The Problem of Violence in the Bible

The human Cruelty and the Judgment of God
Violence as Symbol

- “You shall not murder!” (Exodus 20:13; Deut 5:17); “God is love” (1 John 4:8.16)

- The beginning of Croatian literature (Marko Marulić):

- Judith’s “sword” against “Nebuchadnezzar’s” project:
  - Aram, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece

  - = God’s judgment against Lucifer

  - Jesus brought a sword (Mt 10:34)
  - “will perish by the sword” (Mt 26:52)

- Bethulia:

  - [Betula] = a virgin, [Bet-El] = House of God
“Violence of God”

- God does not require from Abraham the killing of his son but

- **Consecration, exultation**
  - Persecutors in Exod. 14:

- “Egypt”, not “Egyptians”
  - The firstborn of Egypt in Ps 136:10:
    - = the first descendants of the House of Slavery
      - Radical removal in John 15:1s:

- Father is the vinedresser

- He removes unfruitful branch, he prunes (cleanses) the fruitful
Joshua the warrior in Ex 17:8-16

- How old is he in Ex 33:11?
  - youngling נָּעַר náʿar
    – cf. 1 Sam 3, Jer 1:6s)
- 16 chapters after Exod. 17
  - How long the fight (Ex 17:12)?
- Long time – the whole day
  - The role of Moses (v10-12)?
- Praying patronage
- The opponent: עָמָלֵק Amalek (singular! 8-11.13s.16) 7x
  - Whose fight (16b cf. 14b)?
- The Lord have war against Amalek (v16)
- Extinction (יִהְוָה: “I will utterly blot out” 14b)
Special war in the Bible

- Intellectual violence in 2 Kgs 18:28–36
- Hard siege of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 18,27):
- Feeding with excrements
  - Religious accusation in 18:22:
- King Hezekiah destroyed holy places
  - Conqueror’s false prophecy (18:25):
  - יהוה said to me: “Destroy this land!” (v25)
New attack

- Diplomatic language in 2 Kings 18:26.28:
  - Judean (28) instead of Aramaic (26)
  - Cult of personality in 18:29.31:

- *Thus says the king* (יהוה) (thus says)

- cf. “Hear the word of the great king” (28)

- <> do not listen to Hezekiah (2x 31s)
  - deceitful call in v31:

- Make peace with me (31)
  - = HB: make a blessing! בְּרָקָא

- Conquered gods are powerless (35) →

- יְהוָה powerless?
Royal answer

- Answer to verbal attack (2 Kgs 19:1):
  - Tearing clothes, with sackcloth in the Temple
- Answer to written attack (19:14-19):
  - The letter “before יהוה” (14)
  - Sennacherib (name only!) against God (16)
  - Gods of nations truly powerless, they are no gods (18)
    - Theological intention of the prayer (19:19):
      - That all the kingdoms may know God (19)
  - Success: Jerusalem spared
Attack on Nehemiah’s restoration

- Personal testimony of Nehemiah
- “great anger” (Neh 3:33; 4:1) at first as mocking
  - The opponents of the restoration 3:33.35; 4:1:
    - Sanballat – *Sinuballit* – Acadian
      (Moon-god has a son 3:33)
    - Tobiah – the Ammonite (traitor, Vg. 4:3)
    - Arabs, Ammonites, Ashdodites (Vg. 4:7)
      - = Samarians
      - New attack u 4:2 (Vg. 4:8):
- War
  - Method in 4:5 (Vg. 4:11):
- Undercover, infiltration
  “cainic” intention: to kill (הרצח cf. Gen 4:8)
Successful answer

- Nehemiah role model in Neh 1:4; 2:4; Vg. 4:40
- Community praying (Neh Vg. 4:9)
  - The leader has insight (Vg. 4:10):
- Resignation, forces gone, end too far away
  - Motivational speech to the people in Vg. 4:14:
    - cf. 2:17 (emotion, mind, purpose):

  - Emotion: “Do not be afraid!” (Vg. 4:14)
  - Method of Moses: thinking on God (Vg. 4:14)
    - Respectable Lord (cf. 1:5), God will fight (Vg. 4:20)
  - Purpose: family and home (Vg. 4:14)

- Success in Vg 4:19 (↔ v8):
  - Infiltration discovered
    - Opponents wanted to stop the word (Vg 4:8 cf. v11)
    - God stopped their plan (Vg v15) = God’s war (20)
    - = The prayer in 4:9 was (still) worth it
Military answer

- Strategy and equipment u Neh 4:3.7.10 (Vg. 4:9.13.16):
  - Guards day and night (Vg. 9)
  - sword, spear, bow, shield, body armor (Vg. 13.16)
  - Building and defendig (Vg. 17):
- Work with one hand, weapon with the other
  - The leader working himself (Vg. 21.23):
- We labored (Vg. 4:21)
- Neither I nor my brothers… (Vg. 4:23)
New Testament and violence

- The one whom they have pierced (Zec 12:10; John 19:37); LXX: “he”, HB: “me”
  - Christ’s summary in Luke 24:44:
- “everything”… in the Bible… “must be fulfilled” – became victim of human violence
  - Exposed in John 8:6.8:
- Bent down (6.8)
  - Only he in the dialogue with the accused (8:10s):
- “Woman” (10) – “Lord” (11)
  - Lamb of God who takes away the sin (John 1:29) cf. 8:59
- They want to stone Jesus