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## Treating Traum(a): Examples in the Tanakh that Mirror Events during the Life of Bonhoeffer and Crimes of the Ian Rankin Novel *Knots and Crosses*

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### Abstract

The Hebrew Bible (Tanakh) contains a wealth of stories reflecting life in the ancient world including struggles and wars that prove(d) traumatic. It is shown time and again that history repeats itself, and the stories of the Bible reappear in the modern world, both real and (crime) fictional. In this paper, traumatic experiences associated with the German pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer as well as the fictional character DI John Rebus created by the crime writer Ian Rankin, are linked with similar incidents recorded in the Tanakh. The first novel in the Rebus series, *Knots and Crosses*, also forms the basis for demonstrating the trauma suffered by the protagonist. As an adjunct, the German word for dream, *Traum*, is taken out of "Trauma" and treated in the Joseph novella of Genesis. Finally, Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech is used as a point of convergence for the different strands capture.

### Keywords

Hebrew Bible; Dietrich Bonhoeffer; Ian Rankin; Rebus; *Traum*; "I have a dream"

This article seeks to demonstrate links between stories and events found in the *Tanakh*<sup>1</sup> and two men of the twentieth century, one real and one fictitious, with reference to trauma. The Hebrew Bible contains books of a variety of genres, and the second book of Kings, the books of Daniel, Job, Exodus, Deuteronomy but especially the first book, Genesis, will provide examples that mirror the trauma suffered. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German Protestant pastor and theologian, might have remained quite obscure had not Hitler risen to power. During the war, Bonhoeffer became involved in an underground movement that plotted to kill Hitler. In this paper, the trauma

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<sup>1</sup> *Tanakh* is the Jewish term for the Hebrew Bible which in turn is the accepted term in academia for the Old Testament. *Tanakh* is an acronym taken from the initial letters of the three words that divide up the Hebrew Bible: Torah (the Law/Pentateuch), Nevi'im (Prophets) and Ketuvim (Writings).

of 1930s Germany and Bonhoeffer's role within that environment will be discussed. Inspector Rebus, the creation of the Scottish writer Ian Rankin, first appeared in 1987 in *Knots and Crosses*. This novel will be considered here, in order to identify the origins of Rebus' trauma. Rebus is a troubled person, someone who has been subjected to much trauma, yet, unconventional in his methods as he may be, there is no denying that he always strives for justice. In *Knots and Crosses*, the reader is introduced to the character with all his inner turmoil. While recognising that the protagonist is undoubtedly influenced by his reading of the Hebrew Bible,<sup>2</sup> the emphasis here will be on identifying examples in the *Tanakh* that mirror some of the crimes in *Knots and Crosses*. In the final section, the *Traum* (German for dream) will be taken out of "Trauma," using primarily the Joseph story in the book of Genesis to demonstrate this. By incorporating Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech, the interconnectivity of the different strands will be captured.

### **Bonhoeffer and the emerging Nazi state**

The following background information attempts to show the environment in which Dietrich Bonhoeffer found himself, while focusing on the Jews. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was ordained a minister in November 1931. A little over a year later, in January 1933, Hitler came to power. He very quickly quashed opposition from political parties, especially the Communists and trade unions. The historian Danny Orbach sums up in one short chapter of his book *The Plots Against Hitler*<sup>3</sup> the speed with which this was achieved. The burning of the Reichstag in February 1933 by a Dutch man, probably acting alone, had profound effects.<sup>4</sup> Hitler used the fire "as an excuse to uproot all opposition

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<sup>2</sup> A treatment of the influence of Presbyterianism on Scottish writers would be expected in this article. However, the emphasis here is less on the literature itself and how it deals with the Bible and more on a mirroring of crimes of the Hebrew Bible with crimes perpetrated in the novel.

<sup>3</sup> Danny Orbach, *The Plots Against Hitler* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2017)

<sup>4</sup> The lone-man-as-arsonist theory has been the accepted one since the 1960s. In February of this year, it was reported in *The Guardian* newspaper that the presumed remains of Marinus van der Lubbe, the accused, had been disinterred and a toxicology examination had been carried out. The intention was to confirm whether van der Lubbe had been excessively drugged before his trial thereby forcing a confession out of him. It is claimed that an accelerant would have been needed to cause the widespread damage to the Reichstag and that van der Lubbe would not have had the time to do this in the 15-20 minutes that he was in the Reichstag. The most recent theory is that he was abetted by a group of men from the *Sturmabteilung* (SA), the paramilitary wing of the Nazis. Philip Oltermann, "'Blind chance' or plot? Exhumation may help solve puzzle of 1933 Reichstag blaze," *The Guardian*, February 26, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/feb/26/blind-chance-or-plot-exhumation-may-help-solve-puzzle-of-1933-reichstag-blaze>.

networks, organizations, and parties in Germany.”<sup>5</sup> It was therefore relatively easy for Hitler to introduce laws unopposed. As early as April 1933, Jews<sup>6</sup> were being excluded from the civil service and were not allowed work in hospitals and the judiciary.<sup>7</sup> President Hindenburg did manage to keep those Jews who had fought in, or who had lost a relative in, the First World War in civil service jobs, but this was eroded over time. The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 deprived Jews of German citizenship and also forbade marriage or sexual relations between Germans and Jews. When the Olympic Games took place in Berlin in 1936 and the eyes of the world were on the country, Hitler ordered that all anti-Jewish notices be removed.<sup>8</sup> Two years later, in 1938, Jews were banned from participating in commerce, and later that year, during the night of 09-10 November, the November Pogrom, more familiarly known as *Kristallnacht*, took place.<sup>9</sup> Jewish property and synagogues were attacked and destroyed by the SS and the SA during this night in retaliation for the assassination in Paris of an official at the German embassy by a Polish Jew. Official figures record the death of 91 Jews during this night, but the actual number is deemed to be much higher. This night also saw the first mass arrest and commitment to concentration camps of Jewish men, with around 30,000 arrests. Therefore, the extent of the trauma suffered by the Jews in Germany over these few years of 1933–1938 is evident.

Some comparative texts can be found in the *Tanakh* for a selection of these traumatic events in Germany. A direct comparative text for the destruction of synagogues can be found in 2 Kings 25:9. This book includes the account

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<sup>5</sup> Orbach, *The Plots*, 2.

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that there were only about half a million Jews in Germany at this time. Cf. William Carr, “Nazi Policy against the Jews” in *Life in the Third Reich*, ed. Richard Bessel (Oxford: OUP, 1987), 69.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen J. Lee, *European Dictatorships 1918 – 1945*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Oxon: Routledge, 2003), 202.

<sup>8</sup> Lee, *European Dictatorships*, 214.

<sup>9</sup> The term “*Kristallnacht*” is contentious. It suggests the destruction of Jewish property and of synagogues only. Yet it is estimated that up to 1,500 Jews were killed on that night in Germany and Austria. (*Deutschlandfunk*, 09 November 2018, <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/nachgefragt-warum-ist-der-begriff-kristallnacht-verschwunden-100.html>). Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Memorial Center, claims only 91 Jews died, as do official records. The term *Kristallnacht* continues to be used in the English-speaking world. Alternatives used include “Pogromnacht” (the term “pogrom” is associated with massacres of Jews in Russia and Eastern Europe and therefore not acceptable to some people) and “Kristallnacht-Pogrom.” Yad Vashem uses the longer term “The November Pogrom (“*Kristallnacht*”).”

of the destruction of the Temple of Solomon<sup>10</sup> during the reign of the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. He burned the house of the Lord, the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house he burned down (2 Kings 25:8b-9).

The story continues with the breaking down of the walls around Jerusalem and the exile of the people who were left in the city. Unlike in Germany, where the synagogues and property were destroyed in retaliation, in this story the rich interior of the Temple was destroyed and carried away. "The bronze pillars that were in the house of the Lord" were broken up "and carried ... to Babylon" (2 Kings 25:13). A similar fate befell "all the bronze vessels used in the temple service" (v.14b) as well the gold and silver items.

In the mid-1930s, the Nuremberg Laws had deprived the Jews of their German citizenship, and restrictions were placed on where the Jews could work. Similarities with the loss of "nationality" or identity and being prevented from working for oneself can be found in the second book of the Hebrew Bible, Exodus. Exodus relates the story of Moses, who will feature briefly in *Knots and Crosses* below, leading the people out of slavery in Egypt. How they had become slaves there ties in with the story of Joseph, which will be discussed later. Genesis gives an account of how the descendants or tribes of Jacob had been forced to go to Egypt when the crops in their own land failed. Egypt had thrived under the guidance of Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, and it was there that the tribes fell into slavery. As slaves, they were deprived of their identity, "nationality," their own jobs, and thus they too suffered exclusion. In the first chapter of Exodus (v.11), reference is made to taskmasters who had been set over them "to oppress them with forced labor." Since the Israelites continued to multiply, posing a threat to Egyptians, the Egyptians "became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites" (v.13), making their lives "bitter with hard service in mortar and brick" as well as "in every kind of field labor" (v.14). It was Moses, the baby who was rescued from the river, who was chosen to lead the people out of slavery. In chapter 9, Moses receives the message from God to say to Pharaoh, "Let my people go"

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<sup>10</sup> The Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem came to be accepted in Judaism as the only legitimate temple. The destruction of this Temple had huge ramifications for Jews. The late Biblical scholar, Lawrence Boadt, draws attention to how the prophets Elijah, Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah did not condemn worship at other temples, but did condemn those who, in addition to worshipping Yahweh, also worshipped Baal at these other temples. Lawrence Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction* (New York: Paulist Press, 2012), 236.

(v.1). This phrase, later incorporated into a spiritual (or hymn), will be echoed below.

In 1931, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was ordained a pastor in the Protestant Church in Germany, and he subsequently began working as a chaplain at a higher education institute in Berlin. When Hitler came to power in 1933, the laws that were passed had a profound effect on the Protestant Church especially. The perception of the Weimar Republic (1918-1933) by the Churches in Germany was that it had created a secular society. When Hitler became chancellor, he seemed to offer a return to "order" that the Churches were lacking. Soon, however, the Protestant Churches, accustomed to independence under a federal system, were to be centralised into a single "Reich Church" (*Reichskirche*), under the Reich Bishop (*Reichsbischof*) Ludwig Müller. This Church would include the *Deutsche Christen* (German Christians), a racist, anti-Semitic sect that combined Christian beliefs with Führer-worship.<sup>11</sup> The *Deutsche Christen* included the Aryan Paragraph into their churches, thereby preventing Jews from converting to Christianity and Christian Jews from having any roles in the *Reichskirche*. It was against this background that the Confessional Church (*Bekennende Kirche*) was formed in April 1934 by Pastor Martin Niemöller. Dietrich Bonhoeffer aligned himself with this new Church as he opposed the Aryan Paragraph. In 1935 Bonhoeffer was asked to run a seminary, a training school for pastors, at Finkenwalde (in today's Poland). This was an illegal seminary and it survived for only two years. It was forced to shut down in 1937 but continued underground until 1940. At this seminary, life continued as usual but always with the threat of *Deutsche Christen* in the background. The seminary had to rely on contributions from its congregations, and in an article accompanying an appeal, Bonhoeffer wanted to assure benefactors of the seminary that the brethren's life was "one of extreme simplicity."<sup>12</sup> During their formation at the seminary, the brethren led a simple life in community, where they prayed together, but also found "quiet times for prayer."<sup>13</sup> Writing in 1936 to all students from Finkenwalde – this was Bonhoeffer's way of keeping in touch with the former students – Bonhoeffer emphasised the importance of Scripture in the Confessing Church. For every decision that needed to be made, "we must make it a rule to look for the scriptural evidence";<sup>14</sup> he added

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<sup>11</sup> Lee, *European Dictatorships*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 214.

<sup>12</sup> Erwin Robertson, ed., *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Selected Writings* (London: Fount Paperbacks, 1995), 73.

<sup>13</sup> Robertson, *Selected Writings*, 73.

<sup>14</sup> Robertson, *Selected Writings*, 87.

that they could not rest “until we have found it.”<sup>15</sup> Bonhoeffer was also concerned that some of the brethren who had been arrested had to wait quite some time before they were given Bibles. The importance of Scripture to Bonhoeffer becomes clear from these examples.

The story of Daniel, which also links back to King Nebuchadnezzar in 2 Kings, gives an example of remaining faithful to the Law in secret.<sup>16</sup> The book of Daniel repeats the besieging of Jerusalem mentioned above in relation to the desecration and destruction of the Temple of Solomon. In 2 Kings the story goes that Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard “carried into exile the rest of the people who were left in the city” (2 Kings 25:11a). In the book of Daniel, it is the nobility and physically strong whom the king commands should be brought back to Babylon.

... bring some of the Israelites of the royal family and of the nobility, young men without physical defect and handsome, versed in every branch of wisdom, endowed with knowledge and insight, and competent to serve in the king’s palace; they were to be taught the literature and language of the Chaldeans (Daniel 1:3b – 4).

The king’s aim was to train them so that they could serve in his court: “The king assigned them a daily portion of the royal rations of food and wine” (v. 5a). For Daniel, this posed a problem, as eating this food would result in him defiling himself,<sup>17</sup> so he surreptitiously avoids partaking of the food by asking the palace master to collude in deception. This presents the palace master with a dilemma, since he was “afraid of my lord the king” (v.10a) and if Daniel and his three companions were not thriving, they “would endanger my head with the king” (v. 10b). Needless to say, even though Daniel and his three companions lived on vegetables and water, “they appeared better and fatter than all the young men who had been eating the royal rations” (v. 15b). It is probably fair to deduct from this story of four individuals who “worked underground” to keep the law of their faith, that Dietrich Bonhoeffer was also one of a limited number of pastors who worked underground to train other pastors at the seminary.

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<sup>15</sup> Robertson, *Selected Writings*, 87.

<sup>16</sup> For links between Daniel and dreams, see below.

<sup>17</sup> Another interpretation is that by refusing this food, Daniel was resisting royal authority. Michael D. Coogan, ed., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version With The Apocrypha*, Fully Revised Fifth Edition, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1251.

On the night of 09 November 1938 [The November Pogrom (“*Kristallnacht*”)], Dietrich Bonhoeffer was in the northeast of the country, moving between Köslin and Groß-Schlönwitz (both in present-day Poland), where he was running the seminary in two locations. News of the destruction taking place in cities around Germany was slow to filter through, and as there were no Jews living locally, the area had escaped the destructive actions of that night. Having subsequently heard about what had happened, Bonhoeffer headed to Berlin that weekend and informed himself of events at his family home. He was also concerned about the house in Göttingen that his twin sister and her husband, whose parents had been Jewish, had abandoned when they emigrated to England in September of that year.<sup>18</sup> Although Bonhoeffer recorded some notes in his bible, the only specific note relating to contemporary events can be found in the book of Psalms (Psalter), psalm 74:8b. Here Bonhoeffer underlined: “they burned all the meeting places of God in the land” and recorded in the margin, “9.11.38.” He also drew a line in the margin against the subsequent verses 9 and 10a (Fig. 1).

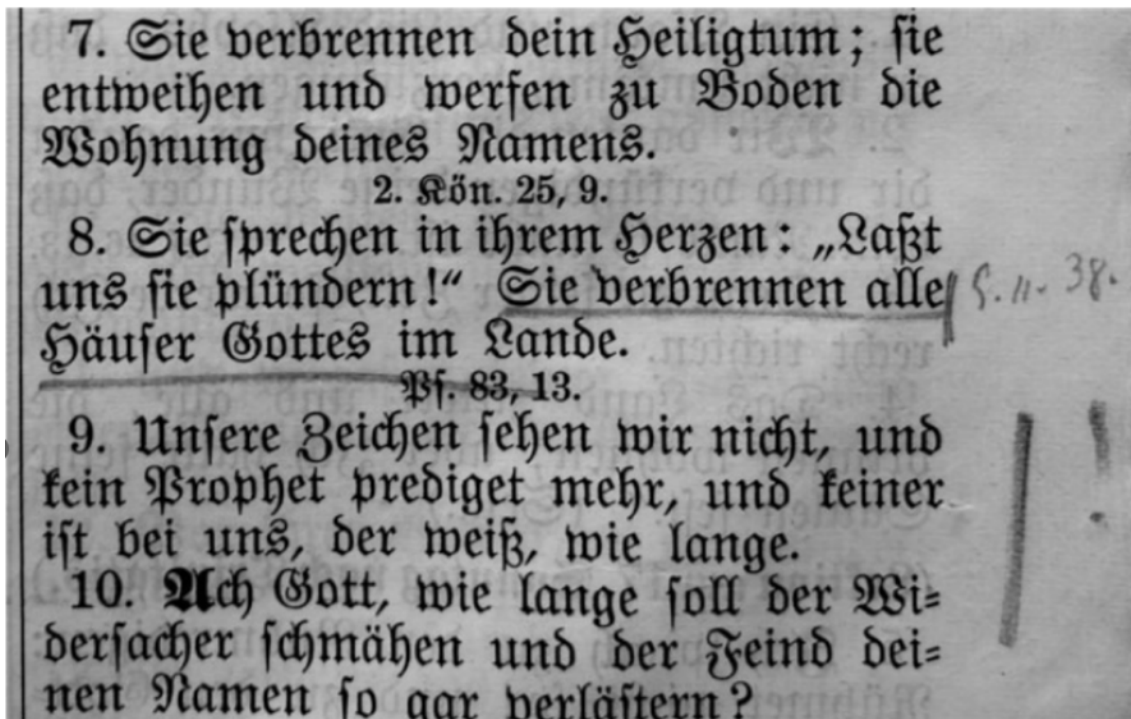


Figure 1: The *Kristallnacht* Annotation: Nachl 299 (Bonhoeffer), Bibliothek, 1A6: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Handschriftenabteilung. Photo Credit: David A.R. Clark/ Courtesy of bpk-Bildagentur/Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin/ Art Resource, NY

<sup>18</sup> Eberhard Bethge, “Dietrich Bonhoeffer: One of the Silent Bystanders,” *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe* 25, no. 1 (1992): 36, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41443081>.



That this was recorded contemporaneously was attested to by one of the theological students, Hans Werner Jensen, who in turn wrote the date of 10 November 1938 in his bible beside the same line, as this had been chosen by Bonhoeffer for meditation.<sup>19</sup> Bethge, Bonhoeffer's pupil, later co-worker and eventually friend, believed that this was written proof that Bonhoeffer related the events of 09 November with the Babylonian Temple destruction and deportation of people two and a half thousand years earlier. In a recent study by the Canadian Presbyterian minister and adjunct lecturer in theology at Wycliffe College, Toronto, David A. R. Clark argues that Bethge attributed an historical interpretation of the psalm to Bonhoeffer. Yet, as Clark contends, Bonhoeffer's own interpretation of the psalms was based on a Christological approach. Bonhoeffer, writing in September and October of 1938, stated that:

The Psalter is the prayer book of Jesus Christ in the truest sense of the word. He prayed the Psalter, and now it has become his prayer for all time.<sup>20</sup>

For Clark, Psalm 74:8 was not only an historical interpretation on Bonhoeffer's part, but that he "heard in Psalm 74 the voice of Christ crying out in human suffering amid the Jewish victims of *Kristallnacht*."<sup>21</sup> Since Bonhoeffer was running the seminary at this time, he did not have access to a pulpit to preach about what had occurred on 09 November, nor did he make any public comments. This was in all likelihood deliberate on his part in order to avoid unnecessary attention to the running of the seminary. If Bonhoeffer was, in this instance, a "silent bystander,"<sup>22</sup> by meditating on Psalm 74 he would have become a "suffering bystander," aligning himself with Christ who, for Bonhoeffer, was with, and praying with, the suffering Jews on that November night.

### **The origins of Rebus' trauma**

In the first of the series of Rebus novels by Ian Rankin, *Knots and Crosses*, the reader learns about the trauma suffered by Rebus during his training for the

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<sup>19</sup> Bethge, "Silent Bystander," 36.

<sup>20</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, quoted in David R. A. Clark, "Psalm 74:8 and November 1938: rereading Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Kristallnacht* annotation in its interpretive context," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 71, no.3 (2018): 259. doi: 10.1017/S0036930618000315.

<sup>21</sup> Clark, "Psalm 74:8," 264.

<sup>22</sup> See Bethge, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer: One of the Silent Bystanders" for treatment of this concept.

Special Air Service, the SAS, and how it continues to affect him. Military historians Anthony King and Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon<sup>23</sup> agree that the memoirs and other books about the SAS are not reliable, and that the operations of the SAS are often exaggerated. This is most likely also the case with the training that Rebus underwent. In *Knots and Crosses*, the trauma endured by Rebus is interwoven with the storyline. As the story moves forward, Rebus is pulled back to the past. The author has said of the novel that it “was (in part) an attempt to update the themes of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.”<sup>24</sup> R.L. Stevenson’s work can be classed as a Gothic novel, and a feature of the Gothic novel is the scream. It is this that the reader encounters in the opening line of the Prologue to *Knots and Crosses*: “The girl screamed once, only the once.” As the novel develops, a scream haunts Rebus and contributes to his trauma as he deals with his past. While visiting his brother, “Without warning, a face screamed up at him from the carpet, trapped in its cell.”<sup>25</sup> Soon after, when reflecting on his current case of kidnapping and murder of young girls in Edinburgh, Rebus’ thoughts include “a screaming in his memory.” As the case develops, Rebus becomes more unsettled as more information is revealed about the scream:

*Trapped in its cell, the face screaming  
Let me out Let me out  
Let me out...* (KC, 47; italics in original)

The “*Let me out Let me out*” continues to haunt him. When he feels let down by a fellow police officer to whom he had become close, his thoughts reveal that

*He’d been let down again. Let down  
Don’t let me down, John. Please.  
Please Please Please*

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<sup>23</sup> Anthony King, “The Special Air Service and the Concentration of Military Power,” *Armed Forces & Society* 35, no. 4 (2009): 646-666; Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon, “Those Who Dared: A Reappraisal of Britain’s Special Air Service, 1950-80,” *The International History Review* 37, no. 3 (2015): 540-564, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2014.918558>.

<sup>24</sup> Ian Rankin, “Edinburgh as literary metaphor,” *Britannica*, Accessed November 13, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Ian-Rankin-on-Edinburgh-A-City-of-Stories-1273556/Edinburgh-as-literary-metaphor>. In a recent interview with the BBC’s *The Big Scottish Book Club*, Rankin explains that he “thought of it as a piece of Scottish gothic and very much based on *Jekyll and Hyde*.” George Mair, “Rebus was based on *Jekyll and Hyde*,” *The Times*, 12 December 2022, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/rebus-was-based-on-jekyll-and-hyde-f7t2nz0mf>.

<sup>25</sup> Ian Rankin, “*Knots and Crosses*,” in *Rebus: The Early Years* (London: Orion, 1999), 12. Hereafter this work will be cited parenthetically in text with the abbreviation KC.

*And a screaming in his memory...* (KC, 90; italics in original)

As the novel progresses, intertwined with the screams and the calling of “*Let me out,*” Rebus’ past is slowly revealed. The reader finds out about Rebus having served in the army and how he and a fellow soldier had been chosen to train for the SAS. The training was rigorous, “a time of stress and deprivation, of deceit and brutality” (KC, 25). Rankin reveals more and more of the training to which Rebus and his fellow soldier had been subjected including after they had been chosen for “a crack Special Assignments group” (KC, 25). In an attempt to break Rebus, he was subjected to a test in a “helicopter, a bag over his head” (KC, 59), convinced that he was “two-hundred feet up above the sea” (KC, 132). When he refused to co-operate with his tormenters, he was pushed out of the helicopter: “then I dropped, dropped like a brick ... and then I hit the ground” (KC, 132). Just before he hits the ground, he “screamed for one second, maybe two” (KC, 132) with the effect that Rebus’ own scream now joins the screams already in his head. What starts to become clear to the reader is how the memories from the past are interlinked with the current case on which Rebus is working. Unlike in the Gothic novel where the *motif* of the scream relates to a woman, it is revealed that the scream in Rebus’ head is from his fellow soldier from the SAS training, the man behind the kidnapping and murders in the novel.

Since, in Rebus’ own words, it was “an Old Testament land that he found himself in, a land of barbarity and retribution” (KC, 25), it is no surprise that he can be found reading the Hebrew Bible. “*You must really hate my guts. Am I Job or something? Is that it?*” (KC, 26; italics in original) Rebus asks of his God. When Rebus finds himself in hospital, he turns to his Bible, choosing “some of the better passages in the Old Testament” (KC, 104). He therefore reads, among others, the book of Job. A subsequent exchange between Rebus and his visitor concerns the character of Job. Job had suffered terrible calamities, yet he continued to remain faithful to his God.

““But he goes on bothering?”” asks Rebus’ visitor. ““Yes, that’s the incredible thing.”” (KC, 104-105)

The *Annotated Bible* comments that the theme of the book of Job is less about suffering and more about injustice in relation to undeserved suffering.<sup>26</sup> Job has been a righteous man, yet he is made to suffer injustice. He demands

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<sup>26</sup> Coogan, *Annotated Bible*, 735.

restitution from God.<sup>27</sup> Through questioning God by comparing himself to Job, Rebus reveals his feelings of having been subjected to many injustices.

### **Crimes of Knots and Crosses**

The crimes committed in the novel include kidnapping, serious assault, murder, theft, torture and drug dealing. However, since the main storyline concerns the apparent random kidnapping and subsequent murder of young girls in Edinburgh, the focus here, in order to show a comparison with the Hebrew Bible, will be on those two crimes. There are few examples of kidnapping in the Hebrew Bible. One instance occurs in 1 Samuel 30 where women and children including the family of David, a significant figure in the Hebrew Bible, are kidnapped. In Gen. 40:15, Joseph, whose story forms part of this paper below, states: "I was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews." Some translations insert "kidnapped" for stolen.<sup>28</sup> Kidnapping must have been a common enough crime of the times since Exodus and Deuteronomy<sup>29</sup> include guidance on how to deal with the perpetrators.<sup>30</sup> In Exod. 21:16, shortly after Moses receives the Ten Commandments, and included with the subsequent ordinances, God orders that "Whoever kidnaps a person, . . . shall be put to death." Similarly in Deut. 24:7, with the emphasis on the kidnapping of another Israelite, "then that kidnapper shall die." Examples of murder in the Hebrew Bible are in plentiful supply: indeed, the earliest murder takes place in chapter four of Genesis, the first book of the Hebrew Bible (Gen. 4:8b), with the story of Cain killing his brother Abel. Although Gen. 9:6 states that "Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person's blood be shed"; in Deuteronomy, one finds allowance for manslaughter. God has ordered that cities of refuge be identified to allow someone who had caused the death of another to flee to them. "Then Moses set apart on the east side of the Jordan three cities to which a homicide could flee, someone who unintentionally kills another person..." (Deut. 4:41-42b) These rules and regulations attributed to God combine to form "a pact or covenant between

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<sup>27</sup> Coogan, *Annotated Bible*, 735.

<sup>28</sup> See the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB) (La Habra, California: Lockman Foundation, 2020); *New Living Translation* (NLT) (Illinois: Tyndale House Foundation, 2015) or the *Christian Standard Bible* (CSB) (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2015).

<sup>29</sup> While Deuteronomy has been associated with Moses and his revisiting of the Law in the first four books of the Bible, modern scholars attribute Deuteronomy to a later period of circa 622 BCE and King Josiah of Judah. Material from Exodus is therefore repeated in Deuteronomy with an attempt to bring it more up to date for a later generation.

<sup>30</sup> Here is an example of the anthropomorphism of God, whereby God is responsible for ordering the punishments to be carried out.

God and Israel.”<sup>31</sup> Scholars describe them as “a theologized form of Near Eastern treaty agreements.”<sup>32</sup> The ruler, as the patron of his subjects, also has obligations to them under the agreement.

### **Taking the *Traum* out of Trauma**

It would be remiss not to seize the opportunity to take the “*Traum*” (German for dream) out of Trauma and to use primarily the Joseph story of the Hebrew Bible to illustrate this, while keeping to the theme of trauma.<sup>33</sup> The story of Joseph remains well known today due to the Lloyd Webber-Rice musical *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, which was revived in recent years and ran in the London Palladium.<sup>34</sup> This story spans chapters 37 to 50 of the book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible, with Joseph’s death in chapter 50 bringing Genesis to a close. Due to its length, the story of Joseph is often referred to as the “Joseph Novella.”<sup>35</sup> The “*Traum*” connected to Joseph is two-fold: firstly, it is the dreams of Joseph that first alienate his brothers. Secondly, when Joseph interprets dreams, he brings about his own freedom and influence in Egypt.

Since Joseph had been born when his father Jacob (also known as Israel) was old, he was his father’s favourite. Joseph’s brothers hated him for this (37:4b) and they found it difficult to speak with him. While it might be surmised that Joseph suffered trauma due to his brothers’ difficult relationship with them, it seems not to have deterred Joseph in his feelings about them. In Gen. 37:6-7, Joseph is not afraid to tell his brothers of his dream where, while they were all binding sheaves in the fields, Joseph’s “sheaf rose and stood upright; then [the brothers’] sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to [Joseph’s] sheaf.” His brothers interpret this as Joseph reigning over them (37:8) and their reaction is negative: “So they hated him even more because of his dreams and his words” (37:8b). This hatred by his brothers occurs three times – in verses 4b, 5b and 8b. Joseph’s second dream was similar in that “the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to [Joseph]” (Gen. 37:9). This also angered his father and caused jealousy in his

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<sup>31</sup> Coogan, *Annotated Bible*, 109.

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<sup>33</sup> Of the 15 accounts of dreaming in the Hebrew Bible, six of these are related to Joseph. See Laura Quick, “Dream Accounts in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Jewish Literature,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 17, no. 1 (2018): 11.

<sup>34</sup> The show also ran in Dublin in August 2022 in the Bord Gáis Energy Theatre.

<sup>35</sup> See Quick, “Dream Accounts,” 9; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch* (New York: Yale University Press, 1992), 25 and 107.

brothers. It then led his brothers to plot against him. In the ensuing story, Joseph's brothers "conspired to kill him" (Gen. 37:18) but through the intervention of one brother, Reuben, Joseph's life is spared. Instead, he is sold into slavery to the Ishmaelites who in turn took him to Egypt (Gen. 37:28). This is the first part of the major trauma endured by Joseph: being sold into slavery in a new land, exposure to a new language and with no contact with his family.

As the narrative of the story is linear and mostly makes sense, the reader is left wondering how Joseph's father, Jacob, will react when his son goes missing. The conspiring brothers are quick to come up with a plan to deceive their father. The robe (the multicoloured dreamcoat of the musical<sup>36</sup>) given by Jacob to his favourite son is dipped in the blood of a slaughtered goat and taken to the father (v. 31-32). On seeing the robe, Jacob believes that his son has been killed by a wild animal. Jacob's reaction is to tear his clothes, put on sackcloth and to mourn his son for many days (v.34). This suffering father cannot be comforted by his family.

Because "[t]he Lord was with Joseph" (Gen. 39:2) he prospered in Egypt and was recognised for his success associated with the Lord and was promoted to overseer of the estate he was working on. Joseph, being "handsome and good-looking" (Gen. 39: 6b), was a temptation to the wife of Joseph's master. Having tried to seduce him, she played a trick by keeping his garment and accusing him of having attempted to seduce/rape her. Joseph now finds himself in prison, the second part of his trauma. While there, his gift of dream-interpretation comes to the fore. Joseph successfully interprets a fellow inmate's dream. After this man's release and on hearing about Pharaoh's troubling dream of how the seven "ugly and thin cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows" (Gen. 40:4), he informs Pharaoh of the correct interpretation made by Joseph, a "young Hebrew" (v. 12) of his own dreams. "[All] the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men" (v. 8) had been unable to interpret this for Pharaoh; when Joseph does so he thus demonstrates the power of the Lord in comparison with the weakness of the magicians and wise men.

Whereas Joseph had interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh in Egypt, Daniel became the dream interpreter of King Nebuchadnezzar (see above for links between the actions of Nebuchadnezzar and the destruction of synagogues in 1938, as well as for links with Bonhoeffer). Just as all "the magicians of

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<sup>36</sup> The meaning of the Hebrew text is unclear. The text is therefore often translated as a "robe with sleeves." However, the Greek translation uses "a coat of many colors." This, in turn, influenced the creation of the title of the musical. Coogan, *Annotated Bible*, 62.

Egypt and all its wise men" (Gen. 40:8) had not been able to interpret Pharaoh's dream, neither were "the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers" (Dan. 2:2). It was in "a vision of the night" (v.19)<sup>37</sup> that "the mystery was revealed to Daniel" (v.19). Daniel thereby saved the lives of those who had not been able to interpret the dream, and he also facilitated the recognition by Nebuchadnezzar of Daniel's God as "the God of gods and Lord of kings" (v.47). The result of this dream interpretation was that Daniel was promoted, just as Joseph had been, he was "given many gifts" (v.48) and was made "ruler over the whole province of Babylon" (v.48) as well as "chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon" (v.48).

A person who brings all the strands covered in this article together is the civil rights' activist, Dr Martin Luther King Jr.<sup>38</sup> King is best remembered for his "I have a dream" speech.<sup>39</sup> This was given to an estimated crowd of a quarter of a million in Washington in 1963 and contains the phrase "I (still) have a dream" nine times. King's dream was for a world of freedom and equality for people of all colours and creeds ("Black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics"). Here can be found links to Bonhoeffer, who did not differentiate between Christians, Christian converts from Judaism and Jews. King quotes the prophets of the Hebrew Bible, Amos and Isaiah, "justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream" (Amos 5:24) to support his call for justice and equality. Rebus, too, can be found, like a modern-day (fictitious) prophet, supporting injustices inflicted on the world he finds himself in.

Comparisons have also been made between Bonhoeffer and King, though there is no evidence that King was aware of Bonhoeffer. Both men were pastors, they worked for a just society and they died as martyrs.<sup>40</sup> During his year at the Union Theological Seminary in New York 1930-31, Bonhoeffer was introduced to the Abyssinian Baptist church and through contact with this church, he became familiar with African-American spirituals. Having brought recordings back to Germany, he played them to his students at

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<sup>37</sup> Visions and dreams are often treated differently by scholars. Here, though, the interpretation might have been delivered in a dream.

<sup>38</sup> King's father, born Michael King, was also a Baptist pastor. After a visit to Germany in 1934, he was so impressed by what he learned about Martin Luther that he changed his name. Firstly, he included "Luther," then that morphed into Martin Luther. His son's name was also changed. <https://www.german-way.com/notable-people/featured-bios/martin-luther-king-jr-in-berlin/>. Accessed 27 February 2023.

<sup>39</sup> The speech can be listened to and/or read at <https://www.npr.org/2010/01/18/122701268/i-have-a-dream-speech-in-its-entirety>.

<sup>40</sup> Similarities include both dying at the age of 39 years and being influenced by Gandhi.

Finkenwalde. The same spirituals would have been familiar to King. Indeed, in the final lines of his "Dream" speech, King alludes to "the old Negro spiritual: Free at last. Free at last. Thank God almighty, we are free at last." King speaks of the African Americans who are "in exile in [their] own land." When Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt, his story opened the way for the descendants of his father, Jacob, to live in exile. The book of Exodus then tells of the long journey out of exile. As noted above, in chapter 9 of Exodus the command of God to "Let my people go" (v.1) forms the basis for an African-American spiritual. This spiritual, dating back to the 1850s/60s, possibly formed part of the spirituals that Bonhoeffer came to know. While in hospital, Rebus had also been found reading "the stories of Moses" (KC, 104) There is, therefore, an interconnectedness of Bonhoeffer and those associated with his environment, the fictional character of Rebus and the players in the stories of the *Tanakh*, and King is a conduit through whom these meet and interact.

### **Concluding observations**

In summary, it has become clear that the *Tanakh* forms a source for comparisons with traumatic events associated with Bonhoeffer and some crimes in *Knots and Crosses*. Characters such as Daniel, Joseph, Moses and Job and also the prophet Amos provide a focal point, and the books of Genesis and Exodus also play a significant, recurring role. Furthermore, what was not foreseen was how the different threads would interconnect and overlap. Although it is possible to take the *Traum* out of "Trauma," it is not possible to eliminate trauma from humanity, and the *Tanakh* will continue to remain relevant and provide a backstory to lives lived – both real and fictitious.