

# The Relationship of the Old Testament Prophets with Civil Authorities from the perspective of Human Rights: The Case of Naboth's Vineyard (1 Kgs 21: 1-16)

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## Abstract

The present study aims to analyze from a different point of view the already established message, the theological message behind the episode "Naboth's Vineyard". For this, we propose to look strictly from the perspective of Old Testament culture, the relationship between the prophet of God and the representative of civil authority, insisting on the particularity of human rights (as they were left by God in the Torah). We pay close attention to whether they are widely respected, and if not, we try to identify the moment when their violation occurs and the synchronic reasons behind the delegitimization actions of the concept. The case of Naboth's vineyard is taken as a case study, in which we highlight the corrupt games of the corrupt king Ahab, which facilitated the dispossession of the parental legacy and finally the murder of the grape grower Nabot. At the same time, we strengthen the indisputable need of the prophet, who is stepping forward, ready to face the cost of life, corruption and monarchical immorality, in order to rebalance the social balance of Israel.

**Keywords:** Naboth's Vineyard, Civile Authorities, Prophets, Human Rights, Mission

## Introduction

THE GUARANTOR OF THE ORTHODOXY of the prophet's message in Israel was his very calling, a missionary reality that legitimized him as the Messenger of God<sup>1</sup> (*Malak Yahwe*) to publicly declare the will of YHWH

<sup>1</sup> The noun מַלְאָכִים (usually translated by the Sender) has a wide range of meanings in Hebrew, its semantic field also includes the meaning of "sons of God" (*bēnê (ha) ʾēlōhîm*) referring in particular to heavenly creatures, not to genealogical relationships (Gen 6: 2;

reflected by His law (Mal 2: 5-7). Once he felt that the Lord commanded him to utter a divine message, the prophet had to convey to the people the intention of God (Amos 3: 8), whether they wished or not to obey. Some prophets like Moses, Jeremiah, or Jonah tried to escape the mission entrusted<sup>2</sup>, motivating their person to be totally inadequate for such a work, delaying decision-making, amid their subjective fears.

However, the prophet would finally listen to the command of the Lord, and begin his introductory speech (*captatio benevolentiae*<sup>3</sup>) like: אֲנִי הֵן יְהוָה (so speaks the Lord) informing the people about the divine plan of the world<sup>4</sup>. Later, the exile prophets presented themselves to their audience, with the

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Job 1: 6; Ps 29: 1; 82: 1; 89: 6-7). Other terms, such as those of *mēšārēṭīm* or *sār*, refer to the functions of dispatches or commanders (Josh 5: 14; Ps 103: 21). However, the interpretation of ministry by the meanings of the word *mal,āk*, meaning “messenger, sent, soil”, is the most common throughout the Old Testament. The noun, *mal,āk* translated into LXX through *aggelos* (“angel”), can target both heavenly and human beings. In this sense, there are some mysterious texts in which the exact identity of the subject is left in a cone of shadow (Judg 2: 1; Mal 3: 1). Only the Latin text of the Vulgate makes this distinction clear, using the term *angelus*, for the heavenly messenger, and for the earthly messenger, the word *nuntius*. This messenger of the Lord, in the present case, the prophet (2Chr 36: 15-16; Isa 44: 26; Hag 1: 13) is, according to Mal 3: 1 the herald of the coming of the Lord (כִּבְיָאֵל). He is also the messenger of YHWH (מַלְאָכֵי) acting as His interpreter, declaring what is right (Job 33: 23). To be seen David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 462; Francis Brown, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 521.

<sup>2</sup> The mission of the prophet chosen by God comprises an ethical pedagogy applied to the people through the prophet, who has not only a passive role in the course of events (a role that relates to his personal relationship with YHWH), but also an active missionary (the prophet is the man sent among men in view of the realization of the divine plan - Gen 18: 19). The fulfillment of the divine mission of the prophet is to facilitate the blessing of God on all, the prophet pedagogically initiates a nation, to walk in the path of righteousness, to later know God. Therefore, the abandonment of the mission meant the abandonment of the ethical dimension of the call to the prophetic ministry and implicitly the endangering of the salvation of a whole nation. To be seen Cosmin Lauran, *Missio Israelis: O Lectură Misionară a Vechiului Testament* (Alba Iulia: Editura Reîntregirea, 2017), 297-301.

<sup>3</sup> Any honest preacher will have to acknowledge that homiletic failure is due to him for various reasons, whether he manages the *inventio* or *captatio benevolentiae* wrongfully, or the public expectations were too great, hence the emphasis on minuses and reluctance assimilation of the nonverbal message. Through a confession built on an unbeatable rhetoric (with a *captatio benevolentiae* directed at the people, making special reference to the Jewish heritage and divine election for the mission among the Gentiles), the Prophet Moses is able to expose the revealed message of YHWH, posing as the sole ruler of the chosen people. Thus Moses, through his stature as a preacher and catechist, also contributes decisively to the permanent formation of the members of his community. See Monica J.Harris, Robert Rosenthal, “No more Teacher’s dirty looks: Effects of Teacher Nonverbal Behavior on student outcomes”, in *Applications of Nonverbal Communication*, eds. Ronald E.Riggio, Robert S.Feldman (London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 2005), 159; U. Kellermann, “ἀπολογέομαι *apologeomai* defend oneself”, in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 1, eds. Horst Balz, Gerhard Schneider (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1990), 137; Charles H.Dodd, *La predicazione apostolica e il suo sviluppo* (Brescia: Paideia Editrice, 1978), 36.

<sup>4</sup> Geoffrey Wigoder, *Enciclopedia Iudaismului* (București: Hasefer, 2016), 537.

introductory phrase: *koh amar Yahwe*, “so speaks the Lord”; or with the formula: *vaiehi devar Yahwe elai* meaning “it was the word of the Lord to me” (Jer 1: 9; 2: 7 etc). The expression *devar Yahwe* meaning “the word of the Lord”, revealed to His prophets, counting over 900 occurrences in the Bible<sup>5</sup>.

There is indeed a wide range of ways in which God has been in contact with His people to constantly instruct them to attain holiness, a *sine qua non* condition of salvation: through His law (Deut 4: 36) through direct communication (Isa 8: 11), through dreams (Ps 16: 11), through suffering (Prov 3: 11), but especially through the prophets (Jer 7: 28; 25: 13; 32: 33; Zech 3: 2). Moses was the prophet in excellence who constantly taught the people about the requirements of the Law of Yahweh. The book of Deuteronomy, in particular, for the prophetic action of teaching the Torah, uses the verb in the form of Piel rbd (רַבַּד) which can have two meanings: teaching the law and transmitting the law<sup>6</sup>. This would mean that the Prophet Moses, when teaching the Law, would only transmit it further orally into the living consciousness of the people, without the involvement of a well-systematized educational act (Deut 4: 44; 5: 27 etc.). The goal was to establish monotheism in Israel and to enlighten other people, because a law as straight as that in Israel was clearly not of human inspiration, the perfecting of the Law drawing the respect of the inhabitants of the Ancient East<sup>7</sup> (Deut 4: 5-6).

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<sup>5</sup> Petre Semen, *Introducere în Teologia Profeților Scriitori* (Iași: Doxologia, 2010), 21.

<sup>6</sup> We see how St. Paul, for example, updates this Jewish motive on the occasion of the Lord's Supper discourse (1Cor 11). He borrows this specialty of Jewish education, being a good connoisseur of the Law. Speaking of the Eucharist tradition, he states that the whole teaching has been received (Εγὼ γὰρ παρέλαβον ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου – 11: 23) from God, and that he alone handed it over to the Christians of Corinth (ὁ καὶ παρέδωκα ὑμῖν). The Greek terms *paralambanō* and *paradidōmi* were technical terms in Jewish culture, used to emphasize the teaching of an important tradition related to customs, rituals, or parenetic teachings. The Greek philosophers used these terms to define the process of teaching their doctrinal teachings, but for the Apostle Paul, the teaching of this tradition with which he identified himself perennially meant the continuation of the Last Supper, “the night He was sold”, 23b) until this cultic moment of the Eucharistic celebration. So, it focuses on the death of Jesus on the grounds of the “Pascal Lamb”. The indicative aortic verb *parélabon* with *paralambanō* root can be understood, when it comes in close connection with tradition, in the sense of “taking something together”; “obtain”; or simply “get”. In Greek literature *paralambanō* is found in a personal way, meaning “to accept; to receive someone” (Herodotus, Plato), but also in an objective way, meaning “to take control, control” (Aristofan, Plutarch). Instead, in the Jewish thinking, *paralambanō*'s emphasis is on teaching the Law and its means of interpretation, because both *qibbel* (take, receive) and *māsar* (to be taught) are found almost always in connection with its teaching learning the Jewish tradition. To be seen James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: William B.Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 189; A. Kretzer, „*paralambanō* zu sich nehmen, annehmen; hinzuziehen; übernehmen”, in *Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, band III, hrsg. Horst Balz und Gerhard Schneider (Stuttgart: Verlag W.Kohlhammer, 1983), 68-69; Hans Conzelmann, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 238-239; Richard A.Horsley, *1 Corinthians* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 160.

<sup>7</sup> Cătălin Vatamanu, *Educația la poporul ales* (Iași: Doxologia, 2011), 216-222.

By enhancing the imminent catastrophe, the prophets considered themselves the messengers of a divine warning<sup>8</sup>, interpreting the international geopolitics of the time, from the perspective of a God Who is teaching pedagogically in the history of the people of Israel<sup>9</sup>. Through prophetic speech, the faithful in Israel were reminded of the obligations solemnly assumed on Sinai in the form of the Covenant, their vocation, aiming at the direction of the Israeli lifestyle, which, by denying the requirements of the Covenant, practiced idolatry, defamation and crime, to YHWH. The sermon of the prophet was to determine the Israelite who repudiated the law through his improper conduct to resume the way of knowing God, because YHWH, through his prophet, the prophet, wants to prove to him that he has not forgotten his covenant, and that God through His messengers started looking for the lost man<sup>10</sup>. The Prophet was thus sent, during the period of great moral crisis, to overcome slippages and remind the people, which is the will of God to be followed<sup>11</sup>. The confession of the prophet was fully assumed, courageous, he presenting God's message of condemnation, often with the price of life. Jeremiah the prophet calls his disciple, Baruh, the son of Neriah, and commands him to write in a book all YHWH's threats regarding the future of the Jews (Jer 43: 4), and to make it public because he was imprisoned by the commandment the idolatrous king, paying with the price of his liberty, the daring to face the king<sup>12</sup>. Finally, because he deplored the apostasy of Israel, he is condemned to death by stoning<sup>13</sup>. Other prophets suffered an equally cruel fate for their confession: Isaiah, because he is fighting against King Manasseh, is sentenced to death by sawing; Amos is subjected to the martyrdom of the strike with the sword and dies the martyrdom being killed by the sword; Miheiah is thrown into the abyss by King Joram, and receives the crown of martyrdom; Daniel is beheaded by the Emperor Atticus, crowning

<sup>8</sup> The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, often informed the people of the close punishment of God, but the Israelites benefited from their condition of a chosen people, and allowed themselves to live in all kinds of passions, thus self-excommunicating themselves under the divine promise (Jer 6: 14; Ezekiel 13: 10). So these defeatists have forgotten the requirements of their covenant with YHWH, drawing the wrath of God upon them because of the acts of social inequality (Isa 1: 15-17; Jer 5: 28; Amos 5: 7-12; Mic 3: 1), religious syncretism (Isa 1: 10-17; Jer 6: 20; Hos 6: 6; Amos 5: 21-27), foreign policies (Isa 30: 1-5; 31: 1-3, Jer 2; Ezek 16: 26; Hos 5: 13; 7: 11) - signs that the people have denied their Master, violating the nature of the Alliance (*berîth*). See E. Johnson, "ānaph; 'aph'", in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, eds. G.Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids: William B.Eerdmans Publishing, 1974), 357.

<sup>9</sup> Geoffrey Wigoder, *Enciclopedia Iudaismului*, 537.

<sup>10</sup> André Neher, *L'essence du prophétisme* (Paris: Calman-Lévy Editeur, 1972), 94.

<sup>11</sup> Petre Semen, *Introducere în Teologia Profeților Scriitori*, 7-10.

<sup>12</sup> Ioan Gură de Aur, *Despre obscuritatea profețiilor*, trad. de Radu Mustață (București: EIBMBOR, 2013), 80-82.

<sup>13</sup> Vasile Porfirogenetul, *Minologhion*, coll. PG 117, 432B-C.

the confession of monotheism in a profoundly idolatrous society<sup>14</sup> etc. Some scholars say that the inauguration experiences of Moses and Gideon become normative for the later prophetic call, and the key structure is this: the encounter with divinity; the introductory word; sending; objection; encouraging; the sign<sup>15</sup>. God is preoccupied with the restoration of the dignity of His people, who had been deprived of liberty and oppressed in many ways by the Egyptians, and is using His servant Moses to restore the right to liberty and dignity to the people of Israel (Exod 3: 10). The land of Canaan, which God will give as an inheritance, becomes the topos where Israel will have full liberty to exercise its right to holiness<sup>16</sup>; so that, in God's plan, human rights only have their meaning when they lead man to holiness, to God's knowledge.

## **The relationship of the prophet with the royal authorities of Israel from the point of view of human rights**

The history of the people of God is closely dependent on the reception of the Law, and through its fulfillment Israel remained in the field of God's knowledge. The obedience to the law was not only seen as a way of blessing Yahweh, but as a genuine response to the grace of deliverance from the Egyptian bondage (Exod 20: 1-17). But Israel proves to be a bankrupt people in obedience to the law, that is why God allows sufferings in His people for the pedagogical purpose of corrupting the slippages<sup>17</sup> (Lev 26; Deut 28; Josh 23: 14-16; Dan 9). The monarchical institution was bound to remain faithful to the law of God, both to keep the state of Israel under the graces of divinity, but also to sustain the cultic office, the daily sacrifices for sins, that the people should advance on the path of holiness. In this sce-

<sup>14</sup> Spiridon Bilalis, *Martirii Ortodoxiei: Teologia Martiriului*, trad. de Ciprian-Ioan Staicu (București: Editura Christiana, 2016), 37.

<sup>15</sup> Normann Habel, "The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 2 (1965): 297-323; G.Y. Glazov, *The Bridling of the Tongue and the Opening of the Mouth in Biblical Prophecy* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 69-86.

<sup>16</sup> The text of Deut 4 becomes paradigmatic in view of the moral framework of exercising the right to holiness, where the apodictic connection between the Covenant and the Law, by evoking the past in a didactic way, prepares the way to the fulfillment of the announced goal. The fulfillment of the Law of God depends on the success of the Jews to take possession of the Land of Canaan, because the Law is based on the Covenant on which the relationship of the people with YHWH was based. Israel's call is to become a peculiar people, a holy people of God, who will be distinguished from his idolatrous and immoral neighbors, especially through his moral and spiritual relationship with his God, established by His righteous law. To be seen Peter C. Craigie, *Deuteronomul*, trad. de Daniela Rusu (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Logos, 2008), 147-149.

<sup>17</sup> J.D. Douglas, N. Hillyer, D.R.W. Wood, *New Bible Dictionary*, (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 1423.

nario, the king owed his people to remain faithful to God, for the embrace of idolatry would be an attempt at the very religious, social and political stability of the nation.

Also, the king ought to know the law as one who was instrumental in judgment in the people, for his ability to judge as the disputes arising, according to Yahweh's demands, depended on the restoration of the dignity of the afflicted- the rights of the common Israeli, King. This judgment exercised by competent forums did not have the ultimate purpose of condemning, but rather straightening<sup>18</sup>, just as David requires judgment from God (Ps 25: 1); which means that the judgment restores the balance of the community<sup>19</sup>. In the history of Israel, the king was the one invested with the judging of social behaviors (2 Sam 14: 1-20; 15: 1-6; 2 Par 19: 5-7; Ps 71: 1-2<sup>20</sup>), in all other situations, the Jews they were redressing their deprecations to YHWY - the last judge on the matter<sup>21</sup>. The derivatives of the verb dealing with the right judgment (צָדַק) are the following: (Hiph'il, Qal, Pi'el, Niph'al, Hithpa'el). *Hiph'il* is his synonym for righteousness and his basic meaning is the accentuation of innocence, justice; in both cases man is declared to be right because of his deeds (Job 27: 5; Isa 53: 11, Dan 12: 3). Therefore, *hiph'il* represents the restoration of the community or of relations from the perspective of the Covenant, thus embodying an ethical dimension. *Qal* translates into "being just" in civic or legal logic, or in both directions. *Pi'el* counts five instances (Jer 3: 11; 16: 51-52, Job 32: 2) all demonstrating the real existence of righteousness. *Niph'al* is only found in (Dan 8: 14), meaning without a doubt the action by which the order, action made by God

<sup>18</sup> All the derivatives of this etimon derive their roots from the Hebrew noun *tedaka* translated by the Greek *dikē*, which is a superior element of the cosmos, springing from God and underlying human relationships. The first reference of the Greek term is that it is right to fulfill the law; in the second plan, to maintain righteousness or order to obtain righteousness; and on the third level, the one to punish, to declare the sentence. See H. Seebass, "Justicia", in *Diccionario Teológico del Nuevo Testamento*, vol. 2, eds. Lothar Coenen, Erich Beyreuther (Salamanca: Ediciones Sigueme, 1990), 404; Alfred E. Tuggy, *Lexico Grieco-Español del Nuevo Testamento* (El Paso: Editorial Mundo Hispano, 1996), 245; Cătălin Varga, „Δικαιοσύνη în limbajul biblic. O scurtă incursiune filologică, exegetică și teologică,” *Teologie și Viață* 9-12 (2014): 133-135.

<sup>19</sup> W.F. Lofthouse, "The Righteousness of God," *The Expository Times*, 50 (1939): 341-345.

<sup>20</sup> Cătălin Varga, „Teologia și Exegeza episodului *Schimbarea la Față* (varianta lucanică),” *Altarul Banatului* 7-9 (2013): 84.

<sup>21</sup> Henri Cazelles, „A Propos de quelques textes difficiles relatifs à la justice de Dieu dans l'Ancien Testament,” *Revue biblique* 2 (1951): 169. As the King of the chosen people, YHWH is the one who governs history, intervening in the turning points (Josh 1: 9; 2: 24) through his prophets and messengers (Isa 1: 18; 40: 4-5; Jer 6: 16-19; 15: 19; Ezek 33: 2-20; 37: 9; Mal 3: 1). As a Judge (Ps 95: 10-13), YHWH inspired the writings of the old covenant of the responsibility of distributing a social justice, equivalent to the pathology of the deed. See also Leo G. Perdue, *The Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 243; Aubrey Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1967), 6-7; Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol.1, (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1975), 372; Edmond Jacob, *Théologie de L'Ancien Testament* (Paris: Delachaux&Niestle, 1955), 75-82.

Himself, is restored. Finally, *hithpa'el* (Gen 44: 16) is synonymous with the *pi'el* case showing the fulfillment of justice from ethical and legal perspective<sup>22</sup>. In accordance with the verbs above, the noun *sedeq*, *sedāqāh* (justice, justice) also has the same meaning<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, the action of “justice” or “straightening” in the exercise of the king’s judicial function in Israel is concentrated in terms of: objects, man and God; taking decisive value in the iconomia of our deeds. Thus, the man who is directed, or the man who is granted and at the same time asserts the right to holiness, is the one who obeys the law (Lev 19: 36<sup>24</sup>), is the one who fulfills the Covenant, because the notions of conscience, worship, justice, social relations, nationality - all of this is included in this concept<sup>25</sup>.

More than any king of Israel was obliged to know the law of YHWH, in order to guide people with justice, to the will of God. The indebted to instruct the king in knowledge of the Law, were the Levites: “When will ascend the throne of his kingdom, you have to write for himself book of this law in the book<sup>26</sup> that is the priests the Levites, and be it at him and he read it all the days of his life that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, and to force him to do all the words of this law and all these decisions” (Deut 17: 18-19). Israelite was bound to know from childhood Torah (Deuteronomy 11: 18-19), the more the king, the king assured them that the Levite instruction necessary to always remember that although he was the supreme authority in Israel, yet he had to study the word of the Lord in order to lead the people righteously, for the Torah was basically the constitution of ancient Israel, which the king was obliged to know and fulfill<sup>27</sup>. The exact meaning of words is difficult to establish because of the ambivalence of the expression (הַפְּרוֹתָהּ הַיְנִשְׁמֵ-תָא)

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<sup>22</sup> R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 947-949; Martin H. Manser, Alister E. McGrath, Donald J. Wiseman, *Zondervan Dictionary of Bible Themes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999); James Swanson, *A Dictionary of Biblical Language. Hebrew Old Testament* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> James Hardy Ropes, „Righteousness and The Righteousness of God in the Old Testament and in St.Paul”, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 2 (1903): 215.

<sup>24</sup> Norman H. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), 73; C.H. Dodd, *The Bible and the Greeks* (London: Hodder&Stoughton, 1954), 44-45.

<sup>25</sup> Scholar S.Lynnonett, on the other hand, comes with an important contribution, showing that the Greek *dikaioσynē* is a translation of the Hebrew word *ṭedaká*, which means the work of God through which the salvation of man is accomplished or established. See Stanislaw Lynnonett, „La soteriologie paulienne”, in *Introduction à la Bible*, vol. 2, (Bilbao: Desclée de Brouwer), 840.

<sup>26</sup> The literal form of the formula (מִפְּרוֹתָהּ הַיְנִשְׁמֵ-תָא) may suggest „before [the Levite priests]” or “from the copy of [the Law] before the [Levites]”; or simply “in the presence of the Levites”. To be seen Francis Brown, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 818.

<sup>27</sup> Cristinel Iatan, “Serving the priests (kōhānīm) in ancient Israel and its implications. The sons of Aaron, the priests whose hands were sanctified for the service of the priesthood (*Nm.*

תִּשְׁבֵּר): “this second law” in the book of Deuteronomy. This word *mesni* in Hebrew, which can be translated as “repeating, double, second, repetition”, is used in the Old Testament, in four instances. First, the term refers to the second position, referring both to the second row priest (2Kgs 23: 4; Jer 52: 24) and to the inferior rank (Gen 41: 43). Secondly, the term is also used to describe the second function in exercising and establishing power (1 Sam 23: 17; Neh 11: 9; Esth 10: 3; Zeph 1: 10). Third, *mesni* is also used to describe a blessed work, a reward, a return to privileges (Exod 16: 5; Deut 15: 18; Isa 61: 7; Zech 9: 12). Finally, it may also involve a transcript, a copy of an original<sup>28</sup> (Deut 17: 18; Josh 8: 32; Ezra 1: 10). It is obvious that in this case, תִּשְׁבֵּר-מִשְׁנֵי refers to the copy of the law, but we can not know for sure whether strict reference is made to the legislation on the status and duty of the King (vv. 14-17) or the legislative part of the book of Deuteronomy, especially in chap. 12-26. Another issue is whether it refers to the original Sinai document, the so-called Book of the Covenant<sup>29</sup> (Exod 24: 7). Beyond all these exegetical difficulties, kingdom in Israel was the form of leading a constitutional monarchy, structured according to the teachings of the law of God (Torah). The written law was the guide of any king of the ancient world, say the rabbis, the King being obliged to study and implement it both at the personal and community level<sup>30</sup>. That is why we think that this seemingly crux interpretum of Deut 17: 18 refers not only to pieces of independent texts of the Deliberative Law, but to the entire Law (Torah), which the future king of Israel is studying in its entirety from childhood, under the careful guidance of representatives of pre-Exile institutionalized education, according to the latest archaeological findings<sup>31</sup>.

But when the pre-Exile king of Israel intentionally forgot his attributions and his subordination to the Torah, the prophet-the man sent by God, with the exact purpose of defeating the royal slippings, came to the ramp. The profound ethical message of the prophets, besides the blame of sinners and the portrayal of divine love through the promise of deliverance<sup>32</sup>; has a different dimension, the prophetic message also brings into question the observance of some elementary rights violated by the corruption of civil authority (for example, Nabot’s case). However, for a cultural and contextual understanding of the paradigm, it is important to underline that in the ethical thinking of ancient Israel, moral obligations are not defined in terms of total

3, 3)”, in *Via lui Nabot: Naboth’s Vineyard. Studia Theologica Recentiora*, eds. Octavian Gordon, Alexandru Mihăilă (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2012), 98-99.

<sup>28</sup> Charles F. Jean, Jacob Hoftijzer, *Dictionnaire des inscriptions sémitiques de l’Ouest* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965), 313.

<sup>29</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *Deuteronomul*, 290.

<sup>30</sup> Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy* (Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 168.

<sup>31</sup> André Lemaire, *Les écoles et la formation de la Bible dans l’ancien Israël* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 8-15.

<sup>32</sup> Geoffrey Wigoder, *Enciclopedia Iudaismului*, 537.

obedience to Yahweh's will. The Old Testament ethics, although based on the commandments of God (the Torah), does not, however, imply obedience to external authority, so as to annul the postulate of the natural law and virtues in their various forms. Yahwe claimed morality from His people, not because He commanded this, but because the ethical prescriptions of the Law were good for the sound development of the Jewish society<sup>33</sup>. Ethics did not suppress freedom, the Israelite was free to practice ethics, but this freedom did not absolve him of responsibility for the deeds committed. The very first word in the Decalogue refers to the theme of liberty, says Origen, when God reminds the Jew that he has freed him from the bondage of Egypt to live a moral life, a life full of holiness<sup>34</sup>, in the promised land. The Prophet sent by God had the duty to remind the King that the denial of man's dignity, created in the image of God to be permanently sanctified, was equal to the atonement of God's supreme monarch<sup>35</sup> (Jer 28: 1-2).

There is a law of International Law, to which all peoples have subscribed (Amos 1: 3 – 2: 3<sup>36</sup>), a universal law applicable to the need to respect human dignity. When the Israelites promoted a purely human model of the king, disobeying the norms of international law and the revelation pattern commanded by Yahweh in Deut 17, then they all fell into error in disregarding the divine will. When the monarchic function is deviated from its natural course, and the King is no longer just a simple representative of the people and a servant obedient to the Torah<sup>37</sup>, but claiming the last authority, entering into a flagrant conflict of interest with Yahwe, then the prophet remains the only solution resolving the crisis. His mission and the repentance of the king and the people will depend on the condemnation of Israel's deliverance from the wrath of God.

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<sup>33</sup> John Barton, *Ethics in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 12-13.

<sup>34</sup> Origen, *Omiliu la cartea Ieșirii*, VI, trad. de T.Bodogae, Nicolae Neaga și Zorica Lațcu, (București: EIBMBOR, 1981), 80-81.

<sup>35</sup> Silviu Tatu, *Dumnezeu a vorbit în vechime prin profeți. Studii în Vechiul Testament* (Oradea: Editura Metanoia, 2007), 139.

<sup>36</sup> We observe from the Prophet Amos' indictment that the minimum international human rights to be respected at all costs were aimed in particular at the dignity of slaves, poor, prisoners of war, pregnant women, deceased or workers. These oracles of the Prophet Amos are examples of peculiarities; they refer to the war-consuming reprehensible deeds in all varieties of atrocities: irrational cruelty (1: 3. 11. 13); the purchase and sale of war lords (1: 6. 9); profanation of the deceased (2: 1). Oracle references refer not only to crimes committed against the Jews, but Israel itself is judged by the same iniquities (2: 6-16). Therefore, the violation of the international law regarding wartime behavior of both heathen and chosen people, who became dubiously guilty, was violated because, unlike the others, Israel had revealed a clear law of the war from which it did not have He may abdicate (Deut 20). To be seen John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, *Comentariu cultural-istoric al Vechiului Testament*, trad. de Silviu Tatu, Luca Crețan, (Oradea: Editura Casa Cărții, 2016), 822-823; James D.G. Dunn, John W. Rogerson, *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 691.

<sup>37</sup> Silviu Tatu, *Dumnezeu a vorbit în vechime prin profeți*, 77.

## The case of Elijah the prophet and king idolatrous Ahab: Nabot's life and a flagrant violation of the right to property (1Kgs 21, 1-16<sup>38</sup>)

The right to property was of divine origin (Deut 15: 12-14; 24: 19), and the alienation of the parents' inheritance was also prohibited by the law of God<sup>39</sup> (Lev 25: 23-28, Num 36: 7). Here are the two divine rights of the Israelite Nabot, violated by the greed of King Ahab, through rapt and use of power. We can say that Naboth's right to life (Exod 21: 16; Deut 24: 7) was canceled by Queen Jezebel, educated in the spirit of absolutist thinking of the Phoenician culture<sup>40</sup>, giving orders to commit horrible murder, with the purpose of depriving the innocent Nabot of wealth (1Kgs 21: 13-14). Ahab does not seem to be the first attempt of this kind, some of the biblical ones, also due to the sudden death of his two sons (*Ohozia and Ioram*), successors to the throne of Israel (2Kgs 1; 2Kgs 9). Moreover, there is no note in the royal chronicles about the funerals of these two kings, who traditionally had to enjoy all the royal honors in their early death<sup>41</sup>; fact that further strengthens our predictions.

The humanitarian spirit of Deuteronomy provided for the slave released under the yoke of his master in the seventh year (Exod 21: 2) the right to property, so that he had a house of his own and a piece of land for his subsistence, so as to they do not again get into slavery<sup>42</sup>. Under certain circumstances, the servant could choose to remain in his master's life (*'ebed 'olām*) or free himself, this being the equivalent of the previous six years of work<sup>43</sup>. This provision, which favored the right to property for the slave of Israel, was part of the Jubilee and Sabatic laws (Exod 21: 2-6; 23: 10-12; Lev 25; Deut 15; 1-18), symbolizing the return of the Jews from the Babylonian exile, Israel thus becoming the slave (*ebaday*) liberated of Yahweh (Lev 25: 42).

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<sup>38</sup> The Historical-Critical Research Division of the Old Testament questions the paternity of this chapter, precisely because of the inappropriate appearance of a social problem such as that of Nabot's vineyard, in a narrative context where only topics such as conspiracy, rebellion, prophetic intervention, etc. For more details see Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, Qumran, Septuagint* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 2015), 8; Steven L.McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings: The Composition of the Book of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1991), 67; Jerome T.Walsh, „Methods and Meanings: Multiple Studies of 1 Kings 21,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 2 (1992): 193-211; Marc Shoffren, „Educational Approaches to Naboth's Vineyard (1 Kings 21),” *Journal of Progressive Judaism* 13 (1999), 7.

<sup>39</sup> John F.Walvoord, Roy B.Zuck, *Comentariu al Vechiului Testament*, trad. de Octavian Verlan, Constantin Leontiu, (Arad: Editura Multimedia, 2010), 529.

<sup>40</sup> Paul R.House, *1, 2 Kings* (Nashville: Broadman&Holman Publishers, 1995), 232; Richard D. Nelson, *First and Second Kings* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973), 120.

<sup>41</sup> Viorel-Cristian Popa, „Considerații exegetice contextuale la 3 Regi 16, 34,” *Studii Teologice* 3 (2017): 95.

<sup>42</sup> Karl Fredreich Keil, Friedrich Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 372.

<sup>43</sup> Peter C.Craigie, *Deuteronomul*, 270-271.

This logic of liberation will, through exodus, form Jewish thinking for a long time<sup>44</sup>. But not only that, but the jubilee year affirms the fundamental unity of creation through the celebration of the Sabbath year, in which both man and earth were called to enter Sabbath rest (Lev 25: 2-7). It also had an absolute necessity, allowed the earth to rest and refresh without people starving, since Yahweh was committed to feeding his people. The Sabatic Year was also essential for reforming the Jewish relationship with Yahweh, scholar R.S. Kawashima sees this year's jubilee, a primary source of cosmic ritual purification, for the symbolic jubilee atone for the socio-economic pollution, thus restructuring the sacerdotal relationship between earth and man<sup>45</sup>. Also, the Sabbath year had a prophylactic function of divine inspiration: if the Canaanites were exterminated from their lands due to the moral pollution of the area (ebr. *tm'*) the same danger awaits Israel if it is compromised with idolatry (Lev 26: 32-45) - here comes the indispensability of the jubilee, which has the moral aim of purifying Israel from all its sins, which could attract upon it the horrors of "the universal law of occupation"<sup>46</sup> (a reality that can no longer be postponed during the activity of the prophet Jeremiah - 2Chr 36: 21).

From the evening of Yom Kypur, at the meeting point between the two different calendars (Spring Nisan and Autumn Tishri<sup>47</sup>), the law of the jubilee year, was so conceived that every Jew or alien, bond or free, would resume his life on an equal basis<sup>48</sup>. They applied unanimously these legal provisions, they would have encouraged the decency of the inhabitants of Israel, because no one could ever have accumulated excessive wealth or the opposite, no one would ever have been condemned to poverty and slavery forever<sup>49</sup>. The main provision of the jubilee code was the

<sup>44</sup> Richard H.Lowery, *Sabbath and Jubilee* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 29; R.Kinsler, Gloria Kinsler, *The Biblical Jubilee and the Struggle for Life* (Maryknoll: Orbis Press, 1999), 6.

<sup>45</sup> Robert S.Kawashima, „The Jubilee Year and the Return of Cosmic Purity“, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 3 (2003): 372; Laura Kelly Fanucci, „Release from the Slavery of Debt: The Jubilee Year for Ancient Israel and the Modern Global Economy“, *Obsculta* 1 (2014): 5-6.

<sup>46</sup> Robert S.Kawashima, „The Jubilee Year and the Return of Cosmic Purity“, 385-386.

<sup>47</sup> Baruch A.Levine, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Leviticus* (Philadelphia/Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 171; Morales, L. Michael, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus* (Leicester: IVP Academic Press, 2015), 35-38.

<sup>48</sup> The celebration of Jubilee through its eminently ethical character was to prepare the people for the coming of the great and last Jubilee, that is, the age of the Savior, the One who will give man's perfect liberty, eschatologically (Luke 4: 16-30). To be seen R.B. Sloan, *The Favorable Year of the Lord. A Study of the Jubiliary Theology in the Gospel of Luke* (Texas: Scholar Press Austin, 1977), 24; Roland de Vaux, *Les Institutions de l'Ancient Testament*, vol. 1, (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1958), 264-265.

<sup>49</sup> Geoffrey Wigoder, *Enciclopedia Iudaismului*, 369; Fred Skolnik, Michael Berenbaum, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 11, (Farmington Hills: Keter Publishing House, 2007), 308. In fact, researcher A.Schenker says, if we study the laws of the slaves of the Torah from the perspective of the vocabulary, the historical context, the compositional history and the literary, theological and ethical particularities; we will notice that the provisions of the Jubilee Year (Lev 25: 39-55) faithfully follow the previously stated perspectives (Exod 21: 1-11; Deut 15:

return of the entire property to the original owner, in accordance with the territorial distribution provided by Moses. If, because of the debt, a Jew was forced to sell his property, it was not considered definitively alienated, but only temporary, until the jubilee year when it returned to the true owner<sup>50</sup> (Lev 25: 25-28). Then all debts were canceled (though Lowery researcher, says that the entire debt was totally canceled only in the 49<sup>th</sup> year in the Sabatic Year) and gives the right to dignity to the person concerned<sup>51</sup>. In this context, it is easy to understand the fraud by King Ahab by illegitimate cancellation of Nabot's right to property, all the more so since Ahab did not want to return it to the injured, his own life in the jubilee year. In this context, it is easy to understand the fraud by King Ahab by illegitimate cancellation of Nabot's right to property, all the more so since Ahab did not want to return it to the injured, his own life in the jubilee year.

Nabot's refusal to dispose of his good also comes amid the legislation on buildings but also on the basis of the clear prohibition, since the time of Moses, that one should sell his parental inheritance<sup>52</sup> (Lev 25: 23-28; Num 36: 7). First,

1-18). See A.Schenker, „The Biblical Legislation on the Release of Slaves: The Road from Exodus to Leviticus”, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 1 (1998), 23-41.

<sup>50</sup> The Hebrew noun “*ebed*” used both the servant and the slave, but also denotes two different types of slaves. There is a clan of slaves, which has come to the slave of their master because of the inability to pay his debts to him; and another category of slaves, either born in this condition or coming from the prey of war - they could be sold and bought with very few rights. The Jewish law limits this last form of slavery, the most precarious, strictly non-Israelic (Lev 25: 44), while slavery arising from debts has been strictly provisional until the person in question paid with his own freedom, duty towards its creditor. On the basis of the Jubilee Year convention of Lev 25: 39-41, those who enjoyed the unconditional right to freedom and the removal of all debt in the jubilee year were only the slaves due to the debt, that is to say, the people of Israel. Unlike them, however, the non-Jewish slave, especially the Canaanite, could not enjoy release in the year of the jubilee, but he was the property of the Jewish master all his life (Lev 25: 44-46). But this does not mean that he does not enjoy a series of legal rights and ritual privileges: his master could not kill him; if the slave was circumcised, he could enjoy the same ritualistic provisions of Pessah; he could regain his freedom if there was someone to redeem him in cash, but if the slave suffered physical harm because of his master, he was automatically declared free; it was forbidden to return a fugitive slave to his master (Deut 23: 16). The Christian church, since the fourth century, forbids the Jews to hold slaves from Christians, and Jews will be the first to abolish slavery long before Christians. Although some scholars (Falk, Andersen), based on the prophetic texts of Jeremiah (34: 9. 16-17), say that in fact many Jews did not respect the release of slaves in the jubilee year, which attracted the wrath of God on the people. To be seen Gregory C. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 145-147; Nathan Andersen, „Slave Systems of the Old Testament and the American South: A Study in Contrasts”, *Studia Antiqua* 1 (2003): 57-59; Ze'ev W. Falk, *Hebrew Law in Biblical Times* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2001), 87.

<sup>51</sup> Robert North, *The Sociology of the Biblical Jubilee* (Rome: The Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1954), 2; Richard H. Lowery, *Sabbath and Jubilee*, 68-69.

<sup>52</sup> The great Jewish historian, Joseph Flavius, says Nabot came from a wealthy family, and his life was certainly inherited from his parents. Ahab's deed of illegally disposing of his fatherly inheritance produced such indignation in God's eyes that Yahweh sent his

Nabot's refusal to do business with his parental inheritance proves him to be a true believer of Yahweh who obeys the divine commandment. Nabot's refusal raises some questions about the right of a citizen to refuse royal offers; but the present context carries a profound religious implication, precisely therefore, in the context of the Torah, King Ahab had no right to issue such an offer<sup>53</sup>.

There is, however, in the history of Israel a case of selling the parental property to the king (2 Sam 24: 24), but the gesture is done by a scumbag, on which the mosaic ban has no effect. The preservation of wealth (נַחֲלָה) *nahālā* meant to every covenant of the Covenant, not just an act of piety to the memory of the parents, but also a religious duty<sup>54</sup>. The Hebrew noun *nahālā* denotes only what is to be passed on from one generation to the next, only by the law of inheritance (Gen 31: 14), which is in fact an ancient right of permanent incidence. The theological idea behind *nahālā* is that Yahweh is the Only Owner of the whole earth (Ps 47: 4) and He divides the land of His people according to His own good<sup>55</sup> (Deut 32: 8). That is why the Israelites have no right in the process of alienating the earth, for they are not their true masters, but Yahweh. Its derivative, the Hebrew noun *yerushah* in Num 36: 7 means "land, earth", and the verb *yarash* means "to possess" (Deut 3: 20). In just a few instances, just the one here, refers to patrimonial possessions in the sense of direct inheritance<sup>56</sup> (Gen 15: 3-4; 21: 10). Thus, Ahab's request contravened the Law of God, and the king's embezzlement was rather an insult to the Only Owner - Yahwe.

By the intervention of Queen Jezebel, the victim is murdered on the back of a simulacrum: Nabot was accused of blaspheming God and the king. The Mosaic law forbade such behavior (Exod 22: 28), but did not claim the death penalty for the blasphemer, and yet, Ahab and the civil authorities compromised, they decided without any legal basis, the death penalty for Nabot. The contribution of civil authorities or city leaders to the use of crime can not be overlooked, precisely because of the importance of public opinion in the history of Jewish culture<sup>57</sup>. In its essence, the confrontation between

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prophet to warn the wicked king of his imminent death. To be seen William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: The Antiquities of the Jews*, VIII. 13. 8. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), 158. Newer scholars, instead, propose the episode of Nabot's vineyard, an example of confrontation between the rich and the poor, between the subsistence and the lush one; making it clear that this character, named Nabot, would have been a humble peasant who would live his life from one day to the next. To be seen A.Rofé, "The Vineyard of Naboth: The Origin and Message of the Story", *Vetus Testamentum* 1 (1988), 89.

<sup>53</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *1 and 2 Kings* (Georgia: Smyth and Helwys Publishing, 2000), 258.

<sup>54</sup> H.D.M. Spence, Joseph S.Exell, *1 Kings: Exposition and homiletics* (London: Funk&Wagnalls Company, 1909), 507.

<sup>55</sup> R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 569.

<sup>56</sup> Jacob Milgrom, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers* (Philadelphia/Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 2003), 298.

<sup>57</sup> Ksenafu Akulli, "More than just Naboth's Vineyard. Reflections on the Implications of the Community on Exploitation and Corruption in the Context of I Kings 21", *KAIROS – Evangelical Journal of Theology* 2 (2011): 294.

Naboth and Ahab bears the mark of oppression by invoking the false witness (a role played by the city's chieftains). We are given the powerful and influential narrative, which cancels the rights of the weaker than himself, all with the corrupt authority's patronage. We have to do with the abuse of royal power, because more and more in the history of mankind, power corrupts and authority becomes subjective in the exercise of its function. From a legal perspective, we face a case of political oppression against the weakest, where the corrupt<sup>58</sup> community involvement speaks out; that is why we can call this transaction as illegal<sup>59</sup>. Undoubtedly, we are witnessing a case of secularization of human rights - an Old Church institutional reality, within which the supreme human values, decreed by the Law of Yahweh, become relativized<sup>60</sup>.

Due to the death of the innocent Nabot, Ahab comes into possession of the vineyard, not by a legal basis, since there is no one, but by traditional use<sup>61</sup> (2 Sam 16: 4). The greed was great, and due to the location of the vineyard, in the Jezreel region (*Tel 'Ein Yizre'el*), near the Ghilboa Mountains, open to the very fertile valley of the Jezreel, famous for its agricultural and grazing conditions<sup>62</sup>. These reprehensible acts of Israel's civilian authority of those times, led by the most corrupt king in Israel's history, were severely fined by the prophet Elijah, mandated by God to bring to King Ahab the message of his near death<sup>63</sup>. Unfortunately, the victim can not return his right to property, nor is the act of rewarding the innocent possible. Any attempt to correct the situation is doomed to failure, so for Ahab and his home there is only the certainty of the punishment of God, the only One who can intervene into salvation<sup>64</sup>.

The direct confrontation between the apostate king Ahab and the prophet Yahweh, Elijah (vv. 17-20), sets the basis for a prophecy on the end of Ahab's

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<sup>58</sup>The Latin *corrumpo* from which the verb "corrupts" originates, means in the first place "to ruin, to deteriorate, to rot"; but transferred to the moral area, corruption is the vice of the immoral who is in the seat of political, economic or professional power, exploits his position through decision makers or influence, in favor of an illicit personal profit. Generally this is at the expense of the one who is socially dependent on him. It is exactly the situation between the corrupt king Ahab and his subject, the injured winegrower Nabot, who pays the price of his life, the illegal action of the king. To be seen Mitropolitul Bartolomeu, *Corupția Spirituală. Texte Social-Teologice* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Eikon, 2011), 77-78.

<sup>59</sup> Ksenafu Akulli, "More than just Naboth's Vineyard", 296-297.

<sup>60</sup> Jean-Marie Lustiger, "L'Église, la Révolution et les Droits de L'Homme", in *1789 La Commémoration*, eds. Maurice Agulhon, Jean-Denis Bredin (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), 130-173.

<sup>61</sup> James E. Smith, *The Books of History* (Joplin: College Press Publishing Company, 1995), 185.

<sup>62</sup> Nadav Na'aman, "Pharonic Lands in the Jezreel Valley in the Late Bronze Age. Appendix: The Ancient Name of the Jezreel Valley", in *Canaan in the Second Millennium B.C.E.: Collected Essays*, vol. 2, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns Publishers, 2005), 239; Jennie Ebeling, Norma Franklin, Ian Cipin, "Jezreel Revealed in Laser Scans: A Preliminary Report of the 2012 Survey Season," *Near Eastern Archaeology*, 4 (2012): 232-239.

<sup>63</sup> David S. Dockery, *Holman Concise Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman&Holman Publishers, 1998), 144.

<sup>64</sup> Renato Poggioli, "Naboth's Vineyard or the Pastoral view of the Social Order," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 1 (1963): p. 8.

life. We have no reason to doubt its fulfillment, because Ahab died in war, and his son Joram was killed exactly at the place of Naboth's vineyard (2Kgs 9: 22-26), in order to be fulfilled with precision the smaller details of the prophecy brought against the house of Ahab<sup>65</sup> (1Kgs 21: 21-22). In the case of the death of the son of Ahab, killed exactly at the place of Naboth's vineyard, the principle of the Talion's Law, meant to restore the posterior dignity of the injured, applies in this case. The mating of the house of Ahab comes as the punishment of God for the iniquities committed by Jezebel, who killed the prophets of God. The Lord's revenge, presented in 2Kgs 9: 26a, brings with it blood of blood and life for life. The verb used here for revenge, the Hebrew *nqm*, is synonymous with those in 2Kgs 9: 7-10a, and most of its *nqm* occurrences indicate YHWH as the subject of coercive action. In particular, we identify it with the same ideological content in Isaiah's prophecies (1: 2; 34: 8; 35: 4; 47: 3; 59: 17; 61: 2; 63: 4) and Jeremiah's also (8: 15; 10: 50; 15: 51) of the TM text<sup>66</sup>.

Therefore, we find in the episode of Nabot's vineyard, a whole series of violations of basic rights by the corrupt civil authority of Israel: the violation of the right to property (Lev 25; Deut 15: 12-15; 24: 19); equal representation before the courts of law (Deut 19), non-discrimination (Exod 20: 10; Lev 16: 29; 17: 8; 19: 33-34; Deut 10: 19; 24: 19; 1Chr 29: 15; Ps 94: 5-6; 146: 9; Jer 7: 6), and not in the latter, we identify in the act of King Ahab the violation of two commandments in the Decalogue<sup>67</sup>: "*Thou shall not bear false testimony against their neighbor*" (ס: רמֵשׁ לַעֲרֹב הַנֶּעֱצֵת אֶל) and "*Thou shall not lust for their neighbor's house*" (דָּרֶעֶר יִבֵּד מִקֵּהת אורל).

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<sup>65</sup> James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings* (New York: Scribner's Sons Publishing, 1951), 330-334.

<sup>66</sup> H.G.L. Peels, *The Vengeance of God: The Meaning of NQM and the Function of the NQM-Texts in the Context of Divine Revelation in the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995); Patrick T. Cronauer, *The Stories about Naboth the Jezreelite: A Source, Composition and Redaction Investigation of 1 Kings 21 and Passages in 2 Kings 9* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 46-47.

<sup>67</sup> We have rendered these two commandments in the Decalogue in our own translation, because the Romanian Bible translations, through the option of the conjunctive mode ("*Do not Confess Straightly ...*"), lose sight of the imperfect qal of the Hebrew verb *lō ʾā ʾānē(h)* which in Romanian corresponds to the future indicative mode, that is why it translates correctly according to the context, by the formula "*you will not ...*". Also, the translation of the Septuagint also faithfully preserves the original of the Hebrew text, using the verb *οὐ ψευδομαρτυροῦσιν* which is indicative in the future, and must be translated into Romanian by the phrase "*you will not ...*". To be seen Christo H. J. Van der Merwe, Jackie A. Naude, Jan H. Kroeze, *A biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 72; Barbara Friberg, Timothy Friberg, Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 265; William Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000), 224; Timothy Crow, Silviu Tatu, *Ebraica Biblică* (Oradea: Editura Cartea Creștină, 2001), 97-101; Emilian Cornițescu, Dumitru Abrudan, *Limba Ebraică Biblică* (București: EIBMBOR, 2002), 87: "*The imperfect shows us an unfulfilled state, something vague, and it usually translates to the simple future, and in other cases, the context is also expressed by the present or the future compound. Since time is unclear in Hebrew, context and some syntactic rules are used to specify verbal action in time*".

## Conclusions

The mission of the prophet in the Old Testament was to bring the people closer to the requirements of the law of God, so that Israel could continue to benefit from divine protection. Every time Israel slipped on the slope of idolatry, Yahweh sent his servant to warn the people to return to true worship. He also transmitted the punishment fixed by Yahweh for the one who did not want to repent of his immoral deeds. There is a wide range of ways in which God has been in contact with His people to constantly instruct them to attain holiness, a *sine qua non* condition of salvation: by His law through direct communication, dreams, suffering, but especially through His prophets.

A special case in this scenario is the king of Israel, the top representative of civilian authority. The monarchical institution was bound to remain faithful to the law of God, both to keep the state of Israel under the graces of divinity, but also to sustain the cultic office, the daily sacrifices for sins, that the people should advance on the path of holiness. In this scenario, the king owed his people to remain faithful to God, for the embrace of idolatry would be an attempt at the very religious, social and political stability of the nation. But the kings of Israel, except for very few of them, proved to be inclined to idolatry, leaving God by their way of life, and indirectly endeavoring to the welfare of the kingdom. In order to correct his conduct, God prepared the prophet, to go and apostrophe to the irresponsible king, which attracted by his idolatrous behavior, divine wrath on his house, and the people over whom the king was anointed. Most of the time, the prophet's life was put in threat in order to accomplish his mission, which is why we have some cases of prophetic reticence, but in the end God's man assumes the paradigm of the hero who contributes decisively to the purification of the nation he belongs to. The civil authority, in most cases, due to the increase of corruption and sliding on the suicidal slope, rejected the message of the prophet, considering it to be a waste, and above all, he was persecuting the Messenger of the Lord, furthering the wrath of God upon him and Israel in general.

Such a paradigmatic case is also the prophet Elijah, who has suffered much from King Ahab and his wife Jezebel, for his courage to confront him directly and publicly with the king. Because Ahab blatantly assailed the grace of the vine grower Nabot, violating a series of human rights, clearly specified in the Law, prophet Elijah prophesies to him and his house, death - as a punishment from God for wrongdoing. The episode of Nabot's episode is an eloquent example of the Old Testament, which points out how the relationship between the prophet and corrupt civil authority should be conducted. God does not allow any fracture of concession from this relationship - the prophet is obliged to fine-tune the moral slippages of idolatrous

and corrupt royalty. This is in fact the supremacy of the prophet and the nothingness of the king who repudiates Yahweh of his people, risking with it the very political and economic stability of the kingdom over which he is unworthy.

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