

On Exodus 33,1–11

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Exodus 33,1–11 contains two distinct literary units. The first, in 33,1–6, is a divine speech interlaced with a description of the actions of the Israelites, while the second, in 33,7–11, is a description of the regular method by which Moses and Yahweh would communicate at the Tent of Meeting. Although this basic division of units is easily recognized, scholars have struggled with some of the finer points of the analysis of the two pieces, as well as with the relationship, if any, between them. This brief essay is an attempt to provide a new reading of the passage, one that might help to alleviate some of the long-standing difficulties with its interpretation.

For the most part, scholars have recognized that the second unit, Ex 33,7–11, is a unified composition.¹ It is couched entirely in the frequentative, expressed by the alternation of *yiqtol* and *wəqatal* forms.² It has a single topic: the manner in which Moses would seek oracular decisions from Yahweh at the Tent of Meeting. As has often been noted, the distinctive views expressed in these verses regarding the location of the Tent outside the camp, Yahweh's descent in a cloud, the intimate nature of the conversation between Moses and Yahweh, and the presence of Joshua are all found in a series of related pentateuchal texts.³ There can be little doubt, then, that these five verses in Exodus 33 come from the same pen.⁴ Although the unity of the passage is not in question, however, there re-

¹ Exceptions are very rare; see, e.g., H. Holzinger, *Exodus erklärt*, KHC 2, 1900, 109.

² On the expression of the frequentative in Biblical Hebrew, see especially S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew and Some Other Syntactical Questions*, 1998, § 120.

³ The texts are: Num 11,16–17.24b–30; 12,4–8; Deut 31,14–15. On the relationship of these texts to Ex 33,7–11, see, e.g., E. Blum, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch*, BZAW 189, 1990, 76–88, although Blum also (erroneously) includes Ex 34,34–36 in this group; A. H. J. Gunneweg, *Das Gesetz und die Propheten: Eine Auslegung von Ex 33,7–11*; Num 11,4–12,8; Dtn 31,14f.; 34,10, ZAW 102 (1990), 169–180.

⁴ In this paper I am consciously avoiding the use of either source-critical terminology (such as J and E) or traditional-critical terminology (such as layers and redactions), accepting only the widely-agreed-on determination that the passage is essentially non-priestly. The analysis of the passage in question – and of any biblical passage – must be based first and foremost on internal criteria. It is my hope that the argument presented here may be of use to scholars subscribing to any theory of pentateuchal composition.

mains the issue of how these verses are conceptually linked with their narrative context. Where and when did the Tent function as described in these verses? How does this description relate to what comes before it?

Even more fundamental questions arise regarding Ex 33,1–6. As opposed to the accepted unity of vv. 7–11, here a remarkable variety of textual divisions has been put forward, with almost no agreement to be found in the literature.⁵ All commentators seem to recognize and be responding to the same series of ostensible difficulties, however, which can be briefly enumerated. The syntactic continuity of vv. 1 and 3 seems to be interrupted by v. 2: the first words of v. 3, »to a land flowing with milk and honey,« connect not to the preceding clause in v. 2, »I will drive out the Canaanites, etc.,« but to v. 1, »Go up from here.« It is also argued that while vv. 1–2 seem to present a positive image of Yahweh (in the manifestation of his messenger) leading the Israelites to Canaan, v. 3 suddenly seems the polar opposite, informing Moses that Yahweh will not accompany the Israelites.

In v. 4, the Israelites seem to respond to this negative divine word, and remove their finery, but in v. 5, Yahweh instructs Moses to tell the people to remove their finery – which they had already just done in the previous verse. Furthermore, the beginning of v. 5 is a nearly verbatim repetition of Yahweh's words in v. 3, raising the question of why the people need to hear them again (since v. 4 clearly states that »the people heard this evil word«). And in v. 6, the people – again – remove their

⁵ The reader is invited to see the following analyses, not a single one of which is in agreement (for a passage of only six verses!): J. Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments*, 1885, 92–94; B. W. Bacon, *The Triple Tradition of the Exodus*, 1894, 151–152; W. E. Addis, *The Documents of the Hexateuch*, 1892–1898, vol. 1, 154–155; J. E. Carpenter/G. Harford-Battersby, *The Hexateuch According to the Revised Version*, 1900, vol. 2, 132–133; Holzinger, *Exodus*, 108–110; B. Baentsch, *Exodus-Leviticus-Numeri übersetzt und erklärt*, HKAT I/2, 1903, 274–276; O. Procksch, *Das nordhebräische Sagenbuch: Die Elohimquelle übersetzt und untersucht*, 1906, 96–97; R. Smend, *Der Erzählung des Hexateuch auf ihre Quellen untersucht*, 1912, 170–171; H. Gressmann, *Mose und seine Zeit: Ein Kommentar zu den Mose-Sagen*, FRLANT 1, 1913, 218; A. H. McNeile, *The Book of Exodus*, WC, 2. ed. 1917, 211; S. R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus*, CBC, 1918, 357–358; O. Eißfeldt, *Hexateuch-Synopse*, 1922, 53–54; W. Rudolph, *Der »Elohist« von Exodus bis Josua*, 1938, 53–55; C. A. Simpson, *The Early Traditions of Israel: A Critical Analysis of the Pre-Deuteronomic Narrative of the Hexateuch*, 1948, 213; M. Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary*, OTL, 1962, 253–254; A. W. Jenks, *The Elohist and North Israelite Traditions*, SBLMS 22, 1977, 52–54; Blum, *Studien*, 57–61; J. Van Seters, *The Life of Moses: The Yahwist as Historian in Exodus – Numbers*, 1994, 319–321; A. Graupner, *Der Elohist: Gegenwart und Wirksamkeit des transzendenten Gottes in der Geschichte*, WMANT 97, 2002, 140; R. E. Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed: A New View into the Five Books of Moses*, 2003, 175; W. H. C. Propp, *Exodus 19–40*, AB 2A, 2006, 583.

finery. There is, further, the question of how to understand the final words of v. 6, »from Mount Horeb«: what do they modify and what do they imply?⁶

We may begin the analysis here by observing that v. 1 cannot be separated from v. 3. The initial command to Moses in v. 1, »Go up« (עלה), is paralleled by Yahweh's refusal in v. 3 to accompany the Israelites, »I will not go up« (לא אעלה). Further, it is precisely this verb, עלה, that is used in the two earlier instances of the phrase »to a land flowing with milk and honey« in v. 3 (Ex 3,8.17).⁷ Although some see between vv. 1 and 3 a shift from a positive divine stance to a negative one, it seems that the harsh judgment of v. 3 is already anticipated in v. 1 in Yahweh's pointed use of the second person, »you and the people that you have brought up from the land of Egypt.«⁸ The change in person is particularly noticeable as it contrasts with the two aforementioned references to »a land flowing with milk and honey.« In both Ex 3,8 and 17 Yahweh very clearly takes upon himself the obligation to bring the Israelites up: »I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians and to bring them up from this land« (3,8); »I will bring you up from the misery of Egypt« (3,17). Ex 33,1 and 3 – together – thus represent a conscious reversal of Yahweh's earlier statements.⁹

⁶ In addition to the narratological and syntactic issues, many scholars have identified certain verses in this passage as secondary additions for other reasons. The style of v. 2 (and sometimes more of vv. 1–3, especially given the reference to the patriarchal promise in v. 1) has been considered deuteronomistic; see Procksch, *Elohimquelle*, 96–97; Smend, *Hexateuch*, 53–55; McNeile, *Exodus*, 211; Propp, *Exodus 19–40*, 583; for a relatively recent and extensive argumentation, see S. Boorer, *The Promise of the Land as Oath: A Key to the Formation of the Pentateuch*, BZAW 205, 1992, 266–270. Similarly, v. 5 has been considered priestly; see Bacon, *Triple Tradition*, 151–152; Van Seters, *Life of Moses*, 319–321.

⁷ The third occurrence of the phrase before Exodus 33, in 13,5, belongs to a late, post-redactional insertion; see S. Gesundheit, »Three Times a Year«, *FAT*, forthcoming. My thanks to Prof. Gesundheit for sharing a pre-publication version of his book with me.

⁸ See Blum, *Studien*, 58, who plausibly suggests that the emphatic specification of »you and the people« in v. 1 serves a similar purpose.

⁹ There is no pressing need to see the reference to the patriarchal promise in v. 1b as deriving from a different hand; as Blum, *Studien*, 57–58, has argued, the reference to the promise of land in this passage serves to drive home the point that despite Yahweh's refusal to travel with the Israelites, their eventual possession of the land is not threatened. There is also no difficulty with the ostensible switch in addressees between v. 1 (Moses) and v. 3 (the people), as some scholars have claimed. Moses operates as the representative of the people; a similar alternation occurs in other passages (e.g., Ex 14,10.15). Furthermore, the identification of Moses with the Israelite people as a whole is already anticipated, if not actually completed, in the phrase »Go up from here, you and the people« (v. 1).

The coherence of vv. 1 and 3 as a single statement throws the status of v. 2 even more sharply into question. Solutions have been proposed to overcome this situation. Verse 2 has been taken by some as parenthetical, which, although it is highly unusual for parenthetical statements to disrupt the syntax so abruptly, would not be impossible.¹⁰ And it is possible to read the announcement that the divine messenger will go before the Israelites not as a positive statement, but as a threat, in conjunction with Yahweh's personal withdrawal in v. 3.¹¹ The difficulty with these attempts to incorporate v. 2 into vv. 1 and 3, however, is that its content is at odds with the rest of the narrative. In particular, as some have noted, the announcement that Yahweh's messenger will lead the people renders Moses's response in 33,12 unintelligible: »See, you say to me ›Bring this people up [העל],‹ but you have not made known to me whom you will send [חשלה] with me.« But this is precisely what Yahweh has just done in v. 2: »I will send [שלחתי] a messenger before you.« In the entire conversation between Moses and Yahweh in 33,12–17 and 34,8–11 regarding whether or not Yahweh will accompany the Israelites, not once is the messenger referred to; in fact, Moses's pleas in chapters 33 and 34 seem to suggest that Yahweh has threatened to leave the Israelites to their own devices entirely.

It thus seems very likely that v. 2 is, in fact, an interpolation.¹² Moreover, as others have seen, the verse seems to pick up on the content and style of other texts from Exodus.¹³ In Ex 23,20, Yahweh says »I will send a messenger before you«; in 23,23 he says that this messenger will bring the Israelites »to the Amorites, the Hittites, etc.« Ex 33,2 also seems to be based on 34,11: »I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, etc.«¹⁴ Notably, in 34,11 it is Yahweh, not his messenger, who will

¹⁰ See, e.g., U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, 1967, 426; B. Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, OTL, 1974, 583. A related, though slightly different, suggestion is made by A. B. Ehrlich, *Miqra ki-Peshuto*, vol. 1, 201, who suggests that this parenthetical verse about the divine messenger is in fact describing Moses himself.

¹¹ See B. J. Schwartz, *Reexamining the Fate of the ›Canaanites‹ in the Torah Traditions*, in: C. Cohen/A. Hurvitz/S. M. Paul (eds.), *Sefer Moshe (Festschrift Weinfeld)*, 2004, 151–170, 157; J. S. Baden, J. E., and the Redaction of the Pentateuch, *FAT* 68, 2009, 131 n. 78.

¹² So Bacon, *Triple Tradition*, 151; Carpenter/Harford-Battersby, *Hexateuch*, 132; Driver, *Exodus*, 357; Simpson, *Early Traditions*, 213; Blum, *Studien*, 58–59.

¹³ See Carpenter/Harford-Battersby, *Hexateuch*, 132.

¹⁴ It is not the case that every list of the indigenous Canaanite peoples is a secondary expansion of the text, as has sometimes been suggested (see, e.g., Bacon, *Triple Tradition*, 22 and elsewhere); it is not the presence of this list that renders the verse difficult to read as part of vv. 1 and 3. We may also note that the order of the nations given in these lists scattered throughout the Pentateuch is rarely identical, so we should not make too much of the divergence in order between Ex 23,23; 34,11; and 33,2 – though it is at least worth recognizing that the order in 33,2, beginning with the Amorites and the Canaanites, has no parallel.

drive out the indigenous Canaanite populations; the same is true, in fact, in 23,23: despite the fact that the messenger will lead the Israelites into the land, it is Yahweh himself who will annihilate them (והכחדתי). This is important because it serves to explain one of the ostensible difficulties in 33,2: that Yahweh says he will send a messenger, but also that he himself will drive out the native populations (ווגרשתי).¹⁵ In taking elements from Ex 23,20 and 23 as well as 34,11, it seems that the interpolation in 33,2 represents an attempt to resolve the apparent discrepancy between, on the one hand, Yahweh's statements that he will send a messenger to guide the Israelites and that he himself will conquer the Canaanite peoples and, on the other hand, his announcement in 33,3 that he will not accompany them himself.

In v. 4a we have what appears to be the logical continuation of vv. 1 and 3. The people, learning of Yahweh's decision not to accompany them – to let them find their own way – go into mourning.¹⁶ As sensible as v. 4a is, v. 4b, in which the Israelites do not put on their finery, seems deeply problematic.¹⁷ As noted above, v. 4b is in direct conflict with vv. 5–6: in v. 4b, it is assumed that the Israelites did not have their finery on and, in light of Yahweh's word, refrained from putting it on, while in vv. 5–6, it is assumed that the Israelites did in fact have their finery on, and subsequently took it off.¹⁸ Even setting aside the discrepancy be-

¹⁵ This difficulty is recognized and addressed in the LXX, which reads »he will drive out, etc.«

¹⁶ There is no particular need for an explicit speech report between vv. 3 and 4, in which Moses told the people what Yahweh had said. The transmission of Yahweh's words is represented by the verb וישמע; indeed, if it were preceded by an explicit speech report, then the verb would be rather extraneous.

¹⁷ There is some question as to what exactly the »finery« (עדי) of the Israelites refers to. It seems most likely that it refers to items of clothing, rather than jewelry (as already argued by ibn Ezra on 33,4). On the one hand, there is the statement in Ex 12,35–36 that the Israelites took silver and gold from their Egyptian neighbors; on the other, there is the competing tradition in Ex 12,34.39 that the Israelites left Egypt in such a hurry that they were unable even to let their dough rise. The first of these traditions, the despoiling of the Egyptians, is probably to be linked with the narrative of the golden calf in Ex 32: it was from the gold that the Israelites took from the Egyptians that they manufactured the calf. The second of these traditions, that they left in a hurry, seems to preclude any possession of jewelry, as the Israelites were, after all, slaves, and without the despoiling of the Egyptians it is hard to see where they would have gotten any gold or silver from.

¹⁸ The blatant contradiction between v. 4b and vv. 5–6 would seem to militate against the possibility that v. 4, in whole or in part, is a secondary insertion into the text (as suggested by Addis, Documents, I, 155; Carpenter/Harford-Battersby, Hexateuch, 132; McNeile, Exodus, 211; Rudolph, »Elohist,« 54; Simpson, Early Traditions, 213; Blum, Studien, 59). It is difficult to imagine the aim of a secondary insertion that introduces a

tween these verses, v. 4 is not particularly logical as the continuation of v. 4a. The half-verse tells us that the Israelites refrained from putting on their finery – but why should we think that they would have put it on if Yahweh had not said what he did? They were, after all, about to embark on the journey through the wilderness – hardly the appropriate context to be donning their best.

All of these difficulties may be alleviated with one small but important textual emendation.¹⁹ Rather than reading »none put on his finery« (ולא שחו איש עדיו עליו), we should read instead »none took off his finery« (ולא שחו איש עדיו מעליו). The introduction of the single letter *mem* before the final word in v. 4 reverses the entire meaning of the clause, and solves all of the problems described above (and some additional ones as well). Now we may understand the entire sequence of vv. 4–6. The relationship of v. 4b to 4a is now clarified: it is not that the Israelites were expected to take off their finery, but rather, given that they were mourning (ויהתאבלו), that they were expected to take it off, as is the biblical custom when mourning.²⁰ Verse 4b is thus adversative: »They went into mourning, but they did not take off their finery.« The obvious question is why the text thinks that they had their finery on to begin with; the answer is provided by the narrative of Exodus 19, the beginning of the Sinai/Horeb pericope: »Yahweh said to Moses, »Go to the people and sanctify them today and tomorrow and have them wash their clothes« ... Moses came down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people and they washed their clothes« (19,10.14). In preparation for their encounter with the deity in Exodus 19, the people got dressed up; in Exodus 33, at the notice that Yahweh would no longer be in their midst (בקרבך, 33,3), they should have taken their special clothing off.²¹ Yet

clear narrative contradiction: the inserted verse itself cannot be taken as the final word, since its claims are immediately undercut by the original text that follows, and the resulting canonical text also does not present the interpolation as definitive, but, rather, as problematic. As a rule, it is methodologically suspect to attribute narrative contradictions to the work of a secondary hand, as if later interpolators are unable to read and understand the narrative that they are creating. We may note the difference between v. 4b and v. 2, which I have proposed above is an interpolation: while v. 4b (if an insertion) seems to serve no purpose other than to create a contradiction with vv. 5–6, in v. 2 we can see an attempt to reconcile the diverging statements regarding the guidance of the Israelites, be it by Yahweh himself or by his messenger.

¹⁹ My deep thanks to Prof. S. Chavel for raising this possibility in conversation with me.

²⁰ On the well-known custom of removing one's best clothing when mourning, see, e.g., Gen 37,34; II Sam 3,31; 14,2; Isa 22,12; 61,3; Jer 4,8; 6,26; Ez 27,31; Am 8,10; Joel 1,13; Mic 1,8; Ps 30,12; Est 4,3.

²¹ If the connection between Exodus 19 and 33 is accepted, it provides yet another piece of evidence for the understanding of »finery« as clothing.

they did not – thus supporting Yahweh’s description of them in v. 3 as »stiff-necked.«

This reading also explains the nearly verbatim repetition in v. 5 of Yahweh’s words from v. 3 – and, perhaps, the slight variations between the two statements. Faced with yet another example of the people’s intransigence, in their refusal to mourn appropriately his departure from their midst, Yahweh repeats his condemnation, and adds to it, for indisputable clarity, the reason for his anger. »[As I just said,] you are a stiff-necked people« – and note the emphatic placement of the independent pronoun »you« (אתם), in contrast to the word order in v. 3. »If I went up with you for even one instant, I would destroy you« – in a slight but telling change from v. 3, where the threat looks ahead to the journey through the wilderness, בדרך, here the threat is imminent: רגע אחד. Yahweh’s fury has suddenly shifted from potential to real, from anticipated to very present. Something has changed between the statement of v. 3 and that of v. 5; and that thing is the people’s disrespectful behavior in v. 4. It is this to which Yahweh responds directly: »Now, take off your finery [as you should have already], and I will consider what to do to you.« The previously observed contradiction between v. 4 and vv. 5–6 is now alleviated: Yahweh’s command in v. 5 assumes that the Israelites did in fact have their finery on – as v. 4 now does as well. Yahweh’s command, concluding with the words עדין [מ]עליי, reflects exactly the last words of v. 4: עדין מעליי.

The final clause of v. 5, »and I will consider what to do to you,« was also slightly awkward in its original context; after all, in vv. 1 and 3, Yahweh had clearly stated precisely what he was going to do to the Israelites: he was going to leave them to their own devices. What more would there have been to consider, since the decision had already been made, and Moses had yet to plead with Yahweh to change his mind? In the context of the new reading of v. 4b, however, this statement makes considerably more sense. Just as Yahweh’s anger has shifted from potential to present because of the people’s intransigence, so now Yahweh’s renewed anger brings with it a choice: should Yahweh punish the people for their behavior or not?

Finally, of course, v. 6 now recounts the Israelites’ removal of their finery – for the first and only time, and in direct response to Yahweh’s command in v. 5. There is no longer any contradiction with v. 4; v. 6 is now, in fact, the logical continuation of v. 4. The people neglected to take off their finery when they went into mourning; Yahweh became angry and threatened them; so the people, as instructed, and as they should have the first time, took off their finery. We may also note the progression of verbs used to describe the Israelites’ removal of their finery: in v. 4, it is the straightforward שית; in Yahweh’s response in v. 5, he uses the more forceful ירד (hiphil); and when the people finally obey, the almost violent word נצל (hitpael), »to strip oneself,« appears. The increasing intensity

of the verbs reflects that of the narrative.²² With the emendation proposed here, vv. 4–6 present a perfectly reasonable sequence, internally coherent and well integrated with the content of vv. 1 and 3: they are the very demonstration of Yahweh’s rationale for not accompanying the Israelites. All the contradictions are removed, and all of the apparent doublets are explained.²³

What remains as a problem in vv. 4–6 are the final two words of v. 6, »from Mount Horeb« (מִהַר חֹרֵב). Many commentators and translations render these words as »from Mount Horeb on,« and thus take the first word of the verse, »they stripped themselves« (וַיִּחַנְצְלוּ), as if it expressed not a single action but a passive continuous state: »they remained stripped.«²⁴ Yet the *wayyiqtol* form employed here hardly lends itself to

²² Recognition of the progression of verbs in vv. 4–6 also brings with it the observation that now all three occurrences of the word »finery,« עֲדִי, belong together. In most documentary scholarship on this passage, vv. 4–6 have been ascribed to two different sources; yet this entailed a truly remarkable coincidence: that two independent authors, telling the story of the events at the mountain in the wilderness in their own unique ways, would have each introduced, for the first and only time (since it appears nowhere else in the Pentateuch), the word עֲדִי. We would have to believe that these two documents, written in isolation from each other, both happened to use an extraordinarily rare word at so precisely the same moment in their respective narratives that, when they were interwoven, the word appeared in successive verses in the combined text. The highly unlikely nature of such a coincidence has long been one of the stumbling-blocks in the source-critical analysis of this passage.

²³ There is, admittedly, no versional evidence to support the proposal offered here. Yet this should not be an argument against this emendation, nor others that lack an attested text-critical variant. Text criticism is not restricted to the identification of and choice between attested forms, but involves at every level a certain amount of exegesis on the part of the critic. As stated by R. S. Hendel, *The Text of Genesis 1–11: Textual Studies and Critical Edition*, 1998, 9, when there are no variants attested but a textual problem seems to exist in the text, »the reconstruction of the archetype is dependent solely on good arguments and good judgment«; note especially the fine example Hendel provides, the emendation of וַיִּרְדּוּ וַיִּרְבּוּ in Gen 9,7. In the case of Ex 33,4, a remarkable concentration of long-standing interpretive problems are solved by the proposed emendation, and it requires only that a single letter have dropped out. As for the absence of the *mem* from the masoretic text, there may be no clear explanation. It could well have resulted from a simple scribal error; one could also imagine that a particularly pious scribe objected to the idea that the Israelites would have acted so disrespectfully toward Yahweh – though this, and any solutions like it, are purely speculative.

²⁴ So ibn Ezra on 33,4; see, e.g., the ASV, ESV, NAB, NJB, NJPS, and NRSV translations. As a corollary to this understanding of the text, some scholars have suggested that the removal of the finery »from Mount Horeb onward« exists as an etiology for why Israelite men did not wear jewelry (first posited by Gressmann, *Mose*, 221). Archaeological and comparative evidence renders this theory highly doubtful (see the discussion of jewelry in P. J. King/L. E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, LAI, 2001, 276–280).

such a meaning of continuous stativity; furthermore, the use of the definite direct object marker **אֵת** before »their finery« poses a difficulty for the proposed passive rendering. These difficulties with the traditional understanding of **מָהֵר הוֹרֵב** have led some to posit that it modifies not the verb, but the immediately preceding noun, »their finery,« thus meaning something like »the finery that they wore at Mount Horeb.«²⁵ Yet if that were the case we would expect the relative particle **אֲשֶׁר** between »their finery« and »from Mount Horeb.« In addition, and perhaps more importantly, adding »from Mount Horeb« here would seem entirely superfluous: we know from the narrative context exactly where they are, and, if it were necessary for some reason, it would make far more sense to have added this modifier to the first occurrence of the word »finery« in v. 4, rather than to the last.²⁶ Indeed, the conclusion to the brief episode of vv. 4–6 calls for nothing further than »the Israelites stripped themselves of their finery.« No specification of place or time is required.

It is, however, precisely that specification of time and place that is lacking from Ex 33,7–11. These verses, as noted above, describe the use of the Tent of Meeting, and are presented entirely in the frequentative. What is unclear about the passage is when and where »Moses would take the Tent and pitch it outside the camp,« etc. The placement of this description in the middle of the Sinai/Horeb pericope makes it seem as if the Tent functioned then and there. Yet this is clearly not the case. It is only in the priestly narrative that the Tent of Meeting is actually used at the mountain, both for divine communication and for inaugurating the cult that is centered in the Tent.²⁷ By contrast, in all of the texts that are dependent on the description of the Tent in vv. 7–11 the narratives take place in the wilderness between the mountain and the border of Canaan. Indeed, while the Israelites are still at the mountain there is no need for any man-made place for Moses to speak with Yahweh; as the narrative demonstrates repeatedly, when Moses wants to speak with Yahweh, or vice versa, Yahweh speaks to Moses directly from the mountain. And,

²⁵ See Rashi on Ex 33,4; Cassuto, Exodus, 428.

²⁶ The deeply felt difficulty with the phrase has led some scholars to propose emending the text. A. Klostermann, *Der Pentateuch: Beiträge zu seinem Verständnis und seiner Entstehungsgeschichte*, 2. ed. 1907, 448, proposed reading two infinitives absolute: **מָהֵר הוֹרֵב**, »quickly removing (them)«; Rudolph, »Elohist,« 54, also suggested two infinitives absolute: **מָהֵר וְנָדַב**, »quickly and willingly.« In a more extreme move, Procksch, *Elohimquelle*, 97, posited that the phrase was a remnant of an original itinerary notice of the Israelites' departure from the mountain, equivalent to that found in Num 10,33: »[They journeyed] from Mount Horeb.«

²⁷ See Ex 40,34; Lev 1,1; 8–10; Num 7. On the sharp distinction between the priestly and non-priestly conceptions of the Tent of Meeting, see M. Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel*, 1985, 260–275.

though it is grammatically possible, it seems highly unlikely that vv. 7–11 could refer to any period before the Sinai/Horeb pericope.

What Ex 33,7–11 requires, then, is a notice of the temporal setting for the depicted use of the Tent of Meeting, and specifically one that situates the use of the Tent as occurring after the Israelites had left the mountain. In short, it requires precisely those words that are causing the difficulty at the end of v. 6: »from Mount Horeb.« I propose, then, that the last two words of v. 6 should actually be read as the first two words of v. 7: »After Mount Horeb, Moses would take the Tent and pitch it outside the camp, etc.« As versification was a post-compositional development, this requires no emendation of the biblical text; merely the postulation of an error at some point of the text's transmission, perhaps at its initial versification. A few comments on the style and structure of this proposed sentence are necessary.

We may begin with the temporal sense of the phrase »from Mount Horeb.« This is essentially the same understanding of the phrase as in the traditional rendering at the end of v. 6, »from Mount Horeb on.« Whereas in its canonical context the continuous nature of the phrase is at odds with the *wayyiqtol* form of וַיִּהְיוּצֵלְלוּ, here there is no such problem, as the verbs in vv. 7–11 are in the *yiqtol* and *w^eqatal* forms. We may also recognize the parallel usage of an ostensibly locative phrase having a clear temporal meaning in Hos 12,10: »I have been Yahweh your God since the land of Egypt (מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם).« In the newly-conceived v. 7, the words מֵהַר חֹרֵב thus serve as an initial temporal phrase preceding the main clause beginning וּמֹשֶׁה. There is no syntactical difficulty here. Temporal phrases may occur with or without an initial וַיְהִי or וַהֲיִה, as is well known. Although they are most often constructed with כ/ב + infinitive construct, they appear in numerous other forms, sometimes as simple as a single word.²⁸ And the main clause that follows may begin with any number of forms and word orders, including the *wayyiqtol*, the *w^eqatal*, and, as here, *waw* + subject, using the so-called *waw* of apodosis.²⁹

Moving the words »from Mount Horeb« from the end of v. 6 to the beginning of v. 7 thus works grammatically and also alleviates two distinct interpretive difficulties: the oddity of the phrase at the end of v. 6 and the lack of a temporal designation for vv. 7–11.³⁰ From a broader

²⁸ E.g., Num 16,5: בֹּקֶר וַיֵּדַע יְהוָה («In the morning [literally, »Morning«] Yahweh will make known«).

²⁹ E.g., Gen 22,1; I Sam 3,2. On the *waw* of apodosis in general, see P. Joüon/T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, 1996, 646–649.

³⁰ For scholars who adhere to the documentary theory, it also alleviates the most pressing source-critical problem in Ex 33,1–6: while it is generally held that the bulk of the passage belongs to J, the identification of the mountain as Horeb in v. 6 is a unique feature of E (and D). Thus the appearance of Horeb in v. 6 is a primary reason that many

perspective, it also serves to sever more cleanly the two units of Ex 33,1–11. Scholars have long attempted to connect the two, in a variety of ways. On the most extreme end, there were those who posited that the finery removed by the Israelites in v. 6 was somehow used in the construction of the Ark and/or the Tent (the narration of which was, in their view, excised from the text in favor of the far more expansive priestly description in Exodus 25–31 and 35–40).³¹ Much closer to the suggestion proposed here are those scholars who have seen in the continuous nuance in v. 6 of »the Israelites remained stripped of their finery from Mount Horeb on« the subtle introduction of the temporal framework for vv. 7–11.³² Yet when the phrase is moved to v. 7, it becomes clear that vv. 1–6 have nothing to do with the Tent, and that vv. 7–11 have nothing to do with the removal of the finery. (This is not to say that they are necessarily from distinct hands; such a conclusion can be drawn only from the connection of each unit to other pentateuchal texts and with an overarching theory of pentateuchal composition in mind.)³³ The two units have distinct concerns, forms, structures, and temporalities.³⁴

I have proposed in this paper three substantial changes to the canonical text of Ex 33,1–11. First, that v. 2 be recognized as a secondary insertion. Second, that the word *עליו* in v. 4 be emended to *מעליו*. And third, that the words *מהר חורב* be read not as the end of v. 6 but as the beginning of v. 7. The secondary status of v. 2 is a long-held scholarly position; the emendation in v. 4 is exceptionally minor; and the reversification of vv. 6–7 requires no alterations to the consonantal text whatsoever. There is nothing overly radical in these suggestions; yet, taken together, they alleviate all of the long-standing interpretive difficulties of the passage.

scholars have seen fit to divide vv. 1–6 between J and E; to move »from Mount Horeb« from the end of vv. 1–6 to the beginning of vv. 7–11 (which are, among documentary scholars, universally assigned to E) thus removes the need to unnaturally divide the references to the »finery« into multiple documents.

³¹ See Haran, *Temples*, 263 and the scholarship cited there.

³² See Van Seters, *Life of Moses*, 321.

³³ See, for example, the analysis of Blum, *Studien*, 60–61, who sees a link between Yahweh's refusal to be »in the midst« of the people and the establishment of the Tent outside the camp.

³⁴ For the purposes of this paper it is unnecessary to enter into the long-standing debate regarding whether vv. 7–11 have been displaced from their original location, or the more vexed questions of why they would have been displaced and why they would have been moved to this particular spot in the narrative. I suggest only that if they were in fact moved, the words »from Mount Horeb« were moved along with them.

The analysis of Exodus 33,1–11 has long been a matter of dispute, with a remarkable variety of readings put forward with little consensus. This paper proposes a new reading of the passage, involving one secondary addition, one text-critical emendation, and one readjustment of the versification, with the result that two coherent units of text emerge.

L'analyse d'Ex. 33,1–11 est discutée depuis longtemps, avec un nombre étonnant de lectures et peu de consensus. La présente analyse propose une nouvelle lecture de la péricope, incluant une addition secondaire, une émendation de critique textuelle et une délimitation des versets corrigée: deux unités textuelles en résultent.

Die Analyse von Exodus 33,1–11 ist seit langem umstritten. Es gibt eine bemerkenswerte Vielfalt an Auslegungen ohne wirklichen Konsens. In dem Beitrag wird ein neuer Vorschlag unterbreitet. Unter Annahme einer sekundären Erweiterung und auf Grundlage einer textkritischen Konjektur sowie der Korrektur der Versabgrenzung ergeben sich zwei kohärente Texteinheiten.