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Examination of Exodus xxxiii. 7-11.

BY PROF. C. M. MEAD, PH. D.

This passage has occasioned much perplexity and discussion. The difficulty is a very obvious one, when the passage is considered in connection with the context. In chh. xxiv.-xxxi. we have the account of Moses' being called up into the mount, and there receiving directions concerning the building of the tabernacle. In ch. xxxii. is narrated how the people, during Moses' long delay, had made them a golden calf, and how Moses, after administering reproof and chastisement, returned to Jehovah to intercede for the people. In ch. xxxiii. 1-3, Jehovah renews his promise that the people shall go to the land of Canaan, and says, "I will send an angel before thee and I will drive out the Canaanite," etc. . . . "for I will not go up in the midst of thee: for thou art a stiffnecked people; lest I consume thee in the way." In consequence of this utterance, it is said (ver. 4) that "the people mourned, and no man did put on him his ornaments." Then, in ver. 5, we have an apparent repetition of ver. 3, "And Jehovah said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiffnecked people; should I for one moment go up in the midst of thee, I should consume thee: and now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what I will do with thee." This command to put off the ornaments, coming after the statement that the people did not put them on, seems to be out of place. The A. V. accordingly renders, "For the Lord *had said* unto Moses," etc. We are not warranted in so translating, though often the Vav Consecutive introduces a verb which is not consecutive to the foregoing in a strictly chronological sense. But inasmuch as ver. 5 is a repetition and enlargement of ver. 3, and is followed (ver. 6) by the statement, "And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments from Mt. Horeb on," we are compelled to hold that vers. 5 and 6 are a substantial repetition of the foregoing, with the addition that the laying off of the ornaments was in direct consequence of a divine

command, even though we assume, with some, that we have here two distinct narratives loosely put together. But, at the worst, no serious difficulty need be found here. It is when we come to the following five verses that the real puzzle is presented. After this statement about Jehovah's threat and the people's humiliation, as indicated by their not wearing their ornaments from this time on, we read (according to the usual rendering), "And Moses took the tent, and pitched it without the camp, and called it the Tent of Meeting. And it came to pass, when Moses went out unto the tent, that all the people rose up and stood, every man at his tent door, and looked after Moses until he was gone into the tent. And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tent, the pillar of cloud descended, and stood at the door of the tent; and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man at his tent door. And Jehovah spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant, Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tent."

The difficulties presented by this passage are two: (1) It speaks of the Tent of Meeting (A. V., "tabernacle of the congregation") as of a structure already erected, whereas, according to the rest of the book, it was as yet only projected, but not built; (2) the passage interrupts the narrative of ch. xxxiii. itself; for ver. 12 seqq. is a direct continuation of the communication between Jehovah and Moses; and vers. 7-11 have (as usually understood) no visible connection with it.

The first of these difficulties those who hold to the unity of authorship, or at least consistency of authorship, have attempted to solve in two ways: (a) Some have thought that the tent here spoken of was Moses' own tent, which he now set apart provisionally for sacred purposes until the permanent structure should be completed. But it is hard to see why, if Moses' private tent was intended, it should not have been called "*his* tent" instead of "*the* tent." Moreover, the following verses represent Moses as being only occasionally in this tent, *i. e.* only for the purpose of special communication with Jehovah. Where was he to eat and sleep? What was to be his ordinary dwelling-place? This difficulty is evaded, not met, when Keil translates "*a* tent," and says that it was a tent of Moses which, on account of the divine revelations made in it, became a provisional tabernacle. If the meaning is that it was one of Moses' tents, then, to say nothing of the fact that it is a pure assumption to suppose that he had several tents of his own, the use of the definite article is unaccountable. If he had but one tent, the definite article would be less objectionable,

though even then very strange; but if he had several, and this was only one, such a construction is quite inadmissible.

(*b*) The other explanation is that the tent here mentioned was a sanctuary which from the first had been used as a central place of worship, and is therefore familiarly called "the tent." The obvious objection to this is, that there is no previous reference to any such structure, and it seems singular that in the first place where it is mentioned it should be called simply "the tent." Moreover, the paragraph before us produces the impression that this was the beginning of the religious use made of this tent. It was now taken and pitched outside of the camp, and called the tent of meeting. It may, indeed, be urged that it is intrinsically probable that there had been some sanctuary from the first; but this narrative can be made to refer to such a sanctuary only by a very strained exegesis.

But these interpretations, while they, if otherwise admissible, remove the first difficulty—the absurdity of telling what was done with a building not yet erected—do not at all relieve the second one, the interruption of the account of Moses' conversation with Jehovah. When Moses says (ver. 12), "See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people; and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me," there is a manifest and direct reference to Jehovah's promise (ver. 2) that "an angel" should go before them. Moses is grieved because Jehovah himself refuses to go with them, and only sends an unknown angel; and he intercedes for a modification of the divine sentence. Now, in the midst of this negotiation is inserted the account of what Moses did with this unknown tent. No one can reasonably suppose that it describes what happened at this time; it is commonly understood to describe a customary use made of the tent; but there is obviously not only no reason for interjecting the account here, but the best of all reasons why it should not have been interjected, viz., that it has nothing to do with the things related in the context, and inexcusably interrupts the narrative. And these conjectures about what this tent was—conjectures at the best without any positive support, and such as would never have been thought of except for the anachronism respecting the real tabernacle—do not at all relieve us as regards the incongruity between this passage and the rest of the chapter. On any theory of the authorship of the Exodus, here is a very serious difficulty. Such a causeless breach of continuity is quite without parallel; and the least that can be said of the paragraph in question (as commonly understood) is that it is misplaced. And this brings us to a third theory respecting the difficulty in question.

(*c*) It is held that these five verses refer to the same tabernacle as

the one elsewhere more largely described, but that they are by a different author, and are here inserted out of place. In confirmation of this view, we are pointed to discrepancies between this account of the tabernacle and the more detailed one, besides the one already noticed. Thus it is observed that, according to the passage before us, the only use made of the tabernacle was its occasional occupation by Moses in order to receive divine communications, whereas elsewhere little or nothing is said about Moses' being in it, the chief use of it being sacerdotal. Again, according to the section before us, Joshua was to remain permanently in the tent; whereas, according to the other accounts (Num. i. 51, iii. 10, 38, xviii. 7, 22), only Aaron and his descendants were allowed to enter it. Furthermore, the tabernacle is here said to be outside of the camp, whereas later (Num. ii. 17) the tabernacle is located in the midst of the camp. These discrepancies are thought to betray the hand of a different writer in the passage before us from that of the author of the other accounts.

This hypothesis, however, not only does nothing to relieve the first difficulty, the anachronism respecting the tabernacle, but leaves the second of the difficulties entirely untouched. The differences in the conception of the tabernacle might indeed be thus explained; but it is still left unexplained how the compiler of the book should ever have been led to insert this narrative in this place. That he might sometimes disregard or overlook discrepancies of a minor sort, in putting together writings of different authors, rather than dissect and distort the writings, is very conceivable. But there is everywhere manifest such a disposition to construct an orderly and on the whole self-consistent history, that so glaring an anachronism and contradiction as is here presented is without parallel and without excuse. He could not have been ignorant of the fact that the tabernacle which he now describes as in existence had, according to the other documents, not yet been built. Moreover, he must have seen that the present place is in every way a most inappropriate one for introducing it, inasmuch as it interrupts in an utterly impertinent and irrelevant manner the account of Moses' communication with Jehovah. When we consider how freely, on the ordinary theory of compilation, the writings of the various original authors were chopped up and patched together, sometimes so that one-half of a verse is assigned to one author and all of the context to another, there would seem to be no conceivable reason why the redactor should not here, when the occasion was so urgent, have either omitted this paragraph, or else have reserved it for a later time when it would have been in place.

It is therefore no material relief to assume that this whole section

(xxxii.-xxxiv.) about the golden calf and Moses' intercession being Jehovistic, the redactor finding it in this shape did not care to detach any part of it from the rest, notwithstanding the glaring discrepancy which was thus introduced into the history. But even if this did afford some relief, there would remain unexplained why the Jehovist himself should have put together his own material in such a way as this; for, as we have seen, irrespective of the anachronism between xxxiii. 7-11 and the longer account of the tabernacle, this section is out of place even as related to its immediate context. Dillmann, feeling this difficulty, attributes these verses (xxxiii. 7-11) not to the Jehovist, but to the younger Elohist, to whom he also attributes mainly the first six verses also. But this is only shifting the trouble, not removing it; it rather increases it. For if the redactor had two or three narratives to make his compilation from; if Ex. xxxiii. 7-11 was not a constituent and original part of the whole section xxxii-xxxiv; then the wonder is all the greater why the redactor should have put together the narratives of different authors so as to create such palpable confusion and contradiction, when it would have been just as easy, and every way more sensible, to insert this short paragraph, if at all, in a place where it chronologically belongs. If it is supposed that the redactor himself is not responsible for this arrangement, but found these five verses from the younger Elohist already incorporated with the Jehovist's account of the golden calf, etc., then this only raises the question, How did such incorporation *ever* take place? *Some one* must have put together the two things in this absurd way; and go back as far as we may in our conjectures, the difficulty remains the same, and remains unsolved. There is every presumption against such a historical account of the use of the tabernacle having been interpolated into this narrative of the negotiation between Jehovah and Moses.

Delitzsch, in the second of his recent articles on the Pentateuch, which treats of the tabernacle, ranks himself among those who assume that the tabernacle of this passage is the same as the one previously described, and that this passage is from a different author from that of the other and more detailed account of the tabernacle. He thinks that the one wrote without any purpose of supplementing the other, and that the two accounts were put together by a redactor who must have had some desire to harmonize them. "Probably," says he, "he was led by this desire to give this abruptly-beginning section its present position, so that the putting of the sacred tent out of the camp, and far away from it, appears as a penal consequence of the people's sin of apostasy." This suggestion is an approach towards what I

regard as the true solution. But it does not remove the difficulties already set forth. If the redactor was influenced by a harmonistic intent here, he had very poor success in the execution of it, since, by representing Moses as removing the tabernacle at this juncture, he brings this account into the flattest contradiction with the other accounts of the tabernacle, according to which the sanctuary was not yet erected. That the removal of the tabernacle from the midst of the camp, might have served as a punishment of the people's apostasy, is very true, provided there was a tabernacle in existence; but, inasmuch as according to the rest of the book, there was none as yet, and the redactor himself has given us to understand the fact, it seems almost like satire to speak of him as attempting to harmonize the different accounts by representing the people as punished by the removal of a non-existent tabernacle. Besides all this, there remains untouched the other difficulty, that the section in question is utterly incongruous with the immediate context.

One other explanation may be mentioned, that of those who hold (*d*) that the detailed account of the tabernacle is a fiction, and that the tent in the narrative before us is a real tent, in which the ark was kept. This is the view *e. g.* of Graf, who holds moreover that the Elohist account of the tabernacle is later than the one before us. He explains the position of the longer narratives of the tabernacle with reference to Ex. xxxiii. 7-11 as follows: "It was occasioned by the mention of the אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד in xxxiii. 7 sq.; but the direction to

build had been given to Moses on the mount, and therefore belonged to the place where his forty days' stay on the mount was told of, xxiv. 18; the execution of the command, however, had to be preceded by that which was immediately connected with his descent from the mount, xxxii.-xxxiv.; therefore the description of the structure was inserted immediately before the laws which were to be given before setting out from Sinai, with which laws this description was closely connected (*Geschichtliche Bücher des A. T.* p. 60)." But this solution is as inadequate as the others to meet the real difficulties. The whole value of it depends upon the shrewdness of the critic's guess as to the reason why these narratives are arranged as they are; but even if we assume the guess to be a shrewd one, the relief is the slightest possible. By assuming the Elohist account to be a pure fiction we do indeed in one sense explain how the two accounts are inconsistent with one another; but inasmuch as the redactor is supposed to have had an intelligent motive in his work, the problem is not solved till we can discover both intelligence and motive. Graf has assigned a

motive, but it is at the expense of the redactor's intelligence. The redactor is supposed to have inserted the Elohist directions concerning the tabernacle before this Jehovistic section (xxxii.-xxxiv.) for the reason that in the latter the Tent of Meeting is mentioned, and it is mentioned in the account of what happened immediately after Moses' descent from the mount, where the directions were given. Therefore, it is further assumed that the actual erection of the tabernacle is put after this Jehovistic narrative for the reason that immediately after Moses' descent there had been no time for the work of building. In other words, because in this Jehovistic section the tabernacle is spoken of as an existent fact, therefore the redactor puts the Elohist account of the command to build it before this mention, but puts the Elohist account of the actual building of it after the Jehovistic account which speaks of it as already built! This, then, is the solution of the first difficulty—a solution which is attained by assuming the fictitiousness of one of the narratives, the inconsistency of the fictitious narrative with the older historical one, the agency of a redactor in putting the two together as one whole, and the egregious stupidity of the redactor in that he, in doing his best to weave the narratives together, gives us to understand that the tabernacle was not built until after it had been used! As to the second difficulty, this explanation, like all the others, simply leaves it untouched.

But perhaps enough has been said in setting forth the difficulties under which the ordinary theories labor. Yet it is important to present these clearly, in order the better to justify a new attempt. Especially would I insist on the second of the two difficulties as one challenging more attention than it has yet received. As already observed, ver. 12 is immediately connected with vers. 1-6. It is manifestly a continuation of the narrative respecting Jehovah's communication with Moses. That these five verses (7-11) cannot (as Keil seems to hold) describe what happened in the course of this communication is so obvious that it hardly needs demonstration. The simple fact that these verses (if historical at all) manifestly narrate something that was customary, is the conclusive refutation of any such notion. This being so, the only refuge, on the ordinary theories, is to assume that these verses are misplaced. But how or why these verses should ever have become placed here, is more than any one has ever discovered. No parallel to such a misplacement can anywhere be found, unless perhaps the account of the adulteress in John viii. is such an instance. But that passage, whatever may be true respecting its authenticity, is without the support of good manuscript authority in this place, whereas the oldest versions and MSS. fail to

cast any suspicion on the passage in Exodus. The presumption is that the passage is in the right place. Not until it is proved impossible to justify its present position, should we resort to the hypothesis that it belongs elsewhere.

Let us now see if there is not a solution which meets both of these difficulties, and not merely one; and a solution which does not, like the most of those considered, increase the embarrassment more than it relieves it. Such a solution, as I conceive, is suggested by the remarkable fact that the verbs in this section are *Future verbs throughout*, or, what is the same thing, Perfects with the Vav Consecutive. This fact, not at all noticed by most commentators, is casually alluded to by some as an instance of the Future used to denote a customary past action. The idea that the verbs may be actual Futures seems not to have occurred to any of them. And yet the presumption is greatly in favor of so translating them. The Imperfect, in historical narration, is always to be rendered by the Future, unless there is evidence to the contrary. In the present case what is the evidence to the contrary? Whatever that evidence may be, is it strong enough to compel us to translate the passage in such a way as to involve us in the serious perplexities which have been shown to beset the ordinary translation? Are not these grave enough to warrant us in translating the passage in the simplest and grammatically most natural way, unless we are thus landed in still greater difficulties? Certain it is that by rendering these verbs as Futures we remove at one stroke the two difficulties which have been considered. By so understanding them we simply make these verses, not a statement of what was done with an existing tabernacle, but a divine direction concerning what should be done with the future tabernacle. They are made, in short, to be the continuation of the language of Jehovah contained in ver. 5. Let us now substantiate this view more particularly.

A word first as to the grammatical question. It is of course not to be denied that the Imperfect is often used with reference to past actions. But in prose such instances are rare, and are, so far as I know, nowhere else kept up through so long a section as this; and where they are so used, the reference to repeated or habitual actions is clear. In the present case, it is true, many of the verbs might be understood as describing a customary action; but not all, and notably not the first three, can easily be so understood. It would be unnatural to translate, "And Moses used to take the tent, and used to pitch it without the camp, and used to call it the tent of meeting." These verbs apparently denote single actions: and what reason could

the writer have had for using the Future tense? It is reasonable to insist strongly on this fact, and to claim that the original presumption in favor of the Future rendering is redoubled in force by the absence of any assignable reason for using the Future tense at the opening of this section, unless the writer meant the verbs to describe something really future.

In addition to the grammatical consideration, now, we find that this construction relieves us of the whole difficulty arising from the apparent anachronism. The passage now does not imply that the tabernacle is already constructed, but it is only a direction what to do with it when it shall be constructed. We are under no necessity, therefore, of inventing a sanctuary, antecedent to the real tabernacle, and yet bearing the same name; or of supposing that Moses had to be turned out of house and home, in order to provide a place for religious worship. The Tent of Meeting is the same here as in the preceding chapters—in both cases something that is yet to be. We are also under no necessity of accounting for contradictions by assuming plurality and inconsistency in the authorship of the different narratives. If it be said that there are other marks of diverse authorship besides the anachronism and the apparent misplacement, it is enough to reply that the interpretation which I propose leaves room for as many authors as any one chooses to assume; only it does not require us to find so much contradiction between the different authors as has been heretofore found. If it is held that, in maintaining the theory of plurality of authorship, it is important to make the disagreements as great as possible, instead of seeking, so far as can be done reasonably, to reconcile them, then that may be regarded as an objection to the proposed interpretation. But I am not aware, though this seems to be the principle practically followed by many critics, that it has yet become an established canon of hermeneutics.

The presumption is that the tent called אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד is the same thing here as in the preceding chapters. On any theory but the one now propounded, these five verses appear to be entirely inexplicable. But regarded as a direction concerning what should be done, they are perfectly appropriate and intelligible where they stand. Moses had been told to say unto the people that Jehovah would not go up in the midst of them. They were commanded to put off their ornaments, that Jehovah might know what he would do unto them. In ver. 6 we are parenthetically told that the command was complied with; and then, in vers. 7-11, we are further told what Jehovah did decide to

do with them. Having declared that he could not go up in the *midst* of the people, he determines to indicate this symbolically by requiring that the Tent of Meeting, which Moses has received orders to have constructed, and which was to serve as the place of Jehovah's manifestation of himself, should be pitched, not in the *midst* of the camp, but far off, *outside* of it. Jehovah was to be distant from the people; they were to be reminded of their sin by the location of the tabernacle. These verses, instead of being an unaccountable interruption of the context, are thus in perfect keeping with it.

Not only are these two most pressing difficulties removed by this interpretation, but also the apparent discrepancies which have been mentioned between this account of the tabernacle and the other accounts of it are relieved, if not entirely done away. Thus, what is said about Joshua's remaining in the tabernacle creates a difficulty at the worst no greater when the verbs are rendered as Futures than when they are rendered as Preterites. In fact, the discrepancy is relieved. As now translated, these verses express a threat simply, and a threat which, as the following verses show, was not fulfilled. Moses' intercession (ver. 12-16) secures from Jehovah the promise (ver. 17), "I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken, for thou hast found grace in my sight." It might be said, then, that everything in this account of the tabernacle which appears to conflict with the other descriptions of its use, may be explained as a part of a threat never carried out, so that the discrepancy falls of itself. Still, as may be reasonably urged, the discrepancy respecting Joshua has been unduly magnified. The passages which forbid any but the priests to come nigh the tabernacle have reference, as Num. xvi. 40 clearly intimates, to those who come for the purpose of exercising sacerdotal functions. Moses, at all events, though not a son of Aaron, could, according to the Elohist, enter the tabernacle and there commune with Jehovah (Ex. xxv. 22, xxix. 42; xxx. 6, 36); and he is associated with Aaron and the priests in the arrangement of the encampment with reference to the tabernacle (Num. iii. 38). Now, Aaron having become himself implicated in the people's sin, it may be regarded as a part of the penalty imposed, that he is not to enter the tabernacle. That Joshua, as Moses' confidential attendant, should be with him in the tabernacle, is no stranger than that he should accompany him to the mount when he was to commune with Jehovah (Ex. xxiv. 13, xxxii. 17).

A similar remark applies to the discrepancy respecting the use made of the tabernacle. In Ex. xxxiii. 7-11 it appears to be only an oracle; nothing is said about priests or sacrifices. If Aaron, as an

accomplice in the sin of the people, was to suffer punishment with them, this would explain the absence of all mention of him. And the revocation of the threat removes all the discrepancy in any case; for even the Elohist narrative speaks of the tabernacle as a place where God was to meet with Moses (Ex. xxv. 22) and with the people (xxix. 43).

In like manner, the difference relative to the location of the tabernacle disappears, when it is considered that the command to put it outside of the camp symbolizes Jehovah's refusal to go up in the midst of the people. If, as is the fact, this refusal was revoked, then that the tabernacle should afterwards be spoken of as in the midst of the camp is just what is to be expected.*

It thus appears that all the difficulties which have beset the passage under consideration are either wholly removed or greatly lessened, while none of them are increased by the proposed translation. It would seem, then, that an interpretation so simple as this, one favored by grammatical idiom, and one that solves the puzzles that are created by the ordinary translation, ought to be adopted unless there are very weighty objections to it. What, then, can be said against it?

1. It may be said that, ver. 6 being a historical statement, the presumption is that the language of Jehovah ends with ver. 5.—It is sufficient to reply that, though there may be such a presumption, there are yet so many instances of similar parenthetical construction, that the objection is anything but decisive. Thus, in Ex. iv. 4, 5, we read, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thy hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: that they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers . . . hath appeared unto thee." A precisely simi-

* It may be objected to this that the discrepancy as to the location of the tabernacle is not confined to the passage before us, but recurs in Num. xi. 24-30, in the narrative concerning Eldad and Medad, where it is said of them (ver. 26) that they "remained in the camp" and "went not out unto the tabernacle." Also in Num. xii. 4 Moses, Aaron, and Miriam are commanded to "come out unto the tabernacle of the congregation." These passages, it must be admitted, make the impression that the tabernacle was outside of the camp. But these expressions might be used of those who went out of their tents to the tabernacle, even though the tabernacle was in the centre of the encampment, especially if it was separated by a considerable distance from the surrounding tents. This is confirmed by the fact that in xi. 24 it is said of Moses that he "went out, and told the people the words of the Lord," where, whether the going out was from the tabernacle, where Moses had been receiving the divine communications, (Keil), or from his own tent (Knobel), it certainly does not mean that he went out of the camp. In Ex. xxxiii. 7 the word מִחוּץ is used; this is explicit; nothing of the sort is found in Numbers.

lar construction occurs in Ex. iv. 7, 8. Cf. also Matt. ix. 6, Mark ii. 10, Luke v. 24. In these cases the interruption of the grammatical construction is perhaps even more disturbing than in the one before us. It is not at all unnatural that, in immediate connection with the command concerning the ornaments, it should be parenthetically remarked that the command was obeyed. This objection, therefore, is, at the most, of little weight.

2. Again, it may be objected that, if these verses are the continuation of Jehovah's address to Moses, then Moses ought to be addressed in the second person, and Jehovah ought to speak of himself in the first, whereas both Moses and Jehovah are here spoken of in the third person. This is doubtless the chief thing which has made this section appear to be a historical statement rather than a direction concerning the future. This grammatical fact by itself certainly does favor the common translation. But every Hebrew scholar knows how frequent, and often how very abrupt, the changes of person are in that language. See a parallel construction in Ex. xxiv. 1, 2. Indeed, in the verses immediately preceding we have an illustration of this. Jehovah commands Moses to say to the people, "Ye are a stiffnecked people; should *I* go up in the midst of thee, I should consume thee." This, taken strictly, would represent Moses as the consuming one. And, what is more to the point, inasmuch as what Moses is told to say to the people has the form of a direct address of God to the people, it is in fact in perfect consistency with this, if not indeed required by it, that Moses should be spoken of in the third person. The only really strange thing is, therefore, that Jehovah should be spoken of in the third person, and not continue to use the first. But examples of this idiom are extremely numerous. *E. g.*, xxxiv. 10-26 we find that Jehovah, in a series of commands addressed to the people, repeatedly speaks of himself as a third person. Thus (ver. 14), "Thou shalt worship no other god; for Jehovah, whose name is jealous, is a jealous God." This circumstance, therefore, of a change of persons is by no means a serious objection to the proposed construction.

3. It may be said that, if ver. 7 is a continuation of ver. 5, the verb in the Perfect with the Vav Consecutive should precede the subject, whereas the subject now stands first, with the verb following in the Imperfect. This objection (which has been privately urged by some to whom the proposed translation has been presented) I fail to see the force of. That ordinarily the subject follows the verb is very true; but here the verb certainly does follow the subject; and this position of it is no more difficult to explain on one theory than on

another. That the verb may be Jussive here is shown by the precisely parallel constructions in Gen. i. 20, 22, where Jussive verbs, following a Jussive or Imperative, are placed after the subject. If it is asked why the subject here precedes the verb, the answer must be either that the clause is a circumstantial one, or that an emphasis lies on the subject. Against the former explanation, it must be objected that circumstantial clauses should have some obvious relation to the context, whereas these verses (if historical) have none. If they described something which happened at this time, something which illustrates or explains the context, we might naturally call them circumstantial, though even then the use of the Imperfect at the outset would be unaccountable. But, as all agree, they do not describe what happened at that time, nor anything that it is important to mention as an elucidation of the context. In order to secure even any appearance of connection of thought, we are obliged to read into the passage what is not in the faintest manner suggested by it. Thus it might be imagined that the author, while telling of Moses' conference with Jehovah, was led to think of the tabernacle in which the conference took place, and threw in at that point this bit of historical information about it. But why interject this information into the very midst of the narrative? Why not at least wait till the close of the account of the conference? And then especially, why not intimate in some manner that the conference really did take place in the tabernacle? The one thing which alone would justify, or at least in some degree account for, such an interruption of the narrative, is wholly omitted. The case of ver. 6, as related to the context, is quite different. It is an interruption, indeed, in one sense; but it has an obvious connection with the context. It is, moreover, not a circumstantial clause, for it is connected with the foregoing by the Vav Consecutive.—We must, then, account for the position of the subject of the sentence by regarding it as emphatic. There may, indeed, appear to be no special need of emphasis here; but there is certainly as much as in Gen. i. 20, 22, above referred to, or as in Gen. iv. 18. The contrast is between the people who (ver. 5) are punished for their sin, and Moses, who, not having been implicated in their sin, is to enjoy the privilege of peculiar intimacy with Jehovah.

4. One more objection may be urged, viz., that there is a particularity of detail in the passage before us, which seems more appropriate as belonging to a historical narrative than as belonging to a direction or a threat, especially if, as in the present case, the threat is not to be carried out, and is revoked even before being communicated to

the people whom it concerns. This is to my mind the only serious objection to the interpretation above advocated. If there were not still more serious objections to the ordinary view, this might be enough to decide the verdict in favor of the historical construction of the passage. But the weight of this objection is much diminished by the following considerations. (a) No difficulty is to be found in the mere fact that the threat is not fully executed. It might *a priori* appear to be inconsistent with the divine character to suppose that God could utter a threat which he is immediately induced to retract by human intercession. But in view of the multitude of instances in which God is said to have repented of his own acts, and to have been moved by the sufferings and prayers of his children, we must relax the rigor of the speculative doubt. More particularly, we have instances of threats prophetically uttered, but retracted before being executed, *e. g.* the prophecies concerning Ahab (1 Kings xxi. 18-29), Rehoboam (2 Chron. xii. 5-12), Nineveh (Jonah iii.), and Micah's prophecy (iii. 12), declared in Jerem. xxvi. 18, 19 not to have been executed on account of the people's repentance. The difficulty, then, is not at all in the mere fact that what is here prescribed is not carried out; it is only in the fact that there is more circumstantiality in the directions than is elsewhere found in unfulfilled threats. As to this, however, it is to be remarked (b) that there is no occasion for assuming that *all* of these directions were unfulfilled. In fact, the only particular of which it can certainly be said that it was revoked is the one concerning the pitching of the tent outside of the camp. All that is said, especially, about Moses' going into it to receive divine communications was of permanent validity.

I have attempted to give full weight to all possible objections against the proposed interpretation. None of them seem to be of decisive weight, especially when compared with the much greater objections which lie against the common translation.