

Women and War Brutalities in the Minor Prophets: The Case of Rape

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ABSTRACT

Acts of war violence towards women and children seem to get special attention in the HB prophetic literature. This is in contrast to the historic books (the Deuteronomistic History) where such references are rare. On several occasions the prophetic books mention "dashing in pieces the little ones" (Isa 13:16; Hos 14:1; Nah 3:10). Twice the combination "dashing in pieces the little ones" appears in close connection with "ripping open pregnant women" (2 Kgs 8:12; Hos 14:1), and once in association with the "raping/ravishing" of wives (Isa 13:16). This contribution will focus only on the latter war brutality, namely the raping of women. It argues that although war accounts of rape were for one or other reason suppressed in ANE writings (Assyrian royal inscriptions) and the HB, references in curse formulae and clues in the metaphoric speech of the Minor Prophets (e.g. Nah 3:5) testify to the fact that rape was indeed practised during siege wars.

A INTRODUCTION

In recent times there has been an increase in studies on war and violence in the HB. While Lohfink¹ observed at the beginning of the 1980s that violence was still a neglected theme, the situation has changed drastically since then. A variety of themes are focused on, such as: (1) the so-called "holy/divine war";² (2) violence against women;³ (3) God and violence;⁴ (4) violence against the

¹ Norbert Lohfink, "Gewalt als Thema alttestamentlicher Forschung," in *Gewalt und Gewaltlosigkeit im Alten Testament* (ed. Norbert Lohfink; QD 96; Freiburg: Herder, 1983), 16–18.

² Jordi Vidal, *Studies on War in the Ancient Near East: Collected Essays on Military History* (AOAT 372; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2010); Rüdiger Schmitt, *Der „Heilige Krieg“ im Pentateuch und im deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk* (AOAT 381; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2011).

³ See the seminal study by Claudia V. Camp and Carole R. Fontaine, *Women, War, and Metaphor: Language and Society in the Study of the Hebrew Bible* (SemeiaSt 61; Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1993), and one of the most up to date contributions on gender violence: Brad E. Kelle and Frank R. Ames, *Writing and Reading War: Rhetoric, Gender, and Ethics in Biblical and Modern Contexts* (SBLSymS 42; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008).

⁴ Gerlinde Baumann, *Gottesbilder der Gewalt im Alten Testament verstehen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006).

powerless in society: children⁵ and elderly people;⁶ (5) war and ethics;⁷ and (6) an even more specialised theme, the Book of Ezechiel as "Trauma-Literatur": the psychological and emotional impact of violence.⁸

Also with regard to studies of the broader ANE world (Mesopotamia and Egypt), as well as classical studies, there is a renewed interest in the phenomenon of war and violence, particularly its extreme forms.⁹ However, when analysing these manifestations of violence, the tendency is often to view them in terms of a modern frame of mind, or to regard them as historical accounts of what really happened. Zimmermann reminds us (1) that each age "has its historically specific form of physical and institutional violence," and (2) that "each age has its own way of speaking or writing about violence."¹⁰ With regard to (2), he claims:

. . . texts and images that transmit violence to posterity follow the rules and conventions of their own time, and these may not be easily accessible to the modern observer. Those rules may be based, for example, on political ideologies, on the criteria of who belongs to a society and who does not, or on laws that govern life within the community, but they also depend on conventions of storytelling and literary representation.¹¹

⁵ Andreas Michel, *Gott und Gewalt gegen Kinder im Alten Testament* (FAT 37; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

⁶ Andreas Michel, "Texts of Terror für Alte? Gewalt gegen ältere Menschen im Alten Testament," in *Macht-Gewalt-Krieg im Alten Testament: Gesellschaftliche Problematik und das Problem ihrer Repräsentation* (ed. Irmtraud Fischer; QD 254; Freiburg: Herder, 2013), 53–82.

⁷ Carly L. Crouch, *War and Ethics in the Ancient Near East: Military Violence in the Light of Cosmology and History* (BZAW 407; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009).

⁸ Ruth Poser, *Das Ezechielbuch als Trauma-Literatur* (VTSup 154; Leiden: Brill, 2012).

⁹ For Mesopotamia, see Zainab Bahrani, *Rituals of War: The Body and Violence in Mesopotamia* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), and Andreas Fuchs, "Waren die Assyrer grausam?," in *Extreme Formen von Gewalt in Bild und Text des Altertums* (ed. Martin Zimmermann; MSAW 5; München: Herbert Utz Verlag, 2009), 65–119; for Egypt, see Rolf Gundlach und Carola Vogel, *Militärsgeschichte des pharaonischen Ägypten: Altägypten und seine Nachbarkulturen im Spiegel der aktueller Forschung* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2009); for the classical world, see Robert Rollinger, "Extreme Gewalt und Strafgericht: Ktesias und Herodot als Zeugnisse für den Achaimenidenhof," in *Der achaimenidische Hof/The Achaemenid Court* (ed. Bruno Jacobs and Robert Rollinger; ClOr 3; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 559–666.

¹⁰ Martin Zimmermann, "Violence in Late Antiquity Reconsidered," in *Violence in Late Antiquity: Perceptions and Practices* (ed. Harold A. Drake; Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 344.

¹¹ Zimmermann, "Violence," 344.

Furthermore, were these records in any sense intended to mediate historical information, no matter how limited, or were they solely intended to serve propagandistic or ideological purposes? There are supporters of both these viewpoints. As representative of the latter (ideological) perspective, especially regarding textual information, note the views of Cogan and Berlejung. Cogan remarks: "The royal inscriptions were, first and foremost, ideological compositions, designed to memorialize the achievements of the reigning monarch."¹² A similar view is advanced by Berlejung about the brutal imagery in the art work of the Assyrian palasts, maintaining that they had a clear cognitive and affective purpose:

Sie sollten bei den Betrachtern dazu führen, dass sie erkannten, dass der assyrische König mächtig und unschlagbar war; sie sollten durch die Schreckensbilder emotional in Angst versetzt werden und ihre Handlungsweise sollte so gesteuert werden, dass sie von Gehorsam und Loyalität bestimmt war.¹³

On the other hand, there is the view that these descriptions are in some way reflections of reality: "Intimidation would not work, however, if those who viewed these terrible records did not know that such things could happen and did happen."¹⁴ Or Mayer, who defends the historical reliability of this type of ANE evidence on account of the fact that what is recorded in that context, still reverberates in modern times:

Krieg war und ist immer und überall brutal – das Alte Vorderasien bildet dabei keine Ausnahme. Grausamkeit ist ein dunkles Kapitel der Menschheitsgeschichte, sie erscheint zu allen Zeiten, nicht nur bei den Völkern der Antike, sondern auch in der Moderne.¹⁵

To substantiate his view, he points to the following modern example:

Die Berichte des Generals F.–J. Westermann (1754–1794) und seiner Untergebenen stehen assyrischen Königsinschriften in nichts nach: „Ich habe die Kinder unter den Hufen der Pferde zertreten und die Frauen massakriert . . . Nicht einen einzigen Gefangenen muss ich mir zum Vorwurf machen. Ich habe alle ausgelöscht . . . Die

¹² Mordechai Cogan, *The Raging Torrent: Historical Inscriptions from Assyria and Babylonia Relating to Ancient Israel* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2008), 1.

¹³ Angelika Berlejung, "Gewalt ins Bild gesetzt: Kriegsdarstellungen auf neuassyrischen Palastreliefs," *BK* 60 (2005): 205.

¹⁴ Paul B. Kern, *Ancient Siege Warfare* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 69.

¹⁵ Walter Mayer, *Politik und Kriegskunst der Assyrer* (ALASP 9; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995), 51.

Strassen sind übersät mit Leichen. ... Wir machen keine Gefangene, man müsste sie ja mit dem Brot der Freiheit füttern.¹⁶

Others like Reiner,¹⁷ for example, argue for a "middle position," in other words, a combination between the historical and the ideological approaches. With reference to the similarity in motif between the cruel practice of the Assyrian kings of "flaying" (*kâṣu*) their enemies and "the red dyeing" of the flayed skin of the barbarian king, Valerian (after c. A.D. 260), as reported by the Latinist Lactantius, she holds:

It seems to me that Lactantius's mention of this detail about dyeing the defeated enemy's skin implies either that it corresponded to the truth, or that there were, in his time, some memories or stories about the cruelty of oriental kings manifesting itself precisely in dyeing red the flayed skin of their enemies.¹⁸

Along the similar lines, compare the list of atrocities presumably committed against the indigenous people during the colonisation of America in the sixteenth century. In 1542 the bishop of Chiapas, Bartolomé de Las Casas, presented the following short overview entitled "Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias" ("A Very Short Record of the Destruction of the West Indies"). It was published in 1552 and reads like an excerpt from one of the Assyrian royal annals:

Die Christen mit ihren Pferden, Schwertern und Lanzen verübten Metzeleien und unerhörte Grausamkeiten an ihnen. Sie drangen in die Ortschaften ein; sie verschonten nicht einmal Kinder oder Greise, Schwangere oder Wöchnerinnen; ihnen allen schlitzen sie den Bauch auf und zerstückelten sie, als fielen sie über ein paar Lämmer her, die in ihren Hürden eingesperrt wären. Sie schlossen Wetten ab, wer mit einem einzigen Hieb einen Menschen zerteilen oder ihm den Kopf mit einem Pikenstoss abtrennen oder ihm auch die Eingeweide aufreissen könne. Sie zerrten die neugeborenen Kinder von der Mutterbrust, packten sie an den Beinen und zerschlugen ihnen den Kopf an den Felsen. Andere warfen die Geschöpfchen rücklings in den Fluss, wobei sie lachten und spot-teten und wenn das Kind ins Wasser fiel, sagten sie: Du zappelst ja noch?¹⁹

¹⁶ Mayer, *Politik*, 51, n. 3; see also Rollinger, "Extreme Gewalt," 621, n. 195, who refers to similar brutalities from the classical, medieval and modern worlds.

¹⁷ Erica Reiner, "The Reddling of Valerian," *CQ* 56/1 (2006): 325–329.

¹⁸ Reiner, "Reddling," 329.

¹⁹ Anja Bröchler, "Was uns das Recht unseres Glaubens erlaubt zu tun: Kriegsgreuel in den Eroberungen Amerikas," in *Kriegsgreuel: Die Entgrenzung der Gewalt in kriegerischen Konflikten vom Mittelalter bis ins 20. Jahrhundert* (ed. Sönke Neitzel and Daniel Hohrath; KG 40; Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2008), 137.

If these types of war crimes are said to have been committed in the name of religion not so long ago, what else could one expect from the ANE peoples, who likewise perceived their wars as "divinely inspired"? It should therefore not come as a surprise if similar themes such as "the ripping open of pregnant women," "the removal of the entrails," "the smashing of the heads of newborn babies against rocks," the "treatment of victims like animals," *etcetera* are likewise encountered in ANE war accounts.

But how are these brutal forms of violence to be justified in an ancient context? Without going into detail, I will briefly mention three viewpoints that have been advanced by scholars to explain why wars were conceived as legitimate.

Firstly, war – principally regarded as the responsibility of the reigning king – was seen as the reenactment of the mythological past. Compare Maul's concise summary of the Assyrian war ideology:

Formulierungen in assyrischen Königsinschriften lassen erahnen, dass der König seinen Kampf gegen den Feind als Reaktualisierung des mythischen Kampfes des Helden Ninurta und sich selbst als dessen irdisches und gegenwärtiges Abbild begriff, das den Auftrag von An und Enlil zur Errettung des Landes (an Ninurtas Statt) zu erfüllen hatte.²⁰

Secondly, resistance against the king was interpreted as resistance against the god:

Tatsache, dass Assur selbst, nicht etwa der assyrische König, der wahre König des Reiches ist, erklärt den stark ausgeprägten juristischen Charakter der assyrischen Kriegsführung, der häufig beschrieben worden ist. Jedwedes Aufbegehren gegen die assyrische

²⁰ Stefan M. Maul, "Der assyrische König – Hüter der Weltordnung," in *Gerechtigkeit: Richten und Retten in der abendländischen Tradition und ihren altorientalischen Ursprüngen* (ed. Jan Assmann, Bernd Janowski and Michael Welker; München: Fink, 1998, 74); see also the remark by Beate Pongratz-Leisten, "Ritual Killing and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East," in *Human Sacrifice in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (ed. Karin Finsterbusch et al., Leiden: Brill, 2007), 19, who claims: "Unlike our modern world view, killing in Mesopotamia primarily is part of a concept of order and not of ethical considerations . . . war and chaos are antithetical, not war and peace. War is viewed as *creatio continua*." For Egypt, see the view of Andrea M. Gnirs, "Ägyptische Militärgeschichte als Kultur- und Sozialgeschichte," in *Militärgeschichte des pharaonischen Ägypten: Altägypten und seine Nachbarkulturen im Spiegel aktueller Forschung* (ed. Rolf Gundlach and Carola Vogel; Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2009), 78-79: "Die Vernichtung der Feinde wurde als Beseitigung des Chaos und damit als Aufrechterhaltung der kosmischen Ordnung verstanden. Wann immer Pharao tötet, tut er es als göttlicher Stellvertreter und ist mit entsprechenden göttlichen Fähigkeiten ausgestattet."

Macht wurde als Versündigung gegen den Gott Assur verstanden und entsprechend ohne Erbarmen geahndet.²¹

The third reason advanced is that foreigners are, in terms of the Assyrian value system, regarded as “uncultivated” and that they accordingly need to be “enculturated” in order to behave in a proper manner. The following principle of “imperial citizenship” hails from the well-known Cylinder Inscription of Sargon II (722/1–705 B.C.E.):

Subject peoples from the four (regions), of foreign languages and disharmonious speech, (former) residents of mountains and plains (i.e. foreign countries), all that are guided by the light of gods, the lord of all the world (i.e., the god Šamaš), who, by the order of Aššur my lord, I took captive by the might of my shepherd’s staff, I organized to act in unison and settled in its midst. As work-overseers and commanders, I set over them Assyrian citizens, experts in every kind of skill, to teach (them) correct citizen-behavior: to revere god and king.²²

Despite cultural and social differences, the West Semitic/biblical context shares with the other Near Eastern peoples the same basic principles of warfare. In a recent contribution Achenbach has shown convincingly that, regarding the ideologies of war, there are several similarities between the Deuteronomistic account in 1 Samuel – 2 Kings and the Assyrian annalistic texts reporting on warfare, an aspect that will not be elaborated on further here.²³

Against this brief backdrop of the ideology of ANE warfare, we now turn to the analysis of motifs of war brutalities as evidenced in the HB. This will be done against the background of the broader ANE (especially the New Assyrian) “world at war.” But first, it is important to establish what exactly would count as “war brutalities”? Some prefer to speak of “extreme forms of violence”;²⁴ others are more precise in their definition of what could qualify as “war brutalities”/“atrocities”/“cruelties.” For example, Berlejung, who

²¹ Maul, “Der assyrische König,” 76.

²² Pinhas Artzi, “‘All the Nations and Many Peoples’: The Answer of Isaiah and Micah to Assyrian Imperial Policies,” in *Treasures on Camels’ Humps: Historical and Literary Studies from the Ancient Near East Presented to Israel Eph’al* (ed. Mordechai Cogan and Daniel Kahn; Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2008), 48.

²³ Reinhard Achenbach, “Divine Warfare and YHWH’s Wars: Religious Ideologies of War in the Ancient Near East and in the Old Testament,” in *The Ancient Near East in the 12th–10th Centuries B.C.E.: Culture and History: Proceedings of the International Conference Held at the University of Haifa, 2–5 May, 2010* (ed. Gershon Galil, et al.; AOAT 392; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2012), 1–26.

²⁴ Fuchs, “Waren die Assyrer?”

includes in her "Bilderkanon des Schreckens"²⁵ of the Assyrian empire the following war brutalities: the destruction of fruit trees,²⁶ torture,²⁷ execution, bodily injury, incineration, mutilation,²⁸ killing, rape, disinterment, looting, deprivation, taking of booty, destruction of cities, defilement of sacred places,²⁹ capture and deportation,³⁰ the loss of the home and possessions, humiliation and mockery.³¹ Many of these extreme manifestations of cruelty were characteristic of the Assyrians³² in particular, but they are by no means absent

²⁵ Berlejung, "Gewalt ins Bild gesetzt," 210–211. See also Marcus Müller, "Grausamkeit und Elend in altägyptischen Kriegen," in *Mauerschau: Festschrift für Manfred Korfmann* (vol. 3; ed. Rüstem Aslan, et al.; Remshalden–Grunbach: Verlag Bernhard Albert Greiner, 2002), 1221–222 who distinguishes between a brutal "mind" (*Wesen*) and a brutal "act" (*Tat*). A brutal mind manifests itself in an attitude (*Verhalten*) containing the following brutal characteristics: "grausam," "unmenschlich, roh, andere quälend, sehr hart, rücksichtslos, gefühllos, unangenehm stark, schrecklich . . ." (emphasis in the original). He continues by stating: "Es wird deutlich, dass Grausamkeit wesentlich umfassender als physische Pein ist."

²⁶ For the most recent review of this war strategy, see Michael G. Hasel, "Assyrian Military Practices and Deuteronomy's Laws of Warfare," in *Writing and Reading War: Rhetoric, Gender, and Ethics in Biblical and Modern Contexts* (ed. Brad E. Kelle and Frank R. Ames; SBLSymS 42; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 67–81.

²⁷ See Rollinger, "Extreme Gewalt," 604. For a discussion of different forms of torture in Egypt, see Renate Müller–Wollermann, *Vergehen und Strafen: Zur Sanktionierung abweichenden Verhaltens im alten Ägypten* (PdÄ 21; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 209.

²⁸ See e.g. Tracy M. Lemos, "Shame and Mutilation of Enemies in the Hebrew Bible," *JBL* 125/2 (2006): 225–241; see also Seth Richardson, "Death and Dismemberment in Mesopotamia: Discorporation between the Body and Body Politic," in *Performing Death: Social Analyses of Funerary Traditions in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean* (ed. Nicola Laneri; OIS 3; Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2007), 189–208.

²⁹ Walter Mayer, "Die Zerstörung des Jerusalemer Tempels 587 v.Chr. im Kontext der Praxis von Heiligtumszerstörungen im antiken Vorderen Orient," in *Zerstörungen des Jerusalemer Tempels* (ed. Johannes Hahn; WUNT 147; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 1–22.

³⁰ See Walter Mayer, "Gedanken zur Deportation im Alten Orient," in *Macht und Herrschaft* (ed. Christian Sigrist; AOAT 316; Münster: Ugarit–Verlag, 2004), 215–232.

³¹ Karola Zibeliuss–Chen, "Zur Schmähung des toten Feindes," *WO* 15 (1984): 83–88.

³² For earlier studies, see, Erika Bleibtreu, "Grisly Assyrian Record of Torture and Death," *BAR* 17/1 (1990): 52–61; for more recent surveys, see e.g. Theodore J. Lewis, "You Have Heard What the Kings of Assyria Have Done': Disarmament Passages vis-à-vis Assyrian Rhetoric of Intimidation," in *Isaiah's Vision of Peace in Biblical and Modern International Relations* (ed. Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook;

in the HB. Especially the historic books (the Deuteronomistic History) contain a significant number of such accounts of atrocities.³³ War time mutilations include, for example, “gouging out (נקר) the eyes” (Judg 16:21; 1 Sam 11:2),³⁴ “cutting off (כרת) the head”³⁵ (1 Sam 17:51, 31:9, 2 Sam 20:22 and 2 Kgs 10:7 where the victims were first “slaughtered” [שחט],³⁶ and then their heads were

New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 75–100, and more comprehensively Fuchs, “Waren die Assyrer?”

³³ For similarities between the HB and ANE conquest accounts of these brutal acts, see K. Lawson Younger, *Ancient Conquest Accounts: A Study in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical History Writing* (JSOTSup 98; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990); more recently, cf. Erasmus Gass, “Gewalt gegen Feinde im Landnahmekontext am Beispiel der Adonibezeq-Episode,” in *Macht–Gewalt–Krieg im Alten Testament: Gesellschaftliche Problematik und das Problem ihrer Repräsentation* (ed. Irmtraud Fischer; QD 254; Freiburg: Herder, 2013), 107–170. He claims that the redactors of the conquest narratives in Joshua (1–12) were familiar with the “Erzähltopoi” of the Assyrian royal inscriptions.

³⁴ For similar examples in Assyrian warfare, see Robert Rollinger, “Herodotus, Human Violence and the Ancient Near East,” in *The World of Herodotus* (ed. Vassos Karageorghis and Ioannes Taifacos; Nicosia: Kailas, 2004), 141, n. 30; for Egypt, cf. Müller, “Grausamkeit,” 1227.

³⁵ This practice is well attested in the Assyrian royal inscriptions; see Rollinger, “Herodotus,” 140, n. 19; for Egypt, cf. Müller, “Grausamkeit,” 1227.

³⁶ It is not clear what exactly is implied by this action, which is also elsewhere meted out to different types of victims (Judg 12:6; 1 Kgs 18:40; 2 Kgs 10:14; 2 Kgs 25:7). It is mostly rendered as “to slaughter” (like an animal?). In 2 Kgs 25:7 this act is associated with the royal court and is meant for public display: “They (= the army of the Babylonians) slaughtered/flayed? (שחט) the sons of Zedekiah *before his eyes*.” If the root שחט is linked to the Akkadian *šahātu*, which in certain cases may signify “to flay” (see *CAD* Š/1,92–93), then one may speculate whether this was not the fate of Zedekiah’s sons as well. The usual root for flaying in Akkadian is, however, *kāšu*. Flaying is a well-known practice in Assyrian warfare, from the time of Ashur-bel-kala (1073–1056 B.C.E.) until Ashurbanipal (668–627 B.C.E.); see Robert Rollinger and Josef Wiesehöfer, “Kaiser Valerin und Ilu-bi’di von Hamat: Über das Schicksal besiegter Feinde, persische Grausamkeit und die Persistenz altorientalischer Traditionen,” in *Stories of Long Ago: Festschrift für Michael D. Roaf* (ed. Heather Baker, Kai Kaniuth and Adelheid Otto; AOAT 397; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2012), 504–513. If, however, 2 Kgs 25:7 is ruled out as a possible example of flaying, then this act is nowhere else attested in the HB, unless the obscure root חמר in the combination חמור חמרתים (Judg 15:16) is related to Arabic root חמר, “to flay” and read as an infinitive absolute: “ich habe sie gründlich geschunden.” See Josef Schreiner, *Septuaginta-Massora des Buches der Richter: Eine Textkritische Studie* (AnBib 7; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1957), 117. Cf., however, the recent commentary of Walter Gross, *Richter: Übersetzt und ausgelegt* (HTKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2009), 643, who sees no reason for an emendation and translates: “Mit der Eselskinnlade einen Haufen, zwei Haufen, mit der Eselskinnlade habe ich tausend Mann erschlagen.”

“cut off”),³⁷ “cutting off (קצץ) the thumbs/toes/hands” (Judg 1:6, 2 Sam 4:12)³⁸ and “impaling” (lit. “to hang on a tree”: תלה על עץ; Josh 8:29; 10:26),³⁹ etc. These brutal actions are interestingly enough not hinted at in the Prophetic Books; however, a few new ones are added, such as: “putting hooks in the jaw” (Ezek 29:4, 38:4), “putting hooks in the nose” (Isa 37:29/II Kgs 19:28),⁴⁰ “cutting off nose and ears” (Ezek 23:25),⁴¹ or “to be fettered in chains” (Nah 3:10).

³⁷ For decapitation in Assyria, see the examples supplied by Rollinger, “Herodotus,” 140, n. 19.

³⁸ This was done to the Canaanite Adoni-Bezek and signifies total humiliation: “machen ihn militärisch und kultisch funktionsunfähig”; Gross, *Richter*, 123. His (Adoni-Bezek’s) treatment of his enemies was, however, just as humiliating, since he had previously treated them “like dogs:” “The seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off, used to pick up food scraps under my table” (Judg 1:7; see also Lemos, “Shame and Mutilation,” 237). Similar examples of degradation to the status of animals are often encountered in the Assyrian royal inscriptions. Fuchs, “Waren die Assyrer?,” 89 n. 65, lists a few instances, but I will refer to only one of the most brutal during the reign of Ashurbanipal. The text (A par. 80) runs as follows: “An sein (=Uaites: PAK) *Zahnfleisch* legte ich ein Zaumseil. Ich legte ihm ein Hundehalsband an und liess ihn ... das Schloss bewachen.” The translation is by Rykle Borger, *Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996), 249.

³⁹ Elsewhere in war contexts תלה (“hang”) appears without the qualification “on a tree” (e.g. 2 Sam 4:12, 21:12), or it is explicitly stated that this deed is performed at a public place (“at the public square,” 2 Sam 21:12). Another passage which is difficult to make sense of is Lam 5:12, where “princes are hung (תלה) by (ב) their hands.” See the commentary of Ulrich Berges, *Klagelieder: Übersetzt und ausgelegt* (HTKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2002), 290. Impaling was likewise a popular punishment in the Assyrian empire, especially in the reign of Ashurnasirpal. For examples, cf. Rollinger, “Herodotus,” 140, n. 18. For staking (lit. “Geben auf die Spitze des Holzes”) as punishment in Egypt, see Renate Müller-Wollermann, “Todesstrafe und Folter im pharaonischen Ägypten,” in *Strafe und Strafrecht in den antiken Welten: Unter Berücksichtigung von Todesstrafe, Hinrichtung und peinlicher Befragung* (ed. Robert Rollinger, Martin Lang and Heinz Barta; MaA 51; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012), 149. For the most gruesome act of “hanging someone upside-down,” not attested in Syro-Palestine or Mesopotamia, see Müller, “Grausamkeit,” 1227.

⁴⁰ For examples of both these brutalities in the Assyrian inscriptions (“putting hooks in the jaw/nose”), see Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 238.

⁴¹ For Assyrian examples of “cutting off nose/ears,” especially by Ashurnasirpal II, see Rollinger, “Herodotus,” 142, n. 33 and 34. For another brutal form of disfigurement relating to the face, viz. “the cutting off the lips,” cf. the following example with reference to Ashurbanipal: “Ihre Köpfe schlug ich ab, ihre Lippen schnitt ich ab” (Prism A IV 135; the translation is by Borger, *Beiträge*, 237); see also Rollinger, “Herodotus,” 142, n. 35.

Other acts of war violence seem to get special attention in the prophets, like the merciless actions towards women and children. Three times the prophetic literature mentions the "dashing in pieces (שטט) of the little ones (עולל/עלל)" (Isa 13:16; Hos 14:1; Nah 3:10). No trace, however, is found of this motif in Assyrian accounts of war. Twice the combination "dashing in pieces the little ones" appears in close connection with the "ripping open (בקע) pregnant women" (2 Kgs 8:12; Hos 14:1), and once the latter combination occurs in association with the "raping/ravishing" (?) (שגל, *nip'al*) of wives (Isa 13:16). The section below focuses on the latter war atrocity, viz. the raping of women, which seems to be described most evidently in a few prophetic passages such as, for example, Nah 3:5.

B THE RAPING OF WOMEN

In one of the classic studies on women and rape, Susan Brownmiller⁴² speculates on the reasons why the raping of women is an inevitable element of warfare. The first reason she suggests is a natural one:

It's funny about *man's* attitude toward rape in war. *Unquestionably* there shall be some raping . . . When men are men, slugging it out among themselves, conquering new land, subjugating new people, driving on toward victory, *unquestionably* there shall be some raping.⁴³

Another reason is a psychological one:

War provides men with the perfect psychologic backdrop to give vent to their contempt for women. The very maleness of the military . . . confirms for men what they long suspect, that women are peripheral, irrelevant to the world that counts, passive spectators to the action in the center ring.⁴⁴

However, given the understanding of Brownmiller, it is strange that references to raped women are strikingly absent in Assyrian accounts of war,⁴⁵ in

⁴² Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1975).

⁴³ Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 23; italics in original.

⁴⁴ Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 24–25.

⁴⁵ This corresponds with what Pauline Albenda, "Woman, Child, and Family in Assyrian Art," in *La Femme dans le Proche-Orient Antique: Compte Rendu de la XXXIII^e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale (Paris, 7–10 Juillet 1986)* (ed. Jean-Marie Durand; Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1986), 17–21, established with regard to Assyrian art works as well: "Assyrian art works demonstrate that warfare and diplomacy were the concerns of men. Indeed, the pictorial record strongly suggests that women and children were not molested or abused by their Assyrian captors." See Albenda, "Woman, Child," 21.

view of the fact, as Fuchs claims, that Assyrian males are in no respect different from all other men:

Die durchschnittlichen assyrischen Soldaten waren Männer, die so gut wie jedes Jahr an Feldzügen teilnahmen und dabei unter Lebensgefahr äusserste Entbehrungen ertrugen, sie waren an Raub, Schlächtereien und vielerlei Grausamkeiten gewöhnt, zu denen sie ja auch noch ermutigt wurden – kurzum, sie dürften einen Grad an seelischer Verrohung und moralischer Verkommenheit erreicht haben, der dem eines Söldners des Dreissigjährigen Krieges in nichts nachstand. Und diese Leute, so müsste man angesichts des Schweigens der königlichen Erfolgsberichte annehmen, sollen sich im Chaos einer Plünderung Menschen gegenüber ganz sittsam und züchtig betragen haben, die ihnen wenigstens für Stunden, wenn nicht gar Tage wehrlos ausgeliefert waren? Das ist mehr als unwahrscheinlich . . .⁴⁶

Some other historians use their imagination to reconstruct a probable scenario of what could have occurred during these city sieges. I quote here one such creative re-enactment:

The victims of deportation will have lost everything in the sack of the city, and some may have been malnourished after a long, exhausting siege. The violence of the siege, the slaughter of many inhabitants, the sight of impaled or mutilated prisoners will have traumatized many. Many of the women will have been recently raped. It is difficult to imagine worse conditions under which to embark on a long and hazardous journey into the unknown.⁴⁷

However, there are bits of literary information from the ANE and the classical worlds that could be of assistance in gaining some understanding of what could have taken place in such situations. The following paragraphs will offer some evidence in this respect.

1 Allusions to Rape in Curse Formulae

The worldview reflected in the ANE curse catalogues is, on the one hand, an inverted world (*mundus inversus*),⁴⁸ marked by all kinds of inconsistencies. On

⁴⁶ Fuchs, "Waren die Assyrer?," 71. A similar sentiment is echoed by Steven W. Holloway, *Aššur is King! Aššur is King! Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 121, when he holds: "Roman authors indicate that Roman troops, following the storming or capitulation of a city, normally raped and plundered and slaughtered at will. It is difficult to imagine that the Assyrian army observed a significantly more refined Kriegsethik."

⁴⁷ Kern, *Ancient Siege Warfare*, 227.

⁴⁸ Paul A. Kruger, "Mundus inversus and the Phenomenon of Cursing: Some Examples from the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible," in *Weltkonstruktionen: Religiöse Weltdeutung zwischen Chaos und Kosmos vom Alten Orient bis Islam*

the other hand, many scenarios sketched in these curse corpora mirror real-life situations. Such pronouncements should be seen in relation to what was in fact a reality in everyday life.⁴⁹ One category of curses, for example, has a bearing on the plight of women during situations of war or conflict. Compare the following exemplars from the HB:

Deut 28:30: You shall betroth a woman, but another shall שקל (ravish/rape?) her.

2 Sam 12:11: Thus says Yahweh: "I am about to bring disaster against you out of your own house. I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your companion and he shall lie with your wives in broad daylight."

Jer 8:10: Therefore I will give your wives to others; your fields to conquerors.

Job 31:10: May my wife grind for another, and may others bow down over her.⁵⁰

Similar threats are attested in curse formulae in *Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty*, all referring to the destiny of the treaty partner's relatives at the hands of the enemy, one of which has a bearing on his women, if he fails to comply with the treaty stipulations:

May Venus, the brightest of the stars, before your eyes make your wives lie in the lap of your enemy (Par 42, 428).⁵¹

. . . just as a . . . beast is caught in a snare, may you, your [women], your brothers, your sons and your daughters be seized by the hand of your enemy (Par 80, 588).⁵²

(ed. Peter Gemeinhardt and Annette Zgoll; *OrRelA* 5; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 47–63.

⁴⁹ See Rollinger, "Herodotus," 141; Fuchs, "Waren die Assyrer?," 71, n. 11, and also Gerlinde Baumann, *Liebe und Gewalt: Die Ehe als Metapher für das Verhältnis JHWH–Israel in den Prophetenbüchern* (SBS 185; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2000), 90, "Wenn in den Fluchpassagen der Vertragstexte die Entkleidung der Frauen als ein Geschehen für die Stadt bzw. das Land angedroht wird, so steht auch hinter diesen Texten die konkrete Lebenswirklichkeit von Frauen im Kriegsfall."

⁵⁰ For "grinding" and "bowing down over" as euphemisms for sexual intercourse, cf. Stefan Schorch, *Euphemismen in der Hebräischen Bibel* (*OrBibCh* 12; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000), 123, 140; see also Delbert R. Hillers, *Treaty Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964), 63. For two other passages in the same vein, but focusing not only on the fate of women in war but also on the wider society, cf. Ezek 9:5–6 and 2 Chron 36:17.

⁵¹ Simo Parpola and Kazuko Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* (*SAA* 2; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1988), 46.

. . . may they strangle you, your women, your sons and your daughters with a cord (Par 88, 606f).⁵³

Add to this the following parallel from the classical world (*The Iliad*):

Zeus, greatest and most glorious, and all other gods; whichever side is the first to violate these oaths, may their brains be poured out on the ground as this wine is, theirs and their children’s; and may their wives be mastered by strangers (Book 3. 297–301).⁵⁴

2 Passages Referring to Technical Terms

Before presenting some prophetic passages in which reference is apparently made to the phenomenon of rape, it is important to point out that the HB has no specific word for “raping as sexual assault” equivalent to the modern term.⁵⁵ The English word “rape,” derived from the Latin *rapere* (“seize”) in the sense of an “act of abducting a woman or sexually violating her or both,” is attested from the early 15th century, perhaps from the late 13th century in Anglo–Latin.⁵⁶ Hebrew Bible texts may evoke the idea of physical violence in describing this act, but the terms used rather allude to the feeling of shame or humiliation.⁵⁷ Especially two Hebrew roots are of significance here, viz. ענה and שקל. ענה essentially denotes “die Herbeiführung eines miserablen Zustands.”⁵⁸ For sexual contexts in which this root (*pi’el*) is encountered (Gen 34:2; Deut 21:14, 22:24, 29; Judg 19:24, 20:5; 2 Sam 13:12, 14, 22, 32; Ezek 22:10, 11; Lam 5:11, the latter being the sole example in the context of war), the most preferable translation would be “to humiliate”/“erniedrigen.”⁵⁹

⁵² Parpola and Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties*, 54.

⁵³ Parpola and Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties*, 55.

⁵⁴ The translation is by Anthony Verity and Barbara Graziosi, *Homer: The Iliad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 49.

⁵⁵ See the remark by Gerlinde Baumann, “Gott als vergewaltigender Soldat im Alttestament? Ein Vergleich von Jes 47,2f und Nah 3,4–7,” in *Machtbeziehungen, Geschlechterdifferenz und Religion* (ed. Bernhard Heiniger, Stephanie Böhm and Ulrike Sals; GSR 2; Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004), 58: “Es gibt allerdings auch keinen eindeutigen Terminus für ‘Vergewaltigung’ im Alten Testament: Alle dafür verwendeten Ausdrücke kommen auch in anderen Kontexten zur Bezeichnung anderer Handlungen vor. Die meisten umreißen Zerstörung oder Vernichtung, kommen also in ihrer Auswirkung einer Vergewaltigung auf die betroffene Frau nahe.”

⁵⁶ Douglas Harper, “rape (v),” n.p. in *Online Etymology Dictionary*. [cited 7 April 2014]. Online: <http://www.etymonline.com>.

⁵⁷ Claudia Rakel, *Judit – über Schönheit, Macht und Widerstand im Krieg: Eine feministisch–intertextuelle Lektüre* (BZAW 334; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 191.

⁵⁸ Eberhard S. Gerstenberger, “ענה II,” *ThWAT* 6:252.

⁵⁹ Ilse Müllner, “Sexuelle Gewalt im Alten Testament,” in *Sexuelle Gewalt gegen Mädchen und Frauen als Thema der feministischen Theologie* (ed. Ulrike Eichler and

Another related root that may refer to sexual activity is לָקַח ("ravisht/rape"?),⁶⁰ which is used once in a context that is not necessarily violent (Jer 3:2), and three times in explicit war contexts (Deut 28:30; Isa 13:16 and Zech 14:2). In Deut 28:30 and Jer 3:2 the *qal* is used and the meaning "to sleep with" is proposed, whereas in the other occurrences where the *nip'al* is employed (Isa 13:16; Zech 14:2), the rendering "to be disgraced" is suggested.⁶¹ The LXX, likewise, renders the root differently. On two occasions (Deut 28:30, Isa 13:16) the equivalent $\epsilon\chi\omega$ ("to take into possession by force")⁶² is attested, once $\epsilon\kappa\phi\upsilon\rho\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$ ("to have illicit sexual dealings with"; Jer 3:2)⁶³ and once $\mu\omicron\lambda\upsilon\eta\omega$ ("to violate a woman sexually;,"⁶⁴ Zech 14:2). Interesting to observe that in all MT passages where לָקַח occurs (Deut 28:30; Isa 13:16; Jer 3:2 and Zech 14:2), the term was apparently conceived as abusive by the Masoretes. The *Qere* reading שָׁכַב ("to lie with") is found instead, euphemistically denoting "to have sexual intercourse," "perhaps . . . simply as a less offensive word."⁶⁵

Other scholars, though, are of the opinion that apart from the seemingly negative association of the root, it may, in addition, have another hurtful

Ilse Müllner, Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser/Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999), 46. See also Pamela Gordon and Harold C. Washington, "Rape as a Military Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible," in *The Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets* (ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 313, who suggest: "to force sexual intercourse upon." Lyn M. Bechtel, "What if Dinah is not Raped? (Genesis 34)," *JSOT* 62 (1994): 25, concludes: "The verb (עָנָה) ('to put down') reflects the process of status manipulation inherent in shaming. Given the meaning of 'shame' connoted by the verb 'nh, I will contend that within a sexual context the verb 'nh in the Piel indicates the 'humiliation' or 'shaming' of a woman through certain kinds of sexual intercourse including rape, though not necessarily."

⁶⁰ According to Hans Wildberger, *Jesaja 13–27* (BKAT 10/2; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), 520: " לָקַח . . . ist Bezeichnung für den Vollzug des Coitus." Cf. also the related root in Akkadian *šigiltu(m)* signifying a similar shade of meaning: "unlawful, improper seizure or action" (*CAD* Š/2, 412; see also Schorch, *Euphemismen*, 198, n. 825.)

⁶¹ Wilhelm Gesenius, *Wilhelm Gesenius' Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament* (ed. Rudolf Meyer and Herbert Donner; 18th ed.; Heidelberg: Springer, 2010), 1323.

⁶² Takamitsu Muraoka, *A Greek–English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Louvain: Peeters, 2009), 311.

⁶³ Muraoka, *Greek–English Lexicon*, 220.

⁶⁴ Muraoka, *Greek–English Lexicon*, 466. Note, however, that the customary meaning of this term in the LXX is "to make physically dirty/to defile." See Muraoka, *Greek–English Lexicon*, 466.

⁶⁵ Carol Meyers and Eric Meyers, *Zechariah 9–14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 415; see also Schorch, *Euphemismen*, 205.

undertone, namely, "the violation of a man's sexual property."⁶⁶ This may point to the fact that שקל was seen to have more than one shade of meaning. Not only does it involve violence against the female body, or the committing of a humiliating and unlawful deed, but social relationships are also affected: "Immer wirken mehrere Faktoren zusammen, die die Verletzung bewirken."⁶⁷

Against the background of these few introductory notes, we may now turn to the relevant passages. First are those cases in which the technical terms (שקל, ענה) are used in explicit war contexts. It is helpful to start with Deut 28:30, since there the idea is created that this deed was supposedly not perceived as a violation of the victim's (the woman's) rights, but primarily those of the husband:

You shall betroth a woman, but another shall שקל her (Deut 28:30).

This curse forms part of the list of properties (v. 30–33) to be removed by plunder, if a man fails to keep the law. These include house, vineyard (v. 30), ox, donkey, sheep (v. 31), sons and daughters (v. 32), and produce of the land (v. 33). The initial item in this list (v. 30) is the betrothed, "as if she herself is one among these several properties owned by the man."⁶⁸ Ellens is correct when she remarks that the linguistic arrangement of the phrase (marked word order)

indicates that the tragedy invoked by the curse is a tragedy, first of all, for the man. His sexual property is used by another. The woman is merely the instrument through which the tragedy befalls the man. The tragedy for the woman, while obvious, is nevertheless only implied.⁶⁹

Two other occurrences of שגל appear in Day of the Lord scenarios, namely Isa 13:16 and Zech 14:2, and again this tragedy is merely reported, without elaborating on the effect it could have had on the female victim. The passage in Isaiah constitutes part of the Burden of Babylon Oracle (Isa 13:2–22). The first five verses (1–5) open with a type of "divine war" scenario,⁷⁰ with a command by Yahweh himself to muster an army; v. 6–8 record the

⁶⁶ See Deborah L. Ellens, *Women in the Sex Texts of Leviticus and Deuteronomy: A Comparative Conceptual Analysis* (LHBOTS 458; New York/London: T & T Clark, 2008), 279. Or in terms of a military context: "the transfer of the right of sexual activity with the conquered from their husbands to the military victors." See Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9–14*, 414–415.

⁶⁷ Müllner, "Sexuelle Gewalt," 47.

⁶⁸ Ellens, *Women in the Sex Texts*, 281.

⁶⁹ Ellens, *Women in the Sex Texts*, 278.

⁷⁰ Charis Fischer, *Die Fremdvölkersprüche bei Amos und Jesaja: Studien zur Eigenart und Intention in AM 1, 3–2,3.4f. und JES 13, 1–16,14* (BBB 136; Berlin: Philo, 2002), 75.

effect that these events have (“describing reaction to receiving really bad news”⁷¹), while vv. 9–13 describe the strange and atypical *topoi* of the Day of the Lord (e.g. darkness and cosmic catastrophes).⁷² Verses 14–16 speak of the devastating effects of war, referring specifically to the vile crimes committed against small children and women. The pronouncement runs:

Their little ones will be dashed in pieces before their eyes, their houses will be plundered and their wives שגל (Isa 13:16).

The victims of these acts have no names. They are merely referred to as “them”: “their little ones,” “their houses,” “their wives” (v. 16) and “against them” (v. 17), which could refer only to the godless tyrants (v. 11).⁷³ The formulaic form of the announcement appears not to be a realistic report on actual war circumstances. It should rather be seen as a literary device amplifying the seriousness and extent of a given scenario of disaster. In this respect it may be compared to typical “Notzeitsschilderungen,” often attested in the ancient Near East chaos accounts.⁷⁴

In the other Day of the Lord occurrence of שגל (Zech 14:2) nothing is said about the fate of the children, as is the case in Isa 13:16, but this passage is much clearer on the specific phase of the conquest to which the שגל of women belongs: first the “attack” on the city (אסף אל: “gather against”), then its “capturing” (לכד, *nip'al*), then the “plundering” of the houses (שסס, *nip'al*), with concurrently the שגל (*nip'al*) of the women,⁷⁵ and then the final stage of

⁷¹ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 279.

⁷² For the Day of the Lord themes, cf. Martin Beck, *Der „Tag YHWHs“ im Dodekapropheten: Studien im Spannungsfeld von Traditions- und Redaktionsgeschichte* (BZAW 356; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005) and Paul-Gerhard Schwesig, *Die Rolle der Tag-JHWHs-Dichtungen im Dodekapropheten* (BZAW 366; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006).

⁷³ Seth Erlandsson, *The Burden of Babylon: A Study of Isaiah 13:2–14:23* (ConBOT 4; Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1970), 117.

⁷⁴ For this phenomenon, see Thomas Podella, “Notzeit-Mythologem und Nichtigkeitsfluch,” in *Religionsgeschichtliche Beziehungen zwischen Kleinasien, Nordsyrien und dem Alten Testament* (ed. Bernd Janowski, Klaus Koch and Gernot Wilhelm; OBO 129; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1993), 427–454; see also Paul A. Kruger, “Disaster and the *Topos* of the World Upside Down: Selected Cases from the Ancient Near Eastern World,” in *Disaster and Relief Management – Katastrophen und ihre Bewältigung* (ed. Angelika Berlejung; FAT 81; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 391–424.

⁷⁵ See Bernd Biberger, *Endgültiges Heil innerhalb von Geschichte und Gegenwart: Zukunftskonzeptionen in Ez 38–39, Joel 1–4 und Sach 12–14* (BBB 161; Göttingen: V & R unipress, 2010), 315, who claims that the use of the w-qatal form of the root שסס (“plunder”), in combination with the yiqtol form of שגל, points to the fact that these two actions happen simultaneously.

the siege, the "going into exile" (יצא בגולה). The text reports: "I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to wage war; the city will be taken, the houses plundered and the women שגל. Half of the city will go into exile" (Zech 14:2). The fact that mainly the *nip'al* form of the verbs (3x) is employed signals (1) that Jerusalem is the suffering party, and that (2) although not explicitly stated, the foreign nations are obviously the subjects meting out the punishment.⁷⁶ This passage is reminiscent of Lam 5:11, where the plight of the women of Jerusalem during war is once more the focus of attention, but in that case the root ענה is used. The atrocity is reported as an event that took place in the past. Again the reference is very brief, only stating that the event occurred, without commenting on the pain of the victims:

In Zion they ענה (*pi'el*) women; young women in the towns of Judah.

Häusl is correct when she claims that Lam 5:11–14 is principally concerned with the collapsing of social (male) structures during times of disaster; what happens with the women functions purely as an illustration of the immensity of the destitution:

Dabei wird sexuelle Gewalt gegen Frauen als Kriegswaffe sichtbar. Diese Gewalt basiert auf einer doppelten Differenz, der Differenz von Eroberern und Erroberten und der Differenz von Männern und Frauen. Den Text interessiert wohl die erste Differenz, wenn er von sexueller Gewalt im Rahmen der zerstörten Gesellschaftsordnung spricht. Die zweite Differenz aber nicht in den Blick zu nehmen, birgt die Gefahr in sich, das Subjekt–Sein von Frauen zu übersehen und ihr Schicksal als bloße Illustration der Unermesslichkeit von Not und Grauen zu begreifen.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Biberger, *Endgültiges Heil*, 315. Biberger rightly states: "Sie (die Völker: PAK) führen letztlich nur aus, was in der Absicht JHWHs, der sie gesammelt hat, liegt. Gleichzeitig vermeidet der Verfasser es aber auch bewusst, JHWH unmittelbar mit dem Kriegsgeschehen gegen Jerusalem in Verbindung zu bringen. Somit kann das Unheil, das Jerusalem trifft, auch nicht als Gerichtshandeln JHWHs interpretiert werden." See Biberger, *Endgültiges Heil*, 317.

⁷⁷ Maria Häusl, "Die Klagelieder: Zions Stimme in der Not," in *Kompendium Feministische Bibelauslegung* (ed. Luise Schottroff and Marie-Theres Wacker, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1998), 276. One passage, though, allowing us a slight glimpse into the devastation and psychological anguish of a raped female victim, is the episode of Tamar in 2 Sam 13:1–22; see the analyses of Ilse Müllner, *Gewalt im Hause Davids: Die Erzählung von Tamar und Amnon (2 Sam 13:1–22)* (HBS 13; Freiburg: Herder, 1997) and Ulrike Bail, *Gegen das Schweigen klagen: Eine intertextuelle Studie zu den Klagepsalmen Ps 6 und Ps 55 und der Erzählung von der Vergewaltigung Tamars* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1998).

3 Prophetic Imagery: "Nations Will See Your Nakedness" (Nah 3:5)

I will now turn to another passage in the Minor Prophets, this time in the book of Nahum (3:4–6), which most probably allows us another glimpse of the sexual violation of women during military conquests, although in indirect, metaphorical terms. The Nahum passage is one of the many in the prophetic literature where the metaphorical depiction of a city as a ravished woman is encountered.⁷⁸ The other texts may be Isa 3:16–26;⁷⁹ 47:1–4;⁸⁰ Jer 6:3;⁸¹ 13:22; Ezek 16:35–39; 23:9–10, 26–29;⁸² Hos 2:4–13 and Mic 4:11. These texts function in terms of the *topos* that "cities are frequently personified as women. The context is usually military disaster and the woman is the victim."⁸³ In these scenes the metaphorical and the real world often overlap, as is fittingly described by Poser: "Im Rahmen eines wirklichen Kriegsgeschehens ging tatsächliche Gewalt gegen die *metaphorische* Frau, die Stadt, oftmals in tatsächliche Gewalt gegen in dieser Stadt lebende *reale* Frauen über"⁸⁴ According to this principle, Woman Nineveh's predicament in Nah 3:4–6 is portrayed as that of a shamed and violated woman:

4 Because of the multitude of whorings of the prostitute,
the wellfavoured one, a mistress of witchcraft,
who sells nation's through her whorings,
and peoples through her witchcraft.
5 Behold I am against you, declares the Lord of Hosts,
I will uncover your hem over your face,
and will let nations see your nakedness,
and kingdoms your shame.

⁷⁸ Harold C. Washington, "Violence and the Construction of Gender in the Hebrew Bible: A New Historicist Approach," *BibInt* 5 (1997): 355.

⁷⁹ For example, see the commentary of Willem A. Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12* (HTKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2003), 120–1.

⁸⁰ See Maria Häusl, *Bilder der Not: Weiblichkeits- und Geschlechtermetaphorik im Buch Jeremia* (HBS 37; Freiburg: Herder, 2003), 249.

⁸¹ See e.g. the comment of William L. Holladay, *Chapters 1–25* (vol. 1 of *Jeremiah: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah*; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986) on the phrase in v. 3, "they come into her" (יבאו אליה): "The phrase 'into her come' . . . has sexual overtones . . . the invaders will ravish fair Zion" (206).

⁸² Häusl, *Bilder der Not*, 249.

⁸³ Gordon and Washington, "Rape as a Military Metaphor," 308.

⁸⁴ Poser, *Das Ezechielbuch*, 187–88; see also Brad E. Kelle, "Wartime Rhetoric: Prophetic Metaphorization of Cities as Female," in *Writing and Reading War: Rhetoric, Gender, and Ethics in Biblical and Modern Contexts* (ed. Brad E. Kelle and Frank R. Ames; SBLSymS 42; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 104: "Certainly the violation of women as a metaphor fits the destruction of capital cities, for the stripping, penetration, exposure, and humiliation of women is analogous to siege warfare, with its breaching of the wall, entrance through the gate, and so forth."

6 I will throw filth at you,
treat you disdainfully and make you a spectacle.

At first glance it seems that the prophet alludes in v. 4 to the familiar marriage metaphor in terms of which God is the faithful husband against whom the people (Israel) transgressed with their religious idolatry and, by that, acting like a typical prostitute (e.g. the Book Hosea). But this is not the case here, since God is not the metaphorical partner of Woman Nineveh. The prophet rather employs the metaphor in a totally new way, namely, to portray the relationship of the different nations among each other. In that respect the present passage highlights only one facet of this metaphor, namely the infidelity of Woman Nineveh in international relations:⁸⁵ she has behaved like a shameless prostitute (v. 4); now she will be shamed (vv. 5–6).⁸⁶ Yahweh himself will accordingly apportion the punishment and it will involve the following: "I will uncover (גלה; *pi'el*) your hem (שול) over your face and will let nations see your nakedness" (v. 5). And if that is not enough chastisement, "filth"⁸⁷ will be thrown at her (v. 6).

The metaphorical nature of the text has elicited various modes of understanding. First, a note on the Hebrew term גלה, which basically has two principal meanings: "to carry into exile" (*hip'il*; *hop'al*) and "to uncover" (*qal*, *nip'al*, *pi'el*, *pu'al* and *hitpa'el*). In the *pi'el* formation it denotes "immer das Aufdecken von etwas normalerweise Verborgenen,"⁸⁸ especially with regard to the sexual area and in particular the "Aufdecken der Scham oder dessen, was diese verdeckt."⁸⁹ In this sense it often appears in prophetic marriage imagery where the object is mostly "nakedness/shame" (ערוה: Ezek 16:36, 37, 23:10, 18, 29), or a related term (גבלות, Hos 2:12).⁹⁰ It is difficult to make sense of the combination גלה ("uncover," or its synonym חשף, "to lift up"; Jer 13:26), plus the object referent שול, followed occasionally by the adverb על פנים ("over the

⁸⁵ Heinz-Josef Fabry, *Nahum: Übersetzt und ausgelegt* (HTKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2006), 192.

⁸⁶ Duane L. Christensen, *Nahum: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 344. See also Baumann's claim that, given the fact that the combination of the two roots in Nah 3:4, זנה ("whoring") and כשף ("sorcery") is attested only once elsewhere (viz. with regard to Jezebel in 2 Kgs 9:22), may be an indication that the author of Nah 3:4 resorts to this Deuteronomistic typification of Izebel to paint Woman Nineveh as another example of such an evil figure. See Baumann, "Gott als vergewaltigender Soldat?," 58.

⁸⁷ Although the term שקצים ("filth") is mostly associated with idolatry, it is more plausible that it here carries the connotation of "excrement." See Christensen, *Nahum*, 344.

⁸⁸ Claus Westermann and Rainer Albertz, "גלה," *THAT* 1:422.

⁸⁹ Westermann and Albertz, *THAT* 1:422.

⁹⁰ For the problematic גבלות, see the suggestion in Gesenius, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches*, 776, "[?] euphem. f. die Genitalien."

face”; Jer 13:26 and Nah 3:5). It is proposed that שול in these contexts could be a euphemistic allusion to the female “private parts,”⁹¹ producing, in the case of Nah 3:5, an awkward translation: “I shall uncover your private parts up until your face.”⁹²

Elsewhere similar things are reported about Woman Judah/Jerusalem (Jer 13:22) and Woman Babylon (Isa 47:2–3), with some extra information added. It provides the following picture of shared lexical items:

Isa 47:2-3	חרפה ראה (<i>nip'al</i>)	ערוה גלה (<i>nip'al</i>)	שב/שול ⁹³ חשף
	shame be seen	nakedness uncover	hem lift up
Jer 13:22	חמס עקב (<i>nip'al</i>)		שול גלה (<i>nip'al</i>)
	heel be violated		hem uncover
Jer 13:26	קלון ראה (<i>nip'al</i>)		על פנים שול חשף ⁹⁴
	shame be seen		over face hem lift up
Nah 3:5	מע/קלון ראה (<i>hip'il</i>)		על פנים שול גלה (<i>pi'el</i>)
	shame/nakedness let see		over face hem uncover

From these examples, displaying a rather fixed pattern, a few observations may be made. (1) Notable is the domination of the *nip'al* stem, connoting that the woman is the suffering party: the injustice is done unto her. (2) In two cases the subject assigning this punishment is explicitly indicated as YHWH: “I

⁹¹ Schorch, *Euphemismen*, 198. That this designation could have a pejorative meaning in ancient times is most likely. See e.g. the rendering of Nah 3:5 in the LXX as τὰ ὀπίσω σου (“that which is behind you”); the Vulgate: *pudenda tua* (Fabry, *Nahum*, 184) and the Targum: “the shame of your sins.” See Kevin J. Cathcart and Robert P. Gordon, *The Targum of the Minor Prophets* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), 139. See also Lyle M. Eslinger, “The Infinitive in a Finite Organical Perception (Isaiah VI 1–5),” *VT* 45 (1995): 152, who holds: “it is conceivable that we face here another euphemistic metonymic transference from the clothing to the principal body part it is aimed to cover . . .” See also Baumann, *Liebe und Gewalt*, 90.

⁹² For example, Christensen, *Nahum*, 343, with the note: “it is not the skirt that is uncovered but what is under it, the private parts.”

⁹³ 1QIsa^a reads the more common שול for the *hapax* שב of the MT (Frederick W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion: A Study of the City-Lament Genre in the Hebrew Bible*; *Biblica et Orientalia* 44; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute Press, 1993, 112, n. 72).

⁹⁴ Cf. Jer 49:10 where חשף is used in parallel to גלה (Pi).

will uncover” (Jer 13:26; Nah 3:5).⁹⁵ (3) The elements are presented in a set order: first the report on the nature of the deed (“to uncover the hem [over the face]”), followed by the notice that it takes place publicly (“to see”) and finally an indication of the aim of this act (“to shame”). Only Jer 13:22 does not fall into this pattern: nothing is mentioned about the public display (“to see”) or the element of “shaming.” It simply reports in asyndetic manner: “Your hem is uncovered”; “your heels (עקב) suffer violence (חמס, *nip‘al*).” Already in 1930 Jeremias maintained that the “uncovering of the hem” (Isa 47:3, Jer 13:22, 26, Nah 3:5, etc.) is a humiliating act that captured women were subjected to:

Das Entblößen der Schenkel und Aufheben des vorderen Gewandsaumes wurde kriegsgefangenen Frauen beim Triumphzug als Schmach auferlegt, wie wir auf einer Darstellung an den Bronze-Toren von Balawat Abb. 279 sehen. [Jes] 47, 3 ist ein hinzugefügtes Zitat, das dasselbe besagt. Hierauf bezieht sich die Drohung Na 3, 5; Jes 20, 4; Jer 13, 22. 26; Ez 23, 29, auch Mi 4, 11.⁹⁶

Elsewhere (in Isa 47:1–2) similar progressive degrading is reported about the noble Woman Babylon: first the abandonment of her royal status (“Come down, sit in the dust,” v. 1), then her humiliation into a slave status (“Take up millstones and grind flour,” v. 2),⁹⁷ followed by the “uncovering of the veil, the lifting up of the skirt and the exposing of the thigh” (v. 2–3). The latter gesture is ambiguous. It could have a bearing on reality, in that it could refer to the public exhibition of naked war captives (see above). On the other hand, it could likewise be a metaphorical representation of a ruined city, “stripped” like a woman of her “protecting clothes” (walls and gates, etc.) and thus standing there “naked and exposed.”⁹⁸ Berges appositely adds: “Dass die Erfahrung tatsächlicher sexueller Übergriffe auf die weibliche Bevölkerung der

⁹⁵ Baumann, “Gott als vergewaltigender Soldat?,” 60, goes too far when claiming regarding Nah 3:4–7 that “JHWH wird hier als vergewaltigender Krieger oder Soldat dargestellt.” See Fabry’s criticism (*Nahum*, 109–110) of this claim in view of the cultural and linguistic conventions of the time.

⁹⁶ Alfred Jeremias, *Das Alte Testament im Lichte des Alten Orients* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung, 1930), 689; see also Baumann, *Liebe und Gewalt*, 88, and Poser, *Das Ezechielbuch*, 191. On the range of meanings and functions of nakedness in Egyptian and Assyrian art, cf. Julia M. Asher-Greve and Deborah Sweeney, “On Nakedness, Nudity, and Gender in Egyptian and Mesopotamian Art,” in *Images and Gender: Contributions to the Hermeneutics of Reading Ancient Art* (ed. Silvia Schroer; OBO 220; Fribourg: Academic Press, 2006), 125–176.

⁹⁷ Grinding is the typical work of a maidservant, but the pronouncement could also contain a sexual overtone. For grinding as sexual activity, cf. Job 31:10; see also Ulrich Berges, *Jesaja 40–48: Übersetzt und ausgelegt* (HTKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2008), 483–4.

⁹⁸ Berges, 40–48, 486.

Besiegten eine wichtige Rolle zur Ausbildung dieser Metapher spielt, steht ausser Frage.”⁹⁹

But back to Jer 13:22, where, after the pronouncement “due to the greatness of your iniquity, your hem is uncovered” (v. 22c), the d–part states: “your heels (עקב) suffer violence (חמס, *nip'al*)” (v. 22d). עקב may be an euphemism for the *pudenda*.¹⁰⁰ The meaning of חמס, however, which is the only case of this root in the *nip'al* stem, is problematic. Emerton, for example, proposes that in this context חמס has a meaning synonymous to גלה: “to strip/to lay bare.”¹⁰¹ This suggestion is methodologically not sound, since it argues for the rendering of the one problematic root (חמס, *nip'al*) in terms of another equally problematic one (גלה, *nip'al*).¹⁰² More sensible is the suggestion by Haag: “Hingegen spricht Jer 13, 22 (*nip'al*) von der physischen Vergewaltigung der Frau („Ferse“ euphemistisch für pudenda).”¹⁰³ Holladay is in accord with this proposal when he says: “Here again it is clearly sexual violence that is meant: the imagery has shifted from the loss of the flock to ravishment, an image for invasion . . .”¹⁰⁴

To sum up: with the declaration “to suffer violence” (חמס, *nip'al*), in association with a euphemism for the genitals (עקב), the utterance in Jer 13:22 most probably moves beyond a mere “stripping scene”; it points to the ultimate stage of disgrace in war: ravishing.¹⁰⁵

Against this background we may now turn back to Nah 3:5. Several solutions have been put forward to understand the imagery in this passage.

- (i) It has been mentioned that “stripping and public disgracing” may refer to the plight of captured women.
- (ii) For a long time the opinion prevailed that the act of stripping refers to a fitting punishment for a prostitute. This view is substantiated by

⁹⁹ Berges, 40–48, 486.

¹⁰⁰ Wilhelm Rudolph, *Jeremia* (HAT 1/12; Tübingen: Mohr, 1958), 92; see also Schorch, *Euphemismen*, 182–3.

¹⁰¹ John A. Emerton, “The Meaning of the Verb *ḥāmas* in Jeremiah 13,22,” in *Prophet und Prophetenbuch: Festschrift für Otto Kaiser zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. Volkmar Fritz, Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann, Hans-Christoph Schmitt; BZAW 185; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1989), 19–28. This suggestion is accepted by Gesenius, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches*, 316. See, however, *HAL*, 316, which lists two possibilities: “Gewalttat leiden, entblösst werden.”

¹⁰² Baumann, *Liebe und Gewalt*, 125.

¹⁰³ Ernst Haag, “חמס,” *ThWAT* 2:1052–3.

¹⁰⁴ Holladay, *Chapters 1-25*, 414.

¹⁰⁵ See also Baumann, *Liebe und Gewalt*, 126, “Hier handelt es sich dezidiert um eine Vergewaltigungsszene.”

appealing to parallels in the treaty stipulations.¹⁰⁶ In the present context this explanation does not seem to apply, since the relevant treaty curse assumes an honourable woman who, only after the fulfilment of the curse, has been subjected to the punishment of degradation. Nineveh, however, was at no stage a respectable woman; her disreputable status is already presupposed (see v. 4). Consequently, the only thing left is the pronouncement of an appropriate punishment, which follows in v. 5–6.¹⁰⁷

- (iii) Berlejung seeks for a solution in another direction. She suggests that the assignment of qualities emblematic of a woman/whore (feminisation) to a foreign power (here Nineveh) is a well-known rhetorical strategy in the Assyrian royal inscriptions to degrade the status of the enemy.¹⁰⁸ Although I am in agreement with Berlejung's suggestion that the purpose of this passage is ultimately to discredit Nineveh, I am not convinced that the stratagem of feminisation is hinted at here. This comes later (in v. 13: "Your warriors are women in your midst"). Given that the curse "men becoming women" by its very nature is meant to denigrate male figures, the threat of feminisation of a female figure (Nineveh) appears unfeasible in this context (v. 5), unless the feminisation applies to her male warriors (v. 13).
- (iv) Perhaps the scene in Nah 3:5 should be seen as a case of retributive justice, where the severity of the penalty for a misdeed should be proportionate to the severity of the infraction.¹⁰⁹ What Nineveh has done, will be returned unto her. In the words of Sanderson: "Since Nahum had depicted Nineveh's treachery in terms of female sexuality, it felt quite fitting to him to depict its punishment in terms of sexual violence of a

¹⁰⁶ Hillers, *Treaty Curses*, 58–60, and more recently F. Rachel Magdalene, "Ancient Near Eastern Treaty-Curses and the Ultimate Texts of Terror: A Study of the Language of Divine Sexual Abuse in the Prophetic Corpus," in *Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets* (ed. Athalya Brenner; FCB 1/8; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 326–352.

¹⁰⁷ See Angelika Berlejung, "Erinnerungen an Assyrien in Nahum 2, 4–3, 19," in *Die unwiderstehliche Wahrheit: Studien zur alltestamentlichen Prophetie: Festschrift für Arndt Meinhold* (ed. Rüdiger Lux and Ernst-Joachim Waschke; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2006), 337, n. 64.

¹⁰⁸ Berlejung, "Erinnerungen," 338. For examples of the feminisation of the enemy, see Kruger, "*Mundus inversus*," 50–52; Berlejung, "Erinnerungen," 341, nr. 81, and Cynthia R. Chapman, *The Gendered Language of Warfare in the Israelite-Assyrian Encounter* (HSM 62; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 48–58.

¹⁰⁹ Wikipedia Contributors, "Retributive Justice," n.p. [cited 7 April 2014]. Online: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Retributive_justice.

man against a woman."¹¹⁰ Sweeney concurs with this view: "At this point, verse 5 (Nah 3:5; PAK) turns to the treatment of women by a conqueror by metaphorically portraying Nineveh as a woman who is exposed before her captors, presumably to be raped."¹¹¹

C CONCLUSION

This contribution addresses an issue that was for unknown reasons suppressed in ANE and HB war accounts. No motivation could be found for the silence on this type of information, even though the behaviour of males during such abnormal situations, as well as references in ANE curse formulae, testifies to the fact that this type of atrocity did take place. Another reason for this silence could be that war was regarded in the ancient Near East as the domain of men, with the miseries befalling women not of any significance. However, it appears that the prophetic books did allude to this crime, although in indirect, metaphorical terms. This requires an explanation, which may be that:

The prophecies of rape by the Hebrew prophets take us to an outer limit, but to cross this limit would reveal a world so violent and out of control that it would bring into question the existence of any divine structure at all. Such a world was too terrifying for either the Assyrians or the Hebrews to enter. And so rape did not find its place in the boast of the conquerors, but only in the Hebrew prophecies of doom.¹¹²

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¹¹⁰ Judith E. Sanderson, "Nahum," in *Women's Bible Commentary* (expanded ed.; ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 235.

¹¹¹ Marvin A. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets* (vol. 1; Berit Olam; Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 443.

¹¹² Kern, *Ancient Siege Warfare*, 83.

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