

Estudios de Filología Neotestamentaria
10

Edited by
Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta
Israel Muñoz Gallarte

**GREEKS, JEWS,
AND CHRISTIANS**

Historical, Religious and
Philological Studies
in Honor of
Jesús Peláez del Rosal



EDICIONES EL ALMENDRO
CÓRDOBA

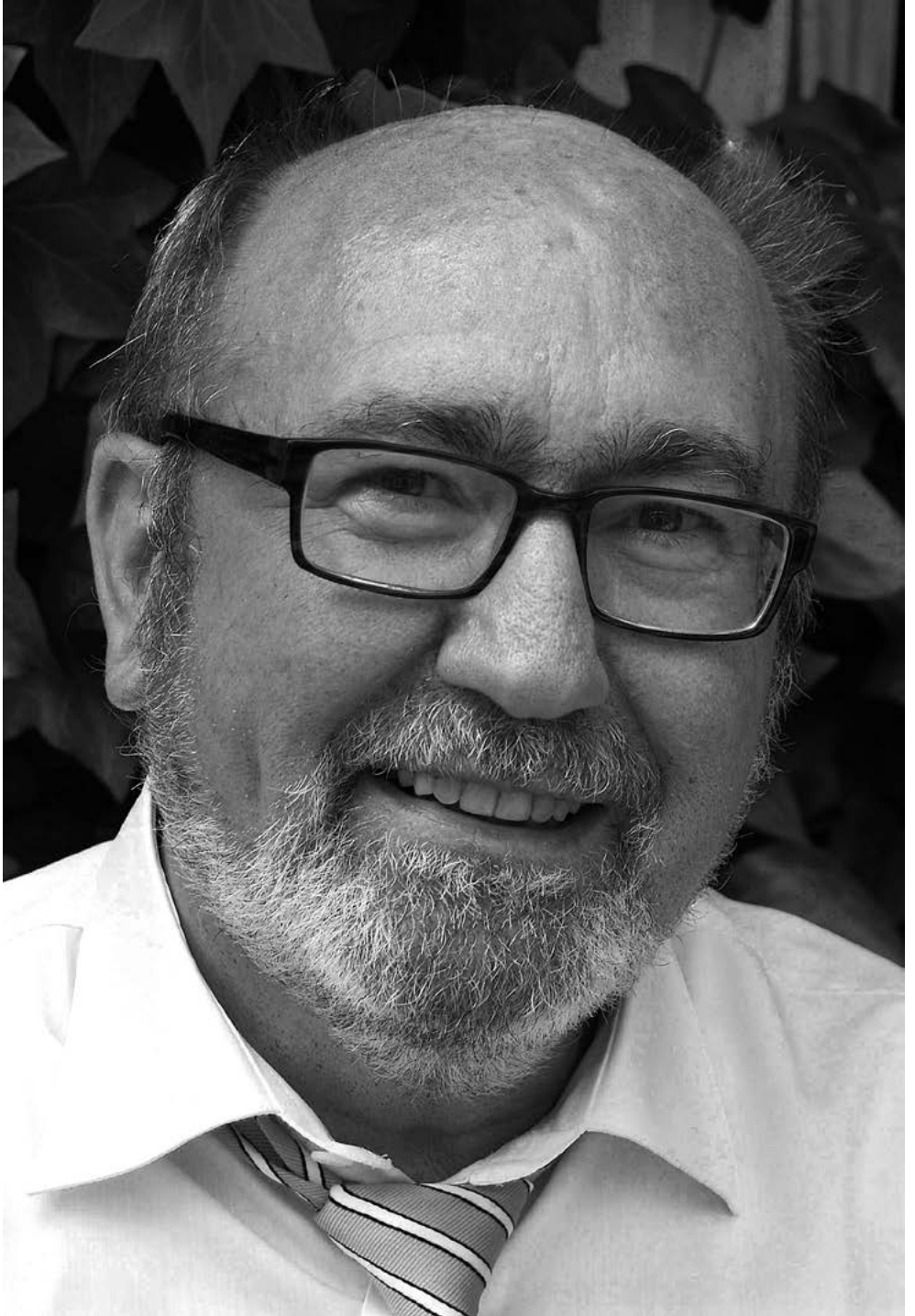
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LAUTARO ROIG LANZILLOTTA
ISRAEL MUÑOZ GALLARTE
(Eds.)

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PREFACE

It was three years ago or so that Israel Muñoz Gallarte called me from Córdoba to discuss the idea of preparing a Festschrift for our friend and colleague Professor Jesús Peláez del Rosal on the occasion of his retirement. Of course I found it a marvelous idea, but, due to my far too many commitments at that time, I confess that I viewed the enterprise with a certain reserve. Despite my most sincere wish to offer Jesús a well-deserved and special gift, I was also very conscious of the extent of the task I was about to take on in case I accepted. My initial resistance, however, very quickly yielded ground to Israel's persuasive style. One of his arguments was the fact that we could count on the help of a legion of friends and colleagues, at the University of Córdoba and elsewhere, all of whom were eager to contribute to the organization of the homage to Professor Peláez.

Luckily, this proved to be the case. This volume would not have been possible without the help of numerous individuals. To begin with, we would like to thank Marta Merino Hernández, Dámaris Romero, and the other members of the Semantic Research Team of the University of Córdoba (Gasco): Pope Godoy, Rufino Godoy, Luis Domingo, José I. González, Juan Guillén, Lourdes Arroyo, and Lourdes García. They all contributed, with ideas and moral support, to the gestation and development of the project. Lourdes Sánchez Moreno diligently helped in every way she could in order to ease our workload during the preparation of the volume. Dolores Serrano Laguna (editorial assistant and secretary) of the Publishing House El Almendro also offered all her generous help. Daniel Pardo Arquero was responsible for the graphic design of the first marvelous, though later discarded, cover. Our most warm thanks also go to Antonio Luis Beltrán Aranda, compositor of the book, who patiently and liberally advised and assisted us any time we needed help, in spite of his many commitments.

*Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta
Israel Muñoz Gallarte*

ESTUDIOS DE FILOLOGÍA NEOTESTAMENTARIA

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JESÚS PELÁEZ

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KARATH as Punitive Expulsion

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This study will examine the non-literal extended meanings of the Hebrew verb *karath*: extermination and expulsion. It will seek to establish the plausibility that the Torah penalty “cut off from his people” most often denotes expulsion from the Israelite community.

Introduction

Words have no meaning in themselves, apart from their usage in a given context. Words do not denote, they are used¹. Meaning is “what a word, in and of itself, contributes to the understanding of an utterance”². The meaning of a word is determined entirely by its use: by its syntagmic relationships with other words in a particular context, and by its paradigmatic position in a lexical field.

What is true of words in general, is most certainly true for the Hebrew verb כרת. In many cases of this word’s use in the Hebrew Bible, its meaning is far from obvious, and must be determined by careful attention to its syntagmic relationship to other words in a given context, and by its paradigmatic relationship to other words in its lexical field.

The objective of this study will be to demonstrate the following: 1. Within its range of possible meanings beyond the physical meaning “to cut”, the word כרת in the Hebrew Bible may be used to mean either

¹ M. Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning* (Grand Rapids 1994) 106.

² J. Louw, “How Do Words Mean – If They Do?”, *FilNeot* 4 (1991) 125-142 at 139.

destruction of people, or expulsion of people from the community. 2. It is more plausible that the *kareth* penalty should be categorized with the latter use of this lexeme than with the former.

This study will examine examples of both of the extended meanings of כרת (destruction and expulsion) to identify syntagmic and paradigmatic relationships that point to one or the other meaning of the word in a given context. Results will be checked briefly with evidence from the early translations found in the Targumim and the LXX. The remainder of this study will address the remaining arguments in favor of destruction as the meaning of כרת in the *kareth* penalty. The use of כרת in this penalty will be contrasted with clear death penalty formulae. The meaning of the associated term “he shall bear his iniquity” will also be distinguished from the penalty of death.

2. The Meaning of כרת

2.1. Basic Uses of כרת

The basic thread of meaning that links all of the various uses of כרת is the idea of “separation”. In its use in the Hebrew Bible, כרת refers 78 out of 288 times to the cutting, cutting off, cutting down, or removal of inanimate objects or abstract concepts, including truth (Jer 7,28), hope (Prov 23,18; 24,14), pride (Zech 9,6), and memory (Ps 34,17; 109,15). כרת is also used 90 times as the verb in the idiomatic expression “to make a covenant”.

כרת is used 120 out of 288 times in conjunction with people or animals, including occurrences of the *kareth* penalty. Many of these uses appear to denote death or destruction, but contain a degree of ambiguity. For instance, in 1Samuel 2,33, the family of Eli is “cut off” from YHWH’s altar. The meaning of this declaration that unfolds in subsequent events contains elements of both extermination and expulsion.

Outside Hebrew, the *krt* root is only used to denote physical cutting, and is not used for either of the two chief secondary meanings it has developed in Hebrew: removal and destruction. Hasel points out that in Hebrew, these non-physical meanings appear only outside of the qal stem³. Outside Hebrew, the root is never used in a legal context.

³ Cf. G. Hasel, “כרת *kārat*”, in G. Botterweck, H. Ringgren & H. Fabry (eds), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids 1995) VII 345.

Kutsch observes, “the translation of *krt* is governed by the obj(ect)”⁴, that is, the object of כרת determines whether it should be translated as “cut” (where the object is an inanimate object such as wood), or some sort of removal or destruction (where a person is the object). Kutsch observes that the sense of “annihilation” is found mostly in announcements of judgment against the nations and against evildoers, while another nuance is the “extermination” of name, memory, and hope⁵.

Daube raises the question of whether כרת is ever used to mean “kill” or “exterminate” in any case except where the object is plural. Daube compares divine decrees of destruction in the historical books, which he says are always directed against groups, to instances of *kareth*, where collective punishment is not possible⁶.

The idea that כרת only means “kill” or “exterminate” when the object is plural, if it could be substantiated, would be helpful to the argument that the *kareth* penalty normally denotes expulsion. However, the data do not substantiate this possibility. While a substantial collection of examples can be found where the proposed rule proves true⁷, one also finds passages such as Judges 4,24, where a singular object (King Jabin) may have been “destroyed” rather than “expelled”. Even this is a subjective judgment, the kind of judgment which the proposed rule does not solve or eliminate. One may also ask whether collective singular nouns such as “all flesh” (Gen 9,11), “every male” (1Kgs 11,16), “all Judah” (Jer 44,11), and “horde” (Ezek 30,15) count as singular or plural.

Spatial separation from a specific place is the usage of כרת in Joshua 3,16, where the waters of the Jordan are “cut off” (*nip'al*). One key example is 1Kings 9,7, where YHWH promises that if the nation disobeys, “I will cut off (*hip'il*) Israel from the land that I have given them”, the fulfillment of which becomes the ultimate example of banishment, the Babylonian exile. In the parallel to this passage, 2Chronicles 7,20, the verb גתש, “uproot”, is used for כרת. In Zechariah 14,2,

⁴ E. Kutsch, “כרת *krt* to cut off”, in E. Jenni & C. Westermann (eds), *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Peabody 1997) 635.

⁵ Kutsch, *TLOT* 636.

⁶ D. Daube, “Über die Umbildung biblischen Rechtsgutes”, in *Symbolae Friburgenses in Honorem Ottonis Lenel* (Leipzig 1935) 250.

⁷ Deut 12,29; 19,1; Josh 11,21; 23,4; 2Sam 7,9; 1Kgs 18,5; 1Chr 17,8; Ps 37,22.28.34.38; Isa 10,7; 11,13; 29,20; Obad 14; Mic 5,8; Zeph 1,11; 3,6.

כרת clearly refers to a case of expulsion in the distant future: “Half will go into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off *from the city*” (nip’al). Jeremiah 11,19 likewise uses such language: “Let us cut him off *from the land of the living*” (qal!). In the last case (as well as the parallel case of Isa 53,8 with גזר – see below), the מן-phrase “from the land of the living” would be redundant if “cut off” automatically equals death.

A striking כרת idiom in the Hebrew Bible that highlights the “separation” sense of this verb is the so-called “non-removal formula”. One example is Joshua 9,23 (nip’al), where Joshua tells the Gibeonites, “There shall not be cut off from you (i.e., some of you shall always be) slaves, hewers of wood, and drawers of water”. In 2Samuel 3,29, David pronounces a curse: “May there never be cut off (nip’al) from the house of Joab one who has a discharge, or who is leprous, or who holds a spindle, or who falls by the sword, or who lacks bread!”. 1Kings 2,4 contains a promise to David that “there shall not be cut off (nip’al) from you a successor on the throne of Israel” (This wording is repeated in 1Kgs 8,25 = 2Chr 6,16, and 1Kgs 9,5 = 2Chr 7,18). The same formula is also used in promises to the Levitical priests (Jer 33,17.18, nip’al), and to Jonadab son of Rechab (Jer 35,19, nip’al)⁸. Except for 2Samuel 3,29, which employs מן, the remainder of the occurrences of the non-removal formula use -ל to indicate the locus of separation.

2.2 Non-Physical Uses of כרת

Aside from its idiomatic use in the expression “to make a covenant”, כרת is used to mean either “separate” or “destroy” approximately 149 times. Eliminated from consideration are the uses of כרת in literal senses such as “cut down”.

כרת is used 89 times with a מן-phrase to specify the locus of separation, plus eight cases where -ל is used for this purpose. In an additional

⁸ A most unusual construction is found in 1Kings 18,5, where Ahab says, “so that we may not cut off (hip’il – active voice and *transitive*) from the animals” (sic – the animals may die, but the subjects of the verb, “we”, suffer separation, not death). BHS suggests that the nip’al form be read here, citing the LXX καὶ οὐκ ἐξολεθρευθήσονται ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων. M. Cogan, *1Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York 2001) 487, argues that the MT is intact and echoes v. 4, and so translates “so that we may not have to destroy any of the beasts”. Neither the LXX nor the MT reads smoothly, so it is unclear whether this passage in its original form was employing a non-removal formula or an expression for destruction.

52 cases where כרת is used without any locus of separation, “removal” becomes less likely as a meaning, although it is possible that a locus of separation is assumed by the text.

Cases where כרת is used with a locus of separation are the cases where כרת is most likely to mean “removal” as opposed to “destruction”, as illustrated by the following examples:

Exodus 8,5: frogs cut off “from you and from your houses” (hip’il infinitive construct, used as synonym of הטר, “to remove” in 8,4).

Joshua 11,21: six (!) מן-clauses are employed to specify the locations from which Joshua wiped out the Anaqim (hip’il waw + imperfect).

Psalms 34,17: memory cut off “from the earth” (hip’il infinitive construct). See also 109,15 (hip’il imperfect + waw).

Isaiah 9,13: YHWH will cut off head and tail, palm branch and reed “from Israel” (hip’il imperfect + waw),

Jeremiah 9,20: death has cut off youth “from the streets” (hip’il infinitive construct).

Ezekiel 25,7: “I will cut you off from the peoples” (hip’il perfect + waw). Parallel: “And I will make you perish (והאבדותיך) from the lands”.

Joel 1,5: sweet wine is cut off “from your mouths” (nip’al perfect).

Joel 1,9: grain and wine offerings are cut off “from the house of YHWH” (hop’al perfect). Also, Joel 1,16: food is cut off “from the house of our God” (nip’al perfect).

Amos 2,3: “I will cut off the ruler from (Moab’s) midst” (hip’il perfect + waw).

In all the above cases where a locus of separation is specified, the meaning “removal” for כרת is prominent, even if destruction is the means by which that removal takes place. To the above cases may be added the “non-removal” idiom discussed above, all cases of which specify a locus of separation, and all but one of which employ the nip’al form of כרת.

“Destruction” is an extended meaning of the *krt* root that is unique to Hebrew. כרת is often used this way in the hip’il, although sometimes also the nip’al carries this meaning (כרת has no pi’el, so the hip’il serves as the intensive conjugation)⁹. One example of this meaning is

⁹ The two uses of כרת in the Pual (Judg 6,28; Ezek 16,4) are probably to be repointed as qal passives.

Judges 4,24, where Israel bears down on Jabin king of Canaan until they “destroy” (hip’il) him (although expulsion is a possibility here). The hip’il is also used to refer to the total extermination of dynasties, such as in 2Kings 9,8, where the meaning of הכריית is made clear by its parallel with ואבד. There is a strong implication of death with הכריית in Numbers 4,18.

It may be argued that most “destruction” cases are ambiguous, that is, they can be used to mean both destruction and/or separation. This is true for כרת in both the nip’al and hip’il. When God promises in Genesis 9,11 that “never again shall all flesh be cut off” (nip’al) by the waters of a flood, when Daniel 9,26 says that a Messiah shall be “cut off” (nip’al), or when YHWH says in Zephaniah 1,3, “I will cut off humanity from the face of the earth” (hip’il), both destruction and simple removal are equally plausible, even if destruction seems to be the more likely meaning in context. This must be kept in mind when it is claimed that the *kareth* penalty is an extermination curse. In Ezekiel 21,4, “I will cut off from you both righteous and wicked”, כרת can hardly be viewed as a punishment on the righteous; in this particular case, separation, i.e. removal from the land seems more in view.

There are some clear exceptions to Zimmerli’s¹⁰ observation that the hip’il of כרת is used to mean destruction. Sometimes even the hip’il is used to mean removal rather than destruction. In 1Samuel 28, Saul removes (הסיר) mediums and wizards from the land (v. 4), while the medium at En-Dor says he has cut them off (הכריית, v. 9). The hip’il is also used in 1Samuel 20,15, where Jonathan begs David never to “cut off” his הסד from him (where destruction is unlikely as a meaning).

The clearest cases where כרת means destruction are contexts where the verb is used with no מן-clause to indicate the place or sphere from which the subject is “cut off”. A particularly clear example is Genesis 41,36, “so that the land may not be cut off (ולא נכרת) through famine (ברעב)”. The verb in this case is nip’al imperfect, and there is no מן-clause to indicate the locus of separation, only a ב- clause to indicate agency. Unless one is required to assume a locus of separation such as “from sustenance” or the like, there is no possible way to translate כרת in a spatial sense in this passage. One is forced to כרת’s extended

¹⁰ W. Zimmerli, “Die Eigenart der prophetischen Rede des Ezechiel”, ZAW 66 (1954) 1-26 at 14-19.

meaning of “destruction”. Another similar example of כרת without the מן-clause is Leviticus 17,14, “All who eat it shall be cut off” (nip‘al imperfect), a *kareth* text, an atypical verse among the *kareth* declarations because it lacks a מן-clause. It should also be noted that in Zechariah 9,10, כרת in the nip‘al without the מן-clause is in poetic parallel with כרת in the hip‘il with a מן-clause.

The use of the hip‘il form of כרת without a מן-clause creates a strong connotation of “destruction”. There are a total of 25 cases in the Hebrew Bible. These include:

Leviticus 26,22: Wild beasts shall “cut off” livestock (hip‘il perfect + waw).

Deuteronomy 12,29: “When the Lord your God has cut off before you the nations whom you are about to enter...” (hip‘il imperfect). See also Deuteronomy 19,1 (hip‘il imperfect); Isaiah 10,7 (hip‘il infinitive construct).

1Kings 18,4: “...while Jezebel was cutting off the prophets of YHWH” (hip‘il infinitive construct).

Jeremiah 51,62: “O YHWH, you have threatened to cut off this place” (hip‘il infinitive construct).

Ezekiel 30,15: “I will... cut off the hordes of Thebes” (hip‘il waw + perfect).

It would appear that כרת in the nip‘al form without the מן-clause may best be taken as meaning “total removal”, i.e. to disappear. There are a total of 23 cases of כרת in the nip‘al without the מן-clause, not including כרת + ל-. Examples include:

Joshua 3,13.16; 4,7: waters of the Jordan are “cut off”.

Isaiah 55,13: “an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off” (also, 56,5, where “name” is the subject).

Taken together, the pattern that emerges is that כרת seems to be used to mean “removal” rather than “destruction” most often in cases where the verb is in the nip‘al form and where a מן-clause is employed. This combination is true for the majority of cases of the *kareth* penalty:

2X – nip‘al + \emptyset (Lev 17,14; Num 15,31)

0X – hip‘il + \emptyset

4X – hip‘il + מן (Lev 17,10; 20,3.5.6)

22X – nip‘al + מן (the remainder of the *kareth* verses)

The verb כרת in Hebrew is ambiguous enough to allow for meanings that involve either destruction or mere removal. It is just as much of a mistake to force the meaning “destruction” onto all non-physical uses of כרת, as Wold does in his dissertation¹¹, as it is to force the meaning “expulsion” in all cases. In a large majority of cases where the meaning “destruction” is claimed, an equally plausible case can be made that the sense is separation. For instance, when the Canaanites were “cut off”, many were destroyed, but many were driven out (גרש), which is consistent with a meaning of “removal”. Both in Hebrew and in other Semitic languages, one must look to other verbs such as השמיד or שלח for clarity on what is intended. This may be why, over time, כרת ceases to be used to denote either expulsion or destruction. This may also explain why *kareth* as a biblical penalty requires explanation for later Jewish readers.

3. Evidence From Synonyms

The Hebrew Bible employs a semantic field of several different synonyms for כרת as spatial separation, including verbs that unambiguously express the concept of expulsion. Almost none of them is used in a legal context. Lepers are expelled (שלח) in Numbers 5,2-3, and in 2Chronicles 26,21 (גזר). נדח is used for the self-imposed banishment of Absalom (2Samuel 14,13-14). Jeremiah is restrained (עצר) from entering the house of YHWH (Jer 36,5). Nehemiah expels (הבריח) the grandson of Eliashib from his presence for marrying a daughter of Sanballat (Neh 13,28-29). In Zechariah 5,3, all thieves and perjurers shall be “cut off” (נקה with no predicate); no other Hebrew Bible passage uses this verb in this sense. The following verbs merit further discussion.

The verb גזר is used 16 times in the Hebrew Bible. It is the root that most closely resembles כרת in its use. Four times it is used to mean “slice”, twice it is used as the verb in the expression “to make a decree” (Esth 2,12; Job 22,28), and the rest are very similar to the non-physical sense of כרת. In 2Chronicles 26,21, leprous Uzziah is “cut off from the house of YHWH”, the closest parallel to biblical *kareth* as separation.

¹¹ Cf. D. Wold, *The Meaning of the Biblical Penalty ‘Kareth’* (Diss. University of California at Berkeley 1978). See also J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York 1991) 457-460.

In Leviticus 16,22, the live scapegoat is taken to “a land cut off”, i.e. isolated from civilization. A similar use is found in Habakkuk 3,17, “though the flock be cut off from the fold”. In Isaiah 53,8 (“cut off from the land of the living”), the added specificity of the phrase “from the land of the living” makes it clear that death is in view here (specificity that the *kareth* penalty lacks). In both Lamentations 3,54 and Ezekiel 37,11, the speaker speaks of being presently “cut off” (no predicate); the use of the perfect tense strengthens the sense that the meaning is separation/isolation rather than “destruction”, since the speaker is alive while speaking.

The root נסה is clearly cognate to the Akkadian *nasahum*, which even Wold correctly translates as “expel”¹². Hammurabi prays concerning any future successor, “May he remove (*lissuh*) the wicked person and the evildoer from his land”¹³. In its four occurrences in the Hebrew Bible, נסה is normally translated “rooted or plucked up”. Proverbs 2,22 uses it as a poetic parallel of כרת: “But the wicked will be כרת from the land, and the treacherous will be נסה from it”. Proverbs 15,25 says that YHWH “will נסה the house of the proud, but will maintain the widow’s boundaries”. Deuteronomy 28,63 warns that Israel will be נסה from its land for disobedience. Psalm 52,7 warns the wicked that God will “נסה you from your tent”.

The root גרש is used to denote Solomon’s banishment of Abiathar (1Kgs 2,27). Its basic meaning is “to drive out”. גרש is used for Adam and Eve’s banishment (Gen 3,24), as well as the banishment of Cain (Gen 4,14). It is used to refer to the expulsions of the Canaanites (Exod 34,11), Gaal of Shechem (Judg 9,41), Jephthah (Judg 11,2), and David (1Sam 26,19).

The root בלל clearly refers to punitive expulsion in Ezra 10,8. The basic meaning of the root is “to make a separation”, as God does several times in the Genesis 1 creation account. The verb often means “to set apart” or “sanctify”. In Leviticus 20,24, YHWH is one who has “separated you from the peoples”. In Nehemiah 13,3, Nehemiah separates (בלל) from Israel all who are of foreign descent. In Numbers 16,21, YHWH warns Moses and Aaron, “Separate yourselves from

¹² Cf. Wold, *Kareth*, 20: “Although נסה is not used with the *kareth* penalty in the Priestly source, there is no question about its semantic parallelism to the verb כרת outside of P”.

¹³ Cf. CH xxv b: 91-2.

this congregation, so that I may consume them". In Isaiah 56,3, the foreigner fears, "YHWH will surely separate me from his people". And in 2Chronicles 25,10, Amaziah sends (בדל) a hired army home. These meanings provide the background for the eventual use of בדל for punitive expulsion at Qumran.

The use of כרת to mean "expulsion" in the *kareth* penalty is best demonstrated when it occurs in conjunction with synonyms that make clear its meaning. At times, the use of האבד in parallel with כרת in passages such as Micah 5,9 indicates a meaning in keeping with the Wold-Milgrom theory. The most striking instance is Ezekiel 25,7, where כרת occurs in parallel with both האבד and השמיד. However, when כרת is used in poetic parallelism with נסה in Proverbs 2,22, in this instance כרת is clearly shown to mean "expel". Further examples include:

Zechariah 13,2: כרת is used in parallel with העבר, "to remove".

Exodus 8,5; 1Samuel 28,9: כרת is used synonymously with הסיר "to remove" in Exodus 8,4 and 1Samuel 28,3.

Malachi 2,12: seems to be fulfilled when Ezra threatens to בדל offenders in Ezra 10,8.

1Samuel 2,33: כרת prediction here is fulfilled when Solomon גרש Abiathar in 1Kings 2,27.

1Kings 9,7: תרכ is rendered נתש "to uproot" in the parallel of this verse in 2Chronicles 7,20.

One dimension of כרת's lexical field can be described as chronological. כרת is used in a non-physical sense 37 times in the Pentateuch, all but nine times of which occur in the *kareth* penalty. It is used this way 28 times in Joshua – Kings, seven of which are in the non-removal formula, while it is used only once in all of Chronicles (2Chr 22,7) aside from three instances where Chronicles quotes from Kings. Its use is disproportionately high in Jeremiah (13 times), Ezekiel (14 times), Micah and Nahum (five times each), and Zephaniah (four times). In the late pre-exilic period, the meaning of "destruction" appears to predominate, while in Joel and Zechariah, a "removal" sense is more noticeable. In the post-exilic period, the non-physical use of כרת appears to be replaced by more specific synonyms denoting either removal or destruction, and is retained only in allusion to older biblical formulas.

The question under discussion is whether the Pentateuch's use of כרת resembles the late pre-exilic usage, or is substantially different.

4. How the Early Versions Translate כרת

The Targumim do not retain the *krt* root for the *kareth* penalty, but employ their own language to translate the meaning of this verb. Targum *Onqelos*, Targum *Neofiti* I, and Targum *Pseudo-Jonathan* always use the *īštapa'al* of שיצו, “to cause to go out”, which is usually interpreted to mean “to finish, complete, end... make an end of, destroy”¹⁴. However, the Samaritan Targum uses either קטע (“to cut off, break off”) or the *itpa'al* of עקר (“to be uprooted, detached, removed”) in all of the *kareth* passages¹⁵.

The predominant root used in the Samaritan Targum appears to be עקר. קטע is used most often by MS A, and seems to be concentrated in passages usually assigned to P, particularly those that specify separation from the “congregation” or from “Israel”. Aside from these two observations, there does not seem to be any noticeable pattern or any indication as to why one word is used and not the other in any given passage.

The question remains as to whether these two roots present any fresh clues to the meaning of כרת. Tal gives “removal, uprooting” as the basic meaning of עקר in Samaritan Aramaic¹⁶, and “ceasing, cutting” as the meaning of קטע¹⁷, both cases of which would appear to support the argument that *kareth* is a lesser penalty than divine extermination. Tal gives “extermination” as a meaning, however, when citing the usage of these two roots in *kareth* passages in the Targum. In so doing, however, he seems to be influenced by the historic rabbinic understanding of these passages, since he gives no contextual evidence for the meaning “extermination” from passages other than the *kareth* passages.

¹⁴ Cf. M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (Peabody 2005 [New York 1943]) 1567.

¹⁵ See chart in G. Hobson, *Cut Off From (One's) People: Punitive Expulsion in the Torah* (Diss. Concordia Seminary St. Louis 2010) 40-41.

¹⁶ Cf. A. Tal, *A Dictionary of Samaritan Aramaic, II* (Leiden 2000) II 658-660.

¹⁷ Cf. Tal, *Dictionary*, II 772-773.

Jastrow seems to be similarly influenced by the rabbinic position in his translation of *שיצ* in the Jewish Targumim. Yet Jastrow's entries on the roots used in the Samaritan Targum support a less severe meaning. So does the linguistic treatment by Sokoloff, who defines *עקר* in the *ithpaal* as "to be uprooted"¹⁸. Sokoloff provides evidence from the Talmud, where the root is used to describe the removal of a carob tree (b. Mo'ed Qat. 81d [1]) and of idolatry (b. 'Abod. Zar. 42c [36]).

It is uncertain whether there is any significant difference between the Aramaic used in the Samaritan Targum and the Aramaic used in the Jewish Targumim and Talmudim. The dates of the Targumim in particular, both Jewish and Samaritan, are uncertain. The possibility cannot be ruled out that dialectical nuances in Samaritan Aramaic may invalidate the evidence from Jewish Aramaic. However, a plausible argument can be made that the Samaritan Targum preserves a different tradition of the understanding of *kareth* than the understanding found in the rabbinic writings. Even the use of *שיצ* throughout the Jewish Targumim may actually reflect a different understanding of *kareth* than the one which came to dominate rabbinic Judaism.

The LXX uses the term *ἐξολεθρεύω* ("utterly destroy") 17 times to translate *כר*. It also uses *ἀπόλλυμι* ("destroy") six times, while Origen offers *ἀφανισθήσεται* ("made to disappear") as an option at Genesis 17,14. The verb *ἐκτριβώ* ("rub out, destroy") is used only in Numbers 19,13, in Jeremiah 11,19, and to translate the Hebrew infinitive absolute construction in Numbers 15,31. The LXX's language seems to spring from the uprooting language of the Targumim, but is more violent in its tone than the Targumim.

However, traces of a "separation" meaning for *כר* may also be found in the LXX. 1Kings 9,7 uses *ἐξαιρώ* ("pluck out, remove") to translate "I will cut off Israel from the land that I have given them". The verb *ἐξαιρώ* is also used three times in 1Samuel 20,15-6. It is used in Jonathan's plea for David not to "cut off" his *ἔλεος* from him, his reference to the day "when the Lord cuts off (*ἐν τῷ ἐξαιρῆναι*) the enemies of David", and his plea that the name of Jonathan not be "cut off (*ἐξαρθῆναι*) from the house of David". The verb *ἐκλείπω* ("die out, fail") is used in passages such as Joshua 3,16 where the meaning "sep-

¹⁸ Cf. M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* (Ramath-Gan 1990) 487-488.

aration” predominates. The verb ἐξαιρώ is used in Joel 1,5 to refer to the “removal” rather than “destruction” of wine from Judah. And in Proverbs 2,22, the verb ὄλλυμι (“destroy, put an end to”) is used for כרת, but the verb ἐξωθέω (“drive out, expel”) is used for its parallel גסה.

The evidence from early translations is not nearly as unanimous as the work of Wold would lead one to believe. While the translation “utterly destroy” is proven to be the understanding of this penalty by the translators of the LXX, the LXX also shows traces of a less violent extended meaning of כרת, an understanding that seems to have been suppressed (as it were) due to an apparent prior commitment to the meaning of this penalty. The Targumim employ glosses on כרת that are much more amenable to an understanding of “expulsion” than the language of the LXX. Translations such as the Latin and the Ethiopic simply follow the LXX. Beneath the LXX is a doubtlessly strong tradition, reflected also in the interpretation of the rabbinic tradition. But the Targumim give evidence that the LXX-rabbinic interpretation of כרת was not the only tradition available in Second Temple Judaism.

5. כרת in its Broader Context

In their approach to the meaning of כרת, Wold and Milgrom argue that *kareth* is an extinction curse, parallel to the standard Near Eastern formula, “May Deity X destroy his name and seed from the land”. The Wold-Milgrom theory equates the result clause ונשא עונו (“he shall bear his iniquity/punishment”) with דמיו בו, “his blood is upon him”, which is a questionable move, because the latter is a result clause attached to the death penalty. This equation will now be examined.

5.1. כרת ≠ Death Penalty

As one seeks the meaning of *kareth*, one must compare the precise wording of the *kareth* penalty with clear death penalty formulas, particularly within the Holiness Code, where the same stratum contains both formulas in close proximity to one another. The formula מות יומת (qal infinitive construct + hop'al 3ms) is found verbatim 19 times in the Pentateuch¹⁹, plus an additional five cases in the plural (all in Le-

¹⁹ Cf. Exod 21,12.15.16.17; 31,14.15; Lev 20,2,9.10.15.27; 24,16.17; Num 15,35; 35,16.17.18.21.31.

viticus 20)²⁰, and five cases of simple יומת²¹. In parallels between the Holiness Code and the Covenant Code, מות יומת replaces the hop'al of חרם (Exod 22,19, MT), and the hip'il (negative command) of חיה (Exod 22,17 MT). Six times (all in the Holiness Code) מות יומת is accompanied by "their blood is upon them". Other than one solitary occurrence of יומת (Deut 13,5), and one case of הרג (Deut 13,10, qal infinitive absolute + hip'il imperfect), Deuteronomy exclusively uses the qal waw + perfect of מות for its death penalty. Outside the Pentateuch, significantly, מות יומת is found in Ezekiel 18,13, accompanied by "his blood is upon him". This combination is found nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible outside of Leviticus 20.

Milgrom has observed that the hop'al form of מות is used in the Priestly writings (including H) for execution by human agency, whereas the qal form is used where God is the agent²². The latter are mostly cases where a person is warned that they will "die" as an apparently automatic consequence of some given action.

Sun claims that in his opinion, "the juxtaposition of מות יומת and כרת punishments has relativized the differences between them (if any)"²³. Similarly, von Rad theorizes that all the offenses in Leviticus 20,9-21, even those that now carry a penalty of *kareth* or childlessness, were originally death penalty offenses due to their identical form, איש אשר + qal imperfect verb + predicate + מות יומת²⁴. However, von Rad's argument is built entirely upon a speculative reconstruction that ignores the distinctive דמיו בו that marks each of the death penalty statutes. It also fails to satisfactorily explain how or why the מות יומת language has been removed and replaced. This is an even greater problem for Sun's position, if *kareth* and execution are to be treated as virtually the same because they have been placed in such close proximity.

²⁰ Cf. Lev 20,11.12.13.14.16.

²¹ Cf. Exod 21,29; Lev 24,21; Num 1,51; 3,10; 18,7.

²² Cf. J. Milgrom, *Studies in Levitical Terminology: The Encroacher and the Levite. The Term 'Aboda* (Berkeley 1970) 5-7.

²³ Cf. H. Sun, *An Investigation into the Compositional Integrity of the So-Called Holiness Code* (Diss. Claremont Graduate School 1990) 234 note 49.

²⁴ G. von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy* (London 1953) 32-33. See also B. Schwartz, "The Bearing of Sin in the Priestly Literature", in D. Wright, D. Freedman & A. Hurvitz (eds), *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom* (Winona Lake 1995) 12 note 35, who says, "The presence of the death penalty in Lev 20:9-16 must mean that it is to be inferred in vv. 17-21".

The differences in language between *kareth* and מוֹת יוֹמָת are best accounted for by a clear difference in meaning. Regardless of how parallel the form of the statutes may be, this list in Leviticus 20 functions to make distinctions between offenses that appear to be lumped together in Leviticus 18.

The expression דָּמִי בּוֹ, in either its singular or plural formulations, is found only in Leviticus 20 (six times) and in Ezekiel 18,13 and 33,5. The related expression דָּמוֹ בְּרֵאשׁוֹ is found in Joshua 2,19 (twice), 1Kings 2,33.37, and Ezekiel 33,4. Still another synonymous expression is דָּמִים לוֹ, found in Exodus 22,1-2 (twice) and in Numbers 35,27 (דָּם לוֹ). Finally, the phrase דָּם עַל is found in Deuteronomy 19,10 and 2Samuel 1,16. All four of these expressions refer unambiguously to responsibility for someone's death. In Ezekiel 33,4-5, בְּרֵאשׁוֹ דָּמִי בּוֹ and דָּמוֹ are used interchangeably back-to-back.

The phrase דָּמִי בּוֹ signifies that in the specified case, the bloodguilt for the execution of the offender rests upon the offender himself or herself. This declaratory formula is attached to the death penalty formula to assure those who carry out this formula that they will not be held responsible for the death of the offender. To convey this meaning is the phrase's primary function here. Its secondary function is to distinguish these statutes from non-capital offenses. It is a phrase that only marks execution by human agency, not death by divine hand, since the Deity has no need to fear punishment for bloodguilt.

The probability that נָכַרָה is non-fatal is implied in the syntagmic statements that sometimes accompany it: "he shall bear his iniquity", and "they shall die childless". Cain is the first to "bear" his "iniquity" (Gen 4,13: גָּדוֹל עוֹנֵי מִנְשָׂא): he suffers angst as if he had been promised *kareth* in the standard rabbinic sense of an extermination curse, but he is banished, not put to death. Likewise, "They shall die childless" need not be any more severe than the fate of Michal in 2Samuel 6,23.

Milgrom claims, "the expression *wēnāšā' 'āwōnō* always implies that the punishment will be meted out by God, not by man"²⁵. But Brichto sees it differently: "The expression *wenāšā' 'wōnō / het'ō* again and again refers to an indeterminate penalty / punishment implemented by man or God"²⁶.

²⁵ Cf. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 295.

²⁶ Cf. H. Brichto, "On Slaughter and Sacrifice, Blood and Atonement", *HUCA* 47 (1976) 19-55 at 24 note 11.

Schwartz cites twenty distinct cases where offenders “bear (their) iniquity” in the priestly tradition²⁷. Some of these appear to imply no punishment at all, such as failure of a witness to testify (Lev 5,1) and failing to rebuke one’s neighbor (Lev 19,17). The suspected adulteress (Num 5,31) is condemned to a life sentence of misery rather than to execution²⁸. While *kareth* is decreed against those who eat blood in Leviticus 17,14, in the next two verses, those who eat carrion are told they must simply bathe themselves and their clothes and be unclean until evening, otherwise they must “bear (their) guilt”. Significantly, a father “bears” his daughter’s “iniquity” for overruling a vow she has made (Num 30,15). None of these seems to call for death or a fate worse than death (as the Wold-Milgrom position describes the *kareth* penalty). Furthermore, in Ezekiel 44,10–14, the expression ישא עונו is used twice (in the plural) in an unambiguously non-fatal sense: the offending priests in these verses are demoted and forced to perform service of a lower rank.

Schwartz makes the following further points about ישא עונו²⁹:

- a) Because the cases where the formula is used carry a variety of punishments or sometimes even no punishment at all, Schwartz finds that the common thread between them is the status of guilt for a particular offense. ישא עונו serves as a metaphor for guilt status.
- b) If “bearing sin” and punishment were “coextensive”, one would expect one or the other to be mentioned in any given context, but not both. The fact that often both occur together is an indication that sin-bearing and its penalty are two separate phenomena that must not be equated.
- c) In several cases, “bearing sin” is a condition that can be rectified. If this is true, then “bearing sin” is only the state of deserving penalty, not the penalty itself.
- d) All but one of Schwartz’s twenty cases are sins of commission, that is, they are deeds. Some may be formulated as sins of omis-

²⁷ Cf. Schwartz, “Bearing”, 11-12.

²⁸ By contrast, Wold, *Kareth*, 126, claims that Numbers 5 “provides the most probable example of *kareth* in the Bible”. He sees the case as involving both a divine curse and destruction of one’s seed through childlessness, in an offense that would otherwise merit death, but cannot be proved for lack of witnesses.

²⁹ Cf. Schwartz, “Bearing”, 12-15.

sion, but in each case, the flip side is a positive offense. “Only when a *deed* has been done is a sin ‘borne’ in the priestly system”.

- e) “Bearing sin” is the “precise counterpart” of the state of impurity, which is further proof that וְנִשָּׂא עוֹנוֹ is a metaphor for a condition. Both sin-bearing and impurity are conditions that can be remedied. וְנִשָּׂא עוֹנוֹ is also analogous to the condition of bloodguilt.
- f) In two of Schwartz’s cases, the declaration that a person bears his/her sin is the counterpart to recognizing their guilt. One might describe this as unresolved guilt in one’s legal status.
- g) The formula יֵשָׂא עוֹנוֹ functions as both a pronouncement of status upon those who have committed a given offense, and also as a threat or warning not to commit the offense.
- h) Schwartz observes that most sins can be “unloaded” by repentance, amends, and/or sacrifice, in which cases “bearing sin” is a condition that does not endure. Some sins, however, can never be remedied, even by suffering punishment by human agency. In such cases, “A deed has been done that cannot be undone; it will be ‘borne’ thereafter”.

Sklar responds by arguing that Schwartz has “overstated his case”³⁰. He says, “At most, it may be said that some texts *mention* no punishment at all”, but they all assume some sort of punishment. Sklar argues that יֵשָׂא עוֹנוֹ is “a *general* statement that the sinner will be punished, which is then explicated by a more *specific* penalty (e.g. *kareth*, death)”. Likewise, Milgrom, in response to Schwartz, insists that עוֹן may also be translated “punishment”, but his arguments do not refute Schwartz³¹. His appeals to Akkadian idiom (*našû* used with *hitam*, *arnam*, or *šertam* as its object) are just as ambiguous as the Hebrew formula in question³². Milgrom finds the punishment for failing to warn a person (Lev 19,17) in Ezekiel 3,18-9 and 33,8, but one cannot be sure that a case as serious as the one described by Ezekiel is what is intended in Leviticus 19,17³³.

³⁰ Cf. J. Sklar, *Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement: The Priestly Conceptions* (Sheffield 2005) 22-23 note 42.

³¹ Cf. Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1488-1490.

³² Cf. Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1490.

³³ Cf. Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1489.

Milgrom's bottom line is that "*nāśā' āwōn* is a nonexpiable, irremediable divine sentence"³⁴. Schwartz's arguments call Milgrom's conclusion into question. But even if Milgrom's statement were true, it would still not serve as clear evidence for the Wold-Milgrom divine extermination theory, because it does nothing to resolve the question of whether expulsion or extinction is intended by the language of the penalty itself.

The use of the phrase "they shall bear their iniquity" in Leviticus 20 serves primarily as a counterpart to *בִּרְמִיָּו*, in order to distinguish capital from non-capital offenses in this series. It must be noted that, while there are examples where "(they) shall bear (their) iniquity" is pronounced upon someone who would die suddenly and automatically, nowhere are *בִּרְמִיָּו* and "they shall bear their iniquity" declared together upon the same offense. They are not synonyms; they are alternatives.

5.2. Interpretational Cruxes

How should one explain cases where both *kareth* and the death penalty are applied? Is this not evidence that the two are synonymous? Here are some alternatives to this conclusion:

A. Exodus 31,14: Both *kareth* and death penalties are declared in the same verse. This could be:

- 1.- Commutation of an original death penalty.
- 2.- Double jeopardy: The offender is to be both executed by humans, and eternally exterminated by God together with his/her descendants (Wold). An alternative to Wold's theory would be for *kareth* to be applied in cases where a court did not have enough witnesses or evidence to convict. A third alternative would be that the offender was deprived of citizenship immediately before execution.
- 3.- Could there be a difference between "profaning" (capital crime) versus "doing any work" (non-capital crime)? One question is whether *כִּי* can introduce an exception clause in such a case. Scholars agree on the limited existence of concessive and excep-

³⁴ Cf. Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22*, 1490.

tive uses of ׀, meaning “although”, “but”, “except”, “unless”, or “nevertheless”³⁵.

A potentially fatal flaw in the theory that “whoever does any work” is an exception to the capital crime of “profaning the Sabbath” in Exodus 31,14, is that the same “whoever does any work” language is used in the very next verse with a death penalty attached. This theory only works if one assumes that there have been one or more additions to the text. Because of the disjointed nature of the text as it stands, however, it is possible that both the *kareth* penalty here and the death penalty that immediately follows it are glosses on an original death penalty in v. 14³⁶.

- 4.- Noth’s position is a combination of 1 and 3: he attributes the discrepancy in these two verses both to emphasis and “secondary addition”, but says the case is one that has more to do with the kind of labor in view, its intention, and its result³⁷. It is hard to avoid the impression that at least some element of this passage is a gloss. It is possible that an exception clause providing for *kareth* has been added to v. 14, and that v. 15 was then added to explicitly negate the addition. Such a possibility is highly speculative, but is not unwarranted, due to the disjointed nature of the text as it stands.

All of the above explanations are ultimately inadequate. What is certain is that desecrating the Sabbath was a death penalty crime. The presence of *kareth* appears to be an intrusion into the text as it reads. Even if it is not, which may well be the case, Exodus 31,14 stands alone as a *kareth* formula that is not in divine prophetic speech form (see discussion of Lev 20,1-6 below) that is pronounced on a death penalty crime. It is best to treat Exodus 31,14 as a case where the writer chooses to pronounce the most extreme form of removal, death, on an offender, thereby emphasizing the extreme threat to the community that this offense engenders.

³⁵ See *Halot*, I 470 §5; also B. Waltke & M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake 1990) 39.3.5d; P. Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Rome 2005) 172c.

³⁶ However, A. Alt, *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion* (Oxford 1966) 112 note 74, argues the reverse. He concludes that v. 15 is closer to the original form of the command.

³⁷ Cf. M. Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary* (Philadelphia 1962) 241.

Conclusion: Exodus 31,14 is the clearest case where כרת is not intended to mean punitive expulsion, but must be taken broadly, according to its use as a non-specific word for removal that this particular context specifies to be a form of removal by death.

B. Leviticus 18,29: “whoever commits any of these abominations”. Presumably, the *kareth* penalty applies to the entire chapter of offenses that precedes this verse. B. However, several of these offenses command the death penalty in Leviticus 20. Possible explanations:

- 1.- An increasing penalty for select offenses, that is, several *kareth* penalties were stiffened by addition of a death penalty, the amendments simply being added on rather than the original penalties being erased.
- 2.- Double jeopardy (Wold). See above (on Exod 31,14).
- 3.- Leviticus 20 provides a subsequent clarification to a summary blanket statement made concerning the collection of offenses enumerated in Leviticus 18, namely, that all of these offenses call for removal of the offender. Expulsion, therefore, it to be applied to all offenses named in Leviticus 18 except those to which a more extreme form of removal is applied in Leviticus 20. Scholarly consensus regards both chapters as part of the Holiness corpus; the chapters may thus be regarded as products of the same school, if not the same editor.
- 4.- Leviticus 18 may have been written for the head of the clan or *בֵּית אָבִיב* who may not have needed to be told what penalties to impose, while Leviticus 20 may have been written for instruction of the community, who needed more specific detail.
- 5.- Perhaps Leviticus 18 should not be read as a case of *kareth* at all in a strictly legal sense, but rather as an exhortatory chapter, with chapter 20 providing the legal specifications.

Conclusion: There is no substantial contradiction between the blanket *kareth* declaration in Leviticus 18, and the death penalties applied to some but not all of the same offenses in Leviticus 20.

C. Leviticus 20,1-6. The key to explaining the juxtaposition of the death penalty and *kareth* here may be that death by stoning is decreed first, then God claims to be the one who will “cut off” the offender, along with everyone else who fails to punish Molech worship. Either this is double jeopardy, or else “cut off” is being used synonymously

with execution. If expulsion were the most common meaning of this penalty, then here would be the encroachment of another meaning that could be confused with the predominant meaning: a removal specifically by death.

The first person singular hip'il form of כרת that is found in Leviticus 20,1-6 occurs a total of 40 times in the Hebrew Bible³⁸. All but once it is found in the mouth of YHWH (in Joshua 23,4, it is spoken by Joshua), and 34 of these instances are in the form of promises. In addition, there are five cases of כרת in the hip'il infinitive construct that are also part of first person statements by YHWH, three of which are promises³⁹.

The above evidence indicates that the כרת pronouncements in Leviticus 20,1-6 are a form of divine prophetic speech. They are divine promises, to be distinguished from penalties for statutes. As such, they are a different kind of speech act entirely. The divine prophetic speech may be classed as commissive, while the *kareth* statutes may be classed as directive⁴⁰.

Conclusion: Syntagmic clues (the hip'il conjugation plus the divine first person form of the verb), plus the legal context of this statute (i.e. the clear linking of a death penalty to this *kareth* declaration) strongly point to a clear but consistent use of כרת to mean removal by death in Leviticus 20,1-6. The facts in this particular case do not rule out the possibility or the likelihood that כרת in other *kareth* statutes may refer to expulsion rather than destruction.

6. Summary

The basic meaning of the verb כרת from which all of its uses are derived is the concept of "separation", primarily by "cutting". Unique to Hebrew are this verb's uses to communicate the ideas of "spatial separation" and "destruction". The use of a *qan*-clause and a locus of

³⁸ Cf. Lev 20,3.5.6; 26,22.30; Josh 23,4; 1Sam 2,33; 2Sam 7,9; 1Kgs 9,7; 14,10; 21,21; 2Kgs 9,8; 1Chr 17,8; Isa 14,22; Ezek 14,8.13.17; 21,8.9; 25,7.13.16; 29,8; 30,15; 35,7; Amos 1,5.8; 2,3; Mic 5,9.10.11.12; Nah 1,14; 2,14; Zeph 1,3.4; 3,6; Zech 9,6.10; 13,2.

³⁹ Cf. Ps 101,8; Isa 48,9; Jer 44,11; Ezek 14,19.21.

⁴⁰ See the discussion of classification of speech act categories in J. Searle & D. Vanderveken, *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic* (Cambridge 1985) 12-20.

separation increases the likelihood that the meaning of כרת in any given context is separation or removal, particularly when the verb is in the nip'al conjugation. The hip'il conjugation serves as the intensive form for כרת, which may yield a meaning of either "destruction" or "total removal", including physical destruction as a form of removal.

Between these two meanings of כרת, the meaning "spatial separation" or "removal" fits well within the context of the *kareth* penalty. The uses of כרת in 1Kings 9,7 and Zechariah 14,2 are the closest parallels to its use in the *kareth* formula, both cases of which clearly refer to geographic expulsion. Sometimes the meaning "removal" is confirmed by contextual synonyms, such as the use of the verb נהש in the parallel to 1Kings 9,7 in 2Chronicles 7,20, the use of כרת and הסיר interchangeably in Exodus 8,4-5 and in 1Samuel 28,3-9, and כרת in parallel with העבר "to remove" in Zechariah 13,2. The "non-removal" formula in passages such as Joshua 9,23 also supports the "removal" meaning for the *kareth* formula, as does the Aramaic translation found in the Samaritan and Jewish Targumim. Although the LXX translation reflects the same interpretation of כרת as "extermination" that came to dominate rabbinic Judaism, the LXX also preserves traces of a "separation" meaning for כרת, especially in 1Samuel 20,15-6, 1Kings 9,7, and Proverbs 2,22.

Although a strong linguistic case can be made for "separation" (= expulsion) as a meaning for כרת in the *kareth* formula, the final verdict is by no means certain or absolute. כרת shows itself to be a higher-level morpheme, a word that encompasses both possible meanings for this penalty, a fact evidenced by the existence of the interpretational cruxes discussed above. To "totally remove" someone may involve death or destruction, as in the clearly prescribed cases of execution for Sabbath violation and for Molech worship, or it may involve expulsion, which was potentially fatal in a wilderness context such as Sarah's expulsion of Hagar, but need not have been fatal in other contexts.

The language of the *kareth* penalty allows for the possible meaning of a divine extermination curse. Certainly it is not difficult to demonstrate an extremely common use of כרת as "destruction" that would support the meaning of an extermination curse. However, it may be argued that in Near Eastern thought, anyone who is under a divine curse ought to be physically removed from their earthly community for the safety of the community as a whole. While it is possible that a

curse was involved in *kareth*, this carries with it the likelihood, if not the certainty, that punitive expulsion was also involved.

In all cases, *krt* denotes removal. In a few cases of the *kareth* penalty, *krt* denotes extreme removal, but in most cases, punitive expulsion provides the best overall explanation for the meaning of *kareth*.