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The Seventy in Scripture

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We know at least two things about the priesthood office of the seventy. Jesus called seventy disciples to serve alongside the twelve (Luke 10:1, 17), and the mission of the seventies in our day is to minister principally to Gentiles (D&C 107:25). When we have said this much, two questions arise: why the number seventy and why to Gentiles? I suggest that the key to both questions lies in a largely neglected corner of the Old Testament – the catalog of the descendants of Noah in Genesis 10. But before examining this “table of the nations,” it will be necessary for us to demonstrate that our contemporary office of the seventy had its counterpart within the tribal system of ancient Israel.

One of the earliest notations of the number seventy appears in the summarizing observation that “all the persons of the house of Jacob, that came into Egypt, were seventy” (Genesis 46:27, RSV). Here the number seventy represents the sum of the number of names listed in the preceding verses (Genesis 46:8-25).¹ Interestingly, this figure is repeated a few chapters later, where we read, “And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls” (Exodus 1:5).² But there is a problem here that requires explanation. For English readers of the scriptures, the problem passage occurs in Stephen’s famous speech before his martyrdom when he said, “And Joseph sent and called to him Jacob his father and all his kindred, seventy-five souls” (Acts 7:14, RSV). Why does this number differ

from those in the Pentateuch? At first glance, the answer is rather straightforward. Both Stephen who gave the speech and Luke who recorded it were reared in the Greek world, the former possibly a Hellenistic Jew³ like Paul and the latter possibly a Gentile.⁴ Consequently, each of them had become acquainted with the Old Testament in its Greek translation, the Septuagint. We can further observe that for the passages already cited from Genesis chapter 46 and Exodus chapter 1, the Greek version reads seventy-five while the Hebrew text says seventy. Thus, quite naturally, both Stephen and Luke repeated the number seventy-five, a sum with which they were familiar from the Septuagint's account of Jacob's removal to Egypt. The question next arises as to which number was primary and which was secondary. Although the evidence is not everywhere unequivocal and is rather complex, in my view the answer is that the original number was seventy, not seventy-five.

Almost every commentator agrees both that the earliest number in Genesis 46 was seventy and that it tallied the names in the list here of Jacob's male descendants, thus offering a patriarchal roster.⁵ The figure seventy was arrived at by including Er and Onan, Judah's sons who died before the Egyptian migration (Genesis 46:12; cf. Genesis 38:6-10) and by excluding Jacob himself (Genesis 46:8) as well as his daughter Dinah (Genesis 46:15).⁶ That this list of seventy had been fixed in formulaic terms and was thus regarded with great respect can be seen in the regularly repeated plural "sons of" applied to the one son of Dan (Genesis 46:23).⁷ The masculine patriarchal cast of this catalog is underscored when one notes that before or during its inclusion in the narrative of Genesis 46, it was modified to serve a different purpose, namely, to show the number of descendants—whether male or female—who accompanied Jacob into Egypt. This new total was sixty-six (Genesis 46:26) because it excluded, naturally, Joseph and his two sons who were already living in Egypt (Genesis 46:20)⁸

and the deceased Er and Onan, which left a total of sixty-five. But it reckoned Dinah, making a total of sixty-six. Thus the modified register of sixty-six became mixed in its gender by including Dinah and consequently diminished the distinctively patriarchal flavor associated with the original number seventy.

Turning to Exodus 1:1-5, I wish to make three points. First, we notice immediately that Joseph's name is omitted from the list of Jacob's sons in verses 2-4. Why? Whereas Genesis 46:8-25 includes Joseph already in Egypt, the table of Reuben and his brothers – omitting Joseph – represents the actual extended family of Jacob that "came into Egypt" (Exodus 1:1). According to Genesis 46:26, the total number of persons reckoned in this migration was sixty-six. But the figure that appears in Exodus 1:5 is seventy. Why? Because, first, the numeral seventy was both older and more important, observations that we have already made. But to make up the tally of seventy, one must count Jacob, Joseph, and Joseph's sons. Interestingly, this is exactly what we find in Exodus 1:5, where Joseph's name is written almost as an afterthought.⁹

Second, there is no question that the first eight verses of Exodus form a major transition in the biblical story. These lines look both forward and backward¹⁰ with the number seventy standing out as the only quantity noted. In a sense, this figure represents the one measurable bridge between the Lord's prophetic covenant with the one man Abraham – who then had no posterity but was to have them as "the sand of the seashore" (Genesis 22:17)¹¹ – and the fulfillment of that covenantal promise when "the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty" (Exodus 1:7), a situation that moved Pharaoh against them (Exodus 1:9-10, 15-16).

The third observation is that the first verses of Exodus, while clearly pointing back to Genesis 46, changed the

order of the names of Jacob's sons. It is worth noting that in all such lists the names were grouped according to Jacob's wives.¹² In our passage in Exodus, the grouping is according to wives, then concubines, that is, first Leah and Rachel, then Zilpah and Bilhah. All of Leah's sons are listed, then Benjamin. But this order is modified in the arrangement of Genesis 46. There the grouping first inventories descendants of Leah, next those of her handmaid Zilpah, then the children of Rachel, and lastly those of her handmaid Bilhah. We must ask whether this slight alteration matters. In my view, the answer is yes. I suggest that the alteration reflects a movement toward priesthood concerns. Let me explain. All are aware that Reuben was Jacob's firstborn child, through Leah (Genesis 29:32; 49:3), and that he was therefore entitled to the birthright. Moreover, we know that when Reuben forfeited the birthright by transgressing (Genesis 35:22; 49:4), it passed to Joseph and, through him, to his son Ephraim, who was formally adopted – along with Manasseh – by Jacob as his own child (Genesis 48:5-6). Such adjustment in granting the birthright shows that it was not to be passed to Leah's second son Simeon but to Rachel's firstborn Joseph.¹³ Bearing in mind that the birthright brought to its recipient the right of officiating as priest for the family or clan, we note that had Joseph died – as his father had been led to believe – then Benjamin would have stood in his place as Rachel's "firstborn."¹⁴ In this light, we note that Exodus 1:2-4 reproduces a list of Jacob's sons that reflects a time when Joseph was still thought to be dead. The six sons of Leah, beginning with Reuben, are mentioned just before Benjamin. If Benjamin was next in line for the birthright after Reuben, why is he not listed immediately after Reuben? Because no editor or author of an ancient Israelite text ever listed Jacob's descendants by writing, say, a register that featured the firstborn sons of his wives, followed by the second children of each, followed by the third, and so forth.¹⁵ Therefore,

one can safely conclude that the listing in Exodus 1:2-3 came as close as any editor would ever come to placing Benjamin's name next to Reuben's in a list of all of Jacob's sons. Remembering that none of the sons of the two handmaids would be eligible for the birthright – at least as long as any sons of Leah and Rachel still lived – and noting that Rachel's "firstborn" Benjamin has been moved closer to Leah's eldest in our list, we conclude that the list in Exodus 1:1-5 exhibits an interest in the grouping of the sons most eligible for the birthright. If we wish to seek other motives that might have influenced the shift in the arrangement of the names from its version in Genesis 46 to its order in Exodus 1, we can observe that no editorial interests appear in the list of Genesis 46 that were decidedly on behalf of Judah or Ephraim, the two later dominant tribes. So, one could argue for an interest in bringing together Leah and Rachel. Leah and Rachel bore the only children eligible for the birthright, the preeminent possession in any ancient clan with its attendant double portion in inheritance and priesthood rights. In a document like the Pentateuch, which focused so clearly on inheritance matters, what else could be meant? This inheritance-priesthood arrangement is also found in Numbers 26, which gives further support to our argument.

Thus we conclude that significant elements have appeared in the early verses of the book of Exodus. First, the concern for the number seventy was so strong that the initial list of Jacob's sons (Exodus 1:2-4) – sixty-six in Genesis 46:26 – was modified to include Jacob, Joseph, and Joseph's sons, to increase the figure to seventy. Thus, whereas in Genesis 46:26-27, the number seventy was not the only number present (sixty-six was the number of Jacob's posterity moving into Egypt), in Exodus 1:1-5 seventy is the only number. Second, the number seventy in Exodus represents the quantity which demonstrated that the Lord's prophetic promises to Abraham were being fulfilled

even though they were to see yet greater fulfillment.¹⁶ Third, the specific manner in which Exodus 1:2-4 has modified the order of the children of Jacob's wives from Genesis 46 illustrates a particular interest in the two full wives and their children, who, before the discovery that Joseph was still alive in Egypt, were the only sons eligible for the birthright.

Now that we have underscored the strength of the number seventy in the history and custom of at least the patriarchal narrative, we must now turn to the issue brought forward by the Septuagint's readings, the number seventy-five. We noted earlier that Stephen mentioned seventy-five descendants of Jacob who came to live in Egypt (Acts 7:14). That figure was based on the variant readings in the Greek text of both Genesis 46:27 and Exodus 1:5, as well as the Alexandrinus¹⁷ manuscript of Deuteronomy 10:22. It has often been argued that because the third-century translator of the Pentateuch from Hebrew into Greek knew of the expanded list of Jacob's descendants in Numbers 26, he added the additional five names in Genesis 46:20, three grandsons of Joseph and two great-grandsons, "obviously with the intention of including here the ancestors of all the families mentioned" in Numbers 26;¹⁸ the Hebrew text of Genesis 46 had included only those who had surely "been born at the time of the migration into Egypt."¹⁹ While this view need not be modified significantly for our discussion here, we should note that the translator of the Pentateuch into Greek was not responsible for altering the number from seventy to seventy-five in Genesis 46:27, Exodus 1:5, and the Alexandrinus Deuteronomy 10:22. It was already written in the Hebrew copy before him, a fact proven by the Dead Sea Scrolls.²⁰ Once again, however, the evidence allows us to conclude that even here the figure seventy came before the number seventy-five. Let me explain.

The existence of the number seventy-five, representing

an adjusted total of Jacob's descendants who reached Egypt and now appearing in an independent Hebrew recension of the Old Testament attested at Qumran,²¹ would seem to weaken the case for the primacy of the numeral seventy. But the figure seventy-five can be handled rather easily. First, we note two key passages: the table of the gentile nations in Genesis 10 and these fascinating lines in the Song of Moses: "When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel" (Deuteronomy 32:8).

One must understand that the word *nations* refers to the Gentiles (Heb. *goyyim*). One must notice further that the scriptural account of the division and spreading of the gentile nations occurs in Genesis 10, where names of Noah's male descendants are recorded and, significantly, total seventy in the Hebrew text. Thus, the meaning of Deuteronomy 32:8 is that there was seen to exist a clear correlation between the number of gentile nations descended from Noah and "the number of the children of Israel," or Jacob, which was computed to be seventy.

Having said this much, we must now deal with the variant number seventy-five by examining differences among textual readings of the last line of Deuteronomy 32:8. In the Masoretic text, the phrase is as it appears in the King James Version, "according to the number of the children of Israel," that is, seventy. In the Septuagint, however, the last phrase reads, "according to the number of the angels of God."²² Moreover, a Hebrew fragment of this passage recovered from Qumran Cave 4 reads still differently, "according to the number of the sons of God."²³ As Geza Vermes points out, "angels of God" and "sons of God" are here "synonyms [and therefore] it is reasonable to conclude that the Septuagint [reading] represents the Qumran type of Hebrew [text]."²⁴ Vermes states the solution succinctly by responding thus to his own question:

seventy descendants of Noah, the Septuagint seventy-two.²⁷ Unfortunately, no help in solving this question is forthcoming from the discoveries at the Dead Sea. Instead, the strength of one's argument must rest on three other Old Testament passages where the textual tradition unequivocally supports the number seventy.

The first incident is in Exodus 24. All will recall that a special covenant ceremony is recounted there in which Moses, Aaron, two²⁸ sons of Aaron, and seventy elders of Israel²⁹ were invited to the sacred mountain to worship the Lord (Exodus 24:1-11). Unlike earlier passages, here the textual support for the numeral seventy is unanimous. Without doubt, the seventy elders should not be reckoned with the other four invitees – making a total of seventy-four – since the seventy are so plainly singled out in verses 1 and 9. In suggesting further significance of this incident for our purposes, let us examine Numbers 11, which offers additional light. It concerns the Lord's directions to Moses after the prophet had complained about the unrelieved pressures of caring for the Israelites:

And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation . . . and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone (Numbers 11:16-17).

After Moses had gathered "the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle" (Numbers 11:24), the Lord shared Moses' spirit among them. The proof of the reality of the Lord's act was borne out when "they prophesied, and did not cease" (Numbers 11:25). In light of our previous discussion, we must note that the Lord's activities also affected two more men, Eldad and Medad, upon whom the prophetic spirit

was allowed to rest (Numbers 11:26). While the number thus affected by the spirit of prophecy totals seventy-two, we should not think that these extra two were *numerically* significant. The correct interpretation came from the lips of Moses: "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them" (Numbers 11:29). The extra two men who prophesied served clearly as indicators that God wills all his people to enjoy his gift. Beyond this, there is little more to be understood from the inclusion of Eldad and Medad.

The third passage is in Ezekiel 8. In this account, Ezekiel has been transported in vision³⁰ back to Jerusalem from his home near the river of Chebar (Ezekiel 1:1; 3:15) to witness the destructive cleansing of the polluted city and land. While being escorted through the area of the temple, he was shown a secret ceremony taking place in a decorated subterranean room beneath its courtyard (Ezekiel 8:7-10). Then Ezekiel observed:

And before them stood seventy men of the elders³¹ of the house of Israel, with Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan standing among them. Each had his censer in his hand, and the smoke of the cloud of incense went up. Then he said to me, "Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the dark, every man in his room of pictures?" (Ezekiel 8:11-12, RSV).

While the nature of the worship service described here remains unclear,³² we notice immediately that it was seventy elders who had joined together for a special rite whose importance is underscored by its connection with the temple area. In this account, too, the textual support for the number seventy is without exception.

We must ask finally what these three passages have to do with our earlier discussion and, specifically, with Genesis 10 and the question of seventy versus seventy-two. In my view, a good deal. They confirm that, in addition

to the twelve-tribe constitution, the numeral seventy represented a specific office within the tribal structure of ancient Israel³³ that was seen to be modeled on the number of both Noah's descendants and Jacob's posterity. Moreover, this inner governing body of seventy was at the same time official and spiritual, functions that in the ancient world were really inseparable. Let us examine the evidence for such conclusions.

In the matter of official activities, the evidence is clear. The event that led to the call of the seventy in the desert was Moses' complaint of "the burden of all this people" (Numbers 11:11) that had been placed upon him: "I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me" (Numbers 11:14). The Lord's promise to Moses was that the seventy would "bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone" (Numbers 11:17). Consequently, the Lord directed that these seventy were to have official positions among the Israelites: "Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them" (Numbers 11:16). One notices readily that they were to be of "the elders," already a position of status among Israel's families and clans.³⁴ Additionally, the Lord used the term *officers*.³⁵ This designation was used earlier of the Israelite foremen who, under Egyptian supervision, oversaw their fellow slaves while still in Egypt (Exodus 5:6, 10, 14-15, 19). In later times they were given judicial (Deuteronomy 1:15-16) and military responsibilities (Deuteronomy 20:5, 8-9; cf. Deuteronomy 29:10; 2 Chronicles 26:11, "Maaseiah the ruler"), including that of organizing the people for marching (Joshua 1:10; 3:2). As late as the period of the divided kingdom, we have record that such officials were still being chosen from the Levites (2 Chronicles 19:11; 34:13). To be sure, we cannot determine whether every reference to an "officer" in the biblical text points to someone associated with an organization of sev-

enty. We can, however, see that the seventy selected by Moses indeed enjoyed an official position among their fellow Israelites.

The religious involvement of the seventy is even more impressively documented. One must recall initially that the gathering of the seventy on the mountain with Moses and Aaron was specifically done to ratify the covenant made by Israel at Mt. Sinai, this in response to God's invitation (see Exodus 19:5-6).³⁶ In this extremely important ceremony, the seventy – plus Moses and others – served not only as agents acting on behalf of the larger Israelite nation but also as the guarantors of the covenant by acting as witnesses of the Lord's ratifying presence.³⁷ In the passage that concerns the appointment of the seventy to assist Moses with the affairs of the camp, the spiritual dimensions were highlighted when the Lord both said to Moses, "I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them [the seventy]" (Numbers 11:17) and then instructed the people to sanctify themselves in preparation for receiving this special spiritual endowment (Numbers 11:18). The entire event, of course, was set in its proper spiritual perspective when the spirit of prophecy fell upon them all "and did not cease" (Numbers 11:25). In the case of Ezekiel's vision, moreover, the religious trappings cannot be missed. For even though the ceremonial assembly was an abomination, as the Lord declared (Ezekiel 8:6, 9), it is clear that the seventy men (Ezekiel 8:11) in the decorated chamber were participating in a religious rite. Thus, the seventy, wherever mentioned in scripture, are understood to have served as religious or spiritual functionaries as well as in more "secular" capacities.

What can we now say about the issue of seventy versus seventy-two in Genesis 10? We have seen clear evidence of an institution of seventy elders who filled various roles within the larger community and functioned within the twelve-tribe structure. That they played a particularly re-

ligious, even cosmic, role can be seen in their spiritual activities at crucial moments during Israel's stay in the desert. It is therefore not amiss to observe that the seventy had special importance for ancient Israelites. The significance is summed up in Deuteronomy 32:8, which, as we noted, made a conceptual link between the inheritances assigned by God to the gentile nations of the earth (Genesis 10) and the seventy descendants of Jacob from whom the tribes were sprung.³⁸ Both the structural constitution and the consciousness of ancient Israel retained the seventy as an organizational entity, a notion supported by Exodus 24:1, Numbers 11:16, and Ezekiel 8:11. Furthermore, because of the absence of textual variants for this figure in these three passages and because of the persistently strong recollection of the involvement of the seventy at key events, I have concluded that this figure represents the most secure key to the original concept of the number of the gentile nations. Admittedly, this may appear to be a weak link in our thinking since we are engaging in somewhat circular reasoning here. For we say that an Israelite institution of seventy elders mirrors the original belief that there were seventy gentile nations, which numeral itself may provide some basis for this number of officers within the Israelite institution, linked as it was to the number of Jacob's male descendants. One may ask, of course, why the office of the seventy among Israelites would be viewed of as having connection to the seventy descendants of Noah. Except for Deuteronomy 32:8, we possess no clues of direct ties in the Bible.³⁹ It is only in modern scripture that the seventy's link to the Gentiles is made absolutely clear. From this source we learn that "the Seventy are also called to preach the gospel, and to be especial witnesses unto the gentiles and in all the world" (D&C 107:25). Thus the tie is made and makes plain that the seventy's modern mission is directed primarily toward the gentile nations,

which were seventy in number according to the Hebrew manuscripts of Genesis 10.

When we turn to Jesus' call of the seventy disciples in Luke's gospel (Luke 10:1-20), we encounter a familiar ambiguity in the manuscripts: seventy versus seventy-two. Interestingly, this very equivocation demonstrates that Jesus' act of appointing these disciples was understood to be linked to Genesis 10, the passage where this particular difference in numbers originally arose. How do we explain this divergence in the manuscripts of Luke's account? The most natural explanation comes if we maintain that it was seventy whom Jesus called. This figure was then altered in some Lukan manuscripts to read seventy-two by scribes who were familiar with the Septuagint's version of Genesis 10 and, knowing the connection between the two accounts, sought to harmonize the figures in Luke 10:1, 17, with the seventy-two names in the table of Noah's posterity. To argue the other way around requires adopting the untenable point of view that the numeral seventy-two was original. One then must postulate that the manuscripts of Luke—written in Greek—were corrected to seventy by Greek-reading scribes to harmonize with the number of names in the Hebrew version of Genesis 10, a version that could be read by few such scribes in the late first and early second centuries when manuscripts of this gospel were enjoying wider circulation.⁴⁰ Consequently, I feel secure in concluding that Jesus called seventy disciples, not seventy-two. Further, these representatives were to be understood as called to serve the Gentiles—if not during Jesus' ministry, at least at a later date⁴¹—a notion supported by the clear connection both to Genesis 10 and to the duties of the seventy outlined in D&C 107:25.

In conclusion, it now becomes clear why Jesus chose two sets of disciples, the twelve and the seventy. The twelve bore an obvious relation to the tribes of Israel, the seventy to the gentile nations of the earth as well as to an

inner structural entity that existed within the tribal system of preexilic Israel. Because of its numerical link to Genesis 10, the figure seventy itself, when applied to Jesus' disciples, anticipated that the gospel message would be taken to the gentile nations after his ministry.⁴² In our own time, the seventies have been given by the Lord the monumental, yet distinctive, task of bearing the gospel to the gentile nations of the world, "thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling" (D&C 107:25).⁴³

Notes

1. Discussion has focused on whether the names of Jacob, the father of the others listed (46:6, 8, 26-27), and Dinah (46:15) were to be reckoned so that the number totals seventy. See S. R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis*, 5th ed. (London: Methuen, 1906), 365-66, 368; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 402-3.

2. While Exodus 1:2-5 does not really say exactly what we find in Genesis 46 (see the discussion below), it is clear that the list of Exodus 1 refers back to that in Genesis. See Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 1-2; S. R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), 1; and Moshe Greenberg, *Understanding Exodus*, part 1 (New York: Behrman House, 1969), 18-19.

3. For the continuing discussion regarding Stephen's background, as well as that of his associates who had Greek names, see Johannes Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), 56-57; Ernst Haenchen, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 15th ed. (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 218-22.

4. Among recent discussions of Luke's identity and ethnic origins, see those of Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to St. Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 14-21; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX)*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 35-47; and Frederick F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (London: Tyndale Press, 1962), 1-8.

5. So, for example, von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 402-3; and John Skinner, *Genesis*, International Critical Commentary Series (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1910), 492-93.

6. Interestingly, no one has ever made anything of the fact that Serah, the daughter of Asher (Genesis 46:17), was clearly reckoned within the total of Jacob's male posterity.

7. Both the Hebrew and Greek texts employ the expected "sons of" in Genesis 46:23. See the comment of Skinner, *Genesis*, 494: "one of Dan. . . . in spite of *bāne*," i.e., "sons." The formulaic quality is further emphasized in "the proportions between the number of children assigned to each wife: Leah 32, Zilpah 16, Rachel 14, Bilhah 7," *ibid.*, 493. E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 345, says that "the figure 66 would seem to be a later correction."

8. Both sons and daughters are mentioned in Genesis 46:7. The new total sixty-six (Genesis 46:26) had to exclude Joseph and his sons even though they were listed both before (Genesis 46:20) and after (Genesis 46:27) this number. Since the original catalog was formed according to the wives of Jacob, Joseph naturally had to be included as a son through Rachel. Genesis 46:27 seems to represent an attempt to harmonize the figures seventy and sixty-six.

9. Frank M. Cross, Jr., *The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies*, rev. ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961), 184-85, argues that, on the basis of a textual variant of Exodus 1:1-5 found in Cave 4 at Qumran (4QEx^a) in which Joseph's name appears in the list just before Benjamin, the omission of Joseph's name from Exodus 1:3 in the Masoretic text represents the inferior reading. But it is more reasonable to postulate that because Joseph was so important, a scribe would *insert* Joseph's missing name into a list rather than omit it, whether mistakenly or by design.

10. Both the list of those who came into Egypt and the notice of Jacob's burgeoning posterity point backwards to Genesis 46 and to Genesis 1:28 and 9:1 respectively. The mention of Joseph's death (Exodus 1:6), of Israel's "increased abundance" (Exodus 1:7), and of the "new king over Egypt" (Exodus 1:8) point to the troubles lying ahead for the Israelites.

11. Cf. Genesis 12:2; 13:16; 15:5; 16:10 (promise to Hagar); 17:6; also Genesis 26:4 and 28:14.

12. In Genesis 35:23-26 and Exodus 1:2-4, the sons are arranged by the following order of Jacob's wives: Leah, Rachel, Bilhah, and Zilpah; in Genesis 46:8-25: Leah, Zilpah, Rachel, and Bilhah; in Numbers 26:5-49: Leah and Rachel with the concubines' sons interspersed (Gad [from Zilpah] in 26:15-18; Dan [Bilhah] in 26:42-43; Asher [Zilpah] in 26:44-47; Naphtali [Bilhah] in 26:48-50). Even the order of marching in the wilderness followed an interspersed pattern (Numbers 10:14-28): Leah's sons, Zilpah's son Gad (Numbers 10:20), Rachel's sons, and Bilhah's sons interspersed with Zilpah's (Numbers 10:25-28).

13. 1 Chronicles 5:1; Genesis 48:5-6; 49:4; see also O. J. Babb's article "Birthright" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 5 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 1:440-41.

14. This is certainly implied by Benjamin's position in the list of Jacob's sons in Exodus 1:2-4, where his name stands in Joseph's place (according to the Masoretic text).

15. None of the references cited in note 12 exhibits this characteristic. It was even the custom when a family ate together that it was seated "the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth" (Genesis 43:33).

16. Deuteronomy 10:22 in RSV: "Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons; and now the Lord your God has made you as the stars of heaven for multitude." The question has arisen among commentators whether the figure seventy simply means a large number. I take the number to mean what it says. An opposite conclusion is that of von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 403: "Originally this number was intended, of course, as a round figure, as an approximate, large number of men." He then cites Exodus 24:9 and Numbers 11:16, passages which reflect an institutional entity and thus do not support his observation. A third passage, Judges 8:30, might uphold von Rad's view. I have noted that 2 Kings 10:1, 6-7 may also sustain it. But these latter two passages have a very different character from those in Exodus 24 and Numbers 11.

17. There is a discrepancy among various Septuagint manuscripts for Deuteronomy 10:22. The Alexandrinus reads seventy-five. See *Septuaginta*, Alfred Rahlfs, ed., 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Wutttembergische Bibleanstalt, 1935), 1:306.

18. The Septuagint, after naming Manasseh and Ephraim, also gives the son and grandson of Manasseh, Machir and Gilead, and two sons and a grandson of Ephraim, Shuthelah, Tahan, and Shuthelah's son Eran. The King James Version does not reflect this in Genesis 46:20, but only in Numbers 26:29, 35-36.

19. Driver, *The Book of Genesis*, 368.

20. Published by Patrick W. Skehan in "A Fragment of the 'Song of Moses' (Deuteronomy 32) from Qumran," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 136 (December 1954): 12. Interestingly, Skehan maintains that the Dead Sea fragment of Deuteronomy 32:8 exhibits the "surely original" reading. See further discussions by Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran*, 184-85, and Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, rev. ed. (London: Colliers, 1977), 204-5.

21. The question concerning the origin of various recensions of the biblical text naturally arises. Differences in the readings among

texts are usually accounted for by a theory of geographical distribution. For instance, F. M. Cross, Jr., *The Ancient Library of Qumran*, 188-94, suggests the existence of (1) an ancient Palestinian type of text with certain characteristic readings, (2) an Egyptian text borrowed from no. 1 and preserved among Egyptian Jews, and (3) a "conservative" type which was the forerunner of the Masoretic textual tradition. See Vermes's summary and critique of this view (*The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 206-9, 222-23).

22. The Septuagint reads: *kata arithmon aggelon theou*.

23. The Masoretic text reads: *lāmispar bānē yisra'el*. The last phrase of the fragment from Qumran (4QDt) reads: *bānē 'el*; as Skehan points out, the state of preservation of the manuscript does not allow us to know whether 'el is the spelling of God's name or whether it was more fully written ("A Fragment of the 'Song of Moses'," 12).

24. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 205.

25. *Ibid.*

26. Driver, *The Book of Genesis*, 367, points to other passages that deal with Joseph's posterity (1 Chronicles 5:24 and 7:14-27) as well as noting the differences between various accounts of Benjamin's descendants, ascribing them to a "corrupt text," which, however, he does not identify.

27. The two names added in the Septuagint version are "Elisha" in verse 2 after Javan and "Cainan" after Aram in verse 22.

28. Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 498, notes that the Samaritan version of Exodus 24:1 and 9 adds the names of Eleazar and Ithamar, "completing the list of Aaron's sons" from Exodus 28:1. While Martin Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: SCM/Westminster Press, 1962), 195, tries to convince us that the names of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, along with Aaron and Moses, were probably glosses in the text, Robert A. Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary* (London: Tyndale Press, 1973), 184, tells us that because these two sons of Aaron died under God's judgment (Numbers 3:4), we are assured "of the authenticity of the tradition, for no one would have inserted their names here in the account of such an important event."

29. For the seventy elders as representatives of all Israel in the covenant ceremony, see J. Coert Rylaarsdam and J. Edgar Park, "The Book of Exodus," in *Interpreter's Bible*, 12 vols. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1952), 1:1016, and Ronald E. Clements, *Exodus*, *The Cambridge Bible Commentary* (Cambridge: University Press, 1972), 158.

30. Some scholars have challenged the notion that the account

in Ezekiel 8:1–11:25 recounted a true visionary experience. See the brief refutation by Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1970), 120.

31. The King James Version reads “ancients” for “elders” even though the Hebrew term is used more than 100 times in the Old Testament with the meaning “elders.”

32. Both Babylonian and Egyptian rites have been suggested, although most scholars favor the latter. Cf. Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary*, 124, and Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 240-41.

33. *Ibid.*, 240: “It appears probable, from Exodus 24:1, 9, where seventy of the elders of Israel were summoned, as the distinguished men of the people, to see God and to eat the covenant meal before him on the mountain of God, and from Numbers 11:16 (24-25), where seventy elders share something of the spirit of Moses, that there was an institution, sanctified by ancient tradition, of seventy elders as the representatives of Israel. What Ezekiel sees therefore [in 8:11] is not a chance group, but the representatives of Israel, as they had once stood before Yahweh at the making of the covenant.”

34. Cf. Exodus 3:16, 18; 4:29.

35. The Hebrew term is *šōtār*, usually translated in the Septuagint by the Greek *grammateus*, although in two instances it is rendered *grammatōeisagōgeus* (Deuteronomy 1:15; 29:10) and once it is translated by *kritēs* (2 Chronicles 26:11). According to Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 1009b, the term may have properly meant scribes or organizers although in practical terms it regularly refers to subordinate officers.

36. See the discussion in Noth, *Exodus*, 196, 198, and Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 502-6.

37. The spoken pledges (Exodus 24:3, 7), the offering of both burnt offerings and peace offerings (Exodus 24:5), the blood rite (Exodus 24:6, 8), the reading of the terms of the covenant (Exodus 24:7), and the sacred meal (Exodus 24:11) all bespeak a solemn covenantal ceremony. See Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*, 184-86.

38. The numeral seventy simply works most easily since the variants eliminate each other: in the instance of Genesis 10, the variant sum is seventy-two, which does not sustain the variant figure seventy-five supported in fragmentary texts of Exodus 1 and Deuteronomy 32 found at Qumran and in the Septuagint's Genesis 46.

39. Although conjectural because we can show no biblical ties,

it is possible that the concerns in the Abrahamic covenant that focus on "all families of the earth" (Genesis 12:3, which likely refers back to "the families of the sons of Noah" in 10:32; cf. 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; Abraham 2:11) may have solidified the number seventy in Israelite institutions as a reminder of their obligation toward the gentile nations of the earth.

40. The Christian sources from which we know how widely the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, along with other New Testament texts, were known and venerated within the early church are brought together by Henry Cadbury, "The Tradition," in F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, eds., *The Beginnings of Christianity*, 5 vols. part 1, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan, 1922), 209-64; by Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1-10; and by Wilhelm Schneemelcher, "The History of the New Testament Canon," in Edgar Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, eds., *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 1:28-52.

41. The likelihood that some of the seventy disciples actually went into gentile cities and villages is strongly supported by Jesus' instructions to eat and drink "such things as are set before you" (Luke 10:7-8), especially in light of Jewish food concerns (cf. Morris, *The Gospel According to St. Luke*, 182-83).

42. Evidence exists, of course, that Jesus ministered to Gentiles; see Matthew 8:28-34 (Mark 5:1-10; Luke 8:26-40); Matthew 15:21-28 (Mark 7:24-31); and Luke 7:2-10.

43. Our investigation has been confined to scripture. Tradition, too, reveals a rich tapestry of accounts dealing with the figure seventy (or seventy-two). One thinks, for example, of the legendary seventy-two translators of the Jewish Law from Hebrew to Greek (*Letter of Aristeas*) in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983-85), 2:7; the seventy-two angels and princes in heaven corresponding to the seventy-two nations of the world (3 *Enoch* 17:6, 8) in *ibid.*, 1:270; the seventy-two heavens (*First Apocalypse of James* 26:16) in James M. Robinson, ed., *Nag Hammadi Library* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1977), 243; and the seventy-two ministering angels who have charge of the seventy-two nations of the earth (*On the Origin of the World* 104:19-20, 105:10-16) in *ibid.*, 165-66. In Judaism, the number of members of the Great Sanhedrin has ranged from seventy-two, to seventy, to seventy-one (the seventy plus one leader), as discussed by Sidney B. Hoenig, *The Great Sanhedrin* (Philadelphia: Dropsie College, 1953), 62-73. In the Semitic tradition, generally, the numbers "seventy to seventy-three are often interchanged" and

“usually designate great diversity,” in Mircea Eliade, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 12 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 11:18. For example, in the Talmud, “seventy languages” represent the total diversity of mankind, further supporting the linkage between the seventy called by Jesus and their mission to proclaim the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. See, e.g., TB *Sotah* 36a (“The words of the Torah [were inscribed] in seventy languages”), and 36b (“Gabriel came and taught [Joseph in Egypt] the seventy languages”). In addition, we have not explored the natural connection between the number seven and seventy; see Johannes Hehn, *Siebenzahl und Sabbat bei den Babyloniern und im Alten Testament* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1907; reprinted 1968 by Zentralantiquariat der DDR), 89-90.