

Medieval Jewish Exegesis on Dual Incipits

ISAAC B. GOTTLIEB



MEDIEVAL JEWISH EXEGESIS ON DUAL INCIPITS

ISAAC B. GOTTLIEB
BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I propose to look at several examples of specific passages in the Pentateuch which have multiple opening formulae through the eyes of medieval Jewish exegesis. This body of work, with its attendant dictionaries and grammars, is sometimes cited by contemporary scholars in discussions about the meaning of a word or its Semitic (Arabic, Aramaic) cognates. However, medieval Jewish scholars between the 10th and the 12th centuries in Iraq (Babylonia), Palestine, and Spain did more than systematize the language of Biblical Hebrew; their philology, lexicography, and grammatical research was but one aspect of a new mode of interpretation called the *peshat*, which replaced the way the Bible had been interpreted by Jews for a thousand years.

The change began in the East, presumably as a result of the interpretations of the Karaites, who rejected the Rabbanite interpretations of the Bible as found in midrash and the Talmud.¹ Midrash in Hebrew and Aramaic can be understood

¹ Daniel Frank writes that “the hallmark of early Karaite interpretation is an anti-traditional rationalism. Investigating the Bible without rabbinic preconceptions became an intellectual and religious imperative” (D. Frank, *Search Scripture Well: Karaite Exegesis and the Origins of the Jewish Bible Commentary in the Islamic East* [Leiden: Brill, 2004], x, xi), while Meira Polliack thinks that “the linguistic-contextual (or ‘literal’) orientation of Karaite biblical exegesis relied on technical Hebrew terms and hermeneutic principles also known from rabbinic and masoretic sources... This suggests that the Karaites did not necessarily revolutionize Jewish biblical study...” (M. Polliack, “Major Trends in Karaite Biblical Exegesis in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries,” in M. Polliack [ed.], *Karaite Judaism, A Guide to its History and Literary Sources* [Leiden: Brill, 2003], 365). Of interest is Miriam Goldstein’s idea that “the adoption of new methods of commentary provided the Karaites a means of distinguishing themselves from their Rabbanite opponents... The new methods of commentary were integral to their identity as a movement, for they ridiculed the interpretations of Rabbinic literature as deviations from the plain sense of the text”

as a noun describing the literature itself (“midrashic literature”) and as a verbal form (e.g., “midrashic exegesis”) denoting homiletical interpretation. Midrash interprets the Bible by expanding the biblical story, seeking additional meaning in wordplays and analogies, and employing an intertextuality that takes no account of context. Thus a verse in Genesis can be illuminated by a passage from Chronicles if the same word or expression is found in both. Midrashic technique is oblivious to history: the aim of midrashic homily is not *explication de texte* but rather the derivation of ethical and religious messages and normative observances of Judaism. The former are derived from the narratives, the latter, called *Halakha*, from the legal portions.²

Both types of midrash, the legal (or Halakhic) and the narrative (or Aggadic), were developed in the Second Temple period and practiced through the first seven centuries of the common era.³ The legal interpretations were the result of scholastic efforts in the Pharisaic or rabbinic study hall, while the Aggadic homilies originated in sermons delivered in the synagogue on Sabbaths and holidays by the Palestinian Rabbis. These sermons were later given literary shape and called midrashic literature. The Karaites rejected the authority of the Rabbis and the validity of their biblical interpretations, preferring to explain the Bible according to its context, grammar, and syntax. The Karaite scholar Yefet ben ‘Eli (Basra, Iraq, mid-10th century) moved to Jerusalem and wrote Judeo-Arabic commentaries on every book of the Bible.⁴ At about the same time, David ben Abraham al-Fasi, also a Karaite, wrote a Hebrew-Arabic dictionary of the Bible.

(“The Beginnings of the Transition from *Dersah* to *Peshat* as Exemplified in Yefet Ben ‘Eli’s Comment on Psa. 44:24,” in G. Khan [ed.], *Exegesis and Grammar in Medieval Karaite Texts* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001], 41–64, here 43).

² The classic study of midrashic techniques is I. Heinemann, *Darkhei HaAggadah* (The Methods of the Aggadah; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1954 [Hebrew]). A comprehensive précis in English of Heinemann’s book by Marc Bregman can be found at <http://www.uncg.edu/rel/contacts/faculty/Heinemann.htm>.

³ As to the origins of midrash, S.D. Fraade, “Rabbinic Midrash and Ancient Jewish Biblical Interpretation,” in C.E. Fonrobert and M.S. Jaffee (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 102, describes a current scholarly approach “in which ‘midrash’ denoted scriptural interpretation in general... dating all the way back, not just to the closing of the Hebrew scriptural canon but inner-biblically into the later books of the Bible...” G. Stemmerger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (trans. M. Bockmuehl; 2nd ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 237, notes that “an extended prehistory of the midrash before the rabbinic period is in any case undeniable.”

⁴ Frank, *Search Scripture Well*, 230; Goldstein, “Beginnings.”

In Iraq, the Rabbanite scholar Saadyah Gaon responded to the Karaites in kind, stressing in his introductions to his translations and commentaries on biblical books that the Bible must be interpreted in its simple, plain, or external sense (*ẓāhir*) unless the five senses, reason, tradition, or a contradictory verse dictated otherwise.⁵ Saadya understood that in his arguments with the Karaites over the meaning of this or that verse, he had to prove that the simple meaning of a verse was not as they interpreted it, but rather in accord with rabbinic understanding. Polemics between Rabbanites and Karaites thus contributed to Bible exegesis that was rooted in grammar, context, and a rational approach to the text.

In Spain, grammatical studies of Hebrew and biblical dictionaries began to appear in 950 C.E. under the influence of the surrounding Arabic culture and its development of Arab grammar (especially Arabic grammar in the context of the Koran).⁶ The ongoing polemic with the Karaites also contributed to the development of reference materials. Grammars and dictionaries written in Arabic enabled an exegesis based upon the straightforward meaning of the verse. While the zenith of Spanish exegesis is to be found in the writings of Ibn Ezra (1089–1165) and Moses Nahmanides (1273), “the hallmarks of the Sefardic Bible commentary can be traced

⁵ H. Ben Shammai, “The Tension Between Literal Interpretation and Exegetical Freedom: Comparative Observations on Saadia’s Method,” in J.D. McAuliffe et. al., *With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Scriptural Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 33–50.

⁶ For the history of Spanish interpretation, see N.M. Sarna, “Hebrew and Biblical Studies in Medieval Spain,” in R.D. Barnett (ed.), *The Sephardi Heritage: Essays on the History and Cultural Contribution of the Jews of Spain and Portugal. Vol. 1: The Jews in Spain and Portugal before and after the Expulsion of 1492* (New York: Ktav, 1971), 323–65 (= N.M. Sarna, *Studies in Biblical Interpretation* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2000], 81–125). More recent introductions to medieval exegesis can be found in the HBOT volumes: M. Saebo (ed.), *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation. Vol. I/2: The Middle Ages* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), chapters 25, 31, 32, 33, 37; *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation. Vol. II: From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), chapters 2, 8. A most readable introduction to medieval exegesis, both Ashkenazi and Sephardic, is E.L. Greenstein, “Medieval Bible Commentaries,” in B.W. Holtz (ed.), *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts* (New York: Summit Books, 1984), 213–59, which includes an English bibliography. J. Kalman, “Medieval Jewish Biblical Commentaries and the State of *Parshanut* Studies,” *Religion Compass* 2/5 (2008), 819–43, lists printed editions of medieval Jewish commentary and provides a review of recent scholarship.

back to Rabbanite and Karaite works composed in Iraq and the Land of Israel as far back as the tenth century.”⁷

In France, several 12th century commentators, earliest among them Rashi (1040–1105), began to engage in grammatical and contextual interpretations of the Bible and to limit their use of midrashic explanations. Because the conditions for the rise of *peshat* interpretation which we enumerated above did not exist in medieval France,⁸ scholars have agreed on three possible reasons for the turn to *peshat*: first, there were some contacts with Spanish Bible interpretation. The Spanish influence on Ashkenaz (medieval France and Germany) increased greatly with the Almohade invasion of Spain from North Africa in the mid-12th century and the subsequent flight of Spanish Jewish scholars northward to Italy, Provence, and France. Many of these refugees, such as the Kimhis, ibn Tibbons, and Ibn Ezra undertook to translate Spanish Jewish grammatical and philosophical tracts from Arabic into Hebrew, enriching the world of Western Jewry and laying the ground for *peshat* exegesis.⁹

A second motivation for *peshat* interpretation of the Bible was *la petite renaissance* in 12th century France, a movement that showed interest in secular study, reason, and a return to the classics of Greece in the original language. Among the Jews, it inspired a return to the original Hebrew text of the Bible, unadorned by midrashic interpretation.¹⁰ The third spur toward *peshat* interpretation was the Christian-Jewish religious polemic. These factors meant that during the 12th century, commentators in Spain and France were all searching for *peshat*, instead of the associative, inferential, and homiletic methods and teachings of the classic midrash.¹¹ The changes

⁷ Frank, *Search Scripture Well*, 249. Frank counts David Kimhi as a Sefardic *parshan*, even though he was actually born in Provence.

⁸ The French scholars did not read Arabic and hence were not familiar with the grammatical treatises produced in the East and in Spain. In addition, there were no Karaites in the lands of Ashkenaz.

⁹ I.M. Ta-Shma has raised the novel idea that *peshat* interpretation in northern France was preceded by *peshat* interpretation in Byzantium; idem, “Hebrew-Byzantine Bible Exegesis ca. 1000, from the Cairo Geniza,” *Tarbiz* 69/2 (2000), 247–56 (Hebrew).

¹⁰ E. Touitou, *Exegesis in Perpetual Motion: Studies in the Pentateuchal Commentary of Rabbi Samuel Ben Meir* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2003 [Hebrew]), 29.

¹¹ Strictly speaking, Rashi used the Talmudic form of the word, *peshto shel miqra*, “the simple meaning of the verse,” while his grandson Rashbam (R. Samuel ben Meir) used the unadorned form *peshat*. In addition to the three reasons we listed, H. Liss, *Creating Fictional Worlds: Peshat-Exegesis and Narrativity in Rashbam’s Commentary on the Torah* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), claims that *peshat* in France was influenced by courtly literature, which brought about an awareness of literary and narrative exegesis.

in exegesis brought about original interpretations not only of individual words and grammatical forms but of entire verses and chapters, since a realistic and rational context was established for the biblical narratives and the laws as well.

The medieval interpreters were attempting to read the Bible in light of its grammar and syntax, and its relation to reality and rationality, but were bound by their axiomatic belief in the divine origins of the biblical text and its unity. These constrictions led to creative attempts to explain away difficulties by means of insights into biblical language and style, or by establishing a different context or background for a particular verse. One such problem was the perception that biblical units sometimes have more than one opening verse, the subject of this paper.

There are modern studies of the Bible whose premises, *sans* the ideology, are quite similar. Wilfried Warning has posited the following for his study of Leviticus:

Because this study focuses exclusively on the extant text, it neither follows nor claims nor attempts any source-critical or redaction-critical hypotheses. Its sole focus is to better comprehend the means by which the extant text has been artistically arranged, that is, to detect the distinct literary devices, deliberate terminological patterns which have been created by the writer(s) of the present text.¹²

In critical thought, dual beginnings for a single pericope (dual *incipits*) are overwhelmingly ascribed to multiple sources which were conflated or to the hand of a redactor who appended his own opening to the original text.¹³ By contrast, when the classical exegetes sensed that there were two opening formulations, they sought to account for the phenomenon by seeing it as a feature of biblical form and style and by having a particular understanding of the two formulations. In these cases, the medieval authors went well beyond commenting on grammar and syntax. I shall cite four examples of dual beginnings and the medieval commentaries that dealt with them.¹⁴ Readers endowed with critical acumen may be

¹² W. Warning, *Literary Artistry in Leviticus* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 6.

¹³ Both explanations are to be found in the scholarly literature. A. Rofé, *Introduction to the Literature of the Hebrew Bible* (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2006 [Hebrew]), 116: “The members of the priestly school “took over” the literature termed JE and edited it extensively, by means of short additions to the beginnings of stories or their endings.” M. Haran, *The Bible and its World* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2009 [Hebrew]), 266: “The authors of the Torah were no more than editors; they limited themselves to light touches of the pen and some chapter headings, in addition to the headings that were already present in the material in front of them.”

¹⁴ I have dealt previously with opening and closing formulations in the following papers: I.B. Gottlieb, “Introductory Formulae in the Penta-

able to see that, despite his presuppositions, the medieval interpreter was sometimes beset with the same problem as the modern commentator. Though medieval and modern scholars have entirely different perspectives on the Bible and indeed on the nature and goals of exegesis, there is a narrow bridge which links the old and the new, as I hope these examples will show.

1. EXODUS 19:1–2¹⁵

1. בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי לְצֵאת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה בָּאוּ
מִדְבַר סִינַי:
2. וַיִּסְעוּ מִרֶפְדִּים וַיָּבֹאוּ מִדְבַר סִינַי וַיַּחֲנוּ בַּמִּדְבָּר וַיַּחֲזֻ-שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל
נֶגֶד הָהָר:

1. On the third new moon after the Israelites had gone forth from the land of Egypt, on that very day, they entered the wilderness of Sinai. 2. Having journeyed from Rephidim, they entered the wilderness of Sinai and encamped in the wilderness. Israel encamped there in front of the mountain.

MEDIEVAL COMMENTARIES

Rashi (19:2): *And they journeyed from Rephidim*—What does Scripture teach us by again expressly stating from where they set forth on the journey, for is it not already written (Ex.17:1) that they had encamped at Rephidim and it is therefore evident that they set forth from there?! But Scripture repeats it in order to make a comparison with the character of their journey from Rephidim to that of their arrival in the wilderness of Sinai! How was it in the case of their arrival in the wilderness of Sinai? They were in a state of penitence [as shown by the unanimity with which they encamped before the mountain: cf.

teach,” *Mehqarim Belashon* 11–12 (2008), 35–50 (Hebrew); “From Formula to Expression in Some Hebrew and Aramaic Texts,” *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 31/2 (2008), 47–61; “Sof Davar: Biblical Endings,” *Prooftexts* 11 (1991), 213–24; “Biblical Beginnings: The Openings of the Five Torah Books,” in M. Avioz et al. (eds.), *Zer Rimonim: Studies in Biblical Literature and Jewish Exegesis Presented to Professor Rimon Kasber* (Atlanta: SBL, forthcoming).

¹⁵ The English Bible translations are taken from NJPS; Rashi (1040–1105) from A.M. Silbermann and M. Rosenbaum, *Chumash with Targum Onkelos, Haphtaroth, and Rasbi’s Commentary* (London: Shapiro Valentine & Co., 1934); Rashbam (France, 1080–1160) from M.I. Lockshin, *Rashbam’s Commentary on Exodus* (Brown Judaic Studies, 310; Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1997); Nahmanides (Spain, 1194–1270) from C.B. Chavel, *Ramban (Nachmanides) Commentary on the Torah* (New York: Shilo Publishing House, 1974). Translations of passages from Ibn Ezra (Spain, 1089–1150) and Sforno (Italy, 1475–1550) are my own. Bracketed words in Rashi, Nahmanides, and Rashbam appear in the editions I used; some bracketed verse references were added by me.

Rashi on the end of this verse! Thus, too, their setting forth from Rephidim was in a state of repentance for the sin they had committed there (see 17:2).¹⁶

Nahmanides (19:1): ... Now Rashi wrote: “And they journeyed from Rephidim... so also was their departure [from Rephidim] with repentance.” Thus Rashi’s language. But I have not understood this. It says in connection with all journeys: *and they pitched* [camp] *in Elim*; *And they took their journey from Elim... and they came unto the wilderness of Sin* (16:1); *and they journeyed from the wilderness of Sin... and encamped in Rephidim* (17:1); and so the entire section of *Mas’ei* [Num. 33] is written.

COMMENT

Rashi wants to know why this pericope mentions that the Israelites journeyed from Rephidim. *A priori* it would seem that there is no basis for Rashi’s question, for the language “and they journeyed”—“and they encamped” is the regular formula used for the travels of the Israelites in the wilderness. This is precisely Nahmanides’ question. In fact, in the verse to which Rashi was referring when he said, “for is it not already written that they had encamped at Rephidim,” we find the exact same style: “From the wilderness of Sin the whole Israelite community *journeyed*¹⁷ by stages as the Lord would command. They *encamped* at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink” (Exod 17:1). Rashi could have asked at that point as well, “Why did the verse state, ‘From the wilderness of Sin the whole Israelite community journeyed,’ when it already had stated in the previous chapter that they had encamped in the wilderness of Sin (16:1), and so certainly they would now be journeying forth from there?” Yet Rashi asked that question only about our text, Exod 19:2.

It would seem therefore that Rashi’s question, “What does Scripture teach us by again expressly stating from where they set forth on the journey,” stems from a sense of repetition and redundancy. Having already said in 19:1, “On that very day, they entered the wilderness of Sinai,” it was entirely superfluous to write in v. 2, “Having journeyed from Rephidim,” for they had already reached their destination. Perhaps

¹⁶ As stated in the previous note, I relied on the English translation of Rashi by Silbermann and Rosenbaum. They, however, do not note in their introduction which text of Rashi they used. A critical edition of Rashi on the Pentateuch was produced by A. Berliner in 1866 and again in 1905. C. Chavel’s edition of Rashi is based on Berliner. Currently, a new critical edition of the Rabbinic Bible (*Miqraot Gedolot*) has been prepared by M. Cohen of Bar-Ilan University, under the title *Miqraot Gedolot HaKeter*, and it is this edition of the text that I have consulted for the commentaries referred to in this paper.

¹⁷ NJPS: “continued.” The Hebrew reads, “וַיִּסְעוּ.”

Rashi had in mind another repetition in these verses, though he did not state it: “they entered the wilderness of Sinai” in 19:2 is a needless repetition of the phrase “they entered the wilderness of Sinai” in the previous verse.

Nahmanides was well aware of the stylistic pair “they journeyed”—“they encamped,” found over and over again in Num. 33, and hence he expressed his wonder at Rashi’s question. However, a closer look shows that our two verses do not really follow the established pattern that Nahmanides cited. In Numbers, we find the pattern consisting of “they journeyed from A, encamped in B; they journeyed from B and encamped at C.”¹⁸ Here, however, the order is completely reversed: “They *entered* the wilderness of Sinai—[they] *journeyed* from Rephidim—they entered the wilderness of Sinai—[they] encamped in the wilderness.” The encampment at Sinai (“they entered”) is stated *before* the departure from Rephidim. Therefore Rashi felt that there was no point in mentioning their departure from Rephidim, which should have been stated *prior to* entering the wilderness at Sinai.

Of course, had ch. 19 begun at v. 2, Rashi would have had no problem, for then the accepted pattern would have been preserved: “Having *journeyed* from Rephidim, they entered the wilderness of Sinai and *encamped* in the wilderness.”¹⁹ Similarly, had the chapter begun with v. 1 alone, no problem would have arisen. We may conclude that the real problem which lay behind Rashi’s question was the double *incipit* that he sensed in the first two verses of ch. 19.

The sense of a dual opening bothered Nahmanides no less, as may be seen in his opening remark to Exod 19:1:

In the third month (Ex. 19:1)—Scripture should have said, “And they *journeyed* from Rephidim and they *encamped* in the wilderness of Sinai, in the third month after their going forth from the land of Egypt,” just as it said above concerning the wilderness of Sin [17:1]. But [Scripture’s manner of expression here is] due to the fact that their coming into the wilderness of Sinai was an occasion for joy and a festival to them, and that since they left Egypt they had been yearning for it... For this reason, Scripture begins this section with the statement that *in the third month... the same day* that the month began, *they came* there [as they had eagerly anticipated]. Following this opening, Scripture reverts [to the usual style] as in the other journeys: *And they journeyed from Rephidim* [19:2].

Ramban had expected to find the usual style, “they journeyed, they encamped.” He therefore attributed the wording of the

¹⁸ In the NJPS translation: “They set out from Succoth and encamped at Eitha... They set out from Eitha... (Num 33:6–7).

¹⁹ In Hebrew, ויסעו... ויהנו.

first verse in Exod 19 to its heightened poetic style, as a way to express the great enthusiasm of the people upon their arrival at Mount Sinai. Like most biblical poetry, this verse is composed of two parallel stichs; the first limb gives the date as, “On the third new moon,” whereas the second reiterates and reinforces the first: “on that very day.”

A previous chapter in the Torah (Gen 21:1–2) seems to be similarly structured:

וְהָיָה כִּי יִקַּח אֱלֹהִים אֶת-שָׂרָה כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר וַיְעַשׂ ה' לְשָׂרָה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר:
וַתֵּלֵד וַתֵּלֵד שָׂרָה לְאַבְרָהָם בֶּן לְזִקְנָו לְמוֹעֵד אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהִים:

1. The Lord took note of Sarah as He had promised, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken. 2. Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken.

On the face of it, this too is a dual *incipit*, the first verse poetic, the second rendered in prose.²⁰ The poetic cadence and parallelism of the first verse did not, however, make an impression on E.A. Speiser, who notes of v. 1 that “the second half of the verse duplicates the first. It appears to stem from *P*, with a secondary change of Elohim to Yahweh, induced by the preceding clause.”²¹ He also parses v. 2 as stemming from *J* (2a) and *P* (2b), because the name Elohim is used in the second half.²² I am in agreement with Speiser on one point: he says nothing about a redundancy between the two verses, and rightly so. Even if one verse or the other might have sufficed to begin the chapter, in my opinion both verses together are not mere repetition, because Sarah giving birth in v. 2 was the outcome of the Lord taking note of her plight in the first verse. In Exod 19, however, the almost identical wording in both verses, “they entered the wilderness of Sinai,” is clearly repetitious and at odds with the usual formula for listing journeys.

CRITICAL SCHOLARSHIP

M. Noth assigns Exod 19:1–2a to *P*, and 2b to *JE*. Regarding a sense of duplication in the *incipit*, Noth says: “The repetition in v. 2b of the remark about this encamping in v. 2a indicates a fragment from the introductory phrases of one of the older sources which has in other respects fallen out in favour

²⁰ It is of interest to note that in both texts the continuation is also rendered in poetic form: see Gen 21:7; Exod 19:3–6.

²¹ E.A. Speiser, *Genesis* (AB, 1; Garden City: Doubleday, 1964), 154. However, in his marking of the sources on p. 153, he marks vv. 1–2 as *J*, noting that “it did not seem practical to reflect such a possibility [that v. 1b stems from *P*] in the translation” (ibid., 154).

²² Ibid., 154, n. 2b.

of P.”²³ B. Childs makes no mention of any duality between Exod 19:1 and 2.²⁴ In W.H.C. Propp’s source analysis of the Horeb-Sinai narrative, he indeed raises the question of a dual *incipit*:

To begin with, 19:1–2 is somewhat awkward. . . . Why are we told twice that Israel “came to the Sinai Wilderness” and twice that they “camped”? On the one hand, this might be the composition of a single writer, who began his story with a kind of heading and then backtracked to explain whence the people had come (Houtman 1996: 439). In other words, “And they set forth from Rephidim” could be a digression framed by *Wiederaufnahme* (cf. Kuhl 1952).

On the other hand... I am more inclined to see a supplemented text. The redactor deliberately placed the words “And they set forth from Rephidim and came to the Sinai Wilderness and camped in the wilderness” inside a preexisting “In the third month of Israel’s Sons going out... And Israel camped there, opposite the mountain.”... One might have rather expected, given the editor’s procedure elsewhere, “and they set forth from Rephidim and came to the Sinai Wilderness. In the third month of Israel’s Sons going out from the land of Egypt, on this day, they came to the Sinai Wilderness. And Israel camped there opposite the mountain.” Apparently, the redactor wished instead to emphasize the month of Israel’s arrival.²⁵

I quoted Propp at length because his idea that **ויבוא מדבר סיני** is a resumptive repetition, following **באו מדבר סיני** in the previous verse, could have been taken right out of Nahmanides’ commentary on Exod 19:1, as cited above.²⁶ So, too, the verse reconstructed as Propp might have wished to see it is exactly the same as Nahmanides posited in his commentary, and the redactor’s presumed emphasis, “on the third month, on that day,” is just as Ramban had explained. In fact, in his notes on these verses, Propp names Nahmanides as the source for the

²³ M. Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary* (trans. J.S. Bowden; OTL, Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 1962), 157.

²⁴ B.S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (OTL; Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 1974), 342. Nor could I find any reference to 19:1–2 in E. Blum, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch* (BZAW, 189; Walter de Gruyter: Berlin, 1990).

²⁵ W.H.C. Propp, *Exodus 19–40* (AB, 2A; New York: Doubleday, 2006), 141. References quoted by Propp are to C. Houtman, *Exodus. Vol. 2* (HCOT; trans. S. Woudstra; Kampen: Kok Publishing House, 1996), as well as C. Kuhl, “Die ‘Wiederaufnahme’—ein literarkritisches Prinzip?,” *ZAW* 64 (1952), 1–11.

²⁶ See Nahmanides’ commentary on Exod 19:1: “Following this opening, Scripture reverts [to the usual style] as in the other journeys: *And they journeyed from Rephidim* [19:2]. This is an instance of a resumptive repetition.

meaning of the phrase “on that day:” “The arrival at Sinai is the culmination of all the preceding chapters of Exodus. In other words, ‘this day’ implies, ‘This was, at last, the day’ (Ramban).”²⁷

This is not to say that the medieval exegetes were always on the mark. Because they were not of a critical mind regarding the biblical text, they did not always identify a repetitious *incipit*. Furthermore, they were not rigorously systematic; the northern French exegetes recognized certain elements of biblical style to be *derekh ha-miqra’ot*, “the way of Scripture,” but they did not compile lists of *incipits*, endings, or connecting terms.²⁸ The next example illustrates this absence. Most of the traditional commentators see only one opening formula. Had they thought in terms of fixed formulae, they might have seen two separate *incipits* here. However, their explanations of the text, differences of opinion, and silence where one might expect comment, all alert the modern reader to the possibility that there are actually two beginnings here. I shall try to show that each formula serves to introduce a separate pericope, which the medieval commentators have melded into a single unit by their interpretation.

2. EXODUS 35:1–5

1. ויקהל משה את כל עדת בני ישראל ויאמר אליהם אלה הדברים אשר צוה ה' לעשות אתם. 2. ששת ימים תעשה מלאכה וביום השביעי יהיה לכם קדש שבת שבתון לה' כל העשה בו מלאכה יומת. 3. לא תבוערו אש בכל משבתיכם ביום השבת. 4. ויאמר משה אל כל עדת בני ישראל לאמר זה הדבר אשר צוה ה' לאמר. 5. קחו מאתכם תרומה לה' כל גדיב לבו יביאה את תרומת ה' זָהָב וְכֶסֶף וְנֹחָשׁ

²⁷ Propp, *Exodus*, 154. Blum, *Studien*, 154, uses the phrase “on this day” to maintain that ch. 18 does not precede ch. 19 chronologically: “Geradezu einen offenen Widerspruch bewirkt die Lokalisierung des Jethro-Besuchs am Gottesberg (v. 5) gegenüber der unmissverständlichen und betonten Angabe von Ex 19, 1f., wonach Israel erst hier an ‘den Berg’ gelangte.”

²⁸ However, they made a start. See Rashbam at Gen 22:1 on occurrences of the expression “some time afterward,” in M.I. Lockshin, *Rabbi Samuel Ben Meir’s Commentary on Genesis: An Annotated Translation* (New York: Mellen, 1989). Nahmanides makes frequent reference to resumptive repetitions, and R. Joseph Kara and Rashbam identified a type of foreshadowing (*haqdamot*). On this style in Torah literature, See N.M. Sarna, “The Anticipatory Use of Information as a Literary Feature of the Genesis Narratives,” in R.E. Friedman (ed.), *The Creation of Sacred Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 76–82 (= Sarna, *Studies*, 211–20); Liss, *Creating Fictional Worlds*, 96–9, calls this style “literary anticipation.”

1. Moses then convoked the whole Israelite community and said to them: “These are the things that the Lord has commanded you to do: 2. On six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a Sabbath of complete rest, holy to the Lord; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. 3. You shall kindle no fire throughout your settlements on the Sabbath day. 4. Moses said further to the whole community of Israelites: This is what the Lord has commanded: 5. Take from among you gifts to the Lord; everyone whose heart so moves him shall bring them—gifts for the Lord: gold, silver, and copper.”

COMMENT

With two exceptions, all the commentaries (cited below) saw in the clause “Moses then convoked” ויקהל משה the opening formula for the entire chapter that followed, which describes the collection of goods to be used in the construction of the Sanctuary. No doubt they were influenced by the fact that ויקהל משה stood at the beginning of a weekly Torah reading, *Parashat Vayakhel*, whose entire subject (Exod 35:1–38:20) was the tabernacle. Perhaps these exegetes also wondered why the usual introductory formulation for legal portions, “And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the sons of Israel,”²⁹ was not used. In their comments, Rashbam and Ibn Ezra imply that the usual formula would have been inadequate, for it was not just a question of passing on a command; the people had to be physically gathered together in order that they might hand over the goods which they were donating to the Sanctuary, as is made clear in Exod 35:5, “Take from among you gifts to the Lord.” *Vayaqhel* meant that Moses actually assembled the entire community.

Further, both Rashbam and Ibn Ezra in his short commentary to Exodus³⁰ note that the people had to be summoned for the additional purpose of collecting the half-shekel that each male had to donate for the Sanctuary (Exod 30:13).³¹ This amount is called a *terumah*, or gift (*ibid.*), the same word used for the materials donated to the sanctuary in 35:5. Ibn Ezra pointed to the plural forms, “these are the

²⁹ וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר דַּבֵּר אֶל כָּל עֵדוּת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם

³⁰ Ibn Ezra wrote two commentaries to Exodus: the shorter version he completed in Lucca, Italy (1142–1145) and the longer one in Rouen, France (1153).

³¹ The similarity between Rashbam and Ibn Ezra raises the possibility that one saw the commentary of the other. On this question, see M.I. Lockshin, “Tradition or Context: Two Exegetes Struggle with *Peshat*,” in J. Neusner et al. (eds.), *From Ancient Israel to Modern Judaism, Essays in Honor of Marvin Fox. Vol. 2* (Brown Judaic Studies, 173; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 173–86, here 174 n. 5 and 6.

things” (35:1) **אלה הדברים**; “to do [them]” (ibid.) **לעשת אתם**, as proof that the people had to be assembled for both purposes, to donate goods to the Sanctuary and to pay the half-shekel.³²

Like Rashbam and Ibn Ezra, Nahmanides was also of the opinion that the words “Moses then convoked” opened the pericope about the sanctuary. He too explained the plural forms “these are the things” and “to do them” as referring to “the work of the Sanctuary and all its implements.” In Nahmanides’ view, vv. 2–3, which speak of the Sabbath, were inserted in order to convey a *midrash halakha*, or rabbinic ruling: work necessary to build the sanctuary and its implements may not be performed on the Sabbath. This teaching was conveyed through the juxtaposition of the prohibition to toil on the Sabbath (35:2–3) with the order to gather donations for the tabernacle (35:1). In sum, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra in both his long and short commentaries, and Nahmanides all considered “Moses then convoked” to be the opening formula for the subject of the sanctuary. None of them paid heed to the fact that the Masoretes had marked the beginning of a new *parasha* or paragraph at 35:4 with the symbol (פ), which would be entirely out of place if 35:1 were indeed the opening for all that followed.

Ibn Ezra’s remarks in his short commentary came as an explicit retort to Saadyah Gaon, as cited by Ibn Ezra, who insisted that “these are the things” and “to do them” in 35:1 referred to the Sabbath, whose details followed in vv. 2–3, and not to the sanctuary. According to Saadyah, the plural objects referred to the 39 types of work which the Israelites were commanded to refrain from doing on the Sabbath (35:2–3).³³ In other words, the opening formula “Moses then convoked” introduced the law of the Sabbath and not the construction of the sanctuary.

The other medieval commentator who seems to agree with Saadyah is Rashi. Rashi did not deal explicitly with the object of the phrases “these are the things” and “to do them,” as did Saadyah. However, I sense his agreement with Saadyah based on his comment at 35:2: “He intentionally mentioned to them the prohibition in reference to the Sabbath *before the command about the building of the Tabernacle*” [em-

³² In both versions of his commentary, Ibn Ezra stresses that “the tabernacle and its vessels” are the plural objects of the words “these are the things,” “to do them.”

³³ The number of prohibited actions on the Sabbath (39) is a rabbinic concept (Mishnah Shabbat 7,2). Ibn Ezra in his retort (short version) rejects Saadyah’s explanation on the grounds that “to do them” refers to taking positive action, such as gathering items for the sanctuary, and not to refraining from action or prohibited work on the Sabbath.

phasis mine, I.G.]. This means that Rashi did not see ויקהל משה as the opening formula for the subject of the Sanctuary, which only comes later, at 35:4. For both Saadyah and Rashi, the command about the tabernacle begins at that verse with the words, “Moses said further to the whole community of Israelites: This is what the Lord has commanded,” זה הדבר.

Here are the comments of the medieval exegetes themselves:

MEDIEVAL COMMENTARIES

Rashi (35:1): “*And Moses assembled*” — ... It (the word ויקהל) is used in the verbal form that expresses the idea of causing a thing to be done, because one does not *actually* assemble people with one’s hands, but they are assembled by his command.

(35:2) “*Six days may work be done*” — He intentionally mentioned to them the prohibition in reference to the Sabbath before the command about the building of the tabernacle in order to intimate that it does not set aside (supersede) the Sabbath.

Rashbam: “*Moses convoked* [the whole Israelite community]”: In order to take from each of them half a shekel, and in order to instruct them³⁴ about the construction of the Tabernacle.

Ibn Ezra, short version: And the reason for [the choice of the word] *Vayaqhel*, because all of the community³⁵ was required to pay a ransom for themselves [a reference to the half-shekel in Exod 30:12]. The Gaon [Saadyah] said, that the words “these are the things” אלה הדברים refer to the commandment of the Sabbath, which is equated to all the other commandments by virtue of the chief works [*avot melakhot*—39 activities prohibited on the Sabbath]. But the correct explanation in my opinion is that “these are the things” refers to the items necessary for the tabernacle and its vessels, therefore the verse says, “to do them [in the plural].”

Ibn Ezra, long version: And the reason for [the choice of the word] *Vayaqhel*, that everyone hear from his [Moses] mouth about the Tabernacle, so that they all donate. And the meaning of “these are the things”—the Tabernacle and its vessels, which must be constructed; therefore it says, “to do them.”

Nahmanides: “*These are the things which the Eternal hath commanded, that ye should do them. Six days shall work be done.*” The expression, *these are the things which the Eternal hath commanded* refers to the construction of the Tabernacle, all its vessels and all its various works. He preceded [the explanation of the construction of the Tabernacle] with the law of the Sabbath, meaning

³⁴ *Lehazhiram* can also mean “to warn them,” see further.

³⁵ Ibn Ezra uses Heb. *Qabal*, a play on the opening word *Vayaqhel*.

to say that the work of *these things* should be done during the six days, but not on the seventh day which is *holy to G-d*. It is from here that we learn the principle that the work of the tabernacle does not set aside the Sabbath.

Both Rashi and Nahmanides cited the halakhic midrash that the Sanctuary may not be built on the Sabbath. As I pointed out above, this ruling was based on the juxtaposition of the Sabbath and the Sanctuary, which occurs several times in the Pentateuch, and on which the Rabbis commented that one may not construct the tabernacle on the Sabbath.³⁶

Nahmanides was relatively brief in his comments on Exod 35:1. However, upon reaching Lev 23:1–4, he realized that the text clearly contained two opening formulae, “These are my fixed times,” “These are the set times of the Lord.” They were not continuous but were separated by one verse. Further, the Masoretes had marked a new paragraph (*parasha*) before the second *incipit*. This was remarkably similar to the case of Exod 35:1–2: two opening formulae in vv. 1 and 4; two verses separating them which dealt with a different subject; the Masoretic sign of a new *parasha* (פ) after the “interruption” and before the second *incipit*. Here is the text of Leviticus and the comments of Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and Nahmanides:

3. LEVITICUS 23:1–4

1. וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר. 2. דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם מוֹעֲדֵי ה' אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ אֵלֶּה הֵם מוֹעֲדֵי. 3. שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲשֶׂה מְלֶאכֶה וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבַּת שַׁבְּתוֹן מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ כָּל מְלֶאכֶה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ שַׁבַּת הוּא לֵה' בְּכֹל מוֹשְׁבֹתֵיכֶם. (פ) 4. אֵלֶּה מוֹעֲדֵי ה' מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם בְּמוֹעֲדָם

1. The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: 2. “These are my fixed times, the fixed times of the Lord, which you shall proclaim as sacred occasions. 3. On six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there shall be a Sabbath of complete rest, a sacred occasion. You shall do no work; it shall be a Sabbath of the Lord throughout your settlements. 4. These are the set times of the Lord, the sacred occasions, which you shall celebrate each at its appointed time.”

³⁶ For example, BT Yebamot 6a: “For it was taught: Since it might have been assumed that the building of the sanctuary should supersede the Sabbath, it was explicitly stated, Ye shall keep My Sabbaths, and reverence My Sanctuary (Lev. 19:30); it is the duty of all of you to honor Me.” I did not find such a teaching for our verse, but Rashi’s language attests to a *derasha* based on adjacent passages.

MEDIEVAL COMMENTARIES

Rashi (23:3): *Six days* [may work be done but the seventh day is the Sabbath of strict rest]—What relation is there between the Sabbath and the festive seasons? *But by putting both into juxtaposition Scripture intends to teach you that he who desecrates the festivals is regarded as though he has desecrated the Sabbath, and that he who keeps the festivals is regarded as though he had kept the Sabbath* (Siphra).

(23:4): *These are the appointed festivals of the Lord*—Above (v. 2), where similar words are used, Scripture is speaking of proclaiming the year to be a leap-year, here it is speaking of the קדוש החדש, sanctification of the month.

Ibn Ezra (23:2): ... and the reason to say, “These are My fixed times” [in the plural] because there are many Sabbaths in a year.

Nahmanides (23:2): The correct interpretation appears to me to be that the meaning of the verse *the appointed seasons of the Eternal, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are My appointed seasons*, is that it refers [only] to the festivals mentioned further on in the sections: *In the first month* etc. [but it does not refer to the Sabbath]. It is for this reason that He states there once again, *These are the appointed seasons of the Eternal*, because He had interrupted with the subject of the Sabbath. Thus He states, *the appointed seasons of the Eternal, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are My appointed seasons*, meaning that no manner of servile work be done on them, but the Sabbath you are to keep, making it *a Sabbath of solemn rest* from all manner of work whatsoever, for He admonishes concerning the Sabbath many times. He further alludes here [to the law that even] when the Sabbath falls on one of the days of the festivals, we must not suspend [the law of the Sabbath] so that the preparation of food be permitted on it [as it is when it falls on a weekday, but instead it is prohibited].

A similar case [where the phrase *these are* refers to the continuation of a subject which had previously been mentioned, because in the middle Scripture interrupts with another subject], is the verse, *These are the words which the Eternal hath commanded, that ye should do them* [Ex. 35:1], which refers to the tabernacle and its vessels which he [Moses] will mention in the second section, and [in the next verses] he interrupts with the Sabbath: *Six days shall work be done, and on the seventh day there shall be to you a holy day* etc.; and then he again says, *This is the thing which the eternal commanded... Take ye from among you an offering*, this being the [same] command that Scripture had mentioned at the beginning, but because it was interrupted with another subject, Scripture had to start from the beginning again.

COMMENT

Rashi refers to the juxtaposition of the Sabbath and the festivals and derives from it a moral, as cited in *Sifra*, the tannaitic midrash on Leviticus. His comment on v. 4, “These are the set times of the Lord,” takes notice of the earlier opening sentence, “These are my fixed times” (23:2), but explains, in the fashion of rabbinic interpretation, that each opening comes to teach a different law. He makes no mention of the fact that the Sabbath is not a festival and hence cannot be included under the rubric of “sacred occasions” (23:2) nor does he note that these two opening formulae that introduce a single topic are practically identical. Both of his comments are in the midrashic mode; the first is derived from juxtaposition and the second isolates each verse in order to teach a separate lesson. There is absolutely no attention paid to the entire context.

Ibn Ezra, as opposed to Rashi, thinks that the opening verse, “These are My fixed times,” introduces the Sabbath or Sabbaths of the year, hence the plural “times.” Presumably, he thinks that the second *incipit* in v. 4 is the introduction to the festivals that follow. Despite their differences, Ibn Ezra, like Rashi, is not bothered by a sense of duplication or repetition in vv. 2 and 4. Neither is he troubled by the interpretive crux: How can the Sabbath be included among festive days which have to be declared by the people (“which you shall proclaim as sacred occasions,” Lev 23:2) if the Sabbath is divinely ordained and not at all dependent on the lunar calendar?

Nahmanides (Ramban) stands far apart from them in his reading of the text. Ramban understood that the subject of the entire chapter was the holy days, not the Sabbath. The two introductory formulae, “These are My fixed times” (Lev 23:2), “These are the set times of the Lord” (23:4) are separated by a single verse about the Sabbath (Lev 23:3). The Sabbath must therefore be seen as an interpolation and interruption. Because the subject of the holy days was abruptly ceased, biblical style called for a resumption of the main subject, worded as closely as possible to the original opening. That is why vv. 2 and 4 are practically identical. In the twentieth century, this style was termed resumptive repetition or *Wiederaufnahme*.³⁷

The similarity of Lev 23 to our case, noted Nahmanides, is striking. In Exod 35, after the introductory “Moses then convoked,” the subject of the Sanctuary is interrupted, as it

³⁷ Nahmanides was partial to this phenomenon and made frequent use of it in his commentary. See S. Talmon, “The Presentation of Synchronicity and Simultaneity in Biblical Narrative,” *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 27 (1978), 9–26.

were, by two verses about the Sabbath, 35:2–3.³⁸ In v. 4, the text returns to deal with the Sanctuary. Like Lev 23:4, Exod 35:4 is also marked as a new *parasha* or pericope. If so, we should be looking for two formulaic openings in the four verses of Exod 35:1–4 as well.

This is exactly what Nahmanides proceeds to do. In his comments on Lev 23, Nahmanides identifies the opening formula for the tabernacle and its implements in Exod 35 not with the phrase “Moses then convoked,” but rather with the remainder of that verse: “These are the words אלה הדברים which the Eternal hath commanded, that ye should do them” (Exod 35:1). He then uses the words for ‘interruption’ (*hifsig*) and ‘resumption’ (*hazar ve-‘amar*) several times in this passage. He notes that resuming the subject of the tabernacle after an interruption about the Sabbath requires a return to the opening formula or as close to it as possible (*hazar, lahazar u-lehathil barishona*). The resumptive repetition took the form of a second *incipit*, זה הדבר, “This is what the Lord has commanded: Take from among you gifts to the Lord” (35:4–5).

Nahmanides’ ear for biblical style was perfectly tuned; the two phrases, אלה הדברים “these are the words” and זה הדבר “this is the thing (which the Lord has commanded),” are indeed, as we shall soon see, standard introductory formulae. In both Exod 35 and Lev 23, Nahmanides saw the need for a resumptive repetition following an interruption; this was his explanation for what appeared to be, in each case, two introductory formulae for a single subject.³⁹ We might say that Nahmanides raised resumptive repetitions to the status of a rule that he applied equally to both cases. The application of such a rule, rather than offering an *ad hoc* solution for each problem, lent the interpretation a sense of universal validity. This was a feature of the *pesbat* approach that Nahmanides advocated.⁴⁰

³⁸ In both pericopes, the Sabbath interrupts the main subject. On this issue, see below.

³⁹ In Leviticus, Nahmanides realized that in each case we were dealing with two separate *parashot*, for so they are marked by the Masoretes. Nonetheless, he viewed each case as a single subject that had been interrupted and then resumed, albeit in a new chapter.

⁴⁰ Nahmanides’ exegetical approach is quite complex; see B. Septimus, “Open Rebuke and Concealed Love: Nahmanides and the Andalusian Tradition,” in I. Twersky (ed.), *Rabbi Moses Nahmanides (Ramban): Explorations in His Religious and Literary Virtuosity* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983), 17–23; Y. Elman, “Moses ben Nahman/Nahmanides (Ramban),” in M. Saebø (ed.), *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation. Vol. I/2*, 416–32.

To sum up, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, and even Nahmanides at Exod 35⁴¹ all saw in the phrase “Moses convoked” an opening formula to a single subject, the tabernacle. In contrast, Rashi and Saadyah both saw the first three verses (35:1–3) as an independent *parasha* dealing with the Sabbath. Saadyah’s opinion was related by Ibn Ezra in his short commentary: “The *Gaon* [Saadyah] said, that the words ‘these are the things’ אלה הדברים refer to the commandment of the Sabbath, which is equated to all the other commandments by virtue of the chief works [*avot melakhot*—39 activities prohibited on the Sabbath].” Saadyah mentioned the 39 activities to justify the plural form, “these are the things.” It is possible that Saadyah, like Nahmanides, identified “these are the things” (35:1) as the introductory phrase (*incipit*) to the Sabbath, rather than “Moses convoked,” but this is not certain.⁴²

Is the phrase “Moses convoked” (*vayaqhel Moshe*) a formulaic opening? To judge by its various appearances, *vayaqhel* does not qualify as an opening formula.⁴³ However, both אלה הדברים and זה הדבר are exclusively formulaic.⁴⁴ These are the very phrases respectively cited by Nahmanides (Lev 23:2) as the opening formula and its resumptive repetition in Exod 35. In his view, what we actually have in Exod 35 are two separate sections, one on the Sabbath (35:1–3) and the other about the tabernacle and its vessels (35:4–40:38), each headed up by separate but related introductory phrases.

⁴¹ Nahmanides changed his mind at Lev 23, as explained above. For Nahmanides’ use of resumptive repetition, see I.B. Gottlieb, *Order in the Bible* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press/Bar-Ilan Press, 2009 [Hebrew]), 331.

⁴² We actually have Saadyah’s commentary to Exodus as preserved in Geniza manuscripts, chief among them an MS in St. Petersburg (Leningrad) containing his comments on Exod 27–40. These were published by Y. Ratzaby, *Rav Saadya’s Commentary on Exodus* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1998 [Hebrew]). On p. 241, commenting on our verse, Saadyah writes: “And so far as the phrase ‘these are the things,’ אלה הדברים we think it would have been more appropriate to write ‘this is the thing’ זה הדבר since we are speaking of the (single) commandment of the Sabbath. But it was not written thus because the Sabbath has many matters, many prohibitions and many positive customs...”

⁴³ *Vayaqhel* appears seven times in the Bible, twice in the Pentateuch. Of the latter, one incidence is our case, while the second is actually an expression of closure: “Korah gathered (*vayaqhel*) the whole community against them at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. Then the Presence of the Lord appeared to the whole community” (Num 16:19). Of the remaining five cases, two are in the middle of a story, one stands at the beginning of a chapter but not necessarily as an opening word, another is a beginning but does not stand at the beginning of a chapter, while only in 1Chr 28:1 *vayaqhel* is definitely an opening phrase.

⁴⁴ See Gottlieb, “Introductory Formulae,” 37–9; idem, *Order in the Bible*, 37–9, 39–41. In the case of *elle ha-devarim*, it is a closing formula as well.

Why was the *parasha* on the Sabbath inserted prior to the chapter about the tabernacle? We have already noted that the Sabbath and the tabernacle are mentioned together several times in the Pentateuch, even in the same verse.⁴⁵ Israel Knohl has noted that the rabbinic midrash prohibiting work on the tabernacle on the Sabbath day may be the simple and straightforward message carried by the juxtaposition of these passages.⁴⁶ Exod 35 may be another example of this tendency.

CRITICAL SCHOLARSHIP

Nahum Sarna notes at Exod 31:12: “The concluding—and, appropriately, the seventh—literary unit within the pericope of the instructions for the tabernacle is devoted to the observance of the law of the Sabbath. Correspondingly, the resumption of the tabernacle narrative in ch. 35 commences with the Sabbath law.”⁴⁷ At 35:1, he writes: “Just as the divine instructions about the Tabernacle concluded with the law of the Sabbath rest, so the narrative about its construction commences on the same theme—to the same purpose,” sending his readers back to his comment on 31:12–17.⁴⁸ The connection he draws between the two *parashot* supports a relation of resumption between them, as he himself says. While Sarna speaks of resumption, not of resumptive repetition, it appears that the thematic resumption in Exod 35:2 is repetitive in language as well.⁴⁹

Baruch Levine outlines the subject matter of Lev 23 and comments: “The above outline, especially the two superscriptions, shows the composite character of chapter 23. The Sabbath law has been appended to the beginning of the cal-

⁴⁵ E.g., Exod 31:11–13; 35:1–5; Lev 19:30 (same verse); 26:2 (same verse).

⁴⁶ I. Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 16; J. Milgrom, *Leviticus* (AB, 3B; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 1955. Y. Zakovitch, *An Introduction to Inner-Biblical Interpretation* (Even-Yehuda: Reches Publishing House, 1992 [Hebrew]) has made the point that most midrashic methods, such as learning from adjacency, were already employed in the Bible itself.

⁴⁷ N.M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus שמות* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 201.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 222. Presumably, Sarna meant to relate the tabernacle and the Sabbath through the theme of holiness in space and time.

⁴⁹ I would contend that Exod 35:2 opens with a resumptive repetition on the subject of the Sabbath: “On six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death.” Compare this with 31:15, the verse it is resuming: “Six days work may be done; but on the seventh day there shall be a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does work on the sabbath day shall be put to death.” This is practically a literal repetition, a sure sign of *Wiederaufnahme*.

endar proper, and verses 39–43 have been similarly added at the end, after it seemed that the calendar was complete.”⁵⁰ If however the Sabbath is a later addition, then the opening superscriptions never had the Sabbath in mind, only the festivals. If so, why does Levine have difficulty (in his commentary) with the use of the word *mo'ed* in v. 2 to include the Sabbath? Nahmanides' idea that the superscription in v. 4 resumes the subject of the festivals after an interruption avoids this problem; indeed, both superscriptions in vv. 2 and 4 never had the Sabbath in mind.

Bernard Levinson sees “editorial devices as cues to textual reformation.”⁵¹ Two devices in particular which provide evidence of editorial activity are the resumptive repetition (Levinson prefers “repetitive resumption”) and Seidel's law, which may come together or separately. One of his examples is Lev 23.

The inclusion of the Sabbath within the festival calendar ... is disruptive both on topical and formal grounds. That secondary inclusion, which aims at a greater comprehensiveness, is marked by a repetitive resumption. The editor frames Lev 23:3 with v. 4, which repeats the verse before the interpolation (Lev 23:2) according to Seidel's law.⁵²

However, citing Talmon, Levinson notes that repetitive resumption may function as a compositional device and need not necessarily point to editorial activity or textual reworking. This would have been a particularly good case in which to cite Nahmanides' understanding of resumptive repetition.

Milgrom discusses the introductory formula in Lev 23 at length. He cites Levinson as saying that v. 1 was the heading of the original calendar and v. 4 was a resumptive repetition “in order to form the introverted structure of vv. 1–4.”⁵³ Milgrom himself rejects this argument and thinks that the Sabbath in Lev 23 is an interpolation. He further cites David Hoffman, who

tries to counter these arguments by pointing to Exod 35:1–3, which begins *elleh haddebarim aser-simma YHYH la'asot 'otam*, literally, ‘these are the things that YWYH commanded to do them.’ This heading cannot refer to the Sabbath, the subject that immediately follows (vv. 2–3), because on the Sabbath one

⁵⁰ B. Levine, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Leviticus* אִשְׁרֵי (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 154.

⁵¹ This is actually the title of a division in the first chapter of B.M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 17.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 19–20.

⁵³ Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1954.

does not ‘do’ anything. Rather, it applies to the following subject, the construction of the Tabernacle (vv. 4ff.).

Milgrom concurs that “he is absolutely correct regarding Exod 35:1 as the true heading for the long story of the construction of the sanctuary (Exod 35:4–39:43)” but this is because Milgrom, unlike Hoffman, thinks that the Sabbath at Exod 35:2–3 is also an interpolation. Milgrom’s idea that Exod 35:1 does not refer exclusively to the Sabbath but rather to the construction of the tabernacle, as we have seen, was the subject of discussion also among the medieval exegetes. I would like to point out that despite Milgrom’s comment that “on the Sabbath one does not ‘do’ anything,” the verb “to do” לעשות does indeed appear frequently in reference to the Sabbath: In the Sabbath *parasha* (Exod 31:12–17), it appears five times. Perhaps the most memorable reference is Gen 2:3, אשר ברא אלהים לעשות, “all the work of creation that He had done.” It is then found in Exod 35:1, “These are the things that the Lord has commanded you to do” לעשות and may indeed be the *incipit* for the Sabbath, as Saadyah and Rashi maintained.

Propp seems to have accepted the view of the exegetes that Exod 35:1 introduces both the Sabbath and the tabernacle. “One might think that the ‘words’ [הדברים] in 35:1 are the Sabbath commands alone. In the larger context, however, Moses is actually introducing all his discourse in 35:2–36:1 concerning both the Sabbath and the Tabernacle.”⁵⁴ In light of the critical view which sees vv. 2–3 as an interpolation, Propp’s silence on this issue is surprising. In his case, we might say that the medieval interpretation was adopted *in toto* by one proponent of the historical-critical school.

My final example, like the first, is a case of the most basic form of dual superscription: two initial verses in one pericope. Unlike the previous examples, however, this occurrence went unnoticed by the classic medieval exegetes. It was a Renaissance scholar who first hinted at the possibility of a composite opening in this text. Initially, Rabbi Obadiah Sforno of Italy (1475–1550) seems to have adopted the same approach as Nahmanides, relying on resumptive repetition to explain the duplication. However, he then proceeds to suggest a more original solution. Scholars have connected the stress on *peshat* interpretation in Northern France with the “small renaissance” (*petite renaissance*) in 12th century France. Can we ascribe Sforno’s critical perception to the major renaissance of 15th century Italy?⁵⁵ If I understand his remarks

⁵⁴ Propp, *Exodus*, 659.

⁵⁵ Z. Gottlieb, the editor of *R. Obadiah Sforno’s Torah Commentary* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1980 [Hebrew]), 28, thought so: “Sforno was typical of the time and place in which he lived—the renaissance in Italy.

correctly, his explanation in fact points in the direction of a dual superscription.

4. LEVITICUS 16:1–2

1. וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה אַחֲרֵי מוֹת שְׁנֵי בְנֵי אֶהֱרֹן בְּקִרְבָּתָם לִפְנֵי-ה'
וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה דַּבֵּר אֶל-אֶהֱרֹן אַחִיד וְאֵל-יָבֵא בְכָל-עַת
אֶל-הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִבֵּית לְפָרְכָת אֶל-פְּנֵי הַכַּפֹּרֶת אֲשֶׁר עַל-הָאֹרֹן וְלֹא יָמוּת
כִּי בְעֵנָן אֶרְאֶה עַל-הַכַּפֹּרֶת:

1. The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they drew too close to the presence of the Lord. 2. The Lord said to Moses:

Tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come at will not the Shrine behind the curtain, in front of the cover that is upon the ark, lest he die; for I appear in the cloud over the cover.

R. Obadiah Sforno (16:1): The word “and he spoke” (וַיְדַבֵּר) does not generally introduce the contents of speech but rather the general act of speaking. Therefore it is often followed by the verb “saying” (לֹאמַר) to indicate the particular message. Likewise the text here reads, “The Lord spoke to Moses after the death... and He said to him.” But because Scripture took the time to tell that it was after the death of the two sons, it did not write [in the second verse] “and He said to him” (וַיֹּאמֶר) (אֵלָיו) but repeated that the Lord was the speaker and the listener was Moses (אֶל-מֹשֶׁה) (וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה)—“The Lord said to Moses.”⁵⁶

COMMENT

Sforno’s use of the term “repeated” (*hazar ve-bizkir*) is reminiscent of Nahmanides’ use of the same words for *Wieder-aufnahme* or resumptive repetition.⁵⁷ However, as we are dealing with two adjacent verses, what need is there for a resumption? Do the nine intervening words in v. 1, “after the

He was a synthesis of Torah and wisdom, deep faith together with a desire to know things as they really were, to the point where reason could reach.” A sign of his open mindedness may be seen in the fact that the Christian Hebraist Johannes Reuchlin studied with him sometime after 1498; see S. Kessler Mesguich, “Early Christian Hebraists,” in M. Saebø (ed.), *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation. Vol. II*, 258.

⁵⁶ וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה אַחֲרֵי מוֹת. הִנֵּה תִיבֵת "וַיְדַבֵּר" בְּלִשׁוֹן הַקֹּדֶשׁ לֹא תִפֹּל
בָּרַב עַל חֲלָקֵי הַדְּבָר, אֲבָל תִּפֹּל עַל מִשְׁךְ הַדְּבָר בְּכָלֵל. וְלִכֵּן אַחֲרֵי לִשׁוֹן הַדְּבָר
יָבֵא בָרַב לִשׁוֹן הָאִמְרָה הַפְּרָטִית. אֲמַר, אִם כֵּן, "וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה אַחֲרֵי מוֹת...
וַיֹּאמֶר.. דַּבֵּר אֶל אֶהֱרֹן אַחִיד". וּמִפְּנֵי שֶׁהָאִרִיד בְּסִפּוֹר "אַחֲרֵי מוֹת" לֹא כָּתוּב
'וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו', אֲבָל חִזֵּר וְהִזְכִּיר הָאֵל יְתִבֵּר הָאֵל יְתִבֵּר הָאֵל וּמֹשֶׁה הַשּׁוֹמֵעַ.

⁵⁷ Above, Lev 23:2, Nahmanides wrote *hazar ve-amar*, translated as “and then he again says.” The words *hazar ve-bizkir* are to be found in Nahmanides’ commentary, Exod 20:14; Deut 9:4; and with a slight variation (*hazar le-bazkir*), Lev 21:17.

death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they drew too close to the presence of the Lord,” constitute such a lengthening that the text now requires a return to the original topic? Evidently Sforino saw in 16:1 a variation on the standard opening formula, “And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying.”⁵⁸ The variant opening left out the word “saying” and added two adverbial phrases, “after the death of,” “when they drew too close to the presence of the Lord.” In Sforino’s opinion, this deviation from the standard opening demanded a resumptive repetition in the next verse.⁵⁹

While I find Sforino’s explanation forced, his insight into Biblical style is invaluable. In effect, he was asking why we need two opening formulae, *wayyedabber Adonay el Moshe* (16:1), and *wayyomer Adonay el Moshe* (16:2). Perhaps he himself sensed that resumptive repetition was not the proper explanation in this case. He therefore proceeded to a second idea which, though based on rabbinic sources, is quite radical in its implications:

According to some of our rabbis, of blessed memory, there were two separate dictates; the import of the verses would then be as follows: “The Lord spoke to Moses and said to him to speak with Aaron that he is not to come [...] lest he die.” And after the death of Aaron’s two sons, He said to Moses: “Speak with Aaron that he is not to come [to the sanctuary] more than he is commanded lest he die the way his sons died, because they were zealous to offer more incense than they were commanded. And this second dictate was to chasten him more than the first.”⁶⁰

Sforino is suggesting that our text is conflated. The original chapter was addressed to Aaron before the incident on the eighth day of inauguration, and had one opening formula. It was then repeated to Aaron with a different opening, this time making reference to the death of his sons. As novel as this proposition is, Sforino actually relies on rabbinic statements in Talmud and Midrash for support. Thus, the final sentence in Sforino’s comment, “And this second dictate was

⁵⁸ This formula is used in Leviticus alone 35 times and in the Priestly code over 70 times.

⁵⁹ Note this parallel: “The narrative introduction to the divine speech in 16:1a α is resumed in v. 2 a α , except that the verb אמר has now replaced דבר” (C. Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch: A Study in the Composition of the Book of Leviticus* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007], 97 n. 112).

⁶⁰ אָבֵל לְדַבְרֵי קִצֵּת מִרְבוּתֵינוּ ז' ל' הָיוּ שְׁנֵי דְבוּרִים, וַיְהִי שְׁעוֹר הַכְּתוּב "וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה" וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו "דַּבֵּר אֶל אֶהֱרֹן.. וְאֵל יִבְא.. וְלֹא יָמוּת". וְ"אֶתְּרֵי מוֹת שְׁנֵי בְנֵי אֶהֱרֹן" אָמַר לְמֹשֶׁה "דַּבֵּר אֶל אֶהֱרֹן.. וְאֵל יִבְא" שְׁלֹא יִכְנָס יוֹתֵר מִמֶּה שְׁצִוָּה "וְלֹא יָמוּת", כְּדֶרֶךְ שְׁמֵתוֹ בְּנֵיו בְּהִיּוֹתָם הוֹרְסִים לַעֲשׂוֹת קִטְרֵת יוֹתֵר מִמֶּה שְׁצִוָּה. וְזֶה 'לְזָרוּ יוֹתֵר מִן הָרִאשׁוֹן'.

to chasten him more than the first,” is reminiscent of the midrash which Rashi cites in his comment on this verse:

Rashi (16:1): —*And the Lord spake unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron etc.*—What is this *statement* intended to tell us? Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah illustrated this by a parable: *It may be compared to the case of a sick person whom the physician visited.* He (the physician) came and said to him: “Do not eat cold *things*, nor sleep in a damp place!” Another *physician* came and said to him: “Do not eat cold *things*, nor sleep in a damp place so that thou mayest not die as Mr. So-and-so died!” *Certainly* this (the latter) put him on his guard more than the former; that is why Scripture states “after the death of the two sons of Aaron” (Siphra).

(16:2): —The Lord said to Moses: Tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come—that he die not as his sons have died.

Ostensibly the midrash is responding to the phrase “after the death of the two sons of Aaron.” What is the connection between the deaths of Nadab and Abihu and this *parasha* that deals with the ritual of atonement on Yom Kippur and the purification of the Sanctuary? To answer this question, the midrash converted the adverbial phrase of time spoken by the narrator, “after the death of the two sons of Aaron,” into part of the Lord’s message to Moses. God’s words to Moses were as follows: “The Lord spoke to Moses: ‘After the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they drew too close to the presence of the Lord, tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come at will to the Shrine behind the curtain, in front of the cover that is upon the ark, lest he die; for I appear in the cloud over the cover.’” The death of Aaron’s sons is thus the reason that Aaron should not approach the Sanctuary at will.

Sforno did not interpret the midrashic parable as Rashi did. Where Rashi spoke of two doctors, the second making his warning more personal than the first, Sforno understood the parable to speak of one doctor who gave two different warnings. In this way, Sforno used the parable to answer his own question—why were there two superscriptions to this chapter?⁶¹ Sforno’s answer is that each opening formula was said at a different occasion. The first opened with the words “*vayyedabber, vayyomer,*” and was used to head the chapter on the atonement ritual which Moses relayed to Aaron *before* the incident of Nadab and Abihu. Later on, *after* the incident, the chapter was repeated to Aaron, this time with the *incipit*, “Tell (*dabber*) your brother Aaron that he is not to come at will to the Shrine behind the curtain, in front of the cover that is

⁶¹ Sforno does not actually cite the parable, save for the closing sentence, “to chasten him more than the first,” which shows that he was basing his reasoning on it.

upon the ark,” and with the added warning, “lest he die the way his sons died.” Sforino relies on a Talmudic discussion to claim that the chapter was recounted before the incident of Nadab and Abihu as well as afterward.⁶²

CRITICAL SCHOLARSHIP

Christophe Nihan notes that “the discussion on the genesis of Lev 16 is remarkably complex, so much so that it is even difficult to summarize.”⁶³ The uniqueness of the introductory formula(e) in Lev 16:1–2 was noted by many scholars, and this observation led to many hypotheses. Wilfried Warning devoted a mini-chapter to Lev 16:1–2; in his count of “divine speeches” in Leviticus, he finds 16:1 to be “a distinct DS.”⁶⁴ He also viewed Lev 16:1 as a repetitive resumption that harkened back to Lev 10, the story of Nadab and Abihu.⁶⁵ Nihan himself thinks that

the introduction in 16:1, with its reference to the death of Nadab and Abihu, was a late interpolation inserted when Lev 10 was added. In this respect, the classical view that the introduction to the ritual in v. 1–2 is not from one hand, and that v. 1 is manifestly later than v. 2, may be accepted.⁶⁶

In light of both parts of Sforino’s comments, I would venture to say that v. 2 alone was the original opening of ch. 16, introducing an annual ceremony to cleanse the temple of impurities and to achieve atonement for those sins relating to the Sanctuary. On the ordained day of the ritual, the tenth of the first month, Aaron was to enter and offer up incense on the altar of gold. Verse 2 is thus aligned with the closing of the *parasha*, “This shall be to you a law for all time: to make atonement for the Israelites for all their sins once a year” (Lev 16:34).

The prohibition to enter the sanctuary in v. 2 had nothing to do with the deaths of Nadab and Abihu; it prohibited even the High Priest to enter the Holy of Holies under penalty of death, save for this annual ceremony. However, several chapters earlier, the sons of Aaron had entered the Sanctuary’s premises on the eighth day of the ordination period,

⁶² b. Yoma 53a.

⁶³ Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 340.

⁶⁴ Warning, *Literary Artistry*, 42–6. In his view, it actually holds a central position in Leviticus, being speech 17 out of 35.

⁶⁵ For this he cites Blum, *Studien*, 318, note 119: “Im übrigen deutet der Rückgriff auf Lev 10 (den Tod der beiden Aaron-Söhne im Heiligtum) in Lev 16,1 keineswegs, wie gern argumentiert wird, auf einen ursprünglich unmittelbaren Anschluss an Lev 10, sondern gewinnt gerade als Wiederaufnahme über die Reinheitstorot in 11–15 hinweg seinen Sinn.”

⁶⁶ Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 346.

offered incense without being commanded to do so, and were immediately stricken. It thus seemed the perfect illustration for what Aaron was now being warned not to do.⁶⁷ In order to relate this chapter to that incident, a second superscription was formulated; v. 1 served to link ritual law with the earlier narrative.

I offer two proofs for this thesis: First, v. 1 uses the expression “when they drew too close to the presence of the Lord” (בקרבתם לפני ה'). The root *qrb* “to draw near” appears eleven times in the story of Nadab and Abihu (Lev 9). Yet in the present chapter, with the exception of v. 1, the root does not appear at all. If indeed this pericope followed on the heels of the incident, in place of “let him not come close to the sanctuary,” (ואל יבא בכל עת אל הקדש) one would have expected “let him not draw near,” ואל יקרב. In fact we find exactly this phrase in Num 17:5, “so that no outsider—one not of Aaron’s offspring—should presume to offer incense,” using the phrase *yiqrab* (למען אשר לא יקרב איש זר).

Second, throughout the books of Leviticus and Numbers, the standard opening formula is: “The Lord spoke to Moses, saying,” וידבר ה' אל משה לאמר. It appears as such over 70 times. Outside the Priestly literature, however, the formula drops the word “saying.”⁶⁸ Within the Priestly literature, this superscription appears without the word “saying” (לאמר) only once—in our verse, 16:1.⁶⁹ This would seem to indicate that the verse differs in style from all the other chapter openings in Leviticus. My contention is that this verse was secondary.

The idea that this chapter originally had no connection with the earlier incident of Nadab and Abihu could also explain why it was not placed adjacent to ch. 9. For as Ibn Ezra already noted, ch. 16 follows directly from the preceding chapters, 11–15, all of which deal with laws of ritual uncleanness, *tum'ah*, and the possibility that those who were ritually unclean had entered the sacred precincts; it was for them that the atonement and purification ritual of ch. 16 was ordained.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Namely, he was being warned not to enter the sanctuary unless commanded; likewise Nadab and Abihu did that “which He had not enjoined upon them” (Lev 10:1).

⁶⁸ M. Paran, *Forms of the Priestly Style in the Pentateuch* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1989 [Hebrew]), 223.

⁶⁹ Warning, *Literary Artistry*, 42–3, connects the absence of לאמר in Lev. 16:1, 2, and 21:1, but in my opinion these passages need to be distinguished.

⁷⁰ Ibn Ezra on Lev 16:1: “*After the death*—After warning the Israelites that they shall not die [a reference to Lev 15:31, “You shall put the Israelites on guard against their uncleanness, lest they die through their uncleanness by defiling My tabernacle”], the Lord told Moses to warn Aaron as well lest he die as did his sons.” I would omit the final words “lest he

This supposition can also provide an answer to the following question raised by Knohl:

According to the simple meaning of Lev 10:1, it seems that their sin was that they did not take from the holy fire burning upon the altar, as we find written in the Targumim and in the writings of the sages... Lev 16:1–2, on the other hand, seems to indicate that the sin was in the very approach to the holy.⁷¹

Indeed there is a difference in the formulation of the sin between 10:1 and 16:1.⁷² Chapter 10 describes the actual sin: bringing a strange fire with incense onto the altar. This, however, would not bring the sin into the rubric of ch. 16, entering the precincts of the Sanctuary unless commanded (16:2). Therefore 16:1 connects their sin to the general prohibition against entering the sanctuary without summons by formulating it in more general terms—“when they drew near to the sanctuary and died.”⁷³

die as did his sons” and concur with Ibn Ezra that the warning to Aaron was identical to the earlier warning to the people: both were warned against entering the tabernacle, either in a state of uncleanness or uncommanded. S.R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1913), 46, citing Kuenen and Wellhausen, similarly justifies the order of chapters 8–16: “They come *after* the consecration of the priests, whose functions concerning the ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’ they regulate, and *before* the law of the Day of Atonement, on which the sanctuary is cleansed from the pollutions caused by involuntary uncleanness of priests and people.” J. Milgrom, *Leviticus* (AB, 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 639, adds: “Finally, it is hardly an accident that the story of Nadab and Abihu is followed by the laws of impurity (chaps. 11–15). To be sure, this story adds the impurity of corpse contamination to those in the subsequent impurity collection which must be purged on Yom Kippur (see 16:1).” According to all these explanations, the place of chapter 16 is where it should be, following the laws of ritual defilement.

⁷¹ Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence*, 150 n. 108.

⁷² *Pace* Knohl, Lev 16:2 makes no reference to Nadab and Abihu.

⁷³ B.J. Schwartz, *The Holiness Legislation: Studies in the Priestly Code* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1999 [Hebrew]), 19 n. 23: “The superscription of Lev 16, ‘after the death of,’ teaches that according to the narrator, the command of the annual atonement ritual was given after the deaths of Nadab and Abihu (ch. 10)... The very title, ‘after the death of,’ bears witness that the present arrangement [of the chapters], with its chronological deviation, is the original order. If chapter 16 were the original continuation of chapter 10 from the literary viewpoint, there would be no room for such a title as we find in chapter 16.” This argument—that adverbial clauses of time and place that seem to indicate chronological deviation are really proof that the Torah is concerned about chronology—was already made by Nahmanides, on Lev 25:1, and independently by M. Sternberg, “Time and Space in Biblical (Hi)story Telling: The Grand Chronology,” in R.M. Schwartz (ed.), *The Book and the Text: the Bible and Literary Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 14–81. However, in my opinion, Lev 16 is not one of those cases. As explained above, quite the opposite is

To conclude, the adoption of the idea of dual *incipits* for this text can resolve several problems and Sforno's comments seem to point in this direction.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I examined four cases of dual superscriptions. In all of them, I found some reference to the concept of "opening formulae" among one or more of the traditional exegetes. Some commentators found duplication in the opening phrases, others explained the text in a way that did away with dual *incipits*. Nahmanides explained two cases (Exod 35, Lev 23) as the result of resumptive repetition. Sforno, the latest of the commentators cited, suggested that the dual *incipit* in Lev 16 was the result of what we would call a conflate text. Overall, these comments of medieval Jewish exegetes and those who followed in their wake show an awareness of literary problems, although they did not formulate their comments as such.⁷⁴

true: the superscription "after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they drew too close to the presence of the Lord" is a secondary attempt to create adjacency for two portions, Lev 10 and Lev 16, that were never intrinsically connected, thus creating an artificial case of *en muqdam umeubar ba-torah*, "there is no earlier or later in the Torah." See Nihan's view in note 66 above.

⁷⁴ I want to thank Eric Lawee for reading this paper and for his helpful suggestions, as well as the referees of *JHS* who commented on a former version of this article.