

Concordia Seminary - Saint Louis

Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary

Bachelor of Divinity

Concordia Seminary Scholarship

5-18-1936

An Investigation of Molech and Recent Theories Concerning the Term

Herbert C. Albrecht

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir_albrechth@csl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/bdiv>



Part of the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Albrecht, Herbert C., "An Investigation of Molech and Recent Theories Concerning the Term" (1936).

Bachelor of Divinity. 702.

<https://scholar.csl.edu/bdiv/702>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Concordia Seminary Scholarship at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Bachelor of Divinity by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

**AN INVESTIGATION OF MOLECH AND RECENT
THEORIES CONCERNING THE TERM**

by

Herbert C. Albrecht

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the B.D. degree.**

**CONCORDIA SEMINARY
St. Louis, Missouri
1936**

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

PREFACE.....1

I. INTRODUCTION.....3

II. EXTRA-BIBLICAL MATERIAL.....9

III. BIBLICAL MATERIAL.....24

A. LEVITICUS PASSAGES.....24

B. OTHER PASSAGES OF THE MT.....33

C. WAS MOLECH A GOD?.....41

IV. IMPORTANT THEORIES ABOUT MOLECH.....59

A. EISSFELDT'S THEORY OF 1935.....59

B. MELECH THEORY.....75

V. CONCLUSION.....78

VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....80

PREFACE

The impetus for the study of Molech in the Old Testament was furnished by Dr. Paul E. Kretzmann, who suggested the subject and recommended it as being a timely and valuable study, since only last year Prof. Otto Eissfeldt of Halle University, Germany, had come forward with a new theory regarding it.

We wish gratefully to acknowledge the many valuable suggestions furnished by Dr. Kretzmann, and assure him that his guidance and encouragement was gratefully received and deeply appreciated. Our sincere thanks is hereby also extended to Dr. Walter A. Maier, for various hints and suggestions in regard to Bibliography, evaluation of material, etc., and especially the training received in his classes, not to mention his many self-sacrificing favors, which alone were responsible for a profitable year spent in studying Semitics.

ABBREVIATIONS

- Am.T.** American Translation of the Old Testament.
- G.H.L.** Gesenius, Hebrew Lexicon (1907 Brown, Driver, Briggs revised).
- K.J.V.** King James Version of the Bible.
- LXX** Septuagint (Greek version of the Old Testament).
- MT** Massoretic text (text of the Hebrew Old Testament).
- Vul.** Vulgate (Latin version of the Old Testament).

Note: For further detail in regard to these books see
Bibliography.

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The influence of mechanistic, materialistic science, through Evolutionism, has in recent centuries shaped men's theories regarding the origin and development of the religions of mankind. Since the universe was conceived to be the direct result of vast eras of development by a simple process of cause and effect, it had to follow that religion was also an outgrowth of the same lines of cause and effect. Deistic speculation, indeed, made God the primal cause of this development, insofar as he set the universe in motion, leaving it to evolve in its own way, but Deism thought of religion as being merely a part of the natural process of the evolution of the universe.

Whatever evidences of early religious beliefs and customs have come to us in the last century or more have been made to fit a preconceived theory of the evolution of mankind, and of religion. The questions uppermost in the minds of thinkers on the history of religion in the past era are the following. How could religion have evolved

if God did not directly create it? -- If God gave man the potentialities for evolving religion, what are the steps by which this was done? And what, we ask, was the result of their speculations? —

Various theories have been suggested to account for the origin of the beliefs and practises to which the term religion is applied. Perhaps the oldest is that "fear made the gods". Less naive are those modern explanations which regard religion as an organization of social customs around life interests accompanied with the personifications of social beliefs. Other origins are found in fetishism, totemism, naturism, tabu, sex, dreams, ghosts, mana or mysterious power.¹

Regardless of the fundamental premises with which these theories begin in the development of religion, or what natural phenomena they give primary consideration, all agree in insisting that the gods were created in the image of man and that it was not vice versa.

Today the trend of thought seems to be away from the acceptance of any of the theories of the development of religion in the sense that it evolved or developed from customs and superstitious fears of the human race. Whether all scholars will ultimately swing back to the conservative view that originally there was a monotheism, and that polytheism was a corruption of it, is hard to say, but most probably they will not, unless forced to do^{so} by

1. Matthews, S. and Smith, G. B., editors of Dictionary of Religion and Ethics 1921 see Religion p. 371

what they might consider^{an} unimpeachable and direct archaeological discovery.

Taking the view according to the Bible, that originally man knew the one true God, and that gradually he began to make other gods (idols) for himself, and thus eventually allowed polytheism to supplant his monotheism nearly entirely, -- taking this view of the history of religion, one must marvel at the great corruption that some centuries later had set in among the nations of the earth. With Noah, of course, the human race began anew with God. But how quickly was he not forgotten by many people! This is shown by the gross polytheism which existed among the nations only a few centuries later.

The following is a list of some of the major deities worshipped in ancient Egypt during the period before the establishment of the Old Kingdom (2980 B.C.): Nekhebet (vulture goddess), Horus (hawk god), Osiris (god of the dead), Anubis (god of the underworld), Thoth (god of wisdom and arts), Apis (god of cemeteries), Hathor (cow goddess of love and destiny), Neit (goddess of the Nile).

During the period of the Old Kingdom (2980-2445 B.C.) the god Rê (Ra) displaced Horus, and the rest of the list worshipped at this time reads as follows: Atum, Khefre, Thoth, Nut, Hathor, Neit, Bast, Osiris, Ptah.

During the Middle Kingdom (2160); and during the time of the Empire (1580) many of the minor gods sank into oblivion, but Re and Osiris and a few others remained, and various new gods, such as Amon, Aton, and Sutekh were added.

The religions of Mesopotamia demonstrate the same great departure from monotheism. The Sumerians, perhaps the earliest occupants of Mesopotamia had, beside innumerable minor deities, the following list of important gods: Enlil (the chief of demons -- god of the air), Ea (god of the lower region), Dumuzi (god of agriculture), Nana (goddess of the planet Venus), Enzu (god of the moon), Ningirsu (goddess of agriculture).

The Akkadians who invaded the land of the Sumerians under Sargon I adopted the Sumerian religion, and perhaps added nothing to the above list.

The Babylonians (Semites), after conquering Sumer and Akkad introduced new deities. They worshipped mainly: Marduk, Ea, Anu, Shamash, Sin, Damkina, Nabu, Ishtar, Adad, Nergal, and Enlil.

Concerning the gods of the Hurians we know little, but their followers, the Assyrians (1200 B.C.) had chiefly the following deities: Ashur, Ishtar, Ramman (Hadad), Anu, Dagan, Shamash, Sin, Marduk, Nergal, Nabu, Damkina, Ea.

It can be seen from the above sketch what gross polytheism obtained among the early nations in and about the cradle of the human race, Mesopotamia, not long after the flood. How quickly, and how thoroughly monotheism was forgotten by the great multitudes! -- Yet, doubtlessly God maintained knowledge of himself and his will among some of these people, just as he called Abraham to serve him, and later the children of Israel, and in the New Testament the Christians of all nations.

In regard to the worship of the gods referred to above we have not as much information as we should desire. We know that in Egypt there were priests, who at an early period made offerings in the temples. The usual offering which was brought to the gods of Egypt seems to have been in the form of food and drink, and often flowers and incense were brought to the temple for the enjoyment of the deity.

In the religious practices of Sumer and Akkad we know the main things which were offered to the gods. Some of them are the following: oxen, sheep, goats, birds, chickens, ducks, geese, fish, figs, cucumbers, butter oil and cakes. The Babylonians likewise had sacrifices of various kinds, and especially also animal sacrifices, as for example, lambs, pigs and birds.

But even though we know that these nations reverted quickly from monotheism to polytheism, and gross practices, yet it is hard to believe that any people could sink so low, as to institute a rite of child-sacrifice to honor one or the other of their idols. In the following pages we shall deal with an idol and his rites, which we consider one of the grossest examples of idolatrous practices. We are speaking of Molech, mentioned in the Old Testament and the child-sacrifices connected with his worship.

Our main sources of information in regard to this god and his cult is, of course, the Old Testament, but in the speculations about him a great amount of extra-Biblical material has been presented, and this shall engage our attention before we begin to cope with our main issues, namely the Biblical references to this god and the theories propounded to clarify them.

CHAPTER II.

EXTRA-BIBLICAL MATERIAL.

The extra-Biblical material concerning Molech is very limited and far-removed from the historical period of Molech's existence. The descriptions of Molech which are current today come to us through Nicolaus a Lyra, and some of the older Protestant commentators from the medieval Jewish commentators. These commentaries in turn repeat a midrash preserved in two slightly different forms.¹ There are numerous variations between the two, but none which materially affect the sense.²

Molech's place of worship was outside the walls of Jerusalem according to the above mentioned sources, which is borne out by what knowledge we have of him from the Old Testament (cf. I Kings 11,7; 2 Kings 23,10; Jer. 32,35). As to the exact nature of the place of worship of Molech the midrashim certainly have a very definite idea. The following description is recorded by G.F. Moore as the one given in the midrash Yelamedenu:

His idol stood in the innermost of seven chambers or cells, separated by grated doors. The worship-

1. Moore, G.F., The Image of Molech in the "Journal of Biblical Literature Vol. XVI, 1897 pp. 161-165.

2. Ibid.

per who offered a bird was admitted to the first or outer cell; he who offered a goat, to the second; a sheep, to the third; a calf, to the fourth; a young steer, to the fifth; a bull, to the sixth; he who brought his son as an offering alone might enter into the seventh, the presence chamber of the deity.¹

A description of the form of Molech according to the same midrash follows. Again we quote Moore.

The idol itself had the head of a calf upon a human body; the arms were extended with the hands open like those of a man who is about to receive something from another. The image was hollow -- we must suppose of metal² -- and was heated by a fire from within till the hands were glowing.³

To stop here, without introducing the holocaustal sacrifice would be to omit the climax of it all. Hence we shall introduce the matter of child-sacrifice at once by quoting again from the same author.

The priest took the child from its father and laid it in the hands of Molech, where it was burned to death; the priests meanwhile violently beating drums that the cries of the victim might not be heard by the father and move his heart.³

-
1. "according to Rashi, of copper" (Author's own footnote).
 2. Moore, G. F. The Image of Molech in the "Journal of Biblical Literature" Vol. XVI, 1897, pp. 161-165.
 3. Ibid.

We have previously mentioned that there is another version of the above description "found in Echa Rabbathi, Tumathi (on Lam. 1,9)".¹ -- In this version the idol is likewise represented as standing behind seven grated doors. To pass the first an offering of fine flour was necessary, to pass the second turtle doves or young pigeons were necessary, to pass the fourth a ram, to pass the fifth a calf, to pass the sixth a bull, and in order to be allowed to cross the threshold of the seventh a son had to be brought as a sacrifice. The description of the image here leaves the impression that Molech had the form of a man. It says nothing about a calf's head, and the idol is pictured as holding in its hand a copper pan, underneath which a portable furnace was placed to heat it. We shall allow Moore to complete the picture:

The priests lay the child in the pan, start the fire in the furnace, and shout their acclamations before the father saying, "May it be pleasant to thee! -- May it be agreeable to thee!" that the offerers might not hear the crying of their sons and draw back.

-
1. Moore, G.F., The Image of Molech in the Journal of Biblical Literature. Vol. XVI, p. 162.
 2. Ibid.

Just how true these descriptions of Molech and the connected sacrifices may be is questionable. It does seem to be asking quite a bit of a person to require him to believe that such horrible crimes were perpetrated under the guise of worship to a deity. One might expect some extremely barbarous tribes to sacrifice an enemy to an idol, and one is not unusually surprised to hear that the Egyptians occasionally sacrificed captives to their gods,¹ but it is quite another matter to accept as gospel-truth an account of the slaughtering of children as if they were lambs. But what is far more difficult to conceive of for an occidental mind such as ours is that this was done by the parents. We can hardly conceive of the hardness of heart or the fervor of sentimental superstition which moved these fathers and mothers to sacrifice their own offspring in so cruel and horrible a manner. And yet, it is not impossible to find almost equally horrifying incidents recorded in other literature that seems to be worthy of credence. There are scholars who do not believe that the inhuman characteristics of Molech-worship tax one's capacity to lend credence, even in its most gruesome aspects, unduly. Thus, for example, Eadie reports on

1. Breasted, James H., A History of Egypt 1926, cf. pp. 325, 411 478. The captives seem to have been sacrificed as much to intimidate the enemies as to worship the gods.

the heinous nature of the Molech-sacrifices and then proceeds to defend their historicity:

The Rabbins tell us that it (the Molech statue) was made of brass, and placed on a brazen throne, and that the head was that of a calf, without a crown upon it. The throne and image were made hollow, and a furious fire was kindled within it. The flames penetrated into the body and limbs of the idol; and when the arms were red hot the victim was thrown into them, and was almost immediately burned to death. Its cries were drowned by drums, etc. Some have doubted whether there was an actual sacrifice of life on these occasions..... No objection can be made to the credibility of the Rabbins' account from the barbarity of it; for the burning of widows and the drowning of children in India are certainly no less revolting instances of cruelty than the throwing of infants into the heated arms of an idol-god.¹

In order to defend the historicity of Molech, scholars have had to go especially to the Phoenicians and to the reports of their custom of child-sacrifice by the Greeks. In regard to this matter of Molech's having acquired fame and credence as a result of the notoriety of a Phoenician idol, Eissfeldt has the following statement:

1. Eadie, John, Eadie's Biblical Encyclopaedia (1901) p. 453f.

Der Moloch hat seine Beruehmtheit der Tatsache zu verdanken, dasz er mit dem als Empfaenger von Kinderopfern bekannten phonizisch-punischen Baal Hamon-Kronos-Saturn kombiniert worden ist und dasz man sich, jedenfalls seit den 6. Jahrhundert n. Chr., die Darbringung der Opfer an ihm nach analogie dessen vorgestellt hat, was klassische Schriftsteller wie Diodorus und Plutarch ueber den Vollzug der dem punischen Kronos-Saturn dargebrachten Kinderopfer zu berichten wissen.

Since Molech has in past gathered so much momentum from the statements of Diodorus Siculus and other Greek authors, it is but natural that we should quote them directly. The following is taken from J.F. Wurm's translation of Diodor:

Sie gaben auch dem Kronos Schuld, dasz er ihnen entgegen sei, weil sie in frueheren Zeiten die vorzueglichsten ihrer Soehne diesem Gotte geopfert, spaeter aber heimlich Kinder gekauft, und erzogen und zum Opfer geweiht haetten. Als man eine Untersuchung anstellte, so fand man, dasz Einige von den zu Opfern Bestimmten unterschoben waren. In erwaegung jener Vorfaelle und beim Anblick der vor ihren Mauern gelagerten Feinde fuehlten sie aberglaubische Angst wegen Nichtbeobachtung des einheimischen Goetterdienstes. In der Absicht also, dieses Vergehen wieder gut zu machen, waelten sie zweihundert der vornehmsten Knaben aus und opferten sie oeffentlich. Andere aber, die nachtheiligem Gerede ausgesetzt waren boten sich freiwillig dazu an; es waren ihrer nicht weniger als dreihundert. Es befand sich aber bei ihnen ein ehernes Standbild des Kronos, mit abwaerts ausgestreckten, auf dem Boden zugeneigten Armen, so dasz der auf dieselben gelegte Knabe hin-

1. Eissfeldt, Otto, Molochs Glueck und Ende in Jahrgang 11, "Forschungen und Fortschritte", p. 285f.

unterrollte in eine mit Feuer angefüllte Vertiefung fiel.¹

It seems that child-sacrifice was such an extraordinary thing to the Greek mind that its very unusualness caused them to remember it, and to mention it often in suitable contexts. The Phoenician Kronos is mentioned at various other places in Greek literature, a notable one being found in the scholia to Plato's Republic i. 337 A on the words *ἀνεχλασε τε μαλα σκεδάσαν*. This scholion mentions Kleitarchos as its source. Moore tells us that the same description of Kronos, though in briefer form, is found in the writings of Suidas and Photius. They give their account not as original, but in the name of Kleitarchos. Thus Kleitarchos, one of the biographers of Alexander the Great, is apparently the oldest author to whom we can trace the description of the image of Kronos. He wrote about 300-310 B.C.² Moore conjectures that Diodorus most probably took his material from a history of Agathocles by Duris of Samos, written about 280 B.C.³

Before we drop the matter of Greek accounts for the atrocities of Kronos we must of necessity mention Plutarch's allusion to the Phoenician custom of child-sac-

1. Wurm, J.F., Diodors von Sicilien Historische Bibliothek (1837) Buch 20, Kap 14, S. 2023f.

2. Moore, G. F., The Image of Molech. J.B.L. Vol. XVI, p. 161f.

3. For details and argumentation cf. l.c. note 2.

rifice. There, it will be observed, a new element is brought in, namely that of buying children for the purpose of sacrifice, and then compelling the mother of the child to witness the offering. The following are the words of Plutarch after he distinctly brings out that he is not speaking of beasts instead of children:

But they knowingly and wittingly themselves devoted their own children; and they that had none of their own bought of some poor people, and then sacrificed them like lambs or pigeons, the poor mother standing by the while without either a sigh or a tear; and if by chance she fetched a sigh of let fall a tear, she lost the price of her child, but it was nevertheless sacrificed. All the places round the image were in the mean time filled with the noise of hautboys and tabors to drown the poor infant's crying.¹

But undoubtedly the question will at this point be raised, and justly so, "What has the Phoenician Kronos and all the above collection of Greek records to do with Molech?" -- We answer, "only this, that Molech has in the past drawn heavily on these accounts of inhuman sacrifices to bolster up what records we possess of him and his worship."

Now, therefore, let us stop to determine just how much influence the Greek stories have had on Molech.

1. Goodwin, W.W., Plutarch's Essays and Miscellanies Vol. I, (1911) p. 182f.

It is quite probable that the authors of the midrashim mentioned above borrowed from the accounts concerning Kronos of Phoenicia, yet to say that all of their account is reliant on the Greek records solely and wholly seems to be going a step too far. Moore seems to think that the accounts given us by the midrashim are very greatly indebted to the accounts of Kronos, if not borrowed from them altogether. Eissfeldt insists that Moore has proved that a Molech-statue never existed, but then goes on to modify his statement by saying that at least the historical evidence for it is very unreliable. The statement by Eissfeldt follows:

Moore's Nachweis, dass es solch ein Molech-Bild nie gegeben habe oder doch jecenfalls keinerlei zuverlaessige Ueberlieferung ueber ein solches vorhanden sei.....

It would seem, however, that a total denial of the historical value of the accounts of the midrashim would be going a bit too far. But before we form any definite opinions let us compare the two accounts of child-sacrifice treated above in a more scientific fashion. In the following we have listed the essential points of each story in parallel columns.

-
1. Eissfeldt, Otto., Molochs Glueck und Ende in Jahrgang 11, "Forschungen und Fortschritte" p. 285f.

MIDRASHIM

PHOENICIAN KRONOS

The name of the idol:
Molech.

The name of the idol:
Kronos.

Molech stands in the innermost of seven chambers.

Each of the chambers is separated by a grated door.

An offering of a bird, goat etc., is required to pass six doors.

In the last chamber the sons of the worshippers were sacrificed.

The Phoenicians offered child-sacrifices to Kronos (their own or boughten ones).

Kronos made of brass.

Molech had the head of a calf.

His body was shaped like a man's.

MIDRASHIM

PHOENICIAN KRONOS

Molech's hands were stretched out as if to receive a gift.

Kronos' hands were stretched out pointing toward the ground before it.

Molech had fire inside, or a furnace under the pan in his hands.

Kronos had a pit before him for the fire.

Priests took the child from the father and laid it on the hands of Molech, where it roasted to death.

Children were placed on the arms of Kronos, whence they rolled into the pit of fire.

Priests beat drums or shouted, "May it be pleasant to thee!" to drown the cries of the child.

Hautboys and tabors around the image drowned the infant's crying.

It seems to us that a comparison as that above of the two accounts of child-sacrifice must yield the following data:

Similarities:

1. The parents offered their own children to an idol.
2. The god was a metal statue of somewhat human form.

3. The hands were stretched out in the case of both.
4. The child was laid on the arms of the idol.
5. In both cases much noise drowned the cries of the victim.

Differences:

1. The account of the seven chambers and the doors which were opened only to such as brought special offerings is absent in the second column.
2. Nothing is mentioned of the type of metal constituting Molech.
3. The midrashim report Molech to have had the shape of a man in body.
4. The names Molech and Kronos appear to be quite distinctly different from each other.
5. Molech's hands were-extended so that the child would remain upon it. Those of Kronos pointed downward.
6. Fire burned within Molech or under his extended hands. In the case of Kronos the fire burned in a pit before the image.
7. The child remained on Molech's hands, while in the sacrifices to Kronos the child rolled into the pit of fire before him.
8. Molech's priests did all the drowning out, whereas others apparently assisted the priests of Kronos.

A theory which makes the Jewish midrashim copy from the Greek accounts of sacrifices to Kronos would account for all of the similarities very well, but would at the same time disregard entirely all the differences. If the writers of the midrashim based their accounts upon the accounts current among Greek authors about Kronos and Kronos-worship, then certainly they must have allowed their imaginations to fill in quite a bit. The account of the seven chambers separated by seven doors, for example, is best taken as a historical heritage by tradition rather than as the deliberate fabrication of the writers. Perhaps, of course, this element was added from some other source, or even fabricated by popular tradition in the centuries intervening between the days of Molech, and the writing of the midrashim, but to assume this as likely on the basis of our present knowledge, would be high-handed guessing, and anything but a soundly scientific procedure. -- Perhaps the sanest attitude to take, considering the evidence at hand, is to allow that the Greek accounts about Kronos-worship probably colored the account about Molech by the Jewish Rabbis, but that their main source of information appears to have been some other account of child-sacrifice, and very probably that received by tradition from previous ages.

Moore takes the view that it is scarcely conceivable that the description of the idol Molech at Jerusalem should be independent of the Greek stories. He says:

It is far more probable that the authors of the Midrashim borrowed their notions of Moloch and his worship from Greek sources.¹

In substantiation of his view he points to the widespread circulation of the main source of the Greek stories, namely the writing of Kleitarchos.

Through what channels the Greek story came to them (the writers of the midrashim), it is of course impossible to tell. But it may be worth while to remark that Kleitarchos' account had, so far as we can judge, unusually wide currency from the fact that it gave an historico-etymological explanation of the proverbial "sardonic laughter".²

The view of Moore, however, disregards not only the distinct differences pointed out above, but also the extraordinary efficiency of Hebrew oral tradition. There is no reason why the essentials of the story and the description of the midrashim could not have come directly from very early times. Especially since Molech is mentioned in the Pentateuch is it very probable, for the Torah was held in especial esteem and always read by

1. Moore, G.F., The Image of Moloch, J.B.L. Vol. XVI, p.161f.
2. Ibid.

the Jews in their synagogues, and hence it is but natural that they should maintain some sort of a tradition about this idol.

SUMMARY:

Our present extra-Biblical information about Molech comes chiefly from the medieval midrashim. A similar account to that about Molech is found in various Greek writings. Though the Greek accounts may have colored the story of Molech somewhat, yet it seems that the midrashim must be considered as reporting some historical material.

CHAPTER III

BIBLICAL MATERIAL

Having mentioned the most consequential extra-Biblical sources for our present knowledge of Molech, let us go on to our main source, namely the Bible.

A. Leviticus Passages.

We shall introduce the Biblical material connected with Molech by studying the first occurrences of this word in the MT, namely those in Leviticus, the first of which is Lev. 18,21. The context surrounding this verse deals with the unlawful marriages listed by Moses for the Israelites, in order that they might avoid the sins of the Canaanites, whose land they were soon to conquer. In the verses immediately preceding verse 21 and those directly following it unlawful lusts are forbidden, which fact might lead one to assume that verse 21 also has some reference to sexual immoralities. To show just what is meant we shall quote verses 19-24.

19. Also thou shalt not approach unto a woman to uncover her nakedness, as long as she is put apart for her uncleanness.
20. Moreover thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbor's wife, to defile thyself with her.
21. And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God; I am the Lord.
22. Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with woman-kind; it is an abomination.
23. Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith; neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto; it is confusion.
24. Defile ye not yourselves in any way of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before thee.

Because of the nature of the context in which verse 21 is found Nowack says:

v. 21, ist vom Bearbeiter, der ein Interesse an der Bekämpfung des zu seiner Zeit grassirenden Melekdienstes hat, und fuer die Strafbestimmung 20,2 zugl. ein entsprechendes Verbot schaffen wollte, eingeschoben; grade hier wegen der v.20 gebotenen Stichwoerter קדש und אשר .¹

However Keil and others follow a more scientific procedure and regard the verse as authentic, and not an insertion, as does Nowack. Keil looks upon the verse

1. Nowack, W., "Handkommentar zum Alten Testament" Exodus-Leviticus-Numeri p. 394.

as connected with its context by the idea of adultery. The following is his statement:

An die fleischliche Hurerei reiht sich ein Verbot der geistlichen Hurerei an.¹

Murphy has the same conception as Keil. His statement follows:

Idolatry is a spiritual adultery (xvii,7, and elsewhere). Passing of their seed through the fire was an idolatrous custom of the Kenaanites.²

At any rate the removal of this verse on the mere ground that it does not appear to fit into its context is a high-handed procedure, and not at all scientific. Hence we must retain the verse as it is and attempt to establish its true meaning as it stands.

The MT reads thus literally: "and of your seed you shall not give to pass over to Molech". The LXX has the following: "And of your seed you shall not give to worship to the chief one".³ The Greek word employed for "to worship" is λατρεύω, meaning "to serve", "worship", and is often used in the LXX as a trans-

1. Keil, C.F., "Biblischer Commentar", Leviticus, Numeri und Deuteronomium (1862) p. 118.

2. Murphy, J.G., Commentary on the Book of Leviticus. p. 233.

3.

lation of the Hebrew קָנָה .¹ The Hiphil, which is here used, may therefore well be to "devote", and the G.H.L.² lists this translation as the desirable one in this particular verse.

The LXX translators seem to have understood the term קָנָה as referring to a king or a ruler in general, and hence used the Greek term ἡγεύω . In the case of the vul., however, the matter is different, for it refers directly to an idol, which is Molech. It has the following: "De semine tuo non dabis, ut consecretur idolo Moloch". The translator of this phrase had a very definite notion about Moloch, for he calls Moloch an idol, using that very word.

The questions which arise after considering the above material are these: Was Molech an idol or not? What is the force of the phrase "cause to pass through the fire", or "consecrate by fire"? What is to be understood by "seed", -- the primary meaning of seed, or the more remote one meaning children or offspring?

From an objective, scientific investigation of this passage alone, one could hardly give a definite answer to the above questions. Hence we shall leave this passage and go on to the next passage in Leviticus to see whether it will not bring out definite evidence, which can be applied here.

2. G.H.L. - Gesenius, *W. A Hebrew and English Lexicon* (1907) p. 718.

1. Abbot-Smith, G., *Manual Greek Lexicon* p. 265, see κατεύω
2. G.H.L. - Gesenius, *W. A Hebrew and English Lexicon* (1907) p. 718.

Whatever doubt may have existed about the authenticity of Lev. 18,21 is greatly diminished by the fact that in the same book, only two chapters removed, there is another very definite reference to Molech. The passage to which we refer is Lev. 20,2-5. We shall quote it from the K.J.V.

2. Again thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones.
3. And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people, because he hath given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name.
4. And if the people of the land do any ways hide their eyes from the man when he giveth of his seed unto Molech, and kill him not,
5. Then will I set my face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off, and all that go a whoring after him, to commit whoredom with Molech, from among their people.

The word Molech occurs four times in this short section of Leviticus. In verse two we have מֹלֵךְ , and in verses three and four we have the same. In verse five, however, we find the form מֹלֵךְ . There can be no doubt, then, in regard to the trilateral root with which we have to do. It is plainly מֵלֵךְ . Moreover, if the Massorettes have given us a correct pointing, the word is to be pronounced "Molech" (מֹלֵךְ).

The LXX translates this word with *ἰδωλῶν*, as it did in the previous verse which we considered (18,21). However, the Vul. also translates as it did in Lev. 18, 21, for in verse 2 it has "idolo Moloch", and in the other verses only "Moloch".

As in 18,21 the "giving of the seed to Molech" is spoken of in these verses, but there is no direct clue given as to the meaning of this expression, either in the text itself or in the context. But though there is no clue to the direct meaning, yet in verse three we have an interesting concomitant feature accompanying the "giving of seed to Molech". We are told that Jahweh "will set his face against that man, and will cut him off from his people because he hath given of his seed unto Molech to defile" Jahweh's sanctuary and to profane his holy name. From this, then, we might conclude that the "giving of seed to Molech" either directly or indirectly involved a profaning of the sanctuary and the name of Jahweh.

It would be a direct defiling of Jahweh's sanctuary if, for example, Jahweh's place of worship were given over to the service of an idol. It would be an indirect

defiling of Jahweh's sanctuary and name if some worship of an idol were carried on in the land, for by its very presence in the land such idolatry would constitute a profanation of his name and also of his sanctuary, the seat and symbol of his presence. Keil favors the latter idea and says that the defilement was not brought to the sanctuary itself, but that the verse is to be taken to mean that the worship of Molech defiles in the same way as all sins defile the sanctuary ("in demselben Sinne, wie alle Sünden Israels das Heiligtum in ihrer Mitte beflecken"¹). Cp. also Ezek. 23,37-39.

The worship of Molech, whatever its essence may have been was a serious offence, as we may see from 20,1, for there we read that whoever "giveth any of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones". Verses four and five emphasize the importance of the punishment: "And if the people of the land do any ways hide their eyes from the man when he giveth of his seed unto Molech, and kill him not, Then will I set my face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off".

The last statement of verse five strengthens the observations made by Keil and Murphy in regard to Lev. 18,21. They termed the worship of Molech by the Israel-

1. Keil, C.F., Leviticus, Numeri und Deuteronomium, p. 126.

ites as "spiritual adultery", and verse five expresses the identical idea. It reads: "and all that go a whoring after him, to commit whoredom with Molech, from among their people". It is scarcely possible to understand this "whoring after Molech", in a literal, verbal sense. Besides, the notion that idolatry is whoredom on the part of the people of Jahweh is very common in the Old Testament (cf. Ex. 34,15.16; Deut.31, 16; Lev.17,17; Judges 21,7; 8,27.33; I Chron. 5,25; Ezek. 6,9; and the book of Hosea).

Hence we conclude that in Lev. 20,2-5, and also in Lev. 18,21 the reference is not to actual immorality, but rather to spiritual immorality, spiritual adultery, i.e. idolatry, and idolatrous practices. Therefore, also the seed spoken of in Lev. 18,21; 20,2.3.4. is undoubtedly to be interpreted as meaning "children", and Molech is doubtlessly also an idol, but we shall deal with this point in greater detail later on.¹

1. Cf. Chapter III,c.

SUMMARY:

What may we conclude from our study of the passages referring to Molech in the book of Leviticus? -- We may conclude that:

1. Molech is an idol.
2. Children were not to be dedicated to him on penalty of death.

The main question still remaining is the meaning of the phrase, "pass through to Molech", or "cause to pass through the fire to Molech".

B. Other Passages.

In order to determine the meaning of the phrases similar to "cause to pass through to Molech", we shall have to go to other passages in the MT where this or a similar phrase is used.

Passages containing such phrases as, "pass through the fire to Molech", or "cause to pass through the fire" are generally interpreted as referring to the burning of children as sacrifices to an idol, who was probably Molech in most cases. We meet with many such references in the Old Testament, the first one to be treated being Deut. 18,10. This passage reads as follows: "There shall not be found among you anyone that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire".

There are particularly two reasons why we conclude that this passage refers to the same practice that Lev. 18,21 has reference to. The first reason is the similarity in phraseology, for in both cases we have the verb קָדַשׁ used in the Hiphil, which must be rendered: "cause to pass through", or perhaps, as the G.H.L. gives it, "consecrate". The second reason is that both

of these passages are a warning against the abominations of the Canaanites, whose land the Hebrews were to occupy (cp. Deut. 18,9 and Lev. 18,3b.). They were to be sure not to adopt the practices of these people, especially in regard to idols and idol-worship. -- For these reasons commentators have generally referred Deut. 18,10 to worship like that commonly said to have been paid to Molech, or to Molech proper.

Another passage from Deut., namely 12,31, gives us a clearer picture of the nature of this worship of the Canaanites. After an admonition directed to the children of Israel, who were about to occupy their promised land, the people are told not to inquire, "How did these nations serve their gods?", and then to say, "even so will I do likewise", the verse we are interested in goes on to explain that God hated their rites, and also why he hated them. "Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God: for every abomination to the Lord, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods, for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods".

Though Molech is not directly mentioned in this verse, yet it is a significant passage, because it tells us in so

many words that the Canaanites had the custom of burning their sons and daughters to their gods. And what is warned against in Lev. and Deut. is recorded as actual history in some of the later books of the Old Testament. Thus in 2 Kings 3,26.27, we read that the king of Moab took his oldest son and sacrificed him on the wall. Likewise we are told that some of the people whom the king of Assyria brought into the land of Israel to replace the Israelites who were taken into captivity, namely the Sepharvites, "burnt their children in the fire to Adramelech and Anamelech: the gods of Sepharvaim" (2 Kings 17,31).

Just when the Hebrews adopted the custom of sacrificing their children to idols, we have no way of telling. It may, however, be that the god Molech was first introduced by Solomon, and with him child-sacrifice, for in I Kings 11,7 we are told that Solomon built "a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon". But it is often doubted that this is a reference to Molech, a matter which will be discussed later.

The first definite statement we have concerning Molech-worship among the Hebrews is 2 Kings 16,3, where we are told that Ahaz "made his son to pass through

the fire". It is generally accepted that phrases like this one, which speak of causing sons and daughters to pass through the fire, are references to child-sacrifices, as they were made to Molech,¹ and since no other god is mentioned in the Old Testament to whom children were sacrificed we conclude that these expressions have reference to this particular god's worship. Passages generally interpreted to be references to Molech-worship are 2 Kings 16,3; 17,17; 21,6; 23,10; 2 Chron. 28,3; 33,6; Jer. 7,30.32; 32,35; Ezek. 20,25.26; 23,37-39.

But lest anyone doubt that human beings could be capable of deliberately burning their own children as a sacrifice to an idol we shall set forth insurmountable evidence that this is exactly what happened. The passages we shall take into account primarily are 2 Kings 16,3, and 2 Chron. 28,3. Both of these passages deal with the same king and record the same event, namely the act performed by Ahaz, king of Judah, in that he "caused his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen". The thing to be noted particularly in the passage from 2 Kings is the fact that the Hebrew phrase, וַיַּעַזְבֵהוּ אֶחָד מִבְּנָיו "to cause his son to pass through the fire" occurs. However in 2 Chron 28,3, where, as said, the same incident is reported, we find that a different

¹ Cheyne, T.K.-Black, J.S., Encyclopaedia Biblica Vol. 3 p. 3184. Also Driver, S.R., Deuteronomy, "I.C.C." p. 222.

phrase is used instead of the usual "passing through the fire". The words there employed are these: $\gamma\gamma\prime!$ $\omega\prime\prime\prime$ $\prime\prime\prime\prime\prime\prime\prime\prime$, and they are to be translated: "and he burnt his sons in the fire". This gives us a very definite statement of the nature of the rite referred to by the words: "cause to pass through the fire", It tells us in so many words that the children were burnt.

There can be no doubt that these passages refer to the same custom, for in both cases we have the added explanation: "after the manner of the heathen whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel". And this added phrase identifies the rite referred to here quite definitely with the rites of the Canaanites against which the Israelites were warned in Lev. and Deut., which references were treated above.

It is untenable that the "passing through the fire" and the "burning" did probably not involve the killing of the children, but merely a more or less harmless ceremony in which the children were made to pass through or over or between fires. That such a ceremony has existed among various peoples is well established, but this can-

not be meant here, for other passages of the Old Testament show us that an actual killing of children was involved. We point first to Ezekiel 16,20.21, which passage reads thus: "Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed ($\text{נָסַחְתְּ} \text{לָהֶן}$) unto them to be devoured ($\text{אָכְלוּ} \text{אֹתָם}$). Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter that thou hast slain ($\text{רָצַחְתְּ} \text{לִּי}$) my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them?" The verbs used here, namely נָסַח , אָכַל , and רָצַח , which mean respectively "sacrifice", "consume", and "kill", do not permit any other interpretation to stand than that these children were killed.

Another passage from Ezekiel indicates clearly that the children were slain. We read as follows in 23,39: "For when they had slain ($\text{רָצְחוּ} \text{אֶת}$) their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it".

But there are also other references, which plainly indicate that the children were killed. Psalm 106,37.38, states it in so many words. It reads: "Yea they sacri-

ficed their sons and their daughters unto devils and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with blood". The mention of sacrificing here indicates that the same custom is referred to as in the above passages, and the fact that these sons and daughters were sacrificed to the idols of Canaan further brands this as a reference to the crimes warned against in the Lev. and Deut. passages treated above.

In this connection we might quote the opinion of Driver. Speaking about the phrase "cause to pass through the fire", he says: "It must be more than a mere ceremony of lustration, or consecration by fire to Molech"¹; and as the basis for his opinion he refers to Jer. 7,31; 19,5, and Deut. 12,31.

Jer. 7,31 reads thus: "And they have built the high places of Tophet, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn ($\text{נ' 7 } \dot{\omega} \dot{\zeta}$) their sons and daughters in the fire: which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart". And Jer. 19,5 reads: "They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn ($\text{נ' 7 } \dot{\omega} \dot{\zeta}$) their sons with

1. Driver, S.R., I.C.C. Deuteronomy p. 222.

fire for burnt offerings ($\eta' \delta' \mu$) unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind". In both of these passages we have $\eta\eta\omega$, "burn" used, which indicates to us that sons and daughters were actually burnt. In the last passage, however, the word $\eta\epsilon\mu$ is added, which means "burnt offering", "holocaust"¹, and hence we are certain that these children were sacrificed as an animal was sacrificed, and therefore undoubtedly slain and burnt.

The last passage referred to by Driver has already been quoted above. It is Deut. 12,31, and the pertinent words are these: "for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt ($\iota \delta \eta \omega$) in the fire to their gods". The statement that these sons and daughters were burnt in the fire to the gods of these people implies nothing less than that they served as sacrifices to an idol.

SUMMARY:

What now are we to conclude is meant when a text says that "sons and daughters were made to pass through the fire"? Certainly nothing less, than that children were sacrificed, -- actually killed or sacrificed to some god or idol.

¹ cf. G.H.L. p. 750 -- "whole burnt offering".

C. Was Molech a god?

While we are dealing with Biblical sources proper we shall deal with the question whether Molech was really an idol, for the latest speculation in regard to Molech, does not question the fact that the Hebrews sacrificed their children, but it insists that there never was such an idol as Molech to whom they offered their sons and daughters. The theory was propounded by Professor Otto Eissfeldt, of Halle University in Germany. We shall take up a detailed study of his theory later,² but here we propose to investigate the evidence in the Bible whereby the term "Molech" has generally been identified as a name for an idol. Eissfeldt's main tenet, however, should be mentioned before we go on. He proposes to make "Molech" a sacrificial term, or a term signifying "an offering made in fulfillment of a vow", a "vow-offering" (ein Geluebdeopfer). In examining the passages where Molech occurs, we shall weigh the evidence for the possibility of Eissfeldt's suggestion.

1. For a short resume of Eissfeldt's theory cf. his article in Forschungen und Fortschritte, Jahrgang 111, p. 285f.

For the important facts see "Concordia Theological Monthly" Vol. VII. p. 51.

2. Cf. Chapter IV, A.

The term Molech (מֶלֶךְ) occurs in very few passages, but one of the most important ones in which it is found is I Kings 11,7, because there Molech is set as a parallel to another name for an idol, namely Chemosh. The passage reads as follows: "Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon". The fact that both Chemosh and Molech are represented here as being idols is quite obvious, and will hardly be disputed. But the name "Molech" is the point often brought into question in this verse, for there exists the possibility that the name "Milcom", which is mentioned in verses five and thirty three of this chapter, should be read instead of Molech.

The main reasons why scholars have suspected that "Milcom" can be read for "Molech" are the following: First the similarity of the names מֶלֶךְ (I Kings 11,7), מִלְכָם (I Kings 11,5), מִלְכָם (I Kings 11,33). Secondly, the fact that both Milcom and Molech are described as Ammonitish idols (cf. I Kings 11,5.7.33.), has helped to give rise to the conjecture that Molech is the same god as Milcom. Thirdly, the observation that nowhere else in the MT does Molech occur without the definite article as it does here (מֶלֶךְ).

The reasons against adopting the conjecture that "Milcom" should be read here instead of "Molech" are the following: First, that all the versions have not "Milcom", but rather use the translation generally employed by them as a rendering for Molech. The LXX has *ἰδὸν βασιλεῖ κούρων*, and the Vul. has "idolo moloch". Secondly, that the latest edition of the MT, edited by Kittel gives *מֹלֶךְ* here.¹ In the notes, of course, it is added that *מֹלֶךְ* is given by the codex Alexandrinus and other duplicate versions, and by the "editio Lagardiana", and that the codex Vaticanus gives practically the same, namely *מֹלֶךְ*. The evidence gathered by Kittel, however, has moved him to print "Molech" as the preferred one.

What shall we conclude now, in regard to Molech in I Kings 11,7? Is this really "Molech", or did some copyist miss the final mem ("מ") on the word *מֹלֶךְ*, so that this should really be "Milcom", who is mentioned in v. 5 and 33 as the god of the children of Ammon? Our conclusion is, that, on the basis of present evidence, we must follow Kittel's reading, because the contextual reasons for adopting the reading "Milcom" do not decisively outweigh the textual evidences, even

1. Kittel, Rud. et Noth, M., "Biblia Hebraica", Liber Regum (1934).

though there is also some textual evidence to support the assumption that "Milcom" was the original reading.

That Molech and Milcom are two distinct idols is quite definitely accepted now by the majority of scholars. The reasons for the distinction of the two are the following: First, that the radicals are different, "Milcom" being written מלכּוּם, and "Molech" being written מוֹלֵךְ. The second reason involves the difference in their places of worship. Milcom's place of worship according to 2 Kings 23,13 was "on the right hand of the mount of corruption", while Tophet, the place of sacrifice for Molech, was, as 2 Kings 23,10 tells us, in the valley of the children of Hinnom. We shall quote the opinion presented in the Keil-Delitzsch Commentary with reference to this point.

Milcom,.... der Greuel der Ammoniter, ist zu unterscheiden von dem Molech, welchem von Ahaz Zeiten an Kinder im Thale Benhinnom geopfert wurden, da beide in Jerusalem verschiedene Cultstaetten hatten, obwohl der Unterschied zwischen beiden aus Mangel an Nachrichten sich nicht naeher bestimmen laesst.¹

¹ I. Keil, C.F. und Delitzsch, F., "Biblischer Commentar ueber das Alte Testament" Buecher der Koenige p. 136.

We have established that Molech, if he was a god at all, was not the same deity as Milcom. And we have shown that, if "Molech" (מֹלֵךְ) is the true reading of I Kings 11,7, as at the present time it appears to be,¹ then "Molech" is placed on a par with Chemosh, the name for an idol of the Moabites, and hence is indisputably also an idol. However, since there is an element of doubt in regard to this passage we shall not insist on the acceptance of it for evidence that Molech was truly the name for an idol.

Another passage in which Molech occurs is 2 Kings 23,10. This verse, speaking of king Josiah's reform, reads thus: "And he defiled Tophet, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech".

Although it is quite evident that in this passage, as well as others in which Molech is mentioned, this word may be understood as referring to a god, and also as meaning a "vow-offering", as Eissfeldt would have it, yet it would seem that the mention of Tophet here, makes it more likely that "Molech" is to be understood as a god. "Tophet", as is generally agreed, was the

1. The American Translation gives "Molech" also p. 568.

place where child-sacrifice was performed, and the seat of Molech-worship.¹ In several passages child-sacrifice is definitely mentioned as being carried on in Tophet, situated in the valley of Hinnom, which is generally called the "valley of the son of Hinnom",² and lies to the south and the southwest³ of Jerusalem. We know from various passages that Tophet was the place where child-sacrifices were carried on (cp. 2 Kings 23,10 with Jer. 7,31; 19,5.6; 2 Chron. 28,3; 2 Chron. 33,6), and the passage quoted above, 2 Kings 23,10, tells us that Josiah stopped the nefarious rite of child-sacrifice by defiling Tophet. Since Tophet seems plainly to be a definite place of worship, i.e. an altar, or a pit in which fire was kindled, it appears to be most natural to conclude that the words, "that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire $\text{לֹא יֵלֵךְ בְּאֵשׁ}$ ", are directed against the worship of a certain god. Hence, Molech seems to be an idol rather than a term meaning a "vow-offering". Because this is a controvertible opinion, however, we shall go on to treat a different passage.

1. cf. Baudissin, W., Moloch in "Realencyklopaedie fuer protestantische Theologie und Kirche", Dritte Auflage, Band 13, p. 280.
2. Identical with "The valley of Hinnom", cf. Ehrlich, A., Randglossen zur Hebraeischen Bibel, Band 7, p. 354.
3. Smith, W.W., The Student's Historical Geography of the Holy Land, p. 25. Cf. also Hastings Bible Dictionary p. 354.

The passage we shall treat next is one mentioned and discussed above, namely Jer. 32,35. "And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech". But there is little more to say in regard to the meaning of Molech here, than there was in the case of 2 Kings 23,10. The evidence for Molech's being the name of an idol is about the same, for the reference to Tophet would naturally lead us to look for the name of the idol to whom children were sacrificed, and since the term Molech, as the name for an idol fits so well in this passage and in other passages, it has been generally concluded that Molech here is an idol. But there is an added feature in this passage, namely the occurrence of "Baal" in such a way as to give rise to the opinion that Molech was a particular name for one of the Baals worshipped extensively in Palestine. We are not told, however, that Molech was a Baal in so many words, and hence it is still possible that Molech here means a "vow-offering". But now let us turn back and re-examine the passages discussed at the very first, namely Lev. 20,2-5.

The word "Molech" occurs four times in Lev. 20,
2-5. We shall repeat the passage.

Again thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel that giveth any of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones. And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name. And if the people of the land do any ways hide their eyes from the man, when he giveth of his seed unto Molech, and kill him not: then will I set my face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off, and all that go a whoring after him, to commit whoredom with Molech, from among their people.

The Hebrew expressions which pertain to our subject in the above section are the following:

"gives his seed to Molech"

יָצַק אֶת-זָרְעוֹ לַמּוֹלֵךְ

"because he gave his seed to Molech"

כִּי יָצַק אֶת-זָרְעוֹ לַמּוֹלֵךְ

"when he gives his seed to Molech"

כִּי יָצַק אֶת-זָרְעוֹ לַמּוֹלֵךְ

"all who go a whoring after him to commit whoredom

כָּל-עוֹבְדֵי מוֹלֵךְ אַחֲרָיו

after Molech"

אֲחֵרָיו

Now let us apply Eissfeldt's suggested change to these phrases to see how his interpretation of Molech will work.

Eissfeldt discusses Lev. 20,2-5 in his work, Molk als Opferbegriff im Punischen und Hebraeischen und das Ende des Gottes Moloch (1935) on page 38ff. Understanding "Molech" (מֹלֵךְ) to mean "an offering in fulfillment of a vow", or to put it more concisely a "vow-offering" (Geluebdeopfer), Eissfeldt translates the phrase "giving to Molech" with "giving as Molech". He renders the preposition "כִּי" with "as", after the analogy of Gen. 22,2 (כִּי אֵלֶיךָ אֲשַׁרְתָּ אֶתְּנֶה אֶתְּנֶה אֶתְּנֶה as burnt offering, "als Brandopfer"), Lev. 5,18, and Deut. 23,19.¹ Substituting "vow-offering" (Geluebdeopfer) for "Molech" in Lev. 20,2-4, we obtain the following:

"Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed as a vow-offering; he shall surely be put to death; the people of the land shall stone him with stones; and I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath given of his seed as a vow-offering, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name. And if the people of the land do any ways hide their eyes from the man, when he giveth of his seed as a vow-offering, and kill him not: then will I set my face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off, and all that go a whoring after him..."

1. Eissfeldt, O., Molk als Opferbegriff im Punischen und Hebraeischen und das Ende des Gottes Moloch, p. 38

It will be noticed that "vow-offering" seems to fit very well in v. 2-4, but now we shall go on to v. 5, where the matter is different. Eissfeldt maintains that the translation "vow-offering" fits into verse 5. He says:

Selbst Lev. 20,5. wo ja vor אָפֶּרֶת nicht אָפֶּרֶת sondern אָפֶּרֶת "hinter" steht und so freilich die Deutung "als Molek" ausscheidet, spricht nicht gegen die Auffassung von Molek als einer Opferart.¹

The improbability of Eissfeldt's suggestion becomes very evident when we substitute for Molech, the actual word which he understands by "Molech", namely "vow-offering" (Geluebdeopfer). Lev. 20,5, then reads: "Then will I set my face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off, and all that go a whoring after him to commit whoredom after the vow-offering". The important Hebrew words are these: אָפֶּרֶת אָפֶּרֶת אָפֶּרֶת , and to render them literally: "to go a whoring after the vow-offering", is very unnatural, but to translate: "to go a whoring after (the idol) Molech", is obviously by far the better rendering.

Besides, one would ordinarily expect the author to use the plural form, and to say: "to go a whoring

¹ Eissfeldt, O., op. cit. p. 38f.

after the vow-offerings", instead of the form given in the text, namely וְלֵבְיָהוּבָה (the vow-offering), the singular.

Eissfeldt cites as parallels to his translation the passages, Judges 8,27, and Lev. 20,6, where, he maintains, the verb "to go a whoring" (וַיֵּלֶךְ), is used in connection with cultu-mantic objects and practices (kultisch-mantischen Objekten und Praktiken).¹ But we should like to point out that "to go a whoring" (וַיֵּלֶךְ) is not used in connection with practices at all, for in Judges 8,27 the people are said to go a whoring after Gideon's ephod, which was a definite object, and in Lev. 20,6 the people do not go a whoring after the practice of visiting familiar spirits, but after those who have familiar spirits, as is definitely shown by the substantive forms, וְיִדְּוֹנִים (necromancers), and וְיִדְּוֹנִים (wizards), and also by the $\text{וַיֵּלֶךְ אַחֲרֵיהֶם}$ (to go a whoring after them). Definite idolatrous people are mentioned, but Eissfeldt wishes to join the verb "to go a whoring" with a practice, namely the practice of sacrificing "vow-offerings". The Hebrew Old Testament, however, does not use "go a whoring after", ($\text{וַיֵּלֶךְ אַחֲרֵי$) in connection with a practice as Eissfeldt states, but the word refers only to objects or

¹ Eissfeldt, O., op.cit. p. 39.

persons. The only thing left then, is to take Molech to be an idol or an object, and there is no reason to hold that it is an object.

On the basis of Lev. 20,5, we hold that Molech refers to an idol and not to any particular type of offering as a vow-offering (Geluebdeopfer). Hence we also maintain that Molech is the name for a god in all other passages where it occurs. But there are also other passages upon which we base our opinion that Molech is the name for an idol, a god.

The first of these passages is Jer. 19,4.5.6.-- The context shows that Jeremiah is declaring the Lord's threat to bring great evil on Judah, preaching in the valley of Hinnom (cf. 19,2 "go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom"). In verse 5 Jeremiah goes on to explain the reason why the Lord will bring such great evil on Judah, and we can picture him standing in a prominent place in the valley of Hinnom and crying that the Lord will bring so great an evil on this place (Tophet), that whoever hears of it shall go away with tingling ears, "because they (the people of Judah) have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have

burned incense in it unto other gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents; they have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind, Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter".

There can be no doubt that the prophet is here referring to the child-sacrifices carried on in the valley of Hinnom, in Tophet, for not only does he mention Tophet directly (19,6 cp. v. 14) but he says the place is filled with "the blood of innocents" (v.4), and that high places were made "to burn" their sons with fire for burnt offerings". These things, as we have noted in previous discussions, are all references to and marks of Molech-worship.

In other passages we have the phrase "cause their sons and daughters to pass through the fire לְעֵשֶׁת הָאֵשׁ " (2 Kings 23,10). And in chapter 32, verse 35 Jeremiah uses words which are undoubtedly parallels to his

denunciation in 19,5, and says: "And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and daughters to pass through the fire מֹלֵךְ (unto Molech), which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin". Here, then, Jeremiah says that the sons and daughters were sacrificed מֹלֵךְ, but in 19,5 he says the sons and daughters were sacrificed לְבָאָל (to Baal). Is it not then obvious that Molech was also called a Baal, and hence was an idol just as all Baals were idols? Baal, of course, was a general term¹ for the idols of various heathen peoples, some of whom the Israelites also adopted and worshipped, and hence it is not at all unnatural that Jeremiah should call the god worshipped at Tophet a Baal.

Now, it is possible, of course, to say that Molech is not a name for an idol even though a comparison of the parallel passages Jer. 19,5 and 32,35 seems to indicate as much, for there is no instance in which Molech is specifically called a Baal, Yet it seems to us that the only natural and sane view to take is this, that Molech was a Baal, and hence also an idol, and not a term signifying an offering.

1. cf. Hastings, James, Dictionary of the Bible, see Baal, p. 78, also "Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart (1927) Erster Band, see Baal, p. 695.

The last passage, which will be treated in this section is one not previously mentioned because it is a rather obscure text. It is found in Amos 5,26, and is rendered thus by the K.J.V.: "But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves". We shall not attempt to solve all the difficulties found in this passage, but will confine ourselves to the word **מַלְכֵיכֶם** (your Molech) and the problems of its recension as much as possible.

The latest text edited by Rud. Kittel, "Biblia Hebraica" (1933) gives no variant readings for **מַלְכֵיכֶם**,¹ and hence we shall follow the reading given there as the true one.

The LXX translates this word "*τοῦ Μολοχ*" (your Moloch), and the Vul. has "Moloc vestro" (your Moloch). The pointing of **מַלְכֵיכֶם** which was added by the Massorettes makes this word **מַלְכֵיכֶם**, which, if it were considered outside of its context would ordinarily be translated "your king". The context, however, seems to show

1. "Biblia Hebraica", Liber XII Prophetarum, praeparavit O. Proksch (1933) p. 29 (Amos 5,26).

that reference is made here to an idol, for we have the word מִזְבֵּחַ^1 (tabernacle) immediately preceding. Thus in translation the whole statement reads, "the tabernacle of your מִזְבֵּחַ ", or to quote the whole phrase, "ye have borne the tabernacle of your מִזְבֵּחַ ". Because of the context, it seems best to take מִזְבֵּחַ as referring to an idol, a meaning which the root מִזְבֵּחַ often takes,² and is the interpretation which the New Testament takes over through the LXX in Acts 7,43.

But even though the same root is found in Amos 5,26 as underlies the name Molech, yet we have no assurance that this was the same idol, Molech, worshipped in Tophet centuries after the sojourn in the wilderness. It is not going too far, however, if one holds that the general concept of מִזְבֵּחַ is the underlying root both for מִזְבֵּחַ in Amos 5,26, and for the word "Molech" (מִזְבֵּחַ) treated above. We would not here insist that Molech is the same idol as is mentioned Lev. 28,21; 20,2-5; 2 Kings 23,10 et.al. In fact, the warning or prohibition which is issued in the wilderness, Lev. 18,21; 20,2-5; Deut. 12,31; and Deut. 18,10 seems to show very definitely that the Hebrews were not yet worshipping Molech in the wilderness, -- or at least not the same Molech the Canaanites worshipped, (cf. Lev. 18,24f; Deut. 12,31; 18,9.12).

1. cf. Keil, C.F., Biblischer Commentar ueber die zwoelf kleinen Propheten. p. 209.

2. cf. Schaff-Herzog "Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge", Vol. VII, p. 449.

It so happens, however, that Amos 5,26 is quoted in the New Testament in Acts 7,43. The speech of Stephen before the council contains this passage quoted apparently from the (LXX) Septuagint. The New Testament, being inspired, puts its stamp of approval on the facts there mentioned. Because it is there taken as a fact that "Molech" was an idol, we are constrained to conclude that מִלְכָּם also refers to an idol in Amos 5,26. We do, however, not identify the מִלְכָּם mentioned in Amos with the Molech mentioned as the idol of the Canaanites, because the מִלְכָּם, according to Amos and Stephen, was already worshipped by the Hebrews in the wilderness, whereas the "Molech against whom the Israelites were warned in the wilderness seems not to have been known to them except in a vague way, and is always mentioned as a Canaanite idol". (Lev. 18,24.25; Deut. 12,31; 18,9.12.)

The fact, however, that מִלְכָּם is an idol in Amos 5,26 practically eliminates the possibility that Molech is anything but an idol, for now we have a distinct precedent that the uncompounded root מִלְכָּם was used to designate an idol in the MT. We have examples of מִלְכָּם used in the name for gods, (e.g. Anamelech, Adramelech, Milcom), but this is the only instance in the MT in which the root מִלְכָּם alone surely means an idol. Hence

it is very very likely that Molech, which has the identical radicals, is also the name for an idol.

In all honesty, let us say in conclusion, that we cannot absolutely prove beyond the shadow of a doubt to everyone that "Molech" was an idol, but in view of the above discussion it seems so highly probable that Molech is an idol that there is no doubt in our own minds about it, yes, not even the shadow of a doubt. But we shall not dismiss Eissfeldt's suggestion mentioned above without discussing his theory at greater length in the following pages.

SUMMARY:

The Hebrews sacrificed their children to idols.
We are convinced that Molech was an idol
to whom children were sacrificed.

CHAPTER IV

IMPORTANT THEORIES ABOUT MOLECH

We must not overlook the speculations of scholars on the subject we are treating, and shall therefore, in the following treat the major recent theories. Since Eissfeldt's theory represents the latest thought about Molech, we shall discuss it at length at once.

A. Eissfeldt's Theory of 1935.

In his work "Molk als Opferbegriff im Punischen und Hebraischen und das Ende des Gottes Moloch" (1935), Prof. Otto Eissfeldt of Halle University claims that child-sacrifice among the Hebrews was originally made to Jahweh; and that only the Deuteronomic reform movement during Josiah's time (621 B.C.) put an end to this inhuman practice. As for an idol by the name of "Molech" or "Molek", as he transliterates it, -such a deity never existed.

He contends that Molech was originally a term which signified a certain type of offering, namely, a "vow-offering" (Geluebdeopfer), but its meaning was

1. Eissfeldt, of course, accepts the Deuteronomic theory, which we reject, but we shall attempt to meet him on his own ground in the following few pages, and treat his Deuteronomic presuppositions later on. cf. p. 73.

changed to make it signify an idol by the Scribes at the time of the Deuteronomic reform, in order to remove the traces of the inhuman child-sacrifices brought to Jahweh before 621 B.C. The word was originally read מִזְבֵּחַ , and meant "as a vow-offering" (als Ge-luebdeopfer), but it was changed to read $\text{מִזְבֵּחַ לְמֹלֵךְ}$, making it definite by the addition of the article, and thus giving it the meaning of "to the Molech" or "to Molech". Quite naturally then "Molech" would appear to be an idol, which according to Eissfeldt, was exactly what the scribes wanted, for, he says, they deliberately intended to create the impression that child-sacrifice was made to an idol, and not, as it was in reality, to Jahweh.

The starting point for Eissfeldt's theory is taken from recent archaeological discoveries. In 1930 J. and P. Alquier, French archaeologists, found three tablets on which the latin term "molchomor" occurred. J.B.Chabot compared this word, which to all appearances is a transcription of a Punic word, with two Punic inscriptions in which the term $\text{מִזְבֵּחַ לְמֹלֵךְ}$ occurs, and concluded that they were identical. Eissfeldt identifies the first half of the word with מִזְבֵּחַ , which in Punic means a lamb, and the second half of the word with לְמֹלֵךְ , which in the Aramaic-Syriac means "promise" (Versprechen). Thus he interprets the term "molchomor" as signifying

a sheep offered in fulfillment of a vow. He likewise takes two latin words, "nasililim", and "niptiam", which occur on several tablets, to mean about the same. Finally, he shows that 𐤓𐤕𐤕 , which also occurs in Punic inscriptions frequently, seems best rendered as a term for an offering made in fulfillment of a vow. (cf. Eissfeldt's work, Molk als Opferbegriff im Punischen und Hebraeischen und das Ende des Gottes Moloch p. 1-30).

These Punic tablets, says Eissfeldt, were to be reminders of the offering of children to the deity, and show, that in later times a sheep was substituted for the child in the ancient Punic rite of child-sacrifice. Thus in fulfillment of a vow to sacrifice a child to a god, a sheep was offered, and the term signifying such an offering was 𐤓𐤕𐤕 (molk).

Upon asking the question whether the word 𐤓𐤕𐤕 occurs also in the Old Testament in the sense of a sacrificial term, Eissfeldt answers in the affirmative, and points to the passages in which Molech occurs. At once, then, he proceeds to show that Molech is not an idol but a term signifying a type of sacrifice, a "vow-offering".¹

¹. Eissfeldt, O., Molk als Opferbegriff etc., p. 31ff.

Eissfeldt's method of procedure is purely by analogy. He shows that in Punic inscriptions $\gamma\tau\upsilon$ seems to be a term signifying an offering, and hence concludes that Molech in the Old Testament has also, possibly, the same meaning. Such an argument by analogy is not illegitimate in the least, though it proves nothing conclusively, but Eissfeldt disregards several considerations, which, it seems, should not be overlooked.

There is first of all the matter of age. The three tablets mentioned, which were discovered in 1930 by J. and P. Alquier, are dated around the second or third century A.D.,¹ and the latin inscriptions on which the words "nasililim" and "niptiam" are found come from about the same period.² The Punic inscriptions in which $\gamma\tau\upsilon$ occurs are not definitely to be assigned to any specific time, but are generally considered as dating from the fourth to the second century B.C.³

Between the reform of Josiah (621 B.C.) and the tablets found in 1930 by the Alquiers, upon which Eissfeldt seems to lay greatest stress, there is a difference of time amounting to 8 centuries, and between the earliest date given for any of the inscrip-

1. Eissfeldt, O., Molk als Opferbegriff etc., p. 1.

2. Ibid. p. 8.

3. Ibid. p. 12, footnote 3.

tions mentioned, namely 400 B.C. and Josiah's reform there is a difference of about two and a quarter centuries. It would seem that to suppose a parallel between the Hebrew of Josiah's day, and the Punic of from 2½ to 8 centuries later is rather weak.

Besides, if the word זֶבַח was very common among the Semitic tongues, then certainly the translators of the LXX would have known it. However, even Eissfeldt must admit that the LXX surely accepts Molech as the name of an idol.¹ Hence we must assume that the word זֶבַח in the sense of "vow-offering" was restricted to the Punic, if, indeed, the Punic had it, for it seems to us that Eissfeldt's arguments are by no means conclusive. It is possible, of course, that זֶבַח was used in the Hebrew as a sacrificial term, disappeared as the result of the machinations of the Scribes, and that the Punic retained it throughout the ages, all unknown to the scholars who produced the LXX, but it seems to be a rather weak possibility. It would seem to be much more sound and sane to assume that this is a comparatively late word found in the Punic alone, originated when the custom of child-sacrifice began to wane, and that the Hebrew word זֶבַח is entirely unrelated to it.

1. Eissfeldt, Otto, Molk als Opferbegriff etc., p. 40.

In regard to Eissfeldt's argument that it was probably the Hebrew scribes who changed the זָבַח to זָבַח in order to falsify the history of child-sacrifice made by the Hebrews to Jahweh,¹ it is necessary to say only a few words. It seems impossible to picture a falsifying process such as Eissfeldt suggests. In the first place the change could not have been made in the Hebrew texts of the day, but it must have been made in the tradition of the scribes, because there were no vowel points in existence at that time.² The vowels had to be supplied by the reader and hence there was no difference between the "ז" with the article, and the "ז" without it.

It is quite inconceivable that the scribes of Josiah's day held a convention, or in some other way unanimously decided to hand down a different vowel-reading for this particular word in the MT, and that thereupon the word זָבַח in the sense of "vow-offering" disappeared from the Hebrew language in very short order, as Eissfeldt must logically assume.

Then, too, it requires a huge stretching of the imagination to imagine that the people would accept

1. Eissfeldt, Otto, Molk als Opferbegriff etc., p. 40-43.
 2. Fuerbringer, L., Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 11.

a falsification of the facts so easily. They, according to Eissfeldt, had been sacrificing their sons and daughters to Jahweh for centuries, and now, to imagine that they could have been convinced in a short time that child-sacrifices were brought to an idol, Molech, in the past, and not to Jahweh, is hardly possible. They might have convinced the people that it was wrong, but to convince them that child-sacrifice was a Canaanitish rite performed for a heathen idol, when they for centuries¹ had known it was a rite of Jahweh, seems highly improbable. Surely, other, simpler means of eliminating child-sacrifice from Jahweh-worship could have been found, if such a rite was ever a feature of the worship of Jahweh.

In this connection it may be well to touch upon certain of the more important passages by which Eissfeldt bolsters his argument that children were offered to Jahweh.² He cites Jer. 32,35; 7,31; and 19,5 as proving that the Hebrews offered children to Jahweh, for he says,

1. Eissfeldt, O., Molk als Opferbegriff etc., p. 47.

2. Ibid. p. 41-42.

Denn wie waere es sonst zu verstehen, dasz Jeremiah den Jahweh sagen laesst er habe das Kinderopfer nicht geboten und dergleichen sei ihm nie in den Sinn gekommen?¹

This, of course, is not a new view, but there are many scholars who say that "it is impossible to see why Jahweh should protest that this sort of sacrifice had not come into his mind unless the people supposed it to be offered to him".²

However, we maintain that Jahweh is here not implying that the Israelites sacrificed children to him, but that they sacrificed children to idols. He says that he did not command them to sacrifice their children to idols and does not at all refer to offerings made to him. The fact that he says that he had not commanded the Israelites to sacrifice their children, and that it never entered his mind to do so is no proof that children were ever offered to Jahweh, as also other scholars maintain.³ This is merely an intensive way of speaking, designed to emphasize Jahweh's displeasure at the sacrifices of the children of the Israelites, who were at the same time his children (cp. Ezek. 23,37-39 and esp. v. 37. "whom they bare unto me"). Keil holds

1. Eissfeldt, O., Molk als Opferbegriff etc., p. 41.

2. Smith, H.P., The Religion of Israel, p. 70.

3. Idem.

a corresponding view as can be seen from his words, which follow:

Das die Molochsopfer als der aergste Greuel zuletzt genant sind, darauf deuten auch die drei Relativsaetze hin: was ich nicht befohlen u.s.w., die in affektvoller Steigerung des Ausdrucks den Abscheu Gottes vor diesem Greuel bezeugen.¹

The Israelites, we must not forget, were bound to the law of Jahweh, and were told exactly what they were to do in regard to sacrifices and ceremonies in the laws of Moses. However, nowhere had God ever commanded them to sacrifice their children to idols. Yes, Jahweh had positively forbidden not only the worship of other gods (Lev. 20,4.5.), but specifically the sacrifice of children to Molech (Lev. 18,21; 20,1-5). It is very possible that Jahweh is alluding to these facts when he states that he did not command the Israelites to sacrifice their children to idols, and that it never entered his mind to command such a thing.

It is also very unlikely that child-sacrifice should be made to Jahweh in the place of worship of an idol (Tophet). One could conceive of the Israelites sacrificing their children at a special altar in or near the temple, the seat of worship of Jahweh, but that they

¹ Keil, C.F.-Delitzsch, F., "Biblischer Commentar" Jeremiah p. 229.

sacrificed them at the seat of worship of another god intending them for Jahweh is very unlikely (cp. Ps. 106, 37.38; Ezek. 20,31; Jer. 32,35. "the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom").

But even though we should assume that the Israelites did sacrifice the children, to whom Jeremiah has reference, to Jahweh, nevertheless, we could hardly conclude from this that child-sacrifice was a general custom of Jahweh-worship. The most that could be proved by Jeremiah's remarks is that occasionally the Israelites, being misguided and influenced by foreign cults, had sacrificed a child in Hinnom, intending to worship Jahweh thereby. But this would by no means justify Eissfeldt's assumption that children were regularly sacrificed to Jahweh before Josiah's reform, or that child-sacrifice was an indigenous feature of Jahweh-worship. If this had been the case surely Ezekiel would not have written as he did, Ezek. 23,37-39:

They have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery, and they have also caused their sons, whom they bore unto me to pass through unto them to be devoured. Moreover this have they done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my sabbaths. For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day, into my sanctuary to profane it; and lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house.

Another passage by which Eissfeldt tries to show that child-sacrifice was indigenous to the worship of Jahweh is Ezek. 20,25f.

Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good and judgments whereby they should not live; And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through (the fire) all that openeth the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that I am the Lord.

With reference to this passage Eissfeldt says:

Hesekiel setzt also die Ueberzeugung, dasz die Kinderopfer von Jahweh geboten seien, ebenso wie Jeremias als Gemeingut weiter Kreise voraus.

However it is quite impossible to understand this passage as referring to the worship of Jahweh by means of child-sacrifices, for, though the first-born of man and beast were dedicated to Jahweh (Ex. 13,2), yet the firstborn of men should all be redeemed, and not killed according to Ex. 13,12, and 34,20. Ezekiel is undoubtedly referring to the child-sacrifice of Molech and not to any child-sacrifice of Jahweh. The judgments whereby the Israelites were not to live were certainly not the laws which were given by Moses, for these were good, and laws whereby the people would live, if they did them. This can only be interpreted as meaning that Jahweh gave the

I. Eissfeldt, O., Molk als Opferbegriff etc., p. 42.

Israelites over into idolatry, and their custom of child-sacrifice, as a result of their deliberate sinning against him, to punish them for idolatrous practices by more idolatrous practices. Keil brings this point out as follows:

Wenn es nun von dieser im Gesetze Gottes streng verbotenen Satzung hier heisst Jahweh habe sie den Israeliten in der Wueste gegeben, so kann das nur im Sinne eines Strafverhaengnisses gemeint sein ... d.i. im Sinne der Verstockung, wonach Gott den, welcher dem Goetzendienste entsagen will in die Gewalt desselben so dahingibt, dass er immer tiefer in ihn hineingerath.

We contend, therefore, that Eissfeldt is wrong when he says that Ezek. 20,25-26 implies that children were offered to Jahweh.

After considering it established from Jer. 7,31; 19,5; 32,35, and Ezek. 20,25.26, that child-sacrifices were brought to Jahweh, Eissfeldt goes on to show that in the narratives, prophecies, and laws of the predeuteronomic era (before 621 B.C.) Jahweh is pictured as having commanded child-sacrifices. He says:

Die vordeuteronomischen Teile des Alten Testaments, Erzaehlungen, Prophetenworte, und Gesetze -- zeigen mit voller Deutlichkeit, dass die Kinderopfer als eine von Jahweh gebotene und ihm wohlgefuehlige Leistung gilt.²

1. Keil, C.F., Delitzsch, F., "Biblischer Commentar" Ezechielp.169.

2. Eissfeldt, O., Molk als Opferbegriff etc., p. 48f.

As an example of human sacrifice to Jahweh, Eissfeldt refers to Judges 11,30-40, the account of Jephtha's vow, and the dedication of his daughter to Jahweh. But that this story does not necessarily imply that Jephtha's daughter was slain is well shown by Keil in his commentary Josua, Richter und Ruth pp. 314-320. And even if she was slain, this is no proof that child-sacrifice was an indigenous rite in the Hebrew Religion.

Another example of an early story in which Jahweh is shown to demand child-sacrifice is the account of the offering of Isaac by Abraham in Gen. 22. However, certainly no one would conclude from this story that Jahweh was pleased with child-sacrifices in general. On the other hand, it rather shows that Jahweh did not demand child-sacrifices.

As an example of the predeuteronomic prophetic writings, strengthening his theory that Jahweh was worshipped by child-sacrifices, Eissfeldt cites Micah 6,7. The phrase to which he has reference in this passage reads thus: "shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my

soul?" -- But this certainly does not imply that a first born child was ever sacrificed. The meaning is quite obviously this that, if the dearest thing on earth, a firstborn child, were given, it would not explate sin.

The predeuteronomic laws, which Eissfeldt cites as strengthening his theory that Jahweh demanded the sacrifice of the firstborn are Ex. 13,2; 13,11-15; 22,28.29; 34,19.20. But we must not forget that it is mentioned that the firstborn of men should all be redeemed (cf. Ex. 13,13; 34,20). Eissfeldt recognizes this also, but nevertheless insists that because the duty of dedicating the firstborn to Jahweh is such a serious matter, as these laws show, therefore they strengthen the conclusion drawn from other passages that child-sacrifice was indigenious in the Jahweh worship. The logic of this argument is questionable, but since there are no passages which conclusively prove that children were sacrificed to Jahweh not only his argument in regard to these passages becomes nil, but also his whole theory.

If these children which passed through the fire were not sacrificed to Jahweh, to whom, then, were they

sacrificed? Certainly the logical and natural answer is, to a god, an idol. Who is this idol? -The natural thing to conclude is that his name is Molech, as we have shown previously.

One can, of course, assume that children were sacrificed to Jahweh as the result of a misconception of the Mosaic law demanding the dedication of the first-born, but there is no definite evidence this ever happened. Any unbiased investigator will certainly conclude that the children sacrificed at Tophet in the valley of Hinnom were sacrificed to an idol, namely Molech.

A final point to be mentioned why we refuse to accept Eissfeldt's theory in regard to Molech, is that the Deuteronomic theory, which we do not hold to be correct,¹ is woven into it, and forms an integral part of it. Eissfeldt holds, as was mentioned above, that the motive for changing the meaning of *mlch* from a sacrificial term to the name of an idol is to be found in the Deuteronomic reform at the time of Josiah. In order to obliterate every trace of child-sacrifice to

¹. For a modern refutation of some of the important features of the Deuteronomic theory cf. article by Munro, W.D., Must We Relegate Deuteronomy to the Reign of Josiah? in the "Evangelical Quarterly" Vol. 8, No. 1, Jan. 1936. p. 3-21.

Jahweh, the scribes deliberately arranged to falsify history so as to make it appear that child-sacrifices were rather made to an idol. This is base deceit whereof we dare not accuse the leaders of God's people, --especially not the leaders of Josiah's time, which was a time of extraordinary piety.

Summary:

Eissfeldt's theory, as he presents it, does not mean the end of the god Molech, as he so boldly states in the last chapter of his work, and also in the very title. His theory is very unnatural, and involves too many weak points, and erroneous premises, from our conservative point of view to be correct.

B. The Melech Theory.

A logical question to ask at this juncture is, what other theory there may be, which explains more fully the nature of Molech in the Old Testament. Our reply is that there is another which seems to be the correct one, namely the Melech theory.

This theory takes the word "Molech", as related to, or rather an adaptation of the more general term "melech", which is a term for idols in general, as Baal is a term applied to several idols. George W. Gilmore says that $\aleph \aleph \aleph$ "was not originally a proper name but came to be applied to the local divinity in many places as his name".¹ "Melech", of course, means "king", and Eissfeldt, in an article, "Jahwe als Koenig" (1928), maintains that the Semites looked upon their gods as kings.

Da ergibt sich denn, dass alle semitischen Voelker nicht nur sich ihre Goetter als Koenige vorstellen, sondern auch fuer sie dasselbe epitheton verwenden, naemlich $\aleph \aleph \aleph$, d.h. Dass diese Vorstellung und diese Benennung ursemitisch ist".²

1. Gilmore, G.W. Moloch in Schaff-Herzog "Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge" Vol. VII, p. 449a.
2. Eissfeldt, O., Jahwe als Koenig, in "Zeitschrift fuer die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft" Band V.-1928- Heft 2/3. p. 84.

He also affirms that looking upon their gods as kings was a universal semitic trait. He says:

Jedenfalls finden wir die Vorstellung der Goetter als Koenige bei allen semitischen Voelkern und bei fast allen als Ausdruck fuer sie das Wort מֶלֶךְ.¹

On the basis of Eissfeldt's investigation and that of W. Baudissin,² the 1930 edition of "Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart" (p. 154f), concludes that "Molech" in the Old Testament is the same "melech" used in all the Semitic languages as an appellative for a god.

But how did the vocalisation molech come to be out of the apparently original melech? -- Scholars quite generally agree that the vocalisation of מֶלֶךְ is most probably due to the application of the vowel pointing of מְשֻׁמֵּת ("shameful thing") to "melech", thus causing it to be read "Molech".³

Most probably, then, "melech" was the common name for a god among the early Semites, and became practically a proper name for one specific idol among the Hebrews, the Molech we know from the Old Testament.

1. Eissfeldt, O., Jahwe als Koenig in Z.A.T.W. Band V.p. 84.

2. "Realencyklopaedie fuer protestantische Theologie und Kirche", Band 13, p. 269ff. (Moloch)

3. Thus the name of a son of Saul מְשֻׁמֵּת (man of Baal), which in I Chron. 8,33; 9,39 is given correctly, but in 2 Sam. 2,4 is always given as מְשֻׁמֵּת-וְשֵׁם (man of shame).

The original pronunciation is unknown to us, but it most probably was not molech. - Molk, malk, milk, and melech are all possibilities, but melech (melek) seems to be the one most likely to be correct.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER IV, B:

Since melech is a common appellative noun for a god in all Semitic languages, and since Molech seems to be basically melech, it is but natural to take Molech to be the name of a god also.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

What are the accomplishments of the above study?--
This question shall be our concluding consideration.

We have examined the extra-Biblical sources for our knowledge of the idol Molech, and have shown that child-sacrifice was practiced notably by the Phoenicians, and though it is possible that Jewish scholars borrowed their entire account of the child-sacrifice performed in connection with the worship of the idol Molech, yet it seems best to allow that there is some vestige of original tradition in the reports of Jewish scholars concerning this idol and his gruesome rites.

We have examined the Scriptural references to Molech and child-sacrifices, and have come to the conclusion that children were literally sacrificed to idols.

We have attempted to apply Eissfeldt's latest suggestion, namely of interpreting Molech in the sense of a sacrificial term, a "vow-offering" (Geluebdeopfer),

but have come to the conviction that it is to be taken as the name of an idol.

We have examined Eissfeldt's entire theory more in detail, and have shown why it is not acceptable.

Finally we have shown that Molech is most probably a god, because all other Semitic tongues have this root *mlk*, and apply it to their gods with appellative force.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

TEXTS:

Holy Bible, (Linear Parallel Edition). 1898.
A.J. Holman and Co., Philadelphia, Pa.

Massoretic Text of the Hebrew Old Testament
Preussische Druckerei, Berlin, 1931.

Biblia Hebraica edidit Rud. Kittel.
Priv. Wuert. Bibelanstalt, Stuttgart.

Liber XII Prophetarum praeparavit O. Proksch
1933.

Liber Regum praeparavit Rud. Kittel et
M. Noth. 1934.

Septuaginta, Vol. I and II. Editor: Rahlfs, Alfred
Privilegierte Wuerttembergische Bible-
anstalt. 1935.

Biblia Sacra (3 Vol.)
Monasterii Westphaliae, 1824.

Novum Testamentum Graece, Editor: Eberhard Nestle.
Privilegierte Wuerttembergische Bibel-
anstalt. 1932.

An American Translation of the Old Testament, 1927
Chicago University Press, Chicago, Ill.

COMMENTARIES:

Ehrlich, Arnold G., Randglossen zur hebraeischen Bibel
(7 Volumes) J.C. Hinrich'sche Buchhand-
lung, 1908.

"International Critical Commentary"

- Driver, S.R., Deuteronomy. 1906.
- Harper, W. Rainey, Amos and Hosea. 1905.
- Keil, Carl F. und Delitzsch, Franz, Biblischer
Commentar ueber das Alte Testament
Doerffling und Franke, Leipzig.
- Leviticus, Numeri und Deuteronomium 1862.
- Josua, Richter und Ruth 1874.
- Die Buecher der Koenige 1876.
- Ezechiel 1868.
- Jeremiah und Klagelieder 1872.
- Die zwoelf kleinen Propheten 1888.
- Lange, J.P., Bibelwerk, Verlag von Velhagen und
Klasing, Bielefeldt.
- Exodus, Leviticus, Numeri 1874.
- Das Deuteronomium 1866.
- Die Buecher der Koenige 1868.
- Der Prophet Jeremiah 1868.
- Die Propheten, Hosea, Joel und Amos 1872.
- Matthews, Shailer, and Smith, Gerald B., A Diction-
ary of Religion and Ethics, 1921,
The MacMillan Co. New York.
- Murphy, James G., Commentary on the Book of
Leviticus. Warren F. Draper, Main Street
Andover. 1872.

Nowack, W., Handkommentar zum Alten Testament Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1903. Goettingen.
Exodus-Leviticus-Numeri, uebersetzt und erklart
von Bruno Baentsch. 1903.

Schaff, Philip, and Lange, J.P. The Prophet Ezekiel
Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1909.

DICTIONARIES:

Abbot-Smith, G., A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1929.

Cheyne, T.K., and Black, J.S., Encyclopaedia Biblica
Adam and Charles Black, London. 1902.

Davis, John D., A Dictionary of the Bible, 1924.
Westminster Press.

Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Zweite Auflage
Verlag von J.C.B. Mohr, Tuebingen 1930

Eadie, John, Eadie's Biblical Encyclopaedia 1901
Charles Griffin and Co. London.

Gesenius, William, A Hebrew and English Lexicon. Trans-
lated by Edward Robinson. Revised by
F. Brown, S.R. Driver, and C.A. Briggs.
Houghton Mifflin Co. 1907. New York.

Hastings, J., et.al. Dictionary of the Bible 1909
Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

Jacobus, M.W., Nourse, E.E., Zenos, A.C., A New Standard Bible Dictionary 1926. Funk and Wagnalls,
London.

Orr, James, International Standard Bible Encyclopedia
Howard Severance Co. 1915.

Realencyklopaedie fuer protestantische Theologie und Kirche Dritte Auflage. J.C. Hinrich'sche
Buchhandlung 1903. Leipzig.

Schaff-Herzog Endyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, Funk and Wagnalls Co., New York and London. 1910.

Books and Articles:

- Breasted, James Henry, A History of Egypt. Charles Scribner's Sons. 1926.
- Diodor von Sicilien, Historische Bibliothek (zwoelftes Baendchen) ueberstzt von Julius Friedrich Wurm. Verlag der J.B. Metzler'schen Buchhandlung, Stuttgart. 1837.
- Eissfeldt, Otto, Jahwe als Koenig in "Zeitschrift fuer die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft", Band V. Heft 2/3, 1928. p. 81-105. Verlag von Alfred Toepelmann in Giessen, 1928.
- Eissfeldt, Otto, Molk als Opferbegriff im Punischen und Hebraeischen und das Ende des Gottes Moloch, in "Beitraege zur Religionsgeschichte des Altertums" Heft 3. Max Niemeyer Verlag, Halle (Saale) 1935.
- Eissfeldt, Otto, Molochs Glueck und Ende in "Forschungen und Fortschritte" Jahrgang 11, 1935. S. 285f.
- Goodwin, W.W., Plutarch's Essays and Miscellanies, Vol. 1. Little, Brown and Co. Boston. 1911.
- Frazer, James George, Adonis, Attis, and Osiris MacMillan and Co. 1919 St. Martin's St. London 1919.
- Frazer, James George, Folklore in the Old Testament (Golden Bough Series) MacMillan and Co. St. Martin's St. London. 1919.
- Kretzmann, P.E., Neue Forschungen ueber das Wort Moloch in Concordia Theological Monthly. Vol. VII, Jan. 1936. p. 51.

- Mandelkern, Solomon, Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae
(2 Vol.) 1846. Lipsiae, Veit et Comp.
(Germany)
- Monro, W.D. Must we relegate Deuteronomy to the Reign
of Josiah? in the "Evangelical Quarterly"
Vol. 8, No. 1. Jan. 1936. p. 3-21.
- Moore, G.F., The Image of Molech, in the Journal of
Biblical Literature Vol. XVI, 1897 p. 161ff.
Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis.
- Orelli, Conrad von, Allgemeine Religionsgeschichte,
A. Marcus & E. Weber's Verlag. 1921.
- Robertson, James, Early Religion of Israel 5th Ed.
William Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh and
London. 1896.
- Smith, Henry Preserved, The Religion of Israel,
Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. 1925.
- Smith, W. Robertson, Religion of the Semites
Adam and Charles Black, London. 1907.
- Smith, William Walter, The Student's Historical
Geography of the Holy Land. Revised and
enlarged Edition 1924, George H. Doran Co.
New York, N.Y.