Rules of Disfigurement: 1 Samuel 5:1-5's Dagon Idol Paradigm of Decapitated Heads and Amputated Hands for Israel's Archaeological Iconoclasms

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1 Introduction

Destruction of divine and human statues is known universally from the ancient Near East in historical and archaeological testimony. [1] People intentionally demolished idols to such an extent that one is hard-pressed to find icons undamaged. This is such a universal truism that May does not know of any fully-intact ancient Mesopotamian divine statue surviving unscathed.[2] May estimates that headless and disfigured images represent ninety percent of Mesopotamia's preserved statuary.[3]

Scholars frequently suggest that statue damage represents deliberate breakage patterns.[4] However, intentional image destruction is a complicated issue, requiring a careful methodology that covers different facets of ancient Near Eastern cultures. [5] Not all broken objects result from deliberate

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[2] Natalie May, "Iconoclasm and Text Destruction in the Ancient Near East," in *Iconoclasm and Text Destruction in the Ancient Near East and Beyond*, ed. Natalie May, OIS 8 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2012), 12.

[3] Natalie May, "In Order to Make Him Completely Dead: Annihilation of the Power of Images in Mesopotamia," in *La famille dans le Proche-Orient ancien: réalités, symbolismes, et images*, ed. Lionel Marti, Proceedings of the 55th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale at Paris, 6–9 July 2009 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 703.

[4] E.g., P. R. S. Moorey, *Idols of the People: Miniature Images of Clay in the Ancient Near East*, Schweich Lectures of the British Academy, 2001 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 66–68; Peter Ucko, *Anthropomorphic Figurines of Predynastic Egypt and Neolithic Crete with Comparative Material from the Prehistoric Near East and Mainland Greece*, Royal Anthropological Institute Occasional Paper 24 (London: Andrew Szmidla, 1968); and Mary Voigt, *Hajji Firuz Tepe, Iran: The Neolithic Settlement*, University Museum Monographs 50, Hasanlu Excavation Reports 1 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 175–181.

[5] Moorey, *Idols*.

mutilation, and often one might observe accidental damage, since some materials (e.g. clay) can fracture easily. Therefore, this analysis focuses upon destructions that are unambiguously deliberate. For example, many Judean Pillar Figurines (i.e. JPFs) probably indicate expected, "natural" breakage at their extremities, such as their weak necks.[6] Thus, I omit unintentional damage that results from normal deterioration. However, general disfigurement patterns do actually emerge within ancient Near Eastern literature (e.g. biblical tradition) and archaeology (e.g. ancient Israel).

Ancient Near Eastern iconoclasm, it would seem, does not essentially differentiate between the "political" and "religious" worlds, nor between symbolic and materialistic incentives, since such "opposites" are not mutually exclusive in antiquity's perspective.[7] Often iconoclastic attacks can suggest a multifaceted synthesis of various motivations,[8] so that one should not always appeal to merely one possibility in every case (e.g. *damnatio memoriae*).[9] Unnatural bifurcations of iconoclasms into antithetical typologies, moreover, should be avoided. Hence, my search for criteria to categorize iconoclasm's destructive tendencies aims to assist archaeologists when describing deliberate statue damage. However, the question arises: If one observes damage to a statue, how does one know if it is intentional? In other words: What are the indications of an idol's mutilation (i.e. the rules of disfigurement)? For absolute confirmation of iconoclasm, one expects literary

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[6] Raz Kletter, *The Judean Pillar-Figurines and the Archaeology of Asherah*, BARIS 636 (Oxford: Tempus Reparatum, 1996), 54–56. Both the pinched and molded head JPFs are found broken at the neck. Hence, the differences of the JPFs' construction techniques do not alter the neck as being the usual breakage point. If one wishes to argue for iconoclastic breakage patterns on JPFs, one might need to demonstrate that JPFs represent a deity (e.g., Asherah). But recent scholarship contradicts such older assumptions. See, for example, Erin Darby, *Interpreting Judean Pillar Figurines: Gender and Empire in Judean Apotropaic Ritual*, FAT II, 69 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

[7] Simon Connor, "Killing or 'De-Activating' Egyptian Statues: Who Mutilated Them, When, and Why?," in *Statues in Context: Production, Meaning and (Re)Uses*, ed. Aurélia Masson-Berghoff, British Museum Publications on Egypt and Sudan 10 (Leuven: Peeters, 2019), 288. Iconoclasts, for Connor, can steal metals and stones from statues, yet still hold symbolic intentions when destroying images.

[8] Laura Battini, "Ritual, Magic, Factuality: Another Look at the Ancient Destruction of Monuments," *NABU* 2018: 55.

[9] May, "Iconoclasm," 5.

correspondence for destruction patterns displaying probable artificiality of damage in contrast to simply natural breakage. One does indeed find literary correlation in the biblical tradition which parallels ancient Israel's actual archaeological evidence for two disarticulation patterns, namely decapitated heads and amputated hands.

In 1 Sam 5:4 Yahweh symbolically battles the Philistines by attacking Ashdod's Dagon idol at its head and hands (כַּף "palm").[10] Although the Philistines claim victory over Yahweh by placing his Ark of the Covenant in Ashdod's temple as a war trophy,[11] Yahweh, in response, assaults the Philistines symbolically (i.e. iconoclasm) and physically (i.e. plagues). In 1 Sam 5, Yahweh attacks the Philistines in ways which indicate divine intervention within ancient Near Eastern cultures (e.g. divinely-inspired plagues).[12] Yahweh's iconoclastic attack upon Dagon's statue was a manifest sign of divine "victory"[13] over the Philistines and their deity. Hence, 1 Sam 5 represents a paradigmatic text that demonstrates iconoclasm's mirroring of human behavior within ancient society's capital/corporal punishments[14] and its martial body mutilations, which mythic imagery of divine conflict likewise reflects.[15] Mythic divine battles within literature and real-life iconoclastic disarticulations of idols found in excavations both imitate human society's

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[10] MT biblical versification always cited.

[11] For Assyrian spoliation of divine images, cf. Morton Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Judah and Israel in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C.E.* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974), 22–41. Bahrani writes: "Taking the cult statue of an enemy land was… an act… of taking the enemy's source of divine power into captivity and thus suppressing its power." (Zainab Bahrani, *The Graven Image: Representation in Babylonia and Assyria* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2003)], 179).

[12] E.g., *ANET*, 347; 394–396.

[13] May, "Dead," 702.

[14] I employ the term "capital/corporal punishments" because one can survive mutilations like hand amputations.

[15] Maul surveys ancient Mesopotamia's city architecture and entryways as public liminal zones for the hegemony's ritualistic display of victory over mythic and political enemies, thereby often indicating literary themes of order conquering the "evil" of primeval chaos. Cf. Stefan Maul, "Der Sieg über die Mächte des Bösen Götterkampf, Triumphrituale und Torarchitektur in Assyrien," in *Gegenwelten zu den Kulturen Griechenlands und Roms in der Antike*, ed. Tonio Hölscher (Leipzig: De Gruyter, 2000), 19–46.

capital/corporal punishments and warfare's mutilations of enemy bodies within ancient Near Eastern cultures (e.g. Mesopotamia[16] or Egypt[17]).

In the ancient Near East, the inverse of earthen interment (i.e. burial's antipode) was the much-feared and shame-filled lack of a cadaver's burial.[18] In the Epic of Gilgamesh, Enkidu describes the spirits of unburied corpses on a battlefield as restless, finding no slumber in the Netherworld.[19] Similarly, Deut 21:22–23 demand the daytime interment of hanged bodies, lest the land be defiled overnight by pollutions of accursed corpses (cf. Deut 28:26's curse[20] of a lack of burial). Earthen burial after death, culturally speaking, is the appropriate end to life for peoples in the ancient Near East. However, the inverse of traditional interment serves to indicate signs of shame in ancient Near Eastern cultures. Thus, the lack of proper burial and the cultural unease its absence produced in ancient society can provide the archaeologist with cultural signs and symbolic markers of a "dreaded disrespect" for the human body, which has correspondence among iconoclastically attacked images found in excavations. Just as Dagon's decapitated and handless torso lay

[16] For example: Seth Richardson, "Death and Dismemberment in Mesopotamia: Discorporation Between the Body and Body Politic," in *Performing Death: Social Analyses of Funerary Traditions in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean*, ed. Nicola Laneri, OIS 3 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2007), 189–208 and Giuseppe Minunno, "La mutilation du corps de l'ennemi," in *Les armées du Proche-Orient ancient (IIIe-Ier mill. av. J.-C.): Actes du colloque international organisé à Lyons les 1er et 2 décembre 2006. Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée*, ed. Philippe Abrahami and Laura Battini, BAR International Series 1855 (Oxford: John and Erica Hedges, 2008), 247–253.

[17] Minunno, "Mutilation." Zibelius-Chen examines specifically corpse mutilations, such as cadavers hanged upside down. (Karola Zibelius-Chen, "Zur Schmähung des toten Feindes," *WO* 15 [1984]:83–88). Matić develops the Egyptian history of upside down corpse hanging, noting a "connection between the enemies, the criminals and the damned" which suggests that "the enemy should share the destiny of the damned in afterlife." (Uroš Matić, "Enemies Hanged Upside [Head] Down," in *Egypt 2015: Perspectives of Research Proceedings of the Seventh European Conference of Egyptologists 2nd-7th June 2015, Zagreb, Croatia*, ed. Mladen Tomorad and Joanna Popielska-Grzybowska, Archaeopress Egyptology 18 [Oxford: Archaeopress, 2017], 323).

[18] Richardson, "Death," 191.

[19] Andrew George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University, 2003), 1:735 and 2:776.

[20] Saul Olyan, "Pain Imposed: The Psychological Torture of Enemies through Ritual Acts in Biblical and Cuneiform Sources," in *Pain in Biblical Texts and Other Materials of the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. Michaela Bauks and Saul Olyan (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 59. Matić ("Enemies") surveys the Egyptian New Kingdom custom of hanging accursed corpses upside down.

disgracefully unburied upon Ashdod's temple threshold for the Philistine public to witness (1 Sam 5:4), so also Israel's archaeology uncovers statues iconoclastically damaged and disinterred, "exhumed," so to speak, from any temple *favissa*. Hence, deliberate damage to statues physically imitates human body mutilation with parallel symbolism and similar cultural significance that warfare's disinterring, or a grave robber's corpse exhumation, shamefully conveys within ancient Near Eastern societies.

The question arises: When one is dead, but not buried, how is such a shameful fact conveyed within customary wartime practice (e.g. Deut 28:26; Jer 22:19; 2 Kgs 9:35)?[21] An answer is found in body maiming and corpse mutilation, especially in the removal of head and/or hands in martial contexts. Likewise, Israel's archaeological record preserves statues with damages corresponding to human disfigurements. One encounters such defacements as the erasure of mouths, noses, ears, eyes, and of various facial features with associated symbols,[22] which all derive from intentions to erase the former identity or esteemed persona from images.[23] However, I focus upon two specific modes of iconoclasm, namely the removal of the idol's head and hands (1 Sam 5:4). Section two evaluates warfare mutilation of human enemies in ancient Near Eastern literature along with comparisons made to capital/corporal punishment. Sections three and four examine damages done to statues, within ancient Near Eastern literature and archaeology (e.g. ancient Israel). Section five concludes with some observations drawn from comparing iconoclasm with human body disarticulation in the ancient Near Eastern mindset.

2 Mutilation of Human Enemies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature

[21] Saul Olyan, *Violent Rituals of the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2019).

[22] May discusses the "annihilation" of a statue's "status insignia" (May, "Dead," 702).

[23] Dolce links defacing mutilations with decapitations as acts intended "to cancel out any identifying features" (Rita Dolce, "Headless Mortals and Gods. Some Remarks on Decapitation in the Ancient Near East," in *Proceedings of the 9th International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, Volume 1*, ed. Rolf Stucky, Oskar Kaelin, and Hans-Peter Mathys [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2016], 88–89).

Patterns of iconoclasm correlate to human mutilation behaviors within warfare and society's capital/corporal punishment. What was originally performed on human bodies in the ancient Near East was correspondingly done to statues in parallel fashion by ancient Near Eastern peoples. Although war attacks a hegemony's power as foreign enemies and not as fellow citizens under capital or corporal punishment laws, one might compare both types of body mutilation to iconoclasm's targeted attack of statues. A similar conceptual transfer from the mythic realm of divine conflict to the physical reality of iconoclasm occurs in the Hebrew Bible.[24] In this section, I describe the cultural background for the ancient Near Eastern conceptual comparison between statues and humans to make sense.

Dread of post-mortem corpse desecration was a universally-feared threat to ancient Near Eastern peoples. Heads often became wartime trophies,[25] as disfigured images illustrate.[26] In Old Kingdom Egypt, reserve heads were made in burial contexts along with protective magic spells to prevent the dead's *ba* (i.e. soul) from "dying" a "second time" by the removal of the deceased person's head.[27] The much-feared abomination of post-mortem decapitation represented a proverbial "second death."[28] Archaeology attests to ancient Near Eastern modeled skull assemblages, providing evidence that human skulls in ancient Neolithic eyes (i.e. PPNA-B periods) were "deemed to hold apotropaic virtues and to serve as links to the other world," being "invested with supernatural powers" in ancestral cult

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[24] Contra: Wolfgang Zwickel, "Dagons abgeschlagener Kopf (1 Samuel V 3–4)," *VT* 44 (1994): 242.

[25] Rita Dolce, *Losing One's Head in the Ancient Near East: Interpretation and Meaning of Decapitation* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2017).

[26] Carl Nylander, "Earless in Nineveh: Who Mutilated 'Sargon's Head?,'" *AJA* 84 (1980):329–333.

[27] Nicholas Picardo, "'Semantic Homicide' and the So-called Reserve Heads: The Theme of Decapitation in Egyptian Funerary Religion and Some Implications for the Old Kingdom," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 43 (2007): 221–252.

[28] Picardo, "Homicide," 222 and Denise Schmandt-Besserat, "The Plastered Skulls," in *Symbols at 'Ain Ghazal*, ed. Denise Schmandt-Besserat, 'Ain Ghazal Excavation Reports 3, Bibliotheca neolithica Asiae meridionalis et occidentalis (Berlin: Ex Oriente, 2013), 215–245.

venerations.[29] Already at the early PPNB site of Tell Qarassa North in southern Syria (i.e. circa second half of the ninth millennium BCE) facial skeletons evidence deliberate mutilation in contrast to then-popular ancestor veneration.[30] Archaeologists (Santana et al.) suggest that Tell Qarassa's PPNB society did not honor the persons' crania, but suspect some conflict inspired the skulls' spiteful mutilation, suggesting possible rituals that used the crania as war trophies.[31] Thus, early in ancient Near Eastern culture we most likely see martial customs already developing into typical manifestations of later periods. Hence, an anthropological paradigm of warfare culture with respect to decapitated heads in ancient Near Eastern societies can probably be traced at least as far back as the second half of the ninth millennium BCE within PPNB times.

The Narmer Palette displays wartime beheadings early on, demonstrating that even in the Protodynastic Period, Egyptians performed decapitations.[32] A complete list of ancient Near Eastern beheadings would be endless, but Dolce provides various examples.[33] Mesopotamian warfare, more so than Egyptian, often performed decapitations of defeated enemies in battle, as observed in the Dadusha Stele's images and text (e.g. Dadusha's transportation of Bunu-Ishtar's head from battle to Eshnunna).[34] The Epic of Gilgamesh describes the giant Humbaba's severed head as being used in

[29] Schmandt-Besserat, "Skulls," 235.
[30] Jonathan Santana, Javier Velasco, Juan José Ibanez, and Frank Braemer, "Crania With Mutilated Facial Skeletons: A New Ritual Treatment in an Early Pre-Pottery Neolithic B Cranial Cache at Tell Qarassa North (South Syria)," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 149 (2012):214.
[31] Santana et al., "Crania," 214.
[32] Joel LeMon, "Cutting the Enemy to Pieces: Ps 118,10-12 and the Iconography of Disarticulation," *ZAW* 126 (2014): 66. Narmer's decapitated enemies were also deprived of their phalli displayed on their abdomen, a detail difficult to see in most photographs.
[33] Dolce, *Losing*. Minunno ("Mutilation," 248) mentions beheadings from Ebla and Mari. Dolce ("Headless") compares ancient Near Eastern human decapitation depictions (from, for example, Ebla, Mari, Carchemish, Zincirli) to excavated statue decapitations (from Mari, for example).
[34] Zainab Bahrani, *Rituals of War: The Body and Violence in Mesopotamia* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 133–147.

necromantic magic,[35] which serves as an illustrative example of ancient Near Eastern customs for decapitated skulls. Ashurbanipal famously gloated over Teumman's head in his triumphal boasting,[36] since "the sign of victory is the body of the vanquished."[37] Ashurbanipal's severing, parading and displaying of Teumman's decapitated head are war rituals, or "theatrical performances of victory."[38] Ashurbanipal even claims Assur's personal directive to behead Teumman specifically,[39] instead of Ashurbanipal's usual, more general assertions of divinely ordained prerogative for his martial tasks. Both Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal compelled prisoners to wear severed heads of enemy rulers publicly, being "forced to participate in the dispersal of the remains of their dead intimates, a harmful ritual act associated with foes rather than friends…"[40] Hence, one finds a close connection of body disarticulation with the much-feared lack of burial in Neo-Assyrian times, the primary period in which corporal torture appears in relief artwork.[41]

Aside from severed heads, ancient Near Eastern sources evidence the fact that amputated hands were not simply war trophies, but were also counted after battle for rulers to reward.[42] Both heads and hands represented personal identity, and their deliberate removal is tied to royal propaganda and/or to administrative counting practices in ancient Near Eastern warfare.[43]

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[35] Jeremy Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 106.
[36] *ANEP*, 451; Bahrani, *Rituals*, 23 and, T. M. Lemos, *Violence and Personhood in Ancient Israel and Comparative Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 179.
[37] Bahrani, *Rituals*, 132.
[38] Bahrani, *Rituals*, 55.
[39] RINAP 5/1, 246.
[40] Olyan, "Pain," 58.
[41] Bahrani, *Rituals*, 154–158.
[42] Minunno, "Mutilation," 247. Ps 24:4 implies that hands, along with the heart, represent self-identity.
[43] The *Long Wall of Carchemish* depicts three decapitated heads and sixteen amputated hands below Suhi II's inscription, thereby showing that both heads and hands were collected (Minunno, "Mutilation," 249). In ancient Syria, similarly, cylinder seals depict human limbs, such as severed hands and heads. Cf. Adelheid Otto, *Die Entstehung und Entwicklung der Klassisch-Syrischen Glyptik*, Untersuchungen zur Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archaeologie 8 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2000), plates 4–6.

Egyptian militaries counted their fallen enemies by severed hands[44] or phalli,[45] but less-frequently with decapitated heads. Egyptian preference for amputated hands is evidenced by Amenhotep I upon his capture of Nubian bowmen.[46] The cutting off of a defeated enemy's hand as a trophy, moreover, is a well-attested practice in New Kingdom Egypt.[47] This New Kingdom counting system may have been imported from Egypt's Semitic neighbors,[48] since in the Ramesside period such war trophies were indicated by Semitic "*kp*" (כַּף), meaning "hand/palm."[49] Yet, Bietak's excavations at Avaris have revealed archaeological evidence from even earlier.[50] Just outside of the 15th

[44] Minunno, "Mutilation," 248. Stefanović argues for a decline of hand amputations during the Egyptian 18th and 19th Dynasties to mainly severing hands of non-circumcised dead, but the circumcised usually had their phalli removed in the 19th Dynasty (Danijela Stefanović, "The Counting of the Dead Enemy's Hands," *Journal of the Serbian Archaeological Society* 19 [2003]:164–165).

[45] Minunno ("Mutilation," 248) and Lacau relate the concept of hands reckoned as war trophies to the similar counting mechanism of phalli (cf. 1 Sam 18:20–27) (Pierre Lacau, *Les noms des parties du corps en égyptien et en sémitique*, Mémoires de l'Institut national de France 44:2 [1972], 234). For the Egyptian warfare custom of hand counting, famous examples include Rameses II's Qadesh battle (i.e. Hittites) and the Medinet Habu depiction of Rameses III's tallying of Libyan hands and penises (*ANEP*, 340; 348). For severed hands and phalli as Egyptian mutilations, see LeMon, "Cutting," 65–67 and A. A. Loktionov, "May My Nose and Ears Be Cut Off: Practical and 'Supra-practical' Aspects of Mutilation in the Egyptian New Kingdom," *JESHO* 60 (2017): 268–269. Abdalla argues that Egyptian hand amputations were not for trophies or for counting the slain, but for the two crimes of either false witness or for rebellion against rulers (Magda Abdalla, "The Amputated Hands in Ancient Egypt," in *Studies in Honor of Ali Radwan*, ed. Khaled Daoud, Shafia Bedier, and Sawsan Abd el-Fattah [Cairo: Supreme Council of Antiquities, 2005], 29). In contrast, Stefanović ("Counting," 164–165) argues that the primary motivation behind Egyptian hand amputations was for post-mortem counting of the wartime enemies' dead. Yadin demonstrates that Shalmaneser III provides Mesopotamian evidence for hand amputations similar to that of Egyptians (Yigael Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands: In the Light of Archaeological Study*, 2 vols. [Jerusalem: International Publishing, 1963], 2:399) (e.g., *ARAB* 1:147; 1:157; *COS* 2:280). Ancient Near Eastern statues are usually fully-clad, so that one would not expect to find iconoclasm targeting sexual organs like the phalli, even in Egypt.

[46] *AEL* 2:13.

[47] Stefanović, "Counting," 164.

[48] Stefanović, "Counting," 165.

[49] Hellmut Brunner, "Die Hieroglyphen für 'räuchern,' 'bedecken,' 'Handfläche' und die ihnen entsprechenden Wörter," in *Göttinger Vorträge vom Ägyptologischen Kolloquium der Akademie am 25. und 26. August 1964*, ed. Siegfried Schott (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 93–96; Hartwig Altenmüller, "Hand," *LÄ* 2:940; and P. Ackroyd, J. Bergman, and W. Von Soden, "יָד," *TDOT* 5:404–405, 418.

[50] Manfred Bietak, "The Archaeology of the 'Gold of Valour,'" *Egyptian Archaeology* 42 (2012): 42–43; and, Manfred Bietak, Nicola Math, Vera Müller, and Claus Jurman, "Report on the Excavations of a Hyksos Palace at Tell El-Dab'a/Avaris (23rd August–15th November)," *Egypt and the Levant* 22/23 (2012/2013):31–32. However, Candelora proposes that the amputated

Dynasty King Khayan's Hyksos palace at Avaris,[51] in front of a throne room, pits were found containing amputated hands. This find suggests that soldiers received rewards for bringing hands to the king after battle.[52] Thus, Egyptian hand counting customs apparently predate Amenhotep and New Kingdom policies.[53]

In Mesopotamia, as in Egypt, often heads were decapitated, although kings also severed arms and/or hands.[54] Esarhaddon boasts of cutting off the hands, noses, eyes, and ears of runaway slaves.[55] Similarly, Ashurnasirpal glories in the removal of hands and facial features of captured enemy troops.[56] Ashurbanipal, famously, went beyond mere amputations, displaying a love for gore when mutilating his enemies.[57] With regard to legal matters, Hammurabi's code requires hand amputation for some offences, such as theft (e.g. paragraph 253, xliv, 69–82). In Hammurabi's code, sometimes the plucking of an eye parallels punishments for violations resembling ones which require hand removal. For example, if a surgeon accidentally blinds an *awīlu*'s eye, then governors must retributively amputate the physician's hand (paragraph 218, xli, 74–83).

Martial decapitations have much more ancient Near Eastern literary testimony than hand amputations, although both heads and hands served as trophies for post-battle rewards reckoning when early "Israel" fought battles in the Iron Age I period. Biblical passages indeed suggest warfare "counting"

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hands are remnants of a legal punishment (Danielle Candelora, "Trophy or Punishment: Reinterpreting the Tell el-Dab'a Hand Cache within Middle Bronze Age Legal Traditions," in *The Enigma of the Hyksos, Volume I, ASOR Conference Boston 2017 – ICAANE Conference Munich 2018 – Collected Papers*, ed. Manfred Bietak and Silvia Prell, CAENL IX [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2019], 95–106). In my opinion, Bietak's interpretation seems more plausible.

[51] Bietak, "Archaeology," 42.

[52] Bietak, "Archaeology," 43.

[53] Similarly, at Avaris, archaeologists discovered a pit containing three skulls and three right hands, all dating to the 18th Dynasty's inception. Cf. Manfred Bietak, Josef Dorner, Peter Jánosi, and Angela von den Driesch, "Ausgrabungen in dem Palastbezirk von Avaris Vorbericht Tell El-Dab'a/'Ezbet Helmi 1993–2000," *Egypt and the Levant* 11 (2001): 64.

[54] Examples include: RIMB 2, 293, 296, 302, 310, 312; RINAP 3/2, 333–334; RIMA 2, 201, 265; *ARI*, 2:126; 2:161; *ARAB*, 1:147, 1:157.

[55] RINAP 4, 84.

[56] RIMA 2, 201.

[57] Examples include: RINAP 5/1, 243; RINAP 5/1, 246; RINAP 5/1, 250; RINAP 5/1, 260.

practices for body parts like the head and hands. In Judg 7:25, for example, Gideon's army decapitates Oreb and Zeeb and takes their heads as proof of their deaths. Heads are war trophies also in the deaths of Goliath (1 Sam 17:51–54) and of Saul (1 Sam 31:8–13; 1 Chr 10:8–12). One might compare Goliath's and Saul's body disarticulations to the seventy heads of Ahab's dynasty heaped up at Jezreel's gate (2 Kgs 10:8), the people of Abel-Beth-Maacah throwing Sheba's head to Joab (2 Sam 20:14–22), or Samuel's hewing of Agag to pieces (1 Sam 15:33).[58] Similarly, Saul's body parts were exchanged in warfare between the Philistines and Israelites.[59]

Various biblical contexts suggest aspects of capital/corporal punishment in body disarticulation and/or disfigurement (e.g., Zedekiah's blinding).[60] In 2 Sam 4:5–12, for example, David cuts off the hands and feet of Rechab and Baanah in retaliation for beheading Ishbosheth, then subsequently displays the body parts publicly at Hebron's pool.[61] Likewise, the Israelites amputate Adoni-Bezek's thumbs and big toes in retribution for how Adoni-Bezek treated enemies (Judg 1:3–7). Just as Yahweh severs the hands (כַּף) of Dagon's statue in 1 Sam 5:4, so also Deut 25:11–12 require that a woman's hand (כַּף) be amputated if she seizes a man's genitalia. In Judg 8:6, quite strikingly, Succoth's leaders mention hands (כַּף) as if Zebah's and Zalmunna's palms would prove their deaths. Thus, as such biblical passages indicate, there is little distinction in the body disarticulations of warfare and of capital/corporal punishment among ancient Near Eastern societies.

[58] E.g., Mic 3:1–3; Ezek 23:25.
[59] Compare the Philistine public display of Saul's armor and body parts at temple and city wall in 1 Sam 31:8–13 and 1 Chr 10:8–12 to David's punishment of Rechab and Baanah (2 Sam 4:5–12).
[60] Blinding is a common mutilation, as in the examples of Zedekiah and Samson (e.g., 2 Kgs 25:7; Jer 39:7; 52:11; Judg 16:21; Num 16:14; Zech 11:17). E.g., *ARAB*, 1:147; 1:169; *ANET*, 533; *ARI*, 2:126; or 1:82, footnote 177's references. Olyan (*Rituals*, 136) describes blindness's reproach with Darius's Bisitun Inscription. Also see Nylander, "Earless," 331. Blindness is a divine curse in Deut 28:28–29. Nahash the Ammonite demands partial blindness from Jabesh-gilead by the gouging out of the right eyes (1 Sam 11:2).
[61] Compare the hands and feet of Rechab and Baanah to Saul's hanged body parts and also to the Egyptian New Kingdom practice of hanging corpses upside down (Matić, "Enemies").

Although I focus upon martial treatment of external foes, one might also note parallels to body mutilations in society's treatment of its internal "enemies" when it applies capital/corporal punishment within its own community by legal authority.

Ancient Near Eastern mutilations have three primary motives. For one, amputation can have "degradation as a goal" (e.g., Judg 1:6).[62] Secondly, corpse disarticulation could represent war taunts or intimidating military threats, as in cases of decapitations.[63] Lastly, removing body parts like hands is "done to arrive at a reasonable count of soldiers killed."[64] Usually the act of beheading an enemy sought both desecration and public humiliation[65] or "shame."[66] However, ignominy was connected to every mentioned motive, all of which resulted in the person's degradation publicly.[67] Surely all three reasons played a role, but each motivation relates to ancient shame[68] in the enemy's lack of proper burial after death.[69] Although Mesopotamian sources reveal examples of decapitations displayed at public locations (e.g. city liminal zones),[70] the counting of body parts is known primarily from Egyptian sources. One need not choose merely one motive for body disarticulations and/or disfigurements as exclusively primary. One can, instead, note that capital/corporal punishments and martial mutilations are both related closely with shame connotations in lack of burial.[71]

3 Mutilation of Statues in Ancient Near Eastern Literature

Iconoclasm simply connotes statue damage and does not equate perfectly with human body mutilation. However, patterns for disfiguring idols in ancient

[62] Jack Sasson, *Judges 1-12*, AB (London: Yale University, 2014), 361.
[63] Sasson, *Judges*, 361.
[64] Sasson, *Judges*, 361.
[65] Sasson, *Judges*, 356.
[66] Lemos, *Violence*, 49.
[67] Lemos, *Violence*, 49.
[68] T. M. Lemos, "Shame and Mutilation of Enemies in the Hebrew Bible," *JBL* 125 (2006): 225–241.
[69] Richardson, "Death."
[70] Dolce, *Losing*, 5 and 29–30.
[71] Richardson, "Death."

testimony certainly derive from norms for mutilating human bodies.[72] A conceptual transfer from human mutilation to physical statue damage is illustrated by Ashurbanipal's treatment of the Elamite Hallusu's image as if it were Hallusu himself, since the various statue features are physically damaged for Hallusu's real-life, hostile acts against Assyria.[73] Thus, actual, physical statues were treated as their presumed counterparts, since the copy was "the embodiment of the represented person" and, as such, "can be punished for his deeds."[74] The image "always retained something of the original within it and could even take the place of the represented, occulting it to an extent but at the same time being its presence."[75]

One can look beyond heads and hands to the legs, feet, or the defacement of facial features (e.g. mouths)[76] among ancient Near Eastern targets of iconoclasm.[77] Damage to the mouth on idols does not readily correspond to human body mutilation (e.g. capital/corporal punishment), yet it apparently reflects iconoclasm's desire to counter the "magic" of the Mesopotamian ritual of *Mîs-pî*.[78] Although it is rare to find an idol's head, if it is "preserved," its "facial features, particularly lips and noses, are almost always injured."[79] New Kingdom Egypt and its contemporary ancient Near Eastern societies (e.g. the Hittite and Middle Assyrian empires) severed noses and ears in legal contexts, just as statue faces and their status symbols are found iconoclastically attacked.[80] Head horns on images, moreover, are a

[72] Dolce, *Losing*, 64–78; and, Dolce, "Headless."
[73] May, "Dead," 718.
[74] May, "Dead," 718.
[75] Bahrani, *Image*, 183. A divine statue was "the manifestation of the god in the realm of human beings" and "the phenomenon of the deity proper on earth" (Bahrani, *Rituals*, 165).
[76] May, "Dead," 702.
[77] E.g.: May, "Iconoclasm;" May, "Dead;" and Natalie May, "Decapitation of Statues and Mutilation of the Image's Facial Features," in *A Woman of Valor: Jerusalem Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Joan Goodnick Westenholz*, ed. Wayne Horowitz, Uri Gabbay, and Filip Vukosavovic, Biblioteca del Próximo Oriente Antiguo 8 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2010), 105–118.
[78] May, "Dead," 719. May ("Dead," 719) suggests that nose mutilations may relate to *Mîs-pî*.
[79] May, "Dead," 702.
[80] Loktionov, "*Nose*," 269. Loktionov ("*Nose*," 278) suggests a "supra-practical" symbolism in the severance of human noses and ears from the similarities of iconoclastic damages done to statue visages.

frequent target of iconoclasts (cf. Enuma Elish's hacked horns of Tiamat),[81] demonstrating the important symbolism of horns in the ancient Near East.[82] However, following 1 Sam 5:4's paradigm, I focus solely upon iconoclasm's severing of head and hands.

1 Sam 5:1–5 describe decapitation and hand amputations in relation to Yahweh's iconoclastic attack upon Dagon's statue, which represents the divine battle between Yahweh and Dagon executed at Ashdod's temple threshold. 1 Sam 5:3–4's description of Dagon tumbling twice before Yahweh's ark does not indicate primarily submission or worship, but rather both "falls" indicate Dagon's death by Yahweh's victorious hand in combat (e.g. Judg 3:25).[83] 1 Sam 5's duplicated toppling of Dagon symbolizes a proverbial "doubling down" of Dagon's metaphorical death, with 1 Sam 31:9's decapitation adding a repeated emphasis to Saul's death from 31:8's "falling." Likewise, in 1 Samuel 5, Yahweh attacks Dagon in two stages, corresponding to the twin defeats of Israel at Ebenezer earlier in chapter four. Both attacks (i.e. iconoclasm and plague epidemic) represent the same message: Yahweh is greater than Dagon, especially since Yahweh "killed" Dagon at Ashdod's temple threshold. 1 Sam 5:4's iconoclastic mutilations, such as Dagon's decapitation, signify Yahweh's victorious conquest over his enemy Dagon.[84]

1 Sam 5:4's statement that "only Dagon was left upon it (i.e. Ashdod's temple threshold)" relates to other warfare contexts (e.g. Josh 13:1; Jer 34:7) in which there remain few or no survivors after military encounters.[85]

[81] SAA 3, 101, 39: r.13. Specifically, a mystical Assyrian commentary to Enuma Elish.

[82] May ("Iconoclasm," 18) states that usually horns of "surviving Mesopotamian divine statues were hacked" as they were "divine status" symbols. The symbolic meaning of horns in the ancient Near East is not completely understood. See Margit Linnea Suering, *The Horn-Motif in the Hebrew Bible and Related Ancient Near Eastern Literature and Iconography* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University, 1980).

[83] Steve A. Wiggins, "Old Testament Dagan in the Light of Ugarit," *VT* 43 (1993):270. Contra: Zwickel, "Kopf," 239. Wiggins ("Dagan," 273 n. 8) notes verses with נפל as indication of death.

[84] Mark Brandes, "Destruction et mutilation de statues en Mésopotamie," *Akkadica* 16 (1980): 39.

[85] 1 Sam 5:4 is a relatively rare שאר verbal clause to have a proper name as subject (e.g., Gen 7:23; Deut 3:11; Josh 13:12). Such clauses usually have general, non-specific nouns (e.g., Gen 47:18; Num 21:35; Deut 3:3; Josh 8:22; 10:28, 30, 33; 11:8, 14). However, Gen 42:38 has

Ironically, 1 Sam 5:4 reads "only Dagon remained on (the threshold),"[86] which implies sarcastic aniconic parody reminiscent of Deutero-Isaiah, since similar mocking of the deity's frail physicality is a biblical theme. In 1 Sam 5:4, like destroyed icons excavated by archaeologists, only Dagon's torso remains on the doorway's threshold, without head or hands, reduced merely to a trunk to represent his divine persona. Hence, solely Dagon's limbless "corpse" is left to Dagon after his unsuccessful battle against Yahweh in his own temple. Dagon's headless and handless torso intentionally falls on Ashdod's temple "threshold" (מִפְתָּן),[87] which indicates a public, shame-filled spectacle of Dagon's "cadaver" displayed before Philistine worshipers entering Ashdod's temple (1 Sam 5:5).[88] Zeph 1:9 intertextually indicates that 1 Samuel 5:5 (cf. LXX Greek's textual addition) should be understood in a context of Yahweh's judgement of Dagon which Ashdod's priests avoid when entering Dagon's temple. Likewise, Zeph 1:9 describes Yahweh's indictment against Jerusalem's temple priests despite their attempt to "cross/step over the threshold"[89] and evade Yahweh's coming judgement for their metaphorically-signified "form of apostasy."[90] In Zeph 1:9 an ancient Near Eastern custom of corpse display at entryways created an intertextual link with 1 Sam 5:5, which Zeph 1:9 figuratively

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Benjamin still "remaining" to his father Jacob (compare 1 Sam 16:11), just as 1 Sam 5:4's "Dagon" is ironically left to Ashdod's temple threshold.

[86] One need not textually emend 1 Sam 5:4's Hebrew "Dagon" to LXX Greek's "spine/backbone," or to "fish body" (Henry Preserved Smith, *The Books of Samuel*, ICC [Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1899], 39). Dagon was not associated with fish, but was a "weather-god, who gave his name to grain" (Graeme Auld, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary* [Louisville: WJK, 2011], 76). Assuming MT's "Dagon" is original, there is implicit parody in naming the icon's trunk as "Dagon," since Dagon becomes merely a destroyed idol with only a torso left. Thus, in subverting the reader's expectation of a word like "torso" or LXX's "spine/backbone," MT 1 Sam 5:4 suggests sarcastic parody when stating that "only Dagon remained on it (i.e. Ashdod's temple threshold)."

[87] Marvin A. Sweeney, *Zephaniah: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 85–88.

[88] Note corpses at liminal zones (e.g. doorways or city gates) in Judg 19:22–27 and 1 Kgs 16:34 (cf. Josh 6:26). Wiggins ("Dagan," 272) writes: "Death and the threshold seem closely related" (compare 1 Kgs 14:17).

[89] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 88.

[90] Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 76.

expresses through 1 Sam 5:5's Philistine cultural taboo fear regarding thresholds.[91]

As in 1 Sam 5:5's example of Dagon's torso, Sennacherib's usurping sons shockingly murdered him "in between the bull-colossi" at a temple's doorway in Nineveh,[92] which parallels ancient Near Eastern customs of displaying corpses near enemy gateways.[93] One can also compare Yahweh's "slaying" of Dagon at the temple's threshold to Hammurabi's Code (paragraph 227, xlii, 43–55), in which the death penalty requires hanging the victim's condemned body at his own household's doorway. Likewise, paragraph 21 (ix, 14–21) requires that a thief who breaks into a house be hanged publicly at the very point of breaching. Hence, ancient Near Eastern legal policies establish liminal zones (e.g. city gates) as locations for corpse presentation,[94] just as extispicy texts describe enemies and lions depositing corpses at gateways.[95] Within both real and mythic realms, ancient Near Eastern literature provides cases of enemies being placed physically at liminal zones (e.g. doorways and gateways) for public display, often indicating victory over foes.[96] In Neo-Assyrian propagandistic reports, one sees human skin draped over city walls or on corpse piles around cities in order to teach political lessons to royal enemies.[97] Physical statues, in contrast, cannot be literally skinned, but are broken in ways imitating human mutilations. Simply put, deliberately-

[91] Wiggins ("Dagan," 271–273) describes the taboo in its biblical and ancient Near Eastern context.
[92] RINAP 5/1, 244. Compare Rassam cylinder, iv 70–73 with 2 Kgs 19:37.
[93] For example: *ARAB*, 1:146–148; 1:156; 1:166; 1:168; *ARI*, 2:123–124; 2:126; 2:161.
[94] E.g., May, "Dead," 722 and Nylander, "Earless," 331. Nylander's Darius examples were alive, although mutilated at the gate. Kaim draws parallels to Darius's mutilations from similar examples performed by Ashurnasirpal and Ashurbanipal (Barbara Kaim, "Killing and Dishonoring the Royal Statue in the Mesopotamian World," in *Studi sul Vicino Oriente Antico dedicati alla memoria di Luigi Cagni, Vol.1*, ed. Simonetta Graziani, Istituto Universitario Orientale Dipartimento di Studi Asiatici Series Minor 61 [Naples: Instituto Universitario Orientale, 2000], 517).
[95] E.g., Ulla Jeyes, *Old Babylonian Extispicy: Omen Texts in the British Museum*, Uitgaven van het Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 64 (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1989), 127–128.
[96] Maul, "Sieg."
[97] For example: *ARI*, 2:123–124; 2:126; RINAP 5/1, 234.

damaged images are often displayed publicly at liminal zones,[98] such as city gates, building doorways, or temple thresholds (e.g. Enuma Elish V:73–75).[99] Likewise, Esarhaddon placed despoiled statues of Taharqa, the Kushite ruler of Egypt, at Nineveh's arsenal Tell Nebi Yunis, similar to how "bodies, body parts, and severed heads of defeated royal enemies were exhibited at the city gates."[100] In summary, "statues of enemy kings and princes were exhibited in the same way" as mutilated bodies of "defeated enemies."[101]

Within biblical tradition one finds iconoclasm in the context of cultic reforms, such as Josiah's (2 Kgs 23), and similar public demonstrations of iconoclasm and cultic demolitions are known elsewhere in the ancient Near East (e.g. Ashurbanipal's religious attack against Elam).[102] One encounters various iconoclasms in imitation of human mutilations,[103] but mythic divine battles best illustrate the ancient Near Eastern perspective which inspires iconoclasts to mutilate statues. Of the many ancient Near Eastern body mutilations that parallel 1 Samuel 5's iconoclasm,[104] Ugarit's Baal Cycle provides mythic warfare scenes which are striking (e.g. *KTU* 1.13:6–7's severed hands and heads).[105] In divine battle, for example, Anat ties decapitated "heads" to her back and fastens amputated "hands" to her girdle (*KTU* 1.3.II:5–13),[106] similar to how iconoclasts remove heads and hands when damaging statues. Likewise, Anat hacks Mot to pieces for birds to consume, as if carrion left after battle (*KTU* 1.6.II:30–37).[107] In the Hebrew Bible, there is a conceptual exchange of iconoclastic terminology applied to both images and

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[98] May, "Iconoclasm," 20 and, May, "Dead," 718–722.
[99] SAACT 4, 96. Marduk commemorates his victory over Tiamat's monsters by placing them at public gates. Similarly, Ashurbanipal exhibited deliberately-damaged statues of defeated Elamite kings (e.g. Hallusu) at Nineveh's Southwest Palace (Bahrani, *Rituals*, 164).
[100] Bahrani, *Rituals*, 174.
[101] Bahrani, *Rituals*, 174.
[102] May, "Dead," 720–721.
[103] E.g., Dolce, *Losing*, 64–78; Dolce, "Headless;" May, "Iconoclasm;" May, "Decapitation;" and May, "Dead." For examples, see Agnès Spycket, *La statuaire du Proche-Orient ancient* (Leiden: Brill, 1981).
[104] Lemos ("Shame," 225) lists examples.
[105] Minunno, "Mutilation," 249.
[106] *UNP*, 107.
[107] *UNP*, 156. Note also the parallel passage (*UNP*, 161).

humans: the verb כרת describes how both are "cut" (e.g., Exod 34:13 with 4:25; 1 Sam 17:51; 31:9; 2 Sam 20:22). This conceptual transfer between idols and people can be observed strikingly in Hos 8:4's כרת *double entendre*. In Hos 8:4, כרת apparently has the double verbal object of both the nation of Israel and Israel's icons simultaneously.[108] The point ironically is that idols and humans (i.e. Israel) are essentially treated the same by Yahweh, just as people "cut down" images as if they are human victims.[109] Hence, in our primary ancient Near Eastern literary source for iconoclasm descriptions (i.e. biblical tradition), the conceptual overlap between statue disfigurement and human body mutilation becomes obvious.

4 Mutilation of Statues in Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology

The Gudea family statues of Lagash "constitute the largest assemblage of statuary of a single Mesopotamian dynasty."[110] The statue collection provides an example of how one might argue for iconoclastic damage patterns, in general. The destruction of Gudea's dynastic statues is remarkably consistent,[111] although two of them, probably fakes, were not decapitated.[112] The question remains if such uniform patterns of damage represent intentional iconoclasm, with Suter saying no,[113] but May suggesting the affirmative.[114] For May, the beheading or defacing of the great majority (90%) of these statues indicate deliberate damage.[115] Suter, however, suggests "natural catastrophe" as the cause, in contrast to "human agency."[116] May concludes that the "complex of Gudea statues was probably destroyed because he was revered as the ancestor of Ur III dynasty,"[117] which points to a close

[108] Ehud Ben Zvi, *Hosea*, FOTL XXIA/1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 169.
[109] E.g. Exod 34:13; Judg 6:25–30; 1 Kgs 15:13; 2 Kgs 18:4; 23:14; etc.
[110] May, "Dead," 706.
[111] Claudia Suter, "Gudea of Lagash: Iconoclasm or Tooth of Time?," in *Iconoclasm and Text Destruction in the Ancient Near East and Beyond*, ed. Natalie May, OIS 8 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2012), 57–87.
[112] May, "Dead," 706.
[113] Suter, "Gudea," 74.
[114] May, "Decapitation," 112; and, May, "Dead," 707.
[115] May, "Decapitation," 106.
[116] Suter, "Gudea," 74.
[117] May, "Dead," 722.

connection between image and its symbolized, human reality. Whatever the case, Gudea's statues evidence the plain fact that contemporaneous literature should be utilized to decide debates concerning possible iconoclasm. I would suggest that greater certainty of evidence for iconoclasm can be deduced during Israel's Iron Ages from coetaneous sources[118] preserved in ancient Near Eastern literature. Excavational evidence exists to indicate iconoclastic damage patterns which imitate martial mutilations and capital/corporal punishments during the "biblical" archaeological periods.

Early on, even before the Early Dynastic period (i.e. Uruk period), one finds statues predominantly headless.[119] This "headless" trend continues throughout ancient Near Eastern history.[120] When ancient Israel begins to emerge, Hazor's excavated finds present Late Bronze Age headless and handless statues for comparative archaeological analysis.[121] Ben-Tor discusses eighteen statues iconoclastically attacked at Hazor.[122] He examines eleven figures with "mutilations," all statues displaying amputated hands or severed heads,[123] whose iconoclastic damage, along with Hazor's Late Bronze Age destruction layer, Ben-Tor credits to Israelites attacking Canaanite Hazor.[124] Zwickel describes divine and human statues attacked in iconoclasm, all of which were found within ancient Palestine and Transjordan.[125]

Hazor represents the land of Israel's most prolific iconoclasms, with striking examples being decapitated basalt seated figures with deliberately-

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[118] Also, earlier in the Late Bronze Age.
[119] May, "Dead," 703.
[120] Nylander, "Earless;" Kaim, "Killing;" May, "Decapitation;" Dolce, *Losing*, 64–78; and Dolce, "Headless."
[121] Amnon Ben-Tor, "The Sad Fate of Statues and the Mutilated Statues of Hazor," in *Confronting the Past: Archaeological and Historical Essays on Ancient Israel in Honor of William G. Dever*, ed. Seymour Gitin, Edward Wright, and J.P. Dessel (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 3–16.
[122] Ben-Tor, "Fate," 4. The Hazor excavations continuously publish new examples.
[123] Ben-Tor, "Fate," 14.
[124] Amnon Ben-Tor, "The Fall of Canaanite Hazor: The 'Who' and 'When' Questions," in *Mediterranean Peoples in Transition: Thirteenth to Early Tenth Centuries BCE.*, ed. Seymour Gitin, Amihai Mazar, and Ephraim Stern (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1998), 456–467.
[125] Zwickel, "Kopf."

damaged right hands (Ben-Tor's statues 14, 15, 17).[126] Similarly, two nearly identical statues of Thutmose III both display the exact same iconoclastic removal of the head and both hands,[127] demonstrating remarkable unity in both their original design and iconoclastic destruction. Likewise, Beth-Shean's inhabitants amputated the arms of Rameses III's seated statue and then separated the head at the relatively weak torso area, possibly during Shishak's Palestinian campaign.[128] The unnatural point for severing the head, being lower than the customary neck area, was probably due to the nemes headdress creating a comparatively thick neck which was not as easily broken as the torso, since it had relatively equal width to the neck section.[129] The hands and arms were definitely first amputated by deliberate targeting, then the statue was likely toppled in order to decapitate the thickly-necked headdress portion, thereby breaking at the torso's weak point lower down the statue's body.[130] Although Beth-Shean iconoclasts beheaded Rameses III at the uncommon mid-torso region,[131] the same disarticulation pattern still emerges, with both hands and the head being severed in clear iconoclastic attack. Unfortunately, often statue torsos and heads are found lacking any other appendages (e.g. hands), but two of Hazor's decapitated basalt seated figures have matching severed heads found nearby (i.e. Ben-Tor's statues 14 and 17).[132] However, excavations most often find headless and handless torsos, or

[126] Ben-Tor, "Fate," 7–9.

[127] Nora Scott, *Egyptian Statuettes* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1946), figure 17 and, Mohammed El-Saghir, *Das Statuenversteck im Luxortempel*, ZBA 6 (Mainz: Von Zabern, 1992), 69–70.

[128] Frances James, *The Iron Age at Beth Shan: A Study of Levels VI-IV*, Museum Monographs (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1966), 153. Scholarship debates James's chronological conclusions. Mazar, for example, questions James's dating for the temple of Rameses III's statue to Level 5, preferring late Stratum 6. Moreover, scholars now doubt that Shishak destroyed much of anything in his Palestinian campaign (Amihai Mazar, email).

[129] James, *Beth Shan*, figure 81:3.

[130] Rowe provides a photo to indicate that the thick neck with nemes headdress was as wide as the armless torso. A hammer possibly severed the upper torso, after the arms were first amputated. Cf. Alan Rowe, *The Topography and History of Beth-Shan with Details of the Egyptian and Other Inscriptions Found on the Site*, Publications of the Palestine Section of the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania 1 (Philadelphia: University Press, 1930), plate 51.

[131] Perhaps this was due to hasty toppling without utilization of iconoclastic tools (e.g. hammer).

[132] Ben-Tor, "Fate," 7–9.

simply heads without bodies, mere remnants of their former images. This frustrating archaeological pattern continues throughout the Persian and Hellenistic periods,[133] although interment can preserve broken parts.[134] Despite typical dispersal of statue fragments, whether contemporaneously or later, iconoclastic damage patterns become apparent in Israel's archaeological excavations. Although several examples of headless or handless iconoclasms exist, space constraints require that I refer the reader to other authors in May's edited volume,[135] May herself,[136] Spycket,[137] and Dolce[138] for specific cases.[139]

When despoiling idols, ancient Near Eastern cultures treat statues like humans of large-scale population deportations.[140] In statue abduction, like iconoclasm's imitation of human body mutilation, ancient people transport idols as if they are exiled persons. Thus, Isa 46:1–2 picture the gods Bel and Nebo prostrating in their captivity,[141] thereby indicating a societal shame connected to the humiliation that human deportation conveys among ancient Near Eastern cultures. In the case of spoliation, as in iconoclasm, antiquity's handling of statues imitates how ancient societies treat human bodies,[142] whether in warfare or in capital/corporal punishment.

5 Conclusion

Ancient Near East culture, generally speaking, treats statues like human bodies. Martial mutilations and capital/corporal punishments provide parallel

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[133] Zwickel, "Kopf," 246–249.

[134] Note Ben-Tor's evaluation of 'En Hazeva's burial as reverential in contrast to its excavators ("Fate," 13).

[135] Natalie May, ed., *Iconoclasm and Text Destruction in the Ancient Near East and Beyond*, OIS 8 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2012).

[136] May, "Iconoclasm;" May, "Decapitation;" and, May, "Dead."

[137] Spycket (*Statuaire*) has examples.

[138] Dolce, *Losing*, 64–78; and, Dolce, "Headless."

[139] Simpson describes three Assyrian statues that were both decapitated and hand-amputated. Cf. St. John Simpson, "Annihilating Assyria," in *In Context: The Reade Festschrift*, ed. Irving Finkel and St. John Simpson (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2020), 145.

[140] Cogan, *Imperialism*, 22–41; May, "Iconoclasm," 13–15; and, Steven Holloway, *Aššur is King! Aššur is King! Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, CHANE 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 123–144.

[141] E.g. *ANET*, 18. Proskynesis among deities occurs throughout the Ugaritic Baal Cycle (e.g. *UNP*, 92–95, 98–100, 109, 127, 153).

[142] Bahrani, *Image*, 149–184.

behavioral patterns that illustrate how statues are similarly perceived and handled in ancient society. Essentially, the way one treats one's enemy in warfare is the same for idols in iconoclasm. Although heads and arms are usually the easiest statue appendages to break off (e.g. JPF heads),[143] one should not facilely dismiss such parts as simply falling off naturally. Ancient Near Eastern cultures had societal reasons to amputate hands and sever heads of images with iconoclastic symbolism. Thus, iconoclasm should be compared to corresponding human body mutilations (i.e. disarticulations of heads and/or hands) known culturally from warfare and legal penalties. Essentially, how one treats the physical body of society's criminals and/or martial enemies within ancient Near Eastern cultures reflects correspondingly how one treats an image's "body" in iconoclasm. Hence, statue disfigurements imitate wartime enemy mutilations and capital/corporal penalties for criminals, although warfare is the typical context for cultural comparison to iconoclasm. Archaeology regularly verifies ancient literary testimony (e.g. biblical tradition) which reveals that iconoclasm often mirrors the treatment of martial enemies in antithesis to customary burial. Thus, warfare rituals performed on enemy bodies within the ancient Near East (e.g. New Kingdom Egypt) provide a fairly reliable criterion for detecting iconoclasm in the remains of deliberately-damaged idols from Israelite sites from the Late Bronze Age to subsequent periods.[144] Iconoclastic behavior reflects mainly ancient martial customs which ritually invert normal human burial,[145] thereby, indicating "death" with societal shame particularly shown in the head's removal.[146] Warfare brings out iconoclasm's "death" symbolism most

[143] Kletter (*Pillar-Figurines*, 54–56) concludes that JPF breakages are not iconoclastic patterns. He is probably correct, but Kletter's assessment must always be reevaluated with new excavational data.
[144] Zibelius-Chen ("Schmähung," 87) and Matić ("Enemies," 323) observe that Egyptian cadavers hanged upside down imply that the dead enemy is forced to share the same chaotic fate of damned souls in the afterlife.
[145] Richardson, "Death."
[146] Richardson ("Death," 201 n. 63) writes: "Severed heads/skulls throughout the history of Mesopotamian literature are most typical of all body parts to act as an index for the (unburied) body."

clearly, since a military's iconoclastic destruction particularly imitates a victorious conquest over the image of one's enemy (divine or human) in battle.[147]

In ancient Israel, since at least Hazor's Late Bronze Age, statues were treated as wartime enemies and were, thus, desecrated like human corpses. Iconoclasm, as observed in 1 Samuel 5, demonstrates greater proof of the idol's "death" in a symbolic punishment, although there might be other possible intentions at work.[148] Just as martial mutilation further validates the enemy's death, sometimes in some sense of an official reckoning, iconoclasm displays the image's shame-filled lack of proper burial by the disarticulation of the idol's "body parts," sometimes displayed at public liminal zones (e.g. city gates).[149] Biblical passages, likewise, usually connect iconoclasm with warfare imagery, just as human body mutilations historically and literarily often occur within martial contexts.

The biblical tradition, particularly 1 Sam 5:4, indicates that ancient warfare practices and capital/corporal punishments transferred into the physical realm of statues and their iconoclastic demise. Just as Yahweh attacks Dagon twice in 1 Samuel 5, so body mutilation is a means of "doubling down" against a wartime enemy's corpse and ensuring a more mortifying "death." Political and religious iconoclasm merge in warfare's treatment of the human body, since both iconoclasms damage statues in the same way as one mutilates one's martial enemy (e.g. head and hand disarticulations). However, the often-proposed artificial bifurcation between religious and political iconoclasms should no longer be maintained fastidiously, as there is little difference between them in the ancient perspective. Both types of iconoclasms draw from corporal mutilation patterns, as in 1 Sam 5:4's decapitation and hand amputations. In summary, a statue's demise is shown in the same way that

[147] Brandes, "Destruction," 39.
[148] Battini, "Ritual;" Dolce, *Losing*, 73; and, Connor, "Killing," 288.
[149] For example, Dolce (*Losing*, 70) postulates two decapitated statue displays at ancient Ur's gate. For other image beheadings, cf. Dolce, *Losing*, 64–78.

military attackers communicated an enemy's death to ancient Near Eastern observers and/or hegemonies. As a general rule, images (divine or royal) are handled like human bodies, just as spoliations imitate human deportations (e.g. Nebuchadnezzar's Judean exile),[150] although there are differences among abduction patterns.[151]

It is unnecessary to assign significance to partial disfigurement of a statue as somehow representing something other than death. A bifurcation of iconoclasm into "incomplete" versus "complete" types seems somewhat pedantic, since statue mutilation patterns basically convey something akin to a physical death for humans,[152] even if the damage is only partial and emblematic.[153] Violence is violence, whether the object is a human or a statue. Yet, there are elements within iconoclasm's symbolism whose purpose is to memorialize, rather than completely obliterate. One such element is the iconoclastic damage *per se*.[154] Iconoclasm surely desires the observing audience to recognize and remember the destructive act itself, which, at the very least, symbolically signifies the image's "death"[155] and/or its punishment within the "afterlife."[156] Without a doubt, human experience of death, such as in martial mutilation and capital/corporal punishment, served as the template for iconoclasts to imitate when they damaged statues.

There are similar mutilation patterns within capital/corporal punishment and warfare's treatment of enemy bodies which iconoclasm clearly mimics (e.g. hand amputation). Corporal punishment looks inward at society, while warfare mutilation looks outward to foreign foes. There is a thin,

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[150] Bahrani, *Image*, 149–184.
[151] Dolce, "Headless," 93; and, Dolce, *Losing*, 72.
[152] May, "Dead."
[153] Contra: Nylander, "Earless," 330; and, Kaim, "Killing," 516.
[154] Brandes ("Destruction," 39) concludes that iconoclasm symbolically destroys the statue's identity (e.g., May, "Dead," 723). However, Brandes gives a bit of overstatement. Iconoclasm surely wishes an audience to know that the statue is "dead" to some extent, so that complete annihilation of identity somewhat counters this desire.
[155] May ("Dead," 723) speaks of "total annihilation," although this seems a little hyperbolic.
[156] Compare Zibelius-Chen ("Schmähung") and Matić ("Enemies") for Egyptian corpse desecrations which reflect the enemy's afterlife "damnation."

often indistinct, line dividing the internal criminal from the external enemy among ancient Near Eastern societies. This faint boundary is especially noticeable in the clear similarity of body mutilations "executed" by both internal and external punishment patterns (e.g. decapitation). Although martial mutilation is more common, capital/corporal penalty particularly elucidates the symbolic significance of certain body part disarticulations among ancient Near Eastern cultures (e.g. hand severance).

In conclusion, archaeologists should compare capital/corporal punishment and warfare mutilation practice found in ancient Near Eastern literature (e.g. biblical tradition) with iconoclastic patterns discovered in excavations. Where there is ancient literary testimony there likely will be archaeological evidence from the ground. Future excavations in Israel will probably uncover more statues missing their heads and/or hands which date from the Late Bronze and Iron Ages (i.e. "biblical" periods). This is likely because one finds, starting from at least the Late Bronze Age, ancient Near Eastern literary and archaeological precedence for similar treatments of human bodies and statues (divine or human). Mythic imagery (e.g. Ugarit's Baal Cycle) provides a literary setting and sense for 1 Samuel 5:4 to be understood as a type of military execution in a divine battle context. Hence, biblical literature suggests that its iconoclastic patterns, inspired by human body mutilations, derive from relatively early cultural behaviors (e.g. the Late Bronze Age) and not from 1 Macc 10:84's later Hasmonean rule (i.e. Jonathan's burning of Ashdod's Dagon temple).[157] Therefore, this article both refines and amplifies Zwickel's essay.[158] Thus, contrary to Zwickel,[159] archaeological discoveries at Hazor require one to posit decapitation and hand amputation as iconoclastic patterns of targeted attack upon statues within ancient Israel, going back at least as early as the Late Bronze Age.

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[157] Zwickel, "Kopf," 249.
[158] Zwickel, "Kopf." Contrary to Zwickel, even late textual layers of biblical material can preserve cultural traditions and memories from earlier times (e.g., iconoclasm patterns).
[159] Zwickel, "Kopf," 249.

My analysis of iconoclasm, which often occurs in martial contexts, might explain biblical imagery that deliberately conflates idols with human enemies, or simply merges human foes with icons who "die" symbolically (e.g. Psalm 82; Jer 10:11; Isa 10:10–11).[160] Biblical writers imagine the physical destruction of images as signifying the political defeat of the deities' associated human forces.[161] Hence, biblical authors make a conceptual transfer from the known, real-life practice of iconoclasm to the mythic world of divine warfare (e.g. Ugarit's Baal Cycle), such as in the heavenly realm of Psalm 82's imagined battle. However, scriptural writers make a conceptual shift that is completely inverted to the ancient Near Eastern perspective observed in this article. In other words, biblical authors conceptually cross the realm of divine warfare into the domain of physical, real-world iconoclasm when viewing international reality and politics through their literary imagery's perspective. Thus, scripture speaks, possibly with synecdoche,[162] as if iconoclasm reflects real-life events and actual power struggles of nations in warfare. Ancient Near Eastern iconoclasts, in contrast, surely assume the opposite conceptual transfer in their ideological practice of iconoclasm, with its symbolic gestures of an imagined mythic battle against the idol's deity.[163] In summary, ancient Near Eastern iconoclasm remains conceptually in the figurative realm of symbolism, although physically performed by real-life actors. However, biblical imagery, especially within "apocalyptic" warfare descriptions, merges iconoclasm conceptually with this physical world in its literary perspective of

[160] In Isa 10:10–11, Assyria intends to destroy the idols of Samaria and Jerusalem, which could also be assumed to undergird Rabshakeh's speeches against Hezekiah's citizens (2 Kgs 18:19–19:13). Psalm 82 presumes iconoclasm in its imagery of gods dying, as if idols "die" with divinely-judged rulers and nations (cf. Jer 10:11's icons perishing from the earth).

[161] E.g., Psalm 82; Exod 23:23–24; 34:13; Num 33:51–55; Deut 7:1–5; 12:1–4; 1 Sam 7:3. Both Lev 26:30–31 and Ezek 6:1–13 conceptually link destroyed idols with corpses, but in these contexts the desecrated cadavers with their cultic objects and installations are not foreigners, but Israelites.

[162] Iconoclasm often occurs within martial contexts so that biblical authors, therefore, might describe warfare through one of war's accompanying components of iconoclastic destruction.

[163] Brandes, "Destruction," 39.

political reality through iconoclasm's symbolic actions (e.g. Isa 2; 21:9; 27:9; 30:22; 31:7; 57:13; etc.).