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War in the Bible

Thomas Wetzel

Loyola University Chicago, twetzel@luc.edu

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Just prior to the signing of the treaty of Punakha, Bhutan's elders and most influential lamas voted unanimously to select their first king in 1907, following the death of the final *desi*. He was given the title of Druk Gyalpo, or Dragon King, and established the nation's status as a constitutional monarchy. Following years of fiercely upheld isolationism and resistance to modernization, the third king of Bhutan, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, developed the country's diplomatic relationships, particularly with India. In 1961, the third Druk Gyalpo enacted a process of planned development and modernization. However, he pledged to keep the cultural and historical identity of his country intact.

The modernization process for Bhutan was allowed for both foreign financial aid and technical training and assistance from other South Asian countries. Notably, the nation further strengthened its ties to India, with whom it had established previous diplomatic ties with a friendship treaty in 1865 when the country was a British holding. Further treaties signed in 1910, 1949, and 2007 further solidified the close relationship between the two nations. India currently stands as the largest annual contributor of foreign aid to Bhutan, giving out over 600 million dollars per year in financial contributions to the kingdom and accounting for as much as 60% of the country's exports and 75% of its imports. China has also sought to develop close ties to the kingdom, as both traditional regional powers see strategic value in the geographical location of Bhutan and potential military value as a staging ground for future engagements.

In addition to diplomatic relationships, King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck created the Royal Bhutan Army, or RBA, in addition to the police force. As Bhutan is landlocked, it does not have a naval force, or an air force. The one modern foray into conflict by the RBA came in 2003–2004, when they commenced operations against several Indian separatist groups, who had begun setting up camps in Southern Bhutan in the late 1990s. With the aid of the Indian Armed Forces, the RBA defeated and removed the Assamese separatist groups in a series of operations from December 2003 to January 2004.

Despite an increasing international presence over the last 110 years, the kingdom of Bhutan has maintained its independent spirit and upheld its status as a fierce protector of its cultural values

and ideals. Although the kingdom has become more open to outside influence, such as with the introduction of television in 1999, Bhutan remains unique in its commitment to singularity of mind and spirit and the promotion of spiritual wealth of its citizens.

Daniel Joseph

See also Buddhism; China; India

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BIBLE

One of the few points on which virtually all of the biblical authors and redactors agree is their portrayal of YHWH, the God of Israel, as a warrior. Common among Israel's neighbors in the ancient Near East (ANE) was the divine combat myth, an account that understood the creation of the world as the outcome of a primordial battle between a god of order and a chaos deity usually associated with the sea, rivers, serpents, and the forces of cosmic disorder. In the typical version of the combat myth, a divine warrior, such as Marduk or Baal, exercises his powers as a storm god to destroy the chaos deity. Out of the carcass of the defeated god (named in versions Leviathan, Yam[m], Rahab, Tehom, or Tiamat), the storm deity brings forth the cosmos and its denizens. In honor of his great victory, the pantheon names the storm deity as the "lord of lords and god of gods," whom the other gods will worship and serve in exchange for his continuing vigilance against the chaotic upheavals that reverberate throughout the created order. Creation, in other words, was seen as an ongoing process of divine battle against forces of chaos.

The Hebrew Bible

The texts of the Hebrew Bible (HB)—the academic name for the scriptures known to Judaism as the *Tanakh* and overlapping with the Christian Old Testament—were composed in Hebrew and contain the oldest (and only) parts of the sacred scriptures shared by the two religious traditions. Among the earliest compositions found in the HB are Exodus 15 and Judges 5, poems that celebrate the power and might of YHWH who protects and fights for his people of Israel. The parting of the Sea of Reeds in Exodus 15 is a demonstration of YHWH's power over the Egyptian oppressors and an invocation of the combat myth: Out of the watery chaos that destroyed Israel's enemies, YHWH brought forth Israel as a "nation of priests" and "holy people" to minister in his sacred land, Israel, as YHWH's covenantal partner. Judges 5 makes plain that in Israel's account of the combat myth, YHWH calls upon his people to participate in the divine restoration; he may have fought *for* Israel in the story of the Exodus, but as the Israelites occupied the Promised Land, YHWH expected them to fight *with* him, even as the primary cause of their victory remained YHWH. Indeed, the biblical authors show a dismissive indifference toward describing implements of warfare, offering only passing and generic mention of chariots, swords, shields, spears, siege engines, and the like. Throughout much of the biblical canon, undue attention to weaponry is tantamount to denying YHWH's power and might.

In the book of Job and in some of the psalms, the ANE chaos deities appear as personal forces arrayed against YHWH and the people who serve him. Over time, various narratives in the HB show how Israelite authors demythologized the chaos deities. In some of the psalms, YHWH crushes Rahab and Yam, dismembering them in overt repetitions of the combat myth. At other points, however, Leviathan becomes a great sea monster created by YHWH as his personal plaything. This depowering of polytheistic views reaches its completion during the Babylonian exile, resulting in texts like Genesis 1, in which *Tehom* appears as pure, raw chaotic stuff, the watery abyss *out of which* God creates the cosmos. All that remains of the chaos deities is an impersonal and chaotic substratum that underlies the ordered cosmos.

The personal forces of chaos reemerge in the HB as nations opposed to Israel's role in creation. Egypt is a chaotic state, continually serving as a false hope and foil to YHWH. But so too, in varying degrees, are Moab, Aram, Assyria, and Babylon, all opposed to YHWH's divine order and so, by definition, disordered. But each of these nations can likewise become a tool that YHWH uses to discipline Israel when his people turn away from him. In contrast, the original Canaanite peoples typically have no role in the divine plan and were no more than egregious human agents of cosmic disorder, and YHWH placed these peoples under the ANE practice of *hrem* once the Israelites entered the Promised Land. Often translated as "the ban" or "the curse of destruction," *hrem* was ANE warfare taken to its ultimate end: the divinely mandated eradication of the opponent. The rules of *hrem* vary throughout the biblical narratives. At times, YHWH commands the Israelites to kill only adult males along with females who had already borne children, preserving the rest of the population, as well as their property and possessions, as the spoils of war granted to Israel. At other times, though, the mandate required the destruction of men, women, children, and the elderly, as well as livestock and property, even razing the besieged city. The purpose of *hrem*, at any level, was to destroy the offending community's power to reproduce and so perdure in history.

Scholars disagree on whether ancient Israel actually practiced *hrem*. The archaeological records that correspond to the biblical dating of the conquest (ca. 1200–1000 BCE) are varied, some areas revealing radical destruction of Canaanite city-states and other areas suggesting something closer to Israelite assimilation. The biblical texts that advocate *hrem* show signs of later composition or at least substantive editorial redaction. Gathered during the Babylonian exile (ca. 586–539 BCE) or even later, these documents may be nothing more than revenge fantasies projected onto written history as both warning and explanation: Because the Canaanites persisted in the Promised Land despite YHWH's command, they posed a continuing threat of chaotic disruption within Israel. Disorder cannot be contained; it must be destroyed, or it will destroy Israel.

The time after the Babylonian exile was a period rich in theological reflection on the nature

of divine warfare in what one now could call Jewish, rather than Israelite, thought. Having returned to the Promised Land after the conquest of Babylon by the Persian Empire, the Israelites were residents of a Persian province known as Yehud, named after the tribe of Judah, the southern part of Israel that had survived both the Israelite civil war of 922 BCE and the Assyrian conquest of the northern tribes in 722 BCE. Judah was also the tribe of David, the king of Israel who was promised an everlasting throne and *messianic* kingship in which YHWH would embrace each of David's successors as God's own son, imparted by this divine preference with authority that (in Psalm 89, for instance) echoes distinctly the powers of the divine warrior. The Davidic king in this psalm will crush his enemies and establish his dominion over the sea and the rivers, a clear reference to the combat myth, but in this case, it references powers that YHWH has imparted to a *human* ruler. Despite such promises, however, the Davidic throne in the Persian, Greek, and Roman eras remained empty, and Israel was but a province under gentile rule. Chaotic disorder seemingly had superseded and crushed the divine order, and as the prophet Ezekiel described in one of his visions, YHWH apparently followed his people into exile, a harbinger of great change.

In biblical texts like Zechariah, Esther, and Daniel, the personal and conscious power of the forces of chaos increases markedly. The Amalekites, a nomadic people appearing in the earlier parts of the Bible, emerge again, now transmogrified into a supernatural force capable of damaging YHWH himself. One sees as well a change in *the satan* (literally, "the accuser"), a figure in early Israelite thought who served in YHWH's divine court as a sort of supernatural district attorney, bringing charges against those who had violated the divine order. In the postexilic era, the satan gradually became Satan, a diabolic and utterly disordered accuser apparently driven solely to wreak havoc on the relationship between YHWH and his creation. This emerging apocalyptic perspective saw in history not just the overt events of war and conquest but also the supernatural conflict lying above or behind human warfare. In the apocalyptic mind, YHWH defended his besieged people against empires that were embodiments of chaotic forces. The beasts and monsters of Daniel were not

symbols of the future; they *were* the reality within the present moment.

Conversely, a concurrent strand of biblical thought portrayed YHWH as more distant in times of warfare. In narratives like the Hebrew version of Esther and the books of the Maccabees, the Jews face cultural and/or physical genocide, and they are forced to take up arms alone against human powers seemingly driven by supernatural forces. YHWH remains silent in these narratives, except for the fact that the Jews prevail, their victory attesting to the divine support that seems otherwise invisible. These texts often appear to relate narratives present implicitly in apocalyptic sources within the Bible, almost as though the versions are two perspectives on the same divine warfare at work with and (significantly) *through* the children of Israel.

Jesus and the Early Church

Within this cultural matrix emerged the early Church and its understanding of Jesus of Nazareth, but contrary to much of modern Christian thought, the portrayal of Jesus is not a rejection but a continuation of this apocalyptic return of the combat myth. The ability to control, manipulate, and reform water into an ordered creation remained a powerful symbolic narrative in the time of the early Church. It is no coincidence, for instance, that Jesus transforms water into wine, walks on water, or controls storms, rather than, say, performing fire miracles. In the book of Revelation, the divinely reordered creation at the end of time will lack seas entirely; the only water on the Earth will flow from the Temple in Jerusalem, fully under the control of God the Father and Jesus the Son. Likewise, the apostle Paul sees in the rite of baptism an act of destruction and re-creation that literally kills the disordered parts of human life and offers a preview of that restored creation. In these views, Jesus embodies the promise of the messianic king and is himself the divine warrior. The Church, originally seen in the New Testament (NT) as a reform movement within Israel, shares in this divine work. True, the battle lines drawn in much of the NT are more spiritual than physical, but the apocalyptic context must not be forgotten: This spiritual or cosmic warfare is the deeper and more profound reality. Jesus and his disciples battle supernatural forces when they exorcise demons,

heal diseases, or (later) baptize converts. The intermingling of the political and the supernatural appears overtly in a Gospel narrative in which Jesus casts out a group of demons occupying one host; their collective name is a Roman military term: Legion. The world still rests fundamentally in a state of cosmic warfare, and the stakes have, in fact, increased.

It is easy to miss this element in the Gospel narratives, and particularly among the historic peace churches and throughout Western Christianity since the 1960s, there has been a strong tendency to emphasize Jesus's nonviolence. It is true that Jesus rejected overtly militaristic options to free Israel from Roman occupation (options represented by the likely anachronistic insertions into Gospel narratives of Jesus's encounters with members of the Jewish guerrilla terrorist movement known as the Zealots). Jesus likewise advocates for his disciples to "turn the other cheek" in the face of personal violence and refuses to allow his disciples to return evil for evil, instead commanding them to love their enemies. All the same, careful biblical exegesis must keep in mind that Jesus derives his two commandments—to love God and to love one's neighbor—from the Torah and specifically from sections of the Torah preparing the Israelites for their military return to forcibly retake the Promised Land.

The love advocated by Jesus in the NT, as is the case with YHWH's commands in the HB, is a love that can be expressed through violence: It can "heap coals upon the head of the enemy," it can command (in Luke's Gospel) that the disciples purchase and carry swords in the future, and it can empower Jesus himself to use a bullwhip to drive the money changers from the Temple precincts as he apparently seizes control of the Temple Mount in an overt act of Davidic messianic kingship. The apostle Paul will remind his churches that they should array themselves in the armor of saving justice, righteousness, and salvation, but the modern reader misses the point if one thinks this is purely spiritual metaphor. Paul, here, is specifically quoting a passage from the book of Isaiah that describes YHWH's armor as he prepares to do battle as the divine warrior. Paul is reminding his followers to do likewise.

Jesus promises peace to his followers, there is no doubt, but one must recall the ancient Israelite

matrix from which his thought emerged: The Hebrew word *shalom* indicates not simply the absence of violence but rather the right and just ordering of creation and one's life, a sense of balance and proportion that, from the biblical perspective, must be imposed on a chaotic creation. *Shalom* is an active process of control and re-creation, not the surrender of arms. The thought of Jesus may not justify the active armament of secular states—and indeed is likely profoundly hostile to such armament—but Jesus, like YHWH, retains the name "LORD of Hosts," a quaint English translation for "YHWH of armies," the God who rules both the armies of Israel and the supernatural forces arrayed against the sentient forces opposed to divine order. This is most apparent in the book of Revelation, which closes the NT. Drawing upon the HB visions of Daniel and Zechariah, the writer of Revelation (the Greek name of which is simply *Apocalypse*) describes the end of the age, meaning here not the end of human history but rather the end of the chaotic Roman Empire that destroyed Jerusalem and YHWH's own temple in 70 CE and now persecuted both the Jewish refugees of that battle and the gentile and Jewish members of the Church. Here, the chaos deities have returned in near full force; the Beast and the Devil roam the Earth, and the Abyss (which is the English translation of the Hebrew *Tehom* of Genesis 1) has re-emerged as well, now as fiery lava-like waters that send upheaval throughout the planet itself.

Jesus is portrayed as the Passover Lamb, the one who was slain in order to preserve Israel from destruction, but he is also the divine warrior who "wages war in righteousness" and appears in the final cosmic battle on a white steed, draped in a crimson cloak. The latter description comes directly from a portrayal in Isaiah of the triumphant and wrathful YHWH taking the battlefield in a cloak dyed in the blood of his fallen victims. These images were commonly associated with Jesus throughout Christian history; "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," a song written during the American Civil War, celebrates this picture of Jesus as the divine warrior and envisions him leading the Northern forces into battle to wage a war of vengeance and wrath upon the South. A loving God, from this perspective, must be prepared not just to defend his people and his creation but perhaps

even to eradicate that which threatens to harm them. This explains from yet another perspective why the “new heaven and the new earth” described in Revelation must have no sea; chaos has not just been defeated, but it has been literally and forcefully eradicated. Only the living waters that flow from the restored Temple may remain. What was implied in the water miracles of the Gospels has been spelled out in full at the end of the NT: Jesus is YHWH, YHWH is a warrior, and creation is an ongoing battle that must be engaged.

Conclusion

Warfare is legitimate in the biblical understanding only if authorized by YHWH; even in the HB’s celebration of the Davidic kings, the texts pass without comment over their purely secular conquests of territorial expansion. Conversely, whenever the integrity of Israel is threatened—either the purity of the land or the survival of the people of Israel—warfare is not simply an option but often a necessity. “Holy war,” then, is something of a redundancy in discussing the biblical view of war; the only authentic warfare can be that which serves to restore divine order over incorrigibly disordered realms of creation (including, at times, even Israel). Such warfare must be divinely ordered and not become a further expression of the chaos it seeks to destroy. The world will be without war, according to the Bible, only when that divine order has been fully restored.

Thomas Wetzel

Author’s Note: YHWH is the divine name historically not pronounced by observant Jews. Both biblical and modern Hebrew, in their written forms, rely primarily on a consonantal text that only at times indicates vowels through small diacritical marks above, within, and below the consonants. To prevent accidental pronunciation of the divine name, later rabbis intentionally provided the vowels from an alternative form of the divine name, *Adonai*, literally, “my Lord.” This led to the English translation convention of substituting *LORD* for *YHWH*, but it also led to the erroneous derivation *Jehovah*, which combines the Germanic transliteration *JHWH* with the rabbinic vowels for *Adonai*, resulting in a mistaken blend of both.

See also Anabaptists; Anglicanism; Bahá’í Faith; Catholicism, Roman; Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons); Eastern Orthodox Church;

Genocide; God; Holocaust; Israel; Judaism; Just War; Lutheranism; Mennonites; Methodists; Peace Church; Pentecostalism; Presbyterianism and Congregationalism; Religion and War; Religious Society of Friends (Quakers); Unitarian Universalism

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BIOCHEMICAL FACTORS IN AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE

As society delegates the use of violence to legal and legitimate authorities, so is the control of aggression and violence a concern for civilians who wish to prevent its occurrence among the general public. Knowledge of the internal biochemical and genetic factors able to modulate aggressive behavior can help to understand the phenomenon, even if external influences are also responsible. Internal biochemical factors are either neurotransmitters, acting within the nervous system, or hormones, circulating within the whole organism. Both of these have in common the ability to stimulate or inhibit biological receptors present in the cells.

Aggression and violence should not be studied without exploring the biological basis of the so-called fight-or-flight response, whereby the autonomic nervous system supports reactions against threats. Although primarily a defense system against aggression, this response is also used