CORPORATE SOLIDARITY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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Introduction

The following pages represent an overview of study I have done on this subject in bits and pieces through the years, as I have engaged in exegesis of various portions of the OT and have encountered passages that give evidence of the corporate solidarity concept. The following treatment makes no claim of comprehensiveness—I seem to find new allusions to the solidarity principle every few weeks in my devotions or research or teaching. This paper is not intended to be a defense of any position now held or once held within Adventism or the Christian Church at large. My findings have come independently (and mostly before I was even aware) of current discussions within the church, although I obviously cannot claim to be writing completely in a vacuum. I use the term “corporate” synonymously with “corporative,” but in this paper tend toward the former word since the term “corporate” is more widely recognized.¹ I also use the term “solidarity” somewhat advisedly, since this term means different things to different people. But “corporate solidarity” still seems the best expression to encompass the phenomena concerning the relationship between the group and the individual that I find in the OT.²

¹ “Corporative” is the term employed especially by J. de Fraine, Adam et son lignage: Etude sur la notion de ‘personnalité corporative’ dans la Bible (1959). This term is also utilized by N. H. Ridderbos in his discussion of the solidarity phenomena in Rom 5; and by G. C. Berkouwer, Sin, Studies in Dogmatics (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 512ff., in discussing the nature of original sin.

² I am specifically avoiding the term “corporate personality,” which is an English law term that was popularized with reference to OT corporate solidarity by H. Wheeler Robinson in his book (based on a scholarly paper read in 1935 and a popular lecture delivered in 1936) Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964, 1980). Robinson’s view of “corporate personality” was partly developed by applying Sir Henry Maine’s theory of a three-stage development of Indo-European law to Old Testament law. Maine pointed to primitive Indo-European societies as being an aggregation of groups, with no individual rights, and Robinson suggests the same primitive situation in the Old Testament. But Robinson goes beyond Maine’s corporate responsibility to a corporate personality, utilizing the research of contemporary anthropologists B. Spencer and F. J. Gillen on the Australian aborigines, who observed what they described as a magico-biological psychological unity of members in the same clan. Robinson further incorporated the anthropological theory of L. Levy-Bruhl, who suggested primitives thought in a pre-logical way and made no clear distinction between the individual’s personality and that of the social group. Applying the insights of the above historical and anthropological theories to the Old Testament, Robinson maintained that Israel’s primitive pre-
seek to define “corporate solidarity” at the outset of the paper, since it is the OT phenomena, and not the English term, that are under investigation. Perhaps at the close of this study, the reader may wish to suggest a more appropriate term to denote what I have described. In the survey which follows, I will not attempt a detailed exegesis of each passage, but as succinctly as possible point to the indicators of corporate solidarity.

Corporate Solidarity in the Beginning

The relationship between “humankind” and Adam. Reading Gen 1-3 in Hebrew, one is struck with the sustained wordplay involving the word ’ādām (or with the article hā′ādām). In Gen 1:26-27 the word (once with the article and once without) means “humankind.” In Gen 2:18ff. hā′ādām (with the article) indicates an individual person, “the human.” In the succeeding verses of Gen 2 and opening verses of Gen 3 it is not clear whether to translate the term (with the article) as “the human” or “Adam” (see the different practices of different modern versions), but by Gen 3:17 (without the article) it clearly constitutes the proper name, “Adam.” In Gen 5:1-2, the recap of human creation at the beginning of the second major section of the book, the same term ’ādām (without the article) denotes both the name “Adam” (vs. 1a) and the name of the human race, including both male and female, “Humankind” (vs. 1b, 2).

Significantly, throughout the rest of Scripture, no one else is named “Adam.” By the usage of the term ’ādām in the opening chapters of Genesis, it seems apparent that Adam is presented as the “representative head” of the human race. Adam bears the name which

logical mentality did not distinguish clearly the limits of one’s individual personality within the corporate body. Building upon then-current historical and anthropological theories that are now discarded, Robinson has been rightly criticized by recent scholars. See especially J. W. Rogerson, “The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality,” Journal of Theological Studies 21 (1970): 1-16. Regardless of the weaknesses of Robinson’s study, he does point to some additional OT passages revealing solidarity between the individual and the corporate body of Israel that I have added to my own list. An even more detailed study, building on Robinson and correcting somewhat his tendency toward a “primitive” Israeliite mentality (but still maintaining a misguided notion of “development” from corporate to individualistic responsibility), is Jean de Fraine, Adam and the Family of Man, trans. Daniel Raible (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1967). De Fraine presents many more examples of the corporate solidarity concept of Scripture, only part of which I have been able to include in this paper. What is now needed is a new look at recent anthropological research into tribalism, especially in the Near East, as has been begun by anthropologist Sten LaBianca of Andrews University, and has been partially applied by Randall Younker also of Andrews University) in his study of the ancient Ammonites. Better understanding of Old Testament solidarity, and better terminology (such as “collectives”) may emerge from this interface between anthropology and Old Testament study.

Ellen White supports this interpretation of Adam’s position with regard to humanity. She writes, “Under God, Adam was to stand at the head of the human family. . .” (CT 33). “The Sabbath was committed to Adam, the father and representative of the whole human family.” (PP
is also the name of Humankind. Only Adam in OT salvation history is given this name. Adam the person is in corporate solidarity with the 'ādām which is humanity as a whole.

This solidarity indicated by the singular-collective fluidity of the term 'ādām also seems underscored by its explicit etymological linkage with the “ground.” In Gen 2:5, 7 the term [hā] 'ādām (once with and once without the article) denotes the human being who is at first not present to till, and then is formed from, the “ground” (hā'adāmāh). The linkage between “human” [hā] 'ādām and “ground” [ha] 'adāmāh highlights corporate solidarity because in Gen 2:6-7 “ground” also refers to both localized “dust of the ground” from which Adam was made (vs. 7), and to the universalized “whole face of the ground” (vs. 6; cf. Gen 7:23).

It appears that Paul’s presentation of Adam as representative man in corporate solidarity with the human race (Rom 5 and 1 Cor 15) is not only a NT concept, but already present in and ultimately derived from the opening pages of Scripture.

**Eve in Corporate solidarity with the rest of the human race.** Not only is Adam in corporate solidarity with humankind, but Eve (from the Hebrew word meaning “life” or “living”), as the “mother of all living” (Gen 3:20), is presented as in corporate solidarity with the whole human race that would in effect issue forth from her womb. In discussing Adam’s representative headship over the human race, it must also be pointed out that Adam is presented in solidarity with his wife. This solidarity is indicated by several aspects of the narrative: man and woman both told to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” and both given dominion to rule the earth as “co-regents” (Gen 1:28); the forming of woman from the rib of man (Gen 2:21); Adam’s description of his wife as “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” and his etymological play on words between “man” (‘iš) and “wo-man” (‘iššāh) (Gen 2:23); and Moses’ utilization of Adam and Eve’s relationship as a paradigm for later marriages, in which the man is to “cleave” to his wife, and the two are to become “one flesh” (Gen 2:24). In all of these points, it is to be recognized that the solidarity is between equal partners without hierarchy in the marriage relationship; the headship of husband and voluntary submission of wife does not come until after the Fall in the judgment of Gen 3:16.  

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48). To my knowledge, a careful study of Ellen White’s usage of the idea of corporate solidarity has not yet been undertaken.

4The concept of corporate solidarity in these Pauline passages is widely recognized. For a succinct and insightful summary of Paul’s usage, see e.g., C.H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1954), 78-83; and Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 57-64.

The Covenant of Creation. Several passages in the OT prophets allude to a covenant of creation. In Hos 6:7 God addresses apostate Israel: “But like Adam [k’ê’dâm] they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt treacherously with Me.” The ambiguity of the Hebrew k’ê’dâm is apparent in the modern translations: some take it to refer to Adam as a person, and some to “humans” or “humankind.” In fact, the polyvalence of the term is probably intentional on the part of the biblical writer: a covenant is made to Adam the individual, but inclusive in the covenant is all ê’dâm, all humankind.

Isa 24:5 speaks of the whole earth having “broken the everlasting covenant.” This does not seem to refer to the Noahic covenant, the only explicit universal covenant made by God with the earth (since the Noahic covenant had no conditions to break), but probably refers to a covenant made at creation with “humankind” through the representative human, Adam. Jer 33:20 speaks of God’s “covenant of day and night,” which in parallel Jer 31:35-36 seems to refer back to creation and not the Flood.

That there is a covenant of creation seems implied not only in the Prophets but also in the creation narrative of Genesis 1-2. If Moses wrote the book of Genesis about 1500 B.C., this was the time of the international suzerainty covenants described in Hittite documents. It is intriguing to compare the elements of the Hittite suzerainty treaties with Moses’ description of creation. The international covenants made by suzerains with their vassals in Moses’ day contained the following elements: (1) preamble, introducing the suzerain; (2) historical prologue, indicating what benefactions the suzerain had bestowed upon his vassals in his relationship with them; (3) covenant stipulations, both general and specific, involving the duties and responsibilities of the vassals; (4) blessings and curses; and (5) witnesses to the covenant making.

Gen 1-2 contain these same elements. God identifies Himself in the preamble—He is Yahweh Elohim the Creator. The historical prologue is the description of His creative acts in forming the world and its inhabitants. The stipulations include the general creation ordinances of the sabbath (Gen 2:1-4), marriage and procreation (Gen 1:28; 2:24), and labor (Gen 1:27-28; 2:15), and the specific stipulation not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:15-17). The blessing is clear: “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28), and the curse is also explicit: “In the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die.” The witness in Genesis is God Himself: “And God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (Gen 1:31). Other witnesses are mentioned in Job, Moses’ parallel book written about the same time: “All the sons

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6See NASB and NIV for this translation “like Adam.” The RSV translates “at Adam,” taking Adam as a place name, but one must emend the preposition k’ to b’ to arrive at this translation. The KJV and NKJV translate “men” or “mankind” which also goes ultimately back to creation.

of God shouted for joy” at creation (Job 38:7). Thus it is possible to conclude that although the word covenant is not used in Gen 1-2 (as the word sin is not employed in Gen 3), yet the concept of covenant is present. God makes a covenant with humankind at creation.

That this covenant is made not only with Adam as an individual but is to include all humanity, is implicit in the Creation and Fall narratives, as well as intertextual interpretations of these narratives. In Gen 2:16-17, the covenant stipulation not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and the curse of death for breaking the covenant--all this was announced only to the man, and yet after the subsequent fashioning of woman, it is clear that the covenant stipulation and curse/judgment applied to her as well (Gen 3:2, 3, 13, 19). The remainder of Genesis is the unfolding of the reality of the curse of death upon the whole human race (see especially Gen 5, with the recurring phrase “and he died” after each patriarchal genealogy, and the literary conclusion of the book with Joseph “in a coffin in Egypt”). Later OT writers’ intertextual interpretation of Gen 3:19 clearly reveal that the curse of Gen 2 applies to all humankind (see Eccl. 3:20; 12:7; Ps 104:29).

The post-Reformation Federal theologians of the 17th century (notably Johannes Cocceius),8 following the clue of Rom 5 and 1 Cor 15 and the parallel with the covenant of grace, already posited a covenant at creation, which they usually termed the “covenant of works” in contrast with the covenant of grace. George N. M. Collins summarizes the essence of the Federal theologians’ understanding of this covenant and its implications for the federal relationship between Adam and the human race:

Adam, as the first man, was the natural head of the race, and represented all mankind as the human party to the covenant of works into which God entered with him. As the natural head, he stood in a federal (foedus, Latin “covenant”) relationship to all posterity. His obedience, had it been maintained, would have transmitted an entail of blessedness to them; his disobedience involved them with him in the curse which God pronounced upon the transgressors of his law.9

While Federalism at first glance appears to come close to recognizing corporate solidarity in that it sees Adam as “representative head” of the whole human race, its conception actually seems to be on a somewhat different plane. In Federal theology Adam is connected to all humanity not because of his corporate solidarity with humanity, but because of a divine covenant with Adam which stipulated that humanity would be forensically held responsible if Adam sinned.10


10For a discussion of the similarities and differences between Federal theology and corporate solidarity, see Berkouwer, 449-465, 517. For a critique of Federal theology, see also
In the covenant of creation implied in Gen 1-2, the connection between Adam and humankind is grounded on a deeper level than a juridical “as if” declaration of God to Adam. The covenant of creation with Adam must be seen in the light of the corporate solidarity that inheres between Adam and the human race from the beginning. Humanity as a whole truly is included in what Adam their representative head does. This inherent corporate relationship between the representative individual and the group he/she represents will become more apparent as we move through the OT material.

The corporate “seed” and representative “Seed” of the woman in Gen 3:15. If Gen 1-3 in general present Adam as the representative human in corporate solidarity with the human race, Gen 3:15 in particular presents One who is to come as the representative “Seed” of the woman who is in corporate solidarity with the corporate “seed” of the woman. I will not argue here in detail for the Messianic interpretation of Gen 3:15, as this has been done elsewhere. But it is important to notice the literary movement of progressive parallelism in vs. 15. This may be diagramed as follows:

| Vs. 15a | serpent “you” — Singular — woman |
| Vs. 15b | seed of serpent — Collective (plural) — seed of woman |
| Vs. 15c | serpent “you”/
“your head” — Singular — “He/ “His heel” |

It has been generally recognized that the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman mentioned in vs. 15b denotes a collective singular representing a plural idea. This enmity between the spiritual descendants of Eve and the spiritual descendants of the serpent is emphasized throughout the early chapters of Genesis—the descendants of Cain and the descendants of Seth, those who leave the presence of the Lord and those who call upon the Lord (Gen 4:16, 26), issuing in two sets of genealogies (Gen 4 and 5), and finally in the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men” (Gen 6:1-3).

But what is crucial to note in Gen 3:15 is the movement from the collective seed of the serpent in vs. 15b, to the singular “you” (the serpent) in vs. 15c. As O. Palmer Robertson insightfully observes, “To correspond to the narrowing from ‘seed’ to ‘Satan’ on one side of the enmity, it would appear quite appropriate to expect a similar narrowing from a multiple ‘seed’ of woman to a singular ‘he’ who would champion the cause of God’s enmity against Satan.”

The LXX translators of Gen 3:15 recognized this narrowing from collective “seed” to individual Messianic “Seed.” Only here in the whole book of Genesis do they break the fundamental rule of Greek grammar regarding the agreement between pronoun and its antecedent. Since sperma “seed” is neuter in Greek, the pronoun that follows should be neuter,


12Ibid., 99.
but the translators translated as *autos*, a masculine singular “he.” They apparently understood the Messianic implication of the literary progression of parallelism in the Hebrew.

Gen 3:15 predicts that one day an individual “Seed” in solidarity with the corporate “seed” of Eve will personally crush the head of the Serpent. As the representative of the corporate whole, He will bring a solution to the moral conflict between the woman and her seed and the serpent and his seed. Gen 3:15, often called the Protoevangelium or “First Gospel Promise,” also implies the means by which this victory over the serpent will take place. The picture is one of a male individual, with bare foot, stepping willingly and willfully upon the head of a venomous snake. It is an intimation of voluntary, vicarious (substitutionary) sacrifice of one’s life on behalf of the many to destroy the serpent. This intimation of substitutionary atonement is further strengthened and illuminated in Gen 3:21 when God makes tunics of skins to clothe Adam and Eve. Just as their “nakedness” was more than physical nudity—even though they had on fig leaves they still told God they were “naked,” vs. 10; it was a spiritual nakedness of soul, guilt—so the clothing was a spiritual as well as a physical covering. The specific mention of skins implies the sacrifice of innocent animals, especially in the context of a full-blown sacrificial system assumed just a few verses later in the next chapter (Gen 4:3-5).

Thus Paul’s recognition of the Messiah as the new Representative Head of the seed of the woman, the Second Adam, is also not just a NT concept, but is ultimately rooted in Gen 3:15. The Protoevangelium may be seen as the foundational passage presenting salvific corporate solidarity.

**Corporate Solidarity and the Patriarchs**

**The corporate “seed” and representative “Seed” of Abraham.** In Paul’s discussion of Christ as the promised Seed in Gal 3, he does not cite Gen 3:15, as one might expect. Rather, his citation (in vs. 8) comes from Gen 22:17-18: “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, ‘In you all the nations shall be blessed.’” In Gal 3:16 Paul states: “He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ which is Christ.” Some have insisted that Paul’s argumentation in this verse is an example of rabbinic exegesis that is not faithful to the original context. But these scholars have failed to see how the principle of corporate solidarity is explicitly present in Gen 22.

Gen 22:17-18 contains the same narrowing from collective seed to singular Messianic Seed that we find in Gen 3:15. In Gen 22, following the “Binding of Isaac” on Mt. Moriah, the Lord gives Abraham a promise in vss. 17-18: “In blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed [zera’] as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your Seed [zera’] will possess the gate of His enemies. In your Seed [zera’] all the nations of the earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.” Note in particular how the usage of zera’ “seed” in vs. 17a is clearly a plural idea in the context of “the stars of heaven” and “the sand which is on the seashore.” But in vs. 17b the second occurrence of “Seed” narrows to a singular “Seed” in the context of “His” (singular, not “their” plural)
enemies. Verse 18 continues with this singular meaning of “Seed” with the promise that in this individual Messianic “Seed” all of the nations of the earth would be blessed. Thus this promise coming at the end of Abraham’s test on Mt. Moriah, indicates that the whole incident is typological of the work of the Messiah. And it further illustrates how the coming Messiah would be in corporate solidarity with the “seed” of Abraham.

Paul’s argumentation in Gal 3 indicates that he understands how the use of the Hebrew word *zera‘* (“seed”) in Gen 22:17 moves from a collective (plural) idea to a single “Seed.” Then a few verses later (Gal 3:29) Paul correctly points to the collective (plural) aspect of this same term in the wider context of Gen 22:18: “And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Paul’s argumentation thus remains faithful to the original context and meaning of Gen 22:17-18. Christ the Messianic “Seed” is in solidarity with, and representative head of, the corporate “seed” of Abraham.

**Corporate solidarity of Abraham with Levi.** Though not mentioned explicitly in the OT, the corporate solidarity between Abraham and Levi is clearly referred to in Heb 7:9-10: “One might even say that Levi himself, who received tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him” (RSV). F. F. Bruce notes the clear incidence of corporate solidarity (which he terms “corporate personality”) in this passage: “Reverting for a moment to the tithe-receiving tribe of Levi, our author points out that Levi, the ancestor of that priestly tribe and the embodiment of its corporate personality, may be said himself to have paid tithes to Melchizedek. . . .”

**Corporate solidarity and Isaac.** Not only is the “seed” of Abraham a corporate plural which narrows down to a single representative “Seed,” as we have seen above, but also Abraham’s direct physical offspring, Isaac, is named as the representative head in whom Abraham’s seed would be called. God said to Abraham: “In Isaac your seed shall be called” (Gen 21:12). Isaac is in corporate solidarity with his descendants, and is said to be the recipient of the promises of land along with his descendants (even though it was only the descendants that physically received the promises). In Gen 17:19, God promises Abraham regarding Isaac: “I will
establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him.” Later to Isaac himself, the divine promise of land is reiterated: “to you and to your descendants I give all these lands.” The next verse makes clear who actually receive the lands: “I will give to your descendants all these lands” (vs. 20).

In the Genesis narrative concerning Isaac the concept of corporate responsibility and culpability is revealed by the remonstrance of Abimelech king of Gerar against Isaac when he falsely told him that Rebecca was his sister. Abimelech exclaims: “What is this you have done to us? One of the people might soon have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us” (Gen 26:10).

**Corporate solidarity and Jacob.** Corporate solidarity of Jacob with his forefathers is revealed in his death wish: “I am to be gathered unto my people; bury me with my fathers” (Gen 49:29). H. Wheeler Robinson seems to correctly note that “burial in the family sepulcher is the realistic act which unites a man with his ancestors. If he is not properly buried, this unity is not properly achieved.” Joseph makes a similar request—that his bones be carried up from Egypt when the children of Israel returned to Canaan (Gen 49:25; cf. fulfillment of his wish in Exod 13:19; Josh 24:32). The statement that one who died was “gathered to his people/fathers” is used also of Abraham (Gen 25:8), Ishmael (Gen 25:17), Isaac (Gen 35:29), Aaron (Num 20:24), Moses (Num 27:13; Deut 32:50), and the generation of elders who outlived Joshua (Judg 2:10). Corporate solidarity with one’s ancestors is even (and especially) revealed in being buried with them.

Jacob is presented not only in solidarity with his forefathers, but also with his descendants. This corporate solidarity of Jacob (along with his brother Esau) and his offspring is revealed already while he is in Rebecca’s womb. The Lord said to Rebecca before her twins were born: “Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger” (Gen 25:23). The later narrative is clear that the older son Esau did not serve his younger brother Jacob in their immediate lifetimes, but the prophecy dealt with the respective descendants of each brother. Already from the womb, Jacob, along with his brother Esau, are in corporate solidarity with their descendants. Through their corporate representative, two nations are already said to be in the womb of Rebecca.

Corporate solidarity of Jacob with his later descendants is particularly revealed in the usage of his names. At Penuel on the bank of the brook Jabbok, Jacob wrestled with a Man/Angel/God (Gen 32:24, 30; cf. Hos 12:4), and his name was changed from Jacob to Israel. “And He (the divine being) said, ‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed’” (Gen 32:28). From this account onward in the OT, we find the term “Israel” sometimes referring to the individual patriarch and sometimes the nation of Israel that descended from him. This oscillation of referents is also apparent with the patriarch’s original name Jacob, which in the OT often refers to the nation and again almost in the same breath to the individual. In his dissertation dealing with the usage of names related to Israel in Amos and Hosea, Ganoune Diop shows how this movement from the

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16Robinson, 27.
individual patriarch (Israel, Jacob) to corporate nation (Jacob, Israel) is not just a literary device of metonymy but serves a deep theological purpose of delineating the ideal identity and mission of God’s people.\textsuperscript{17}

The corporate solidarity of the patriarch Jacob/Israel with the nation of Israel is shown not only by the use of the same name referring both to individual and corporate body, but also by “including” the later generations of Israel in the original story of the patriarch. In Genesis 28 Moses describes Jacob meeting God at Bethel. But the intertextual interpretation of this incident by the later inspired Bible writer Hosea depicts contemporary (eighth-century B.C.) Israel in corporate solidarity with Jacob. The Hebrew of Hos 12:4 literally reads: “He [Jacob] met God at Bethel and there God spoke with \textit{us.}” In the inspired understanding of Hosea, corporate Israel was in solidarity with Jacob and thus God spoke to them there at Bethel as well as to the individual Jacob. As Diop remarks about the shift from “he” to “us” in this verse: “This feature reinforces the notion of corporate solidarity.”\textsuperscript{18}

Jacob’s wife Rachel is also presented as in corporate solidarity with Israel as a nation. In Jer 31:15, Jeremiah portrays the horrors of the Babylonian captivity, and then writes: “A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.” Robinson rightly points out that this is not “a merely ideal or figurative existence of Rachel....Rachel weeps because she dies in her children.”\textsuperscript{19}

\textbf{Corporate solidarity and the sons of Jacob.} When Jacob was about to die, he called his sons together and said, “Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days” (Gen 49:1). The rest of the chapter describes the future of each son in turn, starting with the eldest and ending with the youngest. But whose future is Jacob really describing, that of his sons, or of the 12 tribes that descended from these sons? Verse 1 indicates that he refers to what will befall “you”—the 12 sons who were gathered before him. But note the conclusion to Jacob’s blessing, penned by Moses (vs. 28): “All these are the twelve \textit{tribes} of Israel, and this is what their father spoke to \textit{them}, i.e. the \textit{tribes}! Once more, the corporate solidarity between the twelve sons of Jacob and their descendants makes it possible for the blessing of Jacob at once to speak to the individual sons and at the same time to their corporate tribal entities. Furthermore,

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\item \textsuperscript{17}Ganoune Diop, “The Name ‘Israel’ and Related Expressions in the Books of Amos and Hosea,” Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1995, \textit{passim}. Diop shows numerous examples just within the two books of Amos and Hosea where Israel refers to the individual and then to the corporate body. Examples of the designation “Jacob” referring to the corporate body include Amos 6:8; 7:2, 5; 8:7; Hos 10:11; 12:2 [Heb. 3]; cf. Deut 33:10; Ps 24:6; 53:6; 78:21; 87:2; 99:4; 105:10; 135:4; 147:19; Isa 9:8; 14:1; 17:4; 40:27; 41:8, 14, 21; 42:24; 43:1; 44:1, 2, 21, 23; 45:4; 48:12, 20; 49:5; Jer 10:25; 30:10; 31:17; 46:27, 28; Lam 1:17; 2:2, 3; Ezek 28:25; 37:25; 39:25; Mic 2:12; 3:8; Nah 2:2.
\item \textsuperscript{18}Diop, 360.
\item \textsuperscript{19}Robinson, 30.
\end{itemize}
with regard to the two sons/tribes singled out by Jacob for the most extended blessings, the corporate solidarity leads one more step— to the Messiah who will come as Shiloh from the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:8-12) and as the divine Suffering One like Joseph (Gen 49:22-25). The Messiah ben Judah who is at the same Messiah ben Joseph is the eschatological representative Head of the sons of Israel with whom He is in corporate solidarity.

Corporate Solidarity and the Exodus

The historical Exodus. One of the richest clusters of passages giving vivid evidence of corporate solidarity concerns the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. In numerous passages Moses indicates that in time to come the later generations, who did not physically participate in the Exodus, are nonetheless to consider that they were indeed present when God delivered His people. Future generations were to say to their children, God “delivered our households” (Exod 12:27); “By strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Exod 13:14); “We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; and the Lord showed signs and wonders before our eyes” (Deut 6:21-22).

Some forty years after the covenant-making service at Mt. Sinai, and after the whole generation of adults who actually witnessed the Sinai event had died in the wilderness, Moses calls upon the new generation born in the desert to consider that they themselves had been there. With some seven different strong Hebrew constructions, Moses presses the point home: “The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord did not make this covenant [only]...

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20 Rabbinic interpretation clearly saw the blessing to Joseph as a Messianic prediction; see the forthcoming MA thesis by Jan Sigvartsen for rabbinical references and exegetical substantiation of this Messianic interpretation from the text of Gen 49:22-25.

21 See P. C. Craige, Deuteronomy, New International Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans: 1976), 148: “In a literal sense, the covenant was made with the fathers of most of those standing there on the plains of Moab. The essence of the covenant, however, was its present reality, so that Moses drives home very forcefully the direct identification of the principally new and young generation with those involved in the making of the Horeb covenant. It was made with us, each one of us, these present today, all of us who are living—the syntax of this part of the Hebrew sentence is at first sight rather awkward, but it functions effectively in a hortatory sense to drive home the direct relationship between the people present and the Lord of the covenant.” Again, Moshe Weinfeld, Deuteronomy I-11, Anchor Bible Commentary (NY: Doubleday, 1991), 237-238, commenting on Deut 5:2-3: “According to the traditions in Numbers and Deuteronomy, the Exodus generation, which stood at Sinai, died out during the forty years of wanderings in the desert (cf. Num 14:23, 30; Deut 1:35; 2:14-16). In order to make the Sinaitic covenant binding for the new generation, the author had to make the Israelites declare that the Sinaitic covenant was actually directed to them and not just to their fathers: ‘not with our fathers . . . YHWH made this covenant, but with us, the living, all of here today.’ The generation that stands on the plains of Moab is then conceived as standing at Sinai. . . . A similar explanatory digression is found in Deut 11:2-9. There the author stresses the fact that the signs and miracles
with our fathers, but with us, us ourselves, those who are here today, all of us who are alive. The Lord spoke to you face to face at the mountain. . . .” (Deut 5:2-4; cf. 29:14-15). Later in his farewell address, Moses instructs that those who, in Canaan, would bring their offerings of firstfruits to the central place of worship should repeat a credo of corporate solidarity before the Lord: “So the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a might hand. . . ; He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, ‘a land flowing with milk and honey’” (Deut 26:8-9; cf. vss. 1-11)

In Joshua’s last charge and covenant renewal service before he dies—as the last of the adult generation who actually witnessed the Exodus—the Lord Himself retells the Exodus story, alternating between the expressions “your fathers” and “you”: “Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and the Egyptians pursued your fathers. . . . So they cried out to the Lord; and He put darkness between you and the Egyptians. . . . And your eyes saw what I did in Egypt” (Josh 24:6-8). Even though the whole generation who physically experienced the Exodus was dead, the Lord insisted that the succeeding generation of Israel reckon that they personally came out of Egypt.

Here we have striking examples of corporate solidarity. Israel is a single, unified corporate unity; what happens to one or some, happens to all. The history of Israel’s forefathers is the personal history of every subsequent generation.

This understanding of corporate solidarity was apparently not unique with Israel in biblical times. This seems evident by the speech made by Moses’ messengers to the king of Edom when they requested to pass through Edomite land: “Thus says your brother Israel: ‘You know all the hardship that has befallen us, how our fathers went down to Egypt, and we dwelt in Egypt a long time, and the Egyptians afflicted us and our fathers. When we cried out to the Lord, He heard our voice and sent the Angel and brought us up out of Egypt; now here we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your border. Please let us pass through your country. . . .’” (Num 20:14-17) The use of corporate solidarity language by Israelite messengers, alternating between “our fathers” and “we/us” apparently did not seem strange to the king of Edom.

In fact the answer of “Edom” (=the king of Edom?) to Moses’ messengers also reveals corporate solidarity, as the response comes in the singular while apparently representing all Edom: “Then Edom said to him, ‘You shall not pass through my land, lest I come out against you with the sword’” (vs. 18). The Israelites continue the dialogue with further corporate solidarity language, shifting from “we” to “I”: “So the children of Israel said to him, ‘We will go by the Highway, and if I or my livestock drink any of your water, then I will pay for it. . . .’” (vs. 19) The narrator’s introduction to Edom’s response quoted above, and the narrative summary of the done by God at the Exodus were experienced, not by the sons of the listeners (who are the ones actually being spoken to), but by the listeners themselves. (11:7; cf. 29:1). The blurring of generations concerning the covenantal commitment is clearly expressed in 19:13-14: ‘I make this covenant not with you alone, but with those who are standing here with this day, and with those who are not with us here this day. . . .Israel throughout its generations is thus presented in Deuteronomy as one body, a corporate personality. . . .” Moshe Greenberg goes on to cite the medieval Jewish commentator Ibn Ezra on this verse: “Not only with our ancestors but also with us. . . .”
incident also reveals corporate solidarity, as the whole nation of Edom and the whole nation of Israel is described in the singular: “Then Edom said to him [Israel]” (vs. 18); “Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory; so Israel turned away from him” (vs. 21).

Later prophets who refer back to the historical Exodus also utilize the concept of corporate solidarity as they describe the event. For example, Amos records the divine speech against eighth-century BC Israel in which Yahweh alternates between “them” and “you” as we have seen in the Pentateuch and Joshua: “Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them [Israel of the Exodus and Conquest]. . . . Also it was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite” (Amos 2:9-10). In the next chapter Amos continues: “Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, ‘You only have I known of all the families of the earth...’” (Amos 3:1-2). Since the “family” of Israel is in corporate solidarity, those living in Amos’ day are considered part of the “you” who came up out of Egypt.

Though our modern society of Western individualism may find this concept of corporate solidarity difficult to grasp or internalize, such language is still very much alive in the Jewish Passover seder, as each year during the Passover service the following directive from the Haggadah is repeated: “Let every person, in every generation, think of himself as one of those who came out of Egypt, as it is said in Scripture ‘And you shall tell your son in that day saying, “This is done because of what the Lord did for me when I came up from Egypt”’” (Exod 13:8). Simply stated, this Passover principle of corporate solidarity is—“You are there!”22

Other examples of corporate responsibility during the time of the Exodus are pointed out by Joel Kaminski, and include such passages as Exod 7; 32 (esp. vs. 10); Lev 10:6; Num 11; 13; 14:12; 16:21; 17:9; 25; 32:14; Deut 1:37; 3:36; 4:21; 13:16; 20:17; and 23:4.23

The eschatological New Exodus. Not only is the principle of corporate solidarity operative with regard to the historical Exodus from Egypt, but it also links this historical Exodus to the eschatological New Exodus of the future Messiah. This is already apparent in the Pentateuch, when one closely compares references to the Exodus in the oracles of Balaam. In Balaam’s second oracle, he says: “God brings them [the people of Israel] out of Egypt; He has strength like a wild ox” (Num 23:22). Then in the next oracle, Balaam repeats the same words, with one significant difference--the change of “them” to “Him”: “God brings Him out of Egypt;

22The implications of this approach to the Exodus in particular, and the Bible in general, are profound for biblical preaching. If the Christian church saw their solidarity with ancient Israel in the intimate sense that we as Christians “were there” and the history of Israel is not about some far-away and long-ago people, or even about our spiritual ancestors, but actually our personal diaries, what a difference it would make in how these portions of Scripture were preached and received in the Church!

He has strength like a wild ox” (Num 24:8). The fourth oracle, clearly pointing to the “last days” (Num 24:14), makes clear that the “Him” is the future Messiah: “I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel. . . . Out of Jacob One shall have dominion. . . .” (Num 24:17-19). In the progression of the Balaam oracles, we have the clear picture of the future Messianic King, who will be in corporate solidarity with historical Israel, experiencing a new eschatological Exodus.

The same corporate solidarity between ancient Israel and its future messianic representative (the New Israel), is revealed by the prophet Hosea, and recognized by the gospel writer Matthew. Matt 2:15, following the description of the baby Jesus’ return from Egypt, cites the fulfillment of Hos 11:1: “Out of Egypt have I called my son.” Critical scholars have charged Matthew with unfaithfulness to the original OT context, but these scholars have failed to see the larger context of Hos 11:1.

It is true that Hos 11:1 in its immediate context refers to the past historical Exodus of ancient Israel from Egypt. The verse reads: “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son” (RSV). The next verse describes the historical circumstances of national Israel’s turning away from Yahweh to serve the Baals.

However, it is crucial to see not only the immediate context of the chapter but also the wider context of this verse. C. H. Dodd, in his book According to the Scriptures, has demonstrated how the NT writers often cite a single OT passage as a pointer for the reader to consider the larger context of the passage. Dodd has shown that the larger context of Hos 11:1—both in the book of Hosea itself and in the other contemporary eighth-century BC prophets—describes a future New Exodus connected with Israel’s return from exile and the coming of the Messiah. Note especially the following passages: Hos 2:14-15; 12:9, 13; 13:4-5; Isa 11:15-16; 35; 40:3-5; 41:17-20; the servant songs of Isa 42-53 (see below for discussion of these); 55:12-13; Amos 9:7-15; Micah 7:8-20. Thus, far from distorting the original OT context of Hosea, Matthew “quoted a single verse not as a proof text, but as a pointer to his source’s larger context. Instead of interrupting the flow of his argument with a lengthy digression, he lets the words of Hosea 11:1 introduce that whole context in Hosea.”

Thus the eighth-century prophets seem to have clearly recognized that Israel’s Exodus from Egypt would be recapitulated in the Messiah as the future corporate representative of Israel.


Matthew remains faithful to this larger OT context in his citation of Hos 11:1. In harmony with the OT predictions, Matthew depicts Jesus as the New Israel, recapitulating in His life the experience of ancient Israel, but succeeding where the first Israel failed.

The first five chapters of Matthew describe in detail Jesus as the New Israel experiencing a New Exodus: coming out of Egypt after a death decree (Mt 2:15), and going through His Red Sea experience in His baptism (Matt 3; cf. 1 Cor 10:1, 2). This is followed by His wilderness experience of 40 days paralleling the 40 years of ancient Israel in the wilderness. During this time Jesus indicates His own awareness of His role as the New Israel in the New Exodus by consistently meeting the devil’s temptations with quotations from Deut 6-8 (where ancient Israel’s wilderness temptations are summarized). Finally, Jesus appears on the Mount as a new Moses, with His 12 disciples representing the tribes of Israel, and repeats the Law as Moses did at the end of the wilderness sojourn.

Matthew and other NT writers also depict the death and resurrection of Jesus as a New Exodus. At the Transfiguration the first Moses speaks to the New Moses about His “departure” (Greek εξόδος) which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). Jesus’ death is the ultimate Red Sea experience. After His resurrection He remains in the wilderness of this earth 40 days (like the Israel’s 40 years in the wilderness) and then as the New Joshua enters heavenly Canaan as the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith.

The NT writers also carry this Exodus solidarity further as the people of God in NT times who are part of the body of Christ constitute the New Israel experiencing a New Exodus (see Hebrews 4; cf. 2 Cor 6:17). And as the final step in recognizing this corporate solidarity with regard to the Exodus, John the Revelator sees the redeemed people of God--spiritual Israel--of the last days who have gotten victory over the beast, his image, and his mark, in corporate solidarity both with the historical national Israel and with Christ the New Israel. In Rev 15 these redeemed ones sing the “Song of Moses,” in corporate solidarity with ancient national Israel after coming out of Egypt (Exod 15), and they sing the “second stanza,” as it were, the “Song of the Lamb,” in corporate solidarity with the New Israel who made possible their spiritual deliverance from the penalty and power and the very presence of sin (Rev 15:1-4).

**Corporate Solidarity in the Mosaic Law**

**Moral and civil laws.** Robinson and others delineate a number of examples in the Mosaic law where the principle of corporate solidarity seems to be operative. The most

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29 Robinson, 25-26. A later article by J. R. Porter, “The Legal Aspects of the Concept of ‘Corporate Personality’ in the Old Testament,” *Vetus Testamentum* 15 (1965): 361-380, rightly criticizes Robinson’s notion of “psychic community” and “psychical unity,” but does not reject underlying elements of family or group solidarity. He notes that there may be other elements also at work in the examples cited by Robinson, including “the notion that a man can possess persons in much the same way that he possesses property” and “early religious beliefs about the
obvious example is in the Ten Commandments, where the Lord reveals Himself as One “visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands [of generations] of those who love Me and keep My commandments” (Exod 20:5, 6). The solidarity in the immediate family is evidenced by the regulations for levirate marriage, in which a man is to take responsibility to raise up posterity for his dead brother (Deut 25:5). It is also evidenced in the laws against incest (Lev 18), which presuppose a family bond of the flesh; sexual relationships are forbidden with one “near of kin”, lit. “flesh [šēʾēr] of his flesh [bēšārō]” or “of the same flesh.”

Solidarity in the city is indicated by the regulation that a whole city is responsible for an unsolved murder or for idolatry of some its inhabitants (Deut 13:12-18; 21:1-9). Clan solidarity is clear from the responsibility of the goʾēl, as representative of the clan, to redeem the life and property of his next-of- kin (Lev 25:47-55; cf. the book of Ruth) and to act as the blood-avenger for a clan member who has been murdered (Num 35, esp. vs. 19). Solidarity in the whole community is revealed in the collective responsibility of the community to punish the sin of an evil person within the community, and thus, to root out the contagion of sin from the community, or as Scripture puts it, to “put away the evil from your midst” (Deut 13:5; 22:21, 22, 24; etc.).

Solidarity with the community of Israel of previous generations is illustrated in the causal linkage between the forefathers and their descendants, both in good (blessing) and in evil (the curses). Moses counsels, “therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live” (Deut 30:19). In the recital of the covenant curses, God indicates the linkage between the sins of the forefathers and the sins of the contemporary generation in the punishment: “And those of you are left shall waste away in their iniquity in your enemies’ lands; also in their fathers’ iniquities, which are with them, they shall waste away” (Lev 26:39) Because of this solidarity, the children are to confess both their own sins and the sins of their fathers: “But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, . . . then I will remember my covenant with Jacob. . . . I will remember the land” (vss. 40, 42).

The corporate solidarity of the nation is uniquely emphasized in the Mosaic legal codes by means of a continual shifting from the plural “you” to a singular “you.” For example, Exod 23:9: “Also you [singular] shall not oppress a stranger, for you [plural] know the heart of a stranger, because you [plural] were strangers in the land of Egypt.” Again, Exod 23:13: “And in all that I have said to you [plural], be circumspect and make no mention of the name of other gods, nor let it be heard from your [singular] mouth.” Examples of this ease of shifting from singular to plural or vice versa may be multiplied throughout the legal sections of the

contagious nature of blood, holiness, sin and uncleanness” (p. 380). Porter also rightly points out throughout his article that legal material involving group responsibility in no wise diminishes the primary guilt which focuses upon the individual who commits the offense, and that most of the sins of individuals involving the group occur with regard to “crimes of an exceptional nature which in fact fall outside the regular operation of the law” (p. 365).

Other examples of legislation displaying corporate solidarity are given by de Fraine, Adam and the Family of Man, 55-57, 77-78, 85-87, 117-122.
Pentateuch.  

**The ceremonial laws regarding the priesthood and sacrifices.** In the Levitical system it was clearly the priest who stood as the representative of the corporate body of Israel. According to Lev 10:17 the priests were to “bear the guilt of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the Lord.” The high priest, in particular, was the representative head of the people to God. On his shoulders he wore two onyx stones inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel as “memorial stones,” to “bear their names before the Lord on his two shoulders as a memorial” (Exod 28:12). On his breastplate were 12 precious stones representing the 12 tribes: “So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the breastplate of judgment over his heart, when he goes into the holy place, as a memorial before the Lord continually” (Exod 28:29). Striking examples of the priestly mediation as representative head for the people include the high priest’s work on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16) and Phineas’ atonement for the children of Israel, stopping the plague by killing the brazen offender Zimri at Baal-Peor (Num 25:10-18).

The sacrificial system also carries with it the concept of corporate solidarity. The sacrificial animal is clearly in solidarity with the individual worshiper or the corporate body of Israel when sins are confessed upon it and hands are laid upon it, thus transferring the sins from the individual or corporate body to the sacrificial substitute and representative of the sinner(s). This concept of sacrificial substitution has been dealt with in detail by Angel Rodriguez.  

**Corporate Solidarity and the Conquest**

**Rahab.** In the conquest of Jericho, family solidarity is shown by the sparing of the entire household of Rahab because of her kind treatment of the spies and statement of faith in Yahweh (Josh 2:12-14; 6:22-25). She is then linked in corporate solidarity with the nation of Israel. The inspired narrator states, “So she dwells in Israel to this day” (Josh 6:25). The Hebrew literally reads that she dwells “in the midst [b’qereb]” of Israel. Jon Berquist comments insightfully on the implications of solidarity in this phrase “in the midst”: “The term refers to inward parts, or even the womb. Rahab the prostitute now enters the womb of Israel and the story reaches its second climax. The community enfolds Rahab.”

**Achan.** The corporate solidarity of the whole nation of Israel during the Conquest is dramatically illustrated in the experience of Achan: the entire nation is held responsible for the

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sin of the one man; one man’s sin involved the whole of Israel in defeat (Joshua 7:22:20). The Lord specifically says to Joshua after the defeat at Ai, “Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the things devoted to destruction, and both stolen and deceived; and they have put it among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies. . because they have become doomed to destruction” (Josh 7:11-12). Josh 22:20 makes this corporate responsibility even more explicit: “Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel?” Even though only Achan sinned, the whole of Israel in corporate solidarity with Achan are implicated in the crime. Some have suggested that the same principle explains why the whole household of Achan was destroyed for Achan’s sin, although since he hid the stolen goods under the floor of his tent, we may presume that the entire household actually participated (and were accomplices) in the crime. It seems clear, however that corporate solidarity is displayed in the participation of all Israel in the stoning and burning of Achan and his household at the Valley of Achor (Josh 7:24-26).

The covenant renewal ceremony. A final, and most dramatic evidence of the corporate solidarity principle in the time of the Conquest occurs in the last chapter of Joshua. We have


34Ellen White makes a striking general application of the corporate solidarity principle operative with regard to Achan and Israel: “The history of Achan teaches the solemn lesson that for one man’s sin the displeasure of God will rest upon a people or a nation till the transgression is searched out and punished” (ST April 21, 1881; 2 BC 996). Again she writes, “the nation was held accountable for the guilt of the transgressor” (PP 494). She then applies this principle specifically to the church: “Achan’s sin brought disaster upon the whole nation. For one man’s sin the displeasure of God will rest upon His church till the transgression is searched out and put away” (Ibid., 497). Still again, “God holds His people, as a body, responsible for the sins existing in individuals among them” (3T 269). Corporate solidarity is still operative!

35Ellen White supports this conclusion: “Achan’s parents had educated their son in such a way that he felt free to disobey the Word of the Lord, the principles inculcated in his life led him to deal with his children in such a way that they also were corrupted. Mind acts and reacts upon mind, and the punishment which included the relations of Achan with himself, reveals the fact that all were involved in the transgression” (Ms 67, 1894; 2 BC 998).

36Note Ellen White’s comment: “As the people had been held responsible for Achan’s sin, and had suffered from its consequences, they were, through their representatives, to take part in its punishment. ‘All Israel stoned him with stones.’” (PP 495)
already referred to Joshua’s covenant renewal ceremony, in which, although almost all of those who literally witnessed the Exodus had already died, God insists that His audience is to consider that they were there (Josh 24:5-8). We now mention the passage again in the context of the Conquest. When the Lord described His acts of deliverance for the children of Israel, He deliberately shifted back and forth from referring to “your fathers” (those who were literally present at the Exodus and Wilderness Wanderings) to “you” (the later generation who were to consider that they were there). While the fathers of the present congregation had literally experienced the Exodus and wilderness experience, God now urges the later generation of the Conquest to reckon that they personally had come out of Egypt and had seen with their own eyes what God had done. God says in effect, “You were there!”

**Corporate Solidarity and the Period of the Judges**

Allusions to the concept of corporate solidarity emerge from several incidents in the history of the Judges. In Judges 1 the descriptions of the various tribes in the singular indicate the solidarity between the tribes and their ancestors, the immediate physical sons of Jacob: “And Judah went with his brother Simeon, and they attacked the Canaanites. . . .” (Judg 1:17). In Judges 2 the Angel of the Lord speaks to the children of Israel, invoking corporate solidarity to depict them as having come up out Egypt: “I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers. . . .” (Judg 2:1). In the same chapter is indicated the role of the various judges, raised up by God as representative heads of Israel to deliver the corporate body (Judg 2:16-19).

In Judg 11 we find Jephthah identifying so closely with the Gileadites who had made him their captain that he says to the Ammonite king: “What do you have against me, that you have come to fight against me in my land? . . . Therefore, I have not wronged you but you have wronged me in fighting against me. May the Lord, the Judge, render judgment this day between the children of Israel and the people of Ammon” (vss. 12, 27). Jephthah gives a similar speech later when he complains to the Ephraimites: My people and I were in a great struggle with the people of Ammon; and when I called you did not deliver me out of their hands” (12:2).

The final chapters of the book of Judges (Judg 19-21) provide an insightful look into the way corporate solidarity operated in the period of the Judges. When certain perverted men of the town of Gibeah in the tribe of Benjamin committed a shameful act against a Levite’s concubine, the whole town and even the whole tribe was held ultimately accountable. The book of Judges concludes with the entire tribe of Benjamin on the verge of extinction due to the application of the principle of corporate solidarity.

Still in the time of the judges, the record of 1 Sam 2:31 pronounces judgment upon the entire house of Eli because of his sons’ wickedness. In 1 Sam 6:19 apparently the whole town of Beth Shemesh was punished because of those inhabitants who looked into the ark of the covenant.

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37I have illustrated how this principle of corporate solidarity in Joshua’s covenant-renewal ceremony may be applied to the contemporary church setting in my book *In the Footsteps of Joshua* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1995), 121-128.
Corporate Solidarity in the History of the Monarchy

Israel’s kingship. Although it was not God’s original plan to have earthly kings ruling over Israel (He Himself was to be their King), yet He foresaw this development and made provision for it (Deut 17:14-20). Saul was appointed as the representative head (nagîd) over God’s people (1 Sam 9:16; 10:1). The corporate solidarity of the king with the nation is evidenced by the fact that the Davidic king is called Yahweh’s “son” (2 Sam 7:14), the same term used for corporate Israel (Exod 4:22-23; Hos 11:1).

A striking example of one person standing for the many in the history of the Monarchy is the incident of David and Goliath (1 Sam 17), in which the “champion” Goliath represented the whole nation of the Philistines, and his defeat signaled the defeat of the entire army. Another specific example of the outworking of corporate solidarity during this period is the divine judgment upon David’s family members because of his sin against Bathsheba and Uriah—involving the death of David’s son, the prediction that “the sword shall never depart” from his house, and the prediction that David’s wives would be ravished by one from his own house (2 Sam 12). Other examples include the execution of seven of Saul’s descendants to expiate the Gibeonite blood shed by Saul (2 Sam 21), and the punishment of the whole nation of Israel for David’s census taking (2 Sam 24). In the time of Solomon, corporate solidarity is displayed as God delays punishing Solomon for his sins for the sake of his father David, but announces to Solomon that his kingdom will be torn away from his son, except for one tribe (1 Kgs 11:11-12).

From the period of the divided Monarchy, 1 Kgs 14 describes the divine judgment upon King Jereboam’s family for Jereboam’s sins (cf. 1 Kgs 15:29); Elijah expresses the principle of corporate solidarity between king and people when he calls King Ahab the troubler of all Israel because he and his father had forsaken the Lord and followed Baal (1 Kgs 18:18), and Elijah announces the divine retribution upon Ahab’s son because of Ahab’s sin, since Ahab humbled himself before God (1 Kgs 21:29). In 2 Kgs 1 is recorded the divine retributive judgment upon King Ahaziah’s soldiers (groups of fifty) because of the king’s apostasy. As a last example, we find that the people of Judah are to go into exile for the sins of their representatives, King Hezekiah (2 Kgs 20:15-10) and Manasseh (2 Kgs 21:1-18; 23:26-27; 24:3). As Kaminski summarizes regarding Manasseh, the texts imply “that the king is representative of the whole nation, and thus if he errs the nation as a whole might suffer for his misdeed.” Further examples

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38 It is instructive to note that the Hebrew expression for “champion” is literally “the man [in the space] between two [armies].” The representative nature of the “champion” standing for the army he represents is thus implicit in the Hebrew.

39 See Kaminski, Corporate Responsibility, 96-113.

40 Kiminski, Corporate Responsibility, 37. Kiminski (ibid.) refers to this phenomenon “in which sin spreads horizontally across a generation as intra-generational retribution.” For further discussion of corporate responsibility in the Manasseh narratives, see ibid., 31-54. It should be pointed out that according to 21 Kgs 21:9, the people of Israel are also personally implicated in
from this period could be multiplied.41

The Davidic king was not only in solidarity with his people, but in solidarity with the New David, the Messianic king from his lineage. This is in evidence already in 2 Sam 7, where David discerns in the promise regarding Solomon the perpetuity of the Davidic throne, a reference to the coming Davidic Messiah (2 Sam 7:19),42 but it is especially apparent in the Davidic/Messianic Psalms. Psalm 2 sets the tone for these psalms. In this psalm of David (see Acts 4:25) there is striking evidence that the anointed Davidic king is in solidarity with the future Messiah. Psalm 2 moves from the local level of the earthly installation of the Davidic king as Yahweh’s “son,” to the cosmic level of the divine Son, the Messiah. The final verse indicates this movement: “Kiss the Son, lest He [the Son] be angry, and you perish in the way, when His [the Son’s] wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him [the Son]” (vs. 12). The expression “put trust in” elsewhere in the some two dozen occurrences in the Psalms is always reserved for the deity; the Son of vs. 12, therefore, is none other than the divine Son of God. Thus, when the Father says of Jesus at His baptism, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt 3:17), He is announcing, among other things, the solidarity already presented in Ps 2 between the OT Davidic “son” and the New David, the divine “Son.”43

The internal indicator of solidarity between the historical Davidic king and the future Davidic Messiah in Psalms 2 clarifies the relationship of solidarity in the remainder of the Davidic psalms. The Davidic “anointed one” is in solidarity with the people of Israel and ultimately with the divine eschatological Messiah. What is implicit in the Psalms becomes explicit in the prophets. Numerous OT prophets predicted that the Messiah would come as the New David, recapitulating in His life the experience of the first David. Note, e.g., the following passages: Jer 23:5; Ezek 34:23; 37:24; Isa 9:6-7; 11:1-5; Hos 3:5; Amos 9:11; and Zech 8:3.

Thus the Davidic psalms relating to David’s experience as the anointed one--namely, his suffering and his royal reign--already in the OT psalms and prophets are announced as referring to the Messianic David. The NT writers, and Jesus Himself, in citing Davidic psalms denoting the apostasy, although the blame is placed upon the king for seducing them: “But they paid no attention, and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel.”

41See especially de Fraine, Adam and the Family of Man, pp. 152-170, and Kaminski, Corporate Responsibility, 190-191.

42See the discussion of this Messianic passage in Walter Kaiser, Toward An Old Testament Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 149-155.

43Ellen White points out how in this announcement the Father’s acceptance of His Son Jesus also includes in it those who believe in Him: “Christ’s prayer on the banks of the Jordan includes every one who will believe in Him. The promise that your are accepted in the Beloved comes to you. God said, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’” (GCB April 4, 1901; 5 BC 1079). “The voice that spoke to Jesus says to every believing soul, ‘This is my beloved child, in whom I am well pleased.’” (MS 125, 1902; 5BC 1079).
the suffering and royalty of the anointed one, are simply recognizing the corporate solidarity between the first and the New David as already announced in the OT.\textsuperscript{44}

**Solidarity with previous generations (ancestors) in sin and righteousness.** During the United Monarchy, there are a number of examples of corporate solidarity. According to 1 Sam 15:2-3, the Amalekites of King Saul’s day were to be punished (obliterated) because of what they had done to the children of Israel when they came up from Egypt (cf. Deut 25:17-19). Later in the Divided Monarchy, divine judgment comes upon the sons of Hiel for Hiel’s building up of Jericho despite the warning of Joshua (1 Kgs 16:34; cf. Josh 6:26). According to 2 Kgs 5:27, because of Gehazi’s sin of greed, Elisha pronounced a divine sentence involving not only Gehazi but his posterity: “therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever.” The people of Israel largely departed from God in covenant disloyalty, and the descendants are often said to have suffered the consequences of the guilt of their “fathers.” These same texts also indicate another aspect of corporate solidarity, as “they place the blame for the fall of Judah upon the deeds of those who lived in earlier generations, especially upon Manasseh and his generation.” We hear Josiah lamenting after the finding of the book of the Law in the temple: “great is the wrath of the Lord that is aroused against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book” (2 Kgs 22:13). Again, immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem, Jeremiah adds this lamentation: “Our fathers sinned and are no more, but we bear their iniquities” (Lam 5:7).\textsuperscript{45} The solidarity between the wicked and their children who bear the consequences of their sins is particularly strong in the imprecatory psalms (Ps 21:10-11; 69:22-28; 109:6-13; 137:8-9).

On the other hand, there is abundance of evidence of blessing accruing to later generations because of the righteousness of the fathers. The relevant passages cluster especially in the Psalms. For example, Ps 25:13 “He [the righteous one] himself shall dwell in prosperity, and his descendants shall inherit the earth.” Similarly in Proverbs 20:7: “The righteous man walks in his integrity; his children are blessed after him.” (See also Ps 37:25, 26, 37; 102:29; 112:2; 128:6; 147:6; Prov 11:21; etc.)

**The concretization of a people as an individual person.** One of the most pronounced evidences for concretization of a people in an individual is the use of the “I” in the psalms. There has been much discussion regarding the identity of the “I” of the psalms,\textsuperscript{46} but the weight

\textsuperscript{44}For discussion of these Messianic psalms in general, and Psalms 16 and 22 in particular, see my article, “New Testament Use of the Old Testament,” *JATS* 5/1 (1994):23-28; see p. 37, n. 4, for brief mention of other Messianic psalms.

\textsuperscript{45}This is not to deny the biblical doctrine of individual responsibility that runs through Scripture. Many passages indicate that the sins of the fathers were also imbibed by their descendants and thus the solidarity in sin involved the iniquity of both ancestors and descendants (see Amos 2:4; Isa 65:6-7; Ezek 2:3; Jer 3:25; 11:10; 14:20; 32:18; etc.).

of evidence seems to point to the “I” as referring to an individual (e.g. David) as the representative of the group. As de Fraine writes, “Anytime that we have an ‘I’ that shifts without any definite reason to the collective ‘we,’ there is a good probability that the ‘I’ may be an individual who, in some way or other, through the ‘we’ expresses his union with the others of his group.”

For example, in Ps 44 there are six different shifts from singular to plural or plural to singular. Again, in Ps 60 there is a series of collectives (“we” or “our”), with a single shift to the singular representative in vs. 9: “Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will lead me to Edom?”

The prophets during the Monarchy often refer to Israel and the surrounding nations as a single individual. While this might be classed as a literary device of metonymy or personification, it also reveals the solidarity of the nation in the prophet’s mind. Thus Israel is called a “child” (Hos 11:1; Jer 31:9; Mal 3:10), a “virgin” (Jer 18:13), a “daughter” (Isa 1:8; 10:32; 16:1; 37:22; 52:5; 62:11; Jer 4:31; 6:2, 23; 13:21; Amos 5:2; Micah 1:13; 4:8, 10, 13; etc.), a fiancee and spouse (Hos 2:21-22; Jer 2:2; Ezek 16), and an adulteress (Isa 1:21; Jer 2:32; 13:27; Ezek 16) or sacred prostitute (Jer 3:6, 8; Ezek 23), a mother (Isa 49:18; 54:1; 60:4-5; 66:8), and a widow (Lam 1:1).

Other nations are likewise referred to as an individual person: “virgin daughter Babylon” (Isa 47:1; Jer 51:33), “virgin daughter of Egypt” (Jer 19:24; 46:11), “you [the daughter] who dwells in Dibon” (Jer 48:18), the “daughter of Edom” (Lam 4:21-22), the “rebellious daughter” Ammon (Jer 49:4), and “your sister Sodom” (Ezek 16:48).

The Servant Songs. In the Servant Songs of Isa 42-53, what is most striking is the frequent alternation between the corporate and the singular servant, with both individual and corporate servants described in the same language. In this way the prophet is able to dramatically indicate that the Messianic Servant is in corporate solidarity with the nation of Israel, and will come as the New Israel, to recapitulate in His experience the experience of the old Israel, in particular with regard to His death-resurrection.

Corporate Solidarity in the Exilic Period

Ezekiel. The prophet Ezekiel, perhaps most forcefully among the prophets, reveals the

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47 De Fraine, *Adam and the Family of Man*, 231.


50 For more complete discussion of corporate solidarity between the prophets and the community of Israel, see de Fraine, *Adam and the Family of Man*, pp. 170-182.
corporate solidarity between the prophets and the people of Israel. At the beginning of his ministry, he is called upon by God to lie on his left side for 390 days, and then on his right side for 40 days. The reason is explicitly given: “For I have laid on you the years of their [Israel’s] iniquity . . .; so you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Israel” (Ezek 4:5). As Daniel Block describes the role of Ezekiel, “Instead of representing Yahweh, he now plays the role of the priest, carrying the burden of his people’s sins on his shoulder.” Block further suggests that “Ezekiel is hereby called on to be a suffering servant, bearing the consequences of Israel’s sin.” In Ezekiel’s actions we have a singular example of corporate solidarity between himself and the people whose iniquities he bears.

Daniel. The exilic prophet Daniel exhibits another striking illustration of corporate solidarity, this time in his prayer for his people. In Daniel 9, Daniel, realizing that the 70 years of Israel’s Babylonian Captivity predicted by Jeremiah were almost expired, offers a prayer to God that He will be faithful to His promise to bring Israel back from captivity. In the process of his prayer, he links himself with his people in a remarkable way, confessing the sins of corporate Israel as his own: “We have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled” (vs. 5) “Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land” (vs. 6). “O Lord, to us belongs shame of face, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against You” (vs. 8). “To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him. We have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God. . . . Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law. . . ; therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him” (vs. 9-11). “And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and made Yourself a name, as it is this day--we have sinned, we have done wickedly!” (vs. 15)

At the end of the recorded prayer, Daniel makes clear that he was including himself in corporate solidarity with the nation in the prayer of confession: “Now while I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel . . .” (Dan 9:20). This devout prophet, called three times by the angel “a man greatly beloved” by God (Dan 9:23; 10:11, 19), recognizes his solidarity with His people and confesses their sins as his own.

Corporate Solidarity in the Post-Exilic Period

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52Ibid., 177.

Ezra. Ezra’s prayer in Ezra 9, like Daniel’s in Daniel 9, reveals the corporate solidarity of Ezra with the sins of his people, and also the solidarity of Ezra’s generation with the previous generations of Israel. After learning of the intermarriage of some leaders in Israel with pagan neighbors, he prays: “O my God: I am too ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to You, my God; for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has grown up to the heavens. Since the days of our fathers to this day we have been very guilty, and for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands.” (Ezra 9:6-7). Ezra extends the corporate solidarity language throughout the rest of the prayer, and concludes: “Here we are before You, in our guilt, though no one can stand before You because of this!” (vs. 15) Obviously Ezra himself was not guilty of mixed marriage, yet he identified with his people and prayed a prayer of corporate confession, including himself with the guilty.

Nehemiah. The same kind of prayer as we find with Daniel and Ezra, is prayed by Nehemiah as he heard the news of the unbuilt walls of Jerusalem. He addresses the “great and awesome God” thus: “please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father’s house and I have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against you.’’ (Neh 1:6-7).

The same corporate solidarity is apparent in Nehemiah’s prayer of Nehemiah 9. After describing the history of Israel’s rebellion against God since the Exodus from Egypt (vss. 7-32), Nehemiah indicates that it was not just the forefathers that rebelled during this history. He prays: “However You are just in all that has befallen us, For You have dealt faithfully, but we have done wickedly. Neither our kings nor our princes, our priests nor our fathers, have kept Your law . . .” (vs. 33-34).

Summary and Conclusions

Definitions. The following definitions seem to capture the essence of what is involved in corporate solidarity in the Hebrew Scriptures: “The whole group, including its past, present, and future members, might function as a single individual through any one of those members conceived as representative of it.”

Major aspects. The following aspects of the phenomena of corporate solidarity are

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54Ibid., 25.

55Berkouwer, 513-514, summarizing de Fraine.
modified from the observations of Robinson and de Fraine:

1. **Extension in Time.** Corporate solidarity has an extension going beyond the present moment in both the past and the future. There is a common ancestor standing at the origin of the group who “actualizes” it through the course of history, and among contemporaries a group has a tendency to express itself in a single individual. (Also there is often an emphasis upon a future Messianic representative of the corporate group, not noted by either Robinson or de Fraine.)

2. **Realism.** Corporate solidarity is an eminently real concept which transcends the purely literary or ideal personification, making the group a real entity actualized in each of its members. The group and the individual make one single total reality. The whole group is included in the individual and *vice versa.*

3. **Fluidity.** Corporate solidarity is extremely “fluid” in the sense that the biblical writer passes quickly back and forth from the individual to the collective and *vice versa.*

4. **Continuing Application.** Corporate solidarity continues to exist throughout the biblical period alongside an equally important individualistic emphasis (contra the development from corporate to individualistic postulated by Robinson, and somewhat by de Fraine).

**Major themes.** The following nine major themes involved in corporate solidarity are recognized by de Fraine, with a tenth that I have observed emerging from many of the solidarity contexts:

1. *The Father of a Family and His Household.*
4. *The Ancestor Prolonged in His Descendants.*
5. *The Beneficial Influence of the “Fathers” on Their “Children.”*
6. *The Harmful Influence of the “Fathers” on Their “Children.”*
7. *The Identity of Name for a “Clan” and for a Person.*
8. *The Concretization of a People in an Individual Person (including a future Messiah, not recognized by de Fraine).*
9. *The Legal “Thou” (shifting from singular to plural and vice versa).*
10. *The Personalization of Events of the Ancestor(s) by Later Generations (a crucial theme not recognized by de Fraine).*

**Extent.** After this brief survey of the outworking of the principle of corporate solidarity in the OT, I cannot help but exclaim with Robinson, who after his survey wrote regarding the extent of this conception: “It is, of course, impossible to attempt any exhaustive review of its applications. They would range from the accidence and syntax of Hebrew grammar up to the highest levels of Old Testament theology.” Likewise, Kaminsky demonstrates that “corporate ideas are common, central and persistent in the Hebrew Bible.” Without being exhaustive, hopefully this survey gives some glimpse of the far-ranging extent to which corporate solidarity

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56 Robinson, 34.

57 Kaminsky, 30.
permeates the OT message.

The lesson. Kaminski’s penetrating analysis of corporate responsibility in the Hebrew Bible includes a study of the co-existing biblical principle of individual responsibility, as evidenced in such passages as Deut 24:16, 2 Kgs 14:6, Jer 31:29-30 and Eze 18, showing that corporate responsibility does not undermine individual responsibility. At the same time, Kaminski’s research leads him to the following thought-provoking challenge for the present time:

There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that the corporate ideas contained within the Hebrew Bible may provide certain key elements to new theological constructs that would take greater account of the importance of the way in which the individual has communal responsibilities. Such a theology is very necessary at a time when it is becoming apparent that many contemporary problems are communal and even global in nature.58

Let them who have ears to hear take heed!

Selected Bibliography


58Ibid., 116-178.

59Ibid., 189.


