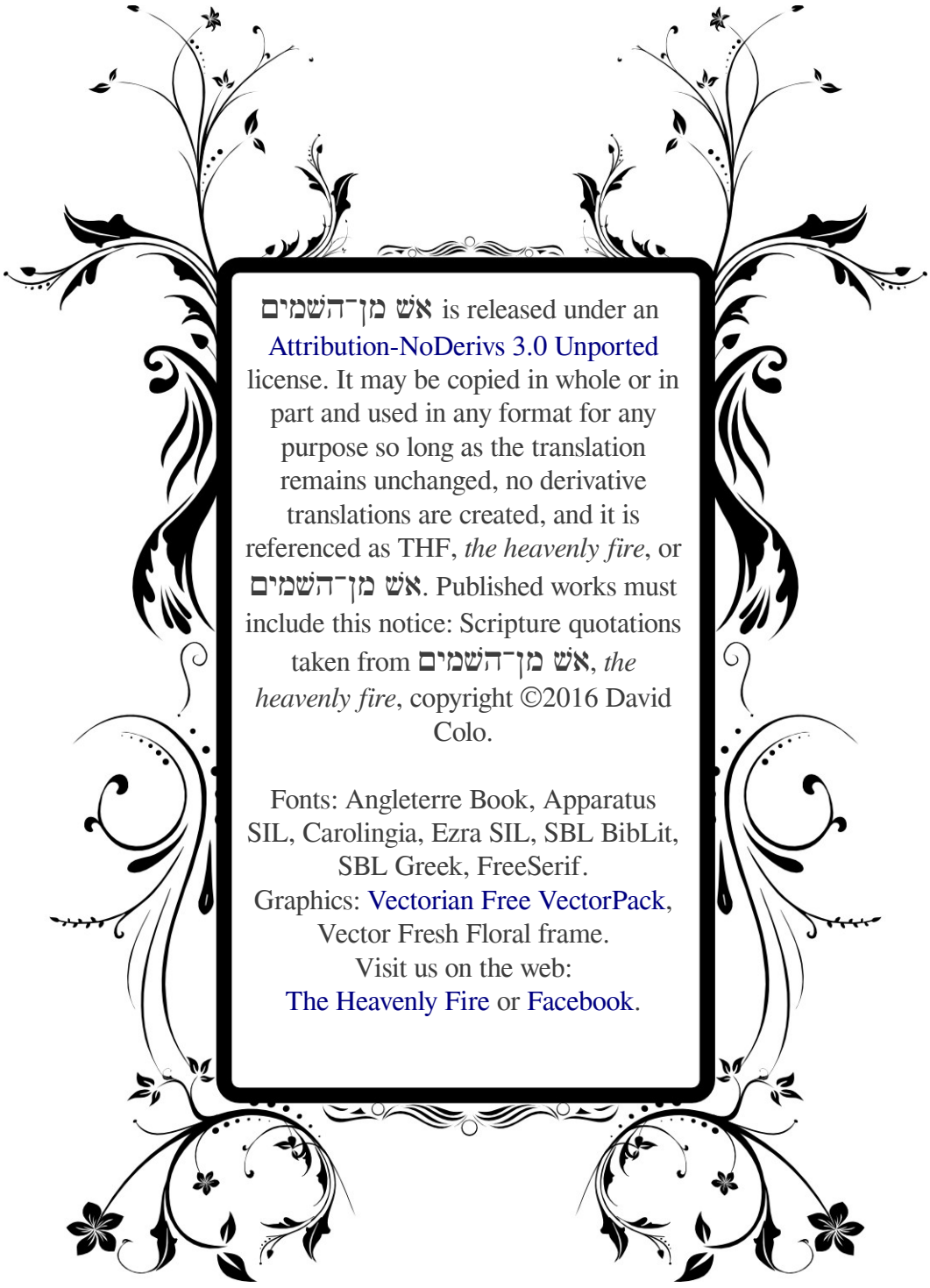


אש מן-השמים
the heavenly fire



David Colo



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INTRODUCTION

NAMES AND TERMINOLOGY

1. Of The Translation

“Isn't it true [that] my word [is] like fire,” proclaims YHWH,
 “and like hammer, shatters stone?”
 —Jer 23:29

אש מן־השמים (*’ēš min-haššāmayim*) translates as “the fire from heaven” or, more simply, “**the heavenly fire**” (THF). Such language is drawn from theophanic imagery, which likens the presence of YHWH to various manifestations of fire, and from an ancient Jewish conception of YHWH's word as fire. Early Rabbinic tradition equated the fire that descended from heaven on Sinai with scripture itself. This can be seen, for instance, in the following midrash, which uses a word-play to phonetically link “Torah” (תּוֹרָה) with “its flame” (אֹרֶה): “*Because YHWH descended upon it in fire* (Exod 19:18). This shows that the Torah [is] fire, was given from fire, and is comparable to fire. . . . One can do nothing but warm himself [with] its flame” (*Mek. Bahodesh* 4).

2. Of The Israelite Deity

By way of piety and tradition, the scribes who placed vowel points in the Hebrew manuscripts obscured the name of God by placing under its consonants the vowels of words like Elohim (God), Adonai (My Sovereign/Lord), and Ha-Shem (The Name). Some translations create the hybrid “Jehovah” out of this heterogeneous mix, while others translate the vowels. Still others trace the name back to a hypothetical form of the verb “to be” (Yahweh). Like translations of other religious texts, THF replicates the deity’s name when that name is used. Since, however, its full pronunciation was lost, we render the name as we have it and how scribes have written it for the last three millennia: **YHWH** (a font quite different than the rest of the text is used to indicate the name's sacred status—much like how ancient Jews might use the Paleo-Hebrew script). Likewise, “**Elohim**,” “**El**,” and “**Eloah**” are often used instead of “God,” but “**The One God**” when a definite article precedes it. Where the text intends to communicate something other than the deity's name, we follow intently.

SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH

The eclectic text of von Gall, which showed a tremendous bias towards the Masoretic Text in its presentation, is not used by this translation. Instead, we use Samaritan manuscripts published by Blayney (*Pentateuchus Hebraeo-Samaritanus*), Kennicott (*Vetus Testamentum Hebraicum*), and Shoulson (The Torah: Jewish and Samaritan versions compared), with comparison against Tsedaka (The Israelite Samaritan Version of the Torah), which claims to represent the traditional text used by present-day Samaritans. For an English translation, see שֵׁבֶט אֶפְרַיִם, *staff of Ephraim*.

the heavenly fire

Sigla and Abbreviations

√	Verbal root
ⲚⲚ	Samaritan Pentateuch
ⲃ	Ben Chayyim
Ⲙ	Septuagint: Old Greek
ⲙ ^D	Masoretic Text: Damascus Codex
ⲙ ^L	Masoretic Text: Leningrad Codex
ⲙ ^O	Masoretic Text: Oriental 4445
Ⲥ	Syriac Peshitta
ⲡ ^N	Targum: Neofiti
ⲡ ^O	Targum: Onkelos
ⲡ ^P	Targum: Pseudo-Jonathan
ⲱ	Vulgate (Stuttgart)
<i>b.</i>	Babylonian Talmud tractate
<i>m.</i>	Mishnah tractate
<i>t.</i>	Tofsefta tractate
Alter	Robert Alter's The Five Books of Moses
DSS	Dead Sea Scroll(s)
Fox	Everett Fox's The Five Books of Moses
HB	Hebrew Bible
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
KJV	Kings James Version
LEB	Lexham English Bible
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NET	New English Translation (NET Bible)
NJPST	New Jerusalem Publication Society Tanakh
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
SET	Stone Edition Tanach
SOE	<i>staff of Ephraim</i>
YLT	Young's Literal Translation

Message

Historical Stuff

Form and Genre

The Priestly Code

Chapter 1

8

¹ Then he called to Moses (YHWH spoke to him out of the Meeting Tent) saying, ² “Speak to the Israelites. Say to them, 'Human, when one of you presents a present to YHWH, from the livestock—from the herd or from the flock—you must present your present.

³ If the ascension [sacrifice] [is] one's present from the herd, a perfectly [fine] male, he must present. At the entrance of the Meeting Tent, he must present it for his acceptance before YHWH.

⁴ He must press his hand upon the head of the ascension [sacrifice], then it will be accepted on his behalf as appeasement for him.

⁵ He must slit [the throat] of the herd's [male] offspring before YHWH. Then Aaron's descendants, the priests, will present the blood. They must spatter the blood against the altar round about, which [is] [at] the entrance of the Meeting Tent.

⁶ He must skin the ascension [sacrifice] and dismember it into its members ⁷ (the descendants of Aaron, the Priest, will then place fire on the altar and arrange wood over the fire. ⁸ Aaron's descendants, the priests, will arrange the members, the head, and the omentum over the wood that is on the fire, which [burns] on the altar), ⁹ but its entrails and its shanks, he must wash with water.

The priest will then turn the entirety [to] smoke on the altar—an ascension [sacrifice], a gift of delectable aroma to YHWH.

¹⁰ And if from the flock [is] one's present—from the sheep or from the goats—for an ascension [sacrifice], a perfectly [fine] male, he must present.

¹¹ He must slit it[s throat] at the altar's northern side before YHWH. Aaron's descendants, the priests, will then spatter its blood against the altar round about.

¹² He must dismember it into its members (both

its head and its omentum, the priest will arrange over the wood that is on the fire, which [burns] on the altar), ¹³ but the entrails and the shanks, he must wash with water.

The priest will then present the entirety and turn [it] [to] smoke on the altar. An ascension [sacrifice] [is] it—a gift of delectable aroma to YHWH.

¹⁴ (And if from the birds [is] an ascension [sacrifice] [as] one's present to YHWH, he must present one of the turtle-doves or one of the pigeon squabs [as] his present.

¹⁵ The priest will present it at the altar. He must wring off its head and turn [it] [to] smoke on the altar, but its blood must be drained along the altar's wall.

¹⁶ He must remove its crop by its feathers and throw it beside the altar to the east—to the ash pile.

¹⁷ He must tear it by its wings. He must not separate [it].

The priest will then turn it [to] smoke on the altar over the wood that is on the fire. An ascension [sacrifice] [is] it—a gift of delectable aroma to YHWH.)

Chapter 2 ב

Chapter 3 ג

Chapter 4 ד

Chapter 5 ה

Chapter 6 ו

Chapter 7 ז

Chapter 8 ח

Chapter 9 ט

Chapter 10	י
Chapter 11	יא
Chapter 12	יב
Chapter 13	יג
Chapter 14	יד
Chapter 15	יה
Chapter 16	יו

TRANSLATION NOTES



- 1:1 **Then he called** — Instead of וִיקְרָא (Then he called) as present in מ^L, מ^O, and מ^D, ב has וִיקְרָא: וִיקְרָא. This indicates that ב's consonantal text is וִיקְרָא (Then he came to/met with) as in Num 23:4, 16, but it has been corrected to “Then he called.”
(YHWH spoke to him out of the Meeting Tent) — The purpose of this parenthetical is to make explicit who the unidentified “he” of the previous verb should be (YHWH). It also explains how Moses could hear from YHWH if, at the end of the previous scroll (Exod 40:35), he was not allowed to enter the Meeting Tent.
- 1:2 **Human**, — אָדָם is here interpreted as a vocative. Most translations read it together with מִכֶּם and render it something like “any one of you,” “any man of you,” or “any of you.” That rendering is influenced by Θ: ανθρωπος εξ υμων (a man of you). Neither follows the Hebrew text. The Hebrew is אָדָם כִּי־יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם. “Any man” or “any one” would more likely be אִישׁ כִּי (Lev 13:40; 19:20; 22:14, 21; 24:17, 19; 25:26, 29; 27:2, 14), not אָדָם כִּי. Also, if it were “one of you” or “man of you,” we should expect to find מִכֶּם next to the word it was modifying as in Lev 17:12 (נִפְשׁ מִכֶּם). Thus, the language itself is not appropriate for such a translation. In the three places כִּי אָדָם is found (Lev 1:2; 13:2; Num 31:19), the Masoretes inserted a major disjunctive accent above אָדָם, which indicates that it exists at the *juncture* between two sections or ideas. This supports the vocative reading.
when one of you — This is the literal translation of כִּי־יִקְרִיב מִכֶּם.
a present — Alternatively, “an offering/gift.” This translation mimics the word-play between the noun קָרְבָּן and the verb יִקְרִיב. So Fox: “brings-near a near-offering.”
your present — Instead of the singular form קָרְבַּנְךָ (your present), ב has the plural קָרְבָּנִיכֶם (your presents). This is supported by Θ.
- 1:3 **ascension [sacrifice]** — So called because the whole thing “ascends” to YHWH (from עֹלָה) as fire, smoke, and smell.
perfectly [fine] — Alternatively, Fox's “wholly-sound.”
- 1:4 **press** — The verb סָמַךְ does not refer to touching, but to leaning, supporting, or applying force to something. See, for instance, Amos 5:19 and Judg 16:29.
appeasement — כָּפַר means to “appease,” “sooth,” or “pacify.” Thus, when the sacrifice is burned it can become a “soothing smell.”
- 1:5 **slit [the throat]** — Technically, שָׁחַט refers to cutting the throat of an animal. The verb is an active Qal, not a passive or Niphal form. So also, “the bovine's male offspring” is the *object* of the verb, not its *subject* (as indicated by the object marker). Thus, NRSV's “The bull shall be” is in error. Θ has a plural instead of a singular form, which means the priests are the ones performing the slaughter, not the presenter. That interpretation, however, runs afoul of common Jewish tradition. As *m. Hullin* 1:1 states, “Any [Jewish] person may slit [the throat] and the slaughter is acceptable.” This is echoed by *t. Hullin* 1:1 “All [Jewish] people [are] suitable to slit [the throat]. Even a Samaritan. Even a foreskinned [Jew].”

the herd's [male] offspring — Literally, “a son of the bovine” (בן הבקר). So YLT (the son of the herd), LEB and NASB (the young bull), Alter (the male of the herd), and KJV (bullock).

This is supported by 𐤄 and 𐤅. It is possible, however, that בן should be understood as defining the member, class, or type (as it often does). If so, בן הבקר may really mean “that which is a male bovine” or simply “a bull.” So HCSB, NET, NJPST, NRSV, and SET.

satter — That is, forcefully scatter or splash.

1:6 **He must skin . . . and dismember it** — 𐤀 has the plural form of both these verbs. 𐤄 supports it.


dismember it into its members — This translation mimics the word-play between the verb ונתח and the suffixed noun נתחיה. So Fox: “section it into its sections.”

1:7 **The descendants of Aaron, the Priest** — Translation literal. So 𐤀^L, 𐤀^O, and 𐤀^D. Many change the text from “the priest” to “the priests” in harmonization with the next verse. So 𐤀 and 𐤄. Since a scribe would have no reason to change the text from a plural to a singular, we consider the Masoretic reading original. That means that the plural subject is not “the priest,” but “the descendants” and “the priest” is in apposition with “Aaron.”

1:8 **omentum** — A form of suet (fatty tissue) that covers the entrails (which have been removed according to the next verse). This is confirmed by *m. Tamid* 4:2, which states that once the gut was slit open, this fat had to be removed before the entrails.

which [burns] on the altar — Literally, “which [is] on the altar.”

1:7-8 We place these verses in parentheses to correspond to the shift in language. Right before, the verb is singular, referring to the act that the one who brought the sacrifice must perform. It then switches, in vv. 7-8, to plural verbs, which introduce activities done by the priests. At the start of v. 9, however, it jumps back to the singular, which means that we are, once again, speaking about the one who brought the sacrifice. The original text seems to have been “He must skin the ascension [sacrifice] and dismember it into its members, but its entrails and its shanks, he must wash with water.” The intervening material describes what, exactly, “Aaron's descendants” are supposed to be doing while that is happening.

1:9 **but its entrails** — 𐤀^D accidentally duplicated the noun at the start of the sentence, but placed marks over the word to indicate that only one occurrence was correct: .

its shanks — Literally, “its *two* shanks.” The noun has a dual ending. Since, however, the animal is a quadruped, it must incorporate both sets of shanks. This is confirmed by *m. Tamid* 4:2, which relays how the slaughterer would cut off both the fore and hind-legs below the knees.

he must wash — Instead of the singular ירחץ (he must wash), 𐤀 has the plural ירחצו (they must wash). That is most likely, a harmonization.

with water — Or “in” water.

the entirety [to] — The post-positive, disjunctive accent above this word (*pashta*) means that it should not be read with the next word (the entirety of the altar).

on the altar — “On” represents the locative *heh*.

an ascension [sacrifice], — 𐤀^L has a hole in its line where, apparently, the text originally said

עלה הוא (an ascension [sacrifice] [is] it). The pronoun was later erased: ~~עלה אשח~~. Neither מ^D nor מ^O show any awareness of another word missing from that space. We must conclude, therefore, that a very ancient tradition of the text lacked the pronoun (even though **עלה הוא** occurs everywhere else). It appears that **6** did not know of this pronoun. It is present, however, in **xx**.

a gift of — **אשה** is interpreted by many translations as a variant of **אש** (fire). So NASB (an offering by fire), KJV (an offering made by fire), and HCSB (a fire offering). However, there are several offerings that are termed **אשה**, but are not burned (the wine libation and display bread) as well as a few that are burned, but never called **אשה** (the purification sacrifice). It cannot, therefore, be an offering of “fire.” Instead, as its Ugaritic cognate suggests, **אשה** refers to that which is given to a deity. In other words, a “gift.” Or as **ט^N**, **ט^P**, and **ט^O** render it: “a present which is accepted.” So NET (a gift). According to the Masoretic vocalization, **אשה** is in construct with the following word (a gift of).

delectable — Though **נִיחֹחַ** probably comes from the root **נִחַח** (to rest/repose), and in some cases certainly does mean “soothing,” in the context of the cult, it took on a different nuance. It referred to something “pleasant,” “nice,” or “agreeable.” This can be seen by the rendering of **6** (a sweet fragrance) and **ט^O** (with pleasure). The negative data is also telling. If it did refer to “soothing” or “appeasement,” it would be mentioned alongside the reparation sacrifice.

1:10 This verse is quite a bit different in **xx**. Compare with SOE. The biggest difference is the inclusion of the phrase “At the entrance of the Meeting Tent, he must present it.” Though **6** does not include that phrase, it includes another: “And he will lay his hand on its head.”

perfectly [fine] — Alternatively, Fox's “wholly-sound.”

1:11 **slit it[s throat]** — Technically, **שָׁחַט** refers to cutting the throat of an animal. See 1:5.

spatter — That is, forcefully scatter or splash.

its blood — 4QLev^b says “the blood” instead of “its blood.”

1:12 **He must** — **xx** has the plural form of the verb (as in v. 6).

dismember it into its members — This translation mimics the word-play between the verb **נִתַּח** and the suffixed noun **נִתְחָיו**. So Fox: “section it into its sections.” Since previously (vv. 6-8), the one who brought the sacrifice is the one who dismembered it and the priests were the ones who arranged all the bits, we have ignored the Masoretic accentuation and moved the *athnach* to the end of “members.”

omentum — A form of suet (fatty tissue) that covers the entrails. This is confirmed by *m*.

Tamid 4:2, which states that once the gut was slit open, this fat had to be removed before the entrails.

will arrange — **וַעֲרַךְ** appears to be the wrong form of the verb. Instead of *waw*-consecutive, it should be imperfect. The imperfect form does, however, appear in **xx** and may reflect the original reading.

which [burns] on the altar — Literally, “which [is] on the altar.”

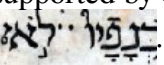

- 1:13 **its shanks** — Literally, “its *two* shanks.” The noun has a dual ending. Since, however, the animal is a quadruped, it must incorporate both sets of shanks. This is confirmed by *m. Tamid* 4:2, which relays how the slaughterer would cut off both the fore and hind-legs below the knees.
- with water** — Or “in” water.
- will then present** — This verb is not present in v. 9.
- the entirety** — The post-positive, disjunctive accent above this word (*pashta*) means that it should not be read with the next word (the entirety of the altar).
- on the altar** — “On” represents the locative *heh*.
- a gift of** — אֲשֶׁה refers to that which is given to a deity. In other words, a “gift.” Or as ט^N, ט^P, and ט^O render it: “a present which is accepted.” See 1:9.
- delectable** — נִיחֻחַ refers to something “pleasant,” “nice,” or “agreeable.” See 1:9.
- 1:12-13 Like vv. 6-9, the original text, which discusses what the person offering the gift is supposed to do, is broken by commentary relating to the duties of the priests. We place that commentary in parentheses. The original text would have been: “He must dismember it into its members, but the entrails and the shanks, he must wash with water.”
- 1:14-17 This section was probably not part of the original text. It uses different language (“wall” in v. 15 instead of “side” in v. 11; partitive *min* in v. 14, which is absent in vv. 3 and 10; the verb “to cast/throw” in v. 16, which is extremely unusual—only appearing once more in the entire scroll of Lev), the instructions are different (though the wings are torn, they are left attached to the body; its entrails are not removed except by accidental attachment to the crop; its blood is not spattered), and it comes out of nowhere (the introduction deals only with animals from the herd or the flock—birds are not mentioned).
- 1:14 **one of** — Partitive *min*.
- the pigeon squabs** — Literally, “the sons of the pigeon” (בְּנֵי הַיּוֹנָה). It is possible, however, that בֵּן should be understood as defining the member, class, or type (as it often does). If so, בְּנֵי הַיּוֹנָה may really mean “those which are pigeon.” So ESV (pigeons). According to *m. Hullin* 1:5, however, a pigeon is a valid sacrifice because it is young, whereas a young turtle-dove is invalid. So also, a turtle-dove is a valid sacrifice because it is no longer young, but a pigeon that is no longer young is invalid. We, therefore, render it “pigeon squabs.” Or, as most translations have it, “young pigeons.”
- 1:15 **at the altar** — Literally, “to/toward” the altar.
- wring off** — Though this verb appears only twice in the HB, it is used at length in the Mishnah (see, for instance, *m. Zebahim* 6-7) where it clearly refers to a one-handed removal of the head.
- on the altar** — “On” represents the locative *heh*.
- along** — Instead of עַל, we have אֶל.
- 1:16 **its crop** — So the term was understood by the ancient versions (ט^N, ט^O, and 6).
- by its feathers** — The *bet* here is one of instrumentality (by means of). See the next verse for

another. The use of נֶצֶר in Ezek 17:3, 7 proves that it refers to feathers or plumage. When the crop was removed, this would also remove any food stored in the bird's gullet. So ט^o rendered this phrase “with its food” and ט^N “with what it contains.” Oftentimes, the intestines would come out as well (attached to the crop). So *m. Zebahim* 6:5: “He came then to the body and removed the crop and the plumage and the entrails that came forth with the crop.”

throw it — Literally, “her.” That is, the crop (a feminine gendered noun in מ^L).

to the ash pile — Literally, “to the place of the ash.”

1:17 **by its wings** — The *bet* here is one of instrumentality (by means of). See the previous verse for another.

He must not — מ^L has no *waw* attached to the negative particle. This is supported by מ^D. מ^o has space for it, but fills it with two small dots as though expecting one:  There is, however, a *waw* attached to the negative particle in 4QLev^b and .

will then turn it — The object pronoun is included this time.

on the altar — “On” represents the locative *heh*.

a gift of — נִשְׁחָת refers to that which is given to a deity. In other words, a “gift.” Or as ט^N, ט^P, and ט^o render it: “a present which is accepted.” See 1:9.

delectable — נִיחֻחַ refers to something “pleasant,” “nice,” or “agreeable.” See 1:9.

2:1

2:2

2:3

2:4

2:5

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