

JEWISH BIBLE QUARTERLY

עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה

THE WIVES OF ESAU

THE PILLARS OF THE TEMPLE

CHRONICLES' LEVITICAL COVENANT

**THE STORY OF JUDAH, THE HERO: AN
ANALYSIS OF GENESIS 38**

**PSALMS CHAPTER 63: DAVID IN
THE WILDERNESS**

**THE TRIPLE TRAGEDY OF THE
GEDALIAH ASSASSINATION**

**WHO WERE THE "FEARERS OF THE LORD"
(YIREI HASHEM) IN PSALMS?**

THE DESTROYING ANGEL

**METALLURGY IN THE BIBLE: IRONWORKING
AND THE DISPOSAL OF THE GOLDEN CALF**

**THE FIFTY-FIRST INTERNATIONAL BIBLE
CONTEST FOR JEWISH YOUTH 5774**

THE JEWISH BIBLE QUARTERLY

In cooperation with
THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, THE JEWISH AGENCY

AIMS AND SCOPE

The **Jewish Bible Quarterly** provides timely, authoritative studies on biblical themes. As the only Jewish-sponsored English-language journal devoted exclusively to the Bible, it is an essential source of information for anyone working in Bible studies. The Journal publishes original articles, book reviews, a triennial calendar of Bible reading and correspondence. Publishers and authors: if you would like to propose a book for review, please send two review copies to BOOK REVIEW EDITOR, POB 29002, Jerusalem, Israel. Books will be reviewed at the discretion of the editorial staff. Review copies will not be returned.

The **Jewish Bible Quarterly** (ISSN 0792-3910) is published in January, April, July and October by the **Jewish Bible Association**, POB 29002, Jerusalem, Israel, a registered Israeli nonprofit association (#58-019-398-5). All subscriptions prepaid for complete volume year only. The subscription price for 2014 (volume 42) is \$60. Our email address: info@jewishbible.org and our website: www.jewishbible.org. Single articles can be ordered through www.bl.uk. All submissions to the JBQ (including Letters) must be submitted electronically by email. Telephone: +972-2-6216145.

Founded by. LOUIS KATZOFF, Editor 1972 – 1987 as *DOR LE-DOR*

PAST ASSOCIATE EDITORS:

CHAIM ABRAMOWITZ, DAVID WOLFERS, CHAIM PEARL,
THEODORE STEINBERG, PATRICIA BERLYN

Editor: ZVI RON

Editor Emeritus: SHIMON BAKON

Associate Editors: DAN VOGEL, RUTH WALFISH

Managing Editor: JOSHUA J. ADLER

Editorial Secretary: JOSH BACKON

JEWISH BIBLE ASSOCIATION

Chairman: GABRIEL SIVAN

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

JONATHAN BEN-ARI (KATZOFF)
GAD DISHI
GILAD GEVARYAHU
YOSEF GREEN
ALAN GREENSPAN

HAYYIM HALPERN
REUVEN HAMMER
RICHARD HIRSCH
PINCHAS KAHN
NANCY ORDWAY

GARRI REGEV
PESACH SCHINDLER
HAIM SKIRBALL
SHUBERT SPERO
WALTER ZANGER

THE JEWISH BIBLE QUARTERLY

Vol. 42, No. 4 (168)

OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2014

THE WIVES OF ESAU	<i>Reuven Chaim Klein</i>	211
THE PILLARS OF THE TEMPLE	<i>Raymond Apple</i>	221
CHRONICLES' LEVITICAL COVENANT	<i>David J. Zucker</i> <i>Moshe Reiss</i>	229
THE STORY OF JUDAH, THE HERO: AN ANALYSIS OF GENESIS 38	<i>Yong Zhao</i>	238
PSALMS CHAPTER 63: DAVID IN THE WILDERNESS	<i>Tani Prero</i>	244
THE TRIPLE TRAGEDY OF THE GEDALIAH ASSASSINATION	<i>Joshua J. Adler</i>	247
WHO WERE THE "FEARERS OF THE LORD" (<i>YIREI HASHEM</i>) IN PSALMS?	<i>Shimon Bakon</i>	250
THE DESTROYING ANGEL	<i>Shaul Bar</i>	255
METALLURGY IN THE BIBLE: IRONWORKING AND THE DISPOSAL OF THE GOLDEN CALF	<i>Susan V. Meschel</i>	262
THE FIFTY-FIRST INTERNATIONAL BIBLE CONTEST FOR JEWISH YOUTH 5774	<i>Joshua J. Adler</i>	270

ARTICLES IN THE *JBQ* ARE INDEXED AND ABSTRACTED BY:
Internationale Zeitschriftenschau für Bibelwissenschaft und Grenzgebiete,
Old Testament Abstracts, *Religious and Theological Abstracts*,
Index of Articles on Jewish Studies (Rambi), *Index to Jewish Periodicals*,
Religion Index One: Periodicals

THE WIVES OF ESAU

REUVEN CHAIM (RUDOLPH) KLEIN

The Bible mentions Esau's three wives in two different chapters, yet the names given to them are inconsistent. In Genesis 26, Esau is said to have taken Canaanite wives, Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite and Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite (Gen. 26:34). In addition, Esau later married Mahalath daughter of Ishmael (Gen. 28:9). However, when the Bible details the genealogy of Esau's descendants in Genesis 36, it gives other names for Esau's wives – Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite, Oholibamah daughter of Anah daughter of Zibeon the Hivite, and Basemath daughter of Ishmael (Gen. 36:2-3). The traditional commentators find various ways of reconciling this discrepancy. At one end of the spectrum, Rashi explains that both accounts discuss the same three women and for various reasons they are referred to by different names. At the other end of the spectrum, some explain that Esau took the wives mentioned in Genesis 36 in addition to those mentioned earlier, making the number of Esau's wives six in all. Other commentators take intermediate approaches, declaring that some of the wives named on the two lists are identical, while others are not.

	Genesis 26:34; 28:9	Genesis 36:2-3
1.	Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite	Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite
2.	Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite	Oholibamah daughter of Anah daughter of Zibeon the Hivite
3.	Mahalath daughter of Ishmael	Basemath daughter of Ishmael

RASHI'S APPROACH (THREE WIVES)

Rashi (to Gen. 36:2-3) understands that Esau had only three wives and that the same women are mentioned in both Genesis 26 and 36, but they are referred to by different names. He explains that Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite was previously referred to as Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite. She was first called Basemath because she regularly offered incense

Reuven Chaim (Rudolph) Klein is a graduate of Emek Hebrew Academy and Yeshiva Gedolah of Los Angeles. He is currently a fellow at the Kollel of Yeshivat Mir in Jerusalem. He lives with his wife and children in Beitar Illit, Israel.

(*besamim*) to false gods. Oholibamah daughter of Anah daughter of Zibeon the Hivite was previously referred to as Judith daughter of Beerī the Hittite because Esau called her Judith to trick his father Isaac into believing that she had rejected idolatry.¹ He further identifies Basemath daughter of Ishmael with Mahalath daughter of Ishmael, so named because Esau's sins received forgiveness (*mehilah*)² when he married her. Without delving into such hermeneutics, Kimḥi (to Gen. 36:2) also understands that the Bible is referring to the same three women. He merely explains that each of Esau's wives had two names and that were listed under different names in different places.³

R. Nathan Ashkenazi ben Samson Spiro (1490-1577)⁴ brings textual support for Rashi's explanation. When the Bible lists Esau's wives in Genesis 36, it states: *Esau took his wives from among the Canaanite women – Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite, Oholibamah daughter of Anah daughter of Zibeon the Hivite, and Basemath daughter of Ishmael* (Gen. 36:1-3). Spiro reasons that since the Bible states that "Esau took *his* wives" (and not simply "Esau took wives"), one can infer that the wives listed here had been mentioned previously. This, according to Spiro, is why Rashi felt compelled to explain that the three wives mentioned in both places are identical.⁵

On two occasions, Josephus refers only to the three wives of Esau mentioned in Genesis 36, namely, Oholibamah, Adah, and Basemath. He does so in the section of his *Antiquities* which roughly corresponds to Genesis 26 and again in the section corresponding to Genesis 36.⁶ Josephus thereby ignores the names mentioned in Genesis 26. He evidently preceded Rashi in his effort to reconcile the two Biblical accounts, assuming that the three wives mentioned in Genesis 36 are identical with those mentioned in Genesis 26.

RASHI'S APPROACH: DIFFICULTIES AND RESOLUTIONS

Several difficulties arise from Rashi's approach. Firstly, if Adah was Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite, why is she listed as first among Esau's wives in Genesis 36, but second in Genesis 26? Likewise, if Oholibamah is Judith, why is she listed as second in Genesis 36 and first in Genesis 26? Secondly, if Oholibamah and Judith are one and the same, why is Oholibamah's lineage given as *daughter of Anah daughter of Zibeon the Hivite* and Judith's lineage as *daughter of Beerī the Hittite*? Thirdly, why in Genesis 26 did Esau change Oholibamah's name to Judith so as to trick his parents into

believing that she had rejected idolatry, but not do this for his other wife, Basemath, whose name alludes to her idolatrous practices?⁷

Shapiro explains that in Genesis 36 the order of Esau's wives reflects the order in which he built families with them. Adah/Basemath is therefore listed first in Genesis 36, because she was the first wife of Esau to bear him children (see Gen. 36:4). However, in Genesis 26, she is listed second because her name there is an allusion to her pagan incense offerings, which the Bible wanted to place immediately before the next verse, where the idolatrous practices of Esau's wives and his parents' disapproval are recorded: *They were a source of bitterness to Isaac and Rebekah* (Gen. 26:35).⁸

Similarly, R. Solomon Luria (1510-1573) observes that in Genesis 26 the Bible specifically refers to Adah/Basemath as Basemath, thus alluding to her idolatrous incense, despite the fact that Oholibamah is called Judith in the same passage to make her seem more righteous. Using the name Basemath serves to introduce the next story: *It came to pass when Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see...* (Gen. 27:1). *Midrash Tanhuma* explains that Isaac's eyesight was impaired by the smoke from the pagan incense offered by Esau's wives.⁹ It is therefore appropriate, when the names of Esau's wives are mentioned two verses earlier, for one of those names to hint at the idolatry that weakened Isaac's vision.¹⁰

R. David Pardo (1718-1790) notes that the name Basemath, which recalls the word for incense (*besamim*), has good and bad connotations. It can either refer to the incense of idolatry or to deeds as pleasant as incense.¹¹ The Tosafist Rabbenu Hayyim Paltiel,¹² in his Pentateuch commentary, does interpret her name in that virtuous way. Consequently, Esau felt there was no need to change Basemath's name as he had changed Oholibamah's, since "Basemath" could have a positive connotation.¹³ R. Menahem ben Solomon (a twelfth-century exegete) furthermore suggests that Oholibamah's name alludes to the fact that her tent (*ohel*) was open to the public like an altar (*bamah*), and that she would fornicate there.¹⁴ Since that name alludes to her sexual misdeeds, Esau wished to make her more acceptable to his parents by changing her name to Judith.

These explanations account for the inconsistencies in the order of Esau's wives and for Esau's alteration of Oholibamah's name to Judith without changing the name of Basemath. However, as mentioned above, Rashi's as-

sumption that Oholibamah was identical with Judith has still to explain why Judith is called the daughter of Beerī the Hittite while Oholibamah's lineage makes her the daughter of Anah daughter of Zibeon the Hivite. Hizkuni maintains that, according to Rashi, one must accept that Anah and Beerī were the same person.¹⁵ R. Tobias ben Eliezer (an eleventh-century commentator) supports this view, observing that their names have similar connotations: *Be'er* means "wellspring" and *Ayyin* (phonetically similar to Anah) means "spring."¹⁶ Likewise, the term "Hittite" used to describe Beerī could be equivalent to the term "Hivite" used to describe Anah and Zibeon. Indeed, R. Abraham Maimuni (see below) declares that "Hittite" is a hyponym [an inclusive term] for "Hivite".¹⁷

Luria offers another explanation as to why Esau's wife she is referred to as a daughter of Beerī the Hittite when she is called Judith, and as a daughter of Anah daughter of Zibeon the Hivite when called Oholibamah. He writes that it was a known fact that Anah was a bastard¹⁸ and so, in an effort to conceal the illegitimacy of her family, Esau changed the name of his wife's father from Anah to Beerī, just as he changed her name from Oholibamah to Judith. Luria claims that the name Beerī alludes to Beer-lahai-roi, the place where Hagar encountered an angel (Gen. 16:13-14). By changing her father's name to Beerī, Esau meant to show his parents that his wife came from a righteous family.¹⁹ Luria also explains that Esau changed his father-in-law's nationality from Hivite to Hittite because the Hivites were more given to idolatry than the Hittites. His source for this explanation is the Talmud (TB *Shabbat* 85a), which states that the Hivites were connected with the serpent (*hiviya* in Aramaic) that lured Eve into eating from the Tree of Knowledge. By associating the Hivites with this reptile, the Talmud implied that they had a greater addiction to sin than any other nation.²⁰

The Bible lists Anah among Zibeon's children (Gen. 36:24), which seems to indicate that Anah was Zibeon's son. However, Rabbenu Tam (quoted by Tosafot to TB *Bava Batra* 115b)²¹ states that Anah was actually female. Rabbenu Tam thus disposes of the contradiction regarding Oholibamah/Judith's parentage. Beerī the Hittite was her father and Anah the Hivite daughter of Zibeon was her mother.²² This notion is at variance with Rashi's understanding that Anah was a male.

THE APPROACH OF SEFER HA-YASHAR (FOUR WIVES)

Before telling how Jacob usurped the blessing Isaac promised to Esau, *Sefer ha-Yashar* (a midrashic work) states that when Esau was forty years old, he married Judith daughter of Beeri son of Aifer the Hittite.²³ Subsequently, after an account of how Jacob received the blessing, *Sefer ha-Yashar* relates that Esau married Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite, whom he called Adah because the blessing had been stripped (*adah*) from him.²⁴ After describing Jacob's flight to Haran, *Sefer ha-Yashar* notes that Esau married Mahalath daughter of Ishmael.²⁵ Then, during Jacob's fifth year in Haran, Esau's wife Judith daughter of Beeri died; she had borne daughters (named Marzith and Puith) to Esau, but no sons. In the sixth year of Jacob's stay in Haran, Esau married Oholibamah daughter of Anah daughter of Zibeon the Hivite. Esau eventually moved to Oholibamah's place of origin, Mount Seir, where his family intermarried with the native Horites. *Sefer ha-Yashar* also relates that Esau married off his eldest daughter, Marzith, to Anah son of Zibeon,²⁶ who was his wife's brother.²⁷

Sefer ha-Yashar appears to reconcile the Biblical accounts of Esau's wives by explaining that Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite (mentioned in Genesis 26) and Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite (mentioned in Genesis 36) are one and the same person, which is close to Rashi's understanding of the texts. Unlike Rashi, however, *Sefer ha-Yashar* believes that Judith (mentioned in Genesis 26) and Oholibamah (mentioned in Genesis 36) are not identical. Judith's name occurs in Genesis 26 because Esau married her at that point in time, but it is not mentioned again in Genesis 36 because she had already died then and Esau had not fathered any male children with her. On the other hand, Oholibamah figures only in Genesis 36 because Esau had not yet married her during the period described in Genesis 26; by the point in time that Genesis 36 describes, however, they were already married and had male descendants. *Sefer ha-Yashar* does not seem to address the discrepancy concerning this daughter of Ishmael, but it is a reasonable guess that the book's author assumed that Mahalath daughter of Ishmael and Basemath daughter of Ishmael were one and the same. To sum up, therefore, *Sefer ha-Yashar* maintains that Esau had four wives: Adah/Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite, Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, Mahalath/ Basemath daughter of Ishmael, and Oholibamah. This is the approach adopted by several medie-

val commentators:²⁸ Rashbam (to Gen. 36:2), Ibn Ezra (to Gen. 26:34, 36:1), Hizkuni (to Gen. 36:2), Yosef Bekhor-Shor (to Gen. 36:1), and *Sefer ha-Gan* (to Gen. 36:1).²⁹

THE APPROACH OF NAHMANIDES (FIVE WIVES)

In his commentary to Genesis 36:2, Nahmanides (Ramban) asks two questions about Rashi's exposition and then offers an alternate approach. Firstly, if, according to Rashi, Esau changed Oholibamah's name to Judith in an effort to make her seem less idolatrous, why does the Bible also change the name of her father from Anah in Genesis 36 to Beeri in Genesis 26? (This question has already been addressed above.) Secondly, Nahmanides assumes that Basemath must either be a real name or a descriptive one; it cannot be both. If so, how does Rashi explain that Basemath is the proper name of Ishmael's daughter (Mahalath being merely a descriptive one that alludes to the absolution of Esau's sins) if he also claims that Basemath is a descriptive name for Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite, alluding to her idolatrous practices? Is "Basemath" a real name or simply a descriptive one?

These questions show that Nahmanides adopts the approach of Ibn Ezra, with some minor modifications. He also affirms that Judith and Oholibamah were not the same person. However, since he regards Basemath as a proper name only, he rejects the view that Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite and Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite were one and the same, having both a proper name (Adah) and a descriptive one (Basemath), thus concluding that they were two different people. According to Nahmanides, Esau first married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite and Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite, who both died childless. This might have been a punishment for the suffering they inflicted on Isaac and Rebecca. Esau then married another two wives: Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite, who was the sister of his deceased wife Basemath, and Oholibamah. Subsequently, he also married Ishmael's daughter, Mahalath. Since "Mahalath" has a dismal connotation (*maḥalah* signifying "malady"), Esau changed her name to that of one of his original wives, Basemath, which has a pleasant association (*besamim* signifying "fragrance"). Nahmanides adds that Esau did so because Mahalath/Basemath daughter of Ishmael was especially dear to him, being his cousin and thus more acceptable to his father Isaac.

Accordingly, Judith and Basemath daughter of Elon are not mentioned in Genesis 36 because they had died by then without children, while Adah and Oholibamah are not mentioned in Genesis 26 because Esau had yet to marry them. The daughter of Ishmael is called Mahalath in Genesis 26 because Esau married her during that time and so the Bible uses her original name, but in Genesis 36 she is called Basemath because Esau had already renamed her by then. In summation, Nahmanides understands that Esau took five wives: Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite, Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite, Oholibamah daughter of Anah daughter of Zibeon the Hivite, and Mahalath/Basemath daughter of Ishmael.

This approach was evidently adopted by Targum Pseudo-Jonathan as well. By omitting any comment on the apparent discrepancy between Genesis 26 and Genesis 36, he seems to take the two accounts at face value. In other words, he considers all of Esau's wives to be different people. However, there is one exception: Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (to Gen. 28:9) writes that Mahalath daughter of Ishmael is Basemath daughter of Ishmael. He thus understands that Esau had five wives, one of whom was Mahalath/Basemath, which conforms with the opinion of Nahmanides.

THE APPROACH OF RABBI ABRAHAM MAIMUNI (SIX WIVES)

R. Abraham Maimuni (1186 - 1237), the son of Maimonides, has a different suggestion – that Esau took the wives mentioned in Genesis 36 in addition to those listed in Genesis 26. Since those mentioned in Genesis 26 never bore him children, they are not enumerated in Genesis 36, where Esau's descendants are recorded.³⁰ According to this explanation, Esau had six wives, the three listed in Genesis 26 and the three others mentioned in Genesis 36.³¹

CONCLUSION

The commentators offer several approaches to explain the inconsistency between the Bible's account of Esau's wives in Genesis 26 and Genesis 36, some closer than others to the plain meaning of the text. Rashi takes them to be the same women listed under different names. *Sefer ha-Yashar* and a slew of other commentators basically agree with Rashi, but maintain that Esau had four wives, since they refuse to identify Judith and Oholibamah as the same woman. Nahmanides mostly agrees, with the caveat that Adah daughter of

Elon the Hittite and Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite were not identical but sisters. In his view, therefore, Esau took five wives. Abraham Maimuni utterly rejects the notion of the Bible mentioning Esau's wives under different names. His explanation is that the three wives in Genesis 26 and the three in Genesis 36 are entirely different people, indicating that Esau had a total of six wives.

NOTES

1. Rashi's possible source for this explanation is TB *Megillah* 13a, which states that whoever rejects idolatry is called a "Judean." By renaming his wife Oholibamah as "Judith," Esau implied that she had abandoned idolatry.
2. Rashi declares that his source for this is *Midrash Shemuel* (ch. 17). The same idea is also found in the Jerusalem Talmud (*Bikkurim* 3:1). Other early commentators state that she was first called Basemath because her deeds were as pleasant as incense before her marriage, but was later named Mahalath because her evil deeds after joining Esau were like a fearful disease (*mahalah*). See S. Sasson, ed., *Moshav Zekenim* (London, 1959) p. 46; and J. Klugmann, ed., *Peirush ha-Roke'ah* (Benei Berak, 2001) p. 216.
3. Kimḥi writes that just as all three of Esau's wives had two names, so did Zibeon (who was also called Beerī). Kimḥi apparently considered Adah and Basemath to be the same person because they are both mentioned as daughters of Elon the Hittite, and Mahalath and Basemath to be identical because they are both mentioned as daughters of Ishmael. Kimḥi seems to have believed, like Rashi, that Oholibamah was the same person as Judith and that Zibeon/Beerī was Oholibamah's grandfather. Thus, Oholibamah's lineage in Genesis 36 is traced to her father and grandfather (Anah and Zibeon), but in Genesis 26 only to her grandfather Beerī (also known as Zibeon).
4. In addition to his commentary on the Pentateuch, Spiro also wrote glosses to Alfasi and *Mevo She'arim*, a commentary on *Sha'arei Dura*. He was the grandfather and namesake of R. Nathan Nata ben Solomon Spira (c. 1585-1633), the famous Polish kabbalist and author of *Megalleh Amukkot*.
5. N. A. Spiro, *Imrei Shefer* (Lublin, 1591) fol. 59b.
6. W. Whiston, trans., *The Antiquities of the Jews* (Cambridge, 1737), 1:18; 2:1.
7. Another approach, suggested recently, follows Rashi's in many ways: Much to the chagrin of his parents, Esau married Judith and Basemath who were Canaanite idol worshippers. So as to become reconciled with his parents, he decided to marry a member of Ishmael's family whose lineage would be more acceptable, and therefore took Basemath the daughter of Ishmael as his wife. However, since Basemath had the very same name as one of his idolatrous wives, Esau changed it to Mahalath in an effort to show his remorse for having previously married Canaanite idolaters. To remain consistent, however, Esau then felt obliged to rename his first two wives as well, so Judith became Oholibamah and Basemath became Adah. For more details of this approach, see J. H. Abraham "A Literary Solution to the Name Variations of Esau's Wives," *Torah U-Maddah Journal* 7 (1997) pp. 1-14; and "Esau's Wives," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 25 (1997) pp.

251-259. While this explanation is quite original and has some merit, its major premises are not supported by earlier commentators.

8. *Imrei Shefer*, fol.. 59b.

9. *Midrash Tanhuma*, *Bereshit* 26, 8.

10. A. Y. Bernstein, ed., *Yeriyot Shlomo* (Benei Berak, 1984) p. 35.

11. D. Pardo, *Maskil le-David* (Venice, 1761) fol. 32b.

12. I. S. Lange, ed., *Peirushei Rabbenu Hayyim Paltiel al ha-Torah* (Jerusalem, 1981) p. 75.

13. Rabbenu Yoel (a medieval commentator) notes that her other name, Adah, alludes to the fact that she adorned herself (*ade'ii*) like a prostitute; see J. Klugmann, ed., *Sefer ha-Remazim le-Rabbenu Yoel* (Benei Berak, 2001) p. 106. It was thus appropriate for the Bible, in Genesis 26, to refer to her as "Basemath," which has both positive and negative connotations, as opposed to "Adah," which evidently has only a negative one.

14. S. Buber, ed., *Midrash Sekhel Tov*, vol .1 (Berlin, 1900) p. 205.

15. C. D. Chavel, ed., *Peirushei ha-Hizkuni al ha-Torah* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1980) p. 134.

16. S. Buber, ed., *Midrash Lekah Tov* (Vilna, 1880) fol. 92a.

17. S. D. Sasson, ed., *Peirush Rabbenu Avraham ben ha-Rambam al Bereshit/Shemot* (London, 1958) pp. 124, 126. R. Meyuhās ben Elijah (a twelfth-century Greek commentator) writes that "Horite" is also a subset of "Hittite" because Anah is referred to as a Horite (Gen. 36:20-21), even though he is called a Hittite elsewhere. See A. W. Greenup and C. H. Titterton, eds., *Peirush Rabbenu Meyuhās al Bereshit* (London, 1909) p. 97.

18. Anah is listed as a son of Seir (Gen. 36:20) and also as a son of Zibeon the son of Seir (Gen. 36:24). Rashi (to Gen. 36:24, citing TB *Pesahim* 54a and *Bereshit Rabbah* 82:15) reconciles this discrepancy by explaining that Zibeon son of Seir had incestuous relations with his mother, the wife of Seir, and Anah was born of that union. Anah is therefore listed as a son of Seir because Seir's wife was his mother, and he is also listed as a son of Zibeon because Zibeon was actually his father. This is the source for the notion that Anah was a bastard.

19. Another explanation can be gleaned from Rabbenu Yoel, who states that the name Beeri alludes to her immersion in the *mikveh* (*be'er* denoting a well). Thus, by changing his father-in-law's name to Beeri, Esau was trying to imply that his wife observed the laws of family purity. See J. Klugmann, ed., *Sefer ha-Remazim le-Rabbenu Yoel*, p. 107.

20. R. Judah Löw ben Bezalel (1520-1609), the celebrated Maharal of Prague, offers a similar explanation but maintains that because of their link with the serpent, the Hivites were regarded as the most cursed of nations while the serpent was regarded as the most cursed of beasts (Gen. 3:14). See J. D. Hartman, ed., *Hummash Gur Aryeh*: Genesis, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Makhon Yerushalayim, 1990) p. 183. See also S. D. Sasson, ed., *Moshav Zekenim*, p. 64.

21. See also *Moshav Zekenim*, p. 65.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

23. *Sefer ha-Yashar* (Benei Berak: Mishor Publishing, 1984) p. 96. Though first printed in the 1600s, *Sefer ha-Yashar* is traditionally considered to be much older; see J. D. Eisenstein, *Otzar ha-Midrashim* (p. 251), where he claims that it was written in Geonic times (ninth or tenth century).

24. *Sefer ha-Yashar*, p. 98.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

26. Ibid., p. 131. Oholibamah's father is recorded there as Anah son of Seir, not Anah son of Zibeon, yet when describing Esau's marriage to her it traces her lineage as "daughter of Anah daughter of Zibeon." Additionally, this work mentions the story of Anah, *who discovered the hot springs in the wilderness while pasturing the asses of his father Zibeon* (Gen. 36:24). Although there seems to be a contradiction here regarding the identity of Anah's father, one answer (as stated earlier) could be that Anah was the illegitimate son of Zibeon and Seir's wife.

27. Ibid., p. 103. The author of *Sefer ha-Yashar* appears to contradict himself once again, stating that Oholibamah was Anah's daughter, not his sister. He should have recorded that Esau married his daughter Marzith to Anah son of Zibeon, who was his wife's father, not her brother. It seems clear, however, that *Sefer ha-Yashar* agrees with the midrashic source referred to above (note 18), which states that Zibeon had incestuous relations with his daughter-in-law. Although Oholibamah is usually regarded as a daughter of Anah, she could also have been his sister.

28. However, these commentators differ from *Sefer ha-Yashar* on a few small points. They imply that Judith did not bear any children to Esau, whereas *Sefer ha-Yashar* declares that she gave birth to females. Nor do they consider Esau's marriage to Judith and to Adah as two separate events, but take the Bible literally when it speaks of Esau marrying both of them at the same time. They also explicitly identify Basemath daughter of Ishmael with Mahalath daughter of Ishmael, whereas *Sefer ha-Yashar* only does so implicitly by omission.

29. In one of his kabbalistic works, R. Eliyyahu ben Shlomo Zalman, the Gaon of Vilna (1720-1797), mentions "the four wives of Esau": see *Bi'ur Ha-Gra al Sifra de-Tzeni'uta* (Vilna, 1913) fol. 32b. A prominent contemporary mystic, R. Jacob Ades, writes that it is evident from this that the Gaon subscribed to Rashbam's view that Esau had four wives. See *Kabbalat Ha-Gra*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 2006) pp. 363-4.

30. S. D. Sasson, ed., *Peirush Rabbenu Avraham ben ha-Rambam*, p. 126.

31. Nevertheless, without explaining why, Maimuni concludes that Rashi's approach is the better one.



If you have written a paper in the *Jewish Bible Quarterly* and wish to see if it has been quoted in another academic journal, book, or doctoral dissertation, access <http://scholar.google.com> and type in Jewish Bible Quarterly under "journal" and your name under "author".



THE PILLARS OF THE TEMPLE

RAYMOND APPLE

Among the notable features of Solomon's Temple were the two monumental pillars or columns which formed a major artistic feature of the Sanctuary. Our first question is: What were these pillars made of? I Kings 7:15 states that they were made of *nehoshet*, a word that the biblical text employs in a rather indeterminate sense: it can mean pure copper or a copper alloy. *Nehoshet* is generally translated to mean copper, but the pillars are more likely to have been made of bronze, an alloy of copper with a small amount of tin. This material is more durable than copper or stone and was used for various building materials in the ancient world. The JPS translation thus reads *columns of bronze*. According to II Chronicles 4:16, all the Temple vessels were made of *nehoshet maruk*, "burnished bronze."

The pillars were heavy structures: *one column was 18 cubits high and measured 12 cubits in circumference* (I Kgs. 7:15) – about 8.2 m tall and 1.8 m thick. They were probably made in parts, cast in clay molds (II Chron. 4:17), taken to Jerusalem, and assembled there. Not only the pillars but the whole edifice required the making and moving of massive materials, which could be handled with relative ease today, but would then have created major technical difficulties. Recognizing the magnitude of the problem, *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1:1, 5 posits that the stones of the Temple carried themselves and placed themselves in position.

Superficially, it seems that the pillars stood outside the entrance of the Temple, although we cannot be sure how far outside the doors they were. In place of the ambiguous phrase *le-ulam ha-heikhal* (lit. "for the portico of the hall"; I Kgs. 7:21), II Chronicles 3:15 has *lifnei ha-bayit* – *before [in front of] the house*, while verse 17 of that chapter has *al-penei ha-heikhal* – *in front of the hall*. Keil comments, "This unquestionably implies that the two brazen pillars stood unconnected in front of the hall, on the right and left sides of it and not within the hall as supporters of the roof. Nevertheless many have decided in favor of the latter view."¹ An exterior location is generally adopted

Rabbi Dr. Raymond Apple is emeritus rabbi of the Great Synagogue, Sydney, and a former president of the Australian and New Zealand orthodox rabbinate.

in depictions of the Temple, although a location *inside* the entrance is supported by David Kimḥi, who reads *le-ulam ha-heikhal* as if it were *ba-ulam*, *in the hall*. By adding the phrase *bi-khenisat ha-bayit* ("at the entrance of the building"), he seems to imply that the pillars were just inside the hall.

The Bible deals with the pillars in three main passages: I Kings 7:15-22, 41-42 (cf. II Kings 25:17); II Chronicles 3:17; and Jeremiah 52:20-23. The version in I Kings reads, *He [Hiram] set up the columns at the portico of the Great Hall; he set up one column on the right and named it Jachin, and he set up the other column on the left and named it Boaz. Upon the top of the columns there was a lily design. Thus the work of the columns was completed* (verses 21-22). The text in II Chronicles states: *He erected the columns in front of the Great Hall, one to its right and one to its left; the one to the right was called Jachin, and the one to the left, Boaz*. The measurements in I Kings 7:15-20 differ from those in Jeremiah, presumably reflecting renovations and alterations made over the years, or perhaps measuring standards had changed.

I Kings implies, but does not clearly state, that the pillars were solid. According to Jeremiah, they were hollow, *navuv* (verse 21), a term rendered by the Targum as *halil* and by Rashi as *halul*. *Navuv*, from a root meaning "to hollow out", can have a figurative sense (*ish navuv* in Job 11:12 is an empty-headed man), but here it is probably meant literally. Hollow casting was known in ancient Egypt and may have been used for ease of manufacture and handling.

The pillars did not survive the destruction of the First Temple; Jeremiah 52:17 reports: *The Chaldeans broke up the bronze columns of the House of the Lord*. II Kings 25:13 has a similar account. The pillars were carried away in pieces for ease of transportation. When the Second Temple was built, they were not returned and we have no record of new pillars being constructed to replace them. For this and other reasons, the Second Temple and Herod's reconstructed Sanctuary were not identical with the First Temple.²

Taken together, the texts of I Kings and Jeremiah raise three major questions:

- a. The Significance of the Names of the Pillars
- b. The Purpose of the Pillars
- c. The Orientation of the Pillars

THE NAMES OF THE PILLARS

It is strange for parts of the Temple to have proper names, though elsewhere there are name-bearing cairns and pillars, e.g., Gal-ed, *mound* (or *stone-heap*) of *witness* (Gen. 31:47) and Mizpah, *watch-tower* (Gen. 31:49). The nearest to a biblical cultic example is when Moses *built an altar and named it Adonai-nissi, The Lord is my banner* (Ex. 17:15).

Boaz is vocalized differently in some versions. While that of the Masoretic text is *Bo'az*, the Septuagint in I Kings 7:21 has *Ba-az* and in II Chronicles 3:17 *Be-az*, although it must be pointed out that there are often variant texts within the Septuagint.³ In the Vulgate the name is *Bo'oz*. However, all versions of the name contain the same key word *oz*, "strength." Jachin (*Yakhin*) derives from a root that means "to establish". The two words, when conjoined, could form the headlines of a nationalistic slogan connected with the royal dynasty. *Bo'az* might signify *In His [God's] strength shall the king rejoice* (cf. Ps. 44:9), and *Yakhin, God will establish the throne of David forever* (cf. I Kings 9:5). If the names refer to the Temple and not the monarchy, they may be part of an inscription such as *God will establish the Temple and make it firm* (or: *give it strength, in His strength, or: through it Israel will be strong*, a possible reference to Psalm 29:11, *May the Lord grant strength [oz] to His people*).

This is the view of Radak (Kimḥi) in his exegesis of I Kings. The *Da'at Mikra* edition of Kings notes a suggestion that the name *Yakhin* reflects a verse in the Song of the Sea, *The sanctuary [makhon?], O Lord, which Your hands established* (Ex. 15:17).⁴ If this suggestion is valid, we might find a *Bo'az* reference earlier in verse 2 of the same chapter: *The Lord is my strength [ozzi] and might*.

Midrash Tadshe, a pseudepigraphic work traditionally ascribed to the second-century *tanna* Pinḥas ben Ya'ir, attaches a cosmic symbolism to the Sanctuary, connecting the pillars with the moon and the sun. According to this *midrash*, Jachin represents the moon, since the Psalmist affirms: *David's throne shall be established [yikkon] forever as the moon* (Ps. 89:38); while the moon determines the festivals for Israel, as it is written, *He appointed the moon to mark the seasons* (Ps. 104:19). Boaz represents the sun which comes forth in power and strength, as it is written, *He [the sun] rejoices like a strong man to run his course* (Ps. 19:6).⁵

The imaginative interpretation of the Freemasons, who were greatly enamored of Solomon's Temple and its architecture, makes Jachin and Boaz historical figures. Boaz would refer to the great-grandfather of King David and Jachin to the assistant high priest who, they believed, officiated at the dedication of the Temple. Jachin appears in the 21st of the 24 divisions of priests listed in I Chronicles (24:17). However, there is no obvious reason to link David's forebear (despite his piety and integrity) with the Temple; and even less logic in plucking out of obscurity a minor priest called Jachin and claiming that he held high office and officiated at the dedication of the Sanctuary. (In I Kings 8, where the dedication of the Temple is narrated, Solomon is the major officiant and no priest is mentioned by name.) Freemasonry may have confused Jachin with a person bearing a similar name, Hanina "the deputy High Priest," who figures in Mishna *Avot* 3:2.

Modern edifices sometimes record the names of their architect and builders (or donors) in or on a building, but it is unlikely that a similar wish led to the naming of the pillars of the Temple, especially in view of the solemnity with which the Bible commands the use of the two names and the fact that no record exists of architects, artisans or donors called Boaz or Jachin.

Whether the names were actually inscribed on the pillars is not certain, but this is not impossible in view of a precedent – the phrase *Kodesh la-Adonai*, *Holy to the Lord* (Ex. 28:36), being engraved on the High Priest's frontlet. There is therefore a possibility that words hinting at God or His attributes of strength and stability were inscribed on the pillars: Psalm 93:2 states that His throne is *nakhon* ("firmly established"), from the same root as *Yakhin*.

THE PURPOSE OF THE PILLARS

It is tempting to suppose that the pillars were originally designed, following precedents in Arad, Megiddo, etc., to hold up the roof of the portico. However, in view of contemporary precedents, they were more probably free-standing and merely ornamental, the main feature of a monumental entrance plaza. Pillars provided a ceremonial entrance to other ancient buildings, as indicated by archaeological discoveries in many parts of the region and confirmed by artistic representations on ancient coins from Cyprus, Sidon, etc. Herodotus (2:44) and other authors describe pillars of this kind. Cleopatra's Needle in London may be a surviving example of a free-standing obelisk.

Pursuant to this usage, some old churches in Europe and elsewhere have twin free-standing columns which, in time, became a popular artistic symbol. The cathedral of Würzburg has shafts bearing the names Jachin and Boaz, while a historic synagogue in Worms had columns near the Ark bearing Hebrew words derived from I Kings 7:15-16. Various medieval Hebrew manuscripts contained illustrations of the Temple, but these related to the Second Temple, which had no Jachin and Boaz.

It is possible that Hiram exerted an influence on the introduction and design of the original pillars, since in Tyre (his city of origin) two pillars stood outside the temple of Hercules.⁶

The pillars may have had a ceremonial purpose, the king receiving an official position next to Jachin. II Kings 11:14 speaks of him *omed al ha-ammud ka-mishpat*, which the JPS renders *standing by the pillar, as was the custom*, although *ammud* could mean "a platform." If the king had a recognized place to stand, the High Priest (at his consecration or regularly) may also have been accorded an official position next to Boaz. This would have indicated the (ideal or theoretical) symmetry of temporal and spiritual power.⁷

Things that come in twos, like earth and heaven or male and female, can easily be seen to provide dual explanations for the two pillars. Viewing the symmetry in this way invites interpretation, whichever way we regard the pillars, either as utilitarian in purpose or merely symbolic.

Robertson Smith believed that they had a utilitarian, cultic role as high fire-altars. Alternatively, the pillars could have served as the base for braziers or another form of external lighting that pointed the way into the Temple at night.⁸ This may have been the reason for the bowls (*gullot*) on top of the capitals (I Kings 7:41). Zechariah 4:2-3 uses *gullah* for a bowl of oil on top of a golden candlestick. However, if the pillars were pedestals for exterior lighting, the biblical account would presumably have mentioned this. Much the same could be said about W. F. Albright's notion of incense stands.

Albright argued that the pillars could have represented the metaphorical columns (sometimes known as Pillars of the East or Pillars of the Dawn – see Zech. 6:1) through which the sun rose in the morning to pour its light into the Sanctuary. By contrast, rabbinic thinking averred that the Sanctuary needed no light from outside. Since the Temple was the House of God, the source of all light, the light appeared from inside and *came out of* the Temple. Thus,

according to *Exodus Rabbah* 36:1, "The Temple gave light to the whole world." Alternatively, Albright suggests, the pillars denoted the twin qualities of endurance and continuity (of the building or the Davidic dynasty), or they symbolized the columns of fire and cloud which led the Israelites through the wilderness.⁹

Jewish commentators tend to treat both the pillars themselves and their duality as symbols.¹⁰ Suggestions include the notion that they represent two trees of life; the pillars of cloud and fire in the wilderness; the two *keruvim* (cherubs) in the Sanctuary;¹¹ the two eyes placed high above in the human body; or the two copper mountains (Zion and Scopus) from which Divine judgment goes forth (Zech. 6:1).

Homiletical interpretations of Jachin and Boaz are plentiful in more recent Jewish writing. The *Hida* (*Hayyim Yosef David Azulai*) states that one who prepares himself (*Yakhin*) spiritually can override the strong (*Bo'az*) temptation to sin. The *Malbim* (*Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Mikhael*) affirms that God works in two ways – by establishing the laws of nature through His strength (*Bo'az*) and by being prepared (*Yakhin*) to make exceptions to them.¹²

THE ORIENTATION OF THE PILLARS

A third major question concerns the orientation of the pillars. From which direction did one see Jachin on the right and Boaz on the left as related in the Book of Kings – from the outside looking in or from the inside looking out? The Jewish commentators on I Kings 7:21 maintain that it was when one stood inside the building and looked out toward the entrance in the east (Ezek. 11:23; cf. Zech. 14:4 and also the Gospel of Mark 13:3). This theory placed the right pillar, Jachin, in the south, and the left pillar, Boaz, in the north. This tradition, known to Josephus (*Antiquities* 8:3:4), is sustained by Whiston's explanatory note to the Josephus passage.¹³ Josephus, however, never saw the actual pillars, since they disappeared before his time, and he must only have reported a tradition passed down from previous generations.

An example of a contrary approach may be found in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* entry on the Temple (q.v.), which reproduces a drawing based on the view of C. Watzinger, with Jachin on the right and Boaz on the left looking in from outside. If Jachin was in the south and Boaz in the north, the entrance to the building was in the east. The fact that the Temple had its door in the

east is borne out by the Mishnah (*Sukkah* 5:4), which states that the Jews were shocked to read in Ezekiel 8:16 how some members of the congregation turned away from the Holy of Holies, *their backs to the Temple of the Lord and their faces to the east...bowing low to the sun in the east.*

CONCLUSION

The Temple in all its incarnations had a central role in Israelite religion. Since its destruction, it has exerted continuous fascination and played a major part in religious and cultural history. Centuries of often loving study have, however, not solved the innumerable problems arising from biblical texts on the subject. While this paper has probably failed to provide answers, it has at least pinpointed some of the questions.

NOTES

1. C. F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 3: I & II Kings, etc., by C. F. Keil, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983 reprint) p.101.
2. On the Temples, see *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 15, s.v. "Temple" and "Temple Mount"; S. Schaffer & A. Joseph, *Israel's Temple Mount* (Jerusalem: Achva, 1975).
3. On the Septuagint, see M. J. Mulder, ed., *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum: Mikra* (Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum/Phila.: Fortress, 1988), ch. 5, "The Septuagint", by E. Tov.
4. *Da'at Mikra – Sefer Melakhim*, ed. Y. Kiel (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1989) p. 140.
5. *Midrash Tadshe* (so named because it commences with an exposition of Genesis 1:11, of which the first word is *Tadshe*, "Let [the earth] sprout") is also known as *Baraita de-Rabbi Pinhas ben Ya'ir*. It is a small work; apart from its inclusion in Jellinek's *Beit ha-Midrash*, a fuller edition was published in Vienna by A. Epstein in 1887.
6. B. S. Isserlin, "Israelite Art During the Period of the Monarchy," in Cecil Roth, ed., *Jewish Art: An Illustrated History* (London: Allen, 1961) pp. 77-118.
7. Although they may have been no more than decorative obelisks, the pillars could have been used as archival repositories, with data recorded on or (if they were hollow) within them. Many cultures feared that hard-won scientific or ethical knowledge would disappear, especially in time of fire or flood, if not preserved in relatively indestructible form. The Torah commands (Deut. 27:2-3), *As soon as you have crossed the Jordan...you shall set up large stones. Coat them with plaster and inscribe upon them all the words of this Teaching.* The biblical text itself notes the problems caused by the disappearance of the Book of the Law, which was later found at the bottom of a money chest (II Kgs. 22:8-13). In his *Antiquities of the Jews*, (I.2), Josephus states that the descendants of Seth inscribed information about the heavenly bodies on two pillars, one of brick and one of stone.
8. William Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites* (New York: Meridian reprint, 1956) pp. 487 ff.
9. William Foxwell Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (Baltimore, 1942) p. 148.

10. W. G. Braude and I. J. Kapstein, trans., *Pesikta deRab Kahana* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1975), ch. 21.
11. Apart from their primary role on the Ark of the Covenant, the cherubim were a common decorative feature of the Sanctuary, found on the walls, doors and panels (I Kgs. 6:29-35) and the bases of the "molten sea," which was a huge laver (I Kgs. 7:23).
12. A. Z. Friedman, ed., *Ma'yanah shel Torah*, vol. 2 (Tel Aviv: Pe'er, 1955) pp. 169-70.
13. William Whiston, *The New Complete Works of Josephus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999) p. 275.



If you have written a paper in the *Jewish Bible Quarterly* and wish to see if it has been quoted in another academic journal, book, or doctoral dissertation, access <http://scholar.google.com> and type in Jewish Bible Quarterly under "journal" and your name under "author".



CHRONICLES' LEVITICAL COVENANT

DAVID J. ZUCKER, MOSHE REISS

The Book of Chronicles presents a version of history, a selective account of times gone by. Its purpose is to revitalize, reinvigorate, and renew Judaism for its audience, namely, the returning exiles from Babylon and their descendants now living in Judah in the fifth-fourth centuries BCE.¹ With neither a Davidic dynasty ruling nor a fully independent state, that community is despondent.² Second Isaiah's glorious future is unrealized; life is difficult. The community needs to reinvent its understanding of its Covenant with God. The old covenants, the Mosaic/Sinai Covenant that created a nation from a group of slaves and the political Davidic/Zion Covenant that created a dynasty, are part of Israel's memory. Yet they are not enough to sustain and revitalize this present community.

Chronicles focuses on the religious system based on the Jerusalem Temple, the cultus, and the attending Levitical personnel as the expression of the Covenant between God and Israel.³ Although this idea is not the sole purpose of Chronicles, it is a major theme of the book. Chronicles is a "general and comprehensive theological stock-taking, striving to achieve a new religious balance in the face of a changing world." As Sara Japhet explains, the goal of Chronicles "is a comprehensive expression of the perpetual need to renew and revitalize the religion of Israel" (emphasis added).⁴

Chronicles' interests are "primarily ecclesiastical,"⁵ and it desires "a rehabilitation of the national-cultic institutions" according to King David's directions (see Ezra 3:10; Neh. 12:45). Yet for Chronicles, this is done without a "specific linking of hope with a kingly figure or with the Davidic house."⁶

Chronicles is content with Cyrus's support of the Temple's construction. "For all his focus on David and his descendants and the everlasting promise

Moshe Reiss is a rabbi and a PhD from Oxford University. He has lectured at Columbia University and the Catholic University of Leuven and was assistant rabbi at Yale University. He has been widely published in numerous journals on the Bible. www.MosheReiss.org

David J. Zucker, PhD, BCC, served as Rabbi/Chaplain and Director of Chaplaincy Care at Shalom Park in Aurora, Colorado. He is the author of several books, the latest are The Bible's PROPHETS: An Introduction for Christians and Jews (Wipf & Stock, 2013) and The Bible's WRITINGS: An Introduction for Christians and Jews (Wipf & Stock, 2013). www.DavidJZucker.org

made by God to David, the Chronicler nowhere explicitly advocates the reestablishment of the Davidic monarchy, let alone a rebellion against the Persian Empire. He seems relatively content with life under Persian suzerainty, provided that the worship at the temple in Jerusalem is able to continue without restraint."⁷

The Chronicler borrows from the Torah (Pentateuch) and what is known as the Deuteronomic Histories (Deuteronomy through Kings, though largely ignoring the Book of Judges). Scholars dispute about the Chronicler's sources. Gary Knoppers thinks it likely that there were different, perhaps older, sources than those which were eventually incorporated in the Masoretic text.⁸ Chronicles' focus on the southern kingdom⁹ and David's role, as well as on the Jerusalem cultus, might reflect different material not found in those other documents.

DAVID SANITIZED

In Samuel and Kings, David has a rich, but morally problematic history. Chronicles seeks to portray a David who has, as a prime purpose, the establishment of the cultus. "For his depiction of David he utilized those materials from the [Deuteronomic History] that would enhance David's qualifications as builder of the temple or highlight his position as a victorious and powerful king. Thus he omitted most of the narrative commonly known as the History of David's Rise (I Samuel 16 – II Samuel 5), in which David gradually gained ascendancy over Saul and kingship over all Israel, and almost all of the Succession Narrative (II Samuel 9–20; I Kings 1–2)."¹⁰

Consequently, in his description of David, the Chronicler deletes the more problematic details of David's life; he selects only those passages that fit Chronicles' positive agenda:

David at Hebron (II Sam. 5:1-3)	Parallel in Chronicles (I Chron. 9:1-3)
David and Philistines (II Sam. 5:17-25)	Parallel in Chronicles (I Chron. 14:8-17)
David and Abigail (I Sam. 25)	No parallels in Chronicles
David and Bathsheba (II Sam. 11)	No parallels in Chronicles

The sanitized David becomes an idealized ruler. In Chronicles "[David is] a gifted and successful warrior (I Chron. 14; 18-20), the recipient of dynastic promises (I Chron. 17), a repentant sinner (I Chron. 21), and an astute administrator (I Chron. 22-29). The writer does not just mention these royal

achievements; he clearly considers them to be critical features of the Davidic legacy."¹¹ More specifically, from a cultic viewpoint, David is the idealized religious ruler.

Chronicles is concerned with religious institutions in Jerusalem, primarily the Temple and cultic tradition. The David connection is that he introduced the musical guilds in connection with the cult service centering about both ark and tabernacle (I Chron. 16:4-6).¹² David sets up the twenty-four watches of priests and the twenty-four watches of Levites (I Chron. 23; 24:1-19). This includes the singing of certain psalms.¹³

David is credited with being the founder of the cultus, despite the fact that it is Solomon who builds the Temple. "As Moses had once received plans for the tabernacle," Jacob M. Myers observes, "so David now received plans for the temple from the Lord (I Chron 22:1, 28:19); and the place was designated by the angel of the Lord (I Chron 21:18 ff.)." While personnel arrangements, such as the Levites carrying the ark, and the positions of the priests and Levites, are connected to Moses (I Chron. 15:15; II Chron. 30:16), "most of the priestly, Levitical, and other personnel appointments in connection with the temple cultus are attributed to David, who was virtually a second Moses," Myers explains (emphasis added).¹⁴ Klein, in reference to I Chronicles 15, makes an even stronger statement: "David in this chapter is a second Moses, who also pitched a tent and blessed the people" (see Ex. 33:7; Deut. 33:1).¹⁵ In terms of status, given the emphasis placed upon the beloved King David, the references to that monarch overshadow those made to Moses. David is mentioned well over 250 times in Chronicles, Moses on less than two dozen occasions. Many of those Davidic references are in terms of his role as warrior or ruler of the state, but again and again, from I Chronicles 9:35 to the end of that book, David is presented as the founder of the cult.

DAVID BECOMES A LATTER-DAY MOSES

Moses is deserving of honor, but for Chronicles "it is the David who ordained the Levites to their office who brought the worship of Yahweh to its highest perfection and its true fulfillment."¹⁶

David is close to a parallel partner with Moses, receiving revelation directly from God. David is therefore entitled to add new elements, innovations, to the religious life of Israel.¹⁷ As well as serving as an additional founder of the

cultus, David appropriates some of Moses' language from the Torah, notably in some of his succession statements. In I Chronicles 22, David's charge to Solomon has a familiar sound, recalling the language with which Moses charged Joshua. In this instance, David creates a link with Moses, since the king first mentions the lawgiver and then both quotes and slightly paraphrases him, but without noting that he does so (See I Chron. 22:13; Deut. 31:7-8).

Chronicles acknowledges that Moses had a special relationship with God (I Chron. 6:34 [6:49]; 23:14; and II Chron. 1:3; 24:6, 9; 30:16). Similar imagery is associated with David (I Chron. 17:3, 4, 7).

DOWNPLAYING MOSES

Even as David is sanitized, so is the role of Moses downplayed. Chronicles twice utilizes the term *Torat Moshe* – the Torah of Moses (II Chron. 23:18, 30:16). Yet "in general no prominence is given to [Moses] by the Chronicler, for whom the great climax of his people's history came with David rather than with the exodus from Egypt."¹⁸

By way of contrast, in the writings of the Deuteronomist Historian in Kings, we are given the formulaic words, For [God] they are Your very own people that you freed from Egypt, from the midst of the iron furnace . . . For You, O Lord God, have set them apart for Yourself from all the peoples of the earth . . . as You promised through Moses Your servant (I Kgs. 8:51-53). When the Chronicler tells this tale, "he cannot accept that the people of Israel became the people of God through a single act at a particular point of history."¹⁹ Israel becomes God's people over many years as they develop a relationship. David is a key character in forming the ongoing bonds with God. As Knoppers writes, Chronicles "neither stresses the Exodus and Conquest nor ties these events to the founding of Israel as a nation . . . [Chronicles] does not associate the Exodus with the crystallization of Israel's corporate identity."²⁰

However, "it does not necessarily follow that the Chronicler had no place for Moses, as various allusions throughout the work indicate."²¹ Yet the references to Moses are limited. Citations mentioning him are sporadic throughout Chronicles; but many are biographical rather than cult-connected (I Chron.

5:29 [6:3]; 23:13, 14 ff.; 26:24).²² As Japhet writes, "Chronistic allusions to Moses are almost restricted to the 'Law of Moses.'"²³

In principle, the Torah is the ultimate source of the cultus. Yet Chronicles moderates the figure of Moses in terms of his connection to the Torah. Although the text connects the Torah specifically to Moses (*sefer Torat Y-H-W-H be-yad Moshe*; II Chron. 34:14), Chronicles more often refers to the more generic "Torah of the Lord" (I Chron. 16:40; 22:12; II Chron. 12:1; 17:9; 31:3, 4; 34:14; 35:26).

A LEVITICAL COVENANT

To find religious meaning in his own day, the Chronicler reinterprets Israel's collective history. Chronicles recognizes and values the importance of the Exodus from Egypt, and Moses' central role in the Sinaitic revelation. Likewise, Chronicles recognizes and values the creation of the Davidic dynasty. Yet both of these events were in Israel's past; the Chronicler has a different purpose for his contemporary community.

As a result, the Chronicler neither focuses on the [Mosaic] Sinai Covenant nor on the [Davidic] Zion Covenant. The Sinai Covenant was a religious contract mandated between God and Israel, and mediated by Moses. Stated briefly in the words of Jon Levenson, the "focus of the Mosaic covenant sealed at Sinai is twofold: history and morality" (emphasis added). The Zion Covenant established between God and David, focusing on politics and dynasty, is tied to the Land of Israel itself. Again, quoting Levenson, the "Davidic covenant, then, is distinct in kind from the Sinaitic . . . In the case of the Davidic [Zion] covenant, history and morality are no longer the focus . . . Rather, the Davidic covenant [is] a covenant of grant . . . [it is] God's commitment to the Davidic dynasty"²⁴ and, presumably, to the land that they rule. Those covenants were in the past. To achieve his goal, to revitalize, reinvigorate, and renew Judaism in his time, and to (re)establish the Temple and its rituals, Chronicles therefore highlights what might be termed a Jerusalem-based (unspoken but real) Levitical Covenant (Temple and ritual-centered) between God and the people of Israel.²⁵

This implicit Levitical Covenant blends aspects of both Sinai (worship of God/cultic matters) and Zion (the Temple in Jerusalem). In that sense, Chronicles is a "zealous and not too subtle apologia on behalf of the Levites, who,

in [the author of Chronicles'] opinion, have yet to achieve the honor and influence that are rightfully theirs."²⁶

In I Chronicles 23, the number of Levites far exceeds that found in the Torah. As Japhet explains, the Chronicler evidently seeks to portray these Levitical orders as broadly as possible, both in terms of their numbers and their organization.²⁷ There are both traditional and additional duties. In addition to merely guarding the Temple, the Levites are responsible for the musical liturgy: to give thanks and praise the Lord every morning and evening, as well as on Sabbaths, new moons and festivals (vv. 30-31). "Such a mandate for the Levites was previously established by David vis-à-vis the Ark (16:1-38)."²⁸

I Chronicles 15 highlights David's "meticulous preparation" for transporting the ark to Jerusalem. This description was "composed by the Chronicler himself without a biblical Vorlage." David saw to it that "no one but the Levites should carry the ark, in conformity with Pentateuchal legislation and as a correction to the procedure in the first effort to bring the ark to Jerusalem . . . David also commanded the chiefs of the Levites to appoint Levitical singers, and so this additional duty of the Levites, also in the cult of the Chronicler's day, is given the authority of Israel's first king."²⁹ The many verses dedicated to this endeavor, and the literally dozens of names of the Levites involved, are in sharp contrast to the four verse description of the ark's transportation in II Samuel 6:12-15 without a designated Levite in sight. Likewise, the lists of Levites in I Chronicles 23 and 24, as well as Hezekiah's ritual acts supported by the Levites in II Chronicles 29, have no parallels in Samuel-Kings.

AFTER THE TEMPLE'S DESTRUCTION

New conditions bring about new emphases. The Second Temple was destroyed in 70 CE. Eventually, after a couple of centuries perhaps, it became clear that the Temple would not be restored, at least within the foreseeable future. Consequently, Judaism changed its focus once again. The Chronicler's notion of something like a Levitical Covenant, to connect God and the people of Israel, became moribund. Levenson's description of the relationship between the Sinai Covenant and the Zion Covenant became true also of the Levitical Covenant: "Mount Zion fell heir to the legacy of Mount Sinai. Zion

became the prime locus of theophany, the home of YHWH, the seat of his government, from which he promulgated decrees and at which Israel renewed her partnership in covenant with him . . . The early traditions emphasize Sinai; the latter ones, those of David's time and after, emphasize Zion . . . [yet] the truth is, a quick reading of the Hebrew Bible leaves one with a larger awareness of Sinai than Zion. The notion of a Mosaic revelation at Sinai endured . . . In fact, tradition came to canonize the Mosaic movement, as it did not canonize the Davidic-Solomonic."³⁰

Part of the canonization of the Sinai Covenant/Mosaic movement is the convention that the chain of tradition reaches back to Sinai (Mishnah Avot 1:1). It is also true that Jews continue to read the Torah "given at Sinai" as part of the weekly, festival, and High Holy Day liturgies. Nonetheless, in Judaism the Temple and Mount Zion retain a central role in ritual and theology, despite their having been destroyed 2000 years ago. Even today, as has been the case for millennia, the physical direction of prayer is toward Jerusalem, toward the place where the Temple once stood (Sifrei Deuteronomy, Piskah 29).

Levenson suggests that religiously and culturally, the "presence is the presence of Zion, but the voice is the voice of Sinai."³¹ We contend that the presence is the presence of Zion, but unlike the days of the Chronicler, it is a Zion without a Temple and a Levitical cult; so in effect, by default, the voice is the voice of Sinai. Nonetheless, in the Chronicler's time, nearly 2,500 years ago, it was a Temple-centered Levitical Covenant with David's prominent role in its creation that captured his imagination.

CONCLUSION

For Chronicles, the pinnacle of Israel's history is the establishment of the cult associated with the Temple in Jerusalem rather than the Exodus and the revelation at Sinai or the establishment of the Davidic dynasty. The Chronicler privileges the Davidic dynasty, but does not call for an independent monarchy. He selectively revises and rewrites the history he knows from the Torah and from the books of Samuel and Kings. A major feature is a sanitized version of David's legacy with a stress on David's importance as champion of the Levitical cultus. King David, the servant of God, is the person who transmits those traditions and records the directions, which must now be

scrupulously followed. The Chronicler's primary concern is a Jerusalem-based Levitical Covenant, Temple-centered and focused on ritual. The new covenant would be through the Levites, who by their efforts connect the people with God. For the Chronicler, this revisionist religious approach is purposeful; it is the best way to revitalize Judaism for his audience, the exiles returning from Babylon and their descendants now living in Judah.

NOTES

1. Recent discussions of current thinking about when Chronicles was written, whether the book had one or more authors, as well as its relationship to Ezra-Nehemiah, can be found in Ralph W. Klein, *I Chronicles: A Commentary* [Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible] (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), "Introduction," pp. 13-17; as well as in Gary N. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9* (Anchor Bible 12; New York: Doubleday, 2003) pp. 72-89.
2. Earlier prophecy was not fulfilled, cf. Haggai 2:20 ff.; Zechariah 4:6 ff.; 3:8; 6:12 ff.
3. "Compared with the parallel histories of Samuel and Kings, the redactor of Chronicles has a great tendency to dwell on the details of Temple worship, on the arrangements of the Priestly vestments, and on the Levites as well," *JPS Guide – The Jewish Bible* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008) p. 215.
4. Sara Japhet, *I and II Chronicles: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993 [The Old Testament Library]) pp. 44, 49; "The Chronicler shaped his material to highlight the continuity within the community of faith": Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) p. 655.
5. John Bright, *A History of Israel*, fourth ed (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000) p. 401.
6. Bright, p. 453..
7. Klein, *I Chronicles*, p. 47.
8. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, pp. 69-71. For a chart that offers Chronicles' parallel citations to the Masoretic text, see Jacob M. Myers, *II Chronicles*, AB 13 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965) pp. 227-231.
9. The history of the northern kingdom is almost completely absent in Chronicles, as are the narratives about Elijah and Elisha (1-2 Kgs.)
10. Ralph W. Klein, "Chronicles, Book of 1-2," in David Noel Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1996) c1992, S. 1:996.
11. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, p. 82.
12. Jacob M. Myers, *I Chronicles* (Anchor Bible, 12; Garden City: Doubleday, 1965) p. 121.
13. Gary N. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 10-29* (Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 2004) pp. 856-857.
14. Myers, *I Chronicles*, pp. lxviii, lxix.
15. Klein, *I Chronicles*, p. 358.
16. Simon J. De Vries, "Moses and David as Cult Founders in Chronicles," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 107/4 (Dec. 1988) p. 639. De Vries notes that "the book of Chronicles seems to make relatively little of Moses while strongly promoting David as a cult founder alongside Moses," pp. 619-638, here 619.

17. While Sara Japhet does not say this specifically, she implies it in *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and its Place in Biblical Thought*, revised edition (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1997) pp. 230-232: "David virtually displaces Moses . . . For the Chronicler . . . David was the key person . . . [who] was responsible for the whole of Temple worship" (I Chron. 16:37-43). See also Myers, *I Chronicles*, p. 122. "David's authority now stands both behind the role of the Levites and the use of psalmody in worship." Klein, *I Chronicles*, p. 363.
18. R. J. Coggins, *The First and Second Books of Chronicles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 119.
19. Japhet, *I and II Chronicles: A Commentary*, p. 600.
20. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9*, p. 81.
21. Coggins, p. 119.
22. Knoppers, however, points out that "Mosaic legislation consistently occupies an important place in Chronicles and should not be overlooked in any study of Chronistic theology," *I Chronicles 1-9*, p. 83.
23. Japhet, *I and II Chronicles: A Commentary*, p. 526. References to the Law/Torah of Moses (Torat Moshe) can be found in II Chronicles 23:18; 30:16. In like manner, there are only two references to the Book of Moses/Sefer Moshe (II Chron. 25:4; 35:12). Only once is Moses associated with the Ten Commandments, and there it is because he placed the tablets in the Ark (II Chron. 5:10).
24. Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis, Chicago: Winston Press, 1985) pp. 100-101.
25. The term Levitical Covenant is one that the authors of this article propose as descriptive of the Chronicler's viewpoint; it is not of general usage in the relevant literature.
26. De Vries, p. 636. De Vries goes on to suggest that it is not unreasonable to speculate that the Chronicler was a Levite. Klein, however, states that this seems "only a possibility rather than a probability," *I Chronicles*, 17.
27. Japhet, *I and II Chronicles: A Commentary*, p. 412.
28. Gary N. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 10-29*, p. 825.
29. Klein, *I Chronicles*, p. 358.
30. Levenson, p. 187.
31. Levenson, p. 188.

THE STORY OF JUDAH, THE HERO: AN ANALYSIS OF GENESIS 38

YONG ZHAO

Chapter 38 of Genesis, which relates the story of Judah and Tamar, seems at first irrelevant and unlinked with the chapters before and after it. Most Bible critics view it as "an independent story that has no connection with the story of Joseph." On the other hand, Robert Alter explains that this chapter serves to connect Judah's deception of his father with the deception practiced on him by his daughter-in-law. It is an example of the deceiver being deceived.¹ In addition, this chapter apparently serves to emphasize Judah's negative character, adding the neglect of his daughter-in-law to his previous transgressions – betraying his brother and deceiving his father. Mieke Bal argues that chapter 38 serves as a "mirror," a contrast to Joseph's experiences and fate. Moreover, adopting the perspective of feminist criticism, she emphasizes the role of the female character, Tamar. In her opinion, it was Tamar's behavior that helped Judah to become aware of his mistakes, resolve to mend his ways, and assume his proper household responsibilities.²

These approaches indicate that chapter 38 has a narrative function within the wider Joseph narrative, but far more is involved. A neglected aspect of the chapter is its opening verse, which states that *Judah went down from his brothers*. Why did he leave his brothers and go south, and why does the Bible specifically mention this fact? The rabbis explain that *Judah went down* means that he was demoted from his previous high rank as leader of the brothers, either because he failed to prevail on them to rescue Joseph (*Midrash Tanhuma*, *Vayeshev* 12) or because his own rescue attempt was incomplete (TB *Sotah* 13b). The theme of these explanations is that while Judah acted commendably by persuading his brothers to sell Joseph rather than leave him to die in a pit, more was expected of him. He did not live up to his potential ability as a leader and positive influence. R. Abraham Saba (1440-1508), in his *Tzeror ha-Mor* commentary, maintains that Judah was behaving like a penitent: he moved away from his brothers so as to distance himself from their negative influence, or else he could not bear to see his father's agony over the loss of Joseph,

Dr. Yong Zhao is an Associate Professor at the School of Environmental Science and Engineering, Tianjin University, China.

knowing that he was to blame. Kimhi (Radak) notes that Adullam, where Judah camped, is geographically south of Dothan, where the brothers were pasturing their flock in the previous chapter (Gen 37:17), thus *Judah went down* means that he traveled south. On that basis, I think it is possible that Judah followed the Ishmaelites' path and headed south, endeavoring to track them down in the hope of finding Joseph and bringing him back to his father.³ Note that while Judah's brethren did not treat Joseph as a brother, due to the favoritism shown him by Jacob and probably because they had different mothers, Judah explicitly called Joseph *our brother, our own flesh* (Gen. 37:27).

Chapters 37-50 of the Book of Genesis are generally viewed as "the story of Joseph," but this narrative actually has a dual significance. It is also "the story of Judah," of which chapter 38 forms part. The narrative framework presents two concurrent stories of growth and change, featuring both Joseph and Judah.

Throughout chapters 37-50, "the story of Joseph" and "the story of Judah" are skillfully intermingled to form a harmonious, integrated narrative framework. There are two storylines, one focusing on Joseph's behavior and the other on Judah's development as a leader. Of these, the storyline about Joseph is more prominent and explicit, while the one concerning Judah is mainly implied.

Joseph obviously hated his brothers for what they did to him, which explains why he made no attempt to contact his family after becoming viceroy of Egypt.⁴ Yet Jacob, his father, never did him any harm; on the contrary, Jacob loved Joseph and set him above his brothers. Jacob was heart-stricken when he learned of Joseph's supposed death (Gen. 37:34-35), constantly bewailed him, and suffered misery and torment ever after. Joseph's failure to contact Jacob, who was innocent of any wrongdoing, may be seen as a rejection of filial responsibility.

The names Joseph gave his two sons reveal what was on his mind. Manasseh was so named because *God has made me completely forget my hardship and my parental home* (41:51), and Ephraim because *God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction* (v. 52). Together, these names point to a repudiation of his family and past and to the joy of his well-being in Egypt.

Joseph had little regard for the plight of his kinsfolk during the time of re-

gional famine. When God allowed Joseph to foresee the seven years of abundance and the seven years of scarcity, he collected all the food of those abundant years on Pharaoh's behalf, but gave no thought to his own father and brothers. When the good years had passed and the years of famine arrived, he opened all the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, but evidently showed no concern for his family in Canaan. Joseph may conceivably have expected their arrival in Egypt to purchase food, this being part of some master plan he had devised, but there is nevertheless an element of callousness in his behavior. Even after Joseph encountered his brothers, he hid his true identity from them and seemed only to concern himself with the fate of Benjamin. His original idea, it appears, was only to make sure that Benjamin, his brother by blood, would enjoy the good life with him in Egypt.

On a moral and religious level, Joseph behaves most commendably, refusing the advances of Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39:7 ff) and consistently naming God as the source of his ability to interpret dreams (40:8, 41:16 ff). However when it comes to his family in Canaan, Joseph seems apathetic, narrow-minded and selfish, as in his youth. While it is true that Joseph allows his brothers to take food home with them, he seems to be doing the absolute minimum that human decency prescribes. Although he weeps in private when he hears his brothers discussing their guilt (Gen. 42:24) and when he meets Benjamin (43:30), Joseph always manages to overcome this softer side of his nature and continues harassing his brothers until he hears Judah's heartrending plea (Gen. 45:1).

While Joseph is intent on subjecting his brothers to a series of tests and trials, it is Judah who brings a positive dénouement to the story. He thus maintains his role of savior as in previous critical situations. When Joseph's life was in danger, it was Judah who saved him. The brothers plotted to kill Joseph and Reuben suggested that they throw him into an empty pit. Since it was too deep for him to climb out, Joseph would be exposed to the burning sun by day and to the freezing cold by night. He would probably die there, but (as Reuben explained to his brothers) they would not have his blood on their hands (Gen. 37:22). Although they witnessed Joseph's anguish and heard him plead for his life, none of them paid heed (42:21) except for Reuben – who meant to release him from the pit

when no one else was around (37:21-22, 29-30) – and Judah, who spotted an Ishmaelite caravan heading for Egypt, then thought of a way to save Joseph's life (37:26-27) and so, accidentally, made him destined for greatness. Judah could have done more to rescue Joseph, but his own career as a leader now began.

Later, when the whole family was starving and the brothers could find no way to obtain food other than by returning to Egypt with Benjamin, it was Judah who saved the day. Although Reuben offered his two sons' lives as collateral for Benjamin's safe return, Jacob still refused to have Benjamin taken to Egypt (Gen. 42:37-38). They had thus reached an impasse. It was Judah who solved the problem by persuading Jacob to agree. Unlike Reuben, who offered his two sons' lives as security, Judah made himself responsible for Benjamin's safety, a more ethical proposal, and this touched Jacob's heart-strings (Gen. 43:9-11).

Finally, when Benjamin was taken to Egypt and detained there as an alleged thief, it was again Judah who saved him. Judah's emotional but well-argued appeal to Joseph (44:18-34) stressed the fact that Joseph and Benjamin were Jacob's favorites (44:27) and that his own life was bound up with Benjamin's (44:20-31). On hearing this, Joseph could no longer control himself; he wept aloud and then made himself known to his dumbfounded brothers (45:1-3). Joseph now realized how greatly Jacob cherished Benjamin and himself, and how sincerely Judah loved Benjamin and their aged father. Judah's moving speech, his self-sacrificing readiness to free Benjamin, and his exemplary courage made a deep impression on Joseph and his brethren. The hatred he felt for them was at last dispelled, giving way to affectionate reconciliation, and Joseph brought his family to live in Egypt.

Chapters 37-50 of Genesis show that the fate of Joseph and his family was changed by Judah. He, rather than Joseph, is the true hero of this story. It was Judah who saved Joseph's life, who secured grain for his family by persuading Jacob to send Benjamin with him to Egypt, who volunteered to sacrifice himself for Benjamin, and who brought about the reconciliation through his impassioned plea. Joseph responded by supplying wagons to bring his family from the hardships of Canaan to the comforts of Egypt.

How did Judah transform himself from the failed rescuer of chapter 37 into the selfless leader of chapter 44? That is explained in chapter 38, which fits

organically into the whole scenario, allowing us to observe Judah's developing sense of leadership and responsibility. He at first ignores his daughter-in-law's plight, but by the end of the episode he admits that he was wrong and had not lived up to his responsibilities (Gen. 38:26). When his shameful behavior is exposed and he is thoroughly discredited, Judah makes no attempt to obscure or deny his culpability. Instead, he bravely acknowledges it and repents.⁵ Having learned the lesson of his earlier failure to save Joseph, he must now assume the mantle of a responsible leader and do what is right, even when it is hard for him. This chapter marks a turning point in Judah's life, after which the narrative shows him leading his brothers in a proper and successful way.

Later, when Jacob gathers his sons together before his death, giving each of them his evaluation and prediction (49:8-12), Judah receives an accolade higher than those awarded to Joseph and his other brothers, for Judah will become their leader and rule Israel (49:8). An interesting and dramatic feature here is Jacob's prediction: *Your father's sons shall bow down before you* (49:8), an omen in Joseph's dreams (37:6-9), is now attached to Judah. Jacob chooses it for Judah when he blesses to his sons, even though Joseph, not Judah, is viceroy of Egypt at the time. It signifies that authority will be transferred from Joseph to Judah.

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet; so that tribute shall come to him and the homage of peoples be his (49:10). The Chosen People have two designations: Israel and the Jews. The name "Jew" comes from Jacob's fourth son Judah, rather than Reuben, Joseph or the other sons. As history has shown, Judah and his heirs played a leading role in the development of the Israelites. Judah's tribe headed all the others and his descendants, from King David onwards, were the nation's rulers.

Chapters 37-47 of Genesis are widely regarded as the "Joseph Narrative," and Joseph does appear in them as the leading figure. However, the person who undergoes a real transformation and development of character, emerging as the active hero of those chapters, is in fact Judah.

NOTES

1. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1981) p. 10.
2. N. Meifang, "On Chapter 38 of the Book of Genesis," *Foreign Literature*, 2 (2011) pp.132-136.
3. Y. Zhao, *Legends and Commentaries on the Jewish Bible* (Beijing: China Religious Culture

Pub- lisher, 2013) pp. 46-7. According to Genesis 37:21-22, however, it was Reuben who intended to save Joseph and restore him to his father.

4. See also the discussion of this point in the Hebrew journal *Megadim*: Y. Bin-Nun, "Division and Unity: Why Did Joseph Not Send a Message to his Father?," *Megadim* 1, pp. 20-31; the response of Y. Medan in *Megadim* 2, pp. 54-78, and Bin-Nun's reply on pp. 109-110; together with the response of Y.

Spiegel in *Megadim* 5, pp. 93-94, where an early source for this approach is presented. See also Moshe Soller, "Why No Message From Joseph to His Father?," *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, 26:3 (July-Sept. 1998) pp. 158-167, and Hayim Granot, "Observations on the Character of Joseph in Egypt", *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, 39:4 (October-December 2011) pp. 263-267.

5. Judah is sometimes criticized for being cold-blooded and ruthless in his judgment of Tamar (38:24). In fact, this is a misinterpretation of the procedure dealing with women who had committed adultery (Lev. 20:10). Although such punishment may seem cruel to the modern reader, Judah passed this sentence because he was faithful to the religious laws that would later be promulgated in Leviticus.



If you have written a paper in the *Jewish Bible Quarterly* and wish to see if it has been quoted in another academic journal, book, or doctoral dissertation, access <http://scholar.google.com> and type in Jewish Bible Quarterly under "journal" and your name under "author".



PSALMS CHAPTER 63: DAVID IN THE WILDERNESS

TANI PRERO

A Psalm of David, when he was in the Wilderness of Judea (Ps. 63:1).

According to the traditional rabbinic commentaries (Rashi, Ibn Ezra, and others), chapter 63 of Psalms was composed by David when he fled into the Judean wilderness to escape from Saul, who wished to kill him. By beginning the psalm with this sentence, the editor of Psalms indicates that it should be read in the context of David's description of his trying experiences in the wilderness, focusing on his physical deprivation. However, instead of complaining about his trying conditions, David directs his feelings of suffering toward God. While many of the terms used in this psalm can have many meanings, in the wilderness context provided by the superscription these verses are understood to refer to the particular experiences and hardships connected with that environment, thus providing additional insights into this psalm. If you have been to the wilderness, the empathetic identification with these experiences makes the metaphors of the chapter much stronger. I will attempt to convey the feelings and context of the wilderness refugee, based to some extent on my own wanderings and ponderings in the very region where David hid.

What things does a person in the Judean wilderness lack? Foremost is water. He also doesn't have enough food. He misses his bed, there isn't enough shade, he feels the sun burning his skin and drying him out. There are wild animals roaming around and if someone brings food into the wilderness, the animals will eagerly snatch it when he is not looking. As the wanderer loses his physical wellbeing, his mind also becomes weakened and he may start to hallucinate. He has visions; he sees mirages.

The fascinating theme of this chapter is the way in which David transforms his feelings of discomfort into a longing for God. In the wilderness, David does not have enough water, yet he does not complain of thirst. As his skin dries out in the hot sun, he does not complain about its peeling and cracking. Instead, he says to God, *My soul thirsts for You, my parched body yearns for*

Rabbi Tani Prero leads Camp Yaalozu, a Jewish wilderness survival camp. During the school year he helps run ACE High School in Tarum, Israel. He also leads hikes and teamwork and leadership workshops, all with a spiritual twist.

You in the arid wasteland, where I am tired and without water (v. 2). These first verses of the chapter set the tone. David takes these feelings of discomfort which result from not having his basic physical needs and transforms them into yearning for God.

After many days without enough water, David begins to see visions. As his mind is weakened by physical deprivation, his imagination is stronger than usual. He does not imagine an oasis in the distance or a messenger coming to announce the passing of Saul's ire, which would free him from his wilderness refuge. As David's rational faculties falter, his imagination wanders toward God. Speaking of God, David says, *I envision* (from the Hebrew verb *hozeh* – "see a vision") *You in holiness; to see Your power and glory* (v. 3). Alternatively, David may be imagining the Temple, his choice of the word *ba-kodesh* implying not "in holiness" but "in the Sanctuary."¹ When a person finds himself in the wilderness, he can uniquely see and feel God's power, especially in contrast to the weakness of the human being trapped there.

As he feels his strength waning, David senses that his life is in danger. He declares, *Your kindness is better than life itself* (v. 4). David expounds further, exclaiming that as long as *my lips will praise You*, my life is meaningful. In other words, as long as I recognize your goodness, my life is worth something. *I will bless You with my life*, he then adds (v. 5). Sforno explains that David has now achieved a deeper recognition of God's kindness. In a situation where David does not know that his basic needs will be provided, he gains a deeper appreciation of the beneficent God who looks after him.

As with a rich fat [feast], my soul will be sated when with joyful lips my mouth can sing your praises (v. 6). Food in the wilderness is scarce. Why is David speaking about a fine, rich feast? He may wish he had it, but that is not what he says. Instead of lamenting his lack of food, David takes his hunger and turns it into a desire to praise God. His soul will be sated with succulent songs of praise for his God.

On my bed, at night, I think of you (v. 7). Why does David mention his bed? – because he is sleeping on the ground or perhaps on a hastily assembled collection of sticks and rocks. As he settles into these rough accommodations, he does not think about his uncomfortable "mattress" as he goes to sleep. Instead, his thoughts turn to God: *I think of You late at night* (ibid). Why is David lying awake in the middle of the night? In that harsh wilder-

ness environment he just cannot fall asleep. David is once more undergoing extreme physical deprivation. His response, however, is not to complain or bemoan his fate. Instead, he lies awake, uncomfortable but absorbed in contemplating God.

In the shadow of Your wings I will shout for joy (v. 8). While the idea of God's protective shadow often appears in Psalms (e.g., Ps. 17:8, 36:8, 91:1), here the term *tzel* gains additional significance when we understand that in the wilderness David has no such protection. Amid all his suffering, however, David recognizes God's kindness and fatherly eye, proclaiming, *My soul is attached to You; Your right hand supports me* (v. 9).

Then David thinks about why he is here in this tough environment. Why did he escape to the wilderness in the first place? Because he fled from *those who wish to destroy my soul* (v. 10). Enemies who pursued and wished to harm him forced him to seek refuge there. David would like them to fall by the sword, to *be the food of jackals* (v. 11). Why jackals? It seems likely that when David went to sleep, jackals inhabiting the Judean Wilderness came and snatched his food. He certainly heard them howl at night while he lay fearful and unprotected. Instead of troubling me, David feels, let those jackals attack my enemies. These verses do not express a longing for God, but for the punishment of his enemies in the same wilderness environment.

David finally concludes that *the king will rejoice in God* (v. 12). Throughout Saul's pursuit of him, David has never treated Saul as less than Israel's king. He has had several opportunities to kill Saul, but refrained from doing so. Ever since Samuel anointed him as king, David has known that his time will come, but he is in no hurry to oust Saul from the throne. Hence his generic phrase, "the king shall rejoice in God." Whether it be himself or his pursuer, Saul, the rightful king should accept all his challenges and heart-aches and direct them toward God.

This chapter highlights a fascinating way of transforming feelings of discomfort into a passionate and powerful desire for a connection with the Lord.

NOTES

1. Amos Hakham, *Da'at Mikra – Sefer Tehillim* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1989) p. 364.

WHO WERE THE "FEARERS OF THE LORD" (*YIR'EI HASHEM*) IN PSALMS?

SHIMON BAKON

The term *yir'ei Hashem* ("those who fear the Lord") appears in four verses of the Psalms: *Israel, trust in the Lord! Their help and their shield is He. House of Aaron, trust in the Lord! Their help and their shield is He. Those who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord! Their help and their shield is He* (Ps. 115:9-11). *He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron; He will bless those who fear the Lord* (115:12-13). *Let Israel declare, 'His steadfast love is eternal.' Let the house of Aaron declare, 'His steadfast love is eternal.' Let those who fear the Lord declare, 'His steadfast love is eternal'* (118:2-4). *O house of Israel, bless the Lord; O house of Aaron, bless the Lord; O house of Levi, bless the Lord; you who fear the Lord, bless the Lord* (135:19-20). Due to a juxtaposition comparing the House of Israel, House of Aaron, House of Levi, and those *who fear the Lord*, commentators realized that *those who fear the Lord* must be a different category, separate from the Israelites. In their interpretations of Psalm 115:11 we find three different approaches. Radak and Malbim interpret *yir'ei Hashem* to mean Israelites of great wisdom and piety. Rashi explains that it refers to proselytes (*gerim*), whereas Ibn Ezra, Meiri and Metzudat David see the term as applying to righteous gentiles (*hasidei ummot ha-olam*). This opinion is also mentioned by Radak as a second possibility.

The first interpretation (men of great wisdom and piety) lacks pertinence: such men need no special call to bless the Lord for they praise Him at every opportunity. Rashi's interpretation is also hard to accept, since for all practical purposes there is no difference between a born Jew and a proselyte. However, the third interpretation (righteous gentiles) makes sense as they are a distinct group. The following verse indicates that the declaration of blessing takes place in the Temple: *Praise the name of the Lord; give praise, you servants of the Lord who stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God* (Ps. 135:1-2). During the Second Temple period, there was an Outer Court on the Temple Mount where entrance was permitted for righteous gentiles who had adopted various Jewish practices, such as ob-

servance of the Sabbath, abstention from forbidden food, and the like.¹ The Mishnah (*Shekalim* 1:5) relates that non-Jews could bring certain types of offerings to the Temple.

NAAMAN: THE FIRST GOD-FEARING GENTILE

Unlike Ruth, whose firm declaration, *Your people shall be my people, and your God my God* (Ruth 1:16), makes her a true convert, Naaman, the Aramean army commander who was plagued with leprosy, fits the category of "those who fear the Lord." He follows the instructions of the prophet Elisha, bathes seven times in the River Jordan, and is miraculously healed. Although he does not formally adopt the Israelite religion, Naaman declares himself to be "one who fears the Lord" before returning to his native land. He stands before the man of God (Elisha) and exclaims: *'Now I know that there is no God in the whole world except in Israel! . . . for your servant will never again offer up burnt offering or sacrifice to any god, except the Lord* (II Kgs. 5:15, 17).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: A CALL TO ALL THE PEOPLES

Israel's message was a powerful one in the ancient world; it proclaimed a revolutionary faith in One God that demanded a high standard of moral conduct from its adherents. Among other religious practices, Israel had the Sabbath, a day of rest ridiculed centuries later by the "enlightened" Romans, which was ultimately adopted in part by Christianity and Islam. With the establishment of the Temple, Israel was ready to invite all peoples on earth to worship the Lord in Jerusalem.

There are already sources for this invitation in the Bible. When David set up the Ark of God he called, *O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength* (I Chron. 16:28). Indeed, when dedicating the First Temple, King Solomon invited gentiles to participate: *If a foreigner who is not of Your people Israel comes from a distant land for the sake of Your name – for they shall hear about Your great name and Your mighty hand and Your outstretched arm – when he comes to pray toward this House . . . grant all that the foreigner asks You for. Thus all the peoples of the earth will know Your name and revere You* (I Kgs. 8:41-43).

Isaiah is equally explicit: *As for the foreigners who attach themselves (ha-nilvim) to the Lord, to minister to Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants. . . . I will bring them to My sacred mount and let them rejoice in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices shall be welcome on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples (Isa. 56:6-7).* Most of the commentators interpret *ha-nilvim* to mean foreigners who became true proselytes. However, the stress placed on *loving the Name of the Lord*, maintaining justice and righteousness (Isa. 56: 1), and keeping the Sabbath (Isa. 56: 2, 4, 6) leaves open the possibility that the term *ha-nilvim* refers to *yir'ei Hashem*.

THE ERA OF THE EXILE

In the pre-exilic era, calling on the peoples of the earth to worship the God of Israel remained a mere invitation. We have no record of gentiles heeding the call. However, in the exilic and post-exilic era, some drastic changes in religious life and an unprecedented expansion of Jewry occurred, all of which contributed to the phenomenon of *yir'ei Hashem* or *yir'ei shamayim*. First and foremost, idol worship came to a sudden end. It is astounding that the efforts made by a succession of great prophets had little influence on their contemporaries. Jeremiah, the last of the pre-exilic prophets, bitterly complains: *They placed their abominations in the House which bears My name and defiled it; and they built the shrines of Baal which are in the Valley of Ben-hinnom, where they offered up their sons and daughters to Molech . . .* (Jer. 32:34-35). Yet no such complaints against idolatry are heard from the post-exilic prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Furthermore, Israel's expanding sacred literature and teaching, hitherto in the hands of the spiritual elite, now became the possession of the common man. This may well have appealed to idol worshippers seeking a different religious path.

Confirmation of Judaism's growing influence on people outside the Land of Israel can be found in the words of the prophet Malachi (fifth century BCE), who declared: *From where the sun rises to where it sets, My name is honored among the nations* (Mal. 1:11). This statement, according to Zer-Kavod, alludes to the "God fearers".² Lastly, Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Judea and subsequent events led to expanding Jewish populations in Egypt and North Africa, Babylonia, Asia Minor, and (eventually) Rome. The number of these

expatriates grew to millions and, according to Salo Baron,³ a large number of proselytes and *yir'ei Hashem* contributed to this expansion.

WHAT PROMPTED THE *YIR'EI HASHEM*?

The fact that, even in their dispersion, Jews staunchly maintained their belief in One God and a stable religious life style evidently impressed many sensitive gentiles, whose array of deities had lost all meaning and appeal. Dissatisfied with their old pagan way of life, they may have been drawn to the worship of One God and the Jewish system of morality with its strictly regulated conduct.

Nevertheless, Rome's emperors strove to shore up their crumbling idolatry. In that effort they were supported by Roman authors who ridiculed the invisible God of Israel, denounced the Jews as "atheists," scorned their day of rest, and mocked the Jewish aversion to eating pork. Even so, a number of prominent Romans became *yir'ei Hashem*. Emperor Nero's wife, Poppaea, is said to have worshiped the Lord, observed the Sabbath, and abstained from forbidden food.⁴ Another Roman aristocrat who followed Jewish practices was Flavius Clemens, the nephew of Emperor Vespasian (TB *Gittin* 56b).

Judging by the NT's vitriolic attack on the Pharisees (Matt. 23:15), "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you compass sea and land to make one proselyte," there must have been a Jewish mission to the gentiles. In fact, it is recorded that Ananias and other Jews converted Izates and other members of the royal house of Adiabene.⁵ The Sages praised Queen Helena of Adiabene, who brought precious gifts to the Temple (Mishnah *Yoma* 3:10).

Although Poppaea, Flavius Clemens, and Queen Helena considered themselves to be Jews, it took some time for the rules governing the acceptance of proselytes (*giyyur*) to crystallize. The Talmud records a debate between two illustrious Sages, R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus and R. Joshua, over the following issue: If a proselyte is circumcised but has not undergone ritual immersion in a *mikveh*, or if he has performed ritual immersion but is not yet circumcised, can he be deemed a genuine proselyte? (TB *Yevamot* 26a).

The propagation of *yir'ei Hashem* was halted by two developments. Firstly, Christian missionaries, who did away with the observance of Torah law and Jewish ritual, were more successful in appealing to gentiles than were the

Jews. Secondly, the Sages of the Talmud blocked Jewish efforts to make proselytes by enacting the following law: "A heathen who accepts all the laws of the Torah except one is not admitted as a proselyte" (TB *Bekhorot* 30b). The era of *yir'ei Hashem* thus came to an end.

NOTES

1. This area was bordered by the *soreg*, which indicated the point beyond which gentiles could not enter (*Middot* 2:3). See also Josephus, *Wars*, 5.5.2 [3b], 6.2.4.

2. Mordekhai Zer-Kavod, *Da'at Mikra – Malakhi* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1990) p. 5.

3. Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, vol. 1: *Ancient Times to the Beginning of the Christian Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958). See also Louis Feldman, *Jews and Gentiles in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Max Margolis and Alexander Marx, *History of the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1941); and Zvi Peretz Chajes, *Be-Sod Ammi* (Boston: Beth Midrash Lamorim, 1962).

4. See Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20:189-196, and the discussion in Steve Mason, "The *Contra Apionem* and Historical Inquiry in the Roman Rhetorical Schools," in L. H. Feldman and J. R. Levison, eds., *Josephus' Contra Apionem: Studies in its Character and Context* (Leiden: Brill, 1996) p. 191.

5. See Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20:17-96; *Genesis Rabbah* 46:111.



Full text of articles from Volumes 1 - 41 is
available for download on our website:

<http://jbq.jewishbible.org/jbq-past-issues/>



THE TRIPLE TRAGEDY OF THE GEDALIAH ASSASSINATION

JOSHUA J. ADLER

Chapters 40-41 of Jeremiah tell the story of Gedaliah son of Ahikam, appointed by the king of Babylon as governor of those Judeans who had not been exiled. This occurred some time after the Chaldeans had put down the Jewish revolt (c. 586 BCE), resulting in the destruction of the Temple and the exile of the social elite. Since the Neo-Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, was aware that many Judeans (such as Gedaliah and the prophet Jeremiah) had opposed the revolt, he was willing to give the Jews who remained a chance to live and rebuild their country. The new governor was supported by Jeremiah and many others of the peace party. Gedaliah intended to restore some semblance of normal life to the land while it was under Chaldean rule, and he invited Jews who had sought refuge in neighboring countries to return. However, this period of semi-autonomy was short-lived as Gedaliah was assassinated by Ishmael son of Nethaniah, a fellow Judean, whom Baalis king of Ammon had sent to kill him. Fearing retaliation by the Babylonian king, the remaining Judeans fled to Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them.

The first tragedy in this story is the murder of a Jewish leader by a fellow Jew. The biblical narrative does not explain why Ishmael wished to kill Gedaliah. It seems likely that he regarded Gedaliah as a traitor, and the fact that Ishmael killed some of the Chaldean troops along with Gedaliah indicates that he may have wanted to continue the war against them (Jer. 41:3). We are also told that Ishmael *was of royal descent* (41:1), suggesting that he considered himself more fit than Gedaliah to rule. There is an additional element, however, since the text (40:14, 41:15) relates that he was sent by the neighboring king of Ammon, indicating that Gedaliah's assassination may have been part of an Ammonite move against Chaldean interests in the region.

When Johanan ben Kareah (of the peace party) discovered that Ishmael was bent on killing Gedaliah and warned him of this, the new governor simply dismissed it as an unfounded rumor (40:15-16). The Talmud (TB *Niddah*

Joshua J. Adler, formerly Rabbi of Chizuk Emuna Congregation in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, has lived in Jerusalem since 1972, and serves as managing editor of The Jewish Bible Quarterly.

61a) cites Gedaliah's naïve refusal to heed the warning as an example of the lesson that "although one should not accept this *leshon ha-ra* [evil speech] as a fact, one should take note of it." Apparently, Gedaliah could not believe that a fellow Judean would want to kill him. While his optimistic attitude may have given him the strength to try and rebuild a shattered nation, he lacked the shrewdness needed to beware of enemies who did not share his vision.

After the murder of Gedaliah and his allies, a group led by Johanan ben Kareah succeeded in freeing many of the hostages who had been taken by Ishmael, although the assassin and his accomplices managed to escape and find refuge in Ammon. The murder of his appointee enraged the king of Babylon and even the loyalists feared that he would now punish the survivors. These loyalists then asked the prophet Jeremiah, who had also opposed the revolt, if their planned escape to Egypt was approved by God. When the word of the Lord was not for the people to seek refuge in Egypt but to stay put, they refused to obey God's command and even forced Jeremiah to accompany them to Egypt (Jer. 42-43). This was the second tragic outcome of Gedaliah's assassination.

The third tragedy involved a reversion to idolatry by many of the Judean exiles in Egypt, who started to worship the moon goddess known as the Queen of Heaven. They blamed all the calamities that had afflicted the people on heeding the admonishment of the prophets to worship only the God of Israel (Jer. 44:15ff). When Jeremiah heard these arguments from his fellow Jews, he realized that all the preaching and instruction by him and by prophets of the First Temple era had been in vain. This was the third tragedy resulting from the murder of Gedaliah and its repercussions, which deprived the Judeans of a leader in their own country. It signified a rejection of the God of Israel and a return to idolatry.

These three tragedies mark a reversal of the Exodus from Egypt. Then, the people had been rescued from Egyptian slavery by the prophet Moses, fulfilling God's command; now they had brought the prophet Jeremiah back to Egypt, ignoring God's clear disapproval. The relapse into idol worship in Egypt recalls the prophet Ezekiel's description of the Egyptian "fetishes" with which the enslaved Israelites had defiled themselves (Ezek. 20:7-9). Even the idea of Israelite infighting is mirrored in the period of Egyptian slavery,

when Moses tries to break up a fight between two Hebrew slaves (Ex. 2:13). Although the Gedaliah episode may be seen as a minor tragedy when compared to the destruction of the First Temple and exile to Babylonia, it marks the dashing of any hopes of restoration, and a reversal of all that had been accomplished generations earlier by the Exodus from Egypt.



עשה תורתך קבע

THE TRIENNIAL BIBLE READING CALENDAR

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF CHAIM ABRAMOWITZ

October	Joshua	10 – 24
	Judges	1 – 13
November	Judges	14 – 21
	I Samuel	1 – 20
December	I Samuel	21– 31
	II Samuel	1– 17
January	II Samuel	18– 24
	I Kings	1– 22
February	II Kings	1– 25
	Isaiah	1 – 3



THE DESTROYING ANGEL

SHAUL BAR

The particular term "destroying angel" (*malakh ha-mashhit*) occurs twice in the Bible, in II Samuel 24:16 and its parallel, I Chronicles 21:15. Other allusions to this "destroyer" (*mashhit*), can be found in Exodus 12:23 and Isaiah 54:16. The story of Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem may also allude to a destroying angel (II Kgs. 19:35; Isa. 37:36; II Chron. 32:21), although the term used there is simply *malakh*. In the cultures of the ancient Near East, gods were believed to be responsible for death and destruction. The Bible, however, does not portray such a configuration. Instead, the destructive agents act according to God's instruction: they are His messengers and it is the Lord who initiates death and destruction. We will see that the Bible refers to the angelic forces of destruction in a way that negates the ideas of neighboring cultures.

DAVID AND THE DESTROYING ANGEL

The destroying angel is sent to afflict Israel with pestilence, in punishment for David's census (II Sam. 24:16). According to the account in the Book of Samuel, the destructive angel *was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite* (ibid.). The parallel account in Chronicles provides a more extensive description of what happened. David looks up and sees the angel of the Lord *standing between heaven and earth, with a drawn sword in his hand directed against Jerusalem* (I Chron. 21:16). This description of the angel draws on earlier biblical literature, the story of Joshua before the conquest of Jericho (Josh. 5:13) or the angel who appears to Balaam and his ass (Num. 22:23 and 31). The angel hovering between heaven and earth has antecedents in Ezekiel 8:3 and Zechariah 5:9.¹

The first part of II Samuel 24:16 may be understood to imply that the angel acts independently: *When the angel stretched out his hand against Jerusalem to destroy it*. In the parallel account in I Chronicles, however, it is clearly the Lord who takes action: *God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it* (v. 15). The angel can do nothing on its own initiative, but only act in accordance

with the will of God. Even in II Samuel, the second half of 24:16 declares that the Lord regretted His action and (as in I Chron. 21:15) told the angel to halt: *The Lord renounced further punishment and said to the angel who was destroying the people, 'Enough! Stay your hand!'*

The conclusion of the story in Chronicles includes details not found in the Book of Samuel. In this earlier account we read that after David paid Araunah in full for the threshing floor, he built an altar there on which he sacrificed burnt offerings. Only then did the Lord halt the plague. Chronicles states that the threshing floor belonged to Ornan the Jebusite and that David called upon the Lord when he made the burnt offerings. Fire then came down from heaven, a sign that the Lord had responded to David's prayer.² At that time, we are told, God also ordered the angel to return his sword to its sheath. What He said is not reported, but suggested by the angel's action – sheathing his sword (I Chron. 21:26-27). This closes the circle. Previously, David had seen the angel brandishing a sword against Jerusalem; now he saw the angel returning the sword to its scabbard. In any event, it is the Lord who brings the plague to an end by calling off his emissary, the angel of destruction.

THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT

The destroying angel seems to be alluded to in the Bible's description of the slaying of the firstborn, where he is called *ha-mashhit*: *for the Lord will pass over the door and not let the Destroyer enter and smite your home* (Ex. 12:23). While it is stated explicitly that the Lord passed through Egypt to smite the firstborn (Ex. 12:12–13), and the text of the Passover *Haggadah* expounds this to mean, "I and not an angel," verse 23 attests that the Lord was accompanied by the destroying angel, whose nature is to strike down all whom he encounters, unless – as here – the Lord restrains him. This seems to be the intention of the *Mekhilta's* comment on verse 22, *None of you shall go outside the door of his house until morning*: "This indicates that when the destroying angel is given permission to do harm, he does not distinguish between the righteous and the wicked."³ The Psalmist's account of the plagues of Egypt (Ps. 78:49) indicates that the plagues were inflicted by *mishlahat malakhei ra'im* – *a band of deadly [lit. evil] angels*. The talmudic sages used the term *mishlahat* to describe a band of destructive creatures, specifically a wolf pack.⁴ Kraus believes that this "band of evil angels" does not refer to the

"destroying angel" (*mashhit*) associated with the last plague (Ex. 12:23), but to the demonic powers that the Lord dispatches with every affliction.⁵

It seems, then, that we must distinguish the "destroying angel," *ha-mashhit*, from the messengers of death who come to punish individuals only. By contrast, the Destroyer is sent by the Lord to kill multitudes through a plague. Unlike the deadly messengers, who bring both natural and premature death, the Destroyer inflicts only a premature, painful death. Still, this *mashhit* is controlled by God.⁶

THE MESOPOTAMIAN DEITIES

Meier relates that although the people of ancient Mesopotamia believed that almost any god could destroy entire communities, there were specific gods whose main function was to kill mortals.⁷ He cites the myth of Erra, who was motivated by an irrational lust to kill and destroy and who delighted in battle. In the end, he was only restrained by his companion, Ishum. He and Resheph came to be identified with Nergal, the god of war and sudden death, ruler of the underworld. In the *Epic of Atrahasis*, Enlil consults with the other gods and resolves to send plagues to destroy mankind. Namtar is meant to implement his decree. These gods, who treat the righteous and the wicked alike, must be stopped before they wreak utter destruction on the world. Erra, referring to his own action, says: "Like one who plunders a country, I do not distinguish just from unjust, I fell (them both)."⁸ Namtar halts the threatened catastrophe after human beings perform rituals to appease him.⁹

WRATH

Another implicit allusion to the destroying angel can be found in *For wrath [ketze]f has gone forth from the Lord: the plague has begun* (Num. 17:11 [RSV 16:46]). Milgrom sees this wrath or anger as an independent entity, similar to the Destroyer that acts on behalf of the Lord.¹⁰ There are indeed several references to it in the Bible. Thus (Num. 1:53), *The Levites, however, shall camp around the Tabernacle of the Pact, that the wrath [ketze]f may not strike the Israelite community*. Similarly, the mandate continues, *No outsider shall intrude upon you as you discharge the duties connected with the Shrine and the altar, that wrath [ketze]f may not again strike the Israelites* (Num. 18:5).¹¹ According to Rashi, this plague is spread by the Angel of Death, who

is also known as "the Anger before the Lord with the authority to kill."¹² In the Talmud, the Angel of Death (*malakh ha-mavet*) has assistants, one of whom is actually named Ketzef: "Rav Hisda said: 'They are: Fury, Anger and Wrath [*Ketzef*], Destroyer and Breaker and Annihilator'".¹³ Elsewhere, Ketzef is the name of an angel of destruction (*Targum Yerushalmi*, Numbers 17:11). He is also specifically noted as acting on behalf of God, not as an independent entity: *Wrath [ketzef] has gone forth from the Lord* (Num. 17:11).

The Sages regarded the Destroyer as an amoral force that could be overcome only through sacrificial blood, incense, or some other ritual. However, these rituals were directed to God, not to the Destroyer himself.¹⁴ In the ancient Near East, incense was burned for the gods to placate them and still their anger. Egyptian reliefs depict Canaanite priests standing on a high place¹⁵ and offering incense to Pharaoh, who is massacring the inhabitants of a city. In both of the biblical stories about the Destroyer (the Tenth Plague and the threshing floor of Araunah), the plague is halted by a ritual act (placing blood on the doorpost, building an altar, burning incense), but it is God, not His messenger, who responds.

SENNACHERIB

The destroying angel may also figure in the story of Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem (II Kgs. 19:35; Isa. 37:36; II Chron. 32:21), where we read that the angel of the Lord struck the Assyrian camp by night, leaving 185,000 corpses at daybreak.¹⁶ The plague is also mentioned by Ben Sira: *He smote the camp of Assyria and destroyed them with a plague* (48:21). This is the Hebrew text of the Cairo Genizah, but the Septuagint and Vulgate attribute the destruction in the second part of the verse to "His angel." Josephus, too, mentions the plague,¹⁷ but refers elsewhere to the angel of the Lord.¹⁸ In the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch (II Bar. 63:6–8), Ramiel is the angel who "burned their bodies within." While attributing the slaying of the Assyrians to an angel, all of these texts show the angel acting on God's behalf.

POST-BIBLICAL SOURCES

Ultimately, the notion of an angel with autonomous responsibility for death, like the Canaanite deity Mot, is anathema to the staunch monotheism of the Israelite faith, which holds that God alone is responsible for both life

and death. Nevertheless, death is strongly personified in the Bible, a possible relic of the polytheistic creeds that influenced and are combated in biblical literature. The Lord delegates some of His power to angels, which are not independent entities acting on their own volition. Nowhere does the Bible refer to some enduring independent power whose entire rationale is death and destruction.

Rabbinic texts do refer to the Angel of Death (*malakh ha-mavet*) and similar baneful forces. Because such a belief in the Angel of Death, demons, and destructive angels constitutes a form of dualism, the talmudic Sages placed strict limits on the power and activity of the Angel of Death and set Israel outside its domain: "When Israel stood at Mount Sinai . . . the Holy One, blessed be He, called the Angel of Death and said to him: Even though I made you a universal ruler over earthly creatures, you have nothing to do with this nation."¹⁹ After the affair of the Golden Calf, however, this exemption was revoked and Israel was once more handed over to his power. Nevertheless, it is God who decides whether to place Israel under or beyond the Angel of Death's control.²⁰

The Angel of Death receives his instructions from God. When permitted to take the souls of human beings, he does not distinguish between the good and the wicked. His function is to take men's souls. Only a chosen few of the nation's ancestors died by the Divine kiss and were not given over to this angel's control.²¹ He was created by God on the first day of Creation, operates under His authority, and performs His behest. Nevertheless, he is granted a degree of autonomy in his actions and choices,²² certain actions by human beings making him more likely to strike them.²³

CONCLUSION

The destroying angel is explicitly mentioned twice in the Bible (II Sam. 24:16; I Chron. 21:15). In addition, there are several other passages in the Bible and rabbinic literature that refer to destructive supernatural forces. The idea of the destroying angel as an independent force, acting of its own accord, is foreign to the Hebrew Bible, which emphasizes that God is in control of these destructive forces so as to negate polytheistic beliefs. The angel can do nothing on its own initiative and must only act in compliance with the will of God. It is He alone who deals death and gives life.

NOTES

1. Some modern scholars, including Fuss, Schmidt, and Rupprecht, believe that a non-Israelite deity stands behind the description of the angel. Schmidt suggests that it may be a plague deity like Resheph. However, the consistent identification of the Lord with plague and pestilence throughout the Bible makes this idea unnecessary. See W. Fuss, "II Samuel 24," *ZAW* 74 (1962) pp. 162–163; K. Rupprecht, "Der Tempel von Jerusalem. Gründung Salomons der jebusitischen Erbe?," *BZAW* 144 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977) p. 10; Herbert Schmid, "Der Tempelbau Salomons in religionsgeschichtlicher Sicht," in A. Kuschke and E. Kutsch, eds., *Archäologie und Altes Testament. Festschrift für Kurt Galling* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1970) p.246.
2. Something similar happened at the dedication of the Sanctuary in Sinai: "Fire came forth from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the fat parts on the altar" (Lev. 9:24); and again at the dedication of Solomon's Temple: "When Solomon finished praying, fire descended from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the House" (II Chron. 7:1).
3. *Mekhila de-Rabbi Yishmael*, Bo 11.
4. Mishnah, *Bava Metzia* 7:9.
5. Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60–150 A Commentary*, trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989) p. 129.
6. In Hebrews 11:28 the authors used the exact same Greek term for *mash'it* as the Septuagint did in Exodus 12:23. It is not clear, however, whether the New Testament reference is to the Lord or to an angel. On the other hand, in the Wisdom of Solomon (18:16), it is God personified as the Logos, described metaphorically as a stern warrior who leaps from the divine throne holding God's *unambiguous decree as a sharp sword*. Given that the Logos is the Lord or one of His aspects, the author of the Wisdom of Solomon evidently believed that for the Tenth Plague the Lord did not rely on an angel or messenger. According to Jubilees 49:2-4, the Egyptian firstborn died through the power of the demonic *Mastema*.
7. S. A. Meier, "Destroyer," in K. van der Toorn, B. Becking and P. W. van der Horst, eds., *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1995) p. 241.
8. Stephanie Dalley, "Erra and Ishum (1.113)," in William W. Hallo, ed., *Context of Scripture* (Leiden: Brill 1997), vol.1, tablet V.10, p. 415.
9. W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *ATRA-HASĪS: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), I, viii: 407–412, p.407.
10. Jacob Milgrom, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990) p. 142.
11. Cf. Proverbs 16:14.
12. TB *Shabbat* 89a
13. TB *Shabbat* 55a.
14. Milgrom, *Numbers*, p. 142.
15. Othmar Keel, "Kanaanäische Sühneriten auf Ägyptischen Tempelreliefs," *Vetus Testamentum*, 25 (1975) p. 421, fig 5.
16. Trying to offer a rational explanation, some have suggested that the Assyrian host fell victim to plague. These explanations depend on a passage in Herodotus, who refers to Sennacherib as "king of the Arabians and Assyrians." His planned invasion of Egypt ground to a halt because

rodents overran the Assyrian camp: ". . . and one night a multitude of field mice swarmed over the Assyrian camp and devoured their quivers and their bows and the handles of their shields likewise, insomuch that they fled the next day unarmed and many fell" (*Historiae*, 2:141, ed. Godley).

17. Josephus, *Antiquities*, X:21.

18. Josephus, *Jewish War*, V:388.

19. *Leviticus Rabbah* 18:3.

20. *Exodus Rabbah* 32:7.

21. TB *Bava Batra* 17a.

22. TB *Hagigah* 4b–5a.

23. TB *Berakhot* 51a; TB *Bava Kamma* 60b.



Full text of articles from Volumes 1 - 41 is
available for download on our website:

<http://jbq.jewishbible.org/jbq-past-issues/>



METALLURGY IN THE BIBLE: IRONWORKING AND THE DISPOSAL OF THE GOLDEN CALF

SUSAN V. MESCHEL

INTRODUCTION

In this article we will examine two questions in the Bible in light of the science of metallurgy: when the Israelites acquired the ability to work iron, and how the Golden Calf was destroyed.

IRONWORKING DESCRIBED IN THE BIBLE

The ability to forge iron and to make tools and weapons was a sign of technical development in ancient society. Metalworking in the earlier books of the Bible deals with manufacturing objects from silver, gold, and copper, which have relatively low melting points and are therefore much simpler to fashion than iron artifacts. Silver, gold and copper have melting points of 1064° C, 962° C and 1085° C, respectively.¹ As opposed to these relatively low melting metals, iron melts at 1538° C, thus requiring a considerably higher temperature to be fashioned into implements. The temperature needed to melt copper or bronze (bronze is 90% copper and 10% tin) could be reached in the ancient furnaces through the use of bellows, which provided the necessary forced draft of air to facilitate combustion.² The production of iron implements was possible only with the development of carburized iron (0.8% carbon) and the progress in quenching and tempering technology.³ Current chemical analyses are able to show if the iron in excavated artifacts was carburized and thus prove the level of technology. It is of some interest to see whether our ancestors possessed the technical know-how to produce their own plowshares, axes, spears, and other iron objects without the help of neighboring craftsmen.

The blacksmith was called *nappah* (user of bellows) or *pehami* (user of charcoal). These terms indicate that there was some activity involving smelting and the use of ovens, and that blacksmiths had some idea of the need for

Susan Meschel attended the Technical University in Budapest, Hungary. In 1957 she immigrated to the USA, where she continued to study chemistry at the University of Chicago (M.S., PhD). She taught both at the University of Chicago and at Roosevelt University and was involved in research in high temperature thermodynamics. She is currently Adjunct Professor at the Illinois Institute of Technology in the Materials Science Department.

blowing air to increase the temperature of their ovens. The Bible recognizes the significance of metalworking, noting that Tubal-cain was a craftsman of copper and iron (Gen. 4:22), one of only three early professions singled out in Genesis 4 (herdsman, musician, metalworker). The Bible also appreciates the value and importance of having ore deposits. Canaan is described as *a land whose rocks are iron and from whose hills you can mine copper* (Deut. 8:9). The Book of Job (28:1-6, 9-10) even describes the difficulties of the mining process.

Many of the citations of metalworking in the earlier books of the Bible refer to silversmiths or coppersmiths, for example:

His mother took two hundred shekels of silver and gave it to a smith. He made of it a sculptured image and a molten image (Judg. 17:4).

He was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father had been a Tyrian, a coppersmith. He was endowed with skill, ability, and talent for executing all work in bronze . . . now the pails, the scrapers, and the sprinkling bowls, all those vessels in the House of the Lord that Hiram made for King Solomon were of burnished bronze. The king had them cast in earthen molds, in the plain of the Jordan between Succoth and Zarethan (I Kgs. 7:14, 45-46).

The last two citations refer to a named person, Hiram of Tyre, who was invited to create copper or bronze objects for the Temple of King Solomon. They also prove that the Israelites were familiar with the sand casting method used for bronze. Working with iron was much more difficult, however, since its melting point was too high for the technique established for bronze objects. The prophet Samuel relates:

No smith was to be found in all the land of Israel, for the Philistines were afraid that the Hebrews would make swords or spears. So all the Israelites had to go down to the Philistines to have their plowshares, their mattocks, axes, and colters sharpened. The charge for sharpening was a pim for plowshares, mattocks, three-pronged forks and axes, and for setting the goads. Thus on the day of the battle, no sword or spear was to be found in the pos-

session of any of the troops with Saul and Jonathan; only Saul and Jonathan had them (I Sam. 13:19-22).

This indicates that the Israelites had to pay the Philistines to do their iron work for them at the time. It is not clear whether the Israelites lacked the technical expertise to forge iron or whether they had the knowledge but were prohibited by the Philistines to make use of it. However, if the Israelites took their farm implements to the Philistines for repair, they must have had such iron tools to begin with. Even so, there is no way of knowing if these tools were originally made by the Israelites or purchased from the surrounding nations.

King Uzziah of Judah (c. 785-734 BCE) provided his army with shields, spears, helmets, and mail (II Chron. 26:14), but the Bible does not say who produced these items. However, during the reign of Hezekiah (727-698 BCE), a major tunnel was cut through the rock to the Pool of Siloam (II Kgs. 20:20).⁴ The apocryphal Book of Ben Sira (175-200 BCE) refers to the tools used for this project: *Hezekiah fortified his city and brought water into the midst of it. He tunneled the sheer rock with iron and built pools for water* (Ben Sira 48:17).⁵ The construction of Hezekiah's tunnel indicates that the Israelites had by then acquired an expert knowledge of ironworking.

Isaiah the prophet confirms the activity of Hebrew ironsmiths in remarkably poetic detail: *The woodworker encourages the smith; he who flattens with the hammer encourages him who pounds the anvil. He says of the riveting, 'It is good!' and he fixes it with nails, that it may not topple* (Isa. 41:7). *The craftsman in iron, with his tools, works it over charcoal and fashions it by hammering, working with the strength of his arm* (Isa. 44:12). *It is I who created the smith to fan the charcoal fire and produce the tools for his work* (Isa. 54:16). This last citation clearly refers to the technique for producing carburized iron, forging and perhaps making wrought iron objects, with heat treating the metallic surface by means of a carbon source. If we accept the traditional date of Isaiah as the pre-Exilic era, we will have evidence of solid progress in ironworking by the seventh-eighth centuries BCE. However, many scholars attribute these passages to Deutero-Isaiah, dating from the sixth century BCE.

The prophet Ezekiel also gives a vivid description of the technology, with a moralistic tone: *The House of Israel has become dross [slag] to Me; they are*

all copper, tin, iron, and lead...As silver, copper, iron, lead, and tin are gathered into a crucible to blow the fire upon them, to melt them, so will I gather you in My fierce anger and cast you into the fire and melt you (Ezek. 22:18-22). This is, of course, a general description of pyro-technology, not specifically one of forging iron. Nevertheless, it is an impressive technical description.

The Bible famously compares Egypt to an iron crucible: *The Lord took and brought you out of Egypt, that iron blast furnace, to be His very own people* (Deut. 4:20); *I freed them from the land of Egypt, the iron crucible* (Jer. 11:4). Deuteronomy speaks of blowing air to increase the temperature of the blast furnace, which indicates some ability to produce iron implements, but this may refer to the technical capability of the Egyptians rather than that of the Israelites.

In the Book of Kings we read that Nebuchadnezzar deported thousands of skilled workers: *He exiled all of Jerusalem, all the commanders and all the warriors – ten thousand exiles – as well as all the smiths and artisans* (II Kgs. 24:14). The Hebrew term *harash* ("smith") is the same word used in I Samuel 13:19, where we are told: *No smith was to be found in all the land of Israel, for the Philistines were afraid that the Hebrews would make swords or spears*. Thus, by the time of the First Temple's destruction in 586 BCE, Jews had become familiar with the work of a blacksmith.

From this overview it remains unclear as to when the Israelites became skilled in ironworking. The early books of the Bible indicate that the Philistines were more skilled in the technique, but the Israelites may have acquired it by the time of Hezekiah and certainly by 586 BCE.⁶

THE DISPOSAL OF THE GOLDEN CALF

An extensive literature discusses the Golden Calf, which we read about in the Book of Exodus. The issues arising usually deal with the moral concerns and social development of the Israelites. My focus is on a scientific problem: How did the Israelites dispose of the statue?

The Book of Exodus describes the making of this idol: *And all the people took off the golden rings that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. This he took from them and cast in a mold, and made it into a molten calf* (Ex. 32:3-4). The plain meaning of this text is that the Golden Calf was made

of cast gold. However, pure gold is too soft for the production of durable artifacts, copper-gold alloys being normally used in making jewelry. The percentage of gold in the alloy is reflected in the karat rating assigned. One gold alloy used in the biblical period was electrum, consisting of 50 percent gold and 50 percent silver.⁷ The jewelry that the Israelites gave to Aaron was probably gold alloy, and so too the Golden Calf.

How was the Golden Calf destroyed by Moses? Exodus and Deuteronomy describe the same process: *He took the calf that they had made and burned it; he ground it to powder and strewed it upon the water and so made the Israelites drink it* (Ex. 32:20). *As for that sinful thing you had made, the calf, I took it and put it to the fire; I broke it to bits and ground it thoroughly until it was fine as dust, and I threw its dust into the brook that comes down from the mountain* (Deut. 9:21).

The reference to burning the gold, as opposed to the more normative process of melting it, is puzzling. Furthermore, how was the burned metal ground into dust? These texts have been subject to different interpretations, most of which are not consistent with our modern scientific understanding.

Ibn Ezra (on Exodus 32:20) explains that the Golden Calf was melted down and a chemical was added to blacken and char the gold. This is what the Bible calls "burning" the gold. However, Ibn Ezra does not say which chemical was used. The whole purpose was to make the gold unusable and it was then reduced to a powder. This idea is also found in the commentary of Hizkuni. William Bird Herapath, a nineteenth-century scientist, also suggested that chemical methods were used, but with the effect of dissolving the gold, and he believed⁸ that aqua regia (a mixture of nitric and hydrochloric acid) was employed.⁸ There is no evidence, however, that the Israelites knew of such a reagent. The production of these acids synthetically is a twentieth-century development. According to another nineteenth-century hypothesis, the Golden Calf was fused with a mixture of potassium nitrate (niter) and sulfur, yielding a soluble compound.⁹ This is a more plausible idea, since KNO₃ (niter) and sulfur were known in the biblical period, and they could certainly fuse metals in furnaces.

Ibn Ezra further explains that once the gold had been chemically blackened, it was beaten into thin sheets and shredded, to make it seem pulverized. Thus, the Golden Calf was not really ground to dust but cut into shreds, or the

shreds were then reduced to powder.¹⁰ Radak explains that iron tools were used for this purpose.¹¹

Alternatively, the calf was not made of solid gold but of wood overlaid with beaten gold. When the wood burned, the gold would have melted into granules and these were scattered over the water. Abrabanel and Isaac Arama interpret Exodus 32:20 to mean that wooden objects used with the idol were burned, while the Golden Calf itself was ground to dust.

There is a further complication: gold powder would sink in the brook before the Israelites could drink it. Nahmanides, commenting on the same verse, writes that either the gold was ground so fine that it did float, or that only a little was thrown into the water at a time and the Israelites quickly drank it, or that the whole outcome was miraculous.

David Frankel, in his study of this question, hypothesizes that an ancient editorial or copyist's error occurred and suggests reversing the two parts of the previously cited verses (Ex 32:19-20),¹² as follows: *He became enraged and hurled the tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain; then he ground it to powder and strewed it upon the water and so made the Israelites drink it*, followed by *He took the calf that they had made and burned it*. In this reading of the text, it is not the gold that is pulverized and scattered over the water but the tablets. Assuming that the tablets were of limestone or marble, the process is technically quite reasonable. Limestone can be broken and powdered without the use of any sophisticated equipment. Such powder would mix with the water and could float on it, since its density is not high, whereas the gold powder would sink to the bottom.

Frankel also points out that in ancient Ugaritic and Sumerian cultures the total annihilation of a god was achieved by burning it in fire, grinding and strewing the ashes in a field or in water, or by allowing birds eat the remains. However, the requirement to drink the ashes was not part of these rites. Frankel compares Moses forcing the Israelites to drink water with the powdered tablets suspended in it to the rite of the *sotah*, the wife suspected of adultery (Num. 5:11-31). There, the suspect woman was tested by having to drink water mixed with curses from a text washed off a holy scroll: *The priest shall put these curses down in writing and rub it off into the water of bitterness. He is to make the woman drink the water of bitterness that induces the curse so that the curse inducing water may enter into her to bring on bitter-*

ness (Num. 5:23-24). In this case, the tablets themselves served as the scroll that was mixed with water in order to determine who had sinned. Since this approach is based on reordering the biblical verses, it is not surprising that traditional commentators never suggested anything of the kind.

As a scientist, Frankel proposes a segment switch that appeals to me. The physical and chemical process of crumbling limestone or marble and dissolving it in water is simple to perform by ancient technology. The melting of the gold is also consistent with the level of ancient technology available to the Israelites. Thus, Moses compelled the Israelites to drink the water with the powdered tablet suspended in it as a test with God's words. This alternate approach frees the contemporary reader from having to assume that advanced chemical and technological processes (or miracles) would be needed to explain how Moses disposed of the Golden Calf.

NOTES

1. T. D. Massalski, H. Okamoto, P. R. Subramanian and L. Kacprzak, *Binary Alloy Phase Diagrams* (Materials Park, OH: ASM International, 1990) pp. 8, 360, 1702.
2. R. J. Forbes, *Metallurgy in Antiquity. A Notebook for Archaeologists and Technologists* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1950).
3. J. R. Partington, *Origins and Development of Applied Chemistry* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1935) pp. 486-493; James D. Muhly, "How Iron Technology Changed the Ancient World and Gave the Philistines a Military Edge," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, November-December (1982) pp. 230-242.
4. Forbes, op. cit. See also, "Sound Proof: How Hezekiah's Tunnelers Met," *Biblical Archaeological Review*, September-October (2008) pp. 50-57.
5. In Ben Sira 38:28 we also have a detailed description of an ironsmith's shop: *So too is the smith sitting by the anvil, intent upon his handiwork in iron. The breath of fire melts his flesh, and he wastes away in the heat of the furnace. He inclines his ear to the sound of the hammer, and his eyes are on the pattern of the object. He sets his heart on finishing his handiwork, and is careful to complete its decoration.*
6. Forbes, op. cit.; Muhly, op. cit.
7. Partington, op. cit., pp. 486-493.
8. W. B. Herapath, *Philosophical Magazine*, 3 (1852) p. 528.
9. T. Thomson, *A History of Chemistry* (London: Colburn and Bentley Publishing Co., 1830) p. 256; H. E. Roscoe and C. Schorlemmer, *A Treatise in Chemistry* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1877) p. 519.
10. D. J. de Solla Price, *Science Since Babylon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961) p. 27; M. Levey, *Chemistry and Chemical Technology in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Amsterdam: Elsevier Publ. Co., 1959) pp. 178-196.
11. This idea is also found in *Yalkut Midreshei Teiman*. See Yosef Assia, ed., *Hummash Otzar Ha-Rishonim*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Makhon Torat Ha-Rishonim, 2003) p. 730.

12. D. Frankel, "The Destruction of the Golden Calf: A New Solution," *Vetus Testamentum*, 44 (1994) pp. 330-339.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Rabbi Elliot B. Gertel for his interest and encouragement. This paper is dedicated to my teacher, Rabbi Sandor Scheiber, who inspired me as a teenager to read the Bible with a critical eye; and to Rabbi Ira Eisenstein, who was instrumental in helping me as a new immigrant in the USA to find a way to continue my studies in science. I also wish to thank Judy Meschel for constructive criticism and editorial comments.



INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUTHORS

Detailed *Instructions for Authors* and journal style
can be found on our Internet website:

<http://www.jewishbible.org>



THE FIFTY-FIRST INTERNATIONAL BIBLE CONTEST FOR JEWISH YOUTH 5774

JOSHUA J. ADLER

The fifty-first year of the International Bible Contest (*Hidon ha-Tanakh*) for Jewish Youth took place as usual on Israel Independence Day, televised and broadcast live. This year, 71 young contestants from 33 countries participated. They were joined by four Israeli youngsters, the top four in the Israeli Bible contest which had taken place a few weeks earlier. The winner of that contest was Itamar Kalifa. Prior to the Independence Day contest, the pupils from various countries were given a written exam from which the top 12 contestants were chosen to face the four leading Israelis pupils. Over the past 35 years questions for the written exams were devised by Mr. Yosef Shaar z"l, who passed away recently, and Mr. Pinhas Neriah has now undertaken the writing of questions for the Diaspora contestants as well as those asked during the entire contest. The winner of the Israeli contest, Itamar Kalifa, came in third in the international contest after the runner-up, Tefilah Berenson, also of Israel. Eitan Amos from Toronto, Canada, was this year's Bible champion. It has been at least twenty years since a non-Israeli was the contest's *Hatan ha-Tanakh*.

This year it was decided that Israel's Department of Education will assume chief responsibility for organizing the annual *Hidon* rather than the Israel Army, as in former years, although the IDF is still very much involved in making the *Hidon* a national event. Also contributing to its success is the deft handling of the proceedings by the contest's master of ceremonies, Dr. Avshalom Kor.

The first speaker this year was the new commander of the Army Education Corps, General Avner Paz-Tsuk, who was followed by the Chairman of the Jewish Agency, Natan Sharansky, and Minister of Education Shai Piron. The chief judge at the contest was Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein. I had the honor this time of being one of the assistant judges. Unlike last year, however, when there were several challenges regarding the number of points awarded

Joshua J. Adler, formerly Rabbi of Chizuk Emuna Congregation in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, has lived in Jerusalem since 1972, and serves as managing editor of The Jewish Bible Quarterly.

or as to whether a contestant's answer was correct, there were no such issues this year and so we judges had no hard decisions to make.

The classic Bible contest traditions were maintained. In the first round of the contest every one of the sixteen contestants are asked a question via short educational films, a procedure which has been the practice now for several years. Also, as every year all the contestants are given tours of the country to sites connected with the Bible, a day on an army base and visits with various government leaders such as the Prime Minister and Education Minister.

The annual *Hidon* is sponsored by several organizations including the government's Education Department, the IDF, the Jewish National Fund (*Keren Kayemet*) and the Jewish Agency. Jewish communities around the world are urged to prepare pupils for local Bible contests wherever they are held or to prepare pupils privately so that they can become future participants in the international *Hidon*. Pupils may study the Bible either in Hebrew or in their native languages. (During the written exam in Israel and at the Independence Day contest there are always translators for anyone speaking a language other than Hebrew.) For further information about the contest contact a Jewish Agency representative at www.jafi.org



If you have written a paper in the *Jewish Bible Quarterly* and wish to see if it has been quoted in another academic journal, book, or doctoral dissertation, access <http://scholar.google.com> and type in Jewish Bible Quarterly under "journal" and your name under "author".



**BOARD OF REGENTS
OF THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT
CONNECTICUT CREDIT ASSESSMENT PROGRAM**

**GRANTS FULL COLLEGE CREDIT APPROVAL TO JEWISH
BIBLE ASSOCIATION PROFICIENCY EXAMS IN HEBREW
AND JUDAIC STUDIES**

The Board of Regents of the State of Connecticut through its Connecticut Credit Assessment Program via Charter Oak State College www.charteroak.edu now grants full college credit approval for our proficiency exams in: Jewish music, Hebrew, Talmud, Bible, Jewish Law, Jewish History and Jewish Ethics toward a regionally accredited BA in Liberal Studies. See:

<http://www.charteroak.edu/prospective/programs/ccap-institutions.cfm> Our website <http://www.jewishbible.org/college-program> has information on the program and exam descriptions.

Jewish Music: 18 credits **Hebrew:** 15 credits (Modern and Biblical) **Bible:** 15 credits **Talmud:** 9 credits **Jewish Law:** 18 credits

Jewish History: 6 credits **Jewish Ethics:** 3 credits

=====

High school students who have taken Advanced Placement (AP) exams in: English composition, college math, science, American government, European history, and public speaking have basically satisfied all general education requirements for the regionally accredited BA.

=====

Students have gone on toward second BA's and graduate school (law, MBA's etc.). Entire cost for the BA from Charter Oak State College (including our fees) is \$6,000. Students are eligible for a \$2500 IRS education tax credit. Email us at: info@jewishbible.org

JEWISH QUARTERLY
עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בו
P.O.B. 29002 • JERUSALEM, ISRAEL

PRINTED MATTER

ירושלים
YEROUshalayim
שולס - P.P.
אישור מס' 1357