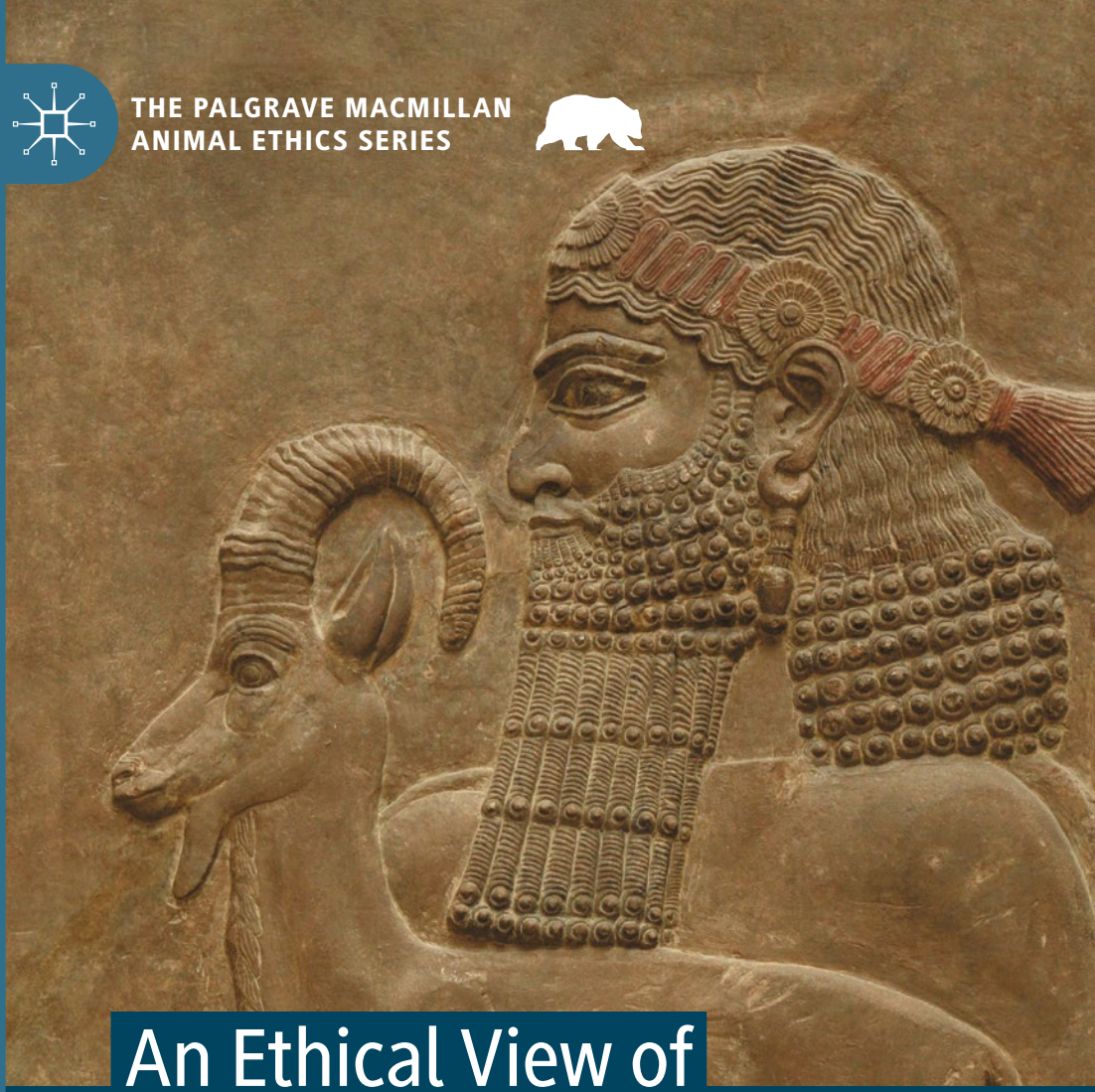

THE PALGRAVE MACMILLAN ANIMAL ETHICS SERIES

An Ethical View of Human-Animal Relations in the Ancient Near East

Idan Breier

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The Palgrave Macmillan Animal Ethics Series

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Oxford, UK

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Oxford, UK

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the ethics of our treatment of animals. Philosophers have led the way, and now a range of other scholars have followed from historians to social scientists. From being a marginal issue, animals have become an emerging issue in ethics and in multidisciplinary inquiry. This series will explore the challenges that Animal Ethics poses, both conceptually and practically, to traditional understandings of human-animal relations. Specifically, the Series will:

- provide a range of key introductory and advanced texts that map out ethical positions on animals;
- publish pioneering work written by new, as well as accomplished, scholars;
- produce texts from a variety of disciplines that are multidisciplinary in character or have multidisciplinary relevance.

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In memory of Drs Tibor and Stephania (Dora) Vago who, while physicians, were first and foremost human beings

Series Editors' Preface

This is a new book series for a new field of inquiry: Animal Ethics.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the ethics of our treatment of animals. Philosophers have led the way, and now a range of other scholars have followed from historians to social scientists. From being a marginal issue, animals have become an emerging issue in ethics and in multidisciplinary inquiry.

In addition, a rethink of the status of animals has been fuelled by a range of scientific investigations which have revealed the complexity of animal sentiency, cognition and awareness. The ethical implications of this new knowledge have yet to be properly evaluated, but it is becoming clear that the old view that animals are mere things, tools, machines or commodities cannot be sustained ethically.

But it is not only philosophy and science that are putting animals on the agenda. Increasingly, in Europe and the United States, animals are becoming a political issue as political parties vie for the "green" and "animal" vote. In turn, political scientists are beginning to look again at the history of political thought in relation to animals, and historians are beginning to revisit the political history of animal protection.

As animals grow as an issue of importance, so there have been more collaborative academic ventures leading to conference volumes, special journal issues, indeed new academic animal journals as well.

Moreover, we have witnessed the growth of academic courses, as well as university posts, in Animal Ethics, Animal Welfare, Animal Rights, Animal Law, Animals and Philosophy, Human-Animal Studies, Critical Animal Studies, Animals and Society, Animals in Literature, Animals and Religion—tangible signs that a new academic discipline is emerging.

"Animal Ethics" is the new term for the academic exploration of the moral status of the non-human—an exploration that explicitly involves a focus on what we owe animals morally, and which also helps us to understand the influences—social, legal, cultural, religious and political—that legitimate animal abuse. This series explores the challenges that Animal Ethics poses, both conceptually and practically, to traditional understandings of human-animal relations.

The series is needed for three reasons: (1) to provide the texts that will service the new university courses on animals; (2) to support the increasing number of students studying and academics researching in animal related fields, and (3) because there is currently no book series that is a focus for multidisciplinary research in the field.

Specifically, the series will

- provide a range of key introductory and advanced texts that map out ethical positions on animals;
- publish pioneering work written by new, as well as accomplished, scholars, and
- produce texts from a variety of disciplines that are multidisciplinary in character or have multidisciplinary relevance.

The new Palgrave Macmillan Series on Animal Ethics is the result of a unique partnership between Palgrave Macmillan and the Ferrater Mora Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics. The series is an integral part of the mission of the Centre to put animals on the intellectual agenda by facilitating academic research and publication. The series is also a natural complement to one of the Centre's other major projects, the *Journal of Animal Ethics*. The Centre is an independent "think tank" for the

advancement of progressive thought about animals, and is the first Centre of its kind in the world. It aims to demonstrate rigorous intellectual enquiry and the highest standards of scholarship. It strives to be a world-class centre of academic excellence in its field.

We invite academics to visit the Centre's website www.oxfordanimalethics.com and to contact us with new book proposals for the series.

Oxford, UK

Andrew Linzey
Clair Linzey

Acknowledgments

This volume takes an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the ancient Near East, Hebrew Bible, philosophy, theology, and zoology. Alongside my exploration of the political and social history of the biblical and ancient Near Eastern eras I have long examined the field of Human-Animal Studies (HAS), guided and supported by Prof. Emeritus Joseph (Yossi) Terkel of the School of Zoology at Tel Aviv University. My historical work being comparative and interdisciplinary, discussion of HAS has proved a challenging task. Some years ago, I made the acquaintance of Prof. Andrew Linzey of Oxford, who encouraged me develop my interest in animal ethics. This has prompted a slew of articles published in the pages of the *Journal of Animal Ethics* published by the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics headed by Prof. Andrew Linzey and Dr Clair Linzey and other volumes initiated by the chief editor. My thanks go to these prominent scholars for encouraging my interest in HAS and specialization in its ethical aspects.

My deep gratitude also goes to my teachers and colleagues at Bar-Ilan University and the University of Haifa from whom I have learned a great deal—and, of course, to my family for their dedicated support over all the years. I also wish to thank Liat Keren for her limpid translation of my Hebrew manuscript into English. The volume is dedicated to the memory of Drs Tibor and Stephania (Dora) Vago—physicians who were first

and foremost human beings. As many have noted before me, animals themselves make us human (Grandin & Johnson, 2009). In times of human conflict, they identify the island of humanity in the hell humankind creates. As Levinas remarks of his time in incarceration in Fallingbostel prisoner of war camp:

> … about halfway through our long captivity, for a few short weeks, before the sentinels chased him away, a wandering dog entered our lives. One day he came to meet this rabble as we returned under guard from work. He survived in some wild patch in the region of the camp. But we called him Bobby, an exotic name, as one does with a cherished dog. He would appear at morning assembly and was waiting for us as we returned, jumping up and down and barking in delight. For him, there was no doubt that we were men. … He was a descendant of the dogs of Egypt.[1] And his friendly growling, his animal faith, was born from the silence of his forefathers on the banks of the Nile. (Levinas, 1997, p. 153)

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[1] Cf. "But not even a dog will threaten any of the sons of Israel, nor anything from person to animal so that you may learn how the Lord distinguishes between Egypt and Israel'" (Exod. 11:7).

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1

Introduction

This volume addresses human-animal relations as reflected in the Hebrew Bible and ancient Near Eastern literature. The first part examines Mesopotamian sources—popular sayings, proverbs, myth, epic, and law codes. The second explores the biblical literature—narrative, historiography, law, prophecy, psalmody, and the wisdom corpus.[1] In light of the interdisciplinary approach adopted and varied target audience, a brief introduction to the ethics of human-animal relations and the cultures discussed herein is in order.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines ethics as "moral principles that control or influence a person's behaviour."[2] It thus deals with questions that have practical implications—i.e., what people should and should not do. While some acts are ethical imperatives, some are laudable but not mandatory. Regulating one's relations with others, ethics embodies the right and proper way to behave (Weinryb, 2008, pp. 1:22–23; Sagi, 2012, p. 17). Ethical conduct can be prompted either by utilitarian motives or an altruism that is the antithesis of egotism, however, the

[1] Espousing a comparative method, Chap. 5 (Hebrew Bible/Mesopotamia) bridges the two parts.
[2] https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/ethic?q=ethics.

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distinction between the two not always being clear: both sides sometimes benefit from acts that are not necessarily altruistic—such as the "profitable altruism" some animals exhibit (Williams, 2006, p. 32, 49; van Dooren & Despret, 2018, pp. 166–169).

While human beings display what may be called an ethical instinct or natural morality, they can also acquire such virtues through self-instruction or by learning from others (Williams, 2006, p. 47, 177).[3] Hereby, they can enhance their "ethical intelligence" (Posner, 2004, p. 65). Frequently resting on false facts, the ethical instinct must be perfected (Singer, 2004, pp. 82–83); the developments of recent generations still being incomplete, humanity is still an ethical work-in-progress. This circumstance is exemplified by modern ideological and political extremism and dictatorships responsible for mass murder that counter the twentieth-century's recognition of the human right to life, freedom, income, and social security (Robertson, 2004, p. 18; Talmon, 2000, p. 3; cf. Talmon, 1981, pp. 1–18; Hobsbaum, 1995, p. 13).[4]

In today's urban, industrial society, human beings live at a distance from the animal world, largely regarding it as a resource to be exploited and taking over its natural habitat for human use. Good human-animal relations thus depend upon the rearing of pets, who fill part of the human need for affection and communication. More often than not, however, especially in "post-domestic" Western societies, human beings treat animals as objects and property (Singer, 1975, p. 238; Carruthers, 1992, pp. 161–162; Hursthouse, 2000, p. 12; Steiner, 2005, p. 228; Hurn, 2012, pp. 98, 102–5; Weil, 2012, pp. 61, 138).

Since the 1970s, however, the ethical status and rights of animals have become part of the human agenda and academic discourse. This development has prompted a process of self-examination that has helped change human consciousness and deeds in this field. Although people's attitudes towards animals have altered over the past 40 years or so, room for improvement still exists (Linzey & Linzey, 2014, p. 10; 2018a, pp. 4, 15;

[3] "Ethical instincts" are considered, if very quick, reflexes, largely based on emotions. They thus contrast with ethical judgment, which are slower and primarily guided by reason (Nisan, 2017, pp. 34, 78).

[4] For late nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century European optimism regarding human nature, see Biddiss, 1997, pp. 83–84.

Marvin & McHugh, 2014, pp. 2–3, 8; Linzey & Cohn, 2017, pp. 14–15; Pettman, 2018, p. 30; Turner et al., 2018, p. 4; Kagan, 2019, p. 1). Social and ethical change is thus needed rather than mere reliance on legislation (Garner, 2010, p. 130).

Human-animal ethics are a complex subject on both the theoretical and practical level, due in large part to the fact that, by definition, human beings find it easier to understand and be considerate of their own species. Generally speaking, people exhibit a moral concern for those close to them, the more distant others being the less consideration they evoke (Singer, 1999, p. 76; Gruen, 2011, p. 70).[5] In this context, caring is a form of utilitarianism directed towards the human subject that governs the way in which we treat others. Although not mandatory, this attitude is linked first and foremost to solicitude and attentiveness to other beings' interests (desires and needs). It is thus the antithesis of indifference. Ignoring another's plight can also be regarded as a type of evil, the other becoming morally transparent. Empathy thus forms an important element of ethics.[6] An ethical sense is necessary in order to overcome the indifference that makes us refrain from objecting to evil. While maliciousness—an intent to harm—is more injurious than indifference, indifference-informed evil is worst of all (Warren, 1986, p. 171; Margalit, 2004, pp. 32–34, 43; Lorberbaum, 2018, p. 124; Rainey, 2021, p. 149).[7]

Evil in the world is due primarily to natural disasters and human deeds—witting or unwitting (Kasher, 2002, p. 40).[8] While nature has no ethical obligation to the animal kingdom, not being a moral agent, human beings possess a developed sense of self-consciousness and

[5] The term "ethics" carries a dual signification: a) a moral code (= morality); and b) a philosophy of ethics (= philosophical morality) (Barton, 2014, p. 1).

[6] Empathy itself is a process in which a person imagines the feelings, emotions, and thoughts of another (Goldie, 2000, p. 195).

[7] Indifference to the suffering of animals stems from two primary beliefs: their inability to distinguish between good and evil and the fact that they do not feel pain (Garner, 2010, p. 105). For the difference between the cruel person who deliberately harms and the brutal or unsympathetic individual, see Williams, 2006, p. 91.

[8] Natural incidents are referred to as "disasters," human acts as "atrocities." When harm is not due to a natural disaster or "God's hand," observers must take a clear stand (Herman, 2015, p. 733).

freedom of choice.[9] When animals are accorded moral stature they must also be granted legal status (Regan, 1983, p. 96; Morris, 2011, pp. 261–62, 271; Palmer, 2012, p. 35). Ethical rights exist even when not supported by appropriate legislation, however (Weinryb, 2008, p. 2:108).

Animals' relatively less-developed cognitive abilities preclude them from acting on the basis of clear-cut moral codes of right and wrong, good and evil. The social behaviour some species exhibit is not necessarily moral—and certainly not guided by ethical rules. Some scholars thus argue that animals are "moral patients" (Regan, 1983, pp. 154, 166, 239; Miller, 2012, p. 27; Linzey, 2013, p. 23).[10]

Human-animal relations not being symmetrical, the sense of solidarity that calls for caring and concern in the face of suffering or injustice does not rest upon mutuality. Human beings must thus employ their cognitive and ethical superiority to benefit their fellow creatures (Wood, 1999, p. 17; Williams, 2006, pp. 118–119; Gruen, 2011, p. 74; cf. Warren, 1997, p. 225; Kemmerer, 2006, p. 47; Anderson, 2018, pp. 150–151).[11] Hereby, an essential anthropocentrism evolves that pursues animal welfare rather than exploitation or harm (Miller, 2012. p. 95). Human weakness lies in *homo sapiens*' ability to act rationally to achieve unethical goals, such conduct lying beyond faunal capacity (Pink, 2004, p. 123). Human ethical commitment must therefore be directed towards every

[9] In contrast to earlier paradigms, modern scholars now acknowledge animal self-consciousness, as exemplified in protection of territory or competition for human attention. Today, the test of animal self-identification in a mirror is thus no longer employed as an exclusive criterion. Whatever the case in this regard, human self-consciousness is more complex than animal self-awareness, operating along more rational lines (Steiner, 2008, p. 29; Chan & Harris, 2011, p. 315; Korsgaard, 2011, pp. 101–3; DeMello, 2012, p. 386; Bernstein, 2018, pp. 352–353). Their cognitive capacity enables people to develop this advantage (Driver, 2011, p. 150). Free will is the ability to choose how to act, set goals, desire, etc., initiating a chain of actions. Rather than constituting a form of omnipotence, however, it rests upon a lack of coercion or perversion of the truth (via brainwashing or propaganda, etc.) and possible alternatives (Clarke, 1996, pp. 381, 387; Marcoulesco, 2005, p. 5:3200). In an animal context, we can no longer say that creatures lower than *homo sapiens* operate solely on an instinctual level. Dolphins and chimpanzees, for example, possess a measure of free will, albeit not being able to make decisions involving value considerations as per humankind (Pink, 2004, pp. 22–28, 53; Kane, 2005, p. 94; Baumeister, 2010, pp. 17, 26).

[10] Others contend that some species do follow ethical rules of some sort: see Bradie, 2011, p. 570.

[11] Supremacy does not warrant abuse (Linzey, 1995, p. 17). As Scully (2002, p. 9) notes, the issue is not only human cruelty but also human hubris and dominance over the animal world.

creature that feels pain rather reserved exclusively for rational agents (Kane, 2010, p. 146; Kagan, 2019, pp. 10–13).

In unequal relations, human beings can transcend their natural tendencies and feel others' pain, seeking to help them even at personal cost or risk—displaying compassion. On such occasions, they identify with the other without judging them, thus shifting from neutrality to positivity and action (Sagi, 2003, p. 475; 2012, pp. 21–22, 25).[12] From an ethical perspective, patients must be treated with respect rather than mere compassion or out of "sentimental interests"—first and foremost because this is required by justice (Regan, 1983, p. 261).

Identifying situations that demand moral judgment calls for well-developed cognitive powers ("ethical intelligence") that heighten sensitivity to the other (Hess, 2016, p. 42). The latter is one of the hallmarks of moral conduct (Waal, 2016, p. 88). As noted above, the proper attitude towards animals constitutes a special ethical case, *inter alia* because creatures cannot communicate verbally and thus convey their suffering (Carruthers, 1992, pp. 143–145; Singer, 1999, pp. 68–69; Gruen, 2011, pp. 24–25; Linzey & Linzey, 2018b, pp. 40–42; Korsgaard, 2018, p. 61).[13] Human beings are also much better mimics than most animals, their facial movements creating emotional and cognitive responses that arouse empathy in observers. It is thus difficult to identify animal distress, special powers requiring mobilization for such purposes (Palagi, 2016, pp. 90–92).

In this light, many people do not understand—rather than deliberately ignore— animal pain (Rachels, 2008, pp. 260–267), whether physical, mental, or a combination of both. Pain cannot be explained to an animal, in particular if it is inflicted with good intentions, such as medical care (Linzey, 2009, p. 5; 2013, pp. 10, 27).[14] Nor do they possess the

[12] According to Margalit (1996, p. 234) compassion is linked to a non-arrogant identification, thus being more less hierarchical in nature than mercy, which derives from a position of superiority. Sharing another's pain is a lower emotion than compassion (Sagi, 2012, p. 25).

[13] Although both human beings and animals experience pain and fear, the latter express these feelings through non-verbal means (Singer, 1975, pp. 11–12; Frey, 2011, p. 184; Peggs, 2018, p. 376). Human cognitive superiority enables people to cope better with pain (Akhtar, 2011, p. 498), an issue closely tied to ethics (Frey, 2005, p. 177).

[14] Mental pain stems from fear, threat, anxiety, trauma, pressure—and expectations and a sense of approaching evil. These feelings are very similar to their more complex human counterparts (Linzey, 2009, pp. 5, 81).

insight, language, or social power to seek to change the attitudes displayed towards them (Wise, 2004, p. 27).

Animals' sensory and cognitive attributes differing from those of human beings, they experience non-human subjective states they cannot express verbally (Nagel, 1991, pp. 169–176; cf. Scully, 2002, p. 5; Steiner, 2005, p. 244; 2008, pp. 9–10). Although people frequently seek to adopt the point of view of animals, this is usually an artificial attempt unless governed by an ethical concern for justice. Animals not understanding justice in the human sense, they lack full equal rights. They must thus be protected and treated fairly and properly (Rawls, 1999, pp. 354, 442, 448).[15] Some maintain, indeed, that to be human means to display a conscience and take responsibility for others (Frankl, 2004, p. 24).

As we saw above, ethical caring and compassion are stronger the closer the person is to us. Human beings thus tend to be more empathetic to species that resemble them—not just in intelligence but also in the affection they arouse. The interests of those further removed from us geographically and trait-wise must nonetheless be taken into consideration. This necessitates acknowledgement of the fact that *have* interests (Calarco, 2015, pp. 13, 19–21; Clement, 2017, p. 148, 156; Kasperbauer, 2018, p. 74).[16] Domesticated animals—i.e. those kept by human beings for a purpose, thereby making them dependent on their masters—must therefore be protected and taken care of, domestication often leading to the relegation of animal to the status of objects or property. With respect to wild animals, human beings have an ethical responsible not to harm them as they go about their business (Warren, 1997, p. 234; Garrett, 2011, p. 73; Palmer, 2011, p. 710, 719; Buller, 2018, p. 200; Peggs & Smart, 2018, p. 427).[17]

Animal interests revolve primarily around desire (or the avoidance of pain) and survival, irrespective of their cognitive ability (Garner, 2010, p. 129; Naconecy, 2018, p. 307).[18] Although human interests are generally more complex than those of their faunal counterparts, some animals'

[15] Human beings do not always find it easy to exhibit compassion (Linzey, 2009, p. 3).

[16] More attractive species often arouse more positive human responses and are thus treated better (Estren, 2018, pp. 501–502, 506).

[17] For human-animal conflicts/balances of interest, see Woodroffe et al., 2005.

[18] Western philosophy has traditionally highlighted human rationality, representing animals as irrational creatures, some thinkers even ignoring animal pleasure and pain (Hursthouse, 2000, p. 81).

needs go beyond mere biological existence—e.g. a wish for society or territory (Regan, 1983, pp. 89, 98; Francione & Charlton, 2017, p. 25). The ideal of finding a balance between human and faunal interests (Epstein, 2004, p. 158) can be attained, many species not having conflicting interests (Singer, 1975, p. 259).

Human life being considered more valuable than animal existence, human beings customarily enjoy greater ethical and legal protection (Carruthers, 1992, p. 167; Zamir, 2007, p. 6, 62; Copp, 2011, 296–298; Frey, 2011, p.186; Milligan, 2015, p. 117; Kagan, 2019, pp. 4–6, 48–49, 81, 279). The existence of a set of priorities for saving life linked to age and cognitive/medical state should not mean that those not on top of the list are denied their rights, however (Francione, 2010, pp. 23–24).

Having briefly reviewed some of the ethical issues pertaining to human-animal relations, let us now survey the ancient societies explored herein. As its name indicates, Mesopotamian culture developed between two rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates. Occupying much of present-day Iraq, this territory was ca. 700 km in length, ca. 500 of which were alluvial plains. The area stretched from the Persian Gulf in the south to the Anatolian gateways and between the Arabian deserts in the west to Asia in the east (the Iranian plateau slopes).[19] The two rivers that determine the territory overflow their banks when the northern snows melt, often causing severe damage, in particular if they arrive before the harvest season.[20] The first culture known in southern Mesopotamia, whose members dwelt in orderly fixed settlements, dates to the sixth millennium BCE. From the mid-fourth millennium, cities began emerging in the area, characterized by monumental architecture. The inhabitants also began using metals. The first pictorial script developed around 3200–3100 BCE, yielding in turn to a syllabic cuneiform script consisting of more abstract signs (syllabary). Close to the invention of writing, lexical texts appeared listing the names of cities, objects, plants, and animals.

[19] The desert formed a significant obstacle to travel until the camel came into use during the first millennium (see Pollock, 2001, p. 29).

[20] During the proto-Neolothic period (12,000–9000 BCE), agriculture exploded across the ancient Near East, swathes of territory being dedicated to systematic crop growing (Beaulieu, 2018, p. 28).

The vegetation that grew on the river banks served as home for numerous species—wild boar, large cats, hyenas, snakes, deer, onagers, etc.[21] Southern Mesopotamia benefitting from very little rain (up to ca. 150 mm), local agriculture depended upon irrigation from the rivers, piped to the fields through a network of channels. The digging of these required collaboration between the inhabitants. While the area between the two rivers was alluvium rich, making the soil fertile, it was poor in other resources—trees, building stones, metals, etc.[22] This encouraged the development of trade and military campaigns to obtain the necessary materials.

The most important crop was barley, a resilient species capable of surviving heat, aridity, and low rain fall and used as cattle feed. Ripening before wheat, it was also less liable to be damaged when the Tigris and Euphrates flooded. This region was also home to the first domestication of goats, sheep, pigs, cattle, cats, and dogs.[23] The society responsible for these innovations was the non-Semitic ancient Sumer, most of whose members lived in cities established during the third millennium BCE in southern Mesopotamia. In times of crisis, these urban centers served as refuge for their residents, as well as the inhabitants of nearby villages, against attacks by wandering nomads.

Much of Sumer's economy derived from agriculture and sheep and goat flocks/herds. Agricultural land thus developed close to the cities, beyond which lay pastures. During the third millennium BCE, Sumerian cities came to be ruled by royal houses, the Sargonid dynasty assuming power over central Mesopotamia during the second half of this millennium. Founded by Sargon of Akkad, this lasted for over a century. Later on, the Sumerian Ur III emerged in the south of the empire. Sumerian culture merged with the Eastern-Semitic Akkadian culture around 2000 BCE. Although Akkadian became extinct as a language from ca. 1800 BCE onwards, Sumerian culture continued to influence the Akkadian societies of Babylonia and Assyria, the latter copying Sumerian school

[21] The Mesopotamian fables and proverbs dealt with in Chaps. 2 and 3 herein, adduce many of these.

[22] The most common materials were clay, reeds, limestone, and bitumen.

[23] For the dating of animal domestication, see Clutton-Brock, 2007, pp. 71–96; 2012. For Mesopotamian fauna, see Gilbert, 2002, pp. 3–75.

textbooks and developing an exegetical tradition of earlier sources and new works (Saggs, 1989, pp. 31–35, 115–117; Postgate, 1992, pp. 3–40; Kuhrt, 1995, pp. 1:6–72; Pollock, 2001, pp. 29–47; Crawford, 2004, pp. 7–51; Charvát, 2013, pp. 73–75; Liverani, 2014, pp. 93–70; Foster, 2016, pp. 3–31; van de Mieroop, 2016, pp. 13, 41–42, 144–145; Beaulieu, 2018, pp. 27–56).

* * *

The first section of the book deals with the ethical aspects of human-animal relations as reflected in Mesopotamian sources—the comprehensive corpus of proverbs and aphorisms the Sumerians developed being preserved and adapted by the Babylonians. First examining the ethical representation of fauna in this literature—a genre designed to convey didactic, practical, and moral lessons—it then discusses the ethical dimensions of the mutual relationship between the gods, animals, and hybrid creatures on the one hand and human beings on the other in the mythic and epic Mesopotamian corpora. Finally, it surveys the attitude displayed towards fauna in the ancient Near Eastern law codes.

The second section explores animal ethics in biblical literature. This corpus being compiled primarily in the land of Israel, some remarks regarding the nature of this territory are in order. Israel's central location in the ancient Near East gave it significant geographical, geopolitical, and economic influence. Long and narrow, with largely mountainous and sandy terrain, it stretched north to south along the coast—from the Sinai Peninsula and the two arms of the Red Sea up to the wooded Lebanese mountains west of the Syrian and Arabian deserts. It fell into four long sectors—plains, hills, valleys, and plateau, all lying north-south. Forming a natural crossroads and corridor between Asia (and thence Europe) in the north and Africa in the south, it also served as a principal conduit for the passage of seeds, animals, and birds migrating north-south and south-north, through the East African Rift.

Its structure, sectors, rock formations, climate, soil, economy, and inhabitants were all varied. Its seasonal climate is affected by two very different regions—the arid sub-tropical desert that characterized much of the ancient Near East, and the humid Mediterranean, marked by a barometric

depression responsible for its prominent precipitation (Har-El, 1997, pp. 1:19–21; 2005, pp. 9–10; cf. Miller & Hayes, 2006, pp. 9–23).

Every country generally possesses its own distinctive natural phenomena, flora, and fauna, the extent of this uniqueness resting heavily on its size and division into geographical and climatic regions. Relatively small, mountainous countries such as Israel exhibit diverse, dissimilar natural phenomena. Most of these are not exclusive in the case of Israel, everything appearing in any of its regions being found (to an even greater extent) in other countries belonging to the same ecological region—the Mediterranean, Asian steppes, Arabian deserts, and Africa. Rather than being marked by *sui generis* phenomena per se, Israel is thus special because many lie side by side within its territory. The abrupt changes in landscape, vegetation, and life occurring within a very small area, the country is home to a wide variety of faunal species. Although some of those adduced in the biblical text (ca. 120) are now extinct, new species arrived to take their place (Alon, 1990, pp. 19–20; Slifkin, 2015, pp. 30–31). The consequent plethora of animal life is reflected in most of the sections of the Hebrew Bible.

This literary corpus is itself diversiform with respect to genre, time, editing, and perspective. Despite the differences, it is informed by an underlying principle—namely, theological ethics. Running like a scarlet thread through all the biblical books, this is worth discussing in brief. Biblical ethics constitutes an integral part of scriptural theology, focusing primarily on a practical morality. While the latter is oriented first and foremost towards the Israelites, whom God chose to serve as examples and exemplars to other peoples, it also contains numerous universal aspects. Its ethical principles draw their power from the fact that they embody God's will as the beneficent Creator who formed the world (Hazony, 2012, pp. 41–42, 63–65; Barton, 1998, p. 15; 2014, pp. 11–15, 47–48, 125; Johnson, 2021, p. 39).[24] The Hebrew Bible represents God as the paradigm *par excellence* of an ethical ruler who takes care of the needs. As the only species created in his image and likeness, with cognitive powers and free will, *homo sapiens* must aspire to imitate him. Human-animal relations are thus meant to resemble those between God and his creatures.

[24] For the concept of "natural law," see Chaps. 6 and 7.

The covenant God made with Israel on Sinai rests on a bond exclusive to the two parties and a commitment to act in accordance with divine ethics. When the punishment for breaching the covenant collective, each member bears responsibility for the survival and sustenance of his or her fellows. Under Israelite law, ritual and ethics focus upon protecting and aiding the weak. The prophetic literature prioritizes morality over ritual, the prophets asserting that God's primary wish is for ethical conduct and accountability (Barton, 2003, p. 47; Wright, 2004, pp. 23, 31–41, 63–68, 86; Hazony, 2010, pp. 28–30; Burnside, 2011, pp. 160–161; Unterman, 2017, pp. 6, 18–19, 93–107; cf. Collins, 2019, pp. 20–21, 110; Schlimm, 2021, pp. 98–99). The biblical ordinances are thus primarily negative, in particular those related to treating others. Designed to prevent behavior that harms one's fellow (Rotenstreich, 2014, pp. 373–375), they seek to restrict human deeds (Mills, 2001, p. 1).[25] Although pentateuchal laws often explicitly stipulate the punishment for a specific violation, they do not always do so, the behavior expected therefore being grounded in individual conscience and a sense of responsibility (Barrera, 2021, p. 76). Human beings and animals sharing the life God breathes into them in common (Goldingay, 2019, p. 103), biblical ethics and law include animals. Their representation also frequently serves to convey ethical lessons.

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[25] According to Margalit (1996, p. 32), recognition of the rights of the other grants him or her dignity and a special status, rights justifying obligations. Other scholars stress that the concept of duty rests on the premise that the other possesses rights (Sean-Calley, 2018, p. 396, 414). Ethical theories generally rest on rights or obligations (Weinryb, 2008, 2:113; cf. Raz, 1988, pp.165–192).

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2

Fauna in Ancient Sumerian Proverbs: The Role Animals Played in Shaping Southern Mesopotamian Social Norms and Conventions

The Sumerian Proverb Collections

Proverbs are known in virtually every human culture, reflecting the way of life, mentality, and behavior of the society in which they were created (Gordon, 1968, p. 1). The earliest examples are those from ancient Sumer (modern-day southern Iraq), the birthplace of writing at the end of the Uruk period (ca. 3200 BCE) (Kuhrt, 1995, pp. 1:23; Beaulieu, 2018, pp. 30–33). The first evidence of literary activity emerges ca. 2800 BCE, the phenomenon growing and spreading during the early dynastic IIIa period (ED IIIa) (2600–2500 BCE). Like the bilingual Sumerian-Akkadian collections housed in Ashurbanipal's (668–631 BCE) library, the collections of Sumerian proverbs belong to the didactic-practical wisdom genre. Including aphorisms and advice, this distinctive corpus deals with daily human conduct, its purpose being to guide and teach people how to act in order to prosper and provide moral education. Speculative wisdom, in contrast—exemplified by second-millennium BCE Babylonian literature—addresses problematic issues and the meaning of life.

The Sumerian proverbs contain pithy sayings and short aphorisms. To date, around 28 large monolingual collections have been discovered,

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together with a number of smaller ones from the Isin-Larsa period (1900–1800 BCE). These evince that the material continued to be studied and copied long after Sumerian had ceased serving as a spoken language (the end of the third millennium BCE). It is also quoted in epic literature and the Mari and Assyrian letters (Hallo, 1990, pp. 203–17; Alster, 1997, pp. 1:18–19).

The majority of the proverbs are secular in nature, relating to the everyday life of agricultural society—growing/harvesting crops, caring for livestock, etc. Exhibiting a clear practical tendency, they contain very little moral preaching. Although they do not give explicit directions as to how to behave, they were intended to guide their readers (i.e., students) towards right living and raising and sustaining a family in dignity and wisdom and away from unbefitting traits—anger, debauchery, inebriation, lying, etc. (Klein, 2011, pp. 1:550–56; Hurowitz, 2012, pp. 1:55).

Some scholars regard the collections as "textbooks" written by teachers for students in the scribal schools of the Old Babylonian period (first half of the second millennium BCE). They thus argue that the material is not an authentic reflection of third-millennium Sumerian culture (Veldhuis, 2000, pp. 388–89; Taylor, 2005, pp. 19–21). The compilation process lasting centuries, however, the contents include many early traditions. During the Old Babylonian period, the sources were subject to a form of canonization—collection, copying, editing—to help students study (Vanstiphout, 1979, pp. 118–25; Robson, 2001, pp. 44–48).[1] Scribal schools throughout the ancient Near East sharing numerous features, a common bank of values existed across the Fertile Crescent (Demsky, 2012, p. 67).

Structurally, the proverbs are literary miniatures, largely in the spoken vernacular. Although they thus do not originate in wisdom circles, they are considered part of the sapiential corpus. Substantively, they represent a pool of knowledge that on occasion represents conflicting perspectives (Alster, 1996, pp. 1–9). A proverb may also occur in a variant version in (an)other collection(s) (Shifra & Klein, 1996, p. 525; Alster, 2005, pp. 18–26; Alster, 2011, pp. 17–18; Beaulieu, 2007, pp. 3, 18; Gabbay, 2011, p. 53). Stemming from a traditional agricultural society, they

[1] See also George, 2005, pp. 127–137; Alster & Oshima, 2006, pp. 33–42; Klein & Samet, 2012, pp. 108–9.

frequently place fauna in the service of metaphors, some putting the lesson they wish to deliver in the mouths of the animals themselves (Alster, 1997, pp. 1:15–17, 23–24; Alster, 2005, p. 342; Taylor, 2005, pp. 13–17 (see Chap. 3).

We shall commence this survey with wild creatures living outside human settlements, then looking at domesticated animals and their interaction with human beings. The zoological aspects of an animal in its natural habitat being reflected in the proverbs, we shall review its dominant features and representation in ancient Near Eastern sources in brief whenever a particular species is first discussed (Way, 2011, p. 66).

Wild Animals in the Sumerian Proverbs and the Educational Lessons They Convey

One of the animals who left a strong, royal impression was the lion. Featuring prominently in ancient Near Eastern sources, the "king of beasts" is known for its power and strength (Gilgamesh V:1; George, 1999, p. 49). According to the eighteenth-century BCE Laws of Hammurabi, lions attacked large mammals such as yoked oxen and donkeys (LH §244; Roth, 1997, p. 125). A super-predator, it posed a great threat to shepherds, who struggled to defend themselves and their flocks against its attacks. If one took a sheep, the shepherd was thus not charged with negligence—the loss being considered on a par with animals dying from disease or pestilence (LH §266; Roth, 1997, p. 150). Its menace to travelers is reflected in the Mari letters, a city-state on the right bank of the Euphrates ruled by Zimri-Lim between 1775 and 1761 BCE: "Now, as I departed from Mari, a [lion] killed a young servant of mine during the journey" (ARM 14 11; Sasson, 2015, p. 270; cf. *ARM* 10 35). Another letter evinces its danger to human settlements:

> Just before nighttime, two lions lay down by the fence of the main gate. The farmers of Abullatum (by Mari) and troops from hither and yon gathered, but they could (not) chase them away. We sent out nomads as for protection. These nomads killed one lion; one was driven out. (*ARM* 26 106; Sasson, 2015, p. 165)

Lions served as a symbol of royal might from the first Egyptian dynasty (beginning of the third millennium) onwards (Houlihan, 2002, p. 99). Egyptian literature as a whole treats the lion as a particularly fierce beast (The Shipwrecked Sailor, 30, 97; Simpson, 2003, pp. 48–50). The Pharaohs thus often compared themselves to lions (Fleuren, 2019, p. 41), the species also naturally being associated with the gods (Hart, 2005, pp. 92–93; Lewis & Llewellyn-Jones, 2018, p. 322).

As in other second and first millennium Mesopotamian cultures—Assyria, Babylonia, Achaemenid Persia, the lion represented royal might as in Sumer (Breniquet, 2002, p. 161; Cool-Root, 2002, p. 183; Watanabe, 2021, pp. 113-119). In Assyria and Anatolia, it also served as the symbol of a number of gods (Collins, 2002b, p. 318; Peled, 2019, p. 89).

The Sumerian proverbs portray lions as living in thickets on the prairies, on occasion even being trapped in snares meant for other animals, the ancients fearing to set them free (SP 1.128, 2.155, 3.70). The Sumerians appear to have believed that the lion was incapable of compassion, a sense scholars frequently define as an ethical emotion (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001, pp. 116, 133; Rowlands, 2011, p. 542). As super-predators, they threatened flocks and herds protected by dogs (SP 5.56). Later Babylonian texts refer to them as the "enemy of livestock" (The Babylonian Theodicy, 61; *COS*, 1:93 [Foster]). They were thus perceived as highly dangerous and greatly feared (SP 5.61, 63–64): "A place where a lion has eaten a man, no man passes a second time" (SP 5.67; Alster, 1997, pp. 1:132)—i.e., do not approach places known to be perilous; or, learn from other people's experience.

In another saying, the lion represents a strong person, either physically or of high social status, whom one should not criticize: "If a lion has made a hot pot (of soup), who will say, 'It is not good?'" (SP 5.66; Alster, 1997, pp. 1:131, 2:404; cf. SP 5x4). The idea that one should not mess with a person of substance also occurs in the following proverb: "In front of a lion he is eating meat" (SP 5.68; Alster, 1997, p. 1:132).[2] A similar aphorism adduces the wolf in place of the lion: "Don't eat the meat of the wolf"—i.e., do not go near the wolf's dinner (SP 5 A70; Alster, 1997, p. 1:132).

[2] Cf. also: "One does not snatch a corpse from the mouth of a marauding lion" (Erra and Išum V:11 [Dalley]; *COS*, 1:415).

The Mesopotamian poem Erra and Išum (prior to the eighth century BCE) portrays the lion and wolf as the bitter enemies of the shepherds and their flocks: "The lion and the wolf will fell Shakkan's [the Mesopotamian cattle-god] cattle ... The shepherd prays to you for his sheep; he cannot sleep by day nor by night" (1:85–86; *COS*, 1:406 [Dalley]).[3]

Another Sumerian proverb clearly identifies the lion as the fiercer of the two animals: "After the lion came near him, you chase the wolf away" (SP 5 B69; Alster, 1997, p. 1:132). This teaches that one should not "kick a person/animal when he is down"—even when he/it might not be harmless.[4] A hapless individual who encounters a lion becomes afraid of even the tiniest things: "The thief, out of fear of facing a lion, becomes a man driven by fear of facing a lion cub" (SP 13.5; ECTSL). The threat lions posed to both other animals and human beings is also reflected in a Mari letter: "A lion does not plow; he hinders plowmen" (ARM 28 63; Sasson, 2015, p. 317).

At the same time, they were also held up as a model for imitation. Unlike other predators in the big cat family, lions live in prides, collaborating with one another when hunting larger prey (Schaller, 1976, pp. 33–34, 259–62; Alon & Mendelssohn, 1993, p. 42). This knowledge is embodied in paintings drawn on early third-millennium BCE cylinder seals discovered in Ur in Sumer (Charvát, 2017, pp. 173–78)—wolves exhibiting similar behavior (Fagan, 2015, p. 23). The Sumerian proverbs thus represent lions as a symbol of cooperation: "O lion, your allies in the bush are numerous; a lion does not eat his fellow in the bush" (SP 5.59, 60; Alster, 1997, p. 1:130).

Foxes are prevalent in many regions of the world—Europe, Asia, North America, and North Africa—also being introduced by human beings into Australia and the Pacific Ocean islands. They benefit human society in particular by eating the vermin and insects that destroy crops (Asa, 1993, pp. 193–95). Found close to human habitats from prehistoric times onwards, five species are recognized in ancient Near Eastern literature (Lewis & Llewellyn-Jones, 2018, p. 362). In many folk cultures,

[3] See also Enki and Ninḫursag, 13; Jacobsen, 1987, p. 186.

[4] The non-inclusive language used herein reflects the norms of the period.

they are considered to be smart and cunning tricksters, frequently being anthropomorphized (Waida, 2005, pp. 5:181–82). The (post-Sumerian) Babylonian proverbial corpus designates the fox by various epithets—wise one, sorcerer, prowler, thief of the open country (E K 3641: I 18; G Kar 48, frag. 3 and K 8570; Lambert, 1960, pp. 201, 204; cf. Sövegjártó, 2021, pp. 95-96). Aesop follows the same tradition (Gibbs, 2002, pp. 12–13, 45, 55–56, et al.; see also Mair, 1928, p. 291), as also rabbinic literature (cf. b. Ber. 61b) and still later cultures—Arabic (Shafir, 2016, p. 267 #1105) and Europe. This fact may be due, *inter alia*, to its large eyes and pointed nose, which give it the appearance of craftiness (Asa, 1993, p. 195).[5]

Vulpine egotism is also adduced in the early Sumerian epic of Enki and Ninhursag, which recounts how Enki systematically sought to have intercourse with his daughter, granddaughter, and great-granddaughter as well as the goddess—incest being taboo in most cultures of the world (Macionis, 2012, pp. 171–72).[6] Ninhursag thus laid a curse upon him that he would fall sick, then hiding so that he would not find her and force her to rescind it. Discovering her sanctuary, the artful fox leveraged a favor from Enki (Enki and Ninḫursag, 248–285; Jacobsen, 1987, pp. 201–3). Here, the fox is thus represented as amoral, finding a way to avoid the punishment due him by offering his services to the god. As we shall see below, the Sumerians believed that the gods were bound by the same laws and ethics as human beings. Hattusili I of Hatti (1650–1620 BCE) similarly cites the fox's untrustworthiness in a letter to a vassal king: "… and don't take the side of the fox. The fox who does these lying things …" (Salvini, 1994: 35–36; See Hoffner, 2009, p. 78).

In the Sumerian proverb collections, the fox serves as a metaphor for a serial liar (SP 2.71, 72, 3.55, 8b30, et al.)—lying being regarded as an amoral trait in Sumerian law (LU §§13, 14, 28, 29, 30). He is thus a sly creature: "The fox [lies] even to(?) Enlil"—i.e., the head of the pantheon (SP 2.58; Alster, 1997, p. 1:56). A son more dangerous and cunning than his parents was like a "fox [who] outfoxes its mother" (SP 2.60; Alster,

[5] According to Machiavelli (Bondanella, 2005, pp. 60, 68), although the fox's cunning saves it from the snare, it cannot withstand the wolf.

[6] The ancient Egyptians (and Persians) practiced endogamous marriage, primarily within the royal dynasties (Frandsen, 2009).

1997, p. 1:57). An example of such behavior is the fox who, not being able to build his own house, "came to his friend's house to serve as a construction worker[?]"—i.e., take over his companion's abode (SP 2.62; Alster, 1997, pp. 1:57, 2:366). This proverb may be based on the fact that, while foxes inhabit caves abandoned by others (e.g., badgers and porcupines), they also share such lodgings with the animal who dug them—choosing a different section, however (Asa, 1993, p. 193).

In contrast to the super-predators, who do not employ hunting ruses, the fox hides and ambushes its prey. It is thus heavily dependent upon its senses and always alert to danger: "(If) the hearing of the fox is bad, its foot will be crushed" (SP 2.61; Alster, 1997, pp. 1:57, 2:366). Hattusili I compares his Hurrian enemies to a fox that conceals itself in a thicket, waiting patiently for its victims: "[The gods' c]alled the Hurrian troo[ps] (as though they were) foxes that had been chased [into the] bu[shes]" (*KBo* 3.1, col. 1 43–44; Collins, 1998, p. 17). Known for its ability to deceive innocent dogs (fools) (SP 8b32), it was regarded as inferior to canines: "In the city of no dog, the fox is overseer" (SP 1.65; Alster, 1997, p. 1:17). Less well regarded than the latter, it was considered to be of no benefit to human beings.

The mongoose is also adduced in the Sumerian proverb collections. Archaeo-zoological findings evince that this species was known in Sumer as early as the Ur III dynasty (2122–2006 BCE). Originating in the Indus Valley, it then spread to Iran and Mesopotamia (Lewis & Llewellyn-Jones, 2018, pp. 384–85). Living in thickets and feeding off insects and vermin—rats, snakes, etc.—that pose a hazard to human beings and society, it also harms crops and avian predators (turkeys and birds' eggs), thus disturbing the ecological balance (Lodrick, 1982, pp. 192–93; Dor, 1997, p. 93). The Mishnah and Talmud attest that it attacks doves, kids, and lambs (m. B. Batra 2:5l; b. Hullin 52b). Its thick skin functioning to protect it, it is immune to most types of snakes (Barchen et al., 1992, pp. 7717–21), thus being known in the ancient Near East for its ability to eliminate them.

Also known in Egypt, Egyptian literature represents the mongoose as killing rats and cobras. Some Egyptians even treated it as a sacred species (Lewis & Llewellyn-Jones, 2018, pp. 386–87). The Sumerians' high regard for the mongoose's ability led them to believe that: "The

mongoose does not know the fear of god" (SP 28.3; Alster, 1997, p. 1:285).[7] Their ability to kill snakes is reflected in a curse known from the reign of Esarhaddon (680–669 BCE) cast against those who broke contracts:

> Just as a sna[ke] and a mongoose do not enter the same hole to lie there together but think only of cutting each other's throat, so may you and your women not enter the same room to lie down in the same bed; think only of cutting each other's throats! (Esarhaddon Succession Treaty, §71, lines o555a–559)[8]

Starving mongooses posed a threat to foxes: "Someone 'opening' some meat at the den[?] of a fox said, 'One does not mention this to[?] a mongoose'" (SP 8.b36; Alster, 1997, pp. 1:173, 2:417). If pushed, they would even eat crumbs: "If bread is left over, the mongoose eats it. If I have any bread left over, then a stranger consumes it" (SP 1.9; ECTSL). As a swift and slippery creature, the mongoose represents defeated enemies on the run in the first-millennium royal Assyrian inscriptions: "In order to save his life, he (Raḫinu) flew alone and entered the gate of his city [like] a mongoose" (*RINAP* 1:59 [20:b'–10']). In a proverb that serves as a short fable, the mongoose is associated with senescence:

> I was a youth – now my personal god, and access to my protective deity, and my youthful vigour have all left my loins, like a run-away donkey. My black mountain has sprouted white gypsum. ... My mongoose, which used to eat strong-smelling butter, can no longer stretch its neck even towards a jar of ghee. (SP 17.b3; ETCSL; cf. 10.12, 19.a1)

The analogy between the onset of old age and a bolting donkey reflects the Sumerians usage of donkeys in warfare before the introduction of horses.[9] Similar descriptions full of the bathos of fading strength occur in the biblical literature (cf. 2 Sam 19:5–38; Qoh 12:1–7) and the Egyptian wisdom corpus:

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[7] See also Herodotus, *Hist*. 2.67 (Waterfield, 2008, p. 122).

[8] Parpola & Watanabe, 1988 (http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/saao/corpusjr).

[9] For the donkey, see below.

> My Sovereign Lord: Old age has arrived, infirmity has descended, misery has drawn nigh, and weakness increases. One must take a nap like a child every day, the eyes are blurred, the ears are deaf, and vigor wanes because of weariness. The mouth is silent and no longer speaks; the memory is gone and cannot recall (even) yesterday. The bones ache through frailty, pleasure has become repulsive, and all taste has vanished. What old age does to men is totally despicable. The nose becomes plugged and cannot breathe; even standing and sitting are a bother. (Maxims of Petahhotep, 4.1–5.2; Simpson, 2003, 130 [Tobin])[10]

Hattusili III of Hatti (1264–1239 BCE) notes that he had compassion upon his enemy Armataṛḥunta as he grew old: "… moreover, he was an old man, he provoked (a feeling of) pity in me …" (Apology of Hattusili III, §10a; *COS*, 1:202 [van den Hout]). As we observed above, this is a moral sense, the linkage between the old mongoose and human being intended, it would appear, to arouse a sense of sympathy for the unfortunate animal and its reduced chances of survival. This can be seen as a desire to expand tenderness to include fauna (Gruen, 2011, p. 75)—a challenging task when compassion does not always come easily to people (Linzey, 2009, p. 3). Despite the fact that they are not commonly domesticated creatures, the old man calls his pet "my mongoose," recalling the ancient Egyptian practice of rearing the species to control rats and snakes (Ben-Jacob, 1993, pp. 200–4)—a custom still maintained in agricultural regions today (Talshir, 2012, p. 101 n. 37).

Domesticated Animals in the Sumerian Proverbs and the Education Messages They Convey

One of the most common domesticated animals in the ancient Near East was the donkey. The date at which the tamed wild ass was first domesticated remains obscure, possibly occurring in Nubia, south of Egypt, or Western Asia (Gilbert, 2002, p. 17; Goulder, 2021, pp. 249, 252).

[10] Cf. also the Tale of Sinuhe, 168b–170 (Simpson, 2003, p. 61).

During the second millennium BCE, it was replaced under certain circumstances by horses and mules, both of which were faster and stronger (Borowski, 1998, pp. 94, 109). The horse's greater swiftness is illustrated in a Demotic Egyptian proverb: "If a donkey goes with horse, it adopts its pace" (Lichtheim, 2006, p. 3:77). Until the horse was introduced into the ancient Near East, the donkey was used in warfare (Gilgamesh and Agga, 28b; Jacobsen, 1987, p. 348; cf. Borowski, 1998, p. 94; Caubet, 2002, p. 218), being regarded as a nimble animal (Enmerkar and Esuhgirana, lines 46–47; Vanstiphout, 2003, p. 31). Innana/Ištar thus lauds the vigorous, fleet-footed donkey in the Gilgamesh Epic, for example: "Your donkey when laden shall outpace any mule! (VI:9; George, 1999, p. 48).

At the beginning of the second millennium BCE, donkeys formed the backbone of the trade caravans that made the six-week trek between Assyria and Cappadocia, between 200 and 250 of them each carrying loads of around 65 kg of silt or 30 kg of textiles (Bryce, 2005, p. 29; Collins, 2007, p. 25). According to the eighteenth-century Mari letters, donkeys could bear crops of around 80 kg (*ARM* 26 213; Sasson, 2015, p. 192). An Egyptian sage recommends not overburdening a donkey in order to avoid injuring it (Instructions of Onchsheshonqy, 20/24; Simpson, 2003, p. 521). Rather than consideration for the animal, however, this appears to be a purely economic calculation. Sumerian sages similarly gave advice with respect to donkeys and their behaviour (Instructions of Shuruppak , 216–219).[11] In the Land of the Nile, people walked alongside load-bearing donkeys, only riding them infrequently (Houlihan, 2002, pp. 106, 124): "This peasant went down to Egypt after he had loaded his donkeys with vines, rushes, natron, salt, wood ... panther skins, wolf hides ... full (measure) of all the good products of Salt-Field" (Eloquent Peasant; *COS*, 1:9 [Shupak]).

The letters preserved in the mid-fourteenth-century El-Amarna archive, represent donkeys as the most important form of transportation in the ancient Near East (EA 96:7–17; 280:24–29; Rainey, 2015, pp. 1:541, 1089). They continued to be used for this task through the Roman Empire (Hopkins, 2009, p. 198)—a fact due primarily to their

[11] Black et al., 2004, p. 290; cf. http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section5/tr561.htm

little need of water and habit of grazing along the roadside (Borowski, 1998, pp. 93–94; Caubet, 2002, p. 220; Bryce, 2012, p. 229); the accessibility and availability of water also served as a guiding factor in the choice of one's route (Margueron, 2014, p. 158). One of their principal tasks was in the agricultural sector—threshing (LH §269; Roth, 1997, p. 130).

Although generally considered to be calm and easy-tempered animals (Way, 2011, p. 31), they went for much less than oxen or cows in Hatti (HL §118; Roth, 1997, p. 235). Despite this, they were never viewed as worthless, Babylonian vets taking care of both oxen and donkeys (LH §§224–225; Roth, 1997, p. 124). In the Hebrew Bible, the owner of a wayward donkey would go great distances looking for it (1 Sam 9:1–20). In Sumer, a man who possessed several donkeys was regarded as content (Gilgamesh and Netherworld, V:262, XII:109; George, 1999, pp. 187, 194).

Despite their prominent status within ancient Near Eastern cultures and the numerous roles they fulfilled, the Sumerian proverbs frequently depict donkeys in unflattering terms. Whinging rather than working hard, they are adduced as a symbol of idleness in order to highlight the value of diligence: "My donkey is not fit for fast running; he is fit for braying" (SP 2.75; Alster, 1997, p. 1:61). The noise they make, irritates other people, forcing the owner to remove them: "The donkey roared (?); its owner gasped (?): 'We must get up and away from here! Quickly! Come!' ..." (SP 2.76; ECTSL). In other words, a boor or tactless man who speaks in public causes confusion. A person without any social sense is similarly like a "widow donkey [that] distinguishes itself by breaking wind" (SP 2.80; ECTSL). Another proverb depicting the donkey as eating his own bedding, failing to understand that it will need it later (SP 2.77), warns against "instant gratification."

The donkey is also criticized for its hygienic regime: "(For) a donkey there is no stench. (For) a donkey there is no washing with soap" (SP 2.79; Alster, 1997, p. 1:61). This proverb classifies human beings as "civilized" in contrast to the "uncivilized" faunal world. Two further aphorisms represent it as engaging in sexually inappropriate behavior: "A donkey beating its penis against its belly … One does not marry a three-year-old wife, as a donkey does" (SP 2.78, 2.81; ETCSL). As we saw

above in regard to myths, Sumerian society considered sexual modesty an ethical and legal duty (LU §§6, 7, 8, 14; Roth, 1997, pp. 17–18). The donkey who disregarded these rules thus symbolized the person who ignored social sexual norms.

As a fleet-footed animal, the donkey also embodies youths fleeing senescence (SP 9.a8, 17l; b3). Seeking to arouse compassion for the elderly whose strength has left them, one proverb compares the latter with an elderly donkey: "Your helpless donkey has run out of speed. Enlil, your helpless man has run out of strength" (SP 2.74; Alster, 1997, p. 1:62). As in the saying relating to the mongoose quoted above, this picture of a donkey in decline arouses pity in the reader for the long in tooth.

The ancients were impressed by horses from a very early period, the species holding a prominent place in the pre-historic cave drawings—constituting ca. 30 percent of the animals depicted therein (Kalof, 2007a, pp. 3–4). They only became a significant feature on the ancient Near Eastern landscape at the beginning of the second millennium BCE, long after their domestication in Eurasia (Kazakhstan or Ukraine) in the middle of the fourth millennium BCE. Initially used for their meat and milk, ca. 1750 BCE they were harnessed to chariots in Mesopotamia (Caubet, 2002, p. 218; Fagan, 2015, pp. 139–40; cf. also Lloyd and Llewellyn-Jones, 2018, pp. 114–15).

Domesticated horses reached Egypt a century later with the invasion of the Hyksos during the seventeenth century BCE (Clutton-Brock, 2007, p. 82). In the ancient Near East, the horse was employed primarily for warfare (chariots) rather than labor, people beginning to ride them ca. 1300 BCE. An ongoing process, this included the development of dedicated equipment (Borowski, 1998, pp. 101–3; Fagan, 2015, p. 141). Possession of a horse(s) symbolized wealth (Kalof, 2007b, p. 4). Reflecting the period before the horse became an established feature in Mesopotamian society, the Sumerian proverbs make little reference to them. One nevertheless represents the species as a not particularly intelligent animal: "Like a horse, you drink as you paw" (SP 5.37; Alster, 1997, p. 1:125). This appears to embody the contrast between the "civilized" and "uncivilized" (Alster, 1997, pp. 2:401–2).

Sheep were first domesticated in the region of the Zagros Mountains, a ridge extending 1,500 km across western Iran into eastern Iraq, between ca. 9,000 and 6,000 BCE in the transition from the Paleolithic to the Neolithic period. They began to be reared systematically in Mesopotamia ca. 5,500 BCE, whence they were brought to Egypt ca. 500 years later. From the fourth millennium onwards, their wool became important in the Mesopotamian textile industry (Lewis & Llewellyn-Jones, 2018, p. 73). [12]

They appear to have been known in Sumer as early as the Uruk dynasty (3,500–3,000 BCE) (Borowski, 1998, p. 67). The Sumerians reared large flocks of sheep and goats (Crawford, 2004, pp. 12, 18), little effort being involved in this task in anthro-zoological terms. While their flock mentality makes it easy for a single shepherd to control a large group, they are physically frail and require protection from predators (Dor, 1997, p. 44; Fagan, 2015, p. 58).

The contribution of sheep to ancient economy is reflected in a Sumerian document entitled "The Debate between Sheep and Grain" that belongs to a genre designed to enable a person to understand his environment. The anthropomorphized sheep contends that it provides human beings with numerous items, both in the field and in the city—its milk and meat serving as food for the gods, its hide being made into water skins, its wool into clothing and rope for the army, as well as finding its way into royal banners (ibid, lines 92—115; Black et al., 2004, pp. 227–28). In ancient art, sheep symbolize fertility and abundance (Caubet, 2002, p. 221), being offered as sacrifices across the Fertile Crescent (Scurlock, 2002, p. 397).

As noted above, being easy targets sheep need a shepherd's guidance and protection, the latter thus being required to demonstrate great devotion and skill. On occasion, he failed to meet these expectations: "Because the shepherd departed, his sheep did not come back into his custody" (SP 3.10; Alster, 1997, p. 1:34). Another proverb attributes the loss of a flock to a confused shepherd (SP 3.11; cf. 5.x13). These sayings appear to adduce the principle that a person is responsible for ensuring that his

[12] Cf. also Gilbert, 2002, p. 10; Brewer, 2002, p. 438; Clutton-Brock, 2007, p. 73; Fagan, 2015, p. 54; Beaulieu, 2018, p. 28.

property remains in his possession. An individual's personal god is also regarded as a shepherd and guide (Snell, 2011, pp. 17–28): "A man's personal god is a shepherd who finds pasturage for him. Let him lead like sheep to the grass they can eat" (SP 3.134; Alster, 1997, p. 1:102). This encourages dependence on one's personal god, recalling a much later biblical psalm (Ps 23:1-4). No proverbs treat the loss of sheep or lambs to wolves or lions, however—a theme we shall address in the following chapter.

Like sheep, wild goats were domesticated ca. 9,000 BCE (Clutton-Brock, 2007, p. 73; Beaulieu, 2018, p. 28). While some scholars contend that this process occurred later, ca. 7,000–6,000 BCE, all agree that it took place in the environs of the Zagros Mountains, thence spreading to Mesopotamia and Egypt around 5,000 BCE (Brewer, 2002, p. 438). According to the third-millennium Sumerian lexical lists, the ancients distinguished several species (Lewis & Llewellyn-Jones, 2018, p. 55). Goats grow up very quickly, giving human beings milk, meat, hides, and fur (hair) (Borowski, 1998, p. 61; Fagan, 2015, pp. 45–46). Adapted to living in hilly regions, they are also known as the "poor man's cow," yielding more milk than any other herd relative to their size. Although they cost less to feed, sufficing with dry herbage, on occasion they do not even let young tree branches grow back again, the paths they create over the hills also harming growth on the slopes and thereby creating arid expanses (Dor, 1997, p. 45).

The Sumerian proverb collections depict goats as skilled in surviving in frontier regions: "Although it has never gone there, the goat knows the wasteland" (SP 3.111; Alster, 1997, p. 1:99; cf. 8b7). Their instincts enable them to cope with new and difficult conditions: "A goat speaks as follows to another goat: 'I also toss with my head'" (SP 8b6; Alster, 1997, pp. 1:167, 2:88). As Alster (1997, p. 2:14) notes, while this denotes the way in one species behaves in very similar fashion to another, it belongs to those sayings that adduce the distinctiveness of human nature in comparison with the faunal world. In another aphorism, the goat represents a person facing a hopeless situation: "When the wolves were pursuing the goat, it turned around, and its feet stumbled over its own feet" (SP 8b8; Alster, 1997, p. 1:198). As we shall see in the following chapter, unlike

sheep goats are also occasionally portrayed as sophisticated and cunning, however, these attributes aiding them in evading predators.

Moving from small cattle to cows, bulls, and oxen, we find that in the ancient Near East the wild bull served as a symbol of strength, human beings gradually learning to harness it to gather food. Human-cattle relations appear to have commenced ca. 12,000 BCE, oxen being yoked to the plow ca. 4,500 BCE and thenceforward constituting a major source of labor. Ca. 3,500 BCE, oxen begin appearing on Sumerian signet rings (Kalof, 2007a, p. 11; Kalof, 2007b, p. 2).[13] Cattle began being domesticated in Egypt ca. 9,000 BCE (Gordon, 2007, pp. 127, 135). Due to the major role they played in agricultural, the ox was regarded as a particularly valuable commodity (LH §118; Roth, 1997, p. 235; Borowski, 1998, p. 121). As we saw above, Mesopotamian vets attended oxen, spells for their recovery being known from both Mesopotamia and Egypt (Lewis & Llewellyn-Jones, 2018, p. 44). Like the lion, the ox served as a symbol of royalty in Sumer, this practice extending across the whole Fertile Crescent to the Achaemenid Persian Empire of Cyrus and his successors in the second half of the first millennium (Breniquet, 2002, p. 61).[14] Wild ox hunting was revered as a particularly brave activity, the Assyrian kings boasting of their prowess—Tiglath-pileser I (1114—1076 BCE) being a prominent example (*RIMA* 2:26 [A.0.87.i: vi 70–71]). The Egyptian royal inscriptions similarly depict Ramesses II (1279–1213 BCE) as an ox (Houlihan, 2002, p. 99; Teeter, 2002, p. 268; Lichtheim, 2006, p. 155). In Canaanite/Ugaritic mythology, the ox appears as an image in the titanic struggle between Mot and Balu: "Môtu is strong, Baʿlu is strong; they butt each other like wild bulls" (Baʿlu Myth, col. vi:13–14; *COS*, 1:72). The ancient Greeks also regarded the domesticated ox as a significant asset: "First of all, get a house and a woman and an ox for plowing—a slave woman who might follow the oxen, not a wife—and put everything in your house in order, etc." (Hesiod, *Op.* 405–407; Powell, 2017, p. 125). In light of its agricultural importance, ancient Near Eastern law protected the domesticated ox from harm and

[13] Cf. also Pfitzner, 2019, pp. 141–42; Shelton, 2007, p. 96; Fagan, 2015, p. 83; Lloyd and Llewellyn-Jones, 2018, p. 32.

[14] See also Cool-Root, 2002, pp. 183, 198; Caubet, 2002, pp. 220, 223; Collins, 2002b, pp. 316, 318.

theft (LU 34–37; LH 8, 241–249, 262–263; MAL 4–5; HL 63, 65, 70–78)—as well as those it injured (LE 53–55; LH 250–252; Exod 21:28–29; Deut 22:10, 25:4).

The Sumerian proverbs distinguish between the wild ox (bull) and its domesticated counterpart, depicting the former as very difficult to tame and harness to help with agricultural tasks: "The wild bull is taboo for the plough" (SP 3.14; ECTSL). A number of proverbs adduce the wild ox's independence, portraying it as wandering freely through uncultivated areas and unrestrained by any plowing yoke (SP 5.5, 6). Living in mountainous regions, it was in no need of food from human beings (SP 7.82). Blessed with strong limbs, it also had an aggressive temperament (SP 5.9–10). Its behavior is thus compared to the egotist who follows his own whims, ignoring social norms: "Like a wild bull, you are pleased with what is pleasant to yourself, as they say" (SP 5.4; Alster, 1997, p. 1:122). The difficulty in freeing oneself of one's commitments even when investing great effort in doing so is compared to being yoked: "(He who says) 'Let me live today' is bound like a bull leash" (SP 3.33; Alster, 1997, p. 1:87; cf. SP 7.100). No one living in an ancient city being able to escape his duties, urbanites were compared to wild oxen that, meant to live in the wild, are fettered and bound (Alster, 1997, p. 2:380).

As we saw above, the domesticated ox was regarded as a valuable asset. The Sumerian proverb collections thus depict those who own oxen as from the upper class (SP 5.29; Alster, 1997, p. 2.124). Homo sapiens possesses cognitive advantages over animals, even if they are much stronger than him: "The fettered oxen are stronger than the men who fettered them" (SP 5.15; Alster, 1977, p. 123).[15] Tamed and harnessed, the ox serves as a symbol of routine: "Furrows are pleasant to a threshing ox" (SP 2.86; Alster, 1997, pp. 1:63, 2:370; cf. 5.17). Despite this, interrupting its quotidian practice is an unwise practice: "An ox that follows the track of the threshing floor does not trample down the seeds" (SP 2.87; Alster, 1997, pp. 1:63, 2:370). It thus represented people who like routine and do not appreciate change. At the same time, in one saying the ox symbolizes the lazy man: "He is deceitful, like an ox fleeing the threshing-floor" (SP 2.85; ECTSL).

[15] ECTSL: "The ox has been tamed; its tamers are great."

The ancients did not consider the ox to be particularly bright, one proverb attesting that when it raises dust it goes straight in its eyes (SP 2.90). This saying appears to seek to dissuade people from uncalculated behavior that will ultimately backfire on them. The ox is also depicted as aggressive and impulsive and thus not always a welcome passerby on the road (SP 5.12); when roaming, it acts like a commissioner (SP 5.28)—i.e., a beast of whom others are afraid. Due to its strength, it is difficult to redress the damage it does: "Like an ox you do not know how to turn back" (SP 5.13; Alster, 1997, pp. 1:23, 2:00)—i.e., exercize moderation and self-restraint. Some poorly-preserved proverbs suggest that one should whip oxen and beat sheep, slack leadership being dangerous in human culture (SP 15.c2). The ox also represents jealousy or envy: "A stranger's ox eats grass, while my ox lies hungry" (SP 2.93; ECTSL).

Although we do not know precisely when the cow was first domesticated, the Sumerians were familiar with tamed animals from ca. 3,000 BCE. This process appears to have been linked to the accelerated transition from nomadic life to permanent agricultural settlements (Dor, 1997, p. 42).

Cows are very attached to their calves, calling to them and protecting them from wolves and foxes (Grandin & Johnson, 2009, p. 139). In the ancient Near East, lactating cows served as a symbol of motherhood (Caubet, 2002, p. 220; Pfitzner, 2019, p. 146). In Hittite mythology, for example, the god is thus regarded as providing for human beings—just as the cow does for her calf (Collins, 2002a, p. 247). The Sumerians esteemed cows for giving milk (and cream), from which they made cheese (Enmerkar and En-suḫgir-ana, 183–184; Black et al., 2004, p. 8). The proverbs also reflect their admiration for their good nature—following their owners and supplying him with food and only goring when provoked. A cow could thus only be handed over with the paying of recompensation (SP 5.30–32; Alster, 1997, pp. 2.400–1). The value of calves similarly appears to be reflected in a proverb in which a fool who looks for things that have not yet come to fruition is compared to a bovine: "Like a cow who has not given birth, you search for a calf of yours that does not exist" (SP 5.34; Alster, 1997, pp. 1:124, 2:401).

Pigs (wild boar) were domesticated ca. 6,000 BCE (Clutton-Brock, 2007, p. 73; Beaulieu, 2018, p. 28)—after sheep and goat, which are

easier to pasture in fields (Cansdale, 1970, pp. 46–47). Wild boar inhabited the marshy land of Sumer, whose water channels made for easy irrigation (Postgate, 1992, p. 15; Gilbert, 2002, p. 14), causing great damage to the barley fields (Enki and Ninḫursag, 18; Shifra & Klein, 1996, p. 57).[16] As both herbivores and carnivores, pigs eat roots, tubers, insects, snakes, mice, fledglings, grapes, etc. (Fagan, 2015, p. 97). They also served as an important source of meat in the ancient Near East (Lewis & Llewellyn-Jones, 2018, p. 98), appearing to be the only animal domesticated solely for its flesh. Artistic representations attest to their presence in Sumer from ca. 3,000 BCE (Borowski, 1998, p. 140). Like cattle, they seem to have been particularly popular in southern Mesopotamia, northerners rearing more sheep and goats (Breniquet, 2002, p. 147). Pork was a very common element of the Egyptian diet (Houlihan, 2002, p. 108; Brewer, 2002, p. 440), only later coming to be considered as impure (Herodotus, *Hist*. 2.47). Although pigs are generally very similar in intelligence to dogs, they have never been accorded the same status as canines (Grandin & Johnson, 2009, pp. 173–74; Clement, 2017, p. 148). A Babylonian text thus represents the pig as unhygienic, eating everything put before it, and as acting improperly towards its owner:

> The pig is unholy … bespattering his backside, making the streets smell … polluting the houses. The pig is not for a temple, lacks sense, is not allowed to tread on pavements, and is an abomination to all the gods, an abhorrence [to (his) god,] accused by Šamaš. (VAT 8807, rev. col. iii 5-12; Lambert, 1960, p. 215)[17]

Both Judaism and Islam prohibit the eating of pork (DeMello, 2012, pp. 127–28). In the Hebrew Bible, the pig is the epitome of impurity and abhorrence—a foe that destroys the land and its vegetation (Prov 11:2; Ps 80:4; Dayan, 2017, p. 85). The Sumerian proverbs similarly regard it as a dirty animal—"A pig sprinkled with mud" (SP 8.a15; Alster, 1997, p. 1:166)—that eats bread off the ground and foodstuff that even a dog would turn his nose up at (SP 2.111, 8.a6). Its alleged uncleanliness is

[16] Jacobsen (1987, p. 186) identifies the animal here as a colt.

[17] Leick, 1998, pp. 147–48. Shemesh was the Babylonian god of the sun and justice.

reflected in a proverb that runs: "A trough from which the pigs eat" (SP 1.117; Alster, 1997, p. 1:26)—i.e., an item not fit for the use of civilized people (Alster, 1997, p. 2:53).

The proverb collections also address the damage pigs cause. In search of roots to eat, they dig holes in houses (SP 8a1). The devastation caused by people who act too late cannot be rectified: "While they were waiting for the sow that had disappeared, they strengthened the piggery" (SP 8b2; Alster, 1997, pp. 1:67, 2:414). In contrast to the majority of the proverbs, one adduces an explicitly bovine simile in describing a person who takes things without differentiating between seizing them for himself or for others: "He snatches things like a pig, as if for himself, but also for his owner" (SP 8a4; ECTSL).

Long known as "man's best friend" and the most common pet today (Serpell, 2008, p. 2; Miklósi, 2012, p. 53), the dog features prominently in the Sumerian proverb collections (Breier, 2014, pp. 83–101). Descended from the wolf, canines were the first animal species to be domesticated, ca. 15,000 years ago or perhaps even earlier (Davis, 1987, pp. 127–32; Clutton-Brock, 1999, pp. 47–58, 2012, pp. 92–94, 2017, pp. 479–81). The phenomenon spread rapidly, many sites across diverse continents attesting to it and the dog playing an important role in the Neolithic revolution (Leonard et al., 2002, p. 1616; Lobell & Powell, 2010, p. 26). The earliest findings relating to human-canine relations in the Mediterranean comes from epipaleolithic Natufian culture, a dog being discovered buried with a woman at Einan in the west of the Hula Valley (Bar-Yosef & Garfinkel, 2008, p. 117). This and the Chalcolithic period have also yielded bone and stone canine figurines (Bodenheimer, 1960, p. 37; Mazar, 1990, p. 37).

Helping human beings in their daily tasks, dogs began living in close proximity to people, human-canine interaction thus becoming greater than any other human-animal relations (Belk, 1996, pp. 126, 138; Gunter, 1999, p. 35).[18] In general, the two species exhibit a unique relationship—a pact based on mutuality and a sophisticated form of communication (Bradshaw & Noth, 2008, p. 118; Miklósi, 2012, p. 2, 99;

[18] See also Shore et al., 2006, pp. 325–34; Grandin & Johnson, 2009, p. 26; Nakajima et al., 2009, pp. 180–81.

cf. Dor, 1997, p. 69). Some scholars even consider the canine as a sort of intermediate stage between homo sapiens and the rest of the animal kingdom (Menache, 1997, p. 24).

The dog's most prominent positive attribute is its loyalty (Dor, 1997, p. 69). Numerous proverbs adduce this quality, portraying canines as serving as guard dogs, sheep herders, and faithful to their owners (SP 2.118, 5.83, 110, 121–122). In the majority, however, dogs are wild creatures difficult to tame. On occasion, their aggressive behavior is due to poor or no training (Jagoe & Serpell, 1996, pp. 31–42; Abrantes, 2005, pp. 19, 69; Miklósi, 2012, pp. 58, 61). Males are more vicious than females, being responsible for around 70 percent of assaults (Willis, 2008, p. 60; Mugford, 2008, p. 142).

One proverb draws a direct parallel between human conduct and canine behavior: "Like a dog, he hates to submit" (SP 5.92; Alster, 1997, p. 1:138). Another encourages caution in the face of loved domesticated dogs capable of biting (SP 4.17). Dogs are also said to be egotistical: "A dog knows 'Take it!' but does not know 'Put it down!'" (SP 5.81; Alster, 1997, p. 1:136). This may relate to people who only know how to get things and are unwilling to share, a trait the Sumerian denounced. They are also depicted as causing damage (SP 2.116, 3.94, 5.98, 109).

With lusty appetites, they leave no morsel for the next day: "A dog eating foul food is a dog that leaves nothing for the next day" (SP 2.110; Alster, 1997, p. 1:67): while animals are governed by "immediate gratification," people should take long-term needs into consideration. Some advised against throwing bones to dogs, perhaps fearing they would become even more voracious (SP 5.75; Alster, 1997, p. 2:405). Although canines generally consume meat, they may resort to fruit: "A dog had come to a garden for some dates. The owner of the garden chased him away … 'This is a thief' …" (SP 5.88; Alster, 1997, p. 1:137). Starving dogs made so bold as to seize sacrifices: "The bitches admonish their whelps (saying), 'You, don't eat the bread that belongs to funeral offerings; after he has brought it here, the man will eat it (himself)'" (SP 5.119; Alster, 1997, p. 1:142).

As noted above, both dogs and pigs are regarded as ravenous and insatiable, not stopping to swallow. The Hittite Instructions to Priests thus describes them as being kept away from temples: "If a pig (or) a dog

somehow approaches the implements of wood or bitumen which you have, and the kitchen servant does not discard it, but gives the god to eat from the unclean (vessel), to such a man the gods will give dung (and) urine to eat (and) to drink" (*ANET*[3], 209). The Egyptians followed the same practice (Shupak, 2015, p. 280*). These proverbs appear to seek to educate people who, in contrast to canines, are capable of controlling their appetite.

Dogs are also known for their sexual customs: "A dog licks its shriveled penis with its tongue" (SP 2.117; Alster, 1997, p. 1:68). Like those cited above, these sayings inculcate self-restraint—a theme that also appears in Sumerian myths. While canines are depicted as one of the most intelligent animals in the faunal kingdom, the proverbs focus more attention on their cognitive deficiencies: "The dog thinks it is clever, but to its master …" (SP 2.115; ECTSL). In short proverbial sayings, they even speak (see Chap. 3). At the same time, however, they fail to internalize social norms (SP 5.116, 5.77, 84).

The Sumerians were also familiar with wild dogs that inhabited unsettled regions, on occasion entering villages and cities in search of food (SP 2.109, 114). A Sumerian lullaby from Nippur observes: "Who raises his voice in a shout? If it is a dog, someone should throw it a morsel; if it is a bird, someone should throw a stone" (Shifra & Klein, 1996, p. 613). The proverbs also frequently speak of wandering dogs: "A sniffing dog entering all the houses" (SP 2.209); "A dog which knows no home" (SP 2.115; ECTSL); "Like a dog, you have no place to sleep" (SP 5.111; Alster, 1997, pp. 1:67, 68, 141). Shuruppak, an early Sumerian sage, similarly warns of the danger dogs pose: "An unknown dog is evil; an unknown man [is horrible]" (Instructions of Shuruppak, 266–267; cf. Alster, 2005, p. 99). Itinerant dogs thus served as a metaphor for people without roots—whom one should treat very carefully.

The fact that dogs—so frequently regarded as "man's best friend"—are represented in such a negative light in the Sumerian proverb collections may be due in part to the literacy that emerged in Sumerian culture—a phenomenon that changed the course of human history (Demsky, 2012, pp. 61–93). It may also reflect the belief among some that close human-animal interaction poses as a threat to human superiority (Kasperbauer, 2018, p. 83), popular proverbial literature thus focusing upon canine flaws rather than intelligence.

Like dogs, cats are one of the most popular pets today (Espak, 2019, p. 303). Some scholars maintain that cats were first domesticated in Egypt, serving as pets and, due to their religious significance, being embalmed after death (Brewer, 2002, p. 449; Hart, 2005, pp. 45–47; Clutton-Brock, 2007, p. 74). Frequently adduced in Egyptian proverbs (Teeter, 2002, p. 258), evidence of domesticated felines also comes from ca. 12,000 BCE Mesopotamia—although some date this phenomenon to 7,000 BCE. Cats catch rodents and vermin (Lewis & Llewellyn-Jones, 2018, p. 200; Beaulieu, 2018, p. 28), not changing their behavior radically even after domestication. They can be difficult to train and are sometimes antisocial (Grandin & Johnson, 2009, pp. 67–74). Although they are not appealed to in ethical-educational contexts, the Sumerians recognized their distinctive features: "The claws of a cat can walk even in sheep fat; as with a cat, it is its tongue that treats its skin; a cat can find a hole in the ground" (SP 8b16–18; ECTSL). One proverb also observes feline dependence and ties with human beings, cats following those carrying bowls of food (SP 5.31). They may thus symbolize the selfish person.

Conclusion

This chapter analyzes the use to which animals are put in the Sumerian proverb collections. This literature, which includes aphorisms and advice, belongs to the didactic-practical wisdom genre designed to instill values that enable a person to prosper and succeed in life on the one hand and ethical principles for living in society on the other. In the main, the proverbs are popular sayings prevalent in Sumer in the third millennium BCE rather than originating and circulating solely in sapiential circles. The proverb collections continued to serve as textbook material in scribal schools even after Sumerian gave way to Akkadian (Babylonian/Assyrian) during the first half of the second millennium BCE.

As a traditional and agricultural society, the Sumerians lived in close proximity to the animal world, fauna thus playing a major role in the proverb collections. A large number of the proverbs in fact deal with human-animal interaction. Fauna frequently serve as metaphors for human behavior, conveying educational lessons: the lion represents

strength and thus an individual not to be messed with. Despite being depicted as harmful to people and society, its good qualities—mutual commitment and communal living—could be imitated. Ambushing of its prey, the fox is cunning, thus symbolizing deception and lying—traits as abhorrent to the ancients as to moderns. The elusive mongoose that outwits snakes is represented as afraid of no one, not even the gods; when old, however, and its power and senses desert it, it becomes a metaphor for the senescence that arouses the ethical emotion of compassion.

The domesticated animals adduced in the proverbs include the donkey, used for transport and threshing. This species serves as an image of the tactless person who does not internalize conventional social norms, as well as a negative sexual role model—an important field of Sumerian ethics. Like the elderly mongoose, the venerable donkey kindles human compassion for both humans and animals. The horse is similarly cited as a negative metaphor for "uncivilized" eating habits the "civilized" should shun. Sheep and goats were so vital to ancient society that the proverbs address the shepherd's moral duty to protect them. They also symbolize the person who takes care of his own possessions and/or those of others. While goats are lauded for their survival skills even under the most difficult of conditions, they are also vulnerable to predators. Sheep and goats exhibit similar behavior, this fact highlighting human free will.

The wild bull is represented as a dangerous, independent creature difficult to govern/control—the antithesis of proper human conduct. Although the domesticated ox was perhaps the most vital of all to the Sumerian economy, due to its great strength, its high price put it out of the reach of many. In the proverbs, it embodies welcome routine and lack of change. Despite being domesticated, it was unwise to provoke it. The cow, in contrast, was highly esteemed for its contribution to the economy, also serving as a symbol of motherhood and caring. Very common in Sumer, pigs were reared for their meat, living off a varied diet including things abhorrent to people and/or that harmed crops. Swine thus represent the selfish egotist or person who engages in disgusting deeds. This negative image functions as a form of counter-example.

As "man's best friend," the dog's most prominent feature is unconditional loyalty to its owner. The proverbs frequently adduce the negative aspects of canines, however—their wildness and voraciousness. Not

following social norms, they functioned as negative examples due to the rapid development of writing in Sumer, which prompted a desire to distinguish homo sapiens from the animal kingdom. Finally, the cat symbolizes egotism.

This survey thus demonstrates that the third-millennium Sumerians employed their familiarity with faunal qualities and attributes to convey messages pertaining to social norms and ethical behavior.

Abbreviations

ANET[3]	Prichard, James B. 1969. Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament. 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
ARM	Archives Royales de Mari.
COS	Hallo, William W. ed. 2003. The Context of Scripture. Vol. 1. Leiden: Brill.
EA	El-Amara Letters.
JCS	Journal of Cuneiform Studies.
LE	Laws of Ešnunna.
LH	Laws of Hammurabi.
LU	Laws of Ur-Namma.
MAL	Middle Assyrian Laws.
RIMA 2	Grayson, A. Kirk. 2002. Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC I (1114–859 BC). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
RINAP 1	Tadmor, Haim, and Shigeo, Yamada. 2011. The Royal Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 BC) and Shalmaneser V (726–722), Kings of Assyria. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.
RINAP 5	Novotny, Jamie, and Jeffers, Joshua. 2018. The Royal Inscriptions of Ashurbanipal (668–631 BC), Aššur-etel-ilāni (630–627 BC), and Sîn-šarra-iškun (626-612 BC), Kings of Assyria. Part 1. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press.
SP	Sumerian proverbs.

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3

Sumerian Faunal Fables: Talking Animals and Educational Lessons

Introduction

The previous chapter having discussed the characteristics of the Sumerian proverbs and sayings and the aspects of the faunal representations therein, this looks in more detail at the pithy aphorisms that preceded Aesop's more well-known Greek fables by around 1500 years. To date, most scholars have only paid attention to the general Sumerian influence on their Greek counterparts (Adrados, 1999, pp. 1:284, 291–293, 305–6; Holzberg, 2002, pp. 13, 15; de Cunha Corrêa, 2007, pp. 103–108). As well as analyzing the Sumerian collection, it thus also addresses the relationship between the two sets of literary texts.

As we saw in Chap. 2, the proverbs were intended to provide young (and adult) Sumerians with tools for learning how to prosper in society and act morally as part of their formal and informal education.[1] Education

[1] A formal education system existed across the ancient Near East that taught writing and a wealth of cultural knowledge in schools, students also being trained in the ethical norms of society (Shupak, 1999, pp. 13–21; Demsky, 2012, pp. 68–71; Cohen, 2012, pp. 65–85).

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being designed to correct human weaknesses and thus social failures, it promotes a supportive and moral society (Ben-Pazi, 2016, p. 14).

Proverbs are brief tales in poetic verse or prose that inculcate moral lessons by bestowing human characteristics upon animals and, on occasion, plants and flora (Baldick, 2001, p. 26, 93). This artificial faunal society reflects the patterns and traits of its human counterpart (Karhonen, 2019, pp. 211–212). Relating to everyday life, pithy sayings at times portray ironic or paradoxical situations (Childs & Flower, 2006, p. 82). The animals frequently interact, thereby attracting the attention of their adult audiences and delivering their educational and moral points with greater punch (Howe, 1995, pp. 642–643; Gibbs, 2002, p. xviii). Hereby, they encourage the audience to ponder their ramifications (Northwood, 2015, p. 23).

Fables customarily revolve around a single central plot. Extraneous complexity tending to blur their moral and educational message, they engage in no literary frills or flounces (Span, 2001, pp. 175–176, 182). Embodying a kernel of practical wisdom presented via the drawing of analogies between the story and real life, their particular form makes them universal and timeless, blurring the boundaries between *homo sapiens* and faunal species (Ukhmani, 1992, p. 2:67; Gibbs, 2002, p. xv; Refael-Vivante, 2017, p. 177; Hallo, 2011, p. 466; Carpenter, 2018, p. 81). This character reflects the belief, known from classical Greece onwards, that human nature is the same across the world (Thucydides, 3.82 [Mynott, 2013, p. 212]; Asheri, 2004, p. 71; Fuks, 2005, p. 142; Puchala, 2003, p. 37; Hsü, 2000, pp. 360–361).

Rather than the high morality of the philosophers or prophets, which champions elevated virtues and going beyond the letter of the law, the proverb seeks to deliver a form of wisdom that brings practical benefits—friendship, loyalty, modesty, etc. These attributes serve human beings in their relations with friends and enemies alike (Span, 2001, pp. 180–181).

Although proverbs are a well-known feature of biblical literature, herein they generally take the form of allegories—metaphors elaborated into very short stories (cf. Ezek 17:3–12; 19:2–9; 24:3–11; 33:3–17; 34:2–31) or parables—epigrammatic sayings conveying a moral lesson (2

Sam 12:1–4; Isa 5:1–6).[2] The most well-known biblical fabulas are two that anthropomorphize plants—the trees in Jotham's parable (Judg 9:8–15) and the cedar and thorn bush in the account of Jehoash (2 Kgs 4:8–10; 2 Chr 25:17–19; cf. Haran, 1978, pp. 448–552).[3]

The first Greek proverb—"The Niggle and the Hawk"—appears to date to the eighth century BCE:

> And now I will tell a fable for elders who themselves have understanding. Thus the hawk said to the nightingale with fancy plumage as he carried her high among the clouds, seizing her in his claws. And she, pierced in his crooked claws, wailed pitifully. He spoke to her forcefully: "Strange bird, why do you cry out? One much stronger now holds you. You must go wherever I take you, although you are a singer. I will make a meal of you if I wish, or I will let you go. He is a fool who wishes to go against those who are stronger. He cannot win, and he suffers pain in addition to shame." So spoke the swift-flying hawk, the long-winged bird. (Hesiod, *Op*. 175–185; Powell, 2017, pp. 116, 118)

A didactic story relating to the struggle between justice and power, this teaches that one should not become involved with the wicked or strong (Holzberg, 2002, pp. 12–13; Clayton, 2008, pp. 180–182). Greek aphorisms are most prominently associated with Aesop, however. According to Herodotus (*Hist*. 2.134; Waterfield, 2008, p. 148), Aesop was a sixth-century BCE slave. Born either in Samos in the Aegean or Phrygia, his sayings spread across Greece and the Roman Empire in both written and oral form. He composed numerous faunal fables, in some of which animals behave according to fixed stereotypes—the brave lion, cunning fox, cowardly hare, etc.—and in others the strong paradoxically need the assistance of the weak or the shrewd fail to deceive the innocent.[4] His

[2] See Chap. 7.

[3] See Chap. 6.

[4] The way in which the plot develops in these is not always easy to determine (Gibbs, 2002, pp. ix–xi, xix; cf. Sax, 2017, p. 457).

fables also appear to have found their way to Socrates and Plato (Northwood, 2015, pp. 13–26). As we see below, some evince the influence of the much earlier Sumerian tradition.

The Fables

Having briefly reviewed the theoretical background, let us now examine some of the animals that feature prominently in the Sumerian proverb collections. The arrogant fox, for example, refuses to acknowledge the limits of his capabilities:

> The fox said to his wife: "Come! Let us crush Uruk between our teeth like a leek; let us strap Kullab upon our feet like sandals." Hardly had they come within a distance of 600 *nindan* [= 100m] from the city, before the dogs began to howl from the city. "Slave girl from Tummal, slave girl from Tummal, come with me to your place! All kinds of evil howling from the city!" (SP 2.69; Alster, 1997, p. 1:59)

Although he boasts that he can destroy the city of Uruk/Kullab, the fox in fact reveals himself to be a coward. The way in which he refers to his wife—"slave girl from Tummal"—also alludes to a Sumerian tradition regarding pusillanimity (Alster, 1997, p. 2:367). This aphorism was intended to teach the ancient Sumerians how to behave modestly, recognizing the boundaries of their abilities. Aesop represents the fox in a similar fashion (Gibbs, 2002, f. 236, p. 116).

The same traits are attributed to the fox in brief Sumerian sayings that closely resemble proverbs. In these, it utters a short sentence that conveys an educational-ethical message: "The fox, having urinated into the sea: 'All of the sea is my urine,' he said" (SP 2.67; Alster, 1997, p. 1:58; cf. 8 sec. B 22; SP 8 sec. B22). In two short epigrams, it attempts to provoke an ox or elephant, neither of whom it feels are relating seriously to its silly antics (SP 2.65; 8 sec. B19; Alster, 1997, p. 1:58, 169; cf. SP 8 sec. B34). The idea of a small creature inciting a large one while completely ignoring the power relations between them reaches the absurd in the following grotesque fable:

> The elephant spoke to himself and said: "Among the wild creatures of Šakkan [the god of the wild animals of the steppe] there is no one comparable to me." The *altirigu*-bird [wren?] answered him: "And yet, I, in my own proportion, I am equal to you," it said. (SP 5.1; Alster, 1997, pp. 1:121, 2:400)

This type of fable appears to warn against taking on those stronger or higher ranked than oneself. A similar idea occurs in several of Aesop's examples (Gibbs, 2002, f. 228–236, pp. 113–116). Both longer and more complex than their Sumerian counterparts, herein the weaker creature learns a hard lesson, only understanding its mistake when it is too late (Gibbs, 2002, ff. 265–266, pp. 128–129).

The Sumerian proverbs also represent the fox as wicked and treacherous (SP 2.66; 8 sec. 33; Alster, 1997, 1:58; p. 1:172) and sarcastic and egotistical: "After a lion had fallen into a pit, a fox came to him and said: 'I am taking your sandals home to you on the other side'" (SP 5.58; Alster, 1997, p. 1:130). Aesop likewise portrays the animal as cynical, mocking the hare rather than aiding it in its time of need (Gibbs, 2002, f. 444, p. 205).

Another Sumerian proverb relates to an exhausted old ox seeking to escape a fox that is harassing him (SP 8 sec. B21; Alster, 1997, pp. 1:169–170; cf. SP YBC 7301). Aesop also makes use of this motif, speaking of a wild boar, ox, and even the harmless donkey, tormenting a miserable old lion (Gibbs, 2002, f. 422, pp. 197–198; cf. f. 15, p. 12). The poor state into which the strong animal falls in its old age that serves as an image of the person whose strength leaves him or her reflects a prevalent ancient concern (cf. Ps 71:9; Simpson, 2003, pp. 130–31 [Tobin]; Shupak, 2016, pp. 67–68).

The Sumerian proverbs also portray the fox as impertinent and avaricious:

> Nine wolves having caught 10 sheep, there was one too many and they did not know how to share out the portions. A fox came along and said: "Let me allocate the portions for you! The nine of you take one sheep. I by myself shall take nine—this shall be my share!" (SP 5 vers. A71 = 5 vers. B74; Alster, 1997, pp. 1:132, 134)

This fable represents voracity not only as an immoral trait but also as ludicrous (Alster, 1997, p. 2:415). Aesop likewise has a fable about dividing the spoil amongst the lion, wolf, and fox. Here, however, the fox's cunningness rescues him from the fate the world suffers—of being eaten by the strong, ravenous lion (Gibbs, 2002, f. 15, p. 10). Another Greek proverb recounts how the fox takes all the prey hunted by a lion and bear who have seriously injured one another in their fight over the meat (Gibbs, 2002, f. 62, p. 33). The fox's avarice is also adduced in another Sumerian proverb:

> A fox demanded of Enlil the horns of a wild bull. While it was wearing the horns of a wild bull, it started to rain, and they rose high before him, so he could not enter his hole. Until midnight the wind kept blowing, and the clouds gave rain. After it had stopped (raining) upon him, and he had become dry, he said: "Let me return the office to his lordship!" (SP 8 sec. B20; Alster, 1997, p. 1:129)

In yet another, the mice in Aesop's fable fall into a similar situation as the fox in the Sumerian saying:

> War had broken out between the mice and the weasels. The mice were inferior in strength and when they realized that their utter weakness and cowardice put them at a disadvantage, they elected satraps and generals who could be their leaders in war. The satraps wanted to be more remarkable and conspicuous than the other mice, so they put horns on the tops of their heads. Then the weasels attacked the mice once again and routed them completely. The other mice were able to scamper quickly and easily into the mouse holes which had been prepared for their concealment. The commanders, however, despite being the first to reach the holes in the retreat, were unable to get inside because of the horns on their heads. The weasels were thus able to seize the mouse generals and consign them to death. (Gibbs, 2002, f. 455, p. 209)

The "horn" aphorisms appear to serve to inculcate the virtue of being content with a little in both Sumer and ancient Greece.

The fox exploits his attributes to find food, frequently meeting an ostensibly innocent creature that is ultimately revealed to be smarter and capable of escaping, however:

> A fox spoke to a goat: "Let me put my shoes in your house!" (The goat answered): "When the dog comes, let me hang them up on a nail!" (The fox answered): "If the dog stays like that in your house, bring me my shoes. Let me not stay till midnight!" (SP 8 sec. B28; Alster, 1997, pp. 1:171, 2:416)

As we saw above—and as indicated in another proverb—the fox is terrified of the dog (SP 8 sec. B29; Alster, 1997, 1:171). Aesop similarly portrays the fox as a cautious creature that, while generally capable of protecting itself against predators or identifying imposters, on occasion gets into trouble because of its bravado (Gibbs, 2002, f. 15, p. 12; f. 145, p. 75; f. 322, p. 154).

The goat that uses its guile to outfox the fox also appears in a similar guise in another proverb:

> A lion had caught a helpless she-goat (and said), "Let me go! I will give you my fellow ewe in return." "If I let you go, tell me first your name!" The she-goat answered the lion: "You don't know my name? 'I Am Cleverer Than You' is my name!" After the lion had come to the sheepfold, he roared, "I released you!" She answered from the other side: "You released me, you were clever … the sheep are not here." (SP 5.5; Alster, 1997, pp. 1:128, 2:416)

Aesop similarly presents the goat as a resourceful creature:

> There was a goat grazing up high on a cliff. At the bottom of the cliff there was a wolf who wanted to catch the goat and eat her. Since it was impossible for the wolf to climb up the cliff, he stood down below and said to the goat, "You poor creature! Why have you left the level plains and meadows in order to graze upon the cliff? Are you trying to tempt death from that height?" The goat said to the wolf in response, "I know how often I have managed to frustrate you! What makes you think that you can now get me

> to come down off this cliff so that you can eat me for dinner?" (Gibbs, 2002, f. 100, p. 52)

The motif of a weak animal taking advantage of its wisdom to evade a predator is well known from other fables in Aesop's collection (Gibbs, 2002, f. 33, p. 20; f. 31, pp. 19–20; f. 117, p. 61; f. 312, p. 150; f. 356, p. 168). In some sayings, it becomes a victim despite its acumen, however. These are designed to teach about the nature of the world (Gibbs, 2002, ff. 129–131, pp. 67–69).

The dog also appears in a number of proverbs. Numerous Sumerian sayings depict canines as wild and stupid (Breier, 2014, pp. 83–101). In one aphorism, a dog is portrayed as consulting with its tail—no wiser than itself (SP 5.102; Alster, 1997, pp. 1:139, 2:407). *Inter alia*, the canine's idiocy derives from its voraciousness, as in the following brief epigram: "The dog chewing some bones spoke to his anus, 'It will do harm to you,' they say" (PS 5.84; Alster, 1997, p. 1:137). Canines are also depicted as failing to recognize social conventions: "A dog came to a brothel, and said, 'One does not see anything. Let me open this one!'" (SP 5.77; Alster, 1997, p. 1:135, 2:406). On other occasions, it is described as ungrateful to its host (SP 5.116; Alster, 1997, pp 1:143, 2:408). Its insatiable appetite similarly points to its treachery towards others (SP 5.42; Alster, 1997, pp. 2:402).

The dog's forefather, the wolf, is also represented as dominated primarily by its stomach:

> After a wolf had taken a seat in a thorny bush, he spoke to Utu [the Sun-god], "When I come out, from now on, let me eat no more sheep. When I am hungry, the sheep I have taken, whatever you mention, what do they mean to me? I am bound by a just oath! Now, what shall I eat?," he said. (SP 5 vers. B72; Alster, 1997, p. 1:133; cf. SP 5 vers. B71; SP 5 vers. A72)

With respect to food customs, we find the following brief sayings:

> When the lion caught a "bush-pig," he roared: "Until now your flesh has not filled my mouth, but your squeals have made me deaf!" (SP 5.57; Alster, 1997, p. 1:129)

> A pig which was about to being slaughtered by the pig-butcher squealed, "Along the road your ancestors and your uncles walked, you too are walking, [so why do you scream?]." (SP 8 sec. A 2; Alster, 1997, p. 1:166)

These short epigrams teach that some things follow the way of the world and cannot be changed (Alster, 1997, p. 2:414). Aesop's collection also contains a proverb that presents a pig squealing on the way to be slaughtered in the city (Gibbs, 2002, f. 397, p. 185).

The Sumerian aphorisms include a number of short sayings addressing the faunal love of freedom and release from human yoke. The horse, for example, complains against the burden laid upon him (SP 5.38). The donkey, in contrast, succeeds in throwing it off, contentedly returning to his pre-bondage state (SP 5.39). In another, a religious official attempts to persuade a lion to abandon his natural habitat and come and live with him in the city: "… the lamentation priest met a lion in the desert: "Let him come to the town … to the gate of Inanna, where the … dog is beaten with a stick. What is your brother doing in the desert?" (SP 2.101; ETCSL translation t.6.1.02; cf. Alster, 1997, pp. 1:65, 2:371).[5] A similar motif occurs in Aesop's fable about a wolf, a dog, and a collar:

> A comfortably plump dog happened to run into a wolf. The wolf asked the dog where he had been finding enough food to get so big and fat. "It is a man," said the dog, "who gives me all this food to eat." The wolf then asked him, "And what about that bare spot there on your neck?" The dog replied, "My skin has been rubbed bare by the iron collar which my master forged and placed upon my neck." The wolf then jeered at the dog and said, "Keep your luxury to yourself then! I don't want anything to do with it, if my neck will have to chafe against a chain of iron!" (Gibbs, 2002, f. 3, p. 5; cf. f. 409, p. 191)

A short Sumerian proverb evinces the need to be sensitive to others' needs by appealing to canines: "A dog spoke as fellows to his master: 'Indeed, what is pleasant to me does not exist to you. In your eyes it is not even there'" (SP 5.78; Alster, 1997, pp. 1:135, 2:406).

[5] ETCSL = Proverbs: http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.6.1.02#.

As we observed above, many of the Sumerian proverbs and Aesopian fables exhibit a close resemblance to one another. Three Greek epigrams in particular appear to reflect the Sumerian Etana Epic (Adrados, 1999, p. 1:305; Karhonen, 2019, p. 213). Herein, after an eagle makes a pact of friendship with a snake it turns on the snake's offspring (Tab. II 1′–72′). As the snake bitterly mourns its young, the Sun-god Utu—also in charge of justice—tells him how he can capture and punish the eagle: "Cut its wings, feather and pinion, pluck it and throw it into a bottomless pit, let it die there of hunger and thirst!" (Tab. II, 121–123; Dalley, 2000, p. 195).[6]

Aesop relates to two elements in this myth. The first treats the alliance between the two animals—here an eagle and a fox—the attack on the young, and the retribution (again different in nature):

> The eagle befriended the fox but he later devoured the fox's pups. Since she had no power over the eagle, the fox prayed to the gods for justice. Then one day when a sacrifice was burning upon an altar, the eagle flew down and grabbed the sizzling meat to carry it off to his chicks. The meat was so hot that as soon as the chicks ate it, they died. (Gibbs, 2002, f. 155, pp. 80–81; cf. f. 154, p. 80)

The same story occurs around a century before Aesop in a poem by the Greek writer Archilochus (frg. 174; Brown, 1997, pp. 59–62; de Cunha Corrêa, 2007, 103–8; Gagné, 2009, pp. 254–256). Aristophanes also cites it a little later in *The Birds* (ll. 652–653) (Henderson, 1999, p. 49). The Sumerian motif of clipping the eagle's wings and the care humans devote to it are known from another Aesopian fable. Herein, a man crops its wings and keeps it shut up in a chicken coop, another person releasing it and taking it under his own wing (Gibbs, 2002, f. 83, p. 44). The third-millennium Sumerian sayings, which appeared later in Mesopotamian collections (up to the eighth/seventh centuries BCE), thus appear to have found their way to Greece in oral form.[7]

A brief examination of ancient Egyptian literature further substantiates this claim. Although few written proverbs have survived from this corpus, animal paintings—primarily from the Ramesside period (last

[6] See Chap. 4.

[7] For the dating of the sources, see Chap. 2.

quarter of the second millennium BCE)—represent fauna in human situations and interaction (Shupak, 1999, pp. 19–24; 2011, p. 621).[8] Quite possibly, these represent oral traditions that were not written down. One of the few sayings that have survived relates to a lion that catches a mouse. Pleading for its life, the latter promises to reward the lion at the first opportunity. Despite laughing in its face, the lion lets the mouse go. One day, the lion gets caught in a hunter's trap. The mouse finds him and gnaws through the net, thereby releasing him (Lichtheim, 2006, pp. 3:158–159).

Aesop presents a similar proverb about a mouse who repays a favor after being trapped (Gibbs, 2002, f. 70, pp. 37–38), other Egyptian epigrams that have not survived in written form likely also leaving an imprint on his collection. Dual Mesopotamian and Egyptian influence is also evident in a number of biblical examples, particularly in Proverbs (Shupak, 2007, pp. 20–24; Hurowitz, 2012, pp. 1:54–64). Egypt and Mesopotamia's ties with Greece are also well known, Gyges of Lydia in Western Anatolia being in contact first with Ashurbanipal of Assyria (668–631 BCE) (Cogan & Tadmor, 1977, pp. 65–85) and then Psamtek/Psamtic II of Egypt (664–610 BCE) (Herodotus, *Hist*. 2:154; Spalinger, 1978, pp. 49–57; Redford, 1993, pp. 434–435). It is thus not unreasonable to assume that the early Sumerian and Egyptian aphorisms reached Greece in oral form.

Conclusion

This chapter examines some of the sayings in the Sumerian proverb collections that refer to animals. Dating to the third millennium BCE, these dicta served as study material in scribal schools in Babylonia and Assyria for thousands of years. Although belonging to the genre of Mesopotamian wisdom, they derive from popular rather than sapiential circles. Functioning as tools for acquiring practical wisdom and inculcating morality, the messages they convey were intended to guide the ancient Sumerians to act morally and be successful and prosperous in life. The short, pithy epigrams

[8] The cylinder seals from the first centuries of the third millennium BCE (ca. 3000–2700 BCE) found at Ur may have been engraved with figurative scenes (Charvát, 2017, pp. 250–251, 272).

delivered ethico-educational content in a way that was easily heard and understood, attracting the attention of the audience and on occasion even arousing antagonism on account of their moralization. The fauna they adduce exhibit particular traits—arrogance, cunning, profound insight, etc. Some of the fables are humorous; others draw unexpected conclusions. The interaction between the human and animal worlds teaches both to acknowledge the other and recognize their shared habits. The "human" features attributed to the fauna are based on the attributes of each species, the fox being cunning but not always wise, the goat as smart as the sheep, the dog not always capable of understanding human social conventions, etc. Human beings similarly do not always comprehend the needs and distress suffered by animals. The lessons cover various areas: knowing one's limitations, avoidance of bragging or provoking someone stronger or more powerful, extending a hand to rather than mocking the other, eschewal of voraciousness and rapaciousness, honesty without naïvity, dodging danger, etc. This practical wisdom was intended to aid the ancient Sumerians both to succeed in life and to create an ethical society.

Fables generally being stories with a universal message, they are not necessarily dependent upon the time or place in which they originated. They thus appear to have spread across civilizations marked by the cultural interaction that frequently accompanies political and economic ties. Analyzing the affinities between the Sumerian proverbs and Aesop's fables, we have seen how, where influence is palpable, the later Greek epigrams developed and elaborated their earlier Sumerian counterparts. Animals serving ancient civilizations as a tool for inculcating moral traits in human society from the dawn of history, they thus spread from one culture to another.

Abbreviations

JARCE	Journal of the American Research Centre in Egypt
OHT	Olam ha-Tanach
TAPA	Transactions of the American Philological Association

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4

Human Relations with the Animal Kingdom in Mesopotamian Literary Genres

Introduction

This chapter deals with ethical aspects of human-animal relations in the second- and third-millennium Mesopotamian literature that emerged in Sumer in southern Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq). Non-Semitic Sumerian culture developed at the end of the fourth millennium BCE, forming the home of literacy—the first script appearing therein ca. 3200 BCE. The earliest literary sources in Sumerian date from ca. 2600–2500 BCE, although some scholars push this back to 2800 BCE. They were closely followed by Semitic document in Akkadian (since 2450 BCE) (Holm, 2007, p. 269; Richardson, 2019, p. 13).[1] As is well known from earlier stages of traditional agricultural societies and in contrast to the modern world, human beings lived in close proximity to the animal kingdom (Taylor, 2013, pp. 15–21). Literary sources from this period thus

[1] Akkadian developed in two dialects during the second millennium BCE—Assyrian in the north and Babylonian in the south.

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provide us with a fascinating glimpse into human-animal relations, including their ethical dimensions.

Mythic and Epic Literature

Sumerian, and Akkadian (Assyrian and Babylonian) literature falls into diverse categories: (a) mythological narratives; (b) epics, tales, and legends; (c) laments and prayers; (d) wisdom and didactic literature; (e) autobiographies; and (f) love songs (Holm, 2007, pp. 269–270; Foster, 2016, p. 31). Written anonymously, most of these genres continued to exist in Babylonian and Assyrian literature, heirs to Sumerian culture (ca. 2000 BCE) (Crawford, 2004, p. 13). Sometimes copied into Akkadian as school learning exercises, the Sumerian documents joined other original Akkadian works (Klein, 2011, 2:524; Demsky, 2012, pp. 78–84). A large part of the material examined in this chapter derives from the mythic and epic literature composed in Sumerian and Akkadian in Mesopotamia. We shall thus first briefly review these two genres.

Myth is an anonymous plotted story that focuses primarily on the gods or figures possessing divine attributes. Of great importance to its author and his audience, it was part of ancient religious and tradition, (Segal, 2004, pp. 13–14). Giving meaning to religious ideas and to the question of how something becomes what it is, it addresses the creation of the world, humanity, human beings and animals, and the plant world, also giving an account of social order. Myths often begin as oral tales passed down from generation to generation (Freedman, 1999, p. 555; Baldick, 2001, pp. 163–264; Hillington, 2006, pp. 146–147), the events to which they refer occurring before the beginning of human history (Berlin, 1983, p. 23).

Because they are not true in a scientific sense, myths sometimes contain diverse and/or conflicting rationales (Bolle, 2005, p. 9:6360). Their verisimilitude being inapposite in societies that believe in them, the verification and refutation that play such a significant role in critical/academic thought was irrelevant in the ancient world (Ohana, 2010, p. 48). Although closely associated with the imagination, mythic thought is not divorced from reality or reason. Seeking to understand actuality without subjecting it to universal scientific laws that meet the standard of logic, it

sets out to explain phenomena with the help of tales of the gods and personified animals, plants, and even inanimate objects. While created by a specific culture, myths are simultaneously shaped by the latter (Frankfurt, 1977, pp. 3–5, 14–17; Ohana, 2010, p. 49; Van De Mieroop, 2016, pp. 5–12).[2] Mythic thought has therefore served as a lens through which to observe the universe (Johnson, 2021, p. 70).

Epics are lengthy narratives that describe the deeds of legendary hero(ine)s who lived in the remote past. They frequently incorporate parts of myths, popular tales, and history, the protagonists customarily being protected by or even descending from the god(s). They thus wage miraculous battles or campaigns, found cities, and save people. Epics generally have some religious content, also conveying philosophical lessons linked to the meaning of life. Like myths, they develop orally (Baldick, 2001, p. 82; Knipe, 2005, p. 4:2813; Louis, 2007, p. 8; Cuddon, 2013, p. 239).[3]

The Role Animals Play in Mesopotamian Creation Stories

We shall look first at the animals represented in the Mesopotamian (Sumerian and Babylonian) creation stories. The Sumerian Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Underworld describes the initial stages of An and Enlil's formation of the world—the separation of the earth and sky (lines 8–13; Black et al., 2004, p. 32; Schwemer, 2007, p. 126). Other sources evince that the sky and the earth formed a single entity in the form of an ancient mountain. When the gods divided them, they created a space in which life—and death—could emerge (Kramer, 1963, p. 113; 1982, pp. 135–137). According to the epic, the world was forged out of already existing material rather than *ex nihilo* as in Genesis (Long, 2005,

[2] As the ancient Greeks began criticizing myths for their lack of scientific thought, the term "myth" gradually took on negative connotations, signifying an erroneous popular belief purporting to be scientific (Segal, 2004, pp. 6, 11–12). Today, "modern myths" are based on seminal historical events that are raised to the status of formative myths or on origin stories that serve as the platform for modern ideologies (Lacoue-Labarte & Nancy, 1991; Malkin, 2004, p. 47; Pringle, 2006).

[3] The Sumerian heroic period is also known in Greek and Jewish literature (Kramer, 1946, p. 120; Finley, 2002, pp. 19–20; Charvát, 2013, pp. 193–194).

p. 3:186). The first gods then made younger, minor gods, male gods coupling with their female counterparts (EkNg, 70–185; EkNh, 5–7; ElNl, 41–142).

Bowing under the weight of the agricultural tasks necessary for their survival, they created human beings to help them. In most of the Mesopotamian myths, the creation of human beings is associated with Enki, the god of the earth and sweet water—and also responsible for laying the foundations of human civilization (Kramer, 1970, pp. 103–7; Moran, 1971, pp. 52, 55; Shifra & Klein, 1996, p. 55). Humankind was thus created in response to a problem rather than pre-planned (Keel & Schroer, 2015, pp. 21, 111). In this regard, it contrasts with the biblical account, in which God had no need of assistance, the world being created for humanity's sake (Gen 1:28–30; Klein, 2011, p. 540; Keel & Schroer, 2015, pp. 109–111; cf. Sparks, 2007, pp. 629–632).

The myth of Enki and Ninmaḥ, for example, recounts that the gods labored arduously in digging channels and other agricultural tasks, all the while complaining about their bitter fate. The goddess Ninmaḥ thus asked the Creator-god Enki—responsible for creating the rivers, vegetation, and, as becomes clearer later in the plot, the animals (Pettinato, 2005a, p. 4:2791; Espak, 2010, p. 98)—to form a creature to bear their heavy burden. Enki created two goddesses, in whose womb lay the first two creatures made of clay. With the aid of Ninmaḥ, the Mother-goddess, and seven other divine midwives, the first human couple (male and female) was thus fashioned (lines 8–40; Shifra & Klein, 1996, pp. 80–81).

During the second millennium BCE, this early creation story evolved, re-surfacing in two later Akkadian myths—Atrahasis and Enūma-Eliš (Jacobsen, 1976, p. 116). According to the first (which also contains the Babylonian Flood account), human beings were created by Ea, the Wisdom-god, and Mami, the Mother-goddess—Akkadian incarnations of the Sumerian gods (Jacobsen, 1968, pp. 106–7; cf. Muffs, 1978, p. 81; Thompson, 2002, pp. 166–167, 186, 193). Designed to shoulder the tasks of the gods, human beings were created from clay and the rebel god Ilamela's blood (Atrahasis, I 204–354).

The Babylonian Enūma-Eliš tells how Marduk rose through the ranks of the divine hierarchy (Frymer-Kensky & Pettinato, 2005,

pp. 4:2809–2810; Tamtik, 2007, pp. 65–73).[4] He created human beings from Qingu's blood to serve the gods, the latter suggesting that all the minor gods be wiped out (V 135–156, VI 1–34).[5]

In contrast to Genesis 1 and 2, none of these creation stories explicitly recounts the creation of the animal kingdom (Gen 1:20–31; 2:19–24; Kikawada, 1983, p. 44; Dalley, 2000, p. 4; Averbeck, 2003, p. 760; Keel & Schroer, 2015, pp. 116–117).[6] Some allusions to it nonetheless occur in Mesopotamian mythology. The Debate between Sheep and Grain adduces a primal scene in which only the gods exist, the plant and animal kingdoms not yet having been created:

> With no sheep appearing, there were no numerous lambs, and with no goats, there were no numerous kids, the sheep did not give birth to her twin lambs, and the goat did not give birth to her triplet kids; the Anuna, the great gods, did not even know the names of Ezina-Kusu or Laḫar. (DSG, 6–11; Black et al., 2004, p. 226)[7]

Later on, agriculture, clothing, and the gods responsible for human beings and their welfare—Dumuzi, the Shepherd-god, and Šakkan, the god of wild animals—still not having been created (DSG, 12–19; cf. Jacobsen, 1985, p. 45), human were thus vegetarians:

> The people of those days did not know about eating bread. They did not know about wearing clothes; they went about with naked limbs in the Land. Like sheep they are grass with their mouths and drunk water from the ditches. (DSG, 20–25; Black et al., 2004, p. 226)[8]

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[4] This god is known as early as the third millennium BCE (Leick, 1998, p. 115; Black, 2000c, p. 189).

[5] In theological terms, the idea that humanity was fashioned by a rebel or hostile god may be intended to demonstrate the fate of the person who opposes the gods (Moran, 1970, pp. 48–56).

[6] See Chap. 6.

[7] Ezina-Kusu was the Mesopotamian Grain-goddess, Laḫar the Sumerian Sheep- and Goat-goddess. The disputation literature to which this text belongs contains humoristic/sarcastic dialogues between two personified animals/materials/professions, each of the speakers making claims to be the more important and effective: shepherds argue with peasants, snakes with money, lambs with wheat, and birds with legends. Inter alia, this genre contains mythic features belonging to the wisdom corpus (Shifra & Klein, 1996, p. 583; Mittermayer, 2019, p. 175).

[8] According to the second creation story in Genesis, Adam and Eve similarly walked around naked (Gen 2:25).

According to the Sumerian Flood Story (SFS), the animal kingdom was created after humanity:

> After An, Enlil, Enki, and Ninhursag had fashioned the black-headed people [i.e., the Sumerians], they also made animals multiply everywhere, and made herds of four-legged animals exist on the plains, as is befitting. (SFS, A 11–14; Black et al., 2004, p. 213; see also Espak, 2010, p. 194; 2019, p. 307)

The Debate between Bird and Fish contains a lengthy account of how Enki created the animals and took care of their needs:

> In those ancient days, when the good destinies had been decreed and after An and Enlil had set up the divine rules of heaven and earth, then the third of them … the lord of broad wisdom, Enki, the master of destinies, gathered together … and founded dwelling places; he took in his hand waters to encourage and create good seed; he laid out side by side the Tigris and the Euphrates, and caused them to bring water from the mountains; he scoured out the smaller streams and positioned the other watercourses … Enki made spacious sheepfolds and cattle-pens, and provided shepherds and herdsmen; he founded cities and settlements through the earth and made the black-headed multiply. He provided them with a king as shepherd, elevating him to sovereignty over them; the king rose as the daylight over the foreign countries. … Enki knit together the marshlands, making young and old reeds grow there; he made birds and fish teem in the pools and lagoons … he gave … all kinds of living creatures as their sustenance …place[d] them in charge of this abundance of gods. When Nudimmud [Enki], august prince, the lord of broad wisdom, had fashioned … he filled the reed-beds and marshes with fish and birds, indicated to them their positions and instructed them in their divine rules. (DBF, 1–21; Black et al., 2004, pp. 230–231)

We find a similar picture of Enki creating the ecological environment of plants and human life in The Heron and the Turtle (lines 1–21) and Enki and the World Order (lines 1–16, 50–60, 221–237) (Black et al., 2004, pp. 215–217, 220, 236). According to the latter, Enki gave cattle to the Martu—nomads in the region between the Tigris and Euphrates: “Enki

presented Animals to those who have no city, who have no houses, to the Martu/Mardu nomads" (EWO, 248–249; Black et al., 2004, p. 221; cf. Kramer & Maier, 1989, p. 49; Averbeck, 2003, pp. 762–764).

In general, Enki takes pains to care for animals in distress. In The Heron and the Turtle, for example, when the "turtle, the trapper of birds, the setter of nets, overthrew the heron's construction of reeds for her, turned her nest upside down, and tipped her children into the water. The turtle scratched the dark-eyed bird's forehead with its claws, so that her breast was covered in blood from it" (HaT, A 60–66), the heron appealed to Enki in desperation. Heeding her cry, he asked his aide to erect a reed barrier and net to protect her from the evil turtle (ibid, A 67–B 9).

According to The Debate between Sheep and Grain, Enlil, the powerful Storm-god who both destroys and makes the land fertile, was also involved in the creation of animals:

> At that time Enki spoke to Enlil: "Father Enlil, now Sheep and Grain have been created on the Holy Mound, let us send them down from the Holy Mound." Enki and Enlil having spoken their holy word, sent Seep and Grain down from the Holy Mound. Sheep being fenced in by her sheepfold, they gave her grass and herbs generously. (DSG, 37–44; Black et al., 2004, p. 227; Jacobsen, 1976, pp. 97–103; 1977, pp. 140–144; McCall, 1990, p. 25; Marcus & Pettinato, 2005, p. 4:2799)

Responsible for creating winter and summer, he thereby further tends to animal fecundity:

> Winter made the ewe give birth to the lamb, he gave the kid to the goat. He made cows team together with their calves, he provided butter and milk. On the high plain he made the deer and stag glad of heart. He made the birds of heaven set their nests in the broad spaces. The fish of the lagoons laid eggs in the reed-bed. In all the orchards he made honey and wine drip[?] to the ground. (DWS, 50–56 [ETCSL];[9] cf. Kramer, 1963, p. 145, 266; 1982, pp. 186–187)

[9] See https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section5/tr533.htm.

Other minor gods were also in charge of animal welfare and procreation—Dumuzi, the Shepherd-god (for whom see below) and Ninurta, the Warrior and Protector-god associated with agriculture and rain (Leick, 1998, pp. 31–34, 135–137; cf. Annus, 2002, pp. 145–148; Schwemer, 2007, p. 127):

> My King, ewe give birth to lambs, ewes give birth to lambs, the sheep of the fold are born; I shall call upon your name. My King, goats give birth to kids, goats give birth to kids, billy goats are born; I shall call upon your name. My king, cows give birth to calves, cows give birth to calves, cows and breed-bulls are born; I shall call upon your name. My King, she-asses give birth to foals, she-asses give birth to foals, donkeys … are born; I shall call upon your name. My King, humans give birth to children, My King, humans give birth to children. Ninurta, King … (A *Balbale* to Ninurta, 8–21; Black et al., 2004, p. 187)

KAR 4, copied from a much earlier source in Assyria ca. 1100 BCE, relates how the first two human beings, male and female, were created in order to take care of the animal kingdom: "Ullegara and Annegara they shall be called; (to make) cows, sheep, cattle, fish and birds (and) the prosperity of the land abundant" (lines 52–56; Espak, 2010, p. 195).

Mesopotamian mythology thus represents animals as having been created by Enki and Enlil, the two gods linked to water and fertility, lesser gods such as Dumuzi, Ninurta, and Šakkan being responsible for their welfare.

The Functioning of the Primal World and the Gods' Attitude Towards the Animal Kingdom

At the beginning of creation, peace and harmony prevailed between the gods and the animal world. Set in the Sumerian "Garden of Eden" located in Dilmun, the origin-myth of Enki and Ninhursag describes how the earth was pure and virginal:

> In Dilmun the raven was not (yet) cawing, the flushed partridge not cackling. The lion slew not, the wolf was not carrying off lambs, the dog had not been taught to makes kids curl up, the colt had not learned that grain was to be eaten. When a widow had spread out malt on the roof, the dove was then not tucking the head (under its wing) [in fear]. (lines 13–21; Jacobsen, 1987, p. 186; Shifra & Klein, 1996, p. 57 n. 5; Dickson, 2007, p. 5)

This text indicates that animals were not created as predators or with any tendency to do harm.[10] The scene recalls that painted in Genesis, in which all those whom Adam named, including himself and his wife, were vegetarians (Gen 1:29–30).[11] According to the latter, however, God supplied *all* his creatures with sustenance rather than just the animals (Westerman, 1984, pp. 162–164; Wenham, 1987, p. 33). The Hymn to Amun-Re similarly depicts humans as vegetarians: "He who made herbage (for) the cattle, and the fruit tree for mankind" (IV 4; *ANET*[3], 366 [Wilson]).

The epic Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta contains a spell that presents a fascinating picture of creation, no animal hurting any human being (albeit without any mention of vegetarianism):

> In those days, there being no snakes, there being no scorpions, there being no hyenas, there being no lions, there being no dogs or wolves, there being no(thing) fearful or hair-raising, mankind had no opponents (lines 136–140; Jacobsen, 1987, p. 289; cf. Kramer, 1943, p. 193; Alster, 1973, p. 103)[12]

The Mesopotamian gods nevertheless happily ate the sacrifices offered to them, human beings similarly taking from the meat on the altars without any concern for the fate of the animals sacrificed (Larsen, 2005, p. 14).[13]

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[10] For Enki as desirous of knowing the plant and animal kingdoms, see Dickson, 2007, pp. 499–515.

[11] See Chap. 6.

[12] Some scholars translate differently, assigning the idyllic state to the future (Vanstiphout, 2003, p. 65): see Chap. 7.

[13] When Enki and Ninmaḫ celebrate after creating humanity, Enki roasts holy kids for An and Enlil, for example (Enki and Ninmaḫ, 48; Jacobsen, 1987, p. 158).

While the Hebrew Bible permits the eating of flesh after the Flood, however, it imposes certain restrictions (Gen 9:3–4; Keel & Schroer, 2015, p. 146).

The question of divine and human ethical attitudes towards animals also arises from the diverse versions of the Mesopotamian Flood story. Some scholars maintain that the background of this narrative lies in the torrential rain storms from which Mesopotamian settlements frequently suffered, which threatened human and animal life, the myths thus resting on a kernel of historical truth (Leick, 1998, p. 93; cf. Segal, 2004, pp. 12–13). Although the original Sumerian source (SFS) has only been preserved in corrupt form (Black et al., 2004, pp. 213–215), it serves as the core of two later expanded versions from the Old Babylonian period.

In the eponymous Babylonian Flood story Atrahasis, humankind grows at an uncontrolled rate, the commotion people make disturbing Enlil's rest.[14] He thus seeks to "cull" the population through plagues and famines. Enki heeds humanity's cries, however, and thwarts Enlil's schemes (I 352–413, II 265–330; cf. Frymer-Kensky, 1977, pp. 148–149). Not justifying Enlil's treatment of either human beings or animals, this text is not a theodicy in any sense (Moran, 1971, p. 56). It thus contrasts with the biblical Flood account, in which the deluge is due to human sin (Gen 6:5–8; Frymer-Kensky, 1977, pp. 149–150; Shifra & Klein, 1996, p. 88). The Mesopotamian version may reflect a measure of criticism against the gods' arbitrary decision-making processes (Moran, 1971, pp. 59–60), these not being governed by the ethical principles of good and bad (Simoons-Vermeer, 1974, p. 33).[15]

Enlil's plot having been stymied, he determines to wipe out all life on earth through a flood. Enki informs his colleague Atrahasis of Enlil's intentions, however, advising him to build a boat to save all those threatened (Atrahasis, III 1–37).[16] In order to prevent his companions from interfering with the project or trying to board the boat, Atrahasis gathers

[14] This demographic issue may have worried the ancient Sumerians (Draffkorn Kilmer, 1972, pp. 173–174). In the Hebrew Bible, God blessed creation with the words "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28; 8:17′; 9:1, 7; Moran, 1971, p. 61; Frymer-Kensky, 1977, p. 150).

[15] For the gods' interactions with one another, see Chap. 3.

[16] Animals are only adduced in the full version edited by Shifra and Klein, who reconstruct the work in the light of further fragments (1996, p. 121, lines 37a, e).

together the city elders and misleadingly tells them that he is seeking to escape Enlil's clutches. They thus extend their aid to him (apparently at his request), assisting in the marine construction—the poor and children also participating in the enterprise (III 38–69).

The myth addresses two ethical issues—Atrahasis' disinformation and the exploitation of children and the poor. Atrahasis employs a type of lie (Bok, 1989, pp. 13, 18; Ekman, 1992, p. 28). While the more egotistical a lie the more it is generally considered a graver offence (Cantarero & Szarota, 2017, p. 322), in certain circumstances it is may serve as a form of defense, thus not being regarded as immoral (Elaad, 2007, pp. 34–37; Vrij et al., 2010, p. 90). In such cases, truth is subject—albeit only temporarily—to a higher value or principle (Singer, 1999, p. 292; Rotenstreich, 2014, p. 256).[17] Here, Atrahasis may be attempting to protect the person elected to preserve humanity and the animal world.

Exploitation of weak sectors of society was viewed as a seminal sin in the ancient Near East (Weinfeld, 1995, pp. 29–38). In Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Underworld, for example, Gilgamesh of Uruk rides on the shoulders of orphans as part of his game- playing, thereby causing them great pain (GEU, 154–155; Black et al., 2004, p. 35). Atrahasis may thus be said to have been saved due to his close relations with Enki—in contrast to Noah, whom God delivers because of his righteousness (Gen 7:1).[18] In Sumerian-Babylonian culture, the saving of human and animal life via deception is condoned by the gods. Despite its selfish aspects, Enki's act is not a misdeed (Kramer & Maier, 1989, p. 132; Klein, 2011, p. 548).

Atrahasis loads everyone onto the boat to save their lives:

> Everything there was […] everything there was […] pure once […] fat once […] he selected [and put on board.] [The birds] that fly in the sky, cattle [of Šak]kan, wild animals[?] […] of the open country, [… he] put on board. (III 32–38; Dalley, 2000, p. 31)

[17] Although the Hebrew Bible categorically prohibits lying, it condones lies told to save life (Horn-Prouser, 1991, pp. 5–6; Shemesh, 2002, pp. 81–95).

[18] Cf. also Ziusudra, the protagonist of the Sumerian Flood story, and Utnapišim, the hero of the Flood narrative in the Gilgamesh Epic (Loewenstamm, 1962, p. 605; 1992, pp. 6–9).

After all have disembarked, Atrahasis offers thanksgiving sacrifices to the gods.[19] According to Shifra and Klein's reconstruction of the corrupt text, these were meal (plant-based) rather than animal offerings (III 252–254; Shifra & Klein, 1996, p. 127).[20]

Another version of the Flood story occurs in the eleventh tablet of the Gilgamesh Epic. The first great epic, comparable to Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, this was written in the second millennia BCE in Babylonia and is based on earlier third-millennium Sumerian epics.[21] Gilgamesh (ca. 2600 BCE) was the fifth king of the first Uruk dynasty, apotheosized after his death. Two-third god and one-third human (I 45–46), he is a tragic heroic protagonist who, in the wake of his companion Enkidu's death, goes in search of eternal life because he regards the sentence of mortality imposed on all creatures as blatantly unjust (Jacobsen, 1990, p. 243; Shifra & Klein, 1996, pp. 183–184; Dalley, 2000, pp. 39–45; Millard, 2000, p. 128).[22]

On his peregrinations, he seeks out the hero of the Flood episode, Utnapištim—who, with his partner, were given eternal life by the gods after the Flood—in order to ask him how to gain this status (Veenkler, 1981, p. 201). Utnapištim tells him that all the creatures (with the exception of himself and his wife) are mortal (Pruyser & Tracy Luke, 1982, p. 189). To demonstrate this, he recounts a Flood narrative that closely corresponds to Atrahasis. This version preserves an important section in better form than the latter, however, according to which, when the Flood subsided, the ark came to rest on the Nişir/Nimuš mountains, the birds helping the protagonist ascertain that the waters have indeed receded:

> But the seventh day when it came, I brought out a dove, I let it loose: off went the dove but then it returned, there was no place to land, so back it came to me. I brought out the swallow, I let it loose: off went the swallow but then it returned, there was no place to land, so back it came to me. I brought out the raven, I let it loose: off went the raven, it saw the waters

[19] According to Foster's edition, he may also have done so before embarking (1993, p. 1:180).

[20] Noah, in contrast, "built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar" (NRSV).

[21] Versions also exist that date to the first millennium BCE, however.

[22] For the development of the epic and its diverse versions, see Tigay, 2002.

> receding, finding food, *bowing and bobbing*, it did not come back to me. I brought out an offering, to the four wings made sacrifice, incense I placed on the peak of the mountain. Seven flasks and seven I set in position, reed, cedar and myrtle I piled beneath them. The gods did smell the savour, the gods did smell the savour sweet, the gods gathered like flies around the man making sacrifice. (Gilg. XI 145–161; George, 1999, pp. 93–94)[23]

Here, the birds' physical attributes are superior to those of human beings (the ability to fly). In contrast to Atrahasis, however, Utnapištim offers thanksgiving offerings to the hungry gods from the animals who survived the Flood à la Noah (Gen 8:4–22; Keel & Schroer, 2015, p. 28).[24] As a sort of "consolation prize" for his efforts, Utnapištim's wife reveals their secret to him—namely, a plant that keeps one young even if it does not impart eternal life.[25] Gilgamesh sets off to find this, locating it after much searching. Being distracted for a minute, however, a snake sneaks off with it:

> Gilgameš found a pool whose water was cool, down he went into it, to bathe in water. Of the plant's fragrance a snake caught scent, came up [in silence], and bore the plant off. As it turned away it sloughed its akin. Then Gilgameš sat down and wept, down his cheeks the tears were coursing. … [he spoke] to Ur-šanbi the boatman: "[for whom,] Ur-šanbi, toiled my arms so hard, for whom ran dry the blood of my heart? Not for myself did I find bounty, [for] the 'lion of the earth' I have done a favor!" (IX 303–314; George, 1999, p. 97)[26]

While Gilgamesh's encounter with the pair helped him come to terms with his mortality (despite being two-thirds god), it also prompted him to change his ethical views. When he returned to his homeland, instead of continuing to be a tyrannical ruler he began aiding his subjects. According to the long (Old Babylonian) version, he first tested it on the elders of the city, then ate of it himself (XI 295–300/272–281). The epic

[23] This passage is very corrupt in Atrahasis.

[24] From the human perspective, however, these are thanksgiving offerings for survival, of course (Keel & Schroer, 2015, p. 28).

[25] This unit appears to be a secondary addition (Lambert & Veenkler, 1982, p. 69).

[26] This is a mythic explanation of why the snake sheds its skin.

therefore deals with morality as well as mortality, demonstrating that life is not only a matter of heroic individual struggle but also cooperation and the building of families and cities (Vulpe, 1994, pp. 279–283; Abusch, 2001, pp. 621–622; 2015, pp. 130–136; Pettinato, 2005b, p. 5:3488). According to the Mesopotamian Flood story, the animals were thus saved primarily on the basis of the gods' interest rather than any divine or human ethical compassion.

Unethical treatment of animals is also reflected in the behavior exhibited by Inanna, a Sumerian goddess known in Babylonian-Assyrian culture as Ištar. A complex figure, she served as the goddess of love in the sense of physical sexual attraction rather than romance and the goddess of war, also being associated with the storms and rain responsible for fertility and damage. She was thus regarded as a powerful embodiment of both life and death (Jacobsen, 1976, pp. 135–137; Abusch, 1999, pp. 452–455; Green & Black, 2000b, p. 156; Leick, 2004, pp. 55–110). According to the Gilgamesh Epic, she had numerous lovers, to all of whom she caused great harm. Some being human, they bridged the divine and earthly realms (Pettinato, 2005c, p. 7:4403).

Gilgamesh himself eludes her courting, telling her that she hurts those she delivers—including animals:

> You loved the speckled *allallu*-bird, but struck him down and broke his wing: now he stands in the woods crying 'My wing!' You loved the lion, perfect in strength, but for him you dug seven pits and seven. You loved the horse, so famed in battle, but you made his destiny whip, spur and lash. You made his destiny a seven-league gallop, you made his destiny to drink muddy water, and doomed Silili his mother to perpetual weeping. (VI 48–57; George, 1999, p. 49)

In similar fashion, she turned the shepherd into a wolf, thereby disturbing the order of creation determined by the gods, who separated the divine, human, and animal realms from one another (VI 58–62; Harris, 1991, p. 272). In Innana and Ebiḫ, the goddess seeks to dominate Ebiḫ, the mountain, where many animals make their home:

> Fruit hangs in its flourishing gardens and luxuriance spreads forth. Its magnificent trees are themselves a source of wonder to the roots of heaven. In

> Ebiḫ … lions are abundant under the canopy of trees and bright branches. It makes wild rams and stags freely abundant. It stands wild bulls in flourishing grass. Deer couple among the cypress trees of the mountain range. (lines 121–126; Black et al., 2004, p. 337)

The goddess attacks the mountain and the creatures that dwell in it and severely damages them:

> Mountain range, because of your elevation, because of your height, because of your attractiveness, because of your beauty, because of your wearing a holy garment, because of your reaching up to heaven, because you did not put your nose to the ground, because you did not rub your lips in the dust, I have killed you and brought you low. As with an elephant I have seized your tusks. As with a great wild bull I have brought you to the ground by your thick horns. As with a bull I have forced your great strength to the ground and pursued you savagely. I have made tears the norm in your eyes. I have placed laments in your heart. Birds of sorrow are building nests on these flanks. (152–165; Black et al., 2004, p. 338)

Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld likewise portrays her mistreating animals. Apparently linked to a fertility rite, this text describes her as descending into the underworld, the kingdom of her older sister Ereškigal, the goddess of death and gloom (McCall, 1990, p. 71; cf. Noegel, 2017, pp. 119–144). Here, too, she seeks to take charge, despite the fact that the gods had placed a clear boundary between the land of the living and that of the dead that could not be crossed in either direction.

Caught, she is supposed to remain in the netherworld, only being allowed to return to earth if she finds someone to take her place. In her egotism, Inanna has no qualms about doing so, suggesting her husband/lover Dumuzi. The demons thus kidnap him and bring him down (IDNW 1–403), thereby dooming the earth to infertility (Shifra & Klein, 1996, p. 350; cf. Kramer, 1950, pp. 361–363).[27] The Shepherd-god who

[27] Dumuzi is known as Tammuz in Akkadian, the name of a Babylonian/Hebrew month (July). Tammuz's descent into Sheol is also depicted in The Dream of Dumuzi, Dumuzi and Geštinanna, and the laments dedicated to him. Inanna's descent closely resembles that of Persephone to Hades in Greek mythology, the eleven-season cycle equaling the eleven rise and fall of cities (Mander, 2005, p. 4:2522). He appears to have been accompanied by Šakkan, lord of the plains and the animals who inhabit them (Leick, 1998, p. 147).

guards the flock against predators and robbers with his faithful hound (DD, 96–97; McCall, 1990, p. 26), Dumuzi is the complete antithesis of Inanna in this respect. His descent into Sheol symbolizes the arrival of the dry season (summer), in which little grows.[28]

In light of his great importance, his sister Geštinanna volunteers to take his place in Sheol six months out of the year (IDNW, 404–409; Kramer, 1966, p. 31). This Mesopotamian fertility ritual associated with Dumuzi then spread to Syro-Canaan, its echoes also being heard in the Hebrew Bible (Ezek 7:13; Scurlock, 1992, pp. 53–67; Black, 2000a, p. 96).

A broken tablet contains a passage from a myth in which Dumuzi, his flock, and dog are all beaten so severely that he appeals to Utu, the god of the sun and justice to save them:

> "Oh and woe! Utu, Utu, pray be my friend. Oh and woe! Nanna, Nanna, pray be my companion. From my snake-(menaced) ewe, make the snake go away. From my scab-(afflicted) mother-goat, make the scab go away. From my lot expropriate the *miqlu*-disease, let it whirl about in heaven. From my dog remove the seizures, let him follow the sheepfold. As for me, fashion a divine hand against the treacherous *Kurgarra*. In my holy sheepfold I will pronounce your name on prime cheese." (BM 96692:18–25; Kramer, 1990, pp. 146–147)

The gods heed his plea and heal him and his furry friends (BM 96692:26–46; Kramer, 1990, p. 147).

The Dream of Dumuzi reports a nightmare the god had one night that his flock had been seriously injured (lines 34–40). His sister Geštinanna interprets it for him as predicting that he and his flock will be attacked by bandits. These transpire to be the demons of Sheol who drag him down to the underworld (lines 58–264). This episode also appears in Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld: seeking to escape the demons, Dumuzi asks Utu to turn his hands and feet into those of a snake (IDNW, 368–380)

[28] Dumuzi's fate may also be linked to the hunted animals of the steppes (Leick, 1998, p. 34).

or deer (DD, 170–179). Although this allows him a temporary respite, he is eventually recaptured and taken down to Sheol.[29]

In the later Babylonian-Assyrian myth Ištar's Descent to the Netherworld (beginning of the first millennium BCE), Inanna's descent halts human and animal procreation as well as Dumuzi's (lines 76—90; Foster, 1993, p. 1:406). The Hymn to Inanna likewise customarily depicts her as threatening the gods and animal kingdom: "Inanna a falcon preying on the gods, Inanna rips to pieces the cattle–pens" (lines 30–32; Black et al., 2004, p. 94).

The Sumerians also composed love poems in honor of the "holy marriage" ritual ceremony designed to foster fertility. During the rite, the king, representing Dumuzi, wed a priestess symbolizing the fertility of the agricultural fields and animals (Shifra & Klein, 1996, p. 333; Tinney, 2000, p. 25; Rubio, 2001, pp. 268–269). These songs were paralleled by laments to the dead Dumuzi in which the god is portrayed as a lamb or kid deserted by its mother (cf. My Heart is a Reed Pipe, 10–15; Jacobsen, 1987, p. 51). Others describe the birth-giving Mother-goddess as a cow grieving over her calf (cf. In the Desert by the Early Grass, 98′–99′, 114′, 147′, 170′; Jacobsen, 1987, pp. 66–70). The Wild Bull has Lain Down likewise compares Dumuzi to a dead wild bull (lines 1–3), his dwelling now being inhabited by jackals and his paddocks by ravens (lines 38–39; Jacobsen, 1987, p. 49). Hereby, the wild animals replace the sheep and goats.

A similar motif occurs in a historical context in The Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur: "In the rivers of my city, dust has gathered, foxholes are made therein" (line 269; Samet, 2014, p. 69).[30] The lament known as For Him of the Faraway notes that "wailing is verily for the reed thicket; the old reeds may not give birth to (new) reeds. That wailing is

[29] In general, the particular physical attributes of animals are superior to those of human beings. The hymn "Šulgi, King of the Road," composed in honor of Šulgi of Ur, one of the great kings of the ancient Near East, for example, depicts him charging furiously(?) "like a fierce lion … like a wild ass I galloped, with my heart full of joy, I ran onward(?), racing like a solitary wild donkey …" (70–74; Klein, 1981, pp. 198–199). The distance between Ur and Nippur the king ran is about 160 km—a singular feat (Anderson Lamont, 1995, p. 212).

[30] See also The Cursing of Agade, 172–192, 271–256; Black et al., 2004; Klein, 2017, pp. 282–84 (biblical sources).

verily for the woods; they may not give birth to stag or deer" (lines 16–17; Jacobsen, 1976, pp. 68–69).

In light of these sources, gods such as Enki, the Creator-god, and Dumuzi, the Shepherd-god, appear to have loved and taken care of animals—in contrast to Inanna and Gilgamesh, who had no qualms about treating them badly in order to further their own interests, ignoring their suffering. The latter also acted abusively towards other creatures, Inanna torturing her lovers and not hesitating to send Dumuzi down to Sheol and Gilgamesh maltreating the inhabitants of his city.

The Treatment of Animals by Hybrid Creatures

Before looking at hybrid creatures and human beings who lived in the wild and their treatment of animals, let us first examine the relationship between settled and nomadic Sumerians. Mesopotamian society existed in two territorial frameworks—the outer, threatening, lawless circle vs. the inner, civilized one (Avraham, 2011, pp. 45–50). The nomads who inhabited the frontier spaces were greatly feared:

> The [nomads(?) and the] mountaineers, [who do not] eat [grain like (civilized) men], who do not build [houses like (civilized) men], who do not build cities like civilized men—At [midnight(?)] they come down (from the mountains): [When the workers] have finished their work, and the sheep are returned (to the stall), [when the men] have finished ploughing the fields, [they … and] take(?) the collected sheaves of corn. (Instructions of Šuruppag, V, b, 268–275; Alster, 1974, pp. 49–51; Fagan, 2015, p. 80)

Located west of the Euphrates and living in close proximity to wild animals, the Sumerians referred to nomads as Martu, attributing animal qualities to them:

> The Martu, a destructive people, with the brains of a beast, who like wolves [ravage] the stalls and sheepfolds, people who do not grain, people who are [on the move] who are […never] peaceful! (Šu-Sin's Historical Inscriptions, collection B v:24–31; Klein, 1996, p. 85)

In The Marriage of Martu, a young girl seeks to persuade her companion not to marry a Martu man by adducing the nomads' "destructive hands" and "monkey-like features" (lines 131–132; Klein, 1996, p. 89). A Sumerian lament similarly recounts how the Gutians invaded and destroyed the city of Agade:

> Enlil brought out of the mountains those who do not resemble other people, who are not reckoned as part of the Land, the Gutians, an unbridled people, with human intelligence but canine instincts and monkeys' features. Like small birds they swooped on the ground in great flocks. (The Cursing of Agade, 150–158; Black et al., 2004, pp. 121–122; cf. Espak, 2019, p. 304; Verderame, 2021, p. 15)

The nomads living close to nature, the Sumerians often depicted them in animal terms.

The contact between people and wild animals is also clearly reflected in the Gilgamesh Epic. An energetic ruler, he was accustomed to abusing his subjects. In order to restrain him, the gods created Enkidu from clay. Initially living in the wild (I 1–104), the latter also seems to have been a hybrid creature:

> All his body is matted with hair, he bears long tresses like those of a woman: the hair of his head grows thickly as barley, he knows not a people, nor even a country. Coated in hair like the god of the animals, with the gazelles he grazes on grasses, *joining the throng* with the game at the water-hole, his heart *delighting* with the beasts in the water. (I 105–112; George, 1999, p. 5; Ponchia, 2019, pp. 187, 200)

"Enkidu" means "Lord of the good place" (Leick, 1998, p. 44; 2004, p. 255), suggesting the ancients' evaluation of this location.[31] The hunter was astonished by the creature, complaining to his father that Enkidu was aiding the animals and interfering with his activity:

> Over the hills he [*roams all day*,][always] with the herd [*he grazes on grasses*,][always] his tracks [*are found*] by the water-hole, [I am afraid and] I dare

[31] Despite the different versions, some scholars adduce parallels between Enkidu and the hairy Esau (Gen 25:24–27; Hamari, 2011, pp. 625–642).

> not approach him. [He fills in the] pits that I [myself] dig, [he pulls up] the snares that I lay. [He sets free from my grasp] all the beasts of the field, [he stops] me doing the work of the wild. (I 126–133; George, 1999, p. 6)[32]

When his father advises him to send a woman to seduce Enkidu so that the animals will shun him, he chooses Samhat the harlot:

> For six days and seven nights Enkidu was erect, as he coupled with Shamhat.
> When with her delights he was fully sated, he turned his gaze to his herd.
> The gazelles saw Enkidu, they started to run, the beasts of the field shied away from his presence.
> Enkidu had defiled his body so pure, his legs stood still, though his herd was in motion.
> Enkidu was weakened, could not run as before, but now he had *reason*, and wide understanding. (I 193–202; George, 1999, 8)

Not only is he ostracized by the animals but he also converses with Samhat during intercourse, in deviation from normal animal custom (Leick, 2004, p. 266).[33]

Setting out off to cut cedars—one of the symbols of kingship in the ancient Near East— the two protagonists kill Huwawa, Guardian of the forest, on the way (Schaffer, 1983, p. 307). The purpose of the adventure,

[32] Hunting did not end with the development of agriculture. For hunting in the ancient Near East, see Hughes, 2007, pp. 49–51; Foster, 2002, p. 285.

[33] The motif of sexual contact with a woman in order to "civilize" wild men also occurs in the fifth-century Armenian version of Pseudo-Callisthenes' *Alexander Romance*, the earlier Greek version not containing this third-century passage. Some scholars note the Egyptian motifs and elements from the Gilgamesh Epic that appear therein (Nowotka, 2017, pp. 25–27; Anderson, 2012). While they do not cite our story, the affinities with the tale of Enkidu and the harlot are intriguing:

> Then there appeared to us, about nine or ten o'clock, a man as hairy as a goat. And once again, I was startled and disturbed to see such beasts. I thought of capturing the man, for he was ferociously and brazenly barking at us. And I ordered a woman to undress and go to him on the chance that he might be vanquished by lust. But he took the woman and went far away, where, in fact, he ate her. And he roared and made strange noises with his thick tongue at all our men who had run forth to reach her and to set her free. (Pseudo-Callisthenes, *Alexander Romance*, §209; Wolohojia, 1969, pp. 113–114)

For the motif of the wild man who becomes civilized in early Indian sources, see Abusch, 2015, pp. 177–218.

however, was to gain experience and fame, killing animals (even if in their dreams) being neither in self-defense nor for sport, food, or clothing (IX 8–27′).[34] Gilgamesh even boasts to Siduri the tavern-keeper of having killed lions, the bull of heaven that sent Inanna, and Huwawa (X 30–34, 55–58; Abusch, 2015, pp. 168–170). While his slaughter of the bull may be explained as an act of defense, protecting the inhabitants of his city, it is particularly gruesome, the two companions removing its heart and then prostrating themselves before Šamaš (VI 147–148).

Although Huwawa, Guardian of the forest, was an intimidating "superhuman" figure legitimately appointed to his role by Enlil (III 55′–62′; Jacobsen, 1976, p. 202; van der Toorn, 1999, pp. 431–432), Gilgamesh and Enkidu's slaying of him was an abhorrent act (Feldt, 2016, pp. 358, 371). In both versions, the earlier Sumerian (Gilgamesh and Huwawa) and later Babylonian, Huwawa pleads for his life (GaH, 153e–187; Gilg., V 148′–159′). Enkidu has no compassion, however, killing him with his bare hands according to the Sumerian version and encouraging Gilgamesh to undertake the task and then immediately joining in according to the Babylonian (GaH, 179–180; Gilg., V 160′–343′; Empson, 1976, pp. 246, 250; Schaffer, 1983, p. 308). Harming a person who entreats mercy compounds the severity of such an act in ethical terms. In the Joseph cycle, for example, the brothers acknowledge that they have been punished for their sin: "They said to one another, 'Alas, we are paying the penalty for what we did to our brother; we saw his anguish when he pleaded with us, but we would not listen. That is why this anguish has come upon us'" (Gen 42:21).

This discussion evinces that although Enkidu had earlier been a man of nature, protecting the animals, he is now swept up in Gilgamesh's violence. For his part, up until his encounter with Utnapištim, Gilgamesh had been a cruel tyrant and possibly even a predator (Fleming & Milstein, 2010, p. 456). Their slaying of the Guardian violating the order the gods had imposed, they had to be punished. Gilgamesh's hybrid (man-god) nature may have meant that he was not killed with Enkidu (Lord, 1990, pp. 372–374).

[34] See in particular Shifra and Klein's reconstruction (1996, pp. 255–256).

As we noted above, however, his meeting with Utnapištim, who protected the animals in the ark—together with Enkidu's death and his coming to terms with his mortality—changed something in his character, transforming him from an egotistical hero into a person who treated others well. Enkidu—possibly also originally a hybrid creature—underwent the reverse process, his "humanization" alienating him from the animal kingdom and ultimately costing him his life.

Human-Animal Relations

Finally, we turn to the human plane. Here, numerous epics present exemplary friendships between human beings and animals. The Cursing of Agade, for example, depicts the city in its days of glory as characterized by warm mutual relations between human beings and wild animals. Knowing that they would not be harmed. the latter had no fear of entering human settlements:

> …that monkeys, mighty elephants, water buffalo, exotic animals, as well as thoroughbred dogs, lions, mountain ibexes, and *alum* sheep with long wool would jostle each other in the public squares. (lines 18–24; Black et al., 2004, p. 118)

Etana and the Eagle similarly recounts the tale of a poplar tree that grew close to a temple, in the top of whose branches the mythological Anzu-bird nested and in whose roots a snake made its home.[35] Although the two animals make a pact, the eagle blatantly breaks it and carries off the snake's offspring. Significantly, the snake—represented as a dangerous animal in numerous mythologies—plays the role of innocent victim here. The ancients being very wary of snakes, they appear as poisonous in many myths (Teeter, 2002, p. 253; Lewis & Llewellyn-Jones, 2018, p. 758).[36]

[35] In the Sumerian kings' list, Etana is the twelfth queen of Kiš. The extant text has undergone numerous evolutions (Green & Black, 2000a, p. 109; Dalley, 2000, p. 189). For the broken tablet that recites Etana's tragic death, see Kinner-Wilson, 1974, pp. 248–49.

[36] As we saw above, snakes attacked Dumuzi's flock. For an Assyrian prayer against snakes, see Foster, 1993, pp. 1:128–29.

From a human perspective, they also possess positive attributes, helping farmers cope with vermin (Cool Root, 2002, p. 176).

Here, the snake appeals to Utu/Šamaš, who also served as the god of justice (McCall, 1990, p. 26). The latter tells him to capture the eagle by cunning, cut off his wings, pluck his feathers, and cast him into a deep pit to meet his death. The snake following these instructions, the eagle then pleads with Utu/Šamaš to grant him mercy. The god finally determines to divert Etana—on his way to find the plant of birth for his barren wife (EaE I–II)—to give aid. According to Shifra and Klein's reconstruction of the corrupt text, the eagle asks Utu/Šamaš for permission to communicate with human beings (EaE III 1–8; Shifra & Klein, 1996, p. 152). Etana meets the eagle on route and inquires as to whether he will aid him to find the plant. The eagle giving his consent, Etana nurses it back to health:

> When Etana heard this, he covered the front of the pit with juniper, made for it and threw down […] thus he kept[2] the eagle alive in the pit. He began to teach it to fly again. For one [month], then a second [month] he kept[2] the eagle alive in the pit and began to teach it to fly again. For third [month], then a forth mo[nth] he kept[2] the eagle alive in the pit and began to teach it to fly again. [Etana] helped it for seven months. In the eight month he helped it out of the pit. The eagle, now well fed, was as strong as a fierce lion. The eagle made its voice heard and spoke to Etana, "My friend, we really are friends, you and I." (EaE III 25–26; Dalley, 2000, p. 197; cf. Foster, 1993, p. 1:445)

When the eagle recovered, he took Etana on a journey across the heavens, even aiding him in finding the plant of birth (EaE II 27–IV 44; Horowitz, 1990, p. 517; Leick, 1998, p. 60; cf. Winitzer, 2013, pp. 450–451).

Ethically speaking, the eagle was justly punished for his abominable act—ultimately receiving mercy from the god of justice who sent Etana to save him. Etana's motives for helping the bird stemmed from self-interest, however, the eagle promising to join in the search for the plant of birth. This accords with the fact that human beings generally act in their own interests (Singer, 2004, p. 82). In order to comprehend animal suffering, people must understand that creature also have interests of their own (Singer, 1975, p. 9; Linzey & Linzey, 2014, p. 10).

Here, there is no principled recognition of animal interests or any attempt to balance human-animal interests (Epstein, 2004, p. 158; Gruen, 2011, pp. 74–75; Calarco, 2015, p. 13). Nor is there any pure act of compassion in which a human being sacrifices his own interests in favor of those of an animal—a form of altruism from the perspective of intention rather than consequence alone (Linzey, 2009, p. 3; 2013, p. 35, 55). Even if his act does serve his own interests, Etana nonetheless helps the bird. We might even go so far as to say that the eagle was changed for the better in ethical terms: after committing an awful sin and being severely punished for blatantly breaking his pact with the snake, he keeps his word and aids Etana in finding the plant of birth.

Close human-animal relations also appear in the Lugalbanda and Anzu-Bird epic. Lugalbanda was the third king of the first dynasty that ruled Uruk (ca. 2700–2600 BCE). In the epic, however, he is still his predecessor Enmerkar's chief of staff.[37] The text portrays Lugalbanda's virtues as making him fit for leadership—as well as the human desire to fly. In the first part, the protagonist falls ill during a journey from Uruk to Arata, his companions leaving him in a cave in the mountains with a supply of food (cf. Vanstiphout, 2003, p. 139). When he recovers, he ascends to the Anzu-bird's nest in the tree tops on one of the highest mountains. The eagle and his partner not being there, Lugalbanda takes care of their offspring:

> Lugalbanda is wise and he achieves mighty exploits. In preparation of the sweet celestial cakes he added carefulness to carefulness. He kneaded the dough with honey, he added more honey to it. He set them before the young nestling, before the Anzud chick, gave the baby fatty meat to eat. He fed it sheep's fat. He popped the cakes into its beak. He settled the Anzud chick in its nest, painted its eyes with kohl, dabbed white cedar scent onto its head, put up a twisted roll of salt meat. He withdrew from the Anzud's nest, awaited him in the mountains where no cypresses grow. (LAB 50–62; Black et al., 2004, pp. 23–24; Shifra & Klein, 1996, p. 164; cf. Vanstiphout, 2003, p. 139; Verderame, 2021, pp. 17–18)

[37] For Enmerkar, see Annus, 2016, pp. 64–65.

When he returns to the nest, the Anzu-bird greatly appreciates the gesture, blessing Lugalbanda: looking down in flight, he explains to him how to catch up with his companions (lines 63–219). When he does so, they ask him how he survived:

> Holy Lugalbanda replies to them, "The banks of the mountain rivers, mothers of plenty, are widely separated. With my legs I stepped over them, I drank them like water from a waterskin; and then I snarled like a wolf, I grazed the water-meadows, I pecked at the ground like a wild pigeon, I ate the mountain acorns." (lines 238–243; Black et al., 2004, p. 27; cf. Vanstiphout, 2003, p. 149)

Lugalbanda's behavior here recalls that of Enkidu before he is civilized: he cares for the eagle's nestling, despite leaving it when he has to return to duty (Falkowitz, 1983, p. 104). It is thus difficult to ascertain whether his treatment of it is based on pure compassion or whether he secretly anticipated some recompense from the Anzu-bird.

In Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave, in contrast, the hero hunts and captures animals in abundance, including those that are wounded, offering sacrifices in honor of the gods, who delight in the feast:

> As the sun was rising … Lugalbanda, invoking the name of Enlil, made An, Enlil, Enki and Ninhursag sit down to a banquet at the pit, at the place in the mountains which he had prepared. The banquet was set, the libations were poured—dark beer, alcoholic drink, light emmer beer, wine for drinking which is pleasant to the taste. Over the plain he poured cool water as a libation. He put the knife to the flesh of the brown goats, and he roasted the dark livers there. He let their smoke rise there, like incense put on the fire. As if Dumuzi(d) had brought in the good savours of the cattle pen, so An, Enlil, Enki and Ninhursag consumed the best part of the food prepared by Lugalbanda. Like the shining place of pure strength, the holy altar of Suen … On top of the altar of Utu and the altar of Suen … he decorated the two altars with the lapis lazuli … of Inana. Suen … He bathed the *a–an–kar*. When he had bathed the … he set out all the cakes properly. (lines 371–392; Black et al., 2004, pp. 19–20; cf. Vanstiphout, 2003, p. 125)

In everything related to the gods, he thus has no compassion for the animal world, happily offering sacrifices in the hope of advancing his own interests (Jacobsen, 1989, p. 85; Larsen, 2005, p. 14).

The abuse of animals outside ritual contexts is reflected in an epic known as Enmerkar and En-suḫgir-ana. When Enmerkar of Unug (Uruk?) seeks to subject to the far-off city of Arata in the region of the Iranian plateau (Majìdzedeh, 1976, pp. 105–113; Hansman, 1978, pp. 331–336; Black, 2000b, p. 105), a competition is arranged between the cities. Ur-Girnuna, the wizard of Arata, makes the cows and goats speak and the animals infertile, thus interfering with the divine order:

> In that day the animal pen and the byre were turned into a house of silence; they were dealt a disaster. There was no milk in the udder of the cow, the day darkened for the calf, its young calf was hungry and wept bitterly. There was no milk in the udder of the goat; the day darkened for the kid. The kid and its goat lay starving, its life … The cow spoke bitterly to its calf; the goat … to its kid. The holy churn was empty … was hungry … lay starving. On that day the animal pen and the byre were turned into a house of silence; they were dealt a disaster. (EEs 198–208; Black et al., 2004, pp. 8–9)

Here, not only the adult animals but also their helpless offspring are injured. Their appeal to Utu/Šamš for help is immediately followed by a contest between Ur-Girnuna of Arata and Sagburu of Unug.[38] The wizard and enchantress send fish eggs down the river, the wizard creating another type of animal from them each time and the enchantress a stronger predator who kills them. Winning the contest, she condemns Ur-Girnuna to death in the river on account of the catastrophe he brought upon the animals (lines 210–273; cf. Shepperson, 2012, p. 58).

[38] A third-millennium Sumerian love charm compares a couple's love to an animal's concern for its offspring: "As the shepherd seeks for the sheep/ The goat her kid/ The ewe (her) lamb/ The jenny her foal" (lines 15–18; Foster, 1993, p. 1:60).

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the ethical dimension of human-animal relations in Mesopotamian literature. According to the conventional Sumerian view, the world was created by two of the first gods, Anu and Enlil, who separated the sky from the earth. Other minor gods subsequently being created, human beings were fashioned due to the gods' wish for somebody to take care of their needs and shoulder the burden of their hard work. In contrast to the Hebrew Bible, the early versions do not mention the creation of the animal world. According to the creation stories, Enki, the god of the earth, wisdom, and sweet water, forms the animals. In other sources, Enlil, the Storm-god, was also involved in the process, minor gods being responsible for taking care of the animal kingdom.

As in Genesis, a number of myths evince that the primal world was one of peace and harmony. The Mesopotamians believing that human procreation disturbed Enlil's rest, however, the god determined to wipe out everything on earth. In contrast to the biblical Flood story, this decision did not derive from any ethical considerations, even the survival of humanity and the animals being due to Enki's deception and personal interests. In one version, the Mesopotamian Flood hero was even unprincipled.

Inanna, the goddess of physical love and war, did not hesitate to harm animals in order to fulfill her desires, also causing Dumuzi, the Shepherd-god, the animals' benefactor, to be taken down to Sheol.

With respect to the attitude of hybrid creatures to the animal kingdom, Gilgamesh—two-thirds god and one-third human—acts cruelly towards both his fellows and the animals. The death of his companion Enkidu and his meeting with Utnapištim and his partner who save him from the Flood make him realize that he will never become immortal, however. This recognition leads him to change his approach to others. For his part, Enkidu—originally a hybrid human-animal creature of some sort—undergoes the reverse process: from living harmoniously in the wild with the beasts of the forest and protecting them from hunters, he becomes a human being they shun. Instead of restraining Gilgamesh,

he joyfully joins him in harming the animals and Huwawa, Guardian of the forest. Punished for these sins, he pays with his life.

Two cases of a warm and close relationship between human beings and animals were adduced. Etana nurses the Anzu-bird back to health and Lugalbanda takes care of the eagle's offspring when its parents leave the nest—in exchange for which the eagle aids him in finding his companions who had continued on their way after he fell ill. Despite the fact that in both cases human interest plays a part, they both involve compassion. Lastly, we observed how Enki was punished by Ur-Girnuna of Arata for hurting the animals.

Abbreviations

ANET^3	Prichard James B. 1969. Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament. Princeton: Princeton University Press
BA	Biblical Archaeologist
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Orient Research
Bib	Biblica
CC	Continental Commentary
DBF	The Debate between Bird and Fish
DD	Dumuzi's Dream
DSG	The Debate between Sheep and Grain
EaE	Etana and the Eagle
EEs	Enmerkar and En-suḫgir-ana
EkNg	Enki and Ninḫursag
EkNh	Enki and Ninmaḫ
ElNl	Enlil and Ninlil
EWO	Enki and the World Order
GEU	Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Underworld
IDNW	Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld
JANER	Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions
JANES	Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Society
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JCS	Journal of Cuneiform Studies

JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review
LAB	Lugalbanda and the Anzu(d)-Bird
ML	Mikra Leyisrael
Or NS	Orientalia Nova Series
RA	Revue d'Assyriologie et d'archéologie Orientale
RB	Revue Biblique
SFS	Sumerian Flood Story
StOr	Studia Orientalia
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

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5

Animals in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Law Codes

Ancient Law

All legal systems include statutes and ordinances based on a perception of justice and morality (Cohn, 1999, p. 7; Crouch, 2016, p. 341). Norms that guide people to behave in specific ways, laws develop in cultures structured by rules that regulate human conduct. Ordinances both granting and limiting power, the law is a far more complex phenomenon than a simple collection of measures, governing the mutual relations with the society in which these are applied (Mautner, 1998, pp. 547–548, 552, 560). While social, economic, political, and cultural conditions affect jurisdiction, the latter also impacts its environment—not merely formally (Brunner, 2003, p. 726). Rather than a random assembly of rules and regulations, codification is designed to create a unified and coherent system (Barak, 1992, pp. 1:164–165).

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In the ancient Near East, instructions regarding proper conduct in accordance with social norms appear as early as the sapiential literature and collections of Sumerian proverbs from southern Mesopotamia (Hurowitz, 2012, p. 1:55; Klein, 2011, pp. 550–556).[1] Towards the end of the third millennium, this society consolidated a law code known as Ur-Nammu (Lafont & Westbrook, 2003, pp. 183–122).[2] Several other codes of this type subsequently emerged in Babylon, Assyria, and Hatti in Anatolia. Formulated as hypothetical cases and containing the rulings in their regard (see below) and called *dinâti* (laws) in Akkadian, these correspond to what Exod 21:1 refers to as "ordinances": "These are the ordinances (דינים) that you shall set before them" (Finkelstein, 1978, pp. 588–589; van de Mieroop, 2016, pp. 144–155).[3]

In contrast to later legal codes, these largely served as propaganda rather than an important source of jurisdiction, the primary source of law appearing to be regulations and royal edicts (Westbrook, 2003, pp. 19–23; Malul, 2006, pp. 17–19; 2010, pp. 20–21; Jacobs, 2021, p. 29).[4] Despite the emergence of writing, these also continued to function as oral law (Bottéro, 1992, pp. 180–181; von Soden, 1994, pp. 131, 141; Westbrook, 2003, pp. 13–16; Demsky, 2012, pp. 318–324). While, the sapiential literature preached proper conduct in Mespotamia, Hatti, and Egypt (Ockinga, 2001, pp. 484–487; James, 2007, pp. 73–99; Lloyd, 2014, p. 168; Shupak, 2016, pp. 7–19), the Egyptians rarely formulated extensive law codes, these only emerging in the land of the Nile at a later date (747–332 BCE) (Shaw & Nicholson, 1995, pp. 159–160).

From a literary perspective, the pentateuchal laws differ from other ancient Near Eastern codes, being integrated into the historical account of the Israelites' journeying from Egypt to Canaan rather than forming independent compositions. Deriving from God himself, they were given to the people by Moses, these two facts bestowing their legitimacy upon them. The Israelites bound themselves to obey them in a covenant

[1] See Chaps. 2 and 3.

[2] Egyptian legal sources adduce laws and "edicts" but not codes. Some scholars argue that the latter existed but have not survived (Jasnow, 2003a, pp. 255–256; 2003b, pp. 289–290).

[3] Biblical quotations follow the NRSV.

[4] While no evidence exists in support of the theory, the Israelite kings may also have issued royal edicts.

renewed on various occasions (cf. Deut 12:27; Josh 24:1; 2 Kgs 23:1–3) (Loewenstamm, 1978, p. 621; Wright, 2004, pp. 26, 96; Patrick, 2014, p. 507; cf. Crouch, 2016, pp. 344–345).

In general terms, the Hebrew Bible attaches great importance to legal matters, the Israelite perception being governed by the need to act justly and rightly (cf. Gen 18:19; Isa 2:7; Jer 4:2; Amos 5:24; Mic 6:8; etc.). These two notions, together with the root שפ"ט, indicate a focus on helping the weak—an ethical stance also reflected in Mesopotamian sources (Weinfeld, 1995, pp. 25–41).

Animals in Pentateuchal and Ancient Near Eastern Tort Law

Animals appear in ancient law primarily in relation to property law. Designed to protect an individual's possessions, these regulations formed the heart of ancient Near Eastern legal codes (Finkelstein, 1978, p. 613). One of the principal issues in this context was the stealing of livestock, a phenomenon known from the fourteenth-century Egyptian El-Amarna archives (Breier, 2016, p. 20). Jacob maintains that he did not ask for compensation when some of Laban's flock were stolen while he was herding them, for example: "That which was torn by wild beasts I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it myself; of my hand you required it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night" (Gen 31:39).

The Decalogue treating stealing as a cardinal offense (Exod 20:15; Deut 5:17; cf. Lev 19:11), the prophets and rabbinic Sages reproved the people on this account—including the poor who stole to fill their stomachs (cf. Isa 1:23; Jer 2:26, 7:9; Hos 4:2; Zech 5:3–4; Prov 6:30, 29:24) (Shupak, 2007, p. 65; Hurowitz, 2012, p. 1:230). As per the biblical norm, the punishment was a fine double the worth of the animal, those unable to pay it being sold into slavery for a designated period of time (cf. Exod 22:2).[5] It is reasonable to assume that whatever was stolen had to be returned to the owner in addition to payment of the fine (cf. Lev 5:23).

[5] If a free man sold into slavery was kidnapped and found in the offender's house (cf. Joseph), he was subject to the death penalty (cf. Gen 37:25–27, 40:15; Exod 21:16; Hittite Laws [HL], 19–20).

If a person was caught with a still-live stolen animal, he was required to pay double its worth, as in all cases of theft (Exod 22:8). If the animal was no longer in his possession, however—having either been sold or slaughtered—the punishment was heavier: "When someone steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, the thief shall pay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep" (Exod 22:1). According to Maimonides (1135–1204 CE), this stringency may derive from the desire for deterrence, the rearing of domestic animals being prevalent during the biblical period (Frick, 1993, p. 90).[6]

In Mesopotamian law, the eighteenth-century Babylonian Code of Hammurabi stipulates that the theft of animals from temples or palaces was a more serious offense than stealing from an ordinary individual: "If a man steals an ox, a sheep, a donkey, a pig, or a goat—if it belongs either to the god or to the palace, he shall give thirtyfold; if it belongs to a commoner, he shall replace it tenfold; if the thief does not have anything to give, he shall be killed" (CH, 8) (Roth, 1997, p. 82). The city of Nuzi, east of the Euphrates, adopted rules governing theft from ordinary people, the punishment for which was a fine of up to twelve times the animal's worth (N IV 326, 334, 347) (Noy, 1989, pp. 39–40). If a shepherd or herdsman changed the mark on a flock and then sold the sheep, he was required to return ten times as many animals as he originally stole (CH, 265).

In fourteenth-century Middle Assyria, a person who altered the mark on a friend's sheep in order to sell them had to return the stolen animals, was given 100 blows, had his head shaved, and was required to work for the king for a month (Middle Assyrian Laws, Tab. F, §1) (Roth, 1997, p. 187). Second-millennium Hittite law, which reflects the reform instituted in the royal jurisprudence, similarly relates to the theft of animals (Malul, 2010, p. 228). Herein, the person who stole a cow or horse over two years old or a ram was required to repay 15 animals of the same kind, the theft of a plowing ox, work horse, or trained goat, stag, or ram requiring repayment of 10 times the number stolen. The person who stole a cow, sheep, or castrated ram had to repay six times the number of animals

[6] Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed* 3.41: http://www.hermetics.org/pdf/sacred/The_Guide_for_the_Perplexed.pdf.

(HL, 57–59, 63–65, 67–69). If an ox, horse, mule, or ass was found in the thief's possession, "when its owner claims it, [he shall take] it in full; in addition, the thief shall give to him double" (HL, 70) (Roth, 1997, p. 227).

A person who stole a fattened pig was required to pay 12 shekels—six shekels for a pen pig. The punishment for stealing or killing a pregnant sow was financial restitution of six shekels and restitution in grain for the embryos in her womb (HL, 82–85). If it transpired that the animals had been consensually transferred to another person, however, the latter was not held to be a thief and the animals were restored to their owner (ibid, 66).

Hittite law also relates to the theft of bees. The punishment for stealing a swarm was five shekels (ibid, 91). The person who stole two or three hives, however, received a far greater sentence: "[If] anyone steals [2] or 3 bee hives, formerly the offender would have been exposed to bee-sting. But now he shall pay 6 shekels of silver. If anyone steals a bee-hive, if there are no bees in the hive, he shall pay 3 shekels of silver" (ibid, 92) (Roth, 1997, p. 228). In addition to evincing the development of the legal code, this text demonstrates the principle of "measure for measure"—i.e., punishment in kind. Two other Hittite laws reflect this notion, the offenders in these cases being killed by oxen (HL, 121, 166). Mesopotamian law also addresses the selling of animals by those who did not own them (CH, 35–36; Middle Assyrian Laws F §2), a person who unwittingly purchased a stolen beast being required to return it to its owner (Middle Assyrian Laws C, §5).

The issue of the legal responsibility of watchmen and shepherds was of great importance in ancient society. Beasts of burden being regarded as valuable assets, ancient legislators related very seriously to the responsibility of those appointed to guard them, those who rented them, and those who borrowed them. The Book of the Covenant in Exodus (20:19–23:33) notes that those under whose watch animals were stolen were required to pay an amount to the owner because they had been paid to do the job. In cases of rape, if they took an oath they were exempt from payment. If the animal died, they (and the shepherd) had to bring proof of the fact, provision of such again exempting them from payment (Exod 22:9–12).

The same law is reflected in the story of Jacob and Laban (Gen 31:39). Amos 3:12 also adduces this situation as a metaphor for the fate of Samaria (Paul, 1994, p. 67). While Israelite law exempted a person from paying in this case, however, David boasts to Saul that as a shepherd he had fought a lion and bear in order to protect his flock (1 Sam 17:34–35) (Garsiel, 1993, p. 160). This was a difficult and dangerous feat, Isaiah observing that lions were not "terrified by their [the shepherds'] shouting or daunted by their noise" (Isa 31:4) (Hoffman, 1994, p. 147). Shepherds exhibited not only courage in this respect but also moral fortitude—i.e., they were willing to risk their lives to defend helpless animals despite the fact that legally they were not held responsible or required to pay restitution.[7] Jeremiah and Ezekiel also compare the final kings of Judah to shepherds who betrayed the trust put in them. God nonetheless appointed loyal shepherds over the people from the house of David (Jer 23:1–6; Ezek 34:4–24) (Brin, 1993, pp. 174–175; Hoffman, 2004, p. 1:470; Kasher, 2004, pp. 2:667–669).[8]

Biblical law stipulates that if an animal dies or is injured while on loan, the legal owner must be compensated. If the owner was present at the time of its death, however, the borrower is not bound to pay (Exod 22:13) (Avishur, 1993, p. 138). According to the Code of Hammurabi, "If he [a man] should cause the loss of the ox or sheep which were given to him, he shall replace the ox with an ox of comparable value or the sheep with a sheep of comparable value to its owner" (263) (Roth, 1997, p. 129). If the number and offspring had decreased, the owner had to be paid a sum agreed to in a contract between the parties (CH, 264). If a plague broke out or a lion mauled the flock, however, the shepherd must swear an oath before god, thereupon being given the carcasses (ibid, p. 266). If he was responsible for the outbreak, on the other hand, he had to provide new stock to the owner (ibid, p. 267).

The Code of Hammurabi also addresses the issue of indirect responsibility for animals, here in regard to watchman employed to guard a storehouse containing grain for sowing or feed/fodder. If the seed or fodder

[7] David had a personal interest in preventing the flock being attacked, the latter belonging to his father.

[8] See also Chap. 7.

was stolen and found in his possession, his hand was cut off (CH, 253). If he exhausted the animal, he had to pay for double the grain or fodder he had been paid (CH, 254). If he rented out the animals for whom he had been made responsible or sold the grain and could fulfill his commitments to the owner, he was sentenced to be dragged by the cattle (CH, 255, 256).

With respect to the renting of an ox, if the renter let the animal die through carelessness or beating, he had to replace it (CH, 245). If he broke its legs or cut its neck tendons, the ox must also be replaced (CH, 246). For blinding one eye, the restitution was half the price of the ox; for breaking a horn, cutting off the tail or hoof tendons, a quarter of its price (CH, 247–248). If a rented ox or donkey died of a disease or from mauling, the renter was required to swear an oath before the gods, thereby exempting from payment (CH. 244, 249). A similar stipulation occurs in the Hittite Laws (HL, 75) and Laws of Ur-Nammu (34–37). While the perpetrator had to recompense the injured party according to Hittite law, the owner of the wounded animal could choose whether to receive another animal or keep the injured one and accept compensation (HL, 74, 77b).

With respect to the losing and finding of animals, the biblical law states: "When you come upon your enemy's ox or donkey going astray, you shall bring it back" (Exod 23:4). Deut 22:1–3 further stipulates that while an animal must be returned, if its legal owner is far away it may be kept until he asks for it. This corresponds to Hittite law:

> If anyone finds an ox a horse, or a mule, he shall drive it to the king's gate. If he finds it in the country, he shall present it to the elders. The finder shall harness it [i.e., use it while it is in his custody]. When its owner finds it, he shall take it in full, but he shall not have the finder arrested as a thief. But if the finder does not present it to the elders, he shall be considered a thief. (HL, 71)

If the ox is found dead or dies in a field, however, he must give the owner two oxen in restitution (HL, 72).

Ancient legislators were aware of the fact that not everyone who found a misplaced animal would voluntarily seek to return it to its owner.

Hittite law imposed severe sentences on such persons, especially if they removed the owner's mark from the animal. Those who tried to hide the animal's identity were required to return seven beast of the same species, of various ages (HL, 60–62) (cf. Malul, 2010, p. 242 n. 89).

If a person caused an animal's death, Leviticus stipulates that: "One who kills an animal shall make restitution for it; but one who kills a human being shall be put to death" (Lev 24:21) (Galil, 1993, p. 180). Hittite law similarly punished anyone who killed a pregnant sow (HL, 84), the punishment for killing a shepherd's dog being 20 shekels and 12 shekels for killing a dog trainer's (or: hunter's) dog (HL, 87–88). The stipulation: "If anyone strikes a dog of enclosure (?) a lethal blow, he shall pay one shekel of silver" (HL, 89) (Roth, 1997, p. 228) appears to refer to an owner-less dog. While this may indicate that Hittite law protected stray dogs, it may also serve as a generalized statement against the killing of any animal, thus explicitly falling within the field of ethics.

The residents Uruk in southern Mesopotamia worshiped Gula, the goddess of healing—who was also associated with dogs. A recently-published source from this site states:

> On the twenty-second day of the [fourth] month in the sixteenth year of Nabonidus I sat thereupon … and a big and small dog stood in front of me; after the big dog snatched a piece of bread from me, I grabbed a stick (and said to myself): "I want to beat the big dog." But the big dog jumped away, and I hit the puppy instead; and because of the blow I struck him, he died. (Wunsch, 2012, p. 28 [modified translation])

The wife of the worshiper, present at the incident, also attested to what had taken place. Unfortunately, the fragmentary state of the text precludes knowledge of the perpetrator's fate.

Ancient Near Eastern law also deals with the damage animals cause. The ox being liable to wound or injure, biblical law differentiates between two types of oxen, the "innocent"—i.e., one unaccustomed to goring—and the "warned" ox who has a history of goring. When the former kills a person, it is stoned but the owner is not punished. If the latter kills a freeman, it is stoned and the owner is also put to death—unless he ransoms himself to redeem his life with the agreement of the other party. If

it kills a slave or maidservant, the owner must pay 30 shekels in compensation (Exod 21:28–32) (Avishur, 1993, p. 136).

The notion of ransom rests on the fact that the act was not committed with one's own hands or with the intention to kill. In contrast to other ancient Near Eastern laws, biblical legislation does not recognize generally ransom: "Moreover you shall accept no ransom for the life of a murderer who is subject to the death penalty; a murderer must be put to death" (Num 35:31); "For the ransom of life is costly, and can never suffice" (Ps. 49:8). This circumstance may reflect the biblical ethos that human life cannot be evaluated in monetary terms (Greenberg, 1997, pp. 266–268; Wise, 2000, p. 29; Patrick, 2014, p. 509).

Biblical law also addresses the injuries caused by animals to other animals—an ox that gores another ox and kills it, for example. If the ox is "innocent," it is sold and the proceeds divided equally between its legal owner and the injured party. If it is a "warned" ox, its legal owner must pay the injured party the ox's full value, although he is permitted to keep the carcass (Exod 21:35–36). The Laws of Ešnunna (LE, 54–55) and Code of Hammurabi (CH, 250–252) also deal with the damage caused by oxen. Both relate to the goring of animals, like the Hebrew Bible distinguishing between "innocent" and "warned" oxen and calling for greater restitution for the death of a freeman than that of a slave. While the two owners divide the price of the living and dead oxen equally between them in the case of an innocent ox that kills another (LE, 53), no details are given regarding the "warned" ox.

Another form of damage derived from the occasional grazing of oxen in a neighbor's field. The Code of Hammurabi stipulates in this regard:

> If a shepherd does not make an agreement with the owner of the field to graze sheep and goats, and without the permission of the owner of the field grazes sheep and goats on the field, the owner of the field shall harvest his field and the shepherd who grazed sheep and goats on the field without the permission of the owner of the field shall give in addition 6000 silas of grain per 18 ikus (of field) to the owner of the field. If, after the sheep and goats come up from the common irrigated area when the pennants announcing the termination of pasturing are wound around the main city-gate, the shepherd releases the sheep and goats into a field and allows the

> sheep and goats to graze in the field-the shepherd shall guard the field in which he a1lowed them to graze and at the harvest he shall measure and deliver to the owner of the field 18,000 silas of grain per 18 ikus (of field). (CH, 57–58; Roth, 1997, pp. 92–93)

Hittite law, in contrast, allows the owner of the field to let the oxen work for a day, returning them to their owner at the end of the day (HL, 79). It also permits financial compensation for damage to fertile vineyards caused by animals—a case also addressed in the biblical text: "When someone causes a field or vineyard to be grazed over, or lets livestock loose to graze in someone else's field, restitution shall be made from the best in the owner's field or vineyard" (Exod 22:5 [4]).

Like oxen, dogs were also a source of maiming. The fine imposed upon them resembles that relating to oxen (LE, 56). Canine eating habits could similarly be a nuisance: "If a dog devours lard, and the owner of the lard finds the dog, he shall kill it and retrieve the lard from its stomach. There will be no compensation for the dog" (HL, 90) (Roth, 1997, p. 245; Malul, 2010, p. 245).

Animals thus regularly appear in ancient Near Eastern tort laws, many of which exhibit close parallels to one another and all being designed to regulate human-animal relations in an agricultural society.

Animals in the Ethical/Humane Laws in the Hebrew Bible

All the ordinances discussed above relate to the damage caused to human beings due to their use of and contact with the animal world, the primary purpose of the torts laws being to compensate for loss (Cohn, 1999, p. 718). Framed within the specific legislating and jurisprudential culture, the amount to be paid involves ethical principles (Barak, 1983, pp. 265–266). Responsibility was another important moral principle (Shagar, 2016, p. 46). These statutes relate principally to human welfare, however, largely disregarding animal suffering. According to the traditional legal view, animals were considered objects that, while associated with the owner's rights, had none of their own. Under this system, they

thus had little legal protection (Epstein, 2004, p. 144; cf. Patterson, 2006, p. 19). Animals belonging to a person were his property and possessed financial value. As living beings, however, they formed a special class of property: the owners' interests lying in keeping them alive and ensuring they were fit to work, they sought to provide them with all the food and care they needed (Francione, 2010, pp. 26, 79). Under such circumstances, the best that could be done was to treat them fairly and considerately in accordance with the law (Garner, 2010, p. 130).

Legislators were thus responsible for understanding the particular situation of animals and translate ethics into legal language—as exemplified in the biblical model. Intended to regulate life, biblical law raises numerous ethical norms to the status of legal canons, turning them into positive (do) and negative (do not do) commandments (Elon, 1988, p. 1:103; Cohn, 1999, p. 94; Sessler, 2008, p. 85).[9] In this way, they became "sacred ordinances," possessing absolute and binding authority because they represent the divine will (Lurie, 2007, p. 49).

Forming the basis upon which the Hebrew judicial system later developed during the Second Temple and Talmudic period (Shagar, 2016, p. 51), pentateuchal law includes injunctions relating to faith, ritual, ethics, prohibitions/licenses and proper conduct between human beings/God, in society, and personally (Albeck, 1999, p. 11, 13).[10] In later periods, the Sages also incorporated ethical issues deriving from non-Jewish sources into the "sea of halakhah" (Lichtenstein, 2016, pp. 15–36), distinguishing in technical terms between binding laws related to civil/financial law and things prohibited and allowed (Elon, 1988, p. 1:109).

Other biblical laws address human-animal relations other than those involving damages. Belonging to the field of ethics—i.e., moral acts that should be performed (Spiegel, 1992, pp. 91–91; Clarke, 1996, p. 307; Hare, 2005, p. 160; Weinryb, 2008, p. 1:122)—these frequently run

[9] The majority of the biblical precepts are negative, even those not formulated negatively being so implicitly, the basic premise being that human drives and instincts are naturally destructive than constructive and must therefore be controlled (Rotenstreich, 2014, pp. 374–375). In formal terms, they are divided into casuistic (descriptive) and apodictic (categorical) laws (Collins, 2019, p. 11).

[10] The New Testament and Qumran literature also contain tort laws alongside religious norms relating to ethical and ritual fields (Hacohen, 2011, pp. 28, 237–238).

contrary to financially profitable courses of action (Leibowitz, 1999, p. 26; Lurie, 2007, p. 100).

The biblical ordinances discussed below are what are now known as "humane laws" (von Rad, 1973, p. 141; Isaacs, 2000, p. 79; Christensen, 2001, p. 293; Stone, 2018, p. 111; Goldingay, 2019, p. 106). In contrast to "humanism," a philosophic idea or principle that places human beings at the center (anthropocentrism) rather than God (theocentricism) (Leibowitz, 2006, pp. 363–364; Schweid, 2007, p. 21), "humane" signifies taking the other into consideration. This attitude may derive from the biblical principle that human beings should imitate the merciful God who created them (Wright, 2004, p. 38; Kemmerer, 2007, p. 5; Schlimm, 2021, pp. 98–99).[11] To "act like a human being" is to understand that other forms of life exist apart from *homo sapiens*, with whom we share the planet (Linzey, 1995, p. 28; Linzey & Cohn-Sherbock, 1997, p. 24 Isaacs, 2000, p. 77; Schwartz, 2001, p. 15; Milligan, 2015, pp. 100–101). Later Jewish sources not only assert that "man is better than the animals" but also the fact that the two groups share common features (Amsel, 2015, pp. 92–94).

In practical terms, this approach extends compassion to all (Gruen, 2011, p. 75). This view, which over the years has also exerted an influence upon civil law, is secular, atheistic ethical systems also recognizing humane values towards animals (Malkin, 2003, p. 97). While very little attention was paid to the question of how to treat animals in the classical world (Clark, 2011, p. 37), only isolated Greek philosophers exhibiting sympathy for the animal kingdom (Dombrowski, 1984, pp. 37–40, 56), modern social life rests on values inherited from cultural traditions that are largely informed by religious tenets (Ravitzky, 2005, p. 33).

Having presented the theoretical background in brief, let us now examine some of the ethical aspects of the biblical attitude towards animals. A hierarchy exists between human beings and animals from the very first moment of creation: "God said to them [Adam and Eve], 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living

[11] See Chap. 6.

thing that moves upon the earth'" (Gen 1:28).[12] Biblical morality customarily being framed in the context of control over the other (Barilan, 2012, p. 38), this hierarchy is to be understood in practical terms as assuming responsibility and giving guidance (Westermann, 1984, p. 161; Wenham, 1987, p. 33). Humankind is presented here as the representative of the merciful Creator, who places the responsibility for fostering and safeguarding creation upon the shoulders of human beings (Wood, 1999, p. 17; Wenz, 2001, pp. 227–228; Linzey, 2013, pp. 14–15, 28–29). As some scholars note, God does not wish human beings to be simply part of nature but wants them share it with him (Heschel, 1954, p. 17).

An important biblical principle, compassion must thus be directed towards animals as well as human beings (Levy & Levy, 2002, p. 57; Patterson, 2006, pp. 17–18; Linzey, 2008, pp. 290–292; 2009, pp. 28–42). This involves tolerance, understanding, and forgiveness. These sometimes clash with absolute justice (Blumenthal, 1986, pp. 589–592; Lichtenstein, 2015, p. 134), this being referred to as the "paradox of compassion" (Sagi, 2006, pp. 33–34). Some scholars also argue that responsibility (goodness) is an inherent part of human character because the fate of all creation hangs on humanity's shoulders, requiring complete identity between the "self" and ethics (Lévinas, 2004, p. 71; Ben-Pazi, 2016, p. 41).

The call for and definition of right behavior—including towards the animal world—is encoded in the Decalogue: "But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns" (Exod 20:20//Deut 5:14) (Nelson, 2002, p. 82; Tigay, 2016, p. 1:244). This law reflects the consideration to be given to beasts of burden, a principle resting on the tenet of humane treatment (Durham, 1987, p. 289). From an ethical perspective, animals are thus to be regarded as part of the community and thus deserving of rest (Miller, 2012, p. 79; cf. Linzey & Cohn-Sherbock, 1997, p. 24), responsibility for their welfare falling on human shoulders (Falk, 1991, p. 57; Collins, 2019, p. 112).

[12] See Chap. 6.

Early Mesopotamian myths, in contrast, claim that the gods maintain that such rest is their prerogative alone, not to be extended to human beings or animals. Marduk thus declares, for example: "Let me set up primeval man: Man shall be his name. Let me create a primeval man. The work of the gods shall be imposed (on him), and so they shall be at leisure" (Enūma-Eliš: VI 6–8; Dalley, 2000, pp. 260–261; cf. Propp, 2006, p. 177).[13]

According to the Pentateuch, the land also deserves to rest once every seven years, this law being known as the "sabbatical year." Herein, the fields are left fallow, enabling the animals to eat their fill (Miller, 2012, p. 80; Collins, 2019, p. 113).

> Now you shall sow your land for six years and gather in its yield, but *in* the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie uncultivated, so that the needy of your people may eat; and whatever they leave the animal of the field may eat. You are to do the same with your vineyard *and* your olive grove. (Exod 23:10–11//Lev 25:1–7)

Biblical law also stipulates that a stray animal must be returned to its owner, even if one is at odds with him (Exod 23:4). As we saw above, although ancient Near Eastern legal codes relate to lost animals that belong to someone, biblical laws also take consideration of animal suffering. *Inter alia*, this view is based on the juxtaposition of this ordinance with "humane" law (Durham, 1987, p. 331; Avishur, 1993, p. 145), the following injunction stating that beasts of burden must be helped up if they fall under the weight placed on them: "When you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden and you would hold back from setting it free, you must help to set it free" (Exod 23:5) (Houtman, 2000, p. 246). This principle is reinforced in Deut 22:4: "You shall not see your neighbor's donkey or ox fallen on the road and ignore it; you shall help to lift it up." The rabbinic Sages expanded this statute to include other animals: "There is no difference between an ox and another animal as regards falling into a pit" (m. B. Qam. 5:7) (Tigay, 2016, pp. 2:544–545).

Animals were also closely associated with the cultus, serving as one of the principal offerings sacrificed to God. Here, too, we find humane laws: "When an ox or a sheep or a goat is born, it shall remain seven days with

[13] See Chap. 4.

its mother, and from the eighth day on it shall be acceptable as the LORD's offering by fire" (Lev 22:27) (Galil, 1993, p. 157; Milgrom, 2000, p. 183; 2004, p. 273).[14] Some scholars maintain that the humane attitude mandated here is intended to rein in a religious-ritual fervor oblivious to animal sensitivities (Hartley, 1992, p. 362). This belief may also lie behind the prophetic critique of the cultus when it is not accompanied by ethical-moral conduct, the sacrifices then representing unnecessary killing (cf. Isa 1:10–17; Jer 7:1–15; Hos 4:4; 5:7; 6:6; Amos 5:21–25; Mic 3:8–12) (Smith, 1997, p. 139).[15]

Biblical law also prohibits killing two generations of a family at the same time: "But you shall not slaughter, from the herd or the flock, an animal with its young on the same day" (Lev 22:28). Both Second Temple and modern authors note that this ordinance reflects the need to preserve the species (b. Hull. 79a; Gerstenberger, 1996, p. 331). It also embodies a humane approach towards the animal world, however (Milgrom, 2000, p. 184; 2004, p. 273), the law itself giving preference to compassion over ritual requirements (Hartley, 1992, p. 362). Maimonides also associates this commandment with taking animal sensitivities into consideration:

> It is also prohibited to kill an animal with its young on the same day (Lev. xxii. 28) … for the pain of the animals under such circumstances is very great. There is no difference in this case between the pain of man and the pain of other living beings, since the love and tenderness of the mother for her young ones is not produced by reasoning, but by imagination, and this faculty exists not only in man but in most living beings. (*Guide for the Perplexed*, 3.48)

Modern scholarship supports this view, clearly demonstrating that animals have feelings (Moussaieff Masson & McCarthy, 1995; Bekoff, 2007; Safina, 2015).

One of the most well-known biblical laws regulating the treatment of animals is the prohibition against cooking a kid in its mother's milk

[14] Unfortunately, the practice of removing offspring too early from their parents continues today, primarily as a result of economic considerations (Bradshaw, 2004, p. 151; DeGrazia, 2008, p. 220; Rachels, 2011, p. 877).

[15] See also Chap. 6.

(Exod 23:19, 34:26; Deut 12:21).[16] Forming the basis of the Jewish laws of kashrut, some scholars argue that it was designed to steer the Israelites away from Canaanite practices. No direct proof of this assertion existing, however, it is likely to be a matter of humane treatment (Christensen, 2001, p. 293; Nelson, 2002, p. 181; Tigay, 2016, p. 1:404).

The law against taking a mother bird and her young explicitly rests on concern for animal welfare:

> If you come on a bird's nest, in any tree or on the ground, with fledglings or eggs, with the mother sitting on the fledglings or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young. Let the mother go, taking only the young for yourself, in order that it may go well with you and you may live long. (Deut 22:6–7)

Like the prohibition against slaughtering a mother and her offspring on the same day, this ordinance reflects the need to preserve the species and prevent causing the animals pain (von Rad, 1973, p. 141; Nelson, 2002, p. 268; Christensen, 2002, p. 497). Both statutes also appear to be designed to arouse human sensitivity towards parent-progeny relations within the animal kingdom (Tigay, 2016, p. 2:545). In this respect, they directly parallel the law enjoining respect for human parents: "Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, so that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you" (Deut 5:16; cf. Exod 20:12). Some scholars also associate these precepts with the injunctions regulating warfare, which allow fruit to be eaten from trees during an attack on an enemy city but prohibit the destruction of the trees themselves because: "Are trees in the field human beings that they should come under siege from you?" (Deut 20:19–20) (Cohen, 1993, p. 168).

The prohibition against yoking an ox and donkey together to plough a field (Deut 22:10) exemplifies a purely ethical commandment. Often interpreted in a broader sense as forbidding the harnessing of any two different species together (cf. Rashi ad loc.), it appears to be designed to protect the weak(er) animal and avert unnecessary suffering (Nelson, 2002, p. 269; Tigay, 2016, p. 2:549). According to the Roman polymath

[16] This is also found in an Assyrian curse: see SAA 2, Esarhaddon Succession Treaty, 547.

Marcus Terentius Varro (116–27 BCE), it was inexpedient to yoke together two oxen unequal in strength (Hooper & Ash, 1934, p. 235).

Biblical law also prohibits the muzzling of oxen while threshing (Deut 25:4). The animal custom of eating while being worked is known from an early Egyptian relief (*ANEP*, 26). Owners frequently adopting measures to prevent this in order to economize on feed or keep the animals at work, the Pentateuch forbids them from acting cruelly in this regard (Tigay, 2016, p. 2:613). During the Second Temple period, Josephus observes that the reason for this law lies in the fact that "it is not just to restrain our fellow-laboring animals, and those that work in order to its production, of this fruit of their labours" (*A.J.* 4.8.21). The Talmud similarly states that gagged animals are likely to be frustrated and suffer (b. B. Meṣ. 90a).

This law is further supported by the statement: "He [God] will give grass in your fields for your livestock, and you will eat your fill" (Deut 11:15) (Tigay, 2016, p. 1:349). While this asserts that God pledges to guarantee that human beings will have enough to eat, it also evinces that grass serves first and foremost as fodder for the animals. The rabbinic Sages inferred from this verse that human beings must feed their livestock before they themselves eat: "Rab Judah said in the name of Rab: A man is forbidden to eat before he gives food to his beast, since it says, *And I will give grass in thy fields for thy cattle, and then, thou shalt eat and be satisfied*" (b. Ber. 40a). Much earlier, this principle guided Eliezer, Abraham's servant, in his search for a wife for his master's son:

> Let the girl to whom I shall say, "Please offer your jar that I may drink," and who shall say, "Drink, and I will water your camels"—let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I shall know that you have shown steadfast love to my master. (Gen 24:14)[17]

The humane biblical laws make no mention of the punishment meted out to the offender, enforcement being first and foremost a matter of conscience and responsibility before God (Barrera, 2021, p. 76; cf. Barton, 2014, p. 21).[18]

[17] See Chap. 6.

[18] According to Barton (1998, p. 10), some laws govern feelings and emotions—e.g. "You shall not covet" (Exod. 20:17[13]; Deut. 5:21[17]). Relating primarily to thinking before acting, they are designed to control human drives (Rotenstreich, 2014, p. 375).

The Disparities Between Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Law

The major difference between the two sets of laws lies in the ethical aspect with which the former are imbued. This fact reflects the biblical sensitivity to animal feelings—part and parcel of its concern for the weak sectors of society (Haran, 2009, pp. 458–459). The prophets thus call upon the people to imitate God's redemptive acts in their relation with animals: "I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them" (Hos 11:4)[19] (Andersen & Freedman, 1980, p. 580; Stuart, 1987, p. 179; Macintosh, 1997, p. 179). Isaiah similarly compares God in his mercy to a shepherd who pastures and protects his flock: "They shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them down, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them" (Isa 49:10) (Blenkinsopp, 2002, p. 188; Goldingay & Payne, 2006, p. 2:176).[20] The psalms portray God as concerned for the creatures he has created no less than for human beings: "Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your judgments are like the great deep; you save humans and animals alike, O LORD" (Ps 36:6; cf. 104:11; 14, 27; 145:9, 16) (Felix, 1992, p. 325–326).

The Near Eastern legal codes and Pentateuch differ primarily due to the fundamental premises on which they rest and their respective authority. Mesopotamian thought was governed by the premise that the law embodied cosmic principles. Rather than serving as the source of law, however, Šamaš, the Sun-god, responsible for justice, was principally in charge of implementing it. In conceptual terms, the gods demanded that the kings establish law and justice. The ancient Near Eastern monarchs thus represented themselves as prime legislators.

In contrast to the Hebrew Bible, the ancient Near Eastern codes rested on economic rather than religious principles, not containing the same ethical demands by God that his people obey the spirit as well as the letter

[19] See Chap. 7.

[20] See Chap. 8.

of the law. The biblical texts portray God as gracious and compassionate towards all his creatures, the source of law and justice, and the formulator of ordinances interwoven with ethical commandments and admonitions. Whoever violates the covenant is thus first and foremost a sinner in God's eyes rather than in those of the king or injured party (Gen 39:9; 2 Sam 12:13). The ethical distinctiveness of biblical law is encapsulated in Moses' dictum: "Or what great nation *is there* that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?" (Deut 4:8) (Saggs, 1989, p. 159; Greenberg, 1997, pp. 261–263; Wise, 2000, pp. 27–29; Frymer-Kensky, 2003, p. 982; Barton, 2014, p. 22; Redditt, 2014, p. 150; Bartor, 2016, pp. 162, 175; Unterman, 2017, pp. 21, 24–25).

Conclusion

This chapter examines the attitude towards animals in the Hebrew Bible and other ancient Near Eastern legal codes. The first section presents the two groups of ordinances, the second comparing the tort laws in each system, looking at such issues as stealing, responsibility, shepherds, renters, and stray animals. It also discusses the various types of damages covered by these laws, revelaing the existence of close affinities between the biblical and ancient Near Eastern laws in the area of tort laws pertaining to animals, a clear trend towards deterrence and appropriate compensation for injuries exhibiting itself.

The third section analyzes biblical ordinances regulating human-animal relations without any parallel in other ancient Near Eastern law codes—the sole exception being the fine imposed for killing outdoor dogs. This evinces the existence of a series of statutes belonging to the ethical realm known today as "humane" laws designed to protect and promote animal welfare.

The fourth section addresses the divergence between the two groups of legal codes, demonstrating that this derives from the variant fundamental principles upon which they are based. While the ancient Near Eastern injunctions are attributed to the kings, the latter rather than the gods being responsible for their formulation, the biblical legal code is founded on the belief that its statutes were given to Moses by God, Moses then delivering

them to the Israelites. The fact that they incorporate torts and ethical principles that encompass the animal as well as human world is a function of God's status as a merciful and compassionate Creator concerned for all his creatures. This cardinal principle later found expression in the legal and philosophical thought of the rabbinic Sages and early Christianity.

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ANAP	Prichard, J. B. (Ed.). (1974). *Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament*. Princeton: Princeton University Press
CC	A *Continental* Commentary
CH	Code of Hammurabi
EL	Laws of Ešnunna
HCOT	Historical Commentary of the Old Testament
HL	Hittite Laws
ICC	*International* Critical Commentary
ML	Mikra Le'Yisrael
OHT	Olam ha-Tanach
OTL	Old Testament Library
SAA	States Archives of Assyria, Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project: https://assyriologia.fi/natcp/saa/
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

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6

Human-Animal Relations in Biblical Narrative and Historiography

This chapter examines the ethical aspects of human-animal relations in the pentateuchal and historiographical texts (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings and Chronicles). Informed by abstract thinking (Johnson, 2021, p. 105), "narrative ethics" must be "extracted" from them (Barton, 1998, pp. 20–21, 75)—an exercise that frequently imbues the latter with greater force (Burnside, 2011, pp. 13, 16).[1] Written by diverse authors, developing over a long period, and undergoing extensive editing, biblical literature contains various genres. Its religious ideas and theology thus cannot be treated as homogenous, the "book of books" in fact being a "library" (Kaduri, 2011, p. 5; Collins, 2019, pp. 1–2). As we noted in the Introduction, however, they are nonetheless bound by a common theological ethics (Barton, 1998, p. 15).

As the first chapters of Genesis, which deal with the creation, demonstrate, much ancient thought was conceived and formulated in religious terms (E. Leibowitz, 1991, p. 18; Y. Leibowitz, 2000, pp. 2–8), explaining the world from a divine perspective (Heschel, 1983, pp. 15–16;

[1] Biblical ethics are also intertwined with theology, revolving around the deity (C. Wright, 2004, pp. 17–26, 41, 68, 96).

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cf. Collins, 2019, p. 28). The Genesis stories present numerous ethical challenges (Schlimm, 2021, p. 85)—*inter alia*, how human beings should treat the rest of creation (Avery-Peck, 2014, p. 1:135). The first creation narrative provides a schematic and chronological view of the events—the formation of the plant world, animate universe, and human beings. The second first addresses the creation of Adam, then treating the trees and animals, and finally the fashioning of Eve.

Many biblical scholars maintain that the two accounts derive from separate sources (Schwartz, 2007, pp. 139—54); others argue that they represent two perspectives (Schweid, 2004, p. 33). In the present context, some regard the "duplication" as describing two human types—the conqueror and dominator of nature vs. the preserver and cultivator (Soloveitchik, 1992a, pp. 17–38; Good, 2011, p. 26). The dual stories suggest that God formed the world peacefully, little evidence of the struggle known from ancient Near Eastern sources emerging therein (Crouch, 2009, p. 30; Walton, 2011, p. 10l; Knohl, 2011, p. 133). In contrast to the Mesopotamian myths (see Chap. 4), for example, the Hebrew Bible portrays human beings as constituting part of the original plan of creation rather than the solution to a problem (Keel & Schroer, 2015, p. 111). Adam was thus specifically fashioned to serve as the divine representative on earth—not to fill the gods' needs (Berman, 2008, pp. 20–23). Or as Levinas asserts, rather than being necessary for the plan of creation human beings are its purpose (Levinas, 1997, 26). God is a beneficent and protective creator, sensitive to the fate of human beings and animals. Formed in his image, human beings are called upon to act in the same way (Muffs, 2005, pp. 41, 79; D. Hazony, 2010, p. 28; Izakson, 2020, p. 24)—some philosophers regarding indifference in this regard as a form of evil (A. Margalit, 2004, pp. 33–34; Heschel, 2011, p. 66; cf. Rawls, 1999, pp. 297–98).[2]

In contrast to paganism, God is not subject to any other entity, raw material, or the laws of nature (Kaufmann, 1976, pp. 302, 321; Zakowich, 1991, pp. 60–61; Hurowitz, 2008, pp. 3–5). Biblical thought thus refrains from attributing mysterious powers to nature or worshipping

[2] According to Singer (1999, p. 223), this is not yet a higher level of evil, being malicious intent.

natural forces. Nature rather subjugates itself to the higher divinity (Heschel, 1983, pp. 88–100).

According to the first account of creation, the first man was formed in God's image after the creation of the animal world (Gen 1:26–27).[3] The Hebrew צלם (*tzelem*) carries two meanings: a) as a technical term, it denotes an idol (cf. Num 33:52; 2 Kgs 11:18); b) in a borrowed sense, it signifies a (spiritual) being (cf. Gen 5:3; 9:6). While both valences are also borne by the Akkadian ṣalmu, in the Hebrew Bible all human beings share God's image rather than just the king (Cohen & Weinfeld, 1993, p. 33; *CAD* Ṣ, 1962, 78–85). Practical speaking, it conveys the idea of human beings' superior intelligence and consequent moral free will (Brams, 2016, pp. 14–16).[4]

Some scholars stress the human responsibility to cleave to and develop this "image," using it to nurture the environment and take care of creation (Soloveitchik, 1979, pp. 85–88, 91–92, 103, 111–12; Lichtenstein, 2018, pp. 5–6).[5] While their free will makes human beings ethical creatures who must give an account of their actions (Gen 3:9; Soloveitchik, 1979, p. 103; Avishur & Klein, 1993, p. 39), however, in contrast to the animals, they must be educated to discern between good and evil (Corruthers, 2011, p. 398).[6] Unlike paganism, their purpose is to walk uprightly before God rather than provide the deity with food and drink (Muffs, 2005, pp. 42–43).

After creating Adam and Eve, God blesses them:

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[3] The fact that human beings are created in God's image is also adduced in Gen 9:6 in connection with the prohibition against murder. On the first occasion (Gen 1:26–27), the idea thus relates to human dominance over the remainder of creation; on the second, to the limiting of this power and human responsibility (Sacks, 2005, pp. 9–10).

[4] According to Yeshayahu Leibowitz (1999, p. 16), human beings are conscious of their mortality, this awareness encouraging them to be sensitive to humanity and appreciate their lifespan. Asa Kasher, in contrast (Kasher, 2002, pp. 38, 74–75), argues that, while this recognition casts a shadow over human life, it does not prevent human beings from living a meaningful existence. For human self-consciousness, see the Introduction.

[5] The conflicts in the creation are inter-human, all having been created in the same image (Mills, 2001, p. 19).

[6] In some cases, a person's free will is taken away due to sin: cf. Exod 4:21; 10:1; 14:4; Isa 6:10; R. Kasher, 2006, p. 15.

> "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; and to every animal of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to everything that moves on the earth which has life, *I have given* every green plant for food"; and it was so. (Gen 1:28–30 [NASB])

According to this passage, God originally intended human beings to be vegetarians and develop mutual relations with the animal kingdom rather than killing them for meat or sport (Knohl, 2007, p. 18; Knohl, 2011, p. 134). The Hebrew Bible thus addresses human-animal relations from an ethical perspective right from the outset.[7] In the translation cited above, human beings are presented as created to dominate the animal world, as indicated by the verbs "rule" and "subdue." This might give rise to a moral dilemma if interpreted as giving human beings license to oppress animals. The Hebrew employs root רד"ה (radah), once in the future tense and once in the imperative. While this can signify harsh, tyrannical rule, particularly towards enemies (Isa 14:6; Ps 110:2), in many other places it merely denotes responsibility and governance (Lev 26:17; 1 Kgs 5:30; Isa 14:2; Ps 68:28). In Assyrian and Babylonian—dialects of Akkadian—the root redû primarily carries the meaning of "accompany, guide." In the context of animals, it refers to driving animals—generally in donkey or ox convoys (*CAD*, 14 [R], 226, 228–29; *AHW*, 2:965–57). The sense of severe punishment or trampling is documented in Syrian and Arabic, both post-biblical languages (Kaddari, 2006, 990). The intent thus appears to be that God laid upon human beings responsibility for caring for and guiding animals (von Rad, 1964, p. 58; Westerman, 1984, p. 159; Klein, 1993, p. 23; van Hecke, 2003, pp. 41–43).

As created in God's image, human beings are intended to act as his delegates in governing the world. They are thus responsible for cultivating and preserving its natural resources and taking care of the animal

[7] For Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman philosophical views of the animal kingdom, see Newmyer, 2011. Proper human-animals relations have yet to be discussed extensively in this context: see Clark, 2011, p. 37.

kingdom (Linzey, 1995, p. 33; 2009, pp. 42–43; 2013, pp. 28–28; Day, 2013, pp. 15–16; Miller, 2012, p. 36).[8] Their rule must therefore be ethical, purposeful, and restrained, informed by a compassion that reflects God's character (Linzey & Cohn-Sherbok, 1997, pp. 20–21; C. Wright, 2004, pp. 20–24; Izakson, 2020, p. 18).[9] Their morality is frequently judged in the Hebrew Bible by the way in which they relate to others (Barilan, 2012, p. 38), being "humane" in the sense we are discussing herein meaning recognizing that humanity must share the world with others (Milligan, 2015, pp. 100–1).[10]

Rather than the world being created for arbitrary human purposes—the meeting of human desires or needs—every creature and species is worthy in its own right. Not being merely a means to a human end, they must all respect the other (Heschel, 1942, pp. 300–1). As Genesis evinces, they are both in need of protection and potentially harmful to others (Roi, 2018, p. 37): while being born and dying as objects, they live as intelligent subjects capable of exercising free will (Soloveitchik, 1992b, pp. 54–55). Like a father deciding to have a child, God thus took a calculated risk when he formed Adam and Eve (Sacks, 2005, pp. 195–96).

According to the second Genesis creation account, God placed Adam in charge of the world: "Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and tend it" (Gen 2:15). Humanity's task is thus to take care and maintain the natural and social universe, preventing it from coming to harm and cultivating it rather than exploiting or being indifferent to it (A. Lichtenstein, 2012, pp. 20–25; Lichtenstein, 2018, pp. 114–15). Human-animal relations are therefore meant to be creative rather than manipulative (Burnside, 2011, p. 146). Created in God's image, human beings are intended to serve as his agents (Muffs, 2005, p. 43; Cooley, 2013, p. 317; Weiler, 2016, p. 51). Right from the beginning, however, they were subject to a limitation—not to

[8] Cf. also Isaacs, 2000, p. 77; Wenz, 2001, pp. 227–28; Schweid, 2004, pp. 69–70; Kemmerer, 2007, pp. 6–8; Miller, 2012, pp. 116–19; Brown, 2014, p. 1:527; Linzey & Linzey, 2014, p. 12; Unterman, 2017, pp. 6, 15; Korsgaard, 2018, pp. 9–20, 58; Boyfield, 2019, p. 102.

[9] Cf. Weinfeld, 1995, pp. 17–23, 44. Essentially, human beings can either seek to develop relationships with or dominate others (Johnson, 2018, p. 30; Giroux & Saucier-Bouffard, 2018, p. 46).

[10] While some species exhibit moral responsibility, this differs from human ethical behavior (Miller, 2012, pp. 26–30). On occasion, some also act more morally than human beings (Bruce, 2019, p. 48).

eat from the fruit of the tree of knowledge. The blending of free will with this prohibition produced beings ethically responsible for their deeds before God (Gen 3:8) (Avishur & Klein, 1993, p. 39; Nathan, 2016, p. 94).

Adam then names the animals (Gen 2:19a)—an act regarded as demonstrating ownership or superiority in the Hebrew Bible and ancient Near East (Sutskover, 2012, p. 34). As Walter Benjamin notes, "God's creation is [also] completed when things receive their names from man" (Benjamin, 1997, p. 65). Rather than ignoring the animal kingdom Adam took responsibility for it (Gen 2:19; Linzey & Cohn-Sherbok, 1997, p. 21; Stone, 2018, p. 37). Not finding a proper mate for Adam amongst the animals, God then proceeded to form Eve (Gen 2:19b).[11] Their coupling did not follow the rules of animal mating—designed exclusively for procreation—but was rather based on an intimate relationship (Frankl, 2000, p. 91; Sicker, 2002, pp. 13, 40–41). As we saw in Chap. 4, Enkidu's contact with a woman introduced him to sexual relations that also involve verbal communication and true partnership, the animals who had been his companions up to that point now deserting him (Leick, 2004, p. 266). Adam and Eve's eating from the tree of knowledge and making of clothes similarly distanced them from the animal kingdom (Sicker, 2002, p. 30).

The first animal to which "human" attributes are ascribed is the snake, which tempts Eve into violating the prohibition against eating from the tree of knowledge (Gen 3:1–15). At the beginning of the passage, the snake is depicted as being like all the other animals of the field rather than the mythological creature adduced in other texts (cf. Isa 27:1; Job 26:13).[12] Its cunningness immediately reveals itself, however, demonstrated in its rhetorical ability. Some scholars thus regard the whole account as a myth accommodated to biblical theology (Klein, 1993, p. 32; Roitman, 1995, pp. 157–58, 170–73; Shinan & Zakovitch, 2004, p. 32, 34). The snake was punished for his lack of ethics by being reduced to slithering on its belly, condemned to perpetual hostility with human beings—in line with the seriousness of the

[11] Cf. Weinfeld, 1993, p. 13; Keel & Schroer, 2015, p. 117.

[12] It is later associated with Satan: see Good, 2011, p. 36; Day, 2013, p. 35.

sin into which he seduced them (Gen 3:13) (Sicker, 2002, p. 36). The story provides an etiological explanation of why the snake is always presented in the Hebrew Bible as dangerous to human beings (Klein, 1993, p. 31). Before Adam and Eve are expelled from the vegetarian world of the Garden of Eden because of their sin, God makes "garments of skin" for them (Gen 3:21). Some scholars believe this to have been a specially created type of leather rather than animal skins (Sorabji, 1993, p. 198; Sicker, 2002, pp. 40–41).

The creation narrative is followed by the story of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1–16)—the first death/murder of both a human being and an animal (Buber, 1997, p. 63; Ophir, 2004, p. 155). As we saw in Chap. 5, biblical ethic regards murder as a very serious sin that cannot be atoned for because human beings are created in God's image (Wise, 2000, p. 29; Patrick, 2014, p. 1:509). While Adam's firstborn, Cain, followed in his father's footsteps as a farmer, Abel adopted a new profession—herding sheep (Gen 4:1–5) (Good, 2011, p. 48). The theme of the peasant vs. the shepherd is known in numerous cultures (Fishbane, 2005, p. 3:1344). It also anticipates the human archetypes that will arise in the future (Y. Hazony, 2012, p. 45, 108). Sumer literature, which we examined in earlier chapters, contains three sources dealing with the question of who contributes more to humanity—the farmer or the herdsman, both of which were very common professions in ancient cultures. These disputation poems depict the two as ultimately living amicably, however (Kramer, 1982, pp. 185–92; Black et al., 2004, pp. 225–29).[13] Although the biblical text gives no indication of how the siblings' parents regarded Abel's domestication project (Sicker, 2002, p. 46), Abel may be said to have taken care of the animal world (Byron, 2011, p. 33). The (semi-)nomadic shepherd may have felt more vulnerable than his brother, thus seeking intimacy with God through prayer and sacrifice (Roi, 2018, p. 29).

The text deals with the responsibility to control one's emotions. Human beings share feelings and instincts that must be controlled with animals—the sexual drive, ownership, power, and status. While animals can fight to the death over these, this is a natural impulse—the need for protect

[13] See also Loewenstamm, 1982, pp. 123–24; Gilead, 1984, pp. 14–17; Avishur & Klein, 1993, pp. 39–40.

self-defense and survival rather than any malicious or evil intent. While drives help animals survive in nature, human beings are intended to live in human environments and control and guide animals into and along the proper channels out of a moral conviction (Schweid, 2004, pp. 87–88; Solomon, 2007, p. 18; D. Hazony, 2010, pp. 243–44; Schlimm, 2021, p. 95).

The biblical text does not explain why Cain's sacrifice was rejected. It may have been due to his selfishness (Byron, 2011, p. 39). The similarity in Hebrew between "Cain" and *kina'ah* suggests that it might have been envy (Schlimm, 2021, p. 95): if Cain could have accepted God's passing over of his sacrifice in favor of Abel's he might not have murdered his brother.[14] Envy is a very common emotion that adversely impacts human relations, also possibly being exhibited by chimpanzees and baboons. It derives from comparison of one's state with that of another, especially when he or she is similar or equal in status—or a feeling of deprivation or injustice that leads to an attempt to take away the superiority of someone who appears to possess some advantage over oneself. While this is often the reward or recognition that he or she gains (Ben-Ze'ev, 1998, p. 153; Ben-Ze'ev, 2001, pp. 38–51; Ekman & Cordaro, 2011, p. 366), envy sometimes arises from a subjective feeling prompted by negligible or even non-existent disparities (Ben-Ze'ev, 2001, p. 4647; Weinryb, 2007, pp. 28–31).

Envy can fuel the desire to humiliate or hurt the other, manifesting itself in self-destruction that affects the rational (Solomon, 2007, p. 104). There may already have been tension between the siblings even before they offered their sacrifices—possibly over the use of land, Cain wanting it for his crops, Abel for his flocks. Whatever the case may be in this regard, God warns Cain against sinning and employing violent means intended to be kept under control (Gen 4:6–7) (Kosman, 2014, pp. 39-42).

The enigmatic story raises other questions with respect to Cain's sacrifice: how does the idea of offering living sacrifices fit in with the vegetarian ethos of Genesis and when did eating meat become accepted?

[14] Many traditional commentators have sought to explain God's act in such a way that it does not appear arbitrary: see, for example, A. Margalit, 2004, p. 196.

(Maccoby, 1982, pp. 26–27; Good, 2011, p. 48).[15] Did Cain murder Abel because he had killed the animal he sacrificed? Did this slaughter suggest to Cain that it was also permissible to kill human beings (Sicker, 2002, p. 54, 112). Did Cain believe that he had invented the concept of sacrifices and that, while merely imitating him, Abel had gained God's favor? (Ararat, 1985, p. 315). Objectively speaking, Abel's offering was more valuable while demanding less effort, Cain's requiring struggling with the soil God had cursed (Gen 3:17) (Good, 2011, p. 49). The brothers thus did not start out on an equal footing (Y. Hazony, 2012, p. 105). If God's interest lay in the results, Cain had to make a greater effort (Kolkowsky, 2004, pp. 14–15). On this reading, what was at stake was the type of behavior rather than the kind of sacrifice offered (Maccoby, 1982, pp. 25–26).

Murder is denounced in virtually every human culture, constituting the most serious crime on the law books (Siegel, 2010, p. 304; Macionis, 2012, p. 194). It differs from manslaughter by virtue of the killer's mindset at the time, manslaughter being the unintentional killing of another person (Brookman, 2005, pp. 5–12; D'Cruze et al., 2006, pp. 3–5). As we saw in Chap. 5, biblical ethics view murder as the most serious of all crimes, one which cannot be atoned for by any financial compensation because every individual is created in God's image (Wise, 2000, p. 29; Patrick, 2014, p. 1:509). It thus also defiles the land (Num 35:33–34) (Noort, 2003, p. 103; Cohn, 1999, p. 551)[16]—a concept also known in Mesopotamia (van der Toorn, 1985, pp. 15–16). Biblical theology views murder much more harshly than other ancient Near Eastern cultures, however (Barilan, 2012, pp. 6–37).

The story of Cain and Abel poses the question of how human beings created in God's image who are capable of killing their own kin can also embody love and fellowship. Unlike later Greek literature, which is marked by father-son conflicts, the ancient Israelite tradition focuses primarily on sibling rivalry (Maccoby, 1982, p. 27; Rosenberg, 1989, pp. 19–20; Polak, 1995, pp. 28–29). Biblical narrative, especially that in

[15] Christian theologians such as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas argue that following the original sin in the Garden of Eden, human beings lost some of their status: see, for example, Sorabji, 1993, p. 198.

[16] See also Pirani, 1989/90, p. 13; Levenson, 1993, p. 7; Vermeule, 2014, pp. 39–41.

Genesis, highlights the differences between brothers (and sisters), frequently adducing the envy they exhibit towards one another (cf. Gen 30:1; 37:11; Isa 11:13; Polak, 1995, pp. 28–29). The Hebrew Bible as a whole attaches great importance to brotherly/sisterly love and the dangers of sibling/tribal conflict (cf. Isa 9:19–21; Jer 9:4 [3]; Bremmer, 2003, p. 78; Vermeule, 2014, p. 42).

Although God commanded Cain to choose good rather than evil (Gen 4:6–7) (E. Leibowitz, 2016, p. 67), how he knew what they were when no legal system existed raises questions. The biblical text does not necessarily human beings as either "good" or "bad," most being complex ethical figures, the good thus being tainted by evil and vice versa. This reflects the fact that it represents ordinary life rather than utopia (Y. Hazony, 2012, p. 80). The Genesis narratives indicate the existence of a "natural law" prior to the institution of the legal system (Y. Leibowitz, 2000, p. 28; Burnside, 2011, pp. 76–77, 80; Schuele, 2014, pp. 1:334, 336; Johnson, 2021, pp. 86–88).[17]

As in eating from the tree of knowledge, the taking of personal responsibility is also involved (Good, 2011, p. 49). This lies behind God's query of Cain: "Where is Abel your brother?" (Gen 4:9) (Wright, 2004, p. 356; Barak-Erez, 2019, p. 80). Although Adam is called upon to recognize his responsibility already in the Garden of Eden, there it is a question of obedience rather than ethical responsibility for another (Katz, 2005, pp. 216–23; Duyndam, 2008–2009, pp. 239–45; cf. Sacks, 2005, pp. 3, 24, 138). Levinas refers to the demand for responsibility embedded in God's command as "religious humanism" (Levinas, 1997, p. 26).

Some thinkers criticize Abel for focusing solely on taking care of his flocks rather than seeking to mitigate Cain's envy and emotional turmoil (Ophir, 2004, pp. 156–57; Ophir, 2013, p. 16). His punishment was to be cut off from the soil and condemned to wander: "When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a wanderer and a drifter on the earth" (Gen 4:12) (Barak-Erez, 2019, p. 192).[18] After murdering his brother the herdsman, he might thus have had to

[17] A similar entity was also identified by the seventeenth-century British philosophers Thomas Hobbes and John Locke (Morrow, 2005, pp. 79, 215, 266; Ryan, 2012, p. 440).

[18] Cain appears to have gained a measure of forgiveness when he recognized his sin, not paying for Abel's murder with his life (A. Margalit, 2004, p. 198).

earn his income as a nomadic farmer (Kosman, 2014, p. 90)—or perhaps by rearing and taking care of animals as Abel had originally done. This change from a settled life linked to cultivating the soil to perpetual roaming may possibly have brought him closer to God (Roi, 2018, pp. 29–30).

Cain's example and the precedence he set for going astray was then followed by humanity at large. Although the Flood story is known in many ancient cultures (see Chap. 4), only the Mesopotamian versions exhibit affinities with the biblical account in Genesis. Both the Mesopotamians and Israelites regarded the Flood as dividing history into two primal periods, introducing a new era in human annals (Klein & Artzi, 1993, p. 54). Not all the myths link the Flood with (im)morality, some ascribing to it to human disturbance of the gods; nor is/are the survivor/s always those who behave righteously (Loewenstamm, 1992, pp. 6–9; Rudhardt, 2005, pp. 5:3130–31).[19] The moral of the biblical Flood is that God hates corruption and violence, those who adopt such behavior being better off dead (Linzey, 1995, p. 103; Linzey, 2008, p. 287).

Noah is the first person to be called "righteous," his ethical conduct prompting God to remove the curse from the soil. Noah was responsible for delivering not only himself and his family but also the animal kingdom (Buber, 1997, p. 72). Hidden within this episode, however, is the question of why God's wrath fell on creatures as well as human beings. The Talmud addresses this issue, asking: "And if human beings sinned, what has the cattle committed?" (b. Yoma 22b). Some rabbinic Sages suggest that if humanity was destroyed no point existed in leaving the animals alive. Others maintain that the animals also sinned by intermingling (b. Sanh. 108a; Gen Rab. 28:8; Loewenstamm, 1992, pp. 6–7; Wise, 2000, p. 17). The latter proposal accords with the modern philosophical premise that the animal world was created for its own sake, independent of human beings (Korsgaard, 2011, p. 109; Linzey & Linzey, 2019,

[19] The gravest sin with which the generation of the Flood was charged was violation of a commandment that, although not stated explicitly, was intended to be universally understood—a natural law of sorts (Sagi, 2020, p. 137). The biblical text does not details the sins on account of which God determined to virtually wipe out humanity, one possibly having been the straw that broke the camel's back (Avraham, 1995, p. 158). According to the Mesopotamian tales, the punishment was not proportional—if sin was involved at all (Jacobs, 2021, p. 25).

p. 1).[20] During the Flood, Noah found himself "in the same boat" with all manner of creatures. While he was responsible for them, this may also have been an "ethical test" God wished him to pass (Schweid, 2004, p. 97).

As in the Mesopotamian Flood stories (see Chap. 4), a bird aids the protagonist in discovering whether the waters had receded so that the survivors could leave the ark (Gen 8:7–12). After the Flood, it transpired that human nature had not changed, however. Rather than annihilating humanity completely this time, God lowered his ethical sights: acknowledging that violence is inherent in the human makeup, he accepted that the best that can be done is to channel and restrain it. He therefore allowed human beings to start eating meat. Here, too, however, he imposed some conditions: killing one another is anathema and animals may only be slaughtered for food (Gen 9:3–6) (Sicker, 2002, p. 112; Schwartz, 2007, p. 154; Knohl, 2011, pp. 134–35; Miller, 2012, p. 119). Granting life to all, he put humanity in charge of all, requiring them to exercise moral control over themselves (Linzey, 2008, p. 288; Izakson, 2020, p. 18).[21]

From this point onwards, the animals appear to start fearing human beings:

> The fear of you and the terror of you will be on every animal of the earth and on every bird of the sky; on everything that crawls on the ground, and on all the fish of the sea. They are handed over to you. (Gen 9:2)

This attitude may serve as a defense mechanism, preventing animals from becoming easy prey for human hunters (Schwartz, 2007, p. 139–54; Knohl, 2007, p. 19; Knohl, 2011, p. 135; Good, 2011, pp. 83, 86). At the same time, the species are also separated from one another (Westheimer & Mark, 2016, p. 65).

Genesis then proceeds to the patriarchal cycle. These stories being written down generations after the events themselves, the Hebrew Masoretic Text version of the ethical issues they address appears to

[20] In the Hebrew Bible, women and children are occasionally punished collectively for transgressions committed primarily by their men-folk (Goldingay, 2019, p. 104).

[21] Part of Eve's punishment for eating from the tree of knowledge was that Adam would dominate her (Gen 3:16). Here, too, however, this does not mean abuse (B. Greenberg, 1988, p. 1041).

preserve tales handed down from generation to generation (Barton, 2003, p. 25). Abraham's move from Mesopotamian to Syro-Canaan formed part of the Western Semitic migration that began in 2300 BCE and reached its peak in ca. 1900 BCE. After making their way to the central mountain of Canaan (Anbar, 2007, p. 195; Issar & Zohar, 2008, pp. 98–100), Abraham and his family continued wandering across the ridge, from Shechem to Jerusalem, Hebron, and finally Beersheba, detouring into the Jordan Valley and western Negeb.[22] When famine struck the land, Abraham also went down to Egypt for a period. The nomadic patriarchs refrained from going down into the plains and coastal regions with their urban populations, which tend not to welcome itinerant travelers (Reviv, 1981, p. 19).[23]

The patriarchal narratives contain numerous passages that highlight the free will on the basis of which human beings can act (Brams, 2016, p. 8), inculcating morals via exemplification rather than abstract conceptualization (Heschel, 1983, p. 201). Abraham and his family were called to be righteous (Gen 18:19) (Weinfeld, 1995, p. 7; 1996, p. 89), their mission being to raise humanity to the level of universal values (Schweid, 2004, pp. 102–4; G. Wright, 2004, p. 50). Abraham fought for justice and righteousness and the faith from which they both stem (Y. Leibowitz, 2000, p. 86).[24] Here, too, this appears to have rested on a natural, popular law that served as the touchstone for ethical conduct (Barton, 2014, pp. 99–101). When Abraham and Lot realized that they land was too

[22] See also Malamat, 1991, pp. 51–53; Har-El, 1997, pp. 1:68, 109–11; Har-El, 2005, pp. 335–39; Wasserman & Bloch, 2019, pp. 40–45. For a comparative anthropological study of the patriarchal nomadic culture in light of modern Bedouin customs, see Bailey, 2018.

[23] On occasion, the Hebrew Bible suggests that the urban polity of high culture does not live up to the proper ethical standard, the protagonist thus departing for a nomadic life based on a different, more elevated morality where he (*sic*) must exhibit ethical responsibility (Y. Hazony, 2012, pp. 103, 110, 130, 134). According to some scholars, although not Canaanites not all the Israelites are descendants of Jacob: see Ahituv, 2003, pp. 63–64; Rösel, 2003, p. 52. For opposition to the view that the Amorites migrated and the counter-claim that the Israelites are Canaanites and Habiru, see Finkelstein & Silberman, 2002, pp. 35–36, 45–47; Maidman, 2003, pp. 120–28.

[24] Abraham is not represented as an ideal figure, his achievements being gained through struggles with his weaknesses (Simon, 2003, pp. 49–50). While he thus serves as an exemplar, he is not perfect (Mills, 2001, pp. 31–41). The same is true of the other patriarchs, all of whom contrast with the Greek heroes (Sacks, 2005, p. 37).

small to sustain both of them, Abraham made his nephew a generous offer:

> So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are relatives! Is the entire land not before you? Please separate from me; if *you choose* the left, then I will go to the right; or if *you choose* the right, then I will go to the left." (Gen 13:8–9)

Abraham's altruism contrasts with Lot's egotism, the latter choosing the more fertile region along the Jordan and Abraham taking the arid Negeb, which demands high skills in finding oases and pasture from shepherds and herdsman. The conflict between the two thus exemplifies a practical ethical issue (Gen 13:10–18) (Schweid, 2004, p. 117; Bremmer, 2003, p. 78). When Lot and his companions are later taken captive, Abraham risks his life to save them, not asking for any of the redeemed assets—which likely included numerous animals (Gen 14:1–24).[25]

The animal-morality link is also reflected in the story of the choice of Isaac's wife, many of whose details appear legendary (Schweid, 2004, p. 142). Abraham sent his servant Eliezer to his (Abraham's) family in northern Mesopotamian to take a wife for Isaac (Gen 24:1–10). When he approached his destination, he determined on his *modus operandi*:

> He made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water when it was evening, the time when women go out to draw water. And he said, "Lord, God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. Behold, I am standing by the spring, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water; now may it be that the young woman to whom I say, 'Please let down your jar so that I may drink,' and who answers, 'Drink, and I will water your camels also'—may she be the one whom You have appointed for Your servant Isaac; and by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master." (Gen. 24:11–14)

[25] According to the text, Abraham received livestock from the king of Egypt after the latter took Sarah thinking she was merely Abraham's sister (Gen 12:16).

Rebecca fits this ethical bill, taking responsibility for and caring for the camels. Eliezer thus selects her as Isaac's wife (Gen 24:15–21) (Kemmerer, 2007, p. 10), giving her the presents he has brought after the camels have drunk. When he asks about her lineage and whether he can find rest with the family, she answers: "'I am the daughter of Bethuel, Milcah's son, whom she bore to Nahor.' Again she said to him, 'We have plenty of both straw and feed, and room to stay overnight'" (Gen 24:24–25). The compassion she exhibits towards the camels indicating more than more courtesy, she is fit to become part of Abraham's close family (Soloveitchik, 2017, p. 196). Her consideration and thoughtfulness towards animals thus serves as a moral test (Linzey & Cohn-Sherbok, 1997, p. 24; Levy & Levy, 2002, p. 63; Schwartz, 2007, p. 27).[26] Some scholars maintain that she was also swayed by the wealth on display in Eliezer's caravan, however (Schweid, 2004, pp. 145–46).[27]

Rebecca bears Isaac twins, who—reminiscent of Cain and Abel—quickly prove to be very different to one another: "When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a civilized man, living in tents" (Gen. 25:27). The hunter lives in nature, having no wish to change it but rather seeking to integrate into it as a predator (Hevroni, 2016, pp. 28–29). Esau's eating habits are depicted as animal-like (Gen 25:30) (Zakowich, 2010, p. 105). Hairy and with the fresh smell of the fields wafting off him (Gen 27:26), he recalls Enkidu, the wild man of the Gilgamesh Epic (Galpaz-Feller, 2003, p. 120; Stone, 2018, p. 21) (see Chap. 4). In contrast to Enkidu, however, who interferes with the hunting expeditions, Esau is a skilled hunter. He also brings Ishmael—likewise a hunter—to mind, Isaac's attempts to reconcile with Esau possibly being intended to prevent the distancing that had occurred between Ishmael and Abraham (Gen 21:20; 27:3–4) (Galpaz-Feller, 2006, pp. 29–30). Born to be a "wild man," Ishmael is likened to the wild ass, a non-domesticated animal symbolizing freedom—contrasting with

[26] Cf. Kemmerer, 2007, p. 10. The Quran depicts Mohammed as concerned by the suffering of camels (Robinson, 2019, p. 84).

[27] In the Hebrew Bible, the camel symbolizes affluence and status (Dor, 1997, p. 47). Numerous commentators regard the camel details as anachronistic: while the species was known in the ancient Near East from the third millennium BCE, it only later became part of the human caravan system: see Borowski, 1998, p. 112; Pollock, 2001, p. 29.

his mother, a converted maidservant (Gen 16:12; Grossman, 2018, pp. 262-63; Shemesh, 2018, p. 306).[28]

Jacob and Esau appear to have been adversaries from birth (Bartal, 2018, p. 236). Eventually, Jacob escapes for his life to Nahor, finding refuge with his uncle, Laban (Strine, 2021, p. 102). On meeting his niece Rachel, he helps her water her father's flocks (Gen 29:10). He himself then becomes an expert herdsman, specializing in cross-breeding (Genesis 30–31) (Felix, 1992, pp. 27–41).[29] He represents himself as being concerned for Laban's flocks:

> For these twenty years I have been with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten the rams of your flocks. I did not even bring to you that which was torn by wild animals; I took the loss myself. You demanded it of my hand whether stolen by day or stolen by night. This is how I was: by day the heat consumed me and the frost by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes. (Gen. 31:38–40).[30]

When he reunites with Esau some years later, Jacob is again depicted as concerned and considerate of his flock;

> Then Esau said, "Let's journey on and go, and I will go ahead of you." But he said to him, "My lord knows that the children are frail and that the flocks and herds that are nursing are a matter of concern to me. And if they are driven hard just one day, all the flocks will die. Please let my lord pass on ahead of his servant, and I will proceed at my leisure, at the pace of the cattle that are ahead of me and at the pace of the children, until I come to my lord at Seir." (Gen. 33:12–14)[31]

Like Jacob, who becomes a shepherd who takes care of his flocks, Moses and David were also herdsmen before becoming leaders (Exod 3:1; 1 Sam 16:11). When David sought to persuade Saul to let him face off

[28] Cf. Morris, 1074, 88. According to some scholars, Hagar and Ishmael's expulsion freed them from their slave status in Abraham's house: see, for example, Galpaz-Feller, 2006, pp. 26–27.

[29] For the differences between Abraham's and Jacob's wanderings, see Weisman, 1985, pp. 1–13.

[30] For the legal aspect of the issue, see Chapter 5.

[31] Linzey & Cohn-Sherbok, 1997, p. 24; Stone, 2018, p. 26; cf. Schwartz, 2007, p. 28.

against Goliath, he appeals to his ability to protect his father's animals from predators:

> But David said to Saul, "Your servant was tending his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a sheep from the flock, I went out after it and attacked it, and rescued *the sheep* from its mouth; and when it rose up against me, I grabbed *it* by its mane and struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear etc." (1 Sam 17:34–36)

The compassionate shepherd thus serves as a model for a good leader.[32]

When Jacob's sons go down to Egypt, they, too, are portrayed as herdsmen—a profession the Egyptians despised and thus only practiced amongst the lower classes (Gen 46:34; 47:5–6) (Shupak, 2020, pp. 346–50). During the Israelites' wanderings in the desert after their deliverance from Egypt, the people are similarly said to complain that neither they nor their animals had water to drink (Exod 17:3; Num 20:4–11). As they approached Canaan, the Gadites and Reubenites chose to stay on the eastern side of the Jordan because of the pasture this terrain offered (Num 32:1–4; Deut 3:12–20).

The blessings promised to those who keep God's covenant likewise apply to both human beings and animals (Deut 11:15; 28:11). Those who violate it will have their livestock taken by their enemies (Deut 28:51). Possession of large flocks and herds is also liable to make a person forget God and his precepts (Deut 8:11–14). In a similar vein, the king's law forbids the monarch from accumulating stallions, the reference presumably being to horses for pulling war-chariots upon which he might rely rather than upon God (Deut 17:16–17; Tigay, 2016, pp. 2:462–63).

As in the Flood, animals are also collateral damage in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, God razing the two cities to the ground, including the vegetation (Gen 19:23–28). It is thus reasonable to assume that they were wiped out due to human sin. The plagues of Egypt, designed to change Pharaoh's mind, constitute a similar case (Barak-Erez, 2019, p. 30), God regarding the bondage of foreigners as unethical (Cohen & Weinfeld, 1993, pp. 139–40). Some of the plagues—the

[32] For the figure of the herdsman, see Chapters 7 and 8.

blood, frogs, lice, pestilence, boils, hail, and firstborn—fall on animals (Exod 7:21; 8:12–18; 9:1–10, 18–25; 11:5; 12:29; 13:15).[33]

In these cases, the rule of the Flood appears to apply—namely, that the animals share the punishment meted out to human beings for their sin. They are also the victims of biblical proscriptions during wars fought in God's name or "holy wars" the Israelites conducted in accordance with religious precepts against those who violated sacred principles.[34] Under these conditions, the designated subjects/objects must be categorically destroyed (Malamat, 1991, p. 11116; Weinfeld, 1992, pp. 103–4).[35] God thus commands the Israelites to proscribe the Canaanites and their property on entering the Land as a way of protecting their religious identity (Deut 20:16; 21:1–3; Josh 6:20–21) (Weinfeld, 1988, pp. 135–47; Reeder, 2021, p. 49).

Samuel similarly commands the king to anathematize Amalek in God's name:

> This is what the Lord of armies says: "I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, in that he obstructed him on the way while he was coming up from Egypt. Now go and strike Amalek and completely destroy everything that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey." (1 Sam 15:2–3)

On rare occasions, the value of life is overridden by other principles (M. Greenberg, 1992, p. 52). The indiscriminate killing of people and animals being threatening from an ethical standpoint, God's commandment creates an acute conflict—as in the *akeda* (the sacrifice of Isaac), for example. In such instances, obedience to God assumes greater importance than the "ethical instinct" (Kaufmann, 1976, p. 2:186; Neher,

[33] The horses may have drowned at the Red Sea because they formed part of the fighting units of men, animals, and weaponry (Exod 14:23–28; 15:1, 21).

[34] These are relatively rare events, however: see Zeeligmann, 1992, pp. 121–25; Tigay, 2016, pp. 51–17.

[35] Wars of anathema are also known in Greece: see Weinfeld, 1992, p. 104. For the proscription of human beings and animals, see, for example, Josh 7:24–26; Judg 20:48.

1989, pp. 206–7; A. Lichtenstein, 2012, pp. 142, 146).[36] At certain times, the truth is thus secondary to the value of preserving life (1 Sam 16:1–2; Jer 38:24–26) (Shemesh, 2002, pp. 81–95; cf. Rotenstreich, 2014, pp. 131, 255–56).

From rabbinic literature through to the modern day, some Jewish scholars have sought to explain the harsh punishment meted out to Amalek, even going so far to level criticism against it (Sagi, 1998, pp. 203–5).[37] Saul failed to fully obey the anathema command and was thus punished, Samuel dismissing his claim that he had left some of the flock alive in order to offer sacrifices out of hand (1 Sam 15:9–14) (Elitzur, 1999, pp. 114–15, 119; Demsky, 2001, p. 106). He may have suffered a harsher penalty as a result of also refusing to admit his guilt (D. Hazony, 2010, p. 87).

Just as animals can pay the price for human sin they can also serve as instruments in God's hand to punish or aid human beings, this fact exemplifying God's governance of the animal kingdom (Noegal, 2019, pp. 100–1). The Egyptian plagues, for instance, included frogs, lice, flies, and locusts (Exod 8:3–24; 10:3–7). During the wanderings in the wilderness, God similarly sent snakes to punish the people (Numbers 4–6). A prophet of Judah commanded to prophesy against Jeroboam of Israel is warned not to stay in the northern kingdom or eat or drink anything therein. When invited by an elderly prophet from Beth-el to be a guest in his home and dine with him, the former condemns him for not obeying God's command, and later prophesying that he will not be buried with his fathers:

> It came about after he had eaten bread and after he had drunk, that he saddled the donkey for him, for the prophet whom he had brought back. Now when he had gone, a lion met him on the way and killed him, and his body was thrown on the road, with the donkey standing beside it; the lion also was standing beside the body. And behold, men passed by and saw the body thrown on the road, and the lion standing beside the body; so they

[36] According to Y. Hazony (2012, pp. 103, 114–15, 139), rather than demanding blind obedience to commandments that apply in any given situation, biblical ethics call for discernment of God's will. Nor is the "ethical interest" always right (Singer, 2004, pp. 82–83).

[37] Some argue today that bans being rare in ancient times and now no longer practiced at all, Jews should thus not change their ethical conduct in any way (Rabinovitch, 2021, p. 90).

> came and told about it in the city where the old prophet had lived. Now when the prophet who had brought him back from the way heard about it, he said, "It is the man of God, who disobeyed the command of the Lord; therefore the Lord has given him to the lion, which has torn him and killed him, in accordance with the word of the Lord which He spoke to him." (1 Kgs 13:23–26)[38]

This enigmatic unit portrays the harsh punishment meted out to anyone who fails to fulfill his divine commission. Like Saul and Amalek, God tests the Judahite prophet's faithfulness (Weisman, 2008, p. 2126). Unlike him, the lion complies with God's will, not devouring or even severely mauling his body, as per its wont (Simon, 1997, pp. 157, 172–75; Way, 2011, p. 199; Slifkin, 2015, p. 91; Stone, 2018, p. 102).[39] Miraculous events can thus sometimes convey a moral (Rofé, 2009, p. 145).

A lion also serves to punish a transgressor in 1 Kgs 20:25–26 (Uffenheimer, 1984, p. 170). When the northerners were exiled in 722 BCE, the Assyrians settled other peoples in Samaria (2 Kgs 17:24) in line with the Empire's bi-directional migration policy. The new inhabitants not worshiping Yahweh, he sent lions to attack them. When a priest is summoned to teach them how to worship the God of Israel, the lions back off (2 Kgs 17:25–28) (Miller & Hayes, 2006, pp. 388–90). Ashurbnipal's inscription reflects the occurrence of a similar phenomenon in the city of Sippar after it fell to Assyria: "[(…) its [*water-meadow*]s were filled with lions instead of oxen and sheep" (K. 6232: obv. 5') (Frame & Grayson, 1994, p. 6).[40]

Wild beasts invaded settlements that had been attacked and their inhabitants killed or exiled. The Book of Kings attributes a theological reason to this fact, suggesting that the lions served as divine agents (Cogan, 2019, p. 589). When a group of youths taunt Elisha for his baldness, God chooses bears to play this role:

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[38] Beth-el possesses an ambiguous status in the biblical texts, being the site of both the patriarchal and illegitimate northern cultus: see Amit, 2003, pp. 120–22, 128–30.

[39] For lions in the Hebrew Bible, see Dor, 1997, pp. 61–62; Strawn, 2005; Slifkin, 2015, pp. 69–94; Dayan, 2017, pp. 63–69.

[40] Cf. a Sargon II inscription (Gadd, 1954, p. 193, lines 71–72).

> From there Elisha went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, some boys came out of the town and jeered at him. "Get out of here, baldy!" they said. "Get out of here, baldy!" He turned around, looked at them and called down a curse on them in the name of the Lord. Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys. (2 Kgs 2:23–24)

Here, rather than a binary morality (do not mock the elderly) the categories of sacred and profane are adduced. Anyone who hurts a godly person will be punished severely, animals sometimes serving as his instruments (Rofé, 1986, p. 21; Cogan, 2019, pp. 409–10; cf. Uffenheimer, 1984, p. 175; Stone, 2018, pp. 102–3).[41]

The idea that corpses must be accorded a dignified burial also sets off human beings off from animals (M. Lichtenstein, 2015, p. 257). Both the Hebrew Bible and ancient Near Eastern literature regard proper interment as a sacred principle, mauling by beasts thus being an abomination, bringing shame on the corpse and the family alike. Deliberate neglect of a corpse was therefore insult to injury and his / her family (Breier, 2012, pp. 77–108). The curse of not being buried decently but eaten by the birds of heaven and wild animals is thus a common threat in the biblical texts (cf. Deut 28:26; 1 Sam 17:43–44; Isa 5:25) (Hillers, 1964, p. 68:69).[42] Wild dogs who penetrated human settlements often devoured human remains (Vilela, 2021, pp. 24–26). While canines were regarded as "man's best friend," they were also despised and thought to be feral (Breier, 2019, 2020). The idea that a person's body would be eaten by dogs thus constituted a particularly weighty curse (cf. 1 Kgs 14:11; 16:4). The same notion was also held by the Neo-Assyrians: "May the earth not receive your corpses but may your burial place be in the belly of a dog or a pig" (Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty, lines 484–485) (Parpola & Watanabe, 1988, p. 46).

The biblical prophets also hurled a similar imprecation at Jezebel for promoting idol worship in the northern kingdom of Israel: "'This is the word of the Lord, which He spoke by His servant Elijah the Tishbite,

[41] The difficulty in measuring punishment is addressed by various rabbinic Sages: cf. b. Sotah 46b. See also the story of the death of Aaaron's sons Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10:1–3) and Uzzah (2 Sam 6:6–7). For bears in the Hebrew Bible, see Slifkin, 2015, pp. 108–11; Dayan, 2017, 63–69.

[42] See also Jer 7:33; 8:2; 9:21; 14:16; 16:4; 22:19; 25:33; 36:30; Ezek 39:17–20.

saying, 'On the property of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel'" (2 Kgs 9:35–36). In the Egyptian Story of the Two Brothers, the older brother kills his wife on suspicion of committing adultery with his sibling: "Presently he reached his home, and he killed his wife, cast her (to) the dogs, and sat down in mourning over his younger brother" (Simpson, 2003, p. 85; cf. Lichtheim, 1976, p. 207 [Wente]).

The Samson cycle abounds with animals motifs. As a judge, Samson was an unusual figure, being motivated more by personal than national/tribal interests (Oren, 1980, p. 259; Assis, 2005, p. 21, 24). Not an exemplary character, he was easily seduced by women, frequently acting impulsively and recklessly (Amit, 1999, pp. 215–16; M. Lichtenstein, 2015, p. 321). The biblical text represents him as a "superman" of sorts, some scholars adducing affinities between him and Enkidu the wild man of the Gilgamesh Epic (Galpaz-Feller, 2003, pp. 117, 131; Herzog, 2018, pp. 25, 36). When a lion attacks him unprovoked, he kills it with his bare hands (Judg 17:5–6) (Zakovitch, 1982, pp. 90–91).[43] After the father of his Philistine fiancée marries her off to someone else, he seeks collective revenge, being aided by the animals—caught in the crossfire and quite possibly paying the price with their lives:

> And Samson went and caught three hundred jackals, and took torches, and turned the jackals tail to tail and put one torch in the middle between two tails. When he had set fire to the torches, he released *the jackals* into the standing grain of the Philistines and set fire to both the bundled heaps and the standing grain, along with the vineyards *and* olive groves. (Judg 15:4–5)

When the Philistines came to capture him, he worked free of his fetters and continued on his quest: "Then he found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, so he reached out with his hand and took it, and killed a thousand men with it" (15:15–16). While the poor jackals (or foxes) appear to have become instruments for blind collective punishment, the donkey seems to have eaten part of the carcass it found.

[43] Both David and Benaiah b. Jehoida are depicted as overcoming lions (1 Sam 17:34–37; 2 Sam 23:20)—as are the protagonists of the Gilgamesh Epic (10:34, 38; George, 1999, p. 77) and Hercules (Hesiod, *Theog*. 327–332; Ovid, *Metam*. 9.197–200).

Up until now, we have seen how animals served as vehicles of divine wrath (the exception being Samson). Do they participate voluntarily or get some pleasure out of the act? Punishment by proxy is well known in the Hebrew Bible, Isaiah and Jeremiah in particular presenting the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires as God's agents (Isa 10:5–6; Jer 25:8–11). Both also note that the latter will themselves suffer after fulfilling their mission, their leaders believing themselves to be acting independently rather than on God's behalf and thus having no qualms about being proud or cruel (Isa 10:7–16; Jer 25:12) (Goldingay, 2019, p. 19).[44] This philosophy underpinned their theopolitical approach (Uffenheimer, 2001, p. 197; de Jong, 2007, p. 249; Goldingay, 2009, p. 183; Aster, 2017, pp. 105–6; Vanderhooft, 2018, pp. 93–112).

When animals serve as instruments of punishment, the text only observes that the affliction will eventually pass (Ezek 32:4; 34:28; cf. Lev 26:6). Linguistically, rather than conveying any ethical-moral message the biblical expression חיה רעה "wild/evil beast" denotes a beast of prey (i.e. a carnivorous rather than herbivorous animal), without any reference to moral evil of any sort (Raday & Rabin, 1989, p. 1: 153). On occasion, animals obey God's commandment to do good to people—the ravens who provide Elijah with food and the whale who saves Jonah, for example.

Animals can also play a positive role as divine agents (cf. Noegal, 2019, p. 100). Having predicted a severe famine (which would also affect the animal kingdom), Elijah is commanded by God to hide from Ahab and Jezebel of Israel in Wadi Kerit, east of the Jordan, in order to prevent the king from mitigating his evil decree on the one hand and to protect him during the drought on the other. God tells Elijah that he will ensure that the ravens bring him food in the morning and evening (1 Kgs 17:1–6) (Simon, 1997, p. 197; cf. Rofé, 1986, p. 108). As we shall see in the following chapter, God also summons Leviathan to save Jonah as he seeks to flee from fulfilling his mission (Jonah 1:1–11). This teaches him that he had been sent to convince the Ninevites to repent from their evil and thus

[44] Cf. Lam. 1: 22; Klein, 2017, pp. 127–128. The Empires' barbarity was a function of their territorial ambitions and subjugation of other peoples rather than hunger or the desire to protect their living space.

avert their fate—a lesson in divine compassion (Galpaz-Feller, 2009, pp. 53–59; Shinan & Zakovitch, 2015, pp. 60–62). Like Jonah, Elijah's survival by means of creaturely assistance may be designed to demonstrate the nature of mercy: just as both the human and animals worlds suffered from famine, so the destruction of Nineveh would have affected both populations. Jonah is likewise supposed not only to threaten calamity but also to show compassion to those who deserve it (Muffs, 1992, pp. 35–36; cf. Roi, 2012, pp. 78–88).

While most well-known for his speaking capacities, Balaam's donkey (she-ass) is also an example of animal suffering (Levy & Levy, 2002, p. 63; Linzey & Cohn-Sherbok, 1997, p. 24; Stone, 2018, p. 92). When Balak of Moab sends Balaam to curse the Israelites, the latter's donkey pulls up when confronted by an angel wielding a sword in its face. Seeking to avoid the apparition, he moves off the path, prompting Balaam to hit him. Still attempting to bypass the angel, he then cowers against a wall, squeezing Balaam's foot and thus receiving another beating. Finally, it

> lay down under Balaam; so Balaam was angry and struck the donkey with his staff. Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" And Balaam said to the donkey, "It is because you have made a mockery of me! If only there had been a sword in my hand! For I would have killed you by now!" But the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I ever been in the habit of doing such a thing to you?" And he said, "No." (Num 22:27–30)

The angel then reveals himself to Balaam, expressing his anger over his beating of his beast of burden—who had in fact saved his life. Repenting, Balaam acknowledges that he had not seen the angel (vv. 31–36). Herein, Balaam is depicted as a despised prophet willing to take money to curse people on a par with the Mosquito shaman priests (M. Margalit, 1989, pp. 77–78; Savran, 2010, p. 58; cf. Douglas, 1993, p. 413).[45] Blind and obtuse to the meaning of his she-ass's behavior, he hits her, not

[45] Spells and charms in ancient times fell within a religious framework, however: see Moore, 1990, pp. 359–78.

understanding that she is seeking to avoid the angel (Wolf-Monzon, 2002, pp. 240–44; cf. Safran, 1993, p. 371; Garsiel, 1993, p. 142).[46] When God opens her mouth and gives her human speech, the human-animal relationship is reversed (Way, 2005, pp. 682–83). This supernatural event evinces that God is responsible for giving speech to his creatures, the prophet only being a channel for conveying his words (Hepner, 2011, pp. 181, 184). The story thus presents the value of obedience to God's will (Safran, 1988, p. 111).

Emphasizing his long years of loyalty to his master, the donkey contrasts this with the abuse he has received from Balaam, including threats to kill him with his sword—the same death Balaam himself suffers (Num 31:8; Josh 13:22) (Frisch, 2015, pp. 108–9). The angel is angry with Balaam for the brutality he has regularly exhibited towards his animal (Kolkowsky, 2004, p. 38)—some scholars suggesting that the latter represents the prophet's super ego (E. Leibowitz, 2016, pp. 124–25).[47]

Animal mistreatment also occurs in the relation to the Philistines in the wake of their capture of the Ark of the Covenant. Unsure as to how to proceed, they ask for an oracle to determine whether they should return it (Hurowitz, 2012, pp. 180–181). The priests and diviner advise them:

> Now then, take and prepare a new cart and two milk cows on which there has never been a yoke; and hitch the cows to the cart and take their calves back home, away from them. Then take the ark of the Lord and place it on the cart; and put the articles of gold which you return to Him as a guilt offering in a saddlebag by its side. Then send it away that it may go. But watch: if it goes up by the way of its own territory to Beth-shemesh, then He has done this great evil to us. But if not, then we will know that it was not His hand that struck us; it happened to us by chance." Then the men did so: they took two milk cows and hitched them to the cart, and shut in their calves at home. And they put the ark of the Lord on the cart, and the

[46] The repetition of the details emphasizes Balaam's nescience: see Polak, 1995, pp. 61–62. His blindness is an inability to properly see and understand things.

[47] The donkey is known in both the Hebrew Bible and ancient Near Eastern literature as both a hard worker and lazy and stubborn: see Way, 2011, pp. 67–69. For a Babylonian proverb in which a donkey gets angry with, weeps, and speaks to its master, see K8592 (plate 53); Lambert, 1960, p. 210 (preserved in a very poor state).

> saddlebag with the gold mice and the likenesses of their tumors. Now the cows went straight in the direction of Beth-shemesh; they went on the same road, bellowing as they went, and did not turn off to the right or to the left. And the governors of the Philistines followed them to the border of Beth-shemesh. (1 Sam 6:7–12)

Here, the narrator appear to wish to stress the Philistines' cruelty towards the cows and the young calves separated from their mothers (Nachson, 2015, pp. 33-39).

Animals also feature in two biblical proverbs—the ewe-lamb and the cedar and the briar. The first is given to David after he sleeps with Bathsheba and sends her husband to his death fighting the Ammonites (2 Sam 11:2–27). The plot of getting rid of Uriah succeeding, David treats those under him as his personal property, exploiting Bathsheba sexually and sacrificing a loyal officer in order to preserve his power (Barton, 1998, pp. 32–33; J. Wright, 2014, pp. 89–95). Ironically, it is Uriah's moral conduct in obeying his master and not letting his comrades down that upsets David's plan, the poor man paying the price with his life (Simon, 1997, p. 125). The proverb is intended to teach that divine ethics restrain arbitrary royal force and that punishment cannot be avoided (Garsiel, 1972, p. 171; C. Wright, 2004, p. 268; Barton, 2014, p. 31). It is also evinces that the king's political fate depends on his moral conduct (Halbertal & Holmes, 2017, p. 96). It thus illustrates the polarity between the description of David's impressive achievements and his personal debasement, national decline, and the calamities he met (Garsiel, 1972, p. 162; Baden, 2013, p. 225).[48]

Nathan the prophet chides the king by delivering a juridical parable:

> Then the Lord sent Nathan to David. And he came to him and said, "There were two men in a city, the one wealthy and the other poor. The wealthy man had a great many flocks and herds. But the poor man had nothing at all except one little ewe lamb which he bought and nurtured; and it grew up together with him and his children. It would eat scraps from him and drink from his cup and lie in his lap, and was like a daughter to him. Now a visitor came to the wealthy man, and he could not bring himself to take

[48] For the view that the story is late, see Finkelstein & Silberman, 2007, pp. 107–8.

> *any animal* from his own flock or his own herd, to prepare for the traveler who had come to him; so he took the poor man's ewe lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him. (2 Sam 12:1–4)

Serving as an allegory, this short tale conveys a moral lesson. In contrast to fabulas, however, with which we dealt in Chap. 3, here the animals or plants involved are not anthropomorphized (McKenzie, 2000, p. 159; Baldick, 2001, p. 182; Cuddon, 2013, p. 509). The juridical parable is rather a realistic story dealing with violation of a law or norm told to someone who has committed a similar act as that described therein so that he or she can unwittingly determine his or her own fate (Simon, 1997, p. 132). In this case, it puts David—the holder of ultimate authority in the kingdom and responsible for ensuring justice for all—on trial. The monarch obligingly gives his verdict, showing no mercy or proportional response to the perpetrator (2 Sam 11:5–6) (Garsiel, 2008, pp. 4:63, 66; cf. Weinfeld, 1995, p. 11). The intimate human-animal relationship the parable depicts is indeed realistic (Simon, 1997, p. 143), David's ire being raised by the mistreatment the lamb receives—and sharply contrasting with his indifference to Uriah's fate (Simon, 1997, p. 146).

The second parable relates to talking trees and a non-speaking animal.[49] When Amaziah of Judah (805–776 BCE) proposes to Jehoash of Israel (805–790 BCE) that the latter meet and fight him (2 Kgs 14:7–8), Jehoash responds as follows:

> But Jehoash king of Israel sent *messengers* to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, "The thorn bush that was in Lebanon sent *word* to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, 'Give your daughter to my son in marriage.' But a wild animal that was in Lebanon passed by and trampled the thorn bush. (2 Kgs 14:9) (Felix, 1992, pp. 151–52)

Although the moral does not correspond to the parable in every detail, as quite often in the biblical text, it compares Amaziah with a small bush that gets beaten down by wild animals. Ignoring the warning, Amaziah

[49] It thus contains fabulistic features: see Haran, 1978, p. 5:549.

goes out to battle and is defeated (2 Kgs 14:11–14). In contrast to the ewe-lamb parable, this carries a political message.

Conclusion

This chapter examines human-animals ethics in biblical narrative and historiography. It first analyzes the two accounts of creation in Genesis 1–2, demonstrating that the first portrays the Garden of Eden as a vegetarian paradise devoid of violence, over which human beings are placed to cultivate and care for in partnership with God. Humanity is thus created in order to use its rational, cognitive, and ethical superiority to protect and look after the animal world. The second presents Adam as not finding a mate amongst the animals, God thus forming Eve to serve as his partner. Human beings and animals thus share some features and differ in others. According to this chapter, Adam also names the animals, signifying both intimacy and dominance. The first creature human beings encounter is the snake, which persuades Eve to sin. Hereby, the two are set at odds with one another, the etiological story seeking to explain why the snake is dangerous and slithers on its belly.

This sets the scene for the first animal and human deaths in the Hebrew Bible. No less than a murder, the Cain and Abel story exhibits numerous affinities with Sumerian tales and disputes between shepherds and peasant farmers. Rather than exemplifying reconciliation, however, the biblical episode ends in a horrific act, thus functioning as a caution for human beings that all—human beings and animals—are created in God's image.

The Flood wipes out not only the human but also the animal world, raising questions the text does not answer. These have been addressed by commentators and scholars from earliest times through to the present. Saving pairs of animals so that they can survive, Noah and his family are responsible for taking care of them in the ark, thus teaching the righteous couple about their ethical duties.

The patriarchal narratives reflect pastoral life and the dilemmas it poses, including the compassion and mercy human beings are to show to animals—portrayed as sought-after virtues. As on other occasions, during the Egyptian plagues animals become collateral damage when God

punishes the Egyptians for their sin. They also serve as divine agents, both for good and for bad. As instruments of "God's long arm," they serve his interests and purposes rather than merely following their own instincts. They thus differ from human beings, who can fulfill their commission out of wickedness or pride. Finally, animals sent by God can help save human beings in time of need or distress. Biblical narrative also includes cases in which human beings mistreat animals, acting very cruelly towards them. In two passages, animals are adduced in parables intended to teach a lesson—either ethical or political.

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible.
AHW	Von Soden, Wolfram. 1965. Akkadisches handwörterbuch. 3 vols. Weisbaden: Harrassowitz.
CAD	Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, edited by Ignace J. Gelb, Benno Landsberger, and A. Leo Oppenheim. Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, vol. Ṣ 1962; R 1999.
JANES	Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society.
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature.
ML	Mikra Le'Yisrael.
OHT	Olam Ha-tanakh.
OTL	Old Testament Library.
RB	Review Biblique.
RR	Review of Religion.
SAAB	State Archives of Assyria Bulletin.
UF	Ugarit Forschungen.
VT	Vetus Testamentum.
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary.

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7

Human-Animal Relations in Classical Prophecy

Introduction

This chapter examines the way in which the Latter Prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Minor Prophets—employ faunal images to convey their message to their audiences: the inhabitants of Judah and Israel in the wake of the Babylonian exile and those who returned during the Restoration period. Living and working from the mid-eighth century BCE (Hosea and Amos) through to the early fifth century (Malachi), these figures held that God's covenant with his people was based on faithfulness to the One God and compliance with his ethical principles. They thus cautioned the kingdoms and their leaders that if they did not honor the covenant and repent from sin they would be punished. This disloyalty included relying on human allies instead of God, the prophets cautioning them that rebelling against their Assyrian and Babylonian overlords was futile because they were instruments in God's hand. This theopolitical premise reflects the fact that such action violated their vassal treaties, giving their masters an excuse to transform the kingdoms into

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administrative districts of the Empire without their own king and living in exile (Hoffman, 1977a, p. 102, 111; Oded, 2010, p. 98, 401; Buber, 2016, p. 190).[1]

According to the classical prophets, God privileges religio-ethical conduct over the cultus. Morality revolves around a positive attitude and protection of the weak sectors of society—widows, orphans, strangers (*gerim*), the poor (Neher, 1989, pp. 13–14, 85, 109; Sawyer, 1995, pp. 44–45; Weisman, 2003, pp. 144–145; Fuhr & Yates, 2016, pp. 9–23; cf. Handel, 1995, p. 190).[2] The Latter Prophets' principal goal was thus moral correction in compliance with the divine covenant. This deciding the nation's fate, their prophecies of reproach were conditional (Uffenheimer, 2001, p. 41, 60; Fenton, 2001, p. 130; Hazony, 2012, p. 64), designed to save Israel and Judah from destruction and exile (Carroll, 1986, pp. 43–43; Kartz, 2016, p. 137; Sweeney, 2016, p. 233).[3] In this sense, as Amit observes:

> Prophecy, laws, historiography, biblical poetry and even the wisdom literature deal clearly and openly with political subjects related to the history of the kingdom, the fate of the nation, the conduct of its rulers, relations between the nation and its surroundings, rules of conduct toward the king and so on. Moreover, with the aid of a principle such as dual causality every political act can be understood as the political consequence of divine will; that is, as being theopolitical in nature … even non-mention of God does not divest political events of their political significance … in biblical literature politics and theopolitics are in most cases one and the same. (1994, p. 28)

[1] Conflict in the Hebrew Bible thus always involves three parties—the victim, the attacker, and God (Eidevall, 2005, pp. 55–56).

[2] While the eighteenth-century Mari prophecies contain reports of calls for the king to behave ethically, these are in the minority (Nissinen, 2017, pp. 83–85; cf. Vriezen & van der Woude, 2005, p. 304).

[3] On occasion, alongside the dire threats they hold over the people's heads the prophets also portray a more optimistic future—if the people and their leaders repent (Burnside, 2011, p. 10). Rather than allowing for repentance and a change of heart, some of the harsh prophecies, especially in Hosea and Ezekiel, predict calamity irrespective of the nation's behavior, however (van der Woude, 1988, p. 33; Uffenheimer, 1992, pp. 219–222). For Isaiah, see below.

Making the king's responsible for observing God's covenant, the prophets differed from the ancient Near Eastern norm, according to which royal duties to the god were primarily ritualistic in nature—building temples and offering sacrifices—rather than moral and ethical. *Contra* their ancient Near Eastern counterparts, they were thus highly critical of the royal house (Muffs, 2005, p. 26; Nissinen, 2017, pp. 203, 261, 267). Nor were their moral sensitivities confined to the Israelites, their prophecies frequently addressing other peoples unfamiliar with biblical law. They thus appear to have possessed a notion of "natural law"—i.e. a set of ethical rules applying to humanity as a whole (Barton, 2003, pp. 27–28, 32–48, 2012, pp. 58–59, 2014, pp. 83–85, 101).[4] While not explicitly presented as God's word in rhetorical terms, these ethical standards—the assumption of human free will and the possibility of divine forgiveness—form the guiding force behind biblical history in their view (Heschel, 2001, p. 19, 103, 222; Wright, 2004, p. 33; Hazony, 2012, p. 162).[5] Each prophetic book nevertheless bears its own distinctive character, deriving from the specific prophet's outlook and historical background (Wilson, 1998, pp. 212–213).

Let us look first at realistic faunal representations. As a farmer/shepherd, Amos drew upon his experience and knowledge of animal characteristics (Amos 1:1; 7:14; Paul, 1994, p. 124; Eidevall, 2017, p. 126). In his prophecies—which did not find favor amongst the decision-makers—he sought to explain to his audience that he was constrained by God to speak. In order to prompt people to listen, he asks a series of rhetorical questions that employ on faunal imagery:

> Does a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey? Does a young lion growl from his den unless he has captured something? Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground when there is no device in it? Does a trap spring up from the earth when it captures nothing at all? … Certainly the Lord God does nothing unless he reveals his secret plan to his servants the prophets. A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken! Who can do anything but prophesy? (Amos 3:4–5, 7–8 [NASB]; Paul, 1994, p. 58)

[4] See Chap. 6.

[5] Although biblical ethics stress the material abundance God bestows upon human beings, receipt of this is conditional upon moral choices (Barrera, 2021, p. 79).

A southerner by birth, Amos denounced the corruption and hardheartedness of the inhabitants of the kingdom of Israel during its period of prosperity, castigating the profligacy of the wealthy of Samaria, its capital (Paul, 1994, p. 103; Heschel, 2001, pp. 33–34; Kartz, 2016, p. 147): "Those who lie on beds of ivory, and lounge around on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock, And calves from the midst of the fattened cattle" (Amos 6:4).

Animals are also depicted realistically in prophecies of reproof designed to dissuade the kings of Israel and Judah from relying on military force or treaties with neighboring kingdoms, thereby rebelling against the Assyrian (and later Babylonian) Empire to which they were subject as vassals. The prophets argued that the best—and only—course of action was to cease and desist from any revolt and repent and trust in God's mercies (Hoffman, 1977a, pp. 111–116; Goldingay, 2009, pp. 31–35). This concept rests on the theopolitical premise that God rules world history, the great empires serving as instruments in his hand (Sawyer, 1995, pp. –49). Isaiah thus criticizes the exaggerated self-confidence of the kings of Judah and their reliance on war horses,/chariots and collaboration with Egypt (Isa 30:15–16; 31:1–3; Heschel, 2001, pp. 88–92; Aster, 2017, pp. 105–106).[6] His contemporary Micah reveals that the former served primarily as a means of retreat (Mic 1:13; Vargon, 1994, pp. 55–56; Hoffman, 2017, pp. 83–84). In order to persuade his audience to change their ways, above all from an ethical perspective, Isaiah describes the quality of the imperial forces that will fall upon them: "The hoofs of its horses seem like flint, and its *chariot* wheels like a storm wind" (Isa 5:28; Hoffman, 1994, p. 44).

Jeremiah—who fought for the survival of Judah and the Temple by calling upon the kingdom's inhabitants to reform their morals—similarly observes the Babylonian army's "horse power" (Jer 6:23; Allen, 2008, p. 91), maintaining that its advance could be heard from far away, its warriors sowing panic amongst the locals and destroying the land (Jer

[6] Cf. Rabshakeh's mockery of the fact that the Judahites could not muster an army of 2000 horse riders (Isa 36:8). For the Egyptian horses on which Judah relied to rebel against Babylon, cf. Jer 46:4, 9; Ezek 17:15.

4:29; 8:16; cf. 47:3; Hoffman, 2004, p. 1:277).[7] Ezekiel likewise foresees that Tyre will be razed by the Babylonians because of its pride:

> Because of the multitude of his horses, the dust *raised by* them will cover you; your walls will shake from the noise of cavalry, wagons, and chariots when he enters your gates as *warriors* enter a city that is breached. With the hoofs of his horses he will trample all your streets. He will kill your people with the sword, and your strong pillars will go down to the ground. (Ezek 26:10–11; Eichrodt, 1970, p. 371)

Jeremiah also threatens the people with poisonous snakes that attack silently (8:17; Hoffman, 2004, 1:278), Amos and Joel depicting the locust as a tool in God's hand (Amos 4:9; Joel 1:1–20; cf. Lewis & Llewellyn-Johns, 2018, pp. 604–606).[8]

According to Jeremiah, Israel's enemies unwittingly serve divine tools of punishment, plundering their flocks and herds (Jer 5:17; Lundbom, 1999, pp. 396–397).[9] Isaiah likewise asserts that the Philistines will destroy Israelite agriculture, the remaining inhabitants only being left with scattered animals: "Now on that day a person may keep alive only a heifer and a pair of sheep; and because of the abundance of the milk produced he will eat curds, for everyone who is left within the land will eat curds and honey" (Isa. 7:21) (Hoffman, 1994, p. 52). Some scholars regard this as a consolation prophecy, however, according to which the inhabitants of the land will have a surfeit of produce from very few animals. On another occasion, Isaiah presents a similar picture, indeed, of a faunal utopia (Isa 32:20; Kaiser, 1974, p. 336; Vargon, 2015, pp. 62–63).

A prophecy discussing the fate that will befall Judah when the enemy arrives includes the detail that even the birds of the air will desert it (Jer 4:25). In a similar spirit, Jeremiah states that people and animals will flee Babylon in order to seek refuge from its imminent destruction (Jer 50:3), all those left beyond behind—including the flocks, herds, working animals, and war horses—being struck down (Jer 51:20–24).

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[7] Jeremiah associates idolatry with ethical sins, both violating God's will (Holt, 2021, p. 187).

[8] For animals as divine instruments of punishment, see Chap. 6.

[9] For Babylonian activity in Kedar and Hatzor in the Arabian-Syrian desert in this regard, cf. Jer 49:29, 32.

The prophets also adduce "wicked animals" in the context of punishment. Ezekiel, for example, lists these as forming part of the calamities God will send upon the people—domestic creatures again becoming collateral damage: "For this is what the Lord God says: 'How much more when I send my four severe judgments against Jerusalem: sword, famine, vicious animals, and plague to eliminate human and animal life from it!'" (Ezek 14:21; Kasher, 2004, p. 1:313–314).[10] In consequence of the blows God strikes, the domestic animals also suffer from their wild counterparts or the plagues God sends upon the people (cf. Hos 4:2–3; Jer 21:6; Ezek 25:13; cf. Barton, 2014, p. 121).[11]

As we saw in the previous chapter, when applied to fauna the term רעה "evil/vicious" does not carry any ethical valence, rather pointing to the fact that the animal is a dangerous predator. In Biblical Hebrew, the phrase "evil/vicious creature" thus signifies a predator that kills and eats to survive, "evil/vicious" in this context being synonymous with "threatening" (Raday & Rabin, 1989, 1:153; Kaddari, 2006, p. 877).[12]

The prophets also reflect the ways in which animals are treated compassionately. In a prophecy of lament of sorts, Jeremiah, for example, describes the drought that will fall upon Judah (Allen, 2008, p. 169). According to biblical theology, famines are frequently a form of punishment for human sin (cf. Jer 14:7; Amos 1:2; Paul, 1994, p. 27). In order to illustrate the distress caused and prompt the people to repent, Jeremiah also appeals to the latter's sensitivities by adducing the suffering the animal world will experience:

> That which came as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah regarding the drought: "Judah mourns and her gates languish; *her people sit* on the ground in mourning garments, and the cry of Jerusalem has ascended. Their nobles have sent their servants for water; they have come to the cisterns and found no water. They have returned with their containers empty; they have been put to shame and humiliated, and they cover their heads, because the ground is cracked, for there has been no rain on the land. The farmers have been put to shame, they have covered their heads. For even the doe in the

[10] Cf. Ezek 5:17; 14:15.

[11] For animals as forming collateral damage during the punishment of human sin, see Chap. 6.

[12] See Chap. 6.

> field has given birth only to abandon *her young*, because there is no grass. The wild donkeys stand on the bare heights; they pant for air like jackals, their eyes fail because there is no vegetation. (Jer 14:1–6; Felix, 1992, pp. 207–208)[13]

Elsewhere, he explicitly contends that fauna bear the consequences of human sin (Jer 12:4; Carroll, 1986, p. 285; Hoffman, 2004, p. 1:324–325; Allen, 2008, p. 149). Isaiah likewise speaks of Egypt being visited by a natural disaster affecting the Nile, several fish populations being radically reduced (Isa 19:6–8; Hoffman, 1994, pp. 98–102; Blenkinsopp, 2000, p. 315).[14]

Faunal images also occur in prophecies of deliverance. Jeremiah observes that if the people and their leaders act justly and righteously and do not trample the weak, the House of David will continue to sit on the throne and ride horses and chariots (Jer 22:3–5). Ezekiel similarly asserts that in the future, when the people will be gathered together in the land, they will be blessed with abundance: "I will multiply on you people and animals, and they will increase and be fruitful" (Ezek 36:11; cf. Jer 31:12; 33:12–13).

One of the unusual species God sends to help human beings is the whale in Jonah (Jon 1:17–2:10[11]). This example may be intended to illustrate the principle of mercy, Jonah seeking to avoid fulfilling his mission of calling the Ninevites to repentance and thereby saving them. At the end of the story, God expressly includes cattle in his concern for the city inhabitants, linking this with Jonah's consideration for the gourd:

> Then the Lord said, "You had compassion on the plant, for which you did not work and *which* you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight. Should I not also have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 people, who do not

[13] Cf. also Joel 1:20; Hag 1:11.

[14] Cf. Exod 7:21. The ancient Egyptians regarded the Nile and its delta as gifts from the gods (Watts, 1985, p. 254). The ecological catastrophe may also have been linked to the Assyrian invasion of Egypt—or the civil war that would engulf the country (Childs, 2001, p. 143).

know the difference between their right hand and their left, *as well as* many animals?" (Jon 4:10–11)[15]

The divine decree was annulled not only by the Ninevites' repentance but also by God's compassion, which extends to all his creatures—a fact Jonah was unable to comprehend through his own cognitive powers (Sasson, 1990, pp. 309–311; Simon, 1992, pp. 86–87; Limburg, 1993, p. 97; Shinan & Zakovitch, 2015, p. 135).

Faunal behavior also served the prophets as a positive model, setting a precedent for the wisdom scribes who taught lessons based on their observation of the natural world (Blenkinsopp, 2000, p. 184). Isaiah, for example, cites the ox and donkey as exemplars of obedience and loyalty to their caring masters: "An ox knows its owner, and a donkey its master's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand" (Isa 1:3; Kaiser, 1983, p. 14).[16] Jeremiah likewise adduces the birds who do not stray from the migratory route God has determined for them, having implanted his wisdom in the natural world, in order to teach Israel that they, too must obey God and walk in the ways he has laid out for them: "Even the stork in the sky knows her seasons; and the turtledove, the swallow, and the crane keep to the time of their migration; but my people do not know the judgment of the Lord" (Jer 8:7; Hoffman, 2004, p. 1:271–272; Dell & Forti, 2020, pp. 257–258).[17]

Turning from the realistic faunal representation in the prophets to their metaphorical and allegorical usage, those familiar to the writers from their own experience—particularly in pre-modern times—frequently serve as literary devices to arouse the audience's senses (Labahn, 2005, p. 94, 96). An explanation of one thing via appeal to another (Cuddon, 2013, p. 432), metaphors employ figurative modes and analogical thinking, illustrating abstract concepts via physical examples (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 10, 60; Gray, 2020, pp. 33–34; Landy, 2020, p. 49; Johnson, 2021, p. 106). They are thus intimately linked to the culture and language in which they created (Schmidt, 2015, p. 245,

[15] For the ravens who took care of Elijah, bringing him food and drink (1 Kgs 17:1–6), see Chap. 6.

[16] Some scholars hold that the prophet attributes common sense to both animals (Harbon, 2021, p. 167).

[17] See also Craigie et al. (1991, p. 133).

249), breaking the norms and conventions of ordinary language and forming new semantic structures (Riede, 2005, p. 19). When adduced in religious sources, the religious discourse becomes associated with daily experience (Bisschops, 2003, pp. 116–117). If only part of the imagery matches the sources, the saying is a simile—a metaphor that focuses on a narrower field, addressing a single shared feature (Soskice, 1985, p. 85; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 8, 148; Donoghue, 2014, pp. 74–77).

In the present context, in contrast to prophecy—i.e. words delivered as God's own (Brin, 2006, p. 319)—allegory is an image or brief story that contains several layers of meaning. As a complex or extended metaphor informed by an inherent logic that links a chain of events, it seeks to convey an idea through the use of figurative language based on experience (Baldick, 2001, p. 5; Cuddon, 2013, p. 21; Crisp, 2005, pp. 324–327, 332–334).

The prophets frequently compare God/the king to a shepherd, the people being his flock. Caring, protective figures whose task is to sustain and defend their animals, shepherds are meant to be responsible for their animals rather than exploitative or abusive towards them (Hunziker-Rodeward, 2005, p. 233; Verde, 2020, p. 25).[18] The shepherd/flock image occurs in both biblical and Mesopotamian literature.[19] The preface to the Code of Hammurabi, for example, states: "I am Hammurabi the shepherd selected by the god Enlil … Shepherd of the people whose deeds are pleasing to the goddess Ištar, etc." (CH i 50–52, iv 45–48; Roth, 1997, pp. 77, 80). It also appears in the mid-third-millennium Egyptian Admonitions/Instructions of Ipuwer: "See, all the ranks, they are not in their place, like a herd that roams without a herdsman" (9:2; Lichtheim, 1973, p. 158).

The prophets frequently portray God as a shepherd gathering together and protecting his flock (cf. Isa 53:6; Jer 31:9; Ezek 36:37; Mic 7:14; Zech 9:16). According to Jeremiah, for example, having failed to take care of their flock God will remove the last kings of Judah and raise up another loyal shepherd from the House of David (Jer 23:1–5; cf. 13:20;

[18] See Chap. 6 (Jacob and David).

[19] Cf. Num 27:16–17; 2 Sam 7:7; 1 Kgs 22:17. Although biblical metaphors partially resemble their Mesopotamian counterparts, they reflect a paganism that differs from biblical monotheism (Brettler, 1999, p. 222).

50:6–7; Hoffman, 2004, p. 1:465; Lundbom, 2004, p. 169). Ezekiel similarly accuses the leaders of Judah of acting irresponsibly and not looking after their flock (Ezek 34:1–10, 18–19; Greenberg, 1997, pp. 694–695).[20] God will thus assume the task himself:

> "I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing place will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down in a good grazing place and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will feed my flock and I myself will lead them to rest," declares the Lord God. "I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken, and strengthen the sick; but the fat and the strong I will eliminate. I will feed them with judgment. As for you, my flock, this is what the Lord God says: 'Behold, I am going to judge between one sheep and another, between the rams and the male goats.'" (Ezek 34:14–17; Allen, 1990, p. 162)

Ezekiel addresses these words to his co-exiles in Babylon, prior to the destruction of the Temple, who had come to despair of the corrupt Judahite leadership and/or that of the Babylonian exiles. Extending a measure of hope to them, he contends that God himself will be their shepherd, saving them and sending them a good ruler from the House of David (Kasher, 2004, pp. 2:652–653). Micah likewise depicts the people's redemption in terms of the compassionate gathering of the flock:

> "On that day," declares the Lord, "I will assemble those who limp and gather the scattered, those whom I have afflicted. I will make those who limp a remnant, and those who have strayed a mighty nation, and the Lord will reign over them on Mount Zion from now on and forever. (Mic 4:6–7; cf. 2:12; 7:14; Isa 40:11; Zeph 3:19)

Employing a similar faunal allegory, Hosea describes God as taking care of his people and loving them as a father:

> Yet it is I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I pulled them along with cords of a man, with ropes of love, and I became to them as one who lifts the yoke from

[20] For the negligence of the Assyrian kings as shepherd who lose their flocks, see Nah 3:18.

> their jaws; and I bent down *and* fed them. (Hos 11:3–4; Andersen & Freedman, 1980, p. 580; Stuart, 1987, p. 179; Macintosh, 1997, p. 445)

Hosea's reproofs focus on Israel's infidelity—primarily in relation to God but also interpersonally and politically (Heschel, 2001, p. 51, 58, 61).[21] *Inter alia*, he presents the northerners as "stubborn heifers" incapable of being yoked and threshing, who persistently rebel against their master. The farmer must thus use the whip or stick on them (Hos 4:16; Van Hecke, 2005, pp. 215–231).[22] He also depicts the people's unfaithfulness via the image of the dove:

> So Ephraim has become like a gullible dove, without sense; they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria. When they go, I will spread my net over them; I will bring them down like the birds of the sky. I will discipline them in accordance with the proclamation to their assembly. (Hos 7:11–12)

On this occasion, their infidelity is explicitly political, the leaders not relying on God but entering into a treaty with strong powers—to whom they are also unfaithful. The image of the "gullible dove" may derive from the fact that, despite knowing how to navigate, doves are relatively easy to catch, distant flying thus being linked to diplomacy (Stuart, 1987, p. 122; Eidevall, 2020, pp. 119–120).[23]

Jeremiah similarly portrays religious disloyalty to God via a faunal metaphor:

> "How can you say, 'I am not defiled, I have not gone after the Baals'? Look at your way in the valley! Know what you have done! You are a swift young camel running about senselessly on her ways, a wild donkey accustomed to the wilderness, that sniffs the wind in her passion. Who can turn her away

[21] God's relationship with his people being "romantic," Israel's unfaithfulness is a form of adultery (Hazony, 2010, p. 175).

[22] Although oxen were most frequently employed for threshing in the biblical period, cows were occasionally used (cf. 1 Sam 6:7; Hos 10:11). For the yoke as a symbol of political subjugation in the Hebrew Bible and ancient Near East, see Anbar (2000, pp. 17–19).

[23] Numerous cultures regard doves as a symbol of purity (Gunter, 1999, p. 1). Felix (1992, pp. 242–243) argues that they are not completely loyal to their partners, however.

> *in* her mating season? None who seek her will grow weary; in her month they will find her. (Jer 2:23–24)

This passage compares the Judahites to two wild animals: the Judahites chase their pagan lusts like the nimble camel who runs everywhere and the donkey that finds its feet in the desert, racing hither and thither in pursuit of a mate (Carroll, 1986, p. 133; Hoffman, 2004, p. 1:142; Balentine, 2018, pp. 117–118).

As when rebuking the leadership, the prophets also often draw on faunal imagery in their ethical admonitions of the wicked. In most of these cases, their utterances are similes that focus on the prominent feature of a specific animal. They thus portray the wicked as venomous snakes that lay poisonous eggs or spiders that catch their victims in their webs (Isa 59:5–6; Watts, 1987, p. 282; Paul, 2008, pp. 2:456–457). Alternatively, they run after their sins, disregarding God's moral laws like horses mindlessly galloping into battle (Jer 8:6; Hoffman, 2004, p. 1:271). Jeremiah also employs the equine image to symbolize the licentious: "They were well-fed lusty horses, each one neighing at his neighbor's wife" (Jer 5:8). This reference appears to be to buxom women whose passion causes them to snort (Hoffman, 2004, pp. 1:204–205)—an unbefitting female trait (Allen, 2008, p. 73) the prophet denounces as "unbridled passion." Ezekiel likewise adduces the horse and the donkey together (Ezek 23:20; Kasher, 2004, p. 1:456).

Jeremiah depicts those who oppress the poor and get rich at their expense as partridges that hatch other birds' eggs: "As a partridge that hatches eggs which it has not laid, so is a person who makes a fortune, but unjustly; in the middle of his days it will abandon him, and in the end he will be a fool" (Jer 17:11). From the pheasant family, partridges inhabit the Negeb and Jordan Valley, the females frequently sitting on the eggs of another; not gaining the heat they need, many die before they emerge. This is the fate of the wicked who amass unlawful wealth, people despising them for causing distress to those around them (Felix, 1992, pp. 209–211; Hoffman, 2004, p. 1:398; Allen, 2008, p. 201).

Lamenting the injustice of the affluent northerners, Amos similarly compares their women to fertile cows: "Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria, who exploit the poor, who

oppress the needy, and say to their husbands, 'Bring now, that we may drink!'" (Amos 4:1). In order to satisfy their material appetites, these women persuade their powerful and influential husbands to take ever more oppressive measures against the poor, thereby not only becoming accomplices in crime but also exacerbating opprobrious social exploitation (Paul, 1994, p. 2:72; Jeremias, 1998, pp. 63–64).

In an apocalyptic prophecy, Deutero-Isaiah describes God as consuming the wicked like moths and worms eat through wool and garments (Isa 51:8; Childs, 2001; Paul, 2008, pp. 2:328–329). First Isaiah, who prophesied during the First Temple period, also likens sin itself to the color scarlet/crimson—extracted from a particular species of insect (Isa 1:18)—symbolizing the spilling of blood whose stain is difficult to remove. Significantly, needless killing of animals without repentance may have been regarded as a more serious offense than exploiting vegetation (Blenkinsopp, 2000, pp. 184–185; Childs, 2001, p. 19).[24]

While the prophets discussed above objected to alliances with other nations designed to resist or thwart Assyrian and Babylonian advances, the "false prophets," delivered optimistic messages encouraging revolt against the imperial overlords (Overholt, 1972, pp. 459–461; Sharp, 2000, p. 431, 2003, p. 120).[25] They thus proclaimed that God would save his people from all catastrophes (Rom-Shiloni, 2009, pp. 200–202; Vanderhooft, 2018, pp. 99–100), making no ethical demands upon the people or calling upon them to repent (Muffs, 1992, p. 35). Without a change of heart, the true prophets foresaw the historical (rather than apocalyptic) possibility that Israel and Judah would be destroyed and the Temple with them (Hoffman, 1997a, pp. 80–81).[26] Not holding that Jerusalem and the Temple were always protected by divine providence (Goldingay, 2009, pp. 176–177; Sweeney, 2018, pp. 32–33; cf. Holt, 2021, p. 185), they insisted that the religious and political leadership

[24] See also below.

[25] For similar Mari prophecies, see Nissinen (2003, p. 16, 43, 94); Barsted (2006, pp. 30–41); Malamat (1995, p. 50, 61); Weinfeld (1995, pp. 37–39); Parpola (1997, pp. 4–11).

[26] While the true prophets warned of impending disaster, this could be averted if the people repented (Bultman, 2001, p. 85). We have no way of knowing conclusively how many Israelites heeded Jeremiah and the other true prophets' warnings and how many followed the false prophets (Begg, 1997, p. 38).

were responsible for the ethical circumstances that would lead to the kingdom's downfall (Tiemeyer, 2009, pp. 256–257).[27]

Ezekiel thus compares the false prophets to jackals, represent the destruction that will fall upon the nation because of the political and ethical line they preach: "Israel, your prophets have been like jackals among ruins. You have not gone up into the breaches, nor did you build up a stone wall around the house of Israel to stand in the battle on the day of the Lord" (Ezek 13:4–5). Like (the) animals, rather than defending their walls they have exploited the situation, turning national fears to their advantage (Eichrodt, 1970, p. 163; Brin, 1975, p. 65; Muffs, 1992, p. 31; Kasher, 2004, 1:296–297; Allen, 1994, p. 200).[28] Elsewhere, Ezekiel compares the Judahite officials who encourage the people to revolt against Babylon to wolves and the corrupt leaders to vicious lions, asserting that complacency and low moral standards will bring ruin upon the kingdom, Temple, and citizens alike (Ezek 22:25, 27; Allen, 1990, p. 39; Greenberg, 1997, p. 461; Kasher, 2004, p. 1:449).

The prophets also draw on faunal imagery to describe divine activity. Isaiah exhibits a distinctive approach with respect to Jerusalem's immunity in this regard:

> For this is what the Lord says to me: "As the lion or the young lion growls over his prey, against which a band of shepherds is called out, and he will not be terrified at their voice nor disturbed at their noise, so will the Lord of armies come down to wage war on Mount Zion and on its hill." Like flying birds so the Lord of armies will protect Jerusalem. He will protect and save it; he will pass over and rescue *it*. (Isa 31:4–5)[29]

Just as lions defend their prey against the shepherds who endeavor to take it off them so God will defend Jerusalem—like a bird who protects its

[27] The exception to the rule is Isaiah: see below.

[28] Cf. Neh 4:3[3:35]. While not stated explicitly, this type of prophecy is related to idolatry (Greenberg, 1983, p. 252).

[29] This view was rejected by other prophets, such as Micah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel (Sweeney, 2005, p. 81, 2016, pp. 239–240; Johnston, 2009, pp. 116–117), Jeremiah himself being accused of being a false prophet for acknowledging the possibility of destruction (Jer 26:1–19; Hoffman, 1997b, p. 228).

offspring in the nest (Watts, 1985, p. 409; Hoffman, 1994, p. 147; Forti, 2020, p. 242). They also symbolize the advancing enemy whose attack cannot be staved off, however, leading to exile in a far-off land (Isa 5:29; Kaiser, 1983, p. 113; Watts, 1985, p. 65).[30]

Isaiah compares the Egyptians to flies, symbolizing their vast numbers, and Assyria to stinging bees (Isa 7:18–19; Hoffman, 1994, p. 51; cf. Watts, 1985, p. 107). The latter are also snakes that become more dangerous from generation to generation: "Do not rejoice, Philistia, all of you, because the rod that struck you is broken; for from the serpent's root a viper will come out, and its fruit will be a winged serpent" (Isa 14:29; Kaiser, 1974, p. 54). [31]

Jeremiah describes the enemy horses as fleeter than eagles in order to indicate their swiftness (Jer 4:13; Carroll, 1986, pp. 163–164), comparing their swiftness to a swarm of locusts (Jer 51:27). God himself acts like a lion, roaring or attacking the flock and shepherds (= kings), who stand helpless before him (Jer 25:9, 34–38).[32] On occasion, the latter themselves "roar" in their sins against God (Jer 12:8; Hoffman, 2004, p. 1:328).

As a way of demonstrating the catastrophe God is about to visit upon the people, Hosea employs a cluster of metaphors taken from the faunal world, all of which relate to predators that threaten the herd:

> So I will be like a lion to them; like a leopard I will lie in wait by the wayside. I will confront them like a bear deprived of her cubs, and I will tear open their chests; I will also devour them there like a lioness, as a wild animal would tear them to pieces. (Hos 13:7–8; Andersen & Freedman, 1980, p. 627)[33]

In a historical retrospective of sorts designed to convey a lesson to his audience, Jeremiah employs another series of metaphors to describe the cruelty of those attacking Judah: "Therefore a lion from the forest will

[30] For Assyria as a lion, see Nah 2:11–13[12–14].

[31] For Israel's adversaries as humiliated snakes crawling on their bellies, see Mic 7:17.

[32] Cf. also Hos 5:12, 14; Amos 1:2; Joel 3:16 [4:16]; Jer 49:19–20.

[33] The impending threat may have been from the emerging Assyrian Empire (Stuart, 1987, p. 204).

kill them, a wolf of the deserts will destroy them, a leopard is watching their cities. Everyone who goes out of them will be torn in pieces, because their wrongdoings are many, their apostasies are numerous" (Jer 5:6).[34]

On other occasions, the prophets make use of similes that focus on a prominent feature of a specific animal—as in the depiction of the invading forces of the Babylonian Empire: "Their horses are faster than leopards, and quicker than wolves in the evening. Their horsemen charge along, their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swooping down to devour" (Hab 1:8; Roberts, 1991, pp. 96–97).[35] In order to highlight the speed of the Babylonian horsemen, Habakkuk compares them to eagles. The latter not generally being known for this quality, some scholars suggest that the reference here is to the cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) ("leopards"), the swiftest of all the mammals, reaching up to ca. 110 km an hour and in short spurts (500 m) and 80 km an hour over longer stretches (Dor, 1997, p. 64; Slifkin, 2015, pp. 138–140).[36]

Vehemently denouncing the pride, aggressiveness, and corruption of Israel's enemies (Heschel, 2001, p. 98, 210), Isaiah castigates the boasts made by the Assyrian king:

> For he has said, "By the power of my hand and by my wisdom I did this, because I have understanding; and I removed the boundaries of the peoples and plundered their treasures, and like a powerful man I brought down their inhabitants, and my hand reached to the riches of the peoples like a nest, and as one gathers abandoned eggs, I gathered all the earth; and there was not one that flapped its wing, opened *its* beak, or chirped." (Isa 10:13–14)

[34] Depiction of the enemy as a predator heightens the threat he poses (Verde, 2020, p. 19).

[35] For God as an eagle spreading its wings and catching Edom, see Jer 49:22. For the Edomites as inhabiting the mountainous regions as eagles, see Obad 1:4; Felix, 1992, pp. 214–216. Deutero-Isaiah prophesies the Israelites' downfall via the image of the great-winged eagle (Isa 40:31).

[36] The Mishna distinguishes between the leopard and the cheetah: "The wolf, the lion, the bear, the leopard, the *bardelas*, and the snake are considered forewarned even if they had never previously caused damage" (B. Kam. 1:4).

Assuming divine status, he exiles the inhabitants of small kingdoms at will, devouring them as his right (Watts, 1985, p. 150; Blenkinsopp, 2000, p. 254; Childs, 2001, pp. 91–93).[37]

Addressing the great empires, Ezekiel likewise describes them in allegorical terms. In contrast to fables, however, faunal allegories are not marked by any significant anthropomorphism, the animals not speaking (Haran, 1978, pp. 548–549). These two passages date to the last days of the kingdom of Judah, just before its destruction by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. During this period, Judah served as a buffer state between Babylon in the north and Egypt in the south (Lipschits, 2005, p. 68, 365; Hoffman, 2018, p. 60). In the first, Ezekiel compares Nebuchadnezzar (605–562 BCE) to a great eagle with a vast wing span and spectacular plumage who plucks fresh branches from the top of the Lebanese cedar—an impressive phenomenon in its own right—and plants it in Canaan as a lowly vine. A second eagle—as large but not as majestic—takes the vine, however, and replants it. Will this not expose it to the dry east wind, asks the prophet (Ezek 17:1–10; Rom-Shiloni, 2020, pp. 99–100).

The great eagle represents the strength and speed of the invading Babylonian army, as well as the protection it extends to the king of Judah and his vassal kingdom as an unwitting instrument in God's hand. The second eagle symbolizes Psamtek/Psamtic II of Egypt, a much weaker king than his Babylonian counterpart (Greenberg, 1983, pp. 309–310; Allen, 1994, pp. 259–263). Here, Ezekiel addresses both the political issue and the ethical principle of not violating a treaty—an act all the prophets denounced as breaching the oath to God the people swore when they entered into his covenant (Duguid, 1994, pp. 34–35; de Jong, 2007, p. 249).[38]

The second allegory represents Judah as a lioness that, having reared her cub, loses it to a hunter's snare, her second cub suffering the same fate

[37] In portraying Ephraim's impending fate, Hosea asserts that its glory will be "like birds that fly away" (Hos 9:11). Micah, in contrast, compares Judah to a bereaved wife who, lamenting the loss of her sons, shaves her hair and makes herself "bald as a vulture" (Mic 1:16), symbolizing her grief and ugliness (Cruz, 2020, pp. 130–131).

[38] The prophets frequently objected to violating political treaties on both political and theological grounds (Tsevat, 1959, p. 201; cf. de Jong, 2007, p. 249).

(Ezek 19:1–9; Beentjes, 1996, p. 27).[39] Here, the strong, threatening lion becomes a vulnerable creature, Ezekiel possibly being aware of the Mesopotamian tradition of the royal hunting of lions (Rom-Shiloni, 2020, pp. 105–106). According to most scholars, the first cub is Jehoahaz, exiled by Necho II (609 BCE) (2 Kgs 23:31–35; cf. Jer 22:10–12). The second appears to refer to Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, whom the prophet warned against revolting against Nebuchadnezzar (Allen, 1994, p. 296; Rom-Shiloni, 2020, pp. 104–106).[40]

Faunal imagery also serves to describe imminent catastrophes. Populated areas—in which people had pets and domestic animals—becoming deserted, they become home to wild creatures: jackals (Jer 10:22; 49:33; 51:37); wild goats and hyenas (Isa 34:14), wild donkeys (Isa 32:14), hedgehogs (Isa 14:23; 34:11; Zeph 2:14), porcupines and ravens (Isa 34:11), owls and vultures (Isa 34:11, 15; Zeph 2:14), and herds (Isa 17:2; Zeph 2:6).

The prophetic literature also contains eschatological and apocalyptic passages. Most religions have traditions relating to both the beginning and the end of time/history (Werblowsky, 2005, pp. 4:2833–34). In the Hebrew Bible, these pertain to the end days when the world will be redeemed from all evil and everyone and thing will know God, people and fauna living peacefully and harmoniously together, untroubled by plague or war (Hoffman, 2017, p. 180).[41] In contrast to the prophecies of rebuke, which make human fate conditional on ethical conduct, these are deterministic, the outcome having been established before time (Buber, 1997, p. 113; cf. Uffenheimer, 1983, p. 27).[42]

One of the most well-known faunal passages in this regard is Isaiah 11:

> And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion and the fattened steer will be together; and a little boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will

[39] Cf. the image of Judah as a lion in Jacob's blessing (Gen 49:9).

[40] Some hold that it relates to Jehoichin, however, Ezekiel delivering the allegory to Zedekiah in order to prevent him becoming third in line (Eichrodt, 1970, pp. 252–253; Begg, 1989, p. 366).

[41] For Mesopotamian eschatological prophecies, see Weinfeld (1979, pp. 263–276).

[42] The term "eschaton" occasionally refers to a more imminent future, highlighting the full and certain fulfillment of events (Hoffman, 1977b, pp. 437–439).

> graze, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. They will not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. (Isa 11:6–9)[43]

This universal eschatological vision can be understood in two ways. Some regard it as allegorical in form, the animals symbolizing human/national behavior and the abandonment of violence in favor of peace (e.g. Wildberger, 1991, pp. 480–481). The majority, however, view it as eschatological, both fauna and human beings acting in accordance with their true nature and returning to the vegetarian state of the Garden of Eden (Kaiser, 1983, p. 183; Watts, 1985, p. 173; Blenkinsopp, 2000, p. 265; Childs, 2001, p. 103).[44] Hosea paints a similar picture:

> On that day I will also make a covenant for them with the animals of the field, the birds of the sky, and the crawling things of the ground. And I will eliminate the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and will let them lie down in safety. (Hos 2:18[2:20]).

Here, too, following the making of a covenant the world will return to its primal harmonious state. According to the prevailing scholarly view, this prophecy is marked by a universal perspective (cf. Andersen & Freedman, 1980, p. 280; Stuart, 1987, pp. 58–59).[45]

A sub-group of these prophecies relates to the Day of the Lord, when God will demand an account from the wicked and appear in person before the redemption, taking control of the world out of human hands (Margalit, 1968, pp. 14–16, 27; Weinfeld, 1983, p. 74, 85; Stuart, 1987, p. 353). Amos, for example, asserts:

> Woe to you who are longing for the day of the Lord, for what purpose will the day of the Lord be to you? It will be darkness and not light; as when a

[43] See Chap. 6. According to Collins (2019, p. 115), it indicates that *homo sapiens* is to live tranquilly with the animal kingdom.

[44] See Chap. 6.

[45] Some focus on its particularistic aspects, however, which relate to Israel (Macintosh, 1997, p. 82).

> man flees from a lion and a bear confronts him, or he goes home, leans with his hand against the wall, and a snake bites him. Will the Day of the Lord not be darkness instead of light, even gloom with no brightness in it? (Amos 5:18–20)

While the faunal imagery derives from the prophet's every-day environment (Mays, 1969, p. 105), some scholars suggest that he draws his inspiration from the growing Assyrian Empire (Eidevall, 2017, p. 163): over time, this imposed the Pax Assyrica on the region that, while bringing economic prosperity, also led to the small kingdoms becoming vassals, destroyed, and exiled (Bienkowski, 2001, p. 266).[46] The appeal to dangerous animals is thus designed to demonstrate that God will strike blows from which no one can escape (Jeremias, 1998, p. 100; cf. Andersen & Freedman, 1989, p. 522).[47] Joel similarly seems to compare the enemy army that will emerge on the Day of the Lord to a plague of locusts. In order to heighten the effect, he then likens the locusts to horses (Joel 2:1–12; Cogan, 1994, pp. 34–35).

Isaiah describes the Day of the Lord as a time when humanity will acknowledge God's universality, abandoning their prideful boasting to creatures of the dark/night: "On that day people will throw away to the moles and the bats their idols of silver and their idols of gold, which they made for themselves to worship" (Isa 2:20; Weinfeld, 1983, p. 90; Kaiser, 1983, p. 63).

Animals played a role as casual "undertakers" in early history, devouring corpses left unburied after catastrophes. As we saw in the previous chapter, this fate was considered "insult to injury" in the ancient Near East. Describing the punishment visited upon Judah because of Manasseh's sins, Jeremiah observes: "'And I will appoint over them four kinds of doom,' declares the Lord: 'the sword to kill, the dogs to drag away, and the birds of the sky and the animals of the earth to devour and destroy'" (Jer 15:3). He employs similar imagery to curse Jehoiakim (609–598 BCE): "They will not mourn for him: 'Oh, my brother!' or, 'Oh, sister!' They will not mourn for him: 'Oh,

[46] See also Parpola (2003, pp. 100–103); Faust & Weiss, 2005, pp. 72–88.

[47] Cf. Amos 9:3; Isa 24:18.

for the master!' or, 'Oh, for his splendor!' He will be buried with a donkey's burial, dragged off and thrown out beyond the gates of Jerusalem" (Jer 22:18–19; cf. 36:30). This is either non-interment, the corpse being left for the wild animals, or burial unbefitting a king (Way, 2011, pp. 194–197).[48]

Finally, the prophets address the killing of animals, which falls into various categories. The first is for food. As we saw in Chap. 6, the world was created vegetarian, God only licensing the conditional consumption of meat after the Flood (Gen 1:29–30; 9:3–4). Israel subsequently received further laws governing the eating of blood (Lev 3:17; 7:26–27; 17:10–13; Deut 12:23), the ordinances relating to slaughter for food being designed to restrict animal suffering (Deut 12:21; Tigay, 2016, pp. 1:269–271).[49]

On occasion, starvation prompted the people to violate these laws, an act severely denounced (cf. 1 Sam 14:32–34). In similar vein, gluttony was not viewed favourably. Accusing the upper-class Judahites of appetency, pride, and lack of trust in God, Isaiah depicts this behaviour as needless slaughter: "Instead, there is joy and jubilation, killing of cattle and slaughtering of sheep, eating of meat and drinking of wine: 'Let's eat and drink, for tomorrow we may die'" (Isa 22:13). Deutero-Isaiah likewise attacks those who slaughtered and ate unclean animals as part of idolatrous rites (Isa 66:3, 17; Paul, 2008, pp. 2:570–571). Like other prophets, he vehemently castigates sacrifices offered without intention or ethical conduct: "'What are your many sacrifices to me?' says the Lord. 'I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fattened cattle; and I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats'" (Isa 1:11; cf. Amos 5:21–24; 8.4–6; Hos 4:4–6; 6:1–6; Mic 6:6–8). Offering sacrifices cannot compensate for corrupt moral behaviour, the performance of rites requiring accompaniment by ethical conduct (Watts, 1985, p. 17).[50]

[48] For the discrepancies in the sources regarding Jehoiakim's burial, see Reamer (2004, p. 217).

[49] Cf. b. Hul. 24b.

[50] These sacrifices are regular offerings carried out in accordance with proper protocol (Blenkinsopp, 2000, p. 184; Childs, 2001, p. 19).

Despite God's concern for the cultus, ethics take precedence over ritual, justice to the weak sectors of society (orphans, widows, strangers, etc.) driven by divine morality being of prime importance (Kaiser, 1983, p. 35; Blenkinsopp, 2000, p. 185).

Micah espouses the same principle in a passage some scholars regard as summarizing biblical ethics:

> With what shall I come to the Lord and bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to him with burnt offerings, with yearling calves? Does the Lord take pleasure in thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give Him my firstborn *for* my wrongdoings, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, mortal one, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Mic 6:6–8; cf. Amos 5:21–24; Heschel, 2001, p. 129; Jeremias, 1998, p. 101; Redditt, 2014, 2:151)

The sacrificing of many animals in order to cleanse one's hands without abandoning injustice is thus a needless form of killing that seeks to cover up injustice and lack of compassion (Smith, 1997, p. 139; Heschel, 2001, p. 249, 256). Although biblical religion is closely associated with the cultus, sacrifices do not constitute food for the gods as in pagan traditions. Neither their volume or type are subject to particular restrictions in the Hebrew Bible. Offering many, especially in order to cleanse one's conscience—a form of hypocrisy—thus smacks of idolatry (Vargon, 1994, pp. 177–178; Unterman, 2017, pp. 96–106). Here, too, ritual is subjugated to ethics (Hoffman, 2017, p. 246).

Conclusion

This chapter examines the faunal imagery employed in the classical/Latter Prophets. The findings reveal that these figures called for exclusive worship of the God of Israel, their rebukes primarily addressing social reform

in accordance with divine ethics. Human beings having free will, the future depends upon the choices they make. While moral injustice can be punished by natural disasters such as famine, it more frequently takes the form of invading enemies depicted as wild beasts.

The prophets often describe animals realistically, noting their traits and features—the roaring of lions, the flight of storks, the loyalty of oxen and donkeys, etc. In their portrayal of impending catastrophe, they note that the faunal world serves as collateral damage, suffering the same fate as human beings when God visits the latter with drought or military campaigns. Animal imagery also serves as a fruitful pool of metaphors, similes, and allegories, the people being portrayed as a flock and God/kings/leaders their shepherd. Hereby, the prophets heighten the latter's ethical responsibility for taking care of the people because they have been appointed to their position by God. Faunal imagery appears frequently in passages dealing with enemy attacks—which can only be averted by repentance. If this is not forthcoming, the land is deserted and depopulated, left for wild animals to devour the unburied corpses. It is also employed in eschatological prophecies that speak of abundance and peaceful coexistence, illustrating the return to the primal state of world harmony. Finally, animals form an integral part of the cultus, the prophets denouncing the offering of many sacrifices to cover up immoral behavior, censuring it as needless slaughter.

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
CC	Continental Commentary
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
ML	Mikra Le'Yisrael
OHT	Olam ha-Tanakh
OTL	Old Testament Library
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

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8

The Place and Role of Animals in the Psalms and Biblical Wisdom Literature

Introduction

This chapter discusses the ethical dimensions of the faunal imagery in the biblical psalms and sapiential literature—Psalms, Proverbs, Qohelet (Ecclesiastes), and Job. Fascinated by the wisdom embodied in nature and the wondrous conduct of the animals, the ancient scribes and sages drew on zoological features to create metaphors that both enriched their literary artifacts and conveyed educational lessons (Forti, 2008a, p. 1, 8, 10, 2018, p. 4).

The Book of Psalms is an "anthology" of various types of psalms comprising 150 chapters (Kuntz, 2014, 2:159) from the early monarchy (tenth century BCE) through to the end of the Persian Empire (323 BCE). Presenting a wide range of views, it includes hymns (songs of praise), individual/national requests, royal psalms, enthronement psalms, laments, and wisdom psalms (Gillingham, 1994, pp. 252–254; 2016, pp. 207–217; Vriezen & van der Woude, 2005, p. 442; Brin, 2011,

I. Breier, *An Ethical View of Human-Animal Relations in the Ancient Near East*,
The Palgrave Macmillan Animal Ethics Series,
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1:362–363).[1] In contrast to the prophetic writings, rather than regarding or presenting their words as the product of direct revelation these writers base their insights on observation and analysis (Gillingham, 1994, pp. 6–7, cf. Boda et al., 2018; Schellenberg, 2020).

The lyrical poetry in Psalms serves as a vehicle through which the authors and worshippers can express their emotions. It thus differs from epic literature, which focuses on the gods' power and might and victory over their enemies (Rofé, 2004, p. 11; cf. Brown, 2016, p. 253).[2] Some of the individual psalms may constitute a response to events in the writer's life (Bergant, 1997, p. 65). The chapters of the book were thus formed from biographical experience and the liturgy rather than representing any systematic doctrine.

While fashioned by poets, collectors, and editors, the values they espouse impart an overall coherency to it (Gillingham, 1994, pp. 275–276). The book's distinctiveness lies in the fact that it transmits human beings' words to God in direct form rather than God's utterances to *homo sapiens* or interpersonal human communication (Alter, 1987, p. 261; Weiss, 2001, p. 13). Unlike the other biblical texts, it lies in the service of the believer rather than functioning as a source of religious authority (Gelander, 2013, p. 1), the psalmist who addresses God being portrayed as a godfearer (albeit not presenting himself explicitly as a righteous person). From an emotional perspective, he arouses empathy in his audience (Hoffman, 1995a, p. 234, 236).

Many of the psalms depict God as creator of the natural order and thus an ethical being—i.e., as caring for all his creatures, in particular the weak (Weinfeld, 1995, pp. 20–29, 41–44; Wright, 2004, p. 177; Barton, 2014, p. 37, 39, 112; Schuele, 2014, p. 1:334). Assured of divine redemption, they hold that the righteous are saved by their righteousness, the wicked ultimately being punished (Bergant, 1997, p. 74; Brown, 2020, pp. 75–79).

The psalmists appeal to fauna for various purposes, thereby linking many of the species together (Bergant, 1997, p. 73). After establishing

[1] Although Psalms contains the bulk of biblical poetry, the latter also occurs in the historiographical and prophetic literature.

[2] The boundaries between epic and lyric poetry are not always clear cut in the Hebrew Bible, however.

that God created the world in the first nine verses, Psalm 104 thus asserts that YHHW's compassion extends to all his creatures, for example:

> He sends forth springs in the valleys; they flow between the mountains; they give drink to every animal of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. The birds of the sky dwell beside them; they lift up *their* voices from among the branches. He waters the mountains from his upper chambers; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of his works. He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and vegetation for the labor of mankind, so that they may produce food from the earth, and wine, which makes a human heart cheerful, so that he makes *his* face gleam with oil, and food, which sustains a human heart. The trees of the Lord drink their fill, the cedars of Lebanon which he planted, where the birds build their nests, *and* the stork, whose home is the juniper trees. The high mountains are for the wild goats; the cliffs are a refuge for the rock hyrax. He made the moon for the seasons; the sun knows the place of its setting. You appoint darkness and it becomes night, in which all the animals of the forest prowl about. The young lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God. *When* the sun rises they withdraw, and they lie down in their dens. A person goes out to his work and to his labor until evening. Lord, how many are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your possessions. There is the sea, great and broad, in which are swarms without number, animals both small and great. The ships move along there, *and* Leviathan, which you have formed to have fun in it. They all wait for you to give them their food in due season. You give to them, they gather *it* up; you open your hand, they are satisfied with good. You hide your face, they are terrified; you take away their breath, they perish and return to their dust. You send forth your Spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground. (Ps 104:10–30)[3]

Employing high poetic language, the authors delve into intimate details, presenting a natural order governed by divine providence (Weiser, 1971, p. 668; Barton, 2014, p. 112).[4] Although omnipotent, God gives breath

[3] This passage is cited in full due to its significance. Biblical quotations follow the NASB unless otherwise noted.

[4] Here, the writer appears to exhibit some familiarity with ancient Near Eastern literature. While the text closely resembles the Egyptian Great Hymn to the Aten, however, it polemicizes against the mythological approach (Dahood, 1970, p. 33; Hoffman, 1995b, p. 126).

to all living things, taking care of their needs and protecting them (Craigie, 1983b, p. 32, 34; cf. Wright, 2004, p. 116; Collins, 2019, p. 110). All creatures thus depend on his mercy, compassion, and providence (Goldingay, 2008, p. 188; Lewis & Llewellyn-Jones, 2018, p. 127; Noegal, 2019, p. 101). According to Psalm 104, human beings and animals form a "community of creatures" under God's vigilance (Linzey & Cohn-Sherbok, 1997, p. 23)—despite the fact that the wicked person's unethical deeds conflict with the "goodness" of creation, casting doubt on divine supervision and the doctrine of retribution (Blenkinsopp, 1995, p. 51; Gelander, 2013, p. 112).

Psalm 147 similarly portrays God's mercy to the wild animals:

> *It is* he who covers the heavens with clouds, who provides rain for the earth,who makes grass sprout on the mountains. *It is* he who gives an animal its food,*and feeds* young ravens that cry.[5] He does not delight in the strength of the horse;he does not take pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord favors those who fear him,those who wait for his faithfulness. (Ps 147:8–11)

The human inclination towards evil cannot always withstand the divine will embedded in God's attribute of lovingkindness (Dahood, 1970, p. 346; Craigie, 1983b, p. 310; Felix, 1992, p. 325; Goldingay, 2008, p. 722). The sense of security founded on human skill and might is thus false (Weiser, 1971, p. 835).

Two further psalms laud God for watering the earth, thereby bringing joy to the animals (Ps 65:9–13; 68:9–10; Craigie, 1990, p. 143, 177; Gelander, 1995, p. 271; Goldingay, 2007, pp. 280–281, 360; Gillingham, 2018, p. 355, 368).[6] Ps 36:6[7] states: "Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; your judgments are like the great deep. Lord, you protect mankind and animals." God's mercy frequently counters his attribute of judgment, allowing him to protect and save his creatures (Gruber, 1995a, p. 164; Gillingham, 2018, p. 221; Lewis & Llewellyn-Jones,

[5] When they have grown a little, raven chicks call out loudly when hungry (Felix, 1992, pp. 325–326).

[6] Both praise God as Creator and his victory over mythical creatures (Ps 74:13–17; Craigie, 1990, p. 251).

2018, p. 58). It is thus not confined to Israel or humanity at large but also covers the whole of creation: "The Lord is gracious and compassionate; slow to anger and great in mercy. The Lord is good to all, and his mercies are over all his works" (Ps 145:8–9; cf. vv. 14–16).

The psalmist also calls on the animal kingdom to praise God (Ps 148:7; Craigie, 1983b, p. 316; Goldfeder, 2016, p. 73).[7] Other texts adduce faunal elements in association with the Exodus, God sending animals to strike the Egyptians because they refuse to obey him and release his people from bondage (Ps 78:45–46; 105:30–31) and winged fowl or quail to feed the Israelites in the desert (Ps 78:27; 105:40; cf. Exod 16:23; Num 11:18–20; Goldingay, 2007, p. 493, 497).[8]

Psalm 8 describes the place *homo sapiens* holds in the creation:

> What is man that you think of him, and a son of man that you are concerned about him? Yet you have made him a little lower than God, and you crown him with glory and majesty! You have him rule over the works of your hands; you have put everything under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the animals of the field, the birds of the sky, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes through the paths of the seas. Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! (Ps 8:4–9[5–10])

While this passage portrays human beings as insignificant in relation to the Creator, God bestows upon them attributes superior to those of his other creatures, making the latter subservient to them. This disparity embodying the wonders of creation (Craigie, 1983a, pp. 107–108; Hacham, 1990, p. 32), the psalmist clearly alludes to the creation story in Genesis, which depicts God as making human beings responsible for the remainder, taking care of their needs because all are created in God's image (Gen: 1:27–28; Weiser, 1971, p. 145; Avishur, 1995, pp. 49–50; Goldingay, 2006, p. 159; Gillingham, 2018, p. 72).[9] Human beings are thus called upon to cultivate their cognitive faculties as setting them apart

[7] For the mythological features this passage exhibits, see Weiser (1971, p. 833); Goldingay (2008, p. 732).

[8] For the rams and lambs rejoicing before God the mountains and hills when Israel is set free, see Ps 114:4, 6. For the quail, see Lewis and Llewellyn-Jones (2018, p. 264); Noegal (2019, p. 101).

[9] The psalmist employs a merismus that covers all living things (Dahood, 1966, p. 51).

from the rest of creation—such as the horse and mule (Ps 32:9; Hacham, 1990, pp. 178–179).[10] They are also intended to learn from experience (their own or others'), confessing that they have sinned or erred rather than stubbornly refusing to correct themselves (Gruber, 1995a, p. 151; Craigie, 1983a, pp. 267–268; Forti, 2018, pp. 84–87).

Despite the cognitive advantages human beings hold over their faunal counterparts, however, Psalm 49 twice observes that they resemble beasts (vv. 14, 21[13, 20]). Their rational and ethical faculties notwithstanding, they are no more immortal than the animals, however, all species sharing the same fate (Craigie, 1983a, p. 360). In the present context, the didactic message the comparison conveys is that, pursuing wealth and material happiness, human beings leave nothing behind them when they die, making riches and glory irrelevant (Hacham, 1990, p. 283; Weisman, 1995, p. 218).[11] The passage may also serve an educational purpose, illustrating the foolishness of relying upon one's own wisdom (Goldingay, 2007, p. 103).

The psalmists also adduce fauna in order to exemplify the fact that human beings should put their faith and trust in God: "Fear the Lord, you his saints; for to those who fear him there is no lack *of anything*. The young lions do without and suffer hunger; but they who seek the Lord will not lack any good thing" (Ps 34:9–10[10–11]). This text points out that, despite the temptations they face, those who fear God and keep his commandments will not find themselves in need. The cruel predator, in contrast, is likely to go hungry because, while strong, it is subject to God's providence (Weiser, 1971, p. 298; Gruber, 1995a, p. 157).[12]

The idea of God's uncompromising protection of his creatures is also illustrated via faunal imagery in Psalm 91:

[10] Although these two species generally symbolize strength, here they are adduced for their low intelligence (Goldingay, 2006, p. 459). Horses are frequently characterized as "lustful" (Jer 5:8; Forman, 2011, pp. 115–121): see Chap. 7. While mules are not explicitly said to be stupid or stubborn, their association with horses and donkeys—who symbolize this trait *par excellence*—projects this quality upon them (Forti, 2018, p. 87; Collins, 2002, p. 242; Way, 2011, p. 69).

[11] For the possibility of wisdom influence here, see Forti (2018, p. 13).

[12] Some scholars observe that the lion represents the wicked who loot and plunder herein (Ps 7:3[2]; 17:12; Hacham, 1990, p. 188).

> For you have made the Lord my refuge, the Most High your dwelling place. No evil will happen to you, nor will any plague come near your tent. For he will give his angels orders concerning you, to protect you in all your ways. On their hands they will lift you up, so that you do not strike your foot against a stone. You will walk upon the lion and cobra, you will trample the young lion and the serpent. (vv. 9–13)

Lions and poisonous snakes attack suddenly, making it difficult to defend oneself against them (Craigie, 1990, p. 457). The motif of trampling, which signifies invincibility and immunity from harm, also occurs in Egyptian sources (Weiser, 1971, pp. 611–612).

Two national psalms teach that rather than relying on military force, the Israelites should put their trust first and foremost in God:

> The king is not saved by a mighty army; a warrior is not rescued by great strength. A horse is a false hope for victory; nor does it rescue anyone by its great strength. Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who wait for his faithfulness, to rescue their soul from death and to keep them alive in famine. (Ps 33:16–19; cf. 147:10–11; Goldingay, 2006, p. 471)

Introduced into the ancient Near East ca. 2000 BCE and being harnessed to chariots over time, horses symbolize military prowess in the Hebrew Bible (Dor, 1997, p. 52; Borowski, 1998, pp. 100–106; Dayan, 2017, p. 111; Lewis & Llewellyn-Jones, 2018, pp. 114–120).[13]

As noted above, one of the most frequent faunal images is that of God shepherding his flock: "The Lord is my shepherd, I will not be in need. He lets me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; he guides me in the paths of righteousness for the sake of his name" (Ps 23:1–3; cf. 77:20; 78:52; 79:13; 95:7; 100:3). Here, God embodies the ideal shepherd who protects his flock and ensures they have food and drink—not a trivial concern in the arid conditions of Eretz Israel (Goldingay, 2007, p. 22). When he guides them

[13] Cf. Exod 14:9; Judg 4:15; 1 Kgs 10:29; Job 39:19–25. Entering Egypt with the Hyksos invasion in the seventeenth century BCE, horses subsequently came to pull war chariots (Clutton-Brock, 2007, p. 81).

towards proper behaviour, they respond with full trust (Ps 23:4–6; Felix, 1992, pp. 266–268; Weiss, 2001, pp. 43–44; Goldingay, 2006, p. 347; Gelander, 2013, p. 23), thereby imbuing them with hope (Gillingham, 2018, p. 145).

In one psalm, the author appeals to God to pasture and deliver the Josephites—i.e., the northern kingdom of Israel (Ps 80:2). Possibly written in the difficult period prior to its destruction by the Assyrians (722 BCE) or in the wake of the exile of the inhabitants, this attests to the mutual commitment Israel and Judah exhibited after the division (Weiser, 1971, p. 547; Brin, 1995, p. 48; Goldingay, 2007, p. 534). The faunal imagery may thus be intended to encourage the audience not merely to put their faith and trust in God but also to take responsibility for one another.

Another psalm employs it to describe the believer's longing for God: "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for you, God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" (Ps 42:1–2). The deer's habit of stretching its neck to drink symbolizes spiritual thirst here, the epithet "living God" alluding to divine intervention in human life (Weiss, 2001, p. 95).[14] God's protection is often described metaphorically in terms of a mother bird spreading her wings over her chicks: "He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you may take refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and wall" (Ps 91:3–4). God's "wings" protect the believer like a shield in battle or from the harsh realities of life (Hoffman, 1995b, p. 91; Gelander, 2013, pp. 83–84; Forti, 2018, p. 69).[15] From a religious perspective, the psalmist thus inculcates complete trust in divine salvation (Weiser, 1971, p. 607).

Another psalm appeals to God to act like a bird defending her young in the nest, the latter possibly symbolizing the Temple (Ps 84:1–6; Brin, 1995, p. 66; Goldingay, 2007, p. 590). Yet another portrays God as giving vitality and power to his followers, strengthening their feet like those of the deer (Ps 18:33–34; Weiser, 1971, p. 194). When he punishes, in contrast, he consumes people (and property) like moths devouring clothing: "Remove your plague from me; because of the opposition of your

[14] For deer in the Hebrew Bible, see Slifkin, 2015, pp. 223–235.

[15] Cf. Pss 17:8; 36:7[8]; 57:1[2]; 61:4[5]; 63:7[8]; 91:4.

hand I am perishing. With rebukes you punish a person for wrongdoing; you consume like a moth what is precious to him; certainly all mankind is mere breath! Selah" (Ps 39:10–11[11–12]; Cohen-Tzemaḥ, 1995, p. 175; Weiss, 2001, pp. 85–86).[16] This imagery suggests a disease that causes a sense of abandonment (Gillingham, 2018, p. 231).

Numerous psalms also employ faunal motifs to describe the wicked. The lion, for example, represents the reckless, menacing person:

> He sits in the lurking places of the villages; he kills the innocent in the secret places; his eyes surreptitiously watch for the unfortunate. He lurks in secret like a lion in his lair; he lurks to catch the needy; he catches the needy when he pulls him into his net. (Ps 10:8–9; cf. 17:12; 35:17)

Here, the psalmist asks God to help the weak and poor who suffer at the hands of the wicked who, ambushing them, seek to catch them like lions their prey (Craigie, 1983a, p. 125; Goldingay, 2006, p. 181; cf. Gillingham, 2018, p. 87). On occasion, the lion appears together with other predators—e.g., long-horned cows and dogs: "Save my soul from the sword, my only *life* from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth; from the horns of the wild oxen you answer me" (Ps 22:20–21; cf. vv. 12–13; Forti, 2018, p. 46).[17] Stray dogs congregating together and gnawing at unburied corpses, canines stand, *inter alia*, for the despised and hungry on the margins of society who similarly place the weak and unprotected in their sights (Ps 22:16, 20[17, 21]; 59:6, 14[7, 15]; 24:23[24]).[18]

The wicked are frequently compared to venomous snakes as representative of the dark nature of the impious who ignore the cries of the oppressed (Ps 58:5; Goldingay, 2007, pp. 205–206; Gillingham, 2018, p. 335). In one psalm, the author depicts the despair of those who suffer at their hands: "I am a worm and not a person, a disgrace of mankind and despised by the people" (Ps 22:6). Crawling on the ground, the worm symbolizes the sense of abjection that fills the worshiper over the shame

[16] Cf. Isa 51:8; Job 4:19; 13:28; Lewis and Llewellyn-Jones (2018, p. 637).

[17] Some scholars read the buffalo here rather than the wild ox (Goldingay, 2006, p. 335).

[18] Gelander (1995, p. 252); Malul (1995, p. 102); Goldingay (2006, p. 332); Forti (2018, p. 37). See Chap. 6.

and disgrace to which he has been exposed (Malul, 1995, p. 98, 100; Gelander, 2013, pp. 42–43).[19] Also associated with death and burial (Isa 14:11; Job 17:14), it embodies the dejection and abasement the victim feels—and/or approaching death (Craigie, 1983a, p. 99; Forti, 2018, pp. 43–45).

A number of psalms that address the relationship between the righteous and the wicked also appeal to faunal imagery:

> Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the pressure of the wicked; for they bring down trouble upon me and in anger they hold a grudge against me. My heart is in anguish within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me. I said, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. Behold, I would flee far away, I would spend my nights in the wilderness. Selah. I would hurry to my place of refuge from the stormy wind *and* heavy gale." (Ps 55:3–8[4–9])

Appalled by the corruption in the city, the afflicted author longs to fly away like a bird, the desert being as far removed as possible from the presence of the wicked (Weiser, 1971, p. 419; Craigie, 1990, pp. 56–57; Goldingay, 2007, p. 169).[20]

While not categorically confirmed by scientific observation (Felix, 1992, pp. 242–243), many cultures—including the biblical—regard the dove as a symbol of purity and faithfulness due to its mating habits (Gunter, 1999, p. 1; Lewis & Llewellyn-Jones, 2018, p. 254). In one psalm, the thus writer bemoans the fact that he has been forced to flee into uninhabited regions to seek refuge from the wicked: "I resemble a pelican of the wilderness; I have become like an owl of the ruins. I lie awake, I have become like a solitary bird on a housetop" (Ps 102:6–7[7–8]). Although turned out of his home/nest to become a solitary wanderer, he nonetheless has not despaired of God (Ps 102:12ff[13ff]; Hoffman,

[19] Cf. Isa 41:14; Job 25:6.

[20] He thus resembles Jeremiah in his lament and despair: "Oh that I had in the desert a traveler's lodging place; so that I might leave my people and go away from them! For all of them are adulterers, an assembly of treacherous people" (Jer. 9:2[1]; cf. 48:28; Cant 2:14a; Lundbom, 1999, p. 539; Allen, 2008, p. 115).

1995b, p. 118; Gelander, 2013, pp. 157–159). Just as some mammals represent ruins and destruction, so the latter form the natural habitat of several bird species, who thus exemplify abjection (Felix, 1992, pp. 183–185; Forti, 2018, pp. 75–77).[21]

Elsewhere, the psalmist takes a different approach, contending that, while his companions suggest that he take flight from the wicked, he will not become like a bird in order to find a safe haven but will trust God to protect him (Ps 11:1–2; Goldingay, 2006, pp. 188–190; Gillingham, 2018, p. 89). In supplicatory psalms such as this, the author entreats God not to forsake him because he is the only person in whom he can trust (Craigie, 1983a, p. 200; Forti, 2018, p. 41). In confronting the wicked, another writer asks God to support him and raise him up like the majestic horns of the wild ox (Ps 92:10[11]; Felix, 1992, pp. 294–295; Weiss, 2001, p. 148; Goldingay, 2008, p. 58).

In some of the collective psalms, the psalmist compares the nation's enemies to bees in order to illustrate their number (Ps 118:12; Forti, 2018, p. 55; cf. Deut 1:44; Isa 7:18–19).[22] One also likens the adversary to a wild boar coming out of the forest, against which the psalmist needs divine protection (Ps 80:13[14]; Dahood, 1968, p. 259; Goldingay, 2007, p. 540). Two others, in which the writer appeals to God for salvation, portray those attacked as a flock slaughtered in a type of orgy of killing (Ps 44:22[3]; Craigie, 1983a, p. 334; Goldingay, 2007, p. 47) and a turtledove threatened by predators (snakes?) (Ps 74:19; Felix, 1992, pp. 286–287).

Turning to the biblical wisdom literature, we note firstly that it comprised of Proverbs, Qoheleth, and Job.[23] While a broad and varied corpus, it is informed by common language and themes. Exhibiting a universal nature in general, *inter alia* it seeks to discover the laws of nature through observation.[24] In contrast to the scientific approach, however,

[21] Cf. Isa 34:11–15; Mic 1:8; Zeph 2:14; etc.

[22] This psalm carries nationalistic aspects because its author is a king or commander-in-chief (Gruber, 1995b, p. 184).

[23] For the discussion of whether a biblical "wisdom corpus" actually exists, see, for example, Sneed (2011); Weeks (2017); Kynes (2019).

[24] Wisdom passages also occur in other biblical genres (cf. Boda et al., 2018; Crenshaw, 1969; Dell, 2016, 2020; Forti, 2008b; Morgan, 1981; Seow, 1982; Whedbee, 1971).

the biblical sages offer practical advice relating to how to better one's life and become more moral (Hoffman, 2011, pp. 325–332).[25]

Proverbs is a collection of sapiential, ethical, and pragmatic sayings informed by wisdom. Although not addressing the pentateuchal commandments directly, it is predicated upon religious precepts, some of the didactic aphorisms possibly being "secular" in origin and then reworked theologically. Some may even have been "imported" from Mesopotamia (Sumer and Babylon) or Egypt (Blenkinsopp, 1995, p. 26; Rofé, 2004, pp. 90–91, 96; Longman, 2006, p. 57; Hoffman, 2011, p. 336; Sandoval, 2013, pp. 100–103; Grillo, 2016, pp. 183–184). The book includes both wisdom and popular sayings (Dell, 2006, p. 51), the latter generally being universal in nature, the life experience they reflect developing into didactic proverbs (Falk, 1991, p. 76; Forti, 2008a, p. 14). Some aphorisms originated in an oral wisdom tradition that was then written down. The book thus covers a wide time period, exhibiting the influence of numerous cultures from a broad geographical expanse, diverse and/or conflicting perspectives, and a complex set of ethical standards (Hoffman, 2011, p. 338; Rotasperti, 2021, pp. 11–12, 18–21; Stewart, 2021, pp. 241–246).[26] An "anthology of collections," its final editing may have occurred following the Babylonian exile (Dell, 2006, p. 20; Vayntrub, 2020, p. 28).

Theologically, it holds God's righteousness as an axiom rather than a problem to be solved (as per Job), the advice it offers resting on the premise that the honest person will be rewarded. Wisdom being a form of fearing God, it is essentially ethical in nature, leading to moral restraint (Hoffman, 1995a, pp. 231–232; Brown, 1996, pp. 40–41, 146).[27] Its acquisition is therefore both an ethical and personal imperative to prevent human deterioration into the folly of wickedness (J. Greenberg, 1987a, p. 268; Clifford, 1999, p. 52).

[25] For (biblical and Egyptian) speculative wisdom, see, for example, Shupak (1993).

[26] Ontological passages are notoriously difficult to date due to their ongoing relevance. Although the authors may have been close to the royal house, they were intimately familiar with plebeian life (Vriezen & van der Woude, 2005, p. 446).

[27] The fear of God is a religious sense that includes an unwavering commitment to others, in particular the weak and needy, that derives from an authentic religious consciousness (Margalit, 1996, p. 235).

Designed to inculcate wisdom in the young as they develop and mature, the proverbs it contains serve as a mode of socialization, providing practical recommendations for good living. They are guided by the principle that ethical conduct is the recipe for prosperity, human beings being capable of choosing to walk righteously or unrighteously (Bergant, 1997, p. 102; Mills, 2001, p. 19, 217; Barton, 2003, p. 67, 70; Balentine, 2016, p. 279).[28] The book also teaches that all creation must be treated rightly and fairly (Bergant, 1997, p. 103).

As in the discussion of faunal imagery in the psalms, we shall first examine the realistic way in which animals are treated in the wisdom literature. Their observation of nature made the biblical Sages marvel and stand in awe of the wonders of the natural world, despite not directly noting the Creator's involvement therein:

> Four things are small on the earth, but they are exceedingly wise: the ants are not a strong people, but they prepare their food in the summer; the rock hyraxes are not a mighty people, yet they make their houses in the rocks; the locusts have no king, yet all of them go out in ranks; the house gecko[29] you may grasp with the hands, yet it is in kings' palaces. (Prov 30:24–28; Bergant, 1997, p. 112).

While the four creatures adduced herein are small and fragile, they have wisdom on their side. The ant stores food in summer for winter, the hyrax finds refuge in rocks, the locusts organize themselves in military formation without a commander, and the lowly gecko inhabits royal palaces (Shupak, 2007, p. 208; Fox, 2009, pp. 878–879; Hurowitz, 2012, 2:578–80). All four species thus exhibit an impressive ability to survive (Clifford, 1999, p. 267). Although the faunal imagery is realistic, it clearly also serves a didactic purpose (McKane, 1970, p. 661).

The ant appears in proverb lauding diligence, thus functioning as a model for human imitation—in particular the indolent: "Go to the ant,

[28] According to Williams (2006, p. 174), ethical duty is a practical conclusion.

[29] The Hebrew reads "lizard": see Forti (2008a, pp. 116–117); Lewis and Llewellyn-Jones (2018, p. 574). Cf. also the suggestion relating to four exemplars. The passage is corrupt, however, and difficult to exegete. Prov 30:29–31 may level criticism against the rule of power (Shupak, 2007, p. 208; Fox, 2009, p. 880; Forti, 2008a, p. 12).

you lazy one, observe its ways and be wise, which, having no chief, officer, or ruler, prepares its food in the summer *and* gathers its provision in the harvest" (Prov 6:6–8). Despite (or because) of its size, the ant works hard all year round, thus epitomizing industriousness, systematic application, and self-discipline (McKane, 1970, p. 323; Forti, 2008a, p. 101; Fox, 2010, p. 218; Rotasperti, 2021, p. 153).

Proverbs praise of the sedulous and denunciation of the sloth (Prov 10:3–4; 24; 30–31; Hoffman, 2011, p. 349; Hurowitz, 2012, 1:38; Goldingay, 2019, p. 108) recalls ancient Egyptian wisdom, a late (Demotic) work describing the idle son who says to himself: "Do not be active in all sorts of business and slack in your own. He who is not slack, his father will he active for him" (Instruction of Ankhsheshonq 23:17–18; Lichtheim, 2006, p. 177; Simpson, 2003, p. 524).[30]

One proverb encourages the shepherd not only to rear flocks but also to be considerate of their needs:

> Know well the condition of your flocks, *and* pay attention to your herds; for riches are not forever, nor does a crown *endure* to all generations. *When* the grass disappears, the new growth is seen, and the herbs of the mountains are gathered in, the lambs *will be* for your clothing, and the goats *will bring* the price of a field, and *there will be* enough goats' milk for your food, for the food of your household, and sustenance for your attendants. (Prov 27:23–27)

This brings to mind a Babylonian sapiential saying: "Take thought for your livestock, remember the planting" (K 1453:14; Lambert, 1960, p. 109). According to Proverbs, farmers should learn the optimal number of working animals they need: too few and the work will not be carried out; too many, and they will be difficult to feed: "Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean; but much revenue *comes* by the strength of the ox" (Prov 14:4; Shupak, 2007, p. 106; Forti, 2008a, p. 56; Hurowitz, 2012, pp. 2:336–337).

In the context of the ethical aspect of human-animal relations, the Sage asserts: "A righteous person has regard for the life of his animal, but

[30] Although not wicked, the lazy suffer the same fate as the impious (Vayntrub, 2020, p. 22).

even the compassion of the wicked is cruel" (Prov 12:10). This antithetical parallelism indicates that the righteous understands animal requirements and sensitivities, thus providing for them without any need for verbal communication.[31] The wicked person thus does not treat animals properly (Shupak, 2007, pp. 99–100; Hurowitz, 2012, pp. 2:318). Some scholars regard this conduct as forming part of consideration of the rights of the weak in society (Wright, 2004, p. 124).

Proper social conduct governed by biblical ethics includes respect for the O/other: "Better is a portion of vegetables where there is love, than a fattened ox *served* with hatred" (Prov 15:17). A simple meal offered in a spirit of friendship is to be preferred over a lavish feast served with hostility, good relations being more important than ostentation and luxury (cf. Prov 17:1; Shupak, 2007, p. 111; Hurowitz, 2012, pp. 2:353). During the biblical period, meat was primarily eaten at sacrificial celebrations and special events rather than every day. While oxen specifically fattened for slaughter were an extravagance (Fox, 2009, p. 596), "vegetables" were not necessarily poor-men's food, rather signifying here the simplicity and modesty that accompany the mutual paying of respect (Forti, 2008a, p. 76; Rotasperti, 2021, p. 167). A similar saying appears in the Egyptian Instruction of Amenemope: "Better is bread when the mind is at ease than riches with anxiety" (vi 7–8; Simpson, 2003, p. 229; cf. Shupak, 2016, p. 230).

Another aphorism in Proverb addresses the person who breaches the fifth commandment in the Decalogue (Exod 20:12[15]//Deut 5:16[15]): "The eye that mocks a father and scorns a mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it" (Prov 30:17). Just like leaving a corpse unburied for the dogs to eat, not honoring one's parents is such a fundamental principle that its violation is punished by wild animals (Clifford, 1999, p. 266).[32] Another aphorism presents the attitude reflected above in Psalms—namely, that human beings should not rely on war horses and chariots alone but put their trust in God's salvation (Prov 21:30–31; Hurowitz, 2012, pp. 2:432–433).

[31] Biblical law obligates human beings to take proper care of domestic animals (Levy & Levy, 2002, p. 62).

[32] For animals devouring human corpses, see Chap. 6.

Proverbs also employs faunal imagery to reinforce its didactic message. The sage thus adduces the "loving doe" and "graceful mountain goat" to illustrate female beauty, for example (Prov 5:18–19; Fox, 2010, p. 202; cf. Miller, 2004, p. 77).[33] Elsewhere, however, he claims that the latter cannot cover over foolishness: "As a ring of gold in a pig's snout so is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion" (Prov 11:22; Rotasperti, 2021, p. 121). The Babylonian wisdom tradition represents the pig as doltish and unbefitting sacred temples (VAT 8807: rev. III 5–8, 15, 55–56; *BWL*, 215–217). Biblical law regards it as unclean and thus forbidden for consumption (Lev 11: 7–8; Deut 14:8).[34] The "ring of gold" is therefore a beautiful, costly item given to a despised and ugly creature (Hurowitz, 2012, pp. 2:309).

Some consider the commonsense adduced here as associated with the ability to act ethically—*inter alia* because wisdom serves as a shield against temptation (cf. Prov 31:30; Forti, 2008a, p. 46, 52). The sage also cautions against the seductress/prostitute (Prov 7:1–23; cf. 9:1–16), comparing the doltish youth who falls into the snare with the ox driven to slaughter and the trapped bird—two innocent creatures ignorant of their fate (Forti, 2008a, pp. 44–49; Fox, 2010, pp. 249–250).

Wisdom constituting an important asset (Falk, 1991, p. 76; Hoffman, 1995a, p. 231), the fool functions as a negative paradigm: "Let a person meet a bear robbed of her cubs, rather than a fool in his foolishness" (Prov 17:12). The biblical authors regard bears as extremely dangerous creatures (1 Sam 7:35–36; 2 Kgs 2:23–24; Isa 11:7), the she-bear bereaved of her cubs being particularly threatening (2 Sam 17:8; Hos 13:15; Shupak, 2007, p. 123). According to the humoristic proverb, the fool is thus capable of causing great damage and harm (McKane, 1970, p. 505; Clifford, 1999, p. 166; Stewart, 2021, p. 254). On occasion, silly and provocative behaviour—such as needlessly intervening in a conflict—entangles a person, causing great heartbreak: "*Like* one who takes a dog by the ears, so is one who passes by and meddles with strife not belonging to him" (Prov 36:17; Shupak, 2007, p. 177; Forti, 2008a, p. 99, 101).

[33] Canticles similarly compares the beloved to a dove and the lover to a gazelle (2:9, 19).

[34] According to Herodotus (2.47), the Egyptians also forswore swine, pigs being the only animals to have been domesticated solely for consumption (Borowski, 1998, p. 140).

The foolish find it hard to learn, committing the same deeds over and again rather than changing their ways: "Like a dog that returns to its vomit, so is a fool who repeats his foolishness" (Prov 26:11). This proverb, which arouses feelings of disgust and abhorrence, creates the impression that, like dogs, dolts enjoy their impious ways, despite exposure to immoral acts usually arousing loathing (Ekman, 2003, p. 174). One proverb nevertheless offers them some hope: "A whip is for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools" (Prov 26:3). Just as the whip and bridle restrain the horse and donkey as they work, guiding them in the right direction, so the fool may also be trained (Shupak, 2007, p. 175).

The choice of faunal imagery to depict the possibility of educating the stupid turns this proverb into a sarcastic saying (cf. Ps 32:9; Forti, 2008a, p. 75).[35] These also bear an ethical dimension, Proverbs drawing a parallel between wisdom and righteousness and foolishness and wickedness and hereby creating an equation between intellectual and ethical faculties (Barton, 2003, p. 66).

Another faunal image in Proverbs compares inebriation to a poisonous snake (Prov 23:31–35; Rotasperti, 2021, pp. 171–173). The king's wrath is similarly expressed figuratively as the lion's rage, the sage thus cautioning against arousing him (Prov 19:12a; 20:2). This aphorism may reflect a negative attitude towards the monarch, the biblical text customarily highly esteeming self-control (Goldingay, 2019, p. 29). When he is content, however, the king brings blessings like the dew on the grass (Prov 19:12b; Hurowitz, 2012, pp. 2:400).

Although Proverbs generally treats authority as necessary and positive, some of its aspects must be treated with caution (Goldingay, 2019, p. 72). These sayings may thus serve as "signposts" of sorts to members of the royal court (Rofé, 2004, p. 94), the sage calling on them to act with reserve around the king. Overall, the ideal person is decent and acts with restraint, thereby maintaining social order and public welfare (Forti, 2008a, p. 62).

[35] For whipping fools as a form of education, see Prov 10:13; 19:29; 22:15; 23:13–14. Others argue that the stupid person has no hope like the ignorant beasts in the proverb (Clifford, 1999, p. 231). Horses and donkeys understand things by means of pain (Fox, 2009, p. 792).

Faunal imagery likewise functions as a warning against unethical conduct: "Do not weary yourself to gain wealth; stop dwelling *on it*. When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For *wealth* certainly makes itself wings like an eagle that flies *toward* the heavens" (Prov 23:4–5). Proverbs not embodying any principled objection to wealth (Prov 22:7), this (apparently corrupt) text seems to refer to ill-gained affluence that will forsake its owner like an eagle in flight (cf. Jer 17:11; Shupak, 2007, p. 154; Forti, 2008a, p. 34). A similar view occurs in the Egyptian Instruction of Amenemope: "If riches come to you by thievery … they will make themselves wings like geese, and fly up to the sky" (vii 9, 16, 10, 4–5; Simpson, 2003, p. 230; Shupak, 2016, p. 231).

In like vein, the biblical sage asserts that an unwarranted curse haunts one like a fluttering sparrow or darting swallow (Prov 26:2; Hurowitz, 2012, p. 2:510). Birds are occasionally set side by side with gazelles, as when the sage admonishes his readers against acting as guarantors for strangers and thereby becoming entangled—despite such aid conventionally being recognized and esteemed: "Save yourself like a gazelle from *the hunter's* hand, and like a bird from the hand of the fowler" (Prov 6:5; cf. vv. 1–4; Rofé, 2004, p. 92; Fox, 2010, pp. 214–215; cf. Miller, 2004, p. 78).

Qoheleth likewise contains a collection of sayings (many of which are very short) and sapiential speeches that offer advice without any hint of disputation or storyline as in Job. According to the majority of scholars, the book was written in the third century BCE, during the Ptolemaic (Hellenistic) period (Blenkinsopp, 1995, p. 76; Vriezen & van der Woude, 2005, p. 462; Grillo, 2020, pp. 50–53).[36] In contrast to Proverbs, rather than seeking to present objective truth the author's interest lies in presenting his own thought(s), thereby imparting an autobiographical element to his text. The brief aphorisms can be divided roughly into two categories—those that perceive the world in line with the author's outlook, thus being dark and gloomy, and those that draw speculative conclusions from the descriptions adduced.

Qohelet portrays human beings as helpless in the face of the laws imposed upon them, finding it difficult to understand God's thought(s)

[36] For the influence of Greek thought upon Qoheleth, see Balentine (2016, p. 286).

and thus being dogged by uncertainty (Hoffman, 2011, pp. 347–348; Lee, 2013, pp. 104–105). Methodologically, he proscribes a large number of sapiential dicta, preaching a form of scepticism. While not always consistent, his worldview is coherent, resting on the premise that human beings must make the most of life and enjoy it to the full without slipping into hedonism, wasting their days, or cultivating unrealistic aspirations. While they should acquire wisdom, they should not seek to escape from everyday life. Life not being totally predetermined, they can exercise at least some measure of free will.

Like Proverbs, he presents the social world as hierarchical and traditional (J. Greenberg, 1987a, p. 277; Fisch, 1994, p. 106, 111; Kirsh, 2014, p. 37, 69, 88; Gelander, 2016, p. 20, 152, 155; Grillo, 2020, pp. 56–59). Although critical of his surroundings, he does not propose reform, however (Bergant, 1997, p. 120), holding that human beings should fear God even if they do not allways understand his ways (Gelander, 2016, p. 9, 17).

Qohelet directly addresses the question of human-animal relations, asking whether the former are superior to the latter:

> For the fate of the sons of mankind and the fate of animals is the same. As one dies, so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath, and there is no advantage for mankind over animals, for all is futility. All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust. Who knows that the spirit of the sons of mankind ascends upward and the spirit of the animal descends downward to the earth? I have seen that nothing is better than when a person is happy in his activities, for that is his lot. For who will bring him to see what will occur after him? (Qoh 3:19–22)

Both human beings and animals share the same fate, neither being able to change it.[37] To the question of immortality of the soul this raises he has no answer: all creatures can do is be content with their lot, not knowing what the day will bring (Crenshaw, 1987, pp. 103–104; Hoffman, 2011, p. 348; Shinan, 2021, pp. 97–101). His observation of nature and the animal kingdom prompts Qohelet to conclude that *homo sapiens* is a

[37] Cf. Ps 49:13, 21.

species of animal. While intelligent and capable of speaking, planning, and thinking philosophically, ultimately human beings suffer the same end as their faunal counterparts (Kirsh, 2014, pp. 57–58).[38]

While this fact may underlie the prohibition against boasting of their superiority over the animals (Forti, 2018, p. 26), some scholars suggest that rather than reducing the status of *homo sapiens* it raises that of the animal world: not only do human beings partake of animal nature but the latter also exhibit some human features (Gurevitch, 2008, p. 228). Others stress that Qohelet regards human beings as subject to God's ethical judgment due to their cognitive faculties (Rotasperti, 2021, p. 113).

In terms of realistic faunal representation, Qohelet adduces the absurd scene of "slaves *riding* on horses and princes walking like slaves on the land" (Qoh 10:7). Here, he appears to be complaining or warning about social reversals—undeserving people coming to power at the expense of those worthy of the position and thereby creating chaos (Seow, 1997, p. 325; Bartholomew, 2009, p. 322; Shinan, 2021, p. 204). Rather than denouncing divine retribution, he criticizes the conduct of human beings, who are intended to maintain proper social order (cf. Prov 30:21–23; Gelander, 2016, pp. 113–116).

As in Proverbs, the snake also makes a realistic appearance in Qoheleth: "If the serpent bites before being charmed, there is no benefit for the charmer" (Qoh 10:11). This seems to relate to the spells against snake bites, which will be exposed as sham if the snake attacks before they have been uttered (Seow, 1997, p. 327; Shinan, 2021, pp. 306–307).[39] Snake charmers and sorcerers were common in the ancient Near East, forming an integral part of religious life (Faber, 1995, 3-4:1985). Biblical theology categorically denounces these practices, however (Ps 58:5; Isa 3:2–3), reform within and without resting on better ethical behavior in line with divine principles rather than spells cast on the gods (Mic 3:8; Heschel, 2001, p. 25).[40] Qoh 10:8 cautions against arousing poisonous snakes

[38] Qohelet only relates to the fact of their common fate, not addressing the difference in their quality of life (Seow, 1997, p. 168). In principle, the biblical texts focus on this world rather than speculating about the afterlife (Kirsh, 2014, pp. 58–59).

[39] In a broader context, the proverb may indicate that snake charmers and sorcerers cannot successfully neutralize all threat or danger (Bartholomew, 2009, p. 324).

[40] For animals as instruments of punishment in God's hand, see Chaps. 6 and 7.

(Zer-Kavod, 1990, p. 63; Shinan, 2021, pp. 204–205). This proverb may also be understood allegorically, however, the snake symbolizing punishment: anyone who harms his or her fellow will suffer hurt in consequence (cf. Isa 5:8–10; Bartholomew, 2009, p. 323; Shinan, 2021, pp. 204–205).[41]

Qohelet also employs faunal imagery when discussing human fate, arguing that no one—righteous or wicked—can predict his or her sudden death. All thus resemble birds or fish who unwittingly fall into the hunter's snare or net (Qoh 9:11–12; Seow, 1997, p. 321; Bartholomew, 2009, pp. 306–307; Shinan, 2021, p. 193). The assertion "For whoever is joined to all the living, there is hope; for better a live dog, than a dead lion" (Qoh 9:4) reflects the fact that many ancient cultures despised canines, regarding them as the antithesis of the majestic lion. Qohelet thus contends here that any form of life, even the most lowly, is better than death—heroic as the latter might be (Crenshaw, 1987, p. 173; Bartholomew, 2009, p. 302; Gelander, 2016, p. 8; Shinan, 2021, p. 187).[42]

In general, Qohelet calls upon human beings to act coolly and collectedly. The fool is incapable of doing so, however, his foolish and impulsive behavior thus—as Proverbs teaches—being liable to cause great harm. In the same vein, Qohelet preaches: "Dead flies turn a perfumer's oil rancid, so a little foolishness is more potent than wisdom and honor" (Qoh 10:1). Just as expensive perfume can be spoiled by the small fly, so the dolt can inflict extensive damage that affects the whole community (Seow, 1997, p. 323; Bartholomew, 2009, p. 320; Shinan, 2021, p. 198).

Dealing with silence, trauma, loss, and the implications thereof for ethics, theology, and social relations, the Book of Job questions conventional religiosity, in particular the concept of retribution—the prosperity of the righteous and suffering of the wicked. It thus addresses universal

[41] It may also relate to those who seek to control another's territory (cf. Isa 5:8–10; Shinan, 2021, pp. 204–205).

[42] According to Rotasperti (2021, pp. 111–112), Qoheleth contains other sayings that run contrary to this view (cf. Qoh 4:1–3; 6:3–6).

questions that are also treated in Mesopotamian literature.[43] In contrast to Proverbs, which maintains that the principle of retribution rests on an intimate link between proper ethical conduct and human welfare, Job is troubled by the fact that fearing God does not automatically ensure success. He thus asks God to enforce the well known and accepted retributive norm.

The body of the text revolves around a series of disputes between Job and his companions—and ultimately God, presenting Job as the paradigm of piety of whom God himself is willing to boast (Job 1:8).[44] Unlike Job and his friends, however, the reader is aware that the disasters that visit him are not due to his sin, God suspending the traditional doctrine of retribution in order to test him. Each in his own way, Job and his comrades endeavour to cope with and explain his suffering and the divine principle of retribution. While objecting to the classic idea that the righteous person is rewarded and despite his great pain and protest against God's treatment of him—which takes the form of righteous indignation—Job does not abandon his faith. His frustration rather derives from the fact that he cannot understand how the principle works (Brown, 1996, pp. 50–51, 82; Bergant, 1997, pp. 19–20, 33; Hoffman, 2011, pp. 340–346; Seow, 2013, pp. 94–95; Grillo, 2016, pp. 193–194; Hankins, 2020, pp. 30–36).[45] In ethical terms, his unwarranted affliction opens his eyes to the suffering and injustice in society as a whole (M. Greenberg, 1987b, p. 288).

While wisdom and tradition can guide the individual, God's ways are not always fathomable (Falk, 1991, p. 78). Nor is all suffering a consequence of sin (M. Greenberg, 1987b, p. 301). Job thus questions the view, found throughout the Hebrew Bible, that God's righteousness is a given (Seow, 2021, pp. 257–258).[46] Some scholars maintain that rather

[43] Job appears to have been composed during the Babylonian exile or immediately afterwards, in the Persian period (Hoffman, 2011, p. 346; Hankins, 2020, p. 45). According to Ezekiel, the Babylonian exiles were traumatized and in shock (Crouch, 2021, p. 198). For the affinities between Job and Mesopotamian sources, see Blenkinsopp (1995, pp. 68–70); Clifford (1998, pp. 70–73); Vriezen and van der Woude (2005, pp. 431–432).

[44] For his righteousness, see also Ezek 14:14–20.

[45] For the views expressed in the book, see Hoffman (1995a).

[46] Abraham and Habakkuk question the collective punishment of Sodom and the prosperity of the Babylonian Empire respectively, however (Gen 8:25; Hab 1:5–11).

than focusing on his suffering, the book deals with Job's inability to grasp its meaning (Bergant, 1997, p. 30; Leibowitz, 2002, p. 22; cf. Mills, 2001, p. 220).[47] Significantly, the search for meaning is unique to *homo sapiens*, not being a faunal trait (Frankl, 2004, p. 13). Job also sharpens the biblical idea that some ethical issues cannot be resolved (Barton, 2003, p. 23). God's answer to Job at the end of the book, which describes the world of wild animals in detail, remains opaque (Hankins, 2020, p. 41; cf. Speickermann, 2016, p. 287).

The Book of Job draws on faunal imagery to illustrate God's greatness, in particular in God's response out of the whirlwind. Herein, God expounds on his role as Creator and sustainer of the universe. His absolute control over nature is a biblical theme that deviates from pagan doctrine, according to which the gods themselves fear natural forces (Unterman, 2017, pp. 10–11). In this lengthy passage, which consists of a series of rhetorical questions, God stresses his responsibility for all creation and impartation of the skills necessary for survival, as well as his care for and provision of all their needs (Job 38:36; 39:25; Clifford, 1998, p. 90; Hacham & Klein, 2007, pp. 208–211). Life on earth is thus characterized by providential harmony:

> "Can you hunt the prey for the lioness, or satisfy the appetite of young lions, when they crouch in *their* hiding places, *and* lie in wait in *their* lair? Who prepares feed for the raven when its young cry to God, *and* wander about without food? Do you know the time the mountain goats give birth? Do you observe the calving of the deer? Can you count the months they fulfill, or do you know the time they give birth? They kneel down, they deliver their young, they get rid of their labor pains. Their offspring become strong, they grow up in the open field; they leave and do not return to them. Who sent the wild donkey out free? And who opened the bonds of the swift donkey, to whom I gave the wilderness as his home, and the salt land as his dwelling place? He laughs at the turmoil of the city, he does not hear the shouting of the taskmaster. He explores the mountains of his pasture, and searches after every green thing." (Job 38:39–39:8; M. Greenberg, 1987b, p. 298)

[47] Modern mental-health practitioners note that soldiers returning from bloody combat look for meaning in their experience, seeking to make sense of it (Herman, 2015, pp. 70–71).

This picture attests to the sages' interest in and intimate familiarity with the world of nature (Blenkinsopp, 1995, p. 65). All wild, the animals it adduces inhabit regions beyond human settlement and responsibility, thus not enjoying human care and concern. They nevertheless cope well, being content with their lot under divine providence—even in places characterized by chaos. God thus reveals himself in nature, human beings not being its sole purpose or goal.[48]

This account also seeks to prompt Job to praise God for his marvelous powers, which are far greater than human attributes. It is also designed to teach that God is not capricious or tyrannical but forgiving and compassionate towards all, all species thus being able to trust his workings. *Homo sapiens* does not always comprehend God's ways, however, due to the limited nature of human intellect (Brown, 1996, pp. 96–101, 117–118; Bergant, 1997, p. 20, 44; Clifford, 1998, pp. 91–96; Whybray, 1998, p. 161, 165; Miller, 2012, pp. 100–101).[49] In his second speech to Job, God also presents his might in relation to two of the largest and most majestic creatures—the hippopotamus and Leviathan (Job 40:15–41:8[40:15–32]; Hacham & Klein, 2007, pp. 213–216; cf. Habel, 1985, pp. 264–267; Felix, 1992, pp. 355–358).

The book also adduces the daily life of the animal kingdom. In his reply to Zophar, for example, Job complains about the ethical injustice of the fate of the wicked—an issue also addressed in the prophetic literature (cf. Jer 12:1; Ps 94:3; Clines, 2006, p. 625). In order to demonstrate their undeserved prosperity, he argues that their animals conceive and give birth, their offspring living happily and going out to play in the fields like sheep: "His ox mates without fail; his cow calves and does not miscarry. They send out their boys like the flock, and their children dance" (Job 21:10–11).

Losing all his children and property, including much livestock, Job cites the ease of the wicked, highlighting the subject of children and animals (Pope, 1973, p. 158; Habel, 1985, pp. 326–327). He also contends that the wicked steal oxen and donkeys from the weaker sectors of

[48] We cannot know the extent to which God prefers human beings (if at all) over animals (Korsgaard, 2018, p. 11).

[49] The only animal cited herein to have been domesticated is the horse (Job 39:19). This reference may be to a wild stallion, however.

society—widows and orphans—upon which they rely for their income. They are thus forced into the desert to live like wild donkeys (Job 24:1–6). Widows and orphans are God's particular concern in the Hebrew Bible, it being an ethical and legal duty to take care of them (Hacham & Klein, 2007, p. 137).[50] Ancient Near Eastern sources similarly represent them as in need of compassion (Whybray, 1998, p. 109).

Complaining of being mocked by youths, Job contends that he would not have even let their fathers guard his sheepdogs—a despised species in the ancient Near East (Job 30:1; Hacham & Klein, 2007, p. 161; cf. Habel, 1985, p. 418; Wharton, 1999, p. 125).[51] Eliphaz adduces the dangers animals pose to passersby: "You will laugh at violence and hunger, and you will not be afraid of wild animals. For you will be in league with the stones of the field, and the animals of the field will be at peace with you" (Job 5:22–23).[52] Eliphaz paints a picture of an ideal future for the righteous that recalls the harmonious co-existence with the animals adduced by the prophets (Isa 11:6–8; Hos 2:18[10]; Pope, 1973, p. 46; Habel, 1985, p. 136; Clines, 1989, p. 152; Whybray, 1998, p. 48). Elihu argues that, God having created the animal kingdom in wisdom and knowledge, human beings must learn from it. When animals suffer, they thus turn to God rather than people, whom they cannot always trust (Job. 35: 10–12; Pope, 1973, p. 265; Whybray, 1998, p. 149; Klein, 2007, p. 189). Job responds to Eliphaz's justification of his fate by praising God and his wonders, God hunting him like lion hunters who boast in their deeds, showing no compassion for their victims: "And should *my head* be high, you would hunt me like a lion; and you would show your power against me again" (Job 10:16; Habel, 1985, p. 200; Whybray, 1998, p. 67; Ḥacham, 2007, p. 78; Slifkin, 2015, p. 60).[53] Elsewhere, Eliphaz seeks to restrain Job's anger and refusal to accept his sentence, citing a proverb to the effect that a fool's wrath consumes him like a moth

[50] Exod 22:22–24[21–23]; Isa 1:23; Ps 68:5[6]; Job 22:9.

[51] See above.

[52] This may refer to stones in fields that cannot be moved, thus making furrowing difficult (Gray, 2010, p. 165). Travel was often dangerous in biblical times due to wild animals (Lev 26:22; Judg 14:5–6; etc.).

[53] His complaint may be that God unfairly exploits his advantage (Bergant, 1997, p. 33, 43).

and eats precious garments (Job 5:2; Felix, 1992, p. 271; Whybray, 1998, p. 44; Cohen & Hacham, 2007, p. 50).[54]

Like Psalms, Job compares the wicked to predatory lions: "The roaring of the lion and the voice of the *fierce* lion, and the teeth of the young lions are broken out. The lion perishes for lack of prey, and the cubs of the lioness are scattered" (Job 4:10–11). In the context of the doctrine of retribution Eliphaz advocates, the roaring lions are the wicked whose schemes against the righteous are stymied by divine intervention (Habel, 1985, p. 126; Clines, 1989, p. 143; Cohen & Hacham, 2007, pp. 46–47). Bildad similarly justifies God's actions, arguing that those who do not trust in him or thinks that they will go unpunished will abruptly find their world shattered like a house constructed of spider webs (Job 8:13–14; Habel, 1985, p. 177; Clines, 1989, p. 208; Whybray, 1998, p. 60).

Conclusion

This chapter examines some of the ethical aspects of faunal representation in the psalms and wisdom literature—Proverbs, Qoheleth, and Job. An analysis of Psalms reveals that the psalmist portrays God not only as Creator of all but also as caring for the needs of animals, it thus befitting the latter to praise him. When human beings employ their cognitive and ethical superiority to take care of the other creatures for whom God has given them responsibility a "community of creatures" is formed. One psalm highlights the fact that despite this advantage, *homo sapiens* dies just like all other species, the gap between them thus not being unbridgeable. The psalmists also draw on faunal imagery to describe faith and trust in God and his salvation, both human beings and animals being exempt from harm when they do so. These creatures, which are well known from the biblical text, frequently harm sinners as instruments in God's hands. While God is most frequently depicted as a good shepherd who takes care of his flock (people), he is also compared to a bird that

[54] He also maintains that human beings are fragile creatures made of dust that easily crumbles, thus being as easy to crush as moths (Job 4:19).

spreads its wings over its young. The wicked, who trample over ethical laws (both individually and collectively) are likened to predators (lions and snakes) and their innocent victims as a flock or birds escaping for their lives.

The sage of Proverbs presents the wonders of creations and peculiar features of the animals who help them survive. While not explicitly referring to God as Creator, he attributes creation and human/faunal traits to him. Via realistic accounts of animal habits and habitats, he seeks to inculcate ethical principles—diligence, erudition, the maintenance of social order, mutuality, honor/respect.

Qohelet similarly employs faunal images to convey his message. Like the psalmists, he asserts that human beings suffer the same fate as animals, despite possessing ethical responsibility while alive. As in Proverbs, he highlights the importance of social order, only the worthy thus achieving positions of power; like Psalms and Qoheleth, he warns of the harm fools can cause. He also holds that life must be preserved even if it is not worth more than that of a dog. In order to illustrate these educational messages, he often appeals to the animal kingdom.

Pondering the suffering of the righteous, like the psalmists Job describes God as Creator and sustainer of all things, imparting to animals the skills to survive in nature, far from human settlements. He, too, compares the wicked to predators and the weak and righteous to fleeing creatures. Elihu presents the idea that human beings can learn from the animal kingdom.

These two sets of literature thus make use of faunal imagery both realistically and metaphorically in order to convey their teaching—fear of God, mutual fellowship, and interpersonal/special compassion. These usages evince that the ancient poets and sages closely observed the natural world and drew on it to inculcate ethico-religious principles.

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
BCBC	Believers Church Biblical Commentary
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly

DM	Da'at Mikra
ML	Mikra Le'Yisra'el
OHT	Olam ha-Tanakh
OTL	Old Testament Library
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

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9

Conclusion

This volume deals with the ethical aspects of human-animal relations as reflected in ancient Near Eastern literature. It focuses on a number of "windows of time" through which early times can be observed, concentrating on periods and genres that offer (relatively) extensive documentation. The Introduction surveys third-millennium BCE Sumerian culture—some of which sources are extant in copies and edited texts from the first half of the second millennium BCE, primarily in Babylonia. People living in close proximity to the animal world during this period, creatures served as practical, educational, and ethical exemplars.

Chapter 2 addresses faunal representation in the Sumerian proverb collections. Mostly popular, these sayings were designed to impart lessons to the younger generation (as well as adults), teaching them how to live well and succeed in society—as well as to behave morally. Although sometimes portrayed realistically, the animals more frequently serve metaphorical roles herein. Lions, for example—dangerous predators against whom people and other animals must be protected yet who also work together while hunting—symbolize strong men who should not be provoked on the one hand and mutual support on the other. The fox epitomizes cunning and deceit, both morally reprehensible traits: although

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not as powerful as the lion or wolf, it uses its wits to overcome its prey. The mongoose is an elusive creature that has no fear. In its old age, however, it represents the senescent whose faculties have deteriorated, thereby evoking pity and compassion. Donkeys and dogs symbolize people who fail to conform to social norms; the wild ox is a powerful beast who lets its rage erupt without restraint; the pig arouses disgust for its appetite, thereby exemplifying the virtue of self-control. As Sumerian society became increasingly urbanized and literate during the third millennium BCE, a gap opened up between human and faunal behaviour. Animals are frequently depicted in a negative light thus constitute the antithesis of civilization, wherein people ideally act decently and moderately. Some are portrayed in a positive light, however, the domesticated ox personifying welcome routine and cows the maternal sense, for example.

Chapter 3 surveys faunal representation in the Sumerian fables, which belong to the proverbial genre. These anthropomorphize the animal world, creatures speaking and talking like human beings. Adducing scenes of daily human interaction via faunal images, the texts convey educational lessons that, like pithy proverbs, were intended to instruct the Sumerians how to succeed socially, play by the rules, and act ethically. As in the sayings, the animals are ascribed prominent stereotypical features—the lion = strength, the fox = cunning, treachery, and arrogance, the goat = resourcefulness, etc. They are also depicted as seeking to free themselves of the burdensome yoke imposed on them by human beings.

This distinctive perspective reflects an understanding of animal suffering, calling—albeit indirectly—for care and consideration of their needs. In an educational context, the fables promote adoption of positive attributes such as integrity, modesty, contentment with what one has, life-saving wisdom, and distancing oneself from foolishness, lust, and deception. Oral in form, they spread westwards, some later serving as the basis for Aesop's more sophisticated fables (sixth-century BCE Greece). In most, fauna function more frequently to convey practical, educational, and ethical principles for human conduct than teach the proper moral attitude people should adopt towards animals.

Chapter 4 explores the ethical aspects of human-animal relations in Mesopotamian (Sumerian/Babylonian) epics and mythology, looking at the local creation stories and the idea that human beings were created in

order to supply the gods with victuals. In most cases, the latter were formed by the beneficent god Enki, who took care of all their needs. Minor gods—Dumuzu, Šakkan, and Ninurta—also exhibit concern for animal welfare. According to several myths, the primal cosmos was characterized by a lack of violence, creatures being vegetarians. In its various versions, the Mesopotamian Flood narrative states that Enlil desired to wipe out humankind, the animals suffering as collateral damage. In contrast to the biblical Flood account, this wish was not due to immoral behaviour, Enki going against Enlil's command and leaving a remnant of humanity and the animal world alive. The latter were thus shut into an ark in order to survive the Flood. One version even recounts that the human being selected was not necessarily virtuous. The Storm-god Enlil is thus depicted as capable of harming both human beings and animals. Inanna, the sensuous and selfish goddess of sensual love and war, is also said to abuse fauna, this treatment being denounced.

Various hybrid animals also populate Mesopotamian mythology and epic literature. Two-thirds god and one third human, Gilgamesh of Uruk mistreated human beings and fauna alike. One of the long versions of the epic suggests that at the end of his tortuous—and ultimately abortive—search for eternal life, he underwent a metamorphosis. His companion Enkidu—originally a man of nature who closely resembled an animal, living with and aiding creatures—was a "crossbreed" of sorts who experienced the reverse process, his faunal friends distancing themselves from him when he became civilized and urbanized and infected with Gilgamesh's cruelty. The latter had no qualms about killing Humbaba, an innocent hybrid creature who lived in the Cedar Forest. For this he was punished and felled by the gods. In the two epics featuring Etana and Lugalbanda, the heroes form a bond with the Anzu-bird—albeit based on personal interest.

Chapter 5 bridges the ancient Near Eastern sources and biblical literature, examining the attitude towards animals in the tort laws of the two cultures from a comparative perspective. Covering injuries inflicted on animals serving human beings, these deal with theft, the responsibility of shepherds/watchmen/labourers, finding lost animals, etc. They also regulate the damage animals themselves cause, responsibility for these lying in the hands of those taking care of them. The laws exhibit a tendency

towards compensating for any harm suffered—either to the animals or as a result of their behaviour. They thus served as a deterrent against negligence or criminality.

Biblical and ancient Near Eastern torts laws closely resemble one another with respect to the animal world. A second set of laws is that commonly referred to as "humane" today. Belonging to the ethical sphere of human-animal relations, these limit what human beings can do to animals in order to prevent their physical and mental abuse. They only appear in the Hebrew Bible, reflecting the fact that ancient Near Eastern law codes were formulated and issued by kings. While their ascription to the god was only theoretical and abstract, the biblical authors attribute Israelite precepts to the beneficent God who created and exhibits concern for every person and creature.

Chapter 6 discusses the ethical dimensions of human-animal relations in biblical narrative and historiography. Like the Mesopotamian myths, the first creation story in Genesis relates that the world was created non-carnivorous. God charges human beings—the apex of creation, characterized by high cognitive skills and free will—with taking care of the natural world. Hereby, they serve as his (minor) partner in maintaining the cosmos. While human beings reign over fauna, this domination should be informed by concern and responsibility, precluding dictatorship. According to the second creation story, Adam found no "helpmeet" amongst the animals, God thus forming Eve out of his "rib." Adam also names the animals, the snake tempting Eve (and Adam through her) in the Garden of Eden and causing her to sin by eating from the Tree of Knowledge. The punishment of all three explains the hostility between *homo sapiens* and the *serpentes*.

The narrative of Cain and Abel embodies the clash between farmer and shepherd. While this is also reflected in Mesopotamian literature, in the Hebrew Bible the conflict ends in murder rather than reconciliation. The account of the Flood evinces that when human beings sinned ethically, the animals were punished with them, despite not being moral agents. The patriarchal cycle reveals details concerning shepherding culture and the moral dilemmas it poses, together with the care and concern the forefathers and mothers exhibited towards the faunal world. As in the Flood, animals suffered as collateral damage in the plagues God inflicted upon

the Egyptians—also serving as instruments through which God punished sinners, however (other cases of which occur in the Hebrew Bible).

In contrast to foreign armies, animals are not penalized for their aggression, not possessing cognition or free will or acting out of arrogance or cruelty for its own sake. They also function as God's envoys to help human beings—e.g. Elijah (and Jonah). On occasion, cruelty towards animals is represented in a negative light (e.g. Balaam and the Philistines and the suckling cows [1 Samuel 6]). Animals play a part in the parable of the poor man's lamb (which includes no personification), designed to convey a moral lesson, and that of the cedar and the thistle, intended to teach a practical principle (here, too, the plants rather than animals speak).

Chapter 7 examines the ethical aspects of animal representation in the prophetic literature (classic/Latter Prophets). Calling for ritual reform, the prophets demanded the abandonment of injustice and amorality in Israel and Judah, prioritizing ethics over ritual and arguing that without intention rites are rote and hypocritical and sacrifice a cruel and unnecessary form of killing. Most focused on repentance—i.e. the fact that human free will makes it possible to change one's attitudes and behaviours. If the people do not live up to God's standards, they charge, they will be punished, by natural disasters such as drought and pestilence and, most significantly, invading armies (Assyria, Babylon). Fauna are also adduced as models of imitation—the ox and donkey's loyalty and the stork's cleaving to the migratory route determined for it by God should be copied by the Judahites so that they remain faithful to God and walk in his paths. The punishment awaiting the sinful kingdom is similarly illustrated by a severe famine that will endanger the animal world, thereby forcing them to repent of their evil ways.

Animals frequently serve a metaphorical, similic, and allegorical role in the prophetic corpus. The people are likened to a flock, the king/God being the shepherd, for example. Hereby, the writers adduce the way in which royalty should behave and their responsibility to both their subjects and God. They also warn the people of the dangers of not abandoning their wickedness by depicting the Assyrian and Babylonian armies as predators poised to invade and wipe them out. Here, too, the purpose is to more effectively convey an ethical message. Animals further appear in

eschatological contents that anticipate a period of peace, prosperity, and harmony between all creatures in a restoration of the Garden of Eden.

Chapter 8 investigates the ethical representation of animals in the psalms and wisdom literature (Proverbs, Qohelet, and Job). The psalmists depict God as creating and sustaining the whole living world, the animals being called to praise him together with human beings. With their cognitive skills and moral stature, the latter are meant to help God in caring for fauna (as per the principle laid out in Genesis). The authors adduce the animals known to them in order to demonstrate and encourage belief and absolute trust in God and his deliverance. Above all, they liken the wicked to predators and the righteous to those who flee for their lives, God being the good shepherd who looks after the flock who put their faith in him or a bird that spreads its wings over its chicks.

Presenting the wonders of creation, the sages of Proverbs point to the distinctive skills animals possess, using their observation of their conduct to instil educational values such as diligence, learning, safeguarding the social structure, etc.—as well as prominent ethical principles: brotherhood, honoring one's parents, etc. Qoheleth likewise appeals to fauna in order to convey his complex message, which includes maintaining social order, avoiding imitation of the foolish, preserving life, etc. Addressing the question of the suffering of the righteous, Job depicts God as the Creator of the world who treats all his creatures benevolently, ensuring their food supply and survival in nature. Like the psalmists, he portrays the wicked as predators preying on the virtuous. In general, Proverns, Qoheleth, and Job evince their writers' familiarity with the animal world and extensive employment of realistic or metaphorical faunal representation in order to inculcate educational principles designed to illustrate the right way to live in society and before God.

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