

THE OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND OF REST IN HEBREWS 3:7–4:11

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ALTHOUGH THE CONCEPT OF REST¹ has been important in the teaching of the church throughout the centuries,¹ it has received comparatively little attention by biblical scholars until recently.² The growing volume of literature on this theme over the past thirty years should be celebrated.³ This includes numerous articles devoted to the concept of rest in Hebrews 3–4.⁴ Unfor-

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¹ The rest motif was used extensively throughout the early church (e.g., *Odes of Solomon* 11.12, 23; *Epistle of Barnabas* 15; 2 *Clement* 5.5; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 6.14, 108; 7.11.68). For a discussion of these and other examples in the literature of the early church see Jon Laansma, *"I Will Give You Rest": The Rest Motif in the New Testament with Special Reference to Mt 11 and Heb 3–4* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1997), 129–45; and Judith Hoch Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor in the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Gospel of Truth* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1998), especially 25–32. Other notable examples include the unforgettable prayer of Augustine during the waning days of the Roman Empire: "You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in you" (*Confessions* 1.1); and Richard Baxter's *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* (1650), which was the most widely read book during the uncertain years following the English Civil War.

² One notable exception is Gerhard von Rad, "There Remains Still a Rest for the People of God" (1933), in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1966): 94–102.

³ O. F. Hofius, *Katapausis: Die Vorstellung vom endzeitlichen Ruheort im Hebräerbrief* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1972); Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "The Promise Theme and the Theology of Rest," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 130 (April–June 1973): 135–50; David Darnell, "Rebellion, Rest, and the Word of God: An Exegetical Study of Hebrews 3:1–4:13" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1974); A. T. Lincoln, "Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 197–220; Samuel Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1988); Laansma, *"I Will Give You Rest"*; and Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor in the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Gospel of Truth*.

⁴ J. Frankowski, "Requies, Bonum Promissum Populi Dei in VT et in Judaismo

unately enthusiasm for the subject has not resulted in a general consensus regarding its meaning in Hebrews.⁵ The diversity of opinion is undoubtedly due in part to the pivotal role of the concept of rest in understanding the warning found in this passage. However, the difficulty is also due to neglect of the concept's Old Testament background. Although many have analyzed the Old Testament texts cited in Hebrews,⁶ few have examined the author's use of Old Testament narratives to warn his readers.⁷ The neglected

(Hebr. 3:7-4:11)," *Verbum Domini* 43 (1965): 124-49, 225-40; H. A. Lombard, "Katápausis in the Letter to the Hebrews," *Neotestamentica* 5 (1971): 60-71; H. W. Attridge, "Let Us Strive to Enter the Rest": The Logic of Hebrews 4:1-11," *Harvard Theological Review* 73 (1980): 279-88; Thomas Kem Oberholtzer, "The Kingdom Rest in Hebrews 3:1-4:13," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145 (April-June 1988): 185-96; John Brand, "Sabbath-Rest, Worship, and the Epistle to the Hebrews Celebrating the Rule of Yahweh," *Didaskalia* (March 1990): 3-13; Khiok-Khng Yeo, "The Meaning and Usage of the Theology of 'Rest' (*καταπαυσι* and *σαββατισμος*) in Hebrews 3:7-4:13," *Asia Journal of Theology* 5 (1991): 2-33; David E. Garland, "The Renewal of the Promise of Rest: A Canonical Reading of Hebrews 3:7-4:13," in *Reclaiming the Prophetic Mantle: Preaching the Old Testament Faithfully*, ed. George L. Klein (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 203-21; Peter E. Enns, "Creation and Re-Creation: Psalm 95 and Its Interpretation in Hebrews 3:1-4:13," *Westminster Theological Journal* 55 (1993): 255-80; and Robert Van Kooten, "Guarding the Entrance to the Place of Rest: Hebrews 4:12-13," *Kerux* 11 (December 1996): 29-33.

⁵ Some of the debated issues include whether rest is best understood as a place or a state, a present reality or future promise, the heavenly temple, or earthly Sabbath. For a survey and critique of the various views on the meaning of rest in Hebrews 3-4 see Laansma, "I Will Give You Rest," 276-332; and Richard James Griffith, "The Eschatological Significance of the Sabbath" (Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1990), 267-311.

⁶ Those consulted for this study include Simon Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Amsterdam: Van Soest, 1961); Markus Barth, "The Old Testament in Hebrews: An Essay in Biblical Hermeneutics," in *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation*, ed. W. Klassen and G. F. Snyder (New York: Harper & Row, 1962): 53-78; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, *New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), xlvii-lit; George Howard, "Hebrews and the Old Testament Quotations," *Novum Testamentum* 10 (1968): 208-16; Richard Longenecker, "Hebrews and the Old Testament," in *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975): 158-85; Paul Ellingworth, "The Old Testament in Hebrews: Exegesis, Method and Hermeneutics" (Ph.D. diss., University of Aberdeen, 1977); J. C. McCullough, "The Old Testament Quotations in Hebrews," *New Testament Studies* 26 (1980): 363-79; Ronald E. Clements, "The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 28 (1985): 36-45; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1991), cxii-cxxiv; and R. T. France, "The Writer of Hebrews as a Biblical Expositor," *Tyndale Bulletin* 47 (1996): 245-76.

⁷ Two notable exceptions include Richard C. Oudersluys, "Exodus in the Letter to the Hebrews," in *Grace upon Grace*, ed. J. I. Cook (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 143-52; and J. Dwight Pentecost, "Kadesh-barnea in the Book of Hebrews," in *Basic Theology Applied: A Practical Application of Basic Theology in Honor of Charles C. Ryrie and His Work*, ed. Wesley and Elaine Willis and John and Janet Master (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1995), 127-35.

Old Testament background of Hebrews 3:7-4:11 can help answer controversial questions regarding the spiritual condition of those warned, the nature of the "apostasy" (3:12), and the meaning of rest.

THE EXPOSITION OF OLD TESTAMENT TEXTS IN HEBREWS

Several characteristics of the use of the Old Testament by the author of Hebrews are important to this study. The first is the author's application of early Jewish exegetical principles in his treatment of Old Testament texts.⁸ For example the author utilized Hillel's exegetical rule known as *gezera shawa* ("verbal analogy") by appealing to rest in Genesis 2:2 in order to explain the meaning of rest in Psalm 95. Furthermore the author followed the midrashic practice of selective editing in his citation of Psalm 95:10. By changing the demonstrative pronoun from "that [*ἐπεινή*] generation," as found in the Septuagint, to "this [*ταύτη*] generation" (Heb. 3:10), he was able to apply more forcefully the warning of Psalm 95 to his readers' situation. This minor modification produces a rhetorical effect without altering the meaning of the original verse. Another example is the author's repeated use of "today" (*σήμερον*) from Psalm 95:7 in order to modernize the Old Testament text as well as stress the urgency of its warning to his audience (Heb. 3:7, 13, 15; 4:7). In summary, the author sought to reorient Old Testament texts to the situation of his readers by using common rabbinical practices without violating or altering their actual sense to their original audience.⁹

A second characteristic is the author's pattern of using extended expositions of Old Testament passages in a fashion surprisingly rare among other New Testament writers.¹⁰ The author's uncommon expository style may be due in part to the likelihood

⁸ See Lane, *Hebrews 1-3*, cxix-cxxiv; and especially Herbert W. Bateman IV, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1:5-13* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 9-21, 59-77, 93-116.

⁹ Regarding the limited use of contemporary Jewish hermeneutical principles by New Testament authors in ways that preserved the actual sense of the Old Testament text see Douglas Moo, *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives* (Sheffield: Almond, 1983), 17-78, 374-92.

¹⁰ France lists Psalm 8:4-6 (in Heb. 2:5-18); Psalm 95:7-11 (in Heb. 3:6-4:13); Psalm 110:4 (in Heb. 5:5-7:28); Jeremiah 31:31-34 (in Heb. 8:1-10:18); Habakkuk 2:3-4 (in Heb. 10:32-12:3); and Proverbs 3:11-12 (in Heb. 12:4-13) as examples of how the author applied the Old Testament to "the current situation of his readers" through extended expositions of earlier biblical texts ("The Writer of Hebrews as a Biblical Expositor," 245-76).

that the book originated as a written sermon or homily with the concluding epistolary greetings added later for its distribution.¹¹ France recommends this "homily" to modern expository preachers as a "first-century example of a Christian expositor whose instinct it was to develop his argument by focusing successively on a number of key texts." By "drawing [these texts] into association with other related Old Testament ideas," the author of Hebrews, France observes, was able "to produce a richer and more satisfying diet of biblical theology than could be provided by a mere collection of proof-texts."¹²

One example of this is found in Hebrews 3–4, where the author provided a lengthy exposition of Psalm 95 to develop a comparison between the people of the Exodus and his readers. He used these parallels to exhort his audience to hold fast to their hope and assurance in Christ (Heb. 3:6, 14) and to warn them of the perils of unbelief and disobedience endured by Israel in the wilderness (3:17–4:2, 6, 11). Besides his exposition of Psalm 95, he also appealed to the events of Kadesh-barnea reported in Numbers 14 (Heb. 3:16–4:2) and the rest inaugurated in Genesis 2 (Heb. 4:4). This approach indicates that the author's interest was not limited to the individual texts, and it reflects a broader canonical theology that spans the breadth of Old Testament redemptive history.

A third characteristic is the author's extensive use of typology throughout the epistle to promote his argument. Although he used the vocabulary of "type" only twice in the epistle (8:5, 9:24), typology was his dominant way of applying Jewish Scripture to his contemporary audience.¹³ Earlier attempts to characterize typology in terms of Christocentric focus, divine design, or prefiguration have been replaced more recently by a general consensus that typology describes the biblical authors' use of "historical correspondences

¹¹ France, "The Writer of Hebrews as a Biblical Expositor," 246–50; Harold W. Attridge, "Parenthesis in a Homily (*λόγος παρακλήσεως*): The Possible Location of, and Socialization in, the 'Epistle to the Hebrews,'" *Semeia* 50 (1990): 210–26; Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, lxx–lxxv; and Steve Stanley, "The Structure of Hebrews from Three Perspectives," *Tyndale Bulletin* 45 (1994): 247–50. Its original form as a homily is indicated by the expression "this word of exhortation" (Heb. 13:22) used in Acts 13:15 for a synagogue homily, the absence of any introductory epistolary greeting, the use of the communal "we" and "brothers," the introduction of biblical quotations with a rhetorical question, and the heavy dependence on the Pentateuch and Psalms, all characteristic of Jewish-Hellenistic homilies.

¹² France, "The Writer of Hebrews as a Biblical Expositor," 250.

¹³ The term *τύπος* is used in Hebrews 8:5 and its counterpart *δωρίτυπος* in 9:24. Other similar examples of the use of *τύπος* in the New Testament include Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 10:6; and 1 Peter 3:21.

retrospectively recognized within the consistent redemptive activity of God.¹⁴ There are two basic characteristics commonly regarded as essential to biblical typology. One characteristic is that typology is based on "historical facts: persons, actions, events, and institutions."¹⁵ Rather than being a method of exegesis, typology is a way of viewing God's redemptive activity throughout history. It is based on the assumption that God follows consistent patterns in dealing with His people.

Another characteristic of typology is that it requires true historical and theological correspondences.¹⁶ A lack of genuine correspondence between the type and antitype would result in fanciful and trivial interpretations.¹⁷ Hence the spiritual conditions of persons and events appealed to in earlier redemptive history must genuinely correspond to their contemporary counterparts identified by the author. In other words the rhetorical success and logical connection of the typological relationship depends directly on the genuineness of the correspondence between the earlier type and the later antitype. The significance of this point will be seen later as the spiritual condition, potential apostasy, and judgment of the author's readers are determined by observing the spiritual condition, apostasy, and judgment of the Exodus generation.

The aspect of escalation or heightening is often given as a third defining characteristic of typology.¹⁸ This is clearly present in Hebrews where the author used typology to argue from the lesser to the greater (3:3; 7:15; 8:6; 9:11, 23). However, the interpreter must be cautious not to "heighten" the meaning of the later antitype in a

¹⁴ R. M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical *τίπος* Structures* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981), 94.

¹⁵ Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald H. Madvig (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 17-18. See also David L. Baker, "Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?* ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 327-28; and Walther Eichrodt, "Is Typological Exegesis an Appropriate Method?" in *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics*, ed. C. Westermann (Atlanta: John Knox, 1960), 225.

¹⁶ Louis Berkhof, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 145; Eichrodt, "Is Typological Exegesis an Appropriate Method?" 226-27; and R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 40-41.

¹⁷ Baker, "Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament," 327.

¹⁸ Goppelt, *Typos*, 18, 199-202; Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 107-8; and Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1991), 173-74.

way that obscures its genuine historical correspondence to the earlier type.¹⁹

A fourth characteristic of the author's use of the Old Testament is that he often moved beyond citations and clear allusion to more subtle "echoes" of Old Testament persons, events, or concepts less obvious to the modern reader.²⁰ In an earlier article this writer drew attention to such "echoes" used in the warning of Hebrews 6:4–8, because they play such a crucial role in understanding the intended meaning of that controversial passage.²¹ Likewise in Hebrews 3–4 one must be alert to the greater context of the passages cited in order to grasp more fully the author's complete meaning.²²

THE EXODUS GENERATION IN HEBREWS 3:7–4:11

Because of the typological relationship between readers and the Israelites in the wilderness, the spiritual condition of the latter provides an interpretive key to understand the spiritual condition of those warned in Hebrews 3–4. Those who understand the warnings to address believers in danger of losing their salvation regard the Exodus generation as a redeemed people who forfeited

¹⁹ David Baker argues that an "increase" or heightening "is simply an aspect of the progression from Old Testament to New Testament and not a necessary characteristic of a type" ("Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament," 326). Also intertextuality within the Old Testament reveals that heightening is optional to the typological relationship. For example the blessings and the sin of the Exodus generation are used to instruct later generations without any heightening or "increase" (e.g., Pss. 75; 106:6–33; Isa. 63:7–14).

²⁰ Richard B. Hays suggests seven criteria to use in accurately identifying echoes: (1) *Availability*: Was the proposed source of the echo available to both the author and the readers? (2) *Volume*: How much rhetorical stress is placed on words or concepts found in the proposed source? (3) *Recurrence*: How much does the author cite or allude to the same scriptural passage? (4) *Thematic coherence*: How well does the proposed echo fit into the line of the author's argument? (5) *Historical plausibility*: Is it plausible that the original readers could have understood the proposed echo in light of their historical background? (6) *History of interpretation*: Have other readers, both critical and precritical, heard the same echoes? and (7) *Satisfaction*: Do the proposed readings make sense? (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989], 25–32).

²¹ See Randall C. Gleason, "The Old Testament Background of the Warning in Hebrews 6:4–8," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155 (January–March 1998): 62–91.

²² Following C. H. Dodd (*According to the Scriptures* [London: Nisbet, 1952], 126–27), many now agree that the New Testament authors practiced a "contextual exegesis" by "quoting individual references as signposts to the broad redemptive-historical theme[s] from [their] immediate and larger OT context" (G. K. Beale, "Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? An Examination of the Presuppositions of Jesus' and the Apostles' Exegetical Method," *Themelios* 14 [1989]: 90–91).

salvation through their stubborn rebellion and unbelief displayed in the wilderness.²³ Others argue that Hebrews 3-4 does not warn its readers against the loss of salvation, because the Exodus generation was never truly saved. For example Grudem emphatically declares that though the people of Israel "had been 'redeemed' in the great exodus from Egypt . . . they had never believed" and therefore "were never saved in the first place."²⁴ Although these first two views disagree regarding the spiritual condition of the Exodus generation, they agree that failure to enter into rest means falling short of genuine salvation, resulting in eternal judgment. A third view considers those warned as genuinely saved believers who are in danger of forfeiting future blessing and of undergoing the physical discipline of God's wrath and who yet will escape eternal judgment.²⁵ A modified form of this final interpretation is advocated in this article because it seems to fit best the initial readers' typological relationship to the redeemed status of the Exodus generation and the meaning of rest when viewed from the perspective of Old Testament theology.

In Psalm 95 David cited the unbelief and the judgment of the wilderness generation as a warning for the people of his day. Then by using David's psalm the writer of Hebrews passed the same warning on to Jewish believers, their descendants in the first century. For the typological comparison to apply properly to his read-

²³ For example in his treatment of typology in Hebrews 3:7-4:13, Goppelt explains how "Israel's downfall in the rebellion, by which they forfeited salvation," is used to "warn the church about the possible loss of salvation" (*Typos*, 172-73). Marshall also argues that the Exodus generation had "received the good news" and as such were "God's people." Yet because they became "disobedient and distrustful and consequently [did] not enter into rest," there remained for them "only the possibility of judgment." Hence, they depict "the dangers facing those who fall from the faith and obedience which are the conditions of salvation." See I. H. Marshall, *Kept by the Power of God*, rev. ed. (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1996), 138-40. For a similar position see Grant R. Osborne, "Soteriology in the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *Grace Unlimited*, ed. Clark H. Pinnock (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1975), 144-66.

²⁴ Grudem's claims that Hebrews 3-4 contains "explicit statements" and "explicit language" that the Exodus generation "never were saved," "had never been truly saved," and "were never saved in the first place" are remarkable overstatements (Wayne Grudem, "Perseverance of the Saints: A Case Study from Hebrews 6:4-6 and the Other Warning Passages in Hebrews," in *The Grace of God, the Bondage of the Will*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995], 1:160-61).

²⁵ Joseph C. Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings: A Study of Eternal Security and the Final Significance of Man* (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle, 1992), 93-110; Michael A. Eaton, *A Theology of Encouragement* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1996), 215; R. T. Kendall, *Once Saved, Always Saved* (Chicago: Moody, 1983), 153-55; Oberholtzer, "The Kingdom Rest in Hebrews 3:1-4:13," 188; and Pentecost, "Kadesh-barnea in the Book of Hebrews," 127-35.

ers the spiritual condition of the wilderness generation must closely correspond to the spiritual condition of the audience of this epistle.

THE REDEEMED STATUS OF THE EXODUS GENERATION

Despite their unbelief and rebellion at Kadesh-barnea, the Exodus generation was a redeemed people who had exercised faith. The evidence for this begins when Moses and Aaron first reported the words of the Lord to the people. Hearing Aaron's report and seeing them perform signs, "the people believed" and "bowed low and worshiped" (Exod. 4:30–31; cf. Ps. 106:12). The significance of this initial act of faith by the people should not be overlooked for several reasons. *First*, the word יָדַעַתְּ, translated "believed," means in the Hiphil form "to have faith, to trust (in)" and was used in the Old Testament to express full confidence and genuine faith in Yahweh.²⁶ *Second*, the six occurrences of יָדַעַתְּ in Exodus 4, beginning with Moses' doubts whether the people would "believe" him (vv. 1–9) and ending with their belief in Yahweh (v. 31), mark the people's faith as central to the argument of the chapter. *Third*, the genuineness of the people's faith is evidenced not only by their immediate worship (v. 31; 12:27) but also by their obedience. In response to the specific commands regarding the preparation of the Passover sacrifice, the author emphatically declared twice that all of Israel "did just as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron" (12:28, 50). *Fourth*, in response to their fear of attack by the Egyptians, the Lord promised them "salvation" (14:13). Here the word נִשְׁעַתְּ is used for only the second time in the Old Testament to predict their deliverance. Following their rescue the author declared that the Lord indeed "saved [נִשְׁעַתְּ] Israel that day" (v. 30).

Fifth, in response to their deliverance, the text again states, "they believed in [יָדַעַתְּ plus אֶל] the Lord" (vv. 30–31). The Hiphil form of יָדַעַתְּ, this time with the preposition אֶל, denotes their entrance into a relationship of trust in Yahweh. This form is also used of Abraham, in Genesis 15:6, who "believed in the LORD, and He reckoned it to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:6).²⁷ The genuineness of their

²⁶ H. Wildberger, "יָדַעַתְּ," in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 1:142–45.

²⁷ Regarding the soteriological significance of this construction see Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 122–24. Other examples of יָדַעַתְּ plus אֶל ("believed in") that express genuine faith in God include 2 Chronicles 20:20; Psalm 106:12; and Jonah 3:5.

faith and praise is noted elsewhere in the Old Testament (e.g., Ps. 106:12). *Sixth*, the Song of Moses²⁸ describes the rescue from Egypt as "salvation" (יִשְׁעוֹ), Exod. 15:2) by which the Israelites were "redeemed" (v. 13) and "purchased" (v. 16). *Seventh*, references to their deliverance elsewhere in the Old Testament show that, though they sinned (Ps. 106:6), forgot God's works and kindness (v. 7), and rebelled (v. 7), the Lord "redeemed" (78:42; 106:10; Isa. 63:9), "saved" (106:8, 10; Isa. 63:8-9), and forgave them (Neh. 9:17; Pss. 78:38; 99:8). *Eighth*, the establishment of the Sinai Covenant (Exod. 24:1-9) with the people of Israel is another indication of their redeemed status. The giving of the Law was never intended to provide a means of salvation; instead it presupposed faith and was given to an already redeemed people.²⁹

Later in Hebrews 11 the author confirmed the faith of the Exodus generation. With the events of Exodus 14:30-31 clearly in mind he commended them for their exemplary faith, declaring, "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land" (Heb. 11:29). Those who experienced deliverance from the Angel of Death by their faith (which was expressed through keeping "the Passover" and "sprinkling . . . the blood," v. 28) were later saved from the destruction that came on the drowned Egyptians. The Israelites' faith was expressed by their passing "through the Red Sea" (v. 29). Hence the author included the Exodus generation among those who had "gained approval though their faith" (v. 39).

THE SIN OF THE EXODUS GENERATION

The author used numerous terms throughout Hebrews 3-4 to describe the sin of the Israelites. The most prominent is the expres-

²⁸ Poetry is often used in Hebrew narratives to explain to the reader the significance of the preceding historical events. See Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (Louisville: Westminster, 1974), 248-50; and J. W. Watts, *Psalm and Story: Inset Hymns in Hebrew Narrative*, JSOT Supplement 139 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1992).

²⁹ See Wayne G. Strickland, "The Inauguration of the Law of Christ with the Gospel of Christ: A Dispensational View," in *Five Views on Law and Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 232-36. The pattern of faith preceding God's covenants is consistent throughout redemptive history. For example, "Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. 6:8; cf. Heb. 11:7) long before the Lord established a covenant with him (Gen. 6:18; 9:8-17). Likewise, although Hebrews 11:8 commended Abraham's faith before his arrival in the land, the Genesis account mentions his faith (Gen. 15:6) immediately before the "cutting" (כָּרַךְ) of the Abrahamic Covenant (15:9-21). This pattern is also followed in the New Testament. The disciples "believed in Him" (John 2:11) long before the Lord instituted the New Covenant (Luke 22:17-20) with them (minus Judas).

sion “harden your hearts” (3:8, 13, 15; 4:7), which he borrowed from Psalm 95:8. Although this expression is often associated with the heart of Pharaoh (Exod. 4:21; 7:3, 13, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; etc.), in Psalm 95 it describes the Israelites in the wilderness. Both the Hebrew word קָרַח and its Greek equivalent $\sigmaκληρύνω$ in the Septuagint denote a “hardening” of the will (i.e., stubbornness) against listening to and obeying the Lord (Deut. 9:6, 13; Neh. 9:16–17, 29; Jer. 7:26; 17:23; 19:15).³⁰

Quoting Psalm 95 in the Septuagint, the author of Hebrews identified the hardening of their hearts with “the provocation” or “rebellion” ($\tau\acute{\omega}$ παραπικρασμῶ), the Greek rendering of “Meribah” (מֵרִיבָה), and “the testing” or “trial” ($\tau\omicron\upsilon$ πειρασμοῦ), the rendering of “Massah” (מַסָּה).³¹ Meribah and Massah identify the time immediately after Israel’s deliverance from Egypt when they first “tested” the Lord over the lack of water and doubted His presence among them at Rephidim (Exod. 17:1–7). The name Meribah was used again forty years later when they “rebelled” over a lack of water at Kadesh (Num. 20:2–13). The psalmist undoubtedly intended both events and the intervening “forty years” (Ps. 95:10; Heb. 3:9) to confirm the consistent pattern of “go[ing] astray in their heart” (Ps. 95:10; Heb. 3:10).³² However, he also had in view their rebellion after the spies returned to Kadesh-barnea (Num. 14), for the expression “[God] swore in [His] anger” (Ps. 95:11) could refer only to God’s oath (“as I live”) by which He prohibited their entrance into the land (Num. 14:20–35; Deut. 1:34–40).

The New Testament author’s focus was clearly on the events of Kadesh-barnea as evidenced by his repeated reference to God’s oath (Heb. 3:11, 18; 4:3) and his warning that their “bodies fell in the wilderness” (3:17; 4:11; cf. Num. 14:29, 32–33). Therefore the sin (Heb. 3:17) of unbelief (3:12, 19; 4:2) and disobedience (3:18; 4:6, 11), warned against in Hebrews 3–4, must correspond in

³⁰ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. M. E. J. Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 3:1152; and Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2d ed., rev. F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 756. The use of the Greek term $\sigmaκληρύνω$ in the New Testament indicates that even the disciples were capable of a “hardened heart” (Mark. 8:17).

³¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 64.

³² This corresponds to the Lord’s account of the “ten times” they had tested Him (Num. 14:22). Whether ten discrete events were in view or this was an idiomatic way of saying “many times,” the point is clear that they exhibited a consistent pattern of rebellion. See Ronald B. Allen, “Numbers,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 2:820.

meaning to the "rebellion" (Num. 14:9; Deut. 9:23-24) and unbelief (Num. 14:11) of Israel at Kadesh-barnea.

The writer's warning against "an evil, unbelieving heart . . . falling away from the living God" (Heb. 3:12) is often understood as "a willful rejection of salvation" tantamount to a complete apostasy from faith in God.³³ However, since *ἀποστήναι* ("to fall away") is not a technical term for absolute apostasy but simply denotes movement away from a point of reference,³⁴ it is best to determine the meaning of this warning in light of the events of Numbers 14 alluded to throughout the passage. Undoubtedly the author used *ἀποστήναι* to echo Moses' warning to the people at Kadesh-barnea: "Do not rebel [*ἀποστάται*] against the Lord" (Num. 14:9, LXX). In Hebrews 3:12 *ἐν τῷ* with the infinitive *ἀποστήναι* is used exegetically to further explain "an evil, unbelieving heart."³⁵ The adjective *ἀπιστίας* ("unbelieving") corresponds to the Lord's question to Moses at Kadesh, "How long will they not believe in Me?" (Num. 14:11; cf. Deut. 1:32; 9:23; Ps. 106:24). The adjective *πονηρά* ("evil") occurs twice in the description of the "evil [*πονηράν*] congregation" at Kadesh-barnea (Num. 14:27, 35) but nowhere else in the Pentateuch.³⁶ The phrase "the living God" corresponds well to the Exodus theme of God's life-sustaining presence guiding His people (Exod. 13:21-22; 15:13-17; 17:6-7; 23:20, 23; 33:14-15; 40:34-38; Num. 10:33-34; 11:16-25; 14:7-9). In summary, the readers were cautioned not against a complete absence of faith in God but more specifically against the failure to believe that God would sustain their lives in the face of impending danger (cf. Exod. 14:7-9). They were warned that their lack of faith would draw them away from the life-sustaining presence of God, their only source of "mercy" and "grace" to aid them in time of need (Heb. 2:18; 4:16).

The unbelief of the people at Kadesh-barnea must also be un-

³³ See Buist M. Fanning, "A Theology of Hebrews," in *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 408; and McKnight, "Warning Passages," 39-41. Although Paul Ellingworth cautions against understanding the expression "to imply a return to paganism," he does affirm that it denotes "the wilderness generation's abandonment of faith in the living God," which suggests a complete rejection of faith (*The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], 222).

³⁴ For example *ἀφίστημι* is used elsewhere in the New Testament to declare that Anna never "left" the temple (Luke 2:37), the angel "departed" from Peter (Acts 12:10), and Mark "deserted" Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:38).

³⁵ James Hope Moulton and Nigel Turner, *Syntax, vol. 3 of A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1963), 146.

³⁶ Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 86.

derstood in light of the sins of Moses and Aaron.³⁷ The death of Miriam (Num. 20:1) and the death sentence on Moses and Aaron (20:12, 24) reinforced the point that none of the Exodus generation except Joshua and Caleb would enter the Promised Land. Moses and Aaron received exactly the same punishment as the people because they committed the same transgression at a different time. This is indicated by the fact that the “rebellion” (קָרָה) and “unbelief” (אִי־אֵמֶן) of Moses and Aaron are designated by the same Hebrew words as the sin of the people (cf. Num. 14:9, 11 and 20:12, 24; Deut. 9:23–24).³⁸

The sins of Moses and Aaron are typically regarded as minor in comparison to the magnitude of the sin of the people. However, the words and behavior of Moses are reported in Numbers 20:10–12 as a most serious desecration of Yahweh’s holiness and reputation.³⁹ Moses spoke in anger to the people, “Listen now, you rebels; shall we [i.e., I and Yahweh] bring forth water for you out of this rock?” (20:10). His rhetorical question implied doubt (i.e., “unbelief”) whether God genuinely intended to provide water for the people because he deemed them unworthy to receive it. The gravity of Moses’ sin is seen not only by the pronoun “we” that equated his role with God’s, but also by questioning God’s clear command to provide water for His people (20:8, 24). Since the Lord pronounced judgment on both Moses and Aaron, Aaron must have participated in Moses’ disobedience as his willing spokesman.⁴⁰ Hence they incurred the same punishment as the other “rebels” who died in the wilderness.

Based on the Old Testament principle that punishment is given “measure for measure” according to the nature of the transgression committed, the same punishment of Moses, Aaron, and the people indicates that “exactly the same” sin was committed by

³⁷ Earlier examples of their sins include Moses’ doubts regarding God’s ability to supply enough meat for the people (Num. 11:21–23) and Aaron’s making the golden calf (Exod. 32:1–6, 21–25, 35; Deut. 9:20–21).

³⁸ See Alfred Jepsen, “קָרָה,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 1:304.

³⁹ See M. Margalio, “The Transgression of Moses and Aaron—Num. 20:1–13,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 2 (October 1983): 215. He suggests that by questioning God’s command to provide water Moses in effect denied the divine name Yahweh, which means that God will be with His people in their distress to help them (*ibid.*, 219).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 208–9.

all.⁴¹ Also the same place name "Kadesh" suggests the author's intention to link the sin of the people in Numbers 14 to the sin of Moses and Aaron (13:26; 20:1). The writer to the Hebrews also intended to include Moses among those who provoked the Lord by describing "all those who came out of Egypt led by *Moses*" (Heb. 3:16, italics added).⁴² Unless he intended to draw attention to Moses' inclusion in the group, the added phrase, "by Moses" seems unnecessary.

The sin of the Exodus generation was a growing lack of trust in God's life-sustaining presence (Exod. 17:7) to provide for their needs (Num. 11:4-6, 18-23; 14:7-9). Their sin culminated in their refusal to trust God to bring them into the land and overcome its inhabitants (14:8-10). Their sin was certainly grievous! But several factors suggest that it was not a total and final rejection of faith in God and that eternal condemnation was not at issue.

First, God "pardoned them according to [Moses'] word" (14:20), that is "according to the greatness of [God's] lovingkindness" (v. 19), thereby granting them forgiveness for their transgression.

Second, in response to the Lord's oath of judgment on them, "the people mourned greatly" (v. 39). The next day they confessed, "We have indeed sinned," and they attempted to possess the land the Lord had promised (vv. 40-45). Though their confession and resolve to enter the land were now too late, their response is hardly representative of a people that had totally renounced belief in God.

Third, their redemption (i.e., salvation) from Egypt was not forfeited, for they were never allowed to return to their former bondage under Pharaoh. Instead, God "carried" them along in the wilderness "as a man carries his son" (Deut. 1:31), caring for them (Acts 13:18) by feeding, clothing, guiding, and protecting them for forty years.⁴³ Fourth, since their sin is identical in description and punishment to that of Moses and Aaron, it must be regarded as the same. Therefore, since no one considers the sin of Moses and Aaron

⁴¹ Ibid., 221. See also Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 385-86.

⁴² This subtle allusion to Moses' shared guilt and fate with the Exodus generation (Heb. 3:16-17) reinforces the point of the author's earlier contrast between Jesus and Moses (3:1-6). Though Moses was regarded as a "faithful" servant (3:5; cf. 11:23-29; Num. 12:7), by comparison Jesus "has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses" (Heb. 3:3) because He, unlike Moses, was "without sin" (4:15).

⁴³ Although the external evidence appears almost evenly split in Acts 13:18 between *επροφώδησεν* ("he cared for them") and *επροσφόδησεν* ("he put up with them"), the former could very well be the original reading because it has early support (e.g., A, C*, B^74), and it fits the positive sense of Paul's message and perhaps his echoing of the verb's use twice in the Septuagint in Deuteronomy 1:31.

as total apostasy that incurred their eternal destruction, neither should the sins of the people be regarded as such.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE EXODUS GENERATION

Some have mistakenly equated the Exodus generation's experience of "falling in the wilderness" (Heb. 3:17) and "not entering My rest" (3:11, 18–19; 4:6) with "eternal damnation."⁴⁴ This conclusion is unwarranted for several reasons. First, this would imply that Moses, Miriam, and Aaron were also included among the condemned, since they too died in the wilderness and forfeited their entrance into the rest of Canaan. Few if any would agree that the greatest of all the prophets, Moses, along with the founder of the Levitical priesthood, Aaron, were excluded from the world to come because of their disobedience. Moses' appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus (Matt. 17:3; Luke 9:30) should remove any doubt regarding his life in God's presence.

Second, the oath that the Lord made in response to Israel's sin at Kadesh-barnea contains two inseparable parts.⁴⁵ The first is the declaration that God "pardoned them according to [Moses'] word" (Num. 14:20). This can only mean that the people were forgiven of the iniquity of the sin they had just committed (v. 19). In the same breath the Lord uttered the second part of His oath, denying them entrance into the land (v. 23). As if to reinforce his oath ("as I live"), the Lord then stated three times in five verses that their "corpses shall fall in this wilderness" (vv. 28–33; cf. v. 35). Both their forgiveness and their failure to enter into the land are declared as part of one oath. Since forgiveness and eternal condemnation are mutually exclusive, neither their failure to enter the rest of Canaan nor their untimely death can be equated with damnation. However, before the nature of their judgment can be determined, the Old Testament concept of rest must be understood.

THE OLD TESTAMENT CONCEPT OF REST IN HEBREWS 3:7–4:11

The writer to the Hebrews appealed to the Old Testament concept of rest to warn his readers against the sin of the Exodus generation (Heb. 3:7–19). He declared that the rest Israel forfeited at Kadesh-barnea was still available to his readers if they remained steadfast

⁴⁴ See McKnight, "Warning Passages," 33–34.

⁴⁵ Occurrence of the common oath form "as I live" in Numbers 14:21, 28 ties together the entire section (vv. 20–35) as one oath.

(4:1-11). Following the rabbinic practice of appealing to verbal similarity (i.e., *gezera shawa*), the author drew on the use of "rest" in Genesis 2 to explain the meaning of "rest" in Psalm 95. The connection between the two passages is clear in the Septuagint, where both use cognates of *κατάπαυσις* that denote a state or a "place of rest."⁴⁶ Since *κατάπαυσις* occurs eight times (and the verb *καταπαύω* occurs three times) in Hebrews 3-4, its meaning is crucial to the entire passage. The word *κατάπαυσις* in the Septuagint renders two Hebrew words whose contexts are important to understanding the use of *κατάπαυσις* in Hebrews.⁴⁷ The first is *מנוחה*, which is used in Psalm 95:11 to indicate the rest forfeited by the people of Israel when they rebelled in the wilderness (Heb. 3:11, 18-19; cf. Num. 14). The second is *נוח*, which is used in Genesis 2:2 to signify that God "rested" after He created Adam.

WORSHIPING AT YAHWEH'S RESTING PLACE: PSALM 95

Several reasons suggest why Psalm 95 was chosen by the author of Hebrews instead of other Old Testament rest passages. First, Psalm 95 served the author's purpose to prove that Canaan was no final resting place. Second, it was familiar to his readers since the psalm was widely used in the early church "as a call and guide to worship."⁴⁸ Third, the example of the Exodus generation corresponded to the threat facing his audience. Fourth, the author was able to capitalize on the psalmist's use of "today" to drive home the warning to his contemporary audience. Fifth, the ambiguity of the expression "My rest" made its application more elastic than other Old Testament references to rest.

The meaning of "My rest" in Psalm 95:11 has been disputed. The various views include the "rest" God promised Israel in the land, eternal soteriological rest in heaven,⁴⁹ "kingdom rest" in the future millennium,⁵⁰ and God's resting place in the temple.⁵¹ When

⁴⁶ Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 417-18.

⁴⁷ See Lombard, "Katápausis in the Letter to the Hebrews," 63-64.

⁴⁸ Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1975), 343.

⁴⁹ Leonard J. Coppes, "נוח," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 2:663.

⁵⁰ Toussaint, "Warning Passages in Hebrews," 74; and Oberholtzer, "The Kingdom Rest in Hebrews 3:1-4:13," 190-92. Although both view the "rest" as eschatological and millennial, Toussaint equates it with eschatological salvation while Oberholtzer equates it with future rewards and authority to rule with Jesus as distinct from final salvation.

understood in light of the other Old Testament rest passages, *Psalm 95:11 is best understood as a warning against forfeiting the right to worship before the presence of the Lord in His holy sanctuary and to enjoy the covenantal blessings.* The noun מנוחה in Psalm 95 denotes a “resting place” in the sense of the “dwelling place of God.”⁵² It is derived from the primary root verb נח, which signifies being “settled down” in a secure place, safely out of reach from one’s enemies.⁵³ The word and its cognates often speak of the Lord granting His people rest in the Promised Land (Deut. 3:20; 12:9–10; Josh. 1:13; 22:4; 1 Kings 8:56).

In Deuteronomy 12 the land was promised to the people of Israel as their “resting place” (מנוחה, v. 9), not to do as they pleased (v. 8) but rather to worship before the presence of the Lord (vv. 5–7, 11–14). This “rest” (נח) was realized under Joshua after the conquest (Josh. 23:1; cf. 21:43–44; 22:4), by David after his defeat of the Philistines (2 Sam. 7:1), and then by Solomon at the dedication of the temple (1 Kings 5:3–5; 8:56; 1 Chron. 22:7–10).⁵⁴ In each case the Lord gave His people rest from their enemies in order for them to worship Him and to enjoy the blessings He had promised them in the land.

After Israel’s settlement in the land the term מנוחה came to denote God’s “resting place” on Zion (Ps. 132:8, 13–14; Isa. 11:10) in the temple (1 Chron. 28:2; cf. 2 Chron. 6:41) as a synonym for His throne (Isa. 66:1). Hence Israel’s rest and Yahweh’s resting place were linked by worship. The people were “rested” (נח, Hiphil) in the land for the purpose of worshiping Yahweh. The land became Yahweh’s “resting place” (מנוחה), where He promised to dwell in order to bless His people (Deut. 12:5–11). Then He was enthroned on His “resting place” (מנוחה) on Zion (1 Chron. 23:25; Ps. 132:13) in the temple (1 Chron. 28:2), where He should be worshiped. Furthermore the verb נח was commonly used to signify the “dedication” of certain items before the presence of the Lord for liturgical purposes

⁵¹ Georg Braulik, “Gottes Ruhe—Das Land oder der Tempel? Zu Psalm 95,11,” in *Freude an der Weisung des Herrn, Beiträge zur Theologie der Psalmen, Festgabe zum 70. Geburtstag von Heinrich Gross* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1986), 33–44.

⁵² Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2:600.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 2:680.

⁵⁴ Regarding the relationship of “rest” to the temple and worship under Solomon see Roddy Braun, “Solomon, the Chosen Temple Builder: The Significance of 1 Chronicles 22, 28, and 29 for the Theology of Chronicles,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95 (1976): 582–86.

(e.g., manna, Exod. 16:33-34; Aaron's linen tunic, Lev. 16:23; Aaron's rod, Num. 17:4; and the firstfruit of the harvest, Deut. 26:4, 10). So both the noun *מנוחה* and its verb *נוח* became part of the worship vocabulary of Israel, describing all aspects of Israel's celebration of the Lord's life-sustaining presence in their midst.

The use of *מנוחה* in Psalm 95 fits its pattern found elsewhere in the Old Testament. The psalm's twofold division between a call to worship (vv. 1-6) and a warning to worshipers (vv. 7-11) indicates its liturgical purpose to invite people into the sanctuary of Yahweh.⁵⁵ The people were called to come before Him joyfully (vv. 1-2) in order to worship Him as King over creation (vv. 3-5) and as Shepherd of His people (vv. 6-7). The expressions "His presence" (v. 2) and "before the Lord" (v. 6) are based on the word *פָּנֵי*, referring literally to "the face of God."⁵⁶ This term often served as an emphatic reference to God Himself (Exod. 20:3; 33:14-15; Deut. 4:37; Isa. 63:9). Consequently to come "before the Lord" (literally, "to the face [*פָּנֵי*] of the Lord") often signified a visit to the sanctuary for worship (Exod. 23:15; 34:20; Deut. 31:11; Ps. 42:2; Isa. 1:12).⁵⁷ Further, throughout the Psalms the "face" (*פָּנֵי*) of the Lord is frequently linked to God's sanctuary.⁵⁸

Therefore the privilege to "enter into My rest" (Ps. 95:11) is best understood as the right to worship before the personal presence of Yahweh (vv. 2, 6), which could be forfeited by hardened, rebellious hearts like those of the Exodus generation (vv. 8-10). This fits the argument of Hebrews 3-4 in which the author encouraged his readers that if they would "hold fast" to their hope (Heb. 3:6) and their assurance (v. 14) in Christ they could "draw near with confidence to the throne of grace" (i.e., God's resting place) to receive "help" (4:16), "blessing" (6:7), and "reward" (10:35; 11:6).

RESTING IN GOD'S PRESENCE: GENESIS 2

The writer of Hebrews cited Genesis 2:2 to elucidate the meaning of "rest" throughout Hebrews 3-4. Yet for modern readers the con-

⁵⁵ For a liturgical explanation of how the psalm was used to invite worshipers into the temple court see G. Henton Davies, "Psalm 95," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 85 (1973): 183-95.

⁵⁶ Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 3:940-41.

⁵⁷ Victor P. Hamilton, "פָּנֵי," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2:727.

⁵⁸ This is especially true in the enthronement psalms in which the presence of God is associated with the temple courts (Ps. 96:6, 8-9) and the ark of the covenant (97:2-3, 5; 99:1).

nection between “My rest” in Psalm 95 and God’s rest from His creative activity in Genesis 2 may be difficult to follow. The obvious connection in both instances is that the rest spoken of belongs to God. However, how does that contribute to the author’s argument? The inference seems to be that when God provided rest for Himself He also provided rest for His people. Yet Genesis 2 makes no mention of rest for Adam. Or does it? Old Testament citations often have more in view than merely the verse quoted. Genesis 2 has two words for “rest.” The first is the verb *נָח*, which speaks of God’s rest following His creative work (Gen. 2:2; cf. Heb. 4:4, 10). Although the word indicates that God rested from His creative activity, it does not imply that God became completely inactive. Rather God “ceased one activity in order to continue in another.”⁵⁹ When God rested from His creative work, He looked on “all that He had made” and declared that “it was very good” (Gen. 1:31). In other words God ceased His creative activity to enjoy what He had created.

In Genesis 2 God’s presence was with mankind in the garden through His interaction with Adam and Eve. “God *took* the man and put [rested] him into the garden of Eden” (2:15), “*brought* [the animals] to the man” (v. 19), “*took* one of his ribs, and *closed up the flesh*” (v. 21), and “*fashioned* into a woman the rib . . . and *brought* her to the man” (v. 22, italics added). In summary, God walked in the garden with Adam (3:8), taking pleasure in him by caring for his needs. The author of Hebrews exhorted his readers to enter into God’s rest by resting “from [their] works, as God did from His” (Heb. 4:10). If God ceased other activities in order to enjoy Adam, then humankind enters God’s rest by ceasing other activities in order to take pleasure in worshipping God.

The writer of Hebrews called this primordial rest *σαββατισμός* (4:9). Although found nowhere in Greek literature before Hebrews, this term occurs several times in other early Christian literature.⁶⁰ In each case *σαββατισμός* refers not to the Sabbath Day but rather “to the Sabbath *observance*, or Sabbath *celebration*.”⁶¹ The emphasis was not on the cessation of daily activities but rather on an unhindered opportunity for the people of Israel to celebrate God’s life-sustaining presence among them (Exod. 31:12–16; cf. 2 Macc. 8:27). As such, Sabbath celebration was meant to be a time of festive

⁵⁹ Lombard, “*Katápausis* in the Letter to the Hebrews,” 65.

⁶⁰ E.g., Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 23.3. For discussion see Hofius, *Katápausis*, 103–6.

⁶¹ Laansma, “*I Will Give You Rest*,” 276–77 (italics his).

praise including special sacrifices commemorating God's provisions (Lev. 23:27-32; 24:5-8; Num. 28:9-10; 1 Chron. 9:32; 23:30-31; 2 Chron. 2:4; 8:12-13; 31:3). Its origin in Creation suggests that this Sabbath celebration transcends the rest forfeited by the Exodus generation and enjoyed under David and Joshua. So this "rest" remains available "today" to everyone who believes (Heb. 4:4).

The second synonym for "rest" in Genesis 2 is נָח , which is used of God causing Adam "to rest" (Hiphil) in the garden (Gen. 2:15). Regarding the placement of Adam in the garden, both the Septuagint and modern English translations obscure the change from the common word for "put" (נָטַח) in verse 8 to נָח , meaning "rest" in verse 15. However, the introduction of the word נָח should not be overlooked. As noted earlier, this term was part of the worship vocabulary of Israel and signified the placement of something in the presence of the Lord for the purpose of worship (Exod. 16:33-34; Lev. 16:23; Num. 17:4; Deut. 26:4, 10).

Furthermore, for several reasons the two infinitives at the end of Genesis 2:15 are best translated "to worship and obey." First, the verb עָבַד was often used as a synonym for worship (Exod. 3:12; 12:31; Deut. 4:19; Isa. 19:21; Jer. 35:15) and frequently described the Levitical worship in the tabernacle and temple (Exod. 38:21; Num. 3:7-8; 4:23, 26; 18:6; 1 Chron. 24:3, 19; 2 Chron. 8:14). In addition the verb שָׁמַר was commonly used of "keeping" (i.e., "obeying") covenant stipulations (Gen. 17:9-10; 18:19; 26:5; Deut. 4:6; 7:12; 29:9).⁶² This meaning best fits the immediate context in which God "commanded" (צִוָּה) Adam regarding the conditions for worshiping in His presence (Gen. 2:16-17).

Second, the final ת (with the *mappiq*) on both infinitives is a feminine pronominal suffix and therefore cannot refer to the masculine noun "garden" (גַּרְדֵּן) as suggested by the standard translation "to cultivate it and keep it."⁶³ A better option adopted from rabbinic sources by Cassuto (*Bereshith Rabbah* 16.5) reads the final ת (without the *mappiq*) as part of the infinitive form.⁶⁴ As such, both in-

⁶² See Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 124; John Sailhamer, "Genesis," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 2:45; Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, *New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 209-10; and U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961), 1:122-23.

⁶³ Neither is the feminine noun "ground" (אֲדָמָה) in Genesis 2:9 a possible antecedent because of its distance from the noun "garden."

⁶⁴ Cassuto also claims to find this reading in several other texts (*Genesis*, 1:122), indicating a long history of this interpretation within Jewish midrash.

finitives would function as verbal nouns without direct objects, meaning simply “to worship and to obey.”⁶⁵

Third, the task of “cultivating the ground” was not assigned to Adam until after he was expelled from the garden as part of the curse (Gen. 3:23; cf. 3:17–19) and therefore this task should not be understood as part of man’s original purpose.⁶⁶ Hence, God “rested” (נָח) man in the garden to worship (עָבַד) before Him and to “obey” (שָׁמַע) His command (cf. 2:16).⁶⁷ Once Adam disobeyed God’s command (3:11, 17), he forfeited his right to “rest” in God’s “presence” (3:8) and enjoy Eden’s blessings (3:23–24).

Why did the author of Hebrews not simply quote from Genesis 2:15 if he intended to draw attention to man’s rest in the garden to worship and obey God? Since he was using the Septuagint, the author could not quote Genesis 2:15 to support his argument because it eliminates the rest motif by not using *καταπαύω*. Surely he had access to the Hebrew text, as did his Jewish readers, and was therefore aware of the significance of נָח in Genesis 2. Rather than interrupt his argument by explaining to his readers the difference between their Greek Bible and its Hebrew original, he simply alluded to the Old Testament concept of rest in Genesis 2:2.⁶⁸

In summary, the Old Testament concept of rest is best under-

⁶⁵ See Sailhamer, “Genesis,” 45, 47–48. The exact consonant structure of the infinitive לעבֹד occurs (with different vowel pointing in the Masoretic text centuries later) only five times elsewhere in the Old Testament, where it is identified in each case as a noun denoting the service of worship (Num. 4:35, 39, 43; 1 Chron. 25:1; 26:3). This reinforces the probability that it is a verbal noun without a direct object in Genesis 2:15. The Septuagint rendering of 2:15 (*ἐργάζεσθαι αὐτὸν καὶ φυλάσσειν*) allows for this same idea if *αὐτόν* (accusative) is understood as the subject of both infinitives referring to man (*ἀνθρώπου*) rather than referring to “paradise” (*ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ*). For similar examples in the Septuagint of a personal pronoun in the accusative case functioning as the subject of two infinitives connected by *καί* (i.e., infinitive>accusative pronoun>*καί*>infinitive) see Genesis 19:33, 35; 2 Kings 4:4; Esther 6:2; and *Tobit* 5:18. This rendering also makes better sense because the object of *ἐργάζεσθαι* is *τῆν γῆν* (feminine), not *τὸν παράδεισον* (masculine), elsewhere in the context (Gen. 2:5; 3:23). As such the Septuagint should be translated “and [the Lord] placed him in paradise for him to serve and obey.”

⁶⁶ Cassuto, *Genesis*, 1:122; and Sailhamer, “Genesis,” 45.

⁶⁷ This interpretation is advocated by Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 124; Sailhamer, “Genesis,” 2:44–45; Matthews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 208–9; Cassuto, *Genesis*, 121–22; and the *Hereshith Rabbah* 16:5, 8. See also John Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1996), 74–76; and E. R. Clendenen, “Life in God’s Land: An Outline of the Theology of Deuteronomy,” in *The Church at the Dawn of the 21st Century* (Dallas, TX: Criswell, 1989), 162–63.

⁶⁸ Furthermore the author’s echo to Genesis 2:15 in Hebrews 4:10 meets nearly all of Hays’s criteria for Old Testament echoes (see note 20 above).

stood as the blessing of worshiping God in the safety of His presence.⁶⁹ Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden first experienced this rest after God rested from His creative activities (Gen. 2:7-9; 15-22). After they were separated from His presence (3:8; 4:14), God again began to appear to His people (e.g., Abraham, 12:7; Moses, Exod. 3:2), culminating in the appearance of His divine presence before the Exodus generation in the pillar of cloud (13:21). Later God declared to Moses, "My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest" (33:14), thus identifying the divine presence as the source of rest. This is confirmed by the author's citations of Psalm 95 throughout Hebrews 3-4. Psalm 95 is a call to worship by joyfully approaching God's presence in His sanctuary (v. 2). However, the privilege of worshiping in God's dwelling place can be jeopardized by hardened, rebellious hearts (Ps. 95:8-10). God's presence first dwelt in the Garden of Eden, then in the tabernacle, then in the land (specifically Zion), and finally in the Solomonic temple.⁷⁰ In each case access into the presence of Yahweh for worship was jeopardized by disobedience to covenant stipulations. For his disobedience Adam was excluded from the place of God's presence in the garden. Likewise, because of rebellion, the people along with Moses, Miriam, and Aaron were refused entrance into the land where God promised to dwell and bless them. Their failure to experience God's rest in the land did not affect their election and salvation as the people of God but it did qualify, hamper, and negate their celebration of the life-sustaining presence of God. Rather than a source of joy and blessing, God's presence became a source of judgment.

"REST" IN THE ARGUMENT OF HEBREWS 3-4

The Epistle to the Hebrews is addressed to Jewish Christians who retrogressed in their spiritual life and considered returning to Judaism in order to avoid persecution from the Jews.⁷¹ Through an exposition of the Old Testament concept of rest the author exhorted

⁶⁹ The concept of Sabbath in the Old Testament also fits this interpretation because, like Adam's rest in the garden and Israel's rest in the land, the Sabbath rest was also designed for the express purpose of worshiping Yahweh (Heb. 4:9).

⁷⁰ Many have drawn connections between the Garden of Eden, the tabernacle and temple, and the land. For example Sailhamer argues for locating the garden in the land of Canaan, specifically where the temple would finally be built (*Genesis Unbound*, 69-77).

⁷¹ Regarding the identity of readers and general background of the epistle see Gleason, "The Old Testament Background of the Warning in Hebrews 6:4-8," 66-69.

them to “hold fast” to their confidence in Christ (Heb. 3:6, 14). This was meant to “encourage” them to face hardships boldly as “the day” approached (3:13; cf. 10:25) when the land would be burned (6:7–8) and temple worship would “disappear” (8:13).⁷² Using Psalm 95 the author warned that their lack of faith and confidence in Christ could jeopardize their rest, similar to what happened to the Exodus generation, potentially resulting in their loss of physical life (Heb. 3:17–19). In Psalm 95 God’s rest refers to Israel’s worship before the personal presence of Yahweh (vv. 2, 6), which could be forfeited by hardened, rebellious hearts like those of the Exodus generation (vv. 8–10). The readers could still “enter His rest” (Heb. 4:1, 3) by continuing to place their faith in the life-sustaining presence of God (4:4). The offer of rest was not limited to the Exodus generation, because it was first experienced by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden after God “rested” (Gen. 2:7–9; 15–22; cf. Heb. 4:4, 10). Neither was it limited to the occupation of the land under Joshua because David offered the same rest in his day (4:7–8).

The author argued that God’s “resting place” is limited by neither time nor place. Rather His “resting place” is now in His heavenly sanctuary where Jesus Christ has “sat down” (1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2) to serve “in the presence of God” as the believers’ High Priest (3:1, 4:14; 7:25–8:2; 9:11–15, 23–26; 10:19–22). If they remain faithful (3:6, 13), though the earthly temple will “disappear” (8:13), the readers can still “enter His resting place” (4:1, 3, 10–11) and “draw near with confidence to the throne of grace” (4:16) to “continually offer up” sacrifices of “praise” and good works (13:15–16). However, if they refuse to trust in God’s life-sustaining presence mediated by Jesus Christ their High Priest, they could forfeit the joy of God’s presence as a “resting place” for worship and Sabbath celebration. Instead, God’s presence would become to them a place where sins are exposed (4:12–13), punishment is given (3:17; 10:29–31), rewards are lost (10:35–36), and discipline is received (12:4–11).

The concept of rest must also be understood in light of the prominence of the covenant motif throughout Hebrews.⁷³ The word *διαθήκη* (“covenant”) occurs seventeen times (Heb. 7:22; 8:6, 8, 9 (twice), 10; 9:4 (twice), 15 (twice), 16, 17, 20; 10:16, 29; 12:24; 13:20), accounting for about half of its use in the New Testament.

⁷² Regarding allusions in Hebrews to the impending destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 see *ibid.*, 88–90.

⁷³ Susanne Lehne, *The New Covenant in Hebrews* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990), 93–117.

Most of these occurrences make reference to the New Covenant prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Following the Old Testament pattern, the New Covenant includes stipulations assuring the covenantal blessings. The forfeiture of rest in Hebrews corresponds to the covenantal consequences for failing to fulfill the stipulations of the New Covenant order.

CONCLUSION

The Old Testament background to Hebrews 3-4 indicates that those warned by the author were genuinely redeemed like the people of Israel in the Exodus. The readers were warned against committing the same sin of unbelief in the life-sustaining presence of God that Moses, Aaron, and the wilderness generation committed. That sin could result in their failure to enter into "God's rest," which meant that they would lose the opportunity to worship God joyfully in the safety of His presence and to enjoy the covenantal blessings. In the present age of unrest, what God's people need is not the comforts that come from a robust economy or a peace treaty in the Middle East, but rather the joy of worshiping in the safety of the soul-satisfying presence of God. The prayer of Augustine has never been more relevant: "You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in you" (*Confessions* 1.1).