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Scott B Noegel (University of Washington)

## ON THE DYSPHEMISTIC BAAL NAMES IN 2 SAMUEL

### ABSTRACT

*In this essay I argue that the names Ishbosheth, Mephibosheth, and Jerubbesheth in 2 Samuel are not merely dysphemistic efforts to avoid pronouncing the name Baal, but constitute a literary device that functions to mark the shame of these figures. As such, they figure on a par with other devices like the mnemonic of odium examined previously in this journal and various forms of appellative paronomasia which feature prominently in Samuel.*

כִּי כְשֵׁמוֹ כְּזֵהוּא נָבָל שְׁמוֹ וְנִבְלָה עִמּוֹ

“For as is his name, such is he:  
Nabal is his name and foolishness  
is with him”.

1 Sam 25:25

### 1. INTRODUCTION: THE MNEMONICS OF ODIUM

In a previous issue of this journal, I drew attention to a literary phenomenon in the Hebrew Bible in which merely sounding the consonants in Baal’s name (i.e., בעל) compelled the use of consonants in the word “shame” (i.e., בוש) and/or its synonymic word pairs (e.g., חפר “reproach” and כלם “humiliation”) (Noegel 2015).<sup>1</sup> I contended that the device invokes the memory of Baal-Peor in order to shame or otherwise disempower the name of Baal. Thus, by calling attention to the shame of Baal, the prophet also conjured images of idolatry, sexual misconduct, offerings to the dead,<sup>2</sup> and

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1 The synonyms חפר and כלם are frequent word pairs with בוש. For בוש and חפר, see Mic 3:7; Job 6:20. For בוש and כלם, see Isa 45:17; 50:7. On other terms for shaming in biblical Hebrew, see Olyan (1996:203 n. 6).

2 The texts from Ugarit also connect Baal with death and the shades. See, e.g., CAT 1.5; 1.6 vi 45-47; 1.20; 1.161. Ironically, these texts characterize Baal as a god who detests the things that the Israelite polemicists associate with him and his cult, especially shame and prostitution. Thus, CAT 1.4 iii 15-23: “For Baal abhors two sacrifices, three, the Rider on the Clouds: A sacrifice of shame (*btt*), a sacrifice of prostitution (*dnt*), and a sacrifice of the violation of handmaidens (*tdmm amht*). For in it the shame (*btt*) is obvious, and in it are handmaidens violated (*tdmm amht*)”. The Ugaritic *btt* and *dnt* are cognate equivalents of בשת

punishment as related in other biblical texts (e.g., Num 25:1-18; 31:13-20; Deut 4:3; Josh 22:17; Ps 106:28-31).<sup>3</sup> Consequently, I labeled the device a “mnemonic of odium”. I further argued that the device is informed by an ontological conception of words that equates similarity in sound with similarity in essence. Rabinowitz explains:

In ancient Israel, owing to the conception of the nature of words, verbal and linguistic similarities and comparisons of every kind – metaphor, simile, paronomasia, and all other figures of diction – were held indicative of – indeed, constitutive of – relationships and effects not restricted, as in our modern cultures, to matters of communication and expression (1993:14).<sup>4</sup>

In total, I examined seventeen such texts (Isa 25; 26; 54; Jer 3; Hos 2; 9; Judg 3; 2 Kgs 10:18-28; Prov 12; 18; 19; 22:17-23:35; 27; 31; Ps 35; Job 8; and Qoh 10).<sup>5</sup>

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and זנה. *Tg. Pseud. Jon.* to Num 25:2 classifies the sacrifices to Baal at Peor as במרזחיהון “marzeah-meals”. On the marzeah as a cultic meal involving the deceased, see Jer 16:5; Amos 6:7; and McLaughlin (2001).

3 For an even treatment concerning the sexual and other rites that took place at Baal-Peor, see Milgrom (1991:211-218, 476-480) and Levine (2000:294-297). On the rabbinic association of ritual defecation with Baal-Peor, see *b. Sanh.* 64a; *Sifre* Num 131; *b. Sanh.* 106a; *Abod. Zar.* 3; Rashi on Num 25:3.

4 On the performative dimension of polysemy and paronomasia, see Noegel (2021:145-152).

5 To these I now add three more: 1 Sam 28:7-8; Job 31:39-40; and Prov 3:27-35. The first resounds the name Baal (i.e., בעל) by referring to the necromancer as a בעלת-אוב “possessor of a ghost” and suggests “shame” (בוש) and “deception” (בגד) by telling us that Saul disguised himself: וַיִּלְבַּשׁ בְּגָדִים “and he donned garments”. Compare the paronomastic idiom “clothed with shame”, which appears elsewhere (e.g., Job 8:22; Ps 35:26; 132:18). Garsiel (2018:213) was the first to aver that the term for necromancer suggests Baal worship. The Joban passage employs the negative particle בלי and phrase בעליה “its owners” (v. 39) to invoke “Baal”, and the noun באשה “stinkweed” to suggest “shame” (v. 40). The third case from Proverbs exploits בעליו “its owners” to resound “Baal” (v. 27) and then follows it with the phrase באיש “a man” (with the preposition ב) to echo “shame” (v. 31), as well as תועבת “abomination” (v. 32) and קלון “disgrace” (v. 35).

## 2. BAAL AND SHAME: DYSPHEMISTIC NAMES

In this issue, I should like to address another, more famous association between Baal and shame in 2 Samuel that occurs in the glosses on personal names that substitute the theophoric element “Baal” (בעל) with the word “shame” (בוש).<sup>6</sup> These include Ishbosheth (2 Sam 2:8), Mephibosheth (2 Sam 4:4; 21:8), and Jerubbesheth (2 Sam 11:21).<sup>7</sup> While most scholars have seen these names as dysphemistic in purpose, there have been a variety of ways they have been understood.<sup>8</sup> In the past, most have assumed that the

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6 In Hos 9:10, בושת “Shame” is clearly a substitute for the name בעל “Baal”, since people are sacrificing to it. It also appears in reference to Baal-Peor. On this passage as evoking “agreed memories” concerning past events, see Ben Zvi (2005:201).

7 2 Sam 23:8 lists a warrior named יִשָּׁב בַּשֶּׁבֶת תַּחְמוֹנִי “Josheb-Bashebeth, a Takhmonite”, but the LXX, on the one hand, reads Ιεβοσθε. On the other hand, 1 Chron 11:11 reads the name as יָשָׁבֶעַם בֶּן־חַכְמוֹנִי “Jashobeam, the son of Hakhmoni”, while the LXX transliterates as Ιεσεβααλ (LXX<sup>B</sup> reads Ιεσεβαδα). McCarter (1984:489) opines that there first was a dysphemistic name containing בושת that was corrupted to its current form (though this does not explain the form of the name in Chronicles). I posit that there never was an intermediate stage involving the dysphemistic form בושת. Instead, the author altered the name to its current form precisely to avoid attributing any taint of shame to David or his warriors. With Garsiel (2018:338), I see the change as deliberate and not a corruption. As he notes, the altered name means “the sitter sitting in the sitting place of the wise”. We thus have here a case of a more positive substitution.

8 See, e.g., Parry (2003:373-376). Tsevat (1975) argues that בושת and בַּשֶּׁבֶת are the cognate equivalent of Akkadian *bāštu* “guardian angel”. See also Hamilton (1998). Schorch (2000) provides supporting evidence from the LXX. These views were anticipated already by Jastrow (1894), who equated בושת with Akkadian *baštu* “power, possession”. For the purposes of this essay, it matters little whether בושת reflected *bāštu* “guardian angel” or *baštu* “power, possession”, since the writers still exploited it for its similarity to בושת “shame”. McCarter (1984:86-87) rejects the connection with *bāštu* and sees the Baal names not as dysphemistic, but as references to the noun “lord”, e.g., Baaliah “Yahweh is my lord” (1 Chron 12:6). Avioz (2011) maintains that the replacement of the theophoric elements was original to the composition and not the act of a later editor. On the inscriptional evidence for names containing the element בעל, see McCarter, Bunimovitz and Lederman (2011); Levin (2014); Garfinkel *et al.* (2015); Garsiel (2015); Golub (2017); Rollston *et al.* (2021).

names were later glosses that served to avoid pronouncing the name Baal, but this explains the substitution, not the use of the names.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, some other passages in Samuel reference בעל without any suggestion of dysphemism.<sup>10</sup> Herein I take a different approach and argue that Israelite authors employed these dysphemistic names as a literary device that functioned to attribute shame to these figures. Thus, they function much like the mnemonic of odium I have just described and like other cases of appellative paronomasia in Samuel.<sup>11</sup> Below I discuss each of the relevant figures and the textual evidence for their shame.

2.1 *Ishbosheth, son of Saul (2 Sam 2:8), for Eshbaal (1 Chron 8:33; 9:39)*<sup>12</sup>

Ishbosheth, Saul's fourth son, is twice involved with sexual scandals, though not of his own contrivance. In the first event, he informs Abner that he knows he is sleeping with Rizpah, his father's concubine (2 Sam 3:7-8). According to Stone (1996:143), this incident marks Ishbosheth's dishonor by demonstrating his inability to prevent a sexual relationship between another man and the women of his own household.<sup>13</sup> Ishbosheth's protests were weak at best, for Abner immediately scolded him for reproaching him "over a woman" and threatened to bring all of Israel to David's side.

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9 McCarter (1984:86-87) observes that dysphemistic substitution also takes place between the Masoretic text and various recensions of the LXX. Thus, the name בעל in 1 Kgs 18:19; 18:25, appears as αἰσχύνῃς "shame".

10 For example, the site בעל-פרצים occurs twice in 2 Sam 5:20. We find יהודה בעל in 2 Sam 6:2. In 2 Sam 1:6, the expression בעלי הפרשים "horsemen" occurs. 2 Sam 21:12 mentions the יבש גלעד בעלי "citizens of Yabesh-Gilead" (cf. בעלי קטילה in 1 Sam 23:11). In none of these verses is the use of בעל a cause of consternation. The name ירבבעל occurs in 1 Sam 12:11 without a gloss or hint of dysphemism. Outside of Samuel, in Jer 11:13, the term בשת "shame" occurs in parallelism with the god בעל (the LXX does not translate בשת). Here again we have evidence for the mnemonic of odium, but not dysphemistic substitution.

11 See Garsiel (1993b; 1998/1999; 2000). On appellative paronomasia in ancient Hebrew texts generally, see Noegel (2021:97-113).

12 The LXX and other Greek recensions to 2 Sam 2:8; 2:10 read Ιεβοσθε. 4QSam<sup>a</sup> and Josephus (*Ant.* 7.9) also employ the dysphemistic name. See Nodet (2007:147).

13 Rabichev (1996) contends that a woman is shamed by failure to maintain sexual purity, premarital sex, adultery, failure to bear sons, and disobedience. See also Matthews (1998).

Ishbosheth found himself unable to reply, because he feared him (2 Sam 3:8; 3:11). In fact, the narrator introduces Ishbosheth's statement without even mentioning him by name (2 Sam 3:7). As Fokkelman clarifies: "This treatment of Ishbosheth is iconic for his weakness. His being omitted or being suppressed, to which he contributes himself, iconically stands for the message that he is a nobody" (1990:72). The narrator also refers repeatedly to the "house of Saul", and not to Ishbosheth (2 Sam 3:1 [2x]; 3:6 [2x]). Abner expresses his loyalty the same way (2 Sam 3:8; 3:10).<sup>14</sup>

The second scandal in which Ishbosheth finds himself occurs when David sent him word commanding him to return Michal even though she had married another man (2 Sam 3:13-16). Again, he obeyed without hesitation, even though Ishbosheth was king. In fact, it was Abner who took Ishbosheth to Mahanaim and made him king (2 Sam 2:8-9), in contrast with David whom the people anointed (2 Sam 2:4), even though Ishbosheth did not lead his army in battle at Gibeon (2 Sam 2:12).<sup>15</sup> Morrison's description is apt:

King Ishbaal is a mere pawn that Abner takes and uses to preserve his power in Saul's realm. When King Ishbaal attempts to exercise his own authority, the general will remind him that he keeps him on the throne (3:8) (2013:37-38).

For confronting him about his father's concubine, Abner punished Ishbosheth by defecting and convincing all of Israel to unite with David (2 Sam 3:18-19). Thus, Ishbosheth is portrayed as a weak ruler who does the bidding of others. Since he cannot protect, provide, or administer justice to his tribe, he shames his role. Even after Abner died and no longer stood in his way, Ishbosheth's lack of leadership persisted, for when Ishbosheth was told of his death, the narrator informs us: *וַיִּרְפוּ יָדָיו וְכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל נִבְהָלוּ* "his hands weakened, and all of Israel were dismayed" (2 Sam 4:1).<sup>16</sup> For his dishonorable rule, Ishbosheth would suffer a disgraceful talionic end when two of Saul's warriors stabbed him in the stomach and beheaded him while

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14 For these observations, see Fokkelman (1990:73).

15 The import of the hiphil forms was noted by Fokkelman (1990:37). Morrison (2013:37) offers a useful discussion of the contrast between Abner and David's actions.

16 The root *בהל* "dismay, fear", which occurs here, appears in parallelism with *בוש* "shame" in Ps 6:11; 83:18. On *בוש* meaning "disappointment", see Avrahami (2010).



he was sleeping in his bed at midday (2 Sam 4:5-7). Dismemberment was a widespread act of shaming in the ancient Near East.<sup>17</sup>

### 2.2 *Mephibosheth, son of Saul (2 Sam 21:8), for Mephibaal*<sup>18</sup>

There are two men named Mephibosheth.<sup>19</sup> The first is Saul's son (2 Sam 21:8), born to him by his concubine Rizpah. We know next to nothing about him except that David handed him over to the Gibeonites, who impaled him along with his six other siblings. The Gibeonites then exposed their corpses on a hilltop (2 Sam 21:8-9). Their lack of a proper burial heaped additional shame upon them. The narrator adds the detail that "they were put to death in the first days of the harvest, the beginning of the barley harvest" (2 Sam 21:9), not just to note the heat of the season and time of year, which occurred during a drought, but to reveal that they died before they could enjoy the festivities that accompany the harvest. Though Mephibosheth's story is extremely brief, as with Ishbosheth, his name foreshadows his shameful end and suggests that it was talionic in nature.

### 2.3 *Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan (2 Sam 4:4), for Mephibaal/Meribaal (1 Chron 8:34; 9:40)*<sup>20</sup>

The second Mephibosheth is Jonathan's son (2 Sam 4:4). Information about him is only a bit less scant. The narrator tells us that his nurse dropped him accidentally when he was five years old, thus incapacitating his legs (2 Sam 4:4). Though reprehensible in our day, Israelites viewed physical disability as a sign of shame and ritual impurity (see, e.g., Lev 21:17-23; 2 Sam 5:5-

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17 See Olyan (1996:214); Lemos (2006).

18 Chronicles contains no parallel text, but the dysphemistic name is presumed to stand for Mephibaal or Meribaal. See McCarter (1984:124-125).

19 That two of the figures share the name Mephibosheth contributes to their confusion in Samuel. In 2 Sam 4:1, the LXX and 4QSam<sup>a</sup> incorrectly record Mephibosheth as "the son of Saul". In the Masoretic text of 2 Sam 19:25, Mephibosheth is called a son of Saul, though he is Jonathan's son. On the textual confusion between the two figures and their names, see McCarter (1984:124-125), who regards Mephibosheth/Miphibaal as Saul's son and Meribaal as the son of Jonathan. Bailey (2019) argues that the textual confusion reflects the redactional development of Samuel. He posits that there once was an account of the death of Mephibosheth, the son of Saul, in 2 Samuel 4 and 2 Sam 21:1-14, that was removed and replaced with the current wording.

20 The LXX to 2 Sam 4:4 transliterates as Μεμφιβοσθε, but the Lucianic recension reads Μεμφιβααλ. The Old Latin also has *memphibaal* (in 2 Sam 9:6).

8).<sup>21</sup> He is introduced first while discussing Ishbosheth, as Alter observes (2019:323), in order to “make clear that after the murder of Ish-Bosheth, there will be no fit heir left from the house of Saul, for Saul’s one surviving grandson is crippled” (cf. 2 Sam 9:3). Indeed, Mephibosheth would never rule Israel, thus fulfilling Saul’s curse to Jonathan that he and his sons would never have their own kingdom, because he shamed his family by siding with David: אַתָּה לְבֶן־יֵשׁוּעַ לְבִשְׁתָּךְ וּלְבִשְׁתַּת עֲרוֹת אִמֶּךָ “You belong to the son of Jesse to your own shame, and to the shame of the nakedness of your mother” (1 Sam 20:30). Nevertheless, when Absalom revolted, Mephibosheth apparently entertained aspirations to the throne that appeared threatening enough to compel David to seize his property and give it to Ziba, Mephibosheth’s servant (2 Sam 16:1-4). Throughout Mephibosheth’s story, the narrator consistently depicts him as lacking courage, something considered shameful in a leader. Thus, when David assumed rule, Mephibosheth immediately flung himself on his face in prostration and declared his servitude even though he desired the throne for himself (2 Sam 9:6). That Mephibosheth viewed the encounter with trepidation is implied by David’s reply: “Do not be afraid!” (2 Sam 9:7). Even when David returned to him his grandfather’s land and assigned workers to tend it on his behalf, and let him eat at his table, Mephibosheth’s response still registered his lack of power and status: “What is your servant that you should show regard for a dead dog like me?” (2 Sam 9:8). In fact, David’s statement that he would eat at his table “*like* one of the king’s sons” only emphasizes that he was in fact *not* one of them.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Mephibosheth’s words are ambiguous throughout his dialogue with David making it impossible to know whether he is being truly honest (Schipper 2004). Even when concluding Mephibosheth’s tale, the narrator does not resist reminding us of Mephibosheth’s physical shame, and thus, his inability to rule or be ritually pure: וְהוּא פֶסֶחַ שְׁתֵּי רַגְלָיו “and he was lame in both legs” (2 Sam 9:13).<sup>23</sup>

21 See Olyan (2008:43-44, 90-91).

22 Mephibosheth would have a son named Mica (2 Sam 9:12). His descendants appear in 1 Chron 8:35-38; 9:41-44.

23 Later the narrator informs us that Mephibosheth came to meet David in a state of mourning: “he had not dressed his feet (לֹא־עָשָׂה רַגְלָיו) or trimmed his moustache, and he had not cleaned his garments” (2 Sam 19:25). There is some debate over the expression concerning his feet, but one cannot help but recall that his legs are lame. While *b. Yebamot* 48a suggests that the expression refers to the paring of his toenails, *b. Yebamot* 103a sees here a euphemism meaning

#### 2.4 *Jerubbesheth (2 Sam 11:21) for Jerubaal (Judg 6:32)*<sup>24</sup>

The name Jerubbesheth appears in the episode concerning David and Bathsheba's adulterous affair. In this account, Joab instructs his messenger how to handle David's response to bad news concerning the war at Rabbah. He anticipates that David might get angry and ask, "Who killed Abimelek son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman drop an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez?" (2 Sam 11:21). Ironically, the query recalls another incident when a woman led to a man's demise. That shame was associated with the original event is clarified in Judg 9:54-55 in which Abimelek asks his sword-bearer to kill him, "so that it will not be said of me, a woman killed him" (9:55). Moreover, Abimelek had shamefully killed seventy brothers of his father (Judg 9:5; 9:18; 9:56). He did so by hiring some "worthless and reckless men" with funds obtained from the temple of Baal (Judg 9:4). Joab evokes the shameful memory of the earlier event to underscore the shameful circumstance that David has created for himself.<sup>25</sup> Shalom-Guy's astute observation is worth citing in full:

Another shared feature is the efforts by the protagonists to hide their shame; however, the reasons for this shame differ. Abimelech wishes to hide his shameful death at the hands of a woman and asks his arms-bearer: "Draw your dagger and finish me off, that they may not say of me, 'A woman killed him!'" (Judg. 9.54). David seeks to conceal his shameful adultery by sending Uriah home (v. 8), but Uriah's refusal forces David to choose another solution – bringing about Uriah's death in war (vv. 15, 17). Note too that a woman plays a central role in the plot of each story: a woman kills Abimelech and David kills because of a woman. "By mentioning the death of Abimelech at the hands of a woman, Joab seemingly reveals David's secret, as if saying, if Abimelech was killed by a woman, Uriah the Hittite died in a similar fashion because he too was killed by a

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that he did not cut his pubic hair. Thus, there is at least one tradition that understands here a reference to Mephibosheth's "shame". See the discussion in McCarter (1984:421).

24 The LXX to 2 Sam 11:21 reads *Ιεροβααλ*. The vocalization of *יְרֻבְשֶׁת* with *בִּשְׁת* is unusual. Many consider it paronomasia on *בִּשְׁת*, though Paul (1996:961) opines that it was vocalized to suggest *שָׁקַר* "lie".

25 There also are a number of literary parallels that tie Abimelek to Saul. See Garsiel (1990:97-99).

woman: namely, Uriah died because of his wife.”<sup>26</sup> The parallel constructed between King David and Abimelech sharpens the negative side of David’s behavior ... Abimelech fell at the hands of a woman, but that was at war, whereas David ‘fell’ at the hands of a woman because he *did not* go to war (2010:425-426, italics are original).

Thus, it is fitting that Joab instructs his messenger that, if David should refer to Jerubbesheth, he should immediately add “your servant Uriah the Hittite was among those killed” (2 Sam 11:21). Indeed, Jerubaal receives criticism in his own narrative in Judges for behaving like a king and taking too many wives (Garsiel 2018:335-336). The use of the name Jerubbesheth instead of Jerubaal serves to underscore the element of shame that pervades the two stories. Garsiel intuited this when he hypothesized why the author did not use Jerubaal as in 1 Sam 12:11: “In 2 Sam 11:21, the subject is Abimelech (Jerubbesheth’s son), therefore the context calls for denunciation, while in 1 Sam the context is about the savior judges, among them Jeruba‘al” (2018:336).<sup>27</sup> Had Joab used the name Jerubaal the effect would not have been the same.<sup>28</sup>

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

Herein I have maintained that the dysphemistic names Ishbosheth, Mephibosheth, and Jerubbesheth in 2 Samuel constitute a literary device that serves to highlight the shame of these figures. Its function is arguably most apparent in the case of Jerubbesheth, whose name underscores the shame of a past event in order to drive home the shame of a current one.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the historical memory was reworded to fit the new literary context (Shalom-Guy 2010). Thus, in many ways, the names function like the mnemonic of odium I discussed above and like numerous other examples

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26 Shalom-Guy here cites Ehrlich (1969:212).

27 See also the query by Fokkelman (1981:69 n. 21), who sees the mention of Jerubbesheth as hinting at David’s shame: “Does the expurgated form of Jerubbesheth (*pro* Jerubaal) add anything to this aspect?”

28 Note also 2 Sam 11:26, “When Uriah’s wife heard that her husband (אִישׁוּהָ) Uriah was dead, she lamented over her husband (בַּעֲלָהּ)”. The use of בַּעֲלָהּ would appear to be an unnecessary repetition. I aver that here too the echo of “Baal” calls attention to the shame of the affair.

29 Fokkelman (1981:61) also illustrates how the Jerubaal narrative was crafted into a ring structure.

of appellative paronomasia in the Hebrew Bible that exploit names for their sounds and meanings.<sup>30</sup> They are informed by the same ontological conception of words. As Garsiel holds, such devices in Samuel are “linked to the characterization of these personages and the evaluation of their acts” (2000:182).

It is noteworthy that three of the four figures who bear the dysphemistic names are descendants of Saul. While each of the three bears his own shame in his respective narrative, each also carries with him the dishonor that Saul brought upon Israel and upon his descendants, a shame that is frequently placed in sharp contrast to David’s honor.<sup>31</sup> While Saul’s earlier reign enjoyed a number of military victories (e.g., Jabesh-Gilead, Michmash, and Amalek; see 1 Sam 14:47-48), his waning years were accompanied by shameful martial moments. The famous account of David and Goliath represents the first tilt toward this decline. In that pericope the Philistine shamed Israel multiple times (using the root חרף).<sup>32</sup> Rather than proving his leadership against the taunts, Saul was terror stricken (1 Sam 17:11; 17:24). It took a small, ruddy boy, who rejected Saul’s armor (1 Sam 17:38-39), to defeat the giant. Though the Israelites routed the Philistines afterwards, Saul’s embarrassment was permanent. Adding to his downward spiral was his appropriation of Samuel’s sacrificial duties (1 Sam 13:12-13), his

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30 Appellative paronomasia upon the names Gideon and Jerubaal also appears frequently in the book of Judges. See Garsiel (1991:17, 106, 180, 217; 1993a; 2008); Garsiel and Řehák (2019).

31 On the numerous points of contrast between Saul’s shame and David’s honor, see Stansell (1994). Literary structures abet the contrasts. See Garsiel (1990:107-137). Scholars, e.g., Dragga (1987), also have drawn attention to the ways that the book of Judges reflects traditions concerning Saul’s shame. In her study of the accounts of Benjaminites in Judges, Park (2015:719) concludes: “the message seems to be that Saul, as a member of this effeminate, deviant, left-handed tribe, is not manly enough to be considered a true king”. I add that Judg 21:8-14 also records an account concerning the shaming of the tribe of Benjamin for not aiding in a military campaign. The people wept because of the ban pronounced upon the people of Yabesh-Gilead. On the importance of this place name in Samuel, see above.

32 See 1 Sam 17:10; 17:25; 17:26 (2x); 17:36; 17:45. Insults are a form of shaming. Goliath also viewed David with shame (1 Sam 17:42 employs the root בזה). Moreover, the giant cursed (קלל) David by his gods (1 Sam 17:43) and threatened to feed his corpse to the birds of the sky and animals of the field (1 Sam 17:44). Thus, his shaming of Israel was comprehensive.

defiance of the *herem*-ban in his campaign against the Amalekites (1 Sam 15:18-19), and his failure to inquire of Yahweh when he should have (1 Sam 14:20). For helping David, Saul also murdered the priests and inhabitants of Nob, including women, infants, and livestock (1 Sam 22:18-19), unlike his actions towards the Amalekites. For these sins, “Saul” (שׂאֵל) would “ask” (שׂאֵל) of Yahweh, but no longer receive a response, even by illicit means (1 Sam 14:37; 28:6). Auld remarks, “Success and failure in consulting Yahweh mark one of the contrasts between David and Saul”.<sup>33</sup> In fact, Saul would never again defeat an enemy in battle. Instead, those victories would belong to David.<sup>34</sup> Saul’s degeneration climaxes in his encounter with Samuel at Gilgal during which the prophet told him that Yahweh rejected him as king (1 Sam 15:23; 15:26; 15:28). That Saul viewed his rejection and permanent separation from Samuel (1 Sam 15:35) as shameful is revealed by his confession of guilt and his bitter request that Samuel spare him a small bit of honor by returning with him to the elders of Israel (1 Sam 15:30).<sup>35</sup> As Stansell notes, Saul’s exact phrase, “please honor me” (כִּבְדֵנִי נָא), “... pleads for a public gesture from Samuel to symbolize an honor he no longer possesses. Saul has lost his honor ...” (1994:59). Thereafter, Saul was beset by an evil spirit (1 Sam 16:15) and remained in constant fear of David and the Philistines (1 Sam 17:11; 18:12; 18:15; 18:29; 28:5; 31:1), and he would continue to make poor decisions. Prominent among them was his illegal visit to the necromancer of Endor to “ask” (שׂאֵל) of Samuel (1 Sam 28:16), during which he violated his oath to fast.<sup>36</sup> The ghost of Samuel too struck terror into his heart (1 Sam 28:20-21).<sup>37</sup> Indeed, as the dead Samuel promised, Saul would die the next day with his sons at the battle of Mt. Gilboa (1 Sam 28:19; 31:1-13). Unable to face the prospect of torture and the shame of defeat, Saul committed suicide by falling on his own sword, and his armor-bearer did the same (1 Sam

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33 Auld (2011:573). Cf. 2 Sam 5:23: “David asked (שׂאֵל) of Yahweh ...”

34 1 Sam 23:28-24:2 mentions Saul’s return from pursuing the Philistines, but no victory.

35 In accord with Hobbs (1997:502) one might say that Saul was no longer able to continue his patron-client relationship with Israel: “Failure to maintain one’s clients through provision of protection results in shaming for both”.

36 The cases of paronomasia here involving the root שׂאֵל are found in Garsiel (1991:244-245). On the clever use of this root in reference to both Samuel and Saul, see also Garsiel (2018:73-75).

37 The verb בהל “dismay” used to describe Saul in 1 Sam 28:21 also conveys his shame, as discussed above.

31:4-5).<sup>38</sup> As Olyan explains, “Defeat certainly dishonors or shames the vanquished and their allies, as many texts make clear” (1996:208-209 n. 19).<sup>39</sup> The Philistines then further shamed Saul by mutilating his corpse and dedicating his spoils to Astarte:

They cut off Saul’s head and stripped off his armor. Then they sent (word) throughout the land of Philistia to spread the good news in the temples of their idols and among their people. They then placed his armor in the temple of the goddess Astarte, and they impaled his body on the wall of Beth-Shan (1 Sam 31:9-10).<sup>40</sup>

Thus, the latter years of Saul’s life were stained with dishonor. In fact, his shame followed him after death. According to 2 Sam 21:1, Yahweh brought a famine upon the land on account of Saul and his “house of blood”, because he had put the Gibeonites to death, thus breaking the oath that Joshua had sworn with them.<sup>41</sup> According to Stiebert, notions of shame are connected with sexual and chthonic infertility (Stiebert 2002). Such associations explain the numerous cases of biblical paronomasia involving the roots בוש “shame” and יבש “dry”,<sup>42</sup> a device that also informs our story in which the site of יבִישׁ גִּלְעָד “Yabesh-Gilead” plays a prominent role. We hear it three times in conjunction with the mutilation of Saul and his sons and the placement of Saul’s armor in the temple of Astarte: 1 Sam 31:11 (יבִישׁ גִּלְעָד); 1 Sam 31:12 (יבִישָׁה); and 1 Sam 31:13 (יבִישָׁה). We next learn that David was informed about how the people of יבִישׁ גִּלְעָד obtained their bodies and wrote to praise them (2 Sam 2:4-5 [2x]). We do not hear of Yabesh-Gilead again until 2 Sam 21:12, when David procures their bones from the יבִישׁ גִּלְעָד “citizens of Yabesh-Gilead” (here with בעל!).<sup>43</sup> The place thus evokes and connects the on-going drought and the shame of

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38 Note the irony. Saul did not want the Philistines to make sport with his body, but the Philistines eventually behead him and place his corpse on display.

39 He cites Isa 16:14; 20:5; 23:9; Jer 46:12; Hos 4:7; Lam 1:6; 1:8. Cf. 2 Sam 19:4.

40 On the shaming of Saul and his sons, see Olyan (1996:214-215).

41 On shame as a result of a breach of covenant, see Olyan (1996).

42 See, e.g., Isa 1:29-30; Ezek 37:1-22; Hos 13:15. See Stiebert (2002:59, 126-127).

43 The name יבִישׁ also enhances the two-fold reference to עֲצָמוֹת “bones” in the passage, as bones are sometimes considered “dry” in biblical texts (e.g., Ezek 37:11; Prov 17:22). Fokkelman (1986:628), also keenly observes the paronomasia between יבִישׁ and בֵּית שָׁן that forces one to contrast them.

Saul and his family, while subtly recalling Astarte and Baal.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, Lynch (2010) has shown that terms for shame can express the physical effects of a drought as a land in mourning (e.g., Isa 1:29; 33:9; Jer 14:3-4; Joel 1:11).<sup>45</sup> Thus it is no accident that Yahweh did not put an end to the famine until David took their bodies away from *גְּלֵעָד* and had them properly interred in Zela (2 Sam 21:14). David's act of honor atoned for (כפר) the shame of Saul and his descendants.<sup>46</sup> As he asked the Gibeonites, *וּבַמָּה אֶכַּפֵּר וּבְרָכוּ אֶת־נַחֲלַת יְהוָה* "How shall I make atonement, and bless the estate of Yahweh?" (2 Sam 21:3).

In sum, the dysphemistic names of Ishboshet and the two men called Mephibosheth constitute literary devices that register their shame and that of their ancestor Saul. The authors often exploit this shame in a way that contrasts it with the honorable acts of David. Like Jerubbesheth, these figures are cast as flawed leaders whose behavior brought shame upon them and the house of Israel. The authors of 2 Samuel employed these shame-names, rather than their theophoric counterparts, to register this ignominy for their audience.

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- 44 *גְּלֵעָד* also figures prominently (5x) in the tale of how Nahash the Ammonite besieged it and threatened to bring shame (*תְּרַפָּה*) upon Israel by gouging out every inhabitant's right eye (1 Sam 11:2). The threat angers Saul enough to dismember a team of oxen as a warning to all those tribes who do not come to his aid (1 Sam 11:4-7). Here too the story combines shaming, weeping, and dismemberment with the root *יבש*, thus evoking *בוש* "shame". The root *יבש* appears nowhere in 1 or 2 Samuel except in the place name *גְּלֵעָד*.
- 45 Compare the Ugaritic *Epic of Kirtu* in which drought is brought upon the land when king Kirtu becomes deathly ill (*CAT* 1.16 iii 1-17).
- 46 Note too that Jonathan also bears shame. This is made clear by Saul's public insult in 1 Sam 20:30, referenced above. As Stansell (1994:60) remarks: "... in terms of honor/shame within the family unit, the son has broken faith with father and family and brought shame on Saul. Thus Saul's shaming of Jonathan is a consequence also of the dishonor Jonathan has brought upon Saul, who is both father and king". Indeed, 1 Sam 20:34 explicitly states that Saul had shamed Jonathan. Moreover, like his father, Jonathan died in a failed battle.



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