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ORGANS OF STATECRAFT IN THE ISRAELITE MONARCHY

BY ABRAHAM MALAMAT

PART III

This is the third installment of a four-part series, featuring a lecture and discussion at the home of the first Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben Gurion, in 1963. We are presenting this series in commemoration of Ben Gurion's birthday centennial, which is being observed widely this year in Israel.
In this portion we reproduce the lively discussion of the members of the Bible Study Group at the conclusion of Professor Malamat's presentation. The first two parts were published in the Fall 1986 and Winter 1986–87 issues of "Dor le Dor".

DISCUSSION

"ELDERS" AND "YOUNG MEN" – THE MORAL TO BE DRAWN

Amos Hacham (Winner of the First International Bible Contest): I should like to pose several questions. Firstly, the matter of Rehoboam's age. It is difficult to accept 41 as his accession age at face value for, according to this, he would have been born before Solomon's enthronement. Rehoboam was the son of Naama of Ammonite origin, whom Solomon married presumably after becoming king, since we know that marriage with foreign princesses was part of his royal policy.

Another question concerns the covenant renewal upon a king's accession to the throne. Now David was certainly a new king over Judah as well as Israel. Yet we have no information that the house of David existed before the kingdom of David, or that it held any sort of authority within Judah. Therefore, he should have been required to conclude a covenant with Judah similar to that with Israel. Why is no mention made of this?

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On the matter of elders and "young men" there are indeed many instances to show that elders were a specific institution. But the very type of story in question places it in the category of wisdom literature. It were best, therefore, to accept the words *Zeqēnīm* and *yelādīm* as biological terms per se. We could then draw the proper moral, namely, that the counsel of the experienced in life's ways is preferable to the advice of the young. Is it not the story's intent to prove the king's folly in having given ear to the flattery of the young men, rather than to the wise counsel of the elders, thereby bringing down disaster upon himself?

WHENCE THE OPPOSITION TO SOLOMON?

David Ben-Gurion: First of all, concerning David's covenant: David was not the first king over Israel – Saul had preceded him. He was in need of some special act that would make his rule acceptable to the northern tribes. This is where Abner came in. This case, however, cannot serve as proof that the covenant between king and people was an established institution. Moreover, during all of Solomon's reign we hear of no covenant with the people. He had simply inherited David's kingdom, as the latter had already been ruler over all Israel.

Another point which should be stressed: The split in the kingdom actually began in the days of Solomon. It must have been discussed quite openly during Solomon's reign. What indeed brought about the contrasting attitudes between elders and "young men" regarding concessions to the north? I should like to defend Rehoboam somewhat. The split, after all, was the result of Solomon's errors. He paved the way for the split while Rehoboam merely reaped the fruit of his father's act.

I see the matter as follows: Solomon, during his latter years, adopted an increasingly oppressive policy. True, he introduced foreign trade and increased the national income to a very great extent. But his wisdom seemed to have failed him in his last days when his hand grew heavy upon the people. After all, 1,400 chariots, 12,000 horsemen and considerable infantry were a burdensome yoke in those days. He built his foreign policy around international marriages, not necessarily through love of foreign women as much as from a desire to keep the peace. But all this engendered hatred toward the regime and full-scale opposition against Solomon.

There are two references to this:

a) Jeroboam's "lifting a hand against the king" (I Kings 11:27). It is possible that the redactor (who was either of the house of David or in any case not antagonistic toward it) drastically cut the story. There can be no doubt that an attempt at rebellion was made during Solomon's reign.

b) In close proximity to the intended rebellion we have the incident of Ahijah the Shilonite (I Kings 11:29 ff.). Discontent had been brewing increasingly during Solomon's last days. There had also been divisive attempts. It is against this backdrop that one may comprehend the counsel of both the elders and the "young men". The elders, who had experienced both Solomon's efforts on behalf of his people and his oppressive rule in his declining years, realized that he had erred toward the last, hence their advice to Rehoboam that he ease the people's burden. The "young men" however, knew Solomon only from his last years – years of heavy taxation, and large-scale chariotry. To them this was royalty's prerogative and they suggested a similar path for Rehoboam. The latter thus became the victim of his father's misdoings and of the wrong counsel of people who had lost sight of the beginnings of the monarchy.

Pres. Zalman Shazar (Third President of the State of Israel): Stimulating material and ideas have been presented for our cogitation. No doubt one of the most enlightening points is the Gilgamesh-Rehoboam parallel of elders and "young men". Yet it is precisely this aspect of things which is problematic. If memory serves me correctly, the time gap between Gilgamesh and Rehoboam is a thousand years. I would be much more convinced if we had other comparisons to go by from the Rehoboam period itself.

WAS THERE A REVOLT AGAINST REHOBOAM?

Dr. Menahem Naor: (Professor of Bible, University of Judaism, Los Angeles): The lecturer has nicely interwoven the passage dealing with the negotiations between Abner and David and the Shechem affair. One verse, however, has not entered the discussion but is important for a proper understanding of the continuity of the story. During those very negotiations it is said of Abner (II Sam. 3:19): "And Abner went also to speak in the ears of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel, and to the whole house of Benjamin". If a Judean king wishes to rule over Israel, he must hearken to Abner's advice to do "what is good in the eyes of Israel and Benjamin".

A point on which I disagree with the lecturer concerns the significance of the call, "what portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse, to your tents, O Israel". One ought to differentiate between two aspects: revolt which is a passive matter and war-preparedness which is a positive act. In II Kings 8:20, it is written: "In his days Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah and made a king over themselves". The people of Edom do not wage war against the people of Judah. All they desire is that the people of Judah should not do battle against them.

D. Ben-Gurion: In II Chronicles 10:19, we read: "So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day" (cf. parallel verse in I Kings 12:19).

Dr. M. Naor: That was a revolt but it did not necessitate a war on Israel's part as long as Judah did not attack her. Judah, for her part, was constrained from so doing by the prophet. As far as Israel was concerned, however, it was undoubtedly a revolt.

Now as regards the elders and "young men", I have no idea as to whether we are dealing with two institutions or not. The Bible certainly has no intention here of appraising us of two bodies. Despite the nice difference between "senex" and "senator" the reference in our case is undoubtedly to old men. Those who "stood before" Solomon were, understandably, old people, while those before Rehoboam were younger men. There would simply be a change of personnel within the group at the side of the king. It is these younger men against whom Isaiah inveighs (3:4) "and I will give young men *(ne'arīm)* to be their ministers and babes shall rule over them". It is this grouping of "young men" who were to reign together with the king. But the attempt to identify them with the king's sons seems improbable as the latter did not grow up together with Rehoboam. The first born does not grow up with his younger brothers. The words "that were grown up with him" refer to those who were of the same age as the king.

D. Ben-Gurion: His father had many wives and his brothers could conceivably have been the same age as he.

Dr. M. Naor: But this is not what the biblical story-teller had in mind. When we hear of the king's sons, as in the case of Adonijah, aspiring to the throne, there is the explicit statement (I Kings 1:9) *...and he called all his brethren the king's sons...* It is noteworthy that when the king's sons are considered a special grouping, they are expressly referred to as "his brethren" and not "those who

stand before him". The latter should rather be interpreted as ministers and outsiders.

Dr. Benjanmin Uffenheimer (Professor of Bible at Tel-Aviv University): I have no doubt the lecturer was correct in his assumption that the *yelādīm*, the "young men", were actually sons of the king, and that they were versed in the ways of the kingdom. I do not know whether they can be conceived of as a permanent institution. The illuminating verse in II Chronicles 11:22 which concerns the appointment of crown-prince Abijah over his brethren is indublitable proof that we are dealing here with a politically influential group.

As additional testimony to the lecturer's opinion and in refutation of Dr. Naor's attitude, I wish to quote Isaiah 9:5: "For a child *(yéléd)* is born unto us, a son is given unto us, and the government is upon his shoulder". The sages of the Talmudic period interpreted this phrase as referring to king Hezekiah. Alt, moreover, has made the interesting point that this phrase indicates Hezekiäh's accession to the throne and not the time of his birth. It would seem as though Isaiah has employed a folk term of endearment,*ye'le'd*, used for the regent and the plural *yéladīm*, for the young princes. In the case of Rehoboam the narrator was using a popular term most artistically in presenting the two extremes: elders and "young men".

"YOUNG MEN" AS EXPERT BODY

Dr. H. Gevaryahu (Director of the World Jewish Bible Society): The lecturer's interpretation of the "young men" as princes of the court may find additional substantiation elsewhere in the Bible. The finest equivalent of such a reading is Daniel 1:3–4: "And the king spoke unto Ashpenaz his chief officer, that he should bring in certain of the children of Israel, and of the seed royal, and of the nobles, youths *(yéladīm)* in whom was no blemish, but fair to look on and skillful in all wisdom, and in knowledge, and discerning in thought, and such as had ability to stand in the king's palace: and that he should teach them the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans".

These "youths" then are endowed at the time of their selection with special physical and mental characteristics. But we see that though they possess all manner of wisdom, they can neither read nor write the language of the Chaldeans. Their "curriculum" therefore, is confined to this aspect of learning. After their

three–year period of study, they are considered capable of filling administrative posts and of being included amongst the "wise men of Babylon".

As to the "young men" being a group of boys, the *ōménīm* (guardians) in the Jehu episode are a case in point. The word *ōménīm* stems from a root connected with the concept of wisdom as well as with the rearing and educating of the young. Thus the "young men" were a corporate group of young wise men, fully versed in the various branches of the wisdom of their time and consulted by the king.

Yet another instructive instance of the *yélādīm* is found in Ecclesiastes 4:13–16. We are told here of two such individuals – to my notion referring to Rehoboam and Jeroboam – who ascended the ladder of fame and eventually became a byword for wisdom: "Better is a poor and wise child (yéled) than an old and foolish king ... For out of prison he came forth to be king. although in his kingdom he was born poor" (ibid. 13 and 14). This child or "young man" is identifiable with Jeroboam, whose family antecedents were lowly and who had apparently been released from prison. Verse 15 continues: "I saw all the living... that they were with the child *(yéled)*, the second, that was to stand up in his stead". This "second child" refers simply to Rehoboam as following the first child, without any implication of a second generation.

Finally, I should like to pose a question concerning the northern tribes' demand to alleviate their overall burden. Can one find any relationship between this request and the so-called *misharum*-procedure of Mesopotamian kings? This refers to the custom whereby a new king would introduce various facilitations, cancel debts, release slaves and the like. Dr. Malamat, who is conversant with the external sources relating to the Bible, can well give his opinion on the matter.

David Zakkai (News Commentator for Davar): It was truly pleasant having this systematic presentation, lacking as it did any tone of finality. The various hypotheses on the problem of the "young men" have left us with somewhat of a feeling of an even score. We are still unable to say with absolute certainty whether the "young men" constituted a specific body. I do feel, however that in rendering the word *yélādīm* "children", "young men", the narrator or redactor has expressed his bitterness at Rehoboam. He is definitely set against the king and employs the word *yélādīm* with contempt and irony.

Prof. Yehuda Elizur (Professor of Bible at Bar Ilan University): I should like to make a few minor comments. On the subject of the organization of the royal

progeny, I would add II Samuel 13:23 ff. I refer to the scene between Absalom and David concerning the feast of the sheepshearers. We learn from this episode that the king is the one to grant permission to join the celebrants. When, however, he himself refuses to go, Amnon, in his capacity as head of the princes, is to go in his stead.

As to the question of Solomon's covenant-renewal, I should like to refer you to I Chronicles 28. In this chapter we read of David's assembling the leadership of Israel, while in 28:22 we are told: "And they made Solomon the son of David king the second time, and anointed him unto the Lord to be prince". I feel that in discussing the entire question, these verses are not to be overlooked.

One must also take issue with the lecturer on his conclusion, namely, that the king turned to the groups that were in a position to implement his proposals. The advice of the elders certainly required no power of execution. Rehoboam, however, chose the difficult and burdensome road. Had he given ear to the elders, there would have been no need for any sort of executive power.

Joseph Braslavi (Israel Geographer and Author): On the matter of the "young men" who grew up with Rehoboam, the lecturer has cited one Mesopotamian parallel, and Dr.Gevaryahu, one from the book of Daniel. An additional example could be supplied from I Kings 11:17 ff., namely, the story of Hadad, the Edomite prince and adversary of Israel, who fled to Egypt. He was well received by Pharaoh, and the son born to him by Pharaoh's sister–in–law, was raised at Egypt's court with the undoubted intent of having him serve Egyptian interests later on.

The distinguished lecturer has properly stressed the character of the covenant with David. This did not represent submission to David but was an actual pact, somewhat loose in structure, and subject to renewal or cancellation. What I wish to point out is that the Bible does not emphasize David's domination over all of Israel, but rather his sovereignty in the covenant between Israel and Judah. This is instanced, for example, in David's return from Trans–Jordan after the Absalom revolt. (II Sam. 19:14): "And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah and said: We have ten parts in the king, and also more right in David". Before us is the covenantal emphasis: "ten parts" in king David. Again when David appoints Solomon as his successor, he says (I King 1:35): "....and I have appointed him to be prince (*nāgīd*) over Israel and over Judah", stress being laid on the covenant between Israel and Judah, with Israel as the first-mentioned.

Dr. Moshe Weinfeld (Professor of Bible, Hebrew Univerrsity, Jerusalem: Dr.Malamat's point on the literary—epic expressions embodied in our story is well taken. But these literary motifs and expressions seem to me to be the Achilles heel of our story, revealing the tendentiousness of the whole chapter. Dr. Gevaryahu has already dwelt upon the parallel in the book of Daniel. There we encounter "children" being "nourished" for three years in the king's palace that they might stand "before the king", the selfsame expressions employed in our story. A like thought is to be found in I Kings 10:8 dealing with Solomon's wisdom: "Happy are these thy servants which stand continually before thee that hear thy wisdom". In the book of Ecclesiastes the problem of the old and the young in connection with the act of ruling appears again, although in paradoxical fashion. "Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king who will no more be admonished" (4:13).

This brings me to my next question: Are we not to view the Gilgamesh—Agga story as a literary parallel more than a historical one? The enigmatic sayings and proverbs both in that epic and in our chapter which Dr. Malamat referred to are a matter of literary genre rather than historical reality. Dr. Gevaryahu has raised the query whether the request for relief from the yoke has any connection with the *misharum*-act which was implemented by the Babylonian and Assyrian kings upon ascension to the throne. Indeed it seems that this motif was invoked in our story by the author who was acquainted with the habit of *misharum* in monarchial courts, an act consisting of cancellation of debts, release from corvee, etc.

I am of Dr. Malamat's opinion that the kernel of the story is to be found in an authentic historical background. I believe, however, that the historical base of the story was blurred by the literary embellishments woven into it. We may conjecture that the old men advising the abatement of the heavy burdens were actually the elders of northern Israel, who came to make a covenant with Rehoboam on condition that he fulfills their demands. Rehoboam, being influenced by his ministers, rejected their proposal, and this brought about the division of the state. In other words, the "old men" and the "children" belong to the wisdom theme, while the authentic story told about elders as the representatives of the northern tribes. and ministers representing the court. Support for our conjecture may be found in some of the Greek versions to our chapter. According to these, the "old men" are the elders of Israel and not the king's council.

Dr. Israel Mehlman (Educator, Director of the Department of Education and Culture in the Diaspora, WZO): We have been given some well presented arguments about institutions during the days of the monarchy, which certainly may be regarded as adaptations and developments of those in existence during tribal times. The "elders of the people" serve as one such example. Still another is mentioned in connection with Absalom's revolt (II Sam. 19:10): "And all the people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel" – a reminder of the national or tribal assembly. Later we hear of the dispute between the "men of Judah" and "men of Israel", which afford the impression of soldier combatants. The question then arises whether the national assembly, "elders of the people", men of Judah and Israel were temporary or permanent institutions? Secondly, can one define their authority or, at the least, their area of activity during the period of the monarchy?

Concerning the "young men" it appears that Amos Hacham struck home with his remarks. The question actually is, whether one may seek a real institution such as a "young men's council" in this wisdom–type story. It may well be that both the "young men" and the elders participated in the national council despite the age disparity, with the expression "young men" aimed at mocking their political immaturity.

Chairman, Justice M. Silberg: The lecturer has correctly noted the act of anointment in the enthronement ceremony. The Bible contains five such cases: the anointments of Saul, David, Solomon, Jehu and Jehoash.

Pres. Shazar: There is also the anointment of Hazael.

Chairman: I was referring solely to the kings of Israel and Judah. The Talmud also bears this out. The act of anointment is without doubt a folk act and entails agreement en masse.

D. Ben-Gurion: Yet David's anointment was accomplished in secluded fashion.

Chairman: I should like to pose the following question: What, in the lecturer's opinion is the connection between the covenant and the anointing?.

The fourth and final section will deal with Prof Malamat's response and summation. It will be published in the Summer issue 1987 of Dor le Dor.

SIGHT, SIN, AND BLINDNESS IN THE SAMSON NARRATIVE

AND IN MILTON'S SAMSON AGONISTES

BY PEGGY FROST

Sight, sin, and blindness are inextricably linked in the Biblical narrative of Samson and in John Milton's *Samson Agonistes*.

That the eye itself in Jewish tradition is held responsible for sexual sin is clearly enunciated in the passage from the Bible (Num. 15:39) which follows the command: *Hear O Israel.* This is the order to put fringes upon one's garments: *And it shall be unto you for a fringe that ye may look upon it.* And the verse continues:*And that ye go not about after your own heart and your own eyes after which ye go astray.* The Hebrew verb translated as "go astray" is *Zonim* (זונים) which literally denotes going astray sexually or engaging in harlotry.

Seeing is the key verb, too, in the narration of Adam and Eve's realization that they are sexual creatures. Commenting on the serpent's temptation of Eve, Sforno[1] says that the snake is Satan, the power of lust which, working through human imagination, causes mankind to sin. Imagination causes people to disobey the will of God when their rational faculties are not operative. He quotes the sages as saying: "The eye and the heart are procurers of sin". Therefore, he continues, God has warned us: *And that ye go not about after your own heart and your own eyes after which ye go astray.*

Gersonides (Ralbag), comments on Judges 16 as follows: the moral of the Samson story is that "there is recompense and justice for every deed מדה כנגד מדה, measure for measure, and this is proven by the fact that Samson was blinded because he went after his eyes which entrapped him[2].

1. Obadiah of Sforno (1475–1550) on Gen. 3:1.
2. Gersonides (1288–1340).

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The Biblical law of *Lex Talionis* declares that the punishment must fit the crime – *"an eye for an eye"* (Num. 16:14). This was interpreted by the ancient sages much as we understand it today as requiring recompense for injuries. But the force of the law remained. Blinding was, in ancient times, a common punishment for one's enemies as well as retribution for specific crimes. It was so commonplace[3] that the expression "capturing someone's eyes" became a Hebrew idiom (אחיזת עינים) for deception. Lust, deception and loss of sight are thus also linked.

The sexual nature of Samson's sin, his inablity to resist sexual temptation, is underscored by a coincidence of place. Samson's first Philistine wife came from a place called Timnah (Jud. 14:1). It was this wife who enticed Samson into divulging to her the secret of his riddle. Timnah is also the site of the Judah–Tamar episode (Gen. 38:13) in which Judah was entrapped into having sexual intercourse with his daughter-in-law. Two dissimilar verbs are used in these two narratives – both in connection with Timnah. "Samson *went down* to Timnah" (וירד שמשון תמנתה – Jud. 14:1); in the Judah-Tamar story we read: "And it was told to Tamar: Behold, your father-in-law is *coming up* to Timnah" הנה חמיך עולה תמנתה (Gen. 38:13). Commenting midrashically, David Kimchi (Radak) indicates that, in the latter instance, Judah was *raised up*; i.e. out of the sexual union of Judah and Tamar would come an ancestor of King David. Samson, however, *went down* to Timnah to show us that, with each successive liaison with a Philistine woman, Samson's moral character degenerated[4].

In Jewish legends Samson is depicted as a creature of inordinate lusts. The Midrash comments that had Samson not been a Nazirite, his conduct would have been even more licentious since "wine (forbidden to the Nazirite) leads to unchastity"[5]. In licentiousness, Samson is compared to Amnon and Zimri, both of whom were punished for their sins[6]. Even in prison, writes the Talmud, Samson allowed sexual pleasure to dominate him. The Philistine women "set aside all consideration of marital bonds in the hope of gaining offspring who would inherit his strength and stature[7]. Once again the formula we have been ex-

3. Kings 11,25:7.
4. Kimchi (1160–1235) on Jud.14:1
5. Obadiah of Sforno on Jud, 13:7.
6. Talmud, Tractate *Sotah* IC, (London: Soncino Edition)
7. *Sotah*, 9B,10A.

amining occurs in the following saying of the Rabbis: "Samson's eyes were put out because he followed them too often"[8].

Samson's name (Shimshon) means sun. His home was in Zorah, situated on a mountain ridge directly opposite Beth Shemesh, a site whose very name means Temple of the Sun[9].

Impurity is linked both with Samson's sexual adventures and with his punishment. He used the jaw bone of an ass to slaughter his enemies (Jud. 15:15). The Rabbis comment on the word jaw bone (לחי): "He likes that which is unclean (Philistine women) and his life shall be saved by the water of an unclean thing". When Samson was dying of thirst, water came forth from *Lechi*, the jawbone of the ass[10].

Possible etymologies for the name Dalilah are many. Each is suggestive. One source is the name *Dllt* from the Arabic root *Dll* – meaning *to entice*[11]. The Rabbis, however, connected the name with the Hebrew root *Dll* – דלל — to *enfeeble*, because "she enfeebled Samson's strength, she enfeebled his actions, and she enfeebled his determination"[12]. Marilla notes that Dalilah "deserves this name, "she who makes poor" (from the Hebrew root *Dll*) as it was through her that Samson became poor; he lost his strength, his wisdom, and his piety."[13] Dalilah is thus connected with sexual enticement, enfeeblement, and emasculation. By her actions, she became a symbol for seduction. She herself did not cut off Samson's hair, but called in a man to do the deed, thereby enfeebling the hero and symbolically emasculating him.

The Circean temptation and sexual wiles inherent in Dalilah's characterization were noted by the early Bible commentators. The sages conjectured that in order to wrest from Samson the secret of his strength, Dalilah "disengaged herself from him at the moment of sexual consummation."[14]

8. *Sotah*, 9B.
9. "Samson", *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1971.
10. *Bereshit Rabbah*, 9:25.
11. "Dalilah", *Encyclopdia Judaica;* Milton uses this spelling.
12. *Bamidbar Rabbah*, 9:24.
13. E.L.Marilla, *Milton and Modern Man* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1968) p.208.
14 *Sotah*, 9B.

A further clue to Samson's view of women and sex is provided by his retort to the men of the city who had learned from Samson's first wife the answer to the riddle he had posed. Samson says:

If ye had not plowed with my heifer,
Ye had not found out my riddle (Jud. 14:18).

Gersonides indicates the sexual connotation of *"plowed"* and notes that Samson suspected his wife of betraying him and of giving the answer to the riddle to the one with whom she was having a sexual relationship[15]. (A twentieth-century sensibility cannot help but point out the implications of equating one's wife with one's heifer; to the licentious male, Samson, a female is no more than a sexual object, a useful possession).

Sex and blindness obviously bring to mind Oedipus. Self-blinding is the retribution meted out to him by Fate for the sexual sin of incest. Like Samson, Oedipus dies blind and in exile.

SAMSON AGONISTES

The collision of John Milton's personal experiences and outlook on life with the "presences" and "traditions" of the Samson narrative results in the complex texture and multiple ambiguities of Milton's *Samson Agonistes*. A set of relationships similar to that we have explored in the Biblical narrative is present in this great drama as well: eyesight as temptation to sexuality and sensuousness leading to blindness as punishment for sexual excesses. These physical terms may be translated into moral ones as well; sight may result in sin which, in turn, leaves one devoid of insight into oneself and into the Divine purpose. Sight may be insight, perception or foresight, or it may connote lust and a perversion of the senses. Blindness may be that which leaves one in spiritual darkness or, paradoxically, it can be the very means of "opening our eyes", of gaining insight into the soul. We have evidence of Milton's broad knowledge of the Bible and of Jewish commentaries.[16] That his mind was replete with mythological and classical learning is incontestable. It is not surprising, therefore, that "echoes, allusions, guests,

15. Gersonides on Jud. 14:18.

16. The sources are given in Harold Fisch, *Jerusalem and Albion* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964) p. 160. The two sources are: H.F.Fletcher, *Milton's Semitic Studies* (Chicago, 1926). pp.68, 73–78 and *Milton's Rabbincal readings* (Urbana, 1930), pp. 41–43.

and ghosts" from these diverse source are embedded in *Samson Agonistes*, and from them we are able to divine a pattern which enriches our understanding of the text and of the author.

Brodwin, in her exhaustive analysis of Milton's concern with the Circe myth, notes that "the second temptation of Circe is, then, the degradation of masculinity through sexual enslavement[17]. It is this second temptation which, so clearly visible in the Samson story, is fully explored in *Samson Agonistes*; it is Milton's preoccupation with this temptation that accounts for his choice of subject, for his use of mythic echoes and Judaic commentary, and for his metaphorical language. In this drama, lust to which the eyes entice results in emasculation – literally, to the loss of manly strength and vigor; figuratively, to the most tragic loss of all for Milton, blindness.

In her paper entitled "Milton's Hebraic Herculean Hero", Carole Kessner compares Samson to the Heracles of Euripides' play. The chief virtue of both is physical strength; their chief weakness lies in the inability to resist sexual desire. In his madness, Heracles is unable to see[18] The Chorus chants (line 1071): "Darkness lies upon his eyes". Once again, sex and blindness are connected. Milton himself likens his hero to the Greek one:

> So rose the Danite strong
> Herculean Samson from the Harlot-lap
> of Philistine Dalilah...[19].

Although, according to Stollman, Milton divests Samson of much of the carnality usually attributed to him by the Talmud and the Church fathers[20], this paper maintains that the connotations of Milton's linguistic references more than compensate for the paucity of specific sexual scenes: the innumerable allusions to and mentions of eyes, sin, and blindness contain within themselves inescapable sexual reverberations. Samson is not sure, despite his words, that he can resist the temptation.

17. Leonora Leet Brodwin, "Milton and the Renaissance Circe", *Milton Studies*, VI, 1974,p.24.

18 .Carole S. Kessner, "Milton's Hebraic Herculean Hero", *Milton Studies*, VI, p.249.

19. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book IX, 1059–1062.

20. Samuel S. Stollman, "Milton's Understanding of the Hebraic in in Samson Agonistes", quoted in *Milton Quarterly* 1972, pp. 1034).

The savagery with which Samson forbids Dalilah to approach him indicates his fear of success if once he allows physical contact between them. His repudiation of her stings her into a spiteful declaration to seek appreciation from the Philistines, and she goes, leaving the Chorus to ponder over the strange power of physical love[21].

The Bible limits the account of Samson's blinding to three Hebrew words – וינקרו את עיניו "And they put out his eyes" (Jud. 16:21). Samson's only specific reference to his blindness comes in his plea:

> *And strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be this once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes* (Jud. 16:28).

Explicit references to blindness occur more than *fifty* times in *Samson Agonistes*. One can see that to Milton blindness is not just a punishment that must be avenged; blindness is the *summa summarum* of Samson's and Milton's attempts to escape the temptations which lead to impurity. The eyes must be averted, forcibly if necessary, from these temptations; blindness is a *force majeure*. To Milton as to Samson, blindness is the supreme penalty, a fate worse than death. Samson in this seventeenth century play bemoans his plight;

> As in the land of darkness yet in light
> To live a life half dead, a living death. (99, 100).

And he questions God's wisdom:

> Since light so necessary is to life,
> And almost life itself, if it be true
> That light is in the soul,
> She all in every part; why was the sight
> To such a tender ball as the eye confin'd?
> So obvious and so easy to be quench'd
> And not as feeling through all parts diffus'd
> That she might look at will through every pore?
> Then had I not been thus exil'd from light; (90–98).

Blindness is not welcomed by Milton nor by his hero, but it is recognized as the force which can save them from what they most fear: going astray after their own eyes. But the cure is surely as bad, if not worse, than the sickness.

21. David Daches, *Milton* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1964), p. 241.

Allurement, the fall to temptation, impotence and blindness are entwined by Milton in the words he gives to Samson concerning his Nazirite abstinence from liquor:

> But what availed this temperance, not complete
> Against another object more enticing?
> What boots it at one gate to make defense,
> And at another to let in the foe,
> Effeminately vanquish'd by which means,
> Now blind... (558–563).

When Dalilah offers to take care of the eyless Samson, she, the epitome of sexual enticement, puns in this manner:

> If aught in my ability may serve
> To *lighten* what thou suffer'st,... (743,744)

In *Milton's Blindness*, Eleanor G. Brown pleads that there is nothing subjective in *Samson Agonistes*, "no trace of Milton's symptoms or experience of blindness."[22] One would have to differ sharply with that assessment. We have noted the brevity of references to blindness in the Biblical narrative. Milton's drama begins and ends with blindness; "eyeless in Gaza" permeates every line. The subtle and the more explicit allusions to sexual temptation, a falling into the snares of sexuality, and the loss of masculinity all suggest that *Samson Agonistes* is indeed a record of Milton's psyche; it is *his* loss of sight which enables him to portray so powerfully the blind Samson. It is *his* life-long fear of the temptations of Circe that is the key to understanding the play.

Physical lust, actuated by the sense of sight and its consequences, physical enslavement, accompanied by the bodily impairment, have been our concerns thus far. The greatness of *Samson Agonistes* is that, in it, Milton was able to suffuse these images of corporeality with moral and spiritual dimensions.

In equating Samson's and Israel's servitude, Milton not only reiterates Biblical historiography – that sin and rebellion against God are the causes of destruction and exile – but he also associates them with his own struggle for what he perceived to be liberty, political freedom. Physical temptation, in this sense, is the

22. Merritt Y. Hughes, Editor, *John Milton* (Indianapolis, The Odyssey Press, 1980), p. 544.

temptation to live under tyranny rather to fight for freedom. Inner freedom is what is lost in tyranny. The "spiritually blind" are unable to see that what appear to be the advantages of tyranny turn, in the long run, into the bonds of servitude. In his life-time, Milton witnessed the collapse of his political dreams; by what appears to be a process of displacement, what was wish-fulfillment to Milton is reality to Samson. Samson becomes his people's champion, freeing them from the Philistine yoke.

The temptation to sexual indulgence is transmuted into the allure of the life of ordinary pleasure – the undedicated life. As Brodwin writes: "Thus Dalilah's primary appeal to Samson... is that he relax his moral rigor and partake of the ordinary pleasures of life"[23]. Dalilah also suggests that a blind Samson is better for her than one who sees; he would be more completely under her protection. Dalilah feels that she must "enfeeble" Samson and remove him from the "perilous enterprise" (803) and enjoy him as "Love's prisoner" (808). Serving also as an instrument of the temptation to live an undedicated life is Manoa. While attempting to ransom his son, Samson, Manoa counsels Samson to submit patiently to God's will. This Samson views as a lure into idleness, an enticement against which Milton inveighed throughout his literary career. Samson's dilemma is clear: to choose saintly patience, coupled perhaps with the pleasures of the ordinary, reasonably safe life (if Manoa's mission succeeds), or heroic martyrdom.

As the hero himself says, the impulse to choose the latter and thereby accomplish the task to which his birth has dedicated him, flashes upon him:

> Be of good courage. I begin to feel
> Some rousing motions in me which dispose
> To something extraordinary my thoughts. (1381–1383).

'Rousing motions' – are to be understood as divine inspiration suddenly infused into him."[24] The mystery of the divine call and human response is the dominant theme of the drama, according to the critic, Charles Hutta. In this interpretation, Samson's problem arises from his failure to hear the call of God[25].

23. Brodwin, p.70.

24. Kessner, p. 256.

25. Charles A. Hutta, "Samson's Identity Crisis and Milton's", in *Imagination and the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, 1971), p.110.

His pride *blinds* him. Although Samson's parents were told of their son's future mission when "in the sight of both my parents" (24,25) they were given the message from God, insight in the son was lacking; *blinding* pride *blinded* Samson.

Dalilah's name reverberates with an interesting linguistic echo: *Layla* – night – a word phonetically similar to Dalilah and one which suffuses the characterization with the multiple allusions to light and darkess in the play itself. This movement from light to darkness has been mentioned by many critics. Carole Kessner makes the additional comment, in her comparison of *Heracles* with *Samson Agonistes*, that in both dramas the heroes "move from a nadir of despair to insight and the gradual accumulation of inner strength". She adds that "a persistent image in both is the movement from physical blindness to spiritual vision[26].

With self-knowledge comes spiritual loneliness, but also self-awareness and insight into oneself. The drama opens with the hero in darkness, his sense of sight obliterated and his spiritual consciousness undeveloped. Blindness of eye cannot be reversed but "with inward eyes illuminated" (1686), Samson is aroused to his true mission. His soul, irradiated with Divine light, loses its paralysis of will, and can take action, an action which validates the "light" revealed to his parents at the heralding of his birth. Samson gains not only insight but second sight; he is able to *discern* God's will and *to see* his own place in the Divine scheme. Like Tiresius, blind to the ordinary daylight, he can see into the darkness. His blindness is the cause and condition of his power of second sight.

A COMPARISON

The Biblical Samson dies with a prayer on his lips asking God for the strength to avenge himself on the Philistines. Although the Chorus in Milton's drama exclaims: "O dearly bought revenge, yet glorious" (1660), Samson does not here utter sentiments similar to those of the Biblical strong-man. Biblical Samson has avenged himself upon his foes, he has saved his people from their enemy, and he has avenged the putting out of his eyes. Milton's Samson glories in his martyrdom because he has thereby fulfilled God's word; and, more than anything else, he has regained the power to exercise his free will, to make a

26. Kessner, p.243.

choice, to be an active agent for good. He has rejected the tempations, he has seen the light. His renewed power is symbolized by the growth of his hair; he is no longer "enfeebled" or effeminate. His eyes lead *not* into temptation, he is lured *not* to sensuality but to a higher calling. His punishment is annulled; he is no longer spiritually blind. The allusions, echoes and images which have occupied us in this paper are once again united: eyes, potency, and perception in the regeneration of Samson as a moral hero, an embodiment of Milton's ideal.

In characterizing Milton's use of the Biblical narrative for his own great work, we may cite what Harold Bloom has written in *The Anxiety of Influence:*

"Poetic influence — when it involves two strong, authentic poets, — always proceeds by a misreading of the prior poet, an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation. The history of fruitful poetic influence... is a history of anxiety and self-saving caricature, of distortion, of preverse, wilful revisionism..."[27].

27. Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p.30.

* * *

Editorial Comment on "A Unique Biblical Law", Page 194

Mrs. Shrager, a lay-person who has conducted Bible Study groups for many years, has writtem this article, in which she presents her arguments in a most interesting fashion.

However, the Editors wish to voice three reservations:

a. It is our conviction that the Bible has to be interpreted within the framework of rabbinic tradition. Thus the Eye for an Eye, as well as "Cutting off the hand", in Rabbinic interpretation is nothing more than "fair compensation".

b. Putting the hand ירך תחת *— under the thigh, was used as an oath by the family of Abraham only, in all probability, since the Brith was the sign of the Covenant between God and Abraham.*

c. בשר*, flesh, refers to the entire body, though on occasion it may euphemistically be used for genitalia.*

TILES AND BRICKS IN BIBLICAL POETRY

BY YOSEF GREEN

Biblical poetry both in manuscript as well as in its printed form is clearly distinguishable from the narrative and legal portions of the Bible. A closer look at these poetic verses reveal that they are written in either one of two patterns in the Sefer Torah.*

The first pattern is described in rabbinic literature as "blank space over print and print over blank space" אריח על גבי לבנה ולבנה על גבי אריח and it covers the column or page from right to left. The second pattern features two columns of print, one alongside the other, separated by a column of blank space. This form has been described as: אריח על גבי אריח ולבנה על גבי לבנה.

The first pattern appears in Exodus, Chapter 15 שירת הים (Song at the Reed Sea), a second time in Judges, Chapter 5 שירת דבורה (Song of Devorah) and a third time in II Samuel, Chapter 22 שירת דוד (Song of David).

The second pattern can be seen in Deut., Chapter 32 האזינו, in the Book of Esther, Chapter 9, where Haman's sons are mentioned, and a third time in Joshua, Chapter 12, which contains a list of 31 Canaanite Kings.

This follows the Halakha as it appears in the Tractate Megillah 16b: כל השירות כולן נכתבות אריח על גבי לבנה ולבנה על גבי אריח חוץ מעשרת בני המן, מלכי ישראל, והאזינו.

Rabbi Nissim bar Yaakov of Kairawan, a North African scholar who lived in the 11th century, explains in his commentary on the Talmud, why biblical poetry follows either one or the other pattern. From his comment, it is clear that students of the Bible can learn from its structure and form as well as from the wording of the text.

*Simulation of the Torah scroll patterns can be seen on pages 270-273 (שירת הים) and 896-902 (האזינו) in the Hertz Pentateuch.

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Rabbenu Nissim explains the difference as follows: כשהחומה שווה בשני ראשיה ואין לה בליטות, אין להוסיף עליה ולחזקה כמו שהיו יכולים אם היו שם בליטות ושיני החומה על מנת לאחד את שני העמודים ולמצא פשרה ביניהם.

When *Shira* (biblical poetry) is written in two straight columns with each *ariach* or *l'vayneh* (Hebrew for tile or brick) even and in a straight line, one cannot add or strengthen it by joining it to the parallel monolith, thereby bringing about a compromise or union of the two.

When, however, *Shira* is written across the page, interspersed with blank spaces, you can bridge the spaces, in a manner of speaking.

Now, let us return to the poetic portions in question. Those written אריח על גבי לבנה, blank spaces over print and print over blank spaces, record and celebrate the defeat of one or another of Israel's enemies. (ביום הציל ה' אותו מכל איביו).

Exodus Chapter 15 commemorates the defeat of Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea; Judges Chapter 5, Israel's victory over Sisra and Jabin, King of Hatzor, in the battle fought on Mt. Tabor in the valley of Jezrael; and II Samuel was written by David "after the Lord had saved him from all of his enemies."

In each case, the defeat of an enemy, be it Egypt, Hatzor, the Philistines or the Jebusites, did not necessarily mean that Israel would never again live in peace with any of these nations. Each of these songs of victory flow from line to line, from page to page, albeit with blank spaces on every line. But just as the blanks can be filled in, so can the lines of communication between two nations be repaired. Normal diplomatic relations can be restored, bridges of understanding over which trade and commerce flow, can be rebuilt.

Conflicts arising out of differences between nations, be they political, economic or cultural, fill the pages of history. This does not, however, preclude the possibility of nations reconciling differences and striving for peaceful co-existence.

The schematic form in biblical poetry which leaves room for compromise is: אריח על גבי לבנה ולבנה על גבי אריח. Each example of *Shirah* following this pattern of "blank space" is a coded message, oblique but nevertheless clear. It points to arbitration and compromise as the basis for resolving most conflicts involving Israel and her neighbors.

There are, however, three exceptions that allow for no compromise and they are exemplified in the Bible by the format which the Talmudic sages called: אריח על גבי אריח or the structure of the twin monoliths.

The three as already indicated are:

a) the progeny of Haman, a reminder of the relentless war Jews must wage in every generation against anti-Semitism. Haman, a descendant of Amalek and their ilk declare: לכו ונכחידם מגוי ולא יזכר שם ישראל עוד *Come, let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Yisrael may be no more in remembrance* (Ps. 83:5). And so we have the Biblical admonition: תמחה את זכר עמלק מתחת השמים לא תשכח *You shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under the heaven. Do not forget!* (Deut. 25:19).

b) The war against the Canaanite kings was a battle not only for possession of Eretz Israel, it was a determined effort to vanquish polytheism, the very antithesis of pure ethical monotheism. It was an unrelenting struggle against the debased, licentious and immoral practices to which the indigenous population had long been addicted. This was to be a never ending war against a weltanschaung which was anathema to the essence and spirit of the biblical faith. It was to be a war to the end מלחמה עד חרמה.

And so we have the symbol of two monoliths, אריח על גבי אריח for there is no bridge that can span the infinite abyss separating the two. No apologetics can effect any form of meaninghful reconciliation between these two world views for they are as far apart as East and West.

c) Deut., Chapter 32 (Haazinu) is likewise written in the form of a double monolith because of the verse (8): בהנחל עליון גוי בהפרידו בני אדם, יצב גבולות עמים למספר בני ישראל *When the Most High gave nations their homes and set the divisions of man, He fixed the boundaries of peoples in relation to Israel's numbers.*

We can learn from this verse that when God first allocated land to each nation, He did so with a view to the special needs of Bnai Israel. The format of these poetic verses was meant to underscore the fact that the inalienable rights of the Jewish people to its land are non negotiable and must not be compromised as symbolized by the double monolith.

Each poetic portion depicting the two monoliths is another dimension of Israel's never ending battle to survive physically, spiritually and nationally.

SHEMITTAH AND THE GEOGRAPHY OF ISRAEL

BY LOUIS KATZOFF

ששׁ שנים תזרע את ארצך... והשביעית תשמטנה ונטשתה *Six years thou shalt sow thy land... but the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and be fallow. (Exod. 23:10-11).*

This Hebrew year, 5747, is a Shemittah year in Israel. Many and varied are the religious laws pertaining to the Sabbatical year of the land.

It is my purpose in this article to center our attention on the geographical aspects of the Shemittah laws and specifically relate them to the geographical limits of what we encompass in the term Eretz Yisrael.

THREE CATEGORIES OF LAWS

שלש ארצות לשביעית: כל שהחזיקו עולי בבל מארץ ישראל עד כזיב לא נאכל ולא נעבד. וכל שהחזיקו עולי מצרים מכזיב ועד הנהר ועד אמנה נאכל אבל לא נעבד. מן הנהר ומאמנה נאכל ונעבד. (משנה מסכת שביעית 6:1)

Three countries are to be distinguished in what concerns the Seventh Year:

1. Throughout that part of the Land of Israel which was occupied by those who came up from Babylon (עולי בבל), as far as Cheziv, Seventh Year produce may not be eaten (if unlawfully cultivated);

2. Throughout that part which was occupied by those who came from Egypt (עולי מצרים), from Cheziv to the River (Euphrates) and Amanah, Seventh Year produce may be eaten, but the soil may not be cultivated;

3. From the River and Amanah onward, Seventh Year produce may be eaten and the soil cultivated. (Mishna Sheviit 6:1)

עולי מצרים ועולי בבל

A distinction is made here between the Israelites who came to the Land of Canaan from Egypt in the conquest by Joshua (and later by David), and the Judeans who returned to settle on the Land of Israel after the Babylonian exile. The

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expansionist effects of Joshua's and David's military forays stretched the borders of Eretz Yisrael as far north as the River Euphrates (or, as the Mishna states, to the River Amanah located north of Damascus). The northern country was sanctified as part of the Holy Land, which would thus be subject to the laws of tithes and the Shemittah Year. However, the question was raised: Is such sanctification permanent (קידשה לשעתה קידשה לעתיד לבוא)? Most of the Talmudic sages answered in the negative. With the destruction of the Temple in 586 BCE, the land north of Achziv lost its sanctity, yet, it retained some of its sacredness, but not to the extent of the Biblical law which applied essentially to the actual limits of Eretz Yisrael. The Mishna therefore declares the land of Syria as partially subject to the laws of Shemittah.

This idea is codified by Maimonides in his יד החזקה: סוריא יש דברים שהיא כארץ ישראל ויש דברים שהיא כחוץ לארץ; והקונה בה קרקע כקונה בארץ ישראל לענין תרומות ומעשרות; וכל בסוריא מדברי סופרים (הלכות תרומות 1:4).

> "In some matters, Syria is like Eretz Yisrael, and in some like the Diaspora; a Jew who buys property there is as though he bought it in Eretz Yisrael with regard to the laws of tithes and the Seventh Year. However, all the laws pertaining to Syria stem from Rabbinic interpretation (מדרבנן) and thus contain certain leniencies (in contradistinction to the severity of Biblical injunctions – מדאורייתא)." (Yad Hahazakah, Trumot 1:4).

The returnees from Babylonia to the Holy Land (עולי בבל) did not come as conquerors. Mostly of the poorer classes, they barely were able to strike economic roots in the land. Their geographical ambitions were modest, and their settlements reached only as far as Achziv (today, between Nahariya and Rosh Hanikra).

With the return under the leadership of Joshua (not to be confused with the Biblical Joshua) and Zerubavel, and a later immigration, led by Ezra and Nehemiah, the land was re-sanctified with regard to the laws of tithes and Shemittah (מצוות התלויות בארץ). Essentially, the settlements of the Babylonian Olim marked out the exact borders of Eretz Yisrael, subject to the Biblical law (מדאורייתא). As the centuries moved on, Jews relocated further north into Syria, and by the 4th Century CE, the landscape deep into Syria was dotted with Jewish settlements. Hence the problem arose of how far beyond the border do the laws of Shemittah apply.

THE SYNAGOGUE MOSAIC IN REHOV

An ancient synagogue mosaic was discovered in 1974 which contained, in addition to the usual diagrams, a special text pertaining to the laws of tithes and Shemittah. The unique character of the 4th-7th century synagogue mosaic at Rehov, in the valley of Beth Shean, aroused the attention of the scholarly world, for it was virtually a replica of a well known text in the Jerusalem Talmud (דמאי פ"ב, שביעית פ"ו) and in the Tosefta (תוספתא שביעית פ"ד וספרי דברים פיסקא נ"א) Its importance was enhanced in that it represented an actual application of the laws, both in time and location.

In addition to a detailed list of permissible and forbidden foods in the Sabbatical Year, it outlined the pagan cities (Beth Shean, Caesaria, Banias, Ashkelon, Bet Guvrin) where food grown during the Seventh Year was exempt from the laws of Shemittah.

Of particular interest to the geographer is the listing of locations constituting the limits of Eretz Yisrael in the fulfillment of the laws of tithes and Shemittah. The northern border spells out the areas reached by the returnees from the Babylonian exile (עולי בבל) within which the laws take on the full severity of the Biblical injunction. As an Halachic text it was probably meant to relate its content to the Mishnaic division of the land in the Tractate Sheviit 6:1. Familiar names appear such as Gaatan (Nahariya), Banias, Katzrin and Marj Ayun[1].

Professor Yaacov Sussman of the Hebrew University studied the text and came forth with the following explanation for the containment of the borders within closer limits than what the northern Jewish settlements (in Syria) warranted. The Sages were interested in lightening the hardships of farmers in their observance of the Shemittah laws. Among the easements proposed were the exemptions of the laws in the areas where pagans made up the majority[2].

1 The location of Marj Ayun is several miles above the border, in Lebanon. However, since the name means "the valley of", it probably refers to Metulla which is located at the southern end of the valley.

2 In our own day, the economic plight of the pioneer settlers in Palestine prompted the renowned Rabbi of Kovno, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Spektor in, 1889, and Rabbi A. I. Kook, the first chief Ashkenazi Rabbi of the Yishuv, in 1910, to propose "selling" the land to a non-Jew for two years and thus sparing the colonists from violating the laws of Shemittah (similar to מכירת חמץ before Pesach).

"GREEK" LOGIC IN THE BOOK OF JOB

(Chapter 12)

BY DAVID WOLFERS

A QUESTION OF PUNCTUATION

Much has been made, particularly by Christian authors, of the distinction between the Hebrew and the Greek modes of thought, the former intuitive and associative, the latter rigorous and formal. It is of no little interest therefore to find a demonstration in tight, almost syllogistic, logic running through an entire chapter of the Book of Job, and that one which traditionally has frequently been held to be devoid even of common continuity.

One of the points in dispute between Job and his three friends is the source of responsibility for the calamity which Job (and his people)[1] have suffered. Reduced to its simplest terms, the friends have argued that, because Job has sinned, God has withdrawn His protection from him, but that the authors of his woes are nonetheless human beings. Job has merely to return to God and he and his people will be restored to favour and hence to prosperity. Job, however, sees the matter as a more deliberate and, therefore, a more sinister matter. Knowing his own innocence of all significant wrongdoing, he interprets the catastrophe which has befallen him and the Jewish people as a deliberate free-will act of God; a part of a plan and intention entirely independent of the behaviour of those who have suffered in it, and involving no independent initiative from those human agents who have carried it out. It is on this basis that his frequent accusations against God of malice or indifference rest.

In Chapter 12 Job addresses this point of dispute. After a preliminary exchange of mild unpleasantries, the Chapter proper begins with verse 4: שחק

1. See D. Wolfers, *"Is Job After All Jewish"*, Dor le Dor, Fall 1985, pp. 39–44, in which the theory that Job is an allegorical figure for the Hebrew nation is aired.

Dr. Wolfers is a medical practitioner and demographer who, since his retirement in Jerusalem in 1976, has devoted his time to the study and translation of the Book of Job. He is the author of numerous scientific articles and co-author of several books on aspects of the international population problem.

לרעהו אהיה — *I am become a laughing stock to His friends.* The Hebrew here is quite unequivocal that it is not to Job's own friends that he has become an object of scorn, but to the friends of some other "he". There is really no alternative to God for this role. God's friends are those who, up to this time, have believed in, been dependent upon, and been loyal to Him[2].

The first of a series of punctuational errors which has made the chapter essentially incomprehensible now follows. The remainder of the verse reads: קרא לאלוה ויענהו שחוק צדיק תמים. It has not been generally realised that these two lines (as well as the ensuing two verses) specify the scornful comments which God's "friends" are making about Job and his downfall, nor has it been realised that the two lines form one complete sentence. Thus the correct reading will be *(They say) 'He who calls upon God and He answers him is a just and innocent jest!*, and the next two verses in the same vein: *He who scorns disaster and is at ease in thought is ripe for stumbling! His dwellings are safe — for robbers. And his fortresses for those who provoke God — For whomsoever can subdue God to his hand!*

There are certainly textual difficulties in these verses as can be seen by comparing the above with the NJPSV.[3]

2. The effect which the sight of Job's calamity is producing on those who witness it is a recurrent conceit in the Book of Job. 17:8–9, reading

> "The upright are appalled at this,
> And the innocent, that the godless triumphs,
> So that the righteous embraces his (the godless) ways
> And the pure of hand reinforces his strength"

is Job's most effective statement on the subject to which Eliphaz in 22:19–20 replies that in the face of the prosperity of the wicked

> "Righteous men look on and jeer
> And an innocent man would deride them
> (Saying) 'Surely our enemy is lost
> And the fire will consume their remnant!'"

Elihu, in the final section of Chapter 37, joins Job in describing the consternation among those who see the success of the heathen over the believers and in asking God to speak out and explain.

3. V.6 reads: ישליו אהלים לשודדים — ובטוחות למרגיזי אל — לאשר הביא אלוה בידו

NJPSV is:

"Robbers live untroubled in their tents, And those who provoke God are secure, those whom God's hands have produced".

The idea that אהלים לשודדים refers to the tents of robbers is based on a grammatical illusion that

We should have found it difficult to accept this version, even though it appears literally correct, without first having considered the possibility that some national disaster lay behind Job's tragedy, for the concept of "subduing" God is one which can hardly arise at a personal level. On the national level however, and most particularly in the time of Sennacherib, this was precisely the issue involved between Judah and Assyria[4].

With these verses 4–6, Job sets out graphically the most extreme expression of the view opposite to his own – that free-acting human agents can successfully frustrate the will of God. By attributing this view not to his opponents in the debate (who in any case have not voiced it) but as it were to the congregation of

this form is a valid alternative to the normal genitive expressed by the construct אהלי שודדים. In fact, despite Gesenius' three examples (Gesenius Hebrew Grammar, par. 129b) there is no true biblical example where the circumlocution is employed if the construct would have been equally unambiguous. In this particular verse there is an additional barrier against reading the phrase as a genitive in that the accent *'Azla legarmeh* which is strongly disjunctive, is placed between the two words, expressly forbidding this reading.

In the second line the difficulty centers on the meaning of the word בטחות which is in form the feminine plural participle, and is employed in the Book of Isaiah to mean (over-) confident women. The vocalization here is *qatul* so that the word is *hapax* to this passage. On the evidence of the manifest parallelism of the two lines, it seems that בטחות is a parallel to אהלים and should therefore be understood as "secure places", hence "fortresses" which fits the sense perfectly. Cf. R.Gordis ("The Book of Job", 1978, Jewish Theological Seminary of NY, p. 137) who translates the word "dwellings" as derived from בטח "to recline", a notion based on Job 11:18.

In the third line the expression הביא בידו must be seen as cognate with the common phrase בידו נתן – "deliver into his power", giving a simple and consistent sense in place of the many tentative and unsatisfactory versions hitherto current.

4. The idea that Sennacherib could "subdue God", "bring Him under his hand" is explicit in the message presented by him through Rabshakeh to the Jews in Jerusalem "*...Beware lest Hezekiah peersuade you, saying: The Lord will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? who are they among all the gods of these countries, that have delivered their country out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?* (Is. 36:18–20). True, this is his message for the *men that sit on the wall, to eat their own dung, and to drink their own water with you* (Is. 36:12), and is delivered in a loud voice, while in the more private earlier part of the address Rabshakeh has a different message for Hezekiah and his generals – *Am I now come up without the Lord against this land to destroy it? The Lord said unto me: Go up against this land, and destroy it* (Is. 36:10). But similarly it is the vulgar reaction to his plight which Job is describing in 12:4–6, and not that of the learned.

God, he contrives to leave out of the discussion all question of his own innocence, which he takes as a *datum,* and at the same time to convey to God that He is harming His own standing by destroying this innocent and pious man.

In the next four verses Job in turn ridicules the view which he has quoted by asserting that even the dumbest of animals, even the inanimate earth itself is consciously or unconsciously aware that the events in dispute are the work of "the Lord", and it is perhaps significant that this is the only place in the poem of Job that the tetragrammaton name of the God of the Jews is employed.

However, ask the beasts, and they will teach thee,
And the fowl of the air, and they will tell thee,
Or speak to the earth, and it will teach thee,
And the fish of the sea, they will recount to thee:
Which does not know of all these
That the hand of the Lord has wrought his,
In Whose hand is the spirit of all that lives
And the breath of all mankind? 12:7–10.

Even here, where instinctive reaction to events is met by an even deeper instinctive feeling, there is some attempt at injecting logic into the dispute, with the last two lines making a paradox out of the view Job is exploding. From here, however, Job makes it clear that he is genuinely going to appeal to logic. *Does not the ear test words as the palate tastes its food?* This verse, which reappears in Chapter 34 with Job's own words being put to the test, is a statement of intention to examine verbal evidence and draw conclusions from it. A failure to take this into account has led to the mispunctuation of the following verses, and consequently to a failure to understand them altogether. The requirement of verse 11 is that it shall be followed by quotation, either direct or indirect, of words which are to be put to a test. What in fact is contained in vv. 12 and 13 are two contrasting proverbs.

"Wisdom is with the aged
And length of days has Understanding"?

"With *Him* is Wisdom and might;
He has counsel and Understanding"?

Whatever the provenance of these two statements[5], because they function in this context as "sayings", it is necessary to enclose them in quotation marks, and because they are to be tested, one against the other, they should each be followed by a mark of interrogation. They are presented to the reader as alternative hypotheses.

What follows is, as the dynamic of the passage requires, the verbal evidence upon which a choice between the two hypotheses is to be made and, again in accordance with the demands of the argument, this evidence is derived, not *ex cathedra,* but, in part at least, from remarks already made by Job's opponents in the debate. Each of the next four lines is recognizably a paraphrase or an extension of a statement made by one of the three comforters in the first cycle of speeches. These four lines also, therefore, must be framed, independently, in quotation marks.

If He throw down, it cannot be rebuilt	*8:15*
If He confine a man, he shall not be released	*11:10*
If He restrain the waters, they dry up.	
If He send them forth, they overturn the earth	*5:10, 11*

On the basis of this evidence, Job now announces in 12:16 the result of the test and the corollary which is to be drawn from the conclusion

"With *Him* are strength and Wisdom
His are sinner and tempter".

The logical sequence is now carried to its final and devastating conclusion with a detailed description of the events leading to the downfall of the Israelite empire, each of which is credited as the action of "Him", the One against Whose decisions Job has demonstrated that there is no appeal, and to Whom all Wisdom and power ultimately belong.

He it was Who led[6] *the councillors away barefoot*

5. The second saying is remarkably similar to Prov. 8:14:
Counsel is mine and sound wisdom
I am understanding, power is mine.
where the speaker is Wisdom herself, but no model has been preserved for the first.

6. It is a vital question for the understanding of the whole Book of Job whether 12:17–25 is to be understood (as it usually is) as simply a list of the habitual hostile practices of God or as a survey of a series of historical events for which Job argues His responsibility. With the exception of the last verse, each of the couplets in the passage consists of one line in which the action is expressed by an active verb. The tenses of these verbs are mixed, including imperfects (vv.

And made fools of the judges;
Who slackened the bond of the kings
And bound their loins with a fetter;
Who conducted the priests away stripped
And subverted those established of old;
Who perverted the speech of the faithful
And removed the judgement of the elders
Pouring contempt upon princes
And undermining the morale of the legions.
It was He uncovered deep things out of darkness;
He brought out into daylight the shadow of death.
He increased the nations and destroyed them;
Spread the nations abroad, and then abandoned them,
Disheartening the chiefs of the people of the land
When He left them to wander a trackless waste.
They groped in the dark, for there was no light,
And He made them to stagger like drunkards. 12:17–25.

Comprehensively, all the folly, weakness and sin of the decaying national body is here loaded onto God's back as Job confronts the simplicity of the "scourge of God" theory of history with an all embracing fatalism which ascribes not only the punishment, but also the crime, to a God truly and to the *logical* extreme

17,19,20) and imperfect consecutives (vv. 18,22,23,24). The 'verb' of the second line of v.21 is *hapax* and in the form of a noun construct.

The clue to the intention of the passage is, I suggest, to be found in a brief paragaph (116 f) in Gesenius Grammar: "By an exhaustive analysis of the statistics, Sellin shows that the participle when construed as a *verb* expresses a single and comparatively transitory act, or relates to particular cases, historical facts, and the like, while the participle construed as a *noun* indicates repeated, enduring, or commonly occurring acts, occupations, and thoughts". In this passage, there is unequivocal evidence as to the form of construction of the participle in only one case – that is v.22 where the participle מגלה is written with the vowel *segol* beneath the *lamed* whereas, for it to be construed as a noun, the vowel required is *sere*.

I conclude therefore that all the participles are to be understood as verbal and interpreted in the same sense, and that the passage relates the events for which Job holds God responsible rather than the character which he attributes to Him. These events, in the logic of the chapter, sum up to the "this" of v.9 which the hand of God wrought, and comprise the specifics of the tragedy and sufferings of Job.

immanent in history. He believes that he has "proved": לו שגג ומשגה (v. 16): "His are sinner and tempter", or perhaps "Misled and misleader are His".

Job as a metaphysician is not perhaps a well-accepted character in the biblical assemblage, but there is no other way to describe the argument which he develops so relentlessly in this chapter than as one of formal metaphysical logic designed to carry the credo of an omnipotent and omniscient God to its final conclusion.

If it is clear what Job is doing in this chapter, it is perhaps less clear what his author is up to. The purpose of the Book of Job was to provide a different, and more sophisticated, explanation for the events of the 8th Century B.C.E. than that provided by the chroniclers who ascribed the downfall of the Israelites to the misdeeds of their kings – a theory which suffered from a gaping flaw in that the character of Hezekiah, King of Judah at the time of its conquest by Sennacherib, was exemplary. It would seem that the author had the choice between distancing God from history or of involving Him even more fully – that is, of making of the course of history a divine design in which the human actors did no more than read the parts written for them by the Creator. Taking this latter option, he made of the 8th Century a trial of the faith of Israel from which it was to emerge transformed from a tribe loyal to its tribal god into a people dedicated to a missionary task on behalf of a universal God. This indeed is the significance of a Job whose faith in both God and righteousness survives the apparent brutal destruction of the hitherto accepted link between these two, survives the death of the concept of reward and punishment, bursts the confines of self-interest and promises ever after to survive on love of justice, and love of God alone.

A NOTE ON JOB 6:8–10

SUICIDE AND DEATH-WISHES

BY WALTER RIGGANS

Recently I heard a sermon on the call to be faithful to the Lord whatever the cost, because in spite of any pain or hardship, the joy of knowing you had been a faithful witness would be more important then the negative repercussions. Interestingly enough the preacher took as his text Job 6:10:

> *Then I would still have this consolation – my joy in unrelenting pain – that I had not denied the words of the Holy One.* (NIV)

In spite of the fact that the sermon seemed to touch the congregation very positively, I was impatient to spend some time on the text at leisure. What follows is a suggested alternative to the understanding of the NIV, and as far as I can make out, the majority of translators and commentators. But the important thing is that I believe it more faithfully reflects both Job's position as seen in the book, and also the basic attitude, albeit implicit, not explicit, of the Scriptures towards suicide and death-wishes.

Let me begin with a brief summary of other relevant cases in the Tanach. In Judges 16:23–31 we have Samson deliberately sacrificing his own life to ensure the destruction of many Philistines, including important leaders. This is regarded in Jewish traditions as an act of heroism in a state of war.

In I Samuel 31:1–7 we see that the Philistines have succeeded in defeating the Israelites decisively in a major battle. Saul has seen his three sons slain also. Rather than flee or be captured, Saul asks his armour bearer to kill him. Upon a refusal to do this, Saul kills himself. There is a further story recorded in II Samuel 1:1–12 where it is told that Saul did not succeed in killing himself, but was spared a certain and tortuous slow death by an act of "mercy" by an Amalekite. No censure is given against Saul by David or the court. This was perhaps also seen as a dignified act in a state of war. Interestingly, the "mercy-killer" is executed (II

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Samuel 1:13–15) for daring to kill the king of Israel. (A text for the euthenasia debate? perhaps not).

Then we see Ahitophel committing suicide rather than face a traitor's trial and death (II Samuel 17:23). Zimri who took the throne from Elah preferred to die with his new palace, rather than place himself at the mercy of Omri, the army's choice for king (I Kings 16:18).

In both these latter cases we have abnormal situations, but even so, the idea of suicide is so abhorrent to Jewish tradition that some commentators, e.g. Rabbi David Kimchi, interpret the last text to mean that Omri burned the palace, and Zimri with it.

We also have death-wishes from Jonah (4:3), Elijah (I Kings 19:4) and Jeremiah (20:14) in the contexts of their public prophetic ministries. They are angry, afraid, depressed, lonely, and become thoroughly defeated and negative. Does Job fit here? I think not. But we must return to this at the end.

The implicit Biblical tradition, and the explicit Jewish tradition has been that *suicide* is a grave sin against God. It is to despise or devalue, and rebel against His priceless gift of life. What then is the situation of Job? Of course he doesn't attempt suicide. But does he desire death, and so commit the sin anyway? Certainly one would get that impression from some translations, as the NIV suggests, for example:

> *Oh, that I might have my request, that God would grant what I hope for, That God would be willing to crush me, to let loose His hand and cut me off! Then I would still have this consolation – my joy in unrelenting pain – that I had not denied the words of the Holy One (Job 6:8–10).*

Let us have a closer look at the text. Chapter 6 opens with Job about to respond to a speech by Eliphaz in which he tries to comfort Job by saying that no man is righteous before God, and so Job should not be embarassed at confessing his sin before God. God will then reverse this process of severe punishment. Job resorts to an image of weighing-scales to try to show his confusion and anguish at how God is treating him.

He says if his anguish and punishment could be measured quantitatively, then even his friends would see how inexplicable is the extent of his suffering. Because of this, he has been rash in his language (e.g. Job 3:1, 11). It is, of course, the heart of Job's anguish, not that he is suffering physical and emotional torment, but that no reason can be found for it. God is silent and elsewhere (Job 23:3–7).

Because of this Job sees no happy ending, as against the sermon I heard on verse 10. He is not a martyr in this situation.

If this were a punishment, then he could accept it, but it is not. God often punishes by means of "arrows" (Psalm 7:14; 38:3; Ezekiel 5:16; Deut. 32:23; etc.), but Job cannot accept these arrows as God's good correction or justified punishment (verse 4). They are poisonous.

Job is not crying out for nothing. Just as simple beasts will cry out only when they *don't* have what they need for life, (verse 5; cf. Joel 1:18), so Job cries out in his deprivation — the torment of not seeing purpose or resolution. For how can he hope that God will *stop* this process of increasing torment, since he cannot conceive of God initiating it in the first place?

In verses 6 and 7 Job says the counsel of his friends is worthless. They do not begin to understand his truly existential dilemma.

And so we come to verses 8 and 9 where Job reveals his inability to go on. If only God would at least give him the concession he is longing for! Why cannot God just finish him off now? That at least would be a release from his torment (see the use of the phrase in verse 9 used of manumission elsewhere, e.g. Psalm 105:20; Isaiah 58:6).

Note that Job is *not* contemplating suicide, *God* initiated this set of circumstances, and so only *God* can (and must) put an end to them. What is the rationale behind this? We must wait for verse 10, the key to understanding Job's psychology. ותהי עוד נחמתי ואסלדה בחילה לא יחמול כי לא כחדתי אמרי קדוש

Death would be a comfort, rather than going on with tortuous dying. But then the text has ואסלדה. I take the "ו" as meaning "but" here. What then of this difficult hapax legomenon?* The Versions try to explain it in their own ways, but the traditional rendering has been to follow the LXX and Targum with a verb meaning "to exult, to leap (for joy)". The RSV has, e.g.

"I would even exult in pain unsparing".

Ewald accepts this in his commentary, as does S. R. Driver in his Revised Version. He actually has a marginal translation, "though I shrink back", but he says it has no contextual relevance. We shall return to this. The I.C.C. commentary of Driver and Gray accepts this meaning, but the argumentation is somewhat confused. The post-Biblical root סלד is noted as meaning "to draw back", as, e.g., in the Talmud, Shabbat 40b, where it is used of a hand recoiling from the heat of a

* A word occurring only once.

fire. But, having accepted the traditional meaning, they say the root must also be able to mean "to leap".

In the course of the 1920's this was followed in the commentaries, e.g., by Buttenwieser and Ball. In 1939 Kissane gave us, "I would be steadfast", but without notes to justify it. In the 1950's both Weiser and Tur-Sinai opted for the wisdom of the traditional view, as did Fohrer and Horst in the 1960's. This is the consensus also of the works by Dhorme, Rowley, and Pope. In 1965 Gordis translated this as "I trembled in pitiless agony", but again without notes.

My conviction is that those who sensed something in the post-Biblical root were on the right track. It means "to retreat, recoil, flinch". In other words, not leaping in joy but springing back in fear or the like. Therefore I translate it accordingly as: *As it is, I cringe in the merciless anguish.* Job is saying swift death is bliss compared to his torments. He is constantly recoiling in fear and horror from this God and this world which he doesn't understand at all any more. He is not wishing for death, since he feels death is coming anyway, he merely wishes a swift, painless death.

The כי־לא I take not as "that" but as "because". Here is the bottom of the line. The reason Job recoils from the life he has now been reduced to, is that he has *not* denied God nor His words. He *cannot* therefore have deserved this horror. And yet he is suffering it.

If there is no longer *justice* with God, Job says, at least I pray (verse 8) that there is still *mercy*. Finish me off quickly, Lord.

Job is not, then, actively seeking death. He is in that state of pathos where swift death would be preferable to long anguish. He does not commit the sin of despising God or life. Job, then, is a sui generis case, along with that of Samson and perhaps Saul. His righteousness far exceeds that of Ahitophel or Zimri, and his commitment to God, or at least the God he could not forget no matter how things had changed, shows up the pettiness of Jonah and the fear of Elijah and Jeremiah.

THE LAYOUT OF THE DECALOGUE ON THE TABLETS AND ARCHAEOLOGY

BY HERBERT RAND

The two tables of testimony containing the Decalogue, given to Moses at Sinai for deposit in the Ark, could have survived the passage of time; being of stone, the tables ("the Tablets") were not subject to decay as organic materials. There is a tradition that the prophet Jeremiah, anticipating the destruction of the Temple, secreted the Ark and the Tablets in a cave on Mount Nebo and sealed the entrance[1]. In their absence, there will continue to be questions as to the layout of the text on the Tablets. What was the direction of the inscription on each, right to left or left to right, or boustrophedon?[2] Was the writing horizontal or vertical, entirely on one table and repeated on the other, or partly on each, and what part of the writing appeared on the reverse sides of the Tablets?

The Book of Exodus contains specifications for the Ark from which the approximate size of the tablets may be deduced. Since the Ark was about 4 feet long by 2-1/2 feet wide by 2-1/2 feet high, each of the tables lying side by side within the

1. L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Bible* (Phila., 1909) P. 632, 2 Macc: ii: 4-8. B. Wachholder, *Eupolemus* (New York, 1974), pp. 237-242. For other theories, see: M. Haran, *"the Disappearance of the Ark"*, IEJ 13 (1963), pp. 45–58.

2. Boustrophedon is writing in the same direction in the first and odd rows and in the opposite direction in the even rows (as the ox ploughs). In Hittite writing, two or more connected lines were invariably boustrophedon as in the earliest Greek inscriptions. Ugaritic and Canaanite were written left to right, Phoenician, right to left. The oldest Hebrew script yet discovered is left to right, differing from direction of later Hebrew script. D. Diringer, *Semitic Writing* (London, 1948), p. 101; ib. *The Alphabet* (New York, 1948), pp. 75, 95, 167, 205. H. Tur-Sinai (Torcyner), "The Origin of the Alphabet", J Q R N S XLI, (1950–1), pp. 83-109. 159-70, 277-301. W. A. Mason, *A History of Writing* (New York, 1920).

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Ark could not have exceeded about 26 inches in length by 22 inches in width (66 by 56 cm).

There were two sets of Tablets. The original set was not man-made; before Moses received them, they had already been inscribed by the "Finger of God". The text refers to them as לחת "tablets" (plural) modified by the word האבן "stone" (singular), thereby indicating that the two tables were to be treated as a unity[3].

Having smashed the original set when he saw the Israelites worshipping the Golden Calf, Moses hewed two like stones so that God might inscribe them exactly as the first set. The layout of the original Tablets is described in Ex. 32:15 in these words (the "Descriptive Clause"): משני עבריהם מזה ומזה הם כתבים. Most English translations, as well as the Septuagint and the Vulgate, give that text the meaning of: "tables inscribed on both their sides, on one side and on the other were they written."

One school of Rabbis taught that the Decalogue was written on the Tablets four times: once on the face and once on the reverse side of each table. The majority of the Sages held that the inscription was split up so that the first five commandments were on the first table and the remaining five were on the other. There was another interpretation to the effect that the letters were cut through to the back of each table so that all four surfaces were inscribed[4].

The expression מזה ומזה invariably denotes two separate points, one at the right and one at the left side of a person or object. For examples, see: I Sam. 14:4 (one side of a valley and the other); also, Ex. 17:12 (Aaron and Hur held up Moses' hands, one on his right side and one on his left); also Ex. 26:13 and Ex. 38:15 (curtains hung on each side of an opening); also, Num: 22:24 (the angel confronted Balaam between the vineyards, a fence being on this side and a fence מזה on the other side).

It would be difficult, without stretching the limits of language, to find a clear reference to four surfaces, obverse and reverse, in the Descriptive Clause. Moreover, there were more appropiate expressions available to Moses had he intended to refer to the front and back of each table. For example, see Ex. 33:23

3 Ex. 24:12.

4. Talmud. Shab. 104a.

אחרי ופני (my back and my front); also, Ez. 2:9-10 פנים ואחור (in front and behind).

In the Descriptive Clause, מזה signifies a starting point at the edge or margin of each of the two tables. Unlike Hittite cuneiform or Egyptian hieroglyphics, the characters of Hebrew script are not syllabic but alphabetic. Therefore, we may rule out the likelihood of the inscription running in vertical columns.

The layout of the Decalogue on the Tablets must be viewed within the framework of תבנית המשכן[5], the pattern of the Sanctuary. Before the original set of tables had been inscribed, Moses was shown the design for the Ark and for its cover (Ex. 25:19). The specifications for the cover called for two cherubs of beaten gold, one to be placed מזה at one end and the second to be placed מזה at the other, both facing each other with outstretched wings. The Ark served not only as a receptacle for the tablets but also as the throne and footstool of the invisible God[6].

I suggest that the starting point of the inscription on the table deposited in the Ark on the right side (of the viewer) was at the upper corner or margin of the table's left side, with the direction of the writing being horizontally to the right; and the starting point on the other table was at the upper corner of its right-hand margin with the script running to the left. In that way, the flow of the inscription on each of the Tablets would seem to be emanating from the central throne of God, in accord with the pronouncement that His laws would issue from between the cherubs[7]. Archaeology tends to support this hypothesis.

Change in the direction of writing on a wall, or on lintels or panels framing a niche or doorway, or along the base of a statue, was commonplace in ancient Egypt. Its scribes and sculptors followed their own ideas to achieve symmetry and to highlight the central theme[8]. There was no fixed rule for the direction of inscriptions but it was usual for horizontal inscriptions on panels framing a doorway or the entry to a temple, tomb or niche to begin at a point nearest the

5 Ex. 25:9

6. R. deVaux, *Ancient Israel*, (New-York, 1961), Vol. 2, pp. 297-299; U. Cassuto, *Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, (Jerusalem, 1967) P. 323.

7. Ex. 25:22.

8. E.A.W. Budge, *The Egyptian Language*, (London, 1966), p. 10.

center, with the flow of writing running thence in opposite directions[9]. That familiar pattern for monumental inscriptions had become part of the cultural environment of long-time residents such as the Israelites. A format in the Egyptian style indicated above for the inscription of the Decalogue on the tablets in their given situs was entirely consistent with the presence of numerous other Egyptian elements in Israelite writing and in the Hebrew language at the time of the Exodus[10]. A symmetrical format for the inscription of the Decalogue with outward flow of the writing on each table would have matched the Israelites' perception of the appropriate style for the tablets, lying side by side, flanking the throne of God.

In view of these points, the Descriptive Clause may be understood to mean:

tables that were written from two edges; from here (the right) and from there (the left) were they written.

However, on the basis of any evidence that may be garnered solely from the Pentateuch, it would be too conjectural to hypothesize that the Tablets were written boustrophedon, a possibility which may not as yet be verified or disproved.

9. Examples of changes in direction of writing:

(a) False door of Iteti (cairo Museum). Inscription on each panel framing door reads away from statue in niche: Illus. C. Aldred, *Tutankhamun*, (New York, 1962), p. 77.

(b) Carved chair of Tutankhamun inscribed on upper and lower panels with change of direction in middle. Illus. Desroches-Noblecourt, *Tutankhamun*, (Boston, 1963), p. 71.

(c) Stela of Hor and Suty, Fig. 44, *Introductory Guide to British Museum* (1969), p. 124 (Collection No. 826), change in direction of writing at center of lintel.

(d) Colossal Statues of Rameses II, in situ Abu Simbal; horizontal inscription along base with change of direction at center. Illus. C. Aldred, *The Egyptians*, (London, 1961).

(e) Statue of Rameses II lying prone on rectangular base in ritual stance; the long sides of the base are inscribed right to left and left to right, respectively, both starting at the front (Cairo Museum).

10. A.S. Yahuda, *The Language of the Pentateuch and its Relation to Egyptian*. (London, 1932).

THE DOVE, TURTLE–DOVE AND PIGEON IN BIBLE AND MIDRASH

BY S.P. TOPEROFF

We have grouped the three birds together because they belong to the same genus. Both the dove and the pigeon are called 'yonah', but the latter is usually introduced by ben or bnei yonah signifying the singular and plural. In Genesis 15:9 *gozal* (גוזל) is translated "young pigeon", but this word can equally apply to the young of any bird.

Regarding the derivation of the word *yonah* (יונה), it is conjectured that it is derived either from *yanah*, to oppress, maltreat, or from *anah*, to moan, both derivations are alluded to in Bible and Talmud.

Isaiah declares, *'I do moan as dove'* (38:14). Ezekiel refers to *'the doves of the valleys, all of them moaning'* (7:16), while the prophet Nahum recalls that *'her handmaids moan as with the voice of doves'* (2:8). In the Talmud we read that a man should always strive to be rather of the persecutors, as there is none among the birds more persecuted and oppressed than doves and pigeons, and yet Scripture made them (alone of birds) eligible for the altar (Bava Kama 93a).

That the gentle dove was exposed to the wild beasts is underlined by the Psalmist *'O deliver not the soul of the turtle-dove to the wild beast'* (74:19). Incidentally, the turtle-dove is called *tor* (תור) probably onomatopoeic, and is symbolic of the spring, *'for lo the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of spring has come, and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in the land'* (Song of Songs 2:11). The voice referred to in the above verse is possibly the cooing of the turtle-dove which sounded like 'tor', hence its name.

Other characteristics of the dove – its strong flight, *'Oh that I had wings like a dove!'* (Ps. 55:7), while the Song of Songs emphasises the purity and uniqueness

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of the dove, *'My dove, my undefiled is but one, she is the only one of her mother'* (6:9). Perhaps the most delightful description of the dove is found in the following passage *'O my dove... let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely'* (Song of Songs 2:14).

We must now turn our attention to the classical text in which the dove figures prominently, Genesis Chapter 8, where we learn that Noah sent a dove *'to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground'*. The question has been posed, why a dove? It should be noted that the dove more than any other bird in the Bible, is employed metaphorically in Jewish teaching and some scholars are of the opinion that here the clean, gentle and peace-loving dove is sharply contrasted with the unclean, cunning bird of prey, the raven. We, however, know that the dove recognises its resting place and we suggest that Noah instinctively recognised the dove to be a reliable and trustworthy messenger. This is characterised by history, for throughout the ages the carrier pigeon has proved to be a worthy and excellent courier despatching messages over long distances with amazing precision.

However, it should be noted that we draw a line of demarcation between a dove and a carrier pigeon. The latter is aided by personal effort, a written message which is attached to its feet, wheras the dove is not dependent upon human assistance. The dove is master of its destiny and uses initiative. In our story it brings a message to Noah in the form of an *'olive leaf freshly plucked in her mouth'* (Genesis 8:11). This expression is pregnant with meaning and interpretation. Why are we expressly informed that the leaf was freshly plucked (or torn) in its mouth? The dove could simply have picked up a leaf floating on the water but such information would prove to be useless to Noah. But a fresh green olive-leaf freshly torn off from a tree rooted in the ground indicated to Noah that the waters had considerably decreased as the olive tree is not tall. Furthermore, the olive tree is specifically mentioned because its leaves do not drop either in the days of summer or in the rainy season; the leaves are always fresh and sturdy. (Menahot53b). One further difficulty needs clarification. We know that the dove is particularly fond of sweet foods; why then did it favour the leaf of an olive which is bitter? Here too the dove imparts a telling message. In the words of the Rabbis the dove symbolically exlaimed 'Let my food be as bitter as an olive-leaf provided that it comes from the hands of God rather than be as sweet as honey and I be dependent upon the gifts of man' (Eruvin 18b). This noble sentiment is

echoed in the fourth paragraph of the Grace after meals: We beseech Thee o Lord our God, let us not be in need either of the gifts of mortals or of their loans but only of Thy helping hand.

In Rabbinic literature the dove is invested with a host of virtues, all symbolic of Israel. In our Midrash we derive a significant lesson for Diaspora Jewry. All birds apart from the dove fly, and when they grow weary they rest on the top of a tree or a rock, but the dove merely folds one of her wings and flies with the other. This has been interpreted to mean that the nations of the world need both wings, land and culture to maintain their existence, but Israel can fly and soar to great heights even on one wing, namely its culure which is the Torah. In the Diaspora where she was denied her national home, she was sustained by the immortal culture enshrined in the Torah (Genesis Rabbah 39). In another passage the Rabbis declare: As the dove, when it is slaughtered, does not struggle, so the Israelites do not struggle when they are slaughtered for the sanctification of the Name, and as the dove saves herself only by her wings, so the Israelites are saved only by the merit of the Torah (Midrash Tehillim 159a).

In yet another passage we read: As the dove is chaste, so the Israelites are chaste... as the dove atones for sins, so the Israelites atone for the nations. For the seventy oxen which they offer on the Festivals represent the seventy nations so that the world may not be depopulated of them... as the dove from the hour she recognises her mate does not change him, so the Israelites from the time when they recognised the Holy One have not changed Him (Song of Songs Rabbah 1, 15). From the above we see that conjugal fidelity is underlined both at the beginning and end of the passage. This may throw some light on the nature of the sin offering which a woman after childbirth must bring to the altar. '*And when the days of her purification are fulfilled for a son or for a daughter she shall bring...a young pigeon or a turtledove for a sin-offering*' (Leviticus 12: 6). This offering indicates that the woman was pure before marriage and that she is always faithful to her partner. In this manner we equate the purity of married life among humans with the chastity of the dove towards its mate.

An additional reason for the popularity of the pigeon and turtledove as an offering was a practical one: these birds were economical and suited the poor, as reflected in a touching episode in the life of King Agrippa recorded in the Midrash. The king decided to set aside one day to offer a thousand birds. He consequently sent a personal message to the High Priest that he alone was to offer

the birds on one particular day. However, on this day a poor man appeared with two turtle-doves in his hand and pleaded 'My master, the High Priest, every day I catch four turtle-doves, two of which I offer up and the other two are my livelihood. If you refuse to offer the two, my livelihood will be affected'. The High Priest was moved and offered the two birds. We are informed that Agrippa received a bath kol (a heavenly voice) in a dream saying 'the sacrifice of the poor man rightly had priority' (Leviticus Rabbah 3).

There was, however, a period when the price of turtle-doves and pigeons rose considerably and we owe it to the foresight and courage of Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel who would not rest till the price dropped. After issuing a decree "the price of a pair of birds fell to a quarter of denar" (Bava Bathra 166a-b).

The price of doves was also regulated by the supply; doves breed every other month and there was a superabundance of them. This created a problem. In Babylonia and Palestine the dove-cotes around the town were so numerous that fowlers had to be prohibited from snaring the birds within a distance of 30 ris from the town (a ris was about 266 cubits). Indeed, laws were enacted prohibiting the setting up of cotes within a distance of 50 cubits from the town because the birds were considered a liability as they eat the seeds in the gardens and orchards. In this connection one sage explained that the amount of food a pigeon will find in a space of 50 cubits is normally enough to satisfy its hunger (Bava Bathra 23a). There were a variety of species of pigeons, and Jews understood the nature of these birds and could distinguish each breed (Bava Bathra 80a). We shall mention by name two species, one the Hardisian, a domesticated dove which received its name according to Jastrow from the manner of its fructification (Hullin 139a) and the other the Herodian dove, a domesticated indoor dove which presumably was named after Herod who kept them in the garden surrounding his palace.

In conclusion a story is narrated in the pages of the Talmud concerning a teacher called Elisha who was called 'the man of wings'. The Roman government issued a decree that any Jew found wearing Tefillin will have his brains pierced through. Elisha disregarded the decree, put on his Tefillin and walked into the street. When a quaestor saw him, Elisha attempted to flee and took off his Tefillin and held them in his hand. He was overtaken and when asked what he held in his hand, he replied 'the wings of a dove'. The Rabbis ask, why the wings of a dove? Because the Congregation of Israel is likened to a dove כנסת ישראל דומה ליונה, as

a dove is protected by its wings,so is Israel protected by the Mitzvoth (Shabbat 49a, 130a).

Proverbial Sayings

A gambler, a usurer and a pigeon-trader (used for betting purposes) are ineligible to act as witnesses (Eruvin 82a).

The Rabbis have never permitted us the raven nor forbidden us the dove (Sanhedrin 100a).

The Rabbis distinguish between a dove and a sparrow. The latter does not return to its nest when the fledgings leave but the dove does return to its nest even when the fledglings leave the nest. (Midrash Tehillim on Psalms 84: 4).

The effigy of a dove was found on Mount Gerizim and the Samaritans worshipped it. (Genesis Rabbah 39).

On top of the throne of King Solomon was a dove with a golden crown in its mouth (Numbers Rabbah 12: 14).

A people distinguished with divine precepts and meritorious deeds is compared to a dove (Lamentations Rabbah).

ABRAHAM'S GREAT SIN – A REEVALUATION

BY BENJAMIN GOODNICK

Tradition, based on the Biblical test, has ascribed many virtues to our first patriarch, Abraham. First and foremost, he is considered to have been the founder of Judaism, the first monotheist in his utter rejection of paganism. (This appears to be the reason why new converts very often take on the Hebrew name of Abraham ben Abraham.) The outstanding traits attributed to him are those of hospitality, righteousness, peace-seeking, and obedience to God's will – and profound concern for the lives of all human beings.

Yet, the Bible makes no human being into a perfect person; even Abraham has his flaws. Most prominent is the claimed self-serving deception he used in calling his wife, his sister (despite partial justification, since she was a half-sister).

It has been said that Abraham's purpose may have been to raise Sarah to a higher social status and thereby to offer her greater protection and distinction. Nevertheless, he has been condemned for this action, for he exposed his wife to possible abduction – which indeed occurred – and rape, which was aborted through divine intervention. Nachmanides (Ramban) in his commentary (Gen. 12:13) states plainly that "our father Abraham sinned greatly, unintentionally, by bringing his righteous wife to possible transgression because of his fear lest they kill him... He should have relied upon Hashem to save him and his wife...".

How shall we interpret his action? Was it one of cowardice, of trying to save his own life? Of seeking an easy way out of a dangerous situation? Could he have spoken thus before realizing the possible consequences? Yet, it is inconceivable that he could have at any time acquiesced to anything happening to Sarah, his wife. How do we resolve these issues? Perhaps by perceiving this repeated incident (i.e. in Egypt and Gerar) from a new standpoint.

We are accustomed, in sizing up a situation or person, to make note or individual incidents, evaluate them, and then weigh their cumulative effect. This

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discrete, perhaps cross-sectional, approach tends to deprive the subject of its life, its continuity. We may be able to illuminate the happenings in Abraham's life through a longitudinal study, by seeking a central theme that runs throughout his interactions with others.

What, then, is this basic theme, this life-style of Abraham? It is his profound concern with preserving human life. From this one aim all his acts stem and can be explained, in conjunction with, of course, his deep faith and obedience to divine command. Let us trace them historically.

Abram is commanded to leave his ancestral home and to wander over strange lands where he knows no one. He is given a blessing, which he accepts, but remains concerned about the welfare of all those with him. Early he realizes that the moral standards of these new peoples are not his and that frictions and dangers may develop, so he takes precautions.

This approach is clearly expressed in his response later to Abimelech, king of Gerar (Gen. 20:11): *I thought surely there is no fear of God in this place and they will kill me because of my wife... so when God made me wander from my father's house, I said to her: ...whatever place we come to, say there of me "He is my brother."* Evidently this verbal agreement preceded any expected incident whatsoever.

Thus, his fundamental intent – in varied situations – was to prevent, if he could help it, confrontations that might lead to conflict and might be life-threatening.

Let us expand this view in evaluating the events at Gerar and in Egypt. It is hardly likely that Abraham would just allow himself to be killed. He could fight. He had sufficient manpower to defend his own and ward off attacks. He was able to pursue and battle four kings to save the life of his nephew Lot and his family. Combat was not the issue. Rather to avoid a situation that might result in harm to people close to him, he permitted Sarah to be taken. He had full faith that once he did his share, carried out his task – as he saw it – peacefully, he would obtain divine intercession on his and his wife's behalf. Indeed, the Lord says to Abimelech of Abraham that he is "a prophet" and *will intercede for you to save your life* (Gen 20:7).

Thus, Abraham's deception was only intended to be a temporary ruse, a half-lie, to avoid conflict with strangers who might seek to kill him. Otherwise, we would have to assume that he was willing to have his wife defiled, something

totally incomprehensible, and actually take the chance of losing her once she entered the harem of a king. Note, for example, the wrathful reaction of the sons of Jacob on discovering that their sister, Dina, had been violated: *...because he* (i.e. the violator) *had committed an outrage in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, a thing not to be done ... Should our sister be treated like a harlot* (Gen. 34: 7,31). Obviously, the tradition of defending the sexual purity of Hebrew women had long before been established.

It can also be assumed that Abraham acted in this way in order to relieve any anxiety or terror Sarah would feel if her husband were to challenge strange soldiers coming to his encampment with the deliberate purpose of carrying her off by force.

A similar attitude can be applied to the sacrifice of Isaac. Again, Abraham, in full acceptance of a divine decree, sets out with his son to a far place fully prepared to sacrifice his own son. On the way up the mountain Isaac questions him: *where is the sheep for the burnt-offering?* Abraham replies that *God will see to the sheep for the burnt-offering* (Gen. 22:7-8). Was Abraham lying? To the best of his knowledge, there was no sheep waiting on the top of the mountain to be sacrificed.

Then why did he say those words? One reason would be to relieve the mind of the lad, to remove any distress he might be sensing. The other more profound reason would be that he really believed that somehow – he knew not how – his son would be, indeed, had to be saved. Had he not been promised time and again (Gen. 12: 2,7; 13: 15–16; 15: 4–5; and 17: 1–8, 16) that from his loins a great people would arise? So how could his son, then, die?.

What, then, was the nature of this test? As Dr. Hertz discusses this theme (comments on Gen. 22:1); "A test is never employed for the purpose of injury but to certify the power of resistance". The sacrifice of Isaac revealed Abraham's total commitment to obedience, his readiness to contain his fears and his questioning while maintaining his utmost faith in the justice and promise of the Almighty.

The same analogy applies to the two incidents with Sarah. Since Abraham had been commanded to travel to new lands, he had to accomodate himself – despite his better judgement – to the ways of those lands. Yet he had the utmost reliance on the Deity that in some manner he and his would be saved. In the meantime, he could prevent bloodshed.

In this vein, Abraham did not protect his claim to the well he dug that was challenged by the people of Gerar and left the area to avoid any altercation. This

happening was only mentioned when Abimelech wanted to make a treaty with him (Gen. 21: 25-26).

Similarly, when the opposing shepherds quarreled over water, Abraham, to avoid strife, asked his nephew, Lot, to choose whatever living space he desired and he, Abraham, would accept what was left (Gen. 13: 5–12).

On the other hand, Abraham was not a passive individual; he could speak up. His concern with all human life is apparent in his discussion with God (Gen. 18:17–32) regarding the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah. Despite the lateness of the hour, since the destruction of these cities had already been determined, he spoke forth firmly for justice - for all people.

An interesting sidelight is Abraham's mildness in the midst of aggressive action. Note that when he returned from defeating the four kings he only brought back *all the possessions, he also brought back his kinsman Lot and his possessions, and the women and the rest of the people* (Gen. 14:16). Neither he nor his allies brought back the spoils of war, of the wealth of the foe. Otherwise, Abraham would not have had to ask from the king of Sodom: *For me, nothing but what my servants have used up; as for the share of the men who went with me – Aner, Eshkol, and Mamre – let them take their share* (Gen. 14:21–24). Obviously, he is referring to the king's possessions they had returned; were it not so, their spoils would have been more than sufficient.

His everyday involvement with the welfare of strangers, of weary travelers, is most evident. He did not ask the three men (Gen. 18:3) their names or whence they came. He made himself servant to their simple bodily needs, of washing, resting, and eating. Again his goal was that of sustaining human life. (We know the legend of Abraham's placing his tent at the juncture of roads, so that he could see those who came from any direction)

In the matter of Hagar, who was given to Abraham by Sarah (Gen. 16:2), he did not defend himself against his wife's false accusation (Gen. 16:5) but, for the sake of family peace, left the handmaid in Sarah's control.

On the other hand when Sarah wanted Abraham to send Hagar away with Ishmael (Gen. 21:10–14), he was deeply distressed for their safety. Again, it was only in obedience to divine command that he allowed himself to send Hagar and Ishmael, a woman and her young son, into a wilderness. Even then, he personally provided them with bread and water for their journey. Ultimately, here too, he was relying on divine justice that he was doing the right thing.

A UNIQUE BIBLICAL LAW

BY MIRIAM Y. SHRAGER

There is one law in Torah – one law only – which specifies mutilation for punishment of a criminal. This law is to be found in the Book of Deuteronomy. It reads:

> *If two men get into a fight with each other, and the wife of one comes up to save her husband from his antagonist and puts out her hand and seizes him by his genitals; you shall cut off her hand; show no pity.*[1] (Deut. 25:11–12).

Why? Why mutilation?

This law carries in its introduction overtones of language and similarities of scene which relate it to the following law in the Book of Exodus:

> *When men fight, and one of them pushes a pregnant woman and a miscarriage results, but no other damage ensues, he (the one responsible) shall be fined according as the woman's husband may exact from him, the payment to be based as the judges determine. But if other damage ensues, the penalty shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.*[2] (Exod. 21:22–25).

The scene for this law is also a brawl between two men. One of them pushes a pregnant woman and a miscarriage occurs. If no additional damage to the woman is evident, the responsible man is to be fined according to the demand of her husband, subject, if necessary, to arbitration. If, however, the pregnant woman loses her life, the man is to be held accountable under Torah's law of "life-for-life", which established standards for assessing body-injuries – with the sole exception of those which result in human death for which no compensation may be

1. "The Torah, The Five Books of Moses", First Section, Second Edition, Fourteenth Impression, 1982, The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia.
2. For the legal meaning of "life for life": Lev. 24:17–18, p. 228.

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offerred or accepted[3], – and for converting those legal standards for body-injuries into equivalent monetary penalties. Here most similarities between the laws of Exod. 21:22–25 and Deut. 25:11–12 appear to end, since the law of Exod. 21:22–25 provides monetary compensation for injury to a man's wife who was not an active participant in a brawl between two men, while the law of Deut. 25:11–12 demands mutilation of a woman who was involved in a fight between two men, one of whom is her husband.

The Hebrew roots of three words, חלץ, ירך, בשר, describe factually, poetically, euphemistically, or synonymously the human genital organs or their issue. Examples of English translations of these words are to be found in the following quotations:

> And Abraham said to the senior servant of his household, who had charge of all that he owned, "Put your hand under my *thigh* ירכי and I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of the earth"(Gen. 24:2–3).

> So the servant put his hand under the *thigh* – ירכו תחת of his master Abraham and swore to him as bidden. (Gen. 24:9).

> And God said to him,
> I am El Shaddai.
> Be fertile and increase;
> A nation, yea an assembly of nations,
> Shall descend from you.
> Kings shall issue from your *loins* מחלציך. (Gen. 35:11).

> All the persons belonging to Jacob who came to Egypt – his own *issue* – יוצאי ירכו aside from the wives of Jacob's sons – all these persons numbered 66 (not including Joseph and Joseph's two sons) (Gen. 46:26).

> And when the time approached for Israel to die, he summoned his son Joseph and said to him: "Do me this favor, place your hand under my *thigh* – ירכי תחת as a pledge of your steadfast loyalty: please do not bury me in Egypt. When I lie down with my fathers, take me up from Egypt and

3 Num. 35:31–32.

bury me in their burial place". He replied, "I will do as you have spoken". And he said, "Swear to me". And he swore to him. Then Israel bowed at the head of the bed". (Gen. 47:29–31).

The total number of persons that were of Jacob's *issue* – יוצאי ירך came to seventy, Joseph being already in Egypt (Exod. 1:5).

Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: "When any man has a discharge issuing from his *member* – זב מבשרו he is unclean... (Lev. 15:2). (See also Lev. 15:7, 15:13, 15:16).

The term בשר – flesh and ירך – thigh, is used in the following passages to connote female genitalia:

When a woman has a discharge, her discharge being blood from her *body*בבשרה, she shall remain in her impurity seven days; whoever touches her shall be unclean until evening (Lev. 15:19).

Here the priest shall administer the curse of adjuration to the woman, as the priest goes on to say to the woman – 'may the Lord make you a curse and an imprecation among your people, as the Lord causes your *thigh* to sag את ירכך נפלת and your belly to distend. (Num. 5:21). [See also Num. 5:22 and 5:27].

Thus each Book in Torah demonstrates the use of only a few words to describe factually, poetically, euphemistically, or synonymously the human genitalia. The law of Deut. 25:11–12,[4] however, uses the root of a different Hebrew word, בוש. ("shame"), and this law is translated as follows:

If two men get into a fight with each other, and the wife of one comes up to save her husband from his antagonist and puts out her hand and seizes him by his genitals (במבשיו), *you shall cut off her hand; show no pity.*

Since this law does not state the effect of the woman's action upon either or both men, several questions arise regarding the probable cause of her guilt and its extraordinary punishment. Was she to be punished for interfering in the brawl? If so, as a wife? Or as a woman? Or, was she to be punished for inflicting physical damage on her husband's opponent? If so, what kind of injury? And to what degree? Potential, temporary, or permanent? Minimum or maximum?

4. Preempted in a footnote of Meek's translation of Middle Assyrian Law No. 8.

Under this law the extreme punishment to be exacted from the wife for her interference in the brawl was generally understood throughout the ages as due to her flagrant immodesty. Despite her natural concern for her husband's well-being, the admonition is given: *you shall cut off her hand; show no pity.* (Deut. 25:12b). As a woman, rather than as a wife, her conduct might have been considered more reprehensible, a display of female insolence combined with female interference. In either case, however, — interfering wife or interfering woman— her action could have tipped unjustly the scale of victory in favor of one of the two combatants.

Throughout the ages the punishment to be inflicted under Deut. 25:11–12 might also have been understood to relate to the kind and amount of physical damage which the wife's action had caused her husband's antagonist. But this law, which tells us the part of the body involved does not indicate nor describe the degree of injury sustained by it! No qualifying words are to be read in it. Therefore, a standard for assessing the amount of physical violence and its result is missing, and the relationship between this particular crime and its punishment has been obscured:

Obscured, perhaps, because the solemn oaths which an aged Abraham demanded of his senior servant, and a dying Jacob demanded of his son Joseph, *...put your hand under my thigh,...* expressed euphemistically that the hand was to be placed in contact with the genitals, believed to be the physical seat of generation. Thus, the person taking such an oath swore to God on his unborn progeny to fulfill it. That this was probably a variant of a general belief throughout the ancient Near East before and after the Hebrew patriarchal period may be indicated by reference to Middle Assyrian Law No. 8, Tablet A1:[5]

> "If a woman has crushed a seignior's testicle in a brawl, they shall cut off one finger of hers, and if the other testicle has become affected along with it by catching the infection even though a physician has bound (it) up, or she has crushed the other testicle in the brawl, they shall tear out both her [eyes][6]

5. Translated by Theophile J. Meek, *"Ancient Near East Texts Relating to the Old Testament"*, James B. Pritchard, Editor, Third Edition with Supplement, 1969, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, p. 181.

6 Translated by Theophile J. Meek, *"Ancient Near East Texts..."*.

A comparison of Middle Assyrian Law No. 8 and Deut. 25:11–12 shows that the Middle Assyrian Law is concerned with the crime of a woman directly involved in a brawl with a man whose testis or testes she has injured. Middle Assyrian Law No. 8 defines a minimum and maximum degree of physical injury resulting from the woman's attack, and it recognizes that additional damage may develop from the injury originally sustained. Middle Assyrian Law No. 8 establishes the minimum penalty for this crime as the cutting off of one of the woman's fingers, and the maximum penalty as the tearing out of both her eyes.

The law of Deut. 25:11–12 concerns the wife of one of two men engaged in a brawl. In her effort to defend her husband, she seizes her husband's opponent by his genitals. This law does not distinguish degrees of physical injury, and the wife is to be penalized for such conduct by having her hand cut off.

It may be presumed that each of the women who is the subject of these laws would have acted under emotional stress: the woman of Middle Assyrian Law No. 8 because she was an active participant in the fight, the wife in Deut. 25:11–12 because she wished to protect her husband.

While Theophile J. Meek dates the Middle Assyrian Laws inscribed on the clay tablets excavated from Ashur to the reign of Tiglath-Pileser I, 12th century B.C.E., he also states that the laws on these tablets may go back to the 15th century. It is significant, therefore, that both the Middle Assyrian Law No. 8 and the law of Deut. 25:11–12 legislate regarding the sexual injuries of males, caused by the violent conduct of females. It is, however, most surprising that both laws should penalize such crimes with mutilation. Mutilation is not an uncommon penalty among the fifty-nine Middle Assyrian Laws of tablet A 1, but punishment by mutilation can be found in Torah solely in the law of Deut. 25:11–12.

I suggest that Middle Assyrian Law No. 8 continues to reflect the general ancient Near East in the masculine genital organs as the source of human procreation, and that the law of Deut. 25:11–12 expresses the variant Hebrew belief in the genitals as the dynamic seat of a man's vitality, and of his descendants. Accordingly, when the wife seizes the genitals of the man with whom her husband is brawling, she has damaged his "flesh", and has imperilled his future "issue", the yet-unborn "offspring of his thigh", or "loins". As her crime may transcend the life of her victim, her punishment is to be extreme — and unique.

[Please turn to page 159 for editorial comment]

REFLECTIONS OF READERS

WATER IN BIBLICAL TIMES

BY ROBERT KUNIN

Dedicated to the memory of Rabbi Joshua Kohn, former member of the Editorial Board of Dor le Dor, and to honor his wife, Priva חבדל לחיים ארוכים.

At times we fail to realize the importance of water to our health and well-being. Our newspapers, TV and radio media occasionally bring the topic to our attention. For example, we are told that millions of people are dying in Ethiopia and areas south of the Sahara in Africa, the reason being that it has not rained significantly in this area of the world for several years. Further, even with some rain in this area, the situation will be hopeless because this area of the world is beset with an impossible agricultural system. The agriculture of this area of the world has essentially been destroyed.

To put this scenario into perspective, one must look at some facts. For example, it requires 600 lbs. of water to raise one pound of grain and several pounds of grain are required to raise one pound of meat. It is for this reason that people in many areas of the world rarely eat meat.

For physiological purposes, an adult requires an intake of approximately one quart of water daily to keep alive. However, for cooking, washing and sanitary purposes, each household in the United States requires approximately 50–75 gallons of water per day per person. Of course, this implies that the water be relatively pure. We could not, for instance, survive on sea water nor even on brackish water. One might be interested in noting that in many countries of the world, practically all of the people depend upon waters whose compositions are outside of the limits set by the U.S. Public Health Service and the World Health Organization for potable water.

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On top of all of these problems, our best water supplies and reserves even in the United States, are being polluted with a myriad of chemicals, many of which paradoxically, are truly important to our well-being. We cannot blame all of these pollution problems on industry. The upward trend in the United States with respect to waterborne diseases can be attributed to pathogenic bacteria and virus particles emanating from sewage entering our water supplies. More people are becoming ill today as a result of diseases arising from water contaminated from sewage. Our sewage plants are behind in their capability to treat sewage properly and money is not available to improve these plants and to build new plants. Cesspools have been located too close to our potable water wells even in many *affluent* areas.

This brief introduction tells us about the situation that exists today with our water supplies. Historically, it is of interest to reflect upon the water situation in biblical times.

Our first source of information on water in the Bible starts with the Book of Genesis, Chapter 1.

From reading the first few verses of Genesis, it is of interest to note that there was water before there was dry land and before there were animals and man. There was also light before there were man and animals. Man and animals could not, of course, exist without water and light. Hence, the "Divine Plan" was most ingenious, orderly and consistent with modern biological concepts.

It is also of interest to note that, at present, approximately 75% of the surface of the earth is occupied by water. This was also the case after the sixth day of creation. No water was destroyed since Creation. We have been cycling and recycling water since creation in a fantastic natural process. We must therefore conclude that we are all drinking the same water that was consumed by Adam, Eve, Moses, etc. This natural recycling of water was also part of the "Divine Plan" – The Water Cycle – a purification process involving evaporation of lakes, rivers, seas and oceans and subseqent formation of rain through condensation as described in Genesis, Chapter 2.

We must be cognizant of the fact that the population of the earth has changed considerably since the time of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve had an infinite volume of water available to them, but now four billions of people must share this same volume of water. Further, all of the water available to Adam and Eve was pure, pristine and potable; however, most all of our

water that is on this earth today is either sea waters or brackish waters that are not suitable for potable or agricultural purposes. Our waters have reached this state as the rains and rivers percolated through and over rock formations and soils, leaching various salts which end up in our oceans and seas. This is an irreversible process with most of our oceans and seas becoming more and more saline. Although man cannot use these saline waters for potable and agricultural purposes without tremendous expenditures of energy, sources of food can thrive in such saline waters and the majority of the people of the world derive a large portion of their diet from fish that grow in the seas and oceans. However, as we pollute our oceans and seas, the fish become contaminated and cannot be used for food.

If we continue to read Genesis, we may conclude that our oceans and seas had not as yet become very saline, at least through the period of the Flood and Noah. If the family of Noah and the animals, the "two by twos" sustained themselves for so long a period of time (150 days), the oceans and the seas must have been potable.

However, geochemically, many changes in our water supplies must have transpired between the books of Genesis and Exodus. For example, when we read in Exodus about the episode of Moses at Marah as he led the Israelites through the desert to the Promised Land, we learn of the existence of the "bitter" or "brackish" water as we refer to it today. We also learn of the beginning of water treatment, as Moses (Exodus Chapter 15 vs. 23–25) made the "bitter" water of Marah "sweet" by casting the bough of the tree into the "bitter" water.

The Book of Joshua and modern archeology give us another view of the Israelites dealing with the water problems during the biblical period. When Joshua and the Israelites entered Canaan, the Israelites complained that the Canaanites and Philistines were strongly entrenched in the fertile lowlands. The Israelites could only occupy the hilly highlands and immediately were faced by two major problems – available arable land and an adequate water supply. By hand, they solved the problem of the terrain by developing terracing and construction of retaining walls. The water problems were solved by constructing cisterns, damming flood waters, etc. The engineering powers of the Israelites emerged, by their developing an ingenious water system for Jerusalem, using aqueducts, tunnels, cisterns and reservoirs.

It is obvious that the Jewish Bible affords us an excellent view of water practices during biblical times. Two interesting conclusions emerge. First, we are currently using or considering the implementation of biblical water treatment practices for purifying our water supplies. Second, the Israelis are currently employing biblical agricultural practices for their arid areas, practices that conserve water. Apparently, the quotation in Ecclesiastes – "There is nothing new under the sun" is still apropos today.

* * * *

BIBLICAL TRIVIA –IV

VAVEI HA'AMUDIM — ווי העמודים

BY CHAIM ABRAMOWITZ

Torah scribes have taken special pride in heading, wherever possible, each column with the same word or letter. Because of the frequent reference to the King in the Book of Esther, the word המלך heads each column in every handwritten מגילת אסתר. In all Torah Scrolls every column except six begins with the letter "vav".

As the word "vav" is both the name of a letter and also means "hook", and the word עמוד means a "column" and also a "pillar", the phrase ווי העמודים (Exodus 38:10), "the hooks of the pillars" was taken to mean also the "vav's" beginning each column of the Sefer Torah.

THE POWER OF CUSTOM

Many Torah leaders have raised their voices against this custom because it may lead scribes to lengthen or shorten letters in order to make it possible for a "vav" to head a column. Rabbi Joseph Karo, in his commentary, the Tur Yoreh Deah (273), admits the inclusion of the six exceptions mentioned above, but calls the "vavei ha'amudim" the product of ignorant scribes and impermissible. He omits mention of it in his own שולחן ערוך, יורה דעה but Rabbi Moshe Isserles makes approximately the same comment in his additions. In spite of all the opposition, the custom still persists.

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MOSES AND JOSIAH

A RABBIS EXPERIENCE WITH HIS CONGREGATION

BY CHARLES A. KLEIN

Many rabbis have found the introduction of guided Torah study during the course of Shabbat and Festival Services to be an effecive way of bringing our people back into the Book. In my own synagogue, the time devoted to studying the Torah portion has led many of our congregants to explore Torah on a deeper level. It has also generated a spontaneity as congregants, unafraid to ask, and daring enough to answer, discover the world of Torah.

On the second day of Pesach, we conducted a Torah study in the synagogue, and it led to some fascinating results. We read that day these verses from II Kings 23:4–6: *And the King commanded Hilkiah the High priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the Lord all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Beth-el. And he put down the idolatrous priest, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to offer in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that offered unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the constellations, and to all the host of heaven. And he brought out the Asherah from the house of the Lord, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped it small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the common people.*

As I considered the action of Josiah described in verse 6, what came to mind was a similar series of actions attributed to Moses in Exodus 32:19-21. There Moses *took the calf which they had made, and burned it with fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon the water, and made the Children*

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of Israel drink of it. The actions of Moses and King Josiah are virtually identical. As I reflected on this comparison, it appeared to me that the author of the verses from II Kings 23 was deliberately attempting to compare the reform of Josiah with the earlier response of Moses to the golden calf. When the Haftorah and its blessings were concluded, I juxtaposed II Kings 23 with Exodus 32 and asked my congregants to arrive at their own conclusions. After years of looking at comparative texts of Torah, one congregant offered the suggestion that the author of II Kings was purposely painting King Josiah with the same colors used in portraying Moses.

As our discussion ensued, another congregant asked that we all look at the conclusion of the Haftorah, II Kings 23:25. Summarizing the life of king Josiah it reads, *And like unto him there was no king before him that turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might according to all the laws of Moses, neither after him arose there any like him.* This verse was considered in juxtaposition to Deuteronomy 34:10, which writes of Moses: *And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.* As we discussed these two verses, it seemed to those present that in the Bible's portrayal of their absolute distinction from all other kings and prophets, King Josiah and Moses are made to appear very much the same.

It remains for me to draw some conclusions from this study. Moses in his time descends from Sinai. When he views the Israelite camp from afar he is angered with the people's construction of the golden calf. As the Torah goes on to describe, Moses sets out to uproot all vestiges of idolatrous worship. In this campaign, Moses smashes the idol, burns it, grounds it into powder, and serves it to the people who participated in its worship. Only through this is he able to restore a purity to the people. In its aftermath, the people can turn once again to God. The destruction of the golden calf, and the subsequent reconciliation between God and the people of Israel it permits, was a necessary prelude to the giving of the second set of tablets at Sinai.

Centuries later, King Josiah responds vigorously to the idolatry of the people. His predecessors have opened Jerusalem and the Temple to a whole range of cults. It remained for this inspired king to bring an end to the pollution of the Temple in Israel. His actions are powerful, as he even carries his reform to the remote high places of Israel. The idols must be smashed,

burned, made into powder, and then sprinkled on the graves of those for whom idolatry was a way of life. King Josiah, like Moses before him, was determined to uproot all idolatry. his courageous actions were a prelude to the restoration of Torah.

Perhaps then, it is Torah which binds these two Biblical figures together. For in the aftermath of Josiah's purification of the Temple, there came a new Matan Torah. For the Torah which had been lost was restored to the people in his days. How fortunate the people of Israel to have both Moses and King Josiah. One brought Torah to Israel. The other, in his time, redeemed it from oblivion and made it once again the heritage of the children of Israel.

* * * *

WORDS OF TORAH

Samson Raphael Hirsh's Commentary on the Torah (Pentateuch),
translated into English by his grandson Isaac Levy

SELECTED AND ARRANGED BY JOSEPH HALPERN

On Genesis 24:27: Who has not discarded His Loving-Kindess and His Truth חסד ואמת. What אהבה is in feelings, חסד is in deeds, love translated into action. אמת is to a certain extent a restricting, or at least a limiting addition. חסד ואמת is an act of love where the love does not run too close to overlooking the truth (not allowing one's heart to run away with one's head, I.L.) It is inclined to accede to the wishes of the beloved one without considering the true worth of these wishes. God's Love is חסד ואמת, it only grants such wishes in which the truth is conserved, which truly do lead to happiness. To see their children married is the dearest wish of parents. If they try to accomplish it at all costs, without consideration of the true essentials (if it is not with a girl with an Abrahamitic disposition, well then we will take one from ענר, אשכל, וממרא or from ארם) then they are endeavouring to do חסד without אמת. But Abraham wanted only חסד together with אמת, and both were granted to him by God.

On Genesis 25:12: These are the descendants of Ishmael... (תלדת)

We only find the word תולדות written מלא דמלא completely "full", with the ו of the root as well as the ו of the plural, twice, viz, אלה תולדות שמים וארץ (Genesis 2:4) and אלה תולדות פרץ (Ruth 4:18); at Esau the radical is missing, everywhere else the ו of the root indicates some deficiency in the begetting, something lacking internally, that of the plural. Here, at Ishmael both are missing. Perhaps the missing ו of the root indicates some deficiency in the extension, the expansion, the increase in number and spreading. The products of heaven and earth reaching from the Divine laws of nature are complete and perfect, both intensively and extensively. Equally, the descendants of Perez, on whom the Jewish hopes of the salvation of mankind are placed. The numerous descendants of Esau are great extensively, but their inner, spiritual, moral selves are still deficient. The word occurs once in reference to Jacob's offspring also with the ו of the root missing (Genesis 37:2) but that is just where, by their sin against Joseph, the fact that the sons of Jacob were still lacking in moral perfection, becomes apparent. The descendants of Ishmael had neither the extensive greatness of Edom, nor the intensive greatness of Isaac, hence תלדת.

עשה תורתך קבע

TRIENNIAL BIBLE READING CALENDAR

March 1987 אדר תשמ"ז

M	Joel 2	א	2	יואל ב'
T	Joel 3	ב	3	יואל ג'
W	Joel 4	ג	4	יואל ד'
Th	Amos 1	ד	5	עמוס א'
F	Exodus 25-27:14	ה	6	תרומה
שבת	Haftarah: I Kings 5-26-6:13	ו	7	הפטרה: מלכים א ה', כו-ו' יג
S	Amos 2	ז	8	עמוס ב'
M	Amos 3	ח	9	עמוס ג'
T	Amos 4	ט	10	עמוס ד'
W	Esther 1-2	י	11	אסתר א-ב'
Th	Esther 3-4	יא	12	אסתר ג-ד'
F	Exodus 27:20-30:1	יב	13	תצוה פ' זכר
שבת	Haftarah: I Samuel 15:1-34	יג	14	הפטרה: שמואל א ט"ו, א-לד
S	Esther 5-7	יד	15	פורים אסתר ה"-ז'
M	Esther 8-10	טו	16	שושן פורים אסתר ח'-י'
T	Amos 5	טז	17	עמוס ה'
W	Amos 6	יז	18	עמוס ו'
Th	Amos 7	יח	19	עמוס ז'
F	Exodus 30:11-34	יט	20	כי תשא
שבת	Haftarah: I Kings 18:1-39	כ	21	הפטרה: מלכים א י"ח, א-לט
S	Amos 8	כא	22	עמוס ח'
M	Amos 9	כב	23	עמוס ט'
T	Obadiah	כג	24	עובדיה
W	Micah 1	כד	25	מיכה א'
Th	Micah 2	כה	26	מיכה ב'
F	Exodus 35-40	כו	27	ויקהל פקודי פ' החדש
שבת	Haftarah: Ezekiel 45:16-46:18	כז	28	הפטרה: יחזקאל מ"ה טו-מ"ו,יח
S	Micah 3	כח	29	מיכה ג'
M	Micah 4	כט	30	מיכה ד'

T	Micah 5	31 מיכה ה׳	א
		April	
W	Micah 6	1 מיכה ו׳	ב
Th	Micah 7	2 מיכה ז׳	ג
F	Leviticus 1-5	3 ויקרא	ד
שבת	Haftarah: Isaiah 43:21-44:23	4 הפטרה: ישעיהו מ״ג, כא־מ״ד, כג	ה
S	Nachum 1	5 נחום א׳	ו
M	Nachum 2	6 נחום ב׳	ז
T	Nachum 3	7 נחום ג׳	ח
W	Habakkuk 1	8 חבקוק א׳	ט
Th	Habakkuk 2	9 חבקוק ב׳	י
F	Leviticus 6-8	10 צו	יא
שבת	Haftarah: Malachi 3:4-24	11 הפטרה: מלאכי ג׳, ד־כד	יב
S	Song of Songs 1-2	12 שיר השירים א־ב׳	יג
M	Song of Songs 3-4	13 שיר השירים ג־ד׳	יד
T	Passover Exodus 12:21-41	14 פסח שמות י״ב כא־מא	טו
	Haftarah: Joshua 5:2-6:1	הפטרה: יהושע ה׳, ב־ז׳, א	
W	Leviticus 22:26-23:44*	15 פסח ויקרא כ״ב, כ־ כ״ג, מד*	טז
	Haftarah: II Kings 23:1-25*	הפטרה:מלכים ב כ״ג, א־כה*	
Th	Song of Songs 5-6	16 שיר השירים ה־ז׳	יז
F	Exodus 33:12-34:26	17 שמות ל״ג, יב־ל״ד, כו	יח
שבת	Haftarah: Ezekiel 37:1-14	18 הפטרה: יחזקאל ל״ז, א־יד	יט
S	Song of Songs 7-8	19 שיר השירים ז־ח׳	כ
M	Exodus 13:17-15:26	20 פסח שמות י״ג, יז־ט״ו, כו	כא
	Haftarah: II Samuel 22	הפטרה: שמואל ב כ״ב	
T	Deuteronomy 14:22-15:17	21 פסח דברים י״ד, כב־ט״ו, יז	כב
	Haftarah: 10:32-12:6	הפטרה: ישעיהו י׳, לב־י״ב, ו	
W	Habakkuk 3	22 חבקוק ג	כג
Th	Zephariah 1	23 צפניה א	כד
F	Leviticus 9-11	24 שמיני	כה
שבת	Haftarah: II Samuel 6:1-7:17	25 הפטרה: שמואל ב ו׳, א־ז׳, יז	כו
S	Zephaniah 2	26 יום השואה צפניה ב׳	כז
M	Zephaniah 3	27 צפניה ג׳	כח
T	Haggai 1	28 חגי א׳	כט
W	Haggai 2	29 חגי ב׳	ל

*Only in the Diaspora *רק בחוץ לארץ

April-May 1987 — אייר חשמ"ז

Th	Zechariah 1	30 May	א זכריה א
F	Leviticus 12-15	1	ב תזריע מצורע
שבת	Haftarah: II Kings 7:3-20	2	ג הפטרה: מלכים ב ז', ג־כ
S	Zechariah 2-3	3	ד זכריהו ב'־ג'
M	Isaiah 10-32-11-12	4	ה יום העצמאות ישעיה י', לב־י"א, יב
T	Isaiah 4	5	ו זכריהו ד'
W	Isaiah 5	6	ז זכריהו ה'
Th	Isaiah 6	7	ח זכריהו ו'
F	Leviticus 16-20	8	ט אחרי מות קדושים
שבת	Haftarah: Amos 9:7-15	9	י הפטרה: עמוס ט', ז־טו
S	Zechariah 7	10	יא זכריהו ז'
M	Zechariah 8	11	יב זכריהו ח'
T	Zechariah 9	12	יג זכריהו ט'
W	Zechariah 10	13	יד זכריהו י'
Th	Zechariah 11	14	טו זכריהו י"א
F	Leviticus 21-24	15	טז אמר
שבת	Haftarah: Ezekiel 44:15-24	16	יז הפטרה: יחזקאל מ"ד, טו־כד
S	Ezekiel 12	17	יח זכריהו י"ב
M	Ezekiel 13	18	יט זכריהו י"ג
T	Ezekiel 14	19	כ זכריהו י"ד
W	Malachi 1	20	כא מלאכי א'
Th	Malachi 2	21	כב מלאכי ב'
F	Leviticus 25-27	22	כג בהר בחקותי
שבת	Haftarah: Jeremiah 16:19-17:14	23	כד הפטרה: ירמיהו ט"ז, יט־י"ז, יד
S	Malachi 3	24	כה מלאכי ג'
M	Psalms 1	25	כו תהילים א'
T	Psalms 2	26	כז תהילים ב'
W	Psalms 3	27	כח יום ירושלים תהילים ג'
Th	Psalms 4	28	כט תהילים ד'

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