finds means to extend the relationship of “brotherhood” to voluntarily contracted orders supported by oaths. The Near East, including Israel, found itself in this situation and applied the oath in economic, political, and religious affairs. At a later time, curses lost their force and yielded either to a relatively free relation (as in Christianity) or to a secular economic system supported by the courts or by threats of the loss of further business. To what extent a covenant with curses or a moral wisdom with rewards can be considered to be continuingly legitimate in the present world is a question that cannot be quickly answered.

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THE DOG IN EX. XI 7

RSV has in Ex. xi 7 But against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, not a dog shall growl. The very meaning of this expression is to my mind not yet explained by any commentary ancient or modern. The usual rendering of the Hebrew לְּהֶרָס עֵבֶר אֵילֶי נַעַר not a dog, shall not move his tongue is like e.g. the A.V. shall a dog not move his tongue or more literally shall a dog not sharpen his tongue 1). The earliest translations move in the same direction as RSV, e.g. LXX and the Targum of Onkelos have a dog will not make a noise with his tongue 2). As result of this translation the majority of scholars interpret this expression as that a dog will not bark or will not be aggressive against any Israelite or his beasts 3). The question is, however, what is the real meaning of this expression in light of this explanation? Why should the barking dog appear almost out of thin air? Is the expression with this interpretation so important that it could validate its inclusion in this part of the narrative? To give more or less satisfactory replies on these questions, we must investigate the expression afresh.

The real problem of the expression is the verb יָהְרַס. With an example of the same kind of verb from Joshua x 21 this verb is listed in most of the dictionaries as sharpen, combined with the word tongue, it means sharpen the tongue 4). In Akkadian we have a word ḫurāṣu(m)

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2) LXX has χοίραν κων τῇ γλῶσσῇ αὐτοῦ and the Targum of Onkelos has נַעַר לְבָן לְבָן לְבָן לְבָן לְבָן for the meaning of the stem neḇah in Aramaic cf. Gustaf H. DALMAN, Aramäisch-neuhebräisches Wörterbuch, 249.
3) Cf. e.g. A. DILLMANN, Die Bücher Exodus and Levitikus, 1897, 107-8, J. SCHONEVELD in Commentaar op de Heilige Schrift, 1956, 149.
4) Cf. KÖHLER-BAUMGARTNER, Lexicon in veteris testamenti libros, 1953, ad loc.
with the meaning to cut off, or to cut in 1). The same stem occurs in Ugaritic referring probably to a harrow or sledge 2). On the other hand, we have another stem of bdras listed in the dictionaries as the second stem with the meaning to crave for or to be eager after. In only one indisputable place in the Old Testament does it appear, viz. 2 Sam. v 24 where it is rendered by RSV with bestir yourself. There is a vague possibility that the same stem occurs in Ugaritic as št in 1 Aqhat 10 3). The only clear cognate from other Semitic languages is the Arabic word with approximately the same meaning. It is possible that the verb bdras in Ex. xi 7 could be connected to the latter meaning and could be translated: a dog shall not move his tongue eagerly against...... This translation is in concord with the meaning of the verb in 2 Sam. v 24 where David is commanded to move eagerly to attack the Philistines. It is also possible to translate Joshua x 21 with be (the enemy) does not move his tongue eagerly against the Israelites. This may mean in this particular case that the enemy was not allowed to slander the Israelites after their defeat. On the contrary, the enemy is subjugated. But what could be the meaning when a dog is the subject of the sentence? It seems to make better sense to connect bdras with eager movement than with sharpening. The reason for this assumption is the following: The only satisfactory explanation for the presence of the dog here in Ex. xi 7 is that the dog will not be allowed to lick the blood or eat the flesh of the Israelites. On the contrary, it is implied that this calamity would overtake the Egyptians, especially their first-born. In other words, the expression in Ex. xi 7 has the threat of a well known and common curse of the ancient Near East although in a negative formulation. The trangressor of a contract either in the international or civil field is sometimes threatened with a curse of exposure of the dead body and the torming and eating thereof by wild animals, birds of prey and dogs. We want to draw the attention to the following: In a vassal-treaty of Esarhaddon the infidel is threatened with the curse that a swift arrow will kill him and that his flesh will feed eagle and jackal 4). Note also the following examples, a few within many:

3) Aistleitner, Wörterbuch, 107. Others arrange the words differently, e.g. tšt brs, cf. A. Herdner, Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabetiques, 1963, 87 and brs is taken as a noun, gold.