

***Herem* in the Old Testament**

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One of the thorniest issues in Old Testament interpretation revolves around how to translate and understand the Hebrew noun *herem* and related verb *haram*, often rendered by modern English translations as “devoted to destruction” or put “under the ban.” Not only is that Hebrew root relatively common—the verb appears 50 times in the Old Testament and the noun 29—but it also plays an important role in the Old Testament both theologically and ethically. Discussions of its theological and ethical implications sometimes assume the meaning of the root without actually analyzing how it is used. To further complicate matters, the root appears in diverse situations throughout the Old Testament, making it difficult to provide a standard meaning or translation.

To address this problem, the Warfare and Violence in the Old Testament study group at the Evangelical Theological Society decided to focus on the meaning of *herem* for its invited session at the 2025 annual meeting. This session was divided into two parts, each of which had two shorter invited papers followed by a lengthy audience-driven discussion. The papers were designed to address *herem* from four different directions. Charlie Trimm focused on recent research on the use of the root in the Mesha Stela and in the Levitical texts to highlight the diversity in how it is used. Michael Morales offered a reevaluation of how the word is used in Deuteronomy, while David Firth examined the word in the rest of the narrative books in the Old Testament to provide further historical perspective. Finally, Myrto Theocharous analyzed the translation of the root into Greek and some of the early reception history of the root in Greek texts. Many other topics could have been profitably included (such as a paper on the root in the prophets), but these four papers provided a solid foundation for understanding how *herem* functions. The in-person discussion during the session was robust and insightful, and our hope is that the publication of the papers here in *HIPHIL Novum* will also inspire extended discussion about this important root.