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WORDPLAY IN GENESIS 2:25-3:1

ZVI RON

The Bible contains numerous examples of wordplay where the same word is used multiple times in close proximity to convey different meanings. For example, when Samson fought the Philistines using the jawbone of an ass, he proclaimed *'With the jawbone of an ass* (hamor)*, heaps upon heaps* (hamor hamortayim)*, with the jawbone of an ass have I smitten a thousand men'* (Judg. 15:16). In Hebrew, the word for both "ass" and "heap" is *hamor*, leading *Metzudat David* to note that this is an example of wordplay (*lashon nofel al lashon*). It is no surprise to find an amusing turn of phrase coming from Samson, who, we know, was fond of riddles (Judg. 14:12). This type of wordplay is also found in the narration of Judges. In the brief description of Jair the Gileadite we find, *And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts* (ayarim)*, and they had thirty cities* (ayarim)*, which are called Havvoth-jair unto this day, which are in the land of Gilead* (Judg. 10:4). Here, too, is an example of wordplay, based on the fact that the Hebrew word *ayarim* can mean both "ass colts" and "cities." Radak (Kimhi) and *Metzudat David* both note that this is an example of eloquence (*tzahut lashon*).

Both of these examples are noted by Ibn Ezra in his discussion of Genesis 2:25-3:1. There we read that Adam and Eve were living in the Garden of Eden, *And they were both naked* (arummim)*, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed* (Gen. 2:25). Immediately after that we are told, *Now the serpent was more cunning* (arum) *than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made* (Gen. 3:1). Ibn Ezra notes that in one verse the term *arum* is used to mean "naked" and in the next verse the same basic root denotes "cunning" or "subtle." He explains: "Do not be astonished that *arum* is used right after *arummim*, having two different meanings, for this is the way of eloquence (*tzahut lashon*)." He then cites Judges 15:16 and 10:4 as examples of this style. Modern Bible scholars also take this to be an example of wordplay. Cassuto notes that the word for "naked" is generally vowelized to read *eirom*

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throughout Genesis (3:7, 3:10, 3:11), and only in 2:25 is it vowelized *arum*, in order to make the similarity between *arummim* (naked) in 2:25 and *arum* (cunning) in 3:1 more blatant.[1] Robert Alter explains that this is "the kind of pun in which the ancient Hebrew writers delighted."[2]

Other than Ibn Ezra, we might expect Radak here to note this interesting use of language, as he did in Judges 10:4, but he does not. Instead, he notes how the two words are in fact different grammatically. It may be that while Radak is comfortable explaining that the narrator of Judges and Samson engaged in wordplay, it is another thing entirely to ascribe such literary behavior to the narration of the Torah, the actual word of God. This would explain why other traditional Bible commentaries do not note the wordplay here either. Ibn Ezra, however, seems to understand that this is an example of how "the Torah speaks in the language of men",[3] and that even the divine Torah can use wordplay, just as human authors do.

Even though it is generally understood that the Hebrew words for "naked" and "cunning" are based on different roots, they clearly have a strong similarity, bordering on homophony. There may be a semantic connection between these two terms.[4] Leon Kass affirms that "the root sense of *erum*, 'naked,' is 'smooth': someone who is naked is hairless, clothesless, smooth of skin. But as the pun suggests, someone who is clever is also smooth, a facile thinker and talker whose surface speech is beguiling and flawless, hiding well his rough ulterior purposes."[5]

Ibn Ezra does not indicate what the purpose of this wordplay is, and seems to imply that it has no purpose apart from being a nice turn of phrase. Some modern Bible scholars, particularly religious Christians, have tried to find some meaning behind this wordplay. It has been suggested that the function of the wordplay is to establish a connection between the two verses, teaching that nakedness causes temptation;[6] to emphasize that Adam and Eve became aware of their nakedness because of the serpent's cunning;[7] or to indicate that because Adam and Eve were naked, innocent and oblivious of evil, the serpent was able to use his cunning to mislead them.[8] None of these lessons are particularly profound, and it may well be that the primary motivation for using similar sounding words for both "naked" and "cunning" was to fashion an interesting and pleasant narrative, with the possibility of some additional message or lesson as a welcome side effect.[9] However, many contemporary

Bible scholars explain that the wordplay serves a purely narrative function, providing a transition and linkage between the story of the creation of Adam and Eve and the episode of the serpent.[10] This linkage is important, since often in the Bible the introduction of a new character by means of a circumstantial clause, as is done here with the serpent, marks the beginning of a new episode. [11]

Translations of the Bible, from Onkelos, the Septuagint and the Vulgate[12] down to modern English translations,[13] generally ignore this wordplay. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* has a unique way of translating this verse, defusing any alleged wordplay. He translates the word *arum* as "wise" in Genesis 2:25 and 3:1. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* to Genesis 2:25 thus reads, *And they were both wise, the man and his wife, but they did not remain in their glory*.[14] The second clause of the verse had to be changed, since the verse is not discussing nakedness and there is no reason to bring up any feeling of shame or lack thereof. Rather than being understood to mean "ashamed", the word *yitbosheshu* is translated as "'remain", as in *The people saw that Moses had delayed* (boshesh) *in descending the mountain* (Ex. 32:1). The interpretation of *Pseudo-Jonathan* teaches that Adam and Eve were wise and glorious; this state of glory was not to persist, however, due to the cunning of the serpent.[15] Whereas this translation understands the words *arummim* and *arum* to be clearly related, it interprets them both as referring to wisdom, so this is not an example of wordplay. The *Pseudo-Jonathan* translation is very hard to accept in light of the fact that in Genesis 3:11 God asks Adam, *'Who told you that you are naked* (eirom)*?'* – which cannot be interpreted as meaning "wise."[16] His interpretation of Genesis 2:25 and 3:1 is forced and unnecessary, functioning only to circumvent the possible wordplay.

We have seen that the wordplay in Genesis 2:25-3:1 has been ignored by most classical Jewish commentaries, Ibn Ezra being the notable exception. His approach, that this wordplay is simply an eloquent use of Hebrew with no great theological message, is echoed by many contemporary scholars who regard it as a narrative device providing a transition from the episode of the creation of Adam and Eve to the episode of the serpent.

NOTES

1. Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1996) p. 95 (Hebrew).

2. Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996) p. 11. See also Gary A. Rendsberg, "Alliteration in the Exodus Narrative", in *Birkat Shalom – Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism Presented to Shalom M. Paul* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), vol. 1, p. 83.

3. See, for example, TB *Bava Metzia* 31b, 94b; *Berakhot* 31b; *Gittin* 41b; *Makkot* 12a; and *Nedarim* 3a.

4. Dirk Delabastita, *Traductio: Essays on Punning and Translation* (Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 1997) p. 78.

5. Leon Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006) p. 82. Chief Rabbi J. H. Hertz similarly explains: "Seeming simplicity is often the most dangerous weapon of cunning," in Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino Press, 1965) p. 10. This interpretation puts *erum* in the company of other Hebrew words referring to items of dress that also imply treachery, such as *begged* (garment, treason) and *me'il* (cloak, embezzle).

6. Hershey H. Friedman, "Humor in the Hebrew Bible", *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, vol. 13:3 (September, 2000) pp. 258-285. See also Naomi H. Rosenblatt, *Wrestling With Angels* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1995) p. 30, who suggests that the wordplay hints that the serpent "represents the sexual stirrings within the woman."

7. G. Johannes Botterweck, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. XI (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdman's Publishing Co., 2001) p. 352; Dianne Bergant, ed., *The Collegeville Bible Commentary – Old Testament* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1992) p. 43.

8. John Walvoord and Roy Zuck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: David C. Cook, 1983) p. 32.

9. See Elliot R. Wolfson, "Seven Mysteries of Knowledge", in Hindy Najman and Judith H. Newman, eds., *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2004) p. 202.

10. Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary – Genesis* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989) p. 23; Yehuda Kiel, *Da'at Mikra – Bereshit* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1997) p. 69; A. S. Hartom, *Sifrei Ha-Mikra – Bereshit* (Tel-Aviv: Yavneh, 1969) p. 21.

11. Francis I. Anderson, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974) p. 79. See also Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1994) p. 104.

12. Delabastita, *Traductio*, p. 79.

13. See Phylis Trible, "The Bible in Bloom", *The Iowa Review*, vol. 21, no. 3 (Fall, 1991) p. 26.

14. Michael Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1992) p. 25. See also Alter Wein, *Yayin ha-Tov al ha-Targumim* (Rehovot: Kest-Lebovits, 1976) p. 10.

15. See also R. Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin in his commentaries *Ha'amek Davar* and *Harḥev Davar* to these verses, where he discusses at length the correct translation of *yitbosheshu*. According to *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, Adam and Eve possessed wisdom even before eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. On this, see R. Ḥayyim of Volozhin's *Nefesh ha-*

Hayyim, 1:6 in the notes, where he explains that eating from the tree did not impart wisdom, but rather caused good and evil to be mixed together in the world.

16. So, too, in Genesis 3:7 and 3:11, where *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* translates the word as "naked."

AND HE CALLED BY THE NAME OF THE LORD

SHIMON BAKON

Upon his arrival in the Promised Land, Abraham built an altar and *he invoked the name of the Lord* (using the ineffable tetragrammaton; Gen. 12:8, JPS translation). He later returned to this altar and again *invoked there the name of the Lord* (Gen. 13:4). The Bible does not report that a sacrifice was offered at the altar, only that the name of the Lord was invoked. A third time, Abraham *planted a tamarisk at Beer-sheba, and invoked there the name of the Lord* (Gen. 21:33). The Hebrew phrase used here is *va-yikra be-shem*, which can also be translated as "called by the name of the Lord" or "called in the name of the Lord." What does this phrase mean? What did Abraham do at the altar and the tamarisk?

Abraham burst on the stage of history at the age of 75. Very little is recorded about him in the Bible prior to his Divine summons to move to a land that *I will show you* (Gen. 12:1). It is, however, inconceivable that Abraham would be chosen to be the father of a new, revolutionary monotheistic faith and the father of a nation unless he had proven himself worthy of this status.

The Midrash fills this vacuum by portraying Abraham as an iconoclast and as a man willing to give up his life for preaching a faith that brought him into conflict with the authorities in Ur of the Chaldeans.[1] Maimonides, in his monumental work *Mishneh Torah* (*Hilkhot Avodat Kokhavim* 1:3), elaborates:

> After this mighty man was weaned, he began to explore and think. Although he was a child, he began to think [incessantly] throughout the day and night, wondering: How is it possible for the sphere to continue revolving without having anyone to control it? Who is causing it to revolve? Surely it does not cause itself to revolve.
>
> He had no teacher, nor was there anyone to inform him. Rather, he was mired in Ur Kasdim among the foolish idolaters. His father, mother, and all the people [around him] were idol worshipers, and he would worship with them. [However,] his heart was exploring and [gaining] understanding.

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> Ultimately, he appreciated the way of truth and understood the path of righteousness through his accurate comprehension. He realized that there was one God who controlled the sphere, that He created everything, and that there is no other God among all the other entities.

Indeed, the rabbis of the Midrash understood that Abraham's radical new faith had already crystallized prior to his arrival in Canaan. His efforts to convert idol worshipers to his faith, even prior to his sojourn to Canaan, were deduced from the verse, *Abraham took . . . the persons they had acquired in Haran* (Gen. 12:5), which is interpreted to mean "those he had brought under the wings of the *Shekhinah* (Divine Presence).[2]

Abraham's faith subsequently finds expression in the encounter with Melchizedek, where the latter proclaims, *Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth* (Gen. 14:19); in Abraham's confrontation with God at Sodom, when he declares, *Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?* (Gen. 18:25); and in his reference to the Lord as *the Everlasting God* (Gen. 21:33). We see here the core elements of Abraham's theology – an eternal God, Creator of the world, a moral God who acts in a just manner.

The idea that Abraham had a fully formed theology enables us to understand what is meant by *he invoked the name of the Lord*. This phrase first appears in the Bible regarding the time of Enosh, grandson of Adam: *It was then that men began to invoke the Lord by name* (Gen. 4:26). Sforno, commenting on this verse, explains that the term here means: "Then the righteous of the generation began publicly teaching the name of the Lord to the masses. . . to contradict the approach of the idolaters who arose then."[3] The term *invoke the Lord by name* denotes a public proclamation of the proper understanding of God.

Similarly, with regard to Abraham invoking the name of the Lord, classical commentators interpret it to mean that he proselytized and taught people how to worship the Lord. Ramban, in his commentary to Genesis 12:8, explains: "He would call out in a loud voice before the altar and inform people of the name of God and His Divinity." The altar and the tamarisk were places where Abraham publicly taught his new theology to the masses. Isaac later did the same (Gen. 26:25), yet Jacob is never reported to *invoke the name of the Lord*. Ramban points out that Jacob had many children and his own *kehillah*

gedolah, a large community. This was enough to make their view of God known among other people, so outwardly directed teaching was no longer thought necessary.

The term *shem*, normally translated as "name", can have other meanings in the Bible. Thus, in *yad va-shem* (Isa. 56:5), it signifies "memorial"; in *karati ve-shimkha* (Isa. 43:1) it is best translated as "I have chosen you"; and in *ve-ta'aseh lekha shem* (Jer. 32:20) it means "renown." Similarly, *karati ve-shem* ("I have singled out") is the term used when God appoints Bezalel: *I have endowed him with a divine spirit of skill, ability, and knowledge in every kind of craft, to make designs for work in gold, silver and copper . . .* (Ex. 31:2-4). All of these contexts denote some sort of public announcement, as we have seen in the case of Abraham.

Va-yikra ve-shem thus combines proclaiming (*va-yikra*/invoking) the Divine Name and indicating its significance (*ve-shem*/by the name). When God tells Moses, *I have singled you out by name* (Ex. 33:17), Moses requests, *Let me behold Your Presence* (Ex. 33:18). What follows is a revelation of God's thirteen ethical attributes: *The Lord! The Lord! a God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast kindness, extending kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet He does not remit all punishment, but visits the iniquity of fathers upon children and children's children, upon the third and fourth generation* (Ex. 34:6-7). Note that this is preceded by the phrase *va-yikra ve-shem Adonai* (Ex. 34:5). The traditional commentaries explain that it is God who called out "in His name", proclaiming and explaining what His own attributes are.[4]

When Abraham the trailblazer invoked (or called by) the name of the Lord, he converted idolaters, bade them walk in the ways of God, and taught them that God is One, the Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, and Eternal.

NOTES

1. *Bereshit Rabbah* 38:13.

2. *Bereshit Rabbah* 39:14.

3. Traditionally, idolatry began in the days of Enosh. According to the Midrash (*Bereshit Rabbah* 23:10), the term *huhal* in Genesis 4:26 (usually translated as "began") signifies *mered* (rebellion), and according to Rashi "profaned." This era is thus understood by the Midrash to be when idolatry came into existence.

4. See for example, Saadiah Gaon, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, and Sforno on Exodus 34:5.

QUEEN ATHALIAH: THE DAUGHTER OF AHAB OR OMRI?

REUVEN CHAIM (RUDOLPH) KLEIN

In the Books of Kings, Athaliah emerges as the most notable female character not only because she is the only queen who ruled alone, but also because she serves as a bridge between the royal families of Judah (the Davidic dynasty) and Israel (the Omride dynasty). That is, her lineage links her to the Omride dynasty and she reigned as the sovereign regent of Judah by virtue of her marriage to Jehoram, a scion of the Davidic line. However, due to an inconsistency in the Bible, there is a controversy over the exact placement of Athaliah in the genealogy of the Omride family: some passages in the Bible seem to imply that her father was Omri, yet in other passages it seems that Ahab was her father. The problem is compounded by her marriage into the Davidic family – a halakhic issue because of other marriages between members of the Davidic and Omride dynasties.

THE PROBLEMATIC MARRIAGES

After the death of Zimri, king of Israel, the people of Israel split into two factions; one supported Tibni son of Ginath as the new king, while the other supported Omri. The Bible (I Kgs. 16:21-22) reports that the supporters of Omri prevailed and, upon Tibni's death, Omri became the undisputed king of Israel.[1] Rashi and Kimhi explain in the name of *Seder Olam Rabbah* (ch. 17) that when Asa, king of Judah, married his son Jehoshaphat to Omri's daughter (in what was probably a politically motivated move), Omri was seen as the more powerful of the two, and Tibni was then assassinated to eliminate the pretender. Accordingly, the royal families of Judah and Israel were related by virtue of Jehoshaphat's marriage to the daughter of Omri. This was the first instance of marriage between the two royal houses. It is not mentioned explicitly in the Bible.

Additionally, the Bible relates that King Jehoshaphat of Judah was *connected to Ahab through marriage* (II Chron. 18:1). While Rashi (to II Chron.

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22:2) explains that this refers to the above-mentioned marriage between Jehoshaphat and the daughter of Omri,[2] Kimhi (II Chron. 18:1) says this means that Jehoshaphat took Ahab's daughter as a wife for his son Jehoram. Indeed, the Bible later mentions that Jehoram strayed from the path of his righteous forefathers and explains: *He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab; for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife; and he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord* (II Kgs. 8:18, II Chron. 21:6).

This implies that the wife of Jehoram was the daughter of Ahab – the son and successor of Omri. However, when introducing the reign of Jehoram's son Ahaziah, king of Judah, the Bible writes:

> *In the twelfth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel did Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah begin to reign. Two and twenty years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Athaliah the daughter of Omri king of Israel. And he walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as did the house of Ahab; for he was the son-in-law of the house of Ahab* (II Kgs. 8:25-27).

This implies that Athaliah (the wife of Jehoram and mother of Ahaziah) was actually the daughter of Omri, not Ahab. The same is implied in II Chronicles 22:2. This is the above-mentioned contradiction as to whether Athaliah was the daughter of Omri or of Ahab.[3] As explained below, the various commentators seek to reconcile this discrepancy by clarifying that one passage is literal while the other is not. Some affirm that Athaliah was indeed the daughter of Omri, while others state that she was really the daughter of Ahab. Either way, Athaliah, a scion of the Omride family, was married to Jehoram, king of Judah, creating a second union between the two families.

A third marriage between the two families is found in the above-mentioned passage which notes that Ahaziah *was the son-in-law of the house of Ahab*. This implies that Ahaziah was the son-in-law of Ahab.[4]

Among these unions, Jehoshaphat, the father of Jehoram, is said to have married a daughter of Omri, and Ahaziah, a son of Athaliah and Jehoram, is said to have married a daughter of Ahab. Accordingly, if Athaliah was a daughter of Omri, it would seem that her husband Jehoram married his aunt by marrying Athaliah (for Jehoshaphat his father also married a daughter of

Omri); and if Athaliah was a daughter of Ahab, it would seem that her son Ahaziah married his aunt by marrying a daughter of Ahab (for his mother Athaliah was also a daughter of Ahab). Thus, wherever one places Athaliah in the genealogy of the Omride family a problem arises, for one must explain how a king of the Davidic dynasty was apparently allowed to marry his mother's sister, an act biblically proscribed in Leviticus 18:13.

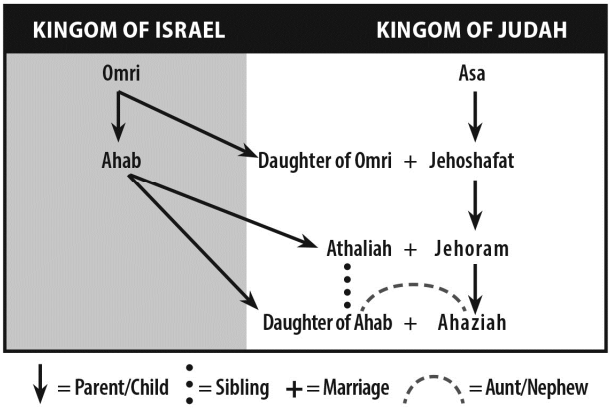
ATHALIAH AS THE DAUGHTER OF AHAB

Most of the classical rabbinic commentators elucidate that Athaliah was indeed the daughter of Ahab. According to this opinion, one must explain why Athaliah is also referred to as the daughter of Omri and how her son Ahaziah seemingly married his own aunt. Kimhi (to II Chron. 22:2 and II Kgs. 26) writes that Athaliah was the daughter of Ahab, but was nonetheless "attributed" to her grandfather, Omri. His explanation is that since "grandsons are tantamount to sons,"[5] Athaliah could be considered a daughter of Omri, even though she was really a daughter of his son Ahab. Gersonides (to II Kgs. 8:18) also writes that Athaliah was the daughter of Ahab, but concedes that sometimes the Bible traces her lineage to her father and sometimes to her grandfather. Abrabanel (to II Kings Ch. 8) adds that since Athaliah was raised as part of the household of her grandfather Omri, she is considered like his daughter, even though she was really his granddaughter. Rabbi Haim D. Rabinowitz (1911-2001) explains that although Athaliah was really the daughter of Ahab, she is mentioned as a daughter of Omri to stress that her lineage to Omri through Ahab was legitimately recognized since she was born to Ahab by a Jewish wife and not by Jezebel, who was not Jewish.[6] Had Athaliah's mother been Jezebel, Athaliah would not have been considered Jewish and according to Jewish law would not be considered a descendant of Omri.[7] These explanations account for the apparent contradiction regarding the parentage of Athaliah.[8]

However, one must still address the issue as to how her son Ahaziah could have been the son-in-law of Ahab if one is forbidden to marry one's mother's sister. These commentators are therefore forced to assume that Ahaziah was not literally a son-in-law of Ahab.[9] Kimhi (to II Kings 8:26) explains that when Ahaziah is referred to as *the son-in-law of the house of Ahab*, it does not mean that Ahaziah married a daughter of Ahab; it actually means that his

father Jehoram was the son-in-law of Ahab (because he married Athaliah, who was Ahab's daughter). Therefore, Kimhi declares, Ahaziah is called Ahab's "son-in-law" because he was related to Ahab through marriage. Kimhi remains consistent in his view that Athaliah was a daughter of Ahab. Nonetheless, Kimhi's explanation is hard to accept, not only because Ahaziah was related to Ahab through his father's marriage to Ahab's daughter, but also because his mother was Ahab's daughter, making him a grandson of Ahab! It seems very odd to say that a man is related to his maternal grandfather "through marriage" (that of his parents) when the relationship is simply due to the fact that his mother's father was his grandfather! Rabbi Samuel Laniado of Aleppo, Syria (d. 1605), offers an alternate way of answering the difficulty: he notes that the Bible calls Ahaziah a *son-in-law of the house of Ahab*: it does not say that Ahaziah was the actual son-in-law of Ahab. Therefore, he writes, it is quite plausible to explain that Ahaziah married a daughter of one of Ahab's wives who was not fathered by Ahab. Such a marriage (to one's mother's father's wife's daughter) is completely permissible. This accounts for the wording *the house of Ahab*, because Ahab's wives and their children are all considered members of his household, even if they are in no way biologically related to him.

ATHALIAH DAUGHTER OF AHAB



Accordingly, one can explain that Athaliah was the daughter of Ahab without having to explain that Ahaziah married his own aunt, because Ahaziah did not actually marry a daughter of Ahab – he married a step-daughter of Ahab.[10]

ATHALIAH AS THE DAUGHTER OF OMRI

Some modern-day academic researchers have concluded that Athaliah was actually the daughter of Omri, not Ahab. They justify their claim through synchronization with the projected timeline of King Ethbaal of Tyre and Sidon (father of Jezebel). According to this explanation, Athaliah is referred to in the Bible as the daughter of Ahab simply because she was raised in the household of her older brother Ahab.[11]

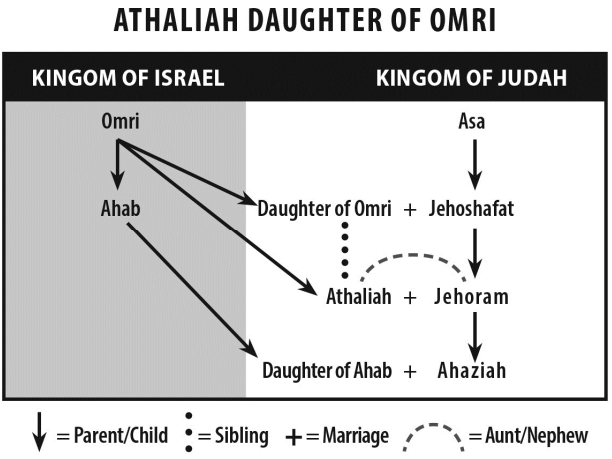
Though not noted by academic scholars, there are actually medieval rabbinic sources which also assume that Athaliah was the daughter of Omri.[12] Rabbi Bahya ben Asher (d. circa 1340) writes that the Hebrew word for "daughter" can also mean "sister."[13] He makes this assertion because of the following biblical passage:

> *And the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father with guile, and spoke, because he had defiled Dinah their sister, and said unto them: 'We cannot do this thing, to give our sister…But if ye will not hearken unto us, to be circumcised; then will we take our daughter, and we will be gone'* (Gen. 34:13-17).

In this passage, Jacob's sons first refer to Dinah as their sister and then later as their daughter. To reconcile this discrepancy, Bahya posits that *bat*, the Hebrew word for "daughter", can also refer to a sister. Bahya writes that the same is true of Athaliah, i.e., she was really the sister of Ahab even though she is referred to as his daughter. The same idea is presented in two recently published medieval commentaries on the Pentateuch, *Moshav Zeqanim*[14] and *Perushei Rabbenu Hayyim Paltiel al Ha-Torah*.[15] Bahya proves that Athaliah was really the sister of Ahab from the fact that Ahab had no daughters,[16] as II Kings 10:1 only refers to his having seventy sons, no daughters being mentioned.[17] However, one can just as easily argue that the Bible simply did not feel the need to mention Ahab's daughters or that "seventy sons" really means "seventy children." In fact, according to Hebrew

grammar, when a plurality of males and females together is referenced, the word is always written in its masculine form.

As noted above, if one explains that Athaliah was really a daughter of Omri, one must also explain how she married Jehoram according to *Seder Olam Rabbah*, which records that Jehoram's father, Jehoshaphat, married a daughter of Omri, making Athaliah Jehoram's aunt. In fact, Laniado had considered the possibility that Athaliah was really the daughter of Omri, suggesting that she is referred to as the daughter of Ahab to emphasize that she was wholly a sinner like her brother Ahab.[18] Laniado then rejected such an approach, specifically because of this problem, and (as mentioned above) determined instead that one cannot maintain that Athaliah was the daughter of Omri, since she must have been Ahab's daughter.[19] Dayan Yehezkel Abramsky of London (1886-1976) makes the same assumptions as Rabbi Laniado and offers a solution to his problem:[20] Abramsky points out that the Bible does not say who was Jehoram's mother. He therefore argues that Jehoshaphat fathered Jehoram through another wife, not through the daughter of Omri. Consequently, both Jehoshaphat and his son Jehoram could have married daughters of Omri without Jehoram having engaged in any illicit marriages, because Athaliah the daughter of Omri was not his aunt, but rather his stepmother's



sister. [21]

Another answer can be offered, based on a textual emendation to *Seder Olam Rabbah*. R. Eliyyahu ben Shlomo Zalman, the Vilna Gaon (1720-1797), in his glosses to *Seder Olam Rabbah*, emends the text to read "Asa married his grandson Jehoram to a daughter of Omri" instead of "Asa married his son Jehoshaphat to a daughter of Omri." Elijah Gaon (known also as Ha-Gra) justifies this emendation by explaining that the marriage referred to in *Seder Olam Rabbah* is that of Jehoram to Omri's daughter Athaliah.[22] Of all three marriages between the royal families, two are mentioned explicitly in the Bible (that of Jehoram to Athaliah, and that of Ahaziah to a daughter of Ahab), yet this particular marriage is only mentioned in *Seder Olam Rabbah* and is not even alluded to in the Bible. The omission seems to lend credence to Ha-Gra's emendation. Others, however, declare that this emendation is unfounded, on the basis of earlier sources such as the *Tosefta* (*Sotah* 12:3), Kimhi, Rashi, and early manuscripts of *Seder Olam Rabbah*, all of which state that Asa married his son Jehoshaphat to a daughter of Omri.[23]

CONCLUSION

The Bible relates that Jehu was commanded to slay the entire "house of Ahab" (II Kgs. 9:8) and that he did indeed kill "all that remained of the house of Ahab," leaving no survivors (II Kgs. 10:10-11). However, based on the above discussion, this passage is problematic because Athaliah, a member of the Omride family, remained alive and actually reigned as queen regent in Judah after Jehu's rebellion. R. Ya'akov Hayyim Sofer asks this question and presents two different answers in consonance with the above explanations. He writes that if Athaliah was a daughter of Omri, she was not included in the decree to destroy the "house of Ahab" because she was not one of Ahab's descendants. Alternatively, he explains, even if one understands that Athaliah was a daughter of Ahab, she still would not have been included because the decree applied only to the male descendants of Ahab, not to the females. In fact, the literal wording of the prophecy foretelling Ahab's doom runs: *The entire house of Ahab shall perish; and I will obliterate from Ahab all who urinate against the wall and anyone who survives or remains at large in Israel* (II Kgs. 9:8). The phrase *all who urinate against the wall* (*mashtin bekir*) is understood by Gersonides to refer specifically to males (see Gersonides there and to I Sam. 25:22, I Kgs. 14:10).[24]

In summation, there seem to be two legitimate traditions concerning the parentage of Athaliah. Both traditions are forced to explain that some verses in the Bible are not literal. Some commentators propose that the word "daughter" can refer to a granddaughter, and that Athaliah was really the daughter of Ahab and is sometimes called the daughter of Omri because she was his granddaughter. Other commentators, who maintain that the word "daughter" can refer to a sister, therefore assert that Athaliah was really the daughter of Omri and is sometimes called the daughter of Ahab because she was his sister. According to the former stance, one must also explain that Ahaziah, Athaliah's son, was not literally a son-in-law of Ahab because that would entail marrying his mother's sister; while according to the latter stance, one must explain that Jehoshaphat did not marry a daughter of Omri or that even if he did, his son Jehoram was not a product of that union.

NOTES

Special thanks are due to Avi Levine, who designed the charts for this article.

1. Alternatively, Kimhi explains that Tibni committed suicide when he realized that his influence had waned owing to Omri's success in politically engaging the kingdom of Judah.

2. See W. B. Barrick, "Another Shaking of Jehoshaphat's Family Tree: Jehoram and Ahaziah Once Again", *Vetus Testamentum*, vol. 51, fasc. 1 (Jan. 2001) pp. 9-25. Barrick entertains the possibility that it was actually Jehoshaphat himself, not his son Jehoram, who married Athaliah. However, this explanation has no basis in the Bible.

3. Interestingly, one can regard Ahab's Hebrew name, *Ahav*, as a portmanteau word meaning "brother-father." This alludes to both sides of the debate surrounding the lineage of Athaliah; Ahab was either her brother or her father.

4. The name given for the mother of Ahaziah's son and eventual successor, Joash, is Zibiah of Beersheba (II Kings 12:2). This may or may not refer to a daughter of Ahab. The fact that she is from Beersheba seemingly implies that she was not a daughter of Ahab, since Beersheba is located in the territory of Judah, not Israel. However, Rashbam (to Gen. 26:33) writes that there were two cities named Beersheba, based on the wording of I Kings 19:3, *and [he] came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah*, implying that another Beersheba is located elsewhere. See S. Maimon, *Simhat Yehoshu'a al Ha-Torah* (Jerusalem, 2007) p. 20, for further discussion about these two cities.

5. Kimhi compares this to the *midrash* (*Sifrei* to Num. 10:29, cited in Rashi to Exodus 18:1) which states that Reuel was the father of Jethro, although Jethro's daughters called Reuel their father (Ex. 2:18) since a grandfather is also called a father. All of this is based on a Talmudic postulate (TB *Yevamot* 62b) mentioned in regard to fulfilling the commandment of procreation through grandsons in the event of the death of one's children. See *Sedei Hemed*, vol. 1 (Warsaw, 1891) p. 130: 384, where the author proves from this discussion that the postulate extends to granddaughters, not just grandsons. The other commentators may have eschewed Kimh'is explanation simply because they understood the Talmudic postulate to apply only to grandsons.

6. R. David Luria (1798-1855) wrote that Athaliah was indeed the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel: see *Midrash Rabbah: Ruth*, vol. 6 (Jerusalem: Wagschall/Moznaim Publishing, 2001) p. 35. See also footnote 9 below concerning the view of Abrabanel.

7. H. D. Rabinowitz, *Da'at Soferim: Melakhim* (Jerusalem/New York, 1962) p. 89.

8. Cf. I. Weinberg, *Perush Niv Olam al Seder Olam* (Beit Shemesh, 2001) p. 133, who argues against the explanation of Rabbi Rabinowitz.

9. Abrabanel, in his commentary to II Kings 8:18, explains that Jehoram married Jezebel the daughter of Ahab and she caused him to stray. This is printed in all extant editions of Abrabanel including his *Perush al Nevi'im Rishonim* (Leipzig, 1686) p. 279b; *Sefer Melakhim* (Hamburg, 1687) p. 57a, and *Perush al Nevi'im Rishonim* (Tel Aviv, 1954). However, this is most certainly an error because nowhere else does one find that Ahab had a daughter named Jezebel (he had a wife with that name) or that Jehoram married a a woman named Jezebel. Therefore, it seems that the proper reading of Abrabanel should be "Athaliah" instead of "Jezebel." In fact, Gersonides (to II Kgs. 8:26) explicitly identifies the daughter of Ahab mentioned in regard to Jehoram's straying as Athaliah. From this it appears that Abrabanel subscribed to the view that Athaliah was a daughter of Ahab; and this is also evident from the passage of Abrabanel mentioned above in which he explained that although Athaliah was a daughter of Ahab, she was raised in the house of Omri. Nevertheless, Abrabanel (to Deut. 27:14) writes that Ahaziah is mentioned as the son-in-law of Ahab because he sinned by following in the path of his mother-in-law Jezebel through the influence of his wife, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. He thus appears to believe that Ahaziah was literally a son-in-law of Ahab. If so, then Abrabanel must have understood that Athaliah was not a daughter of Ahab, but rather of Omri. There is therefore a contradiction in Abrabanel's stance regarding this issue.

10. E. Batzri, *Keli Yakar: Melakhim 2* (Jerusalem: Ha-Ketav Institute, 1994) p. 190.

11. H. J. Katzenstein, "Who were the Parents of Athaliah?," *Israel Exploration Journal*, vol. 5, no. 3 (1955) pp. 194-197; William W. Hallo, "From Qarqar to Carchemish: Assyria and Israel in the Light of New Discoveries," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, vol. 23, no. 2 (May, 1960) p. 41, fn. 32; J. M. Miller, "The Fall of the House of Ahab," *Vetus Testamentum*, vol. 17, fasc. 3 (July 1967) p. 307; Susan Ackerman, "The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 112, no. 3 (Autumn 1993) p. 395, fn. 37.

12. Independent of these sources, R. Ze'ev Wolf Einhorn of Horodna (d. 1862) also assumed that Athaliah was a daughter of Omri. See *Midrash Rabbah: Ruth*, vol. 6 (Jerusalem: Wagschall/ Moznaim Publishing, 2001) p. 35.

13. C. Chavel, *Rabbenu Bahya al Ha-Torah: Bereshit* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1966) p. 292.

14. S. Sasson, *Moshav Zeqanim* (London, 1959) p. 61.

15. I. S. Lange, *Perushei Rabbenu Hayyim Paltiel al Ha-Torah* (Jerusalem, 1981) p. 107 (his wording, however, is rather obscure). See I. M. Ta-Shma, "Hayyim Paltiel ben Jacob," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., vol. 8 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007) p. 483. Ta-Shma theorizes that the author of this work (mentioned as "still unpublished" in his article) was R. Hayyim Paltiel ben Jacob, a noted German scholar of the late thirteenth century.

16. R. Yomtov Lipmann Heller (1579-1654) wrote that Bahya did not prove that Athaliah was a sister of Ahab from the fact that she is referred to in the Bible as the daughter of Omri (Ahab's father) because those passages can be reinterpreted in light of Kimhi's and Gersonides' explana-

tions to not mean that she was literally a daughter of Omri, as mentioned above. See A. Heller, *Tuv Ta'am al Rabbenu Bahya: Bereshit* (Benei Berak, 1992) p. 214.

17. Bahya also notes that *Targum Yonatan* translates "daughter of Ahab" as "sister of Ahab." However, this is not found in any extant editions of *Targum Yonatan*.

18. It seems that throughout rabbinic literature Ahab is viewed as a paragon of sin, or at least more so than his father. For example, see TB *Sanhedrin* 90a, which counts Ahab as one of three kings who lost their portion in the World to Come (including Manasseh of Judah and Jeroboam ben Nebat of Israel); see also Rashi (to Gen. 48:8), who states that Jeroboam and Ahab were wicked men descended from Ephraim, but does not mention Omri, Ahab's father. Cf. T. Ishida, "The House of Ahab," *Israel Exploration Journal*, vol. 25, nos. 2/3 (1975) pp. 135-137, and E. Ben Zvi, "The House of Omri/Ahab in Chronicles," *Ahab Agonistes: The Rise and Fall of the Omri Dynasty* (London/New York: T & T Clark and the Library of Biblical Studies, 2007) pp. 41-52.

19. E. Batzri, *Keli Yakar: Melakhim* 2 (Jerusalem: Ha-Ketav Institute, 1994) p. 183.

20. Y. Abramsky, *Hazon Yehezkel: Tosefta Nashim*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1963) pp. 55b-56a.

21. See R. Margolios, *Sefer Hasidim* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1927) p. 20, who discusses a prohibition against a father and son marrying two sisters.

22. M. D. Yerushalmi, *Seder Olam im Bi'ur Ha-Gra* (Jerusalem, 1955) p. 55, #57, and *Seder Olam Rabbah* (Warsaw, 1905) pp. 47:51. However, see *Me'ir Ayin* there who points out that this explanation is unlikely because if Asa was still alive during Jehoram's marriage to Athaliah, Jehoram could have been at most two years old at the time of his marriage!

23. Y. M Weinstock, *Seder Olam Rabbah Ha-Shalem, Seder Zemannim* (Jerusalem, 1956) p. 270, and S. Mirsky, *Midrash Seder Olam* (Jerusalem, 1988) pp. 35b-36a.

24. Y. H. Sofer, *Torat Ya'akov al Ha-Torah* (Jerusalem, 2002) pp. 686-691; and *Kovetz Beit Aharon ve-Yisrael* (Karlin), vol. 95 (Sivan 5761) pp. 130-133. In the JPS, *mashtin be-kir* is euphemistically translated as "male" or "manchild" [Ed.].

YAH: A NAME OF GOD

CLIFFORD HUBERT DUROUSSEAU

In the Bible, God has a personal name. It was revealed to Moses at the time when he delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt (Ex. 3:15; 6:2-9). According to Exodus 6:3, even Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not know God by that name. On this passage, Josephus wrote, "God declared to him [Moses] His holy name, which had never been discovered to man before, and concerning which it is not lawful for me to speak" (*Antiquities of the Jews* II.12.4). In Hebrew it has four consonants: Y-H-V-H. The original vowels are now unknown. The form Yahveh or Yahweh is a conjectural scholarly reconstruction, but no complete certainty attaches to it.

"Jehovah" derives from a Christian misunderstanding and mispronunciation of the name. In 1971, it disappeared from *The New American Standard Bible*, which had used it uniformly for nearly 7000 occurrences in the earlier *American Standard Bible* of 1901. The translators changed their stance after learning to their embarrassment that they had made a serious mistake. *The Jewish Encyclopedia* calls this hybrid form "a philological impossibility".[1] Even Milton's *Paradise Lost* is marred by it. In Book VII, lines 601-603, where he relates the angels' celebration in Heaven of the creation of the world, Milton writes:

Creation and the six days acts they sung:
Great are thy works, *Jehovah*, infinite
Thy power.

Earlier on, in the fourteenth century, Dante's *Divine Comedy* avoided this mistake by simply using the letter *I* for *yod*, the first letter of *the Shem ha-Meforash*, to represent God's name. In *Paradiso* XXVI, lines 134-136, where Dante meets Adam through John, Adam says:

I was the name on earth of the Sovereign Good,
whose joyous rays envelop and surround me.
Later *El* became His name . . .

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Yet *I* is clearly not the complete Hebrew personal name of God, and how many readers would understand what Adam says without an explanation from someone who knows Hebrew?

The four-letter Name of God, *Y-H-V-H*, also called the Tetragrammaton, was unknown to millions of Christians for many centuries. Jerome's Latin Vulgate did not transliterate it, and this was the Bible of Western Christians for over a millennium. Even the (Catholic) Douay version in English, which appeared in 1610 and was used until 1964, did not transliterate *Y-H-V-H*, since the Douay version was based on the Vulgate. The Septuagint, used universally in early Christianity and by the Greek Orthodox Church today, likewise does not transcribe it. The translation of the Hebrew Scriptures made by Aquila, the disciple of Akiva in the second century, used Paleo-Hebrew script for every instance of the Tetragrammaton (see "Aquila" in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*), but Christians did not generally use it because he translated the *almah* of Isaiah 7:14 as *neanis* (young woman), not *parthenos* (virgin). Protestant translators who, beginning with Tyndale in 1530, thought they were revealing a great secret to Christians by employing the notorious hybrid form mentioned above, made use of it only a few times, so that it was easily overlooked. The *Authorized King James Bible* of 1611, for example, uses it only seven times. Thus, ignorance of God's sacred Hebrew personal name has been long-standing and widespread – but there is good news.

There is a short form of this name. It occurs for the first time in the Song of Moses (Ex. 15:2) as *Yah*. It appears soon after in Exodus 17:16, but major English translations generally obscure this fact by not transliterating it. Twenty-four times it appears conjoined in the liturgical *Halelu-Yah* doxology in Psalms; eighteen times it stands alone, and once it is conjoined with a preposition in Psalm 68:5. In Isaiah it occurs together with the long form as *Yah Y-H-V-H* in 12:2 and 26:4, and twice on its own in the Psalm of Hezekiah (Isa. 38:11). It stands in the same verse as *Y-H-V-H* in Exodus 17:16. This is a difficult verse in Hebrew and, following the conjectural emendation proposed in *The New Jerusalem Bible*, it may be translated along with verse 15 as follows: *Moses then built an altar and named it Y-H-V-H-Nissi* [Y-H-V-H-My-Banner]. *He said, Hand upon the banner of Yah, Y-H-V-H will be at war with Amalek generation after generation*.[2] Psalm 89:9 also includes *Y-H-V-H* and *Yah* in the same verse: *O Y-H-V-H, God of hosts, who is mighty like You,*

O Yah? In Song of Songs 8:6, love is defined as *a flame of Yah* [*shalhevetyah*]. It thus has a wide distribution in the Hebrew Scriptures, being used in the Torah, the Prophets (*Nevi'im*) and the Writings (*Ketuvim*).

This fact is obscured because major English translations avoid transliterating *Yah*. *The New American Bible Revised Edition* does not transliterate it. *The New Jerusalem Bible*, which is distinguished for uniformly transliterating *Y-H-V-H* as "Yahweh" in the Hebrew canon, transliterates *Yah* only once (in Ex. 15:2). *The New American Standard Bible* and *The New Revised Standard Version*, among the major Protestant translations, do not transliterate it at all. However, it occurs four times in *The New King James Version* – once in Psalm 68:4 (= 68:5 Masoretic Text) as *YAH*, and three times in Isaiah (12:2; 26:4; and 38:11, the second occurrence in this verse being translated as "the LORD"). *Tanakh-The Holy Scriptures* (NJPSV) transliterates it in Isaiah 12:2; 26:4; 38:11.

This name of God occurs frequently at the end of personal names such as Elijah (Eliyyah) and, among the Latter Prophets, in Isaiah (Yeshayah), Jeremiah (Yirmeyah), Obadiah (Ovadyah), Zephaniah (Tzefanyah), and Zechariah (Zekharyah). The names of Uzziah and Hezekiah are also well-known from the prophecies of Isaiah. Many more examples can be discovered in the genealogies of I Chronicles 1-9, the lists of Jews who returned from the Babylonian captivity in Ezra 2 and of those who were found to have married foreign wives in Ezra 10, as well as in Nehemiah 10-12 and other biblical passages. As in the case of *Halelu-Yah*, the Divine Name is obscured by the Hallelujah/Alleluiah spelling (j or i instead of y) and by its being combined with other Hebrew words.

In addition to being knowable and known, this short name of God is *pronounceable with absolute certainty.* Although John McKenzie, in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, claims that the pronunciation of the four-letter Hebrew name of God has been recovered in recent times,[3] this is only a scholarly consensus since the time of H. Ewald and William Gesenius in the nineteenth century. As Rabbi Gunther Plaut points out, "How the name was originally pronounced is no longer certain."[4] There is unanimous agreement among Jews, on the other hand, that the single vowel of the short form of the Tetragrammaton is *kamatz*.

Articulating *Yah* is permissible. While Jews are forbidden by the Oral Law to pronounce the Tetragrammaton (TB *Kiddushin* 71a, *Pesahim* 50a; cf. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* ii.12.4), no such prohibition is specified for *Yah*, although observant Jews customarily pronounce it only in prayer and study. They also refrain from writing it. Instead of using *yod-hé* (10-5) to represent fifteen, they substitute *tet-vav* (9-6) because *yod-hé* are the consonants spelling *Yah*; and instead of *yod-vav* (10-6) to represent sixteen, they use *tet-zayin* (9-7) because yod-vav is, like *yod-hé*, a theophoric designation (see *Joel=Yo-El*). Roman Catholics were recently forbidden by the Vatican to use the name "Yahweh" in prayers and liturgical hymns. Its use by Catholic scholars currently engaged in dialogues with Jews would obviously be disallowed.[5] Earlier, the official *Nova Vulgata Bibliorum Sacrorum* published in 1979 used the form "Iahveh" for the Tetragrammaton, but later editions replaced "Iahveh" with *Dominus* (Latin for "Lord"), as Jerome had done. The wide use of *Yah* in the Hebrew Scriptures argues at least for its recognition, and certainly for its transliteration, in those instances where it stands alone.

Yah is also *popular*. In Jewish liturgy, it occurs in the Song of the Sea (Ex. 15:2), which forms part of the Jewish daily morning service. It figures in the *Hallel* (Psalms 113-118) recited on Pilgrim Festivals, Hanukkah, Rosh Hodesh (the New Moon), during the Passover *Seder*; and in "the Great *Hallel*" (Psalm 136) recited on Sabbath and festival mornings. *Yah Ribbon Alam* ("God, Master of the Universe"), written in Aramaic by the sixteenth-century poet Yisrael Najara, is one of the most popular Jewish table hymns (*zemirot*). It concludes with a prayer that *Yah* may redeem Israel and restore Jerusalem, "the city of beauty." Among the Sephardim, *Yah Shimkha* ("Yah is Your Name") is sung during morning service on the second day of Rosh Ha-Shanah (the New Year). Attributed to Yehudah Halevi, this poem's verses form an acrostic spelling YHDH (*Yehudah*).

In Christian worship, especially among Protestants, "Hallelujah!" is often spoken and sung with enthusiasm (even ecstatically) by people with no knowledge of Hebrew. It is not widely recognized that *Halelu* is a plural imperative ("Praise ye" in older English) and *jah*, as it appears conjoined to *Halelu*, is *Yah*. In Hebrew, the two words are occasionally separated by a *makkef* (hyphen), indicating that they are read as a unit with the accent on the last syllable. Gentiles place the accent incorrectly on the third syllable. A

famous example of this mistake occurs in the "Hallelujah" chorus of Handel's *Messiah*, where the accent falls not only on the third syllable, but even on the second.

Finally, *Yah* is kosher. Although, due to unfamiliarity and lack of general recognition, it seems to be an irreverent form of the full Hebrew personal name of God, the facts listed above indicate that it is in fact religiously correct. Even Moses used it. And while the Song of Sea proclaims, *Y-H-V-H is His name!* (Ex. 15:3), the line above it runs, *Yah is my strength and might; He has become my salvation* (Ex. 15:2a). Isaiah uses this line from the Song of the Sea in his prophecies, modifying it by adding *Y-H-V-H* next to *Yah*, further showing their equivalent status: *For Yah Y-H-V-H is my strength and might, and He has been my salvation* (Isa. 12:2b). The NJPSV translates this line thus: *'For Yah the LORD is my strength and might, and He has been my deliverance.'* Isaiah uses *Yah Y-H-V-H* again in 26:4, additional proof that *Yah* is as acceptable and proper as *Y-H-V-H*. Moreover, as we have seen, Psalms contains over forty instances of *Yah*, and many Hebrew names also have *Yah* as a component.

Thus, while the longer form of God's personal Hebrew name is clearly shown by the number of its occurrences to be the preferable one, the shorter form is knowable and known, pronounceable with absolute certainty, permissible, popular, and kosher. The Jewish sages (TB *Kiddushin* 71a) quoted the verse, *This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations* (Ex. 3:15), as their support for concealing the pronunciation of *Y-H-V-H*, in direct contradiction to what the plain meaning of Scripture seems to intend, pointing out that *le-olam* ("forever") is written defectively (without the *vav* for the vowel "o") and can be read as *le-allem* ("to conceal"). Yet there is an alternative form of the Hebrew personal name of God which has not been concealed by the Sages and which is not unknown. What is this name? *Yah is His name* (Ps. 68:5).

NOTES

1. See "Names of God" articles in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. VIII (1906), p. 8, and *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1972), 7:680-681.

2. Joseph H. Hertz, former Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, in *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (London: Soncino Press, 1960), says on page 281: "The text is difficult and can also be translat-

ed, 'The LORD hath [sic] sworn , the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation' (Onkelos, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Luzzatto, RV Text)."

3. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph Fitzmyer, Roland Murphy, eds. *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (New Jersey: Prentis Hall, 1966) p. 1286.

4. W. Gunther Plaut, *The Torah: A Modern Commentary* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 2005) p. 394.

5. This directive means that *The New Jerusalem Bible* (1985), which uses the form "Yahweh" for its nearly 7,000 occurrences in the Tanakh, may not be used in Catholic liturgy. A new version, entitled *The Bible in Its Traditions*, will soon replace it and Jewish scholars have been invited to contribute. The use of "Yahweh" will be discontinued.

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THE TRIAL OF JEREMIAH AND THE KILLING OF URIAH THE PROPHET

CLAUDE F. MARIOTTINI

THE TEMPLE SERMON

The editing and composition of the Book of Jeremiah have been a matter of debate among scholars. They agree, however, that Jeremiah 7 and 26 are two accounts of Jeremiah's Temple sermon. Chapter 7:1-5 details his sermon in the Temple and chapter 26 provides a summary of the sermon and the audience's response.

According to Jeremiah 26:1, the Temple sermon occurred *At the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah. king of Judah*.[1] Jehoiakim became king in succession to Jehoahaz, Josiah's second son, who was deported to Egypt after reigning in Jerusalem for three months. Jehoiakim was placed on the throne by Egypt's ruler, Pharaoh-Neco (II Kgs. 23:34; II Chron. 36:4).

In his sermon, Jeremiah declared that the people had violated the demands of the covenant by not living according to God's Torah (Jer. 26:4), by breaking several of the stipulations of the Decalogue (Jer. 7:9), and by believing that they were safe from the consequences of their actions (Jer. 7:10). As a result of their continual rejection of God's Torah and their belief that the Temple would guarantee their safety, Jeremiah announced that the Lord would destroy the Temple of Jerusalem in the same way he had allowed the sanctuary at Shiloh to be destroyed. Like the Temple in Jerusalem, Shiloh was God's house, the place where he chose to put His name and make His habitation (Jer. 7:12). However, because of the wickedness of the people, God allowed His house at Shiloh to be destroyed.

Jeremiah warned the people that they had failed to obey the injunctions of the Torah, and, for this reason, the Lord could no longer guarantee the safety of the city and deliver the people from the threat posed by the enemies of Judah. In the view of the religious authorities, however, Jeremiah's sermon was blasphemous and treasonable.

Chapter 26 mentions three prophets: Jeremiah, Micah, and Uriah (called *Uriyyahu* in the Hebrew text). One significant aspect of this chapter is the attempt to legitimate Jeremiah as a true prophet and validate his word as true

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prophecy. Jeremiah twice defended himself as a prophet by affirming that the Lord had sent him to proclaim his message to Judah. *'It was the Lord who sent me to prophesy against this House and this city', he declared* (Jer. 26:12), and *'in truth the Lord has sent me to you, to speak all these words in your ears'* (Jer. 26:15). By declaring that it was none other than God who sent him, Jeremiah set a seal of authenticity on his mission and message.

The confrontation between Jeremiah and the authorities of Judah occurred at a time when the nation was facing a political crisis precipitated by the death of Josiah. Among Jeremiah's opponents were the optimistic prophets, whom the Septuagint explicitly calls "false prophets." These seers were proclaiming a message about the threat faced by the nation, a threat brought about by the fall of the Assyrian empire and the rise of Babylon. They told the people that the Babylonian threat to Jerusalem would not materialize because the presence of the Lord in the Temple guaranteed Jerusalem's security. According to Jeremiah, these seers were proclaiming a deceitful message to the people: *'You shall not see the sword, nor shall famine come upon you, but I will give you unfailing security in this place'* (Jer. 14:13).

Chapter 26 also shows that the proclamation of Jeremiah and Uriah contradicted the message of the optimistic prophets. The message conveyed by Jeremiah and Uriah offered a different perspective of the nation's current political and religious situation, one that did not suit those prophets who were trying to defend the status quo. Jeremiah proclaimed that the Temple was threatened with destruction and that the people were in danger of being cast out of the land unless they repented and returned to the Lord.

THE TRIAL OF JEREMIAH

In his sermon preached *in the court of the House of the Lord* (Jer. 26:2), Jeremiah proclaimed that if the people continued to ignore God's warning, He would destroy Jerusalem and the Temple, even as He had destroyed Shiloh. In addition, Jeremiah declared that Jerusalem would become the object of a curse among the nations. In foretelling the destruction of the Temple, Jeremiah went against the popular view that the presence of the Temple safeguarded the city of Jerusalem. The people believed that "Jerusalem had a privileged place with God and so was immune from the fate of Shiloh."[2]

It is possible that the people who heard Jeremiah's sermon were divided

about the validity of his message. References to "the people" appear in Jeremiah 26:7-9, 11-12, 16, and 24. In verses 7-9, the people supported the priests and the prophets and opposed Jeremiah; but in verses 11-12 and 16, they sided with the officials who supported Jeremiah and declared him not guilty of being a false prophet. In verse 24, the people tried to have Jeremiah put to death.

As a result of his sermon, the people seized Jeremiah and threatened him with the death penalty. The angry reaction of the audience was based on their belief that no true prophet would ever announce the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

Jeremiah was placed on trial to decide whether he had committed blasphemy by speaking about the destruction of the Temple and against Jerusalem. Should he be found guilty of blasphemy, he would be put to death as the priests and the prophets had requested. They made that demand because of the injunction that any prophet who spoke falsely in the name of the Lord should be executed (Deut. 18:20). The trial of Jeremiah took place, in accordance with the stipulations of Deuteronomy 18:20-22, in order to determine whether Jeremiah was a true prophet and whether he had been sent by the Lord.[3]

During the trial, only the priests and prophets accused Jeremiah of blasphemy. The charge lodged against Jeremiah was that he had prophesied against Jerusalem (Jer. 26:11). The people who had formerly opposed Jeremiah now adopted a neutral position, awaiting the decision of Judah's leaders.

The court was convened *at the entrance of the New Gate of the House of the Lord* (Jer. 26:10). The royal officers were not present when the religious officials declared that Jeremiah should be put to death. The palace officials were summoned to hear the case and decide whether or not the prophet deserved to die. Some scholars believe that Jeremiah's accusers misrepresented his actual words to the royal officers.[4] Jeremiah had not merely prophesied against the city: he had condemned widespread violation of the covenant and the people's false sense of security. He gave the people a chance to avert the divine judgment, but their rejection of his message ensured that what he had predicted would become a reality.

In their case against Jeremiah, the priests and the prophets accused him of preaching against both the Temple and Jerusalem, ignoring the people's vio-

lation of the Decalogue. The real issue between Jeremiah and the religious authorities was his message of impending judgment, which negated the ideology behind their views and therefore posed a threat to their political power as well.

When Jeremiah began to defend himself, he addressed his words to the royal officials and the people rather than to his accusers, the priests and the prophets (Jer. 26:12). Jeremiah declared that he was innocent of the charges leveled against him, for the Lord had sent him to proclaim His message and to warn the people of the consequences of their disobedience. The words spoken in that proclamation were not his own, but those he had received from God. In conclusion, Jeremiah stated that putting him to death would result in the shedding of innocent blood.

After Jeremiah presented his defense, the royal officers and the people declared that Jeremiah was not guilty. He had proclaimed an authentic message and they acquitted him of the charge of being a false prophet. They told the priests and the prophets: *'This man does not deserve the death penalty, for he has spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God'* (Jer. 26:16).

THE MESSAGE OF MICAH

Following Jeremiah's acquittal, another group of people arose to speak on his behalf (Jer. 26:17-19). The reason why the elders of the land came to defend Jeremiah was probably because declaring him to be a true prophet was not sufficient to convince everyone of his innocence. The fact that, after the trial, Ahikam ben Shaphan had to use his influence to keep Jeremiah from being handed over and executed by the people (Jer. 26:24) is evidence that the threat to Jeremiah's life had still not been removed.

In their defense of Jeremiah, the elders cited a precedent from the nation's history. They reminded those present that a century earlier, in the days of King Hezekiah, Micah the Morashtite, a prophet from a small village in Judah, had also prophesied about the Temple and Jerusalem, and had warned the people of a coming judgment. Micah's proclamation, quoted by the elders (Jer. 26:18), was similar to that of Jeremiah in his Temple sermon, declaring that Zion would be plowed like a field, that Jerusalem would become a pile of rubble, and that the Temple Mount would become a hill overgrown with trees (Mic. 3:12). The elders concluded that although Micah's words were as

harsh as Jeremiah's, he had not incurred the death penalty. The elders rendered an impartial decision, since they were not connected with the Temple's religious establishment or with the political leadership of Jerusalem.

This quotation of an oracle by a prophet in another prophetic book is something unique in the Bible. The elders repeated almost verbatim Micah's words against the Temple and the city. They praised Hezekiah and the people of Judah for sparing Micah, even though – like Jeremiah – he had prophesied the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem. King Hezekiah gave heed to the prophetic word. On the basis of the historical precedent cited by the elders, Jeremiah was not put to death. The reaction of Hezekiah to Micah's message serves as an indictment of Jehoiakim. Brueggemann states that Jehoiakim "is the model of disobedience." From the outset of his reign, the word of the Lord was unwelcome, "systematically rejected and resisted."[5]

By mentioning Hezekiah's decision about Micah's prophecy, the elders implied that the religious and political officials in Judah should imitate the action taken by Hezekiah. The elders affirmed that a prophet's word spoken against the city was not sufficient reason for his execution. In contrast to Jeremiah, who offered salvation for Jerusalem if the people abandoned their evil ways, Micah's words against the city and the Temple offered no way out. The text does not say whether the words of the elders persuaded Jehoiakim to accept Jeremiah's message. The execution of another prophet, Uriah, clearly indicates that in the past the king did not accept the validity of Jeremiah's preaching.

THE KILLING OF URIAH

In his Temple sermon, Jeremiah declared that the Lord had sent prophets who urged the people to obey the Torah's injunctions. The way the words of Jeremiah are constructed in verse 26:5, *'the prophets whom I have been sending to you persistently',* indicates that in the days of Jehoiakim there were other prophets urging the people to obey the Law, and Uriah was one of them. We are now told in four verses (Jer. 26:20-23) the story of one such prophet who was put to death, Uriah.

It is hard to place the story of Uriah's death within the chronological framework of Jeremiah's trial. The extent to which the killing of Uriah is related to the trial of Jeremiah is unknown. Nor do we know when that

prophet's execution took place. It can be inferred from the narrative that Jehoiakim had Uriah executed at the beginning of his reign.

Uriah ben Shemaiah was an unknown prophet from Kiriath-jearim, one of the four Gibeonite cities (Josh. 9:17). There is no information about him in the Bible other than these few verses. We are told that Uriah proclaimed a message identical with Jeremiah's. The linking in the text of Uriah with Micah and Jeremiah is an attempt to place Uriah's ministry within the prophetic tradition represented by these two seers (Jer. 28:8). It was also an affirmation that the content of his message was consistent with the one proclaimed by the true prophets. Jeremiah, Micah, and Uriah came from small villages that preserved and promoted the ancient religious traditions of Israel.[6] By informing us that Uriah came from Kiriath-jearim, the narrative links Uriah to the traditions associated with the Ark of the Covenant and the destruction of the sanctuary at Shiloh.

When Jehoiakim was told about Uriah's message, he summoned his officials and military men and decided to have Uriah killed (Jer. 26:21). The expression, *the king sought to put him to death*, clearly "denotes killing done by someone in authority, very often the king."[7]

How Uriah came to hear of this royal decision is uncertain. Like Jeremiah, he may have had supporters within the government. Fearing for his life, Uriah took refuge in Egypt. Jehoiakim was then a vassal of Pharaoh Neco and there may well have been a formal suzerain-vassal treaty between Egypt and Judah that included the extradition of fugitives. This was standard practice at the time. A peace treaty between Hattuŝili III, king of the Hittites, and Rameses II of Egypt (1284 BCE) thus included a clause stating that fugitives would be extradited to their country of origin.[8]

At Jehoiakim's command, Elnathan ben Achbor went to Egypt with a detachment of men to secure Uriah's return. Elnathan belonged to a prominent Judean family. He was among the royal officers present when Baruch read Jeremiah's scroll (Jer. 36:12) and one of the officials who urged Jehoiakim not to burn it (Jer. 36:25). If he is the same Elnathan who was the father of Nehushta and the grandfather of Jehoiachin (II Kgs. 24:8), then he was also Jehoiakim's father-in-law.

The execution of Uriah took place on the king's authority. Uriah was denied burial in a family sepulcher: he was interred instead in one of the graves

meant for the common people – *benei ha-am*. According to II Kings 23:6, this burial ground was located in the Kidron Valley. It may be that Jeremiah's execration of Jehoiakim, who had an ignominious burial (Jer. 22:18-19), was the prophet's response to the disgraceful treatment of Uriah.[9]

Uriah was put to death by Jehoiakim because he had prophesied against the Temple and the city in the same way Jeremiah had done. The death of Uriah is another reminder of the strong opposition that Jeremiah faced during his long ministry. It seems clear that the narrative of Uriah's death was not cited at Jeremiah's trial: it was added by the compiler of Jeremiah's book, traditionally Baruch ben Neriah, to tell his readers about another prophet who spoke in the Lord's name, but who did not escape Jehoiakim's wrath as Jeremiah had done. Although the *Tosefta* (*Sotah* 9:5-6) indicates that the Uriah episode was in fact mentioned at the trial by Jeremiah's opponents, thus serving as a precedent for the killing of a prophet, other traditional Jewish commentators (such as Mahari Kara and Malbim) accept that it was a later addition, although they feel that Jeremiah himself added it to the narrative so as to emphasize the danger threatening him. The fact that the Uriah episode does not begin with a statement naming the relater surely indicates that this is a narrative section and not part of the dialogue at the trial.

The reference to Uriah's death may have been a veiled warning to Jeremiah. Jehoiakim may have wanted Jeremiah to realize that his message was unacceptable and could lead to his death. If the messenger could be silenced, the threat enunciated by the prophet would be nullified. The death of Uriah shows how little regard Jehoiakim had for the prophets and for the message they proclaimed, demonstrating the king's attitude toward those who objected to his policies. The silencing of Uriah indicates the kind of opposition Jeremiah faced both from the king and from the religious leaders of Judah. When Jehoiakim was challenged by the words of Uriah, no one interceded with the king on Uriah's behalf, so he was free to vent his wrath against the prophet.

The final verse of the chapter (26:24) presents another twist to Jeremiah's trial. Ahikam ben Shaphan rescued Jeremiah from death at the hands of the people. Ahikam was the son of Shaphan the scribe, a high official in King Josiah's court. When the book of the covenant was discovered during the renovation of the Temple, *Shaphan read it before the king* (II Kgs. 22:8-10). Josiah then sent Shaphan, Ahikam and other envoys to Huldah the prophet-

ess, asking for her evaluation of the book's significance (II Kgs. 22:12-20). Gedaliah, Ahikam's son, was chosen by the Babylonians to serve as governor of Judah after the fall of Jerusalem (II Kgs. 25:22; Jer. 40:5-6). This indicates that Ahikam was a man of considerable political influence in the last days of Judah.

The placing of verse 24 after the account of Uriah's death suggests that some people were not convinced by the verdict of the royal officials. They believed that Jeremiah deserved to die for his words against the Temple and Jerusalem. Ahikam's action shows that the threat against Jeremiah's life had not ended with the decision of the royal officials. There is no way of knowing if the campaign for Jeremiah's death life took place immediately after the trial or whether some people, influenced by Jehoiakim's past decision to execute Uriah, were bent on killing Jeremiah as well, thus necessitating Ahikam's intervention to save the prophet. The reference to Ahikam in this context is important, because it shows that Jeremiah found support among the king's own officials.

CONCLUSION

The slaying of the prophet Uriah is mentioned in connection with Jeremiah's to emphasize the wickedness of King Jehoiakim. His rejection of the message of Jeremiah and Uriah constituted a rejection of God's message for the nation. As Walter Brueggemann notes, the only hope for Judah, the message Jeremiah was preaching, was viewed "as an unnecessary threat." God's Torah, which held the promise of life for Judah, was now "intolerable."[10]

The murder of prophets is a rare occurrence in the Bible. Jezebel, a Tyrian princess and the wife of King Ahab, persecuted and killed many prophets (I Kgs. 18:4, 13; 19:1-2). Apart from the execution of Uriah ben Shemaiah, there is only one other example of a prophet being killed by his own people: the stoning of Zechariah ben Jehoiada at the behest of King Joash (II Chron. 24:20-22). The general charge against Israel of killing prophets appears only once in the Tanakh: *'Nevertheless they were disobedient and rebelled against You and cast Your law behind their backs and killed Your prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to You, and they committed great blasphemies'* (Neh. 9:26, NRSV). While many of the prophets encountered some opposition in the discharge of their ministry and even faced threats to

their lives, none of them were put to death. The story of Uriah's execution in Jeremiah 26 is an anomaly that reflects the spiritual condition of Judah in the years before its exile to Babylon.

NOTES

1. All references will be taken from The Jewish Publication Society Bible translation (TNK), unless otherwise indicated.
2. Walter Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 26-52: To Build, To Plant* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) p. 7.
3. A description of the trial procedure is found in Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) pp. 245-7.
4. Kathleen M. O'Connor, "'Do Not Trim a Word': The Contributions of Chapter 26 to the book of Jeremiah," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 51 (1989) pp. 617-630; Brueggemann, p. 7, note 6.
5. Brueggemann, p. 5.
6. Mark Leuchter, "The Cult at Kiriath Yearim: Implications from the Biblical Record," *Vetus Testamentum,* 58 (2008) pp. 526-43.
7. Gerald L. Keon, Pamela J. Scalise and Thomas G. Smothers, *Jeremiah 26-52* [(Word Biblical Commentary] (Dallas: Word Books, 1995) p. 30.
8. James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near East Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955) p. 203.
9. William Holladay, *Jeremiah 2* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989) p. 103.
10. Brueggemann, p. 12.

SHEPHERDING AS A METAPHOR

GERALD ARANOFF

Why does the Bible specifically indicate the shepherding occupation of so many biblical figures? Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve sons of Jacob are all described in the Bible as shepherds. Jacob's sons give shepherding as their occupation and that of their forefathers (Gen. 47:3). Later, Moses and David are also denoted as shepherds. While it is true that shepherding is an appropriate occupation for the nomadic Patriarchs, what message does the Bible convey by pointing out this fact?

Rabbi Moshe Tzvi Neriah mentions the merits of shepherding in his comments to the verse, *Three times a year – on the Feast of Unleavened Bread, on the Feast of Weeks, and on the Feast of Booths – all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place that He will choose. They shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed* (Deut. 16:16). He cites TB *Hagigah* 3a, "Rava expounded: What is the meaning of the verse: *How lovely are your feet in sandals, O daughter of nobles!* (Song of Songs 7:2). [It means:] How comely are the feet of Israel when they go up on the festival pilgrimage." Rabbi Neriah writes, "The beauty that accompanied the soles of the feet included . . . *O fairest of women, Go follow the tracks of the sheep* (Song of Songs 1:8) – go and walk in the footsteps of your holy forefathers (*kodashim* or *kedoshim*?) who went and walked there with their sheep."[1]

R. Neriah explains that shepherding is considered a lofty occupation because it was that of the biblical forefathers. However, this does not explain why they were shepherds in the first place. With all the occupations available, why choose this one, and why point it out in the Bible? Keeping sheep was known as a job for an ignoramus – a young boy and a dog could undertake it. Biblical commentators write of shepherding as a task leading to solitude and contemplation,[2] thus making it an appropriate lifestyle for a religious individual. I think there is another reason why the Bible points out that many biblical heroes were shepherds.

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The standard midrashic explanation for Moses and David being shepherds is that taking care of sheep was a prelude and, in a way, a training ground for leading the Israelites. *Exodus Rabbah* (2:2) presents God observing the leadership capabilities of both Moses and David through their shepherding skills. Regarding Moses, the Midrash famously tells how a little lamb ran away while he was tending Jethro's flock. Moses chased after the lamb and found it drinking at a spring. He then exclaimed, "I did not know that you ran away because you were thirsty! You must be tired." He then lifted the little lamb and carried it on his shoulders back to the flock. Owing to this display of compassion, God declared, "Since you have mercy while leading sheep of flesh and blood, then by your life, you shall also shepherd My sheep, Israel." Similarly, regarding David, the Midrash states that he kept the big sheep penned and let the little ones graze first, allowing them to eat the softer vegetation. Next, he released the old sheep to graze on the medium vegetation, and finally the strongest sheep were released to graze on the toughest vegetation. God then declared, "Whoever knows how to take care of sheep, each one according to its strength, he is the one who shall come and shepherd My people."

The connection between leadership and shepherding is also made in *Midrash Tanhuma* (*Beshalah*, 15), where many parallels are listed between the way God and Moses looked after the Israelites. For example, a shepherd takes care of his sheep even if they run off, just as God and Moses did not abandon the Israelites during the forty years of wandering in the desert, despite their constant complaints and rebelliousness.

While this midrashic understanding of the significance of shepherding applies to Moses and David, leaders of the nation, and even to the Patriarchs who can be seen as the leaders of all future generations of Israelites, it does not take into account the very first case of a shepherd mentioned in the Bible, namely, Abel. He is by no means a leader, and in fact the Bible explicitly states that he *also brought the choicest of the firstlings of his flock* (Gen. 4:4), following the lead of his older brother Cain, who had brought God an offering *of the fruit of the soil.* I suggest that Abel, the first shepherd, is in fact the archetypal biblical shepherd and the key to understanding the significance of this occupation.

The Bible records Moses saying to the wicked Pharaoh, *'You yourself must provide us with sacrifices and burnt offerings to offer up to the Lord our God; our own livestock, too, shall go along with us – not a hoof shall remain behind: for we must select from it for the worship of the Lord our God; and we shall not know with what we are to worship the Lord until we arrive there'* (Ex. 10:25-26). From this we see that the standard mode of Israelite worship was through animal sacrifice. Throughout the Bible we find that the Israelites were deeply involved with sacrifices, for example: *Saul answered, 'They were brought from the Amalekites, for the troops spared the choicest of the sheep and oxen for sacrificing to the Lord your God. And we proscribed the rest'*(I Sam. 15:15).

This form of worship was already established with Cain and Abel, where the shepherd's animal sacrifice is accepted and the farmer's offering is rejected (Gen. 4:3-5). Although it is specifically noted that Abel brought *the choicest of the firstlings of his flock* (Gen. 4:4), implying that the vegetable sacrifice was rejected because it did not represent the best Cain had to offer, the fact is that after this episode burnt offerings became the main form of sacrificial service. Animal sacrifice was performed by Noah upon exiting the Ark (Gen. 8:20); and it continued with Abraham and his descendants. It should be noted that animal sacrifice is not the only valid form of sacrificial service. The Bible also refers to meal offerings and libations of wine and oil. However, the very first sacrifice ever accepted in the Bible was an animal brought by a shepherd.

From the first sacrifice reported in the Bible, the shepherd's offering is considered the appropriate one, thus validating that occupation in the context of bringing the correct sacrifice. Emphasizing that many biblical heroes were shepherds is, fundamentally, a way of categorizing them as holy – individuals who were, in practice, capable of bringing the right kind of offering to God.

NOTES

1. *Ner la-Ma'or* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Sefarim, 2012) p. 436.

2. "Abel chose shepherding sheep, which leads to solitude [*hitbodedut*], as did many prophets such as Moses, David and their like, in order to offer from them a sacrifice to God" (*Keli Yakar* on Genesis 4:3).

SAUL AND GENOCIDE

BEREL DOV LERNER

God's biblical command to *blot out the memory* of the Amalekites (Deut. 25:19) has long been a source of consternation for Jewish thinkers. Michael J. Harris's book, *Divine Command Ethics: Jewish and Christian Perspectives,*[1] devotes an entire chapter to the issue. Critics of religion have, for their part, focused on the Amalekite "genocide" as an easy point of attack against biblical morality. The British *Guardian* newspaper recently ran an item by Katherine Stewart entitled, "How Christian fundamentalists plan to teach genocide to schoolchildren."[2] That article discusses the story of King Saul's battle against the Amalekites, and cites Philip Jenkins, a prominent American academic historian, as claiming that the story has been used to justify acts of genocide perpetrated by white settlers against Native Americans, Catholics against Protestants, Protestants against Catholics, and even Rwandan Hutus against Tutsis. In recounting the passage from Samuel, Stewart first quotes the command to wipe out the Amalekites that Saul received from Samuel (I Sam. 15:3) and then summarizes the rest of the story as follows: "Saul dutifully exterminated the women, the children, the babies and all of the men – but then he spared the king. He also saved some of the tastier looking calves and lambs. God was furious with him for his failure to finish the job." One can hardly blame Stewart for her interpretation of the biblical passage; as far as I know, it is universally accepted by Bible believers and Bible critics alike. A close reading of the actual text of Samuel, however, reveals a very different story.

It is the prophet Samuel himself who offers the first clue to the new interpretation. It should be remembered that, having been spared by King Saul, the Amalekite king Agag is brought before Samuel, who promptly executes him, but not before uttering this harsh goodbye: *"As your sword has bereaved women, so shall your mother be bereaved among women"* (I Sam. 15:33). There is apparently a logical contradiction in this verse. If Saul has killed all the Amalekite women, Agag's mother should be long dead, but if she is dead, what sense is there in declaring that she will be bereaved!? Evidently, some

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of the women –Agag's own mother at least – must have survived Saul's onslaught. However, for those who have read beyond the story of Saul's battle there is no need for pedantic demonstrations that some Amalekites survived the war. After all, just twelve chapters later (I Sam. 27:8) we find David attacking the Amalekites, who later return the favor: *By the time David and his men arrived in Ziklag, on the third day, the Amalekites had made a raid into the Negev and against Ziklag; they had stormed Ziklag and burned it down. They had taken the women in it captive, low-born and high-born alike* (I Sam. 30:1-2). If Saul had exterminated all of the Amalekites, who was left to fight against David?

In order to arrive at an interpretation that will solve these quandaries, our story must be dissected into its relevant sections. These are: 1) Samuel's command to Saul (I Sam. 15:1-3); 2) Saul's execution of the command (15:4-9); 3) God's complaint to Samuel and the latter's reaction to it (15:10-12); and 4) Samuel's condemnation of Saul (15:13-31).

The operative verse in Samuel's command is categorical and chillingly straightforward: *'Now go, attack Amalek, and proscribe all that belongs to him. Spare no one, but kill alike men and women, infants and sucklings, oxen and sheep, camels and asses'* (15:3). Saul's actual execution of the command is more complicated. He first assembles his troops, approaches the Amalekite city, and warns the Kenites to stay clear of the fighting. Finally, we have arrived at Saul's attack, which is described as follows: *Saul destroyed Amalek from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is close to Egypt, and he captured King Agag of Amalek alive. He proscribed all the people, putting them to the sword* (15:7-8). Take note that these verses are written in the third person *singular*. What does this signify? We are surely not expected to believe that Saul vanquished the Amalekites single-handed; rather, we are to understand that in fighting the Amalekites Saul's troops served as instruments of his will. Saul alone decided what was to be done and his men simply followed his orders. At this point, however, the biblical narrator expands the compass of volition to include Saul's troops, and the text moves abruptly into the third-person plural: *But Saul and the troops spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the second-born, the lambs, and all else that was of value. They would not proscribe them; they proscribed only what was cheap and worthless* (15:9). Apparently, Saul has now abandoned his role as sole decision-

maker and has allowed his troops to have their say in how things will be done.

How does all of this relate to the prophetic critique of Saul's behavior? Samuel explicitly condemns Saul for not killing the animals – *'What is this bleating of sheep in my ears?'* (15:14) – and we should remember that Saul shared the decision to spare those animals with his troops. Ungraciously, Saul even tries to pin *all* of the responsibility for that misstep on his men and explains to Samuel: *the troops spared the choicest of the sheep and oxen for sacrificing to the Lord your God, and we proscribed the rest* (15:15). Saul is claiming that the troops sinned (third-person plural) by sparing the animals of their own prerogative; for his part, he was only personally involved in the proscription (first-person plural) of the remaining livestock. Saul later confesses to having been culpably weak in his leadership: *'I did wrong to transgress the Lord's command and your instructions; but I was afraid of the troops and I yielded to them'* (15:24). It seems clear that Saul's wrongdoing involved his (passive?) participation in actions which reflected the will of his troops. From my earlier analyses, we know that this consists, specifically, of sparing Agag and the livestock.

The background developed above hardly contradicts conventional wisdom; now it is time to lower the exegetical boom. I have so far abstained from pointing out a glaring difference between Samuel's command and Saul's execution of it. While Samuel spares no words listing every section of the Amalekite population which must be destroyed, the verse describing Saul's execution of the command simply states: *He proscribed all the people, putting them to the sword* (15:8). Standard English usage would lead us to believe that the phrase *all the people* is just a briefer way of saying *men and women, infants and sucklings*. But is it?

In our passage, the New Jewish Publication Society translation (from which I quote) uses the word "people" to translate the Hebrew word *am*. In Modern Hebrew, *am* has come to denote solely a "people" in the sense of a large ethnic community, and it is in this sense that Saul's destruction of the Amalekite *am* can be seen as an ancient instance of genocide. However, while scripture does sometimes use *am* in this way, the word often bears another meaning. Consider Genesis 14:16, which reports how Abraham and his men recovered captives taken in war: *he also brought back his kinsman Lot and his posses-*

sions, and the women and the <u>*am*</u>. Whatever is meant here by *am*, it certainly does not include women! Later, we read of Pharaoh setting off to overtake the escaping Israelites: *He ordered his chariot and took his* <u>*am*</u> *with him* (Ex. 14:6). Now Pharaoh presumably did not muster Egypt's women and children to do battle; the word *am* actually refers to the *six hundred of his picked chariots, and the rest of the chariots of Egypt, with officers in all of them* mentioned in the next verse. As soon as one starts looking for such instances, it becomes clear that scripture is full of verses in which the word *am* refers to a military force. The Book of Samuel itself uses *am* in this sense, as, for example, in the verse *Saul divided the am into three columns; at the morning watch they entered the camp and struck down the Ammonites* (I Sam. 11:11). Even the story of Saul's battle against Amalek offers clear instances of this additional usage. In the JPS version, the word consistently translated as "troops" (i.e., Saul's troops) is, in fact, *am*!

All of the above points to the validity of a rather unconventional interpretation of our story. Saul did in fact kill all of the Amalekite *am*, that is to say, he put the Amalekite *warriors* to the sword, but he spared the non-combatants. It is no longer surprising that Agag's mother would live to mourn his death or that a few years later the Amalekite boys who were too young to fight Saul would grow up to do battle against David.

Interestingly, this interpretation helps clarify a well-known *midrash*. According to the Babylonian Talmud (*Yoma* 22b), when Saul received the divine command to destroy the entire population of Amalek and their livestock, he began questioning its morality: "If human beings sinned, what [sin] have the cattle committed; and if the adults have sinned, what [harm] have the little ones done?"[3] A divine voice is said to have replied with a quotation from Ecclesiastes (7:16): *Don't overdo goodness*. This *midrash* does not quite make sense, given the standard understanding of the war against Amalek. We can understand why Saul is depicted as questioning the order to kill the cattle, since the cattle were in fact spared. But why would the author of the *midrash* think that Saul was bothered by having to kill children? Given my interpretation, the *midrash* becomes more comprehensible: Saul spared both the cattle *and* the children – and, appropriately, it suggests that those decisions reflected his qualms about killing members of either category.

All of this does, however, leave us with a tricky theological problem. Saul had been commanded by God to kill every Amalekite man, woman, and child, yet he only killed the warriors. One would think that this merciful bit of improvisation would have called down at least as much divine wrath as did the sparing of mere animals. However, Samuel (and presumably God Himself) seems completely untroubled by it!

Since I believe my exegesis to be – up to this point – unimpeachable, I will build a somewhat radical theological conclusion upon it. As became clear above, Saul sinned by giving in to his warriors' desire to spare Agag and the livestock. The verse describing how the *am* was killed – and not the women and children – is written purely in terms of Saul's own (third-person singular) agency. Saul is blamed only for submitting to the will of his troops. Appropriately, Samuel chides him, *'You may look small to yourself, but you are the head of the tribes of Israel'* (15:17).

When God orders a king to commit genocide, He evidently respects the monarch's prerogative to refuse. God thus has no complaint about Saul's unwillingness to kill women and children. This perhaps demonstrates a sensitivity to the moral predicament of a human being who is asked to play God. What God will not condone is a weak king, who simply yields to his troops' desire when – without any real ethical qualms to explain their behavior – they wish to save proscribed animals for a barbecue in defiance of God's express command. While my interpretation of the story hardly leaves us without moral and theological questions, I think it is still far more palatable than the standard exegesis.

I shall conclude with a brief consideration of how my interpretation relates to a very recent discussion of the war with Amalek. In his latest book, *In God's Shadow: Politics in the Hebrew Bible*,[4] political philosopher Michael Walzer uses the Amalek episode to illustrate one of his central theses, i.e., that in the Bible "God's interests are represented by His prophets, while the full and often contradictory set of human interests – personal, dynastic, and national – is represented by the king" (p. 67). Walzer compares Saul's reluctance to kill Agag with King Ahab's statesmanlike decision to spare the people of Aram and their king in order to achieve a negotiated peace (I Kgs. 20:34), a bit of human wisdom that was also condemned by a prophet (I Kgs. 20:42). My conclusion is perhaps more discriminating. Indeed, God's inter-

ests, as voiced through prophecy, call for the total annihilation of the Amalekites and their animals, while Saul seems to have other issues in mind. However, Walzer may have been too quick to *completely* identify God's interests with the prophetic voice. By the end of the story, both the Israelite prophet and the Israelite king have given ground to each other's position. While Saul agrees that it was wrong to spare Agag and the animals, Samuel makes no complaint about Saul's decision to spare the non-combatants. It appears that God's ultimate "interests" (as expressed by the outcome of the whole narrative rather than by any single voice within it) lay somewhere between the strict commands of prophecy and the wisdom of human statecraft. Unfortunately, by failing to kill Agag and the animals, Saul failed on both accounts. Not only did he disobey God's command, but he did so in a demonstration of weak leadership by giving in to the narrow momentary interests of his troops. It was this double failure – of both piety *and* statesmanship – that doomed Saul's reign. Perhaps these further considerations can help complete our reading of the above-cited *midrash*. When God scolds Saul for his qualms, it is as if God tells him, "Right, don't kill the children. But must you spare the animals as well!? *Don't overdo goodness!*"

NOTES

This article is dedicated to the memory of my father, Dr. Joseph Lerner, z"l.

1. M. J. Harris, *Divine Command Ethics: Jewish and Christian Perspectives* (London & New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003) pp. 134-150.
2. K. Stewart, "How Christian fundamentalists plan to teach genocide to schoolchildren," *The Guardian*, May 30, 2012. Recovered June 7, 2012, from http:/www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/ may/30/christian-fundamentalists-plan-teach-genocide.
3. Soncino translation. I thank Prof. Shubert Spero for suggesting that I mention this *midrash.*
4. M. Walzer, *In God's Shadow: Politics in the Hebrew Bible* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012).

SERAH BAT ASHER IN RABBINIC LITERATURE

MOSHE REISS

INTRODUCTION

Serah daughter of Asher[1] was one of the two women listed among the seventy[2] who went to Egypt with Jacob (Gen. 46:17), the other being Dinah, Jacob's daughter. Hundreds of years later, Serah is mentioned in the census taken of the Israelites as they prepared to enter the Land of Israel (Num. 26:46).[3] While this verse simply indicates that she was a daughter of Asher, not that she was still alive at the time, a remarkable midrashic tradition developed about her as an immortal woman. Adding to her mystique is the fact (unusual in the Bible) that she reportedly had no husband or children. The only other Israelite women lacking a husband or children who figure in the Pentateuch are Dinah and Miriam. In the aggadic tradition these are supplied for them (TB *Bava Batra* 15b, *Sotah* 12a; *Exodus Rabbah* 1:17), but not for Serah.

SERAH AND JACOB

Following the chronology of the Bible, the first tradition about Serah is that she sang to Jacob, gently informing him that Joseph was still alive. "[The brothers said] If we tell him right away, 'Joseph is alive!,' perhaps his soul will fly away (he will have a stroke). What did they do? They said to Serah, daughter of Asher, 'Tell our father Jacob that Joseph is alive, and he is in Egypt.' What did she do? She waited till he was standing in prayer, and then said in a tone of wonder, 'Joseph is in Egypt/ There have been born on his knees/ Menasseh and Ephraim.' His heart failed, but when he finished his prayer, he saw the wagons: immediately the spirit of Jacob came back to life" (*Midrash ha-Gadol* on Gen. 45:26).[4] Thanks to her music and poetry, he would survive this shock.[5] The patriarch blessed her, saying: "The mouth that told me the news that Joseph is alive will never taste death" (*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Gen. 46:17; *Sefer ha-Yashar* 54:98). A blessing by her grandfather Jacob apparently endowed her with prophetic powers, and in

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some traditions she was taken straight to heaven before her death (*Exodus Rabbah* 5:13-14), much like Elijah (II Kgs. 2:11).[6]

SERAH AND MOSES

The Midrash explains that Joseph gave a secret sign that would prove the identity of the true redeemer from Egypt, using the term *I have taken note* [pakod pakadeti]. Joseph told this to his brothers. Asher told it to Serah, his daughter. When Moses and Aaron came to the elders of Israel and performed the signs in their sight, the elders of Israel went to Serah bat Asher, and said to her: "A certain man has come, and he has performed a set of miraculous signs before our very eyes." She said to them: "There is no significance attached to these signs." They said to her: "He said, *'I have taken note of you'* (Ex. 3:16). She said to them: "He is the man who will redeem Israel from Egypt in the future, for so I heard from my father, *'God will surely take notice of you'* (Gen. 50:24)." The people then believed in their God and in Moses, as it is said, *And the people believed when they heard that the Lord had taken note of the Israelites* (Ex. 4:31).[7]

Serah bat Asher, the survivor from the Patriarchal age, gives support to the authority of Moses and endorses his claim to be the redeemer of Israel. On the basis of the critical words, "God has surely taken notice of you", the time has come for the fulfillment of His divine promise.

SERAH AND JOSEPH'S BONES

When Joseph was about to die, he said to his brothers: *'When God has taken notice of you, you shall carry up my bones from here.' Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt* (Gen. 50:25-26). The Israelites honored Joseph's wish: *And Moses took with him the bones of Joseph, who had exacted an oath from the children of Israel, saying, 'God will be sure to take notice of you; then you shall carry up my bones from here with you'* (Ex. 13:19).

In several midrashic sources, the Egyptians hid Joseph's body, fearing that if it left Egypt they would be visited by darkness and plagues, or in order to prevent the Israelites from ever leaving by not giving them the opportunity to fulfill their promise to Joseph. How, then, did Moses know where Joseph's bones were buried?[8] The Midrash explains that Serah the daughter of Asher

showed Moses the resting place of Joseph. She said to him: "The Egyptians put him into a metal coffin which they sank in the Nile." So Moses went and stood by the Nile. He took a tablet of gold on which he engraved the Tetragrammaton, threw it into the Nile, and cried out; the coffin then rose up out of the water.[9] This *midrash* is based on a miracle performed by Elisha: "And you need not be surprised at this, for it says, *As one of them* [a disciple of the prophet Elisha] *was felling a trunk, the iron ax head fell into the water. And he cried aloud, 'Alas, master, it was a borrowed one!' 'Where did it fall?' asked the man of God* [Elisha]. *He showed him the spot; and he cut off a stick and threw it in, and he made the ax head float* (II Kgs. 6:5-6). Now if Elisha, the disciple of Elijah, could cause iron to float, how much more could Moses, the master of Elijah, do so!" (*Mekhilta*, *Beshallah* 10).

Once again, Serah makes her appearance as a revealer of lost or hidden information, thus in some way contributing to the redemption of the Israelites.[10]

SERAH AND THE WISE WOMAN OF ABEL OF BETH MAACAH

When Joab, King David's army commander, goes to Abel of Beth-maacah where Sheba, the rebellious son of Bichri, a Benjamite, is hiding, he threatens to destroy the entire city, possibly causing a rift in the nation. A wise woman saves the day by convincing the residents to decapitate Sheba and toss his head over the wall to Joab (II Sam. 20: 14-22).

The Midrash identifies that "wise woman" as Serah, still alive after all this time! In an elaborate retelling of the story, the details of how Serah convinced both Joab and the residents are spelled out. To Joab she said, "Are you Joab?" – meaning, "You are a father (*Yo-Av*) of Israel, yet you do nothing but shorten the life of man. You don't behave according to the meaning of your name. Neither you nor David are learned". [. . . She continued, "In earlier times they would have spoken, saying, "Let them ask Abel to surrender"] and so they would have ended the matter, by which she meant: "Have the words of Torah ended here? Is it not written, *When you approach a town to attack it, you shall offer it peaceful terms* (Deut. 20:10)?" Later she identifies herself to Joab as "I am the one who completed the number of Israel; I am the one who linked the 'faithful' to the 'faithful', Joseph to Moses." She convinced the residents to give up Sheba, using a stratagem.

"The woman immediately came to all the people with her clever plan. 'Do you not know David's reputation?' she urged them, 'Which kingdom has successfully resisted him?' 'What does he demand?' they asked her. 'A thousand men,' she replied, 'and is it not better [to sacrifice] a thousand men than to have your city destroyed?' 'Let everyone give according to his means,' they proposed. 'Perhaps he would be willing to compromise,' she suggested. She then pretended to go and appease him, and returned with the number reduced from a thousand to five hundred, then to one hundred, to ten, and finally to one, a stranger there, and who was he? – Sheba the son of Bichri. They promptly cut off his head [and threw it down to Joab]" (*Genesis Rabbah* 94:9).

He then sounded the horn; all the men dispersed to their homes, and Joab returned to the king in Jerusalem" (II Sam. 20:22).

Here, Serah is not necessarily revealing a secret, but she does act as a key element in bringing about salvation (a theme in her earlier midrashic roles), facilitating the Exodus. As before, she affirms life over death,[11] more than six hundred years after her first appearance.

SERAH IN TALMUDIC LORE

In *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* (10:117), Serah explains to Rabbi Johanan in the house of study that the waters at the splitting of the Reed Sea looked like a glass wall, rather than like a latticework (as he was teaching). Here again, Serah functions as a revealer of lost or hidden knowledge and also in the context of Israel's redemption from Egypt.

THE DEATH OF SERAH

According to the Midrash, did Serah ever die or is she still in existence? Many sources report that she entered Paradise alive, and thus transcended mortality. In medieval Jewish mysticism, Serah has a place of honor in *Gan Eden*.[12]

The Persian Jews of the city of Isfahan believed that Serah bat Asher actually lived among them until she died in a great fire in their synagogue in the twelfth century CE. This synagogue and its successors were subsequently known as the Synagogue of Serah Bat Asher. In the Jewish cemetery of Isfahan, there was to be found, at least until the end of the nineteenth century,

a tombstone marking the final resting place of "Serah the daughter of Asher the son of our Patriarch Jacob" who died in the year equivalent to 1133 CE. This alleged gravesite was marked by a small mausoleum known as *heder Serah* ("Serah's Room"), which remained for centuries one of the best known pilgrimage sites for the Jews of Persia. In the Iranian exile, Jews were accustomed to prostrate themselves at the gravestone of Serah, as they now customarily pray here in Israel at the Tomb of our Matriarch Rachel near Bethlehem. Like the tomb of Rachel, that of Serah is also located in a "room" (i.e., a mausoleum). This room is believed to have wondrous doorposts and only people of good character and deeds may enter; but the way in shrinks before anyone else and prevents them from entering.[13]

CONCLUSION

The fact that a few short appearances in genealogical lists could generate such a multifaceted woman in midrashic literature is truly remarkable. Serah bat Asher uniquely represents the continuity from her grandfather in the Patriarchal age to Moses and Joshua, the Davidic monarchy, and the Talmudic era. She is the bearer of an oral tradition and of secret knowledge, a power of life and redemption. In this capacity she seems to function as an eternal figure, rather like a female counterpart to Elijah, who will reveal the hidden time of the final redemption when he heralds the coming of the Messiah. However, it should be noted that there is one major difference between Elijah and Serah. Although Serah is described in some midrashic sources as immortal (e.g., *Derekh Eretz Zuta*, ch. 1), we have noted above how certain traditions developed suggesting that she died at some point. No eventual death is ever suggested for Elijah. This is due to the verses at the end of Malachi which state: *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. And he will turn back* [*to God*] *the hearts of fathers with children and the hearts of children with their fathers…*(Mal. 3:23-24). This explicitly indicates that Elijah is still somehow alive and waiting to fulfill his role as harbinger of the Messianic age.

NOTES

1. Serah's name in the biblical text is spelled with *sin* (שׂ) as the first letter, but often with a *samekh* (ס) in non-biblical texts, where it can mean "overhanging, overlapping" (Ex. 26:12). Serah thus overlaps the Patriarchal age and that of entry into the Promised Land. See F. Brown, S.R. Driver and C. A Briggs, eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951) p. 710; and M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (New York: Pardes Publishing ed., 1950) pp. 1024-1025.

2. As Nahum Sarna observed, Serah is the only granddaughter listed along with Jacob's fifty-three grandsons: *Torah Commentary on Genesis* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1989) p. 315. Although the text states that Jacob took all of *his sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters* (Gen. 46:7), implying that there were a few granddaughters, none are listed apart from Serah. Rashi notes that Jochebed, the mother of Moses and another granddaughter, is included in the number of people who went down to Egypt, yet she is not listed by name. Jochebed was reputedly born on the border between Canaan and Egypt, hence another "overlapping" individual (*Genesis Rabbah* 94:1; *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* 10). Louis Ginzberg, in his *Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1938), vol. 5, p. 39, notes sources claiming that Asher was Serah's adopted father and that he married her mother (Hadorah), a widow, when Serah was three years old. Marc Bregman expansively translates the text about Serah in *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* (*Beshallah*) as follows: "I completed the number of seventy Children of Israel who accompanied Jacob to Egypt. I linked one faithful leader of Israel, Joseph (who is called *ne'eman*, 'faithful,' in Genesis 39:4), with the next faithful leader of Israel, Moses (who is called *ne'eman*, 'faithful,' in Numbers 12:7)." See Bregman, *Serah bat Asher: Biblical Origins, Ancient Aggadah and Contemporary Folklore*, The Bilgray Lectureship, booklet published and distributed by the University of Arizona, 1997 [reprinted in *New Harvest* (St. Louis: The Brodsky Library Press, 2005)].

3. Serah is also noted in I Chronicles 7:30 as a daughter of Asher.

4. Translated by Aviva Gottlieb Zornberg in *Genesis, the Beginning of Desire* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1995) p. 281.

5. In a slightly different version, her brothers told her: "Believe it or not, just sing it and then we will come and prove it. But it would be better if you believed it, for you would sing the better": Thomas Mann, *Joseph and His Brothers*, trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (London: Knopf, 1969) p. 1128.

6. Quoted by Rachel Alderman, "Serah bat Asher: Songstress, Poet, and Woman of Wisdom", in O. W. Elper and S. Handelman, eds., *Torah of the Mothers* (New York: Urim, 2000) p. 225.

7. *Exodus Rabbah* 5:13, *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, 48.

8. See *Mekhilta, Beshallah – Petihta*; Howard C. Kee, "The Testament of Simeon", in James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1983) pp. 787-788. In some versions the brothers sank Joseph's coffin in the Nile in order to prevent the Egyptians from worshiping his body; *Zohar* II, 46a, note 345.

9. In another version, found in *Tanhuma – Bereshit* 2, Moses writes on a small stone, "Rise, Ox": Alderman, op. cit., p. 236. See also TB *Sotah* 13a and *Tosefta Sotah* 4:7, where Serah shows Moses where Joseph is buried, but the part about throwing a tablet into the Nile to make the coffin rise is omitted.

10. See also *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, trans, J. Z. Lauterbach, vol. 1, Schiff Library of Jewish Classics (Philadelphia: JPS, 1949) pp. 176-177. In a Samaritan *midrash*, when the Israelites are leaving Succoth (as noted in the biblical text), they are stopped by a pillar of fire. While efforts are being made to discover who had committed a sin, Serah, speaking for the tribe of Asher, tells the elders that they had forgotten Joseph's bones. Moses went back and Serah found the bones. See Z. Ben-Hayim, ed., *Tebat Marqua: A Collection of Samaritan Midrashim* (Jerusalem: Academy of Sciences, 1988) p. 98.
11. Alderman, op. cit., p. 243.
12. *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* 38:103; Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, vol. 2, p. 116; vol. 5, p. 356 n. 294, p. 359 n. 321. See also *Zohar* III, 167b, where Serah is granted an honored place in Paradise.
13. Marc Bregman, op. cit.

עשה תורתך קבע

THE TRIENNIAL BIBLE READING CALENDAR

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF CHAIM ABRAMOWITZ

January	I Chronicles	10 – 29
	II Chronicles	1 – 8
February	II Chronicles	9 – 36
March	Genesis	1 – 28
April	Genesis	29 – 50
	Exodus	1 – 6
May	Exodus	7 – 34

PROOFTEXT THAT ELKANAH RATHER THAN HANNAH CONSECRATED SAMUEL AS A NAZIRITE

JOSHUA BACKON

> *And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying: Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them: When either man or woman shall clearly utter a vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to consecrate himself unto the Lord, he shall abstain from wine and strong drink . . . All the days of his Naziriteship shall he eat nothing that is made of the grape-vine, from the pressed grapes even to the grape-stone. All the days of his vow of Naziriteship no razor* [ta'ar] *shall come upon his head; until the days be fulfilled, in which he consecrateth himself unto the Lord, he shall be holy, he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow long* (Num. 6:1-5).

The Book of Samuel relates the story of childless Hannah who, at the tabernacle in Shiloh, cries bitterly and prays to the Lord. *And she made this vow: 'O Lord of Hosts, if You will look upon the suffering of Your maidservant and will remember me and not forget Your maidservant, and if You will grant Your maidservant a male child, I will dedicate him to the Lord for all the days of his life; and no razor* [morah] *shall ever touch his head'* (I Sam. 1:11). The Mishnah in *Nazir* (9:5) debates whether or not Samuel was a Nazirite. Those that say he was a Nazirite derive it from the use of the word *morah* (razor), as in the case of Samson: *For you are going to conceive and bear a son; let no razor* [morah] *touch his head, for the boy is to be a Nazirite to God from the womb on* (Judg. 13:5). Others state that the meaning of *morah* is "fear", indicating that Samuel will fear Heaven and not fear man (see Rashi, quoting *Targum Jonathan*). While Malbim brings both opinions, *Metzudat Tziyyon* translates *morah* as "razor" and both *Metzudat David* and Maimonides (*Hilkhot Nezirut* 3:16) indicate that Samuel was a Nazirite.

The first question is: How could Hannah consecrate a yet unborn male child as a Nazirite? Generally, there is no legal mechanism to consecrate something that does not yet exist. Commentators indicate that when Eli the Priest says, *'Then go in peace . . . and may the God of Israel grant you what*

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you have asked of Him' (I Sam. 1:17), his blessing satisfies this requirement of something that already exists.

However, there is another problem: according to the Mishnah (*Nazir* 4:6), only a father can consecrate a minor male as a Nazirite, not the mother. Indeed, Radak (I Sam. 1:11) raises this question. He cannot find anything in the text to show that Elkanah made the consecration, and is astounded that the rabbis never dealt with the solution to this problem in the Talmud. Although there were commentators who suggested that Samuel was in the category of a Samson-type Nazirite,[1] and that the law prohibiting a mother from consecrating a male child was accordingly not in force (see *Tosefot Yom Tov* on the Mishnah; Responsa *Or ha-Meir*, section 30; *Sefer Marganita de-Rabbi Meir* on the Talmud, *Nazir* 66a), the consensus follows Maimonides (*Hilkhot Nezirut* 3:16), declaring that Samuel was a regular *nazir*. I therefore suggest that the prooftext that it was indeed Elkanah who consecrated Samuel as a Nazirite is found in I Samuel 1:23: *Her husband Elkanah said to her: 'Do as you think best. Stay home until you have weaned him. May the Lord fulfill His word.'* TB *Nazir* 20b indicates that if the wife says to her husband, "I am a *nezirah* and so are you", and her husband responds by saying "Amen", he too becomes a Nazirite as a result of his consent to her vow. On this basis we can understand that Hannah told Elkanah that the child would be a Nazirite and that Elkanah said "Amen" to her oath, thus consecrating the child. Indeed, both Sforno and Gersonides (Ralbag) on I Samuel 1:23 indicate that Elkanah made the consecration official by using the phrase *May the Lord fulfill His word*. Likewise, *Tiferet Yisrael*, a commentary on the Mishnah (*Nazir* 9:5), indicates that Elkanah acquiesced in Hannah's vow, thus validating it. In this way the legal requirements for consecrating Samuel as a Nazirite were fulfilled.

NOTE

1. A Samson-type Nazirite may exceptionally trim his hair once a year and have contact with dead bodies (Mishnah *Nazir* 1:2).

BOOK REVIEW

Onkelos on the Torah: Understanding the Bible Text, 5 vols., eds. Israel Drazin and Stanley M. Wagner (Jerusalem/New York: Gefen, 2011). Reviewed by Raymond Apple.

Targum Onkelos has long awaited a full translation into English. Israel Drazin and Stanley M. Wagner have now filled the gap by means of five handsomely produced volumes published by Gefen. Other literary classics – the Bible, Mishnah, Babylonian Talmud, Midrash Rabbah and Zohar – were rendered into English decades ago. However, several desiderata remained, including the Targum of Onkelos. There is a theory that the Soncino Press declined to translate the *Shulhan Arukh* for fear that it might make every ignoramus a *posek* (halakhic decisor), but why they did not turn their attention to *Targum Onkelos* is not known, especially in view of the rabbinic dictum that everyone should study the Targum on the weekly Torah portion (TB *Berakhot* 8a-b). As a major classical text, the Targum made the Pentateuch *morashah kehillat Ya'akov – an inheritance of the Congregation of Jacob* (Deut. 33:4) for Aramaic-speaking readers who knew little Hebrew, a problem already recognized in the Book of Nehemiah (13:24; cf. TB *Megillah* 3a and Rashi to *Megillah* 21b).

An English version of Onkelos was planned to accompany the translation of Rashi prepared by A. M. Silbermann and M. Rosenbaum (in association with Blashki and Joseph) in the 1920s and 30s, but the project was not realized. Ktav Publishers issued volumes on Onkelos some years ago, but the present work is in a class of its own. It is probably the most solid and comprehensive edition of the Targum ever published and will rehabilitate Onkelos for the modern age. Apart from the general introduction to the series, each volume has the Torah text in Hebrew, the Targum in Aramaic, an English translation of the Targum, a page-by-page commentary, an appendix with additional notes, a section of Onkelos highlights and discussion points, and the Hebrew text of the *haftarot* with a translation of their Aramaic Targumim. The English is elegant and it is delightful to come across a Torah work

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that is not written in "*yeshivish.*" The font, layout and binding are attractive, and the books are a pleasure to handle.

Alhough the Targum is attributed to Onkelos, his identity – if, indeed, he existed – remains a mystery, despite the best efforts of the authors and other Targumists. Tradition (TB *Meg.* 3a, etc.) maintains that he was a proselyte, the son of a wealthy heathen from Asia Minor, and surrounded his name with legends that made the Targum seem romantic, regardless of its contents. Folk tradition identified him with Aquilas, the second-century translator of the Pentateuch into Greek. It asserted that the name Onkelos was an attempt to render Aquila (*Akilas*) into Hebrew (despite the orthographical problem of replacing *ayin* with *aleph*), and believed that Aquila sought to demonstrate his Jewish loyalty by producing an Aramaic *Hummash* in addition to his Greek translation (*Genesis Rabbah* 70:5). In TJ *Megillah* 71c, the rabbis eulogistically applied to Aquila the verse, *You are finer than all (other) people* (Ps. 45:3), although the reference is probably to his translation into Greek ("the fine language"). It is possible that when the Aramaic translation became widely known, it was colloquially spoken of as possessing the Aquila/Onkelos style.

The editors touch on these legends, but stick to scholarship. They separate the Aquila and Onkelos translations and conclude that little can be said with certainty about who produced the Targum that tradition associated with Onkelos. Since it uses tannaitic *midrashim* redacted about 400 CE, they posit that the work could not have come from an earlier date. They see in it the literary-philosophical stance of Rabbi Yishmael as against that of Rabbi Akiva (the contrast between the Yishmael and Akiva principles of interpretation is well spelled out in the introduction to the Exodus volume). Nonetheless, they do not satisfactorily explain why talmudic passages deriving from earlier than 400 CE speak of *targum didan* – "*our* Targum" (TB *Kiddushin* 49a) and have so many Targum references. The phrase, "*our* Targum", recognizes that there were many *targumim* – some dating back to Second Temple times (TB *Shabbat* 115a; cf. *Soferim* 5:15), some partial in scope, some relatively complete – against which Onkelos (if that is what is meant by *targum didan*) appears to have been the "authorized" version. Targum notes must have circulated for centuries, especially amongst the *meturgemanim*, the synagogue

officials who expounded the formal Torah portions in Aramaic (TB *Pesahim* 50b, *Kid.* 49a; Mishnah *Megillah*, ch. 4). There was, however, opposition to committing targumic renderings to writing, for fear that people would think them as sacred as the Torah text itself (TB *Meg*. 32a). All this is evidence that targumic material developed long before the year 400 and that many people must have had a hand in producing it. The editors could have said more about the existence of schools of translators, which indicates that "our" Targum was not composed by any one individual. The real question is who (an individual? a group?) *redacted* Onkelos, not who wrote it. For the sake of convenience, however, the editors constantly speak of "the targumist", a usage followed in this review, even though it may be that Onkelos as such never existed or that there were a number of "Onkeloses." The rabbinic Sages believed – against linguistic and other evidence – that Ezra authored all or most of the Targum, which was forgotten or lost over the centuries until Onkelos, whoever he was, reformulated it in the second century.

The introduction to Exodus, the first volume to appear in this series, and the more extensive introduction to Genesis both analyze the literary and ideological methodology of the Targum in an attempt to delineate its relationship to the Bible. It is a solid and helpful analysis, one that should be required reading for anyone interested in the subject. A similar attempt was already made by Nathan Marcus Adler in his Hebrew commentary, *Netinah la-Ger* – "A Gift to the Proselyte" (Vilna, 1875): the name is a play on the author's first name and the tradition that Onkelos was a proselyte. It is said, however, that Hasidic detractors called Adler's book *Nevelah la-Ger* – "Carrion for the Proselyte" (Deut. 14:21). The authors of the present work render obsolete some of Adler's views, e.g., that Aquilas and Onkelos were one and the same, that Onkelos rediscovered and wrote down the Targum, that the work follows the tradition of Rabbi Akiva, and that it was addressed to the scholar more than the common reader.

As indicated above, this translation is careful and stylish, avoiding two extremes – obfuscation on the one hand, and over-simplification on the other – although one can quibble here and there with the editors' choice of words. An instance is Genesis 1:2, where Onkelos renders *tohu va-vohu* as *tzadya vereikanya*, translated here as *unformed and empty* when *desolate* might be

better than *unformed*. Jastrow translates *tzediyah* in his *Dictionary* as "desolation."

One has to say that this work has a major drawback. Sometimes the English does not match the Aramaic text printed on the facing column, a problem that could have been avoided had the editors decided on a particular Aramaic version and insisted that the English match the Aramaic text. They state: "The Aramaic text upon which our translation, commentary and appendices are based relies upon Abraham Berliner, *Targum Onkelos* (Berlin, 1884) and Alexander Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic* (E. J. Brill, 1959). For technical reasons, the *Onkelos* text in this volume is from a different source. Hence, the reader will find discrepancies on a number of occasions." This is just not good enough. The "technical reasons" they mention seem to have been decided on by the publisher, but they detract from the reader's enjoyment. A detailed comment is made below about a leading example (deriving from Gen. 48:22) of this confusion.

It is also annoying to find that the notes which begin on the left-hand page, beneath the translation, move to the right-hand page and then resume on the next left-hand page, leaving the reader unsure of where to go.

When people study Rashi's commentary, they classically ask, "What was bothering Rashi?" Likewise, the editors of the present volume must have asked themselves many times, "What bothered Onkelos that made him change the Torah text?" Fortunately, they usually (though not always) succeed in finding a possible explanation. It is well known that Onkelos's work is not a mere literal translation of the Hebrew text, although this would already have merited a *dayyenu* (Targum Pseudo-Jonathan is much freer), but in many instances it takes the liberty of altering – even rewriting – the Bible for the sake of a philosophical or literary purpose. An example from the *Akedah* (Binding of Isaac) narrative is Genesis 22:14, on which the editors remark, "Onkelos rewrites the entire verse . . . seven changes are made," the main purpose being to remove anthropomorphisms. Sometimes the purpose of rewriting is the achievement of clarity. An example of an interpolation that makes the text clearer is Genesis 1:14, where *u-le-yamim ve-shanim*, literally *for ancient days*, becomes in Onkelos *u-le-mimnei vehon yomin u-shenin – for counting days and years*. Another example is Exodus 20:2, where *beit avadim*, literally *house of slaves*, becomes *beit avduta, house of servitude*.

Rabbinic interpretations are incorporated in the text, e.g., in Exodus 20:5 God *visits the guilt of the fathers upon the rebellious children (benin ma-radin)* who *continue to sin as their fathers*. In Exodus 20:13, where *lo tignov* is normally translated as *You shall not steal*, some Onkelos texts add *nefesh* (*a person*), thus interpreting it to mean *You shall not kidnap*. In Leviticus 19:32, *seivah*, *the hoary head*, becomes *de-savar be-Orayta, those who are aged in Torah* (not necessarily in years). Several times (e.g., Ex. 23:19, 34:26) the Bible ordains: *lo tevashel gedi ba-halev immo – you shall not cook a kid in its mother's milk*; this becomes *la teikhlun besar ba-halav, you shall not eat meat in* (or, with) *milk.* At times a post-biblical flavor is given to a word, e.g., in Leviticus 19:10, where *la-ger, for the stranger*, becomes *le-giyyorei – for proselytes* (similarly in verse 34; cf. Ex. 20:10). Onkelos is a Lover of Zion, as we see from Numbers 24:5 where *mah tovu ohalekha, how good are your tents*, becomes *ma tava ar'akh – how good is your land* (cf. Jer. 30:18).

Sometimes the editors fail to attach enough significance to a textual change that appears in some (though not all) versions of the Targum. In Jacob's final blessings, Genesis 48:22 reads in Hebrew *asher lakahti mi-yad ha-Emori beharbi u-ve-kashti – which I took from the Amorites with my sword and my bow.* The translation they give is precisely that, *with my sword and my bow*, but the Aramaic version they use is *bi-tzeloti u-ve-va'uti,* which means *with my prayer and my plea.* The resulting confusion is hard for the reader to work out, even though the two versions are mentioned in the editors' footnotes. What we are not given is a reference to TB *Bava Batra* 123a, which shows that the Sages preferred the spiritual to the militaristic interpretation; nor is it explained why "sword" is one of the terms for prayer (Adler quotes a view that prayer, like a sword, protects a person) or why there is a connection between *be-kashti, with my bow*, and a plea (the Hebrew consonants can be read as *bakkashati, my plea*). What is going on here is an ideological tug-of-war between military and spiritual weapons that may have taken place in the context of the Jewish revolt against Rome. One would have liked this issue to be addressed.

An immensely important feature of the Targum is the changing of the Divine Name from *Elohim* to *YHVH*. According to the editors, this change was made to avoid confusing the public with a name bearing the plural ending *im,*

an exception being Genesis 1:27, where the editors regard the phrase *betzelem Elohim*, *in the image of God*, as too well known for it to be altered (they also note in the Appendix to Genesis, "The targumist does not change *Elohim* to the Tetragrammaton where a pronoun is attached to *Elohim*, such as '*our* God'"). The plural ending of *Elohim* still arouses controversy, but it should be noted that in reference to *Ha-Shem* the name takes a singular verb and cannot refer to a plurality of gods. *Elohim* is generally explained as the plural of majesty; the intensity of power that the singular *Elo'ah/Eloha* is not strong enough to convey; or a status like *ne'urim* (youth) or *zekunim* (old age). Rabbinic exegesis has many theories about these two names: for instance, *Elohim* represents God as judge while *YHVH* suggests His mercy (see TJ *Ta'anit* 2:1; *Genesis Rabbah* 12:15 and 33:4; Rashi to Gen. 1:1). Onkelos is not likely to have wanted God to appear in the Torah in the aspect of mercy alone (or mostly so) without the attribute of justice, since Divine judgment of the world is so axiomatic to biblical philosophy. It may well be that the problem caused by the name *Elohim* lies in the sheer ambiguity of the word; it seems to be a generic term for a powerful being, not limited to *Ha-Shem* but sometimes denoting a pagan god (Ex. 20:3), an angel (Ps. 8:6), a human prince (Ex. 21:6), or a human judge (Ps. 82:1). It is also found as a form of superlative – e.g. *wrestling of God* (Gen. 30:8) or *a great city unto God* (Jonah 3:3) – which denotes "great" even in cosmic terms. The name *YHVH* certainly has nuances that have long been the subject of study and discussion, but there is no problem about who (or Who) He is. It could also be that *YHVH* has more passionate spiritual overtones, while *Elohim* suggests a more abstract, distant deity. Did Onkelos then prefer *YHVH* for reasons of clarity, emotion, or ideology? The authors should have worked more on this subject, seeing how important it is from page one of the Bible.

A further, presumably ideological, phenomenon in Onkelos is that anthropomorphisms are generally avoided, replacing, for example, "*God* did" with "the word (*meimra*) or glory (*yekara*) of God did." Instead of an active verb, "God *did*", Onkelos generally has a passive one, "It *was done before God*." Any sign of physicality is removed from the Creator. *Etzba Elohim – the finger of God* (Ex. 8:15) becomes *maḥa min kodam YHVH – a plague from before the Lord*. Onkelos must have been impressed by verses such as *Be very careful . . . for you saw no shape when the Lord your God spoke to you at*

Horeb out of the fire (Deut. 4:15). Hence he renders the anthropomorphic verses of Exodus 33:18-23 metaphorically, suggesting that God will protect Moses with His *meimra*. However, there is a problem with Genesis 1:26, *Let us make man in our image*: it is not only that in Onkelos the verse retains the plural sense (*na'avid . . . be-tzalmena*), he also retains the anthropomorphism, *Let us make*. The editors explain, "It is possible that this verse was so well known by the people that the targumist felt it would not be misunderstood." They may be right, but the idea that Onkelos did not touch well-known passages warrants further investigation.

The editors' extensive notes display specialized knowledge of targumic material and a broad acquaintance with rabbinic exegesis, although fascinating words and phrases are sometimes left unannotated. Every reader has a favourite piece of exegetical ingenuity and is keen to discover what a new publication has to say on a particular verse.

The whole content of this work, even the incidental notes and suggestions for discussion, is a goldmine for the reader. Despite the criticisms voiced above, these volumes deserve to be treasured and consulted. By including the Torah blessings, the editors clearly hope that readers will use these books to follow the Torah readings in synagogue, and I for one plan to do so. I am quite excited about it, not only because the work is so fascinating in itself but because it will help me to follow the advice of one of my teachers – to look at each year's Torah portions through the eyes of a different exegete.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUTHORS

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BOOK REVIEW

JPS Bible Commentary – Jonah, Uriel Simon, ed., Lenn J. Schramm, trans., Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1999, 95 pp. Reviewed by David J. Zucker.

The Book of Jonah defies easy classification. What is its literary genre: is it meant to be read as history? What are its themes: is there one central theme? Uriel Simon, Emeritus Professor of Biblical Studies at Bar-Ilan University, masterfully addresses these and many other questions in this revised and expanded edition of the Hebrew original, which appeared as part of the series entitled *Mikra Le-Yisra'el: A Bible Commentary for Israel*, a scientific-historical commentary on the Tanakh. In his Introduction, Simon explains that Talmudic sages, medieval exegetes, and modern scholars have sought to identify a central theme that unites all the elements of the book. In the past, there were three popular broad definitions, each of which Simon dismisses in turn. *Atonement versus Repentance*: Tradition designates Jonah as the *haftarah* for Yom Kippur, thereby suggesting that repentance is the key element, but only chapter 3 actually deals with this theme. *Universalism versus Particularism*: Whereas this interpretation is adopted by such luminaries as Rashi, Radak, and Abraham ibn Ezra, Simon argues that this "view has no substantial anchor in the text" and is rejected by most modern Jewish Bible scholars, although "it remains attractive to most Christian scholars" (p. ix). *Prophecy: Realization versus Compliance*: This view, favored by Saadiah Gaon, Rashi, Radak, and many modern scholars, is dismissed by Simon because "there is no real sign in the Book of Jonah of the prophet's anguish that his prediction did not come to pass" (p. xi). Finally, the approach that Simon accepts is *Compassion: Justice versus Mercy*. This approach "explains the plot, the characters, and the dialogue as embodying the primordial struggle between justice and mercy" (p. xiii), and in Simon's view it provides a central theme for the entire book.

Simon deals at length with the use of irony in Jonah. He makes a good case for irony in the book, but opts for Compassionate Irony in place of Ironic

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Satire, seeing Jonah as "a genuinely pathetic figure in his hopeless struggle with his God" (p. xxi), and noting that "what irony it does contain is not particularly biting" (p. xxii). Simon buttresses his argument further on when he writes that the "paradoxical tension" between God's "inordinate severity with Jonah" and "extraordinary leniency with Nineveh" is "resolved only when Jonah comes to realize that the will of [God] is not arbitrary, but compassionate, for those who are near and those who are far" (p. xxiv). These arguments are, to my mind, not wholly convincing in light of Simon's previous statement that there is no sign of the prophet's anguish that his prediction did not come to pass.

Other features in the Introduction address the unity of the book and the provenance of the psalm in chapter two. There are some interesting parallels with the prophecy of Jeremiah (see Jer. 18:7-8). Simon looks at chiastic elements in the book, and considers the date of Jonah's composition.

The densely written Introduction is followed by the actual commentary on Jonah, which makes up just over half of this volume. Simon divides Jonah's four chapters into seven segments which begin with *The Command and Its Violation*, feature topics such as *In the Belly of the Fish: Submission*, and *In Doomed Nineveh: The Repentance of the Sinners*, and end with *East of Nineveh: Acquiescence*.

Simon's writing is at times somewhat turgid, and he is given to over-long sentences, yet there is a wealth of material in this volume, supplemented by a good bibliography. His wide-ranging familiarity with the many comments and commentaries about Jonah, from Talmudic times to the modern period, is impressive. This volume is a welcome addition to modern scholarship on the Book of Jonah.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

In the recent issue of *JBQ,* Min Suc Kee suggests that the meaning of *mayim* is "closely associated with its original meaning as a pair" (Min Suc Kee, "A Study on the Dual Form of *Mayim*, Water," *JBQ* 40:3 (2012), p. 183). The author finds support for this thesis in the Creation story of the Bible and that in *Enuma Elish*. It seems to me that Min Suc Kee's suggestion is fundamentally wrong, because it assumes that the meaning of a most basic word of any language, "water," referring to a natural necessity for human existence, was originally crafted and shaped to reflect notions in some creation legends.

When and how the original language from which Hebrew evolved actually developed is not known. Jewish tradition maintains that Hebrew was the first language spoken by mankind. Whatever the case, it seems to me that the term for "water" was so important to humans that it was among the first to be formed in any vocabulary. Also, being so essential to human survival, this word probably did not admit any ambiguity. It is therefore difficult to accept the notion that the term had to wait for legends of creation to develop before it came into being. Obviously, these legends could not have been created without first having the term "water."

Min Suc Kee can certainly claim that "the literary evidence so far demonstrates that the waters above and below [the firmament] were understood as a pair that was originally one body but separated later into two" (p. 186). This understanding, however, does not mean that the duality is reflected in the word *mayim*. Thus, the claim that "In ancient Israelite verbal and written communications *mayim* (water) must clearly have been pronounced and written as 'dual'; and this practice would have been closely associated with a belief that the waters were divided in two as a pair" has not been demonstrated and cannot be demonstrated. Min Suc Kee's understanding of *shamaym* as consisting of *(sh)a* + *maym/mu* = "one of the waters/of the waters" gives an indeterminate term.[1]

My personal view is that *mayim* was perhaps derived from the onomatopoeic *yam* ("lake" or "wide stretch of a river"), connoting the sound of water movement, as the root *hmh* ("murmur, roar") connotes the noise of waves

(Jer. 5:22, 31:35; Isa. 51:15). Notably, *ham* and *yam* are homophones. The word *mayim* could originally have designated "that which was brought from the sea, or river." Although it has the form of a masculine plural, *mayim* is in no sense a plural. The first speakers of Hebrew, observing that water comes from heaven in the form of rain, may well have named the heavens *shamaym* because that was a place "where water was" (*sham mayim*).

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NOTE

1. Aaron Marcus, *Barzilai: Massah be-Toledot ha-Lashon ha-Ivrit* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1983) pp. 58-59. Marcus suggests that *shamaym* is derived from the root *(sh)mm* in the sense of "awestruck, amazed" (Jer 2:12). This is also a position in *Genesis Rabbah* 1:4. Marcus states that *shamaym* can be viewed as the plural of *sham*. This seems to be flimsy etymology, even though in several Semitic languages (Akkadian, Phoenician, Sabean, Arabic, Ethiopian, Aramaic) the word for "heaven" begins with *(sh)m*.

INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

Only original papers written in English will be considered. Manuscripts must be word-processed on a computer using one of the following formats only: WORD6, WORD7, or RICH TEXT FORMAT (.rtf). Do **NOT** use the ENDNOTES feature of WORD. The entire MS. must be in plain text with no special formatting. Do **NOT** include tables or graphics. MSS. must be double-spaced. Authors are requested to email an attached file to: info@jewishbible.org and to include the author's full name, postal mailing address, phone number and a short, 2-3 line biographical sketch. A printed page in the JBQ is approximately 34 lines long, with approximately 80 characters to a line. Thus, the submitted MS. should be no longer than 12 pages. There are no page charges.

REFERENCES should be cited consecutively in the text as superscript numerals (raised 3 points) and listed on the last page in numerical order. Each reference should contain, in order, the following: **JOURNAL ARTICLE:** Author (initial of first name, last name), "Title of article" (in quotation marks, lower case), Title of Periodical in italics, vol. # (year of publication) inclusive page numbers. **Example**: S. Bakon, "Biblical Monotheism: Some of its Implications" *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 19 (1990) pp. 83-91. **BOOK:** Author (initial of first name, last name), Title of Book in italics, (place of publication: Publisher, year of publication) p. #. **Example**: N. Sarna, *JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989) p. 330. To check proper formatting, see examples of the most recent issue of the journal on http://jbq.jewishbible.org

QUOTATIONS from the Bible should follow one of the Jewish Publication Society translations, unless a special point is being made by the author for the purpose of his article. Biblical quotations should be checked by the author for accuracy. Biblical quotations should be in italics. No quotation marks are used except for dialogue, which takes single quotation marks [']. Quotations from the Septuagint or other versions are not in italics. In general, quotations from any source other than the Bible are not in italics or underlined. When a book of the Bible is mentioned in the text, the name of the book is written in full, followed by chapter and verse. In a direct quotation, the citation is in parentheses at the end of the quoted text, using the short forms below – e.g., (Gen. 12:1-3). Place period after numbers or reference. **EXAMPLE**: Exodus 6:1-9; 6:30; 7:3. – *and this too will be given you* (Gen. 29:27). Source references to the Talmud should appear thus: TB *Berakhot* 15a. **HEBREW WORDS** transliterated into English should be in italics, except those in very common use, such as Tanakh and Midrash. Where a Hebrew word is used followed by an English translation, or vice- versa, the translation is in brackets. Hyphenate prefixes such as *be-* and *ha-*. The following are Hebrew transliterations: *Alenu, hodesh, kadosh, tzaddik, va-yehi*. Hebrew should be used very sparingly and only if absolutely vital to the article.

The following transliteration guidelines, though non-academic, are simple and widely accepted:
א and ע assume the sound of the accompanying vowel (e.g., Amen, Ayin, Eretz, Olam)
ח = **H** (e.g., Hodesh)
כ and ק = **K** (e.g., Ketuvim, Kadosh)
כ and ך = **Kh** (e.g., Melekh)
צ = **Tz** (e.g., Tzaddik)
ֶ = **E** (e.g., Ken, Esh)