Desecrated covenant, deprived burial: threats of non-burial in the Hebrew Bible

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Dissertation

DESECRATED COVENANT, DEPRIVED BURIAL:
THREATS OF NON-BURIAL IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

by

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“Besides being wise, the Teacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs. The Teacher sought to find pleasing words, and he wrote words of truth plainly” (Qoheleth 12:9-10).

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Thank you, Roger, for your support, your encouragement, your smile, your music and your love. Thank you, Elizabeth and Katherine, for showing me every day that what I do at home will always be more important than the words on any page. Roger, Lizzie, and Katie—each of you have contributed to this project. You share in my successes and you catch me when I stumble. It is with love that I dedicate this dissertation to my husband and daughters.

*Be Thou my wisdom and Thou my true word*
*I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord*
*Thou my great Father, I Thy true son*
*Thou in me dwelling and I with Thee one*
DESECRATED COVENANT, DEPRIVED BURIAL:
THREATS OF NON-BURIAL IN THE HEBREW BIBLE
FRANCES DORA MANSEN

Boston University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, 2015
Major Professor: Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, Professor of Hebrew Bible

ABSTRACT

The non-burial motif in the Hebrew Bible borrows language, imagery, and rhetorical strategies from its ancient West Asian milieu. Despite its many attestations in TANAKH, this motif often is overlooked in biblical research. Past scholarship relied on Delbert Hillers’ form-critical and comparative work, which identified several occurrences of a biblical “curse of no burial” that shares stereotypical terminology with Mesopotamian treaty-curses. Nevertheless, Hillers’s classification of the “curse of no burial” as a treaty-curse obstructed the identification of the majority of biblical references to non-burial. As one type of threatened or actualized post-mortem punishment, deprivation of burial appears explicitly and as the intended result of another threatened or performed act of violence. Revising Hillers’s typology, I propose a description of references to non-burial that considers the following characteristics: 1) elements of post-mortem abuse; 2) agent; 3) victim; 4) reason; and 5) intended result. The identification of non-burial as post-mortem abuse, recognizable by the presence of stereotypical terminology in these five interpretive categories, broadens the net of non-burial references beyond the scope of treaty-curses. Over forty examples of the non-burial motif appear across thirteen biblical books. In-depth interpretations of six of these references to non-burial (Num 14:28-35; Deut 28:26; 1 Sam 17:44-47; 1 Kgs 14:10-11; Isa 14:18-20; Jer 8:1-3) scrutinize literary contexts, lexical features, and rhetorical functions.
The non-burial motif appears in several different types of socio-literary contexts, and it functions as a literary weapon within biblical authors’ ideologically-shaped rhetorical compositions. Rhetorical-historical interpretation and social-anthropological theory clarify implications of deprived funerary rites. In biblical and extra-biblical examples, the non-burial motif is used to: 1) shame victims and their communities; 2) eradicate the victims’ identity; and 3) bolster the identity of the agent. When the victim’s identity depends upon its relationality with the agent (i.e., Israel’s vassaldom to YHWH’s suzerainty), the imposition of post-mortem punishment redefines the dynamics of the relationship.
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<tr>
<td>BAR</td>
<td><em>Biblical Archaeology Review</em></td>
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<td>BASOR</td>
<td><em>Bulletin for the American School of Oriental Research</em></td>
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<td>BASORSup</td>
<td>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research Supplementary Series</td>
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<td>BSac</td>
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<td>CAT</td>
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<td>CBQ</td>
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<td>DH</td>
<td>Deuteronomistic History</td>
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<td>HSM</td>
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<td>HUCA</td>
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<td><em>Israel Exploration Journal</em></td>
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<td>JANES</td>
<td>Journal of the ancient Near Eastern Society</td>
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<td>Journal of Biblical Literature</td>
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<td>JCS</td>
<td>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</td>
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<td>SJOT</td>
<td>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</td>
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<td>UF</td>
<td>Ugarit Forschungen</td>
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<td>VT</td>
<td>Vetus Testamentum</td>
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<tr>
<td>VTE</td>
<td>Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon</td>
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<td>VTSup</td>
<td>Vetus Testamentum Supplement</td>
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<td>ZAW</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche wissenschaft</td>
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Chapter 1
Introduction, Survey of Scholarship, and Methodological Considerations

“…for the ancients, in fact, the sacred and the obscene were very often one and the same. These people knew how to honor death. Death is to be honored as the cradle of life, the womb of renewal. Once separated from life, it becomes grotesque, a wrath—or even worse.”

Introduction and Thesis

Death and burial—like birth—are as deeply personal as any experiences can be. Nevertheless, modern socio-anthropological investigations highlight that social interactions often are influenced by communal interpretations of these individual experiences. As anthropologist Peter Metcalf notes, “the issue of death throws into relief the most important cultural values by which people live their lives and evaluate their experiences. Life becomes transparent against the background of death, and fundamental social and cultural issues are revealed.”

Images of death and burial abound in the Hebrew Bible (HB) and demonstrate that ancient Israel’s worldview extended beyond a person’s lifespan. On one hand, ancient Israelites were deeply invested in future generations of Israel; and birth and womb images frequent biblical authors’ concerns. On the other hand, these same writers believed that one’s personhood did not evaporate upon physical death; accordingly, images of the underworld (Sheol), death, and burial appear throughout the HB.

The past three decades of biblical scholarship have witnessed an increase in studies on death and burial, including important sociological, archaeological, literary, and historical

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investigations. While monographs on the subject explore nearly all facets of this unavoidable aspect of human life, deprivation of burial often is overlooked. The literary motif of non-burial in biblical literature demonstrates that—like other ancient West Asian (aWA) traditions—literary forms are as dynamic as the social realities they attempt to describe.

The non-burial motif is a prevalent literary phenomenon in the HB, borrowing language, imagery, and rhetorical strategies from its aWA milieu. Past scholarship on non-burial has relied on Delbert Hillers’s form-critical and comparative work, which briefly identified several occurrences of a traditional stereotypical “curse of no burial.” Despite Hillers’s description of the traditional “curse of no burial” as one of the most frequent curses found in ancient West Asia, Hillers’s classification of the “curse of no burial” as a treaty curse limited the identification of the majority of references to non-burial in biblical literature. Moreover, Hillers’s narrow description of the “curse of no burial” made it difficult for scholars to describe the variety and implications of non-burial threats in biblical literature. This dissertation provides a thorough investigation of the non-burial motif in the HB and addresses the inadequacies of Hillers’s typology. I investigate social and literary contexts in which references to non-burial appear and establish how threats of non-burial functioned as deadly weapons within the biblical authors’ ideologically-shaped rhetorical arsenal.

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5 In recognition of the Levant’s position on the Asian continent, scholarship increasingly is shifting to designating the former “ancient Near Eastern” region as “ancient West Asian.”
7 Ibid., 33.
8 I will discuss Hillers’s contributions to comparative biblical studies, as well as the limitations of his approach, more fully, pp. 5, 30-32.
“Non-Burial” Defined

Saul Olyan has demonstrated that ancient Israelite burial patterns fall along a spectrum of honor, forming an ideological hierarchy. Non-burial, corpse exposure, and corpse abuse lie at the farthest extreme of the spectrum, while timely public burial in the family tomb is situated at the opposite extreme.⁹ Between these two poles, burials were considered more or less honorable depending on certain, specific factors. Burial outside of the family tomb was not ideal, but it was not wholly dishonorable either.¹⁰ In contrast, disposal of a corpse outside of city or village limits, with stones covering the human remains, was considered dishonorable, but not as dishonorable as complete deprivation of burial.¹¹

In this dissertation, I examine threatened or actualized punishment in which non-burial is either referred to explicitly, or appears as the intended result of another threatened or enacted act of violence. Several associated acts of violence or abandonment result in similar outcomes, as certain literary examples demonstrate. As an element in ancient Israel’s broader death and burial ideology, deprivation of burial is a particular type of post-mortem abuse. I categorize the following acts as types of post-mortem abuse: deprivation of burial; exposure of corpses to natural elements; abandonment of corpses to scavenging animals; exhumation; decapitation; casting of a slain person (or bones) into the field, wilderness, or beyond the city gate; deliberate exposure of (often mutilated) corpses of fallen soldiers; eventual “refuse”-like state of corpse; lack of laments offered by living kin; lack of any kin to offer a lament on behalf of the deceased; deprivation of future, enduring mortuary rituals; non-gathering to the ancestors; and defilement and destruction of burial sites. In ancient Israel’s complex death and burial ideology, each of the

⁹ Olyan, “Israelite Internment Ideology,” 603. Examples of ideal burials include: Gen 49:29-31; 50:13 (Jacob); Judg 8:32 (Gideon); 16:31 (Samson); 2 Sam 2:32 (Asahel); 21:14 (Saul and his sons); 2 Kgs 9:28 (Ahaziah); 23:30 (Josiah); Gen 49:29-31; 50:13 (Jacob).
¹⁰ Consider the burial of the man of God from Judah in 1 Kings 13:29-31. His burial in another man’s ancestral tomb is not an ideal burial, but it is far more desirable than a complete deprivation of burial.
¹¹ See, e.g., Absalom’s post-mortem treatment in 2 Sam 18:17.
associated acts of post-mortem abuse may lead to the assumed consequence of non-burial. Although no single biblical text includes all aspects of post-mortem abuse, most texts include one, two, or three elements (although not always in the same order, or with identical terminology).

Given this classification of non-burial as a type of post-mortem abuse, I identify threats of non-burial based on several, related criteria. References to non-burial typically appear among other threats, often consist of multiple elements, and include stereotypical terminology. Jeremiah 16:4 serves as a helpful example:

They shall die of deadly diseases. They shall not be lamented, nor shall they be buried; they shall become like dung on the surface of the ground. They shall perish by the sword and by famine, and their dead bodies shall become food for the birds of the air and for the wild animals of the earth. 12

In this text, the accursed are threatened not only with death, but also with additional post-mortem punishment, including lack of proper funerary ritual (i.e., burial and the raising of laments) and exposure resulting in corpse consumption by predatory birds and scavenging animals. As this example shows, the non-burial motif encompasses more than threats of deprivation of physical interment.

Several stereotypical lexical elements often appear in references to non-burial. The example from Jer 16:4 includes verbal and nominal indicators of non-burial such as (not) buried, (not) lamented, “dead bodies” (corpse), “dung,” “birds of the air,” and “wild animals of the earth.” Threats of non-burial in biblical and aWA contexts often combine recognizable verbs and nouns, suggesting a common literary stock of terminology associated with post-mortem abuse and the literary motif of non-burial. In Chapter 4, I present the variety of stereotypical

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12 Biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.
terminology associated with non-burial and the frequency with which the terms appear in biblical examples.

**A Revised Typology of Non-Burial**

D. Hiller’s examination of a “curse of no burial” considered the presence of distinctive terminology in prophetic curses. His investigation, informed by the AWA treaty curse tradition, provided valuable insights into similarities between ancient Israelite and AWA literary compositions. Hiller’s brief (two-page) analysis described the biblical “curse of no burial” as “quite stereotyped,” typically containing three elements: 1) the corpse is left unburied; 2) the corpse is left for predatory birds and scavenging animals; and 3) the corpse is refuse (dung, devastation, etc.) upon the ground.  

Hiller recognized that the “curse of no burial” is prevalent throughout the HB, noting in particular how the traditional curse appears with greatest frequency in the book of Jeremiah. Identifying twenty-one examples of the curse in the HB, Hiller described the “curse of no burial” as “one of the most common of traditional curses,” stemming neither from a Deuteronomic writer nor from a Jeremianic source. Nevertheless, Hiller’s typological description of non-burial as a curse, related to the Mesopotamian treaty-curse and maqlû traditions, limited his designation of several threats of non-burial throughout the tripartite canon. It is true that several examples of non-burial contain stereotypical terminology similar to AWA treaty curses of non-burial. As this dissertation makes clear, however, the majority of HB examples include a range of terminology in numerous, diverse literary contexts.

I propose a revised typological description of non-burial that takes seriously several socio-literary characteristics appearing in most biblical references to non-burial. These characteristics are: 1) elements of post-mortem abuse; 2) agent of abuse; 3) victim(s) of abuse; 4)

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14 Ibid., 33.
15 Ibid., 68–69.
reason for abuse; and 5) intended result of abuse. As interpretative categories, these five socio-literary characteristics widen the net of non-burial to include threats beyond the scope of tripartite treaty curses. The identification of non-burial as post-mortem abuse, recognizable by the presence of stereotypical terminology in five socio-literary categories, allows my analysis of references to non-burial to include previously unrecognized examples. My compilation of references to non-burial in TANAKH demonstrates that textual examples include a diversity of means and methods and occur either with purposeful action or purposeful inaction. I have identified approximately fifty distinct examples of non-burial in TANAKH spread over thirteen books: Genesis; Numbers; Deuteronomy; 1 Samuel; 1 and 2 Kings; Isaiah; Jeremiah; Ezekiel; Nahum; Psalms; and Proverbs.\(^{16}\)

In Chapters 2 and 4, I demonstrate that both aWA and ancient Israelite references to non-burial use several terms to refer to post-mortem abuse and deprivation of burial. In addition to variety in terminology, threats of non-burial appear in a wide range of literary contexts and genres, such as narrative cycles, annalistic royal history, law, discrete prophetic utterances, liturgical, and wisdom texts. Non-burial terminology appears in both literal and metaphorical uses of language. Moreover, threats are issued against both individuals and groups. The variety evidenced in references to the non-burial motif in the HB indicates that ancient Israel’s authors did not directly copy threats of non-burial from aWA treaty documents. Rather, just as non-burial appears in several aWA literary contexts (e.g., epic literature, treaty documents, maqlū, boundary markers [kudurru], and tomb inscriptions), ancient Israelite references to non-burial function as rhetorical weapons in multiple literary contexts and to several ends. As threatened or actualized punishment against the most severe violators, the non-burial motif is used to: 1) invoke shame; 2) exterminate the victim’s identity; and 3) establish and/or reinforce the identity of the agent of

\(^{16}\) Beyond the confines of the Hebrew Canon, references to non-burial appear in the apocryphal book of Tobit. I briefly explore these references in an excursus in Chapter 4.
non-burial. When the victim’s identity depends upon its relationality with the agent of abuse (i.e., Israel’s vassaldom to YHWH’s suzerainty), the dynamics of the relationship are redefined by the imposition of post-mortem punishment.

Survey of Scholarship

My investigation of the non-burial motif stands at the intersection of several scholarly pursuits, including comparative, literary, and anthro-archeological studies. As a reversal of socially mandated funerary practice, non-burial often subverts ancient Israel’s expectations concerning life after death. Accordingly, I review Israelite and aWA death and burial ideologies in order to discuss how threats of non-burial reverse them. Literary references and pictorial depictions of corpse abuse abound in several aWA contexts, demanding that I compare and contrast ancient Israel’s use of similar terms and images. Social-anthropological studies on corpse abuse, social memory, and identity formation analyze how societies employ graphic corpse imagery in their literature. Ancient Israelite authors intentionally referenced non-burial within their compositions for specific reasons. Literary and rhetorical criticism aids in identifying reasons for the inclusion of graphically violent images within various literary corpora. The following survey of scholarship takes into account these various approaches to the presence of references to non-burial in TANAKH.

Death and Burial: Trends in Scholarship

The last half of the 20th c. CE witnessed an influx of research on death and burial ideologies. On one hand, numerous archaeological analyses of mortuary practices in the Late Bronze and early Iron Age Levant have enabled scholars to examine burial patterns and tomb construction in order to reconstruct ancient Israel’s view of death and the netherworld. On the other hand, several publications review biblical attestations to death and burial ideologies in

Each of these influential studies approaches death and burial in ancient Israel with distinctive objectives representing important shifts in scholarly attention to death and burial in ancient Israel. Tromp focused primarily upon biblical evidence concerning death and burial ideologies. His research also provided a detailed comparison of death in Ugaritic and Israelite mythology. A product of his decade, in which Ugarit studies reached their heyday, Tromp’s textual and comparative work focused solely on Ugarit and Israel without engaging extensively with other extra-biblical evidence. Brichto’s contribution sought to balance biblical and extra-biblical evidence, placing each within its socio-cultural context. His essay, while focusing on the relationship between kin (living and deceased) and the land, moved towards interpreting references to death and burial in light of the ideological perspectives of the ancient Israelite religious practitioner and author. Bloch-Smith surveyed archaeological evidence and discussed

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19 Brichto’s approach has encouraged further ideologically-focused studies, notably in the recent work of Francesca Stavrakopoulou: “Exploring the Garden of Uzza: Death, Burial and Ideologies of Kingship,” *Bib*
how the material data supports (or undermines) textual attestations. While more recent archaeological surveys of tombs have appeared, Bloch-Smith’s monograph remains the standard by which all others are judged. She provides regional differentiation in her presentation of burial patterns and measures textual evidence against available material data. As the following pages demonstrate, these treatments retain their esteemed position in biblical studies because of their moderate, measured approaches to available evidence.

In addition to focusing on death and burial in general, some late 20th c. CE biblical scholars produced lengthy investigations of distinctive elements in ancient Judahite mortuary practice in particular. These studies generally fall into two categories. First, biblical scholars interested in the history of Israelite religion have examined Israelite ancestor reverence (“Cult of the Dead,” “Cult of Dead Ancestors”), informed by archaeological discoveries suggesting the presence of an ancestor cult at Ugarit. A second group of scholars has focused on literary references to death and burial, particularly the role of death and burial formulary in the Deuteronomistic History (DH). I review each of these trends in greater detail below.


Death, Burial, and the History of Israelite Religion:

Specialists focusing on death and burial ideologies in the HB tend to fall upon an interpretative spectrum. On one end of the interpretive spectrum, several scholars examine evidence from Israel’s aWA context and conclude that ancient Israelites worshiped ancestors to the same extent attested in Mesopotamian and Syrian contexts. Pointing to archaeological evidence of offerings at burial sites and to epic literature in which deceased ancestors often are referred to as deified, these scholars argue that ancestor reverence was a widespread phenomenon throughout the ancient Levant. On the opposite end of the interpretive spectrum, scholars interpret evidence of death cult activity and references to the afterlife as (relatively) insignificant to the biblical writers’ ideological perspectives. Finally, many scholars fall in the middle of the spectrum by evaluating available textual and material evidence with moderation, in order to avoid over- or under-emphasis of data. By definition, moderated approaches balance the textual and


The comparative work of the early 20th c. CE often is described as “pan-Babylonism” or “pan-Ugaritism” to acknowledge the trend to interpret all things Israelite as extensions of Israel’s aWA environment. See, for example, Peter Craigie, “Ugarit and the Bible: Progress and Regress in 50 Years of Literary Study,” in *Ugarit in Retrospect: Fifty Years of Ugarit and Ugaritic* (ed. Gordon Young; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 99–11; Johannes C. de Moor and P. Van der Lugt, “The Spectre of Pan-Ugaritism,” *BibOr* 31 (1974): 3–26.
material evidence in order to ascertain a probable reconstruction of ancient Israelite and religious practices.

Before the turn of the 20th c. CE, the primary sources for comparative research in death and burial included limited, explicit biblical references, scant evidence from funerary excavations, and information unearthed during the significant exploration of Mesopotamia and its documents, particularly the archives from Nineveh. An explosion of available archaeological data appeared in the early 20th c. with excavations at Emar and Ebla, Mari, Nuzi, Ugarit, Alalakh, Elephantine, and Qumran. While each of these locations provides invaluable data for reconstructing a life experience, the material from Ugarit especially has shaped our understanding of ancient Israelite death and burial ideologies. Ancient Israel and biblical Hebrew shared remarkable similarities with Ugarit’s 2nd millennium West Semitic language and culture; indeed, manuscripts from Ugarit have helped to clarify some issues in biblical Hebrew grammar and development. Moreover, Ugarit provides preserved Middle Bronze Age (MBA) mythological documents, providing important information regarding the Ugaritic pantheon and Ugaritic perspectives on death and the afterlife.

Commonalities between Ugaritic and Judahite material and literary evidence have led several scholars to posit nearly identical cultic activity in these two cultures. In his 1986

monograph, *Beatific Afterlife in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East*, K. Spronk accentuated similarities between Ugaritic and ancient Israelite death and burial ideology and practice. In particular, Spronk contended that a widespread cult of dead ancestors existed throughout the ancient Near East—a view representative of his “generation” of scholars.

Spronk was not alone in his synthesis of aWA and Judahite data. Marvin Pope concluded that there was “scant reason to doubt” that funerary rites in West Semitic cultures were nearly identical to similar Mesopotamian traditions. Ephraim Stern argued that archaeological evidence from Israel and its neighbors, including the Philistines, Ammonites, Moabites, etc., suggests that religious cults were nearly identical and stemmed from an older, Phoenician model. Both Syrian and Palestinian traditions developed out of this model.

T. Lewis produced a monograph that provides a comprehensive treatment of comparative evidence available to him. But Lewis’ work also has been criticized for erring on the side of over-synthesis, positing very close similarities between Ugaritic materials related to death practices and those of ancient Israel. Based on his interpretation of material finds, for example, Lewis posited a death cult operating at Tel Dothan. In his view, archaeological evidence of funerary provisions and of openings (perhaps windows) cut into tombs suggested that such architectural features were used for the

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30 Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*. 
care and feeding of the dead, i.e., a death cult with funerary offerings provided to deceased ancestors.31

Lewis’ approach also led him to accept the biblical presentation of official Yahwistic practices as opposed to religious rites performed in households. In this way, both Lewis and Spronk suggested that biblical prohibitions against certain rites (e.g., necromancy) indicate widespread agreement among Israelites and Judahites about which rites are properly Yahwistic and which are more “Canaanite” in origin.32 Their lack of diachronic analysis of the development of rites skews their interpretation of biblical evidence concerning actual practice of the rites.

Since Spronk’s work, several scholars have offered critiques of his synthesis and approach to comparative material while praising his over-all project. Mark S. Smith and Elizabeth Bloch Smith argue that Spronk’s proposed existence of a New Year’s revivification festival and his identification of “rpum” in numerous texts under debate went too far.33 In response to “pan-Babylonism/Ugaritism,” a backlash of minimalist interpretation of Ugaritic evidence in the 1990s urged restraint in positing correlations between the funerary and ancestral cult at Ugarit and evidence from ancient Israel.34

Philip Johnston and Brian Schmidt represent the other extreme of the interpretive spectrum, both interpreting evidence of death cult activity and references to the afterlife as

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32 Smith and Bloch-Smith, “Death and Afterlife in Ugarit and Israel,” 281. Also see Brichto, “Kin, Cult, Land and Afterlife,” 8, 52.
33 Christopher Hays, Death in the Iron Age II and in First Isaiah (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 117; Smith and Bloch-Smith, “Death and Afterlife in Ugarit and Israel.”
(relatively) insignificant to the theological perspectives of biblical writers. As brief reviews of their work demonstrate, biases on the part of biblical scholars often influence their presentations of the biblical authors’ probable theological/ideological stances.

Johnston argues against many archaeologists and historians of ancient Israel in his claim that, “neither the archaeological nor textual evidence indicates an Israelite preoccupation with the bones of the dead.”\(^\text{35}\) Concerning textual evidence, Johnston points to the relatively few appearances of Sheol, the proper name for the underworld. He concludes that the scarce explicit references to Sheol indicate that biblical authors were not concerned with the underworld. While Sheol is the proper name of the underworld in biblical Hebrew, many other terms are used to describe the afterlife and realm of the dead throughout biblical literature. As I demonstrate in Chapter 3, biblical authors chose a plethora of literal and metaphorical descriptions of the grave and the afterlife in their writings. Johnston’s narrow lens reduced his ability to recognize the diversity of perspectives on the afterlife held in ancient Israelite society.

Johnston’s lens limited not only identification of metaphorical references to death and the afterlife, but also his identification of genre. For example, when discussing the brevity of information provided in the HB concerning mourning periods (seven day and thirty day), Johnston writes “no general policy is given.”\(^\text{36}\) The scarcity of laws concerning mourning and burial in the HB does not prohibit readers from gaining understanding about practice. It is true that there are few extant laws concerning burial, but several references to burial customs appear.


\(^{36}\) Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, 64.
Indeed, a review of passages which reference mourning makes clear that although a “policy” is not put forth, generally accepted social practices are clear.\textsuperscript{37}

Johnston’s comparison of Israelite and Egyptian death and burial ideologies reveals his interpretive tendencies. He argues that compared to Egypt’s significant evidence concerning the afterlife and funerary offerings, ancient Israel’s limited explicit evidence indicates little to no effort to provide post-mortem funerary offerings for the deceased.\textsuperscript{38} Bloch-Smith, by contrast, interprets the available evidence from a different perspective:

The more than three hundred uniform, reasonably well-preserved internments from Judah examined in conjunction with the biblical testimony suggests a new reconstruction of the role of the dead in Judahite society. The material remains contribute to discussions of provisioning the dead: the reasons behind the practice, its origin and duration, and the rationale for choosing specific items. The fact that mortuary provisioning continued throughout the period of the existence of the kingdom, and into later periods, necessitates a reinterpretation of certain biblical texts regarding the "official" and "popular" practices of the Judahite cult of the dead.\textsuperscript{39}

Johnston’s work, though detailed and well versed in the comparative data, does not acknowledge the powerful impact of death on biblical writers. Reviewing his work reveals a clear bias against non-Yahwistic (i.e., “Canaanite”) religion and an overestimation of the role that Israelite orthodoxy played in the religious lives of all Israelites. Johnston’s bias appears clearly in the following statement: “The Israelites may have been tempted to venerate their dead as other ancient peoples did.”\textsuperscript{40} The use of the word “tempted” is telling. He regards respect for—or veneration of—the dead as a temptation that must be avoided. Elsewhere, he observes: “…there is no reference to religious ceremonies at funerals—burial was simply conducted by the immediate family. Mourning and funerary customs were not apparently invested with religious

\textsuperscript{37} For an extensive study of Israelite mourning practices, see: Saul M. Olyan, \textit{Biblical Mourning: Ritual and Social Dimensions} (New York: Oxford Univ., 2004).

\textsuperscript{38} Johnston, “Death in Egypt and Israel: A Theological Reflection,” 94.


\textsuperscript{40} Johnston, “Death in Egypt and Israel: A Theological Reflection,” 108.
significance.” In this telling statement, Johnston suggests that the practices of the bet 'abot were not religious per se because no specific, dogmatic details appear in the biblical literature. On the contrary, scholars have demonstrated that the locus of religious activity and instruction was at the home, led not by an ordained priest, but by father and mother. Indeed, Deuteronomistic literature includes instructions to elder generations to teach their children about faith (Deut. 4:8-10; 6:7; cf. Ps 78:1-6). Further, Priestly and Deuteronomic sources reveal that Israelite religious calendars required adjustment in order to accommodate family observances.

A final passage suffices to demonstrate the scholarly bias with which Johnston approaches literary images of non-burial. For Johnston, the Egyptian practice of lavish preparation for death was, “…a colossal, collective exercise of self-deception…. By contrast, Israel’s practice of simple interment without costly ornaments involved neither special respect not disrespect for physical remains, and avoided disjunction between belief and practice.” It is clear from the above citations that Johnston views funerary cultic activity as characteristic of the “other”—a fault and excess to be avoided. Scholars who examine Israelite religious practices ought to be cautious about judging certain religious practices with such disdain.

Brian Schmidt joins Johnston in his minimization of death and burial rites in the lives of ancient Israelites. Schmidt argues, correctly, that scholarship should employ more distinct definitions of funerary and mortuary rites. In his monograph, Israel’s Beneficent Dead, he attempts to categorize funerary rites, accumulating substantial data regarding death and burial in

41 Johnston, Shades of Sheol, 64.
43 For example, consider how Josianic and Hezekian reforms adjusted Passover and other rites originally located within the realm of household religious practice in order to align with centralization of the cult. See Bernard M. Levinson, Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation (New York: Oxford Univ., 1997).
ancient Israel. The overall results are helpful resources that remind scholars not to conflate mortuary rites and funerary rites. Schmidt suggests that scholars use “ancestor worship” only when referring to rites in which the dead are understood as deified, or as having powers comparable to a deity. The category of “care for or feeding of the dead/ancestors” should be used only when referencing rites associated with funerary offerings. He also argues that since the act of providing food and drink for the dead indicates that they are weak, this cultic activity differs from “ancestor worship.” The practice of providing funerary provisions to deceased ancestors in order to continue the family line is an example of a “mortuary cult,” to be differentiated from “ancestor worship.” Schmidt further contends that the marzeah feast (considered by most scholars to be a funerary feast involving both living and dead kin) was not funerary in nature; it was an organization focused upon economic transactions. Finally, Schmidt argues that “commemoration of the dead” is distinct from both “ancestor worship” and “mortuary cult” activities and need not predicate their existence. Rites that include placing flowers at the grave of the deceased, or reading aloud the names of the dead, are intended to maintain the deceased’s memory, but they do not suggest continued interaction between the living and the dead. Using his delineations among types of funerary and mortuary activity, Schmidt draws different conclusions about certain material finds. Recall, for example, the windows in tombs at Tel Dothan, which suggested to Lewis that living kin provided provisions (or offerings) to deceased ancestors. Schmidt’s classification of funerary offerings as nourishment for

45 Schmidt, Israel’s Beneficent Dead.
46 Ibid., 10.
47 Ibid.
49 Schmidt, Israel’s Beneficent Dead, 10–11.
supposedly “weak” deceased kin does not predicate the existence of an ancestor cult. He concludes that architectural openings in tombs at Dothan and Ugarit were used only at the time of interment, rather than as passages through which living kin might provide offerings to their ancestral dead on an ongoing basis.

As stated above, defining rites precisely is important; scholars should identify their terms in order to clarify objects of study. However, Schmidt’s work includes several shortcomings. First, Schmidt’s underlying argument that each funerary rite was distinct and did not overlap with any other is presumptive; and analysis of available data suggests otherwise. Both textual and material data include provisions alongside commemoration. Other texts include references to the rephaim (residents of the afterlife often depicted as partially deified) alongside feeding rites. Further, archaeological evidence demonstrates that ancient Israelites, like their neighbors, provided provisions for their deceased, took part in commemoration rites, and may have kept domestic statues of deified ancestors (e.g. teraphim) within their family homes. Neither biblical nor material evidence provides enough data to form a full, clear picture of funerary and/or mortuary practice and it is difficult—or impossible—to form sharp distinctions between associated rites. The blurred distinctions between post-mortem rites further demonstrate this reality. Biblical authors clearly merged discrete ritualized acts of violence against corpses within single references to post-mortem abuse. Just as delineating between precise funerary rituals in biblical and extra-biblical references proves difficult, non-burial rites coalesce within the broader category of post-mortem abuse.

50 Ibid., 195.
51 Schmidt, “Memory as Immortality,” 92.
52 Whole vessels were discovered at tombs at Tel Dothan, for example. See: Bloch-Smith, Judahite Burial Practices, 38; Daniel M. Master et al., Dothan I: Remains from the Tell (1953-1964) (The Excavations of Joseph P. Free at Dothan (1953-1964) 1; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 24.
A second weakness of Schmidt’s research hinges upon his assertion that feeding rites implied an assumed weakness of the dead. Schmidt does not provide foundational evidence for this claim, yet he uses it to interpret relevant texts. His interpretation of KTU 1.142 claims that the Ugaritic text does not presume any supernatural powers for the dead, brushing off reference to a feeding rite as appeasement for a “malevolent ghost” or “weak, neglected [ghost].” The circular nature of his argument allows such conclusions. Several scholars have refuted his assertion, pointing to texts that reflect a belief that the dead are able to intervene in the land of the living. J. Scurlock notes that in Mesopotamian and Egyptian cultures care for the dead did not imply that the dead were powerless. Rather, such activities sought to maintain a positive relationship with the dead. Moreover, evidence indicates that both aWA and ancient Israelite religious rites included care for (e.g., feeding) deities. The extent to which deceased ancestors were deified is disputed; lexical evidence presented in Chapter 3 suggests a correlation between the dead and deities. Scurlock further notes that death rites and ancestor cults do not stand on their own as discrete practices aimed at deceased kin. Rather, such rites are part of a wider network of ritualistic/magical rites, including incantations, curses, prayers, blessings, and

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necromancy—all part of a worldview in which communication between this world and the afterlife was possible.\textsuperscript{57}

\textbf{Death, Burial, and the History of Israelite Religion: Moderation}

Several scholars attempt to find balance in their interpretation of available evidence, neither over- nor under-synthesizing the comparative data. Scholars whose works have gained seminal status, e.g., E. Bloch-Smith and H. Brichto take a moderated approach, interpreting available material evidence in relation to textual resources. Brichto’s influential essay discusses the polarization among biblical scholars who study death and burial ideologies. Introducing methodological approaches from the social sciences, Brichto’s contribution balances biblical and extra-biblical evidence, placing each within its socio-cultural context. All the while, Brichto urges caution against retrojecting one’s own theological perspectives into the ancient worldview: “The intuitions which guide the scholar in his attempt to estimate the outlines of what lies beneath the surface derive from, and are reinforced by, two distinctly different sources: the study of coeval and neighboring societies and cultures; and the conceptual categories and thought patterns of the scholar’s own time and place.”\textsuperscript{58}

Bloch-Smith also balances material and textual data in her interpretation of ancient Israelite death and burial ideology and practice. Regarding mortuary rites related to deceased ancestors, her interpretation of evidence leads her to conclude: “A picture emerges of a widespread, flourishing cult of the dead, practiced in Jerusalem as in the rest of the country, which persisted throughout the Iron Age. A ‘cult of the dead’ is here taken to mean that the


\textsuperscript{58}Brichto, “Kin, Cult, Land and Afterlife,” 2..

Judahites believed the dead possessed powers and acted on that belief.”⁵⁹ Although there is no concrete scholarly consensus concerning the existence of the “cult of the dead” within ancient Israel’s broader death and burial ideology, most scholars follow Brichto’s and Bloch-Smith’s measured approach, allowing that Israelites shared a widespread concern for deceased ancestors and possibly participated in feeding or other post-mortem “care.”

A recent, monograph-length publication on death and burial imagery fuses several approaches to burial and its deprivation.⁶⁰ Christopher Hays examines “death” as a common literary theme in First Isaiah using rhetorical criticism alongside balanced interpretation of biblical and extra-biblical evidence. Recognizing a deficit of current, in-depth reviews of extra-biblical evidence, Hays places Isaiah’s use of death imagery within its complex Iron Age II context. He also identifies the cultural heritage of Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Syro-Palestinian funerary traditions familiar to 8th c. Jerusalem Isaiah. Hays’s analysis is sensitive to scholarly debates—on both ends of the spectrum—that either over- or under-estimate the influence of neighboring traditions on Israel. Instead, he provides the probable opportunities for cultural influence and interprets Isaiah’s language within this context. Hays is careful not to overemphasize the similarities between Judah’s death ideologies and aWA evidence, but he sometimes places disproportionate weight on Egyptian influence than might be appropriate. First, archaeological evidence suggests that Egyptian cultural influence declined in the Levant during Iron Age I.⁶¹ Second, though Egypt’s death ideologies have few similarities with Semitic traditions, Hays emphasizes the similarities more than the differences. Even though Hays’s primary goal is to examine rhetorical uses of death imagery in Isaiah, his contribution provides a

⁵⁹ Bloch-Smith, Judahite Burial Practices, 23.
⁶⁰ Hays, Death in the Iron Age II.
much needed, contemporary review of Judahite and comparative death and burial, the first since the early 1990s.

**Death and Burial and Redactional History**

The scarcity of explicit references to death, burial, and ancestor rites in biblical literature has puzzled scholars who recognize a WA cultural influences on Israel. Pitard observed: “One of the most striking aspects about the Hebrew Bible is how little it actually talks about death and the afterlife. The subject does not form a primary theme in any book of the Hebrew Bible. What we find instead are (at best) scant, rather off-hand, ambiguous and non-specific references to the subject in a variety of contexts.”

While the HB lacks a discrete composition that singularly focuses on death or the afterlife, I posit that death and burial emerge alongside primary themes in ancient Israelite literature, including in Numbers, Isaiah (esp. Chaps. 1-39), Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Qoheleth. Furthermore, death and burial formulae provide an organizational scheme in the Deuteronomistic History; and several ancestral traditions hinge upon the death and burial of patriarchs and matriarchs.

Several scholars consider how historical forces may have led to the purposeful limitation of death, burial, and afterlife references within the HB. For Hays, “The limited extent of the attestations in the biblical text is due more to a theological decision of Yahwistic scribes than it is to an actual absence of ancestor cult in pre-exilic Judah and Israel.” In other words, Hays posits that the redactional history of the biblical text accounts for the dearth of textual references.

In “Death and Afterlife: the Biblical Silence,” R. E. Friedman and S. D. Overton argue that earlier versions of the biblical material included additional references to death, burial, and the ancestors. For example, the proper name for the underworld, Sheol, appears only nine times in

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biblical Hebrew prose (all within the J composition). As stated above, Johnston concludes from this lexical evidence that the afterlife was of little concern to ancient Israelites. Because both Deuteronomistic legal material and the Priestly Holiness Code restrict interaction between the living and the dead, however, scholars posit that references to Sheol, death, and burial were either redacted or eliminated in the course of Priestly and Deuteronomistic revisions. Similarly, Blenkinsopp posits a programmatic reduction of references to death and burial activities, particularly those related to ancestor reverence. The 7th c. BCE deuteronomistic reforms included centralization of worship within the context of an increasingly centralized state. Cultic and political ideologies drove efforts to limit kin-based religious practices at local sanctuaries. H. Niehr examines the religio-political background for probable changes in death and burial ideology within the textual evidence. He argues that during the monarchical period, dead ancestors were an important—if not the most important—members of a family unit. Through their writings, however, both prophetic and priestly circles implicitly created distance between the YHWH cult and the dead.

Examining the available textual and material evidence, K. van der Toorn concludes that while ancient Israel included a pervasive cult devoted to deceased ancestors, biblical authors,

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compilers, and redactors systematically removed references to rites that were contrary to emerging Yahwism, resulting in a “hidden heritage” of religious practice.\textsuperscript{69} C. Hays suggests that efforts to limit household religious practice in favor of centralized Yahwistic devotion dates to the 8\textsuperscript{th} c. BCE and is reflected already in the prophecies of Jerusalem Isaiah.\textsuperscript{70} From the social anthropological perspective, Mary Douglas suggests that 7\textsuperscript{th} c. Neo-Assyrian imperial policies led to an atmosphere in which Israel’s youth—including a young King Josiah—sought revolutionary change from their predecessor’s religious practices. Her essay, “One God, No Ancestors,” interprets Josianic efforts to eliminate ancestor reverence as the consequence of Israel’s continued position as vassal to Assyria. Douglas suggests that emboldened youth witnessed their disenfranchised elders and sought to make their own mark on religious tradition and practice.\textsuperscript{71}

Despite efforts to minimize worship surrounding—and literary references to—Israel’s ancestors, biblical texts hint at a continuation of ancestral reverence through the 6\textsuperscript{th} c. BCE. In particular, texts in Jeremiah allude to continued reverence of ancestors throughout the exilic era. Jeremiah 2:26-27, for example, references Israelites engaged in idol worship, calling inanimate objects “mother” and “father”:

As a thief is shamed when caught, 
so the house of Israel shall be shamed—
they, their kings, their officials,
their priests, and their prophets,
who say to a tree, “You are my father,”
and to a stone, “You gave me birth.”
For they have turned their backs to me,
and not their faces.

\textsuperscript{69} van der Toorn, \textit{Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel}, 206. K. van der Toorn’s primary evidence for the existence of a cult of the ancestors is theophoric use of kingship names. For a critique of van der Toorn’s analysis, see Levenson, \textit{Resurrection}, 54–58.
\textsuperscript{70} Hays, \textit{Death in the Iron Age II}, 175.
Moreover, scholars point to several references to marzeaḥ (funerary feasts and/or offerings) in prophetic texts (see Chapter 2) as evidence of interaction between the living and the dead.\footnote{E.g., Isa 5:11-13; 28:1-4, 7-8; 59:9-57:13; Jer 16:5-9; Ezek 8:7-13; 39:17-20; Amos 2:7-8; 4:1; 6:1-7; Hos 4:16-19; 9:1-6. John McLaughlin, The Marzeaḥ in the Prophetic Literature: References and Allusions in Light of the Extra-Biblical Evidence (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Suriano, “Breaking Bread with the Dead.”} Together, implicit and explicit references to death, burial, the deceased, afterlife, and mortuary rites shine a diffused light upon ancient Israelite death and burial ideology. The distribution of extant references in the HB suggests that ancient Israelites were concerned with proper burial and avoided situations that could result in deprivation of burial. While I hesitate to say that the biblical thought-world included a structured system of death and kin—a view H. Brichto espouses,\footnote{Brichto, “Kin, Cult, Land and Afterlife,” 3, 5.} I do affirm that one must examine both implicit and explicit references to non-burial in order to achieve greater clarity about how ancient Israelite authors utilized literary allusions to corpses. Despite the relative scarcity of explicit references to death and burial practices in HB texts, surviving references suggest that death and proper care for the deceased greatly concerned ancient Israelites (see Chapters 3 and 4). The theological perspectives of TANAKH’s redactors and compilers may have led them to expunge the biblical record of many explicit references to death, burial, and the afterlife. Nevertheless, the majority of references to non-burial have yet to be identified and placed within this larger framework, leaving scholars with an incomplete picture of death and burial ideology in ancient Israel. This dissertation demonstrates that the biblical authors’ literary stock included multiple references to death and to burial and its deprivation.

**Death and Burial Formulary**

Epilogue formulary, in general, and death and burial formulary (DBF), in particular, have garnered significant scholarly attention. Specifically, source-critical analyses recognize that the DBF both impart valuable information to biblical prose and serve as editorial elements within
larger narrative blocks.\textsuperscript{74} Helga Weippert’s seminal work on the function of epilogic formulary within the redactional framework of the DH is representative of this endeavor.\textsuperscript{75} For the purposes of this dissertation, a brief review of DBF suffices to present text- and source-critical trends in death and burial studies.

A very common euphemism for death, “and PN lay/slept with his fathers,” occurs frequently throughout the Pentateuch and DH, most often referring to leaders such as royalty, Moses, and Jacob (Gen 15:15; 46:30; 31:16). This formulaic phrase has triggered several textual studies. The crux of interpretive questioning has been whether the phrase indicates death, peaceful death, or burial, a combination of the three, or another aspect of death and burial ideology connected perhaps to the perceived, continued existence of deceased ancestors.

Variations of this phrase include the replacement of “lies with” (שׁכב) with other euphemisms of death. The phrases “gathered to one’s people” (Gen 25:8, 17; 35:29; 49:33; Num 20:24; 27:13; 31:2; Deut 32:50) and “gathered to his/its fathers” (Judg 2:10; 2 Kgs 22:20; 2 Chron 34:28) appear as similar, related euphemisms for death.\textsuperscript{76} Indeed, as I demonstrate in Chapter 3, to be “gathered” often stands alone as an indication of death (Num 20:26; 27:13; Isa 57:1; Ezek 34:29; Hos 4:3), just as sleeping can be used alone to signify death (e.g., Job 3:13; 14:12; Ps 13:3; Jer 51:39, 57). Lexical associations with these phrases help to confirm the existence of positive associations between death and the ability to maintain connections between kin. That the promise of burial with one’s ancestral kin as part and parcel of God’s blessing is apparent in the narrative

\begin{itemize}
\item \bibitem{suriano} Suriano, \textit{The Politics of Dead Kings}, esp. 23–34 provides an extensive review of the history of scholarship of epilogue formulary.
\item \bibitem{weippert} Weippert, “Die ‘deuteronomistischen’ Beurteilungen Der Könige von Israel Und Juda Und Das Problem Der Redaktion Der Königsbücher.”
\end{itemize}
describing the sealing of the covenant between Abram and YHWH (Gen 15:18-21; 17). Directly after the promise of land and freedom for Abram’s offspring, God promises the patriarch: “You shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a ripe old age” (Gen 15:15).

Baruch Halpern and David Vanderhooft’s examination of DBF in the book of Kings provides the most thorough analysis of the history of interpretation of the euphemism of lying with one’s fathers/ancestors. Most DBF include the following elements: 1) notice of death; and 2) description of burial (with or without reference to his fathers [“wyškb PN ṁʾbtyw]) in a specific location, region, or town. On a literary level, DBF serve as epilogues to royal accounts; together with introductions, they frame the historiographical narrative of kings’ careers.

Variations in the formulary provide interpretive clues not only to authorial activity, but also to the demise of the king and the historiographer’s judgment concerning his reign. As Halpern and Vanderhooft note, kings who die by violent or unnatural means are frequently treated differently (often simply wayyāmot, “and he died”). B. J. Alfink argued that the phrase “sleeping with [one’s] father” referred not to burial in an ancestral grave, but to a peaceful death. Despite identifiable trends in DBF, a straightforward analysis of DBF does not provide concrete clarification of the phrase’s possible meaning. For example, the DBF of such personas as Abraham (Gen 25:7-11) and Moses (Deut 34:1-8) mar the results of any analysis of the terminology. Their DBF are so extraordinary to account for the degree of honor imparted upon death. In the Yahwist narrative of Israel’s deathbed request, the phrase cannot indicate burial, for burial is to occur only after transportation of Israel’s corpse, after he “lies with his fathers” (Gen

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Moreover, when YHWH informs Moses that he is about to “lie with (his) fathers” (Deut 31:16), there can be no association with burial in an identifiable ancestral tomb, for the text later makes clear that Moses is buried in an undisclosed location known only to YHWH (Deut 34:6). Moses’ esteemed role warrants the highest degree of honor in burial treatment; nevertheless, stereotypical DBF appears in his death report.

Various hypotheses concerning the meaning of the phrase have appeared in recent decades, including: the act of depositing the bones of the deceased in the grave; a separate phase in the transition to the afterlife; the union of the deceased with ancestors in Sheol; the occurrence of an ideal, natural death; or a euphemism for death and burial. Halpern and Vanderhooft agree formally with Driver and Alfink that the phrase “to sleep with [one’s] father” may be understood euphemistically as a reference to (a peaceful) death, since death clearly is the “logical referent.”

They get closest to the possible meaning in a footnote, however: “…examples from comparative religion may provide a conceptual link…permitting clarification. Speculatively, the phrase may relate to the passage of life to significant status as an ancestor.” Bloch-Smith, acknowledging the variety in usage of related formulary, writes: “The formula….certainly evokes the image of the deceased reunited with family members in the ancestral tomb.” There is something distinct about joining one’s ancestors that happens neither at the moment of death, nor at the moment of burial. Textual variations disallow such direct associations between the formula and a specific rite. A. Porter discusses how aWA textual and material evidence suggests that funerary rites did

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85 Ibid., 188. n. 25.
86 Judahite Burial Practices, 110.
not simply serve to discard of human corpses. Rather, rites aided in the transition from an identity of a deceased human being to that of an “ancestor.”

Matthew Suriano’s recent in-depth analysis of DBF provides a fresh examination of this genre. He places DBF’s importance not within the Deuteronomistic redactional schema, but argues that DBF carry political import within their literary context. For Suriano, each DBF within the books of Kings is part of a larger construct of political ideology “embodied by the passage of power from father to son.” The DBF serve as indicators of succession, not simply of death and burial. By extension, Suriano argues, the death and burial (of kings, in particular) have political significance. Throughout his work, Suriano demonstrates that examination of DBF not only uncovers editorial intention within the DH, but also reveals an author’s ideological framework.

Issues of the quality of death and security of succession are integral to the DBF. The completeness of DBF often indicates the level of honor afforded a king upon his death. Patterns in DBF appear to depend on the king’s origin. In the Southern Kingdom of Judah, nearly all of the DBF of Davidic kings include burial notices in the royal tomb in the City of David. The consistency of DBF for the southern kings creates a refrain-like message throughout the narrative accounts. And, as Stavrakopoulou notes:

This schematic portrayal of an unbroken line of ancestors and descendants, stretching into the past and in the future, functions as a conceptual shorthand to emphasize the divinely-sponsored longevity of the Davidic house, its religio-political legitimacy as the guardian of YHWH’s specially-selected dwelling place, and its permanent occupation of that place.

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87 Porter, “Communities in Conflict: Death and the Contest for Social Order in the Euphrates River Valley,” 1, 9. I discuss Porter’s hypothesis further in Chap. 2.
88 Suriano, The Politics of Dead Kings, 49.
89 Also see Halpern and Vanderhooft, “The Editions of Kings in the 7th-6th Centuries BCE,” 185.
90 Suriano, The Politics of Dead Kings, 27.
In sharp contrast to the soundly patterned southerly DBF, the regnal accounts of the Northern kings include inconsistent death and burial reports. Kings from Israel are more likely to be left unburied, or buried outside of the ancestral tomb, than are kings from Judah. The contrast between the North and the South is—of course—a central feature in the books of Kings.

Examining the DBF makes the contrast even shaper, for the DBF are a “means of elevating the ancestral heritage of the Davidic line and its fixed location in Jerusalem whilst at the same time denigrating the weaker ancestral pedigree of the Northern kings and their transient possession of the land.”

Not all examples of incomplete DBF may be categorized as threats or actualizations of non-burial. Indeed, review of DBF demonstrates that some of the less full reports may or may not include burial. Further, some DBF exclude mourning information, and others exclude burial location. In Chapter 5, I examine the dynastic curse of non-burial against the house of Jeroboam, demonstrating that the non-burial motif functions as the extreme opposite of a full DBF.

Following Suriano, I argue that non-burial too reveals an author’s perspective. As a literary motif appearing within certain DBF, variations in burial notices and non-burial notices reflect authorial perspective.

Non-Burial Research: Delbert Hillers

In his 1964 investigation of treaty-curses in the HB, Delbert Hillers examined canonical references to non-burial, noting in particular similarities between the “curse of no burial” and aNE examples of treaty-curses. Essential components of Hillers’s brief (two-page) analysis were his acknowledgement of the frequency of the “curse of no burial” in the HB, his description of such curses as “quite stereotyped,” and his identification of the three distinct elements they

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92 Ibid.
93 Charts included in Halpern and Vanderhooft, “The Editions of Kings in the 7th-6th Centuries BCE,” pp. 189-190, demonstrate such variety in DBF.
94 Hillers, Treaty-Curses, 68–69.
typically exhibit: 1) the corpse is left unburied; 2) the corpse is left for scavengers (i.e., as food for birds and beasts of the land); and 3) the corpse is refuse (dung, devastation, etc.) upon the ground. Hillers argued against C. Steuernagel claim that non-burial passages throughout the HB stem from Jeremiah. Instead, Hillers stated that the “curse of no burial” is a very common traditional curse, stemming neither from Jeremiah or the author of Deut 28. Still, Hillers’s presentation suggests that prophetic references to non-burial are a direct reflection of Mesopotamian treaty-curse and maqlû traditions.

As the biblical material analyzed in Chapter 4 demonstrates, the vast majority of citations of non-burial threats display characteristic terminology; however, they diverge in precise construction, suggesting that non-burial may have been a literary motif, rather than a literary type or form. Hillers’s typology of a distinct “curse of no burial” has limited the identification of the variety of other post-mortem threats, occasioning attempts to make the biblical data fit the comparative model. While using comparative evidence remains essential for studying this literary motif, the previous practice of forming rigid delineations between “threat,” “oath,” and “curse” according to external criteria has impeded efforts to understand the contextualized

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95 Ibid., 69.
96 Ibid., 31n.2; cf. Carl Steuernagel, Deuteronomium Und Josua: Und Allgemeine Einleitung in Den Hexateuch (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1900), 99–105.
97 Hillers, Treaty-Curses, 33.
98 In the academic study of biblical literature, “form” (translated from the GermanGattung) refers to both the structure and the genre of a literary unit. On this distinction, see John Barton, Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1996), 31–32; Gene M. Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament (Guides to Biblical Scholarship; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1971), 12. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (www.oed.com), “motif” is defined generally as, “A distinctive, significant, or salient theme or idea; a recurrent or prevalent characteristic”; in the field of Literary Criticism, “motif” is defined as, “A particular subject for imaginative treatment, esp. an incident, situation, ethical problem, etc., embodying a central idea that informs a work; a recurrent theme, subject, or image.” I use “motif” in the current study, because it allows for greater variety in literary structure and various socio-literary contexts in which threats of non-burial appear.
functions of references to non-burial within biblical texts.\textsuperscript{99} Past scholarship has relied on Hillers’s form-critical and comparative work, which identified several occurrences of a stereotypical “curse of no burial.” But his brief discussion described neither the variety of non-burial threats in the biblical literature, nor the implications of their varied usage.\textsuperscript{100} This inadequacy led to two, interrelated problems. First, scholars tasked with understanding texts in which the non-burial motif appears rely on limited information, with hardly any critical analysis.\textsuperscript{101} Second, because the majority of work on references to non-burial focuses on the treaty-curse genre, comparative and form critical studies provide the primary avenue of interpretation for non-burial images.

Despite the limited research on threats of non-burial, treatments of death ideology in ancient Israel recognize that the deprivation of burial was a much-feared phenomenon. As Brichto writes, “…men feared death itself less than the deprivation of burial, for eternal rest and eternal happiness were at stake. The most terrible punishment, reserved for those guilty of great crimes, was the privation of burial.”\textsuperscript{102}

Hillers’s project stands as one example of comparative scholarship that focuses on aWA treaties and biblical documents. In the mid-20\textsuperscript{th} c., several prominent scholars compared extra-biblical documents (especially Esarhaddon’s Vassal Treaties) to curses in the book of


\textsuperscript{100} Hillers, \textit{Treaty-Curses}, 68–69.

\textsuperscript{101} See, e.g., W. Boyd Barrick, \textit{The King and the Cemeteries: Toward a New Understanding of Josiah’s Reform} (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 215. Further, see Brichto’s brief treatment of non-burial, “Kin, Cult, Land and Afterlife,” 35–38. Brichto does not rely upon Hillers’s characterization of non-burial as a treaty-curse. Rather, Brichto includes non-burial and corpse exposure as aspects of his discussion of kin relations and the land. Because of the relative paucity of scholarship on threats of non-burial in context, Brichto’s analysis falls short of providing full interpretations of the passages he discusses.

\textsuperscript{102} Brichto, “Kin, Cult, Land and Afterlife,” 4–5.
Deuteronomy and the prophetic corpus. These studies, alongside Hillers’s comparative treatment of the curse of non-burial in Deuteronomy 28:26, set the stage for future studies on biblical references to non-burial.

Non-Burial Research: Treaty-Curses

D. Hillers’s identification of the “curse of no burial” as a treaty curse flows directly from Deut 28:26, “Your corpses shall be food for every bird of the air and animal of the earth, and there shall be no one to frighten them away.” Here, non-burial appears as one curse among the many curses aimed at those who do not adhere to the Deuteronomistic articulation of Israel’s covenant with YHWH.

Scholars often have noted formal similarities between the construction of the Deuteronomistic law and aWA suzerainty treaties. In particular, the nature and form of the Hittite suzerainty treaties display remarkable affinities with the Deuteronomistic covenant, each (often) consisting of six elements: 1) preamble; 2) historical prologue; 3) treaty stipulations to which the vassal nation must adhere; 4) instructions for the location and public proclamation of the treaty documents and copies; 5) list of witnesses, often consisting of deities of the suzerain and vassal; and 6) blessing and curse formulae that spell out the consequences of either adherence to, or desecration of, the treaty for the vassal. The final, sixth section of treaties is of particular importance for this study. In Deuteronomistic law, the blessings and curses appear in Deut 28:1-46.

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104 McCarthy, Treaty and Covenant; Hillers, Treaty-Curses; Wiseman, “The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon.”

How is the curse of non-burial in Deut 28:26 similar to extra-biblical evidence, and on what levels can we make judicious comparisons?

G. E. Mendenhall’s 1954 publication on treaty forms led scholars to explore similarities between Hittite treaties and the Deuteronomic law. Furthermore, the publication of the Sefire treaties and the Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon (VTE) opened the door to further, comparative analyses of biblical law forms and those of varying aWA societies. D. J. McCarthy, in particular, noted that while the Deuteronomic law followed the pattern of Hittite treaties, the contents of some of its sections contained striking similarities to VTE: “... the essential elements of the form [are] stipulations, the gods list or invocations, and the curse formulae which are invariably found in the treaties from Eannatum of Lagash to Esarhaddon of Assyria.”

Moshe Weinfeld further examined the curse formulae and remarked at the parallels of form, content, and order:

Not only are the curses of leprosy, blindness, exposure of the slain, sexual violation of the wife, pillage, and the enslavement of children common to both. They occur in almost identical order, with the single exception of the curse of pestilence and unburied corpses, which in the VTE follows the affliction of blindness while in Deuteronomy it preceded the imprecation concerning leprosy.

Despite the minor change in ordering in Deuteronomy, the language and literary context of its references to non-burial echo the comparative neo-Assyrian treaties:

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106 Mendenhall, “Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition.”
109 Weinfeld, Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School, 118.
Scholars have debated the degree to which the authors of Deuteronomy relied upon treaties in their composition. Looking particularly at the curse formulae, Weinfeld posited direct borrowing by the DH:

Apart from the VTE and Deut. 28 no such series of maledictions has as yet been discovered. Since this is the case and since the order of the curses is explicable only against a Mesopotamian background [aligning with the order of the Mesopotamian pantheon], we may conclude that a Judean scribe transposed an entire and consecutive series of maledictions from Assyrian treaty documents to the book of Deuteronomy. Others have suggested that the curses in Deuteronomy are directly dependent upon an Assyrian Vorlage.

In the decades following the initial exuberance for comparing these documents, scholars have moderated their positions. Moderate interpretations now acknowledge the similarities between Deuteronomy and VTE, but also recognize that the curses included in both stem from a common stock of traditional curse language also appearing in other mediums, including royal annals, kudurrus, and tomb inscriptions (see Chapter 2). Nicholson, for example, asks if differences between structure and purpose in Deuteronomy and in the other treaties require scholars to admit that the biblical “authors were not concerned with producing, whether in form or style or contents, simply a literary and theological replica of treaties.” Indeed, the use of varied traditional material suggests a common literary stock of blessings and curses that influenced many writers, Israelites and others. As Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrate, biblical authors also used non-burial language in various genres and literary contexts. If scholars recognize differences as well as similarities, it is most judicious not to overstate the level of direct dependence. Rather, as Nicholson observes, “. . . Deuteronomy shares with treaties, boundary stones, and law codes a curse list; but that is far from saying that it sought to imitate the form of

110 Ibid., 122; Weinfeld, “Traces of Treaty Formulae in Deuteronomy.”
112 Nicholson, God and His People, 72.
any one of them.” Clearly, the trend in treaty studies is to acknowledge that despite obvious similarities, it is difficult to posit direct borrowing between aWA and Israelite compositions.

Recent scholarship on the relationship between curses in Deuteronomy and in aWA documents concurs that curse motifs were used in several socio-literary contexts. Two sections at the 2012 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature provided opportunities for several scholars to present new analyses of the extent to which biblical authors relied up (or were influenced by) aWA treaty curses. The emerging consensus is that biblical authors did not borrow directly; rather, language appearing in treaty contexts (e.g., Esarhaddon’s Succession Treaty and the book of Deuteronomy) attest to cultural norms for treaty composition. A conjectured, common cultural stock of literary motifs better explains how and why specific curses (including non-burial curses) appear in diverse literary contexts. Variations in form, context, organization, and lexical elements suggest that direct borrowing most likely did not occur; rather, the widespread transmission of treaty-documents throughout the provinces of aWA empires familiarized many individuals with treaty language.

Non-Burial Research: Source-, Form-, and Ideological-Criticism

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Outside of treaty-curse studies, investigation of references to non-burial is limited, as the following review makes plain. Taking his cue from Hillers, Patrick Cronauer has examined the curse of non-burial in the Naboth passages (1 Kings 21; 2 Kings 9) using source, textual, and redaction criticism. He argues that Hillers’s description of the curse’s stereotypical tripartite structure does not adequately account for all occurrences of the literary motif in the biblical record. Nevertheless, Cronauer applies Hillers’s notion of a stereotypical formulation of a “curse of no burial” to his source-critical analysis of texts concerning the deaths of Israelite monarchs. He suggests that variations in formulary indicate compositional gaps.

In two brief essays, Morton Cogan examines the interrelated themes of non-burial, disinterment, and corpse exposure in prophetic literature, especially the book of Jeremiah. In particular, Cogan notes that characteristic terminology appears in references to non-burial. Kevin Cathcart observes that two texts in the book of Nahum exhibit parallels with Phoenician, Akkadian, and Aramaic treaty-curses and suggests similarities to references to non-burial in the book of Jeremiah. Each of these approaches follows the perspective of D. Hillers. Form-critical analysis and comparative evidence from Mesopotamian treaties identify biblical references to non-burial as formulaic treaty-curses.

Matthew Suriano’s examination of formulaic epilogues in the book of Kings focuses upon the socio-political significance of formulaic death and burial notices (including threats of

non-burial) when they are interpreted in light of corresponding funerary rites and burial ideology. He also argues that the interrelationship of formulaic motifs becomes clear when we use “theoretical models adapted from social scientific and anthropological studies.” Suriano analyzes literary motifs not in terms of their redactional history, but in order to disclose how epilogues function thematically to bracket dynastic reigns. Moreover, his approach highlights the biblical authors’ freedom to employ stereotypical terminology in dynamic ways, using formulaic not as place holders within the text, but as crucial signals of literary judgments. Suriano’s application of text-criticism alongside socio-literary analysis indicates a shift in the interpretation of death and burial formulary.

Francesca Stavrakopoulou’s article on Ezekiel 39 examines corpse abuse and non-burial as central aspects of the Gog pericope, which function not only as sources of shame, or examples of corpse defilement (a frequent concern of Ezekiel), but as fundamental aspects of the narrative’s purpose. Stavrakopoulou contrasts the role of corpses in Ezekiel 39 with the vision of dry bones in Ezekiel 37 (in which Ezekiel strolls amongst piles of dry bones, unconcerned with issues of defilement), noting that both passages use the motif of corpse exposure, but to different ends.

Her approach combines rhetorical-ideological interpretations of biblical texts and anthropological

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theory, and she employs cultural concepts such as identity and social relationality.\textsuperscript{123} Stavrakopoulou posits that honorable and dishonorable treatments of human remains articulate and alter the deceased person’s identity and relationship status: “the methods and means of dealing with a corpse constitute a process effecting and maintaining the transformation of the deceased from a social person into a nonliving entity, enabling the living community to negotiate and reframe their relationship with that individual.”\textsuperscript{124}

Stavrakopoulou identifies several features of post-mortem abuse in Ezek 39:1-16. In only a few verses, enemies are killed and plundered, and the corpses of defeated armies are abandoned on the battlefield (vv. 1-10) for consumption by birds of prey and scavenging animals (vv. 4, 17-20). Deviating from other instances of corpse abuse, the text includes details of the burial of Gog and his soldiers in a mass grave (v. 11-16). Instead of interpreting these verses in terms of defilement of the land from corpse impurities, or as treaty-curse enactments (as do most scholars), Stavrakopoulou uses social-anthropological concepts to illumine the proto-apocalyptic treatment of Gog and his army:

The denial or removal of the deceased from their culturally-expected final resting place was a visual and violent act of war, imposing un-rest upon the defeated party \textit{ad infinitum}. The misuse or ill-treatment of the graves and/or corpses of a defeated enemy served as an important public, graphic reminder of the military, political, and territorial power of the victor, as demonstrated by biblical and extra-biblical references to and illustrations of piles of unburied bodies left at city gates.\textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{123} For her methodological approach, see “Gog’s Grave,” 70.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 67.
The application of social-anthropological and warfare theory to the Gog pericope enables Stavrakopoulou to provide an innovative interpretation of a challenging passage that is a marked departure from the comparative and form-critical work on non-burial of the mid-20th c.

Olyan’s influential work on death and burial rites within the broader framework of ritualized behavior recognizes the rhetorical implications of expressions of non-burial in biblical passages. Olyan posits that—as ritualized violence—corpse abuse serves specific goals. Frequently, ritualized violence seeks to destroy the identity of the victim while simultaneously strengthening the identity of the perpetrator. Moreover, Olyan suggests, the nature of interpersonal relationships changes when violence acts occur. Several recent studies demonstrate Olyan’s important influence upon the study of ritualized violence in ancient Israel. First, T.M. Lemos’ recent work assesses the intended results of ritualized acts of violence (including corpse abuse). Lemos suggests that many stereotypical terms in biblical references to corpse abuse signal an effort to alter the identity of the victim. For example, decapitation, skin flaying, and casting corpses upon the field are most often associated with livestock. When one performs such acts against a human enemy, Lemos argues, the enemy is transformed from a person to a non-person. Second, Jacob Wright’s recent scholarship analyzes examples of ritualized violence against urban populations and infrastructure. Wright demonstrates that cities

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and their inhabitants are treated like vulnerable victims (e.g., women, corpses) in biblical and aWA texts and pictorial reliefs. 129

In Chapter 6, I examine how non-burial modifies identity and relationality. Biblical authors reshape Israel’s identity and its relationship with YHWH when they state that Israel itself suffers post-mortem abuse and non-burial (literally and figuratively). As the agent of post-mortem assaults, YHWH’s image as victor is fortified over and against other common images of aWA power—i.e., against other Mesopotamian rulers.

**Methodological Considerations:**

This dissertation avoids remaining within a single methodological approach to biblical historiography as it relates to death and burial studies. Following Saul Olyan, Christopher Hays, and Francesca Stavrakopoulou, I interpret biblical data using tools from literary criticism in conjunction with extra-biblical evidence. Furthermore, I analyze biblical passages using the tools of rhetorical criticism in order to determine how and why biblical authors employed the non-burial motif.

**Rhetorical Criticism and Biblical Studies**

As referenced above, comparative and form critical studies were first to be employed to non-burial studies. These approaches continue to reveal important elements in passages in which curses of non-burial appear in treaty/covenant contexts. Nevertheless, previous studies have limited the identification of several references to non-burial that do not align with the formal

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generic descriptions of the “curse of no burial.” As a corrective to the limitations of form-critical analysis alone, rhetorical critical analysis follows directly from form-critical questions. James Muilenberg introduced rhetorical criticism to biblical studies in his 1968 Presidential Address to the Society of Biblical Literature.\(^\text{130}\) In response to an earlier request from his graduate students, Muilenberg focused less on formal characteristics of texts and more on the rhetorical nature of composition, utilizing tools from the fields of stylistics and aesthetic criticism.\(^\text{131}\) In response to suggestions that rhetorical criticism is not a distinct method of biblical interpretation, Muilenberg responded that his approach was not a distinct method, but a project promoting “literary sensitivity.” Rather than create an entirely new method of biblical interpretation, Muilenberg and his students incorporated several methods in order to discover new meanings in biblical literature.\(^\text{132}\) Originally intended as a reform of form criticism and corrective to historical criticisms, which Muilenberg believed had overreached their goal in the dissection of biblical material into small units, rhetorical criticism sought to understand the “fabric” of the author’s mind, perceivable through the specific construction of the text.\(^\text{133}\) Muilenberg’s students have taken up his goal of text-centered, structural analysis of texts. Phyllis Trible and Jack Lundbom demonstrate how scholars with diverse aims can apply the tools of rhetorical criticism to myriad biblical corpora.\(^\text{134}\)

\(^{130}\) James Muilenburg, “Form Criticism and Beyond,” 1968.

\(^{131}\) Jack Lundbom, Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), xxxi.

\(^{132}\) Ibid., xxxii.

\(^{133}\) Brad E Kelle, Hosea 2: Metaphor and Rhetoric in Historical Perspective (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 28.

Brad E. Kelle has combined aspects of rhetorical criticism with historical-critical approaches. The structure of a passage and literary images and formulary employed provides key insights into the rhetorical intent of the author. Moreover, rhetorical analysis works best, Kelle suggests, when interpreters consider the general historical situation in which the literature was composed—or the situation of its intended audience. Kelle argues that one may identify the “rhetorical-historical situation” behind a biblical passage, thus determining why and how the author composed his document in one form, rather than another.135

The important interplay between author, text, and audience is crucial for discerning why biblical texts were composed as they were. As Michael V. Fox writes, “A study becomes rhetorical only when it removes a text from its ‘autonomy’ and inquires into the transaction between rhetor and audience, focusing on suasive intentions, techniques, and effects.”136 For the purposes of this dissertation, I posit that one cannot understand the multivalent meanings associated with literary references to death and burial without first understanding the rhetorical-historical situation of the text and the cultural stock whence literary motifs arose. After establishing the cultural context within which ancient Israelite authors encountered and expressed a variety of beliefs about death and burial (Chaps. 2 and 3), I focus specifically upon biblical references to non-burial within their socio-literary contexts. I approach the biblical text through the lens of historical-rhetorical criticism, which seeks to understand the message of the author, delivered through intentioned use of language, to a specific audience that understood the nuances of the language chosen. All of these interactions occur in a socio-literary-historical context.

135 Kelle, Hosea 2, 27.
Scholars increasingly argue that rhetorical-historical criticism works best when merged with interdisciplinary pursuits. Interestingly, many recent studies on violence, in general, and death and burial, in particular, approach the biblical literature precisely in this fashion. Consider, for example, the work of Stavrakopoulou, Hays, Olyan, and Suriano, addressed above. In each of their studies, images of death, burial, and ancestors are placed in the socio-literary horizon in which they were written, taking into consideration the possible rhetorical intent of the author. Texts were composed with intention, and literary images of non-burial function within the intent of the author and the audience’s response.

Social-Scientific Approaches to Violence in Biblical Studies

Any scholarship concerning the violent outcomes of war, including the intentional deprivation of burial, must consider the social scientific research that informs our understanding. The field of biblical studies is indebted to Susan Niditch’s War in the Hebrew Bible, a field-changing publication that introduced the language still used by biblical scholars’ approaches to violence in the HB. Niditch’s influential evaluation of ancient Israelite military ideology incorporates literary-criticism with social anthropological studies on warfare. Consider, for example, a recent collection of essays that incorporate Niditch’s work in order to discuss the

historical-rhetorical situation of biblical references to violence. Biblical texts are interpreted using the tools of rhetorical criticism in dialogue with findings from social-anthropology.\textsuperscript{139}

As an intentionally violent act, non-burial is illumined by social-anthropological studies. In particular, studies that examine ritualized violence and identity disclose cross-cultural norms applicable to ancient Israelite and \textit{aWA} references to post-mortem abuse.\textsuperscript{140} Inherent in the pronouncement of non-burial threats is the concept that a deceased person’s physical non-burial was not the central focus. Rather, the implications of non-burial for one’s post-mortem identity were of utmost importance. Meredith Chesson recently suggested that one important avenue in current mortuary research is the “nature of ‘personhood,’ identity, social memory, and social structures, including the nature of ‘social death’ and ‘biological death’.”\textsuperscript{141} In Chapter 2, I


discuss further how death and identity feature in social-anthropological studies. Like aWA threats of non-burial, passages in TANAKH that deploy non-burial language against Israel (its leaders and population) make claims about Israel’s current and future identity. The future identity of the victim is the true target of post-mortem abuse. Further, the agent’s reinforced identity frequently appears alongside the victim’s destroyed identity. The imposition of the literary weapon of non-burial threatens not only post-mortem abuse, but also “social death,” especially when the victim is a collective body (e.g., Israel). A contextualized study of non-burial should combine comparative studies and rhetorical-critical studies with findings from social-anthropology and archaeology. The remainder of this dissertation utilizes these multifaceted methodological approaches.

**Scope of Study**

References to non-burial appear in aWA literature from the 19th c. BCE to the 3rd c. CE. Chapter 2, while noting the range of examples from this sixteen centuries time span, will focus primarily on those cultures and chronological periods with which, and during which, ancient Israelite authors most likely had access. C. Hays notes: “One of those areas that needs further emphasis is the nature and degree of cultural and religious interaction between Judah and its imperial neighbors in the pre-exilic period, the Mesopotamians and the Egyptians. The specific socio-historical conduits through which cultural influence worked were often overlooked or omitted in biblical studies in the past.”\(^\text{142}\) Cultural interaction between Judah, Israel, and their aWA neighbors becomes evident as we compare the death and burial ideologies from different regions.

Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrate that while Israel shared some similarities with Egyptian death and burial ideology, its own ideology more closely resembles that of its west Semitic

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\(^{142}\) Hays, *Death in the Iron Age II*, 3.
neighbors. This may be due, in part, to Israel’s length of time under Assyrian and Babylonian dominance, geographical proximity, lingua franca, and the Assyrian practice of importing its culture into those of conquered nations. Egypt, by contrast, did not treat its vassal states thusly. As D. B. Redford writes: “In general, Egyptian culture transplanted poorly in western Asia. At no time can we detect a collective will in the Egyptian peoples towards promoting their own way of life beyond their Sinai frontiers, either by colonization or forcible conversion.” In addition to Egypt’s lack of willful propagation of its culture upon other societies, Israel aligned itself more with Mesopotamian culture than with Egyptian culture. In the absence of immediate military opposition, Israel understood itself as kin to many other societies in the Levant. Nevertheless, Egyptian tombs and funerary texts include references to non-burial that share similar terminology with Mesopotamian and Israelite references.

Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrate that the majority of biblical references to non-burial occur in literature that most likely originated Iron Age II, a time when aWA depictions of non-burial were more widespread and numerous. Biblical authors employed the motif of non-burial in their writings not because it appeared in treaties familiar to government officials, but because they understood that corpse exposure constituted a very real threat in interactions with Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian forces. Biblical texts from the pre-exilic to Second Temple periods illustrate that their authors referenced non-burial as a warning to change action before a possible destruction, or as a corrective for continuing disloyalty following the collapse of the Judean state in 587 BCE.

Progression of Dissertation Chapters

The chapters of this dissertation provide a comprehensive, contextualized survey of references to non-burial in the HB. Assisted by findings from historians of ancient Israelite religion and archaeologists, I review the death and burial ideologies of several aWA cultures (Chap. 2) and ancient Israel (Chap. 3), establishing the social contexts of the non-burial texts I will examine. In Chapter 2, I examine the death and burial ideologies of Israel’s aWA neighbors in order to understand the cultural context and literary stock from which the motif of non-burial arose. I identify basic cultural conceptions of death and the afterlife, the dead, and burial in order to highlight how Israel’s neighbors threatened non-burial through a wide variety of cultural media.

In Chapter 3, I review ancient Israel’s death and burial ideologies, establishing that ancient Israelites viewed honorable burial as a necessary rite. Burial patterns and funerary rites appear in biblical texts, and material finds contribute additional evidence. From this data, we can glean important information about ancient Israelite beliefs concerning death, the dead, and the afterlife.

In order to understand why biblical authors referenced non-burial, Chapters 2 and 3 establish the importance of burial and mourning rites. Lexical analyses of words related to death, the dead, and the afterlife/underworld illustrate how Israel and its neighbors understood death. Archaeological evidence for the preparation of the corpse and burial site provides further information about how different cultures valued burial and respect for corpses. Moreover, archaeological investigations have revealed a great deal about ancient conceptions of death, as well as fleshing out the reality of corpse abuse in military campaigns.144 Yet archaeological and comparative analyses alone cannot sufficiently explicate burial ideologies, and they surely cannot

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144 Bahrani, Rituals of War; Barrick, The King and the Cemeteries; Smoak, “Assyrian Siege Warfare Imagery and the Background of a Biblical Curse.”
explain deprivation of burial.\textsuperscript{145} Likewise, relying solely on biblical evidence leads to a less full picture of ancient religious ideologies and ritual behaviors.\textsuperscript{146} The historical and archaeological data presented in Chapters 2 and 3 establish the cultural background against which I will examine ancient Israelite threats of non-burial in Chapters 4 and 5.

In Chapter 4, I utilize textual evidence, including lexical and verbal clues, to identify approximately fifty references to non-burial in the HB. References are presented in their canonical order and in light of the five socio-literary characteristics present in most references to non-burial (agent, victim, method of abuse, reason for abuse, and intended result of abuse). These socio-literary interpretative categories illustrate both the variety of references to non-burial in the HB and the patterns that emerge from my analyses of them.

In Chapter 5, I focus on six examples of the non-burial motif—each within its literary context—and consider the rhetorical functions of each. Informed by literary context, lexical clues, and generic form and organization, I determine the specific genre of each reference to non-burial (e.g., threat, curse, taunt, allegory, prophetic judgment oracle, or lament). I pay particular attention to the socio-literary characteristics of non-burial references in order to determine how identity and relationality feature within each pericope.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I consider the implications of non-burial threats in the biblical literature with special attention to the impact of non-burial on identity formation and destruction. I will review the conclusions attained from the literary and rhetorical analyses in Chapters 4 and 5, and I ask—on a broader level—how ancient Israelite references to non-burial compare with other cultures’ uses of such imagery. It may seem obvious why authors threatened their enemies with corpse abuse and non-burial. Nevertheless, the question remains: why did biblical authors

\textsuperscript{145}Olyan, “Israelite Internment Ideology,” 602, n. 5.
choose violent images of warfare to describe their God’s ostensible treatment of YHWH’s own people?
Chapter 2
“*I made him more dead than he was before*”:
Death, Burial, and Non-Burial in ancient West Asia

Introduction

Israel did not exist in a social, geographic, or literary vacuum, and its worldview shows
signs of interactions with its neighbors. Ideological perspectives on death and burial in the HB
have direct association to the aWA environment of which Israel was a part. Hence, any
investigation of the deprivation of burial in Israelite literature must include an examination of
corollary post-mortem treatment in the aWA. In the material record spanning two millennia,
myriad socio-literary contexts in which references to non-burial appear include vassal treaties,
palace reliefs, tomb inscriptions, victory steles, succession treaties, boundary markers, epic
myths, ritual texts, and trans-generational loyalty oaths. This breadth of contexts demonstrates
that non-burial was part of the common stock of threats and curses in the aWA world, carrying
with it notions of loss of political and military might, shame, betrayal, loss of individual and
communal identity and reputation, and covenant infidelity. Moreover, non-burial played an
important role in political and military propaganda campaigns; and images of exposed, unburied
corpses appear in graphic detail in palace reliefs. We cannot know the extent to which depictions
of non-burial in royal propaganda align with the historical realities of Mesopotamian warfare; we
can presume, however, that in order for propaganda and threats to carry weight, some social
memory concerning the actualization of non-burial must have existed.

In this chapter, I examine cross-cultural perspectives on death and burial. I illustrate how
the non-burial motif impacts not only the immediate victim of post-mortem abuse, but conveys
extensive social implications. First, I present salient findings from the field of anthropological
archaeology that establish the relationship between a society’s death and burial ideology and that
society’s construction of identity. Next, I review death and burial ideologies from Israel’s aWA neighbors. We shall see that the purposeful deprivation of burial in the aWA cultural milieu often consisted of multiple elements of corpse abuse. The reasons and intended results of corpse abuse reveal that a primary goal of aWA non-burial was a multi-tiered transformation of identity. Threats of non-burial aimed to transform the perpetrator, victim, and community.

Examples of non-burial appear in several cultures that had opportunity to interact with ancient Israelite society—either directly or through cultural channels. Ancient Israel arose among smaller Western Semitic cultures in the midst of the era dominated by Mesopotamian imperial rule and Egyptian cultural influence. Comparative research in ancient Israel’s cultural connections to its environment, while often disagreeing on specific levels of “borrowing,” has shown that Israel participated in a shared literary and material heritage (including, e.g., loan words, treaty and legal language, type and shape of cooking utensils, military weaponry, and burial practices), even in a context where difference was asserted. I will consider death, burial, and non-burial ranging from the Sumerian burial remains and epic tradition, Phoenician and Egyptian tomb inscriptions, and the Mesopotamian literary record in order to demonstrate the cultural stock of non-burial imagery that may have influenced Israel. Judah and Israel’s cultural, religious, and material connections demonstrate important interaction between Judah and Israel and their neighbors.

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148 Hays, Death in the Iron Age II, 4.
As noted in Chap. 1, 20th century academic treatment of aWA and Israelite mortuary traditions fell upon an interpretive spectrum. The crux of division lay with the level to which each scholar understood ancient Israelite archaeological and literary evidence aligning with its aWA counterparts. Scholars on one end interpreted every possible example of a death cult as evidence to its widespread practice—others, of course, interpreted the same evidence with the opposite conclusions. In the last decade, several scholars have attempted to modify the findings of their predecessors, aiming to interpret the evidence not simply on comparative grounds, but also using tools from the social sciences and ideological-historical interpretation. The latest interpretations of the available data conclude—with more or less concurrence—that aWA cultures include some form of funerary and mortuary rites, which carry some resemblance to data available from Israelite material and written records.¹⁴⁹ I proceed in this chapter on the assumption that aWA and Israelite cultures had probable points of cultural influence resulting from trade, population movement, and cultural assimilation from political and/or military presence. As a foreshadowing of conclusions, I do not think that the complementary data provides definitive evidence of direct borrowing/copying of distinct phrases (such as curse formulae); rather, I proffer that similarities in stereotypical terminology, emphasis upon identity

¹⁴⁹ Several in depth surveys examine death and burial in aWA cultures (see, e.g., Bendt Alster, ed., Death in Mesopotamia: Papers Read at the XXVIe Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale (Rencontre assyriologique internationale; Copenhagen: Akademisk, 1980); Jan Assmann, Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt; Andrew Cohen, Death Rituals, Ideology, and the Development of Early Mesopotamian Kingship: Toward a New Understanding of Iraq’s Royal Cemetery of Ur (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Lewis, Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit; Scurlock, “Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Mesopotamian Thought”; John Taylor, Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 2001).) In each treatment of death and burial, scholars make note of the frequent references to corpse abuse and non-burial, however no full-treatment of post-mortem abuse in aWA and ancient Israel has been published. The goal of this dissertation is not to provide a full review of aWA death and burial ideology, but to provide the cultural frames within which references to non-burial appear. Further, I gather in this Chapter the majority of references to non-burial in published aWA inscriptions. After I review the comparative data in this Chapter, I will provide a full examination of the non-burial motif in ancient Israelite literature.
in the afterlife, and literary context suggest that the mechanisms of cultural influence provided a
region-wide stock of descriptive language concerning the deprivation of burial.

**Anthropological Archaeology of Death in ancient West Asia**

Specialists in social scientific fields, including social anthropologists, ethnographers, and
archaeologists, have long noted that a society’s mortuary program reveals significant information
regarding roles and identities within society. While some studies examine social structures
present within funerary rites, others observe how social status and/or identity may be revealed (or
altered) by post-mortem treatment. The Binford-Saxe program argued that variations in mortuary
treatment reflected one’s social rank within society. In his watershed publication, M. Parker
Pearson noted that “funerals are lively, contested events where social roles are manipulated,
acquired and discarded.” Furthermore, individual or group identities may be established,
strengthened, or weakened by the post-mortem treatment afforded to the person or group.

The recent publications of anthropological archaeologist J. Robb aid our discussion of
non-burial. Robb argues that the numerous types of specific burial rites within a given society
should not be seen as isolated acts. Instead, all burial rites are part of a broader, meaningful
mortuary program that reflects how that society understands the body. When a body is treated

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150 See Porter, “Dynamics of Death,” 2–7 for a review of social-anthropological finding on aWA
conceptions of death.
151 Lewis R. Binford, “Mortuary Practicies: Their Study and Potential,” in *Approaches to the Social
Dimensions of Mortuary Practices in a Mesolithic Population from Wadi Halfa, Sudan,” in *Approaches to
the Social Dimensions of Mortuary Practices* (ed. John A. Brown; Memoirs of the Society for American
152 Michael Parker Pearson, *The Archaeology of Death and Burial* (College Station: Texas A&M Univ.,
2001), 32.
154 Robb, “Burial Treatment as Transformations of Bodily Ideology,” 287; cf Scurlock, “Death and the
Afterlife in Ancient Mesopotamian Thought”; contra Schmidt, *Israel’s Beneficent Dead*. 
outside of the norm of its mortuary program, the variation reflects a particular judgment upon the body (and the person inhabiting it).\textsuperscript{155} Robb’s thesis consists of three related concepts of the body and identity, each of which greatly assists our examination of how aWA cultures interacted with a corpse on several related planes.

First, Robb argues that the human body may be understood through the concept of biographic narrative. The moment of death serves as a “major punctuation” in one’s lifespan, but it does not end the narrative.\textsuperscript{156} Robb writes that, “[as a] rite of transition, [a funerary ritual] puts a closing stamp on human biography, even as it may at the same time open up a new chapter in the social life of the dead.”\textsuperscript{157} The moment of death is not the end of a narrative, but it marks a significant transitional moment in one’s biography (or one nation’s history). As a transition from one segment of a population to another, death and burial does not necessarily close relationships; rather, it seeks to integrate the deceased into a different segment of the kinship group.\textsuperscript{158} In addition to transitioning the deceased person from one segment of the kinship group to another, mortuary rites also may impact the identity of the person. For example, Anne Porter has argued that mortuary rites, particularly those of Early Bronze Age Syria, function to transform deceased persons into “ancestors.”\textsuperscript{159} The purposeful deprivation of such rites, therefore, simultaneously prohibits the transformation of one’s identity (from a deceased person to an ancestor) and forbids the possibility of transition from living kin to the kinship group of deceased ancestors.

\textsuperscript{155} Robb’s perspective reflects the legacy of the Binford-Saxe model of mortuary practice, which understands mortuary rituals as reflective of status. Variations and/or deprivation of normative rites imply a change in status (or a comment on the status) of the deceased. Moving beyond the corporate nature of the Binford-Saxe approach, Robb incorporates individual identity in his analysis of mortuary programs. 

\textsuperscript{156} Robb, “Burial Treatment as Transformations of Bodily Ideology,” 288.

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., 293.

\textsuperscript{158} Metcalf and Huntington, \textit{Celebrations of Death}, 149.

\textsuperscript{159} Porter, “Dynamics of Death,” 1, 9.
The second concept in Robb’s thesis is the notion that the human body is a “social construction and locus of human production.” One cannot understand a society’s narrative concerning a human body until one understands how the body itself is cognized. The human body is not an autonomous object; it lives in relation to other bodies in a cultural context. Age, gender, production, and soul/spirit are just a few elements that construct a particular society’s concept of a “person.” Societies and their literature rarely explicitly state their definition of a social person; rather, one must examine social practices (e.g., burial) to understand bodily ideology. In the case of aWA and ancient Israelite conceptions of the body, one can turn to its funerary and burial rites in order to understand more clearly how the society understood personhood. Burial rites and death and burial reports often focus on a person’s re-union with ancestors (e.g., “he gathered to his fathers”). Burial sites, tomb construction, and the identities of other tomb inhabitants all suggest belief in an afterlife in which one gathers to one’s ancestors. A timely burial in an ancestral grave, with public mourning on the part of the living kin, speaks to the ancient Israelite concept of persons tied to their kin.

The third, related concept of Robb’s thesis describes the disposal of an object as a cultural act. As in nearly all cultures, aWA cultures viewed a living body as something distinct from a non-living body; furthermore, a human body is viewed as fundamentally different from other types of objects. In the case of burial, the distinction is clear. As Robb points out, “the ways in which it is socially possible to dispose of a dead body are highly prescribed and differ sharply from ways of disposing of a dead pet, a dead cut of steak, a dead television, or a dead letter.” The ways in which a society treats a non-living body says a great deal about how that society views the body itself. Several scholars note that the dead body itself has agency, as

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161 Ibid., 288–289.
162 Ibid., 289.
shown by its treatment from one culture to the next. In ancient Israel’s priestly corpus, for example, the presence of a dead body demands a prescribed series of actions. On one hand, an ancient Israelite was obligated to provide a timely burial for a corpse. On the other hand, a corpse was a polluting object for the entire assembly; and any contact with a corpse required purification (Num 19:11-20). Accordingly, laws limit contact with a corpse; especially in cases of contact between the priest and the corpse (Lev 21:1-4). Nevertheless, texts do not presuppose that no burial is better than the possibility of transmission of corpse pollution. In contrast, Egyptian religious hierarchy interacted directly with corpses. The god Anubis was described as an embalmer who guarded corpses and accompanied spirits to the afterlife, and his attendants frequently attended to corpse preparation before burial.

The agency of the dead body and the corollary post-mortem treatment underscore that variation from the socially-expected funerary and mortuary rites matter. Social anthropologists note how funerary and burial rites often consist of several elements in which the living community of the deceased acknowledges both the biological death and the social death of the deceased. The performance or reporting of certain post-mortem rites (to the exclusion of other rites) suggests a judgment upon the deceased. For example, one text may discuss one’s post-mortem treatment and include information pertaining to the time and type of death, the bodily preparation before burial, the burial itself, and details concerning the mourning period. In contrast, a text may reference one’s death tersely, including few details concerning post-mortem treatment (e.g., “and he died”). Social-anthropologists argue that there is reason for variation in

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death reports. If a text reports a particular post-mortem treatment of a person, or a death and burial report does not include expected information, there is reason for such variation.

Robb’s examination of bodily treatment as indicative of a culture’s bodily ideology leads to several fascinating conclusions. He suggests that variations from cultural norms of burial provide insight into how a body is viewed. Four variations appear cross-culturally. First, a “burial pathway” (pattern of rites connected to the burial of a body) may be abbreviated. The diminishment of temporal and other aspects of burial rites reflect a truncation of socially expected rites. For example, a corpse may be prepared for burial in haste, or kin may take part in a truncated mourning period. Abbreviated burial pathways often are seen among people without large social networks, including the poor and children. Second, a burial pathway might be elaborated or extended, particularly for persons with presumed greater social importance. Leaders may receive longer than usual mourning periods, (e.g., a thirty day mourning period for Moses in Deut 34:8), or be embalmed in order to preserve their bodies. Robb posits that an extension or elaboration of a burial path applies to “people of greater social concern whose remains act as a focus of memory.”

Third, a normal burial pathway might be avoided and replaced with another type of burial pathway. Absalom’s burial in 2 Sam. 18:17 reflects this variation. His body is not sent to his kin for burial in the royal tomb; rather, he is buried in the forest under a pile of stones. The burial of Eshbaal’s head in Abner’s tomb also reflects an abnormal burial pathway (2 Sam 4:12). In this passage, the burial of Eshbaal’s head suggest that even if a fully honorable burial is impossible, burying a portion of a body is more desirable than complete deprivation of burial. Mass graves, pit graves, and other non-standard graves belong in

this category. Finally, a burial pathway might be denied completely. Robb suggests that the denial of a burial pathway (i.e., non-burial) is “ostensibly for people excised from moral communities, as with witchcraft executions, heretics, suicides buried in unconsecrated ground, and so on.” Textual evidence provides the result of the denial of burial. As noted by several scholars—and as we shall see below in this Chapter—deprivation of burial and the desecration of burial sites serves to “sever the social relationship between [the dead] and the living, thus turning ancestors into rootless, and rancorous ghosts.”

If, as Robb suggests, a funerary ritual is a cultural action and an important punctuation in the narrative of the body, variations from cultural norms carry important messages concerning a culture’s judgment upon the abnormally-treated body. I suggest that in aWA and ancient Israelite societies, variations from the expected norm of timely burial in an ancestral burial site with public mourning not only disclose judgment upon the life of the deceased, but also intend to impact their identity and relationality in the afterlife—what Robb calls “the social life of the dead.” The motif of non-burial is thus a literary weapon that communicates lasting judgment for the present while at the same time enacting enduring judgment for the afterlife. In the following sections, I discuss how variations in burial impact the future identity of the non-buried person.

**Mesopotamia: Sumerian Death Ideology and Non-Burial**

Archaeological and literary evidence from Sumeria provides some of the earliest examples of death and burial ideology in the aWA, as well as several fascinating examples of burial’s deprivation. While archaeological evidence is limited, scholars have uncovered royal

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168 In ancient Israel, burial outside of the family tomb also may be understood as an abnormal burial pathway. Consider, for example, 2 Chron 21:20; 24:25; 28:27, in which Jehoram, Joash, and Ahaz are not buried in the royal ancestral tomb of the kings in Jerusalem.
169 Robb, “Burial Treatment as Transformations of Bodily Ideology,” 293.
171 Robb, “Burial Treatment as Transformations of Bodily Ideology,” 293.
tombs dating to 2500 BCE. These tombs—their construction, inhabitants, and provisions—provide data regarding the Sumerian concept of death and the afterlife and suggest that Sumerian culture envisioned a continued form of existence in the afterlife.\textsuperscript{172} Moreover, Sumerian epic literature provides helpful descriptors of the Sumerian conception of: 1) death and the status of the deceased; and 2) the importance of burial and implications of its deprivation. Finally, these texts help to demonstrate how in the earliest known records, a social stigma against the deprivation of burial existed, resulting in severe implications for the status of the dead in the netherworld.

\textbf{Sumerian “Death” and the “Dead”}

The Sumerian myth and epic tradition provides details concerning death and its relationship to life. The close connection between life and death in the Sumerian worldview is expressed in the creation myth, \textit{Atri- hazis}, which explains the origin of human beings as the manipulation of the remains of a slaughtered deity:

\begin{quote}
…Let one god be slaughtered, 
then let the gods be cleansed by immersion. 
Let Nintu mix clay with his flesh and blood. 
Let that same god and man be thoroughly mixed in the clay. 
Let us hear the drum for the rest of the time. 
From the flesh of the god let a spirit (\textit{etemmu}) remain, 
let it make the living know its sign, 
lest he be allowed to be forgotten, let the spirit remain (\textit{Atri- hazis} 1: 208-217; cf. lines 225-230).\textsuperscript{173}
\end{quote}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{173} British Museum, 78941. B.R. Foster, trans., “The Epic of Atrahasis,” \texttt{Http://www.livius.org/as-at/atrahasis/atrahasis.html#Insurrection_of_the_Lower_Gods}, January 16, 2012. Also see Dina Katz, \textit{The Image of the Netherworld in the Sumerian Sources} (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2003), 197n.3. In this chapter, I provide translations from \textit{ANET} when possible. Not all references to non-burial that I cite appear in \textit{ANET} due to the obscure nature of several references (not considered by previous scholarship to be “Related to the Old Testament”), and due to the additional translations that have appeared since the publication of \textit{ANET}.
\end{itemize}
In this foundational myth, human life originates in death. Despite the close connection between life and death in *Atri-ḫasis*, however, other sources present the two realms as far removed from each other. The netherworld often is described as “distant,” requiring the recently deceased to undertake a tedious journey in order to enter its realm. Additionally, most Sumerian depictions of the netherworld are mythic. Words used to denote the netherworld, such as *kur* and *arali*, often carry mythological and metaphorical meanings. *Kur* describes the realm of the dead as mountainous in some texts, as subterranean in other texts, and as an abode of monsters in yet other literary contexts. One mythic text, “Inanna’s Descent to the Nether World,” describes the realm of the dead as a lapis-lazuli mountain and palace from which one can ascend and descend. One can ascend from death into the land of the living only if a living replacement takes one’s place in the underworld. Other texts, by contrast, suggest that once persons enter the afterlife, they may not exit; only evil spirits have the ability to travel to and from the netherworld. The ability to journey to and from the realms of the living and the dead is one characteristic of restlessness that we will see throughout several aWA cultures. A deceased person at rest has no need or desire to leave the afterlife to interact with the living.

The *Gilgamesh* tradition famously focuses on the inevitability of death. In addition to the Standard Akkadian text constructed from fragments found in the library of Ashurbanipal, older Sumerian traditions connected with the heroic figure of Gilgamesh help to reconstruct Sumerian death and burial ideology. The struggle to overcome fear of death’s inevitability is a

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175 Ibid., 56–61.
177 Katz, *The Image of the Netherworld in the Sumerian Sources*, 41.
theme that unites much of the Gilgamesh Epic.\textsuperscript{179} In Gilg. X, Utanapishtim explains to Gilgamesh that the gods ordained death after the deluge and cannot be avoided, despite Gilgamesh’s fears (X.iii.1-4).\textsuperscript{180} Gilg. XII consistently is concerned with the concept of death, leading some scholars to interpret the text as a performative or ritual document used to commemorate the deaths of warriors, including those whose bodies were never recovered.\textsuperscript{181}

Other Sumerian sources reveal that life in the afterworld entailed an existence similar in some measure to life experienced on earth, including social stratification, assigned duties, and a full range of human feelings. Social strata provided class division, at least to the extent of separating the royal from non-royal. The “Curse of Agade” portrays the Underworld as hierarchical—both the chthonic deities and deceased priests require placation in the form of offerings.\textsuperscript{182} In the poem detailing the death of Ur-Nammu, readers discover that upon his entrance into the underworld, he must present gifts to the “seven gods” and the scribe of the underworld.\textsuperscript{183} The text shows that residents and deities of the underworld require (or are placated by) items from the land of the living, including oxen and sheep, weaponry, clothing, narrative poems are best known from translations produced by 18\textsuperscript{th} c. Babylonian scribes. Where possible, I will provide E.A. Speiser’s translation and the corresponding citation from \textit{ANET}.

\textsuperscript{179} Ibid., xiii.
\textsuperscript{180} \textit{ANET}, 90.
\textsuperscript{181} S. N. Kramer (“The Epic of Gilgamesh and Its Sumerian Sources: A Study in Literary Progression,” \textit{JAOS} 64 (1944): 7–23.) demonstrated that Gilgamesh XII was not composed in Akkadian alongside the first eleven tablets. Instead, the Akkadian versions of Gilg. XII are a direct translation from on Older Sumerian poem, “Gilgamesh and the Netherworld” (also called “Gilgamesh and the Netherworld” and “Death of Gilgamesh”). Until recently, many translators and commentators chose to omit Gilg. XII from their publications, because it presents a break in the narrative frame of the first eleven tablets (i.e., in Gilg. XII, Enkidu appears alive). In essence, Gilg. XII is a prequel to the larger Epic of Gilgamesh. On this history and interpretation of this text, see: George, \textit{The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic}, 47ff., 53–54. Also see Niek Veldhuis, “The Solution of the Dream: A New Interpretation of Gilgames’ Death,” \textit{Journal of Cuneiform Studies} 53 (2001): 133–48. Here, I use S.N. Kramer’s translation of the “Death of Gilgamesh,” \textit{ANET}, 50-52.


leather bags, vessels, household ornaments, and jewelry.\textsuperscript{184} Ur-Nammu presents the offerings to deities and deceased royalty, including Nergal, Gilgamesh, and Dumuzi; here, deceased royalty appear to assume a deified character.

Social stratification appears again in duties assigned to elite figures. Gilgamesh is assigned the duty of insuring that the deceased behave properly; Ur-Nammu holds the position of judge. In the “Death of Enkidu,” readers encounter Queen Ereškigal’s scribe, whose role is to tally the dead in the underworld (Gilg. VII.4.49-55).\textsuperscript{185} Sumerian sources further reveal that the dead experience the full range of human emotions, and may exist either peacefully or in a state of unrest. In one Sumerian lament, a spirit complains that the food he receives is not good enough; in Death of Ur-Nammu, however, the food offered is “perfect”—fit for a king.\textsuperscript{186} Texts such as these suggest that the quality of funerary rites and offerings has implications for one’s satisfaction in the afterlife.

\textbf{Sumerian Burial and Funerary Offerings}

Burial’s importance within Sumerian death and burial ideology is revealed by several features of the material record. Many Sumerian homes included a subterranean burial site; however, archaeologists also have discovered burial grounds outside of cities.\textsuperscript{187} Burial in a cemetery also is attested in a fascinating inscription concerning the reforms of King Urukagina of Lagash. The stele lists payments made in former days to various employees (e.g., boatmen, field surveyors, artisans) and includes the specified payment for “he who brought the dead man to the cemetery (for burial)—his beer was 7 pitchers and his bread were 420.”\textsuperscript{188} After Urukagina

\textsuperscript{185} ANET, 87.
\textsuperscript{186} Katz, \textit{The Image of the Netherworld in the Sumerian Sources}, 215–216, 220.
\textsuperscript{187} Kramer, \textit{The Sumerians}, 89.
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 317.
gains control of the kingdom of Lagash, he institutes reforms throughout the land, essentially firing (or banning) most employees (such as the boatmen, the tax bailiffs, head shepherds), but retains other workers at a lower pay-scale. Unlike in the “former days,” the inscription states that the one bringing the dead to the cemetery is now to receive: “(only) 3 pitchers [of beer] (and) his (loaves of) bread were (only) 80.” In the time of Urukagina, it seems, the position of undertaker was crucial enough to maintain, albeit at a docked pay. The inscription suggests that Sumerians acknowledged a form of occupation for those assisting in burial not dissimilar to a modern-day undertaker’s tasks. Public records also attest to a schedule of funerary offerings; and archaeologists have discovered calendars in which the delivery of funerary offerings is scheduled at specific intervals, along with times set aside for public commemorations of the dead.

Sir Edward Woolley’s decade-long excavation of Ur provided significant data concerning the Sumerian concept of death and the afterlife. The royal tombs, dating to 2500 BCE, suggested to Wooley that kings were buried with—and therefore presumably accompanied to the Underworld by—grave goods and human companions. Throughout aWA cultures, archaeologists have discovered grave goods at burial sites; the presence of human companions is less frequently attested. Scant contemporary literary evidence exists to corroborate Woolley’s conclusion of human retinue accompanying persons to the grave, leading to scholarly dispute about the

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189 Ibid., 317–318.
192 For full reviews of grave provisions found in aWA burial complexes, see Campbell and Green, The Archaeology of Death in the Ancient Near East.
The historicity of royalty buried with companions. The exception is the fragmentary description of Gilgamesh’s death, burial, and descent to the Underworld, often referred to as the “Death of Gilgamesh.”

After Gilgamesh descends to the Underworld and joins its deities, as well as other elite deceased, he offers gifts to the chthonic deities. These offerings are presented on behalf of Gilgamesh and all who “lay with him,” including his wife, sons, concubines, palace entertainers, the royal valet, and royal household attendants. These companions continue their relationship with Gilgamesh in the afterlife, residing in a “purified palace.”

As the great hero of Sumerian lore, Gilgamesh’s death, burial, and reception into the Underworld illustrate the most honorable form of death and burial afforded Sumerian royalty. In contrast to the elaborate retinue accompanying Gilgamesh to the afterlife, Ur-Nammu alone descends into the underworld. Perhaps the difference highlights the degree to which Gilgamesh’s epic elaborates the death, funeral, and descent of the legendary character. Or, as Kramer posits, the difference may suggest that by the time of Ur-Nammu, Sumerians no longer practiced group burials.

Sumerians regarded burial of the dead as so crucial that it appears as a qualification for human society. In the “Marriage of Martu” portion of the “Curse of Agade,” the Amorites are described as an inhuman class of beings, unsuitable for marriage. The Amorites are accused of acting like swine, because they eat raw meat, “dig for truffles in the highlands,” and do not bury their dead. The act of burial thus was considered a necessary rite in civilized society.

The responsibility for providing proper, honorable burial and funerary rites fell upon the living kin of the deceased. The connection between kinship and burial obligations was so close

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195 Death of Gilgamesh B.7 (ANET, 51).
197 The Curse of Agade (Johns Hopkins Near Eastern Studies; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ., 1983), 32.
that legal documents concerning inheritance and adoption mention the obligation to bury. An adoption text from Nuzi demonstrates that the obligations of burial and funerary rites existed even in cases of socially created kinship bonds. The text reads: “As long as P. (the adopter) is alive K. shall serve him. When P. dies K. shall weep for him and bury him.”\textsuperscript{198} In a fragment of the Gilgamesh Epic, Enkidu wishes to delay death until all of his living kin have passed, leaving only his friend Gilgamesh left to bury Enkidu. The intimacy of burial arises from kinship bonds, as well as through the bonds of a friendship (Gilg. V, 256-257).

Living kin were required not only to bury their dead, but also to mourn for the deceased and provide funerary offerings as several funeral liturgies and other literature state.\textsuperscript{199} Funerary offerings often are connected to the “house of ki-si-ga” (cf. Akkadian \textit{kispu}), which seems to have functioned as a location for funerary banquets or meals.\textsuperscript{200}

\textit{A funeral dirge offered by a son for his father provides several insights concerning the importance of burial at all levels of the Sumerian hierarchy:}

\begin{quote}
0 Nanna, may your spirit (?) be pleased, may your heart be at rest,
Utu, the great lord (?), of Hades,
After turning the dark places to light, will judge your case (favourably),
May Nanna decree your fate (favourably) on the “Day of Sleep,”
[May] Nergal, the Enlil of the Nether World….before (?) it (?)
May the bread-eating heroes (?) utter your name,…food,
[May] the…of the Nether World…pity…,
May (?) the….drinkers [satisfy(?)] your thirst with (?) its (?) fresh water (lines 87-94).\textsuperscript{201}
\end{quote}

In these few lines, the mourners seek divine blessings upon the deceased in order to insure a peaceful afterlife, described as a heart “at rest.” Lines 92-94 suggest the possibility of funerary

\textsuperscript{199} Katz, \textit{The Image of the Netherworld in the Sumerian Sources}, 201–207.
rites, in which food and drink are offered for the restful spirit of the deceased. The “bread-eating heroes” and the “drinkers” have some connection to the satisfaction of the deceased. The “bread-eating heroes” are called to “utter your name,” suggesting that remembrance of the dead through regular recitation of the deceased’s name also may have played a role in funerary activities.

Lines 104-112 of the preceding funeral dirge correlate positive treatment of the deceased with that of his living kin, so that they may live in peace as well. Hence, offerings made on behalf of the deceased lead to positive treatment of the living, as well as the dead. Without descendants to offer food and drink to the deceased, the dead will not experience the possible joy of consuming their libations on the “bed of the gods.”202 After his journey into the underworld, Enkidu reports that a person who has no “provider of funerary offerings” becomes a beggar in the afterlife, forced to “eat the scrapings from the pot and crusts of bread that are thrown away in the street” (Gilg. VII,153). In another text, the deceased Lulil complains to his sister, Egi-me; he lies among the “most wicked of men” because she has not provided him with proper funerary rites on account of her overwhelming grief on the occasion of his death.203 Funerary offerings appear to provide opportunities for the continuation of kin relationship and social stratification across generations.204 As we shall see, threats of post-mortem abuse often include the lack of any living kin to provide funerary offerings for the deceased.

Scholars debate the significance of funerary offerings for the status of the dead in the afterlife. Do the dead require food and drink because they are malevolent by instinct, as Miranda Bayliss suggests, or are the dead and the living viewed as mutually dependent, as other scholars

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204 Katz, The Image of the Netherworld in the Sumerian Sources, 198.
(including Dina Katz) argue?  This dissertation cannot resolve the issue. It is important to note, however, that ancient Mesopotamians believed a relationship between the living and the dead was possible through proper burial and funerary offerings. The deprivation of such honorable rites had implications for both the living and the dead, as we shall see.

Sumerian Deprivation of Burial

The Sumerian record suggests that funerary rites determine, in part, how one fares in the afterlife. Ur-Nammu died violently and was abandoned on the battlefield “like a crushed vessel.” Yet despite his violent end, he was honored with proper funerary rites, including public mourning before his funerary bier. As indicated above, Ur-Nammu’s arrival into the realm of the dead occasions celebration and ceremony. Burial, mourning, and funerary offerings allow the deceased to experience honorable existence in the afterlife, even after a violent death.

Considering the importance of post-mortem responsibilities in Sumerian tradition, it is not surprising also to find references to non-burial in several Sumerian media, including epic literature, wisdom writings, and military and tomb inscriptions. First, references to non-burial and its implications appear in the Gilgamesh epic. After Enkidu returns from a tour of the netherworld, Gilgamesh asks about the fates of various deceased persons and groups. Regarding those persons who died without proper burial but were left unburied in the field (such as soldiers), Gilgamesh asks if Enkidu has seen “him whose corpse was cast out upon the steppe.” Enkidu responds, “His ghost is not at rest in the underworld (George’s translation)”/”His spirit finds no rest in the netherworld (Kramer’s translation)” (Gilg. XII,152). Does Enkidu’s response imply that the spirit of the exposed corpse is not in the netherworld at all, or is in the netherworld but

not at rest? The lacuna from lines 120-143 may have provided additional evidence to answer this question. For example, if Gilgamesh were to ask about the spirit of the one whose body was cremated, Enkidu may have replied that he is not at rest; alternatively, Enkidu may have replied that he is not there at all. The answers that Enkidu does provide never include a response that the spirit is not in the netherworld.

I posit that Enkidu’s response indicates that the unburied corpse is in the netherworld, but somehow not at peace. The construction of the text provides a clue. After each of Gilgamesh’s questions, Enkidu answers, “I have seen,” followed by a description of the state of afterlife experienced by the person about whom Gilgamesh asks. The “I have seen” response indicates that the person’s spirit is in the same netherworld Enkidu had visited. For example, a person killed in battle is present, and his kin mourn for him (XII.149-150). The text’s repetitive construction indicates that an unburied person apparently gains admittance to the underworld, but does not find rest. As we shall see below, a positive afterlife includes having adequate food and drink offerings, hopefully of high quality. Enkidu does not specify the precise reason for the abandoned warrior’s unrest; perhaps it is because he lacked the proper burial and/or associated mourning rites essential to a peaceful afterlife in later Mesopotamian writings. Turning to other texts contributes additional information regarding unrest in the netherworld. In the Sumerian text “Inanna’s Descent to the Netherworld,” Damu is not able to rest, describing his spirit as “disembodied” and unable to consume the food and drink provided to him through funerary offerings.\(^\text{208}\)

While proper funerary and burial rites seemingly were considered necessary for a restful afterlife, the ominous fear of the unknown might outweigh negative assumptions about denying

\(^{208}\text{Conceptions of the Afterlife in Early Civilizations: Universalism, Constructivism, and Near-Death Experience (London; New York: Continuum, 2009), 78–79.}\)
Burial. In Gilg X, Gilgamesh admits that following Enkidu’s death, he mourned for six days and seven nights. But he did not permit his body to be buried until a maggot fell from Enkidu’s nose because he feared losing his friend forever (Gilg. X.ii.7-9).

References to non-burial also appear in Sumerian wisdom texts. A third-millennium proverb reads, “A man who does not worship his god is thrown into the desert; his body is not buried, his son does not provide his ghost with drinking water through his libation pipe.” Here, lack of faithful observance is punished by expulsion of the corpse into the desert, non-burial, and lack of funerary offerings.

One of the earliest examples of non-burial comes from a 19th c. BCE inscription of Yaḫdum-lim, King of Mari. This foundation inscription provides a lengthy rehearsal of Yaḫdum-lim’s military achievements and the curses he wishes upon his enemies, including the curse of exclusion from the dead (translated by G. Dossin as “qu’il ne reçoive pas de morts!”). Military art from the Early Dynastic Period shows that non-burial was not simply an abstract idea in epic and wisdom literature. It also appeared in political and military contexts. An inscribed stele, aptly named the “Stele of the Vultures” for its depiction of vultures hovering over corpses, provides a very early example of the aWA concept of dishonorable death by means of exposure and scavenging animals. The stele dating from the reign of Eannatum of Lagash (c. 211

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2450 BCE) and records his military victories and a treaty between Umma and Lagash. In this stele, we read of a military hero bade by the deity to confront Umma, who is accused of transgressing an oath made during a border conflict. Eanutum’s successor, Entemena of Lagash (c. 2334), sponsored the inscription of a victory stele that also served as a territory marker. In one section, Ningirsu battles with the Ummaites and—seemingly on divine command—casts the bodies of the defeated armies in the plain:

Then did Ningirsu, Enlil’s foremost warrior, do battle with (the men of) Umma in accordance with his (Enlil’s) straightforward word; by the word of Enlil he hurled the great net upon them (and) heaped up their skeleton (?) piles in the plain in their various places.212

After the Ummites’ defeat, they fail to obey the stipulation of a treaty. Consequently, Entemena attacks Ur-Lumma of Umma and his army and “left their bodies in the plain (for the birds and the beasts to devour) (and then) heaped up their skeleton (?) piles in five (separate) places.”213 In both battles, post-mortem abuse of enemies serves a purpose. In the first battle, emphasis falls on the defeat of the conquered force and placement of the corpses in plain site, perhaps to serve as a visual warning to other would-be enemies of Entemena. In the second battle, Entemena also displays the corpses of the treaty-breakers; in this case, however, the army is punished with the explicit intention of consumption by scavenging animals. In both inscriptions, the method of post-mortem abuse (exposure and consumption) is the focus of the text, rather than upon the agent or victim.

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213 Ibid.
Finally, evidence exists for desecration of tombs in the Sumerian record. In a votive inscription boasting of Eannatum’s military victories, we read that the king “heaped up” Elamite and Uruaite burial mounds as part of his “laying waste” to the city-states he encountered.214

Summary

My review of Sumerian evidence demonstrates that the earliest recorded ideas of death, the dead, and burial in Mesopotamia fit within a pattern that will continue through two millennia. The Sumerians believe that burial and mourning rites are essential for the honorable end of human life. Moreover, the Sumerian concept of the underworld involves several aspects of human society, but in a distant locale. Deities, priests, and royalty reside in the underworld; and they require reverence, most often through offerings. In the underworld, the dead also are expected to provide offerings for the deities—an act mirroring the expectation that the living offer sacrifices on behalf of the dead. As depicted in the Epic of Gilgamesh, non-burial (such as results from warfare), does not lead to exclusion from the netherworld; rather, non-burial results in restlessness of the deceased’s spirit. The precise characteristics of restlessness are not made explicit in Sumerian texts, but the reverse state of a restful afterlife includes permanence in the afterlife, with sufficient food and drink offerings. Finally, pictorial images of non-burial in military contexts suggest that corpse abuse and non-burial were considered fitting treatment of the defeated force by the victors.

Mesopotamia: Akkadian Death Ideology and Non-Burial:

Sumerian death and burial ideology influenced later Mesopotamian societies.

Archaeological, inscriptive, and literary evidence provide details on many aspects of Assyro-Babylonian death and burial ideology, including: the characteristics of death and the underworld;

214 Ibid., 309.
the status of the dead and the role of ancestor reverence (cult of the dead ancestors); funerary practices, including burial rites and mortuary rituals; and fear of tomb desecration and non-burial.

Akkadian “Death” and “the Dead”:

In Mesopotamian, a deceased person (mītu) descended into the Netherworld after burial. The transition from life to death took place on two realms. On one hand, proper burial within a grave, sarcophagus, or tomb enabled entry into the netherworld—the burial site serving as the portal through which one entered the afterlife. On the other hand, epic texts describe a perilous journey to the netherworld, including travel over a steppe, down a river, and through seven gates. \footnote{215 Scurlock, “Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Mesopotamian Thought,” 1886–1887.} Death—as a place of eternity—was a continued form of one’s existence, but on a different plane. To continue in the afterlife, however, one needed to enter the underworld by successfully completing the journey “across the river” and “at the west setting of the sun.” Even though the afterlife was conceived in terms of a distant land to the west, journey to the afterlife took place at the site of internment, which often was below the floor of the ancestral home. \footnote{216 Gerdien Jonker, The Topography of Remembrance: The Dead, Tradition and Collective Memory in Mesopotamia (Studies in the History of Religions 68; Leiden; New York: Brill, 1995), 194.}

The realm of the dead was a joyless locale, described as one of dust and thirst. Still, contact with the dead provided an avenue by which the living might retain a relationship with the dead and enhance the afterlife experience for their deceased kin. Terms used to describe the dead illustrate this relationship. The common, generic word for the dead was mītu. Offerings to the dead often occur with the word ili, indicating an image of the dead (perhaps in a divinized sense); the ili were the focus of ancestral rites. \footnote{217 Karel van der Toorn, “Second Millennium West Asian Family Religion,” in Household and Family Religion in Antiquity (ed. John Bodel and Saul M. Olyan; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 27.} A common term used to describe the essential essence of a person’s identity (particularly a deceased person) was etemmu, which often is used
synonymously with “corpse.” J. Scurlock describes an *eṭemmu* as a “body spirit,” which was, “semi-divine, wind-like or shadow-like entities which exist in living beings, survive death, and subsequently receive offering from the deceased’s descendants at his tomb.” The *eṭemmu* was associated with the interred remains of the deceased, and relied on enduring funerary offerings in order to gain the strength necessary to move freely from the buried remains into the afterlife, and vice versa. Well-tended *eṭemmu* retained the ability to communicate with the living and intercede in the lives of the living. Ancestor rites and ancestor rites or necromancy provided points of contact, through which the *eṭemmu* might intercede—either with benevolence or malevolence.

As with other aWA cultures, and as we shall see with ancient Israel, Assyrians believed that their deceased kin were free to rest in the afterlife so long as they received proper burial and continuous funerary offerings. The tombs of three neo-Assyrian queens underscore the restful state of the dead. Inscribed injunctions declare that disturbing the burial site will disturb those

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221 Several texts reference the presence of disturbing spirits who travel from the afterlife to wreak havoc and illness upon the living. On the presence of foreign spirits and the necromantic activities required to dispel them, see: Ibid., 203–209; JoAnn Scurlock, Magico-Medical Means of Treating Ghost-Induced Illnesses in Ancient Mesopotamia (Leiden: Brill, 2006). Conversely, deceased kin who had been provided regular funerary offerings by their descendants were expected to intercede on behalf of the living. The following prayer demonstrates this expectation (cited in Jonker, The Topography of Remembrance, 229.):

> You are the dead of my family and you have created everything,
> My father, my father’s father, my mother, my mother’s mother,
> My brother, my sister, my family, my relatives and my clan,
> As many as rest in the ground.
> I have brought the *kispu* for you, and paid attention to you.
> I have tended you, honoured you, and paid attention to you.
> Assist me on this day before Šamaš and Gilgameš.
> Provide for me justice, and decide my legal case.
resting. Moreover, whoever disturbs the resting inhabitants of the tomb likewise shall be
cursed with a restless afterlife: “May Ningizida, Nedu and the great gods of the underworld grant
no sleep to his corpse forever and always.” Sennacherib’s tomb describes it as “a palace of
sleeping, a grave of rest, a habitation for eternity.” Peaceful existence as a ghost in the
netherworld was possible through proper burial and mourning and continuous funerary offerings.
A Babylonian poem laments that the deceased’s funerary rites did not last long enough to see him
safely into the afterlife: “My grave was open, my funerary goods ready./Before I had died,
lamentation for me was done.”

Akkadian Burial and Funerary Rites

Using an array of material and literary evidence, scholars have constructed an overview
of the death and burial rites afforded to the majority of Mesopotamians. Most burials were
individual; the exception was an adult buried alongside an infant or small child. Unlike in
Phoenicia, cremation was not practiced in Mesopotamia, because of the integral relationship
between the etemmu and the remains of the deceased (see below for the practice of cremation in
Phoenicia). Following a person’s death, his or her corpse was prepared for burial with specific
garments and oils and displayed publically for a short while. Many scholars hold that the
majority of Mesopotamian tombs were located under the home, in an ancestral burial site built at

\[222\] Hallo, “Disturbing the Dead,” 532. For the texts and translations of these royal inscriptions, see:
Abdulilah, “Die in Nimrud/Kalhu aufgefundiene Grabinschrift der Jaba,” Baghdader Mitteilungen
21 (1990): 461-70, esp. 461 (lines 15-18), and idem, “Die Grabinschrift der Mullissu-mukannisat-Ninua aus
Ninua aus Nimrud/Kalhu und andere in ihrem Grab gefundene Schrifttrager,” Baghdader Mitteilungen
21 (1990): 471-82, esp. 471 (line A 3-4) and 474-75 (lines B 6-11). Pictures of inscriptions and grave goods
from the three queens’ tombs are available in the Baghdad Museum, Iraq. Items themselves have been
transported to protective vaults throughout the decades-long unrest in Baghdad.

\[223\] Cited in Jonker, The Topography of Remembrance, 195.

\[224\] Hallo, “Disturbing the Dead,” 533.

\[225\] Hays, Death in the Iron Age II, 41.
the time when the home was constructed.\textsuperscript{226} Other scholars point to public burial groups as evidence that burial need not occur at the home. Moreover, both homes with and without evidence of subterranean burials often include \textit{kispu} shrines, indicating that the lack of burial in the home did not prohibit the living from providing offerings to deceased kin.\textsuperscript{227} Tombs and their inhabitants often were depicted as the “roots” below a home; above the group was the realm of the “fruit” of a family—namely heirs (sons, children, seed) and reputation (name, memory). Analysis of several tomb and building inscriptions portray this upper and lower (roots and fruit) conception of the relationship between the afterlife and the realm of the living.\textsuperscript{228} As we shall see below, several inscriptions curse those above (the fruit) if any damage or desecration befalls the roots below.

At the time of burial, living kin supplied items necessary for the journey to the underworld, including food, sandals, and offerings to the gods of the underworld upon arrival. Evidence suggests that royal burials may have included full-sized chariots to assist in the regal journey from life to death. Non-royals also were buried with specified objects. Along with food offerings, the majority of tombs include items from one’s personal or professional life, such as household ornaments, jewelry, weaponry, and cylinder seals.\textsuperscript{229} Following preparation of the corpse and burial, kin would mourn the deceased for up to seven days, often with the assistance of professional mourners.

As we saw in earlier Sumerian data, the quality of one’s existence in the afterlife was determined largely by the quality and quantity of funerary provisions provided at burial and the

\textsuperscript{226} Jonker, \textit{The Topography of Remembrance}, 194.
\textsuperscript{227} van der Toorn, “Second Millennium West Asian Family Religion,” 26–27.
continuity of offerings after burial. Evidence points to food offerings both in and outside of the
tomb. One inscription detailing a man’s inheritance illustrates the importance of funerary
offerings: “As long as I am alive she shall provide me with food, when I am dead she shall
perform the kispu rites.” Here, a father from Susa seemingly makes his daughter’s inheritance
dependent on her willingness to care for her father in his elder years, as well as to provide for his
care after his death. Most likely, the kispu was a type of funerary meal or offering comparable to
the marzeah. Several texts suggest that the kispu may have been provided for the deceased by the
living kin at the time of the burial and included among the burial items. Offerings for royalty
occurred at the new and full moons, whereas offerings for non-royals appear to have been
provided monthly. Other evidence suggests that the kispu was a daily offering within the
family home, with more elaborate offerings occurring monthly. After careful examination of
material and textual references to the kispu in Mesopotamia, G. Jonkers concludes that it was not
practiced in Sumeria, but appears to have become a more wide-spread practice with the Amorites
after 2000 BCE. Consider, however, the evidence compiled by G.P. Basello concerning
funerary banquets in inscription and pictorial reliefs in Elam. While the majority of inscriptions

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230 Pitard, “Tombs and Offerings: Archaeological Data and Comparative Methodology in the Study of
Death in Israel”; Jeremiah Peterson, “Two New Sumerian Texts Involving The Netherworld and Funerary
Pollock, “Feasts, Funerals, and Fast Food in Early Mesopotamian States,” in The Archaeology and Politics
of Food and Feasting in Early States and Empires (ed. Tamara L. Bray; New York: Kluwer
232 Akio Tsukimoto, “Aspekte von Kispu(m) Also Totenbeigabe,” in Death in Mesopotamia: Papers Read
at the XXVIe Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale (ed. Bendt Alster; Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag,
1980), 129ff.
235 Jonker, The Topography of Remembrance, 53. For additional discussion of the kispu, see Hays, Death
references *kispu* date to the 2\textsuperscript{nd} millennium, reliefs from Susa dating to 2730-2600 BCE depict people gathered to share in a feast, suggested to by funerary in nature.\textsuperscript{236}

The invocation of the name of the dead most likely accompanied funerary offerings. Commemoration rites often are called *šūma zakāru* (“invocation of the name”), and the eldest son of the family was designated as the *zakir šumim* (“invoker of the name”).\textsuperscript{237} Both terms stem from the root *zukru*, meaning to speak or recall, suggesting that rites included recitation of the names of the dead.\textsuperscript{238} Frequently, the invocation of the deceased’s name appears alongside the verb *paqādu* (“tending”), implying that the invocation of name accompanied a form of mortuary care—most likely, food and drink offerings.\textsuperscript{239} As we shall see below, the deprivation of burial often evoked fear of loss of name. Without burial, one would not receive funerary offerings or name invocation, resulting in the least restful form of afterlife existence.

Mesopotamians clearly placed high value on honorable burial within one’s own ancestral land with corresponding funerary rites provided by living kin. One can see the implications of Assyrian’s program of forced exile upon the practice of funerary rituals. The 157 recorded deportations carried out by the Assyrians upon other nations intended to separate the defeated people from their ancestral homeland, including ancestral burial grounds. As Jonker reminds us, the Assyrians did “their utmost to eradicate any traces in the memory of their opponents; they were not content “until nothing remained” (*adi là bašē*).”\textsuperscript{240} Furthermore, living kin make great efforts to re-establish ties between deceased kin and ancestral land. One text describes how the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{237} van der Toorn, “Second Millennium West Asian Family Religion,” 25.
\item \textsuperscript{240} Jonker, *The Topography of Remembrance*, 48.
\end{itemize}
body of the 7th-c. BCE Shamash-ibni was transported back to his native land fifty years after his death in order to be interred with ancestors. As we shall see below in chapters 3 and 5, ancient Israelites too were concerned with the separation from ancestral lands and burial sites during their exilic experience, and biblical authors speak of this experience using dramatic images and burial and its deprivation.

**Deprivation of Burial**

Given the significance of burial in Mesopotamia, it is not surprising that deprivation of burial and reversal of burial (through exhumation) appear in inscriptions throughout Assyrian and Babylonian history in a variety of contexts. Two examples of exhumation illustrate the way imperial forces might reverse burial as a punishment. First, the oft-cited report of the campaign against the Elamites explicitly states why an enemy might be exhumed:

> The burial places of their early (and) later kings, who had not feared Aššur/Ištar, my lords, (and) who had made my royal predecessors tremble, I devastated, I destroyed (and) let them see the sun; their bones I removed to Assyria. I laid restlessness on their spirits. Food-offerings (to the dead) and water-libations I denied them (6.70-76).  

On this victory stele, Ashurbanipal boasts of his defeat over the Elamite kings, referencing tomb desecration, disinterment, exposure, and exile as the methods of post-mortem abuse. The reason given for Ashurbanipal’s multi-stage, post-mortem abuse of his enemies is their ostensible lack of fear of the Assyrian deities, but two other explanations also are possible. First, given the numerous other examples of similar language against enemies, the Elamites very likely were disinterred for their disloyalty after breaking a treaty, which would have been sworn in the names of the patron deities of both the vassal and the suzerain nations. By breaking the treaty, the Elamite king disrespected Ashurbanipal and his god(s), described as a lack of fear for Aššur/Ištar.

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The consequence of treaty desecration was the imposition of traditional treaty curses, which included non-burial (see below).

A second option is offered by W. Hallow who suggests that the reason for Ashurbanipal’s harsh treatment against the Elamites might be their own previous desecration of the graves of deceased royals, since the Elamites are described in the text as “disturbers of the kings my ancestors.”²⁴³ Perhaps Ashurbanipal is applying *ius talionis* in his treatment of his enemies. Hallow’s interpretation is strengthened as we consider the victim of abuse in this example. The explicit victims of the post-mortem abuse are the human remains of Elamite ancestors, not the living, defeated Elamites. Bones are exhumed and deported. This particular inscription is important because it highlights the presumption of enduring consequence for the spirits of the exhumed deceased: through exhumation, exposure, and exile of the bones of the Elamite kings from their ancestral burial ground, Ashurbanipal imagines that their spirits will never again find rest. The bones, taken from their kin (deceased and living), will no longer receive the sustenance provided by mortuary rituals. As I will demonstrate in Chapters 4 and 5, ancient Israelite images of non-burial entail very similar expectations for the victims of post-mortem abuse. The costs of non-burial extend far beyond the immediate act of violence against the defeated nation; indeed, Ashurbanipal proves his decisive victory by demonstrating that his power over the Elamites will last forever.

Second, an 8th c. inscription from the annals of Sennacherib refers to the exhumation of enemy tombs: “That Merodach-Baladan . . . removed the gods of the entire country from their shrines. The gods . . . together with the bones of his ancestors which he dug up out of their tombs, he loaded upon ships . . . and made off like a bird.”²⁴⁴ In this example, Sennacherib’s

²⁴³ Hallo, “Disturbing the Dead,” 531.
²⁴⁴ Daniel David Luckenbill, *Annals of Sennacherib* (Reprint (1924); Ancient Texts and Translations; Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007), 47.
defeat of Merodach-Baladan includes overpowering the sacred objects of his enemy, including the gods and ancestral remains. Though not explicit in this reference, one may conjecture that the goal of Sennacherib’s actions is to demonstrate ultimate power over his enemy, while simultaneously removing the potential, benevolent involvement of gods and the deceased.

In the preceding two examples, exhumation is carried out on the corpses of enemy forces. Many other examples threaten exclusion from the afterlife through non-burial, corpse abuse and exposure, and deprivation of funerary offerings. These threats appear in tomb inscriptions as warnings to tomb desecrators, in treaty-contexts as curses against those who might break the stipulations of the treaty agreement, in proverbs, and in law codes, magical incantations, territory markers, royal annals, victory stele, and foundation documents.

References to non-burial frequently appears in annalistic contexts. Sargon of Agade boasts of his military prowess in his chronicles using stereotypical non-burial terminology. This inscription asserts that “From the East to the West [Sargon] aliented from (them) and inflicted upon [him] (as punishment) that he could not rest (in his grave).”245 The Sargon Chronicle further boasts that the Babylonian king Samsuilu, son of Hammurabi, devastated enemy forces to such an extent that “corpses filled the sea.”246 Shalmaneser III’s military chronicles also reference exposed corpses in a report concerning a sweeping conquest of enemy land. Shalmaneser III boasts:

I covered the wide plain with the corpses of his warriors….I slew their warriors with the sword, descending upon them like Adad when he makes a rainstorm pour down. In the moat (of the town) I piled them up, I covered the wide plain with the corpses of their fighting men, I dyed the mountains with their blood like red wool.247

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245 ANET, 266.
246 ANET, 267.
Esarhaddon’s vassal-treaties (VTE) and victory stelae provide additional evidence of non-burial as a threat or punishment in Assyrian political relations.\textsuperscript{248} Inscriptions and pictorial reliefs from the reign of Esarhaddon include numerous references to corpse abuse—far too many to review in full detail in this dissertation. I will discuss a few examples from different literary contexts in order to illustrate how the non-burial motif functioned during Esarhaddon’s reign. Esarhaddon’s frequent use of non-burial and corpse abuse as a curse against would-be treaty violators suggests that the consequences of non-burial were severe enough to warrant use in curse formulae.

Several insights can be gained from non-burial references in VTE and in Esarhaddon’s Prism, included below. First, non-burial—an act of violence against both the dead individual and his kin—resulted in the dissolution of the family unit in the afterlife:

\begin{quote}
Instead of grain may they grind [our bones] (and those of) your sons (and) your daughters (VTE 6: 445-446).
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
As a killu which slips into a grinding-mill; just so may you, your woman, your sons (and), your daughters have no rest or sleep; (and) may your bones never stay together (VTE 8:637-640).
\end{quote}

Second, non-burial’s affects reached beyond the grave and into the afterlife. Here, the accursed is threatened with deprivation of funerary offerings after death:

\begin{quote}
Above, may they take possession of your life; below, in the netherworld, may they make your ghost thirst for water (VTE 6:476-477).
\end{quote}

Third, Esarhaddon’s repeated reference to scavenging animals indicates a collection of stock phrases and ideas concerning non-burial in curse contexts:

\begin{quote}
May Ninurtu, chief of the gods, fell you with his swift arrow; may he fill the plain with your corpses; may he feed your flesh to the eagle and jackal to feed on (VTE 6:425-427).
\end{quote}

May dogs and swine eat your flesh; May your ghost have none appointed as funeral-libation pourer (VTE 6: 451-452).

May dogs and swine drag them to and fro in the squares of Ashur; May the earth not receive your corpses (in burial); May you be food in the belly of a dog or pig. (VTE 6:483-484).

I smashed their hard stone walls like a potter’s vessel (and) let the vultures eat the unburied bodies of their warriors (Prism I, v, 5).”

Fourth, VTE and Esarhaddon’s prism also highlight the intended result of non-burial. Without burial or burial rites, one’s name—memory and reputation—will be obliterated forever: “May Šarpanitu, who gives name and seed, destroy your name and your seed from the land” (VTE 6:435-436).

Finally, Esarhaddon’s use of non-burial references demonstrates that corpse abuse and exposure served as public, visual displays of the victor’s strength and shamed the defeated.

Esarhaddon’s Prism boasts that he “... laid out the bodies of their warriors like (drying) malt” (I. iv.70). In a tablet from Kuyunjik, the victory stele of either Esarhaddon or his son, Ashurbanipal, records the Assyrian king’s acts upon victory: “[I heaped] their corpses upon each other in the city square [. . .]; I made piles with their heads [. . .]” (1019.16-17).

In the examples discussed thus far, the progression from Sennacherib to Esarhaddon’s reign shows an increase in non-burial language in the surviving documents. A final example illustrates the precision with which corpse abuse was described within Esarhaddon’s inscriptions. A lengthy passage from the Rassam Cylinder recounts Ashurnbanipal’s violent revenge upon his enemy:


250 Ibid.

251 Ibid., 304. The piling of decapitated human remains is a frequent motif in Akkadian inscription and pictorial reliefs. A forthcoming dissertation (Carl Pace, Hebrew Union) focuses exclusively on the motif of decapitation of human remains in AWA inscription and provides a full analysis of sociological implications of such references.
I tore out the tongues of those whose slanderous mouths had uttered blasphemies against my god Ashur and had plotted against me, his god-fearing prince; I defeated them (completely). The others, I smashed alive with the very same statues of protective deities with which they had smashed my own grandfather Sennacherib—now (finally) as a (belated) burial sacrifice for his soul. I fed their corpses, cut into small pieces, to dogs, pigs, zîbu-birds, vultures, the birds of the sky and (also) to the fish of the ocean. After I had performed this and (thus) made quiet (again) the hearts of the great gods, my lords, I removed the corpses of those whom the pestilence had felled, whose leftovers (after) the dogs and pigs had fed on them were obstructing the streets, filling the places (of Babylon), (and) of those who had lost their lives through the terrible famine.

This passage includes multiple methods of post-mortem abuse, including decapitation, feeding the corpses to scavenging animals, exhumation, and exposure. The act of feeding animals with the remains creates a gory merismus; animals of the land, the sky, and even the ocean all will feed upon the corpses. Even then, so many corpses will remain that streets will be obstructed. Furthermore, it is striking how millennia later, readers still sense a deep-felt emotional aspect to Esarhaddon’s violent actions. Throughout the examples of post-mortem abuse during Esarhaddon’s reign, the method of abuse is described in greatest detail. Still, the reason for abuse is articulated as a form of revenge for the death of Sennacherib. The reciprocal nature of the violence provides rest in the afterlife for Esarhaddon’s ancestors.

With this vivid inscription in mind, we move to the reign of Esarhaddon’s son, Ashurbanipal. The violent nature of inscription and relief reaches a climax in Ashurbanipal’s reign and the inscriptions he commissioned highlight the images of post-mortem abuse in the most striking terms. The victory stele concerning Ashurbanipal’s defeat of the Elamites—while the most frequently quoted by biblical scholars who encounter references to non-burial—is only one example in this king’s repertoire. Several others provide violent images of corpse abuse and non-burial that go far beyond the horrors of exhumation. In one example, stereotypical terminology of scavenging animals appears: “As for the remaining men, while they were still

252 “The Death of Sennacherib” (iv 65-82); ANET, 288.
alive . . . as his funerary offering . . . I crushed those men by means . . . I fed their torn flesh to
dogs, swine, vultures, eagles, birds of the sky, and fish of the sea” (Prism A 4:70-76).²⁵³ In this
inscription, Ashurbanipal records his treatment of the dismembered bodies of Šamaš-šūm-ukīn’s
household. Despite its lacunae, this inscription clearly includes both denial of kin-related
funerary rites and exposure of corpses to scavenging animals throughout the cosmos.

A relief from Ashurbanipal’s reign sheds further light on the aWA conception of the
lasting consequences of non-burial. As with the bones of the Elamite kings, Ashurbanipal
originally intended to exile the corpse of Nabū-bēl-šumāti to Nineveh, disallowing his native kin
from providing proper burial rites. In a change of heart, however, Ashurbanipal decides to inflict
further punishment upon the deceased, using his living kin as a vehicle of post-mortem abuse.
Nabū-bēl-šumāti’s brother is forced to wear around his neck the severed head of his dead brother,
saying of the corpse: “I made him more dead than he was before” (A.vi.39-50).²⁵⁴ This inscription
makes explicit what several other inscriptions and pictorial reliefs display. The abuse to a corpse
and deprivation of burial insinuates a further punishment inflicted upon the deceased.²⁵⁵ As
Schmidt explains, what becomes wholly clear is that the dishonorable disposal of a corpse
signified a “second” death.²⁵⁶ When a corpse decomposed in the sun’s exposure, was devoured

²⁵³ Ashurbanipal’s Prism Inscriptions (Kouyunjik Collection, British Museum). I. Tzvi Abusch,
Mesopotamian Witchcraft: Toward a History and Understanding of Babylonian Witchcraft Beliefs and
Literature (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 231; Borger, Beiträge Zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals, 40; Streck,
Assurbanipal Und Die Letzten Assyrischen Könige Bis Zum Untergang Niniveh’s, 2, 38:70–76.
²⁵⁴ Ashurbanipal Relief (Kouyunjik Collection, British Museum). See: Seth Richardson, “Death and
Dismemberment in Mesopotamia: Discorporation Between the Body and Body Politic,” in Performing
Death: Social Analyses of Funerary Traditions in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean (ed. Nicola
Laneri; Oriental Seminar Series 3; Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 2007), 198; Hays, Death in the Iron Age
II, 39; Borger, Beiträge Zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals, 59–60.
²⁵⁵ See also, Esarhaddon’s royal inscriptions: “To show the people the might of the god Aššur, my lord, I
hung the heads of Sanda-uarri and Adbi-Milkūti around the necks of their nobles and I paraded in the
squares of Nineveh with singers and lyre(s)” (Esarhaddon 2.i.50-56; cf., 3.ii.5-9; 60.1’-3’; ANET, 291;
Leichty, The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, 29, 37, 135.)
²⁵⁶ Schmidt, “Memory as Immortality.”
by scavenging animals, or was cast into unidentified oblivion, the person really died—no chance of continued existence in the afterlife possible.

The phenomenon of a “second” death carries with it two implications: lack of entry into the underworld, and lack of funerary rites, which create an enduring memory, reputation, and identity of the deceased. Akkadian evidence demonstrates that Mesopotamian concepts of death view the former as the more fearful outcome of non-burial. Expulsion or denial from the ancestral tomb is highlighted in several Akkadian sources with diverse literary contexts.

References to non-burial appear for reigns outside of Assyrian rule. Several additional Akkadian inscriptions include victors’ records of dishonorable treatment of enemy corpses. In the Annals of Suhu (890-750 BCE), a victor boasts that his army did not lose any warriors on the battlefield: “No one’s corpse among them (my troops) fell in the steppe.” It is unclear if this implies that no one died or if those who did perish were collected from the battlefield. The same cannot be said for the defeated army, described as follows: “I caused their blood to flow like waters of a river. The road with their corpses was visible to eagles and vultures. I filled the mountains and the wadis with their skulls like mountain stones. Birds made their nest in their skulls.”

In addition to written records of threats of non-burial against treaty violators and defeated enemy forces, pictorial reliefs provide vivid depictions of violence against corpses. The abuse of corpses (including beheading, skinning, impalement, shaving, and severing of genitalia and appendages) often implies the non-burial of corpses, even if the threat is not stated explicitly. While the art and literature in which these abuses appear focus on mistreatment of the corpses,

Corpse abuse and non-burial are connected because of the implications associated with both forms of punishment.

In the tradition of the centuries-earlier Sumerian Stele of Vultures, Neo-Assyrian reliefs depict corpse abuse with intensified vividness. Serving simultaneously as historical record, ritualistic composition, and propaganda, the reliefs highlight the belief that a victorious king’s power is upheld by the trampling—and/or public abuse—of corpses of the defeated army. There is a progression in the violent presentation of corpse abuse. The limited references from Old Babylonian periods contrast to the frequency of use of images of corpse abuse in the Middle Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian periods. In these latter periods, records demonstrate that Mesopotamian leaders employed “corpse abuse as a statement of power.” As these periods advance, the gore with which literature presents corpse abuse increases until it becomes an art form; the gorier the presentation, the greater the power of the imposing forces. Seth Richardson has amassed evidence of the increasing gore Assyrian royal inscriptions use to describe the desecration of enemy corpses.

Reliefs from the reigns of Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Ashurbanipal depict soldiers flaying the skin of captives, impaling captives upon tall posts, and standing upon disorderly collections of corpses, horses, fish, and other living beings. The relief chronicling the Battle of Til-Tuba, for example, depicts horses and chariots trampling scattered bodies. In addition, the relief contains a scene in which Assyrian soldiers stand above prisoners with raised weapons.

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258 As Seth Richardson, “Death and Dismemberment in Mesopotamia: Discorporation Between the Body and Body Politic,” esp. 196-197, 200–201, notes, the frequency of corpse abuse in Assyrian royal inscriptions and reliefs is too great to cite all examples. Records dating to Shalmaneser I reference the disregard for enemy corpses.
260 Richardson, “Death and Dismemberment.”
261 Bahrani, Rituals of War, 154–158. See, e.g., Sennacherib’s Relief of the Seige of Lachish (British Museum, ME 124909).
forcing the Elamites to grind bones, perhaps those of their ancestors. Interestingly, most Neo-Assyrian documents include the king as the agent of violence against the corpses of the loser; pictorial reliefs, by contrast, often depict soldiers as responsible for the abuse. The purpose of such violence, in art and real life, most likely was multi-tiered. On one hand, Bahrani argues that “rows of naked bodies in front of a besieged citadel in Anatolia (was) a display that was surely meant to terrorize the inhabitants of the city into capitulation.” At the same time, these acts and the art depicting them served to impose shame and to tarnish the reputation of the defeated party. Shaming propaganda surely was a desired effect of post-mortem abuse, especially when one takes into account the purposeful imposition of nakedness upon the captives and the forced destruction of one’s own ancestral remains. Finally, as Seth Richardson notes, the collective effect of violence in numerous contexts was to create a veritable “pornography of violence,” which possibly served Mesopotamian leaders by inviting their populations to participate—or at the least, to become normalized—to violence against treaty violators and defeated enemies.

Thus far we have seen Mesopotamian references to non-burial appear in several contexts ranging from treaty-curses to tomb inscriptions and victory stele. Additional references to non-burial appear in boundary markers (kudurru) and ritual incantation texts (maqlû). In one maqlû, a witch’s body is violently discarded through non-burial and scavenging animals:

262 Also called “Battle of the River Ulai”, Nineveh, c. 650 (British Museum 124801a) See: Ibid., 24–29, 221.
263 Rituals of War, 158.
265 “Death and Dismemberment,” 198.
266 The kudurru seem to focus on ancestral offerings in their curses: “May Ninurta, the lord of boundary-stones, remove his son, who liberates water for him!”; “May his corpse drop and have no one to bury.”
May eagle and vulture prey on your corpse,
May silence and shivering fall upon you,
May dog and bitch tear you apart
May dog or bitch tear apart your flesh.\textsuperscript{267}

Post-mortem punishment appears twice in legal contexts. The first examples comes from the epilogue to the Laws of Hammurabi: “May the goddess Ištar . . . make a heap of the corpses of his soldiers upon the plain, and may she show his soldiers no mercy” (LH l.92-li.23).\textsuperscript{268} The second appears in a Middle Assyrian law code (MAL), which cites non-burial as punishment for a woman who inflicts abortion upon her fetus:

If a woman of her own accord drops that which is in her, they shall prosecute her, convict her, impale her, (and) not bury her. If she dies from dropping that which is in her, they shall impale her (and) not bury her (MAL A.53).\textsuperscript{269}

This final, brutal example aids our understanding of the implications of non-burial. Here, an indicted woman (not an enemy of the state or treaty violator) is punished with impalement and non-burial as a result of her disregard for human life (and property). The mother’s punishment for self-induced miscarriage carried a worse punishment than for a man who causes a miscarriage in a woman (MAL A. 50-52; cf. Exod. 21:23-25). Both MAL and biblical law apply talion conceptions of justice to the infliction of miscarriage.\textsuperscript{270} It is clear that MAL’s punishment of non-burial is intended to affect persons other than the living female violator. Even if the woman dies as a result of the abortion, she still endures the punishment of non-burial. One may conjecture that the implications include: shame for the woman’s family because of their inability

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\textsuperscript{267} Maqlû VIII 81-89; IX 183-187; Abusch, \textit{Mesopotamian Witchcraft}, 230. Another maqlû curses with the following words: “O Girra, in the (netherworld) Ekur, the place of your (astral) travel, speedily cause them not to have rest”; ibid., 230; the originals are housed in the British Museum.
\textsuperscript{268} Richardson, “Death and Dismemberment,” 201; Laws of Hammurabi, Louvre, Paris.
\textsuperscript{269} Middle-Assyrian Laws, A53 (\textit{ANET}, 185); Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin.
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to bury their daughter/wife; punishment so severe as to dissuade other similar acts; and restlessness upon the spirit of the deceased woman.

Ugaritic Death and Burial

As in ancient Mesopotamian civilization, evidence from the ancient city-state Ugarit (Ras Shamra) provides important information for constructing the aWA practice of non-burial. Both archaeological and literary sources demonstrate that the Ugarites imagined a complex underworld and associated pantheon, maintained a close relationship with the deceased, and believed that burial was an essential rite of transition between life on earth and existence in the underworld.

Ugaritic “Death” and the “Dead”:

Upon death, a person descended into the underworld through a process of specific funerary and mortuary rites, transitioning from a living person to a citizen of the underworld. Several terms are used to speak of the “dead,” including mt and rpum. As with the Hebrew cognate, met, scholars do not agree on the etymology of Ugaritic mt, which can be translated as both “the dead” and “man.”

Two theories of the etymology of rp’ dominate its translation. On one hand, scholars point to the Semitic consonantal root rph, meaning “to sink down” or “to be weak.” If the rpum originate from this root, they can be understood as the weak, powerless inhabitants of the underworld. This translation leads scholars to interpret all rpum texts as references to a weak class of beings, as opposed to a semi-divinized class of ancestors. As Lewis points out, however, the Ugaritic aleph (’) is a strong consonant, diminishing the likelihood of our form deriving from rph.

Furthermore, scholars have demonstrated

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273 Lewis, Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit, 14.
persuasively the linguistic connection between the Ugaritic *rpum* and the Semitic root *rp’*, which most scholars agree carries the associated meaning of healing.\(^{274}\) The *rpum* would then be taken as the active participle of the root *rp’* (to heal), signaling an ability to affect the lives of the living positively. H.L. Ginsberg argues that the *rp’* originally may have meant “to join,” due to its frequent contextual sense of one who joins ancestors in the underworld.\(^{275}\) As a result of the debate concerning the term’s linguistic etymology, most scholars now either leave *rpum* untranslated, or use titles such as “shades”, “healers” or “saviors.”\(^{276}\) Of course, there is clear linguistic and literary similarity with the biblically attested *rp’m* (רְפָאִים); and both translation and interpretive options appear in biblical and Ugaritic studies.\(^{277}\)

In both Ugaritic and biblical contexts, the *rpum* carry with them some ancient mythological history, appearing in obscure passages as distant ancestors reflecting a narrative history that, for the most part, is lost to modern readers.\(^{278}\) In some other contexts, *rpim* and *mtm* are paralleled with divine beings (*ilnym, ilm*).\(^{279}\) Finally, as denizens of the underworld in several texts, the *rpum* also have a distinct status in Ugaritic and Israelite thinking.\(^{280}\) In the “Ugaritic Funerary Text” (*KTU* 1.161), for example, *rpum* receive the deceased king to the rank

\(^{274}\) Caquot, “Les Rephaim Ougaritiques.”
\(^{278}\) For a recent, in-depth study of mythological resonance in rephaim passages, see Brian R Doak, *The Last of the Rephaim: Conquest and Cataclysm in the Heroic Ages of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ., 2013).
\(^{280}\) See, e.g., Isa 14:9; 26:14, 19; Ps 88:10-11; Prov 2:18; 9:18; 21:16; Job 26:5.
of the royal dead in the underworld. A. Caquot questions if the many, varied contexts in which the *rpum* appear have some logical, historical connection:

Telle serait l'origine possible des 'îlnym/ *rp’um* de Ras Shamra: ((dryades )) ou ((figures mythologiques)) des Cananéens, ils sont devenus dans l'imagination israélite la personification des races disparues d'une part, d'autre part, acolytes du dieu Ba'al lors de sa réintronisation, et sans doute aussi lors de sa descente dans le monde des morts, ils sont devenus le prototype des mânes.²⁸¹

Perhaps the connection between *rpum*, the dead, mythological ancestors, and *Ba‘al* point to the mythological origin of this class of beings. Following F. M. Cross, Lewis translates *rp’* as “heroes,” arguing that the *rp’* in Ugaritic literature have similarities with the Greek *hērōs*.²⁸²

Clearly, the translation of the word indication “the dead” has important implications for the status of the dead and their importance in Ugaritic death and burial ideology.

The “Ugaritic Funerary Text” (*KTU* 1.161), also referred to as the “Liturgy of the Shades,” reveals yet another lexical marker for “the dead” in Ugaritic literature. In addition to *mt*, *rpum*, and *ilmn*, the dead are described as the *qbs* “gathered ones” of *Didanu*.²⁸³ The “gathered ones” appear in parallel to the *rpum* and assemble as a congregation of the underworld to welcome the recently deceased king.²⁸⁴ As Chapter 3 will demonstrate, ancient Israelites often employed the euphemism of being gathered to ancestors upon death. Proverbs 21:16 explicitly connects death with the gathered assembly of *rephaim*: “Whoever wanders from the way of understanding will rest in the assembly of the dead (בִּקְהַל רְפָאִים יָנוּחַ).”²⁸⁵

²⁸² Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, 7ff, 14.
²⁸³ Ibid., 7.
²⁸⁵ Parallel references to the dead and the *rephaim* appear in Ps 88:11; Isa 26: 14, 19.
Several occurrences of *rpum* in parallel relationship to other lexical markers suggest that these underworld inhabitants were regarded as divinized. The “Ugaritic King List” (*KTU* 1.113) and “Ugaritic Funerary Text” (*KTU* 1.161) reveal that royal funeral liturgies included recitation of the names of dead royalty as part of mourning rites held at the tomb. The deceased were considered to be divinized beings, joining rank among the *rpum*.

In Ugaritic myth, *Môt* is the patron god of the underworld. He is portrayed with an excess of power, possessing the capability even to defeat the high god *Ba‘al* by swallowing him. Indeed, *Môt’s* appetite for destruction is such that he is envisioned as having lips that can cover the whole earth and consume it: “[one lip to] the earth, (the other) lip to the heavens and (his tongue) to the stars” (*KTU* 1.5 ii 2-3). Despite *Môt’s* great destructive capabilities, other texts question *Môt’s* specific classification in the Ugaritic pantheon. He is referred to as the bn ilm (literally “son of gods”), which most likely refers to *Môt’s* status as a divine being similar to the Hebrew *ben ’elohîm*. Additional evidence for *Môt’s* divine status appears in the *Ba‘al* Cycle, where his is called the *ydd il* (“beloved of El”). *Môt’s* relationship with *Ba‘al* varies from one Ugaritic text to another. Even with the divine status granted *Môt* in the *Ba‘al* Cycle, his name does not appear in other cultic texts that list members of the Ugaritic pantheon. In addition to *Môt*, Ugaritic texts refer to other deities bearing associations with the underworld, including the goddess Šapšu and the god Dogan. Lewis suggests that Šapšu played a functional role in the Ugaritic death cult, acting as an escort to deceased persons journeying to the underworld and

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287 See below for additional details on Ugaritic funeral liturgy.  
288 *KTU* 1.6 vi:26-27  
289 *KTU* 1.4 vii:46  
290 For synthesis of possible identities of Môt, see Hays, *Death in the Iron Age II*, 122–124; Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, 152.
aiding in the delivery of goods offered in funerary cultic activities. Dagan, too, seems to have played a role in funerary offerings, serving as intermediary between the living and deceased kin awaiting their offerings in the underworld. Interestingly, both Šapšu and Dagan are associated with images of corpses and corpse offerings (pgr) in Ugaritic myth. The exact purpose of the pgr offering remains in dispute, but most agree to some degree with K. Spronk’s conclusion that pgr offerings were provided to underworld deities as part of the death cult.

**Ugaritic Burial and Funerary Rites**

Excavations of Ugaritic tombs help to clarify the importance of burial. Ugarit’s dead were buried intramurally in walls beneath homes and within the city gates. Tomb ceilings included holes through which libations may have been poured. Interpretations vary concerning the nature of Ugaritic tombs, their channels for libations, and the associated death cult. Initial reports after the discovery of Ras Shamra argue that the city was an elaborate necropolis with evidence of an extensive cult of the dead. Not realizing that families buried their kin beneath their homesteads, archaeologists identified the vast number of tombs as a necropolis rather than as an urban settlement. Since the modification of initial findings, debates continue as to the widespread nature of death-related activity in Ugarit. Contemporary scholars rely on K. Spronk,

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291 Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, 38.
292 Hays, *Death in the Iron Age II*, 125; Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, 75.
293 *KTU* 1.102:12; 6.13-14.
whose seminal publications synthesize the evidence in favor of an Ugaritic death cult and mortuary activity, and on T. Lewis, who surveyed the same material as Spronk, but proffered more conservative interpretations of the extent of Ugarit’s death cult.297

The location, construction, entrances, and contents of Ugaritic tombs have received considerable reconsideration in recent decades. Reexamining the libation channels that previous scholars used as primary evidence for an elaborate ancestor cult, Pitard argues that the libation channels did not run directly into the tombs; rather, they flowed away from the tomb, serving as a drainage system. Moreover, he argues that holes in the ceilings of tombs may well have been made by looters attempting to gain access to grave goods buried alongside the dead.298 Despite moderations in interpretation, however, most scholars conclude that material and textual evidence points to some mortuary activity occurring at or near burial sites.299 First, storage receptacles placed beside tombs suggest that living kin provided some type of mortuary offering or held mortuary feasts. Second, the construction and accessibility of tombs from homes above suggest that living kin anticipated future entry into the tomb. Finally, textual data indicates that libations may have been poured directly into or on top of tombs.300

As in Mesopotamian traditions, Ugaritic funerary rituals were accompanied by mortuary feasts. Paramount to the review of mortuary feasts is the marzēah, which appears in Ugaritic, biblical, Phoenician, Nabataean, and Palmyrene inscriptions.301 The Ugaritic marziḥu (cf. Hebrew marzēḥ in Amos 6:7 and Jer 16:7) may denote a banquet, social functions, or the physical property used for such occasions. Despite significant lacunae, the Rephaim texts allude

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297 Lewis, Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit; Spronk, Beatific Afterlife.
300 See, e.g., KTU 1.1 ii 19-25; 1.3 iii 15-21; 1.3 iv 8-14, 28-31.
301 For discussion on aWA evidence of mrzh, see: Nahman Avigad and Jonas C. Greenfield, “‘A Bronze’ Phialē” with a Phoenician Dedicatory Inscription,” IEJ 32 (1982): 125ff.
to the *marziḥu* as a funerary banquet. In *KTU* 1.21, Dan’el asks the *rpum* to attend a seven day *marziḥu* in honor of his deceased son, *Aqht*. Pitard argues that more recent evidence for some practices previously understood to be “funerary” in nature are no longer viewed as such by all scholars. Specifically, he suggests that this feast was social, not funerary, in nature. Despite recent criticism as to its exact meaning, the *marziḥu* generally is interpreted as a funerary feast, in which the shades of the underworld are invoked to join in festivities along with the living kin of the deceased. Several reasons support this interpretation. First, there need not be separation between social and funerary meals. Social-anthropological findings discussed above in this Chapter hold that funerary rites are part of broader cultural rite systems. Second, the correspondences in both terminology and context demand an acknowledgment of the similarities in funerary banquets across several aWA social contexts. In addition to the Ugaritic references, two biblical texts suggest a funerary context. In Jer 16:5-7, the prophet condemns mourning rituals; among the list of prohibited funerary customs is the *marz ḥah*, which appears to be a funerary banquet (cf. Amos 6:4-7). As M. Pope writes, “this funerary feast [*marziḥu*], corresponding to the Mesopotamian kispu, was…the Marzeaḥ of the Bible.”

Ugaritic epic tradition provides evidence that Ugaritic society emphasized the importance of burial and mourning rites for a quality afterlife. Once again, the “Ugaritic Funerary Text” (*KTU* 1.161) provides key data concerning the sequence and elements of a royal funeral and the

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king’s arrival into the underworld. The text chronicles the activities of King Niqmaddu III (13th c. BCE) and his kin after his death. In order for a successful succession to occur, the deceased ancestors of the new king must receive honor. Several groups and individuals are summoned (qra), including the most ancient rpum. Once the summoned dead gather, sacrifices are offered in the underworld. The deities are intimately involved in welcoming the newly deceased king to the underworld; indeed, the goddess Sapšu is personally involved in the proper burial of Niqmaddu III. Throughout the text, rites performed by the living on behalf of ancestors are intended to inspire future benevolence from the underworld. The gathering of the deceased not only serves to welcome the newly departed Niqmaddu III to their ranks, but also issue a salutation to the new, living ruler. In this way, Ugaritic royal funerary cultic activity shared features with Mesopotamian rituals, in which deceased royalty are invoked and receive sacrifices in exchange for their blessing upon the newest dynastic ruler.

**Ugaritic Deprivation of Burial**

The focus on funeral liturgy and status of the dead in Ugaritic material and literary evidence suggests that burial was a central element in one’s transmission from life on earth to existence among the rpum in the underworld. Several Ugaritic mythic texts underscore burial’s importance and provide evidence for the implications of its deprivation. In particular, the Ba’al and Môt epic in KTU 1.5-1.6 offers several key insights into Ugaritic death and burial ideology. In 1.5vi11-14, El mourns the death of Ba’al in a ritual descent from the throne of Saphon (cf., Isa 66:1). When El descends, he leaves his throne to sit on his footstool, which he then leaves to sit upon the ground (ars). It is not clear whether arş means the soil of the ground or the

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underworld. Following *El’s* tripartite descent, lines 15-22 depict the deity engaging in several mourning rites, including pouring ashes on his head, donning a loin-cloth, self-mutilation in the form of skin gashing, and shaving of facial and body hair. As Chapter 3 will show, ancient Israelite mourning rites include similar rites, as recorded in several biblical texts (e.g., Job 2:8; Lev 19:27-28; Deut 14:1). N. Wyatt suggests that *El’s* act of coveting himself with dust and ashes is a “ritual self-burial,” as opposed to acts of self-mutilation, which he refers to as “classic expression[s] of grief and guilt.” Regardless of the ritual symbolism associated with placing ashes on one’s head, this act appears throughout AWA and ancient Israelite mourning activities and need not be treated differently.

In response to *Ba’al’s* death, ‘*Anat* (his consort or sister) attempts to retrieve his corpse from *Môt*. ‘*Anat* finds *Môt* unwilling to release the corpse and subsequently unleashes her anger upon the netherworld deity. The language used to describe her attack evokes images of both fertility and non-burial. In the first lines, ‘*Anat’s* treatment of *Môt* employs agricultural terms; *Môt* is reduced to grain as one would reduce a sheath of wheat. She pierces him, burns him, grinds him, and scatters him upon a field. As countless scholars have noted, these terms all refer to actions by which one re-fertilizes the land. In the context of trying to return *Ba’al’s* corpse to life, the image of re-fertilization makes sense.

The following lines, however, raise questions about the (fertility) metaphor. *Môt’s* scattered remains are eaten by “birds and fowl,” in a particular manner described as “šir.lšir.” The rhetorical impact of this verse becomes clear when we consider the translation of “šir.lšir.” P. Watson translates the phrase “piece by piece,” following cognate-driven translations of, e.g.,

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308 Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 126n52. See Chap. 3, pp. 144-148, for a discussion of these terms.
309 Ibid., 127nn.53, 56. Levine and de Tarragon, “Dead Kings and Rephaim,” 658., note the similarities between ‘*El’s* mourning over Ba’al and Jacob’s response upon hearing the (false) news of Joseph’s death (Gen 37:35). Both father figures demonstrate a desire to “descend to Sheol” in order either to retrieve their lost kin, or to join their kin in the afterlife, because living without them is too difficult to bear.
Yet the same cognate tradition, including Hebrew šә’әr and Akkadian šәru, point to “flesh,” as in Smith’s translation. The image of flesh scattered upon a field for consumption by scavenging fowl calls to mind images of non-burial in other aWA traditions. Understood in this way, ’Anat’s ritual violence against Mөt not only serves (possibly) to re-fertilize the land, but also serves as judgment against the netherworld deity, who will not give up the corpse of her beloved Ba’al.

The interpretation of ’Anat’s actions as ritualized corpse abuse becomes clear when we consider that an act of re-fertilization of the land would require the winnowed and sown seed to take root in the ground. In this tale, scavenging birds eliminate that possibility. Noting this reality, scholars such as J. Gray suggest that this verse aligns well with the legislation of offering the first grain in Lev 2:14. When this passage is read alongside Lev 2:14, the metaphorical description of ’Anat’s abuse of Mөt may be understood as a “harvesting” of Mөt, just as the first fruits are harvested in Lev 2:14.

The context of ’Anat’s violence further suggests that strategic abuse of Mөt’s corpse is the intended result of this passage. J. Watson states that, “’Anat’s actions are “deeds of vengeance or retribution, or . . . an attempt to force Mөt to release Ba’al, or perhaps as both.” While ’Anat’s motivation certainly might stem from a desire for retribution, the image of Mөt’s pierced, winnowed, ground, burnt, scattered, and consumed flesh does not lend itself to the conclusion that ’Anat’s actions intend to motivate Mөt to act; rather, ’Anat’s actions make any further action on her victim’s part impossible. Two passages from the Hebrew Bible also contain the sequence of piercing/winnowing, grinding, burning, and scattering. In each, the objects of

Driver. Driver, Canaanite Myths and Legends, 111.

Smith and Parker, Ugaritic Narrative Poetry, 156, 161.


ritual violence are not intended to re-fertilize the land; rather, both the Golden Calf (Exod 32:20) and the tombs and bones of the ancestors in Bethel (2 Kgs 23) become powerless after Moses and Josiah, respectively, burn, grind, and scatter the once efficacious items (idols?). In each example, the agency of the offending party or item (Môt, the Golden Calf, the Bethel ancestors’ remains) is rendered ineffective by the series of acts against their remains. Furthermore, the Ugaritic example also brings into consideration the ius talionis, so important in corpse abuse and non-burial threats. Môt boasts that he devoured Ba’al “like a lamb in my mouth” (II.21-21); ’Anat reciprocates, adding to the violence by crushing, burning, and scattering Môt’s remains, which are consumed by scavenging animals.

Following El’s mourning activities and lament (1.5.vi.21-26), ’Anat searches the steppe for Ba’al’s corpse, finds it, and engages in mourning rites identical to those performed by El (1.5.vi.31-1.6.i.5). After she mourns, ’Anat retrieves the corpse; in strikingly terse language, the text states that “she wept for him/and buried him. She placed him in a grave of the gods of the underworld” (1.6.i.17-19). Following the burial, ’Anat offers a funerary sacrifice (lines 19-31). The efforts to protect Ba’al’s corpse and the violence against ‘El take up considerably more literary space than the eventual burial of Ba’al.

The Aqht Epic also highlights the importance of burial and of efforts to avoid non-burial in Ugaritic literature. After Aqht is killed, Dan’el engages in ritualized mourning behavior. He calls upon Ba’al to break the wings of predatory birds so that Dan’el can kill and dissect them in order to find the remains of his son, Aqht. The ritual is repeated three times; twice Dan’el fails to locate his son’s remains and requests that the birds be restored to life. In the final repetition Dan’el finds the remains of Aqht, removes them from the bird, and buries them (19.1.32-33).

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I thank Mark Leuchter for analyzing the ritualistic aspect of these parallels in a recent paper: Mark Leuchter, “Between Politics and Mythology: Josiah’s Assault on Bethel in 2 Kgs 23:15-20” (presented at the Theorizing Violence in the Hebrew Bible, Brown University, 2013).
After Dan’el succeeds in providing a proper burial for his son, he issues a curse: “May Ba’al break the wings of the birds of prey if they fly over my son’s grave and disturb his sleep.”

Dan’el’s effort to locate the remains of his son—even after they have been consumed by birds of prey—suggests the importance of honorable burial of kin and the degree to which the dishonorable state of non-burial must be avoided.

**Egyptian Death and Burial Ideology:**

The complex death and burial ideologies in Egyptian culture have been well studied and debated. Material and textual evidence such as the Books of the Dead, Letters to the Dead, Coffin Texts, grave goods, and tomb inscriptions provide scholars with ample evidence to construct a full picture of Egyptian death and burial ideologies. For the purposes of this dissertation, a brief review of Egyptian death and the dead will suffice before we move on to examples of deprivation of burial in the Egyptian material record.

**Egyptian “Death” and “the Dead”:**

Scholars have demonstrated that a clear progression of thought existed concerning those persons who were able to attain divine status in the afterlife. In the Old Kingdom, only the king could achieve the status of a god in the Netherworld; evidence from the Middle Kingdom includes non-royal officials earning their divinized blessings; and in the New Kingdom, evidence

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demonstrates that anyone could become “an Osiris” in the afterlife.\textsuperscript{317} Despite the earlier exclusivity of a blessed afterlife, the overall attitude towards death in Egyptian culture is less ominous than we find in Mesopotamian narrative (i.e. Gilgamesh). The well-noted Harpers’ Songs present an inexorable, yet not wholly negative outlook on death and the afterlife. Texts often reference death as a time of rest—a literary correspondence to the archaeological evidence of the frequency of beds and headrests in burial chambers.\textsuperscript{318} It should be noted, however, that there are nonconformist versions of the same genre in which the finality and doom of death are highlighted.\textsuperscript{319} The Letters to the Dead suggest that Egyptians understood the afterlife as a continuation of worldly existence. When people died, they expected to join their deceased kin. Moreover, the dead were able to influence the lives of the living—either benevolently or malevolently.\textsuperscript{320}

Ancient Egyptian views of the person inform us on the status of the dead. A person was thought to consist of several elements: 1) the \textit{ba} (or soul), which departed the body at the point of death or burial, but was free to travel and hopefully reunite with the body in the afterlife; 2) the \textit{akh} (translation difficult, but “spirit” often is used) survives death and could be a negative or positive influence in the afterlife; 3) the \textit{ka} has been interpreted in several ways, because it has many manifestations, including a person’s image or statue and the ability of a person to survive in the afterlife even after the death of the physical corpse.\textsuperscript{321} Jan Assmann demonstrates that the collective nature of human identity is reflected in Egyptian death and burial ideology. Funerary and mortuary rites, such as tomb construction and mummification, stress the continuation of a

\textsuperscript{318} Taylor, \textit{Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt}, 107.
\textsuperscript{319} Johnston, “Death in Egypt and Israel: A Theological Reflection,” 102–104.
\textsuperscript{320} Lesko, “Death and Afterlife in Ancient Egyptian Thought,” in \textit{CANE} (ed. Sasson), 4:1765.
\textsuperscript{321} Ibid., in \textit{CANE} (ed. Sasson), 4:1763–4.
person’s memory after death, reflecting a hope for continuation of identity in the afterlife.\textsuperscript{322} It is clear from this admittedly brief sketch of the human person that Egyptians understood the corpse as only one aspect of a person’s existence. Several elements of personal identity continued after one’s physical death. Through proper burial, funerary offerings, spells, and prayers, one’s identity could survive—and thrive—in the afterlife. As we shall see below, eternal existence is tied to enduring memory, which is made possible through the successful completion of funerary rites.

\textbf{Egyptian Burial and Funerary Rites}

Preparation of the corpse is the central feature in Egyptian burial ideology and practice. Texts and inscriptions emphasize mortuary preparations through embalming and mummification before burial in order to prevent decomposition. Further, texts suggest that the integrity of the corpse was essential for a peaceful afterlife. In the Book of the Dead’s “Papyrus of Ani,” Ani prays that his head shall never be cut off, as was the head of Osiris.\textsuperscript{323} If the body is dismembered (through violence or through poorly performed mummification), portions from the Pyramid Texts reveal a hope that divine intervention might provide integrity to the corpse.\textsuperscript{324} Applying S. Olyan’s ideological hierarchy of Israelite burial rites to the Egyptian death and burial ideology, it is clear that protective mortuary rites (embalming and mummification) stand at the honorable end of an ideological spectrum, while cremation is situated at the opposite, dishonorable end. As I demonstrate below, Egyptian references to corpse abuse often threaten cremation of the corpse in order to prohibit posthumous commemoration, thus annihilating one’s

\textsuperscript{324} See, e.g., a spell issued on behalf of a king, asking for the deity Nut to reassemble dismembered body parts (Françoise Dunand and Roger Lichtenberg, \textit{Mummies and Death in Egypt}, trans. David Lorton (Ithaca: Cornell Univ., 2006), 24).
identity. Accordingly, protection of both the body and tomb are key features of Egyptian ideology, as demonstrated by the Coffin texts, the Books of the Dead, and letters to the dead, which often were included with the body in burial.325

Egyptian burials included material provisions required for transport and rest in the underworld. Following preparation of the corpse and burial, enduring funerary offerings and prayers were considered essential responsibilities of living kin in order to secure a restful afterlife for the dead and benevolence from the netherworld for the living. While there are variations in grave goods provided to the dead upon burial, scholars note that the funeral liturgies described in the Pyramid Texts and tomb inscriptions show that a specified funeral liturgy was used—without significant alteration—from 3800 BCE until the 2nd century CE.326 Hundreds of texts and inscriptions describe the numerous funerary offerings provided to the dead in their funerary chapels, as well as spells offered on behalf of the dead for protection in their journey to the underworld. The elaborate nature of the offerings and the familial duty in their presentation are clear from these texts. The scope of grave goods reflects that socioeconomic status determined how lavish one’s grave goods might be. One particularly extravagant grave good was so large that it required burial outside of the tomb complex itself—a full-sized ship was buried next to the third-millennium BCE Pyramid of King Khufu in Giza!327 Still, even the most humble of pit graves include grave goods. Pit graves dating back to the fourth-millennium BCE reveal that corpses were buried with a wide range of grave goods, which reflected the deceased’s status in life, and perhaps served as apparatus considered necessary for existence in the afterlife.328

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327 Taylor, Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt, 105.
328 Ibid., 13.
Royals and populace alike buried their dead with objects, reflecting a wide-spread belief in a continuation of existence in the afterlife.

The necessity of burial is reflected in archaeological evidence of elaborate tomb construction, tomb inscriptions, and literature. For example, we find clear evidence for the necessity of burial and enduring funerary offering in the funerary chapel that Sethos built for his father following his death. The inscriptions reveal that Sethos had a duty to build the chapel, to dedicate a cult statue in honor of his father, and to provide food offerings continually. Sethos remarks: “It is good to be active for one who is in the netherworld. It attests to a son who stands up for his father.”^329 Artistic representations of the afterlife in this chapel are typical of many extant tombs of wealthy Egyptians. The chapel inscription includes a clear articulation of how Sethos interpreted his father’s new existence in the afterlife: “His mother is with him, not leaving his side. Those who passed away before him are gathered in front of him.”^330 The duty of a son to attend to the burial and funerary rites of a parent is not only a sign of familial obligation, but also a matter of future reputation for both the living kin and the deceased. Rameses II built a temple for his father Sethos I following his death and wrote, “My heart leads me to perform good deeds for my father, Sethos I. It will cause that one forever says, ‘It was his son who kept his name alive’.”^331

During the reign of Tuthmosis III, a vizier named Amenuser built for himself an apparently glorious tomb with the following inscription:

I erected an excellent tomb for myself in my city of plentitude of time. I richly outfitted the place of my rock-cut tomb in the desert of eternity. May my name endure on it in the months of the living, which recollection of me is good among men in the years to come. Only a little of life is this world, eternity is in the realm of the dead.\(^332\)

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[^329]: Jan Assmann, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, 49.
[^330]: Ibid.
[^331]: Ibid., 51.
[^332]: Ibid., 372.
In this inscription, we learn several aspects of Egyptian death and burial ideology. First, one could prepare for one’s own burial (cf. Sheba’s tomb in Isa 22:15-19), insuring that the eternal resting place was up to par. Second, the endurance of one’s name and reputation was tied intimately to one’s burial. Third, the approach of death need not be ominous, but could be interpreted as a positive step to an eternal existence. Amenuser’s inscription suggests that the eternal aspect of death is in the underworld itself, but other texts suggest that eternal existence lies in the endurance of memory of one’s deeds. Consider, for example, an early 2nd millennium document from the Instruction of Merikare entitled, “The story of the eloquent peasant,” which presents the connection between honorable burial at the end of one’s (righteously-led) life and the enduring memory made possible by said righteously-earned burial:

Righteousness is eternal. It descends into the realm of the dead in the hand of the one who practiced it. He will be buried, and will join the earth; but his name will not be erased on earth, he will be remembered because of his virtue.333

The Instruction of Ptahhotep articulates the corollary negative of the righteously-earned burial:

“The greedy one has no tomb.”334 In Egyptian death and burial ideology, honorable burial was an outward sign of one’s righteously led life; and it was necessary in order to enjoy a continued existence in the afterlife.

Certainly not all ancient Egyptians could afford elaborate tombs, extensive preparation of the corpse, or lavish funerary offerings. Excavations reveal that many Egyptians were buried in a simply pit burial.335 Archaeologists confirm that the remains of non-elite Egyptians exhibit forms of embalming; however, numerous human remains in non-elite tombs did not undergo

333 Ibid., 55.
334 Ibid.
335 Taylor, Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt, 43, 217.
mummification. Still, the grave’s inhabitant wore a gold necklace with several embedded stones. The presence of precious metal and precious stones in simply pit burials suggest that even those who could not afford mortuary preparations provided grave goods to the deceased. Moreover, the presence of valuable items may indicate that the deceased was judged as worthy of bearing prized commodities to the afterlife.337

Burial in one’s own homeland was a sign of blessing; alternatively, one could be punished with burial outside of one’s own territory and ancestral tomb. One inscription reads: “As you love life and forget death, your city gods will praise you, you will not taste the terror of another land, you will be buried in your (own) tombs, and your offices will be assigned to your children.”338

As in Mesopotamian cultures, protection of the tomb for the sake of one’s status in the afterlife was a central concern of ancient Egyptians.339 Tomb inscriptions are particularly helpful for the current study, as they often include curses against would-be grave robbers, who apparently were exceedingly prevalent throughout ancient Egypt’s history.340 In contrast to most aWA threats of non-burial, in which scavenging animals play a prominent role as enemies to a decomposing corpse, Egyptian literature features a dog as a protector of the corpse and tomb. The most prominent dog symbolism is Ânpu, or Anubis, the son of Osiris or Rā. Anubis is depicted as a dog, or as a human with a dog’s head—a protector of corpses awaiting their funeral.

In the legend of Osiris and Isis, Anubis is credited with finding the corpse of Osiris, aided by

336 Ibid., 51–52.
338 Jan Assmann, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt*, 176; 444nn25, 33.
other dogs. Moreover, texts depict Anubis as an embalmer, who prepares and protects Osiris for his journey to the Netherworld.\textsuperscript{341}

Tomb inscriptions warning against anyone touching and disturbing the tomb surely address both possible forms of looting. Often, tomb inscriptions threatened potential looters with violence. The \textit{Mo‘alla} inscription states: “As regards any ruler who will rule in \textit{Mo‘alla}, and who will commit a bad, evil act against this coffin, and against any part of this tomb, his arm will be cut off for \textit{Hemen} at his procession from this district.”\textsuperscript{342} The tomb of Ankhmahor from Saqqara clearly aims to defray looters through the \textit{ius talionis}: “Anything that you might do to this tomb of mine, the like shall be done to your property.”\textsuperscript{343} Additional inscriptions threaten not only decapitation, but also excommunication from all elements of community, be they in life, death, or in memory:

As for any rebel who might rebel and plan in his heart to desecrate this tomb and what it contains, which might destroy inscriptions and damage the statues in the tombs of the ancestors . . . . he shall not be transfigured in the necropolis, his property shall not endure in the necropolis, his children shall be expelled from their tombs, he shall be an enemy to the transfigured ones, his name shall not be mentioned among the transfigured ones, his memory shall not endure among the living of the earth, water shall not be poured for him, offerings shall not be brought for him on the wag-festival…\textsuperscript{344}

In this inscription, the curse threatens any potential desecrator and his kin with several post-mortem punishments. An exclusion from transfiguration in the necropolis indicates that the desecrator’s spirit will enter neither the burial site nor afterlife. Burial rites are necessary for a

\textsuperscript{341} Taylor, \textit{Journey through the Afterlife}, 84. The domestication of dogs appears in ancient Egyptian inscriptions and art dating from the Pre-Dynastic era. Moreover, a limited number of burial sites include mummified dogs buried alongside their human companion (see Peck, \textit{The Material World of Ancient Egypt}, 178–179.).
\textsuperscript{342} Assmann, “When Justice Fails,” 153. For a full study on the protection of tombs in Egypt, see Sottas, \textit{La Préservation de La Propriété Funéraire Dans L’ancienne Égypte, Avec Le Recueil Des Formules D’imprécation.}
\textsuperscript{343} Hays, \textit{Death in the Iron Age II}, 80; For extensive analysis of the royal tombs of Saqarr, see Jean Philippe Lauer, \textit{Saqqara: The Royal Cemetery of Memphis: Excavations and Discoveries since 1850} (New York: Scribner, 1976).
\textsuperscript{344} Jan Assmann, \textit{Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt}, 40, emphasis mine.
transfiguration from a living, embodied person to a deceased spirit. Moreover, the desecrator will be the enemy of the dead: his name remains unmentioned in the underworld. His children likewise are excluded from the netherworld. They will not be able to perform necessary commemoration rites necessary to ensure the continuation of their parent’s name. Deprivation of burial was thus a way to exclude one from community. The trans-generational nature of this curse also appears in an inscription from the New Kingdom. Here, non-burial is extended to the descendants of any possible desecrator of the tombs and their stelae: “His tomb will burn and not receive his children.”

**Egyptian Deprivation of Burial**

The significance attached to the integrity of the corpse and protection of the tomb in Egyptian culture occasions examples in which the deprivation of proper burial appears. Two examples of non-burial in pictorial reliefs appear in the Egyptian material record—the Battlefield Palette (also called the Vultures Palette) and the Narmer Palette—both of which date to the late predynastic era, c. 3150 BCE. The Battlefield Palette depict birds, lions, and other animals attacking enemy corpses on a battlefield; and the Narmer Palette includes ten displayed corpses lying with their heads at their feet. These pictorial depictions of corpse abuse suggest that violence against enemies’ corpses was considered a possible outcome after defeat by the Egyptian imperial forces.

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346 Battlefield Palette (or “Vultures Palette”) is a pre-dynastic or early dynastic fragmentary palette now housed at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (Jeffrey Spencer. *Early Dynastic Objects* (vol. 5; London: British Museum, 1980), 79–80, no. 576); the Narmer Slate Palette was discovered by James Quibell in Hierakonpolis in 1898-99 and is now housed at the Oriental Institute, Univ. of Chicago (James Edward Quibell, Frederick Wastie Green, and W.M.F. Petrie, *Hierakonpolis: Plates of Discoveries, 1898-99* (2 vols.; London: B. Quaritch, 1902).
From the Early Middle Kingdom (2050-1640 BCE) forward, we find inscriptions containing images of non-burial. In Monumental Imprecation III, the future identity of the accursed is clearly at stake:

…he will not be buried in the West, and their flesh shall burn together with that of the criminals, they having been turned into ones who do not exist….he shall be an enemy of the glorified spirits, his memory shall not be among those living on earth, water shall not be poured for him, offerings shall not be given to him on the wag-feast and any other beautiful feats of the necropolis.

Here, cremation (a common form of bodily disposal for criminals) has vast repercussions. To burn a body is to destroy it, thereby depriving it of the elaborate preparation and mummification required for honored burial and entrance into the underworld, where one might join the “glorified spirits.” Deprivation of burial “in the West” (the underworld) ostensibly determines that no funerary offerings will be offered for the deceased among the living, thereby extinguishing one’s identity (“memory”) forever. These themes are repeated in the next example:

His name shall not exist, he shall not be buried in the desert, he shall be cooked together with the damned, whom god has cursed; his city-god shall abominate him, his fellow-citizen shall abominate him (Monumental Imprecation, IV.79-80).

In this imprecation, not only is erasure of identity included, but also we find a direct correlation between the blessedness of afterlife and the accursed state of non-burial. The condemned status of the unburied (indeed, cremated) victim also is emphasized in the following tomb inscription from Hasaya:

As for anybody who will not recite this, he shall fall to the anger of his city-god, and to the slaughter of the king. He shall not be remembered among the spirits and nevermore shall his name be mentioned on earth; he shall not be buried in the West, he shall be burned together with the damned, since Thoth has condemned him; his face shall be spat at.

The potential nonconformist to the inscription’s demands will be met with multiple curses, including anger from the local deity, execution ordered by the king, loss of identity both in the underworld with the spirits and among the living, non-burial, cremation with criminals, rejection, and shame.

Inscriptions that include reference to non-burial continue into the Intermediate Period (1070-712 BCE). Consider, for example, the following foundation document from the funerary temple of the sage Amenhotep son of Hapu:

As for the general or military scribe who will follow after me and who will find the ka-chapel falling into ruin….they shall not receive the dignity of the righteous; they shall not eat the offering cakes of the ‘cavern-dwellers” (the deceased in their tombs); one shall not libate for them water from the river; their son shall not be installed at their place….They shall belong to the sword on the day of destruction, they shall be called enemies; their bodies shall be consumed, they shall hunger without break, and their bodies shall die.349

The preceding examples demonstrate that the notion of enduring memory is the crucial linchpin in Egyptian burial ideology. Correspondingly, threats of non-burial most often include reference to one’s future identity. In the last example from the Egyptian regard, the god Re curses the underworld demon Aphosis in the “Book of the Overthrowing of Apophis.” This curse demonstrates that the most direct object of abuse is not the corpse itself, but the annihilation of one’s identity and that of one’s kin:

I have commanded that a curse be cast upon him; I have consumed his bones; I have annihilated his soul in the course of every day; I have cut his vertebrae at his neck, severed with a knife which hacked up his flesh and pierced into his hide . . . . I have taken away his heart from its place, his seat, and his tomb. I have made him nonexistent: his name is not; his children are not; his is not and his family is not; he is not and his false door is not; he is not and his heirs are not. His egg shall not last, nor shall his seed knit together—and vice versa. His soul, his corpse, his state of glory, his shadow, and his magic is not. His bones are not, and his skin is not.350

350 ANET, 7 (my emphasis).
In this illustrative example, the curse entails violence and decapitation, tomb desecration, and disruption of afterlife existence. The result of these acts is not simply the unrest of the dead victim, but the complete nonexistence of Apophis and his kin. The curse lists several violent acts against Apophis directly, including the destruction of bones, hacking of flesh, decapitation of the body, and removal from the tomb. Moreover, the curse attacks Aphopis’s expectation of enduring memory among the living. Re—the divine agent of abuse—annihilates Aphosis’s name, children, family, egg and seed, and heirs. Finally, all eternal aspects of Aphosis’s existence are destroyed, including all those elements that Egyptians understood to continue in the afterlife.

**Phoenician Death and Burial**

Phoenician material and literary evidence sheds additional light on the role of burial and its deprivation in ancient Israel’s cultural environs. While several important differences between Phoenician and Israeliite death and burial ideology exist, the evidence demonstrates that these neighbors and trading partners also valued burial and understood non-burial as a frightening outcome.

**Phoenician “Death” and “the Dead”:**

As in Ugaritic and Israeliite texts, Phoenician texts use several terms to designate the dead. The term *rp’m* appears in two Phoenician inscriptions as a title for residents of the underworld. Interestingly, both tomb inscriptions also include threats of non-burial (discussed below). In another text, the term *’lm* may refer to the divinized dead. Finally, in a Neo-Punic text from the 1st c. BCE, we read of the divinized *rp’m*, providing further evidence for the status of the dead in Phoenician influenced traditions.³⁵¹ Phoenician culture imagined that the dead

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were at rest, or perhaps “lying” with the ancestors.\footnote{Suriano, \textit{The Politics of Dead Kings}, 38, 39, 72.} Moreover, similar to its nuance in biblical literature, the image of “gathering” may have been applied to death in Phoenician culture. A Punic inscription reports, “Behold in this place were gathered her bones in the earth.”\footnote{Ibid., 39n.106.}

**Phoenician Burial and Funerary Rites**

The most significant difference between the Phoenician burial ideology and that of most of its neighbors is the pre-funeral treatment of the dead’s remains. Whereas Egyptian bodily preparation often included embalming and mummification, in Phoenician culture cremation was the primary method for disposing of physical remains.\footnote{Cremation also appears as one aspect of third-millennium Syrian mortuary practice. See Porter, “Dynamics of Death,” 10.} The two treatments stand as contrasting approaches to post-mortem bodily treatment. In Egyptian culture, we saw that curses often referenced burning as punishment. In Phoenician material evidence, cremation appears to have been the norm, rather than a dishonorable post-mortem rite.

Beginning in 1990, significant excavations have uncovered a necropolis dating back to Iron Age Tyre.\footnote{Maria Eugenia Aubet, ed., \textit{The Phoenician Cemetery of Tyre-Al Bass: Excavations, 1997-1999} (Ministère de la Culture, Direction Générale des Antiquités, 2004); Maria Eugenia Aubet, “The Phoenician Cemetery of Tyre,” \textit{NEA} 73, no. 2/3 (2010): 144–55.} Thus far, over three hundred cremation urns have been identified, including the cremated remains of adults (ages twelve and up).\footnote{Aubet, “The Phoenician Cemetery of Tyre,” 145.} There is no record of child burial in this necropolis, which is regarded as the primary burial ground for the city of Tyre. From this data, Aubet concludes that “not only did [children] have no right to be buried with adults, but . . . they were not entitled to full membership in the funerary community.”\footnote{Ibid., 146.} Archaeologists also found evidence of older urns relocated to be nearer newer urns, suggesting perhaps that relatives might be buried together—or that kin-groups arranged their ancestors’ urns in certain areas within the
Several burial sites within the necropolis had stone stelae with carved pictures or inscriptions naming the inhabitant whose ashes were in the urn; further, many burials were specially marked with small stones. Finally, Aubet notes that evidence of funerary rites occurring grave-side exists, including food and drink vessels with discernible protein (fish or meat) remains. Many of these urn groupings, which date back to the 9th and 8th c. BCE, are contemporary to Israel. In addition to evidence of offerings external to the grave, archaeologists have concluded that several items were left in the grave alongside the remains; and some graves show evidence of fires lit in the grave before it was closed. Evidence of additional fires lit outside of the grave appears as well.

Anthropological-archaeologists have reconstructed a probable portrait of Phoenician funerary rites from available material and textual evidence: after cremation, funeral and mourning rites in Tyre lasted for a significant duration (several days—perhaps weeks), perhaps corresponding with the Phoenician conception of transmission of the deceased to the Netherworld. Furthermore, limited evidence suggests that Phoenicians participated in a funerary feast, a marzēaḥ similar to what appears in Mesopotamian and Israelite texts. A bronze bowl from the 4th c. BCE is inscribed with “the marzēaḥ of Shamash.” A late 3rd c. BCE Punic inscription from a Phoenician colony contains the inscription “the marzēaḥ of the gods.”

Phoenician Deprivation of Burial

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358 Ibid., 148.
360 Aubet, “The Phoenician Cemetery of Tyre,” 149.
361 Ibid., 151; cf., Porter, “Dynamics of Death,” 1, 3, 10.
362 Avigad and Greenfield, “‘A Bronze’ Phialē with a Phoenician Dedicatory Inscription,” 120.
363 Johnston, Shades of Sheol, 183.
Archaeologists note that Phoenician burial sites demonstrate change, particularly in type, decoration, and effort to protect the burial site. By the 5th and 4th c. BCE, burial sites are decorated more elaborately than in prior centuries; and tomb inscriptions suggest that the integrity of buried remains has become a central concern. Significantly, tombs inscriptions threaten non-burial for those who might desecrate the tomb and disturb its contents. Two inscriptions on the tomb of Eshmunazar of Sidon threaten non-burial. The first reads, “May they not have a resting-place with the shades, and may they not be buried in a grave, and may they not have a son and seed in their place!” (KAI 14:8-10). A second inscription reads “May they have no root down below and no fruit on top” (KAI 14:11-12). Finally, a 5th c. inscription on the sarcophagus of Tabnit of Sidon includes the following curse: “May you not have any seed among the living under the sun or resting-place with the shades!” (KAI 13:7-8).

Tomb inscriptions illuminate several ideas regarding Phoenician threats of non-burial. First, Phoenician afterlife is imagined as a restful period in which the dead join with the rpʾm. Second, the threat of non-burial is connected in each of these three examples with continued life for the deceased’s descendants. It is uncertain whether the act of deprivation of burial and the afterlife is the cause of the lack of living kin “under the sun,” or a trans-generational element added to the curse. Clearly, however, the threat of discontinuation of living kin falls directly after the threat of non-burial in each of these tomb inscriptions. KAI 14:11-12 pairs the “root” of those in the afterlife with the “fruit” of the living, suggesting that connection between dead ancestors and living descendants was possible. Third, the tomb inscriptions suggest that the Phoenicians understand disruption of a tomb to be a violent—or, at the least, disrespectful—act committed against the deceased.

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364 Olyan, “Honor, Shame, and Covenant,” 214, n. 42. See also the following grave inscriptions: KAI 1:2; 13:3-8; 14:4-20, 20-22; 226:6-10.
C. Hays interprets the Phoenician tomb inscriptions as evidence that later Phoenician culture placed importance on the “integrity of the corpse and the hope for a place among the divinized dead.” While I agree that the tomb and its contents are placed in highest regard, Hays’s description is imprecise. Phoenician tomb inscriptions do not attest to a need for corpse wholeness per say, considering especially the continued presence of cremation. Cremation, by definition, eliminates the physical body. This is, of course, in direct contrast to mummification, which attempts to preserve the body. Phoenician inscriptions do not necessarily emphasize the integrity of the corpse, but the integrity of the burial itself. This distinction is prudent especially when we contrast Phoenician practices with other aWA cultures in which cremation is considered a punishment against the deceased that disallows corpse wholeness in the afterlife.

**Conclusion:**

Extra-biblical evidence demonstrates that Israel’s neighbors valued burial and believed that proper burial was necessary for a peaceful existence for the dead, the living, and the delicate balance between the two. Threats and punishments of non-burial were levied against treaty violators and enemies not only because of the consequences of physical non-burial, but also for its far-reaching implications. Repercussions from non-burial might include: shame for living kin and the perceived inability of the deceased to travel to the underworld and rest among the ancestral dead. Further, non-burial might result in the inability of living kin to provide ancestor-related materials, services, and rituals intended to create and sustain trans-generational social unity. As Stavrakopoulou notes, “displacement of the dead ruptures the carefully managed relationship between the dead and the living, upsetting the social dynamic between them. Disinterment thus functions as an act of aggression towards the living community, as well as the

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365 *Death in the Iron Age II*, 131.
dead.” The frequent allusions in aWA references to non-burial to kin below and above the ground (e.g., “seed”/”root” and “fruit”) illustrates the implications of non-burial for both living and deceased kin.

Literary and pictorial references to non-burial allows us to contrast ways in which aWA societies understood the necessity of burial and the implications of its deprivation. The vast array of images of non-burial in the material record stem from a variety of socio-literary contexts, but they demonstrate striking similarities in stereotypical terminology and intended impact on the addressee or victim of the non-burial threat or punishment. Despite similarities in terminology among examples from varying aWA cultures, patterns emerge in the ways in which different societies employ images of non-burial; and these patterns are directly tied to central features of a society’s distinct death and burial ideology. Specifically, in Mesopotamian contexts, references to non-burial appeared in two primary contexts. First, beginning with Sargon of Agade, Mesopotamian rulers incorporated non-burial and corpse abuse into royal annals. Military victories were marked by the victor’s ability to abuse or discard the corpses of the defeated party. Secondly, threats of non-burial appear in curses against those who broached the stipulations of treaty agreements. In both royal chronicles and treaty documents, Mesopotamian references to non-burial utilized gruesome depictions of corpses devoured by animals, resulting in the living’s inability to provide their deceased kin with the necessary mortuary rituals. Mesopotamian references to non-burial highlight the method of post-mortem abuse over and above its agent, victim, reason, and result. In contrast, the Ugaritic references to non-burial appearing in narrative contexts seem to highlight the reason for abuse. Here, agents of abuse enact post-mortem abuse upon their victim as retribution for previous violent acts against kin.

Stavrakopoulou, Land of Our Fathers, 81.
In Egyptian texts, however, the chief concerns appear to be one’s post-mortem identity, reputation, and enduring funerary rituals, all of which affect one’s identity among the spirits in the afterlife. Tomb and building inscriptions threaten potential desecrators with (often trans-generational) post-mortem abuse. Without burial and accompanying mortuary rites, one’s spirit “name” could not endure into the afterlife. Frequent allusions to “name” and “memory” in Egyptian references to non-burial highlight the result of post-mortem abuse.

In Chapters 3, 4 and 5, I will examine ancient Israelite death and burial ideology, biblical non-burial data, and contextualized references to non-burial in the HB. As will become clear, Israel’s use of non-burial significantly overlaps with its aWA neighbors’, particularly in terms of stereotypical terminology and presence of non-burial threats in treaty contexts. Biblical texts include gruesome literary images of corpse abuse for rhetorical impact. Like Mesopotamian sources, ancient Israelite literature demonstrates that non-burial signals one party’s strength over another’s weakness. Like Egyptian examples, identity is a central feature of ancient Israel’s incorporation of the motif of non-burial in its compositions.

A key difference appears in ancient Israelite literature, however. Throughout the examples explored in this Chapter, the threatening and enacting agent of post-mortem abuse in aWA references to non-burial are either suzerains or their armies. In no example does a god appear to be the source of abuse. In contrast, biblical authors frequently name YHWH—and not a human suzerain—as the active agent of abuse directed towards human victims.
Chapter 3

“And he rested with his fathers”: Death and Burial Ideologies in Ancient Israel

Introduction

Previous studies of death and burial in ancient Israel have focused on archaeological evidence and transecting data points in biblical and extra-biblical literature. As the aWA material record presented in Chapter 2 illustrates, a variety of literary sources attest to social expectations of proper burial, mourning, and funerary rites intended to memorialize the deceased, ensure a “restful” afterlife, and enable an enduring memory of the deceased. The expectation for honorable burial stems directly from the aWA conception of the afterlife as a continuation of worldly existence, but on another plane. Care and maintenance of the passages to afterlife and the netherworld are significant aspects of funerary culture in available aWA texts. This Chapter demonstrates that ancient Israel also was concerned with the means and methods of death and burial. The HB reveals these universal human concerns, but with variability of expression. The variety of opinions about Sheol, myriad identifications and descriptions of the deceased, and variability with which death and burial are referred indicate that biblical authors were not socially or literarily constrained to use set formulas when discussing death and burial. First, I briefly review applicable archaeological evidence, focusing on those aspects of the material record that demonstrate concern for proper burial. Next, I survey lexical evidence for death and burial in the HB, examining the variety of terms used to signify the act of dying, the burial process, and characteristics of the deceased and their realm. In conjunction with archaeological evidence, literary evidence clarifies the concept of a socially-mandated, “ideal” burial. My analysis of non-burial in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 demonstrates that threatened or enacted post-mortem abuse negates the positive effects of an “ideal” burial.
Archaeological Evidence for Ancient Israelites’ Death and Burial Ideologies

Archaeological evidence informs our knowledge of ancient Israelite burial ideologies. In recent examinations of ancient beliefs about death and burial, scholars have examined biblical texts in conjunction with material remains in an effort to provide a fuller picture of ancient Israelite burial practices. Archaeological investigations reveal a great deal about conceptions of death, including the reality of corpse abuse in military campaigns. Yet archaeological and comparative analyses alone cannot explicate burial ideologies sufficiently, and they surely cannot explain the phenomenon of deprivation of burial. Relying solely on biblical evidence, however, leads to a less than full picture of ancient religious ideologies and ritual behavior. The following section briefly surveys archaeological evidence of burial patterns, focusing especially on data that informs our understanding of the deprivation of burial.

Hundreds of burial sites have been located in Judah; and archaeologists have utilized their locations, size, and internal objects to reconstruct an historical picture of death in ancient Judah. Three predominant types of burial in the Southern Levant appear from the LBA through IA in Judean sites: pit burial; jar burial; and cist burial.

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367 Bloch-Smith, Judahite Burial Practices; Pitard, “Tombs and Offerings: Archaeological Data and Comparative Methodology in the Study of Death in Israel.”
369 Olyan, “Israelite Internment Ideology,” 602, n. 5.
In the hill country, corpses were interned in tombs (either hewn or in caves) and laid upon a bench for the decomposition process. Following decomposition, bones were moved into another area within the tomb, ostensibly to make room for additional corpses. The movement of bones from a rock-cut bench within the tomb to an ossuary (or separate space designated for bones) often is understood as “secondary burial.” Secondary burial does not require an interpretation that the remains were disregarded and not revered. The widespread evidence of consolidation of bones and the use of ossuaries suggest that the gathering of human remains to a central area within the family tomb was a common practice, and perhaps a space-saving matter. Anne Porter argues that secondary burials in Early Bronze Age burials along the Euphrates is one stage in the multi-tiered transition of the deceased person’s identity from an individual, living member of the kinship group to a member of the collective kinship group of “deceased ancestors.” In this light, secondary burial is not disrespectful, nor is it simply a space-saving technique; rather, the movement of human remains appears as a crucial element within a culture’s mortuary program. Considered alongside the plentiful evidence imbuing honor to human


Bloch-Smith, “The Cult of the Dead in Judah,” 214. Other burial types appear and are interpreted as showing significant foreign influence. These include Anthropoid coffins (Egyptian); bathtub coffins (Assyrian); jar burial (Syrian); and cremation (Phoenician). See Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, 58n44. For an additional survey of burial patterns in Palestine, see Kletter, “People without Burials?”.


Porter, “Dynamics of Death,” 9, 22.
remains, secondary burial does not signal disregard. Indeed, turning back the HB, in 2 Sam 21:14, Saul and Jonathan’s second burial helps to restore divine favor.\footnote{Hays, \textit{Death in the Iron Age II}, 160.}

In the lowlands, corpses frequently were buried in simple ground burials, either in pits or cists (stone lined graves). There is some indication that geography played a role in the variance of burial types, because pit graves appear in higher proportion in the sandier climates, whereas cave burials and hewn bench tombs are more common in the soft rock of the highlands. Nevertheless, examples of pit graves in the highland bedrock appear in, e.g., Megiddo and Lachish; and hewn graves exist in the coastal regions.\footnote{Rivka Gonen, \textit{Burial Patterns and Cultural Diversity in Late Bronze Age Canaan} (American Schools of Oriental Research Dissertation Series 7; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 9.} R. Gonen argues that climate and geology played only minor roles in the type of burial:

Because a burial not only fulfills the basic need to remove a corpse, but is also a complex outcome of communal and personal needs, the geological conditions play only a minor role in the choice of the site and form of the burial. When the burial practice is of the cave type, people cut the caves from hard and soft limestone, in the mountains as well as in the sandstone ridges at the coastal plain, at a great investment of time and effort. On the other hand when burial customs demand internment in a pit, pits are dug in sand, earth or rock, in the plains and in the mountains, even when caves are locally available.\footnote{Gonen, \textit{Burial Patterns and Cultural Diversity in Late Bronze Age Canaan}; Rivka Gonen, “Regional Patterns of Burial Customs in Late Bronze Age Canaan,” \textit{Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society} 45 (1984): 70–74. Cf. William G. Dever, “Review of R. Gonen, Burial Patterns and Cultural Diversity in Late Bronze Age Canaan,” \textit{IEJ} 45 (1999): 299–300. Variety in tomb construction burial practice also appears in the material record of Israel’s Syrian neighbors (For a review of archaeological findings, see Porter, “Dynamics of Death,” 10–15).}

Looking at location, burial type, and grave goods included in the burial site, Gonen’s approach stresses cultural differences discernible in the material record. She provides a full report of Late Bronze Age cultural influences visible through regional burial patterns.\footnote{Judahite Burial Practices, 55.} In her extensive study of IA tombs, E. Bloch-Smith also acknowledges that cultural patterns emerge in burial practices, even when examples of variation continue.\footnote{Bloch-Smith, “The Cult of the Dead in Judah,” 216.}
Excavations reveal that bench tombs grew in popularity and eventually became the most common form of burial in Judah. They have been uncovered at sites on the Northern coast, the Shephelah, southern coastal plains, and in northern Israelite valleys.\textsuperscript{381} In fact, from around the time of the fall of Samaria until the fall of Jerusalem, twenty-four sites demonstrate exclusive use of the bench tomb, with exceptions only in the urban locations of Jerusalem and Lachish.\textsuperscript{382}

Despite the large number of burials excavated, less than adequate analysis of human remains exists in the categories of age and gender.\textsuperscript{383} In 555 burials examined in two studies, 285 were determined to be adults of undetermined sex. Fifty-four infants and sixty-six children have been identified, along with eight adolescent males, twelve adolescent females, twenty-seven adult males, and thirty-three adult women.

Infants were most often buried alongside adults; however, archaeologists have found examples of individual burial of an infant in a simple grave. Some infants, whose remains were collected in jars, were left with small trinkets such as bracelets, beads, and rings. The infants buried alone in pits or urns were left without discernible grave goods. E. Bloch-Smith suggests that social beliefs account for the difference in grave goods placed with infants, positing that the burials without provisions or with the smallest amount of grave goods indicate that the deceased had not acquired adequate status. The presence of provisions in some infant burials suggests that, “even infants required and benefitted from the amuletic powers of jewelry.”\textsuperscript{384} Children and adolescents also were buried with adults; and they were more likely than infants to be buried with objects, including beads, bowls, and shells.\textsuperscript{385} Cultural perceptions of identity at death surely account for the variation in burials, from infant remains to those of children and adults, because

\textsuperscript{382} Ibid., 216.
\textsuperscript{384} Ibid., 65.
\textsuperscript{385} Ibid., 66.
archaeological evidence does not point to chronological differences between infants receiving no grave goods and those with them. Perhaps infant remains discovered without grave goods suggest that a baby had not yet acquired the status of living kin because of stillbirth or death related to parturition—common tragedies in the ancient world.\(^{386}\) Qoh 6:3 speaks to the honor of burial afforded to all persons: “A man may beget a hundred children, and live many years; but however many are the days of his years, if he does not enjoy life’s good things, or has no burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he” (Qoh 6:3). The stillborn child who never experiences life is deemed “better off” than a man who did not enjoy life, or was denied burial.

In contrast to the Phoenicians, ancient Israelites typically did not practice cremation and viewed the practice as offensive. Cremation is portrayed either as part of divine judgment (Gen 19:24; Isa 66: 22-23; Amos 2:2, 5), or as an essential act of purification (Gen 38:24; Lev 20:14; 21:19; Num 16:35).\(^{387}\) The burning of human remains often is intended to desecrate both the location and the remains. Josiah’s burning of exhumed bones at Bethel serves as a paradigmatic example of such views (2 Kings 23).\(^{388}\) If cremation of corpses is not honorable, the practice of burning living humans is a complete abhorrence. Leviticus 18:21, 20:2-5; 2 Kgs 21:6; Jer 7:31, 32:5, and Isa 57:5 mention its practice and prohibition. Child sacrifice by fire often is interpreted


\(^{387}\) Contrary to the literary record, cremated remains have been found in ceramic vessels buried in the sand, in pyre burials, and in cave tombs. These remains appear most frequently in coastal sites, in vessels showing Phoenician influence. Excavations at Mt. Nebo and Lachish revealed “cremation strata,” in which were found fragments of burnt bone resulting from either initial cremation or exposure to fire when moved from one location in the tomb to another in a secondary burial. Of particular interest is Tomb 120 at Lachish, in which the remains of 1500 people have been discovered. This massive group was buried together and interred with a covering layer of animal—mostly swine—bones. In addition to interment with swine bones, several bones of the 1500 people show evidence of burning at some point (Bloch-Smith, \textit{Judahite Burial Practices}, 52, 59, 66).

as a sacrifice to the god Molek.\textsuperscript{389} Regardless of its historicity, the combination of corpses and fire is viewed with great disdain in the biblical literature.

Of course, not all cremation necessarily carried negative implications. Consider, for example, the burning of Saulide remains in 1 Sam 31:12. In this narrative context, cremation serves a rhetorical and theological purpose; its cause is not punitive, but an effort to avoid further post-mortem abuse by the Philistines, including exposure to the elements and consumption by scavenging animals.\textsuperscript{390} Further, the burning of Saulide remains—protective rather than punitive—does not result in full cremation. After the Jabesh-Gileadites burn the bodies of Saul and his sons, they honor the deceased through burial and mourning rites: “They came to Jabesh and burned them there. Then they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh, and fasted for seven days” (1 Sam 31:12).

In addition to grave location and analysis of human remains, archaeologists examine grave goods as indicators of cultural influence. In both LB and IA burials, many graves include a bowl and jar. Earlier IA burials appear to have more elaborate grave goods than later graves. Grave goods suggest trade, commerce, and artistic influence, in addition to possible influences from others’ burial ideologies. Burials from the 12\textsuperscript{th}-11\textsuperscript{th} c. BCE include a wide range of objects and provisions, most often in local Myceean and Cypriot styles, and consist of items intended for sustenance, protection, and personal care. Utensils include bowls, jars, flasks, pyxides, and craters, as well as personal items, such as beads, pendants, bangles, rings, earrings, scarabs, eyes


\textsuperscript{390} See Brichto, “Kin, Cult, Land and Afterlife,” 37n.58. This narrative will be discussed below in greater detail.
of Horus, and figurines depicting the deity Bes.\textsuperscript{391} In addition to items with amuletic powers, protective tools found in burial sites include javelin heads, spearheads, blades, arrowheads, spindle whorls, pins, and needles. The final category of items provided for the deceased, items of personal care and enjoyment, include seals, combs, mirrors, cosmetic implements, and assorted items associated with games.\textsuperscript{392} Gonen notes that most Late Bronze Age grave goods stem from the domestic arena.\textsuperscript{393} Based on his conclusion, Johnston writes that LBA burial sites included “a full range of domestic ware, with no specific funerary items.”\textsuperscript{394} Of course, the problem with such a conclusion is that the lack of verifiable, cultural information about the importance placed on grave goods forces scholars to admit that we cannot determine whether or not domestic wares played a role in burial and funerary rites. We lack sufficient information to conclude that household goods were not intended for some purpose in the afterlife, e.g., the care and maintenance of the deceased on their journey to the afterlife, or in supplication of the deceased. Without knowledge of the level of efficacy granted to an array of common domestic goods, we cannot make determinative evaluations as to their status as funerary or non-funerary items. The presence of domestic wares in a majority of burial sites suggests that a link existed between death, burial, and domestic goods. Beyond that, we must rely on limited literary evidence for further indications of the purpose of such grave goods.

Burials from the 10\textsuperscript{th}-6\textsuperscript{th} c. BCE often include personal objects and provisions reflecting the regional cultural influences of Phoenicia and Assyria, including bowls, jars, storejars, dipper juglets, cooking, eating, and wine vessels, and amphoras. One particular type of grave item has drawn significant focus from scholars of ancient Israelite history: female pillar figurines. These figurines, evidenced as early as the 11\textsuperscript{th} century BCE, have prominent breasts and often tree- or

\textsuperscript{392} Bloch-Smith, \textit{Judahite Burial Practices}.
\textsuperscript{393} Gonen, \textit{Burial Patterns and Cultural Diversity in Late Bronze Age Canaan}, 14.
\textsuperscript{394} \textit{Shades of Sheol}, 57.
pole-like bodies in line with biblical depictions of Asherah. Scholars have argued that these figurines served a variety of purposes in, e.g., worship of Asherah, Astate, and/or Ishtar, various fertility cultic activities, lactation, and the cult of dead ancestors. Female pillar figurines are documented in household shrines throughout both Judah and Israel. In tombs, however, the same figurines only appear in Judah.

Archaeological evidence points to the use of burial sites accommodating families, with males and females, young and old, buried together in both bench and cave tombs. Least disturbed burial sites often contain the remains of three to five generations, equaling between fifteen and thirty interred individuals. In LBA caves, secondary burials (moving the bones from decomposed corpses to the back or side of the cave, or to ossuaries, allowed for generations of remains and their corresponding grave goods to be grouped together. In more urban areas, where wealthier families and individuals lived in higher proportion, graves display evidence of substantial craftsmanship and include more elaborate grave goods. This evidence harmonizes with narratives in TANAKH such as the story of the royal steward from Shebna, whom Isaiah censured for his desire for individual burial outside of his family’s tomb: “What right do you have here? Who are your relatives here, that you have cut out a tomb here for yourself, cutting a tomb on the height, and carving a habitation for yourself in the rock?” (Isa 22:16).

Lexical and Literary Evidence for Israelite Death and Burial Ideology

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397 Gonen, *Burial Patterns and Cultural Diversity in Late Bronze Age Canaan*, 13.
A scan of the Hebrew Bible for words and phrases associated with death demonstrates that ancient Israelites understood death as a natural progression of human existence. Death occurred naturally or violently, and one’s death could be described succinctly or with literary flourish. Variations from peaceful, *natural* death and honorable burial required the use of a variety of verbs, nouns, and euphemisms to describe the implications of *unnatural* death and burial.

**Characteristics of Death**

Death in ancient Israel was a constant reality and threat in arenas ranging from the domestic sphere to military encounters. Correspondingly, biblical Hebrew speaks of death in many ways. Verbs indicating death can be categorized according to generalized/natural death, violent death, and euphemisms implying death. The most common verb to indicated death is *mût* (to die); it is used for natural, premature, and violent deaths alike. Conjugations of this verbal root in the *qal* are applied to humans—both individuals and groups—as well as to animals (e.g., Gen 33:13; Lev 11:39; Exod 7:18; 8:9; 1 Sam 24:15; Qoh 9:4; Isa 66:24). Death was an expected reality for all living beings (Num 16:29), including plants and trees (Job 14:8). Joshua 23:14 and 1 Kgs 2:2 speak of death euphemistically as “to go the way of all the earth.” Natural death occurred frequently (Gen 25:8; Num 16:29; Judg 10:2, 5; Ps 82:7; 1 Chron 29:28). On the most basic level, to die was to depart the earth in some way (Ps 39:13) and to lie in the earth (Job 7:21). Conjugations of *mût*, either alone or in tandem with other verbs, are also applied to violent deaths inflicted upon fellow human beings (Lev 20, 24; Ex 21:12-17; 1 Sam 14:39, 44; Jer 26:8). In addition to death at the hands of a fellow human being, several texts indicate that God may be the agent of death upon humans (e.g., Gen 20:19; Jos 10:11). Furthermore, humans—collectively—can experience death (Amos 2:2; Hos 13:1; Ezek 18:31; 33:1). In the *po‘el* and

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399 The root *mwt*, conjugations of which indicate death-associated nouns, verbs, and adjectives, occurs 1000 times in the Hebrew Bible. Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, 127.
hiphil, forms of mút indicate violent death (1 Sam 14:13; 2 Sam 1:16; Jer 20:7). The punishment of death often appears as the referent of hiphil conjugations (Ex 1:16 [E]; Num 14:15 [J]; 35:19, 21 [P]; Lev 20:4 [H]; Isa 65:15; Hos 2:5; 1 Chron 2:3). These conjugations are used in place of the more common verb for “to kill,” hgr. Conjugations of mút also occur in parallelism with other verbs. One can die and expire (גוע), be extinguished (כבה), be consumed (כלה/םלול), fall (נפל), and be gathered (אסף). The frequency and variety of terms connoting death demonstrate the range of possible meanings conveyed by the word “death.” The complexity of meanings and usages expands when we consider euphemisms for death.

While many synonyms for death suggest that it is an ominous actuality contrary to life, several synonyms indicate that certain aspects of death and burial were not wholly negative. In particular, terms that liken death to “rest” and phrases that emphasize kinship relations reflect the complexity of ancient Israelite conceptions of death. As I discussed in Chap. 1, the deuteronomistic formula, “and PN slept with his fathers,” reflects the idea that upon death, one is gathered to one’s kin—either literally (in the ancestral tomb), or metaphorically (in the afterlife community of ancestors). This common formulary presents perhaps the most positive perspective on death: upon death and honorable burial, one was somehow understood to sleep with/lie beside/reside (שׁכב) with one’s deceased ancestors. The kinship relationship is part and parcel of death and burial terminology, as suggested by the deuteronomistic formula and the common use of verbs such as ‘sp (“to gather”; see, e.g., 2 Sam 21:13; Jer 8:2; 25:33; Ezek 29:5).

Several other verbs in biblical Hebrew denote death. These include words used in place of mút and those used in conjunction with it. Forms of ‘bd (“to perish”) appear in references to both natural death and violent death. The term gw’ (“to expire”) also refers to the act of dying (Num 20:29; Zec 13:8; Job 36:12) and appears in parallelism with mút (Job 3:11; 14:10), as well as with ‘sp (“to gather” [Gen 49:33]). Most often associated with extinguishing fires or lamps,
the term *kbh* also is used to speak of death (2 Sam 14:7; Isa 43:17; Jer 4:4; 21:12). Death is imagined as a process by which the earth “eats” (*’kl*) the deceased. In these instances, death is understood as a violent act that takes the living from the earth as one devours food. (see, e.g., Num 16:30; 26:20; Deut 11:6; Ps 106:17). In death, one can be “consumed” (*klh*). This latter term frequently appears in parallelism with—or near proximity to—other death-terms (Isa 1:28; 16:4 [with *tmm* and *’ps*]; 31:3 [with *npl*]; Jer 16:4; 44:27 [with *tmm*]; and Ezek 5:12 [with *npl* and *mut*]).

Biblical writers often use specialized terms to describe an unnatural or violent death, or a death through which the author seeks to highlight certain ideological perspectives. One such verb is *krt* (in *qal*, “to cut off”). On one level, this verb indicates the cutting of objects such as trees (Deut 19:5), grapes (Num 13:23), human heads (1 Sam 17:51; 31:19; 2 Sam 20:22), and human foreskins (Ex 4:25). Moreover, *krt* is used to describe the ratification of a covenant (Gen 21:27, 32; Jer 34:18; Ps 50:5), a usage stemming from the act of cutting (dividing?) a sacrificial animal in the process of treaty making. Both the pentateuchal priestly material (P) and the Holiness Code (H) use *krt* in the *niphal* in formulary phrases to indicate capital punishment, e.g., “PN will be cut off (from his peoples)”: Gen 17:14; Ex 31:14; Lev 7:20, 21, 25, 27; Num 15:30). This phrase, in which the plural “peoples” appears twelve times (all in the Pentateuch), seems to indicate a separation of the deceased from the kinship group. In the *hiphil*, this verb often applies to punishment and death of the wicked (Ps 101:8) and of those engaged in illicit activities, i.e., necromancers (1 Sam 28:9). Interestingly, the *hiphil* conjugations describe punishments in which God is the agent of death against the human victim (1 Kgs 14:10; 21:21 (+ *la*); 2 Kgs 9:8

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401 Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, 33n.35.
(+ la); Isa 14:22; Jer 44:7-8 (v. 7; + la); 47:4 (+ la); Mal 2:12).\textsuperscript{402} Note that in these last references, the context is most often either violent death, death without proper burial, and/or death with a resulting disconnection from the covenant community. As we shall see in Chaps. 4 and 5, disconnect from the covenant community is often the intended consequence of violent death without burial. S. Olyan’s helpful analysis of the expression רצוי נזרנו ("we are utterly cut off" [Isa 53:8; Ezek 37:11; Ps 88:6; Lam 3:54]) provides insight into how biblical authors employed euphemisms of death in their compositions in order to instill their writings with associated (often covenantal) meanings.\textsuperscript{403} H. C. Brichto offers that to be “cut off” from the community is antithetical to the notion of joining one’s kin (in the afterlife). He suggests that the phrase does not necessarily connote deprivation of burial; it suggests some exclusion from the ancestral lineage or inheritance either in the present, or for a future generation.\textsuperscript{404} Several biblical passages discussed in Chap. 4 demonstrate that krt carries a meaning similar to gzr, denoting a break with the covenant community.

Violent death is also alluded to using the word “to fall” (npl). Often, npl refers directly to death (Ex 19:21; 32:28; Jg 5:27; 2 Sam 3:29, 34, 38; 21:9; Isa 31:8; Ps 82:7; Sir 10:10). More precisely, npl refers to death resulting from military conquest.\textsuperscript{405} The niphal of npl, “to cause to die,” also is important for the present study (1 Sam 18:25; 2 Kg 19:7 (Isa 37:7); Jer 19:7; Ezek 6:4; 32:12; Ps 106:26; Prov 7:26; Dan 11:12; 2 Chron 32:21). The importance of the use of npl to describe conquest and the resulting exposure of corpses on the battlefield will become clearer in

\textsuperscript{402} Also see Deut 24:1, 3; Josh 1:9; Isa 50:1; Jer 3:8 (for hoph conjugations of krt in which a divine agent is present).
\textsuperscript{403} Olyan, “We Are Utterly Cut Off.”
Chap. 4, where I demonstrate that “to fall” often also implies “not to be buried” (see, e.g., Jer 9:21; Ezek 39:5; cf. Isa 14:19, in which npl appears in parallelism with šlk, a form associated with non-burial).

As discussed in Chap. 1, a very common euphemism for death, “and PN lay/slept with his fathers,” occurs frequently throughout the Pentateuch and DH, most often to refer to leaders and royalty, such as Abram, Moses, and Jacob. Variations of this phrase include the replacement of “lies with” (שׁכב) with other euphemisms for death. The phrase(s) “gathered to one’s people” (Gen 25:8, 17; 35:29; 49:33; Num 20:24; 27:13; 31:2; Deut 32:50), “gathered to his/its fathers” (Judg 2:10; 2 Kgs 22:20; 2 Chron 34:28) appear as a similar, related euphemism for death.\footnote{I will explicate the meaning of this phrase below. Some scholars understand it as a euphemism for death; others suggest that the image of being gathering to one’s people indicates the act of joining deceased kin in the afterlife. See: B. J. Alfink, “L’Expression Škb m ‘bwtyw,” Oudtestamentische Studien 2 (1943): 128; B. J. Alfink, “L’expression N’SPL-‘MYW,” Oudtestamentische Studien 5 (1948): 118–31; G. R. Driver, “Plurima Mortis Imago,” in Studies and Essays in Honor of Abraham A. Neuman (ed. M. Ben-Horin, B.D. Weinryb, and S. Zeitlin; Leiden: Brill, 1962), 142; Alexander Heidel, The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels (2nd. ed.; Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1949), 188; Johnston, Shades of Sheol, 34; Nicholas Tromp, Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969), 168.}

Indeed, as discussed above, to be “gathered” often stands alone as an indication of death (Num 20:26; 27:13; Isa 57:1; Ezek 34:29; Hos 4:3), just as sleeping can be used alone to signify death (e.g., Job 3:13; 14:12; Ps 13:3; Jer 51:39, 57). The lexical associations with these phrases help to confirm the existence of positive associations between death and the ability to maintain connections between kin. The promise of burial with one’s ancestral kin as part and parcel of God’s blessing is apparent in the narrative describing the sealing of the covenant between Abram and YHWH (Gen 15:18-21; 17). Directly after the promise of land and freedom for Abram’s offspring, God promises the patriarch: “You shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a ripe old age” (Gen 15:15).
Additional texts reveal similar attitudes toward death and burial. Job 17:16 serves as a good example: “They shall go down to the bars of the nether-world, when we are at rest together in the dust” (JPS: בַּדֵּי שְׁאֹל תֵּרַדְנָה אִם-יַחַד עַל-עָפָר נָחַת.). The image of cohabitation in the netherworld suggests that the author of Job imagined existence after death and burial includes congregation with others—in the case of the blessed, congregation with one’s ancestors.

As shown below, the esteemed role of ancestors and their purported existence in the underworld might shed additional light on this ubiquitous phrase. The fact that many threats of non-burial include specific references to the exclusion of one’s corpse from the ancestral tomb and not being “gathered” to one’s ancestors indicates that the identity of the deceased is much at play in the issue of honorable/ideal versus dishonorable/anti-ideal burial.

In addition to verbal indicators of death’s characteristics, several texts provide details concerning the characteristics of “death” in nominal forms (māwēt/mēt/mūt/môt). In particular, the psalmists and wisdom writers ponder death’s terrors (Ps 55:4; Eccles 7:26; Psalm 18:4ff.). A feminine noun for death (tomūtāh) appears in phrases such as the “children of death,” indicating either those set to die, or perhaps those coming under the purview of personified death (Ps 79:11; 102:21).

In Chap. 2, we saw that death often is personified in Ugaritic writings; moreover, the aWA pantheon includes several chthonic deities. In the HB also, personified Death appears in the figure of “Mot” (2 Sam 22:5; Isa 5:14; Job 18:13; cf. Job 18:14).407 Death takes on several anthropomorphic qualities under several names. In one instance, Sheol opens its mouth to consume the dead (Isa 5:14; cf. Hab 2:5, in which personified Mot appears in parallelism with Sheol). Elsewhere, Jeremiah describes the fear of Death entering through windows (Jer 9:21).

The book of Job contains two descriptions of personified Death. Death is able to speak in Job

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28:22; further, Job refers to a “firstborn of Death” (18:13). A proverb references “messengers of Death” (Prov 16:4). In Hosea 13:14, Death is addressed directly.

Allusions to personified Death find resonance in the chthonic deities of the aWA. In fact, the HB contains several references to chthonic deities also represented in aWA literature. Mot appears in parallelism with the deity Belial in two texts (2 Sam 22:5; Ps 18:5). Moreover, several texts refer to the deity Molek (also vocalized as Malik). Interpreting these texts (Lev 18:21; 20:5; Deut 12:31; 1 Kgs 11:7; 2 Kgs 23:10 13; Jer 19:5; 32:35; cf. Isa 57:9, in which mēlek often is interpreted as a reference to Molek), scholars often point to the cult of Molek, which included child sacrifice. The HB itself points to child sacrifice as a foreign concept practiced by the Moabite Mesha (2 Kgs 3:27), with origins in neighboring Canaanite religions (Lev 18:21; Deut 12:31; 2 Kgs 16:3; 21:2). Archaeological evidence does not support the accusation that human sacrifice occurred in the valleys surrounding Jerusalem, including Topheth. Chapters 4 and 5 further discuss accusations against ancient Israelites concerning sacrifice in Topheth. Here, it suffices to say that personified Death appears in several texts. Death takes on both anthropomorphic qualities and links to chthonic deities throughout the aWA.

Burial

Given the obvious concern with death and burial in the HB, it may seem counterintuitive that the only mandate for burial in TANAKH appears in Deut 21:13, which demands that an executed and hanged criminal be buried before sundown on the same day. Despite the absence of detailed prescriptions for burial, texts that refer to burial and its location make clear that type

and location of burial were central interests in ancient Israel. For the Israelites, the tomb was not only the burial location, but also the entrance to the underworld. As such, the tomb shares characteristics with Sheol and often is situated within the territory of Sheol.\textsuperscript{409}

S. Olyan’s valuable analysis of death and burial ideology reveals a hierarchy of burial patterns in ancient Israel.\textsuperscript{410} Internment within the family tomb is the most honored form of burial, especially when followed by public acknowledgment of the deceased through mourning ritual activity. The farthest extreme from peaceful, public burial in the ancestral tomb is non-burial. The deprivation of burial does not permit the deceased to rest within the tomb with the ancestors or the living to perform the socially expected mourning rites. Lying between these two poles of burial hierarchy are variations in forms of internment including, but not limited to, burial in a tomb not associated with one’s ancestral inheritance, burial in the tomb of another family, internment in a pit (covered with stones) and internment in a mass grave.

The primary nominal indicator of tomb/grave is \textit{geber} (Gen 23:4; Exod 14:11; Isa 22:16; Job 10:19) or \textit{q}\textsuperscript{e}\textit{burâh} (Gen 35:20; Deut 34:6; Isa 14:20). Other nouns often refer to the grave either euphemistically or metaphorically; these words include “pit,” “earth,” “bed,” and “house.” “Cistern”/“pit” (\textit{bôr}) also appears as both a literal and figurative reference to the tomb and the underworld (Isa 14:15, 19; Ps 30:4; Prov 28:11) Frequently, these references appear in parallelism with other nouns concerning death and burial (e.g., “tomb” \textit{[q}\textit{br]} in Isa 14:19; Ezek 32:23-25; “tomb” with Sheol in Isa 14:15; 38:18; Ps 88:11; Prov 1:12; Ezek 26:20; 31:16). The dead are described as “those who go down to the pit (\textit{יוֹרְדֵּי בוֹר})” in Ezek 31:14; 32:29, 30; Ps 28:1; 88:5; 143:7). In such contexts, \textit{bôr} is understood to bear negative connotations; the pit is opposed to life and the land of the living (Ezek 26:20). Sheol can carry negative connotations as well, but it also appears to carry some positive characteristics. Note that many of the references

\textsuperscript{409} Schmidt, “Memory as Immortality,” 89.
\textsuperscript{410} Olyan, “Israelite Internment Ideology.”
cited above appear in contexts of non-burial. In Chap. 4, we shall see the important role bôr plays in many references to non-burial.

Scholars debate instances in which “earth” (ʾereṣ) appears to refer to the tomb. I discuss this term below in relation to the underworld. The term for “bed” (miškāb) sometimes refers to the tomb (Isa 57:2; Ezek 32:25; 2 Chron 16:14) and may connect the idea of burial to a restful afterlife. Burial locations are also referred to as “house.” In the DBF of Samuel, Joab, and Manasseh, we read that each man was buried “in his house” (2 Sam 25:1; 1 Kgs 2:34; 2 Chron 33:20). Such language may point to the practice of intramural or subterranean burial, in which family members were interred within the walls or beneath the floors of a residence. Alternatively, this phrase may indicate burial within the ancestral tomb on one’s land allotment.

Textual evidence suggests that regardless of the type of death experienced by the deceased—natural, violent, self-inflicted, or as a consequence of capital punishment—honorable burial in the ancestral tomb was the norm.411 Numerous biblical examples explicitly refer to burial in a family tomb.412 Others include implicit references to a family burial plot.413 In addition to the kinship-related euphemisms of death (e.g., “sleeping”/“joining”/“being gathered to the ancestors”), these verses illustrate that physical burial in the ancestral tomb was a central feature of Israelite burial ideology and practice.

The ideal burial in an ancestral tomb located close to living kin, preferably on the family land holding, permitted continuous funerary activities to occur. Scholars who speculate on ancestor veneration note that localized burial would make associated rites possible, ensuring that the deceased looked favorably upon the living. As Bloch-Smith writes, “Given the presumed

411 Ludwig Wächter, Der Tod Im Alten Testament (Arbeiten zur Theologie 8; Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1967), 89ff.
412 E.g., Gideon (Judg 8:32), Samson (Judg 16:3), Asahel (2 Sam 2:32), Ahithophel (2 Sam 17:23), Barzillai’s plea to David (2 Sam 19:38), and the burial of Saul and his sons (2 Sam 21:14).
413 E.g., Josh 24:30, 33; Judg 10:10:1ff.; 12:7-1.
posthumous powers of the dead, it was important for the supplicant to know the location of the burial in order to petition the deceased.”

Arguably, no biblical narrative better illustrates the need for burial of kin on one’s own land than the story of Abraham’s purchase of land upon the death of his wife, Sarah (Genesis 32). F. Stavrakopoulou provides a helpful interpretation of the Machpelah narrative, positing that Abraham’s actions are understood best when considered in light of related ideological ideas about burial and land possession. In recent decades, portrayals of the ancestors in Genesis often have been read as paradigmatic tales of the patriarchs as immigrants and enslavers. Ideologically driven, post-colonial studies suggest that Abraham’s and Joseph’s journeys and negotiations for land rites provide a framework within which scholars can best understand Israel’s entrance into the land of Canaan. Further, such studies permit the eventual dispossession of the Canaanites from the land to be considered from the indigenous Canaanites’ perspective. Offering a different ideological perspective, Stavrakopoulou interprets Abraham’s land negotiation as related directly to his own needs: to bury Sarah; to possess land; and to demarcate the purchased territory (one function of burial sites). In Genesis 23, readers learn that after lengthy, public negotiations at the city gate, Abraham purchased Ephron’s field in Machpelah, east of Mamre, which included a cave and trees. The narrative continues, “After this, Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave of the field of Machpelah facing Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan. The field and the cave in it passed from the Hittites to Abraham as a burial property” (Gen 23:19-20).

Stavrakopoulou suggests that the narrative ends in this way because its actual focus is not Sarah’s

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burial per se. Rather, the narrator focuses on “the possession of hereditary land, constructed around the territorial function of a tomb.” 417 Abraham’s purchase of burial land signifies the establishment of a new family line. Ancestral lines often were defined through land ownership and verified by the presence of an ancestral tomb. Social-anthropological studies demonstrate that cross-culturally, ancestral burial sites demarcate the physical property of a kinship group. By extension, the mortuary practices performed at the burial site served to solidify the identity of the social group. 418

David’s establishment of royal burial in the city of Jerusalem also falls within the category of the establishment of a new ancestral tomb in which generations of kin can expect to be buried. DBF in the books of Kings and Chronicles include specific details about the burial locations of various kings. The DBF reports in these two historiographies generally agree, but some variations appear. 419 David’s descendants down to Ahaz were buried in the city of David. Ahaz was buried “in the city, in Jerusalem” (2 Chron 28:27). Manasseh and Ammon are said to be buried in “Uzza’s garden,” a descriptor that has puzzled scholars but may refer to a royal burial enclosure within the palace grounds (2 Kgs 21:18, 26). 420 Interestingly, King Manasseh’s Deuteronomistic DBF differs from the Chroniclers’ account. In 2 Kgs 21:18, Manasseh’s burial location is specified as “in the garden of his house, in the garden of Uzza.” In 2 Chron 22:30, however, the text states, “So Manasseh slept with his ancestors, and they buried him in his house. His son Amon succeeded him.” The discrepancy between the Deuteronomistic and Chronicles accounts might stem from two differing traditions; alternatively, both accounts might refer to the

420 Stavrakopoulou, “Exploring the Garden of Uzza.”
same location using different terms. Jehoram and Joash are said to be buried “in the city of David, but not in the tombs of the kings” (2 Chron 21:20; 24:25). Jehoram’s deprivation of burial among other royals results from his culpability in the bloodshed of the sons of the priest Jehoida; Jehoida, by contrast, receives royal burial: “And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, and for God and his house” (2 Chron 24:16). 2 Chronicles reports that Amaziah was buried “in the city of Judah” (25:28), while Uzziah was buried “with his fathers in the kings’ burial field” (26:23). Josiah was buried in his own ancestral tomb—“in the tombs of his fathers” (2 Chron 35:24). 2 Kings does not include burial information for Jehoiachim or Hezekiah; in 2 Chron 32:33, however, we read that Hezekiah was buried “on the ascent to the tombs of the sons of David.” The inclusion of a precise burial location and the treatment of the deceased in DBF may indicate judgment against the deceased. Burial within the city limits, or even within the palace walls, was far more honorable than non-burial, but it did not necessarily equate with the most honorable burial on the spectrum of honorable-dishonorable burials.

Burial outside the normal, social expectation of internment in an ancestral tomb includes burial in a city’s outskirts (e.g., a valley) or burial in a mass grave or grave of the common people. Narrative clues alone cannot determine the specific nature of these indicators and how—or if—they differed. Archaeological research has uncovered pit graves with numerous remains, suggesting the existence of common burial fields outside of Jerusalem (e.g., in the Kidron Valley). Burial in the valley aligns with narrative references to dishonorable burial and treatment of the dead, including Josiah’s desecration of graves and asherah in 2 Kgs 23:6, Jehoiakim’s disposal of the prophet Uriah (Jer 26:23), Jeremiah’s prophecies concerning the final fate of King Jehoiakim (Jer 22:18-19); and Jeremiah’s threats of non-burial aimed at all the inhabitants of

421 Ibid. Burial in “the garden of Uzza” also is discussed by Na’amān, “Death Formulae and the Burial Place of the Kings of the House of David,” 246.
Jerusalem and Judah (Jer 7:32-33). Burial in a valley was considered dishonorable for at least two reasons. First, it impeded burial in the ancestral tomb and subsequent mortuary rites.

Second, Bloch-Smith notes that burial in a valley was stigmatized because of the connotation between valleys and rites purportedly performed there, including Tophet rites.\textsuperscript{422} The valley location itself (already desecrated) suggests that defilement would extend to the burial site and the human remains interred there. Johnston, by contrast, suggests that mass burials became commonplace by the end of the monarchy and were not imbued with negative connotations. He points to the passages cited above, including the burial of the prophet Uriah and narrative accounts of Josiah’s reforms, to support his claim.\textsuperscript{423} The problem with Johnston’s conclusion, however, is that the few references to common graves are rare exceptions to most DBF. These passages become clearer when we interpret them in relation to S. Olyan’s spectrum of ideal/non-ideal burials. Olyan suggests that any burial outside of the family tomb signals a level of dishonor. Therefore, burial in a pit covered with stones, burial in a mass grave, or burial in another family’s tomb all point to some degree of dishonor for the deceased. In Chap. 4, I demonstrate how the burial of the man of God from Judah in a non-family tomb (1 Kings 14) strengthens Olyan’s argument. Burial in a communal burial ground certainly bore negative implications for the afterlife, for without the possibility of joining one’s ancestors or receiving funerary offerings, the deceased might experience unrest or be forgotten.

Narratives take pains to note the location of burials, even when they occur in the course of a journey (e.g., the burial of the man of God from Judah [1 Kings 14]; Rachel’s burial alongside the road to Ephrath [Gen 35:19-20]).\textsuperscript{424} Rachel’s burial is unique because other matriarchs and patriarchs (Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Leah) are buried together.

\textsuperscript{422} Bloch-Smith, \textit{Judahite Burial Practices}, 111.
\textsuperscript{423} Johnston, \textit{Shades of Sheol}, 53.
\textsuperscript{424} Cox and Ackerman, “Rachel’s Tomb.”
in the same tomb (Gen 49:29-33). Rachel dies giving birth during a lengthy journey, and mourners erect a *massebah* (memorial standing stone) at her burial site. Interestingly, erecting *massebah* as burial markers appears not to be a typical Israelite practice; references to it appear more frequently in references to Egyptian, Phoenician, and Aramaean burials. Rachel’s burial story is important because although she is buried outside of her family tomb and land allotment, her burial location is recorded, enabling future mourners to acknowledge it. Scholars have long wondered why biblical authors portrayed Rachel’s burial along the journey, rather than being transported back to the family tomb (as were other ancestors). The patriarchal narratives include examples in which people transported their deceased kin (e.g., Jacob [Gen 50:7-14], Joseph [Gen 50:22-26; Exod. 13:19; Josh. 24:32], and Saul [2 Sam 21:12-14]). True, transfer of Jacob and Joseph’s bodies would be an easier task given the mummification of their corpses according to Egyptian custom. But the relevant texts also include examples in which kin transport the remains of the just-dead, including Samson (Judg 16:30), Asahel (2 Sam 2:32), Ahaziah (2 Kgs 9:28), and Josiah (2 Kgs 23:20).426

In order to understand Rachel’s DBF, it is helpful to consider evidence from the aWA record, which indicates that stillborn or miscarried children—in addition to a mother who died in childbirth—were considered socially marginal and kept separate from society. In many cultures, an unborn or stillborn infant was considered “vulnerable and dangerous,” and a “foetus born prematurely ha[d] a malevolent spirit, dangerous to the living.”428 As we saw in the discussion of archaeological evidence (above), some tombs include only the remains of a single, small infant. Finding a single female buried alone is very rare. If death in childbirth mandated an

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426 Cox and Ackerman, “Rachel’s Tomb,” 137.
individual burial, archaeologists likely would have located more examples, since death in childbirth was the leading cause of death for women in the aWA.429 That being said, it is difficult to draw definite conclusions based on available evidence; burial sites without specific markers are nearly impossible to find. Without a hewn tomb or memorial marker (e.g., Rachel’s masseba), living kin and descendants would not be able to identify burial evidence at a particular site. A similar burial report mirrors Rachel’s simple grave burial: Deborah receives a simple grave burial in the ground near a tree (Gen 35:8). Cox and Ackerman question if the narrative of Rachel’s burial reflects a traditional view that women who perished during childbirth were counted among the “unhappy” dead and required burial outside the family tomb.330 If Rachel’s death and burial narrative reflects similar treatment of women who die in childbirth (widely attested in ethnographic data, as Cox and Ackerman present) perhaps Rachel’s speedy burial functioned to separate her from the kinship group.

Regardless of the impetus behind Rachel’s burial outside of the family tomb, the HB demonstrates that timely burial of all deceased persons is another essential element of ancient Israel’s death and burial ideology. Elderly, respected members of the community who died natural deaths were buried, of course. So were criminals, infants, suicide victims—persons who, in other societies, do not always “earn” the honor of burial. In Deut 21:23, we read that even the corpse of a criminal hanged on a tree must be brought down and buried the same day in order that his corpse not defile the land. The treatment of the corpse after hanging may signal the level of dishonor attached to the deceased, depending on where the treatment falls on the ideological spectrum of socially expected burials. Two examples illustrate this practice. First, in Josh 8:29, Joshua hangs the King of Ai upon a tree until the evening. Rather than bury the King’s corpse, he

430 Cox and Ackerman, “Rachel’s Tomb,” 135–48.
removes it from the tree and casts it at the entrance of the city gate. Eventually, the corpse is covered with stones, receiving what S. Olyan calls a dishonorable burial, but a burial nonetheless since the corpse is covered. Two chapters later, Joshua treats the five kings of the Amorites as he did the King of Ai (Josh 10:26-27). The only difference between the treatment of the King of Ai and the Kings of the Amorites is the final resting place of the deceased. The King of Ai was covered with stones at the entrance of the city, a heap “which remains to this day.” The Kings of the Amorites are “cast” (hiphil of שָלַךְ), like the King of Ai, but into the cave in which they had hidden. The mouth of the cave was covered with rocks “until this very day.”

Even if one’s body was not whole, an honorable burial was still possible if the remaining body parts were buried. Consider, for example, 2 Sam 4:12, in which Eshbaal’s severed head is buried without his body in Abner’s tomb. Even though Eshbaal’s body was not reclaimed and burial in Saul’s tomb was not possible, his interment was recorded, indicating that the location and manner of burial were important to Israelite authors and their readers.431

The narrative accounts of Saul’s death and burial in 1 Sam 31; 2 Sam 16:5-8; 21:1-14; 1 Chron 10:11-12 demonstrate the obligation to protect and bury corpses of kin and the theo-political implications of post-mortem abuse. There are several fascinating features of the DBF of Saul and his sons. Of particular interest to this current study, readers encounter the extraordinary portrayal of Rizpah in 2 Sam 21:1-14. In this text, Rizpah undertakes monumental measures to protect the exposed corpses of seven of Saul’s sons, two of whom are her own children. Even David responds to Rizpah’s devotion to the corpses of Saul’s sons; her actions prompt David to provide an honorable (albeit late) interment for the Saulides in their ancestral tomb (21:11-14).432 Rizpah’s vigil against scavenging animals extends for a significant duration, stretching from the beginning of the harvest until a downpour that most likely signaled the end of the harvest

period. Just as ancient Israelites ended their harvesting of grains at the end of the harvest, the end of Rizpah’s vigil signaled that scavengers would no longer be able to harvest the corpses of the royal sons. Furthermore, the extended period of the harvest season and vigil (the summer months) emphasizes the sacrifice that Rizpah made for the sake of a dignified burial of her kin. She pitched a tent over rocks in order to protect both herself and the corpses from the sun. Still, the summer heat and time lapse would have allowed for extensive decomposition to occur before David’s burial of the corpses at the end of the harvest season. Despite the horrific conditions and her personal sacrifice, Rizpah remained with the corpses until David arrived to bury Saul’s heirs. Arguably more than any other biblical narrative, Rizpah’s post-mortem protection of the Saulide corpses demonstrates the extent to which kin regarded honorable burial as essential.

It is clear that burial’s importance is demonstrated by texts ranging from pre-exilic historical narratives and prophetic texts, through the exilic era in the prophetic, scribal, and priestly traditions, and continuing into the post-exilic and Second Temple period, with evidence of continued concern for burial in the Apocrypha. Texts such as Sirach 38:16-23 and Tobit relate how a family’s control over the burial of its kin was regarded as a religious imperative without which their Jewish identity might be questioned by their kin and their God. Tobit’s burial of Israelites in the face of sure punishment by enemies makes clear that burial was not simply a family affair; it also carried religious and political import.

Inhabitants of the Underworld

Upon death, a deceased person entered the next stage of existence through the transitional experience of burial. Biblical Hebrew uses several terms to refer to the dead, and the terms often

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434 Although there are significant implications to the Rizpah episode a full analysis of this pericope in light of the ritual, political, theological, and social dimensions to Rizpah’s vigil and of David’s response lies beyond the scope of this dissertation. See my forthcoming essay, “Identity on the Rocks: Rizpah, David, and the Dead.”
435 See Chap. 4 for an excursus on the non-burial motif in the book of Tobit.
differentiate between the categories of a corpse, a deceased person, and an inhabitant of Sheol (or, “ancestor”).

Often, a corpse is called pgr (see, e.g., Isa 14:19; Numbers 14). The deceased and corpses are also referred to as nepeš (“being” or “body”; see, e.g., Lev 19:28; Num 5:2; Hag 2:13). The term “flesh,” bašar, also signifies a corpse; in most cases, the contexts include images of non-burial (1 Sam 17:44; Gen 40:19; Ezek 32:5; cf. Jer 19:9). Often, nblh refers to human remains (1 Kgs 13:22-30, 24; Isa 5:25; Jer 7:33; 9:21; 16:4 (with met); 19:7; 34:20; Ps 79:2). Corpses are also referred to as “the body of the dead” (מַת נְפֶשׁ; Num 6:6; pl. Lev 21:11).

Deceased persons are referred to by many words and phrases in biblical Hebrew; at times, the terminology suggests divergent understandings of the precise nature of the deceased. Most frequently, deceased persons are referred to as “the dead” (מְטַ; e.g., Ps 31:13) or “dead ones” (מָטִים [see, e.g., Isa 26:14; Ps 106:28]). The active participle of the main root, mwṭ, mēṭ appears approximately one hundred times. Additionally, the dead are those who “descend into the pit” (Ezek 31:14; 32:29, 30; Ps 28:1; 88:5; 143:7). Frequently, persons dying from violence are referred to as the “slain” or as those who have “fallen” (מַזְמַע; מֵרָפָא).

Several terms in the HB that refer to the inhabitants of Sheol suggest that the Israelites understood the dead to have some ability to contact the living, either through necromantic or funerary rites, or perhaps simply through their own efficacy. These terms include: “those who pass over,” abārîmʾobrîm (Ezek 39:11, 14, 15); “divine ones,” ʾelōhîm (1 Sam 28:13; Isa 8:19); “mutterers” or “ghosts,” ʿittîm (Isa 19:3; cf., Akk. ātemmu), ṣōbōt (Isa 29:4); “knowing ones,” yiddēʿōnim (Isa 8:19); “holy ones,” qedôšîm (Ps 16:3); and the raphāʾîm—shades or healers—raphāʾîm (Isa 14:9; 26:14; Ps 88:11).

Like some languages in ancient Israel’s neighboring cultures, biblical Hebrew uses raphāʾîm (often translated “shades” or “ghosts”) to refer to the deceased. This term is fraught
with interpretive complications. Literary structure suggests a connection between terms; *raphā‘îm* appears in parallelism with “death” (*mēt*) in Isa 26:14; Ps 88:11. In Isa 26:14, *mēt* appears in parallelism with *raphā‘îm* often translated as “shades.” In this context, YHWH’s punishment of the deceased gives finality to existence in the underworld. If there were a chance to have contact with the living, either through necromantic activities or in future rites supporting the memory of the deceased, YHWH’s punishment upon the deceased (*mētim* and *raphā‘îm*) is the eradication of future contact between the living and the dead. The result of the divide is the destruction of the memory of the deceased: “The dead do not live; shades do not rise—because you have punished and destroyed them, and wiped out all memory of them” (Isa 26:14).

The Hebrew *raphā‘îm* refers to several types of people and appears twenty times in the HB. In certain contexts, *raphā‘îm* refers to ancient inhabitants of Canaan; in other contexts, *raphā‘îm* clearly appears in death or underworld contexts. In most instances, the term appears without the definite article, suggesting that it was a proper name. In Genesis, the *raphā‘îm* appear to denote the ancient inhabitants of the Transjordan. They, alongside the Zuzim and Emim, are defeated by Chedorlaomer (14:5). The same *raphā‘îm* are listed as one of ten ethnic groups whose land was promised to the descendants of Abraham (15:20). Elsewhere, *raphā‘îm* appears as an alternate name for other known groups or land (Deut 2:11, 20; 3:11). The *raphā‘îm* are at times depicted as giants, leading to that translation in some LXX texts (e.g., Deut 2:11, 20). Further, several texts identify King Og as the last of the *raphā‘îm* (Deut 3:11; 13; Josh 12:4; 13:12). In his 2013 published dissertation, Brian Doak argues that the *raphā‘îm* should be considered alongside other heroic figures in ancient Israelite and aWA myth, such as the Nephilim, Anaqim, Emim, Zamzumim/Zuzim, and Gibborim. As monstrous “giants,” these

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436 In contexts in which the definite article does appear, the pseudo-historical Canaanite inhabitants are nearly always the referent (Gen 15:20; Deut 3:11; Josh 12:4; 13:12; 17:15; 1 Chron 20:4; cf. Job 26:5, in which the definite article appears within a “death” context).

figures represent forces of evil to be overthrown; in the biblical literature, they are remembrances of chaos.  

In his treatment of biblical characterizations of the *raphā'îm*, P. Johnston examines references to *raphā'îm* as inhabitants of Sheol, and concludes that they “are not a major Old Testament concern.” Textual analyses reveal that the term appears more often than Johnston allows; there is indication that in some contexts, references to the underworld inhabitants have been redacted through repointing (*raphā’îm*/*rōpha’îm*; e.g., 2 Chron 16:12). In most cases, the term *rōpha’îm* is translated correctly as “healers” or “physicians.” Consider, however, Job 13:4. In this verse, Job responds to his friends’ speech by stating that he is as intelligent as they are and understands their logic. What he lacks is the ability to communicate directly—and reason—with God. Job explains: “As for you, you whitewash with lies; all of you are worthless physicians (רֹפְאֵי אֱלִיל כֻּלְכֶם) (13:4). Later in the book of Job, we read: “The shades below tremble (הָרְפָאִּים יְחוֹלָלוּ), the waters and their inhabitants. Sheol is naked before God, and Abaddon has no covering” (26:5-6). In this example, the *raphā’îm* clearly are the deceased in the underworld, the realm thrice described as the “waters,” “Sheol,” and “Abaddon.” In both examples, Job uses nominal forms of *rp’* to speak of weakness. In the first example, Job 13:4a describes his friends metaphorically. They are not actually plasterers; and even if they were, plasterers do not use lies to complete their handiwork. Job accuses them of being unable to describe the truth. In 13:4b, Job describes his friends as worthless *raphā’îm* who are unable to complete their tasks. Both of these parallel clauses provide metaphorical descriptions of Job’s friends.

Other texts suggest that the *raphā’îm* lead a quiet or weak existence in Sheol. Psalms intimate the distance between YHWH and the *raphā’îm* (88:10; cf. Ps 6:5). When we look to Isa 26:19, however, the *raphā’îm* are said to return to life. Here, *raphā’îm* are placed in literary

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438 Doak, *The Last of the Rephaim*.
439 *Shades of Sheol*, 128.
parallelism with “your dead,” “their corpses,” and “inhabitants of the dust.” In Isa 14:19, the raphāʾîm prepare to meet the king of Babylon upon his impending entry into Sheol. Some scholars conclude that references to the raphāʾîm in Proverbs that treat the way of the wicked or foolish suggest that the raphāʾîm themselves are foolish or wicked. However, Prov 2:18; 9:18; and 21:16 make no moral judgments against raphāʾîm. Rather, they point out that a foolish or wicked life will lead to death. As we discussed in Chap. 2, raphāʾîm appear in aWA literature as well, including in Sidion (KAI 13:7; 14:8) and Ugaritic literature.440 In Ugaritic epic, a rp’u is designated as the “eternal king” (mlk ‘lm), in some way setting this figure above the deceased in the underworld (KTU 1.108.1).441

Several correctives to the consensus of the late 20th c. (characterized by B. Schmidt’s and P. Johnston’s work) examine the status of raphāʾîm within ancient Israel in terms of Israel’s broader literary and theological perspectives. Jon D. Levenson’s 2006 publication, Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life, challenged Johnston’s insistence that the dead, weak inhabitants of the underworld, were outside of God’s protective purview.442 Levenson broadened the perspective of the dead, arguing that rather than an individualized view of resurrection of a soul, ancient Israelites understood death on a corporate level. Biblical evidence, especially from Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, does not ponder individual afterlife as much as the afterlife of the people as a whole. As a result, Levenson suggests that

442 Levenson, Resurrection.
scholars interpret the complicated meaning of *raphāʾîm* with consideration of the corporate nature of identity in the afterlife.⁴⁴³

Matthew Suriano’s extensive research on biblical and extra-biblical references to the *raphāʾîm* presents a strong case for understanding these enigmatic figures as a specialized group of deceased royal ancestry.⁴⁴⁴ As royal ancestors, the *raphāʾîm* played crucial roles in royal succession. Suriano suggests that biblical references to the *raphāʾîm* (e.g., Isa 14:9) make clear that the *raphāʾîm* were not passive shades in Sheol; they were active in the afterlife. Comparative material further suggests that deceased royal ancestors had the capacity to impact the lives of the living. Based on biblical and extra-biblical evidence, I agree with scholars who conclude that the *raphāʾîm* were inhabitants of Sheol. That being said, not all texts lead conclusively to an identification of the *raphāʾîm* as divinized.

Whether understood as “healers” (from the root *rp*’) or “weak ones” (from the root *rph*), the *raphāʾîm* appear as inhabitants of the underworld.⁴⁴⁵ Moreover, when combined with evidence from the Ugaritic literature, it becomes clear that references to the *raphāʾîm* in the HB point to earlier beliefs in some of the powers of the dead. The rhetorical analyses of biblical passages in Chap. 4 will demonstrate that biblical authors referenced *raphāʾîm* in conjunction with the non-burial motif, suggesting that the deprivation of burial impacted one’s eventual transition from a living human to a resident of the underworld.

As we have seen in other lexical categories, biblical Hebrew employs metaphors and similes to refer to the “dead.” In Ps 31:13, for example, the dead are compared to a broken pot: “I

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⁴⁴³ Cf., Porter, “Dynamics of Death.” who argues that EBA archaeological and textual evidence of mortuary practices may point to an eradication of individual identity for the purpose of creating (and fortifying) corporate identity.

⁴⁴⁴ Suriano, *The Politics of Dead Kings*, 149ff. See Suriano’s treatment for a full bibliography on recent treatment on the *raphāʾîm*.

⁴⁴⁵ Caquot, “Les Rephaim Ougaritiques”; de Moor, “Rāpiʾūma—Rephaim”; Williams, “Are the Biblical Rephaim the Ugaritic RPUM Healers?”.
am forgotten like the dead from the mind, like a broken vessel.” This verse suggests that the enduring presence of the dead is established through memory. Its ostensible author laments that just as the forgotten dead are useless, so too is s/he.

The HB does not present a clear picture of YHWH’s relationship to the dead, despite some scholars’ arguments that ancient Israelites affirmed a set, impenetrable barrier between the heavenly and nether realms. On one hand, Ezek18:32 states that YHWH takes no delight in the death of the dead (בְמוֹת הַמֵּת). On the other hand, Ps 34:20 asserts that God protects the bones of the righteous. The latter passage may suggest that God’s concern extends into the afterlife; alternatively, the psalmist might believe that God protects burial sites from desecration. Several psalms state that those in the netherworld cannot praise YHWH (Ps 30:10; 88:10; 115:17). But other texts suggest that one in the “depths” may still implore YHWH for assistance (Ps 130:1). Amos 9:1-2 clearly states that YHWH’s power extends into the netherworld.

The Underworld

The proper name for the underworld in biblical Hebrew is Sheol (שְאוֹל; see, e.g., Gen 37:35; 44:29, 31; Num 16:30, 33; Isa 7:11; Ezek 31:15, 17; Hos 13:14; 1 Kgs 2:6; Job 11:8; 17:16; 24:19; Ps 49:14; 139:8; Prov 30:15; Hab 2:5). When persons died, they were expected to go to Sheol (לִשְׁאוֹל). Other lexical options appear in references to Sheol as the underworld. Frequently, terms meaning “pit” indicate the realm of the dead. Psalms 9:17 and 16:10 place “pit” (בְשַׁחַת) and Sheol in synonymous parallelism. In Ps 30:4, 88:5, and Ezek 31:16, “pit” (בוֹר) appears in synonymously parallelism with Sheol (cf. Ezek 32:22-20).

The underworld also is described as the “depth” (תְהוֹם) and as the “deep of the earth” (אֶרֶץ תַחְתִּית). Several scholars have suggested that ’eres (“earth,” “land,” “ground”) sometimes

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designates the underworld. Johnston, who carefully examines each example in which earth refers
to the underworld, concludes that these references often have political, territorial, or religious
meanings. Contrary to his conclusions, however, Johnston’s analyses serve as significant
evidence that ’erēṣ was associated with the dead and their realm, at least on a literary level.

Some texts present Sheol as having different levels. For some psalmists, the worst
offenders were sent to the “lowest underworld” (Ps 86:13; 88:7). Ezekiel’s oracles against Tyre
envision the king of Tyre and his entire fleet descending to the lowest levels of the sea and the
netherworld:

When I make you a city laid waste, like cities that are not inhabited, when I bring up the
deep over you, and the great waters cover you, then I will thrust you down with those
who descend into the Pit, to the people of long ago, and I will make you live in the world
below, among primeval ruins, with those who go down to the Pit, so that you will not be
inhabited or have a place in the land of the living (Ezek 26:19-20). 448

Ancient Israelites appear most often to have envisioned Sheol as a dark place set aside from light.
Job 10:21 refers to the underworld as the “land of darkness and shadows.”

Funerary Activities and Rites:

Scholars have identified various rites associated with funerals and/or burial sites. In
addition to references to generalized mourning rituals, several texts point to specific activities at
the burial site (see, e.g., Isa 57:6-9; 65:4). Fasting, offering laments, mutilation of objects or
one’s own body, graveside fires, necromantic rites, and funerary meals all suggest that funerary
activities varied; and the living recognized some efficacy to maintaining connections between the
living and the dead through mortuary activities.

Mourning was a recognized funerary activity in which family, clan, even nations would
gather for a specific time period (see, e.g., Gen 23:2; 24:67; 37:35; 50:10; Num 20:29; Deut 34:8;

448 Cf., Ezek 31:14-18; 32:23.
Most mourning periods lasted for seven days (1 Sam 31:13). For certain notable figures, however, mourning continued for a longer duration; the Israelites mourned both Moses and Aaron for thirty days (Num 20:29; Deut 34:8; cf. Miriam’s truncated DBR in Num 20:1). Fasting accompanied periods of mourning and also lasted for seven days. The men of Jabesh-Gilead fasted after that internment of the Saulide bones (1 Sam 31:13). Jacob’s family joined Egyptians in a seven day mourning period (Gen 50:10; see also Gen 37:34; 2 Sam 1:11; 13:31).

Mourners offered laments throughout the mourning period, either through personal expression or via a paid, professional mourner. Laments typically included the formal marker *hoy* (see, e.g., Amos 5:16; Jer 9:17; 2 Chron 35:25; 2 Sam 1; Jer 22:18; 34:5; 1 Kgs 13:30).

Several texts refer to specific clothing worn by mourners in general, and widows in particular (2 Sam 14:2, 6; Gen 38:11, 14). The manipulation of several elements of one’s person was often an element of funerary activity. Some texts specify tearing of one’s garments as part of the formal mourning process. Others refer to the prohibited practice of self-mutilation in the forms of shaving (Lev 19:27; 21:5; Deut 14:1; Isa 15:2; 22:12; Jer 16:6; 41:5; 48:37; Ezek 7:18; Mic 1:16; Amos 8:10; Job 1:20) and laceration (Jer 16:6; 41:5).

S. Olyan has suggested that examples of mutilation in a funerary or mourning context might be viewed through the interpreted lens of shame or humiliation. Sociological interpretations of textual examples of shaving demonstrate that this act “proves to be a uniquely flexible way of bringing about and making status change in ritual settings.”

For extensive studies in mourning in ancient Israel and the ancient Near East, see Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*; Xuan Huong Thi Pham, *Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).


interest is the fact that many of these activities also appear in military contexts; victors subject captured forces to forced shaving or nakedness in order to demonstrate the defeated enemy’s complete subjugation to its victors and to instill shame. One example of shaving further demonstrates the transformative nature of the act (Deut 21:12-13). In this text, the shaving of a foreign woman’s head is part of the ritual by which an Israelite man takes a foreign wife. What are the implications of shaving in the marital context? Perhaps, as Olyan suggests, the shaving of the alien wife’s head symbolizes the finality of her separation from her family of origin: her birth family becomes “dead” to the woman. Alternatively, shaving may visually attest to the newly formed identity of the alien woman. She ritually purifies herself through shaving as a Nazirite undergoes shaving in the course of his purification rites (Numbers 6, 8). The alien woman’s shaved head ostensibly serves as a visible reminder of her new identity as an Israelite wife. I suggest that in addition to these options, the act of shaving the foreign woman also serves to shame her, as one shames captives through shaving rites. The act of shaming may serve to further subordinate the foreign woman in her new role as wife. In Chap. 5, I will further discuss the implications of visual ritual acts for one’s identity. What becomes clear is that whether in military, marital, or funerary contexts, the act of shaving sets the individual apart as markedly, visibly different, thus requiring that he or she be treated differently within a particular social context. As Olyan writes, “Shaving effects and marks ritual transition, a change in status of one shaved.”

Turning again to Ezekiel’s oracle against the trading giant Tyre (Ezek 37:29-32; 35-36), we find an illustrative depiction of mourning rites:

The mariners and all the pilots of the sea
stand on the shore
and wail aloud over you,

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453 Ibid., 622.
and cry bitterly.
They throw dust on their heads
and wallow in ashes;
they make themselves bald for you,
and put on sackcloth,
and they weep over you in bitterness of soul,
with bitter mourning.
In their wailing they raise a lamentation for you,
and lament over you:
“Who was ever destroyed like Tyre
in the midst of the sea?
All the inhabitants of the coastlands
are appalled at you;
and their kings are horribly afraid,
their faces are convulsed.
The merchants among the peoples hiss at you;
you have come to a dreadful end
and shall be no more for ever.”

In this oracle, we see that mourning activities often occur in tandem; and all are regarded as part of the possible responses to death.

Care for the Dead: Food Offerings

The connection between food and funerals has garnered significant attention from scholars, who see references to the Ugaritic marzeaḥ and allusions to the Akkadian kispu in several biblical texts. References to the bread of mourners suggest an act of eating associated with funerary rites (Hos 9:4; Ezek 24:17, 22). Other texts refer to a house of mourning (Qoh 7:2ff) or to meals and houses associated with mourning (Jer 16:5; Amos 6:7). The practice of partaking in a funerary feast is specifically prohibited in Deut 16:4, suggesting that at some point, ancient Israelites knew of—and participated in—such rites. Paired with archaeological evidence of food vessels interred with corpses and of libation channels, the literary evidence may reveal that funerary feasts were not only shared among mourners, but also offered to the dead (cf. Ps

Evidence from the Israelites’ environment suggests that the _marzeaḥ_ was a regionally acknowledged rite most commonly accompanying funeral proceedings. In addition to funerary meals and the possibility of food offerings to the deceased, several texts refer to ritual burning at a burial site. Ritual burning may have included the burning of spices or incense, or of funerary pyres and are most often connected with royal funerary activity (2 Chron 16:4; 21:19; Jer 34:5; 2 Chron 32:33).

Care for the corpse included preparation for burial, the act of internment, and several associated rites. T. Lewis provides a helpful analysis of funerary care of Jezebel.\textsuperscript{455} Using the masc. plural imperative of _pqd_, Jehu orders his attendants to “care for”/”attend to” Jezebel’s corpse after it is flung from a palace window (2 Kgs 9:34). When the men who go to “_pqd_” Jezebel find only her feet, skull, and hands, however, they must return to Jehu to explain the destruction of her corpse. Most scholars and translations understand Jehu’s _piqdû-nā’_ as an order to visually identify Jezebel’s remains. But Mesopotamian funerary traditions may shed further light on this order. The person responsible for caring for the deceased in preparation for funerary rites in Mesopotamian traditions was the _pāqidu_.\textsuperscript{456} The role of “caretaker” often fell upon the eldest son, who prepared funerary feasts (_marzeaḥ_) and made funerary offerings (cf. the role of the _hātik_ in Ugaritic literature). Despite the Mesopotamian connection, however, Lewis warns readers not to jump too quickly to conclusions, since a cognate root does not appear in extant Ugaritic or Phoenician literature.\textsuperscript{457} Nevertheless, two additional Hebrew texts reveal that in some contexts, conjugations of _pqd_ are connected with treatment of the dead and/or deceased. In addition to 2 Kgs 9:34, Ps 31:6 includes a phrase now used in all Catholic Requiem Masses: “Into your hands I commend (_’apqīd_) my spirit (_rūḥī_).” In this context, the person in turmoil trusts the

\textsuperscript{455} Lewis, _Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit_, 120–122.
\textsuperscript{457} Lewis, _Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit_, 121n.54.
deity to *pqd* for the spirit. The intimate care of one’s being (including their corpse after death) most often is the responsibility of living kin; here, the duty is entrusted to the divine realm. Furthermore, when Job considers God’s intimate role in Job’s entire lifespan (Job 10:8-12), he acknowledges God as the protector of his “spirit”:

> Your hands fashioned and made me; and now you turn and destroy me. Remember that you fashioned me like clay; and will you turn me to dust again? Did you not pour me out like milk and curdle me like cheese? You clothed me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews. You have granted me life and steadfast love, and your care has preserved my spirit (*ךָּוּפְקֻּדְתְּ שָׁמְרָה רוּחִּֽי*).  

In this passage, each of the five phrases presents God’s dual participation in life and death. In the final phrase, God grants life and preserves (*pqd*) the *ruaḥ*. The preceding discussion demonstrates that when considered from the context of death ideology, references to the verb *pqd* intimate a familial responsibility towards the deceased.

**Corpse Impurity**

In ancient Israelite ideology, a significant feature of the corpse is its status as a contagious source of impurity (see Num 5:2; 6:6-12; 19:11-22; 22:4; Lev 21:1-11). Contact with corpses renders one ritually impure and requires a specified purification process before one can reenter the community and the sanctuary. Whoever comes into contact with a corpse, a bone, a grave, or a tent in which a corpse lies is rendered ritually impure for seven days. No matter where one encounters a corpse—in a street, at the cite gate, upon a battlefield, or in preparation for burial at a tomb—the corpse is ritually defiling. Moreover, anyone who comes into contact with an object or person that has touched a corpse also becomes impure until purified (Num 5:2). In fact, a vessel left uncovered in a tent containing a corpse also becomes impure. Corpses are

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458 Of course, in ancient Israelite worldview, “spirit,” is used not in the same sense as the term is understood in later Jewish writings, in which the division between a physical body and a metaphysical spirit is clear (see, e.g., Jub 23:20-22; 1 Enoch 22). Rather, use of *ruaḥ* implies a quality of “life force.” When one is alive, one has *ruaḥ*. When one dies, his or her *ruaḥ* departs.

regarded as so impure that priests are not allowed to come into contact with them, except when an immediate family member dies (Lev 21:1-4). As the most severe form of defilement, those who fail to purify themselves from ritual defilement resulting from corpse contact are subject to disconnection from the people; they suffer karet (are cut off) from the covenantal community (Num 19:20).

While corpse impurity is an important element in impurity laws, many narrative accounts of the death and burial of key figures do not mention the impurity associated with corpses, bones, and/or tombs. In death narratives and DBF, attention falls more heavily on the location and nature of the burial. As we shall see in Chap. 5, it is surprising that passages that refer to corpse abuse and non-burial often appear not to be concerned with corpse defilement of those involved in funerary rites. Nevertheless, corpse defilement appears as a motif in passages in which non-burial affects all of Israel and the land (i.e., Ezek 37; 38-39). The casting out of corpses onto the land does not defile the active agent of the expulsion (often YHWH); rather, the casting out of corpses defiles the land upon which the corpses fall. In this way, the implications of non-burial extend beyond the lives (and afterlives) of the victims and their kin to the ground.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have compiled evidence pertaining to ancient Israelite death and burial ideologies. Archeological and textual data contribute to our understanding of Israel’s relationships with the deceased and of the rites by which Israelites acknowledged these relationships. It should be clear that no single, proscribed set of words, deeds, or rites

460 According to Lev 21, the priest may only defile himself for the funerary treatment of his parents, children, brother and unmarried sister. Lev 21:4 explicitly excludes the priest’s wife from the immediate family for whom the priest may provide funerary care.
accompanied death throughout ancient Israel’s history. Different writers incorporated different expressions of death and burial according to their interpretations of the end-of-life experience. The significant constant throughout all strains of Israelite historiographic, legal, and poetic texts is the belief that timely, honorable burial was essential. The ideal form of burial was timely, within one’s own land inheritance, and in one’s ancestral tomb. Moreover, burial accompanied by lament or mourning rites contributed to the honorable burial of the deceased.

As I reviewed in Chapter 1, several in-depth studies have provided synthesis of death and burial terminology. My compilation of examples serves a distinct purpose. The variety of opinions about Sheol, myriad identifications and descriptions of the deceased, and variability with which death and burial are referred indicate that biblical authors were not socially or literarily constrained to use set formulas when discussing death and burial. This variability applies to references of non-burial as well. In the next two chapters, I will identify examples of non-burial appearing throughout the tripartite canon of TANAKH. As Chapter 4 will show, the non-burial motif clearly includes stereotypical terminology, yet does not appear just in the formulaic treaty-curse genre. In Chapter 5, I will scrutinize six discrete textual examples in order to demonstrate the variety with which the non-burial genre appears in the HB, and to understand how and why some Israelites and foreigners were denied the most basic elements of the end-of-life experience. As the current chapter made clear, burial in ancient Israel is a rite of transition central to ancient Israel’s ideology of death, and was intimately connected to family location and identity. The following two chapters will demonstrate that an important element in ancient Israel’s literature is the purposeful deprivation of burial, aimed at destroying one’s familial ties and identity.
Chapter 4

“To the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the field”:

The Non-Burial Motif in the Hebrew Bible: A Presentation of the Data

Introduction

Thus far, I have investigated social and cultural perspectives on death and burial in ancient Israel and its aWA environs. Burial—public, dignified, acknowledged through mourning rites, and conducted in one’s own territory—was the culmination of one’s life in society and established for the living visible certainty of their deceased kin’s proper transition to the netherworld. The deprivation of burial was considered highly dishonorable, and accordingly appears as threatened or actualized punishment in the aWA literary record. In Delbert Hillers’s 1968 description of the treaty-curse “no burial,” he explicitly identified twenty-one references to non-burial, yet left open the possibility of more by recognizing the high frequency of the curse.462

In this Chapter, I identify forty-nine references to non-burial appearing across thirteen books in the HB. First, I describe the variety of stereotypical terminology associated with the non-burial motif. Distinctive words and phrases appear in each of five interpretive categories (elements of post-mortem abuse, agent, type of abuse, reason for abuse, and intended result of abuse). Second, I compile examples of stereotypical terminology appearing in references to non-burial. I present the compiled data in groups based on canonical order and according to similarities within the interpretive categories (e.g., references in the Latter Prophets in which Israel is the victim, an enemy nation is the victim, and/or YHWH is the agent of abuse). The data presented below is limited to those references that fall within canonical bounds of the Hebrew Bible. References to non-burial in the book of Tobit are treated in an excursus following the presentation of canonical references.

462 Hillers, Treaty-Curses, 33, 68.
Chapter 3 presented lexical evidence pertaining to the expansive and complex ancient Israelite death and burial ideology. As the most dishonorable way to dispose of a human corpse, non-burial maintains a definite role in the ideology. Several stereotypical words and phrases figure in references to non-burial. Appearing in both Israelite and aWA references, characteristic terminology signals the reader to the presence of the non-burial motif.

**Predatory Birds and Scavenging Animals**

Texts often refer to scavenging animals, including fowl and mammals. Ancient Israelite authors use two different nouns to refer to predatory birds in the context of exposed corpses. The common collective noun for bird, עוף, appears in some threats concerning exposed corpses. The root עיט often signifies a bird of prey. In addition, wild mammals serve as threats against corpses. Biblical authors generally employ the phrase “beasts of the field” to refer to scavenging animals, but other ways of referring to scavengers also are attested. Ezekiel 29:5 refers to the “living beings of the earth” (cf. Ezek 32:4; “living beings of all the earth”), and Ezek 31:13 includes “living beings of the field.” Other texts specify certain species that will damage discarded corpses. In Jezebel’s infamous death report, horses trample her strewn corpse (2 Kgs 9:33).

References to dogs signal danger as well, appearing in texts to consume the flesh or

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463 See, e.g., Gen 40:19; Deut 28:26; 1 Sam 17:44; 1 Kgs 14:10; 16:4; 21:24; Jer 7:33; 15:3; 16:4; 19:7; 34:20; Ezek 29:5; 31:13; 32:4; Ps 79:2.


465 Other texts reference trampling as an act of violence such as Isaiah 14:19 against the corpse of Babylon and Isaiah 28:3, in which the “drunkards of Ephraim” are trodden underfoot (or hoof). Interestingly, horses also transport the dead (2 Kgs 11:6; 14:20).
blood of an exposed corpse. Jeremiah 15:3 succinctly presents the terror of scavenging animals: “And I will appoint over them four kinds of destroyers, says the Lord: the sword to kill, the dogs to drag away, and the birds of the air and the wild animals of the earth to devour and destroy.”

Threatening a body (individual or corporate) with scavengers suggests that the victim has neither the power nor the infrastructure to escape the aggressor. Moreover, vulnerable human remains signal that the deceased lacked the kinship network needed to protect his or her corpse from post-mortem attack. Accordingly, several threats of non-burial juxtapose references to scavengers with a lack of kin to protect or bury the deceased (Deut 28:26; Jer 7:33; Ps 79:2-3). Corpse abuse inflicted by scavenging animals assaults both the deceased and the surviving community. In contrast to socially-structured funerary rites in which the community partakes, consumption of corpses by scavenging animals and predatory birds is “an image of the unstructured elimination of the dead.”

Allusions to scavenging animals indicate that human society has not dealt properly with the dead, leaving members of animal kingdom to their natural impulses.

**Corpse Decomposition**

Threats of non-burial often allude to the final state of a decomposed corpse, comparing exposed human remains to refuse (סוחה; Isa 5:25) or, more commonly, dung (דֹּמֶן; in 2 Kgs 9:37; Jer 8:2; 9:21; 16:4; 25:33; Ps 83:11 [ET 83:10]). Four threats of non-burial in the book of Jeremiah employ the stereotypical phrase “they shall become dung on the surface of the ground.”

2 Kings 9:37 uses similar language in its threat against Jezebel: “the corpse of Jezebel shall be

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like dung on the field in the territory of Jezreel.” A stereotypical dynastic curse against the house of Jeroboam warns that it will be consumed “just as one burns up dung (גלל) until it is all gone” (1 Kgs 14:10). Zephaniah 1:17 curses sinners by stating that their flesh will be like dung-pellets (גללים). Verbal images of a decomposed corpse underscore the lasting impact of non-burial. Without interment, one’s remains and identity disintegrate into polluting refuse.

**Action and Non-Action: Verbs employed in corpse abuse**

Several stereotypical verbs appear frequently in references to non-burial. Hebrew šlk (hiphil) often describes the violent act of casting off a corpse without regard for the corpse’s treatment or final resting place (2 Kgs 9:25; Isa 14:19; 34:3; Jer 14:16; 22:19; 36:30). The agent of post-mortem abuse may “cast” or “fling” a corpse into the wilderness, a field, or upon a road. Alternatively, a disregarded corpse may be “cast” or “flung” (passive construction) onto deserted land and left for scavenging animals to consume. As in aWA inscriptions and reliefs, a corpse may be “flung” (exposed) into a public space, e.g., before city gates (Jer 14:16; 22:18-19).

The verb krt (כרת) appears in several references to non-burial, especially when a person—living or deceased—is somehow “cut off” from his or her community, usually with negative connotations (1 Kgs 14:10; 21:21; Jer 9:20). In both Ezek 37:11 and Ps 88:6-13, for example, the verb designates the deceased as cut off from life, from God, and from any hope for a covenantal

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468 Traditionally, the term גללים has been translated as “dung-pellets” (understood to be an insult, or as a reference to a pollutant), or as “idols” (object of apostasy). See, e.g., Ezek 6:4-6, 9, 13. For a discussion on the history of interpretation of this term, see DDD, 346.


470 Cogan, “A Technical Term for Exposure.” Passages that include the non-burial motif in the book of Ezekiel also include verbs of “casting” and “tossing” corpses; however, Ezekielian passages use different verbs than the references in the Deuteronomistic History, Isaiah and Jeremiah (Ezek 6:4; 29:5; 32:4-5).
relationship. Finally, in addition to being cast aside or cut off from their community, corpses often are portrayed as abandoned or disregarded corpses using the verb npl ( النقد [“to fall”]; see Num 14:29, 32; Jer 9:21; 19:7; Ezek 6:7; 29:5). This verb frequently appears in parallelism with conjugations of mt (“to die”; Jer 44:12; Lev 11:3; Ezek 5:12; Ps 82:7), and it often describes the dishonorable death of a soldier upon a battlefield. Such deaths are briefly recorded, frequently without a burial notification.

Five examples of the non-burial motif explicitly include the verb “to bury” (הות) with a particle of negation (2 Kgs 9:10; Jer 8:2; 16:4, 6; 25:33). Further, several references indicate that a corpse will not be “gathered” (אסף) to the grave and/or ancestors, nor will it have any living kin to perform the act of gathering (Jer 8:2; 9:21; 14:16; Ezek 29:5; Nah 3:18; Ps 79:3). Nahum 3:18 indicates that the opposite of gathering will occur as part of one’s post-mortem punishment. There, the dead are “scattered,” rather than “gathered” (cf. Ezek 6:5; Ps 53:5).

The theme of post-mortem abandonment in references to non-burial is expressed using one or more of four phrases. Each phrase connotes either a lack of kin to perform necessary funerary rites, or a complete destruction of one’s kinship network. First, non-burial threats indicate that no one will be left to bury the accused (Jer 14:6; Ps 79:3). Second, as mentioned above, some references state that no one will be able to protect the corpses from scavenging animals (Deut 28:26; Jer 7:33; 14:16). Further, no kin will be available to “gather” the corpses

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471 Olyan, “We Are Utterly Cut Off,” 46. In Ezek. 37:14, Israelites purportedly perform the proverb, “Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely,” comparing the experience of exile to that of non-burial. They feel as if they are abandoned as dried, exposed human remains. The term krt appears with positive connotations in several contexts. In treaty-making contexts, krt is used euphemistically with brt to signify the formation of a treaty (see, e.g., Gen 9:11; 12:27; 15:18; Exod 23:32). Further, krt is used to reference the act of circumcision in Exod 4:25 (Cf., Gen 17:10-14, in which an uncircumcised male suffers karet for covenant infidelity).

472 As with krt, npl also may carry connotations of violent disconnect from one’s community (e.g., npl in pf. hophal, النقد) appears in 4QDe5:2.10, “His name is cast down from the nations”).
Finally, some references to non-burial indicate that after death, the deceased person’s living kin will not lament the deceased (Jer 16:4, 6; 22:16; 25:33).

Corpse

As Chap. 3 demonstrated, biblical authors used several terms to indicate a living or deceased human body. Biblical Hebrew employs several terms (translated as corpse, carcass, or body) to describe human remains, including: *nblh* (1 Kgs 13:22-30, 24; Isa 5:25; Jer 7:33; 9:21; 16:4 (with *met*); 19:7; 34:20; Ps 79:2); *npš* (e.g., Lev 19:28; Num 5:2; Hag 2:13; cf. “the body of the dead” נפשׁ; Num 6:6; pl. Lev 21:11); *pgr* (e.g., Numbers 14; Isa 14:19; Nah. 3:3), and *gvyh* (Nah. 3:3; Judg. 14:8; 1 Sam. 31:10; Dan. 10:6). References to non-burial frequently include the term “flesh,” *bašar* (1 Sam 17:44; Gen 40:19; Ezek 32:5; cf. Jer 19:9). Each term carries distinct connotations. Scholars note that *npš* not only signifies a ritually defiling corpse, but also designates the “vital life force” that establishes a person’s identity (e.g., Gen. 2:7; cf. Akk. *napištu* “breath of life”).

In cognate literature, the term *pgr* not only refers to a corpse, but also has interesting ties to mortuary activities. Scholars note the relationships between the Hebrew *pgr* and Akkadian *pagru* (“corpse”), as well as the appearance of *pgr* in Ugaritic literature.

Interestingly, *pgr* appears in parallelism with the god Šapšu in KTU 1.102:12. The diversity of...

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474 Suriano, “Breaking Bread with the Dead,” 1–2. I am grateful to Professor Suriano for providing advanced copies of his manuscript and helpful personal correspondence in preparation of this dissertation. For Mesopotamian terms for the dead, see Hays, *Death in the Iron Age II*, 43ff.


referents in biblical and cognate literature suggests that *pgr* connotes not only a corpse, but also a deified inhabitant of the underworld, and an offering made on behalf of the deceased.

Finally, one passage suggests that non-burial also can be applied to non-persons. Isaiah 21:9 describes shattered Babylonian idols scattered on the ground after Babylon has fallen. In this passage, characteristic terms used in non-burial references appear, most likely in an effort to eradicate the power once attributed to the idols.

**References to Non-Burial in TANAKH**

With the preceding discussion of stereotypical terminology in mind, I now turn to biblical examples of non-burial. Identification of stereotypical terminology in the five interpretive categories identified above contributes to my classification of biblical references to non-burial. Below, I present non-burial data with both prose and chart. If the biblical reference does not include explicit evidence for an interpretive category, I leave the chart space blank. The careful delineation of examples enables readers to take each biblical reference on its own, without conflating the non-burial motif into a formulaic phrase. The preceding review of terminology and the following presentation of non-burial references demonstrate that the non-burial motif is not formulaic. It appears, rather, in a variety of literary contexts and employs a variety of stereotypical terms.

In the Torah, the non-burial motif appears in narrative contexts within a novella, divine threats and indictments, and enacted punishments. In the DH, non-burial terminology appears in curse formulae, taunts, political annals, and prophetic oracles of curse and fulfillment. This variety of usage continues when we turn to the Latter Prophets, where non-burial appears most frequently in prophetic indictments and curses. It is not limited to these literary settings, however. In the Writings, certain psalms and proverbs include the non-burial motif.

**Non-Burial in Torah**
Among historiographical narratives in the Torah, examples of the non-burial motif include Joseph’s dream interpretation (in legendary material concerning the patriarch’s rise to power). In Gen. 40:19, an imprisoned Joseph foresees the exposed corpse of the Pharaoh’s chief baker: “within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head—from you!—and hang you on a pole; and the birds will eat the flesh from you.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biblical Text</th>
<th>Element of Threat</th>
<th>Agent</th>
<th>Victim</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gen 40:19</td>
<td>Decapitation</td>
<td>Pharaoh</td>
<td>Chief baker of Pharaoh</td>
<td>Unstated (fulfillment of Joseph’s dream interpretation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exposure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scavenging animals</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This post-mortem threat includes the elements of decapitation, exposure, and scavenging birds consuming the victim’s flesh. The named agent of abuse is Pharaoh, who will decapitate and expose the baker’s corpse. Pharaoh does not afford his servant due protection; and the result is not only the grimmest of predictions for the dreamer, but also the fulfillment of Joseph’s dream prediction. The Hebrew text highlights the contrast between the fates of the cupbearer and the baker in its rhetorical use of wordplay. In Gen 40:13, we read, “יִּשָא פַרְעֹה אֶת -רֹאשֶׁךָ” (“Pharaoh will lift up your head”). In Gen 40:19, however, we read, “יִּשָא פַרְעֹה אֶת -רֹאשְׁךָ מֵּעָלֶיךָ” (“Pharaoh will lift up your head, from off of you”). A good translation that highlights the contrast between the two dream interpretations also takes into account the text’s clear lexical elements, e.g., baskets, birds, and heads.

In Israel’s post-exodus wilderness traditions, implicit references to non-burial appear in Moses’ divinely pronounced indictments against the Hebrews (Num 14:28-35; 25:4).
Readers encounter nuanced applications of terminology suggestive of non-burial, such as falling corpses and preying animals. That these references occur without expected burial formulae further illumines the function of terminology within these passages.  

*Non-Burial in the Former Prophets (Deuteronomistic History)*

In several literary contexts, the Deuteronomistic History employs references to non-burial. In the historiographical narrative tradition that chronicles David’s rise to power, David and Goliath exchange explicit non-burial taunts:

> The Philistine said to David, “Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the field.” But David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This very day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head; and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD’s and he will give you into our hand” (1 Sam 17:44-47).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1Sam 17:44</td>
<td>Scavenging animals</td>
<td>Goliath</td>
<td>David</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

477 I will examine Numbers 14 in greater detail in Chap. 5.
Careful examination of this famous conflict account produces a refined interpretation of its role in the larger narrative account of David’s career. At first glance, the two characters exchange nearly identical non-burial taunts; nevertheless, small changes in the descriptions of the perceived agent and victim of each taunt indicate that the author uses terms associated with non-burial in order to further his ideological objectives. The David and Goliath pericope is one of six examples of non-burial that I will examine in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Examples of thwarted attempts at non-burial appear in the Deuteronomistic History, and a number of them are situated during the complicated transfer of power from the Saulide to Davidic dynasties. After the Philistines find the corpses of Saul and his three sons on Mount Gilboa, they bring the remains for impalement and public exposure in Beth-shan (1 Sam 31:9-10). The royal corpses remain exposed overnight until the Jabesh-Gileadites rescue them, return to Gilead with the corpses, and then cremate and bury the bones (1 Sam 31:12-13).

<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Sam 31:9-10</td>
<td>Decapitation</td>
<td>Philistines</td>
<td>Saul and his sons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exposure</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

The attempted non-burial of Eshbaal, Saul’s son and successor, also is thwarted. After Eshbaal is murdered and decapitated, his military captains, Rachab and Baanah, bring his head to David in hopes of praise and reward. Instead, David treats the men worse than they treated Eshabaal. In place of praising Rachab and Baanah, David orders his proxies to kill, decapitate, and publically expose (through hanging) them (2 Sam 4:12ab).
Further highlighting the difference in treatment of Eshbaal and his murderers, David orders that Eshbaal’s head be buried in Abner’s tomb in Hebron (2 Sam 4:12c). The burial of Eshbaal’s head contrasts with the exposure of his murderers, indicating that burial of body parts was considered more honorable than total deprivation of burial.

The corpses of seven additional Saulides are subjected to post-mortem exposure after David offers them to the Gibeonites as appeasement in hopes of ending Israel’s misfortunes. As noted in Chap. 3, Rizpah’s extraordinary vigil protects the corpses from scavenging animals throughout the harvest season until David gathers the seven exposed Saulide corpses, together with the remains of Saul and three of his sons from Jabesh, and inters them in Saul’s ancestral tomb (2 Sam 21:8-14). David’s eventual burial of the Saulide corpses not only puts an end to their dishonorable exposure, but also presents David as an honorable rescuer of his former adversaries.

In addition to historiographical narrative, non-burial terminology appears in biblical law. The Deuteronomistic formulation of the covenant between YHWH and Israel includes the curse of non-burial among the blessings and curses that will result from adherence to, or desecration of, the covenant (“Your corpses shall be food for every bird of the air and animal of the earth, and there shall be no one to frighten them away,” Deut 28:26).
As I will show in Chap. 5, the legal context of this non-burial language will most likely incline later, deuteronomically-inclined writers to include threats of non-burial in their prophetic literature.

Recall the widely cited typology that D. Hillers presented of non-burial as a stereotypical, often tri-partite curse directly related to neo-Assyrian treaty-curses.\(^{478}\) Three deuteronomic curses against dynasties appear among Hillers’s small list of non-burial references: 1 Kgs 14:10-11; 16:4; and 21:21-24).

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deut 28:26</td>
<td>Scavenging animals lack of protection</td>
<td>YHWH</td>
<td>Israelite covenant violator</td>
<td>covenant stipulation (v. 15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Kgs 14:10-11</td>
<td>“cut” off Consume Scavenging animals</td>
<td>YHWH</td>
<td>“House of Jeroboam”; יָצוּר אֲבוֹת in Israel</td>
<td>Covenant violations (v. 9)</td>
<td>Trans-generational retribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Kgs 16:3-4</td>
<td>Consume Scavenging animals</td>
<td>YHWH</td>
<td>“Baasha and his house” יָצוּר אֲבוֹת (v. 11)</td>
<td>Walked in the way of Jeroboam (continued apostasy), led people of Israel to sin (v. 2)</td>
<td>Trans-generational retribution. Note that in 1 Kgs 16:6, the text records Baasha’s death and burial: “Baasha slept with his ancestors and was buried at Tizrah…” The punishment is fulfilled in v. 11.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Kgs 21:17-26</td>
<td>“cut” off Consume Scavenging animals</td>
<td>YHWH</td>
<td>Ahab and Jezebel; the “house of Ahab”; יָצוּר אֲבוֹת in Israel</td>
<td>Plot to kill Naboth and take his vineyard (1 Kgs 21:2-13); provoked</td>
<td>Ahab laments after apostasy (YHWH reverses initial curse in 1 Kgs 21:29)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Form critics identify the following form as standard:

I will cut off from PN every male, both bond and free, in Israel and will consume the house of PN, just as one burns up dung until it is all gone. Anyone belonging to PN who dies in the city, the dogs shall eat; and anyone who dies in the open country, the birds of the air shall eat; for the LORD has spoken (1 Kgs 14:10-11; 16:4; 21:21-24).

Of the twelve examples of non-burial in 1 and 2 Kings, however, only three exhibit this stereotypical, “deuteronomical” form. Furthermore, careful examination of these three dynastic curses reveals that each includes slight variations. First, references to the victim(s) do not appear in identical form. Second, the curse against Baasha does not include a threat to cut him off. The dynastic curse clearly has formulary characteristics, but even this example shows flexibility in the application of the non-burial motif.

Other examples of non-burial in the DH, while often containing stereotypical language similar to the dynastic curses, appear in diverse literary genres. Prophetic cycles include non-burial terminology in threats (1 Kgs 13:20-22; 21:17-26). Curses, threats, indictments, and punishment include references to non-burial in narrative accounts of the rise and fall of dynasties (2 Kgs 9:8-10, 25). Further, non-burial appears in the political annals of Josiah’s reign (2 Kgs 23:15-18).

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479 In addition to Hillers, see the helpful compilation of “deuteronomical” formulas in: Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomical School*.

480 I examine the curse of non-burial issued against King Jeroboam (1 Kgs 14:10-11) in greater detail in Chap. 5.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biblical Citation</th>
<th>Element of Threat</th>
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<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Kgs 13:20-22</td>
<td>Non-burial</td>
<td>Man of God from Judah</td>
<td>Not obeying the word of YHWH</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Kgs 9:25</td>
<td>cast corpse in field</td>
<td>Jehu</td>
<td>Joram, son of Jezebel</td>
<td>Sins of Jezebel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Kgs 23:6</td>
<td>Desecration of tombs of the “common” people</td>
<td>Josiah</td>
<td>Tombs of common people buried in Wadi Kidron</td>
<td>Destruction and defilement of local cultus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Kgs 23:15-18</td>
<td>Disinterment, Burning of bones</td>
<td>King Josiah</td>
<td>Bones of deceased entombed at altar of Bethel</td>
<td>Defilement of altar of Bethel, tombs, and bones, alongside other falsely sanctified cultic objects</td>
<td>Defilement of site. Causes unrest for the deceased. Cf., 2 Kgs 23:16b-18, where Josiah allows tomb of man of God to remain untouched, so that he may “rest.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explicit references to non-burial abound in the narrative account of Jezebel’s indictment as chief apostate among the royals and her corresponding punishment (1 Kgs 21:23, 25-26; 2 Kgs 9:8-10, 33-37).

| 2 Kgs 9:8-10 | Scavenging animals | Passive; no specified agent | Jezebel | Avenge the bloodshed of YHWH’s servants | |
| 2 Kgs 9:33, 36-37 | Body cast out Scavenging animals dung | Passive; no specified agent | Jezebel | Sins of Jezebel Fulfillment of Elijah’s prophecy | lack of recognition, no tomb, end of identity |

Striking in Jezebel’s narrative is the actualization of non-burial. In 2 Kings 9, we find a graphic depiction of Jezebel’s death, in which her body literally is thrown to the ground to be trampled and consumed by scavenging animals. In this example, Jehu is the instigating agent of the abuse,
though the violence is carried out by proxies (the guards and horses). The intended result of the 
(almost) complete destruction of her body is the total annihilation of memory of her in the future:

He said, “Throw her down.” So they threw her down; some of her blood spattered on the 
wall and on the horses, which trampled on her. When they came back and told him, he 
said, “This is the word of the Lord, which he spoke by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, ‘In 
the territory of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel; the corpse of Jezebel shall 
be like dung on the field in the territory of Jezreel, so that no one can say, “This is 
Jezebel”’” (2 Kgs 9:33, 36-37).

Jehu’s instructions to the guards concerning Jezebel’s post-mortem treatment is evidence that the 
proper post-mortem treatment and honorable burial directly affect one’s post-mortem identity. 
Without proper burial, no living person will be able to identify the once well-known royal.

Non-Burial in the Latter Prophets

In the Latter Prophets, non-burial threats appear most often in prophetic indictments and 
oracles of punishment and destruction. The majority of these references cluster around the late 
pre-exilic and exilic periods identified in Jeremiah and Ezekiel.\(^{481}\) In some cases, the threats are 
directed against the Israelites (Isa 5:25; 22:15-19; Jer 7:32-33; 8:1-3; 14:16; 15:3; 16:4-6; 19:7; 
34:20; Ezek 6:4-6, 11-13; 33:27-29; Zeph 1:17). As the following chart shows, biblical authors 
sometimes include threats of non-burial using passive constructions (Jer 7:32-33; 22:18-19; 
36:30). The majority of threats, however, present YHWH either as the active agent of post-
mortem punishment, or as the instigator of proxy forces that will execute punishment (i.e., 
YHWH sends nations, animals, weapons, and cosmic forces as agents of punishment in Isa 5:25-
26 and Jer 14:16; 15:3; 22:18-19). Of course, context often implies YHWH as the instigator of post-mortem abuse in several texts in which the direct agent of abuse is left unspecified (i.e., Jer 7:32-33).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biblical Citation</th>
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<th>Agent</th>
<th>Victim</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isa 5:25</td>
<td>exposure, like dung</td>
<td>Natural forces (earthquake?) sent by YHWH The nations sent by YHWH (v. 26)</td>
<td>YHWH’s people</td>
<td>lack of knowledge of YHWH (v. 12b); iniquity, injustice (vv. 21-23); rejected Torah: “for they have rejected the instruction of the LORD of hosts, and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel” (v. 24b)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 22:15-19</td>
<td>“Cast” into wide field Exclusion from pre-built tomb</td>
<td>YHWH</td>
<td>Shebna and his family</td>
<td>Rather than repentance and mourning for destruction, Shebna and family imbibed to comfort themselves before death</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 7:32-33 (cf. Jer 19:11)</td>
<td>Scavenging animals lack of protection</td>
<td>Passive; no specified agent</td>
<td>Israelites</td>
<td>Apostasy, especially sacrificial activity in valley the land shall become a waste (v. 34)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 8:1-3</td>
<td>Disinterment Exposure Non-gathering Non-burial</td>
<td>YHWH</td>
<td>Jerusalemite leadership and population</td>
<td>Apostasy</td>
<td>Experience of exile compared to experience of abused, abandoned corpse (v. 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 12:9</td>
<td>Like dung</td>
<td>Scavenging animals</td>
<td>YHWH issues imperative (subject debated)</td>
<td>“my heritage or possession”/land of Israel (object debated)</td>
<td>Destroying the vineyard (vv. 10-12)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jer 14:16</td>
<td>“cast” into street</td>
<td>famine and sword (context implicates YHWH as instigator)</td>
<td>people of Jerusalem</td>
<td>listening to false prophecy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 15:3</td>
<td>dragged away</td>
<td>sword, dog, bird, wild animals, all appointed by YHWH</td>
<td>“this people”</td>
<td>sins of Manasseh in Jerusalem</td>
<td>negative reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 16:4-6</td>
<td>not lamented</td>
<td>sword, famine because YHWH will remove peace</td>
<td>“this people” v.3 “concerning the sons and concerning the daughters that are born in this place, and concerning their mothers that bore them, and concerning their fathers that begot them in this land” v. 6 “both great and small”</td>
<td>sins of the fathers, apostasy (v. 11) covenant violation (v. 11) v. 18b “they have filled my land with the carcasses of their detestable things and their abominations” (interesting literary reversal)</td>
<td>Trans-generational retribution (v. 3) doubled recompense (v. 18) knowledge of YHWH’s strength (v. 21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 19:7</td>
<td>Scavenging animals</td>
<td>YHWH</td>
<td>kings of Judah, inhabitants of Jerusalem (v. 3); “counsel” of Judah and Jerusalem (v. 7a)</td>
<td>apostasy (v. 4) sacrifice of innocent blood (v. 4)</td>
<td>negative reputation (v. 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 22:18-19</td>
<td>Lack of mourning (from kin or from royal subjects)</td>
<td>Passive; no specified agent</td>
<td>King Jehoiakim</td>
<td>apostasy, injustice (vv. 9, 13-17)</td>
<td>Shame (v. 22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 34:20</td>
<td>Scavenging animals</td>
<td>Enemies</td>
<td>Those who transgressed the covenant: “officials of Judah, the officials of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf” (v. 18)</td>
<td>Not granting release of slaves, even after making covenant before YHWH to do so (vv. 14-17)</td>
<td>negative reputation before other nations (v. 17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 36:30</td>
<td>End of dynasty</td>
<td>Passive; no specified agent</td>
<td>Jehoiakim</td>
<td>Retribution for iniquity (v. 31), expanded second scroll with additional words not present in first scroll that was</td>
<td>end of dynasty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In other cases, prophetic proclamations of non-burial are directed against Israel’s enemies (Isa 14:18-20; 18:5-6; 34:3; 66:22-23; Jer 25:33; Ezek 29:5; Nah 3:3-5, 18). With the exception of the Nahum example, each threat against enemies names YHWH as the primary agent or initiator of violence by proxy. Further, the majority of examples in this category include knowledge of YHWH as the explicit reason for non-burial (Isa 18:5-6, Ezek 29:6; Ezek 32:15; 39:6-7, 21-24). Two examples identify the intended result of non-burial as destruction of the victim’s future identity (name, memory, position; Isa 14:18-20; 66:22).

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isa 14:18-20</td>
<td>cast out</td>
<td>YHWH</td>
<td>Babylon (v. 4)</td>
<td>destroyed the land</td>
<td>separation from kin in tomb and...</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verse</td>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td>Locality</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Comment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isa 18:5-6</td>
<td>Scavenging animals</td>
<td>YHWH</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Killed kin</td>
<td>Lack of future memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 34:3</td>
<td>Cast out Exposure</td>
<td>YHWH</td>
<td>Nations</td>
<td>Vengeance for destruction of Zion (v. 8)</td>
<td>Eternal destruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa 66:22-23</td>
<td>Exposure; decomposition (worms); enduring cremation</td>
<td>YHWH</td>
<td>Those who have rebelled against me</td>
<td>Rebellion</td>
<td>Punishment for the rebellious: shame and lack of knowledge. Vs. Reward for the those living in the new heavens and new earth: God will cause their “descendants and [their] name to remain” (v. 22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer 25:33</td>
<td>Not lamented Non-burial Dung</td>
<td>Great storm, sword, sent by YHWH</td>
<td>All the nations (vv. 31-32)</td>
<td>Wickedness</td>
<td>Make Babylon a perpetual desolation (v. 11), fulfillment of prophecy (v. 13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezek 29:5</td>
<td>“Cast” into wilderness Fall upon field Non-gathering Non-Burial Scavenging animals</td>
<td>YHWH</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Egypt’s lack of support for Israel (v. 6)</td>
<td>Knowledge of YHWH (v. 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezek 31:13-14</td>
<td>Scavenging animals; yet, metaphor lapses in v. 14, when they will be handed over to those</td>
<td>YHWH (casts out Assyria, v. 11)</td>
<td>Assyria (portrayed metaphorically as a cedar of Lebanon)</td>
<td>Pride</td>
<td>Change in identification of Assyria as powerful empire: never again will Assyria, or any</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
who go to the Pit, in burial. Perhaps “Death” is a personal name in this verse.

| Ezek 32:4-6 | Cast out Scavenging animals | YHWH (1s) | Egypt | Name of YHWH profaned (v. 7) | Knowledge of YHWH (v. 15) |
| Ezek 39:4-6, 17-20 | Falling corpses Scavenging animals | YHWH | Gog | Knowledge of YHWH (vv. 6-7, 21-24) |
| Nahum 3:3-5, 18 | Exposure of corpses (piled in streets) Non-gathering | Passive; no specified agent | Assyrians, Nineveh Apostasy, influence and abuse of other nations (v. 4) | Shame (v.5) |

Jeremiah 9:20-22 includes stereotypical non-burial terminology in the context of a lament:

Hear, O women, the word of the LORD, and let your ears receive the word of his mouth; teach to your daughters a dirge, and each to her neighbor a lament. “Death has come up into our windows, it has entered our palaces, to cut off the children from the streets and the young men from the squares.” Speak! Thus says the LORD: “Human corpses shall fall like dung upon the open field, like sheaves behind the reaper, and no one shall gather them.’

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jer 9:20-22</td>
<td>“cut off” Falling corpses Dung Non-gathering</td>
<td>“Death” Judeans (perhaps women within homes), royalty, children, men in streets=all Jerusalemites</td>
<td>Disloyalty (vv. 13-14)</td>
<td>Knowledge of YHWH (v. 24) YHWH will act with justice and according to covenant stipulations (v. 24)</td>
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The lament’s broader literary context provides important clues for the application of non-burial terminology in this pericope. The reason for post-mortem abuse appears in Jer 9:13-16, where YHWH warns Jerusalemites of impending destruction for their lack of covenant loyalty. The deity instructs Jeremiah to call upon professional mourners, women, and young girls who must be taught a lament to perform after the punishment (9:17-20). The lament itself details the agent, victims, and elements of YHWH’s punishment. While non-burial appears as part of YHWH’s pronounced punishment, the actual agent of abuse is personified Death (מָוֶת). People within homes (perhaps the women called to perform the lament), those in the palaces (royalty), children, and men in the streets will suffer the pangs of punishment. The fourfold description of the victim creates a veritable all-inclusive assault on Jerusalemite society—no one is excluded from Death’s blow. Moreover, the lament includes four typical elements of post-mortem abuse (“cut off”, falling corpses, become like dung, non-gathering of corpses). Finally, the passage articulates the intended result of YHWH’s impending judgment in verse 24: “…let those who boast boast in this, that they understand and know me, that I am the LORD (אֲנִי יְהוָה); I act with steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth (חֶסֶד מִּשְׁפָט וּצְדָקָה), for in these things I delight, says the LORD.” YHWH’s identity is upheld through the pronouncement and execution of divine punishment. Further, the deadly punishment is not from the hands of a capricious deity; YHWH’s deeds are grounded in three terms associated with covenant loyalty (חֶסֶד, מִּשְׁפָט, וּצְדָקָה). The recognition formula, “I am the LORD,” indicates that YHWH’s identity is the central focus of the pericope. In Chap. 6, I will discuss the implications of the recognition formula appearing alongside references to non-burial.

**Non-Burial in Writings**

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ps 53:5</td>
<td>Scattering of bones</td>
<td>YHWH</td>
<td>Ungodly; those who say there is no God (v. 1)</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>Shame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps 68:24 (23)</td>
<td>Scavenging animals; post-mortem consummation (death already occurred in the depths of the sea, v. 22).</td>
<td>YHWH</td>
<td>Enemies (v. 21)</td>
<td>Reversal of fortune; Israel will be brought back to the sanctuary in celebration</td>
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</table>
| Ps 79:1-4         | Scavenging animals  
Non-burial  
No kin left to bury | Nations | Jerusalem | God’s anger and punishment (v. 5) | Shame, negative reputation for the nations (v. 4) |
| Ps 83:9-10        | Become like dung   | God | “the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagrites, Gebal and Ammon and Amalek, Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assyria also has joined them; they are the strong arm of the children of Lot.” (vv. 6-8) | “They lay crafty plans against your people; they consult together against those you protect. They say, ‘Come, let us wipe them out as a nation; let the name of Israel be remembered no more’” (vv. 3-4). | Loss of identity: hope is that nations will ‘no longer [to] be remembered’, as opposed to Israel. |

In each example, stereotypical language heightens the psalmist’s lament. Interestingly, each of these Psalms uses non-burial references to describe different groups. Psalm 53, an individual liturgical lament, depicts the impending punishment of the wicked using characteristic non-burial
terminology. In Ps 83:9-10, the poet represents the community and implores YHWH to act against foreign nations as at Endor, leaving the nations as “dung for the ground” (v. 10). In these two literary settings, we find terms appearing most often in texts that refer to non-burial; and each psalm employs them as literary weapons against wicked opponents.

Unlike Pss 53 and 83, Psalm 79 is not directed against the wicked “other.” Rather, the “other” is described as having violently punished the psalmist’s own community. Here, the community grieves over the destruction of Jerusalem, its temple, and God’s “servants”/“the faithful.” Non-burial is part of the destruction inflicted upon God’s city, temple, and people. It is striking that the psalmist uses characteristic non-burial language to describe metaphorically experiences of war and exile. Indeed, Psalm 79 suggests that the punishment of non-burial has already occurred:

> They have given the bodies of your servants to the birds of the air for food, the flesh of your faithful to the wild animals of the earth. They have poured out their blood like water all around Jerusalem, and there was no one to bury them (Ps 79:2-3).

Liturgical uses of non-burial imagery suggest that Israelite authors in different social, literary, and religious contexts felt free to employ stereotypical references to non-burial in ways appropriate to the circumstances and audiences addressed. The non-burial motif within liturgical poetry appears with a variety of terminology. The variation indicates that the inclusion of the non-burial motif was not the result of redactional work after the completion of the psalm. Rather, the variety within the Psalter is additional evidence that non-burial was a motif used among several literary circles, rather than the formulaic construction of one segment of Israelite literati (i.e., the Deuteronomistic Historians).

482 The Psalmist’s reference to violence previously enacted upon Endor is ambiguous. Joshua 11:17 references Endor as a town that the Israelite were unable to dispossess during their conquest of the land of Canaan.
Turning to the wisdom corpus, Prov 30:17 contains terminology stereotypical of post-mortem abuse:

The eye that mocks a father
and scorns to obey a mother
will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley
and eaten by the vultures.

Here, scavenging animals await children who disrespect and prove disloyal to their parents. A brief examination of this proverb in light of our five interpretative criteria demonstrates that the genre of a discrete popular saying differs greatly from other genres in which references to non-burial appear.

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<tr>
<td>Prov. 30:17</td>
<td>Scavenging animals</td>
<td></td>
<td>Disobedient children</td>
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With neither literary nor performative context, it is nearly impossible to discern several interpretive elements of this non-burial reference, including agent, reason, and intended result. The rhetorical impact of a proverb employing stereotypical non-burial terminology is determined by its performance context, rather than its lexical elements alone. Although a freestanding proverb does not provide a context of usage, the presence of non-burial language in wisdom literature suggests that it was not restricted to military, treaty, or prophetic literary contexts. It was part of ancient Israel’s established literary stock and familiar to at least some segments of its society. In this saying, graphic language associated with non-burial is used to address the consequences of familial disloyalty.

Conclusions

In this Chapter, I have demonstrated that while many threats of non-burial exhibit similar terminology, diverse lexical elements were used by different authors in different contexts. Three
different words are used to describe the corpse: נבל (corpse); בשר (flesh); and פה (corpse).

Verbal elements include “casting off” (hiphil form of שלך) and “to cut off” (🔪). Corpses can be denied burial and internment with ancestors (לא יאש ולא יקיר; alternatively, corpses may be exhumed (למשל ומיָאָסְף). The fate of corpses is not necessarily standard either: abandoned corpses may be consumed as food (למאלא); left without protection (לידי ומיָאָסְף); trampled (ואין מחרֵיד; מוס בום); or become like dung (לדמן). Unprotected corpses are subject to consumption by scavenging animals, a phenomenon described with variation in different contexts. Clearly, similarities exist between the meanings of lexical choices used throughout the references compiled in this chapter. These differences suggest, however, that there was common literary knowledge of the motif of non-burial, rather than a central Urtext from which an editor (e.g., deuteronomic or Jeremianic) borrowed a curse of non-burial and inserted it in established texts.483

Further, I have demonstrated that non-burial is a dynamic motif throughout the HB, appearing in a variety of contexts in TANAKH. Even within a single biblical book, the motif demonstrates flexibility in its range of applications. Stereotypical terminology appears in most references to non-burial. The contexts of usage shift, however, indicating that references to non-burial can convey disparate meanings in different contexts. The preceding compilation of non-burial data confirms the variety that the motif exhibits. First, references to non-burial appear in both prose and poetry within several biblical genres, including historical narrative, law, liturgical poetry, wisdom literature, political annals, legend, and prophetic narrative. Furthermore, references to non-burial appear in smaller, sub-genres, including treaty-curses, trans-generational dynastic curses, taunts, proverbs, laments, and an array of divine and prophetic indictments and judgments.

The five interpretive categories used to identify stereotypical non-burial terminology also reveal the motif’s variability in the HB. The methods of post-mortem punishment, while certainly exhibiting similarities, also reflect variation. No single example includes all types of post-mortem abuse. Rather, biblical authors combine different elements within their compositions. Agents of post-mortem violence are presented with great variety. In several cases, the texts present YHWH as the active agent, including verbs conjugated either as 1st person common singular or as 3rd person masculine singular. In other examples, however, there is no explicit agent referenced; in these examples, the verbs often appear in passive conjugations. Furthermore, agents are not always human: inanimate objects and natural disasters often appear as agents of abuse. Despite the variability in textual presentation of the agent, literary contexts often provide clarification concerning the instigator and agent of violence. For example, in prophetic oracles, formulaic elements such as the prophetic announcement (“Thus says YHWH”) or the recognition formula (“So that they will know that I am YHWH”) makes clear that YHWH is the implied instigator of abuse, even if not the explicitly named agent of violence. I will discuss the role of the identity of the agent in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Non-burial is directed against both individuals and corporate bodies. In some examples, the victim is the foreign enemy; more often, however, the victim is an Israelite, perhaps understood as the “enemy within.” Regarding reason and intended result, not all references to non-burial include these interpretive categories; however, literary contexts often provide important clues. The recognition formula, often determinative in agent identification, is juxtaposed frequently with the non-burial motif, demonstrating a recurrent, intended reason for non-burial threats. It is true that non-burial often seeks to destroy the victim’s identity. The compilation and analysis of stereotypical terminology frequently found in the non-burial motif indicates that the identity of the agent of violence too is a crucial feature of the motif.
twofold implications related to identity, visible in my presentation of non-burial in this Chapter will become clearer in Chapter 5. In Chapter 5, I not only examine six examples of non-burial identified above, exploring the genres, literary contexts, and literary structures of each example, but also carefully consider the five interpretive categories in order to show that 1) non-burial was not a static, formulaic literary element in ancient Israel, and 2) biblical authors intentionally included the non-burial motif to make claims about the identity of both victim and agent.

Excursus: Non-Burial Beyond the Canon: Tobit’s Burial of Cast Aside Corpses

The importance of providing honorable burial for kin serves as a recurring literary theme throughout the apocryphal book of Tobit.\textsuperscript{484} Tobit’s tale of protecting corpses from non-burial suggests that Israelites transmitted stories of horrific corpse abuse into the Second Temple Period.\textsuperscript{485} While beyond the canonical and temporal boundaries of this dissertation, Tobit’s reversal of Assyrian non-burial practice is revealing. The book of Tobit states that throughout the reigns of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon, Tobit collected the corpses of Israelites killed by Assyrians in order to provide them with a timely, honorable burial (1:17-18; 2:7). In spite of the sure punishment that accompanied his acts (1:18-20), and mocking from his neighbors (2:8), Tobit felt obliged to fulfill his role as kinsman even if the act caused defilement and separation from his family (2:9).


\textsuperscript{485} Lexical features and historical anachronisms suggest that the book of Tobit was written long after the narrative’s presumed context of Assyrian domination. To establish approximate dates of composition, scholars note that the book references the rebuilding of the Second Temple (520-515 BCE); however, no mention is made of the persecution of Jews under Antiochus IV Epiphanes (r. 175-164 BCE). Therefore, a 3\textsuperscript{rd} or 4\textsuperscript{th} c. BCE date is probable.
Scholars traditionally interpret Tobit’s charitable burial of deceased Israelite kin as an act that sustains social cohesion in the midst of Diaspora (Tobit 1:3). Alongside his insistence that his family adhere to dietary laws and the liturgical calendar, Tobit’s stealthy burials are defined as “acts of solidarity” performed to strengthen kinship relations.\textsuperscript{486} Even in Diaspora, Israelite identity is maintained through religious rites such as dietary laws and burial rites. As anthropologist Massimo Cultraro suggests, mortuary practices often are expressive of a kin group identity.\textsuperscript{487} Furthermore, the establishment of burial places in new habitations allows a group to negotiate, assert, or challenge their preconception of their identity.\textsuperscript{488} The narrative in the book of Tobit recalls how Assyrian forces attempted to destroy—kill—Israel through destruction of its cities, deportation of its people, and acts of post-mortem abuse. The character Tobit, living under Assyrian oppression and struggling to maintain a sense of Israelite identity, fulfilled familial and communal obligations in spite of cultural influences surrounding him. Moreover, Tobit’s actions sought to retain social identity in a situation that threatened Israelite identity, cohesion, and vitality. As one scholar writing on genocide remarks, “Social vitality exists through relationships, contemporary and intergenerational, that create an identity that gives meaning to a life. Major loss of social vitality is a loss of identity and consequently a serious loss of meaning for one’s existence.”\textsuperscript{489}


\textsuperscript{487} Cultraro, “Combined Efforts till Death: Funerary Ritual and Social Statements in the Aegean Early Bronze Age.”


\textsuperscript{489} Claudia Card, “Genocide and Social Death,” \textit{Hypatia} 18, no. 1 (2003): 63 (author’s emphasis).
Tobit’s infamous middle-of-the-night burial adventures are further clarified in light of the historical background and ramifications of Assyrian corpse abuse. The author of Tobit clearly holds elements of institutional memory of tales of Assyrian corpse abuse under Sennacherib. Without a knowledge of corpse abuse and non-burial as military practice, the tale makes less sense. For example, if Israelite corpses were tossed over the city walls as a means of standard dismissive disposal of the dead, why would Sennacherib mind if someone took the corpses and buried them, saving the environs of the city’s gates from disease and stench (i.e., Tobit 1:17-19)? Tobit’s fear of and punishment for burying kin demonstrates that his community knew that the cast-out corpses were not simply discarded in a dishonorable way. The aWA documents surveyed in Chapter 2 reveal that the Assyrian practice of exposing enemy corpses in marketplaces and city gates was not simply the standard means for disposing of human remains. Inscriptional evidence depicts exposed corpses as trophies of victory. The violent treatment of Israelite corpses in Tobit reflects the punishment of an army against its defeated enemy.

Tobit’s task of gathering the scattered corpses goes further than a simple collection of discarded bodies. He performs burials at the risk of sure defilement and likely punishment not only to strengthen bonds among his community, but also to undo the punishment of non-burial inflicted on the Israelites by their conquerors. Tobit’s burial of Israelite bodies makes a claim that, in spite of enemy action, the Israelites maintain control of their kin and their rituals. Like the author of Ezekiel 37, the author of Tobit insists that Israel ought no longer to be reckoned as an unburied, exposed corpse. Israel in exile is a community whose members have obligations to each other—in this life and in the afterlife.\footnote{The interesting connection between Ezekiel’s and Tobit’s use of the corpses in their presentation of life in Diaspora has garnered little scholarly attention, and requires further research.} Tobit’s dangerous decision to bury the remains of
bodies thrown over the walls of Nineveh re-enforces his proclamation that enemy forces might hold enough power to kill Israelites, but they lack the power to control Israelite identity.
Chapter 5
“So no one can say, ‘This is Jezebel’”:
Threats of Non-Burial in the Hebrew Bible

Introduction

Thus far, I have explored social and cultural perspectives on death and burial in Israel and its aWA environment. Honorable burial—public, dignified, acknowledged through mourning rites, and conducted in one’s own territory—was a culmination of one’s life in society and established visible certainty for the living of their deceased kin’s proper passage to the netherworld. In the previous Chapter, I compiled examples of the non-burial motif throughout the HB and demonstrated the variety of literary contexts in which non-burial threats, curses, taunts, and proclaimed punishments appear. In this chapter, I examine six specific examples of non-burial (Num 14:28-35; Deut 28:26; 1 Sam 17:44-47; 1 Kgs 14:10-11; Isa 14:18-20; Jer 8:1-3), with particular focus on the immediate literary context, lexical features, and rhetorical functions of each example. I analyze literary contexts within the broader context of the entire pericope and according to the following criteria: 1) genre and literary form of non-burial reference; 2) lexical elements of post-mortem abuse; 3) agent of enacted or threatened post-mortem abuse; 4) victim of abuse, or addressee of threat; 5) reason given in text for enacted or threatened post-mortem abuse; and 6) intended consequence of impending non-burial.

I examine texts utilizing the preceding criteria in order to advance the second goal of the study: to determine the rhetorical function of non-burial threats within their socio-literary contexts. Accordingly, the socio-literary elements of the literature will illustrate ways in which different authors employed stock terminology and imagery for diverse ideological ends. We shall see that patterns emerge in the ways in which different authors employ the motif of non-burial in their literary works.
Six Illustrative Examples of Non-Burial in TANAKH

The six examples chosen represent the variety of contexts, genres, and terminology identified in the preceding Chapter. These passages demonstrate that different examples of non-burial language and imagery incorporate varying socio-literary elements, including agents, victims, causes, and consequences. As noted above, each example contains elements from the common literary stock of non-burial; but each employs it to accomplish different goals.

The examples included in this section are not presented in canonical order. First, I examine Deut 28:26, cited by many scholars as the standard, paradigmatic example of references to non-burial in TANAKH. Scholars argue that due to its placement in the deuteronomistic covenant this non-burial curse has influenced other biblical examples. I examine how Deut 28:26 relates to other treaty documents of the Iron Age, and ask if and how its placement in Deuteronomy possibly impacted other biblical authors.

Second, I examine two examples from the Deuteronomic History: 1 Sam 17:44-47; and 1 Kgs 14:10-11. On one hand, both examples contain similar lexical elements that explicitly denote the passages as references to non-burial. On the other hand, the two passages use language associated with non-burial in different genres, thereby demanding a closer look at how literary contexts influence our interpretations of references to non-burial. As we shall see, two examples of non-burial in the DH (chosen from many others) function to bolster ideological messages embedded in the historiography. These messages are related, but they are not identical.

Following detailed analyses of two explicit references to non-burial in the DH, I turn to the book of Numbers, in which the narrative includes implicit references to non-burial through lexical selections and literary context. Informed by our understanding of burial in ancient Israel (Chapter 3), verses in Numbers 14 will reveal previously overlooked meanings and functions.
The final two examples treated below appear in the Latter Prophets. Isaiah 14 includes a proclamation of non-burial against a foreign enemy, while Jer 7:32-8:3 contains a sweeping judgment against all Judahites using an array of non-burial-related terms. I have chosen these two passages because they also serve as examples of how similar language in specific contexts can function toward various ends. Isaiah’s proclamation seeks to reverse Babylon’s fortune and position through artful use of burial and non-burial terminology. Jeremiah’s oracle uses non-burial imagery to articulate the exilic experience and the past, present, and future status of the covenant.

1. **Israelite Covenant Violators: Deut 28:26**

In prior biblical scholarship, a pericope’s curse of non-burial most often was measured against the “paradigmatic” example of a non-burial curse in Deut 28:26: “Your corpses shall be food for every bird of the air and animal of the earth, and there shall be no one to frighten them away” (וְהָיְתָה נִבְלָתְךָ לְמַאֲכָל לְכָל עֹף הַשָּמַיִּם וּלְבֶהֱמַת הָאָרֶץ וְאֵּין מַחֲרִּּיד). 491 Encountering an example of non-burial, interpreters often followed Hillers’ lead, relating the example primarily to Deut 28:26 and, perhaps, to the Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon (VTE). 492 O. Lipschits, for example, interprets Jehoiakim’s burial formulae in 2 Kings 24 and Jeremiah 22 according to the “curse of the dtr. Law.” 493 Scholars turn to Deut 28:26 as the paradigmatic example of non-burial language for several reasons, most prominently because of its terminology and covenantal context.

Multiple lexical elements identify Deut 28:26 as a non-burial curse. First, we recognize the common term נְבֵלָה (here in construct form, with 2 mpl. pron. suf.), translated “corpse” or

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“carcass.” Often, נבלת refers to human remains (1 Kgs 13:22-30, 24; Isa 5:25; Jer 7:33; 9:21; 16:4; 19:7; 34:20; Ps 79:2). Note that in these examples, the deceased experiences (or will experience) some form of post-mortem abuse or disgrace. Indeed, in every instance in which this term refers to human remains, some aspect of non-burial is present.494 The only exception to this statement appears in Isa 26:19, where נבלת refers to the buried dead who wish to be restored to life. Exhumation plays a role in this verse; but unlike other examples, salvation is the intended result of the disinterment described.

The curse in Deut 28:26 indicates that corpses will “become food” (לְמַאֲכָל) for “every bird of the air/sky and animal of the earth” (לְכָל עֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּלְבֶהֱמַת הָאָרֶץ). Consumption of corpses by animals of varied species is a common theme in texts referring to non-burial, and this terminology appears to serve several possible functions. First, the juxtaposition of winged and landed animals creates a merismus, indicating that all faunae will have access to the fallen corpse. A second function relates to corpse vulnerability. One can imagine that the descriptions of varying types of animals brought to mind species such as vultures, jackals, dogs, and other creatures that often threatened livestock in the ancient world. In the domestic arena, said livestock required protection from aggressive scavengers. In Deut 28:26, the corpses of the covenant violator will be left without such protection, having “no one to frighten them away” (וְאֵין מַחֲרִּיד). Moreover, in 2 Sam 21:10 Ripzah endangers herself to protect the corpses of Saul’s sons from scavenging animals, making possible their subsequent burial with their father and brothers in the ancestral tomb. F. Stavrakopoulou suggests yet another function of references to scavenging animals. Lack of protection signals lack of bodily preparation for burial and corresponding funerary rites. Therefore, “unlike the dead in their tombs, who receive libations

494 נבלת is also used to refer to animal corpses, particularly in regards to purity issues. See, e.g., Deut 14:8, 21; Lev 5:2; 11; 17:15; and Ezek 4:14; 44:31.
and offerings, the dead exposed in the wilderness will not be fed, but will be food. When considering such graphic language, it is helpful to consider the intended audience. A present-day, westernized reader might not immediately understand the very real consequences of non-burial, since he or she lives in a society where undertakers prepare corpses for funeral services, which are most often held in a location other than the home, and where agricultural and animal husbandry is not the primary source of income. Authors of Deut 28:26 need not spell out the implications of corpses becoming carrion, however; such consequences would be understood by ancient Israelite audiences, for whom livestock protection and funerary preparation and rites were common-place realities.

The three elements of post-mortem abuse in Deut 28:26 (corpse (נְבֵּלָה), scavenging animals, and desertion) identify the verse as a reference to non-burial. Certain elements associated with non-burial do not appear in this “paradigmatic” example, however. Deuteronomy 28:26 does not include an explicit reference to non-burial (i.e., “You shall not be buried”), non-gathering, exhumation, or exposure (through the telling use of the hiphil form of שלך). Other references to non-burial contain more aspects of post-mortem abuse than Deut 28:26; yet despite these absences, this verse is regarded as the “typical form” of the curse of non-burial due to its canonical location.

Deuteronomy 28:26 and its language of non-burial appears as just one aspect of punishment in a collection of curses. Included among the blessings and curses for those who do not adhere to the Deuteronomistic articulation of Israel’s covenant with YHWH, the non-burial curse serves the DH in the same way as Akkadian suzerainty treaty curses, where non-burial also appears among the consequences of not adhering to treaty stipulations. In Chapter 1, I demonstrated the features of aWA treaties visible within the Deuteronomistic articulation of the

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covenant. In spite of similarities between Deut 28:26 and comparative curses of non-burial in aWA treaties, differences must be noted, particularly when we look at the agent and victim of the Deuteronomistic curse of non-burial. First, the agent of non-burial is unspecified in Deut 28:26. As one curse among a list of many in literature comparable on some levels to aWA treaties, readers may assume that the more powerful treaty party would be responsible for implementation of curses resulting from the less powerful party’s failure to fulfill treaty obligations. The covenant forged at Sinai and reiterated in Deuteronomy created a covenantal relationship between YHWH and Israel not unlike the suzerain-vassal relationship in aWA diplomatic relations. In the aWA treaties, curses were levied against violators of the treaty, most often enemies of the king and/or state, and carried out by the suzerain’s military agents. In the case of Deut 28:26, YHWH is the implicit suzerain; and Israel is the vassal. Desecration of the covenant on Israel’s part would result in YHWH effecting the curses, either actively or through a proxy. As we shall see below, different biblical authors provide varied interpretations of YHWH’s role in post-mortem abuse.

A second difference between the biblical curse of non-burial in Deut 28:26 and its aWA counterparts is related directly to the above discussion on agent. The victim of punishment envisaged in Deut 28:26 requires explication. Because the covenant was formed between Israel and its patron deity, desecration of the covenant would result in the punishment of Israel by its own patron deity. Said differently, while aWA treaty curses were directed towards enemies of the king and/or state, the biblical curse in Deut 28:26 is directed towards YHWH’s elect people. As I demonstrated in Chapter 4, in early Israelite prophecy and in historical narratives, threats of non-burial regularly are levied against Israelites, not enemy forces. When we do see non-burial threatened against foreign enemies, these references appear to originate in later writings. The consequences for portraying divine punishment with military and corporeal rhetoric will have

496 Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, 137.
intriguing and disturbing results, as we shall see below and in Chapter 6. There are significant implications to the curse of non-burial in a social-literary context in which post-mortem punishment is used not against the enemy other, but against one’s own people.

The importance of the curse of non-burial in Deut 28:26 stems not only from the grim implications of non-burial, as discussed in Ch. 2, but also, and more significantly, because of its textual location among other serious stipulations of covenant violation. The noted and well-documented impact of deuteronomic theology and redactional activity on the exilic prophetic literature is of crucial import here and in the following examination of post-mortem threats. Indeed, M. Weinfeld suggests that the varied language of non-burial prevalent throughout TANAKH is indeed “Deuteronomic Phraseology,” and includes most commonly-recognized threats of non-burial in his Appendix which catalogues deuteronomic phraseology.\footnote{Ibid., 349, 351, 353. See also J. Philip Hyatt, “Jeremiah and Deuteronomy,” \textit{JNES} 1, no. 2 (1942): 156–73; cf., Steuernagel, \textit{Deuteronomium Und Josua: Und Allgemeine Einleitung in Den Hexateuch}, who attributes the phrase to Jeremiah.}

My identification of non-burial terminology throughout TANAKH makes clear that biblical authors of multiple traditions understood the impact of the non-burial motif. Prophets in the deuteronomic tradition, such as Jeremiah, and in the priestly tradition, such as Ezekiel, understood that covenant violation demanded the actualization of covenant stipulations, among which was the vivid depiction of corpses left unburied. As I made clear in Chapter 4, liturgical poetry of the Psalms and wisdom saying in Proverbs include the non-burial motif. While I do not agree fully with M. Weinfeld that biblical references to non-burial are all deuteronomic in origin, I agree with his conclusion that curses were understood metaphorically. As Weinfeld writes,\footnote{Weinfeld, \textit{Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School}, 137.}

the maledictions were therefore either dramatized or graphically depicted by literary simile in Israelite prophecy, just as they were in ancient Near-Eastern treaties. As the maledictions were a sanction against breach of treaty, so the purpose of the prophetic threats was to portray the calamities that would follow as a consequence of the violation of Israel’s covenant with Yahweh.
Non-burial’s ability to provide visual depth to prophetic pronouncements of judgment resulted in extension of non-burial beyond the confines of the Deut 28:26, and into the religious and literary imaginations of the Judean prophets. Despite the precise origin on influence for the stereotypical lexical elements present in most non-burial threats, the use in Deut 28:26 and elsewhere creates a clear motif in biblical literature, of which different authors use make in their own compositions.

2. David and Goliath…and God: 1 Sam 17:44-47

When young children recall the popular legend of David and Goliath, they most likely remember David’s keen skill with a slingshot and stone. Less remembered, perhaps, is the double occurrence of non-burial references embedded in David and Goliath’s traded taunts. Before the fatal shot flies from David’s self-made sling, the youthful future Israelite king and his battle-ready Philistine opponent trade taunting words. Their taunts act as signs of disrespect for each other, the armies and nations they represent, and the gods for whom they fight. Both in studies of references to non-burial, and treatments of the famous David and Goliath encounter, scholars often overlook these references to non-burial. In this section, I examine the taunts issued by the sparing partners and ask how the author/editor relayed his ideological perspective through references to non-burial. In order to examine with greater clarity the references to non-burial embedded in the taunts, I divide the pericope as follows:

1) 1 Sam 17:4-37  Character Development
   a) 17:4-10  Description of Goliath

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499 See, e.g., Baruch Halpern, David’s Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King (Eerdmans, 2004), 6–13; Steven McKenzie, King David: A Biography (Oxford: New York: Oxford Univ., 2000), 70–77. Both of these monographs on David contain lengthy treatments of the David and Goliath legend, but they focus primarily on: 1) David’s military strategy; 2) the probability of redactional activity and the weaving together of two traditions, as evidenced by the Masoretic Text and Septuagint; 3) the historicity of Goliath’s actual height and other minor details, including type of armor worn.
As this outline suggests, the construction of the David and Goliath legend emphasizes character development more than the actual battle between the two characters. While the battle merits four terse verses at the end of the pericope, readers first encounter over thirty verses rich with visual descriptions of both David and Goliath (1 Sam 17:4-37). Goliath’s physical strength, imposing height, and well-crafted armor are detailed in the text (vv. 4-8), suggesting that Goliath’s power symbolizes the very nature of the Philistine threat against the fledgling nation of Israel.

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500 This element also was noted in a recent publication by David T. Lamb, “‘I Will Strike You down and Cut off Your Head’ (I Sam 17:46): Trash Talking, Derogatory Rhetoric, and Psychological Warfare in Ancient Israel,” in *Warfare, Ritual, and Symbol in Biblical and Modern Contexts* (ed. Brad E. Kelle, Frank Ritchel Ames, and Jacob L. Wright; Society of Biblical Literature ancient Israel and its Literature 18; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014), 126.
Israel. In contrast, David’s status as the youngest of Jesse’s sons runs throughout vv. 12-15, 17-23. David is neither old enough nor strong enough nor man enough to be on the battlefield with his brothers; instead, he dashes between the battlefield and his father’s flocks, serving as shepherd, messenger, baggage handler, and food delivery boy.

Following the establishment of a seemingly highly inequitable battle, readers gain another insight into David. In vv. 26-40, the author elucidates David’s moral character: even when questioned by the king (v. 23) and rebuked by his brothers (vv. 28-30), David promotes himself as able to fight. Moreover, he argues that an Israelite must meet Goliath for a duel in order to defend the honor of “the living God” (v. 26). In a last effort to maximize elements of suspense, vv. 38-40 impart the startling information that despite his inferior size, David refuses to wear the king’s armor because of David’s inexperience with the armor’s foreboding weight. Instead, David will approach the Philistine warrior with smooth stones and his staff. Throughout the lead-up to the battle, David is presented both as motivated by superior theological motives and as the physical underdog.

Armed head to toe and insulted by the diminutive opponent chosen by the Israelite ranks (v. 41-32), Goliath is first to issue the taunt of non-burial: “‘Come to me, and I will give (וְאֶתְנָה) your flesh (ךָבְשָרְ) to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the field’” (1 Sam 17:44). Two significant lexical elements inform readers that Goliath taunts David with non-burial. First, using the Hebrew כָּבְשָר (“flesh”), Goliath claims power over David’s body. Forms of כָּבְשָר often designate the physical body of both animal and human; and they thrice appear in contexts of non-

502 The presentation of David in 1 Sam 17 differs from the description of David in 1 Sam 16:14-23, in which an older David is known by Saul; indeed, in ch. 16, David is Saul’s personal arm bearer.
burial. Goliath’s taunt boasts that he will deliver David’s “flesh” to an array of scavenging animals, aligning his words with Deut 28:26, in which the non-burial curse includes the phrase לעביד ועביד העשים והבלבים והפילים (“every bird of the air and animal of the earth”). In 1 Sam 17:44, Goliath too uses language stereotypical of scavenging, but with slightly different terminology: לעביד ועביד העשים והבלבים והפילים (“to birds of the air and animals of the field”). The differences in precise word choice, while admittedly very slight, point to flexibility in the use of stereotypical non-burial language.

Looking closer at how the Israelite author composes Goliath’s taunt, the words and their organization create the impression that the Philistine is the superior aggressor. The agent and victim of the taunt are clear. Goliath commands David to approach (“come to me”; לכה אלי) and uses the first person singular (“I will give”; ואתנה) to indicate that he will be the aggressor and agent of abuse over David. David alone is the victim of the threatened abuse; the second person singular pronominal suffix on the singular form of “flesh” (ךבר) indicates that David’s flesh will become carrion.

Social theory assists our interpretation of the biblical author’s presentation of the Philistine threat. Taunts serve multiple purposes when issued on the battlefield; they can challenge, dissuade, embarrass, emasculate, frighten, and threaten. In this example, Goliath makes specific claims about the nature of the upcoming fight by choosing non-burial terminology for his taunt. Indeed, Goliath’s words serve three related purposes. First, his taunt conveys self-aggrandizement; the young, handsome, shepherd boy cannot defeat the mightiest of the Philistine

503 In addition to Goliath’s taunt in 1 Sam 17:44, see Gen 40:19 and Ezek 32:5, in which ברשׁ appears in non-burial contexts. Also see: Jer 19:9, which follows a reference of non-burial in v. 7; there, however, ברשׁ is used in reference to cannibalism, not non-burial. As noted above, the majority of threats of non-burial instead use רגשׁ “corpse” as the object of abuse.

504 For role of taunt in aWA military practice and the bardic tradition of war, see: Lamb, “‘I Will Strike You down and Cut off Your Head’ (I Sam 17:46): Trash Talking, Derogatory Rhetoric, and Psychological Warfare in Ancient Israel,” esp. 112–126; Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible*, 92. As noted above, the majority of threats of non-burial instead use ברשׁ “corpse” as the object of abuse.
forces. Second, the taunt demeans David’s physical stature and method of engagement; David has no chance of self-preservation. Not only will he lose this battle, but also he will be so badly beaten that Goliath will possess of his flesh and dispose of it in the most disrespectful fashion.

Third, Goliath’s taunt mocks David’s comrades: their chosen warrior representative will perish; and the Israelites lack the power even to collect his corpse. Indeed, Goliath’s earlier call to battle indicates his motive. In 1 Sam 17:10, he asks for an opponent in order to shame Israel: יִֽנֵּיה הָיָ֖ה הָֽעְדִיקָ֑תַיָּֽה (“I am going to shame the ranks of Israel”).

As S. Niditch discusses in her examination of warfare tactics, the only way to undo the negative effects of the taunt is to meet and beat it: “A taunt is a challenge, a dare that cannot be ignored unless the object of the challenge and implicit impulse wishes to admit cowardice, womanishness, and defeat. To meet the challenge and remove the taunt is to obtain status and glory.” David’s response to Goliath certainly accomplishes these goals. Without missing a beat we read David’s retort, in which similar terminology of non-burial, supplemented by additional elements, appears:

“You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This very day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head; and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD’s and he will give you into our hand” (1 Sam 17:45-47).

Lexical elements point to similarities and differences between these characters’ taunts and determine whether or not David meets and beats Goliath’s taunt.

First, David reverses the direction of the verbal fight. Goliath ordered David to approach him in v. 44 (“come to me,” קָאַה אֶלְּלָי); in v. 45, David counter commands with an emphatic “you

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505 George, “Constructing Identity in 1 Samuel 17,” 398. Other translation options for חֵרַפְתִּי include “defy,” “scorn,” “reproach,” and “taunt.”
506 Niditch, War in the Hebrew Bible, 93.
come to me” (אַתָה בָא אֵלַי). Moreover, David seemingly supplies the theological reason why his diminutive stature and lack of armor and weaponry will not determine the battle’s outcome.  

David draws a sharp comparison between Goliath—whose probability of victory is bolstered by physical strength, sword, spear, and javelin (בְחֶרֶב וּבַחֲנַית וּבְכִידֹן)—and himself, who approaches the duel without armor and weaponry, but with the support of Israel’s deity, whom Goliath seeks to shame (1 Sam 17:10).

David’s retort not only answers Goliath’s taunt, but also broadens the scope of abuse. To start, David specifies that he will behead Goliath—a threat that may seem incredulous to readers who just learned that David does not carry even a sword to the fight. David then returns Goliath’s threat of non-burial, but with modifications. Whereas Goliath’s taunt threatens David’s flesh (בשׁר), David threatens פֶגֶר מַחֲנֵּה פְלִּשְׁתִּים (“the corpse [sing. construct] of the Philistine army”). Two departures from Goliath’s taunt require comment. First, David chooses פֶגֶר (“corpse”) over בשׁר (“flesh”), reverting to the more frequent lexical choice in non-burial contexts.  

Second, David’s threat of non-burial is directed against the whole of the Philistine army, not simply against Goliath. Indeed, “corpse” appears here in singular construct form, suggesting that the enemy forces—as a whole—will be destroyed by David, who is armed not with standard weapons, but with divine force.

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508 C.f., Deut 28:26, in which we find נבלת rather than פֶגֶר. A similar form is found in the Dagan Stela, where mortuary offering were presented to the dead. See Bloch-Smith, Judahite Burial Practices, 109.

509 Here I must disagree with S. McKenzie, King David: A Biography, 72., who renders the phrase, “I will kill you, cut off your head, and leave your corpse and the corpses of the Philistine camp…” McKenzie’s translation responds to the difficulty present in Hebrew. If we examine the text according to the differences between taunts, I suggest that the singular construct is intended, and provides greater contrast between the words of David and Goliath.
David’s taunt refers to scavenging animals, but slightly alters Goliath’s initial words. David will deliver the Philistine army “לְעוֹף הַשָמַיִּם וּלְחַיַת הָאָרֶץ” (“to the birds of the sky and living beings of the earth”). Once again, slight changes in lexical choice appear. It remains unclear whether these changes occur because of authorial desire for variety in terminology or because of the author’s intended rhetorical effect. Regardless of the original reason behind the word choice, it is clear that not all references to non-burial share identical, formulaic terminology.

David does not conclude his taunt with the threat of non-burial. Instead, he provides reasons for his claims. God will ensure David’s victory for God’s own self-aggrandizement—not David’s, not Goliath’s. God’s victory will destroy the enemy and also insure recognition: “so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD’s and he will give you into our hand” (1 Sam 14:46c-47). YHWH’s universal identity will be upheld by the seemingly miraculous defeat of Goliath. Betraying the author’s pro-Davidic and pro-Israelite ideological perspective (after all, this is the Israelite—not the Philistine—account of the duel), David’s witty comeback to Goliath not only suggests his greater intellect and battle-ready cleverness, but also indicates that when David reaches victory, it will be David and YHWH’s victory, since both have fought for the sake of Israel.510

David’s taunt and claim of divine sanction grow stronger in the final verses of our passage, in which the author briefly recounts the actual fight between David and Goliath. David’s wit proves valuable as he deftly maneuvers toward Goliath and strikes the warrior with a stone. Once again, the DH highlights the unlikeliness of David’s victory by reminding readers (v. 50) that David prevailed in battle even though “וְחֶרֶב אֵּּין בְיַד-דָוִּד” (“there was no sword in David’s

510 Niditch, War in the Hebrew Bible, 94.
hand”). Finally, David’s threat of decapitation is actualized as he beheads his opponent with Goliath’s own sword (v. 51).

Given the lengthy introduction to the battle between David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 17, the brief recital of the actual encounter seems curious. Why might the narrator make such an effort to set the scene, develop the characters, and create suspense with pre-battle taunts, only to spend so little space describing the “meat and bones” of the encounter? As Mark R. George writes, the role of the author of ideological historical narrative is not only to retell the event, but also (and more significantly), to shape the reader’s perception about the event—what is important, who is important, and why. George writes, “Historical narrative functions in a manner similar to that of metaphors, suggesting for the community in what direction it might think about those events and how it might interpret them.” Following George’s description of historical narrative, I suggest that the literary presentation of non-burial in the taunts uttered by Goliath and David is fundamental to the author’s ideas about what is important in this passage: 1) David’s identity; 2) YHWH’s role as Israel’s protective warrior in favor of David’s nascent kingship; 3) David and YHWH’s relationship in the maintenance of the divine-Israelite covenant.

The David and Goliath material constructs David’s identity on numerous levels. First, David is presented as the underdog. Yet despite his age and size, he plays the clever, divinely-sanctioned warrior throughout the story. His words convey wit in contrast to Goliath’s brawn. His confidence contrasts with Saul, who is frightened by Goliath’s words (17:11). Moreover, David’s faith in Israel’s deity contrasts both with Saul’s inability to lead Israel to victory and Goliath’s hubris. In stark contrast to Philistine’s representative warrior, the diminutive appearance of Israel’s chosen representative suggests that Israel’s leader will not be like the

511 George, “Constructing Identity in 1 Samuel 17,” 392.
leaders of “all the nations,” but will gain his strength from the protection of Israel’s patron deity. 512

The second aspect of David’s identity formation in this pericope is Israel’s embodiment in the very person of David. In v. 26, David emerges from amidst the ranks of Israelites to answer Goliath’s challenge, arguing that someone must defend the “armies of the living God.” Finally, David fights on Israel’s behalf. 513 When David responds to Goliath’s taunt, he does so in a way that makes the personal duel a national battle. David will not simply destroy Goliath’s flesh; with strength from Israel’s God, he will devastate the “corpse of the Philistine army.”

The third function of David’s characterization stems from the addition of pro-Israelite, pro-Davidic, and Yahwistic ideology/theology into the battle taunt. David’s words indicate that far more is at stake than a simple duel. In this example of non-burial imagery, YHWH enables a faithful servant to gain victory for Israel. By doing so, YHWH upholds the existing covenantal relationship between the divine realm and Israel; Israel will not suffer the curse of non-burial for covenant desecration as enumerated in Deut 28:26, rather, the Philistines will experience dishonor intended for those who break treaties and show disloyalty in the ancient world. Moreover, YHWH’s intercession in David’s battle foreshadows the covenant relationship that will be solidified in 2 Samuel 7.

References to non-burial in the legend of David and Goliath create the literary framework in which David begins to emerge as the ideal, future king of Israel. Through manipulation and supplementation of Goliath’s original taunt, David’s taunt functions to cast him in the role of the clever, battle-ready, fearless, faithful leader, who will replace the inept and fearful Saul.

3. Jeroboam’s Dynasty: 1 Kings 14:10-11

512 Ibid., 401.
513 Ibid., 393.
References to non-burial in the DH often are directed to royal dynastic families whom the Deuteronomistic redactors condemn for rejecting the covenant between Israel and YHWH and causing Israel to sin against its patron deity. Many members of royal families are deemed unrighteous by the Deuteronomistic Historians, but only a select few (Jeroboam [1 Kgs 14:10-11], Baasha [1 Kgs 16:3-4], and Ahab and Jezebel [1 Kgs 21:17-26]) are cursed with non-burial.

In this section, I examine the reference to non-burial embedded in the prophetic announcement of destruction of Jeroboam’s dynasty, asking how death and burial function in DH’s presentation of Jeroboam and his role in the history of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Ahijah’s curse against Jeroboam’s dynasty appears in 1 Kgs 14:10-11. Rather than delivering the curse to Jeroboam himself, Ahijah delivers the curse to Jeroboam’s unnamed wife.

For the purposes of this study, I divide the pertinent literary context as follows:

1) 1 Kgs 13  
   Man of God from Judah

2) 1 Kgs 14:1-9  
   Jeroboam's Wife Visits Ahijah
   a. 14:1-4  
      Jeroboam’s instructions to his wife
   b. 14:4-5  
      Ahijah’s foresight
   c. 14:6-9  
      Review of Jeroboam’s Sins

3) 1 Kgs 14:10-11  
   Dynastic Curse of Non-Burial
   a. 14:10a  
      Disaster upon house of Jeroboam
   b. 14:10b  
      “Cut off” from Jeroboam
      "מַשְׁתִּין בְׁקִיר עָצוּר וְׁעָזוּב בְׁיִּשְׁרָאֵל"
   c. 14:10c  
      Burn up/Sweep away house of Jeroboam as dung
   d. 14:11  
      Scavenging Animals

4) 1 Kgs 14:12-14  
   The Exception of Abijah
   a. 14:12-13  
      Abijah’s death, public mourning, and burial
   b. 14:14  
      Renewal of Davidic dynasty

Following a discussion of genre and context, I examine lexical elements in the curse of non-burial, including an extended excursus on interpretive challenges presented by the word-pair appearing in the curse, עָצוּר וְׁעָזוּב. In this example of non-burial language, the rhetorical impact

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514 I explore the meaning of this difficult phrase below.
results—to a large degree—from literary context; accordingly, I will demonstrate that the passage’s placement and organization provide keys to its rhetorical function.


As I discussed in Ch. 1, death and burial formula (DBF) appear throughout the DH, providing essential information regarding a king’s reign and evidence of a passage’s redactional history. The standard DBF provide notice of the king’s death, burial details (e.g., location, or “with his fathers”), and succession.\footnote{1 Kings 22:51 serves as a helpful example: “Jehoshaphat slept with his ancestors and was buried with his ancestors in the city of his father David; his son Jehoram succeeded him.”} Critical studies have grappled with the idiomatic phrase included in some DBF, “PN lay [or slept] with his fathers.”\footnote{G. R. Driver, “Plurima Mortis Imago,” in \textit{Studies and Essays in Honor of Abraham A. Neuman}, eds. M. Ben-Horin, B.D. Weinryb, and S. Zeitlin (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 128–143; Halpern and Vanderhooft, “The Editions of Kings in the 7th-6th Centuries BCE”; Suriano, \textit{The Politics of Dead Kings}.}

The most recent critical studies of the term argue that the phrase indicates a peaceful death, rather than burial, or death in general. The focus of this section is to examine the extreme opposite of a full DBF: the dynastic curse of non-burial issued against the house of Jeroboam.

The judgment levied against Jeroboam (1 Kgs 14:10-11) is a helpful example of the DH threats of non-burial against dynasties judged to have desecrated the covenant relationship between Israel and YHWH. The judgment proclaimed by the prophet Ahijah includes stereotypical language and stock phrases employed by the DH against Baasha, Ahab, and Jezebel as well (1 Kgs 16:4; 21:21-24). Against Jeroboam, we read:
Therefore, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam. I will cut off from Jeroboam every male, both bond and free, in Israel and will consume the house of Jeroboam, just as one burns up dung until it is all gone. Anyone belonging to Jeroboam who dies in the city, the dogs shall eat; and anyone who dies in the open country, the birds of the air shall eat; for the LORD has spoken (1 Kgs 14:10-11).

Past commentators have acknowledged that this threat against Jeroboam is formulary. For some, the curse’s introductory “לָכֵּּנ הִּנְנִּי” (lāk n hinn; “therefore, [see/behold]…”) in v. 10 marks Ahijah’s words as “a prophetic threat in the imminent future.” Other form-critical interpreters have categorized the indictment against Jeroboam as the “condemnation of a royal house” formulation. Still others have noted similarities between non-burial terminology here and in the Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon. Recognizing these comparative elements, some scholars view the judgments as secondary curse formulae inserted into the royal histories. H. Weippert, for example, refers to the dynastic curses as:

…post-narrative but predeuteronomistic judgments of the rejection on the descendants of Jeroboam I, Baasha, and Ahab.…their basic elements and the sequencing of these are quite stereotypical but nonetheless are placed in the mouths of the three prophets—Ahijah, Jehu, and Elijah.

As we can see, scholarly treatments of this passage acknowledge the formulary nature of Ahijah’s curse against Jeroboam and recognize its similarities to the curses against Ahab and

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522 Helga Weippert, “‘Histories’ and ‘History’: Promise and Fulfillment in the Detueronomistic Historical Work,” in *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History* (Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 8; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 58.
Baasha. Despite these generic categorizations, however, few scholars have linked explicitly the characteristic terminology employed in the oracle of doom against these dynasties with non-burial.\(^5\)

In order to understand how dynastic curses function in their literary context, I first explore lexical elements in the curse against Jeroboam, including aspects of v. 14 that have puzzled translators for centuries. As the outline above demonstrates, Ahijah’s curse contains four elements:

- a. 14:10a  
  Disaster upon house of Jeroboam

- b. 14:10b  
  “Cut off” from Jeroboam “משתין בקיר עוצר ועוזב בישראל”

- c. 14:10c  
  Burn up/Sweep away house of Jeroboam as dung

- d. 14:11  
  Scavenging Animals

First, Ahijah announces that YHWH will personally “bring evil/disaster” (מֵבִיא רָעָה) upon the house of Jeroboam. In this generic threat, the *hiphil* participle lends intensity to YHWH’s personal role as agent of the impending evil.\(^6\) This phrase also appears in 2 Sam 17:14; 1 Kgs 21:21, 29; 2 Kgs 21:12; 22:16; Jer 4:16; 6:9; clearly, these examples show that “bringing disaster” is one element of many non-burial threats.

To denote death, the curse includes the idiomatic form of “to cut off” (*וְהִכְרַתִּי*), also appearing in the *hiphil* 1\(^{st}\) person sing. As I demonstrated in Ch. 1, this form often denotes not only death, but also separation from the protection of the covenant. The precise victims of abuse are indicated with the following words: “משתין בקיר עוצר ועוזב בישראל.” Below, I will discuss in depth the possible meanings of these word-pairs. Following their deaths, those of Jeroboam’s dynasty who perished in the city (lit., “the dead of Jeroboam”; הַמֵּת לְיָרָ בְעָם) will be consumed by dogs; those who died in the field will be eaten by the birds of the air (*עוֹף הַשָּמָיִם*).

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Deut 28:26 and 1 Sam 17:44-47, this reference to scavenging animals in different locales depicts the totality of destruction. Regardless of where they die, they will be counted under the punishment inflicted upon the Jeroboam dynasty.

Immediately following the curse of non-burial, Ahijah pronounces the means of punishment, which include YHWH treating the house of Jeroboam like dung. YHWH will “utterly consume” (וּבִּעַרְתִּי) the house of Jeroboam until it is gone. Scholars have rendered this phrase with alternate translations, seeking to clarify the Hebrew imagery. Noth chose heraustegen for וּבִּעַרְתִּי, suggesting that YHWH would “sweep out” Jeroboam’s dynasty as one would dung.525 Similarly, Rehm used wegfe gen (“to sweep away”) to clarify the phrase.526 Recently, S. Joo argued that we should render the phrase “I will exterminate” in line with the divine anger present in dynastic curses (e.g., Jer 14:9).527 The impact of language typical of Deuteronomic injunctions against the wicked suggests that the Jeroboam dynasty will be destroyed in totality and in disgrace.528

In an interesting addition to the standard dynastic curse of non-burial, readers learn that Jeroboam’s ill-stricken son, Abijah, alone earns the honor of burial. The prophet informs Jeroboam’s wife:

Therefore set out, go to your house. When your feet enter the city, the child shall die. All Israel shall mourn for him and bury him; for he alone of Jeroboam’s family shall come to the grave, because in him there is found something pleasing to the LORD, the God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam. Moreover, the LORD will raise up for himself a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam today, even now! (14:12-14).

God does not heal Abijah—indeed, he will die as soon as his mother nears home. But, in contrast to the rest of his family, Abijah will receive the blessing of an honorable burial and the added honor of public mourning performed by “all of Israel” (14:13). Abijah deserves this honor.

525 Martin Noth, Könige (vol. 9; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1968), 308.
526 Rehm, Das Erste Buch Der Könige, 1979, 146.
527 Joo, Provocation and Punishment, 37–38.
according to the text, because of some goodness that YHWH perceives in him. Furthermore, Abijah is buried, and the narrative must explain why, given the dynastic curse against his family. The final verse of our passage makes clear one of the primary motivations for the annihilation of Jeroboam’s dynasty. In v. 14, we read that YHWH will raise up the next king over Israel.

The text makes explicit that non-burial is threatened against Jeroboam and his family, excluding Abijah. What exactly does this mean? Translation issues abound in answering this question. The text provides the following modifier in v. 10c: "משתין יעיר, עוצר ועוזב יישราely.

According to this phrase, those punished with consuming death and scavenging animals include “every male, both bond and free” (NRSV; BDB). Literally, the first clause ("משתין יעיר") translates (plainly) to “he who pisses against a wall,” and often is understood as a graphic description of all men. Other translators suggest that this clause refers to children, for whom urination in public is a common occurrence. The 1917 JPS translation rendered the phrase “every man-child, and him that is shut up and him that is left at large in Israel,” evoking this possible, youthful association.

Interpreters offer a variety of translations for the phraseology in the second clause, which reads “עוצר ועוזב”. Translation options include: “every male, both bond and free”; “restrained and set free”; “even the restricted and the abandoned”; “to the very last of Israel”; “under ritual taboo and ritually free”; “helpless and abandoned/destitute/worthless”; “under age and of

In this verse, we detect a concerted effort by the DH to marry an earlier prophecy in which Abijah is promised a natural death with the stereotyped curse of non-burial delivered to his family. Abijah’s honorable death, burial and public mourning are included to avoid any contradiction between prophecy and curse. See Weinfeld, Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School, 24.


Cogan, 1 Kings, 379.

Gray, I & II Kings, 337.

Ibid.

age”; and “married and unmarried.” The numerous possible translation options offered in scholarly treatments and published translations demonstrate the lack of scholarly consensus concerning this word pair. As Talmon and Fields note:

None of the above mentioned renditions of עצור ועזוב fits the context in which the expression occurs. Rather, they seem to be in the nature of a counsel of despair resulting from the two major problems posed by the phrase: (1) the meaning of עזוב cannot be easily squared with עצור, and (2) in the formula, the two terms are grammatically in the passive voice.

The term ’āṣūr (qal masc. sing. passive participle of ’āṣar) includes translation values in the field of restraint, such as “to restrain,” “to hold back,” “to detain,” “to retain strength,” “to rule.” Often, ’āṣar is used to speak about restraint in prison (e.g., 2 Kgs 17:4; Jer 33:1; 39:15). In our passage, the term ’āṣūr is paired with ’āzŭb (masc. sing. passive participle of ’āzab), which in the qal designates notions of departure or freedom, including “to leave,” “to forsake,” “to set free or loose,” “to abandon.”

While the meaning of these two terms, used independently, is clear, the meaning of the terms used together as a merismus has puzzled scholars. Interpreters long have sought to place the word pair’s meaning in different contexts, including meanings originating in military, legal, ritual, kinship arenas, and stemming from “popular” usage. Most translations settle upon “bond and free,” hedging their bets on a legal context. The problem with the legal context,

536 For a lengthy list of possible translations, see Frederic William Farrar, The First Book of Kings (2nd ed.; New York: A. C. Armstrong, 1904), 303.
538 BDB, 783.
539 BDB, 736-37.
540 Used in classical rhetoric, a merismus is “a form of synecdoche in which two (or in early use sometimes more) contrasting or complementary parts are made to represent the whole.” “merismus, n.”. OED Online. September 2012. Oxford Univ. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/245177?redirectedFrom=merismus (accessed November 07, 2012). The word pair’s classification as a merismus has been suggested by Julius Lewy, “Lexicographical Notes,” HUCA 12/13 (1937): 100; Rehm, Das Erste Buch Der Könige, 149.
however, is that it does not clarify the meaning of the phrase in many of its textual occurrences, including Deut 32:36 and 2 Kgs 14:26, in which the phrase seemingly refers to the totality of the population. 542

The question centers upon the context into which we may best place the word pair. What meaning(s) might this phrase have carried so that it would be applicable in this current context, expressing the totality of the punishment of the accursed family? E. Kutsch argues that the word pair carries kinship associations, because complete destruction of a family unit is the intended message. 543 In this socio-literary context, the phrase might point to those under the protection of the father’s house and those free from paternal restraint; alternatively, the merismus may indicate those helpless or destitute. 544 Working still within the context of kinship relations, J. Lewy states that the terms carry the meaning of “(the) yet unborn and (the) born.” He suggests that this meaning implies total destruction of the kinship group. Lewy points to Prov 30:16, in which we read “וְעֹצֶר לְרָחַם.” Here, the masc., singular construct of 'oṣēr is used figuratively, denoting that which is “shut up in the womb.” 545 Interestingly, the context of this usage of the word relates Sheol to a barren womb; the following verse (Prov 30:17) includes a proverbial threat of scavenging animals against disobedient children! 546

M. Cogan observed that this word pair (which he calls “aphoristic images”) occurs again in Deut 32:36; 1 Kgs 16:11; 21:21; 2 Kgs 9:8; 14:26; 547 and ʿāẓēr appears in Jer 36:5. 548 Of particular note—yet neglected by the aforementioned scholars—is the fact that in many of the occurrences of ʿāẓēr עָצוּר, the direct literary context includes reference to non-burial. Given the

542 Gray, I & II Kings, 338.
544 Gray, I & II Kings, 374.
546 “The eye that mocks a father/and scorns to obey a mother/will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley/and eaten by the vultures.”
547 Cogan, I Kings, 379.
548 Gray, I & II Kings, 337.
frequent occurrence of the word-pair in contexts of non-burial, I suggest that it be interpreted with this wider “death context” in mind. Perhaps the merismus indicated those unborn (āṣūr), as indicated by J. Lewy, and those who have been set free already (āzūb). Said differently, a translation of the word-pair “עָצוּר וְעָזוּב” may distinguish between those persons still unborn and those already dead.\(^{549}\) If this translation works, the merismus includes not only all living members of the בת-יָרָבְעָם (“house of Jeroboam”), but also those yet to be born and those already deceased. The word-pair thus specifies an incredibly broad sweep of a kinship group pledged to destruction.

Other instances of the word-pair likewise trouble interpreters. Consider, for example, 2 Kings 14:26: כִּי־רָאָה יְהוָה אֶת Uni יִשְרָאֵּל מֹרֶה מְאֹד וְאֶפֶס עָצוּר וְאֶפֶס עָזוּב וְאֵין עֹזֵר לְיִּשְרָאֵּל ("For the LORD saw that the distress of Israel was very bitter; there was no one left, bond or free, and no one to help Israel" [NRSV]; “For the LORD saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter; for there was none shut up nor left at large, neither was there any helper for Israel” [JPS]). In this verse, we read that YHWH looks upon an abandoned Israel, left full of sin from the reign of Jeroboam. Israel’s abandonment stems from lack of help, specifically עָצוּר וְעָזוּב. If one translates this passage using the proposed representation of those unborn and those already set free (in death), the verse then would read, “YHWH saw the very bitter affliction of Israel; there were none but the unborn (עָצוּר); none but the deceased (עָזוּב); and none to help.” In other words: there was no one at all; lacking all other options, YHWH looks upon his people and intercedes (2 Kgs 14:27).

Interpreting the obscure word-pair in this way takes into account the lexicon options for translation, as well as the literary contexts in which the phrase occurs. In our passage it heightens the punishment levied against Jeroboam and his family. There will be no dynasty, no chance of a

\(^{549}\) E. Würthwein, I Könige 1-16 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 177, hints at an afterlife context for the word-pair.
future, because not only are the living to be exterminated, but the ancestral kin are destroyed as well as the prospect for future kin. As J. Holder notes, “The divine judgment against the house of Jeroboam will be absolutely comprehensive and without any escape for those who have the greatest potential to continue the dynasty, that is, the male progeny.”\textsuperscript{550} The dynastic curses of non-burial appearing in Deuteronomic judgments against Jeroboam, Baasha, and Ahab achieve greater clarity when we consider the new translation options for \(עָצוּר וְעָזוּב\). To destroy the living members of the family indicates an end to the reign of Jeroboam; to destroy any deceased ancestral kin with whom the living find comfort is worse still; even more horrendous is to destroy any chances of future generations. All members of the family—living, deceased, and unborn—face consuming death and desecration from scavengers. YHWH’s punishment issued by Ahijah could not be more inclusive.

The preceding discussion of lexical elements in the curse against Jeroboam and the excursus on \(‘āṣūr ‘wāāzūb\) provide ample justification for counting 1 Kgs 14:10-14 among our compilation of non-burial threats. As stated earlier, however, the literary context of this particular passage is determinative in understanding its full rhetorical impact; and we turn to it now.

The doomed fate of Jeroboam in 1 Kings 14 has proven problematic for biblical interpreters, particularly when it is read in light of Jeroboam’s introduction in I Kings 11—an introduction that—at first glance—appears to be a positive Deuteronomistic assessment of the monarch. In 1 Kgs 11:29-37, the prophet Ahijah meets Jeroboam on the road from Jerusalem. As a prophetic sign act, Ahijah tears a new robe into twelve pieces, signifying the severed tribes

\textsuperscript{550}“The Presuppositions, Accusations, and Threats of 1 Kings 14,” 32.
and territories of Israel. Jeroboam is to take ten lengths of cloth (literally, ten tears; “עֲשָרָה קְרָעִּים”) as a sign of his rule over ten tribes (vv. 30-31). For the sake of the promise to David, YHWH will allow Solomon to retain his portion despite his transgressions (v. 33). Jeroboam will receive an additional tribe upon Solomon’s death. The key to the full interpretation of this passage is the fate of the twelfth tribe, described in vv. 36-37: “Yet to his son I will give one tribe, so that my servant David may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen to put my name. I will take you, and you shall reign over all that your soul desires; you shall be king over Israel.” Despite Jeroboam’s future reign over Israel, Ahijah’s prophecy indicates that he will not serve as the ultimate successor of the Davidic lineage.

The establishment of the eternal Davidic dynasty recorded in 2 Samuel 7 indicates unconditional fulfillment of YHWH’s promise. In contrast, Jeroboam’s election to king over Israel is conditional; and his limited success (and eventual failure) is foreshadowed in vv. 38-39. In Deuteronomic fashion, YHWH will establish a lasting (though not permanent) dynasty through Jeroboam if he obeys the statutes and ordinances outlined in the covenant.

1 Kings 14 effectively ends any promise of longstanding dynastic rule for Jeroboam and his family. Urged by her husband, Jeroboam’s wife approaches Ahijah to ask the prophet for divine aid to heal her ill son (14:1-4). With divine knowledge, Ahijah foils her attempt at trickery and delivers the prophetic oracle of judgment against her husband and their lineage in which his elevation to king is reviewed (14:7-9). The reader then learns that Jeroboam’s disloyalty brands him as the bad king par excellence, even worse than those before him: “but you have done evil above all those who were before you and have gone and made for yourself other gods, and cast

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551 Jeroboam’s rise to power includes similarities to other passages. In fact, six “contexts refer to divestiture of kingship through qr’….all of these contexts unambiguously have yhwh as the subject of qr’.” M. Brettler, “Ideology, History and Theology in 2 Kings Xvii 7-23,” VT 39, no. 3 (1989): 277–278.

images, provoking me to anger, and have thrust me behind your back” (14:9). The reciprocal punishment is the curse of non-burial issued in vv. 10-11.

Understanding this curse against the backdrop of Jeroboam’s failed covenant loyalty, as expressed in its formulation in 1 Kgs 11:38 and in its recession in 1 Kgs 14:7-9, and in relation to the curse’s presence in the Deuteronomic covenant’s curses against covenant desecrators, Ahijah’s message to Jeroboam explains the harshest of punishments. Jeroboam has violated his obligations as demarcated in his selection as king over Israel. Jeroboam has neither turned away from the sins of those before him, nor worshipped YHWH exclusively. Indeed, Jeroboam’s sins are presented as the paradigmatic evil for which the northern kingdom eventually falls. As J. Holder expresses:

Jeroboam’s sin is unprecedented . . . . the king created gods for himself. Jeroboam therefore stands accused of rejecting Yahweh’s legitimate and exclusive rights to worship in Israel. He introduces into his kingdom rivals to Yahweh, which cannot be tolerated.

Jeroboam is the instigator of Northern Kingdom apostasy: he created bull figures in Bethel and Dan; raised shrines; instituted priests and festivals; and worked to establish northern sites as illegitimate imitations of Jerusalem’s cult. As Robert L. Cohn notes, “Hammering out the verb ’āšā (“he made”) nine times (v. 28-33), the narrator depicts Jeroboam’s acts as self-willed and self-serving.” Jeroboam patently fails to uphold his requirements in the conditional covenant with YHWH that endorses his kingship. This presentation of Jeroboam’s failures is vital to the DH’s focus on the pattern of apostasy in the Northern Kingdom. Indeed, in the theological justification for the Northern Kingdom’s exile in 2 Kgs 17:7-23, we read that Israel is “misled” by Jeroboam’s cultic reforms (vv. 21-22). Jeroboam’s entire reign falls under this judgment: whereas in 1 Kgs 11:29-39 Jeroboam is presented as the divinely-sanctioned king, in 2 Kings 17.

553 Cogan, 1 Kings, 380.  
556 Brettler, “Ideology, History and Theology in 2 Kings Xvii 7-23,” 268–70.
the text blames Jeroboam for the fall of Israel not only because of his illicit cultic reforms, but also because the North broke away from the Davidic line through his reign. The dynastic curse of non-burial is levied against Jeroboam because of his culpability in covenant disloyalty and in the consequential downfall of the North to Assyria. As a result, Jeroboam becomes the “archetypical Unheilsherrscher” through whom the narrator explains the series of disasters in the North.

As stated above, the rhetorical impact of Jeroboam’s non-burial stems not only from the affective employment of non-burial terminology, but also from the unit’s literary organization. Specifically, the chiastic arrangement of Jeroboam’s rise and fall account is interrupted at its center point with the tale of the man of God from Judah (1 Kgs 13:1-32). This narrative appears as a story within a story and includes post-mortem punishment against the man of God from Judah. Commentators long have noted questions of theodicy which arise from this example of prophetic conflict, in which the man of God from Judah seemingly is tricked by another prophet and then punished with dishonorable burial. The text seems to play with the role of the man of God from Judah as simultaneously doing the bidding of God and earning requisite punishment. As K. Bodner notes, “The punishment is both severe and ironic—his corpse will not be buried in the ancestral tomb—since he earlier spoke about burial sites and their desecration in

557 Ibid., 279.
his condemnatory utterance at Bethel.\textsuperscript{561} Examination of the placement of the man of God from Judah story in the Jeroboam narrative provides focus on the rhetorical functionality of the irony introduced by punishment in both tales. The two tales exhibit gradations of post-mortem abuse. The trans-generational curse against the Jeroboam dynasty contrasts to the eventual burial of the (unnamed) man of God from Judah.

In 1 Kings 13, readers encounter the repeated, three-fold admonition to the man of God from Judah that he neither eat food, drink water, nor return by another way (vv. 9, 17). Flying in the face of the repeated prohibitions, the “other” prophet deceives the man of God and invites him to eat and drink, claiming divine sanction.\textsuperscript{562} Despite the repeated prohibition against such activity, the man of God from Judah fails his test, and joins the other prophet. While sitting and dining with the lying prophet, the “true” divine word announces impending punishment of the man of God for disobeying his initial instructions. The man of God will be deprived of burial in the ancestral tomb because he failed to keep God’s commandment: לֹא תָבוֹא נִבְלָתְךָ אֶל-קֶבֶר אֲבֹתֶךָ (“your body shall not come to your ancestral tomb”; 1 Kgs 13:22).

In an extended prose narrative following the prophetic announcement of post-mortem punishment (vv. 24-31), readers learn about its actualization. The prophecy seemingly comes true when a lion kills the man of God from Judah and leaves his corpse—untouched—alongside the road. Surely, one would expect the lion to consume the corpse; but the text thrice states otherwise (vv. 24, 24, 28). J. Mead argues that the text includes this detail to contrast the man of God and the lion; the lion does not consume his prey, while the man of God could not resist eating when told not to.\textsuperscript{563} This contrast may well be true. Considering the verses that follow, however, there appear to be other implications to the man of God’s corpse remaining whole. The

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{562} Mead, “Kings and Prophets, Donkeys and Lions,” 198–199.
\textsuperscript{563} Ibid., 204.
\end{footnotesize}
lion’s expected consumption of the corpse would have fulfilled sufficiently the earlier prophecy of exclusion from the ancestral tomb. But the narrator chooses to describe in further detail the final treatment of the corpse of the man of God. When the other prophet finds the corpse, left whole and still flanked by both donkey and lion, he is overcome with empathy. He mourns the death of the man of God as one would mourn kin and buries the corpse in his ancestral tomb: רוקא ניבלו בקברו ויספו עליו 웃 אחים (“He laid the body in his own grave; and they mourned over him, saying, ‘Alas, my brother!’”; 1 Kgs 13:30). Moreover, the prophet requests that upon his own death, he be buried alongside the man of God, forever forging their artificial kin relationship (v. 31). In the conclusion to this tale, the early prophecy is fulfilled when the man of God from Judah is deprived burial among his own ancestors; he suffers lasting post-mortem punishment, with exclusion from his ancestral tomb and the resulting loss of perpetual rest with his deceased kin. However, readers’ possible discomfort with the harsh punishment of the man of God is relieved with the addition of empathy in the tale. In v. 30, our character receives burial, and—through the act of burial—public mourning rites (“and they mourned over him”; ויספו עליו; 3rd p. m. pl.) with the promise of newly formed kin-relations upon the future death of the other prophet, the man of God from Judah’s punishment is tempered.

A question remains: why is this tale of the man of God from Judah inserted in 1 Kings 13, between the election of Jeroboam to king in ch. 11 and the announced curse against his dynasty in ch. 14? I suggest that the placement of this pericope functions to create clear distinctions between the man of God from Judah and Jeroboam. Several key features in the text point to the intended comparison. First, both Jeroboam and the man of God are found (מצז; 11:29; 13:14) on the road (voie; 11:29; 13:24) by a prophet. Both men are highlighted for their roles in speaking against “illicit” worship (12:27ff; 13:2-3). Further, both Jeroboam and the man of God narrowly miss arrest by the king (11:40; 13:4). Finally, both the man of God and
Jeroboam are indicted for disloyalty to the word of God and condemned with post-mortem
punishment (13:22; 14:10-11). As K. Bodner writes, “both Jeroboam and the man of God detour
from their mandates, and are penalized with a violent, premature death.” Nevertheless, there is
more to the story.

Bodner’s rhetorical analysis of the allegorical tale of the man of God makes clear the
overlap in mission between the two characters. Bodner stops short, however, of determining the
full rhetorical impact of the differences between the two burial-related punishments. They are not
identical punishments consisting of “violent, premature death.” Rather, the punishments detail
the level of dishonor afforded each man. The man of God is excluded from burial in his ancestral
tomb—still, he is buried. Looking again to S. Olyan’s hierarchy of burial ideologies, the man of
God’s burial falls in the category of dishonorable treatment, but it is not as dishonorable as the
deprivation of burial proclaimed against Jeroboam. As I detailed in Ch. 3, ideal burial included
timely burial within one’s ancestral tomb accompanied by public mourning rites and enduring
remembrance, actualized in mortuary rites (or, for some, ancestor reverence). Correspondingly,
there were varying forms of the “anti-ideal,” in which certain aspects of the ideal are absent.
Ahijah’s proclaimed punishment against Jeroboam falls clearly at the extreme end of “anti-ideal.”
The treatment he is to receive excludes bodily preparation for burial, protection from scavengers,
burial in any tomb, mourning rites, and subsequently, any enduring cultic activity centered around
his tomb. The man of God endures the harsh punishment of eternal separation from his kin;
Jeroboam will endure the utter annihilation of his dynasty and its future memory.

The current placement of the inserted tale in ch. 13 highlights the extent of Jeroboam’s
disobedience: “By placing the parable of the man of God between the declaration of Jeroboam’s
sin and his punishment, the author implies that Jeroboam returns to his sin despite the example of

564 Bodner, Jeroboam’s Royal Drama, 113.
the fate of the man of God." The failed test of the man of God and his resulting (albeit softened) punishment provide both Jeroboam and readers with examples of disloyalty. The two stories, which form a clear chiastic rise and fall, must be read together to grasp the full rhetorical impact of either tale taken alone. Indeed, when we separate the two tales, as many source critics have done, we see that the narrator/redactor allows more space for the man of God from Judah than for the activities of the actual events of Jeroboam’s reign. The historical record of his political career might not be the text’s central intent; its arrangement underscores the importance of loyalty, and the horrifying results of disloyalty. Complete deprivation of burial for Jeroboam and his kin signals the extreme opposite of a standard DBF. The motif of non-burial indicates that Jeroboam’s disloyalty excludes him and his kin from the ancestral tomb, and from earning an honorable literary record of his death and burial.


The first three examples demonstrate that references to non-burial appear in varying contexts and generic categorizations, including legal curse formulary, taunt, and prophetically announced dynastic curses. I now turn to Numbers 14, in which readers encounter implicit references to non-burial throughout the wilderness narrative, as opposed to the explicit curses, taunts, and judgments seen above. For the purposes of this study, I divide the immediate literary context as follows:

1) 14:1-4    The Grumbling
   a. Rejection of leaders
2) 14:5-9    Moses, Aaron, and Joshua try to nullify the camp
3) 14:11-12  YHWH’s punishment—near total extermination
4) 14:13-22  Moses’ intercession on behalf of Israel
5) 14:23-25  Non-entrance into the Promised Land
6) 14:26-27  Reason for judgment

565 Cohn, “Literary Technique in the Jeroboam Narrative,” 34.
566 Ibid., 32–33.
7) 14:28-35  Pronouncement of Judgment
   a. 14:28-29  “In this wilderness, your corpses will fall”
   b. 14:31-32  Grumblers will become prey
   c. 14:33  “Until your corpses come to an end”

8) 14:34-35  Reason and Result

In Num 14:1-4, the beleaguered Israelites, tired and hungry from their journey from Egypt, cry out against Moses and Aaron. Their complaints include rhetorical questions, wondering if remaining in Egypt would have been better than continuing their harsh journey. In v. 2, they cry out: “Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness!”

The following verse continues their grievance and questions God’s motivation: “Why is the LORD bringing us into this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become booty (“prey,” lbz); would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?”

Finally, the Israelites agree to set for themselves a leader in order to return to Egypt (v. 4).

Placed within the larger context of the Exodus narrative, the Israelites’ grumbling in the wilderness draws the reader’s attention back to the situation in which they left Egypt—the morning following the first Passover when YHWH’s powers killed the Egyptians’ first born. The text specifically notes that the Israelites fled Egypt while the Egyptians were burying their dead! Despite YHWH’s salvific posture towards the Israelites in the celebration of the first Passover, the grumblers in the wilderness question if the burdens of journeying to the Promised Land are simply too difficult to endure, even when compared with oppression and death in Egypt. Moreover, the Israelites not only question God’s sound logic and justice (v. 3), but also their divinely appointed leaders (v. 4).

567 See Num 33:3-4.
In response to their complaints, Moses and Aaron attempt to reassure the Israelites of YHWH’s plan (vv. 5-9); once again, however, they are rejected (v. 10). YHWH elects to exterminate the Israelites in the wilderness, save Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb, from whom a larger and greater nation will arise (vv. 11-12). In the following seven verses, Moses intercedes with God on behalf of his charges. Wielding rhetorical speech, Moses in effect causes YHWH to change course in action. Rather than destroy the entire nation in the wilderness, YHWH will not permit the Sinai generation to enter the Promised Land (v. 23). Instead, only Caleb, Joshua, and the children of the complaining generation will be allowed to enter the land.

Moses and Aaron then issue the divine pronouncement against the generation of those who “gathered against” YHWH in the wilderness (vv. 28-35). In this short pericope, YHWH thrice accurses all those over the age of twenty, using terminology often associated with non-burial (vv. 29, 32, 33).

The first articulation of divine punishment appears in v. 29: “In this wilderness, your corpses will fall” (בַּמִּדְבָּר הָזֶה יִפְלוּ פִּגְרֵיכֶם). Recalling the Israelites initial complaint in v. 2, YHWH proclaims that that they will indeed die in “this wilderness.” In order to highlight the precise location of the impending punishment and to tie the punishment to the initial complaint, the prepositional phrase is placed at the beginning of the sentence, rather than following the normal order in which predication appears first. Moreover, the judgment specifically denotes the objects of punishment as “your corpses” (pgr). The ancient Israelite author chose strong language and emphasized word order to evoke the physicality of the threat. As Robert Alter notes, “It would have been sufficient, idiomatically and semantically, to say, ‘And you will fall in this wilderness.’ God’s language, by making the corpses the grammatical subject, invites the Wilderness
generation to contemplate the concrete reality of their own death, “you” turned into “corpses.” The use of “corpses” (pgr) rather than the personal pronoun carries with it connotations from other contexts in which this term is used. As we saw above in Chap. 4, pgr is a common stereotypical term employed in many references to non-burial (Num 14; Isa 14:19; Nah. 3:3). The image of falling corpses in a barren wilderness certainly connotes a scene in which honorable burial is least likely to occur.

The second articulation of punishment appears in vv. 31-32. Once again, the people’s complaint is turned on its head. In 14:3, they bemoaned their current experience and worried that their children would become prey (lbz). Here, YHWH assures Israel that their children will not become prey: “But your little ones, who you said would become booty (“prey”, lbz), I will bring in, and they shall know the land that you have despised” (v. 31). The reassurance is short-lived, as YHWH continues the proclamation of divine punishment in v. 32, explaining that the complainers themselves will become prey: “But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness” (וּפִּגְרְיכֶם אַתֶּם יִּפְלוּ בַמִּדְבָּר הַזֶּה). Accented by the disjunctive waw, and highlighted by use of the independent pronoun (אַתֶּם), the author clearly distinguishes between the perceived destiny of the younger generation with the physical reality of the older generation. In other words, not theirs, but your very own corpses shall not only fall in the wilderness, but also be abandoned to scavengers of the wilderness. As in v. 29, this second articulation of punishment repeats the complainers’ reference to “this wilderness” (תֵּלָה נְפַקְרֵיכֶם). The third and final articulation of YHWH’s punishment against the complainers occurs in v. 33 (וּבְנֵיכֶם יִּהְיוּ רֹעִּים בַמִּדְבָּר ארָבָעִּים שָׁנָה וְנָשָׁאוּ אֶת-זְנוּתֵיכֶם עַד תֹּם פִּגְרְיכֶם בַּמִּדְבָּר). Translations of this verse attempt to illustrate the nuanced use of loaded terminology in the divine judgment. In NRSV, we read, “And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness for forty years, and shall

suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness.” JPS translates the same verse as, “And your children shall be wanderers in the wilderness forty years, and shall bear your strivings, until your carcasses be consumed in the wilderness.” In NIV we read: “Your children will be shepherds here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness, until the last of your bodies lies in the wilderness.” These translations show the perceived difficulty in rendering the Hebrew term used for disloyalty (זְנוּתֵיכֶם) and the explicit reference to “your corpses” (פִּגְרֵיכֶם). Each translation tries to impart the visual impact of the author’s choice of פִּגְרֵיכֶם. Moreover, each translation wrestles with the meaning of corpses “coming to their end” (תֹּם) in the wilderness. The punishment’s duration is not indicated by breadth of remorse or reflection, by distance of journey or length of days; in v. 33, the determining factor of YHWH’s punishment is the final consummation of corpses.

The following verses conclude YHWH’s proclamation of punishment, clarify the reasons and results for the harshest of punishments, and offer another explanation to the forty-year time period:

According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for every day a year, you shall bear your iniquity, forty years, and you shall know my displeasure. I the LORD have spoken; surely I will do thus to all this wicked congregation gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall come to a full end, and there they shall die (vv. 34-35).

While the active agent of the final act of corpse exposure is left unstated, the narrative explicitly intends this punishment as YHWH’s plan for those who betray their divine deliverance from Egypt. By delaying entry into the promised land, YHWH guarantees death in the harsh wilderness. “Falling corpses”—without reference to burial, as we shall see in other passages in the book of Numbers—generates a gruesome picture of exposed bodies lying upon the desert floor. Surely, for ancient Israelites whose familial responsibilities included protection and

569 Below, I will discuss in greater detail the impact of this terminology in Numbers 14
preparation of corpses for burial, the picture created by the author’s chosen lexicon serves as a dire scenario. The concluding words of YHWH’s punishment suggest that the intended result of the complainers’ deaths, witnessed by their children, is knowledge of YHWH’s displeasure. Furthermore, by preserving this memory in writing, the shame resulting from YHWH’s punishment continues in perpetuity.

We turn to key terminology to understand better the reason for the harshest of punishments and the nature of the covenant disloyalty in this passage. In Num 14:33, the unfaithful Israelites are to be punished for “זְנוּתֵיכֶם.” Translation options for this phrase include “your (m.pl.) faithlessness,” “unfaithfulness,” “disloyalty,” “straying,” and “whoring.” Both זנה (to commit fornication) and זְנוּתֵיכֶם evoke images of sexual impropriety to refer to religious infidelity. Examples of metaphorical use of sexual imagery denoting covenant infidelity abound. Ancient readers of the book of Numbers would understand the charge of זְנוּתֵיכֶם against the Wilderness generation as an indictment of covenant infidelity requiring punishment according to covenantal stipulations. The author of this passage uses imagery from two distinct arenas of human existence (sexuality and death) to underscore the depth of disloyalty shown by the wilderness generation. In this case, the punishment for unfaithfulness is three-fold: 1) the corpses of the unfaithful will fall in the wilderness; 2) the divine denial of entry into the promised land for the guilty generation; and 3) the delayed entry into the promised land for the children of the guilty generation.

The question remains, how and why must the younger generation “bear” their parents’ repeated rebellions? The answer lies in the repeated reference to fallen corpses. YHWH will

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570 R. Alter translates this term literally, “whoring,” in order to make clear the graphic imagery used by the biblical author (The Five Books of Moses, 753, cf. 218, 509–510, 617, 631, 636, 760, 817.).
force the younger generation to witness the dishonorable non-burial of their forbearers before they gain access to the land in which covenant fidelity is mandated. The harshest of punishments in the most unforgiving of environments ought to act as a deterrent against future rebelliousness. The generation saved from YHWH’s death-dealing punishment in the desert is denied the benefits of residing with their kin, in life or in death. As such, this generation—along with those who will be born in the land of Judah for generations to come—will gain neither the ritual, theological/spiritual, psychological, nor economic (inheritance) benefits linked with proper kinship burial and mourning rituals in ancient Israelite society.572

In addition to functioning as a warning against future disloyalty, the waiting period is part of the punishment itself. The younger generation will make recompense for the sins of their ancestors through their delayed realization of YHWH’s covenant promise of land.573 References of non-burial often serve a retributive function within their literary contexts. Rarely is this function stated as directly or explicitly as the law of talion, it is “reflected only in indirect links between the deed and the reward or punishment meted out to its doer.”574 In Numbers 14, YHWH’s punishment of non-burial directly corresponds to complaints referencing death in Egypt.

As we have seen throughout this project, ancient Israelites expected death and understood death and its unpleasant realities. Protection and preparation of the body for burial were part and parcel of familial life. Burial of young and old was necessary in order to prevent disease, insure societal expectations, and align with cultic proscriptions against corpse impurity.575 The book of

572 Adriane Leveen, Memory and Tradition in the Book of Numbers (New York: Cambridge Univ., 2008), 159.
575 See, e.g., 2 Sam 21:10: “Then Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it on a rock for herself, from the beginning of harvest until rain fell on them from the heavens; she did not allow the birds of the air to come on the bodies by day, or the wild animals by night.”
Numbers makes clear that death in the wilderness was a reality, and bodies required proper disposal. The violent death of Israelites in the wilderness is, arguably, a central theme of Numbers 11—26. The author(s) employs a striking variety of descriptions of death, including plague, God’s consuming fire, being cut off, swallowed up by the earth, and poisoned by the venom of snakes, to name a few. But how are the dead treated in the wilderness? Is the proclamation of YHWH’s punishment in Num 14:29, 32, 33 indicative of non-burial, or is this the book of Numbers offerings a standard death and burial notice? Do the children of the rebellious Israelites heed the punishment pronounced by YHWH in 14:28-35? We must examine these questions below.

Leveen’s detailed compilation of death reports in the book of Numbers provides an opportunity for interesting analysis. Of the thirteen death reports in the book of Numbers, seven are narrated with no report of burial (Num 11:15; 14:36-38; 14:45; 15:35-36; 17:11-15; 21:6; 25:6-15); one report describes the “deaths” of Dathan and Abiram, who are buried alive (Num 16:27-33); one includes reference to burned bodies, but with no explicit burial (Num 16:35, cf. 17:1); one references the mass burial of the “craving” generation (Num 11:33-34). The three remaining death reports include the passages detailing Miriam and Aaron’s deaths (Num 20:1; 22-29), and the extended narrative concerning Moses’ death, whose burial is esteemed above all others since it is performed by none other than YHWH (Deut 34:1-8).

Looking specifically at Numbers 14—25, we find numerous accounts of the deaths of Israelites; none, however, refer to honorable burial. As Adriane B. Leveen notes, “While Numbers narrates the variety of ways in which the people die, it only records the burial of members of the generation once, with extreme brevity (cf. Num. 11:34).”

576 Leveen, “Falling in the Wilderness,” 249.
577 Ibid., 265.
578 Ibid., 246.
of burial of the punished generation occurs before YHWH’s punishment is determined in ch. 14. Turning to this telling verse, the biblical author reports, “So that place was called Kibroth-hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had the craving.” Rather than providing information about funerary rituals in a standard DBF, this verse provides etiological information for a place name.

Apart from Numbers 11:34, throughout the book Numbers, the older grumbling generation is laid to rest without specificity; indeed, the text buries the generation in a literary mass grave of sorts. There is no specificity of location, mourning ritual, identification of familial burial tradition and unification. The obliteration of memory is a central feature in the deprivation of burial motif and is an important result of YHWH’s punishment in the book of Numbers: “Unlike [Moses, Aaron, and Miriam], or for that matter, the rebels who are named at the moment of death [Dathan and Abiram], ordinary Israelites go unnamed when they die. In reports devoid of individuality, not even their tribal names are mentioned . . . . [They are] condemned to oblivion.” The older generation is left in the abyss of the wilderness, obliterating any chance of a future collective memory.

The act of abandoning the dead in the wilderness affects not only the dead and their living kin, but also the landscape itself. As Leveen notes, “the omission of particular, discrete sites of burial has the effect of turning the wilderness in its entirety into a vast and terrible burying ground. Numbers 19:16 captures that image in its depiction of a landscape littered with corpses . . . .Wilderness has become wasteland.” This passage, referencing falling corpses without explicit burial, certainly creates an environment of impurity. Indeed, the Priestly authors

579 Ibid., 258.
580 Leveen, Memory and Tradition, 162–163.
of the book of Numbers create a wilderness full of impurity, thereby establishing the landscape as wholly uninhabitable for future generations.\footnote{The irony, of course, is that the deathscape of the wilderness is also the context in which the Tabernacle is built. The camp also becomes an extension of the Tabernacle, allowing for an expansion and portability of “sacred space.” See Baruch M. Bokser, “Approaching Sacred Space,” \textit{HTR} 78, no. 3-4 (1985): 279–99; Sara Japhet, “The Prohibition of the Habitation of Women: The Temple Scroll’s Attitude toward Sexual Impurity and Its Biblical Precedents,” \textit{JANES} 22 (1993): 69–87.}

The depiction of the wilderness as the desolate, polluted deathscape for those who dare rebel against YHWH does not mean that no burials occur within its confines. While Numbers 11 concludes with the notice of a collective burial, the text also includes records of the burials of Miriam and Aaron (Num 20:1, 22-29).\footnote{Leveen, “Falling in the Wilderness,” 259.} Burial—and its deprivation—are not merely consequences of the landscape; they indicate the deceaseds’ role in the Israelites’ rebellion and YHWH’s plan to move Israel forward.

Those Israelites who are faithful to the covenantal agreement forged between YHWH and Israel gain the honor of burial, even if it is tainted by burial outside of the inherited ancestral land. Those Israelites who fall under the indictment of rebellion bear the punishment of non-burial. The projected, two-fold result of YHWH’s punishment against the guilty is made clear in Numbers 14. Moses’ artful negotiation with YHWH in vv. 13-19 produces a softening of the impending punishment. While the Israelites will not experience complete annihilation, the divine punishment still will carry theological import: YHWH maintains that “the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD” (Num 14:21). Those who refused to acknowledge and obey YHWH’s glory demonstrated in the escape from Egypt and in the wilderness remain accursed to die without proper burial. The children of the accursed will gain important experience during the forty year delay; they will know his “displeasure” (14:34). If divine abandonment of an entire generation is not enough to deter future disloyalty, what is? The author of Numbers employs stereotypical terminology of non-burial to allude to the dishonorable demise that accompanies the deathscape of the wilderness.


\footnote{Leveen, “Falling in the Wilderness,” 259.}
disloyalty. The two-fold knowledge of YHWH’s glory and YHWH’s displeasure appears as the intended result of divine punishment.

In this passage, readers do not encounter an explicit curse of non-burial. Allusions to non-burial demonstrate that authors had the literary freedom to include the non-burial motif without using curse formula to justify the harsh punishment upon the Wilderness generation. Just as covenant violators are accursed with non-burial in Deut 28:26, so too do the grumblers suffer the drastic consequences of covenant disloyalty.

5. Babylon and Babylon’s King: Isaiah 14:18-20

Turning to the latter prophets, I will now examine a threat of non-burial addressed to a non-Israelite—here, the king of Babylon. The literature of First Isaiah (Isaiah 1—39) makes frequent use of death imagery throughout its varied literary contexts, including warnings for Israelites to change course or face God’s punishment, prophetic depictions of Israel’s future, and oracles against foreign nations (OAFN). Isaiah 14 includes a judgment of non-burial against the king of Babylon, in addition to vivid depictions of Sheol and its inhabitants and the call for the death of the oppressor.

The broader literary context of Isaiah 14 helps clarify the specific pericope in question. Therefore, I shall explore first the death imagery in Isa 14:1-23 as the context in which non-burial appears in vv. 18-20. Isaiah 14 appears within the Book’s OAFN in chs. 13—23, a section introduced by the formulaic maššā’ (“oracle concerning”). For the purposes of the current study, I divide ch. 14 as follows:

1) 14:1-4a Oracle of deliverance for Israel

583 In Isaiah’s OAFN, this formulaic introduction also occurs at 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 21:1; 21:11; 21:13; 22:1; 23:1.
584 For additional information on the structure of Isaiah 14, see R Mark Shipp, Of Dead Kings and Dirges: Myth and Meaning in Isaiah 14:4b-21 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 134–140.
2) 14:4b-20  
Taunt song (Spotted) against the king of Babylon

a. 14:4b-8  Earth and its people rejoice over coming destruction
b. 14:9-17  Sheol prepares for Babylon’s entrance
c. 14:18-20 judgment of non-burial against Babylon
   i. 14:18  All the kings of the nations lie in glory, each in his own tomb;
   ii. 14:19  but you are cast out, away from your grave, like loathsome carrion, clothed with the dead, those pierced by the sword, who go down to the stones of the Pit, like a corpse trampled underfoot.
   iii. 14:20  You will not be joined with them in burial, because you have destroyed your land, you have killed your people.  
May the descendants of evildoers nevermore be named!

4) 4:21-23  
trans-generational judgment oracle against Babylon

Isaiah 14:1-4a, an oracle of judgment, connects 13:2-22 and 14:4bff. After due punishment outlined in the previous chapters, we read, “the LORD will take pity on Jacob, and will again choose Israel, and he will give them rest upon their land” (14:1). In this brief statement, Isaiah summarizes many of the significant themes of Isa 40—55, including Israel’s divine election, reversal of judgment, re-possession of land, and deliverance from oppressors.

Despite scholarly consensus that the sub-unit Isa 14:1-4a is of independent, exilic origin and later than the material that follows, literary evidence suggests its purposeful and artful placement as a transition between two oracles against Babylon. In v. 3 Israel is promised rest and deliverance from its labors, hard work, and toils: “When the LORD has given you rest from your pain (or “disturbance”) and turmoil and the hard service with which you were made to serve” (יהוה בְּיוֹם הָנִּיחַ יְהוָה לְךָ מֵּעָצְבְךָ וּמִּרָגְזֶךָ וּמִּן-הָעֲבֹדָה אֲשֶׁר עֻבַּד-בָּךְ). From a literary perspective, lexical elements tie together the subunit with later verses. The presence of רָגֵז (pain/disturbance) ties the oracle of deliverance of Israel with the oracle of destruction of Babylon with forms of רָגֵז in vv. 9 and 16. As Hays notes, רָגֵז most often is used as a technical term referring to negative treatment of, or disturbance of, the dead.\footnote{Hays, Death in the Iron Age II, 208. See, e.g., 1 Sam 28:15 and the funerary inscription of Tabnit of Sidon (KAI 1.9A:5, 1.13:4, 6, 7).} As we shall see below, disturbance of the
dead is a fundamental facet of Isaiah’s oracle against the haughty Babylonian king. The use of יד helps to heighten the contrast between future deliverance and rest for the Israelites and eternal unrest for Babylon. The repetition of terms suggests—if not a unified passage—then the work of a “sensitive redactor.”

Immediately following Isa 14:1-4a, YHWH instructs Isaiah to deliver a מָשָׁל against the Babylonian king. The generic category, מָשָׁל, has widespread meanings, often denoting a proverb, allegory, parable, or ethnic genre, among other forms in which metaphorical imagery plays a fundamental role. Interestingly, מָשָׁל appears in Deut 28:37 following the curses against those not adhering to the covenant stipulations. These curses will be imposed upon the covenant violator in order that they “become an object of horror, a מָשָׁל, and a byword among all the peoples where the LORD will lead you.” Brevard Childs presents the מָשָׁל material in Isa 14:4b-23 as a Spottlied (taunt song), following the form-critical conclusions of H. Jahnow. As we will see below, Isaiah taunts the foreign king by repeatedly reversing social expectations for the king’s future. In this context, Isaiah’s מָשָׁל is a lengthy taunt against an enemy. Gale Yee has demonstrated that the Spottlied in Isaiah 14 is an example of parody, in which the author imitates the style of a known literary form—the funeral dirge. The author of Isaiah 14 manipulated the traditional literary expectations of form and content and replaced the expected content with unexpected material. In terms of genre, the author uses the traditional prophetic form of a dirge with large sections written in the qînâ meter and including the stereotypical use of

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587 Shipp, Of Dead Kings and Dirges, 34–43.
589 Hays, Death in the Iron Age II, 207; Shipp, Of Dead Kings and Dirges, 40ff.
Rather than include the expected grief-ridden lament of a typical dirge, Isaiah parodies the dirge model in order to taunt the king of Babylon.

The taunt consists of mocking laments in different scenes as outlined above. First, the earth and its people rejoice over the coming destruction of Babylon (vv. 4b-8), including exultation by the cypresses and cedars, so often depicted as the military glory of Babylon (v. 8; cf. Isa 37:24).

In the first strophe of Isaiah’s mock lament, the king of Babylon experiences defeat through reversal of his actions toward Israel.

The second scene continues the pattern of reversal. The rephaim in Sheol prepare to meet the king of Babylon (v. 9a), indicating that Babylon’s period of strong leadership is coming to a concrete end. The Babylonian king, who boasted of his ascent into the heavens and prideful posturing as loftier than YHWH will be brought low—out of the heavenly realm, below even the earthly realm, into Sheol itself (vv. 11-14). As noted in chs. 2 and 3, many scholars agree that rephaim are the inhabitants of Sheol, and are identified with the Ugaritic rapi’ūma. In Ugaritic literature, the rapi’ūma were glorified members of the deceased royalty; in the Hebrew Bible, the rephaim often are depicted as existing in a weakened state. Isaiah’s depiction of the Babylonian king on a path to join the rephaim indicates a weakening of power. Universal ridicule will accompany the erasure of Babylon’s pride and rule (vv. 16-17). Nations will ask how such a

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592 Neo-Assyrian documents also catalog the notion of its monarch as military victor who fells trees: “I went up to the mountains of Amanus and cut down logs of cedar and juniper. My royal image I set up before the Amanus”; see Peter Machinist, “Assyria and Its Image in the First Isaiah,” JAOS 103, no. 4 (1983): 723.
reversal of power could occur, reducing the most powerful king to nothingness. Like the preceding section readers here witness a reversal of fortune for the king of Babylon, who will be covered with worms and maggots in the tomb (v. 11)—a striking contrast to his former glorious position on the throne, which he sought to place in the heavens (v. 13).

In vv. 4-17, Isaiah provides abundant description of, and justification for, Babylon’s punishment of non-burial in vv. 18-20. Terms of degradation abound in vv. 11-15: the king’s “pride is brought down to Sheol” (ךָהוּרַד שְׁאוֹל גְאוֹנֶ) he has fallen from the heavens (אֵּיכָו נָפַלְתָּ מִּשָּמַיִמֶ) and been cut down to the ground (נִגְדַעְתָּ לָאָרֶץ). All of these images suggest the act of lowering the king of Babylon from his posturing of divine accession (indeed, he is mocked as the “Day Star, son of morning” [הֵּילֵּל בֶּן-שָׁחַר] in an allusion to astral worship). Babylon was the rising star of political and military might, but the Babylonian Empire’s perceived haughty stance demanded that Babylon’s power be taken down. Accordingly, its king will be “brought down to Sheol” (אַךְ אֶל-שְׁאוֹל תוּרָד); moreover, the king will be confined to the lowest portion of Sheol, “to the depths of the Pit” (אֶל-יַרְכֵּט-בוֹר). Babylon—represented by its king—neither acknowledged divine rule nor fulfilled its obligations. In other words, the Babylonian king, despite vast territory acquisitions and military victories, failed to meet the minimum requirements of earthly rule as conceived by the Israelites.

In the first two sections of our passage, Isaiah has assured Israel of coming justice (vv.1-3) and provided the background to Babylon’s fall (vv. 4-17), which becomes explicit in vv. 18-20. In the third scene of mocking lament, the poetry filled with death-imagery shifts its focus from burial in Sheol to strewn corpses. First, Isaiah reiterates the socially expected honor of royal burial, in which kings receive “glory” in burial within the ancestral tomb (v. 18): “All the kings of the nations lie in glory, each in his own [tomb];” כָל-מַלְכֵּי גּוֹיִּם כֻּלָם שָׁכְבוּ בְכָבוֹד אִּישׁ בְבֵּיתו. There

seems to be a double-entendre in the lexical choices in v. 18. Rather than use the expected term *qbr* ("tomb"), the author uses the construct of *byt* (בֵּית) "house," which also can be translated as "dynasty," or as here, "tomb." The double meaning of *byt* becomes clear when we look to the following verse (14:19), in which *qbr* "tomb" is placed in parallelism with *byt* in 14:18.596

The honorific burials of the kings of the nations is contrasted with the dishonor due the king of Babylon, who will suffer many types of post-mortem abuse (v. 19): “but you are cast out, away from your grave, like loathsome carrion, clothed with the dead, those pierced by the sword, who go down to the stones of the Pit, like a corpse trampled underfoot;”

Highlighted by the disjunctive *waw* and emphatic personal pronoun, v. 19 contrasts the peaceful, honorable burial of the other kings of the nations with Babylon’s fate. Despite Sheol’s preparation to receive the king of Babylon in the preceding section, the mighty ruler will not obtain a final, honorable rest. Rather, we read that he will be disinterred (אַתָה הָשְׁלַכְתָ מִּקִּבְרְךָ), an act described using the stereotypical *hiphil* form of *šlk* used in many texts of non-burial and disinterment.

Past scholarship has understood this verse as an indication that the king of Babylon was not buried, and translations adopt this interpretation. H. Brichto’s translation reads, “But you are exposed without a sepulcher.”597 O. Kaiser similarly translates the phrase: “Aber du bist grablos hingeworfen.”598 M. Shipp suggests distance from a grave: “The tyrant is cast out, far from a grave.”599 Similarly, B. Childs’ translation reads, “But you are cast out of your tomb;” however,

596 Suriano, *The Politics of Dead Kings*, 161n.47. Alternatively, Na’aman, “Death Formulae and the Burial Place of the Kings of the House of David,” 249.), argues that the synonymous usage of *byt* and *qbr* confirms the archaeological evidence of intramural (and subterranean) burials within royal palace complexes.
in his exposition Childs states that the king “receives no burial, but like a loathsome corpse is abandoned and desecrated.” In response to such interpretations, S. Olyan has argued that רלך ("to cast out") with the particle מ ("from") entails a violent act of exhumation, rather than simple non-burial. Indeed, the progression from a description of the king in the Pit covered with worms to the king being “cast from” the grave suggests disinterment. From the perspective of rhetorical impact, the act of exhumation suits the pattern of Isaiah 14, in which the poet continually uses reversals to mock Babylon’s future. The king is not up but down, not admired but mocked, not buried but exhumed.

The remainder of v. 19 is chock-full of graphic images and terminology associated with death, burial, and non-burial: Babylon will be cast like “loathsome carrion” (כְנֵּצֶר נִתְעָב); his corpse will be like the dead, wrapped in burial garments (לְבֻּשׁ הֲרֻּגִּים), specifically those who are killed by the sword (מְטֹעֲנֵּי חָרֶב). Moreover, Babylon is like “those who descend to the stones of the pit” (יוֹרְדֵּי אֶל-אַבְנֵּי-בוֹר), except that he will not even receive the relative protection of a pit, for he will be like a “trampled corpse” (כְפֶגֶר מוּבָס). In every way, then, Babylon’s death is contrasted to that afforded other nations, who “lie in glory, each in their own “house”[tomb]” (v. 18). The poet of Isaiah 14 uses numerous descriptors to explicate what Babylon’s non-burial entails. The verbal elements in v. 18 are bolstered by five graphic elements linked to the larger motif of non-burial. Verse 19 does not use the stereotypical phrase of scavenging animals seen in other examples; rather, the poet describes the exhumed corpse as “loathsome carrion,” indicating that scavenging is possible. Violence and abandonment are both described through literary allusions, rather than directly. The corpse will be wrapped in burial garments as one who has been killed by a sword and prepared for burial in a pit, but it will be trampled. The artful description of non-burial

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600 Childs, Isaiah, 120, 126.
601 Saul Olyan, “Was the King of Babylon Buried Before His Corpse Was Exposed? Some Thoughts on Isa 14,19,” ZAW 118, no. 3 (2006): 423–424. Olyan argues that where the hiphil/hophal of רלך appear with מ, the meaning is “unambiguous” in describing a casting from one location to another (ibid., 425).
suggests knowledge of a common literary motif of non-burial rather than direct borrowing from a particular treaty context.

Verse 20 succinctly and explicitly provides both the reasons for and intended result of the deprivation of enduring burial afforded the international ruler: “You will not be joined with them in burial, because you have destroyed your land, you have killed your people. May the descendants of evildoers nevermore be named!” (לֹא תֵּחַד אִּתָם בִּקְבוּרָה כִּי אַרְצְךָ שִׁחַת עַמְךָ הָרָגְתָ לֹא יִּקָרֵּא לְעוֹלָם זֶרַע מְרֵעִּים). The first half of the verse explains the reason for punishment: Babylon will not join “them” (presumably all the kings of the nations cited in v. 18) in burial, because he destroyed his land and killed his own people (v. 20a). The second half of the verse (v. 20b) provides the intended result of punishment: because Babylon’s ruler failed to meet the basic requirements of leadership, the descendants of the evildoers will be erased from future memory; they will never again be named. The memory of Babylon and its ruler will be obliterated when it is denied the honor of burial that otherwise would establish lasting memory during the afterlife.

The trans-generational judgment of non-burial is intended not only for the king of Babylon, but also for all offspring who might follow. Tangible evidence of afterlife in the aWA worldview was the enduring memory of the deceased, often recalled by future generations during specific memorial ceremonies and funerary rites. Non-burial precludes future recollection, because the dead have no physical burial location nor a place of rest in Sheol. Offspring can neither commemorate the dead, offer sustenance to the dead, nor expect any collateral goodwill from Sheol. Therefore, to lose one’s identity after death consists of what Schmidt calls “death

\[602\] In this verse, there are clear similarities to aWA non-burial references. Note, e.g., that the denial of memory extends to future “seed.”
after death.” Through non-burial, Babylon will endure the “second death,” in which no future memory or identity will endure.

The trans-generational dimension of Babylon’s judgment continues in the final section of Isaiah’s oracle (Isa 14:21-23), which details the prophesied violent executions of the royal sons. In vv. 22-23, we read:

I will rise up against them, says the LORD of hosts, and will cut off from Babylon name and remnant, offspring and posterity, says the LORD. And I will make it a possession of the hedgehog, and pools of water, and I will sweep it with the broom of destruction, says the LORD of hosts.

Here, YHWH is the active agent against a broadly defined victim. Indeed, Isa 14:22-23 uses the first person singular to describe YHWH as the active agent of the impending violent punishment. Moreover, in these two verses the formula נאום יהוה (“says the Lord”) thrice interrupts the description of judgment. The victim is described using parallel construction of the lexical pairs שם ושאר (“name and remnant”) and ונין ונכד (“son and offspring”). These word pairs echo a similar lexical pair in a tomb inscription from Sidon: “May they not have a resting-place with the shades, and may they not be buried in a grave, and may they not have a son and seed in their place!” Identity (“name”) of the deceased and future progeny are connected in both contexts, a fact I explore in greater detail in Ch. 6.

In Isa 14:22, current and future Babylonian leaders will be “cut off,” denoted with the characteristic language of violent (often divinely ordained) death by the hiphil of כת. All dynastic succession in Babylon will cease. Babylon will be “a place for the owl, and a pool of
waters”. C. Hays clarifies the imagery used here. In Ugaritic literature hmry (cesspool/muddy pit) is used to describe the underworld; similarly, owls are associated with wastelands in mythic literature.\(^605\) Isaiah uses this graphic terminology further to describe the death-scape in this chapter.

In the extended oracle against Babylon, notions of death, the netherworld, and lost identity run throughout Isaiah 14. Recall that in section 1 (Isa14:1-4a), Israel will be granted rest. Placed in the broader context of unrest depicted in the oracle against Babylon in Isaiah 14, Israel’s future rest can be understood as a restful afterlife.\(^606\) In section 2 (Isa 14:4b-17), Sheol and the rephaim will prepare a place for Babylon, which has made itself loftier than any other nation or king. Next, section 3 (Isa14:18-20) envisions the disinterment of Babylon’s king for his utter failure as a monarch, described as mistreatment of the land and people, and improper understanding of his role of human—not divine—ruler. Finally, section 4 (14:21-23) concludes the pericope with YHWH’s first person speech about the final violent death of Babylon and its future generations, reducing the once great land to wasteland.\(^607\)

As stated above, Isaiah 14 takes the form of a lament, but shifts the tenor of the literature from sorrow to ironic mocking. The oracle against the king of Babylon is described as a māšāl, signaling a form that typically includes figurative uses of language. Of course, modern and ancient readers alike know that an entire empire and its progeny cannot actually be flung into Sheol and then disinterred. The ironic, mocking tone of the lament and its corresponding, extended metaphor of death and corpse abuse are central to interpretation of the passage. To depict a nation’s ruler as receiving the most dishonorable of treatment is to make claims about the power of the nation and the dissolution of its reputation. As discussed in chs. 2 and 3, Israelite

\(^606\) Hays, Death in the Iron Age II, 208.
\(^607\) Ibid., 221.
and aWA social constructs envisioned burial as a stage in a person’s life—even as the culmination of the earthly life. The level of honor afforded an individual at death indicated the virtue (or lack thereof) of that person as viewed by his community and by patron deities. The disinterment, exposure, and scavenging of the king’s corpse in Isaiah 14, placed within the socio-literary context of a divinely imparted prophetic oracle, serves as judgment against the character and actions of the king and the nation he represents. I suggest that the author of this message employed the extended metaphorical imagery of death and non-burial in order to present the hubris of the foreign king.

Delving into issues of the historical identity of the king of Babylon portrayed in Isaiah 14 lies beyond the scope and purpose of the current study. Scholars have suggested Philistine, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, and generic/anonymouse identities, pointing to tenses used in different verses to indicate the historical position of the author(s) of the passage.  The language used in this pericope is metaphorical, so it is no surprise that biblical scholars attach numerous historical identities to the poetically presented monarch. Many of these debates hinge on the redactional history of Isaiah 14, as well as numerous efforts to hypothesize diverse origins of each of its four sections. The process of determining origins of biblical literature is undoubtedly an important one, but it need not be the only approach to pericopae resplendent in imagery. As I have demonstrated, the literary themes and rhetorical message of Isaiah 14 hold together when read as a whole, suggesting that the author/redactor of the material understood the implications of the death imagery running throughout. For an Israelite who experienced the political, military,

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610 Note, however, that when one reads Isaiah 14 as a whole (the hopeful restoration of Jacob and the house of Israel, the violent military death of a king, and the future deaths of his sons, one thinks of Sargon II, “the first and only Assyrian king in the Assyrian Empire to fall on the battlefield and not receive fitting burial”
social, and financial oppression of many foreign leaders, a punishment of destruction and eternal un-rest would be an expected, anticipated divine punishment, actualized by the hands of foreign forces.

The reasons and results provided in this example of non-burial point to its role in the reputation and identity of the recipient of non-burial. The purpose of Isaiah’s taunting māšāl was to mock Babylon’s pride-filled political and military posturing and damage any reputable claims of power once held by the nation and its ruler(s). Likewise, the purpose of the judgment of non-burial was forever to mark Babylon’s king(s) as depraved, not only undermining any claims of earthly power, but also disallowing any future identity. I explore these implications of non-burial further in Ch. 6.

6. The Principalities, Politicians, and People of Judah: Jer 7:32-8:3

The book of Jeremiah uses an array of metaphorical language to describe apostasy at the root of Israel’s diplomatic and divine punishments. Jeremiah’s worldview included the fundamental notion that Judahite apostasy would (and eventually did) result in the destruction of Jerusalem, her daughter cites, and the exile of most of her inhabitants. The book of Jeremiah demonstrates its familiarity with aWA treaties, propaganda, and literature in the language chosen to address issues of apostasy and exile. Among its graphic language describing YHWH’s impending punishment of the unfaithful, we find frequent references to non-burial. Indeed, as D.

(Hayim Tadmor, Benno Landsberger, and Simo Parpola, “The Sin of Sargon and Sennacherib’s Last Will,” State Archives of Assyria Bulletin 3 [1989]: 29). This quote is cited in Hays, Death in the Iron Age II, 217. See also Brichto, “Kin, Cult, Land and Afterlife,” 25; Shipp, Of Dead Kings and Dirges, 159.

Hillers noted, Jeremiah trumps all other biblical books with its frequency and creative uses of non-burial references.\textsuperscript{612}

In Jer 7:32-8:3, the prophet engages seven concepts associated with post-mortem threats: scavenging animals; lack of protection; exhumation; exposure; non-gathering of the deceased to their ancestors; non-burial; and endless identity as refuse.\textsuperscript{613} While most texts concerning non-burial include one, two, or three typical elements, Jeremiah’s curse intensifies the burden on the accursed. Even those who had been buried will be exhumed to suffer the post-mortem curse of non-burial and exposure.

In order to understand better Jeremiah’s rhetorical, multivalent use of non-burial terminology, one must first place the brief pericope in its larger literary context. Often scholars divide the oracles that conclude ch. 7 and those that begin ch. 3. Combined, however, Jer 7:30-34 and 8:1-3 provide a tripartite conclusion to the warnings levied at Judah throughout the so-called “Temple Sermon” in ch. 7; in fact, these verses present “a horrifying and unrelieved climax.”\textsuperscript{614} The three oracles concerning illicit cultic activities in the valley (7:30-31; 32-34; 8:1-3) balance the three oracles concerning the Temple in 7:1-15.\textsuperscript{615} For the purposes of this study, I divide the passage as follows:

1) \textbf{7:30-31} \hspace{1cm} Accusation of Abominations at Topeth in Hinnom

2) \textbf{7:32-34} \hspace{1cm} Punishment in Topeth
   a. \hspace{0.5cm} v. 32 \hspace{1cm} Topeth/Hinnom will become Valley of Slaughter, “for they will bury in Topheth until there is no more room”
   b. \hspace{0.5cm} v. 33 \hspace{1cm} The corpses of this people will be food for the birds of the air, and for the animals of the earth; and no one will frighten them away.

3) \textbf{8:1-3} \hspace{1cm} Proclamation of Judgment


\textsuperscript{613} For other aspects of post-mortem abuse in Jeremiah, see Jer 16:4-6, in which the deceased also are refused customary mourning rituals.


\textsuperscript{615} Jack Lundbom, Jeremiah 1-20 (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 493.
a. v. 1  Exhumation of bones of official, priest, prophets, people of Jerusalem

b. v. 2  and they shall be spread before the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven, which they have loved and served, which they have followed, and which they have inquired of and worshiped; and they shall not be gathered or buried; they shall be like dung on the surface of the ground.

c. v. 3  Death shall be preferred to life by all the remnant that remains of this evil family in all the places where I have driven them, says the LORD of hosts.

Compositional divisions play an important role in interpreting the current passage. The first oracle (Jer 7:30-31) concerns non-Yahwistic, defiling cultic activity occurring both in the Temple and at the bāmōt of Topheth in the Valley of Hinnom (the location of alleged child sacrificial activities prohibited in Deut 12:31; 18:10; Lev 18:21; 20:25 and condemned in numerous other texts). Jeremiah 7:30 begins with an introductory kî, signaling that what follows will provide the reasoning behind impending judgment. This oracle has produced much academic discussion in the fields of Israelite religion and biblical studies. It does not explicitly concern non-burial, however; and it suffices to mention its presence in the literary context of our passage.

The second oracle in the series (7:32-34) continues the theme of illicit worship in the Hinnom Valley. In Jer 7:32, the prophet issues an oracle of judgment introduced by hinneh laken and the messenger formula. The Valley of Hinnom, which Jeremiah identified in the preceding verse as the site of child sacrifice, will be known as the “valley of slaughter” (גֵּיא הַהֲרֵּגָה), alluding to violent, untimely death. In vv. 32-33, the precise cause of death is left unstated; the key to YHWH’s punishment is the dishonorable burial location—and eventual non-burial—of the

accursed. The dead will be so numerous that the guilty will be forced to bury them in Topheth until no room remains (cf. Isa 66:24).

With no room for burial and no one remaining to protect the corpses, the deceased become vulnerable to scavenging animals (described in v. 33 using stereotypical language for scavenging (וְהָיְתָה נִבְלַת הָעָם לְמַאֲכָל לְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִּם וּלְבֶהֱמַת הָאָרֶץ וְאֵּין מַחֲרִּיד)). The terms used in this judgment are most similar to terms in Deut 28:26, but the text is not an exact duplicate. In Deut 28:26, the Hebrew reads: “וְהָיְתָה נִבְלָתְךָ לְמַאֲכָל לְכָל-עֹף הַשָּׁמַיִּם וּלְבֶהֱמַת הָאָרֶץ וְאֵינָּם מַחֲרִיד.” Both texts use the same root for “corpse” (נבלה), but the Jer text does not have the pronominal suffix. The only other divergence is the precise object of the phrase. In Deut 28:26, the object is “you” (2ms pronominal suffix), the implied reader of the curses. In Jer 8:3, the object refers back to the indictment in v. 31 by addressing “this people” (הָעָם הַזֶּה).

In v. 32, key literary features (chiastic arrangement, repetition, and parallelism) emphasize the words of judgment. “Topheth” occurs at the beginning and end of the verse, and “valley” appears twice. The final verse of the second oracle (Jer 7:34) also uses a four-fold repetition of “voice” to emphasize the future silencing of the people. Here, Jeremiah echoes language of another aWA curse-tradition, in which the accursed will have no joy. Interestingly, the present curse of no-joy also appears in Jer 16:9 and 25:10, texts that also juxtapose threats of non-burial.

The placement of the third oracle in the series challenges some interpreters. On one hand, the third oracle (Jer 8:1-3) is a discrete unit introduced by the formulary phrase “At that time, says the Lord” (בָּעֵת הַהִּיא נְאֻּם יְהוָה), which signals a forthcoming prophetic announcement of punishment. The oracle concludes with the formulary closing words, “says the Lord of Hosts” (נְאֻּם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת) and is marked by a setumah. Internally, we find a five-fold repetition of “bones”

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618 Lundbom, Jeremiah 1-20, 493–494.
619 Hillers, Treaty-Curses, 57.
in Jer 8:1 followed by a five-fold repetition of the relative pronoun in Jer 8:2. These features point to the literary integrity of the oracle as a discrete composition. On the other hand, Jer 8:1-3 continues the literary devices found in the two preceding oracles and provides supplementary and concluding details. Despite the literary indication of three discrete oracles in Jer 7:30—8:3, each of which use diverse references to death and non-burial, the passage is unified by its central theme of post-mortem disgrace. Jeremiah 7:32-34 focuses on the future necessity of non-burial in the precise location of the most heinous of illicit cultic activities.

The third oracle in the series uses different terms to describe the post-mortem disgrace of accused Judahites. The differences in lexical elements, combined with verse and chapter divisions, motivate many interpreters to separate the judgment oracles in Jer 7:30-34 and 8:1-3. When we examine the varied use of terminology from semantic circles related to burial and its deprivation, it becomes clear that the author/redactor of Jer 7:30—8:3 intended the oracles to be read together, providing vivid details for Judahites if they do not heed the warnings presented in the Temple Sermon (Jeremiah 7). Moreover, Jer 7:1—8:3 provides sequential readers of the book of Jeremiah with a recapitulation of previously occurring poetic material. This block of primarily prose literature makes clear to Judahites that the gravity of their sinfulness makes future punishment inevitable.

In Jer 8:1-3, lexical elements provide specific details of Jeremiah’s vision of YHWH’s punishment, the reasons motivating the use of such language, and its intended result. The five-fold repetition of עוֹצְמוֹת ("bones") intensifies the focus on the object of punishment and desecration. The guilt does not lie with a single individual; rather, an unspecified agent(s) will “bring out” (וּיצָאוּ) of their graves a series of groups, descending in rank of social status:

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620 The current project will not engage issues of origin and redaction in these oracles, in order to focus specifically on the rhetorical implications of non-burial imagery. Further research certainly will include efforts to understand which layers of redaction include (and excluded) specific terms related to non-burial.

621 Allen, Jeremiah, 104.
the bones of the kings (plural) of Judah; his princes (masc. plural, with 3mpl pronominal suffix); the prophets (plural); and the inhabitants (plural construct) of Jerusalem. Rather than stating—in a semantically terse way—that everyone will be disinterred, or that all graves will be emptied, Jeremiah explicitly details the totality of punishment by identifying those groups affected by the impending punishment. In this condemnation of Judahite sinners, scholars recognize a clear articulation of the pre-exilic “deuteronomic cliché,” namely, that “all Judaeans—the entire society, from the king and officials to the humblest people—were obstinate sinners. They ignored YHWH’s call for repentance and so deserved their castigation.”

Some scholars focus on this passage as an example of punishment for elite Jerusalemites, those who most likely would have received extravagant funeral rites and offerings. Accordingly, they compare Jer 8:1-3 to other threats of non-burial against elites (e.g., against the Babylonian king in Isaiah 14 and 2 Kings 23, in which Josiah disinters the bones of the priests of Bethel. While these comparisons have warrant based on the comparable act of dishonorable post-mortem treatment, a key aspect of Jeremiah’s prophecy sets his words apart from others. In Jer 8:2, all of Jerusalem will fall victim to the anonymous agent doing YHWH’s bidding; no one will be spared.

The agent of impeding, complete disinterment remains left unstated; still the literary context make clear that YHWH is the instigator or violence. Scholars, however, most often interpret this verse as a reference to (Neo)-Assyrian propagandist accounts of treatment of dead enemies. As shown in Ch. 2, Neo-Assyrian rulers often boasted about their complete control over the outcome of a battle and subsequent control over the enemy’s corpses. Recall, for example, Aššurnāṣipal II’s report of the treatment of rebels of Sûru: “I erected a pile [of corpses] in front of his gate. I flayed as many nobles as had rebelled against me (and) draped their skins over the

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623 Lundbom, Jeremiah 1-20, 500.
624 Ibid., 501.
pile; some I spread out within the pile, some I erected on stakes upon the pile, (and) some I placed on stakes around the pile.”

The (in)famous account of Ashurbanipal’s 8th military campaign (cir. 646 BCE), during which his forces captured the Elamite capital of Susa, provides additional fodder for the perception of Assyrian warfare practices. In addition to looting the palaces and temples of valuables, Ashurbanipal boasts that he desecrates the bones of royalty: “Their bones I carried off to Assyria, thus imposing restlessness upon their spirits, and depriving them of food (or, “ancestral”) offerings and libations.”

The vast amount of post-mortem abuse described in the Mesopotamian material record surely made images of corpse abuse real for Jeremiah’s audience. Here, too, I note that the notion of Israel’s enemy as an agent of YHWH’s punishment emerges in literature contemporary with the book of Jeremiah. In explanations of the Babylonian victory and exile, prophets often reversed traditional notions of election. As Stulman writes, “Judah, once chosen, is now rejected, or defined, whereas Babylon, once rejected, is now chosen as an instrument of divine judgment.”

In Ch. 6, I discuss the implications of YHWH as active agent of post-mortem punishment against both Israelite and foreigner.

With a clearer understanding of the victims and agent of non-burial, we turn to the reasons motivating post-mortem abuse. Jeremiah 8:2 continues the literary devices of 7:32—8:3 in its five-fold repetition of the relative pronoun, providing readers with specific reasons for the announced punishment. After disinterment, with its associated implications of disgrace, all of the bones of the various groups will be spread by the same unspecified agent of punishment (וּשְׁטָחוּם) beneath false deities whom the guilty have worshipped. Astral worship seems to have been a temptation for both Judahite royalty and the populace during the period of Assyrian domination.

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625 Richardson, “Death and Dismemberment,” 196.
627 Stulman, “Insiders and Outsiders in the Book of Jeremiah,” 76.
and among the exiled population in Egypt (see, e.g., Zeph 1:5; 2 Kgs 21:5; Jer 44:15-19, 25). In Jer 8:2a, Judahites are indicted for worship of heavenly bodies similar to the Mesopotamian cultic associations with the Queen of Heaven (Ištar/Astarte/Anat/Šapšu), echoing a similar charge in Jer 7:18: “The children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods, to provoke me to anger.” In this earlier charge of apostasy, Jeremiah claims that Judahites have performed cultic acts that do not conform with orthodox Yahwistic worship. Families—parents and children—prepare and offer sacrifices for the Queen of Heaven. In Jer 8:2a and 7:18, Jeremiah reveals theological affinity with Deuteronomy, particularly the deuteronomic injunctions against Astral worship in Deut 4:19 and 17:3 (see also 2 Kgs 23:5), in which the same heavenly bodies are listed in identical order (sun, moon, and host of heaven). Even though the non-burial terminology of Jer 7:34 more directly correlates with the stereotypical deuteronomic curse of non-burial in Deut 28:26, deuteronomic influence clearly continues in Jer 8:1-3 as well. In a dramatic and ironic reversal of fate, Jeremiah suggests that the law of talion applies to YHWH’s punishment of Judahites, who have walked after, sought after, and worshipped the sun, moon, and all the host of heaven. In direct response to apostasy directed to the heavenly bodies, Judahite bones will be spread before the very same heavenly entities. Now, instead of Judahites lying prostrate in worship in the Temple or on rooftops, their bones will lie exposed, with no protection from the elements.

Jeremiah 8:2 continues the description of post-mortem punishment. The results of disinterment and exposure reflect the reversal of societal importance of burial (discussed in Ch.2, above). The effect of disinterment will be the exclusion of the deceased from their ancestral tombs. Recall that in typical deuteronomic DBF, the deceased are “gathered to” or “lie with”

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628 For details on the influence of the “Queen of Heaven” in ancient Israel, see Ackerman, *Under Every Green Tree*, 5–35.
their ancestors and buried. Here, Jeremiah reverses this stereotypical language: the disinterred bones will be neither gathered nor buried (ותָאֲסָפוּ וְלֹא יֵּקָבֵר). Instead of burial in a tomb at a specific location (ancestral town or city), the deceased will become like dung upon the ground (לְדֹמֶן עַל פְּנֵּי הָאֲדָמָה יִּהְיוּ). In other words, the punishment for apostasy—breaking the covenant with YHWH—is disengagement from the community and eternal status as refuse.

In Ch. 2, we noted that “gathering” is one of the primary terms used in death and burial notices. To be gathered to one’s ancestors indicated peaceful death and burial, most often in the ancestral tomb, and a restful afterlife in which one joined deceased kin in Sheol. Disinterment patently reverses social expectations of afterlife with kin associations. Deprivation of association with ancestral kin and the ancestral tomb results in eternal disconnection with the kin (and their descendants) who would otherwise perpetuate one’s enduring memory and identity in the afterlife. As we have seen in the six examples of non-burial explored in this Chapter, not all references to non-burial include identical terminology. Jeremiah 8:1-3 lacks a form of the root שלך as well as any reference to scavenging animals. This passage describes exhumation as the act by which non-burial is achieved. Threats of non-burial in the aWA material record also contain references to the removal of bones and consequent, eternal disconnect with ancestral kin, especially when we turn to the Phoenician and Egyptian evidence. The tomb inscriptions from Sidon provide corollary ideas: “May they not have a resting-place with the shades, and may they not be buried in a grave, and may they not have a son and seed in their place!”

Looking to the Early Middle Kingdom tomb inscription found at Hassaya, we note the following imprecation:

As for anybody who will not recite this, he shall fall to the anger of his city-god, and to the slaughter of the king. He shall not be remembered among the spirits and nevermore shall his name be mentioned on earth; he shall not be buried in the West, he shall be

\[629\] KAI 14:8-10, cited in: Olyan, “Honor, Shame, and Covenant,” 214, n. 42. See also the following grave inscriptions: KAI 1:2; 13:3-8; 14:20-22; 226:6-10.
burned together with the damned, sine Thoth has condemned him; he face shall be spat
at.\(^{630}\)

In the aWA context, then, clear connections exist between lack of burial and disconnect with
one’s ancestral kin. In the following chapter, I will examine the implications of deprivation of
“gathering” and burial on issues of identity.

In addition to non-gathering and non-burial, YHWH’s punishment will result in exposure
of the corpses/bones, allowing them to rot as “dung” upon the ground. While some
commentators have argued that references to “dung” are secondary in Jer 8:2 and 9:21, a reading
attentive to non-burial imagery within its larger context recognizes that “dung” is a stereotypical
lexical element also present in other texts with a similar theme.\(^{631}\) Recall, for example, 2 Kgs
9:37, which cites Elijah’s prophecy concerning Jezebel.\(^{632}\) Reference to “dung” (דֹּמֶן)
adds to the
dishonor of judgment against Judah; in fact, Holladay argues that Jeremiah uses the word as a
simile here and in 9:16 to compare the wickedness of the Judahites and Jezebel’s wickedness.\(^{633}\)

Jeremiah’s use of non-burial terminology in his pronouncement of divine punishment,
suggestive of future destruction from enemy forces, adds an even graver dimension to the threats
in vv. 1-2. As M. Cogan writes, “the prophet pictured YHWH’s punishment of Jerusalem in
terms of an earthly overlord punishing his disloyal subjects, by carrying out, to the letter, the
sanctions of broken oaths.”\(^{634}\) Through their idolatry, Jerusalem and its constituents (listed in Jer

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\(^{630}\) Assmann, “When Justice Fails,” 154–156; Edel, Die Inschriften Der Grabfronten, 37–66, 120–127,
190ff.

\(^{631}\) Other references to becoming as dung include: Jer 9:21; 16:4; 25:33; Isa 5:25; Ps 83:11. All of these
texts include different elements of language stereotypical to curses of non-burial.

\(^{632}\) בְחֵּלֶק יִּזְרְעֶאל אֲשֶׁר לֹא יֹאמְרוּ זֹאת אִּיזָבֶל לֹא יֹאמְרוּ אִּיזֶבֶל כְּדֹמֶן עַל פְּנֵּי הַשָדֶה והית

\(^{633}\) William Lee Holladay, Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 1-25

\(^{634}\) Morton Cogan, “A Note on Disinterment in Jeremiah,” in Gratz College, Anniversary Volume on the
Occasion of the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Founding of the College, 1895-1970., eds. Isidore David
8:1) have broken their covenant with YHWH. Now, they will incur the full array of stereotypical
curses of their day. 635

The last verse of the passage points to the intended result of post-mortem abuse in this
passage, and to Jeremiah’s rhetorical use of the non-burial motif: “Death shall be preferred to life
by all the remnant that remains of this evil family in all the places where I have driven them, says
the Lord of hosts” (Jer 8:3). Jeremiah suggests that the condition of non-burial, with its
associated consequences, signifies the existence of Judeans during the exilic period. The life
experienced by surviving, but deported Jerusalemites will be comparable to that of an unburied
corpse: mistreated; abandoned; and forgotten. Jeremiah keenly has stacked additional weight
onto the impending punishment. Not only will the wicked be not gathered to their ancestral kin
(8:2), but also they will be scattered (הִדַחְתִים). Here, the agent of punishment is explicit: using the
1st person, YHWH claims credit for scattering those who remain. The metaphor of non-burial
now becomes clear; and the people would rather experience death than deportation, depicted
metaphorically as the scattering of bones. The notion of death preferred over life appears in
several other texts, e.g., Lam 4:9 and Jonah 4:3, 8. Jeremiah 22:10 also suggests that life in exile
is a worse fate than death, because those in exile will never again see the land of their childhood:
“Do not weep for him who is dead, nor bemoan him; weep rather for him who goes away, for he
shall return no more to see his native land.” Placed in the social and literary context of a nation
on the brink of exile that questions its future covenantal relationship with YHWH, Jeremiah’s
answer speaks bleakly to the accused covenant violators. 636

635 Hillers, Treaty-Curses, 68–69, suggests that the literary usage of the non-burial curse has implications
for the author’s concept of covenant: “[t]he closest prophetic parallels are in Jeremiah, the most important
being in Jer 34:20 . . . . In this case the context is perhaps significant. The verse stands in the oracle which
Jeremiah delivered after king and people had broken their covenant to release the Hebrew slaves.”
636 Not all biblical references to exposed corpses in TANAKH signify a negative future for the Israel. See,
e.g., Ezekiel 37, in which the prophet envisions a reversal of non-burial when the exposed, dried bones will
be re-vivified. This reversal and revivification points to divinely-initiated possibility of Israel’s future
Textual clues further indicate Jeremiah’s rhetorical use of non-burial terminology in his interpretation of the exilic experience. In Jer 8:3, we read that the experience of “this wicked family” (מִּשְׁפָחָה הָרָעָה הַזֹאת) in “all the places” (בְכָל הַמְקֹמוֹת) that YHWH has driven them is a fate worse than death. Here, two interpretive points arise. First, in terms of the specific literary contrast, there is a textual connection between the lack of maqom (“place/space”) for burial in Jer 7:32 and hammeqomot (“the places”) to where the wicked will be scattered in 8:3. Second, when one considers the larger ideological context of Jeremiah’s prophecy, there is a contrast between the “place” of deuteronomist emphasis (the Jerusalem Temple, city of Jerusalem, and land/territory of Judah) with scattering of the people to “all the places.”

The inevitability of exilic experience noted in Jer 8:3 simultaneously reflects the same idea in the Temple Sermon (Jer 7:15), looks back to the exile theme in earlier prose material (Jer 5:19), and presages repetition of the same theme in later prose material (Jer 9:16). The certainty of exile as retribution for covenant violation is a theme of Jeremiah’s prose sermons, which seek both to change behavior and to provide validation for the Judahites who are, or will be, in exile. The exile is a very real threat, described using graphic images of unburied Israelites. These images of discarded corpses become all the more real in light of actual military practice that Judahites may have witnessed—or, at the least, heard about. Jeremiah’s metaphorical references to non-burial emerge as an apex in his reflection on exile and serve multiple purposes we will explore in greater detail in Ch. 6.

**Conclusion**

existence. Jeremiah 31:40 also indicates that in the future, God will sanctify the dead and their final, dishonorable resting places in the valleys and fields as part of a new covenant forging experience.  


The extended interpretations included in this Chapter confirm the data presented in Chapter 4. The non-burial motif appears with significant variety in terms of terminology, genre, literary context, and manner of application. Several elements of the motif’s variety are plain. First, the application or employment of the motif varies. Biblical authors incorporated similar—but not identical—terminology when they mentioned corpse abuse and non-burial, in both explicit and implicit ways. Further, in the six examples chosen for closer examination in this Chapter, we have seen variation in the five interpretive categories. Still, I have shown that the agent of destruction is most often divine. The exception is the taunt of non-burial issued by Goliath, who boasts that he will personally hand David’s body over to scavenging animals. In the other examples, YHWH is either explicitly denoted as the agent of punishment through 1st c.s. verbal forms or is implicitly understood as the instigator of violence within the literary context. In contrast, the victim(s) of non-burial differ in these examples. The victim can be either kin or foreigner, male or female, elite or common. Moreover, the victim can be individual or communal.

A significant difference in the application of the non-burial motif results from the communal or individual identity of the victim of violence. Threatened and actualized non-burial may appear in literary contexts as literal threats or punishments against a character’s physical body. For example, in the taunts traded between David and Goliath, the battlefield context allows the reader’s imagination to visualize beaten, decapitated, and exposed corpses of soldiers and entire garrisons. Again, turning to the narrative concerning the man of God from Judah, the pericope discusses the physical burial concerns of an individual human character. While it might stretch the imagination of some readers to visualize a lion passively sitting next to a corpse, dishonorable disposal of the corpse, followed by the kin-like burial, concerned a Judahite with whom the biblical audience might identify.
In comparison, references to non-burial in passages that contemplate the past, present, and future treatment and identity of a communal body (such as nation of Judah or Babylonian empire), it becomes clear that biblical authors utilize the very real, physical implications of corpse abuse and exposure and applied those implications to national situations. So, for example, in Jeremiah 8:1-3, all of Israel will not be exposed as a single corpse; rather, the life that Israel will experience in exile will be as if it were an abandoned, exposed corpse. The literal and metaphorical applications of the non-burial motif further demonstrate that the motif was not limited to treaty-curse contexts, but provided striking literary allusions within varied compositions.

It is clear that threats of non-burial often were directed against those judged to have crossed a boundary of loyalty, most often loyalty to a covenantal expectation. The punishment for disloyalty varied in precise lexical description, but seems to have been threatened (or enacted) in order to diminish or destroy the identity of the victim or victims. Furthermore, the identity of the agent of abuse (or instigator of violence if no agent is named) stands to change. The knowledge of YHWH as sovereign, just, omnipotent, and as divine warrior appears as intended results in the examples discussed above. In light of covenant disloyalty and the imposition of covenant curses, the identity of both victim and agent shift. In Ch. 6, I explore these dual categories of covenant disloyalty and identity. Utilizing findings from interdisciplinary studies of death, burial, and identity formation, I ask how biblical references to non-burial reflect certain authors’ conceptions of covenant and identity.
Chapter 6

“Then you shall know that I am the LORD”:

Implications of Non-Burial

Introduction

In Chapter 2, I established that Israel’s aWA neighbors composed a variety of literary references to corpse abuse and tomb desecration. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 demonstrated that ancient Israel’s surviving literary stock also included references to non-burial and post-mortem abuse. Biblical authors did not replicate aWA treaty-curses; rather, they applied the literary motif of non-burial to several socio-literary contexts. This chapter describes the implications of the biblical motif of non-burial. Specifically, I ask how references to non-burial reflect their authors’ conceptions of the identity of both victims and agents of post-mortem abuse.

I first discuss how ancient Mesopotamians included corpse exposure and deprivation of burial as elements within their broader military strategies. In military contexts, post-mortem abuse simultaneously eradicated the identity of the victim and reinforced the identity of the aggressor. Throughout this dissertation, I have shown how literary representations of post-mortem abuse appear in relation to both individual and corporate bodies. In this Chapter, I follow the work of social anthropologist Meyers Fortes, who does not differentiate greatly between individual and collective identities: “Individual and collective are not mutually exclusive but are rather two sides of the same structural complex. The scheme of identification employed for individual persons is the same scheme of identification as serves to distinguish lineages and clans.”640 Below I will show that the deprivation of burial aims to diminish or destroy all aspects of a victim’s identity. The victim’s name, reputation, and memory suffered from the

diminishment or destruction of identity.\textsuperscript{541} If non-burial is directed against a nation, the literary description of post-mortem abuse aims to diminish or destroy all aspects of the nation’s identity, such as pride and power.

The cross-cultural phenomenon of ritualized violence underscores how and why aWA and biblical authors attacked identity and memory through graphic references to corpses. Next, I demonstrate how ancient Israelite and aWA threats of non-burial directly threatened the victim’s identity. Finally, I discuss how Israel’s identity hinged upon its covenantal relationship with YHWH. References to non-burial appear in several biblical passages that describe the relationship between Israel and its patron deity. If the deprivation of burial abolished identity, and if ancient Israel’s identity depended upon its covenantal partnership with YHWH, then deliberate references to non-burial speak to the past, current, and future status of Israel’s covenant with God.

**Non-Burial as a Military Weapon**

Contemporary evidence from the aWA demonstrates that images of corpse abuse were frequently depicted in military and royal propaganda. The victory stelae referred to in Chapter 2 show how imperial forces hailed their victories in both inscription and pictorial representations by referencing the decapitated, exposed corpses of defeated forces. Historians of ancient warfare

\textsuperscript{541} The term “identity” is fraught with complications. Theoretical definitions attempt to balance the several elements of a person’s existence with the confines of this term. For discussion on “identity” (in relation to death and burial), see: Chesson, “Social Memory, Identity, and Death”; Lemos, “Physical Violence and the Boundaries of Personhood in the Hebrew Bible”; Parker Pearson, “Mortuary Practices, Society and Ideology: An Ethnoarchaeological Study.” For the purposes of this study, I use “identity” to describe the aspects of a person (or nation) that are vital in recognition within society. In this way, “identity” is a synonym to “personhood.” As social anthropologist S.D. Gillespie notes, “A major component of personhood derives from the enactment of relationships within a society, typically as part of everyday experience or practice. These include relationships between different persons, persons and groups, different groups, the living and the dead, and people and objects, since personhood is not confined to living human beings” (“Mortuary Ritual, Agency, and Personhood: A Case Study from the Ancient Maya,” 75.).
disagree about whether these violent acts were performed as frequently as stelae suggest, or simply served as strong propaganda for imperial leadership. Still, several biblical texts make clear that ancient Israelite society was surrounded by war and shaped by its consequences. Nahum 3:1-3, for example, shows that the brutality of Mesopotamian battle practices left its mark on the psyche of their enemy’s nation:

Ah! City of bloodshed, utterly deceitful, full of booty— no end to the plunder! The crack of whip and rumble of wheel, galloping horse and bounding chariot! Horsemen charging, flashing sword and glittering spear, piles of dead, heaps of corpses, dead bodies without end— they stumble over the bodies!

The composition of v. 3 creates a powerful image for readers. Three separate terms refer to human remains in a four-fold description of the battle’s victims. The corpses are so bountiful that horses stumble: (וְרֹב חָלָל וְכֹבֶד פָגֶר וְאֵין קֵּצֶה לַגְוִּיָה כִּשָּׁלֹו [כִּשָּׁלָה]). The verse itself seems to trip over the innumerable casualties of war.

The text from Nahum clarifies poetic references in texts like Ps 79:1-3, which suggest that foreign nations inflicted stereotypical corpse abuse within Jerusalem’s precincts:

O God, the nations have come into your inheritance; they have defiled your holy temple; they have laid Jerusalem in ruins. They have given the bodies of your servants to the birds of the air for food, the flesh of your faithful to the wild animals of the earth. They have poured out their blood like water all around Jerusalem, and there was no one to bury them (Ps 79:1-3).

Whether or not Mesopotamians practiced corpse abuse to the extent they boast about in their propaganda, ancient Israelites certainly believed non-burial was part and parcel of aWA military convention; and they interpreted their experiences of defeat in these terms, among others. Texts such as these demonstrate that images of scattered corpses clearly infiltrated the minds of Israelites.
Imperial forces, especially from and after the Sargonid period, were particularly boastful about their ability to gain control over enemy forces, their land, and their fallen corpses. References to ill-treatment of enemy corpses abound in the ancient record, suggesting that the practice was well-known and oft practiced. The vertical mounting and exposure of human remains before city gates also appears as a frequent motif in Mesopotamian inscriptions and reliefs. Tiglath-Pileser reports that he exposed the corpses of the officers of Rezin of Damascus and the remains of the King of Bit-Shalani “to the gaze of his countrymen.” Assurbanipal’s infamous transport of the bones of Elamite ancestors culminated in Assurbanipal forcing his captives from Gambulu to crush the Elamite bones in front of the city gate. In the same campaign, Assurbanipal boasts that he exposed the decapitated head of his victim before the gate at Nineveh in order that “the severed head of Teumman, the king of Elam, might show the people the might of Aššur and Ištar, my Lords.” Here, non-burial intends to reveal the agent’s power.

Turning to the HB, in 2 Sam 4:12 we read that David hung the corpses of Rachab and Baanah (Eshabaal's military officers) at the pool of Hebron. In this narrative context, David’s actions are highlighted as morally superior. He exposes the corpses of offenders and provides an honorable burial for Eshbaal (more precisely, for Eshbaal’s severed head) after his brutal murder. A recent article suggests that the exposure of corpses and severed heads at the conclusion of battles was a form of celebration in the Assyrian court. In this light, severed heads are considered “grisly

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642 For a recent treatment of corpse abuse in the aWA literary record, see Richardson, “Death and Dismemberment,” esp. 193–203.
645 Borger, Beiträge Zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals, Bvi50–66, 66–99; Luckenbill, ARAB, 865–866.
In each of these examples, the agent of corpse abuse and exposure intends not only to shame the deceased, but also to gain additional recognition of the power and superiority of the victor and the victor’s deities.

Neo-Assyrian inscriptions and reliefs include images not only of corpses vertically mounted, but also of widespread exposure of fallen enemy corpses across a battlefield. Recall, for example, the annalistic reports from Shalmeneser III’s military expeditions discussed in Chap. 2:

I covered the wide plain with the corpses of his warriors . . . . I slew their warriors with the sword, descending upon them like Adad when he makes a rainstorm pour down. In the moat (of the town) I piled them up, I covered the wide plain with the corpses of their fighting men, I dyed the mountains with their blood like red wool. 647

In this report, the Babylonian leader describes his victory over enemy corpses in both vertical and horizontal planes. Seth Richardson has compiled a collection of ancient reliefs that depict a defeated army across a wide horizontal plane. 648 The reliefs demonstrate that imperial forces claimed victory over large territories through the exposure of corpses throughout the land. Ancient Israel’s prophetic literature also includes references to corpses strewn over a vast landscape. 649 Ezekiel, in particular, prophesizes that YHWH will scatter corpses throughout the land and mountain tops. The dispersal of corpses will be so wide that blood will flow in streams (Ezek 6:13; 29:5; 32:4; 37:1-2). Jeremiah prophesizes that exposed corpses will be so widespread that they will cover the earth: “Those slain by the Lord on that day shall extend from one end of the earth to the other. They shall not be lamented, or gathered, or buried; they shall become dung

647 ANET, 277.
648 Richardson, “Death and Dismemberment.”
on the surface of the ground” (Jer 25:33). In this verse, terminology typical of the non-burial motif accompanies claims of wide-spread corpse exposure.

S. Richardson has observed how the treatment of enemy corpses became emblematic of the growing Assyrian landscape. He writes:

The horizontal dispersement of enemy corpses across Neo-Assyrian battlefields was a rhetorical means of naturalizing dead enemies as the emblem of an extensive imperial landscape. These vertical versus horizontal displays of “anti-burial” were metonymic for conquered states: mounds for city-states, fields of dead for empires, presenting the social discorporation of political communities as a whole. Images of stacked and scattered corpses seem to have signaled two aspects of Neo-Assyrian military prowess. On one hand, the vertical mounding of corpses provided a clear visual reminder of the victor’s might over and above the defeated; the defeat was visible even from a distance. One could neither enter nor exit a city, nor pass by the gate (the main meeting place for juridical activity) without observing the exposed enemy corpses. On the other hand, corpses spread throughout territory formerly controlled by the defeated party signaled a wide-spread victory. In both instances, non-burial visually communicates the power of the agent.

The deprivation of burial and exposure of enemy corpses thus served several important purposes. Exposed corpses demonstrated the superior power of the Assyrians, who now controlled both the landscape and the population (living and dead) of the defeated party. Exposed corpses also conveyed that any power formerly held by the defeated enemy no longer existed. The defeated party controlled neither their land nor the fate of their own bodies. Furthermore, the exposure of corpses warned passers-by to avoid the fate of those before them; in order to remain alive and maintain honor, one must obey the commands of the agent of corpse abuse. The victor possessed enough strength to: 1) win a battle; 2) gain territory; 3) inflict humiliation upon one’s

650 Richardson, “Death and Dismemberment,” 200.
enemy; and 4) control the inhabitants of the land—both the living and the dead. In contrast, scattered and stacked corpses visually communicated a nation’s weakness on several levels. The defeated nation lacked the power to: 1) win a battle; 2) collect the corpses for proper internment; and 3) secure access to their ancestral burial sites in order to provide proper burial for their deceased. The highly visual component of corpse exposure thus strengthened the identity of the victor while simultaneously indicating the defeated party’s weakened (or non-existent) status.

Several ancient Israelite references to non-burial against enemies are best understood in light of Neo-Assyrian corpse abuse. The extended, metaphorical threat of non-burial against the Babylonian king in Isaiah 14 can be interpreted as the application of Babylon’s own military technique upon itself. Isaiah’s figure “Babylon”—represented as a haughty king—would suffer the very pangs of military defeat that its forces imposed upon its foes. Moreover, Babylon’s haughtiness would be utterly reversed when it descended into Sheol, only to be cast out as an exposed corpse. If Isaiah’s vision of a defeated, dead, and exposed Babylon were realized, it would demonstrate that Babylon no longer had the power to control its territory or its forces. Moreover, Babylon’s defeat and non-burial would demonstrate that YHWH, the victor of the battle, had the power to control Babylon’s destiny beyond the battlefield into death.

Babylon’s exposed corpse reveals that the empire has been transformed from the agent of post-mortem abuse to its victim. Threats of non-burial and corpse abuse in Mesopotamian royal literature claimed that the ruler’s sovereignty extended beyond the realm of his territory into the territory of the enemy and even into the afterlife. Isaiah’s incorporation of the same imagery in

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651 For motives for mutilating and exposing corpses, see Saul M. Olyan, Disability in the Hebrew Bible: Interpreting Mental and Physical Differences (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 2008), 43–45.
652 On the connection between burial rites and land ownership in ancient Israel, see Stavrakopoulou, Land of Our Fathers, 11–18. The Hebrew Bible attests to the role that burial sites and markers played in a family’s claim to a plot of land. To deny burial or to destroy an established burial site often served as an attack on conventional kinship claims of territoriality. Abraham’s purchase of a plot of land at Machpelah demonstrates the importance of a legal territorial claim to the land in which family buries its kin. See Genesis 23; 49:29-33; 50:12-14.
his writings asserts that YHWH’s authority extends beyond the heavenly realm and Jerusalem, into the streets and palaces of Jerusalem, and on into the afterlife of the king. Said succinctly, Babylon’s identity as a powerful suzerain is destroyed; YHWH’s identity as the victor is fortified.

Identity in the Afterlife

Life and Death and Flesh

Evidence from ancient Israel and its aWA neighbors highlights that one’s identity was connected intimately with one’s body (in life) and corpse or bones (in the afterlife). As I discussed in Chapter 2, the 18th c. BCE Sumerian creation epic, Atra-Ḫasis, includes a striking link between flesh, identity, and enduring memory. In the first tablet, the god Nintu sacrifices the lesser god Aw-ilu in order to create humanity. After slaughtering Aw-ilu, Nintu mixes his flesh and blood with clay. The intentions of this manipulation of the deity’s remains are described as follows:

…Let one god be slaughtered,
then let the gods be cleansed by immersion.
Let Nintu mix clay with his flesh and blood.
Let that same god and man be thoroughly mixed in the clay.
Let us hear the drum for the rest of the time.
From the flesh of the god let a spirit remain,
let it make the living know its sign,
lest he be allowed to be forgotten, let the spirit remain (Atra-ḫasis I: 208-217).

Mixed with clay, the sacrificed deity’s unburied flesh and blood makes possible the enduring existence of Awu-ilu’s spirit and the creation of new life. Deprivation of burial does not permit an enduring memory; rather, the persistence of flesh enables the spirit to assume a new form.

One of ancient Israel’s creation myths also connects humanity’s origin with death in a circular pattern. Adam and Eve’s mortality reflects the circular nature of life and death: “By the

653 Foster, “The Epic of Atrahasis.”
sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Gen 3:19). In Genesis 2:7, the creation formed from the dust only becomes a living being (נֶפֶשׁ חַיָה) with the addition of the breath of life. The Hebrew word נֶפֶשׁ has many translation options (cf. Akk. napištu). The term (occurring over six hundred times in the HB) appears in relation to a body (as a living person or as a corpse) and in relation to one’s identity as something living (as opposed to something not living). Eric Meyers defines נֶפֶשׁ as “a unitary conception of the totality of the individual”—an essence that does not necessarily dissolve at the moment of death.

Remembrance and Identity

Sources reveal that the connection between flesh and identity as a living being continues into the afterlife. Just as נפֶשׁ has several translation options, the Hebrew term most commonly translated “name” (שם) also can be translated as “reputation,” “memorial,” “family line.” In this way, the term שם is similar to “remembrance,” זכר. If living kin remember their deceased ancestor, that ancestor’s “name” survives. Brian Schmidt posits that ancient Israelites understood immortality “by the preservation of one’s deeds, position or personhood in the mind of those one left behind long after one’s departure from this world.” In other words, one’s reputation created one’s enduring identity following death. Schmidt’s suggestion does not necessitate the

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654 Suriano, “Breaking Bread with the Dead,” 1–2. I am grateful to Professor Suriano for providing me with advanced copies of his manuscript and helpful personal correspondence while I was preparing this dissertation. For Mesopotamian terms for the dead, see Hays, Death in the Iron Age II, 43–47.


657 Brichto, “Kin, Cult, Land and Afterlife,” 21n.29, 22.

658 See Prov. 10:7: “The memory (זֵכֶר) of the righteous is a blessing,/but the name (שֵּׁם) of the wicked will rot.” Here, antithetically parallel lines present the fate of one’s “name” as dependent upon one’s moral and ritual disposition. Also see Isa 14:22, in which Babylon’s name is “cut off” (cf. Isa 55:13).

659 Schmidt, “Memory as Immortality,” 100.
conclusion that afterlife in ancient Israel was a form of “immortality only [in] posterity.” Instead, the notion of an enduring identity was just one aspect of continued existence after death. Consider Isa 26:14-15, in which YHWH defeats the *raphaim* by eradicating their “memory”: “The dead do not live; shades do not rise— because you have punished and destroyed them, and wiped out all memory of them (וַתְּאַבֵּד כָּל זֵּכֶר לָמוֹ).” Several scholars cite this verse as primary evidence that the dead and the afterlife did not occupy the minds or rites of ancient Israelites. F. Stavrakopoulou, by contrast, offers this same verse as evidence that identity did continue into the afterlife; one was only completely dead if one’s memory was erased. Non-burial is one way to diminish or destroy one’s enduring memory. The absence of one’s “name” or “memory” in the afterlife was the “dreaded death after death.” As the references compiled in Chapter 4 make clear, Ezekiel’s oracles against foreign nations/rulers express this point repeatedly.

Several features of aWA and ancient Israelite funerary ideologies demonstrate that burial and funerary rites often provided several ways in which one could safeguard one’s memory in the future. 2 Samuel 18 includes a striking description of Absalom’s death and burial. After Joab’s militia murders Absalom, the text describes his dishonorable burial:

[Joab’s troops] took Absalom, threw him into a great pit in the forest, and raised over him a very great heap of stones. Meanwhile all the Israelites fled to their homes. Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up for himself a pillar that is in the King’s Valley, for he said, “I have no son to keep my name in remembrance (הַזְכִּיר שְׁמִּי);” he called the pillar by his own name. It is called Absalom’s Monument to this day (2 Sam. 18:17-18).

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661 There are very limited references to immortality of the soul in ancient Israel. In post-exilic and Second Temple literature, the concept of immortality of the soul in some form in the afterlife appears in several contexts. See Pss 49, 73; 4 Maccabees; Jubilees; 1 Enoch; Wisdom of Solomon (Ibid., 97). On the view of the afterlife in early Jewish writers, including Josephus, see: Jonathan Klawans, *Josephus and the Theologies of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford; New York: Oxford Univ., 2012), 93ff., 118–119.
664 This apt description comes from the title of Brian Schmidt’s helpful article: “Memory as Immortality.”
This passage demonstrates that lack of progeny had tangible repercussions in one’s conception of the afterlife. Despite Absalom’s dishonorable post-mortem treatment (v. 17), his afterlife is not altogether hopeless. Absalom’s memorial pillar takes the place of progeny, since an inscribed name provides the commemoration that a son or daughter might offer. The construction of a memorial pillar intends to maintain one’s name in eternal remembrance.

Both Mesopotamian and Egyptian concepts of an elaborate hierarchal system in the afterlife—at times identical to the hierarchy among the living—provided an avenue by which the deceased might continue their existence and identity after death. Royal funerary texts provide ample evidence of belief in a continued existence after death. Rites of commemoration, including periodic invocation of the name of the deceased, preserved his or her individual identity. The Ugaritic King List and Eblite King’s List include the names of deceased royals alongside references to deities. In addition, elaborate tomb construction, lengthy mourning rites, and extensive funerary offerings aimed to solidify the identity of deceased royalty. Consider the royal burials at Ur and Sumerian funerary texts, in which lavish grave goods were presented at the time of burial for both the deceased and the deities of the underworld. Archaeological

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665 Limited references to commemoration rites appear in the HB; most occur in the context of a royal funeral liturgy (e.g., Jer 34:5; 2 Chron 16:14; 21:19; 32:33). In his dissertation, Matthew Suriano suggested that formulaic death and burial notices may have been part of commemoration rites in a royal funeral liturgy (“The Formulaic Epilogue for a King in the Book of Kings in Light of Royal Funerary Rites in Ancient Israel and the Levant” (Dissertation, Los Angeles: Univ. of California, 2008), 3n.4, 41.).


668 Schmidt, “Memory as Immortality,” 94.

669 Ibid., 94–95.
evidence suggests that royals were buried with personal provisions (including, perhaps, human retinues) to provide continuous service even in the afterlife.  

Non-Burial as a Literary Weapon in Identity Destruction

The ritual performance of burial and funerary customs not only constructs ongoing social identity, but also provides the context within which rituals can be purposively inverted. Royal monuments and literature, in particular, are arenas in which the ideal funerary ideology might be transformed into the anti-ideal. As S. Richardson notes, “Social identity… is created not purely by the projection of perfecting ideologies, but also by their admonitory inversion.” For Richardson, the inversion of ideal burial and funerary rites create a negative social identity for the deceased. I posit, however, that the material and literary evidence demonstrates that the inversion of ideal burial often functions to diminish identity through shame or destroy identity by preventing memorialization.

We have seen how funerary monuments and rites functioned to guarantee memory of the deceased by their living kin. Accordingly, the desecration of funerary structures and corresponding denial of funerary offerings served to obliterate the memory—and identity—of the deceased. As Chapters 2 and 4 demonstrated, curses in the written records of the aWA and ancient Israelite often explicitly threaten the physical funerary structure and/or prohibit funerary rites. A few examples demonstrate this pattern. An early Sargonic inscription states: “Whoever destroys this inscription—may An destroy his name; may Enlil exterminate his seed.” Here, we see the common pairing of “name” and “seed” (or “progeny”). Esarhaddon’s Vassal Treaties include similar terms: “May Šarpanitu who gives name and seed, destroy your name and your

671 Richardson, “Death and Dismemberment,” 191.
672 Kramer, The Sumerians, 324.
seed from the land” (VTE 6:435-6). The Sefire Stela also includes a reference to the destruction of one’s name: “[And may his name be for]gotten, and may [his grav]e be . . . .” (AIS II:A:4-5).

Homer’s *Iliad* suggests that the unburied Patroclus is forgotten once he is dead, but not yet buried:

> You sleep, Achilles, and have forgotten me; you loved me living, but now that I am dead you think for me no further. Bury me with all speed that I may pass the gates of Hades; the ghosts, vain shadows of men that can labor no more, drive me away from them; they will not yet suffer me to join those that are beyond the river, and I wander all desolate by the wide gates of the house of Hades. Give me now your hand I pray you, for when you have once given me my dues of fire, never shall I again come forth out of the house of Hades.

Here, the unburied spirit begs for burial so that his spirit can rest permanently in Hades; the act of burial is considered an act of remembering.

As the material reviewed in Chapter 2 demonstrated, Egyptian inscriptions include name-destruction to a far greater extent than their aWA counterparts. Recall the inscription from the Tomb at Hasaya:

> As for anybody who will not recite this, he shall fall to the anger of his city-god, and to the slaughter of the king. He shall not be remembered among the spirits and nevermore shall his name be mentioned on earth; he shall not be buried in the West, he shall be burned together with the damned, since Thoth has condemned him; he face shall be spat at.

J. Assman concludes that curses on ancient Egyptian funerary monuments aimed to destroy not only the body and name, but also one’s entire identity:

> Curses . . . aim at total destruction and annihilation . . . they aim at the total dissolution and decomposition of a person in all his aspects, in this world and in the hereafter….the technique of cursing consists in knowing how to undo a person. It presupposes a concept of person, a knowledge of what constitutes and belongs to a person[,] and how these different elements and constituents are most effectively disintegrated and annihilated.

Clearly, actions resulting in the inability of the living to remember the name of the deceased imperil the identity of the deceased after death. Because identity and memory are joined

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674 Ibid., 159.
integrally in social construction, the destruction of the locus of identity also seeks to destroy memory of the deceased. This concept extends to communities (e.g., the city of Jerusalem) and corporate bodies (e.g., Israel).  

In the HB, the infamous treatment of Jezebel’s corpse in 2 Kgs 9:37 illustrates how deprivation of burial led to a presumed erasure of one’s memory among the living: “the corpse of Jezebel shall be like dung on the field in the territory of Jezreel, so that no one can say, ‘This is Jezebel’.” Without a burial site, there can be no inscribed tomb; and Jezebel’s kin can neither offer funerary sacrifices nor partake in commemoration rites by which Jezebel’s name could be honored and remembered.

The concept of name-destruction applies to corporate identity as well. In Isaiah’s mašal against the King of Babylon, Isaiah provides an explicit reason for casting the King of Babylon out of Sheol: “May the descendants of evildoers nevermore be named!” (Isa 14:20c). One’s name (reputation, identity) is destroyed not by burial in Sheol, but by exclusion from the afterlife in Sheol. Psalm 83 provides another insightful example. The Psalmist includes stereotypical terminology of non-burial in a threat against Israel’s enemies: “Do to them as you did to Midian, as to Sisera and Jabin at the Wadi Kishon, who were destroyed at En-dor, who became dung for the ground” (Ps 83:9-10). The reason for this treatment of the foe appears in vv. 3-4:

They lay crafty plans against your people;  
they consult together against those you protect.  
They say, “Come, let us wipe them out as a nation;  
let the name of Israel be remembered no more.”

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675 In a similar way, a complete destruction of a city (coined by Jacob Wright as “urbicide”) seeks not only to destroy the inhabitants and institutions of the city, but also to destroy the memory and identity of the city.  
676 Of course, inclusion of Jezebel’s corpse abuse in the text ironically allows for her to be remembered. Still, the inclusion of her post-mortem abuse in the narrative assures that Jezebel’s name forever will be associated with dishonor.
These verses suggest that Israel’s foes wanted to destroy any memory of Israel; therefore, the Psalmist implores YHWH to punish the enemy with reciprocal acts. Because the enemies attempted to destroy Israel’s name, their punishment should culminate in the decomposition (into dung) of their own corporate identities.

**Non-Burial as a Literary Weapon in Covenant Enforcement**

**Covenantal Relationship**

Throughout much of the HB, Israel’s identity hinges upon its relationship with YHWH. Priestly, deuteronomic, prophetic, and wisdom corpora all present a binding relationship between Israel and its deity. Of course, the formulations of the covenantal relationship vary between corpora. The Noahic, Abrahamic, and Davidic covenants all feature YHWH’s unconditional promises to Israel, although each with particular nuances of the authors’ historical perspectives (Gen 9:8-17; 15:18-21; 17; 2 Sam 7:8-17). In these covenants, YHWH promises to provide divine protection, land, offspring, and a dynasty without placing stipulations on Israel. Other covenantal traditions provide additional layers to the covenantal relationship. The Mosaic covenant appears in several narrative traditions in the HB, each with their own perspectives on the covenant formed between YHWH and Israel (via Moses) at Mount Sinai/Horeb. As I discussed in Chapter 4, biblical scholars long have noted similarities between aWA treaty

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677 There are, of course, occasions in which biblical authors question the endurance of the covenantal relationship. Consider, for example, portions of the book of Job and various compositions in the Wisdom corpus. One notable exception to the foundational belief in binding covenantal relationship appears in the Book of Qoheleth, in which the author questions if any set of meanings or relationships provide security and stability amidst the uncertainty of human existence.

678 The Yahwist (J), Elohist (E), Priestly (P), and Deuteronomistic (D) sources all portray the covenant with variations in terminology and ideological perspective. For more on the distinctions within these sources, see Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period* (2 vols.; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1994), 1:23, 60–66.
traditions and biblical covenant traditions. A notable similarity present in both Neo-Assyrian
treaties and the Deuteronomic treaty is the curse of non-burial (Deut 28:26).

Biblical evidence indicates that being part of a community bound by covenant obligations
impacted one’s enduring memory, which is connected to identity. Consider one psalmist’s
succinct description of how one’s memory is connected to blessing and curses:

The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,
and his ears are open to their cry.
The face of the LORD is against evildoers,
to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth (Psalm 34:16-17 (vv. 15-16 [ET])).

The cries of the righteous reach YHWH. In contrast, one who is unrighteous in life experiences
distance from YHWH. Note that in Ps 34:17b, the remembrance (זִכְרָם) of the wicked is “cut off”
using a hiphil conjugation of the characteristic verb krt (לְהַכְרִית). As we have seen, this verb plays
an important role in both covenantal curses and references to non-burial. To be “cut off” (רָז or
רָע) implies that one is cut off from the covenantal community and unable to benefit from the
blessings it receives.

Psalm 124 also provides evidence of YHWH’s involvement in the life and death (and
burial) of those faithful to the covenant. In the psalm of thanksgiving, the psalmist credits
YHWH with saving the community from enemy attack, which is articulated as drowning (Psalm
124: 4-5). The literary image shifts in vv. 6-7, however, where YHWH is credited with saving
the psalmist not from the flood, but from predatory birds, “Blessed be the LORD, who has not
given us as prey to their teeth. We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowlers; the
snare is broken, and we have escaped.” In this instance, YHWH is not the agent of post-mortem
abuse, but the agent of protection against such abuse.679

679 Note that with both images employed in Psalm 124 (drowning and predatory birds), the implication is a
lack of proper burial. While this dissertation examines explicit and implicit references to corpse abuse
upon the land, further research will examine how the act of drowning one’s victim (i.e., Israelite newborns
in the Nile and the Egyptians in the Red Sea) also result in non-burial.
Non-Burial Motif within the Covenantal Context

This dissertation has demonstrated that the HB includes references to non-burial beyond its appearance in the covenantal curses in Deuteronomy 28. Priestly, deuteronomistic, prophetic, liturgical and wisdom corpora include the non-burial motif alongside the motif of covenant. In many instances, biblical authors refer to non-burial in order to demonstrate that Israelites (or Israel as a nation) has desecrated the covenant. Accordingly, Israel will suffer the consequences spelled out in the nation’s treaty with its suzerain, YHWH. Passages throughout TNK suggest that some Israelites have acted in such a disloyal manner that they will suffer one of the most visual and harsh punishments in the ancient world: deprivation of burial.

Covenantal Desecration Leading to Non-Burial

The preceding discussion on burial and identity makes clear that non-burial has implications beyond the context of treaty stipulations in Deut 28:26. Indeed, threatened or actualized non-burial “undoes” the identity of its victim. In the majority of these threats, Israel’s identity as YHWH’s covenantal partner suffers severe blows.

In the Priestly corpus, the Exodus generation proves so disloyal that YHWH choses to terminate them. After Moses’ intercession, not all of the people will die in the wilderness. Instead, the corpses of the older generation will fall in the wilderness, with neither record of burial nor burial site (Num 14:28-35). A. Leveen aptly connects proscribed death in the wilderness with covenant infidelity. “Once they had broken the covenant,” she writes, “God can legitimately kill them off in the wilderness. For their part, the people fail to understand that by refusing to conquer the land, they have rejected the only life available to them.”680 Life in Egypt was no longer possible; the life of the wilderness generation depended upon their willingness to continue their journey as God’s designated people. God’s insistence that the corpses of Israel’s

680 Leveen, “Falling in the Wilderness,” 249.
exodus generation must fall in the wilderness before their offspring enter Palestine implies that the deceased forfeit both the land promised to their ancestors and divine protection. They cease to be God’s people. Moreover, the disloyal Exodus generation forfeits its ancestral ties; these people never will have the opportunity to receive honorable burial in their ancestral homeland. When the survivors of the wilderness period enter the land, several decisive moments feature the burial of ancestors who were deemed worthy to traverse the wilderness and die in the land (see, e.g., Joshua 24). The contrast is stark. On one side of the Jordan one finds death without burial in an ancestral territory; on the other side, life within the covenantal community and the potential for honorable burial awaits.

In addition to Psalm 34 (see above), the book of Ezekiel expresses the concept of a discontinued connection to the covenantal community. In Ezek 37:11, the 6th c. BCE priest/prophet interprets the experience of exiled Israel by means of a popular saying uttered by exiled Judeans in Babylon: “Our bones are dry, our hope has perished; we are utterly cut off.” Ezekiel’s audience performs this proverb in order to liken its existence to the status of abandoned, unburied corpses. Dry bones are scattered upon the earth, with neither fellow Israelite nor patron deity to rescue them. But there is more to the claim of being “cut off” than simply being “effectively dead,” as S. Olyan demonstrates:

…the expression לixo נגזרנו may suggest that exiled Judeans, like the dead, are no longer the beneficiaries of Yhwh’s covenant loyalty, that they cannot hope in his faithfulness, that they are forgotten by Yhwh, that they are unable to worship Him, and that they will never return to their land. 681

For many, life as an exiled Judean signals that YHWH has broken the covenantal promises of land and king. Judah and Jerusalem are no longer under the control of YHWH’s people, and Judah has ceased to be recognized as God’s set-apart nation. This sentiment also appears in Jer 8:1-3:

681 Olyan, “We Are Utterly Cut Off,” 51.
At that time, says the Lord, the bones of the kings of Judah, the bones of its officials, the bones of the priests, the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be brought out of their tombs; and they shall be spread before the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven, which they have loved and served, which they have followed, and which they have inquired of and worshipped; and they shall not be gathered or buried; they shall be like dung on the surface of the ground. Death shall be preferred to life by all the remnant that remains of this evil family in all the places where I have driven them, says the Lord of hosts (emphases mine).

Here, the distance between YHWH and Israel during the exile is likened to non-burial (in bold); standard, normative death is preferable to the deportees’ current state of exile (in italics).

Texts that refer to non-burial often express the intended results of non-burial, explicating why Israel’s status must change from YHWH’s covenant partner to discarded outsider. Two correlated issues appear most frequently. First, the shame that Israel will experience is an end in itself. Second, Israel’s public shaming demonstrates that it must withstand the consequences of covenant disloyalty made clear in its treaty stipulations. YHWH’s punishment demonstrates continued suzerainty, even in the midst of Israel’s diminished state. In other words, while Israel’s positive reputation and identity are undone by threats of non-burial, YHWH’s identity is fortified.

**Diminishment and Destruction of Victim’s Identity**

Several explicit and implicit references to the deliberate imposition of shame as the intended result of non-burial appear in the HB. As the references compiled in Chapter 4 illustrate, the non-burial motif often includes terms associated with shaming. Frequently, humiliation before both kin and enemy appears as the intended result of non-burial. Isaiah’s oracle against unfaithful covenant partners describes the intended result and motive of YHWH’s punishment. YHWH states: “I also will choose to mock them, and bring upon them what they fear; because, when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, they did not listen; but they did what was evil in my sight, and chose what did not please me” (Isa 66:4). Several verses later, text

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682 Isa 66:22-23; Jer 12:13; 15:3; 19:8; 34:17; Nah 3:5; Pss 53:5; 79:4. The imposition of shame also is clear in non-burial threats that reverse the fortune (or political position) of the victim, such as Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 31.
contrasts punishment for the rebellious with blessings for the faithful. In vv. 22-24, YHWH proclaims:

For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, says the LORD; so shall your descendants and your name remain. From new moon to new moon, and from sabbath to sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, says the LORD. And they shall go out and look at the dead bodies of the people who have rebelled against me; for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.

The enduring name of the faithful (v. 22) differs markedly from the exposed corpses of the rebellious (v. 24). Not only will the rebellious suffer non-burial, but also they will “be an abhorrence (דֵּרָאוֹן) to all flesh” (v. 24). The result of YHWH’s punishment in v. 24 fulfills the intent to mock in v. 4.

Several of Jeremiah’s prophecies of punishment also explicitly name shame as a central intention of the punishment. Jeremiah 19:7b-8 demonstrates this well: “I will give their dead bodies for food to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth. And I will make this city a horror, a thing to be hissed at; everyone who passes by it will be horrified and will hiss because of all its disasters.” Here, publically felt shame lies at the root of YHWH’s punishment.

A final example demonstrates that prophets frequently combined metaphorical motifs in order to impose shame. In Nah 3:3-5, the author explains that the Assyrians will experience the horror of unburied corpses because they have led other nations to apostasy (v. 4). As noted above, Nah 3:3 provides a vivid depiction of unburied corpses piled in the streets and causing horses to stumble over human remains. The following two verses employ sexual and witchcraft imagery to indict the unfaithful city:

683 The obscure term דֵּרָאוֹן, appearing here in Isa 66:24 and in Daniel 12:2 (דִּרְאוֹן), is problematic, and requires further interpretation in light of the non-burial motif.
684 Also see Jer 12:13; 15:3; 34:17.
Because of the countless debaucheries of the prostitute, gracelessly alluring, mistress of sorcery, who enslaves nations through her debaucheries, and peoples through her sorcery, I am against you, says the LORD of hosts, and will lift up your skirts over your face; and I will let nations look on your nakedness and kingdoms on your shame (Nah. 3:3-5).

These verses aver that the victim’s impending punishment and accompanying shame will be that of a woman whose body is publically exposed. Finally, the end of Nahum’s oracle includes terminology often associated with burial and non-burial: “Your shepherds are asleep, O king of Assyria; your nobles slumber (ךָנָמוּ רֹעֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ אַשוּר יִּשְׁכְנוּ אַדִּירֶי) /Your people are scattered on the mountains (נָפֹשׁוּ עַמְךָ עַל הֶהָרִּים)/with no one to gather them (וְאֵין מְקַבֵּץ)’” (Nah 3:18). Here, the prophet uses four verbs that ancient Israelites employed to refer to death and (non-) burial. The shepherds and nobles are unavailable. They are either inattentive to the needs of the king and his people, or they have perished. As Chapter 3 demonstrated, the terms for slumber and sleep are euphemisms for death. In either scenario, the shepherds and lords of the land cannot provide protection for the people who are scattered upon the mountains. The Assyrians are abandoned “with no one to gather them.” The phrase “gather them” alludes to death and burial formulary, in which one is “gathered” to one’s ancestors in death and burial. Moreover, “no one to gather them” is a stereotypical phrase in non-burial threats. In Nahum 3, defeat results in exposed corpses and shame depicted metaphorically as a woman publically exposed against her will.686

685 There very well might be a word play in this clause, for the term to scatter (שׁנפ) reminds readers of שׁנפ, which indicates a corpse, or a person’s vital life spirit (see above, pp. 174, 274-275).

686 In her careful analysis of ritual acts, T. M. Lemos notes that transformation (or destruction) of identity often appears in relation to those on the margins of society: “While Israelite men are portrayed as using violence to abrogate the personhood of other Israelite men as well as [foreigners and women], the marginal status and sometimes ambiguous claims to personhood of these other categories of person made them all the more susceptible to physical violence” (see Lemos, “Physical Violence and the Boundaries of Personhood in the Hebrew Bible,” 2).
Although several references to non-burial and corpse abuse do not refer explicitly to shame, the shaming intent can be inferred through careful analyses of the socio-literary context. Scholarly investigation of the deliberate imposition of shame is not new in social science research, but it remains a green topic in biblical studies. In the latter field, the most important, current work on shame appears in the work of scholars who focus on ritual violence.  

In his 1986 essay, “The Phenomenon of Violence,” David Riches argued that violent acts are imbued with intent and meaning. When people act violently, they do so in order to communicate a message and institute change. Violence is a social interaction with implications for the individual and the collective. It affects the agent of violence, the victim of violence, and the witness(es) of violence. Moreover, the visual quality of violence furthers the perpetrator’s goal of making an ideological statement in a public forum. As I have shown, violent acts serve to bolster the agent’s identity and power while making public statements about the victim’s identity. Shaming the enemy plays a crucial role in identity transformation and destruction. Conversely, the victim—in the face of a stronger, more powerful oppressor—searches for ways to maintain identity (to “save face”) in spite of the violent, oppressive acts they endure.

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689 Ibid., 11.

Any discussion of ritual violence in warfare ideology within the HB must consider the work of Susan Niditch. Drawing from the social sciences, Niditch sheds light on why Israelite authors referred to AWA military practices in their own writings. She argues that herem (ban) ideologies often appear in societies in which groups fear loss of their own identity in the face of external oppression and violence. When the ban is employed as an enactment of God’s justice, outsiders are objects of the most visually violent acts in order to present the threatening force as wholly different from insiders. In this way, ban ideology is functional. Total extermination works to purify the body politic. When the enemy is viewed as an absolute outsider, it becomes a monster that is simultaneously evil, unclean, and contagious. The ban as God’s justice contends with the notion of killing other human beings by dehumanizing them. In other words, violence for the sake of divine justice often results in the altering of the victim’s identity.

The physical transformation of a victim through ritualize acts of violence visually communicates a change in status. Acts such as the imposition of the herem, post-mortem abuse, and imposed shaving simultaneously shame and alter the victim’s identity. Consider the act of shaving mandated in Deut 21:10-13:

> When you go out to war against your enemies, and the LORD your God hands them over to you and you take them captive, suppose you see among the captives a beautiful woman whom you desire and want to marry, and so you bring her home to your house: she shall shave her head, pare her nails, discard her captive’s garb, and shall remain in your house a full month, mourning for her father and mother; after that you may go in to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife.

The foreign captive is transformed into a woman worthy of marriage within the Israelite community after performing several ritual acts. Visually, the woman is shaved and her nails are

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691 At the 2013 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Baltimore, MD, scholars assembled to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the publication of Niditch’s War in the Hebrew Bible. In addition to papers that pushed the limits of Niditch’s theory on war ideology, informal discussions focused upon how her work applies to the most recent work on ritual violence and its impact upon our reconstruction of ancient Israelite concepts of personhood.

692 Ibid., 74.

693 Ibid., 77.
trimmed. Moreover, the woman must symbolically mourn for her parents—as if they were
dead—signifying separation from her kin. Through these ritual acts, the foreign woman
effectively shifts from an outsider to an insider (see also David’s shaving of the Ammonites in 2
Sam 10:1-5).

The intended transformation of a person or nation from one entity/identity into another
through ritual acts applies not only to the enemy outsider, but also to the outsider within.
Concerning specific acts of violence against corpses, the agent of violence seeks visually to
transform the changed status of the exposed person (or the exposed nation) from an identifi able
entity into one with no identity. With no possibility of normative post-mortem treatment and
honorable burial, the victim loses insider status, becoming a definitive outsider, excluded from
normative social behavior by means of exclusion from the tomb. Indeed, several examples of
non-burial dehumanize the victim, suggesting that he or she will become (like) dung or prey.

Jeremiah 12:7-12 provides a helpful example. In this text, YHWH proclaims:

I have forsaken my house, I have abandoned my heritage; I have given the beloved of my
heart into the hands of her enemies. My heritage has become to me like a lion in the
forest; she has lifted up her voice against me—therefore I hate her. Is the hyena greedy
for my heritage at my command? Are the birds of prey all around her? Go, assemble all
the wild animals; bring them to devour her. Many shepherds have destroyed my
vineyard, they have trampled down my portion, they have made my pleasant portion a
desolate wilderness. They have made it a desolation; desolate, it mourns to me. The
whole land is made desolate, but no one lays it to heart. Upon all the bare heights in the
desert spoilers have come; for the sword of the LORD devours from one end of the land to
the other; no one shall be safe (italics mine).

Here, Israel’s culpability in its demise has serious consequences. Verses 7-8 provide YHWH’s
reason for the punishment Israel will endure: speaking out against God. Further, in v. 10, YHWH
accuses Israel of destroying the “pleasant portion” it received from YHWH. The author then

\[^{694}\text{Olyan, “Shaving Rites,” 618.}\]
\[^{695}\text{For fuller analyses of the ritual dynamics in this passage, see Niditch, } War in the Hebrew Bible, 85; Olyan, “Theorizing Violence in Biblical Ritual Contexts: The Case of Mourning Rites.”}\]
\[^{696}\text{On this dynamic in the book of Jeremiah in particular, see Stulman, “Insiders and Outsiders in the Book of Jeremiah.”}\]
reverses Israel’s expected fate in v. 12. Israel—just accused of scavenging the land—becomes
the target of scavenging birds and hyenas. As Benjamin Foreman observes, “Whereas we would
expect that the animals of the field and the vultures above are gathered in order to devour the
same thing that Israel is feasting on, the tables are turned in the last word of the metaphor: Israel
becomes the prey!” (author’s emphasis). Through the ritual act of non-burial, Israel’s formerly
held identity as YHWH’s covenant partner yields to its new identity as prey. The change in
status to Israel’s nationhood demonstrates the fragility of identity in ancient Israelite thought. T.
M. Lemos notes that “one could be moved ever so quickly from the status of full personhood to
an animalized state of being, one moment a man, another a body in parts, gnawed by vultures and
wolves.”

The victim of non-burial suffers the shame of post-mortem abuse and a change in identity
within the covenantal relationship. As S. Olyan observes, the imposition of shame often appears
in covenantal contexts:

The conferring of honor and the inscription of shame may function to externalize
conformity or nonconformity to covenant stipulations or to communicate relative position
in a status hierarchy. Covenant honor, like covenant love, is reciprocal; it applies to
partners in parity treaties and to those in covenants of unequals (vassal-suzerain treaties),
even if the reciprocal nature of honor is not always made explicit.

Understood in this light, a suzerain (i.e., YHWH) who believes that the vassal (i.e., Israel) has not
honored its covenant stipulations may shame the vassal in order to communicate a change in
covenantal status. Olyan argues that ritual acts were instrumental in the imposition of shame:
“the context for such actions was frequently ritual: public rites became a medium through which

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697 Foreman, Animal Metaphors, 229.
698 T. M. Lemos recently delivered a paper exploring how acts of ritual violence often “animalize” the
victim. This insight is particularly applicable to acts of post-mortem corpse abuse; see T. M. Lemos,
“Violence and the Personhood of Foreigners in the Hebrew Bible,” in Warfare in Ancient Israel: Ethics and
Ideologies of War: Warfare Studies at the 20th Anniversary of Susan Niditch’s War in the Hebrew Bible
699 Lemos, “Physical Violence and the Boundaries of Personhood in the Hebrew Bible.”
700 “Honor, Shame, and Covenant,” 205.
the state of covenant relations was effectively communicated. And covenant relations were never static; they were maintained through the public inscription and reinscription of honor, or transformed by means of public diminishment or shaming.”701

Clearly, ritual acts, including corpse abuse resulting in non-burial, carry several consequences. First, deprivation of burial excludes the victim from any possibility of normative funerary practices, many of which were assumed to lead to a peaceful afterlife. Without burial, there could be no communion with deceased ancestors, no funerary offerings, and no burial sites with tombstones that served as loci of commemoration rites.

Second, non-burial was meant to cause shame for perpetuity. Taking clues from literary resources and findings from the social sciences, I have discussed how the agent of non-burial (frequently YHWH) sought to shame victims in the course of punishment for covenant disloyalty. Further, agents of post-mortem abuse intended the shaming or erasure of their victims’ identity. The fragile status of personhood and nationhood in ancient Israel is reflected in texts that threaten non-burial for the explicit purpose of destroying one’s name. As T. M. Lemos writes, violent rites “uncreate personhood.” Finally, non-burial carried implications for one’s identity as YHWH’s covenant partner. In many non-burial texts, covenant disloyalty results in the diminishment or destruction of the victim’s identity.

**Establishment or Bolstering of Agent’s Identity**

Non-burial clearly seeks to diminish or destroy the victim’s identity. Acts of non-burial are more than destructive, however. As Lemos and Olyan note, ritually violent acts, including non-burial, function not only to uncreate the personhood of the victim, but also (simultaneously) to create, sustain, or bolster the identity of the perpetrator. Olyan notes that “rites shape reality

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701 Ibid., 208.
Therefore, rites (particularly violent rites) function “to shift the status of a human being from that of person to that of non-person, and to highlight the superior status and superior claim to personhood of the one inflicting the violence upon someone else.”

In a single act, the identities of both entities can be transformed. Through non-burial, the victim’s identity is altered or erased, while the agent’s identity is established. Several references to non-burial include explicit reference to identity formation.

In the context of ancient Israel’s literature, YHWH is most often specified as the agent of the abuse. Accordingly, a resulting knowledge of YHWH appears as the explicit goal of non-burial in several passages. In some instances, knowledge of YHWH’s omnipotence is highlighted as the intended result of non-burial. In other texts, biblical authors state that through the following acts of post-mortem abuse, both victim and witness will “know YHWH.” In Ezekiel 32, YHWH’s “lament” over the anticipated downfall of Egypt contains explicit references to non-burial:

I will throw you on the ground, on the open field I will fling you, and will cause all the birds of the air to settle on you, and I will let the wild animals of the whole earth gorge themselves with you. I will strew your flesh on the mountains, and fill the valleys with your carcass. I will drench the land with your flowing blood up to the mountains, and the watercourses will be filled with you (Ezek 32:4-6).

The result of Egypt’s violent destruction is pronounced at the conclusion of the “lament”: “When I make the land of Egypt desolate and when the land is stripped of all that fills it, when I strike down all who live in it, then they shall know that I am the LORD” (Ezek 32:15; emphasis mine).

The recognition formula (“then you [or they] will know that I am YHWH”) appears in

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703 Lemos, “Physical Violence and the Boundaries of Personhood in the Hebrew Bible.”
705 1 Sam 17:44-47; Isa 18:5-6; Jer 9:23; 16:21; Ezek 6:7; 6:13; 29:6; 32:7; 33:27; cf. 2 Sam 4:12 in which David’s identity is bolstered rather than YHWH’s.
conjunction with references to non-burial at a number of other places in the HB. Not surprisingly, however, the book of Ezekiel contains more examples than any other biblical book. A primary theological theme running throughout the Book is Ezekiel’s insistence that despite the Temple’s destruction in 587 BCE and the deportations of Judah’s inhabitants, YHWH remains sovereign over Israel and the cosmos. Any restoration of Israel and its land ultimately occurs in order that both the Israelites and other nations acknowledge YHWH’s identity as the unrivaled sovereign. The recognition formula articulates the downfall of nations as part of Israel’s restoration. In short, this formula plays a vital role not only in the compositional structure of the book of Ezekiel, but also in its rhetorical presentation of Israel’s future. In oracles against Israel in Ezekiel 1—24, the recognition formula appears at the conclusion of oracles to insist that Israel will be forced to acknowledge YHWH’s unparalleled power. Here, in the destruction of both Israel and its foes, acknowledgement of YHWH’s identity as sovereign is decisive. Ezekiel’s repetitive use of the recognition formula also makes important claims about how Israel should act in the covenantal relationship with YHWH. The formula’s occurrence following indictments of rebellious apostasy suggests that knowledge of YHWH is not theoretical; instead the recognition of YHWH “becomes de facto a denial of false gods.”

Recognition of YHWH’s identity over and against the destroyed identity of the victim of corpse abuse appears in threats against enemies (as in Ezekiel 32) and against Israelites who have desecrated the covenantal relationship. Consider Ezek 6:4-5, 13:

Your altars shall become desolate, and your incense-stands shall be broken; and I will throw down your slain in front of your idols. I will lay the corpses of the people of Israel.

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in front of their idols; and I will scatter your bones around your altars… And you shall know that I am the Lord, when their slain lie among their idols around their altars, on every high hill, on all the mountain tops, under every green tree, and under every leafy oak, wherever they offered pleasing odor to all their idols (emphasis mine).

Here, YHWH insists that Israel’s apostasy will result in a double defilement. First, the altars will be defiled by the corpses and bones YHWH scatters around them. Second, the land itself will be defiled when the corpses are exposed throughout the land of idol-worshiping covenant violators.

Verse 3 includes a word play; gillûlim both refers to idols and evokes gelâlim (“dung pellets”). References to scattered corpses and allusions to dung-pellets connotes more than defilement of altars and land. Indeed, such words are common in references to corpse abuse and non-burial. A scattered corpse defiles what it touches, to be sure; but it also suffers the vast consequences of deprivation of burial. The victim’s identity is transformed and shame is imposed. Throughout, the goal of the shame-inducing, identity altering post-mortem abuse is the ultimate knowledge of YHWH. In Ezekiel 6—as in other examples discussed throughout this dissertation—the non-burial motif suggests an enduring demolition of the victim’s formerly held identity while simultaneously bolstering the agent’s identity.

709 See BDB, 164-165, for the usage of these two terms. For a discussion on the translation history of these two terms, see Moshe Greenberg, Ezekiel 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 132. Darr, The Book of Ezekiel, 1159.
**Conclusion**

Throughout this dissertation, I have demonstrated that issues related to death and burial are fundamental to ancient Israelite authors—a concern they shared with many other human societies. I have contributed to the understanding of the deprivation of burial, an important aspect of this phenomenon. Proper burial signaled several things; the deprivation of proper burial also carried multiple implications. First, proper burial indicated that the deceased would maintain his or her memory among living kin. Memory was tied directly to one’s burial in a tomb and the enduring invocation of one’s name. Without burial in a specified location, one’s living kin could not provide proper tribute to the memory of the deceased. Second, proper burial signaled that one would enter Sheol in the afterlife. Characteristic death and burial formulary suggest that proper burial led to communion with deceased ancestors in Sheol. Consequently, lack of proper burial prohibited one from a restful afterlife among the deceased kin. Third, and clearly related to the first two points, when one received proper burial, living kin could provide proper funerary offerings. Biblical and extra-biblical evidence alike suggests that both the quality and quantity of funerary offerings was understood to have an impact on the quality of afterlife. Without burial, kin could not offer food and drink, leaving their deceased ancestors parched, hungry, and restless in Sheol. These three implications of proper burial—and, by extension, its deprivation—affect the future existence of the deceased. With neither proper burial and mortuary rites nor admittance into the social life of Sheol, the non-buried person either disappears into oblivion, or perhaps restlessly roams, as aWA sources indicate.

Other implications of non-burial also appear. The deprivation of burial does not impact the individual alone; it bears implications for an entire community (or kinship group). First, non-burial demonstrates that a community has neither the power nor the organizational ability to maintain control of its corpses. 2 Samuel vividly illustrates the communal implications of proper
burial and non-burial. Rizpah’s extended vigil over the bodies of her sons and step-sons insures that neither enemy nor scavenger can gain access to her kin’s corpses. Although she is unable physically to bury the men, she can protect their remains from scavengers.

Second, the community’s ability to bury its dead suggests that its deity has provided the opportunity to do so. In other words, Israel’s theocentric ideology of events led it to interpret the act of burial as evidence of divine blessing. By contrast, the converse suggests that non-burial signals divine punishment. Frequently, the literary contexts of references to non-burial in the HB explicitly mention covenant obligations. In other instances, non-burial signals divine displeasure with disloyalty and the subsequent punishment.

Similarities in stereotypical “non-burial” terminology, emphasis upon identity in the afterlife, and literary context suggest that the mechanisms of cultural influence provided a region-wide stock of descriptive language concerning the deprivation of burial. The compilation and analysis of biblical and aWA references to non-burial demonstrate that biblical authors often utilized allusions to non-burial in ways similar to their aWA counterparts. First, both biblical and aWA authors drew upon similar terminology to describe the horrors of non-burial. Second, references to non-burial in both corpora often share a similar literary context, appearing in either treaty/covenant or military literary contexts. Third, non-burial is threatened as the most severe outcome for potential treaty violators and is intended to shame the victim in hopes of dissuading future defiance, or—in the case of Judah’s 6th and 5th c. BCE exile prophets—to encourage changes in behavior.

The significant differences between the two corpora require explication. Mesopotamian suzerainty treaties bonded suzerain and vassal nations; hence, punishments were levied against a foreign nation or other, would-be enemy of the suzerain. Israel took the pattern of the suzerainty treaty and applied it to its perception of the human-divine relationship. Although treaties between
humans and deities are not attested among Israel’s aWA neighbors (although deities functioned as “witnesses” to these treaties and enforcers of their obligations), Israel’s perception of its relationship with YHWH was largely informed by these aWA treaties. The Israelite treaty forged between YHWH and Israel stipulated that if the latter breached its covenant responsibilities, the requisite punishment would fall upon God’s own people. Accordingly, the vast majority of post-mortem threats in the HB, including non-burial, are directed against the insider (Israelite). Of the approximately forty-nine references to the non-burial motif I have compiled, only twelve are directed against outsiders (non-Israelites).

A second, significant difference is connected to the first. As stated above, the curses of an aWA suzerainty treaty were levied against a weaker vassal nation by a mighty suzerain. Ancient Israelites used the treaty metaphor to define their relationship with YHWH. Thus, when a curse is threatened or enacted, biblical texts often portray YHWH as the agent of violence. YHWH’s agency transpires either directly or through a proxy. Indeed, many biblical texts that threaten and admonish Israel using verbal images of non-burial depict YHWH as the principal, 

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711 See, e.g., the covenant curses in Deut 28:15-68.


713 The precise number of references is indefinite because several passages include multiple threats of non-burial within a single pericope. See also Ps 79:1-4 and Prov 30:17, in which poets refer to the non-burial motif in distinctive ways that do not fit neatly into the categories provided here.

active agent who personally “casts” Israel out onto the field and leaves it to scavenging animals.\textsuperscript{715}

Threatened or actualized non-burial against an individual clearly attempts to diminish or destroy the identity of the deceased. The victim’s name, reputation, and memory suffered from the deprivation of burial. On a broader, metaphorical level, threatened or actualized non-burial against an entire people suggests that they no longer hold the same status they once possessed. In Isaiah 14, Babylon’s non-burial suggests that the empire no longer is capable of destroying its enemies and boasting about its victories. Babylon defined itself by its mighty power over and against the smaller city states it destroyed. Babylon’s descent into Sheol and sudden exhumation sinks its haughty king and nation into death’s abyss and punishes the once-great king through corpse exposure. In Israel’s self-description in Ezek 37:11-14, the people’s perceived, post-mortem corpse exposure signals that they no longer see themselves as covenant partners, shielded from defeat by YHWH (also see Jer 8:1-3). Israel’s identity as a chosen people under YHWH’s protection is nullified following the people’s rebellious desecration of the covenant.

The purpose of non-burial often entails a multi-tiered transformation of identity. We have seen that non-burial does not simply destroy the victim’s identity. It also enforces the identity of the agent of violence. Returning to our examples of Babylon and Israel, we see that Mesopotamian reliefs depicting their practice of scattering and stacking corpses underscore their identity as a sure and strong military power. In biblical literature, however, references to non-burial rarely include knowledge of Israel as their intended result. Rather, knowledge of YHWH’s strength explicitly appears alongside the non-burial motif. In literary contexts in which both the

\textsuperscript{715} See, e.g., Isa 5:25; Jer 19:7; Ezek 6:4-7; 33:27-29; 35:8. The Ezekiel passages are especially telling since YHWH, the speaker of the threat, uses 1st person verbal conjugations in graphic depictions of post-mortem abuse. On curses invoked by YHWH upon Israel, see Daniel Isaac Block, “Beyond the Grave: Ezekiel’s Vision of Death and Afterlife,” \textit{Bulletin for Biblical Research} 2 (1992): 118–119; Johnston, “Nahum’s Rhetorical Allusions to Neo-Assyrian Treaty Curses,” 417; also see Joo, \textit{Provocation and Punishment}.\textsuperscript{715}
motif of non-burial and covenant appear, the scattering of enemy and Israelite corpses alike serves to demonstrate the ultimate power of Israel’s treaty partner, YHWH. Thus, references to non-burial allow the author simultaneously to diminish (or destroy) the identity of one party while reinforcing the identity of another party (and, especially, its God). Like other ritualized acts of violence, e.g., shaving, stripping, or stoning, the casting off of human remains has both destructive and formative intents and results. The ideological perspective of a particular author determines whose identity will be diminished and whose will be bolstered. On one hand, death-dealing rhetorical weapons wield the power to turn a corpse into a statement of divine sovereignty. On the other hand, the same words also contain the potential to cast a nation into oblivion.
**LIST OF JOURNAL ABBREVIATIONS**

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>BAR</td>
<td>Biblical Archaeology Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>BASOR</td>
<td>Bulletin for the American School of Oriental Research</td>
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<td>BASORSup</td>
<td>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research Supplementary Series</td>
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<td>BBR</td>
<td>Bulletin for Biblical Research</td>
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<td>Bib</td>
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<td>BibOr</td>
<td>Biblica et Orientalia</td>
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<td>BSac</td>
<td>Bibliotheca sacra</td>
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<td>CBQ</td>
<td>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSM</td>
<td>Harvard Semitic Monographs</td>
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<td>HTR</td>
<td>Harvard Theological Review</td>
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<td>HUCA</td>
<td>Hebrew Union College Annual</td>
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<td>IEJ</td>
<td>Israel Exploration Journal</td>
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<td>JANES</td>
<td>Journal of the ancient Near Eastern Society</td>
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<td>JAOS</td>
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<td>JQR</td>
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<td>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</td>
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<td>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</td>
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<td>OBO</td>
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<td>ZAW</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche wissenschaft</td>
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  o “Jerusalem Isaiah”
  o “The Vision of Isaiah”
  o “The Book of Psalms”
  o “Job: ‘Our Ancestor, Out Contemporary’”
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    • Preaching/Teaching Challenging Biblical Passages
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  o “Safety and Sanctity: Moses on the Mountain, God in our Lives”
  o “The Politics of (Re)Naming in the Bible”
  o “Romans 1-4, Paul and the Law”
  o “Wisdom Literature and the Case of Sirach”
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- National Society of Collegiate Scholars
- Golden Key Honors Society
- Boston University Graduate School Organization
PARISH AND COMMUNITY WORK

2014-Present  Immaculate Conception School Parents’ Association, Marlborough, MA
  • Co-President, ICSPA Board

2012-2014  Immaculate Conception School Parents’ Association, Marlborough, MA
  • Secretary, ICSPA Board

2011-Present  Immaculate Conception School, Marlborough, MA
  • Member, Annual Fund Board

2005-Present  Immaculate Conception Parish, Marlborough, MA
  • Member, Parish Choir
  • Lecturer, Women’s Bible Study
  • Cantor
  • Soprano Soloist

2005-2009  Immaculate Conception Parish, Marlborough, MA
  • Assistant Director, Children’s Choir

2003-2005  Christ Episcopal Church, Needham, MA
  • Director, Junior High Youth Group
  • Member, Christ Church Parish Choir
  • Member, Music, Liturgy, and Worship Committee

2002  Eikos Community Services, Brighton, MA
  • Counselor in Residential Mental Health Community

1997-1999  Trinitarian Congregational Church, Concord, MA
  • Leader, Middle School Youth Group