers, in preaching historical texts, would display the persons mentioned in the texts [of Scripture] as models to be imitated, as examples to be followed.” This pitfall very quickly flows into the Bible’s teaching on prayer. The following diagram, adapted from David Helm’s book *Expository Preaching*, highlights the results of this.

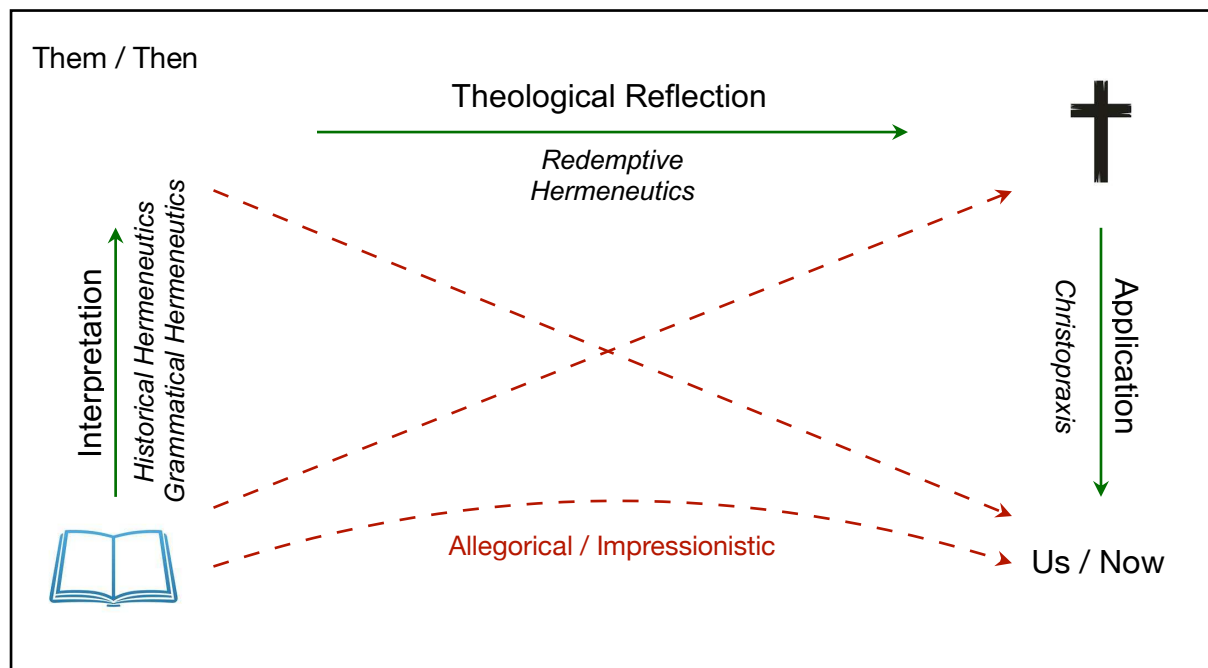


Figure 1: The Pitfalls of Hasty Interpretation

Firstly, if the Bible interpreter moves too quickly from the pages of Scripture to the life of a believer, the result will be a shallow understanding of the text at best (2014:23-26). Moreover, this approach is reduced to the impressions of the reader rather than the God intended meaning of the text. The thrust of corporate prayer, as a result, becomes pragmatic. The motivation to pray as a redeemed community is reduced to subjective impressions of the text upon the reader.

Secondly, if the interpreter, having completed sound exegesis, then moves to application for today the result will only be imperatival or intellectual (2014:74). While the Bible is full of imperatives and while they are vitally important, imperatives without a proper biblical and theological context can be applied in very wrong ways. Corporate prayer, in this instance, becomes something which the people of God must do, void of any kind of theological underpinning.

Thirdly, one cannot move from the text to Christ without sound hermeneutical principles. This approach robs the text of its theological richness and Divine impetus (2014:84). The text is stripped of its historical setting and in its place is filled with theological dogma. The text then becomes a mere abstraction, which will have far reaching consequences. Here, corporate prayer becomes an event of the past, something which merely moves the biblical story along.

Responsible biblical interpretation gives credence to the text by understanding its history as well as God's overarching purposes. The redemptive-historical method fulfils this mandate. Corporate and representative prayer, on one hand, is not merely a pragmatic enterprise by the Church, nor, on the other hand, a practice to be relegated to the pages of history. It must, rather, be understood through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

In seeking to rightly interpret and apply the Old Testament, I maintain that all of Scripture must be understood through the person and work of Jesus Christ. As Augustine (2014:25) famously once wrote, "In the Old Testament the New is concealed, in the New the Old is revealed." If the pursuit of biblical theology is done



correctly, the integrity of the Old Testament is maintained while also upholding the Divine purpose for which Scripture is intended.

### 1.3.2. Corporate and Representative Prayer in the Pentateuch

Boda (2018:806) and O’Kennedy (1996:430) have pointed out that the book of Psalms has dominated the study of prayer in the Old Testament. Of these studies, many of them have focused on form criticism (Miller 1994), tradition criticism (Boda 1997), and rhetorical criticism (Greenberg 1983). Some have even argued that Old Testament prayer is confined to Psalms. This resulted in a neglect of non-Psalmic prayers. Others have asserted that prayer has no literary or theological function (cf. O’Kennedy 1996:430). In light of these observations, there is great potential for the study of prayer in the Historical Books (Boda 2018:811).

The importance of the Torah (or Pentateuch) has this afore mentioned potential in the study of prayer. Observing the historical narrative reveals that prayer is often placed in strategic places within the canon, and performs a definite literary and theological function. Pentateuchal prayer becomes the starting point for understanding the character of God and his redemptive purposes. The Torah records the revelation of the character of God, the origins of the nation of Israel, and the law which determined their way of life. Wenham (2003:1) writes, "It [The Pentateuch] offers an explanation of the world and its inhabitants. It explains the origins of sin and traces its consequences. It introduces the idea of a chosen people through whom the world will be redeemed."

The Torah, however, is not a compilation of unrelated books; rather these books together form a literary unit. Harrison (1969:496) helpfully notes that, "The Pentateuch is a single work in five sections, not a collection of five different books." Thus, every episode in the history or statute in the law contributes to the larger unfolding theme of redemption. Waltke and Yu (2007:152) suggest, "Moses recorded for the twelve tribes of Israel the foundational promissory covenants with Adam, Noah, and Abraham that determined the elect nation’s beliefs and value structures, namely, the promise of a champion who would vanquish Satan."

Given the nature of the Bible's progressive revelation, it seems best to begin a study on the subject of corporate and representative prayer at the start of that revelation. Goldsworthy (2003:107) writes, "Biblical theology is an approach to the Bible that seeks to allow the Bible's message about God to come through in the way the Bible tells it." This approach will avoid more systematic methods that dominate the subject of corporate prayer. Moreover, it will allow the reader to develop a more robust understanding of corporate and representative prayer as it is found in the Pentateuch.

### 1.3.3. Covenantal Christopraxis

As one moves from a redemptive-historical hermeneutic of the Pentateuch to practical application, an appropriate framework is needed. This framework is what I have termed covenantal Christopraxis. "Christopraxis" says Anderson (2001:53) "is the normative and authoritative grounding of all theological reflection in the divine act of God consummated in Jesus Christ and continued through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ." But Christopraxis, I believe, must be grounded in a new covenant context. This new covenant is anticipated in the Old Testament with various figures, institutions and practices foreshadowing the person and work of Jesus.

By understanding a new covenant framework the Church embodies and enacts its experience of redemption. More specifically, a covenantal Christopraxis enables the Church to rightly understand the pursuit of corporate and representative prayer. Outside of this understanding of the believer's covenantal identity in Christ, prayer still possess the danger of degenerating into a purely humanistic pursuit. In response to this, Murray writes:

Obedience, therefore, is not something that may be conceived of artificially or abstractly. It is obedience that enlisted all the resources of his [Christ's] perfect humanity, obedience that resided in his person, and obedience of which he is ever the perfect embodiment. It is obedience that finds its permanent efficacy and virtue in him. And we become the beneficiaries of it, indeed partakers of it, by union with him (1955:24).

Covenantal Christopraxis, therefore, becomes both the propelling and sustaining force behind corporate and representative prayer. It reveals that we are in Jesus and that he is in us. As the believer's, and by extension the Church's, identity is found in Jesus

prayer is no longer relegated to some unknown sphere within the Christian experience. Rather than being pursued out of a sense of moral duty, corporate prayer becomes grounded in the believer's identity in Christ. Sinclair Ferguson adds these helpful words:

The knowledge of our union with Christ . . . gives us confidence in prayer. It was when Jesus had begun to expound the closeness of this union that he also began to introduce the disciples to the true heart of prayer. If Christ abides in us and we abide in him, as his word dwells in us, and we pray in his name, then God hears us (Jn 15:4-7). But all of these expressions are simply extensions of the one fundamental idea: If I am united to Christ, then all that is his is mine. So long as my heart, will and mind are one with Christ's in his word, I can approach God with the humble confidence that my prayers will be heard and answered (1997:105).

To summarise, a right understanding of covenantal Christopraxis transforms prayer into communion with the one to whom we are profoundly united.

#### 1.4. Research Question and Objectives

How can a redemptive-historical approach to corporate and representative prayer in the Pentateuch contribute towards covenantal Christopraxis in Baptist Churches?

The following dissertation aims to understand how Jesus, in his person and work, fulfils the expectation of corporate and representative prayer in the Pentateuch, with a view towards presenting a covenantal Christopraxis for Baptist Churches. In order to achieve this, the following objectives are posed:

With respect to the Pentateuch, the author wishes to research:

- The historical narratives wherein the record of corporate and representative prayer to Yahweh is found.
- The historical-redemptive context in which corporate and representative prayer is placed.

Regarding covenantal Christophaxis, the author wishes to research:

- The biblical trajectory of God's covenants.
- How the Old Testament covenantal expectation is fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ
- The implications of such fulfilment upon the new covenant community, namely, the Church.

#### 1.4.1. Objectives

What are the general aims?

- To analyse the historical narratives wherein corporate and representative prayer to the Lord is found.
- To maintain the force of the redemptive-historical setting wherein corporate prayer is set.
- To establish how corporate and representative prayer in the Pentateuch anticipates the person and work of Jesus.

What is the specific aim?

- To move towards a covenantal Christophaxis of corporate and representative prayer in Baptist Churches.

#### 1.5. Research Design

The first step towards answering the research question begins with defining the hermeneutical methodology I will utilise in this dissertation. This will not only define the parameters of research within the Pentateuch, but also provide a clear biblical structure for interpreting the selected texts.

Secondly, I will identify all the references within the Pentateuch which record corporate and representative prayer. This will include the historical records of corporate prayer, the content of corporate prayer, corporate prayer made by a mediator on behalf of others, and God himself summoning people to pray. I will not exclude the use of poetry by the biblical writers within these narratives.

Thirdly, I shall undertake to perform detailed exegesis on selected texts in order to understand corporate and representative prayer within its redemptive-historical context. This exercise will fill the bulk of the following dissertation. Thereafter, I will attempt to synthesise the exegetical data from the Pentateuch into a unified whole.

Once an exegetical study has been completed, the author shall progress to explore the covenantal expectations of prayer and the New Testament fulfilment of it, with particular emphasis on the life of Jesus Christ.

Finally, the above findings will be drawn upon in order to highlight the importance of covenantal Christopraxis for corporate and representative prayer in Baptist Churches, highlighting its relevance not only to the Christian's understanding, but also the churches identity and witness to the world.

The following diagram is a visual representation of the current author's research design:

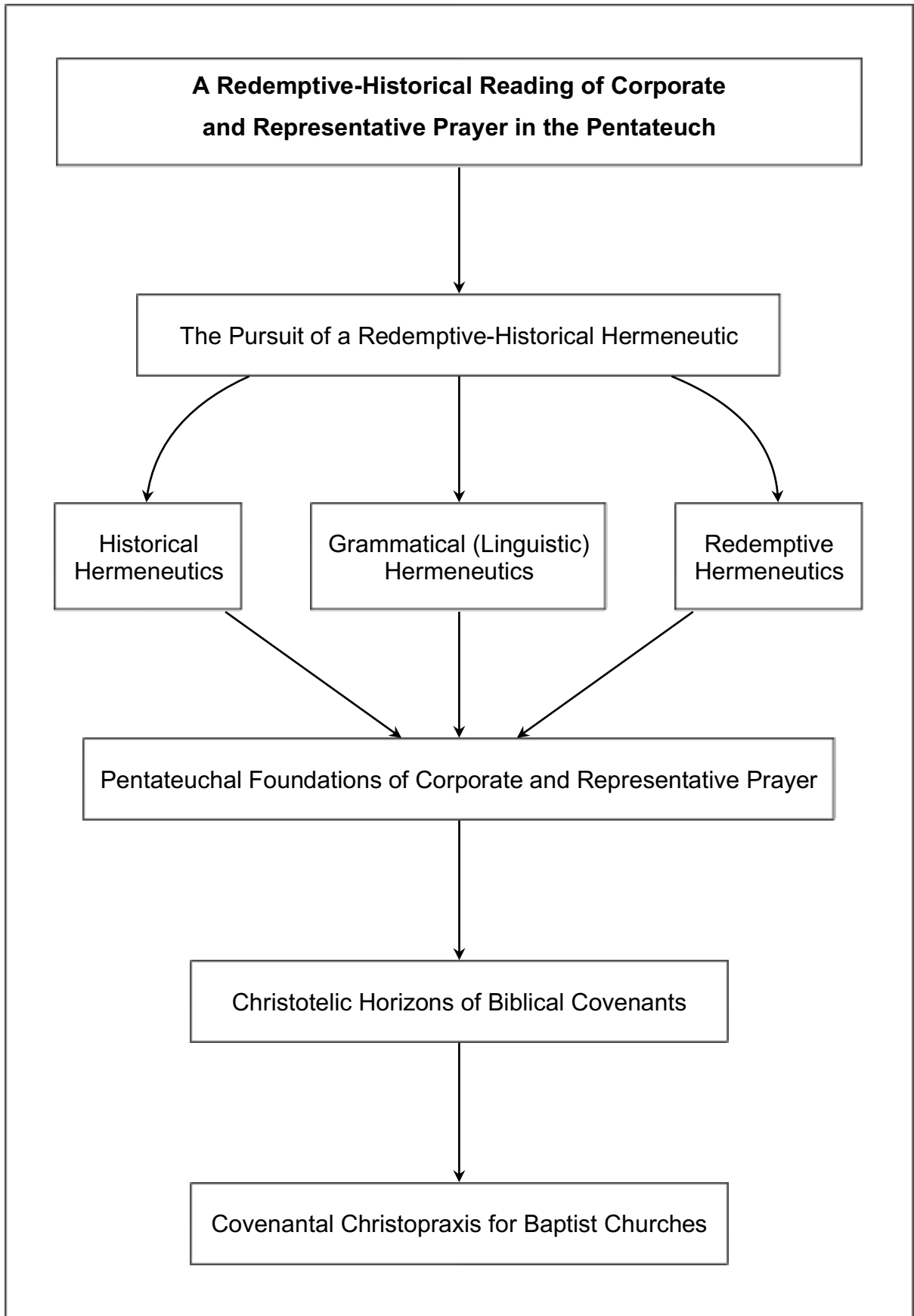


Figure 2: Biblical Theology Methodology

## 1.6. The Author's Approach

Approaching the theme of corporate and representative prayer is a delicate endeavour. While many Christians and churches are aware, generally, of the need to pray, a dissertation that merely advocates for obedience to the practice can remain sub-Christian even if the author proves that the Bible demands such behaviours (Chapell 2018:4). Arthur Pink insightfully observes:

In the great majority of books written, and in the sermons preached upon prayer, the human element fills the scene almost entirely. It is the conditions which we must meet, the promises we must claim, the things we must do, in order to get our requests granted; and God's claim, God's right, God's glory are often disregarded (1961:109).

In the present case, my desire is to build on the work of Goldsworthy and Millar, by tracing the theme of corporate and representative prayer utilising a historical-redemptive lens. While an exhaustive study on the subject must be reserved for a fuller publication, the current dissertation will restrict its exploration of corporate and representative prayer to the Pentateuch. These findings, however, must be related to Jesus as the fulfilment of the Old Testament without spiritualising or sentimentalising the text of Scripture. I believe that any attempt to understand corporate and representative prayer outside of Christ will inevitably devolve into a miserable exercise amongst God's people. Grasping, however, the Christian's identity in Jesus is the key to communion with God.

A presupposition of this dissertation is that the New Testament is a continuation of the Old Testament. This compels me to examine the historical development of prayer in a way that is consistent with the New Testament authors. In other words, to accurately understand corporate and representative prayer, one must trace its thread through the entire Bible. While some may find it helpful to examine the record of corporate prayer found in other ancient religions, the focus of this dissertation will be restricted to corporate and representative prayer as found in the Pentateuch.

I will begin by clarifying the hermeneutical method adopted in this dissertation. Unfortunately, much confusion pervades the subject of hermeneutics making it necessary to clarify the framework employed herein. I will define a "historical-grammatical-redemptive" framework and attempt to bring clarity by delineating

between the Christocentric, Christiconic and Christotelic approaches within redemptive hermeneutics.

In Chapter 3, I will identify and analyse those places in which corporate and representative prayer is found within the Pentateuch using the redemptive-historical-grammatical (linguistic) method of interpretation. This will include descriptions of prayer found within the narrative as well as actual prayers, most notably those of Moses. Of particular importance will be the redemptive-historical setting of each context. I will apply a synchronic and canonical approach to the Bible.

Thereafter, in Chapter 4, I will observe the covenantal expectation of the Old Testament which is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ. In this instance, I will use the descriptive method within a thematic approach. As a guide, I will utilise categories already established within systematic theology in an attempt to synthesise the Old Testament data. My observations will extend to Jesus as the last Adam, the prophet after Moses, and the true Israel. Selection is therefore both unavoidable and natural.

In Chapter 5, the significance of corporate and representative prayer, as explored in this dissertation, will be synthesised under the heading Covenantal Christopraxis, with special attention given to theological and practical application. Finally, I will conclude this dissertation by presenting the research in a concise and coherent manner. I will also make note of areas for further research in order to develop this subject more.

Corporate and representative prayer, I believe, is not a minor doctrine that should be relegated to the areas of lesser importance within Christian theology. Instead, it is a biblical theological theme that begins in the first chapters of Genesis and fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ.



## CHAPTER 2: THE PURSUIT OF A REDEMPTIVE-HISTORICAL HERMENEUTIC

The subject of biblical hermeneutics has a long-standing history. This history, though, is often perceived as being filled with authorial, linguistical, and traditional complexity. The resulting tension is seen in numerous books and articles that seek to provide some form of interpretive guidance. In addition to this, every reader of the Bible possesses an inherent framework, articulated or unarticulated, which they apply to the text. This perspective may be philosophical, cultural, social, or theological. With the vast array of opinions, it is important, therefore, to outline the approach adopted in this dissertation.

A number of authors (e.g. Chou 2016:113; Kaiser 2013:15) on the subject of hermeneutics have maintained that the historical-grammatical method of interpretation meets all the requirements for proper biblical interpretation. Proponents of this particular hermeneutical framework maintain that it is itself prescribed by Scripture. This assertion is maintained on the basis of the prophets' and apostles' interpretation of Scripture, as well as Christ Himself who affirmed what the prophets spoke and used Scripture to speak to a variety of issues according to what was previously written (Chou 2016:139).

According to Pereira (2016:21) this two-legged approach, however, is mistakenly narrow. While such an approach may help the reader understand a particular text within its immediate context, it struggles to provide an answer that addresses the unity of the Scriptures. Louis Berkhof, although writing much earlier, in his book *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* explains why this is the case. He asserts, "There is a great deal within Scripture that does not find its explanation in history, or in the secondary authors, but only in God as the *Auctor primarius*" (Berkhof 1950:133). Similarly Dan McCartney in his paper *Should We Employ the Hermeneutics of the New Testament Authors?* writes:

[The] grammatical-historical method does not, and by its very nature cannot, deal with the special hermeneutical considerations of a divine text. A text written by several individuals from different cultures over the course of several centuries, which is at the same time authored by One who knows where history is going before it gets there, is inherently unique. Grammatical-historical interpretation proceeds on the assumption of the similarity of its text to other texts. The Bible is

indeed a text like other texts, but it is also in certain ways *sui generis*, and thus requires something more (2003:n.n.).

Berkhof, recognising this tension, argues that due to Scripture's divine origin; its organic whole; and progressive development, it warrants the interpreter to complement the grammatical-historical method with a third element. He goes on to call this third element "theological interpretation" (Berkhof 1950:134). In the same manner, Pereira (2016:21) calls for a third hermeneutical leg which must account for the fact that the biblical text is revelation. While most would agree with Berkhof's and Pereira's conclusions, there is much discussion regarding what form such "theological interpretation" or "hermeneutic leg" should take.

## 2.1. Defining a Redemptive-Historical Framework<sup>2</sup>

In seeking to provide some clarity towards a theological interpretation, Gaffin (2012:93), defending a redemptive-historical framework, writes, "Biblical interpretation is not autonomous assessment of a distanced textual datum but receptive appropriation of the God-authored preinterpretation of redemptive history consummated in Christ." This approach to Scripture is not novel. Geerhardus Vos (1894:16), in his inaugural address as Professor of Biblical Theology at Princeton Seminary, wrote, "God has embodied the contents of revelation, not in a dogmatic system, but in a book of history." That is to say, revelation has not completed itself in a single exhaustive act, but "unfolded itself in a long series of successive acts" (Vos 1948:5).

At this point, one must recognise that the nature of the Bible's progressive revelation is not haphazard. In other words, the acts of God within history do not stand by themselves as disconnected or isolated events. Rather, they are inseparably linked to

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<sup>2</sup> In the following dissertation, I have chosen to define what I mean by the term "redemptive-historical," rather than using the more common historical terms "*heilsgeschichte*" (salvation history) or "*heilsgeschichtlich*" (salvation-historical), which may be open to confusion. For example, Surburg (1969:8) points out the *heilsgeschichte* had evolved in two different directions. For some, *heilsgeschichte* developed into Dispensationalism. Others believed that the key to understanding the history of revelation (*heilsgeschichte*) is the Kingdom of God, which is a world of true righteousness that penetrates our physical and spiritual life. The approach taken in this dissertation stems from the works of Geerhardus Vos (1862-1949).

the redemptive purposes of God. Berkhof (1950:135) confirms this, “The revelation they [Old and New Testaments] contain is progressive, and gradually increases its definiteness, clearness, and spiritual conception. As the New Testament is implicit in the Old, so the Old is explicit in the New.” Mohler (2008:96) likewise agrees with this assessment stating, “The Bible is not just a compendium of good short stories, but a grand, life-encompassing metanarrative of God’s work of redemption in the world.” Vos (1948:15) goes even further, he emphatically asserts that, “Revelation is so interwoven with redemption that, unless allowed to consider the latter, it would be suspended in the air.”

Critics of the redemptive-historical approach have often argued that it undermines the historical-grammatical method in order to bridge the immediate text into the broader scope of revelation. Such a critique, however, is unfounded. Redemption, by its very nature, is historical. That is to say, the purposes of God occur within history as multiple historical events constitute an organically unfolding whole (Gaffin 2012:90). This history begins in Genesis, incorporates the Patriarchs, develops through Israel, and consummates in Christ. But this record does not merely recite historical facts. It reveals an ongoing drama whereby God progressively discloses his plan to use his Son to redeem fallen humanity. Thus, rather than undermining a text’s historical setting, the redemptive-historical method strives to uncover both the history of the text as well as larger historical progression of God’s redemptive purposes. Fee and Stuart defend this position well as they write:

Every individual Old Testament narrative (bottom level) is at least part of the greater narrative of Israel’s history in the world (middle level), which is in turn a part of the ultimate narrative of God’s creation and his redemption of it (the top level). This ultimate narrative goes beyond the Old Testament through the New Testament. You will not fully do justice to any individual narrative without recognising its part within the other two (1993:80).

This conviction is also reflected in Chapell (2018:5) as he maintains, “Just as historic-grammatical exegesis requires the preacher to consider a text’s terms in their historical and literary context, responsible theological interpretation requires the expositor to discern how a text’s ideas function in the wider redemptive context.”

While the redemptive-historical approach places a high pedigree on the role of God as the supreme author of Scripture, it does not, however, diminish or minimise the role of the human author (contra Chou 2016:123). Rather, the diversity of God's speaking is a function that takes place through the various writers. A concern for biblical revelation as history should inevitably draw the reader to the instrumentality of the human author. Gaffin (2012:96) asserts, "The distinguishing characteristics and peculiarities of each of the human authors and what they have written are essential to revelation as historically differentiated." Such careful attention to the various authors with their respective individuality undergirds the organic unity and coherence of the Bible as Divine revelation.

In light of these considerations, the approach taken by the current author in this dissertation may well be termed "a historical-grammatical-redemptive" method of interpretation. This three-legged approach to the text is much closer to the Christotelic approach which both Chou (2016:116) and Block (2013:6) acknowledge as abiding within the grammatical-historical framework (see also Gaffin 2012:92). Before moving on to each individual element of the historical-grammatical-redemptive approach, which will bring balance to the task of biblical interpretation, some space must be devoted to Christ-centred hermeneutics.

### 2.1.1. Christocentric, Christiconic, and Christotelic Approaches

Greidanus (1999:234) once wrote, "Redemptive history is the bedrock which supports all the other ways that lead to Christ in the New Testament." Utilising this theological or hermeneutical third-leg of biblical interpretation, needs further clarification. One of the most significant debates within hermeneutics concerns the appropriate method for relating this Old Testament redemptive framework to New Testament Christology. This task, unfortunately, is not an easy one. Porter (2004:121) wrote, "The move from the original text of Scripture, with all of its time-bound character to theological truths for life today is one of the most demanding intellectual tasks imaginable." A number of nuanced hermeneutical approaches have been developed by various authors in order to provide some help. The Christocentric approach (Greidanus 1999; Goldsworthy 1981) considers all of Scripture as having Christ as its central theme. The Christiconic

approach (Kuruville 2013) maintains that the character of Christ is the goal in the lives of believers. The Christotelic approach (Enns 2015) sees Christ as its end, purpose or fulfilment.

#### 2.1.1.1. The Christocentric Approach

The Christocentric approach is the interpretation of a biblical text in such a way that its main theme is directly and explicitly related to the Second Person of the Trinity. Pepler (2012:120) defines a Christocentric interpretation as, "Interpreting Scripture primarily from the perspective of what Jesus taught and modelled, and from what he revealed concerning the nature, character, values, principles, and priorities of the Godhead." Poythress similarly writes:

It is appreciating the Old Testament as it is in the design of God: a witness, foreshadowing, anticipation, and promise of salvation as it has now been accomplished by the work of the triune God in Jesus Christ Incarnate (1991:285).

The Christocentric framework is, in other words, an attempt to interpret the Bible primarily through the lens of Jesus' life and teaching. In this way, Jesus is placed as the author, dominant subject, and principle interpreter of Scripture. Padgett defends this approach to the text by affirming:

Since the Scriptures are the result of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by the will of the Father through Jesus Christ, and since the Word of God who speaks through all the Scriptures became incarnate in Jesus Christ, it is Jesus Christ himself who must constitute the controlling centre in all right interpretation of the Scriptures (2006:39).

Such a position, however, seems unduly forced. The most notable danger of the Christocentric approach is that the specific thrusts of individual Old Testament texts may get neglected in the rush to correlate the Old Testament with the New Testament. The divine intent can overshadow the human author's purpose, which in turn facilitates wide-spread typology (Chou 2016:124). The result of this controlling feature is a canon within a canon. That is to say, one can elevate a portion or theme of Scripture above others. Accordingly, such a canon within a canon neglects and excludes all of that which God has inspired.

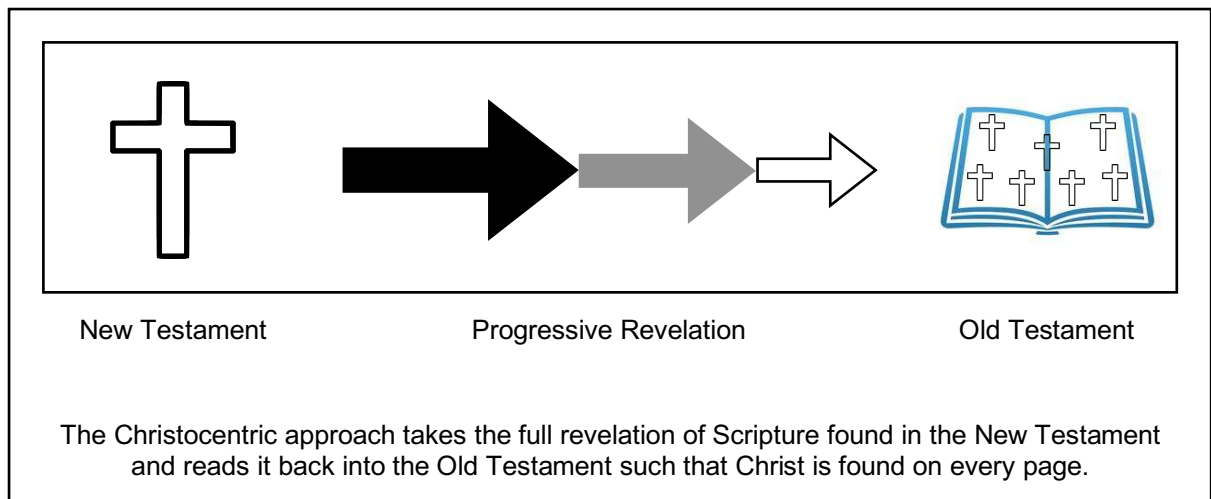


Figure 3: A Visual Representation of the Christocentric Approach

The implications of this are far-reaching. A canon within a canon may inadvertently reflect a low view of Scripture, which in turn may lean towards the creative genius of the preacher rather than the divinely intended message of the biblical authors (Block 2013:7). In this instance, the Christocentric hermeneutic moves away from author-based meaning to reader-based meaning. This is something which proponents of this position warn against (Johnson 2007:126).

Another major criticism against the Christocentric approach is that it leads to unbalanced formations of theology and even an emaciated Christology. Concerning the former, Chou (2016:133) remarks, "Concentrating on Christ alone can cause one to neglect discussing the Father and the Spirit. It can even lead to confusion to the roles within the Godhead." With regards to the latter, Chou (2016:134) similarly writes, "By making hasty connections, one may fail to see certain associations which lead to a high Christology or discredit the way Christ is legitimately in the Scripture."

Although the Christological hermeneutic desires to teach Christian theology and exalt Christ, it is not without fault. A Christocentric approach to the Scriptures may result in a canon within a canon, reader-based meaning, and imbalanced theology. For this reason, a more specific approach needs to fill the hermeneutical third leg.

### 2.1.1.2. The Christiconic Approach

The Christiconic approach was made popular through the work of Dr. Abraham Kuruvilla. The Christiconic method of interpretation understands that as Jesus perfectly fulfilled every divine demand, every single pericope of Scripture demonstrates a component of His image. For Kuruvilla:

The plenary world in front of the text (the synthesis of all the world segments projected by individual pericopes) or the integration of the theologies of the various pericopes of Scripture is, in effect, a composite image of Christ. Each pericope, then, portrays an aspect of that image, a facet of Christlikeness. Thus, in fulfilling the divine demand, text by text, a believer becomes progressively more Christlike as the divine demands of pericopes are sequentially met (2013:260).

In other words, since Jesus Christ is the only man to perfectly meet God's standard, he is consequently the only one who has perfectly inhabited the world in front of the text, living by all its requirements. This world in front of the text comes to the reader through pericopes which reveal God's ideal world. Thus, for Kuruvilla, the text is not an end in itself, but is a means to an end (2018:53). Therefore, the Scriptures reveal the perfect man in the person of Jesus Christ, God incarnate, pericope by pericope. Readers and listeners are confronted with the reality of what Christlikeness is through the image we are to be conformed to. Kuruvilla (2013:85) goes on to say, "Scripture is geared primarily for this glorious purpose of God, to restore the *imago Dei* in mankind by offering a theological description of Christlikeness ... in this sense, the focal point of the entire canon of Scripture and all of its pericopes is the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect man and the paramount *imago Dei* himself."

While there is much to commend within the Christiconic approach, particularly Kuruvilla's concepts of "privileging the text" and "pericopal theology," it is also open to criticism. Kuruvilla stresses that one must focus on what the author is doing with a particular text in order to elicit valid application for readers (2018:50-51). He does not, however, define which author the interpreter should focus on. Within the Old Testament in particular, the Divine author of Scripture is at work through the human author (2 Pt 1:21). While the two are not in tension, the Bible interpreter must consider the metanarrative of God's revelation. Or, to use Kuruvilla's (2013:49) language, the

Bible interpreter must consider the Divine pragmatics of the text. This is to ask, “What is God doing with the text?”

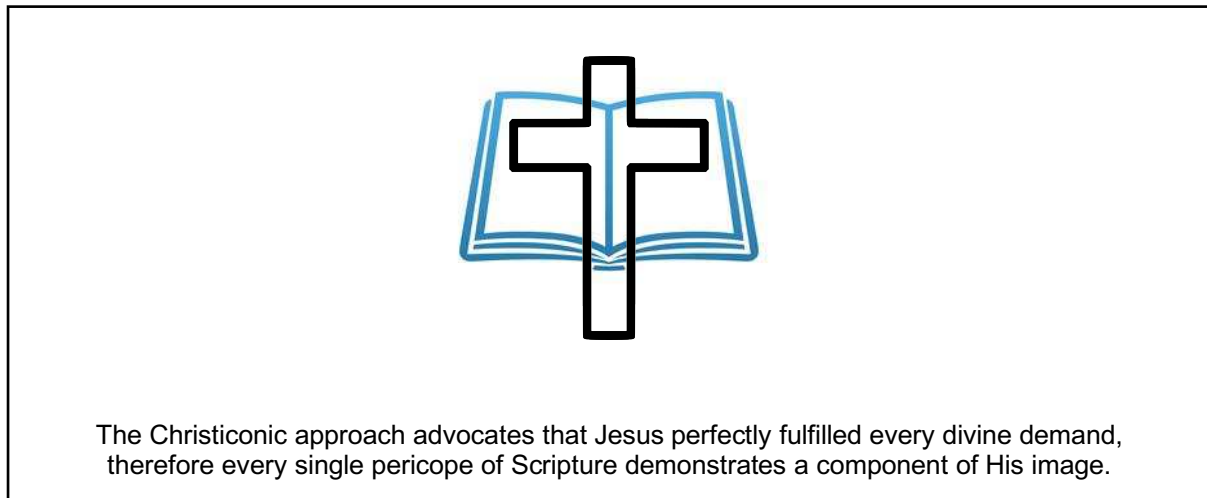


Figure 4: A Visual Representation of the Christiconic Approach

Additionally, simply presenting Jesus as the paramount *imago Dei* does little to bring unity to God’s redemptive proposes. For Kuruvilla (2018:56) the world in front of the text is, “God’s gracious invitation to live in his ideal world by abiding by the thrust of that pericope.” But this may be misleading. On one hand, the biblical interpreter will be left wanting when approaching a text that exemplifies a behaviour which Christ never exhibits, namely repentance. On the other hand, there are roles which Christ exemplifies that are larger than any believer could begin to imitate, Redeemer, Mediator, and Lord.

In addition to this, a Christiconic approach quickly brings condemnation upon humanity as complete failures against Jesus’ standard. Surely, using Kuruvilla’s framework, the point of the human author is to highlight the nature of humanity’s weakness, brought about by sin, to live according to God’s commands. Regardless of how much humanity strives, it cannot attain such a calling. Thus, biblical interpretation can quickly be reduced into moralism. Chapell (2018:7) writes, “God’s revelation is not simply cataloging his attributes or constructing a behaviour manual.” This is a rather significant missing component within the Christiconic approach.

Kuruvilla’s Christiconic approach to the text has much to commend, particularly the concept of pericopal theology. However, like the Christocentric approach, it too has it



limitations, namely, it does not consider what God himself is doing with a particular text, it is limited by the person and of work Christ, and it may be inclined towards a moralistic tendency. This leads us to a third approach.

### 2.1.1.3. The Christotelic Approach

The final method under consideration for relating the Old Testament redemptive framework to New Testament Christology is the Christotelic approach. Christotelic proponents present their method as a correction to Christocentric preaching (Block 2018:11-13). In contrast to the Christocentric hermeneutic which claims that text *points* to Christ, the Christotelic framework claims that Christ is the *end* (Gk. *telos*) or the *goal* of the Old Testament (BDAG 2000:998).

Bryan Chapell, influenced by the work of Sidney Griedanus, warns of attempting to find Jesus in every biblical account (1994:292). He contends that a passage of Scripture retains its Christotelic focus not because of its implied or imagined reference to Christ, but rather, because the text serves to contribute to the great unfolding revelation of the divine work in and through Jesus Christ. According to Mills (2019:n.n.), "The key for the Christotelic method is that Christ is not *within* every passage but rather the *ultimate end* of the Old Testament" (emphasis original). The Bible, in other words, follows a historical-redemptive story that finds its climax in the death, burial, resurrection, and second coming of Christ. Peter Enns (2015:143) in his book *Inspiration and Incarnation* asserts, "To read the Old Testament 'christotelically' is to read it *already knowing* that Christ is somehow the *end* to which the Old Testament story is heading" (emphasis original). Thus, while the theology of a particular text might not speak about Christ directly, it finds its ultimate purpose in Christ's work which comes later in redemptive history.

The Christotelic approach is an attempt to understand how the entire Old Testament meets its goal in Christ in such a way that respects both the historical and linguistic context of the Old Testament, but also sees how Christ fulfils that Scripture. Enns (2015:143) adds, "A grammatical-historical reading of the Old Testament is not only permissible but absolutely vital in that it allows the Church to see the varied trajectories set in the pages of the Old Testament itself." To put it another way, a Christotelic

approach to redemptive interpretation seeks to uncover what God’s people would have understood by a given passage in its historical context, and also how that meaning expands and becomes fuller with the progress of redemptive history. In other words, those who hold a Christotelic hermeneutic want to understand redemptive history both *as redemptive* and *as history* (Eph 1:10).

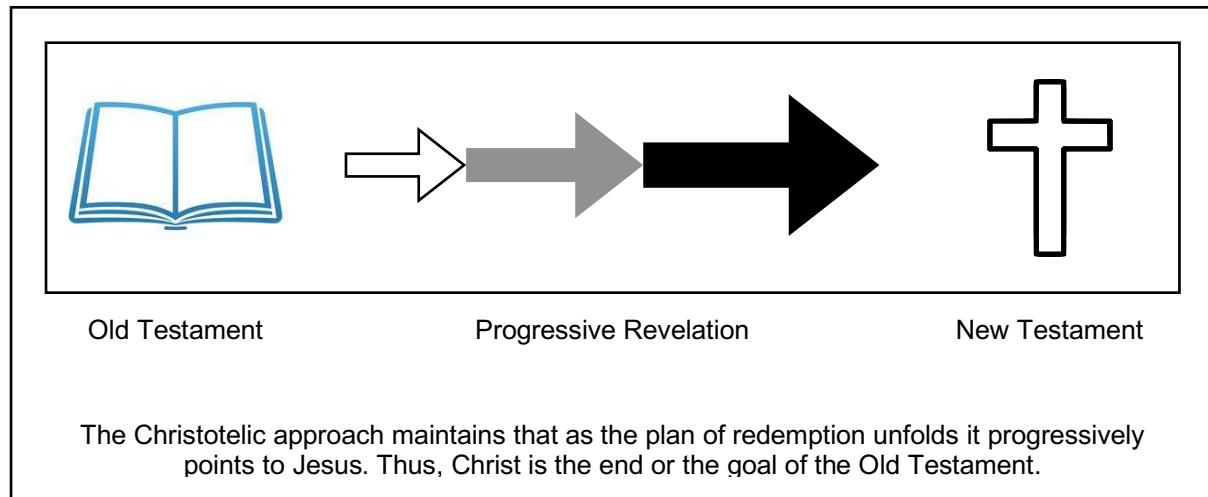


Figure 5: A Visual Representation of the Christotelic Approach

Proponents of the Christotelic approach attempt to guard against two extremes. First is a “Jesus under every rock” approach to Old Testament interpretation. The second extreme that the Christotelic hermeneutic is trying to guard against is a “these passages and no more” approach to the Old Testament. This is the view that only a handful of passages are Messianic but the rest were purely for ancient Israel (e.g. Dispensationalism). A Christotelic approach will seek to respect the “Jewishness” of the Old Testament canon in its original context, but will also see embedded in that very “Jewishness” an eschatological orientation that points forward to the coming of the Messiah.

The Christotelic approach more accurately defines the redemptive framework of the current author. First, the aim of the Bible interpreter is to seek to understand what God was saying to his people at a particular time and in a particular context (historical-grammatical), and then to understand such a passage in light of the completed redemptive work of Jesus Christ, and how it applies to God’s people today in him (redemptive). While not every text of Scripture explicitly mentions Jesus Christ, every text does present a vital part of the metanarrative of redemption which culminates in

the Messiah (Block 2018:14). This is best articulated by Storms (2013:40) as he affirms, “The entire theological system of the Old Testament points forward to his work, and in his coming the whole Old Testament economy finds its perfection and fulfilment.”

Having further clarified the current author’s historical-grammatical-redemptive approach, time may now be devoted to each leg within this framework.

## 2.2. The First Leg: Historical Hermeneutics

The Word of God originated in a historical way, and therefore, can be understood only in light of history. The words of the biblical authors can only be interpreted correctly when viewed against the proper historical backdrop. To this end, the interpreter must seek to know the biblical author as well as the external factors or circumstances of his life. In other words, historical hermeneutics aims to reconstruct the author’s world. The pursuit of historical hermeneutics is the pursuit of understanding the text within its historical setting.

As far as possible, the identity of the author, the recipients, and the occasion for writing must be identified. Goldingay (2008:7) highlights the importance of this pursuit as he writes, “An Old Testament narrative theology is dependent on the factuality of the events it refers to.” In some instances, authors may well be identified within a particular book. Others may be harder to identify. Berkhof (1950:166) writes, “He [the interpreter] must seek acquaintance with the author himself ... his character and temperament, his disposition and habitual mode of thought.” A proper understanding of the author will facilitate a proper understanding of his words.

For the correct understanding of the biblical text, the original hearers and readers must also be identified. Berkhof (1950:125) expresses the indispensable nature of this pursuit as he affirms, “The condition of the original hearers not only determines the general character of the writing, but also explains many of its particulars ... An intimate knowledge of the original readers will often illuminate the pages of a writing addressed to them in an expected and striking manner.”

In addition to the identity of the biblical authors and their contemporaries, historical hermeneutics must also consider the development and identity of Israel as a nation. That is to say, Israel's faith is derived from its God ordained history. "Their faith," Pereira (2015:7) writes, "comes from the historical narrative in the Old Testament text and not from the events or experiences behind the text." Naturally, this leads the interpreter to consider social, political, geographic, religious, and cultural foundations of the text.

Intimately linked to these three elements of historical hermeneutics is the intent or purpose of the biblical authors. Osborne (2006:38) notes, "We should not study any passage without a basic knowledge of the problems and situation addressed in the book and the themes with which the writer addressed those problems."

At this point it is important to note that there are two ways in which the historical text can be approached: diachronically or synchronically. The diachronic approach looks at the development of the text across time. Its goal is to analyse the text's origin and development, and its final form in light of these (Pereira 2016:25). This approach, however, has the tendency of atomising the text due to its relationship with historical criticism. The result is a text that remains trapped in the past.

A synchronic approach considers the text in its final preserved form. According to Pereira (2016:25) this method is best suited for literary criticism, genre and form analysis, narrative criticism and rhetorical criticism. This implies that historical hermeneutics must honour the form of Scripture as well. The Hebrew Scriptures possess a tripartite division of the Law (*Torah*), Prophets (*Nabi'im*), and the Writings (*Ketubim*). Thus, while the Bible reader will have the tendency to read the Old Testament books individually, one must also consider them together in order to accomplish responsible exegesis.

### 2.3. The Second Leg: Grammatical (Linguistic) Hermeneutics

Grammatical hermeneutics seeks to determine the biblical author's intended meaning. According to Pereira (2016:27), the term "grammatical" is too narrow to encapsulate all that this aspect of hermeneutics entails. Grammar generally deals with only lexical

and syntactical analysis of the text. A linguistic approach, in contrast, seeks to understand words, idioms and grammatical form as it is used rhetorically throughout Scripture. Linguistic hermeneutics will include consideration pertaining to the pericope of a text, the genre of a text, the structure of the text, and word studies within the text.

The intimate relationship between historical and grammatical hermeneutics is noted by Davidson (1843 cited in Berkhof 1950:113) who asserts, “Grammatical and historical interpretation, when rightly understood, are synonymous. The special laws of grammar, agreeably to which the sacred writers employed language, were the result of their peculiar circumstances; and history alone throws us back into those circumstances.”

Linguistic hermeneutics, in the first place, begins with the Bible reader identifying the pericope in which a particular text is found. A pericope may be defined as a short section or literary unit that has integrity even when “cut off” or “cut out” (Gk. *perikoptō*) from a longer narrative (PDBS 2002:92). As such, it is a complete literary unit which contains logical markers that identify its beginning, development and conclusion. While the text must be read and interpreted within this pericope, it must also be understood in its broader context.

In addition to identifying the pericope, the Bible reader must also identify the genre of the text, otherwise known as form-criticism. The genre of a text may be narrative, poetry, prophecy, didactic, wisdom, parable, etc. Identifying genre will also help the reader to know when a text should adopt a figurative interpretation rather than a literal one.

Linguistic hermeneutics must also understand how a particular text is structured. This will enable the current author to identify stylistic and rhetorical aspects of the texts (Pereira 2016:28). Such a task will be undertaken in order to uncover the devices used by a particular biblical author in order to persuade the reader. The pursuit of structural analysis will understand the use of repetition, motif and emphasis.

It is only at this point that matters of etymology may be addressed. That is, the meaning of a pericope must be evaluated in its individual parts. In addition to this, the interpreter must consider whether these words are used in a general or specific sense (*Uses Loquendi*).

The linguistic leg of hermeneutics consists of identifying the text in the form of a pericope. Additionally, literary types or genre must be identified within the pericope. This will involve uncovering stylistic and rhetorical elements employed by the author. At times, it may also include word studies.

#### 2.4. The Third Leg: Redemptive Hermeneutics

As previously established, the redemptive-historical method strives to uncover both the history of the text as well as the larger historical progression of God's redemptive purposes. Chapell (2018:10-11) identifies three ways in which redemptive hermeneutics can be fulfilled in such a way that upholds the Christotelic approach: text disclosure, type disclosure, and context disclosure.<sup>3</sup>

Text disclosure suggests that a particular text may directly refer to Christ or his Messianic work. In this instance it is relatively easy to anticipate how a particular passage looks forward to the redemptive work of Jesus.

God's redemptive work in Christ may also be evident in Old Testament types.<sup>4</sup> Chapell (2005:281) elsewhere writes, "Typology as it relates to Christ's person and work is the study of correspondences between person, events, and institutions that first appear in the Old Testament and persons, events and institutions in the New Testament that more fully express salvation truths." Similarly, Beale defines typology in the following way:

Typology is the study of analogical correspondences between persons, events, institutions, and other things within the historical framework of God's special revelation, which, from a retrospective view, are of a prophetic nature. According to this definition, the

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<sup>3</sup> cf. Greidanus (1999:203-226) who mentions six ways which lead to Christ from the Old Testament. Beale (2020:29) mentions two hermeneutical approaches viewing Christ in the Old Testament.

<sup>4</sup> Debates surround the subject of typology, specifically regarding what constitutes a legitimate type-antitype relationship and what constitutes the interpreter's imagination (Routledge 2008:43-47).

essential characteristics of a type are: (1) analogical correspondence; (2) historicity; (3) forward-pointing; (4) escalation; (5) retrospection (2020:29).

The conviction of Chapell and Beale is that responsible typology allows the interpreter to approach the Old Testament within biblical grounded redemptive connections already established by Scripture's Divine author.<sup>5</sup> The relation between the type and antitype is not simply one of mere repetition. Rather, as Storms (2013:38) affirms, "In the 'antitype' there is an eschatological completion and consummation." In this way, the Bible itself reveals a text's ultimate purpose.

Finally, the biblical interpreter may rely on context disclosure to develop the redemptive thrust of a passage. By identifying where a particular passage fits within the overall revelation of God's redemptive plan, the reader is able to anticipate the *telos* of God's purposes in Christ. Chapell writes:

As we demonstrate how every text reflects aspects of our needs for God's grace that are made plain in the fullness of time, we honour the unity of Scripture, God's progressive plan for redemption, and the many ways that the Holy Spirit coordinates the whole Bible to reveal the grace of the Savior and the futility of any other hope (2018:17).

The third-leg of redemptive hermeneutics strives to uphold the organic unity of Scripture. The Holy Spirit has so directed human authors that their separate constrictions are organically related to one another. This unity is revealed in either Text, Type, or Context Disclosure. These distinct elements come together as a single record of God executing his divine plan, wrought in Christ for the redemption of a people that will glorify him eternally.

It is my intention to investigate the corporate prayer motif in the Pentateuch not only in its literary and historical setting but also its place in God's redemptive plan. This multifaceted reading of the Old Testament will enable us to do two things. Firstly, it will allow us to discern the Lord's message to his covenant people within its literary and historical context. Secondly, it will allow us to appreciate the progressive nature of Scripture as it anticipates the person and work of Christ. It is true that not every text of

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<sup>5</sup> Beale (2020) suggests various ways in which to identify typological connections. These will be explored at relevant points in this dissertation.

Scripture explicitly mentions Jesus Christ, but every text does play a vital part in the metanarrative of God's redemptive plan. This does not mean that the author's task is to discover Christ in every text, as is often stereotyped, but to discover where every text stands in God's redemptive history (contra Block 2013:6).<sup>6</sup>

It is the conviction of the current author that no aspect of revelation can be fully understood or explained in isolation from God's redeeming work that culminates in Christ's ministry (Keller 2015:58). This framework is closer to the Christotelic approach which both Chou (2016:116) and Block (2013:6) acknowledge as abiding within the grammatical-historical framework (see also Gaffin 2012:92). As Goldsworthy (1981:45) affirms, "Biblical theology is not concerned to state the final doctrines which make up the content of Christian belief, but rather to describe the process by which revelation unfolds and moves toward the goal which is God's final revelation of his purposes in Jesus Christ."

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<sup>6</sup> It is unfortunate that the redemptive-historical method is often made synonymous with a Christocentric method (see Chou 2016:117), or dismissed as allegory altogether (see Chapell 2013:18-19).



## **CHAPTER 3: THE PENTATEUCHAL FOUNDATIONS OF CORPORATE AND REPRESENTATIVE PRAYER**

The pursuit of Chapter 2 established a clear methodology for a redemptive-historical approach to the Old Testament. This concept may more fully be understood as a historical-grammatical-redemptive hermeneutic. Such a three-legged (or three level) approach to the Old Testament will enable the interpreter to understand what God was saying to his people at a particular time and in a particular context, while at the same time empowering the interpreter to understand a passage in light of the completed redemptive work of Jesus Christ, and how it applies to God's people today in him. The following chapter will apply this method to the corporate prayer motif in the Pentateuch. The aim of this exegetical process is to demonstrate that a redemptive-historical approach to the text is not a stretch of the imagination, but a proper lens which indicates that the Scriptures are intended to be read Christotelically.

In the pursuit to develop a biblical theology of corporate prayer, the Pentateuch occupies a place of particular prominence. The Torah's historical record of creation and covenant, its anticipation of the promised land and the developing kingdom, as well as the Pentateuch's influence on the prophets, serve as the building blocks of redemptive history. There is a tendency, both in articles and commentaries, to apply a systematic framework to its practice throughout Scripture. However, the redemptive-historical approach, as utilised here, is dynamic not static. That is, it follows the movement and process of God's revelation through the Scriptures. The task then will be to identify the redemptive context of each text; i.e., where and how does this text function in the unfolding revelation of God's redemptive nature and plan. This redemptive plan was announced at the dawn of human history (Gen 3:15), as God promised to provide a divine way out of the human dilemma created by the fall. All human history and biblical commentary unfolding beyond that point must be interpreted in the light of this promised provision.

### **3.1. Calling on the Name of the Lord: Corporate Prayer in Genesis**

Some (Keller 2014:16) have suggested that the first occurrence of corporate prayer within the biblical record is found in the Garden of Eden. This assertion is based on

the free and unrestrained intimacy enjoyed by Adam and Eve with God. Such a view is reflected well by Mathews (1996:259). Using strong language of intimacy, he asserts, “Eden held for the man and woman a blissful communion with God without mediation.” In a similar manner, Korpel and De Moor write:

Direct communication between God and certain privileged people is confined mainly to descriptions of the early history of Israel. God addresses the first human beings directly in the Garden of Eden. He visits the patriarchs of Israel and engages in conversation with them. The Lord used to speak face to face to Moses, conversing with him as with a friend (Ex 33:11; Num 12:8) (2011:148).

Others have pushed the first appearance forward in the biblical narrative. Rosscup (2008:12) suggests that the first prayer contained within the Old Testament is, “A kind of confession ... He [God] confronts them about the sin. He talks with them, and they talk with Him. This is in essence a kind of prayer in that they react to His words and respond in conversation with Him.”

While such a position admirably retains the notion of a God who speaks, these authors seem to replace “communion with God” with conversations with God (Owen 2007:388-89). This pre-fall intimacy suggests that the interactions between God, Adam and Eve are something other than prayer, rather they are presented as pre-fall natural conversations (O’Kennedy 1996:422). Even in those instances where God speaks directly with Abraham or Moses, the natural reading of Scripture compels reader to understand these as special, uncommon experiences with God. As such these occurrences cannot be accepted to be a normative experience for all of God’s covenant people.

Johnston (1870:27) however, contends that the first instance of corporate prayer is to be found in Genesis 4:6. Clowney (1990:138), unfortunately without developing the significance of this further, states, “Worship begins in the godly line of Seth.” Similarly, Spurgeon (2010:53) refers to Genesis 4:26 as, “The First Public Worship in the World.” It seems most natural to conclude that it is only at the end of Genesis 4 that anything resembling prayer truly begins. For this reason, the author will not consider the opening chapters of Genesis as prayer.

### 3.1.1. Genesis 4:1-26

#### 3.1.1.1. Translation

- 4:1 And Adam<sup>7</sup> knew<sup>8</sup> his wife Eve and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, “I have produced<sup>9</sup> a man with [the help of]<sup>10</sup> Yahweh<sup>11</sup>.”
- 2 She again gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper<sup>12</sup> of flocks, but Cain was a tiller<sup>13</sup> of the ground.
- 3 And it came about in the course of time<sup>14</sup> that Cain brought the fruit from the ground an offering<sup>15</sup> to Yahweh.
- 4 And Abel also brought from the first-born of his flock, and of their fat ones. And Yahweh looked with favour upon Abel and his offering.<sup>16</sup>
- 5 But towards Cain and his offering He looked not with favour. So Cain became very angry<sup>17</sup> and his face fell.
- 6 And Yahweh said to Cain, “Why are you angry<sup>18</sup> and why has your face fallen?”
- 7 If you do well, [will you] not be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin [is] crouching<sup>19</sup> at the door; its desire [is] for you, but you must rule over it.
- 8 And Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And it came to pass when they were in the field, Cain rose against Abel his brother and killed him.
- 9 And Yahweh said to Cain, “Where [is] Abel your brother?” And he said, “I do not know, [am] I the keeper of my brother?”
- 10 And he said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood [is] crying out to me from the ground.”

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<sup>7</sup> וְהָאָדָם יָדַע יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים suggests the beginning of a new section in the Genesis narrative. Verse 1-2 provide the background for what is to follow.

<sup>8</sup> יָדַע (*yd'*) is used euphemistically referring to sexual intimacy.

<sup>9</sup> קָנִיתִי (*qānītī*) is a play on the word from Cain (קַיִן, *qayin*)

<sup>10</sup> The preposition 'ēṯ suggests the addition, “with the help of.”

<sup>11</sup> The current author will translate יהוה (*YHWH*) as Yahweh.

<sup>12</sup> רֹעֵה (*r'h*, Qal. Participle) The participle is used substantively.

<sup>13</sup> עֹבֵד (*'bd*, Qal. Participle) The participle is used substantively.

<sup>14</sup> lit. at the end of days

<sup>15</sup> מִנְחָה (*minhā*) refers to any type of offering, either grain or an animal (HALOT 2000:601). Since Cain was a farmer, his offering was likely the first fruits from the ground.

<sup>16</sup> Since Abel was a shepherd, his offering was taken from the first-born of the flock.

<sup>17</sup> Impersonal construction with the use of הָרָה (*hrh*) lit. “it was hot to Cain” (BDB 1977:354).

<sup>18</sup> lit. why is it hot for you?

<sup>19</sup> Some commentators (Mathews 1996:270-71) have compared “crouching” (רַבִּץ, *rbṣ*) to the cognate Akkadian term *rābiṣum*, a mythological demon.

- 11 So then you [are] cursed from the ground which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.
- 12 When you till the ground, it will not again yield its strength to you; you will be a wanderer<sup>20</sup> and a traveler<sup>21</sup> on the earth.
- 13 And Cain said to Yahweh, "My punishment<sup>22</sup> [is] greater than [I can] bear.
- 14 Behold, you have driven me from the face of ground and from your face I am hidden; I will be a wanderer and a traveler on the earth, and whoever finds me will slay me."
- 15 But Yahweh said to him, "Therefore whoever kills Cain, he will be avenged sevenfold." And Yahweh put onto Cain a sign [so that] no one finding him would kill him.
- 16 Then Cain went from the presence of Yahweh and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.
- 17 And Cain knew his wife and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch; and he built a city and called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch.
- 18 To Enoch was born Irad,<sup>23</sup> and Irad fathered Mehujael, and Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech.
- 19 And Lamech took for himself two wives. The name of the first [was] Adah, and the name of the second [was] Zillah.
- 20 Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of [those] who dwell in tents and [those] who have livestock.
- 21 The name of his brother [was] Jubal; he was the father of [those] who play [the] lyre and [the] pipe.
- 22 Zillah also gave birth to Tubal-cain; he was the forger<sup>24</sup> of all [kinds of] tools of bronze and iron. The sister of Tubal-cain [was] Naamah.
- 23 And Lamech said to his wives, "Adah and Zillah, listen [to] my voice, wives of Lamech, hear my word, for I have killed a man for wounding me; and a young man for striking me.
- 24 If Cain is to be avenged seven times, then Lamech's [is] seventy-seven fold."

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<sup>20</sup> נָרַע (*nw'*, Qal. Participle) The participle is used substantively.

<sup>21</sup> נָרַד (*nwd*, Qal. Participle) The participle is used substantively.

<sup>22</sup> עֲוֹן (*'āwōn*) usually means "iniquity" or "guilt" but can occasionally mean "punishment" (HALOT 2000:800).

<sup>23</sup> The emphatic 'eṭ appears 52 times in the Old Testament.

<sup>24</sup> לִטָּשׁ (*lṭš*, Qal. Participle) The participle is used substantively.

- 25 And Adam knew his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and she called his name Seth, for [she said], “God has appointed for me another child in the place of Abel, for Cain killed him.”
- 26 And for Seth, to him also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh;<sup>25</sup> at that time<sup>26</sup> [men] began<sup>27</sup> to call upon the name of Yahweh.

### 3.1.1.2. Historical Hermeneutics

Whereas Genesis 2-3 recount the life of Adam and Eve within Eden, chapter 4 begins a new saga of humanity’s first parents’ experience outside the garden. Sadly, the optimism of the narrative quickly turns to the sordid account of sin’s continuing encroachment by the murder of Abel at the hands of his elder brother (vv3-16). The larger pericope, the generation of the heavens and earth (2:4-4:26), concludes with God’s grace toward Adam and Eve. Seth, Adam’s third son, replaces the murdered Abel and heads a new progeny that is remembered as the time for “when men began to call on the name of the Lord” (4:25-26).

#### 3.1.1.2.1. Authorship

The issue of the authorship regarding the book of Genesis is inescapably intertwined with the question of the composition and origin of the entire Pentateuch. Surprisingly, however, the book of Genesis gives no explicit indication for its authorship, nor does the rest of the Pentateuch attribute authorship to any one individual in particular. Nevertheless, it is defensible from both internal and external evidence that the Pentateuch is Mosaic. It may be helpful, at this point, to include an extended discussion on the nature of the Pentateuch’s authorship.

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<sup>25</sup> Sailhamer (2008:98) suggests a wordplay between (’îš) and (’ēnôš), establishing a literary connection between the first son and the last son.

<sup>26</sup> The particle ’āz, “at that time,” has a variety of meanings in the Old Testament. It can mean “after this,” or “because of this.”

<sup>27</sup> The passive use of “to begin” is impersonal in this instance.

### 3.1.1.2.2. Mosaic Authorship

“The author of the Pentateuch has become one of the most complex and provocative issues in biblical studies,” claims Alexander (2003:61). Although no direct connection is made between Moses and the Torah, it has become closely associated with him because of his central role in Exodus to Deuteronomy. This is made evident by a number of references pertaining to Moses’ writing activities. God commands him to record certain historical events (Ex 17:14; Num 33:2) and laws (Ex.24:4; 34:27) as well as a song (Deut 31:22). These textual records bear witness to the fact that Moses was both the recipient of divine revelation and a witness to redemptive acts.

Claims of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch are also echoed throughout the rest of the Old Testament. There was a book of the Law that was associated with Moses’ name (Josh 1:7, 8). Moreover, in later biblical revelation, the Israelites referred to a “Book of Moses” (2 Chr 25:4; Ezra 6:18; Neh 13:1). “These passages,” according to Longman and Dillard (2006:41), “provide strong intrabiblical data for a Mosaic writing, while not being specific about its shape or scope.” It is also clear that Jesus and the early Church connected much, if not all, of the Torah with Moses (Mt 19:7-8; 22:24; Mk 7:10; 12:26; Lk 24:24, 27; Jn 1:17; 5:46; 7:23; Acts 3:22; 15:21; Rom 9:15; 10:19; 2 Co 3:1; Heb 9:19). This weight of biblical evidence has led to the prevailing belief that Moses wrote the Torah.

This affirmation, however, deserves qualification. There are certain passages which, based on a clear reading of the text, were added after Moses’ death. The most obvious of these is found in Deuteronomy 34, the record of Moses’ death which was likely added by Joshua (Smith 1993:20). Additionally, Numbers 12:3 refers to Moses as the most humble man who ever lived. This would be self-contradictory if written by Moses himself. Upon closer inspection, the term *’ānāw* (meek) is not the normal Hebrew word for humility or meekness but one that conveys an individual’s dependence upon the Lord (Cole 2000:202).

It must also be admitted that multiple sources have been used in the composition of the Torah (cf. Num 21:14; Ex 24:7). The use of such sources by the biblical author

neither denies the biblical text nor the doctrine of Scripture. These considerations led Longman and Dillard to conclude:

The conservative view has always been qualified, however subtly, by admitting non-Mosaic elements to the Torah ... Since there are what appear to be obvious later additions, many conservatives speak in terms of the “essential authorship” of Moses. This expression vigorously affirms Moses as the author of the Torah, while also leaving open the possibility of later canonical additions (2006:42).

### 3.1.1.2.3. Non-Mosaic Authorship

The historical affirmation of Mosaic authorship has not gone unchallenged. Wellhausen’s work, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (1885), focused on documentary hypothesis which would set the trajectory for subsequent generations. The start of the twentieth century saw a new consensus emerge, one that rejected the long-standing tradition of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Wellhausen argued that the Pentateuch was composed of four sources based on the following.<sup>28</sup>

Firstly, the use of two different divine names in Genesis (Elohim [God] and Yahweh [LORD]) led some scholars to suggest that several documents or fragments had been combined to form the present text. These documents were divided into Yahwist’s Narrative (J) and the Elohist’s Narrative (E). Additionally, Wellhausen included the Deuteronomist document (D) and the Priestly document (P). Secondly, the same basic story is repeated more than once (doublets).<sup>29</sup> Thirdly, differences in style which included different names for the same person (e.g. Horeb/Sinai; Jacob/Israel). Fourthly, different theologies seem to indicate different emphases of the various authors. These sources would have been interwoven by a redactor or editor. There are a number of variations to Wellhausen’s documentary hypothesis. These include: fragmentary approach, supplementary approach, and form criticism. Wellhausen tied his documentary hypothesis to an evolutionary approach to Israel’s history, one which minimized the historicity of the patriarchal period and, therefore, Moses’ prominence (Hubbard 1996:894).

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<sup>28</sup> What follows is a summary of Longman and Dillard (2006:43-47).

<sup>29</sup> In response to this, Hubbard (1996:896) contends, “Repetition within Heb. prose may be connected with the characteristically Heb. (and indeed Semitic) use of repetition for emphasis. Ideas are underscored in Heb. literature not by the logical connection with other ideas but by a creative kind of repetition which seeks to influence the reader’s will.”

These theories have, in recent years however, been met with skepticism. Although not completely discarded, the documentary theory has been modified by modern scholars. Alexander (2003:62) writes, "While proponents of the Documentary Hypothesis still exist, there is an ever-growing unease that it fails to provide the best explanation for the composition of the Pentateuch."

Although biblical scholarship is divided on the issue of how the Pentateuch was composed, and even though the Pentateuch itself offers no clear statement regarding its author, it is nevertheless possible to affirm Mosaic authorship (contra Alexander 2003:70). In any case, the concern of the current author is the final form of the text, since that is what God has preserved for and given to the Church for its edification. In subsequent sections, I will provide internal biblical evidence for Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.

#### 3.1.1.2.4. Recipients and Purpose

As with the nature of its authorship, the purpose of Genesis is intertwined with its relationship to the rest of the Pentateuch. "Genesis does not come to us as an isolated book," affirms Sailhamer (2008:34), "it is part of a larger work called the Pentateuch, the first five books of Moses." For example, the opening verses of Exodus presuppose that the reader is already familiar with the main details of the story of the Joseph narrative in Genesis 37-50. Moreover, Exodus 13:19 refers back to Joseph's comments in Genesis 50:25 concerning his bones being taken up out of Egypt. Additionally, the books of Genesis to Deuteronomy are bound together by a plot that involve two strands of divine promise, that of land and a royal deliverer, both of which remain unfulfilled by the end of the Pentateuch (Alexander 2003:69).

The purpose of Genesis, therefore, serves as a prelude to God's overarching purposes for the nation of Israel as a whole. Smith (1993:36) writes, "After the long Egyptian bondage, God's people needed to be reminded of their roots. They needed an accurate account of the promises which God had made to their fathers. Thus, the immediate purpose of the author is to remind the Israelites that God had promised to deliver them from bondage (Gen 15:16; 46:4)." Similarly, Mathews (1996:52) affirms,



“Genesis was cast so that the Mosaic community could draw the inferential analogies between the distant past and their present experiences.”

### 3.1.1.3. Linguistic Hermeneutics

#### 3.1.1.3.1. Genre

The book of Genesis possesses a complex literary composition. In chapter 4 itself, historical narrative, genealogy, and lyric poetry are all present. Mathews (1996:261) suggests that, “The genealogical schema (*tōlēdōt*) of the book that dominates the structure of the whole has set the primeval narratives as the preamble to Israel’s history, thus understanding these first events as part and parcel of Israel’s national history.”

#### 3.1.1.3.2. Important Recurring Verbs (by stem)

Stem	Meaning	Verse	Analysis	Translated As
ילד	to give birth	4:1	Qal. Imperfect. 3FS	she conceived and <i>bore</i> Cain
		4:2	Qal. Infinitive. Construct	And again, she <i>bore</i>
		4:17	Qal. Imperfect. 3FS	she conceived and <i>bore</i>
		4:18	Niphal. Imperfect. 3MS	To Enoch was <i>born</i>
		4:18	Qal. Perfect. 3MS	Irak <i>fathered</i>
		4:18	Qal. Perfect. 3MS	Mehujael <i>fathered</i>
		4:18	Qal. Perfect. 3MS	Methushael <i>fathered</i>
		4:20	Qal. Imperfect. 3FS	Adah <i>bore</i>
		4:22	Qal. Perfect. 3FS	Zillah also <i>bore</i>
		4:25	Qal. Imperfect. 3FS	she <i>bore</i>
		4:26	Paul. Perfect. 3MS	a son was <i>born</i>
הרג	to kill	4:8	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS Pronominal Suffix 2MS	and <i>killed</i> him
		4:14	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS Pronominal Suffix 1S	will <i>kill</i> me
		4:15	Qal. Participle. MS. Construct	if anyone <i>kills</i> Cain

		4:23	Qal. Perfect. 1S	I have <i>killed</i> a man
		4:25	Qal. Perfect. 3MS Pronominal Suffix 2MS	for Cain <i>killed</i> him
יָדַע	to know	4:1	Qal. Perfect. 3MS	Adam <i>knew</i> his wife
		4:9	Qal. Perfect. 1S	I do not <i>know</i>
		4:17	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	Cain <i>knew</i> his wife
		4:25	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	Adam <i>knew</i> his wife
קָרָא	to call	4:17	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	he <i>called</i> the name
		4:25	Qal. Imperfect. 3FS	<i>called</i> his name
		4:26	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	<i>called</i> his name
		4:26	Qal. Infinitive. Construct	<i>call</i> upon the name
יָסַף	to add	4:2	Hiphil. Imperfect. 3FS	She <i>again</i> gave birth
		4:12	Hiphil. Imperfect. 3FS	it will not <i>again</i> yield
חָרָה	to become angry	4:5	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	Cain was very <i>angry</i>
		4:6	Qal. Perfect. 3MS	Why are you <i>angry</i>
נָקַם	to avenge	4:15	Hophal. Imperfect. 3MS	<i>vengeance</i> shall be taken
		4:24	Hophal. Imperfect. 3MS	If Cain's <i>revenge</i> is sevenfold

Table 1: Important Recurring Verbs in Genesis 4:1-26

### 3.1.1.3.3. Important Recurring Words (by stem)

Stem	Meaning	Occurrences	Verse	Translated As
אָהַב	brother	6	4:8	Abel his <i>brother</i>
			4:8	Abel his <i>brother</i>
			4:9	Abel your <i>brother</i>
			4:9	keeper of my <i>brother</i>
			4:10	your <i>brother's</i> blood
			4:11	your <i>brother's</i> blood
אֲדָמָה	ground	3	4:10	from the <i>ground</i>

			4:11	from the <i>ground</i>
			4:12	When you till the <i>ground</i>
מִנְחָה	offering	3	4:3	an <i>offering</i>
			4:4	his <i>offering</i>
			4:5	his <i>offering</i>

Table 2: Important Recurring Words in Genesis 4

The frequent use of the verb “to give birth” indicates the presence of a genealogy. However, the repetition of the word “brother” reveals a clear theological intention by the author as the genealogy is interwoven into the narrative. This intention is observed as the verb “to call” is initially used for the naming of children, while it is later used in the context of worship, to “call upon the name of Yahweh.” In this way, the author reveals that the passage is concerned about the preservation of a godly line after the death of Abel.

#### 3.1.1.3.4. Structure

Internally, Genesis 4:1-26 possesses evidence of cohesion. The birth announcements at the three seams of the chapter have similar language. The narrative is built on the numerical congruity of sevens and multiples of seven (cf. v15; v24). The same Hebrew construction (participle used substantively) identifies the occupations of Cain and Abel as well as those found in Cain’s genealogy.

Structurally the Cain-Abel narrative (4:3-16) is sandwiched between two sections recounting the birth and genealogy of Adam’s descendants, Cain (v1-2) and Seth (v25-26). Cain’s genealogy ends with Lamech boasting of his infamous career (4:23-24). This is followed by the announcement of Seth’s birth and a brief genealogical statement with a note about worship of the Lord (4:25-26). The chapter begins and ends with the same subject matter of worship.

### 3.1.1.3.4.1. Text Outline

A v1-2 Filling the Earth: The Birth of Cain and Abel

B v3-7 A Call to Worship: Cain and Abel Before the Lord

C v8-16 The Reign of Sin: The Death of Abel by the Hands of Cain

A' v17-24 The Earth Filled: The Descendants of Cain

B' v25-27 Worship Restored: The Birth of Seth and Calling on the Name of the Lord

### 3.1.1.3.5. Commentary

#### 3.1.1.3.5.1. Filling the Earth: The Birth of Cain and Abel v1-2

The Hebrew term “knew” (*yd*) generally speaks of intimate personal relationship (BDB 1977:393). Cain’s birth is the first indication that God’s earlier promise (Gen 3:15-16) would be fulfilled and that Adam’s faith was not misplaced (3:20). The narrator reinforces this indirectly in referring to Adam’s wife by the seldom-used “Eve” (Mathews 1996:264).

Eve acknowledges this when she attributes to the Lord’s involvement her giving birth to Cain. By a play on the sound of the verb “brought forth” (*qānîti*), Eve names her eldest “Cain” (*qayin*). The verb has two different meanings. It could be translated with the meaning of being acquired, as “gotten” (ESV, NASB) or in the sense of create, as “brought forth” (NIV). By utilising such creation language Eve acknowledges that this achievement came only by the assistance of the Lord. This is in contrast to viewing herself in the role of cocreator (Walton 2001:261).

#### 3.1.1.3.5.2. A Call to Worship: Cain and Abel Before the Lord v3-7

“In the course of time” may imply that the practice of giving offerings was customary for the brothers, perhaps learned from Adam. Cain and Abel’s offerings were presented to the Lord according to their differing vocations. These offerings are described with the same term מִנְחָה (*minḥâ*), which can be used as a general reference to any kind of gift (Gen 32:13; 1 Sam 10:27). Cain, however, did not bring the firstfruits

(*bikkûrîm*; cf. Lev 2:14), but only “some” of his crop (contra Sailhamer 2008:96). This is contrasted with the offering of Abel who brought not only “some” of his “firstborn” (*bikkôrôt*, BDB 1977:114) but the best of the animal, the fatty portions. The passage is intent on showing the contrast between the two men. At this point the narrative ties together the worshiper and his offering as God considers the merit of their individual worship. Both giver and gift were under the scrutiny of God. Cain’s offering was not accepted because he retained the best of his produce for himself (Mathews 1996:268).

By remaining silent regarding the exact reason why God rejected Cain’s offering, the author seems far more concerned with his response to the Lord’s rejection (Sailhamer 2008:97). Walton (2001:263) argues, “Whatever the cause of Cain’s rejection, the text is more interested in his response to it than it is in delineating the details. The offence under scrutiny is the murder of Abel, not the unacceptable offering.” God questions Cain for the same purpose he questions Adam and Eve in the garden (3:9, 11). That is, God’s purpose was not intended to scold but to elicit Cain’s admission of sin with the view to repentance (Mathews 1996:269). When Cain practices what is right, there will be an uplifted face, meaning a good conscience before God without shame. Understanding the expression, “If you do well, will not [your face] be lifted up?” this way reverses the earlier imagery of Cain’s downcast face.

The Lord forewarned Cain that right action would be rewarded but a wrong course meant giving sin an opportunity to destroy him. The consequences of his reaction to God’s correction are more far-reaching than the initial sin itself, for if he pursues sin’s anger, it will result in sin’s mastery over him.

The term “crouch” (*rābaṣ*) is commonly used of domesticated animals (Gen 29:2; 49:9; Ex 23:5). This pictures sin temporarily at bay, but coming alive when stirred. The Lord instructed Cain that though sin “desires” him he can still “master” it (4:7b). This language is an allusion to the judgment oracle against the woman (3:16), reminding Cain of the earlier consequences of sin. Cain’s despicable action is underscored by the repeated phrase “Abel, *his brother*” (also v 9-11).

### 3.1.1.3.5.3. The Reign of Sin: The Death of Abel by the Hands of Cain v8-16

God's question "Where is your brother Abel?" echoes the inquiry put to Adam in the garden, "Where are you? (Gen 3:9)" Both acts of disobedience are intentionally tied together, indicating that Cain's disobedience had its antecedents in the sin of his father (Mathews 1996:273). However, unlike his father Adam, Cain adds to his condemnation by lying. He attempts to elude the question and thereby absolve himself of responsibility.

This is followed by divine punishment similar to that found in the garden, "you [are] cursed (*'ārûr*)." Like the serpent, Cain is placed under a curse. "Cursed are you above (*min*) all the livestock" (3:14) is parallel to "cursed are you from (*min*) the ground" (4:11). This connection highlights that both the serpent and Cain are murderers who receive the same retribution. Because Cain has polluted the ground with innocent blood, he is "driven" from it as his parents were from the garden (3:24).

Cain acknowledges that God's punishment will result in his death. Cain's complaint repeats the description in 3:24, where God "drove" (*gāraš*) his parents out of the garden. Being "cast out" means a loss of the protection not only of his community, but also of the Lord. Cain, however, adds that he will be left to himself and forgotten by God and without his protection. Yet, despite Cain's expulsion, the Lord does not leave him helpless. Matthews (1996:278) suggests that, "God prevents the spread of bloodshed that otherwise would escalate." Thus, the Lord's response is merciful even in the light of such grievous sin, perhaps indicating that Cain manifests a repentant heart (Sailhamer 2008:101).

### 3.1.1.3.5.4. The Earth Filled: The Descendants of Cain v17-24

By tracing the lineage of Cain immediately following God's promise, the author of Genesis demonstrates the mercy and faithfulness of the Lord. Cain survives and founds a posterity. Although the genealogy demonstrates how sin disqualified Cain's household as the lineage of blessing, it shows conversely that God's promise of

preservation for Cain was honoured. Generously, the Lord grants even the wicked Cainites the power of propagation, and therefore they too share (partially) in the blessing of all those who bear the “image” of God (1:26-28).

Another evidence of God’s grace may well be the advancements that the Cainite family achieve in the development civilisation. Yet just as the blessing of progeny by Cain is shadowed by Abel’s murder and the antics of Lamech, the blessing of the learned arts is sullied by the embarrassment of Lamech’s polygamy and the weaponry developed by his son Tubal-Cain, who also bears the name of his infamous ancestor.

### 3.1.1.3.5.5. Worship Restored: The Birth of Seth and Calling on the Name of the Lord v25-27

Within the narrative of Genesis, there is an early expectation for the seed (זֶרַע; *zērā*). Would Cain or Abel be the one to crush the serpent’s head? Such expectation is soon diminished, however, with the death of Abel by the hands of his brother. The godly murdered by the ungodly. It would be inconceivable, therefore, for the one who has slain his own brother to be the promised seed, the one who would restore humanity from Adam’s disobedience (Millar 2016:21). Thus, the lineage of Seth has a particular emphasis upon the backdrop of the earlier verses in Genesis 4. Even though the creation mandate, “[To] be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen 1:28) is evidenced through Cain’s descendants who show skill in architecture (1:17), agriculture (1:20), music (1:21), and metallurgy (1:22), there is still something amiss.

As the writer of Genesis transitions from the lineage of Cain to that of Seth, significant developments within the text must be noted. The concluding phrase, “At that time, [men] began to call upon the name of Yahweh” highlights a definite beginning of something that was never experienced before. According to TLOT (1997:427) the verb translated as “began” (הָלַל; *hll*) ordinarily carries the meaning of “desecration,” while the root represents the original connotation of being “loosed” or “set free” (cf. GHCLLOT 2003:281). The Jewish Targums reflect the former understanding in its opinion of Enosh. While they render the Hebrew הָלַל as “began,” they also understood it as carrying the connotation of “pollute.” Targum Neofiti (McNamara 1992 cited in

Mathews 1996:292) reads, “Then the sons of man began to make idols for themselves and to surname them by the name of the Memra of the Lord.” Thus the verse referred to the defilement of the name Yahweh by the making of an idol and giving it the sacred name. Enosh then was viewed not as the paradigm of godliness but the beginning of moral degradation.

Mathews (1996:292) contends, however, that הלל (began) consistently appears in Genesis 1-11, “To mark strategic new features in the progress of the narrative (6:1; 9:20; 10:8; 11:6).” In light of this, Genesis 4:26b announces a new direction in formal worship. This is similar to Abram building an altar upon arriving in Canaan, where the same descriptive phrase, “called on the name of the Lord,” occurs (12:8). By inaugurating altar worship in Canaan, a historic significance for the family of faith occurred. Even so, prayer at the birth of Enosh began in a decisive way for the Sethite generations.

In order to see the importance of this development, Millar (2016:21) suggests that one must focus on the preceding context. It is at this point that the reader encounters, according to Walton (2001:278), the first example of literary device in the Genesis narrative. The text has followed the genealogical line of least interest first, but now transitions to bring into the spotlight the line of most significance. Brueggemann (1982:66) observes, “After this time, the family of humankind is not traced from the deathly Cain, whose genealogy ends with Lamech.” The author of Genesis is not merely concerned with giving the reader a record of Adam’s and Eve’s descendants, but he is also focused on those who will walk with God and those who will not. Such a concern is evident in the Cain and Abel pericope that begins chapter 4.

According to Mathews (1996:279) the author of Genesis intentionally contrasts the lineage of Seth with that of Cain. He writes, “Whereas Cain’s progeny founded the civilised arts, Seth’s era is remembered as the time mankind worshipped the Lord” (v26b). Walton (2001:279), however, disagrees, “Just as there is no implication that only Cain’s line had cities and the arts of civilisation, so the text does not imply that only the line of Seth called on the name of the Lord”. Likewise, Provan (2016:107) writes, “Since this cannot refer to the beginning of worship of Yahweh as such,



because that was already happening before (e.g. in the sacrifices of Cain and Abel), we must assume that it is a reference to the beginning of *widespread* worship of Yahweh” (emphasis original). What Walton and Provan seem to miss, however, is that the birth of Seth is interpreted by Eve as God’s response to the loss of righteous Abel (Mathews 1996:290). By bearing ‘again,’ the hope of a זָרַע אֲחֵר (lit. another seed) born to Eve meant a righteous lineage is possible through Adam’s son Seth.

Furthermore genealogies, as Robinson (1986:595) suggests, are designed to celebrate life and accomplishment by tracing the continuation of family from one ancestor to the next. While Cain’s record involves the cessation of life, as represented by the murderers Cain and Lamech; Seth’s genealogy, on the other hand, shows the orderly progress of creation through procreation and the succession of the “image” (5:1b–3). What is surprising, however, is the limited space devoted to Seth. The author seems far more focused on developing the narrative in order to arrive at Seth’s descendent, Enosh. Millar (2016:21) suggests that this omission may be due to the reality (albeit an argument from silence) that Seth shows no sign of resembling the promised זָרַע (seed). The birth of his son Enosh, however, initiates something never seen before.

Enosh’s birth marks an important point in the development of the righteous lineage of Adam. But, unlike previous instances in Scripture where one’s name is intricately connected with the immediate context (e.g. Gen 1:26; 3:20; 4:2), prayer seems to have little intrinsic connection with Enosh himself. His name has no relation to prayer, nor is he mentioned again apart from the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 1 Chronicles 1. The answer must lie elsewhere.

The name אֱנוֹשׁ (Enosh) in Hebrew can function both as a common noun and as the name of an individual (HALOT 2000:70; GHCLLOT 2003:63-64). As a common noun it may indicate an individual “man” in a general sense (cf. Job 5:17) or collective “mankind,” where it is synonymous with *’ādām* (cf. Job 36:25; Ps 8:4 [5]). This leads Mathews (1996:291) to conclude that, “‘Enosh’ then as the new ‘Adam’ who heads a new line that will receive the blessing and survive the flood.”

It is at this time that people “began to call on the name of the Lord” (v26b)<sup>30</sup>. Theologically speaking, the context surrounding 4:26 is one of historical-redemptive anticlimax. The notion that the promised seed restoring creation immediately is itself crushed. The expected seed is clearly not Cain, Abel, or Seth, but the birth of Enosh leads to people calling on the name of the Lord. “With the beginning of the new life,” says Brueggemann (1982:67), “there is reference to the beginning of reliance on Yahweh (4:26; cf. 12:8; 13:4; 26:25). The God to whom Cain turned in despair is the God the new family now embraces.”

The reference to “calling on the name of the Lord” also links 4:25-26a with the succeeding material at 5:2-3, where the “naming” formula reappears, “And she/he called his name ...” This same formula is reserved for the naming of the final patriarch “Noah” in 5:29. Thus while the Sethite members give birth and name their offspring, they also give homage to the Lord by calling on his name (Mathews 1996:292).

A number of exegetical difficulties are faced in the latter half of verse 26b, resulting in conflicting translations in the ancient versions. First, the Hebrew text has an indefinite construction (lit. “it was begun to call ...”), resulting in no stated subject. Modern translations supply the subject, such as “men” (NIV, NASB) or “people” (NRSV). The LXX, however, attributed to Enosh himself the innovation of calling on the “name of the Lord.” The significance of this cannot be overlooked, by attributing to Seth’s first genealogical descendant the introduction of public worship, these versions draw an even sharper distinction between Cain’s offspring and that of Seth. Cain’s progeny and successors pioneer cities and the civilised arts, but Seth’s firstborn and successors pioneer worship (Mathews 1996:292).

At this point, time must be devoted to unpacking the precise nuance of the phrase, “calling of the name of Yahweh.” This too has received a host of differing opinions.

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<sup>30</sup> A problem frequently cited in Gen 4:26b is how to correlate what appears to be the introduction of the name “Lord” (Yahweh) here with its use as early as 2:4 and routinely in the garden narrative (2:4-4:26). Moreover, this statement appears to contradict the revelation of the Lord to Moses at Sinai (Ex 3:6, 15; 6:2-3). Critical scholars commonly contend that the name Yahweh was unknown until it was first revealed to Moses. However, a lengthy discussion on the subject lies outside the scope of this dissertation.

Clowney (1990:138), somewhat simplistically suggests, “In the most basic sense, calling on God’s name means uttering his name aloud, addressing him by name.” Akin to this, Moore (1941:337) suggests that prayer, “is a frank, unfeigned, specific pleading with God to perform what only He can bring to pass.” Rosscup (2008:23) goes a bit further by asserting, “The calling is a communion that addresses the Lord in worship, devoting attention to Him.” HALOT (2000:1130) suggests, “Entering into an intensive relationship as someone who calls.” Millar (2016:22) contends that, “When this phrase is used in the Old Testament, it is asking God to intervene specifically to do one thing — to come through on his promises.”

In order to make sense of this, Ross (1997:148) helpfully remarks that the name of the Lord is metonymical for his very nature. In Genesis 12:8 and 13:4 Abram called on the name of the Lord, relying on the Lord to fulfil what he had previously promised. This is also the case in 1 Kings 18:24. As Elijah confronts the prophets of Baal he challenges, “And you call upon the name of your god, and I will call upon the name of the Lord.” Elijah understands this phrase as prayer and that such prayer revolves around the Lord’s promises to the patriarchs.

And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, “O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back” (1 Kgs 18:36-37; ESV).

Likewise, in the prophetic literature, calling on the name of the Lord is not a vague term to cover all kinds of interaction with the Lord. Rather it is intimately connected with the Lord’s plans to act on behalf of his people. In Isaiah 12:3, calling on the name of the Lord is the definitive mark of God’s people. The prophets Joel (2:32), Zephaniah (3:9), and Zechariah (13:9) all see a clear connection between the Lord’s covenant commitment and calling upon his name. The thrust of the biblical evidence leads Millar to conclude:

It is clear, then, that as the Old Testament unfolds, to ‘call on the name of Yahweh’ is not simply to ‘pray’ in any generic sense. To call on the name of Yahweh is to cry to God to come through on his promises, and specifically to rescue and give life to his covenant people. It is a prayer for salvation, or an expression of the fact that one is relying on God for salvation (2016:26).

The closing verses of Genesis 4 deliberately look back upon the opening pericope of the chapter (Sailhamer 2008:103). Despite the heinous consequences of sin, there are, nevertheless, signs of grace. It becomes increasingly transparent that Genesis 4:25-26 should not be glanced over as a mere historical footnote but bare significant theological weight which will affect the trajectory for prayer in the Pentateuch and the rest of Scripture. While prayer may not necessarily play a significant role in the rest of the book of Genesis — as many key incidents occur without anything resembling prayer — it does not mean that the narrative has nothing to contribute to a biblical theology of prayer. As observed, corporate prayer in Genesis is to cry out to God to fulfil his promises, and specifically to rescue his covenant people. It is, one might say, a prayer for salvation, or an expression of the fact that one is relying on God for salvation.

#### 3.1.1.4. Redemptive Hermeneutics

It is interesting to note, in the first place, that the primary trajectory of corporate prayer is not praise, lament, or intercession. Corporate prayer begins in Scripture as a cry for God to do what he has promised.<sup>31</sup> This hope is built upon the foundation that God himself speaks. The Trinity is eternally, ontologically communal and communicating before ever there were human beings to speak to. Goldsworthy (2003:26) affirms, “He is a discoursing God within the context of the history of redemption for the very reason that he is also a discoursing God within himself from all eternity.” Poythress (1999:16-25) refers to this in his Trinitarian approach to hermeneutics as an essential consideration when thinking about the nature of communication. Such communication, both within the Trinity and amongst mankind created in the image of God, is not merely instinctive. Rather, it is both rational and relational. Berkhof highlights the implication of this in his System Theology as he writes:

His [God’s] life stands out clearly before us in Scripture as a personal life; and it is, of course, of the greatest importance to maintain the personality of God, for without it there can be no religion in the real sense of the word: no prayer, no personal communion, no trustful reliance and no confident hope (1938:84).

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<sup>31</sup> While this dissertation will go on to explore various forms of prayer, it is helpful — at this point — to note that corporate pray must not be viewed as a single indistinguishable mass.

Corporate prayer then, clings to the God who speaks, pleading with him to deal with sin by fulfilling the covenant promises he has revealed (Millar 2016:27; Goldsworthy 2006:21). While the term covenant does not appear in the opening chapters of Genesis, Nichols (2011:123) argues that we should retain its usage, precisely because the *proto-evangelium* is God's solemn pledge to rescue Eve and her seed from the effects of sin (Gen 3:15). In addition to this, God places no conditions upon this promise. It rests upon God alone. The promise of redemption, in other words, is accomplished and applied by divine power (Nichols 2011:126). God's promise forms the first path within redemptive history towards its Christological fulfilment.

The events in the opening chapters of Genesis, particularly the disobedience of Adam, and the subsequent promise of a "seed," looks forward to a new federal head who will undo the effects of sin. This typological disclosure contrasts the first Adam with the last Adam, Jesus Christ. Most poignantly, where Adam fails to confront evil, Jesus remains faithful in the face of temptation (Mt 4:1-22; Mk 1:12-13; Lk 4:1-12). He does so as the last Adam who reverses the results of the curse. Just as sin came into the world through disobedience occasioned by a tree, so Jesus overcomes sin by his obedience on a tree (i.e. the cross). As death comes through Adam, so life comes through Christ.

Christ's work, therefore, must be understood in representative and Adamic terms. Christ's obedience is the answer to Adam's disobedience. Adam acted representatively as a covenant head. Jesus similarly acts as the new covenant head, which means his actions are counted to others vicariously. Berkhof (1938:447) affirms this as he writes, "As Adam was the representative head of the old humanity, so Christ is the representative head of the new humanity. All the blessings of the covenant of grace flow from Him who is the Mediator of the covenant."

This is key to understanding corporate prayer through union with Christ. As the head of a new humanity, corporate prayer becomes the natural practice of those who are restored to God following out of their corporate identity in Jesus. In fact, prayer becomes one of the first means of worship by those whom the Lord calls. Johnston (1870:27) writes, "Prayer was among the very first forms of religious worship known

and practiced by our fallen race.” Berkhof (1938:447) goes on to assert, “Like the first Adam, He [Christ] did not represent a conglomeration of disjointed individuals, but a body of men and women who were to derive their life from Him, to be united by spiritual ties, and thus to form a spiritual organism.”

At this point, Millar (2016:27) contends that corporate prayer cannot be separated from the gospel. To call on the name of the Lord is to ask of God what we cannot do for ourselves. “It is to admit our weakness and appeal to his awesome strength.” Miller (1994:174) affirms this sentiment as he writes, “It may seem anachronistic to say so, but it is nevertheless profoundly true that in these words we hear the ‘gospel.’” This gospel aspect is made clear once we recognise that long before humanity began to call on the name of the Lord, the Lord called on the name of his people (Goldsworthy 2003:109-111; Millar 2016:28). In the Garden of Eden, “The Lord God called to the man and said to him, ‘Where are you?’” (Gen 3:9). Even though Adam and Eve have rejected God, the Lord still calls out to them, long before they call to him. The Lord is the one who initiates the speaking with his people. Seitz writes:

Prayer is not humanity’s effort to reach God from below by crying out to him. Rather it is the consequence of having made himself known, and our faithful response to that prior knowledge. True prayer, therefore, means discourse with the one Lord, and that cannot be taken for granted as covered under some generic deity (2001:15).

To put it another way, those who call on the name of the Lord do so because God has first called on them. John Calvin (1845:2:451) writes, “Just as faith is born from the gospel, so through it our hearts are trained to call upon God’s name.” Thus, when believers corporately call upon the name of the Lord, not only do they take hold of the promise by faith in the one who issues it, they also tangibly express the new creation identity given to them by their federal head, Jesus Christ, the last Adam. For Peskett (1990:26), “To know God’s name is the privilege of a friend, and to be called by his name (2 Chr 7:14) is to belong to his family.”

### 3.2. The God of the Covenant: Corporate Prayer in Exodus

It is important to note the relationship of the book of Exodus within the broader redemptive scheme of God. The book ought not to be thought of as a separate,

independent work. Rather, one must recognise that the Exodus narrative follows on closely from Genesis, such that Exodus 1 constitutes not the beginning of an entirely new work but the beginning of a new section of a larger work (Stuart 2006:20). Maintaining this tight relationship provides a bridge from the death of Joseph (Gen 50:22) to the birth of Moses and the Israelite plight.

### 3.2.1. Exodus 1:1-2:25

#### 3.2.1.1. Translation

- 1:1 These<sup>32</sup> [are] the names of the sons of Israel<sup>33</sup> who came [to] Egypt with Jacob; they came each one with his household:
- 2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah;
- 3 Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin;
- 4 Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher.
- 5 And all the descendants of Jacob<sup>34</sup> were seventy persons, but Joseph was in Egypt.
- 6 And Joseph died<sup>35</sup> and all his brothers and all that generation.
- 7 And the children of Israel were fruitful and multiplied greatly; they multiplied and became exceedingly strong,<sup>36</sup> so that the land was filled with them.
- 8 Now a new king rose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.
- 9 And he said to his people,<sup>37</sup> “Look, the people of the children of Israel [are] greater and more numerous than us.
- 10 Come, let us deal shrewdly with them or else they will become numerous, and, if war comes to pass, they will be added to our enemies and they will fight against us and depart from the land.”

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<sup>32</sup> The first word in Exodus is “and” (*’ēl’lēh*), suggesting that Exodus is a continuation of the narrative that Genesis began (Hamilton (2011:2)).

<sup>33</sup> The Hebrew expression “sons of Israel” (*bēnē yīsrā’ēl*) frequently denotes Israel’s descendants as a people or nation and consequently is sometimes translated “Israelites.” In this context the translation “sons of Israel” is more appropriate since only Israel’s sons are specifically named.

<sup>34</sup> lit. all the person who went out of the loins of Jacob

<sup>35</sup> מוֹת (*mwt*) is singular even though the subject is plural (Joseph, his brothers, that entire generation).

<sup>36</sup> The doubling of *mēōd mēōd* expresses the superlative.

<sup>37</sup> אֱמ (’ām) occurs twice in this verse. In the LXX, the first “people” is translated as *ethnei* (people), but for the Israelite “people” it uses *genos* (race). The latter term indicates that the Israelites were foreigners in Egypt (Hamilton 2011:5).

- 11 So they appointed commanders over them in order to oppress them with forced labour. They built the storage cities for Pharaoh, Pithom and Rameses.
- 12 But the more he oppressed<sup>38</sup> them, so they became more numerous, and so they spread out, and they feared because of the presence<sup>39</sup> of the children of Israel.
- 13 The Egyptians compelled the children of Israel to work with ruthlessness.
- 14 And they made their lives bitter with hard work, with mortar and with bricks and with all kinds of work in the field, with all their work they enslaved them with ruthlessness.
- 15 Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom [was] named Shiphrah and the name of the other [was] Puah.
- 16 And he said, “When you are helping the Hebrew women to give birth and you see them upon the birthstool,<sup>40</sup> if he [is] a son, you shall put him to death, but if she [is] a daughter, she shall live.
- 17 But the midwives feared God and they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live.
- 18 And the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, “Why did you do this thing, and let the boys live?”
- 19 And the midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women [are] not like the Egyptian women, for they [are] vigorous and give birth before the midwives come to them.”
- 20 And God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied and became very numerous.
- 21 Because the midwives feared God, he gave them families.
- 22 And Pharaoh commanded all of his people, saying, “Every son who is born you shall throw into the Nile, but every daughter you shall let live.”
- 2:1 Now a man from the house<sup>41</sup> of Levi went and took a daughter of Levi.
- 2 And the woman conceived and gave birth to a son; and she saw that he [was] beautiful, and she hid him [for] three months.

<sup>38</sup> The imperfect verb refers to past continuous actions.

<sup>39</sup> מִפְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (*mippēnē' bēnē' yisrā'ēl'*) lit. from the face of the children of Israel.

<sup>40</sup> אֲבָנִים (*'ōbñā'yim*) is difficult to translate. The only other use of this term in the Old Testament is found in Jeremiah 18:3, where it refers to a “potter’s wheel.”

<sup>41</sup> בַּיִת (*bā'yit*) lit. house, sometimes refers to a tribe.



- 3 But she was not able to hide him any longer, she took for him a basket of papyrus and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the boy in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the Nile.
- 4 And his sister stood at a distance, to know what would happen to him.
- 5 The daughter of Pharaoh went to wash at the Nile, and her maidservants [were] walking alongside<sup>42</sup> the Nile. And she saw the basket in the midst of the reeds and sent her maid, and she brought it to her.
- 6 And she opened it and saw the boy, and behold the boy was weeping! She had compassion for him and said, “This [is] one of the Hebrews’ boy.”
- 7 Then his sister said to Pharaoh’s daughter, “Shall I go and call a woman [who is] a nurse from the Hebrews to nurse the boy for you?”
- 8 Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Go.” And the girl went and called the mother of the boy.
- 9 And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this boy and nurse him for me and I will give you your wages.” So the woman took the boy and nursed him.
- 10 When the boy grew up she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became a son to her.<sup>43</sup> And she called his name Moses, and said, “Because I drew him out of the water.”
- 11 Now it came about in those days, Moses had grown up,<sup>44</sup> he went out to his brothers and he saw their forced labour; and he saw an Egyptian [was] striking a Hebrew, one of his brothers.
- 12 And he turned here and there and saw that there was no one, and he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.
- 13 He went out the next day, and behold, two Hebrew men were fighting. And he said to the guilty [one], “Why do you strike your companion?”
- 14 And he said, “Who appointed you a prince and a judge<sup>45</sup> over us? [Are] you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?” Then Moses was afraid, and said, “Surely the matter has become known.”

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<sup>42</sup> יָד (yād) lit. hand of the Nile (cf. Num 13:29; Deut 2:37).

<sup>43</sup> The Hebrew idiom indicates that Moses became her son through adoption (Alexander 2017:59).

<sup>44</sup> גדל (gd) is repeated in verses 10 and 11 in order to link these passages.

<sup>45</sup> The Hebrew nouns שָׂר (śār), “prince” and שֹׁפֵט (špē), “judge” do not refer here to two separate roles, but rather form a hendiadys, denoting a single office (cf. 2 Chron 1:2; Prov 8:16; Amos 2:3; Mic 7:3; Zeph 3:3).

- 15 When Pharaoh heard of this matter he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the presence of Pharaoh and he lived in the land of Midian. And he sat down by a well.
- 16 The priest of Midian [had] seven daughters, and they came and drew water and filled up the troughs to provide drink [for] their father's flock.
- 17 And the shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and rescued them and provided drink [for] their flock.
- 18 And they came to Reuel their father, he said, "Why have you come back so quickly today?"
- 19 And they said, "An Egyptian delivered us from the hands of the shepherds, and he also drew for us and provided water for the flock."
- 20 And he said to his daughters, "Where [is] he? Why have you left this man behind? Call him and let him eat bread."
- 21 And Moses agreed to stay with the man, and he gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses.
- 22 And she bore a son and he called his name Gershom because he said, "I am a stranger in a foreign land."
- 23 And it came about during those many days the king of Egypt died and the children of Israel groaned<sup>46</sup> because of their forced labour and they cried out; and their cry for help went up to God because of their forced labour.
- 24 And God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.
- 25 And God saw the children of Israel; and God knew.<sup>47</sup>

### 3.2.1.2. Historical Hermeneutics

#### 3.2.1.2.1. Authorship

The nature of authorship and composition of the Pentateuch was considered, albeit in general, in the preceding section. It may, however, be necessary to point out a few elements that relate specifically to Exodus.

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<sup>46</sup> אָנָה (*nh*) occurs only in the Niphal (cf. Prov 29:2; Isa 24:7; Lam 1:8; Joel 1:18).

<sup>47</sup> It is peculiar to find the verb יָדַע (*yd'*) without an object. LXX, NIV, NKJV, and AV supply the object "them."

The book of Exodus describes events that took place over a period of about eighty-one years. This record begins with the birth of Moses (2:1ff) and ends with the completion of the Tabernacle (40:1-35). Between these two bookends, Moses describes himself in the third person as the author of what he had written. He records how he was told by God to write down the story of the Israelite encounter with the Amalekites at Rephidim (Ex 17:14). He also describes being instructed to write down the law as given him from God (Ex 24:4; 34:1, 27-28). In light of these features, Stuart writes:

In the ancient world, authors did not normally make any statement within their works of their authorship of those works, just as is almost always the case in the modern world. The fact that Moses actually stretched the boundaries of this practice and referred to his authorship within the works we call the books of the Pentateuch probably represents a special attempt to lend authority to those works from within rather than merely via a title or superscription (2006:33).

The explicit witness of the book of Exodus as well as the literary evidence from contemporary sources, underscores the Mosaic authorship of the book of Exodus.<sup>48</sup>

#### 3.2.1.2.2. Recipients and Purpose

Many in the original audience would not have known the details found in the earlier chapters of Exodus. These were people who, after all, had spent hundreds of years in pagan surroundings, most of whom probably needed reintroduction even to the very identity of Yahweh himself. Bearing this in mind, Stuart (2006:28) suggests, “We may reasonably conjecture that the first audience for whom he [Moses] wrote was the second postexodus generation, the one that had grown up in the wilderness during the days described in the book of Numbers.” Similarly, Garrett (1991 cited in Stuart 2006:53-54) has argued that Moses most likely composed these materials during the years of the wilderness wanderings for the benefit of the second-generation Israelites who were growing up during that thirty-nine-year period, as well as for the benefit of those who came to join with Israel either spiritually or ethnically.

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<sup>48</sup> contra Alexander (2017:10) who argues that, “A few explicit statements credit Moses with recording in writing specific parts of Exodus, but the narrator does not claim that Moses is the author of this material (24:4; 34:27-28).”

At the very least, we may assert that Moses would have written the book for the generation that was preparing to enter the promised land. This would have been a reminder to them of who they were and what was required of them in the covenant God had made with their parents.

### 3.2.1.3. Linguistic Hermeneutics

#### 3.2.1.3.1. Genre

The book of Exodus is made up of a number of different types of literature, including narrative, law, and poetry. As with much of the Old Testament, the primary genre for the book of Exodus may be termed as “theological history”. The history of Israel is encased within a narrative which conveys the theological intention of the author. “This history,” according to Longman and Dillard (2006:72), “is called theological or prophetic in recognition of the fact that it is history with the particular intention of revealing the nature of God in his acts.” Thus, it may be asserted that the intention of the book is to inform its readers about God’s great acts in the past.

In addition to the theological history of the book, Exodus — in contrast to other Old Testament literature — highlights the important role of the law. The law is not just an appendage or separate part of the book but flows within the history of redemption, as will be observed.

The genre of Exodus 1-2 may be classified as historical narrative. The author continues to draw out the unfolding purposes of God’s towards the children of Abraham. The nation which went into Egypt, numbering only a handful, has grown to a considerable size. However, despite their impressive growth, the nation now faces a dominant force that threatens their very existence. The narrative genre is further observed through the progression of the passage. The reader develops a heightened sense of moral and theological tension only to be resolved through divine intervention.

### 3.2.1.3.2. Important Recurring Verbs (by stem)

Stem	Meaning	Verse	Analysis	Translated As
יִלַּד	to give birth	1:15	Piel. Participle. FP. Absolute	to the Hebrew <i>midwives</i>
		1:16	Piel. Infinitive. Construct Pronominal Suffix 2FP	Hebrew women <i>to give birth</i>
		1:17	Piel. Participle. FP. Absolute	the <i>midwives</i> feared God
		1:18	Piel. Participle. FP. Absolute	called for the <i>midwives</i>
		1:19	Piel. Participle. FP. Absolute	the <i>midwives</i> said
			Piel. Participle. FS. Absolute	before the <i>midwives</i> come
		1:20	Qal. Perfect. 3P	and <i>give birth</i>
			Piel. Participle. FP. Absolute	God was good to the <i>midwives</i>
		1:21	Piel. Participle. FP. Absolute	the <i>midwives</i> feared God
		2:2	Qal. Imperfect. 3FS	and <i>gave birth</i> to a son
2:22	Qal. Imperfect. 3FS	she <i>bore</i> a son		
רָאָה	to see	1:16	Qal. Perfect. 2FP	and you see them
		2:2	Qal. Imperfect. 3FS	she saw that he [was] beautiful
		2:5	Qal. Imperfect. 3FS	she saw the basket
		2:6	Qal. Imperfect. 3FS Pronominal Suffix 3MS	and saw the boy
		2:11	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	he saw their forced labour
			Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	he saw an Egyptian
		2:12	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	and saw that there was no one
		2:24	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	God saw the children of Israel
קָרָא	to call	1:10	Qal. Imperfect. 3FP	if war comes to pass
		1:18	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	the king of Egypt <i>called</i>
		2:7	Qal. Perfect. 1S	Shall I go and <i>call</i>
		2:8	Qal. Imperfect. 3FS	the girl went and <i>called</i>

		2:10	Qal. Imperfect. 3FS	she <i>called</i> his name Moses
		2:20	Qal. Imperative. 2FP	<i>Call</i> him and let him eat bread
		2:22	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	he <i>called</i> his name Gershom
חיה	to be alive, stay alive	1:16	Qal. Perfect. 3FS	she shall <i>live</i>
		1:17	Piel. Imperfect. 3FP	they let the boys <i>live</i>
		1:18	Piel. Imperfect. 3FP	let the boys <i>live</i>
		1:22	Piel. Imperfect. 2MP	every daughter you shall let <i>live</i>
ידע	to notice	1:8	Qal. Perfect. 3MS	who did not <i>know</i> Joseph
		2:4	Qal. Infinitive. Construct	to <i>know</i> what would happen
		2:14	Niphal. Perfect. 3MS	the matter has become <i>known</i>
		2:25	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	and God <i>knew</i>
עשה	to do, make	1:17	Qal. Perfect. 3P	they did not <i>do</i>
		1:18	Qal. Perfect. 2FP	Why did you <i>do</i> this thing
		1:21	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	he <i>gave</i> them families
		2:4	Niphal. Imperfect. 3MS	what would <i>happen</i> to him
רבה	to become numerous	1:7	Qal. Imperfect. 3MP	they <i>multiplied</i>
		1:10	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	they will become <i>numerous</i>
		1:12	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	they became more <i>numerous</i>
		1:20	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	the people <i>multiplied</i>
מות	to die	1:6	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	And Joseph <i>died</i>
		1:16	Hiphil. Perfect. 2FP	you shall put him to <i>death</i>
		2:23	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	the king of Egypt <i>died</i>
ירא	to fear	1:17	Qal. Imperfect. 3FP	the midwives <i>feared</i> God
		1:21	Qal. Perfect. 3P	the midwives <i>feared</i> God
		2:14	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	Then Moses was <i>afraid</i>
עבד	to toil	1:13	Hiphil. Imperfect. 3MP	compelled...Israel to <i>work</i>
		1:14	Qal. Perfect. 3P	they <i>enslaved</i> them
ענה	to be wretched,	1:11	Piel. Infinitive. Construct Pronominal Suffix 3MS	in order to <i>oppress</i> them

	emaciated	1:12	Piel. Imperfect. 3MP	the more he <i>oppressed</i> them
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Table 3: Important Recurring Verbs in Exodus 1-2

### 3.2.1.3.3. Important Recurring Words (by stem)

Stem	Meaning	Occurrences	Verse	Translated As
בֵּן	son, child	12	1:1	the <i>children</i> of Israel
			1:7	the <i>children</i> of Israel
			1:9	the <i>children</i> of Israel
			1:12	the <i>children</i> of Israel
			1:13	compelled the <i>children</i> of Israel
			1:16	if he [is] a <i>son</i>
			1:22	Every <i>son</i> who is born
			2:2	and gave birth to a <i>son</i>
			2:10	he became a <i>son</i> to her
			2:22	And she bore a <i>son</i>
			2:23	the <i>children</i> of Israel groaned
			2:25	God saw the <i>children</i> of Israel
עֲבֹדָה	work	5	1:14	with hard <i>work</i>
				with all kinds of <i>work</i>
				with all their <i>work</i>
			2:23	because of their <i>forced labour</i>
				because of their <i>forced labour</i>
סְבִלּוֹת	burden	2	1:11	with <i>forced labour</i>
			2:11	he saw their <i>forced labour</i>

Table 4: Important Recurring Words in Exodus 1-2

The repetition of the words “give birth” and “son” highlights the authors concern with the preservation of the nation of Israel. Such a concern, however, it not merely tied to the present circumstances of the nation, but its future preservation as well. Yahweh,

intervenes for the nation through Moses, who Pharaoh's daughter "saw" was beautiful. While Moses "saw" the suffering and "labour" of the nation, he could not provide deliverance by his own actions. In contrast, Yahweh "saw" and "knew" their suffering, raising up Moses to be his representative.

#### 3.2.1.3.4. Structure

As the second book of the Pentateuch, Exodus continues the story that begins in Genesis. The structure of Exodus, therefore, is a substructure of the Pentateuch, one integral part of the whole. As such, the introduction to the book of Exodus functions as a transition to the entire book. It provides a sense of continuity from the book of Genesis which introduces God's plan of redemption. This "transitional-introduction" (Stuart 2006:54) is composed of six component parts.

In the first place, Moses includes the twelve sons of Jacob (Ex 1:1-6), connecting the narrative of Exodus with the patriarchal narratives of Genesis 12-50. Thereafter, secondly, Moses describes how the descendants of Jacob flourished in Egypt, even while under severe oppression (1:7-14). The promises made to Abraham (Gen 26:3-4; 46:3) are being fulfilled, yet the reader senses they may be under threat. Such growth, thirdly, makes the Israelites a target for Pharaoh (1:15-22). He introduces a vicious genocide with the goal of controlling the Israelite population. Moses' birth (2:1-10), fourthly, is found in the midst of this campaign. Fifthly, Moses himself experiences a personal exodus (or exile). He is forced to flee from Egypt as a criminal sought for murder. These verses cover a forty-year period. Reflecting on this, Stuart (2006:55) writes, "Moses was allowed to understand both the experience of fleeing Egypt and a great deal about survival in the Sinai wilderness, knowledge that constituted part of God's preparation of him to assume the position of leader of God's deliverance." Lastly, the chapter is brought to a close reminding the reader of two important facts: the severity of the Israelite oppression and that God had not forgotten his people (2:23-25).

It is important to note that Moses, within this transitional-introduction, carefully avoids including the divine name Yahweh. He only introduces it again in 3:2, even though he employed it 175 times throughout the book of Exodus (Stuart 2006:55).



#### 3.2.1.3.4.1. Text Outline

- A 1:1-6 Looking Back: The Continuity of God's Promise
- B 1:7-14 The Bondage of Israel
- C 1:15-22 Population Control
- D 2:1-10 God's Provision
- E 2:11-22 Moses' Exodus
- F 2:23-25 God's Concern

#### 3.2.1.3.5. Commentary

##### 3.2.1.3.5.1. Looking Back: The Continuity of God's Promise 1:1-6

These opening verses provide an obvious connection to what Moses said in the latter chapters of Genesis. His desire is to ensure that the reader understands that the book of Exodus is a direct continuation of Genesis. This is accomplished from the outset by making the first six words in the Hebrew of Exodus identical to the first six words of Gen 46:8 (Stuart 2006:57; Alexander 2017:38).

By listing the twelve names of the sons of Israel, the first readers of the book would have been reminded that the great nation of Israel which came out of Egypt, numbering many tens of thousands, had gone into Egypt numbering only seventy. These readers would have been those who belonged to the huge exodus nation, for whom Moses composed the narrative. This little detail was a reminder of the faithfulness of God to his promises. The background of this great host was traceable to a single man's family.

##### 3.2.1.3.5.2. The Bondage of Israel 1:7-14

The language used by Moses casts the reader's mind back to the Genesis creation story (Alexander 2017:42). The language of Exodus 1:7 parallels the creation language of Genesis 1:28 and 9:1. The point made by such language is that Israel's population growth was the result of God's original design and ongoing care. The link with Genesis 1:28 implies that, like their forefathers, the Israelites were fulfilling the creation mandate (Enns 2000:41). According to Porten and Ruppaport (1971 cited in

Hamilton 2011:5), “The climax of Genesis 1 is Exodus 1: the divine power to proliferate found its highest expression in the emergence of Israel.” Fretheim goes even further as he views Israel as fulfilling in microcosm what God intended for the whole of creation:

*God’s intentions in creation are being realized in this family; what is happening is in tune with God’s creational purposes. This is a microcosmic fulfillment of God’s macrocosmic design for the world (cf. 40:34-38). Israel is God’s starting point for realizing the divine intentions for all (1991 cited in Alexander 2017:43; emphasis original).*

It is against this distinctive background that the opposition of the new Egyptian king must be understood.

A king who has no knowledge of Joseph now rises to power in Egypt. The precise identity of this new monarch is never given. This appears to be a deliberate act on the part of Moses, who contrasts various unnamed kings with Israel’s God, whose name is revealed as Yahweh. Alexander (2017:43) affirms, “In spite of their influential position the kings of Egypt are ‘nonentities’ from an Israelite perspective.”

The brief comment that this king “did not know Joseph” must be understood to mean that he refused to honour any prior arrangements protecting the status of the Israelites. By implication, the former assurances given to Israel are now invalid.

An important contrast is introduced in verse 9 between the Egyptians and the Israelites. The former are designated as the king’s people, while the latter are referred to using the unique expression *‘ām ben yīsrā’ēl* (the people of the sons of Israel). Stuart (2006:63) understands this phrase as being pejorative. First, it dehumanises the Israelites somewhat by focusing on their category rather than their humanity. The king does not view the Israelites as his people. Second, it identifies them as a separate nation, a political entity with their own territory (Alexander 2017:44). This language drew attention to the fact that the Egyptians now had to contend not merely with a minor group of people living in a region of a great country, but a full foreign nation within their midst.

The Egyptian king, in dramatic fashion, portrays the danger posed by the ever-increasing Israelite population. He plays on the sense of insecurity which most populations feel when faced with those of a different ethnic origin. Stuart (2006:64) remarks, “To portray his own people as somehow a minority, potentially dominated by the outsider majority, was a clever way to engender popular support for his plan.” According to the king, these foreign immigrants posed a threat not simply to the throne, but to every Egyptian.

As a result, the king called for population control of the Israelites. The verb חָכַם (*hkm*) may simply mean “to act wisely”. The LXX, however, reads, “Let us conquer them by trickery.” While wisdom is normally viewed as something to be attained, Pharaoh perverts what God has given (Alexander 2017:51).

Instead of a reduced Israelite population, the Egyptians saw an Israelite population growth parallel to the intensity of the persecution. This implies that as the early years of the program went by, the population of the Israelites did not decline. The Egyptians then stepped up the oppression, assuming that it needed to be more severe in order to work effectively.

At this point, Moses highlights Israel’s desperate need for deliverance. The ‘taskmasters’ were appointed in order to oppress the Israelites. Moses emphasises that their lives were “bitter with hard service ... and in all kinds of work” in order to highlight that the situation was intolerable. The severity of the workload was, of course, integral to the population control plan. Although the imposition of heavy labour upon the Israelites was designed to restrict their numerical growth, the opposite occurred. The more the Egyptians oppressed them, the more the Israelite population increased.

For Moses, slavery and oppression (and the slaughter of children) were not merely aspects of historical reporting. He had witnessed it all firsthand, and its severity had eventually become too much even for him, raised an Egyptian, to witness (2:11-12).

### 3.2.1.3.5.3. Population Control 1:15-22

To restrict further the growth of the Israelite population, Pharaoh summons two midwives, Shiprah and Puah, and instructs them to kill every baby boy at birth. Alexander (2017:55) suggests that by instructing the midwives to kill the Hebrew male children as they were being born, Pharaoh might have hoped that their deaths would be viewed as natural.

The response of the midwives to the royal command is recorded in a single sentence. Disregarding the king's instructions, the midwives do not kill the newborn male Israelites. The narrator reveals that they act out of respect for God.

With an absolute minimum of detail, the narrative records a second brief encounter between Pharaoh and the midwives. On this occasion the king challenges them to explain why they have not fulfilled his instructions. The midwives reject Pharaoh's accusation on the grounds that they have played no role whatsoever in the birth of these babies. They have neither abetted nor aborted a single birth (Hamilton 2011:14).

God responds positively towards the midwives. As a result of their stance against Pharaoh, the Israelites continue to multiply and become very numerous. Pharaoh's attempt to restrict their growth is ineffective. Furthermore, the midwives' reverence for God is rewarded as they themselves become the "mothers of households".

Confronted with the ever-increasing growth of the Israelite population, Pharaoh resorts to one further desperate measure. He commands all of his people to kill every newborn Israelite male by drowning. The drowning of the male babies, according to Durham (1987 cited in Alexander 2017:57), "becomes both the climax of the narrative of the oppression and the catalyst for the arrival of the delivering hero, Moses."

### 3.2.1.3.5.4. God's Provision 2:1-10

As the one who gives birth to Moses, his mother acts decisively to preserve his life in spite of Pharaoh's edict. When she is no longer able to conceal her growing baby

within her own home, she weaves and waterproofs an ark in order to hide him among the reeds that lined the banks of the Nile.

The sudden appearance of Pharaoh's daughter adds an element of tension into the story. Seeing a baby, she quickly recognises him to be a Hebrew boy. More importantly, she reacts to the crying baby with compassion. She clearly does not share her father's antipathy towards male Hebrew babies (Alexander 2017:62).

By naming the Hebrew boy, Pharaoh's daughter lays claim to Moses as her own son. To further emphasise her claim on Moses, Pharaoh's daughter refers to how she rescued him from the Nile. What matters to Pharaoh's daughter is her right to be viewed as the legitimate mother of Moses, and this she claims on the basis of having personally drawn him, as an abandoned child, out of the Nile. For this reason she can call him "son".

#### 3.2.1.3.5.5. Moses' Exodus 2:11-22

Carefully linked to the preceding section by the reference to Moses' growing up, the account of his life moves swiftly from childhood to manhood. Nothing is revealed about what has happened to him in the intervening years.

While the opening verses conclude with Moses being adopted by Pharaoh's daughter as her own son, verse 11 makes it evident that Moses does not see himself as an Egyptian. The twofold reference to "his brothers" underlines that he perceives himself to be a Hebrew.

Moved with compassion for the plight of his kinsmen, Moses intervenes. His actions mirror what the Egyptian was doing to the Hebrew: he strikes. Yet the outcome of Moses' action is different. Compared to the Egyptian who struck the Hebrew slave, Moses' strike kills the Egyptian. His actions alienate him from both his own people and Pharaoh, and he is forced to flee for his life.

Moses seeks refuge east of Egypt in the land of Midian. Moses' flight to Midian for safety probably implies that this region was free of Egyptian control. Given the

exceptionally dry climatic conditions of the Sinai Desert, it is hardly unexpected that Moses should sit down at a well. Nor is it surprising that shepherds should come to water their flocks. However, on this occasion the first shepherds to arrive are all women, sisters entrusted with the care of their father's flock. As Moses watches, some male shepherds come and take advantage of the women, driving away their flock from the watering troughs. Enraged by what he witnesses, Moses comes to the rescue of the women. In verse 11-12 as well as 13-14, Moses is portrayed as the defender of those who are being wronged.

The ongoing tension in the narrative regarding the identity of Moses is reflected in the answer provided by Reuel's daughters. In their eyes Moses is an Egyptian. Moses cannot disguise the fact that he has been brought up in the court of Pharaoh; his clothing, if not his language and accent, probably point to his Egyptian origin. Yet, ironically, Moses is in Midian due to his action on behalf of his Hebrew "brothers" against Egyptian aggression.

With minimum detail, the reader is informed of a series of events that eventually result in Moses having a son. Moses agreed to settle with Reuel, in due course marrying one of his daughters, Zipporah. When Zipporah gives birth to a son, Moses calls him Gershom. By way of explaining why he chooses this particular name, Moses alludes to his own status as a sojourner or foreign resident. Moses expresses his sense of alienation within the community where he now lives.

#### 3.2.1.3.5.6. God's Concern 2:23-25

Exodus 2:23-25 interrupts the story of Moses in the household of his father-in-law in Midian. These verses return the reader's attention to Egypt, where God's people are trapped in slavery. Rather than addressing the nation directly, the passage provides the reader with a glimpse behind the scenes into the inner-working of God's purposes. The expectation is that God will now take action by interceding on behalf of his people and deliver them from bondage.

At this point in the narrative, the people of Israel began to pray. While the language differs from that found in the book of Genesis, the sentiment remains. Hamilton

(2011:41) however, disagrees, for him, “The crying is simply the loud and agonised crying of someone in acute distress and calling for help.” Hamilton’s position does seem strange, especially in light of the fact that he acknowledges, “Two later verses in the Pentateuch (Num 20:16; Deut 26:7) do refer to this cry as a cry to the Lord” (Hamilton 2011:41). The most natural reading of the text seems to indicate that the Israelites, now a large population, cry out to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob for rescue. Their prayer is based on confidence in the commitment of the Lord to his people. This is reinforced in chapter 6:1-13 where the Lord affirms his commitment to the covenant, and underlines that he will answer the prayers of his people. Stuart (2006:103) affirms this as he writes, “The exodus did not come about simply because people were in trouble; it was the result of a prayer of lament for rescue to the only one who could actually do something about it.”

God heard the cry of the children of Israel and God remembered his בְּרִית (covenant). This is the first occurrence of the word in Exodus, in comparison to its twenty-five occurrences in the book of Genesis. The introduction of the covenant at this particular point in the historical narrative emphasises its renewal to the subsequent generations of the patriarchs. According to Johnstone (2014:55), “God will act not simply out of compassion for the Israelites suffering ... Still more fundamentally, God will act because ‘God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’” The commitment that God had entered into in ages past extends into the future as a guarantee of continuing involvement in the destiny of Israel.

The term זָכַר (remember) does not suggest that God was somehow unaware or unconcerned previously (Douglas 2006:103). The emphasis lies upon the ongoing nature of the covenant. God’s promises have never stopped being valid, however seldom most Israelites may have called upon him. In this sense, the term is understood as an idiomatic expression for covenant application rather than mental recollection. In other words, to say that, “God remembered his covenant” is to say that God decided to honour the terms of his covenant at this time. Enns (2000:84) writes, “Once again, we see how the Israelites’ present circumstances must be seen from the broad, divine perspective. In saving them, God displays his faithfulness to his earlier promise.” The Lord’s very character is at stake as his people call upon his name, and so he initiates

the process of deliverance. “That God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob,” writes Goldsworthy (2003:114-15), “does not mean he had forgotten it, but rather that he intended to act on the basis of it. The entire Exodus narrative that follows is based on this premise: that God is a faithful, covenant-keeping God.”

It seems likely that there are two complementary concepts of covenant in the book of Exodus and in the wider Pentateuch. On the one hand, the covenant defines the relationship between God and Israel that will come into being at Mount Sinai after the exodus from Egypt (Ex 19-24). On the other hand, Exodus 2:23-25 introduces a complementary idea of covenant. It does not anticipate the making of a covenant as a future event at Sinai. Rather, the covenant is something long-standing, made in ages past with the ancestors. According to Johnstone:

An arc extends from Genesis 17 (the covenant made) to Exodus 2:24-25 (the covenant recalled) ... What is going to happen at Sinai is not the making of the covenant, already long established with its sign of circumcision, but the revelation of Law (2014:58).

This complementary idea of the covenant is a feature that saturates the prayers of Moses as Israel’s mediator throughout the rest of the book.

#### 3.2.1.4. Redemptive Hermeneutics

Through his promise to Abraham, Yahweh had chosen the nation of Israel to possess a unique place in his purposes. The tragedy, at this point in redemptive history, is the slavery that the nation experiences at the hand of Pharaoh. More than that, the very preservation of the nation is at stake, as they experience the extermination of their sons. While the account of God’s response to the prayer of his people in the midst of their plight, engenders within the reader a sense of divine comfort; its more important function is to point forward to the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. The path that one must follow to understand Exodus 1-2 redemptively is that of type disclosure, particularly as expressed by Matthew’s use of Hosea 11:1, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> There are some who would consider Hos 11:1 as Messianic (Sailhamer 2001:96). However, it seems better to understand Mt 2:15 as typological.



### 3.2.1.4.1. Matthew's Use of Hosea 11:1

The fulfilment of the Old Testament Scriptures is a prominent theme in the synoptic gospels. Each author, in their own unique way, is concerned to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah, God's Son. Matthew's infancy narrative (Mt 1-2) makes prominent use of this fulfilment motif.<sup>50</sup> After the wise men left, the Lord's angel warns Joseph that Herod will look for Jesus in order to kill him, so they must leave the country and escape to Egypt for safety. Matthew sums up this episode by saying that they were in Egypt until the death of Herod. It is in this summary statement, before the account of the slaughter of the children and the return of the family to Israel, that Matthew refers to Hosea 11:1. By placing the fulfilment of Hosea here, the author of the first gospel illustrates the importance of understanding the wider context of an Old Testament passage. Utilising clues found in the wider context of Hosea, Matthew's use of Hosea 11:1 becomes a climatic pivotal marker in the passage.

Hosea 11 reflects synonymous parallelism, "When Israel was a youth, I loved him, and from Egypt I called my son." Those who hold to a *sensus plenior* view often claim this passage to support a hidden meaning (Chou 2018:105). Matthew, as we will see, is very careful in the construction of the narrative and thereby his theological argument. Hosea speaks of God's unique love for Israel when the nation was helpless. Hosea himself quotes Exodus 4:22 where Yahweh declares, "Israel is my firstborn son." As Yahweh's son, God demonstrates his love by rescuing Israel from slavery in Egypt. There are a number of references to Egypt within the book of Hosea. A number of them view the Exodus event as a past event (2:15; 12:9, 13; 13:4), while others speak of a return to Egypt (7:16; 8:13; 9:3). For Gaffin (2012:106), "The exodus is the archetypal evidence that the Lord God is the Saviour of the people." However, this is only part of Hosea's equation.

Without ignoring this immediate context, Matthew extends his gaze of Hosea to the larger context of the book and the Old Testament (Barrett 2018:238). Earlier in Hosea (ch 10) the prophet describes the earlier glory days of Israel. Times of glory, however,

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<sup>50</sup> Matthew 1:18-2:23 contains five of the ten "formula quotations" distinctive to the gospel (Gaffin 2012:102).

have been supplanted by the wickedness of the current nation. “These associations,” writes Gaffin (2012:106), “along with the other references to Egypt point to what some fairly see as Hosea’s Egypt typology.” Israel’s punishment for apostasy and rebellion results in the reversal of the Exodus. The impending exile in typological Egypt (Assyria) will be like going back to slavery. The judgment of God upon the nation will not mark the end of Yahweh’s dealings with his covenant people. The reversal of the exile, the deliverance from bondage, fills the nation with hope. Just as Yahweh loved his son and rescued him the first time, so his love should drive another rescue (cf. Pss 74:10-15; 77:14-15). Israel will return from typological Egypt (Hos 11:11). Out of Egypt, Yahweh will call his Son.

By quoting Hosea 11:1, Matthew sees more than the fulfilment of a word prediction, but the fulfilment of a type (Blomberg 2007:7; Beale 2020:35). He recognises a correspondence between the preservation of the son, Israel, and the Son, Christ. Thus, in going to Egypt, the primeval place of slavery, persecution, and affliction, Jesus illustrates what Yahweh will do for his people both physically and spiritually. Chou (2018:135) writes, “God’s love for Israel in the first Exodus has driven him to work out what is required for the new Exodus.” A “new exodus” motif is present leading to the salvation for sinners, not only for Israel but for all nations. This motif is reflected in Blomberg’s writing:

Just as God brought the nation of Israel out of Egypt to inaugurate his original covenant with them, so again God is bringing the Messiah, who fulfills the hopes of Israel, out of Egypt as he is about to inaugurate his new covenant (1992:67).

At the heart of Yahweh’s redemptive purposes is his commitment to his promises. The promised exodus, in other words, will be accomplished by the true Son. Thus, for Matthew, Jesus himself is the locus of true Israel. Barrett (2018:239) writes, “It [the Exodus] was a necessary progression in God’s fulfilling His covenant promise to Abraham, at the heart of which was the promise of the Seed.” Israel, as God’s son (Ex 4:22), is called to be Yahweh’s servant. However, the nation failed to live according to Yahweh’s covenant expectations. Jesus, the Messianic servant, will prove to be the faithful Son, where the nation had been the faithless son.

The idea of the true “Son of God” is reinforced elsewhere in Luke 3 (cf. Mt 3:13-17). Jesus, at his baptism, is declared to be God’s true Son in whom the Father is well pleased. Luke, clarifying this assertion, then follows with the genealogy of Jesus in terms of sonship. Jesus is son of Joseph, the son of Heli, and so on all the way back to Adam, the son of God. Adam, the first son of God, rebelled against Yahweh’s status. Additionally, within the context of the covenant promises to David, the son of David is declared to be the son of God (2 Sam 7:12-14).

But God’s sons Adam, Israel, and David’s descendants, all repudiated that privilege. “Christology, then,” writes Goldsworthy (2006:17), “is vital to our understanding of corporate prayer.” What belongs to the true humanity of Jesus now belongs to all those who trust in him, those who have experienced the New Exodus. Paul’s description of our “in Christ” and “with Christ” existence indicates that nothing hinders our access to the Father. If it belongs to the risen Jesus to have access to the Father, it also belongs to all who are in union with Christ by faith (Heb 10:19-22).

Jesus, therefore, does not simply offer to us the example of sonship in prayer. He does far more than model loving and intimate trust in the heavenly Father. “Rather,” according to Clowney (1990:160), “he does what only he could do in the perfection of his divine and human sonship. He saves sinners, brings them to the Father, and gives them a new relation that far exceeds the relation in which Adam and Eve were created.”

In summary, the basis of true prayer is the Sonship of Jesus which we share in union with him. The acceptance he has with the Father is the acceptance we now have. If the Father always hears the Son, then he always hears those who, in Christ, are sons.

### 3.2.2. Exodus 20:1-21

#### 3.2.2.1. Translation

20:1 And God spoke all these words saying,

2 “I [am] Yahweh your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt from the house of slaves.

- 3 You shall have no<sup>51</sup> other gods before me.<sup>52</sup>
- 4 You shall not make for yourself a divine image, or any form<sup>53</sup> of that which [is] in heaven above, or that [is] in the earth beneath, or that [is] in the water under the earth.
- 5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I, Yahweh your God, [am] a jealous God punishing [the] guilt of [the] fathers on [the] children to [the] third and [the] fourth generation of those who are haters of me.
- 6 But showing loyal love to thousands of those who love me and are keepers of my commands.
- 7 You shall not lift up<sup>54</sup> the name of Yahweh your God in vain, for Yahweh will not leave unpunished the one who lifts up his name in vain.
- 8 Remember the Sabbath day, to consecrate it.
- 9 Six days you shall work, you shall do all of your work.
- 10 But the seventh day [is] a Sabbath for Yahweh your God; you shall not do any work, you, or your son or your daughter, your male servant or your female servant, or your domestic animal, or your stranger who [is] in your gates.
- 11 For [in] six days Yahweh made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that [is] in them, and rested in the seventh day; therefore Yahweh blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it.
- 12 Honour your father and your mother<sup>55</sup> so that your days may be long in the land Yahweh your God [is about] to give you.
- 13 You shall not murder.
- 14 You shall not commit adultery.
- 15 You shall not steal.
- 16 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

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<sup>51</sup> לֹא (*lō*) with an imperfect verb expresses an emphatic prohibition (HALOT 2000:511).

<sup>52</sup> עַל־פָּנָי (*ʿal pānēh*) lit. means “upon my face.”

<sup>53</sup> Exodus reads *pě’sēl weḳōl-tēmûnāh*, “divine image, or any form,” whereas Deuteronomy 5:8 reads *pě’sēl ḳōl-tēmûnāh*, “divine image of any form.” Weinfeld concludes that the Exodus phraseology has been changed in Deuteronomy on the basis of the book’s character and ideology (1991 cited in Alexander 2017:388).

<sup>54</sup> נָשָׂא (*nśʾ*) most often means, “to carry” or, “to lift up.” It appears again with the spreading of false reports in Exodus 23:1.

<sup>55</sup> Biblical Hebrew does not have a separate word for parents (Hamilton 2011:326)

- 17 You shall not covet the house of your neighbour; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that [is] your neighbour's.
- 18 Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off.
- 19 Then they said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die."
- 20 Moses said to the people, "Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin."
- 21 The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.

### 3.2.2.2. Linguistic Hermeneutics

#### 3.2.2.2.1. Genre

The genre of Exodus 20 may be classified as law within historical narrative. Historically, Yahweh has brought his people to Mount Sinai in order to establish a covenant with them. The sign of the covenant is presented to the nation in the form of the Ten Commandments, written on two tablets of stone. The Decalogue itself may be classified as apodictic law. This is defined as, "Laws promulgated in unconditional, categorical directives such as commands and prohibitions" (Klein et al. 2004:342). This law addresses the audience directly, and has a binding nature on subsequent generations.

#### 3.2.2.2.2. Important Recurring Verbs (by stem)

Stem	Meaning	Verse	Analysis	Translated As
עשה	to do, make	20:4	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS Pronominal Suffix 2MS	You shall not <i>make</i> for yourself
		20:6	Qal. Participle. MS. Absolute	But <i>showing</i> loyal love
		20:9	Qal. Perfect. 2MS	you <i>shall do</i> all of your work

		20:10	Qal. Imperfect. 2MS	you <i>shall not do</i> any work
		20:11	Qal. Perfect. 3MS	Yahweh <i>made</i> the heaven
דבר	to speak with one another	20:1	Piel. Imperfect. 3MS	And God <i>spoke</i>
		20:19	Piel. Imperative. 2MS	You <i>speak</i> to us
			Piel. Imperfect. 3MS. Jussive	do not let God <i>speak</i> to us
עבד	to toil	20:5	Hophal. Imperfect. 2MS Pronominal Suffix 2MP	or <i>serve</i> them
		20:9	Qal. Imperfect. 2MS	Six days you shall <i>work</i>
קדש	holy, removed from common use	20:8	Piel. Infinitive. Construct Pronominal Suffix 3MS	to <i>consecrate</i> it
		20:11	Piel. Imperfect. 3MS Pronominal Suffix 3MS	Yahweh... <i>consecrated</i> it

Table 5: Important Recurring Verbs in Exodus 20:1-21

### 3.2.2.2.3. Important Recurring Words (by stem)

Stem	Meaning	Occurrences	Verse	Translated As
לא	no	13	20:3	<i>no</i> other gods
			20:4	You shall <i>not</i> make
			20:5	You shall <i>not</i> bow down or <i>serve</i> them
			20:7	You shall <i>not</i> lift up will <i>not</i> leave unpunished
			20:10	you shall <i>not</i> do any work
			20:13	You shall <i>not</i> murder
			20:14	You shall <i>not</i> commit adultery
			20:15	You shall <i>not</i> steal
			20:16	You shall <i>not</i> bear false witness
			20:17	You shall <i>not</i> covet
				you shall <i>not</i> covet

יום	day	7	20:8 20:9 20:10 20:11 20:12	Remember the sabbath <i>day</i> Six <i>days</i> you shall work But the seventh <i>day</i> For [in] six <i>days</i> Yahweh made rested in the seventh <i>day</i> the sabbath <i>day</i> so that your <i>days</i> may be long
רֵעַ	friend, neighbour	4	20:16 20:17	against your <i>neighbour</i> the house of your <i>neighbour</i> your <i>neighbour's</i> wife that [is] your <i>neighbour's</i>

Table 6: Important Recurring Words in Exodus 20:1-21

The use of the word “no” further indicates the presence of the law genre. The various prohibitions are intended to mark the nation as Yahweh’s covenant people. Thus, the Decalogue itself becomes the covenant sign between Yahweh and the nation of Israel. But within the law, there are elements which reveal of Yahweh’s gracious intention. “Work” ought not to be a burden for the nation, but something which anticipates resting in Yahweh, the one who expresses love to his people in redemption.

#### 3.2.2.2.4. Structure

After a brief narrative introduction in verse 1-2, verse 2-17 record Yahweh’s words to the assembled Israelites, including the Ten Commandments. This is the only divine speech in Exodus in which God addresses directly each adult Israelite, both male and female. Elsewhere, Yahweh had always used Moses (or Aaron) as his spokesman. The Decalogue, from the Greek expression *deka logi*, is followed by a short record (20:18-21) of the people’s response. These verses highlight the initial reaction of the people who have observed the dramatic theophany. They explain why God, having just spoken to the people, no longer speaks directly to them. They also provide an important statement that explains the purpose behind the theophany at Mount Sinai.

#### 3.2.2.2.4.1. Text Outline

- A 20:1-2 Prologue
- B 20:3-17 The Ten Commandments
- C 20:18-21 The People's Fear

#### 3.2.2.2.5. Commentary

##### 3.2.2.2.5.1. Prologue 20:1

This introductory statement (“God spoke all these words”) is a unique feature of the Decalogue, distinguishing this divine speech from the many others that were mediated through Moses to the Israelites (Alexander 2017:398). The authority of the Decalogue then is derived not from the content of the message, but from the unique speaker (Hamilton 2011:327). The witness of the rest of the Old Testament bears this same emphasis, that is, that the people heard the voice of God for themselves and could not doubt his presence among them (Deut 4:10-14, 32-40; 5:4, 22-27; 9:10; Neh 9:13).

##### 3.2.2.2.5.2. The Ten Commandments 20:2-17

At the very start of Yahweh's address, he introduces himself using the formula, “I am Yahweh your God.” By introducing himself in this way, Yahweh underscores the personal nature of this divine-human relationship. Yahweh is identified as the giver of the covenant with Israel as the recipient. This two-party covenant links Yahweh and his people in formal legal relationship. Within this covenant relationship, Israel is represented by singular pronouns because the entire nation is viewed as an entity, a united people responding as one to God's commands (Stuart 2006:446).<sup>56</sup>

Having identified himself, Yahweh refers to his rescue of the Israelites from Egypt. Thus, this passage not only serves as a self-introduction, but also as a motivation. It provides the reason for why the Israelites should keep the obligations outlined in the

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<sup>56</sup> contra Alexander (2017:399) who writes, “He addresses each individual, rather than the community as a collective whole.”



Decalogue. By reason of having rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt, Yahweh had a claim on his chosen people.

The first “word” focuses on the exclusive allegiance that Yahweh expects from each Israelite. “This prohibition,” remarks Alexander (2017:400), “against having other gods is remarkable given the wide-spread acceptance of polytheism throughout the ANE [Ancient Near East].” In a world dominated by polytheism, the affirmation that the Israelites were to recognise no other gods establishes the foundation of monotheism. The severity of the punishment associated with the worship of other gods – the death penalty (Num 25:1-18; Deut 13:1-18) – and the emphasis upon Yahweh being the God of all the earth also favour a monotheistic outlook.

The second “word” outlaws every sort of idolatry, in any form whatsoever. It also includes an explanation of how seriously God takes idolatry because of its ability to corrupt successive generations, keeping them from God’s blessing. The prohibition against making idols and bowing down to them concludes with a statement that is meant to motivate the Israelites to obey. Central to this is the affirmation that Yahweh is a jealous (אֲנִי) God. McConville (2002:127) observes, “Jealousy in the OT is an active quality, a passionate loyalty.” On the one hand, his judgment will come upon those who are faithless; while on the other hand, he will demonstrate faithful, unmerited love towards those who express their faithfulness to him through obeying his commandments.

The third “word” encompasses a broad range of activities involving the misuse of Yahweh’s name. This commandment contains a prohibition followed by a threat of punishment for those who do not obey. Stuart (2006:455) suggests that the primary meaning of “I lift up the name of Yahweh your God in vain” would appear, “to be invoking his name as guarantor of one’s words.” In other words, the most basic idea behind this commandment is the prohibition of perjury. The commandment, however, is worded generally enough to encompass any misuse of Yahweh’s name, from making light of it or overtly mocking it, to speaking about Yahweh in any way disrespectfully.

The fourth “word” focuses on the subject of the Sabbath. As with the preceding commandment, the instructions regarding the Sabbath are formulated using general terms. Additionally, according to Alexander (2017:410) within its present literary context, “The divine rescue of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt is part of a larger narrative in which God’s creation plan to cohabit with humanity on the earth takes a step closer towards fulfilment through the covenant ratified at Mount Sinai.” By committing themselves to the obligations of the Decalogue the Israelites expressed their willingness to participate in creating Yahweh’s earthly sanctuary. This becomes a foretaste of the “blessedness into which the people of God are at last to enter” (Keil and Delitzsch 1996:1:399). Stuart (2006:460) adds to this by asserting, “The Sabbath ... is designed to help people become spiritually stronger and closer to God; whatever it does by way of helping people recuperate from being physically tired (and it certainly can do this) is an incidental, rather than a primary, benefit.”

The fifth “word,” like the fourth, is expressed positively, requiring the Israelites to honour (כבד) their parents. The previous commandments were concerned with the necessity of honouring God, now comes a commandment that follows logically because it is concerned with honoring parents, who have the awesome role in the family of representing God. This commandment elevates the status of both the father and mother within Israelite society, giving them an authority not unlike that enjoyed by God himself (Alexander 2017:413). Parents are envisaged as representing God to their children, the family unit being a miniature of the nation. The final part of the fifth commandment consists of a motivation clause that associates the respecting of parents with possession of the land that Yahweh had promised to give the Israelites. The reference to land is significant, anticipating the possession of Canaan, the goal of the Israelites’ journey from Egypt.

The rest of the Decalogue consists of five main prohibitions, most of which are expressed with the utmost brevity. In marked contrast to the first five “words”, there are no motivation clauses or references to God in verses 13-17.

The sixth “word” consists of only two words in the Hebrew text equivalent to “never murder.” The Hebrew term (רצח, *rṣḥ*) specifically means to put to death improperly,

rather than with authorisation (HALOT 2000:1283). Thus, by prohibiting both murder and manslaughter, this commandment demonstrates the high pedigree that God places upon human life. No human being has the right to take another's life, because each person is made in God's image (cf. Gen 1:27; 9:6). It is important to note at this point that God's Old Covenant people, being a theocratic community, were delegated the right to take human life by his command, either in the form of his capital punishment laws or his direct holy war call.

The seventh "word" is a prohibition against committing adultery. The sacred nature of the marriage relationship is placed after the sanctity of human life. The lack of any object after the verb suggests that both men and women are being addressed here. Both genders have a responsibility to ensure that this covenant obligation is not broken. Stuart (2006:463) writes, "No one is allowed to have sex with any married person except his or her spouse, and no married person is allowed to have sex with anyone other than his or her spouse." By incorporating this prohibition into the Decalogue, the nation of Israel should recognise that a promiscuous society will not be true to the covenant being ratified. Fundamentally, such promiscuity proclaims that faithfulness in relationships is not a core value of its members.

The eighth "word" prohibits theft. As with the preceding two commandments, this prohibition is framed using two words. Legal possession and personal ownership of things are permitted implicitly by this commandment. Stuart (2006:465) comments, "Stealing threatens the social order and causes pain to others by undermining the ability to possess with sure access things that are useful and needful." The prohibition against stealing not only underlines the importance of having respect for other people and what belongs to them, but also gives support to the fundamental concern that greed is a form of idolatry (Alexander 2017:421).

The ninth "word" spoken by Yahweh to the Israelites concerns integrity of character. In all likelihood, the wording of the prohibition relates to a judicial situation in which someone is required to give evidence concerning a neighbour (Alexander 2017:422; Stuart 2006:465). The Old Testament places considerable weight on witnesses giving accurate information. False witnesses received the same penalty as the falsely accused individual would have suffered if condemned as guilty (Deut 19:16-21). The

requirement to be a truthful witness for one's neighbour exemplifies the need to be truthful in any context that may have consequences for the well-being of another person.

The tenth "word" addresses the issue of inappropriate craving to have someone or something that belongs to a neighbour's household. The final commandment forbids an individual to covet what belongs to another. Motyer (2005:230) notes, "The intention is not to limit the scope of the commandment to these precise objects, but by heaping one possible object of coveting on another to drive home the seriousness of the sin of covetousness itself."

#### 3.2.2.2.5.3. The People's Fear 20:18-21

As the narrative of Exodus develops, corporate prayer — as typified by a people calling out to God — transitions towards mediatory prayer. In this instance, Moses stands as the representative of the Israelites before God. This turning point is seen at the end of the covenant ceremony in Exodus 20:18-21.

Beginning in Exodus 19, God sets the stage for the giving of the law by establishing the nature of his relationship with his people (Selvaggio 2014:116). Up to this point, as Stuart (2006:431) points out, "So many Israelites were naïve theologically, and so many in the group were new even to whatever Israelite traditions existed that there was surely a real danger of people trying to follow Moses up the mountain to satisfy their curiosity about things divine." But this scene of fire, cloud, and thunder have overwhelmed the Israelites' senses, installing fear and awe — so much so that they demanded that thereafter Moses should always relay God's words to them. This was not a matter of mere pragmatic choice for the people. They perceived that they could not repeatedly endure having to hear God speak directly to them. As an accommodation, Moses thereafter approached God closely, but the people "stood far away" (NIV "remained at a distance") as v21 states.

Moses was somehow able to endure God's voice, presumably by special divine grace, but the average Israelite found it so terrifying that he wanted nothing more of it

(Douglas 2006:468). It was not merely the sound of God's words that had such an effect. "The people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking" (Ex 20:18). The combination of sensory data along with the voice of God was too much for them, so that, "the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off."

It is Moses who stands in thick darkness and receives divine revelation. He is the archetypal prophet and mediator between God and humanity (White 2016:192). Calvin (2010:1:331) likewise writes, "For no longer could they now despise the voice of the man, whom they had of their own accord desired to be given them as their mediator, lest they should be consumed by the awful voice of God."

The significance of Moses' mediatory role cannot be overstated. His role is deeply connected with God's previous promises to the patriarchs and its future fulfilment. This connection is reinforced by the Hebrew word *לִפְיֵד* (lightening, v18). Its only other use in the Pentateuch occurs in Genesis 15:17, where it refers to the "torch" that passed between the animal carcasses that Abraham had cut in half (Enns 2000:425). Both instances *לִפְיֵד* represent God's physical, though mediated, presence. The use of the word in these two instances suggest a reminder to the Israelites that the God of the Exodus is the God of the patriarchs.

As the mediator between Israel and God, Moses stands upon the promises made by God not only to Israel at Mount Sinai, but also upon the promises made to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This understanding is reflected in various prayers which appear throughout the book of Exodus. For example, Moses prays:<sup>57</sup>

O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all (Ex 5:22-23; ESV).

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<sup>57</sup> Enns (2000:171) does not identify this pericope as prayer. However, due to the covenantal response of Yahweh in the following chapter, it seems most natural to read the narrative as prayer.

Moses is, seemingly, exasperated. Both Pharaoh and the Israelites want nothing to do with him. His complaint is essentially that Yahweh has not kept his promises. But a major shift follows in the Lord's response:

I [am] Yahweh. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as El Shaddai; and [by] my name Yahweh, was I not known to them? I also established my covenant with them to give to them the land of Canaan, the land where they dwelled as sojourners. And I also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom [the] Egyptians worked as slaves, and I remembered my covenant (Ex 6:2b-5; author's translation).

It is worth pausing to note that Exodus 6 is the first record within the book where God says אֲנִי יְהוָה (I am Yahweh). Stuart (2000:169) argues that the most likely translation of 6:3 is not that of the ESV ("but by my name the Lord I did not make myself known to them") but rather a question, "and by my name Yahweh, did I not make myself known to them?" The interrogative construction beginning with אֵל (ēl) assumes a positive answer (cf. Num 23:19; 2 Sam 23:5; 2 Kgs 5:26; Jer 18:6; Jonah 4:11; Job 11:11; 30:25). Yahweh had said these words only twice before, in Gen 15:7 to Abraham and in Gen 28:13 to Jacob, each time in connection with the promise of the land to their descendants. He, Yahweh, is *El Shaddai* (God Almighty) referred to in the patriarchal stories (Gen 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3). Interestingly, once again the promise of inheriting the land of Canaan follows the Lord's revelation of himself.

The two words *'ānî yhw̄h* have profound significance theologically in two different ways.<sup>58</sup> First, they function as a synecdoche to bring to mind God's impending covenant because identification of the giver of a covenant is part of the preamble. Hamilton (2011:99) suggests that the phrase, "Constitutes a self-presentation formula that adds authority to the proclamation that follows." Thus, "I am the Lord" is almost tantamount to saying, "I am Yahweh, your covenant God." Second, "I am the Lord" is a statement of identity, not just theoretical identity but relational identity. This direct relationship, is crucial to the Exodus narrative as God identified himself with his people personally (Stuart 2006:173-74).

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<sup>58</sup> There has been much discussion regarding the origins of this material with critical scholarship concluding that these two passages come from two different sources. See discussion in Dozemann (2009:163-168), Enns (2000:174-75) and Hamilton (2011:97).

While Moses' prayer reflects his own discouragement and doubts concerning the commitment of the Lord to his people, such discouragement and doubt does not disavow God of his covenant. Rather, the Lord answers by affirming his commitment to the covenant, and thereby underlines that he will, in fact, answer Moses' prayer. Thus, Moses should assume full continuity between the promises to the patriarchs and the need for confidence in the present difficulties. Stuart (2006:169) remarks, "God's reassurance to Moses continues with covenant language, reminding him that he is Yahweh (v2), the God of the patriarchs, that the patriarchs worshiped him by that name, and that the patriarchal promises included their descendants' possession of Canaan."

### 3.2.2.3. Redemptive Hermeneutics

The giving of the law at Sinai is one of the most significant redemptive-historical events in all of Scripture. This ceremony marked the birth of Israel as a nation. The covenant is given to a people who are redeemed by grace and who need specific instruction in order to structure themselves in a way that is consistent with this salvation. God, through his servant Moses, set forth the foundation of his redemptive relationship with the nation of Israel and his expectations of how they would approach him and treat one another. As the intercessor, Moses is the one who mediates to God's people the word of salvation.<sup>59</sup>

The response of the people to the dramatic signs at the foot of Sinai underscore the revelation of the holiness of God. Barrett (2018:47) writes, "There is an immeasurable distance between God and people that people cannot begin to bridge and that God cannot close simply by an act of His will." What is required, therefore, is a mediator who can relate to both parties. Within the Exodus narrative, it is Moses who steps into this role. The pattern continues throughout the Pentateuch as Moses, time and again, intercedes for the people before Yahweh.

Not only does this pattern continue with Moses, but also through mediator-types within the rest of the Old Testament. The revelation of God is mediated to humanity through

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<sup>59</sup> μεσίτης (trans. mediator, arbitrator) occurs only once in LXX (Job 9:33).

the prophets (Jer 15:1). Reconciliation is mediated through the priest by means of the Levitical system. This enabled the nation to approach a holy God as members of a society of which he was the head. Gerhard von Rad (1965:372-74) has observed that these repeated narrations of Yahweh's commissioning is evidence of typology within the OT itself. Furthermore, the forward-looking nature of these cyclic narratives of people and events foreshadow a Christological fulfilment. Beale (2012:22) affirms this when he writes, "Candidates for types may also be those major redemptive-historical events that in some fashion are repeated throughout the OT and share such unique characteristics that they are clearly to be identified with one another long before the era of the NT." Recognising the fulfilment of Christ as the mediator between God and man avoids unfruitful exemplary or moralistic implications of the text. The objective work of God in Christ is a work that bridges the chasm. It shows us God coming to man by meeting the conditions of the law in Christ, thereby restoring man to communion with God.

According to Selvaggio (2014:129), "The greatest gift that Jesus gave to his people was not his exegesis and distillation of the law; rather, it was his own perfect life lived in fulfilment of that law on our behalf." Redemption, in other words, was secured not only through Jesus' death on the cross, but also through the righteous life that he lived upon this earth. Jesus lived for the salvation of his people as much as he died for it. To put it another way, "Jesus Christ perfectly kept the law, perfectly embodied it, and perfectly exemplified it" (Poythress 1991:91). Without the life and death of Jesus, the law that came through Moses could only bring condemnation and death. But by Jesus' perfect obedience imputed to the redeemed and by his perfect sacrificial death on our behalf, Jesus accomplished what the law never could — he made his people righteous and holy. Selvaggio later writes:

Moses was the human vessel that God chose to communicate his law to his people, but Jesus was the one who fulfilled that law, both in meaning and in practice. The law that was given through Moses could only bring death, but the law fulfilled by Jesus brings life and liberty. This is perhaps the greatest contrast between these two mediators (2014:129-30).

It is this perfection of obedience that qualifies Christ as the sole mediator between God and man. Berkhof (1938:345) writes, "In His capacity as Mediator Christ met the demands of the law in its federal and penal aspects, paying the penalty of sin and



meriting everlasting life.” This is repeatedly affirmed in the New Testament: “Jesus the mediator of the new covenant” (Heb 12:24); “he is the mediator of a better covenant” (8:6); “this cup is the new covenant (*diathēkē*) in my blood” (Lk 22:20; cf. Mt 14:24; 26:28). Accordingly, the London Baptist Confession states, “This office of Mediator between God and the human race belongs exclusively to Christ, who is the Prophet, Priest, and King of the Church of God. This office may not be transferred from him to any other, either in whole or in part” (LBC 8.9).<sup>60</sup>

### 3.2.3. Exodus 32:1-14

#### 3.2.3.1. Translation

- 32:1 When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered around Aaron and said to him, “Come, make for us gods who shall go before us because this Moses,<sup>61</sup> the man who brought us from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.
- 2 And Aaron said to them, “Take off the ornamental rings of gold that [are] on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters and bring them to me.”
- 3 So all the people took off the ornamental rings that [were] on their ears and brought [them] to Aaron.
- 4 And he took [it] from their hand and he shaped it with a graving tool and made a molten calf. And he said, these [are] your gods, O Israel, who brought you from the land of Egypt.
- 5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and he said, “Tomorrow [shall be] a feast for Yahweh.”
- 6 So they rose early the next day and offered burnt offerings and presented peace offerings;<sup>62</sup> and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

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<sup>60</sup> There is some hesitancy to refer to these three offices of Christ due to their sharp distinctions (see Erickson 2013:697).

<sup>61</sup> כִּי־זַֿה׳ מֹֿשֶׁה (kî-zěh’ mōšěh) is a rare instance of an adjective before a name. The people may be expressing disgust with Moses and separating themselves from him.

<sup>62</sup> The LXX uses singular verbs indicating that these activities would have been something which Aaron did, rather than all the people.

- 7 Yahweh said to Moses, “Go down at once,<sup>63</sup> because your people whom you brought from the land of Egypt have behaved corruptly.<sup>64</sup>
- 8 They have turned aside swiftly from the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and they bow down in worship to in and sacrifice to it, and say, ‘These [are] your gods who brought you from the land of Egypt.’”
- 9 And Yahweh said to Moses, “I have observed this people, and behold, they [are] a stiff-necked people.”<sup>65</sup>
- 10 Now then, leave me [alone] that my anger may burn against them and may consume them; and I will make you a great nation.<sup>66</sup>
- 11 But Moses implored the face of Yahweh his God and said, “O Yahweh, why should your anger burn against your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a strong hand?
- 12 Why should [the] Egyptians say, ‘With evil [intent] he brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them out from the face of the earth?’ Turn from your burning anger and change your mind about this disaster against your people.
- 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel,<sup>67</sup> your servants to whom you swore by yourself<sup>68</sup> and said to them, ‘I will make your offspring numerous like the stars of heaven, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it to eternity.’”
- 14 And Yahweh changed his mind about the disaster that he had threatened to do to his people.

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<sup>63</sup> This is the second time that Yahweh uses the two imperatives לְיָרֵד (ləkrēd) in addressing Moses (cf. 19:24).

<sup>64</sup> שִׁחֵת (šihēt) The Niphal stem is used to describe the corruption of humanity in the time of Noah (Gen 6:11, 12[x2]).

<sup>65</sup> עַם־קָשָׁה־עֲרָךְ (‘ām-q<sup>e</sup>šēh-’ō’rēp) lit. people stiff of neck. This expression occurs five times in the rest of the Old Testament, all within the Pentateuch (Ex 33:3, 5; 34:9; Deut 6:6; 13).

<sup>66</sup> לְגֹי גְדֹל (leḡōy’ gāōl) is the same wording that Yahweh uses with Abraham in Genesis 12:2.

<sup>67</sup> The LXX changes “Israel” to Jacob.

<sup>68</sup> The only other place where God swears by himself is Genesis 22:16.

### 3.2.3.2. Linguistic Hermeneutics

#### 3.2.3.2.1. Genre

Exodus 32 fits within the narrative genre. However, it must be viewed in relation to the law which was established in Exodus 20. The pericope records the breaking of the covenant obligations stipulated by Yahweh on Mount Sinai. There Yahweh had required his people to pay attention to proper worship. On this occasion, however, the author describes, in detail, the spiritual decline of the nation. By slowing the narrative down, Moses is concerned to show that the nation not only fails to worship correctly, they reject the God of the covenant entirely.

#### 3.2.3.2.2. Important Recurring Verbs (by stem)

Stem	Meaning	Verse	Analysis	Translated As
עלה	to ascend, go up	32:1	Hiphil. Perfect. 3MS Pronominal Suffix 1P	the man who <i>brought</i> us
		32:4	Hiphil. Perfect. 3P Pronominal Suffix 2MS	your gods...who <i>brought</i> you
		32:6	Hiphil. Imperfect. 3MP	they ... <i>offered</i> burnt offerings
		32:7	Hiphil. Perfect. 2MS	your people whom you <i>brought</i>
		32:8	Hiphil. Perfect. 3P Pronominal Suffix 2MS	your gods...who <i>brought</i> you
עשה	to do, make	32:1	Qal. Imperative. 2MS Pronominal Suffix 1P	Come, <i>make</i> for us gods
		32:4	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS Pronominal Suffix 3MS	and <i>made</i> a molten calf
		32:8	Qal. Perfect. 3P	<i>made</i> for themselves
		32:10	Qal. Imperfect. 1S	I will <i>make</i> you a great nation
		32:14	Qal. Infinitive. Construct	that he had threatened to <i>do</i>
דבר	to speak with one another	32:7	Piel. Imperfect. 3MS	Yahweh <i>said</i> to Moses
		32:13	Piel. Imperfect. 2MS	you swore...and <i>said</i> to them
		32:14	Piel. Perfect. 3MS	that he had <i>threatened</i>
ראה	to see with one's eyes	32:1	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	When the people <i>saw</i>
		32:5	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	When Aaron <i>saw</i> this

		32:9	Qal. Perfect. 1S	I have <i>observed</i> this people
בוא	to enter	32:2	Hiphil. Imperative. 2MP	<i>bring</i> them to me
		32:3	Hiphil. Imperfect. 3MP	<i>brought</i> [them] to Aaron
חרה	to become angry	32:10	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS. Jussive Pronominal Suffix 1S	that my <i>anger may burn</i>
		32:11	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	why should your <i>anger burn</i>
יצא	to come out, come forth	32:11	Hiphil. Perfect. 2MS	you <i>brought out</i> of the land
		32:12	Hiphil. Perfect. 3MS Pronominal Suffix 3MP	he <i>brought them out</i> to kill them
פרק	to tear away, tear off	32:2	Piel. Imperative. 2MP	<i>Take off</i> the ornamental rings
		32:3	Hithpael. Imperfect. 3MP	the people <i>took off</i>

Table 7: Important Recurring Verbs in Exodus 32:1-14

### 3.2.3.2.3. Important Recurring Words (by stem)

Stem	Meaning	Occurrences	Verse	Translated As
אָרֶץ	ground, earth	6	32:1	from the <i>land</i> of Egypt
			32:4	from the <i>land</i> of Egypt
			32:7	from the <i>land</i> of Egypt
			32:8	from the <i>land</i> of Egypt
			32:11	out of the <i>land</i> of Egypt
			32:13	this <i>land</i> of which I have spoken
אֱלֹהִים	god, gods	4	32:1	make for us <i>gods</i>
			32:4	these [are] your <i>gods</i>
			32:8	These [are] your <i>gods</i>
			32:11	the face of Yahweh his <i>God</i>
רָעָה	evil, wickedness	3	32:12	With <i>evil</i> [intent]  this <i>disaster</i>
			32:14	about the <i>disaster</i>

Table 8: Important Recurring Words in Exodus 32:1-14

In contrast to the previous pericope, the nation who “worked” in anticipation of God’s rest now “works” to produce a golden image in the form of Yahweh. This is a clear covenant violation. The breaking of the covenant causes Yahweh to burn with anger, threatening to destroy the very people whom he brought out of the “land” of Egypt.

#### 3.2.3.2.4. Structure

The reader of the Exodus narrative might have anticipated that the lengthy report of Moses receiving instructions for the construction of the tabernacle (chs 25-31) would be immediately followed by a report of their fulfilment. This, however, is not the case. Instead, the reader is confronted with the record of how the Israelites jeopardise their covenant relationship with God by constructing a golden calf at the foot of the mountain. Within the larger framework of chapter 32-43, this pericope may be divided into two parts: 32:1-6, and 32:7-15.

##### 3.2.3.2.4.1. Text Outline

- A 32:1-6 Israel’s Idolatry
- B 32:7-14 God’s Anger and Moses’ Intercession

#### 3.2.3.2.5. Commentary

##### 3.2.3.2.5.1. Israel’s Idolatry 32:1-6

About forty days have passed since Moses went up the mountain (cf. 24:18). His absence from the camp creates a sense of uncertainty among the Israelites. Consequently, the people surround Aaron and demand that he construct a god for them. This request is highly ironic in the light of the instructions that God was giving to Moses on the mountain. The Hebrew expression, “gathered around” (*qāhāl niphal + ‘āl*) is used by Moses only three other times. All these occur in the book of Numbers within the context of opposition and hostility (Num 16:3; 16:42; 20:2). This may suggest that Aaron may have acted out of fear for his own wellbeing.

Succumbing to the pressure, Aaron facilitated their return to idolatry. He requested gold earrings from the women and children, but not the men. This could reflect his estimation that more than enough earrings would be produced to have sufficient gold for an idol. Or it could reflect the fact that only women and children, not men, wore earrings among the Israelites.

Particularly in doubt is the exact meaning of *māssēkā* (מַסֵּכָה), usually translated “molten image.” The description of the calf as a cast image suggests that it was possibly made of solid gold and not of wood plated with gold (contra Stuart 2006:665). There is little doubt that Israelites believed that it was Yahweh, and no other god, who had delivered them from Egypt. Only this time, Yahweh was now being represented by an idol, the very thing forbidden by the second commandment. In other words, the people recognised the calf as the embodiment of Yahweh, the God who had led them in their exodus.

After the people accept the image as a suitable representation of their deity, Aaron constructs an altar and proclaims a festival to Yahweh. His actions are possibly intended to steer the people in the right direction (Alexander 2017:662). The rapid sequence of verbs in verse 6 gives an impression of whole-hearted commitment by the Israelites. However, their enthusiastic celebration of the festival is highly inappropriate in the context of committing idolatry.

#### 3.2.3.2.5.2. God’s Anger and Moses’ Intercession 32:7-14

Exodus 32:7-14 forms a unit that underscores the mystery of the wrath of God, and the mediating role of Moses in appealing to the mercy of God. From the broader context, there is little doubt that the second commandment has been utterly violated (v8). Moses and Yahweh were conversing on Mount Sinai, it was during this time that the Israelites made for themselves a metal-plated idol in the shape of a calf. They bowed down to it, sacrificed to it, and attributed to the idol their rescue from Egypt. Stuart observes:

What they could see and touch at their convenience was what they wanted—a god who would let them live as they wished and have a good time when they wanted to and who would not impose his covenant requirements on them. Theirs was a foolish choice reflecting

badly on any people so self-absorbed and self-destructive as to make it (2006:669).

The survival of the newly formed people of God is at stake. In verse 10 God rhetorically proposed three things: to unleash his anger, to destroy the current Israel and to make a new nation from Moses' descendants effectively replacing the promises to make Abraham into a great nation with new promises to do the same for Moses. This tested Moses' commitment to God's original plan, the plan to make a great people out of Abraham.

Moses reflects no desire to replace Abraham and no interest in easing his own problems by seeing the sinful Israelites obliterated. Later (v32) Moses is, in fact, willing to offer the loss of his own eternal life rather than see the nation of Israel eliminated from the earth. Moses' prayer is focused on the continuation of the covenant and the survival of hope in the promises of God. Moses appeals to God with three arguments, all of which draw attention to God's character of consistency and faithfulness.

Firstly, why should God nullify the result of his demonstration of divine power? Secondly, why should God grant the Egyptians' delight in seeing the Israelites crushed— by their own God? Thirdly, why should God go back on his promises to the patriarchs? Moses rests his plea not on any good thing he had done, but rather, solely upon God's revealed will and promises. To this Selvaggio (2014:140) remarks, "Moses asked God to remember the covenant promises that he had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. He set his plea upon the bedrock of God's covenant and his self-attesting oath to bring Israel to the land of promise."

The final prayer in the book of Exodus comes later in the same chapter. On the surface, the sentiments expressed by Moses seem broadly similar, but there are profound differences. Rather than simply asking Yahweh to honour his commitments to Israel, Moses raises the possibility of making atonement for the people.

The next day Moses said to the people, 'You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.' So Moses returned to the Lord and said, 'Alas, this people has sinned a great sin. They have made for themselves gods of gold. But now, if you will forgive their sin—but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written.' But the Lord said to Moses,

‘Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book. But now go, lead the people to the place about which I have spoken to you; behold, my angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them’ (Ex 32:30-34; ESV).

The covenant had been broken, as symbolised by Moses’ own actions the prior day in smashing the precious tablets of testimony. While addressing the people, and now to God directly, Moses bluntly described the people’s transgression as a “great sin” and as idolatry — a violation of the first two commandments. The wording “gods of gold” recalls the language of the second commandment in 20:23. A major appeal was now Israel’s only hope for restoration. Hamilton writes:

That he begins with ‘perhaps’ indicates that Moses has no idea whether God is open to this. Earlier in the chapter he is bold with God to the point of being brazen. Here he hedges his approach with possibility-only language. To be sure, God is gracious and merciful, but his forgiveness cannot be presumed, as if God is duty bound to remove our sins anytime and anywhere we ask him (2011:554-555).

What is fascinating is that Moses presents no offering to bring about such forgiveness, other than a plaintive request that he be blotted out in the place of his people. Stuart (2006:684) writes, “In these verses Moses linked his appeal for forgiveness for Israel’s sin to an offer to lose his own eternal life if the people’s sin could not be forgiven.” The fact that the Lord ignores his request (v33-34) and simply asserts his divine right and commitment to keeping his promises to those who have not abandoned him draw the threads of covenant and atonement together. In other words, it is now completely clear that the idolatry of the people at Sinai had not resulted in their destruction, but God had been faithful to his original intent, just as Moses prayed he would be (32:11-14) and had spared the nation for its original purpose, to conquer and occupy the promised land (Stuart 2006:688).

The prayer of Moses at the conclusion of the larger narrative marks an inclusio (Clowney 2000:693). Previously, God had said that he would not go in the midst of the people because they were stiff-necked (Ex 33:5). On this occasion, Moses prays, “Please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance” Ex 34:9).



As one works through the Exodus narrative, it becomes increasingly clear that corporate prayer — either by the nation or one representing them — rests upon the character of God, especially revealed through his covenant promises.

### 3.2.3.3. Redemptive Hermeneutics

In the previous section (Ex 20), we observed that God brought the nation of Israel to Mount Sinai to enter into covenant with them. That covenant relationship was based upon God's deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt. As Israel's King, God set forth stipulations for his relationship with Israel which find their most succinct expression in the Ten Commandments. Additionally, the text introduced the concept of a mediator, one who represents God to the people and who represents the people to God. This theme, and its expectation, in developed further as redemptive history unfolds.

Exodus 32 is a record that stains the pages of Israel's history. In this account Israel breaks that covenant which God had established by constructing an idol in the form of a golden calf. This rejection extends not only to the Yahweh; but to Moses, Yahweh's representative to his people. Moses' response reveals a degree of both mercy and judgment. Unexpectedly, he is even willing to present himself as an offering of atonement in order to secure the protection of the nation. Here, Moses continues to foreshadow the intercessory work of Jesus.

One might have expected that Moses would have used this occasion to affirm God's judgment against Israel. They were, after all, breaking the very covenant that Moses was bringing to them on the tablets of stone. Sadly, the nation rejects both their leader and their God. But while Moses had been rejected by Israel, he was still willing to present himself as an atonement offering for the nation. Moses' plea for mercy and the manner in which he made this plea not only reflects his spiritual maturity, but also serves as a continuing pattern for prayer (Selvaggio 2014:140). Moses asked God to remember the covenant promises that he had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. He set his plea upon the bedrock of God's covenant and his self-attesting oath to bring Israel to the land of promise. Douglas (2006:672) affirms this as he writes, "Reminding God of his promises was hardly needed from the point of view of God's memory; it

was, rather, a means of showing his faith in who God was, something he also continued to pursue further in the aftermath of the people's sin."

God did not require any offering from Moses. He forgave Israel's sin and Moses remained the nation's leader. While God was the ultimate source of Israel's salvation, Moses' actions should not be diminished. Moses was faithful to his calling as mediator and was instrumental in saving his nation from utter ruin. Moses' offer, however, does point us to Jesus. Such a pattern is seen in Christ, who did not use his equality with God for his own sake, but rather offered his own life for the sake of others and now intercedes for rather than condemns those who approach God through him (Stubbs 2009:135). White (2016:272) affirms that, "Moses the intercessory is a type of Jesus, who in his unique holiness and innocence intercedes for the world."

Like Moses, Jesus was widely rejected by his own people. They had once worshipped him as the coming Messiah, placing palm branches of victory in his path in his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. But they quickly turned against him and demanded his crucifixion at the hands of Pontius Pilate. One might have expected that Jesus would have used this occasion to affirm God's judgment against Israel, but upon the cross, Jesus showed compassion on the very people who had demanded his crucifixion. "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Lk 23:34).

Both Moses and Jesus were willing to give their lives for the sins of God's people, but the major difference was that the offering that Jesus made was efficacious in all respects. Moses' offer, while displaying the heart of a mediator, could not atone for the sin of God's chosen people. In stark contrast, Jesus' offering of himself was fully efficacious to atone for the sin of God's chosen people. "This is a priestly prayer, one which foreshadows the role of the Priest-Prophet, Jesus who will submit to the curse that is upon covenant-breakers so that they might be saved" (Goldsworthy 2003:117).

### 3.3. The Presence of the Lord: Corporate Prayer in Leviticus

One of the intriguing features of Leviticus, albeit seldom discussed, is the fact that there is not a single reference to prayer in the entire book. In Exodus 32, Moses

alluded to the fact that only the Lord could have provided atonement for the sins of his people. The absence of prayer in general within Leviticus may suggest that performing rituals, including prayer, cannot influence God. While the need for atonement is clear, God himself must provide this.

This is where a historical-redemptive approach to corporate prayer in the Pentateuch provides the reader with a clue to the silence of Leviticus. As Rosscup (2008:200) notes, “Leviticus goes on with the narrative of Exodus without a break. Once the tabernacle was ready for use and the Lord showed His presence in it, He called to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting ... (Lev 1:1).” The central image describes the covenant King of Israel dwelling in the midst of his people. This image is rooted in two of the book’s central themes: the tabernacle and the covenant (Sklar 2014:37).

Milgrom (1991:18-19) suggests that there must have been both prayer and music in temple worship, even though it is not mentioned explicitly in the book. If anything, Leviticus 16:21, as suggested by Wenham (1979:61), implies something like prayer taking place on the Day of Atonement with the laying on of hands. According to the Mishnah, the high priest said the following prayer as he placed his hands upon the scapegoat:

O God, thy people, the House of Israel, have committed iniquity, transgressed, and sinned before thee. O God, forgive, I pray, the iniquities and transgressions and sins which thy people, the House of Israel, have committed and transgressed and sinned before thee; as it is written in the law of thy servant Moses. For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you: from all your sins shall ye be clean before the Lord (Yoma 6:2).

In addition to those prayers made on the Day of Atonement, there may be traditional evidence to suggest that prayers were offered at other ceremonies. Once again the Mishnah suggests that while the priests were offering incense, the rest of the Israelites gathered in the outer court for prayer (*m. Tamid* 4:3; *m. Kelim* 1:9). Thus the burning of incense became associated with prayer. In light of these descriptions, Rosscup (2008:204) suggests that in the book of Leviticus, prayer “is a spiritual reflex response to God’s Word.”

Some (Balentine 1993:45) suggest that the absence of corporate prayer is built on the idea that Israel is a “kingdom of priests” where access to the Lord is not simply limited to the priestly class. Nevertheless, regardless as to how one views the silence of prayer in Leviticus, Rosscup (2008:199) asserts, “prayer is integral to this book even if not often explicitly mentioned.”

In its broader framework, Sklar reasons that book of Leviticus casts a vision that takes Israel’s identity back to the Lord’s intent for humanity from the beginning of the world. That is (2014:30), “to walk in rich fellowship with their covenant King, enjoy his care and blessing, and extending through all the earth his kingdom of justice, mercy, kindness, righteousness, holiness and love.” The Israelites, in other words, were not only to be a signpost back to Eden; they are to become a manifestation of it and a people who extend Eden’s borders to every corner of the earth.

In addition to this, the ancient Israelites were to understand that they owed exclusive loyalty to the Lord, their covenant King, and were to show such loyalty by being faithful to his laws. The laws, however, anticipated something (or rather someone) far greater who would satisfy the requirements for atonement perfectly and enable the people to fulfil their covenant obligations (Millar 2016:36-38).

### 3.4. The Mediator and the Covenant: Corporate Prayer in Numbers

#### 3.4.1. Numbers 11:1-15

##### 3.4.1.1. Translation

- 11:1 And the people became like those murmuring<sup>69</sup> evil in the ears of Yahweh; and Yahweh heard, and his burning anger was kindled, and the fire of Yahweh burned among them and it consumed the outskirts of the camp.
- 2 And the people cried out to Moses, and Moses prayed to Yahweh, and the fire died down.
- 3 So the name of that place was called Taberah, because the fire of Yahweh burned among them.

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<sup>69</sup> כִּמְתַאֲנָנִים (*kemit’ō-ne’im*), lit. complained, is used only here and in Lam 3:39.

- 4 Now the rabble<sup>70</sup> who [were] in their midst had a strong craving; and the children of Israel also turned back and wept and said, “Who shall feed us meat?
- 5 We remember the fish which we ate in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic.
- 6 But now our lives<sup>71</sup> [are] dried up, there is nothing whatsoever except this manna [before] our eyes.”
- 7 The manna [was] like the seed of coriander, and its appearance [was] like the appearance of bdellium.
- 8 The people went about and gathered [it] and ground [it] with handmills or crushed [it] in the mortar and boiled it in the pot and made cake of it; and its taste was like the taste of cake baked with oil.
- 9 When the dew fell on the camp [at] night, the manna fell with it.
- 10 And Moses heard the people weeping throughout their clans, each [one] at the entrance of his tent; and the wrath of Yahweh was kindled, and in the eyes of Moses it was evil.
- 11 And Moses said to Yahweh, “Why have you done evil to your servant? And why have I not found favour in your eyes, that you place the burden of all this people on me?
- 12 Did I conceive all of this people? Or have I fathered them, that you should say to me, ‘Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries a suckling child, to the land which you swore to their fathers?’
- 13 Where [am] I to get meat to give to all of this people? For they weep before me saying, ‘Give us meat so that we may eat!’
- 14 I alone am not able to carry all of this people, because it is too burdensome<sup>72</sup> for me.
- 15 If this is how you [are] going to deal with me, please kill me immediately,<sup>73</sup> if I have found favour in your sight, and let me not look on my wickedness.”

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<sup>70</sup> אֲסַפְסָפִים (*’āsāpsūp*), lit. rabble, is used only here in the MT.

<sup>71</sup> נַפְשֵׁינוּ (*nāpšē’nū*), lit. our throats.

<sup>72</sup> כָּבֵד (*kābēd*), lit. heavy.

<sup>73</sup> The verb הָרַג (*hrg*) is repeated almost immediately, only separated by an interjection, highlighting a sense of urgency in Moses’ words.

### 3.4.1.2. Historical Hermeneutics

#### 3.4.1.2.1. Authorship

The traditional approach to the formation of the Pentateuch, as previously stated, has focused on the role of Moses as both the writer and the editor of the text. A number of internal factors, particular to the book of Numbers, reinforce this traditional position.

Numbers is a continuation of the preceding three books. In it, there is only a single reference to the writing activity of Moses, recounted in Num 33:1-2. Throughout the book, however, it is noted that Moses is the recipient of the divine revelation. The introductory phrase, "The Lord spoke to Moses," is used forty-two times and forms one of the books key theological statements and organising elements. Ashley (1993:4) states the case well saying, "[W]hen the text claims that, for example, Moses wrote something or received a communication from God, it is not just literary convention but a description of historical fact."

The book does, however, contain some material that is most naturally understood as post-Mosaic additions (e.g. 12:3; 21:14-15; 32:34-42). In light of these elements, Moses appears as the natural human figure to be assigned the recording of the revelatory acts and words of God, but he also includes source material and glosses.

#### 3.4.1.2.2. Recipients and Purpose

Numbers derives its ultimate significance within the framework and context of the greater Pentateuch. The book focuses on the laws of Israel while in the wilderness. Interestingly, it is only in the book of Numbers that one finds the military order of the tribes, the census of the fighting force, and the travel duties of Levites. Based on this Smith (1993:404) suggests, "The immediate purpose of the book is to relate the history of God's people from the time of the first census until the final encampment before they entered the promised land." Sadly, only two adults of those who left Egypt were permitted to enter the promised land.

### 3.4.1.3. Linguistic Hermeneutics

#### 3.4.1.3.1. Genre

One of the distinctive features of the book of Numbers is the great variety of literary forms within the book. Milgrom (1990:xiii) lists a number of genres with examples: narrative (4:1-3), poetry (21:17-18), prophecy (24:3-9), victory song (21:27-30), prayer (12:13), blessing (6:24-26), lampoon (22:22-35), diplomatic letter (21:14-19), civil law (27:1-11), cultic law (15:7-21), oracular decision (15:32-36), census list (26:1-51), temple archive (7:10-88), itinerary (33:1-49). In addition, the reader will find stories, travel itineraries, lists of personal names and lists of instructions for worship, reports of military battles and accounts of legal disputes. Most of these genres, however, exist within the broader context of the instructional history writing that characterises the Pentateuch as a whole (Longman & Dillard 2006:95).

Historical narrative is the characteristic genre of Numbers 11. The passage records the murmuring of Yahweh's covenant people, the response of judgment to their murmuring and Moses' complaint as the mediator of the covenant. Once again, the covenant serves as the backdrop for Yahweh's grace upon the nation.

#### 3.4.1.3.2. Important Recurring Verbs (by stem)

Stem	Meaning	Verse	Analysis	Translated As
אכל	to eat, feed	11:1	Qal. Imperfect. 3FS	<i>consumed</i> the outskirts
		11:4	Hiphil. Imperfect. 3MS Pronominal Suffix 1P	Who shall <i>feed</i> us meat?
		11:5	Qal. Imperfect. 1P	the fish which we <i>ate</i>
		11:13	Qal. Imperfect. 1P. Cohorative	so that we may <i>eat!</i>
בכה	to weep	11:4	Qal. Imperfect. 3MP	the children of Israel... <i>wept</i>
		11:10	Qal. Participle. MS. Absolute	the people <i>weeping</i>
		11:13	Qal. Imperfect. 3MP	they <i>weep</i> before me
נשא	to carry	11:12	Qal. Imperative. 3MS Pronominal Suffix 3MS	<i>Carry</i> them in your bosom

		11:14	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS Qal. Infinitive. Construct	<i>carries</i> a suckling child I alone am not able to <i>carry</i>
בער	to burn	11:1 11:3	Qal. Imperfect. 3FS Pronominal Suffix 3MP Qal. Perfect. 3FS	the fire of Yahweh <i>burned</i> the fire of Yahweh <i>burned</i>
חרה	to become angry	11:1 11:10	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	his <i>burning anger</i> was kindled the <i>wrath</i> of Yahweh
רעע	to be bad, not fit for use	11:10 11:11	Qal. Perfect. 3MS Hiphil. Perfect. 2MS	it was <i>evil</i> Why have you done <i>evil</i>
שמע	to hear with one's ears	11:1 11:10	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	and Yahweh <i>heard</i> And Moses <i>heard</i> the people

Table 9: Important Recurring Verbs in Numbers 11:1-15

#### 3.4.1.3.3. Important Recurring Words (by stem)

Stem	Meaning	Occurrences	Verse	Translated As
אש	fire	3	11:1 11:2 11:3	the <i>fire</i> of Yahweh the <i>fire</i> died down the <i>fire</i> of Yahweh
בשר	meat	3	11:4 11:13	Who shall feed us <i>meat</i> ? Where [am] I to get <i>meat</i> Give us <i>meat</i>
מן	manna	3	11:6 11:7 11:9	except this <i>manna</i> The <i>manna</i> [was] like the seed the <i>manna</i> fell with it
אף	nose, anger	2	11:1 11:10	his burning <i>anger</i> was kindled the <i>wrath</i> of Yahweh

Table 10: Important Recurring Words in Numbers 11:1-15



The repetition of the words “meat” and “manna” stress the fact that Yahweh had graciously and supernaturally provided for his people in the wilderness. The nation, however, nostalgically looked back on their experience in Egypt, not remembering their slavery, but what they could “eat”. This caused Yahweh to “burn” with anger. Ironically, the fire of Yahweh “ate” the outskirts of the camp.

#### 3.4.1.3.4. Structure

Israel’s journey from Mount Sinai begins on a positive note. The nation has affirmed its obedience to God, they are willing to share the good that God will give them, and they are confident in the Lord’s leadership and power. Unfortunately, the journey quickly turns sour. Unfaithfulness soon becomes an all-encompassing reference to Israel’s disobedience and failure. Such covenant unfaithfulness is recorded in Numbers 11-25 with three rebellion cycles (Cole 2000:170). First, from Sinai to Zin (10:11-15:41). Second, the Zin wilderness (16:1-19:22). Third, from Zin to Moab (20:1-25:18). The pericope under observation is set within the first cycle of unfaithfulness and records the first two acts of rebellion by the nation.

##### 3.4.1.3.4.1. Text Outline

- A 11:1-3 The First Rebellion: Fire at the Fringes
- B 11:4-15 The Second Rebellion: A Complaint about Food

#### 3.4.1.3.5. Commentary

##### 3.4.1.3.5.1. The First Rebellion: Fire at the Fringes 11:1-3

Numbers 11 marks a dramatic shift from the positive tone in chapter 10. Previously, the people looked forward to the promised land and were assured of God’s care and protection (10:29). Numbers 11:1-3, however, recounts the first instance of the nation’s discontent and complaining against God. By way of contrast, the complaints that Israel made to God in the book of Exodus were treated as legitimate needs: the people need water (Ex 15:22-26), the people need food (Ex 16), and the people again need water (Ex 17:1-7).

In each case, God takes their complaints seriously and fulfils the needs of the Israelites by turning bitter water into sweet water, by providing manna and quail for food, and by causing water to flow from a rock. In the book of Numbers, however, the Israelites raise their voices in complaint about similar needs, but in this instance their complaints are treated as acts of faithlessness. The whining of the Israelites rouses God’s anger and punishment, which is only mitigated only by Moses’ intercession. The contrast between pre-Sinai and post-Sinai may be observed as follows:

Exodus		Numbers	
Miriam’s Song of Praise	15:20-21	Miriam and Aaron Rebel	12
Israel Complains	15:22-26	Israel Complains	11:1-3
Manna and Quail	16	Manna and Quail	11:4-15, 31-35
Water from the Rock	17:1-7	Water from the Rock	20:1-13
Leaders Appointed	18	Leaders Appointed	11:16-30
Israel is Victorious	17:8-16	Israel is Defeated	14:39-45

Table 11: A Comparison of Pre and Post Sinai Complaints

This initial rebellious incident sets the stage and pattern for the successive acts of sedition. The unnamed complaint in Num 11:1-3 becomes a schematic summary of the basic outline of the complaint stories to follow (Olson 1996:63). Milgrom (1990:89) helpfully affirms, “This short section of three verses contains all of the essential elements of all the subsequent narratives describing Israel’s complaints: complaint (11:4-5; 12:1-2; 14:1-4; 17:6-7; 20:3-5; 21:5), divine punishment (11:33; 12:9-10; 14:20-37; 16:32; 17:11; 21:7), and immortalising the incident by giving a name to the site (11:34; 20:13; 21:3; Ex 15:23; 17:7).”

At this point within redemptive history, the people are on the other side of Sinai. Not only have they witnessed a dramatic revelation of God’s power and glory, but they have also entered into a covenant relationship with the Lord (Stubbs 2009:115). Olson articulates the weighty implications of this new established relationship as he succinctly writes:

Before Sinai, Israel was like a newly adopted child who did not yet know the rules of the household. God, the divine Parent, bent over backwards to satisfy the legitimate needs of an Israel immediately out

of Egypt. But by the time we reach Numbers, the people of Israel know their responsibilities in the law and the commandments. Israel must take responsibility and is answerable for its relationship to God (1996:63).

The present rebellion, therefore, initiates a dramatic theological movement in the book. This is made clear by the direct apposition of 11:1-3 with 10:29-36 (Cole 2000:180). The first word in the Hebrew text of 11:1, וַיִּהְיֶה (‘‘and so it happened’’) is also the first word in 10:35. In the earlier text the focus is on the ark of God leading the people out from Sinai with the promise of ‘‘good things to Israel’’. In the present text the people are complaining continually about the ‘‘hardship’’ (lit. evil) of the desert. ‘‘In the Book of Numbers,’’ Cole (2000:181) asserts, ‘‘this action constitutes a shift in the structural and theological movement of the book from one of unity, faithfulness, holiness, and celebration to one of discord, rebellion, and dissatisfaction with who they were as the people of the covenant.’’

By sending the purging fire only to the perimeter of the Israelite camp, where uncleanness and ceremonial impurity were relegated, the Lord was displaying his mercy. The entire camp could have been consumed had the Lord’s judgment been poured out in the midst of the encampment. Faced with potential disastrous circumstances of an all-consuming fiery judgment, the people quickly shifted from complaining before God to pleading with Moses to intercede with God on their behalf.

There is a deliberate contrast between the people who כָּמַתְּאָנְנִים (lit. complained to each other) and Moses who is the only one who addresses God. The verb וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל, translated ‘‘and he prayed’’ in the NIV, denotes intercessory prayer that was a continuous action on the part of God’s chosen leader (Cole 2000:181). The Lord in his mercy was responsive to the fervent prayer of this righteous man, whom Milgrom calls the ‘‘archetype of prophetic intercessor’’ (1990:83). The implication seems to be that Moses is the only one thinking on covenantal terms, and therefore is the only one who calls on the name of the Lord. Consequently, we are led to understand that the destruction of the Israelites was averted purely because of the Lord’s commitment to the covenant which he established.

### 3.4.1.3.5.2. The Second Rebellion: A Complaint about Food 11:4-15

The theme of the Lord's covenantal commitment is made explicit in the following pericope (v4-15) where the people are once again filled with ingratitude. Complaints about food and water supply were among the most common reasons for the dissatisfaction that festered among the people and led to outright rebellion against God and his appointed leader Moses. In this second rebellion, the people's displeasure was instigated by an assembly (הַקָּהָל הַזֶּה) of those who had departed from Egypt along with the Israelites (cf. Ex 12:38; Josh 8:35). The disgruntlement of this mixed group spread rapidly through the camp of the children of Israel. When commenting on the influence of this group, Olson affirms that:

One Jewish rabbinic interpretation links this non-Israelite fringe group with the preceding rebellion in Num 11:1-3 in which God's fire burned only the outlying parts of the camp; it is this fringe group who is responsible for both rebellions. In the second rebellion about food, however, this non-Israelite fringe group succeeds in stirring up the Israelites themselves (11:4). Thus, the discontent of the community seems to be spreading from the margins in toward the centre of the camp (1996:64).

In the midst of their barrenness in the desert setting, the Israelites had become nostalgic over their former food supply while forgetting the bondage and oppression from which the Lord had so dramatically delivered them. The failure to remember God's grace and faithfulness permeates their rebellion. The widespread nature of the discontent is highlighted by the phrase "every family wailing" (v10), as the initial grumbling of the rabble spreads like wildfire through the camp.

Upon hearing the cries of dissatisfaction from the people, God was considerably angered, and Moses was distressed (lit. "and in the eyes of Moses evil/contemptible"). Moses is now exasperated with the people for making his role as a leader unbearable and with the Lord for assigning him this overwhelming burden of leadership. Up to this point, Moses has always emphasised the intimate tie between himself and the people of Israel. Moreover, he had always ensured that the personal favour he experienced in God's eyes also extended to the people as a whole. But here in Numbers 11, Moses appears to sever himself from the Israelites. R. Allen (1990:791-92) calls this passage "Moses' Lament". Cole (2000:187) suggests that, "Here Moses has lost sight of God's

greatness and grace, of his ability to provide for the needs of his people.” This explains why the prophet’s reaction is pointed primarily toward God, challenging the divine decision to place him in the parental role of providing for this nation.

Moses’ complaint is based on the implications of God’s covenant loyalty to his people. Once again, Moses’ prayer is based upon the previous promises of God (Olson 1996:66). The implication of Moses’ words is that God is the mother who conceived and gave birth to Israel. The female and maternal imagery is striking. God is the one who ought to take responsibility for carrying Israel as a mother cares for a breast-feeding child. Such female imagery for God is unusual in the Old Testament, although it is not unique (Deut 32:18; Isa 42:14; 66:13).<sup>74</sup>

#### 3.4.1.4. Redemptive Hermeneutics

Nearly a year has elapsed since the encampment of Israel at the foot of Sinai (Num 10:11 cf. Ex 19:1-2). As Israel resumes its march to the promised land, the nation is filled with excitement and expectation. The people line up as Moses commands (Num 10:13-28). God himself guides the Israelites with a pillar of fire (Num 10:33). But after three days journey from Sinai, expectation deteriorates into grumbling. On this occasion, Moses’ mediatory role is expanded upon.

As the focus of the story shifts from the people to Moses, it develops in an unlikely way. Usually Moses displays more concern for the people, he often steps into the gap between God and the murmuring people and intercedes for them. But in this instance, Moses does not intercede for the people; instead, he adds his complaint to that of the people. While God is displeased with the people, Moses is displeased with God. He complains that God’s expectation of him to care for the people is too much. Moses’ limitations lead him to question not only his own strength, but God’s as well. He lacks faith in God’s power and providence.

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<sup>74</sup> It has been suggested that the participle אָמֵן (attendant) is masculine, indicating a male child carer, rather than a wet nurse. Due to the image of God giving birth to Israel, the author has maintained the feminine usage.

Once again the reader is exposed to the cyclic pattern of Yahweh's commissioned representative. Von Rad says:

In the case of certain descriptions of the call and the failure of charismatic leaders (Gideon, Samson, and Saul), we are dealing with literary compositions which already show a typological trend, in that the narrators are only concerned with the phenomenon of the rise and speeding failure of the man thus called (1965:362).

It is by way of contrast then, that Moses' impatience and frustration with Yahweh anticipates one who will submit wholly to him. Christ's ministry fulfils the qualities of leadership that Moses lacks. Christ calls himself the good shepherd who cares for, provides for, and lays his life down for the sheep. Christ, in the face of death for a people who reject him pray, "Not my will, but yours, be done" (Lk 22:42).

### 3.4.2. Numbers 13:1-14:38

#### 3.4.2.1. Translation

13:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses saying,

2 "Send out for yourself men and let them spy out the land of Canaan which I [am about] to give to the children of the Israel. You shall send one man from each of their fathers' tribes, everyone a leader among them."

3 So Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran at the command of Yahweh; all of them men [who were] heads of the children of Israel.

4 And these [were] their names: from the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur;

5 from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori;

6 from the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh;

7 from the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph;

8 from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Nun;

9 from the tribe of Benjamin, Oalti the son of Raphu;

10 from the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi;

11 from the tribe of Joseph, from the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi the son fo Susi;

12 from the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Gemalli;

13 from the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael;

14 from the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi;

- 15 from the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son of Maki.
- 16 These [are] the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun Joshua.
- 17 Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan and said to them, “Go up there into the Negev and [then] go up into the hill country.
- 18 and see what the land [is like], and whether the people who inhabit it [are] strong or weak, whether they [are] few or many
- 19 and whether the land which they [are] inhabiting [is] good or bad, and whether the cities in which they [are] inhabiting [are] like open camps or in fortifications?
- 20 How [is] the land, is it fertile or lean? Are there trees in it or not? Show yourselves courageous<sup>75</sup> and take from the fruit of the land.” Now [was] the days of the firstfruits of the grapes.
- 21 So they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehab, at Lebo-hamath.
- 22 They went up through the Negev and came to Hebron. Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the descendants of the Anakites [were] there. Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.
- 23 And they came up to the valley of Eshcol and from there they cut off a branch with a single cluster of grapes; and they carried it on [a] pole among two [men]; with the pomegranates and the figs.
- 24 That place [was] called the valley of Eshcol, because of the cluster which the children of Israel cut off from there.
- 25 And they returned from spying out the land at the end of forty days.
- 26 And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the assembly of the children of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh. And they brought back word to all the assembly and showed them the fruit of the land.
- 27 And they told him, “We came to the land which you sent us; and also it [is] flowing with milk and honey and this [is] its fruit.
- 28 However, the people who are inhabiting the land [are] fierce, and the cities [are] fortified and very large; and moreover we saw the descendants of the Anakites there.

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<sup>75</sup> וְהָיָה כְּמַעֲשֵׂי הַיָּדָיִם (we<sup>h</sup>ithāzzāqtēm'), is used as a command. cf. NIV, “Do your best.”

- 29 [The] Amalekites [are] living in the land of the Negev, and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites [are] living in the hill country, and the Canaanites [are] living by the sea and by the banks of the Jordan.”
- 30 But Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, “We should certainly go up<sup>76</sup> and take possession [of] it because we are able to prevail over it.”
- 31 But the men who went up with him said, “We are not able to go up against the people because they [are] stronger than us.”
- 32 And they presented the report of the land which they had spied out to the children of Israel saying, “The land through which we went to spy out, [is] a land which eats its inhabitants; and all the people when we saw in it [are] men of great size.
- 33 And there we saw the Nephilim, the children of Anak from the Nephilim, and we were as grasshoppers in their sight.”

- 14:1 Then all the assembly lifted up their voices and gave their cry, and the people wept that night.
- 2 And the children of Israel grumbled<sup>77</sup> against Moses and against Aaron. All the assembly said to them, “If only we had died in the land of Egypt or if only we had died in this wilderness.
- 3 Why [is] Yahweh bringing us into this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little children will become plunder; would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?”
- 4 And each man said to his brother, “Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt.”
- 5 Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation the children of Israel.
- 6 And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh from the spies [of] the land tore their garments
- 7 and said to all the assembly of the children of Israel, “The land which we went through to spy out, is an exceedingly<sup>78</sup> good land.
- 8 If Yahweh delights in us then he shall bring us into this land and give it to us, a land flowing with milk and honey.

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<sup>76</sup> עֲלֶה (*ʿlh*) is doubled, highlighting the sense of urgency in Caleb’s words.

<sup>77</sup> לוֹן (*lwn*) is a term used in reference to the desert generation (Ex 15-17; Num 14-17; Josh 9:18).

<sup>78</sup> The doubling of *mēōd mēōd* expresses the superlative, highlighting the exceeding goodness of the land.



9 Only you must not rebel against Yahweh, and you must not fear the people of the land because they [are] our bread; their protection has been removed from them and Yahweh [is] with us; you shall not fear them.

10 And all the assembly said to stone them with stones, but the glory of Yahweh appeared in the tent of meeting to all the children of Israel.

11 And Yahweh said to Moses, “How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, [in spite of] all the signs which I have done in their midst?”

12 I will strike them with a plague and I will dispossess them and I will make you a nation greater and more mighty than they.”

13 But Moses said to the Lord, “Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for you brought up this people in your might from among them,

14 and they will tell the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that you, O Lord, are in the midst of this people. For you, O Lord, are seen face to face, and your cloud stands over them and you go before them, in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night.

15 Now if you kill this people as one man, then the nations who have heard your fame will say,

16 ‘It is because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land that he swore to give to them that he has killed them in the wilderness.’

17 And now, please let the power of the Lord be great as you have promised, saying,

18 ‘The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.’

19 Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now.”

20 And Yahweh said, “I forgive [them] according to your word.

21 But as I live, and as all the earth will be filled with the glory of Yahweh,

22 all the men who have seen my glory and my signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put me to the test these ten times and have not listened to my voice,

- 23 shall not see the land that I swore to their fathers; nor shall those who despise me see it.
- 24 But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit within him and has remained true after me, I will bring him into the land into which he went, and his offspring shall take possession of it.
- 25 Now, the Amalekites and the Canaanites [are] living in the valley; tomorrow turn and set out for the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea.<sup>79</sup>
- 26 And Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron saying,
- 27 “How long will this evil assembly grumble against me? I have heard the grumbings of the children of Israel which they are grumbling against me.
- 28 Say to them, ‘As I live, declares Yahweh, what you have spoken in my hearing, so I will do to you.
- 29 Your corpses will fall in this wilderness, according to your complete number, all from twenty years and above who have grumbled against me.
- 30 Surely you shall not come into the land which I have lifted up my hand to make you dwell in it, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.
- 31 But your little children, who you said shall be as plunder, I will bring them in and they will know the land which you have rejected.
- 32 But as for you, your corpses will fall in this wilderness.
- 33 And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years and they shall bear your unfaithfulness until the completing of your corpses in the wilderness.
- 34 According to the number of days which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for each day, you shall bear your guilt forty years; and you shall know my opposition.
- 35 I, Yahweh, have spoken. Surely I will do this to all this wicked assembly who have banded together against me; in this wilderness they will come to an end, and there they will die.”
- 36 And the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land and who returned and made all the congregation grumble against him by spreading a bad report about the land,
- 37 the men who produced a bad report about the land, died by a plague before Yahweh.

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<sup>79</sup> יַם־סוּף (dērēk ym-sûp') lit. sea of reeds.

38 But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive from those men who went to spy out the land.

### 3.4.2.2. Linguistic Hermeneutics

#### 3.4.2.2.1. Genre

Number 13-14 records, in narrative form, the instructions of Moses to spy out the land of Canaan. The passage records, with great detail, the obedience of the spies to Moses' instruction. It also provides clear descriptions of that which the spies had experienced. This includes descriptions about the land, its produce and its inhabitants. On this occasion, the reader is made privy to information of which the original hearers initially heard a warped version. This heightens the moral tension of the passage. Canaan is the land of promise. Therefore, a refusal to enter the land is a refusal of Yahweh's covenantal purposes.

#### 3.4.2.2.2. Important Recurring Verbs (by stem)

Stem	Meaning	Verse	Analysis	Translated As
תֹּר	to spy out	13:2	Qal. Imperfect. 3MP. Jussive	let them <i>spy out</i> the land
		13:16	Qal. Infinitive. Construct	to <i>spy out</i> the land
		13:17	Qal. Infinitive. Construct	to <i>spy out</i> the land of Canaan
		13:21	Qal. Imperfect. 3MP	they... <i>spied out</i> the land
		13:25	Qal. Infinitive. Construct	from <i>spying out</i> the land
		13:32	Qal. Perfect. 3P	which they had <i>spied out</i>
			Qal. Infinitive. Construct	which we went to <i>spy out</i>
		14:6	Qal. Participle. MS. Absolute	from the <i>spies</i> [of] the land
		14:7	Qal. Infinitive. Construct	we went through to <i>spy out</i>
		14:34	Qal. Perfect. 3MP	which you <i>spied out</i> the land
		14:36	Qal. Infinitive. Construct	whom Moses sent to <i>spy out</i>
		14:38	Qal. Infinitive. Construct	who went to <i>spy out</i> the land

בוא	to enter	13:22	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	and <i>came</i> to Hebron
		13:23	Qal. Imperfect. 3MP	they <i>came</i> up to the valley
		13:26	Qal. Imperfect. 3MP	they <i>came</i> to Moses and Aaron
		13:27	Qal. Perfect. 1P	We <i>came</i> to the land
		14:3	Hiphil. Participle. MS. Absolute	Why [is] Yahweh <i>bringing</i> us
		14:8	Hiphil. Perfect. 3MS	he shall <i>bring</i> us into this land
		14:16	Hiphil. Infinitive. Construct	to <i>bring</i> this people
		14:24	Hiphil. Perfect. 1S Pronominal Suffix 3MS	I will <i>bring</i> him into the land
		14:30	Qal. Perfect. 3MS	into which he <i>went</i>
		14:31	Qal. Imperfect. 2MP	you shall not <i>come</i> into the land
עלה	to ascend, go up	14:31	Hiphil. Perfect. 1S	I will <i>bring</i> in
		13:17	Qal. Imperative. 2MP	<i>Go up</i> there into the Negev
			Qal. Perfect. 2MP	[then] <i>go up</i> into the hill country
		13:21	Qal. Imperfect. 3MP	So they <i>went up</i>
		13:22	Qal. Imperfect. 3MP	They <i>went up</i> through
		13:30	Qal. Infinitive. Absolute	We should <i>certainly</i> go up
			Qal. Imperfect. 1P	We should <i>certainly</i> go up
		13:31	Qal. Perfect. 3P	the men who <i>went up</i> with him
	Qal. Infinitive. Construct	not able to <i>go up</i> against		
14:13	Hiphil. Perfect. 2MS	for you <i>brought up</i> this people		
נשא	to carry	13:23	Qal. Imperfect. 3MP Pronominal Suffix 3MS	they <i>carried</i> it on [a] pole
		14:1	Qal. Imperfect. 3FS	<i>lifted up</i> their voices
		14:18	Qal. Participle. MS. Absolute	<i>forgiving</i> iniquity
		14:19	Qal. Perfect. 2MS	you have <i>forgiven</i> this people
		14:30	Qal. Perfect. 1S	I have <i>lifted up</i> my hand
		14:33	Qal. Perfect. 3P	your unfaithfulness

		14:34	Qal. Imperfect. 2MP	you shall <i>bear</i> your guilt
שלה	to stretch out	13:2	Qal. Imperative. 2MS Pronominal Suffix 2MS	<i>Send out</i> for yourself men
			Qal. Imperfect. 2MP	You shall <i>send</i> one man
		13:3	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	So Moses <i>sent</i> them
		13:16	Qal. Perfect. 3MS	whom Moses <i>sent</i> to spy out
		13:17	Qal. Imperfect. 3MS	Moses <i>sent</i> them to spy out
		13:27	Qal. Perfect. 2MS Pronominal Suffix 1P	the land which you <i>sent</i> us
		14:36	Qal. Perfect. 3MS	whom Moses <i>sent</i> to spy out
מות	to die	14:2	Qal. Perfect. 1P	If only we had <i>died</i>
			Qal. Perfect. 1P	if only we had <i>died</i>
		14:15	Hiphil. Perfect. 2MS	if you <i>kill</i> this people
		14:35	Qal. Imperfect. 3MP	there they will <i>die</i>
		14:37	Qal. Imperfect. 3MP	<i>died</i> by a plague
נתן	to give	13:2	Qal. Participle. MS. Absolute	I [am about] to <i>give</i>
		14:1	Qal. Imperfect. 3MP	all the assembly... <i>gave</i> their cry
		14:4	Qal. Perfect. 1P. Cohortative	Let us <i>appoint</i> a leader
		14:8	Qal. Perfect. 3MS Pronominal Suffix 3FS	he shall... <i>give</i> it to us

Table 12: Important Recurring Verbs in Numbers 13-14

### 3.4.2.2.3. Important Recurring Words (by stem)

Stem	Meaning	Occurrences	Verse	Translated As
אָרֶץ	ground, territory	36	13:2	the <i>land</i> of Canaan
		Only select verses mentioned	13:18	what the <i>land</i> [is like]
			13:19	the <i>land</i> ...[is] good or bad
			13:20	How [is] the <i>land</i>

			13:26	the fruit of the <i>land</i>
			13:27	the <i>land</i> which you sent us
			14:2	in the <i>land</i> of Egypt
			14:3	into this <i>land</i> to fall
			14:8	he shall bring us into this <i>land</i> a <i>land</i> flowing with milk
בֵּן	son, people	33 Only select verses mentioned	13:2	to the <i>children</i> of the Israel.
			13:24	which the <i>children</i> of Israel
			13:32	to the <i>children</i> of the Israel
			13:33	the <i>children</i> of Anak
			14:2	the <i>children</i> of Israel grumbled
			14:6	Joshua the <i>son</i> of Nun Caleb the <i>son</i> of Jephunneh
			14:18	of the fathers on the <i>children</i>
			14:29	from twenty years and above
			14:33	your <i>children</i> shall be shepherd
מִדְבָּר	wilderness, desert	12	13:3	from the <i>wilderness</i> of Paran
			13:21	the <i>wilderness</i> of Zin
			13:26	in the <i>wilderness</i> of Paran
			14:2	in this <i>wilderness</i>
			14:16	in the <i>wilderness</i>
			14:22	in the <i>wilderness</i>
			14:25	set out for the <i>wilderness</i>
			14:29	will fall in this <i>wilderness</i>
			14:32	will fall in this <i>wilderness</i>
			14:33	in the <i>wilderness</i>

				your corpses in the <i>wilderness</i>
			14:35	in this <i>wilderness</i>
רָע	bad, wicked	4	13:19	[is] good or <i>bad</i>
			14:27	this <i>evil</i> assembly
			14:35	to all this <i>wicked</i> assembly
			14:37	a <i>bad</i> report about the land

Table 13: Important Recurring Words in Numbers 13-14

The narrative emphasises the role of the Israelites spies in the land of Canaan by the repetition of the words “spy out,” “stretch out,” and “wilderness”. These words communicate a sense of purpose and direction. This land was promised to the “sons” of Israel. As such, Yahweh is directed them to enter into their inheritance. However, the spies provided a “bad” report on the land. The result of the report is that the nation would not “go up”. This does not merely reflect a distrust in their own military ability, but in the ability of Yahweh to fulfil his covenant promises.

#### 3.4.2.2.4. Structure

The first rebellion cycle reaches its climax in the people’s rejection of the land God had promised them. The previous records of rebelliousness function as precursors that ultimately lead to the rejection of the promised land and the rejection of God’s leadership through Moses. Stubbs writes:

Israel is on the edge of the promised land, ready to finally enter into the blessings God has in store for it and to live into its calling to be a nation whose ways will be a light to all other nations. But instead of being the prelude to a story of celebration, the glimpse of the promised land given to the spies leads to another rebellion of the people against God (2009:126).

The sin, in other words, that prevents Israel from entering the promised land is the rejection of the entire covenant relationship that Yahweh has established with them. These two chapters constitute a literary unit that is based upon the following factors: (1) utilisation of chiasmic structures, (2) repetition and wordplay on several key terms and phrases, and (3) narrative dialogue involving Yahweh, Moses, and the people.

Ashley (1993:230) has noted that in each case the punishment was “related directly to the words of the people involved.”

#### 3.4.2.2.4.1. Text Outline

A 13:1-24 The Scouts' Expedition<sup>80</sup>

B 13:25-33 The Scouts' Report

C 14:1-10a The People's Response

B' 14:10b-38 God's Response

A' 14:39-45 The People's Expedition

#### 3.4.2.2.5. Commentary

##### 3.4.2.2.5.1. The Scouts' Expedition 13:1-24

More than any other story in Numbers, the spy narrative in chapters 13-14 lays the foundation for the unifying structure and theme of the book. Chapters 13-14 begin with Israel on the southern border of Canaan in the "wilderness of Paran" (12:16; 13:3). This becomes the staging area for Israel's first official military exploit into the promised land. God directs Moses to send twelve leaders, one from each tribe, to scout out the land. Given the representative nature of the twelve spies, the central purpose seems to indicate that these men are being sent out as witness to bear testimony that God's promise of the land is true, rather than being a reconnaissance mission (Stubbs 2009:127-28). The spies survey the land for forty days and then return to report what they have seen.

##### 3.4.2.2.5.2. The Scouts' Report 13:25-33

After spending forty days in Canaan (13:25), the spies returned to report that it was indeed a very good and fertile land, just as God had said. As proof, they brought grapes, pomegranates and figs (13:23, 27; Deut 1:25). The produce of the land is symbolic of God's faithfulness to his covenant promises. The land is indeed good; and Yahweh has brought them to this land. But as quickly as the spies gloried over the

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<sup>80</sup> Adapted from Milgrom (1990:387-88).



produce of the land, ten of them began to grumble about the power of the people of the land. The divergent report concerning the people of the land marks a major turning point in the narrative and is introduced by the emphatic and restrictive Hebrew adverbial phrase **אָפּוֹס עִי** (however). The people were strong, the cities were well fortified and there were men of such great stature that the spies felt like grasshoppers (13:28, 31-33).

Caleb intervenes in an attempt to give courage and hope to the people. His faith is contrasted with the fear of the divergent spies. Caleb's words, however, are not filled with blind optimism, but wholehearted trust in the promises of God.

#### 3.4.2.2.5.3. The People's Response 14:1-10a

The lies of the spies have their intended effect. All the Israelites become afraid and complain against Aaron and Moses, refusing to go into the promised land. In a series of a few brief lines, the Israelites repudiate all that God has done for them. They reject all the promises that God. They even yearn for their own deaths (v2). The joyous freedom from the suffering of slavery in Egypt, the careful provision of water and manna, the guidance and protection all through the desert are forgotten and renounced. The Israelites fear death by the sword if they enter the promised land. They use their women and children as pretence for their lack of faith (v3). Then the Israelites speak words that utterly destroy their covenant relationship with God as they cry, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt" (v4).

George Coats (1968:146) observes that here for the first time, the murmuring is followed by a move to return to Egypt. The murmuring, therefore, involves not simply an expression of a wish that the Exodus had not occurred or a challenge of Moses' authority in executing the Exodus, but now an overt move to reverse the Exodus. Wenham (1981:120) notes: "By this time they [the Israelites] actually propose returning to Egypt, thereby rejecting the whole plan of redemption...Now within sight of their goal they suggest giving it all up." Stubbs (2009:130) adds, "The central rebellion, and thus the central sin, of Israel in Numbers is this anxious fear, which leads them finally to reject God and his plan for them."

As soon as the words are spoken, Moses and Aaron fall on their faces, half in anticipation of the divine wrath about to explode upon the people and half in prayerful intercession for God's forgiveness (14:5). Caleb the faithful spy is joined by Joshua as they both tear their clothes in a show of grief and distress over this refusal to enter the promised land. Together they make one more plea to the people to move ahead and conquer the land in obedience to God. Sadly, the people respond by threatening to stone them (14:10a).

#### 3.4.2.2.5.4. God's Response 14:10b-35

Anthropomorphically, an angry and despairing God appears at the tent of meeting to speak with Moses. Yahweh's appearance interrupts the people's intention to stone their leaders. God cries out, "How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them" (14:11)? God then pronounces an immediate death sentence on all Israel: "I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them." The last time God "struck with pestilence" was against Pharaoh and the Egyptians in the ten plagues of the exodus (cf. Ex 9:15). Like Pharaoh, the rebellious Israelites refuse to believe in the power of Yahweh to do what he says. This time, Yahweh's punishment will reverse the exodus. Although he had taken Israel out of Egypt as his "inheritance" (Ex 34:9), now Yahweh will "disinherit them" (Num 14:12). This in effect would be the end of Yahweh's covenantal history with Israel (Stubbs 2009:132). God, however, offers to separate Moses out from the rest of Israel and make of him a great and mighty nation (14:12).

The narrative takes a sharp turn as Moses carries out his role as intercessor for the people before the Lord. This prayer reveals the depth of Moses' knowledge of Yahweh and his ways (Cole 2000:230).

Moses' role as an intercessor had previously been exercised in 11:2, when fiery judgment came down from the skies, and in 12:13, when Miriam was struck with a leprous disease. Moses continually expresses a concern for God's reputation among the nations. The Lord's dealing with his people might be misconstrued by the Egyptians and the surrounding nations. This would continue to be an age-old question

of how a benevolent God can bring harsh judgment upon his people and still maintain his reputation with honour.

Rhetorically, the threefold use of the second person pronoun echoes Moses' depth of passion in his appeal to God concerning his present and future reputation among the peoples of Egypt and Canaan. *You* are in their midst, *You* appear to them and over them, and *You* go before them day and night (v14). Cole (2000:230) highlights this significance as he remarks, "These expressions portray the intimacy of the relationship between God and his people, through his abiding presence, his providential protection, and his power." With such mighty deeds renowned among the nations, Moses beseeched the Lord to allow his vengeance to acquiesce to his forgiveness based upon the possibility that defamation might come to his name. To allow the Israelites to suffer great loss or be annihilated in one foul swoop of vengeance might convey to the nations that Israel's God was unable to bring them into the promised land, casting a detrimental reflection on his character rather than on the real problem — an insolent nation. By utilising the terminology of ability (יָכֹלֶת), Moses reminds the reader of the contrasting reports of Caleb (בְּיַיִכֹּוֹל נֹכַח, for we are surely able) versus the ten other scouts (לֹא נֹכַח, we are not able).

Moses escalates his appeal based upon God's attributes of long-suffering, faithfulness, loyal love, and forgiveness, while still maintaining the balance with his justice and righteousness. He recalled the words of the Decalogue, which spoke of God's judgment of idolatry lasting to the third and fourth generations of the rebellious, while his loyal love would endure to a thousand generations of the faithful (Ex 20:5-6). Moses understands that God's אֱמֻנָה (steadfast love) is not simply kindness, but covenant faithfulness. It is this aspect of God's character that makes God willing to stick with Israel and not abandon his covenant with them, even though the nation is continually unfaithful. Stubbs (2009:132) remarks, "This forgiveness requires the suffering patience of God and consists of the extension of God's covenant with Israel even though Israel had rejected and despised God. Forgiveness is the continuance of the covenant relationship with the community of Israel in spite of its rebellion and sinfulness."

The present text (v18-19) shares a number of similarities with Ex 34:6-7, indicating that Moses drew directly from the revelation in the previous incident with the golden calf. God had said he would forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin, though not leaving the guilty unpunished. God has an obligation to fulfil the promises that he has made in the past. The promise to which Moses holds God accountable is an abbreviated form of the important revelation of God's inner character made personally to Moses in Ex 34:6-7. This affirmation of God's character given after the golden calf apostasy is a theologically significant reformulation of a similar affirmation given in the first Sinai covenant in Ex 20:5-6 (Olson 1996:82). In his intercessory prayer in Numbers 14, Moses urges God to let the divine power "be great in the way that you promised," referring to the promise in Exodus 34. Here the greatness of God's power is revealed not first of all in judgment and punishment, but rather in God's gracious and steadfast love and forgiveness.

The Lord answers Moses' prayer not because of the character of the intercessor, nor his negotiating skills, but on the basis that appeal is made to the Lord's prior covenantal commitments. Prayer is made and answered in Numbers purely on the basis of appeal to God's promises.

#### 3.4.2.2.5.5. The People's Expedition 14:36-45

Immediately after God pronounces his forgiveness and judgment of the people, the repercussions of their sin become evident. Numbers 14 concludes with two brief scenes. In the first scene, v36-38, the ten unfaithful spies who brought the ill report of the land and caused Israel's rebellion die in a plague. What God had originally intended to do to the whole nation, now occurs only to these leaders (14:12). Their immediate deaths serve as a prelude to the upcoming series of rebellions, deaths, and plagues that will eventually fall upon all members of the older wilderness generation. Olson (1996:86) suggests that, "The tradition of the old generation's 'ten' rebellions and subsequent plagues (14:22) mirrors the ten plagues and acts of disobedience by the Egyptians (Exodus 7-12)." This theme is the death of the old rebellious generation of the wilderness wanderings and the birth of a new generation of hope standing on the threshold of the land of Canaan (cf. Num 32:13).

In the second scene, v39-45, the Israelites suddenly change their minds. They resolve to rise up and fight the inhabitants of Canaan. This response only confirms their failure to comprehend the depth of their own sinfulness and lack of understanding. God had sworn with an oath that the old generation would not enter the land (14:20-23). Moses warns the people, "Do not go up, for the LORD is not with you; do not let yourselves be struck down before your enemies" (14:42). The critical issue is not human strength or even human resolve or determination. The key is the presence of God in their midst. The result was predictable. The Israelites were soundly defeated in battle (14:45).

#### 3.4.2.3. Redemptive Hermeneutics

At the threshold of the promised land, the Israelites are within arms reach of inheriting the promises made to Abraham (Gen 13:15). The history of the nation has been characterised by Yahweh's provision and protection, albeit interspersed with his discipline as well. The first-time reader should rightly expect the nation to boldly take hold of the directives of the Lord. Sadly, the passage takes a devastating turn with the faithlessness of the nation rejecting Yahweh himself and yearning for slavery.

Perhaps the best path to undertake on this occasion to understand the redemptive aspect of corporate prayer, is by way of context disclosure. The threat of the judgment of God evokes from Moses another prayer of intercession in which he recalls the proclamation that the Lord made on the occasion of the golden calf (Ex 32). It is a prayer for forgiveness in the light of Yahweh's covenant faithfulness and mercy. The faithfulness of Moses, Joshua, and Caleb is contrasted with the unfaithfulness of the unbelieving Israelites. On this occasion, Caleb and Joshua are styled according to Moses and Aaron. Beale (2020:39) recognises this pattern as Old Testament typology. That is, Old Testament characters styled after earlier Old Testament characters are viewed as types of Christ (e.g. Gen 1:28 with Gen 9:1-2, 7; Deut 31 with Josh 1; 3:7). These types anticipate Christ himself, who is the embodiment of faithfulness.

In the book of Hebrews, the author makes an allusion to Num 12:7, where God says of Moses, "He is faithful in all my house." The faithfulness of Moses entailed the carrying out of his responsibilities. The *hōs* (v5) shows the position where the

faithfulness is demonstrated: faithfulness in his role as servant. It is Moses' calling as a servant (*therapōn*) which foreshadows the fulfillment of the old covenant when Jesus came (Allen 2010:252). Cole writes:

At pivotal points in the Bible, when humanity's sinful rebellion reached an uncontrollable crisis, God would intervene through wondrous means to demonstrate his power and glory, and then manifest his justice and grace by endeavoring to draw his crowning creation back to himself. From Noah and Abraham, to Moses and Elijah, and finally and incomparably in Jesus, the story of his redemptive power has resonated through his word to challenge those whom he desires to call his own to faith and fulfillment (2000:228).

Jesus is the mediator of a new and more glorious covenant. He personally delivers his people and saves them from sin, death, and the wrath of God. Jesus' work of redemption is clearly greater than that of Moses. Moses was a faithful servant in God's house, but Jesus is God's faithful Son. His glory far surpasses that of Moses and the glory of the exodus is eclipsed by the glory of God's providence in bringing about redemption through Jesus.

In addition to this, by drawing the analogy of building a house, the author of Hebrews forces the reader to consider the argument in light of 2 Samuel 7. In that instance, Yahweh reveals that David's son would build a house for him (7:13) and that the son's house would be made sure forever. The term house (*bāyit* [MT]; *oikos* [LXX]) is prominent in this chapter, used fourteen times by the author to speak variously of the Lord's house, David's house, and the house of David's heir.

Part of the difficulty of unraveling the logic of the author of Hebrews has been the fact that both Jesus (by analogy) and God the Father are spoken of as builders. Yet, this mix of both God and the Messiah spoken of as builders of a house is exactly what we find in 2 Samuel 7. It could be that the author is echoing that chapter which also speaks of the concept of faithfulness (Guthrie 2007:952). Further, the chapter proclaims that the Lord would build the son's house and that the son would build a house for the Lord (7:13). God promises to "confirm" or "show faithful" the house of David's son (*pistoō* [LXX]). This is the same verb used in Psalm 77:8, 37 to speak of the unfaithfulness of the wilderness wanderers. It is through this contrast that we come to see the

faithfulness of Christ against the faithlessness of the nation. It may be reasonable to say that even here Christ shows himself to be the true Israel. Stubbs asserts:

The cross itself is the symbolic centre of the faithfulness that eluded Israel. Instead of fearing for his life and avoiding and rejecting the call of God, Christ entered into his own place of rest at the right hand of God through enduring the cross ... Christ's obedience to the point of death on the cross is the antithesis of sloth and despair and pride and — at the root of them all — unfaithfulness (2009:131).

It is worth noting at this point that very little is said about the prayers of the individual Israelite. Prayer is emphasised as the function of the prophet. The one who speaks God's word to the people also stands as the mediator of the people's word to God. "Christ... is the word of God to the people and the word of the people to God. Without this mediation, human prayer is impossible and meaningless" (Goldsworthy 2003:118).

### 3.5. The Privilege of Calling on the Lord: Corporate Prayer in Deuteronomy

The final piece relating to the corporate prayer motif is found in Deuteronomy 4:5-8. Though it is not specifically a passage recording the prayer of Moses or the people of Israel, it nevertheless requires some attention.

#### 3.5.1. Deuteronomy 4:1-14

##### 3.5.1.1. Translation

- 4:1 Now, O Israel, listen to the rules and the regulations that I [am] teaching you to do; in order that you may live and you may go and take possession of the land that Yahweh, the God of your fathers, [is] giving to you.
- 2 You must not add to the word<sup>81</sup> that I [am] commanding you, nor take away from it, to keep the commands of Yahweh your God which I [am] commanding you.
- 3 Your eyes are seeing what Yahweh did at Baal-peor; for every man that followed after Baal-peor Yahweh your God destroyed him from your midst.
- 4 But you who held fast to Yahweh your God [are] all alive today.

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<sup>81</sup> דָּבָר (*dābār*) has a wide semantic range. Here it is synonymous with the whole law which was presented to Moses.

- 5 See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it.
- 6 Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’
- 7 For what great nation is there that has a god<sup>82</sup> so near to it as Yahweh our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?
- 8 And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?
- 9 Only watch yourself and watch your soul<sup>83</sup> closely, so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen, so that they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but you shall make them known to your children and to your children’s children.
- 10 That day you stood in the presence<sup>84</sup> of Yahweh your God at Horeb, Yahweh said to me, ‘Assemble the people to me, so that I may let them hear my words that they may learn to fear me all the days which they [are] alive on the earth, and that they may teach their children.
- 11 And you came near and you stood under the mountain, and the mountain [was] burning with fire up to the heart of heaven, darkness and thick cloud.
- 12 And Yahweh spoke to you from the midst of the fire; you [were] hearing the sound of words, but you [were] seeing no form, only a voice.
- 13 And he declared to you his covenant which he commanded you to do, the ten words; and he wrote them on the two tablets of stone.
- 14 And Yahweh instructed me at that time to teach you rules and judgements that you might do them in that land that you [are] about to cross over to possess it.

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<sup>82</sup> אֱלֹהִים (*‘ēlōhîm*) could be translated as “god” or “gods.” The contrast here is not between Yahweh and other gods, but between Israel (whose God is Yahweh) and other nations.

<sup>83</sup> נֶפֶשׁ (*nēpēš*) sometimes carries the meaning of desire (BDB 1977:659).

<sup>84</sup> לְפָנַי יְהוָה (*lipnē’ yhw*), lit. to the face of Yahweh.



### 3.5.1.2. Historical Hermeneutics

#### 3.5.1.2.1. Authorship

The Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy is found both at the beginning and the end of the book. The text begins with the words *‘āššēr dbr mōšēh* (lit. which Moses spoke), a statement that attributes the following passage and, by implication, the entire work to Moses. Similarly, towards the end of the book (31:24) it states, “Moses had finished writing the word of *this* law” (emphasis added). According to Ridderbos (1984:19), “Deuteronomy presents a clearer self-witness concerning its authorship than any of the other books of the Pentateuch.”

The unity of the Old and New Testaments also affirms Mosaic authorship of the concluding book of the Pentateuch. Beginning with Joshua (Josh 1:7-8), the attribution to Moses continues throughout the Old Testament (Judg 1:20; 3:4; 1 Kgs 2:3; 2 Kgs 14:6; 2 Chr 25:4; Ezra 3:2) and also the New Testament (Mt 19:7; Mk 12:19; Lk 20:28; Acts 3:22; Rom 10:19; 1 Co 9:9). The weight of evidence leads Merrill (1994:22) to affirm, “There can be no doubt that the prophets, Jesus, and the apostles concurred with the witness of Deuteronomy about its authorship.”

In the end, the internal witness of Deuteronomy and the rest of Scripture offer the strongest clue about its original authorship, but leaves open-ended the issue of its final editing and canonical form (Woods 2011:31) It is likely that in a few places small additions were made under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, particularly the account of Moses’ death in the last chapter.

#### 3.5.1.2.2. Recipients and Purpose

Some disagreement exists regarding the main purpose of Deuteronomy. Some (Woods 2011:72) would describe this as a farewell speech. In some ways, Deuteronomy is a reshaping of the Law. This is evidenced by the Greek title of the book, *deuteronomium*, the second law (Block 2012:25). On the eve of entering Canaan, adjustments in certain obligations were necessary (Smith 1993:478). More

than that, the book aims at an internalisation of God's Law. Moses was seeking to implant within his people the will to live by God's statutes.

Firstly, it was important that the people understood who they were, from where they had originated, and what their God intended for them in the years to come. The book reiterates the covenant, but it does so in an expanded form in terms appropriate to a new generation, one that is about to enter a new experience and engage in new responsibilities (Merrill 1994:26). Secondly, Moses was about to die. As the leader who delivered the nation out of Egypt, he would not enter the promised land. It was essential, therefore, that he commit to writing the revelation of God. This composition would serve as the corpus of law and practice for the covenant community from that day forward (Longman & Dillard 2006:104).

### 3.5.1.3. Linguistic Hermeneutics

#### 3.5.1.3.1. Genre

For Olson, Torah best defines the form of Deuteronomy, which he translates as a programme of "catechesis." Olson (1994:11) defines this catechesis as, "The process of education in faith from one generation to another". He recognises that when Deuteronomy uses the term "Torah," it understands itself to be a teaching book. While Deuteronomy stands alone within the Pentateuch in calling itself Torah, it relates more specifically to covenantal law. In this sense, Torah relates to the exposition of the law, that all Israel might learn and know God's will (Woods 2011:32).

Others (von Rad in Woods 2011:31-32) have described the book as "preached law," rather than codified law. This is seen when compared to the Book of the Covenant (Ex 20:22- 23:19) and the Holiness Code (Lev 17-26). Deuteronomy is of mixed and varied genre, but all this does not invalidate the essential core of the composition as being covenantal in style and purpose. One might say that the message of Deuteronomy is expressed through covenant narrative and exhortation, together comprising a farewell address (Merrill 1994:29).

Von Rad’s description of “preached law” is particularly observed in Deuteronomy 5. As Israel is about to enter into the promised land after forty years in the wilderness, Moses reminds the nation of its covenant obligations to Yahweh. This “preached law,” however, is contained within a larger narrative of failure, judgment, forgiveness and faithfulness. The covenant is not merely something which the nation must resign to the previous generation in the past, but something which they must embrace.

### 3.5.1.3.2. Important Recurring Verbs (by stem)

Stem	Meaning	Verse	Analysis	Translated As
עשה	to do, make	4:1	Qal. Infinitive. Construct	that I [am] teaching you to <i>do</i>
		4:3	Qal. Perfect. 3MS	what Yahweh <i>did</i> at Baal-peo
		4:5	Qal. Infinitive. Construct	that you should <i>do</i> them
		4:6	Qal. Perfect. 2MP	Keep them and <i>do</i> them
		4:13	Qal. Infinitive. Construct	which he commanded you to <i>do</i>
		4:14	Qal. Infinitive. Construct Pronominal Suffix 2MP	that you might <i>do</i> them
למד	to learn	4:1	Piel. Participle. MS. Absolute	that I [am] <i>teaching</i> you to do
		4:5	Piel. Perfect. 1S	I have <i>taught</i> you
		4:10	Qal. Imperfect. 3MP	that they may <i>learn</i> to fear me
			Piel. Imperfect. 3MP	they may <i>teach</i> their children
		4:14	Piel. Infinitive. Construct	to <i>teach</i> you rules
צוה	to give an order	4:2	Piel. Participle. MS. Absolute	that I [am] <i>commanding</i> you
			Piel. Participle. MS. Absolute	which I [am] <i>commanding</i> you
		4:5	Piel. Perfect. 3MS Pronominal Suffix 1S	as the Lord... <i>commanded</i> me
		4:13	Piel. Perfect. 3MS	which he <i>commanded</i> you to do
		4:14	Piel. Perfect. 3MS	Yahweh <i>instructed</i> me
ראה	to see with one’s eyes	4:3	Qal. Participle. FP. Absolue	Your eyes are <i>seeing</i>
		4:5	Qal. Imperative. 2MS	See, I have taught you

		4:9	Qal. Perfect. 3P	your eyes have <i>seen</i>
		4:12	Qal. Participle. MS. Absolute	you [were] <i>seeing</i> no form
שמע	to hear with one's ears	4:1	Qal. Imperative. 2MS	Now, O Israel, <i>listen</i> to the rules
		4:6	Qal. Imperfect. 3MP	when they <i>hear</i>
		4:10	Hiphil. Imperfect. 1S Pronominal Suffix 3MP	let them <i>hear</i> my words
		4:12	Qal. Participle. MS. Absolute	you [were] <i>hearing</i> the sound
שמר	to keep, watch over	4:2	Qal. Infinitive. Construct	to <i>keep</i> the commands
		4:6	Qal. Perfect. 2MP	<i>Keep</i> them and do them
		4:9	Niphal. Imperfect. 2MS	Only <i>watch</i> yourself
			Qal. Imperative. 2MS	<i>watch</i> your soul closely

Table 14: Important Recurring Verbs in Deuteronomy 4:1-14

### 3.5.1.3.3. Important Recurring Words (by stem)

Stem	Meaning	Occurrences	Verse	Translated As
דָּבָר	word	5	4:2	must not add to the <i>word</i>
			4:9	do not forget the <i>things</i>
			4:10	let them hear my <i>words</i>
			4:12	the sound of <i>words</i>
			4:13	the ten <i>words</i>
יוֹם	day, lifetime	5	4:4	all alive <i>today</i>
			4:8	I set before you <i>today</i> ?
			4:9	all the <i>days</i> of your life
			4:10	That <i>day</i> you stood fear me all the <i>days</i>
בֶּן	son, child	4	4:9	to your <i>children</i> to your <i>children's</i> children to your children's <i>children</i>

			4:10	may teach their <i>children</i>
עַיִן	eye	3	4:3	Your eyes are seeing
			4:6	the <i>sight</i> of the peoples
			4:9	your eyes have seen

Table 15: Important Recurring Words in Deuteronomy 4:1-14

The repetition of the words “learn,” “command,” and “word” draw the reader’s attention to the special nature of Yahweh’s revelation to his covenant people. The nation must commit themselves to “do” those things which have been revealed through the covenant. But, it is also their responsibility to transmit this revelation to their “children”.

#### 3.5.1.3.4. Structure

Chapter 4 forms a bridge between the historical review of chapters 1-3 and the beginning of Moses’ exposition of the law in 5:1. According to Merrill (1994:113) the chapter also marks a major literary turning point, “A transition from itinerary or historical narrative to parenesis.” Having traced the course of Israel’s forty years in the desert, Moses then drew conclusions from that experience and urged a course of action for the present and future.

##### 3.5.1.3.4.1. Text Outline

- A 4:1-8 The Privileges of the Covenant
- B 4:9-14 The Covenant at Horeb

#### 3.5.1.3.5. Commentary

##### 3.5.1.3.5.1. The Privileges of the Covenant 4:1-8

Chapter 4 marks a shift from the more descriptive quality of chapter 3 to a more persuasive, sermonic tone in the remainder of the chapter and first speech of Moses (Thompson 2014:36). As Israel is poised to transition from nomadic to settled living, Moses displays a concern for the nation as the temptation to worship a foreign god is

on the rise (cf. 4:3). The temptation to turn to idols was a concern tied intimately not just to the culture of Canaan but also to the land itself.

In light of this temptation, Moses teaches the Israelites that holding fast to life according to the commands means holding fast to the Lord. Block (2012:110) asserts that, “For Moses ‘righteousness’ is not an abstraction but adherence to an objective norm, demonstrated in concrete ethical acts that seek the interests of others and results in perfect harmony between them and their Ruler.”

“More than most books of the Old Testament,” Gerbrandt (2015:105) suggests that, “Deuteronomy emphasises the uniqueness of Israel and the special relationship it has with God (cf. 4:4-8; 7:7-11; 33:26-29).” But Israel’s greatness is not due to its immense size, military skill or economic power. The grounds for the nation’s greatness are founded upon the nearness of its God (v7), and the justness of its Torah (v8). This intimacy with God consequently engenders one of the unique privileges that Israel enjoys — to call upon the name of the Lord (Millar 2016:42). This carries the implication that the Lord hears and answers them.

By comparison, even though the gods of the surrounding nations were perceived in highly anthropomorphic terms, they were also thought to be so busy and preoccupied with their own affairs that they could scarcely take notice of their devotees except when they needed them. Daniel Block expresses this well when he writes:

When other people pray to their gods they remain both aloof and silent. Craftsmen may design them with big ears, but they remain silent. Ironically, although the Israelites’ God was not represented by images they could set up in their homes or anywhere else, he was near and although he had no ear, he heard their cries whenever they called on him (2012:119).

It was in contrast to these nations that Moses drew attention to the Lord, God of Israel, who, though utterly transcendent and wholly different from humankind, paradoxically lives and moves among them (Merrill 1994:117). The God who has redeemed the nation from Egyptian slavery and now is giving Israel the land, is the same God who cares for his people like a parent cares for and loves his child (cf. 1:31). This is shown most clearly in God giving Israel the entire law (4:8). Just as God has given Israel land, God is now giving Israel directions for life in the land.

The statement that no nation has **חֲקֵי וּמִשְׁפָּטִים** (statutes and rules) is a radical and unusual claim. Normally people are judged on the basis of whether or not they are obedient to the law. However, this statement evaluates the law itself. This is only possible if it is assumed that there is a standard or measure of righteousness even above the law (Gerbrandt 2015:107-8). Merrill asserts:

This, of course, is what Deuteronomy as a covenant renewal document achieves. It is not a radically new statement about the relationship between the Lord and Israel but an updating of an old one appropriate to new times and different circumstances (1994:116).

A “righteous” decree, in short, is one that leads to and maintains proper covenant relationship. There is a relational dimension to the law, one that finds itself very much at home in a covenant context. Woods frames this succinctly as he writes:

Obedience to these laws would not only ensure the success of Israel’s covenant life within the land (v5), but would also display before the nations the greatness and wisdom of her laws (v6), leading to an acknowledgment of the greatness of Israel as a nation because of her intimacy or nearness to God in prayer that existed in no other religion (v7, [2011:106]).

Yet again, prayer is understood in the context of the Lord’s covenant commitment to his people. It is not simply the fact that Israel had statutes and rules from God that mattered. Even more important was the fact that their God was near to them, ready to respond whenever they called upon him. The life of God’s people is always envisaged as a life lived in covenantal dependence upon him and in covenantal fellowship with him (Brown 2008:37).

#### 3.5.1.3.5.2. The Covenant at Horeb 4:9-14

It was on the basis of what Israel saw and heard forty years earlier that Moses’ offer of covenant renewal could be made. It is in light of the past that Moses urged the people to take utmost care lest they forget what they had seen. Israel’s historic — and future — problem was one of forgetfulness (eyes have seen) and disobedience (slip from your heart) (cf. 6:12; 8:11, 14, 19; 9:7).

The fire theophany sets the stage for repeated references to Yahweh’s words at Horeb. However, the phrase “blazed with fire” is not used of Sinai in Exodus 19:18,

but of the burning bush at Horeb, the mountain of God (Ex 3:1-2). In Deuteronomy, Horeb now replicates the burning bush of Moses for Israel (cf. 33:16). This becomes the starting point of Israel's call and vocation in the light of Exodus 19:1-6, to be a treasured possession and a holy nation unto Yahweh (Woods 2011:107).

The intensely epiphanic nature of the revelation is clear from the fact that the Lord spoke to the assembly from the midst of the fire. It was an overwhelming experience, awe-inspiring, and calculated to remain forever imprinted upon their memories. Their God was a consuming fire, far above them, hidden from them, separate from them; a God of justice whose law was holy, who demanded obedience. To be recipients of his loving care demanded a wholehearted response of faithfulness and obedience. Merrill writes:

What is implied is that such an experience with the living God must be rooted and grounded in a historical event, an event that must be recalled and celebrated regularly and faithfully by all who participate in it and benefit from it. There is no room in Old Testament theology for existential encounters without historical and spatial points of reference (1994:119).

Only as Israel remembered the past and the commitments they made could they expect to receive and abide by the covenant revelation and expectation that was about to be disclosed to them. The contrast between form and voice at this point stresses the auditory nature of this event. But the notion of form will find greater development in verses 15-18 and 25-28 as an attack on idolatry. This is the chief sin according to Deuteronomy, and runs counter to Israel's imageless worship of God. God was to be heard and not seen, and through hearing, obeyed.

#### 3.5.1.4. Redemptive Hermeneutics

Deuteronomy 4 has a pivotal role to play in the linking past, present and future history of Israel together. Moses is concerned that Israel should take special care not to forget or disobey the Lord's voice which they heard at Mount Horeb, especially as it relates to the sin of idolatry (Woods 2011:115). Yahweh demonstrated his love to the nation as well as faithfulness to the covenant promise in giving them the land, but Israel was also required to keep his decrees and commands.



This passage reminds the reader that along with the experience of salvation itself the presence of Yahweh and the knowledge of his will represent the supreme privileges of this great nation people. Having said this, it is highly unusual for the Old Testament to speak of Israel as a great nation. This description is found only here and in Deuteronomy 26:5, where it refers to the children of Jacob going down to Egypt and becoming a nation, great, mighty and populous. Israel's greatness lies in its wisdom and discernment, as reflected in the nearness of God and in the justness of its entire law. To put it another way, Israel's greatness is more than just its size, but includes the nation's impact upon the world, thereby connecting the promise of greatness with the promise of being a blessing.

Reflecting on the theme of God's nearness, Paul explicitly quotes Deuteronomy 30:12-14 in Romans 10:6-8 and applies it to Christ, who is the climactic demonstration of God's nearness and his revelation. "This passage," remarks Seifrid (2007:652), "is hermeneutically the most significant of the entire letter." In this instance, the law itself anticipates its fulfillment in the work of Christ.

In the immediate context of Romans 10, Paul underscored Israel's failure to submit to the law of God and instead established a righteousness of their own (v3). The contrast that Paul establishes is between God's righteousness and that which is Israel's own. Israel's failure lies in its disobedience to the gospel and in the misunderstanding of Scripture that this disobedience reveals. For Paul, the proper knowledge of Scripture is bound up with a proper knowledge of God, who does not remain at a distance in the demand of the law. Rather, God in Christ comes near to all human beings by his Word. Boa and Kruidenier clarify this tension well as they write:

Building on the Old Testament theme of "accessibility to the will of God," Paul substitutes Christ and the gospel (the word of faith) for Moses' references to the law. No Jew (or any person) would be able to complain that the will of God (righteousness by faith in Christ) was hidden. The transition from law to faith was as plain as the initial standard of law had been in Deuteronomy (2000:301).

In other words, Paul argues that Christ is the goal (*telos*) of the law by appealing to the pattern of God's dealing with his people in the gift of the law, a pattern that has come to fulfillment in the "word of faith." His purpose is to explain what Scripture is

*finally* about, in the decisive context of God's saving work in Christ. The law that requires works has its goal beyond itself in Christ. Paul's use of the present tense, "Moses writes," underscores the continuing validity of this righteousness and of the demand of the law. Seifrid says it best:

The final and ultimate message of Scripture is not the law, but rather the revealed, saving righteousness of God. It is only with this righteousness that universal salvation arrives: the Gentiles have believed in the "stone of stumbling" (9:33). Christ, the goal of the law, brings righteousness to everyone who believes (10:4). The distinction between Jew and Gentile is overcome in this eschatological act, not in the prior gift of the law, which was distinct to Israel (2007:653).

As a result, for those who belong to Christ the new reality of the law's fulfillment, the life of the resurrection, which transcends the former subjection to sin and death, is present here and now.

### 3.6. Preliminary Conclusions: The Corporate Prayer Motif in the Pentateuch

Goldsworthy (2003:112) observes, "We know God as the God of the covenant, and we address him in prayer as a reflection of our covenant relationship with him." Our study through the Pentateuch has uncovered the centrality of Yahweh's covenant to his people through two major facets regarding corporate prayer (Goldsworthy 2006:21). Firstly, corporate prayer is firmly tied to the covenant relationship between Yahweh and his people. Secondly, Yahweh raises up individuals who function as intercessors on behalf of his covenant people.

#### 3.6.1. Corporate Prayer and The Covenant

The opening pages of the Old Testament reveal that the basis of God's dealings with humanity takes place within the context of a covenant. This covenantal relationship is built upon the foundation that God himself speaks. "Prayer," observes Clowney (2000:691), "addresses the personal God who reveals himself to human beings, created in his image." In response to his spoken word, corporate prayer clings to the God, pleading with him to fulfil the covenant promises that he has disclosed to his people.

The covenantal thrust of prayer is first observed in response to the proto-evangelium (Gen 3:15) where Yahweh unconditionally promises to rescue Eve and her seed from the effects of sin. Leaning upon this solemn pledge, the descendants of Seth take hold of Yahweh's revelation, calling upon him to reverse the effects of sin. The promise of redemption is accomplished solely by divine power.

The centrality of the covenant motif further develops as the Pentateuch unfolds. God's covenant with the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is the reason why he acts on behalf of his people who experienced slavery in Egypt (Ex 2:24). The Israelites, now a large population, cry out to God for rescue. Such prayers rest in the steadfast loyalty of Yahweh to his people (cf. Ex 6:5). God heard the cry of the children of Israel and he remembered his covenant. The introduction of the covenant at this particular point in redemptive history emphasises its renewal to the subsequent generations of the patriarchs. The commitment that God had entered into in ages past extends into the future as a guarantee of Yahweh's abiding presence. Clowney (2000:692) believes that, "The Exodus was not just liberation of the people from bondage; God brought them out to bring them to himself at Mt Sinai. The Lord's claim on liberated Israel provided a new covenantal setting for prayer." As prayer in the Pentateuch unfolds, the prayers of Moses, in particular, are of central importance in God's dealings with Israel.

The most distinctive example of this is observed in Exodus 34. While Moses was on Mount Sinai, receiving the plans for the building of the tabernacle from God, the people induced Aaron to make a calf of gold. Yahweh threatened to destroy the very people who once boldly affirmed, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient" (Ex 24:7). What could Moses now do? As the nation's corporate representative, he appealed to Yahweh's covenant promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex 32:13), to the honour of Yahweh's name among the nations (Ex 32:12), and to Yahweh's covenantal love for his chosen people (Ex 34:6). Goldsworthy (2003:115) goes so far as to say that the entire Exodus narrative is based on a single premise, "God is a faithful, covenant-keeping God."

The abiding presence of the Lord by means of his covenant faithfulness becomes the primary feature of Israel's greatness. The nearness of Yahweh and the purity of his

revealed will, rather than the nation's immense size, military skill or economic power, sets his covenant people apart from any other nation. It is such intimacy with Yahweh that allows Israel to enjoy one of its most unique privileges: to call upon the name of the Lord. This carries the implication that the Lord hears and answers them.

“Prayer in the Pentateuch” writes Millar (2016:43) “is restricted to texts predicated on God’s covenantal initiative.” It is not simply the fact that Israel had statutes and rules from God that mattered. Prayer must be understood in the context of the Lord’s covenant commitment to his people. The life of God’s people is always envisaged as a life lived in covenantal dependence upon him and in covenantal fellowship with him. This is the basis for their privileged position, the reason why Yahweh was near to them, ready to respond whenever they called upon his name.

### 3.6.2. Representative Prayer Within the Covenant Community

The covenantal relationship between Yahweh and his people does not stand in isolation. As redemptive history unfolds, certain individuals function as representatives of the covenant people to Yahweh. While very little is revealed pertaining to the prayer life of the ordinary Israelite, we can only infer that it existed, especially in connection with the cultic rites such as offering of sacrifices as prescribed in the book of Leviticus (Goldsworthy 2006:21). This biblical emphasis on the role of the corporate representative in intercession seems deliberate.

As the narrative of Exodus develops, corporate prayer — as typified by a people calling out to God — transitions towards mediatory prayer. We observed this turning point at the end of the covenant ceremony in Exodus 20:18-21. From that point onwards, Moses not only speaks the Word of God to the people, but as the nation’s corporate representative, he also speaks the word of the people to God. In doing so, Moses grounds his prayers upon the promises made by God not only to Israel at Mount Sinai, but also upon the promises made to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Exodus event, therefore, should not merely be reduced to the liberation of a people from bondage; rather, Yahweh delivered the nation from slavery in order to bring them to himself. The Lord’s claim on the liberated nation of Israel provides a new covenantal

setting for prayer. As such, the prayers of Moses were of central importance in God's dealings with Israel.

The most significant narrative of representative corporate prayer in relationship to the covenant is found in Exodus 32. While Moses is on the mountain, the people persuade Aaron to construct a calf to represent God. This covenant transgression deserves the strictest judgment. Yet, even though Moses is given the opportunity to be the head of a new nation, he reflects no desire to replace Abraham and shows no interest in easing his own problems by seeing the covenant people of God obliterated. Moses' prayer is grounded on the continuation of the covenant promises of God. He appealed to God's covenant promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ex 32:13), to the honour of God's name among the heathen (Ex 32:12), and above all, to God's *hesed*, his covenantal love (Ex 34:6). This is a priestly prayer that foreshadows the role of the prophet-priest, Jesus, who will submit to the curse upon covenant breakers (Goldsworthy 2003:117). Yahweh accepts Moses' prayer and while judgment falls, the covenant established between God and the nation remains fixed.

As one works through the Exodus narrative, it becomes increasingly clear that representative prayer continues to rest upon the character of God, especially as it is revealed through his covenant promises. This is juxtaposed against the unfaithfulness of Israel which continues to be a prominent feature throughout the Pentateuch. The implication seems to be that the one representing the people is the only one thinking in covenantal terms, and therefore is the only one who calls on the name of the Lord. In fact, the only reason why the nation eventually reaches the promised land is purely because of the Lord's commitment to the covenant which he established with his people.

Later, the people rebel because of the report of the spies who were sent into Canaan. Rather than taking hold of the Word of God, the people refuse to enter the land. Once again, Moses' prayer is based upon the previous covenant promises of God (Cole 2000:66). The people's representative escalates his appeal based upon God's attributes of long-suffering, faithfulness, loyal love, and forgiveness, while still maintaining the balance with his justice and righteousness. Moses understands that

God's אֱמֻנָה (steadfast love) is not simply kindness, but covenant faithfulness. It is this aspect of God's character that makes God willing to stick with Israel and not abandon his covenant with them, even though the nation is continually unfaithful. Stubbs (2009:132) remarks, "This forgiveness requires the suffering patience of God and consists of the extension of God's covenant with Israel even though Israel had rejected and despised God. Forgiveness is the continuance of the covenant relationship with the community of Israel in spite of its rebellion and sinfulness."

The mediators of the old covenant could not provide redemption. Moses saw a generation perish in the desert. Christ is the ultimate mediator, as prophet (Heb 1:1-2), priest (Heb 7:3, 25), and king (Heb 2:8; 12:28). As prophet, he speaks the words given to him by the Father (Jn 15:15; 17:8). As priest, he mediates our worship and offers his atoning sacrifice, ever living to make intercession for us (Heb 7:24-25). And as king, he ever gives us confidence to approach his throne in prayer (Heb 6:19-20).

Representative prayer continues through the Old Testament. Joshua continues the intercessory role patterned after Moses (Josh 7:7-9). Samuel is portrayed as both proclaimer of God's word, and as intercessor for a wayward people (1 Sam 7:8-9; 8:6-22; 12:16-25). Another significant instance of representative prayer is that of Solomon at the dedication of the temple (1 Kgs 8). Here, Solomon prays that God will perform what he has already promised to do (v25-26). Throughout the Psalms, particularly those written by David, the role of the corporate representative comes to the fore. The inference seems to be that intercession was confined to those who, by virtue of their position assigned to them by God as prophets, priests, and kings, had a peculiar role in representative prayer as mediators between Yahweh and his covenant people. The emphasis of representative prayer rests on the covenant promises of Yahweh to fulfil his covenant promises. This pattern is established in the Pentateuch and continues through the Old Testament.

It seems that the Old Testament Scriptures are far more interested in showing people in prayer rather than telling the nation about prayer. At this point, we are able to ask why the Scriptures emphasise the corporate representative role of the prophet, priest, and king above individual prayer? Goldsworthy concludes:

The only conclusion that we can reach is that it points to the foundational role of Jesus, the true prophet, priest, and king, as the human intercessor upon whose prayers the efficacy of all prayer is dependent...above all, it is this prophetic role as intercessor that is fulfilled by Jesus as the one who enters the presence of the Father and makes intercession for the saints (2006:22).

An exploration of the Pentateuch has uncovered two facets of prayer. Firstly, prayer is established within the context of Yahweh's covenant relationship with his people. Secondly, Yahweh raises up individuals who function as intercessors on behalf of his covenant people. Covenant provides a framework within which the bond between God and his people can be conceived and by which the identification of the covenant participants can be achieved, that is, between fellow members of the covenant community and a covenant representative. In both these facets the foundations for a Christotelic approach can be seen. Approaching the Pentateuch with a redemptive-historical framework avoids simple exemplarily conclusions being drawn from the text. Rather, the interpreter must understand how a particular passage functions within the broader redemptive purposes of God, ultimately fulfilled in Christ the *telos*.

## CHAPTER 4: CHRISTOTELIC HORIZONS OF BIBLICAL COVENANTS

In Chapter 3, we applied a redemptive-historical reading to corporate and representative prayer in the Pentateuch. This exercise yielded a number of stimulating results, more than simply exhibiting a pattern for effective prayer. Firstly, each pericope in the Pentateuch reveals, albeit in part, a facet of the person and work of Christ. These facets, however, do not stand in isolation from the larger structure in which they are found. Rather, the shadow of Christ is presented to us within the framework of Biblical covenants. It is within this covenant context that the people of God experience the benefits and privileges of communion with him. From its very beginning, prayer clings to the God who speaks to his people within a covenant relationship. This leads to the second aspect of Pentateuchal prayer, namely, within this covenantal context, prayer is made on behalf of the people by a covenant representative. However, as Biblical revelation unfolds, these covenant representatives are less than perfect. This further anticipates the one who will be the perfect representative of the covenant, one who will fulfil all its righteous requirements. Clowney (2000:695) helpfully brings these two elements together in writing, “The Lord himself comes to consummate OT revelation. The primary prayer of God’s people under the old covenant is answered: God comes in person.” The following chapter sets out to form a covenantal bridge between the Old and New Testaments, by showing that Christ is the fulfilment of Biblical covenants.

A crucial piece within the development of this dissertation is what Gentry and Wellum (2012:606) affirm in their statement, “The typological structures of Scripture are developed primarily through the covenants.” By grasping the unfolding nature of the covenants, the reader of the Bible is able to better understand the promise-fulfilment motif of Scripture. For example, Old Testament characters are often presented according to a pattern established by earlier Old Testament figures (Beale 2020:39). Adam, as the covenant head of mankind, establishes a pattern that is repeated in the narrative of those who come after him. As the Bible unfolds, “little Adams” appear who seem to take on the role of the first Adam (e.g. Noah, Abraham, Israel). Yet, each of these “little Adams” points beyond himself to the expectation of the last Adam, the Christ, who is to come. What is observed in the case of Adam can also be perceived



in other typological patterns, whether they are persons (e.g. Moses), events (e.g. the Exodus), or institutions (e.g. the sacrificial system). These progressive typological patterns within the biblical covenants create clarity until that to which they point finally arrives.

#### 4.1. Defining a Covenant

The Hebrew term for covenant (*berîṭ*) has solicited a number of different etymological suggestions. The term is sometimes connected with the Akkadian noun meaning “bond” or preposition meaning “between” (Williamson 2000:420). Others have suggested that the Hebrew root carries the meaning “to cut” (HALOT 2000:157) or of “eating together”, hinting at the idea of a covenant of friendship (GHCLLOT 2003:141; cf. Gen 26:30; 31:54). Furthermore, covenants were widely practiced in the ancient Near East, as seen in the Hittite treaties, the treaties of Esarhaddon and the Aramaean treaty of Sefire (Fensham 1996:234). Amongst these historical practices, two main types of treaties occurred. The first was a treaty between equals in which the two parties are called “brothers”. The second was a vassal-treaty, contracted between a great king (suzerain) and a minor king (vassal). In a friendly relationship the great king is usually called “father” and the vassal king “son”. These covenants bound the suzerain to the vassal unconditionally. In a more stern relationship the suzerain is called “lord” and his vassal “servant”. This treaty stipulates that certain curses would come into effect if the treaty is broken, while also including that certain blessings would occur to the vassal if the treaty is kept (Fensham 1996:235). It is clear from the Old Testament that the treaty relationship with foreign nations was not unknown to the Israelites (Ex 18; Josh 9-10; 1 Kgs 5:1). In the pursuit of understanding Biblical covenants, it soon becomes apparent that the theological usage of the word, as opposed to its etymology or historical parallels, is far more important in determining its meaning.

The term *berîṭ* (occurring 287 times in the Old Testament) suggests that it conveys the idea of a solemn commitment, guaranteeing promises or obligations undertaken by one or both covenanting parties (BDB 1977:136). The term applies predominantly to divine-human commitments, but it is also used of various agreements between humans (cf. Gen. 21:22-24; 1 Sam 18:3; 1 Kgs 5:1-12; 2 Kgs 11:17), including

marriage (Ezek 16:8; Mal 2:14; Prov 2:17). *Diathēkē* is the Greek translation (LXX) of the word *bērit* which is taken over in the New Testament.

“A covenant” according to Robertson (1980:4), “is a bond in blood sovereignly administered.” More recently, Williamson (2007) and Nichols (2011) offer slightly different definitions compared to Robertson, placing less emphasis on the sacrificial element of the covenant ceremony. For Williamson (2007:43), “A divine–human *bērit* may be defined as the solemn ratification of an existing elective relationship involving promises or obligations that are sealed with an oath.” Nichols (2011:117) similarly writes, “God’s covenants are verbal promises, spoken to men in human language. They are more than bare promises; they are solemn promises, confirmed and sworn with an oath.” For both Williamson and Nichols, the fundamental aspect of a covenant is that it binds two parties together. By the covenant ceremony, persons become committed to each other.

Biblically, God speaks to establish his covenant. He speaks graciously to commit himself to his creatures and to declare the basis on which they shall relate to his creation. In some instances, the covenant ceremony will include a blood sacrifice (e.g. Gen 8:20-22; 15). On other occasions, no sacrifice is recorded (e.g. Ex 20; 2 Sam 7). As the Lord establishes a covenant with his people, he is the one to outline the terms of their relationship. Scripture records no instances of bargaining or negotiating. There is, in other words, a unilateral form of covenant establishment. Kline (2006:1) argues that, “The *berith* arrangement is no mere secular contract but rather belongs to the sacred sphere of divine witness and enforcement.” While covenants in Scripture may emphasise promissory or legal aspects of the covenant, it does not alter the formal character of the covenantal administration.

Covenantal language is designed to communicate the permanent nature of the bond between God and man. The covenant bond is not a casual or informal relationship, but a bond which extends to life and death. This aspect of a covenant derives its meaning from the idea of cutting, since it was the custom in making covenants to pass between the divided parts of victims (GHCLOT 2003:141; cf. Gen 15:9-10, 17-18). The cutting process symbolised a pledge to death. For Robertson (1980:10), “The

dismembered animals represent the curse that the covenant-maker calls down on himself if he should violate the commitment which he has made.”

## 4.2. Covenants In the Old Testament

The Old Testament reveals that God’s unfolding redemptive purposes with humanity primarily take place within the context of a covenant.<sup>85</sup> Noah (Gen 6:18), Abraham (Gen 15:13-18), Israel (Ex 19:5-8), and David (2 Sam 7:11-17) all experienced God’s blessing and discipline within a covenantal relationship. Even the prophet Jeremiah (31:31) anticipated the establishing of a future “new covenant.” “Covenant” suggests Nichols (2011:1), “is the organising principle of Scripture.” As such, God’s covenants form the backdrop and substance of Christ’s mission.

While the term “covenant” does not appear before Genesis 6:18, many who hold to a covenantal position maintain that there are three other covenants that precede God’s covenant with Noah (as reflected in the Westminster and London Baptist Confessions).<sup>86</sup> First, an eternal covenant of redemption made between members of the Trinity before the creation of the world (Nichols 2011:303). Second, a probationary covenant of works is established between God and Adam before the fall (Robertson 1980:67). Third, a post-fall covenant of grace through which God promised to rescue humanity from the consequences of sin and fulfil his creative purpose (Robertson 1980:93).

### 4.2.1. The Noahic Covenant

The first explicit covenant in Scripture is that between Yahweh and Noah. While the covenant is announced before the flood (Gen 6:18), it is only established after the waters subside from the earth (Williamson 2007:40). In Genesis 9, the Noahic covenant is made with the sole survivors of the flood and, by extension, humanity as a whole. Additionally, the covenant is extended to all who come out of the ark (9:9-

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<sup>85</sup> Williamson (2000:420) disagrees, “To see all God’s salvific activities in terms of covenant is unwarranted.”

<sup>86</sup> It is interesting to note the difference between the LBC and the WCF at this point. The WCF explicitly mentions the covenant of works with Adam (7.2) while the LBC does not. The LBC, however, assumes the covenant of works in subsequent chapters (19.6; 20.1).

11). Through this covenant, Yahweh reaffirms his original plan for humanity (9:7). Additionally, humanity's creation mandate (cf. Gen 1:26-30) will never again be interrupted by a flood (Gen 8:21-22; 9:11-15).

With this affirmation, God gives the Noahic economy an important role in redemptive history. Williamson (2020:n.n.) elsewhere suggests that, "It is at least implicit from the scope of this covenant that God's redemptive goal will ultimately encompass the whole creation." Williamson's assertion suggests that the Noahic covenant forms a benevolent framework of common grace in which Yahweh will work out the redemption of his people.

This is reinforced by the sign of the Noahic covenant. While Yahweh's "bow in the clouds" (Gen 9:12-17) would reassure mankind of his promise, its express intent, anthropomorphically, was to remind himself to keep his covenantal promise. In this sense, Yahweh's redemptive purpose in the Noahic covenant encompasses both the Mosaic and Christian economies as well. Nichols (2011:113) affirms that, "God's covenants are symphonious, not atomistic. They display spiritual harmony and evangelical unity."

#### 4.2.2. The Abrahamic Covenant

The second covenant is that which is made with Abraham. The promises of Yahweh to the patriarch are recorded in Genesis 12:1-3. God would bless Abraham in two ways. Firstly, Abraham would become a great nation, thereby receiving a great name. Secondly, through Abraham, Yahweh would mediate his blessing to all the nations of the earth. These promises are ratified in the covenant ceremony of Genesis 15. There, Yahweh is represented in the form of a smoking fire pot and burning torch which passes between divided pieces of animals. This symbolically represents Yahweh taking the responsibility of the covenant upon himself. "In the case of the Abrahamic covenant," asserts Robertson (1980:131), "God the Creator binds himself to man the creation by a solemn blood-oath. The Almighty chooses to commit himself to the fulfilment of promises spoken to Abraham." This action is indicated in the unilateral

nature of the covenant. God alone took upon himself the covenant obligations; Abraham simply remained a passive spectator.

More recent approaches debate whether or not the Abrahamic covenant consists of single or multiple covenants (Williamson 2000:422). A single covenant position maintains that the covenant with Abraham is introduced in Genesis 12, ratified in chapter 15, and amplified in subsequent chapters. A multiple covenant position argues that Genesis 15 and 17 are two separate covenants. The first covenant guaranteed Yahweh's promise to make Abraham into a great nation. The second covenant related to God's promise to bless the nations through Abraham and his seed. Whatever the exact nature of the covenants may be, both positions aim to unify God's people and his redemptive dealings with them. The Abrahamic covenant swells with significance throughout redemptive history.

#### 4.2.3. The Mosaic Covenant

The Abrahamic covenant is, by necessity, linked to the third covenant in Scripture, namely, the Mosaic covenant. God's dealings with the nation of Israel are governed by the memory of the Abrahamic covenant (Ex 2:24; 3:6; 3:15-16; 6:8; Deut 9:5; 29:13; 30:20). In faithfulness to the patriarch, Yahweh redeems Israel from Egypt, preserves the nation in the wilderness, and brings them to Sinai. In this way, the covenant at Sinai is presented as the outworking of the Abrahamic covenant. Hebrew Israel was the visible society of Abraham's physical prosperity (Nichols 2011:243). At the centre of both the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants is the presence of God with his people (Gen 17:8; Ex 20:2). "The primary concern of the Mosaic covenant," according to Williamson (2000:424) "was the maintaining of the unique divine-human relationship between Yahweh and Israel."

The focus of the Mosaic covenant is less on what Abraham's descendants must do in order to inherit the land and more on how they must conduct themselves within the promised land as Yahweh's chosen people (Ex 19:5-6). Like their forefather, Israel was to walk before Yahweh and be blameless (Gen 17:1). By adhering to Yahweh's covenant obligations, Israel would be manifestly different from other nations, thereby reflecting God's wisdom and greatness to the surrounding nations (Deut 4:6-8). In this

way, the great nation descended from Abraham would be maintained. “This covenant,” claims Williamson (2007:42), “is clearly the most prominent *berit* in the Old Testament ... and is renewed at several important junctures in Israel’s history (cf. Deut 29:1; Josh 24:25; 2 Kgs 23:1-3).”

The Mosaic covenant also provided the means by which the divine-human relationship between Yahweh and his covenant people could be maintained, namely, sacrificial worship, particularly on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16). Williamson (2020:n.n.) asserts that, “Just as the Noahic covenant guaranteed the preservation of human life on earth, so the Mosaic covenant guaranteed the preservation of Israel, Abraham’s great nation, in the land.”

Although Hebrew Israel was the visible society of Abraham’s physical prosperity, circumcised in body, their response of ingratitude and disobedience displays the hardness of the human heart. Within that nation, however, there was a remnant who remained faithful. According to the New Testament writers, this remnant was composed of Abraham’s spiritual children, circumcised in heart (Rom 4:12, 16; Gal 3:7, 9, 29). In his work, Christ organised the faithful remnant of Hebrew Israel into a visible community when he instituted the new covenant (Nichols 2011:243).

#### 4.2.4. The Davidic Covenant

The fourth covenant of the Old Testament is that between Yahweh and David. The covenant itself is set against the backdrop of both the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants (2 Sam 7:8-11, 23-26). Both Abraham and David are promised a great name (Gen 12:2; 2 Sam 7:9), victory over enemies (Gen 22:17; 2 Sam. 7:11), a special divine-human relationship (Gen 17:7-8; 2 Sam 7:14), a special line through which their name will be perpetuated (Gen 21:12; 2 Sam 7:12-16), and a unique descendant who will mediate international blessing (Gen 22:18; Ps 72:17).<sup>87</sup> Given these connections between the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, there can be no doubt that they are

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<sup>87</sup> Although the term *berit* is not used in the immediate context, the promises of God to David are referred to elsewhere (cf. 2 Sam 23:5; 2 Kgs 8:19; 2 Chr 13:5; Pss 89:3, 19-27, 39; 132:11; Isa 55:3; Jer 33:14-26).

inextricably related. In the Davidic covenant, the promises made to Abraham become more focused.

In the Davidic covenant, the presence of God is considered in relation to his “house.” The word play on the term “house” provides a dual connotation between the temple and a dynasty. This allows for a close connection to be established between the Davidic ruler and the presence of God in the temple (Macaskill 2013:107-08). In this way, the centrality of the presence of God is integrated around the role of the Davidic king. God’s people wait in expectation for the Messiah, the son of David, to revive his throne and reign on it over God’s people under a new covenant forever. Williamson (2000:426) concludes, “While the divine promise to bless the nations in Abraham’s seed would be fulfilled in a scion of David, ultimately that fulfilment depended on a Davidic king who would be a son of Abraham in the fullest possible way, and not merely biologically (cf. Ps 72).”

#### 4.2.5. The New Covenant

This leads to the final covenant of the Old Testament, the prediction of a new covenant. The persistent failure of Israel to live according to Yahweh’s covenant requirements led to the inevitable disaster for both the nation and its monarchy. The exile into Babylon coupled with the destruction of the temple would have meant the end of God’s plan for Israel, had it not been for the covenant faithfulness of Yahweh. The prospect of a new covenant — one that would be both continuous and discontinuous with those of the past — fills the horizon of the prophets.

The new covenant of Jeremiah is conceptually grounded in the Mosaic covenant. Again, the central motif is that of divine presence (Jer 31:33). God takes upon himself the responsibility of ensuring that the law is internalised and made efficacious. The covenant, in other words, becomes an internal reality. While Jeremiah speaks of internalisation of the law (Jer 31:33), Ezekiel speaks of radical spiritual transformation (Ezek 36:26–27). For both prophets, this inner renewal would result in the ideal divine-human relationship. “In this new covenant,” says Williamson (2020:n.n.) “all the hopes and expectations of previous covenants attain their climactic fulfillment and eschatological expression.”

This is also reflected in the writings of Isaiah who associates the new covenant with the Servant figure (Isa 42:6; 49:8; 54:10; 55:3; 61:8). The Servant will be the head of an “ideal Israel” which, “picks up the promises to Abraham and is presented as the climatic and ultimate fulfilment of the covenants that God established with the patriarchs, the nation of Israel, and David’s son” (Gentry & Wellum 2012:645).

#### 4.3. The Consummation of Biblical Covenants

Underlying our brief overview of biblical covenants is a pattern of repeated failure. Yahweh’s people consistently fail to uphold the conditions or responsibilities of the covenant he established with them. Adam and Eve’s ejection from Eden (Gen 3:23-24), Abraham’s family conflict (Gen 16:5-6), Israel’s rejection of God in the fabrication of an idol and their lack of trust on threshold of the promised land are a dramatic record of the nation’s disobedience. The turmoil that repeated acts of covenantal disobedience created, highlights the necessity for a new covenant — one which will have an everlasting effect. Although Israel had failed in fulfilling its covenantal responsibilities, Yahweh would not fail in his purpose to establish a great nation to glorify his name. The expectation of hope beyond devastation took many forms. The prophets spoke of a return to the land (Jer 30:3; 32:37; Ezek 37:21, 26), the restoration of acceptable worship, and a renewal of a royal line (Robertson 1980:272). The unifying motif of all these aspects involved a new covenant. By means of a new covenant relationship, Yahweh would bring to fruition his commitment to redeem a people for himself. At the heart of this hope lies a single person, the Messiah.

As God’s redemptive plan is progressively disclosed through the biblical covenants, the identity of the Messiah becomes more defined. From the Old Testament teaching, the Messiah is viewed as both the obedient son, the antitype of all the previous covenant mediators, and the one who is also the unique Son of God incarnate. Scripture teaches that the fulfilment of God’s promises will be accomplished through a man, as developed through various typological persons, such as Adam, Noah, Moses, Israel, and David, all seen in terms of the covenants. But Scripture also teaches that this Messiah is more than a mere man since he is identified as God.



According to the witness of the New Testament, Jesus is the teleological fulfilment of the biblical covenants. Matthew presents Jesus as the climax of Yahweh's covenant promises. Jesus is the *telos* of the promises made to Abraham (Mt 1:1, 17; 3:9; 8:11-12). He is the *telos* of the Mosaic covenant (Mt 3:15; 5:17-48; 9:16-17; 11:28-39) and Israel (Mt 2:15; 4:1-11; 5:13-16; 8:11; 12:18-21; 13:47; 21:42-44; 24:14; 25:31-34; 28:19; cf. Lk 2:14, 32). He is the *telos* of Yahweh's promise to David (Mt 1:1; 3:17; 4:15-16; 15:22; 16:16; 21:5; 22:41-45; cf. Luke 1:69-70). In the fullness of time God fulfils his covenants with Abraham, Israel, and David by sending his Son, Jesus Christ. Nichols (2011:282) suggests that, "As Abraham's heir, Christ blesses men from every kindred, tribe, and tongue with spiritual blessing through the gospel. As David's heir, Christ rules over God's people on David's throne." The Mosaic covenant similarly focuses on the work of Christ. Through Moses, Yahweh provides a picture of the ministry of the Messiah. The complex nature of the tabernacle, offerings, and ceremonies reveal, in part, what Christ must do. Just as Moses mediated the old covenant through the angel of Yahweh, so also, Jesus, God incarnate, mediates the new covenant. "The inception of God's redemptive favour to his people is his covenantal blessing of Abraham the patriarch. Its fulcrum is his covenantal blessing of David the king. Its culmination is his covenantal blessing of Jesus the Messiah" (Nichols 2011:113). The *telos* of the covenant, in other words, rests on Jesus' incarnate life in fulfilment of his covenant faithfulness to Abraham, Israel, and David. As the second person of the Trinity, Jesus is both the author and mediator of this divine pledge. Gentry and Wellum (2012:647) say this best, "In Christ, we have the promised one, the mediator of God's people. David's greater son, the true Israel, the true seed of Abraham, and the last Adam."

#### 4.3.1. The Last Adam

At the beginning of creation, God entered into a covenant with Adam promising him eternal life on the condition of perfect obedience (DBI 2000:176). Often called the Covenant of Works, it teaches that God freely entered into a covenant relationship with Adam, promising him life on the condition of perfect obedience (Gen 1:26-28;

2:15-17).<sup>88</sup> God ordained that in this covenant Adam should not only represent himself, but also act as the representative for all his physical descendants (Nichols 2011:328). That is, if he had obeyed, his obedience would be counted to the rest of humanity and all people would have eternal life.

But Adam chose the course of disobedience and, as a result, plunged all of humanity into a state of sin. In other words, because Adam was the federal head of the human race his disobedience affected all his descendants. Berkhof (1938:246) argues that, “The guilt of Adam’s sin, committed by him as the federal head of the human race, is imputed to all his descendants. This is evident from the fact that, as the Bible teaches, death as the punishment of sin passes on from Adam to all his descendants (Rom 5:12-19; Eph 2:3; 1 Co 15:22.”

When Adam disobeyed, God could have justly left humanity in a state of sin, cut off from eternal life. However, Yahweh promises to redeem humanity through the seed of Eve. Such hope undergirds the first record of prayer in the Bible (Gen 4:26) which will only be fulfilled in the man from heaven, Jesus Christ.

The record of Jesus’ conception breaks the pattern of natural birth since Adam. As such, Jesus is seen as the federal head of a new humanity (cf. Lk 1:31-35; 3:38). The Gospel of Mark emphasises that when Jesus obeys in the face of temptation, he does so as the new Adam. While Adam’s sin led to natural disharmony, Jesus obedience in the wilderness leads to natural harmony, as seen by him dwelling peaceably with the wild animals (Mk 1:12-13). Moreover, Jesus’ death is also portrayed in Adamic terms. In the Gospel of John, Pilate presents Jesus to the crowd as the King of the Jews saying, “Behold the man” (Jn 19:5). Pilate’s proclamation echoes God’s words in reference to Adam in Genesis 3:22, “Behold, the man has become like one of us.”

In the epistles, Paul makes several comparisons between Adam and Jesus, showing that both are literal heads of humanity who bring certain consequences for mankind. In Romans 5:12-21, the apostle develops the parallel between Adam and Christ. The

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<sup>88</sup> Due to the limitation of terminology, Robertson (1980:57) prefers the phrase, “Covenant of Creation.” Similarly, Barrett (2018:110) suggests the phrase, “God’s covenant with humanity.”

man Adam brings death, guilt, and condemnation to all who are in him, while the man Christ Jesus brings life, righteousness, and justification to all who are granted spiritual life through their faith-union with him. John Murray underscores the federal headship concept by stating:

God governs men and relates himself to men in terms of solidaric relationship. And just as the sin, condemnation, and death in which all members of the race are involved can never be construed or estimated in purely individualistic terms, so we never find righteousness, justification, and life in operation except as the solidarity constituted by God's grace is brought to bear upon our human situation (1968:1:180).

In similar fashion, Paul contrasts Adam and Jesus several times in 1 Corinthians 15. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive (1 Co 15:22). The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit (1 Co 15:45). The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven (1 Co 15:47). Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven (1 Co 15:49).

The New Testament witness suggests that Christ's work must be understood in representative, and Adamic, terms. As the last Adam, Jesus renders the perfect obedience God demanded of the first Adam. Adam acted representatively as a covenant head. Jesus similarly acts as a covenant head, which means his actions are counted to others vicariously.

#### 4.3.2. The Prophet After Moses

As we have observed, Moses played a significant role in Yahweh's redemptive purposes within the old covenant. Moses is characterised as a deliverer (Ex 3:7-10), covenant mediator (Ex 34:27), priest (Ps 99:6), and ruler (Ex 2:13-14; Acts 7:27). In short, Moses was Yahweh's chosen mouthpiece and mediator as he orchestrated the deliverance of his people out of bondage in Egypt. As such, Moses' significance in redemptive history cannot be easily overstated. His figure casts a shadow that stretches over the entire corpus of the Old Testament Scripture. But as impressive as Moses was, the prophet sets the stage for Jesus Christ.

After the exodus from Egypt, Moses spoke to the people of Israel and told them that they should look for another prophet to come who, like him, would ultimately redeem God's people from bondage and captivity. In Deuteronomy 18:15, Moses declares, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers — it is to him you shall listen."

The New Testament sees Jesus as the *telos* of a prophet like Moses. The words of the Father on the Mount of Transfiguration in Matthew 17:5 allude to Deuteronomy 18:15, "While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!'"

Similarly, Peter sees the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:5 fulfilled in Jesus. In his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, Peter announces:

Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people' (Acts 3:19-23; ESV).

Additionally, both Paul and the writer of Hebrews highlight the superior nature of the new covenant to the old. In 2 Corinthians 3:1-18, Paul contrasts the new and the old covenants, highlighting the vast difference of the old compared with the surpassing glory and permanence of the new. Paul makes a similar comparison between Hagar and Sarah in Galatians 4:21-31. The writer of Hebrews continually returns to the subject of the superiority of the new covenant (Heb 7:22; 8:6-10:31; 12:18-24; 13:20). The writer contrasts the old and new covenants by emphasising the superiority of the promises, sacrifice, mediator, blessing, and inheritance.

Although Jesus is like Moses in many ways, He is also greater than Moses (Heb 3:1-6). Jesus led His people through a greater exodus, not from mere physical slavery in Egypt, but rather out of eternal bondage to sin and death. This is why Hebrews 8:6 declares that Jesus is the mediator of a new and better covenant. Selvaggio (2014:xix)

remarks that, “Though the two mediators are inextricably connected, there is no doubt that Jesus eclipses Moses in every regard.” Moses could only foreshadow redemption, Jesus actually accomplished it for his people.

#### 4.3.3. The True Israel

Covenant theology is often criticised for quickly moving from speaking about Christ as the true Israel to the Church, without first dwelling on how Israel as a type leads to Christ the antitype (Gentry & Wellum 2012:121). The redemption relationship between Israel and Jesus forms a crucial link to what follows, therefore some time must be devoted to it now.<sup>89</sup>

The promises given to Israel were not automatic guarantees to be received apart from faith and obedience. Claiming that Abraham was their father was never a sufficient basis for claiming the covenant promises, for “God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham” (Mt 3:9). Due to Israel’s historical disobedience, the prophets announced that in the end it will be the remnant who is saved (Isa 10:20-23; Amos 9; Mic 7:18). “Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel” (Rom 9:6) is not only a Pauline teaching but a summary of the prophetic warnings of the Old Testament. If Israel is the elect people, those with whom God has entered into covenant, who then is the true Israel? The Gospel of Matthew, both in its structure and in its themes, provides a starting point for this teleological exploration.

##### 4.3.3.1. Genealogical Clues

The New Testament begins with a genealogy. The phrase, “book of the genealogy” (*biblos geneseōs*), could more literally be translated “a book of the genesis” (Carson 1984:61). Matthew’s choice to begin in this way reveals a particular emphasis in his Gospel. This is further seen by the words, “Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham,” which echoes historical biblical covenants. It seems likely that Matthew has the fulfilment of Genesis 12 and 2 Samuel 7 in mind. Blomberg (2007:2) asserts

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<sup>89</sup> In what follows I lean heavily on Holwerda’s work (1995:27-58).

that, “As a descendant of David, Jesus comes as an Israelite king; as a descendant of Abraham, he will bless all the nations of the earth.”

After Noah, God’s covenant with Abraham lays the foundation for the history of redemption recorded in the Scriptures. Matthew intentionally begins his genealogy of Jesus at that point. By carefully linking Jesus to Abraham, Matthew declares that God’s promise of blessing for the nations will now be fulfilled. The earliest hint of this is witnessed in the coming of the wise men from the East to worship Jesus (Mt 2). Later, Jesus prophetically announces that, “Many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (8:11). At the conclusion of the Gospel, Jesus commissions his disciples to “make disciples of all nations” (28:19).

A second Old Testament promise equally strengthens the thrust of Matthew’s genealogy. God had promised king David that his house and that the throne of his offspring would be established forever (2 Sam 7:8-16). The promised Son of David will be the representative embodiment of Israel through whom the nations will be blessed. “Son of David” is an important designation in Matthew. Not only does the introduction of David become a turning point in the genealogy itself (1:6, 17), but the title occurs throughout the Gospel narrative (9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15; 22:42, 45). For France (1985:75), “The accession of David to kingship, and the loss of that kingship at the Babylonian exile; now in the coming of Jesus, son of David, that kingship is to reach its appointed goal.” Matthew intends for the genealogy of Jesus to be read as the genealogy of Israel’s true king, who represents true Israel. Chou (2018:134) agrees with this conclusion, “David was God’s son as he represented God’s son Israel.”

By linking Jesus to Abraham, Matthew declares that God’s promise of blessing for the nations is now being fulfilled through Jesus. By linking Jesus to David, Matthew reveals that God’s promise to David had not failed because it finds fulfilment in Jesus. The focus of Matthew’s genealogy is clear. Holwerda contends:

The significance of Jesus is deeply rooted in the history of Old Testament Israel, so deeply that the blessings promised to Old

Testament Israel find their fulfilment only through him. He is Israel, the representative embodiment of true Israel and Israel's king (1995:34).

In his person and in his work, Jesus is all that Israel was meant to be because in Jesus God himself takes the place of his covenant partner in order to secure the continuity of his covenant with Israel. Consequently, the definition of true Israel is forever shaped by this action. Blomberg (1992:53) writes, "Matthew's names for Jesus present him as the fulfillment of the hopes and prophecies of Israel but also as one who will extend God's blessings to Gentiles. His birth marks a new epoch in human history." Israel can never again be defined apart from Jesus Christ.

#### 4.3.3.2. Geographical Clues

Egypt played a dual role in the early history of Yahweh's covenant people. On one hand, Egypt was the place for refuge from the famine. Through the safety provided by the land, God's people were preserved (Gen 50:20). But, on the other hand, Egypt was the historic oppressor of the nation. In the midst of the nation's slavery, God intervened with signs and wonders in order to liberate his people from bondage and deliver them into the promised land.

As we have already observed in Chapter 3, Matthew sees the movement out of Egypt as typologically fulfilled in Jesus. On the surface, Matthew's use of Hosea 11:1 seems out of place. Jesus' flight into Egypt was undertaken in order to provide protection from Herod, but the verse from Hosea is about the original exodus from Egypt and God's providential deliverance. Egypt is remembered as the land of bondage from which God's people came forth to enter upon a new life of freedom. But the verse quoted from Hosea should not be interpreted in isolation from its Old Testament context.

Hosea 11 is a formal complaint that God lodges against Israel, his son, because Israel has failed to respond to his love. Even though the nation had experienced God's covenant faithfulness to Abraham in deliverance from Egypt, they spurned that love. God's intention expressed in the exodus had not taken shape in history because of Israel's disobedience. Yahweh had pronounced judgment upon the nation and a new slavery, a symbolic return to Egypt, under the guise of exile to Assyria would take

place (Hos 11:5). For Garrett (1997:222), “Here [Hosea 11] the slavery in Egypt is the pattern for a second period of enslavement in an alien land (v5), and the exodus from Egypt is the type for a new exodus (vv10-11).” Thus, God recalls the first exodus in Hosea 11:1 in order to promise a second. Even though Israel returned from exile, its people continued to live under foreign domination.

When Matthew presents Jesus as the *telos* of Hosea 11:1, he intends for the reader to see overtones of a new exodus, an act of deliverance that will finally bring an end to the oppression of God’s people. God had promised that his people would once again be reborn, renewed, and restored in a new exodus. “By declaring Hosea 11:1 fulfilled in this event,” writes Holwerda (1995:40), “Matthew proclaims not only that Jesus is Israel, God’s beloved Son, but also that the long awaited exodus has begun.”

#### 4.3.3.3. Heavenly Clues

Matthew records two occasions of a voice speaking from heaven. In both these instances the pronouncement is largely the same, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” with only a slight addition in the second, “listen to him!” (Mt 3:17; 17:5).

On the first occasion, the voice is heard after Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptist. John was the forerunner of the Messiah (cf. Isa 40:3). His message centred on repentance in light of the nearness of the kingdom of heaven (Mt 3:2). The prophet’s baptism demonstrated a recognition of one’s sin, a desire for spiritual cleansing, and a commitment to follow God’s law in anticipation of the Messiah’s arrival (France 1985:91). John also confronted the false Jewish leaders of his day who presumed they were God’s children simply because they were descendants of Abraham (Mt 3:8).

But in approaching John, Jesus had not come to confess any sin but “to fulfil all righteousness.” “To fulfil all righteousness,” according to Blomberg (1992:81), “means to complete everything that forms part of a relationship of obedience to God.” In response to this action and declaration by Jesus, God sent the Spirit to qualify Jesus for his Messianic task and then announced from heaven, “This is my Son, the Beloved,



with whom I am well pleased.” This act of identification shows that he is willing to take upon himself the judgment that Israel deserves (Schreiner 2008:172).

The voice from heaven quotes both Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1. Together they reflect Jesus’ dual role: a Kingly Messiah and a Suffering Servant (Blomberg 2007:14). But who is this servant described by Isaiah?

The Servant Songs of Isaiah (Isa 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12) make reference to the Servant of the Lord. The first song (Isa 42:1-9) depicts the Lord’s Servant establishing justice. In the second song (49:1-7), the Servant is a light to the Gentiles (49:6), such that his praise reaches the ends of the earth (42:10). The third Servant Song (Isa 50:4-9), demonstrates the faithfulness of the Servant to the Lord (vv4-5). This faithfulness, however, will result in suffering (v6). And in the fourth Servant Song (Isa 52:13-53:12), it becomes clear that the victory of the Servant will be achieved through suffering.

From the descriptions of the Servant of Yahweh found in various passages of Isaiah, the best interpretation is one that identifies the Servant as referring in some sense both to Israel and to one who by representing Israel renews Israel (Holwerda 1995:43). But Matthew intends to identify Jesus as God’s anointed Servant, who is well pleasing to God because of the righteousness that he fulfils. France (1985:96) contends, “Jesus’ Messianic mission ... is thus spelt out around three key concepts: he is the Davidic Messiah, the Son of God, and the Servant whose mission is to bear the sins of his people.” Simply put, Jesus is the one in whom the hopes of Israel converge.

#### 4.3.3.4. Wilderness Clues

The wilderness was an important location in the history of Israel. It was there that Israel had been tested by Yahweh as a Father disciplines his son (Deut 8:5). Israel, however, had failed to learn the lessons Yahweh had intended for them. But now the true Son of God, at the outset of his mission, faces the same test (Mt 4:1-11). At this point, the idea of Jesus as the true Israel develops even further (France 1985:97).

In the wilderness Jesus fasts forty days and forty nights, a time which may reflect the forty years of Israel's wandering in the wilderness (Deut 8:2). During this time, Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6 and 8, all of which refer to the experience of Israel. These passages from Deuteronomy are part of a lengthy sermon in which Moses rehearses Israel's history of sin and failure during the wanderings in the wilderness. He then uses that history to admonish Israel and to encourage obedient living when Israel enters the promised land. By being tested, Jesus proved himself faithful to God. The relevance of such passages cannot be reduced to merely topographical overlap (France 1975:67). Where Israel failed, Jesus proves to be a true Son of God.

#### 4.3.3.5. Prophetic Clues

The Old Testament prophets anticipated a future in which God would rule, bring healing, and overcome evil. At that time, God's covenant people would be gathered, and righteousness would spring forth before the nations (Ezek 34; Isa 61). At the start of his ministry, Jesus announces the arrival of that future kingdom (Mt 4:17). For Jesus, God's kingdom was not only near, it had arrived. In Jesus the blessings of the kingdom are being poured out and promises are being fulfilled.

The first instance of the arrival of the kingdom is observed in Matthew's quotation of Isaiah 9:1-2 (Mt 4:15-16). Originally Isaiah had prophesied that Zebulun and Naphtali would be brought into contempt. This occurred when Yahweh judged the northern territories of Israel using the Assyrian empire (Blomberg 2007:18). The light dawning upon the land would initially refer to the Israel's return from exile. But Isaiah looks beyond the immediate future. He saw that Yahweh would glorify himself by fulfilling the promises and restoring his people under the offspring of David. The light dawning on that horizon begins with the ministry of Jesus in Galilee.

The second instance is found in Matthew 15:29-31. On this occasion Jesus goes up onto a mountain, and crowds bring him sick people, whom Jesus heals. This description of Jesus' ministry contains a clear allusion to Isaiah 35:5-6:

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;  
then the lame shall leap like a deer,  
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy (ESV).

These, however, are the blessings promised to the covenant nation of Israel as they moved on the highway to eschatological Zion (Isa 35:8ff). But on this occasion, not only do these blessings demonstrate the arrival of the kingdom of heaven, they are blessings which are extended beyond the boundaries of Israel (France 1985:248).

This is reinforced by the preceding context with the healing of a Canaanite woman, a term which few would use in the first century (Blomberg 2007:54). Because of her “great faith” her daughter was healed. Here a Gentile woman and her daughter share in the compassion of the Davidic Shepherd-King, he who heals and feeds his people, even though she receives only scraps from the table (Mt 15:27).

Additionally, on several occasions, Jesus saw his own experience in the light of the Psalms which originally referred to the suffering and vindication of Israel. The most prominent of these is Psalm 118:22 quoted by Jesus in Matthew 23:39 (cf. Mk 12:10-22). The rejected corner stone of Psalm 118 originally referred to the dramatic victory of Israel, but Jesus sees himself as the *telos* of the passage. Moreover, Jesus is the suffering servant, a title which was originally designated for Israel (Isa 52:13-53:12). Jesus is God’s servant who is anointed with the Spirit (Mt 12:18-21; cf. Isa 42:1-4).

These five clues together reveal that the true identity of Israel lies in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Schreiner (2008:271) concludes, “Matthew’s emphasis on fulfilment indicates that Jesus is the true Israel who fulfils what God always intended when he chose Israel to be his people.” In other words, Jesus fulfils every preparatory and anticipatory aspect of the history of redemption in the Old Testament in general — and in the history of Israel in particular — because he is the true Israel of God. Undergirding this understanding of Jesus lies the biblical idea of corporate person, the idea that one person can represent a group or a nation and that the nation can be representatively embodied in one person (Holwerda 1995:34).

In this way, Israel typologically points forward to the coming of the true Israel, the Lord Jesus who inaugurates a new covenant in his blood (Gentry & Wellum 2012:121).

France writes:

Jesus’ types are drawn from a wide range of aspects of Israel seen in the Old Testament; they are not restricted to any one period or any

single class ... he sees in the *experiences* of Israel foreshadowings of his own; he sees the *hopes* of Israel fulfilled in himself (1998:75; emphasis original).

Vlach (2012:48), who holds to a more dispensational leaning, agrees with this position, "A proper understanding of Jesus as 'true Israel' (if we use that title) should be in the context of understanding Jesus as the corporate Head of Israel. He embodies perfectly everything God intended for Israel to be. In this sense we can say Jesus is 'true Israel' because He embodies Israel perfectly." To put it another way, Jesus Christ is not merely analogous to the Old Testament nation of Israel, nor simply parallel to her in terms of his experience. Jesus is Israel in the sense that God's purposes, promises and predictions for the nation find their *telos* in his life, death, resurrection, and exaltation (Storms 2013:42).

Others have suggested that to claim Jesus is the true Israel is biblically unwarranted because the term does not appear in Scripture. Such a claim, however, is quickly shown to be indefensible. For example, Jesus was tried on the charge that he claimed to be "king of the Jews" (Mk 15:2, 26, 32). However, no such claim is recorded in Scripture. Nevertheless, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey (Mt 21:1-11; cf. Zech 9:9), an act which the people interpreted with royal overtones (v9). Moreover, Jesus used language rich with kingly symbolism. His favourite title for himself was "Son of Man" (Dan 7:13). Jesus viewed his ministry through the lens of the "Servant of Yahweh" (Isa 49). Simply because the term "true Israel" does not appear in Scripture with reference to Jesus, does not mean that it must be rejected.

The biblical covenants teach that Jesus is the last Adam, the prophet after Moses, and the true Israel. The promised seed of Abraham, the anticipated prophet like Moses, King David's greater son, and the mediator of the new covenant all find their teleological fulfilment in the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is within this teleological context that the cross of Jesus is to be understood. Because of covenantal violations, humanity is condemned to die. But Christ took upon himself the curse of the covenant and dies in the place of the sinner. Or, to put it another way, Christ died as a substitute for the covenant-breaker. In so doing, he becomes the substitutionary sacrifice. Instead of the person and work of Christ appearing in a vacuum, Jesus

becomes the *telos* of Old Testament prayer, because in him the covenant expectations are fulfilled.

#### 4.4. The Corporate Nature of the New Covenant

It is rather tempting to set the individualistic dimension of the new covenant against a more corporate reading of the old. While not necessarily diametrically opposed to each other, there is the potential for imbalance as reflected by Harrison's (1973:140) comment, "When the new covenant was inaugurated by the atoning work of Jesus Christ on Calvary, this important development of personal, as opposed to corporate, faith and spirituality was made real for the whole of mankind." A more biblically balanced view is presented by Robertson (1980:287-90), "The corporate dimension which played such a vital role in God's old covenant dealings with his people must not be omitted from the present realities of the new covenant ... Presumption occurs when corporateness is recognised apart from individuality. Isolationism occurs when individuality is recognised apart from corporateness." Berkhof similarly argues:

Like the first Adam, He [Christ] did not represent a conglomeration of disjointed individuals, but a body of men and women who were to derive their life from Him, to be united by spiritual ties, and thus to form a spiritual organism. Ideally this body, which is the Church, was already formed in the covenant of redemption, and formed in union with Christ, and this union made it possible that all the blessings merited by Christ could be passed on to those whom He represented in an organic way (1938:448).

This covenantal framework must serve as the starting point for reflection on union with Christ. As the Messiah, Jesus is the covenant representative. Born under the law, he fulfils the condition and takes the curse of the old covenant, and his blood sacrifice ratifies the new covenant. Therefore, to be united to Jesus, to be in him, is to be in the covenant through his representative headship. In Christ, believers keep the covenant. God's own righteousness is the righteousness of those who belong to him. In short, Yahweh fulfils the scope of his redemptive purposes in Christ. Turning once again to Berkhof:

By this union believers are changed into the image of Christ *according to his human nature*. What Christ effects in His people is in a sense a replica or reproduction of what took place with Him. Not only objectively, but also in a subjective sense they suffer, bear the cross,

are crucified, die, and are raised in newness of life, with Christ (1938:451; emphasis original).

In this prophetic mediation Christ reforms and transforms his people. Through these covenantal aspects, Christ expresses the personal presence of God. Yahweh comes to uniquely meet with his people and to dwell with them through Jesus. Their identification with him, their participation in his narrative, is realised by the indwelling Spirit, who constitutes the divine presence in their midst and is understood to be the eschatological gift of the new covenant (Macaskill 2013:1). In other words, the very concept of the covenant underlies a theological representation, by which the story of one man (Jesus) is understood to be the story of the people.

#### 4.5. The Covenant Community of the New Covenant

When Jesus reforms and transforms Hebrew Israel into Christian Israel, he accomplishes their redemption from sin and reconciles them to God (Nichols 2011:115). Macaskill (2013:298) asserts, “The new covenant is not an external set of conditions to which Christ conforms, he is the new covenant, it is in his blood.” Therefore, all those who are in Jesus through union with him are now Israel. To put it another way, Jesus is the antitypical fulfillment of Israel, and the Church through union with Christ can be rightfully called the new Israel (Gentry & Wellum 2012:106). As Beale affirms:

Christ is the true Israel, and as true Israel, he represents the church as the continuation of true Israel from the OT. Christ came to do what Israel should have done but failed to do. Those who identify by faith with Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, become identified with him and his identity as true eschatological Israel (2011:652).

It is not an allegorical or spiritualising hermeneutic by which the Church is to be identified with Israel, but rather what Beale (2011:655) calls a “legal representative” or “corporate” hermeneutic that underlies this identification of the Church. Stated differently, Jesus is the true Israel, and the Church becomes the Israel of God as it unites itself to the True Israel. “The old covenant nation of Israel,” argues Robertson (1980:289), “typologically anticipated the new covenant reality of the chosen people of God assembled as a nation consecrated to God.” Poythress contends that:

Because Christ is an Israelite and Christians are in union with Christ, Christians partake of the benefits promised to Israel and Judah in Jeremiah. With whom is the new covenant made? It is made with Israel and Judah. Hence it is made with Christians by virtue of Christ the Israelite. Thus one might say that Israel and Judah themselves undergo a transformation at the first coming of Christ, because Christ is the final, supremely faithful Israelite (1994:106).

For Poythress the concept of Israel undergoes “transformation” because of Christ who is the “supremely faithful Israelite.” Likewise Goldsworthy contends that (1981:112), “Jesus Christ is the head of the new race. All who are united to him are members of that race, but only because he *is* that race” (emphasis original). Even though the new covenant is made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah (Jer 31:31), “The New Testament applies it to the Church through the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ, David’s greater Son, the true Israel, and the last Adam” (Gentry & Wellum 2012:645-46).

These theological affirmations are consistent with the biblical witness. Isaiah envisions the divine perpetuation of Christ’s spiritual posterity (Isa 59:20-21). God creates this spiritual posterity by his Word and his Spirit. Both are essential features of the new covenant. The Word without the Spirit is reduced to rationalism. The Spirit without the Word is reduced to mysticism (Nichols 2011:261). Storms maintains:

The True Israel of this eschatological age is no longer the nation of the old covenant, but the Christian community, inaugurated by a new covenant through a mediator greater than the Israelite priesthood; for Jesus not only repeats the work of the prophet, priest and king, but in him it is perfected. In this new community the hopes of the Old Testament Israel are fulfilled (2013:41).

The expression of God’s purposes is made evident in the Church. Christ promises that he is committed to build his Church in every generation until he returns (Mt 16:18). The Church then is the visible society of Christ’s spiritual posterity. This happens when God creates spiritual children through the gospel and adds to the Church those who are being saved (Acts 2:38-42, 47). For Berkhof the existence of the Church precedes Israel:

This body, which is the Church, was already formed in the covenant of redemption, and formed in union with Christ, and this union made it possible that all the blessings merited by Christ could be passed on to

those whom He represented in an organic way. They were conceived of as a glorious body, a new humanity, sharing the life of Jesus Christ (1938:448).

The earthly temple of the new covenant is the Christian heart and the Church. God's new covenant temple is not a temple restricted to a geographical area. Rather, his people form the temple here on earth. God gives his Spirit to each Christian (1 Co 6:19-20), but he also gives his Spirit to each Church (1 Co 3:16-17; Eph 2:20-22). The Church recognises these brothers and sisters and receives them into its membership and privileges. Every Sunday the new covenant community is privileged to enter God's special presence in his temple. Beale articulates this best:

The NT presents Jesus as the one who completes what was begun but not finished in the OT ... this means that he is the new, eschatological Adam (Heb 2:6-9), better than Moses (Heb 3:1-6), better than the priests of the OT (Heb 5:6-11; 7:1-10:22). He is a sacrifice better than the OT sacrifices (Heb 10:1-22) who executes a covenant better than the old covenant (Heb 8:6-13). The reason why what Jesus does is better than the OT is that what he does is irreversible and eternal, not temporary and passing away. Thus:

1. Jesus is the new end-time Adam.
2. Jesus is the new end-time Israel.
3. Jesus is the new end-time Davidic King.
4. Jesus is the new end-time Priest.
5. Jesus is the new end-time Prophet.
6. Jesus is the new end-time Teacher of the Law.
7. Jesus is the new end-time Temple.
8. *The church is all these things in its union with Christ* (2020:49-59, emphasis added).

Once the Christology of the New Testament is set in place, in that Jesus of Nazareth is portrayed as the one in whom all the promises of God are affirmed (2 Co 1:20), the broader perspective of prayer becomes evident. It belongs to those who, in Christ, are part of a new created order, the true children of Abraham, the royal family, and a holy nation.

It is the covenantal relationship between the divine and humanity that enables fellowship with him. If God had not initiated the plan of redemption through the establishment of a covenant, prayer would be impossible. The unity of the biblical covenants lies in their gracious formation by God, which also means that prayer is



grounded in grace alone. By placing humanity within this covenantal bond, God has bound himself to hear our prayers and respond in accordance with his character.

#### 4.6. Summary

The study on corporate and representative prayer revealed multiple facets of the person and work of Christ. These facets, however, did not stand in isolation from the larger structure in which they are found. Rather, the shadow of Christ is presented to us within the framework of Biblical covenants. This chapter began as an attempt to grasp the unfolding nature of the various biblical covenants. In doing so, we were able to see the unfolding of the promise-fulfilment motif in Scripture. Throughout the Old Testament, covenantal language is designed to communicate the permanent nature of the bond between God and man. However, when God establishes a covenant with his people, he is the one to outline and fulfil the terms of their relationship. As such, God's covenants in the Old Testament form the backdrop and substance of Christ's mission.

As God's redemptive plan is progressively disclosed through the biblical covenants, the identity of the Messiah becomes more defined. The fulfilment of God's promises will be accomplished through a man. But Scripture also teaches that this Messiah is more than a mere man since he is identified as God. The New Testament teaches that Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, is the last Adam, the prophet after Moses, and the true Israel. Jesus, in other words, fulfils every preparatory and anticipatory aspect of the history of redemption in the Old Testament. The prayer of God's people in the Old Testament is answered in a person. Undergirding this promise-fulfilment motif lies the idea that one person can represent a group or a nation to God and that the nation can be representatively embodied in one person. In this way, Biblical covenants point to the role of Jesus, the true prophet, priest, and king, upon whose prayers the efficacy of all prayer is dependent.

This covenantal framework serves as the starting point for reflection on union with Christ. As the Messiah, Jesus is the covenant representative. Therefore, to be united to Jesus, is to be in the new covenant through his representative headship. To even go further, the teleological identity of Christ is shared by those who are united to him

by faith. But the new covenant people of God also share in the ministry of their representative head. Prayer is the privilege of those who are part of a new created order, the true children of Abraham, the royal priesthood, and a holy nation.

## CHAPTER 5: COVENANTAL CHRISTOPRAXIS AND THE BAPTIST CHURCH

Chapter 4 was an attempt to demonstrate that Christ, in his person and work, is the teleological fulfilment of Biblical covenants. As such, he is the last Adam, the prophet after Moses, and the new Israel. This covenantal consummation, however, does not terminate with Jesus, but has great implications for the corporate identity of the Church by way of her union with Christ. The new covenant people of God do not merely have a new status (justified, adopted, holy), but they also possess a new identity. That is, the teleological identity of Christ is shared by those who are united to him by faith. As such, the Church comprises of those who are part of a new created order (2 Co 5:17), who serve as a royal priesthood (1 Pt 2:9), and who are the new Israel. This new identity is not merely one that is restricted to the individual believer, but it extends to the new covenant community.

The following chapter aims to explore the theological and practical implications of what we have observed so far in this dissertation. Having said that, such an exploration must be guided by the Church's corporate identity in Christ. This forms the bedrock of covenantal Christophraxis. Finally, we will conclude this chapter by answering the research question: *How can a redemptive-historical approach to corporate and representative prayer in the Pentateuch contribute towards covenantal Christophraxis in Baptist Churches?*

### 5.1. Orthopraxis or Christophraxis?

Doctrine is not merely something to be examined, it is to be practiced (Jas 2:14ff). Generally, evangelical Protestantism has used the term "orthopraxy/orthopraxis," meaning right practice, to express the movement from doctrine to practice. Paul, in Titus 3:8, shows the relationship between orthodoxy and orthopraxis within a single verse, "I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God [orthodoxy] may be careful to devote themselves to good works [orthopraxis]." Orthopraxy, in its most basic form, is about practices that are in harmony with God's kingdom in the Church and world. "Orthopraxy," writes de Bruyn (2016:12) "is the correct application of the Christian doctrine to home life, church life, civil life, economic

life — indeed, all of life.” Anderson (2001:49) takes this concept even further by asserting that, “In praxis one is not only guided in one’s actions by the intention of realising the telos, or purpose, but by discovering and grasping this *telos* through the action itself.”<sup>90</sup>

Orthodoxy, orthopraxis, and orthopathy are generally viewed along the lines of logical development. The Word of God produces right doctrine, right doctrine in turn proceeds right practice, and right practice helps the Church develop right affections. These spheres are generally treated in isolation from each other, with little overlap. The result has often been an unexpected divorce of logical connections. Orthodoxy is set in opposition to orthopraxis, while orthopathy is altogether forgotten.

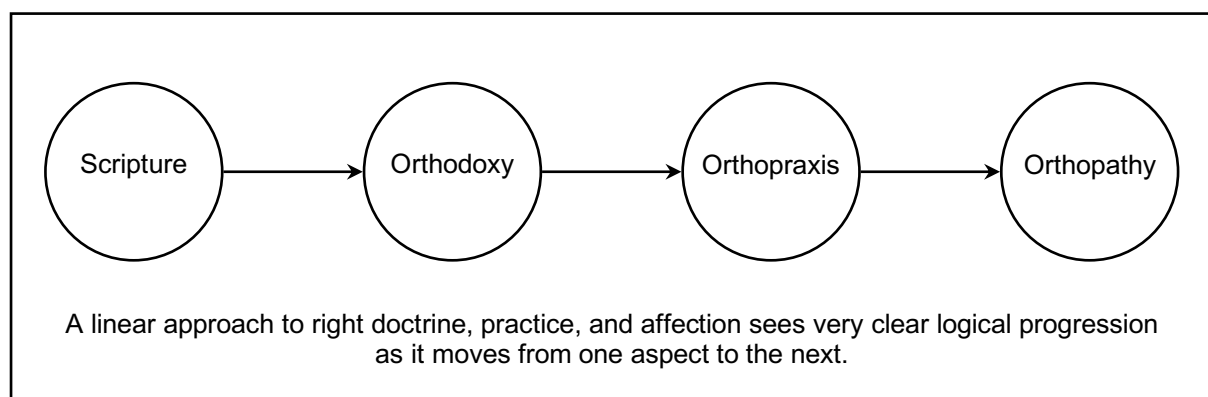


Figure 6: A Linear Approach to Orthopraxis

The pursuit of orthopraxis, I believe, is not wrong, but it does not go far enough. By moving from right doctrine to right practice, it tends to overlook the very foundation which should reinforce its infrastructure. In most instances, motives towards corporate prayer are reduced to imperatives (what God commands) or biblical pragmatics (what will be gained). Much less time is given to the Church’s covenantal identity in Christ. One can conceive of a congregation that zealously holds to right doctrine and right practice, yet is completely ignorant of her identity in Christ. A Church may pray boldly, intercede passionately, and confess humbly, but still not have a clear understanding of who they are in Jesus, which should undergird such prayers. Richard Lovelace, writing more than 40 years ago, in his book *The Dynamics of Spiritual Life* offers an accurate description of the Church today:

<sup>90</sup> For Anderson the *telos* is, “its final purpose, meaning or character.”

Ask evangelicals what the most essential condition of revival is and they are most likely to point to prayer. In most of the church's life in the 20th century, however, in both Evangelical and non-Evangelical circles, the place of prayer has become limited and almost vestigial. The proportion of horizontal communication that goes on in the church (in planning, arguing and expounding) is overwhelmingly greater than that which is vertical (in worship, thanksgiving, confession, and intercession). Critically important committee meetings are begun and ended with formulary prayers, which are ritual obligations and not genuine expression of dependence — when problems and arguments ensue, they are seldom resolved by further prayer, but are wrangled out on the battlefield of human discourse (1979:153).

Horizontal communication is not wrong. Planning and preaching are not in conflict with worship. But if these things are done without a proper appreciation of who the Church is in Christ, she can quickly become an empty shell. Something beyond a logical connection is needed to move from orthodoxy to orthopraxis.<sup>91</sup>

“Christopraxis” says Anderson (2001:53) “is the normative and authoritative grounding of all theological reflection in the divine act of God consummated in Jesus Christ and continued through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in the Body of Christ.” For Anderson, the movement from right doctrine to right practice is both supported and empowered by Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the relationship between orthodoxy and orthopraxis is no longer a logical one, but a theological one. Understood in this way, Christopraxis is the continuation of the ministry of Christ through the Church as it is enabled by the Holy Spirit. Moreover, it is the ministry of the Holy Spirit that develops right affections in the heart of the believer individually and the Church corporately. This allows the Church to pray, not out of a sense of guilt, but a godly desire to please the Lord.

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<sup>91</sup> Evangelical Protestants will agree that orthodoxy is more than just intellectual assent to biblical truth, while orthopraxis is more than just correct behaviour. My desire is to explore the “more than” in these statements.

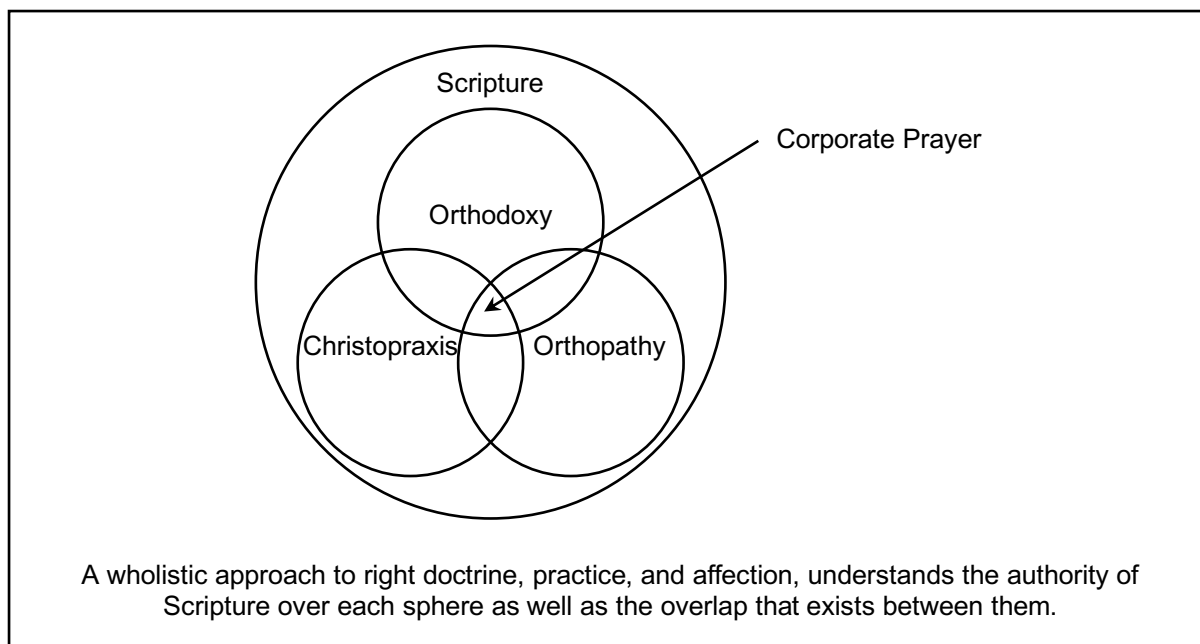


Figure 7: A Wholistic Approach to Christopraxis<sup>92</sup>

This, I believe, should form the foundation for understanding corporate and representative prayer in the local Church. Most books on the subject focus, almost exclusively, on how to develop a personal prayer life or the benefits of prayer, dealing with the identity of Jesus in a cursory manner. Christopraxis forces us to shift our attention from imperatives and pragmatics to our identity in Jesus Christ and how, through prayer, Christ continues his work through the Church.

## 5.2. Theological Significance

D. A. Carson (1992:17) aptly wrote that, “Just as God’s Word must reform our theology, our ethics, and our practices, so also must it reform our praying.” In our study of corporate and representative prayer in the Pentateuch, we discovered that prayer performed a definite theological function within the narrative in which it is found (O’Kennedy 1996:430). Such prayers were not haphazard interjections within the text, but conformed to the theological intention of the author, and equally important, the redemptive purposes of God. Such prayers not only provide shape to the narrative, but also set in place Christological expectations.

<sup>92</sup> While I have placed corporate prayer at the centre of this Venn diagram, it may be replaced with any aspect that pertains to Christian discipleship.

### 5.2.1. Corporate Prayer and Union with Christ

In developing a practical model to encourage the Church to pray, it is crucial to broaden our understanding of union with Christ. Historically, union with Christ has predominantly been observed through the lens of justification and sanctification. For example Calvin (1845:2:159) says, “Both of these [the mortification of the flesh and the quickening of the Spirit] we obtain by union with Christ.” In addition to justification and sanctification, John Murray (1955:169) adds, “Union with Christ reaches its zenith in adoption and adoption has its orbit in union with Christ. The people of God are ‘heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ’ (Rom 8:17).” Union with Christ, however, goes beyond justification, sanctification, and adoption. In response to the historical affirmation, Macaskill contends:

At its most basic level [it is] an exchange not merely of status but of identity. It is not simply that our guilt is transferred to Jesus and his righteousness to us but that our status before God rests on a more fundamental exchange. What Jesus takes to the cross is *who we are*, our very selves with all their guilt, and what we enjoy in union with him is precisely *who he is*, his fullness with all its glory (2019:39; emphasis original).

For Macaskill, the very identity of Christ becomes the identity of the believer. This unique identity emerges from the distinctive ways in which the Spirit’s role is described in relation to Jesus and to the believer. While at every point, the identity of the believer is derived from that of the Son, it is the Spirit who realises this identity in the believer (Macaskill 2013:303).

Thus, while Christ perfects this priestly role of Moses, the Church is called to join in this role as the Holy Spirit impresses the identity of Christ upon her. The Church is called to live sacrificially for others as she imitates Christ’s sacrifice on behalf of sinners (1 Pt 2:12). The Church is called to offer intercession on behalf of others, especially those who have been given positions of authority (1 Ti 2:1-2). The Church not only prays for those who love her, but even for those who will persecute her (1 Pt 2:16-17). This notion of identity is reinforced by Peter, quoting Exodus 19:6, who claims that the people of the new covenant are a royal priesthood (1 Pt 2:9). Therefore, rather than using their role of intimacy as a point of privilege, those who are united to Christ use their intimacy with God by praying for others (Clowney 2000:693).

Furthermore, we might say that prayer belongs to the children of God because they are re-made in the image of God through Jesus Christ, the true Son. Christology, then, is vital to our understanding of prayer. What belongs to the true humanity of Jesus now belongs to all who trust in him. The basis of prayer rests upon the sonship of Jesus in which we share by way of our union with him (Goldsworthy 2006:17). Through Jesus we are given the same status that he has, as the sinless Son, before God. The acceptance he has with the Father is the acceptance we now have. If the Father always hears the Son, then he always hears those who, in Christ, are sons.

### 5.2.2. Corporate Prayer and Communion with God

In addition to broadening our theological understanding of union with Christ, we must also appreciate that prayer facilitates communion with the triune God. Prayer is addressed not simply to a personal, but to a tri-personal God (Clowney 2000:696). As such, corporate prayer draws believers into communion with the living God. For Owen (2007:388), “The soul is never more raised with the love of God than when by the Spirit taken into intimate communion with him in the discharge of this duty [prayer].” Prayer is made to the Father (Mt 6:9), in the name of the Son (Jn 14:13-14), with the help of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:26). This does not mean that there must be explicit Trinitarian formulas in our prayers. But it does mean that prayer is rich in its interpersonal complexity, something which the Church can easily take for granted. Goldsworthy writes:

Prayer is a gift of the Father and is grounded in the revelation of his will for us. Prayer is only possible when it is mediated by the Son with whom we are united by faith...Prayer is only possible when the Holy Spirit of God regenerates us and turns us to the Son in trust and faith so that we might have fellowship with the Father (2003:190).

In this dissertation, we have seen that God must address humanity first, before we are ever to respond to him. As sin enters into the world, in light of Adam’s rebellion, mankind possesses no right to enter into God’s presence, nor the desire to approach him (Rom 3:11, 23; 5:12). But as Scripture unfolds, the biblical picture of prayer is given within the framework of God’s gracious activity in salvation. Salvation is God’s eternal plan that is expressed in his covenantal commitment to his people. As God carries out his eternal plan of salvation he does so in the context of a revealing and



redeeming Word. We must appreciate afresh that it is God who made the first move towards us and any move we make is a response to this. For Goldsworthy (2006:20), “Authentic prayer is an expression of gospel-based faith.” And, as God’s children, we inherit every spiritual blessing we already possess by faith (Rom 10:12; Eph 1:3-6; Col 1:4-5). We call on the name of the Lord, but only because he has called on us. We cry out to him because of the promises he has given to us. In this sense, according to Millar (2016:29), “All biblical prayer is covenantal — all prayer is gospel driven.” That should shape our expectations when we pray. On one hand, God through the gospel, has made it possible for us to speak to him. But on the other, God draws close and invites us to call on his name.

Paul speaks of prayer as the Spirit of Christ within us crying to the Father (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6). The Holy Spirit enables believers to respond in faith to the revealed Word (Jn 1:12-13; 3:3-8; Acts 13:48; 16:14). In this way the ministry of the Holy Spirit is intricately woven together with the ministry of the Word. It is the Spirit who not only unites us to Christ, but also seals us for the day of redemption (Eph 1:13) and helps us to pray (Rom 8:26). The verb “help” (*synantilambanomai*), that Paul uses in Romans 8, does not indicate that the Holy Spirit prays on our behalf, but that the Holy Spirit takes part in prayer with us and makes our prayers effective (Grudem 1994:382). Owen (2007:388) writes that prayer is, “A spiritual duty required of us by God; and so they [prayers] are wrought in us by the Spirit of sanctification.” This is of great comfort, but carries with it great consequences. “One of the ministries of the Spirit is to help us in our praying,” writes Mack (2004:24), “therefore, where there is no prayer, there is no Spirit, and thus no salvation.”

### 5.3. Practical Significance

It is no surprise that corporate prayer occupies little time in the local Church. Frizzell (1999:15-16) offers five reasons as to why this may be the case. Firstly, as the Church moves towards programs and activities, less time is available for prayer. This is not to say the structured Church activities are inherently wrong. However, a Church can be misguided if her programs eclipse the place of prayer. “In this pattern,” says Frizzell (1999:15) “we see a tragic example of the good becoming a substitute for the best.”

Secondly, due to the variety of such activities, corporate prayer is given less and less attention. Over time, the prayer meeting has vanished from many churches. The resulting contrast is paradoxical. A Church may have its schedule filled with Bible studies, discipleship, leadership training, youth ministry, and yet has little to no time for prayer. Sadly, communion with God has been scheduled out of the Church.

Thirdly, as many pastors are not confident in leading prayer meetings, it is naturally replaced by other activities. Sadly, many pastors do not view corporate prayer with any degree of importance. It may be an optional supplement for the Church, but it is by no means central to the life of the body. The adage rings true, “As the pastor goes, so goes the Church.” The congregation will never display a greater zeal and fervency in prayer than that of the pastor.

Fourthly, as churches place a greater emphasis on structured programs, corporate prayer is treated as something of less importance. The schedule of a Church will reflect what she believes to be of greatest value. The calendars of many churches today demonstrate an ever-increasing reliance on contemporary discipleship methods rather than on corporate prayer. Today, what many call a prayer meeting lacks frequency and fervency.

Fifthly, we are currently six to seven generations removed from a time when corporate prayer was one of the essential practices of the Church. For many Christians, the rich history of powerful prayer meetings and supernatural revival is not even a memory. For many today, this history is a far-removed record on the pages of books. The outcome is seen in formulary prayers tacked on at the beginning and end of Church activities. Prayer is something we do, not something we are passionate about.

In addition to Frizzell’s observations, Millar (2016:233-36) adds a few more. Sixthly, contemporary life, for western Christians, is easy. The current generation has enjoyed a lasting time of peace and economic prosperity. Opportunities to thrive in society are widely available. This ease of life moves prayer to the sideline of our Christian experience. Moreover, the pursuit of opportunities has driven Christians further into individualism. Whitney (1996:163) observes, “In the Western half of the world ... the independent spirit prevails over the *interdependent* spirit” (emphasis original).

Seventhly, technological progress increases spiritual distraction. For most believers today, our pockets contain the doorway to the world. Communication, news, and entertainment can be accessed easily through mobile phones. While our phones could be used for much good, they also provide a source of innumerable distractions. These distractions make it harder to develop healthy prayer habits.

Eighthly, the availability of good teaching hinders intercession. Never before in history have Christians had access to so much sound biblical teaching. But, strangely enough, this has led to a decline in prayer. When believers earnestly count on their pastor to shepherd them, there will be a natural seriousness for intercessory prayer. The congregation sees the labour, service, emotional drain, tiredness of their pastor week by week. This visible reminder drives the Church to pray. Nowadays, it is easy to tune into one's favourite podcast or livestream. What goes on in the Church, and the pastor's life, matters little.

Finally, many Christians have embraced unbiblical ideas of prayer. Many believers treat prayer like a divine slot machine; put in the prayer, pull the handle, and rewards come flowing out. When the results do not match our expectations, we are disappointed. Disappointment leads to doubt, and very soon we may become cynical towards prayer altogether. Millar (2016:236) says, "We fail to pray because there is something false or ridiculously unrealistic about much we have seen and heard." Very soon the Church gives up.

"Prayer," highlights Hiscox (1980:223), "is an important element in all religious service. Not only is it vital to the individual Christian life, its importance in social religion is scarcely less important." In light of these observations, how does the current dissertation contribute to developing healthy corporate prayer? How can the Church recover this vital element of her spiritual life? Only a recovery of the sense of God's greatness and glory will remedy the situation. When this prevails, the corporate prayers of God's people will take on fresh urgency and effectiveness.

### 5.3.1. Redefining Corporate Prayer

The apostle Peter tells us that the natural spiritual activity of the Church, flowing out of our new identity in Christ is, “to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pt 2:5). For most churches today, the definition of worship is restricted to congregational singing. Comparatively, the preaching of the Word of God, corporate prayer, and even the ordinances/sacraments (i.e. baptism and the Lord’s Supper) are treated as peripheral elements. Any movement towards a recovery of corporate prayer must begin with understanding prayer as worship.

The London Baptist Confession argues that, “The acceptable way of worshipping the true God has been instituted by himself and delimited by his own revealed will. He may not be worshipped according to human imagination or methods” (LBC 22.1). This means that a proper understanding of the elements of worship must flow from Scripture, not human preference. Interestingly, the Greek terms translated as “sing” (*hymneō*; *psallō*; *ōdē*) appear a total of 10 times in the New Testament. Whereas the terms for “pray” (*euchomai*; *deomai*) appear 99 times. Thus, to reduce the definition of worship to singing reflects a gross imbalance in many churches.

“Praise,” according to O’Kennedy (1996:425), “is probably the heart of Old Testament prayer.” Prayer as worship appears in both historical narrative (Ex 15:1-18; Deut 32:1-43; Judge 1:1-31; 2 Sam 22:2-31) as well as poetry (Ps 8, 29, 33, 100, 103). Praise can be seen as the recognition of who God is (attributes) and thanksgiving is recognition for what God gives (deeds). The very premise for prayer rests upon God’s act of reconciling mankind to himself. Through salvation, the Church is able to recognise God in the fullness of his character. He is the sovereign ruler of creation. He is omnipotent. He is omnipresent. He is eternal. He is holy. He is love. He is good. He is merciful. The unity of these attributes should naturally result in worship. “Fundamentally, this appreciation of God for His own sake, is true worship” (Swincer 2019:35).

When commentating on Isaiah 56:7, “My house shall be called a house of prayer,” Calvin wrote:

For by this expression he both showed that the duty of prayer is a principal part of his worship, and that to enable believers to engage in it with one consent his temple is set up before them as a kind of banner ... But although the shadows of the law have ceased, yet because God was pleased by this ordinance to foster the unity of the faith among us also, there can be no doubt that the same promise belongs to us—a promise which Christ sanctioned with his own lips, and which Paul declares to be perpetually in force (1845:2:497-98).

With the coming of Christ, Old Testament worship reached its fulfilment. Consequently, the tension between personal and institutional worship was resolved. Clowney (2000:693) writes, “Spiritual worship is not templeless worship, but worship at the true temple, the incarnate Son.” Of utmost importance now, is the individual’s spiritual appetite and awareness (Evans 2000:33). Appetite speaks of a hunger for God and a single-minded desire for closer communion with Him. Awareness implies confession of sin, both personal and corporate, and a concern for the advance of God’s kingdom. Hiscox contends:

The disposition to pray, to petition the Supreme Being for benefits needed, and for defence against impending evils, is instinct in the human mind. But the idea of worship, in its strict sense, of fellowship with the spiritual, and communion with the unseen, seems never to have entered into the idea of prayer, except by those illuminated by a divine revelation (1980:228-29).

Without diligent preparation, the believer is in danger of being a white-washed tomb, falling into the routine of religion with little faith. Jesus warns, “This people honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (Mk 7:7-8). While corporate prayer honours God through worship, it also calls for preparation and discipline as it holds out the promise of great blessings for God’s people. Hiscox (1980:231) “This service not only reveals, but nourishes and develops the religious vitality of the Church, and the importance of the service as a spiritual force cannot well be overestimated.” Corporate prayer must be recovered as an important element of worship. It deserves careful evaluation in days when much of what passes as worship lacks a sense of God’s majesty.

By way of implication, Peskett (1990:23) notes that prayer transcends radical divisions. Prayers throughout the Bible are offered in many different languages, cultures, and buildings. Joel 2:32 predicts that the day will come when “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Zephaniah 3:9 says the day will come when God will “change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord.” In short, worship through corporate prayer unites those who would otherwise be antagonistic towards each other due to ethnic tensions, because they share a greater identity in Christ.

### 5.3.2. Recalibrating Corporate Prayer

The prophet Isaiah deals with both the restoration of Israel and the salvation of all peoples. Isaiah anticipates a time when foreigners and eunuchs, who were previously excluded from the assembly of Israel, will be treated as equal citizens in the community of God’s faithful (56:3-6). Blomberg (2007:67) captures this future prospect in writing, “The God who gathers the exiles of Israel back into their homeland will gather others — Gentiles, obviously — as well (56:8).” Those who were once kept at an arm’s length would be incorporated into the covenant community of God, and the Lord promised of these:

And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord,  
to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord,  
and to be his servants,  
everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it,  
and holds fast my covenant —  
these I will bring to my holy mountain,  
and make them joyful in my house of prayer;  
their burnt offerings and their sacrifices  
will be accepted on my altar;  
for my house shall be called a house of prayer  
for all peoples.  
The Lord God,  
who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares,  
“I will gather yet others to him  
besides those already gathered” (Isa 56:6; ESV).

The context in Isaiah is eschatological, looking to a future day when Jew and Gentile alike would worship God in religious purity. The equality of Jew and Gentile in that worship began with Christ’s first coming. This passage is quoted by Matthew as Jesus enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (Mt 21). After Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, he

entered the temple precinct driving out the merchants and money changers. Caiaphas, the high priest, had recently moved the trade of sacrificial animals from the Kidron Valley to the court of the temple designed for God-fearing Gentiles to use in worship and prayer (Blomberg 2007:67). On this occasion, Matthew justifies Jesus' zealous behaviour by quoting the Old Testament prophet. As it stands, the temple court was intended to be a "house of prayer" (Mk 11:17 includes the phrase "for all the nations"). But now it is so filled with commotion that neither Jew nor Gentile can easily pray here. Though not as explicit as John 2:19, there is nevertheless implicit "new temple" theology here (Blomberg 2007:68). Jesus, in his coming death, will replace the temple and its sacrificial system as the focal point of God's salvific activities.

"God's agenda for us," according to Millar (2016:236), "is nothing less than transformation into the likeness of Jesus." Not only must corporate prayer be redefined as worship, it just also be recalibrated around Jesus, the new temple, and the new covenant community, living stones of God's spiritual house (1 Pt 2:5; cf. Eph 2:19-22). This corporate identity also remedies the individualism that is prevalent in the contemporary Church. McKibbens rightly highlights:

Spirituality is frequently described in private terms, as if spiritual growth is something done only by an individual. But corporate worship stands in weekly testimony that spirituality is also community, that 'I' am also a part of a "we," and that in the community of believers I am more complete and fulfilled than if I tried to go it alone (1990:20).

### 5.3.3. Rediscovering Corporate Prayer

The early Church comprised of men and women who were committed to corporate prayer. Their reputation as praying people, however, does not come from their individual prayer lives nearly as much as from their corporate witness. In Acts 2:42 we read that, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." God had moved powerfully on the day of Pentecost in the lives of these people. One of the results of this was a devotion to praying with the others who also had the Spirit of God. Corporate prayerlessness should be unimaginable to us. "Private-only prayer is not New Testament Christianity" (Whitney 1996:174).

Perhaps the most distressing feature to consider when evaluating the decline of corporate prayer is ignorance. Many professing Christians are simply unaware of what God has revealed through the Scriptures concerning corporate prayer. This is reflected in the numerous books on prayer which amount to little more than psychological self-help books. Prayer is individualised, and God is sentimentalised.

In order to rediscover corporate prayer, not only must the Church be reminded of her identity in Christ, she must also be reminded of those activities which flow from her identity. Clowney helpfully writes:

In corporate prayer, we approach Jesus and join the heavenly assembly (Heb 12:22-29). The confidence which enables us to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus (Heb 10:19-22) also moves us to keep meeting together to encourage one another (Heb 10:23-25) (2000:695).

Prayer takes the people of God into the presence of the personal, sovereign, covenant God. If a Church neglects prayer, she finds herself in the midst of an identity crisis, she has forgotten who she is and, therefore, what she must do. Those who are a part of the local Church need to be reminded that their prayerlessness adds to this crisis. Each member has the responsibility to give themselves to ministry. Given, the Church is filled with those who find themselves in different places spiritually, some may find the thought of praying with a group daunting. Acts 2:42 does not say they all prayed aloud, but it does mean that they prayed together.

#### 5.3.4. Corporate Prayer and the Priesthood of All Believers

Redefining corporate prayer as worship, recalibrating corporate prayer around the new Temple, and rediscovering corporate prayer in the Church, will naturally lead to a greater appreciation for the Baptist Principle, *The Priesthood of All Believers*, namely:

[We believe in] The Priesthood of All Believers, by which we understand that each Christian has direct access to God through Christ our High Priest, and shares with Him in His work of reconciliation. This involves intercession, worship, faithful service and bearing witness to Jesus Christ, even to the end of the earth.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> This statement is taken from the Baptist Union of Southern Africa Directory (2016-17:221).



The old covenant people of God were organised within a tribal-representative structure (Carson 2007:1065). Within this structure God related to them through specially called mediators (e.g. Moses, the priesthood, kings). These mediators included the priesthood, which facilitated proper worship within the temple, as well as the high priest, who served as the representative head on behalf of the people to Yahweh on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16).

All this changes with the consummation of the new covenant. No longer was the sacrifice of animals appropriate, because Christ, the Lamb of God, had given himself as a sacrifice for sin. In his perfect sacrificial work of atonement, Jesus becomes teleological fulfilment of the priesthood and the high priest. It is Jesus, the great High Priest, who now mediates between the Lord and his new covenant people (Heb 7:24). In this way, the identity of Christ becomes the very identity of those who are united to him by faith. For Dever and Leeman (2015:54), “Every member of the covenant has direct, immediate access to God in Christ.” The Spirit who first empowered Christ (Isa 11:1-3; 49:1-2; Mt 3:16) now empowers Christ’s people (Ezek 11:19-20; 36:25-27; Joel 2:28-32; Eph 1:13-14). That is, he empowers and gifts every member for service.

Rather than emphasising rights or privileges, the Baptist Principle highlights the responsibilities and duties of each member in the local Church to serve others. Although each believer is a priest, individually responsible to God, they also share a corporate identity as the priesthood. In other words, the priesthood of all believers is the mutual ministry of all believers towards each other. Part of the corporate responsibility of the priesthood is to assemble in Christ’s name, to offer up spiritual worship (which includes corporate prayer), to intercede for each other and the world, and to encourage believers. This is inherent in Peter’s affirmation that the Church is, “A royal priesthood...that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pt 2:9).

#### 5.4. Summary

Right practice must be supported and empowered by Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. As such, union with Christ goes beyond justification, sanctification and adoption. The very identity of Christ becomes the identity of the believer. The

acceptance he has with the Father is the acceptance we now have. If the Father always hears the Son, then he always hears those who, in Christ, are sons. In this way, prayer facilitates communion with the triune God. Prayer is addressed not simply to a personal, but to a tri-personal God. This is only possible because the biblical picture of prayer is given within the framework of God's gracious activity in salvation. We call on the name of the Lord, but only because he has called on us. Moreover, by the presence of the Holy Spirit we become temples of the living God, both individually and corporately. Love for God leads us to seek him in prayer. Love for others enables the Church to persevere in prayer on their behalf.

Three practical observations were made regarding corporate prayer within the Church. Firstly, corporate prayer must be recovered as an important element of worship. Secondly, corporate prayer must be recalibrated around Jesus, the new temple, and the new covenant community, living stones of God's spiritual house. Thirdly, the Church must rediscover prayer. Altogether, these observations enhance the meaning of the Baptist Principle, *The Priesthood of All Believers*.

## 5.5. Conclusion

In most instances, the motivation towards corporate prayer has been reduced to imperatives or pragmatics. Books on prayer amount to little more than psychological self-help aids. Often prayer is individualised, and God is sentimentalised. Taking a different approach, this dissertation sought to answer the question: *How can a redemptive-historical approach to corporate and representative prayer in the Pentateuch contribute towards covenantal Christopraxis in Baptist Churches?*

This research question raised the following objectives:

- To analyse the historical narratives wherein corporate and representative prayer to the Lord is found. In so doing, one must be careful to maintain the force of the redemptive-historical setting wherein corporate and representative prayer is placed.

- To establish how corporate and representative prayer in the Pentateuch anticipates the person and work of Jesus.
- To move towards a covenantal Christopraxis of corporate and representative prayer in Baptist churches.

#### 5.5.1. Answering the Research Question

The research question was answered by following the progress of corporate and representative prayer along the pathway of God's progressive revelation of himself in his covenantal and redemptive purposes, particularly in the Pentateuch. This exploration revealed a number of facets regarding Christ's person and work. However, this was always done within a broader covenantal framework. Thus, biblical covenants become the context for prayer. Additionally, the prayers recorded within this covenantal context focus on the covenant representative.

It is noteworthy that the biblical covenants themselves anticipated one who would fulfil the righteous demands of the law and be the perfect covenant representative. According to the witness of the New Testament, Jesus is the teleological fulfilment of the biblical covenants. He is the last Adam, the prophet after Moses, and the true Israel. It is through Christ then, that the people of God possess the privilege of having him so near that he hears them whenever they call upon him. Corporate prayer is grounded upon the Lord's covenantal commitment to his people through Jesus.

More than that, the new covenant community shares in the identity of Jesus as their covenant head. As the Messiah, Jesus is the covenant representative. Born under the law, Jesus fulfils the condition of the law, takes the curse of the old covenant upon himself, and ratifies the new covenant in his blood. Christ's work of redemption not only included his death on the cross, but also his life under the law. Jesus lived for the salvation of his people as much as he died for it. Therefore, to be united to Jesus, to be in him, is to be in the covenant through his representative headship. Union with Christ goes beyond justification, sanctification, and adoption. The very identity of Christ becomes the identity of the believer. Prayer belongs to those who, in Christ, are

part of a new created order, the true children of Abraham, the royal family, and a holy nation.

Finally, right practice must be undergirded by the work and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, not merely right doctrine. As the new covenant community lives out her new identity in Christ, she does so in reliance upon the Spirit of Christ. Clowney (1990:171) frames it well as he writes, "Knowing God, loving God, worshipping God: in this way our union with Christ in the Spirit finds expression." Thus, prayer is understood as the continuation of the ministry of Christ through the Church as it is enabled by the Holy Spirit.

### 5.5.2. Recommendations

Historically, the book of Psalms has dominated the study of prayer in the Old Testament. This resulted in an imbalanced and, to some degree, a distorted picture of prayer. This dissertation sought to explore literature outside of the Psalms prayers.

By exploring prayer found within the Old Testament narrative, we have discovered the broader historical context which provides a richness to the record of prayer. Prayer, as we have observed, was often found in strategic places within the narrative: the restoration of worship (Gen 4:26), the burden of slavery (Ex 2:23-24), the establishment of the covenant (Ex 20:19-21), the breaking of the covenant and imminent disaster (Ex 32:11-14), and refusal to enter into the promised land (Num 14:11-19). In this way, we have observed the literary and theological function of prayer. However, this was done very specifically (corporate and representative prayer) in the Pentateuch.

Further study is needed within other books of the Old Testament, namely, the Writings and the Prophets, as well as other themes, that is, individual prayer, vows and oaths, lamentation and confession, as well as the prayer cult, etc. If the Church is ever to regain its strength in this vital spiritual exercise, she needs to know her biblical heritage.

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