

TROPHY HUNTING – A BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE FROM THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST OF THE IRON AGE (CIRCA 1200–500 B.C.E.)

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ABSTRACT

Humans have been hunting since time immemorial. In recent times, especially after the shooting of Cecil, a trophy-lion, various questions have surfaced about sport hunting. In this article, evidence from the Bible and archaeology from the Iron Age ancient Near East is presented to enable the reader to understand how and what was hunted. The article will conclude with the biblical Israelites' and their neighbours' attitude towards hunting, in particular trophy hunting.

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, a polemic ensued regarding hunting, especially trophy hunting², after the now world famous lion, Cecil (Fig. 1), was shot in the Hwange National Park in Zimbabwe. Conservationists are calling on the US government and the European Union to ban the import of lion trophies. Earlier this year, Emirates Airlines ceased to carry hunting trophies of elephants, rhinos, lions, and tigers on its planes. South African Airways, which previously banned customers from transporting hunting trophies, lifted the embargo on 22 July 2015 (Gajanan 2015). Pretoria FM, a local radio station in the Republic of South Africa, proclaimed that although hunting for consumption was biblically justified, trophy hunting was not (Pretoria FM 2015).

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² Trophy: "hunting or war souvenir: a memento that symbolizes victory or success, e.g. the head of an animal killed during a hunting expedition or something taken from an enemy killed in battle" (Encarta Dictionaries 2009).



Figure 1: Cecil, Zimbabwe's most famous lion
(Gajanan 2015)

This prompts the question: is it possible to posit a clear answer vis-à-vis hunting, especially trophy hunting, by studying the everyday life of biblical Israel and the ancient Near East in conjunction with the Bible's view on hunting?³

ORIGINS OF HUNTING

Hunting is defined as the “sport that involves the seeking, pursuing, and killing of wild animals and birds, called game and game birds” (Encyclopædia Britannica 2012:s.v. hunting). To early mankind, hunting was not a sport, but a necessity to survive and provided food from the meat, clothing from the skin and material for tools from the bones, horns and hooves. In the time of biblical Israel, due to development in agriculture, hunting was no more a necessity to survival, but it still played an important role in their daily life. Game was still utilised as food and by-products, but

³ Due to the lack of an all-inclusive terminology for hunting that excludes sport hunting (trophy hunting), the term “non-sport hunting: will be used collectively for all other types of hunting.

frequently wild animals were killed because they interfered with agricultural practices. Herbivores destroyed crops and carnivores were a threat to livestock (Encyclopædia Britannica 2012:s.v. hunting).

The basic productive/economic unit in Israel was husbandry and agriculture and animal breeding were joint ventures on most farms (Deist 2000:143). Purely based on economics, any threat to the productivity of the unit (farm) would have been met head-on. In protecting their livelihood, wild animals were killed, thus hunting was part of the every-day life of Iron Age Israel. Boys learned from an early age how to handle weaponry, such as the bow, sling and sword, by accompanying their fathers in such activities as warfare and hunting (King & Stager 2001:46). The hunter's continual training with his weapons as well as in tracking and stalking had a social value in maintaining group activity, earning prestige, and preserving tradition (Encyclopædia Britannica 2012:s.v. hunting).

The subsistence farmer killed game either to utilise the carcass or to eliminate a threat to the farm, whether it was to their crops or livestock. For such a person hunting was part of his occupation. Early hunting for sport was for rulers and their nobles, those having the most leisure-time and wealth (Encyclopædia Britannica 2012:s.v. hunting).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE OF HUNTING

There is minimal archaeological evidence of hunting in Palestine. The archaeological evidence is from the neighbouring countries where elaborate hunting scenes are portrayed. This is not unexpected, because there is a general lack of pictorial evidence regarding Iron Age Israel throughout Palestine and no deduction regarding their attitude towards trophy hunting can be made accordingly.

The Egyptians were “sport hunters” where lion hunting was the sport of kings (Pfeiffer 1975:s.v. lion). The Assyrians and Babylonians were also partial to the chase, as is shown by the dramatic hunting scenes depicted on the walls of their temples and palaces. Ashurbanipal(669–627 B.C.E.), the “Hunting King”, in the seventh century

B.C.E. had himself immortalised in a bas-relief with the accompanying boast: “I killed the lion” (Encyclopædia Britannica 2012:s.v. hunting; Pfeiffer 1975:s.v. Ashurbanipal). The Assyrians captured lions, kept them in caves and then released them for the king to hunt. Different reliefs portrayed Ashurbanipal using a bow and arrow from a chariot, a spear/lance from horseback (Pfeiffer 1975:s.v. hunting) and facing a lion with a sword after it was shot with an arrow (Fig. 2). The choice of weapons was made without the consideration of minimising the risk to the hunter. The king hunted to both improve and prove his strength and accuracy with the instruments of war. This sport hunting, as portrayed in archaeological finds of the ancient Near East, was done with the sole purpose of displaying the king’s prowess and had nothing to do with defending livestock or using the animal products.



Figure 2: Assyrian lion hunt (Van der Crabben:s.v. Assyrian lion hunt).

HUNTING WEAPONS

Hunting weapons were usually the same as the personal weapons used in war. This is part of the reason that royalty were “required” to hunt. They had to practice with the weaponry that would be used in battle, as well as prove their mettle. The weapons used in hunting were the bow and arrow, sling and stone, lance, spear, sword, *knobkerrie* (similar to a throwing stick), snares and traps (Gispen, Oosterhoff & Ridderbos 1977:s.v. jag [hunting]). In contrast to the neighbouring kingdoms, where clear-cut archaeological evidence of sport hunting exist, the Iron Age Israelites seemingly practiced non-sport hunting and would have used weapons that killed game as effective as possible from as safe a distance as possible. The long-range weapons they would have used – the sling and the bow – are discussed below.

Sling and slingstone

The sling was a formidable weapon, which could slay lions and bears (1 Sam 17). The sling was made from perishable material (leather or cloth), thus archaeologists rely on written accounts and reliefs from battles to deduce what the sling looked like in the Iron Age (King & Stager 2001:228). It consisted of a small strap or socket of leather to which two cords of approximately 60 centimetres were attached. The hunter (as did the warriors depicted in the reliefs) held the ends of the cords in one hand with one of the cords tied around the wrist, placed the missile snugly in the strap and whirled the socket and missile rapidly around his head. If the Lachish reliefs portraying the Assyrian slingers (Scheepers & Scheffler 2000:256) are used, together with the “anatomical man” of 1.70 metres to extrapolate the dimensions of an Iron Age sling, the length of 60 centimetres for the cords of the sling is proportionally correct. By letting go of the unattached cord at the right moment, the slinger could let the missile fly out of the socket at a high velocity with considerable accuracy (Encyclopædia Britannica 2012:s.v. sling; Stander & Louw 1990:s.v. *slingervel* [sling]).



Figure 3: Sling stones from Lachish (Scheepers 2011:36)

The sling stones, on the other hand, were made from very durable material. Hundreds of these round tennis/baseball/cricket ball size limestone or flint sling stones, six to seven centimetres in diameter, were found at Lachish (Fig. 3). Stern's (2001:6) opinion, that lime was used to produce projectiles is probably a case where the wrong terminology is used and it should have been "limestone". Hills of chalk and chalky limestone are part of the geography around Lachish (Scheepers & Scheffler 2000:215). The data from the Lachish excavations suggests that more flint sling stones were recovered than limestone projectiles (Ussishkin 2004). It was time-consuming and labour intensive to make the round sling stones, whether they were made of flint or limestone. Any round stone, for example from a riverbed, such as David used against Goliath, would have sufficed.

Flint and limestone are both non-metallic minerals with more or less similar specific gravity of 2.6, meaning projectiles of the same dimensions more or less weigh the same.⁴ In comparison to a modern-day cricket or baseball ball that weighs about

⁴ Definition: "Specific gravity (G) is defined as the ratio between the weight of a substance and the weight of an equal volume of water at 4 °C (39 °F). Thus a mineral with a specific gravity of 2 weighs twice as much as the same volume of water" (Encyclopædia Britannica 2012: *s.v.* specific gravity).

170 grams, a Lachish sling stone was relative heavy for its size at approximately 250 grams. Both types would have been lethal if they struck an animal directly on the head, while a hit to the body would cause blunt force trauma but not necessarily a fatality. Such a wounding hit could be dangerous to the hunter if the wounded animal consequently attacked him.

Projectiles of 250 grams could be hurled at up to 240 km/h (King & Stager 2001:229), which produced 556 joules of kinetic energy. Compared to modern hunting weapons such as a .308 Winchester (7.62 mm), which produces 2720 joules kinetic energy and a handgun, the 9 mm pistol, which produces 468 joules kinetic energy, the sling was an “adequate” weapon, but not nearly as powerful as modern hunting weapons (Cheney 2003:34).

Injuries from sling stones

Medium velocity projectiles, such as sling stones, cause blunt force trauma. A blunt force injury may result in a bruise or superficial laceration (ragged cut), as well as a fracture to underlying bones, with subsequent internal bleeding. A hit to the body is less lethal than a hit to the head due to the resilience of the animal’s body and would not, as a rule, result in internal bleeding and death.

However, a hit to the head is another matter. Brain injury and intra-cranial bleeding due to a cranial-fracture is usually fatal. If not outright fatal, a hit to the head may stun the animal, which enables the hunter to approach the animal and kill it with a short-range weapon (e.g., knife, sword). This is the scenario described in 1 Samuel 17 when David relates how he defended his father’s livestock.

Sling and sling stones and the bible

The Hebrew word אבן occurs 260 times in the Hebrew Bible and is translated “stone” with various meanings, inter alia “sling stone” (Vine, Unger & White 1996:s.v. stone). The general understanding of the size of the stone used in a sling, especially in the Afrikaans-speaking community, is that of a *klippie*, which translates as pebble. In 1 Sam 17:40, the *Afrikaanse Ou Vertaling* (Old Afrikaans Translation) uses the

expression *gladde klippe* (smooth stones), which is not the same as the diminutive *klippie*. *Klippie* is used in the *Afrikaanse Nuwe Vertaling* (New Afrikaans Translation). When laymen are questioned as to their understanding of the size of David's sling stones, the general idea is that of a *klippie*, not bigger than a golf ball; the person is usually astonished when informed that it is more or less the size of a cricket ball, but twice as heavy. This misperception is reflected in van Zyl's (1993: 1 Sam 17:40) and Stander and Louw's (1990:s.v. *slingervel*) use of the word *klippie* when they explain the use of a sling and sling stones.

The best known biblical "sling story" is David felling Goliath with his sling (1 Sam 17). Before David took on Goliath, he told King Saul how he had defended his father's flock against bears and lions (1 Sam 17:33–35). He made use of his sling to smite the "sheep-thief". A *klippie* (golf ball size), adequate for a "thieving" hare, would not have had enough energy to stun or inflict a lethal blow to the bear or lion, but a stone of cricket ball size, with twice the weight, would have.

Bow and arrow

The bow and arrow is one of the most ancient weapons used in hunting and warfare. It is a system for launching a straight sharpened projectile at a distant target. To use a bow and arrow, the archer places an arrow against the bowstring and pulls the bowstring back, bending the bow and storing the muscle energy of the archer in it. By letting go of the drawn bowstring, the archer suddenly releases the energy stored in the bent bow, rapidly propelling the arrow forward (Microsoft Encarta 2009:s.v. bow and arrow).

The bow

The Iron Age Israelites eventually made use of the composite bow with a recurved shape (Fig. 4). The composite bow was made of several strips of wood (laminated) for resiliency, along with sections of animal horn, animal tendons and sinews and glue. This combination of materials provided the bow with the flexibility and strength needed for effective combat and hunting (Ronald 1995:s.v. bow). The more powerful

composite bows, being very highly stressed, reversed their curvature when unstrung. They acquired the name “recurved” since the outer arms of the bow curved away from the archer when the bow was strung, which imparted a mechanical advantage at the end of the draw. When strung, it extended from the head to the waist of the archer. This powerful bow had a range exceeding 200 meters (Guilmartin 2012:s.v. military technology; King & Stager 2001:227).

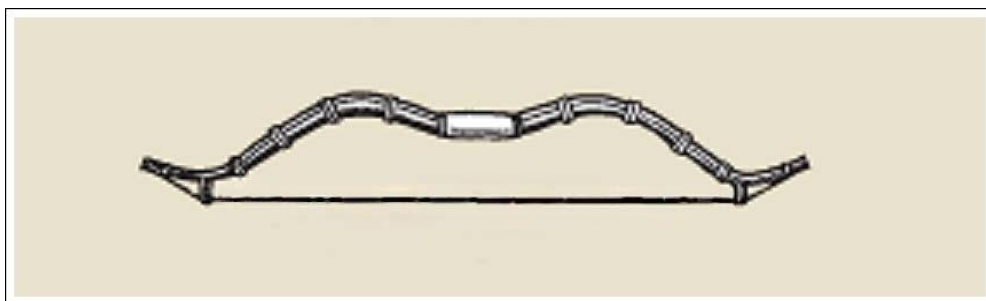


Figure 4: The strung composite bow with a recurved shape
(Encyclopædia Britannica 2012:s.v. bow and arrow: historic bows)

The bowstring was made of organic material, but it is not clear which type of organic material was utilised – flax cord (Deist 2000:216-217), sheep’s gut (Gowers 1987:s.v. foot-soldier) or ox gut (Pfeiffer 1975:s.v. bow and arrow).

Ballistic coefficient is the effect of the design of the projectile – a cylindrical projectile, designed longer, with a smaller-diameter (high ballistic coefficient), which, having the same weight as a larger round spherical object, will lose velocity slower than the spherical projectile (low ballistic coefficient) (Cheney & Cheney 2004:25–26). The sling stone, due to its weight, retained enough velocity to still be lethal at the end of their trajectories, while the much lighter arrows lost velocity due to air resistance, down to speeds where they fell out of the air. In modern-day bow hunting the average shot at game is less than 40 metres, despite the use of better equipment. Thick-skinned animals, such as Cape buffalo, are usually shot from not further than 25 metres (de Beer 2007). This is to ensure the lethality of the wound inflicted by the arrow, before its speed is reduced due to air resistance. The Iron Age hunters probably followed the same *modus operandi* and approached the game as close as possible. In

addition, smaller game have the ability to “jump the string”. If the hunter is far enough from the animal, the animal, when alerted from the movement and sound of firing the arrow, has time to move enough to result in the arrow missing the animal, even if the hunter’s aim was true.

The arrow

The arrow is a long, straight projectile with a pointed tip. The shaft was made of reed or wood with feathered tails to stabilise the arrow in flight. Shafts were made of perishable material, thus archaeologists do not have the privilege to have Iron Age arrow shafts to study. The shafts would have been as smooth as possible to ensure stability during flight for maximum range. The tip of the arrow, the arrowhead, was made of a different material than that of the shaft, with a sharp point and two or three ‘wings’ with cutting edges to inflict as lethal a wound as possible.

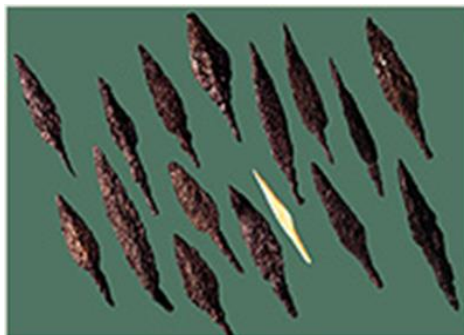


Figure 5: Iron arrowheads excavated at Lachish, with one made of bone (Ussishkin 2004)

Arrowheads are made by flattening a round or square iron bar by hammering it. This process is made easier by first heating the metal in a forge or in the coals of a very hot fire. Once the metal has been flattened, it is then shaped and the edges sharpened. It is then classified as a broadhead. The broadhead is mounted into the shaft by drilling or burning a channel into which the tang⁵ of the broadhead is inserted. It can be glued in

⁵ Tang: “sharp end going into handle: the sharp part at one end of a chisel, knife blade, or

place. The shaft is bound on with sinew or other suitable material. It is the degree of sharpness that determines the rate of bleeding and therefore the effectiveness of the broadhead (Cheney & Cheney 2004:88-89). The Iron Age arrowheads were about seven centimetres long and approximately two to three centimetres across (King & Stager 2001:227).

Iron Age arrowheads were relative small and leaf- or rhomboid-shaped with two cutting edges (Negev 1996:s.v. weapons and warfare; King & Stager 2001:227). Most of the arrowheads found at Lachish were made of iron (Fig. 5), which is on par with the general tendency regarding the production of arrowheads. Both the Assyrian and Israelite armies at Lachish utilised recurved bows shooting iron tipped arrows, which is the same equipment that an Iron Age hunter would have used.

Bow and arrow injuries

Ballistics of the arrow determines the energy at the end of the trajectory when that energy is transferred into the target, which is less than at the beginning of the trajectory.⁶ An arrow flying through the air eventually slows down and falls because of air resistance (Pearcey & Thaxton 1996: *s v* Galileo's Theory of Relativity). The archer's intent was to hit an animal before this happened to ensure penetration with a resulting injury. Three factors influence penetration, namely momentum, shaft drag factor and the type of arrowhead (De Beer 2007). Due to the lack of available data a general posit of wounds inflicted by arrows will be discussed, bearing in mind the deadliness of a bow and arrow – 115 joules kinetic energy from an 85 pound draw-strength bow with a single 42 gram arrow, with a razor-sharp two-winged broadhead, is enough to kill a Cape buffalo weighing 800 kilograms from 25 metres (de Beer 2007).

other similar tool that secures it to the handle or shaft” (Encarta Dictionaries 2009:s.v. tang).

⁶ Ballistics: science dealing with the motion of bodies projected through space (Microsoft Encarta 2009:s.v. ballistics).

An iron arrowhead, with two cutting edges, will damage the various tissues of the intended target through which it penetrates. Contrary to blunt force trauma from a sling stone, where a large wound may result in minor haemorrhage, a relative small cut from a very sharp arrowhead can result in a fatal haemorrhage.

The intention of the ancient archers was to inflict as deep a sharp penetrating wound as possible, to inflict a fatal wound to the animal. The cut from an Iron Age broadhead inflicted a two to three centimetre wide cut for the whole length of the arrow's penetration track. With a minimum of three centimetres penetration, internal organs such as the lungs or liver of, for example, a gazelle, could have been damaged. The cut from the sharp-edged arrowhead would then cause relative uncontrolled internal bleeding with potentially fatal results. The deeper the arrow penetrates the longer the cut from which the animal can bleed. Blood vessels, as a rule of thumb, spread like the branches of a tree from the central part of the body (heart) to the outside. The bigger vessels are deeper in the body, where a deep penetrating broadhead would cause a massive haemorrhage, which would quickly result in death.

THE DANGERS OF HUNTING

Apart from the obvious danger of an enraged animal that might kill a hunter, the Iron Age hunter also faced a spectrum of pathogens. Hunting could result in a wide range of injuries, from a minor scratch to fatal injuries. The danger was that all non-fatal injuries had the potential to turn fatal due to pathogens. Injuries were not the only entry point of these pathogens and Smith and Horwitz (1998:218) state the following about the "micro-dangers" of hunting:

Zoonoses transmitted by insects, or directly contracted from hunting, butchering and consuming animals, or working skins, bone and ivory probably formed the main source of infection during this period. Cohen (1989) lists toxoplasmosis, hemorrhagic fevers, leptospirosis, brucellosis, anthrax, salmonellosis, gangrene, botulism, tetanus and trichinosis as some of the diseases contracted from hunting and eating wild animals.

Smith and Horwitz make a generic statement about diseases associated with hunting. Israel, with the Mosaic Law as hygienic guide, probably did not suffer these diseases to the same degree as their neighbours due to their adherence to the hygienic laws.

THE BIBLE AND HUNTING

The two most noted hunters in the Bible are Nimrod (Gen 10:9) and Esau (Gen 25:27), though they lived prior to Iron Age Israel, whose daily life is under discussion. The Bible acknowledges hunting, as seen in the Mosaic Law, where the hunter shall pour out the blood of the slain game (Lev 17:13; Deut 12:15-22). Numerous metaphorical references are made to hunting. A major factor, which influenced hunting practices in Iron Age Israel, was a restriction dictated in the Hebrew Bible, namely the classification of animals into clean and unclean groups.

Clean and unclean animals

Israel's view of animals vis-à-vis clean and unclean animals according to the Mosaic Law (Lev 11; Deut 14) definitely played a role in their attitude towards hunting. All land-dwelling and winged carnivorous creatures were seen as unclean, while herbivores were classified according to their hooves and whether they chew the cud (ruminant) or not. Pig remains in the Holy Land give an indication of the adherence of Israel to the Mosaic Law and Russell (2009:51) write:

The absence of pig bones in the hill country settlements appears to be an expression of culture, rather than ecology. During the pre-monarchic period, as they were forging their identity, the settlers probably developed the pork taboo in contrast to their neighbours – the pig (as was the case with circumcision) becoming a *distinctive cultural marker* [italics mine] between the Israelites and those around them... Finkelstein (1996:206) has suggested that 'pig taboos ... may be the most valuable tool for the study of ethnicity of a given, single Iron I site'.

The Iron Age Israelites followed the Mosaic Law vis-à-vis clean and unclean domestic animals in such a way that it became a distinctive cultural marker, thus the same can be supposed regarding wild animals.

Clean animals – gazelle

The gazelle is a small, dainty, graceful antelope with recurved horns. Two varieties of gazelles existed in Palestine, the dorcas gazelle (*Gazella dorcas*), which is pale fawn in colour and 21 or 22 inches tall (Fig 6) and the Arabian gazelle (*G. arabica*; now extinct), which is dark smoky fawn colour and 24 or 25 inches tall. Both sexes have hollow horns. Gazelles were seen as clean according to Mosaic Law, because they were ruminants with cloven hooves, thus fit for consumption.



Figure 6: Dorcas gazelle (*Gazella dorcas*)
(Encyclopædia Britannica 2012:s.v. gazelle).

In biblical times the gazelle was probably the game animal most hunted in Iron Age Israel and although Proverbs 6:5 and Isaiah 13:14 do not prove this opinion, they are an indication that gazelles were seen as game-animals. The same applies to the “table of Solomon”, where gazelles were a daily feature (1 Kings 4:23). In Israel, the weapon of choice to hunt gazelles was probably the bow and arrow, similar to Pharaoh Tutankhamen who hunted gazelles with bow and dogs, although the Israelites

probably did not use “unclean dogs” in the hunt (Pfeiffer 1975:s.v. gazelle). The bow and arrow could inflict a fatal wound from a long range.

Unclean animals – hare

Hare (*Lepus europaeus judaeus*, *L. capensis*, and *L. arabicus*), herbivorous rodents, were found both in open country and in woods, preferably near cultivated land in Iron Age Israel and would have been a pest to the Israelite farmers’ crops (Pfeiffer 1975:s.v. hare). Hare are not true ruminants, but regurgitate food to “chew the cud”. Additionally hare do not have hooves, thus Lev 11:6 and Deut 14:7 declare the hare as unclean and they were not available to the Israelites to be hunted for consumption. No further mention is made of the hare in the Bible. This leaves the question whether the Israelites killed hares to protect their crops – without utilising the hare – because hare were widely hunted by other peoples in ancient times (Pfeiffer 1975:s.v. hare). The same argument applies to the porcupine (*Hystrix cristata*), an edible but unclean vermin to crops. These animals were most likely killed and, without being touched, left to the scavengers. A throwing stick, sling or bow would have been lethal to these animals, with the sling probably on top of the list, because an “unclean” stone, after touching the unclean animal to kill it, could have been left. An iron-tipped arrow, due to the monetary value of the iron, would not have been left, but the uncleanness would have caused problems. The ritual cleansing of unclean objects is not part of the scope of this article.

Non-sport hunting and sport hunting

There is a definite difference in the attitude of the sport hunter versus the non-sport hunter, which results in different hunting methods.

Non-sport hunting

Non-sport hunting was definitely part of Iron Age Israel as portrayed in the Bible. This involved hunting for food, such as Solomon’s table (Lev 11; Deut 14; 1 Kings

4:23), and defending the economic unit of the day – livestock and crops on the farm. David used his sling, probably in combination with a dagger or even a short sword, to kill “the bear and the lion”, when it threatened his father’s flock (1 Sam 17:34-37). There can be no question about the Bible’s blessing of hunting to defend farming activities or to hunt for the pot, as seen in the Mosaic Law. Non-sport hunting was part of the everyday tasks and the hunter had nothing to prove regarding his prowess. The aim was to dispatch game as quickly as possible with the minimum risk to the hunter, especially where livestock were being protected against predators. The weapons used in the hunt would have been chosen accordingly. A “long-range” bow or sling would have been preferable to a “medium-range” spear, with the close-up sword or knife the last line of defence.

Sport hunting

The question about the Bible’s position vis-à-vis sport/trophy hunting remains debatable. Nowhere in the Bible is there a direct reference toward sport hunting or hunting for leisure. However, there are indications of the use of wild animals or their products (trophies) for purposes other than for food or other daily necessities. Solomon imported inter alia ivory, apes and peacock (1 Kings 10:22; 2 Chron 9:21). First, elephants (African: *Loxodonta africana*; Indian: *Elephas maximus*) are by definition not clean animals, although they are not mentioned in the Bible. Consequently, ivory products should have been regarded as unclean. The same argument is applicable to hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*) ivory. Notwithstanding the probable uncleanness of ivory products, it was part of the “public display of economic status” for the rich, as seen in Amos 6:1-6 (Deist 2000:178). It was part of the royal splendour of Solomon. The animals from which the ivory was harvested were hunted for no other reason than their tusks for public display of economic status and had definitely nothing to do with requirements for daily life.

Secondly, Solomon imported *apes* and *peacocks* for his court. There are different opinions regarding the translation of the Hebrew word תכיים. The usual translation is peacock, but some thought it to be a reference to old world monkeys brought from

East Africa or to guinea hens from the Upper Nile (Pfeiffer 1975:s.v. peacock). Nevertheless, these animals' purpose was public display of economic status, not to be eaten or processed for utility products. Even if the peacocks were killed, their plumage would have been displayed for their beauty and not their usefulness.

The Iron Age Israelites were not averse to taking trophies. David did it on two "memorable" occasions. The first was when he took Goliath's armour and cut off his head (1 Sam 17:51-57). The armour was put in his tent, but the "main" trophy, the head, was taken to Jerusalem and displayed before King Saul. The second time David took "trophies" was when Saul required him to kill 100 Philistines for his daughter's hand and David and his men went and killed 200. He brought back the 200 foreskins, as Pfeiffer (1975:s.v. foreskin) put it, "as proof of their slaughter and of his prowess". This was "trophies" taken from enemies in battle.

Although there is no clear-cut mention of hunting trophies in the Bible, it is certain that the idea of taking trophies was not a foreign concept in Iron Age Israel.

CONCLUSION

Hunting has always been part of the human race and Iron Age Israelites hunted without a doubt. Although the Bible and archaeological evidence in Palestine do not show sport/trophy hunting, Iron Age Israel was not averse to taking trophies, albeit war trophies. The probable reason they did not partake in sport hunting, as did their neighbours, for example Assyria and Egypt, was the restrictions vis-à-vis the Mosaic Law's stipulations regarding clean and unclean animals. The reason they did not partake in hunting animals for trophies was probably due to the uncleanness of the animal and not because they had a problem, moral or ethical, with sport hunting. There seems to be no foundation to the argument that the Bible allows non-sport hunting but not trophy hunting. However, the argument cannot be stretched to state that the Bible supports sport hunting, but merely that it is neutral. Similarly, it can be argued that archaeological evidence regarding Iron Age Israel is neutral vis-à-vis sport hunting.

However, the archaeological evidence from the ancient Near East, as a locality, without a doubt portrays a trophy hunting society.

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