When the King Crosses the Line: Royal Deviance and Restitution in Levantine Ideologies

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Abstract

Plagues and famines were recurring problems for people of the ancient Levant (eastern Mediterranean); and since these phenomena were perceived to be the actions of the gods, they required interpretation by authorized prophets and diviners. The seven passages discussed here all articulate a common behavioral pattern (with a king identified as the culpable deviant) and character-set with regard to these catastrophes. The motifs manifested are: breach of the sacred, divine punishment in the form of plague or famine, prophetic interpretation, restitution, and blood-sacrifice. The character-set is: the deity, the king/s, the prophet/s, and the suffering population. These Israelite, Hittite, and Greek narratives, while in the form of stories, prayer, and play, I identify as "Royal Deviance Narratives" (1 Sam 5:1–7:1; 2 Sam 21:1–14; 2 Sam 24:1–25; 1 Kgs 16:29–18:45; *KUB* xiv, 8; *Iliad* 1.1–475; and *Oedipus Tyrannus*), and I analyze them in terms of their motifs and their cultural scripts.

Despite the wonders of modern technology, we in industrialized societies are no more capable of controlling weather patterns than the ancients. We are in a stronger position to respond to disease and infestations. But a greater chasm between us and the ancient Mediterranean is our different *perception* and *interpretation* of what we call "the natural order": it was their common assumption that climatological, entomological, and virological patterns were modes of divine action, and often as punishment. This assumption is certainly not geographically limited to the Mediterranean, but it is there that a clear narrative pattern emerged which articulates the causal connection between royal deviance, divine punishment (in the form of plagues, famines, droughts, and storms), as well as the role of professional intermediaries and sacrifices.

Biblical scholars have occasionally noticed parallels between one or two of these "Royal Deviance Narratives." But often the parallels they adduce are at the most cursory level, and presented with little or no analysis. What I maintain here is that these narratives exhibit a whole complex of common character-types as well as motifs. Furthermore, these character-types and motifs emerge from societies with common social structures and cultural assumptions.

The character-types which are consistent in these narratives are these:

1. An offended deity
2. An offending king
3. A prophet who interprets the offense
4. Suffering subjects of the king

The passages which manifest the narrative pattern discussed here share the following motifs:

1. A breach of the sacred by the king
2. Punishment by the deity in the form of plague, famine, or drought
3. Consultation of an intermediary and the intermediary's interpretation
4. Return of confiscated property or other restitution (if possible)
5. Sacrifices offered to the offended deity
6. The deity's appeasement and abatement of catastrophe

After an examination of each passage and its use of the motifs, I will provide an analysis of the cultural and ideological assumptions of the pattern. Table 1, on the following page, charts the motifs of each story. These Royal Deviance Narratives are of interest because they integrate a variety of assumptions which are important for our understanding of ancient Levantine (eastern Mediterranean) cultures in general, and ancient Israel in particular.

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Table 1: Recurring Motifs in the Royal Deviance Narratives

	Breach of the Sacred	Divine Punishment	Prophetic Interpretation	Return or Restitution	Sacrifice(s)
1 Samuel 5–6 Philistine lords	ark captured and placed in Dagon's temple	Yahweh 7-month plague tumors and mice	priests and diviners	ark returned	gold figures as sin offering
2 Samuel 21 kings David and Saul	treaty with the Gibeonites broken	Yahweh 3-year famine	"inquiry"	Saul's sons turned over	human sacrifices
2 Samuel 24 king David	census taken of Israel and Judah	Yahweh 3-day plague	God prophet and seer	X	burnt and peace offerings
1 Kings 16–18 king Ahab	forsaking Yahweh and following Baal	Yahweh 3-year drought and famine	Elijah the prophet	vow of loyalty and execution of Baal prophets	burnt offering
KUB xiv, 8 kings Mursilis & Suppiluliumas	treaty with Egypt broken and cessation of Mala sacrifices	Storm-God 20-year plague	oracle	prisoners returned	sacrifices
Iliad 1.1–487 king Agamemnon	refusal to ransom priest's daughter	Apollo 10-day plague	Calchas the seer	priest's daughter returned	hecatomb
Oedipus Tyrannus king Oedipus	murder of father/king and incest with mother	Apollo plague	Teiresias the seer	Jocasta: suicide Oedipus: exile	Oedipus' bloody eyes

1 Samuel 5:1–7:1

The so-called "Ark Narrative" is a hypothetical source of the Deuteronomistic History located in 1 Sam 4:1b–7:1 and 2 Sam 6:2–23, first isolated by Rost 1982 [1926]; see Campbell 1975; Miller and Roberts 1977; and McCarter 1980: 23–26). The first part of the Ark Narrative recounts how the Israelite army took the ark of the covenant into battle at Ebenezer and lost it to the Philistine forces. Chapter 4 narrates the battle which ends with the ark's capture (4:11), followed by the death of Eli (4:18). In chapter 5 the Philistines shift the ark from Ashdod to Gath to Ekron because it brings an epidemic of unspecified tumors wherever it sojourns. And in chapter 6 the Philistines consult their priests and diviners in order to discover how to deal with the problem. I focus here on chapters 5 and 6, since these chapters go beyond a battle legend to explore narratively what the results of mishandling the sacred object are. (For a detailed analysis of these passages, see Campbell 1975: 83–142.)

The breach of the sacred that occurs here is left unspecified. As Miscall observes, the specific reason the Philistines are afflicted remains unanswered by the narrator (1986:34). Is it simply the Philistines' possession of the ark, or the placement of the ark in the Ashdod temple of Dagon? One could assume it is the latter since no plague is mentioned until after the Dagon-temple incident (5:6). But this interpretation is problematic since the plague of tumors occurs in whatever town to which the ark is transported (5:6–12). Perhaps we should interpret the temple-scene as a specific incidence of the general defilement of the ark at the hands of foreigners, but the explanation remains open.

Yet whatever else the importance of the temple-scene, it is clear that the narrator wishes to convey Yahweh's superior power in comparison to that of Dagon: Yahweh's hand (read: power) is "heavy" (Hebrew: *tikbad*)—a metaphor for plague—while Dagon's hands are broken off (see Roberts 1971). Furthermore, it is Yahweh's honor that comes out on top in the stylized challenge-riposte contest between the physical representations of the two gods: Dagon's statue falls face down before Yahweh's ark (5:4). That the ark is an expression of Yahweh's honor is made explicit in the many wordplays on the Hebrew root *kbd* as a verb, noun, and adjective, as well as the explicit statement made by Eli's daughter-in-law: "Honor (*kabôd*) has departed from Israel, for God's ark has been captured" (4:22). The dangerous ark has been mishandled by the Philistines, and Yahweh's purity and sacrality will permit this treatment neither from Israelites nor foreigners (see Numb 4:15; 1 Sam 6:19–21; 2 Sam 6:6–10). Those who encroach upon Yahweh's honor do so at their own peril. Yahweh's hand is "heavy" (*kbd*; 5:11), and the only way to get him to "lighten up" (*qll*; 6:5) is to make restitution (Miscall 1986 :32).

The agents of the purity/sacral violation might be taken to be the Philistine people in general, since they are usually referred to as a collective (5:1–2; 6:2, 10, 17, 21). But the "five lords of the Philistines" are mentioned as playing the directive role: they make the decision to move the ark (5:8), they follow the cart to Beth-shemesh (6:12), they witness the successful return of the ark into the custody of Levites and the Israelite sacrifice (6:16), and the number of culpability offerings is determined by their number (6:4, 18). The lords are representative figures, and are ultimately responsible.

The punishment on the Philistine cities is an outbreak of tumors (Q: *techôrim*; K: *'epholîm*), and presumably also an infestation of mice or rats (5:6, 9, 12; 6:4; the Massoretic Text does not include the mice until the offerings are mentioned; the Septuagint mentions mice at 5:6). What the nature of these tumors is the narrator does not specify, but perhaps boils (the term occurs elsewhere only in Deut 28:27). The epidemic and infestation (*maggêphah*) continue

for a period of seven months—a traditional folkloric number (note also the *three* stricken cities: Ashdod, Gath, Ekron).

Such an affliction calls for a remedy; but the Philistines do not seek out the answer from healers or physicians. Neither do they request an interpretation of the cause-and-effect relationship between the scourges and their possession of the ark (6:2). They call upon their priests (*kohanim*) and diviners (*qosemîm*) to ask: What is the proper procedure for disposal of the ark? The term *diviners* in Hebrew refers to those who read signs of various types. In Ezek 21:28 [ET 21:23], it refers to shaking arrows, consulting teraphim, and reading livers (see also Numb 23:23; 1 Sam 15:23; 2 Kgs 17:17; Mic 3:6–7). Their precise method for determining the correct procedure is not indicated (for parallels to inquiry of the gods and movement of the gods' statues, see Miller and Roberts 1977: 10–16, 77–87). But the procedure stipulated here may have been a standard one for such occurrences; the Hittites, for example, had such a "standard" procedure (see *KUB* ix,31 ii,43–iii,14, "Ritual Against Pestilence," Goetze 1969: 347). The specialists, however, also realize that the procedure is a contingent one: once they build a cart (pulled by two cows and loaded with the offerings), if the cows take the cart toward Beth-shemesh, then they will know that it is truly Yahweh "who has done us this great harm; but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that struck us—it happened to us by chance" (6:9; for a parallel to this contingency, see *KUB* xiv, 8, below). As Brueggemann aptly points out (1990: 41), they would be able to tell that the deity was at work because the natural instinct of the cows would be to return to their separated calves (6:7).

The specialists stipulate a procedure involving four basic elements. They rule out simply returning the ark (6:3a); this would be inadequate to address the gravity of the offense to Yahweh's honor. *First*, they would have to manufacture and send a culpability offering (*'ašam*; 6:4–5); the offering would consist of five golden replicas of their afflictions: tumors and mice. This comports with notions of imitative magic: *similia similibus* "like addresses like." These were to be placed in a container (6:8). *Second*, they had to construct a new cart, pulled by two milk cows that had never been used for labor (6:7). This stipulation comports with general purity regulations for female sacrificial animals (see Numb 19:2; Deut 21:3). In the Akkadian ritual for covering the kettle-drum, the sacrificial bull must not have been "struck with a staff or touched with a goad" (*TCL* vi, no. 44; Sachs 1969:335 [A:i:6]). *Third*, the ark had to be placed in the cart along with the golden offering, and the cart sent on its path (6:8). And *fourth*, they had to give honor (*kabôd*) to Israel's God (6:5). This comports with the so-called "doxology of judgment," which entails not only an expression of acknowledgment, but admission of culpability (see von Rad 1962: 357–58). This appears in both Israelite and early Christian narratives, for example:

> And Joshua said to Achan: "Direct honor [*kabôd*] to Yahweh, the God of Israel, and give him acknowledgment [*tôdah*]. And tell me what you have done; do not hide from me" (Josh 7:19).

> They called, therefore, the man who was blind for a second time and said to him: "Give honor [*doxa*] to God; we know that this man is sinful" (John 9:24).

For the plagues to abate, restitution had to be made: Yahweh's ark needed to be restored to Israelite territory and the care of Yahweh's priests. Making culpability offerings *and* returning the ark were necessary for cosmic harmony to return.

While the offering of the Philistines took the form of the golden replicas, the liturgical aspect of the story is brought to conclusion by the people of Beth-shemesh. They broke up the cart for fuel and slaughtered the milk cows as a burnt-offering (*'olah*) to Yahweh (6:14).

2 Samuel 21:1–14

Saul and his sons were killed in battle with the Philistines at Mt. Gilboa, as recounted in 1 Samuel 31. Since their bodies had not yet been properly buried with their ancestors (as the narrator indicates in 21:14), the story is evidently set early in David's reign. Budde has been widely followed in seeing its original place in the David narratives as following 2 Sam 8:18 (cited in Carlson 1964 :198–99). The narrative begins with a three-year famine in Israel (v1a), and it is up to the king to discover the source of this on-going disaster. The timing of the incident is also clearly important to the narrator: the beginning of the barley harvest, which would place it near the spring equinox (see Borowski 1987 :31–44, 91–92). The connection of the king and the restoration of fertility is fundamental here (Kapelrud 1979).

The king "inquired" or "sought out" (*bqš*) the face of Yahweh (v1a). The narrator provides no details as to how this was done, but the meaning of the phrase emerges through comparison with other parts of the epic tradition. In 1 Sam 28:6 Saul "inquired" (*ša'al*) of Yahweh, and expected a response through one of three media: a dream, the Urim, or prophets (*nebî'im*) (see *Iliad* 1.62–63; *KUB* xiv, 8 §2, and the analyses below). In 1 Sam 14:36–42 the Urim and Thummim are identified as lots for casting binary answers from Yahweh, executed by a priest (also Numb 27:21; 1 Sam 22:10–15). Judges 20:18–28 and 1 Samuel 22:10–15 also indicate inquiries were made by priests at the Yahweh-shrines in Bethel and Nob. And a general statement appears

in 1 Sam 9:9: "Previously in Israel, when a man went to inquire (*drš*) of God, he said: 'Come and let us go to the seer (*ro'eh*).' " For other prophetic inquiries see also Exod 18:15; 1 Sam 28:6–14; 1 Kgs 14:1–5; 22:5–12; 2 Kgs 1:2–4; 3:11–12; 8:7–10; 16:10–16; 22:11–20; and for unspecified references to inquiry of Yahweh, see Judg 1:1–2; 18:5; 1 Sam 10:22; 23:2–4; 2 Sam 2:1; 5:19, 23–24; Ps 27:8; 1 Chron 21:30. Thus, while this story includes only a general statement of the king inquiring of Yahweh, it indicates one of the accepted Israelite media of priestly lots or prophetic divination.

The result of David's inquiry was that the sacral infraction was discovered to be Saul's breaking of an Israelite treaty with the Gibeonites. The two pivotal phrases are: "there is blood-culpability on Saul and on [his] house" (v1b), and "while the people of Israel had taken an oath regarding them, Saul sought to execute them" (v2). The conclusion is: the culpability of Saul's royal house by breaking the treaty had put the entire society in jeopardy. The narrative connection in the Deuteronomistic History is to Josh 9:3–27, where the Gibeonites trick Joshua and the Israelites into making a treaty with them, forming a patron-client alliance. The direct link is to Josh 9:18: "But the people of Israel did not kill them because the chieftains of the congregation *had sworn to them by Yahweh, Israel's God.*" But beyond the Gibeonite treaty, Yarchin rightly points out that this passage assumes several parts of the Deuteronomistic History (1993: 114): the oath between David and Jonathan (1 Sam 18 and 20), Saul's tragic death (1 Samuel 31), and the preservation of Meribaal (2 Samuel 9).

The importance of the oath is that it identifies the sacral quality of the offense: it invoked Yahweh's name, and may have included a self-curse for a breach as well. One finds such a self-curse quoted when Ruth pledges her loyalty to Naomi: "Thus may Yahweh do to me and more also if even death makes a separation between me and you" (Ruth 1:17; see also 2 Sam 19:13). As with the Philistines' capture of the ark, Yahweh's honor is at stake. (For a broken treaty as the cause of a plague, see the case of the Hittites and Egyptians below: *KUB* xiv,8.) But it must also be noted that Saul's killing of Gibeonites is nowhere recounted in the Bible (McCarter 1984: 441). In line with his argument that 1 Samuel 21–24 narrates the transition from a "warrior-king" model to a "shepherd-king" (viz. mediatory) model in ancient Israel, Yarchin argues that with 21:2 "the famine haunting Israel is revealed to the reader to be the devastating legacy of a warrior-king" (1993: 81).

What the Gibeonites wanted as restitution was for the king to hand over seven of Saul's descendants for execution (v6). They dismiss any notion of a financial settlement since "silver and gold" are not appropriate reparations when the issue is vengeance in a blood-feud (v4). The objects of this exercise from the narrator's viewpoint were the achievement of purgation (*kpr*) of the blood-culpability (see Milgrom 1991: 255-56, 306-07), and the restoration of relationships with the Gibeonites (v3). To accomplish this, blood vengeance was required by the Gibeonites, which they were loathe to carry out without the new king's assistance (see Pedersen 1926: 383–85). David's strategy in having someone else execute his potential political rivals is not brought into focus by the narrator, but appears glaringly obvious (as noted by Kapelrud 1979: 42); and Shimei's accusations in 2 Sam 16:6–7 indicate awareness of the connection between David's motivations and the death of the Saulides (Kapelrud 1979: 43).

The executions of Saul's descendants take on the sacral quality of sacrifice. *First*, they are taken to Gibeon, which is described as "Yahweh's mountain" (v6). The location is problematic since the Massoretic Text reads "Gibeah" (Saul's capital) and the Septuagint reads "Gibeon" (for a discussion of the textual problems, see McCarter 1984: 438 and Yarchin 1993: 66–67); the latter makes more sense since it is the Gibeonites home-turf, and this location is repeatedly referred to in cultic contexts (1 Kgs 3:4; 1 Chron 16:39–40; 21:29; 2 Chron 1:3, 13). Gibeon also had a "great stone" (2 Sam 20:8), which perhaps indicates their local cult-object. *Second*, the executions are carried out "before Yahweh" (vv6, 9), a traditional phrase employed in rituals (see e.g., Exod 34:23; Lev 3:12; Deut 31:11; 1 Sam 2:18). And *third*, their deaths have the same effect as David's sacrifices at Araunah's threshing floor: Yahweh again entertains petitions for the land (v14; see 24:25 and the analysis below). Thus, these are more than executions or vengeance killings—they are human sacrifices: seven victims slaughtered before Yahweh on Yahweh's mountain to effect purgation, reconciliation, and the end of famine. For the sacrifice of a king's child see Judg 12:30–40 and 2 Kgs 3:26–27, and possibly 2 Kgs 16:3 and 21:6. An oath sworn in Yahweh's name requires restitution before Yahweh: if Yahweh is the guarantor of the oath, then Yahweh must oversee any infringements and redress. But care must also be taken how issues concerning Yahweh's anointed king are handled (see Knierim 1968).

With the burial of the seven victims ordered by David (along with the burials of Saul and Jonathan) at the ancestral tomb in the Benjamite village of Zela, resolution is brought to the incident. But one should also note that the narrator credits Rizpah, Saul's concubine, as keeping the incident in the public eye (vv10–11), and therefore prompting David's action. With the burial taken care of, Yahweh is satisfied:

"And after that God was petitioned for the land" (v14); harmony had been restored.

2 Samuel 24:1–25

Because of Yahweh's anger at Israel for unspecified reasons, the deity incites David to take a census of Israel and Judah (24:1). David does so, delegating the task to Joab, his military commander (vv2–9). But upon the completion of the census, David confesses that this is a sinful act: "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O Yahweh, please remove the culpability of your servant; for I have acted very foolishly" (v10b; see also v17). The truly unique aspect of this story is that Yahweh is identified as the instigator of the sacral breach. (Note how the Chronicler solves this theological "problem" by substituting a dualistic perspective, changing the instigator to Satan in 1 Chron 21:1.) Meyers connects the census with David's need for conscripted labor from among native Israelites (1987: 368); and McCarter, connecting the census with military conscription, interprets the punishment for the census as a result of the lack of ritual purity necessary for such an undertaking (1984: 512–14; see e.g., Exod 30:11–16; Numb 8:19).

The divine response to David's confession and request comes by means of Gad, the prophet and seer (*nabî'* and *ro'eh*; v11). Gad had received Yahweh's *word*, indicating an audition (aural, rather than visual), and was commanded to deliver three choices of punishment to the king (v12). Thus, the cause-and-effect connection between David's breach and the pestilence is established even before the punishment occurs. The three choices offered are listed in descending time-lengths: seven years of famine, three months of enemies' pursuit, or three days of plague (v. 13; the Septuagint reads three years of famine, following 1 Chron 21:12, and thus maintains the parallel). As David points out, the plague has the advantage of being under God's merciful control rather than that of David's human enemies (v14). What is left unstated is that it is also the briefest punishment. Seventy thousand men die as a result (v15); but if one follows Mendenhall (1958) and others in interpreting Hebrew *'elep*, not as "one thousand," but as a "contingent" of five to fourteen, the numbers would be 350 to 980. Yahweh's mercy manifests itself in withholding the plague from Jerusalem (v. 16).

The second Yahweh-word is delivered by Gad to David: "Go up and erect an altar to Yahweh on the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite" (v. 18). Even though a time-limit was placed on the plague, sacrifice is still the necessary conclusion to the incident. After negotiations with Araunah, David buys the threshing-floor, wood, and oxen for fifty shekels of silver. David stipulates that he cannot accept them as a gift, because he does not want any question that the sacrifices are from him rather than Araunah (v. 24). The sacrifices are of two types: burnt and fellowship (or "peace") offerings (*'olôt* and *šelamîm*, v. 25). As Anderson argues, this may indicate sacrifices wholly for the deity and sacrifices to be consumed by the community respectively (1992: 878–79). The sacrifices here have the same result as the death of Saul's sons: "Then Yahweh heeded petitions for the land, and the plague was restrained from Israel" (v25; see above 21:14 and *Iliad* 1.454–57).

It is important to note that this is the one story among those we are considering in which the king cannot effectively change his actions. Once the census was taken, it could not be undone.

1 Kings 16:29–18:45

These chapters form a complex narrative which comprises not only multiple scenes, but stories set within stories. After king Ahab succeeds to his father Omri's throne in Samaria, he marries the Sidonian princess Jezebel. This leads him to build a Baal-temple and altar (16:32) and "an Asherah" (16:33). These acts provoke Yahweh so that Elijah delivers the message of judgment: "As Yahweh, Israel's God, lives before whom I stand, there will be no dew or rain, except by my word" (17:1). This parallels the story in 2 Samuel 24 in that the prophet does not simply *interpret* the disaster, but announces it. Again, Yahweh's honor is challenged—this time by an Israelite king having divided fealty. Ahab offers to the Baals and Asherah what, in Israelite ideology, rightly belongs to Yahweh alone—the vassal's allegiance to his suzerain: "and he went (*halak*) and served (*'abad*) Baal and worshipped (*šatach*) him" (16:31).

Ahab's disloyalty to Yahweh results in the devastation of the land, with particular severity in Samaria (18:2; note that Yahweh spared Jerusalem in 2 Samuel 24). But the effects even overflow the borders of Israel; for when Elijah flees to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, the widow who offers him hospitality is ready to die because of the famine (17:12, 14). Thus, both Ahab's kingdom and Jezebel's homeland suffer. The drought lasts into the third year (18:1; see 2 Sam 21:1).

One of the twists in this narrative is that Elijah, rather than the king, sacrifices the burnt-offering (*'ôlah*) to Yahweh (18:30–38). Like the rest of the Elijah–Elisha saga, this scene incorporates several folkloric numbers: the altar is built of twelve stones corresponding to the twelve Israelite tribes (v31); Elijah orders four jars of water poured over the sacrifice three times (another twelve, vv33–34); and the three ritual elements include the burnt-offering (v38), the vow of loyalty (v39), and the execution of the Baal prophets

(v40). For other folkloric numbers in chapters 16–18, in addition to the three-year drought, we find Elijah stretching himself on the dead child three times (17:21), the three none-responses of Baal (17:26, 28, 29), and Elijah's servant looking for signs of rain seven times (18:43–44).

The abatement of the drought and famine occurs in the wake of the three-fold ritual response: sacrifice, vow, execution of opponents. The death of the Baal prophets is tied to the animal sacrifice. And the sacrifice elicits the appropriate response on the part of the people—a vow of loyalty: "Yahweh, he is the god! Yahweh, he is the god!" (18:39). This vow echoes the phrasing and theological concerns of the Shema (as well as the Deuteronomistic History in general), and provides a negative parallel to Ahab's actions:

> Hear, O Israel: Yahweh is our god; Yahweh alone. And you shall love Yahweh your god with all your heart, and with all your being, and with all your strength. . . . You shall fear Yahweh your god. Him you shall serve (*'abad*), and by his name you shall swear. You shall not go (*halak*) after other gods, of the gods who around you [Deut 6:4, 13693–14].

While Ahab's loyalty is not restored within the story, that of the Israelites is. Therefore, after the ritual is complete the rain commences (18:45).

KUB xiv, 8

This Hittite document from the reign of Mursilis II (also known as Urhi-Tešub, who reigned during the New Kingdom, c. 1300 BC; see Houwink ten Cate 1992: 221) is not a narrative per se, but a prayer of supplication in which the king recounts a story. (It is available in two copies besides the one analyzed here: *KUB* xiv, 10 and xxvi, 86; and xiv, 11; see Goetze 1969: 394–96). In the course of petitioning the storm-god and the other Hittite gods, Mursilis's prayer incorporates the narrative motifs we find in the other Royal Deviance Narratives. Some of the parallels between this document and 1 Samuel 21 were first indicated by Malamat (1955); and the parallels to 1 Samuel 5–6 are briefly noted in Miller and Roberts (1977: 53–55). (Throughout I will quote from Goetze's Text A, which comprises eleven paragraphs, only modifying his Elizabethan language.)

Mursilis begins by crying out to his gods to alleviate the twenty-year plague that has devastated the kingdom, not only during his own reign, but spanning the reigns of his two predecessors: his father (Suppiluliumas I) and his brother (Muwattalis II). He identifies the gods as the source of the plague: "What is this that you have done? A plague you have let into the land. The Hatti land has been cruelly afflicted by the plague. For twenty years now men have been dying in my father's days, in my brother's days, and in my own since I have become the priest of the gods" (§1).

He reports that previously he had appealed for a divine response to his petitions through an omen, a dream, or a prophetic word, but received none of them (§2; see 1 Sam 28:6; *Iliad* 1.62–63). He then made the plague the subject of an oracle inquiry (§3), and learned of two possible sources of the trouble from two tablets that were presented to him. *First*, sacrifices which had been made to the Mala River in the days of the old kings had been discontinued (§3). And *second*, a treaty between the Hittites and the Egyptians concerning the people of Kurustama had not been honored by his father. His father had eventually invaded Egypt and taken prisoners of war, and these prisoners had brought a plague to Hatti land (§4–5). With regard to both possibilities, it was "established" by the oracles that these were the causes of the plague (§5–6). While the specific form of the Hittite oracle is not mentioned, Ünal identifies a variety of specialists from Hittite documents: " 'old/wise women,' augurs, magicians, doctors, priests, midwives, *purapi*-people, *hierodules*, *patili*-priests" (1988: 65).

Mursilis goes on to make a formal confession of corporate culpability: "It is so. We have done it" (§6 and 9). But the king proceeds to state twice that this is the result of his father's deviance, not his own: "I know for certain that the offense was not committed in my days, that it was committed in the days of my father" (§6); and "My father sinned and transgressed against the word of the Hattian Storm-god, my lord. But I have not sinned in any respect. It is only too true, however, that the father's sin falls upon the son. So, my father's sin has fallen upon me" (§9).

This situation parallels the situation of David in 2 Samuel 21 most closely. *First*, it is the predecessors (Saul and Suppiluliumas) who are stipulated as deviant, not the reigning kings (David and Mursilis). And *second*, both cases involve the breach of a treaty (with the Gibeonites and the Egyptians). This also raises the issue of swearing treaty-oaths by the gods. Just as the Israelites had sworn before Yahweh (Josh 9:15, 18), so the Hittites had sworn by their gods, and by not living up to what they had sworn, they incurred their gods' disfavor: ". . . although the Hattians as well as the Egyptians were under oath to the Hattian Ṣtorm-god, the Hattians ignored their obligations; the Hattians promptly broke the oath of the gods" (§4; also §5). This constituted a sacral breach, therefore, as well as a violation of the political relationship.

Mursilis makes his appeal to the gods on the basis that restitution has been made:

> If there is to be restitution, it seems clear that with all the gifts that have already been given because of this plague,

> with all the prisoners that have been brought home, in short with all the restitution that Hattusa has made because of the plague, it has already made restitution twentyfold [§10].

But he also admits earlier that he is still planning the reinstitution of the Mala River sacrifices (§8). Thus restitution consists of sacrifices and return of the prisoners of war to Egypt. Like the Philistines (1 Sam 6:9), Mursilis leaves open the possibility that his oracles are incorrect or incomplete (§11).

One last point of interest is Mursilis's articulation of the divine/human relationship in terms of patron/client relations addressed to the Storm-god:

> This is what I [have to remind] you: The bird takes refuge in [its] nest, and the nest saves its life. Again: if anything becomes too much for a servant, he appeals to his lord. His lord hears him and takes pity on him. Whatever had become too much for him, he sets right for him. Again: if the servant incurred a guilt, but confesses his guilt to his lord, his lord may do with him whatever he pleases. But, because [the servant] has confessed his guilt to his lord, his lord's soul is pacified, and his lord will not punish that servant [§10].

Mursilis argues that he is doing his best to hold up his end of the relationship by making restitution and offerings. It is now time for the Storm-god to act like a responsible patron. Because the genre of the document is "prayer of supplication" rather than legend, tale, or historical story, no outcome is stated; the reader is not informed whether or when restoration of the cosmological balance was restored.

Iliad 1.1–475

Homer's great epic the *Iliad* begins in the midst of the Trojan War. The Greeks, (led by king Agamemnon) are besieging Troy (ruled by king Priam) in an effort to effect the return of the abducted Helen, wife of Menelaus. The narrator begins with a prologue summarizing the conflict between the great warrior Achilles and king Agamemnon (1.1–7). The source of their conflict is their disagreement over how to deal with a plague affecting their troops. Furthermore, the source of the plague is identified as the god Apollo, who has been offended and is retaliating for the affront to his honor. The affront is that Agamemnon has taken as a prisoner of war Chryseis, the daughter of Chryses, Apollo's priest; since Chryses is dishonored, so is Apollo (see Rabel 1988). In itself, the taking of prisoners is considered fair in war. What Apollo finds unacceptable is that Agamemnon refuses Chryses's offer of a great ransom. The rest of the Greeks are in favor that "the priest be respected and the shining ransom be taken" (1.23; Lattimore's translation used throughout), but Agamemnon is adamant in his refusal and threatened the priest (1.26-32). The closest parallels to this story are 2 Samuel 5–6 and *KUB* xiv, 8, since they also narrate the loss of war booty to a foreign army which involves a sacral breach.

Apollo responds swiftly to the dishonor and Chryses's request for vengeance. He takes his silver bow and begins by "shooting" the Greeks' mules and hounds with plague (*loimos*); but then he turns to attacking the troops (1.43–52). The result was devastating: "and the corpse-fires burned on, night and day, no end in sight" (1.52); and this continued for ten days (1.53–54). As Blickman observes (1987), the plague is interpreted in Book 1 by the four linked terms: "wrath" (Greek: *mênis*), "death/destruction" (*loigos*), "song" (*paiêôn*), and "strife/rivalry" (*eris*). And this insight comports well with Bailie's that the rivalry between Achilles and Agamemnon is itself a "plague" (1994: 49).

Achilles then calls an assembly and advises Agamemnon that they need the services of an intermediary: a prophet (*mantis*), priest (*hiereus*), or reader of dreams (*oneiropolos*) (1.62–63; see 1 Sam 28:6; *KUB* xvi, 8 §2). Achilles offers the possibilities that the plague is the result of either a broken vow or a failure to offer sacrifice (a hecatomb)—the same two issues Mursilis, the Hittite king, hit upon in *KUB* xiv, 8 (see above)! This prompts the augur of bird-flight (*oiônopolos*) and seer (*mantis*), "Calchas son of Thestor, wisest of augurs," to offer his interpretation of the plague: "No, it is not for the sake of some vow or hecatomb he blames us, but for the sake of his priest whom Agamemnon dishonored (*êtimês*) and would not give him back his daughter nor accept the ransom" (1.93–95).

The next scenes of the story are mostly about the wranglings between Agamemnon and Achilles (see Edwards [1980] and Dickson [1992] for analyses of Book 1 as a whole). Agamemnon is willing to give up Chryseis, the priest's daughter, only if he is free to take one of the female prisoners given to Achilles, Ajax, or Odysseus (1.135–39). As the leader of the Greek armies, Agamemnon's honor is on the line: if everyone else gets to keep their prizes of battle while he has to give his up, he will be dishonored. Achilles accuses Agamemnon of being greedy and dishonoring (*atimos*) him (1.165–70; see also 1.356). The Greeks, then, caught in destruction, rivalry, war, and grasping for women are pulled into what Bailie calls "the mimetic vortex," mirroring the enemies they fight: "the Akhaian [Greek] camp has fallen prey to the historical mimeticism, whereby the social pattern that has given rise to a conflict reproduces itself within any social unit that becomes predominantly defined by the conflict" (Bailie 1994: 49).

Agamemnon counsels that they postpone a decision on the female prisoner to be named later, and make their peace with Apollo. Chalchas directs the terms of restitution:

"Therefore the archer [Apollo] sent griefs against us and will send them still, nor sooner thrust back the shameful plague from the Danaans until we give the glancing-eyed girl back to her father without price, without ransom, and lead also a blessed hecatomb to Chryses; thus we might propitiate and persuade him" (1.96–100). This Agamemnon does: he sends Chryseis back with a hecatomb on a ship captained by Odysseus (1.309–11).

In addition to the hecatomb sent back on Odysseus' ship, Agamemnon orders a concluding ritual in his own camp: "These then putting out went over the ways of the water while Atreus' son told his people to wash off their defilement. And they washed it away and threw the washings into the salt sea. They accomplished perfect hecatombs to Apollo, of bulls and goats along the beach of the barren salt sea" (1.313–17). The hecatomb (*hekatombas*, literally "one hundred oxen") was a traditional Greek communal sacrifice, especially associated with Apollo on the seventh day of the new moon festival (Burkert 1985: 231).

Resolution comes with the offering of the sacrifice and petition by Chryses to Apollo: "'. . . if once before you listened to my prayers and did me honour and smote strongly the host of the Achaians, so one more time bring to pass the wish that I pray for. Beat aside at last the shameful plague from the Danaans.' So he spoke in prayer, and Phoibos Apollo heard him" (1.454–57; compare 2 Sam 21:14; 24:25). The sacrifice restores the Greeks relationship with Apollo and permits them to proceed with their battle against the Trojans. As Bailie succinctly articulates it: "The social order put in jeopardy by the 'plague' is one that maintains social harmony by dissolving what mimetic violence it can in sacrificial rituals, and by redirecting what violence it cannot dissolve outward onto nontribal victims" (1994:50). And as Rabel observes: "Agamemnon dishonored a mortal and offended a god: yet neither of his victims separates the question of honor from the question of material compensation" (1988:478).

Oedipus Tyrannus

The character of Oedipus, king of Thebes, appears in several ancient Greek works: Homer's *Iliad* (23.679) and *Odyssey* (11.271–80), Hesiod's *The Works and Days* (162–63), and Aeschylus's *Seven Against Thebes*. But his most memorable appearances in literature are those in the trilogy of plays by Sophocles (c. 496–406 BCE): *Oedipus Tyrannus*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and *Antigone*.

Oedipus Tyrannus (Oedipus the King) begins with the supplications of the priest of Zeus and other representatives of Thebes on the steps of Oedipus's house. The priest explains their woeful plight:

> A blight is on the buds that enclose the fruit, a blight is on the flocks of grazing cattle and on the women giving birth, killing their offspring; the fire-bearing god, hateful Pestilence, has swooped upon the city and harries it, emptying the house of Cadmus, and black Hades is a plutocrat in groans and weeping [25–30; all translations from Lloyd-Jones 1994].

A later passage adds that "Sickness lies on all our company, and thought can find no weapon to repel it" (167–89). They appeal to Oedipus for help as their mighty representative. He was originally made king when he released them from the tribute of the Sphinx. He is "the first of men, both in the incidents of life and in dealing with the higher powers" (33–34); and they have confidence in him because he has "the extra strength given by a god" (38). Oedipus informs the priest that he has already taken action by sending his brother-in-law Creon to the temple of Apollo to inquire of the god (68–72).

Creon then arrives with the news that Apollo (also called "Phoebus" and "Lord of Lycia") wants to purify the land by exacting blood-vengeance for the death of the former king, Laius, who was murdered. The only thing that will suffice is death or banishment (100–101). Furthermore, the messages from the god are labeled "prophecies" (*manteias*; 149). Oedipus calls upon the population to identify the murderer/s and forbids protecting him/them (236–45). As an interlude of sorts, the chorus calls upon the gods for relief: Athena, Artemis, Apollo, Zeus, and Bacchus (151–215), and specifically calls upon Apollo as "the Healer."

The chorus suggests to Oedipus that he enlist the prophet Teiresias for an identification of the murderer/s, and Oedipus notes that he has already sent for him. His appeal to Teiresias is a classic statement of the Greek ideal of prophecy:

> T[e]iresias, you who dispose all things, those that can be explained and those unspeakable, things in heaven and things that move on earth, even though you cannot see you know the nature of the sickness that besets the city; and you are the only champion and protector, lord, whom we can find. . . . Well, do not grudge the use of a message from the birds or of any other road of prophecy that you possess, and save yourself and the city, and save me, and save us from all the pollution coming from the dead man. We are in your hands . . . [300–14].

The prophet does not want to answer the king because of the gravity of the situation. But he finally reveals the crux of the problem: "you are the unholy polluter of this land" (353), a gripping parallel to Nathan's accusation of David (2 Sam 12:7). But unlike David, who then confesses, Oedipus (ignorant of the facts) denies the charge as ridiculous, and accuses Teiresias of trying to depose him in favor of

Creon (399–400). After an angry showdown between Oedipus and Creon, Jocasta, Oedipus's wife, tells Oedipus not to trust the prophet's words because prophets are untrustworthy: they told her late husband, king Laius, that he would be killed by his own son, so Laius had their newborn son abandoned on the mountain (707–25). Neither of them knows at this point that the prophecy is true, and that Oedipus is also her son.

Animal sacrifice does not play a role here as in the other stories. But Jocasta goes to the temple of Apollo and offers garlands and incense along with her prayers (919–23). And by unwinding the story of the shepherd who brought Oedipus as a baby to Corinth (his former home), it becomes clear that Jocasta is Oedipus's mother, and that she saved the baby by giving him to the shepherd (1117–81). This elicits the concluding cry from Oedipus: "I who am revealed as cursed in my birth, cursed in my marriage, cursed in my killing" (1182–85). The result is that Jocasta hangs herself and Oedipus responds by taking the golden pins from her robes and blinding himself (1231–85). In effect, Jocasta's death, Oedipus's blood, and Oedipus's subsequent banishment form the parallel to the sacrifices in the other Royal Deviance Narratives. The playwright does not provide closure by mentioning the abatement of the plague.

Cultural Analysis

In speaking and writing, humans manifest cultural behavior patterns linguistically; and similar behavior patterns (rather fixed in their articulation) may be recounted in numerous genres. The Royal Deviance Narratives discussed here demonstrate the same behaviors articulated in the broader genres of story, prayer, and play. One might compare the narrating of modern detective investigation in short story, novel, play, movie, and comic strip. My point in analyzing the Royal Deviance Narratives, therefore, goes beyond uncovering a pattern of linguistic motifs. It is my conclusion that these Israelite, Hittite, and Greek narratives all operate from similar cultural assumptions; there is a shared understanding of the divine/human relationship in these Levantine cultures, especially as it relates to kings. While I have focused above on the specifics of the Royal Deviance Narratives and their common motifs, I want to outline some of the common cultural assumptions and social scripts from which these narratives derive. This is important for deepening our understanding of the Royal Deviance Narratives and the groups that produced them, but also for avoiding an ethnocentric reading. These are set out in two groups: those pertaining to the primary motifs in Table 1 above, and those which are ancillary.

Analysis of the Primary Motifs

Sacrality, Culpability, and Group Repercussions. The Royal Deviance Narratives recount the inappropriate breaching of the sacred (spaces, persons, times, orders) which results in calamity that affects the whole group or society: culpable and innocent alike. This places the motif of sacral breach in the arena of "purity/pollution," which covers issues of: in-group/out-group, sacred/profane, clean/unclean, etc. Douglas' analysis of purity and danger opened a whole area of research into purity codes and the implications of purity maps for worldview and ideology (1966). Especially important here is her mapping of three sources of power with regard to purity: "first, formal powers wielded by persons representing the formal structure and exercised on behalf of the formal structure: second, formless powers wielded by interstitial persons: third, powers not wielded by any person, but inhering in the structure, which strike against any infraction of form" (104). It is this third power-source which concerns us here: all of these kings have violated sacred structures—no other human is wielding power against them (e.g., an enemy's curse or a sorcerer's spell). Moreover, Douglas characterizes this manifestation of the structural power of purity as especially evident in societies in which the social and cosmic lines of order are clearly defined (113). For purity analysis and biblical documents, see for example: Milgrom 1991: 443–56; Neyrey 1991; Malina 1993: 149–83; and Hanson 1993.

The Philistine lords placed Yahweh's ark in the temple of Dagon. Saul breached the Israelite covenant with the Gibeonites. David somehow mishandled the census. Suppiluliumas breached the Hittites' covenant with the Egyptians and discontinued sacrifices to the Mala River. Agamemnon refused to return the daughter of Apollo's priest. And Oedipus committed regicide/parricide and incest with his mother. These are all serious breaches of the sacred which make the king into a deviant. In general terms, a deviant is a person out of place: whether defined as sinner, criminal, or unclean person (Malina 1986a: 26)

To understand why it would be comprehensible for a god to make the effects of a catastrophe pervade an entire society, two values need to be mentioned. First, that punishment should befall the entire group is comprehensible in cultures where the group is the focus rather than the individual: sociality over individuality (Malina 1986a: 28–45; 1993: 63–73; Hanson 1996b). Unlike modern, dominant, North Atlantic cultures, ancient Mediterranean cultures socialized individuals to be embedded in the group; in ancient documents, individuals are virtually always oriented to some larger grouping: guild, clan, village, ethnic group, or region. As Geertz perceptively states:

> The Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment, and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against other such wholes and against its social and natural background, is, however incorrigible it may seem to us, a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world's cultures (1983:59).

But this group-orientation has a corollary: the group both benefits and suffers from the actions of its leaders. Leaders not only represent the people in some abstract way, they embody the whole people (see e.g., Whitelam 1991: 128–36; Albertz 1994: 116–22). It is the same logic which ritually identifies the priest with the people in the sacrificial laws: "If it is the anointed priest who sins, thus bringing culpability upon the whole people, he shall offer for the sin that he has committed a bull of the herd without blemish . . ." (Lev 4:3). Because leaders do not act solely on their own behalf, the whole community must pay the consequences of their actions. Despite possible protestations about the delineation of the group (e.g., Gen 18:22–33; Num 16:20–22), groups often pay the consequences for an individual's actions (e.g., Josh 7:1–26). As Malina observes about ancient Mediterranean cultures, the primary emphasis "is on dyadic personality, on the individual as embedded in the group, on behavior as determined by significant others" (1993: 73).

Divine Punishment. Disastrous meteorological, entomological, and virological phenomena always reveal the activities of deities, often as divine punishment. Pervasive in the Levant are stories in which the gods direct judgment on humans in the form of floods (e.g., Atrahasis, Noah), illness of the king (e.g., Kret, Herod Agrippa), and widespread epidemics (e.g., Moses and the Egyptians, Sennacherib's army in Judah). As a general principle, Philo enumerates attacks upon the crops, persons, and kingdoms as divine judgments for breaking the law ("On Rewards and Punishments" §§126–152). For people in advanced agrarian societies, plagues and famines were especially catastrophic events over which they had no direct control (for the theme of plague in literature, see Girard 1974).

This assumption is rooted in the notion of personal causality: "Personal causality is tantamount to the conviction that every effect that counts in life is caused by a person" (Malina 1986a: 89). That is, the question for people in traditional societies is not "What caused this?" but "Who caused this?" Given this assumption, causations beyond human control are generally understood to originate with the gods or demons. What moderns in technological societies would routinely describe impersonally as natural process (e.g., sickness, birth and death), poor environmental management by institutions (e.g., depletion of the ozone layer), or random accident (e.g., a ship sinking in a storm), those in traditional societies look for personal causes. Such a "natural process" Paul declares an act of God: "So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only the one who provides the growth—God" (1 Cor 3:7; see Matt 6:25–33; Jas 1:17). In Israelite law, the opposite of premeditated murder is not "manslaughter," but the action of God (Exod 21:13). The deaths and births in Naomi's family are not random, but acts of Yahweh (Ruth 1:21–22; 4:13–14). Defeat by an enemy army was routinely interpreted as the result of divine disfavor (e.g., Lam 2:5). Even when Jesus eschews deviance as the sole reason for calamity, God's action is still identified as the cause (John 9:2–3).

Considine (1969) gathers numerous references to "divine wrath" from ancient eastern Mediterranean societies and identifies clusters of issues. The Causes of Divine Wrath are: (1) Refusal to accede to a god's request or command; (2) challenge to a god's power by a human being; (3) a god's representative is slighted, or his favorite suffers; (4) the human moral code is infringed; (5) siding with a god's enemy; (6) a covenant with a god is broken; (7) failure to honour a god with sacrifices; and (8) irrational. The Manifestations of Divine Wrath are: (1) Natural calamity (failure of crops, plague, or storm and fire); (2) theophany; (3) frustration of ambition; (4) a champion is engaged; (5) physical ill treatment; (6) the punishment fits the crime. And the Remedies of Divine Wrath are: (1) Preventing its conditions; (2) disarming address; (3) removing the cause of wrath; (4) prayer and sacrifice; (5) conciliatory response; and (6) fear of consequences (see also Speyer 1979).

Note that in the Royal Deviance Narratives a clear clustering of motifs occur. In terms of "Causes of Divine Wrath," the narratives are the most varied: challenge to a god's power (1 Sam 5:1–7:1), a god's representative is slighted (*Iliad* 1), the moral code is infringed (2 Sam 21:1–14; *KUB* xiv, 8; *Oedipus Tyrannus*), failure to sacrifice (*KUB* xiv, 8), and irrational/unexplained causes (2 Sam 24:1–25). The "Manifestations of Divine Wrath" are more cohesive: either crop failure (drought and/or famine) or plague. And the "Remedy for Divine Wrath" is most unified: they combine removing the cause (with the exception of 2 Sam 24:1–25), and prayer and sacrifice.

Prophets and Diviners. Intermediaries function to discern the divine will and interpret cause/effect relationships in the observable world. The ancient world had a variety of specialists who: cast lots; read animal entrails or bird-flights; read astronomical signs; and received messages from the gods in the form of dreams, auditions, and visions. Cryer provides the comparative material to analyze the divination techniques and assumptions operative throughout the Levant and Mesopotamia (1994). His most important conclu-

sions about societies which regularly employ divination are: (1) divination always "works" and is understood to generate real knowledge (326); (2) divination was organized in a hierarchical manner "with competing forms of divination of varying authority at low levels of society, and a few central instances of officially sanctioned and hence authoritative divination at the centres of power" (329); (3) because the world was seen as stable, changes were interpretable as "signs" (329–30); and (4) cause and effect were analyzed differently than in modern, technological, post-Enlightenment societies (331–32).

Overholt (1989) has articulated a communications model for the cross-cultural interpretation of intermediaries of all types. The god/s send/s revelations as communications to humans, and the prophet gives feedback. The prophetic intermediary's communication with the audience takes the form of prophecies or declarations of the divine will, and the audience may give feedback. These same transactions may occur between the intermediary and disciples. And the disciples may act on behalf of the intermediary in relation to the audience. Both the audience and the disciples may receive "supernatural confirmations": wars, plagues, miraculous healings or other successes.

We might expand this model slightly by adding petitionary prayers from the affected people to the god. It should also be noted that in the Royal Deviance Narratives, "disciples" of the intermediaries play no role, and kings play a particular role in the transactions in relation to the larger communities (see Wilson 1980; and Benjamin 1991). But the prophets and diviners play fundamental roles in each of the Royal Deviance Narratives: the Philistine priests and diviners, David's "inquiry," Gad the prophet and seer, Elijah the prophet, the Hittite oracles, Chalchas the seer, and Teiresias the seer. They have to reveal either the specific sacral breach, the person who committed it, or both.

Sacrifice. Sacrifices are appropriate means of propitiation, purgation, and restitution of divine-human relationships. Malina provides a perceptive definition and cross-cultural analysis of sacrifice as "a ritual in which a deity or deities is/are offered some form of inducement, rendered humanly irretrievable, with a view to some life-effect for the offerer(s)" (1996: 37). The sacrifices mentioned in the narratives analyzed here are all of the variety labeled by Malina "Life-restoration sacrifices" which "revitalized after accidental deviance, or after stepping outside the human realm" (38). Animal sacrifices appear throughout the Levant as important restorative links between the deities and communities. As Burkert concludes:

> Animal-sacrifice was an all-pervasive reality in the ancient world. The Greeks did not perceive much difference between the substance of their own customs and those of the Egyptians and Phoenicians, Babylonians and Persians, Etruscans and Romans, though ritual detail varied greatly among the Greeks themselves. . . . And yet, whatever complexities, layers, and changes in cultural tradition underlie the individual peculiarities, it is astounding , details aside, to observe the similarity of action and experience from Athens to Jerusalem and on to Babylon [1983: 9–10].

The rationale for sacrifices involving the shedding of blood is that "the life is in the blood" (Lev 17:11, 14) and it is a potent symbolization of the deity's power over life and death (see Hanson 1993).

Reconciliation. While deities may be offended, reconciliation is also possible. The many myths and legends from the ancient world speak to recurring issues of chaos and creation. When chaos ensues, usually manifested in the connection of the social and cosmic realms, deities have the capability of restoring order through their creative powers (e.g., Marduk over Tiamat; Baal and Anat over Mot and Yamm; Yahweh over the sea, Rahab, and Leviathan). It is an integral function of ancient cults—and especially those of the state cults—to facilitate and oversee sacrificial procedures of restitution and reconciliation as functions of sacrality, purity, and order (see Malina 1996: 30693-33).

Additional Cultural Values

Honor and shame. Honor and shame form a value complex which anthropologists have long identified as foundational in the traditional Mediterranean world—both ancient and modern (see Pedersen 1926: 213–44; Peristiany 1966; Gilmore 1987; Malina 1993: 28–62; and Hanson 1996a). Honor is the claim to status and recognition coupled with the group's acknowledgment of that claim. As the reciprocal of honor, shame is the loss of the individual's status in the eyes of the group. In the stories analyzed here one continually finds that either the deity's honor has been hostilely challenged (e.g., Yahweh in 1 Sam 4:1b–7:1), or the king's honor is on the line (e.g., Agamemnon in *Iliad* 1).

A specific issue in this regard is that the prerogatives of the deity take precedence over those of the king. The ideological conflict articulated in the narratives is not "Should there be a king at the top of the hierarchy?" nor "Is this particular king legitimate?" Rather, the conflict is between the prerogatives of divinity versus the prerogatives of kingship. In other words, these narratives do not challenge the prevailing hierarchy, but reassert and reinforce the deity's preeminent place in that hierarchy: no matter how much power a king wields, he is not free to impinge on the prerogatives of the deity—the boundaries of the sacred are dangerous. Thus, these stories implicitly or explicitly function as "cautionary tales" against royal arrogance. As Blick-

man observes about Book 1 of the *Iliad*: "one lesson of the *Loimos* [plague] is that the *timê* [honor] of a great king can be humbled by the gods" (1987: 9).

Social Hierarchy. A clearly defined social hierarchy is manifested in which the king is more than an individual: he is a representative figure responsible to the deity for the whole people and the land (see Josephus, *Ant.* 15.299), like the relationship between a general and his army. But as such, he also does not usually suffer the punishment directly. As the Elijah story indicates most clearly, it is the widows and orphans—those who are in the most socially precarious position—who are in the forefront of bearing famine, drought, or pestilence. Thus, the explicit social hierarchy reinforced by the narratives is: the deity, the king, the common people (see Lenski and Lenski 1987: 203).

Matthews and Benjamin articulate the spheres of responsibility for Israelite monarchs (which are also relevant to other ancient Near Eastern monarchies): raising a standing army, "forging a specialized network of cities and villages to produce and distribute goods year-round," negotiating foreign treaties and contracts, administration of law, and education (1993: 159). Frankfort adds: interpreting the divine will and the representation of the people before the patron-god/s (1978: 252). And Whitelam rightly points to the importance of constantly articulating and reinforcing this social hierarchy through song, ritual, and other forms of propaganda:

> It is this portrayal of the king's fundamental position as the central symbolic figure in a well defined social and political order that allows royal ideology and ritual to address the twin problems of the justification for monarchy against opposition to its development as well as addressing the problem of any threats from urban factions who might try to usurp the king's position and claim the throne for themselves [1989: 130; see also 1992: 47].

Psalm 72 is perhaps the most obvious piece of ideology in terms of royal status and roles. And most informative with regard to the Royal Deviance Narratives in this psalm is reference to the king's reign in connection with: the execution of justice, the fecundity of the land, and international peace.

Cosmic Harmony. The world is orderly and predictable, and thus the correspondence between personal cause (deviance) and the effect which is personally experienced (sanction/punishment) replicates their perception of reality. The Royal Deviance Narratives are not about the randomness of climatic disasters, but about their signaling disruption of social equilibrium, an imbalance in the world order. The Royal Deviance Narratives derive from and describe societies which can be characterized as "strong group, high grid" (Malina 1986a: 29–37). In terms of "group," these are societies which are collectivist in orientation rather than individualist (see above). And in terms of "grid" (or value realization) they: a) perceive the world as an orderly place, b) have permanent sacred spaces tended by professional priesthoods with fixed rites, and c) evaluate suffering and misfortune as automatic punishment for the violation of formal rules (Malina 1986a:15). Exemplifying this last point is part of a speech from the chorus in *Oedipus Tyrannus*:

> May such a destiny abide with me that I win praise for a reverent purity in all words and deeds sanctioned by laws that stand high, generated in lofty heaven, the laws whose only father is Olympus! The mortal nature of

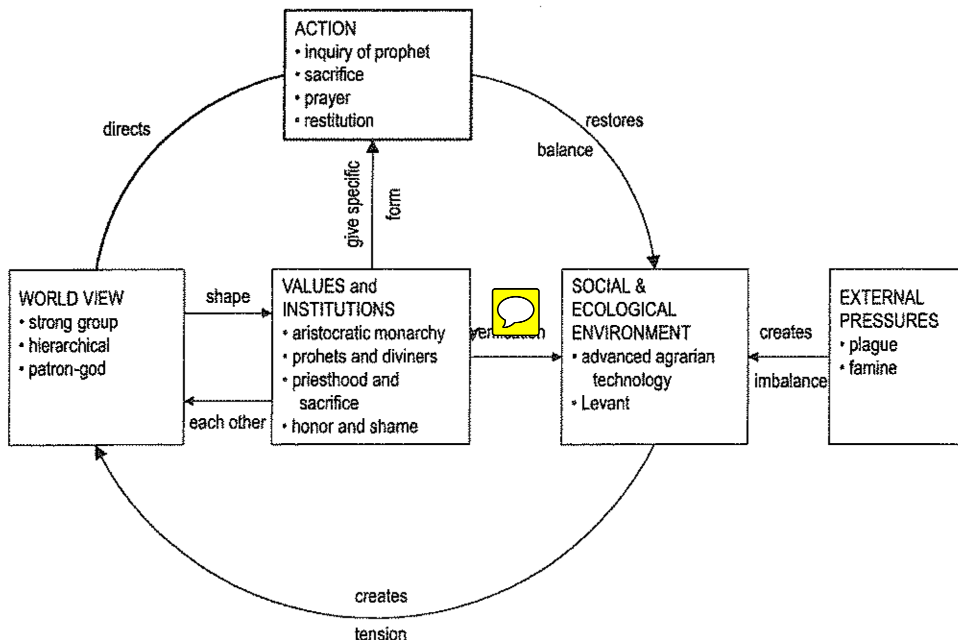

Figure 1: The Impact of External Pressures on Social Equilibrium

> men did not beget them, neither shall they ever be lulled to sleep by forgetfulness. Great in these laws is the god, nor does he ever grow old [863–72].

Biblical passages in which disasters are interpreted as random or unconnected to human responsibility—not assigned as "punishment for deviance"—can be described as "low grid," that is, this is the viewpoint of people for whom their institutions, values, goals cannot be realized fully and are out of sync with the dominant culture (see e.g., Luke 13:1–5; John 9:1–3; and Malina 1986a: 14–18, 125–26, 145–48).

Conclusion

The connections between the Royal Deviance Narratives is not due to literary dependence, but shared cultural assumptions and social structures. Israelite, Hittite, and Greek societies were all societies in the Levant organized as aristocratic monarchies (see Kautsky 1982); they were all "advanced agrarian" societies in terms of technology (see Lenski and Lenski 1987: 175–205); their foundational values were honor and shame; and they were all societies in which sacrifice, war, and torture played integral roles.

The transactions one reads in the Royal Deviance Narratives can be diagrammed applying and modifying "The World-View Model" developed by Kearney (1984: 120—see Figure 1 on the preceding page).

This model helps clarify the role of the new environmental factors (plague, famine, drought) common to these stories. These external pressures firstly create imbalance in the social and ecological environment of the Israelites, Philistine, Hittites, and Greeks: the people are sick or hungry and the land, flocks and herds, and women are infertile. These imbalances create tension and require interpretation based upon their world-view: especially in terms of their patron-god, societal hierarchy, and strong-group cohesion. Their world-view (as articulated by the prophets and diviners) prompts defensive actions in the forms of: prayers and sacrifice, restitution, or blood-feud/vengeance-killing. These actions alter the scene by restoring equilibrium to the social and ecological environment. The cultural values and institutions are generated by the world-view, but also shape the world-view; and the ones in the foreground here are: the aristocratic monarchy; temples, priests, and sacrifices; prophets and diviners; and honor and shame. These give specific shape to the defensive measures taken which work to restore cosmic harmony and social equilibrium.

One need not conclude that the Royal Deviance Narratives derive from some common source or are in any way dependent upon one another. The common social structures, values, and institutions operative in ancient Levantine societies are sufficient to account for the similarities. Moreover, the reader may think of other ancient narratives which manifest the constellation of character-types and narrative motifs found in the Royal Deviance Narratives; the much more complex narrative of the Ten Plagues and the Exodus (Exod 6:26–24:8), which culminates in the sacrifices at Mt. Sinai, comes to mind.

Like the ancient Israelites, Philistines, Hittites, and Greeks, we in modern societies must still face virological catastrophes (AIDS, Ebola virus), famines (Rwanda, Ethiopia), and wars (Bosnia, Chechneya). But we no longer have sacral kings to bear the responsibility. We employ statisticians and actuaries, econometric forecasters and political consultants rather than specialists who read animal entrails and eclipses or bring prophetic visions and auditions. Animal sacrifices as the ritual means to placate a god whose honor has been challenged long ago ceased in the technological West. And we live in a world of impersonal, if complex, cause-and-effect processes (economic, political, educational, legal, medical) in which identifying an event as divine punishment becomes impossible.

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