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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the book of Deuteronomy there are phrases which are used to describe a god, foreign nation, or land by indicating whether or not it was "known" to the Israelites, their fathers, or children. For instance, one of the punishments threatened upon a disobedient Israelite community was oppression at the hands of a nation "which you have not known" (28:33). In similar fashion the Israelites were warned against following after gods which "neither you nor your fathers have known" (13:7; 28:64). In these instances, this lack of knowledge was a desirable quality. That is, it was good that the fathers did not know "x" and based upon this precedent the present generation was encouraged not to know "x" either. This pattern is followed throughout Deuteronomy and Jeremiah with only two remarkable exceptions.² In Deut 8:3,16 "manna" is

¹ This paper represents a major revision of a paper read by the author at the meeting of the Midwest Association of the Society of Biblical Literature on February 19, 1990 entitled, "What Did the Fathers Know? A Discussion of Deut 8:3, 16" and appearing in Proceedings of the Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Societies (forthcoming). In that paper I investigated cross cultural parallels to the manna tradition found in Deuteronomy 8 and concluded the links dubious at best.

² The book of Jeremiah also attests to this devise. For discussions relating the prophecy of Jeremiah and the book of deuteronomy see H. H. Rowley, "The Prophet Jeremiah and the Book of Deuteronomy," in Studies in Old Testament Prophecy Presented to T. H. Robinson, ed. H. H. Rowley (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1950)

described as something which neither the present generation nor the generations of the fathers had known, and for that reason the memory of the manna was to be maintained. This essay will investigate the function of "knowledge" in its association with the manna tradition found in Deut 8:3,16. In so doing, I will examine the use of מן as a chronological divider in the construction of the meaningful temporal organization of experience.

"MANNA"

A folk etymology of the word "manna" is presented in Exod 16:15.³ Here the fathers are depicted as ignorant of the phenomenon. The name "manna" is said to have originated from the question which was posed by the marveling Israelites: "What is it?" The Exodus passage introduces the point made in Deuteronomy. The fathers had no prior knowledge of the manna. Gerhard von Rad suggested that the Exodus 16 passage is foundational to the Deuteronomy passage in placing the manna episode within the context of God's provision for the covenant community while in the wilderness.⁴

157-174. Moshe Weinfeld, Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

³ The tradition is also recorded in Exod 16:1-36; Num 11:6-9; 21:5; Josh 5:12; Ps 78:23-25; 105:40; Neh 9:15,20.

⁴ Gerhard von Rad, Deuteronomy, a Commentary (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966) 73. Von Rad's observation calls into question the working hypothesis of Bodenheimer in which he states that only regard of manna as a "natural phenomenon...permits analysis and discussion." F. S. Bodenheimer, "The Manna of Sinai," Biblical Archaeologist Reader, ed. David Noel Freedman and G. Ernest Wright vol. 1 (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1961) 76. The question here being addressed is not so much the essence of the object, but rather the subject's mode of being in which manna becomes a part.

Twice the book of Deuteronomy tells of provision while in the wilderness with the expected result that the Israelite community should know something. Deut 29:5 states that God supplied manna while the Israelites were in the wilderness so they might know that the Lord is God. Likewise, Deut 8:3 indicates that the lesson taught to the Israelites by means of the manna was that man does not live by bread alone but by "everything that proceeds out of the mouth of God." The concept of "manna", as introduced by Exodus and extended by Deuteronomy, is couched within the context of Israel's developing intellectual and spiritual traditions.

"TO KNOW"

"Knowledge" in the book of Deuteronomy takes on a special historical significance in that many of the objects of knowledge become part of the traditions of the community which are to be preserved and passed on from one generation to another. For instance, Deut 11:2 points out that the children of the present generation do not know the plagues which the Egyptians suffered and so they must be instructed in the demonstration of the mighty deliverance provided by God. Similarly, Deut 31:13 indicates that the children do not know the law and in order to correct this situation the Israelites are to read the law and place it prominently within the community life. In these two instances "knowledge" refers to the preservation of the community traditions.

Conversely, through use of the verb **דָּרַךְ**, Deuteronomy can bring to mind a kind of "knowledge" which refers to items that are foreign to the Israelite community and are to remain outside the communal traditions. Three times (13:3,14; 11:28) the text indicates that there are "gods which you [the present generation] have not known." The absence of previous knowledge is cited as a precedent against seeking present knowledge of strange deities. In one instance, Deut 28:33, a threatened punishment is described as oppression by a "nation which you have not known." The

punishment assumes a terrifying quality due to the introduction of an unknown element. In the literature, the traditions of the community were intentionally distinguished from foreign traditions. One of the ways in which this bifurcation was accomplished was through the use of the verb ידע to discriminate between those traditions which were sanctioned by the community and those which were not.

There are several references in Deuteronomy which mention the combined knowledge of both the fathers and the present generation as a part of the description of other gods or nations. Deut 13:7; 28:36,64 refer to foreign gods and nations which stood outside the knowledge of the fathers or the present generation. In all of these the phraseology is the same - אלה ואבותיך - לא ידעה. The verb, "to know" is formed according to the second person singular masculine pronoun with "you" referring to the present audience, and the substantive, "your fathers", is added in apposition with the weight of emphasis probably residing with the first subject, "you." In all of these passages it is good that the fathers did not know the object and the present generation is expected to maintain that lack of familiarity.

Deuteronomy 8, however, is different. In both instances where the knowledge of the fathers is mentioned it is in reference to "manna." In verse 3 the substantive "your fathers" does not appear in apposition to "you" but is found in an independent clause. Here, the knowledge of "the fathers" is contrasted with that of the present generation. In verse 16 "the fathers" stands alone with no mention of the present generation. The grammatical structure of these verses alone arouses interest. The third plural perfect, used in these verses, has the nun termination only here and in Isa 26:16.⁵ J. Hoftijer has concluded

⁵ As pointed out by Gesenius, this termination may be simply to avoid a hiatus with the following נ (¶441). The Isaiah passage is suspect textually. It should be

a "contrastive" function of this termination when appended to imperfect forms.⁶ A similar intent occurs here with the perfect forms in Deut 8:3,16. The present knowledge of manna is contrasted to a previous lack of knowledge. The grammatical form of this passage should not be discounted, for as Raymond van Leeuwen has pointed out, this chapter is constructed purposefully to form a series of tight literary patterns.⁷ In addition, van Leeuwen has also demonstrated that a series of puns has been incorporated which tie together

pointed out that the Samaritan Pentateuch lacks the nun termination in both vs. 3 and 16 thereby discounting the explanation offered by Gesenius. Otherwise the SP and the MT of verse 3 correspond exactly. Verse 16, however, adds a copulative ׀ after the reference to the "fathers" in the SP besides the full spelling of ׀ and ׀. A case may be made for considering the phrase "ולא ידעו אבותיך" of verse 3 and the phrase "אשר לא-ידעו" of verse 16 as editorial remarks intended to enhance the remarkable nature of the manna.

⁶ J. Hoftijer, The Function and Use of the Imperfect Forms With Nun Paragogicum in Classical Hebrew (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1985) 34-38. Hoftijer mentions this passage but does not offer a grammatical discussion. J. Hoftijer, The Function and Use, 125 n.391. Contrast does seem to be the intent in the references to the knowledge of "you" and "your fathers."

⁷ Raymond van Leeuwen, "What Comes Out of God's Mouth: Theological Wordplay in Deuteronomy 8," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 47 (1985) 55-57. See also N. Lofink, Das Hauptgebot eine Untersuchung literarischer Einteilungsfragen zu Dtn 5-11, (Analecta Biblica 20; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963) 195. R. J. Clifford, Deuteronomy, (Old Testament Message 4; Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1982) 55. R. Van Leeuwen, "On the Structure and Sense of Deuteronomy 8," Proceedings of the Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Societies, 4 (1984): 237-249.

verses 3 and 16.⁸ This means that the grammatical structure of the passage is quite intentional and that the peculiarities of the structure merit close investigation. Further, this is the only time in all of Deuteronomy or Jeremiah that the lack of knowledge on the part of the fathers⁹ is seen as a virtuous quality in the object described.

There are two ways in which the phrase "your fathers had not known" may be understood. First, the phrase could be taken to mean that nothing of this sort has ever existed before. "X," the object of knowledge, is new, and for that reason the fathers had not known it. Here, the emphasis is upon the newness of the object. Secondly, the phrase could be understood to mean that this sort of thing has existed in the past but for some reason or other was foreign to the experience of the fathers. Here, there is a tacit acknowledgement of the prior existence of the object. "X" had simply never been part of the experience of the community. The emphasis, in this way of understanding, is not so much that the object had changed but that something had happened with the knowing subject. In other words, something new was happening in the experience of the community.

In surveying the other instances in which this phrase is used to refer either to the knowledge of the fathers or the knowledge of the present generation, it becomes apparent that the second of the above alternatives is the correct way to understand the phrase. When the nation was warned against following gods which the fathers had not known, the warning did not constitute a denial of the existence of those gods as objects of worship, rather it was a statement which denied that these gods had been objects of worship within the Israelite community. Likewise, a warning which threatened punishment in the form of oppression

⁸ Van Leeuwen, "What Comes Out of God's Mouth," 57.

⁹ The phrase occurs in Jer 9:16; 19:4.

by a nation which the fathers had not known was not a denial of the prior existence of that nation, but was simply an affirmation that the fathers had not been oppressed by those people. The manna experience, food supplied miraculously by God, was new to the communal experience of the Israelite nation and in chapter 8 of Deuteronomy is utilized to evidence the fidelity of God to his people.

THE INTERSECTION OF THE MANNA TRADITION AND KNOWLEDGE FORMULA

There have been several commentators who have addressed the phrases under question. Moshe Weinfeld states of 8:3 that the reference to the knowledge of the fathers is to "stress whatever was exceptional in the event."¹⁰ The phrase was part of the author's rhetorical technique, "designed to impress upon his listeners the greatness of the manna miracle."¹¹ Weinfeld's comments, however, do not adequately explain the function of the phrase "which your fathers did not know," nor its association with the manna. There are a host of other exceptional events described in Deuteronomy which do not share this particular description. Neither the Israelites, nor their fathers had ever crossed the Reed Sea. They had never known battle with the Amalekites, nor had they ever quenched their thirst by drinking water which flowed freely out of a rock. These are all exceptional events which are mentioned in the book and are without the benefit of the notation regarding the knowledge of the Israelites or their fathers. It may be that the emphasis intended by the phrase is other than simply noting the remarkable nature of the event.

S. R. Driver points out that the manna account in Deuteronomy 8 is placed within a parenetic sermon. The

¹⁰ Weinfeld, Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School, 172.

¹¹ Ibid.

manna," 1) taught Israel its dependence upon Jehovah,¹² and 2) operated as a test of Israel's disposition."¹² This certainly seems to be the function of the manna account in Deuteronomy 8, but Driver's statements fail to explain the contribution made by the material which refers to the ignorance of the fathers. Driver's explanation would not be affected if the reference to "the fathers" was removed from the text. Sensitive to this defect Driver continues, "It was food unknown before (Ex 16:15); and consequently a signal evidence of God's sustaining providence."¹³ Once again, however, Driver's comments do not explain the novel idea introduced by the reference to the fathers. Surely, as evidence of God's sustaining ability, it would have been enough for the present generation to have been unaware of the bread from heaven. Given Driver's explanation, the reference to the fathers is unnecessary. Further, the grammatical peculiarities of verses 3 and 16 elude explanation by Driver. Mention of "the fathers" within Deuteronomy 8 suggests that there was a specific intent in mind which could only be satisfied by a reference to the "fathers."

Von Rad adds an insight which may aid in the discussion. In comparison to the account of the manna in Exodus 16, he says of the Deuteronomy 8 passage that in "Dt 8, 3, the matter is completely spiritualized. It is stated expressly that the event was intended to teach that man does not live by bread alone... Here manna is taken as spiritual food."¹⁴ In his opinion, the Deuteronomy 8 passage is an interpretation of the Exodus account stressing the theological implications

¹² S. R. Driver, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy (ICC; Edinburgh: Scribner's, 1902) 106-107.

¹³ Ibid., 107.

¹⁴ G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology, trans. D. M. G. Stalker 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 1:282.

of provision from the mouth of God.¹⁵ While, as pointed out by Van Leeuwen,¹⁶ von Rad may be in error concerning his suggestion of an opposition between the spiritual and the material, von Rad's insight leads us to suspect that the reference to the fathers is intended to communicate a quality of spiritual intimacy granted to the present generation which was withheld from those of earlier generations. The provision of manna served as visible evidence of this privileged relationship. The same view is expounded more fully by Bruce Malina, who observes both halakic and haggadic amplifications of the basic¹⁷ manna tradition throughout the Old Testament. Remnants of this development may be seen in the Psalms where the "manna" is referred to as "grain of heaven" (78:24) and "לחם אנִיִּים" (78:25).¹⁸ The Psalmic literature seems to emphasize that the important thing to remember about the manna is that it was "bread from heaven" which rained down from the "doors of heaven" (105:40; 78:23). The manna motif, placed within the didactic context of Deuteronomy 8, is to be remembered as part of the religious heritage of the community.

To this point, several observations may be offered. 1) The grammatical and rhetorical structure of

¹⁵ Von Rad, Deuteronomy, 73.

¹⁶ R. Van Leeuwen, "On the Structure and Sense of Dt 8," 237.

¹⁷ Bruce Malina, The Palestinian Manna Tradition (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968) 39-40.

¹⁸ The phrase in Ps 78:25 is fraught with difficulties. It may mean "bread of the heavenly beings," i.e. "bread of angels" or it may mean "bread of the Mighty," i.e. "bread of the gods." A helpful introduction to the problems involved may be found in A. Kapelrud, "אִנִּים," Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, ed. G. J. Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. John Willis vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1974) 42-44.

Deut 8:3,16 argues for an intentional and specific contribution by the phrase "which your fathers did not know." That contribution is not sufficiently characterized by calling it "emphatic." 2) The reference to the father's ignorance of the "manna" does not mean that they had no previous awareness of divinely supplied nourishment, just that they had never experienced it. 3) The reference to "manna" in Deut 8:3,16 functions as evidence of God's fidelity to his people.

THE REFERENCE TO THE FATHERS AS A CHRONOLOGICAL DIVIDER

In a variety of ways the Biblical literature refers to the God of Israel as "the God of my father."¹⁹ J. Phillip Hyatt has argued for a theory of religious origins based in part upon the prominence of the nomenclature "the God of my father." Whether or not one accepts Hyatt's theory, he does illustrate, without question, the importance of historical continuity within Israelite religion. When this preferred continuity is kept in mind, the present contrast to the knowledge of the fathers looms in bold relief.²⁰ This observation is all the more striking given the more general tendency found in the book of Deuteronomy regarding the function of remembrance within the community. Edward Blair thinks it not too extreme to state that, "the memory motif, so strong in Deuteronomy, is one of the primary emphases of the Bible as a whole."²¹ The introduction of anything new,

¹⁹ J. Philip Hyatt, "Yahweh as 'The God of my Father'," Vetus Testamentum 5 (1955) 130-136.

²⁰ David Noel Freedman has also alluded to the important role of continuity in the religion of Israel. David Noel Freedman, "Who is Like Thee Among the Gods? The Religion of Early Israel," Ancient Israelite Religion, ed. Patrick Miller, Paul Hanson, and S. Dean McBride (Fortress Press: Philadelphia, 1987) 354.

²¹ Edward Blair, "An Appeal to Remembrance,"

which the fathers did not know, is remarkable in the Deuteronomic literature.

It may be argued that the phrase, "which your fathers had not known," should be understood as a sign the purpose of which was to organize chronological experience. In other words, the phrase referring to the fathers could be understood to bring to mind an idea similar to that accomplished by referring to "the good old days." There are at least two fundamental ways in which experience may be organized temporally. First, experience may be arranged as points upon a continuum. The similarities between points "a" and "b" outweigh the differences so that a continuum is established upon which the two temporal referents may be charted. For example, in a discussion with a colleague, I may refer to an experience which was in the "early days" of my teaching career. The "early days" can be charted at one point some distance from the implied "now" or "later days", both of which reside on the continuum of a "teaching career." Here, the differences between the "early days" and the "now" are understood within the context of a more fundamental similarity, that being a teaching career. The "early days" and the "now" or "later days" are various experiences of teaching which belong upon one continuum. This type of chronological organization is accomplished in the Biblical text by means of a variation of the formula X-לְכַן, which, as demonstrated by Gershon Brin, is the typical notation used by Biblical writers.²² This formula abounds in the Kings and Chronicles and is attested in the Deuteronomic corpus (19:17; 32:7). A similar effect is served by folk aetiologies which explain contemporary phenomena in terms of past events and use variations of the formula "to this day" (Josh 8:28-29; et. al.). If

Interpretation 15 (1961) 43.

²² Gershon Brin, "The Formula X-לְכַן and X-לְכַן: Some Characteristics of Historiographical Writing in Israel," Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 93 (1981) 183-196.

this type of chronological construction is the intent of the phrase in Deuteronomy 8, "which your fathers did not know", then it is untypical in its formulation.

There is a second way in which experience can be organized temporally. Experience may be organized in oppositions. An experience can be either anticipated or recalled, the notable character of which is fundamentally different than the present. Here, the similarities between two points are understood within the context of a more profound distinction. To return to the example from education, this manner of organizing experience may be illustrated by the recall of an event which took place in "under-grad days." The continuum between the "under-grad days" and the "now" is disrupted by the implied graduation. The "under-grad days" are understood within the broader context of graduation which in turn serves as a boundary between two types of experience, "under-grad" and "post-grad." This type of experiential organization emphasizes the boundaries between types of experience and is dependant upon those boundaries for the fundamental categories of meaningful experience. Most generally, the boundaries signify a notable change in the mode of the knowing subject's being rather than a change in the object of knowledge. It is this second type of experiential organization which is constructed in Deuteronomy 8.

As was noted earlier, the verb דָּרַךְ is used within the context of inter-generational references in Deuteronomy and elsewhere in the Biblical text (Deut 13:7; Jer 9:16; 19:24; et. al.). The verb can be used to indicate a continuum between generations (Deut 28:64; Ps 78:6) or it can be used to indicate a temporal divider in the organization of experience which separates generations. Four examples will suffice to illustrate the rather special function of the verb as a temporal divider in the Biblical literature.²³

²³ Lexical descriptions of the verb דָּרַךְ make clear the experiential aspects of the verb, but generally emphasizing the object of knowledge and not the

Exod 1:8 marks the beginning of the Egyptian oppression by the advent of a Pharaoh "who did not know Joseph." The Exodus writer could just as easily have written "in the days of..." and in so doing imply no experiential discontinuity before and after this Pharaoh's reign. Rather, this Pharaoh's lack of knowledge effectively ends a time of peaceful co-existence between the Israelites and their Egyptian neighbors and begins the period of oppression. The temporal continuum of the Hebrew experience is dramatically divided by "knowledge." Later, after a failed attempt on the part of Moses to effect the release of his compatriots, knowledge is again used to demarcate the temporal limits of categories of experience. In Exod 6:3, God reassures Moses of his intent to rescue the Israelites and in so doing reminds Moses of the Divine Name which is known by Moses but was not known by Abraham, Issac, and Jacob. The revelation of the Name constituted a boundary between the experience of the patriarches and the experience of Moses and his associates. Further, knowledge of the Name is presented as adequate evidence of God's intention to "take you for my people" and "be your God" in a way which was only promised to the patriarches (Exod 6:7). This function of the knowledge was frustrated only by the Israelites "broken spirits and their cruel bondage" that is, by their present experiential categories.

Two final examples of the temporal arranging served by the use of **דָּר** are found in the book of Judges. In Judg 2:10, the generation following Joshua is distinguished from Joshua's generation by the report that they "did not know the Lord or the work which he had done for Israel." The knowledge characteristic of the present generation marked their experience as qualitatively different then that of Joshua's

experiential categories of the subject. Other references could be cited, such as Josh 24:31; Ezek 25:14.

generation. Joshua's generation served the Lord (Judg 2:7) while the next generation served the Baals (Judg 2:11). Here, knowledge is used to mark the boundary between two types of religious affiliation and, in the theology of the writer of Judges, between a period of the Lord's blessing and a period of His judgement. A very similar function is served by reference to knowledge in 3:2 of the same book. This verse states that one of the reasons why the Canaanites were left in the Promised Land was that the present Israelite generation might "know war." According to this verse, the experience of the ensuing generations included military conflict which was contrasted to that of the preceding generations. Once again "knowledge" stands as the boundary between temporal-organizational continuums of experience.

It is this disjunctive type of organization which is effected by the reference to the fathers in Deuteronomy 8. In verses 3 and 16, the verb לָדַע signifies the boundaries between two experiential continuums rather than two points upon one continuum. In Deuteronomy 8 the significant point is the boundary which makes the present knowledge different than that of the fathers. In verse three it is explicitly stated that manna, which was unknown, was designed to make the community know that "man does live by bread alone." Something happened to the community which distinguished the present relationship with God from that of the past generation. That something is illustrated by manna, miraculously supplied food, which was previously unknown. The continuum of experience begun with the manna is, according to verse 5, to continue and characterize the community's obedient walk with God so that blessing in the land is assured.

CONCLUSION

Deuteronomy 8 is a highly stylized sermon designed to motivate the believing Israelite community to religious faithfulness. Part of that motivation is a presentation of the community's dependence upon

"everything which proceeds from the mouth of God." That dependency is attested to empiracally by reference to the manna, food miraculously provided by God for the community. That experience was unknown by the fathers and served as a boundary marking off their relationship with God from the more intimate experience of the present generation. Something new had happened in the communal life of Israel. The sermon portrays the community as poised, about to realize the inheritance of the Promised Land. The present generation has begun a new continuum by which to organize experience. Far from being an incidental allusion or simply a technigue designed to emphasize the remarkable, the description of manna as something "which the fathers did not know" is a pointed reminder that something new had happened between the community and God; something which was to have lasting effects.

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