The Biblical Herem

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CHAPTER 8

SAMUEL-KINGS

I: I SAMUEL 15

1 Samuel 15 is one of the most important chapters for the study of דָּם שָׁם in the entire Hebrew Bible. It begins with a speech by the prophet Samuel in which, after emphasizing that he is the holder of the prophetic office by virtue of which Saul was anointed king, Samuel delivers the order for the דָּם שָׁם to be executed in what is to us moderns a bloodcurdling fashion. The Amalekites of every age and all their livestock are to be דָּם שָׁם and therefore slaughtered (1 Sam 15:1-3). Nothing is said of the material booty, presumably because the chapter focuses so markedly on Saul's handling of the captured living. This is part of the economy of the Hebrew narrative, which as in the case of the narrative of the binding of Isaac (Gen 22), can be positively laconic.

Before dealing with the דָּם שָׁם, it is necessary to make a preliminary excursus on the provenance of the chapter. In a recent article on this chapter, D. Edelman writes:

That v.2 alludes directly to Exod.17.8-16 and Deut. 25:17-19 is almost universally acknowledged, as is the indirect dependence of vv. 3, 18, and 21 on holy war prescriptions in Deut. 20.10-20. Treatment of the Amaleqites is to go beyond the special norms set out there.¹

This approach, if correct, would rob this chapter of any significant new data for analysis, since it would not reflect the period of Saul or the years following his demise.² It would merely be a fresh instance of the deuteronomizing in Joshua 10. The דָּם שָׁם is the focus here as it seldom is elsewhere; is it an archaic account or does it rely on late deuteronomistic דָּם שָׁם traditions?

The consensus on the subject of the Book of Samuel in the 'deuteronomistic history,' is that this is the book most lightly touched by the hands of the deuteronomistic school of redactors. In the introduction to his recent commentary, P. Kyle McCarter phrases it this way: "The most striking aspect of the Deuteronomistic redaction of Samuel, whether Josianic or Exilic, is its sparseness."³ He then goes on to assign 1 Samuel 15 to a middle, though still pre-Deuteronomistic prophetic stratum.⁴ Yet in contradiction to that position, he says in a comment on the commencement of the chapter:

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¹ D. Edelman, "Saul's Battle Against Amaleq (I Sam 15)," JSOT 35 (1986), 75.
² Ibid. 80. Edelman sees no historical value in the chapter, but she does mention one crucial factor; that the central character (to the author) was not Saul or Samuel but YHWH.
⁴ Ibid. 20.
"The phrasing of Saul’s instructions points in detail to the passage...in Deut 25:17-19." In fact, the phrasing in 1 Samuel 15:1-3 points to the opposite conclusion.

Under the influence of Noth’s Deuteronomic History hypothesis, the Book of Samuel has sometimes been handled in a rather peculiar way. Yet one has but to turn to the first chapter of the book, and one is breathing a rarified and pre-deuteronomic air. The language in its diction, and idioms, and even in its subject matter which involves the shrine at Shilo, barely mentioned in the literature with affinities to Deuteronomy, is as unlike deuteronomic Hebrew as Hemingway’s English is unlike Defoe’s. Here, in a chapter dealing with warfare, a subject which tends to develop a vocabulary which is consistent over time (barring innovations in technology, formations, and so on, which came slowly in antiquity; cf. the phalanx, invented for the army of Philip II of Macedon in the mid-4th century, and smashed for the first time by the Roman maniples at Cynoscephalae in 197), it may, in general, be more difficult to discover which source has the priority. But the narrative of 1 Samuel 15 uses a totally different vocabulary in describing the content of the הָרָע than any of the הָרָע accounts in books where the deuteronomic school has had a more marked sway. 1 Samuel 15 evinces nothing more than an acquaintance with the general tradition that Amalek attacked Israel shortly after the departure from Egypt; nothing marks it as dependent on the particular formulations of Deuteronomy 25 and Exodus 17. Of the sources dealing with Amalek found in Exodus 17, Deuteronomy 25, and 1 Samuel 15, the latter could be the earliest of the three. It very clearly is earlier than the passage from Deuteronomy from which it has been said to derive. Deut 25:17-19 itself supplies data not found in Exodus, which can be said to contradict it. For example, Exod 17:8-15, gives no account of Amalek’s attacks on stragglers, which means that either D invented it, or had another source.

There is only one line that can be validly adduced for comparison between 1 Sam 15:1-3 and Deut 25:17-19, i.e. Deut 25:17-18a:

ארליך יָּדָם סְעָרַּת לָּא חַלּוֹק אֲשֵׁר חֶבְּלוֹק אֲשֵׁר חֶבְּלוֹק אֲשֵׁר חֶבְּלוֹק

Remember what Amalek did to you on the way after you left Egypt, how it met you on the road....

It is similar to 1 Sam 15:2:

לֹא יָּדָם אֲשֵׁר חָצִית אֲשֵׁר חָצִית אֲשֵׁר חָצִית אֲשֵׁר חָצִית

Thus says YHWH of hosts: I seek vengeance for what Amalek did to Israel, that he attacked Israel on its way up from Egypt.

The verse from Deuteronomy is in its own typical style. The verse from 1 Samuel, on the other hand, expresses itself in a wholly undeuteronomic

5 Ibid. 265.
The familiar description of the deity as מֹסֶר סְדָּדִים כְּרַנֵּקָה is actually not found in the Book of Deuteronomy; it is basically the province of the prophets from Isaiah to Malachi. In the books from Deuteronomy to Kings, the warlike expression מֹסֶר סְדָּדִים כְּרַנֵּקָה rarely occurs; it is found only a few times in Kings (twice in the same formalized oath in 1 Kgs 18:15, 2 Kgs 3:14, twice in the self-same expression of zealotism for God: 1 Kgs 19:10, 14; a fifth occurrence 2 Kgs 19:31=Isa 37:32). Of the historical books, Samuel is the one with the most variegated and alive usage, although even in the Book of Samuel מֹסֶר סְדָּדִים כְּרַנֵּקָה appears in a total of ten verses. The distribution clearly demonstrates that it is not the deuteronomistic school which is responsible for the dissemination of "Lord of Hosts," but that the phrase was chosen by individual prophets and prophetic writers. As I read P. D. Miller, he considers it to be either part of the oldest divine name, of which YHWH is but a hypocoristicon, or an early epithet of YHWH.7

The same pattern obtains for the other phrases in which the 1 Samuel 15 verse differs from the deuteronomistic phraseology. In the semantic field of punishment, the verb יַשְׁתַּל occurs but once in the Book of Deuteronomy, namely in Deut 5:9—in the Ten Commandments. M. Sternberg translates יַשְׁתַּל in 1 Sam 15:2 as "remember," which is logical, since the root is sometimes used in parallel with יָרֵד, but this is not a possibility entertained by the lexic.8

The phrase or expression מֹסֶר סְדָּדִים, which S. R. Driver pointed to as an example of military idiom,9 is represented in Deut 25:18 by the more characteristically deuteronomistic use of a suffixed participle, יַשְׁתַּלוֹ. Driver's position has recently been attacked by P. K. McCarter, on the grounds that the supporting verse Driver cited, 1 Kgs 20:12, was "hopelessly corrupt."10 This characterization is not obligatory. J. Gray in his commentary did not deem it so, but in support of Driver added yet another possible occurrence to 1 Kgs 20:12, namely Ezek 23:24, admittedly a difficult verse (Gray's idea was adopted, with diffidence, by the NJV).11 Thus Driver's idea remains a lively possibility; whereas McCarter finds the MT's מֹסֶר inexplicable.12

Another possibility for interpreting the expression מֹסֶר is to work on the assumption that the idiom expressed is not complete in itself but abbreviated. In this case, the native Hebrew speaker would automatically supply the missing element. A. B. Ehrlich suggested supplying the word "sword" ( GlobalKey), drawing on Exod 32:27—surely an idea that should not be ignored.13 Still

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another idea, drawing on the LXX translation, would be to supply ר琛, an idiom which can be used in a confrontational sense, as the BDB (q.v.) documents. A similar expression in Akkadian, panišu sakānu, meaning “to attack,” adds indirect support. This last suggestion has the advantage of according with the LXX without resort to the text of Deut 25:18 to fill in the “inexplicable” MT of Samuel, as McCarter does, although the Greek of Deut 25:17f. is not the same as the Greek of 1 Sam 15:2. It is best to retain the ‘difficult reading’ as another example of pre-deuteronomic idiom. If deuteronomic language represents the latest stratum in the Hebrew of the Book of Samuel, then there is every reason to believe that non-deuteronomic idiom comes from an earlier era.

In speaking of the Exodus from Egypt, 1 Sam 15:2 uses the older form (as I have argued in connection with Deut 20:1) לָעַל, as against the later לָעַל, found only once in the Book of Deuteronomy in ch. 20, which I placed in the time of Jeroboam II. It should be clear that if a dependence exists here, it is to be found in the opposite direction; Deut 25:18 is, if anything, dependent on 1 Sam 15:2, not contrariwise. Nor, as pointed out above, is the wording of 1 Sam 15:3 describing the הָרַע related to the wording in Deuteronomy, Joshua, or Judges. Also, the injunction not to have pity (using the verb יָשָׁר) is not found with the הָרַע in deuteronomic texts, though it is found close by (Deut 13:9). The injunction does not appear in Deuteronomy 20 at all (except in the somewhat different form, “Do not let a soul live!”). It does appear in Deut 7:4, but with a different verb (לָעַל). Moreover, there is nothing deuteronomic about 1 Sam 15:18,21. The sequence of phrases in v.18 is in fact unique. This is the one time in the Bible that the Amalekites are called sinners. 1 Sam 15:21 tells of an unprecedented event, and employs a unique expression הָרַע הָנַח הָחֲנוֹן, “choice of the הָרַע.” The dependence of these two verses on anything deuteronomic is impossible to sustain.

Additional considerations help demonstrate that the idea that 1 Samuel 15 is ‘indirectly influenced’ by Deut 20:10-20 does not do justice to the chapter. Deut 20:17 lists those nations to be subject (at least theoretically) to the הָרַע, among which Amalek is conspicuous by its absence. Only in a rather distant pericope is the Amalek question addressed (Deut 25:17-19), and the solution to it, not to forget to blot out its memory from under the sky, is that of Exod 17:14. What that meant in practical terms was not stated, but only in 1 Samuel 15 is the ancient hostility towards Amalek put forth in terms of הָרַע. In the light of this the further point that in 1 Sam 15:19 the expression of “to do evil in the eyes of YHWH” is “typically deuteronomistic,” has little validity. In fact, this is common biblical and Near Eastern (Egyptian, Sumerian and Semitic) usage, as can be seen in part from the inu “eye” entry (CAD I/1 156a) which attests to similar expressions, e.g. EA 131:26 maris ana IGI -nu “it is distressing to us.” The

14 See, for now CAD N1 249b.
stipulated “indirect dependence” of 1 Samuel 15 on Deuteronomy does not work. In fact, it is only an impediment to fruitful exegesis of the chapter.

All sources agree that Amalek constituted a special case, a unique occasion for divine wrath. It is clear from the foregoing, however, that 1 Samuel 15, like 1 Samuel 1, breathes a different and older air than Deuteronomy 25 (or 20, as formulated), and that this is evidenced by a Hebrew which differs linguistically from D, but not in the direction of exilic or post-exilic Hebrew, both of which differ from early biblical Hebrew due to normal linguistic development, and in the late period, due to the growing influence of the Aramaic language.

C. H. W. Brekelmans pointed to another factor in attaining a more realistic assessment of the connection between Deuteronomy and 1 Samuel 15:

We must naturally make plenty of room for an inner connection or memory of the prophetic movement, which flowed from Samuel and Elijah towards Hosea and Deuteronomy (my translation).\textsuperscript{17}

In other words, without good evidence to the contrary, we may expect Deuteronomy to be dependent on earlier prophetic traditions. Jeremiah’s pairing together of Moses and Samuel (Jer 15:1), “YHWH said to me, if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me....” indicates the high standing Samuel had with a prophet of a much later period.

The implications of the pre-deuteronomic dating of the 1 Sam 15 tradition of the הַרְשַׁ אֵבָג against Amalek are quite important for our study. The chapter is likely to stem back to the earliest part of the Samuel traditions, certainly no later than the ninth century B.C.. Moreover, as was the case in comparing the MI to 2 Kings 3, the MI account was straightforward and unmagical, while 2 Kings 3 was not. 1 Samuel 15 is like the MI in this respect. YHWH plays a role, as Kemosh did in the MI, but the narrative is straightforward and unmagical. In contrast, Exod 17:8-17, which has been supposed to be another source of this chapter, reduces the battle account to Moses’s miraculous doings which determine the course of the struggle. One would as soon suppose that the present text of the MI is based on an account containing supernatural intervention like that found in Exodus 17.

Whether or not the events of 1 Samuel 15 occurred as exactly described, the הַרְשַׁ אֵבָג against Amalek seems to reflect an early stage in the adaptation of the practice from Israel’s neighbors. The idea that spoils that were הַרְשַׁ אֵבָג were eligible for sacrifice reflects a certain confusion of the related ideas encapsulated in the roots שלפ “to be holy,” and הַרְשַׁ אֵבָג; the latter was never applied to cult worship in Israel. In any case, we certainly have here one of the earliest extant biblical narratives which portrays the הַרְשַׁ אֵבָג. In contrast to the lists of nations, which many scholars say have no relation to the population of pre-Israelite Canaan, no one doubts the existence of Amalek, and Amalek’s depredations in every period made it a group that was extremely eligible for the הַרְשַׁ אֵבָג.

\textsuperscript{17} C. H. W. Brekelmans, \textit{De herem in het Oude Testament} (Nijmegen, 1959), 112.
One of the most difficult tasks in biblical study is to attempt to transcend our own 20th century Western orientation in trying to assess biblical texts. In this respect, anyone viewing biblical material from the standpoint of הֵרֵם is privileged, since it is in itself a non-Western concept. The original audience for which this story was intended grew up in that non-Western culture, and so required much less persuasion as to the rectitude of Samuel's actions (cf. the esteem in which he was later held; Jer 15:1, Ps 99:6). Moreover, the fall of Saul in this context was from the start more explicable to the audience for which the chapter was written than that of the present day.

To understand why these things are so, we must revert to the original problem raised in the chapter, that of Amalek and the הֵרֵם to which it was condemned. Exod 17:8-15 and Deut 25:17-19 delineate the nature of Amalek's crime. Shortly after the deliverance from Egypt, Amalek attacked Israel when it was at its most vulnerable point in the wilderness, to which it was completely unaccustomed. Indeed, it could not even survive there without the continual assistance of YHWH. The anticlimax of the event, the attack coming so swiftly on the heels of YHWH's victory at and over the sea, is truly ludicrous, but one has to attempt to peer under the surface level of narrative to understand Amalek's role as the demonic people whom David called the "enemies of YHWH" (1 Sam 30:26, cp. the fate of YHWH's enemies in Ps 37:20).

Yet it is necessary to go back one step further still—to the Exodus itself. Only by placing the Amalekite crime in its full context can one hope to clarify anything. In his interesting book on the "theology of warfare in ancient Israel," M. C. Lind has focused especially on the Reed Sea 'incident' as a "paradigm for YHWH's saving action in Israel's difficult experiences of the future," and added that "later Old Testament writers follow the lead of the writer of this poem (i.e. Exodus 15) in viewing the sea and exodus as an archetypal event." So far so good. However, he also seems to believe that Exodus 14-15 occurred basically as described, and therefore one should understand the exodus traditions as historically rooted in a battle of YHWH vs. Egypt! As for a mythic explanation, he argues that there was an "early break with myth" followed by a later "remythologising" under David. The fact is that myth permeates the Hebrew Bible from Genesis to Chronicles, but that it takes on a different appearance in relation to other Near Eastern mythologies due to its lack of divinities to populate the tales. Monotheistic myths may be more subtle than polytheistic myths, as Genesis 1 may be compared to Enuma Elish, but they remain myths. The Exodus as described in Exod 14-15 may reflect some historical relationship between Israel and

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18 M. C. Lind, Yahweh is a Warrior: The Theology of Warfare in Ancient Israel (Scottdale, Pa., 1980), 50, and see ch. 3.  
19 Ibid. 49-60.  
20 Ibid. 56f.
Egypt, but to deny its mythic Gestalt is to deny it its very essence and importance in the thought of ancient Israel.\textsuperscript{21}

It is also important to recognize that myths were not objects that could be discarded like old clothes. Myths perpetually arose in human minds, as they do today.\textsuperscript{22}

The Sea of Reeds narratives are, in fact, cosmogonic in character, and may combine two cosmogonic motifs: 1) the triumph of deity over chaos (Chaoswasser) as seen in the Ugaritic mythology, one exemplar of which is that of Baal's victory over Yamm.\textsuperscript{23} We have a similar myth in much fuller form in \textit{Enuma Elish}, which has a number of elements in common with Exodus 15, although humans had to be pressed into service to substitute for the good and the evil gods who serve in the Babylonian Creation Epic. Thus the Pharaoh and the Egyptian army play the role of Kingu and his demons, while Israel is the equivalent to Marduk's passive supporters. Tiamat (whose corpse forms dry land) is represented in Exod 15:9 by the 'congealing of the waters of the abyss (=chaos)',\textsuperscript{24} which allows the people to cross the tamed chaos to dry land (Exod 15:16).\textsuperscript{25} YHWH and Marduk both harness the wind; as fruit of victory Marduk receives his temple Esagila and YHWH his "sanctuary, the work of your hands" (Exod 15:17), i.e. there is no god of crafts like Kothar to construct it. I would scarcely deny the various differences between the two poems. The cosmogonic element in \textit{Enuma Elish} deals with the creation of the world, Exodus 15 with the creation of the people Israel (15:16). However, both deal with the establishment of world order as epitomized by the housing of deity, a shared cosmogonic element of no little significance.

One should note that cuneiformists agree that \textit{Enuma Elish} was written not to explain the creation of the world but to exalt the upstart Marduk and serve Babylonian political ends. Clearly this ploy succeeded, or Assyria

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{22} For a diametrically opposed view, see (among others) R. Bultmann, \textit{History and Eschatology} (New York, 1957), 23-30 and passim.
\textsuperscript{23} See N. Wyatt, "Who Killed the Dragon?" and literature cited there, in \textit{Aula Orientalis} V (1987), 185-198.
\textsuperscript{24} Cf. H. W. F. Saggs, \textit{The Encounter with the Divine in Mesopotamia and Israel} (London, 1978), 54-63. He concentrates on the monster motif, without dealing at all with the idea of chaos.
\textsuperscript{25} F. M. Cross, \textit{Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel} (Cambridge, Mass., 1973). In a philological note on רָבָּן (128 n.59) Cross attacks the traditional translation of the verb רָבָּן, "to congeal" on comparative philologic grounds. He arrives at a translation of רָבָּן "to foam." This is not satisfactory as it does not make a fitting conclusion for the third in the set of parallel units. "Congeal" is supported by LXX and Vulgate, so that in the absence of strong philological evidence it cannot be simply ruled out, especially as Cross cites the use with milk, where it can mean coagulate, curdle, or in other words, lose its character as a fluid. "Congeal" also fits the context far better, since part of the idea behind the waters being "piled up" is that their normal chaotic movement is being brought to a halt by YHWH's will.
\end{footnote}
would not have imitated it. This does not detract from the validity of the comparison I am making, for much the same may be said of Exodus 15. It is from first to last a hymn of praise and exaltation to YHWH—on this point, content and present context are agreed—who, if the Book of Exodus may be trusted so far, was equally an upstart, and in its references to foreign nations the Song of the Sea made an avowedly (Israelite) political statement.

2) The second cosmogonic element is that of the repelling of a human enemy into the realm of chaos, as exemplified by Exod 15:5, where the waters of the abyss cover the enemy and the threat is safely consigned to chaos. This is precisely the Egyptian view of warfare in which the enemies must be returned to a state of non-existence. This allows the daily re-creation of the world to continue; human survival is thus assured, at least for the time being. All these elements, found elsewhere in the environment, are put together in an original way to meet the needs of Israel's religion; but to deny the mythic in Exodus 14-15 is to close the way to understanding the role of the Amalekites in the larger biblical scheme, as well as to leave unanswered many questions. F. M. Cross, in his well-known treatment of Exodus 15, does not denigrate the importance of the element of myth. He does deny, however, that there is a cosogonic element in the first sense. He argues that there is no battle against chaos, since YHWH manipulates the sea without resistance. However, in the Ugaritic text III A B A, in which Baal fights Yamm, he meets with no active resistance. Yamm reacts to both assaults in a completely passive way. Even fierce Tiamat does not really resist; her demise takes up only a few lines of text. Therefore the contrast is not as great as one might assume. The dramatic element in the Song of the Sea in its exposition of the Divine Warrior theme would be completely lacking were one to suppose the use of דיון and ט"א were entirely devoid of all reference to subduing chaos—chaos is just not personified. To suppose chaos is not a factor would strip an entire level of meaning from the poem.

Speaking of the Ugaritic poem of Aqhat, which is incomplete, S. P. Parker observes that:

Assuming that the poem as a whole would have concluded with the establishment or restoration of order as understood as understood by the culture—and such a conclusion appears to be almost universal in ancient literary works....

It certainly seems that both Enuma Elish and the Song of the Sea illustrate the idea of an “establishment,” of order as understood by the culture.” Perhaps this is why not only Moses and Miriam sing the Song, but the whole people (cp. Judges 5, sung only by Deborah and Barak).

27 F. M. Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, 131-2.
28 Ibid.
No sooner had YHWH exercised his cosmogonic powers, allowing Israel to safely pass through the Un-Welt in two manifestations, Egypt and the Sea, then Amalek arrived on the scene to threaten Israel with non-existence, or in other words, with a return to the Un-Welt (which was also threatening Israel in the form of the desert, of which it might be said the Amalekites are a personification of its deadliest dangers)! It was the timing of this attack that rendered Amalek so heinous in the eyes of the biblical writers and of YHWH, so that Amalek became officially set apart as the “enemies of YHWH” and deserving of being fought against from generation to generation. It was the prophetic understanding of this sort of tradition, of which we surely have only remnants, that in the person of Samuel led to the call for Din. It was the cosmologically required response to a people whom YHWH perceived as having no place in the world order. Therefore Saul’s decision to spare Agag (and the booty) was unacceptable to Samuel, whatever his personal feelings, because he was, as it were, a member of YHWH’s council. The moral dilemma that moderns have in regard to this ruthlessness has been absurdly overemphasized, especially as the wiping out of the Amalekites in a body is rarely commented on in the same light. Yet given the Amalekites role as a threat to world order in the history of Israel—which is portrayed by the Bible as unremitting and unrelieved—and the conception of דינ I have been testing, the only surprising thing is how lightly Saul and the people were treated. Compare what happened to Achan! The reason for this may be that the motive was not to steal from the בָּדַד, but at least ostensibly to sacrifice the proscribed cattle to YHWH. Also, the chapter lacks the same character imputed before to Joshua 6, that of “pure myth.” Thus, at the end of the chapter, Saul might be doomed, but he was not ritually executed, nor was the doctrine of collective responsibility applied here (the Deuteronomistic historian not being in evidence). One might offer more suggestions, but they would be speculative in the absence of data. It is enough to note that King Saul offended less, and was treated more leniently than Achan, the peasant.

On the question of the spoil, the presence of Agag has the function of demonstrating that Saul’s sparing of the cattle was not motivated by pious motives, as he claimed. In fact, no one who understood the term בָּדַד could have so acted except, as in the case of Achan, out of greed. The idea that Saul was afraid of the people seems questionable in view of his previous dealings with them; cf. the episode of the eating on the blood, in 1 Sam 14:31ff., where he upbraided the people with the cry “Sinners!” Talk of sacrifice was mere pretext. He had failed to obey YHWH in this vital matter of

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30 J. Milgrom interprets 1 Samuel 15 so as to make Saul the hero who obeyed God, in *Numbers: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation, JPS Torah Commentary* (Phila., 1990), 430. However, on capturing a king during the דינ, it was incumbent on Saul to kill him, i.e. by hanging, as Joshua did, and which Saul did not do; Samuel had to do it. Saul clearly disobeyed YHWH (cf. 1 Kgs 20:42, which derives its bite from this circumstance. Milgrom’s idea that Saul’s actions against the Gibeonites (referred to in 2 Samuel 2) were a “clear historical precedent” for the דינ of Deuteronomy is interesting.
the Lord's enemies (so 1 Sam 28:18, when the specter of Samuel relays God's verdict). For when in 1 Sam 15:3, YHWH of Hosts had commanded that Israel should have no pity on the enemy (יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהִים אָרְשָׁם), Saul and the people directly disobeyed. The same verb (נָתָנָה לְאָרְשָׁם לְאָרְשָׁם) appears to signal his disobedience to everyone. Interestingly, there is a good likeness in tone and even in content between Saul under interrogation and Adam under interrogation. Each blamed a second party, and each was harshly punished but escaped immediate death.

M. Sternberg has pinpointed another reason for the harsh command to destroy the livestock of Amalek, in addition to YHWH's general discretion in these matters:

Note the verbal analogy devised between Israel's coming revenge and Amalek's periodic invasions in the Gideon era: the prospective "both ox and sheep, both camel and ass" rhymes with the retrospective "they left no sustenance to Israel, neither sheep nor ox or ass...and their camels were without number" (Judges 6:3-5).\[31\]

As the writer goes on to remark, the relation between 1 Sam 15:3 and the Judges tradition is a good example of the biblical notion of divine retribution.\[32\] It also illustrates the feeling of endangerment which the Amalekites engendered in ancient Israel; it was their threat of chaos which resulted in the need for the herem. Saul was only able to deviate from the "commandment of YHWH" because he had so far followed it so as to wipe out the mass of human beings.

C. H. W. Brekelmans felt that this chapter evinced a weakening or shift of the original sense of הֶרֶם to a seeking of the purity of the cult.\[33\] As cult purity, i.e. monotheism in this context, is not an issue in this chapter, the point does not seem to be well taken. Furthermore, if purity of the cult were at issue here, it would merely reflect what I have argued is an ancient facet of the הֶרֶם and inherent to it. In the chapter on the Mesha Inscription, I pointed out that Mesha acted with an exclusive devotion to Kemosh, treating YHWH as an enemy. In the light of this and of biblical religion, it is more likely that the הֶרֶם in Israel was associated with an exclusive YHWHism than not.

It is as a uniquely dangerous and perpetual challenge to the divine order of YHWH that the Amalekite nation appears in the Bible. One might add a small note on the use of הֶרֶם in Deut 25:18: this graphic verb, which could not but remind people of the Hebrew word, בָּט, "tail," gives a suggestion of some monstrous animal (the Chaos-monster) pursuing Israel's stragglers (this is not the case in the other attestation of the verb in Josh 10:19, where it is Israelites who are the subjects of the verb, not the

\[31\] M. Sternberg, "The Bible's Art of Persuasion," 50.
\[32\] C. H. W. Brekelmans, De herem, 114.
\[33\] Cf. our treatment above, which relied on an article which the author, Prof. W. W. Hallo kindly supplied me, "Biblical Abominations and Sumerian Taboos," JQR 76 (1985), 21-40.
objects). S. D. Sperling has pointed out to me that in Enuma Elish (V 59), Marduk twists the tail of Tiamat--Akk. ēgīr zīb-bat-sa (CAD Z 101a)--which adds to the plausibility of the suggestion. In any case, the biblical sources are united in promoting a ruthless end to the Amalekites; a people which had forfeited any place it might have had in YHWH's cosmic order.

A later biblical interpretation of the Amalekite threat appears in the Book of Esther, where Haman the would-be destroyer of the Jews is given the epithet, "Agagite" (Esth 3:1,10 and elsewhere). The epithet is best interpreted as a reference to the Amalekite king, Agag. The scroll thus interprets Haman and Agag as having been among the greatest threats to the existence of Israel. As an aside, it is worth noting that, although the text of Esther lacks overt references to YHWH, by alluding to Agag, who died by the hand of Samuel "before YHWH," the scroll of Esther makes an indirect reference to past divine intervention against Israel's enemies.

It is evident that the debate between Saul and Samuel in the last section of the chapter, as Saul attempts to exculpate himself, revolves around the question of obedience to the Lord and around sacrifice. In the view of some scholars, Samuel's execution of Agag was a sacrifice. In Deut 12:31, human sacrifice is singled out as an abomination of the surrounding nations. The relevance of this may be limited in the present context, but there is nothing in the language used of the killing of Agag (1 Sam 15:33) which smacks of sacrificing Agag; indeed 1 Sam 15:20 explicitly delimits the sacrifice to the sheep and cattle. The expression "before the Lord" refers to the scene of Samuel's execution as being at a sanctuary or where god is present, as in other ancient Near Eastern contexts. This does not make it a sacrifice, any more than when (be it a literary device or no) Utuhegal brings Tiryagan to the temple to die was his death was a sacrifice (cf. our treatment above, ch.2, of the MI's מִרְכָּז, מִדּוֹדִי, and Assyrian examples found under CAD mašaru). For Samuel to turn around and sacrifice Agag would be to fall into the trap that Saul and the people fell into, for Samuel was complaining that sacrifice under the circumstances of מְדֹדִי was the worst kind of disobedience, which would result in Saul's losing his scepter. The verb מַעְטָטָה mentioned in connection with the execution is not a verb used in the cult—if it were it would not be so obscure—but is apparently a verb of separation (KBL s.v.) and was therefore chosen to emphasize Samuel's fulfillment of the botched requirement--1 Sam 15:9 says that of the inanimate booty, only the worst was devoted of the war-מְדֹדִי against Amalek, meaning that the requirements of the מְדֹדִי were flouted in proportion to the people's desire for the spoils. All this would have merited an even more dire divine punishment than that which (quite literally) fell to the lot of Achan. Indeed, this punishment was effected. Just as Israel lost the first round at Ai due to Achan's sacrilegious behavior, this is precisely the reason why in biblical terms Israel suffered such a crushing defeat under Saul in his last battle.

34 C. A. Moore, Esther: Introduction, Translation, and Notes, AB (Garden City, 1971), 35-6, discusses the epithet and arrives at a similar conclusion.
35 Cf. Gilg. VI:154-5, for example.
In 1 Sam 15:32-3, there is an elaborate, if compact, “morality play” showing that Samuel indeed killed Agag out of retribution for his past depredations. It starts with a play on a toponym נינאא, a name that has associations with earthly delights and a next-worldly paradise (Eden). Agag says that the bitterness of dying has left him, an evident word-play on נינאא. Samuel reverses this sanguine attitude with his crisp evocation of the pain of bereavement which Agag had brought upon Israel. So would Agag’s mother be rendered the most bereaved of woman, recalling the ending of the Song of Deborah (the blessed “mother in Israel” is contrasted to the unfortunate “mother of Sisera”). The verb Samuel uses, "render childless," may even link back to the previous verse through an unspoken play onspołeczn, a verb which can mean “to prosper” (1 Sam 18:30). Thus the prophet executes a dialectical reverse of Agag’s sanguine words in more than one way. Agag cannot expect an enjoyable death or afterlife.

The whole question of sacrifice is shaped so as to lead into the poetic oracle in which Samuel denounces disobedience (1 Sam 15:22-3), saying that obedience is better than sacrifice, a general sentiment echoed in the later prophets. The oracle condemned Saul to lose his kingdom in these terms. However, this is not to say that the whole matter of the sacrifice or the whole matter of the לְלֵי is secondary, nor the poem—as much of the narrative has been structured to lead to just such an oracle--but both matters have been artfully worked together from an early stage of composition into a theologically coherent narrative and cautionary tale. Not only Saul but Agag, too, is given the opportunity to speak and both show what manner of men they were, a device characteristic, too, of heroic clashes in Greek epic, e.g. Hector before his death in the Iliad, as elsewhere in the Bible. (Sisera in Judges 5). In this the text is far less slanted against Saul then it could easily have been (and this is partially evidenced by the large number of his adherents in modern scholarship; enough material exists to make his case). The narrative reflects not rabid Saul-hatred, but the historical fact of his fall, which had to be seen as first a fall from grace before his god. Not for the first time in the book, Saul is depicted in his complexity. He is a man who, like King Lear, imagines himself to be doing the right thing and learns differently too slowly, and loses a kingdom..

I would not claim to have penetrated every mystery contained in 1 Samuel 15. The analysis has produced some important gains, nonetheless. It was first shown, by a straightforward comparison of texts (aided by other factors such as distribution, e.g. עָבַד וּלְלֵי is not deuteronomic), that the widespread belief that 1 Samuel 15 is dependent on Deuteronomy is incorrect, helping to place its לְלֵי account in its proper (relative) chronological place. I then brought into play the order/chaos paradigm to explain various ramifications of the unique treatment of Amalek in scripture, as viewed through the prism of the לְלֵי. The mythic depiction of the eternal struggle against chaos served as a forerunner to the use of the לְלֵי as an instrument

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36 KBL 922, wonders if it should be in hiphil like the other instances with this meaning, but this seems unnecessary.
in that struggle. Amalek filled the unenviable role of ‘chaos’ and so served as the object of the war-הָוָד. The exposition of the chapter ended with a glance at how the issues raised early in the chapter are worked through in ways that could not have predicted from any formula, deuteronomic or otherwise.

A NOTE ON EXOD 17:14 AND DEUT 25:17

Two verses in the Torah have related formulations relating to the fate of Amalek (see below for a comment on a third). The first comes in Exod 17:14:

מִיָּמָה עָמָלֵק אָצְלָה עַל עַמּוֹן מִשְׁמָה מְלֻא צִלּוֹת

This is customarily translated as, “For I will surely erase the memory of Amalek from under the heavens.” The equivalent from Deuteronomy is this:

מִיָּמָה עָמָלֵק אָצְלָה עַל עַמּוֹן מִשְׁמָה מִלְּכַה אֲלֵי מִלְּכַה

This is normally translated along these lines, “You must erase the memory of Amalek from under the heavens, you must not forget.” The seeming incongruity between the two statements, viz. that YHWH is to be the actor in Exod 17:14 and Israel is assigned the task in Deut 25:19 follows the line of the passages in Exodus which spoke of YHWH or his agents’ intervention to expel (הָוָד) the primordial peoples, the equivalents of which in Deuteronomy employed the פֶּנֶה, which required human participation.

It is clear that these basically identical formulations come from the world of Near Eastern antiquity. This has already been pointed out above in relation to the Utuhegal inscription (c. 2110 B.C.), which contains Enlil’s command to destroy the name of Gutium. The wording closely resembles that of an Assyrian treaty curse adduced by R. Frankena:37

May Zerbanītu, who gives name (and) seed, destroy your name and seed from the land.

W. W. Hallo informs me that the Akkadian equivalent of the Hebrew expression שָׁמַר נֵם, “erase the name,” is šuma pašātu. Von Soden (AHw 844b) gives a nice example from a middle Babylonian kudurrū or boundary stone (in the D-stem): ša ... sum ili u sarrī ... upTaštiu. Here the writer does not expect the miscreant’s activity to wipe out ‘god and king’ But the transition to the treaty curse (cf. Deut 29:19) and to the Biblical Amalek passages which partake of their character is a slight one, given the way the name of a person was often identified with that person in antiquity in what would today

37 R. Frankena, “The Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon,” Oudtestmentliche Studien namens het oudtestmentisch werkgezelschap in Nederland 14 (Leiden, 1965) 147. The author treats the treaties as essentially one, since they differ only slightly from each other.
be regarded as a magical form of identification of name and person. In treaty curse language, to erase or destroy the name is to destroy something, whether Gutium or Amalek. Although this is not the place to launch a full scale philological investigation of the biblical phraseology in its Near Eastern context, it seems clear that this is a case of רְכֵּה, “memory,” acting as an equivalent to cognate Akkadian zikru, “name,” as it seems to act elsewhere. Therefore the translation “memory” misrepresents the idiom and obscures its background and true meaning. It makes little sense to give an order not to forget to erase the memory (Deut 25:19), since it is the Bible which has in fact perpetuated the memory of Amalek. The writers of Deut 25:19 and Exod 17:14 were not interested in memory but in Amalek’s existence as a fighting force. Thus, the Hebrew formula was a wish to return Amalek to a state of non-existence, like that depicted in the first line of the Babylonian Creation Epic in similar language, enûma elis la nābu šāmānu, ṣapliš ammatu šuma la zakrat (“when heaven on high was not named--the earth below not called by a name”).

The link between the language of the Torah’s Amalek passages and that of 1 Samuel 15 becomes clear. Both are speaking in terms of world order, in the Torah passages in simple negative terms. Amalek is to be drummed out of the world order. The use of the רְכֵּה in 1 Samuel 15 is another, practical way of expressing the same thing, except that it reflects the continuing struggle to build an Israelite Weltordnung worthy of the name. If the Torah passages reflect neo-Assyrian influences (as the vassal treaty parallel to Deut 25:19, Exod 17:14 may indicate), this would be another reason to see 1 Samuel 15 as as the oldest source on the “war against Amalek from generation to generation.”

II: 1 KINGS 20:42

The root רְכֵּה appears only three times in the Book of Kings; 1 Kgs 9:21, 1 Kgs 20:42, and 2 Kgs 19:11. 1 Kgs 20:42 will be first. It is the most interesting of the three occurrences, as it poses a problem of interpretation. 1 Kgs 20:42 reads as follows:

 Heb (the prophet) said to him: thus says YHWH. Since you freed the man of my רְכֵּה from (your) hand, let your life stand instead of his life, and your people instead of his people.

39 Normalization follows CAD E 96a.
40 This section appears, in an earlier form in P.D. Stern, “The herem in 1 Kgs 20,42 as a Hermeneutical Problem” Bib 71 (1990), 43-47.
The harsh judgement at the end of the verse condemns the whole people (or conceivably the army), because of Ahab’s clemency towards Ben Hadad. Some commentator’s have simply assumed that the הדם is mentioned as a normal part of Holy War. There are excellent reasons to dispute that assumption. The concept of ‘Holy War’ is, in biblical studies, most closely associated with the name of Gerhard von Rad. He believed that the הדם was an integral part of the Holy War. This is, as I have argued before, a debatable claim. Holy War was not an Israelite invention, and its main practitioner and Israel’s major model in the period of the monarchy was Assyria. Yet C. H. W. Brekelmans’ firm conclusion that Assyria never practiced an analogue to the הדם still holds true As Assyria was the main actor on the stage, while Israel had a minor role, it is plain that the הדם was not normative Holy War practice

This was true too of Israel. Von Rad certainly regarded the wars of Deborah and Gideon as holy, yet in these and other biblical holy war accounts the הדם is lacking. The account in 1 Kings 20 also lacks anything like 1 Sam 15:3 or Josh 6:17-19, where YHWH sent directions as to what the הדם was to entail. In the latter two instances, the הדם was of maximum severity, but Deut 2:1-5 illustrates a case where the Israelites were permitted to take liberal amounts of the spoils. There was thus no one recipe for the הדם that the prophet could have expected Ahab to follow in the absence of directions. Yet here the prophet does not even tell Ahab to initiate the הדם, as he should have after 1 Kgs 20:13 (the summons to war), according to the analogy of the three passages just cited. To sum up, the concept of ‘Holy War’ does not provide in itself an adequate explanation for the sudden appearance of the word הדם.

Others have assumed that the הדם was an expression of the working of the laws of war in Deuteronomy 20. However, it is hard to see how these laws could have any application to 1 Kings 20. There are only three verses in the chapter that deal with the הדם, namely Deut 20:16-18:

16. הדם: יקנ הדם היסקל המלך חלש ואה ויהי אלף ל-18 דזו הדה

41 E.g., B. O. Long, I Kings: With an Introduction to Historical Literature (Grand Rapids, 1984), 207.
42 Due to his influential book, Der Heilige Krieg im alten Israel, (Zurich, 1951).
45 C. H. W. Brekelmans, De herem, 134-139. Theoretically, the discovery of one document could overturn this conclusion.
46 G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology I, 328f.
16. Only from the cities of these peoples whose portion YHWH your God is giving you shall not allow a soul to live. 17. For you must devote them to destruction—the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites—as YHWH your God has ordered you. 18. In order that they will not teach you to construct the like of their idols which they make for their gods, thus sinning against YHWH.

These verses together with the first part of the chapter make it plain that the law of דירה is intended for offensive warfare under divine aegis against the earlier inhabitants of the land. The purpose is to prevent the spread of idolatry by imitation. In my view, none of this can apply to the situation of 1 Kings 20. Ahab is on the defensive, fighting a ‘far away’ people called the Arameans, who are not among the “primordial nations.” Nor is he portrayed in the Bible or in 1 Kings 20 as a campaigner against idol-worship. Finally, in none of the other texts dealing with Aram or wars against Aram is there any intimation of the דירה. Consequently, Deuteronomy 20 is not the key to understanding 1 Kgs 20:42.

These considerations show that Ahab did not violate the דירה in the same sense that Saul did in 1 Samuel 15. If it were not for the last part of the verse, speaking of the wholesale destruction of the people, one would first think of דרה, II, “net.” The use of the net as a divine weapon goes back at least as far as the example of Eannatum of the First Dynasty of Lagash shows; his stele of the vultures depicts Ningirsu using a net against the enemies of the king (ANEP #298). YHWH, too, uses a net as his weapon (e.g. in Ezek 32:3). As it is, since the context deals with capturing the enemy king, we should view it as a double entendre. On one level, YHWH was angry because upon capturing Ben Hadad—acting as YHWH’s net—Ahab let the fish swim free. On another level, YHWH is condemning Ahab figuratively for, as it were, violating the דירה, even though there was none, technically speaking. This is, of course, a divine death sentence.

The appearance here of the דירה requires some fleshing out. In order to understand YHWH’s anger in 1 Kgs 20:42, we must understand what YHWH told Ahab to see why the king’s behavior so angered the deity. In 1 Kgs 20:13-15 we find a prophet approaching the king, saying, “All this great multitude I am giving into your hand today that you shall know that I am YHWH.” Ahab asks, “Through whom?”

48 Lit. “abominations.” It is one of the usual Deuteronomistic locutions for “idol,” and is best so translated for clarity.

49 The inscription accompanying the reliefs of the Stele of the Vultures refers to the king employing nets coming from various deities, like Utu and Enki. An English version is found in S.N. Kramer, The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character (Chicago, 1963), 310-13. In 1 Kgs 20:42, a similar figure is implied, but here King Ahab has failed to use the ‘net of YHWH.’
The prophet replies, “So says YHWH, ‘through the soldiers of the provincial chiefs.’” Ahab asks one more question: “You!” Since Ahab proceeds to muster the soldiers, and since in the only appearance of the prophet before Ahab (1 Kgs 20:28) prior to the final scene of the condemnation (1 Kgs 20:35-43), nothing more is required of him, it is crucial to understand the question Ahab posed. It is translated as “who shall begin the battle?” by the lexica, and is derived from the need to hitch up the horses to the chariots before the battle can begin (מָצַח = ‘bind’). If that is all there is to it, then we may find nothing explicit in the chapter to account for the intensity of the divine wrath in 1 Kgs 20:42. After all, the sparing of defeated leaders was not unheard of in the ancient Near East (cf. Jehoiachin). J. Gray was dissatisfied with the translation of מָצַח as ‘begin’ and offered the following, “Who will clinch the fighting?” He explains this diametrically opposed translation in these words:

‘asar, usually taken as ‘to begin’ means literally ‘to bind,’ hence according to etymology and context, ‘end’ or ‘close with,’ hence our rendering ‘clinch.’

As YHWH was fighting with him, the king of Israel hardly needed to ask the trivial question put in his mouth, “who will begin the fighting,” which advances the chapter’s agenda not one whit. However, Gray’s translation helps to make sense of Ahab’s offense. In letting Ben Hadad go free, Ahab was neglecting his God-given responsibility to clinch, put an end to the war by the logical means of killing the king. This is symbolized by the Aramean king coming to Ahab dressed in mourning and bringing with him cords to be bound in, making him an “נורח יָסָר…” By not taking the opportunity to bind the enemy king, who was מָלַחְמַת מַלְאֹן (war) personified, Ahab defied YHWH’s will and received the condemnation of 1 Kgs 20:42. Instead of knowing that “I am YHWH,” as the prophet said, by spurning YHWH’s gift, Ahab denied YHWH and became a man who was מָלַחְמַת מַלְאֹן in a way similar in principal to the offender of Exod 22:19, and disobedient like Saul who spared Agag.

The writer did his best to raise the ghost of Saul by using the word, מָלַחְמַת, even though the two situations were radically different. Without pretending to read the writer’s mind, the reason he did this seems to have been out of a desire to emphasize the absolute quality of YHWH’s rejection of Ahab, which extended also to his dynasty, as in the case of Saul (although in nei-
ther case did the dynasty expire immediately). However, unlike Ahab. Saul did violate the war-םֶדֶּר in the full sense. Both kings spared an enemy monarch against YHWH's will; Ahab did not seek YHWH's forgiveness, unlike Saul. Probably the use of the expression 'man of my סֹדֶר' made Ahab understand that YHWH's anger was now intractable.

The logic of the prophetic parable in 1 Kgs 20:39f. extends as far as the exchange of Ahab's life for the fortunate Ben Hadad. Yet 1 Kgs 20:42 includes the people of Israel (who must die instead of the Arameans), making Israel in effect YHWH's שֵׁדֶּר (an expression found in Isa 34:5, also a call to judgement, as well as a cry for vengeance). It would seem to be a prediction (before or after the fact) of the doom of the Northern Kingdom, laying its demise at the feet of Ahab, a historically not untenable idea, since Ahab's leading role in the Battle of Qarqar was amply avenged by the Assyrians in the years to come. The fact that the battle is not mentioned in the Bible does not mean that it was forgotten by Israel in biblical times. On the other hand, the Arameans continued to flourish despite Assyrian campaigns against them.

Some scholars believe that none of the wars between the Omrides and the Arameans took place at the time, but that they were actually retrojections of events that occurred later on, following the fall of the dynasty. If this is true (and it is too large a matter to deal with in depth here) one can see why the hated Ahab was put into this position. He was seen by YHWHists as the fons et origo of all evil. At the same time, the argument originally raised by Jepsen that Israel and Aram could not have fought at this time because of the need to counter four Assyrian campaigns is not unsailable. Reluctant allies, they could have fought eagerly the moment the threat receded or was still over the horizon. The reason that Ahab released Ben Hadad, according to 1 Kings 20, was that they were 'brothers,' i.e. allies. This suggests that they were fighting for local dominance, knowing at the same time that they might need each other to fight a common foe. Damascus may well have supported Mesha's revolt by threat or deed, which is conceivably the reason why the king of Israel fled before Kemosh (MI 1.19); he had to guard the home front. One indication of the complexity of the problem is provided by H. Tadmor, who raises the possibility that one reason for the shift in the location of the capital of the Northern Kingdom was to move

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56 As Karl S. Erlich has pointed out to me, the Assyrians periodically wiped the slate clean, and the demise of Samaria is not due to Assyrian revenge over one hundred years later on Ahab. This does not mean that the ideological viewpoint of the Kings' writer paid attention to such facts. In this chapter, Ahab's evil takes on evil portent, and the writer puts all subsequent disaster on Ahab's head. Hence the use of the term, בִּשְׁבִית. In this he takes on the character of a second Jereboam (cf. 2 Kings 17).

the capital westward to a location less exposed to Aramean attack.\textsuperscript{58} This might be a rather concrete sign of the Omrides' relations with the Arameans. Further, B. Mazar has collected a number of circumstantial passages that together with archeological and epigraphic findings lend a plausibility to his more straightforward reconstruction of the relations between Israel and Aram as narrated in 1 Kings 20 and other chapters dealing with the Omrides and Aram.\textsuperscript{59} Whatever the true historical background of the chapter, for the purpose of understanding the בנה in 1 Kgs 20:42 it is fortunately the hermeneutical approach which matters most, not the history, which must remain on any approach mired in obscurity and a subject of surmise.

I have tried to show that the use of the בנה in 1 Kgs 20:42 is far more difficult to explain than simple appeals to Holy War (or to Deut 20:16-18). In fact, Holy War in itself by no means implies the בנה, nor do the operation of Holy War motives in the chapter suffice to explain its presence in this verse. Even when not explicitly stated, as in Joshua 10-11, there is always a clear rationale for the execution of the בנה against a given enemy. In an instance like this, against a foe that is not normally the object of the war-בהז, Ahab could not be faulted for its violation unless the prophet had specifically prescribed it. I have further attempted to show that YHWH ordered the death of Ben Hadad, and that 1 Kings 20:42 gives a powerful but figurative condemnation of death upon his failing to do so. One may add that Ahab’s making a covenant with Ben Hadad instead of adhering to the Covenant by obeying YHWH exacerbated the great wrath that the writer of 1 Kgs 20:42 felt brought suffering on all the people of Ephraim, which was precipitated at least in part by the incident related in 1 Kings 20. It is here that the real parallel with Saul lies. Like Saul, Ahab fecklessly failed to obey YHWH and execute the enemy king. Biblical writers understood that, just as children suffer for the sins of their parents, peoples suffer for the deficiencies of their rulers.

III: 1 KGS 9:20-22

This passage has several aspects of interest. It reads as follows:

All the people who remain in the land from the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites that are not Israelites. Their descendants who remained after them in the land, whom the Israelites were not able to devote to destruction (שודד), Solomon levied for forced labor, (שבר מלח), but he did not place any Israelites in servitude, for they were his men of war....


The passage is a little difficult towards the end. The expression גֵּרֵֽגֶּשׁ has been translated differently, but for the purposes of this study, its precise meaning is unimportant. The general purport of the passage is simply that the members of the five peoples listed were required to shoulder burdens for Solomon that Israelites were not saddled with. This does not mean that Israelites were not subjected to the corvée, as 1 Kgs 5:26-32 describes in some detail. Yet the terminology is different in the latter passage, lacking the word גֵּרֵֽגֶּשׁ with the low status attached to it, and it was not new in the ancient Near East for idle soldiers to be given assigned tasks.

The list of nations is confined to five. One of the missing names is that of the Girgashites. As this is frequently lacking from the lists it is of no great consequence. More important is the absence of the Canaanites, which is deliberate. The LXX adds both, but it places the Canaanites in fourth position after the Perizzites, as happens in MT only in Exod 23:23. Furthermore, the parallel verse, 2 Chr 8:7, contains the same five nations in slightly different order. However, the Canaanites are mentioned in connection with Pharaoh's expedition to Gezer, in what is commonly supposed to be an interpolation displaced from 1 Kgs 3:1. However, this conclusion is scarcely irresistible. As it stands the Pharaoh and Solomon are shown acting on the same stage, enhancing Solomon's prestige. The writer is also careful to mention in this context Solomon's building of "store cities," a term found only here and in Exodus, when the Israelites were building the store cities of Egypt. Pharaoh's extirpation of the Canaanites of the Gezer area constituted for the writer (very probably of the Deuteronomistic school), the elimination of the Canaanites as a significant group; hence the absence of the Canaanites from the list of those remaining. The writer, by omitting the Canaanites in this passage, perpetuated the tradition that the ד' did have an important role in the conquest and settlement of Canaan, and he integrated the Pharaoh's attack on Gezer into that tradition, making Pharaoh a tool of YHWH's will.

The passage is far more realistic than Joshua 10-11, where Joshua applied the גֵּרֵֽגֶּשׁ indiscriminately, wiping out vast numbers of autochthonous inhabitants of the land. The picture given is also in accordance with the MI. There, Mesha applied the גֵּרֵֽגֶּשׁ but he also used Israelite forced labor (II.25-6); he employed his most closely-bound subjects (Dibonites) for one project (I.28), and expected Moabites to dig their own cisterns (I.24-5), not Israelites. Capital projects were enormously labor intensive in that era. Kings were glad to requisition as much of it as they could from the available sources, limited of course by the means which they had at their disposal to maintain control of the labor force, and to maintain it in general.

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60 KBL 540b cites I. Mendelsohn's view "total slavery" although it does not adopt this translation. On this and other points see A. Biram, "ס ב וונרא צראק," Tarbiz 23 (1952/3) 137-42.


62 J. Gray, I and II Kings, 241 note d.
The author of 1 Kings 9 clearly perceived the action of the divine will, so that even the king of Egypt served as God's tool to fulfill the promise to Israel to eliminate the peoples who barred the way to the Israelite settlement in Canaan. The use of the verb נָרָא indicates a left over portion that was not numerous. There was also a limit to how many laborers Solomon could employ in this way. Hence the need for the Israelite corvee as well.

The parallel in 2 Chr 8:9 uses the verb לְ İlçe in the piel instead of נָרָא. The writer does not follow exactly the Kings text of this section. It may not be coincidence that Chronicles omits to say that the Israelites were “not able” to ban all the peoples listed. 1 Kgs 9:21 לְᡳ وعن and 2 Chr 8:9 לְibase may be related. If a ‘Kings’ MS lacked a yod in the word לְibase, the Chronicler could have deleted כְּבָשָׁהוּ without changing the verse dramatically; or it may be a free variation. Whatever the case, the Chronicles use of לְibase where the Kings text uses נָרָא, says nothing as to the meaning of the נר in 1 Kings 9. There it plainly reflects the usage found in Deut 7,13, and 20, where as shown above, the verb means “to consecrate to destruction.”

IV: 2 KGS 19:11=ISA 37:11

The principal question to be settled here is the meaning of the hiphil of דָּרַך. Since the subject of the verb here is Assyria, and the object is the lands of Assyrian conquest (it is from the messengers of the Rabshekah, seeking the surrender of Jerusalem): “See, you have heard that which the kings of Assyria did to all the lands דָּרַך; and you will be delivered?” In 2 Kgs 19:17 of the same chapter, in Hezekiah's prayer, we find the exact counterpart of this verse: “Truly, O YHWH, the kings of Assyria destroyed הָרֶנֶך (הָרֶנֶך) the nations and their land.” The two verses are virtually identical, but the first is addressed to Hezekiah from the Rabshekah, and the second from Hezekiah to YHWH (whether these statements were actually made as given is irrelevant to our concerns). Thus one approach would be that Hezekiah's statement to YHWH is a ‘translation’ of the Rabshekah's words, and that הָרֶנֶך is translated as דָּרַך because the two here are synonyms.

Another argument leading to this result is given by M. Cogan and H. Tadmor in their recent commentary on 2 Kings:

Sanda's suggestion to emend the text...because of the improbablility that the Assyrians practiced the Israelite form of herem--ban--is unnecessary. In late BH, the verb שֶׁהֶרֶנֶך is used in the general sense of “to destroy” ; cf. Jer 50:21, 26; 51:3; 2 Chr 20:23; Dan 11:44.63

This argument is somewhat oversimplified. The diachronic distinction is not based on sufficient evidence; as B. A. Levine pointed out to me, in actuality both meanings existed side by side, but we do not know from what pe-

period. The Jeremiah verses are uniformly exilic, whereas late BH stems from the Persian period. There is a vast difference between the Hebrew of Jeremiah and that of Chronicles and Daniel, which come from the latest linguistic strata in the Hebrew Bible. Then there is Ezra 10:8, in which the verb הֵרָם is still clearly differentiated from "destroy," and this is the case of a lexical subsystem of הֵרָם in the scrolls of Qumran, according to the recent linguistic study of verbs of separation by A. Vivian. 2 Kgs 19:11 is, at the latest, exilic by either Noth's original version of the deuteronomic hypothesis or by any variants of that hypothesis, but it could well be earlier. On the other hand, exilic prophecy's use of the הֵרָם would be robbed of much of its effect if the root were lacking in its connotation of the sacred, as we shall see. J. Gray's explanation was that the verb here is used in a secondary sense, focusing on its destructive aspect. However, the fact that in Arabic the eighth form of הָרֹמָה (=דָּמִי) can mean, "kill, extirpate, destroy" inclines one to believe that the hiphil of הֵרָם II is what is at stake here (see ch.1), especially as the occurrence of the word in 2 Kgs 19:11 does not fit in with a "late usage." As the hiphil of הֵרָם I became less relevant, the use of the הֵרָם II hiphil could be used more frequently in texts without causing unnecessary confusion, at least to the people of the biblical period. Distinguishing between the two roots could only be a problem in texts, not in popular speech.

C. H. W. Brekelmans pointed to the parallel between 2 Kgs 19:11 and the following verse, which repeats the basic contents of 2 Kgs 19:11 but substitutes the root חָרָם "destroy" for הֵרָם, and I have already mentioned v.17 (prayer of Hezekiah) which uses another word for destroy, חָרָם. There is then every reason to see in the verb the simple meaning 'destroy.' After all, הָרֹמָה seems to be used synonymously with 2 Kgs 19:12 חָרָם and 2 Kgs 19:17 חָרָם.

The Book of Kings is the first biblical book since Genesis in which the war-הֵרָם is not depicted as an extant practice in some shape or form. Of course, the actual chronology does not always follow the sequence of books, but it is nevertheless an important if superficial observation. It indicates that the laws of Deuteronomy 20, restricting the הֵרָם to the aboriginal peoples of Canaan, reflect (as well as according to my hypothesis, helped shape) the behavior of Israel during the period of the monarchy. As an aside I shall try to respond to the position that the laws of הֵרָם in Deuteronomy 20 are an expansion of the previous law of siege, and an unreal one at that. They are an expansion, in the sense that the law relating to making peace with a ca-

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65 A. Vivian, *I campi lessicali della "separazione" nell'ebraico biblico, di Qumran e della Mishna: ovvero, applicabilità della teoria dei campi lessicali all'ebraico* (Florence, 1978), 264. The dimension of 'sacrality' survives in Qumran to a limited degree; the same is true of the Mishna, 276.
67 A. Biram, "כָּרָמִי וֹגָמ" 138.
pitulating city reflects the oldest practice of war; if one has to lay siege, the outcome is apt to be bitter (cf. Thucydides on the siege of Platea). Yet the Bible never portrays a successful Israelite siege, which makes Deut 20:10-14, too, look unreal.

The Book of Kings marks a watershed in the use ofḏiṭ in the Bible. It introduces the figurative, or not strictly literal use of the word, placed in the mouth of the biblical prophet (in 1 Kgs 20:42). In 1 Kgs 9:20, a writer makes novel use of theḏiṭ tradition by combining it with the Egyptian assault on Gezer, leading (according to this writer) to the extirpation of the last of the Canaanites, and their consequent omission from the list of autochthonous peoples. Finally, 2 Kgs 19:11 gives us a clear cut example of the use ofḏiṭ, in my viewḏiṭ II with the meaning of “destroy.” The Book of Kings employs the rootḏiṭ only two or three times, but no two uses are alike. The instances are therefore invaluable in disproportion to their number.