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THE JEWISH BIBLE QUARTERLY

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RECLAIMING ESTHER: FROM SEX OBJECT TO SAGE

LEILA L. BRONNER

Contemporary theorists have taught us that "interpretation is a culturally influenced phenomenon."¹ Thus, new insights may be gained from a modern interpretation of the ancient Scroll of Esther. This Scroll has long been regarded as problematic, and over the centuries it has been discussed from various perspectives. I am not going to deal here with many of the issues that have concerned scholars — for example, the absence of God's name, the dearth of other religious elements, the question of the Scroll's canonicity, and the relation of the Greek additions to the Masoretic text. Rather, I am interested in reading the Scroll of Esther primarily as a historical novella that uses facts according to need. As Sidnie Ann White says, "The genre of the book of Esther is most easily described as an early Jewish novella . . . not designed to meet any tests of historical accuracy."²

I wish to focus on the depiction of Esther in the Scroll and on reclaiming her from the "androcentrism [that] abounds in most of the commentaries on the Book of Esther."³ Until recently, scholarly opinion about Esther has suggested, as L. B. Paton stated in 1908, that "She wins her victories not by skill or by character, but by her beauty. . . . The only redeeming traits in her character are her loyalty to her people and her bravery in attempting to save them."⁴ Six decades later, Carey A. Moore summarized Esther's role in the events in the Scroll that carries her name as "Mordecai supplied the brains while Esther simply followed his directions."⁵ These statements are fairly representative of the opinions about Esther expressed by prominent biblical scholars to this day.

Leila L. Bronner, Litt.D., formerly Professor at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and the University of Judaism, Los Angeles, has published many books and articles, most recently From Eve to Esther: Rabbinic Reconstructions of Biblical Women (Westminster/John Knox, 1994).

Works on Esther are riddled by traditional gender politics: male as thinker and doer, woman as handmaiden and follower. Even feminists have characterized Esther as passive and obedient, especially in comparison to Vashti. Mary Gendler sees in Vashti "dignity, pride, independence, disobedience" and in Esther "beauty, humility, courage, grace, loyalty, obedience."⁶ Esther is primarily depicted, and dismissed, as a sex object, a pawn played by the men in her life (her cousin Mordecai, the eunuch Hegai, her husband King Ahasuerus). Given that Esther is most likely a narrative written by a man and was certainly written within a patriarchal context, it would not be surprising if the narrative did indeed promulgate patriarchal constructions of women. However, I would like to argue that Esther was not only a beauty but also a brain, a politician, and a sage.

Recently, a few scholars have begun to re-evaluate Esther, tracing her transformation in the Scroll from passive pawn to influential queen.⁷ S. Talmon, noting the growth of Esther's role over the course of the narrative, states simply that "In the end it is Esther's superior cleverness which saves the day. . . . It is clearly Esther who plays the decisive role in the development of events."⁸ Bruce Jones argues that Chapter 4 marks

a reversal in the relative positions of Esther and Mordecai. . . . Mordecai cannot save the Jews; he was the one who precipitated their predicament. However, Esther can [save them]. . . . In 4:17 the narrator says explicitly that Mordecai did "all that Esther commanded him." From this point in the book onward, Esther is clearly the initiator, not Mordecai.⁹

Such work focuses on the relationship between Mordecai and Esther but tends to give short shrift to Esther's development before Chapter 4 and her later actions. I hope to begin to fill those gaps here.

The story of Esther is well known, so I will mention only events relevant to my argument. After Ahasuerus's dismissal of Vashti (1:12-22) at the behest of his (possibly drunken) advisors, a search for a new queen is undertaken by Ahasuerus's servants (2:2-4). Esther, a lovely orphan who has been raised by her cousin Mordecai, is taken to the palace (2:8). She greatly pleases Hegai, the King's eunuch in charge of the harem, and he provides her with the best of everything (2:9). Esther does not reveal her Jewish ancestry because Mordecai has forbidden her to do so (2:10, 20). When Esther goes to the King, she finds

favor in his eyes, and he makes her queen in place of Vashti. The King even throws a banquet in Esther's honor, calling it *the banquet of Esther* (2:17-18). Here, in the beginning of the narrative, we see Esther as a beautiful girl being moved around at the behest of a bunch of men, with no indication in the narrative of how Esther feels about events. The only thing of which we can be sure is that she is to an approved degree overtly cooperative and compliant.

Jones notes that to many commentators "Esther appears stupid in the book. At first impression she is either dumb or at least helpless. Mordecai makes her decisions for her."¹⁰ I cannot agree that Esther's obedience to her cousin's commands or her following Hegai's advice necessarily implies that she is stupid or passive. She could just as well be showing her ability to listen and learn. She could even be exercising an ability to recruit good advisors and to recognize savvy political maneuvering when she sees it — skills sadly lacking in the King himself.

Next, Esther acts as an intermediary between Mordecai and the King. Hearing from Mordecai that two eunuchs are plotting to murder the King, she notifies him in Mordecai's name and thwarts the plot (2:22). This incident marks Esther's initiation into the politics of the court, and she executes her commission successfully. We are not given any details about the interaction between the King and Esther — for example, does Esther notify him via messenger or letter, or does he happen to summon her? Nonetheless, the incident shows both that Esther is in close contact with (and still listening to) her cousin and that she is willing and able to seize an opportunity to ingratiate herself and her cousin with the King. She is becoming an insider.

All of Chapter 3 focuses on Haman's plans to destroy the Jews after Mordecai refused to bow down to him. In Chapter 4, Esther reappears. She is told that Mordecai is before the King's gate dressed in sackcloth, mourning the planned destruction of the Jews (4:1). Either Esther does not know that the Jews are to be destroyed or she thinks that the edict will not apply to her because, at Mordecai's behest, she has been silent about her Jewish ancestry. Once Mordecai has charged her to go to the King and plead for her people, she protests that she would be putting her life at risk to go before the King uninvited.

All the king's courtiers and the people of the king's provinces know that if any person, man or woman, enters the king's presence in the inner

court, without having been summoned, there is but one law for him — that he be put to death. Only if the king extends the golden scepter to him may he live. And I have not been summoned to visit the king for the last thirty days (4:11).

But Mordecai brushes her protests aside, arguing

'Do not imagine that you, of all the Jews, will escape with your life by being in the king's palace. On the contrary, if you keep silent in this crisis, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another quarter [makom], while you and your father's house will perish. And who knows, perhaps you have attained to royal position for just such a crisis' (4:13–14).

The logic of Mordecai's message is quite convoluted. On the one hand, he proposes that God made Esther queen so that she would be in the position to save her people in this crisis if she would just act, thus stressing her importance and the importance of human action in accomplishing God's purpose. From a certain angle, Mordecai could be seen as viewing the entire situation as a test of Esther's courage and of her loyalty to her people and her family. On the other hand, he suggests that the Jews will be saved whether Esther acts or not; that is, she is entirely unimportant and dispensable. Esther's first reaction is that of an intelligent politician, one who knows the consequences of violating court etiquette. She is reluctant to risk her own life and position for a cause that may well be lost no matter what she says, or that, judging from Vashti's fate, she may well never get to plead.

We do not know what aspect of Mordecai's argument Esther took to heart, yet she initiates the series of events that leads to the saving of the Jewish people. As Jones writes, "she suddenly matures in response to the crisis."¹¹ She commands Mordecai to call a fast for three days, after which she will go before the King and *'if I am to perish I shall perish'* (4:17). Here for the first time Esther the politician is shown to have religious commitment. Scholars often point out that explicit references to God are missing from the Scroll; at most, the commentators find in the word *makom* (4:14) a veiled allusion to God.¹² But in a Scroll that uses the word "banquet" twenty times,¹³ and at a court that seems to spend an inordinate amount of time feasting, Esther's declaration of and participation in a

fast is an astonishingly explicit announcement of faith. In the Hebrew Bible, fasting is a well-known reaction to difficult times; indeed, some of the Jews had already been *fasting, weeping, and wailing* (4:3).¹⁴ Moreover, because prayer frequently accompanies fasting in the Hebrew Bible, Esther's command may well have been understood to include prayer for God's intercession.

Having fasted and put on her royal robes, Esther invades the King's palace. It was no small matter to appear before a King who had already dismissed a queen for disobeying a command and who seems remarkably deficient in moral sense or wisdom.¹⁵ When Esther appears before the King, she captivates him so that he stretches out to her his royal scepter. The King tells her that he is willing to give her *'Even to half the kingdom, it shall be granted you'* (5:3), a hyperbolic expression in line with ancient rules of speech that should be interpreted only as showing the King's readiness to accede to even a quite extravagant request. Nonetheless, to the surprise of many readers, Esther does not immediately plead for her people; instead, she invites the King and Haman to a banquet.

The Scroll presents Esther's encounter with the King as a product of her own initiative. Nothing indicates that anyone advised Esther on how to approach the King. Not even Hegai tells her how to dress, not even Mordecai suggests that she should invite the King to a banquet. The agenda is Esther's alone, and she manages the situation so well that she is warmly welcomed by the King. Likewise, it seems that Esther alone decides to throw two banquets and to wait to plead for her people until the King has said for the third time, *'And what is your request? Even to half the kingdom, it shall be fulfilled.'*¹⁶

When she finally does state her request, Esther wraps her pleading for her people in the rhetoric of obedience but subtly places bounds on the King. Selling the Jews would be one thing, she says, but exterminating us is not an appropriate exercise of your power. Furthermore, she reveals to the King that, although his treasury will be enriched through Haman's plan, Esther herself will die. We, at least, can see that the King is about to lose another queen as a result of taking the self-serving and vicious advice of his closest advisors. B. W. Anderson views this as a case of Esther being "victorious through the exercise of her feminine charms"¹⁷ but I would argue that it is also a case of Esther being victorious through accurate, intelligent, politic assessment of the King's likely reactions.

Indeed, the King has Haman hanged, gives Haman's estate to Esther, and replaces Haman at court with Mordecai. The King appoints Mordecai because *Esther had revealed how he was related to her* (8:1), and he is moved by Esther's plea to allow Mordecai to decree that the Jews defend themselves on the day appointed for their annihilation (8:6,11–12). Esther has orchestrated what amounts to a palace coup, replacing the King's chief advisor with her cousin and herself.

Esther's last two actions in the Scroll are those of a leader of her people. She requests that the King grant . . . *to the Jews that are in Shushan to do tomorrow also according unto this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows* (9:13). By this request, Esther makes sure that the people of the King's capital know that the lives of the Jews are not to be taken lightly, as Haman had done. She also institutes, with Mordecai, the festival of Purim. Mordecai writes the first letter to the Jews, but it is the second letter written by Esther and issued on her authority as queen that establishes the festival for all time (9:29).¹⁸ In no other biblical context do we find a woman sponsoring a written tradition or establishing the observance of a festival.¹⁹

The Talmud expands on the letter-writing associated with Esther's leadership of her people. The talmudic tractate Megillah states that Esther sent a letter to the sages in which she asked that they perpetuate her name by reading the Book of Esther annually — thus making her Scroll part of the biblical canon — and by celebrating the festival of Purim. "Write me down for future generations," she says.²⁰ At first the sages reject her request, saying commemoration of her festival would inflame hatred against the Jews because it would mark the downfall of non-Jews. She responds by arguing that she is already recorded in the annals of the Persians and wants also to be remembered by her own people. The sages again reply that this would incite the nations against the Jews. When Esther insists, they find validation for her demand by taking Exodus 17:14, *Inscribe this in a document as a reminder*, as their authority for granting her request.

Esther's character and actions are circumscribed by her two environments, the Persian court and Jewish tradition, both of which are strongly male-oriented. The Persian court of the Scroll is governed by an autocratic King who rules by favoritism, greed, jealousy, and anger. Within this milieu, Esther is a notable

success. If nothing else, she is able to manipulate the unpleasant qualities of the King to achieve the downfall of Haman and the salvation of her people. Within the Jewish milieu, Esther is also a notable success. She is a woman of the Diaspora who, in the tradition of the biblical Deborah and the post-biblical Judith, delivers her people from their enemies.

Furthermore, she does so by acting wisely. Her actions are in line with such biblical teachings as *A knowledgeable man is sparing with his words; And a man of understanding is reticent* (Prov. 17:27) and *Through forbearance a ruler may be won over; A gentle tongue can break bones* (Prov. 25:15). The wisdom of the Hebrew Bible is practical, not theoretical, focused on proper action and intelligent leadership. As I have tried to show, Esther may be viewed as embodying such wisdom. Here I am arguing that those actions that commentators have written off as servile and stupid may be interpreted as politic and wise. The female outsider grows into the meaning of her Persian name: Star.²¹ Gendler has argued that the message of Esther is that "women who are bold, direct, aggressive, and disobedient are not acceptable,"²² but I would say that when Esther acts to save herself and her people she exhibits precisely those qualities; it is just that she is judicious in her boldness and disobedience. This is indeed a patriarchal book, but it is a book of sly reversals as well. The King with absolute power cannot withdraw his own edicts. Haman is hanged on the gallows he prepared for Mordecai. The day of mourning becomes days of feasting and gladness. The beautiful woman has a brain and character and religious conviction.

NOTES

¹Kenneth M. Craig Jr., *Reading Esther: A Case for the Literary Carnavalesque* (Westminster/John Knox, 1995) pp. 25 ff.

²Sidnie Ann White, "Esther," in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (Westminster/John Knox, 1992) p. 125. Likewise, Carey A. Moore states, "Thus when all the evidence is taken together, we conclude that Esther is neither pure fact nor pure fiction: It is a historical novel. . . . [The] Book of Esther has a historical core . . . to which have been added legendary and fictional elements" (*The Anchor Bible: Esther* [Doubleday, 1971] pp. lii–liii). L. B. Paton says, "the author had some knowledge of Persia and Persian life which he used to give local colour. They do not prove that his story is historical any more than the local colour of the *Arabian Nights* proved them to be historical" (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Esther* [T. & T. Clark, 1908; rpt. 1976] p. 65). Sandra Beth Berg makes the argument that "The present text

of the book contains an historical kernel, but one which is overlaid with novelistic elaborations," and she goes on to note that describing the book as an historical novel "implies that an historical incident gave rise to a fictional account" but there is no evidence of such an incident (*The Book of Esther: Motifs, Themes and Structure* [Scholars Press, 1979] pp. 1-5). Thus, we must be clear that the "history" in the Scroll of Esther is situated in the details of Jewish and Persian life rather than in the incidents of the narrative.

³Mary Gendler, "The Restoration of Vashti," in *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives*, ed. Elizabeth Koltun [Schocken Books, 1976] p. 245.

⁴Paton, p. 96. I would like to note that characteristics such as loyalty and bravery would probably have been enough to garner praise if Esther had been male, and that none of the men in the Scroll exhibits any excellence of character.

⁵Moore, p. lii.

⁶Gendler, p. 246. Similar observations are found in Kathryn Pfisterer Darr, "More than Just a Pretty Face," *Far More Precious than Jewels: Perspectives on Biblical Women* [Westminster/John Knox, 1991] pp. 188-193).

⁷S. Talmon, "Wisdom in the Book of Esther," *Vetus Testamentum*, 13 (1963) pp. 419-455; Bruce William Jones, "Two Misconceptions about the Book of Esther," in *Studies in the Book of Esther*, ed. Carey A. Moore (KTAV Publishing, 1982) pp. 437-447; Sidnie Ann White, "Esther: A Feminine Model for Jewish Diaspora," in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, ed. Peggy L. Day (Fortress Press, 1989) pp. 161-177; Athalya Brenner (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith, and Susanna* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

⁸Talmon, p. 449.

⁹Jones, p. 442.

¹⁰Jones, p. 441.

¹¹Jones, p. 442.

¹²Moore states that this particular phrase 'relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another quarter' is "one of the most crucial yet debatable phrases in all of Esther" (p. 50).

¹³The word "banquet" appears only 24 times in the rest of the Hebrew Bible.

¹⁴See, for example, Judges 20:26, I Kings 21:9, Jeremiah 36:6, II Chronicles 20:3.

¹⁵The rabbis elaborate on Ahasuerus's debased character. See, for example, BT Megillah 11a ff.

¹⁶The first time the King asks Esther 'What is your petition?' is when Esther comes to the court, the second and third times are at the banquets.

¹⁷B.W. Anderson, *The Book of Esther: Introduction and Exegesis* (Abington Press, 1954) p. 862.

¹⁸See further, "The Book of Esther," *The Interpreters Bible* (Abington Press, 1954) Vol. III, p. 872; S. Goldman, "Esther," in *The Five Megilloth: Hebrew Text, English Translation, and Commentary*, ed. A. Cohen (Soncino Press, 1946), p. 241; Paton, pp. 300-302.

¹⁹Claudia V. Camp, *Wisdom and the Feminine in the Book of Proverbs* (Almond Press, 1985) pp. 140 f.

²⁰BT Megillah 7a. The Megillah contains extensive discussion of the question of whether the Scroll should be made canonical, but the sages finally place it in the canon.

²¹Leila Leah Bronner, "Esther Revisited: An Aggadic Approach," in *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith, and Susanna*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield Academic Press, 1995) pp. 179 ff.

²²Gendler, p. 245.

The Way of Redemption

Psalm 22 begins, *'To the chief musicians upon Ayeleth ha-shachar.'* *Shachar* means the morning star which is the meaning of the Persian word *Esther*. Why was Esther compared to the morning star ? Because when the morning star breaks through at dawn, it comes through gradually. First it appears with a slender ray, then it grows bigger and brighter until the dawn rises in all its radiance. So too, the redemption of Israel in the days of Esther and Mordecai started with a small beginning. *And Mordecai was sitting in the gate of the King's palace; then, and when the King saw Esther the Queen; then, in that night the King's sleep was disturbed; then and Haman took the robe and the horse; then, and Mordecai went out before the King in a royal robe; finally, the Jews had light and joy.*

Rav Assi observed: just as the morning star is the end of all the night, so the star of Esther is the end of all the miracle stories in the Bible.

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A SLIP OF THE READER AND NOT THE REED

Part I

SCOTT B. NOEGEL

The Bible is full of anomalous grammatical forms and exegetes have grappled with them for centuries. While some peculiarities can be explained by deference to dialectical and archaistic poetic factors, others defy explanation. Witness, for example, four instances in which an infinitive absolute derived from one root accompanies a finite form derived from another: Isaiah 28:28, Jeremiah 8:13, 42:10, and Zephaniah 1:2.¹

ISAIAH 28:28-29

In Isaiah 28:23-29, the prophet continues a harangue in parabolic form² against the priests and leaders of Jerusalem, thundering:

Give diligent ear to my words, attend carefully to what I say.

Does he who plows to sow, plow all the time, breaking up and furrowing his land?

When he has smoothed its surface, does he not rather broadcast black cumin and scatter cumin, or set wheat in a row, barley in a strip, and emmer in a patch?

For He teaches him the right manner, his God instructs him.

So, too, black cumin is not threshed with a threshing board, nor is the wheel of the threshing sledge rolled over cumin; but black cumin is beaten out with a stick, and cumin with a rod.

It is cereal that is crushed. For even if he threshes it thoroughly [אדוש ידושנו], and the wheel of his sledge and his horses overwhelm it, he does not crush it.

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*That too, is ordered by The Lord of Hosts; His counsel is unfathomable,
His wisdom marvelous.*

Isaiah's agricultural images come to focus in verse 28, where the meaning of his previous references hinges on resolve. His listeners, after hearing the words *it is cereal that is crushed*, now anticipate the information required to interpret the parable. Yet, it is at this crucial juncture that the prophet confounds his audience by adding *threshes it thoroughly* [ארוש ידושנו].

Efforts to interpret this stich have been thwarted by the inability to choose a common root for both the infinitive absolute and the finite verb. While the former appears to derive from the Aramaic אדש [be quiet, silent]³ the latter demands that we interpret it as "thresh, crush," i.e., from דוש.⁴ The medievals, e.g., Ibn Ezra, Rashi, Radak, and David Altschuler (*Medsudat Zion*) all took אדוש as a form of דוש plus prothstetic *aleph*. F. Delitzsch saw the form as a by-form of דוש with emphatic lengthening.⁵ Delitzsch is followed by E. Young, P. Auvray, O. Kaiser, A. Hakam, and J. Oswalt⁶ who either suggest emendation or defer to the form אדש in 1 Q Isaiah-A.⁷

Other commentators have removed the problem altogether either by eliminating the form⁸ or by emending the infinitive to דוש⁹ but the lack of versional and manuscript support makes this an unsatisfactory enterprise.¹⁰ Less radical are the attempts by Barth,¹¹ who sees the form as analogous to the Aramaic *'af'el* infinitive pattern, and E. Hammershaimb, who views אדוש as nominal in form but functioning as an infinitive.¹² Nevertheless, the presence of an Aramaic root אדש meaning "be silent" suggests that Isaiah employed two distinct roots.¹³

Clearly, to emend the text is drastic and fails to explain the anomaly, and to explain the *crux* by way of a grammatical solution leaves one unconvinced. Moreover, the existence of two distinct roots begs the question: Why not see in the infinitive construction both דוש and אדש? After all, both "crushing" and "hushing" fit the text's context; the former by way of agricultural threshing (cf. vv. 24-28) and the latter by way of Isaiah's repeated exhortation to listen without interruption (vv. 14, 19, 23). In addition, the form's juxtaposition with דוש, used unambiguously as "crush" in the previous verse, makes Isaiah's ambiguous infinitival construction appear all the more intentional. Why get the form correct in one verse and not in the next?

Moreover, we may explain both forms of Isaiah's ambiguous wit by appealing to the oracle's context. It is clear that the targets of Isaiah's jabs are Jerusalem's priests and rulers (28:7) and that they are accused of drunkenness (vv. 7-8) and of babbling like babies (vv. 9-10). We may see in the linguistic ambiguities, therefore, the imitation of inebriated slur. Indeed, Isaiah explicitly states that as a consequence of their stupors his oracle also will be indistinct (v. 11).

Additional support for seeing the infinitival construction as alluding to silence comes from his previous statement in 28:24. Immediately after demanding full attention (v. 23), Isaiah delivers an amphibologic¹⁴ line: *הכל היום יחרש יחרש לזרע* (28:24). Though exegetes usually translate the verse *does he who plows to sow, plow all the time...?*, one also can read it *does he who is silent for strength, silent all the time?* Both *חרש* and *זרע* are polysemous (possess more than one meaning), the former suggesting "plow" and "be silent, dumb" and the latter "seed" and "strength." The polysemy forces Isaiah's audience to pause and consider the meaning of his words.¹⁵ And though the remaining oracle suggests that we interpret the line as a reference to plowing, the point at which we expect to discover the parable's interpretation, namely at 28:28 with *אדוש ידושן* rehearses the ambiguity of 28:24 by suggesting both "crushing" and "silence."

Indeed, *פתח* in the very next line also hints at a silent mouth now opening.¹⁶ Moreover, the words *חרש*, *כרת* and *פתח* in this oracle also have allusive associations to engraving which further demonstrate the poet's sophistication.¹⁷ These "buzz words" strengthen the oracle's ties both to the instruction which the Jerusalemite leaders were negligent in providing (28:9, 28:14) and the treaty (i.e., engraving) they have made with Death (28:15, 28:18).

JEREMIAH 8:11-14

Reinforcing the deliberateness of Isaiah's ambiguous infinitival construction is a similar situation in Jeremiah 8:11-14, part of a larger prophecy against the people of Judah.

'They offer healing offhand for the wounds of my people saying 'Peace' when there is no peace.

'They have acted shamefully, they have done abhorrent things; yet they do not feel shame, they cannot be made to blush. Assuredly, they shall fall among the falling, they shall stumble at the time of their doom,' said The Lord.

SLIP OF THE READER AND NOT THE REED

'I will make an end of them [אסף אספם] *declares The Lord. No grapes left on the vine, no figs on the fig tree, the leaves all withered. Whatever I have given them is gone.'*

Why are we sitting by? Let us gather into the fortified cities and meet our doom there. For The Lord our God has doomed us, He has made us drink a bitter draft, because we sinned against The Lord.

Jeremiah's prophecy comes to a fever pitch in verse 13 with the words אסף - typically translated as *'I will make an end of them.'* As in the Isaiah passage above, we have an infinitive absolute and finite verb derived from disparate roots. The infinitive absolute comes from the root אסף [gather]¹⁸ while the finite form אספם derives from אס [come to an end, cease].¹⁹

As with Isaiah 28:28, this passage has suffered from the treadmill of textual critics. J. A. Thompson proposes that we revocalize either as "gather" or as "destroy," but opts to translate "I would have gathered their harvest."²⁰ Without commenting further on the anomaly, J. Bright²¹ also suggests that we revocalize either to mean "I will gather their harvest" or "I will thoroughly harvest them."²² Such commentators assume a scribal error at work.

Yet, as demonstrated above in Isaiah 28:28, the blended infinitival construction is far from being a slip of the stylus. On the contrary, the prophet has chosen carefully his words to pique the ears of his listeners with ambiguity. Nevertheless, the medievals seem to have been on the right track. Kimhi and Radak noted that there are two roots involved, both with the sense of "final end." This suggests to W. McKane that "there is good reason to retain MT."²³ Thus, he translates: "I will gather them for final destruction."²⁴

Support for the deliberateness of this usage also comes from the context and imagery of the prophecy which refer both to total destruction (8:12, 8:14), which parallels the meaning "make an end of," and to agriculture and viticulture (8:10, 8:13), which parallels the meaning "gather."²⁵ The gist of Jeremiah's one-liner is that the Lord will gather them for the purpose of destruction.

Just previous to the expression אסף אספם Jeremiah promises that the unjust scribes will *fall among the falling and stumble at the time of their doom* (8:12). His blast forces the listener to place his prophecy within a context of impending annihilation. This devastation is echoed in אסף אספם. Yet, after the ambiguous threat, Jeremiah adds that there will be *no grapes left on the vine, no figs on the*

fig tree, their leaves having withered (8:13). The competing contexts create a tension in meaning which the prophet doubtless intended.

The listener, who now must choose between the possible meanings for אסף אסיפם then is dealt another blow of ambiguity in verse 13, when the prophet quips: ואתן להם יעברום. This phrase has been deleted,²⁶ emended, and translated in various ways, usually to mean 'whatever I have given them has passed away,' or the like.²⁷ S. R. Driver translates the line 'I have appointed them those that shall pass over them.'²⁸ B. Duhm²⁹ on the other hand, sees in this stich a metathesis between the letters ע and ג to arrive at יבערום and renders it "they shall consume (or: devour) them." Similarly, G. R. Driver³⁰ reads the line: 'I would give them to be burned.' D. Aberbach³¹ recommends that we read here a possible corruption of ואתן להם יער ערום ['I gave them a naked forest'] as it parallels the previous mention of withered leaves in the same line. Bright,³² who is unable to offer any solution, regards the line "corrupt and untranslatable" and leaves it unrendered.

I believe that the solution to this *crux* lies somewhere between the proposals above. The *crux* remains a *crux* precisely because of its deliberately ambiguous ring. Like the phrase אסף אסיפם which suggests both "gathering" and "destroying," so too does ואתן להם יעברום hint both at "passing over" [עבר] and "destruction" [בער, עבר]. In addition, the root בער also can mean "gather, glean." Support for this comes both from Syriac and Ugaritic cognate evidence³³ and from the Bible. In Isaiah 3:14, for example, we find the root בער used in reference to vineyards. Its meaning "gather destructively" is demonstrated by its parallelism with גזלת העני [*that which was robbed from the poor*].³⁴

Therefore, I prefer to see the expression ואתן להם יעברום as an allusion both to "gathering" and "destruction" and thus, as a rehearsal of the ambiguous אסף אסיפם in the same verse.³⁵ We have seen the rehearsal phenomenon in connection with this device above (cf. Isa. 28:24, 28:28). Note how Jeremiah is able to reinforce the ambiguity of both expressions by adding immediately afterwards: על מה אנחנו יושבים האספו ונבוא אל ערי המבצר ונדמה שם [*Why are we sitting by? Let us gather into the fortified cities and meet our doom there*] (8:14).

GLOSSARY

amphibolobic - a sentence that has more than one meaning

archaistic - an outdated usage which can appear deliberately for poetic purposes

calque - a borrowing by which a specialized meaning of a word in one language is transferred to another language by a literal translation

infinitival - a grammatical construction that uses the infinitive

parabolic - in the form of a parable

pericope - a unit of text

polysemous/polyseme - having more than one meaning/a word with more than one meaning

stich - a segment of a poetic line

NOTES

1. The expression הִטִּיב חַרָּה, which appears two times in Jon 4:9, has been left out of the discussion because the infinitive absolute serves an adverbial function. Nevertheless, it does show that at least adverbially, such forms were known.

2. For a further discussion of the pericope's intertextual characteristics and its relation to the genre known as מִשַׁל see, Judah Aryeh Leiborik, "המשל מעבורת האיכר כישיעיהו כת כג-כט," *Tarbiz* 24 (1955) pp. 126-128.

3. E.g., Sanhedrin 7a: "טובים לדשמע ואדיש" ["Happy is the man who hears himself (abused) and is silent."] (Cf. also Qiddushin 61b). Jacob Levy, *Neuhebraisches und Chaldaisches Worterbuch uber die Talmudim und Midraschim*, Vol. 1 (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1876) p. 34; Abraham Ibn Shoshan, *חדש החדש*, Vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Kiryath Sefer, 1966) p. 29. M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (New York: Judaica Press, 1989) p. 290, cites Sanh. 7a as an example of an *aphel* of דוּש meaning "to be used to, not to mind." Whether the root is אָדַש or דוּש it is clear that "be silent" can be conveyed by אָדַש in Isaiah 28:28.

4. Thus, *HALAT*, pp. 17, 209; *KB*, pp. 15, 207; *BDB*, pp. 12, 190.

5. Frederick Delitzsch, *Prolegomena eines Neuen Hebraisch-Aramaischen Worterbuchs zum Alten Testament* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1886) p. 188.

6. Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1969) p. 300, n. 51; Paul Auvray, *Isaie 1-39* (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1972) pp. 254-255; Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974) p. 258; Amos Hakam, *ספר ישעיהו*, Vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1984) p. 269; John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1986) p. 521, n. 5.

7. It is unclear to me why both Oswalt (p. 521, n. 5) and Young (p. 300, n. 51) see the Qumran חֲדַש as evidence of דוּש. One would expect דוּש or חֲדוּש but not חֲדוּש [renew]. Might this be a corruption of a calque for חָרַש [be silent]?

8. See, e.g., T. K. Cheyne, *The Book of Isaiah* (The Sacred Books of the Old Testament, 10; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1899).

9. Arnold B. Ehrlich, *Randglossen zur Hebräischen Bibel* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1908).
10. See, e.g., Frederick E. Greenspan, *Hapax Legomena in Biblical Hebrew: A Study of the Phenomenon and Its Treatment Since Antiquity with Special Reference to Verbal Forms* (SBLDS 74; Chico, CA.: Scholars Press, 1984) p. 56, n. 46, 100.
11. Jakob Barth, *Die Nominalbildung in den Semitischen Sprachen* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1889) p. 73. Interestingly, he compares וַיִּבְרַח to two other mixed infinitival forms discussed here (i.e., Jer 8:13, Zeph 1:2).
12. E. Hammershaimb, "On the So-called Infinitivus Absolutus in Hebrew," in David Winton Thomas and W. D. McHardy, eds., *Hebrew and Semitic Studies Presented to Godfrey Rolles Driver* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963) p. 85.
- 13.. We may reason that Isaiah, too, borrowed the root from Aramaic. The prophets often drew upon their knowledge of Aramaic and other languages in order to achieve what some have called "style-switching." See, e.g., Stephen A. Kaufman, "The Classification of the North West Semitic Dialects of the Biblical Period and Some Implications Thereof," in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Panel Session: Hebrew and Aramaic Languages (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1988) pp. 55-56; Gary A. Rendsburg "Linguistic Variation and the 'Foreign' Factor in the Hebrew Bible," in Shlomo Izre'el and Rina Drory, eds. *Language and Culture in the Near East*, Israel Oriental Studies 15 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996) pp. 177-190.
14. For additional biblical examples of amphibology see Edward L. Greenstein, "Wordplay, Hebrew," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. VI (New York: Doubleday, 1992), pp. 969; Jack Sasson, "Word Play in the Old Testament," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976) p. 970.
15. For a similar observation regarding the ambiguity of Isaiah 28:25, see S. C. Thexton, "A Note on Isaiah XXVIII 25 and 28," *Vetus Testamentum* 82 (1952) pp. 81-83.
16. The verb is used in reference to the mouth in Ezra 21:72; Job 3:1, 33:2; Daniel 10:6; Isaiah 53:7; to lips in Job 11:5, 32:20; Psalms 51:17, and in contexts involving riddles or word puzzles, e.g., Psalms 38:14 and 49:5.
17. The use here of the root חַרַשׁ , which also can mean "divine through magic" may represent a third level of play as it suits the context of "play on the language of divination." See, Baruch Halpern, "'The Excremental Vision': The Doomed Priests of Doom in Isaiah 28," *HAR* 10 (1986) p. 114.
18. *HALAT*, p. 71;KB, p. 71; BDB, p. 62.
19. *HALAT*, p. 71;KB, p. 71;BDB, p. 62
20. J.A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1980) p. 301.
21. John Bright, *Jeremiah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 21 (Garden City, NY.: Doubleday, 1965) p. 61, n. 6. He also suggests a third and less likely possibility: "Gather their harvest!"
22. The translation "In-gathering I shall destroy them" put forward by Michael Derouche, "Contra Creation, Covenant, and Conquest" *Vetus Testamentum* 30 (1980) pp. 280-290, is unconvincing. While I do see Jeremiah 8:13 as a type of wordplay (see n. 25) and find some intertextual allusions in Jeremiah 7-8 (though not necessarily with Zephaniah 1:2-3 [cf. 282-283, n. 8]), I feel they are subtextual. That is, they are not the primary message conveyed by the play on words. Therefore, the hint at "in-gathering" does not govern the translation.

23. William McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah* Vol. 1, New International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986) p. 189.
24. McKane, p. 188.
25. Perhaps the *infinitivus absolutus* construction serves here as a hitherto unrecognized type of Janus parallelism. The term describes a literary device in which the middle stich of a tristich contains a pun which parallels in a polysemous way both the preceding and following stichs. See, e.g., C.H. Gordon, "New Directions," *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 15 (1978), 59-66; Shalom Paul "Polysensuous Polyvalency in Poetic Parallelism," in M. Fishbane and E. Tov, eds. "Sha'arei Talmon," *Studies in the Bible, Qumran and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), pp. 147-163; see comprehensively my "Janus Parallelism in the Book of Job," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series*, 203 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996). More on this literary device below.
26. See, e.g., McKane, p. 189.
27. See, e.g., P. Paul Jouon, "Notes de critique textuelle," *Melanges de la faculte orientale de l'Universite Saint Joseph* 4 (1910), p. 25.
28. S.R. Driver, *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah* (London: C. Scribner's Sons, 1906) p. 50.
29. B. Duhm, *Das Buch Jeremia* (Tubingen, 1901) p. 90.
30. G.R. Driver, "Linguistic and Textual Problems: Jeremiah," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 28 (1937-38) p. 105.
31. D. Aberbach, "w'tn lhm y'brwm (Jeremiah VII 13): The Problem and Its Solution," *Vetus Testamentum* 27 (1977) pp. 99-101.
32. Bright, *Jeremiah*, p. 61.
33. On the basis of Syriac בער [seek out, collect, glean] BDB (pp. 128-129) suggests that this was the earlier meaning of the Hebrew בער. Payne-Smith, *A Compendius Syriac Dictionary*, p. 51. See also Ugaritic b'r "pillage," C.H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (Analecta Orientalia, 38; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute) p. 375.
34. In addition see, Isaiah 5:5 where it also occurs in a viticultural context, and Exodus 22:4 where it occurs in the *pi'el* and *hiph'il* in reference to agricultural "feeding" and "grazing."
35. Perhaps this explains Rashi's rendering which catches both interpretations: 'All this shall befall them because I gave them statutes and they transgressed [עברו] them.'

THE FUNERAL OF JACOB: A JOINT HEBREW-EGYPTIAN AFFAIR

SHUBERT SPERO

With the death of his father Jacob, Joseph in Egypt faced the formidable problem of securing permission from Pharaoh, the absolute ruler of his kingdom, for himself and his brothers to leave the country so that they may bury their father in the ancestral burial cave in Hebron in the land of Canaan. The difficulty was not only that even a high official such as Joseph did not have freedom of movement, but also one of explaining to Pharaoh why his father would not have considered it a privilege to be buried in Egypt, the land that had sustained him and his family for the past 17 years and which had the most advanced "technology" for ensuring proper passage from this world to the next.

It was probably anticipation of these difficulties that prompted Jacob not only to command his son to bury him in Canaan (Gen. 49:29) but make him take an oath to that effect (47:31). In making his request to Pharaoh, Joseph says:

'Let me go up, I pray thee and bury my father and I will come back. My father made me swear saying: "Lo, I die; in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shall you bury me"' (50:5).

In addition to the pressure of the oath, Joseph cleverly adds another factor that might sway Pharaoh. He cites Jacob as having said: *'...in my grave which I have digged for me.'* Of course, Jacob did no such thing because there was no need to. All the evidence points to Machpela as being a natural cave. If it had to be enlarged, that had already been done by Abraham. However, the pharaohs, who spent most of their lives building monumental tombs for themselves to ensure their immortality, could be expected to sympathize with an individual who desired to be buried in the tomb on which he had expended time and resources to build for himself.

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Even before he requests permission from Pharaoh, Joseph orders the Egyptian "physicians" [*rofim*] to embalm the remains of his father Jacob: *And forty days were fulfilled for him; for so are fulfilled the days of embalming. And the Egyptians wept for him seventy days* (50:2). Later generations had some difficulty with this. The rabbis were critical, saying that Joseph should have realized that the sacred quality of the lives of the Patriarchs put them even in death beyond the reach of decay and putrefaction.¹

More importantly, Egyptian funerary practices were surely bound up with the idolatrous religion of the Egyptians. Was it right to expose his father's remains to those indignities? But perhaps Joseph had no choice! However, much depends upon the nature of the "embalming." Also, the text's reference to these precise periods of "forty days" and "seventy days" is intriguing.

Studies of death and mourning in ancient Egypt reveal that the entire process of preparing the body for burial, which included mummification as well as other rituals and mourning rites, did indeed take seventy days.²

This is known from Herodotus as well as from Egyptian texts. Thus the biblical assertion that *the Egyptians wept for him 70 days* reflects the Hebrews' perception of what the Egyptians were doing over the body of Jacob for so long a period. Choosing to ignore, or perhaps not really knowing, the significance of the various rituals, the Bible presents this as the Egyptians' way of mourning and showing their respect for the deceased.

What is curious is the emphatic statement in the Bible that the embalming process (which is part of the 70 days) took 40 days. We are told that *part* of the mummification process, which was drying out or dehydration achieved by covering the body with the naturally occurring salt compound natron, was indeed completed in 40 days!³

Perhaps this is specifically mentioned in the Bible in order to inform the reader that the mummification process was not performed on Jacob in its entirety, but only this drying out which preserves the body from decay and decomposition. The complete 70-day process, which was fully perfected during the New Kingdom, is described as follows:

The most elaborate process involved the removal of the brain tissue through the nostrils, extraction of the viscera through an incision in the flank, cleansing and anointing the interior of the body and closing it by stitching across the cut. After this the body was covered with natron before being washed and wrapped. . . . the layers of cloth were coated with resin . . . some 375 square meters of linen were used in some burials.⁴

In view of Hebrew burial practices and concepts of proper care of the body after death, for which the first evidence comes from later periods, it is perhaps reasonable to assume that even in the patriarchal age an invasive procedure of the human body after death and removal of organs might have been considered mutilation and disrespect. Perhaps, then, Joseph insisted that the body of Jacob not be eviscerated. Studies do indeed show that "there was considerable variation in embalming techniques at different periods and that not all mummies were eviscerated."⁵

It would thus seem that Joseph and his brothers were able to start out on their funerary journey to Canaan with the feeling that they had not violated Hebrew burial traditions. What do we know about these traditions?

Death was seen as some sort of reunion with one's forefathers, not only in physical terms of burial in a family tomb but in some sense in an afterlife (Gen. 15:15). Abraham's purchase from a Hittite in Hebron of a cave for burials is described in detail in Genesis 23:1-16. Cave burial became one of the dominant forms of burial during the period of the first monarchy because it suited the essential demands of the tradition. On the one hand, the cave fulfills the biblical dictum, *Earth you are and to earth you shall return* (Gen. 3:19). A cave also has room for entire families over generations, and permits opening and closing without disturbing the earlier burials.⁶

There is also evidence in the Bible for the seven-day mourning period [*shiva*] and the 30-day mourning period [*shloshim*] (Gen. 23:2,3; Num. 20:29; Deut. 34:8). However, in keeping with the Hebrew understanding of the familial nature of the burial and mourning obligation, it would appear that one of the most important elements in the burial was that the father be buried by all of his sons. This symbolized the generational unity and continuity of the family and accorded honor to the dead. Thus, the Bible describes the burials of Abraham and Isaac:

And Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of the Machpela (Gen. 25:9) and, And Isaac expired and died and was gathered unto his people . . . and Esau and Jacob, his sons, buried him (35:29).

The Bible's description of the large and heavily-guarded funerary cortege that wound its way from Egypt to Canaan contains a most puzzling feature:

And Joseph went up to bury his father and with him went all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house and all the elders of the land of Egypt. And all the house of Joseph and his brothers and his father's house; only the little ones and their flocks and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen. And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen; and it was a very great company. And they came to the threshing floor of Atad which is beyond the Jordan [beaver hayardain]⁷ and they wailed with a very great and sore wailing and he made a mourning for his father seven days. And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of the Atad they said: 'This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians.'

Wherefore they called the place Abel-mitzrayim which is beyond the Jordan. And his sons did unto him according as he commanded them. And his sons carried him into the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpela which Abraham bought with the field for a possession of a burial place from Ephron the Hittite in front of Mamre (50:7-13).

For an official Egyptian party to travel from Goshen to Hebron, the shortest route would be to take the Way of the Sea or Way of Shur to the Way of the Arabah and up to Hebron. There would be no reason to be "beyond the Jordan"! A possible explanation presents itself, however, if we consider the period of Egyptian history in which the Joseph story took place. For an extended period, an Asiatic people called Hyksos ruled Egypt and made the city of Zoan (Tanis) their capital.⁸

These Hyksos were finally defeated by Ahmose I (XVIIIth Dynasty) in the year 1530 BCE and they withdrew to Canaan. If the Joseph story took place sometime after the Hyksos expulsion, it is very likely that the hill country of Canaan and the lower Negev had not yet been reconquered by the pharaohs.

Therefore, the funeral cortege of Jacob had to use the longer route to Hebron, later taken by the Israelites after the Exodus, that goes around Mt. Seir to the trans-Jordan side.

Egyptian funerary practices included elaborate mourning rituals prior to the burial:

The transport of the body to the tomb took the form of a ritual procession . . . the corpse was placed upon a sledge covered by a shrine and drawn by oxen . . . close to the mummy stood two women impersonating the divine mourners Isis and Nephthys . . . then followed groups of mourning women, a detachment of nine officials and a number of servants carrying tomb furniture Priests preceded the sledge, burning incense and sprinkling a libation of milk As the bier neared the tomb it was greeted by ritual dancers as a lector-priest read from a papyrus funerary spells in honor of the deceased.⁹

This requires a flat open area which may explain why they stopped at the "threshing-floor" of Atad where the last rites in the Egyptian tradition were administered, that made a deep impression upon the local inhabitants (. . . *this is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians*).

Once this phase was completed, the brothers proceeded to carry out their father's wishes in accordance with the Hebrew tradition. It is Jacob's sons and only Jacob's sons that now carry his embalmed remains into the land of Canaan.¹⁰

The rabbis state that the 12 coffin bearers were; Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Naftali, Asher, Gad, Dan, Benjamin, Ephraim and Manasseh. Jacob, they say, had exempted Joseph from this task because of his near regal status, and Levi because of his priestly rank.¹¹

It is, however, the 12 actual sons of Jacob who participate in his burial in the Machpela Cave as did the sons of Abraham and Isaac before him.

The manner of the burial of the Patriarchs makes two striking points:

The bonds created by the biological parenthood of the forefathers remains strong. *All* of their sons, even the estranged and the alienated, the disgruntled and those severely criticized, Ishmael and Esau, Reuben and Simeon, are in attendance at the end.

Our common descent as children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob unites us not only with each other, but with the land wherein our fathers rest.

NOTES

1. Midrash Gen. Rabbah 100:4
2. A.J. Spencer, *Death in Ancient Egypt* (Penguin Books, 1982) p. 126.
3. Stephen Quirke and Jeffrey Spencer, *The British Museum Book of Ancient Egypt* (1992) p. 89: "the period spent on preparing the body for burial between death and interment was 70 days of which 40 were devoted to the drying out or dehydration."
4. Spencer, pp. 112-115.
5. Spencer, p. 113.
6. See G. Barkay, *Burial Caves and Burial Practices in Judah in the Iron Age*, p. 96; R. Gonen, "Burial Practices and Cultural Distinctions in Late Bronze Age Canaan" in *Graves and Burial Practices in Israel in the Ancient Period*, ed. Itamar Singer (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society/Yad Itzhak Ben-Zvi, 1994) p. 77.
7. From the Egyptian perspective, "beyond the Jordan" is the general term for the territory east of the Jordan. Later we find the term being used for either side of the Jordan and qualified by terms, *mizraha* [east] or *yama* [west] as today "West Bank" and "East Bank" refer to the same river. See Numbers 32:19, Joshua 13:27, 22:7.
8. See the interesting linkage in Numbers 13:22: "...now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt."
9. Spencer, pp. 51, 52.
10. The rabbis say that the order of the sons around the coffin was the same as the order of the tribes around the Tabernacle as they encamped in the wilderness. See Rashi on Numbers 2:2. (Jacob had already ruled that "Ephraim and Manassah even as Reuben and Simeon, shall be mine" [Gen. 48:5]).
11. See Rashi on Genesis 50:13.

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CENTRALIZATION OF WORSHIP

SHIMON BAKON

But unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His name there even unto His habitation shall ye seek, and thither shalt thou come (Deut. 12:5).

A prestigious school of biblical research and critique has asserted that only with the discovery of the Book of Deuteronomy did King Josiah (638-609) launch his drastic reformation, abolishing the *bamoth* [במות literally "high places"; local cult sites] and establishing a central site of worship in the Temple of Jerusalem.

According to James Fleming, the alleged purpose of this reformation was the fact that: "The Lord is concerned with matters of worship and ritual. Therefore the law of one sanctuary was indeed the chief feature of reformation. They [the Deuteronomists] must have believed that the way in which worship is conducted matters supremely."¹

S.R. Driver admits that central sanctuaries (such as Shiloh, where the Ark of the Covenant was located for a time) doubtless had pre-eminence, "but so far as the evidence before us, sacrifice was habitually offered at other places, the only limitation being that they should be properly sanctioned and approved."² He furthermore reinforces his claim by asking:

If there was a law forbidding such practice, why did the authorities who were presumed to know of it make no effort to enforce it, but disregarded it? It must be allowed that such inference (namely the non-existence of such a law) is not altogether an unreasonable one.³

He and others base their assertion that, up to the time of the "Deuteronomists," the sacrificial cult was allowed in every place, on Exodus 20:20: *'An altar of earth thou shalt make unto Me and shalt sacrifice thereon . . . in every place [בכל מקום] where I cause My name to be mentioned I will come unto thee and bless thee.'*

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G.F. Moore, followed by J.H. Hertz among others modern Bible scholars, opposes the view that the multiplicity of places of worship is inconsistent with monotheism.⁴

FROM THE WILDERNESS TO SHILOH

Whether or not one agrees with Moore's view, it is nevertheless a fact that from the beginning of Israel's history, a central site of worship was an established fact. The only evidence that can be garnered is the biblical record; the Pentateuch and the historical books of the Bible.

The first evidence is the Tent Sanctuary [אהל מועד] in the wilderness. Exodus 29:43 states: '*And there I shall meet [נועדתי] with the children of Israel and [the Tent] shall be sanctified.*' That sanctuary in the wilderness was a focal point where God revealed Himself to Moses and the people, and it was also the national shrine of the Congregation of Israel. Its most sacred appurtenance was the Holy Ark where the glory of The Lord is perceived to dwell on the Cherubs [ה' צבאות יושב כרובים]. It is thus God's Presence, represented by the Ark, that provided the special sanctity of the *mishkan*.

Contrary to the view of Driver, the emphasis is not on [בכל מקום] *in every place* but on what follows: [אזכיר את שמי] *where I cause My name to be mentioned*. Israel is commanded to demolish all *bamoth* on entering the land of Canaan (Num. 33:52) The Book of Leviticus forbids any man of the children of Israel to offer sacrifices in any place other than the Tent Sanctuary, *lest he be cut off from his people* (17:1-9). The reason for *and they no more sacrifice unto the satyrs* [שעירים] *after whom you go astray* (17:7) is to wean the children of Israel from such abominations, to which they were accustomed during their long sojourn in Egypt.

We note a consistent pattern throughout the Pentateuch. There is to be a specific site, chosen and approved by The Lord, in which sacrifices could be offered, its purpose being to distance the people from the evils of idol worship.

FROM SHILOH TO THE TEMPLE

Up to the time that the sanctuary came to rest in Shiloh, the Ark, by its very structure, was meant to be moved, together with or separately from the Tent itself. Thus, the Ark alone was carried over the Jordan and made its rounds about

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original tabernacle and the altar were both now set up in Gibeon, while the Ark remained, sadly neglected, in Kiriath-jearim.

There is no clear answer to this question, but it may be safely assumed that after the debacle at Shiloh, the Ark had temporarily lost its position of centrality in Israelite worship. Samuel viewed the Ark of the Covenant as the supreme symbol of Israel's religious and moral conduct. The serious abuses of Eli's sons, and their carrying the Ark with them to war with the Philistines, were seen by Samuel as a perversion of its true importance. Samuel's harsh rebuke to Saul now gains added significance: *Hath the Lord a great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in hearkening to the voice of The Lord . . . ? For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft* (I Sam. 15:22,23). To Samuel, bringing the Ark to a war was equal to witchcraft, as it were forcing God to the side of Israel.

It was a stroke of genius on the part of David to bring up the Ark from Kiriath-jearim to Jerusalem, making this city both the religious and national center of a United Kingdom. From the time that his son Solomon built the Temple until its destruction in 586 BCE, the Ark remained there. Jeremiah mentions it (Jer. 3:16), and Josiah refers to it when, after his drive for reformation, he instructs the Levites: *'Put the Holy Ark in the House of Solomon'* (I Kg. 8:16).

THE PERIOD OF THE MONARCHY

King Solomon, in his magnificent speech inaugurating the Temple, echoed the words of Deuteronomy 12:5. *Since the day I brought forth My people Israel out of Egypt I chose one city out of all the tribes to build a house, that My Name might be there* (I Kg. 8:16). This clearly implied that now that the House of God was built and the Ark of the Covenant installed in Jerusalem, it is the site that The Lord had chosen. Characteristically, and almost apologetically, the Book of Kings states: *Only the people sacrificed in the high places [bamoth], because there was no house built for the Name of the Lord until these days* (I Kg. 3:2).

This statement is a rebuttal of Driver's question mentioned earlier: Why did the authorities who were presumed to know of the prohibition of sacrifice on the *bamoth* disregard it? This then was the official policy as Segal correctly states:

In the age of the Monarchy, the unique sanctity of Jerusalem and its temple was universally acknowledged in Israel and when the sanctuaries, the minor bamoth, had become the home of illicit and idolatrous practices, was the Deuteronomic command about the place chosen by God for His presence interpreted as having being fulfilled exclusively in Jerusalem and its temple.⁵

Thus, the major thrust of the prohibition of the *bamoth*, was the prevention of Canaanite idolatrous practices being introduced into the worship of God. However, good intention and the realities of life clashed. The first breach was by Solomon himself when he built a high place for the Moabite idol Kemosh (I Kg. 11:7). Though intended for his foreign wives, it was seen by the author of the Book of Kings as if Solomon had done it for himself, and this incurred the penalty of splitting the United Kingdom into two. After Solomon, a variety of kings who were considered to be "righteous" did not remove the *bamoth*. Thus, *Asa removed all the idols that his father had made...but the high places [bamoth] were not taken away* (I Kg. 15:12-14). On the other hand, Hezekiah's thorough reformation included the removal of the *bamoth*, for which he was ridiculed by the Rabshakeh, spokesman for the King of Assyria: *'...but if you say unto me—"We trust in The Lord our God," is not that He, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah and to Jerusalem, "Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem"'* (II Kg. 18:22). Then came the terrible period of Manasseh's 55-year reign (690-640). *He built altars for all the hosts of heaven in the two courts of the House of the Lord, made his son pass through the fire [as human sacrifices to a pagan god] and shed innocent blood* (II Kg. 21:5-6,16; II Chr. 33:5-6). It was in this time of rampant heathen practices and abominations, so eloquently berated by Jeremiah, that Josiah stepped in with his, alas shortlived, reformation. Its major thrust was not so much the centralization of worship, as too many Bible scholars wish us to believe, as the reintroduction of pristine monotheism, and the purification of Judean life from the dross of heathen practices and immorality.

CENTRALIZATION OF WORSHIP

The "Documentary" school of biblical scholarship theorizes that up to the time of Josiah *bamoth* had a legitimate place in the sacrificial cult. It was only when the "Deuteronomists" or the "Deuteronomistic School" (a euphemism for the Book of Deuteronomy) came to the fore that Josiah brought about a religious revival, which focused on the abolition of the *bamoth* and the centralization of worship in Jerusalem. Hertz, in his great commentary on the Pentateuch, wrote:

The assumption that Deuteronomy is a product of Josiah's age is the basis of the theory on which the critics have built the reconstruction of Bible and history. That theory—viz. the Centralization of Worship in Ancient Israel—they have raised to a dogma.

A legitimate question can be asked: Why did the alleged Deuteronomists not directly designate Jerusalem as the place chosen by God, instead of stating *the place which the Lord shall choose*? After all, the Temple had been in existence for close to 400 years. The answer then must be that the subtle Deuteronomist author, speaking in the name of Moses, did not wish to be accused of forgery. Therefore, he did not mention Jerusalem as the chosen site. But if he intended subtlety, why then specifically state, *the place out of all the tribes*? After all, the tribal division had ceased for almost 400 years, since the time when Solomon had instituted a division of the United Kingdom into 12 districts. It certainly was in disuse when the United Kingdom broke into two. The term "tribe" does not appear even once in the Books of Kings.

Thus, the entire theory is shattered by the plain biblical data here presented:

The term *the site chosen by God* appears throughout the Bible in various forms beginning with Deuteronomy, and in Solomon's inauguration of the Temple. The determining feature of God's Presence was represented by the Ark, first in the Tent of Meeting in the desert, then in Shiloh, and finally in the Temple in Jerusalem.

The *bamoth* were initially strictly forbidden, but then tolerated because of the force of geography and the influence of Canaanite practices. The primary reason for banning them, as stated in Leviticus 17:8,9, was to prevent the introduction of idol worship. Some righteous kings purified these *bamoth* from idolatrous practices. Others, such as Hezekiah and Josiah, destroyed them altogether.

Driver's fatuous question — Why the authorities did not enforce the prohibition of *bamoth* — is contrary to the plain facts that in periods when Judean kings were influenced by the great prophets, there was a revival of monotheism and with it the removal of the *bamoth*. Isaiah and Micah ministered during the reign of Hezekiah; Jeremiah and Hulda during the reign of Josiah. Not surprisingly, during the 55 years of Manasseh's disastrous reign, one notes a total absence of prophetic activity.

Contrary to the statement of Fleming and his confreres, Josiah, after hearing the words of the newly found Book of Deuteronomy, *made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart and all his soul* (II Kg. 23:3, II Chr. 34:31). Now, anyone even slightly conversant with the Book of Deuteronomy must know that the major thrust of the legislation contained in it is religious, ethical, and social, of the highest order. The law of one sanctuary was not the chief feature, but merely a means of achieving the purpose of Deuteronomy: To establish Israel as עַם קָדוֹשׁ [a holy people] (14:1), and to abolish every form of heathenism.

It is of great significance that after the destruction of the Temple, when Judah became free of idol worship, houses of worship and study were established. There was no longer a need for the centralization of worship. God's Presence was found wherever Jews prayed together or studied His word. However, the strongly ingrained centralization of worship, sanctified by millennia of tradition, did not disappear. It acquired a highly spiritualized dimension, as attested by the following talmudic statement which became normative Judaism to this day:

Our Rabbis taught: If one is standing outside Palestine, he should turn mentally towards Eretz Israel. If he stands in Eretz Israel, he should turn mentally towards Jerusalem. If he is standing in Jerusalem, he should turn mentally towards the Sanctuary. If he is standing in the Sanctuary, he should turn mentally towards the Holy of Holies. If he is standing in the Holy of Holies, he should turn mentally towards the mercy-seat. If he is standing behind the mercy-seat he should imagine himself to be in front of the mercy-seat.

Consequently, if he is in the east he should turn his face to the west; if in the west he should turn his face to the east; if in the south he

should turn his face to the north; if in the north he should turn his face to the south. In this way all Israel will be turning their hearts towards one place. (T. Berakhot, 30a).

NOTES

1. James Fleming, *Personalities of the Old Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner, (1951) pp.291
 2. S.R.Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1961) p. 86.
 3. Driver, p. 86
 4. G.F. Moore, *Encyclopedia Biblica* I, (1899) p. 1091.
 5. M.H. Segal, *The Pentateuch, Its Composition and Authorship*, (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967) p. 88.
 6. J.H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, p. 939
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ERRATA

1. In the article The Punishment of Job's Friends by Julius Moser (Vol. 25:4) page 214, line 3 from the bottom should read: conventional cliches, whereas Job maintained a high moral position by speaking the truth ...

2. In the article P'SHAT - An Innovative Method in Torah Commentary by Judah Henkin (Vol. 25:4) page 235, 1st line of the 4th paragraph should read: We usually view p'shat as being severely limited vis-a-vis derash.

GOD AND MAN IN BIBLICAL ACTION

JACOB CHINITZ

Anthropomorphism in the Bible has been handled heretofore in several ways. One way was to assume that biblical language has to conform to some previously ordained theology. Hence, any reference to God in terms of human features or human action must be taken as metaphorical, and must be reinterpreted in some philosophical or mystical manner. Thus Maimonides, in the opening part of his *Guide for the Perplexed*, deals with about 20 terms in order to remove any possible anthropomorphic misunderstanding, and gives biblical language philosophical meaning consistent both with the Talmudic tradition and Greek thought.

At the other extreme we have the secular critical approach which takes biblical language at face value, and simply assumes that biblical authors conceived of God in human terms, if not as a human being. Thus when God walks He walks, and when He inhales the aroma of the sacrifices, He inhales, as man does.

We here suggest a third way. By actually examining the verbs attached to Divine and human action in the Pentateuch, taking God as Divine and Moses, the man of God, as human, we found some interesting phenomena. There are three categories of these verbs: The first group refers to actions attributed to God only; the second refers to actions attributed to Moses only, and the third refers to actions attributed both to God and Moses.

The existence of these three categories forces us to reject either of the first two theories on anthropomorphism. If the verbs attributed to God are metaphorical only, why are some of them restricted to God's actions and absent from the actions of Moses? If, on the other hand, God's actions are always human actions, why are some verbs attributed to Moses but never to God? We therefore propose the theory of Limited Anthropomorphism. By this we mean that while the biblical doctrine of man being *made in the image of God*, lends a certain identity

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between God and man, this is only in the sense of "overlap." That is to say: At one end we have actions that can be only human. At the other end we have actions that can only be Divine. In the middle, in a limited area, we have actions that can be Divine and human, Divine or human, on a continuum ranging from literal identity to metaphorical analogy.

We have one more consideration to present before we enter into the documentation of our thesis. It is true that the presence or absence of some verbs in the activity of God and Moses may be due to the accident of the actual events. Thus, if we find that God "forgets" or "does not forget" in the biblical narrative, and we find no reference to Moses forgetting, we draw no theological conclusions. There simply was no occasion to record the act of forgetting by Moses. (We could possibly interpret the delayed circumcision of his son as due to the forgetfulness of his father, but we are dealing in this study only with explicit biblical language, not with "reading between the lines" or midrashic fancy.)

Another possibility for the presence of a verb in reference to God and its absence with reference to Moses, or vice versa, may be due to synonyms. Thus, while the verb *agur*, translated as "fear," in the context *But for fear of the taunts of the foe* (Deut. 32:27) is not used for Moses, we do know that Moses had fear, as in the phrase *vayira Moshe [Moses was frightened]* (Ex. 2:14). Of course, this verb is not used for God. Again, we are limiting ourselves statistically to explicit biblical terminology, and we ignore the question of synonyms.

We are assuming that the legitimacy of our study inheres in the fact that God and Moses, during the life of Moses, are acting within the same context, ambience, environment: Egypt, Sinai, Israel, the desert, Revelation, and all the events of the last four books of the Pentateuch. If we conclude, within this context, certain verbs are restricted to God, certain verbs are restricted to Moses, and certain verbs are used for both God and Moses, some general reflections, perhaps not systematic or precise, become relevant to the question of anthropomorphism.

VERBS SHARED BY GOD AND MOSES

The three examples that follow are a brief sampling from a list compiled by this writer which extends to over 100 in number. In this article we shall rest content

with a summary of the verbs used in this section. See notes at the end of the article for full list.

vahakimoti -- *And I will maintain My Covenant with you* (Lev. 33:9).

vayokem -- *And Moses set up the Tabernacle* (Ex. 40:18)

vayomer -- *And He said, 'Do not come closer'* (Ex. 3:5)

vayomer -- *Moses said, 'I must turn aside to look'* (Ex. 3:3)

astirah -- *"I will hide My countenance from them"* (Deut. 32:20)

vayaster -- *And Moses hid his face* (Ex. 3:6)

But when we have two other lists, one of verbs used for God alone, and another used for Moses alone, we are forced to the conclusion that biblical anthropomorphism is not complete but partial. To return to our tripartite division, apparently there is an area in which God is God, only; an area in which man is man, only; and an area in which God and man resemble each other, not in essence but in action.

VERBS APPLYING TO GOD ALONE

In listing the verbs applied to God exclusively, we not only omitted those applied to Moses, but to any other human character in the Pentateuch. In order to indicate what kind of action is attributed to God, and God only, we have to exclude verbs that are used for the actions of any human being.

bara -- *When God began to create* (Gen. 1:1)

vayipah -- *and He blew into his nostrils* (2:7)

vayatzmah -- *the Lord caused to grow* (2:9)

vayapel -- *the Lord God cast a deep sleep upon the man* (2:21)

vayegoresh -- *He drove the man out* (3:24)

vayashken -- *and stationed east of the garden of Eden* (2:24)

VERBS APPLYING TO MOSES ALONE

Before we attempt to characterize in some way the verbs applied both to God and Moses, in contrast to those applied to God alone, we shall supply the third list, those verbs that are applied to Moses alone.

vayigdal -- *when the child grew up* (Ex. 2:10)

<i>vayira</i>	-- <i>Moses was frightened</i>	(2:14)
<i>vayivrah</i>	-- <i>Moses fled</i>	(2:15)
<i>vayoele</i>	-- <i>Moses consented</i>	(2:21)
<i>vayonos</i>	--... <i>Moses recoiled from it</i>	(4:3)
<i>vayizrok</i>	-- <i>Moses threw it</i>	(9:10)
<i>yashir</i>	-- <i>Then Moses...sang.</i>	(15:1)
<i>vayitzak</i>	-- <i>So he cried out</i>	(15:25)
<i>vayesaper</i>	-- <i>Moses then recounted</i>	(18:8)
<i>nigash</i>	-- <i>Moses approached the thick cloud</i>	(20:18)
<i>voshesh</i>	-- <i>Moses was so long in coming down</i>	(32:1)
<i>vayehal</i>	-- <i>Moses implored the Lord</i>	(32:11)

CONCLUSIONS

When we examine the three lists -- verbs applied only to God, only to Moses, to God and Moses -- we see that some of these verbs are, and some of them could be, used for both God and man on different levels, depending on the degree of anthropomorphism one is ready to attribute to Divinity. While such verbs can possess ambiguity, those verbs describing the action of Moses never offer the potential for Divine implication. Moses is human and his action remains human.

Not all the verbs used exclusively for God or Moses are necessarily restricted by meaning to one or the other. But some verbs are obviously exclusive, not only in biblical usage, but in conceptual limitation. For example, when the Torah states that Moses died, this verb is impossible for God. On the other hand, when we are told that God creates, that action is not possible for Moses.

The conclusions we draw from our study are as follows:

(1) While the Bible does permit itself to describe Divine and human action in identical terms, it is mistaken to assume a total anthropomorphism, or humanization of God by the Bible.

(2) It is evident that certain actions, processes, from the biblical point of view are not interchangeable for God and man. We see this in the fact that some verbs are never used for God, some never for Moses, and even when there is a general analogy in the actions performed, often different verbs are used. Thus God inspires but Moses actually places his hands on Joshua.

(3) Certainly we see a critical difference between the indiscriminate indulgence in human activity by the gods of Greece and Rome, and the limited participation by Divinity in the Bible in human life, in human terms.

NOTES

Other verbs applied to both God and Man: Are, are able, appoint, arise, bring back, bless, break, build, burn, burn with anger, call, carry, cast out, come, command, count, descend, divide, establish, finish, gather, guard, go, hear, hide, hurry, become incensed, judge, kill, make known, make, bring near, bring out, place, put, release, remove, require, respond, return, make ride, rise, say, scatter, see, send, smite, stand, stand up, swerve, take, tell, turn, write. If God and Moses share all these actions -- perhaps not in the same way, but in a way similar enough to concede analogy and make possible the use of the same verb both for God and Moses -- the manifestation of anthropomorphism would be overwhelming

Other verbs applied to God alone: Abounds, afflicts, agrees, allots, annihilates, answers, sets apart, appears, appropriates, asserts, atones, blows, breaks, brings up, grows, casts, ceases, clears, makes cling, clouds, creates, decrees, delivers, delights, denies, destroys, dislodges, displays, dooms, draws upon, drives out, endows, enlarges, establishes, erases, expels, favors, feeds, makes forget, fructifies, gains, gives, guides, makes happen, heals, hurls, increases, judges, keeps, makes known, leads, takes life, mocks, opens, panics, pardons, passes, pities, plagues, prevents, rains, reckons, redeems, regrets, remembers, responds, reveals, is saddened, scatters, shields, shines, shows, shuts, shuts up, smells, skips, spares, starves, stations, strews, subdues, makes succeed, blows the wind, tests, triumphs, brings up, brings upon, makes wander, watches, blows the wind, wipes out.

Other verbs applied to Moses alone: approaches, consents, dies, divests, rises early, entreats, escapes, falls, fears, gathers, grinds, grows, places hands on, hesitates, hides, is modest, makes objectionable, prays, relates, screams, sings, throws, travels, undertakes, waters.

KUDOS TO A DEDICATED BIBLE READER !

William Hadfield-Burkardt takes his Bible study very seriously. He faithfully submits detailed answers to the weekly PARSHAT HASHAVUA quiz we post on the Internet (USENET: soc.culture.jewish) as the ***JBQ QUIZ-OF-THE-WEEK***. We invite others to test their biblical knowledge as does Mr. Hadfield-Burkardt.

FROM THE EUPHRATES TO THE NILE

JOSIAH DERBY

At the Covenant Between the Parts [*Brit Bein Habtarim*] (Gen. 15) God made two promises to Abraham:

Know well that your offspring shall be strangers in a land not theirs, and they shall be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years; but I will pass judgment on the nation they shall serve; and in the end they shall go forth with great wealth (Gen. 15:13, 14).

To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates (Gen. 15:18).¹

The first promise was fulfilled: *The Israelites had done Moses bidding; and they borrowed from the Egyptians objects of silver and gold and clothing.... Thus they stripped the Egyptians* (Ex. 12:35). But where do we read about the fulfillment of the second promise?

It may be argued that the second promise had also been kept, for we read: *Solomon's rule extended over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and the boundary of Egypt* (I Kg. 5:1). Moreover, according to I Samuel 8, David conquered Aram Zobah and Aram Damascus, stationing garrisons in their capitals and exacting tribute from them.

One scholar claims that Solomon established many enclaves of Judeans in Syria.² It should also be noted in favor of this contention that Jeroboam II reconquered Aram Damascus and extended Israel's border northward to L'bo Hamath (II Kg. 14:28). His contemporary, Uzziah, King of Judah, gained control of the Negev as far as Elath, and built a fortification there (II Chr. 26:2). But this can hardly be considered a fulfillment of the promise to Abraham. For one thing, there was still much unconquered territory between Damascus and the Euphrates. And as for the statement regarding Solomon's hegemony (if it is not patently a glorification of his reign) there is no evidence in the Bible that "all

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the kingdoms" had been brought under his control. And besides, whatever sovereignty David or Solomon or their successors exercised over these territories, it was very short-lived.

A more common view that could be propounded in some Jewish quarters is that the second promise was never truly fulfilled for the simple reason that the nation had not deserved it. After all, was it not for the same reason that the nation was ultimately exiled from that portion of the Land of Promise that it had been given? Consequently, some day, in accordance with the divine timetable, that promise will be fulfilled to the letter, even as that segment of the Land of Promise that had been taken from the nation has at long last been returned to it.

This discussion can lead to no fruitful results. There is another, more interesting question that deserves our attention. Abraham was not the only one to whom this promise had been made. As the Israelites set out from Egypt, Moses encourages them by outlining the extent of the Land of Promise: *'I will set your borders from the Sea of Reeds to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates'* (Ex. 23:21). And once again, when their sojourn in the wilderness is nearly over, and they are poised to set foot at last upon the Land that was promised them, Moses assures them that the promise will be kept: *'Every spot on which your foot treads shall be yours: your territory shall extend from the wilderness to the Lebanon, and from the River -- the Euphrates -- to the Western Sea'* (Deut. 11:24). Joshua, upon assuming the leadership of the people, is reassured by God that the promise had not been forgotten, using nearly the exact language that Moses had used on the Plains of Moab (Josh. 1:3,4).

Yet the historians of the monarchy³ were more realistic, and resigned themselves to the far more limited extent of their country. For them the northern boundary was Dan, and the southern boundary was Beersheba. Thus, the historians tell us: *And all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, knew that Samuel was trustworthy as a prophet of the Lord* (I Sam. 3:20). When Hushai of Gath advises Absalom in his tragic coup against his father, David, he tells Absalom to assemble *'all Israel from Dan to Beersheba'* (II Sam. 24:2). In ordering Joab to take a census of the entire nation, David tells him *'to make the rounds of all the tribes of Israel from Dan to Beersheba'* (II Sam. 24:2).

And while the historian allows himself a bit of extra aggrandizement for Solomon by writing that his domain extended northward as far as L'bo Hamath, and that *he controlled the whole region west of the Euphrates* (1 Kg. 5:4), he limits himself to historical reality when he gives an over-all evaluation of Solomon's reign: *All the days of Solomon, Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, dwelt in safety, everyone under his own vine and under his own fig tree* (1 Kg. 5:5).

It is quite clear that in incorporating the Tradition of the Promise made to Abraham at the Covenant Between the Parts, the nation was setting forth the ideal vision of itself, of its longed-for size and extension, its ultimate destiny. The question, then, that concerns us is: How does a tiny and weak country -- small in absolute scale and nearly negligible by comparison with the huge and mighty empires both to its south and to its north -- have the unrealistic audacity to claim a swath of territory many times greater than itself in total area, a territory which under the geo-political conditions of the biblical world the nation understood clearly that it could not hope to conquer and maintain sovereignty over it for any length of time? Israel, even under the United Monarchy, was not a military power of any consequence.⁴

One answer immediately comes to mind. It is almost self-evident from the question itself: as in the case of a small person who can dream of himself as a giant, a small nation can do the same. Convinced as it was of its unique relationship with the One and only true God who was the Creator and the Master of the Universe, it was not just an illusion that God could and would expand the nation's borders so as to gather into it large numbers of people not just for the purpose of increasing its power but perhaps also for spreading the faith in its God. Even though Moses assures the people that God had selected it to be His special nation not because it was great and powerful but rather because it was the smallest of all the nations (Deut. 7:7), it was natural, even logical for the nation to believe that God did not intend to keep it small and weak, for in that condition, what kind of destiny could it fulfill?

These aspirations and expectations became imbedded in the consciousness of the nation as the actual promise by God. The occasional military successes that appeared to reach out towards this goal only served to strengthen their faith in the Promise.

Even though the Promise was reiterated on other occasions and other places, as noted above, the Promise was anchored in the personality of the Father of the Nation, in Abraham. It was to him that the Promise was first made, and this leads us to a second answer to our question, one grounded in history rather than psychology and theology.

The reference to Abraham as "patriarch" creates an image in the mind at variance with what memories the nation in biblical times seemed to have had of him and how they portrayed him in their sacred writings. They saw him not as an aged, white-bearded saintly man constantly engaged in conversation with the Almighty but a *Nesi Elohim*, a title with which the people of Hebron addressed him (Gen. 23:6), which does not mean "a godly prince" but "a mighty prince." The text -- the national memory -- tells us that he is received by kings with great respect and honor as an equal (even though the text refrains from attaching the title to his name); by Melchizedek of Salem (Gen. 14:18), by Abimelek of Gerar (Gen. 20) and by Pharaoh (Gen. 12:18).

Terah, Abraham's father, had moved the family from Ur to the northwest, to Haran, a land between the Euphrates and the Habor Rivers, later known as Aram Naharayim (Aram of the Two Rivers). Upon his father's death, Abraham moved his household southward through Syria into the land of Canaan.

The Bible tells us little or nothing about this period in Abraham's life. An effort to fill this lacuna has been made by B. Z. Luria,⁵ who suggests that, in keeping with the rabbinic tradition both Abraham and Sarah were active in converting people to their God and their way of life.⁶ Abraham brought under his control large enclaves of people through conversion, either by suasion or by force.

Luria⁷ accepts as historic a statement made by Nicolaus of Damascus as quoted by Josephus⁸ that Abraham had been king in Damascus before the arrival of the Arameans. The entire quote reads:

And Nicholas of Damascus, in the fourth book of his history, says thus: Abraham reigned in Damascus, being a foreigner, who came with an army out of the land above Babylon, called the land of the Chaldeans; but after a long time, he got him up, and removed from that country also, with his people, and went into the land then called the land of Canaan but now the land of Judea; and this, when his posterity were become a multitude; as to which posterity of his, we relate their history in another work. Now the

name of Abram is even still famous in the country of Damascus; and there in showed a village named from him, the "Habitation of Abram."

Abraham was subsequently driven out of Damascus by the Aramean hordes that swept out of the desert. Even though he had lost the throne of Damascus, his name and status had apparently gone before him, which would explain the attitude of the kings he encountered later.

Nicolaus' statement, if true, also sheds light on the identity of Abraham's *major domo*, Eliezer of Damascus⁹ whom the childless Abraham considers to be his heir (Gen. 15:2). It may be conjectured that Eliezer was one of the leading citizens of Damascus whom Abraham had converted (hence the name) and had made him one of his chief advisors while king in Damascus. Eliezer was not a slave or servant but a trusted advisor whom he could confidently send on the all-important mission of finding a suitable wife for Isaac.

As Abraham slowly moves southward down the coastline he attracts more converts (whom Luria calls *Ivrim*) who later merged with the Israelite tribes that settled in the north. Abraham travels throughout the land of Canaan finally settling near Hebron. In addition to his household he is accompanied by a substantial fighting¹⁰ force with which he defeats a coalition of four kings that had taken his nephew, Lot, captive, and rescues him and other captives from Sodom. In this battle Abraham is not alone; as a true potentate he has allies, Aner, Eshkol and Mamreh (Gen. 14:24).

Abraham must believe that this territory that he had traversed, and where he had won over so many to his way will one day be his again, and if not his then his descendants will inherit it: the entire span of land, wherever he had set foot.

This is the memory that the nation had of its distant past. In view of the history it had experienced in the more than half a millennium since the time of those events, and in view of the geo-political situation at the time of the writing of that history it was thought best merely to make rather vague references to that vision and aspiration. It was not megalomania which prompted them even to mention a hope that flew in the face of reality; it was rather a bow to an ancient memory of what might have been. It was a sacred act of tribute to the Founder for his enormous and immortal achievement.

A. E. Speiser states:

Canon implies sanctity, and sanctity presupposes that extraordinary importance is thus being attached to the object ... so venerated. The patriarchal narrative must have acquired such a status well before the date of the literary work in which they were incorporated.¹²

Thus, God's promise to Abraham, another instance of the sacredness attached to the patriarchal narratives, was kept there in spite of the reality of the diminished territory of the Land of Israel.

NOTES

1. In Hebrew : *Nahal Mitzrayim* identified as Wadi el -Arish, approximately 25 miles south from Gaza into the Sinai.
2. C.H. Gordon, "The Origin of the Jews in Elephantine," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, XIII (1954) p. 56. This reference is found in N. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis*, p.119, note 22.
3. In the Books of Samuel and Books of Kings. .
4. The statistics in the Bible, generally, should be approached with caution; as one Bible scholar has said, "The authors of the Bible were not accountants."
5. See especially, *Kadmut Ha'ivrim (The Antiquity of the Hebrews)*, and several articles in the journal *Beit Mikra*: "Parashah Ne'elmaḥ Bagvul Hatzafon" ("A Lost Chapter on the Northern Boundary") 100 (1985) p. 2ff; "Hakibush Bi'yemei Ha'avot" ("The Conquest in the Days of the Patriarchs") 103 (1985) pp. 463ff.
6. Midrash R. Gen. 39:21: "Rav Huna said, Abraham converted the males and Sarah converted the females."
7. *Beit Mikra* 117 (1990) p.117.
8. *Antiquities of the Jews, Book I*, end of Ch. III in *The Works of Josephus*, ed. William Whiston, (New York: A.M. Brainard Publishing Co.) Vol. I, p. 99.
9. The NJPS simply transliterates "Dammesek Eliezer," and notes that the Hebrew is uncertain, even though in Hebrew Dammesek is always Damascus.
10. The number 318 in Genesis 14:14 is not to be taken literally. For a discussion of the special nature of this number see Gevirtz, "Abram's 318," *Israel Exploration Journal*, Vol. 19 (1969) pp. 110-113. I am indebted to Nahum Sarna for this reference.
11. See, A.E. Speiser on Genesis 14 in the *Anchor Bible*. Abraham is seen as a "resolute and powerful chieftain," p. 108.
12. E.A. Speiser, "The Biblical Idea of History in Its Common Near Eastern Setting," in *The Jewish Expression* (Bantam Books: 1970) pp. 14.

KIMCHI AND TANHUM BEN JOSEPH HAYERUSHALMI ON CHRONICLES

BEN ZION KATZ

The Books of I and II Chronicles consist of two parts. The first 10 chapters of I Chronicles give genealogical lists from Adam until the time the book was written; it corresponds to much of the genealogical material found in the Torah and later biblical books. The rest of I Chronicles and all of II Chronicles deal with David, Solomon and the history of the Southern Kingdom of Judah until the Exile in 586 BCE, and thus retell much of the material that comprises I Samuel through II Kings. The author of Chronicles, according to the Talmud, was Ezra (Baba Batra 14b).

Differences abound between the genealogies as recorded in the Torah and the events recorded in the Former Prophets (Samuel through Kings) and the material found in I and II Chronicles. Indeed, every commentator on Chronicles must grapple with these contradictions, which basically fall into four categories: Theology, deletions, history and text. We will list some of these contradictions and discuss the approach of two traditional, medieval commentators regarding far and away the most common category of these differences -- the textual.

DIFFERENCES: TORAH/FORMER PROPHETS-CHRONICLES

The first set of differences between the Torah and the Former Prophets on the one hand and Chronicles on the other is theological in nature. A few major examples follow.

In I Chronicles 6:7-13 and 18-23 it is clear that Samuel was a priest, unlike the impression one might receive from I Samuel 1:1.¹ Since Samuel took over priestly duties at Shiloh from Eli (because the latter's sons were unworthy [I Sam. 2:12-3:1]), it makes sense that Samuel should actually be a priest. Similarly, I Chronicles 15:18,21,24 and 16:5,38 state that Oved-edom, the custodian of the Ark of the Covenant before it came to its final resting place in Jerusalem

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was a Levite and not from Gath, a Philistine city, as is implied in II Samuel 6:10.

In I Chronicles 18:17 it is clear that David's sons were chieftains, not priests (as in II Samuel 8:18).

In I Samuel 31:12 it appears that the bodies of Saul and his sons were burned, while the corresponding passage in I Chronicles 10:12 omits this.²

In I Kings 8:66 it appears that the festival Solomon celebrated following the dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem concluded on the eighth day (corresponding to Sh'mini Atzeret), while II Chronicles 7:9-10 clearly states that Solomon celebrated Sh'mini Atzeret.

In I Kings 9:10-11, Solomon gave Hiram, King of Tyre, 20 cities in the Galilee in exchange for help in building the Temple, while in II Chronicles 8:1-2 this same King, whom it calls Huram, gave cities to Solomon.³

Finally, Exodus 12:8 states that the paschal lamb should be eaten roasted, while Deuteronomy 16:7 states that it should be cooked; II Chronicles 35:13 states that it should be cooked with fire, clearly an attempt to use the language found in both Torah passages.

Major episodes are deleted in the Books of Chronicles, among them: the incident of Bathsheba and her husband Uriah the Hittite; the rape of David's daughter Tamar by her half-brother Amnon; the rebellion of Absalom against his father David; David's deathbed charge to Solomon; the idolatry of Solomon in his old age.

Historical details differ between Chronicles and the Former Prophets as well. In general, extra information is given in Chronicles about kings of the Southern Kingdom of Judah (Rehoboam, Abiyah, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jotham, Hezekiah and Manasseh), while there is much less or nothing about kings of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Specific details differ as well. For example, II Samuel 21:19 states that Elhanan slew Goliath, while I Chronicles 20:5 states that he slew Goliath's brother.⁴ It is not noted in I Kings 9 why Solomon removed Pharaoh's daughter from the City of David, while II Chronicles 8:11 supplies us with a reason; she was not pure enough to dwell there.

Finally, there are thousands of relatively minor textual differences between the Torah and Former Prophets on the one hand and Chronicles on the other.⁵ Two

examples will suffice. First: in Genesis 10:4 one of the sons of Javan son of Japhet son of Noah is called "Dodanim," while in I Chronicles 1:7 he is called "Rodanim." Second, II Samuel 24:13 speaks of seven years of famine, while I Chronicles 21:11-12 speaks of three years.

KIMCHI

David Kimchi (Radak, ?1160-?1235), referring to the difference between Genesis 10:4 and I Chronicles 1:7, comments on the latter passage:

... and in the Book of Genesis, where the word is written with two *dalets* [Dodanim], this is because the *dalet* and the *resh* are similar in appearance, so that when archivists referred to their ancient genealogical records, some would read the name with a[n initial] *dalet* [dodanim] and others would read it with a[n initial] *resh* [rodanim]. Thus, the name was popularized with either a *dalet* or a *resh*. Therefore, the name was recorded in Genesis with one reading and in Chronicles with the other, to inform [posterity] that both terms refer to the same name... [Other examples of interchangeable Hebrew letters in the Bible, such as the letters *aleph*, *heh*, *vav* and *yud* are cited]⁶ and even though there are homiletic interpretations explaining the significance of these letter changes, I have decided not to record them so that my work will not become too onerous. [Know, however, that] the essential [reason for these differences] is that which I have already stated [above].

Without getting too carried away (for Kimchi does not seek to explain the three other categories of differences between Chronicles and the earlier biblical books in a like fashion)⁷, he has made several crucial points here. First and most obvious is that minor letter differences in the Bible are of no consequence. Ibn Ezra makes the same assertion (see note 6). Second, the implication is that even the Torah had preceding (written) sources upon which it drew. Third, the Torah and later biblical books both preserve equally valid traditions, even when they transmit conflicting information. It is clear that Rodanim and Dodanim could not both have been the name of Noah's great-grandson. As Kimchi states, because the letters appear similar, there was confusion at some point as to the true name. (A *dalet* and a *resh* do not sound alike, but the written forms are similar.) Kim-

chi does not argue that because the Torah was what Moses heard directly from God its version of events (in this context, the name Dodanim) is superior to that of Chronicles.

TANHUM BEN JOSEPH HAYERUSHALMI

Tanhum HaYerushalmi (c. 1220-1291) was known as the Ibn Ezra of the East. (His commentaries on Judges, Samuel, Kings, Jonah, Habakkuk, Lamentations and Ecclesiastes were written in Arabic, and unfortunately the only published translations of Chronicles are in Latin and German.)

His approach to at least some textual variations between the Former Prophets and Chronicles (e.g., II Samuel 24:13 vs. I Chronicles 21:11-12 cited above) is to attribute them to copyists' errors.⁸ The potential for extending this kind of reasoning is great. It might, for example, allow an examination of other biblical texts for copyists' errors as well, for it is illogical to assume that only parallel passages, where inconsistencies are easily detectable, should be subject to errors of transmission. It is also illogical to assume that only non-Torah books were subject to such errors. (One could plausibly argue that since the utmost care was taken with the transmission of the text of the Torah, there should be fewer such errors than in other biblical books). Thus, one might be justified in searching for such errors even in the Torah itself.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The approaches of Kimchi and Tanhum HaYerushalmi are complementary. Kimchi implies that both the Torah and the later biblical books may have transmitted equally valid traditions, based on older sources that were misread. Tanhum HaYerushalmi allows for copyists' errors. If one can approach the text of the Torah in the same manner as the later biblical books, then the "lower criticism" -- attempting to reconstruct an "original" reading of a received text that is difficult to understand as written⁹ -- may be justifiable from a traditional standpoint. If the Torah, at least in part, was based on preceding written sources, leading to different textual traditions (as Kimchi implied was the case with Dodanim and Rodanim), perhaps other contradictions in the text can be explained in

a similar manner. This raises the possibility of "higher" or "form" criticism of biblical text, in which scholars seek to determine which tradition or traditions were behind a received text.

For example, in the Book of Genesis, many stories appear to be recounted more than once: The naming of Beer-sheba, by Abraham (Gen. 21:22-34), and by Isaac (Gen. 26:18-33); the expulsion of Hagar, when she was pregnant (Gen. 16), and with Ishmael (Gen. 21:9-21); the three so-called wife-sister stories (Gen. 12:10-21, 20:1-18, and 26:6-12); the two givings of the name Israel, (Gen. 32:23-33 and 35:9-16); the two namings of the town of Bethel (Gen. 28:10-22 and 35:9-16).

Moreover, different styles appear to be used in the different accounts. For example: The first story of Hagar, in Genesis 16, uses "Lord" and the word *shif-hah* for "maidservant." The second story of Hagar, in Genesis 21, uses "Elohim" and *amah* for "maidservant."

Many scholars conclude that these differing accounts might be based on differing traditions.¹⁰ Of course, while ascribing such a position to Kimchi or Tanhum HaYerushalmi would be ludicrous, the reasoning process involved is not qualitatively different. Whatever conclusion is reached, modern ideas need to be grappled with. Moreover, the statements of Kimchi and Tanhum HaYerushalmi concerning Chronicles need to be seen alongside other related contemporary opinions. Ibn Ezra, in his Torah commentary to Genesis 36:31, cited an opinion that the entire following section of the Torah, through verse 43, was written after the time of Moses. (He added that the book with that opinion should be burned.) I have recently defended the opinion that Judah HaHasid of Regensburg (d. 1217) may have held the same opinion.¹¹ The implications of the types of opinions expressed by Kimchi, Tanhum HaYerushalmi and Judah HaHasid for a traditional yet open-minded Jewish Bible scholar are far-reaching.

NOTES

1. All of the classical commentators interpret I Samuel 1:1 in light of Samuel's genealogy as given in Chronicles and state that Elkanah (Samuel's father) lived in Ephraim, but was really a priest. The question then is: Why does I Samuel 1:1 state in the opening of the verse that Elkanah was from the hills of Ephraim, and close by calling him an Ephraimite? Kimchi asks this question specifically and argues that "Ephraimite" applies to Elkanah's ancestor Tzuf. (In fact the verse is ambiguous and the

word "Ephraimite" could refer to Tzuf, its immediate antecedent, or could refer back to Elkanah, the subject of the sentence.)

2. Traditional commentators assume that something else was burned (not the bodies); e.g., incense (to camouflage the smell of the corpses; cf. Rashi, Kara) or their weapons (cf. Kimchi). The problem with all of these interpretations, however, is that none of these objects is mentioned in the verse.

3. Most, but not all, traditional commentators had a problem with the idea of "giving away" part of Israel. Gersonides (1248-1344), for example, reconciles the verses from Kings and Chronicles by stating that Hiram first gave the cities to Solomon and then Solomon took them back, because "it is illogical to assume that a king could reduce the size of the land of Israel." Kimchi, on the other hand, simply states that each king gave the other 20 cities and that one transaction was recorded in Kings, the other in Chronicles.

4. This is a difficult issue for traditional commentators to grapple with, the obvious problem being that David killed Goliath (I Sam. 17). One possibility is that Elhanan is David (as in Rashi); the textual support for this opinion comes from the fact that Elhanan was from Bethlehem, as was David. But the verse in Samuel then contradicts the verse in Chronicles which states that Elhanan killed Goliath's brother.

The second possibility is that the verse in Samuel really means that Elhanan killed Goliath's brother (as in Kimchi). The problem here is that the textual support for this opinion is very weak. Even if the word *et* here means "with," the verse in Samuel would read *And Elchanan ... killed ... [the one] with Goliath ...*

The third possibility (cf. the commentary attributed to Rashi on the verse from Chronicles) is that the Goliath mentioned in these two verses in Samuel and Chronicles is not the same Goliath killed by David. The [slight] textual support for this is that in these two verses Goliath is said to be a "Gittite" (i.e., from Gath), while in the David and Goliath story, Goliath is called a Philistine. The problems with this interpretation are that Goliath actually is from Gath (I Sam. 17:23) and that again there is the issue of why the verse in Chronicles contradicts that in Samuel.

5. Besides the two examples given here, the one discussed in the previous note might fit into this category as well, for the textual variations between the verse in Samuel and the one in Chronicles regarding Elhanan are slight. The two verses in parallel read:

Samuel: *Vayach Elchanan ben Yary-Orgim Bes-Halahmi et Galyat ...*

Chronicles: *Vayach Elchanan ben Yair et Lahmi ah Galyat ...*

Note that aside from the variation in the name of Elhanan's father, the particle *et* to *akh* [brother] involves a change of only a single letter, and that *Bethalahmi* [Bethlehemite] to *et Lahmi* [Lahmi becoming the name of Goliath's brother] involves a change of only three letters.

6. Ibn Ezra also felt that minor differences in these letters are immaterial, even in the Torah. See his long commentary to the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1) and his grammar book *Safah Berurah* (ed. G. Lippman, 1839, Furth, reprinted Jerusalem, 1967).

7. The obvious explanation along these lines, for example, regarding the two verses concerning Elhanan and Goliath (or his brother) is that I Samuel preserves two traditions regarding who killed Goliath (David or Elhanan), just as there were two traditions regarding the name Dodanim or Rodanim.

The author of Chronicles, wanting to reconcile these differences, made a few changes to the second verse (see note 5, above) to reconcile these two traditions. The problems with this explanation are that the David and Goliath story is so well known it is hard to imagine a competing tradition. It also ascribes conscious alterations of traditions to the author of Chronicles, and it is difficult to compare the magnitude of the Dodanim-Rodanim difference to the varying material on the slayer of Goliath.

8. M.H. Segal, *Parshanut Hamikra*, p. 93; I Goldziher, *Studien über Tanchum Jeruschalmi* (Leipzig: 1850) p. 25.

9. An example of "lower criticism" can be brought from Amos 6:12, which reads *Can horses gallop on rock? Can one plow with oxen?* The second half of this verse makes no sense -- of course one

plows with oxen! One way to explain this odd phrase is to split the last word of the verse [babikarim] into two [babakar yam]), so the sentence would read; *Can horses gallop on rock? Can one plow the sea with oxen?*" I am indebted to L. Jacobs, *Principles of Jewish Faith: An Analytical Study* (London: 1961) p. 258, for this example.

10. See for example, E.A. Speiser *Anchor Bible: Genesis*, pp. 116-121, 158-160, 1964, and Jacobs, pp. 245-246.

11. See my "Judah HaHasid: Three controversial commentaries", *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, 25 (Jan-March 1997) pp. 23-30

BRAIN TEASER

Brain Teaser #1, submitted by Rabbi Saul Leeman was: *The instances in the Tanakh where we are given the name of a son and the name of his father are numerous. However, the instances where we can name a daughter and her mother (such as Miriam, daughter of Yocheved) are far fewer. How many such instances can you list?* The following submitted answers: Israel Stein, Paul Thomas, and Julius Moster. Congratulations to our winner, Rachel Harris, for submitting perfect answers to the Brain Teaser.

The correct answers to Brain Teaser #1 are:

Naamah [her mother: Zillah] (Gen: 4:22)

Dinah, daughter of Leah (Gen. 34:1)

Tamar [her mother: Maacah] (II Sam. 3:3)

Lo Ruhamah [her mother: Gomer] (Hosea 1:6)

Merab and Michal [their mother: Ahinoam] (I Sam. 14:49-50)

Brain Teaser #2

Manasseh is the name of one of the sons of Joseph (Gen, 14:51). Manasseh is also the name of one of the kings of Judah (II Kings 21). List as many instances as you can of names mentioned in the Torah and duplicated in the books of: Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings.

Our readers are urged to mail in their responses to: **Jewish Bible Quarterly**, POB 29002, Jerusalem, Israel or by email to jbq@jewishbible.org

Those who submit a perfect answer will receive a one-year gift subscription, to be given to any person of their choice. All who submit perfect answers will be acknowledged in the next issue, together with the correct answers.

FROM "SEVENTH DAY" TO "SHABBAT": DUALITIES IN GENESIS 2:1-3

JONATHAN PEARL

The writers of the Hebrew Bible utilized their language masterfully, and often quite subtly. One such linguistic ingenuity, "asymmetric Janus parallelism," is defined as a word which "parallels what precedes it with one meaning and what follows it with a different meaning."¹

According to pioneer Bible scholar Cyrus Gordon, the most important example of this phenomenon is found in Genesis 2:1, involving the word *vayekhullu*. Although *vayekhullu* is commonly translated as *and they were finished*, Gordon notes the dual meaning of the word in this biblical passage (Gen. 2:1-3). Set between the two Creation stories, *vayekhullu* when reflecting on the first account means "and they were completed," while the same word when anticipating the second account means "and they were destroyed."² Gordon states that it is not for us to decide which explanation of the word is correct, but rather to perceive the intentional dual meaning of the word. He sees these two accounts of Creation not as distinct and unrelated, but rather as complementary to each other.

This is also an example of the phenomenon called "build-up and climax."³ The first Creation is the "build-up," followed by the "completion" passage in which all is annihilated, and ending with the "climactic" account of Creation.

Intrigued by this two-fold interpretation of the *vayekhullu* passage as one of both creation *and* destruction, I endeavored to extend it further.

TEXTUAL DUALITIES

There are a number of words in the *vayekhullu* passage which might appear to conflict with this theory (such words as *vayevarekh*, *vayishbbot*, *vayekadesh*). But upon careful examination, one can find a duality (in some cases even a plurality) of meaning for these words as well.

Jonathan Pearl earned his Ph.D in Jewish Studies at New York University, is co-founder and co-director of Jewish Telemages Resource Center, and is rabbi of Congregation Beth Emeth in Hewlett, New York.

(1) *Barekh* not only means "to bless" but can also mean "to curse" (see Job 1:5, 2:9). It has been correctly pointed out by Shimon Bakon and the editorial committee of *Jewish Bible Quarterly* that the Bible's use of the word *barekh* to mean "to curse" is purely euphemistic. While such is certainly the case, in all likelihood to avoid something which might appear sacrilegious, the polarity of meanings in the use of the word *barekh* in the Bible -- from blessing to cursing -- nevertheless exists and cannot be avoided. Thus, we may have in the *vayekhullu* passage the first instance of the euphemistic use of *barekh* to mean "to curse" -- the origin of the polarity of meaning in the use of the word *barekh* in the Bible.

(2) *Shavat* means "to rest" but also assumes the meaning "to destroy" or "cease to exist" (see Lev. 26:6; Isa. 24:8; II Kg. 23:5; Jer. 7:34).

(3) *Kadesh*, while meaning "holy" or "separate," is also understood as "unfit for use" (Deut. 22:9).

Thus we see that, like *vayekhullu*, these words have a duality of meaning. This enables us to extend Gordon's assertion regarding destruction to the entire passage (Gen. 2:1-3). Thus, while retrospectively these verses refer to the completion of the first (imperfect) Creation, prospectively they indicate the destruction of the first Creation and the need for the second (successful) Creation. The latter calls for the following free translation:

Thus the entire universe⁴ and all its host were destroyed. And on the Seventh Day God finished that which He had made. And on the Seventh Day there was a cessation from⁵ all He created. And God cursed [blessed] the Seventh Day and declared it taboo [unfit/sacred], for on that day He destroyed [desisted from] all His work, which He created and did.

The duality of meaning contained in the word *vayekhullu* is echoed and amplified throughout the passage.

DUALITIES AND JEWISH TRADITION

I propose that this "variant" reading of the passage is by no means alien to Judaism. Indeed, my findings, which follow, attest to such a dual reading as falling within the realm of Jewish tradition and Judaic wisdom.

Reflecting on the first Creation, the *vayekhullu* passage implies destruction -- as this first Creation was not to God's liking. This is because it was a failure,⁶ and therefore had to be destroyed and replaced. The second Creation, on the other hand, was successful, as it is from the man and woman of the latter account that humanity is descended. Indeed, such an interpretation of these accounts of Creation is offered by Rabbi Abbahu in the Midrash.⁷

The notion of two Creations -- the first, that failed and had to be replaced, and the second, that was the lasting one and produced the desired results -- might even be embedded in the lore of the Jewish festival of *Rosh haShana*, which is celebrated on the first day of Tishri, the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar. The holiday is described in Jewish liturgy as *hayom harat olam* [the birthday of the world]. However, in Jewish tradition, *Rosh haShanah* is alternately called *Yom haZikaron* [memorial day] based on the biblical verse stating that this day shall be a *shabbaton* [complete day of rest, like Shabbat with all its accompanying prohibitions] and a *zikaron* [memorial] (Lev. 23:24-25). Might not this day, then, have been at once memorializing the destruction of the first Creation and also celebrating the real "birthday of the world" -- the second Creation, the one which produced humankind?

While Genesis' first account of Creation may be the first explicit reference in the Bible to God destroying a Creation which did not please Him, it was not the only one. God, who is described in the Midrash as the "Creator and destroyer of worlds,"⁸ was unhappy with humanity during the time of Noah, and so declared that He would destroy *all flesh ... with the earth* (Gen. 6:13). Following this second all-inclusive destruction, however, God promised never again to unleash His wrath against the earth.⁹

The most striking and important application of the dualities which are the subject of this article concerns Shabbat. The origins of Shabbat (the Seventh Day) are pagan in nature. Most scholars studying the ancient Near East agree that there is a strong connection between the Babylonian and Assyrian "Seventh Day"¹⁰ and that of the Israelites. Of course, it was the genius of the Hebrews to develop and refine the pagan Seventh Day, into the unique Shabbat -- a day of rest, holiness and sanctity. The passage which is the subject of this article does not make mention of Shabbat, but only of the Seventh Day. In fact, in the liturgy of *kabbalat Shabbat* we find the phrase *mekadesh haShabbat umevarekh*

shevi'i. Indeed, in this context, we might read this as "He sanctifies the Shabbat and curses the Seventh Day."¹⁰ Thus the refinement referred to above was a dissociation from the pagan Seventh Day, while holding fast to the holy, and civilized Shabbat.

Nevertheless, the Seventh Day mentioned in Genesis 2:2 is undoubtedly related to its pagan antecedents, and was indeed -- particularly in Assyrian times, as Yechezkel Kaufman suggests -- an 'evil' day.¹⁰ This would explain why in its earliest stages "The Sabbath [in the Pentateuch] was originally a taboo day, that is to say, an unlucky day; no one was to work on that day ... for they would run the risk ... of spoiling their work."¹¹ If indeed Shabbat, in its most primitive and undeveloped phase, was an unlucky day, it might stem from God having "cursed" [*vayevarekh*] its antecedent -- the Seventh Day. And if work done on this unlucky day ran the risk of being spoiled, might that not be because God declared the day "unfit for use" [*vayekadesh oto*]?

Furthermore, I suggest that Shabbat, like *Rosh haShana*,¹² may also be viewed as having been a "day of remembrance" for the destruction of the first Creation. Strikingly, Shabbat is referred to as a *zikkaron lema'ase bereishit*;¹³ that is, a memorial for the account of Creation -- obviously the first one, which was destroyed. In addition, the word *vayekaddesh* (found in the *vayekhullu* passage) can mean "dedicated to" or "in remembrance of" (Jer. 1:5; Joel 2:15). So *vayekaddesh oto ki vo shavat mikkol melakhto* can now be alternatively read *and He dedicated it [to be remembered] for on that day God destroyed [from] all His work*. Thus, it would appropriately have been a "memorial day."

While it may be jolting to couple Shabbat with the motifs of death, destruction, memorial and taboo, such a relationship might indeed have existed in ancient times. It may be no coincidence that many of the Jewish laws concerning mourning are akin to those pertaining to Shabbat (e.g., the prohibitions against leaving one's private domain, against performing manual labor, and against conducting business transactions).¹⁴

A POSITIVE MESSAGE

In conclusion, I must emphasize that the interpretations presented here in no way diminish the beauty of the Hebrew Bible or the genius of the Hebrew nation.

On the contrary, they demonstrate the growth and maturation of the Jewish religion against the backdrop of its pagan antecedents. For while an earlier, primitive Seventh Day looks back to the death and destruction of the first Creation, a subsequent and marvelous evolution transformed the Seventh Day into a Shabbat that looks forward to the world's renewed Creation.

NOTES

1. Cyrus H. Gordon, "Asymmetric Janus Parallelism," in *Eretz Israel*, Vol. 16 (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1982) pp. 80-81.
2. Gordon points out that Rabbi Efes of Antioch interprets *vayekhullu* as 'total destruction.' Indeed, the same meaning is found in the Bible as well (e.g., Jer. 30:11). Gordon also notes that it is most unusual for a Hebrew word to share the same dual meanings with an English word. It does occur however, regarding the English "to finish" which means both "to complete or perfect" and "to terminate or destroy," exactly paralleling the dual meanings of the Hebrew *lekhalot*.
3. Cyrus Gordon, "Build-Up and Climax," *Studies in Bible and the Ancient Near East Presented to Samuel E. Lowenstamm* (Jerusalem: 1978) pp. 29-34.
4. "Heaven and Earth" is a merism meaning "the entire universe."
5. Denoting that not *all* was destroyed but only parts.
6. While the creation of light and the heavenly bodies may have been among the lasting features of the first Creation, there was certainly failure in so far as man's ability to fulfill the command to reproduce. See Gordon, "Build-Up and Climax," p.33.
- A phrase that might seem to be problematic for this interpretation is *vehinei tov m'od* (Gen. 1:31). If all is *very good* why destroy it? However, note that there are two midrashic interpretations of this phrase, both of which allude to death (Genesis Rabbah, 9:5, 10).
7. Exodus Rabbah 30:3.
8. Genesis Rabbah 9:2.
9. Mankind, on the other hand, would not be as fortunate, as there are numerous biblical references to God pouring out His wrath against those who disobey His laws and commands.
10. Furthermore, the passage in Exodus 20:11 amplifies this distinction of Shabbat (and employs the proper conventional meaning of *barekh*): ... *and He rested on the Seventh Day; therefore God blessed the Sabbath Day and sanctified it.*
11. Salomon Reinach, *Orpheus* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 1942) p. 190.
12. As noted above, *Rosh haShana* is a *shabbaton*.
13. Note Jewish liturgy, for the example the *kiddush* for Shabbat.
14. Exodus 16:29, 9:10; Mo'ed Katan 23a; 15a.

DARSHANUT

Darshanut, based on the Hebrew root darash [explicate, expound] presents the expository, homiletic interpretation of the Bible. Its origins are as old as the most ancient aggadic and midrashic teachings and as new as the sermon or Dvar Torah delivered on the most recent Shabbat. The intent is a challenge to relate the Bible to the problems, issues and goals of daily living.

We encourage our readers to contribute to Darshanut. The submission should be based on the Bible, no more than 750 words in length, and as relevant and current as you would like to make it. For more information on submissions, see the inside back cover.

JETHRO -- WHO WAS HE? THEODORE STEINBERG

One *sedra* [Sabbath portion] of the annual cycle of Torah readings is named after Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses (Ex. 18:1-20:23). This is interesting because Jethro, after all, was not an Israelite, and one may ask why a whole *sedra* is named after him; especially the one distinguished by the Revelation at Sinai. (But then he is not the only non-Israelite to receive this distinction. There is also a *sedra* with the name of the Moabite King Balak [Num. 22:2-28:9]. We might even include Noah [Gen. 6:9-11:32], whose era pre-dated any Israelite.) But Jethro has his *sedra* and the Torah introduces him as a religious man, a believer in God, a wise man, and a hospitable gentleman.

Moses was a bedraggled runaway and outlaw when Jethro took him in and provided him with shelter, employment as a shepherd, and even a wife. Although he was not an Israelite, he showed himself to be sympathetic to monotheistic faith, and he rejoiced in all the good things that happened to Israel (Ex. 18:8-11).

Theodore Steinberg, an Associate Editor of JBQ, lives in Jerusalem and delivers his divrei Torah at the weekday morning minyan of Kehilat Moreshet Yisrael.

Later on, in the Book of Numbers (10:29) Moses invited him to join the people of Israel permanently, but he refused. In the meantime, he had been a great help to Moses, for Jethro gave his son-in-law wise advice on how to set up a workable judicial system.

All this is common knowledge. But Jewish tradition and the medieval commentators have some varying views about Jethro. On the negative side, he is not altogether trusted. For example, his refusal to become part of the people of Israel. A man who chooses not to join the Chosen People, in spite of all that he has seen and heard -- his protestations of joy must be shallow, and not quite trustworthy.

The Talmud (San. 94a) remarks that upon Moses' invitation to join the children of Israel, Jethro's flesh became *chidudin*, *chidudin*, which may be translated as "bloody," or "full of thorny prickles." Two sages, Rav and Samuel, argued over the meaning of the word: Rav said: "Jethro caused a sharp knife to pass over his flesh." That is, he circumcised himself and became part of the children of Israel. Samuel is not quite so trusting of Jethro: His flesh became all prickly because of his horror at what happened to the Egyptians at the Red Sea.

Sforno's comment is interesting: Jethro would not accept Moses' invitation to become an Israelite himself, but Moses succeeded in persuading him to allow his sons to become part of Israel. As for Jethro himself, he returned home to Midian. Sforno says that he returned for what we might call, with a touch of sarcasm, contemporary "Zionistic" reasons: "My advanced age cannot bear the air of another land or its food." The Sifrey adds: "I could never go with you," said Jethro. "*Yesh li mishpacha, yesh li eretz, yesh li nechasim.*" ("I have a family, a land, and property.") That is -- I'm not ready for such a big adventure.

And two final comments: When did Jethro actually come on his visit to Israel's encampment? Was it before the Revelation at Sinai, or was it afterwards? In the text, Jethro's arrival is located before the Sinai Revelation and the giving of the Torah. But the traditional discussion moves back and forth. Disregarding the time frame in the text, some authorities argue that Jethro arrived after the Revelation. For example, Moses tells Jethro of all the laws which must be followed, and this suggests that the visit had to come after the Revelation, since before then there were no such laws to administer.

This is an unsolved problem, but consider Ibn Ezra's thought: Jethro came after the events at Sinai, but this episode is inserted as if the visit took place earlier. And for a good reason. Immediately prior to Jethro's arrival, Exodus 17:8-16 tells of Israel's battle with Amalek, the archenemies of Israel, who attacked viciously and without cause. The very next paragraph is about Jethro's visit. Why? In order to tell us that not all non-Israelites are like Amalek.

And finally, on a more personal level, the episode tells the reader a bit about family relations. How shall one treat one's father-in-law? *And Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and bowed down and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into the tent* (Ex. 18:7).

What a nice picture. It is a pleasure to read a few words on where the sense of human unity, solidarity and love probably begins, and whence we learn it. In the family, of course, and perhaps especially with one's in-laws.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

In your article "Creation, Tabernacle and Sabbath" (Vol. 25/2, p. 81) you speak of "the strange use of [to do] in both accounts," and translate the Hebrew term *aseh* [to do] as "observe." It seems to me this is missing the point. The term in Genesis 2:3, *asher bara Elohim la'asot* should really be rendered as "which God created to do," that is to say, the Creator set the stage and we humans ought now to act out what we are [commanded] to do, including the Sabbath. Without our "doing it," there would be no Sabbath (the non-Jewish world is proof thereof), nor anything else we are commanded to observe, i.e. "to do" or "not to do."

Dr. Asher Eder
Jerusalem

RESPONSE

Both Genesis 2:3 and Exodus 31:16, use the word *la-asot* [to do] in connection with the Sabbath. The major thrust of my article you refer to was to show the significant link between Creation, ending in the Sabbath and the building of the Tabernacle, that is to be interrupted by the observance of the Sabbath. The term *la-asot* was one of several *Leitworte* connecting both events.

I could, therefore, wholeheartedly agree with your translation of *la-asot* in Exodus, but it is hardly applicable to the Divine act of Creation. Though syntactically awkward, either the old JPS translation: *which God in erecting has made*, or the New JPS translation: *the work of creation which He had made*, is to be preferred.

However, my late colleague, Haim Abramovitz, proposed the following interpretation of *la-asot*: God created things in a manner able to perpetuate themselves, to multiply and even to evolve.

Dr. Shimon Bakon
Editor

Sir,

In his article on the daughters of Zelophehad (25:3, p. 169), Rabbi Derby argues that the protestations of the elders of Manasseh were not credible because real property could not be moved from one tribe to another. What about border plots? These could be easily annexed by a bordering tribe. The percentage of border holdings to total tribal territory for large tribes, like Manasseh, would be small, but still of concern. For tribes with smaller areas, such as Benjamin, the percentage would be quite high. God's ruling which supported the elders' contention would be of course applicable to all tribes. Derby also argues that the likelihood of a girl from one tribe meeting a man from another was remote. In border holdings, such meetings would probably be more the rule rather than the exception.

Julius B. Moster
Los Angeles

Sir,

In a recent issue of the JBQ, Daniel D. Stuhlman in his instructive article entitled *A Variant Text from the Isaiah Scroll* writes regarding Isaiah 57:19:

שלום שלום לרחוק ולקרוב. This example is hard to characterize.

The meaning of this sentence is obscure. שלום does not seem to be a parallelism, calling to a person, or a poetic repetition.

While it is true that it is not a calling or a poetic repetition, one can discern that there is indeed some parallelism here if one recognizes the "abab structure" through which שלום שלום לרחוק ולקרוב is to be understood as saying: שלום לרחוק ושלום לקרוב. Other interesting examples of this structure: (Song of Songs 1:5) כאהלי קדר כיריעות שלמה which is to be understood as: שחורה אני ונאווה, שחורה כאהלי קדר ונאווה כיריעות שלמה (Ps. 113:5-6) המגביהי which is to be understood as: לשבת במשפילי לראות בשמים ובארץ לא יבא עמוני ומואבי בקהל (Deut. 23:4-5). לשבת - בשמים, המשפילי לראות - בארץ which is to be understood as: לא יבא עמוני ומואבי בקהל ה' על דבר אשר לא קדמו אתכם בלחם ובמים ושכר עליך את בלעם עמוני - על דבר אשר לא קדמו where לא יבא עמוני ומואבי בקהל ה' and לא יבא עמוני ומואבי - אשר שכר עליך את בלעם and אתכם בלחם ובמים.

Saul Leeman
Providence

BIBLE ART CONTEST FOR YOUTH

As part of the festivities for the State of Israel Jubilee (50th Anniversary), the International Bible Contest Committee is sponsoring a Bible Art Contest for Youth. The winner of the First Prize will be invited to Israel, and be a guest at the camp of the International Bible Contest for Jewish Youth. The Committee will cover all costs of travel and lodgings. Prizes will be awarded to outstanding participants. All pictures will remain the property of the Committee, and will not be returned. The winning picture will be reproduced in the **Jewish Bible Quarterly**.

CONTEST RULES

1. Jewish youth, ages 9-18, are invited to submit entries on a biblical theme, person or event. Residents of all countries are eligible to participate, with no limit on the number of entries from any one country.
2. An entry may be the work of one participant or of a group. If the work of a group wins the First Prize, only one representative of the group will be eligible for the trip to Israel.
3. Pictures may be in any medium: ink, crayon, watercolor, oil, etc. They should not be larger than 100x70 cm (39x27.3 inches) or smaller than 35x25 cm (13.7x9.75 inches).
4. Each picture must be marked on the reverse side with:
 - (a) subject of the picture
 - (b) name and age of the participant
 - (c) full address of the participant, including city, country, and telephone.When available, add e-mail and fax.
5. Entries must be received no later than Wednesday, February 25, 1998.
Send them to: Israel Back

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THE TRIENNIAL BIBLE READING CALENDAR

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF
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January 1998

1	Th	Numbers 8:1-9:23
2	F	Numbers 10:1-11:15
4	S	Numbers 11:16-22
5	M	Numbers 11:23-12:16
6	T	Numbers 13:1-14:10
7	W	Numbers 14:11-45
8	Th	Numbers 15:1-41
9	F	Numbers 16:1-17:15
11	S	Numbers 17:16-18:24
12	M	Numbers 18:25-20:13
13	T	Numbers 20:14-22:1
14	W	Numbers 22:2-23:9
15	Th	Numbers 23:10-24:25
16	F	Numbers 25:1-9
18	S	Numbers 25:10-26:51
19	M	Numbers 26:52-27:14
20	T	Numbers 27:15-28:25
21	W	Numbers 28:26-30:1
22	Th	Numbers 30:2-17
23	F	Numbers 31:1-24
25	S	Numbers 31:25-54
26	M	Numbers 32:1-42
27	T	Numbers 33:1-56
28	W	Numbers 34:1-35:8
29	Th	Numbers 35:9-36:13
30	F	Deuteronomy 1:1-2:1

February 1998

1	S	Deuteronomy 2:2-30
2	M	Deuteronomy 2:31-3:22
3	T	Deuteronomy 3:23-4:40
4	W	Deuteronomy 4:41-6:3
5	Th	Deuteronomy 6:4-7:11
6	F	Deuteronomy 7:12-8:20
8	S	Deuteronomy 9:1-29
9	M	Deuteronomy 10:1-11:9
10	T	Deuteronomy 11:10-12:19
11	W	Deuteronomy 12:20-13:1
12	Th	Deuteronomy 13:2-13:9
13	F	Deuteronomy 14:1-15:6
15	S	Deuteronomy 15:7-16:17
16	M	Deuteronomy 16:18-17:13
17	T	Deuteronomy 17:14-20:9
18	W	Deuteronomy 20:10-22:5
19	Th	Deuteronomy 22:6-23:9
20	F	Deuteronomy 23:10-21
22	S	Deuteronomy 23:22-24:18
23	M	Deuteronomy 24:19-25:19
24	T	Deuteronomy 26:1-27:26
25	W	Deuteronomy 28:1-29:8
26	Th	Deuteronomy 29:9-30:10
27	F	Deuteronomy 30:11-31:12

March 1998

1	S	Deuteronomy 31:10-32:52
2	M	Deuteronomy 33:1-34:12
3	T	Joshua 1
4	W	Joshua 2
5	Th	Joshua 3
6	F	Joshua 4
8	S	Joshua 5
9	M	Joshua 6
10	T	Joshua 7
11	W	Joshua 8
12	Th	Joshua 9
13	F	Joshua 10
15	S	Joshua 11
16	M	Joshua 12
17	T	Joshua 13
18	W	Joshua 14
19	Th	Joshua 15
20	F	Joshua 16
22	S	Joshua 17
23	M	Joshua 18
24	T	Joshua 19
25	W	Joshua 20
26	Th	Joshua 21
27	F	Joshua 22
29	S	Joshua 23
30	M	Joshua 24
31	T	Judges 1

April 1998

1	W	Judges 2
2	Th	Judges 3
3	F	Judges 4
5	S	Judges 5
6	M	Judges 6
7	T	Judges 7
8	W	Judges 8
9	Th	Judges 9
10	F	Judges 10
12	S	Judges 11
13	M	Judges 12
14	T	Judges 13
15	W	Judges 14
16	Th	Judges 15
17	F	Judges 16
19	S	Judges 17
20	M	Judges 18
21	T	Judges 19
22	W	Judges 20
23	Th	Judges 21
24	F	I Samuel 1
26	S	I Samuel 2
27	M	I Samuel 3
28	T	I Samuel 4
29	W	I Samuel 5
30	Th	I Samuel 6

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