Water, Rock, and Wood: Structure and Thought Pattern in the Exodus Narrative

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The present study deals with an overarching structure that unites the entire Book of Exodus, namely, the triad of water, rock, and wood.[1] These three elements figure together in the divine instruction to Moses (Exod. 17:5–6):

> And take your *staff* by which you hit the *Nile* in your hand and go. See, I will stand before you there on the *rock in Horeb*, so strike *the rock* and *water* will come out of it.

This triad dominates the description of the Israelite trek from the Sea of Reeds to Mount Sinai and fuses the episodes from 15:22–27 through 17:1–16 into a cohesive narrative sequence, which constitutes a transition from the deliverance at the Sea of Reeds (14:10–15:21) to the revelation at Mount Sinai (chapters 19–34) and copes with the problems inherent in the hardships of the desert.

In a broader perspective this triad seems to dominate the architecture of the Book of Exodus in its entirety, as the mountain symbolizes God and the Nile represents Egypt, while the element of "wood" mediates between them, such as by Moses' staff (Exodus 3–4). The power of this pattern is shown by the fact that it has maintained itself in a variety of reverberations and recastings of the Exodus tradition, e.g., Joshua 3–4; Isaiah 40–42; Psalm 114. The persistence of this triad and its widespread use seem to favor the hypothesis that it embodies a general thought pattern or even an archetypical landscape, as evidenced by the frequent collocation of water, rock, and wood, e.g.:

> And you shall fell every good *tree* and stop all *fountains* of *water* and mar every good piece of land with *stones* (2 Kgs. 3:19).
>
> You that inflame yourselves between the *terebinths*, under every leafy *tree*, that slay the children in the *wadis* under the clefts of the *rocks* (Isa. 57:5).
>
> The voice of YHWH is upon the *waters*, the God of glory thunders, YHWH upon the *immense waters* (. . .) The voice of YHWH breaks the *cedars*; YHWH breaks in pieces the *cedars* of *Lebanon* and he makes *Lebanon* to skip like a calf, and *Sirion* like a young wild-ox (Ps. 29:3, 5–6).

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[1] On the theme of water, see E. Fox, *Now These are the Names: A New English Translation of the Book of Exodus* (New York, 1986), xxxv–xxxvi; the mountain theme has been discussed by R. L. Cohn, *The Shape of Sacred Space* AAR Studies in Religion 4 (Chico, 1981), 43–61. On overarching patterns in Exodus, see F. H. Polak, "Theophany and Mediator: The Unfolding of a Theme in the Book of Exodus," in M. Vervenne, ed., *The Book of Exodus*, *BETL* 126 (Leuven, 1996), 113–47, esp. 115–17, 128–31, 141–47.

In order to attain a better grasp of the various ways in which this thought pattern affects the Exodus account we will now focus our attention on the narratives of the journey to Mount Sinai.

1. *The Brackish Well at Marah (15:22–26)*

The impressive climax of the Exodus narrative, the splitting of and the passage through the Sea of Reeds,[2] is followed by the far more modest episode at Marah (Exod. 15:22–26). This tale mentions a three-day-long wandering in the desert without finding water. At last the Israelites hit upon a well, but it turns out to be brackish, and they rightfully ask: "What shall we drink?" (v. 24). The solution is given in the divine instructions to Moses:[3] by casting a piece of wood (עץ)[4] or a shrub into the well,[5] its water is to become sweet (v. 25a).

The stylistic formulation of this scene is striking. In the opening (vv. 22–23) one notes the game with the epiphora:

> וילכו שלשת ימים במדבר ולא מצאו מים/ ויבאו מרתה ולא יכלו לשתות מים ממרה/ כי מרים הם על כן
> קרא שמה מרה
>
> They went three days in the wilderness and found no *water,/* and they came to *Marah* but they could not drink *water* for *brackishness*,[6] / for it was *brackish*, therefore one called it *Marah.*

In this verse motif-word repetition gives rise to a structure which leads from מים to מרה, from "drinking" to "brackishness," thus highlighting the graveness of the problem. The solution, on the other hand, leads from "water" to "sweetness" in order to return to "water" (v. 25a):

> ויצעק אל ה׳ ויורהו ה׳ עץ וישלך אל המים וימתקו המים
>
> So he cried to YHWH and YHWH instructed him: *wood*, and he threw it into the *water*, and it turned *sweet, the water.*

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[2] According to G. W. Coats' analysis, the scene at the Reed Sea forms a secondary conclusion of the Exodus narrative which originally closed with the scene of spoil taken from the Egyptian neighbors: "The Traditio-historical Character of the Reed Sea Motif," *VT* 17 (1967), 253–65; idem, "Despoiling the Egyptians," *VT* 18 (1968), 450–57. However, since the spoil motif has a reverberation in the Song of the Sea (Exod. 15:9), it seems preferable to regard it as a preparation for the final climax at the Reed Sea.

[3] In Exod. 15:25a ויורהו may be analyzed as a Hif^{c}il form, meaning "instructed him to cast." The Samaritan reads ויראהו ("and he showed him," also reflected in the LXX). On the connotation, "a word from the *Torah*" (*Mek. R. Ishmael*, *Bešallaḥ*: *Wayyissa^c* 1 (quoted according to H. S. Horovitz & I. R. Rabin, *Mekhilta d'Rabbi Ishmael*, 2nd ed. [Jerusalem, 1970]), see D. Boyarin, "Inner-Biblical Ambiguity, Intertextuality and the Dialectic of Midrash: The Waters of Marah," *Prooftexts* 10 (1990), 19–48, esp. 39; as well as N. Lohfink, "'Ich bin Jahweh, dein Arzt' (Ex 15,26): Gott, Gesellschaft und menschliche Gesundheit in einer nachexilischen Pentateuchbearbeitung (Ex 25b.26)," *Studien zum Pentateuch* (Stuttgart, 1988), 91–155, esp. 104.

[4] עץ "ein Holz" according to A. Dillmann, *Die Bücher Exodus und Levitikus*, 3rd ed. (Leipzig, 1897), 178; for other possibilities see B. S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (Philadelphia, 1974), 266.

[5] The verb השליך (Gen. 21:15; 37:20, 22, 24), is frequent in the Exodus narrative (Exod. 1:22; 4:3; 7:9, 10, 12; 15:25; 32:19, 24), in particular in connection with the themes of water and miracle (cf. also 4:3; 7:9–12; and in the Elisha tales: 2 Kgs. 2:16, 21; 3:25; 4:41; 6:6; 13:21).

[6] Taking מרה as an abstract noun (like רעה) rather than as an anticipatory place name; the preposition probably indicates a causal relationship.

The phrase וימתקו המים contrasts with ולא יכלו לשתת מים ממרה and signals the solution of the crisis.

The meaning of this incident is clarified in a series of remarks which are *prima facie* unrelated to it (v. 25b):

> שם שׂם לו חק ומשפט ושם נסהו
>
> *There* He *imposed* him law and justice/ And *there* He put him to the test.

Seemingly, the motifs of "law and justice" are not linked to the Marah scene by a causal chain.[7] Nevertheless, as we shall presently see, they are related one to another on a thematic level.

The notion of imposing "law and justice" may remind one of the covenant theme, and especially of the ceremony at Shechem (Joshua 24:25).[8] This suggestion would be in line with the sequel, which opens with a summary statement of the covenant idea (15:26a),[9] followed by a conditional blessing (v. 26b):[10]

> אם שמוע תשמע לקול ה׳ אלהיך . . . כל המחלה אשר שמתי במצרים לא אשים עליך כי אני ה׳ רפאך
>
> If you hearken to YHWH, your God . . . , all the disease which I imposed in Egypt I will not impose on you, for I, YHWH, your healer.

An important clue to the significance of this pericope is offered by the closing proclamation of the divine healer (v. 26b),[11] whose activity is illustrated by the sweetening of the well (as suggested by Elisha's proclamation: כה אמר ה׳ רפאתי למים האלה; "thus speaks YHWH: I have healed these waters"; 2 Kgs. 2:21). This act, then, symbolizes divine healing and salvation. Specifically, the motif-word שים suggests a link between this proclamation and the previous statement שם שם לו חק ומשפט ושם נסהו. The motif of healing is connected with the covenant idea, "law and justice," by the conditional blessing of the protasis: if the divine instructions are followed, no "disease" will befall Israel. Moreover, the act which symbolizes salvation, the sweetening of the water, is subsequent to God's instruction to Moses: ויורהו ה׳ עץ.

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[7] In 4QpaleoExod^{m} vv. 25, 26 (Column XV, 11, 14) are both followed by a paleo-Hebrew *waw* indicating the opening of the following pericope; see P. W. Skehan, E. Ulrich & J. E. Sanderson, *Qumran Cave 4, IV, Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* 9 (Oxford, 1992), 90–91, pl. XIII.

[8] For the ancient antecedents of the "Shechem covenant" see S. D. Sperling, "Joshua 24 Reexamined," *HUCA* 58 (1987), 119–36. Sperling's arguments, including the indication of the pre-Dtr. character of v. 26, which violates the Deuteronomic ban on open-air sanctuaries (Deut. 16:21–22), have been neglected by M. Anbar, *Josué et l'Alliance de Sichem (Josué 24:1–28)*, *BET* 25 (Frankfurt a.M., 1992), 117–20, 136–37. For a linguistic analysis showing that Joshua 24 probably reflects the Hebrew prose style of the seventh century (unlike chapters 22–23), see F. H. Polak, "Development and Periodization of Biblical Prose Narrative (First Part)," *Beth Mikra* 43 (1997–98), 30–52, esp. 50–51 [in Hebrew, with English summary].

[9] The ostensibly deuteronomistic character of 15:26a (והישר–חקיו) could indicate redactorial intrusion, as suggested by, e.g., A. Schart, *Moses und Israel in Konflikt, OBO* 98 (Freiburg-Göttingen, 1990), 173–77. Childs (*Exodus*, 266–67) judges that vv. 25b–26 probably reflect Dtr. expansions of an underlying account from J. With regard to v. 26 Holzinger hesitates between R^{JE} and R^{D}; in his opinion, the rhythmic character of v. 25 suggests an ancient poetic fragment: H. Holzinger, *Exodus, KHAT* (Tübingen, 1900), xvii, 53. E. Blum ascribes these cola to the author-redactor of the deuteronomistic "composition-stratum" of Exodus (K$_{D}$): *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch*, *BZAW* 189 (Berlin-New York, 1990), 145–48. However, B. Jacob *(The Second Book of the Bible: Exodus* [Hoboken, New Jersey, 1992], 438) notes that the phrase והאזנת למצותיו does not occur elsewhere. The parallelism שמע//האזין is poetic (e.g., Num. 23:18; Deut. 32:1; Judg. 5:3; Ps. 39:13; Isa. 1:2, 10; Deut. 1:45 in a different context). These findings strongly suggest predeuteronomic descent.

[10] The use of conditional negative blessings as disguised curses is also found in Exod. 23:25–26. On the combination of motifs from Exod. 15:26 and 23:25–26 in Deut. 7:15, see N. Lohfink, *Das Hauptgebot*, *An. Bib.* 20 (Rome, 1963), 177–79, 184.

[11] Lohfink's view ("Arzt," 118–19, 152) of the image of "healing" as a post-exilic application of Deutero-Isaian ideas is hardly warranted. רפא is rare in the post-Isaian collection (Isa. 53:5; 57:18) but frequent in Hosea and Jeremiah. On ᵓIlu's epithet *rpᵓu* in the Ugaritic hymn (RS 24.252:1), see D. Pardee, *Les textes para-mythologiques de la 24e champagne (1961)*, *Ras Shamra-Ougarit* 4 (Paris, 1988), 76. On

Secondly, the proclamation of the divine healer also has to do with the statement ושם נסהו (v. 25b), which is not to be regarded as separate from the plight suffered by the thirsty people. The hardship by which Israel was tested is balanced by the divine assurance that it will not suffer the afflictions which smote the Egyptians. Hence this pericope is dominated by the idea of salvation as against suffering, and, in particular, by the notion of the covenant as the setting for salvation.

This theme is resumed in the scene at Elim, where Israel encounters an oasis of twelve springs and seventy date palms (v. 27). These springs form a remarkable reverberation of the well at Marah, while the palm trees belong to the same class as the "wood" by which the brackish water was made sweet;[12] similarity in sound links the palms (*təmārīm*) to the water (*mayim*) of *Marah*.[13] Thus the sudden abundance of the rich oasis counterbalances the distress at the former location, and demonstrates the salvific power of the deity.[14]

2. *Narrative Interconnections*

The linking of the elements "water" and "wood," as witnessed in the episodes of Marah and Elim, recurs in many parts of the Book of Exodus corpus and provides a common semantic substratum, by which the entire book is integrated in one overarching unity.

ᵓIlu's well-known role as a healer who brings relief where nobody is able to do so, see in particular S. E. Loewenstamm, "On the Theology of the Keret Epic," *From Babylon to Canaan* (Jerusalem, 1992), 185–200, esp. 197–99.

[12] The idea that tree and water in this pericope symbolize the Torah has been proposed by R. Elᶜazar the Modaᶜite, who viewed the seventy palm trees as an allusion to the seventy elders ascending to the top of Mount Sinai (Exod. 24:2, 9–11; *Mek. R. Ishmael, Bešallaḥ: Wayyissaᶜ* 1 (ed. Rabin-Horovitz). The number "twelve" recalls the twelve tribes and the twelve *maṣṣebot* used to indicate their allegiance to the covenant (24:4). See also D. J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, *An. Bib.* 21A (Rome, 1978), 254–55; R. P. Robertson, "Symbolism in Exod. 15:22–27 (Marah and Elim)," *RB* 94 (1987), 376–88.

[13] On sound similarity and its structural and symbolic function, see B. Hrushovsky, "The Meaning of Sound Patterns in Poetry: An Interaction View," *Poetics Today* 2 (1980), 39–59, esp. 50–53; F. H. Polak, *Biblical Narrative* (Jerusalem, 1994), 97–105 [in Hebrew]; on its relation to underlying structure see ibid., 138–41, 408–20.

[14] In source criticism 15:27 is mostly attributed to P since it includes a remark on the itinerary; so, e.g., M. Noth, *Exodus*, *OTL* (London, 1962), 127. However, already B. Baentsch prefers to attribute this verse to E, like vv. 22, 23–25a, while admitting that v. 22 may also be attributed to J; *Exodus. Leviticus. Numeri*, *HKAT* (Göttingen, 1903), 140; Holzinger (*Exodus*, 53) argues that vv. 22–25a, 27 may be attributed to J as well as to E, but in his synopsis (xxvii) he prefers the attribution to JE. According to Childs (*Exodus*, 266) this pericope probably belongs to J.

In the scene of Moses' call, as he witnesses the staff turning into a snake, he is instructed to turn the water of the Nile into blood (Exod. 4:9). According to the account of the first plague, he does so by hitting the Nile with his staff (Exod. 7:20).[15] What is more, the Sea of Reeds splits into two as Moses stretches his staff above it (14:16, 21).[16] This staff is significant because it is made of wood; it belongs to the same semantic field as the "wood" of Marah and the date palms at Elim. Of course, these shared traits would be quite unimportant if we were dealing with one feature only. Common phenomena, familiar as they are, may forever keep recurring in a variety of situations. However, such an argument is hardly applicable to clusters of phenomena. From a technical, statistical point of view, the probability of different elements occurring together ("joint event") is far smaller than that of the incidence of a single phenomenon.[17] Therefore, the repeated joint occurrence of different elements is highly meaningful.

In our case the connections between the tales also include the contrast between "throwing down" (וישלך) of the "wood" at Marah (15:25) and the "lifting up" of the staff above the sea (הרם את מטך ונטה ידך על הים, 14:16, cf. v. 21)—both acts in the semantic domain "vertical movement."[18] Moreover, this cluster of correspondences relates to the decisive high point of these stories, as the miraculous act saves Israel from extinction. At the critical turning point, then, one notes three common features, namely: "vertical movement," "water" and "wood"/staff. Thus a common semantic substratum unites the tale of the divine deliverance at the Sea of Reeds and the Marah episode.[19] The latter is a reverberation and a continuation of the former.

Admittedly, the use of such wide, encompassing categories may seem problematic. Is a "well" really comparable to a "sea," or even to the Nile? Is the "wood" by which the well is made sweet comparable to Moses' staff, or to date palms? In this writer's opinion such a categorization is unexceptionable. We are not dealing with a contrast of "sea" and "well" only, but with a broad spectrum, embracing "well," "Nile," and "sea" alike; a similar semantic class includes: "staff," "wood," and "date palm." These categories include all entities of their respective domains. Actually, in ancient Hebrew narrative one regularly encounters a variety of words representing one semantic field. The Paradise tale mentions not only trees and their fruit, in particular the Tree of "Knowing," but also the leaves, with which man and woman covered their nakedness after eating from the tree (Gen. 3:7; surely a significant reverberation), the curse of growing thorns and thistles, and eating from the herbs of the field (v. 18), as well as the shrubs and herbs mentioned in the expository description (2:5). We conclude, then, that the Paradise tale is based on a common substratum constituted by the semantic field "wood"/growing, which is far more comprehensive than a mere motif-word. Similarly, in the Ehud tale we are dealing not only with "hand" and "right hand," but also with "his right thigh" (ירך ימינו, Judg. 3:16), all indicating parts of the human body. A variety of words from this field, including the belly, is used to describe Eglon's killing (Judg. 3:21):[20]

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[15] Ibn Ezra (in his "long commentary" on Exod. 15:26) discerns a contrast-parallel between the first plague and the scene at Marah. On the mythical character of Moses' staff and its repression, see n. 36 below.

[16] In spite of the common ascription of 14:16–18, 21aα.b–23 to P, for which see, e.g., Holzinger, *Exodus*, xxvii, 43–44; Baentsch, *Exodus*, 124–26, these pericopes do not contain any specific Priestly element. The command-execution sequence is also found in such passages, as 2 Sam. 13:17–18; 14:24. But Holzinger and Baentsch ascribe the phrases הרם את ידך (Exod. 14:16) and ויט משה את ידו על הים (14:21) to E, a distinction which is far from self-evident from a point of view of narrative analysis. See now M. Vervenne, "The 'P' Tradition in the Pentateuch: Document and/or Redaction?—The 'Sea Narrative' (Ex 13,17–14,31) as a Test Case," in C. Brekelmans & J. Lust, eds., *Pentateuchal and Deuteronomistic Studies* (Leuven, 1990), 67–90.

[17] For the concept of "joint event," see, e.g., W. L. Hays, *Statistics for the Social Sciences*, 2nd ed. (London-New York, 1974), 142–43, 250–51.

[18] The importance of dominating semantic domains for textual cohesion ("isotopy") has been established by A. J. Greimas, *Structural Semantics* (Ithaca-London, 1983), 78–115, 258–95. The place of this phenomenon in Deutero-Isaian prophecy has been studied by H. Leene, *De vroegere en de nieuwe dingen bij Deuterojesaja* (Amsterdam, 1987), 11–30, 75–119. For its application to biblical narrative see Polak, *Narrative,* 93–105, 139–41, 408–20. The field of "movement" in Exodus 14 has been treated by J.-L. Ska, *Le passage de la mer*, *An. Bib.* 109 (Rome, 1986), 30–32, 126–28; for the field of "visual perception" in Exodus 3, see G. Fischer, *Jahweh unser Gott, OBO* 91 (Freiburg-Göttingen, 1989), 69–72.

[19] For a similar reverberation structure in 2 Sam. 7:11–12; 11:3–4; 12:8–12 and its continuation in the Absalom tale, see F. H. Polak, "David's Kingship—A Precarious Equilibrium," in H. Graf Reventlow & Y. Hoffman, eds., *Politics and Theopolitics in the Bible and Postbiblical Literature*, *JSOT Supp.* 171 (Sheffield, 1994), 119–47, esp. 128–38, 142–43.

> וישלח אהוד את יד שמאלו ויקח את חרבו מעל ירך ימינו ויתקעה בבטנו
>
> Then Ehud stretched *his left hand* and taking his sword from his *right thigh* thrust it into his *belly.*

By the same token, in the Exodus tale the joint occurrence of "well," "Nile," and "sea," of "staff," "tree," and "date palm" is not a matter of chance, but of literary structure: a variety of words from two semantic fields is used to create a common substratum, expressing a particular idea.

3. *Water from the Rock at Massah-and-Meribah (17:1–7)*

Water and wood appear again in the tale of the lack of water at Massah-and-Meribah (17:1–7). Once more the people suffer thirst in the desert, but now they demand explicitly: תנו לנו מים ונשתה ("Give us water and let us drink," v. 2).[21] This demand signals a remarkable radicalization vis-à-vis the rather tame question מה נשתה of the Marah tale (15:22).[22] In Moses' view, the new challenge bears the marks of a conflict situation: מה תריבון עמדי מה תנסון את ה׳, “Why are you contending with me, why are you testing YHWH!” The conflict escalates rapidly with the new complaint addressed to God as well as to Moses (17:3): למה זה העליתנו ממצרים להמית אתי ואת בני ואת מקני בצמא, “Why have you led us out of Egypt to kill me and my sons and my cattle from thirst!” The steady aggravation of the menace appears characteristic of the narrative. Moses testifies before God: עוד מעט וסקלני (“they almost stoned me,” v. 4). Over against the mutiny the narrative places a divine instruction to Moses: he must take up the staff by which he had performed “signs” in Egypt, in order to strike the rock, and thereby give water to the people (vv. 5–6). The explicit reference to the “signs in Egypt” is to set off the fears of a fatal outcome of the Exodus. By doing as he was told, Moses assuages the passions.

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[20] Ehud's sword also has two פיות (denoting "edges," but still carrying the connotation of "mouth" and thereby "speaking"; v. 16), which is significantly connected to his declaration that he is to have a word with the king (דבר סתר לי אליך המלך, v.19), in order to proclaim "the word of God" (דבר אלהים לי אליך, v. 20). The assassination at the hand of Ehud, by means of a חרב פיות, was an act of God indeed; on these and similar features of the tale, see E. M. Good, *Irony in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, 1965), 33–34; Y. Amit, "The Story of Ehud (Judges 3:12–30): The Form and the Message," in J. Cheryl Exum, ed., *Signs and Wonders* SBL Semeia Studies (Atlanta, 1989), 97–123. Polak (*Narrative,* 333–35) refers to the phrase חרב פיות, linking together the fields of "speaking," "human body" and "death" in Prov. 5:3–5 (cf. רגליה).

[21] Samaritan Pentateuch: תנה (in many Hebrew Manuscripts as well), also reflected in the LXX, the Peshitta and the Vulgate.

[22] Naḥmanides, in his commentary on 17:2, suggests a distinction between the open conflict (וירב) of this verse and the complaints (וילנו) of 15:24. The forensic overtones (cf. Josh. 9:18–20; Num. 20:3; Ps. 78:17) are discussed by G. W. Coats, *Rebellion in the Wilderness* (Nashville-New York, 1968), 36–43.

However, the real climax is not reached before the conclusion of the tale; the people have put God to the test by asking היש ה׳ בקרבנו אם אין (“Is YHWH among us or is He not,” v. 7).[23] This formulation carries the crisis to a peak. Thus, the present tale seems far more poignant than the Marah episode, in which the despair was, after all, quite comprehensible.[24]

Nevertheless, the latter episode and the story of Massah-and-Meribah have more in common than just the elements “water” and “wood.” (1) Both tales close with an utterance which explains the real meaning of the incident. In the Marah episode this is the proclamation of the divine healer; in the present scene it is the human question regarding the presence of God. (2) From a structural point of view the human complaint, “why have you led us out of Egypt” (17:3), is the exact antithesis of the divine promise, “all the disease which I imposed in Egypt I will not impose on you” (15:26). The Israelite accusation, “to let me and my sons and my cattle die from thirst” (17:3), contrasts with both this promise and the divine proclamation at Marah, “for I, YHWH, your healer” (15:26). Moses’ rebuke, “Why are you contending with me” (17:2; מה תריבון עמדי), echoes the narrator’s statement, שם שם לו חק ומשפט (15:25b), with √ריב and √שפט sharing a lexical association. (3) The second colon of this reproach (מה תנסון את ה׳) is the counterpart of the narrator’s observation, “and there he put him to the test” (ושם נסהו, 15:25b). At Massah-and-Meribah, then, the populace was bold enough to try the divine sovereign who had tested the people at Marah.

Accordingly, the opposition between these stories is systemic. Against the themes of covenant and salvation, embodied by the Marah tale, the scene at Massah-and-Meribah highlights the conflict. Consequently, these narratives are linked together by strong intertextual connections, involving idea content as well as plot structure (analogy, contrast, and theme) and wording.[25]

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[23] The analysis of 17:2b, 7b as deuteronomistic expansions (e.g., Schart, *Konflikt*, 169; similarly E. Blum, *Pentateuch*, 149) disregards the function of these passages. According to Holzinger (*Exodus*, 55) source analysis of vv. 1b–7 is impossible, in particular since the similarity to Numbers 11 suggests complicated redactorial intrusion; for analysis of this pericope as a complicated amalgam of J (מריבה) and E (מסה) see Baentsch, *Exodus*, 159–60; Noth, *Exodus*, 141; Childs (*Exodus*, 313) is uncertain about the analysis but suggests J, since the only certain E feature, the staff, seems secondary.

[24] See Childs, *Exodus*, 284. In Abarbanel’s opinion (on 15:24), the gravity of the complaints at Massah-and-Meribah follows from the fact that, at the beginning of their stay, they still had some water from the previous well. Abarbanel duly notes the aggravation structure of 17:1–8, for which see also Jacob, *Exodus*, 476; Y. Zakovitch, *“And You Shall Tell Your Son . . .”: The Concept of Exodus in the Bible* (Jerusalem, 1991), 119–20.

Besides, the Massah narrative also points to the coming pericopes: as Moses procures water from the rock by hitting it with his staff, YHWH stands before him "there upon the rock in Horeb" (17:6).[26] This anticipation of the Covenant at Mount Sinai is another indication of narrative cohesion since it also alludes to the "law and justice" "imposed" at Marah (15:26).[27]

4. *The Manna Tale (Exodus 16)*

The basic theme of the narratives of Marah and Massah-and-Meribah also appears in the account of the manna (Exodus 16), which deals with solid food, and may thus be regarded as complementing the narratives about lack of water. These tales are concerned with divine fulfillment of the need for subsistence and are held together by the root √נסי.[28] The manna tale also contains some allusions to the themes of the surrounding narratives. The idea of "water" is presupposed in the promise הנני ממטיר לכם לחם (16:4); manna is described as a layer of dew (טל), thin as the "hoar-frost" (דק ככפור, vv. 13–14), all in the semantic field of water.[29] On the other hand, significant differences exist. In the manna tale the need for concrete food is met once and for all by the gift of miraculous food, whereas the lack of water keeps recurring. By the same token, unlike water, which may turn out to be brackish (15:23), manna is always sweet (16:31) and never spoils (16:24). Hence the manna tale may be viewed as a reader's reaction to the stories about thirst and testing. Envisaging, as it does, a permanent fulfillment of Israel's needs, it is a perfect response to their complaints.

This is not to deny the traditional character of the motifs of the manna narrative. However, the present formulation of the tale contains signs that the ancient motifs have been taken up by somebody reflecting on the Marah tale and the themes implied. The motif of the manna provided him with the perfect answer to the problems with which he was coping. In its present form, then, the manna tale seems to embody a reader's response to the tensions involved by the hardship theme in general, and the Marah narrative in particular.[30]

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[25] On intertextuality in biblical literature in general, see S. Draisma, ed., *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings: Essays in Honor of Bas van Iersel* (Kampen, 1989); G. Aichele & G. A. Phillips, eds., *Intertextuality in the Bible*, *Semeia* 69/70 (Atlanta, 1995). The present writer views intertextuality broadly as a network of relations which position the text in dialogue with the literary and cultural tradition to which it belongs; see, e.g., T. Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle* (Minneapolis, 1984), 60–74. Allusions are no more than the hallmark of this dialogue. "Composite texts" constitute an inner dialogue within the boundaries of an infinitely complicated tradition. Thus, intertextuality is the mode of being of the biblical writings through the ages, including midrashic exegesis and textual transmission.

[26] Naḥmanides regards this remark as an indication of the miracle: from now on the people will never be in need of water. Abarbanel envisions two possibilities: the reference to Mt. Sinai could encourage Moses not to fear the people; alternatively, the location of the miracle, near Mt. Sinai, could clarify the symbolism of the miraculous water, standing for the Torah. For a temporal—that is, metaphorical—explanation of this verse, see Jacob, *Exodus,* 478.

[27] The integration of the Exodus narrative by a sustained interflow of flashback and foreshadowing has been discussed by G. Fischer, "Exodus 1–15. Eine Erzählung," in Vervenne, ed., *The Book of Exodus*, 149–78.

[28] C. Houtman, *Exodus* (Kampen, 1996), 2.299–300. Zakovitch (*Exodus Concept*, 109–11) finds a *crescendo* in a triad of tests by thirst, hunger, and lack of water. However, this dynamic is not expressed in the wording of the text itself. This argument also holds against the view of J. Durham, *Exodus*, *WBC* (Waco Texas, 1987), 212.

[29] Reverberations of the elements "wood," "mountain" are not found.

These considerations also apply to the problematic explanation of the purpose of the giving of the manna (v. 4): למען אנסנו הילך בתורתי אם לא, "that I may test whether they will follow my law or not." Formally this explanation pertains to the Sabbath regulations (16:23–30), but it is actually concerned with the general question of the obedience to God's *Torah* (הילך בתורתי). The problem is that this declaration is uttered in the first divine response to Moses (16:4–6), whereas the command regarding the Sabbath, to which it apparently refers (v. 5), is not enunciated in full before Moses' fourth address to the people (v. 23), after the giving of the manna.[31] For this reason the declaration in question is customarily ascribed to redaction. This analysis, however, fails to clarify the function of this "testing" in the present tale. On the other hand, this motif relates to the theme of the "test" in the Marah tale, which had not been developed in its context (15:25b), but is now explained more fully.[32] Moreover, both these declarations link the idea of "testing" to the notions of חק ומשפט (15:25b) or the divine *Torah* (16:4).[33] In short, the divine declaration of 16:4 is an additional element of the audience response to the Marah narrative.

The manna tale, then, belongs to the same intertextual domain as the surrounding narratives and constitutes a further development of their themes, but its relationship to their basic components—water, wood and mountain—is less substantial. The same distinction holds true of the narrative about the quail, for there the popular complaint is concerned with "meat" (Num. 11:4, 13, 18; 21–22) and the whole spectrum of food (vv. 5–6).[34]

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[30] On audience response and reception criticism, see H. R. Jauss, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," *New Literary History* 2 (1970), 7–37. On the multifaceted applications of these principles in inner-biblical, post-biblical, and midrashic exegesis see S. E. Loewenstamm, *The Evolution of the Exodus Tradition* (Jerusalem, 1992), 18–22, 71–171; D. Boyarin, "Old Wine in New Bottles: Intertextuality and Midrash," *Poetics Today* 8 (1987), 539–56; J. L. Kugel, *In Potiphar's House* (New York, 1990), 247–53; F. H. Polak, "The Restful Waters of Noah," *JANES* 23 (1995), 69–74, esp. 71–72.

[31] For source criticism see, e.g., Holzinger, *Exodus*, 54; Baentsch, *Exodus*, 147; Noth, *Exodus*, 131. On redaction criticism see Blum, *Pentateuch*, 147–48; Schart, *Konflikt*, 131.

[32] For the suggestion that the manna forms the trial in Exod. 16:4; Deut. 8:2–3, see J. Licht, *Testing in the Hebrew Scriptures and in Post-Biblical Judaism* (Jerusalem, 1973), 14–15 [in Hebrew]; M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford, 1985), 327–28. But Childs (*Exodus*, 286) argues that this answer does not suit the praise lavished on it in Exod. 16:31, and proposes that the "testing" originally constituted the response to the question regarding the justification of the hardship in general. This view fits the tenor of Deut. 8:2–7 (see below). On the themes of hardship and theodicy see also Loewenstamm, "The Death of Moses," *From Babylon to Canaan*, 136–66, esp. 140.

[33] The suggestion that 16:4b embodies a Dtr. expansion, correlative with the alleged Dtr. addition in 15:25–26, has been proposed by E. Ruprecht, "Stellung und Bedeutung der Erzählung vom Mannawunder," *ZAW* 86 (1974), 269–307, esp. 298–99. One wonders, however, if one may assume that the supposed redactor would use the manna narrative in order to comment on his own revision of the Marah tale.

[34] In Numbers 11 the theme "water" is represented by the "sea" (שליו מהים, Num. 11:31) and the mention of the "fishes" (vv. 5, 22). As a possible reverberation of the Marah tale one might quote v. 31 כדרך יום כה וכדרך יום כה (cf. Exod. 15:22). Like Exodus 16 the narrative of Numbers does not offer obvious references to the elements "wood" or "mountain."

5. *Victory in the Hill Country of Rephidim (17:8–16)*

The tale of Massah-and-Meribah has its sequel in the account of the victory over Amalek, which relates how Moses stands on a hill and holds the “staff of God” in his hands (v. 9), while his arms are supported by Hur and Aaron. Like the preceding story, this tale also closes with a clue to its meaning (v. 16): מלחמה לה׳ בעמלק מדר דר, “YHWH is at war with Amalek for eternity.”[35] Once again, the staff is a most conspicuous feature (cf. 17:6; 15:24). The picture of Moses holding his arms aloft echoes the way he lifted his hand near the Sea of Reeds,[36] as well as the motif of casting wood into the spring of Marah. Hence, a strong connection exists between the Rephidim tale and the narratives of 15:22–27; 17:1–7.[37] A particularly important element is present in Moses’ announcement to Joshua (17:9): אנכי נצב על ראש הגבעה “I shall be standing on the top of the hill.” This statement is correlative with the divine announcement to Moses at Massah-and-Meribah (17:6; √נצב is lexically associated with √עמד):[38] הנני עמד לפניך שם על הצור בחרב, “Here, I shall be standing before you, there, on the rock at Horeb.” In fact, in the present tale the hill takes the place of the water of the previous episodes. Structurally, this datum is of the utmost importance: step by step, the narrator leads us on to the revelation at Mount Sinai.

6. *The Desert Tales—Structure and Meaning*

Accordingly, the tales of Marah, Massah-and-Meribah, and Rephidim (15:22–27; 17:1–16) are linked by extremely strong interconnections on all levels, including plot and wording. Since these links relate to all aspects of narrative structure, one can hardly maintain that we are dealing with three originally independent tales that have been secondarily united by later redaction. On the contrary, they seem to belong to one integrated, cohesive narrative sequence. In source criticism it would be possible to attribute such a sequence to a single author or stratum. This inference, however, hardly suits the intertextual patterns proposed in the present analysis.

Hence it seems preferable to speak of a *cohesive sequence*, referring to a consecutive series (or an almost consecutive series) of narratives integrated into a unified text by a large number of connections on the level of plot and wording. If these connections are patterned, as they are in the tales considered presently, such a cohesive sequence is to be viewed in an intertextual framework (conclusions with regard to authorship require more specific grounds).

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[35] This writer proposes to analyze מדר דר as the phrase דר דר (“for all eternity,” cf. Exod. 3:15), with the preceding *mem* as enclitic to בעמלק.

[36] As against the view that this gesture signifies supplication, as suggested by J. van Seters, *The Life of Moses* (Kampen, 1994), 204–6, one notes that Israel suffered *defeat* when Moses let his arm down (v. 11). This datum is not suitable to prayer, but favors a magical action, securing divine salvation. On the magical character of Moses’ staff, see Polak, “Theophany and Mediator,” 124, n. 32–33; 129, n. 43.

[37] In source analysis 17:1–8 is mostly attributed to E (Holzinger, *Exodus*, 55; Baentsch, *Exodus*, 161–62), even though Childs (*Exodus*, 321) detects signs of J influence.

[38] For the lexical association נצב–עמד see Y. Avishur, *Stylistic Studies in Word-Pairs in Biblical and Ancient Semitic Literatures*, *AOAT* 210 (Neukirchen-Vluyn-Kevelaer, 1984), 148, on Isa. 22:19; 28:8; Hab. 2:1; 1 Sam. 19:20.

The tales of Marah, Massah-and-Meribah, and Rephidim, then, constitute such a cohesive sequence.[39] Moreover, the way in which the connections among these narratives are ordered, suggests that this sequence forms a structural transition.[40] As we saw above, the opening scene at Marah links up with the account of the miraculous passage through the Sea of Reeds. In the concluding part of this sequence the motif-words צור (17:6) and גבעה (17:9) form a connection with the account of the Sinai Theophany. The narrative thus leads from the Sea of Reeds to Mount Sinai, from slavery to covenant. The transition is clarified by the following table:

element	14:16, 21	15:23–25	17:6	17:9–11	19:3
water	ים	מים	מים	—	—
wood	מטה	עץ	מטה	מטה	—
lifting	הרם	וישלך	—	עלו, ירים	עלה
stone/mountain	—	—	חֹרב, צור	גבעה	ההר

This transition is also indicated by other elements. The Marah tale contains allusions to the Egyptian plagues (15:26) as well as foreshadowings of the covenant (15:25). In the episode of Massah-and-Meribah the populace refers to the Exodus from Egypt, whereas the divine instructions to Moses point to the first plague (17:5), on the one hand, and the mountain of Horeb, on the other.

According to the widely accepted source-critical analysis, which separates the covenant pericope from the Exodus tale,[41] this structure could only belong to the latest stages of the redaction. From a structural point of view, however, the situation is quite different. The macro-structure of the Book of Exodus contrasts the slavery in Egypt with Israel's Covenant with God.[42] If, in Egypt, the Israelites were the forced laborers of Pharaoh, at Sinai they became the servants of God. These are the fundamental poles of the Exodus tale through the generations, as witnessed by, e.g., the Song of the Sea, which depicts the drowning of Pharaoh's army (Exod. 15:1, 4–5, 10) and extols God's kingship in Israel (vv. 1–2, 6–7, 11, 18).[43] On the level of the microtext, this polar opposition is expressed by some programmatic utterances, e.g., the threat to Pharaoh (4:22–23):

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[39] As shown above, the manna tale does not belong to this cohesive sequence. Johnstone views this sequence as the work of a P editor, using D materials, who transferred narratives from the segments following the conclusion of the covenant to the transition from the Reed Sea to Mount Sinai: "From the Sea to the Mountain—Exodus 15,22–19,2: A Case Study in Editorial Techniques," in M. Vervenne, ed., *The Book of Exodus*, 245–63. His main argument is that this sequence is not reflected by the Deuteronomic account in Deuteronomy 9–10; Massah is mentioned Deut. 9:22, between Taberah and Kibroth-hataavah (pp. 247–49). These problems, however, seem related to inner-biblical interpretation, as shown below; Johnstone does not take into account such texts as Ps. 78:14–16; 81:7–8 (see n. 45 below). His valuable remark on "further redactorial assimilation of incidents" (p. 249 on Num. 20:10) points to intertextuality in the sense of n. 25 above.

[40] Cohn (*Sacred Space*, 7–23) discusses the notion of transition in the light of Victor Turner's theory of pilgrimage.

[41] C. Steuernagel, *Lehrbuch der Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Tübingen, 1912), 149; H. Gressmann, *Mose und seine Zeit*, *FRLANT* 18 (Göttingen, 1913), 121, 124, 142–45; G. von Rad, "The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch," in idem, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (Edinburgh, 1966), 1–78, esp. 13–15; and of late Johnstone, "From the Sea to the Mountain"; opposed by, e.g., Schart, *Konflikt*, 179; Lohfink, *Hauptgebot*, 109 (n. 4), 159. An important discussion of the concentric structure of the desert narratives around the Sinai pericope is offered by Schart, *Konflikt*, 49–50, 54, 234–36.

[42] This opposition has been implicitly recognized by J. P. Fokkelman, "Exodus," in R. Alter & F. Kermode, eds., *The Literary Guide to the Old Testament* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987), 56–65, esp. 63. Far more explicit comments are offered (independently) by E. L. Greenstein in his annotations to the Book of Exodus, in W. A. Meeks, ed., *The HarperCollins Study Bible* (San Francisco, 1993), 86. Greenstein refers to Lev. 25:42, 55; one should add that "redemption" (עם זו גאלת, Exod. 15:13) does not mean "liberation" as such, but the return of the "enslaved" person to his/her family. Thus it implies a close relationship between the redeemer and the liberated persons.

> בני בכרי ישראל ואמר אליך שלח את עמי ויעבדני ותמאן לשלחו הנה אנכי הרג את בנך בכרך
>
> Israel is *my son, my first-born*, and I say to you: let my son go that he may serve Me, and if *you refuse* to let him go, see, I will kill *your son*, *your first-born.*

This verse places Israel's God and his first-born over against Pharaoh and his eldest son and thus concretizes the basic polarity. Moreover, the transition is implied by the three-day journey in the desert which, in Moses' first demands from Pharaoh, separates the worship of God from Egyptian slavery (5:1, 3):

> שלח את עמי ויחגו לי במדבר . . . אלהי העברים נקרא עלינו; נלכה דרך שלשת ימים במדבר ונזבחה לה׳
>
> Let my people go that they may hold a feast for Me in the desert. . . . The God of the Hebrews has appeared to us. Let us make a three-day journey in the desert and bring an offering to YHWH.

True, this demand does not mention the covenant theme, and therefore cannot count as a formal announcement of the ceremonies at Mount Sinai. Yet, this does not justify the denial of any connection between the offering after the three-day journey and the wanderings in the desert.[44] Some kind of contact between the newly liberated people and their God is only to be expected. Though unplanned, the incident at Marah, coming after three days of wandering, fulfills exactly this role, and could therefore hint at an older version of the tale, in which an intermediate episode, like that at Marah, served as a foreshadowing of the conclusion of the covenant. This suggestion would fit the formula of 15:25b–26.

Thus, the transition from Egypt to Sinai is a fundamental element of the Exodus tradition, which comes to the fore on the levels of micro- and macro-structure. Both the water-mountain theme, and the transition pattern of chapters 15–17 are the projection of this basic structure. The essential point of this transition structure is that the three-month journey from the Sea of Reeds to the mountain of God relates not only to space and time, but also to Israel's attitude. After the deliverance from Egypt, the people must adapt to the new order, a process indicated by the episodes at Marah, Massah-and-Meribah, and Rephidim. These tales show that divine guidance is not limited to the deliverance from Egypt, but pertains to all spheres of life. In the beginning this insight is problematic because of the hardships of desert life. This crisis climaxes in the scene at Massah-and-Meribah, but the Rephidim tale forms a turning point. Moses' leadership is not questioned. While Israelite despair prevails in the scene at the Sea of Reeds (14:10–12), the Amalekite attack is met quietly (17:8–9). This indicates a new confidence, by virtue of which the people are now ready for the covenant proposal. The journey from the Sea of Reeds to Sinai, then, constitutes a metamorphosis.

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[43] In the Song of the Sea, then, one detects the poles of the transition as seen by Cohn, *Sacred Space*, 13; moreover, the reference to the sacred mountain in Canaan turns Mt. Zion (or the entire Land of Canaan) into a variant representative of Mt. Sinai (i.e., as an allomorph), and thus corroborates Cohn's argument, ibid., 41, 57.

[44] Against Blum, *Pentateuch,* 144, n. 180.

This process, however, is not unproblematic. As Moses meets his father-in-law, he recounts the deliverance from Egypt and the travail suffered during their wanderings in the desert (18:8). The way in which this "travail" (התלאות) is highlighted, is a welcome complement to and correction of von Rad's suggestion that the tradition of Israel's wanderings harbors two conflicting attitudes toward this period: the idealization of the harmonic relation between God and Israel (as in Jer. 2:2), as against the emphasis on the rebellious "murmuring" of the people (e.g., Numbers 11).[45] In Moses' account the "travail" is real and as such cannot be construed in terms of harmonic relationship and conflict alone. The tensions embodied by the desert tales seem far deeper and far more intense.

Indeed, the popular complaints relate to divine guidance. As we saw above, the Massah-and-Meribah tale presents us with a principal argument (17:3): "Why have you led us out of Egypt to kill me and my sons and my cattle from thirst!" The conclusion even mentions doubts concerning the divine presence (v. 7): "Is YHWH among us or is He not?" This argument is more than a mere complaint: it questions the meaning of the perilous hardships and thereby also the justification of God's actions. Thus the narrative expressly raises the problem of theodicy.

This issue is the more severe, as the desert period is inherently connected with the covenant idea. The link is demonstrated by the divine preamble to the Sinai covenant (Exod. 19:4):

> אתם ראיתם אשר עשיתי למצרים ואשא אתכם על כנפי נשרים ואביא אתכם אלי
>
> You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles wings and brought you unto Myself.

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[45] G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (Edinburgh-London, 1962), 1.281–85, 287–89. Boyarin ("Ambiguity," 31–34) uses von Rad's ideas in his analysis of the response to these themes in rabbinical Midrash literature; see also D. Boyarin, "Voices in the Text: Midrash and the Inner Tension of Biblical Narrative," *RB* 93 (1986), 581–97. In a thorough radicalization of von Rad's analysis, Coats (*Rebellion* 13–15, 156, 250–51) regards the murmuring motif as a secondary intrusion, connected with the Judean polemic against Jeroboam's calf-worship. However, the murmuring theme, as well as the motif of "testing God," is found in some ancient poetic accounts of the desert period, e.g., Ps. 81:8,12–13, 17; 95:7–9, on which see Loewenstamm, "The Investiture of Levi," *From Babylon to Canaan,* 55–65 (esp. 56–59); idem, "The Death of Moses," ibid., 136–66 (esp. 137–45); idem, "Ps 81—A Decree upon Joseph," *Exodus Tradition*, 44–52. Since these ancient texts find Israel's central sin in the "murmuring" against the hardships of the desert, this theme seems prior to the motif of the Golden Calf. G. E. Mendenhall detects the background of the "murmuring" theme in the rebellious "evil words" of the Hittite covenant form: "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," in E. F. Campbell & D. N. Freedman, eds., *The Biblical Archeologist Reader 3* (Garden City, 1970), 25–53, esp. 40.

In this characterization the divine deliverance of Israel serves as the motivation for the covenant proposal.[46] Thus the representation of the desert wanderings pertains to the roots of the covenant idea.

However, this matter is placed in the appropriate perspective. The central problem, the skepticism as to the divine presence (17:7), is enunciated only after Moses had already produced water from the rock, while the deity was standing before him on the mountain (v. 6). Hence the people's distrust is at the outset emptied of all significance: it is no more than meaningless, rebellious "murmuring." Moreover, the reference to "your staff with which you smote the Nile" (v. 5), forms a counterweight to the doubts expressed concerning the purpose of the Exodus. In other words, these questions have already been answered.

This principle is even more obvious in view of the Marah episode, for this tale offers the general answer, not only to the lack of water, but to all questions: "all the disease which I imposed in Egypt I will not impose on you, for I, YHWH, your healer" (15:26). We have already seen how this proclamation contrasts with the popular complaint, "to let me and my sons and my cattle die from thirst" (17:3). Once again the complaint had already been answered. Thus, the Marah tale responds to and neutralizes the near-mutiny at Massah-and-Meribah. The idea of the permanent availability of divine assistance and succor, illustrated once more in the Rephidim tale, might even be suggested by the very presence of the element "water": it was by splitting the Sea of Reeds that God saved his people from the Egyptians. Seen from this vantage point, the problems of thirst and lack of water already imply divine salvation. In this sense the Exodus narrative constitutes a theodicy.

But the narrator does not minimize the problem. On the contrary, by allowing the people to express their doubts, he highlights hardship and travail. Thereby, however, he is able to emphasize the all-embracing dimensions of God's guidance. Moses is fully justified in proclaiming to Jethro: "all the travail which befell them in their journey, and YHWH saved them" (18:8). Thus the prophet clears the way for the divine declaration in the covenant proposal: "you have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you unto Myself" (19:6). In sum, the transition structure which has led us from the Sea of Reeds to Mount Sinai is designed to serve theodicy and the covenant idea.

A variety of commentaries, reverberations, and retrospections underscore the importance of these issues. The rhetorical homily of Deuteronomy 8, the general tendency of which is to praise divine providence,[47] speaks of the "great and dreadful wilderness" and mentions "serpents, fiery serpents, and scorpions, and thirsty ground without water" (Deut. 8:15). These dangers, however, in no way constituted a threat for Israel's existence, for "as a father disciplines his son, so the Lord thy God disciplines you" (v. 5).[48] Hence this theodicy does not evade the problem of the hardship, but turns it into a test (v. 2), by virtue of which Israel is to be worthy of the land God is giving it (vv. 7–10).[49]

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[46] So explicitly *Mek. R. Ishmael, Yitro: Baḥodeš* 5 on 20:2 (ed. Rabin-Horovitz). Thus the Tannaitic Midrash actually anticipates Mendenhall's analysis of the function of the "historical prologue" in the covenant formulary; Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms," 32–34, 39; W. Beyerlin, *Origins and History of the Oldest Sinai Traditions* (Oxford, 1965), 67–77. This point has not been sufficiently taken into account by McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 243–48.

[47] For the view that Deuteronomy 8 represents the revision stratum of the introduction to Deuteronomy, see N. Lohfink, *Hauptgebot*, 196. See also F. Lopez Garcia, "Analyse litteraire de Deuteronome V–XI," *RB* 84 (1977), 481–522; *RB* 85 (1978), 5–49; M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, *AB* (Garden City, 1990), 397.

The hardship of desert life is played down, or even disregarded in other historical reviews. Psalm 78 opens the description of the Exodus by referring to the divine guidance of Israel through cloud and a lightning fire (v. 14) in order to continue immediately with the episode of the water from the rock (vv. 15–16). The point is obvious: there was absolutely no lack of water! The Israelite complaints, thus, are nothing but mutiny (vv. 17–20, 22, 32, 40).

The great prophet of the return from the exile, on the other hand, acknowledges the existence of the problem, but emphasizes its immediate solution (Isa. 41:17a):[50]

> העניים והאביונים מבקשים מים ואין/ לשונם בצמא נשתה
>
> The poor and the needy seek water and there is none/ their tongue fails for thirst.

In contrast (vv. 17b–18):

> אני ה׳ אענם, אלהי ישראל, לא אעזבם/ אפתח על שפיים נהרות, ובתוך בקעות מעינות
>
> I, YHWH, will answer them, the God of Israel, I will not forsake them/ I will open rivers on bare hills and in the midst of valleys, fountains.

Similar insights are found in rabbinic literature, e.g., the *Mekhilta*. For instance, the clause "they did not find water" (Exod. 15:22) elicits the following comment: "Rabbi Eliezer says: 'Wasn't the water to be found under the feet of the Israelites, and doesn't the land float on the water?'"[51] In other words, they always had water! Thus, the response to the Exodus tradition in inner-Biblical and postbiblical exegesis testifies in its own way to the severity of the problems raised by the narratives of Marah and Massah-and-Meribah.

7. *Schematic Landscape and General Symbolism*

The opposition of mountain and sea, which underlies the transition from the Sea of Reeds to Mount Sinai keeps recurring in the Exodus tradition. The Song of the Sea, which glorifies Israel's march through the Reed Sea, also extols the settlement in Canaan, as the Israelites were "planted in the mountain of Thine inheritance"

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[48] As a typical "wisdom" theme, this idea is appropriate to Deuteronomy; see M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford, 1972), 298–306; J. W. McKay, "Man's Love for God in Deuteronomy and the Father/Teacher-Son/Pupil Relationship," *VT* 22 (1972), 426–35, esp. 427–32, and 427–28, n. 2.

[49] See n. 32 above, as well as Lohfink, "Arzt," 138–40.

[50] See B. W. Anderson, "Exodus Typology in Second Isaiah," in B. W. Anderson & W. Harrelson, eds., *Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honour of J. Muilenburg* (London, 1962), 177–95.

[51] *Mek. R. Ishmael, Bešallaḥ: Wayyissa*ᶜ 1 (ed. Rabin-Horovitz). See Boyarin, "Ambiguity," 31–34; idem, "Voices," 584–92. See also *Mek. R. Ishmael,Yitro: Amalek* 1 on Exod. 18:9.

(ותטעמו בהר נחלתך, Exod. 15:17).[52] The preceding verse presents the Canaanites as petrified with terror, "struck dumb like a stone" (נדמו כאבן, v. 16). In view of this association of stone and mountain, which represent one and the same material,[53] one also notes Pharaoh's armies sinking "like a *stone*" (v. 5):[54] תהמת יכסימו ירדו במצולת כמו אבן, "*Abysses* cover them/ they went down into the *deeps* like a *stone.*"

The pattern returns in the historical recapitulation of Psalm 78 (vv. 15–16):[55]

> יבקע צורים במדבר וישק כתהמות רבה / ויוצא נזלים מסלע ויורד כנהרות מים
>
> He cleaved *rocks* in the wilderness and gave them drink abundantly as out of the great *abyss*. He brought *streams* out of the *rock* and made *waters* run down like *rivers*.

The psalmist continues to contrast the drowning of the Egyptians with the settlement of the Israelites in Canaan (vv. 53–54):

> וינחם לבטח ולא פחדו ואת איביהם כסה הים
> ויביאם אל גבול קדשו הר זה קנתה ימינו
>
> And he led them safely and they feared not but the *sea* covered their enemies / and He brought them to his holy domain, the *mountain* which his right hand had created.

We can even go further. This water-mountain symbolism is a particular application of a general thought pattern which, as stated at the outset of this study, forms a schematic landscape, illustrated by many examples from the Hebrew Bible and ancient Near Eastern sources, e.g., Egyptian creation narratives,[56] neo-Assyrian reliefs,[57] and Mesopotamian poetry. The poet celebrates Marduk as:[58] *bēl nagbī, šadī u tâmāti, ḫāʾiṭu ḫuršāni*, "the Lord of the *spring wells*, the *hills* and the *seas*, overseeing the *mountains*." The Hymn to Shamash praises the sun god as passing over *mīl tâmti, ḫuršāni, erṣeta, šamāʾi* (the flood of the *sea*, the *mountains,* earth and heaven).[59] A bilingual incantation praises the sun-god as emerging from the mountains:[60]

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[52] Thus the Song of the Sea is also integrated in the discourse of chapters 15–17. An important detail is the lexical association between רום (הרם, 14:16) and גאה//רמה (15:1), for which see Avishur, *Pairs*, 700 (cf. Isa. 2:12; Jer. 48:29; Job 40:10). The general scheme also stands out in the reverberations of the scene at Massah-and-Meribah (Deut. 32:13; Isa. 48:21; Ps. 78:20; 105:41; 114:8), and in the recasting of the Exodus narrative, Neh. 9:11–13.

[53] Cennini instructs the aspiring painter: "If you wish to acquire a good manner of depicting mountains, and make them look natural, get some large stones, which should be rough and not cleaned, and portray them from nature"; quoted according to Max J. Friedländer, *On Art and Connoisseurship* (repr. Boston, 1960), 114. Friedländer's entire discussion (pp. 113–15) is an excellent illustration of the proposed schematic landscape.

[54] A pictorial parallel to the drowning of the Egyptian chariots in the Reed Sea has been detected by L. B. Couroyer, "L'Exode et le bataille de Qadesh," *RB* 97 (1991), 321–58.

[55] For the theory that Psalm 78 contains an ancient alternate version of the Exodus tradition, see Loewenstamm, *Exodus Tradition,* 73–77. As for the tradition of the plagues, one cannot but justify Loewenstamm's position. On the other hand, the representation of the trial motif (vv. 18–19) is close to Exod. 17:7; thus it is difficult to decide whether this version reflects an older version of this motif or a combination of various different tales. On this issue see E. L. Greenstein "Mixing Memory and Design: Reading Psalm 78," *Prooftexts* 10 (1990), 197–218, esp. 205–7. Greenstein highlights the rhetorical function of the historical review in a synchronic reading of the psalm, but acknowledges the possibility that it reflects ancient traditions (pp. 201–2, 207, 213–14, n. 58, n. 67). On Psalm 114 see below.

[56] For the primeval hill arising out of the primeval water, see H. Kees, *Aegypten*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen, 1928), 1–2, with n. 6; W. Beyerlin, ed., *Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (London, 1978), 5; H. Bonnet, *Reallexikon der Aegyptischen Religionsgeschichte* (Berlin, 1952), 71, 864. For similar images in Avestan literature, see Mary Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism* (Manchester, 1984), 30–33 (Yast 5:3; 8:32; 14:21). See also O. Kaiser, *Die mythische Bedeutung des Meeres in Aegypten, Ugarit und Israel*, *BZAW* 78 (Berlin, 1962), 10–32, 36–49.

[57] See, e.g., the reliefs reproduced in H. Frankfort, *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient* (Harmondsworth, 1954), pls. 203, 205.

^{d}Utu kur-gal-ta um-ta-è-na-zu-šè
^{d}*šamaš ultu šadî rabî ina aṣêka*
kur-gal-kur-idim-ta um-ta-è-na-zu-šè
ištu šadî rabî šād nagbī ina aṣêka

Utu, as you emerge out of the *great mountain*, as you emerge out of the *great mountain*, the *mountain* of the *spring wells.*

In Ugaritic literature one notes the appellation of the daughter of the sun as *bt. ʿn. bt. ʾabn*, "daughter of the *spring-well,* daughter of the *stone*."[61] In the same vein, the Jacob narrative mentions "a big *stone* on the *well's* mouth" (Gen. 29:3). Another example is offered by David's curse (2 Sam. 1:21): הרי בגלבע—אל טל ואל מטר עליכם, "Mountains of Gilboa, there be no dew nor rain upon you."

The psalm celebrating the divine march from Teman and the mountain of Paran (Hab. 3:3) mentions the crumbling of hills and mountains (v. 6), as well as the divine war against rivers and sea (v. 8); and the tremor of mountains and the abyss as well as water spouting forth as the deity proceeds to battle (vv. 9–10). What makes this instance particularly relevant is its close relation to the themes of the Exodus: the mountain of Paran parallels Mount Sinai; the war against the sea is often alluded to in hymnic accounts of the crossing of the Sea of Reeds.[62] And again, mountain and sea buttress the promise of universal salvation in Isaiah's messianic prophecy (Isa. 11:9):

לא ירעו ולא ישחיתו בכל הר קדשי / כי מלאה הארץ דעה את ה׳ כמים לים מכסים

One shall not do evil nor destroy in all My holy *mountain* / for the earth will be full of the knowledge of YHWH like the *water* covering the *sea*.

This configuration also appears in the poetic allusion to the creation, when "the *waters* stood above the *mountains*" (על הרים יעמדו מים; Ps. 104:6). Lady Wisdom was created before anything else (Prov. 8:24–25):

באין תהמות חוללתי באין מעינות נבכי (MT: נכבדי) מים / בטרם הרים הטבעו לפני גבעות חוללתי

When there was no *deep*, I was brought forth, when there were no *wells, fountain-springs of water*, / Before the *mountains* were molded, before the *hills* I was brought forth.

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[58] W. R. Mayer, "Das Ritual BMS 12 mit dem Gebet Marduk 5," *Orientalia* 62 (1993), 313–37, esp. 316:28. See also W. von Soden, "Zur Wiederherstellung der Marduk-Gebete BMS 11 und 12," *Iraq* 31 (1969) 85:28.

[59] W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford, 1960), 126–27:29; for further examples see U. Rüterswörden, "Erwägungen zur Metaphorik des Wassers in Jes. 40ff," *SJOT* 1989/2, 1–22, esp. 12.

[60] R. Borger, "Das dritte 'Haus' des Serie Bīt Rimki (Vr. 50–51, Schollmeyer HGS, nr. 1)," *JCS* 21 (1967), 2–3; for additional passages see *CAD* N/1, 108–10.

[61] RS 24.244:1 (Pardee, *Textes para-mythologiques*, 195, 202).

[62] E.g., Ps. 77:15–21; 114:1–4; on these texts and their relation to the psalm of Habakkuk, see Loewenstamm, *Exodus Tradition*, 240–51, esp. 242, 249; J. Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea* (Cambridge, 1985), 104–9.

The coupling of water and mountain is based on their inherent opposition, the former element being liquid and deep, whereas the latter is as solid as it is high. Thus, according to the flood narrative, the water of the Deluge kept rising until "all the high *mountains* were covered" (Gen. 7:19; similarly v. 20; 8:4–5). By the same token, the prophetic promise that Israel will not suffer punishment anymore is buttressed both by allusions to the divine oath after the Flood, and by the eternity of the mountains (Isa 54:9–10).[63] The contrast between the unfathomable depth of the primeval water and the immense height of the divine mountain serves to glorify divine justice (Ps. 36:7):[64] **צדקתך כהררי אל משפטיך תהום רבה**, "Your justice is like godly *mountains*, Your judgments are like the immense *deep*." Mountain and water, then, are the classical poles of a schematic landscape,[65] which opposes "liquid" to "solid" and "low" to "high,"[66] and by which human perception is ordered.

Of course, "water" and "tree" also belong to a landscape scheme, as witnessed by the famous image **כעץ שתול על פלגי מים** ("like a tree planted by streams of water," Ps. 1:3; cf. Jer. 17:7–8; 31:12; Ezek. 17:5; Isa. 1:29–30; 44:14; Gen. 2:5–10). In particular one notes the divine promise accompanying the announcement of the Exodus from Babylon (Isa. 41:18–19):

> אשים מדבר לאגם מים וארץ ציה למוצאי מים / אתן במדבר ארז שטה והדס ועץ שמן / אשים בערבה ברוש תדהר ותאשור יחדיו
>
> I will turn the wilderness into a *water lake* and the dry land into *springs of water.* / I will plant in the wilderness the *cedar*, *the acacia tree, the myrtle and the olive tree;* / I will set the *juniper* in the desert, the *plane-tree* and the *larch* together.

On the other hand, "mountain" and "wood" also constitute a scheme. Trees grow on mountains (Ezek. 17:22–23; 36:8; Judg. 9:48–49; Neh. 8:15–16),[67] as illustrated abundantly by Akkadian and neo-Assyrian reliefs. The Ugaritic epic describes Baᶜlu's enemies fleeing to "the woods . . . the mountain-sides" (*CTA* 4 VII:35–37: *ᵓib. bᶜl.*

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[63] For an analysis of these contrasts see Polak, "Waters of Noah."

[64] In view of the reference to תהום רבה, the phrase הררי אל cannot be considered a mere superlative; cf. Isa. 14:13 (ממעל לכוכבי־אל). The idea of the divinity of the mountain, well known from Hittite mythology (see O. R. Gurney, *Some Aspects of Hittite Religion* [Oxford, 1977], 5, 19, 22), is also met in Ugaritic texts: *ᵓil ṣpn*, RS 24.245:2′ (rev.); see Pardee, *Textes para-mythologiques*, 119; J. Day, *Conflict*, 113.

[65] Additonal echoes of this pattern in poetry are found in the Blessings of Jacob (Gen. 49:25–26) and Moses (Deut. 33:13–15); Isa. 14:23–25; 25:10–11; 27:12–13; 30:25 (as well as vv. 19–20); 40:12; 49:10–11; Jer. 2:13, 18, 20–21; 31:4–5, 8–11; Mic. 7:12; Zeph. 3:10; Ps. 24:2–3; 42:7–8; Dan. 11:45. In prose narrative one notes, e.g., Gen. 12:8; 31:21; Num. 27:12–14; Deut. 3:27; 8:7–8; 27:4; 32:49–51; Judg. 7:3–5, 24–25. The Deuteronomic recasting of the Golden Calf tale has a *naḥal*, "stream," running down from the mountain, in which Moses cast the dust remaining from the calf (Deut. 9:21); see Ibn Ezra on Exod. 32:20.

[66] On the oppostion "dry"-"wet" in the creation and flood narratives, see M. Casalis, "The Dry and the Wet—A Semiological Analysis of Creation and Flood Myths," *Semiotica* 17 (1976), 35–76; see also J.-L. Ska, "Separation des eaux et de la terre ferme dans le recit sacerdotal," *NRT* 113 (1981), 512–32.

[67] For growing crops on hills, cf. Hos. 10:1–8; Jer. 31:4; Isa. 7:18–25; Balaam's first blessing expressly states that he sees Israel from the top of rock and hill (Num. 23:9), whereas the third one praises Israel's dwellings: כנחלים נטיו כגנות עלי נהר . . . כארזים עלי מים (24:6). Wood and stone occur together in the picture of Jotham stationing himself on the mountain in order to proclaim the fable of the trees (Judg. 9:7–13; note also the liquids wine and oil); Abimelech cuts wood on mount Zalmon (9:48).

tʾiḫd / yʿrm. šnʾu. hd. gpt / ǵr). In Biblical Hebrew poetic style, עץ and אבן are lexically associated,[68] e.g., in polemics against idolatry (Jer. 2:27; Hab. 2:19), or as building material (Hab. 2:11): כי אבן מקיר תזעק וכפיס מעץ יעננה, "For a *stone* shall cry out of the *wall* / and a *beam* out of the *timber-work* shall answer it." We also find this pair in association with water (Ezek. 26:12): ואבניך ועציך ועפרך בתוך מים ישימו, "and they will lay your *stones* and your *timber* and your dust in the midst of *water*." Thus, in many passages one recognizes the pattern defined by "water," "wood," and "mountain." In view of these instances, the pattern seems to mean more than a mere matrix or mind set; it is a schematic landscape, that both fills and builds the consciousness of story-teller and hearer.[69] In the Hebrew Bible, which was born in a country of rocky hills, sturdy trees, and stony wadis, this scheme is particularly important.[70]

The basic landscape is represented by David's preparations for battle (1 Sam. 17:40): ויקח מקלו בידו ויבחר לו חמשה חלקי אבנים מן הנחל, "So he took his *staff* in his hand, and chose him five *pebbles* from the *brook*." The psalm celebrating the springs in the mountains also alludes to the trees (Ps. 104:10, 12, cf. vv. 13–14):

> המשלח מעינים בנחלים בין הרים יהלכון . . . עליהם עוף השמים ישכון / מבין עפאים יתנו קול
>
> Who sends forth *springs* in the *wadis* running between the *mountains* . . . Beside them dwell the fowl of heaven / from among the *branches* they make their voice heard.

The same picture prevails in the prophet's ironic image of Sanherib's self-praise (2 Kgs. 19:23–24 // Isa. 37:24–25):

> ברב רכבי אני עליתי מרום הרים ירכתי לבנון / ואכרת קומת ארזיו מבחר ברשיו ואבוא מרום קצו יער כרמלו / אני קרתי ושתיתי מים זרים / ואחרב בכף פעמי כל יארי מצור
>
> With the multitude of my chariots I came up to the height of the *mountains*, / to the innermost parts of *Lebanon*, / And I cut down its tall *cedars* and its choice *junipers*, / And I entered into

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[68] In poetry cf. Isa. 60:17; Zech. 5:4; Qoh. 10:9 (מסיע אבנים // בוקע עצים); so also in elevated prose (2 Kgs. 19:18 = Isa. 37:19; Jer. 3:9; Ezek. 20:32; Deut. 4:28; 28:36, 64; 29:16; 2 Kgs. 18:1); in "technical" prose: 2 Sam. 5:11; 2 Kgs. 12:13; 22:6; 1 Chron. 22:15; 2 Chron. 9:10; 34:11; see also H. J. van Dijk, *Ezekiel's Prophecy on Tyre (Ez 26,1–28,19)*, *An. Bib.* 20 (Rome, 1968) 24; M. Dahood & T. Penar, "Ugaritic-Hebrew Parallel Pairs," in L. R. Fisher, ed., *Ras-Shamra Parallels I*, *An. Or.* 49 (Rome, 1972), 73–382, esp. 302; Avishur, *Pairs*, 593–94.

[69] Various general theories on thought patterns are conveniently reviewed by K. Haberlandt, *Cognitive Psycholgy*, 2nd ed. (Boston, 1997), 141–54. On the role of such patterns in the reading process, see V. Abbott, J. B. Black & E. E. Smith, "The Representation of Scripts in Memory," in L. K. Komatsu, ed., *Experimenting with the Mind* (Pacific Grove, Calif., 1994), 195–208; Haberlandt, *Cognitive Psychology*, 327–30. Among the many detailed studies mention must be made of T. A. van Dijk, "Story Comprehension: An Introduction," 1–21; and E. Guelich-U. M. Quanthoff, "Narrative Analysis," in T. A. van Dijk, ed., *Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (London, 1985), 2.169–97. Critical comments are presented by P. W. Thorndike-F. R. Yekowich, "A Critique of Scheme-based Theories of Human Story Memory," *Poetics* 9 (1980), 23–49; A. Garnham, "What Is Wrong with Story Grammars," *Cognition* 15 (1983), 145–54. Comments on the role of "mental matrices" in the transmission of biblical literature have been offered by Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 434–35. On the role of thought patterns in the ancient versions, see F. H. Polak, "The Rendering of כלה/כלה in the LXX—Ambiguity and Intuitive Comprehension," *Textus* 17 (1994), 57–77.

[70] From a literary point of view, this is a "chronotope" in the sense of M. M. Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel," in M. Holquist, ed., *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin* (Austin, 1981), 84–258.

> its remotest lodge, the *forest* of its fruitful field. / I have *dug cisterns* and drunk foreign *waters*, / and with the sole of my feet I have dried up all the *rivers* of Egypt.

The landscape pattern also underlies the prophetic images of salvation (Isa. 55:10–12):[71]

> כי כאשר ירד הגשם והשלג מן השמים ושמה לא ישוב . . . כי בשמחה תצאו ובשלום תובלון / ההרים והגבעות יפצחו לפניכם רנה / וכל עצי השדה ימחאו כף
>
> For as the *rain* comes down and the *snow* from heaven and will not return there . . . / For you shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace. / The *mountains* and the *hills* shall break forth before you into song,/ and all the *trees* of the field shall clap their hands.

The mythical implications are obvious in the Ugaritic hymn depicting Baᶜlu, as he is seated on his mountain like “the deep,” brandishing his lightning-bolt:[72]

> *bᶜl. yṯb. kṯbt. ǵr / hd. r[bṣ?] / kmdb. btk. ǵrh. ᵓil ṣpn (. . .) šbᶜt. brqm. [. . .] / ṯmnt. ᵓṣr rᶜt. ᶜṣ brq y[mnh?]*
>
> Baᶜlu is seated like a mountain is seated, H[addu] is l[ying down?] like the deep, in his mountain, the divine Ṣapānu (. . .), seven lightning-bolts / eight treasures of thunder (?), a tree of lightning is (?) [his] r[ight hand].

In addition, one notes the cosmic overtones of the well-known verses in the epic (*CTA* 3 C III: 19–22):[73]

> *rgm. ᶜṣ. wlḥšt. ᵓabn. / tᵓant. šmm. ᶜm ᵓarṣ / thmt ᶜmn kbkbm*
>
> the clamor of the *tree* and the whispering of the *stone*, the sighing of heaven with earth, of the *deep* with the stars.

The same matrix also dominates comprehensive narratives. According to the Nineveh version of the Gilgamesh epic, the hero is to traverse the Mâshu *mountains*, where the sun rises (IX, ii: 1–2; 1; iv: 40–41), in order to cross the *sea* to meet Utnapishtim (X, ii: 21–31; iii: 50). The latter’s boatman sends him off to cut *wood* for the oars (X, iii: 40–42), so that his hands will not touch the *waters* of death (iv: 3–8).

In biblical narrative, the tale of Deborah and Barak embodies the entire triad: holding her sessions under the *palm-tree* in the *hill country* of Ephraim (Judg. 4:5), the prophetess urges Barak to concentrate the forces of Naphtali and Zebulun near *Mount Tabor*, whereas Sisera’s army is to convene near the *brook Kishon* (vv. 6–7, 12–13). In the scene of Gideon’s sacrifice (6:21–22) the hero pours *soup* on the *rock* for the angel, who strikes it with his *staff* in order to kindle the fire by which he ascends to heaven.

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71. In addition one notes such poetic passages as, e.g., Hos. 10:7–8; Ps. 65:10–13; 72:3–6; 148:7–9; Ezek. 17:3–5.

72. RS 24.245: 1–4 (Pardee, *Textes para-mythologiques*, 120–21, 130–32); similarly *CTA* 4 VII:26–32. The theory that the mythical picture provides the prototype of the water tales in Exodus has been proposed by W. H. Propp, *Water in the Wilderness*, *HSM* 40 (Atlanta, 1987), 60–62, 125. However, in view of the general thought pattern, the similarities are hardly strong enough to justify the assumption of specific influence.

73. So also in the fragmentary remains of *CTA* 7 II:18–19.

In the Book of Exodus this fundamental matrix is concretized in some notable details. In the pericope of the first plague it underlies the divine orders charging Moses to instruct Aaron (Exod. 7:19; cf. v. 20; 8:1–2):[74]

> **קח מטך ונטה ידך על מימי מצרים על נהרתם על יאריהם ועל אגמיהם ועל כל מקוה מימיהם ויהיו דם**
> **והיה דם בכל ארץ מצרים ובעצים ובאבנים**
>
> Take your *staff* and stretch out your hand over the *waters* of the Egyptians, over their *rivers*, over their *streams*, and over their *pools*, and over all all their *ponds of water*, that they may become blood; and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, and in the *wood* and in the *stone*.

In this context "wood" and "stone," mostly interpreted as referring to vessels made of these materials (e.g., Tg. Onq.), seem little relevant. Apparently these vessels are mentioned because of the basic pattern. A partial allusion to the schematic landscape is found in the account on the plague of the hail, which expressly mentions the damage done to the trees: "and the *hail* smote every herb of the field, and broke every *tree* of the field" (9:25); the locust "will eat the remainder, what has been left to you from the *hail*, and will eat every *tree* which you have growing in the field" (10:5).[75]

The importance of the underlying pattern is clarified by the instructions to Moses in the tale of Massah-and-Meribah (Exod. 17:5–6):

> **ומטך אשר הכית בו את היאר קח בידך והלכת / הנני עמד לפניך שם על הצור בחרב / והכית בצור ויצאו**
> **ממנו מים**
>
> And take your *staff* by which you hit the *Nile* in your hand and go. See, I will stand before you there on the *rock in Horeb*, so strike *the rock* and there will come *water* out of it.

Thus the divine mountain, be it Horeb or Sinai, is placed vis-à-vis the Nile. In this constellation the river obviously symbolizes Egypt, which, moreover, is also mentioned in the declaration of the divine healer (15:26). It is the water of this river which is affected by the first two plagues.[76] The mountain, on the other hand, symbolizes YHWH, one of whose epithets is **צור** ("Rock," note Exod. 17:6), e.g., in the Song of Moses (Deut. 32:4, 15, 18, 31), in Hannah's prayer (1 Sam. 2:2), and in the ancient psalm (2 Sam. 22:3, 32, 47; 23:3); in the panegyric of Deborah we encounter the epithet **זה סיני** ("Lord of Sinai," Judg. 5:5; cf. Ps. 68:9, 16).

Accordingly, the opposition between mountain and water in the Book of Exodus is also symbolic. It contrasts divine guidance in general, and the Sinai covenant in particular, with the slavery of Egypt and, more generally, with the distress and dangers threatening Israel, e.g., dying of thirst, or the dangers of the Sea of Reeds before crossing to safety.

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[74] This connection was perceived by Loewenstamm, *Exodus Tradition,* 90, n. 42. Although Tg. Onq. may be justified in interpreting **ובעצים ובאבנים** as vessels of wood and stone, the Hebrew phrase fits the scheme.

[75] The importance of these passages is indicated by the fact that these are the only instances of **עץ** in the narrative of the Exodus. On the role of the hail as the theophanous plague *par excellence*, see Polak, "Theophany and Mediator," 126–27; S. B. Noegel, "The Significance of the Seventh Plague," *Bib.* 76 (1995) 532–39. For "hailstones" (**אבני הברד**) see Josh. 10:11.

[76] Ancient Israel was quite conscious of its importance for Egypt; cf. Isa. 19:5–10; Am. 8:8; 9:5; Jer. 46:15 LXX (26:15), mentioning the divine bull Apis (Ḫapy), on which see M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* (Berkeley, 1975), 1.204–10; idem, 3.94–97, 99; S. Morenz, *Aegyptische Religion* (Stuttgart, 1960), 48–49, 150. Note also Rashi on Exod. 7:17, as well as *Midrash Tanḥuma*, ed. S. Buber (repr.; Jerusalem, 1964), 2.30 (*Waʾere* 14:118).

What is more, in their symbolism these elements are formative for the literary structure of the Book of Exodus in its entirety. The "water" motif accompanies the plot from its inception (Exodus 1–2; and in particular the order to throw the male babies into the Nile,[77] the exposure and rescue of Moses, and the saving of the daughters of Jethro),[78] the first two plagues (blood and frogs), the seventh plague (hail), the scene at the Sea of Reeds, and the tales of thirst in the desert. On the other hand, the pericope of the covenant is dominated by the "mountain" (17:8–34:35). The accompanying element "wood" also plays a role in the general architecture of the book. In the tale of the burning bush (Exod. 3:1–6) it lays a bridge between the two poles and thus suggests the mediation between them. It symbolizes the act of salvation which leads from hardship and Egyptian oppression to divine overlordship and covenant. It is no wonder, then, that this scene also witnesses the gift to Moses of the miraculous staff (4:3). The dominating role of the element "wood" is also evident in the cycle of the building of the Ark (e.g., 25:5).

8. *Traditonal Scheme and Particular Structure*

A general thought pattern of this type could not be the particular property of one single narrator or author-redactor to the exclusion of all others. On the contrary, we must assume that it was part and parcel of the general literary legacy of the Israelites and thus intuitively recognizable for many readers, listeners, and narrators. True, the impressive structural and stylistic congruence between the Marah tale and the scenes at Massah-and-Meribah and Rephidim suggest that these stories belong to a "cohesive sequence." However, the traditional schemes embodied by them also appear in other narratives, first and foremost in the manna tale in Exodus 16, embodying a reader's reaction to the surrounding tales. This thought scheme also comes to the fore in other texts of the Exodus tradition. In Ps. 114:3–4, 8 the poet opposes mountains to sea and Jordan alike:

> הים ראה וינס הירדן יסב לאחור / ההרים רקדו כאילים הגבעות כבני צאן . . . ההפכי הצור לאגם מים
> חלמיש למעינו מים
>
> The *sea* saw it and fled, the *Jordan* turned backward. / The *mountains* skipped like rams, the *hills* like young sheep. . . . Who turned the *rock* into a *pool of water, flint* into a *fountain of water.*

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[77] This draconian command (v. 22) is preceded by the order to ascertain the gender of the babies born to the Israelites on the birthstones (אָבנים; 1:16). In rabbinic literature one may note the comments on poetic justice regarding Exod. 15:4 and 1:16 (*Mek. R. Ishmael, Bešallaḥ: Šira* 4 [ed. Rabin-Horovitz]). On these and other ironies of the Exodus tale, see also Loewenstamm, "The Story of Moses' Birth," *From Babylon to Canaan*, 201–21, esp. 208–14.

[78] See M. Fishbane, *Text and Texture* (New York, 1979), 63–76, esp. 73, 75; cf. also 70–71, 74 on the חתן דמים and the killing of Pharaoh's first-born son and the apotropaeic function of the blood on Passover night.

Thus the general thought scheme continues to play a formative role in the traditions of the Exodus and the trek through the desert.

Moreover, one may note some creative responses to this tradition. The "water-wood-mountain" triad also presents itself in the account of the crossing of the Jordan (Josh. 3:5–17), which contains obvious allusions to the splitting of the Sea of Reeds (vv. 5, 13–17).[79] The carrying of the Ark embodies the element "wood." The "mountain" is represented by the twelve stones which Joshua took out of the Jordan, and which, after the crossing, were set up as *maṣṣebot* in Gilgal (4:3–9, and especially v. 20). In addition one may point to the mention of "*Mount Gerizim*" and "*Mount Ebal*" "beyond the *Jordan* . . . in the land of the Canaanites that dwell in the Arabah, over against Gilgal, behind the *terebinths* of Moreh" (Deut. 11:29–30).[80] By the same token, Elijah's ordeal at the Carmel relates to water, to the mountain, to the stones of the altar and to the wood for the fire (1 Kgs. 18:23, 31–35). In the end, fire from heaven "consumed the burnt-offering, and the *wood*, and the *stones*, and the dust, and licked up the *water* in the trench" (v. 38); the Baal prophets are slaughtered near "the *Brook Kishon*," and Elijah's servant sits on the *Carmel* to look out over the *sea*. In the desert Elijah journeys from the *broom-tree* to *Mount Horeb* (19:4, 8), after eating and drinking *water* (v. 6).[81]

The traditional triad is found once more in the tales surrounding Elisha's succession of Elijah (2 Kings 2). Elijah is taken up into heaven after crossing the *Jordan* (vv. 8, 11). When Elisha returns to the other side of the river, the "sons of the prophets" go looking for Elijah in the *mountains* (vv. 16–17). The ensuing episodes recount how Elisha dispenses blessing and curse, once again couched in terms of the traditional triad. He casts salt (from a "jar"/צלחית) into the well in order to make the water potable (vv. 19–21). As the prophet returns to the North, bears come out from the *wood* (היער) in order to punish the children who are mocking him (vv. 23–24).

Ezekiel's visionary Torah depicts a *river* descending from the Temple *mountain* (issuing from the *threshold* of the house; Ezek. 40:2; 47:1–2), with healing fruit *trees* growing on both sides (vv. 7, 12).[82] Moreover, as the mighty river pours into the Dead Sea, the salty water is "healed" (vv. 8–9). The description of the "healing waters" and the miraculous trees resumes the ideas of the Marah tale and the scene at Elim, and concretizes the promise of the divine healer (Exod. 15:26b) in the framework of the landscape surrounding the visionary Temple. The very fact that this picture immediately follows the exposition of Ezekiel's prophetic Torah connects this picture with the notion of "law and justice" associated with the promise of healing (Exod. 15:25b–26).

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[79] M. J. Bin Gorion views the passage of the Jordan as the paradigm for the story of the Reed Sea: *Sinai und Garizim* (Berlin, 1926), 418; so also F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge Mass., 1973), 103–5; Zakovitch, *Exodus Concept*, 61–62 (duly noting the correspondence between "staff" and "ark," but not the "stone" motif). However, the mythical motifs that are connected with the divine warrior theme that dominate the Exodus narrative (note especially Loewenstamm, *Exodus Tradition*, 240–51), do not stand out in the tale of the crossing of the Jordan. In A. R. Hulst's opinion, the pattern of the Reed Sea tradition is reflected in the Gilgal tale: "Der Jordan in den Alttestamentlichen Überlieferungen," *OTS* 14 (1965), 162–88, esp. 179–81. The latter is no more than a liturgical reverberation of the mythical motif.

[80] As Moses is supposed to address the Israelites in the Plains of Moab, this text is hardly concerned with Gilgal in the hill country near Shechem; see also Hulst, "Jordan," 165–68. For the opinion that this pericope aims at juxtaposing the covenant traditions of Shechem and Gilgal, see A. H. D. Mayes, *Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, 1979), 219. In this collocation Gerizim and Ebal (blessing and curse!) probably reflect Mount Sinai, while the Jordan echoes the Reed Sea; the terebinths are as holy as the Ark and the divine staff.

[81] For the dependence of the Elijah narratives on the Moses tradition, see Loewenstamm, "The Death of Moses," *From Babylon to Canaan,* 151; R. A. Carlson, "Élie à l'Horeb," *VT* 19 (1969), 416–39, esp. 431–32, 434–37; Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 191–93; Zakovitch, *Exodus Concept*, 69–79.

Ezekiel's vision, then, encompasses in a nutshell some of the most important aspects of the general thought pattern of "water-wood-mountain." This schematic landscape forms an overarching pattern that dominates the entire Exodus tradition. It integrates the apparently independent pericopes concerning the journey from the Reed Sea to Mount Sinai into a "cohesive sequence," organizes the redactional structure of the Book of Exodus in its entirety, and is strong enough to maintain itself in many recastings of the Exodus tradition in its unfolding in the Bible, be it as a reader's reaction (e.g., Exodus 16; Psalm 78, 114) or as a creative response (e.g., Joshua 3–4). It is a formative element in the Elijah-Elisha traditions (1 Kings 18–19; 2 Kings 2) as well as the prophetic literature of the exile (Isaiah 41; Ezekiel 47). The emerging picture is thoroughly intertextual, and suggests an ongoing process of unfolding and development rather than a blending and fusing of individual sources and tales.

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[82] On this image, see first and foremost F. Hitzig, *Ezechiel* (Leipzig, 1847), 364–66; Fishbane, *Text and Texture*, 118–19. Additional aspects of the healing theme are expounded by W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia, 1983), 2.512–13. On Ezek. 31:2–4 see J. D. Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40–48*, *HSM* 10 (Missoula, 1976), 29–31.