

possessions, and they are all stoned and burned, which satiates YHWH's anger and enables the Israelites to take the city of Ai (Josh 8:1–29).

Achan here represents the quintessential free-rider, violating sociocultural mores in order to take advantage of resources facilitated by the broader cooperation of the social group. Achan's transgression in and of itself has no direct effect on the success of the social group, but if it goes unpunished, more free-riding is likely to follow, threatening the cohesion of the group. Because YHWH—who is fundamentally a prosocial agent—imposes and enforces the *herem*, its violation results in YHWH's withdrawal of support from the siege of Ai, resulting in thirty-six deaths and Israel's defeat. Because Achan's sin is reflectively framed as a contaminant that must be rooted out from Israel, the punishment extends beyond the offender to all those within his household who stood to benefit, whether connected by kinship or servitude (cf. Berman 2014). This fictive account rhetorically elevates the stakes vis-à-vis free-riding for those hearers for whom the story was authoritative (it is referenced in a later warning in Josh 22:20).

The ritualization of this act of restraint by including it in the concept of *herem* appropriates the powerful influences of divine scrutiny and punishment, as well as the CREDs (credibility enhancing displays) framework. The simple prohibition of taking the spoils of conquest on the grounds that leadership wants it, or that it advantages and disadvantages different groups and creates chaos, thereby undermining social cohesion and cooperation, would not go over incredibly well. Framing the prohibition as a ritual act, however, endows it with increased social salience and brings YHWH and their oversight into play. Enforcement with the death penalty could take place without the deity, but their ability to covertly monitor all members of the group changes the dynamic considerably. YHWH was the only one who knew that Achan had taken from the spoils, indicating that there is no hiding from the divine monitor (cf. Ps 139). The story additionally heightens the consequences of the violation of this putatively arbitrary ritual act by attributing to it the deaths of thirty-six Israelite troops and the melting of the hearts of the people. What is more, future military endeavors are threatened, not only by the deity's withdrawal of support, but also by the damage done to the reputation of Israel and its deity—this is not a victimless crime. The story of Achan presents one of the most unobstructed views in the Hebrew Bible of the conceptualization of YHWH as a prototypical socially concerned deity. It borrows the concept of *herem* from an earlier period when it may have served to signal the equity and equal subordination of the different members of a loose federation to the deity that unified them, and leverages it as part of a terrifying warning regarding the deity's unseen monitoring.

DIVINE COUNCIL. Like the societies surrounding them, Israel and Judah structured their understanding of the pantheon's sociality and administration around the