

Species and Ethnicity in 1 Samuel 15

The Slaughter of Agag and Rejection of Saul

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Abstract

In 1 Samuel 15, Yahweh commands Saul to utterly destroy the Amalekites. Accordingly, Saul massacres the population, but spares the foreign king (Agag), as well as some livestock for sacrifice. Samuel judges this as disobedience, slaughtering Agag and rejecting Saul. In this article, I argue that this narrative trajectory depends upon the interrelated constructions of ethnicity and species. The construction of Amalekite ethnicity includes humans and domestic animals, and is internally divided by socio-economic status into “the best” (humans and animals) and “the despised”. This simultaneous blurring of the species line and reification of a socioeconomic line brings Agag into close correspondence with fattened animals and leads to his sacrifice. When Samuel sacrifices him, he asserts his power not only over Agag but also over Saul, who is described in terms uneasily similar to the Amalekites. Furthermore, Saul is depicted like a bird of prey, and is thereby removed from civilized society, serving to justify his rejection.

Keywords: ethnicity, species, animalization, human sacrifice, 1 Samuel

Introduction

In 1 Samuel 15, Yahweh commands Saul to utterly destroy the Amalekites (15:1-3). Saul strikes Amalek but spares their king and some livestock (15:4-10), taking the latter to Gilgal for sacrifice (15:15, 21). This proves a fatal error. It is judged as disobedience (15:11), and Samuel pronounces Saul’s rejection as king (15:17-19, 22-29), before slaying the foreign ruler, Agag (15:32-33). This scene, then, depicts genocide and ecocide, the Israelites brutally slaughtering the Amalekite people and domestic animals. I will suggest that, as part of this depiction, the text constructs categories of ethnicity and species. These categories do not operate individually, but are employed together to script the total destruction, and to direct the fates of Saul and Agag. These categories, their interrelationship, and their significance for the narrative trajectory, have been overlooked in scholarship, and will be the focus of this article.

In this article, I will address the question: How do the interrelated constructions of species and ethnicity affect the narrative trajectory of 1 Samuel 15, culminating in the slaughter of Agag and rejection of Saul? I will tackle this question in three stages. I will argue: first, that species and ethnicity are co-constructed categories and the expansive designation “Amalekite” includes nonhuman animals; second, that the Amalekite king, Agag, is animalized and sacrificed; and third, that Saul is both animalized and “Amalekitized,” contributing to and justifying his demise.

Ethnicity and Species

Ethnicity and species as constructed categories

The narrative of 1 Samuel 15 is shaped around foreigners and animals. In previous chapters, Israel's primary enemies have been the Philistines; now the Amalekites take centre stage. And while previous Israelite campaigns had targeted humans, now animals too are slaughtered. To justify this destruction, the chapter constructs categories of ethnicity and species. As products of the human mind, all categorizations are artificial constructions.¹ When we categorize, we select certain features from our vast overflow of sensory data and use these features to organize our reality in ways we deem salient and meaningful (disregarding countless other possibilities). Categories that are socially useful become entrenched—and thus naturalized—in our collective consciousness. Species and ethnicity, for example, have proven helpful ways to organize the world, so we rarely question them. We imagine such categories to be stable and firmly bounded and imbue them with value structures and social roles.

Species and ethnicity categories are as constructed as any others. While taxonomies of species may seem to occur objectively in nature, biological categories are not in fact discrete, bounded, or stable; neither their boundaries nor their criteria for inclusion are clearly defined (Lakoff 1987, 185–95). What's more, these scientific categories do not wholly correspond with the ways people actually classify their faunal worlds (Atran 1993). Diverse alternative schemata are employed within traditional ecological knowledges whose epistemic (and political) significance is increasingly recognized (Berkes 1999; Inglis 1993). Ancient Israelites used various classification systems.² 1 Samuel 15 depicts classes of domestic animal. God merismatically commands the destruction of four animal types, each with an important role in Levantine society (15:3): the head of cattle (שׁוֹר), sheep/goat (שֶׂה), camel (גַּמֶּל), and donkey (חֲמוֹר), used primarily for their ploughing, dairying, transport, and haulage respectively.³ Note already the mismatch with our classifications: we would separate שֶׂה into sheep and goat (see Exod. 12:5), and commonly divide שׁוֹר into ox, bull, and cow.⁴ When Saul spares the animals, new terminology is used (1 Sam. 15:9, 14, 15, 21): flocks (צֹאן) and herds (בָּקָר). The shift means that, linguistically speaking, Saul does not straightforwardly disobey God (Gilmour 2022, 93): God condemns certain categories of animal; Saul spares other categories. Furthermore, Saul moves the focus from the individual animal to the collective, and from all classes of animals to only those used for sacrifice (ignoring camels and donkeys).

If species categories are constructed, so are ethnic categories.⁵ “Ethnicity” is a highly contested concept, whose definition and applicability to the Bible are in

¹ This goes against older views of naturally occurring categories defined by necessary and sufficient conditions. Seminally, Lakoff 1987.

² For examples, see Whitekettle 2001 and 2002.

³ See Borowski 1998 for the roles of these and other species. These animals correspond to those in the account of the Amalekite attack in Judg. 6:4-5 (cf. also 1 Sam. 22:17-19).

⁴ For example, see ESV translations of שׁוֹר in Gen. 32:6, Lev. 22:23, and Exod. 34:19, respectively.

⁵ Rainey (2018, 21–4) analyses how the psychological principles and practices of category formation apply to ethnic groups. The constructed nature of ethnicity is increasingly stressed in scholarship; see overview in Miller 2008, esp. 172-4.

dispute.⁶ Definitions of ethnicity drawn from modern sociology can never wholly avoid anachronism when applied to the ancient world. But they can approximate constellations of features that would be emically recognized by ancient authors, and may thus prove a useful heuristic for understanding biblical texts. These features are in flux over space and time and are not reduceable to a necessary and sufficient set. Yet one strategy of ethnic self-definition is particularly prominent: communal myth-making (the stories in Samuel may even be examples of such myths). Tales of shared ancestry, territory, and history are recursively narrated so as to be canonized within the group's collective consciousness (Bloch-Smith 2003, 403; Miller 2008, 175; Rainey 2018, 4–5). As Katharine Southwood put it in her study of ethnicity in Ezra, “Unlike other identities, the sense of ethnic solidarity... crystallizes around putative myths of descent, associations with territories, and shared ‘historical’ memories.” (Southwood 2012, 40).

These features are evident in Samuel's words which open 1 Samuel 15 and establish the central topics of the chapter. Samuel begins by acknowledging Saul's position “over [God's] people, over Israel” (15:1; על-עמו על-ישראל). This ethnically-charged terminology (“people” and “Israel”) will repeat throughout the chapter.⁷ Samuel then invokes the memory of the foundational exodus narrative through his truncated citation of “what Amalek did to Israel in opposing⁸ him on the way when he came up from Egypt” (15:2).⁹ In the broader literary context, this invocation reminds us of Samuel's longer speech a few chapters earlier, in which he rehearsed Israel's shared “historical” memories from the exodus to the present, framed as an ancestral story about “your fathers” (12:6-11). The Amalekites, it seems, require a “hereditary punishment” for the sin of their ancestors against the Israelites' ancestors (Rainey 2018, 153). The ensuing battle takes place “from Havilah as far as Shur” (15:7)—locations which hark back to the ancestral traditions of Abraham and their associated territories (Gen. 25:18).

Israel is thus placed in stark opposition to Amalek. This ethnic division is discursively constructed, rather than being materially or biologically evident.¹⁰ The Amalekites are constructed as a hated enemy, based on apparent historic animosity. Such animosity can be powerful for present identity (Kugler 2021) even if (as is likely within the compositional context here¹¹), the enemy nation has ceased to be a real

⁶ For an overview of recent research on this topic, see Miller 2008. Miller points out the particular problem is isolating ethnicity from other forms of collective identity. For example, ethnicity is closely connected to nationality and race (see Lemche 2012, 24–5; Southwood 2012, 31–41). While none of these terms can be defined by necessary and sufficient criteria, I follow several scholars (such as Southwood) in highlighting the centrality of shared ancestry, territory, and history to ethnicity (see discussion below).

⁷ On עַם (“people”) as an ethnic term in the Deuteronomistic History, see Rainey 2018, 106–11.

⁸ The Hebrew here is נָשָׂא, which usually means “put.” The existence of a specialized usage of this term for military opposition is suggested by 1 Kgs 20:12.

⁹ This event is narrated more fully in Exod. 17:8-16 and Deut. 25:17-19. The direction of dependency between these texts is disputed. Arguing for the priority of 1 Samuel 15 are Gilmour 2022, 94; Kugler 2021; Stern 2020, 165. Arguing for the priority of the Pentateuchal references are Edelman 1987, 74–5; Vang 2020; Yonick 1971, 41.

¹⁰ See the scholars surveyed in Miller 2008, 186–9.

¹¹ The compositional context of this passage is disputed. Several scholars believe that the basic form of the text is monarchic (Bettanzoli 1986, 236), perhaps part of the “prophetic record” (Campbell 2003, 157–58; Hutton 2009, 369; McCarter 1980, 18–21). Others date it later, either to the exilic period (e.g., as part of DtrP; Veijola 1977, 102) or post-exile (Yonick 1971, 50). Complicating

threat. As F. Barth has made plain, ethnicity emerges particularly through discourse and practices at the boundaries: how to distinguish “us” from “them?”¹² Establishing and maintaining these boundaries becomes a strategy to secure and solidify the in-group. In 1 Samuel 15, hatred of the Amalekites binds Israelite insiders with shared affect against detested outsiders. A similar dynamic is evident throughout 1 Samuel. The book narrates a period of crisis and insecurity, in which Israel tries to establish themselves as a unified people, constantly threatened by, and defined in opposition to, enemy groups (especially the dreaded Philistines).¹³

But there are hints that “Amalek” and “Israel” are not stable or bounded categories. The impression at first gained from 15:1-5 is that the city under attack contains all of, and only, the Amalekites. But this clear-cut construction of a people, mapped onto a single place, becomes blurred. Indeed, there are Kenites¹⁴ in “the midst of the Amalekite” (15:6; תוֹדַ עַמְלֵקִי). Neither Samuel nor Yahweh notes their presence, treating the groups as functional equivalents based on territorial affiliation. Furthermore, though this story assumes complete annihilation of the Amalekites (15:7-9, 15, 20), subsequent chapters attest their ongoing presence (27:8; 30:1-20; 2 Sam. 1:1-16; 8:12).¹⁵ The constitution of Israel, too, seems unstable. 1 Samuel narrates the fractious shift from tribal confederacy to unified nation, in which inner-ethnic tensions emerge, especially between the pro-Saulide northern tribes and the pro-Davidide southerners. The events of 1 Samuel 15 are led by Saul but take place in the south,¹⁶ implicating both groups (15:4). Solidifying their communal identity is part of the task of ethnicity construction that Samuel undertakes. 1 Samuel 15 thus constructs opposing ethnic categories, reifying them through discourse, and making them the prime determinants of life and death.

Ethnicity and Species as Co-constructed Categories

Categories of species and ethnicity are not only constructed; they are co-constructed.¹⁷ The Israelites are referred to as “the people” (עַם; 15:1, 4, 8, 9, 15, 21, 24, 30). Already, this seemingly restricts the Israelite ethnicity to the human community (nonhuman animals are not “people”¹⁸), and restricts the human

matters, most of these scholars recognize that the chapter may have undergone several layers of redaction before reaching its present form.

¹² Seminally, Barth 1998, followed by Brett 1996, 13; Miller 2008 172–73; Sadler 2005, 9.

¹³ On the construction of the Philistines as the archnemesis of the Israelites, see Lemche 2012.

¹⁴ The Kenites were a Midianite people, whose presence amongst the Amalekites might be attested by Judg. 1:16 (based on an emendation of העם to העמלקי; so LXX, Vulg; Gordon 1986, 143). They may be favorably viewed for their association with Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law (Judg. 1:16; 4:11) and Jael, slayer of Sisera (Judges 4–5). David will later give them a gift of spoil from Amalek (1 Sam. 30:29). Fensham proposes that a covenantal relationship existed between the Kenites and Israelites (1964, 51–54).

¹⁵ Several scholars argue that the author(s) of 1 Samuel 15 knew these other Amalekite traditions when they were composing their work (Auld 2012; Campbell 2003, 153; Dietrich 2007, 217; Kugler 2021, 11).

¹⁶ Most scholars agree on a southern location based on the accepted territory of the Amalekites (associated with Edom; Gen. 36:15-16), and on the place names in the story: Telaim/Telem (1 Sam. 15:4; cf. Josh. 15:24); Havilah and Shur (1 Sam. 15:7; cf. Gen. 25:18); and Egypt (1 Sam. 15:7). Edelman, though, argues for a northern location (Edelman 1986, 71–84).

¹⁷ Kim discusses the co-constructedness of race and species categories in the contemporary world (Kim 2015, 15-16).

¹⁸ The term עַם is used in Prov. 30:25-26 to refer to ants and rock badgers, but this is outside the usual scope of the word’s meaning and may be a metaphorical and/or anthropomorphising usage.

community (or at least, the community that matters) to the Israelite ethnicity. In its most basic sense, עַם refers to all members of the ethnic or national group. Indeed, this is its sense in verse 1. Yahweh has had Saul anointed as king “over his people, over Israel” (עַל-עַמּוֹ עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל). This programmatic statement sets our expectations for עַם to refer to the whole community of God’s chosen people. This seems to be its sense in its final appearance in the chapter as well (15:30). But there is a semantic shift in the intervening verses. When Saul summons “the people” (15:4), he does not summon all Israelite humans; rather only soldiers.¹⁹ This terminological specification betrays ideological assumptions with political ramifications. To take this expansive term and limit its usage suggests that true inclusion in the group is restricted to able-bodied males of fighting age, i.e., those who wield societal power. To borrow from the theorist Sylvia Wynter, one specific genre of human “overrepresents itself as though it were the human itself” (Wynter 2003, 260). Other demographics, such as women and children, are left out, not truly “the people.” It is little surprise that elsewhere they are conceptually and physically placed alongside nonhuman animals and taken as the booty from war (1 Sam. 30:18-20).²⁰

If Israelite ethnicity is restrictive, Amalekite ethnicity is expansive. Ethnicity becomes a super-ordinate categorization, over and above gender, age, and even species, encompassing merisms “from man to woman, from babe to suckling, from cattle to sheep/goat, from camel to donkey” (15:3). In contemporary Western discourse, domestic animals are not usually ascribed ethnic status. However, other discourses may configure and negotiate the intersection of species and ethnicity in different ways. In Levantine society, domestic animals may have been “ethnicized” by their place within kinship structures. They were cohabitants of Levantine houses and co-laborers within households, their statuses akin to those of servants, women, or children (Exod. 20:10).²¹ 1 Samuel 15 creates a totalized ethnic category, in which internal groupings seep together, and previously existing differentials of function and value begin to blur. All recede towards the “lowest common denominator,” with Amalekite men conceptualized as equivalent to their women, children, and animals. This totalized and value-laden conceptualization grounds the command of *herem* (הָרֵם), total destruction (1 Sam. 15:3).

Saul accepts “Amalekite” as a cross-species category but constructs a new internal dividing line. He distinguishes between the “good” (טוֹב) and the “despised”/“rejected” (15:9; מֵאֵס/בוֹזָה),²² intending to spare the former. The “good” encompasses “Agag and the best of the flocks and herds and fattened animals and rams.” This categorization cuts across species boundaries and is inflected with social

¹⁹ This semantic shift happens elsewhere too, such that עַם at times becomes a word for “troops.” See Lipiński and Van Soden 2001, 176.

²⁰ Indeed, ancient West Asian plunder lists and battle reliefs commonly place animals, women, and children together. On women as plunder, see Clancier 2015, 27–9; Rey 2016, 47–8. On children as plunder, see Riley 2018, 219, 381.

²¹ On non-human animals as kin, see Millar 2023a, 375–8.

²² Scholars almost universally accept these meanings, though the MT is difficult. The forms are נִמְבָּזָה and נִמְאָסָה, both of which I interpret as niph'al participles. The expected morphology of the former would be נִמְבָּזָה. The additional mem might be explained by the scribe accidentally starting to write נִמְאָסָה (so Driver 1913, 124) or as an inserted glide to ease pronunciation (so Tsumura 1999, 408). The expected form of the latter would be נִמְאָסָה. The aleph has apparently quiesced and the grammatical gender changed to masculine (see Driver 1913, 124; McCarter 1980, 262).

class, for the “best” are those humans and livestock who exist in wealth and prosperity—human kings and fattened beasts.

The new categorization may also relate to Saul’s interpretation of *herem*. On the one hand, *herem* totalizes ethnic categories, commanding complete destruction. But on the other, it does not always require indiscriminate treatment of enemies. The king is sometimes given special attention (Josh. 10:28, 36-43; 11:10-18). When Saul takes Agag alive (תפש חי; 1 Sam. 15:8), he may follow the precedent of Joshua, who takes the king alive (תפש חי; Josh. 8:23) after the *herem* command over Ai. Furthermore, in *herem*, domestic animals are sometimes slain (Deut. 13:15; 20:16-17; Josh. 6:21), but they are also sometimes taken (Deut. 2:35; 3:7; 8:27; Josh. 11:4). Though the explicit command is to kill the livestock here (1 Sam. 15:3b), Saul may consider sacrifice a legitimate mode of fulfilment (15:13, 15).²³

Indeed, *herem* may be closely related to sacrifice,²⁴ the burnable bodies of animals and abhorrent bodies of foreigners colliding in a shared zone of destruction. This does not exhaust its possible meanings,²⁵ but it is a prominent implication in many texts: when a first-born animal is *herem*, its fat is burned on the altar (Num. 18:14-17); when an idolatrous city is *herem*, its spoil is a whole burnt offering (כלי; Deut. 13:16-17); when God makes the nations *herem*, he gives them for slaughter, a great sacrifice in Bozrah (Isa. 34:2, 6). Saul may thus be genuine in his belief that he has “upheld the word of Yahweh” (1 Sam. 15:13) by retaining sacrificial beasts.²⁶ His planned post-battle sacrifice may provide a ritualized animal enactment of the Amalekite slaughter, the bodies of men, women, and children transposed onto the bodies of sheep and oxen. The ethnic line is reified, the species line dissolved.

Categories of species and ethnicity, then, are interdependent socio-cultural constructions. In 1 Samuel 15, Israelite ethnicity is restricted to an idealized set (male, able-bodied humans), while Amalekite ethnicity encompasses diverse humans and domestic animals. This totalizing category is useful to ground the wholesale command of destruction and permits an internal differentiation cutting across species lines. As we will see, it also permits a slippage between human and animal, directing the fate of the Amalekite king.

Animalizing Agag

When Saul captures the Amalekite king, his intentions are not clear. Samuel, though, is decisive: he puts Agag to death. He frames this in judicial terms, invoking

²³ So Milgrom 2001, 2419–21. Scholars disagree about whether Saul genuinely intends to sacrifice the animals (so Gilmour 2022, 93–94; Gunn 1980, 71) or not (so Gordon 1985, 57; Sternberg 1985, 506–11).

²⁴ See Gangloff 2004, 18–19; Janzen 2004, 164–76; Niditch 1995, 28–55; Tatlock 2006, 166–74; Wiley 2005, 79–86. For counterarguments, see Nelson 1997, 48; Stern 2020, 173–74.

²⁵ There is some dispute about the meaning(s) of *herem*, though most translate as “devote to destruction” or similar. Its meaning is often differentiated into *herem* in wartime (as here) and *herem* in peacetime (e.g., Lev. 27:28; Ezek. 44:28). These are roughly equivalent to mandatory and voluntary *herem* (Park 2007, 7–52), verbal and noun forms (Versluis 2016), and D and P sources (Stern 2020, 125–26). Niditch (1995) separates *herem* into models of sacrifice, justice, and purification. However, it is unlikely that they can be separated so neatly; rather, there is overlap in conceptualization (Wiley 2005, 70).

²⁶ Monroe argues that the cultic ceremony is an essential part of the ritualized schema of *herem*, as attested in biblical texts, the Mesha stele, and Sabeian inscription RES 3945 (2007). The imagery of the post-war victory feast is embedded in post-exilic biblical prophecy (see Niditch 1995, 37–40).

the principle of *lex talionis* (15:33). However, this is more than a straightforward execution; it is akin to animal sacrifice. Though several scholars have recognized this,²⁷ few have explored its implications. Below, I will suggest that it reveals the complex interplay of animality, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Agag's status as foreign king causes his animalization, shapes its contours, and scripts its communicative message. Above, we saw an expansive category of Amalekites with a socioeconomically-defined subset of the best humans and animals. Here, we will see how the primacy of the socioeconomic categorization over the species categorization renders the boundaries between species less significant and more porous. The human king is easily animalized.

Animalizing the foreign king

In ancient West Asia, defeated foreign rulers were often dehumanized. Inscriptional and pictorial records (especially from Neo-Assyria) attest to the widespread practice of mutilating enemy elites after the battle,²⁸ violently removing their skin, eyes, hands, feet, phalluses, and heads.²⁹ While the public display of severed heads served to identify the victims (Minunno 2008, 248; Olyan 2016, 127), other modes of bodily disarticulation rendered them unidentifiable. When Samuel “hacks to pieces” Agag's body (15:33), Agag is reduced to flesh, and may no longer be recognizable as an individual, an elite, or even a human. To borrow Micah's words, he is “chopped up like meat in a pot, like flesh in a cauldron” (Mic. 3:3).

The particular form this dehumanization took was often animalization (Dolce 2014, 245–7; Pongratz-Leisten 2001, 207–9; Rainey 2018, 54–95). The accustomed techniques of animal treatment provided a performative apparatus to apply to the king. Sometimes in ancient West Asian post-battle depictions, kings are treated like live animals, controlled by yokes or nose ropes,³⁰ dressed in animal skins,³¹ or tied up alongside bears, dogs, and pigs.³² Other times, they are slaughtered like animals. Ashurbanipal, for example, describes the treatment of Danānu and his associates.³³ Dunānu's deputy is flayed. This was apparently a widespread practice,³⁴ which may

²⁷ See Auld 2012, 179; Meyer 2018, 78; Milgrom 2001, 2420; Tatlock 2011, 42; 2020, 307; Yonick, 1971, 47. For counterarguments, see Stern 2020, 175.

²⁸ See Bagg 2016, 57–82; Minunno 2008; for biblical mutilations, see Lemon 2014; Lemos 2006; Niditch 2014, 187; Olyan 2016.

²⁹ In the books of Samuel: Goliath, Saul, Ish-bosheth, and Sheba lose their heads (1 Sam. 17:51; 31:8-13; 2 Sam. 4:5-12; 20:21-2); the Israelites their eyes and beards (1 Sam. 11:2; 2 Sam. 10:4-5); the Philistines their foreskins (1 Sam. 18:25-27); and Rechab and Baanah their hands and feet (2 Sam. 4:5-12).

³⁰ See inscriptions from Sargon of Akkad (Dolce 2014, 247, n.39); Tiglath-Pileser I (RIMA 2, A.0.87.2.25-27, cited in Dolce 2014, 248); and Sennacherib (Pongratz-Leisten 2001, 196). See also iconographic depictions from the Akkadian Empire or Isin-Larsa period (Dolce 2014, 265), Sargon II (Botta and Flandin 1849, pl.118; reproduced in Bagg 2016, 66), and Esarhaddon (Börker-Klähn 1982, no.219; reproduced in Bagg 2016, 66).

³¹ Sargon the Great boasts of dressing up the prince of Tukriš in an animal skin (Pongratz-Leisten 2001, 154–55).

³² See inscriptions from Esarhaddon (RINAP 4:18, 1, iii.41-42, cited in Trimm 2017, 357) and Assurbanipal (RINAP 5, nr.11, viii.10-14, 25-29, cited in Trimm 2017, 359; RINAP 5, nr.11, ix.103-114).

³³ RINAP 5 Nr.3, vi. 71-78 = Nr.4, vi.77-86 = Nr.6, vii.29'-38' = Nr.7, vii.21-30 = Nr.8, vii.54'-12''.

³⁴ See examples of textual inscriptions from Ashur-Dan II (RIMA 2, 98.1, 39-41); Ashurnasirpal II (RIMA 2, 101.1, I, 89-92. 93. 110); Sennacherib (RINAP 3/1 Nr. 17, iv, 82-86); and Ashurbanipal

be copied from the treatment of animal carcasses (De Backer 2009, 28). One text makes the animal connection explicit: “I stripped off [Šama’gamni’s] skin like the skin of a sheep.”³⁵ Dunānu’s brothers have their flesh chopped up and sent throughout the lands, just as Saul chops and distributes oxen as a message to Israel (1 Sam. 11:7-8; cf. Judg. 19:29). Dunānu himself is “laid on a slaughtering block and slaughtered like a lamb.”³⁶ This is not just a simile, but uses the realia and techniques of actual ovine slaughter.

As we have seen, Agag is categorized alongside domestic animals as their functional equivalent (15:9). From amongst the Amalekites, the best humans and animals are categorized together. The parallelism suggests the conceptual correspondence of Agag with “the fat ones” (השמנים)³⁷ and the well-fed rams (הכרים),³⁸ fatty animals being particularly significant in a sacrificial context (15:22, cf. 2 Sam. 6:13; 1 Kgs. 1:9, 19, 25; 4:23). The suggestion of animal fatness may be present in the poorly-understood term מעדונה, which describes Agag’s movements towards Samuel. Elsewhere, I have argued that it is best translated “luxuriant” or “well-fatted,” tapping into the common semantic field of the root עדן.³⁹ The masculine noun form מעדונים refers to delicacies eaten by elites (Lam. 4:5) and is connected to the fattiness of the king’s food (Gen. 49:20). The verbal form עדן (hithpael) is collated with the verb “to become fat” (וישמינו ויתעדנו; Neh. 9:25), and the related noun עדנים parallels “fatness” (דשן; Ps. 36:9[8]). The foreigner is enlarged and animalized as he walks “well-fatted” to the prophet.⁴⁰ We might also observe a structural and thematic parallel with 1 Samuel 28. In both chapters, Samuel pronounces Saul’s rejection based on his sin at Amalek (15:17-19, 22-29; 28:24), and both chapters end with a slaughter, Agag paralleling the stall-fed calf (עגל מרבק; 28:24) whose life has been a pampered pre-cursor to its inevitable sacrifice.

Fattened animal bodies are the “best” (15:9; מיטב) of their kind for their sacrificial potential and as signifiers of wealth. But transposing this value judgment onto fattened human bodies is problematic. Agag’s classification amongst the “best” seems ironic, given his imminent execution. Indeed, his fattening may make subtle

(RINAP 5 Nr. 17, iv, 82-86 [= Nr. 7, ii.44’-49’ = Nr. 11, i.134b-ii.4]; Nr. 8, x 1’-2’a [= Nr. 7, ix. 1’12’]; Nr. 11, x.1-5). See also images from Sargon II (Botta and Flandin 1849, pl.120), Sennacherib (BM124908, 124909), and Ashurbanipal (BM124802a).

³⁵ A text from Ninurta-kudurra-usur, governor of Suhu (RIMB 2:296-297).

³⁶ The imagery of slaughtering people like lambs is also attested in inscriptions from Ashur-Nirari V (Lemos 2006, 237), Sennacherib (Bleibtreu 1991, 60), and Ashurbanipal (RINAP 5 Nr. 9, ii.75-iii.5 [= Nr. 11, iii.50-69]).

³⁷ The MT here has והמשנים, presumably from משנה “double, second,” but this makes little sense. I accept the emendation to השמנים “the fat ones,” attested by some Hebrew mss and Syr/Targ. The mistake could easily have arisen through metathesis of מ and ש (Driver 1913, 124; Tsumura 1999, 407).

³⁸ Whenever this term is used elsewhere for an animal, it is in an elite context (2 Kgs. 3:4; Jer. 51:40; Ezek. 27:21; Amos 6:4) and/or is explicitly connected with fatness (דשן חלב Deut. 32:14; חלב Isa. 34:6; מריאים Ezek. 39:18). Welton translates the term as “well fed lambs” (2020, 163).

³⁹ Millar 2024. The alternatives are to assume corruption here, either from an otherwise unattested lexeme מעדנית “totteringly” or from a metathesized derivation of ענד “to bind,” hence “in chains” (cf. Job 38:31).

⁴⁰ Fatness, foreignness, and animality are commonly connected. See Luciano and Chen’s reflections on a photograph by Laura Aguilar, in which the artist’s “fat, brown, queer” body “enters the very nonhuman fold where some would place her, effectively displacing the centrality of the human itself” (2015, 184).

judgment on the self-indulgence of elite lifestyles. Samuel has already warned of “the king like the nations” who will satisfy himself at the expense of the poor, with a surfeit of “perfumers, cooks, and bakers” (1 Sam. 8:13). Equally, Eli’s condemned sons fatten themselves on the choice parts of the offering (1 Sam. 2:29), and the wicked Nabal holds the feast of a king (25:36)—in contrast to the heroism of the fasting soldier (14:24; 2 Sam. 11:11; 23:13-17). Agag’s fattening also taps into the xenophobic trope of the foreigner with an aberrant body, like the overlarge Goliath (1 Sam. 17:4).⁴¹ We might also compare Moabite king Eglon (Judg. 3:12-23), who is animalized by his very name (which relates to the Hebrew word for “calf:” עגל), is depicted as “very fat” (using a word usually reserved for fattened animals; בריא), and suffers an ejection of “dung” at his death (with terminology for animal excrement; פרישונה).

Agag does not fully become an animal—indeed, he retains human characteristics in the words he speaks to Samuel (15:32b), and Samuel’s reference to his military behaviors (15:33a). Instead, he sits uncomfortably within both categories; as psychologist David Livingstone Smith puts it, “in dehumanizing others, we categorize them *simultaneously* as human and subhuman” (Livingstone Smith 2016, 418; italics original). Dehumanization derives its power in part from the assumption that there is something “human” to be taken away. What’s more, in animalizing forms of dehumanization, something is not just taken, but added. The habitual treatment of and discourse around nonhuman species creates an alternative category—“animal”—whose members are considered less worthy of moral attention (Wolfe 2003, 7–8). This category is reified, yet has porous boundaries, such that humans can be caught within its scope, conceptualized and treated as beasts. Wielding the category against humans delegitimizes them as objects of moral concern, justifies their harmful treatment, and reduces the probability of empathy (Bandura 1999; Opatow 1990). It thus becomes a powerful technique of Othering, commonly used against foreigners and in service of colonial conquest (Boisseron 2018; Curry 2019, 46–8; Jackson 2020; Kim 2015). It provides not just conceptual tools, but physical practices to subdue the animalized. One such practice is sacrifice.

Sacrificing the Animalized

Animal sacrifice occurred frequently across ancient West Asia. Where human sacrifice also occurred, it was typically in the same manner and archaeological contexts,⁴² suggesting it borrowed from the better-established practice. The rituals seem conceptual equivalents, different in degree but not in kind,⁴³ blurring the ontological divide between “human” and “animal”;⁴⁴ thus, Micah parallels the sacrifice of calves, rams, and firstborn sons (Mic. 6:6-7). Though condemned by several biblical texts (e.g. Lev. 18:21), human sacrifice may sometimes have been

⁴¹ On the animalization of Goliath, see Millar 2023b.

⁴² Recht 2019, 79. For human sacrifice in ancient West Asia and other cultures, see Carrasco 2013; Newton 1996. Recht 2019.

⁴³ Recht (2019, 79) concludes that “Conceptually, [human sacrifice] does not differ significantly from animal sacrifice, other than humans possibly being perceived as of higher value.”

⁴⁴ Of course, this line is already blurred by sacrifice if we assume that the animal victim somehow acts as a substitute for the human (e.g., Klawans 2001; McClymond 2011, 327–8; Schwarz 2012, 5–6). Ken Stone (2016) discusses the blurring of this line in relation to the sacrifice of Jephthah’s daughter (Judges 11).

considered a legitimate Yahwistic ritual (Exod. 22:28).⁴⁵ Agag is thus taken to the sacrificial site of Gilgal (15:32-33). Samuel commands that Agag be “brought” to him, using the same verbal form (נגש, hiphil imperative) that Saul has twice used for sacrificial animals (13:9; 14:34). The lexeme to describe the slaughter—וישסר—is a hapax. It is likely a variant from the root שסע,⁴⁶ which elsewhere refers to tearing up animals (Judg. 14:6), sometimes in a sacrificial context (Lev. 1:17). Agag is ultimately killed “before Yahweh” (לפני יהוה) much like the sacrificial animals before him (cf. 11:15; 13:8-14).

The literary context primes readers to recognize sacrifice here. Each pivotal moment of Saul’s reign has been marked by sacrifice: his anointing (9:11–10:1); the renewal of his kingdom (11:15); his first rejection (13:8-14); his restoration of social order (14:32-35). Likewise, chapter 15 establishes the expectation that sacrifice will occur (15:15, 21). Yet Samuel’s actions are striking: he denounces Saul’s attempted livestock sacrifice, whilst sacrificing Agag himself. What accounts for this inconsistency?⁴⁷ Perhaps the difference in practitioner: Samuel was given no commands by God; thus, his sacrifice is not disobedient. Or perhaps the difference in victim; while animal sacrifice might lead to the communal distribution of meat,⁴⁸ human sacrifice ensures complete devotion to the deity. Furthermore, the foreign king has a unique role in representing the nation. His total destruction may amount to theirs, symbolizing and enacting the fulfilment of *herem*.

Agag’s sacrifice corresponds to ritual post-war practices attested elsewhere. Ashurbanipal depicts himself cutting off the head of the king of Elam, giving it as an offering, libating wine over it, and presenting sacrifices alongside it.⁴⁹ A well-established Egyptian motif (also attested in an ivory from Samaria) shows the victorious king slaying his foreign counterpart before a god, which has been interpreted as representing an actual “ceremonial sacrifice” that customarily took place after battle.⁵⁰

If we understand Agag’s death as a sacrifice, we can better understand its symbolic power within the literary trajectory of Saul’s rise and fall. Cross-culturally, human sacrifice may replace or supplement animal sacrifice in moments of crisis and extreme circumstance (Bremmer 2007, 6). Exceptional measures are needed to avert impending harm or recover from chaos. Here, as the deity (15:33), elders (15:30), and people look on, social and cosmic order might be reconfigured, the

⁴⁵ See Levenson 1993. Tatlock (2006, e.g., 164–5) distinguishes between the sacrifice of insiders (Israelite children) and outsiders (foreigners), arguing that from the exilic period, the former practice receded and the latter gained prominence.

⁴⁶ Most scholars follow this interpretation. An alternative is to take the form as an incorrectly vocalized residual shafel from סרף “bring to an end” (e.g., Thierry 1963, 88).

⁴⁷ The apparent inconsistency here may not in fact be a problem, but fits with this chapter’s depiction of the deity. Yahweh does not delight in sacrifice (15:22) but is appeased by the sacrifice of Agag (15:33), in a similar way to how he does not change his mind (15:29) but changes his mind about Saul’s kingship (15:11, 25). See Johnson 2019.

⁴⁸ Niditch (2014, 193–94) speculates about Saul’s motives in retaining animals for sacrifice: “Why not use captured animals for food protein and to enhance his own status, for power derives from the capacity to provide and distribute meat.”

⁴⁹ These events are repeated in Ashurbanipal’s Prism B (see May 2012, 473), in the epigraphs to tablets (May 2012, 473), and in the carved reliefs of Ashurbanipal’s North Palace (May 2012, 483–84; Nadali 2013, 89).

⁵⁰ Schulman 2988, 41–49. The proper interpretation of these depictions is disputed (see Recht 2010, 173–74). For the Samarian ivory, see Keel and Uehlinger 2010, 289–99.

powerful affect of the performance enhanced by its human victim (Carrasco 2013). The indecipherable sounds of sheep and oxen (15:14) become the pathos-filled words of a man (15:32b). The alien flesh of livestock becomes the all-too-familiar body of a human, in whom the audience can see themselves and by whom they are reminded of their own animality.

The mastermind of the performance is Samuel, who thereby asserts his authority over Saul. Ancient West Asian custom dictated that the king should oversee the slaughter of his enemies.⁵¹ And in the Deuteronomistic History, the king is responsible for ensuring proper sacrifice (Janzen 2004, 120–59), the role differentials within the ritual asserting and ingraining broader power dynamics (Schwarz 2012, 8; Weber 2012, 161). Saul has, with limited success, tried to fulfil this ideal (13:8-9; 14:32-35), and sacrifice has become a key battleground in his power play with Samuel. While Samuel previously condemned Saul’s sacrifice after the event (13:13-14), here he prevents it before it begins,⁵² usurping the sacrificial role for himself. The people may be ripe for a reconfiguration in leadership. There has been dissent against Saul from the beginning (10:27), and tensions have rumbled through his reign.⁵³ Saul “fears” (15:24) the people and is anxious that Samuel “honors” him before them (15:30). Samuel does not, rather proclaiming his own power.

Sacrifice can be an effective tool in smoothing transitions of power. Thus it accompanies the anointings of Saul (9:12-24) and David (16:2-5) as well as the power-grabs of Absalom (2 Sam. 15:12) and Adonijah (1 Kgs. 1:9). It ritualizes the transition, proving its divine ordination through a visceral and affective performance. Such sacrifices lift political configurations from the interpersonal level to the plane of divine-human communication (Weber 2012, 160). It can encode the ideologies, worldview, and moral system of one social group, calling for allegiance (Weber 2012, 159; Janzen 2004, 5). In the preceding chapters, animal dismemberment and sacrifice are repeatedly used to restore disintegrating social relations: to make the people come out “as one man” (11:7), unify in support of Saul (11:12-15), stop scattering from the battlefield (13:8-9), and recalibrate from socio-religious chaos (14:32-35).⁵⁴ This may be part of a wider pattern in which “the dismemberment of corporal bodies [is] a technique for the binding together of a communal Body” (Bryson 2003, 12). The fragmentation experienced at the social level is displaced to the physical level (suffused into animal flesh) and thereby brought under control. Any disintegration of social relations after the Amalekite affair is forestalled by Agag’s sacrifice (Niditch 2014, 194); the people are united behind Samuel and primed for the imminent transition to David’s leadership (also effected by sacrifice; 16:2-5).

Categorized alongside the best of the Amalekite animals, Agag has thus started to resemble them. His animalization has delegitimized him as an object of moral concern and provided a performative script for his slaughter: sacrifice. This script

⁵¹ In Mesopotamian depictions, though soldiers are shown carrying out mutilations, the king claims credit for them in his 1st person inscriptions (Bahrani 2008, 155).

⁵² This is the case in MT, but not in LXX, which has an additional line indicating that Saul has just conducted sacrifices to Yahweh when Samuel arrives. McCarter (1980, 262) and Klein (2008, 146) reconstruct Hebrew based on the Greek.

⁵³ The people scatter from before Saul (13:8, 11), disobey his vow of fasting (14:32-34), and disagree with him about Jonathan’s fate (14:44-45).

⁵⁴ On the sacrifice in chapter 14, see Hawk 2010; Niditch 2014, 200–02.

plays within the larger drama of Saul's rise and fall, culminating a series of sacrifices as the final climactic slaughter to pronounce Saul's impending fate.

3. Animalizing / Amalekitizing Saul

Agag's sacrifice thus helps to delegitimize Saul as king. This is through Samuel's power claim as sacrificial officiant (as discussed above), and also through Saul's association with the sacrificial victim. Several scholars argue that Agag represents Saul, as his "formal antagonist and veiled analogue" (Sternberg 1985, 514). Both kings show hubris (Saul building a monument [15:12], Agag asserting he has avoided death⁵⁵ [15:32b]).⁵⁶ Both are denounced by the prophet, with similarly structured condemnations (because you have done X, so X will be done to you; 15:23, 33a) (Johnson 2019, 204–5). Both suffer a tearing (the tearing of the robe [15:27];⁵⁷ the hewing of the body [15:33b]) (Green 2003, 258; Sternberg 1985, 499). Both experience the end of their kingship (through dethronement or execution). Agag's violent death here may anticipate Saul's on Gilboa (Bryson 2003, 14). If Agag represents Saul, then the dehumanizing portrayal of the former may reverberate onto the latter.

Furthermore, Saul is drawn into the category of the Amalekites, no longer fully Israelite. His condemnation has an ethno-national bent. Rejected from being "king over Israel" (15:26) and with the "kingdom of Israel" ripped from him (15:28), he is reciprocally ripped from the category "Israelite." Through close linguistic correspondences, Saul is "Amalekitized"; his Othering mirrors and is contingent upon theirs.⁵⁸ Key terms are repeated with reference to both Saul and the Amalekites—מָאָס, רֹאֵשׁ, טוֹב, and חָטָא. It is not simply the repetition that is significant,⁵⁹ but the accumulation of correspondences and their structural significance in the trajectory of Saul's demise. The key terms are bifurcated into two pairs—one positive and one negative—which represent the poles of Saul's fate and pointedly depict his reversal of fortunes: from the nation's good head (טוֹב; רֹאֵשׁ) to a rejected sinner (חָטָא; מָאָס). These terms link Saul to the Amalekite animals, specifically to the worst among them.

Indeed, Saul was once the "foremost" leader, the "head" of Israel (15:17; רֹאֵשׁ), like the foremost (15:21; רֹאֵשִׁית) of the Amalekite *herem*. But now (supplanted by David) there is one "better" (15:28; טוֹב) than he, like the "best" (טוֹב, מֵיטֵב, 15:9, 15) of the Amalekite livestock. Saul has been rejected (25, 15:23; מָאָס) as king (מֶלֶךְ), drawn into conceptual correspondence with the rejected (מָאָס) Amalekite property (15:9; מְלֹאכָה).⁶⁰ He has "sinned" (30, 25, 15:24; חָטָא), now part of the Amalekite

⁵⁵ There is a textual variant in Agag's words. MT has "surely the bitterness of death has passed," while LXX and Pesh have "surely death is bitter." See Talmon 1961.

⁵⁶ Cf. Absalom's self-aggrandizing monument in 2 Sam 18:18. Sternberg 1985, 498.

⁵⁷ The Hebrew is ambiguous about whose robe is torn here. Even if it is Samuel's robe (so Brauner 1974; Viberg 2005), it is still interpreted in relation to Saul: his kingdom will be torn away.

⁵⁸ Ehud Ben Zvi (2014, 22) has examined how constructions of ethnicity employ "reciprocal mirroring" and are "discursively contingent," so that certain foreigners may be "Israelitized."

⁵⁹ Indeed, the terms טוֹב ("good") and חָטָא ("to sin") are common, so their recurrence here may be incidental. The other terms, though, are rarer in 1 Samuel, drawing attention to their repetition (מָאָס only appears in 8:7; 10:19 [of rejecting God]; רֹאֵשׁ meaning "leader" does not occur elsewhere; and רֹאֵשִׁית is only found in 2:29).

⁶⁰ On the root מָאָס in 15:9, see above n.23. מְלֹאכָה usually refers to a "work, occupation"; something done or made. Sometimes, though, it can refer to property/animals (Exod. 22:7, 10; Gen. 33:14; 2

eth(n)ical sphere, for they too are “sinners” (15:18; *הטאים*). No longer able to claim the status as an elite male member of the Israelite “people,” he is correlated with despised foreign humans and domestic animals and is thereby denounced.

At one point, the story goes even further. Saul is connected to wild animals, who (unlike livestock) have no place within Levantine (not even Amalekite) social units and are outside the scope of civilization. Saul is like a raptor, “preying on the spoil” (15:19; *והעט אליהשלל*). The verb here—*והעט*—is denominative of *עייט* “bird of prey,” and may be a new coinage in Samuel.⁶¹ The negative usage of this imagery is striking. Across ancient West Asia, warrior kings were likened to powerful predatory birds (Lamb 2014, 115–16), and upon his death Saul will be heroically eulogized as “swifter than eagles” (2 Sam 1:23). It is thus ironic that the same image should be used here with such a different tenor.

Saul-as-raptor does not belong to any civilized community. Though vultures are depicted in battle reliefs, they are not understood as part of the army (like horses might be). Rather, they hover above the battlefield, waiting opportunistically for soldiers to complete their work.⁶² Similarly, Saul is accused of taking for his personal appetite rather than in devotion to Yahweh. Furthermore, raptors do not conform to Israelite purity regulations, thus violating key tenets of the ethnic group. Themselves considered unclean (Lev. 11:13-19), they feast on corpses and blood (cf. Job 39:30)⁶³ and are pictured carrying dismembered body parts.⁶⁴ In the previous chapter, Saul condemned the people for “preying” (*עייט*) on the livestock and eating it “with the blood” (14:32). The people were unclean and descended into the chaos of unregulated social order.⁶⁵ There, Saul controlled the chaos by sacrificing cattle; here he is prevented from doing so, and himself becomes an emblem of impurity.

Beyond the ethnic group, raptors symbolize wildness over against civilization. Unlike livestock, they are not tame-able and do not contribute to human industry. They live outside human cities, inhabitants of the wilderness, making their nests at heights beyond human reach (Isa 18:6; Jer. 49:16; Obad. 4; Job 39:27). What’s more, they are emblems of unregulated death, as they feed off corpses (Millar 2022, 272–5). It is a terrible curse for the body to be left to the birds of the air (e.g., 1 Sam. 17:44, 46; 2 Sam. 21:10; Deut. 28:26; Jer. 16:4), signifying societal abandonment (Stavrakopoulou 2010, 73). Utterly shameful,⁶⁶ it prohibits the proper passage of the deceased. Vultures are a powerful reminder of human animality, starkly revealing that humans—like all flesh—are mortal, fragile, and edible (Plumwood 1999; van

Chr. 17:13). It may be employed here for its soundplay with *מלך*. Rendsburg (2019) argues for a similar wordplay between *מלך* “king” and *מלאך* “messenger” in 2 Sam. 11:1.

⁶¹ The verb only occurs here, in the Q of 1 Sam. 14:32 (discussed below), and in 1 Sam. 25:24 (where it seems to refer to Nabal shrieking, birdlike, at his men). The noun *עייט* occurs in Gen. 15:11; Isa. 18:6, 46:11; Jer. 12:9; Ezek. 39:4; Job 28:7.

⁶² See De Backer 2009. For examples, see the early Mesopotamian Stela of the Vultures (Trimm, 2017; 351–2) and Neo-Assyrian reliefs from Assurnasirpal II (Trimm 2017, 355–56; BM12455) and Tiglath-pileser III (Trimm 2017, 356–7; BM118907).

⁶³ See Huff 2019, 251. On blood taboos, see Gen. 9:4-6; Lev. 3:17; 17:10-16; on corpse taboos, see Lev. 11:39-40; Num. 19:11-13.

⁶⁴ In the Stela of the Vultures, the birds carry the heads and arms of enemies; in a relief of Tilglath Pileser III, they carry entrails.

⁶⁵ Hawk (2010, 679) notes that this violation of the blood taboo “signifies the utter dissolution of the social structures and norms that configure Israelite identity and bind the nation”; cf. also Niditch 2014, 201.

⁶⁶ Olyan (2005) analyses the levels of honour which attach to different Israelite deathways.

Dooren 2011, 55, 58–9). By this association, Saul is removed not only from Israelite community but from all socially-recognized life.

Conclusion

I began this article by asking “How do the interrelated constructions of species and ethnicity affect the narrative trajectory of 1 Samuel 15, culminating in the slaughter of Agag and rejection of Saul?” I have ventured to answer this question in three parts. First, I have argued that, in this story, ethnicity and species are malleable, co-constructed categories. The Israelite “people” excludes nonhuman animals (as well as, e.g., women and children), while the Amalekites include varied people and livestock. The expansive scope of Amalek permits a new division into “the best” and “the despised,” a division which cuts across species and is inflected with socioeconomic status.

Second, regarding Agag: within the expansive Amalekite group, the simultaneous blurring of the species line and reification of a socioeconomic line directs the fate of individual foreigners. Most are subject to total destruction. The Amalekite king is brought into correspondence with fattened animals. Conceptually, he is dehumanized and thereby delegitimized. Physically, he becomes the victim of an animal sacrifice.

Third, regarding Saul: Agag’s sacrifice culminates a series of sacrifices that have shaped Saul’s reign. Through this act, Samuel asserts his own authority and Saul’s rejection. Furthermore, Saul is connected with the sacrificial victim, both animalized and Amalekitized. Finally, Saul is depicted as a bird of prey, removing him altogether from civilized society.

In our contemporary context, ethnicity and animality remain connected (Boisseron 2018; Jackson 2020; Kim 2015). Nations have been known (not always fairly) for their animal practices: Britain for its fox-hunting, Spain for its bull-fighting, China for “eating dog.” Even more harmfully, dehumanization remains rife; immigrants are cast as vermin, Jews as leeches, black folk as monkeys. By interrogating, deconstructing, and reconstructing the connections between ethnic and species categories, we can hope to better understand societies (ancient and modern) and contribute to the flourishing of all ethnicities and all species.

Abbreviations

BM = British Museum. Images available at www.britishmuseum.org

RIMA 2 = A. Kirk Grayson. 1991. *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC I (1114-859 BC)*. The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods, Vol. 2. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

RIMB 2 = Grant Frame. 1995. *Rulers of Babylonia from the Second Dynasty of Isin to the End of Assyrian Domination (1157-612 B.C.)*. The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia. Babylonian Periods, Vol. 2. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

RINAP 3/1 = A. Kirk Grayson and Jamie R. Novotny. 2012. *The Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib, King of Assyria (704-681 BC) Part 1*. The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period; Vol. 3/1, Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns.

RINAP 4 = Erle Leichty. 2011. *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria (680-669 BC)*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.

RINAP 5 = Jamie Novotny and Joshua Jeffers, 2018, *The Royal Inscriptions of Ashurbanipal (668-631 BC), Aššur-Etel-Ilāni (630-627 BC), and Šîn-Šarra-Iškun (626-612 BC)*, The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period, Volume 5/1, University Park, MD: Eisenbrauns.

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