

THE EPITHETS OF NINURTA: A REVISED VIEW OF ORIGINAL  
SIN AND THE JEWISH TABOO AGAINST SWINE

## I

Despite various rationalistic explanations which attribute the Jewish prohibition against the eating of pig flesh to a sanitary code arising from any of a number of bases (e. g., the prevention of trichinosis), most scholars who have seriously considered the matter suspect a more deep-seated totemistic cause as the original underlying reason for the religious law. They have failed, however, to agree on the provenience or significance of the totemic source. This note will suggest a specific starting point but will go further and try to relate both this culinary taboo and the biblical (Genesis) episode of the forbidden fruit to early efforts toward enforcing the first and (to the Jews) most important of the Commandments: "I am the Lord thy God . . . Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."

## II

In the fifteenth century B. C. there was near Jerusalem a Beth Ninurta ("House of Ninurta"), a temple dedicated to the deity who had first served mainly as the war god of the Sumerians and had later been taken over and worshipped in a variety of functions by the Babylonians. Clearly, Ninurta was one of the most important of the Middle Eastern deities in the first half of the second millennium B. C., and, for some time at least, probably the principal competitor to Yahweh, the god proposed by the Jews as the one and only true God. The chief center for the worship of Ninurta lay, of course, in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, the home of both the Sumerians and the Babylonians, but the mere existence near Jerusalem of a temple devoted to this god attests the spread of his cult. The Babylonians applied a number of titles or epithets to Ninurta. One was *Nin Killim* "Lord of Swine," and the ceremonial eating of pig meat formed an essential part of the sacraments of that deity, particularly during a number of holidays. Certainly, then, since the eating of swine represented so intimate a connection with the worship of the pagan god, pig meat would have become anathema to the Jews, therefore regarded as ritualistically unclean, hence forbidden. The fact that the avoidance of this food would also have produced the side effect of cutting down on trichinosis could well have reinforced and further justified the injunction — if the correlation was noticed — but probably in no way caused it. The prohibition reflects the effort to stamp out one manifestation of Ninurta worship.

A second epithet applied to the deity was *Šappar Ilāni*, a phrase which presents certain complications of translation and one which undoubtedly has often been misinterpreted. The word *Ilāni*, literally "gods," is cognate with the Hebrew *Elōhim* (both words being plural forms), the Ugaritic *El* (singular), and the Arabic *Allah*, and offers no difficulties. The word *Šappar*, however, is ambiguous: Babylonian had two homophonous words with this phonological shape. One was an indigenous Semitic word meaning "messenger," whence the title would have signified "Messenger of the Gods." The other homophone was a Sumerian word borrowed into Akkadian, whence it passed to the Babylonian, meaning "fruit tree," and, more particularly, "pomegranate tree." Thus, by this interpretation, the phrase (epithet-title) could also have meant "fruit tree [or pomegranate tree] of the gods." An exhortation to avoid not merely other gods but more especially Ninurta (because of the religious threat which his worship posed), could well have utilized any of the epithets or titles regularly applied to that deity, including *Nin Killim* "Lord of the Swine" or *Šappar Ilāni* "Messenger of the Gods," but with the latter subject to misinterpretation as "Fruit Tree of the Gods." The plural *Ilāni* would have gone into Hebrew as *Elōhim*, historically a plural, but later simply "God" (singular). Thus such an injunction would have become simply a warning against the fruit tree of God.

## III

The bible gives no hint, of course, that anything lay behind the forbidden tree episode other than the surface-level indications: the straightforward command not to touch or eat the fruit of this particular tree and the subsequent disobedience to that command. It may be significant that this passage appears just a few lines after another segment, that of Eve's creation from Adam's rib, attributed by many biblical scholars to a similar Sumerian-Babylonian transmission (in this instance with the homophony occurring in the Sumerian *Nin Ti*, where *Nin* means "Lady" but *Ti* means either "rib" or "life"). In any event, if the surmise about the *šappar ilāni* source of the forbidden tree is correct, then Judeo-Christian notions about the original sin must be revised. The guilt lay neither in the willful eating of the fruit nor in the simple infraction of a direct order. Instead, it involved fundamental disloyalty in the breaking of the first and most important religious command — to have no other gods before the one true God: "... for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God."

The same orientation would appear to be behind the pig-eating prohibition. Both phenomena then may be evinced by the epithets of Ninurta.

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## POSTMASTERS' NAMES AND SOUTH DAKOTA PLACE-NAMES

Several studies have been made of South Dakota's place-names, including the monumental *South Dakota Place-Names* compiled and published by the English department of the University of South Dakota in 1941. Most such studies have investigated the origins of the names of at least some of the state's towns; few have elaborated on the origins of the names of the state's post offices. Such studies would be enlightening and important because although more than 600 towns have been surveyed and platted in South Dakota,<sup>1</sup> the area now comprising the state has had more than 2,000 post offices since 1860.<sup>2</sup> At least 25 towns were founded at the sites of previously-established post offices and received their names from the post offices. In reverse, of course, some post offices received their names from towns which had been founded previous to the establishment of the post offices. The majority of post offices established in South Dakota's history were established, however, in farm homes.

Post offices were occasionally named by officials of the Post Office Department in Washington, D. C. and the reasons why postal officials chose particular names are rarely known. Many post offices were named for the same sorts of things for which towns were often named: famous people, towns in the East, nearby natural features, Indian tribes or words, hopes of the settlers, etc. Some post offices, however, were named after their first postmasters. South Dakota has had more than 300 post offices named in this manner. Usually such post offices were given the postmasters' last names. A list of post offices so named is interesting and enlightening because it includes many names that have within themselves suggestions of other origins. A partial list of post offices in South Dakota named after the last names of postmasters includes: Bliss, Brain, Brave, Chase, Chute, Crooks, Lever, Lightcap, Palm, Porch, St. Onge, Shank, Storey, Sweetland, and Voice.

<sup>1</sup> Registers of deeds records in every county in South Dakota. In the course of other research, the author examined these records in search of the plat of every town platted in the state.

<sup>2</sup> U. S. Post Office Department, *Records of Appointments of Postmasters: Dakota Territory, 1860—1889*; U. S. Post Office Department, *Records of Appointments of Postmasters: South Dakota, 1889—1930*. All the data on post offices in this article has been taken from these two references.

Table 1

SOUTH DAKOTA POST OFFICES NAMED AFTER THE LAST NAMES OF  
THEIR FIRST POSTMASTERS, AND LISTED BY COUNTIES

Counties and Post Offices	First Postmasters	Counties and Post Offices	First Postmasters
Aurora County		Clark County	
Canty*	Timoth E. Canty	Hern*	Margaret A. Hern
Mills*	Sidney B. Mills	Todd*	Simeon Todd
Rollins*	Frank P. Rollins	Vandervoort*	Michael Vandervoort
Beadle County		Codington County	
Lawrence*	Ella F. Lawrence	Halse*	Richard D. Halse
Bennett County		Corson County	
Graham*	John Graham	Dugan*	William D. Dugan
Swett	Mrs. Hazel M. Swett	Husebo*	John O. Husebo
Tuthill**	Jennie Tuthill	Kukuk**	Josephine Kukuk
Bon Homme County		Lightcap*	Ernest E. Lightcap
Sipes*	John Y. Sipes	McLaughlin**	Rupert S. McLaughlin
Brown County		Custer County	
Houghton**	William C. Houghton	McCloud*	James McCloud
Mansfield**	John Mansfield	Mohler*	John C. Mohler
Murray*	Henry Z. Murray	Otis*	Rusin Otis
Brule County		Davison County	
Dinehart*	William Dinehart	Stover*	Leo Y. Stover
Grosse*	Paul Grosse	Day County	
Havlatka*	John Havlatka	Douglas*	Thomas A. Douglas
Henzlik*	Frank J. Henzlik	Egeland*	Berte H. Egeland
Buffalo County		Hanse*	Ole Hanse
Duncan*	James J. Duncan	Maloney*	Joseph C. Maloney
Longland*	John C. Longland	Thorson*	Michael Thorson
Richards*	E. Richards	Wist*	Martin Wist
Butte County		Edmunds County	
Halliburton*	Zula Halliburton	Faris*	Mrs. Helen C. Faris
Hodges*	Louise S. Hodges	Hagan*	Steen Hagan
Macy*	Isaac E. Macy	Reasy*	Walter W. Reasy
Oens*	George W. Oens	Fall River County	
Sampont*	Marie Sampont	Coburn*	Hellen C. Coburn
Voice*	Una Voice	Faulk County	
Wescott*	Ruth Wescott	Harrington*	Angie Harrington
Campbell County		Millard**	Morgan G. Millard
Applegate*	Edwin R. Applegate	Gregory County	
Gillette***	John D. Gillette	Baker*	Leonard C. Baker
Hein*	David Hein	Murphy*	Francis P. Murphy
Charles Mix County		Story*	William D. Story
Billings*	Elbridge A. Billings	Haakon County	
Chandler***	Mary F. Chandler	Carlin*	Douglas F. Carlin
Colvin*	John Colvin	Dowling*	Michael P. Dowling
Hebner*	Fred. W. Hebner	Hamlin County	
Kennedy*	Robert C. Kennedy	Kemp*	Oscar P. Kemp
Mansbridge*	Walter Mansbridge	Opdahl*	Hogen Opdahl
Morrison*	Philester J. Morrison	Hand County	

Table 1 (continued)

Counties and Post Offices	First Postmasters	Counties and Post Offices	First Postmasters
Nieven*	Peter Nievien	Bates*	William Henry Bates
Wagner**	Walter W. Wagner	Helmick*	John Helmick
Hand County		Lawrence County	
Houdek*	Wencil Houdek	Montgomery*	Horace A. Montgomery
King*	John M. King	St. Onge**	Henry T. St. Onge
Kolda*	Frank J. Kolda	Lincoln County	
Miller**	William H. Miller	Yager*	Friedrich Yager
Sweetland*	Lorenzo D. Sweetland	Lyman County	
Hanson County		Ammons*	Edythe E. Ammons
Bard*	John O. Bard	Hultman*	John E. Hultman
Harding County		Leir*	Susie L. Leir
Amburn*	Arthur Amburn	Lloyd*	Maria B. Lloyd
Ashcroft*	Thomas Ashcroft	Mitton*	Elmer A. Mitton
Bratsberg*	Ole A. Bratsberg	Moore*	Joseph Moore
Cammack*	Richard T. Cammack	Spears*	Nathan M. Spears
Cory*	Charles Cory	Sweeney*	William E. Sweeny
Dorfman*	Jacob Dorfman	Zickrick*	John Zickrick
Erickson*	Ida Erickson	Marshall County	
Fladmoe*	Adolph P. Fladmoe	Burch***	Edwin Burch
Murchison*	Clara Murchison	Kidder**	John F. Kidder
Oinas*	Osval C. Oinas	Luffman***	Martin M. Luffman
Willett*	Neola Willett	McPherson County	
Hughes County		Chute*	Herbert Chute
Bussard*	James S. Bussard	Knapp*	Johann Knapp
Giddings*	Georg W. Giddings	Martel*	Carl Martel
Rousseau***	Marcel C. Rousseau	Rueb*	Fred A. Rueb
Hutchinson County		Slocum*	Orange W. Slocum
Maxwell*	Henry Maxwell	Sutherland*	Ralph F. Sutherland
Rezek*	Elias Rezek	Meade County	
Hyde County		Caton***	Nellie M. Caton
Phelan*	Anna J. Phelan	Dunnebecke*	Ferdin. F. Dunnebecke
Sedgwick*	John A. Sedgwick	Edson*	Ella M. Edson
Zeigler*	Philip Zeigler	Naper*	Jessamine Naper
Jackson County		Quigley*	Thomas Quigley
Whitfield*	Robert C. Whitfield	Reed*	Charles L. Reed
Jerauld County		Tivis*	George E. Tivis
Fauston*	Mrs. Mary A. Fauston	Mellette County	
Hyde*	Charles H. Hyde	Brave*	Joseph A. Brave
Stetson*	George W. Stetson	Farley*	Nell C. Farley
Waterbury***	Edwin S. Waterbury	Jorgenson*	Jubal V. Jorgenson
Kingsbury County		Kary*	Mrs. Cordelia Kary
Bartram*	Charles Bartram	Knodell*	Elizabeth Knodell
Huffman*	Henry H. Huffman	Schamber*	Peter Chamber
Manchester**	Chester H. Manchester	Miner County	
Lake County		Leet*	Lorenzo D. Leet
Bronson*	Byron A. Bronson	Longley*	James I. Longley
Delmage*	John A. Delmage	Minnehaha County	

Table I (continued)

Counties and Post Offices	First Postmasters	Counties and Post Offices	First Postmasters
Russell*	Timothy P. Russell	Crooks**	David O. Crooks
Moody County		Stanley County	
Brain*	Francis E. Brain	Nitteberg	John S. Nitteberg
Pennington County		Olney*	Edna Lea Olney
Comstock*	Harriet C. Comstock	Rousseau*	Marcelline J. Rousseau
Furnas*	Coy H. Furnas	Smith*	Harry Smith
Hayward*	Charles Hayward	Sully County	
O'Neill*	Lafayette O'Neill	Brayton*	Henry W. Brayton
Romfo*	Ole J. Romfo	Conklin*	Theodore E. Conklin
Widner*	Maggie E. Widner	Goddard*	Albert C. Goddard
Perkins County		Gunsalus*	George F. Gunsalus
Beal*	Alicia Z. G. Beal	McCamley*	Francis P. McCamley
Brayton*	Frank L. Brayton	Marston	Edwin J. Marston
Ellingson*	Andrew Ellingson	Ney*	Samuel B. Ney
Gibson*	Elizabeth M. Gibson	Turley*	James L. Turley
Lever*	Estella M. Lever	Warnecke*	Ida C. Warnecke
Maltby*	Robert H. Maltby	Todd County	
Sorum	Christian Sorum	Cady*	Mrs. Rosa Cady
Potter County		Tripp County	
Davidson*	James W. Davidson	Bliss*	Loren E. Bliss
Gorman***	Roscoe T. Gorman	Gooby*	Della Gooby
Hoven**	Barbara Hoven	Hamill**	Gail M. Hamill
Mann*	William J. Mann	Linden*	Gustave E. Linden
Morrill*	Dellos A. Morrill	McClain*	Tillie D. McClain
Morrison*	Alex Morrison	McNeely***	Lee McNeely
Roberts County		Shoemaker*	Charles H. Shoemaker
Cadwell*	Almus A. Cadwell	Turner County	
Eddy*	Elmer Eddy	Allen*	James T. Allen
Kloepfel*	Peter Kloepfel	Martin*	Miss Ellen H. Martin
Lohre*	Ole O. Lohre	Shank*	Martin Shank
Otto*	Charles Otto	Walworth County	
Palm*	Emanuel J. Palm	Eckis*	Warren Eckis
Winans*	George Winans	Kingman*	Newton H. Kingman
Sanborn County		Morrison*	Alexander Morrison
Callihan*	Cameron B. Callihan	Spiry*	Fredrick Spiry
Spink County		Washabaugh County	
Henika*	Frank Henika	Mousseau*	Louis P. Mousseau
Price*	Isaac N. Price	Porch*	William A. Porch
Stanley County		Yankton County	
Driggers*	Claude O. Driggers	Brudvig*	Nels N. Brudvig
Havercroft*	John H. Havercroft	Nelson*	Christ Nelson
Kimbro*	Edgar J. Kimbro	Ziebach County	
Lacy*	Estella Mae Lacy	Chase*	Albert F. Chase
Lindsay*	Charles W. Lindsay	Engelhard*	Margaret Engelhard

\* Discontinued.

\*\* Platted as a town. Town still in existence.

\*\*\* Platted as a town. Town now dead.

Several South Dakota post offices were named by adding suffixes denoting towns to the last names of the postmasters. For example, suffixes like -ford, -ton, and -ville.

Table 2

SOUTH DAKOTA POST OFFICES NAMED BY ADDING SUFFIXES MEANING  
"TOWN" TO THE LAST NAMES OF THE FIRST POSTMASTERS

Counties and Post Offices	First Postmasters	Counties and Post Offices	First Postmasters
Aurora County		Lawrence County	
Arlandton*	Charles H. Arland	Brashville*	John Brash
Bon Homme County		Lincoln County	
Tacketts Station*	George L. Tackett	Harrisburg**	Johnson Harris
Brule County		Lyman County	
Lyonville*	Henry W. Lyon	Dirkstown*	Peter B. Dirks
Butte County		Meade County	
Rothford*	Cora M. Roth	Jonesville*	Gussie Jones
Clay County		Smithville*	William E. Smith
Westerville*	Ole Westre	Wrightsonville*	Nellie M. Wrightson
Codington County		Moody County	
Kranzburg**	Matthew Kranz	Sealsville*	Daniel Seals
Davison County		Pennington County	
Morrison*	Charles J. Morris	Prattville*	Lorenz D. Pratt
Fall River County		Perkins County	
Shirkville***	Bonnie D. Shirk	Daviston***	Guillette G. Davis
Faulk County		Stanley County	
Ellisville*	Galeb H. Ellis	Milesville**	Jeremiah C. Miles
McGrawville*	George R. McGraw	Moenville*	Gustav O. Moen
Grant County		Wellsburg*	Fredrick H. Wells, Sr.
Strouseton*	Mary Strouse	Sully County	
Haakon County		Lewiston*	M. L. Lewis
Wellsburg*	Edna M. Wells	Turner County	
Hamlin County		Childstown*	James A. Childs
Kellerton*	Charles W. Keller	Washabaugh County	
Hand County		Headlee Ranch*	John C. Headlee
Saylesville*	J. W. Sayles	Yankton County	
Harding County		Gayville**	Elkanah Gay
Cadyville*	A. Clyde Cady	Walshtown*	Edward Walsh
Grossville*	Hyman J. Gross		

\* Discontinued.

\*\* Platted as a town. Town still in existence.

\*\*\* Platted as a town. Town now dead.

Still other South Dakota post offices were named by shortening or altering the last names of the postmasters in other ways.

Table 3

SOUTH DAKOTA POST OFFICES NAMED BY SHORTENING OR BY  
ALTERING THE LAST NAMES OF THE POSTMASTERS IN OTHER WAYS

Counties and Post Offices	First Postmasters	Counties and Post Offices	First Postmasters
Bennett County		Harding County	
Hishield*	William H. Shield	Gallup*	John W. Gallop
Brule County		Gill*	Carl M. Gilberg
Bendon***	John L. Benda	Lake County	
Ployd*	James Ployhart	Egge	Andrew H. Eggebratten
Van*	John Van Patten	Towles*	Jacob G. Towle
Butte County		Lyman County	
Mac*	D. W. McPherson	Lund*	John Lundmark
Penville*	James B. Pinewell	Moody County	
Corson County		Hillsdale*	Joseph P. Hillers
Scheidel*	F. J. Scheidmantel	Kila*	John Kihlberg
Custer County		Washabaugh County	
Strater*	John Strator	Starbright*	Patrick A. Starr
Grant County		Ziebach County	
Strandburg**	John Strandberg	Englehard*	Margaret Engelhard

\* Discontinued.

\*\* Platted as a town. Town still in existence.

\*\*\* Platted as a town. Town now dead.

Table 4

SOUTH DAKOTA POST OFFICES NAMED AFTER THE GIVEN NAMES OF  
THE FIRST POSTMASTERS

Counties and Post Offices	First Postmasters	Counties and Post Offices	First Postmasters
Bon Homme County		Meade County	
Danbury*	Daniel W. Currier	Marcus*	Marcus M. Connelly
Brookings County		Mellette County	
Clare*	Clarence E. West	Cody*	Cody F. Sinning
Day County		Perkins County	
Leonard*	Leonard Hazelden	Magdalene*	Magdalene Kolnitscher
Gregory County		Potter County	
Nordill*	Nordill N. Vroman	Gustine*	Gustavus A. Macham
Hamlin County		Walworth County	
Thue*	Thue C. Petterson	Roselle*	Rosalie Hofmeyer
Lincoln County			
Leeville*			

\* Discontinued.