

SAMSON'S RIDDLE

"And the Lord said: I will destroy man whom I have created from off the face of the earth: both man, and beast and creeping things, and the birds of the air: for I repent that I have made them. But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord." [1] This much we must always remember: if God had not noticed Noah, the fish, and not Israel, would have been God's chosen: they, and not man, would have been the summit of creation. [2] These two, fish and man, had been linked in many ways even from the beginning. They were both "created", all other things were "made" [3]: only they received a blessing [4]: and though the fish but not man are said to be "good" [5], neither man nor fish are said to be "so". On the first half of the sixth day all will return to normal. The animals will be made, not created. They will be "so", but they will not receive a blessing.

At first they seem an odd pair. Fish are at home in the chaotic waters of the sea. They know no laws, and they have no kins. But we cannot live in the sea. Their home would be our death. How different these two, man and the fish! And yet, neither man nor fish is said to be "so". What then is meant by the phrase "and it was so"? From the context, it does not seem to mean anything like "as it had been in speech, so is it now in deed", since the phrase usually occurs prior to the actual coming to be of the object itself. The hebrew word, if we can judge anything rightly by its roots, seems to mean something like "having a clear way in which to be", [6] as in the sentence "He likes things just so." What is this kinship we have to the denizens of the sea, this strange lack of an "it was so"? They neither follow the ecliptic as does the sun, nor are they restricted to one surface of motion. No paths have been marked out for them in the sea from the beginning. The created beings share an openness of direction, since man too can wander. Perhaps it is because they are both open and free to wonder that they are both in need of a blessing. As we go on we, shall meet others who share in this openness.

And what of that home, the sea? What are it's beginnings? Again, everything is just a bit off - nothing perfectly is clear. Normally we say that it was the second day of creation which was devoted to the establishment of the sky and the waters. Indeed, this would seem to be right and exactly according to God's great overall plan for creation:

Day One	- Light	Day Four	- Sun and Moon
Day Two	- Sky and Water	Day Five	- Birds and Fish
Day Three	- Dry Land including Plants	Day Six	- Animals including Man

God's Plan was clear, simple, and even elegant. The work of the last three days was devoted to the coming to be of the manifestly moving beings which inhabit the several kinds of places prepared for them on the first three corresponding days. But things could not go so smoothly, as the author indicates by not including the words "And the Lord saw that it was good" in the account of the second day. The brute fact is that God's beautiful Plan could not work. There cannot be a sea without the dry land because without the land, the sea has no limits and can provide itself with no definition. For that reason, the words "and the Lord saw that it was good" appear twice on the third day, once to mark the completion of the work of the second day, and once for the work of the third day, properly speaking.

And so once again, the sea, when was it made? In a sense it had always just been there. "And the spirit of God hovered over the waters". [7] Officially it was brought into being on the second day. And yet, in a sense it did not exist until it was given a name on day three and clearly set off from all other things. [8] On day two, God made an expanse and it divided the water which was under the expanse from the water which was over the expanse. [9] The text seems to make no fundamental distinction between the two waters. They differ only by virtue of the expanse itself. The angry sea and the torrential rain, part of our everyday experience, are themselves a part of that original chaos, in spite of the fact that by giving them the name "seas", God placed them within bounds.

How shall we begin to grasp hold of these strangers, the sea, and the fish who can live so peacefully in it? Well, perhaps, to begin with something a bit more human, let us consider the great Fish God, Dagon [10] and his people, the Philistines.

Of their origins we know little or nothing, or indeed perhaps we know too much. From chapter ten of Genesis, the great chapter on the generation of the peoples of the earth, we know that Ham's second son was Egypt who in turn had seven sons, the youngest of whom were Kasluhim and Crete. [11] Of the former we are only told that "Out of there came the Philistines." The phrase occurs nowhere else in the chapter and clearly marks a break in the rhythm of the passages like "... and the sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz and Riphath and Togarmah," which occurs no less than eleven times in the course of the chapter as a whole. Now while the word "to come out of" can occur in the phrase "to come out of the loins of", when used by itself it does not usually imply family origin. Again it is unclear whether the Philistines were in fact sons of Ham, or whether they were men who somehow managed to get through the flood along with their friends the Giants, and ended up in Kasluhim either on their own, or by the help of their Fish God, Dagon. At any rate they were an island people lately come out of the Western Sea, and living in part of what had been the Promised Land.

But let us assume that the Philistines did in fact come from Ham. Ham who had the misfortune of accidentally seeing his drunken father naked and asleep in the tent. As we read the book of Genesis we are all forced to participate in Noah's drunken stupor. The wine of oblivion shapes the whole of things from that point in the book on. The names Adam, Eve, Cain, and Able, Methuselah, Seth, and Enoch, even the serpent and The Garden of Eden, not to mention the the flood itself none of them will ever appear again within the Torah or the books of the Earlier Prophets. [12]

The origins of the whole must be stated in some form, but from the Biblical point of view they must also be forgotten. They may not be harkened back to either as a paradism or as a way of understanding. The temporal besinnings must be compleatly superseded by a covenant. But that is exactly what Ham cannot do.

We are not told whether Ham intended to look or not. It doesn't matter. He has seen what he should not have seen, and knows what he should not know. That is his curse. He cannot participate in the waters of forgetfulness. His mind had been so transfixed by the sight of those antediluvian origins, which lie in back any political society that he could never trust any covenant. Since he could never join in any covenant, it folowed that he was at least in part bound to become a "servant of servants". (This fundemental mistrust that the sons of Ham had for any covenant may be best seen in his grandson Nimrod, who built the tower to escape any future flood. He relied on nothing trusted nothings. Using brick for stone, and slime for mortar, he built it in a plain so as not to use even a mountain. [13])

The first philistine that we actually meet is their king, Abimelech, the man to whom Abraham introduced his wife Sarah by saying "this is my sister." In his own way, he is a good man, in some ways perhaps one of the best that we shall meet in the whole book. But as I say it may only be in his own private way, a way which cannot be taught, and hence a way which cannot be passed on or learned by others. The reader need only compare the words "And he took Sarah" [14] with the parallel passage in Chap. Twelve, "And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house", [15] to see his love and good intentions, though Abraham may not have been as sensitive to the distinction. In fact, Abimelech's only reaction to what Abraham had done to him was to ask naively "What sawest thou that thou hast done this thing?" [16] He naturally assumes that Abraham would not have acted as he did without believing himself to have good cause. He is totally guileless, but equally incapable of recognizing guile. Noble as he is, his followers, as we learn when we meet him for the second time, are all thieves and he is compleatly oblivious to everything. [17] Abimelech is indeed no king at all. Such is the life of the blessed fish.

Some years later we meet Abimelech for the third time. [18] In every verse one is impressed by the depth of his humanity, but again trouble arises, this time between the men of Abimelech and the servants of Isaak. The Philistines had filled with earth all the wells which Abraham had dug. [19] They justified their action

by saying "The water is ours" [20] In Hebrew, of course, the claim is ambiguous and could equally have been translated "Water is ours". Water, according to them, belongs to Dason, earth to the God of Abraham.

A full appreciation of this passage would require a more complete understanding of the character of Isaac than can be presented within the confines of this lecture, but let this much suffice. He is the son of Abraham and the father of Jacob. Other than that there's not much to say. He was always pretty much of a blind and bumbling old fool. His whole life was arranged for him, first by Damskus Eliezer, [21] and then by his wife Rebecca. [22] He liked his venison, [23] and was dumb enough to be caught red-handed by Abimelech. [24] In spite of all this, everything he did always came out right. [25] His one great deed was to keep his father's wells open. In his sleep and blindness, he showed that traditions well laid, could rest in the hands of a blind but constant keeper, only to arise again refreshed in another generation. That was his blessing. He was the blind keeper. [26] Issac had the one virtue the Philistines, men of the Sea God, lacked. Abimelech's virtues were to die with him.

In this context we can see yet another way of understanding the relation between Israel and the Philistines. From the time the two first met on the field of battle, the Israelites were constantly referred to as "Hebrews", [53] a term regularly used only by Philistines. [54] Aside from its use in Gen. 14:13 which would require a very long explanation, it was first used of Joseph when he became a slave in Egypt. [55] It was consistently applied to all the Sons of Israel while they were slaves [56] but once the Red Sea was crossed, the word, where it was not being used by a Philistine, only occurs in the phrase "Hebrew slave". [57] From the Philistine point of view, the Israelites are nothing but slaves, because for them law as such is slavery. The Philistines, on the other hand, are the only people whom the Israelites call "the Foreskined", [58] since they above all men, are in their natural state and know no covenant.

According to the Book of Joshua, God's original plan for the Promised Land included the land recently occupied by the Philistines. [27] But, when God saw that not all the people had the virtue of Isaac, He decreed that the Philistines would remain "to put Israel to the proof". [28] The two had arrived together, one from the east and one from the west, one from the desert and one from the sea. One brought law, the other brought chaos. There would be wars, but neither would finally conquer the other. Thus it became clear Israel could not live without the Philistia! But why should this be so?

Samson's encounter with the Philistines may not solve the problem, but it may define it with greater clarity. By trickery, they were able to answer Samson's famous riddle about the honey he had found one day in the rotting carcass of an ass: "Out of the eater came forth the eatable, and out of the powerful came forth the sweet". [29] But we must try to answer the riddle

without any tricks. How can honey come forth out of the beast? What kind of wisdom can come out of turbulent power? What need can Israel have of the sea? The fourth chapter of the First Book of Samuel presents a glimpse into what might be called a provisional solution to our riddle. How can honey come forth out of the beast? What need can Israel have of the sea?

The sons of Eli, and with them the whole of the priesthood in Shilo had grown corrupt. [30] Before the priesthood could be renewed, the ark had to be captured and remain for some time in the hands of the Philistines. [31] If we think about the importance of water in the cleansing of any defiled object, we can begin to see the fascination which the sea in all its deadly turbulence held for the author. Unlike the peace and lawful order which he wished to establish among men, chaos, destructive as it may be to human existence, may be the only thing in our visible universe not open to guile, spite, or corruption.

While it was in the hands of the Philistines, a great battle took place between idol Dagon and the ark of God. The outcome was disastrous for the Philistines. God sent them a plague of hemorrhoids and mice, and "The head of Dagon and the palms of both his hands lay severed on the threshold, but Dagon remained upon it". [32] God did not destroy him, but set him within his limits as he had done to the sea. In typical Philistine fashion, they carefully return the ark, sending along with it five golden hemorrhoids and five golden mice, again causing us to wonder about the relation between the beautiful and the ugly or between "the sweet and the strong".

When the ark returned to Beth Shemesh, it had somehow changed, but the people had not yet changed with it. Fifty thousand and seventy of them were struck by the Lord just for having looked at it. [33] All we know of these people is that they were indeed of the sons of Aaron and entitled to hold the ark but could not. [34] Almost without thinking, they called for the men of Kiriath Jaarim, and Abinadab accepted it without any fear, and kept it safely for twenty years. [35] Now it must be remembered that these men were not Israelites. They were part of the Gibeonites who had tricked Israel into signing a covenant with them back in the days of Joshua, [36] and the text makes it clear that even in Samuel's day the people were still sensitive to the difference. [37] Israel was still not prepared for the ark, and, except for the disastrous time King Saul, already out of favor with the Lord, took it into battle, [38] the ark remained in the house of Abinadab, and thus out of the hands of the sons of Israel up until the time of King David. [39] But that would take us well ahead of our story, and we must return to the time of Samuel.

The rise of kingship in Israel was a long and very complicated affair, but even before Saul had been confirmed, God made it the first duty of the king to save Israel from the Philistines. [40] The first time we see them, however was under quite different circumstances. The Philistines were present when Saul

was first sent by Samuel to be "among the prophets". [41] Now it must be remembered that at this point in the book, those who were called "the prophets" were not the men we normally think of. They were men who came down from the infamous "high places" with harps, tambourines, flutes, and lyres. At best they were utterly useless; [42] at worst they conjure up notions more akin to the Bohemians, if not to madness itself. [43] The book even goes out of its way to mention that neither Moses nor Samuel themselves were called by the name prophet in their own day [44] But this is not the time to tell the tale of how the book itself understands the metamorphosis which prophecy underwent and which ultimately led to the rise of men like Elijah and Elisha and finally men like Isaiah and Jeremiah [45].

Here, at any rate, Samuel seems to have sent Saul there to give him a new spirit, but when the phrase "is Saul also among the prophets?" occurs in the text for the final time we shall see clearly what the Philistines, who were quietly there from the beginning, may have already known for a very long time, its close connection to his eventual madness. [46]

Saul handled himself well in his first battle which against the Ammonites, [47] but when it came to the Philistines things were no longer the same. Fear caused him to attack without waiting for Samuel to perform the sacrifice, [48] for he was not able to share Jonathan's spirit that "there is no restraint upon the Lord to save by many or by few". [49] Although Saul was stripped of his kingdom that day, the war went on; [50] but it did not go well. In what seems to be another sign of his approaching madness, Saul commanded the people not to eat anything until after the battle. [51] It was a mad attempt to rid himself of the Philistines within himself by denying all natural needs. The results were disastrous, as Jonathan understood from his taste of honey, and among the people eating took its wildest form. [52]

After the war, Saul seems to have been offered something like a reprieve if he could destroy the Amalekites, but he cannot kill Agag, their king. [53] The relationship between the Amalekites and the Philistines is a tale too long to be told here. Suffice it to say that Amalek, as the grandson of Esau, was Israel's closest relative. [60] We assert here without proof that as the Philistines are the sea without, so Amalek is the sea within. If Saul could conquer that he would indeed be king, but he could not. Samuel loved Saul, but Saul was mad and madmen cannot be kings. [61]

An evil spirit was upon Saul and he sent for "a man of music" [62] to cure him of his madness. Music, a song without speech! A strange concept in Israel! It is the first time the word "to play" [nagan] comes up in the Bible, and it will only come up once again in the set of books from Genesis through Kings. In deed, it does not seem to be part of the way of law at all. We must keep a good eye open for the many kinds of music which affect Saul, and the many ways in which he is affected by them. On this occasion it refreshed him, and caused the evil spirit to depart. [63] But this "man" who charmed away the king's

madness was in fact just a boy, a mere boy, a ruddy, fine eyed young boy, [64] but a boy whom we know had already been appointed king. [65]

David was perhaps a bit impetuous and one might well suspect that his brother Eliab was nearly right when he said "I know thy insolence, and thy peevishness, for thou art come down to see the battle". [66] None the less, there it was! "And he smote the Philistine, and killed him, but no sword was there in David's hand". [67] One cannot help comparing this to Saul's fear on first meeting the Philistines, especially when one remembers that "Neither sword nor spear were found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son there were found". [68]

Saul was pleased with David at first, but then there came that other song - the woman's song: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands". [69] The Hebrew rings with a doggerel kind of rhyme, and the evil spirit returned. [70] Now, even David's song could not help.

Saul's plan for getting rid of David included marrying him off to one of his daughters, Meribah or Michal. It didn't matter which. After all, they were both his daughters. "But Michal loved David". [70] That was the thing Saul could not understand; Michal and Jonathan both turned against him and in love with David. What was this fascination that was stronger than family, stronger than law? As Saul later put it to Jonathan, "Thou perverse and rebellious son, do I not know that thou hast chosen the son of Jessi to thine own disgrace, and to the disgrace of thy mother's nakedness"? [71] Saul speaks and we remember Noah.

After Saul's attempt on his life, David ran to Noyoth. Saul sent messengers and ultimately came himself. [72] When he arrived we see the full implication of that line we had heard so many years before "Is Saul also among the prophets?". [73] The text reads: "And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in a like manner, and lay down naked all the day and all the night. Wherefor they say, is Saul also among the prophets?" Only now do we see the full implications of that first meeting between Samuel and Saul. The innocent boy is now a ruined old man laying naked on the ground with a stern Samuel standing over him. Is this what that haunting phrase "Is Saul also among the prophets" meant even from the beginning? One day Saul the innocent will have Does the Edomite slay Ahimelech and destroy the whole city of Nob, even when servants would not obey a king to "put forth their hand to fall upon the priest of the Lord." [75] What was it that the boy who went looking for his father's asses found? How has trust of family and fear of the sea lead him to mistrust of family and a madened embracing of the sea?

And David fled to Nob. There he took the bread of the priests and the sword of Goliath. [76] By breaking the law ever so gently, and taking up the Philistine weapon, David began to enter the sea. At first, he went too quickly and was rejected by the servants of Achish. But David can learn to feign the madness

which held Saul, and so to escape. [77] But how can David continue his Journey back to the sea?

When he left Achish, he went to Adullam and to then Moab. It was a very long Journey and he had to travel back over many centuries. The text reads "David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave of Adullam: and when his brethern and all his fathers house heard it, they went down thither to him." [78] To see what the cave of Adullam meant to "all his father's house", we must go back to the days of his old father, Judah.

It was the time that Joseph had been sold into Egypt as a slave. Reuben was the eldest and knew it. He felt the responsibility, and it was his idea to put Joseph in the pit, thinking to come back later and return him to his father. [79] But the oldest is not always the wisest. Judah rightly saw the depth of the problem. It would not just go away as Reuben had thought. No, the boy had to leave. But how to manage it? His plan was twofold and it was masterfull. "And Judea said unto his brethern, what profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our own hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brothers were content." [80] It was only after he had shown them that they had nothing to gain by killing their brother, that he appealed to any natural abhorrence they might have of fratricide. Without the appeal to the lower, they would not have heard the appeal to the higher. Without the appeal to the higher they would have learned nothing.

And so Joseph was sold into Egypt, and his brother killed a kid. They dipped the coat into its blood, and taking it to their father they said "Please to recognize whether this be thy son's coat or no." [81]

It was about this time that Judah the met Hira the Adullamite. He had left his brothers who were no brothers at all, since they did not know what it meant to be "of our flesh". He wanted nothing more of them. He went off to start afresh, but things did not go well. Er and Onan His sons were both dead and the daughter of Shuah, his wife as well. All seemed death. And Tamar his daughter in law was waiting in widow's weeds for Shelah the youngest, to grow up. But in time Judah was comforted, and went sheepshearing with Hirah the Adullamite. On his return, he met a harlot and when they parted, he left her his signet and his cord and his staff as pledges. But when he sent Hirah the Adullamite to redeem the pledges, no harlot was to be found. [82] Judah was then told that Tamar had played the whore, and went to stone her. But she met him with his signet and his cord and his staff, and said to him "Please to recognize ..." [83]

It's hard to know whether Judah even heard the rest. Those words "Please to recognize", they must have cut more deeply than even Tamar could have understood. It was so many years ago, and now he was hearing them over again. This time they were addressed to him. But who was speaking? Time had gone awry. Was it Tamar?

Or was it his brothers? What were they trying to say to him? What is it that he must recognize? Why must he go back?

The next time we see Judah, he was among them again. They all had gone down to Egypt to buy grain, and suddenly found themselves standing in front of Joseph accused of being spies. Suddenly, they all remembered: "And they said one to another, we are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us and we would not hear; therefore is this distress." [84]. Reuben, the eldest spoke: "Did I not say unto you 'do not sin against the boy,' but you did not hear: and now his blood is required." [85] Reuben felt the problem, but he began to pull back just as Judah was returning. Reuben was insensitive to their recognition of their own guilt, and seemed only to wish somehow to exclude himself from their confession. But for the moment Judah remained silent.

When they returned, Jacob, mourning the loss of Joseph and of Simeon, would not allow Benjamin to be taken back down into Egypt. Reuben again spoke up: "Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: Deliver him into my hand and I will bring him to thee again." [86] This contorted show of concern, however was far from what Jacob wanted, and Reuben's suggestion was simply ignored. And Judah still waits.

When the time was right, Judah spoke to his father simply and soberly. "The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you. If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food: but if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down: for the man said unto us, ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you." Jacob was still not persuaded. "And Israel said, wherefore dealt ye so ill with me as to tell the man whither ye had yet a brother?" The brothers tried to make an excuse, but Judah remained simple yet firm. "And Judah said unto Israel his father, send the lad with me and we will arise and go; That we may live, and not die, both we, and thou, and also our little ones. I will be surety for him: of my hand shalt thou require him: If I bring him not unto thee, then let me bear the blame forever: for except we had lingered surely now we had returned this second time." This time everything is simple nothing is in excess and Jacob agrees. [87]

By the time they arrived in Egypt, Judah had clearly emerged as leader. He related the past. In almost childlike terms he quietly but firmly tells the Great Magician of all the pain that he has caused Jacob. When their discussion is over, the reader knows that sobriety is more powerful than magic; and that the Ephraimite who will one day be king, will not be a man from Ephraim, the son of Joseph, but a man from Ephrath, that is to say, from Bethlehem.

Judah looked at Tamar and heard the rest of her speech.

That was the story David could learn from the walls of the

cave of Adullam.

David was to be in the cave of Adullam one more time. It was late in his life. The Philistine Wars had been over for many years and David was an old man. Then suddenly as if from nowhere they were back. There were giants of all sorts and men with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot. Even David fought well on that day. He and his men killed four of the giants, but they kept coming, and at one point in the battle David grew faint. [88] That was to have been his last battle.

When it was over, he, like so many war-time leaders of our own day, seems to have wished only to retire and sing his songs once more. But there was one more battle. David was in the cave of Adullam and the Philistines were in Bethlehem. Then "David had a desire and said 'Oh that one would give me a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!' And the three mighty men broke through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord. And he said, Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men." [89] What was his desire? David never intended to drink the water, but he was getting old. How could he die if there were no young men of the next generation who had been to the Philistines and had brought back water?

When David left Adullam he took his mother and father and brought them to the king of Moab. Again he has gone back in time, back to wonderful days of his mother Ruth [90] and back to the horrible nights of his father Lot. [91] Have we then begun to see some kind of answer to our question "How can David continue his journey to the sea?" It seems to require a going back, a knowledge of who he was, where he came from, and why it was he who had to be king. But have we really come so far only to find ourselves faced with nothing but a knot of contradictions?

How can David be a teacher were there is nothing to be taught? How can there be tradition in the ever-changing sea? But there is even greater contradiction. Thus far the argument seems to have led us to say that David's blessing, his going back, his seeing behind, is identical to the curse of Ham. No solution to this problem appears within our present horizon, and we must proceed with great care.

After David left Moab, the prophet Gad told him to go to the land of Judah. [92] While there he heard that the Philistines had attacked Keilah, and asked God whether he should rescue them. The answer was "Go!" But, because his men were afraid of the venture, David asked God a second time, and God, even more emphatically, said "Arise, go!" In a way, God was right. The battle was a great success, but when David asked, "Will Saul come down against me?", God said "He will come!" Then David continued to

ask, "Will the men of Keilah deliver me into the hand of Saul?" The laconic God said "he will deliver!" [93] God knew that all the time. David had been tricked! He was now a fugitive from both sides. To return to the sea, to be in the act of becoming a fish means to be neither a man nor a fish. But even in this position, David is able to sign a covenant with one private man, Jonathan, but it may have been the most important. It was here, somewhere between the land and the sea that Jonathan ceded the kingship to David. [94]

We are next presented with two battles. In many ways, such as names and incidents they are quite repetitious. But as we have noted in the case of Abimelech, the author often uses repetition as a way of carefully examining a difference or a change.

The first battle began when an otherwise practically unknown people, the Ziphites told Saul, who was in Gibeah, that David was in Hachilah south of Jeshimon. David heard about it, and went to a place called Maon and Saul gave chase. On this occasion David would have lost the battle, but was saved by the Philistines, who happened to attack Saul at the same time. There was no particular intention on their part, but none the less, David was saved by the Philistines. [95]

David fled to En-sedi, and Saul pursued. In order to relieve himself, Saul went into a cave. David, who happened to be hiding in the same cave, rather kill him, cut his skirt. But even for that he later felt remorse and Saul was reconciled to him. [96]

The second battle starts out as an exact repetition. Again, the Ziphites told Saul, who was in Gibeah, that David was in Hachilah south of Jeshimon. But now things begin to change. This time it was David who attacked and rather than being surprised in the cave. He planned his entrance carefully and far from feeling remorse, he seriously, but also somewhat playfully chided the king's men for so poorly guarding him. The most important difference, however is that in the second affair he did not come as close to the person of the king. Saul, even though he was asleep at the time, was, after all in a somewhat less delicate position than he was the first time. None-the-less, while David had one of his men take the King's spear and cruse of water, he himself did not come near the king's person. [97]

We must note that while he took both the spear and the cruse of water, [98] and even mentions both of them when chiding the king's men, [99] he returned only the spear. [100] We should also note that the word for "cruse" is used rarely in the Bible, -and only in connection with the mystical acts of Elijah. [101]

To understand this we must consider the story which the Author chooses to tell in the interlude between the two wars, in which David hears what he himself called "Abisail's advice" [102] "to shed no blood causlessly." [103] Saul the man need not die, but he could no longer be king, he could no longer hold that

mystical cruse because his inability to face the the sea without going mad rendered him incapable of containing the waters of chaos in confinement.

Abisail's advice "to shed no blood causlessly," was all David had. David was now prepared to enter into the depths of the sea to meet the Philistine. But would he ever find that long road back? Can a man kill a monster even to protect humanity without becomming a monster himself? God's Law, the one He had given to Moses on Mount Sinai, it said "Thou Shalt not Kill," but David would killed. Some would translate "thou shalt not murder," but murder presupposes civil law, and David was going into the sea. Abisail's advice will be a turning point in the life of David. Weak as it may sound, it will hold true even in the roughest sea, and it will bring him back to the land and to the law. We know from the story of Uraiah and Bath Shibah that the Author is fully aware of the fact that the way is not easy to find. We also know that one day Daved will find his way home, but by then his son, the first one he had with Bath Shibah, will be dead and he will have suffered much. And what of the last days of Queen Eshter, beautiful Queen Esther? Poor Queen Esther? The Bible seems to be warning us that some never make it back home. And what of the wind that now blows cold to the north. But now we must return to our story.

After David had spoken with Abisail, he prepared to become a fish and Achish accepted him without question. Achish reminds the reader of Abimelech. He is good, kind and generous, [104] and compleatly taken by David who spent most of his time in his all important war against Amalek.

But for Saul things went badly. He was a broken man, and there was no one he could turn to but the Witch at En-dor. The reader knows that as one who participates in the covenant, he is under personal obligation to stone every witch he encounters, [107] and now he is to meet one for the first time. Under protestation, she raised Samuel from the dead. But Samuel rejected Saul again. Saul was mad and madmen cannot be Kings. But the witch showed him compassion. In a manner that reminds the reader of the meal Abraham served the three angels, she promised little, and served him a fatted calf. [108]. For Samuel, Saul was a king who had to be rejected; but the Witch, precisely because she had placed herself compleatly outside the law, could reward him as a man and pity him.

However, let us not all become mere dreamers. One day during the reign of King Manasseh, the author will be forced to remind us how dilitorious witchcraft is to political life, [109] but to the extent that he has caused us to fall in love with the Witch that we have been commanded to put to death, the author has, for the moment at least, caused us all to peer beyond ourselves, to become fish. This means the text has led the reader to acknowledge that while he must follow the ways of Israel, there are others like Abimelech, like Achish, and even the witch, who follow other ways, and who are no less pleasing in the sight of the Lord. In this case then, to love ones enemy means not to love

him in his potential sameness, but in his actual otherness.

In the few remaining moments we could go on to see how David was able to restore the ark to Israel and bring Israel back to the ark. Instead however, let us consider a man who may have peered into that world beyond our world in a manner even more profound, Job.

Job was perplexed. He wanted to believe the stories of the wise that the good prosper while the bad sink and suffer, but all around him wise men suffered and good men were brought low. He had only to look at himself to know that not all men who suffer have evil hidden in their hearts. There were times when to proclaim such a doctrine only served to increase an already undeserved pain. God was just, yet the salutary myth was not always salutary. Indeed, it could even be cruel.

Then, in the tempest, God showed him many things, and Job was crushed. I am, he said, of little worth, and what shall I answer thee. [110] Most translators and commentators seem to be satisfied with Job at this point, and treat the next three chapters as if they were no more than a repetition. But, as we shall see, God was not looking for recantation. He was demanding much more. Indeed, He meant it when He said "Gird thy loins like a hero!" [111] For it will take a hero. He wanted Job to see Him with the seeing of his eyes rather than hearing of Him with the hearing of his ears. [112]

This meant going beyond the world of men who speak and into the watery realm of the great fish, the Leviathan. He saw its beauties and its horrors. He saw the wild ass snorting its civilization, and the silly ostrich. He saw the grass which grew where no man was: and he saw the great Leviathan itself. There he saw God at play. He seems to have thought about Samson and his riddle. How can the sweet come forth out of the strong. His answer has been deeply misunderstood.

The men of King James say: "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent on dust and ashes." The new JPS translation says "Therefore, I recant and relent being but dust and ashes." [113]

King James is right. The word means "to abhor", or perhaps it would be somewhat more accurate to say "contempt". But the verb "to have contempt" must have an object, and there is no word for "myself" in the text. Now if King James were right in what follows one would expect the "ethnach" to fall on the word "contempt", but it falls on the word they translate "repent". In addition, the word by itself does not mean "to repent" or "to relent", but "to feel a deep sense of inner sorrow." As in English, if one feels sorrow for some past action of one's own, one may be said to repent, but as in English, the word "sorrow" by itself implies neither guilt nor repentance.

Then too, the elipsis "on dust and ashes" meaning "while sitting on dust and ashes" is a construction foreign to Hebrew

syntax. On the other hand, it is quite normal for the word translated "on" to follow the word for sorrow, and together they simply mean "to feel a deep compassion concerning....."

The words "dust and ashes" occur in two other passages in the Bible. In one place Job himself is speaking, and in the other, Abraham uses them while he is playing the part of Job in front of God before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorah.[114] In both cases they mean "man", "lowly man".

Job's last words then are "I have contempt and compassion for mankind." Job had entered into a strange land. It was bitter more terrifying and more tender than any man had ever seen. But it was a world in which Man is no more than a fleck, and his boils no more than a fly buzzing 'round his head. When Job prayed for the well being of the comforters who had so tormented him, he showed that he had learned to live at ease in both worlds at the same time. He had lived in the waters and had returned to live on the dry land. The compatibility of contempt and compassion then seems to be Job's answer to Samson's riddle, and Abigail's advice to David. Perhaps only a man who felt as Job did after God's first discourse could have understood the things that were shown to him in the second. It was that which allowed Job and David to return where Theseus could not. One need, however, only consider the story of Bathsheba to see that the Author knows that the problems are great and that he is not in possession of any magical solution.

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I owe a debt to a student of mine Mr. Holsted for having shown me that the Jonah was another who went beyond, but learned only contempt - contempt without compassion.

Isaiah was another who went beyond and saw the great fish. Now since, for him, the day will come when God will slay the monster,[115] there is no contempt - there is only compassion. But for Job, God is not like an angry child who would smash the head of its toy.[116]

NOTES

[1] Gen. 5:7,8

[2] ib. 5:4

[3] ib. 1:21,27

[4] ib. 1:22,28

[5] ib. 1:21

[6] cf. "The Lion & the Ass" Note to 1:12

[7] Gen. 1:1

[8] ib. 1:10

[9] ib. 1:7

[10] I S. 1:1 ff

[11] Gen. 10
 [12] ib 9:22 ff
 [13] ib 10:1 ff
 [14] ib 12:15b
 [15] ib 20:2
 [16] ib 20:10
 [17] ib 21:25 ff
 [18] ib 26:1-10
 [19] ib 26:14-22
 [20] ib 26:20
 [21] ib 24:1 ff
 [22] ib 27:1 ff, 46
 [23] ib 27:3
 [24] ib 26:8 ff
 [25] ib 26:12 f 22 ff et. al.
 [26] ib 26:24
 [27] Jos. 13:3
 [28] Jd. 3:1-3
 [29] ib 14:14
 [30] I S. 2:27 ff
 [31] ib 2:34, 4:4
 [32] ib 5:4
 [33] ib 6:19
 [34] Jos. 21:13-16
 [35] I S. 7:1-2a, II S. 6:3-4
 [36] Jos. 9:17, 6:4
 [37] I S. 7:2b
 [38] ib 14:18
 [39] II S. 6:1 ff
 [40] I S. 9:19
 [41] ib 10:11
 [42] Ju. 6:8
 [43] Ex. 15:20, Nu. 11:25, I S. 10:5
 [44] Nu. 12:6, I S. 9:9
 [45] The Lion and the Ass: Disression following note to
 Gen. 20:18
 [46] I S. 10:11-12, 19:24
 [47] ib 11:5
 [48] ib 13:11
 [49] ib 14:6
 [50] ib 13:13
 [51] ib 14:24
 [52] ib 14:24-45
 [53] ib 13:3,7
 [54] ib 4:9, 13:19, 29:3
 [55] Gen. 39:17
 [56] Ex. 9:1
 [57] ib 21:2 et al.
 [58] Ju. 14:3, 15:8, I S. 14:6 et al.
 [59] I S. 15:1-33
 [60] Gen. 36:12
 [61] I S. 15:33,34
 [62] ib 16:15
 [63] ib 16:23
 [64] ib 16:12
 [65] ib 16:13

[66] ib 17:28
 [67] ib 17:50
 [68] ib 13:22
 [69] ib 18:7
 [70] ib 18:10
 [71] ib 18:18-20
 [72] ib 20:30
 [73] ib 19:22-22
 [74] I S. 19:24
 [75] ib 23:17
 [76] ib 21:2-10
 [77] ib 21:11-16
 [78] ib 22:1
 [79] Gen. 37:21,22
 [80] ib 37:26,27
 [81] ib 37:31,32
 [82] ib 38:1-23
 [83] ib 38:25
 [84] ib 42:21
 [85] ib 42:22
 [86] ib 42:37
 [87] ib 43:3-10
 [88] II S. 21:15-22
 [89] ib 23:15-17
 [90] Ruth 4:22
 [91] Gen. 19:36,37
 [92] I S. 22:5
 [93] ib 23:3-12
 [94] ib 23:16-18
 [95] ib 23:16-28
 [96] ib 24:1-22
 [97] ib 26:1-25
 [98] ib 26:11
 [99] ib 26:16
 [100] ib 26:22
 [101] I R 17:12-16. 19:6
 [102] ib 25:33
 [103] ib 25:31
 [104] ib 27:6, 29:2-11
 [105] ib 27:8, 30:1-18
 [106] ib 30:19-23
 [107] Lev. 20:27
 [108] cf. Gen. 18:5-8 & I S 28:22-25
 [109] II R 21:7
 [110] Jb. 40:3
 [111] ib 40:7
 [112] ib 42:5
 [113] ib 42:6
 [114] ib 30:19 & Gen. 18:27
 [115] Is. 27:1
 [116] Ps. 74:13-14