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HUMANS AS SACRIFICIAL VICTIMS IN ANCIENT SEMITIC CULTURES

Mark Gregory Cartun

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
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Referee, Prof. Herbert Chanan Brichto

DEDICATION

Dedicated to Jill Wenig, Rabbi Eugene Lipman, Rabbi Daniel Polish, and Bob and Michele Berman, for their long-suffering help. To Rabbi Chanan Brichto for his guidance and patience. And especially to the members of Temple Sinai, Washington, D. C., who, by their figurative "burning" ceremony for the retirement of the mortgage of the building, helped prove the veracity of my thesis.

DIGEST

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the data we have on ancient Semitic human sacrifice for the express purpose of validating the claims that have been made as to its existence, nature and purpose. The problem of Molech-worship as it relates to Israelite, Phoenician, Mesopotamian and Carthaginian archaeological discoveries is thoroughly analyzed.

The evidence concerning human sacrifice is broken into two categories: records native to the culture under discussion and literary allegations by authors external to the cultures. More weight is assigned to evidence of the former category. Major biblical emendations are not relied upon as evidence.

There is a dearth of internal evidence of any kind on human sacrifice from Phoenicia or Canaan. Carthage has yielded some ambiguous stelae and calcined pits, which some scholars have tried to link up with Molech-worship, but that hypothesis cannot be proved and indeed there is much evidence that whatever was happening in Carthage bore no relation to any Judahite practice. Thus the Carthaginian material remains to be understood.

From Mesopotamia and Arabia we find a few texts that are as cogently read as "dedication by fire" as they are read as human sacrifice. In fact, the human sacrifice hypothesis leads one into more difficulties than the dedication hypothesis.

This lack of internal evidence flies in the face of the standard assumption, based on many classical Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Arabic writers, that human sacrifice was rife and rampant among ancient Semitic peoples. It is more probable that only the notion of human sacrifice existed was given credence by a couple of cases (some of which

achieved the status of cross-cultural myths), and was applied by some cultures to surrounding cultures as a measure of their wickedness.

The second part of this paper discusses allegations of Israelite human sacrifice in the Bible: Mesha, the Sepharvites, and the Gibeonites. Only with the incident of Mesha are we really dealing with human sacrifice, and only in the Mesha incident does the legal/historical material register a polemic against human sacrifice.

Part III is concerned with Israelite human sacrifice: "Foundation Sacrifices", Jephtah, the sacrifice of the first-born, Molech, and various ambiguous texts so understood as human sacrifice. Only the Jephthah incident can be understood unmistakably as human sacrifice. The Molech-cult is now understood as non-sacrificial fire dedication to Adad, the "King of Heaven".

The conclusion applies the finding of this thesis, that human sacrifice was virtually non-existent in the ancient Semitic world, to a discussion of the intent of the narrative of the "Binding of Isaac". The hypotheses that it was the etiology of a sanctuary, the etiology of animal substitution for human victims, a polemic against human sacrifice, or a trial of character are weighed.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AD & D	Assyrian Deeds and Documents
ARI	Albright, Archaeology and the Religion of Israel
HIR	Fohrer, History of the Israelite Religion
IDB	Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
LRS	Robertson Smith, Lectures of the Religion of the Semites
MCIB	Weinfeld, עבודת המולך בישראל ובקרב העמים
MEJ	Weinfeld, "Molech" in Encyclopedia Judaica
MLCOT	Gaster, Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament
MOPH	Eissfeldt, Molk als Opferbegriff...
P & S	Thompson, Penitence and Sacrifice in Early Israel...
RI	Kaufman, The Religion of Israel
SOT	Gray, G., Sacrifice in the Old Testament
SOTS	deVaux, Studies in the Old Testament
YGC	Albright, Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan

INTRODUCTION

To begin any discussion of the Biblical passages that seemingly allude to human sacrifice, it is necessary to examine the Semitic cultures neighboring on Israel-Mesopotamia, Phoenician-Carthage, Syro-Palestine, an Arabia (with sidelong glances to non-Semitic but adjacent cultures of Greece and Rome; for tales of human sacrifice abound in these cultures as well). This paper will present the evidence concerning human sacrifice as brought to light by modern scholars, re-examine the conclusions they have drawn from this evidence, weigh other options, and attempt to determine afresh the nature of the conclusions which are warranted by the data. In our cross-cultural comparison we shall endeavor to reconstruct the extent to which human sacrifice was normative in the ancient world, the nature of the rituals, and the motivations for them. To what extent was human sacrifice a regular feature of the cults, and to what extent was it, perhaps, a rare or intermittent phenomenon, not to be taken as normal, established practise? What were the characteristics of the victim with regard to sex, age, and family status? Most important, what is the nature of the evidence?

It is our intention to place great stress on archaeological evidence in respect to the particular culture under discussion. That is, more weight will be assigned to texts (or the lack thereof) attesting to human sacrifice stemming from the culture itself than to allegations about such practises from other contemporary cultures. It need not be said that more weight will be assigned to contemporary and adjacent allegations from external sources than to those reports which are farther removed in time and location.

This last criterion has its limitation. There is the possibility

that texts which might allude to the practice are yet to be unearthed, or that the culture itself may have consciously suppressed such texts or otherwise concealed evidence of the practice. With regard to the possibility that such texts are yet to be unearthed, we submit that we can deal only with the evidence at hand. As to the possibility that a culture would (or could) conceal this type of evidence, we believe that from the assumptions of the external allegations one would have to conclude that such practices would not have been concealed, but affirmed, by these cultures. An internal silence on such matters, therfore, should make us wary as to the veracity of the external authors.

One last cautionary note: it has been the practise of reputable scholars for some time now to approach with distrust "histories" by Greco-Roman authors unless their narratives can be corroborated from other sources. Much that is within their pages is fanciful or based on hearsay. In addition, their own cultural bias and temperamental predispositions often prevented them from understanding the true nature of those cultures with which they had little contact, or which they believed, to be barbaric if not even inimical to their own culture's values.

Much of the discussion of human sacrifice in the secondary literature centers around the issue of so-called Molech-worship in the Bible. Indeed, our interest in the field of human sacrifice grew out of our own study of the scholarly debate on the nature of Molech rites. It is no accident that many of the theories we shall discuss in our research of the scholarship on other Semitic cultures deal with the Biblical terminology of Molech: more specifically, the consonants- mem, lamed, and kaph; the location- "topheth" in the valley of Ben Hinnom; and the actions associated with the rite of "passing sons and daughters to Molech through the fire," and "giving one's seed to Molech." A full discussion of Molech will appear in Part III, together with an elaboration of the data and interpretations from Parts I and II. Let us, then turn to these non-Israelite cultures.

PART I

HUMAN SACRIFICE IN NON-ISRAELITE SEMITIC CULTURES

A. PHOENICIA-CANAAN (SYRO-PALESTINE)

There are references to Phoenician and Canaanite child-sacrifice by Greek and Latin authors. The earliest author we have on the subject is Quintus Curtius (lived in Rome ca. 50 C. E.) who relates a narrative from Tyre under siege by Alexander:

"Some were counseling the resumption of a rite which I cannot believe to have been pleasing to the gods, and which had been in abeyance for centuries. I mean the sacrifice to Saturn of a child of free-born family. This rite, sacrilegious rather than sacred, was transmitted by its founders to Carthage, where, it is said, it was practised up to the destruction of the city. And if the council of elders who held authority had not intervened, a barbarous superstition would have triumphed over humane principles."[1]

Porphyry (232/3-305 C. E., Tyre) writes:

"In the great catastrophes which follow upon wars, drought, and plague, the Phoenicians would mark out one of their own dear children to be sacrificed to Kronos. The History of Phoenicia which Sanchuniaton composed in Phoenician, and which Philo of Byblos (ca. 100 C. E.) translated into Greek, in eight books, is full of such sacrifices."[2]

Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea (ca. 264-340) also quotes Philo of Byblos' translation of Sanchuniaton's work, adding that these sacrifices were done in a mysterious manner[3] and that the rite had been introduced by Kronos himself by the sacrifice of his son:

"Kronos, in going about the world, gave his daughter Athena the kingdom of Attica. But on the occasion of a pestilence and mortality, Kronos offered up his only-begotten son to Uranus...It was customary with the ancients in times of great calamity, to prevent the destruction of all, for the rulers of the city or nation to sacrifice to the avenging demons their most beloved child as a λύτρον (a redemption offering); and those who were given for this purpose were sacrificed with mystic rites. Kronos now...had by a nymph of the country called Anobret an only son... and when great danger from war beset the land, he adorned the altar and invested his son with the emblems of royalty and sacrificed him."[4]

There are many problems in these texts which urge caution as to their acceptance as evidence for the existence of human sacrifice. Curtius wrote from Rome about an event which took place approximately 380 years before his time in Tyre. His approach is decidedly hearsay ("it is said"),

polemical ("a rite which I cannot believe to be pleasing to the gods... a barbarous superstition"), and, in addition, the "elders" prevented the sacrifice from taking place. Indeed, his hearsay account of the siege of Tyre terms human sacrifice as "a rite which had been in abeyance for centuries." We are left to wonder from this account if it had ever taken place at all.

Porphyry and Eusebius are both quoting Philo, who, in turn is supposedly translating a work written in Phoenician by an author known as Sanchuniaton, as to whose very existence there has been longstanding scholarly debate. Even if the Ras Shamra texts are taken to corroborate much of what Philo attributes Sanchuniaton as having written,[5] they still do not establish the existence of an author by that name, nor guarantee his credibility. Therefore, let us examine the internal evidence to determine whether or not it corroborates the account attributed to him.

As of this date, there are no Phoenician texts which feature unambiguous mention either of the existence of a myth of Kronos sacrificing his son or of any cultic act of human sacrifice. Efforts have been made to find references to cultic acts in the letters MLK in the Ras Shamra texts, to connect those references to the Molech rites in Judah. To this end liturgical text 19.15 (discovered in 1955, published in 1965) has been analyzed and re-analyzed, but the prevailing opinion is that it has nothing to do with human sacrifice.[6] The text is incomplete, but the first two lines run as follows:

(1) Wine which is measured by the hand of ( )

(2) in the dbḥ mlk.

Line 3 contains the words dbḥ ṣpn; in lines 7, 10, and 11 we have bt mlk; and in line 14, dbḥ bʿl.[7] The attempt to read dbḥ mlk as a "molk sacrifice"[8]

is complicated first by the fact that dbḥ bʿl is probably a "sacrifice of Baal," which would lead us to believe that in the parallel construction, dbḥ mlk, mlk is also a name or a title (but not a "vow" as Eissfeldt reads.). In addition, dbḥ spn, "sacrifice of the north/Saphon," is also in the same grammatical construction, suggesting that dbḥ mlk cannot mean other than "the sacrifice of the MLK, to the MLK," or "of the MLK status." The references to the sacrifice as belonging to Baal rule out the possibility that the rite is taking place in the temple of another deity, and therefore, bt mlk is with greater likelihood to be read as "palace,"[9] and not as "the temple of Molk". Indeed, the reading of mlk as "king" is to be preferred throughout the passage, even if it refers to a god. This evidence for human sacrifice in Phoenicia can thus be seen to be extremely weak and controversial.[10]

That there must have been human sacrifice in Phoenicia has been argued by those who: a) give credence to the reports of Porphyry, Eusebius, and Curtius; b) accept the fact that human sacrifice was practised in Carthage (as per the accounts in Latin we have discussed in preliminary fashion and will see, and based also on some archaeological evidence); and c) understand Molech worship in Judah as human sacrifice. DeVaux maintains that "the identity of the rites practiced in Israel and Carthage can only be explained in terms of common source, which is evidently Phoenicia."[11] We shall later examine these rites in respect to the supposed affinity or, indeed, identity which deVaux attributes to them. For the present it must suffice to say that the obvious difficulties in the texts of the classical authors themselves, coupled with the lack of internal evidence from Phoenicia[12] provides shaky ground on which to base the existence of any practice, how much the less so abhorred a practice as

that represented by the sacrifice of human beings.

One last note: if Carthage learned the tradition of human sacrifice from its Phoenician founders, as reported by Quintus Curtius, this tradition would have to have been prominent in Phoenicia at least as late as 814 B. C. E., the date of the founding of Carthage according to Timaeus. Were this the case, can we imagine that this practice would not have been featured in Elijah's polemics against the Baal worshippers of Ahab's time (869-850 B. C. E.)? Israel and Judah during the reigns of the two Phoenician Queens, Jezebel and Athaliah, were influenced by Phoenician thought and religion more than at any time in their histories. In view of the fact that there is not a single reference in the Biblical narrative to Elijah's condemning human sacrifice, it would seem that the argument for its existence in Phoenician religion at that time and its subsequent transfer to Carthage is suspect. While this is an argument from silence it serves to underline that there is more in the evidence against the existence of a rite of human sacrifice in the cults of Syro-Palestine than there is in support of that hypothesis.

B. CARTHAGE

Many classical authors discussed Carthaginian sacrifice of humans. Diodorus Siculus (Sicily, 1st century B. C. E.) tells of Hamilcar offering his child to Kronos.[13] Tertullian (160-230 C. E. Carthage) speaks of protests in the proconsulate of Tiberius who were crucified for indulging in the practice.[14] As deVaux admits that there is doubt as to the very substance of the "proconsulate of Tiberius",[15] we must dismiss this verse from Tertullian as evidence. Lactantius (240-320 C. E., North Africa) records the sacrifice of 200 highborn children after the defeat of a Carthaginian army in Syracuse by Agathocles,[16] a tale which Diodorus also relates. [17] Clitarchus describes the scene of the sacrifice to Kronos:

"There was a bronze statue of Kronos with its arms over the brazier in which the children were burnt."[18]

Clitarchus also adds that the children were burnt alive, and they smiled sardonically as the flames reached them. It is easy to see that Clitarchus' information suffers from wild flights of imagination. DeVaux himself does not credit his testimony.[19]

However, just as Greek animosity towards their Eastern Mediterranean rivals, the Phoenicians, yielded biased accounts of their traditions, so was there an even more bitter hatred on the part of the Romans for all things Carthaginian. It is at least a possibility that enmity is what motivated Clitarchus to describe Carthagian human sacrifice as if it were possible for an infant to be so mesmerized as not to feel pain while being burnt alive, or for Plutarch to believe that Carthaginian mothers were somehow different in that they could stand by and watch their children being sacrificed without even shedding a tear.[20] It is also difficult to understand Quintus Curtius being so polemical about Carthage's and its founders' practice of human sacrifice, as it has been alleged that the

Romans themselves, practised it,[21] unless one sees it in the context of a Roman-Punic rivalry. As it is well known that Greco-Roman authors are willing to exaggerate when being overtly polemical, one is constrained to doubt their statements unless they can be corroborated from other sources. In this section, as in the previous section, the primary emphasis will be assigned to archaeological evidence.

Phoenician sources have been investigated thoroughly by Eissfeldt,[22] Albright, and deVaux due to the external allegations that the Carthaginians learned human sacrifice from their founders. And it is from Carthage that we find the most promising archaeological evidence to support this hypothesis. This evidence consists of numerous distinctive stelae surrounding calcined pits in Punic settlements of North Africa, Sicily, and Sardinia. One of these stelae bears a representation of a Punic "priest" carrying what seems to be a child in his arms. Eissfeldt discovered that a number of stelae have inscriptions including the letters MLK, alone, or in combinations as MLK'MR, MLKBʿL, and MLK'DM. These inscriptions date from the fourth to the first centuries B. C. E., and are dedicated to Baal Hammon and/or Tanit. They have been found in Carthage, Guelma, Susa (Adrumetum), Salammbo, and El Hofra.[24] At the bases of the stelae urns containing the calcined bones of human children and lambs were found buried.

Eissfeldt's theory concerning these inscriptions is that they speak of human sacrifice, because of the connection of the letters MLK with the Biblical rite in topheth, which, he assumes, was a rite of human sacrifice. From another set of stelae, discovered at N'Gaous (near Carthage) in 1930, Eissfeldt found Latin inscriptions dating from the end of the second or the beginning of the third century C. E. They are dedicated to Saturn (who is known as Baal Hammon in Latin Africa) and contain the phrase

"sacrum magnum nocturnam molchomor." Eissfeldt translated this as "the great molchomor sacrifice by night," and used this stela as the basis for his vocalization of MLK'MR.

MLK, Eissfeldt argues, is not the name of a god, but rather a type of sacrifice: a "molk" sacrifice. A molk sacrifice is a "vow-offering", and Eissfeldt derives this meaning from the Syriac word "mulkâna", "promise".[25] 'MR, pronounced 'ɒmor', he translates as "sheep" as the basis of the Assyrian "immeru" and the Aramaic "immar", and of the fact that the stelae from N'Gaous speak explicitly about lambs and/or depict them in connection with the mention of "molchomor". In addition, three of these five inscriptions specify that the lamb is a substitute: "anima pro anima, sanguine pro sanguine, vita pro vita;" and two of these add "agnus pro vikario." The lamb seems to have been offered as a substitute for a child, Eissfeldt opines, as the names of the children specified on four of the inscriptions are respectively Impetratus, Donatus, and Concessa, all symbolic names meaning "asked for" or "given" (in connection with a vow, says Eissfeldt). Therefore, MKL'MR is to be understood as the "vow-offering of a lamb (substitute)."

If MLK'MR is a lamb vow-offering, then argues Eissfeldt, it stands to reason that MLK'DM is the vow-offering of a man. This seems to be corroborated by the expression which occurs a few times on the stelae: MLK'DM BSRM BTM, translated by deVaux as "vow-offering of a human, his own flesh (his son's), totally."[26] Therefore, Eissfeldt concludes, the human-sacrifice tradition that Carthage received from its Phoenician founders was the "molk", or vow-offering of a son: MLK'DM, with the allowable substitution of a lamb for the son, MLK'MR.

Eissfeldt's theories have been subjected to much criticism. First,

how did "immeru" and "immar" in Assyrian and Aramaic become "omor" in Punic? The philological problems involved in the change of vowel from i to o in the first syllable and the undoubling of the m have yet to be explained satisfactorily. Moreover, Eissfeldt attempts to draw support for his claim that molech in the Bible is, through Phoenicia, related to the Carthaginian MLK, both meaning a vow-sacrifice, is at variance with Lev. 20:5 למלך זנו אחרי. "To play the harlot after a vow" makes no sense whatever. Molech is either the name or title of a deity or person. DeVaux realizes this as a problem, and suggests that at the time the Israelites borrowed the word from the Phoenicians, the meaning of MLK as "vow" had been forgotten and that the Israelites considered that these offerings were destined for a king-god, a "Melek."[27] This explanation, however, only weakens the argument for MLK meaning vow, since this putative sense is based upon a late Syriac word: "mulkânâ." Surely if MLK meant to the Phoenicians and to the Syriac speakers, that meaning must still have been extant at the time when Israel picked it up. Obviously then, the MLK on the Punic stelae, if it means vow at all, has no relation to Hebrew מלך in the Molech context.

Another philological problem, this time from the Latin, militates against Eissfeldt's argument. A "sacrum magnum" is not a "great sacrifice" but "great Holiness." It is not necessary, therefore, to understand molchomor in the context as being in any way sacrificial. Indeed, many scholars do not see MLK'MR or MLK'DM as having anything to do with sacrifice. Rather, one possibility, at least equally plausible, is that they are epithets of a deity. M. Buber renders MLK'MR as "The Malk has spoken", and MLK'DM (N) as "The Malk is Lord."[28] Another obvious reading of MLK'DM is "King of Mankind", which was El/Kronos' Hellenized name in

the Phoenician sphere: Malkandros.[29] MLKBʿL is only "King Baal", the god to whom the sacrifice was offered. "King" was a common epithet for Punic and Phoenician gods: e.g., Melkart, "King of the City".

Concerning the figure of the "priest" carrying the "child," this stela (and one other similar stela not identified as being a representation of the "molk" rites)[30] is artistically unique. There being no text inscribed upon it, and there not being any other similarly carved stela with text with which to compare it, it seems that the assertion that it is a priest carrying a child to offer him up as a vow-offering is speculation at its wildest. That is simply reading too much into a cryptic picture. Most of the stelae surrounding the calcined pits (which have all too enthusiastically been named, "tofets") bear abstract or floral designs, or have stylized renditions of humans amidst symbols. None of them represent sacrificial scenes. The typical "tofet" stela symbol (figures C and D in the appendix) shows a man-form under a crescent and circle. In summary, Eissfeldt's original hypothesis is weak on supporting details and strong on unproven assumptions.

There are other interpretations of the phrases MLK'MR, MLK'DM and MLKBʿL.[31] Eissfeldt does not interpret MLKBʿL as a sacrifice. Some scholars do. They claim that in Punic, Hebrew, and Phoenician, <u>baal</u> signifies a "landowner," and differs from 'DM, or "plebeian." Thus MLKBʿL, fit into Eissfeldt's schema, would be the sacrifice (of a child) of a highborn landowner, MLK'DM would signify the substitution of a peasant child for the highborn child, and MLK'MR would be the ultimate substitution of a lamb for a human child at all. Support for this interpretation is sought from numerous classical authors. Plutarch (46-117 C. E., Rome)

speaks explicitly of such a practice:

"The Carthaginians were wont to slaughter their own children at the foot of altars. Those who had no children would buy some little ones from poor folk, and slaughter these as one does with lambs or birds. The mother would be present at the sacrifice, never shedding a tear nor uttering a groan."[32]

Diodorus also describes this practice in relation to the earlier-mentioned defeat of the Carthaginian army in 310 B. C. E. at the hands of Agathocles. The Carthaginians, he writes:

"deemed that Kronos too was hostile to them; the reason being that aforetime they sacrificed to this god the best of their children, whereas subsequently they had begun to buy children secretly and send them off to the sacrifice. Inquiry revealed that certain of the children sacrificed had been substituted. Thinking over these things and seeing the enemy encamped before the walls, they were filled with a religious fear of having made nothing of the honors traditionally due to the gods. They hastened to put these errors right, and decreed the public sacrifice of two hundred children chosen from the most distinguished families; other citizens, who were the objects of accusations, voluntarily offered their own children, no less than three hundred."[33]

At first glance these passages seem to support the above substitution hypothesis. However, problems emerge from the tale of Diodorus, in that he maintains that this substitution was at best hush-hush, at worst, excoriated. In any case, as he describes it, the practice of a substitution was hardly something that Carthaginians would inscribe on a stela. For it would appear from Diodorus' account, that a "citizen" family which had been known to have substituted a child for its own, would have created a scandal. The possibility remains, of course, that the attitude towards substitution may have changed from century to century; that Diodorus describes an extreme case (through, since military defeat is the reason for the sacrifice, it would seem that all cases are extreme), or, that as Plutarch intimates, childless couples may have substituted without divine or social disapproval. In any case, the entirety of the above argument presupposes Eissfeldt's philology of MLK as a vow-offering, and that

hypothesis is too shaky a base to build upon, especially in view of the problems it raises.

One cannot, therefore, argue convincingly that the pictures and texts on the "tofet" stelae prove that the Carthaginians practiced human sacrifice. The strongest basis for the acceptance of the view that they did lies in the two assumptions that Molech worship in Israel was human sacrifice, and that Phoenicia is the link and source for the practice in both Israel and Carthage. That Phoenicia practiced human sacrifice, as we have seen, cannot be proven. The nature of the Molech rites in Israel will be discussed in Part III.

The evidence to be gleaned from the pits themselves is stronger than the evidence yielded from the stelae around them. They are ash pits, calcined areas in what archaeologists have labeled "the sanctuary" areas of the Punic settlements in which they were found. The pits were labeled "tofets," as already mentioned, because of a hasty identification as "hearths" ("topheth") which were used "to pass sons through the fire to Molech" in Jerusalem's Topheth.[34] The urns which were discovered buried at the base of the stelae[35] (when the stelae had not been stacked up[36]) contained sandy soil, cinders, conifereous charcoal, land and sea shells, the bones of small mammals, and the trinkets of wealthy children as well as bones of human children and lambs (calcinated). They contained in various instances fragments of skeletons of many children at a time, of lamb and human skeletons mixed, or all lamb skeletons. This could be taken as an indication that they were drawn from a common pyre, and to suggest that whatever happened happened en masse. Yet there seem to be approximately as many victims as urns, suggesting that whatever took place could just as possibly taken place separately. Some see them as the charred result of the mass sacrifices in times of national calamity so vividly retold by the

classical authors. For, if the children were from wealthy citizen families, it is possible that the families that made the "donations" would each have had the means to provide a commemorative stela erected in honor or their child. That the contents of the pits was found in the urns connects them all as belonging to the same rite.[38] And the urns have been dated well enough to show that the practise associated with the pits, urns and stelae lasted from Carthage's founding (7th-8th cunturies B.C.E.[39]) to the second century B.C.E. There is a marked trend towards a higher proportion of lamb bones in the mix as the centuries progress, and, on the basis of the reports of the Latin authors,[40] this has been explained as a rise in the trend towards substitution.

Some argue that the existence of the "tofets" still proves nothing, for in the absence of any explicit and unambiguous Carthaginian text speaking of human sacrifice, one could just as well assume that the urns were crematory urns for newborn (74% of the skeletons overall) and premature infants (6%) or other children up to four years old who died in infancy/childhood of disease, accompanied more and more as the years went on, by the funeral-offering of a lamb, or many lambs. It is certainly not the case that the data from the analysis of the urns-pits points clearly to a tradition of human sacrifice.

Assuming human sacrifice, we can deduce from the number of years over which the few victims are spread out that the rite would have had to have been sporadic, just as the "histories" relate, and that this sporadicity would be tied to occurrences of national disgrace and/or demoralization after military defeat. If this is true, then there is no basis at all for the assertaion of deVaux that the rites in Judah and Carthage were identical and thus had a common source. From all we know about the Judean Molech rites[41] they were cultic, not sporadic (that is, they took place in one location- topheth- and are never mention in

connection with extraordinary calamity). In addition, they took place in one location outside Jerusalem in the valley of Ben Hinnon. (Even assuming as does Albright, the existence of many topheth-style sanctuaries, we must emphasize that even he admits that they would be in the wadis outside the villages[42]). This is in contrast to what is alleged about Carthage. There the rites were sporadic and located inside the cities. No matter what occured in the rites, the locations and occurrence of these rites are so dissimilar as not to be the same thing at all. In addition, as we have shown above, no hypothesis of connection can be proved to exist between the Molech of Judah and Phoenician MLK'DM, MLK'MR, MLKB'L, or molchomor. We therefore conclude that Phoenicia cannot be posited as the link for two such unrelated rites. In this light the lack of internal evidence from Phoenicia is totally consistent with the data as we have it.

This is not to say that human sacrifice never existed in Carthage. That remains as good a possibility as any other, but it is not grounds for a conclusion. It is valid to say that it would be more fruitful to look to some other Mediterranean culture for its origin (Greece, Rome, or North African Native).[43]

C. MESOPOTAMIA

Much research has been directed towards the uncovering of evidence attesting to human sacrifice in Mesopotamia (principally in Assyria) to shed light on the Molech rites in Judah. It is from the reign of Ahaz (735-715 B. C. E.) and onward that Judah is assumed to have adopted many Mesopotamian (Assyrian) practices. Ahaz became an Assyrian vassal after entreating Tiglath-Pileser's assistance in lifting the siege that Pekah, King of Israel, and Rezin, King of Damascus, had laid upon Judah. In return for Assyrian help, Ahaz journeyed to Damascus to pay tribute to Tiglath-Pileser.

While in Damascus, Ahaz became enamored of the accoutrements of the cult he saw there. On his return to Judah, he redesigned the cultic apparati of the Temple "because of the King of Assyria" (II Kings 16: 17-18), and built an altar like the one he saw in Damascus to supplant the one already in the Temple (16: 10-16). Ahaz's grandson Menasseh (687-642) followed Ahaz in the importation of Aramean-Assyrian cultic activity to the cult and to the popular religion: "He built altars for all the host of heaven[44] in the two courts of the house of the Lord (21:5). And both Ahaz and Menasseh "passed their sons through the fire" (16:3 and 21:6) to Molech. Inasmuch as both Menasseh and Ahaz appear to be initiators of other aspects of Assyrian religion, it would seem probable that they received "passing through the fire to" Molech" from Assyria as well. If the Molech cult is human sacrifice, then Mesopotamia, not Phoenicia, is the place to investigate to corroborate that hypothesis.

Another impetus to investigate Mesopotamia for human sacrificial traditions derives from the remark in II Kings 17:31 that "the Sepharvites (whom the Assyrians introduced as colonists to Samaria) burnt their children to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim." Evidence has been

found in archaeological and linguistic contexts to corroborate the deportation of the men of Sepharvaim (Sibraim, in Ez. 47:16, a city between Damascus and Hamath in northern Syria[45]) to Samaria. Adrammelech has been identified as Adad-milki, "Adad the King", a northwestern Mesopotamian god known to have been worshipped in the eighth and seventh centuries, and is a variation on the name of the Syrian storm-god, Hadad/Adad. Anammelech seems to be Anath/Ishtar,[46] the "Queen of Heaven", Adad's consort. Thus we have an allusion to Mesopotamians allegedly practicing child cremation/sacrifice to gods with MLK in their names around the time that Ahaz is recorded as passing his son through the fire.

The search for corroborative evidence from Mesopotamian texts has so far turned up only blind alleys, as far as human sacrifice is concerned. Several controversies have long been resolved. At one time there was debate as to whether the royal tombs at Ur could be considered evidence of human sacrifice.[47] These sixteen tombs discovered by Wooley contained the deceased individual buried with his retinue. The standard interpretation now is that these were not human sacrifices but funeral gifts for the departed.[48] In a similar vein, many have spoken about the so-called "king-substitute" sacrifice, where a beggar took over the role of king during times the priests declared supernatural dangers threatened the king.[49] After the danger passed, the beggar was put to death. And that is precisely what was done: there was no sacrifice, only an execution.[50]

Other texts have been identified as speaking of sacrifices. These have now been recognized as magic cures and statements of revenge.[51] There are also a group of vassal treaties which conclude with a rite of sympathetic magic in which an animal or a figurine is cut up, burned, or otherwise destroyed as pre-punishment should the vassal sin against the

treaty.[52] These are now understood as having nothing to do with human sacrifice: indeed, they are similar to Abraham's "covenant between the parts."[53]

The most controversial texts are Assyrian contracts from the ninth to seventh centuries B. C. E. which mention the "burning" of children to Adad, Ishtar, and Bēlet-ṣēri:

> 1. apilšu rabû ina ḫamri ša Adad iššarap
> "His eldest son shall be burned in the hamru of the god Adad."[54]

> 2. apilšu ana Adamilki (^{d}X.MAN) išarrap, mārassu rabitu itti 2 sutu dam erēni ana Bēlet-ṣēri išarrap
> "He shall burn his son to Adad the King; he shall burn his eldest daughter along with 2 measures of cedar to Bēlet-ṣēri."[55]

> 3. lu apilšu rabû lu mārassu rabitu itti 1 imer riqqe tābūte ana Bēlet-ṣēri i-qa-(li)
> "It is proper to burn his eldest son or eldest daughter with an imer of good spices to Belet-seri."[5]

> 4. apilšu rabû ana pan Adad-milki (^{d}X.MAN) išarrap (GIBIL) mārassu rabitu ana pan Bēle (t-ṣēri i)šarrap...7 ^{lú}MAŠ.MEŠ 7 ^{mi}MAŠ.MEŠ ana Adad ašib Kurbail uššar (~wušuru, Postgate: warû Š); 7 ^{lú}SUḪUR.LA.MEŠ 7^{mi}SUḪUR.LA.MEŠ ana Ištar āšibat Arbaili iddan
> "He shall burn his eldest son before Adad the King; he shall burn his eldest daughter before Bēlet-ṣēri. He shall deliver seven priests and seven priestesses (or hierodules) to Adad, who dwells on the Kurbail, and he shall give seven male temple prostitutes and seven female temple prostitutes to Isthar, who dwells on Arbail."[57]

> 5. 7 mārešu ana pan Adad lišrupu 7 mārātešu ana Ištar SAL harimātu luramme
> "He shall burn seven of his sons before Adah and seven of his daughters shall become temple prostitutes to Ishtar."[58]

These contracts are very similar to two tenth century B. C. E. inscriptions from Tel Halaf in upper Mesopotamia, "Should anyone efface the royal name, seven of his sons are to be burnt before Adad."[59] DeVaux sees all of these texts as human sacrifices, and connects them to the Molech cult.[60] However, C. H. W. Johns maintains that these contracts are figurative: that they represent some sort of fire-ceremony.[61] As can

be seen from texts 4 and 5, the "burning" is juxtaposed with "handing over/delivering" of the children for cultic duties (priests, hierodules, and temple prostitutes). It is difficult for sacrificed children to function adequately in these positions, and hence it behooves us to understand the burning in a way other than literal.

We are inclined to agree with C. H. W. Johns and K. Deller[62] that the verb "šarapu" should not be rendered "to burn," but as "to dedicate (by means of a fire ceremony)." T. H. Gaster records various cultures with customs of dedicating children to gods (or becoming godlike, i.e., immortal) through symbolic burning and boiling: the fire removes mortal impurities.[63] Though it cannot be conclusively proved that the same children who were handed over as religious functionaries were, in fact, the children who were "burned," the existence of a cross-cultural dedication ceremony using fire, compounded with the fact that the texts juxtapose "burning" with "dedicating" lead us to doubt strongly that the acts in question refer to human sacrifices. Taken in consideration together with the lack of other evidence establishing a Mesopotamian tradition of human sacrifice, we feel that the basing of a case for such upon these ambiguous texts would be unsound. They are better understood as examples of dedications by means of fire to deities, as we will show, obtained in Arabia and Judah.

D. PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA

In Northern Arabia there is one Lihyanite text, a doubtful interpretation, of which is cited as evidence for human sacrifice.[64] It states that three personages consecrated to their god a slave in their possession, and the first editors explain that he has been sacrificed. That he has been sacrificed, of course, is not the only interpretation of "consecrate." He may have simply been dedicated for Temple service.[65]

There are literary accounts of human sacrifice in Northern Arabia as well. According to Porphyry, the citizens of Duma sacrificed a child each year and buried it under the altar.[66] Isaac of Antioch (fifth century C. E.) claims that the Arabs of the Syrian desert sacrificed many boys and girls to Kaukabta (Aramaic for al-ʿUzza, the morning star) after capturing Beth-Hur on the Euphrates.[67] In the sixth century the Lakhmid Mundhir III captured Emesus, and legend has it that he offered up four hundred nuns to al-ʿUzza. He also sacrificed the son of his enemy, the Ghassanid Ḥarith, to al-ʿUzza in the course of a "razzia."[68] Two stelae near Kufa called Ghariyani, "the two stelae rubbed with blood," are attributed by legend to have been anointed yearly by Mundhir with the blood of human victims.[69] There is also an age-old Meccan tradition that Mohammed's father was designated by Mohammed's grandfather as a sacrifice in fulfillment of a vow he had made to sacrifice one of his sons when the tenth son had been born. He was redeemed, however, by a ransom of one hundred camels. Another legend from Mecca concerns a woman, in the early days of Islam, who had vowed to sacrifice her expected son. The governor of Medina simply declared the vow invalid.[70]

These are all literary attestations for Northern Arabia. There are none for Southern Arabia, nor are there any texts extant, which

describe human sacrifice. All the above accounts are "sparse and late in their attestations."[71] Most deal with prisoners of war, and thus, were most probably executions, not sacrifices.[72] In addition, some are admittedly no more than legends. In the case of the Mecca stories, the sacrifices never took place, and the legends themselves may be nothing more than etiological narratives condemning human sacrifice[73] and adding a note of drama to the life of Mohammed.[74] In view of the lack of internal evidence (the one text we do have is disputed), it would be fair to say that the idea of human sacrifice was attributed to the Arabs, and that the Arabs practiced ruthless execution of prisoners of war (e.g. Mohammed's destruction of entire Jewish communities who would not convert to Islam). It is not impossible that these ideas could be fused together in legend. At any rate, it would be unsound to conclude from literary sources alone that the practice was widespread and accepted. The Meccan accounts show a clear condemnation (albeit that they are from Islamic times).

The most influential literary account is that of St. Nilus[75] (said to have been a fourth-fifth century C. E. hermit at Sinai) who tells how his son, captured by Saracens, was almost offered up as a sacrifice to al-ʿUzza. He was saved because the Saracens woke up too late and the star had already set. Though some scholars trust Nilus' credibility,[76] the prevailing sense is not to,[77] basically because the descriptions in the narrative contradict all else that is known about the rites of the Arabs.[78]

The most controversial piece of evidence is a text which says that "each of tribes of the Rabi a would give (جعل) 'sons of Moharric' ("the burner") at Salman."[79] Wellhausen considered this to be human sacrifice,[80] but Robertson Smith interpreted it as a dedication rite, in view of the terminology "sons of Moharric" which also appears

other places in the text as the designation of some children.[81] In addition, Weinfeld[82] points out the verb جعل means "to appoint, stipulate to give, or pronounce," which are close in connotation to "dedicate" but unrelated to any sacrificial sense. This interpreation is congruent with what we have shown to be the most probable explanation of the Mesopotamian "burning" texts, and therefore, is not far-fetched by means. Weinfeld further points out that another text explicitly uses the verb جعل when speaking of a barren woman who vows to dedicate her son to pain by means of beating: جعلت ربّ من بنيّه.[83]

It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that while in the Arab world, human sacrifice was current in folklore it cannot be proved to have been practiced. It was certainly condemned by Islamic times. At most we can conclude that its existence was so rare (or non-existent) as to leave no internal record. It is also probable that some sort of fire-dedication ceremony existed among some pre-Islamic Arabs, quite possibly similar in purpose to the ceremony connected with Adad and Ishtar in the Mesopotamian world.

E. SUMMARY OF PART ONE

We have shown that despite the existence of numerous narratives by non-native authors attesting to human sacrificial traditions in ancient Semitic cultures, we find little internal evidence on the subject, and that which does exist can be understood equally well as something other than human sacrifice. We have also highlighted a propensity on the part of many modern scholars to prefer late, distant, and biased "histories" to archaeological evidence. Much of this inclination seems to be due to the acceptance of biblical accounts of "human sacrifice" as true. The next two parts of this paper will deal with those biblical accounts.

The best possiblility that a human sacrifical tradition existed, based on archaeological findings, comes from Carthage. Yet, as of this date, there is no textual evidence that would allow an unambiguous interpretation of the "tofet" data. At the very least we can deduce that the Carthaginian practice, whatever it was, most probably was not derived from Semitic (Phoenician) traditions, but, from other Mediterranean cultures - most probably North African. There is no connection between the Carthaginian MLK and Molech, and the phrase "tofet" in connection with the Carthaginian pits is an unfortunate mistake.

PART II

NON-ISRAELITE HUMAN SACRIFICE RECORDED OR ALLUDED TO IN THE BIBLE

A. MESHA

Having examined the extant archaeological and literary data from the Semitic cultures surrounding Israel, let us now investigate putative instances of human sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible. It should be noted that there is no Biblical mention of Phoenician or Arab human sacrifice. While this, again, is an argument from silence, it is difficult to believe that the Bible would so specifically blame the neighboring nations for a host of evils, yet leave human sacrifice out of that list. This is, however, congruent with the internal evidence from those countries. Though this does not prove that human sacrifice was not practiced, it would indicate that the Israelites either were not aware of it[89] (in which case it would appear that such practices were not as public as the classical authors make them out to be) or that human sacrifice, if it did occur, was not a recognized, cultic action, but an individual one. We tend to favor the latter notion, inasmuch as there is only one unambiguous allegation of human sacrifice in the Bible: the case of Mesha (II Kings 3:27).

Mesha's sacrifice of his son was the result of a campaign by the kings of Israel (Jehoram), Judah (Jeposhaphat) and Edom who had combined against Mesha and succeeded in razing all his cities, ruining all the farmland, cutting down all the good trees, and stopping up all the wells (II Kings 3:24-5). They bottled up the Moabite army in Kir Haresheth, and foiled Mesha's attempt to fight his way out. As a last resort, Mesha offered his son as a holocaust (עלה) on the city wall, hoping that the sacrifice of the crown prince would avert his god Chemosh's wrath. Whereupon wrath (קצף) befell the Israelite host, causing them to lift the siege and return home.

In view of the absence of any prior or subsequent Israelite critiques of Moabite religion for human sacrifical traditions, Mesha's act looms as extreme and extraordinary. It is the ultimate act of despair of a king whose country is already in ruins and whose last hold-out is on the brink of being overrun. The fact that the sacrifice took place not in a sanctuary but on a city wall indicates how far from being a normal cultic it was.

What is the Israelite view of this event? Again, it would seem that this event was considered to be of singular nature, and, remarkably enough, efficacious, for a wrathful event (קֶצֶף) befell Israel as a result of the sacrifice and they ended the siege. Whatever this קֶצֶף was - whatever the form of divine wrath - the Bible attributes it directly to the sacrifice. Do we then assume that the Bible here admits that the god of Moab has power against the God of Israel? Gray does:

> "The sacrifice is a Moabite sacrifice, but the interpretation is a Hebrew interpretation. We need not necessarily infer that a Hebrew interpreter would have approved of a similar sacrifice to Yahweh under any circumstances, but as to the purposes and effect of approved sacrifices he speaks indirectly, yet clearly enough. Chemosh, the god of Moab, is angry at Moab, and his anger had allowed her people to be reduced to last extremities; at this point the King of Moab propitiates the anger of Chemosh by offering up to him his eldest; the anger of Chemosh is, by this sacrifice, deflected from Moab and poured out onto Israel, who, in all haste, retire from the sphere of Chemosh's influence."[85]

However, קֶצֶף , "divine wrath" expressed in the forms of plagues, etc., is incurred (or threatened) in the Bible elsewhere as punishment of the Israelites for the transgression of YHWH's commands: Numbers 1:53, "But the Levites shall encamp round the tabernacle that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel" (i.e.: that they should not infringe upon the space of the tabernacle); or violation of an oath in YHWH's name as in Joshua 9:20, "This we will do to them and let them (the Gibeonites) live; lest wrath be upon us because of the oath which we swore unto them."

One can connect this episode with Deut. 2:9, "Do not harass the Moabites nor provoke them to battle, for I will not give you any of their land as a posession." The intent of this command is to deny Israel the right to colonize Moab by provoking a war. Certainly the Israelites would fear a קֶצֶף from YHWH, not Chemosh, upon breaking this command which is also tied to an oath of YHWH's. Yet we have Elisha encouraging the kings to engage in this war, prescribing for them to "smite every fortified city and every choice city....(to) fell every good tree and stop all fountains of water and mar every good piece of land with stones." To seal his prophecy, Elisha works a miracle (water without rain in verse 20) to show YHWH's approval. It is doubtful that Elisha is being sarcastic in his orders, especially since a miracle is involved. How could he prophecy against the command of Deut. 2:9?

Quite possibly the Deuteronomic command may have originated in awareness of, and thus, after, this incident. On the other hand, one might opine that the command not to harass the Moabites was in force during Elisha's time, but did not apply to punishing (Mesha as) a rebellious vassal. Either way the "wrath" would have been incurred because the Israelites gave Mesha no quarter, forcing him to such desperate straits that he committed the sacrifice of his son.

It is wrong to conclude that "the matter of factness and insouciance of this story would, by itself, indicate that the Hebrew narrator did not look upon the incident as in any sense unique."[86] The very use of the word קֶצֶף indicates that "Mesha's sacrifice of his crown prince on the wall of a Moabite capitol was considered as a terrible thing."[87] Indeed, because of the קֶצֶף, this narrative contains the only explicit, though oblique denunciation of human sacrifice in all the legal-historical material.[88] The denunciation is not so much of Mesha

for committing the act, as of Israel for driving him to it. Human sacrifice is thus considered to be something that only a man who is utterly lost as to have given up all hope is capable of committing - not by any means an action even remotely to be considered as frequent.

Therefore, we accept this as evidence that the practice was not only rare, but singular. No other nation in such straits is recorded as committing such a deed, and at many other times nations in the Bible are described as being in similar desperation. Hezekiah, bottled up in Jerusalem (Isa. 38) never considers it (and he is the son of Ahaz who "passed a son through the fire"), nor is there any mention of such an occurrence by Canaanites during Joshua's conquest, when the herem was being employed.

In sum, the קֶצֶף was not viewed by the biblical narrator as Chemosh's wrath, but as YHWH's; the narrator denounces Israel for driving a pagan king (of a people related to Israel) to commit such an act; and the deed itself was so rare as to be without a single biblical analogue.

B. SEPHARVITES

Another non-Israelite "human sacrifice" in the Bible which we have already mentioned in the discussion of Mesopotamian evidence is the reference to the Sepharvites (II Kings 17:24, 31). The listing of their practice seems to be a factual aside, demonstrating the truth of II Kings 17:33-41, that the peoples Assyria imported to colonize Samaria carried on their national customs while professing to give their allegiance to YHWH. There is no editorialization as the specific evil of this one practice: it is lumped together with the idolatries of the other nations as a violation of worshipping other gods besides YHWH.

In light of the Mesopotamian sources, it would seem strange that only one city in all of Mesopotamia would have a tradition of human sacrifice associated with the worship of two gods who were worshipped through-out the whole of Mesopotamia. Not that it would be impossible, but unless there is a wealth of data lying covered up that would confirm such a tradition for other areas of Mesopotamia, it seems improbable that only the city of Sepharvaim would have developed such a bastardized cult. And, if this Sepharvite ritual were a regular practice, as the Bible may indicate (בָּאֵשׁ בְּנֵיהֶם), and was indeed a human sacrifice, one might expect it to be subject to a more particular condemnation than it actually received. At least it should be set apart from diatribes against fetishistic idolatry.

A possible explanation might be that this is another instance of the genre of Assyrian contracts mentioned above[89] where the burning of sons and daughters needs to be understood figuratively as dedication of children as functionaries to those gods. Adad and Ishtar are the gods in whose name the Assyrian contracts order this burning-dedication, and Adrammelech

and Anamelech, the gods of Sepharvaim, have been identified as Adad and Ishtar.[90]

There is considerable doubt, therefore, that the Sepharvite practice was, in fact, human sacrifice. Indeed, the Bible may be quoting the language of those Assyrian documents. It may be significant that II Kings 17:31 nowhere mentions a sacrificial term: וכספרים שרפים בניהם לאדרמלך וענמלך (The Sepharvites burn their children to (for) Adrammelech and Anammelech). In contrast to this, in the Mesha narrative, in the story of the sacrifice of Isaac,[91] and in the Jepthah legend,[92] the word עלה is specifically used. In view of this evidence it seems unlikely that what the Sepharvites were practising was human sacrifice, and it may even be true that the Israelite authors of II Kings recognized that fact: by quoting one of the pagan "contracts" the authors were merely giving an example of the follies of idolators.

C. GIBEONITES/FERTILITY SACRIFICES

Certain scholars have seen a parallel between a Canaanite fertility saga and II Samuel 21:1-9. The saga runs as follows:

> "She (Anat) seizes Mot, the son of El;
> with the sword she cleaves him,
> with the shovel she throws him,
> with fire she burns him,
> with the mill she grinds him,
> on the field she scatters him,
> his flesh the birds eat,
> the wild beasts devour his limbs."[93]

Ringgren describes this as the god Mot being represented by a sheaf of barley, and connects it with a "cultic drama which had the purpose of maintaining the course of the year and the cycle of the crops."[94] John Gray writes:

> "The Old Testament preserves what may well be a tradition of this gruesome practice (the putting to death of a victim, originally the king, whose vitality was thought to be intimately bound up with that of the growing corn)[95] in the account of the execution of human victims at Gibeon at the beginning of the barley harvest (II Sam. 21:1-9). These are represented as the survivors of the house of Saul, but it seems a case of the tradition of some harvest-ritual associated with the Canaanite shrine of Gibeon which has been given a historical explanation after it has fallen into abeyance and become only a vague memory."[96]

To be sure, the execution by the Gibeonites of Saul's descendants was provoked by a famine of three years (verse 1). And, though the event statedly occurs as punishment for Saul's troubling the Gibeonites in violation of Joshua's oath (Josh. 9:20), Saul's offense is not recorded elsewhere in the Bible. All of which would lead Gray to believe that the real reason for the act is not being told or was not known, and could thus have been a fertility sacrifice.[97]

Let us suggest a critique for this argument. First, it is based on an assumption that the myth in the Ras Shamra texts reflects a rite in which a human was killed.[98] As we have pointed out before, there is no

explicit mention of any such rite in those texts.[99] It would seem that those who so assume find basis for their assumption in the narrative.

What does the narrative itself say about what happened? It may well be that the real reason for the execution is not given. But the explanation need not be a non-corroborated rite of fertility-oriented human sacrifice. A much more plausible reason would be that David resorted to any excuse he could find to eradicate the House of Saul and thus to reinforce his base of power. Coming as this story does at the end of the civil war between the followers of David and Absalom, the action of the Gibeonites could have been a ploy of David's to eliminate those who had supported the revolt against him. The charge against Saul, that he had violated the oath of Joshua, would serve this purpose quite well. Thus we can safely conclude that this story has nothing whatsoever to do with human sacrifice: it is definitely an execution.

PART III

HUMAN SACRIFICE IN THE BIBLE

A. MINOR ALLEGATIONS

1. FOUNDATION SACRIFICES

I Kings 16:34 states that Hiel lost two sons while rebuilding Jericho: his elder son while laying the foundations of Jericho, and his younger son while erecting Jericho's gates. As this passage is mentioned in the context of the sins of Ahab, some scholars have seen this as a special form of sacrifice[100], a "foundation sacrifice".[101]

What is the evidence for this sacrificial category? We have examined the Syro-Palestinian evidence and found no specific reference to human sacrifice in general, much less to "foundation sacrifices". Nowhere does the Bible speak of anyone sacrificing human beings and burying them at the foundations of buildings to placate a deity or for any other reason. Thompson's formulations are on the fuzzy side. In one chapter he adduces that the mention of Hiel's story in the context of Ahab's sins connotes human sacrifice[102], and, in another place, he states that "foundation sacrifices might explain this reference (to I Kings 16:34), but so also might sickness or some other untoward circumstance. It is not, therefore, certain that the passage should be classed as a sacrifice; but, if so, it would come under the heading of propitiation."[103] Dillman believes that foundation sacrifices are an "unprovable assumption."[104]

In connection with archaeological discoveries of funerary urns found under houses, deVaux states that the

> "burial of new-born infants under the ground level of houses or grouped in a free space corresponds to the practice of burying near hearth and home children who die at an early age. As for children or adults buried under or against the base of a building, we should first of all establish that the inhumation was contemporary with the building, and neither posterior nor anterior thereto...In the great majority of cases one can conclude that the burial was not made for the foundation of the edifice."[105]

In addition, deVaux changes his mind about the one piece of archaeological

evidence upon which he had, at one time, based his whole theory.[106] Bereft of his "evidence". nevertheless he continues to espouse the possibility that Hiel might have offered his son as a foundation sacrifice. Without evidence, that is a far-fetched conclusion.

The text itself can be seen as the fulfillment of the prophecy/ curse made by Joshua against anyone who should rebuild Jericho (6:26): he would lose one son setting the foundations and another son erecting the gates. As there is no allegation that Ahab indulged in human sacrifice anywhere in the Bible, nor do we know of such a Phoenician practice, there is no reason not to accept the literal meaning of the text: a prophecy or a curse fulfilled.

2. HEREM

All scholars agree that one must make a fundamental distinction between human sacrifice and the herem of captives of war, of apostate cities, and of Canaanite cities in Joshua's conquest, even if the execution is carried out "before YHWH"[107] (as in I Sam. 15:33). Samuel kills Agag "before YHWH" to fulfill the command (verse 3) which Saul had not obeyed (verse 9). This principle also refers to the Arabs in the legends concerning their putting to death captives of war to al- Uzza.[108] Herem is not sacrifice - it is the principle of a holy war carried out.

3. MISCELLANEOUS PROPHETIC QUOTES

a. Isaiah 66:30: "An ox is sacrificed, a man is killed; a lamb is slain, a dog is struck down; an offering is brought, swine-flesh is savoured; incense memorial is made, idols are kissed."[109] A. Penna[110] has proposed that parallelism in this verse requires the interpretation that the killing of a man be a religious action. However this passage in context belittles the idea that human actions, no matter how grandiose,

mean anything to God. God is only pleased with a man who is "poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at my word" (66:2).[111]

b. Hosea 13:2: "And now they sin more and more, and have made molten images of their silver according to their own understanding, even idols, All of them the work of craftsmen. Of them they say: "They that sacrifice men kiss calves." Even though verses 1-3 are an attack on Jereboam's calves at Dan and Bethel, nowhere is any reference made to a human sacrifice occurring in these sanctuaries. Hosea makes no mention elsewhere of human sacrifice, either. DeVaux suggests that this text is, thus, corrupt,[112] and we concur.

c. Micah (6:7): "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the transgression of my soul?"

DeVaux concludes from this text that sacrifices of the first-born was known, "and in the light of texts contemporary with Micah (who lived during the reigns of Ahaz and Manasseh) we can read in this text a reference to sacrifices to Moloch".[113] As will be shown in section D of Part III there were no sacrifices to Molech. Even were it possible that this quote could refer to the Molech rites, as Jeremiah's polemics do, it is, nonetheless, equally possible to read this verse as a sarcastic polemic attacking the notion that YHWH need sacrifices, and that the costlier the sacrifice, the more he will like it".[114] In this light the quote is similar to Isaiah 66:3.[115]

B. VOW-OFFERINGS

"Vow-offerings" are sacrifices made in fulfillment of a promise. Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter (Judges ch. 11) is, perhaps, the least ambiguous reference to an act of Israelite human sacrifice in the Bible. The text narrates how Jephthah vowed to offer as a holocaust (עלה) to YHWH the first creature that came out to meet him on his return home, if YHWH would grant him success in his campaign against the Ammonites (vv 29-31). When he returns home successful, his daughter is the first to come out to greet him (vv 34-36). Jephthah decides to fulfill his vow (v 37), but she begs for two months to "bewail her virginity". The episode concludes with the etiology of an Israelite custom: "it became a tradition that the daughters of Israel should go year by year and commemorate the fate of Jephthah's daughter four days in every year" (v 40).

Most scholars[115] see a direct relationship between the Jephthah story and non-Israelite "vows to sacrifice the first". For example, the myths of Idomenues, King of Crete, who vowed to Poseidon to sacrifice the first to meet him on his return if Poseidon would allow him to return from Troy. He sacrificed his first born son.[116] Meander made a similar vow to the "Great Mother", and was forced to sacrifice his son, mother and sister."[117] Other references are numerous throughout ancient and modern folklores.[118] Gaster sums up the prevailing view of these stories, which is that they are "based on the ancient and primitive custom of annually bewailing the dead or ousted spirit of fertility during the dry, or winter, season."[119] He goes on to say that this spirit is usually personified as a female, such as Persephone, though males are also included.

The Jephthah story is stange. It is a memorable exception to the standard of religious devotion, or it would not have been recorded. Whether or not the story commemorates an actual event or is merely an Israelite version of the "vow to sacrifice the first" myth so common in folklore is not the issue. What is noteworthy in our context is the very uniqueness of the act. It stands slone as the only unquestioned committed act of Israelite human sacrifice.[120]

Some scholars have seen similarities to Jephthah's vow in the account of Saul and Jonathan at Beth-Aven (I Sam. 14:24-30, 36-46).[121] Jonathan, unknowingly had eaten honey in violation of Saul's adjuration that no Israelite in the army should eat until the battle had been won. Yet, in this instance, the people would not suffer Saul to have Jonathan executed. Instead, he was "ransomed" (פדה I 14:45). Thompson [122] feels that this "ransom" was the substitute sacrifice of an animal, to compensate for the unfulfilled vow.

Yehezkel Kaufman[123] points out that in the case of Jephthah and the "binding" of Isaac the text fail to mount a polemic against human sacrifice. Indeed, both Abraham and Jephthah are grieved at what they perceive they must do to show devotion to their pledge to YHWH, but in neither incident does YHWH or anyone else criticize the practice. In this light the role of the Israelites in preventing Saul from putting Jonathan to death stands out as the only moral outcry against "vow offerings". And here they were protesting a threatened execution, not a sacrifice. And not against the principle as such, but because Jonathan was the instrument of victory. Are we then to infer that "vow offerings" were a legitimate method of demonstrating absolute submission to YHWH?

We will consider the case of Abraham later. But concerning Jephthah,

Thompson writes that though

> "it is true that Jephthah come forward as a Yahweh enthusiast, it can hardly be pretended that a robber captain, of half-Canaanite origin, who was persona non grata with his own tribe, represented the normal faith of Israel. It is misleading to say that his action is not condemned by the narrator. It is the latter's high art to leave the story to teach its own truth, untouched by moralizing."[124]

We cannot totally agree with Thompson that the Biblical narrator refrained from "moralizing". The sacrifice may not have been a moral issue to the narrator if he were intending some other point - namely, the origin of the custom of women weeping four days every year.[125] But I would agree that Jephthah's deed cannot be said to represent "the normal faith of Israel." This on many grounds; whether because Jephthah is "of half-Canaanite origin", or because the story may possibly be no more than fiction (it is such a common theme that its occurrence in any one culture does not establish that it is native or contemporary in that culture.) Therefore, before it can be determined whether Jephthah's actions were normative in Israel or not, we must examine all other claims of Israelite sacrifice.

C. PIDYON HABEN (REDEMPTION OF THE FIRST-BORN)

Various Biblical texts prescribe the dedication of all first-born males, of animals and of humans, to YHWH. In addition, they state that the firstlings of unclean animals (unfit to be eaten by the priests to whom the animals are handed over) and of men are to be "ransomed", redeemed".[126] Redemption is specified in the earliest of these texts, Exodus 34:19-20, which is attributed to the Yahwist.[127] Thus, the redemption of first born sons is so old a phenomenon that it supplanted a practice not commanded in any other part of the Bible. This has led to scholarly speculation as to the precise nature of the "dedication" of human firstlings.

Some scholars see redemption as replacing an ancient practice in Israelite history when first-born sons were dedicated to YHWH by means of sacrifice.[128] Eissfeldt wrote that "originally child sacrifices had a legitimate place in the cult of Yahweh",[129] and believed that the "Molech sacrifices", or "vow-offerings" as he interpreted them, were a revival of the ancient rite of dedicating first-born males sacrificially.

These scholars thus infer that pidyon haben was instituted as the mitigation of sacrificial dedication, and base their conclusions on Ezekiel 20:25-6:

> "I gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live; and I polluted them in their own gifts in that they set apart all that opens the womb that I might destroy them, to the end that they might know that I am YHWH."

It is well-attested that YHWH "hardens hearts", and in I Kings 22: 13-23 he deceives prophets. Therefore, they argue, that a sacrificial dedication of first-born males would have been ordained by YHWH in this manner. In addition, Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, ordered by YHWH, has

indicated to some scholars that this practice was so ancient as to be found in the earliest laws of the Israelite nation.

This misses the entire point of the redemption of the first-born. As can be seen from the texts from Numbers, first-born were consecrated to YHWH originally in a priestly function, and the Levites took that function over from them. Since the first-born were no longer needed for YHWH's service, they had to be "redeemed". In Biblical terminology, YHWH "hallowed all the first-born of the Israelites" to himself "on the day when I struck down every first-born creature in Egypt."

Further echoes of this transition from first-born to Levite can be seen in Judges 17:5, where Micah "consecrated one of his sons to be a priest". Following that, Micah engaged a Levite as priest, and that seemed to be preferable, for he states, "Now I know that the Lord will make me proper because I have a Levite for my priest". (17:13) The Korach rebellion (Numbers 16) indicates that the change was not always smooth. The Korach narrative is a conflate account recording, in effect, two rebellions - an intra-Levitical dispute between Korach and Aaron as to which Levitical family should inherit the priesthood; and a challenge from Dathan and Abiram, descendants of Reuben, the first-born of Israel's sons (16:1), who represent the case that the first-born still make claim to the office of the priesthood.

It is, therefore, clear, that the biblical authors are fully cognizant of the intent of pidyon haben and its place in the development of the Israelite priesthood. To what do we attribute Ezekiel's remarks? The text has been emended by J. E. Bewer to open up an entirely different position, completely negating any possible support for the hypothesis of a sacrificial dedication of first-born male children,[130] but is not the methodology of this paper to rely on such an extensive emendation as

evidence. We do find Ezekiel taking a definite stand against human sacrifice elsewhere,[131] and it is not likely that he was supporting that practice here. It also seems more likely that he is condemning some contemporary practices of Israelites, most probably, the Molech cult. Yet as we will show in Part D, Ezekiel describes events too ambiguously to be relied on as evidence.[132]

Jeremiah takes the opposite position: "They have built the high place of Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to burn their sons and daughters, a thing which I commanded not nor came it ever into my mind (7:31, and again in 19:5)." Taking the verses from Ezekiel and Jeremiah together, it would seem that the Molech cult in Topheth was something that was alleged as having been commanded by YHWH, and that assumption had to be faced by the prophets. The Ezekiel text, though difficult and possibly corrupt, does not refer to a widespread sacrifice of first-born children which was replaced by pidyon haben, for no such sacrificial tradition ever existed.

The allegation that such a practice derives from Abraham's time is absurd in the absolute absence of corresponding patriarchal or other narratives which speak of or allude to a normative sacrifice of first-born as the "first fruit of my strength" (בכרי אוני הוא Gen. 49:3). Jacob resorts to trickery to steal the privilege of the first-born away from his brother. The only conclusion possible is that the position of the first-born male was an esteemed position and not by any means was he sacrificed. Nor did pidyon haben replace any dedication-sacrifice.

D. MOLECH

1. Upon examination of the Biblical texts that deal with the acts of "burning children," "passing them through fire," and " Molech," we find that they occur in two categories - prophetic/psalmodic passages, and legal/historical passages. As these references contain different wordings our first task is to ascertain which verses indeed refer to the same incidents.

The legal/historical texts which cite "Molech" specifically are Leviticus 18:21, "Thou shalt not give any of thy seed to set them apart (להעביר) to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord;" and Leviticus 20:2-5,

"Moreover, thou shalt say to the children of Israel: whoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth of his seed to Molech, he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones. I also will set my face against that man and will cut him off from among his people, because he hath given of his seed to Molech, to defile my sanctuary and to profane my holy name. And if the people of the land do at all hide their eyes from that man when he giveth of his seed unto Molech and put him not to death, then I will set my face against that man and against his family and will cut him off, and all that go astray after him, to go astray (לזנות) after Molech from among their people."

Also II Kings 23:10, speaking of Josiah's reform, "And he (Josiah) defiled Tophet, which is in the valley of Ben Hinnom, that no man might make his son or daughter pass through the fire (להעביר את בנו ובתו) to Molech."

The legal/historical references which speak of similar actions without mentioning Molech are these: Deuteronomy 12:31, "Thou shalt not do (as the Canaanites have done)...for even their sons and daughters do they burn in the fire to their gods; Deuteronomy 18:10, There shall not be found among you anyone who maketh his son or daughter pass through the fire, one that useth divination, a soothsayer

or enchanter, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or one that consulteth a familiar spirit, or an necromancer;" II Kings 16:3,"...and made his (Ahaz's) son to pass through the fire according to the abominations of the heathen (הגוים) which the Lord cast out before the children of Israel;" and II Kings 21:6, "And he (Menasseh) made his son pass through the fire, and practiced soothsaying, and used enchantments, and appointed them that divined by a ghost or a familiar spirit: he wrought much evil in the sight of the Lord to provoke him."[133]

The Priestly and Deuteronomic texts are all speaking of the same action. The Priestly texts explicitly mention Molech, and II Kings 23:10, detailing the Molech rite uses the same terminology as the other Deuteronomic texts: "pass through the fire" Deut. 12:31 is the exception as it mentions only "burning", but as it does not refer to Israelite practices, we will temporarily leave it out of the discussion. Reconstructing, then, we suggest that the full description of the practice, למלך באש להעביר, was known both to Priestly and Deuteronomic traditions, and was sometimes referred to in Deuteronomic sources in abbreviated form as להעביר באש.

Although the verb להעביר can be used in meanings such as "to cause to pass away, remove, destroy," (e.g. I Kings 15:12) this is only true when the verb uses the preposition מן - "from." When it takes the preposition ב it means "to pass through" (e.g. Numbers 31:23, "everything that will abide the fire you shall pass through the fire (להעביר באש) and it shall be pure.") In light of the fact that the legal portions of the Torah were intended to be precise formulations of the law[134] one must take seriously the expressions they

use, and these texts do not mention "burning" in reference to Israelites. In additon, the phrase they do use is hard to apply to a sacrificial situation: if it means to "pass" at all, העביר באש can only imply that whatever was passed in was, in the process, passed through and out.

Wright has argued that passing someone through fire smacks of trial by ordeal.[135] Yet, from the context of Deut. 18:10 and II Kings, 16:3, we see that trial by ordeal and human sacrifice are both mistaken interpretations. Passing through fire is on a level with necromancy, divination, and enchantment in these texts, and those acts are hardly equivalents of trial by ordeal or human sacrifice. They are occult acts in the true sense: outside the cult. Furthermore, necromancy, divination, and enchantment do not by nature involve human beings as sacrificial victims. They are "evil" and they "provoke the Lord" (II Kings 16:3) but there is no condemnation of them as murder or killing.[136] In short, there is no attestation in the legal/historical texts that Israelities who passed their children through the fire to Molech actually sacrificed them or even burned them.

When we consider Deut. 12:31, which does speak specifically of "burning children," it is imperative that we compare this "Canaanite" action to that rite from all the non-Israelite sources which appears to be most similar: the Assyrian "burning: contracts.[137] We have seen that the scholarship on them attaches a figurative meaning to the Akkadian sarapu, "burning". Gaster has pointed out that passing through fire, or boiling in a cauldron was, in many cultures, an act of purification (sometimes for the purpose of achieving immortality) that rid human bodies of their mortal imperfections: "saining them."[138] The legal/historical texts also understand fire and boiling water as purification

agents (Numbers 31:23, see above p. 45). Passing through fire for purification is prescribed for items which will come through the fire unscathed; otherwise purification by water is commanded.

Therefore, in view of the fact that nowhere are "passing through fire" or "burning" compared to killing or sacrifice in the Priestly or Deuteronomic texts, they are better understood figuratively, as the Assyrian burning texts and are the Moharric texts, as a purification/ dedication ceremony.[139]

Linguistic analysis of the verb לעבר supports this last statement. In addition to "pass," להעביר can mean "to dedicate," as can be seen from Exodus 13:1 and 12. Verse 1 reads, " קדש לי כל בכור - sanctify each first-born male to me." It is a direct parallel to verse 12, " והעברת לי כל בכור -dedicate each first-born male to me." The JPS translation[140] of Lev. 18:21 so renders לא תתן מזרעך להעביר למלך: "Thou shalt not give any of thy seed to set them apart to Molech." Yet the same translation renders all occurrences of להעביר בנו למלך as "to pass through the fire to Molech." It is more precise to translate להעביר in all Molech-related texts as "dedicate," and ב as "by means of." The whole phrase - להעביר בנו למלך would then be "to dedicate his son by means of fire to Molech,"[141] This is the link that joins the rest of the legal/ historical texts with Deut. 12:31: what is being proscribed is not a sacrifice at all, but a widespread Semitic practice of fire ceremonies by which children are dedicated to the service of a god.

2. The prophetic/psalmodic texts are a different matter. From them has come the interpretation that the Molech rite is human sacrifice: Jeremiah 7:31-2:

"And they have built high places in Tophet, which is in the valley of Ben Hinnom, to burn their sons and daughters in the fire, which I commanded not, neither came it into my mind. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it no longer shall be called Tophet nor the valley of Ben Hinnom, but the valley of Slaughter ; for they shall bury in Tophet for lack of room;"

19:1-13, which is an account of Jeremiah condemning the "Baal" worshippers in Tophet (verses 5 and 6 are in almost exactly the same wording as 7:31-2); and 32:35, which is a repetition of 7:31 and 19:5.

From Ezekiel: 16:20-21, "Moreover, thou hast taken they sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast sacrificed ( ) unto them[142] to be devoured. Were thy harlotries a small matter that thou hast slain ( ) my children and delivered them up, in setting them apart to them ( )?"; 20:25-6;[143] 20:31, "When, in offering your gifts, in making you sons pass through the fire, you pollute yourselves with all your idols until this day..."

From Isaiah, 57:5, "you that inflame yourselves among the terebinths under every leafy tree; that slay ( ) children in the valleys under the clefts of the rocks."

Psalm 106:37-8, "Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons and shed innocent blood - that of their sons and daughters whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan."

The prophets and psalm do not mention a "Molech." Instead, the actions take place to "Baal," to "demons," or to no one in particular. It is possible to deduce that Jeremiah was specifically denouncing the Molech cult inasmuch as he singles out Tophet as the location of the rite.[144] In addition, as Kaufman has observed,[145] Jeremiah identified all apostate worship as pertaining to "Baal," in which case it would not be inconsistent nor surprising for Jeremiah to condemn a "Molech" rite as

"Baal worship."[146]

We have discussed one of Ezekiel's polemics in the section on pidyon haben.[147] As Ezekiel fails to identify a location or a god, or even to use the word "Molech" in his prophecies, and as he speaks of " להעביר כל פטר רחם ," it has been possible to posit that the rite he condemns could be any one of a range of activities, including, as we observed above, pidyon haben.[148] Though Yehezkel Kaufman maintains that the Molech rites were human sacrifice, he shies away from relying on Ezekiel chapters 16, 20 and 23 for evidence of anything historical:

> "These chapters furnish modern scholars with copious data on the paganism and syncretism of Israel's popular religion, but the fact is that they are nothing but fantasies in which it is difficult to find any substance whatsoever. As a source of history they are worthless; to maintain their historicity one must reject all the rest of the Biblical record...It is characteristic of his exaggerated generalizations that he does not mention Topheth or the Valley of Ben Hinnom, but speaks as if the burning of children took place everywhere and at all times."[149]

In spite of Ezekiel's ambiguous language it has always been assumed by commentators that he was referring to the Molech rites, because he uses the key phrase " להעביר באש " (20:31). Looking more closely, two difficulties arise with this interpretation. First, in 16:20-21, Ezekiel says, "to set them apart to them," not "to Molech."[150] Ezekiel could as easily be referring to Adad and Ishtar[151] as he could to the host of some pagan pantheon. As he mentions no referent, we can only guess. The situation Ezekiel describes in 20:31 does not sound like the situation in the legal/historical texts, in as much as no idols are ever mentioned in those texts in connection with the Molech rites.

If we assume that Ezekiel is referring to the Molech cult when he condemns להעביר בנים as 'slaughter or sacrifice' (16:20-21),

we run into the second difficulty. Nowhere in the legal/historical texts is מעביר בנו compared with slaughter or sacrifice. If, as we maintain, the true nature of the Molech rites were a "dedication by means of fire to Molech: and a "handing over of one's seed" as attendants to him (as was done to Adad and to al-Moharric) one must conclude that Ezekiel would have to be exaggerating to be describing them. Hyperbole such as Ezekiel employs in his verses has been acted out by Jews through the ages who have "sat Shiv'a" mourning the "death" of progeny who have converted out of Judaism or intermarried. In short, for all the reasons cited above, Ezekiel's prophecies are ambiguous, possibly highly exaggerated, and therefore not to be relied upon as evidence upon which to establish a true picture of the Molech or any other cult.

The quote from Isaiah,[152] although it does not mention Molech, has been associated with the Molech cult since it ascribes the slaughter of children to have taken place in "valleys." In addition, the first part of the verse speaks of cultic activities such as went on at the "bamot" ("under every leafy tree"), so it has been inferred that the "slaughter" mentioned is ritual slaughter: human sacrifices.[153]

This quote, like Ezekiel's quotes, is too vague to be relied on as an accurate description of any rite, and there are no grounds upon which to connect the verse with Molech. It nowhere mentions Molech nor any key phrase used in connection with Molech. In fact, fire, which is central to the Molech rite, is not mention at all. Second, there are many valleys and leafy trees in Judah, and Isaiah uses a different word (נחל) than is used for the valley of Ben Hinnom (גי). As the Isaiahs engaged also in hyperbole, we cannot confidently trust their descriptions as fact without corroborative evidence.

Psalm 106 identifies the sacrifice (זבח) of sons and daughters to "demons" as part of a general Israelite participation in Canaanite idolatry. As Dahood[154] dates this psalm around the time of the Exile, when Molech worship still obtained in Judah, a case may be made that it's author could have known first-hand of the Molech rites. Even though it states that the sacrifice was to demons, it is, nevertheless, conceivable that the psalmist intended a polemical characterization of Molech as a demon.[155] Yet if the psalmist is writing polemically, it is entirely possible that the description he gives of the rite itself is also a slander, and thus not to be understood literally, not to be relied upon as evidence. On the other hand, if the psalmist did not know what the Molech and the rites of dedication to him were, his testimony is thereby even less valid. The last alternative is that the psalmist was not referring to the Molech cult at all, in which case we have no other comparable verse to establish the veracity of this verse. We must conclude that the psalm is too cryptic and (without analogue) cannot be accepted as evidence for any human sacrifical cult, including that of Molech.

We are left with Jeremiah's prophecies, from among all the prophetic/psalmodic references, as the only texts which are sufficiently precise to be, without a doubt, diatribes against the Molech cult. But, Jeremiah is also not free of hyperbole. In 2:23, 35, Jeremiah indicts the Israelite people for acts of apostasy of which the people claim they are innocent. It is not altogether unreasonable that a prophet, filled with zeal and doom, should consider the popular worship of YHWH as "Baal worship" if it did not coincide with his own definition. This is a normal excercise. This author has heard Hassidic Jews condemn Reform Judaism as "worship of the Golden Calf," and Reform seminaries as "butcher shops" (as compared

to the "medical school" qualty of Hassidic yeshivot). And these statements were made by Hassidim who had had extensive and pleasant dealing with Reform Jews. Jeremiah's blanket condemnation of the Israelite popular religion as "Baal worship" may be no more than the blanket indictments of Reform Judaism as "Golden Cali worship."

Taken as a whole, the prophetic/psalmodic texts are ambiguous, and hyperbolic. They represent sentiment rather than fact. If one tried to combine the accounts they give to achieve a total picture of the rite, it would be a confused one indeed, due to the different locations, procedures, gods, and purposes which are detailed in these prophecies. In contrast to them, the legal/historical passages agree remarkably well. They present a precise (though stylized, and in that sense, cryptic) description of what we can now see as Semitic ritual of dedicating children as attendants to a deity by "saining" them of mortal imperfections. Exactly how the fire was used in this process is a matter of speculation.[156] As one can safely say that for the devoted children to have been any use to a god as temple prostitutes, priests, and hierodules, they would have to have remained alive throughout the process, we conclude that Molech worship was not a human sacrifice, but solely a ritual by which Israelite children were given over by their parents to serve some deity.[157]

3. The next obvious question is who, or what, was "Molech?" One theory that has been proposed is that MLK is the name of a foreign god. Molech and Milkom (I Kings 11:5,7) occur in the Bible as names of an Ammonite deity. Despite the similarity of names, it does not seem that the Molech we are referring to is an Ammonite god, for the Bible nowhere ascribes the "passing of children through fire" to Ammonites. Most modern scholars have independently agreed that "Molech" in I Kings 11:7 should be read instead as "Milkom." In any event, the lack of corroborative evidence

from the Bible or from Ammonite archaeology renders this theory weak.

There are other deities by the name of Malik/Muluk known from the 18th cent. B.C.E. Mari texts.[158] Yet, Weinfeld argues, "the laws and warnings against the worship of Molech (in Leviticus and Deuteronomy) could hardly refer to these particular deities. It is unlikely that one particular god who is not especially famous would be singled out for mention, while other prominent gods, e.g. Baal, are not mentioned in the Torah even once."[159] Therefore, Weinfeld opines that the Molech mentioned in the legal/historical texts is not the name of god, but the epithet of a god: namely, "king."

The standard interpretation of the word מֹלֶךְ is that it is a tendentious misvocalization of מֶלֶךְ, "king," with the vowels of "shame" - just as Baal was called "Bosheth" (II Sam. 2:8, etc.) and "Ashtarath" was called "Ashtoreth"[160] (II Kings 23:13. The word "Topheth" may have been vocalized similarly: the codex Vaticanus reads "Tepheth" in II Kings 23:10.). The LXX reads מֹלֶךְ as ἄρχων, "king," and thus suggests that the reading "Molech" was not at that time known, further evidence that "Molech" is a Masoretic emendation of an original "melech." In view of the overwhelming scholarly accord, we accept the vocalic emendation, and will henceforth render להעביר ב"י למלך as "to dedicate, by means of fire, to the king."[161]

It is well known that YHWH is often addressed as "King," and some have argued that this Molech rite was, in actuality, a bastardized form of the YHWH cult.[162] They further deduce that that is the reason why YHWH says the Molech cult is a profanation of his name in Lev. 18:21 and 20:3. If this fire-dedication were directed toward YHWH as the "King," then that would be one explanation why the Masoretes emended "melech": to conceal the national shame ("bosheth") of so worshipping

him. It would also explain why Jeremiah might condemn the cult in YHWH's name as a matter "which I commanded not, neither came it into my mind (7:22).

Yet, as we have seen in connection with pidyon haben, YHWH no longer was understood as needing the dedication of first-born male children, and the transition from first-born to Levite was taking place as early as the period of the judges. To assume that YHWH was this "King" to whom children were dedicated by fire one would have to posit the survival of non-levitical dedication, or the existence of an occult Levitical dedication, neither of which is alluded to in the Bible.[163]

It would be more fruitful to look elsewhere for the stimulus of this rite - that is, to some foreign culture. We need not posit YHWH as the "King" to explain the actions of Jeremiah and the Masoretes. Syncretism would also be a cogent explanation.[164] Therefore, we should opine that Molech, the "King," is some foreign god.

"King" is a common Near-Eastern god-epithet, for example Malk-andros, Melkart, and Melech-Baal [165] in the Phoenician sphere, and Adad-milki (Adad-šarru) in the Assyrian sphere. In our discussion of human sacrifice in the non-Israelite Semitic cultures we demonstrated that there is no evidence from Phoenicia or from Carthage of any rite of dedicating children by means of fire connected with any Phoenician or Carthaginian deity.[166] There is much evidence that the practice is Assyrian, based on the similarity of the Molech rite and the Assyrian "burning" documents, as was discussed above.[167] Adad/Hadad and Ishtar/ Bēlet-ṣēri/Sin are the gods to whom children are "burned"in those texts. And the "gods of Sepharvaim," Adrammelech and Anammelech, to whom children were also "burned," have also been identified as Adad[168] and

Ishtar.[169] As Anath and as Ishtar, she is known as "Queen of Heaven" (šarrat šamē).[170] And as Adad and as Hadad, he is known as the "King of Heaven," to which the title "Molech" most probably refers.

Although Kaufman's thesis is that the Israelites were neither pagans nor syncretists, even he admits that there was "one genuinely idolatrous cult of his (Jeremiah's time: the women's worship of the 'queen of heaven' (Jer. 7:17f; 44)."[171] This cult consisted of votive offerings of cakes shaped like an eight-pointed star (the symbol of Ishtar[172] as the "star of heaven" - kakkab šamē) carried under a canopy amidst libations[173] (Jer. 7:18; 44:19), and the burning of incense on rooftops to the King, Queen, and host of heaven.

"Molech" (Adad as "King of Heaven") was worshipped along with Ishtar, "Queen of Heaven," in a syncretistic cult alongside YHWH: "And them that worship, that swear to the Lord and swear by (מַלְכָּם) their king (Zeph. 1:5)." Though some emend מַלְכָּם to מִלְכֹּם (as the New English Bible does), to suggest Milkom, the god of the Ammonites, we know of no such ceremony attending him, but it is well documented that such rites were involved in the Assyrian worship of Ishtar; which leads Weinfeld to judge that emendation invalid.[174] As the previous verse mentions idolatrous priests (כְּמָרִים) among priests כֹּהֲנִים , it would seem that the Adad cult was definitely syncretistic, including the worship of YHWH along with that of the Host and Royalty of Heaven.

Indeed, the syncretistic nature of the cult, the dual allegiance to YHWH and Adad as kings, is a good reason why the word melech was misvocalized - to eliminate confusion between them. This would be sufficient cause for considering the Melech/Molech cult a profanation of

YHWH's name - something from which YHWH, through Jeremiah, would want to disassociate himself, as something which "I commanded not, neither came it into my mind." All in all, it is most likely that the Molech cult was syncretistic with the YHWH cult - not a bastardized form of it, and that the Melech, the King, is Adad, and not YHWH.

We have shown that the Molech rites were a form of dedication to the King of Heaven, Adad, who was co-worshipped with YHWH, and with his consort, Ishtar, the Queen of Heaven. These two cults of the king and queen of heaven seem to have been introduced to Judah with the rising influence of Assyria in Judahite politics. Certainly, the terminus ad quem of its introduction is the reign of Ahaz. The question remains as to whether or not he, himself, initiated the cult of Molech.[175]

As discussed below,[176] Ahaz went to Damascus to offer tribute to Tiglath-Pileser, and while he was there, he became enamored of the altar that was at Damascus. He had it copied and placed in the Temple, removing the brazen altar and putting it on the north side of his altar (II Kings 16:7-16). II Chronicles (28:23) maintains that he used this altar to worship the gods of Aram. Ahaz was also the first person recorded in the Bible as dedicating his son by means of fire (II Kings 16:3). As Adad was the dominant god in this sphere at this time,[177] it seems likely that the Aramean gods whom Ahaz worshipped and to whom he dedicated his son by means of fire were Adad and Ishtar. As Ahaz reigned before the downfall of Israel, he indulged in this cult before the importation of the Sepharvites to Samaria, and thus remains its first recorded Judahite practitioner.

The Molech cult reached its climax with Menasseh (II Kings 21:3-11), and Weinfeld[178] and Kaufman[179] state that Jeremiah's condemnation of it

stems from his reign (Jer. 2:23; 7; 32:35; 44). The fire dedication ceremony seems to have spread to the commoners also (if it was Ahaz himself who brought it to Judah) and it must have flourished in order to merit so many denunciations in the Torah. Yet Josiah's reform appears to have been successful in stamping out the dedications to Molech but not worship of Ishtar by the women. The latter continued until the days of the Second Temple.[180]

4. Though the common understanding of Molech worship was that it was a sacrifice around a large idol of the god "Molech" who had two outstretched hands, down which children would roll into a large brazier,[181] it is interesting to note that early apocryphal and rabbinic literature did not solely hold that view. On the contrary, many non-sacrificial interpretations coexisted with the sacrificial ones. The Midrash distinguishes three major ways by which children could be non-sacrificially "handed over/dedicated/passed through the fire" to Molech.

The first way is expressed in the Book of Jubilees (30:7ff), where the sin of Molech is connected with marrying one's children to pagans. The second method is similar: it is the act of procreation with non-Jewish women, and it is based on a pun on לְהַעֲבִיר "to cause to pass/dedicate" as לְעַבֵּר , "to impregnate." Targum Jonathan renders Leviticus 18:21 ומן זרעך לא תתן לאעברא למלך as בתשמישא לזרעא בת עממין לאעברא לפולחנא אחרא: "Give none of your seed, by means of intercourse with a pagan woman, to transfer to another worship." The Pshitta reads the same verse as
ומן זרעך לא תרמא למבטנו (לעבר) נוכריתא:
"Do not throw away your seed by impregnation of a foreign woman." This interpretation is suppressed in Mishnah Megillah 4:9: כינוי

מזרעך לא תתן להעביר למולך ומזרעך לא תתן
לאעברא בארמיותא משתיקין אותו בנזיפה :

"If one should express 'And thou shalt not give any of thy seed to pass through to Molech' as 'And thou shalt not give any of thy seed to impregnate a heathen woman' they must silence him with a rebuke." Yet this interpretation was not long rebuked nor silenced, and it surfaces as Rabbi Ishmael's in the Sifrei (Shofrim, 171, ב"א : זהו
הבועל ארמית ומעמיד ממנה בן אויב למקום :

"This is it (the worship of Molech): he who has intercourse with a pagan woman and thereby produces a child from her who would be an enemy of God's." We find the debate from Mishnah Megillah expanded in the Babylonian Talmud (25a): תנא דבי ר' ישמעאל בישראל
הבא על הכותית והוליד ממנה בן לע"ז הכתוב מדבר :

"It has been taught in the school of R. Ishmael, 'The text (Lev. 18:21) refers to the case of a Jewish man who has intercourse with a Samaritan woman and fathers by her a child (who will be brought up) into idolatry.'" The Talmud Yerushalmi (Meg. 75:3; Sanh. 27:2) has similar statements.

The above midrashim is as much based upon wordplay as they are upon interchanged contexts. The verses before and after Lev. 18:21 condemn lying with a fellow Israelite's wife, homosexuality, and bestiality. In such a setting it is not surprising that the giving of one's seed to Molech was understood as impregnation. Whether or not these non-sacrificial midrashim were based upon clever word-play or a preserved tradition that Molech had nothing to do with sacrifices cannot be determined.

Yet the third interpretation is so close to what we have reconstructed as the likely reality from the available data that one wonders

if it might not be such a preserved tradition rather than mere word-play. The LXX translates Deut. 18:10 as direct transfer of children to pagan priests for the purpose of becoming attendants[182] to their god. Philo interprets similarly.[183]

In contrast to Ishmael's opinion in the Sifrei (ibid) we read
ר' יהודה אומר: זה שהוא מעביר בנו ובתו לע"ז וכורת עמה ברית: שנאמר העגל אשר כרתו לשנים ויעברו בין בתריו:

"R. Judah says, 'This (he who gives his seed to Molech) refers to one who transfers his son or daughter to idolatry and makes a covenant with it, as it is said (Jer. 34:18) The calf which they rendered in twain and passed through the parts." This imagery of a covenant with idolatry "between the parts" as Abraham made with YHWH is elaborated in the Amoraic descriptions of the ceremony in Sanhedrin 64b:
אמר ר' יהודה: אינו חייב עד שיעבירנו דרך העברה. היכי דמי? אביי: שרגא דליבני במצעי ונורא מהאי גיסא ונורא מהאי גיסא: רבא אמר כמשוורתא דפוריא:

"R. Judah says that he is only liable to punishment if he causes his seed to pass through in the normal way. How is that? Abayye said: 'There was a loose pile of bricks in the middle of a fire on either side of it.' Raba said: "It was like the children;s leaping about on Purim." That this interpretation must have remained well-known through the ages (but apparently not as well known as the sacrificial one) is evidenced in Rashi's comment on Lev. 18:21: ע"ז היא ששמה מולך וזו היא עבודתה: שמוסר בנו לכומרים ועושין שתי מדורות גדולות ומעבירין את הבן ברגליו בין שתי מדורות האש:

'This was an idol whose name was Molech, and this is its worship: he hands his son over to the pagan priests and they make two large fires. Then they make the child walk through the two bonfires." After Rashi,

it is a certainty that all who went to cheder were exposed to this interpretation. The time may have come to regard it as the correct interpretation.

PART IV

CONCLUSION

1. The preceeding chapters have analyzed the data known to us pertaining to humans being used as sacrificial victims in ancient Semitic cultures. We have demonstrated that all arguments supporting the existence of Semitic human sacrifice are based primarily on literary attestations from outside cultures (such as the Romans commenting on the Carthaginians or Hellenistic authors describing Phoenicians), or on interpretations of sparse and stylized Semitic texts. With the exception of the Carthaginian "tofet" - shrines" (which have yet to be firmly established as places of a human sacrificial cult) there is, as of now, not one shred of archaeological evidence, in material remains or in texts, that would support the notion that Semitic cultures ever endorsed, condoned, or incorporated human sacrifice into even their most bastardized and syncretized of cults.

It seems that the theory of widespread human sacrifice in the Near East has stemmed primarily from the prophetic and classical polemics against it. If they condemned it, it must have existed. This line of reasoning mistakes hyperbolic rhetoric for historical fact. To be sure, there are isolated, uncontestable incidents of human sacrifice such as Mesha and possibly Jepthah which legitimized scholarly research for similar occurrences. That this notion of human sacrifice was prevalent among the Semites cannot be doubted. It is the existence of the practice itself which cannot be proved with the data at hand.

With the last statement we return to the discussions of the previous century. Albright writes, "In spite of the documentation available in pagan and Christian sources about human sacrifice in Phoenicia and Carthage, the rationalistic critics of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries refused to believe that the reports had any basis,

especially since archaeological work seemed not to furnish any support."[184] I submit that this is the state of affairs today. Those who will believe documentation which is external to the culture and more often than not overtly polemical will maintain that human sacrifice did exist. Therefore, they will see human sacrifice in cryptic Biblical texts. The will also do so in the face of an absolute archaeological silence. The crucial differences is whether or not one is attempting to find human sacrifice or to prove that it obtained.

What has happened since the nineteenth to revive this issue? Primarily the work done on Carthage by Eissfeldt, Cintas, and Bisi. The discovery of those cryptic stelae and even more cryptic pits and urns[185] fueled the fire of scholarly interest. In addition, Eissfeldt's erroneous identification of MLK as a molk sacrifice revived the molech issue, and, by extension, resurrected the discussion of the Assyrian "burning" documents, understood as figurative fifty years ago. The sideline issue of Arabian human sacrifices has resurfaced, but no new evidence has come to light since the last century. The question of the credibility of St. Nilus has been bandied about,[186] but he is still, in the eyes of most authorities, in disrepute. And Weinfeld has made the definitive interpretation of the nature of the ceremony to the "Moharric."

What is new is Weinfeld's identification of Molech as Adad and his description of the nature of the Molech-Adad dedication rite and Ishtar worship. Besides that, the scholarship in this field has merely revolved around debunking Eissfeldt, a process which has taken forty years. Even that was a repetition of the initial criticism of Eissfeldt's article.[187]

2. This leaves us one last case to treat, and that is the "Akedah", the binding of Isaac (Genesis 22). This is not an issue of fact. Whether or not the event did or did not take place is not open to proofs. Even

if it is historical, the sacrifice was not carried out. What is at issue is our understanding of the original intent of the Akedah narrative in the light of our present understanding of the frequency of human sacrifice in Semitic cultures.

The interpretations are basically fourfold: that it is the etiology of a sanctuary; that it is the etiology of the institution of substituting animals for human victims in sacrifices; that it is the ultimate polemic against human sacrifice; and that it is the account of one man's extreme submission to God's will. Indeed, the question of what is the intent of this story is a very old one. In rabbinic literature and in Christian exegesis (the examples are far too numerous to mention) there has always been a tension between interpretations which emphasize the significance of Abraham's loyalty to God, and those interpretations which regard the Akedah as support for the prophetic injunctions against human sacrifice. It is not the desire of this author to discourage homiletical eisegesis of the Akedah in any way. Yet its exegesis is an issue, especially when statements such as these are made: "From the anthropological point of view it (the Akedah) may be regarded as evidence for the existence of child sacrifice among the Hebrews."[188] "Human sacrifice was an actual custom among some Canaanite tribes. It was practiced for centuries."[189] Therefore, let us examine these four interpretations to determine the extent of which they are truly exegetical.

Scholars have seen the Akedah as "a patriarch legitimizing a Canaanite sanctuary at which human sacrifice was replaced with animal sacrifice."[190] Without a doubt one of the primary functions of the patriarchal narratives was the legitimization of Canaanite sanctuaries and the etiology of place names (e.g. Genesis 16:13-14; 26:12-33; 28). The scholarly attempt to identify Moriah-YHWH Yir'eh as a sanctuary has its

roots in the Chronicler's identification of Jerusalem as the site of Mount Moriah (II Chron. 3:1). The standard rabbinic assumption is that the Temple Mount is Moriah. Recently there have been new identifications. Gunkel[191] felt that YHWH-Yir'eh is Jeruel,[192] and Proksch[193] has attempted to show that it is Schechem. These new interpretations are due to the feeling that the Chronicler based his identification on late and erroneous P traditions.

Whereever Moriah-YHWH-Yir'eh was, one can make a sound case that the authors of Genesis 22[194] received and transmitted the narrative fully aware of its etiological nature. This does not seem to be the emphasis of the story, however. Gunkel has stated that YHWH-Yir'eh does not read like a place name, which was why he proposed Jeruel as an alternative.[195] The mention of "the land of Moriah" and "one of the hills" (22:2) is too vague and inaccurate a description to have been correctly identified by anyone, especially the Chronicler.[196] Moreover, Jerusalem was in the hands of the Jebusites at the time the Akedah would have taken place,[197] and it is difficult to believe that Abraham performed all this inside or in sight of a Canaanite city. Gunkel has pointed out that even through the narrative is conscious of an etiology of a sanctuary, the present form of the story is the testing of a righteous man.[198] It would be a safe assumption, then, that Genesis 22, while transmitted in the standard patriarchal etiological genre, either lost that emphasis along the years or never really had it. Therefore, let us examine the other alternatives.

Hooke,[199] in his discussion of possible sites for Moriah-YHWH Yir'eh, moves on to say, "The story may also have been intended to explain the early Hebrew custom of ransoming the firstborn of male children." Though the tradition of the redemption of the firstborn (Ex. 32:20) may have developed

in full awareness of the Akedah, it is, however, anachronistic to ascribe pidyon haben to the patriarchs, especially since Levites were only beginning to supplant firstborns as priests during the time of the judges.[200] It would be safe to say that this also is not the emphasis of the narrative.

Raising the question of pidyon haben, brings us back to the issue of whether or not this narrative, as Fohrer maintains, "contains what was originally a Canaanite cult legend telling how animal sacrifice replaced human sacrifice."[201] We have dealt with the problem of whether pidyon haben was designed to redeem Israelite firstborn males from sacrifice and demonstrated the likelihood that it was not. DeVaux agrees with Fohrer's assertion that human sacrifice was a Canaanite practice, stating the "Gen. 22 may have been the first of all the narrative (sic) if the foundation of a sanctuary, where, from the outset, only animal victims were offered, in contrast with other, Canaanite, sanctuaries where human victims were also sacrificed."[202] However, the lack of any evidence of Canaanite-Phoenician human sacrifice renders that position untenable.

If it was not a Canaanite practice, then the next alternative is that it was a general Semitic practice which is being declared unacceptable. Denise Piccard maintains that "the theme which inspires (this story) goes back to a far-off period when the religion of nomad Semites included a human sacrifice alongside animal sacrifice."[203] Even deVaux, who maintains that the Israelites did practice human sacrifice in the Molech cult, rejects this hypothesis: "According to all available evidence, the religion of the nomad Semites included nothing of the sort."[204] Nor, according to our findings, did any other Semitic culture, nomadic or settled.

If no other Semitic culture can be shown to have practiced human sacrifice,[205] we return to the question of whether it was uniquely an Israelite phenomenon. The Jepthah story is recognized as singular, and very probably mythological. The Mesha incident is alo unique, and much later than the Akedah. The Akedah could hardly have been conceived with either of those two narratives in mind. We are left with no alternative but to state that there was no human sacrifice in Israel that the Adedah could have been intended to supplant.

Basing a theory of Israelite human sacrifice on the Akedah goes against all else we can uncover about Israelite practices. "Anyway, only paradoxically could we use the narrative to establish that human sacrifices were ever legitimate in Israel; rather does it prove that human sacrifices were disapproved of and that this condemnation was put right back into the time of Abraham."[206]

There is a more fundamental problem. Before one can safely assert that animals were a substitute for humans as sacrificial victims in a culture, one would have to be certain that that was the proper sequence in the evolution of sacrifices. Robertson Smith theorizes that the reverse is probably more correct: that humans replaced animals as sacrificial victims.[207] Smith suggests that primitive societies (including Semitic cultures) were totemistic, and therefore, animal life was held to be more sacred, their life much purer, than human life, Thus, animals were more acceptable victims than humans. He maintains that human sacrifice is a degeneration of that principle which could only occur in an advanced, decadent, society. Indeed, the Incas and Aztecs, who assuredly had a human sacrificial cult, were not at all primitive in their contexts. The Canaanites of the patriarchal

(Amarna) age were also a very advanced and cultured society verging on national collapse in the wake of the invading Arameans, would certainly fit Robertson Smith's category of an advanced, decadent society, as would Carthage, Greece, and Rome. But the Hebrews were by all accounts a primitive, backwoods people up through the time of David. Certainly they were not the type of society to have reached the level of sophistication and decadence which Robertson Smith maintains is necessary for such a cult.

DeVaux supports Smith's notion that human sacrifice is a degeneration of animal sacrifice, citing a text that Robertson Smith certainly knew of: "The practice of human sacrifices cannot be regarded as characteristic of savage races. On the contrary, it is found much more frequently among barbarians and semi-civilised peoples than among genuine savages, and at the lower stages of culture known to us it is hardly heard of."[208] DeVaux applies this principle to render Phoenicia and Carthage as likely societies for the practise,[209] and the difference between the level of culture in Phoenicia and of the patriarchs is readily apparent.

The issue of which came first, human or animal victims, is by no means well-understood. Yet in view of the scholarly arguments against the animal substitution hypothesis, it cannot be blithely asserted that animals were the next step after humans as victims. It is, therefore, inappropriate to conclude that the Akedah could be pinpointing such a change in the Semitic concept of religion.

If, then, the Akedah is not the etiology of animal substitution for human sacrificial victims, and not primarily the etiology of a sanctuary, could it be a polemic against human sacrifice? This is the accepted view: "The story of the 'Binding of Isaac' opens the age-long warfare of Israel against the abominations of child sacrifice which was rife among Semitic peoples...In that age it was astounding that Abraham's

God should have interposed to prevent the sacrifice, not that he should have asked for it...A primary purpose of this command, therefore, was to demonstrate to Abraham and his descendants after him that God abhorred human sacrifice with an infinite abhorrence."[210]

If the Akedah is a polemic let us ask against whom this polemic is directed. In light of our findings, it could not be against any neighbor of Israel, nor against the Canaanites, nor against native Israelite customs. The possibility remains that the Akedah was a polemic not directed against some specific culture, but against the concept in general. YHWH does prevent the fulfillment of his own command, and the prophets later villify even the notion of human sacrifices in YHWH's name (e.g. Jeremiah 7:31 and 19:5). But as many scholars realize, "The story contains no word in repudiation of human sacrifice."[211] Indeed, "it rather implies that Jahveh might desire such a sacrifice."[212] Hertz may abhor human sacrifice, but it cannot be found stated in the narrative itself. "The near sacrifice of Isaac fails to manifest an outspoken objection in principle to the idea of human sacrifice."[213] Speiser argues that the Akedah is "characterized at the outset as a test (unreal), a gruesome mandate to be cancelled at the proper time. If the author had intended to expose a barbaric custom, he would surely have gone about it in a different way."[214] Kaufman, Speiser, deVaux and Thompson, who all hold that human sacrifice <u>was</u> practiced in one way or another in ancient Semitic cultures, find no evidence of an anti-human sacrifice polemic in the Akedah.

One would expect the climax of the Adedah to be a denunciation of human sacrifice if one were to propose that it is a polemic. Bowie asserts that "the climax is not the sacrifice of Isaac, but the word from God, that he is not to be sacrificed."[215] We would suggest that the

climax and the message of the Akedah is in verse 12, "Now I know how dedicated you are to God, since you did not withhold from me your own beloved son." It is not, "Now you know that this is what I will never require again."

Indeed, it has not been traditional in either Jewish or Christian theology to assume that God would not require human sacrifice. Jesus' crucifixion is seen as having been precursed by the Akedah, and Jewish midrash and folklore are rich with legends based on the assumption that Isaac actually was sacrificed and resurrected.[216] Hertz himself explains that it became, in time, the ultimate symbol of "the ideal of martyrdom."[21] He writes, "In all human history there is not a single noble cause, movement or achievement that did not call for sacrifice, nay, sacrifice of life itself...Israel is the classic people of martyrdom."[218] The Akedah is used in support of human sacrifice via martyrdom in the midrash on Hanna, whose seven sons all suffered death by torture rather than submit to worshipping Antiochus' idol: "Go and tell Father Abraham: Let not your heart swell with pride! You have built one altar, but I have built seven altars and on them have offered up my seven sons. What is more: Yours was a trial; mine is an accomplished fact."[219] That interpretations as these have been the core of Christianity and in the mainstream of midrash lead this author to doubt that the Akedah was ever intended to be the polemic so many have seen.

All this leads up to the last alternative, that the narrative is the story of the testing of a righteous man. Gray writes that the Akedah "is in a certain measure an early parallel to the Book of Job: in both cases Yahweh, by the trial of character, brings out the genuineness of the religion and devotion of the man who is tried."[220] That the Akedah

is the saga of a trial is proved in the climax mentioned below[221] and in the challenge of the first verse: "Sometime afterward God put Abraham to the test (22:1)." That this is a common interpretation of the text is not a new statement. That it is the only unequivocal and unambiguous exegesis is seldom recognized.

What was the nature of the test? Brichto writes, "The test of Abraham's faith is the ultimate test, for in being asked to sacrifice his son he was asked to hazard his immortality,"[222] DeVaux expands on this: "Just as the order to quit his country and his family (Gen. 12:1) had cut Abraham off from his past, so this new command cuts off his future...In the person of Isaac it was all Israel of the future which was bound up on the altar."[223] This is indeed the case, as Ishmael is not considered to be Abraham's sone for the purposes of YHWH's covenant: "Through Isaac alone will your line continue" (21:12). The future of Abraham's lineage, which is his immortality, depended solely upon his absolute submission to YHWH. Proksch sees this absolute submission as an "islam" -total surrender to God in fear of God.[224] Speiser maintains that it is not "fear or awe but absolute dedication."[225] The common denominator of all the interpretations is absolute obedience - for whatever reason. It is this obedience, or "islam" of Abraham's which is the emphasis, focus, climax, and purpose of the Akedah.

FOOTNOTES

1. Hist. IV iii, 23.

2. De Abstinentia, ii 56.

3. Praep. Ev. iv. 16.6; cf. Orat. pro Const. 13.

4. ibid., 1.9. Quoted from G. Gray, Sacrifice in the Old Testament: Its Theory and Practice. N.Y., Ktav, 1971 (first published 1925), pp. 91-2.

5. O. Eissfeldt, "Philo Byblius und Sanchunjaton" in (Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart V), 1961, cols 346-7 and 1361; see also O. Eissfeldt, Ras Schamra und Sanchunjaton. (1939).

6. Schaeffer, Ugaritica IV (Paris, 1962), pp. 77-83.

7. YGC, p. 210.

8. cf: Eissfeldt's rendering, below, p. 10.

9. YGC, ibid.

10. "Certain archaeological discoveries have also been interpreted as evidence for human sacrifice in Canaan. In the Ras Shamra texts, however, there is no mention of anything of the sort." Helmer Ringgren, Religions of the Ancient Near East, (Philadelphia) 1973 (translated by John Sturdy), p. 162.

11. SOTS, p. 88.

12. With regard to the lack of archaeological evidence, Albright (YGC, p. 207) says, "that sanctuaries of the "tofet" class have not yet been found in Syro-Palestine may easily be accounted for. Like Tofet in Jerusalem, they must preferably have been located near the bottom of valleys on the south or east of the towns to which they belonged. By now, most of them must be covered deep with debris blown or washed over them." As an argument from silence this does nothing to advance our knowledge.

13. Library of History, XIII, 86:3.

14. Apol. IX 2-4.

15. SOTS, p. 79, n. 107.

16, Div. Inst. i 21. He claims to have received his information from an otherwise unknown author named Pescennius Festus.

17. Below, p. 13.

18. Schol. Plat. Rep. 337A, in edition of Didot; iii p. 321

19. SOTS, p. 80.

20. below, p. 13.

21. Livy (xxii 57) alleges that the Romans offered up humans to stop Hannibal; Ovid speaks of the Roman practice of throwing humans into the river at the annual rite of Argei (Fasti, 621 ff).

22. O. Eissfeldt, Molk als Opferbegriff im Punischen und Hebraischen und das Ende des Gottes Moloch, (Halle) 1935.

23. See appendix, figure A.

24. SOTS, p. 76, n. 84.

25. Albright (YGC, p. 210) displays one scenario as to how MLK as "king" could evolve a meaning of "vow."

26. SOTS, p. 78. Moshe Weinfeld renders this as בג(א)רים גתם, ("עבודת המולך בישראל ורקעה" in Proceedings of the Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies (1969), p. 43.) and says that it also occurs without the mention of MLK (H. Tur Sinai, הלשון והספר, vol. I pp. 104-5). Albright reads the full phrase as a כבהמת אמים (YGC, p. 205, n. 79), and Eissfeldt (MOPH, p. 20) translates it as בבני (כאומים) בתום. All of these interpretations are somewhat forced and not all scholars see it as a sacrificial rite (see הלשון והספר, pp. 106-7).

27. SOTS, pp. 89-90.

28. M. Buber, Königtum Gottes (1932), pp. 214-15.

29. Plutarch, De Iside et Osiride, 16.

30. Bisi reproduces another such figure which is not so identified (Anna Maria Bisi, Le Stele Puniche, (Rome) 1967, figures 31-2. See also appendix, figures A and B, and G. C. and C. Picard, The Life and Death of Carthage, p. 321, figure 25.

31. Dr. Chanan Brichto has suggested that MLK'MR could as plausibly be "the sacrifice of an Emir" as a "vow offering of a lamb."

32. De Supestitione xiii, 171 d.

33. Library of History, xx, 14:4-6.

34. See Bisi, op. cit., ch. 2. See also figure E in appendix.

35. Appendix, figure F.

36. SOTS, p. 82.

37. See SOTS, p. 83, for a table of percentages.

38. De Vaux suggests that this rite was human sacrifice along with substitutions of lambs for humans, (SOTS, p. 83).

39. ibid, n. 118.

40. See table, ibid, p. 83.

41. See below, Part III D.

42. YGC, p. 207. See also above, p. 7, n. 12.

43. Albright states (YGC, p. 207) that "the relatively late date at which the practice of setting up (these Carthaginian) commemorative stelae (the earliest, (15 I 1236, being 6th cent B.C.E.; but most are several centuries younger - R. Dussaud, in Compte - rendus de l'Academic des Iscriptions et Belles Lettres (1946) pp. 376-7. See also SOTS, p. 77.) in connection with "topheth sacrifices" was introduced makes it improbable that they were derived from Phoenicia proper." In addition, Albright maintains that the stelae are North African prototypes.

44. See below, p. 55.

45. W. F. Albright, Archaeology and the Religion of Israel, 5th (N.Y.) 1969; p. 222, n 116.

46. See also below, p. 55.

47. E. A. Speiser, Genesis (Anchor Bible, ed. W. F. Albright and D. N. Freedman), Doubleday, N , 1964, p. 165.

48. SOTS, pp. 55-6

49. Speiser, ibid.

50. SOTS, pp. 57-9.

51. ibid, pp. 56-7.

52. ibid, p. 57.

53. See below, pp. 59-60.

54. C. H. W. Johns in Assyrian Deeds and Documents III (1923) number 632.

55. C. H. W. Johns numbers 436, 474; Kohler-Ungnad, Assyrische Rechtsurkunden, numbers 163, 96a.

56. C. H. W. Johns, number 310, r. 7-10; Kohler-Ungnad number 158: 27-30.

57. Iraq 13 (1951) Pl. XVI, N. D. 496:25-32.

58. Arch. v. f. Orientfor., Beiheft 1 (1933) p. 73, 8:5-7; also W. F. Albright in Anatolian Studies 6 (1956) pp. 75-85.

59. B. Meissner, "Die Keilschrifttexte aus dem Tell Ḥalâf," (Feistschrift M. von Oppenheim), 1933, texts ii and iii, pp. 72-5

60. SOTS, p. 59.

61. AD and D, III, pp. 345-6.

62. Orientalia N. S. 34 (1965) pp. 382-6.

63. MLCOT, pp. 586-8. See also below on fire as a purification agent, p 46.

64. A. Jaussen and R. Savignac, Mission Archéologique en Arabie II (1914) No. 49. cf. pp. 381-2.

65. W. Caskel, Lihyan und Lihyanisch (1954) p. 48; J. Henninger, "Menschenopfer bei den Arabern" (Anthropos liii), 1958, p. 745, n. 73.

66. De Abst. ii 56; Euscbius, Praep. Ev. (ed. Maas) iv. 16, 8.

67. Quoted by Wellhausen in Reste Arabische Heidentums, (1897) p. 40.

68. Procopius of Gaza, De Bello Persico ii 28, 13; Zachariah the Rhetor (J. P. N. Land, Anecdota Syriaca iii, p. 247; trans. F. J. Hamilton and E. W. Brooks, pp. 206-7); Michael the Syrian IX, 16 (trans. Chabot ii, pp. 178-9); Wellhausen, op. cit., pp. 43 and 115; R. Devreese, Vivre et Penser II (= Revue Biblique 1i) (1942), pp. 281 and 294; R. Aigrain, "Arabie" in the Dictionnaire d'historie et de geographie ecclesiastiques, col. 1227.

69. The tradition takes different forms: Wellhausen, op. cit., p. 43; G. Rothstein, Die Dynastie der Lahmiden im El-Hira (1899) pp. 141-2; R. Aigrain, op. cit., col. 1229.

70. Wellhausen, op. cit., p. 116; J. Chelhod, Le Sacrifice chez les Arabes (1955) pp. 97-8; M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, Mahomet (1957), p. 57.

71. SOTS, p. 54.

72. ibid, p. 55.

73. Compare the story of the woman's vow to Saul nearly executing Jonathan in connection with a vow (I Sam. 14), below, p.

74. If Mohammed's father had been sacrificed, Mohammed would never have been born. This may be comparable to the Akedah (below, conclusion) Moses being nearly killed by Pharaoh, and Jesus being sought by Herod.

75. Migne, P. G. 1 xxix cols. 583-694.

76. Albright, YGC, p. 208.

77. SOTS, p. 53; R. Devreese in Vivre et Penser I (= Revue Biblique xlix) (1940) pp. 220-2; MCIB, p. 53.

78. J. Henninger in Anthropos I (1955) pp. 81-148.

79. Jacut's Geographisches Worterbuch herausgegeben von F. Wustenfeld IV, 425:2-4 (Leipzig, 1866-71). Salman is a place in Iraq on the pilgrim road to Kufa. (LRS, p. 364, n. 1).

80. op. cit., p. 53.

81. LRS, p. 364, n. 1.

82. MCIB, p. 52.

83. W. Gottschalk, Das Gelube nach älterer arabischer Auffasung (1919), p. 128.

84. Yehezkel Kaufman maintains that the Israelites did not understand the true nature of pagan worship and viewed it on the whole at its most fetishistic level. RI, p. 20.

85. SOT, p. 86.

86. ibid, p. 87.

87. ARI, p. 158.

88. See pp. 39 and 69 in connection with the avowedly non-polemical nature of the Jepthah and Akedah narratives. The problem of Molech references in the legal-historical texts is analyzed on pp .

89. Above, p. 19.

90. See note 169.

91. Genesis 22

92. Judges 11.

93. Ras Shamra Texts I AB II, 31-8, quoted in Ringgren, op. cit., p. 163.

94. ibid.

95. J. Gray, The Legacy of Canaan, Leiden (1965), p. 126.

96. ibid, n. 1.

97. De Vaux goes to great lengths to support the theory that this was a sacrifice (SOTS, p. 62). He develops his case by interpreting the word יפרו in verse nine. Ezekiel (23:17-18) and Jeremiah (6:8) use the verb to mean "alienate", "to become separated from one's soul." And in Gen. 32:26, the verb is used to mean "dislocate." Therefore, de Vaux has theorized that the Gibeonites "dismembered" the survivors of the house of Saul, just as Anat cut Mot up into pieces. This is a very weak argument. הוקע is also used to designate a drastic punishment, as in Numbers 5:24, "Take all the chiefs and hang them up unto the Lord in the face of the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel." It is also used a few verses after the Gibeonite incident in II Sam. 21:13 referring to the bodies of Saul and Jonathan which had been "hung" on the walls of Beth Shan

(I Sam. 31:8). "Dismember" and "dislocate" are not acts designed to be done in connection with a wall, and thus it seems obvious that the author of this narrative specifically intended the meaning "to hang, impale," making allusions to the fate of others of the house of Saul.

98. Even assuming the existence of such a rite based on the Anath/Mot text, nothing such as that myth describes (grinding, burning, and scattering, along with clearing) takes place in the passage from Samuel.

99. See our discussion pp. 6-7, n. 10. In introducing and commenting upon this saga, Ringgren makes no mention of any such rite or text.

100. P & S, p. 128.

101. "One form of sacrifice to which the archaeological evidence points is that of the foundation sacrifice. The Canaanite foundation sacrifice may be combined with the Moabite sacrifice of the royal heir to Chemosh as affording evidence of the extent to which propitiation was prominent in the thought of Israel's neighbors." SOT, p. 87.

102. ibid.

103. ibid, p. 81. See footnote 8 for his list of articles on the subject.

104. A. Dillman, Die Bücher Numeri, Deuteronomium, und Josua, (Kurzegefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament, ed. C. F. Weil and F. Delitsch) Leipzig, 1886, p. 466.

105. SOTS, p. 60.

106. ibid. These were tombs J and K from Tell el-Far ah near Nablus. See his original article in Revue Biblique lviii, 1951, pp. 401-3.

107. SOTS, p. 64. See also LRS, p. 419, n. 2. "Before YHWH, according to Dr. Brichto, implies "at YHWH's command."

108. Below, p. 21.

109. Translated by de Vaux; SOTS, p. 69.

110. Isaia, 1958, in loco.

111. De Vaux claims that this is a reference to some obscure syncretism. I don't know what he is talking about, and I suspect he doesn't either. SOTS, p. 69.

112. ibid, p. 68.

113. ibid, p. 69.

114. SOT, p. 88.

115. As this verse mentions the sacrifice of a first-born, some have seen it as referring to the supposed widespread Israelite custom of "sacrificing the first-born", which, they believe, was supplanted by pidyon haben. See above, Section C of Part III.

116. Servius, on Virgil, Aenaead iii 121 f, xi 264.

117. Plutarch, de Fluvius ix. 1.

118. "Ke-Sat," Journal Asiatique VI, 1825, p. 159; Grimm #88; for other references see W. O. Sypherd, Jephthah and His Daughter (reprint from Delaware Notes, 12th series) U. of Delaware, 1939, p. 9, n. 15; MLCOT, #115, p. 534.

119. MLCOT, p. 431.

120. "The redactor neither praises nor blames Jephthah, and subsequent tradition did not condemn him (cf. Heb. 11:32)." SOT, pp 65-6. See also our discussion of the Akedah in the conclusion.

121. P & S, p. 109.

122. ibid.

123. R. I., p. 137.

124. P & S, p. 90

125. Besides the question of Jephthah's sacrifice, the custom that Jephthah's daughter seems to have initiated have also been investigated, that is, the weeping for the "dead or ousted" fertility god. This practice occurred in Egypt (Lamenting Osiris) and in Syria (Lamenting Adonis). Both the Gilgamesh epic (vi 46-7) and the chronicle of the Descent of Ishtar to the Netherworld (rev. 56-7) speak of an annual wailing for Tammuz. Ezekiel (8:14) also mentions this custom in connection with Israelite women, who sat at the Temple gate to mourn Tammuz. (See Sypherd, op. cit., p. 15, n. 27.

Indeed, there has been much scholarship attempting to connect Ishtar (Atargatis) as the original model for Jephthah's daughter (ibid, p. 17, n. 7.). Epiphanius states that Kore Persephone (another name for Ishtar) was worshipped by the Sichemites as Jepthah's daughter (Adv. haeres III, 2, XXIII). The male-female confusion of vows to sacrifice the first (first sons, daughters, mothers, sisters) is compounded in the confusion of identifying various gods and goddesses with who descends and who is mourned.

The association of Ishtar with Jephtah's daughter has been investigated for possible connections between the Molech-cult and the "cult of the host of heaven" that Jeremiah denounces (which was Ishtar worship.) This is seen as a source of evidence for the human-sacrificial nature of the Molech cult. Some have claimed that the Jephthah-type human sacrifice is merely carried through in spirit through the annual weeping for his daughter/Ishtar.

Indeed there is an attestation to Israelites weeping at the harvest (Hosea 7:14). This weeping, or "ululation" was common throughout the ancient near-east (see MLCOT pp. 431-2) as a rite of termination of the exile (death) of the fertility god (e.g. Ceres and Persephone). The connection of Ishtar to Jephthah's daughter is confusing and tenuous, but the fertility customs associated with both point out a possible undercurrent of fertility god worship in Israelite history from the Judges to the Exile. It is too speculative, however, to base any theories of Molech worship being human sacrifice on this confusion of gods and goddesses with Jephthah's daughter.

126. Exodus 13:2, 11-16; 22:28-9; 34:19-20; Numbers 3:11-13, 40-51; 8:15-18; and 18:15-16.

127. SOTS, p. 71; P & S, p. 76.

128. E. Dhorme, La Religion des Hebreaux nomades, 1937, p. 33; "primitive law is maintained in all its rigor in the book of Exodus, 22:28-9". (Quoted from SOTS, p. 70, n. 69. De Vaux lists several authors there with similar opinions.)

129. MOPH, p. 35 (Quoted in SOTS, ibid.)

130. The emendation of 20:25-29 reads as follows: "Therefore, son of man, speak to the house of Israel and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Moreover your fathers uttered this blasphemy against me - when they dealt treacherously with me - that I (!) had given them statutes that were not good and judgements whereby they could not enjoy life, and I had defiled them, etc." J. E. Bewer, "Textual and Exegetical Notes on the Book of Ezekiel," (JBL, vol. 72), 1953, pp. 159-161.

131. Above, p. 48.

132. Below, p. 49.

133. The verses in Chronicles speaking of these acts are of dubious tradition and have not been referred to for this reason by any other scholar. The P traditions in Leviticus are short and stylized, and possibly no more an eyewitness then Chronicles. In any case, Leviticus and Chronicles are closer in their accounts to the legal/historical texts of Deuteronomy than they are to the prophets. We will refer to Chronicles when there are significant differences.

134. MEJ, p. 230.

135. Wright, in Interpreters Bible on Dt. 12:31 and 18:10.

136. II Chron. 28:3 also makes a distinction between Ahaz "offering in the valley of Ben Hinnom" and "burning his children in the fire," which may be further proof that the Biblical authors knew that the fire ritual was not a sacrifice.

137. Above, p. 19.

138. MLCOT, pp. 586-8. See also J. B. Frazer, The Fasti of Ovid, 1925, iii. 293 ff; G. Glotz, L'Ordalie dans la Grece primitive, 1904, 105 f., O. Gruppe, Griech Mythologie, 1906, p. 898, n. 4.

139. Especially text #4 above (p. 19) which explicitly states that the "burnt" children are to be handed over (dedicated) as temple functionaries to Adad and Ishtar.

140. Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1917.

141. Not only is biblical Molech worship analogous to the Assyrian rite in the use of fire, but they are also linked by location. Topheth and hamru, the "sacred precinct of Adad, were both outside the city. MCIB, p. 52, n. 103.

142. To the "nations" as in 16:14 or to some unnamed god? The referent is not given.

143. Quoted above, p. 41.

144. II Kings 23:10 states that Topheth is the location. It is not very likely that two such outstanding rites as II Kings and Jeremiah describe occupied the same place at the same time.

145. RI, p. 146, n. 7.

146. That is, if Molech is the name of a god.

147. Above, p. 41.

148. Above, p. 41.

149. RI, pp. 431-2.

150. Above, n. 2.

151. Below, pp. 55 .

152. Weinfeld (MCIB, p. 46) claims that this is Deutero-Isaiah. It is also thought to be trito-Isaish (IDB, in loco).

153. Some also emend vs. 9 to read: "you also went to Molech with ointment" (James Muilenberg, IDB, in loco), but Muilenberg says that the Masoretic vocalization (מֶלֶךְ) is just as possible. Others emend Isaiah 30:33 to read "to Molech" instead of the Masoretic "for the king." See below, n. 161.

154. Psalms III (Anchor Bible, vol. 17A ed. Albright and Freedman) New York, 1970, p. 67.

155. Tur Sinai (הלשון והספר , vol. I, pp. 64 ff) uses this text as a parallel to an emendation he makes of Amos 2:1, מלך אדום לשיד (MT) to מלך אדם לשד . He takes Eissfeldt's view that molekh is a verb meaning "to offer a vow sacrifice," and hence the verse becomes "to offer a man as a vow sacrifice to a demon."

Or, לסיד can be left with the Masoretic vowels, with the meaning, "to burn (by offering as a vow sacrifice) a man into lime." This emendation is too extensive and speculative to be acceptable as evidence under the methodology of this paper.

156. The midrash on this topic can be found below, in section four of this chapter.

157. That was certainly the intent of the ceremony: it was not apriori a sacrifice. As the precise nature of the fire ritual has not come down to us in any Semitic text (unless the Midrash is to be believed! below, p. 59) the possibility remains open that accidents might occur during the course of fire-purification, accidentally burning some of the devotees. This would "fuel the fire" of prophetic denunciations and could easily be the source of the hyperbole of "human sacrifice."

158. SOTS, pp. 73-4; IDB in loco.

159. MEJ, pp. 230-1.

160. MLCOT, p. 588; MEJ, p. 230.

161. Weinfeld (MEJ p. 231) claims further proof for this hypothesis by claiming that the "king" cited in Isaiah 30:33 is actually Molech. De Vaux (SOTS, pp. 73-5) also identifies this "king" as Molech, and cites this verse as evidence of the nature of the topheth: "For a hearth is ordered as of old; yea, for the king it is prepared, deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of YHWH, like a stream of brimstone, does kindle it." However, it is tenuous to assume that this verse has any relationship whatsoever to Molech. From the context of the entire prophecy it can be seen that the king intended is the king of Asshur, and the fire is YHWH's wrath executing fiery judgement on Assyria. To interpret otherwise one would have to reinterpret much of Isaiah.

162. SOT, p. 87.

163. Hannah's dedication of Samuel to YHWH's service under the tutelage of Eli the priest (I Sam. 1) is a case of Naziriteship, and in no way indicative of a widespread dedication cult.

164. Below, pp 55-6.

165. Above, p. 12.

166. Above, p. 5.

167. P. 19.

168. MEJ, p. 231

169. Tur Sinai, <u>halashon v' hasefer I</u>, p. 103. Weinfeld (MCIB, p. 55,

n. 127) admits that it is harder to explain why Anath is masculine - Anammelech - than it is to explain the assimilation of the th in Anath with the m of melech. Albright suggests that we read "An" as the masculine form of "Anath" (in American Journal of Semitic Language and Literature 41, 1925 , pp. 73ff.). Albright later (ARI, pp. 157-8) associates Anammelch with Anu, the chief god of the Sumero - Accadian pantheon, pointing out that a joint temple to Adad and Anu existed in contemporary Asshur. However, M. Avi-Yonah ("Syrian Gods of Ptolemais - Accho," IEJ 9, 1959, pp. 1-2.) has published a text from Acco which is dedicated to Adad and "Atargatis." Atargatis has been shown to be a combination of the two names Ishtar (Astarte) and Anath. Thus it is equally possible to read Anammelech as Anu and Anath. The deciding factor should be the context in which the names are found. As we have no "burning" texts in the name of Anu but we do of Adad and Ishtar, it is better to read Anammelech as Anath/Ishtar.

170. Jeremiah 44:19 מלכת השמים may also be a misvocalization of מלכת השמים - Ishtar.

171. Ringgren, op. cit., p. 61.

172. RI, p. 48.

173. This ceremony is well attested to in Assyrian texts: L. Waterman, Royal Correspondence of the Assyrian Empire I, 1930, no. 1212 rev. 1-10; for corrected reading: A. L. Oppenheim, BASOR 107, 1947, 8, #4.

174. MCIB, p. 55.

175. Quite possibly the host of heaven cult precursed the Molech rites and prepared the way for them. Emendation of Amos 5:26 has yielded a description of the star-cake procession central to Ishtar-worship: "So shall you take up the canopies of (סכות , a misvocalization to resemble שקוץ , "abhorrence" is changed to read סכות , "canopies") your king (who would be Adad, King of Heaven) and the star of כיון is also a misvocalization and should be read כון as in Jer. 44:19. This Kamanu/Kaiwanu is the cultic 8 pointed star-cake, symbol of Ishtar.) your images, the star of your god which you made for yourselves." If this emendation is correct (and it certainly makes more sense than the present readings of "Siccuth" and "Chiun") this would be the earliest mention of Adad-Ishtar worship, dating to the reign of Jereboam II, some ten to forty years before Ahaz. Assyrian influences certainly encroached during Jereboam II's reign, as he "restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath (Assyria) to the sea of the Arabah (II Kings 14:25; see also Amos 6:14). Weinfeld, who espouses these emendations (MEJ, p. 232; MCIB, p. 56, n. 133) states also that the worship of Adad and Ishtar as King and Queen of Heaven became widespread in the Assyro-Aramaean culture around the ninth century B. C. E.

176. P. 17.

177. ב. מזר, "יסודה של ממלכת ארם ויחסיה עם ישראל בימי בית ראשון", מחקרים לחקירות ארץ ישראל ועתיקותיה, ירושלים, תשכ"ב, pp. 143 ff.

178. MEJ, p. 233.

179. RI, p. 408.

180. MCIB, p. 60.

181. See G. F. Moore, "The Image of Moloch," (JBL 16) 1897, pp. 161-5. Moore believes that Rashi's account of the cult (on Jer. 7:31) and RaDaQ's account (on II Kings 23:10) was influenced by the Latin accounts of "Carthaginian child sacrifice," especially Plutarch's (De Superstitione, ch. 13) and Diodorus Siculus (Library of History XX, 14:4-6).

182. The LXX reads περικαθαίρων ... ἐν πυρί and adds πορνεύω. (normal harlotry) and τελεσφόρος and τελισκόμενος female and male temple prostitution respectively, to Deut. 23:18.

183. On the Special Laws, I, 60, 319.

184. YGC, p. 204.

185. As presented at the Society of Biblical Literature convention in Washington, 1975, there have been no new evidence or interpretations of the Carthaginian stelae, pits, and urns than deVaux recorded.

186. YGC, p. 208.

187. For example, see SOTS, p. 76, n. 88.

188. S. H. Hooke, Peake's Commentary on the Bible, London, 1962, p. 162.

189. Walter Russel Bowie, Genesis (IDB) p. 645.

190. HIR, p. 57.

191 Handkommentar zum Alten Testament (ed. W. Nowack) Gottlingen, 1922. Genesis, p. 241.

192. A place in the wilderness of Tekoa in II Chron. 20:16, 20.

193. Genesis (Kommentar zum Alten Testament, ed. E. Sellin.) Leipzig, 1924, p. 314 ff.

194. According to Speiser the text seems to be primarily J with either a P or an E overwrite. According to pre-Speiser concensus, it is primarily E with a J overwrite. "The issue is not a closed one by any means." (Speiser, op. cit., p. 166). See also P & S, pp. 64 ff.

195. Genesis, ibid.

196. P & S, p. 65, n. 6.

197. ibid.

198. op. cit., p. 241.

199. op. cit., p. 193 # 159e.

200. Brichto, Kin, Cult, etc., #22, pp. 57-8.

201. HIR, p. 64. See also SOTS, p. 70, n. 69.

202. SOTS, p. 67.

203. "Reflexions sur l'interpretation chretienne de trois recits de la Genèse" (Hommage à W. Vischer), 1960, p. 183.

204. SOTS, p. 66, n. 59. This footnote contains a lengthy list of articles supporting the notion that the Akedah was the etiology of animal substitution.

205. Even if Carthage can later be unequivocally proven to have maintained such a cult, we have shown that it had no link to Phoenicia or Judah.

206. SOTS, p. 64.

207. LRS, ch. 8.

208. E. Westermarck, Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas, 1906-8, i, 436.

209. SOTS, p. 52.

210. J. H. Hertz, The Pentateuch and Haftorahs (2nd ed.), London, 1967, p. 201.

211. J. Skinner, Genesis (International Critical Commentary ed. S. R. Driver, A. Plummer, and C. A. Briggs), Edinburgh, 1930, p. 332.

212. S. H. Hooke, Genesis (Clarendon Bible, ed. T. Strong, H. Wild, and G. H. Box), Oxford, 1947, p. 89. See also RI, p. 137.

213. RI, p. 137.

214. RI, p. 165.

215. IDB, p. 643.

216. Shalom Spiegel, The Last Trial, N. Y. 1967.

217. Hertz, ibid.

218. ibid.

219. Yalkut Deut 26, quoted by Louis Jacobs in "Akedah", (Encyclopedia Judaica vol. 2) 1971, p. 480.

220. SOT, p. 91.

221. P. 70.

222. op. cit., p. 33.

223. SOTS, pp. 66-7.

224. Theologie des Alten Testaments, Gütersloh, 1950, p. 54.

225. op. cit., p. 163.

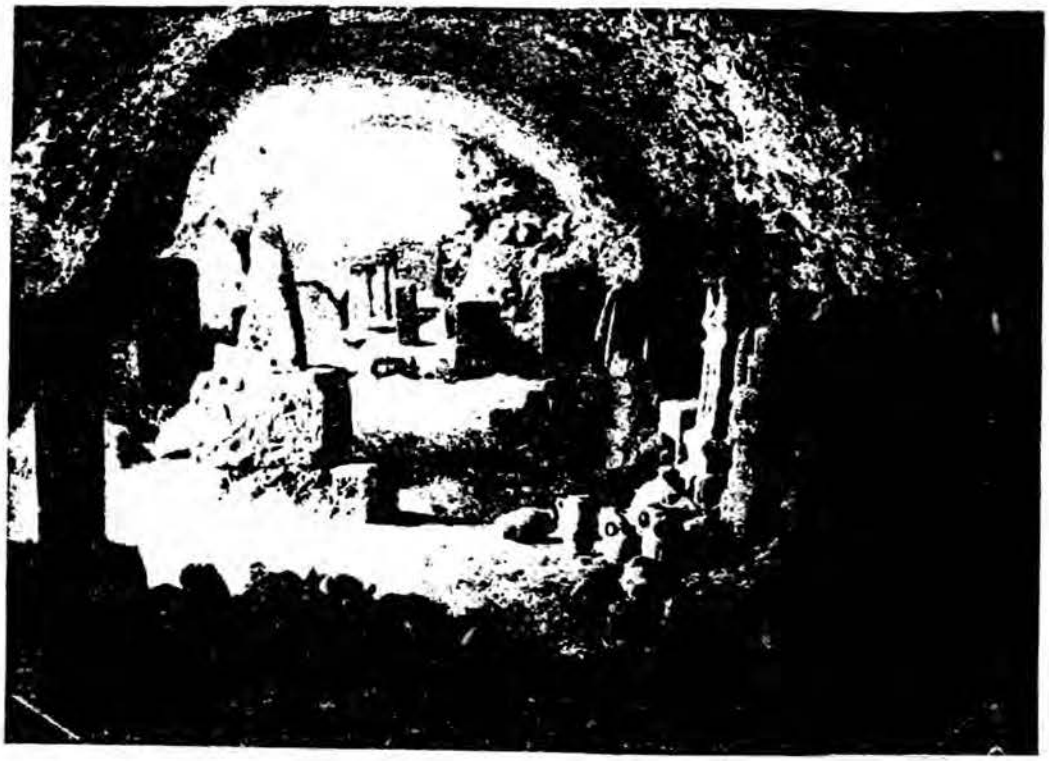
APPENDIX

32

A. Figure from a Carthaginian "tofet-stela" identified as a "priest carrying a child to offer him up."

31

B. Similar figure, not so identified.



C. The Carthage "tofet."

D. A stela in situ in the Carthage "tofet."

E & F. Typical Carthaginian "tofet" stelae.

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