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THE WARRIOR GOD, OR GOD, THE DIVINE WARRIOR

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In the year 31 B.C. the land of Judea experienced a natural phenomenon with which residents of California are all too familiar-an earthquake. It was of enormous severity, "such as had not been seen before", according to the first-century Jewish historian Josephus, to whom we are indebted for this account *(Antiquities* 15.108-160)[1]. Approximately 30,000 people were killed, not to mention the lost of countless head of cattle. At this very time Herod was engaged in a series of battles against Nabataean Arabs, who had temporarily gained the upper hand and then gone so far as to slay Herod's envoys sent to negotiate terms for peace.

According to a lengthy speech that Josephus constructed for Herod, used to encourage his troops prior to the next armed encounter, the Arabs interpreted the earthquake as a sign of God's disfavor, an indication that He had abandoned the Jewish forces in favor of their Arab adversaries and that He was fighting against and not along with His people. By pointing to a peculiar pattern of destruction in the recent earthquake, Herod turned the argument around and "proved" that God did indeed favor Herod's (and the Jews') cause in the soon-to-be-initiate battle: "That He [that is, God] wishes this war to be carried on and knows it to be a just one He Himself has made clear, for though thousands of persons throughout the country were killed by the earthquake, no one in the armed forces suffered any harm, and you were all unhurt. . . Bearing in mind these things-and what is more important-that you have God as your protector at all times, go out with justice and manliness to attack" the enemy. In the combat that followed, Herod's troops were ultimately victorious[2].

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[1] Throughout this paper quotations from the work of Josephus are taken from the Loeb Classical Library translation.

[2] Ancient historians such as Josephus frequently fleshed out their narratives with speeches

In effect, so Herod argued, the battles in which his forces were then engaged constituted a Holy War, the successful outcome of which was not to be doubted, even though the army of Judaea would have to undergo real combat and suffer real losses in order to achieve the victory of which they were assured. A phenomenon of nature, in this case an earthquake and its aftermath, provided the key for Herod's interpretation, an interpretation that the success of the Jewish forces vindicated. This was not the first time that Jews had seen God the Warrior at work through natural phenomena, nor were the Hebrews alone in associating the violence of nature with that of warfare.

This incident, raising as it does such questions as divine participation in what seems to be purely human warfare and the role of mortal soldiers in Holy War, presents clearly several of the issues with which we will deal in this paper. Since this event took place in the post-Biblical period, it also invites us to explore the ways in which Biblical concepts were carried over and further developed in communities for whom the Hebrew Bible retained a central place.

My presentation falls into two parts; my role in each is somewhat different as well. In the first part my function is similar, to that of a reporter,

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and dialogues, ranging in length from a few to several thousand words. Although this material is presented as direct discourse, it is understood that most of these "quotations" are free, but not necessarily inappropriate creations on the part of the historian or the tradition upon which he was dependent. This was not an effort to deceive the reader, ancient or modern; rather, by this means the historian sought to enliven his account and to make points that either the figure being "quoted" might actually have made or that the author felt appropriate within the context of the historical framework he was in the process of constructing.

In the case of this particular speech of Herod's, we have no way of knowing the degree to which Josephus's account reflects the *ipsissima verba* of the Jewish king. Nor is that important for our purposes. We are concerned here with the use, either by Herod or by Josephus, of traditional material dealing with God's role in Israel's wars. As such, this is a relevant example. The same holds true for direct discourse found in the Hebrew Bible, post-Biblical material such as 1 and 2 Maccabees, and Rabbinic literature.

All of these works, Josephus included, are biased, and these biases are bound to obscure, though not usually obliterate, the historical realities that their authors describe and evaluate. Again, it is not important for our purposes whether such-and-such a battle took place exactly as it is recounted in one or another source. We are much more interested, in narratives as well as in speeches, in the use, reuse, and even perversion of traditional themes and motifs in the texts with which we are dealing.

To return again to the particular account found in Josephus, we have no reason to doubt that battles did take place between Herod's troops and the Nabataeans, in which the Jewish forces eventually scored a decisive victory. With respect to the earthquake itself, we have several other witnesses, literary and archaeological, to the occurrence of this quake in either 31 or 30 B.C.

who on occasion disseminates views, others that otherwise might go unnoticed outside of a relative small circle of specialists. In this case, we will focus on a mythic pattern that appears to underlie the numerous references to figure of a Divine Warrior in both Canaanite and Biblical literature, a pattern discernible also in post-Biblical writers as Josephus. The mythic quality of this pattern should attract the active interest of those engaged in fruitful comparative studies.

In the second part of this presentation I will investigate three specific issues that arose when the concept of God as Divine Warrior, a concept we looked at in the earlier section, was applied to activities and attitudes in the sphere of human history, both Biblical and post-Biblical: (1) the difference between Holy War and other types of combat; (2) the role of human armies in Holy War; (3) the role of the "military hero" in such battles. I have already pointed out how the incident related by Josephus leads to a consideration of the first two issues. This is also true for the third of our questions, for at the end of that narrative Josephus records the following: "And so, thinking himself entitled to take great pride in his successes, Herod returned home, having acquired new prestige from this brave exploit." As we shall see, there are numerous traditions that would converge at this point in characterizing such human "pride" as unseemly at best, blasphemous at worst.

Examples in both sections will be drawn from a wide variety of texts dating from the second millennium B.C. through the third to fourth century A.D.[3]

I

[3] Recently the historian Salo W. Baron called attention to the fact that "despite the great importance, even urgency, of understanding the varying attitudes to war, those of the Jewish people, in both theory and practice, have never been satisfactorily examined. There is no significant literature on the basic Jewish ideology as it was formulated over the ages by the Bible and Talmud, by medieval rabbis and modern thinkers, as well as by the actual historical experience of Jewish participation in wars, both passively and actively." Baron's comments appear in the Introduction to *Violence and Defense in the Jewish Experience* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1977), edited by Baron and George S. Wise, which contains papers prepared for a seminar on violence and defense in Jewish history and contemporary life, held at Tel Aviv University, August IS-September 4, 1974. A number of issues, including many related to war, are covered in this volume, which surveys the "Jewish Experience" from Biblical times through the contemporary period. Baron also calls for further "serious investigations of Jewish attitudes toward war." A very informative, succinct account of attitudes toward "war and peace" in a wide variety of religious traditions, including Judaism, is found in John Ferguson, *War and Peace in the World's Religions* (London: Sheldon Press, 1977).

Several generations of Biblical scholars, using a variety of approaches and methodologies, have succeeded in identifying the Biblical theme of God as Divine Warrior, placing this theme within the larger context of Holy Warfare, and drawing parallels between Biblical and Canaanite concepts in this regard. Harvard professor Frank Moore Cross and a number of his students, building on the work of previous and contemporary scholars, have discerned a mythic pattern that underlies both Canaanite and Biblical texts dealing with the figure of the Divine Warrior[4]. This pattern consists of two complementary themes, transmitted for the most part in vivid poetic passages from the two literatures:

Theme A: The march of the Divine Warrior to battle. 1. The divine warrior marches off to war: Driving a fiery cloud-chariot, he uses the elements of nature, such as the thunderbolt and the winds, as weapons against his enemies.

2. At his wrath, nature is in upheaval, with mountains tottering and the heavens collapsing; in effect, all nature wilts and languishes. In the foreground is the cosmogonic myth in which Chaos-represented by the deified Sea Yamm or by the flood-dragon Lothan -is defeated.

Theme B: Return of Divine Warrior to take up kingship. 1. The divine warrior, victorious over his foes, comes to his new temple on his newly won mount.

2. Nature responds to the victorious Divine Warrior. At the sound of his voice all nature awakens. As the mountains dance and the trees clap their hands, the fertility of the earth, of sea, and of womb manifests the rule of the life-sustaining Divine Warrior. (Some of the descriptions may seem a bit overblown, but are supported by the texts themselves, as I will indicate below.)

Having gone directly to a description of this pattern, I need to pull back a bit and put the entire matter in perspective. When I refer to Canaanite material, I have in mind particularly the Ugaritic texts from Ras Shamra, the decipherment of which began almost immediately after their initial discovery in the late 1920s (although it had been possible to recover the basic contours of Canaanite mythology from other sources even prior to these discoveries). In this material it is the god Baal, along with his consort Anat, who is the warrior deity par excellence. Cycles 'of combat against Prince Yamm and against Mot (i.e., the power of Death) can be reconstructed.

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[4] See especially Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973). For material relevant to the present discussion, see especially chapters 5-7. Hereafter, this volume is abbreviated *CMHE.*

These texts take chronological priority over even the earliest Biblical material, and it is clear enough that various Biblical writers, especially in the earlier and later periods, drew from a common store of language and images, as well the property of creative Canaanite poets, to describe the God of Israel as Divine Warrior. Such use of shared motifs, epithets, and so forth supplied one of the elements within Israelite descriptions of God as Divine Warrior. To put the matter in theological terms: various writers of the Hebrew Bible sought to diffuse the supercharged language of their Canaanite neighbors through the careful appropriation of just such language in their portrayals of God. In this way, they hoped to bring into greater relief the very real differences they felt separated God from a so-called deity with whom He seemed to share a number of attributes and characteristics.

At the center of Israel's statements and beliefs concerning God as Warrior is the conviction that God does indeed reveal Himself through the processes of human history and natural phenomena visible in that history. In the context of this over arching affirmation the Hebrew writers saw God at work also when His people Israel were at war. From this point of view Israel's military history was also a recollection of one aspect of God's activity within the realm of human history, as it bears witness to numerous divine-human encounters. However, the conviction that God was fighting alongside His people, that in effect Israel's wars were God's wars, was not limited to any particular historical period or event and could be expressed as an open-ended hope for divine intervention as well as an interpretation of a contemporary or past event.

I fully agree with statements such as the following, which give appropriate emphasis to the theme of God the Warrior within the Hebrew Bible: “The conception of God as warrior played a fundamental role in the religious and military experiences of Israel. . . it lies at the theological center. The language and understanding of God as warrior dominated Israel's faith throughout its course”[5].

It has been argued that the divine name YHWH (convention ally vocalized Yahweh) initially formed part of a formula that identified the deity as "He who creates the [heavenly] armies”. Unfortunately, I cannot deal here with the development of these themes within the several strata of Biblical material. Suffice it first to point to Exodus 15:3 *yhwh 'yš mlhmh,* "The Lord is a man of war," as a succinct and unambiguous statement in this regard found in the ancient Song at the Sea, and then to turn to examples of each element from the above pattern in the Ugaritic and the Biblical material.

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[5] This evaluation is quoted from Patrick D. Miller, Jr., *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel,* Harvard Semitic Monographs 5 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973).

Canaanite (Ugaritic) passages in illustration of a mythic pattern for the Divine Warrior[6]

As Baal marches off to fight Yamm his first adversary, Kothar, the divine craftsman and one of Baal's principal supporters, foresees the warrior's eventual victory:

Behold, thy enemy, O Baal,
Behold, thy enemy thou shall smite-
Behold, thou shall smite thy foes.

His arsenal of weapons, drawn from among natural phenomena associated with the storm, is awesome:

Seven lightning bolts he casts,
Eight magazines of thunder;
He brandishes a spear of lightning.

His voice produces earth-shattering, one might even say cosmos-shattering, results:

Baal gives forth his holy voice,
Baal repeats the utterance of his lips,
His holy voice shatters the earth.

At his roar the mountains quake,
the high places of the earth shake.

Succinctly expressed elsewhere:

Then the heavens withered and drooped
Like the loops of your garment.

As Kothar had predicted, Baal was able to overcome the untamed, chaotic force of Yamm, the Sea:

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[6] Translations of Ugaritic texts are those of Cross, *cmhe.* I have taken the liberty of altering his renderings of certain proper names, in order to present such names in their more familiar, if less correct, form. Thus Ba'l (Ugaritic: Ba'lu) in Cross's translation becomes Baal, and so forth.

Sea fell,
His joints trembled,
Baal destroyed,
He finished off Judge River.
He sank to earth, His frame collapsed. Drank Sea!

Victory over death (Mot) is credited to Baal's consort Anat in the following passage:

She seized El's son Mot.
With a sword she sliced him;
With a sieve she winnowed him;
With a fire she burnt him;
With millstones she ground him.

Victory brings to Baal kingship and installation in his grand temple, which is situated on Mt. Ṣapōn:

My temple [Baal proclaims] I have built of silver.
My palace, indeed, of gold. . .
Behold, Mighty Baal lives;
Behold, the Prince, lord of earth exists.

Baal sits enthroned, his mountain like a dais,
Haddu the shepherd, like the Flood dragon,
In the midst of his mount, Divine Ṣapōn,
On the mount of his victory.

Baal's victory produces a bounteous overflow of nature's richest gifts, such that:

The heavens are raining oil,
The wadis run with mead.

Biblical passages in illustration of a mythic pattern for the Divine Warrior

We next follow this pattern through some of the Biblical material as well. Points of contact with themes and imagery also visible at Ugarit are frequent. As will be immediately noted, the various passages I juxtapose below, which are taken as particularly vivid examples of the elements of which the mythic pattern is composed, are not from one book or even from a single period. In Israel, as at Ugarit, writers selected from a variety of themes and images just those whose use and development were most meaningful in

the author's particular context[7].

A description of God as Warrior:
There is none like the god of Jeshurun,
Who rides the heavens mightily,
Who gloriously rides the clouds.
He Before you he smashed the foe. (Deuteronomy 33:26f as reconstructed)

God and the natural phenomena that serve as part of the Heavenly Hosts, the army through which the Warrior wages war against his foes:
He spread apart the heavens and descended,
A storm cloud under his feet.

He rode a cherub and flew,
He soared on the wings of the wind.

He set darkness round about him,
His pavilion is the raincloud.
Cloud-banks were before him,
Before him his clouds raced by, Hail and coals of fire.
He shot forth his arrows and scattered them,
Lightning-bolts he flashed and put them in panic. (Psalm 18 [2 Samuel 22] 10ff)

Manifestations of the wrath of God:
The god of the Glory thunders,
The voice of Yahweh is on the Waters,
Yahweh is upon the Deep Waters.

The voice of Yahweh is mighty; the voice of Yahweh is majestic.
The voice of Yahweh splinters the cedars;
Yahweh splinters the cedars of Lebanon. (Psalm 29:2ff)

The heavens roll up like a scroll,

[7] Biblical material in this section (through the second passage from Exodus 15) is given in the form reconstructed by Cross, *CMHE,* who attempts to recover the original text underlying the later traditions through which this poetry was transmitted to us. It is instructive to compare these reconstructions with a standard translation such as that found in the Revised Standard Version (RSV), which but rarely departs from the Received/Masoretic Text.

And all their hosts languish,
As the vine leaf withers,
as the fig droops. (Isaiah 34:4)

The earth quaked and shook;
The foundations of the mountains shuddered;
They quaked when his wrath waxed hot.

Smoke rose from his nostrils,
And fire from his mouth devoured;
Coals flamed forth from him. (Psalm 18:81)

God's victory over the chaotic forces of the Sea:
Drove out the enemy before you;
You rule enthroned on the back of Sea.
When his waves rise you calm them.

You crushed Rahab as a corpse,
With your mighty arm you dispatched your enemy. (Psalm 18:8f)

Was it not you who smote through Rahab?
Who pierced Tannin [the dragon]?

Was it not you who dried up Sea,
The waters of the abysmal Deep? (Isaiah 51:9f)

God's kingship and installation:
In his temple his Glory appears!
Yahweh sits enthroned on the Flooddragon;
Yahweh is enthroned, king forever. (Psalm *29:10)*

You brought them, you planted them
In the mount of your heritage,
The dais of your throne
Which you made, Yahweh,
The sanctuary, Yahweh,
Which your hands created. (Exodus 15: 17)

Vivid descriptions of nature's joy reawakening at God's victory:
(Psalm 89:101)
The desert and the steppe shall laugh,
The wilderness shall rejoice and blossom;

Like the crocus it shall burst into bloom,
And shall rejoice, yea, rejoicing and singing…

Indeed waters shall break out in the desert,
And streams in the wilderness.

And glaring desert shall become a swamp,
Parched earth springs o water.

The abode of jackals shall become a pasturage.
Open land [turn into] reeds and papyrus. (Isaiah 35:1-2, 6b f)

Fall down before Yahweh who appears in holiness!

He makes Lebanon dance like a bullcalf,
Sirion like a young buffalo…

The voice of Yahweh makes the deserts writhe;
Yahweh makes the Holy Desert to writhe;
Yahweh makes the hinds to writhe [that is, calve]. (Psalm 29:2, 6, 8)

The Biblical passages from which I have quoted are not for the most part tied to any particular historical battle. As we turn to passages where such a linkage is effected, we move into an area where questions concerning the role of humans in warfare become relevant. Within the Hebrew Bible itself such wars were especially to be located in the events which took place from the Exodus, through the period of wandering in the Wilderness, until the "Conquest" of the Promised Land. These, from the Biblical perspective, were indeed Holy Wars, in which God as Divine Warrior fought, as did His hosts, against historical foes inimical at once to Israel and their God; in general, God is pictured as fighting along with, not instead of human armies, but this is an aspect to which we must return later.

Most frequent are descriptions of God's actions on behalf of His people at the Sea of Reeds. The following example, taken from Exodus 15 (the Song at the Sea), serves to illustrate how Biblical poets infused their descriptions with mythic elements collocated to bring out those implications that, for the believer, were inherent in the events themselves:

Your right hand, Yahweh,
Shattered the enemy. . .
At the blast of your nostrils
The waters were heaped up.

The swells mounted up as a hill;
The deeps foamed in the heart of the sea. . .
You blew with your breath,
Sea covered them. . .
You stretched out your hand,
The underworld swallowed them.

God's active use of the now-passive waters of the Sea of Reeds demonstrated that as Divine Warrior He had met and conquered the waters of Chaos, which were now reduced to the status of one among many in the divine arsenal of weapons.

In a recitation of history that made up part of a ceremony of covenant renewal described in Joshua 24, we find the following: "Then I brought you to the land of the Amorites. . . and they fought with you, and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land, and I destroyed them before you. . . the men of Jericho fought against you. . . and I gave them into your hand." At Joshua 10:11 "the Lord threw down great stones from heaven" against Israel's (and His) enemies. Lastly, in a decisive battle fought under the leadership of Deborah and Barak, divine aid included the following:

From heaven fought the stars,
From their courses they fought against Sisera. (Judges 5:20).

II

Within the Hebrew Bible there is no attempt at classification of wars with respect to their degree of holiness or unholiness. However, from a close reading of the text it is apparent that not all wars fought by Israel were identical in every respect, even if we include only those which rested in a Hebrew victory. In Deuteronomy 20, for example, a distinction is drawn according to the identity of the foe. With respect to the seven nations that occupied Canaan before its conquest, a Hebrew victory was to result in their complete destruction: "in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, but you shall utterly destroy them. . . that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices which they have done in the service of their gods, and so to sin against the Lord your God." Total destruction is also ordained against the Amalekites, a desert tribe that had been the first outside power to attack the Hebrews after their escape from Egypt (see Exodus 17): "You shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; you

shall not forget" (Deuteronomy 25)[8].

In this regard it is instructive to recall that according to a tradition recorded in 1 Samuel 15, God's rejection of Israel's first human king Saul was linked to that monarch's sparing of an Amalekite ruler and the best of his flocks. Although Saul had his reasons, seemingly good ones at that, nothing could change the fact that he had breached the code of Holy War by substituting his own determination of what should be done for God's. We might also note that Haman, the archvillain in the book of Esther, is described as an Agagite, i.e., a descendant of King Agag, whom Saul had temporarily spared in the story just related from 1 Samuel 15.

To return to Deuteronomy 20, with respect to other nations with whom the Hebrews came into hostile contact, their spurning of Israel's overtures of peace (which could be coupled with harsh demands) would result, after their defeat, in the total destruction of adult males, but the capture and subsequent division of all else[9]. Within the literature produced and preserved by the rabbis, there is recorded considerable debate on many aspects of warfare. On the basis of their understanding of the relevant passages from Deuteronomy and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, certain of the rabbis devised a widely accepted distinction between obligatory wars, which adhered closely to what we have called Holy War, and option wars, which may be judged necessary in historical or even theological terms, but which nevertheless were not the results of God's express command. As we shall note in a later section, rather broad categories of exclusion were envisioned for optional wars, but for those of obligation "all go forth, even a bridegroom from his chamber and a bride from her canopy" (Soṭah 44b)[10]. As defined in a succinct manner by Maimonides, obligatory wars, which he termed "wars for a religious cause," included (1) the war against the seven nations; (2) that against Amalek; and (3) a war to deliver Israel from the enemy attacking it (for the last no particular Biblical passage is cited for support). Maimonides

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[8] Deuteronomy 13 similarly commands the complete destruction of any Hebrew city that turns from the worship of God to idolatry: "You shall surely put the inhabitants of that city to the sword, destroying it utterly, all who are in it and its cattle, with the edge of the sword. You shall gather all its spoil. . . and burn the city and all its spoil with fire, as a whole burnt offering to the Lord your God."

[9] Traditional Jewish commentaries extend the obligation to offer terms of peace to conflicts against Canaanite cities and the Amalekites as well.

[10] Soṭah is a tractate in the Babylonian Talmud. Although this tractate is concerned for the most part with the process by which a woman accused of infidelity establishes her innocence (see Numbers 5 in the Hebrew Bible), there is also contained therein a fairly lengthy section (42a-44b) on war and related matters. The translations of Talmudic material that appear in this paper are from the edition prepared by the Soncino Press in London.

termed "optional" "a war against neighboring nations to extend the borders of Israel and to enhance his [i.e., the king's] greatness and prestige."[11]

A dispute over the classification of wars according to type did arise in connection with one category of conflict-what we would call "preventive" war: "Opinion was not divided except in the case of warring with enemies for fear that they would attack, or if they knew they were preparing to attack."[12] Rabbi Judah, who is cited by name, considered them obligatory, but the majority opinion-this is delivered anonymously in the Talmud-is that such wars are optional. By thus depriving what we call preventive, first-strike wars of the status obligatory, these Rabbinic sages, in the words of one modem commentator, "interpret 'defense' strictly, as repelling an active as assault, [and] consider military action initiated by Israel to be only an Optional War."[13]

Let us return for a moment to the category of "voluntary war" and look briefly at this Talmudic statement (Soṭah 44b): "the wars waged by the House of David for territorial expansion were voluntary in the opinion of all." All voluntary/optional wars were not condemned, but they were clearly placed in a different-and inferior-category to those of the Conquest. In this connection, we should note that within the Hebrew Bible prophetic opposition to such wars was not usually a condemnation of war per se, but rather an attack against the presumption of kings, whose efforts to obligate all to take part in combat resulted in enormous social unrest of the type that lost for the house of David control over a united people. In the earlier wars of the Conquest, such extensive internal turmoil is not recorded, and from this perspective the prophets declared that henceforth God would war not alongside His people, but against those very Hebrew leaders who sought to twist the ideology of holy warfare to their own advantage.

In the *War Scroll,* the Essene-like community at Qumran envisioned its obligatory war, of a distinctly holy nature, against the following foes: an alliance of Edom, Moab, Ammon, and Philistia, led by the Kittim of Asshur. Joined to these will be a group of "offenders against the Covenant," which

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[11] Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah* 14 ("The Book of Judges"), Treatise 5 ("Kings and Wars"), chapter 5 (see further all of chapters 5-8). An annotated English translation of this work forms part of the Yale Judaica Series.

[12] This quotation, from the thirteenth-century French Talmudist Menahem Meiri, is found in Maurice Lamm, "Red or Dead?" *Tradition* 4 (1962), p. 185.

[13] Lamm, p. 186. Is it possible to designate the struggle against Hitler, the Soviet Union, or any other enemy as a war against Amalek? According to Lamm, p. 188, "halakhically, no such substitution can be made. 'Amalek' is the name of a specific nation. . . . Maimonides seems to accept a much broader definition of the term. This, however, does not appear to be the consensus of Halakhic opinion."

effectively included all nonsectarian Jews. Other foes against whom the Sons of Light (i.e., the members of the Dead Sea community) must war are the "Kittim who dwell in Egypt" and "the kings of the north." We will look at this scroll again in the following section[14].

I might summarize the material discussed in this section by stating that within the Hebrew Bible there are passages pointing to the recognition of various strata of war, many of which are codified in the Rabbinic material in terms of obligatory vs. optional. Actually, we should also speak of a third type of war, wherein God along with His Heavenly Hosts fought the primordial forces of Chaos. Aspects of such combat, which figured prominently in the Biblical passages cited in the first part of this paper, were in certain periods and among certain groups projected into eschatological warfare, a topic which I have been unable to treat in more than a cursory fashion within the confines of this paper.

The topics to which we now turn all relate to the following issue: the extent and nature of the participation expected of Israel in the various types of combat it did or might undergo against adversaries within the context of human history. Let us reverse the previous procedure and look first at the Rabbinic material, through which we gain some sense of the substance and character of deliberations aimed at defining the precise meaning of the various grounds for exemption offered at Deuteronomy 20: those who built a new house and did not dedicate it; those who planted a vineyard and not enjoyed its fruit; those who had betrothed a wife and not taken her-were all to go back to their houses, as were those who were "fearful and fainthearted." Each of these terms receives extensive consideration in the Talmud, but one point stands out clearly: they are understood as exemptions for voluntary/optional war only. Nevertheless, since these exemptions are defined in what I judge to be a rather broad (and also fair) manner, I think that we are dealing here with a Rabbinic reaction against the abuses referred to above with respect to wars conducted by the kings of Israel and Judah, if not also abuses from periods closer to the time of the rabbis.

Moreover, strict rules of personal hygiene, as well as ceremonial purity, were to be adhered to both in battle itself and in the war camp, for even in time of war each Israelite was told: "you shall keep yourself from every evil thing" (Deuteronomy 23). The reasons for such regulations are to be discovered in the very nature of this warfare: "the Lord your God is with

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[14] For a thorough and authoritative treatment of this document, see Yigael Yadin, *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962). His interpretations of the *War Scroll* have been followed throughout this paper.

you. . . the Lord your God is he that goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory"(Deuteronomy 20); "Because the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to save you and to give up your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy, that he may not see anything indecent among you, and turn away from you"(Deuteronomy 23).

Among members of the Dead Sea community, whose legal requirements for participation in warfare were quite similar to those proposed in Rabbinic literature (both took the Biblical text as their starting point), the matter of "purity" for battle was of particular significance. Their settlement at Qumran could be conceived of as an armed encampment, whose residents were purified soldiers who joined willingly with the angels in their midst to fill the battalions that obediently served under the Divine Warrior, God. The author of the *War Scroll* expressed his community's beliefs as follows: "For the Lord is holy, and the king of glory is with us-a people of saints. Mighty men and a host of angels are among those mustered with us, the mighty one of war is in our congregation, and the host of His spirits is with our steps."

Similar beliefs and regulations were also operative in the mid second century B.C., when Judah Maccabee successfully led his forces against the attacking armies of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV, whose efforts to eradicate Judaism as a distinctive religion had received the enthusiastic support of many Jews themselves. Among our most valuable witnesses to this period are 1 and 2 Maccabees, which generally attribute the victories of their favorite Maccabean leaders to strict adherence to the canons of Holy War and trust in God as Divine Warrior. These documents also contain graphic portrayals of the martial activities of the Heavenly Hosts, such as that found in 2 Maccabees 5: "there appeared golden-dad horsemen charging through the air, in companies fully armed with lances and drawn swords."

As we have seen, Jewish communities did not determine standards of eligibility for military service in a context isolated from their understanding of the nature of both God and human society. Such a determination was, however, but preliminary to decisions, which again needed to be integrated into larger belief systems, concerning what exactly these human soldiers were supposed to do. In general, they were to fight, armed both with weapons and with the knowledge that God is on their side. As I pointed out earlier, God fights alongside, not instead of, humans. However, it was not always deemed appropriate for Israel to send all of its soldiers to battle enemy forces; further, on occasion God was not simply the decisive factor in victory, as we might expect, but the only factor. These and related questions point to the fact that the issue of human participation in warfare was a complex one, some of the subtleties of which we explore at this point.

Gideon, one of the most famous of the Biblical judges, amassed a

great army to do combat against the Midianites, but God instructed him to thin out the ranks considerably, reasoning as follows: "The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, 'My own hand has delivered me' " (Judges 7). In 1 Maccabees 3 Judah is reported to have encouraged his outnumbered forces by stating: "It is easy for many to be hemmed in by few, for in the sight of Heaven there is no difference between saving by many or by few. It is not on the size of the army that victory in battle depends, but strength comes from Heaven." And yet, it does seem that as a rule the Israelite armies with whom God allied Himself were outnumbered, so as to lessen the possibility that humans might praise their own strength, instead of the Divine Warrior who allotted such strength to them, for Israelite armies were to "trust in the Almighty God, who is able with a single nod to strike down those who are coming against us and even the whole world" (2Maccabees 8).

It was then generally necessary for humans armies to fight against overwhelming odds, in order fully to appreciate the enormity of the gift bestowed upon them. In this way they were also led to recognize the source of their strength. The divine nature of this source is generally made known in the accounts preserved for us by the fact that the decisive and determinative event in battle is frequently described in terms of what we might loosely call a "miraculous" divine intervention (which was frequently, but not always, associated with a natural phenomenon). Thus the forces at Qumran were to conduct a six-year campaign against their chief enemies, culminating in a series of seven lots of alternating victory and defeat on the last day (all of which is described in great detail). However, the seventh and decisive lot, which resulted in the annihilation of the enemy, was fought by God alone: the human troops awake to find that the multitude of the enemy were "all slain, for they have fallen there by the sword-of-God." This narrative is reminiscent of the Biblical account of the disaster that befell Sennacherib's troops as they laid siege to Jerusalem in the eighth century: "The angel of the Lord went forth, and slew 185,000 in the camp of thee Assyrians; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies" (2 Kings 19).

From these and numerous other accounts (the fall of Jericho, for example), it is clear that although God could be effective without any human aid, an act of faith to God by means of human participation was generally requisite. And yet, not always-a sub theme can be constructed from passages such as Exodus 14:14. Although we are told that at the time of the Exodus "the people of Israel went up out of the land of Egypt equipped for battle" (Exodus 13), Moses gave the following order: "The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be still" (14:14). Thus it was that at the Sea of Reeds, clearly a crucial event in the history of the formation of Israel, the assembled

humans were told not to fight, to leave it all to God.

I do not believe that in this respect at least actions (or inactions) at the Sea were meant to be paradigmatic[15]. To this degree, Josephus put things in what we might call their usual perspective by speaking of the exiting Hebrews as "unarmed folk" *(4ntiquities* 2). It was not in accordance with the general scheme of things that a group of armed forces would simply do nothing when confronted by an enemy. Josephus then quotes a tradition to the effect that these Hebrews were first armed only after they had passed through the Sea of Reeds, when the weapons of the drowned Egyptians floated to their camp, thanks to "the providence of God."

However, we ought not to obscure in this way the point of the remark attributed to Moses; namely, that on some occasions, though certainly not most of those recorded, trust in God the Divine Warrior must be shown through abstention from active participation. No one ever attempted to formulate hard and fast rules in this regard, but it is noteworthy that Josephus portrays himself as having made use of such a tradition in a speech he delivered to the citizens of Jerusalem prior to its final capture by the Romans, in which he urged them to surrender at once *(War* 5). Selectively choosing examples that would prove his point, Josephus in effect overstated the case by declaring that "there is no instance of our forefathers having triumphed by arms or failed of success without them when they committed their cause to God: if they sat still they conquered as it pleased their Judge, if they fought they were invariably defeated" and "thus invariably have arms been refused to our nation, and warfare has been the sure signal for defeat." It will not do simply to "disapprove" Josephus through the citation of numerous counterexamples, when the people did take up arms to wage a successful campaign alongside God the Warrior, for what Josephus declared has the ring of theological truth: the people's faith in God, the Divine Warrior, must not at every occasion take the form of armed combat. As at the Sea of Reeds, there are times when the justice of their cause is manifest through activities of God alone. It is indeed a delicate balance-the question of the nature of human participation-but the presumption of humans and their attempts to manipulate God must most decidedly be guarded against.

Such issues are taken up again when we narrow the focus on the single individual who is usually in the position of leadership over a human army; he may be called a judge, general, king, warrior-hero, or what have you. Here there is little room for ambiguity: in a wide variety of Biblical and

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[15] On this point d. Millard C. Lind, "Paradigm of Holy War in the Old Testament," *Biblical Research* 16 (1971), pp. 16-31.

post-Biblical traditions there is accord on the point that God is the warrior, with no room for the elevation of any human to a role comparable to His. There were indeed opportunities for individual acts of considerable heroism, but even the most impressive series of such actions was not parlayed into the construction of a "military hero" of the epic proportions seen in other cultures. This downplaying, though not ignoring, of the human hero is a feature I would like to trace, if only briefly.

Within the Hebrew Bible almost every military leader about whom we are given any extensive information comes off as a flawed individual, whose flaws often rose to the surface in the context of warfare itself-this was true of Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson, from the period of the judges. David's downfall (2 Samuel 11 ff) came about through his breach of Holy War regulations (among other things), no matter that some later traditions tried to explain this away. Even good king Josiah met his death in battle (2 Kings 23), which may be accounted for theologically by suggesting that he overstepped the boundaries of divinely prescribed warfare.

"Excessive" preoccupation with the exploits of anyone individual is also countered through the numerous statements, some of which we have looked at, to the effect that it is God alone to whom all praise for victory is due. Thus when the spotlight shone especially brightly on David at the occasion of his single combat against Goliath, the Hebrew Bible records his saying such things as, "The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine," and "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied" (1 Samuel 17).

David is a special case, to the extent that if any figure were going to achieve "heroic" stature, it would be he. Actually, much of the speculation, if not adulation, that might have been lavished on David in this regard was transferred to a figure who is in many respects his alter ego; namely, the Anointed One (Messiah), son of David. With respect to David himself, we find in certain Rabbinic traditions a remarkable transformation, with the result that this individual, most of whose life was occupied with fighting, became a grand figure of peace this on the basis of his refusal to slay his pursuer Saul when the latter stopped "to relieve himself" in a cave (related in 1 Samuel 24; see also 1 Samuel 26)[16].16 It is likewise significant that when Rabbinic discussants sought to illustrate the verse "for the Lord your God is He that goes with you" (from Deuteronomy 20), they selected, not by chance

[16] On this understanding of David and certain other Biblical figures, see Reuven Kimmelman, "Non-Violence in the Talmud," *Judaism* 17 (1968), pp. 316-334.

I would suggest, two examples from the exploits of David. Thus David was to be portrayed either in terms that downplay his military activities or that emphasize the role of God in his victories.

Phineas, the grandson of Aaron, is reported to have slain an Israelite male and a Midianite woman, who were engaged in sexual intercourse (Numbers 25). Later he led an army "to execute the Lord's vengeance on Midian" (Numbers 31). The Rabbis were able to make much of the fact, recorded in the Biblical text, that with this very Phineas God made a "covenant of peace." Thus Phineas as a "man of peace" appears in a wide variety of Rabbinic sources.

With somewhat similar concerns in mind, Philo, a prolific first-century Jewish writer who lived in Alexandria, dealt with Moses' role in the initial defeat of the Amalekites and Abraham's role in the defeat of four kings (related in Genesis 14) in such a way that even what he would term a "literal" reading of such stories does not result in over glorification of these two immensely important humans. I should also add that while for Philo almost every virtue or vice is represented through the actions of one or another Biblical character, none is called forth as a prominent exemplar of ανδρεια (that is, the virtue of a warrior).

After all, within the statement "The Lord is a man of war" from Exodus 15, there is also its opposite: no one else is. This "polemical" element was clearly recognized in *Shirta,* which is a Midrashic or interpretive text on Exodus 15, representing the work of Palestinian-Jewish teachers of the first two centuries A.D. Through a series of comparisons it is clearly demonstrated that no human soldier could possibly measure up to God the Warrior: "Sometimes in a country there is a warrior fully armed, but he has no strength, no courage, no strategy, no war experience. But is not so with Him Who Spake and the World Came to Be. On the contrary, He has strength and courage and strategy and war experience. . . " and so it goes: every type of human warrior is found wanting in some area; God lacks nothing. It also follows that none of those who are called divine can be compared to Him or can do what He does[17].

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[17] The above translation and interpretation of *S hirta* are derived from Judah Goldin, *The Song at the Sea (being* a *Commentary on* a *Commentary in Two Parts)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

The sources I have cited thus far in this section, while by far the best known, are not the only ones. When we turn to the relatively obscure secondcentury B.C. Jewish writer Artapanus, whose work is available only in fragments preserved by later writers, we do note greater emphasis on the military exploits of Moses. For example, to him is credited the invention of Egyptian weaponry and the leadership role in a long and successful military campaign against the Ethiopians (for the latter, see also the account in Josephus, *Antiquities*

Let us close with a look at some examples of the fate held to be in store for human soldiers whom pride or forgetfulness impelled to strive with God for a title which cannot be shared, "man of war." Judah Goldin, from whose edition of the *Shirta* I quoted just above, has constructed a marvelously improbable theory that Exodus 15, the Song at the Sea, was composed by members of a priestly family expelled by Solomon, composed as an attack on both the pretensions of that monarch and the massive introduction under him of foreign, especially Egyptian, influence. While this attack would not have been leveled with matters of military leadership in mind, Goldin's hypothesis does serve to remind us that Israelite and Judaean kings alike were condemned when they sought to add an aura of "holiness" to conflicts that were-from the point of view of the condemners-nothing more than the result of the king's substitution of his own military leadership for that which was God's alone.

In his 1526 treatise, "Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved," Martin Luther pointed to an example of such pride in the ranks led by the Maccabees[18]. Luther, who praises David much as Rabbinic interpreters did for not laying violent hands on Saul, later speaks of God's punishment against those "who delight in war" (a phrase from Psalm 68). One of his examples is

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2.238 ff). The increased prominence given to Moses's marital accomplishments is undoubtedly related to the increased participation by Jewish soldiers in the wars of the period contemporary with Artapanus himself.

However, weaponry is but one aspect of Egyptian culture and society that owes its foundation to Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, or Moses, according to Artapanus's account. These four leaders are pictured as benefactors of mankind, endowing not only the Egyptians, but through them the Greek world and beyond, with all useful knowledge of both terrestrial and celestial matters. Within this context Moses can indeed be viewed as a greater military figure than he is portrayed in the Hebrew Bible, but certainly not as a "military hero" threatening to rival God the Warrior in power or scope.

Hecataeus of Abdera, a Greek writer of the late fourth century B.C. whose work has also been preserved only in fragments, likewise gave high praise to Jewish beliefs and organization in his generally sympathetic account. In this larger context, he spoke of Moses' attention to warfare and the military training of youth. It is possible that Hecataeus, in fashioning these descriptions, had in mind a comparison between Jews and Spartans of the sort that gained currency among certain groups of the Jewish population at a somewhat later period.

For summaries of recent scholarship on Artapanus and Hecataeus, see the relevant articles in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica.* For a fuller discussion of the issues raised in this footnote I recommend the following work: Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (tr. John Bowden; 2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress
Press, 1974).

[18] Martin Luther, "Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved, 1526" (tr. Charles M. Jacobs; revised Robert C. Schultz) in *Luther's Works* 46, The Christian in Society III (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), pp. 89-137.

of "Joseph and Azariah [who] wanted to fight to gain honor for themselves." As recorded in 1 Macabees 5, these commanders, upon hearing of the successes of Judah and his brothers, said: "Let us also make a name for ourselves; let us go and make war on the Gentiles around us." The defeat inflicted upon those who followed Joseph and Azariah, especially when contrasted with the remarkable victories of the Maccabees in this period, was interpreted as a negative judgment on all such forays initiated for the purpose of personal glorification.

We have already viewed Herod as an example in the post-Biblical period. Our final illustration is drawn from the time of the last major armed resistance offered by Jews in antiquity, their last attempt for almost 1800 years to gain control through warfare over their national homeland. I refer to the revolt led by Bar-Kokhba between 132-135[19]. The leader of this revolt, who was actually named Shimeon bar Kosiba, was viewed as a Messianic figure by many, including Rabbi Akiba, who exclaimed: "This is the king Messiah!" Akiba's statement, we are told, was the result of Bar-Kokhba's military prowess.

The lofty expectations for this individual attributed to Akiba were, however, inconsistent with the boastful battle cry that Bar-Kokhba and his soldiers are recorded to have uttered: "0 God, neither help us nor discourage us!" And, the Midrash on Lamentations continues, in this manner was Bar-Kokhba wont to interpret the passage in Psalm 60, "[Has not Thou, O God, cast us off?] And go not forth, O God, with our hosts," which in its Biblical context means something quite different from its use by Bar-Kokhba. The same story is told of two soldiers in Bar-Kokhba's army, who decided to take Hadrian's crown and set it on their own heads. When a well-wisher said, "May the Creator be your help against them," they retorted as had their commander: "Let Him neither help us nor discourage us!" In these cases, as in every case where human presumption leads individuals or whole armies to think that victory can be achieved apart from God, defeat, inglorious if not instantaneous, was considered the appropriate end.

In the text above I have dealt with certain aspects of the figure of God as Warrior and with the ways in which Jewish perceptions of God's role in this regard played a part in shaping attitudes toward war and human

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[19] For a fascinating account of that historical period and of the archaeological excavations which have served to illuminate it, see Yigael Yadin, *Bar-Kokhba: The Rediscovery of the Legendary Hero of the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome* (New York: Random House, 1971). In an appendix Yadin brings together the major ancient sources, both Jewish and non-Jewish, that refer to Bar-Kokhba and the revolt. Some of the Rabbinic material appears below.

participation therein. I have attempted to cover the themes of religion, myth, and nationalistic politics in the context of Israel's history through the second century. In this endeavor I have limited my efforts to the exegetical task of understanding various texts in themselves. Left largely undone is the hermeneutical work of explaining what all of this means for the modern interpreter and the people of our culture, insofar as this latter task intends to suggest how we should apply insights gained to contemporary problems. Nevertheless, as long as nations continue to beat plowshares into swords and pruning hooks into spears-and not the opposite-observations from any period of history on war and warfare will continue to have an unfortunate relevance for all of humanity.

Nebraska