

MEGADIM

JOURNAL OF BIBLICAL STUDIES

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(Yeshiva College 1981)

Who embodied Torah, Avoda
and Gemilut Chassadim

His wisdom, integrity, warmth
and generosity endure

Number 62 –Elul 5783

Bilingual Issue

Herzog College Press – Tevunot

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**Yeshiva University Press
Herzog College Press – Tevunot
Herzog College
Alon Shevut 9043300
Tel. 02-9937333
Fax 02-9932796
tvunot@herzog.ac.il
ISSN 0334-8814**

Aton M. Holzer

Ma'ot Hittite: Finding Divine Morality in Borrowing from an Ancient Near East Context¹

The Problem

On August 9, 2003, an interview appeared in the Egyptian weekly Al-Ahram Al-Arabi in which a Dr. Nabil Hilmi, dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of Al-Zagazig, announced that he, together with Egyptian expatriates in Switzerland, were preparing a lawsuit against “all the Jews of the world.” In the translation prepared by MEMRI, Hilmi begins: “... Since the Jews make various demands of the Arabs and the world, and claim rights that they base on historical and religious sources, a group of Egyptians in Switzerland has opened the case of the so-called 'great exodus of the Jews from Pharaonic Egypt.' At that time, they stole from the Pharaonic Egyptians gold, jewelry, cooking utensils, silver ornaments, clothing, and more, leaving Egypt in the middle of the night with all this wealth, which today is priceless.”²

The basis of the accusation begins with a verse in Exodus 3:22, in which God informs Moses, at the outset of his mission, at the burning bush: “But every woman shall borrow (*ve-sha'alah*) of her neighbor, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil (*ve-nitzaltem*) the Egyptians.” The instruction is conveyed by Moses to Israel in Exodus 11:2, and implementation occurs in Exodus 12:35-36. At face value, God instructs the Israelites, on the eve of the Exodus, to deceive their Egyptian neighbors by asking them to lend them valuables which they have no intention of returning – and by these deceptive means, to “despoil” Egypt. Against the background of Moses’ repeated requests of Pharaoh of a three-day

- 1 Thanks to R. Prof. Joshua Berman for his meticulous and incisive review, and to my daughters Rivka and Dina for their proofreading and comments.
- 2 “Egyptian Jurists to Sue 'The Jews' for Compensation for 'Trillions' of Tons of Gold Allegedly Stolen During Exodus from Egypt.” The Middle East Media Research Institute, August 22, 2003, archived at <https://www.memri.org/reports/egyptian-jurists-sue-jews-compensation-trillions-tons-gold-allegedly-stolen-during-exodus>, accessed July 12, 2023.

religious holiday (Exodus 3:18, 5:3, 8:23), it would seem that the Egyptians had no reason to suspect that they were parting with their valuables on a permanent basis.

The charge of Jewish mendacity in this particular episode has a long pedigree.³ In the scholion of Megillat Ta'anit and in the roughly contemporaneous⁴ b. Sanhedrin 91a, Hilmi's complaint is voiced by Egyptians who contend against the Jews in the presence of Alexander of Macedon, the fourth century BCE conqueror who is often presented as an impartial arbiter of disputes among peoples in his vast territory.⁵ Outside of Jewish sources, this charge is found in second century Marcus Junianus Justinus' epitome of the Philippic History by Pompeius Trogus (XXXVI:2), and Benno Jacob argues that traces of such accusations are evident from responses to it in both Second Temple Pseudepigrapha and Philo.⁶

Suggested Resolutions: A History of Research

The financial claim against the Jewish people is relatively easy to dispense with. The response that the Talmud attributes to Gebiha ben Pesisa – drawing attention to the incalculable debt incurred by Egypt in the free labor of generations of Hebrew slaves, implicitly casting the spoils as (less than adequate) reparations for centuries of enslavement – is found outside of Rabbinic literature, in sources as early as the deuterocanonical books of Jubilees (48:18), Wisdom of Solomon (10:17) and Ezekiel the Tragedian (verses 165-166), and a few centuries on, in Philo Judaeus (The Life of Moses I, XXV). Philo adds that in the context of war between the Israelites and the Egyptians, martial law permits such goods as booty. Medieval and modern commentators add that the transfer of valuables fulfills the Biblical requirement, articulated later in the book, of bestowing gifts upon freed slaves (Hizquni to 3:22, Samuel David Luzzato commentary to 3:22, Umberto Cassuto, Commentary to

3 The Talmudic antecedent is actually noted in some contemporaneous news coverage of the 2003 suit. See e.g., Frida Ghitis, "Dragging Moses into a lawsuit," Chicago Tribune, August 31, 2003, archived at <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2003-08-31-0308310131-story.html>, accessed July 12, 2023.

4 Vered No'am, *Megillat Ta'anit and the Scholion: their nature, period and sources: accompanied by a critical edition*. Diss. Hebrew University, 1997.

5 Meir Ben Shahr, "Jews, Samaritans and Alexander: Facts and Fictions in Jewish Stories on the Meeting of Alexander and the High Priest," in K. R. Moore, ed., *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Alexander the Great*, 403-326, especially 420.

6 Benno Jacob, *The Second Book of the Bible: Exodus* (Walter Jacob and Yaakov Elman, trans.), (KTAV, 1992), 338.

Exodus p. 27). Isaac Abravanel – drawing upon his own experiences in the 1492 Spanish expulsion⁷ – suggests that the spoils served as compensation for the real estate that the Israelites were forced to abandon, to the selfsame neighbors and housemates; the seventeenth century Yemenite Midrash Hemdat Yamim, drawing upon other experiences all too familiar in exile,⁸ links the spoils to restitution for bribes paid a generation earlier to their neighbors to help them hide their newborn sons from Pharaoh’s infanticidal decree. Several contemporary readers among the “New School” of Bible study suggest⁹ that the ruse of the “three-day reprieve” was primarily directed at the masses of the Israelites themselves, who were somewhat comfortable (Numbers 11:5) despite corvée-style labor obligations and were not prepared to leave Egypt permanently – and were at a minimum skeptical of the possibility of functioning as an independent polity (Exodus 14:12). As such, the Israelites themselves may have been unaware when making the request that the “borrowing” was anything but.

There are numerous available post facto justifications for keeping the borrowed goods, which may help to explain why the classical Rabbinic sages of the Mishnah and Talmud did not seem perturbed much by the ethical dilemma – although they did show some uneasiness with the people’s concerning themselves, particularly at this crucial moment, with lucre.¹⁰ Perhaps chief among the justifications is that the sole source that records this “plunder” is the same one that makes clear that the Israelites were acting upon Divine command – and Divine Command Theory is sufficient for countless theologians, from Euthyphro forward. Among exegetes, theological voluntarism is probably best expressed in this context by Ibn Ezra (3:22): “Some complain and say that our ancestors were thieves. Can’t these murmurers see that this was a command from on High? There is no sense in asking why. God created

7 Benjamin Gesundheit, “The Borrowing of Silver Vessels and Gold Vessels” (Heb), *Megadim* 33 (2001), 9-12.

8 See discussion in Nehama Leibowitz, *Studies in Shemot (Exodus)* (World Zionist Organization, 1993), 183-192.

9 Yaakov Medan, *Ki Karov Eilekha – Shemot* (Yediot Sefarim, 2014), 58-64; Menachem Leibtag, “Parshat Shmot - Let My People Go - A Hoax or a Mission?” archived at <https://tanach.org/shmot/shmot/shmots2.htm> and accessed on July 13, 2023; Meir Spiegelman, “Beshalach – The Stealthy Exodus,” archived at <https://www.etzion.org.il/en/tanakh/torah/sefer-shemot/parashat-beshalach/beshalach-stealthy-exodus>, accessed on July 13, 2023.

10 See Gerald (Ya’akov) Blidstein, “The Plunder of Egypt in the Sources of Hazal” (Heb), *Sinai* 67 (1970), 233-243.

everything. He gives riches to whom He desires to give it, and when He wishes to, He takes the very same riches away. There is no evil in this, as everything is His."¹¹

However, for those who reject Divine Command morality, and adopt Socrates' stance as against Euthyphro, Divine morality is itself the nub of the matter. Indeed, in the text, the initiative to deceive is quite clearly God's own; it is explicitly God Himself who commands Moses to 'despoil' Egypt in this way, and not as an ad hoc measure but at the very outset of, and prior to, the Exodus mission. Indeed, Marcion of Sinope, a first-century Christian heretic, made use of these passages to argue that the Jewish God was an inferior one not worthy of worship,¹² similar to the malevolent demiurge of the roughly contemporaneous Gnostics, who shared this objection to the God of the Bible.

Early Christians could abide an assault on the morality of the Israelites, but not on that of the God of Israel, and responses were forthcoming from many of the Church Fathers. The Patristic approaches are summarized in recent survey:¹³ Irenaeus notes that the Egyptians owed their property and very lives to Joseph, and the despoliation is not fundamentally different from greed that is at the root of ordinary commerce. For Tertullian, as in most early Jewish sources, the spoil is seen as just recompense for the Israelites' suffering. For Origen, the end justifies the means – the Egyptians were wasting their riches for idolatry, and the Israelites put them to use for Divine service, in the structure of the Tabernacle. Augustine argues that God permitted the despoliation as a concession to not-yet fully developed human morality. Defenses put forth by Clement of Alexandria, Ambrose of Milan, Gregory of Nazanians, Gregory of Nyssa, Ephrem of Edessa and Theodoret of Cyrrhus are treated briefly. All of these approaches suffer from the problem that God, ostensibly the paragon for human virtue, comports Himself in a manner that is decidedly unethical, even if the objective is moral, or at least justifiable.

Setting aside the theological challenge, contextual problems remain.

1. This deception seems entirely out of place within a narrative which self-consciously presents the most ostentatious overt display of Divine justice in the

11 Translation by H. Norman Strickman and Arthur M. Silver, *Ibn Ezra's commentary on the Pentateuch* (Menorah, 1996).

12 As with most early Christian heretics, Marcion's works survive only to the extent they are cited in attacks by his Christian interlocutors. See Tertullian, *Adversus Haereses* IV:28-30; see discussion in Sebastian Moll, *The Arch-heretic Marcion* (Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

13 Joel Stevens Allen, *The Despoliation of Egypt in Pre-Rabbinic, Rabbinic and Patristic Traditions* (Brill, 2008), 181-272.

Hebrew Bible. Just a few chapters on, the unambiguous exhibit of retributive justice is explicitly touted by an outsider as proof of the preëminence of the God of Israel (18:11). Throughout the narrative, there is emphasis placed on the revelation of Divine singularity to the Egyptians through the Divine power exhibited in the Exodus (7:5, 8:6, 8:18, 9:29, 11:7, 14:4, 14:18), to the extent that further on, annihilation of the Israelites for involvement in the Golden Calf episode is forestalled with the argument that such an outcome would spoil God's reputation accomplished by His show of force among the Egyptians (32:12). In this setting, the acquisition of goods by means of deception seems entirely out of place.

2. Borrowing also seems incompatible with the finality expressed in verses such as Exodus 11:1: And the Lord said unto Moses, "Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether."
3. The borrowing occurs at the point at which it would have been most obvious that the Israelites were likely not to return. The command is conveyed before the final plague, but the actualization occurs at the moment at which the Israelites were being forcibly expelled from Egypt *en masse*, along with all of their livestock and possessions.

Another group of approaches, which potentially ameliorate all of the above concerns, turns upon the reading of two roots present in two of the three or all of the verses, respectively: "נצל" and "שאל".

1. נצל, which is rendered by KJV 'to spoil,' is related to the root הצל, "to save." Benno Jacob argues¹⁴ that when applied to people, rather than loot, the meaning is to save from danger; in the verses regarding the 'despoliation,' the subject is Egypt – and so the verses should be understood to convey that the provision of goods would serve not to despoil, but rather to *save* Egypt, "from the future destructive hate of God and any final vengeance." While appealing, there is no indication for this apotropaic function for the conveyed valuables within the text. Benjamin Gesundheit¹⁵ takes a different approach, arguing that נצל bears the specific meaning of conveying a manumission payment to newly freed slaves. These approaches have advantages over those of the Church fathers in that they find justification for the *ends* of the Divine deception within the verse itself. However, the *means* remain problematic.

14 Jacob, p. 345.

15 Gesundheit, "The Borrowing," p. 12.

2. שאל is a root which is used in the Bible both in the senses of borrowing and requesting. Implicit in Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews* 2:68) and explicit in many commentators (R. Sa'adia Ga'on, R. Hananel, Rashbam to 3:22) and the eleventh century Spanish-Jewish grammarian Jonah ibn Janah (*Sefer Shorashim*, root שאל) is that *sha'al* here should properly be understood as "request." Such a reading would open the possibility that the valuables were a free-will gift from the Egyptians to the departing Israelites, in concert with the prior verse, "And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians (3:21)." Benno Jacob's remarkable exposition goes so far as to suggest that the gifts represented a renewal of public conscience, and a gesture to render the Exodus context one of peace, so that the Hebrews would not come to remember their oppressors with hatred; "the Israelites stretched out their hands in friendship and the Egyptians responded with farewell gifts." In the nineteenth century, when British Jewry struggled for civic equality, Selig Newman and Chief Rabbi Joseph Hertz went so far as to deem the 1611 King James Version translation "borrow" (as opposed to the 1560 Geneva Bible's "aske") anti-Semitic.¹⁶
3. In her monograph on ethics in Biblical narrative, Shira Weiss suggests that with *sha'al*, God intends an intentionally equivocal term; the word can mean "request" rather than "borrow," so even if "borrow" was heard, technically, no outright lie was told – thus somewhat ameliorating the Divine deception. She deduces from this case and from other examples of God-commanded subterfuge – among other ethically ambiguous narratives – that the Biblical narrative, and even Divine behavior, *intentionally* eschews moral absolutism in an effort to guide moral reasoning and ethical decision-making in the complex, real world. She writes, "the Bible *illustrates* moral questions through its narratives and inspires reflection upon ethics, but does not promulgate unequivocal dogmas... through the Biblical literary framework, readers are encouraged to grapple with these complex ethical questions and internalize the tensions and various perspectives into their own moral thinking."¹⁷

Unfortunately, the rendering of שאל in the latter two approaches does not seem to stand up to scrutiny. For one thing, it fails on a contextual level – requesting, rather

16 Leonard Greenspoon, "Despoiling the Egyptians: A Concerning Jewish Legacy?" Archived at <https://www.thetorah.com/article/despoiling-the-egyptians-a-concerning-jewish-legacy>, accessed July 13, 2023.

17 Shira Weiss, *Ethical Ambiguity in the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, 2014), 181-194, 214.

than demanding, booty from the Egyptians contravenes the Divine objective of empowering the emancipated Hebrew slaves. But it also fails on syntactical grounds. R. Elhanan Samet demonstrates that the default, “non-apologetic” meaning of שאל – when not followed by a variant of נתן – is, indeed, to request an item of its owner for its use, i.e., borrowing. The verse which records the affirmative Egyptian response, 12:36, uses the term *vayash’ilu* – which is much more difficult to read as anything other than lending.¹⁸

The Septuagint translates שאל with a similarly ambiguous Greek term; however, it adds elements that leave little doubt as to the deception inherent in the narrative. In its translation of Exodus 11:2-3, the Greek reads: “Speak then *secretly* to the ears of the people, and let each one ask from his neighbor and a woman from her neighbor silver and gold articles and clothing. Now the Lord gave favor to his people before the Egyptians and they supplied them. And the man Moses became very great before the Egyptians and before Pharaoh and before all his attendants.”¹⁹ The addition of the word κρυφη, “secretly,” is not compelled by anything in the Masoretic text. In addition, the Septuagint records the borrowing as having taken place already here, at 11:3, prior to the plague of the firstborn, when it was clear that Pharaoh was withholding his consent from the exodus. These and other details lead Nina Collins to propose²⁰ that the Septuagint preserves a second tradition about an Exodus achieved not by a display of Divine might but by guile, a theory proposed by George W. Coats²¹ some decades prior. Claude Otabela argues that the changes within the Septuagint reflect the translator’s own interpretations – which may indeed have stimulated the subsequent accusations against the Jews in Hellenistic Alexandria – and do not necessarily reflect any alternative Hebrew vorlage.²² Nonetheless, the question remains: how does “borrowing” – which cannot be anything but a deception – fit with the Exodus event cherished and celebrated by Jews for millennia, the ultimate display of Divine power and justice on behalf of His people? Could both be part of the same narrative? On closer scrutiny, additional questions emerge from this puzzling episode.

18 Elhanan Samet, *Iyyunim be-Parashot ha-Shavua*, second series, vol. 1 (Ma’aliyot, 2004), 263-285.

19 Albert Pietersma and Benjamin C. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 58-59.

20 Nina L. Collins, “Evidence in the Septuagint of a Tradition in Which the Israelites Left Egypt without Pharaoh’s Consent,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 56 (1994), 442-448.

21 George W. Coats, “Despoiling the Egyptians,” *Vetus Testamentum* 18 (1968), 450-457.

22 Claude A. Otabela, “Note on the variant of ‘κρυφη’ in Exodus 11: 2a.” *HTS Theologese Studies/Theological Studies* 78.1 (2022), 7388.

- If the point of the borrowing is to despoil the Egyptians, why indeed not make the request earlier, where the Septuagint has it being done, at 11:3, when it would be less suspicious? Why amid the chaos and tumult of the plague?
- Why limit the borrowing to clothing and gold and silver jewelry, with which to dress their children (3:22) – why not borrow anything that they could carry off? Gersonides (3:21) suggests that the purpose was for the Egyptians to adorn the Israelites for the festival to God toward which they were ostensibly departing. But why “put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters” from the outset of the journey?
- Why are the requests gendered - God first specifies that women make the request (3:22), and then Moses commands that men and women do so, each from their respective genders (11:2)?
- Why is it specified that they are to request of their Egyptian friends and neighbors? What of Egyptians beyond lower Egypt, beyond the Israelite settlement of Goshen?
- How likely is, as Collins puts it, “the astonishing fact that the Egyptians were prepared to part with their valuables and give them to people whom they had enslaved, murdered, embittered and ill-treated ‘with rigor,’ and who had caused Egypt and the Egyptians such dreadful harm”²³ – even given that “the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians”?

Enter the Hittites

The Hittite Empire flourished in Anatolia and Northern Syria from 1650 until around 1200 BCE, when it disintegrated in the Great Bronze Age collapse associated with the mass influx of Sea Peoples, coincident with a series of natural disasters.²⁴ Along with the Mesopotamian Empires to the east and Egypt to the west, the Hittite Kingdom constituted a third world power to the north of the Levant throughout much of the estimated period of the Patriarchs, the enslavement in Egypt, and the Exodus; their dissolution follows not long after, and Neo-Hittite states persisted until the advent of the Neo-Assyrian empire in the 8th century BCE, at which point their culture appears to have been all but completely extinguished. The Hittite culture was a blend of many influences, primarily Indo-European from beyond the Black Sea, fused with indigenous Anatolian but also Hurrian, Mesopotamian and Syrian.

²³ Collins, “Evidence,” p. 446.

²⁴ Eric H. Cline, *1177 BC: The Year Civilization Collapsed*. (Princeton University Press, 2014).

Since the discovery of the Hittite library at the erstwhile Hittite capital of Hattuša by Hugo Winckler in 1906, and the decipherment of the Hittite language by Bedřich Hrozný in 1915, numerous affinities have been noted between aspects of Hittite literature and culture and the Bible. Since the Hittites were centered in Anatolia and Northern Syria, the means of cultural contact is as yet unexplained; despite the Bible's identification of Hittites as among the seven nations inhabiting Canaan, archaeological evidence for the Hittites of Anatolia in the southern Levant is sparse, as Itamar Singer notes.²⁵ Singer enumerates several close parallels; among them: the Biblical covenant between God and the Israelites, in its various iterations, parallels Near East vassal treaties – a phenomenon explored to great effect by Joshua Berman²⁶ – and of those, it most precisely mimics Hittite suzerainty treaties of 1400-1200 BCE.²⁷ Description of border boundaries in the Bible parallels those of Hittite treaties in style and form. Certain Biblical laws are paralleled only in the Hittite legal system. Israelite forms of prayer bear strong similarities to Near Eastern ones, but as Shalom Holtz²⁸ points out, Hittite is the only language other than Hebrew to explicitly link prayer with legal proceedings, and, as with Biblical prayer, Hittite prayer is structured as a court proceeding. The Levitical sacrificial cult, with its use of animal blood for cleansing,²⁹ most resembles that of the Hittites, and, moreover, the “grammar” of Israelite sacrifice bears closest affinities to that of the Hittites, as Naftali Meshel notes³⁰ in his recent monograph on the subject. The personnel of the Tabernacle and Temple – Priests and Levites – also finds a parallel in the Hittite cult.³¹ To be sure, none of these phenomena are unique to the Hittites, but the Biblical forms often seem to find their closest parallels in Hittite.

25 Itamar Singer, "The Hittites and the Bible revisited," in A. M. Maeir and Pierre de Miroschedji, eds., *"I Will Speak the Riddles of Ancient Times": Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday, Volume 2* (Eisenbrauns, 2006): 723-756.

26 Joshua Berman, *Created equal: How the Bible broke with ancient political thought* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

27 George E. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 17 (1954), 50-76, and George E. Mendenhall and Gary A. Herion, "Covenant," in David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1 (Doubleday, 1992) 1179-1202.

28 Shalom E. Holtz, *Praying Legally* (SBL Press, 2019), 29.

29 Yitzhaq Feder, *Blood expiation in Hittite and biblical ritual: origins, context, and meaning. Vol. 2* (Society of Biblical Literature, 2011).

30 Naphtali S. Meshel, *The 'Grammar' of Sacrifice: A Generativist Study of the Israelite Sacrificial System in the Priestly Writings with A 'Grammar' of Σ*. (Oxford University Press, 2014), 204.

31 Jacob Milgrom, "The shared custody of the Tabernacle and a Hittite analogy." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (1970), 204-209.

One of the best-known similarities between Hittite religion and the Hebrew Bible is the scapegoat ritual. In contrast to the Hebrew Bible, which knows two elimination-transfer rituals – the scapegoat to Azazel and the birds of the leper – many of these sort of substitution rituals have been found in Hittite tablets. These were found in Hattuša and originate mostly from Arzawa,³² a western Anatolian kingdom that was allied with Egypt until their defeat by the Hittites under Šuppiluliuma I and his son Muršili II, in the late 14th-early 13th century BCE; from Arzawa they may have disseminated to ancient Greece, in the form of the *pharmakos* rituals.³³ To be sure, scapegoat rituals do not seem to have been invented in Arzawa – there is attestation of scapegoats in tablets from Ebla, in northern Syria, in the 24th-25th centuries BCE,³⁴ as well as from Ugarit and the Neo-Assyrian empire – but the Hattušan tablets bear elements which most closely parallel those of the Israelite scapegoat rites, even ones absent from the Bible and recorded only in the Mishnah, such as the tying of a crimson thread around the goat's horns (m. Yoma 6:7).³⁵

The scapegoat and other plague-related rituals emerge in a specific context in Hittite history.

The roughly century of Hittite history between Šuppiluliuma I and Ḫattušili III – their “golden age” in terms of imperial power and culture – saw the greatest degree of contact, conflict, and high drama between Ancient Egypt and the Hittites. For most of antiquity, the great civilizations in the fertile crescent were centered in Egypt and Mesopotamia. For a brief interlude, while Babylonia was arguably in something of a “dark age” for literacy and culture under the Kassites, and embroiled in conflict with Assyria, the vectors of cultural diffusion were less from the Nile to the Euphrates, and more from the Nile to the Orontes.

The “Hittite century” begins with the mid-1300s with Šuppiluliuma I, an accomplished warrior who recaptured and rebuilt the capital of Hattuša, and consolidated Hittite lands – thereby founding the New Hittite Kingdom – after an interval of decline. He pushed beyond the Hittites’ previous possessions in

32 Ian Rutherford, *Hittite Texts and Greek Religion: Contact, Interaction and Comparison* (Oxford University Press, 2020), 120-142.

33 Jan Bremmer, “Ritual,” in Sarah Iles Johnston, eds., *Ancient Religions* (Harvard University Press, 2007), 35.

34 Ida Zatelli, “The Origin of the Biblical Scapegoat Ritual: The Evidence of Two Eblaite Texts,” *Vetus Testamentum* 48:2 (1998), 254-263.

35 Noga Ayali-Darshan, “The Origin and Meaning of the Crimson Thread in the Mishnaic Scapegoat Ritual in Light of an Ancient Syro-Anatolian Custom.” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 44.4-5 (2013), 530-552.

northern Syria into Egyptian-allied territory during the Amarna period in the 18th dynasty, winning the allegiance of Qadesh, but also thereby violating a prior treaty with Egypt. After these campaigns, he received a letter from Tutankhamun's widow Ankhesenamun lamenting the lack of a royal male heir to the Egyptian throne and requesting that he provide a son as her consort, and thus Pharaoh. After investigation, realizing he was on the cusp of control of the entire Levant, he sent his son Zannanza, who was apparently ambushed and murdered after crossing the border – perhaps by the commoners vizier Ay or general Horemheb, who each respectively took the throne, in succession. An enraged Šuppiluliuma attacked the Egyptian frontier; the prisoners of war brought with them a deadly plague that ravaged the Hittite kingdom for more than twenty years, one which soon claimed Šuppiluliuma himself and his immediate successor, Arnuwanda II.

Šuppiluliuma's son Muršili II succeeded him, and further extended his father's territorial holdings. In his role as high priest to the gods – as all Hittite kings were – he issued a series of prayers to various gods in the Hittite pantheon, in which he retells the history and describes how he tried everything – propitiatory gifts, restoration of temples, expiatory rituals, sacrifices and libations, and advances several arguments for the cessation of the plague.³⁶ A large number of plague-related rituals, mostly from Arzawa, have been found in Hattuša – apparently copied during the reign and at the order of Muršili II, after his conquest of the western Anatolian kingdom. Six are scapegoat rituals; of these, only one in particular – Puliša's ritual – appears to have been incorporated into the scribal curriculum,³⁷ given that the ritual features in Muršili's prayer for his ill wife Gassulawiya.³⁸

Puliša's ritual reads as follows:³⁹

1. [Th]us (says) Puliša [if the king]
2. Smites the [la]nd of an enemy an[d from the border of the land of the enemy]
3. He marches [away of the land of the enemy]
4. [ei]ther some [male]god [or a female god among(?)]
5. The people a plague occur[s]

36 Itamar Singer, *Hittite Prayers* (Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 47-69.

37 Billie Jean Collins, "The Arzawa Rituals and Religious Production in Hattusa," in Sandra Blakely and Billie Jean Collins, eds., *Religious Convergence in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Lockwood Press, 2019), 191-202.

38 Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 71-73.

39 Transcription and translation in David P. Wright, *The disposal of impurity: elimination rites in the Bible and in Hittite and Mesopotamian literature. SBL Dissertation Series 101* (Scholars Press, 1987), 45-47.

6. When he [marches a]way from the border of the land of the enemy,
7. They take one prisoner and one woman of the land. [On which road] the ki[ng]
8. Came from the land of the enemy, to that road the king m[oves].
9. All the leaders move down to him. One prisoner
10. And one woman they bring forth to him. He removes the clothes from himself.
11. They put them on the man. But on the woman
12. [they p]ut clothes of a woman. The king speaks
13. Thus to the man—bu[t] if it is [not] convenient to the king, then he sen[ds]
- another person. That one
14. Takes care of the rite. That one [spe]aks [to the] man thus: “If
15. Some male god of the enemy land has caused this plague, b[ehol]d, to him
16. I have given the decorated man as a substitute man. At his head this o[ne is gr]
- eat,
17. At the heart this one is great, at the member this o[ne is gre]at.
18. You, male god, be appeased with t[his de]corated man.
19. But to the king, the [leaders], the ar[my, and the]
20. Land of Hatti, tur[n yourself fa]ithfully. [] But
21. Let this prisoner b[ear] the plague and carry (it) ba[ck into the land of the
- enemy.”]
22. And [t]o the woman he speak[s]ikewise regarding the fema[le go]d.
23. Afterward, [they drive up] one bull and one e[we] of the la[nd] of the
- enemy.
24. Him, his ears, earrin[gs(?)]]
25. Red wool, green wool, bla[ck] wool, [white wool] from the king’s
26. Mouth he dra[ws] forth. [He speaks the following:]
27. “In regard to the king becoming blood [red, green,]
28. [d]ark, and white]
29. [th]is back to the land of the en[emy]
30. And [to the king] himself, the leaders, the ar[my], the [ho]rse[s]
31. [do not] pay attention, (but) take note of it for the land of the enemy.” []
32. [] takes. It on emmer []
33. [The bull with e]arrings
34. He spe[aks] thus: “The god of the en[emy who caused this plague]
35. If he is a male god, to you I have gi[ven] the deco[rated],
36. [ear]ringed approved(??) [bull]. You, male god,
37. Be appeased. Let [th]is bull carry [this plague]
38. Back into the land of the enemy. [The the king, the] king’[s sons],

39. The leaders, the army, and the la[nd of Hatti turn yourself faithfully.”]
 40. Afterwards, the deco[rated] ewe []
 41. He speaks likewise, regarding the female god []
 42-43. Then th[ey se]nd forth the decorated bull [and the ewe to the prisoner] and the woman.

(The rest is broken.)

In a similar scapegoat ritual, the ritual of Ašḥella, decorated rams provided by the heads of the army, a decorated woman, a jug of beer, and thick breads are sent to take the plague to the land of the enemy.

The plague seems to have abated during or soon after Muršili's reign, as it is not mentioned by his son and successor, Muwatalli II, who moves the capital south to Tarḫuntašša as part of an Akhenaten-like religious reform.⁴⁰ Muwatalli battles Ramesses II in Qadesh to a draw in the largest chariot war in history; the latter's propagandistic accounts and pictorial reliefs are drawn upon in the Song of the Sea and the structure of the Tabernacle, respectively.⁴¹ Fifteen years on, Ḫattušili III concludes a durable peace treaty with Ramesses II, ending the enmity with Egypt until the complete dissolution of the Hittite kingdom in the great Bronze Age Collapse several decades on.

Among scholars who contend that the historicity of an Israelite Exodus can be affirmed from the extant archaeological record, a consensus has emerged around the late 13th century BCE – in the nineteenth Pharaonic dynasty,⁴² and for a plurality, specifically the reign of Ramesses II.⁴³ If this is accepted, then the entire aforementioned “Hittite century” coincided with the proposed height of the period of the enslavement of the Israelites, in which they were domiciled in the nome of Goshen, and working in Pi-Atum and Pi-Ramesses – all to the east of the tributaries of the Nile Delta, near the northeastern territorial border of the Egyptian mainland.

40 Itamar Singer, "The failed reforms of Akhenaten and Muwatalli." *British Museum Studies in Ancient Egypt and Sudan* 6 (2006), 37-58.

41 Joshua Berman, "The Kadesh inscriptions of Ramesses II and the Exodus sea account (Exodus 13: 17–15: 19)," in James K. Hoffmeier et al., eds., *Did I Not Bring Israel Out of Egypt? Biblical, Archaeological, and Egyptological Perspectives on the Exodus Narratives* (Eisenbrauns, 2016), 93-112.

42 Lawrence T. Geraty, "Exodus Dates and Theories," in Thomas E. Levy et al. (eds.), *Israel's Exodus in Transdisciplinary Perspective* (Springer, 2015), 55-64.

43 James K. Hoffmeier, "What is the Biblical date for the Exodus? A response to Bryant Wood" in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50.2 (2007), 225-247.

We have evidence that not merely after hostilities had ended under Ramesses II, but also earlier,⁴⁴ doctors, oracles, prescriptions and rites traveled directly between Egypt and the Hittite empire,⁴⁵ and as such, it would not be unexpected to find the Puliša and Ašhella rites adopted by, or adapted to, Egyptian medical practice. Moreover, there is reason to believe that Egyptians and Hebrews of the northeastern border region would be particularly familiar with these rites.

With Hittite correspondence coming to the Pharaoh at Pi-Ramesses, Hittite prisoners of war and Egyptian deserters from the battles waged by Horemheb, Seti and Ramesses joining Israelite and other Asiatic slaves in Pi-Ramesses and Goshen, and Egyptian soldiers returning to the Pi-Ramesses garrison with booty from Hittite battlefield, the ostensible first audience for the Pentateuch and their Egyptian neighbors would have had good reason to be familiar with Hittite conventions and many aspects of their culture. One even imagines a steady stream of freed Egyptian “scapegoat” prisoners passing through Goshen on their way home, dressed in the finery of the Hittite king and queen, or when inconvenient “another person... [who] takes care of the rite,” throughout the long decades that Muršili II labored to find the right combination of rituals to send the Egyptian epidemic back from whence it came. A recent paper argued that the Biblical narrative of Phinehas and Cozbi is in dialogue with the Puliša and Ašhella scapegoat traditions; in killing Cozbi, Phinehas enacts a human female scapegoat ritual to avert the plague in the desert of Moab, and in so doing demonstrates familiarity on the part of the *dor ha-midbar*, the generation of the wilderness, with these specific rites.⁴⁶

A New Approach

In light of the above, a new possible interpretation of the Exodus passages suggests itself.

At the height of the deadliest of the Egyptian plagues, in 11:2, the Israelites are requested, almost begged, as Rashi (s.v. *daber na*) notes – in language reminiscent of Judah’s plea to Joseph in Genesis 44:18 – to ask of their Goshenite neighbors (Exodus

44 Marco De Pietri and Elena Urzi, "Evidence for medical relations between Egypt and Hatti: a brief overview." *Proceedings of the Twentieth Annual Symposium, University of Alcalá, 17–21 June 2019* (Archaeopress, 2021), 114-129.

45 Ignazio Vecchio et al. "Between “Science” and Magic: Pre-Hippocratic Greek Origins of Medicine and Surgery," in *Acta Medica Mediterranea* 29 (2013): 363-367.

46 Lauren A. S. Monroe, "Phinehas' Zeal and the Death of Cozbi: Unearthing a Human Scapegoat Tradition in Numbers 25: 1-18," in *Vetus Testamentum* 62:2 (2012), 211-231.

3:22), Hittite-familiar soldiers and officials, fellow Asiatics and Hittite slaves, to render *the Israelites* their scapegoats. The latter “find favor” in the eyes of their neighbors, in the sense that they deem the Israelites fitting representatives – adorned substitutes about whom the Egyptians might say, “compared to me she is excellent: she is pure, she is radiant, she is pale, she is endowed with everything.”⁴⁷ The Israelites request specifically jewelry and clothing. And they “borrow” these items, because for the ritual to be effective, the adornments must be those of the sender; but under no circumstances do the senders want the regalia returned. The Israelites dress their sons and daughters (3:22), wearing the garments as scapegoats are required to do.

The Israelites, now decorated, along with their sheep and cattle (12:38), and laden with special breads (12:39), are to carry the plague out of Egypt, and off to land of the enemy God that inflicted the plague upon them. In so doing, the Israelites indeed save, *va-yenatzlu*, Egypt.⁴⁸ In its outline of the projected events of the Exodus, Chapter 3 culminates in a supreme irony: God descends to save (*le-hatzilo*) the thoroughly downtrodden Israelites from the hands of the Egyptians (3:8), and when He is done, the Egyptian oppressors will need the Israelites to save them (*ve-nitzaltem*) from the hands of God.

There is no deceit here; on the contrary, the enactment of the Puliša and Ašḥella rituals make it clear to the Egyptians that the Israelite exodus is permanent. This ritual enactment also fits with Pharaoh’s characterization of the moment of release in sacrificial terms (12:31-33). It likewise enables a sense of “closure” with the Egyptians, who achieve expiation, and thereby exempt them from being abominated by the Israelites (Deuteronomy 23:8).⁴⁹

For the ritual to work, as per the Hittite texts, the Israelites would need to reach the land of the enemy, or at least carry the plague out of the borders of Egypt. When Pharaoh sees that the Israelites have turned back within the borders of Egypt – “they are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in” (14:3) – it seemed that the ritual would never be enacted after all, or worse, that the Israelites would carry the plague back to the Egyptians. Given this, Pharaoh’s objective seems to have been to kill

47 Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 72.

48 In the Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (HALOT), נצל is the parent root for both possible meanings, with cognates meaning to take away, save, escape from, extract, draw out, separate and sever. The *pi’el* form can mean either “to pull out, save” (Ezekiel 14:14) or to snatch for oneself (II Chronicles 20:25) (although HALOT comes down on the side of the more conventional translation “to rob” for Exodus 3:22). See Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Brill, 1994) entry 6314, נצל.

49 I am indebted to R. Prof. Joshua Berman for these two points.

the scapegoats, as in the citation in the Song at the Sea (15:9), “my hand will destroy them.” Killing the scapegoat is another means of dispatching the plague, one seen in the Greek *pharmakos* version of the rite, and possibly in some Hittite versions as well,⁵⁰ one which does not require the scapegoat to leave the afflicted territory. Indeed, upon seeing the Egyptians in hot pursuit, the Israelites complain that they have been sent to *die* in the wilderness (14:12). But Pharaoh was mistaken about the Israelites’ itinerary, and indeed, after Divine intervention dispatches with the Egyptian army in the Red Sea, the Israelites proceed beyond the Egyptian border and fulfill the task emplaced upon them by their erstwhile neighbors.

This sort of freedom – scapegoat freedom – comes at a price. Perhaps for this reason, the first Divine communication to the Israelites after they have left Egyptian territory to the wilderness, the destination of the human scapegoat – the terrain of the “angry foreign deity” – is one of qualified reassurance (15:26) “...If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee.” The Israelites need to be assured that God will not put the plagues upon them – the plagues that the Egyptians did put upon the Israelites – if, and only if, they obey the covenant.

The Israelites had reason to be concerned. In borrowing the Egyptian finery, they assumed the plague of the firstborn upon themselves, upon their cattle and upon the donkeys that carried their children and goods (Rashi 13:13, s.v. *peter hamor*); and it is perhaps for this reason that Chapter 13 interrupts the narrative with the commandment to sanctify all firstborn – man, livestock and donkeys – and outlines the methods for their redemption. Tractate Soferim (21:3) records the practice by which Jewish firstborns fast on the eve of Passover – but if the purpose of the plague was to free the Jews, why would they have ever been in danger? Since the emancipation is forever bound up in the transfer of plague, to reenact the eve of redemption is also to recall a time of peril.

By the time of the composition of the Septuagint, all of this context had long been forgotten. Hattuša had been laid to rubble for nearly a millennium, the Puliša and Ašhella tablets buried deep within its mound; and the last embers of Hittite culture had been completely extinguished by the Neo-Assyrians by 700 BCE. The translators understood that the unmodified **לשא** can only mean “to borrow,” and with no better

50 See Monroe, “Phinehas’ Zeal,” p. 215.

explanation, deceit – with all its contextual and ethical problems – was left as the lone possible avenue of interpretation.

The Transformation of the Scapegoat Ritual

The foregoing approach solves the moral question: there was no deception; the Israelites offered to serve as scapegoats for the Egyptians, and fulfilled their duty; it also solves the contextual problem: borrowing at the moment of redemption, in the scapegoat context, underscores the finality of the Exodus, and is thus consistent with the Biblical indications of the Israelites' and Egyptians' awareness of finality, and the expression of Divine power and sovereignty. It addresses all the technical questions – why during the plague, why clothing and jewelry, why the request is gendered, why specifically the Egyptians of the Goshen borderland - those most familiar with Hittite scapegoating, and what “finding favor” could mean in this context. But one new question arises: why would the God of Israel make use of an idolatrous Hittite ritual?

Perhaps for the same reason, and in the same way, that Hittite blood-purification and other sacrificial patterns are mirrored in the Pentateuch. The Torah did not necessarily seek to replace the cultic “grammar” of the Ancient Near East, but to adapt the familiar, and sometimes to subvert it, for often radically different aims.

Indeed, Biblical law does know a scapegoat ritual: the ‘sent goat’ to Azazel (Leviticus 16:10). But despite the many similarities, there is a key difference from the rites in the Arzawa collection. In his publication of the Hittite scapegoat rituals, David Wright notes that “in the Bible, Israel’s *sins* are placed on the animal, whereas in the Pulisa rite, a deity-caused *plague* is dispatched.”⁵¹ From the beginning of Genesis, the Bible identifies sin as the cause of death, and it is sin – the root cause of plague and other kinds of death – that must be eliminated. In Biblical theology, a proper response to plague is not primarily apotropaic; rather, there must be a strong ethical-moral component.

In this respect, the “mass scapegoat ritual” performed by the Egyptians at God’s behest is a fitting inflection point in the life of this ritual. In sending the decorated Hebrew slaves and their cattle in the manner of the Hittites – ostensibly, to carry away death and propitiate the angry foreign deity – the Egyptians were at the same time “sending” their sins, in the manner of the Bible, resolving the moral failing at the root

51 Wright, *The Disposal*, 50. The *metzora*-bird of Leviticus 14:7 is also a sort of scapegoat ritual, and like the sent goat, it also serves not to dispatch plague; however, in its case it disposes not of sin, but of *tum'ah*-impurity.

of the plague. They were releasing the Israelites from their servitude, complete with the gifts manumitted slaves are due, and a bit of reparations, to boot. In the moment of the Exodus, for Egypt, elimination of plague is transformed to expiation of sin – and thus a magical practice is reconceived as an act of *teshuvah*.

Yaakov Beasley

Micah and the Song of the Sea: An Intertextual and Metaphoric Approach

Micah's final oration, featured in the seventh chapter of this literary work, stands out for its poetic depth and fervor, making it a notable piece within the realm of prophetic literature. Given its lyrical potency, some scholars propose that it may have served as a liturgical composition sung during ritualistic occasions. Nevertheless, due to its composite nature, characterized by shifting tones, subjects, and voices, others view this chapter as a compilation of distinct, shorter segments.¹ However, it is worth noting that the transition from personal lament to confession and, ultimately, to an expression of hope for future redemption is a recurring theme in prophetic and psalmic texts. This thematic consistency alleviates the necessity of positing different authors for the chapter. Instead, most scholars discern a three-part structure that unifies the composition as follows:²

- A. Micah's personal lament and the depiction of societal collapse (v. 1-7).
- B. Confession and hope conveyed through the voice of the city (v. 8-13).
- C. Redemption and the fulfillment of promises (v. 14-20).

1 For further scholarship on the formation and literary structure of Micah chapter 7, see Bruce Waltke, *A Commentary on Micah*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 13; Allen, Leslie C. *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1976; Sweeney, Marvin A., David W. Cotter, Jerome T. Walsh, and Chris Franke. *The Twelve Prophets*. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000; Reicke, Bo, "Liturgical Traditions in Micah 7" HTR 60 [1967]: 349–67, and most recently, Yair Hoffman, "The Last of Summer Fruit, The Gleanings of Harvest: The Structure, Composition and Compositional Purpose of Micah 7" (in Heb.), *Beit haMikra* vol. 56:1, 40-64.

2 Beasley, "Joel, Obadiah, and Micah: Facing the Storm", p. 308, Koren Publishing: Jerusalem, publication pending. Neither this division, nor the claim that different voices speak throughout the chapter, is universally accepted by scholars. Many view the inspiring declaration of faith in verse 7 as the transition between Micah's lament as part of the second section, which describes the ultimate revival of the city of Jerusalem, and not as a conclusion to his personal lament. Similarly, scholars debate whether the third section is an organic unit or should be divided between verse 14-17 and verse 18-20. An excellent summary of the varying opinions can be found in the *Mikra leYisrael* commentary to Micah, 272 (Hoffman, Y., *Micah: Mikra leYisrael: A Scholarly Commentary*, Am Oved Publishers: Tel Aviv, 2017)

However, we wish to draw the reader's attention to a specific phenomenon that illustrates a shared intertextual and metaphorical framework within the final two sections of the chapter. In both of these sections, Micah extensively draws upon the "Song at the Sea" (*Shirat haYam*) to convey his message of guidance and solace. This connection was initially observed by Thomas McComiskey and subsequently elaborated upon by Bruce Waltke, who noted:

"The rising crescendo of salvation oracles [in Micah] climaxes surprisingly in praising [the Lord] as a forgiving God, not as a Warrior as in Moses' Song of the Sea with which it has striking intertextual links. The change is profoundly insightful."³

While Waltke meticulously outlines numerous textual parallels between Exodus 15 and the conclusion of Micah 7 – and others have noted even more parallels⁴ – he does not explicitly elucidate why Micah's reliance on Exodus is "profoundly insightful." Instead, Waltke tentatively suggests that Micah's intention might be to enhance the forthcoming salvation by favorably comparing it to the Exodus from Egypt.⁵ Building upon contemporary insights into metaphors, this paper aims to demonstrate the profundity of these parallels by initially delineating the core intertextual connections between Micah 7 and Exodus 15. Subsequently, we will propose the prophetic purpose underlying Micah's appropriation and transformation of the Song of the Sea in his concluding words. This will involve an examination of the abrupt shift in metaphors employed by the prophet and an exploration of how this alteration advances Micah's overarching message.

It is crucial to differentiate between words and phrases that indicate a deliberate intention to create allusions to a prior text and those that merely reiterate words without implying a meaningful connection.⁶ Richard Hays, a pioneering scholar in this

3 Waltke, 450. The first identification of the parallels in scholarship appear in McComiskey, Thomas Edward. 1993. *The Minor Prophets* (vol. 2). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 754.

4 The fullest examination of the parallels comes from Mike Skinner's article, "Echoes of Exodus in Micah 7:8-20: Micah's Critical Appropriation of the Song of the Sea", a summary of which is available online at <https://cruciformtheologyblog.com/2014/02/20/intertextuality-in-micah-7-part-one-evidence/>. This article first inspired my research into how modern theories of cognition, specifically metaphors, can be fruitfully applied to Biblical studies, and I have attempted in this article to develop and expand its ideas here.

5 Here is Waltke's wording: "Whereas I AM at Israel's origins miraculously threw Pharaoh's picked troops into the sea, he now at Israel's end does the even greater saving deed of hurling Israel's sins into the depths and of giving his true people universal victory" (*Micah*, p. 450).

6 Given the ubiquitous usage of the term "intertextuality" in modern biblical scholarship, we shall adopt Richard Hays' definition as the foundation for our research (Hays, Richard B. *Echoes of*

field, has developed specific criteria for distinguishing between texts that genuinely exhibit intertextual links, characterized by one text alluding to or echoing another, versus texts that merely share common vocabulary. This paper will particularly focus on two of Hays' seven criteria: the second criterion, "Volume," which assesses the number of explicit similarities in words or literary patterns between the two texts under consideration, and the fifth criterion, "Plausibility," which queries the feasibility of the speaker or author's intent in establishing the linkage between the two texts and whether this connection, along with its derived meaning, would be readily discernible to the audience or reader.⁷

Our investigation commences by meticulously delineating the intertextual connections discernible between Micah 7 and the seminal Exodus 15. We posit that Micah strategically incorporates two explicit references to the Exodus within the concluding segments of the chapter. The initial reference stands incontrovertible; Micah 7:15 asserts, "As in the days when you came out of the land of Egypt, I will show them wonders." The second reference, we contend, emerges in Micah 7:19, where it is proclaimed, "He shall again ('ישׁוב') grant us compassion." Given the abundance of allusions and parallels to the Song of the Sea both preceding and succeeding this

Scripture in the Letters of Paul. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989, 14):

"Intertextuality is the imbedding of fragments of an earlier text with a later one. The voice of Scripture, regarded as authoritative in one way or another, continues to speak in and through later texts that both depend on and transform the earlier."

Therefore, we are confronted with a two-fold responsibility – both to identify the various intertextual connections and to account for the meaning that they create. As Hays writes:

"The two-fold task of a criticism attuned to such echoes, then, is (a) to call attention to them so that others might be enabled to hear; and (b) to give an account of the distortions and new figuration that they generate." *Echoes*, 19.

- 7 The seven criteria that Hays suggests are as follows:
 - a. Availability: Was the proposed source of the allusion/echo available to the author and/or original hearers?
 - b. Volume: What is the degree of explicit repetition of words or syntactical patterns?
 - c. Recurrence: How often does the author elsewhere cite or allude to the same scriptural passage?
 - d. Thematic Coherence: How well does the alleged echo fit into the line of argument that the author is attempting to make?
 - e. Plausibility: Could [or did] the author intend the alleged meaning or effect, and would his/her listeners/readers recognize it?
 - f. History of Interpretation: Have other readers, both critical and pre-critical, heard the same echoes?
 - g. Satisfaction: Does the proposed reading make sense? *Echoes*, 29-32.

term, we maintain that it specifically alludes to the redemption from bondage. In this manner, Micah actively beckons the Jewish populace to anticipate a second exodus. These references assume paramount significance, as they serve to establish and reinforce the correlations between the two texts, thus satisfactorily meeting the criterion of Plausibility discussed earlier. Through these historical allusions, Micah instructs and leads his audience to discern the echoes of the Song of the Sea.

The second compelling connection between the two texts revolves around the utilization of a rhetorical question that accentuates God's unique attributes immediately following a poetic depiction of God's triumph over His adversaries. Just as the Song of the Sea culminates in the triumphant declaration, "Who is a God like You?" (Exodus 15:11), Micah's portrayal of forthcoming salvation culminates with his exaltation, "Who is a God like You?" (Micah 7:18).⁸ The deployment of similar terminology in analogous literary contexts reinforces the issue of Plausibility—Micah unequivocally intends his audience to contemplate God's singularity through the prism of the Song of the Sea.⁹

In addition to the question of Plausibility, we posit that both texts share a multitude of common words and phrases, as itemized in the table below:

- 8 Descriptions of God's incomparability are found not only throughout Tanakh (see Deut. 33:29; Ps. 35:10, 71:19, 77:13, 89:6, 113:5) but throughout ancient Near Eastern literature. Waltke notes correctly that the primary difference between the manner in which the praise is "[God's] incomparability pertains to unique character to forgive sinners in his intervention in history, not to his surpassing military power ... there is a very real and close connection between [God's] incomparability and the fact that He intervenes in history as the redeeming God" (Waltke, 463).
- 9 Among traditional commentators, both the Abrabanel and the Metzudat David (ad loc) note that the term "שוב" refers to previous acts of salvation, hence the understanding and translation as "again" is appropriate. Midrashically, Rabbi Eliezer in the Talmud suggests the term refers to God's addition of merits to a person's own merits during judgment (b. Rosh haShanah 17a, b. Arakhin 8b). Modern commentators provide a variety of interpretations. For example, Yair Hoffman argues that the "return" is prompted by the distance that existed between God and His people while he punished them. Those commentators noted above (Waltke, Skinner) who noted the parallels between Micah 7 and Exodus 15 interpret similarly.

Micah 7	Exodus 15
<p>Israel [the people] is described as God's inheritance (<i>nahala</i>): Shepherd your people with your staff, the flock of your <i>inheritance</i>. (v. 14) Passing over transgression for the remnant of his <i>inheritance</i>. (v. 18)</p>	<p>Israel [the land] is described as God's inheritance: You will bring them, You will plant them on the mountain, Your <i>inheritance</i> – the place, Lord, that You made for Your dwelling, the Sanctuary, Lord, that Your hands established. (v. 17)</p>
<p>God will perform wonders in the future (<i>peleh</i>): I will show them <i>wonders</i>. (v. 15)</p>	<p>God performed wonders at the Sea: [Who is like you] doing <i>wonders</i>? (v. 11)</p>
<p>The reaction of Israel's enemies is fear (<i>pahad</i>) and trembling (<i>ragaz</i>): They shall <i>tremble</i> out of their strongholds ... they shall be in <i>terror and awe</i> of you. (v. 17)</p>	<p>The reaction of Israel's enemies is fear and trembling: The people have heard; they <i>tremble</i>. (v. 14) <i>Terror and awe</i> fell upon them. (v. 16)</p>
<p>The depths of the sea (<i>metzulot</i>) become the resting place for Israel's sins: You will cast all our sins into <i>the depths</i> of the sea. (v. 19)</p>	<p>The depths of the sea become the resting place for the Egyptians: The deep waters covered them; they sank to <i>the depths</i> like a stone. (v. 5)</p>
<p>God desires kindness (<i>hesed</i>): For he delights in <i>kindness</i> (v. 18)</p>	<p>God took Israel out of Israel with kindness: You have led in your <i>kindness</i> the people whom You have redeemed. (v. 13)</p>

Hence, a plethora of shared words and phrases intertwine Micah's concluding verses with the Song of the Sea, unquestionably satisfying Hays' second criterion, Volume. Both texts are firmly rooted in the historical narrative of God's redemption of His people during the Exodus. They converge in the celebratory rhetorical question concerning the incomparability of the Lord, and they share a substantial linguistic lexicon, interspersed with unique and evocative poetic imagery. To succinctly encapsulate these connections, Waltke aptly remarks, "to make the intertextual connection absolutely clear, the remnant's praise uses picturesque and completely

original imagery from the Song of the Sea: [the LORD] 'again' has mercy: he 'vanquishes' Israel's sins and 'hurls them into the depths of the sea.'"¹⁰

With the intertextual connection between the two texts firmly established, the inquiry must now pivot toward understanding Micah's overarching objectives in weaving these references to the Song of the Sea into his final prophecy. At a cursory glance, it becomes evident that Micah consciously appropriates the language and metaphors of the Exodus to vividly depict the future redemption. Such a strategic choice is poised to instill confidence in his audience, a considerable portion of whom grapples with trepidation in the face of the Assyrian invasion. Hasn't God already fulfilled His promises once before? Hasn't He already triumphed over a formidable superpower that sought to annihilate the Jewish nation in the past? Micah persuasively contends that, just as God safeguarded His people at the Sea, He will do so again—similarly, just as the Jewish people once extolled God in song, they shall resound in praise once more in the future.

We would like to posit an additional dimension to Micah's utilization of wording and imagery from the Song of the Sea in his concluding oracle. This dimension emphasizes the fundamental message underpinning his prophecy. Micah's engagement with phrases borrowed from the Song of the Sea transcends mere linguistic borrowing; it involves subtle alterations and amendments that, crucially, reshape their meanings. A pivotal shift unfolds in Micah's use of metaphors—a shift that departs from his portrayal of God thus far in the book, and one that will persist through the remainder of his narrative.¹¹ Until this juncture, Micah has predominantly depicted God as "The Shepherd" of His nation.¹² God leads them, constructs protective enclosures to shield

10 Waltke, 450.

11 Recent scholarship is beginning to appreciate the importance of a shift of metaphors within a text. Cognitive theorists emphasize that metaphor usage is fundamental to thinking. Jean Piaget argued that we think by forming schemata, mental structures which we build by experience and then use to organize and link later knowledge. These schemata begin with concrete experiences that provide a framework upon which to form the basis for abstract reasoning. Metaphor is thereby central to cognitive processes: "The locus of metaphor is not in language at all but in the way we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another." George Lakoff, "The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor," *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 203. See also Fauconnier, Gilles, and Mark Turner. *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and The Mind's Hidden Complexities*. New York: Basic Books, 2002; and Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

12 The image of God as the shepherd of the Jewish people is ubiquitous in the Tanakh, beginning when Israel blesses Joseph and says, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day..." (Gen. 48:15), and continuing in Gen 49:24,

them from lurking predators (2:12-13), and, notably, Micah implores God within this very chapter, "*Shepherd Your people with Your staff, the flock of Your legacy; they will dwell safely in lush forest lands, pasture in Bashan and Gilad as in ancient days*" (7:13).

Abruptly, Micah initiates a dramatic transformation in his imagery. Commencing with his resounding proclamation that "As in the days when you came out of Egypt, I will show My wonders" (7:14), God undergoes a profound metamorphosis, transitioning from a shepherd to a warrior, aligning with the subsequent references drawn from Exodus 15. The Song at the Sea explicitly and succinctly declares, "God is a man of war!" These references from the Song of the Sea usher in this stark shift in metaphor. God, in this newly adopted metaphor, not only shepherds His people but takes up arms on their behalf, engaging in battle against Egypt and emerging victorious by casting them into the depths of the sea. As Micah employs this new metaphor, he vividly portrays the astonishment and terror that will grip the enemies of the Jewish people as redemption unfolds: "Nations will see and be shamed...they will place their hands over their mouths...like snakes they will lick the dust...they will come quivering out from their holes in terror; they will come before the Lord our God, and they will fear You" (7:15-17). No longer do Micah's listeners perceive God as a benevolent shepherd but as a formidable warrior poised to confront the surrounding adversaries.

However, just as abruptly as Micah seems to embrace this new metaphor for God's relationship with Israel, he appears to cast it aside. In verse 18, the narrative pivots from the confrontation with nations to the praise of God for His loving-kindness and forgiveness toward the Jewish people. But this appears to be a rhetorical feint.

as well as throughout the book of Psalms, most famously in Ps. 23:1, "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want", but also including Psalm 78:52-53 and 80:1, and Isaiah 40:11. As such, the leaders of the Jewish people are expected to model themselves after God, and serves as the shepherds of the nation (see 2 Sam. 5:2. 1 Chr. 17:6); and the Jewish people are consistently referred to as his sheep (Ps. 95:7; 100:3; Is. 53:6). Prophets castigate rulers that fail to measure up to their standard as foolish or negligent shepherds (see Is. 56:9-12; Jer. 10:21, 23:1-4, 25:32-38; and extended developments of this metaphor in Ez. 34 and Zech. 11). The imagery extends to other nations of the time: King Hammurabi of Babylon called himself a shepherd, and Homer regularly styles the Greek chiefs as shepherds of their people. For further resources, see Jack W. Vancil, "Sheep, Shepherd," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1187 P.L. Garber, "Sheep, Shepherd," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerald H. Wilson (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988; and Golding, Thomas A. "The Imagery of Shepherding in the Bible, Part 1." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163, no. January-March (2006): 18-28.

Micah reverts to making a final literary allusion to the Song of the Sea in verse 19, once again portraying God as a warrior. In doing so, Micah takes his listeners on a narrative journey, skillfully heightening their expectations to maximize the impact and resonance of his message. Micah proclaims that God, once more, hurls Israel's enemies into the depths of the sea. However, a startling revelation awaits his audience. While previously, God waged wars against Israel's external foes, most notably the Egyptians, the focus of God's battle has shifted. It is no longer the Assyrians, Babylonians, Edomites, or Arameans who are the targets of God's confrontation, but rather, Israel's true adversaries— their own sins.¹³

By shifting the reference of the enemy from external threats to "God the warrior," the prophet introduces a fundamental transformation in the conceptual framework the metaphor provides. Micah implores the Jewish people to recognize their true adversary as sin. This recognition fundamentally redefines the nature of the battle, its locus, the weaponry employed, and the condition of the people for whom the battle is waged. Instead of squandering their resources and energies against external adversaries, Micah challenges the Jewish people to adopt a different perspective and act accordingly. This correlation between internal moral failings and external foes represents a fitting conclusion to the overarching message that Micah has conveyed from the outset. Micah contends that if Israel and Judah had built societies founded upon the moral principles articulated in the Torah, had practiced compassion rather than corruption, and had exhibited leadership grounded in kindness rather than avarice, then no external force, not even a formidable superpower like Assyria, could have inflicted harm upon Israel in any capacity. This is the message Micah tirelessly endeavors to impress upon the people. By culminating with his rendition of the Song of the Sea, Micah simultaneously instills hope within his listeners while ensuring that their focus remains squarely upon their true adversary.

13 An approach best formulated by cartoonist Walt Kelly's Pogo the possum, who famously uttered: "We have met the enemy, and he is us." For how this phrase evolved, see <https://humorinamerica.wordpress.com/2014/05/19/the-morphology-of-a-humorous-phrase/>.

Yitzchak Etshalom

The Koren Tanakh of the Land of Israel: Samuel - Book Review

When I first received this handsome and weighty volume, I turned to one of my favorite “go-to” passages – the *pim* (I Samuel 13:21). I was curious as to how the editors of a trailblazing Tanakh companion volume would present this Biblical puzzle.

In that passage, we read about the restrictions placed on the people by the ruling Philistines, specifically their prohibiting Israelites from running forges for sharpening tools, out of a fear that they would make weapons. As a result:

וְהִיתָה הַפְּצִירָה פִּים לְמַחְרֶשֶׁת וְלֵאֲתִים וְלִשְׁלֵט קִלְשׁוֹן וְלְהַקְרִדָּמִים וְלְהַצִּיב הַדְּרָבָן.

Rashi (and, following him, Radak and Abravanel) renders *pim* as a multi-edge file, used for sharpening tools. The two avenues of interpretation and translation usually available to the medievalist - when access to *realia* isn't (yet) known - are context and words which share the root letters. The context here (sharpening farm implements) and the root letters (*peh* – mouth) led these Rishonim to interpret *pim* as a sharpening tool. The word and its translation remained largely ignored and “under the radar” until a *pim* weight was discovered in the Philistine coastal areas in the first decade of the 20th century. Once that discovery was publicized and it became clear that the text was attesting to the fee charged by the Philistines for sharpening Israelite farm tools, translations were quickly emended. As early as 1917, JPS proposed:

And the price of the filing was a *pim* for the mattocks, and for the coulthers, and for the forks with three teeth, and for the axes; and to set the goads.

Since then, virtually all translations have presented the text in that manner, as reason would seem to dictate. As more ancient coins were discovered, and proper research was undertaken it was discovered that a *pim* was roughly 2/3 of the weight of a *shekel*. Some more recent translations incorporated this as well:

The charge was two-thirds of a shekel for the plowshares, the mattocks, the forks, and the axes, and to fix the cattle goads.¹

The Koren Tanakh of the Land of Israel presents the word without translation:

The sharpening fee was a *pim* for plowshares...

1 *New American Standard Bible*, 2020 – similarly in *NASB 1995* and *Legacy Standard Bible*.

A footnote, taking the reader to the back of the book, to a brief section titled “Translation Notes”, informs us: “Two-thirds of a shekel, about 10 grams of silver.” However, on the text page itself, there is a brief note, authored by Dr. Michael Carasik, explaining how we know the weight of a *pim* and noting that the word likely has Sumerian roots. The color picture of a *pim*-weight, identified as a 7th c. BCE find from Arad, helps to bring the word, the notion, and the text to life.

On the same page, there are several similar textboxes about farm tools of the period, as well as an entry about the road mentioned a few verses earlier, with a clear photograph of where that road likely ran. All of this makes for an attractive, informative foray into the story of Saul and the beleaguered state of his militia in advance of his planned uprising against the Philistine overlords.

Among all this illustrative information, there is no mention of the translation history of the *pim*. While this may seem to be a pedantic consideration, I will revisit this lacuna further on and will discuss how this may impact on the potential positive influence of the series.

The Koren Tanakh of the Land of Israel series was created in response to an increasingly visible chasm in pertinent reference works. Here are the editors’ words:

The events and geography of Tanakh (like those of nearly every narrative) are set in specific places and times, and its text uses the literary techniques of long-lost cultures. But few works, particularly those written for an English-speaking Jewish audience, have tried to relate the Tanakh to its milieu – comparing its history, literary style, geography, cultural interactions, and political relationships to those that existed at the time. (From the “Introduction to the Series”, page xii).

The first volume, on Sefer Shemot, the Book of Exodus (2019), successfully bridged this gap. Its strong emphasis on Egyptology as well as vital geographic notes, served to provide much of the background for understanding the slavery and exodus narrative cycles. The volume on Samuel, published in 2021, is the second in the series (so far, additional a volumes on Leviticus and Numbers have has also seen the light of day).

As is the case with other books that are driven by narrative (e.g., Genesis) *realia*-the material world of the time and place - plays a central role in the stories found in the Book of Samuel. It is specifically in those books that both archaeology and Ancient Near East textual parallels have so much to contribute to our understanding of the text. Whether in providing context for the notion of “defeated deities” as in the case of the Philistine god Dagon (I Samuel 5, pp. 44-45), giving background to the custom of anointing leaders in the ancient world (I Samuel 2, p. 21) or identifying Near

East parallels to David's dirge for Jonathan and Saul (II Samuel 1, p. 220), the book skillfully illuminates the *sitz im leben* of the Samuel-Saul-David narratives.

The Book of Samuel includes numerous instances of military strategy (as is the case throughout the historic books of the *Nevi'im*). Within the context of these contentious narratives ancient weaponry is predictably invoked – along with numerous more peaceful tools and artifacts of the ancient world, such as our *pim*. The Koren edition is equal to the task, providing brief historic notes and pictures which help the reader follow the story with a clearer mental image of how the story likely played out. For example, Goliath's armor (I Samuel 17) is more easily imagined via a picture of an 8-7th c. BCE scale armor found in Ardabil. Both farm tools and spears are brought to life with vivid pictures on p. 113.

The Samuel-Saul-David narrative cycles involve a significant amount of travel and mention of numerous lesser-known locations or toponyms whose location may have been erroneously identified in the past (such as Gat, discussed on p. 46). Several ancient routes are described, helping the reader more realistically follow David's travels while fleeing Saul.

Numerous place names are identified, using maps as well as brief discussions, following the latest research. In addition to maps and relevant discussions, the volume provides quite a few photographs which enable the reader to gain a bird's-eye view of the topography and environment, as per the example of Avel Beit Maakha in II Samuel 20 (pp. 354-355). Several photographs of the area stretching east from Jerusalem help to put David's flight from Avshalom into a clearer light (pp. 327-332).

The exciting discovery of Khirbet Qeiyafa less than 20 years ago is given a full two pages of introduction as well as an aerial photo depicting the two gates which lead to its identification by numerous contemporary archaeologists as Biblical *Shaarayim* – all this in the aftermath of David's defeat of Goliath (I Samuel 17, pp. 147-149).

In addition to the artifacts displayed, toponyms pinpointed, and ancient practices explained, there are numerous language entries that address and explain idiomatic phrases such as *ir v'eim b'Yisrael* – a city being called “a mother” (II Samuel 20, p. 356) and “a dead dog, a single flea” (I Samuel 24, p. 181) along with many others.

This is a brief but comprehensive survey of the various disciplines used by the various scholars who contributed to the volume. How this palette of reference materials is graphically presented in the book is itself an attractive update of a traditional model.

Since the 13th century, manuscripts of books of Tanakh were usually accompanied by commentaries, following the model of the *Glossa Ordinaria*, where the core text was presented in one large column and the commentaries surrounded it. In other

words, instead of having the commentary as a stand-alone or on a separate page, it accompanied the text upon which it was commenting.² This was, of course, the strategy taken by the first printers of the “Rabbis’ Bibles” (*Mikraot Gedolot*) and has been the only model used since.

It is significant, within the context of our review, that more academic Biblical commentaries eschew this format – as it isn’t necessarily utile for an anthropological or archaeological discussion – in favor of a more standard running discussion. This is even true of more text-driven academic commentary series, such as *Anchor Bible*, *OTL*, and, in Hebrew, *Mikra leYisrael* among others.

The Land of Israel Tanakh appropriated the traditional layout, of text with surrounding textboxes, but in lieu of traditional commentaries, the contributions of their team of scholars appear on each page, below the text.³

This innovative turn of tradition gives the volume a “familiar” feel for the traditional student, also enabling the articles to be briefer, as each one’s reference point is right there on the page.

A handy guide in the introduction to the book provides a key to the types of contributions each textbox contains. The list, which the editors refer to as “Article Categories”, includes Egyptology, *Mishkan*, Geography, *Halakha*, Archaeology, Near East, Language and Flora and Fauna. These categories are not all of one type. *Mishkan*, for instance, has limited input in the Book of Samuel and appears episodically, whereas Language and Geography appear throughout and regularly.

In addition to the text-generated articles, there are several section introductions which serve as broader explanations of significant phenomena in the text. For instance, before the text presentation of II Samuel 11 – the story of David, Batsheba and Uriah, there is a brief introductory article about the issue of royal adultery and illicit killing. In a more mundane context, the list of David’s elite military leaders (II Samuel 23) is prefaced with a short piece about name-lists in Tanakh and in other Near Eastern literature.

The text itself is graphically portrayed in classic Koren fonts, and the translation is:

...produced by a team of scholars who remained true to the original text while also being consistent with modern language, idioms, and readability expectations. Any translation is a commentary, and the Koren translation is

2 This is such an intuitive model for us that we hardly realize how innovative this layout was when first presented.

3 The only earlier example of this of which I am familiar, and which may have served as a model for this series is the *Olam haTanakh* series put out by Yediot Aharonot.

no exception. The translations of the books of the Tanakh used in this series attempt to be true to the initial Hebrew text and also present the Tanakh in a form that flows and is accessible to the modern reader. (From the introduction, page xiv).

A few introductory sections before the text include a timeline of Near Eastern ethnicities and nations, as well as a regional map and a map of the Land of Israel, both highlighting significant cities and topographical features prominent during the period and in the book.

There are a few addenda which follow the text. Besides the standard index, list of image credits and (impressive) list of contributors to the volume, there is also a helpful glossary with brief explanations to critical terms, ethnicities, locations, Near Eastern works and more. The most impressive and useful addendum is a bibliographic listing of significant articles on each of the topics touched upon in the commentaries. If a reader wishes to further his or her knowledge about, for instance, David's lamentation over Saul and Jonathan (II Samuel 1), there are no fewer than ten articles, books or entries cited for further research.

Before addressing the ways in which this volume – and this series – might be used by different types of consumers, I'd like to briefly address the issue of traditionalism which the editors stake out in their introduction:

Koren Publishers Jerusalem is an Orthodox Jewish publishing house, having produced texts for over fifty years. *The Koren Tanakh of the Land of Israel*, is a delicate balance between the scholarship of academia over the last two centuries and the traditions of the Jewish Sages that have come down to us over the last two millennia. (Introduction, p. xiv)

There are numerous ways in which a book about Tanakh can be “traditional” or “Orthodox.” One way is in accepting certain theological premises – such as the reality of Divine prophecy and the historicity of the Biblical narrative – which are challenged in an essentialist way only from outside traditional circles. Another way has to do with the text, specifically the reliability of its transmission and the accuracy of the reading tradition. In other words, besides the orthography of the text, we also rely on tradition for vocalization and parsing, effectively favoring one meaning over any number of possible alternatives. A third feature of a book which would identify it as “traditional” would be its adoption of rabbinic traditions regarding the narrative, specifically the actions of its protagonists (as well as the antagonists).

There are, to be sure, several other “Orthodox-signaling” additions or omissions to be found. Often, when we pick up a new work from an unknown source, we instinctively check for some of these cultural-religious signals to determine

what viewpoint they are likely to espouse and what *weltanschauung* drives their interpretative strategies.

Does our volume meet this standard, as it claims? In other words, without the open declaration, would we pick up this volume and understand it to be “traditional”? This needn’t necessarily be an important question to ask, but once it has been brought to our attention by the editors, the issue bears a bit more scrutiny.

The volume certainly reads the text as a historically reliable document and accepts, as a given, the reality of God’s hand in human affairs as well as the possibility and inevitability of Divine prophecy. This point itself is a great divider between traditional and “academic” (read: non-traditional) books. Whereas the consistent approach throughout most of the world of Biblical academia would read any “prophecy” as having been written *after* the event prophesized, as it could not have been to any human beforehand, a traditional work will assume the truth of prophecy and will not question the sequence of prophecy, *followed by* the event.

Regarding the text itself, the Land of Israel Tanakh assumes the reliability of its transmission.

One noted exception is in the enigmatic opening to I Samuel 13:

בֶּן-שָׁנָה שְׁאוּל בְּמָלְכוֹ וְשָׁתִי שָׁנִים מֶלֶךְ עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל.

A literal translation, quite incredibly, reads:

Saul was one year old when he began his reign, and he ruled for two years.

The difficulty of the literalist reading of the verse caught the attention of the rabbinic sages. In both Yerushalmi (Bikkurim 3:3) as well as Bavli (Yoma 22b) this odd statement is read figuratively, describing Saul as either cleansed of sin when he ascended to power (Yerushalmi) or as spiritually pure (Bavli). This Midrash is woven into the Targum Yonatan and is favorably cited by Rashi (as his only explanation), cited, as well, along with other approaches, by Radak. Other medieval commentators such as R. Yosef Kara, Radak and Ralbag, give other explanations for this oddity. For example, R. Yosef Kara suggests that the events presented in this chapter took place in the *first year* of his rule.

The editors, having noted the glaring difficulty, provide an article (under the “Language” heading) which immediately points the reader to an alternate version in some Greek manuscripts (not found in our standard LXX) that has his age as 40 when he was named king. The article goes on to describe the broad academic approach, to assume that there were two numbers in the verse – how old he was when he became king and the length of his reign – that were somehow lost in transmission. While this is not necessarily an “unorthodox” approach – certainly fine minds would come down on both sides of that determination – completely avoiding the approaches taken

by “the Jewish Sages” to resolving this seems a bit odd. It ought to be noted that R. Tanhum haYerushalmi, a student of Ramban, made the same suggestion that those two numbers were lost in transmission.⁴

A more glaring omission than this relatively minor textual note is how the volume deals with what is likely the thorniest issue in The Book of Samuel – the story of David and Batsheva. The king’s adulterous affair, his (failed) cover-up attempt, his orders to Yoav to have Uriyah abandoned and slain on the battlefield and David’s subsequent marriage to Batsheva are troubling events. Moreover, this tragic episode proves to nearly be the undoing of the Davidic dynasty in its infancy. The rape of Tamar, Avshalom’s fratricide and subsequent rebellion, David’s flight from Jerusalem and the civil war between David’s men, led by Yoav and Absalom’s army under the (very temporary) leadership of Amasa, can all be causally and sequentially traced to the David-Batsheba affair.

These weighty topics have been addressed by traditional scholars, ranging from the famous Aggadic “anyone who says that David sins is but erring” (b. Shabbat 56a) to more nuanced attempts to reconcile the hero-king with his problematic behavior. The history of rabbinic animadversions about this story could fill volumes. Yet nary a word appears in this commentary about traditional responses, from the apologetic to the condemnatory, that are found in our literature. The argument might be made that a volume which endeavors to expose its readership to the last few hundred years of bible research while maintaining a traditional pose would want to include the latter along with – and perhaps even before – sharing the former.

One vital note about this point is in order. We would not expect that a volume such as this would cite Midrashim as matter of course nor would it necessarily invoke the traditional commentators’ words if that can all be understood through the translation of the text. Yet there seems to be a huge gulf between a rabbinic anthology and a work which omits even a mention of traditional attitudes towards royal peccadillos.

This minor critique is only meaningful if the intent of the work was to be a stand-alone, encompassing text to for the study of the Book of Samuel. However, if seen as a companion volume to more traditional works, such as *Mikraot Gedolot* or *Da’at Mikra*, then the nearly complete emphasis on modern scholarship is more easily understood.

It is true that the volume examines numerous words and phrases and provides fascinating and illuminating etymological suggestions as well as tracing the word from its ur-language, be it Egyptian or Sumerian. The issue of language, however, would be significantly enhanced if the volume had also concerned itself with issues of literary

4 See R. Moshe Tedeschi, in his *Ho’il Moshe* ad loc, who assumes this to be the case.

structure, wordplay, and the like. There are many examples of the use of the *leitwort*, chiasmic structures, inverted parallelism and so forth – and this angle of textual analysis is not addressed at all. Perhaps it is asking too much – the volume is already quite large – but it would have added much value to an already valuable tome.

One final point about language, or, more accurately, orthography. There are numerous instances of *keri* and *ketiv* in the Book of Samuel, including the famous *Magdil/Migdol* variation at II Samuel 22:51 and the consistently substituted *tehorim* for *'polim* in I Samuel 5-6. Although the *Magdil/Migdol* variation is discussed, albeit in the context of the practice of reciting this verse in Birkat haMazon and varying the vocalization from weekdays to Shabbat, the larger issue of *keri* and *ketiv* is omitted. This is an especially felt lack in the context of the *tehorim/'polim* substitution, as it is occasioned by what the Baraita in the Bavli (Megilah 25b) describes:

All of the verses that are written in the Torah in a coarse manner are read in a refined manner.

This is, to be sure, a somewhat nervy intervention on the part of the Sages and it would have been an interest topic to read about here.

Again, it is already a weighty volume and there is so much there...but it would have been a nice addition.

I would like to explore how this innovative work might be used by the expected consumer. It seems that there are three types of audiences for this work: The student, the teacher and the scholar. By student, I do not mean one who is enrolled in a course, as that falls under the rubric of “teacher” and how he or she chooses to utilize the volume. By “student” I am referring to someone who is driven to study Tanakh, to understand it, without the consideration of how it might be used “vocationally.” The “teacher” is someone who may be teaching *Sefer Shmuel* in a high school or post-high school setting and would like to utilize some (or all) of the various marvelous resources in this volume to enhance the classroom experience and to broaden and deepen the students’ appreciation and mastery of the text. The scholar is that independent researcher who could conceivably look to this volume to assist him in deepening his own understanding but also in aiding his own research.

These three admittedly have significant overlaps, not only demographically but also subjectively. Nonetheless, I’d like to briefly explore how each of them might make use of the *Land of Israel Tanakh*.

The student, depending on his or her background, is likely to find a nearly unending supply of surprising, intriguing, and enlightening information. If he or she has studied Tanakh in a “traditional” mode, as outlined above, the exposure to the many archaeological finds and geographical information, which are likely new, will

certainly bring the story to life. Since the work is an English-only reference book, the likelihood is high that a significant percentage of the readership will reside in the Anglosphere – but when they come to visit the Land, will be inspired to find these places, visit the museums and so forth. For those many students who are already somewhat familiar with the use of academic disciplines to enhance their study of Tanakh, this may be viewed as a treasure trove of exciting information to add to their data bank. For those students who have an ear for language or are intrigued by anthropology, the many "Language" and "Near East" entries will pique their curiosity and will likely inspire them to read further and, perhaps to take their own study of Tanakh to the next level.

The teacher will look at this volume through a different set of eyes. When a Tanakh teacher sees a new publication, his or her first interest is typically *not* the observation "how interesting this it to me", rather the question "can this be interesting to my students?" Having a copy (or several copies) of this volume in class while studying *Sefer Shmuel* could become a "game-changer." By having a volume available which can speak to such a wide range of interests in the classroom, this has the potential to spark many more young souls with a flame of passion for Tanakh study. A teacher could, for instance, assign a term project where the students can address a given story in the text from any one of a number of perspectives – and each of these perspectives will have a likely starting point in this volume. It is here that the bibliographical index could be most handy. When students learn that they can research such exotic topics as the pagan religions surrounding *Am Yisrael* in Tanakh times, the various monarchic practices which impacted on the establishment of the Davidic dynasty, and so on, there is the real possibility that an otherwise disinterested high school student might find his or her passion in the Book of Books.

Finally, we come to the scholar. Clearly, a top-notch Bible scholar will be familiar with nearly all the contributions in this volume (yet he or she may get some ideas about clear and concise presentation from it). However, a *budding* scholar, or someone whose area of expertise lies outside the field of Tanakh, will probably find the greatest use of this volume in the bibliographic index and may be able to deepen his or her research by using these articles, chapters, and entries and, of course, by following the footnoted references to be found there.

In sum, the *Koren Tanakh of the Land of Israel* is a most welcome addition to our bookshelves, to our libraries and to our *Batei Midrash*. The volume on *Sefer Shmuel* does more than simply add to our font of knowledge and understanding of the text; it also opens up numerous doors to our own study and to allowing us to independently enhance our knowledge, our appreciation of the text and our broader understanding

of the world of Tanakh. As one of my students is fond of saying: “You can’t understand the Tanakh until you understand the *world* of Tanakh.” This handsome volume gives us every hope that we can understand Tanakh – by helping us understand the *world* of Tanakh.

ABSTRACTS

English Articles

Aton Holzer

Ma'ot Hittite: Finding Divine Morality in Borrowing from an Ancient Near East Context

On the eve of the Exodus, God commands the Jews to “borrow” vessels and clothing from their Egyptian neighbors, which are not to be returned but rather become spoils of Egypt. The apparent deception presents a thorny challenge to Divine morality and stands in stark contrast to the unambiguous miraculous displays of Divine power that characterize the remainder of the Exodus narrative. The command also poses contextual problems, among them that the actual time of the fulfillment of the command arrives when the deception was least likely to be effective. The history of the question and classical, medieval and modern approaches are surveyed.

A new solution is presented on the basis of Hittite scapegoat rituals meant to remove plagues, which date to the ostensible period of the enslavement and Exodus. Among these rituals are ones which involve the dressing of male and female “scapegoats” in the finery of the royal family or suitable substitutes and sending them to the land of the enemy, which, for the plague-stricken Hittites, would have been Egypt, particularly its Northeast border. It is proposed that the Egyptians were asked to enact this human scapegoat ritual upon the Israelites for the purpose of removing the plague of the firstborn and dispatching it to Canaan, and as such garments and finery needed to be borrowed – to belong to the Egyptians – even though it was clear that they were not to be returned.

Yaakov Beasley

Micah and the Song of the Sea: An Intertextual and Metaphoric Approach

From the prophet’s self-identification with the suffering of his people to his confident declaration that God will once again perform miracles to redeem them, Micah 7

contains some of its most unforgettable and dramatic imagery and demonstrates Micah's masterful literary and rhetorical talents. Recent scholarship notes a series of textual connections between Micah 7 and Exodus 15, the Song of the Sea. This article lists these connections, judges the validity of the claim that Micah intentionally uses these parallels for rhetorical purposes, and contemplates what those purposes may be. Afterwards, the article notes the brilliant metaphoric shift created through the establishment of this literary connection, and how this metaphoric transformation strengthens Micah's underlying message to his people.

Yitzchak Etshalom

Book Review

The Koren Tanakh of the Land of Israel: Samuel

The challenge of presenting Tanakh in an accessible, relevant manner while staying true to the text and its zeitgeist is one that is faced by a myriad of contemporary authors and author-teams. Koren, with their developing Land of Israel Tanakh series, is meeting the challenge head-on. Several examples of difficult texts and texts which raise ancillary difficulties are assayed with an eye to how successfully the volume on Sefer Shmuel addresses them. The work is discussed within the larger context of the entire project and from the viewpoint of three theoretical target audiences – the Tanakh student, the Tanakh teacher and the Tanakh scholar. Each has much to gain from these volumes; yet as is the case with any such ambitious work, there will be gaps in the presentation and the need to look elsewhere to further one's research, instruction and study.

Hebrew Articles

Yosef Marcus

Jacob's Journey to Haran: Change or Continuity?

After stealing his father's blessing, Jacob's departure for Haran is motivated both by Rebecca's desire to save him from Esau (Gen. 27:41-45) and by Rebecca's explanation to Isaac that Jacob must leave the country in order to marry a woman who is not from Canaan (27:47). Consequently, Isaac sends him to Padan Aram to seek a bride, even offering him the Abrahamic blessing (28:1-5). Thus, Jacob escapes to save his own life and succeeds in establishing a family, as well.

Some scholars contend that in addition to these reasons for his departure to Haran, Jacob's journey will also entail a personality change transforming him from "a simple tent dweller" (25:27) to "a man of the field," a transformation that will make him a worthy recipient of Isaac's first blessing, enabling him to replace his father as head of the family. This assertion, however, must be examined critically by, among other things, studying the literal and symbolic appearances of "the field" in Jacob's life and evaluating Jacob's symbolic role in the origin stories of the nation of Israel.

Hezi Cohen

Two Approaches to Prophecy: Elijah vs. Samuel

The Bible often places one character in the shadow of another in order to shed light on additional layers of meaning in that individual's work. In our article we note repeated parallels between Elijah and Samuel that demonstrate a consistent contrast between the two prophets. Both seek to bring the people to worship God exclusively, but they work in different – even opposing – ways. While Elijah is strict and exacting, speaking in strong language and demanding immediate change, Samuel takes a different path: he speaks softly, encouraging gradual remorse and transformation. We view the parallels as an implied criticism of Elijah, which is reflected in Samuel's success in leading the people to repentance, while in the case of Elijah on Mount Carmel, the people immediately return to their sinful ways.

These biblical parallels not only add to our understanding of Elijah's approach, but they also serve as a 'light of reflection' that allows us to appreciate Samuel's prophetic leadership in a more precise manner, recognizing it as a path of partnership and harmony with the people.

Yair Rahat*

**The Pronouncements Upon the Nations in Isaiah 13-19:
Structure, Context and Meaning**

This article focuses on the first part of the collection of "Pronouncements Upon the Nations" that appears in Isaiah (Chapters 13-19), which includes a sequence of dire prophecies about the downfall of the nations of the region. An analysis of the messages found in these prophecies shows that they are not just an arbitrary collection of prophecies grouped together, but a continuous and orderly literary unit that develops throughout the chapters, fulfilling Isaiah's vision (Chapter 2) that all the nations will seek the Name of God Who dwells in Zion.

Our analysis shows that there is also a significance to the location of "The Pronouncements Upon the Nations" as it is placed in the Book of Isaiah. In a similar vein to the lesson derived from the conspiracy formed by King Retzin of Aram and King Pekah of the Northern Kingdom of Israel against King Ahaz and Jerusalem (Chapters 7-8), these prophecies appear to demand the abandonment of human diplomatic and political tactics and the recognition that it is the Hand of God directing global geopolitical transformations. Acknowledgment of God's ultimate power occurs in His abode in Zion, leading to global harmony where the nations and world powers all worship God.

In closing, the article offers a broad overview of Chapters 7-27 and argues that a central theme is presented – transition from confidence in Man to confidence in God who resides in Zion. This transition occurs in three different circles: initially in Israel, then among the nations, and finally in all of Creation.

Yoav Barzilay

The Description of the Exile in Ezekiel's Symbolic Acts of Prophecy

An analysis of the verses of symbolic acts performed by Ezekiel at the beginning of his prophecy (Chapter 4) shows that they actually include two prophecies. The main prophecy, which is reflected in most of the symbolic acts, focuses on the severe siege that is to come upon Jerusalem leading to its terrible destruction, by famine, sword and fire. The second prophecy – hidden to a certain extent – appears as an addendum of sorts, second to the siege prophecy, and it describes the exile in which Ezekiel and his listeners find themselves. The verses of the prophecy of the exile explain the length of the exile (shorter than what is usually assumed) and its ritual defilement.

Thus, the prophecy of Ezekiel's symbolic actions provides an answer to the two great questions that preoccupied the Jehoiachin exiles on a personal and national level. The first question related to the fate of Jerusalem and the Temple; the second question focused on their own fate after they had been exiled from their land. It seems that this prophecy of Ezekiel was intended to prepare the exiles for their role in the future. The descriptions of the severe siege and the terrible destruction serve not only to prepare them for the personal, national and spiritual crisis that awaited them, but to instill in them the recognition of the responsibility placed upon them as the survivors of the destroyed people of Israel – that the future renewal of Israel depends upon them.

Yaron Zilbershtein

**Legitimacy of New Government Authority in the Twilight Period of Rule:
A Midrashic Interpretation of David and Abigail's Meeting**

The story of the meeting of David and Abigail is one of the most dramatic meetings in the Bible. In this meeting, Abigail reveals herself as an intelligent woman whose thoughtful acts convince David to refrain from killing her husband, Nabal. The interpretation given to this story in the Yerushalmi (and parallel texts) highlights the sexual motif in David and Abigail's meeting, which became, in the view of most commentators and scholars, the central motif of their meeting. By dividing the Yerushalmi's midrashic story into two parts – an anonymous midrashic story followed by a homily presented in the name of Rabbi Levi – and analyzing them as independent units, we suggest that the sexual motif evident in the first story is used only as a backdrop whose purpose is to raise the question of a king's authority to rule on capital crimes during the twilight period

of the previous king's reign. In the second story, which includes Rabbi Levi's homily, Abigail is presented as a brave woman who appears before King David and warns him to avoid the image of a bloodthirsty king who permits himself the wives of other men. We suggest that these interpretations should be understood in light of the frequent changes of rulers in the Roman Empire in the third century, and the need to determine their status according to Jewish law.

Moti Benmelech

**Between Tekoah and Ferrara: An Unknown Italian Interpretation
of The Wise Woman of Tekoah Story**

In this article, an interpretive *derasha* by Rabbi Hillel of Modena on the story of "the wise woman of Tekoa" is published for the first time. Rabbi Hillel interprets the story as an attempt to challenge the legitimacy of vendetta as a substitute for the legal process in cases where the guilt of the murderer is certain, but there is no legal possibility to convict him.

This interpretation is attached to his halachic *responsum* regarding the case of an "honor killing" that occurred in Ferrara in the spring of 1577, in which Rabbi Hillel strongly opposed the act and the attempts to justify it. The commonality between these two serious incidents – vendetta and honor killing – is the concept of honor and its central place in Mediterranean societies. The concept of honor was a central element in Mediterranean Jewish communities, as well, and there were cases of honor killings and blood revenge against which Rabbi Hillel spoke out. This *derasha* sheds light on the world of the Jewish community in the Mediterranean at the beginning of the early modern period and points to some of its darker aspects.