

The Mythic Arc of Predatory Desire in Jewish Legend

sourcesheets v.2.1 by Aharon Varady
primary source texts on the origin and end of predation



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Predation, *treifa* in Hebrew, is the inclination of living creatures to take from one another, to satisfy their living need to eat and reproduce. The Torah bears witness to an ancient worldview which held that predation was not, at least initially, part of the Divine design for the sustenance and sustainability of our world. These concerns find expression in Jewish legendary narratives that explain how, out of a vegetarian world, predation entered nature, why predatory desire persists, and when it may one day be overcome.

Kli Yekar on Deuteronomy 12:21

According to the *Kli Yekar*, the popular commentary on the Pentateuch by Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim ben Aaron Luntschitz (1550–1619), the danger of eating meat is that it will feed a *toeiva* (an uncontrollable desire) for predation.

“Slaughter from your cattle...as I have commanded you”: Not at all times, but only periodically, when the desire becomes strong. And what was said, “just as the gazelle and the deer are eaten, so may you eat them” (Deuteronomy 12:22), and as it said, “When one hunts game of an animal or bird” (Leviticus 17:13), and our Sages said, “the Torah taught proper behavior, that a person should eat meat only on this kind of occasional basis” (Talmud Bavli Hullin 84a). The explanation of the matter is that if people accustom themselves to eating the animals present in the home, ox, sheep, or goat, then all day they will have desire and will accustom themselves to eat it on a daily basis, but they don’t eat it until they hunt game of animals or birds in the forest or desert, where there is danger and great effort to hunt them, then their desire will be calmed, because the eating isn’t worth the great pain and effort.

“וזבחת מבקרך וגו’ כאשר צויתך” — לא בכל עת כי אם לפרקים, בעת התגברות התאוה. וזה שאמר “אך כאשר יאכל את הצבי ואת האיל כן תאכלנו”, וכמו שנאמר (ויקרא יז:יג) “כי יצוד ציד חיה או עוף”, ואמרו חז”ל (חולין פד:א) לימדך תורה דרך ארץ שלא יאכל אדם בשר כי אם בהזמנה הזאת. ביאור הדבר הוא שאם ירגיל האדם את עצמו לאכול מן הבהמות המצוין אתו בבית שור או כשב או עז אז כל היום יתאוה תאוה וירגיל עצמו באכילתו דבר יום ביומו, אבל אם לא יאכל עד אשר יצוד ביערות ובמדברות ציד חיה או עוף שיש לו סכנה וטורח גדול לצודם אז תשקוט תאוותו כי אין האכילה שוה בגודל הצער והטורח...

A. An Origin Myth for Predation in Nature

For Rabbi Luntschitz, where did his anxiety arise that Jews ‘might become accustomed to eat meat on a daily basis’? From where did Jewish concerns for animal welfare arise to inspire philosophical and legal writings? Ancient legends linked to writings in the Torah attest to a concern that human societies could descend into a depraved state, the

consequence of which is the destruction of the world. The legend of the Generation of the Flood, or *Dor Hamabul*, expands upon the verses in Genesis introducing the story of the Deluge. In the rabbinic imagination, the *Dor Hamabul* is the model, par excellence, of a depraved state of humanity where the line between sexual and dietary predation is blurred. Through the practice of *mitsvot* (elucidated through the covenants on Mt. Ararat to Noah and on Mt. Sinai to Moshe) a return to this depraved state is avoided.

Sanhedrin 59b on Genesis 1:29-30 and 9:3

Adam haRishon (the first human) was not permitted to eat animal flesh, for it is written, '[Behold I have given you all the herbs, etc.] to you it shall be for food, and to all the animals of the earth,' (Genesis 1:29-30) implying, but the animals of the earth shall not be for you. And when the children of Noah came [out of the ark], it was permitted [for them to eat flesh], for it is said, '[Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you] even as the green herb have I given you all things' (Genesis 9:3).

Genesis 4:26 and 6:1-6

And to Seth, in turn, a son was born, and he named him Enosh (lit. man). It was then that men began to invoke YHVH by name.

[...] And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the Bnei Elohim (lit. sons of Elohim) saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives, whomsoever they chose. And YHVH said: 'My spirit shall not abide in man for ever, for that he also is flesh; therefore shall his days be a hundred and twenty years.' The Nephilim (literally, "fallen ones") were in the earth in those days, and also after that, when the Bnei Elohim came in unto the daughters of men, and they bore children to them; the same were the Giants that were of old, the men of renown. And YHVH saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented YHVH that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart. And YHVH said: 'I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and creeping thing, and fowl of the air; for it repenteth Me that I have made them.'

Rashi on Genesis 6:2 (after Genesis Rabbah 26:5)

THAT THEY WERE FAIR — Rabbi Yudan said, "It is written here 'tovot,' for when they were being made to appear "good" by being decked out to be taken beneath the marriage canopy one of the lords would come and carry her off first.

OF ALL WHOM THEY CHOOSE — even if it were a married woman or a man or an animal.

אדם הראשון לא הותר לו בשר לאכילה דכתיב (בראשית א, כט) לָכֶם יְהִי הָאֲכִלָּה: וּלְכָל־חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ ולא חית הארץ לכם וכשבאו בני נח התיר להם שנאמר (בראשית ט, ג) בְּיָרֵק עֵשָׂב נָתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת־כָּל:

ולשת גס-הוא ילד-בן ויקרא את-שמו אנוש אז הוחל לקרא בשם ה':

[...] ויהי כִּי־הָחַל הָאָדָם לָרֹב עַל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה וּבָנוּת יָלְדוּ לָהֶם: וַיֵּרְאוּ בְנֵי־הָאֱלֹקִים אֶת־בָּנוֹת הָאָדָם כִּי טֹבֹת הֵנָּה וַיִּקְחוּ לָהֶם נָשִׁים מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּחָרוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר ה' לֹא־יִדּוֹן רוּחִי בָאָדָם לְעַלְם בְּשָׁגֶם הוּא בָשָׂר וְהָיוּ יָמָיו מָאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה: הַנִּפְלִים הָיוּ בָאָרֶץ בְּיָמֵים הָהֵם וְגַם אַחֲרֵי־כֵן אֲשֶׁר יָבֹאוּ בְנֵי הָאֱלֹקִים אֶל־בָּנוֹת הָאָדָם וַיִּלְדּוּ לָהֶם הַמָּה הַגִּבּוֹרִים אֲשֶׁר מְעוֹלָם אָנָּשִׁי הָשֵׁם: וַיֵּרָא ה' כִּי רַבָּה רָעַת הָאָדָם בָּאָרֶץ וְכָל־יֵצֵר מַחֲשֶׁבֶת לְבוֹ רַק רָע כָּל־הַיּוֹם: וַיִּנָּחֶם ה' כִּי־עָשָׂה אֶת־הָאָדָם בָּאָרֶץ וַיִּתְּעַצֵּב אֶל־לְבוֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֲמַחֶה אֶת־הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר־בָּרָאתִי מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה מֵאָדָם עַד־בְּהֵמָה עַד־רֶמֶשׂ וְעַד־עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם כִּי נִחַמְתִּי כִּי עָשִׂיתִם:

כי טבת הנה — אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹדֵן טבת כְּתִיב, בְּשָׁהִיו מְטִיבִין אוֹתָהּ מְקוֹשְׁשֶׁת לִיכָנֶס לְחוּפָּה, הִיא גְדוֹל נִכְנָס וּבו עָלָה תַּחֲלָה: מכל אשר בחרו — אָף בְּעוֹלָת בַּעַל, אָף הַזָּכָר וְהַבְּהֵמָה:

Deuteronomy 32:4

The Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice; A god of faithfulness and without iniquity, Just and right is He. Is corruption His? No; His children's is the blemish; A generation crooked and perverse.

הַצּוֹר תָּמִים פָּעָלוֹ כִּי כָל־דִּרְכָּיו מִשְׁפָּט אֵל אֲמוּנָה וְאִין עוֹל צְדִיק וַיָּשָׁר הוּא: שְׁחַת לוֹ לֹא בָנָיו מוֹמָם דּוֹר עִקֵּשׁ וּפְתִילָתַל:

Midrash Abkir; Yalkut Shimoni on Genesis, remez 44

While the midrash of the fallen angels (and their Giant progeny) is referenced in Rabbinic literature, it finds its fullest expression in midrashic writings which correspond closely to pre-rabbinic deuterocanonical Jewish literature from Antiquity: the books of Enoch/*Hanokh* and Jubilees/*Yubalim*. This expansion of Genesis 6 from midrash, provides, among other things, an origin myth for how predation entered Nature. Crucially it links the basic desire for sex and predatory diet with the *yetser hara* (the wicked desire). While the Fallen Angels are sexual predators, their children, the Giants, are voracious carnivores. The English translation below is adapted from Rabbi Leo Jung. A variation of this legend can also be found in the Zohar. Due to its mature theme, this midrash remains obscure despite its importance.

Rav Yoseph was asked by his pupils, "What is 'Azazel'?"

He said to them: "When the generation of the flood arose and served avodah zarah (lit. strange worship), the blessed Holy One, was grieved. Immediately two angels arose, Shemhazai and Aza'el, and said before Him, 'Master of the Cosmos, have we said before you created the world, 'What is man that you are mindful of him?' (Psalms 8:4) Hashem said: 'And what shall be with the world?' They replied: 'Master of the Cosmos, we would have been satisfied with it.' Hashem said: 'It is evident and clear before me that if you dwelt on earth the yetser hara (evil inclination) would rule you, and you would be (harder) worse than the sons of man.' They said: 'Give us leave, let us dwell with the creatures and you will see how we shall sanctify your name.' Hashem said, 'Descend and dwell with them'.

At once they corrupted themselves (behaved corruptly) with the daughters of man who were beautiful, and were unable to subdue their desire (passion). Immediately Shemhazai saw one girl, whose name was Istahar. He set his eyes on her and said, 'Grant my desire!'

She replied: 'I will not grant it until you teach me the Shem haMeforash (lit. ineffable name), by means of which you ascend to heaven, at the moment (hour) you pronounce (remember) it.'

שאלו תלמידיו את רב יוסף מהו עזאל?

א"ל כיון שעמדו דור המבול ועבדו עבודה זרה היה הקב"ה מתעצב. מיד עמדו שני מלאכים שמחזאי ועזאל ואמרו לפניו רבונו של עולם הלא אמרנו לפניך כשבראת את עולמך "מה אנוש כי תזכרנו?" א"ל ועולם מה יהא עליו. א"ל רבונו של עולם היינו מסתפקין בו. א"ל גלוי וידוע לפני אם אתם שרויין בארץ היה שולט בכם יצר הרע והייתם קשים מבני אדם. א"ל תן לנו רשות ונדור עם הבריות ותראה איך אנו מקדשין שמך. א"ל רדו ותדורו עמהן.

מיד קלקלו עם בנות האדם שהיו יפות ולא יכלו לכבוש את יצרן. מיד ראה שמחזאי ריבה אחת ושמה איסטהר נתן עיניו בה אמר "השמעי לי!"

א"ל איני שומעת לך עד שתלמדני שם המפורש שאתה עולה בו לרקיע בשעה שאתה זוכרהו.

He taught her that Name, she pronounced it, ascended to heaven; without having sinned (dealt corruptly). The blessed Holy One, said: 'Because she has kept herself far from sin, go and fix her among the seven stars in order that she may be mentioned among them forever. (And she was fixed in the Pleiades).' [Midrash Abkir]

When Shemḥazai and Aza'el saw that, they arose and took women and begat (as) sons Heeva and Heeya.

And Aza'el was (set) over the kinds of cosmetics (lt. colors) and over the kinds of ornaments of (appertaining to) women, which (the ornaments) persuade the sons of men to think of (committing) sin.

Immediately Metatron, sent a messenger to Shemḥazai and said to him: 'The blessed Holy One is about to destroy His world and to bring a deluge (over) the world.' He began at once, weeping continually and grieved, because of the world and of his sons.

What would his sons do? What would they eat, should the world be destroyed? For every day each of them ate a thousand camels, a thousand horses, and a thousand oxen.

That night Heeva and Heeya both had dreams.

The first saw a stone on the ground, lying flat like a table, its top incised with many lines of script. An angel came down from the rakiya (firmament), in his hand a kind of chisel with which he scraped and erased all the lines, until he left only four letters.

The second saw a large and beautiful orchard (pardes) planted with all kinds of trees. In the orchard were angels, and in their hands axes with which they felled the trees until they left only one tree with three branches. [Yalkut Shimoni]

Upon waking, Heeva and Heeya stood up in consternation and went to their father. When he told them that the blessed Holy One was about to bring the deluge and that only Noah and his sons would be saved, they cried and wept.

He said: 'Grieve not, your names shall not (be forgotten) cease from this world. For whenever (God) shall decree hardships, or people shall lift up stones or ships, they shall mention your names "Heeva! Heeya!"' At once, they acquiesced.

למדה אותו שם הזכירה אותו ועלתה לרקיע ולא קלקלה. אמר הקב"ה הואיל ופרשה עצמה מן העבירה לכו וקבעוה בין שבעה כוכבים הללו כדי שתזכו בהן לעולם ונקבעה בכימה.

כיון שראו שמחזאי ועזאל כך עמדו ונשאו נשים והולידו בנים היווא והיאי.

ועזאל היה על מיני צבעונין ועל מיני תכשיטין של נשים שמפתים את בני אדם להרהור עבירה.

מיד שגר מטטרון שליח לשמחזאי וא"ל עתיד הקב"ה להחריב עולמו ולהביא מבול לעולם. מיד עמד בבכי והיה מצטער על העולם ועל בניו.

מה יעשו בניו ממה יאכלו אם העולם חרב? שכל אחד ואחד היה אוכל בכל יום אלף גמלים ואלף סוסים ואלף שורים.

בלילה ראו היווא והיאי שניהם חלומות. אחד מהן ראה אבן גדולה פרוסה על הארץ כשלחן והיתה הארץ חרותה וכתובה שיטות שיטות. והיה מלאך יורד מן הרקיע ובידיו כמין סכין והיה גורר ומוחק כל אותן השיטות ולא היה משייר בה אלא ארבע תיבות. והאחד ראה פרדס גדול משובח נטוע מכל מיני אילנות. והיו בו מלאכים ובידן קרדומות והיו מקצצין כל האילנות ולא שיירו בו אלא אילן אחד של שלשה ענפים.

כיון שננערו עמדו בבהלה ובאו אצל אביהם. אמר להם עתיד הקב"ה להביא מבול ולא ישייר אלא נח ובניו כיון ששמעו כך היו צועקין ובוכין.

אמר להם אל תצטערו ששמותיכם לא יכלו מן הבריות. שכל זמן שגוזר גזירות או מעלין אבנים או ספינות שמותיכם הן מזכירין "היווא! והיאי!" מיד נתקררו דעתן.

Shemḥazai repented and hung himself between heaven and earth, head downwards and feet upwards, and he is still suspended, in repentance, between earth and heaven [as Orion]. Aza'el did not repent, and he still abides in his corruption to lead astray (persuade) the sons of man by means of women's cosmetics. Therefore did Israel offer up offerings on Yom Kippurim (day of Atonement), one ram unto HaShem to atone for the children of Israel, and one ram to Azazel.... [Midrash Abkir]

[Yalkut Shimoni continues] ...to carry the sins of Israel. And it was Azazel in the Torah: "And HaShem said: 'My spirit shall not abide in man for ever...[for that he also is flesh; therefore shall his days be a hundred and twenty years']" (Genesis 6:3).

The compositions from which the preceding midrash was remembered were written over a thousand years earlier before the 2nd century BCE. In these writings an etiology (origin myth) of the introduction of predation into a vegetarian world is even more explicit. These sources were preserved in Ge'ez (in Ethiopic script) and other languages and preserved within Christian monasteries. Fragments of an earlier Aramaic version on which they were based upon have been found in the caverns of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Jubilees 5:1-2

*And when the children of men began to multiply on the surface of the earth and daughters were born to them that the angels of HaShem saw in a certain year of that jubilee that they were good to look at. And they (the Nephilim) took wives for themselves from all of those whom they chose. And they bore children for them; and they were the Giants. And injustice increased upon the earth, and all flesh corrupted its way; man and cattle and beasts and birds and everything which walks on the earth. **And they all corrupted their way and their ordinances, and they began to eat one another.** And injustice grew upon the earth and every imagination of the thoughts of all mankind was thus continually evil.*

1 Enoch 7:3-6

*These (Giants) consumed the produce of all the people until the people detested feeding them. So the Giants turned against (the people) in order to eat them. And they began to sin against birds, wild beasts, reptiles, and fish. **And their flesh was devoured the one by the other, and they drank blood,** And then the earth brought an accusation against the oppressors.*

שמחזאי חזר בתשובה ותלה עצמו בין שמים לארץ ראשו למטה ורגליו למעלה ועדיין הוא תלוי בתשובה. עזאל לא חזר בתשובה ועדיין הוא עומד בקלקולו להסית בני אדם לדבר עבירה בבגדי צבעונין של נשים. ולכך היו ישראל מקריבין קרבנות ביום הכפורים איל אחד לה' שיכפר על ישראל ואיל אחד לעזאזל...

שיסבול עונותיהם של ישראל והוא עזאזל שבתורה "לא ידון רוחי באדם לעולם..."

ወከነ ኣሙ ወጡኑ ደቂቀ እጓለ እሙሕያው ይብዝኑ ዲበ ገጸ ኩላ ምድር ወአዋልድ ተወልዳ ሎሙ። ወርእይዎን መላእክተ እግዚአብሔር በአሐቲ ዘኢዮቤልዉ ዝንቱ እስሙ ሠናያት ለርኢይ እማንቱ ወነሥእዎን ሎቶን ሎሙ አንስትያ እምኩሎን እለ ኀረዩ ወወለዳ ሎሙ ውሉደ ወእሙንቱ ረዓይት። ወልሀቀት ዐመፃ ዲበ ምድር ወኩሉ ዘሥጋ አማሰነት ፍኖታ እምሰብእ እስከ እንስሳ ወእስከ አራዊት ወእስከ አዕዋፍ ወእስከ ኩሉ ዘያንሱሱ ውስተ ምድር ኩሎሙ አማሰኑ ፍኖቶሙ ወሥርዓቶሙ። ወአነዙ ይትባልዑ በበይናቲሆሙ ወዐመፃ ልሀቀት ዲበ ምድር ወኩሉ ኀሊና አእምሮ ለኩሎሙ እጓለ እሙሕያው ከሙዝ እኩይ ኩሎ መዋዕለ።

እሉ ፡ በልዑ ፡ ኩሎ ፡ ፃማ ፡ ሰብእ ፡ እስከ ፡ ስእንዎሙ ፡ ሴስዮተ ፡ ሰብእ ። ወተመይጡ ፡ ረዓይት ፡ ላዕሌሆሙ ፡ ይብልዕዎሙ ፡ ለሰብእ ። ወወጡኑ ፡ ዩአብሱ ፡ በአዕዋፍ ፡ ወዲበ ፡ አራዊት ፡ ወበዘይትሐወስ ፡ ወበዓሣት ፡ ወሥጋሆሙ ፡ በበይናቲሆሙ ፡ ይትባልዑ ፡ ወደመ ፡ ይስትዩ ፡ እምኔሃ ። አሜሃ ፡ ምድር ፡ ሰከዩቶሙ ፡ ለዐማፅያን ።

Aramaic fragments of 1 Enoch 7:3-6 from Qumran (4Q201 and 4Q202)

These are the leaders of the groups [of] ten; th[ey and [th]eir [lieu]tenants [. . . they took] women of all that they chose and [. . .] and to teach them sorcery [. . .] and the women became pregnant by them and bo[re ... and giants] were being born on the earth [. . . they consumed] the labor of all the sons of men and did not [. . .] were conspiring to slay humankind [. . .] against every bird and [beas]ts of [the] earth [. . .] [and in] the heavens and to devour the fish of the sea; [their own] flesh [. . .]

Clementine Homilies 8:15-17

The most emphasis on predatory appetite can be found in the writings of Clement, an early Christian writing within the Jewish thought-world. In this telling of the story of the Giants, *mannah* is provided in an attempt to satiate their predatory appetite.

Therefore God, knowing that they [the Giants] were barbarized to brutality, and that the world was not sufficient to satisfy them (for it was created according to the proportion of men and human use), that they might not through want of food turn, contrary to nature, to the eating of animals, and yet seem to be blameless, as having ventured upon this through necessity, the Almighty God rained manna upon them, suited to their various tastes; and they enjoyed all that they would. But they, on account of their bastard nature, not being pleased with purity of food, longed only after the taste of blood. Wherefore they first tasted flesh. And the men who were with them there for the first time were eager to do the like. Thus, although we are born neither good nor bad, we become one or the other; and having formed habits, we are with difficulty drawn from them. But when irrational animals fell short, these bastard men tasted also human flesh. For it was not a long step to the consumption of flesh like their own, having first tasted it in other forms. But by the shedding of much blood, the pure air being defiled with impure vapour, and sickening those who breathed it, rendered them liable to diseases, so that thenceforth men died prematurely. But the earth being by these means greatly defiled, these first teemed with poison-darting and deadly creatures.

All things, therefore, going from bad to worse, on account of these brutal demons, God wished to cast them away like an evil leaven, lest each generation from a wicked seed, being like to that before it, and equally impious, should empty the world to come of saved men.

[... עַמְל כָּל בְּנֵי אִנְשָׁה וְלָהּ
[ה...וּאָ אֹכְלִין
[...קְשָׁרִין לִקְטֹלָה לְאִנְשָׁא ו...
[...קֹוֹבֵל כָּל כְּנָף וְחַיּוֹת אֶרֶץ
[...ור]חֲשִׁי]א ...
[...ו]נְזִיָּא [יְמֵהָא] וְלִמְכָּל בְּשׂוֹר[ה]ן[...]
[...שְׁתִּינָא דִמָּ]א

ὁ οὖν θεὸς εἰδὼς αὐτοὺς πρὸς τὸ θηριῶδες ἐξηγριωμένους καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἑαυτῶν πλησμονὴν τὸν κόσμον οὐκ ἔχοντας αὐτάρκη (πρὸς γὰρ ἀνθρώπων ἀναλογίαν ἐδημιουργήθη καὶ χρῆσιν ἀνθρωπίνην), ἵνα μὴ ἐνδείξῃ τροφῆς ἐπὶ τὴν παρὰ φύσιν τῶν ζώων βορὰν τρεπόμενοι ἀνεύθυνοι δοκῶσιν εἶναι, ὥς δι’ ἀνάγκην τοῦτο τετολμηκότες, μάννα αὐτοῖς ὁ παντοδύναμος θεὸς ἐπώμβρισεν ἐκ ποικίλης ἐπιθυμίας, καὶ παντὸς οὐπερ ἐβούλοντο ἀπήλαιον· οἱ δ’ ὑπὸ νόθου φύσεως τῷ καθαρῷ τῆς τροφῆς οὐκ ἄρεσκόμενοι, μόνης τῆς τῶν αἱμάτων γεύσεως ἐγλίχοντο. διὸ καὶ πρῶτοι σαρκῶν ἐγεύσαντο. οἱ δὲ σὺν αὐτοῖς ἄνθρωποι τὸ ὅμοιον τότε πρῶτον ποιεῖν ἐζήλωσαν. οὕτως εἶτε ἀγαθοὶ εἶτε κακοὶ οὐ γεννώμεθα, ἀλλὰ γινόμεθα καὶ ἐθισθέντες δυσάποσπástως ἔχομεν. τῶν δὲ ἀλόγων ζώων τότε ἐπιλιπόντων, οἱ νόθοι ἄνθρωποι καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων σαρκῶν ἐγεύσαντο· οὐκέτι γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἦν μακρὰν τὴν ἰδίαν διαφθεῖραι σάρκα, πρότερον ἐν ἑτέrais μορφαῖς αὐτῆς γευσάμενοις. ἐπὶ δὲ τῇ πολλῇ τῶν αἱμάτων ρύσει ὁ καθαρὸς ἀῆρ ἀκαθάρτῳ ἀναθυμιάσει μιανθεὶς καὶ νοσήσας τοὺς ἀναπνέοντας αὐτὸν νοσώδεις ἀπειργάζετο, ὥς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους λοιπὸν ἁώρους ἀποθνήσκειν. ἡ δὲ γῆ ἐκ τούτων σφόδρα μιανθεῖσα πρῶτον τότε τὰ ἰοβόλα καὶ λυμαντικά ζῶα ἐξέβρασεν.

τῶν οὖν πάντων πρὸς τὸ χεῖρον χωρησάντων διὰ τοὺς θηριώδεις δαίμονας, ὁ θεὸς αὐτοὺς ὥσπερ κακὴν ζύμην ἐξελεῖν ἐβουλεύετο, ἵνα μὴ ἀπὸ σπορᾶς κακῆς κατ’ ἀκολουθίαν ἐκάστη γενεὰ τῇ πρὸ αὐτῆς ἐξομοιούμενῃ, ὁμοίως ἀσεβοῦσα τὸν ἐσόμενον αἰῶνα σφζομένων ἀνδρῶν κενώσῃ.

Resistance to heavenly *manna* for quenching predatory appetite

Numbers 11:4-6

And the Asafsuf (lit. rabble) that were among them (the camp of Israel) fell a lusting; and the children of Yisra’el also wept on their part, and said: ‘Would that we were given flesh to eat! We remember the fish, which we were wont to eat in Mitsrayim (Egypt) for nought; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic; but now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all; we have nought save this manna to look to.’

וְהָאֶסְפָּסָף אֲשֶׁר בְּקֶרְבוֹ הִתְאַווּ תַּאֲוָה וַיִּשְׁבּוּ וַיִּבְכוּ גַם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ מִי יֹאכְלֵנוּ בָּשָׂר: זָכְרֵנוּ אֶת־הַדָּגָה אֲשֶׁר־נֹאכַל בְּמִצְרַיִם חֲנָם אֶת הַקִּשְׁאִים וְאֶת הָאֲבִטָּחִים וְאֶת־הַחֲצִיר וְאֶת־הַבְּצָלִים וְאֶת־הַשּׁוּמִיּוֹת: וְעַתָּה נַפְשֵׁנוּ יִבֶּשֶׂה אֵין כָּל בְּלֹתִי אֶל־הֶמָּן עֵינֵינוּ:

Yoma 74b-75a

In exploring the extent of the meaning of *innui* (self-affliction) as obligated on Yom Kippur, the Talmud asks why *manna* might be described as afflicting. While the passage reveals how a predatory appetite (in this case, for fish) was interpreted by some as a euphemism for a desire for forbidden sexual practices, it also presents an understanding of manna as a diet intended to help restore self-discipline over their appetites.

"Who fed you in the wilderness with manna...that He might afflict you?"(Deuteronomy 8:15). — [...] We remember the fish which we were wont to eat in Egypt for nought (Numbers 11:5). Rav and Shmuel [were disputing its meaning], one said: [Fish here means] real fish; the other said: Illicit intercourse. One who said it means real fish [explains it so because of] ‘which we were wont to eat’; the other who interprets it as ‘illicit intercourse’, does so because the term ‘for nought’ is used [i.e., sans dowry]. But according to him who said it means ‘intercourse’, does not Scripture read: ‘Which we were wont to eat’? — Scripture uses a euphemism, as it is written: She eats and wipes her mouth and says: I have done no wickedness (Proverbs 30:20).

Numbers 11:32-33

And the people rose up all that day, and all the night, and all the next day, and gathered the quails; he that gathered least gathered ten heaps; and they spread them all abroad for themselves round about the camp. While the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the anger of YHVH was kindled against the people, and YHVH smote the people with a very great plague.

וַיִּקָּם הָעָם כָּל־הַיּוֹם הַהוּא וְכָל־הַלַּיְלָה וְכָל יוֹם הַמַּחֲרָת וַיֹּאסְפוּ אֶת־הַשָּׁלוּ הַמִּמַּעִיט אֶסְף עֶשְׂרָה חֲמֵרִים וַיִּשְׁטְחוּ לָהֶם שְׁטוֹחַ סְבִיבוֹת הַמַּחֲנֶה: הַבָּשָׂר עוֹדְנוּ בֵּין שְׁנֵיהֶם טָרֵם יִכָּרֵת וְאִף ה' חָרָה בָּעָם וַיָּךְ ה' בָּעָם מַכָּה רָבָה מָאֹד:

B. Circumscribing predatory appetite with mitzvot

Jubillees (*Yuvalim*) is the oldest Jewish text providing an explicit connection between the festival of Shavuot and the receiving of the mitzvot: the 7th mitzvah forbidding eating like a predator (ever *min haḥai*) on Mt. Ararat, and the 10 commandments later on, on Mt. Sinai. Dairy foods in Jewish food culture are coded as symbolic of Torah and vice versa — a means by which predatory appetite may be circumscribed within the bounds of ritual law. For this reason, dairy remains a symbolic food representing Torah on Shavuot. On Hanukkah, dairy food traditions recall the story of Yehudit’s subversive victory over the occupying neo-Babylonian general Holophernes after she seduces him and puts him to sleep with a dairy soporific. (Latkes were originally made of ricotta cheese).

Jubillees Chapter 6:1-2

And on the first of the third month, he went out of the ark, and he built an altar on that mountain. And he made atonement for the land. And he took the kid of a goat, and he made atonement with its blood for all the sins of the land because everything which was on it had been blotted out except those who were in the ark with Noah.

Jubillees Chapter 6:6-7

And behold, I have given you all of the beasts and everything which flies and everything which moves upon the earth and in the water, the fish and everything, for food like the green herbs. And I have given you everything so that you might eat. But flesh which is (filled) with life, (that is) with blood, you shall not eat-because the life of all flesh is in the blood lest your blood be sought for your lives.

Jubillees Chapter 6:13-22

And you, command the children of Israel not to eat any blood so that their names and seed might be before YHVH your God always. And there is no limit of days for this law because it is forever. They shall keep it for their generations so that they might make supplication on your behalf with blood before the altar on every day. And at the hour of daybreak and evening they will seek atonement on their own behalf continually before YHVH so that they might guard it and not be rooted out.

And he gave a sign to Noah and his children that there should not again be a flood upon the earth. He set his [rain]bow in the clouds for a sign of the covenant which is forever, that the water of the Flood should therefore not be upon the earth to destroy it all of the days of the earth. Therefore, it is ordained and written in the heavenly tablets that they should observe the feast of Shavuot in this month, once per year, in order to renew the covenant in all (respects), year by year.

And all of this feast was celebrated in heaven from the day of creation until the days of Noah, twenty-six jubilees and five weeks of years. And Noah and his children kept it for seven jubilees and one week of years until the day of the death of Noah. And from the day of the death of Noah, his sons corrupted it until the days of Abraham, and they ate blood. But Abraham alone kept it. And Isaac and Jacob and his sons kept it until your days, but in your days the children of Israel forgot it until you renewed it for them on this mountain.

And you, command the children of Israel so that they might keep this feast in all of their generations as a commandment to them. One day per year in this month they shall celebrate the feast, for it is the feast of Shevuot [oaths] and it is the feast of the first fruits. This feast is two-fold and of two natures. Just as it is written and engraved concerning it, observe it. This is because I have written it in the book of the first law, which I wrote for you, so that you might observe it in each of its appointed times, one day per year. And I have told you its sacrificial offering so that the children of Israel might remember them and observe them in their generations in this month one day each year.

Midrash Tanḥuma Ki Tisa 9

Another interpretation of ‘honey and milk are under your tongue’ (Song of Songs 4:11): At the moment that Israel stood before Mount Sinai and said, All that YHVH has spoken we will do and obey, at that moment, the blessed Holy One said to them, honey and milk are under your tongue.

דא דבש וחלב תחת לשונך, בשעה שעמדו לפני הר סיני ואמרו כל אשר דבר ה' נעשה ונשמע, באותה שעה אמר להם הקבה דבש וחלב תחת לשונך.

Exodus 32:6-10

When the covenant at Mt. Sinai is broken at the incident of the *Egel haZahav* (the Golden Calf), the continued existence of the Israelites is threatened just as the *Dor Hamabul* before it, albeit through destruction by fire rather than water.

Early next day, the people offered up burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being; they sat down to eat and drink, and then rose to dance.

YHVH spoke to Moshe, “Hurry down, for your people, whom you brought out of the land of Mitsrayim (Egypt), have acted basely. They have been quick to turn aside from the way that I enjoined upon them. They have made themselves a molten calf and bowed low to it and sacrificed to it, saying: ‘This is your god, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Mitsrayim!’” YHVH further said to Moshe, “I see that this is a stiffnecked people. Now, let me be, that my anger may blaze forth against them and that I may destroy them, and make of you a great nation.”

וַיִּשְׁכְּמוּ מִמַּחֲרַת וַיַּעֲלוּ עֹלֹת וַיִּגְשׂוּ שְׁלָמִים וַיִּשֶׁב הָעָם לֶאֱכֹל וּשְׁתוֹ וַיִּקְמוּ לְצַחֵק:

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵּךְ-רֵד כִּי שָׁחַת עַמֶּךָ אֲשֶׁר הָעֵלִיתָ מִצְרָיִם: סָרוּ מֵהָר מִן-הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָם עֲשׂוּ לָהֶם עֵגֶל מִסֶּכָּה וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ-לוֹ וַיִּזְבְּחוּ-לוֹ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶּה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הָעֵלֵנוּךָ מִצְרָיִם: וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה רְאִיתִי אֶת-הָעָם הַזֶּה וְהִנֵּה עַם-קָשֶׁה-עֶרְף הוּא: וְעַתָּה הִנֵּיחָה לִּי וַיַּחַר-אַפִּי בָהֶם וְאֶכְלֵם וְאַעֲשֶׂה אוֹתָךְ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל:

Rashi on Exodus 32:6 after Exodus Rabbah 42

TO DANCE — There is implied in this term besides idolatry also sexual immorality, — as we find the word used in, (Genesis 39:17) “to mock (לִצְחֹק) me” where unchastity is meant as is evident from the context — and blood-shed, as it is said, (II Samuel 2:14) “Let the young men arise and play (וַיִּצְחֲקוּ) before me; [and they caught every one his fellow by the head and thrust his sword in his fellows side]” — here, too, Hur was assassinated.

יֵשׁ בְּמִשְׁמַע הַזֶּה גְּלוּי עֲרִיּוֹת, כְּמוֹ שֶׁנִּי לְצַחֵק בִּי (בראשית ל:ט), וּשְׁפִיכוֹת דָּמִים, כְּמוֹ שֶׁנִּי יְקוֹ מוֹ נָא הִנְעָרִים וַיִּשְׁחָקוּ לְפָנֵינוּ (שמואל ב ב:יד), אף כֵּן נִהְרַג חוּר:

C. The End of Predatory Appetite and the Yetser Hara in Olam ha-Bah

Earlier we read in the Midrash of the Fallen Angels that the yetser hara was in the world before their descent occurred. What is the connection between predatory appetite and the yetser hara? The concession to eat meat only occurs after Divine recognition that humanity if allowed to exist must continue in a corrupted state, “wicked from his youth.”

The earliest text for establishing the existence of the yetser hara remaining in the world after the Deluge comes in this concession of God following Noah’s sacrificial offering.

Genesis 8:21

And YHVH smelled the sweet savour; and YHVH said in His heart: ‘I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the yetser (desire) of man’s heart is ra (wicked) from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

וַיֵּרַח ה' אֶת-רִיחַ הַנִּיחֹחַ וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-לִבּוֹ
לֹא-אֶסְףּ לְקַלֵּל עוֹד אֶת-הָאָדָמָה בְּעֵבוֹר
הָאָדָם כִּי יֵצֵר לֵב הָאָדָם רָע מִנְעֻרָיו וְלֹא-
אֶסְףּ עוֹד לְהַכּוֹת אֶת-כָּל-חַי בָּאָשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי:

Allusions to the legend of Istahar’s pronunciation of the divine name, the Nephilim, Shemhazai (also called Uza) and Aza’el, are rife within the Talmud, especially in tractate Yoma dedicated to Yom Kippur, the day on which the ineffable name of God is uttered by the Kohen Gadol, and the Azazel offering is made. This story provides an explanation for the persistence of the yetser hara (the wicked or harmful desire) in the world, as suggested by the Midrash that has the angel Aza’el remaining in the world. Aza’el then becomes the embodiment of the yetser harah.

Yoma 67b

The School of Rabbi Ishmael taught: Azazel — [it was so called] because it obtains atonement for the affair of Uza and Aza’el.

תנא דבי רבי ישמעאל עזאזל שמכפר על
מעשה עוזא ועזאל.

Yoma 69b

Where did they [the High Priest] read [the Torah in public] therein? In the Temple. R. Eliezer b. Jacob said: On the Temple Mount, as it is said: And he read therein before the broad place that was before the water gate; (cf. Nehemiah 8:3) and Rav Hisda said: In the women’s court. [...]

היכן קורין בו בעזרה ראב"י אומר בהר
הבית שנאמר (נחמיה ח:ג) ויקרא בו לפני
הרחוב אשר לפני שער המים ואמר רב
חסדא בעזרת נשים.

And [they] cried with a great [loud] voice unto YHVH their god (Nehemia 9:4). What did they cry? — Woe, woe, it is he [i.e., the yetser hara/Aza’el/tempter to avodah zara] who has destroyed the Sanctuary, burnt the Temple, killed all the righteous, driven all Israel into exile, and is still dancing around among us! You have surely given him to us so that we may receive reward through him. We want neither him, nor reward through him! Thereupon a tablet fell down from heaven for them, whereupon the word ‘TRUTH’ was inscribed. (Rav Hanina said: One may learn therefrom that the seal of the blessed Holy One, is truth).

They ordered a fast of three days and three nights, whereupon he (the yetser hara/Aza’el) was surrendered to them. He came forth from the Holy of Holies like a young fiery lion. Thereupon the Prophet said to Israel: This is the evil desire of idolatry, as it is said: And he said: This is wickedness (Zekharia 5:8). As they took hold of him a hair of his beard fell out, he raised his voice and it went [was audible] four hundred parasangs.

Thereupon they said: How shall we act? Perhaps, God forbid, they might have mercy upon him from heaven! — The prophet said unto them: Cast him into a leaden pot, closing its opening with lead. Because lead absorbs the voice, as it is said: And he said: This is wickedness. And he cast her down into the midst of the measure, and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof.

They said: Since this is a time of Grace, let us pray for mercy for the Tempter to evil. They prayed for mercy, and he was handed over to them. He said to them: Realize that if you kill him, the world goes down. They imprisoned him for three days, then looked in the whole land of Israel for a fresh egg and could not find it.

Thereupon they said: What shall we do now? Shall we kill him? The world would then go down. Shall we beg for half-mercy? They do not grant ‘halves’ in heaven. They put out his eyes and let him go. It helped inasmuch as he no more entices men to commit incest.

(נחמיה ט:ד) ויצעקו אל ה' אלקים בקול גדול מאי אמור אמר רב ואיתימא רבי יוחנן בייא בייא היינו האי דאחרביה למקדשא וקליה להיכליה וקטלינהו לכולהו צדיקי ואגלינהו לישראל מארעהון ועדיין מרקד בינן כלום יהבתי לן אלא לקבולי ביה אגרא לא איהו בעינן ולא אגריה בעינן נפל להו פיתקא מרקייעא דהוה כתב בה אמת אמר רב חנינא שמע מינה חותמו של הקב"ה אמת.

אותיבו בתעניתא תלתא יומין ותלתא לילואתא מסרוהו ניהליהו נפק אתא כי גוריא דנורא מבית קדשי הקדשים אמר להו נביא לישראל היינו יצרא דעבודת כוכבים שנאמר (זכריה ה:ח) ויאמר זאת הרשעה בהדי דתפסוה ליה אשתמיט ביניתא ממזייא ורמא קלא ואזל קליה ארבע מאה פרסי.

אמרו היכי נעביד דילמא חס ושלום מרחמי עליה מן שמיא אמר להו נביא שדוהו בדודא דאברא וחפיוהו לפומיה באברא דאברא משאב שאיב קלא שנאמר (זכריה ה:ח) ויאמר זאת הרשעה וישלך אותה אל תוך האיפה וישלך את אבן העופרת אל פיה.

אמרו הואיל ועת רצון הוא נבעי רחמי איצרא דעבירה בעו רחמי ואמסר בידיהו אמר להו חזו דאי קטליתו ליה לההוא כליא עלמא חבשוהו תלתא יומי ובעו ביעתא בת יומא בכל ארץ ישראל ולא אשתכח אמרי היכי נעביד נקטליה כליא עלמא ניבעי רחמי אפלגא פלגא ברקייעא לא יהבי כחלינהו לעיניה ושבקוהו ואהני דלא מיגרי ביה לאיניש בקריבתה.

The Shulḥan Arukh, literally “The Set Table” was written by Rabbi Yosef Karo in 1563 and is arguably the most widely consulted code of Jewish law. In the passage below, Rabbi Karo begins his code with an allusion to the story in Yoma 69b, expressing the idea that while the Yester Hara cannot be removed from this world, its power can be redirected and hallowed for the good of our world.

Chapter 1: Laws of waking up in the morning. Paragraph 1 — One should strengthen himself like a lion to get up in the morning to serve his Creator, so that it is he who awakens the dawn.

סימן א: דין השכמת הבוקר. סעיף א —
יתגבר כארי לעמוד בבוקר לעבודת בוראו,
שיהא הוא מעורר השחר.

Sukkah 52a

In a discussion on the justification for the separation of men and women in the Courtyard of the Women in the Temple during the *Simḥat Beit Hashoeva*, Water Drawing Festival, a *kal v’chomer* argument is made that if men and women are separated in a time of mourning all the more so must they be separated in a time of joy. What is the cause of the mourning, they ask? Either the death of the Moshiaḥ ben Yosef (thus precipitating the coming of Moshiaḥ ben David) or the death of the *Yetser Hara*.

Rebbi Yehuda expounded: In the time to come the blessed Holy One will bring the Yetser Hara and slaughter it (v'shuḥto) in the presence of the righteous and the wicked.

כדרש רבי יהודה לעתיד לבא מביאו
הקב”ה ליצר הרע ושוחטו בפני הצדיקים
ובפני הרשעים.

Isaiah 11:6-9

The prophet Isaiah envisions a future world (*olam haba*) in which living creatures are somehow satiated with their predatory desire mitigated or entirely extinguished.

And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the nursing child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the basilisk’s den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of YHVH, as the waters cover the sea.

וְגַר זֶאֵב עִם-כֶּבֶשׂ וְנִמְר עִם-גְּדִי יִרְבֹּץ וְעֵגֹל
וּכְפִיר וּמְרִיא יִחָדּוּ וְנָעַר קֹטֵן נְהַג בָּם: וּפְרָה
וְדָב תִּרְעִינָה יִחָדּוּ יִרְבְּצוּ יִלְדֵיהֶן וְאַרְיֵה כִבְקָר
יֹאכֹל-תֵּבָן: וְשִׁעֲשַׁע יֹנֵק עַל-חֹר פֶּתֶן וְעַל
מְאֹרֶת צִפְעוֹנִי גָמוּל יָדוּ הָדָה: לֹא-יָרְעוּ וְלֹא-
יִשְׁחִיתוּ בְּכָל-הָהָר קֹדְשִׁי כִּי-מִלְאָה הָאָרֶץ יָדְעָה
אֶת-ה’ בְּמִים לַיָּם מְכַסִּים:

D. Defeating Amalek

In the narrative of Torah, when human societies succumb to the depraved state modeled by the *Dor Hamabul*, they are liable for some destructive intervention. Bnei Yisrael was itself at risk of this after the incident of the golden calf. As we’ve learned, a signifier of the slide into corruption is a strong predatory appetite. Unsurprisingly, the archetypal hunters, Nimrod and Esav, are apprised as dangerous fools. (They inevitably die of hunting accidents or some transgression of hubris.) Amalek, grandson of Esav and cousin of Israel, also acts in the role of Israel’s nemesis — a society that has devolved from subsistence hunting to predation upon other nomadic peoples. If Israel’s divine mission of being a “light unto the nations” is to circumscribe the predatory appetite under the influence of the *yetser hara* (and thereby prevent world destruction until the next world, Olam Habah, becomes manifest), then it must defeat “Amalek.”

Genesis 25:24-25, 27

When [Rebekah’s] time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. The first one emerged red, like a hairy coat all over; so they named him Esav. [...] When the boys grew up, Esav became a skillful hunter, a man of the outdoors; but Yaakov was a mild man who stayed in camp.

וַיִּמְלְאוּ יָמֶיהָ לָלֶדֶת וְהָיָה תוֹמָם בְּבִטְנָהּ: וַיֵּצֵא
הָרִאשׁוֹן אֶדְמוֹנִי כָּלוּ כְּאֶדְרֶת שֹׁעַר וַיִּקְרְאוּ
שְׁמוֹ עֵשָׂו: [...] וַיִּגְדְּלוּ הַנְּעָרִים וַיְהִי עֵשָׂו אִישׁ
יָדָע צֹיד אִישׁ שָׂדֶה וַיַּעֲקֹב אִישׁ תָּם יֹשֵׁב
אֹהֶלִים:

Genesis 36:12, 15-16

This, then, is the line of Esav, the ancestor of the Edomites, in the hill country of Seir. [...] Timna was a concubine of Esav’s son Eliphaz; she bore Amalek to Eliphaz. Those were the descendants of Esav’s wife Adah. [...] These are the clans of the children of Esav. The descendants of Esav’s first-born Eliphaz: the clans Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, Korah, Gatam, and Amalek; these are the clans of Eliphaz in the land of Edom. Those are the descendants of Adah.

וְאַלְהָ תִּלְדוֹת עֵשָׂו אָבִי אֱדוֹם בְּהָר שְׂעִיר: [...] וְתִמְנַע הָיְתָה פִּילְגֶּשׁ לְאֵלִיפָז בֶּן-עֵשָׂו וְתִלְדַּ
לְאֵלִיפָז אֶת-עַמְלֵק אֵלֶּה בְּנֵי עֵדָה אִשְׁתּוֹ עֵשָׂו:
[...] אֵלֶּה אֱלוֹפֵי בְנֵי-עֵשָׂו בְּנֵי אֵלִיפָז בְּכוֹר
עֵשָׂו אֱלוֹף תִּימָן אֱלוֹף אוֹמָר אֱלוֹף צֶפּוֹ אֱלוֹף
קֶנּוֹ: אֱלוֹף-קֶרַח אֱלוֹף גַּעְתָּם אֱלוֹף עַמְלֵק אֵלֶּה
אֱלוֹפֵי אֵלִיפָז בְּאֶרֶץ אֱדוֹם אֵלֶּה בְּנֵי עֵדָה:

Tanna d’bei Eliyahu 24:3

Eliphaz had a son whom he asked: Amalek, my son, who is the one who will inherit both this world and the world to come? Eliphaz should have gone on to answer the question himself: Israel will be the inheritors of this world and the world to come. So dig wells for them and prepare roads for them. If you do, you will have with Israel the privilege of inheriting a share [in this world] and possessing the world to come. But Eliphaz did not say these things. After he had put the matter to Amalek in an oblique way, he said no more. Thereupon Amalek went forth to destroy the entire [Jewish] world, every part of it, as is said, ‘Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel on account of Rephidim’ (Exodus 17:8).

אֵלִיפָז עִם עַמְלֵק מֵאִי הוּא עַמְלֵק הִיא אוֹמֵר
אֵל אֵלִיפָז אֲבִיו מִי הוּא שְׂיוֹרֵשׁ הָעוֹלָה׃
וְהָעוֹלָה׃ ב׃ א״ל אֵלִיפָז אֵל עַמְלֵק בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
יֹרְשֵׁין הָעוֹלָה׃ וְהָעוֹלָה׃ ב׃ לִכְן לֶךְ עֲכַשְׂיוּ
וּחְפוּר לֵהֵן בּוֹרוֹת שִׁיחִין וּמַעְרוֹת שֶׁל מִים
כְּדִי לִשְׁתּוֹת הֵן וּמַקְנִיָּהֶן וְהֵכֵן לָהֶם דְּרוֹכִים
אִם תַּעֲשֶׂה כֵן תִּזְכֶּה וּתִירֹשׁ וּתִנְחַל וּתְבֹא
לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא אֲבָל הוּא לֹא עֲשֶׂה כֵן אֲלֵא כִּיוֹן
שֶׁאֵמֵר לוֹ רִישׁוֹמוֹ שֶׁל דָּבָר מִיָּד יֵצֵא עַמְלֵק
לְהַחֲרִיב אֶת הָעוֹלָם שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (שְׁמוֹת י״ח) וַיָּבֹא
עַמְלֵק וַיִּלָּחֶם עִם יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרִפְדִּים.

Remember what Amalek did to you on the way, at your going-out from Egypt, how he encountered you on the way and attacked all the stragglers at your rear while you were weary and faint, and he did not stand-in-awe of Elohim.

Mishnah Kedushin 4:13

Rabbi Yehudah says in his own name: Donkey-drivers are mostly wicked, and camel-drivers are mostly honest, sailors are mostly pious. The best of doctors goes to Gehinnom, and the most honest butchers are the partner of Amalek.

Sefer HaHinukh 545:8

The 13th century text Sefer ha-Hinnukh, enumerates and explains each of the 613 commandments identified by rabbinic tradition.

...all that we are commanded is [so that] our souls be refined and purified without the dross of evil thoughts and disgusting character traits. And so that which they said (Berakhot 33a), “[It is because] he makes the traits of the blessed Holy One, into mercy and they are only decrees,” is to say that El (God) did not worry about the nest of the bird and His ‘mercy did not reach’ it and its child; as His mercy does not extend to creatures with an animal soul, to prevent us from doing what we need to them. As were it so, slaughtering would be forbidden.

But [rather], the reason for the proscription is to teach us the trait of mercy and that we not become cruel. Since cruelty spreads in the soul of a man, as it is known with butchers that slaughter large oxen and donkeys, that they are ‘people of blood,’ ‘slaughterers of men’ [and] very cruel. And because of this they said (Mishnah Kedushin 4:13), “The best of butchers are the partners of Amalek.” And behold, these commandments with animals and birds are not mercy upon them, but [rather] decrees upon us, to guide us and to teach us the good character traits. To here are the interpretations of Ramban, may his memory be blessed.

זְכוֹר אֶת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה לְךָ עַמְּלֵק בְּדַרְךָ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם: אֲשֶׁר קָרָךְ בְּדַרְךָ וַיִּזְנֶב בְּךָ כָּל־הַנַּחֲשָׁלִים אַחֲרֶיךָ וְאַתָּה עֵיף וַיִּגַע וְלֹא יָרָא אֱלֹקִים:

רבי יהודה אומר משמו. החמרין רובן רשעים. והגמלין רובן כשרים. הספנין רובן חסידים. טוב שברופאים לגיהנם. והכשר שבטבחים שותפו של עמלק.

כל מה שנצטוינו שיהיו נפשותינו צרופות ומזקקות בלא סיגי מחשבות רעות ומדות מגנות, וכן מה שאמרו לפי שעושה גזירותיו של הקדוש ברוך הוא רחמים ואינן אלא גזירות, לומר שלא חס הא-ל על קן צפור ולא הגיעו רחמיו על אותו ואת בנו, שאין רחמיו מגיעות בבעלי נפש הבהמות למנע אותנו מלעשות בהם צרכינו, שאם כן, היה אוסר השחיטה.

אבל טעם המניעה ללמד אותנו מדת הרחמנות ושלא נתאכזר, כי האכזריות תתפשט בנפש האדם, כידוע בטבחים שוחטי השורים הגדולים והחמורים, שהם אנשי דמים, זובחי אדם, אכזריים מאד, ומפני זה אמרו (קדושין פב:א) טוב שבטבחים שתפו של עמלק, והנה המצות האלה בבהמה ובעוף אינן רחמים עליהן, אבל גזירות בנו להדריכנו וללמד אותנו המדות הטובות, עד כאן בפרושי הרמב"ן זכרונו לברכה.

Rebbi Elazar Hamodai says: “And Amalek came”: Amalek “sneaked” under the edges of the cloud and snatched souls of Israel and killed them, viz. (Devarim 25:18)

רבי אלעזר המודעי אומר: ויבא עמלק. לפי שהיה עמלק נכנס תחת כנפי ענן וגונב נפשות מישראל והורגן, שנאמר: “אשר קרך בדרך” וגו' (דברים כה:יח).

Pesikta d'Rav Kahana 3:8

“Amalek” (Deuteronomy 25:17)... the word is made up of am (people) and lakh (lick) — hence a people which, like a dog, came to lick up Israel’s blood.

עמלק (דברים כה:יז) ...עם לק אומה שבאת ללוק דמן של ישראל ככלב.

Blood Licking and Drinking among Neighboring Tribes in Antiquity

Herodotus on Cambyses

[3.8.1] There are no men who respect pledges more than the Arabians. This is how they give them: a man stands between the two pledging parties, and with a sharp stone cuts the palms of their hands, near the thumb; then he takes a piece of wood from the cloak of each and smears with their blood seven stones that lie between them, meanwhile calling on Dionysus and the Heavenly Aphrodite; [3.8.2] after this is done, the one who has given his pledge commends the stranger (or his countryman if the other be one) to his friends, and his friends hold themselves bound to honor the pledge. [3.8.3] They believe in no other gods except Dionysus and the Heavenly Aphrodite; and they say that they wear their hair as Dionysus does his, cutting it round the head and shaving the temples. They call Dionysus, Orotalt; and Aphrodite, Alilat.

Kinship & Marriage in Early Arabia (William Robertson Smith, 2nd ed. 1903), ch. 2, p. 58-60

[W]e see that... Herodotus has got the thing in its earliest form, but has omitted one trait necessary to the understanding of the symbolism, and preserved in the [pre-Islamic] Meccan tradition. The later Arabs had substituted the blood of a victim for human blood, but they retained a feature which Herodotus had missed, they licked the blood as well as smeared it on the sacred stones. Originally therefore the ceremony was that known in so many parts of the world, in which the contracting parties become one by actually drinking or tasting one another's blood. The seven stones in Herodotus are of course sacred stones, the Arabic anṣāb, Hebrew maṣṣēbōth, which like the sacred stones at the Ka'ba were originally Baetylia, Bethels or god-boxes. So we find in Tāj, 3:560 a verse of Rashid ibn Ramid of the tribe of 'Anaza, "I swear by the flowing blood round 'Aud, and by the sacred stones which we left beside So'air." So'air is

1 On the oath by blood cp. Lane, s.v. *dumya*, p. 917b. For the blood covenant Goldziher adds Zohair, 1:50, Mofadd. 21:3. One or two additional references may be here given for the forms of covenant illustrated in the text. The emasculated form by dipping the hands in a bowl of water appears in Wācidī (Wellh. *Moh. in Med.* p.334). Sometimes, apparently, fruit-juice (*robb*) was taken to imitate blood; such, at least, is one of the explanations offered of the alliance called the Ribāb (see Lane, p.1005, Ibn Doraïd, p.111). We may compare the use of bean juice to smear the face (Lydus, *de Mens.* 4:29); this seems to go with Faba as a totem, Fabii; compare the Attic hero, Kvαπίτης [cp. RS 480]. In Ḥamasā, 190:15, there is an obscure oath, which Freytag and Osiander (ZDMG 7:489) confess that they do not understand, بالعزین وشجرة تصيب بأيدي مجزرة. Here *mathjara* is not a proper name, but must be the same as *thajīr*, the dregs of fruit used to make wine or *nabīdh* (*sicera*). The dictionaries say that this is a foreign word; it is in fact the Talmudic שיגרא (comp. Löw, *Aram. Pflanzennamen*, p.124). *Majzara* is *abattoir*. A tradition given in the Sihah says that 'Omar warned his Moslems to beware of the *majāzir*, because one becomes as unable to avoid them as to abstain from wine when the habit is formed (cp. Maid. 2:22, no. 4: wine and flesh are the two things that seduce men). This has puzzled the commentators, but Al-Asma'ī not wrongly remarks that some sort of gathering is meant, since it is only where men assemble that beasts are slaughtered. I have no doubt that 'Omar had in view some sort of heathenish sacrificial rite, and in our passage "the flanks of the majzara" differ little from "the base of the altar," where in the Old Testament we read of the sacrificial blood being poured. The oath then is "by the two 'Ozzā" (i.e., the goddess Al-'Ozzā and her companion, possibly Al-Lāt—not necessarily two forms of the same

the god of the 'Anaza (Yācūt, 3:94) and 'Aud of their allies and near kinsmen Bākr-Wāil (Bakrī, p.55). We see then that two groups might make themselves of one blood by a process of which the essence was that they commingled their blood, at the same time applying the blood to the god or fetish so as to make him a party to the covenant also.

Kinship & Marriage in Early Arabia, "Additional Note C," p. 296

Hind at the battle of Oḥod made herself a necklace and anklets of the noses and ears of Moslems and even gnawed the liver of her arch-enemy Ḥamza... In later poetry the expression of a desire to drink an enemy's blood is a figure of speech, but Ammianus, 31:16, relates an actual case. Procopius, Bell. Pers. 1:19, speaks only of anthropophagous Saracens in remote parts, as indeed the Arabs of the Hijāz still accuse distant tribes of drinking their enemies' blood. But such accusations are rather reminiscences of obsolete practices than pure inventions;² in Agh. xvi. 50:14 Yazīd the Blood-drinker (shārib al-dimā) appears as a chief of the Tayyi. Another reminiscence of cannibal times is the vow of a mother to drink wine from the skull of the slayer of her son (Ibn Hisham, 567:14 = Agh. iv. 41 22).

The medieval Kurdish/Arab historian, Ali ibn al-Athir (12th century), connects the Biblical Amalek to the Arabic "Al-'Amālīq" (العَمَالِيق), meaning 'the Giants.'

The Complete History, Ali ibn al-Athir, p.72

Amalek is the father of Al-'Amālīq those are Al-Jabaabrah (most powerful) in the Levant who were called the Canaanites and the Pharaohs of Egypt.

وعمليق ، وهو أبو العماليق ، ومنهم كانت الجبابرة
بالشام الذين يقال لهم الكنعانيون ، والفراعنة بمصر

Deuteronomy 25:17-18

Therefore, when YHVH your God grants you safety from all your enemies around you, in the land that YHVH your God is giving you as a hereditary portion, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget!

וְהָיָה בְּהַנִּיחַ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְךָ מְכֹל-אֹיְבֶיךָ מִסָּבִיב
בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ נַחֲלָה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ
תִּמְחָה אֶת-זֵכֶר עַמְּלֵק מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם לֹא
תִשְׁכַּח:

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goddess, perhaps, rather like 'Anathoth, two images of 'Ozzā, twin-pillars, like those of Hercules), "and by the wine-dregs that are poured out by the sides of the altar," or nosb. The dark dregs take the place of gore, as the *robb* did. Similar is the verse cited by the lexicographers, s.v. *عَرِي* (compare Osiander, ut sup.) "by streams of gore that look like dragon's-blood on the cippus of Al-'Ozzā and on the (idol) Nasr" (cp. Tab. 1:7 l. 91, there is a better reading in Lisān, s.v. *أَيْل*). The wine-dregs point to a sacrificial feast, and doubtless this accompanied every covenant (Gen. 31:54, Exod. 24:11). From Diw. Hodh. 87 it appears that it required a *casāma* to enable two tribes to eat and drink together.

2 [Khālid b. Ja'far licked the brains that clung to the sword with which he had cleft the head of Zohair b. Jadhīma (Agh. x. 17:5). According to Ibn Batūta, 1:285, at Medina they licked the blood of the man who had been killed in blood-revenge (*la'dacū damahu*). For other examples see Jacob, *Altarab. Beduinenleben* (1895), 90, n.2, and Goldziher, "Ueber Kannibalismus aus orientalischen Quellen," *Globus*, 70, no. 15 (1896). On the practice of cannibalism for superstitious and medical reasons see Ousāma ed. Derenbourg, 24:19, Ta'rikh al-Sūdān, ed. Houdas, 48, 'Alī Mobārak, *Khitat*, vi. p.2.—I. G.]