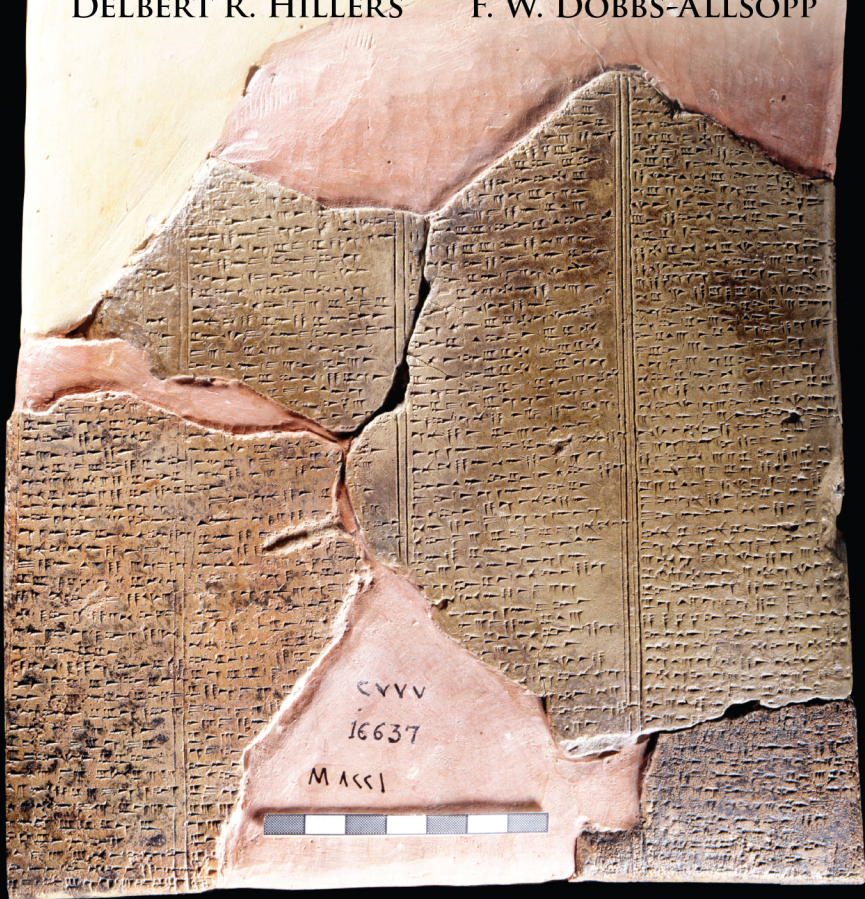


POETS BEFORE HOMER

COLLECTED ESSAYS ON
ANCIENT LITERATURE

BY
DELBERT R. HILLERS

EDITED BY
F. W. DOBBS-ALLSOPP



Poets Before Homer

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Winona Lake, Indiana

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Abbreviations

The basis for this abbreviation list is the list that appeared in the introduction to *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets*, which appears in full in this volume. That list has been expanded to include other abbreviations that appear in this volume. Any abbreviations that appear in this volume but not in this list conform to *The SBL Handbook of Style*.

AAA	. . . .	University of Liverpool Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology
AB	. . . .	Anchor Bible
AB	. . . .	Assyriologische Bibliothek
AfO	. . . .	Archiv für Orientforschung
AJA	. . . .	American Journal of Archaeology
AKA	. . . .	Budge and King, <i>Annals of the Kings of Assyria</i>
ANET	. . . .	J. B. Pritchard, ed., <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , 2nd ed.
AnSt	. . . .	Anatolian Studies
AO	. . . .	Der alte Orient
APAW	. . . .	Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften
ARA	. . . .	D. D. Luckenbill, <i>Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia</i>
Arad	. . . .	The Arad Letters
ARM	. . . .	Archives Royales de Mari
Ar. Or.	. . . .	Archiv Orientální
ArOr	. . . .	Archiv Orientální
AshB	. . . .	The Ashurbanipal Treaty
AshN	. . . .	The Ashurnirari Treaty
ATD	. . . .	Das Alte Testament Deutsch (Göttingen)
AV	. . . .	Authorized Version
BA	. . . .	The Biblical Archaeologist
Baal	. . . .	The Baal of Tyre Treaty
BASOR	. . . .	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BBS	. . . .	L. W. King, <i>Babylonian Boundary-Stones and Memorial-Tablets in the British Museum</i>
BH ³	. . . .	R. Kittel, ed., <i>Biblia Hebraica</i> , 3rd ed.
Bib	. . . .	Biblica
BiOr	. . . .	Bibliotheca Orientalis
BMAP	. . . .	E. G. Kraeling, <i>The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri: New Documents of the Fifth Century B.C. from the Jewish Colony of Elephantine</i>
BoSt	. . . .	Boghazköi-Studien
BZ	. . . .	Biblische Zeitschrift
CAD	. . . .	The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago
CBQ	. . . .	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CQ	. . . .	The Classical Quarterly

<i>Esar</i>	....	The Esarhaddon Treaty
<i>HAT</i>	....	<i>Handbuch zum Alten Testament</i> (Tübingen)
<i>HK</i>	....	<i>Handkommentar zum Alten Testament</i> (Göttingen)
<i>HUCA</i>	....	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IB</i>	....	<i>The Interpreter's Bible</i>
<i>ICC</i>	....	<i>International Critical Commentary</i>
<i>IDB</i>	....	<i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
<i>IEJ</i>	....	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	....	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	....	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JCS</i>	....	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
<i>JEA</i>	....	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
<i>JNES</i>	....	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JRAS</i>	....	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
<i>JSS</i>	....	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>KAT</i>	....	<i>Kommentar zum Alten Testament</i> (Leipzig)
<i>KB</i>	....	<i>Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek</i>
<i>KBo</i>	....	<i>Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi</i>
<i>KeH</i>	....	<i>Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament</i> (Leipzig)
<i>KHC</i>	....	<i>Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament</i> (Tübingen)
<i>MDOG</i>	....	<i>Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft</i>
<i>MDP</i>	....	<i>Délégation en Perse . . . Mémoires</i>
<i>MEOL</i>	....	Mededelingen en verhandelingen van het Vooraziatisch- Egyptisch Genootschap "Ex Oriente Lux"
<i>MIO</i>	....	Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, <i>Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung</i>
<i>MUSJ</i>	....	<i>Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph</i>
<i>MVAG</i>	....	<i>Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatisch-Aegyptischen Gesellschaft</i>
<i>NebNip</i>	....	W. J. Hinke, <i>A New Boundary Stone of Nebuchadnezzar I from Nippur</i>
<i>NJPSV</i>	....	New Jewish Publication Society Version
<i>NJV</i>	....	New Jewish Version = New Jewish Publication Society Version
<i>OIP</i>	....	<i>University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications</i>
<i>Or</i>	....	<i>Orientalia, Nova Series</i>
<i>papMur</i>	....	Wadi Murabba'at papyri
<i>PJB</i>	....	<i>Palästina Jahrbuch</i>
<i>RA</i>	....	<i>Revue d'Assyriologie</i>
<i>RB</i>	....	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RE supp.</i>	....	Sonderausgaben der Paulyschen Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft
<i>RTP</i>	....	H. Ingholt, H. Seyrig, and J. Starcky, <i>Recueil des tessères de Palmyre, Institut Français d'Archéologie de Beyrouth, Bibliothèque archéologie et historique</i>
<i>SAL</i>	....	<i>Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig</i>
<i>Sf I, II, III</i>	....	The Sefire Treaties
<i>ShAd</i>	....	The Shamshi-Adad Treaty

Skinner ICC	....	J. Skinner, <i>Genesis</i> (International Critical Commentary)
<i>Syr</i>	....	<i>Syria</i>
<i>TAD</i>	....	B. Porten and A. Yardeni, <i>Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt</i>
<i>TWAT</i>	....	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i>
<i>UM</i>	....	C. H. Gordon, <i>Ugaritic Manual</i>
<i>UT</i>	....	C. H. Gordon, <i>Ugaritic Textbook</i>
<i>VAB</i>	....	<i>Vorderasiatische Bibliothek</i>
<i>Vg</i>	....	Vulgate
<i>VT</i>	....	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>VTS</i>	....	<i>Supplements to Vetus Testamentum</i>
Westermann BK	....	C. Westermann, <i>Genesis</i> , <i>Biblicher Kommentar—Altes Testament</i>
<i>WZKM</i>	...	<i>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes</i>
<i>YBT</i>	....	<i>Yale Oriental Series: Babylonian Texts</i>
<i>YOS</i>	....	<i>Yale Oriental Society</i>
<i>ZA</i>	....	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	....	<i>Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZDPV</i>	....	<i>Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>

Foreword

The present volume collects and reprints many of Delbert R. Hillers's most important published essays and his now long out-of-print *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets*, along with three previously unpublished manuscripts, including his 1992 William Foxwell Albright Lecture entitled, "Poets Before Homer: Archaeology and the Western Literary Tradition." It is the latter lecture, in particular, that eventually proved to be the primary impetus for the gathering of these essays. In that lecture Hillers used Ernst Robert Curtius's *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, "with its 'topological' method, as a model for exploring the connections of the most ancient Near Eastern literatures to later western literature" (*Letter to E. Halpern*, May 18, 1992; unpubl.). Already in a letter to Kyle McCarter shortly after accepting the latter's invitation to give the Albright lecture, Hillers crisply articulates the animating focus of the lecture:

This lecture will illustrate, with examples from my work and recent work of others, how the archaeology of the ANE yields not only historical information, or art treasures, but the means for reconstructing the history of our common literary or poetic tradition. This last phrase is used not only in the sense of the background of the Bible, but in a more comprehensive sense, of the history of literary themes, metaphors, and topoi which continue in European literature. The lecture will suggest that, though there are certain watersheds in this history such as the emergence of classical Greek literature and the formation and propagation of Biblical literature, our European literary history can validly and profitably be viewed as a continuum starting with the most ancient past. (Feb. 19, 1992; unpubl.)

The lecture was favorably received and in short order Hillers decided to expand it into a full-length monograph ("I have a pretty strong desire to attempt a book on the subject," *Letter to E. Halpern*, May 18, 1992; unpubl.), and thus he never sought to publish the lecture itself. The monograph, to be entitled after the lecture, was to be synthetic and broad ranging, very much in the spirit of Curtius's earlier study, but it never came off. In the end commitments to other projects (e.g., completing *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts* with Eleonora Cussini) and eventually Hillers's own declining health would prevent him from ever embarking on the volume in earnest. Still, as of the fall of 1998 (roughly a year before his death), Hillers remained enamored with "Poets Before Homer"—in his

correspondence about the lecture, he noted, “though one of my latest things, this [lecture] represents a rather clear statement of what I seem to have been doing in much of my earlier work” (*Draft Plan*; unpubl.). So, instead of the synthetic monograph originally envisioned, Hillers thought to collect and republish a number of his own previously published essays that exhibited a principle “concern with investigation of . . . continuity of ancient Near-Eastern literary elements through the Bible . . . and Western literature” (*Draft Plan*; unpubl.). The Albright lecture would head the collection, providing the whole with a defining trajectory and sense of orientation. In a letter to Eric Halpern about the earlier projected book-length study, Hillers explicated the basic strategy that would guide his work in the various chapters: “it will be my strategy to focus on some one literary work: some specific poem, or piece of a poem, or narrative, whether ancient or more recent. From this center I can work back or forward to take in the history, the tradition” (May 18, 1992; unpubl.). Upon reflection, I think this is a fair representation of how Hillers habitually worked all along, especially in his article-length studies, and aptly characterizes the basic trajectory of most of the essays and articles collected here. Therefore, if not quite the synthetic overview initially imagined, this *Poets Before Homer* nevertheless remains a rightful heir to that earlier contemplated project. The articles and one monograph collected here, reread in light of “Poets Before Homer,” enact, in retrospect, the kind of imitating “pattern of *exemplum* followed by *moralisatio*” articulated and exemplified in that lecture and imagined for the larger book.

Once the idea of a collection of (mostly) previously published materials was settled upon, with its overarching thematic concern, two other criteria were used to help determine the selection of essays to be included. Quality was the first consideration. Hillers was not interested in republishing anything that did not continue to measure up to his own standards of quality and precision. Not surprisingly, then, Hillers in a draft plan for this volume frequently registers his own evaluative assessment of a piece contemplated for inclusion in the volume. So, for example, he writes of his “Delocutive Verbs in Biblical Hebrew”: “Maybe my best in this line” (*Draft Plan*; unpubl.). And again of his article “The Reaction to Bad News”: “An early brief but valuable and valid study of traditional poetic language” (*Draft Plan*; unpubl.). He says of his contribution to the Mavin Pope *Festschrift* (“Dust: Some Aspects of Old Testament Imagery”), “Is of importance” (*Draft Plan*; unpubl.). A second guiding consideration was the “relative inaccessibility of many of the items.” And, in fact, a number of the articles republished here were originally published in *Festschriften* (chaps. 3, 7–8, 13, 15, 19, 21–22), a

conference volume (chap. 12), or journals outside of the field (chaps. 4, 9), and hence there is also a convenience to bringing these particular essays together that stands (out) alongside their thematic coherence and continued value and “validity.” Indeed, when you add the out-of-print *Treaty-Curses* (chap. 10), the vast majority of material republished here is not readily or conveniently accessible—not to mention the three unpublished pieces (chaps. 1, 6, 14).

Following Hillers’s death (September 25, 1999), I gave thought to expanding the volume to include other pieces that I felt were on topic or even all of his published essays—making the volume a “collected essays” in the fullest sense of the phrase. In the end, however, I decided to abide by Hillers’s own instincts, which served him so obviously well throughout his life and career, and compose the volume as he and I originally conceived it. The contents and layout are as then envisioned, with only one exception. Hillers intended to publish four new essays instead of the three that are found here. The fourth essay, provisionally entitled “Boanerges, Zenobia, and the Like: Greek Names and Semitic Counterparts,” was to be included as the last chapter in Section III. He described it in his *Draft Plan* this way:

With the evidence of the many individuals at Palmyra with a Semitic name and also a Greek name, the range of possible strategies in giving double names is set out, and the most probable solution to James and John’s sobriquet “Boanerges” (“Sons of Thunder”) is explained, as, in a different way queen “Zenobia,” Greek for Aramaic Septimia “Bat-zabbai.”

Unfortunately, Hillers never got around to writing the essay, though notes for it were collected. Otherwise the volume is as originally formulated.

The essays collected in the first section, though diverse (as indicated by the section title, “Traditions in Metaphor, Magic, and Other Aspects of Literature: Some Examples”), nonetheless are those that lend themselves to being (re)read most readily and most profitably through the lens of “Poets Before Homer” and pressed into service on behalf of the more encompassing project articulated there. Most of these work themselves out from a biblical passage, theme, topos, or image and gain their interpretive vantage point by reading said passage, etc., first and foremost, in light of relevant comparative ancient Near Eastern literature. Outside of the Bible, Hillers’s expertise and interests lay primarily with the various West Semitic literary and epigraphic corpora (e.g., Ugaritic, Elephantine and Palmyrene Aramaic), so not surprisingly, it is to these texts that Hillers most frequently makes recourse. The brief “Reaction to Bad News” is a paradigm example. Here Hillers’s topic of interest is a

biblical “literary convention depicting the reaction to bad news,” which he isolates and explicates with the help of the mythological texts recovered from Ras Shamra, ancient Ugarit. The Ugaritic texts are featured again in “The Roads to Zion Mourn,” as Hillers elucidates the literary tradition that informs and shapes Lam 1:4. In the “Effective Simile” and “A Study of Psalm 148” the comparative base extends further still to Akkadian and Egyptian texts—Akkadian literature features prominently as well in *Treaty-Curses*, republished in the second section of this volume.

The forward trajectory—toward the larger Western literary tradition—announced in “Poets Before Homer” is explicitly realized in each of the remaining essays in this section—though the germinal idea lies pregnant in all of the essays, most especially in the study of hymnody in “A Study of Psalm 148,” which, as Hillers himself observes (*Draft Plan*, unpubl.), anticipates the tradition of hymnody in “the apocrypha” and even in “the Christian liturgy (the canticle *Benedicite omnia opera* ‘O all ye works of the Lord, praise ye the Lord’).” Homer is featured in “Homeric Dictated Texts”; Homer, Virgil, and Roethke in “Dust”; and Boccaccio in “Two Notes on the Decameron” (here we may also glimpse something of Hillers’s late love-affair with Italian and Italian literature).

Section II, “Traditions in Treaty and Covenant,” is focused thematically and consists of three pieces: his published doctoral dissertation, *Treaty-Curses*, and two shorter essays, “Note on Some Treaty Terminology” and “Rite.” All three feature Bible passages compared to instruments of international law, especially ancient treaties. The former, in particular, “is at bottom” a rich “treatment of traditions of imagery and language,” and “hence fits well with other elements of this volume of reprints” (*Draft Plan*, unpubl.). The three, combined with *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea*, provide the substance of Hillers’s career-long preoccupation with the topic of covenant and treaty in the Bible and the ancient Near East.

The essays collected in the third section (“Starting Points: Ugarit, Hermopolis, and Palmyra”) make evident, among other things, that the kind of approach to ancient literature that Hillers is advocating in this volume need not have the Bible as its explicit point of departure. Hillers, ever the biblicist, nevertheless was well aware of the need to appreciate the other peoples and nations of the ancient Near East and their cultural products on their own terms and for their own sakes, even, and perhaps especially, if one ultimately means to refocus on the Bible and ancient Israel. In fact, this point is made quite emphatically (if good humouredly) in “Analyzing the Abominable,” where Hillers critiques the Bible-centeredness of so much of the study of Canaanite religion and literature and calls for an orientation that instead would be centered in

a specific time and place (e.g., Late Bronze Age Ugarit) and primarily interested in the specific products (e.g., literature) of these cultures. Ugarit, Hermopolis, and Palmyra are three such places that Hillers came to know well over the course of his career. The two essays on Ugaritic (“The Bow of Aqhat” and “Difficult Line in Keret,” the latter previously unpublished) and the one on Hermopolis (“Redemption”) show how Hillers’s comparative-literary methodology can be marshaled to the benefit of these non-biblical texts. Akkadian, Egyptian, Hittite, biblical, and even classical materials are drawn on in an effort to elucidate aspects of these Ugaritic and Aramaic texts. The last two essays included in this section (“Palmyrene Aramaic Inscriptions and the Old Testament, especially Amos 2:8” and “Palmyrene Aramaic Inscriptions and the Bible”) return focus to the Bible, this time in light of the late but illuminating Palmyrene inscriptions. This “return” to the Bible comes after and in light of a substantial engagement with the corpus of Palmyrene Aramaic, the chief outcome of which was a new edition of these important inscriptions (*Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, with Eleonora Cussini).

The final section (“Grinding at Grammar”) contains four essays, all featuring linguistic approaches to aspects of biblical Hebrew grammar, which, as Hillers observes (*Draft Plan*; unpubl.), “might be called a different sort of continuity, studying some aspects of Hebrew as paralleled in other ancient Semitic languages.” “Delocutive Verbs” and “Some Performative Utterances” are two of Hillers’s finest pieces. Both utilize insights gleaned from general linguistics (extensions of observations by Benveniste and Austin respectively) to illuminate aspects of Hebrew grammar. Each is tightly argued and generously illustrated, including examples from other Semitic languages. “Observations on Syntax and Meter in Lamentations” and “*Hôy* and *Hôy*-Oracles,” though not as wide-ranging as the other two essays, exemplify the turn toward syntax that was a central hallmark of late twentieth-century linguistics. Both work at their syntactic topics from specific texts outward, and as with the other essays, draw freely on comparative Semitics.

* * * *

In *Poets Before Homer* Hillers wanted to stand back and have a go at the big picture. It was to be, as noted, a wide-ranging and synthetic book that reconsidered the connections of the ancient Near East to the Western literary tradition. He had mounted similarly large-perspective, field-assaying efforts on at least two other occasions. The first was in his book *Covenant* (still in print after almost forty years), whose subtitle says it all: *The History of a Biblical Idea*. More recently, Hillers attempted a synthesis

of a different sort, though no less impressive or significant, namely, his decades-long study of the Palmyrene Aramaic epigraphic corpus, which resulted in the collection and editing of a new edition of the 2,832 Palmyrene Aramaic inscriptions then (1996) known—an undertaking that will be foundational for all future work on this corpus (synthetic or otherwise)—and the creation, as well, of an electronic database for these inscriptions. However, more often and more characteristically Hillers’s habit of mind ran in the other direction, toward the particular, toward the individual detail. Hillers’s genius—if this word may be used—was in his capacity to seize upon one aspect of some larger entity, problem, or topic, to work it through, thoroughly and, as often as not, decisively, all the while resisting the temptation to take up the larger, perhaps un(re)solvable complex of which the detail or problem was but a part. The worked example is the Hillersian trademark—“*exemplum* followed by *moralisatio*”—and this *Poets Before Homer* collects all of his best. And if it ultimately falls short of that more encompassing *Poets Before Homer* he first imagined, that, too, may be glimpsed, at least in part, here and there, when these essays celebrating Homer’s metaphorical literary forebears are sighted along the trajectory charted in “Poets Before Homer.” In the end, that someone else will need to connect the dots that Hillers places here before his readers and render (some version of) that big-picture *Poets Before Homer* is not unfitting. In fact, the idea surely would have delighted Hillers, provoking his characteristic grin and quick bob of the head, a little off kilter. He was keenly aware that he, like all scholars, stood on the (metaphorical) shoulders of those who came before him—and none were bigger to his mind than those of William Foxwell Albright (whose picture, which once proudly stood in Hillers’s office, now hangs in mine and is reproduced below as Fig. 21)—and thus there could be no better tribute to Hillers’s scholarship, by his own reckoning, than to be taken up and over by another. One of the highest compliments Hillers paid me was just of this kind. Embedded within a letter of recommendation he once wrote for me (a draft of which he let me read for some reason), amongst the usual talk about background, course of study and the like, Hillers notes with regard to my dissertation work, which explored a line of thought he had initiated, that I was able to elaborate and expand the thesis beyond what “even” he imagined possible (or words to that effect). It was the “even” that caught my attention. For in that “even” was recognition of my own accomplishment (of no little import for a newly minted Ph.D.) and a distinct note of pride (also not inconsequential for the ego) in how I had managed to develop his ideas. Hillers would have written that other, primordial *Poets Before Homer* if he could have; that he did not, in the end, is perhaps not only

more characteristic of Hillers, viz. his habit of mind, etc., but is also to the benefit of those of us who come after him, for in the provocation Hillers lends us his own pair of (metaphorical) shoulders to stand on that we might continue to think our way (and our field) into the future.

F. W. D.-A.
Summer 2007
Oriental, NC

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Grateful acknowledgment for permission to republish the essays, articles, and monograph that first appeared elsewhere is hereby acknowledged.

***“Poets Before Homer”:
Archaeology and the
Western Literary Tradition***

I am greatly honored by the invitation to deliver the Albright lecture this year. If I do not say much at this point about Professor Albright, whose memory I revere, it is because I will refer appreciatively to his work in the lecture itself. Years ago, I had the privilege of lecturing with William F. Albright in the audience. I can only say that it had a certain bracing effect on the speaker. It is pleasant to imagine his presence in spirit today.

What is the most interesting and impressive sort of archaeological object from the ancient Near East? Something huge, like a pyramid (Fig. 1)? Or perhaps a bull colossus (Fig. 2)? Or, coming down in size, one may prefer something smaller and more fragile which has endured through the long centuries, such as a necklace (Fig. 3)? A small treasure, such as one of the famous Nimrud ivories (Fig. 4), of course, may seem to some more touching and impressive than the kind of object that overwhelms us with its bulk. If your taste runs to written materials, there are delicate papyri, such as these from Elephantine in Egypt (Fig. 5).

My question is, in a sense, a perfect one, because each of us is bound to have a preference, and because there is, of course, no right answer. It may also seem perfectly frivolous, but the serious purpose is this. By

Editor’s note: The William Foxwell Albright Lecture is given annually under the sponsorship of the Department of Near Eastern Studies of the Johns Hopkins University. This is the lecture Hillers delivered April 14, 1992, in substantially the form given then. I have intervened in two ways. First, I have rephrased (very minimally) some of Hillers’s deictic references to maps, people in the audience, and the like—all, I believe, in the spirit of Hillers’s own intention to revise “slightly.” Second, I have had to substitute new illustrations for all of the originals. Before Hillers’s death I had seen a copy of the manuscript complete with the illustrations that he used in the lecture. However, by the time I got to work on the editing process in earnest (after his death) those illustrations had disappeared. Hillers nowhere left an explicit list of what illustrations he actually used. Therefore, I have worked from the general descriptions offered in the lecture itself and supplied what I have deemed appropriate substitutes.



Fig. 1: Sphinx and Pyramids. Brooklyn Museum Archives. Lantern Slide Collection [S10 | 08]. Gizeh. Courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum.

narrowing down from the large and substantial to the small and fragile, I would invite you to think about artifacts recovered by archaeology that are still more fragile than any of these, more insubstantial even than a lacy papyrus. I refer to things made of words. I am not thinking of texts, exactly, but to the building blocks of which literary texts are made, to traditional metaphors and similes, to traditional topics in poetry and prose, to the devices of form and content which were the stock in trade of poets. These things lighter than air also survive, and form the subject of my lecture today. Some of these invisible mental artifacts survive and are creative in European literature of later centuries, down to our own.

Stepping back a bit, consider a map of the ancient Near East (Fig. 6). It may serve to refresh our memory of some terms and place-names, and beyond this, may recall to us the manifold sources of information about ancient literature, and thus begin to indicate the need for some sort of synthesis of all this material. Such a map shows some well-known areas or states such as Egypt, Palestine, and Mesopotamia. Mesopota-



Above—Fig. 3: Headdress, necklace, and hair ribbons from Ur (2600–2500 BCE). Made of gold, lapis lazuli, and carnelian. 38.5 cm. ID# 1553. Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Left—Fig. 2: Bull colossus from NW Palace of Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BCE) at Nimrud. © Trustees of the British Museum.

mia is the source of those texts which we call Sumerian and Akkadian, the later being a broad term covering the Babylonian and Assyrian languages, written on clay tablets in cuneiform script. In various periods, Aramaic speaking peoples had independent city-states in Syria. The most prominent state of ancient Asia Minor, the Hittite empire, is well-known; less a matter of common knowledge are the Hurrians, a people prominent in the mid-second millennium B.C.E., whose territory was centered in northern Mesopotamia and Syria, near the head waters of the Habur River. Finally, what we may call a representative of Canaanite civilization, Ras Shamra on the Syrian coast, with the ancient name Ugarit. From this ancient name comes the name for the language attested there, Ugaritic, in which we have a rich heritage of literary texts.

Discovery of literary texts, or recovery through archaeology of the civilization which is background to those texts, obviously sets before scholars detail work of the most demanding sort: excavation and publication of artifacts, copying and deciphering and editing texts, grammatical study, and so on and on. Along with the work on details comes the need for synthesis of the finds, putting our new knowledge into some



Fig. 4: Openwork plaque with a striding sphinx. Ivory. Nimrud (8th–7th century BCE). $8.8 \times 10.3 \times 2.1$ cm. ID# 4326. Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

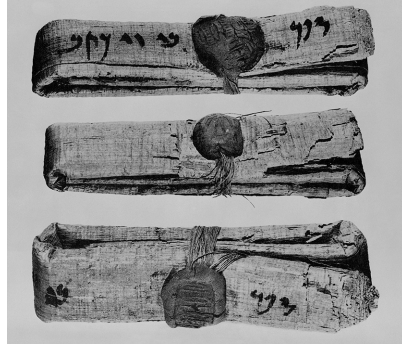


Fig. 5: Unopened papyrus rolls from Elephantine. 47.218.88_47.218.93a-b-GRPA_bw_SL 1. Courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum.

kind of coherent picture. If we need general histories and histories of art and histories of technology, so also we need a history or some sort of synthetic mapping of ancient literature. We need this for two purposes. First, we need to make the trial of assembling a coherent picture of the literature or literatures of the ancient Near East. Second, we need a synthesis addressed to the relation of this ancient literature, or these literatures, to western literature of later times.

To give some focus to thinking about this undertaking, my lecture will center on a concrete proposal. How would it be if we took as a model the master work of Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*?¹ Curtius's book is not a conventional history of individual works of literature, but a study of traditional metaphors and similes and of traditional "topics" in the rhetorical sense. To illustrate with a metaphor, it is not a study of literary texts as entire bodies, but a study of the operative units which create those bodies, the genes and chromosomes of literature.

I do not wish to approach this subject head-on, but indirectly, imitating a medieval pattern of *exemplum* followed by *moralisatio*, "story" followed by the moral, with a concluding reflection on the whole. The first "story" may be called "As You Like It"; the second is a horror story, the history of Father Time: in the language of newspaper capsule reviews of current films, warning: nudity, violence, language; the third illustrative example is a gentler, nostalgic melancholy story, in two parts "Where are they now?" and "The cautious fox"; and the fourth tale is a

1. (Trans. W. R. Trask; 1953).

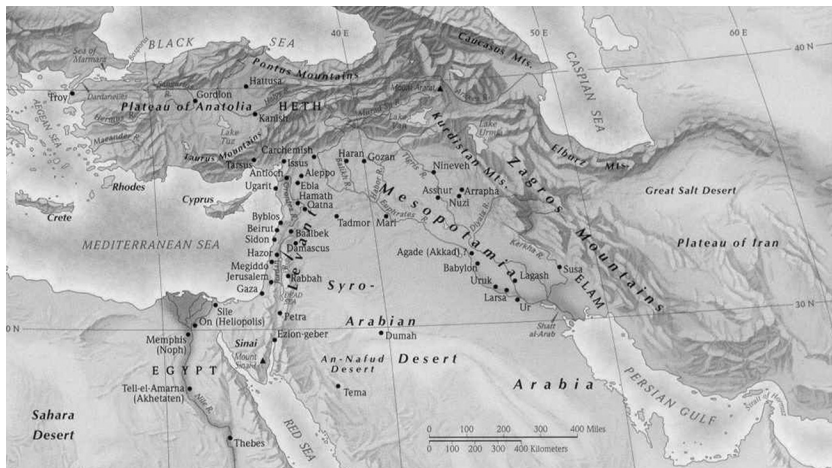


Fig. 6: Map of the ancient Near East.

love story, in three installments: “Cruel Love,” “The Beloved Described,” and “How should I your true love know?”

In his *European Literature*, Curtius includes a discussion—a brief appendix, not a principal chapter, on what he aptly calls “the numerical apothegm,” the simple device in which an author gives shape to his utterance, whatever the content, by putting it in the form of a list, and by announcing at the start how many items will be enumerated. This is “As You Like It,” in the sense that the content may be whatever the poet wants to put in it.

It can be a couple of lines about a dog. Thus there is this from the *Gesta romanorum*, a medieval collection of tales, each followed by its very Christian moral.

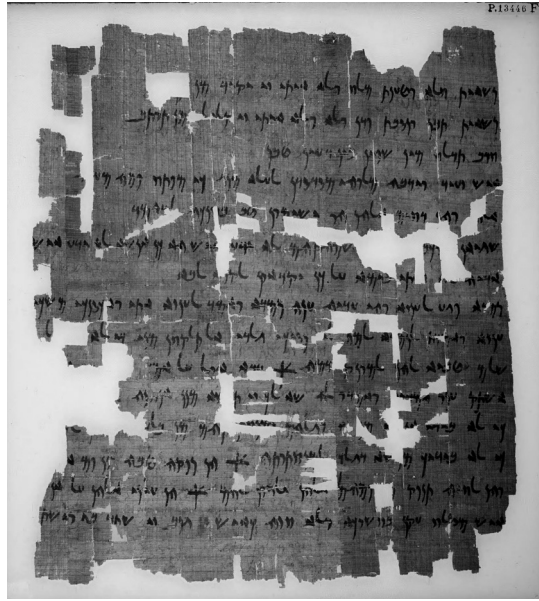
There are four fine things
about our canine friend:
How he licks, and sniffs, and barks,
And is faithful to the end.

The original is Latin verse, of no great merit; I have faithfully reproduced this quality in my own doggerel translation.²

As Curtius notes, Calderon and Goethe employ this simple form, raising it to the level of high art. Turning to the ancient Near East, the biblical examples, which cluster richly in Proverbs, have long been recognized as a source for this little recurrent form. For illustrative ancient

2. In cane bis bina sunt, et lingue medicina, Naris odoratus, amor integer atque latratus. Hermann Oesterley, *Gesta romanorum* (Berlin, 1872).

Fig. 7: Column 11 (P13446F) from the proverbs of Ahiqar. Courtesy of Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung and West Semitic Research. The proverb cited by Hillers comes from column 12, not pictured here.



Near Eastern material, there is this significant bit from the (Aramaic) proverbs of Ahiqar (Fig. 7):

trtyn mln špyrh wzy tll' rhyhm lšmš š[th] hmrh wynyqnhy kbš hkmh []
wyšm^c mlh w^l yhhwh (TAD C1.1.187–88)

There are two things which are good,
 and a third which is pleasing to Shamash:
 one who drinks wine and shares it,
 one who masters wisdom [*and observes it*];
 and one who hears a word but tells it not.³

Although the text is of the fifth century B.C.E., its antecedents may lie in Aramaean court circles of a much earlier century, whence the name Ahiqar found its way also into Assyrian documents.

A still more ancient numerical apothegm comes in a Ugaritic text from the fourteenth century B.C.E. (Fig. 8). The Ugaritic language is in many ways like archaic Hebrew. The numerical saying comes in the lines where the Canaanite storm-god Baal announces—this is in an epic poem:

<i>dm. ʔn. dbḥm. šna. bʕl.</i>	There are two banquets that Baal hates,
<i>tll. rkb. ʕrpt.</i>	three kinds abhorrent to the Cloud-Rider:

3. Cf. J. M. Lindenberger, *The Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar* (JHNES; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983).



Fig. 8: CTU 1.4.III.17–21.
Courtesy of Wayne Pitard
and West Semitic Research.

dbh btt. wdbh{.wdbh} dnt. a banquet of shame and a degrading banquet,
wdbh. tdmm amht a banquet where the women misbehave.
(CTU 1.4.III.17–21)

Clearly, this form is “As You Like It” (or “What You Will”), for it can be filled with any sort of content. However banal some of the examples, this may be the vehicle for poetry as memorable as this from the Bible:

There be three things which are too wonderful for me,
yea, four which I know not:
The way of an eagle in the air;
the way of a serpent upon a rock;
the way of a ship in the midst of the sea;
and the way of a man with a maid.
(Prov 30:18–19; cf. vv. 15–16, 21–23)

The moral. This is a very simple illustration of the incompleteness of a view of Western literature which does not go back beyond classical and biblical texts, a reminder that “There were poets before Homer.”⁴

4. The quotation is left unattributed by Hillers, though his use of quotation marks here and in the lecture’s title (i.e., “Poets before Homer”) makes clear his awareness of borrowing the sentiment. Indeed, it is a commonplace, especially among discussions by classicists. For example, from a critical note on a 19th-century edition of the *Iliad* there is the following: “It is most natural to suppose that there were poets before Homer” (“Felton’s Homer,” *Southern Quarterly Review*



Fig. 9: *Time unveiling Truth*, 1733. Troy, Jean-François de (1679–1752). Oil on canvas, 203 × 208 cm. National Gallery, London, Great Britain. © National Gallery, London / Art Resource, NY.

At the same time it shows that a literary device of this sort is an artifact. A metaphor, or a literary technique, is a human intellectual construct; it is part of culture, a thing that once invented, may be transmitted. In this case, the little literary device, the numerical apothegm, resembles a trick of the trade. It is not so much like a pot as like a potter's technique, part of a transmitted craft. To think of a positive outcome of this first small illustration, it

may show, in a provisional way, how a technique modeled on that of Curtius might usefully supplement other kinds of literary critical methods.

Erwin Panofsky, the great historian of art of a previous generation, begins his classic essay on the iconography of Father Time, of 1939,⁵ with a drawing from an advertisement for the Bowery Savings Bank.⁶ The subject is old Father Time, with his scythe (see Fig. 9), and in this familiar form, it is not very menacing. This, however, turns out to be our horror story. Already in Panofsky's tracing of the imagery through the art and literature of Renaissance and medieval times back to classical Greek representations, we find that some representations, as of time

XXII [1847], 490). Hillers's contribution, very much in the spirit of the larger lecture, is to extend the scope of the "before" beyond Homer's Greek forebears to include the poets of the ancient Near East. — Ed. FWD-A

5. *Studies in Iconology* (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1962 [1939]). *Editor's note*: Hillers's discussion here is framed most specifically in reference to the images by Panofsky. I have not been able to secure permissions to the specific images discussed by Panofsky (and thus also by Hillers). The substitutes are all of the same theme and, where possible, of the same period or style. The original images under discussion are cited in the notes.

6. Image discussed by Panofsky: Father Time. Advertisement of the Bowery Savings Bank; see Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, Ill. 1 p. 65. — Ed. FWD-A



Above—Fig. 11: *Triumph of Time*, from *Triumphs (Trionfi)*. Petrarch. Ms. Strozzi 172, f.44r. Biblioteca Laurenziana, Florence, Italy. Scala / Art Resource, NY.

Left—Fig. 10: *Saturn devouring his son*. Rubens. Canvas, 180 × 87 cm. Inv. 1678. Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain. Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY.

devouring his children (Fig. 10), are gruesome.⁷ Others, less familiar to moderns, of an aged Time with wings (see Fig. 11), for example,⁸ or drawings from earlier times, back to classical antiquity, in which the great scythe is a small sickle (Fig. 12),⁹ are more puzzling, and suggest that the history of the imagery involved is not simple, but complicated.

The figure of “old Time” (Shakespeare, Sonnet 19:13) is a subject not only for artists, but for poets as well; as Panofsky points out, Shakespeare in his *Rape of Lucrece* and in the sonnets betrays something like

7. Image discussed by Panofsky: Saturn. Rome, Vatican Library, Cod. Reg. 1480, fol. 5, 14th c.; see Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, pl. XXIV no. 45. — Ed. FWD-A

8. Image discussed by Panofsky: The Triumph of Time. Woodcut from Petrarch (Jacopo Capcasa di Codeca), Venice, 1493, fol. O5, v.; see Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, pl. XXVIII no. 52. — Ed. FWD-A

9. Image discussed by Panofsky: Saturn. Pompeian Mural from the Casa dei Dioscuri, Naples, Museo Nazionale; see Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, pl. XXIII no. 38. — Ed. FWD-A



Fig. 12: Cronos. Fresco from Pompeii. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, Italy. Nimatallah / Art Resource, NY.

an obsession with “Misshapen Time, . . . Eater of youth.”¹⁰ In the sonnets we find the phrase, “His scythe and crooked knife” (Sonnet 100:14); time is “Devouring Time” (Sonnet 19:1), who bears his “fickle glass, his sickle hour” (Sonnet 126:2) and the lover/poet swears, “I will be true, despite thy scythe and thee” (Sonnet 123:14).

What Panofsky could not know when he published this vivacious essay, in 1939, was that new evidence on the figure of Time was just then coming to hand, in publication of the pre-Greek legends of the Hurrian Kronos, Kumarbi, and in the Ugaritic texts which speak of gray-bearded El. Here is where it gets horrid and violent.

Panofsky, of course, knew and cited the eighth-century Greek poet Hesiod, and his poem about world origins, the *Theogony*, and other early Greek sources for the mythology of Cronos. Kronos carries in art the sickle he used, as we know from Hesiod, to castrate his father Uranos (the Sky). But behind the Greek myth lies a still more grisly, more ancient version. This, in the Hittite language and from around 1500 B.C.E., goes back to a myth of a neighboring people, the Hurrians, whose god Kumarbi is the Hurrian Kronos. (Hurrian Kronos is *not* a learned way of saying “Time flies.”) Kumarbi, the son of the Sky (Anu = Ouranos), chases the king his father, catches him, and *bites* off his genitals. The semen from his father’s phallus, once inside Kumarbi, impregnates him with three other great gods, and he spits them out as the next stage in this Theogony, this account of creation.¹¹

10. *Rape of Lucrece*, 925–27. Note that not only *chronos* is denounced by Shakespeare, but first *kairos* “Opportunity”: “O Opportunity! Thy guilt is great,” line 876.

11. Güterbock, *Kumarbi*. Cf. Heinrich Otten, *Mythen vom Gotte Kumarbi*. Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaft zu Berlin, Institut für Orientforschung, Veröffentlichung Nr. 3 (Berlin: Akademie, 1950). The edition and commentary on Hesiod of M. L. West (*Fragmenta Hesiodica* [Oxford: Calrendon, 1967]; cf. *Hesiodi Theogonia; Opera et dies; Scutum* [3d ed.; Oxonii: E Typographeo Clarendoniano, 1990]), provides much more detail and nuancing on Hesiod, for those interested.

Years ago, when I was dealing with a new idea about an Amos passage, William F. Albright, who liked my suggestion, said at once: “Look in Amos’s contemporary, Hesiod!” It seems to me typical of Albright’s mind that he thought instantly across lines; few others would instantly have identified the Israelite prophet Amos and Hesiod as contemporaries.¹²

To return to the main topic, we can now see what Panofsky could not, that elements he thought to separate and which, according to him, coalesce only later, in Hellenistic times at earliest, or in the Renaissance, that is, the pictures of Cronos/Chronos as the father-castrater and as the devourer of his children, are joined already in a myth of the middle of the second millennium B.C.E., so that, curiously, the Renaissance depiction now appears as an eerie reemergence into consciousness of a very ancient figure (Fig. 10).¹³

It is possible also that the Canaanite God El—his name means “God”—is also a Father Time figure. A plaque now found in the National Museum in Aleppo is usually identified as showing El, the gray-bearded father of the gods (Fig. 13). Recall that the epithet of time in a number of Greek texts is *polios* “gray, grizzled,” old Time (Fig. 14).¹⁴ El is “Father of Years” (*ab šnm*) and in a comic narrative poem that comes to us in Ugaritic, he is beyond question and most graphically and explicitly the father of Dawn and Dusk (*CTU* 1.23). In an Akkadian polyglot list from Ugarit,¹⁵ El (*ilu*) is identified with Enlil, son of Anu (heaven) and with Hurrian Kumarbi. To sum up, Father Time is ultimately a figure derived



Fig. 13: *El stela. Ugarit (Ras Shamra, Syria). Late middle Syrian period. National Museum, Aleppo, Syria. Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY.*

12. “[Zeus] advanced through the sky . . . sending flash upon flash of continuous lightning. The bolts of lightning and thunder flew thick and fast from his powerful arm, forming a solid roll of sacred fire. Fertile tracts of land all around cracked as they burned . . . the ocean-streams and the barren sea began to boil.” (x 617–735, p. 72 in Hesiod, *Theogony* [trans. N. O. Brown; New York: Liberal Arts, 1953]). Cf. Delbert R. Hillers, “Amos 7,4 and Ancient Parallels,” *CBQ* 26 (1964) 221–25.

13. Image discussed by Panofsky: Jacopo Caraglio after Rosso Fiorentino, Saturn. Engraving, B. 24, dated 1526; see Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, pl. XXV no. 47. — Ed. FWD-A

14. Image discussed by Panofsky: Saturn. New York, The J. P. Morgan Library, ms. 785, fol. 34, ca. A.D. 1400; see Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, pl. XXIV no. 44. — Ed. FWD-A

15. [^d*en.lil k*][^m*ur-wi ilum*]^{lum} (*Ugaritica* V, no. 137 col. III 35 p. 246).



Fig. 14: Saturn seated on clouds holding his scythe. After Giovanni Andrea Sirani. Etching. Late 17th c. BM U,3.198. British Museum, London, Great Britain.

from Near Eastern religious, artistic, and literary traditions, including probably the religion of Ugarit.

The moral. This story of an image in both art and literature shows, better than our first illustration, the complex intertwining of literary, artistic, and religious symbolisms. It also illustrates the permutation of a bit of symbolism over time, though not in exactly the way Panofsky conceived of it. This is more than a trivial consideration in trying to assess the validity of a historical study of symbols, and “topics”: do we reach, even by valid stepping back from point to point in the literary history, a

breaking point at which it no longer makes sense to speak of the “same” image, or the “same” topos being transmitted?

Now, to cheer us up, a melancholy story, in two installments. One of the sad things whose contemplation we perversely enjoy is the passage of great or beautiful things into ruin and death. All things are transitory and only Liz Taylor is eternal. A traditional poetic device to introduce and express this idea is to ask “Ubi sunt?” “Where are they now?” This is sometimes rescued from the status of a cliché by its transformation into beauty, as, for example, in the ballad of François Villon (1450) which laments fair women now vanished, with the refrain famous in English through the translation of Rossetti: “But where are the snows of yesteryear?”

As a way to make absence materially present to the imagination, one might picture the ancient ruins of a once-thriving metropolis, such as Dura-Europos, a city on the western bank of the Euphrates that thrived during the Hellenistic and Roman periods (Fig. 15). In fact, in litera-



Fig. 15: Aerial view of Dura-Europos from the north (Photograph 1932 Z-1). Courtesy Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection.

ture, famous ancient cities, and kings, lend themselves to the “Where are they?” treatment. For example, we have this, from a long medieval Latin poem by Bernard of Morlaix, parts of which are used in Christian hymns, familiar to us in English translation, thus “Jerusalem, the Golden” (*Urbs Sion aurea*) and “The days are very evil,” based on the first lines of the poem, with its characteristic rhythm and rhyme pattern: “*Hora novissima tempora pessima sunt vigilemus.*” In the course of this poem comes the “*Ubi sunt?*” theme: “Where now is the glory of Babylon, where now is dire Nebuchadnezzar?” And so it continues for quite a stretch.¹⁶

This commonplace of the literary tradition ancient and modern was attested in ancient Near Eastern texts known already decades ago, and its

16. Quoted from K. P. Harrington, *Mediaeval Latin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962; c. 1925 Allyn & Bacon) p. 320, 14–25; the whole poem (extracts) is given pp. 314–22 under the title *Bernardi Morlanensis de contemptu mundi*; also has name Bernard of Cluny. Cf. use in G. Leopardi, *Canti*, XIII, *La sera del dì di festa*, 30–37: “. . . Or dov’è il suono/ di que’ popoli antichi? or dov’è il grido/ de’ nostri avi famosi, e il grande impero/ di quella Roma, e l’armi, e il fragorio/ che n’andò per la terra e l’oceano?”

parallels in later Western literature have been discussed in specialist articles.¹⁷ Recently, however, our body of attestations has been enriched by publication of texts from second-millennium B.C.E. Emar, on the North Euphrates. From here (Emar is not far from Dura-Europos) we have a well-preserved Akkadian poetic composition, derived in turn from a Sumerian original, touching on the vanity of human life: “Life altogether is nothing but blindness.” The ancient poet continues this plaint by asking: “Where is king Alalu who reigned 3,600 years? / Where is king Entena who ascended to heaven? / Where is the leader, Angeštug / who sought eternal life, like Ziusudra (the flood hero)? . . . Where is Enkidu (the companion of Gilgamesh) / who displayed his brilliant power in the country? . . . Where are the great kings? . . .” Our edition, of 1985, is, with a nice poetic fitness, by a co-national of Villon, the French scholar Daniel Arnaud.¹⁸

To orient ourselves once again with a map (see Fig. 6), we may pedantically answer the question “Ubi sunt?” Moving from Emar on the Euphrates, our next stop is Sefire in Syria (approximately 22 km SE of Aleppo), as we turn to the next story, “The Cautious Fox.” From this small village were recovered three steles preserving the text of a treaty (or treaties) of the eighth century B.C.E. made by a north Syrian ruler. The part of interest here is a list of curses (Fig. 16), among which is this: “. . . and may Arpad become a mound to [house . . . the] gazelle and the fox and the hare and the wild-cat and the owl . . .” (*KAI* 222A.32–33). The ruined city, in a traditional literary topos, a commonplace, becomes the abode of wild animals. In European literature, I refer for a brief example to the nineteenth-century Italian poet Leopardi, and the “cautious fox” or “wary fox” (*la cauta volpe*) who slinks over ruined Rome.¹⁹

17. C. H. Becker, “Ubi sunt qui ante nos in mundo fuere,” in *Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Sprachgeschichte vornehmlich des Orients* (Festschrift Ernst Kuhn) (Breslau: M. & H. Marcus, 1916), 87–105; C. Bezold, “Assyriologische Randbemerkungen,” *ZA* 32 (1918/1919) 18 (adds references to Becker’s collection). For Egyptian parallels (thanks to Esther Hawker-Flueckiger), see M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 194–97 (“The-Song from the Tomb of King Intef”). Claus Wilcke, “Sumerische Königsliste und erzählte Vergangenheit,” in J. v. Ungern-Sternberg and H. Reinan, eds., *Vergangenheit in mündlicher Überlieferung* (Colloquium Rauricum Bd. 9; Stuttgart, 1988), 113–40, with reconstructed text of “La Ballade des héros du temps jadis,” and literature, including B. Alster-U. Jeyes, *Acta Sumerologica* 8 (1986) 10f. (non vidi).

18. Emar VI/4, *Recherches au pays d’Aštata* (Mission archéologique de Meskéné–Emar; Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilizations). Cf. also Nougayrol in *Ugaritica* V (Paris 1968) no. 164 RS 25.130.

19. Leopardi, *Canti*, V, A un vincitore nel pallone 43–46: “Tempo forse verrà ch’alle ruine/ delle italiche moli/ insultino gli armenti, e che l’aratro/ sentano i

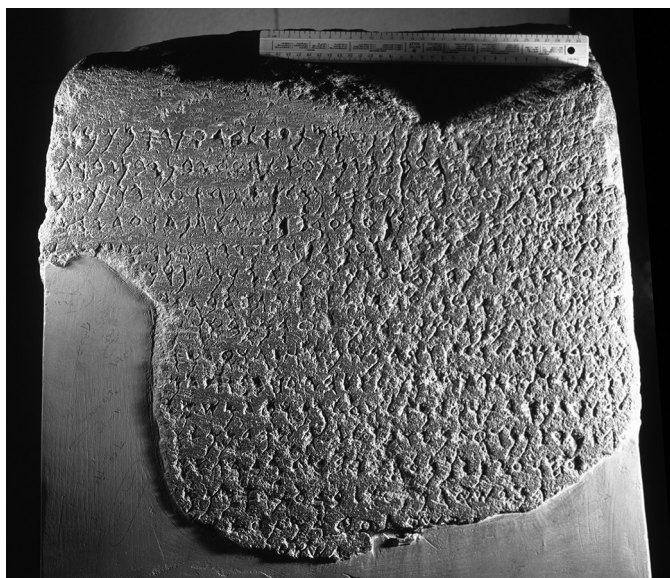


Fig. 16: *Sefire Stele I, Face A*. Courtesy of Wayne Pitard and West Semitic Research.

“Perhaps the time will come when herds will tread on the ruins of the great monuments of Italy, and the seven hills will feel the plow; perhaps after only a few circuits of the sun the cautious fox will inhabit the Latin cities, and dark forests will murmur between the high walls.” This must have come to Leopardi, directly or indirectly,²⁰ from the Bible. In Lamentations (5:18) the poet describes the ruins of Jerusalem thus: “On Mount Zion, which lies desolate, foxes prowl about.” Before the Bible, this topos goes back very far indeed, to about 2000 B.C.E. where it is found in a famous Sumerian composition “The Curse of Agade”: “In your fattening pens, established for purification ceremonies, may foxes that frequent ruined mounds sweep with their tails!” (257–58).²¹

The moral. “Topological” research may contribute to understanding what it means for a poet to work within a tradition, and beyond that, perhaps, provide us, while we are reading a later poetic composition, with a sense of depth or resonance, something of the same feeling we

sette colli; e pochi Soli/ forse fien volti, e le città latine/ abiterà la cauta volpe, e l'atro/ bosco mormorerà fra le alte mura.”

20. Editors refer to Ossian as Leopardi's immediate source.

21. For the text of the passage and images of extant tablets, see J. S. Cooper, *The Curse of Agade* (JHNES; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 62–63, pl. III. — Ed. FWD-A

have when a composer of recent centuries uses a medieval theme, weaving the *Dies irae* chant into a symphony, for example. Here is a case, too, where somewhat paradoxically, the later poet explains the image to us: Leopardi's adjective "wary" (*cauta*) tells why this particular animal is a traditional denizen of ruins. The wary fox does not make his home where there are a lot of humans around, so his presence in a ruin marks the utter cessation of human occupancy.

Now to our love story. The first installment, Cruel Love, deals with the "Venus and Adonis" theme, versions of the story of the youth who spurns the goddess of love and is then destroyed by her. This tale wears its Near Eastern origin openly, in the name of the lover Adonis, a Semitic word. There are many ancient and modern versions of this narrative theme; one to which I shall refer is not widely known, that is, the Ugaritic story of Aqhat, confronted by and finally slain by the goddess Anat. Since classical times, at least since Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (X), the fatal encounter has been located at the Adonis River, the modern Nahr Ibrahim (the headwaters of which are at Afqa in Lebanon), which is supposed to turn red, from the slain hero's blood, and where the blood-red anemone is said first to have sprung up.²² Here one may recall Albright's impressive argument, following the lead of earlier Semitists, that the common etymology of Greek *anemone* as "wind flower," as though from Greek *anemos* "wind," is actually a folk-etymology. Anemone is really Semitic, derived from *nu'mân*, the "Handsome," an epithet of the slain hero or demi-god.²³

Moralisatio. This installment suggests to me something of the vastness of the enterprise under contemplation. This theme, "cruel love," may be suggested in very small compass in some literary attestations, thus in a single recurring epithet in a Ugaritic poem *nu'mân* "the Handsome." Or in a song of our era: "I am slain by a fair cruel maid." Hence it is a commonplace, a bit of literary stock-in-trade. But at the same time it may be a narrative and artistic and religious theme of considerable scope and having a complex history. It sets before anyone who would trace poetic commonplaces historically the practical challenge of setting some boundary to the inquiry, of deciding in advance on some reasonable limit to this line of research.

The second installment is brief: The Beloved Described. Described how? As a beautiful statue! The beloved woman of an Egyptian love

22. "At cruor in florem mutabitur. . . / . . . cum flos de sanguine concolor ortus . . . / . . . brevis est tamen usus in illo; / namque male haerentem et nimia levitate caducum / excutiant idem, qui praestant nomina, venti" (728, 735, 737-39).

23. *History, Archaeology, and Christian Humanism* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964) 172-73.



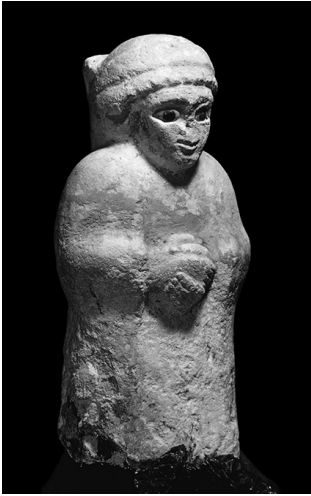
Fig. 17: Nefertiti. Sculpted head from the Ptah Temple in Memphis (ca. 1340 BCE). Egyptian Museum, Cairo, Egypt. Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY.



Fig. 18: Head of Queen Tiye (18th Dynasty; ca. 1355 BCE). Medinet el-Ghurab. Ägyptisches Museum, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany. Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz / Art Resource, NY.

song has “Upright neck, shining breast, Hair true lapis lazuli, Arms surpassing gold” (see Figs. 17–18).²⁴ In a Ugaritic poem of the second millennium B.C.E., the Lady Hurriya is first compared to a goddess for charm, and then is described as a statue, suggesting the nexus of the two in the precious sculptured image of the deity: “Her fairness is like Anat’s / her beauty is like Astarte’s / her eyebrows are lapis lazuli / her eyes like circles of precious stone” (CTU 1.17.III.41–44). Eyes and eyebrows, that is, inlaid with shell and lapis lazuli, as in the little votive statue from Ur (Fig. 19), or on the “Queen’s lyre” recovered from the

24. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 2.182. Written descriptions of Egyptian composite cult statues make clear that they were made of gold, silver, lapis lazuli, and other precious materials; though not many of these have survived, since already in antiquity their metals would have been melted down and the inlaid stones reused (G. Robins, “Cult Statues in Ancient Egypt,” in N. H. Walls, ed., *Cult Image and Divine Representation in the Ancient Near East* [ASORBS 10; Boston: ASOR, 2005], 1–12, esp. 4). Parts of composite statues of humans have survived, such as those of Queens Nefertiti and Tiye in figures 17 and 18. In the case of the quartzite bust of Nefertiti, the tenon upon which a headdress would have been affixed is plainly visible, as are the hollowed out eyes, which would have received inlaid stones. The latter may be seen in the yew wood bust of Tiye: the brows are inlaid with dark ebony, the whites of the eyes with alabaster, and the pupils with obsidian or black glass. The one earring showing from under the brown cap consists of loops of gold and lapis lazuli. — Ed. FWD-A



Above—Fig. 19: Limestone statue from the shrine of Hendursag. Ur (1800–1600 BCE). 37 cm. © Trustees of the British Museum.



Right—Fig. 20: Queen's lyre. Royal Cemetery at Ur (2600–2400 BCE). 112 cm. Restored though beard, hair, and eyes are original and made out of lapis lazuli. © Trustees of the British Museum.

Royal Cemetery at Ur (Fig. 20). The lover, “sighing like a furnace” in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* (II 7 147–49), was not the first to compose “a woeful ballad / Made to his mistress’s eyebrow!” The precious busts of Queens Nefertiti and Tiye (Figs. 17–18) suggest the aptness of the comparison. Thus in ancient Near Eastern statuary, eyes and hairy parts were frequently made of lapis or an imitation, and this enters the literary tradition. In Homer, Poseidon is the god who most frequently has the title *kyanochaitēs*, “having hair of *kyanos*,” that is “dark blue enamel” or “lapis lazuli.”²⁵ But a sea-nymph, Amphitrite, has lapis eyes, and both Zeus and his wife Hera have brows of lapis lazuli. I include a bit of Homeric Greek here because of the tantalizing possibility that we have here in Homer an echo from the time of the Trojan war (traditionally

25. Richard John Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963; first publ. Glasgow: Blackie and Son, 1924), s.v. *kyanos*, *kyaneos*, *kyanopeza*, *kyanoprāros*/*kyanoprāreios*, *kyanochaitēs*, *kyanāpis*.

dated to ca. 1300–1200 B.C.E.), from the Bronze Age. By good fortune, the word for lapis or blue paste is attested in the Mycenaean Greek of the Linear B tablets, in the form *ku-wa-no*, and on the other hand, it is not characteristic for Greek statues of classical times to have blue-colored hair. The tradition continues in Phoenician art—the Phoenicians are descendants of the people we have called Canaanites—as seen in the necklace from Cagliari in Sardegna, featuring a central pendant made of lapis (4th–3rd century B.C.E.).²⁶

As was shown by J. S. Cooper,²⁷ in the Sumerian composition “The Message of Lúdingirra to his Mother” and in its biblical counterpart in the Song of Songs, still more details of the statue enter into the description:

My mother is brilliant in the heavens, . . .

.....

An alabaster statuette set on a lapis pedestal,

A living rod of ivory, whose limbs are filled with charm.

From the Song of Songs, “My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is the most fine gold . . . His hands are as gold rings set with beryl; his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of gold” (5:10–16).

The final episode of our love story takes its name from the ditty sung by Ophelia in *Hamlet* (iv 1). Driven mad by frustrated love and the murder of her father, the “poor wretch” sings songs that are an odd refraction of main themes of the play: death of father and lover, sex and bawdry, and love, including, “How should I your true love know / From another one?” In the pathos of its setting, we may scarcely notice, or care to notice, the words of the song, let alone think of their history. It has the pattern of a question about how the beloved is to be recognized, and goes on with the response to the question “How?,” by giving the marks by which the beloved may be known. In Olivier’s film version, Ophelia drowns while singing: “How should I your true love know? . . . By his cockle hat and staff, And his sandal shoon.”

This is the pattern of the Sumerian poem discussed by Cooper.²⁸ A man sends a messenger to his “mother”—it may be a divine mother, a goddess—and tells the emissary “If you do not know my mother . . . I

26. S. Moscati, *I Fenici* (Bompiani: Gruppo Editoriale Fabbri, 1988), no. 757, and cover.

27. “New Cuneiform Parallels to the Song of Songs,” *JBL* 90 (1971) 157–62; cf. Miguel Civil, “The ‘Message of Lú-dingir-ra to His Mother’ and a Group of Akkado-Hittite ‘Proverbs,’” *JNES* 23 (1964) 1–11.

28. “New Cuneiform Parallels”; see Civil, “Message of Lú-dingir-ra,” 1–11.

shall give you some signs,” introducing an elaborate description of her beauty. This dialogue pattern is found in the Song of Songs (5:8–10): “I adjure you, O maidens of Jerusalem! If you meet my beloved, tell him this: that I am faint with love.” “What sort of beloved is your beloved, O fairest of women?” “My beloved is clear-skinned and ruddy, Preeminent among ten thousand.” In a Greek bucolic poet, Moschos, of the second century B.C.E.,²⁹ it is the goddess Aphrodite herself who has lost her son Eros, “love, Cupid.”³⁰ In the Renaissance his poem on “Fugitive Love” was much imitated, as by Tasso, and by Shakespeare’s contemporary Ben Jonson.

Beauties, have you seen this toy
 Called Love, a little boy,

 He hath marks about him plenty:
 You shall know him among twenty.
 All his body is a fire³¹

Since it might be pedantic to draw any moral about a song of love, we pass instead into the summary discussion, some concluding reflections. Thinking again of Curtius’s *European Literature*, we may ask: is it either desirable or even possible to take this work as a model for inquiry into the connection of our most ancient literature with more recent European traditions?

Curtius covered twenty-six centuries of literature; should we dream of synthesizing and weighing the evidence for the continuance of traditional metaphors and rhetorical or poetic devices in his manner, but attempting to take in an even broader span?

A great critic of that same generation, Leo Spitzer, reviewed Curtius’s book, trenchantly.³² Giving all honor to this impressive achievement, Spitzer in the end asserted that Curtius’s method was not new, but only a more systematic application of a time-honored *modus ope-*

29. Though the motif “the search for the runaway lover” is present in the Song of Songs: “Whither has your beloved gone, O fairest of women? . . . Let us seek him with you” (6:1).

30. A. S. F. Gow, *Bucolici Graeci* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952) 132–33; *Moschou eroās drapētēs*. See for translation and parallels in later literature Henry Harmon Chamberlain, *Last Flowers: A Translation of Moschus and Bion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937) 3–5.

31. From *The Hue and Cry after Cupid* (in F. Cunningham, ed., *The Works of Ben Jonson* (London: Bickers and Son, 1906) 3.36.

32. Review of Ernst Robert Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, *AJP* 70 (1949) 425–31. Cf. Alexander Gellay, “Ernst Robert Curtius: Topology and Critical Method,” in *Velocities of Change* (ed. Richard Macksey, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974) 237–52.

randi. And Curtius seems to have forgotten the truism, that, as Spitzer put it: "the sum total of the sources does not explain the inward form of a particular work of art . . .," that ". . . the great work of art is always unique . . ." Hence the ultimate irrelevance of all Curtius's effort, and the danger that his example may give aid and comfort to a certain kind of pedantry, one which eschews or opposes individualizing aesthetic judgments about literature.

At a distance of forty years, we might, if we cared to, add much else by way of negative judgment. Perhaps the illustrations I have given above are sufficient hints at the intellectual and practical difficulties that would confront any scholar or group of scholars who would wish to produce a Curtius of greater scope.

And yet, characteristics of Curtius's work remain worth contemplating. At the outset, note that his work, scholarly as it was, was not detached from social concern. At a time in the 1930's when he felt European civilization threatened by particularly virulent forms of nationalism, he wrote it as a testimony to unity, to the underlying oneness of twenty-six centuries of Western literature, counting from Homer to Goethe.

If his "topicology" is only a *modus operandi*, we in Near Eastern studies should not despise it on that account. In the hands of the master, Curtius, the result of these researches was far from being a mere mechanical catalogue, a motif-index. His examples are gathered, critics agree, with unerring taste and skill. And the result is an artistic synthesis. That is, as planned and carried to a finish by Curtius, his book is itself literature, a work whose unity and coherence is not only that of a learned work, but that of a work of art.

In Near Eastern studies, much scholarly work has already gone into exploring connections of our old literature to European literature, but that much of this labor has been fragmentary, without even the minimal framework provided by a common name for the intellectual enterprise. Curtius's philologically and historically grounded method seems to me very congenial and promising to laborers in ancient Near Eastern literature. Such a method, one may imagine, could link literary study to history and archeology. It has the potential of supplementing, or testing, other evidence—archaeological evidence in the more normal sense—for transmission of elements of Near Eastern civilization westward. Without having the rather mystical aim of discovering that our literature is "One," with a capital "O," we may be attracted to this technique as a way of identifying the common elements which may be found to join Babylon and Israel and Egypt, and this early literature to that of Greece and Rome and so on. To Spitzer's review, with its concern that "topological" study might distract from properly literary and aesthetic treatment of



Fig. 21: William F. Albright. Photo courtesy of the editor.

literature, we might apply the *mot* of Erasmus, spoken in reply to critics of his wide-ranging learning: “You ask how does the knowledge of philosophy contribute to the knowledge of the sacred writing? And I reply, how does ignorance help?”³³

Curtius’s method has the great merit that it ignores or is destructive of periodization and the jealously guarded domains of the specialist. This is still needed even for scholars in biblical studies. Of course, after all these years of biblical criticism and recovery of the ancient biblical world, we biblical scholars are, perhaps more than other specialists, used to working across lines linguistic and national and religious. William F. Albright used to chuckle at those who thought of him as a “galloping fundamentalist.” I think he liked the vigorous adjective, but I know he repudiated the rest of the identification (Fig. 21). Yet the very title of his magnum opus *From the Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process*,³⁴ and the headings of the chapters, suggest a periodization which sets Israel, and Christianity, apart, and casts other nations

33. See “A Discussion of Free Will” in *Collected Works of Erasmus: Controversies* (vol. 76; ed. C. Trinkaus; trans. P. Marcadale; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999) 1–89.

34. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1940).

and religions as barbaric precursors. Much the same emerges in the famous early collaborative synthesis by Henri Frankfort and John A. Wilson and Thorkild Jacobsen, *Before Philosophy: The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*,³⁵ where Israel and the Bible represent part, along with early Greece, of “the emancipation of thought from myth.” This familiar pairing of Hebraism and Hellenism confronts us at the beginning of a classic synthesis of Western literature, Erich Auerbach’s *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*,³⁶ with its initial contrast of the biblical story of Abraham with Homer’s telling of the scar of Odysseus. Of course, it remains a joke to call Albright, or any of the scholars named, fundamentalists. Yet the invasive, undermining character of Curtius’s method might result in the achievement of a desirable perspective on the Bible, that is, on both testaments. The perspective I have in mind might resemble that expressed by Ernest Jones, the biographer of Freud. Jones speaks of the progress of civilization as a series of “evolutionary substitutions,” the replacement of one set of symbolizations with another, accompanied by the unmasking of ideas that were previously thought to be literally true, as mere “aspects or representations of the truth, the only ones of which our minds were, for either affective or intellectual reasons, at the time capable.”³⁷ So far, I have spoken of Curtius’s work as a possible model. Involved in my inquiry into this classic work, however, is the notion that even if Curtius’s work cannot eventually serve us as a model, it may function as a measure. That is, we may use this classic work as a yardstick. How well are we in Near Eastern studies succeeding in putting together in a coherent way what we

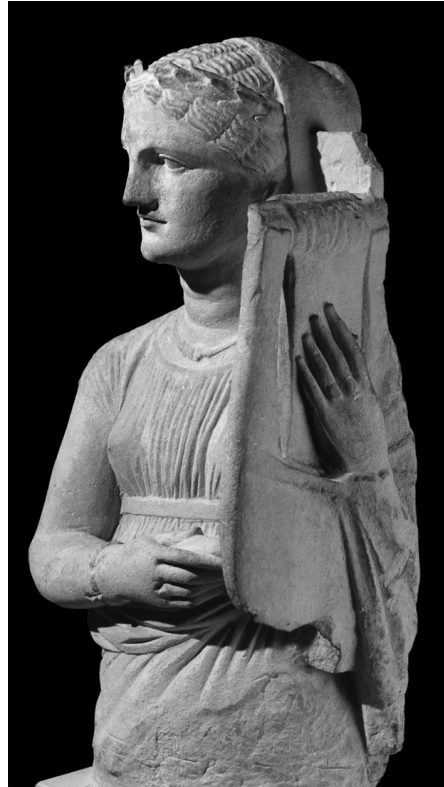
35. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946).

36. (Trans. W. R. Trask; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953).

37. Ernest Jones, “The Theory of Symbolism,” quoted in Ernst H. Gombrich, *Meditations on a Hobby Horse* (London: , 1963) p. 30: “. . . if the word ‘symbolism’ is taken in its widest sense the subject is seen to comprise almost the whole development of civilization. For what is this other than a never-ending series of evolutionary substitutions, a ceaseless replacement of one idea, interest, capacity or tendency by another? The progress of the human mind, when considered genetically, is seen to consist, not, as is commonly thought, merely of a number of accretions, added from without, but of the following two processes: on the one hand the extension or transference of interest and understanding from earlier, simpler, and more primitive ideas etc., to more difficult and complex ones, which in a certain sense are continuations of and symbolize the former; and on the other hand the constant unmasking of previous symbolisms, the recognition that these, though previously thought to be literally true, were really only aspects or representations of the truth, the only ones of which our minds were C for either affective or intellectual reasons C at the time capable. One has only to reflect on the development of religion or science, for example, to perceive the truth of this description.”

Right—Fig. 22: Limestone statue of a female worshipper playing a lyre. Hellenistic Cypriot (ca. 300–280 BCE). Larnaca, Cyprus. 55.5 cm. © Trustees of the British Museum.

Below—Fig. 23: Yuny, chief royal scribe, and his wife, Renenutet. Limestone (ca. 1290–1270 BCE). 86.4 cm. Northern Upper Egypt. ID# 1089. Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



are coming to know about ancient literature. It is possible to conceive of our age as one of barbarism, but who can know, living in the midst of an epoch, what its grand characteristics really are? We might instead view our time as a kind of renaissance. However one defines what the Renaissance was, it was a process of some length, whose boundaries are hard to determine. There are several “Renaissance” centuries. This long time was marked by the emergence of new ways of thought, and by the recovery of lost texts from antiquity. Perhaps something like that is what is going on with the recovery of long-lost Near Eastern literature, which has taken several centuries of discovery and decipherment, not yet finished. This has gone hand in hand with the revolutionary discoveries of 19th- and 20th-century science. Ours is then a time of ferment, of rethinking of old intellectual and academic goals, and of devising new curricula of study.³⁸ The eventual results are probably unpredictable to

38. Prominent among scholars who are pursuing the connections between classical, especially Greek, literature and that of the ancient Near East is M. L.



Fig. 24: Stone panel from the Central Palace of Tiglath-pileser III at Nimrud, featuring two scribes. Alabaster (ca. 735 BCE). ME 118882. © Trustees of the British Museum.

those of us engaged in that pursuit, but the situation is not necessarily one of which to despair.

With a final nod to the ancient singers (Fig. 22) who chanted and the learned scribes (Figs. 23–24) who transmitted the poems of which we have spoken,³⁹ I close.

West. His earlier book *Hesiod. Theogony* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966) already presented Hesiod's work as heavily dependent on eastern sources, a view presented on a broader scope in *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997). West's view of the dependence of Greek literature on West Asiatic forebears is much in harmony with my own, but I find his approach to defining the dependence very different from the "topological" method of Curtius, advocated in my lecture.

39. The material record from the ancient Near East is rich with images of singers, musicians, and scribes. Perhaps the most famous surviving portrayal of a singer from the ancient Levant is that of Ur-Nanshe of Mari (H. Weis, *Ebla to Damascus* [Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, 1985], Cat. No. 66), while a stone panel from the central palace of Tiglath-pileser III at Nimrud depicts a characteristic representation of the twin scribes who served the Neo-Assyrian empire (one writing in cuneiform on a clay tablet and the other on a scroll, presumably in Aramaic; Fig. 24).

PART I

*Traditions in
Metaphor, Magic, and
Other Aspects of Literature:
Some Examples*

A Convention in Hebrew Literature: The Reaction to Bad News

In the Baal Epic, the goddess Anath catches sight of the messengers Vineyard and Field, and reacts violently:

“No sooner espies she the gods,
Than Anath’s feet do stumble.
Behind, her loins do break;
Above, her face doth sweat:
Bent are the joints of her loins,
Weakened those of her back.”¹

This description of dismay at the approach of bad news was a commonplace in Ugaritic literature. Asherah’s response to the approach of Baal and Anath is identical (*UM* 51 II 12–20). When word is brought to Dan’el of Aqhat’s death, his reaction is the same, though it is depicted in a slightly shortened form (*UM* 1 Aqht 93–96). A brief variant of this convention appears in the Keret epic (*UM* 125, 53–54): “As soon as she (Thitmanet) sees her brother, Her [loins] to the ground do break.”²

H. L. Ginsberg has called attention to this literary convention, and has pointed out one biblical parallel, Ezek 21:11–12.³ The present study will show, in the first place, that in biblical Hebrew literature there is a widespread literary convention depicting the reaction to bad news, conceptually similar to that in the Canaanite poems, though there are few verbal correspondences. Secondly, it will be pointed out that certain

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1. *Ugaritic Manual* (= *UM*) *ʿnt* III 29–32, as translated by H. L. Ginsberg, *ANET* (Princeton, 1955), 136–37. Though details of the interpretation of this and the related passages remain uncertain, there is agreement among recent translators as to the general sense; cf. G. R. Driver, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Edinburgh, 1956), 87; C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature* (Rome, 1949), 19; J. Aistleitner, *Die mythologischen und kultischen Texte aus Ras Shamra* (Budapest, 1959), 27; A. Jirku, *Kanaanäische Mythen und Epen aus Ras Shamra-Ugarit* (Güttersloh, 1962), 30.

2. Translated by H. L. Ginsberg; *Ugaritic Manual*, 147.

3. *Ugaritic Manual*, 132, 18; 137, 9; 147, 26.

passages which have been quoted as descriptions of prophetic ecstasy are actually examples of this commonplace depiction of dismay.

In Jer 6:22–23, the prophet announces the coming of the enemy from the north. In v. 24 he continues:

We heard the news of it;
 our hands grew weak (*rāpû yādênû*).
 Anguish seized us,
 pains like those of a woman in labor (*hîl kayyôlēdâ*).

Jer 50:43 is nearly identical:

The king of Babylon heard the news of them
 and his hands grew weak.
 Anguish seized him,
 pains like those of a woman in labor.

Jer 49:23 is longer, and partly obscure, but the same pattern and vocabulary can be recognized in it.

Hamath and Arpad are dismayed
 because they have heard bad news.
 They melt (*namogû*) . . .⁴ cannot be quiet.
 Damascus has grown weak (*rāpētâ*);
 she turned to flee
 and panic seized her.
 Anguish and pains have taken hold of her
 like those of a woman in labor.⁵

Isaiah 13 describes the mustering of the hosts of the Lord for attack on Babylon. The day of the Lord is coming and the sound of the hosts is heard (vv. 1–6). Verses 7 and 8 depict the reaction:

Therefore all hands will grow weak
 and every man's heart will melt (*yimmās*),
 and they will be dismayed . . .⁶
 Anguish and pains will seize them;
 they will writhe like a woman in labor.

Ezek 21:11–12 describes not only the hearers but the prophet himself as reacting in the same way: “As for you, son of man, sigh with breaking loins; sigh bitterly before their eyes. Then when they say to you, ‘Why are you sighing?’ you shall say ‘Because of the news. When it

4. The text as it stands is obscure at this point, and perhaps corrupt. Read perhaps with BHS: “and their heart melts from anxiety.”

5. This last colon is, however, lacking in the Greek.

6. Probably something has dropped out of the text here.

comes, every heart will melt and all hands will grow weak. Every spirit will faint and every man will wet himself.”⁷

To summarize, the following are the principal elements of the convention: 1) approach of the bad news, or, in Isa 13, of the foe; 2) the hands’ falling helpless (*rāpā*), present in four of the five examples cited above; 3) pains in the loins like labor pains, mentioned explicitly in four of five examples and alluded to in the fifth by *šibrôn motnayim*; 4) melting of the heart (*māsas, mûg*), three examples.

Other passages can be identified as examples of this same convention, though somewhat less stereotyped in form. Jer 30:5–6: “We have heard a sound of panic, of terror and no peace. Ask now and see: can a man bear a child? Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor? Why has every face turned pale?” Other poetic passages which show the influence of this commonplace are Exod 15:14–16, Jer 4:9, perhaps Jer 23:9,⁸ Ezek 7:17, Ps 48:6–7 (of the kings who see Zion: “.. trembling seized them there, pains like those of a woman in labor”); and Dan 10:16.

Elements of this convention are also used in Hebrew prose to describe the reaction to bad news. Thus 2 Sam 4:1: “When Saul’s son heard that Abner was dead in Hebron, his hands grew weak (*wayyirpû*), and all Israel was troubled.” Compare also Deut 2:25, Josh 2:9 and 5:1. Numerous passages in the *Hodayot* from Qumran have borrowed from this standard biblical description of distress.⁹

7. Literally, “all knees will run with water.” On the meaning of this expression, see G. R. Driver, “Some Hebrew Medical Expressions,” *ZAW* LXV (1953), 259–60. “Knees” is a common euphemism for genitals in Akkadian; see W. von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, sub voce *birku*. The biblical expression was apparently misunderstood by the writer of *Hodayot* col 4:34, 8:34 [after Sukenik; = *DJD* 40: cols. 12:34–35, 16:35].

8. This is uncertain, but there are resemblances: the prophet’s heart is broken, his bones shake, and this is because of the Lord and his holy words. These lines stand at the beginning of a collection of oracles entitled “Concerning the prophets.” Some commentators (Volz, Rudolph, Weiser) hold that the oracle must be dated early in Jeremiah’s ministry, since the innocent, rather naive young man seems to react in profound surprise to Yahweh’s word concerning the corruption, especially in religious circles (so especially Volz). If one grants the likelihood that this is a variation of the standard “reaction to bad news,” one need not assume that the oracle is early. Ezekiel’s similar reaction (21:11) is no sign of an early date for his oracle.

9. Col 3:7–12, 4:33–34, 5:30–31, 7:2–3, 8:32–34 [= *DJD* 40: cols. 11:8–13, 12:34–35, 13:32–33, 15:5–6, 16:33–35]. Compare also Ecclesiasticus (Hebrew) 25:23; 48:19.

The interpretation of two passages in the prophets is particularly affected when it is recognized that they are examples of the convention discussed here. Hab 3:16 is similar in ideas to the examples gathered above, though the vocabulary is different:

When I heard, my bowels were queasy;
 at the sound my lips quivered,
 My bones began to decay,
 and my steps were unsteady beneath me.
 I *groan*¹⁰ at the day of distress,
 when a people comes up to attack me.

Isa 21:3–4 is even more closely related to the convention discussed in this paper.¹¹ (Verbal parallels to other examples are italicized.)

Therefore my loins are filled with anguish.
Pains have seized me,
like the pains of a woman in labor.
 I am contorted at hearing it;
 I am dismayed at seeing it.
My heart staggers, horror has overwhelmed me.

These passages, especially the latter, have been quoted as descriptions of prophetic ecstasy. Thus most recently J. Lindblom, referring to Isaiah 21: “Here we have a reproduction of a typical ecstatic vision”¹² He cites both Isaiah 21 and Habakkuk 3:16 as evidence

10. The translation of this passage is that of W. F. Albright, “The Psalm of Habakkuk,” in *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy* (Edinburgh, 1946), 13, with the exception of this word. MT *ʾānūāḥ* is perhaps to be connected with Ugaritic *nḥ* in the Keret epic: “(As) the cow moans for her calf, The *young of the flock* for their mothers, Even so will Udum wail (*ktnḥn*),” *UM* 128 16–17, trans. H. L. Ginsberg, *ANET*, 2nd ed., 145.

11. Julian Obermann, in “Yahweh’s Victory over the Babylonian Pantheon,” *JBL* 48 (1929): 314–16, has partly anticipated the present study by collecting a number of the passages cited here, and by concluding (p. 316): “Indeed, in view of the striking similarity in word and rhythm, one might justly assume that ultimately all these oracles are indebted to one and the same literary source” In a footnote he adds: “Or, which is perhaps more likely, they all use (independently) a well established oracular style.” But Obermann believes Isa 21:3–4 gives the words of Babylon, not the prophet. In drawing this conclusion he is seeking a way out of a difficulty which has bothered many: Why does the Israelite prophet display horror, not joy, at the fall of Babylon? The difficulty is negligible if we conclude that the writer of these verses simply depicts the normal reaction to a distressing vision. Recast in unemotional terms, his words mean: “Yahweh’s word is very bad news indeed.”

12. *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia, 1962), 129.

that the prophets experienced “emotional disturbance” and “abnormal psychological phenomena.”¹³ This kind of interpretation is typical of those who have followed Hölscher in advancing some sort of theory of prophetic ecstasy.¹⁴

In the light of the parallels gathered here, these passages must be used much more cautiously in discussing prophetic psychology. The poet’s use of traditional literary formulae prevents us from drawing any conclusions as to his individual psychological reaction. We can only say that he was concerned to describe himself as reacting in a typical, normal way. These passages do not describe the reaction to inspiration per se, but to the distressing content of the inspiration. The parallels show that the disturbing thing is not the approach of the divine word or vision, but the fact that the word is bad news, a “hard vision” (Isa 21:2), the approach of “the evil day” (Hab 3:16).¹⁵ There is nothing peculiarly prophetic about this reaction, to justify calling it “prophetic madness”¹⁶ or an “abnormal psychological phenomenon.” As shown above, the king of Babylon and the people of Hamath, Arpad, and Damascus experience the same emotions; both the prophet Ezekiel and his hearers react in the same fashion.

13. *Prophecy*, 197.

14. See, e.g., G. Hölscher, *Die Profeten* (Leipzig, 1914), 28, 317; G. B. Gray, [*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah, I–XXVII*], *International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh, 1912), 353; R. B. Y. Scott, *The Interpreter’s Bible*, V (New York and Nashville, 1956), 285–86.

15. Lindblom concedes that “the very meaning of the visions must sometimes have filled the visionaries with terror.” *Op. cit.*, 197.

16. So Gray, *loc. cit.*

“The Roads to Zion Mourn”
(Lam 1:4)

A version of this paper was delivered as one of the Schaff Lectures at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in October, 1970; the general subject of the lectures was “Tradition and Originality in Old Testament Poetry.” On that otherwise happy occasion, I felt especially keenly the loss of my friend and colleague, Paul Lapp, and am grateful to Seminary officials for permission to include this extract from the lectures in a volume honoring his memory.

Lam 1:4 is of no great intrinsic importance. It reads: “The roads to Zion mourn, since none come in for the feasts. All her gates are desolate. Her priests sigh, her virgins are troubled, and she is bitter.” Even within the book of Lamentations there are many other verses which are more striking in their thought or language, or which offer more tantalizing problems to the interpreter. I have chosen to consider this verse in detail because it seems to offer a good opportunity to illustrate how the literary tradition shapes the writer’s perception of events and his depiction of them in poetry. Interpreters often think of the depiction of an event in the Bible as two-dimensional, as though what were involved were simply an event, and an observer. I hope to show that one must constantly reckon on the presence of a third partner in the creative process: the tradition. In the present case, there is a hidden image involved, or better, a group of associated images which are not immediately apparent when we read the text, or even when we study it closely. As it turns out, this one rather ordinary verse leads into a group of more interesting passages, and finally to some conclusions as to the aims and procedures of interpretation.

Lam 1:4 is the *daleth* stanza in the alphabetic acrostic. As is common in this book where the acrostic shapes the form, the verse is not closely connected to what precedes or follows. Hence in discussing it we need not consider the context in detail, but need keep in mind only the general setting, which is a description of the desolation of Jerusalem after it fell in 586 B.C.E. The verse contains no major textual or linguistic

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difficulties,¹ and presents no genuine metrical problems. Though it is not easily read as being in the so-called “Qinah” meter, it is generally acknowledged that many lines in Lamentations, especially in chapter one, follow other patterns.

With these preliminaries disposed of, we may read through the verse as it is ordinarily explained, that is, in two-dimensional fashion, as a poet’s report on the state of Zion after the conquest. *The roads to Zion mourn, since none come in for the feasts.* The poet has turned his attention to the cessation of cultic activity in the destroyed city. The roads to Zion, once the thoroughfare for festive bands of pilgrims, now are deserted, and, in the kind of personification of actually lifeless things which is common in the book, are said to “mourn.” *All her gates are desolate* (*kol-šē^cāreyhā šômēmîn*). When the great pilgrim-feasts were still being held, the gates would have been the busiest part of the thronged city. Now they are desolate and quiet. *Her priests sigh.* The priests, of course, were main actors in the central ritual of the feasts; now they are left without any function, and they groan. *Her virgins are troubled* (*bētūlōteyhā nūgôt*). It is not quite so easy to explain why the poet should have singled out the virgins for mention in this context, but interpreters have not been at a loss for an explanation. The virgins are accounted for by saying that they had a prominent part in the festivals; Jer. 31:13 and Judges 21:19–21 are cited in evidence. The verse ends by returning to the theme with which the poem began, the picture of the mourning Zion: *and she (Zion) is bitter.*

All of this is, in my opinion, correct and sensible, though one feels a slight uneasiness at the somewhat contrived way that the presence of the virgins has been accounted for. But note that it is two-dimensional. That is, the exegetes all seem to have in mind that a certain set of conditions exists in Jerusalem and that the poet sees this and sets it down in verse. To be sure, his imagination comes into play, for he recalls how the feasts used to be, and compares that to the present sorry state of affairs, but this consideration does not change the basic model which is set up.

A rather different approach is taken by Norbert Lohfink,² and his interpretation merits separate mention. Lohfink points out, quite

1. The word *nūgôt*, rendered usually as here, “are troubled,” is somewhat difficult. The Septuagint *agomenai* has seemed to some to presuppose a Vorlage *nēhūgôt*, “led away.” On the other hand, *agomenai* may be an inner-Greek corruption for *achomenai*, which would agree with the Masoretic Text, and in any case “led away” does not fit the context as well as “be troubled.” See the commentaries of Rudolph and Albrektson for detailed discussion.

2. “Enthielten die im Alten Testament bezeugten Klageriten eine Phase des Schweigens?” *VT* 12 (1962), 260–77.

correctly, in my opinion, that the progress in thought within the verse is from the external to the internal, that is, from the roads and gates, to the people of Zion, and finally to the personified Zion herself. There is a psychological progress in the verse. At the same time the final subjective viewpoint with which the verse ends is anticipated already in the metaphor at the beginning, according to which the gates “mourn,” an action appropriate only to persons. Now, even if one appreciates Lohfink’s perceptive and original reading of the verse, it also is two-dimensional, since the key to the linking up of the various elements in the verse is thought to be within the poet, within his intention of suggesting a psychological change. Where most commentators have seen the structure of the verse as given in the situation, Lohfink sees it as given in the poet’s purpose. In neither case is there a historical dimension in the interpretation.

It is my intention to show that there is another dimension. All the elements in the picture are associated in other contexts. That is, the elements involved are linked together by tradition, in this case a tradition which can be traced through texts about a thousand years older than Lamentations. The procedure will be to consider biblical passages which are parallel to Lam 1:4 in one respect or another, working toward a reconstruction of the original literary theme from which it is descended.

To link Lam 1:4 with the tradition, we may well begin with the first verb: *ʾabal*. It is often difficult to know exactly how to translate this verb in a given context, since it means both “to mourn,” and “to dry up.”³ The meaning “to mourn” has long been the accepted one, and the sense “to dry up” has not been recognized as widely. Yet Hebrew *ʾabal* occurs as the word in parallel to *yābēš*, “to dry up,” and *heḥērīb* “to cause to dry up,” and an Akkadian cognate *abālu* (a common word) means “to dry up” so that there is no difficulty recognizing this sense in some passages. Whether the two senses derive from the same root, or whether two different roots are involved—a matter that is disputed—need not concern us here, since even if there were two separate verbs originally, they are at any rate perfect homonyms in Hebrew, so that speakers of the language must inevitably have associated them with one another. In a given passage, if one of the senses seems most likely to have been intended by the writer, we will do best to assume that connotations or overtones of the other meaning would also have been present. When we come to discuss individual passages, it will be evident that the literary evidence also justifies this linking of the sense “mourn” and “dry up.”

3. For a fuller discussion, see J. Scharbert, *Der Schmerz im Alten Testament* (Bonner Biblische Beiträge, 8; Bonn, 1955), 47–58.

Our first step will be to examine the contexts in which Hebrew *ʾabal* occurs. A famous use is in Amos 1:2, the very beginning of the prophecy of Amos: “Yahweh will roar from Zion, and from Jerusalem he will bellow, and the pastures of the shepherds will dry up (*wēʾābēlû*), and the top of Carmel will wither (*wēyābēš*).” Not a great deal is to be derived from this, except that *ʾabal* is used of a great drought which blasts even the most fertile parts of the landscape. Nahum 1:4 is rather similar, but uses the synonym *ʾumlal* rather than *ʾabal*; the context pictures a theophany in the course of which Yahweh rebukes the sea and rivers and dries them up, following on which Bashan, Carmel, and Lebanon wither (*ʾumlal*). Jer 4:23–28 is rather similar, being an awesome description of a destruction global in scope, but we may detect in it an additional element that occurs in the Lamentations passage: the stress on the *absence* of persons or things that should normally be there. In Lamentations it was: “None come in for the feasts” (*mibbēlî bāʾē mōʾēd*). In Jeremiah it is: “I beheld the earth, and it was waste and emptiness, and the sky, and its light was gone, and all the birds of the heaven had fled . . . On this account the earth mourns (*teʾēbal*), and the heavens above are darkened.” Like the first verb, *teʾēbal*, so the verb *qādērû* (“are darkened”) is ambiguous, meaning both “be dark” but also “to mourn.” As further texts are adduced, we shall see that in the passages having to do with drought one repeatedly finds reference to what is absent. In advance of this demonstration we may suggest that the mention of the absence of pilgrims in Lam 1:4 is an adaptation of this element of a larger complex. Jer 12:4 shows this same collocation of ideas: “How long shall the earth be dry (*teʾēbal*), and all the grass of the fields be withered? On account of the evil of those who dwell there, beasts and birds are gone.”

Isa 24:4–13 is another vision of a wide-sweeping destruction, which because of its length can be quoted only in excerpts. At the beginning is the by-now familiar: “The earth dries up and languishes (*ʾābēlâ nābēlâ hāʾāreš*), the world dries up and languishes (*ʾumlēlâ nābēlâ tēbēl*).” The “absent” motif is touched on: Few men are left, the vine has dried up, wine is gone, and (with a verbal parallel to Lam 1:4) “all the merry-hearted sigh” (*neʾenḥû*). All joyous sounds are absent. “Desolation is left in the city, and the gates are battered to ruins” (vs. 12). Note the further verbal parallels: “desolation” (*šammâ*) is a counterpart to *šōmēmîn*; and “gates” occurs in both contexts. Although we cannot yet see clearly what it is that accounts for the recurrent association of these words and themes, we notice in the Isa 24 passage a richer collection of echoes to Lam 1:4 than we have met so far. Another passage in Isaiah, 33:7–9, is also rich in verbal parallels to Lam 1:4, including the phrase “Those who pass along the highway have ceased,” and that “the earth dries up

and withers,” but in general the context is so full of linguistic and textual difficulties that one cannot do more than note these resemblances in details.

With the next group of passages we come closer to Lam 1:4 on one side, and to the original topos on the other. These passages speak of drought, but now explicitly refer to human mourning which accompanies the mourning/drying up of the earth. Hos 4:1–3 is one of these. “Hear the word of Yahweh, O Israelites, for Yahweh has a suit against the inhabitants of the land, for there is no truth or fidelity or knowledge of God in the land. There is cursing and deceiving, murder and theft . . . Therefore the land dries up (*teʿēbal*) and all who live there mourn (*ʿumlal*). Both the beasts of the field, and the birds of the sky, and even the fish of the sea have been taken away.” The richest context we have yet encountered is the next, Jer 14:1–6: “The word of the Lord which came to Jeremiah concerning the drought: Judah is dried up (*ʿābēlā*), and her gates languish (*ʿumlēlū*), they mourn down to the ground (*qādēru*), and the cry of Jerusalem has gone up.” After this somber beginning there follows a description of the chagrin of the farmers at the drought, and the drastic effects on the beasts of the field. As striking parallels to Lam 1:4, note the reference to gates joining in the mourning, and following on this the outcry of the people. Though this is not yet the end of the road, we may provisionally sum up by saying that so far it seems that the original theme, or topos, is a description of drought: the land dries up/mourns, and all sorts of things are absent, and as a response humankind joins in the mourning. Lam 1:4 seems to be an adaptation of this combination of elements to describe the cessation of cultic activity in the land.

Such a tentative conclusion is confirmed and amplified by the next passage, Joel 1:1–20. The passage is too long for quotation in full, so I cite only excerpts here, and am taking the liberty of quoting them in an order which will make their connection to what has been said most readily grasped. After describing a plague of locusts, Joel begins to use language more appropriate to a drought than to a locust-plague:

The fields are laid waste, the ground dries up (or mourns, *ʿābēlāh*). For the grain is ruined, the new wine has failed, the olive oil is dried up (*ʿumlal*). Be dismayed, O farmers! Howl, O vinedressers! over the wheat and the barley, because the harvest of the fields has perished. The vine has failed (or has dried up) and the fig-tree is dried up (*ʿumlālā*). Pomegranate and palm and apple—all the trees of the field have dried up, yea, joy has ceased from the sons of men. Gird yourselves and mourn, O priests, wail, O servants at the altar. Go in, spend the night in sackcloth, servants of my God! For meal-offering and libation have been cut off from the house of your God. (vv. 10–13)

This passage adds a new element that is parallel to something in Lam 1:4, specific reference to the priests. But its importance is greater than even this welcome addition of another bit to the mosaic we are constructing. This importance lies in the clarity with which Joel 1 describes the ritual action following on the drought. Drought has come, the earth mourns/dries up, there is detailed listing of all that is lacking, even meal-offering and libation, and the proper response is for the priests to lead the people in ritual mourning, as if in mourning for the dead. They are to wail and gird themselves with sackcloth.

There is still more in Joel 1 to occupy us, but before we return there we may first call attention to the briefer texts which contain this or that element of the complex of ideas we have been studying. The mention of gates as mourning recurs in Isa 3:26, which describes the judgment of God on Zion personified as a woman: “Her gates will lament and mourn, she will be ruined and sit on the earth.” I call particular attention to the last phrase, because it adds another traditional act of mourning to those we have noted already. Wall and rampart are said to mourn and languish also in Lam 2:8. Isa 19:8–10 describes a drought that will strike the Nile, and it is noteworthy for our purpose in that this drought is followed by human mourning, as is typical in the passages we have examined. Isa 16:8 speaks of a drought smiting the vines of Moab, and this drought is followed by weeping: “Therefore I will weep with the weeping of Jazer for the vine of Sibmah.” The passage goes on to say what is absent: joy and gladness, song and shout.

We return now to Joel 1 to pick up a detail that points in two directions: it connects Joel with Lam 1:4 by a verbal parallel, and it suggests the key to the origin of the whole literary topos. “Wail like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.” The verbal echo of Lamentations is obvious. This is the only passage we have met so far that mentions a virgin in any way. But the interest lies in trying to account for why someone called a virgin (*bētûlâ*) has a husband to mourn for. As you might expect, generations of ingenious exegetes have not let such an anomaly go unexplained. Ehrlich, Sellin, Wolff, and others present the classic explanation, based on Deut 22:23. This law provides that a betrothed virgin, called a *bētûlâ*, who is raped by a man in the city and does not cry out, shall be punished by stoning, and the man with her as well “because he raped his neighbor’s wife.” Thus we have a passage where a virgin is at the same time a wife, and Joel 1:8 is then held to refer to the mourning of a young woman who has lost her betrothed before the wedding. The special pathos of such a case is often supported by reference to Deut 20:7, which exempts the newly betrothed but unmarried man from fighting in the holy war. This last passage, however,

is better understood as interested in the mental and spiritual attitude of the eager bridegroom, who could not fight with his whole heart. A more serious objection to the usual exegesis of Joel 1:8 is that it is contrived. It is difficult to believe that such an exceptional case would supply the basis for a simile, especially since there seems to be no reason why the girl in such a case could not be betrothed over again.

A much more plausible solution has been seen already by Kapelrud, Hvidberg, and Bič,⁴ to which one can now add supporting evidence. The source of the simile about the virgin girl with sackcloth wailing for the husband of her youth is the myth of the goddess, the Virgin Anath, mourning for her dead consort, Baal. What holds together the *disjecta membra* of the literary pattern we have found in the Bible is a mythic pattern found outside the Bible and completely intelligible only there. In the long Ugaritic composition known as the Baal epic, the god Baal, who is the Canaanite god of the life-giving rain storm, descends into the gaping maw of death. Translated into non-mythological terms, this is the coming of drought. Word of his death is brought to the father of the gods, El. “Dead is mighty Baal, destroyed the prince, lord of the earth!” Thereupon kindly El, the compassionate, descends from his throne, and sits on the footstool, and from the footstool he takes a seat on the ground. Dust of mourning he pours on his head, dirt of wallowing on his crown. He puts on a *loincloth*.” Though the following lines are linguistically difficult, it is clear that El gashes himself, plowing great furrows in his cheeks and arms, and cries out “Baal is dead!” The goddess Anath now appears. Though she is the consort of Baal, her standing epithet is “Virgin” (*bltl*). She goes in search of Baal’s body and having found it she goes through the same extravagant mourning as El, with the additional touch that “she has her fill of weeping, she drinks her tears like wine.” Then she buries Baal with great ceremony. Having done so she goes in search of the villain, Mot, the god of death. He reports on the results of Baal’s death: “Life is lacking among men; life among the masses of the earth.” In a much-discussed passage the Virgin Anath then destroys the god of death, and as a result Baal returns to life, and instead of death, “Behold alive is mighty Baal! Behold alive is the Prince, lord of the earth! In a dream, O kindly El, the compassionate, in a vision, O creator of creatures, the heavens did rain oil, and the rivers ran with honey.”⁵

4. A. S. Kapelrud, *Joel Studies* (Uppsala Universitets Arsskrift, 1948/4; Uppsala, 1948); F. F. Hvidberg, *Weeping and Laughter in the Old Testament* (Leiden, 1962), 142; M. Bič, *Das Buch Joel* (1960); not accessible to me, this is cited by H. W. Wolff, *Joel* (Biblischer Kommentar; Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1969), 34.

5. Cited here are portions of I* AB (CTA 5; UT 67) vi 9-22; I AB (CTA 6; UT 49 and 62) ii 16-19; and I AB I 1-18. The whole episode may be read in

This is the myth; we may be sure that the myth had its ritual counterpart, that human action accompanied and reacted to the death of Baal, that is, to the lack of rain and the shrinking of life on earth. The Old Testament itself is our best evidence that in Palestine and Syria human-kind, especially the women, carried on ritual mourning for the dead god in time of drought. In a vision Ezekiel was brought “to the opening of the gate of the house of Yahweh which is toward the north, and lo! there were the women sitting weeping for Tammuz” (Ezek 8:14). Tammuz is, as is well known, an originally Sumerian name for the consort of the goddess of love and war; he is an Adonis or Baal figure. This kind of weeping was proverbially bitter, as Zech 12:10–11 makes clear: “They will mourn for him as one mourns for an only son, and make bitter (weeping) for him as for a first-born son. On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be as great as the weeping for Hadad-Rimmon in the valley of Megiddo.” (Hadad-Rimmon is still another name for the dying and rising god.) Having gone this far, I am inclined to see the last half-line of Lam 1:4, “and she is bitter” (*wēhî? mar-lāh*), an allusion to bitter *weeping*, and would propose, without wishing to insist on it, that the word *mar* was suggested to the author of Lamentations because it had a place in the literary complex under discussion. Note that in the difficult passage Isa 33:7–9, which speaks of the earth mourning and drying up, the “messengers of peace weep bitterly.”

As a final touch, recall the title for the virgin’s consort in Joel 1:8; she weeps for “the husband of her youth.” This title is not attested in the extant Ugaritic version of the myth concerning the goddess of love and her spouse, but in Akkadian texts where the pair is Ishtar and Dumuzi (Tammuz), Dumuzi is called: “Dumuzi, the husband of your youth.”⁶

To sum up, the composition of Lam 1:4 was shaped by a tradition which was both very ancient and very remote from the specific occasion for which the author wrote. If this conclusion is correct, then we may be justified in suggesting some other conclusions concerning the composition of Old Testament poems and their interpretation.

First of all, tradition is a partner in the composition of Old Testament poems, occasionally in somewhat unexpected ways. To think of a poem in two dimensions, as called forth by a set of circumstances from the mind of an individual writer, is not wrong, but it is incomplete. A fuller understanding of the process is achieved by reckoning in the role of tradition.

translation (by H. L. Ginsberg) in J. B. Pritchard, ed., *ANET*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, 1955), 138–40.

6. Gilgamesh VI 46: ^d*Dumuzi ḥa-mi-ri ṣ[u-uh]-ri-ti-ki*; The Descent of Ishtar (CT 15 47:47): ^d*Dumu-zi ḥa-mir ṣi-iḥ-[ḥi-ri-ti-ša]*. Akk. *ḥāmīru* could also be rendered “lover” in these contexts.

Of course, it is possible to raise objections. “How much,” you may ask, “did the poet know of any of this? How much did his hearers know of it?” In a sense, the passage discussed, Lam 1:4 is ideal for our purpose because it raises such questions in a very pointed way. Would an author in the 6th century B.C.E. know anything of a mythic pattern attested so much earlier than his time? We are sometimes inclined to set up as the ideal for our exegesis the restatement of the author’s intention. In explaining a text, we propose to be as faithful as possible to what the author intended his text to say. Or we may make our ideal to answer the question: just what did this text mean to the audience, to the contemporaries of the author who heard it or read it? On either standard, whether we reckon from the author’s intention or from his hearer’s comprehension, our lengthy excursus into the tradition on which he drew may seem either irrelevant or positively dangerous. That is, it may seem misleading to recall a history when neither the author nor his hearers were certainly aware of the background of the imagery.

Yet counter-arguments are available, the point having been much discussed in literary studies. The comprehension of the audience is scarcely a usable guide to the meaning of a poem. Then as now, it is very likely that those who heard a poem differed very widely in their understanding of it. If we think of the hymn *Urbs Sion aurea*, “Jerusalem the golden,” how much does a Christian of our own day understand of the imagery? You may understand a great deal, if you have read Genesis, and the Apocalypse, and Ezekiel and Isaiah or even the description of the New Jerusalem among the Dead Sea Scrolls—another singer of the hymn may understand little. If we strive to put ourselves in the place of the first hearers of the hymn, back in the 12th century, we realize that it would be even more difficult to state fairly what a hearer’s comprehension was. I do not mean to discredit in any way the attempt to estimate how a poet’s hearers would have understood his poem; I mean only to make the point that we cannot use the hearer’s comprehension or lack of it to rule out study of the traditions behind the poet’s language.

For similar reasons, it is not satisfactory to make the poet’s intention our guide either. In the first place, the poet’s intention is inaccessible to us at this distance. We know what he intended only from what he wrote. His unexpressed intention is just that, unexpressed and hence unusable by us. In the second place, the writer’s intention is not necessarily decisive even when we know it. It is, in my opinion, quite probable that the writer of Lamentations knew nothing of the myth whose impress on his poem I have attempted to trace, or, if he did know of the myth, that he had no conscious intention of alluding to it. But why should this rule

out interest in the traditional aspect of his work? It is certain that our behavior, linguistic and otherwise, is shaped by patterns which are historically or socially determined. The individual is often unconscious of what conditions his behavior. Hence if we confine ourselves to what is consciously understood by the person who acts we would certainly distort our comprehension. This seems to me to apply very broadly in Old Testament interpretation. It is perhaps not always necessary to know the literary tradition, and certainly it will often be impossible for us to know it. Yet it is always legitimate to inquire after it, and often illuminating.

To turn in a different direction, I would like to point out the difference between this historical study of Israel's literary tradition and form-criticism, *Formgeschichte*, at least as the latter is some times defined and practiced. In the first place, form-criticism tends to look for growth of complex forms out of simple forms. But though development of the complicated out of the very simple fits certain cases, the present example shows that the opposite is also present within Hebrew literature. Prior to any Old Testament use of the literary complex having to do with drought and mourning is a more complex form, which is also more intelligible than any of the fragmented and distorted remnants found in the Bible. A further characteristic of some form-criticism is the tendency to look for the life-situation in which a form functioned within Israel, or within some hypothetical early stage of Israel's development. But in the present case, the “form” is fully functional only outside Israel, that is, outside normative Yahwistic thought. Any biblical manifestation is far removed from the original pattern, and moreover, at no earlier period of Israel's history was this literary pattern totally functional in its original sense. In the case of Lam 1:4, and the many other biblical passages to which it is related, Israel's creative contribution took the form of a reshaping of very ancient traditional elements imported from outside Israel, not of expansion of a pristine form native to some primeval Israel. The proper image for creation in Israel's literature is often not *creatio ex nihilo*, by divine fiat, but creation by adaptation of older materials.

Study of the hidden image in Lam 1:4 has perhaps been instructive as a concrete example of how tradition entered into the composition of a bit of biblical verse, and thereby as suggesting how study of the literary tradition may be a fruitful approach to Old Testament literature. Obviously, however, Lam 1:4 does not make any vital theological point. It does not show the contrast in religious conceptions between Israel and Canaan because it is so remote from the source of the literary theme embedded in it. Another passage, already quoted, Hos 4:1-3 supplies a

clearer view of how radically Israel had split with the polytheistic view, even while retaining the literary topos. It is a prophetic doom-oracle, of two parts, indictment and sentence.

”Hear the word of the Lord, O people of Israel, for the Lord has a suit against the inhabitants of the land, for there is no truth or fidelity or knowledge of God in the land. There is cursing and deceiving, murder and theft, and adultery; they break all bounds and murder follows murder. Therefore the land dries up and all who live there mourn. Both the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky, and even the fish of the sea, have been taken away.”

The observable occurrence was the same for Israelite and Canaanite: a drought. And the Israelite was content to describe the occurrence in traditional terms: the land mourns, people languish, life is wanting. To the polytheist, however, the prelude is a nature-myth: a god has died. To Hosea the explanation is totally different: there is no faithfulness, no steadfast love, no knowledge of God. That is why the earth mourns: Israel has broken the covenant with God.

***Homeric Dictated Texts:
A Reexamination of Some
Near Eastern Evidence***

(with Marsh H. McCall, Jr.)

Albert Lord's theory of oral dictated texts has been for more than twenty years a fruitful element in the hugely difficult but crucial investigation of the early transmission of the Homeric poems.¹ Since the appearance of Lord's seminal article and his later treatment in *The Singer of Tales*, no serious discussion of Homeric transmission has omitted comment, whether positive or negative, on the Lord theory.² Two important and widely used books by distinguished Homerists have adduced parallels for dictated poetic texts from ancient Near Eastern literature. Webster, in examining possible connections between eastern and Mycenaean poetry, comments, "Two works listed in the catalogue of Ashurbanipal's library at Nineveh . . . have against them the note 'from the mouth of X.' This suggests that they were dictated by the poet."³ After referring to several Hittite and Hurrian compositions, he says,

These are songs, therefore, and must have been recorded by dictation. Similarly the Ugaritic *Nikkal* begins "I sing of Nikkal," and *Baal* was

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1. Lord's theory was first presented in "Homer's Originality: Oral Dictated Texts," *TAPA* 84 (1953) 124–34; subsequently reargued in *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960) 124ff.

2. See, as one example of many, A. Lesky, "Homerus," *RE supp.* 11 (1968) 704–5. The importance of the theory is well indicated and the central arguments on either side nicely juxtaposed in G. S. Kirk, ed., *The Language and Background of Homer* (Cambridge 1964). Kirk first outlines the controversy in his introduction (ix–x), then reprints (68–89) Lord's *TAPA* article and his own reply to it, "Homer and Modern Oral Poetry: Some Confusions," *CQ* 10 (1960) 271–81. See also, as a further stage in the debate, A. Parry, "Have We Homer's *Iliad*?" *YCS* 20 (1966) 175–216.

3. T. B. L. Webster, *From Mycenae to Homer* (London 1958) 77.

“dictated by Attani-Puruleni, chief priest, chief shepherd.” Thus we have some evidence for what in any case we must assume that the poets dictated to the scribes, but no evidence that the poet himself was a scribe. He was a singer, who could dictate his songs to the scribe.

Kirk, in discussing—and opposing—the Lord theory, notes, “‘Oral dictated texts’, then, are a practical possibility: this is also shown by the short and rather poor Cretan song dictated in 1786 by the illiterate singer Pantzelió to a literate shepherd friend. More important, perhaps, certain Hurrian and Ugaritic songs of the 2nd millennium B.C. were dictated to scribes [here Kirk cites Webster].”⁴

Lord himself, so far as we know, has not made use of these eastern parallels. But as debate over his theory continues, as it is sure to do, every piece of evidence that has been thought relevant to the problem must be carefully scrutinized. This is particularly true in the present case since, first, the eastern parallels have been suggested by eminent scholars whose word commands respect; second, there is a growing realization among classicists of the depth and extent of eastern influences on early Greek literature,⁵ which in turn lends additional credibility to any supposed individual instance; third, the actual Near Eastern documents on the basis of which the analogy has been argued are beyond the linguistic control of most classicists, which means that use of them cannot easily be checked.

We may conveniently begin with the colophon to a tablet of the Baal epic, which Webster cites. He relies on the widely used translations of H. L. Ginsberg⁶ and G. R. Driver,⁷ according to whom the Ugaritic term *lmd* must be translated “dictated.” This same translation has recently been defended by J. C. de Moor, who concludes that “we have to do here with the first attempts to record a myth until then transmitted orally.”⁸

4. G. S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer* (Cambridge 1962) 99.

5. One thinks perhaps especially of the work of M. L. West and P. Walcot; see, e.g., Walcot’s “The Comparative Study of Ugaritic and Greek Literature,” *UF* 1 (1969) 111–18.

6. In *ANET*, 2nd ed. (Princeton 1955) 141. The Ugaritic text of the colophon may be found in Andrée Herdner, *Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques* no. 6 (Paris 1963) VI 53–57 = Cyrus Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook*, *Analecta Orientalia* 38 no. 62 (Rome 1965) 53–57.

7. *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Edinburgh 1956) 115.

8. *The Seasonal Pattern in the Ugaritic Myth of Baʿlu.*, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 16 (Kevelaer and Neukirchen 1971) 8; cf. 1, n. 2. In a brief note to an otherwise valuable article, “Prose and Poetry in the Mythic and Epic Texts from Ugarit,” *HTR* 67 (1974) 1 n. 1, Frank Moore Cross, Jr., proposes

Actually, Ugaritic *lmd* in this passage is not to be translated as the verb “dictated,” but as a noun, “apprentice.” It is a title of the scribe, Elimelekh (Ilmilku). This suggestion was advanced long ago by R. Dussaud,⁹ and the translation “apprentice” is given in the glossary of successive editions of Gordon’s manual.¹⁰ In his *Babylonische und assyrische Kolophone*,¹¹ Hermann Hunger correctly renders *lmd* “Schüler,” as do M. Dietrich and O. Loretz in a recent lexicographical study.¹²

The evidence bearing on the question is as follows. The word *lmd* is not otherwise attested in Ugaritic in the sense “dictated.” Various forms of the verb mean “learn” or “teach.” Nor is there supporting evidence for a sense “dictate” in other Semitic languages. In biblical Hebrew *lmd* means “learn” or “teach,” and the idea of dictation is expressed quite differently: *wayyiktōb . . . miḥpî X* (Jer 36:4), literally “he wrote it at the mouth of X.” Similarly in Akkadian, *lamādu* means “to learn, teach,” etc., but not “dictate.” In the rare cases in colophons where dictation is mentioned the expression is *ana pī . . . šatir*, literally “written at the mouth of X.”¹³

On the other hand, *lmd* is well attested in Ugaritic in the sense “apprentice.” One may compare biblical Hebrew *limmūd*, “pupil, disciple.” Moreover, in Akkadian colophons, which are extant in abundance in comparison to our meager supply of Ugaritic examples, the scribe is frequently described as *šamallū*, “apprentice.”

As a final point against the idea of dictation of Ugaritic texts, it is noteworthy that the tablets written by Elimelekh (Ilmilku) contain numerous scribal errors. Though no certainty is possible, it seems likely that these confusions of letters and other mistakes are copyists’ errors and not errors of hearing.¹⁴

the translation “master singer” for Ugaritic *lmd*, but without discussing the full range of evidence for correct understanding of the colophon, or bringing forward any cogent new evidence from Semitic for his rather startling suggestion (I Chron. 25:7 is scarcely relevant), so that one may perhaps for the present dismiss Cross’s translation.

9. *Les découvertes de Ras Shamra (Ugarit) et l’Ancien Testament* (Paris 1937) 31.

10. Most recently in *Ugaritic Textbook*, glossary no. 1385. Oddly, Gordon in glossary no. 412 identifies *atn.prln* as “high priest and narrator of sacred myths.”

11. *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 2 (Kevelaer and Neukirchen-Vluyn 1968) 22.

12. “Zur ugaritischen Lexikographie (V),” *UF* 4 (1972) 31–33.

13. Hunger (above, n. ix) 8 and glossary s.v. *pū*.

14. See Stanislav Segert, “Die Schreibfehler in den ugaritischen literarischen Keilschrifttexten,” in *Von Ugarit nach Qumran*, ed. J. Hempel, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 77 (Berlin 1961) 193–212

In the case of the Ugaritic *Nikkal* text, one must concede that it was intended to be sung; indeed also the other Ugaritic poetic texts may have been chanted. But one may question the logic of Webster's conclusion that such songs must have been composed orally and then recorded by dictation. The same objection would seem to apply to Webster's conclusion that the Hittite texts of Kumarbi and Ullikummi are called "songs" and therefore must have been recorded by dictation. Furthermore, the statement which introduces Hurrian passages in Hittite texts, namely "the singer of the land of Hurri sings as follows," is a rubric, a direction for performance, which permits no conclusion as to manner of composition and transmission.¹⁵

Webster's reference to works mentioned in the catalogue of the library of Ashurbanipal is puzzling and apparently incorrect. There is no single ancient catalogue of Ashurbanipal's library; there are several tablets or parts of tablets which contain catalogues of various kinds of compositions.¹⁶ Apparently Webster is referring to a list of compositions (both poetic and prose, be it noted) which contains (not just twice, but repeatedly) the expression *ša pī X*, literally "of the mouth of X." This catalogue, known in part since 1880 has recently been edited and translated by W. G. Lambert, making use of newly identified fragments.¹⁷ In an earlier article Lambert had hesitated over whether the phrase in question indicated authorship or editorship; a new bit (I 4) compels the conclusion that it refers to authorship, and Lambert translates the recurring phrase: "This is by (Ea, Oannes-Adapa, etc.)." Dictation is not implied; all the historical figures named as authors were literate, since they are given priestly titles and the designation *ummānu*, "scholar." Presumably we must suppose that such "authors" as the god Ea and several semilegendary figures are also thought of as literate writers.

There are a very few Akkadian colophons which refer to dictation of a text, in one case the dictation of a poetic text.¹⁸ This is clearly

esp. 211, where Segert argues that the errors in the texts written by Ilimilku are best understood as copyists' errors.

15. See E. Forrer, "Die Inschriften und Sprachen des Hatti-Reiches," *ZDMG* 76 (1922) 195–96, for references to Hurrian singers; see F. Hrozný "Die Lösung des hethitischen Problems," *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft* 56 (1915) 17–50, for a brief discussion of the use of Hurrian in the Hittite cult.

16. See C. Bezold, *Catalogue of the Cuneiform Tablets in the Kouyunjik Collection of the British Museum V* (London 1899) xxix–xxx. We are grateful to Dr. J. J. Roberts for assistance with Akkadian materials.

17. "A Catalogue of Texts and Authors," *JCS* 16 (1962) 59–77.

18. See Hunger (above, n. 11). For the whole text see E. Ebeling, "Bewehrungen gegen den Feind und den bösen Blick aus dem Zweistromlande," *Ar. Or.* 17 (1949) 178–83.

exceptional, and apparently was regarded as undesirable, a last resort. Laessøe notes this somewhat plaintive statement: "Written at the dictation of the scholar (*ummānu*); I did not see the ancient copy" (Hunger's no. 486).¹⁹ It may be observed that even where dictation takes place it is from a literate scholar.

Our conclusion is brief. The bulk of the evidence from Near Eastern literature cited in support of Lord's theory of Homeric dictated texts should not be so used. On the other hand, one bit of eastern evidence seems to have been overlooked, the well-known story of how the prophet Jeremiah dictated a collection of his oracles, some or most of them certainly poetic, to his amanuensis Baruch (Jeremiah 36). The plausibility of the Lord theory will not, of course, stand or fall on the basis of the details discussed here. It must also be stressed that Lord's work has stimulated new views of the origin especially of Ugaritic poetic texts, which seem to many to display formulas and themes similar to what Lord has analyzed in the Homeric poems.²⁰ There is every reason to expect a continuing interchange between classical and Near Eastern studies on the subject of Lord's theories. Our purpose has been simply to help to clarify the terms in which the proposition of oral dictated texts should be debated.²¹

19. J. Laessøe, "Literary and Oral Tradition in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Studia orientalia Ioanni Pedersen . . . dicata* (Hauniae 1953) 213. Laessøe concludes: "it would seem to appear that oral tradition was only reluctantly relied upon, and in this particular case only because for some reason or other an original written document was not available. The reservation with which an instance of oral tradition is reproduced here should make us cautious against underestimating the significance of written tradition in Mesopotamia."

20. See, e.g., Frank Moore Cross, Jr., *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973) 112 and the reference there to the forthcoming work of Richard Whitaker, based on his 1970 Harvard dissertation, "A Formulaic Analysis of Ugaritic Poetry."

21. A draft of this paper has profited from the suggestions of Professor G. Nagy.

A Study of Psalm 148

Recent interpretation of Psalm 148 and related compositions has been influenced by the essay of Gerhard von Rad, "Job xxxviii and Ancient Egyptian Wisdom."¹ According to von Rad, Psalm 148 is in the style of the hymn, blended with a list of the parts of creation ultimately derived from Egyptian learned tradition, represented especially by the Onomasticon of Amenope.² Hans-Joachim Kraus follows von Rad's lead in his commentary on the Psalms,³ and the theory has also influenced interpretation of Genesis 1.⁴

The following study is directed to a reexamination of the literary and religious traditions behind Psalm 148, especially its call to the parts of creation to praise God. This is preceded by a translation of the psalm with notes in which philological points are discussed and new renderings are defended, and by a discussion of the structure and the date of the psalm.

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1. G. von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1966) 281-91, from the German (VTSup 1; Leiden: Brill, 1955) 293-301.

2. See Alan H. Gardiner, *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica* (2 vols; Oxford: Oxford University, 1947).

3. BKAT XV/2; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1966. So also Frank Crüsemann, *Studien zur Formgeschichte von Hymnus und Danklied in Israel* (WMANT 32; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969) 72 n. 2. See also Heinz Richter, "Die Naturweisheit des Alten Testaments im Buche Hiob," *ZAW* 70 (1958) 17.

4. See Werner H. Schmidt, *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte der Priesterschrift* (WMANT 17; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964) 35. Note, however, that Schmidt speaks of a "hymnic-wisdom" tradition.

Translation

1. Hallelujah!^a
Praise Yahweh from heaven,^b
Praise him in the heights!
2. Praise him, all his angels!
Praise him, all his hosts!
3. Praise him, sun and moon!
Praise him, all bright stars!^c
4. Praise him, highest heavens,
And the waters above the heavens.
5. Let them praise the name of Yahweh,
For he spoke and it was done;^d
He commanded and they were created.
6. He established them as an ordinance^e forever;
He made a rule and it will not change.^f
7. Praise Yahweh from the earth,
Dragons and all deeps!
8. Fire and hail, snow and smoke,^g
Storm-wind that does his bidding;
9. Mountains and all hills,
Fruit trees and all cedars,
10. Animals wild and tame,
Reptiles and winged birds,
11. Kings of the earth and all peoples,^h
Princes and all rulers of the earth,
12. Young men and maidens also, old men and youths –
13. Let them praise the name of Yahweh
For his name alone is exalted;
His glory is over earth and heaven!
14. May he raise upⁱ a horn for his people,
To the glory^j of all his faithful ones,
Of Israel, the people close to him.
Hallelujah!^a

Notes

^a It is difficult to decide whether the Hallelujahs at the beginning and end are editorial or part of the composition. In favor of the latter, note that they fit the nature of the psalm and its structure, for as Gunkel pointed out, there is a tendency for the imperatives which characteristically occur at the beginning of a hymn to recur at the end; cf. e.g., Ps 97:12; 103:20-22; 114:7; 135:19, 20; 136:26. On the other hand, the initial Hallelujah is omitted in 11QPs^a, and the final Hallelujah is omitted by LXX. Moreover, LXX treats the initial Hallelujah as editorial; so also the Peshitta, which omits them entirely in Psalms 146-50. Note that the Hallelujah of Ps 106:48 is clearly editorial, ending a book of the

psalter. It seems preferable to leave the Hallelujahs out of account in discussing the structure of the psalm, and the possible relation of v. 14 to the following psalm (see below).

^b For MT *hllw ʔt yhw h mn hšmym*, 11QPs^a has *hllw yhw h mšmym*. Since *mn hšmym* is definitely prose usage (only here in poetry; some 24 times in prose), the reading of 11QPs^a is perhaps slightly preferable in this verse, but in so late a psalm as this it would be unwarranted to eliminate every ʔt, definite article, and ʔāšer from the text as prosaic.

^c LXX *ta astra kai to phās* perhaps arose through misdivision at a stage when waw and yod were practically identical: *kwkby ʔwr* becoming *kwkb wʔwr* and then *kwkbym wʔwr*. In any case MT is preferable as idiomatic, cf. Job 36:7 and 3:9.

^d This colon, present in LXX, is probably to be restored to the text, because the sequence ʔamar / / šiwwā is apparently traditional; it is paralleled in Lam 3:37 and Ps 33:9. The latter also has ʕmd, parallel to the ʕmd of 148:6. Cf. also Prov 2:1; 7:1. Other tricola occur in our psalm, in my opinion: vv 13, 14.

^e *lāʕad lēʕōlām* is an unusual expression (only here and Ps 111:8); and if ʕad is understood as “forever,” it is indefensible, though commentators and translators have glossed over the difficulty. The expression is reminiscent of the redundant *lāʕad ʕad ʕōlām* Isa 30:8, and the solution is to be sought along similar lines. On the basis of Old Aramaic ʕdy and Akkadian *adē* “pact,” scholars have identified occurrences of a Hebrew cognate similar in meaning to *bērīt*, in various biblical passages, most clearly in the name *Gilʕad* as explained in Gen 31:44,⁵ and in Isa 33:8, where *ʕādīm* is to be read with 1QIsa.⁶ In 1956 H. L. Ginsberg identified the word in Isa 30:8, which he at that time rendered: “and it shall be for an attestation (oath) for ever.”⁷ The sense “ordinance” fits Ps 111:8 well. It has the advantage of eliminating the redundancy and it aptly parallels *piqqūdā(y)w* “his commandments,” and goes well in a context full of legal and moral terms: ʔemet, *mišpāt*, *yāšār*, *bērīt*. In Ps 148:6 also “ordinance” eliminates redundancy and is an apt parallel of *hoq* and goes well with the verb *wayyaʕmūdēm*; cf. Neh 10:33 and Ps 105:10 = 1 Chr 16:17. Expressions similar to **ʕad lēʕōlām* “ordinance forever” are *hoq ʕōlām* and *huqqat ʕad ʕōlām*. The cognate *ʕédōt* is used with *ʕōlām* in Ps 119:144, 152. The idea of the colon is one familiar from Jer 31:35; 33:25 and other passages: the orderly succession of sun, moon, and stars is established by divine ordinance. The statement here is compressed: instead of saying that the cycle of sun, moon, and stars is an ordinance forever; the poet says that the heavenly bodies themselves are an ordinance. This is comparable to the mode of expression in Num 10:8: “They (the trumpets) shall be an institution for all time (*huqqat ʕōlām*),” and 2 Chr 35:25: “And he made them (certain songs) an ordinance for Israel.”

5. See Hans Bauer, “Zeitschriftenschau,” ZAW 50 (1932) 178.

6. See J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire* (BibOr 19; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967) 24.

7. In a communication to W. F. Albright. The Jewish Publication Society version (*Isaiah: A New Translation* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1973]) prefers “a witness forever” (reading ʕed).

^f There seem to be three possible treatments of *wēlō' ya'ābōr*. First, retaining MT, one might translate: “and he (God) will not transgress (it).” “Transgress” is a familiar sense of *br*, and it is normal Israelite theology that God will keep his own covenant; see Jer 31:35–36. Yet it seems unlikely that our psalmist would even entertain the notion that God might *transgress*—an expression never used of the deity. Second, reading a plural *ya'ābārū*, translate “they will not transgress (it),” or a passive **yu'bar* “it will not be transgressed.” The idea that the heavenly bodies and the heavenly waters must keep the place assigned them by God is familiar; see Job 28:26–27; 38:8–11; Sir 43:10; Job 14:5. Thus this treatment has been favored by many. Third, with no change of text or of vocalization, translate “and it will not change,” i.e., become null and void, go out of effect. “Vanish, perish” is a common sense of *br*. The verb is specifically used of a law or decree becoming invalid in Esth 1:19; 9:27 (cf. 9:28). This usage seems to be an imitation of Aramaic *dī lā' te'dē'*, see Dan 6:9, 13.

^g Heb *qītōr* “smoke” has troubled commentators here; LXX, Peshitta and the Psalter juxta Hebraeos have “ice,” implying probably *qerah*. But perhaps the language of theophany is reflected in MT. *'āsān*, “smoke,” is in place in descriptions of theophany, see Ps 18:8–14 and Exod 19:18 and the comments by F. M. Cross.⁸ If so, “smoke” is preferable here, and *qerah* may have come in as a slightly easier reading, under the influence of the neighboring Ps 147:16.

^h In this bicolon there are three synonyms for “rulers,” and the term *lē'ummîm*, ordinarily translated “peoples,” which is not synonymous. The proposal of Driver and Gray that *lē'ummîm* here means “rulers,”⁹ which they attempt to support by Akkadian and Ugaritic evidence, has been convincingly refuted by James Barr.¹⁰ The difficulty is resolved in a strikingly different way by Mitchell Dahood, following a suggestion of David Noel Freedman.¹¹ MT *šōpēlē* is taken as an alternate phonetic form of *šbtē*, which, vocalized as *šibtē* “tribes of,” yields satisfactory parallelism: A: kings . . . peoples / B: princes . . . tribes of earth. But it is surely wrong to identify *šōpēlē 'āreš*, a familiar expression (Gen 18:25; Isa 40:23; Ps 2:10; Ps 94:2; Prov 8:16), as involving any problem, especially since *melek* and *šōpēt* constitute a pair of A–B words of great antiquity! In the process, Dahood creates a hapax legomenon, for *šibtē*, “tribes of,” never occurs in construct before any noun such as *'ereš*, *'ādāmā*, or *tēbēl*. In my opinion the difficulty of *lē'ummîm* “peoples” is so slight that no change is called for.

8. *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1973) 164–77, esp. 169.

9. G. R. Driver, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1956) 158 n. 12; John Gray, *The Legacy of Canaan* (VTSup 5; Leiden: Brill, 1957) 194.

10. *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968) 133, 172, 254–55, 329. On the meaning of Akkadian *limu*, *limmu*, which figures in the discussion, see now Mogens Trolle Larsen, *The Old Assyrian City-State and Its Colonies* (Mesopotamia: Copenhagen Studies in Assyriology 4; Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1976) 203–7, 211, 333–53.

11. *Psalms III* (Anchor Bible; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970) *ad loc.*

ⁱ Reading *yārēm*, a jussive. With the conjunction, the verb form whether past narrative (MT) or future (LXX) is awkward in a hymn of praise. A wish or petition is, however, a typical element in the conclusion of a hymn; cf. e.g., Ps 29:11; 104:31.¹²

^j The translation of this slightly awkward phrase follows the new Jewish Publication Society version. Other understandings are possible, but this seems favored by such parallels as Deut 26:19; Zeph 3:20; Isa 60:18; 61:3; 62:7.

The Structure of Psalm 148

Psalm 148 displays a clearly bipartite structure, having two contrasting sections followed by a brief appendix. Section A includes 1–6; B, 7–13; while v 14 is the closing petition. In favor of this analysis, which is not universally accepted, note the following. There are similar phrases at the beginning of A and B: *halēlū yhw miššamayim* and *halēlū ’et yhw min hā’āreš. šamayim* and *’ereš* are a traditional pair, linked often in both poetry and prose, and are here used to mark parallel sections of the psalm. Near the close of each section (5, 13) stands a jussive *yēhalēlū*, “let them praise.” The difference between A and B is marked by contrasting syntax; in A imperatives prevail; in B, vocatives.¹³ The two halves are roughly equal in size, A having 12/13 cola; B, 15. A neat indicator of the end of the body of the psalm lies in the phrase (13) “His glory is over earth and heaven.” *’ereš wēšamayim* occur in this order only here and in Gen 2:4. Here in 148:13 the use of the two terms sums up and emphasizes the two-part appeal to creation, and the reversal of the normal order forms a chiasm to the structure and marks its end; thus AB(ba).

The division into three parts in the New American Bible, with sections beginning at vv.1, 7, and 11 is grammatically dubious and results in very uneven divisions. Dahood’s division in three parts¹⁴ (vv.1–6, 7, 8–13) is very unbalanced; he is misled by a desire to translate *’ereš* as “under-world.” While this sense is well-known in other biblical passages,¹⁵ it is not especially appropriate here, where *’ereš* is a title, balancing *šamayim*. We must not demand perfect logic of the psalmist’s cosmology; we must permit him to list dragons and deeps, fire and storm-wind under the rubric “earth.” R. A. F. MacKenzie’s attempt to separate v.14b,

12. See Kraus, BKAT, xlii

13. Curt Kuhl (*Die drei Männer im Feuer* [BZAW 55; Giessen: Töpelmann, 1930] 97) is surely wrong in asserting that the lack of complete stylistic uniformity in Psalm 148 is a sign of serious textual corruption. On the contrary, the formal perfection of the *Benedicite* is a sign of its lateness.

14. *Psalms III*.

15. As shown by F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman (“The Song of Miriam,” *JNES* 14 [1955] 247–48). They cite Ps 148:7 as an example, but without detailed argumentation.

c from Psalm 148 and attach it to Psalm 149 as a title is unconvincing.¹⁶ His argument from vocabulary is without much force since we are dealing with very short compositions in Psalms 148, 149, and he is unable to cite any other parallel for such a bicolon as the title of a biblical psalm.

Date

Psalm 148 seems from its language to be relatively late. Although there are contacts between its vocabulary and that of Genesis 1, they are not so close as to indicate direct dependence of one on the other (as Gunkel supposed¹⁷), especially since the order of elements of creation is different. Such expressions as the hiphil of *ʿmd* in the sense, “to establish (a law, etc.)”; *hallēl* with Yahweh as object;¹⁸ and *ʿsh dābār* “to perform the word (command) of someone” (cf. Joel 2:11; Ps 103:20; Esth 5:5; 2 Chr 34:31; Num 22:20; Exod 24:3) seem to be mostly late. If *wēlōʾ yaʿābôr* is correctly explained above (see n. 10), it has close parallels only in Esther and Daniel. Literary relations offer only inconclusive evidence for a date. Verse 14 is quoted in Sirach 51 following v.12, but that passage is found only in the Hebrew text from the Geniza, and the date of its composition is uncertain. The relation to the Chronicler is perhaps somewhat more decisive. Skehan argues that the Chronicler, writing in the fourth century, already quotes, at 1 Chr 16:36, “. . . a compiler’s addition to the end of the 4th book of the canonical Psalter . . . a bench mark in the structuring of the Psalter as we know it.”¹⁹ One might go farther and infer that, since a five-fold division seems to be essential to the editor’s scheme, also the fifth book of the canonical psalter was in existence then. This presumably contained our psalm which may then be plausibly assigned to the early fourth century B.C.E.

The Literary Antecedents of Psalm 148

Psalm 148 is obviously related to the typical hymn. With its repeated calls to praise God, it represents an extension of a characteristic topos of the introduction to a hymn. Perhaps it would be better to think of it as an extended hymn *conclusion*, in view of its position in the psalter.

The striking feature of the psalm is its call to the parts of creation, and we may now turn to von Rad’s account of the prehistory of this

16. “Ps 148, 14 bc: Conclusion or Title?” *Biblica* 51 (1970) 221–24.

17. *Einleitung in die Psalmen* (2nd ed.; Göttingen; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966) 93.

18. See J. Hempel, “Hallelujah,” in *IDB*, 2. 514–15.

19. “Qumran and O. T. Criticism,” distributed in manuscript at the fall, 1976, meeting of the Biblical Colloquium; to appear in the *Journées bibliques* for 1976, pp. 167–68 (in press).

feature.²⁰ Von Rad describes ancient Egyptian onomastica, and proposes that such encyclopedic lists came also to Israel, where they were used in ordering phenomena of the cosmos. Job 38 is related to such a learned tradition, but Psalm 148 is even more closely tied to Egyptian forerunners, both the Ramesseum Onomasticon, and the Onomasticon of Amenope, where the resemblance is “rather exact,” and in listing types of human beings, “particularly striking.”²¹ Israel has thus “. . . adapted this somewhat arid scientific material to the purposes of the worship of Yahweh.”²²

There are serious difficulties with this point of view. There is, in the first place, a great contrast in scale. Psalm 148 is brief; the Egyptian lists are long and elaborate. Even the Ramesseum Onomasticon is longer than the corresponding parts of Psalm 148, and Amenope has 610 items. This contrast in size suggests caution in making comparisons.

A second objection is more serious. The resemblance between these lists and Psalm 148 (and the other poetic compositions von Rad compares) lies not in the order as a whole, but only in selected parts. Thus von Rad states that Psalm 148, with the order “fruit-trees, wild animals, domestic animals, reptiles and birds,” is like the Ramesseum Onomasticon. But in the Egyptian text the order is: plant names and liquids (“in some confusion with other sorts” – Gardiner), then birds, then fishes, then more birds, then “a disproportionately short series of quadrupeds” (Gardiner), then a list of southern fortresses, then towns, then “things placed upon water,” then names of loaves or cakes, then cereals. In sum, there is actually little overall resemblance in order.

The same is true when Amenope’s list is considered as a whole. Here the principle of organization is not always clear. Gardiner states: “The truth is that the cohesion of the categories is often so questionable that the scribe may well have found a difficulty in deciding upon a suitable course of action.”²³ The rubrics do not always obviously mark the beginning of a fresh category. Nevertheless, the following pattern emerges. I. Introductory heading. II. Sky, water, earth: nos. 1–62. III. Persons, court, offices, occupations: 63–229. IV. Classes, tribes, and types of human being: 230–312. V. Towns of Egypt: 313–419. VI. Buildings, their parts, and types of land: 420–73. VII. Agricultural land, cereals and their products: 474–555. VIII. Beverages: 556–78. IX. Parts of an ox and kinds of meat: 579–610. Gardiner pessimistically concludes: “To give a

20. *Problem of the Hexateuch*, 281–91.

21. *Problem of the Hexateuch*, 286.

22. *Problem of the Hexateuch*, 287.

23. *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica*, I.36.

coherent account of as unsystematic a composition as On. Am. is barely possible.”²⁴

The resemblance in detail is also less than “striking.” In Amenope’s list of parts of the cosmos, following the keyword “sky,” are “storm-cloud” (10), “dew” (18), and “primeval waters” (22), which correspond to items in part B of Psalm 148, under the heading “earth.” In Amenope no general word for “earth” occurs; different kinds of land are listed in nos. 52–62, beginning with “island.” The listing of human beings in Amenope is not much like that in Psalm 148. The list of rulers begins at item 63, as follows: “God, goddess, (male) spirit, female spirit, king, queen” and so on through a list of officials and occupations that stretches to item 229. (One verse is given to this in Psalm 148!) Only after all that do we have: “Men, patricians, plebians,” followed by a long list of foreign people (with no counterpart in Psalm 148, of course), down to item 295, where we come upon: “Man, stripling, old man, woman, young woman, various persons, boy, child, lad, maiden, weaver, subordinate, etc.” Granted that here there are some items similar to those in 148:12, surely they are not more than one would expect to occur by mere coincidence. In sum, Psalm 148 does not show dependence on a learned Egyptian tradition.²⁵

Since we must search elsewhere for the literary antecedents of Psalm 148, we may begin with Israel’s own tradition of hymnody. Hymns often have imperatives, near the beginning, and many of the elements which are addressed in Psalm 148 occur, separately or in small groupings, in other hymns. “All the world” is called on to praise God in Pss 33:8, 66:1, 4, etc.; “the earth” and “the many isles” in 97:1; the “ends of the earth” in 67:8; “all inhabitants of the earth” in 33:8; “all flesh” in 145:21; “all that has breath” in 150:6; “all peoples and nations” in 47:2, 66:8, etc. Psalms 96 and 98 are rich in this theme; 98 calls on “all the earth . . . the sea and its fullness, the world and they that dwell therein, the rivers . . . the mountains.” Isa 44:23 (“heavens, lowest parts of earth, mountains, forest and all trees”); Ps 69:35 and Ps 103:20–22 begin to approach the elaborate list of Psalm 148.

Moreover, a common theme in hymns is God’s greatness in creation. Psalms 8, 29, and 104 are outstanding examples. In speaking of God’s creation, each lists the parts of creation in terms like those of Psalm 148. Thus one could conclude that Psalm 148 grows out of the common practice of addressing imperatives to God’s creation, an old theme

24. *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica*, I.37.

25. It also seems to me doubtful that the P creation account is related to Egyptian onomastica.

which is then elaborated by drawing elements typical of the body of the hymn back into the introduction. This might suffice to account for Psalm 148, and one might suppose that the final formal elaboration of the type appears in the Song of the Three Children.

On the other hand, the idea of praise to God from creation is linked to a tradition in which elements of the creation are deified; the god is first praised by the other gods. Such a theme survives vestigially in Israelite hymnody, and is attested in Mesopotamian and Egyptian hymns. In the psalter Psalm 29 is well-known for its imperatives addressed to the “sons of God.”²⁶ Psalms 19 and 103:20–22 show traces of the same notion. Ps 89:6, 13 shows clear traces of an originally polytheistic conception: “Let the heavens praise your wonders, O Lord; also your fidelity in the assembly of the holy ones . . . Zaphon and Amana you have created; Tabor and Hermon sing praise to your name.”

If such a theme survives in Israel’s literature one would expect to find it outside Israel. Of course, we have practically nothing in Ugaritic that could be called a hymn, and must turn to Mesopotamia and Egypt. Several hymns in the collection made by A. Falkenstein and W. von Soden exemplify the topos under discussion. Thus, from a hymn to Marduk by Ashurbanipal: “May all the gods see the deeds of the lord of the gods, Marduk; (also) all goddesses, Anu, Ellil, the constellations, the deeps, the earth’s foundations, Cancer, the Annunitu star . . .”²⁷ From a hymn to Shamash: “To you all living things give praise, O Shamash, the universe longs for your light.”²⁸ In another prayer of Ashurbanipal to Ishtar, the point is made that all the gods rejoice at what the king has done for their cult: “. . . the lands together . . . the mountains . . . Queen of heaven, may you rejoice! May Ellil, father of the gods, always rejoice! May Ashur rejoice in Echursanggula; May Anu, king of heaven, be happy! May all the gods of heaven rejoice! May there be rejoicing in the depths! May the gods of the deep springs beam, the fates, the goddesses of the land be happy!” Gods, creation, and mankind praise Ishtar:²⁹ “Where are you not great, where do you not excel in rank? Anu, Ellil, and Ea have exalted you among the gods, have made your dominion great; they have exalted you among all the Igigi, have made your place foremost. At the thought of your name heaven and earth tremble, the gods grow dizzy, the Anunnaki tremble. Mankind praises your awesome

26. I. E. Seeligman (“A Psalm from Pre-Royal Times,” *VT* 14 [1964] 81, n. 1) plausibly suggests that in Ps 96:7, 8a *mšpḥwt* ‘*mym* is a substitute for *bny* ‘*lym*.

27. From no. 6, p. 251, in A. Falkenstein and W. von Soden, *Sumerische und akkadische Hymnen und Gebete* (Zurich and Stuttgart: Artemis, 1953). Translations follow von Soden’s German rendering.

28. *Sumerische* No. 4, p. 242.

29. *Sumerische* No. 61, p. 329.

name.” An imperative call to heaven, earth, and the gods to praise is a feature of many “incantation-prayers” (*Gebetsbeschwörungen*). The evidence has recently been assembled and discussed by Werner Meyer.³⁰ The standard formula is: “May the heavens rejoice over you; May the deep be glad over you. May the gods of the whole world bless you; May the great gods make you satisfied. May Anu, Ellil, and Ea make your dominion great.” Meyer comments on the element of praise as follows:³¹

The ‘forensic’ character of praise is fully developed in the Akkadian prayers of petition. The one who prays wishes to praise the deity; his fellow men should praise the god, and the other deities should sing praise to him and pay him homage. In other words, the human being who has been set free by divine action from his isolated, needy state into a state in which he is in communication with the whole world, now praises the deity in this newly-won ‘wholeness,’ before the forum and through the forum of men and gods.

The Akkadian examples cited above are first-millennium compositions, but at least fragmentary examples of the type of prayer discussed by Meyer date back as far as the 13th century B.C.³² Meyer traces separate elements of the appeal to others to praise god in Sumerian texts from the Old Babylonian period and as early as the Ur III period.³³

Very clear Egyptian examples, some going back to the Pyramid Texts, may be studied in the convenient collection by Jan Assmann.³⁴ In hymns to the sun-god, it is a standard theme that the other gods greet the sun in his daily journey with jubilation and praise, as do men and the blessed dead. Many examples could be cited.³⁵ Animals are among

30. *Untersuchungen zur Formensprache der babylonischen ‘Gebetsbeschwörungen’* (Studia Pohl, Series Maior 5; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1976) 331.

31. *Untersuchungen*, 309 (My translation from the German).

32. *Untersuchungen*, 28. Cf. Marie-Joseph Seux, *Hymnes et prières aux dieux de Babylonie et d’Assyrie* (Paris: Cerf, 1976) 26–27 and A. Falkenstein, “Gebet,” *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* 3 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1957–).

33. *Untersuchungen*, 330.

34. Jan Assmann, *Ägyptische Hymnen und Gebete* (Zurich and Munich: Artemis, 1975). André Barucq (*L’expression de la louange divine et de la prière dans la Bible et en Égypte* [Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, Bibliothèque d’étude, Tome 33; Cairo: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 1962]) discusses, with examples, what he calls the “reverential attitude of the universe” in Egyptian hymns (pp. 212–19), referring to “. . . l’effort des hymnographes pour orchestrer de toutes des ressources que leurs présentait la nature et la monde des dieux, des hommes et des morts leur célébration des grandeurs divines” (p. 219). He regards the resemblances to biblical psalms at this point as extremely tenuous, however; he does not discuss von Rad’s theory.

35. See nos. 12, 15, 16, 21, 22a, etc. in *Ägyptische Hymnen*.

those who praise: “‘Pray to him!’ say the apes; ‘Praise to thee!’ say all animals together.”³⁶ Plants join in:³⁷ “The beasts on the western border praise you; the plants [. . .] turn around to you.” All the earth, wild animals, every foreign country—as high as heaven, as broad as earth, as deep as the ocean—all give praise.³⁸ A fine example is in No. 99, from the Ramesside period:

The gods jump up before you in praise,
Mankind awakens, to adore your beauty;
Beasts dance before you in the wilderness,
The Asiatics prostrate themselves in the mountain-countries.
Heaven leaps [. . .]
Earth [trembles] before the holiness of his name,
Egypt gathers, the wilderness rises early,
To behold his appearance in the morning.³⁹

As Assmann notes, the imperative form is lacking in most Egyptian hymns,⁴⁰ but it is present in abundance in his no. 30 from the Papyrus of Ani (18th Dyn.). Other hymns with imperatives are no. 103, e.g., “O ye gods and goddesses in heaven and on earth! Give praise to the Lord of heaven and earth”⁴¹ Compare no. 124: “Hail, all ye gods, give praise to your Lord!”

In conclusion, the literary antecedents of Psalm 148 lie not in a tradition of encyclopedic learning, but in a hymnic tradition which reaches back to pre-Israelite Mesopotamia and Egypt. Gunkel was near the mark when he wrote: “Such exhortation of creatures to praise of God was not simply a ‘poetic figure’ in Israel; the concept of nature as animate still was lodged in man’s blood at that time This enumeration of all the creatures who should praise God must then have had about it something especially exciting and inspiring.”⁴²

36. From no. 27, a sun-hymn from the Book of the Dead; translation follows Assmann’s German in *Ägyptische Hymnen*.

37. From no. 49; cf., with trees and fish included, no. 132.

38. No. 87E.

39. No. 99.

40. Note, p. 523, to no. 30.

41. No. 103.

42. *Die Psalmen* (5th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968) 618.

Salamalecchi:
Formulas of Greeting and
‘Salute Jerusalem’ (Ps 122:6–9)

F. M. Fales’s “Aramaic Letters and Neo-Assyrian Letters: Philological and Methodological Notes,”¹ which is especially valuable for its bringing to bear of Akkadian linguistic material on the understanding of certain phrases in Egyptian Aramaic, has stimulated me to some responses and rejoinders, given in outline form below. In making these I am conscious that I have not, for want of time, studied the phrases in question with the thoroughness that Fales, and other specialists in these texts or in Semitic epistolography, already have brought to bear on them.

My first objection to Fales’s understanding begins at his paragraph 3.2, where he makes the point that *šlm* + *NAME OF TEMPLE*, as in the Hermopolis letters (*TAD* A2.1.1; 2.1; 3.1; 4.1), has an optative or precative function in context: “The well-being of *NAME OF TEMPLE*, (may it be/may it go) upon/to (’*l*) *ADDRESSEE* from (*mn*) *SENDER*.”² I find his translation “the well-being of the temple of Nabû, etc.” especially unidiomatic, as being overly literal, and would prefer just to render “greetings to the temple of Nabû,” etc.; but here I agree in all essentials

Editor’s Note: Hillers’s intention was to expand this sketch into a fuller study that was to be included in this volume. He described that fuller study as follows:

Starting with forms of salute or greeting in Egyptian Aramaic letters and elsewhere, in the Bible and in Arabic and German, Psalm 122 is neither “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem” or “Pay for the peace of Jerusalem” (a delicious typo in the first edition of the Roman Catholic New American Bible), but “Salute Jerusalem!” with ensuing proper understanding of succeeding lines.

The basic thrust of his understanding of these formulas and how they bear on Ps 122:6–9 is apparent even in outline form here, and thus I have decided to include the sketch as is in the current volume. I have added the footnotes, primarily to make explicit Hillers’s bibliographic and textual references, but also where pertinent to clarify or supplement the argument with my own observations.

1. *JAOS* 107 (1987) 451–69.
2. See Fales, “Aramaic Letters,” 455–56.

with Fales,³ as I believe some others do, against those who, like Joseph Fitzmyer, want to see here an invocation of the deity resident in the temple addressed.⁴

It is at paragraph 3.3 that I have a difference of opinion. Here Fales goes on to distinguish the greeting to the temple from the so-called “secondary greeting” (I think the term is Fitzmyer’s)⁵ *šlm PN*. The latter is not a blessing or greeting, Fales maintains, because (a) it has no formal connection with any of the primary greeting-types attested in Egyptian Aramaic.⁶ This seems to me of little force; all that is asserted, really, is that this is formally different, which leaves open the possibility that it may be a different form of greeting.⁷ Fales’s second and third points (b and c) are both more substantive and important for his case, and in my opinion, more open to question on grounds of logic and consistency. To restate his argument, he wants to start from *šlm l-PN tnh* (e.g., *TAD A2.3.3–4*) or *šlm PN tnh* (e.g., *TAD A2.2.2–3*) “PN is well here,” to argue that *šlm* when followed by *tnh* does not have the sense of a greeting; he adds that the letters contain, after the “multiple *šlm*’s,” requests for information about how the addressees are doing. Hence, Fales concludes, *šlm PN* is an inquiry, a question without an explicit interrogative marker.⁸ But this argument, or group of arguments, is simply dissipated by supposing that what we have is not a unified group of “multiple *šlm*’s,” but *šlm* used in two senses: “Greetings to PN” and “PN is well.” Both are appropriate to correspondence.⁹

3. *Ibid.*, 455.

4. So, for example, in Fitzmyer’s “Aramaic Epistolography” in *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (Missoula: Scholars, 1979) 190.

5. Fitzmyer, “Aramaic Epistolography,” 193.

6. Fales, “Aramaic Letters,” 456. This is not actually true. A number of the Aramaic ostraca from Egypt attest the phrase *šlm PN* as an initial greeting: *šlm ʔhwtb* (*TAD D7.4.1*; cf. *D7.2.1*; 3.1), *šlm ʔwryh* (*TAD D7.8.1*), *šlm ydnyh* (*TAD D7.10.1*), *šlm yslh* (*TAD D7.16.1*), etc. The phrase is also consistent with other related initial greetings in Aramaic (e.g., *šlm* “greeting,” *Ezra 4:17*; *šlmʔ klʔ*, *Ezra 5:7*), Hebrew (e.g., *šlw̄m*, *papMur 42.2*; 43.3; 44.2; 46.2; cf. 1 *Sam 25:6*; 2 *Sam 18:28*), Ugaritic (e.g., *yšlm lk*, e.g., *CTU 2.10.4*; 2.16.4; 2.34.3), and Akkadian (*lū šulmu*, *CAD Š/III*, 250b–51b).

7. Indeed, it is precisely the variety of greeting formulae with *šlm* in ancient Near Eastern epistolary traditions that is most striking.

8. Fales, “Aramaic Letters,” 456.

9. Hillers’s surmise may be supported by two considerations. First, the two sentiments also appear together unmistakably in Akkadian (*a-na ia-ši šul-mu* “I am well” and *a-na aḥi-ia ù a-na ḥa-ta-ni-ia lu-ú šul-mu* “for my brother and my son-in-law, may all be well,” *EA 21.8–9*) and Ugaritic (*yšlm lk* “may it be well with you” and *hnyy ʿmn šlm* “here with me is well,” *CTU 2.46.4, 6*) letters. Second, it is often the case that pragmatic considerations (as with Aramaic *tnh* in the discus-

And this is consistent with Fales's way of reading the greetings to temples! There is no need to search for a linguistic difference between *šlm PN* and *šlm + NAME OF TEMPLE*. My view, I think, is scarcely eccentric; I hope I am simply defending what others have maintained before against an interesting but to my mind unjustified challenge.

On greetings to the residence of a deity, the temple or holy city, note in passing Ps 122:6: *š'lw šlm yrwšlm* "Salute Jerusalem!" I will return to this interesting passage, but note that in the first English edition of the Jerusalem Bible this was translated "Pay for the peace of Jerusalem." Most other translations, too, though they do not contain such a classic and poignantly expressive typographical error, miss the mark slightly with this phrase.

In paragraph 4.1, Fales discusses clauses with *š'l šlm* "with a divine figure as subject." On the basis of Akkadian texts with the phrase *šulmu ša'ālu*, where the gods are the subject of the sentence and the king is the object, and the very frequent use of the same phrase in Neo-Babylonian and Late Babylonian family letters, with ordinary humans as senders and recipients, Fales argues that where we find this phrase in Akkadian or Aramaic we have to do with two distinct contextual situations, gods::king on the one hand, and person::other person, on the other.¹⁰ The Aramaic *š'l šlm*, where mere mortals are involved, means just "to ask how you are/how he is," etc." When the gods are the subject, it means "to look after."¹¹

It is not clear to me that Fales really establishes that this is so even for the Akkadian texts with which he deals (he describes the distinction in Akkadian as "unrecognized"),¹² but I leave that area, into which I can scarcely venture, out of consideration to deal with the Aramaic idioms involved.

In the first place, for Official Aramaic, Fales is asking us to imagine a rather improbable situation, namely that speakers or users of this

sion above) will implicate different senses. So, for example, the idiom *š'l šlum* in 2 Sam 11:7 must mean that David is asking literally after the well-being of Joab, the people, etc. because he is asking it of Uriah who has just come from the battle, whereas in 1 Sam 25:5 the same idiom must be construed as instructions for a greeting, since the greetings themselves (e.g., *wē'attā šālôm* "peace be to you") follow immediately.

10. Fales, "Aramaic Letters," 457–58.

11. *Ibid.*, 458.

12. No such differentiation is apparent in the entries in *CAD Š/I*, 279a–b or *AHW* 1151b. In fact, outside of his assertion that NB *šulmu ša'ālu* when predicated of gods "should be the virtual counterpart of NA *šalāmu* in the D-stem" ("Aramaic Letters," 458 n. 42), Fales provides no positive evidence for the semantic distinction that he draws here.

language kept separate in their minds different senses for the same linguistic form, where the context, in the broad sense, is so similar: gods say this to people, people say it to people. Even if we would suppose, for the sake of argument, that this Aramaic idiom has, in its origin, been influenced by two Akkadian phrases of differing senses as Fales maintains, Aramaic speakers and writers could scarcely have been conscious of the etymological sources, and it seems to me that they would inevitably have blended the two. In my view, just as *šlm PN* and *šlm + NAME OF TEMPLE* are equivalent in sense, so I would suppose in advance that there is unlikely to be a sharp distinction in this phrase determined merely by the involvement of the gods.¹³

This objection is admittedly a bit on the theoretical side. A more serious trouble with Fales's argument here is that he leaves out of view a good deal of the evidence that one would, in a full study, have to assemble. Let us begin with the German—I am serious—"Gruß Gott," a common greeting used in at least some parts of Germany. This is short for "Gruß dich Gott," "May God greet you." All that I want to illustrate by this is that it is not an outlandish notion that God or the gods should "greet" a person, or, let us say "salute" a person, which involves the idea of wishing well. A Semitic example, to come closer to home, was supplied me by George Krotkoff. After the mention of the name of the prophet, pious Muslims say *šallā allāh 'alīhi wa-sallama*, which means, literally translated, "May Allah pray for him and greet him."¹⁴

Time does not permit me to search thoroughly even the biblical material for relevant evidence, but let me put down, somewhat randomly, a number of items for consideration.

13. Or at least not the kind of semantic distinction that Fales has in mind here, i.e., "to ask how one is" v. "to look after one." The phrase *š'l šlm* (and its equivalents in the various Semitic languages) predicated of gods by human beings (outside of strictly mythological narratives; see Judg 6:23) may well implicate the kind of pragmatic use of a request for news of well-being as a formula of greeting that both Fales ("Aramaic Letters," 458) and Hillers recognize. That is, it is rather implausible to think that the sender of a letter would be wishing/reporting that the gods make a factual inquiry into the addressee's well-being or health (cf. D. Pardee's speculation as to why *š'l šlwm* was not used in the Lachish letters, *Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Letters* [Chico: Scholars, 1982] 56), and therefore its use as a greeting (like modern English "how do you do?" and the like, see Fales, "Aramaic Letters," 458 n. 45) may be inferred. Interestingly, the phrase with god(s) as subject does not appear outside of epistolary contexts.

14. H. Wehr (*A Modern Dictionary of Written Arabic* [3rd ed.; Ithaca: Spoken Languages Services, 1976] 425) renders "God bless him and grant him salvation."

Note, to begin with, Judges 6:23, the words of the Being who appears to the parents of Samson; in the preceding context this Being is called “the angel of YHWH” (*mal’ak yhw’h*), but in v. 23 where he speaks for the first time, we have: “And YHWH said to him, ‘Peace be to you (*šālôm lēkā*); do not fear, you shall not die.’” Here we have a well-attested greeting (cf. 1 Sam 25:6; 2 Sam 18:28) and it is placed in the mouth of a deity (YHWH) and addressed to a human being (Gideon), precisely the kind of situation that one might imagine generating the Aramaic epistolary greetings with *š’l šlm* and God or the gods as subject. Further, this example well illustrates the basic ethos that informs the various *šlm* greetings, namely: that of wishing someone well.¹⁵ In Judg 6:23 this positive ethos is made apparent in the following divine reassurance “do not fear, you will not die”—*NJV*’s “All is well” for *šālôm lēkā* nicely captures this aspect of the greeting.

Note also 1 Sam 25:5–6, for the introductory formula *š’l šlwm*, and for the direct speech that follows—in spite of textual difficulties, a blessing, a wishing of well (“‘Go up to Carmel,’ he told the young men, ‘and when you come to Nabal, hail him in my name (*ûš’eltem-lô bišmî lēšālôm*) and say, ‘Thus [. . .]: ‘May you have peace (*wē’attâ šālôm*)! May your house have peace! May all that is yours have peace!’”¹⁶ Quite by chance, I happened on the Syriac of St. Mark’s gospel, where the mocking of Jesus by the soldiers is described, Mark 15:18. It is instructive to note that the Greek says: *kai êrxanto aspazesthai auton, chaire basileu tōn ioudaiōn* “And they began saluting him, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’” The Syriac rendering is exact, and idiomatic in the sense of the imitating the grammatical forms of the Greek: *wšryw lms’l bšlmh šlm mlk’ dyhudy’*.¹⁷ In short, *š’l bšlm* (the noun may occur without a preposition, or with *l*, as in BH frequently, e.g., Judg 18:15; 1 Sam 10:4, 30:21; 2 Sam 8:10; or

15. Similarly, Fales speaks of an expressive function “whereby a number of physical or spiritual benefits are invoked for/wished upon the addressee” (“Aramaic Letters,” 456; cf. 457).

16. The translation is that of P. Kyle McCarter (*I Samuel* [AB 6; New York: Doubleday, 1980] 389), who also discusses the textual difficulties alluded to by Hillers (392).

17. This suggests that the force of the concatenation of greetings followed by *š’l šlm* in *TAD* A2.3.2–3 (*šlm bntšrl w’rg w’šršt wšrdr hrwš š’l šlmhn*) may be similar: “Greetings, Banitsarel and Arag and Isireshut and Shurdur! Harudj hails them.” However, as Fales rightly observes, it is not always easy to distinguish between a “factual request” about well-being and the “formalization” of such a request into a greeting (“Aramaic Letters,” 458). That is, *hrwš š’l šlmhn* may also be construed as the statement of the factual request itself, i.e., “Harudj asks after their well-being” (cf. *TAD* A2.6.2, 7–8).

with *b*, as here in Syriac) means “to greet, hail.” Etymologically, the idiom derives from inquiring about the welfare of another (e.g., *wayyišʿal lāhem lēšālôm wayyōʿmer hāšālôm ʿābīkem* “He asked after their well-being and said, ‘Is your father well?’” Gen 43:27; cf. 2 Sam 11:7), but by synecdoche this part of the whole ceremony (cf. Exod 18:7) and ethos of greeting stands for the whole, and in given contexts means also “to wish another well, to bless.”¹⁸

It is precisely this sense of wishing well, saluting, that is to the fore in 2 Sam 8:10 (= 1 Chron 18:9–10), but which is missed by most modern translations in their rendering of the idiom *lišʿol-lô lēšālôm* as “to greet him” (e.g., *NRSV, NJV*). In context, such a translation, though literally correct, is somewhat flat. Something more than the expression of a simple courtesy is intended here. Toi, King of Hamath, sends (*wayyišlah*) his son to greet the victorious David, yes, but also literally to bless him (*lēbārākō*) and, as likely, to form a political alliance with him—note the gifts of gold, silver, and bronze and that the messenger is Toi’s son and heir to the throne.¹⁹ In other words, something like “salute” better captures the intent and spirit of the greeting. More elliptical versions of the phrasing in this passage are used for the conveyance of greetings in both Hebrew (*Arad* 16.1–2; 21.1–2; 40.2–3; *Mur* 1A.1)²⁰ and Aramaic (e.g., *TAD* A2.4.5; 7.1–2; A3.3.1; 4.1–2; 8.1; A6.3.1; D1.5.1; D7.1.2; 21.2; 22.2) letters.

* * *

Hillers concludes these brief remarks with a working translation of Ps 122:6–9:

Salute Jerusalem:
 “May those who love you be secure!
 May there be peace within your rampart,

18. Fales has the same basic understanding of the phrase, at least when it involves only humans: “Its usage lies thus between a factual request for news of well-being and a secondary formalization of such requests into mere formulae of greeting” (“Aramaic Letters,” 458). Fales helpfully exemplifies the kind of pragmatic development he has in mind from modern European languages, “e.g., how do you do? wie geht’s? come va?” (458 n. 45)—these add to Hillers’s own example of “Gruß Gott.”

19. See P. Kyle McCarter, *II Samuel* (AB 9; New York: Doubleday, 1984) 250, 252.

20. In the Arad letters, the greeting is also joined explicitly with a blessing formula.

security within your towers!
 For the sake of my brothers and friends
 I would say, Peace be within you!
 For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,
 I would seek your good."

His intent was to offer an extended reading of the passage as a way of summing up his argument. Indeed, given its prominence in the proposed essay's title and the several aspects of greeting he chooses to lift up for discussion, it is apparent that Psalm 122 was in view from the outset. Unfortunately, Hillers left no specific comments about the psalm itself, beyond the brief observation cited in n. 1 above, the translation, and a short list of passages (Gen 37:4; Exod 18:7; Jer 15:5; 29:7) presumably relevant to his understanding of the psalm. Still, several of the points that he would have likely made about these verses are discernable. Three stand out with particular clarity. First, and most explicitly, Hillers was keen to show that the standard rendering of *ša'ālū šēlôm yērūšālāyim* in Ps 122:6 as "pray for the peace of Jerusalem," in his words, misses "the mark slightly." This is not an invitation to prayer—*š'l* is not typically used in this way²¹—but an invitation to greet (and even wish well). The combination of the verb *š'l* "to ask" plus the noun *šālôm* "peace, well-being" (with or without a preposition) becomes a standard idiom of greeting in Hebrew and in many other Semitic languages (e.g., OffA, JPA, JBA, Syr, Akk, Ug).²² Insofar as the greeting in Ps 122:6 is addressed to Jerusalem, Hillers thinks it is analogous to the several greetings to temples found in the Egyptian Aramaic letters.²³ In fact, the Babylonian Talmud attests a greeting to Jerusalem formally very similar to the Egyptian Aramaic *šlm + NAME OF TEMPLE: šlm lqrt' yršlm* "Well-being to the city of Jerusalem!" (*San* 96a[47]; 98a[50]). The closest biblical parallel to Ps 122:6 comes in the rhetorical question addressed to

21. One may certainly "ask" through prayer (e.g., 1 Sam 1:27), but *š'l* itself is not a particularly common means in Hebrew of indicating prayer per se—the felt need on the part of BDB (981b) for a parenthetical gloss on the specific sense of *š'l* in Ps 122:6, "(= pray for)," is quite telling.

22. Cf. L. C. Allen, *Psalms 101–150* (Word; Waco: Word, 1983) 186: "the language is reminiscent of the standard phrase of greeting."

23. Note the explicit mention of the temple in Ps 122:9 (*bêt-yhwh*). Psalm 122 is often counted among the so-called Zion songs (e.g., E. S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 1* [FOTL XIV; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988] 16). The tradition of hymning the temple-city complex dates to the mid-third millennium in Mesopotamia, as exhibited most spectacularly in the collection of Sumerian temple hymns attributed to Enheduanna (Å. W. Sjöberg and W. Bergmann, *The Collection of the Sumerian Temple Hymns* [Locust Valley: J. J. Augustine, 1969]).

Jerusalem in Jer 15:5 (*ûmî yâšûr liš'ol lêšālôm lak* “who will [even] stop to greet you”)—the latter has been recognized as a form of greeting.²⁴

Hillers, in light of the “ethos of greeting” that he discusses in the latter part of his comments, would have stressed further that the greeting in Ps 122:6 was also a wishing well of Jerusalem, a blessing. This is clear from his translation, “Salute Jerusalem!” It is perhaps implicit as well in his inclusion of Jer 29:7 among the passages he thought relevant for the explication of Ps 122:6–9. The verse comes from Jeremiah’s letter to the Babylonian exiles (vv. 4–23), which generally exhorts the exiles to make a good life for themselves in Babylon. Here the tenor of the *šālôm* that the exiles are to seek for the city of Babylon (*wêdiršû 'et-šêlôm hâ'îr*) is most positive and beneficial. In fact, Jeremiah says that the exiles’ well-being itself depends on the well-being and flourishing of Babylon, the wording of which in Hebrew (*kî bišlômâh yihyeh lakem šâlôm*) involves a play on common forms of greeting (e.g., *šâlôm*, *šâlôm l-*).²⁵

Finally, based on his treatment of 1 Sam 25:5–6 and the Syriac rendering of Mark 15:18, Hillers surely would have raised the possibility of understanding *ša'âlû šêlôm yêrûšâlâyim* as an introduction to the well wishing and blessing that comes in the following verses. This intention is most apparent in Hillers’s use of quotation marks in the translation to set off what he takes to be direct discourse.²⁶ The strongest contextual cue in support of such a construal is the lack of an explicit antecedent for the masculine plural imperative *ša'âlû*; the subjects of all the other verbs in the hymnic section are clearly given.

In sum, though Hillers may have wanted to say more about Ps 122:6–9, the three aspects highlighted here follow closely on his broader understanding of the several formulas of greeting that he does treat and their informing ethos and result in a reading of these verses (and especially v. 6—“Salute Jerusalem!”) that differs in “slight” but not insignificant ways from that found in the standard commentaries and translations.

24. Esp. Fales, “Aramaic Letters,” 458 n. 47, whose translation is given above; cf. W. L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 441.

25. See W. L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989) 138, 141. And here we do explicitly have the language of prayer (*wêhitpalêlû*).

26. Allen (*Psalms 101–150*, 155) similarly understands the phrase as an introduction to direct discourse, though he only sets vv. 6–7 in quotation marks.

The Effective Simile in Biblical Literature

Prof. S. N. Kramer has written about Sumerian similes from a literary point of view,¹ an interest to which G. Buccellati has already paid appropriate tribute.² It is my intention to investigate certain biblical similes, and their counterparts in Mesopotamian literature, not so much as part of literary production as of “effective” speech, that is, speech intended to produce an effect in the world beyond ordinary discourse. If it were not certain to invite misunderstanding, especially on the biblical side, the paper might have been called “Similes and Magic.”

Magical texts and treaties in Akkadian and Hittite abound in similes. At least two types of similes must be distinguished in the magical texts and in the lists of curses in simile form. The first involves manipulation of an object. Thus the benevolent witch-doctor in the Maqlû series, intending to rid a victim of a black-magic spell, makes images of tallow, copper, dough, asphalt, clay, or wax.³ These figures are identified with the sorcerer or sorceress who has laid the spell on the victim.⁴ Then they are burned as the magician recites the spell, containing a simile: “As these figures melt, dissolve, and run down, so may sorcerer and sorceress melt, dissolve, and run down!”⁵ A parallel is Sefire I A 36–37 “This *GNB*² and [. . .] (are) Mati²el; it is his person. Just as this wax is burned by fire, so may Mati²[el be burned by fi]re!”⁶ Note here the explicit

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1. S. N. Kramer, “Sumerian Similes: A Panoramic View of Man’s Oldest Literary Images,” *JAOS* 89 (1969) 1–10.

2. Giorgio Buccellati, “Towards a Formal Typology of Akkadian Similes,” in *Cuneiform Studies in Honor of Samuel Noah Kramer* (ed. B. L. Eichler et al.; 1976) 59–70.

3. Gerhard Meier, *Die assyrische Beschwörungssammlung Maqlû* (*AfO* Beiheft 2.; 1937) *passim*.

4. This is especially clear in I 31–33 and III 17–21.

5. II 146–47; similar expressions occur elsewhere in the series.

6. The translation is that of Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire* (*Biblica et Orientalia* 19; 1967) 15.

identification of *Matiʿel* with the wax, and that the identification precedes the simile. Similarly, in the Akkadian treaty between Ashurnirari V of Assyria and *Matiʿilu*: “This head is not the head of a lamb, it is the head of *Matiʿilu*, it is the head of his sons, his officials, and the people of his land. If *Matiʿilu* sins against this treaty, so may, just as the head of this spring lamb is torn off, and its knuckle placed in its mouth, . . . , the head of *Matiʿilu* be torn off, and his sons . . . , etc.”⁷ The simile follows, and depends on, a magical identification which is posited. Its intention is perfectly clear. We do not know in all cases of similes in magical texts and curses whether actual objects were manipulated.

Clearly, this sort of simile, accompanying a rite, is not meant to decorate the discourse, or to arouse or give vent to emotions, or to point out a resemblance between two different objects. The spell is meant above all to work, to be effective, to accomplish something in the practical world. The language of the spell is not in the ordinary sense communication, but effective objective action. Furthermore, these similes involve first of all an explicit or implicit identification of two different objects, and comparison comes in only in the second place: what is done to the one object is to have similar effect on the other. Moreover, the relation between the two objects is not so much perceived as it is posited.

In many cases in magical texts or treaty-curses, we are not told any concrete rite accompanied the simile, and it seems practically certain that none did. For example take these similes from an Akkadian “Fire Incantation” (Section II, lines 11–15):⁸

Depart like a snake from your hole (?)
Like a partridge (?) from your lair.
Do not turn back to your prey.
Scatter like fog, disperse like dew,
Like smoke ascend to the heaven of Anu.

Here surely the objects mentioned—at least the fog and dew—are not under the sorcerer’s control. Yet the intention of this sort of simile is, it seems to me, essentially the same as that of those where an object is manipulated. The similes are not far-fetched, or private. Instead, as a rule, they appeal to readily observed natural phenomena or the enduring and most obvious qualities of an object: the scattering of fog, the evaporation of dew, the rising of smoke, that doves do fly to their nests, that crows cross the sky, that chaff flies before the wind, that dew falls at

7. Translated by Erica Reiner, in *The Ancient Near East: Supplementary Texts and Pictures Relating to the Old Testament* (ed. by James B. Pritchard; 1969) 532–33 (96–97). Hereafter cited as *ANET*³.

8. W. G. Lambert, “Fire Incantations,” *A/O* 23 (1970) 40.

night, that rain falls down and does not go back up, that mules do not have offspring, and so on. The sorcerer need not always lay his hand on something and control it, for he can by his words appeal to what is inevitable in nature for the same purpose. These, too, then may be considered “effective” similes. In my opinion, one might propose that these also rest on an implicit identification of the two objects concerned.

Turning now to the Old Testament, I propose that we can find there examples of the “effective” simile, verbal counterparts to the much-discussed “symbolic actions” of the prophets. Two lines of evidence point in this direction. The first is that one can point out verbal resemblances between some Old Testament similes and similes in magic and curse texts. The second, and more important in my opinion, is that one can observe a significant number of cases in which a blessing, curse, or pronouncement of doom in the Old Testament employs one or more similes. That is to say, pronouncements that are meant to be effective often use the simile form as a figure peculiarly apt, by its connection to the concrete, for such utterances.

First, then, some examples of resemblance in content of Old Testament and extra-biblical similes. There are two similes in Ps 68:3. I use W. F. Albright’s translation:⁹ “Let YHWH arise, May his foes be scattered, And let his enemies flee before him! Like smoke may they be put to flight, Like the melting of wax before the fire! Let the wicked perish before YHWH.” This is undoubtedly an old poetic fragment; we must also agree with Albright that “the hymn is an appeal to YHWH, not a mere prediction of what he will do.”¹⁰ It can be called a prayer or a curse on the enemies of Yahweh.

Before looking for extra-biblical evidence, let us consider the Old Testament parallels. Isa 65:5 and Prov 10:26 use a smoke simile, but with a different point: “smoke gets in your eyes” in Proverbs; “in your nose” in Isaiah. Isaiah 51:6 is closer: “For the heavens will vanish like smoke”; here, however, the simile is descriptive rather than effective in intent. Hos 13:3 is closer in spirit to the strong expression of will which shines through Ps 68:3. “And now they sin more and more, and make for themselves molten images . . . Men kiss calves. Therefore they shall be like the morning mist or like the dew that goes early away, like the chaff that swirls from the threshing floor or like smoke from a window.” Note that the prophet means for this to happen, and how he heaps up similes, including that of chaff before the wind, to which we shall return later, and smoke, our present concern.

9. “A Catalogue of Early Hebrew Lyric Poems (Psalm LXVIII),” *HUCA* 23 (1950–51) 36. The textual problems are discussed on p. 17.

10. Albright, *HUCA* 23 (1950–51) 17.

This same simile, of smoke rising, occurs in numerous passages in Akkadian magical literature. Maqlû I 135–41 is part of a short incantation that begins thus: “Incantation. I raise the torch, I burn the figures of the *utukku*,” etc. (other demons are named) “and of all evil which may seize a man. Melt, dissolve, and run down. May your smoke rise up to heaven!” Note that what is burned, we may infer, are tallow figurines; cf. Maqlû II 146–47 and the incantations similar to Maqlû published by W. G. Lambert,¹¹ to which reference will be made below. In other words, the idea of melting and dispersal as smoke are combined in Maqlû as in Ps 68:3. This simile is very common in Akkadian incantations; for references see *AHW* s.v. *qutru*. It is often joined with another: “Like an uprooted tamarisk, never return to its place.” Slightly different is the form it assumes in the “Fire Incantation,” already quoted, where it is joined with other similes.¹² Of interest there is occurrence of the smoke simile along with the fog and dew similes, as in Hos 13:3. The smoke simile also occurs in a Hittite treaty (in Akkadian), the treaty of Mattiwaza-Suppiluliumas:¹³ “May I, Mattiwaza, together with any second wife I might take, and we Hurri-people, together with our possessions, go up like smoke to the sky.” Cf. also the line from a *lipšur* lity; “may my sin rise skyward like smoke” (type 11 1 line 7’).¹⁴

The second simile in Ps 68:3 is “like the melting of wax before the fire!” This simile is otherwise used in the Old Testament to describe great suffering (Ps 22:15) or of the melting of the mountains in a theophany (Mic 1:4; Ps 97:5). These are descriptive, and do not resemble Ps 68:3 in intent. As extra-biblical parallels we may mention Maqlû II 146–47, which prescribes the making of a figurine of tallow, and concludes with the similes: “As these figures melt, dissolve, and run down, so may sorcerer and sorceress melt, dissolve, and run down.” Figurines of wax are mentioned in Maqlû II 159; IV 40; and IX 25, and in texts related to Maqlû published by W. G. Lambert.¹⁵ Another parallel which has already been quoted is in Sefire I A 36–37; an eighth-century Aramaic treaty: “. . . (are) Mati’el; it is his person. Just as this wax is burned by fire, so may Mati[el be burned by fi]re!”¹⁶ For further parallels and discussion, see the literature cited by Fitzmyer.¹⁷ Noteworthy is the

11. W. G. Lambert, “An Incantation of the Maqlû Type,” *AJO* 18 (1958) 294.

12. Lambert, *AJO* 23 (1970) 40.

13. Ernst F. Weidner, *Politische Dokumente aus Kleinasien* (Boghazköi-Studien 8; 1923) 55.

14. Erica Reiner, “*Lipšur* Litanies,” *JNES* 15 (1956) 141.

15. Lambert, *AJO* 18 (1958) 292.

16. Fitzmyer, *Sefire*, 15.

17. Pp. 52–53.

passage in the Hittite Soldier's Oath:¹⁸ "Then he places wax and mutton fat in their hands. He throws them *on a pan* and says: 'Just as this wax melts, and just as this mutton fat dissolves,—whoever breaks these oaths, [shows disrespect to the king] of the Hatti [land,] let [him] melt lik[e wax], let him dissolve like [mutton fat]!' " From the Esarhaddon vassal-treaties comes this simile: "Just as one burns a wax figurine in fire, dissolves a clay one in water, so may they burn your figure in fire, submerge it in water."¹⁹

Hos 13:3, which was mentioned in the preceding discussion of the smoke simile, also uses a chaff simile: "Therefore they shall be . . . like the chaff that swirls from the threshing floor." This simile, using either the Hebrew word *mos* "chaff" or *qaš* "stubble, chaff," with reference to its being carried off by the wind, is very common in the Old Testament. In many cases, as in Hos 13:3, it occurs in contexts where an imprecation is intended, where the simile is, in my terms, effective or creative in intent. Other prophetic passages of similar intent include Is 29:5; 41:15; Jer 13:24; and perhaps Is 17:13.²⁰ In the Psalms we have 35:5: "Let them be like chaff before the wind, with the angel of the Lord driving them on." Similar is Ps 83:14; note the heaping-up of comparisons beginning at v. 10—the enemies should be like Midian, Sisera and Jabin, Oreb and Zeeb, Zebah and Zalmunna, and after the chaff simile the passage closes with similes of fire and storm (v. 16).

Once again Maqlû offers parallels to the effective use of the simile: "May their sorceries be blown away like chaff" (V 57). The simile is repeated in varied form at V 11–20, V 32–35, VIII 57–58. Of interest is the fact that there was an accompanying ritual: Maqlû IX (Ritual Tablet) 176–77: "One puts chaff in a slender clay vessel and blows through its opening into a wash-basin." Contenau cites the same simile from Tîpi Tab. IX²¹ ". . . , may the headache which is in the body of this man be driven off and not be able to return, like the chaff which the wind drives off." The same simile occurs in a Hittite ritual text: "As the wind chases the chaff and carries it far across the sea, so also may it chase away the bloodshed and impurity of their house and carry them far across the sea."²²

18. Trans. by A. Goetze, *ANET*³, 353.

19. Lines 608–11, trans. by Erica Reiner, *ANET*³, 540 (104).

20. Zeph 2:2 is too difficult textually to permit certain interpretation, though it may belong here.

21. G. Contenau, *La magie chez les Assyriens et les Babyloniens* (1947) 221, citing R. Campbell Thompson, *The Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia* (Vol II; 1904) 68–69.

22. Translation by Harry A. Hoffner, Jr., *Alimenta Hethaeorum: Food Production in Hittite Asia Minor* (American Oriental Series 55; 1974) 32. Hoffner

A famous Old Testament simile makes use of the observation that rain and snow fall and do not return, Isa 55:10–11 (RSV): “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and return not thither, but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty,” etc. The idea is found also in Akkadian and Hittite texts. From a *lipšur* litany (translated by Erica Reiner) we have (Type II 1 line 21’): “May my sin, like falling rain, never return to its origin.”²³ From a Hittite conjuration of the underworld: They pour down the rainspout a pot of wine, and say “As the water runs down the [roof] and does [not] return [again] through the [rainspo]jut, so also the evil pollution, etc., of this house be poured out and not return.”²⁴ From an Akkadian prayer of conjuration: “As a rain-shower from heaven does not return to its place, as the water of a rainspout does not flow back, as water flowing downstream does not flow back upstream, so take (the evil) out of the [body] of NN, son of NN, and take it away. Let it not come back.”²⁵ Haas and Wilhelm cite an analogous simile from the treaty of Suppiluliumas and Kurtiwaza: “As the water of a rainspout does not return to its place, so may we, like the water of a rainspout, not return to our place.”²⁶ The same simile is used in a prayer to Telepinus.²⁷ Hoffner notes a badly damaged text which apparently has the same idea: “A[s] the water of a [p]ail [is poured out and does not go back] . . .”²⁸ One may recall in this context the saying of the wise woman to David, 2 Sam 14:14: “We are like water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again.”

In Ps 2:9, the king is told “You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” The simile is paralleled of course, in Jeremiah’s famous symbolic action, Jeremiah 19. Compare also Isa 30:13, “Its breaking is like that of a potter’s vessel . . .” We find these lines in the *lipšur* litanies: “May my sin, like a potter’s broken pot, never return to its former state, may my sin be shattered like a potsherd.”²⁹ Contenau cites an Akkadian text in which the tongue which has charmed

discusses the meaning of Hittite *ezzan* “chaff,” which had been in doubt, and use of the product by the Hittites, on pp. 37–38. In the Ullikummi myth, Kumarbi wished that the storm god would be crushed like chaff, p. 33.

23. *JNES* 15 (1956) 141, Type II 1 line 21’.

24. Volkert Haas and Gernt Wilhelm, *Hurritische und luwische Riten aus Kizuwatna* (Hurritologische Studien I; AOAT Sonderreihe; 1974) 27.

25. *Ibid.*, 28.

26. *Ibid.*, 28, citing Weidner, *op. cit.*, 54ff. (KBo 1 3 Rs. 31.)

27. *Ibid.*, 27.

28. Hoffner, *Alimenta Hethaeorum*, 138.

29. Reiner, *JNES* 15 (1956) 141, lines 15’–16’.

the sufferer is threatened: "May one break you in pieces like this goblet."³⁰ Note also "Smash them like a pot, let their smoke, as from a furnace, cover [the heavens]," in an incantation of the Maqlû type.³¹

This listing of some Old Testament similes with parallels in Near Eastern magic or ritual texts is, of course, incomplete. Even if more parallels could be found, however, we should have to ask if the parallels are at all significant. Certainly they are not sufficient to establish any lineal descent of Old Testament similes from a magical tradition, though one cannot rule that out. But, as was said above, the writers of spells and rituals seem to have drawn their similes from the most obvious, familiar, and inevitable phenomena of their world and idioms of their language, and the Israelite writers, living in essentially the same world, could have created such simple similes quite independently. On the other hand, the parallels are perhaps enough to suggest that the function of some biblical similes was not altogether different.

In Hebrew poetry (similes in prose will be dealt with in a separate treatment), in prayers and in prophetic oracles, similes are frequently found in contexts where the writer expects or desires some objective effect on his world. Some have already been quoted above. A good example is Ps 83, a prayer against the enemies of God (vss. 9–15, RSV): "Do to them as thou didst to Midian, as to Sisera and Jabin at the river Kishon, who were destroyed at En-dor, who became dung for the ground. Make their nobles like Zebah and Zalmunna O my God, make them like whirling dust, like chaff before the wind. As fire consumes the forest, as the flame sets the mountains ablaze, so do thou pursue them . . ." A good clear example from the prophets is Jeremiah's curse and blessing, 17:5–8: "Thus says the Lord: 'Cursed be the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm, whose heart turns away from the Lord. May he be like a shrub in the desert, and not see any good come. May he dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. Blessed be the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is in the Lord. May he be like a tree planted by water that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.'" One can discover many more; I count about 20 passages in Isaiah that use what I have called "effective" similes.³² Similarly, one can find more or less plausible examples in the rest of Old Testament poetic literature.

30. Contenau, *La magie*, 226.

31. Lambert, *AfO* 18 (1958) 294, line 75.

32. 1:30; 5:24; 10:18; 13:12, 14, 19; 17:5–8; 19:14, 16; 24:13; 25:10; 28:4; 29:5–8; 30:13–14, 17; 41:15; 42:14–15; 49:26; 50:9 (cf. 51:8); 55:10; 58:11; 65:22.

To sum up, these similes should be drawn into the discussion of the symbolic actions of the prophets. In his monograph on the subject³³ and in a later article on prophecy and magic,³⁴ G. Fohrer clearly demonstrates the connection of the symbolic actions of the prophets to analogic magic, and notes that a symbolic action is not just a symbol, not a didactic or homiletic tool, but “wirkungsmächtige und ereignisgeladene Tat”—a powerfully effective and actually productive action. I suggest that this insight be extended—as indeed Fohrer does extend it, in a limited way³⁵ to some of the verbal symbols, the similes, of the prophets and other Old Testament writers as well. Sayings which use similes, like the divine word in general, are often not so much communication between speaker and bearer as the turning loose of an effective power in the world. If I am right, what we may call magical thought for want of a better term, is more pervasive in the Old Testament than has previously been recognized.

Fohrer says that in prophecy magic is overcome, because success of the symbolic action depends on fellowship with God³⁶ and the promise of God.³⁷ But the same holds true of many of the magic and ritual texts which have been cited here. Maqlû begins (I 1): “I have invoked you, O gods of the night” and goes on “Come near, O great gods, hear my complaint!” (I 13). At another spot the magician has an almost prophetic consciousness of his calling (Maqlû 61–64): “I have been sent, I go; I have been commanded, I speak. Against my sorcerer and my sorceress Asariludu, lord of the art of conjuration, has sent me: What is in heaven, pay attention! What is on earth, hear!” If Fohrer wants to call the relation of magic to Israelite religion a “broken” one, then we must say the same for Mesopotamian religion.

33. Georg Fohrer, *Die Symbolischen Handlungen der Propheten* (ATHANT; 2nd ed.; 1968).

34. Georg Fohrer, “Prophetie und Magie,” ZAW 78 (1966) 25–47.

35. Op. cit., 35ff.

36. *Symbolische Handlungen*, 108.

37. “Prophetie und Magie,” 27, 35.

Dust: Some Aspects of Old Testament Imagery

“The Holy Ghost in penning the Scriptures delights himself, not only with a propriety but with a delicacy and harmony and melody of language, with height of metaphors and other figures” In his enthusiasm for the imagery of the Bible, where he found “such voyages, such peregrinations to fetch remote and precious metaphors, such extensions, such curtains of allegories, such third heavens of hyperboles,” John Donne joined a chorus of 17th and 18th century European writers who remarked on the difference between their own poetic diction and that of the ancient Hebrews, which they found especially “Oriental.”¹ By the last adjective they meant bold, vehement, not concerned for correctness, not artificial, vivid, violently agitated, affecting, wild, possessing an “agreeable Rudeness.”² Voltaire, who found the figures and metaphors of the Bible “presque toujours outrées,” referred to the Mediterranean heat to account for this barbarism: “l’imagination était sans cesse exaltée par l’ardeur du climat.”³

Modern students of Old Testament literature seem overly content to repeat clichés about “Oriental imagery” and uninterested in a fresh examination of the subject.⁴ In spite of the prominence given to study of metaphor and simile in modern criticism of literature, a recent biblical handbook with the promising title *Exegese als Literaturwissenschaft*⁵

Reprinted with permission from *Love and Death in the Ancient Near East* (eds. John Marks and R. M. Good; Guilford, CN: Four Quarter, 1987) 105–9.

1. This is a much altered version of a lecture given as one of the Schaff Lectures at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in 1970.

2. The phrase is from *Husbands*, “A Miscellany of Poems . . . Preface,” cited in Rolf P. Lessenich, *Dichtungsgeschmack und althebräische Bibelprosa im 18. Jahrhundert* (Anglistische Studien 4; Cologne: Graz, 1967).

3. Cited in Lessenich, *Dichtungsgeschmack*, 32.

4. V. H. Kooy, “Image, Imagery,” *Interpreters’ Dictionary of the Bible*, repeats 18th-century observations to the point of being a caricature.

5. Wolfgang Richter (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1971). By contrast, note the enormous literature collected in Warren A. Shibles, *Metaphor: An Annotated Bibliography and History* (Whitewater, WI: Language Press, 1971).

does not even mention “image,” “metaphor,” or “simile” in its index, nor is the classic *Semantics of Biblical Language*⁶ interested in these topics, though it would seem that figurative language is more than peripheral to religious discourse. There are works that begin to balance this neglect, but there seems to be room for the present attempt to characterize Old Testament imagery.

I have chosen to treat one set of images, similes and metaphors having to do with “dust” or “dirt,” as manageable in a preliminary study and relatively unproblematic. A brief review should suffice to define the set of commonplace associations connected with “dust” in Old Testament literature. Then tentative conclusions can be drawn as to the nature of Old Testament imagery and the implications for the world view of its writers. The principal conclusion that arises is that much Old Testament imagery is what may be called conceptual imagery. This is, in using simile or metaphor involving a given object, Hebrew writers evoke a severely limited range of associated commonplaces—abstract, common qualities belonging to the concept of a class of objects rather than sensuous, particular, or temporary characteristics associated with an individual object. By frequent use of conceptual imagery, Old Testament literature stresses the stability and intelligibility of the physical and moral world. These conclusions are offered for confirmation or modification by study of other sets of Old Testament images, or to serve to identify groups of images or literary compositions which depart from the standard.

The Hebrew terms most prominently involved are the following. The most important is *‘āpār*, which means “soil, dirt, dust.” Another term often linked with *‘āpār* is *’ēper*; in many translations of the Bible this is rendered “ashes,” but as especially Kutscher has demonstrated, in a great many biblical contexts the sense is “dust, dirt,” and in fact the word is probably etymologically connected with *‘āpār*, by way of Akkadian where the initial laryngeal of the root was changed.⁷ Other terms that are partially synonymous with these two, and which figure in the same sort of imagery, are *’ābāq* “dust, powder”; *ṭīt* and *ḥōmer* “clay”; *ḥōl*, “sand”; *’ādāmāh* “ground”; and *’ereṣ* “earth.” In studying these terms I have given some attention to cognates or counterparts in Ugaritic and Akkadian, and have neglected later literatures because I am interested in uses which may be prior to biblical use, not just in parallel phenomena in world literature (*pulvis et umbra sumus*). I have omitted Egyptian from consideration as less accessible to me; it is possible, however, that the biblical tradition was fed from this stream also.

6. James Barr (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961).

7. Literature is cited in Koehler-Baumgartner, *Lexikon*³, s.v. *’ēper*.

Dust is plentiful. There is a lot of it, and therefore dirt or dust becomes a way of describing a vast quantity, an uncountable multitude of a substance. Thus God says: "I will make your seed like the dust (*ʿāpār*) of the earth, that is, if anyone can count the dust of the earth, then your seed can be counted" (Gen 13:16; cf. 28:14). This stock image is used also by the Chronicler, 2 Chr 1:9. As is well-known, "sand" (*hōl*) is used in this kind of context even more often than "dirt" (*ʿāpār*). Biblical usage of this comparison is not restricted to use of large numbers of persons; anything uncountable can be compared to dirt: God's thoughts (Ps 139:18); the grain in Egypt (Gen 41:49); the intelligence of a king (1 Kgs 5:9); the meat sent to the Israelites in the wilderness (Ps 78:27); clothing a miser can hoard (Job 27:16). In hyperbolic expressions it is said that a man can "heap up silver like dirt" (Job 27:16) and in Zech 9:3 that Tyre has "heaped up silver like dirt, and gold like the mud in the streets." This is very similar to expressions which occur in the Amarna letters, where hopeful kings write to the wealthy Pharaoh: "Gold is (as common) in your land (as) dust." Very likely there is a direct connection between the idiom of these pre-Israelite letters and the biblical image, especially since other expressions in the Amarna texts are echoed in the Old Testament.

This is such an obvious and common metaphoric usage of "dust" that it needs no further comment, except to point out that as a metaphor for cheapness—"dirt cheap" is idiomatic also with us—dirt enters into a structure of other metaphors for value. At the top, quite obviously, is gold, consistently symbolic for the highest value; next comes silver, then bronze, then iron, then dirt or clay. This is the sequence of the materials in the great statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan 2:31–33). The metaphoric or symbolic structure in this case corresponds with the actual monetary system. The structure is itself traditional.

Within biblical literature, note Isa 60:17; a description of the glories of the new Jerusalem: "Instead of bronze I will bring gold, and instead of iron I will bring silver; instead of wood, bronze, instead of stones, iron." Every material is moved up a notch. A similar pattern is attested in literary use as early as about 2000 B.C.E., in the Sumerian text called "The Curse of Agade."⁸

Dirt is useful as a metaphor for vileness and low worth in another way. Not only is it common but it is also that which gets stepped on, and in contrast to the sky the dust, or ground, is the lowest thing. Here the passages are too numerous to cite with anything approaching fullness. The following are typical examples in which dirt is clearly thought of as what is trodden down. "For the king of Aram destroyed them and

8. Lines 241–43, *ANET*³, 650.

made them like dirt to trample on” (2 Kgs 13:7). “(The wicked) shall be dust under your feet” (Mal 3:21). Ps 7:6 illustrates that frequently in this kind of use *‘āpār* (“dirt”) may be a B-word to *’ereš* “earth, ground” as A-Word: “And he trampled to earth my life, and put my liver in the dirt.” This pair—and the image involved—is attested already in Ugaritic epics, though the verb involved is a bit obscure: “We’ll thrust my foes into the earth, To the ground those that rise against my brother” (76 [10].2.24–25). Akkadian also knows this image: “Should I say yes, Shamash would treat me as if I were the dust upon which you have stepped” (see the *CAD* s.v. *eperu*, 186b). Rather closely allied to this usage but not identical is the use of “dirt” or “earth” as the opposite pole to something higher, especially the sky. A wide variety of verbs is used to assert that someone or other has brought a man down to the dirt: Isaiah (25:12) writes of the fortresses of Moab: “And the high fortifications of his walls (God) has brought low, leveled, made touch the earth, down to the dirt.” In this usage also *‘āpār* is often associated with *’ereš* “earth.” Hence “dust” is figurative for what is low, defeated, contemptible, and it is used metaphorically to express those ideas also in passages where the *tertium comparationis* is left unexpressed. Thus Ezek 28:18: “And I made you dust on the ground in the sight of all who beheld you.” Note also Zeph 1:17: “And their blood will be poured out like dirt.” Job says: “Your maxims are proverbs of dust (*mišlê ’ēper*), and your defenses are defenses of clay” (13:12). Especially interesting is the use of this image for men. Job says (30:19): “He has brought me down to the clay, and I am made like dirt and dust” (*‘āpār wā’ēper*). Similarly Abraham says to God, most deferentially, “Here I have dared to speak to my lord, and I am but dirt and dust” (Gen 18:27). “Dust” is used in these cases, especially the latter, of man *coram deo*. Although one might think of creation stories as the source of the imagery, the parallels from the Amarna letters deserve citation. A vassal describes himself to Pharaoh as “a true servant of the king, the dust of the feet of the king” (EA 248:5) or elsewhere as “Your servant and the dust you walk on.” In other words, there seems to be an additional dimension in Abraham’s description of himself before his “lord” as “dirt”; the image is perhaps not derived directly from the traditional connotations of dirt, but comes by way of political language, the language used by a servant for someone immensely his superior. To put it in terms which have been used above, the “dust” metaphor here is drawn into a larger structure of metaphor, in which the relation of God to man is conceived in terms of the relations between men in society. The metaphor remains clear, but it is not absolutely simple.

A rather uncommon use of “dust” arises from the fact that dust can be light, and powdery, and easily swept away by the wind. Thus Isa 29:5 “But the multitude of your strangers (?) shall be like fine dust (*’ābāq*

daq), and the multitude of the violent like chaff which passes away.” In only a couple of other passages (Isa 5:24; Ps 18:43 = 2 Sam 22:43) dust is used in a similar way; more commonly chaff is the symbol in this sort of context. An Akkadian epic, of about 1000 B.C.E. (Ir-ra Epic I 107), similarly refers to the dust which the storm wind carries away.

The final major metaphoric use of “dust” which we will consider is as a description of the nature of man: “Dust thou art.” The significance of this metaphor is two-fold at least. “Dust thou art” refers to, and is derived from, accounts of the creation of man. “Yahweh God made man of dirt from the ground.” “Dust thou art” points in the other direction also, to the end of man—“and unto dust shalt thou return.” This in its turn is suggestive of, and derived from, the association of dirt and dust with death, the grave, and the world of the dead.

Lines from the Genesis creation story have already been quoted to illustrate use of “dirt” in describing the origin of man. Such a use is not restricted to Genesis, however. In one of his impassioned outbursts, Job says “Remember that you made me of clay” (10:9). “All are from the dirt” Ecclesiastes says (3:20), and Ps 103:14–15 echoes Job: “Remember that we are dust; man’s days are like grass.” Still another passage in Job (33:6) is significant as linking Old Testament imagery to that of Akkadian creation stories; addressing Job, Eliphaz, in a rather obscure sentence, reminds him that he too is a man and adds: “I too was dug out of clay” (*mēhōmer qōraštī gam ’ānī*). The very verb used is identical to that which appears in various Akkadian texts in referring to the creation of man. In the so-called “Babylonian Job,” *Ludlul bēl nemēqi*, mankind is called: “Creatures whose clay Aruru took in her fingers” (*ikruṣu kirissin*).⁹ Another Akkadian wisdom text, the “Babylonian Theodicy,” refers to a pair of gods thus: “Narru, king of the gods, who created mankind, and majestic Zulummar, who dug out (*karīṣ*) their clay.”¹⁰ And in the Atrahasis epic, an Old Babylonian composition best known for its close parallel to the biblical flood account, there is also a story of the creation of man, in which Ea treads clay like a potter, and the creator-goddess recites the proper incantations, then nips off (*karāṣu* is used) fourteen pieces of clay, from which seven human couples are made.¹¹

As stated, in biblical usage the idea that man is created out of clay is seldom far removed from the idea that man returns to dust: “Dust thou art” is completed by “and unto dust shalt thou return.” The associations

9. Tablet IV, line 40, W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960; reprinted Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1960): 58–59.

10. Line 277, Lambert, *BWL* 88–89.

11. Tablet I, line 256; W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Atra-ḥasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969; reprinted Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999): 60–61.

which formed the picture of “dusty death” are obvious. The dead are laid in the dirt, and after a time the body becomes one with the soil. Thus it is that Isaiah, addressing in his imagination the dead, called out: “Awake and sing, you that dwell in the dirt” (26:19). Elsewhere the dead are “all who go down to the dirt” (Ps 22:30), or “those who sleep in the dirt” (Dan 12:2). To die is to “lie down in the dirt” (Job 20:11; 21:26). A psalmist compresses the picture into one word. “What profit is there in my death? . . . Can dirt praise you?” (30:10). Especially common is the idea that death is a return to the dirt, a conception that encompasses the whole fleeting life of man. This is found not only in the climax of the Yahwist’s creation story, but elsewhere: in the majestic 90th Psalm: “You turn men back to dust (*dakkā*), and say ‘Return, O children of men.’” The death of a prince is described thus: “His breath departs, he returns to the ground” (Ps 146:4). Job’s “Remember that you made me of clay” is answered by: “and you turn me back to dust” (10:9). Ecclesiastes completes the number of those who use the image: “All came from the dirt, and all return to the dirt” (3:20); “the dirt returns to the ground, as it was” (12:7).

Dust is used as synonymous for the realm of the dead also in a Ugaritic text (17[2 Aqht].I.29), but it is Akkadian literature which provides the closest parallels for the image under discussion. The following phrases are cited under *eperu* in the *CAD*. A medical text says of a child with certain symptoms that it “belongs to the soil.” A description of the underworld in the famous myth of Ishtar’s descent to the Netherworld gives this picture: “Dust is lying on door and lock”; the world of the dead is where “their sustenance is dust, and clay their food.” And as a kenning for “to die” the expression “return to dust” (*tāru ana titti*) is well-known and ancient in Mesopotamia, in both wisdom texts and epic literature.

This completes the overview of metaphoric uses of “dirt,” but before we turn to an analysis of the kind of language and thought employed, one more aspect deserves notice—that this verbal symbolism was accompanied by a symbolism of gestures, of physical actions, which express in a different medium the same association of dirt with everything lowly and vile, and with death. Sitting on the dirt is a common gesture in times of distress and humiliation, especially as a gesture of mourning. There is reference also to self-abasement in the form of putting the head, or the mouth, in the dirt. In time of mourning, one put on sackcloth and dust, or put dust on one’s head, or wallowed in the dust. These gestures in turn are used in literary contexts, thus Isaiah (47:1) tells Babylon: “Get down and sit in the dirt, fair virgin Babylon!” and numerous passages incorporate references to actual physical contact with

dirt. Akkadian also makes reference to sitting on the dirt, but it is a portion of the Ugaritic epic of Baal which provides the closest parallel to the gestures we are discussing. On hearing of the death of the god Baal, the father-god El “gets down from his throne, and sits on the footstool. Then from the footstool he sits on the ground. He pours dust of mourning on his head, dirt of wallowing on his crown.” (5 [67].6.12–16). The phrase “dirt of wallowing” employs the same verb that is found in biblical contexts (Heb. *hitpallēs*).

This survey is not complete, but does give a fairly detailed overview of how the Old Testament uses words referring to dirt and dust in non-literal ways, and we may turn to the question with which we began: if this is typical, what are the essential characteristics of Hebrew poetic imagery?

I would conclude, first of all, that Old Testament imagery is not especially “concrete,” or at least that it is misleading to single this out as an especially prominent characteristic. To put it positively, Old Testament poetic imagery is remarkable for its abstractness. So that this may not be a quibble about terms, let me concede at once that in a sense this imagery is concrete. The writers say “Dust thou art,” not “Thou art mortal, thou art transitory,” or the like. But on the other side, note that the only qualities of dirt singled out for non-literal employment are the properties common to all dirt everywhere: lowness, tendency to blow away, commonness. Never is the word “dirt” qualified by an adjective to tell us that only one particular kind of dirt is referred to. There is absolutely no reflection of what we might call “landscape.” The sands beside the Red Sea shore are not like the Mediterranean sands, the Mediterranean sands being white or brown, whereas the Red Sea sand at Solomon’s port of Elath is a beautiful blend of pinks and black and gray. The hill country of Palestine shows, in thin layers over the rock which crops out everywhere, a distinctive red soil, *terra rossa*, quite unlike, for example, the brown loose soil of the Negeb. None of this whatsoever gets into the imagery. In discussing imagery in modern poetry, Wellek and Warren refer to “sensuous particularity” as one of the characteristics of poetic imagery. “Sensuous” is scarcely what comes to mind when one reflects on Old Testament imagery. If “dirt” is a fair sample, Hebrew poetic imagery is far removed from the particular and the sensual, and draws closer to the abstract and intellectual.

It is helpful at this point to quote a modern poet by way of contrast. Theodore Roethke, a 20th-century American poet, also writes of dust, in a poem called “Dolor.” The poem as a whole concerns the sadness, the deadlines, of a life of office work. This passage ends the poem: “And I have seen dust from the walls of institutions, / Finer than flour, alive,

more dangerous than silica, / Soft, almost invisible, through long afternoons of tedium. / Dropping a fine film on nails and delicate eyebrows, / Glazing the pale hair, the duplicate gray standard faces.”¹² This is truly concrete, and sensual. As compared to any of the biblical imagery involving dust, it makes a point by compelling us to see a specific kind of dust in a particular setting. It is interesting to see that the associations evoked by the modern poet are not wholly different from some of the ideas biblical poets associated with dust. Even granting that, however, the technique is far different. Many make the point that biblical imagery is foreign to the modern mind. There is some truth in that judgment, but some assert it for the wrong reason. It is often our own poets who stir us into contemplating the concrete and particular, whereas the ancient writers give us images that are far more abstract and general.

Related to this is a second important characteristic: Hebrew poetic imagery is clear and unequivocal. It is not difficult or ambiguous—qualities much admired in modern verse by some critics. It is quite true, of course, that “dirt” is used metaphorically in more than one sense. But the particular context in the overwhelming majority of cases clearly sorts out which sense (or senses) is intended. There is one way in which this is done which is particularly unmodern, but quite characteristic of biblical style. We might call it the explained metaphor. “I will make your seed like the dust of the earth”; in view of the limited number of traditional associations involved, this is already sufficient to make the sense clear, but the text adds: “that is, if anyone can count the dust of the earth, then your seed can be counted.” Similarly in the case of “sand” and “locusts,” both traditional similes for great number, biblical writers frequently add: *lārōb* “in multitude”; “their armies were like the locusts *in multitude*.” Or take this example from Micah (5:6–7) of the explanation of slightly less obvious metaphor: “And the remainder of Jacob shall become, in the midst of many peoples, like dew from Yahweh, like showers on the grass, which does not wait for man, or tarry for the sons of men. And the remnant of Jacob shall become, . . . in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion in the herds of sheep, which when it has come along and trodden down, tears its prey, with none to deliver (from it).” Of course not all the figurative language is thus patiently explained, yet it is correct to say that the intention to be clear rather than obscure is a persistent trait. It is sometimes achieved by a rigorous narrowing down of the associational possibilities of a substance. “Gold” is a striking example. This metal has a number of properties, its color, its gleam, its heaviness, and so on, which conceivably could have been used in simile and metaphor, but

12. From *Words for the Wind: The Collected Verse of Theodore Roethke* (1958).

as far as I can tell, Old Testament usage is completely consistent in singling out only one characteristic to the exclusion of all others. Gold is symbolic of the highest value among substances, and that is its sense in all contexts. The result is the clarity or consistency to which I referred.

Still another generalization one may make, assuming that “dirt” metaphors guide us in the right direction, is that Hebrew poetic imagery was traditional literary imagery, and hence largely learned by the individual poet as part of his language. Writers about Hebrew imagery have tended to stress the opposite, saying that the imagery is drawn from experience. This is misleading in two ways. The first is that if one says the imagery comes from experience, one is led to think of the experience of the individual poet. Thus Herder paints for us a picture of Amos the shepherd on the hills near Tekoa, “where he gathered his flowers of pastoral poetry.” It is difficult to maintain that romantic point of view when one can show, as is occasionally possible, that the imagery in question had been current in literature for a thousand or more years before Amos tended sheep in Judah. Occasionally it is difficult to imagine that the Old Testament writer had ever personally witnessed the phenomenon. Had Jeremiah, or Hosea, or the writer of Daniel ever seen a wild ass in its element, that is the wilderness? I doubt it; both in literature and popular speech, the wild ass was traditional from remote antiquity for being, in a word, wild, and a person learned that by hearing about it, just as a character in a P. G. Wodehouse novel learned about aspen trees. “I was trembling like an aspen. I don’t know if you’ve ever seen an aspen—I haven’t myself as far as I can remember—but I knew they were noted for trembling like the dickens.”

The Old Testament poets, then, seem to have felt little necessity to be creative in the area of inventing new images. Here again we may note the contrast to much modern verse, a contrast which can be illustrated from the same poem by Roethke that was quoted previously. These are the opening lines: “I have known the inexorable sadness of pencils, / Neat in their boxes, dolor of pad and paper-weight, / All the misery of manilla folders and mucilage, / Ritual of multigraph, paper-clip, comma, / Endless duplication of lives and objects.” This is obviously new, and derived from the poet’s own observation. The pencil and paper-clip are not, to my knowledge, traditional images for heavy despair in Western literature. Old Testament poetry is different: the poet mostly used inherited images, not fresh creations from his own experience of the world.

A further characteristic of Old Testament imagery is the tendency for an image to stand in fixed relationship to other imagery. This was alluded to above, and so can be recalled quite briefly here. “Dust” thought of as the ground, the earth, is at the opposite pole from the sky. As the

most plentiful of materials, it is at the opposite pole from the rarest, gold. "Dirt and dust" used in self-deprecating speech before a superior sets the servant apart from his lord. This tendency to form a network of fixed relationships with other images makes evident the potentiality of biblical imagery as a medium for thought. It would be exaggerating to say that these rather elementary metaphorical structures constitute a system of thought like a scientific or philosophical system, but on the other hand it is perhaps even more mistaken to think of biblical imagery as decorative or primarily a means of expressing emotion.

If some of the above conclusions are true for a substantial portion of Hebrew imagery, it may be further asserted that this would have had the effect, at a level close to the linguistic (lexical), of promoting a view of the world as ultimately morally intelligible and stable—important functions of a religious system. There are many theories of metaphor available to us, beginning with Aristotle's. One that is particularly congenial to the material treated here is that of Max Black, who views metaphor as a "filter."¹³ A member of a given society knows the "system of associated commonplaces" attached to a word such as "wolf." If we say "Man is a wolf," the effect is "to evoke the wolf-system of related commonplaces." Elements of the wolf-system that fit "man" emphasize some human characteristics and suppress others: "the wolf-metaphor . . . *organizes* our view of man."¹⁴ Black's view has the advantage of stressing the role of metaphor—we may include biblical metaphor—in *creating* rather than simply observing the similarity between subjects. And the world created by Old Testament imagery is one that is familiar, intelligible, and stable.

The above is meant as a description, not an encomium, of Old Testament imagery. It is well to remember on the one hand that other ancient literature displays similar characteristics, and on the other that the Old Testament contains the Song of Songs, whose imagery is probably animated by a different aesthetic. In evaluating Old Testament conceptual imagery, it may be illuminating to recall C. S. Lewis's reaction to I. A. Richards's disparagement of "Stock Responses":

By a Stock Response Dr. I. A. Richards means a deliberately organized attitude which is substituted for 'the direct free play of experience.' In my opinion such deliberate organization is one of the first necessities of human life, and one of the main functions of art is to assist it. All that we describe as constancy in love or friendship, as loyalty in political life, or, in general, as perseverance—all solid virtue and stable pleasure—depends on organizing chosen attitudes and maintaining them against the eternal

13. Max Black, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962), 39.

14. *Ibid.*

flux (or “direct free play”) of mere immediate experience. This Dr. Richards would not perhaps deny. But his school puts the emphasis the other way. They talk as if improvement of our responses were always required in the direction of finer discrimination and greater particularity; never as if men needed responses more normal and more traditional than they now have.¹⁵

15. *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961): 54–55.

Two Notes on the Decameron
(*III vii 42–43 and VIII vii 64, IX v 48*)

These notes treat details in the *Decameron* which are admittedly minor, but whose clarification seems to result in a clearer understanding of Boccaccio's sense and intention at several points.

I. The "santa parola dell'Evangelio" (III vii 42–43)

The "altra santa parola dell'Evangelio" cited by Boccaccio's character (and mouthpiece), the feigned pilgrim Tedaldo, is not in the four gospels at all, being instead from Acts 1:1. Tedaldo, in his long polemic against the friars of his day, complains that they say, "Do what we say and not what we do"—so they themselves may be at liberty to *do* the opposite of what they *teach*. Instead, why don't they follow that other holy word of the Gospel: "Incominciò Cristo a fare e ainsegnare"? With alteration only of the divine name, this is a rendering of the Vulgate at Acts 1:1: ". . . coepit Jesus facere et docere" (Jesus began to do and to teach).

"Facciano in prima essi, poi ammaestrin gli altri" (Let them do first, and then teach others). The whole point is the order of the verbs, *do* and *teach*, and in the New Testament, Jesus is said "to do and teach, in that order, in just one passage, Acts 1:1. Sapegno and Branca, in their editions of the *Decameron*, apparently feel the need to identify the biblical reference, but neither can do better than cite passages in the gospels which are only vaguely similar in wording to Boccaccio's citation (both refer to Matt. 4:23; Mark 1:21; Luke 4:18), which is, in contrast, a precise quotation of the beginning of Acts. I am not aware of other commentators who have come closer to the mark.

Once recognized, the author's point is considerably clarified. The sarcasm of his anticlerical attack here is expressed by a parody of a clerical technique, argumentation from the precise order of topics and words in the Scriptures. St. Paul himself used this mode of reasoning, for his purposes: "Adam enim primus formatus est deinde Eva" (1 Tim. 2:13).

Several observations help explain, if not justify, Boccaccio's citation of Acts 1:1 as "gospel," and encourage us to think that his contemporary readers would not have cavilled at such a designation. The book of

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Acts was held to be by St. Luke, the evangelist, and indeed the style and content of the first narratives in Acts suggest a continuation of Luke's gospel. Beyond this, Acts chapter one was from ancient times—certainly by Boccaccio's day—read as the principal lesson for Ascension Day, a celebration which was by then kept very widely throughout Christendom. According to Klauser, keeping of Ascension Day as part of the Paschal festival dates to as early as the fourth century.¹ It is reasonable to suppose that, in an age when much knowledge of the Scriptures came through hearing rather than reading, this practice conferred on the initial passage of Acts both familiarity and prestige.

II. *Cateratte* (VIII vii 64 and IX v 48)

The unusual word *cateratte* occurs in two stories having to do with magic practices. The shorter and simpler tale is IX v, where Bruno takes a special parchment, brought for the purpose by Calandrino, and writes on it “certe sue frasche con alquante cateratte,” as part of a love charm for his enamored friend.

In a longer novella, much more elaborated artistically, VIII vii, a poor scholar, who has suffered cruelly at the hands of a gentlewoman who is in love with another, finds an opportunity for revenge when the lady is forsaken by her lover. Gullible, and misled by her equally stupid maid, she seizes on the notion that one who is a scholar must be a master of black arts as well, and thus able to charm back her lover. As a result the scholar, almost effortlessly and with the cooperation of the victim, is able to impersonate a magician, and put the lady through a silly, humiliating, and ultimately painful burlesque of a magic rite. As one of the first steps he makes an image “. . . con sue cateratte, e scrisse una sua favola per orazione.” The woman holds this as she dips seven times, nude, in a river, and is still clutching it as she climbs the tower where her ordeal culminates.

It is probable that *cateratte* is a variant form of normal “caratteri,” with the general sense “characters, letters.”² From the body of evidence

1. Theodor Klauser, *A Short History of the Western Liturgy*, trans. by John Haliburton, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 86.

2. Branca's note cites Iacopone da Todi, *Laude*, no. 6, line 40, and Bruno Migliorini, *Che cos'è un vocabolario?* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1951), 21–23. Some major dictionaries list and explain the rare word as a form of *cateratta*, or *cataratta* “cataract.” Thus Nicolò Tommaseo and Bernardo Bellini, *Dizionario della Lingua Italiana* (Torino: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1929) s.v. *cateratta* (the editors list the possibility that the word is an error for *caraterre*); Salvatore Battaglia, *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana* (Torino: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1961) s.v. *cateratta* (as from Latin *cataracta* etc.).

which favors this view, as assembled especially by Migliorini,³ the passage in Aretino's *Ragionamento* which describes an elaborate rite of magic meant to serve as a love-charm, seems to me especially significant, since the diminutive used, *catarattole*, is based on a form almost identical to Boccaccio's *caterrate*, and because Aretino gives a fair, though off-hand, description of what the signs looked like: a hag, in his account, ". . . chinata in terra, con un carbone facea stelle, lune, quadri, tondi, lettere e mille altre cantafavole; . . . poi aggirandosi tre volte intorno alle catarattole dipinte . . ." ⁴ The use of *carattere* in Ariosto's *Negromante* is also worth special mention; this evidence has been dismissed because Ariosto is thought to be dependant on *Decameron* VIII vii, but though one phrase is very like Boccaccio's: "Con certe orazion certe carattere," other magical features in the same episode differ, reflecting traditional practices not mentioned by Boccaccio. Thus the charm is written on "tre lame" and one is buried under a threshold—both details being more common in magic than Boccaccio's preparation of an "imagine" to hold in the hand (*Il negromante*, Atto III, lines 1044–47).

Two lines of questioning remain to be pursued. The first has to do with the reason for the odd form—unless we are dealing with mere spelling mistakes. (It is sobering to ponder, in the critical edition of Mancini,⁵ the luxuriance of variants for this word in Iacopone da Todi's phrase "de caratti de l'antiquo serpente": "dei cataracti, de li caratti, de signi, de le caracti, delle caracte, de lu caractere, de li carrati, de li caractari, de le cataracte, de li carattri".) But it is improbable that we have to do with the same accidental scribal error in two separate passages. It is, then, in place to ask why Boccaccio should have used the unusual form.

Branca's note offers, in the word *burlesco*, a reasonable proposal: "Probabilmente voce burlesco nel senso di *caratteri magici*." Branca implies that Boccaccio carried out a deliberate deformation of the word. On this hypothesis, or modifying it slightly to say Boccaccio did not invent, but *chose* an existing, though uncommon, variant of *carattere*, one might go farther and observe that the use of odd and barbarous foreign words and names is from ancient times characteristic of magic. Gager, in the introduction⁶ to his convenient, up-to-date, and authoritative introduction to a much wider literature on ancient magic, the product of

3. Bruno Migliorini, *Giovanni Boccaccio, The Decameron* (London: Penguin, 1972), 21–23.

4. Pietro Aretino, *Ragionamento, Dialogo*, introduzione di Nino Borsellino; note di Paolo Procaccioli (Milan: Garzanti, 1984), 55 and n. 244.

5. Iacopone da Todi, *Iacopone da Todi, Laude*, ed. Franco Mancini, Scrittori d'Italia, no. 257 (Rome: Laterza, 1974), 490.

6. John G. Gager, ed. *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 7–10.

collaboration by specialists, comments on the fondness for the *voces mysticae* in Greek papyri, “words not immediately recognizable as Greek, Hebrew, or any other language in common use at the time.”

In the context of Boccaccio’s two tales, this feature may be thought to add a nice touch to his spoof of magical practice. Gager observes “. . . there was an element of status enhancement for professionals in maintaining a core of ‘unintelligible’ discourse, for this left the client with little choice but to assume that the specialist alone, through superior wisdom, understood the meaning and significance of this higher language.”⁷ Shakespeare’s line concisely expresses the layman’s attitude: “Thou art a scholar, speak to it, Horatio.” Boccaccio’s scholar is capable of faking this part of the pseudoscience as well.

A second inquiry seems more important: what were these “cateratte”? The problem with notes and explanations such as “*segnì magici, geroglyphici, magic signs, magical characters,*” is that *they* are too generic; they do not let the reader in on the fact that something quite specific is suggested by the term. The recent English translation of the *Decameron* of G. H. McWilliam illustrates the difficulty of conveying the sense of Boccaccio’s phrases at this point: “. . . the scholar fashioned an image with certain hieroglyphics upon it, and wrote down some nonsense concocted by himself to serve as a formula.”⁸ Also at IX v, McWilliam’s “. . . a series of meaningless hieroglyphics” does not really convey the sense.

The *characteres* (in a Latinized form) or *charakteres* (in a spelling reflecting the Greek etymology), whatever their ultimate origin—whether ultimately Egyptian or from some other source⁹—are a common feature of magical texts in the Roman period, when a kind of *koine* of magical spells had developed, a loosely unified praxis whose techniques and features were shared across linguistic and religious lines. They are a series of quasia alphabetic signs (Fig. 23), which in various forms are inscribed on lead *tabellae defixionum* (curse tablets) and other kinds of magic texts, down into medieval and even later examples. Early on, the *charakteres* were themselves deified, and addressed as beings with power to carry an incantation into effect; thus, for example: “Most holy Lord *Charakteres*, tie up, bind, etc.” *Charakteres* are a feature of Greek, Latin, and Aramaic magical texts from later antiquity. Cabbalistic texts in Hebrew or Aramaic use a variety of forms of the *charakteres*.¹⁰ *Charakteres* are found

7. Gager, *Curse Tablets*, 10.

8. G. H. McWilliam, *Giovanni Boccaccio, The Decameron* (London: Penguin, 1972), 630.

9. Gager, 57 n.f.

10. Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York: New American Library, 1978 [reprint of 1974 edition]), 186.

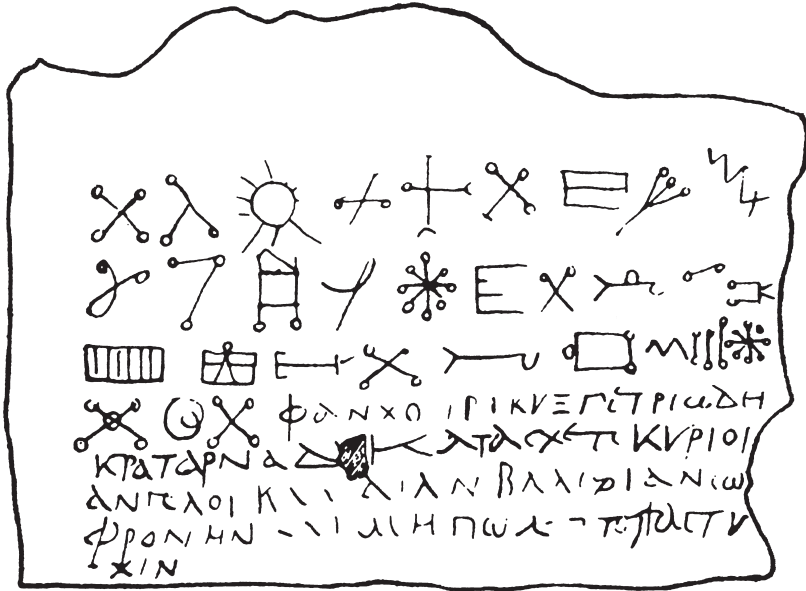


Fig. 25: Typical characters on a lead defixio from Rome, before the intelligible Greek text of the spell. From *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*, edited by John G. Gager. Copyright © 1992 by John G. Gager. Used by permission of Oxford University Press.

also, for example, in the medieval compendium of magic the *Picatrix*, which circulated widely in Arabic and Latin versions.

It is perhaps worth observing that most commonly the *characteres* are inscribed at the *beginning* of a magic charm, preceding invocation of the gods, prayers, and the rest (this is illustrated in Fig. 23); Boccaccio's scholar follows this order in preparing the *imagine* for the lady.

Preachers and theologians inveighed against the demonic *characteres*. Thus St. Augustine frequently condemns them along with other black arts. He warns the faithful not to hang about their necks “*phylacteria vel characteres diabolicos*.”¹¹ Note that the saint has a specific, technical sense in mind with *characteres*. In his *De doctrina christiana*, he specifies that they are: “. . . certain marks which they call characters” (“. . . *quibusdam notis quas characteres vocant*”).¹² To illustrate the continuation

11. J. P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina*. Vols. 34, 38–39 (Paris), Sermon CLXVIII, Column 2071; cf. the same sentiment in other sermons, CCLXV, Column 2239; CCLXXIX, column 2272.

12. Migne, *Patrologiae Latina*, Liber secundus, caput xx, vol. 34, column 50.

of the usage, note that in a popular sermon, in Latin, from the eighth century (falsely attributed to Augustine), we find condemnation of whoever “ties around the neck of humans or dumb animals any characters, whether on papyrus, on parchment, or on metal tablets.”¹³

To sum up, with *caterrate* Boccaccio adds a bit to the comic spookiness of the impostures in these two stories by reference to a specific feature of traditional magic which, though details of its use were esoteric, reserved for actual practitioners, was also part of common knowledge among his contemporaries. Branca observes, in a note on VIII vii, that it is typical for love-charms to be written on an object of metal, and “. . . così topici anche gli altri particolari del sortilegio, quali il volgersi verso nord, la luna, la nudità, le formule, le damigelle ecc.”¹⁴ The word *caterrate* is a pointed reference to yet another part of this array of traditional magic elements. It should not be overlooked that along with the *caterrate*, the scholar “scrisse una sua favola per orazione.” Some kind of *orazione*, prayer to a god or gods, was part of most magic charms. An unusually lovely one, explicitly designated in the text “The prayer which goes with the ritual,” is the hymn to Helios in dactylic hexameter which concludes no. 27 (Greek) in Gager’s anthology, a lengthy “Marvelous Binding Spell.”

13. Gager, *Curse Tablets*, 263–64 no. 167.

14. Vittore Branca, *Giovanni Boccaccio, Decameron: Edizione critica secondo l'autografo Hamiltoniano* (Firenze: Accademia della Crusca, 1976), 1114 n. 64.

PART II

*Traditions in
Treaty and Covenant*

10

*Treaty-Curses
and the
Old Testament Prophets*

Dedicated to my wife – DRH

Originally published as *Biblica et Orientalia* 16; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964.

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Abbreviations

Editor's note: The original publication of *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* included an abbreviation list here. This abbreviation list appears in the front matter to this volume and has been expanded to include other abbreviations that appear in the volume.

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I. The Problem and the Sources

Ancient Near Eastern treaties have already proved to be of great significance for Old Testament studies. Although the number of extant treaties is not large, study of their form has led to a new interpretation of a fundamental theme of the Bible, the covenant between God and Israel.

In 1931 Viktor Korošec published an analysis of the Hittite treaties. He recognized that these were of two basic types: the suzerainty treaty, concluded between a great king and a vassal king, and the parity treaty, concluded between kings of equal status. Korošec described the structure of the typical treaty as consisting of a series of six parts: (1) the preamble; (2) the historical prologue; (3) the stipulations; (4) provisions for preservation and reading of the copy of the treaty; (5) a summoning of the gods as witnesses; (6) a formula of curses and blessings.¹

The resemblance of the structure of this legal form to that of certain covenants described in the Old Testament was first pointed out by George Mendenhall in 1954, and independently somewhat later by Klaus Baltzer.² Mendenhall was able to demonstrate that the form of the covenant tradition which contains the Decalogue (Exodus 20) resembles that of the Hittite suzerainty treaty. The same striking formal correspondence was observed in the outline of another report concerning the conclusion of a covenant, Joshua 24, which tells of a covenant-ceremony at Shechem involving Joshua and all Israel. This resemblance, Mendenhall maintained, is significant first of all for the date of these traditions. The distinctive form of the suzerainty treaty changed in the centuries after the fall of the Hittite empire (around 1200 B.C.E.), Mendenhall argued, and thus this legal pattern must have been introduced into Israel early in her history. Secondly, the resemblance is important for understanding the nature of the relation which is established by the covenant between Yahweh and Israel, until now the subject of much fruitless debate. As Mendenhall describes the relation, it is Yahweh, the great Lord, who after proclaiming his past gracious acts grants the covenant to his people, imposing on them its obligations without binding himself to any corresponding obligations, though it is implied that he

1. *Hethitische Staatsverträge: Ein Beitrag zu ihrer juristischen Wertung* (Leipzig, 1931).

2. Mendenhall's original study appeared in *BA* XVII (1954), 50–76, and was reprinted in his *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh, 1955), 24–50. In a later treatment of the subject he refined the familiar classification of covenants (treaties) by distinguishing also a “patron” covenant and a “promissory” covenant; see *IDB* I s. v. Covenant. For Baltzer's discussion see his *Das Bondesformular* (Neukirchen Kreis Moers, 1960).

will protect them. The people, in turn, are to obey and trust their divine suzerain.

Mendenhall's thesis amounts to a reversal of the position of Julius Wellhausen, who, together with other scholars, held that the idea of a covenant between God and Israel was a creation of the prophets, beginning with Elijah and Amos.³ The introduction of objective ancient evidence to the contrary seems to make Wellhausen's position—never unchallenged—untenable. Mendenhall's views are beginning to gain acceptance among American and European scholars, who are joining him in working out the implications of the new evidence for the history and religion of Israel.⁴

As far as the Old Testament prophets are concerned, then, the current of investigation has been reversed: the line of investigation which is now suggested is an inquiry into the effects which the covenant idea and the covenant form had on the prophets' thought and forms of expression. A portion of that inquiry will be undertaken in the following study, which will explore the relation between the curses⁵ attached to treaties and the prophetic literature. As Mendenhall has already observed, there is a general resemblance between the kinds of doom which the prophets foretell and the threats contained in treaty-curses,⁶ but it remains to be seen whether the resemblance goes beyond this general similarity and includes parallels in specific ideas and expressions. In the treaties, a curse is pronounced on anyone who will prove disloyal. Often these maledictions are cast in striking, concrete terms. The prophets frequently indict the people for breaking the covenant with Yahweh, and then announce that punishment will be inflicted. Did the prophets pronounce this doom by means of ideas and terms borrowed from

3. *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*, 4th ed. (Berlin, 1895), 423–24; in the Meridian reprint of the translation by Menzies and Black (New York, 1957), 417–18.

4. Note, however, that C. F. Whitley still vigorously advocates a position very close to that of Wellhausen in his "Covenant and Commandment in Israel," *JNES* XXII (1963), 37–48. He is, however, unable to offer little by way of fresh arguments or evidence.

5. In this study "curse," "malediction," and the like are used interchangeably to denote any expression by which one person wishes evil on another. E. A. Speiser, in "An Angelic 'Curse': Exodus 14:20," *JAOS* LXXX (1960), 198, has pointed out the inadequacy of our modern vocabulary for reproducing the rich variety of ancient words for "curse," each of which had a particular shade of meaning. Any nice discrimination of those English terms which are available is apt to be purely private and artificial, and is not attempted here. A precise terminology for curses is in any case not of importance for this study.

6. *IDB* I 720.

treaty-curses? This essay is thus primarily intended as a contribution to the history of Israel's literature, though the results could be of significance also for the history of Israel's religion. It may be added that this study, though suggested by Mendenhall's work, is not dependent on the correctness of his views, since it rests on a separate comparison of portions of the treaties with the Old Testament.

F. C. Fensham has recently published a partial investigation of this question, along lines similar to those followed independently here: Fensham compares passages in Amos and Isaiah with curses in the Sefire treaties, Esarhaddon's vassal-treaties, and Babylonian boundary-stones, and concludes: ". . . beyond doubt . . . a close link exists between curses in vassal-treaties and prophetic maledictions."⁷ Since his treatment is intentionally restricted in scope, and by no means exhausts the relevant evidence, it seems that a more extensive treatment of the subject is still in place. Mendenhall's own investigations have concentrated on the earlier periods in Israel's history, and although he has important things to say about the prophets' attitude toward the covenant, he is more concerned with explaining religious and political developments than with tracing literary relationships. Baltzer's work is also primarily concerned with the earlier treaties and with the treaty structure rather than with individual parallels in forms of expression. The first-millennium treaties, which contain the most elaborate curses, are mentioned once or twice in his work, but are otherwise almost completely disregarded. Quite a number of lengthy studies of the Israelite concept of the curse and its religious and social significance have been made, but these have not taken up the question of a literary relation between foreign curses and the Bible.⁸ Scholars have suggested a connection between the curse and

7. "Common Trends in Curses of the Near Eastern Treaties and *Kudurru*-Inscriptions Compared with Maledictions of Amos and Isaiah," *ZAW* LXXV (1963), 155-75; the quotation is from p. 172. The present writer's study was submitted as a doctoral dissertation before the appearance of Fensham's article, and is not dependent on it. Footnotes below indicate where we have found similar parallels or reached similar conclusions. An earlier study by Fensham is also relevant: "Maledictions and Benedictions in Ancient Near Eastern Vassal-Treaties and the Old Testament," *ZAW* LXXIV (1962), 1-9. Stanley Gevirtz has gathered a very useful collection of materials in his "West-Semitic Curses and the Problem of the Origins of Hebrew Law," *VT* XI (1961), 137-58, based on his unpublished doctoral dissertation, which the present writer has not seen.

8. The most useful of these is that of Johannes Hempel, "Die israelitischen Anschauungen von Segen und Fluch im Lichte altorientalischer Parallelen," in *Apoxyasmata*, *ZAW* Beiheft 81 (1961), 30-113 (a revision of a study which first appeared in 1925). See also Johannes Pedersen, *Der Eid bei den Semiten*, *Studien zur*

the doom-oracle as literary forms,⁹ and H. Graf Reventlow has shown that Ezekiel and the author of Lev 26 draw on a common stock of traditional curses,¹⁰ but extra-biblical materials have not been drawn into this discussion.

Since it may seem somewhat far-fetched, at least on the surface, to suggest that the prophets were influenced by the language of international treaties, some preliminary considerations are offered here, not as proving anything in advance about the question under consideration, but simply to indicate the general plausibility of the hypothesis advanced above. First of all, it has already been demonstrated that one curious element of Hittite treaties, the invocation of heaven and earth, mountains and hills as witnesses to the pact, is preserved as a literary form by the prophets. This is even more remarkable in the light of the omission of this feature—probably as theologically unsuitable—from reports of the early covenants of Israel with Yahweh.¹¹ This suggests that it is not impossible that other details of the treaty form have also been borrowed. Recent studies have also made clear the importance of the “covenant lawsuit” or “*Rîb-pattern*” in the prophetic writings; this also represents an adaptation by the prophets of elements of legal terminology connected with treaties.¹² Furthermore, some parallels between treaty-curses and passages in the Old Testament have already been pointed out; one of these is so close that the Assyriologist Borger was led to conclude that the resemblance could not be accidental and to

Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Orients, Heft 3 (Strassburg, 1941), and Martin Noth, “Die mit des Gesetzes Werken umgehen, die sind unter dem Fluch,” in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (Munich, 1957), 155–71 (first published 1938). J. Scharbert, “‘Fluchen’ und ‘Segnen’ im Alten Testament,” *Bib* XXXIX (1958), 1–26, treats the etymology and nuances of meaning of the Hebrew words for ‘curse’ and ‘bless.’

9. So e.g. Aage Bentzen, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, I (Copenhagen, 1952), 198–99.

10. See his *Wächter über Israel: Ezechiel und seine Tradition*, ZAW Beiheft 82 (1962), 4–43.

11. Mendenhall, *BA* XVII (1.954), 60, 66. In this connection, Prof. W. G. Lambert has pointed out to me that heaven and earth, stars, mountains, sea, and other natural phenomena are invoked in a Sumerian and Akkadian bilingual incantation published by E. Ebeling, *ArOr* XXI (1963), p. 380, II. 1–27. The pattern of each saying is the same: *zi dX . . . é-pà = niš dX . . . lû lamâta*, “May you be exorcised by X” (heaven and earth, etc.). See also W. L. Moran, “Some Remarks on the Song of Moses,” *Bib* XLIII (1962), 317–19.

12. See Herbert B. Huffmon, “The Covenant Lawsuit in the Prophets,” *JBL* LXXVIII (1959), 285–95 and Julien Harvey, “Le ‘*Rîb-Pattern*,’ réquisitoire prophétique sur la rupture de l’alliance,” *Bib* XLIII (1962), 172–96.

inquire whether the Israelite writer had perhaps learned this curse from an Assyrian treaty.¹³

The nature of Israel's literature also suggests that it is reasonable to undertake a search for prototypes of prophetic imagery. One fundamental characteristic of ancient Israelite literature, as of ancient Near Eastern literature in general, is that the writers preferred traditional, inherited forms and expressions to those which were private and individual. This principle was first clearly enunciated by Hermann Gunkel in a pair of short essays which laid the foundation for modern study of Israel's literature.¹⁴ Although this concept has been accepted very widely, it is perhaps in place to stress it here, at least if W. F. Albright's assessment of the situation is correct:

The ancient Hebrew poets escaped the prelogical jungles into which many of the greatest modern poets have strayed on occasion precisely because of their close attachment to transmitted forms of verse and poetic clichés. Even today few biblical scholars have an adequate appreciation of the importance of the strictly formal element in ancient literary composition. Hermann Gunkel, Eduard Norden, and Martin Dibelius, followed closely by many others, have indeed created a different approach to the interpretation of ancient literature, but there are still a great many scholars—probably a majority, in fact—who continue to emphasize individual style and to treat each line of a Hebrew poem as though it were the reflection of some psychological idiosyncrasy of the poet, instead of being an example of a given genre or category of composition.¹⁵

Whatever the outcome of the present study may be, it is at least reasonable to begin with the assumption that the ideas, imagery, and vocabulary of prophetic doom-oracles are not entirely the product of the free invention of the individual writers.

The second important generalization about Israel's literature is that, though thoroughly distinctive, it was nevertheless influenced by that of her neighbors. Although the Pan-Babylonian School was guilty of ridiculous excesses in claiming that everything worthwhile in Hebrew literature was derived from Mesopotamia, it is still generally recognized that certain elements in biblical literature are related to Mesopotamian prototypes. Innumerable instances of Canaanite influence on the Old

13. Riecke Borger, "Zu den Asarhaddon-Verträgen aus Nimrud," *ZA* LIV (1961), 191–92.

14. "Die Grundprobleme der israelitischen Literaturgeschichte," in *Reden and Aufsätze* (Göttingen, 1913), 29–38 (first published 1906); "Die israelitische Literatur," in *Die Kultur der Gegenwart*, ed. Paul Hinneberg, Teil I, Abteilung VII (Berlin and Leipzig, 1906), 51–102.

15. "A Catalogue of Early Hebrew Lyric Poems (Psalm LXVIII)," *HUCA* XXIII (1950–51), 2.

Testament have already been pointed out, and new examples are constantly being discovered. Since this is so, it is not a priori far-fetched to propose, as is done here, that passages in the Hebrew prophets may show dependence on originally foreign treaty-curses.

Before proceeding to a description of the available treaties, it is perhaps in place to indicate the purpose of treaty-curses. The ancient treaty was basically an elaborate promise, and the function of the curses attached to the treaty was to make sure that the promise would be kept by invoking the punishment of the gods on the defaulter. The sealing of a promise by a curse was a characteristic of much of ancient legal practice,¹⁶ but this custom tended to disappear, or decline in importance, where the society developed legal procedures by which those guilty of breach of promise could be punished. In the sphere of international relations, however, adequate legal sanctions were not available, and thus the list of curses was retained as a feature of the treaty form as long as it persisted.¹⁷ The structure of the treaty itself changed over the course of centuries, but the curse-list was always included, and in fact grew more elaborate in later times. The curses were apparently regarded as more important than the blessings which were promised for obedience, for the formula of blessings is ordinarily shorter than the curse-formula and often quite perfunctory.¹⁸

The treaties available as sources for this study fall into two groups; the basis for the division is primarily chronological but also partly formal. The first group is a body of texts from the time of the later Hittite empire, the fifteenth to thirteenth centuries B.C.E. Most of these have been recovered from the archives of ancient Hattusas and Ugarit.¹⁹ In

16. See Samuel Mercer, *The Oath in Babylonian and Assyrian Literature* (Paris, 1912); M. San Nicolò, s. v. Eid in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*, ed. E. Ebeling and B. Meissner, II (Berlin and Leipzig, 1938). See Erich Ziebarth, "Der Fluch im griechischen Recht," *Hermes* XXX (1895), 57-70 on the role of the curse in early Greek law and its gradual decline.

17. Mendenhall, *BA* XVII 52-53. Curses also occur in Greek treaties, now conveniently collected in Hermann Bengtson, *Die Staatsverträge des Altertums, Vol. II: Die Verträge der griechisch-römischen Welt von 700 bis 338 v. Chr.* (Munich and Berlin, 1962).

18. For an elaborate exposition of the significance of this proportion, see Martin Noth, *Gesammelte Studien*, 155-71. Note, however, that a few Assyrian inscriptions contain only a blessing, promised to those who will care for the memorial, and no curse.

19. The bulk of these treaties are transliterated and translated in Ernst F. Weidner, "Politische Dokumente aus Kleinasien: Die Staatsverträge in akkadischer Sprache aus dem Archiv von Boghazköi," *BoSt* 8, 9 (1923); Johannes Friedrich, "Staatsverträge des Hatti-Reiches in hethitischer Sprache," 1. Teil, *MVAG* XXXI (1926); 2. Teil, *MVAG* XXXIV (1930); and Jean Nougayrol, *Le palais*

all, more than two dozen separate treaties from this period have been published; some are in good condition, often in more than one copy, while others survive only in small fragments. Curses occur in nearly all those which are fully preserved,²⁰ and it is reasonable to assume that a list of curses originally formed part of most of the treaties.

Fifteen of these treaties contain a malediction, but even so their curses are not particularly useful for this investigation. In most cases the curse is stereotyped and cast in very general terms. Ten of the examples present something that differs only in detail from the following: “The words of the treaty and oath that are inscribed on this tablet—should Duppi-Tessub not honor these words of the treaty and oath, may these gods of the oath destroy Duppi-Tessub together with his person, his wife, his son, his grandson, his house, his land and together with everything that he owns.”²¹

Five of the early treaties offer other curses, prescribing punishments in greater detail, but even in these the list of curses is relatively short.²²

The other group of treaties is later, coming from the ninth to seventh centuries B.C.E. Though fewer in number they contain much more elaborate and colorful curses, and are of greater importance for this study. The oldest of these is that between Shamshi-Adad V of Assyria (823–810) and Marduk-zakir-shum I of Babylon.²³ It is written in Baby-

royal d’Ugarit IV: Textes Accadiens des Archives Sud (Archives internationales) (Paris, 1956). Further bibliography on the Hittite treaties may be found in Albrecht Goetze, *Kleinasiens*, 2nd ed. (Munich, 1957), 95. Portions of a treaty, including the curses, are translated by Heinrich Otten, “Die inschriftlichen Funde,” in *Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Boğazköy im Jahre 1954*, *MDOG LXXXVIII* (1955) 33–36. Two treaties are among the Alalakh tablets (no. 2 and 3); see D. J. Wiseman, *The Alalakh Tablets* (London, 1953). The present writer did not have access to a translation of the treaty between Arnuwandas of the Hittites and representatives of the land Ishmirika, published by R. Ranzoszek, “Traktat Króla hetyckiego Arnuwandas z Krajem Ismirika,” *Comptes rendues des séances de la Société des Sciences et des lettres de Varsovie* 32 (1939), Class I, 25–30.

20. An exception is *BoSt* 8, no. 9, the treaty of Hattusilis III with Ben-teshina of Amurru, which contains no curses though there is empty space at the end of the tablet.

21. From the treaty of Mursilis with Duppi-Tessub of Amurru, translated by Goetze, *ANET* 205

22. The five are *BoSt* 8 nos. 1 and 2; Alalakh tablets nos. 2 and 3; and the Kashka treaty published in part by Otten, *MDOG LXXXVIII* (1955), 33–36; cf. the revised rendering of the curses in A. Goetze’s review of Otten’s article, *JCS* XI (1957), 110–12.

23. Published by F. E. Peiser, *MVAG* III (1898), 238–43; republished by E. F. Weidner, *AfO* VIII (1932–33), 27–29.

lonian script on stone, and although the tablet is badly damaged, eighteen lines of curses can be read. The treaty dates from early in the reign of Shamshi-Adad V, when he was occupied with quelling a revolt in Assyria and was compelled to make an agreement with the Babylonian king which favored the latter.

In his accession year (754) Ashurnirari V of Assyria campaigned against Arpad, and forced its king, Mati'ilu, to acknowledge his suzerainty in a treaty.²⁴ The treaty contains an elaborate list of curses, in this case the best-preserved portion of the tablet.

Three important treaties in the Aramaic language come from approximately the same period as the Ashurnirari treaty, since the king of Arpad is the same Mati'ilu.²⁵ There is still some uncertainty as to the provenience of the three steles which contain the treaties, though scholars now follow the suggestion of Dupont-Sommer and refer to them as the Sefire treaties. The first two treaties were concluded between Mati'el of Arpad and Bir-Ga'yah king of KTK. The identification of the latter king and of his city or land remains quite uncertain, nor is his position with respect to Mati'el quite clear. These treaties have often been referred to as suzerainty treaties, but there are grounds for challenging this designation. It is possible that the treaties are slightly earlier than the Ashurnirari treaty, and arise out of a desire to resist Assyrian expansion. Or they may reflect a conspiracy to rebel against Assyria after Ashurnirari's conquest in 754. Finally, as Noth suggests, one of the treaties may come from before 754, the other from after that date.²⁶ The first two treaties contained lists of curses; that of Sefire I is long and well-preserved, while that in Sefire II is very fragmentary. The preserved portions of the third Sefire treaty contain no curses.²⁷

24. First published by Peiser, *op. cit.*, 228–38; most recently edited by Weidner, *op. cit.*, 17–27.

25. It is possible that the name was borne by several kings of the same line, so the identification is not absolutely certain. It is, however, generally accepted, particularly since palaeographic evidence places the inscriptions in the middle of the 8th century B.C.E.; cf. M. Noth, "Der historische Hintergrund der Inschriften von Sefire," *ZDPV* LXXVII (1961), 126–27. There seems to be an advantage, however, in retaining two different transliterations of the same name; thus in this study Mati'ilu is always used in discussing passages from the Ashurnirari treaty, and Mati'el for the king in the Sefire treaties.

26. On the problem connected with the historical background of the Sefire treaties, see Noth's exhaustive study, *op. cit.*

27. The first Sefire inscription was originally published by Sebastian Ronzevalle, "Fragments d'inscriptions araméennes des environs d'Alep." *MUSJ* XV (1930–31), 237–60; it was republished, with the second, by André Dupont-Sommer, with Abbé Jean Starcky, *Les Inscriptions Araméennes de Sfiré (Stèles I et II)*

The treaty of Esarhaddon of Assyria with Baal of Tyre was concluded on the occasion of the Assyrian's successful campaign against Abdimilkutti of Sidon in 677 B.C.E. Baal had lent his support to the Assyrian king, and was rewarded by treaty with new tracts of land. The language of the pact is Akkadian, written on a clay tablet now very badly damaged. Fifteen lines of the list of curses are fairly well preserved.²⁸

The vassal-treaties of Esarhaddon, the longest of the extant Assyrian treaties, are dated by a colophon to the equivalent of May, 672 B.C.E. Esarhaddon wished to regulate the succession to the throne, and chose to do this by gathering officials from every part of the empire to pledge, by treaty, their loyalty to Ashurbanipal as crown prince. The treaty was produced in many copies; each copy names a different governor or chieftain, but is otherwise very nearly identical to the others. At least eight copies have been recovered, and it has thus been possible to piece together a text of the treaty which is nearly complete. The section of curses is over 250 lines long, and of extraordinary interest. A further unusual feature is the language of the treaty. Although official documents of this period were ordinarily written in the Babylonian dialect, the language here is Assyrian.²⁹

Another of these promissory "treaties," or loyalty oaths, also sworn to Ashurbanipal but at a later date, has been preserved. Its curses are not of great importance for this study, since this section of the text is very badly damaged (though portions of it could perhaps be restored from parallels).³⁰

(Paris, 1958). An important subsequent study is that of J. A. Fitzmyer, "The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire I and II," *JAOS* LXXXI (1961), 178-222. The third Sefire inscription, although mentioned already by Ronzevalle, was first published by Dupont-Sommer and Starcky, "Une inscription araméenne inédite de Sfiré," *BMB* XIII (1956), 23-41; cf. also Fitzmyer, "The Aramaic Suzerainty Treaty from Sefire in the Museum of Beirut," *CBQ* XX (1958), 444-76. For further bibliography the reader is referred to the publications of Dupont-Sommer and Fitzmyer.

28. The most recent edition, with bibliography of earlier works, is contained in R. Borger's *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs von Assyrien*, *AfO* Beiheft 9 (1956), 107-9. Weidner's publication (op. cit., 29-34) is still useful.

29. D. J. Wiseman, "The Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon," *Iraq* XX (1958), 1-99; cf. also the important review articles by R. Borger, *ZA* LIV (1961), 173-96, and I. J. Gelb, *BiOr* XIX (1962), 159-62.

30. First published by Peiser, op. cit., 242-48; the most recent edition is that of Leroy Waterman in *Royal Correspondence of the Assyrian Empire*, II (Ann Arbor, 1930-31), 266-69. A portion of a similar oath, sworn to Sin-shar-ishkun (620-612 B.C.E.), was copied as a school-text, as Gelb points out, op. cit., 161. The tablet was published by E. Weidner, "Ashurbânipal in Assur," *AfO* XIII (1940), 215 n. 69. Probably another fragmentary text, no. 50 in A. T. Clay's *Babylonian*

Since these treaties from the first millennium B.C.E. will be mentioned so frequently in the following discussion, a short title, consisting in most cases of the name of one of the contracting parties, has been adopted for each. This is possible because in no two treaties are both of the principal parties the same. An abbreviation of this short title is used in identifying citations, as follows:

<i>Abbr.</i>	<i>Short Title</i>	<i>Partners and Date</i>
<i>ShAd</i>	“Shamshi-Adad treaty”	Shamshi-Adad V of Assyria and Marduk-zakirshum I of Babylon (ca. 823 B.C.E.)
<i>AshN</i>	“Ashurnirari treaty”	Ashurnirari V of Assyria and Mati’ilu of Arpad (754 B.C.E.)
<i>Sf I, II</i>	“Sefire I, II”	Mati ^o el of Arpad and Bir-ga’yah of KTK (ca. 750 B.C.E.)
<i>Baal</i>	“Baal of Tyre treaty”	Esarhaddon of Assyria and Baal of Tyre (677 B.C.E.)
<i>Esar</i>	“Esarhaddon treaty”	Esarhaddon of Assyria and his officials (672 B.C.E.)
<i>AshB</i>	“Ashurbanipal treaty”	Ashurbanipal of Assyria and his officials (between 669–648 B.C.E.)

If any conclusion is to be drawn as to the relation of treaty-curses to prophetic oracles, other literature must be compared, for the following reasons. A later chapter will show that expressions in the curses often resemble those in doom-oracles, but the significance of this resemblance is affected by the rarity or frequency with which the same expressions occur elsewhere. Furthermore, it is important to trace, where possible, the literary prehistory of the curses which appear in treaties. Ideally, the whole of ancient Near Eastern literature ought to be surveyed in order to answer the questions discussed here, but that is obviously impossible. An attempt has been made to collect and compare most of the curses in the literature of Israel and her contemporaries. This task is made easier by the ancients’ practice of using curses in certain contexts with some

Records in the Library of J. Pierpont Morgan, IV (New Haven, 1923) may be classified as a treaty. Cf. V. Scheil, “Sin-šar-iškun fils d’Aššurbanipal,” *ZA* XI (1896), 47–49 and most recently R. Borger, “Mesopotamien in den Jahren 629–621 v. Chr.,” *WZKM* LV (1959), 73–74. The obverse is badly damaged, but most likely Clay and Borger are correct in identifying the document as a treaty (restoring the first word thus: [*a-di*]-e) of Sin-shum-lishir, a general under Ashurbanipal and his successor. The reverse, also badly damaged, contains a list of curses in which the god Sin is mentioned. By a curious error these curses were translated as part of an inscription of Arik-den-ilu in *ARA* I, p. 26, par. 71.

regularity. Thus curses frequently form part of the texts of *kudurru's*, or boundary-stones, and often stand at the end of any sort of inscription as a warning against defacement. They occur in many other contexts also, however, and it is likely that a good many have escaped the present writer's notice. As for the rest of ancient literature, such parallels to treaty-curses as the writer has noticed are included in the following chapters, but this collection is necessarily incomplete. It follows that the conclusions drawn below are subject to modification to the degree that the collection of parallel expressions in other contexts is incomplete. It is hoped that this initial gathering of materials may at least be useful to other students of the same subject, who will undoubtedly be able to add to it.

The general plan of the study is sufficiently indicated by the table of contents.³¹

II. Types of Treaty-Curses and Their History

An attempt will be made in this chapter to define and describe the different types of treaty-curses, with two aims in mind. The first is that of determining whether there are distinctive features of the form of treaty-curses (as distinguished from their content) which may have parallels in the Old Testament. Secondly, an analysis of the forms of treaty-curses makes it possible to sketch their history by gathering similar maledictions from early texts which are not treaties. The results will be useful for a later portion of this study, in which the possibility of transmission of ideas and phrases from treaty-curses to Israelite writers is considered. With the prehistory of treaty-curses in mind, it will be possible to ask whether the parallels between the treaties and the prophets might be explained as due to mutual dependence on a common source.

It should be noted that certain matters which might be included here are not treated because they have no bearing on the matter in hand.

31. No acceptable English translation of many of the Akkadian texts quoted in this study is available. Even where good English versions exist, they often render the same Akkadian word or phrase in different ways, which reduces their value for illustrating parallels in expression. In order to overcome these difficulties, Prof. W. G. Lambert of Johns Hopkins University has prepared new translations of most of the Akkadian passages used here. Those translations which are the work of other scholars will be specifically identified. Since the present writer is no Assyriologist, Prof. Lambert's generous aid in this and other matters touching on Assyriology has been indispensable, and the writer acknowledges it with gratitude. It goes without saying that the responsibility for selection of these passages and the conclusions drawn from them is solely my own. The Sefire treaties are quoted in Fitzmyer's version, unless otherwise identified. Translations of Hebrew texts are the writer's own.

Thus, for example, no attempt has been made to analyze and compare details of the grammar of curses, since the ultimate purpose of this study is comparison of materials in different languages (Hittite, Akkadian, Aramaic, and Hebrew) and different literary forms (curses and prophetic speeches). Even if Isaiah, say, did borrow an originally Mesopotamian curse as a basis for a doom-oracle, one would not ordinarily expect any of the peculiarities of Akkadian grammar to have survived the transfer. Similarly, this chapter is not intended as a thesaurus of curses from ancient Near Eastern literature; its scope is limited by the purpose of the study to treaty-curses and their parallels. Curses which have no parallels in the treaties are ordinarily not discussed.

1. The curse by the gods or by a single god

Curses in which all the gods or a selection of them are asked to bring evil on the man who breaks his oath are a characteristic of all the treaties which contain a list of maledictions, and are extremely common in other Mesopotamian texts. D. J. Wiseman outlines the history of the form as follows:

The curses of the first group, invoking deities by name, are common to any important agreement where the terms are binding on more than one generation. On interstate documents they are first found on a Sumerian text of Entemena, a ruler of Lagash in the early [sic] third millennium B.C.E. and are common in treaties of the Hittite empire, Old Babylonian and later periods It was customary to protect public monuments, including *kudurru* ('boundary stones') which recorded private property and rights, with many such imprecatory clauses.³²

These religious curses appear in a variety of forms. In the standard treaty form of the Hittite empire, a series of divine witnesses to the pact is first invoked, and the curse refers back to this list without repeating the names: "May these gods of the oath destroy Duppi-Tessub, etc."³³ More often individual gods are mentioned by name in a malediction. Sometimes this is cast in a distinctive form which merits fuller discussion.

The distinctive form alluded to above contains these parts, typically: (1) the name of the deity; (2) an epithet of the deity; (3) the curse to

32. "The Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon," *Iraq* XX (1958), 27. Such curses occur in an international document slightly earlier than that named by Wiseman, the "Vulture Stele" of Eannatum. See F. Thureau-Dangin, *Die sumerischen und akkadischen Königsinschriften*, VAB I (Leipzig, 1907), pp. 14–15, col. 17, II. 7–13 et passim.

33. "Treaty of Mursilis with Duppi-Tessub of Amurru," trans. Goetze, *ANET* 205.

be inflicted. For example, *Esar* 521–22: “May Ea, king of the Apsu, the lord of the deep, give you contaminated water to drink; may he fill you with dropsy.” This example also illustrates the theological precision with which the writer in many cases assigns to a god an epithet and curse in keeping with his nature and function. One is reminded of the structure of the classic Christian collect. Where curses by individual gods occur in a series, they are usually listed in strict order of the gods’ rank within the pantheon. Very often, as in the above example, more than one curse is added after the title and epithet; sometimes the result is a long list following the name of a single god, as in *Esar* 440–52. Occasionally the epithet is omitted; so, for example, *Baal* rev. iv 18: “May Astarte in mighty battle break your bow.” Occasionally more than one god is named, e.g. *Baal* rev. iv 10: “May Baal-sameme, Baal-malage, (and) Baal-saphon raise an evil wind, etc.” These last examples demonstrate that it is not possible rigidly to separate the sub-type discussed here from the main body of religious curses; one form shades off into the next. But in its most characteristic form, with name, epithet, and curse, it is easily recognized, and it is perhaps worth noting the places where it occurs in the treaties.

None of the second-millennium treaties contains curses of this type in its most characteristic form, though the fragment of a treaty with Kashka published by Otten does mention individual gods by name.³⁴

The maledictions of the Shamshi-Adad treaty are all of this type; Marduk, Nabu, Enlil, Ninlil, Ea, and Shamash are invoked. Unfortunately this section of the treaty is incomplete and the beginnings and ends of the lines are broken off. Preserved portions of the Ashurnirari treaty contain curses of this type invoking Sin and Adad.³⁵ The Sefire treaties contain nothing strictly comparable; individual gods are named (Hadad and Anahita?), but without any epithet. The Baal of Tyre treaty names Ishtar, Gula, Sibitti, Baiti-ilani, Anath-Bethel, Qatiba, Baal-sameme, Baal-malage, Baal-saphon, Milqartu, Yasumunu, and Astarte, but with no epithets except for Gula and Sibitti.

Esarhaddon’s vassal-treaties are richest in good examples of this class, with name, epithet, and malediction; Ashur, Ninlil, Sin, Shamash, Ninurta, Venus, Jupiter, Marduk, Sarpanitu, the Lady-of-the-Gods, Adad, Ishtar, Nergal, Ninlil of Nineveh, Ishtar of Erbil, Gula, Sibitti, Ishtar of . . . (?), Palil, Ea, Girra, Enlil, and Nabu are named (in the above order), each name being followed by an appropriate title and one or more

34. Heinrich Otten, “Die inschriftlichen Funde”; cf. the revised translation of the curses published by A. Goetze, *JCS* XI (1957), 110–12.

35. Perhaps rev. v 12–13, where the “Mistress of women” (Ishtar) is invoked, may belong to this class also, but the form is not identical.

curses.³⁶ The Ashurbanipal treaty also includes such curses by a single god; Nabu, Shamash, Sin, Ea, Adad, Ninurta, Nergal, Zababa, Sarpanitu, Nanai, and Ishtar of Erbil are invoked.

As Wiseman indicates, curses calling on the gods by name occur in a text from the middle of the third millennium B.C.E. The distinctive sub-type discussed above, the curse by a single god with appropriate epithet, cannot be traced back quite so far, but a long series of such maledictions does occur in the epilogue to the Code of Hammurabi (18th century B.C.E.), and a fragmentary list, perhaps a prototype of that in Hammurabi's Code, stands at the end of the Code of Lipit-Ishtar (19th century B.C.E.).³⁷

The following paragraphs are intended to illustrate in detail the persistence of traditional curses of this type, but before individual curses are taken up, a description of the *kudurru* is in order. These documents will be mentioned repeatedly, and offer the best parallels to treaty-curses which invoke the gods. Although similar imprecations also occur in the colophons to other public documents,³⁸ in most cases the lists of curses on boundary-stones are much more elaborate and striking. The close parallel between treaty and *kudurru* with respect to curses is only part of a general resemblance between the two legal forms. The typical early boundary-stone records a grant by the feudal overlord, the king, to a subject, the donation being secured by religious sanctions. Significantly, the feudal Cassite period was the time of most extensive use of the *kudurru* form. Later the form was adapted, as a kind of legal fiction, for other transactions, and at the same time lost much of its originally religious character.³⁹

As an illustration of the persistence of a single curse and of the degree of variation that occurs, curses by the god Sin, perhaps the most common of all, are listed here in detail.⁴⁰ Four of the treaties contain

36. Probably 545–46: “May Shamash with an iron plough overturn, etc.,” and 649–51: “May Shamash clamp a bronze trap over you, etc.” do not belong to this category, but with the ceremonial (simile) curses; see below p. XXX [orig. p. 22].

37. See Francis R. Steele, “The Code of Lipit-Ishtar,” *AJA* LII (1948), 446 (col. xx), or *ANET* 161.

38. Stanley Gevirtz has collected West-Semitic examples in “West-Semitic Curses and the Problem of the Origins of Hebrew Law,” *VT* XI (1961), 137–58.

39. See Franz X. Steinmetzer, *Die babylonischen Kudurru [Grenzsteine] als Urkundenform* (Paderborn, 1922), 95–100, 238, 241, 245, 257; and L. W. King, *Babylonian Boundary-Stones and Memorial-Tablets in the British Museum* (London, 1912), xiv.

40. For a discussion of many of these same curses from a different point of view, with additional details, see Jean Nougayrol, “Sirrimu (non *purimu) ‘âne sauvage’,” *JCS* II (1948), 203–8.

curses by Sin; thus *Esar* 419–21: “May Sin, the light of heaven and earth, clothe you with leprosy; may he refuse you entry into the presence of the gods or king (saying): ‘Roam the desert like the wild ass and the gazelle’”; *AshN* rev. iv 4–6: “May Sin, the great lord, who dwells in Harran, put leprosy like a garment on Mati’ilu, etc. May they roam the fields; may he not have mercy on them.” A fragmentary curse by Sin occurs in the Ashurbanipal treaty, and another occurs in the Sin-shum-lishir pact: “May Sin, the light of heaven [and earth] . . . with [leprosy] like a cloak [envelop him].”⁴¹

A similar malediction occurs in many *kudurrus*. A typical form is that of *BBS* 41, II 16–18 (from the time of Marduk-nadin-aḥḥe, early 11th century B.C.E.): “May Sin, the light of the bright heavens, clothe his whole body with leprosy that never departs, so that he may not be clean till the day of his death. May he roam outside his city like a wild ass.” In another *kudurru* much the same curse occurs, but Sin, Shamash, and Ishtar are invoked together.⁴² Still another *kudurru* offers a curse similar to that in the Esarhaddon treaty but adds the curse of dropsy, associated with Ea in *Esar* 522 and often with Marduk: “May Sin, the fierce lord, who is resplendent among the great gods, inflict upon him dropsy whose bonds cannot be loosed, may he clothe his body with leprosy as with a garment, so long as he lives may he be excluded from his house, may he roam the desert like a desert animal, and may he not tread the square of his city.”⁴³ Other *kudurrus* contain the malediction in a form only slightly different from that in the Esarhaddon treaty.⁴⁴ The curse by Sin in the Code of Hammurabi is also related in sense to the version in the Esarhaddon treaty (rev. xxvii 41–60): “May Sin, the lord of the heavens, the god my creator, whose chastening is well known among the gods, deprive him of the kingly crown and throne! May he lay upon him a heavy punishment, his (Sin’s) great chastening, which will not depart from his body, and may he bring the days, months, and years of his reign to an end in woe and lamentation! May he cause the enemies of the kingdom to watch him; may he decree as his fate a life that is constantly wrestling with death!” Conversely, the curse commonly as-

41. See A. T. Clay, *Babylonian Records in the Library of J. Pierpont Morgan*, Part IV (New Haven, 1923), 47–48 and pl. 46, text 50 lines 16–17. Cf. I, note 30 above.

42. See F. Thureau-Dangin, “Un acte de donation de Marduk-zâkir-šumi,” *BA* XVI (1919), 130 iv 6–10.

43. *MDP* II 109 vi 41–vii 4.

44. *BBS* 47 iv 7–9; 61 i 46–48; 78 iii 2–5; *KB* IV 164–65 v 9–12; *KB* IV 80–81 iii 18–21; *NebNip* 193 iii 6–8; and Nougayrol, *op. cit.*, 205 6’–10’.

sociated with Sin, leprosy and the accompanying evils, occurs in several texts as inflicted by all the gods.⁴⁵

The situation with respect to curses by Sin is typical of other religious curses which occur repeatedly in the treaties, *kudurrus*, and Code of Hammurabi. There is often a standard form of curse associated with a god; in many cases this recurs with only minor changes. The curse is not copied with slavish exactness, however, and some variants reproduce the basic sense in almost entirely different terms. Occasionally a different curse is grafted on, as in the case where dropsy was added to the leprosy curse; sometimes a curse quite unlike the usual one occurs under the name of a given god; sometimes the malediction usually associated with a particular god is detached from his name and assigned to someone else. In summary, the tradition with respect to a single common curse is consistent enough to be recognizable, but not rigid.

Certain other deities figure very frequently in standard curses. Adad, "supervisor of the waterways of heaven and earth," is often associated with imprecations having to do with drought, flooding, and famine.⁴⁶ Gula, "the great physician," is asked to visit the victim's body with sickness, poison, and the like, so that he sweats or passes blood instead of

45. *MDP VI* 38 14–19; *AAA XX* 115 28–34. The biblical parallel to this curse will be discussed here rather than in ch. IV below, since there are perhaps special reasons which account for the resemblance. In Dan 5 the seer recounts to Belshazzar the fate which had overtaken his "father" Nebuchadnezzar as a punishment for pride: (v. 21) ". . . he was driven away from men, and his heart was made like that of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild asses." (The last detail is not present in the previous accounts of Nebuchadnezzar's madness, which simply state that the king lived with "wild animals," 4:12, 20, 22, 29). The parallel to those curses by Sin which condemn a man to a life out with the wild asses is obvious, but is rendered less impressive by the fact that in the curses this is the result of leprosy; in Daniel, of a kind of madness. On the other hand, in another version of the story—probably earlier than the form in Daniel—the king is smitten with "a serious skin disease" *šhn' b'yš'* (Dead Sea Prayer of Nabonidus 2, 6). It is possible that the reference to wild asses in Dan 5:21 is a detail which has survived from an earlier version of the tale, which in turn was influenced by this most common of Mesopotamian curses, according to which a man stricken with leprosy must live like a wild ass. For the Prayer of Nabonidus, see J. T. Milik, "‘Prière de Nabonide’ et autres écrits d'un cycle de Daniel," *RB LXIII* (1956), 407–15; cf. D. N. Freedman, "The Prayer of Nabonidus," *BASOR* 145 (1957), 31–32.

46. *Esar* 440–52; *AshN* rev. iv 8–16; *BBS* 23 iv 1; 36 ii 41–42; 41 ii 32–33; 47 iv 3–6; 62 ii 10–13; *KB* IV 82–83 iv 9–15; *MDP VI* 41 iii 9–13; *CH* rev. xxvii 64–80; *AKA* I 108 83–88; E. Unger, *Reliefstele Adadniraris III. aus Saba'a und Semiramis* (Constantinople, 1916), 12–13, 31–33.

water.⁴⁷ Ishtar, “lady of battle and warfare,” often is said to break the infidel’s bow in battle.⁴⁸ Marduk figures in a variety of curses; he is often associated with dropsy, but in general curses by him do not yield a consistent picture.⁴⁹ Shamash, “light of the heavens and the earth,” ordinarily is asked to inflict injustice and darkness.⁵⁰

Other deities appear in curse-lists less frequently and are not so consistently associated with one type of curse.⁵¹ For certain of the curses by a god in Esarhaddon there are no parallels in other texts, to this writer’s knowledge. Girra, (the star) Jupiter, Ninlil of Nineveh, and (the star) Venus are not mentioned in curses elsewhere. This may be due in part to chance, since preserved records are far from complete; in part it may reflect a practice of composing new curses on this pattern to fit a changed religious situation. The inclusion of well-known West-Semitic deities (Baal-šaphôn, Melqart, etc.) in the Baal of Tyre list of curses offers further evidence that new curses were created as the need arose.

Summing up, it is quite obvious that there is no point in looking for formal parallels to curses by a god or by the gods in the Old Testament. Even where the extra-biblical curse has a distinctive form, the name of a god with a fitting title, this characteristic structure would have been altered completely even if curses from this tradition did enter Israelite literature. (Comparisons of content may still be made, of course; these are reserved for section IV below.) But, two conclusions may be drawn from the materials gathered above. Curses which invoke the gods are not peculiar to treaties, but have very close analogues in other texts. Thus if the parallels between curses and prophetic oracles demand explanation, we shall have to ask whether these other texts might have furnished the phrases in question; we cannot immediately conclude that only the treaties could have been the source. Secondly, as far as these religious curses are concerned, it is proper to speak of traditional curses.

47. *Esar* 461–63; *Baal* rev. iv 3–4; *BBS* 41 ii 29–31; 47 iv 15–18; 62 ii 20–25; 79 iii 10–13; *KB* IV 80–83 iv 5–8; *NebNip* 152–53 iv 20–21; 192–93 iii 1–5; *MDP* II 110 14–25; IV 164 ii 1–3; VI 41 iv 5–9; CH rev. xxviii 50–69 (Ninkarrak, a form of Gula).

48. *Esar* 453–54; *Baal* rev. iv 18; cf. *BBS* 18 vi 18–20; CH rev. xxvii 92–xxviii 23 (Inanna). Cf. also *BBS* 23 iii 16, where Ninurta is said to break the bow.

49. *Esar* 433–34; *ShAd* 16–20; *KB* IV 80–81 iii 13–14; *MDP* II 89–90 iii 30–35; II 109 vi 29–40; Unger, *Reliefstele*, 12–13, 29–30.

50. *Esar* 422–24; *ShAd* 27–28; *BBS* 6 19–20; 18 vi 9–10; 41 ii 19–20; 47 iv 10–11; 62 ii 1–3; *KB* IV 80–81 iii 15–17; *NebNip* 151 15–18; *MDP* VI 40 iii 3–6; Unger, *Reliefstele*, 12–13, 30–31.

51. John B. Curtis has collected curses associated with the god Nergal in “An Investigation of the Mount of Olives in the Judaeo-Christian Tradition,” *HUCA* XXVIII (1957), 156–63; cf. *Esar* 445–56.

Curses of this type were widely known and copied, if not exactly then with some consistency, by generation after generation for more than a millennium.

2. *The simile-curse*

The second major form of curse is the simile-curse. This type involves a comparison, cast in the form: "Just as (Akkadian *kī ša, kīma, kī*; Aramaic *ʔyk zy*) . . . , so . . ." For example, "Just as this wax is burned by fire, so shall Arpad be burned" (*Sf I A 35*).

Simile-curses are not a constant feature of the treaties, for they are lacking in the majority of the early Hittite treaties. Yet their presence in two of the Hittite treaties shows that they are not a late development in the treaty form,⁵² as does the fact that references to the conclusion of covenants in the Mari texts (18th century B.C.E.) mention simile-curses connected with treaties.⁵³ The preserved portions of the Shamshi-Adad treaty and of the Baal of Tyre treaty contain no simile-curses, but the fragmentary state of these texts permits no certain conclusion as to what might have been in the complete treaties. Simile-curses are a prominent feature of the other pacts. In the Ashurnirari treaty all of the preserved similes concern a ram and its parts; the ram is identified with *Matiʔilu*, is separated from the herd, its head is cut off, its club (horn?) torn out. In Sefire I, similes concern wax figures which are burned, blinded, and struck,⁵⁴ a bow and arrows which are broken, and a calf which is cut in two. (The list of simile-curses is incompletely preserved.) The Esarhad-don treaty contains thirty-six clear examples of the simile-curse, plus a half-dozen more which may belong to this class. (The latter group will be discussed further below.)

Simile-curses may be divided into three groups: (a) ritual or ceremonial curses; (b) curses which may have been accompanied by a ritual; (c) curses which were apparently not accompanied by a ritual.

a. *Ritual or ceremonial curses*

In this type of simile-curse, a demonstrative pronoun is used with the object compared, indicating that the object was present and was handled in some sort of ritual (at least when the curse was first composed). The simile-curses in the Ashurnirari treaty are all of this type, thus: "This head is not the head of the ram, it is the head of *Matiʔilu*," and "Just as the ram's head is [torn off] . . . , so may the head of the

52. *BoSt* 8 pp. 32-35 rev. 61-63, 65; pp. 50-55 rev. 28, 31, 46-51.

53. See J. M. Munn-Rankin, "Diplomacy in Western Asia in the Early Second Millennium B.C.E.," *Iraq* XVIII (1956), 85-92.

54. *Sf I A 35-42*; on the difficult simile concerning stripping, see below, IV no. 6.

aforsaid be torn off ” (*AshN* obv. i 21–27). The form of most of the simile-curses in Sefire I also makes plain that they were accompanied by a ritual: “Just as this wax . . . this GNB³ . . . these arrows . . . this calf, etc.” (*Sf I A* 35–42).⁵⁵ Only two of the simile-curses in the Esarhaddon treaty clearly imply a ritual. In 547, as R. Borger points out, the demonstrative must be restored: “Just as this sheep is cut up and the flesh of her young is put in her mouth, etc.”⁵⁶ The curse is a close parallel to that in *AshN* obv. i 25–26. *Esar* 612–15 begins: “Just as this chariot . . .”

The general connection of these ceremonial curses with ancient magical practice is obvious, for they employ common magical techniques of analogy and substitution.⁵⁷ The following paragraphs will point out parallels to specific ceremonial treaty-curses in other texts concerning oath-taking and in magical texts.

The slaughter of an animal, which figures in both Sefire I (a calf) and in the Ashurnirari treaty (a ram), was apparently the one ceremony most commonly connected with treaty-making. It provided a technical term ‘to cut a covenant,’ meaning ‘to conclude a covenant.’ The expression is common in Biblical Hebrew and occurs occasionally in other languages.⁵⁸

55. Perhaps *Sf I A* 39 ought also to be included: *w’yk zy y’r gbr š’wt’* “Just as this (lit. the) man of wax is blinded, etc.” In this early period there is still a contrast between absolute and emphatic states, and it is perhaps inadvisable to render a construction like *gbr š’wt’* “a man of wax,” as Fitzmyer does.

56. GAN[AM *an-ni*]-*tū* etc.; *ZA* LIV (1961), 192.

57. For a good discussion of Hittite ceremonial curses in the framework of Hittite magic, see A. Goetze, *Kleinasion*, 2nd ed. (Munich, 1957), 154–57; cf. Johannes Friedrich, “Der hethitische Soldateneid,” *ZA* XXXV (N.F. I) (1924), 170; and Johannes Hempel, *Apoxyismata*, *ZAW* Beiheft 81 (1961), 53, note 107 and the references given there.

58. J. A. Fitzmyer, “The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire I and II,” *JAOS* LXXXI (1961), 190, offers the following collection of examples and discussions: Hebrew *kārat bērit*, cf. Gen 15:10–18; Jer 34:18; Aramaic ‘*dy’ gzar* (*Sf I A* 7); the expression TAR *be-ri-ti*, which occurs in Akkadian texts from Qatna, discussed by W. F. Albright, “The Hebrew Expression for ‘Making a Covenant’ in Pre-Israelite Documents,” *BASOR* 121 (1951), 21–22; Greek *ōrkia tamnein*; cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* XII 161–215; Livy I 24. To these may be added the references to the killing of an ass and to “puppy and lettuce” in the Mari texts, see Mendenhall, “Puppy and Lettuce in Northwest-Semitic Covenant Making,” *BASOR* 133 (1954), 26–30 and Munn-Rankin, loc. cit.; the reference to a treaty-ceremony in the “Abba-AN and Alalah” text published by D. J. Wiseman, *JCS* XII (1958), 129, 39–42: “Abba-AN swore to Yarim-Lim the oath of the gods, and cut the neck of a lamb, (saying) ‘(May I be cursed) if I take back what I gave you’” (trans. Anne Draffkorn, “Was King Abba-AN a Vizier for the King of Ḫattuša?” *JCS* XIII [1959], 95); the lines at the end of the Madduwattāš document (which contains elements of a treaty), which seem to involve the killing of a pig in a ceremony of self-commination,

The handling of figurines of wax (*Sf I A* 35, 37, 39, 42) or other substances is often referred to in magical texts; see, for example, *Maqlû I* 73–121, 135–43; II 75–102, 146–47. Hittite incantations offer many parallels.⁵⁹ The spells recited with these rites often have the standard simile form, thus *Maqlû II* 146–47: “Just as these figurines melt, run, and flow away, so may sorcerer and sorceress melt, run, and flow away.”

Breaking of weapons, involved in a ritual curse in *Sf I A* 38–39, plays an identical role in the Hittite Soldiers’ Oath,⁶⁰ a text which describes the lengthy ceremony by which Hittite warriors swore loyalty to their king.

b. Simile-curses which may have been accompanied by a ritual

A second group of simile-curses lacks the demonstrative pronoun with the object compared, e.g. *BoSt* 8, p. 52, line 31: “Like a reed may they break you.” Yet these curses seem to have been accompanied by a ceremony, at least originally, since in parallels occurring in other texts a ritual is clearly implied. In other less certain cases no good parallel occurs in any extant text, but it is easy to imagine the ceremony that was performed along with the malediction.

Thus for example *Esar* 551–54 contains a simile referring to the slaughter of kids and lambs. As we have seen, this is the commonest kind of treaty-making ritual, and it is reasonable to suppose that this simile-curse, though lacking a demonstrative pronoun, was also originally a ritual curse. Similarly, *Esar* 608–11 refers to burning a wax image and dissolving one of clay; though no demonstrative pronoun is used, the parallels in other texts make it quite certain that this simile-curse was originally a ceremonial curse.

Breaking of weapons, clearly associated with a ceremony in *Sf I A* 38–39, is also mentioned in *Esar* 573–75, and though no rite is clearly implied, the latter curse may originally have been a ritual curse. The same rite is perhaps mentioned in the Shurpu series of incantations (III 27, 29): “The ‘oath’ of bow or chariot . . . The ‘oath’ of lance or arrow.” These references are very laconic, following the standard pattern for this section of Shurpu, and not unambiguous. It is not stated that these weapons are broken, but it is usually assumed that these lines do refer

A. Goetze, *Madduwattaš*, *MVAG XXXII Heft 1* (1927), rev. 92–94 and p. 142; *Šurpu* III 35; the incantation involving a small pig in the Hittite “Ritual against Domestic Quarrel,” *ANET* 351; the oath of Agamemnon, *Iliad* XIX 249–67; the Latin expressions *foedum icere*, *percutere*, or *ferire*. For similar Arabic expressions see Johannes Pedersen, *Der Eid bei den Semiten* (Strassburg, 1914), 12, note 5.

59. See the incantations translated in *ANET* passim, and A. Goetze, *The Hittite Ritual of Tunnawi*, *American Oriental Series 14* (New Haven, 1938), i 49–50, ii 16–20.

60. *ANET* 354.

to oaths sworn by bow, chariot, etc. Miss Erica Reiner, who has most recently edited the *Šurpu* series, interprets the general sense of the third tablet as follows:

māmītu has been translated throughout this tablet and wherever else it occurs in *Šurpu* as ‘oath.’ This is the first meaning of the word, and is clearly its meaning in the first thirteen lines of this tablet. In its other occurrences in *Šurpu*, as in religious texts in general, *māmītu* means something evil. This meaning can be defined more closely precisely from this tablet which lists various actions and objects known to be connected with taking an oath. We suppose, then, that those *māmītus* too whose significance escapes us refer to symbols and symbolic actions accompanying an oath. It was feared, it appears from this tablet, that the numen inherent in these, once invoked, would stay unbound and afflict the person who had sworn the oath.⁶¹

This interpretation of the third tablet of *Šurpu* yields good sense for much of this otherwise obscure section, and if correct permits us to tabulate a number of parallels between *Šurpu*, the treaties, and the Soldiers’ Oath. Thus:

Šurpu III 19: “The ‘oath’ of cup or table.”

Esar 153–54: “You will not make a treaty in the presence of the gods by serving food at table, by drinking from a cup.”

Šurpu III 26: “The ‘oath’: to break reeds in the marsh.”

BoSt 8 p. 52 1.31: “Like a reed may they break you.” Cf. *CAD* vol. H, p. 131a.

Šurpu III 27: “The ‘oath’ of bow or chariot.”

Šurpu III 61: “The ‘oath’: to overturn a chariot but touch its equipment.”

Esar 612–15: “Just as this chariot with its baseboard is spattered with blood, etc.” Cf. *Esar* 575; Soldiers’ Oath iii 35ff.

Šurpu III 41: [“The ‘oath’]: to invoke the name of the god holding a plow.”

Esar 545–46: “May Shamash with an iron plough overturn your cities and your districts.”

Šurpu III 97–98: “The ‘oath’: to put the breast into the mouth of a small child. The ‘oath’: [to cause] the drying up of the breast . . .”⁶²

Compare the curses in *Sf I A* 21–23 (dry breasts for women and beasts) and its parallels (see below, IV, no. 9); however this Sefire curse seems not to be of the ritual type.

Similarly *Šurpu* III 120–21: “The ‘oath’ of cattle (and) wild animals. The ‘oath’ of thorns and thistles” might be compared with the curses involving animals (*Sf I A* 30–33 and its parallels) and weeds (*Sf I A* 36, for

61. *Šurpu: A Collection of Sumerian and Akkadian Incantations AfO Beiheft* 11 (1958), 55.

62. Miss Reiner’s translation of *Šurpu* has been used throughout.

example). *Šurpu* III 95 mentions salt and cress (*sahlû*); salt and cress figure in a number of ceremonial curses and are linked in *Sf I A* 36, but in these cases the ritual seems to be different from that indicated in *Shurpu*.⁶³

The Hittite Soldiers' Oath offers a number of independent parallels to some of the treaty-curses. Thus Soldiers' Oath ii 17–18: "Just as salt has no seed, etc." is repeated in *BoSt* 8 p. 54 49–51. The ritual curse in which a man is threatened with loss of masculinity (Soldiers' Oath ii 42–iii 1) has its counterpart in *AshN* rev. v 9: "May his warriors be women" (see also below, ch. IV, no. 14).

Certain other treaty-curses may be placed with this group even though they invert, or abandon, the usual form of the simile-curse. In the following example the simile does not stand first, as is usual: "May I, Mattiwaza, with any other wife I might take,⁶⁴ and may we Hurrians, with our possessions, go up like smoke to the heavens."⁶⁵ Despite the change in form, the curse may be considered a simile-curse, probably connected with a ritual, for it occurs in a series of maledictions of the simile type, and has close parallels in incantation texts.⁶⁶

Likewise: "May they strangle you, your women (variant: your brothers), your sons and your daughters with a cord" (*Esar* 606–7). This contains no simile, but occurs in a series of simile-curses, and it is easy to imagine that it was originally associated with a ceremonial action like that described in *Maqlû* II 165, 176. For similar reasons *Esar* 526–27, 545–46, 573–75, 649–51, all lacking the simile characteristic of maledictions in this section of the treaty, ought perhaps also to be considered as simile-curses.⁶⁷

63. Cf. Soldiers' Oath iii 45 (*ANET* 354) and Fitzmyer op. cit., 199 note 36, and especially Stanley Gevirtz, "Jericho and Shechem: A Religio-Literary Aspect of City Destruction," *VT* XIII (1963), 52–62, and the literature cited there. Gevirtz argues (against Honeyman) that salting of a ruined city was part of the procedure of consecration (*hērem*), but is uncertain as to whether salt may have served as a symbol of infertility (p. 62 note 2). On the latter question note that salt seems to have this significance in the examples quoted in the text, next paragraph.

64. This phrase envisions the possibility that Mattiwaza might try to evade the effect of a curse by taking a second wife; evidently the phrase, which is a cliché in Hittite treaties, originated in a curse of barrenness and was rather mechanically extended into other kinds of curses, as here.

65. *BoSt* 8 p. 54 (rev.) 48–49.

66. See C. J. Mullo Weir, *A Lexicon of Accadian Prayers* (Oxford, 1934) s.v. *Kutru*.

67. On the other hand, there is an occasional simile in what is properly a curse by a god, e.g. *Esar* 419–21: "May Sin . . . clothe you with leprosy . . . (saying): 'Roam the desert like the wild ass or gazelle.'" But there is no real difficulty

Since none of the curses discussed in this section contains an unambiguous reference to a ritual performed at the time when the treaty was concluded, we cannot be sure that the rites implied were carried out, nor can we rule out the possibility that this was done. It seems likely that there was a development from the real ritual curse to a curse which preserved the form and abandoned the ceremony,⁶⁸ but even this is uncertain, since, for example, “breaking the bow” occurs as a curse by a god long before it is attested as a ritual curse.

c. Curses which were apparently not accompanied by a ritual

For the rest of the simile-curses in the Esarhaddon treaty there are no parallels in ritual texts, and it is difficult to imagine ceremonies which might have accompanied them, unless we are to think of the ancients collecting a snake, mongoose (555), stag (576), chameleon (593), fly (601), and tortoise (620) and putting these creatures through the appropriate paces. It seems more likely that most of these curses never had any connection with a ritual. Since no parallels exist for most of them in any other texts, it is idle to speculate about their source.

As general parallels to simile-curses one may also cite the Egyptian Execration Texts, bowls or figurines inscribed with the names of enemies and smashed in ritual curses, which reflect a similar concept and intent.⁶⁹ Roman and Greek treaties also occasionally were sealed by simile-curses.⁷⁰

in determining that this is not what is called here a simile-curse, for it is cast in the distinctive form of the curse by a single god, and occurs in a series of formally similar curses. Furthermore, it is difficult to imagine the accompanying ceremony!

68. Mendenhall suggests a similar development of the biblical formula for self-cursing: “May the Lord do thus (to me, etc.) and even more”; he explains: “Originally . . . this formula must also have been accompanied by some specific symbolic action such as killing an animal, but in early times the words have already become abstracted from the action and generalized, perhaps in practice accompanied by some gesture,” *BASOR* 133, p. 30.

69. See Kurt Sethe, “Die Aechtung feindlicher Fürsten, Völker, und Dinge auf altägyptischen Tongefässcherben des Mittleren Reiches,” *APAW* (Berlin, 1926), and G. Posener, *Princes et pays d’Asie et de Nubie. Textes hiératiques sur des figurines d’envoûtement du Moyen Empire* (Brussels, 1940).

70. See Mendenhall, *op. cit.*, and Fitzmyer, *Sf I and II*, 190 note 7; see also Polybius III 25 8–9 (at the conclusion of a treaty between Rome and Carthage): “‘May I alone fall as does this stone now!’ And with this he casts the stone from his hand.” Cf. also J. A. O. Larsen, *Representative Government in Greek and Roman History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1955), 209, note 7, on the casting of murderous (red-hot pieces of metal or weights) into the sea, referred to in Aristotle, *Ath. pol.* 23.5; Plutarch, *Arist.* 25.1; Herodotus I 165. The significance of this

The simile type of curse is of a respectable antiquity, though it is not possible to trace the form back through the literature quite as far as is possible with the curse by the gods. As indicated above, examples of the simile type occur in two 14th-century treaties, and parallels occur in contemporary Hittite literature. The resemblances to portions of the *Shurpu* and *Maqlû* series of incantations indicate that some simile-curses are quite old, for although these series received their present form a little before 1000 B.C.E., the compilation of such elaborate manuals of magic clearly stands at the end of a long period of development. The references in the Mari tablets make it clear that simile-curses, at least those involving animals, were used in treaty-making already in the 18th century B.C.E.⁷¹

At first glance it might seem that the distinctive structure of the simile-curse makes possible a search for formal parallels in the Old Testament. The form is still recognizable when translated from one language to another, and there would have been no need for the Israelites to change the form for religious reasons, since the gods are not ordinarily invoked in this kind of imprecation. These considerations are offset by the fact that the simile is an extremely common feature of style. Collection of a large number of similes from the prophets would hardly prove anything about the prophets' use of the language of treaty-curses. The simile may be of such a nature that one could plausibly assume that it originated in a ritual curse,⁷² but it is impossible to prove any relation on formal grounds alone.

Before leaving this subject it is necessary to call attention to one case in which a prophet states explicitly that he is applying a treaty-curse of the simile type. In the days of Zedekiah, the king and the people of Jerusalem made a covenant to release all their Hebrew slaves. The covenant was sworn by the ceremony of cutting up a calf, which, as shown above, would have been accompanied by a malediction identifying king and people with the calf and its fate. Later they forced the freed slaves back

action has been the subject of dispute; a summary of opinions, with bibliography, is given by Larsen.

71. Cf. Munn-Rankin, loc. cit.

72. The following examples from the Old Testament illustrate the use of similes which could have originated in ritual curses; they are not offered as proof that this was the case. An oracle of Ahijah the Shilonite contains a simile which gives the impression of having originated in a symbolic action (1 Kings 14:10): "I will burn up the line of Jeroboam, just as one burns dung until it is gone." Burning is a ritual action commonly connected with curses, though there is no example of burning this particular substance. Compare also 2 Kings 21:13: "And I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down." Examples like the above are perhaps suggestive, but are inconclusive.

into servitude. Jeremiah then announced punishment from God for this callous act in these terms (34:18): “And I will make the men who are transgressing my covenant, who did not carry out the provisions of the covenant which they concluded before me, (like) the calf which they cut in two and passed between its parts.” (It will be shown later that other elements of this doom-oracle are also related to treaty-curses.) This is, of course, a special case: the covenant was very recent, and Jeremiah no doubt witnessed its conclusion. Jeremiah’s reaction to this specific case of breach of treaty was not necessarily characteristic of his attitude toward any breach of the religious covenant between Israel and Yahweh. On the other hand, this instance does suggest that in cases of breach of the fundamental religious covenant, the prophets may have chosen appropriate authentic covenant-curses as the basis for their oracles.

In summary, while it would be pointless to make an extended search in the Old Testament for formal parallels to ritual curses, the foregoing does lead to two conclusions. First, that magical texts could conceivably have furnished expressions used in prophetic oracles, a possibility which will have to be examined in the fourth chapter. And once again it proves possible to speak of a tradition of ceremonial curses. To judge from available sources, simile-curses also were handed down from generation to generation. Such curses were not in most cases composed afresh for each new treaty-making ceremony, but were copied and adapted from older models.

3. *The simple malediction*

The third type, which may be called the simple malediction, will be discussed only very briefly. The oath-breaker is threatened with an evil fate, but no god is invoked and there is no simile. The context often may be taken as implying that such a curse will be inflicted by a god, but this is not expressly stated in the clause itself. Typical examples are *Esar* 485: [“May] your days be dark, your years be dim” and *Baal* rev. iv 19: “May a foreign enemy divide your spoil.” There would be little point in multiplying examples, or in attempting to trace the history of such an essentially artless type. The form is attested already in our oldest international agreement, establishing the boundary of Lagash (mid-third millennium B.C.E.): “May the people of his city, having risen in rebellion, strike him down in the midst of his city.”⁷³ Presumably this kind of curse

73. Trans. S. N. Kramer, “Sumerian Historiography,” *IEJ* III (1953), 226, following A. Poebel, “Der Konflikt zwischen Lagas und Umma zur Zeit Enannatum I. und Entemenas,” in *Oriental Studies Dedicated to Paul Haupt* (Baltimore and Leipzig, 1926), 238.

has been in use since man first wished his neighbor ill. It can hardly be considered a literary type, and is useless for purposes of formal comparison with the Old Testament. It must be said, however, that certain of these curses were apparently traditional. Thus *Esar* 490–93: “May tar and pitch be your food; may the urine of an ass be your drink, etc.” is nearly identical to *AshN* rev. iv 14–15.

Occasionally curses of different formal types have the same content. Thus a common curse by a god: “May Ishtar . . . break your bow” (*Esar* 453 and many parallels) resembles the ritual curses in *SfI* A 38: “Just as (this) bow and these arrows are broken, etc.” *Baal* rev. iv 11–12 is part of a curse on the ships of Tyre in which the names of various Baals are invoked: “May it (the evil wind) tear apart their framework, May they pull up their mooring pole.” This is very similar to *Maqlû* III 134, the only difference being that the latter uses the passive instead of the active voice, but the curse in *Maqlû* is part of an incantation involving use of a model ship and figurines.^{74, 75}

74. *Baal* rev. iv 11–12: ^{GIS}mar-kas-si-ši-na lip-tu-ur ^{GIS}tár-kul-la-ši-na li-is-su-ḫu; *Maqlû* III 134: mar-ka-sa-ši-na lip-ḫa-tir-ma tár-kul-la-ša [li-in-na-sih], restored from O. R. Gurney and J. J. Finkelstein, *The Sultantepe Tablets*, I (London, 1957), no. 82. Cf. *Erra* Epic iv 118. Prof. W. G. Lambert has suggested the following parallels also: tar-kul-li ^dér-ra-gal (v.l. -kal ú-) i-na-as-saḫ “Erragal pulls up the mooring poles” *Gilgamesh* IX 101; ^dér-ra-kal ú-na-sa-ḫa t[ar-kul-li] from the *Atra-ḫasis* Epic, see W. G. Lambert, “New Light on the Babylonian Flood,” *JSS* V (1960), p. 121, line 15. He notes also the reference to the god “Irda, the head mariner, who pulls up mooring poles” ^dir-damá-laḫ₄ galdimgul-sír.ra.ke₄ na-si-iḫ tár-kul-lu, in AN = Anum I 317 (ed. Richard L. Litke) *YOS* Researches [*A Reconstruction of the Assyro-Babylonian God-Lists*, AN: ^dA-nu-um and AN: Anu šá amēli (New Haven, 1998)]; cf. CT 24, pl. 10, line 5.

75. Stanley Gevirtz (*IDB* I 750) holds that the curses called here “simple maledictions” were typically West-Semitic:

The distinctive and distinguishing trait of Hebrew maledictions lies in the manner of curse formulation. In general, a clear difference may be remarked between “East” and “West” (including Hebrew) Semitic curses. Whereas East Semitic (Akkadian) maledictions were formulated in a religio-literary tradition which sought divine approval and execution, importuning a god or gods through imprecation, West Semitic curses were composed in a tradition which relied, primarily, not upon deity, but upon the power of the word. Hebrew shared the general West Semitic preference for constructions in which the agent of the curse remained undesignated, and for verbs in passive forms. Characteristically and specifically Hebraic is the use of the Qal passive participle ^ʾarūr, “Cursed be . . . !” The significance of this distinction between East and West Semitic curse formulations is that in the former, reliance is placed upon deity for the execution of the desired effect, whereas in the latter, in the absence of any indication of curse agency, the reliance is upon the power inherent within the word itself.

4. “Futility” Curses

Although the major curse forms described above are not of much use for comparison with literary forms within the Old Testament, there are several less common formal peculiarities which repay formal comparison with passages in the Bible. A few curses in Sefire I may be called “futility curses”:

[. . . and should seven rams cover] a ewe, may she not conceive; and should seven nur[sess] anoint [their breasts⁷⁶ and] nurse a young boy, may he not have his fill; and should seven mares suckle a colt, may it not be sa[ted; and should seven] cows give suck to a calf, may it not have its fill; and should seven ewes suckle a lamb, [may it not be sated; and should his seven daughters go looking for food, may they not seduce (anyone).” The curses described in Ashurbanipal’s annals (see *ANET* 300) were apparently of the same type.⁷⁷

The form may be described as consisting of a protasis, which describes the activity, and an apodosis, the frustration of the activity. This is often introduced by “but not” (Aramaic *wʾl*; Hebrew *wēlô*; *wēʾên*). In Sefire these curses are listed in a series, and as will be pointed out this is true in the Old Testament in some cases.

The curse-list in Deut 28 contains maledictions of this type. As will be shown in the next section, these curses possess metre, and the following translation attempts to approximate the rhythm of the original.

You’ll betroth a wife
 But another will bed her.
 You’ll build a house
 But never dwell there.
 You’ll plant a vineyard
 But not use its fruit.
 Your ox will be slaughtered before you
 But you won’t get to eat it.
 Your ass will be stolen as you watch.
 And will never come back again.
 Your flock will be given to your foes
 And none will be there to save you. (28:30–31)
 You’ll take much seed to the field,
 But gather little,
 For locusts will devour it.
 You’ll plant your vineyards and till them,
 But you won’t drink the wine
 Or store it up,
 For worms will eat it all.

76. For this restoration, see below, ch. IV, no. 9.

77. Cf. also *BBS* 36 ii 53.

You'll have olive trees all over your land,
 But you won't use the oil for anointing,
 For your olives will all drop off. (28:38-40)

Compare also the brief example in Lev 26:26: "And you will eat, but not be satisfied."

The futility curse is quite common in the prophets. Thus Hos 4:10: "They shall eat, but not be satisfied; they shall play the harlot,⁷⁸ but not increase." Other examples in the same book are 5:6; 8:7; 9:12; 9:16. Amos 5:11 echoes the Deuteronomy curse: "You have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell in them. You have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine." Micah offers a parallel in 3:4, and especially in 6:14-15: "You will eat, but not be satisfied . . . and you will overtake (prey), but not carry it off You will sow, but not harvest; you will tread olives, but not anoint with the oil; and grapes, but not drink the wine."

Other clear examples are Zeph 1:13 and Hag 1:6. Compare also Amos 4:8; 8:12; Mal 1:4. In Job's protestation of innocence a malediction of this type occurs (31:8): ". . . then let me sow, and another reap." In Is 62:8-9 and 65:21-23 the pattern is used in negative form as a blessing.

III. Two Biblical Lists of Curses: Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26

Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26 have already been mentioned as containing parallels to treaty-curses, and in the following section will be quoted repeatedly. As will be shown there, it is common to find that a curse in a treaty has a parallel in either Deuteronomy or Leviticus, and also in a prophetic oracle. The following paragraphs are thus a necessary preliminary to the next section, for the significance of these resemblances is affected by the nature and date of the materials in these two biblical curse lists.

Deut 28 in particular has been subjected to searching critical analysis and is widely regarded as consisting of a small original core which has been much expanded in later editions of the book. Without going into everything that has been written on the subject, it is still possible to collect a sampling of scholarly opinion broad enough to include every important methodological assumption of those who have taken the above view of the chapter.⁷⁹ Carl Steuernagel's treatment of Deut 28 provides

78. The parallelism suggests that a future be translated here; perhaps a *waw* has been omitted by haplography from the beginning of *hiznû*.

79. Few of the criteria for division listed here have gone unchallenged; S. R. Driver, for example, rejected the idea that Deut 28 is either a late addition to the

a convenient starting-point, since it is full, clear, and reasonably characteristic, if somewhat extreme. Steuernagel finds nothing remarkable in the fact that the list of curses is longer than the list of blessings; all the same, he says, we must assume that the curse list has been expanded by later additions. For (1) vs. 45–46 are certainly the original conclusion of the list, so that 47–68 must be an appendix; (2) the appendix itself falls into a number of different sections: (a) 61 is another conclusion; (b) in the section 47–61, the last verses (58–61), which refer to the law as a book, must be separated from the rest; written law is present only in very late times; (c) the plurals [”you”] in 62–63 must be from a different hand than 64–68, which have the singular pronoun [”thou”]; (3) in the first part of the list of curses (15–46), some of the sentences correspond, more or less exactly, to the blessings (1–14). Therefore all of the rest of the curses are later additions. These in turn are either simply expansions of original curses or independent curses (21–22; 27–42). Within this latter group there are some doublets, so that here there may be two different recensions of an older composition. The elements thus separated are also characterized by differences in linguistic usage, especially in relation to Deuteronomic style, as well as in content and in the historical situation which they presuppose.

In detailed discussion of individual verses, Steuernagel declares that v. 26 must be an addition from Jeremiah, where the same curse (to be unburied and eaten by wild animals) occurs. Verse 36 is a late addition since the curse presupposes the Babylonian exile. Verses 47–61 are characterized by a “Breite der Ausführung” and are thus by a different hand than the earlier portions of the list. Verse 49 refers to the Chaldeans, and must be from after 607.⁸⁰

Eduard König adds other criteria for assuming that later additions have been inserted in Deut 28: the lack of a logical progression of thought, and the fact that vs. 47–68 simply repeat the same old curse—pestilence, famine, and war—in different words.⁸¹

G. E. Wright assumes that the brief curses of 28:16–19, each beginning *ʾārûr* “cursed” were taken from the old liturgy used in concluding the covenant at Shechem. “The remainder of the chapter seems

book or contains substantial editorial expansion; see his *Deuteronomy, ICC* (New York, 1895), 303–4. But since new evidence is now available, it is perhaps worth reopening the question here, even at the risk of being guilty of knocking down straw-men. Even G. von Rad, who has shown the antiquity of many elements in Deuteronomy, repeats the usual opinion on the nature of ch. 28; see his *Studies in Deuteronomy* (Chicago, 1953), 72.

80. Carl Steuernagel, *Deuteronomium und Josua, HK* (Göttingen, 1950) 99–105.

81. *Das Deuteronomium, KAT* (Leipzig, 1917), 192, 194.

to represent free Deuteronomic composition on the general theme in order to fulfill the purposes of the author (and editor?) in completing the book.”⁸² Wright is very cautious about assuming late editorial expansion, but criteria similar to those of Steuernagel lead him to suspect that it has taken place.⁸³

Another wing of opinion is occupied by A. C. Welch, who devotes a full chapter to the curse-list in his *Deuteronomy: The Framework to the Code*.⁸⁴ On this question, as on others connected with Deuteronomy, Welch has his own thoroughly independent views. He agrees with some of the divisions proposed by other scholars, but tends to date more of the chapter early. Welch is always ready to see in the language of a curse or series of curses the reflection of one particular historical moment: vs. 15–26, 38–44 picture a society living under one set of conditions (an agricultural way of life, rather secure, prior to the fall of Samaria), while 27–37 reflect different conditions (still agricultural, but less secure; after the fall of Samaria). In 47–57 “there is a note of pain and horror which can leave little doubt that the writer had lived through the conditions he described or had learned them from men who knew them at first hand.”⁸⁵ In this depiction of cannibalism and a mother eating her afterbirth, there is “an entire absence of stereotyped formulas such as appear in some other passages.”⁸⁶

Nearly all of the above arguments for division of Deut 28 are shown to be invalid by a comparison with extra-biblical lists of treaty-curses. In some cases the observations are shown to be correct, but a different conclusion is suggested. First of all, it is pointed out that Deut 28 has several conclusions and introductions (vs. 15, 47, 58), and this is made a reason for assuming that various appendices have been added. But this is also a characteristic of the curse-list attached to the Esarhaddon treaty (compare 414 ff. and 494–512, 513 ff.), and to a lesser degree, of Sefire I (A 14 “If Mati’el”; 24 “If Mati’el”); the Ashurnirari treaty (Obv. I 15 ff.; Rev. IV 1 ff.; Rev. V 1; Rev. V 8, 16), of the Suppiluliumas-Mattiwaza treaty (*BoSt* 8 p. 33, Rev. 59 ff.; p. 35; 70 ff.) and of its counterpart, Mattiwaza-Suppiluliumas (*BoSt* 8 p. 51, Rev. 25 ff.; p. 53, 35 ff.; p. 55, 44 ff.).

The reference to stipulations written in a “book” (*sēper*; 28:58), is normal treaty terminology; preparation and preservation of written copies of a treaty was an essential element in treaty-making. Evidence for this is abundant;⁸⁷ here it will suffice to call attention to *Sf I B*; where in the list

82. *The Book of Deuteronomy, IB II* (New York and Nashville, 1953), 49.

83. *Op. cit.*, 498–501.

84. (London, 1932), 126–40.

85. *Op. cit.*, 135.

86. *Ibid.*

87. For fuller discussion see below pp. 148–50 [orig. 45–47].

of treaty stipulations, composed for the most part in a hortatory style, like Deuteronomy, there is repeated reference to “the treaty which is in this inscription” (*spr*²; lines 23, 28, 33). Whatever the date of composition of Deut 28, it is clear that the author intended it to represent part of a covenant, and the combination of hortatory style with reference to written stipulations fits the situation perfectly well.

On the basis of the same treaty, Sefire I, together with others, we may dismiss the argument that the change of singular to plural in the 2nd-person pronouns indicates editorial expansion. The same shift may be observed in *Sf I B 23* (*šgrim* “you will have betrayed”) and 38 (*šqrt* “thou shalt have betrayed”). In the curses of the Ashurnirari treaty, the oath-breaker(s) are variously referred to as “thou” (Rev. V 1–7 *passim*, 2-m.s. pronouns) and impersonally as “he” (e.g. Rev. IV 7, 19; V 9, 12) and “they” (Rev. IV 5, 6, 10 and often). These last cases are particularly instructive. The change in pronouns here and in Sefire is partly due to the fact that the treaty concerns the king, usually addressed or referred to in the singular, and his sons and nobles, referred to by plural pronouns. But this does not account for all the shifts. Rev. IV 4–6 and 17–19 both begin by listing “Mati’ilu, his sons, his nobles.” In the first case a plural pronoun refers back to this group; in the second, a singular. The variation can only have resulted from a momentary shift of the writer’s point of view. Returning to the case of Deut 28, it would seem that the shift from singular to plural pronouns may be explained without recourse to a theory of later addition; in verses 62–63 the author momentarily abandoned the rather artificial habit of addressing the nation as one individual.

Steuernagel’s excision of all curses which do not have a corresponding blessing is particularly drastic, and particularly ill-advised. There are some treaties which exhibit a neat balance between curses and blessings, notably the majority of the early Hittite treaties, in which both formulas are very brief. But in several of the early ones (*BoSt* 8 Nos. 1, 2) and in all of the later ones, so far as can be determined,⁸⁸ there is no such balance. The curse-list ordinarily contains many clauses with no corresponding blessing. Suppiluliumas-Mattiwaza (*BoSt* 8 No. 1) provides a good brief example; here the curse-list contains two curses which correspond, in order, to two of the blessings. But other curses occur between these two, and they are not later additions to the treaty. The blessings in Sefire I (C 15–16) are insignificant compared to the extensive curses. Martin Noth has rightly compared the structure of Deut

88. Some of the later treaties are, of course, fragmentary, so that it is impossible to tell how extensive the blessing was, or even whether such a benediction was present. The Esarhaddon treaty contains no blessings.

28 to the epilogue of the Code of Hammurabi, with its brief blessing and lengthy curse.⁸⁹

As to v. 26, allegedly dependent on Jeremiah, it must be conceded that a similar phrase does indeed occur in Jeremiah, but as will be shown below (ch. IV, no. 15), this is also one of the most common of traditional curses, certainly not the invention of Jeremiah or the author of Deut 28. As far as those sections of the chapter which refer to exile are concerned (36, 63–68), it may be advanced that, quite apart from the evidence of the treaties, there was an impressive exile before the Babylonian captivity, namely the capture of the northern “ten tribes.”⁹⁰ In addition, the treaties also contain as curses reference to siege, exile, and the attendant horrors: “Just as this ram is [taken] away from his fold, will not return to his fold, will [no longer stand] before his fold, so may . . . Matî’ilu, with his sons, [his nobles], the people of his land [be taken away] from his land, not return to his land, he shall no [longer stand] at the head of his land” (*AshN* Obv. I 16–20; cf. *BoSt* 8, p. 55 Rev. 48, 51).

Change in style, detected by Steuernagel in Deut 28:47–61 and advanced as evidence that this is a later addition, is characteristic of lists of curses in the treaties. The Esarhaddon treaty, as pointed out above, contains a series of curses by the gods, then a series of simile-curses. Even within the curses by individual gods, some are terse (e. g. 435–36), some long-winded (440–52); some are prosaic and flat (433–34), others vivid and impressive (425–27 and many other examples). Of the simile-curses, some display wide divergences from the standard form. Sefire I presents a similar picture, as does the Ashurnirari treaty.

König’s characterization of the curse list in Deuteronomy as lacking logical progression of ideas and very repetitious is unquestionably correct, but these are simply other respects in which the biblical list resembles the treaty-curses. It is unnecessary to offer detailed proof here; a single reading of the maledictions from Esarhaddon’s vassal-treaties will prove quite convincing on this point.

Wright’s idea that some of the curses in Deuteronomy preserve an actual ancient oath-taking liturgy may well be correct, but one may ask whether we should not recognize other curses in this chapter as equally ancient. Wright asserts, following a rather common opinion,⁹¹ that the

89. *Gesammelte Studien* (Munich, 1957), 60–163.

90. Cf. Welch, *op. cit.*, 136.

91. Cf. Noth, *op. cit.*, 157–61 and Mowinkel, *Psalmstudien* V, 83 and especially Sheldon H. Blank, “The Curse, Blasphemy, the Spell, and the Oath,” *HUCA* XXIII Part I (1950–51), 73–95. Blank distinguishes (1) the “simple curse formula” (*ʿārûr* plus subject, sometimes with a condition, “if you etc.”); (2) the composite curse (the curse formula plus “curses freely composed”); (3) curses freely composed without the formula. The development was in the order listed

curses beginning *ʾārûr* are the early ones, but there is only one parallel to this form of curse in any contemporary inscription,⁹² to this writer's knowledge—it is not a treaty—whereas frequent parallels to those which Wright styles the product of “free Deuteronomic composition” occur in treaties. This observation does not prove that the *ʾārûr* curses are late, of course. The fact that these curses possess characteristics of oral tradition may point to an early origin of the form. But the distinction which Wright makes cannot be maintained, especially since other portions of the chapter also exhibit a formulaic rhythmic character.

Welch, who tries to determine the particular historical background reflected by groups of curses within Deut 28, errs in underestimating the traditional element in ancient literature in general, and in curses in particular. The verses in which he detects a “note of pain and horror” testifying to personal experience of these terrors by the writer have many parallels in the curses of the treaties (see below IV no. 10), though in general these are milder in tone than the Deuteronomy passage. The existence of a tradition of curses over a thousand years old renders any attempt to relate individual curses to particular historical periods highly suspect.

Comparison with lists of treaty-curses suggests that Deut 28 is in many ways the same sort of composition: a gathering and adaptation of traditional materials. Evidence from within the chapter leads to the same conclusion. The series of curses beginning *ʾārûr*, corresponding to a similar series of blessings, has long been considered ancient. These curses possess recognizable characteristics of material intended for oral transmission: a fixed pattern and a kind of rhythm. In this they resemble the list of twelve curses in Deut 27:15–26.

To this writer's knowledge, however, it has not been observed that other portions of Deut 28 also exhibit characteristics of oral transmission. This is particularly clear in the case of vv. 30–31. The formula consists of a statement concerning the future (imperfect verbs in v. 30, passive participles in 31), and of a second statement describing its frus-

and thus also from profane to religious—only by stage three was God's name invoked in a curse. This process was complete “at least by the end of the seventh century.” Blank advances no reason or evidence supporting the assumption that the “profane” curse is older than any other type, and his views, if correct, would lead us to wonder why the Israelites were so late to come upon the idea of cursing by God's name, when their neighbors had been doing it for millennia.

92. In the “Epitaph of a Royal Steward,” published by N. Avigad, *IEJ* III (1953) 137–52, discussed by Gevirtz, “West-Semitic Curses,” 151. The brief text dates from around 700 B.C. Gevirtz also regards this occurrence as unique in extra-biblical texts (the examples in the Dead Sea Manual of Discipline are, of course, much later and presumably dependent on the Old Testament).

tration, usually introduced by the conjunction *w* and a negative. These curses have been described above as “futility curses” (see II no. 4 for discussion and translation).

2 + 2	אִשָּׁה תֹאֲרָשׁ וְאִישׁ אַחֵר יִשְׁגַּלְנָה
2 + 2	בֵּית תִּבְנֶה וְלֹא־תִשָּׁב בּוֹ
2 + 2	כָּרֶם תִּטֵּעַ וְלֹא תִחַלְלֵנוּ
3 + 3	שׁוֹרֶךְ טִבּוּחַ לְעִינֶיךָ וְלֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ
3 + 3	חֶמְרֶךָ גָּזוּל מִלִּפְנֶיךָ וְלֹא יֵשׁוּב לְךָ
3 + 3	צֶאֱנָךְ נִתְנֹת לְאִיבֶיךָ וְאֵין לְךָ מוֹשִׁיעַ
X + 3	וְאֵין לְאֵל יָדְךָ

The last phrase is included to call attention to the possibility that v. 32, which has the same order of thought (activity, then frustration) but a much longer protasis than the others in this series, may be an expansion of a curse which was originally cast in the same pattern as those before it. The apodosis has exactly the same form and rhythm as that of the preceding six curses.

The second very clear example of a little list of curses with pronounced rhythm and fixed pattern is vv. 38–41. These also are “futility curses,” but each adds a third clause, introduced by *kî*, indicating the cause of the frustration.

3	זֶרַע רֹב תוֹצִיא הַשָּׂדֶה	A
2	וּמַעֲט תֹאסֹף	B
2	כִּי יִחַסְלֵנוּ הָאֲרֶבָה	C
3	כֶּרֶמִים תִּטֵּעַ וְעִבְדָת	A
2	רֵיִךְ לֹא־תִשָּׂא	B1
«2	וְלֹא תֹאגֵר	B2» ⁹³
2	כִּי תֹאכְלֵנוּ הַתְּלַעַת	C
3	זֵיתִים יִהְיוּ לְךָ ⁹⁴ «בְּכָל־גְּבוּלְךָ»	A

93. B2 is perhaps a variant of B1, introduced from a different version of the curse.

94. Perhaps an addition by the Deuteronomist.

3	וּשְׁמֹן לֹא תִסֹךְ	B
2	כִּי יִשַׁל זֵיתָךְ	C
3	בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת תּוֹלִיד	A
3	וְלֹא־יִהְיוּ לָךְ	B
2	כִּי יִלְכּוּ בְשָׁבִי	C

Before taking up other cases of this same phenomenon, it is in place to point out that neither of these lists is in Deuteronomic style. Each can be distinguished quite easily from its context, and each thus gives the impression of being a quotation. In fact, the rhythmic character of these curses is even more pronounced than is the case with 27:15–26 (*ʿārūr* etc.), where a good deal of revision is necessary to restore what A. Alt considers the original metre (4's without caesura).⁹⁵

Other verses in Deut 28 exhibit either parallelism, metre, or both. Since these examples are all shorter than the two lists just treated, one cannot be as sure that the Deuteronomist was in each case using older poetic materials. Parallelism and metre can be accidental. However, the fact that parts of this chapter are clearly poetic encourages us to take seriously phenomena of parallelism and metre in other verses. These are discussed in order of occurrence.

Verse 23 possesses perfect parallelism: “And your sky o’er your head shall be copper // and (your) ground beneath you iron.” The relative pronoun *ʾāšer* was uncommon in early poetry, and if the two *ʾāšer*’s here are omitted as features added in reworking the line into a prose form and if *wēhāyū* is regarded as either anacrusis or part of the Deuteronomist’s introduction, a 3 + 3 metre is obtained.

וְהָיוּ «שָׁמַיִךְ» «אֲשֶׁר» «עַל־רֹאשְׁךָ נְחֹשֶׁת»
וְהָיוּ «אֲרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־תַּחְתֶּיךָ בְּרֹזָל»

Note that in the parallel expressions *šāmèkā* and «*ha*»*ʾāreš* (if this were an early couplet, the article would probably not be present), only the first has the pronominal suffix. This kind of ellipsis is not uncommon in early poetry; cf. e.g. *UM* 68:6; 2 *Aqht*: I:26. This may be an additional indication that Deut 28:23 is an authentic fragment of ancient poetry. In contrast, the parallel in Lev 26:19 has the suffix with both nouns.⁹⁶

The very next verse, 24, also contains perfect parallelism. As the translators of the new Jewish Publication Society Torah have recognized, the

95. “Die Ursprünge des israelitischen Rechts,” *Kleine Schriften*, I (Munich, 1953), 313–14.

96. This construction in Ugaritic and Hebrew, where one suffix does duty for two, was first pointed out by G. R. Driver, “Hebrew Studies,” *JRAS* (1948), 164–65. For further biblical examples, see M. Dahood, “Enclitic *mem* and Emphatic *lamedh* in Psalm 85,” *Bib* XXXVII (1956), 339–40.

Massoretic placing of the *athnach* is incorrect, for *wē'āpār* belongs to the second colon. "Of the rain of your land Yahweh will make powder // And dust from the sky will descend upon you." If the concluding *'ad hiššāmēdāk* is omitted as a Deuteronomic addition—it occurs five times in this chapter—one obtains a passable 4 + 4 metre.

יתן יהוה «את» מטר ארצך אבק
ועפר מן-השמים ירד עליך

A portion of the following verse, 25, has both metre and parallelism: "By a single way you'll go out against him // But by seven ways you'll flee before him."

בדרך אחד תצא אליו
ובשבעה דרכים תנוס לפניו

A clear example is v. 44, with two lines that must be read as poetry: "He'll loan to you, // But you won't loan to him. He will be the head, // And you will be the tail."

2 + 2 הוא ילוך ואתה לא תלונו
3 + 3 הוא יהיה לראש ואתה תהיה לזנב

Commentators have often pointed out the general resemblance of the passage beginning in v. 49, describing the enemy who will come, to passages in the prophets, especially Jer 5:15-17.⁹⁷ Parts of this passage in Deuteronomy seem to be poetry: "He will not regard the aged // Or have pity on the young" (v. 50).

3 + 3 לא-ישא פנים לדקן ונער לא יחן

"You will eat the fruit of your womb, // The flesh of your sons and your daughters" (v. 53).

ואכלת פרי-בטנך בשר בניך ובנותיך

What conclusion are we to draw from the presence of these poetic elements? We ought not to think of the Deuteronomist as self-consciously embellishing his composition with classical tags, like a Victorian essayist, nor should we imagine that some redactor with a flair for verse is responsible for the poetry here. Instead these fragments of verse indicate that the writer knew and used a living tradition of curses originally cast in poetic form so as to be remembered more easily. Or the poetic form may be due to the fact that these curses are derived from old literary compositions.

This argument based on internal evidence is confirmed in a striking way by one case in which we possess both ends of the process of

97. So, e.g., S. R. Driver, *op. cit.*, in loc.

development. In the prose Ahiram inscription (10th century B.C.E.) occurs a curse which exhibits parallelism and metre: *thtsp htr mšpṯh // thtpk ks' mlkh* (3 + 3) "May his judicial sceptre be stripped away: may his royal throne be overturned." It would be possible to regard this as accidental, but for the fact that in this case a nearly identical couplet occurs in a Ugaritic epic (*UM* text 49:vi:28–29; 129:17–18): *lyhpk.ksa.mlkk lytbr. h̄t.mṯpṯk* "He (El) will overturn your royal throne: he will break your judicial sceptre."

It remains possible that later additions are present in Deut 28, but the arguments advanced so far do not prove it. Comparison with authentic lists of treaty-curses and close examination of the poetic elements in the chapter lead to a different conclusion: Deut 28 represents the combination and reworking by a single author of traditional curses known to him. It is composite, but not as the result of later scribal insertions. No part of it need be dated any later than the rest of Deuteronomy. The lists of curses of the Esarhaddon treaty, Sefire 1, and the Ashurnirari treaty seem to be of this nature also. They give the impression of being composite, not because of late redactional activity, but because the scribes have combined a variety of traditional curses.

Because of its more compact and logical organization, Lev 26 has not been subjected to the same splintering as Deut 28. However, the style of this chapter has long been recognized as standing in an especially close relation to that of Ezekiel, and commentators have attempted to explain the relationship by assuming a straightforward dependence of one on the other. Bertholet, who believes that Lev 26 is in some way dependent on Ezekiel, sums up his discussion by putting the alternatives in this way: "Entweder hat Hes[ekiel] seinen Stil und seine Sprache an einem Cap. unserer atl. Literatur gebildet, oder ein Cap. ist im Stil und in der Sprache Hes's geschrieben."⁹⁸ But Bertholet himself admits that there are puzzling differences in style between the two. On this question H. Graf Reventlow is surely right in arguing that both authors depend on the same living tradition of curses. Reventlow finds poetic elements in Lev 26 and similar, but not identical poetic elements in "prose" passages in Ezekiel, indicating that the prophet used and adapted the same tradition.⁹⁹ Certain of Reventlow's parallels may be less than convincing, because he makes free use, for comparative purposes, of maledictions expressed in very colorless and general terms. In his main contention,

98. *Leviticus*, KHC (Tübingen and Leipzig, 1901), 94.

99. Reventlow develops this point, with many examples, in his *Wächter über Israel: Ezechiel und seine Tradition*, ZAW Beiheft 82 (1962), 4–43, 157–58, drawing on his earlier study of Leviticus, *Das Heiligkeitgesetz, form-geschichtlich untersucht* (Neukirchen, 1961).

however, Reventlow is correct, and we may accept here his characterization of Lev 26 as a collection and ordering of traditional curses.

If the argument so far is correct, we may say that Deut 28 and Lev 26 are, in a sense, units, and that they appear to contain materials older than the books in which they appear. We may now take up the question as to whether they are dependent on the prophets. Chronologically the author of either could have known at least a portion of the prophetic tradition. But the answer to our question is already given, for the most part, with what has already been said about the nature of these chapters. Both contain many passages resembling lines in the prophetic books, but no simple theory of direct dependence or influence can explain both the parallels and the differences. Reventlow has demonstrated this for Ezekiel and Lev 26, and to an even greater degree Deut 28 exhibits features which cannot be explained as derived from any extant prophetic book. There are only fragmentary parallels in the prophets to the lists of 6 (or 7) and 4 "futility curses" here (28:30-31, 38-41). Jer 5:15-17 is like Deut 28:49-52, but is far from identical. One may continue in the same fashion through the whole chapter.

In this connection the parallel pointed out by D. J. Wiseman is significant. One of the most striking verbal resemblances between anything in the treaties and an Old Testament passage is that between *Esar* 528-32, Deut 28:23, and Lev 26:19. *Esar*: "May they make your ground like iron so that no one can plough(?) it. Just as rain does not fall from a copper sky so may rain and dew not come upon your fields and your meadows." Deut: "And your sky o'er your head shall be copper, // and (your) ground beneath you iron." Lev: "I will make your sky like iron // and your ground like copper." As Borger and Moran have observed, it is most unlikely that such unusual and striking expressions originated quite independently.¹⁰⁰ We may go on to point out that this is an independent parallel between a malediction in Deuteronomy and Leviticus and a treaty-curse, for there is nothing like it in the preserved writings of the prophets. This fact supports the view advanced above, that Deut 28 and Lev 26 represent independent compilations of traditional curses.

It is equally important to observe the differences in these three parallel curses. Deut 28:23 is, if our analysis is correct, poetry in 3 + 3 metre. "Copper" occurs in the first colon as a simile for sky, "iron" in the second as a simile for the ground. Lev 26:19 is poetry, but apparently in 3 + 2 metre. The order of the similes is reversed—"iron" is the simile for sky in the first colon and the ground is compared to copper in the

100. R. Borger, "Zu den Asarhaddon-Verträgen aus Nimrud," *ZA* LIV (1961), 191-92; William L. Moran, "The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy," *CBQ* XXV (1963), 85.

second. Lev 26 has a plural suffix (*-kem*) with both “sky” and “ground”; Deut 28 has a singular suffix (*-kā*) with the first only. The curse in the Esarhaddon treaty is not poetry. The similes agree with Deuteronomy, but the ground is described first, then the sky. Thus Leviticus is not directly dependent on Deuteronomy here, nor is either directly dependent on the Mesopotamian curse. We cannot explain both the resemblances and differences by naively supposing that an Israelite writer got this curse from an Assyrian treaty.¹⁰¹ The point to be grasped is that both in Israel and elsewhere there were living and primarily oral traditions of curses on which writers and speakers might draw for various purposes, either leaving the material as they found it or recasting it into their own style. The authors of Deut 28 and Lev 26 drew on this tradition, each in his own way. Since their works are, therefore, essentially authentic ancient Israelite curse-lists, they may profitably be drawn into the discussion of treaty-curses and the prophets.

IV. Old Testament Parallels to Treaty-Curses

In this chapter Old Testament parallels to treaty curses are collected. The principal difficulty in making such a collection lies in determining what is a significant parallel and what is not. This problem arises from the nature of the materials compared. In general, ancient curses and prophetic oracles of doom describe evils and calamities which were part of common human experience. Jeremiah’s “sword, pestilence, and famine” sums up the general content very well. There is little of the fantastic or unheard of, since these threats were meant to be taken seriously. This has the consequence that there is inevitably a general resemblance between treaty-curses and Old Testament prophecies. It would be pointless to collect a great many illustrations of this general similarity.

Since this is true, only those parallels are listed here which display some more specific point of resemblance. The assumption made is that although human experience of calamity has been much the same from place to place and from age to age, descriptions of the same calamity, or curses and threats based on it, may be quite different in the elements selected for emphasis, those disregarded, the terms and comparisons chosen, and so on. If our collection is confined to parallels in specific details, the materials may be valid evidence for or against literary influence. Of course, not every parallel listed below is, by itself, incontestable evidence of influence or dependence, but the writer hopes to have

101. So Borger, loc. cit. One could make out a better case for saying that the Bible preserves an older form of the curse. It is unlikely that this is a very old traditional curse, since it mentions iron, and the poetic form of the biblical curse may point to an early origin in Israel or Canaan, whence it could have been adopted by Akkadian writers.

eliminated those which can be dismissed at once as simply due to common experience.

No logical order for the following sections suggests itself, so the writer has listed them in the order of their importance, that is, the most striking parallels are put first, and so on. Within the individual sections, the following order has been observed: (1) the treaty curse; (2) its extra-biblical parallels, if any; (3) the parallel in Deut 28 or Lev 26, if any; (4) parallels in the rest of the Old Testament. In the latter group the closest parallels are listed first, and others follow in their order within the Hebrew Old Testament.

1. *The dwelling-place of animals*

In *Sf I A* 32–33 the following curse is pronounced upon Arpad: *wthwy ʾrpd tl l[rbyq sy w]sby wšʿl wʾrnb wšrn wšdh w . . . wʿqh* “And may Arpad become a mound to [house the desert animal and the] gazelle and the fox and the hare and the wild-cat and the owl, and the [] and the magpie!” The restoration of the words in the first lacuna is that of Dupont-Sommer, and is rendered well-nigh certain by the biblical parallels which he cites.¹⁰² At any rate, the general sense of the curse is clear: Arpad shall become a tell, inhabited only by wild animals.

This malediction is without parallel in the other treaties, but has parallels in other texts. In Esarhaddon’s letter to the god Ashur occurs the following fragmentary description of a ruined city: “Foxes and hyenas made their homes there.”¹⁰³ In the annals of the same king it is said that Marduk cursed the land and a great flood came, then “birds of the heavens and fish of the deep without number were within it.”¹⁰⁴ Similarly, from the annals of Ashurbanipal: “Wild asses, gazelles, and every kind of wild animal of the desert I caused to lie down there undisturbed,”¹⁰⁵ and “In the city street the owl screeches.”¹⁰⁶

102. André Dupont-Sommer, *Les inscriptions araméennes de Sfiré (Stèles I et II)* (Paris, 1958), 47–48.

103. R. Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs von Assyrien, AfO Beiheft 9* (1956), 107 Rand line 3. (Hereafter cited as *AfO Beiheft 9*.)

104. Op. cit., p. 14 Fassung c: G 10–14.

105. Maximilian Streck, *Assurbanipal und die letzten assyrischen Könige bis zum Untergange Nineveh’s. II. Teil: Texte. VAB VII* (Leipzig, 1916), p. 58 (Rassam Cylinder vi), 104–6 [hereafter simply *VAB VII*]. Streck already pointed out most of the biblical parallels, p. 58 note 3. The fragmentary prism published by Theo Bauer, *Das Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals, Assyriologische Bibliothek N.F. I.* (Leipzig, 1933), 5 vi 10–12 contains the same description in slightly different order. The latter is supplemented by Ferris J. Stephens, *Votive and Historical Texts from Babylonia and Assyria, YBT IX* (New Haven, 1937), no. 77, lines 8–10.

106. Bauer, *Assurbanipal*, p. 78 K. 7673 line 18. Compare also the Hittite curse on a conquered city which states that the city is to be perpetually desolate

The biblical parallels, some of which were pointed out already by Dupont-Sommer,¹⁰⁷ are abundant and striking. The most significant of these for our purpose is Isa 34:11–17:

The hawk and the porcupine shall inherit it,
 and the owl and the raven shall dwell in it.
 He shall extend over it the line of devastation,
 and the plummet of emptiness (over) her nobles.
 They shall call (it) “No Kingdom There,”
 and all its princes shall be nothing.
 Thorns shall grow over its strongholds;
 nettles and thorns in its fortresses.
 And it shall become a dwelling of jackals,
 an abode for ostriches;
 and desert animals shall meet with jackals,
 the satyr shall meet with his fellow.
 Yea, there shall Lilith rest,
 and find for herself repose.
 There the owl shall nest and lay,
 and hatch and brood beneath her.
 Yea, there vultures shall gather together
 one with another.
 Look it up in the covenant-inscription of Yahweh, and read,
 not one of these will be missing.
 One shall not lack the other
 for his mouth has commanded
 and his spirit shall gather them.
 And he has cast the lot for them
 and his spirit has divided for them by line.
 Forever they shall possess it;
 forever and ever they shall live in it.”¹⁰⁸

The key phrase in this passage is the command: “Look it up in the *sēper yahweh* and read.” Obviously the prophet urges his hearers to refer to some sort of document in which this doom was already foretold. It is now possible, on the basis of certain uses of the word *sēper* in the Old Testament and in the Sefire treaties, to explain this hitherto cryptic reference to the “book of Yahweh” as a reference to the inscribed copy

and that the bulls of the weathergod will graze in it forever, published by J. Friedrich, *Aus dem hethitischen Schrifttum*, 2. Heft: *Religiöse Texte*, AO XXV, 2 (Leipzig, 1925), 22–23 lines 18–31.

107. Loc. cit. Cf. also F. C. Fensham, *ZAW* LXXV (1963), 166–68.

108. A number of the precise identifications of animals, etc., in this passage are unknown or uncertain, but as this does not materially affect the point advanced here, the problems have been disregarded. Similarly, textual difficulties have been passed over (except for v. 16, which is discussed below).

of a covenant, hence the interpretive translation above, “the covenant-inscription of Yahweh.” In support of this interpretation, *Sf III* 4 may be cited: *šqrim lkl ’lhy ‘dy’ zy bspr’ [znh]* “. . . you will have betrayed all the gods of the treaty which is in this inscription.” Fitzmyer comments:

spr’ denotes here the text of the inscription engraved on stone; there is no reason to suppose that it was written at first on some soft material. In *Sf I* Cb 3–4 we find only *mly spr’ zy bnšb’ znh . . .*, “the words of the inscription which (is) on this stele.” Such a use of the root *spr* to express an inscription engraved on stone sheds interesting light on the expression *spr hbryt* in Ex. 24:7; 4 Kgs. 23:2; 2 Chr. 34:30, and especially in 4 Kgs. 23:21, *hktwob ’l spr hbryt*.¹⁰⁹

The expression recurs in *Sf I* B 8 *w’l tštq ḥdh mn mly spr’ zn[h]* “And let not one of the words of this inscription be silenced,” and *Sf I* C 17 *lyšr mly spr’ zy bnšb’ znh* “. . . will not guard the words of the inscription which is on this stele.” The word *spr* also means “inscription” in the inscriptions of Kilamuwa (14–15) and Ahiiram (2).¹¹⁰ In support of Fitzmyer’s interpretation, *sēper* seems to mean the stele itself in Isa 30:8: *wē’al sēper ḥuqqāh* “and engrave it on a stele.”¹¹¹ In Joshua 8:32 it is stated that Joshua wrote on stone “the copy of the law of Moses” and afterward (v. 34) he read all the words of the law, “the blessings and the curses, according to all that was written *bēsēper hattôrāh*.” If he was reading what he had written, *sēper* here too refers to a covenant inscription on stone (or plastered, stone, cf. Deut 27:2–8).

In this connection it is not of primary importance whether *sēper yahweh* in Isa 34:16 refers to a covenant text engraved on a stone stele or

109. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “The Aramaic Suzerainty Treaty from Sefire in the Museum of Beirut,” *CBQ* XX (1958), 456.

110. For these inscriptions see now Stanley Gevirtz, “West-Semitic Curses and the Problem of the Origins of Hebrew Law,” *VT* XI (1961), 141, 146–47 and the references cited there. See also K. F. Euler, “Die Bedeutung von *spr* in der Sudschin-Inschrift im Lichte des alttestamentlichen Gebrauchs von *sepaer*,” *ZAW* LV [N. F. XIV] (1937), 281–91.

111. Thus the proposal in *BH*³ “= *aes?* (*siparru*)” though correct in recognizing the inappropriateness of *ḥqq* “engrave” for writing on a book of soft material, becomes unnecessary; it may be added that the use of bronze for writing-material, except for an occasional inscription on a bronze object, is otherwise unknown in Syria-Palestine in this period; cf. Kurt Galling, *Biblisches Reallexikon*, *HAT* I (Tübingen, 1937), col. 462. G. Fohrer has already seen that *sēper* here means “inscription”; see his “The Origin, Composition and Tradition of Isaiah I–XXXIX,” *Annual of Leeds University Oriental Society* III (1961–62), 32. Cf. H. S. Gehman, “Sēpher, an Inscription, in the Book of Job,” *JBL* LXIII (1944), 303–7. (I am indebted to Prof. James F. Ross of Drew University, Madison, New Jersey, for this last reference.)

written on some other material;¹¹² the important point for the purposes of this discussion is that *sēper* is the appropriate term for the text of a covenant, and that this meaning of the word fits the context. The prophet refers his hearers to a treaty which had listed, among its curses, the animals and birds he has just named in his oracle. The commentators, who have missed this point, consider the verse a strange and remarkable one, and betray by their ingenious efforts the lack of any other convincing explanation for the expression.¹¹³

If the interpretation of Isa 34:16 proposed here is correct, the verse is of unique significance for this study. Here a prophet uses threats resembling treaty-curses, and urges his hearers to confirm his words by referring to the text of the treaty; clearly implying that he had consciously patterned his prophecy after the curses of the treaty. Because of the importance of the passage, and because the above interpretation is new, certain problems connected with it demand fuller treatment.

The first of these problems is the textual problem. The Massoretic text reads: *dršw m' l spr yhw wqr'w*. All of the versions, and the Dead Sea Isaiah (IQIs^a), agree with the Massoretic Text, except for the Septuagint, which reads in 16a: *arithmō, parēlthon* "they passed in by count." Several commentators have attempted to emend the Massoretic text on the basis of the Septuagint, but their proposals have not been convincing.¹¹⁴ A comparison of the Massoretic text of 34:11–17 with the Septuagint shows that in v. 16 the *Vorlage* of the Septuagint did not necessarily have a reading different from that of the Massoretic text. The translator of Isaiah is not noted for fidelity to the original,¹¹⁵ but in this passage

112. See Viktor Korošec, *Hethitische Staatsverträge: Ein Beitrag zu ihrer juristischen Wertung* (Leipzig, 1931), 3.

113. Thus Delitzsch, Dillmann, Marti, and especially Duhm, who posits a kind of split personality for the (late) writer: "Augenscheinlich zerteilt sich hier der Verf. unwillkürlich in den Propheten, der er sein will, and in den Schriftgelehrten, der er ist," etc., *Das Buch Jesaia*, HK 4th ed. (Göttingen, 1922), 253. Procksch (*Jesaia I*, KAT [Leipzig, 1930], ad loc.) has seen that the prophet refers to an older prophecy, but suggests that this is the oracle in Isa 13:21–22, thus presenting us with the picture of a doom-oracle on Babylon fulfilled on Edom, which hardly seems fair.

114. See Procksch, op. cit., and A. Dillmann, *Der Prophet Jesaia*, KeH 6th edition, ed. Rudolf Kittel (Leipzig, 1898), ad loc. for the emendations proposed by Knobel and Wellhausen. Knobel could only suggest 'al mispār yahweh yiqrā' "nach der Zahl ruft Jahwe," which, as Dillmann points out, is neither a good reconstruction of the Septuagint *Vorlage*, nor good Hebrew.

115. See Joseph Ziegler, *Untersuchungen zur Septuaginta des Buches Isaia* (Münster i. W., 1934), 1–31 for a discussion of the method used by the translator of Isaiah, with a review of earlier opinions on the subject.

(34:11–17) he translates almost word-for-word, though often obviously at a loss for the meaning of the Hebrew.¹¹⁶ In 15b the Septuagint is longer than the Massoretic Text; in 16a it is shorter. Considering 15b first, the Massoretic text is here suspiciously short, from the point of view of metre, and it seems likely that one of the verbs of 16a should be read with 15b. Neither *dršw* or *wqrʷ* is close in sense to the Septuagint's *kai eidon to prosōpa* but this translator is capable of equally improbable renderings; compare earlier in v. 15 *kai esōsen 'ē gē ta paidia autēs meta asphaleias*, a word-for-word equivalent of *wattēmallēt ūbāqē'ah wēdāgērāh bēšillāh!* Verse 16a, conversely, is suspiciously long in the Massoretic Text. If we read one of its verbs with the preceding line, it is improved metrically without changing its basic sense.¹¹⁷ The Septuagint of 16a is short, metrically speaking, and it is possible that the name *yhw* has been omitted, perhaps because it was abbreviated in the *Vorlage*. *arithmō* reflects *mspr*, not substantially different from *mʹ spr*.

The writer would not insist on every point of the above explanation of the Septuagint variations; Ziegler accounts for them in a different way.¹¹⁸ But it does seem that the translation above ought perhaps to be amended to: “. . . one seeks (or, calls to) the other. Look it up in (or, Read from) the covenant-inscription of Yahweh, etc.” Even if the text is thus emended, it still permits the interpretation advanced here.

The second problem concerns the historical implications of the verse as interpreted here. If *sēper yahweh* here refers to the text of a treaty, the passage implies that a treaty existed between Judah and Edom at some time during the prophetic period, and that this had been broken by Edom. Even though the phrase is a rhetorical device, intended to recall the treaty to his hearers' minds, and not to send them searching the archives, for the prophet to have referred his audience to a non-existent inscription would have been nonsense. If the explanation proposed here is to stand, it must be shown that such a treaty was a possibility within the period in question.

There are four occasions when such a treaty may well have existed, to judge from the meagre evidence available. On any one of these occasions

116. In verses 11, 13, and 14, however, he omits a word from one member of a bicolon, with the result that the parallelism is destroyed. In verses 13 and 14 one suspects that his supply of synonyms for “thorns” and “demons” had been exhausted.

117. Cf. *BH*³ ad loc.

118. “Der Übers. hat die nämliche Vorstellung wie Jer 40 (33), 13 im Auge: *eti pareleusetai probata epi cheira arithmoutos*. Die Tiere warden gezählt, indem man sie unter der Hand vorbeigehen lässt. Dieses Bild veranlasste den Js-Übers., seine hebr. *Vorlage* so zu deuten” (op. cit. 122–23).

the oracle in Isa 34 might have been delivered. Oddly enough, in view of nearly unanimous critical opinion assigning this speech to post-exilic times, three of these occasions fall within the period of Isaiah's ministry. They are listed here in chronological order.

a. On the occasion of the Syro-Ephraimite War (735 B.C.E.)

The situation at the time of the Syro-Ephraimite War is best understood against the background of relations between Judah and Edom in previous centuries. Edom became tributary to Israel at the time of David; the brief description of the relation established implies that she was not bound by treaty, but that David set a military governor over her (2 Sam 8:13–14). Edom fell away partly during Solomon's reign, but Judah's king retained access to the port at Ezion-Geber, in Edomite territory (1 Kgs 9:26; 11:14–22). Down to Jehoshaphat's time Edom was still subject to Judah. The terms in which the relation is described are ambiguous, not to say contradictory, at least on the surface: "There was no king in Edom; a governor (*niṣṣāb*) was king" (1 Kgs 22:48). Probably this means that there was no independent king in Edom, the king was a vassal of Judah, for in the account of the rebellion of the king of Moab dated to the 18th year of Jehoshaphat (2 Kgs 3) we are told that the Judean king joined Ahab of Israel against Moab, and "the king of Edom" acts together with the king of Judah. Under Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram (Joram) the Edomites rebelled against Judah and set up a king for themselves (2 Kgs 8:20–21). Apparently they retained their independence down to the time of Amaziah, who conquered Edom and took Sela (Petra), 2 Kgs 14:7. Whether this victory had lasting effects is uncertain, but Amaziah's son, Azariah (Uzziah) did rebuild Ezion-Geber (Elath) and restore it to Judah (2 Kgs 14:22).

This is the last mention of Edom down to the time of Ahaz. Presumably there was no change in the situation since the days of Uzziah, and it is reasonable to conclude that Edom, or at least a part of Edom, was still regarded as subject to Judah and that this relation was sealed by a treaty. Then, at the time of the Syro-Ephraimite War (735 B.C.E.), when Ahaz was hard-pressed by the coalition of his northern neighbors, the Edomites seized the opportunity to recapture Elath, and also to ravage part of Judah (2 Kgs 16:5–6; 2 Chron 28:16–17).¹¹⁹

Here the two elements necessary as background for an interpretation of Isa 34:16 are present: the treaty relation, for which there is indirect evidence, and Edom's treachery, for which there is explicit evidence. This would have provided sufficient ground for an oracle by a contemporary of Isaiah, or possibly by Isaiah himself. We could not call the

¹¹⁹ Emending, with most commentators, *ʿrm* to *ʿdm* and deleting *rēṣîn* (v. 6) in the passage in 2 Kgs.

oracle too chauvinistic for Isaiah. Edom had plainly dealt treacherously with Judah, and however much the prophets felt that their own nation deserved punishment, this did not blind them to the sins of her neighbors.

b. When Sargon came against Ashdod (710 B.C.E.)

The desire to resist Assyria led rather frequently to the formation of a coalition against her. This motive was enough to bring together such enemies as Ben Hadad of Damascus and Ahab of Israel.¹²⁰ Such a symmachy would have been sealed by the swearing of oaths; the Sefire treaties are apparently actual examples of such pacts. A similar conspiracy may have brought Judah and Edom together on an occasion described in a broken prism of Sargon. A Greek adventurer had gained control of Ashdod and was stirring up trouble for Assyria. "Then [to] the rulers of Palestine, Judah, Ed[om], Moab (and) those who live (on islands) and bring tribute [and] *tamartu*-gifts to my lord Ashur—[he spread] countless evil lies to alienate (them) from me, and (also) sent brides to Pir^u, king of Musru¹²¹—a potentate, incapable to save them—and asked him to be an ally."¹²² The text does not explicitly refer to a treaty or alliance between the states mentioned here, and perhaps the conspiracy never went that far. On the other hand, it is hard to see why Judah, Edom, and Moab should have been singled out for special mention if they did not stand in some special relation to the ruler of Ashdod. At any rate, it is at least possible that a formal agreement by oath existed between Judah and Edom at this time.¹²³ The occasion for a bitter doom-oracle against the former ally would arise when the Assyrian king appeared and Edom hastened to betray the oath and submit. This is, of course, hypothetical, since Isa 34 gives no clues as to the nature of what Edom had done to prompt the prophet's wrath. In general this occasion seems less likely than the first one described above, but it must be considered a possibility.

c. When Hezekiah conspired against Assyria (701 B.C.E.)¹²⁴

Sennacherib's account of his third campaign is well known. For our purpose the important facts that may be learned from it and from the

120. See Shalmaneser's report of his struggle with this coalition, *ANET* 278-79.

121. On the problems connected with the identification of this king and his country, see E. Weidner, "Šilkan(ḥe)ni, König von Mušri, ein Zeitgenosse Sargons II," *AfO* XIV (1941), 40-53.

122. Trans. A. L. Oppenheim, *ANET* 287.

123. See Martin Noth, *Geschichte Israels*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen, 1954), 239.

124. On this date see W. Rudolph, "Sanherib in Palästina," *PJB* XXV (1929), 59, note 1 and the literature cited there.

relevant biblical materials, are these: (1) Hezekiah was the head, in Palestine, of a conspiracy against Sennacherib, apparently linked with that of Merodach-Baladan in Babylon (2 Kgs 20:12–15); (2) Hezekiah and his people were made to suffer because of his role in the rebellion; (3) Edom submitted at once and paid tribute at the approach of the Assyrian king.¹²⁵ What we do not know is whether Edom had sworn to support Judah and the other rebellious states. If she did, it permits a plausible reconstruction of the course of events: all the little states in south Palestine united by oath against Assyria, but when Sennacherib arrived, Judah and just a few others are left alone. If this was the case, this situation furnishes still another occasion for a bitter prophetic oracle against Edom.

d. The destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (586 B.C.E.)

Here we have abundant evidence that the Edomites stood aside as Judah was devastated, and tore jackal-like at the scraps left by the Babylonian lion. Most commentators have dated Isa 34 some time after this experience. This is possible, if we can find any evidence that Edom was supposed to be in league with Judah at the time. One bit of evidence points toward such a reconstruction. In Jer 27 the prophet urges Judah and a group of neighboring states, by word and symbolic action, to submit to the yoke of the king of Babylon. The nations which the prophet addresses are: Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon. All of these had sent envoys to Zedekiah. Commentators agree in explaining their presence in Jerusalem: they had gathered to discuss a joint rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar.¹²⁶ Did they agree on a conspiracy against Babylon and swear to it? There is at least no serious difficulty involved in such a view. The evidence is slender, but it is possible that the post-exilic writers' hatred for Edom was increased by the fact that Edom had broken a treaty.

It is clear that an occasion for the composition of Isa 34 could have arisen repeatedly, beginning with Isaiah's time. This writer sees no compelling reason for dating Isa 34 later than the time of Isaiah. The reference to Edom has been the main criterion for considering the chapter post-exilic, and the other arguments have been more subjective.¹²⁷ But the exact date is of little importance for this study. What is important is that the history of relations between Edom and Judah permits the explanation of Isa 34:16 advanced here.

125. D. D. Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib, OIP II* (Chicago, 1924), pp. 29–34 (Oriental Institute Prism inscription, ii 37–iii 49); trans. *ANET* 287–88.

126. So Keil, Hitzig, Giesebrecht, Volz, Rudolph et al.

127. A late date for Isa 34 has become almost an article of faith in critical introduction; for a review of evidence and opinion, see Procksch, op. cit., 426–33.

A further word may be added on the location of this *sēper yahweh*. We are well informed as to the measures taken to preserve copies of treaties since this is an important subject in the treaties themselves. Korošec aptly describes the practice and its significance: "Durch den Eid wurden die Verträge unter Schutz und Garantie der Götter gestellt. Dieses innere sakrale Verhältnis fand seinen äusseren, sichtbaren Ausdruck durch die Niederlegung der Vertragsurkunde im Tempel vor der Hauptgottheit des betreffenden Landes."¹²⁸ Thus the prophet's words here may be interpreted: "Look it up in the covenant-inscription of Yahweh, which is deposited in the temple of Yahweh as a sign that he guarantees the oaths taken in his name." Of course if we imagine that the prophet is addressing Edom, he refers to *their* copy of the pact.¹²⁹

Why would this treaty-text have been called an inscription of *Yahweh*? *Sēper yahweh* may be a shorter form for *sēper bērit yahweh*. There is evidence that even a treaty or sworn agreement in which *Yahweh* was not a partner but only a witness was called a *bērit Yahweh*. *Yahweh* says, through Jeremiah (34:18), that the men who broke the agreement between king and people to free the Hebrew slaves have broken "my covenant" (*bēritī*). Compare also Ezek 17:19, where *Yahweh* refers to a treaty between Babylon and Judah as "my oath (lit. my curse)" and "my covenant."

Finally, it may be objected that the prophets denounced foreign alliances, and that true Yahwism involved abstaining from such pacts, which probably involved swearing by foreign gods. Thus it might be argued that it is unthinkable that any Israelite prophet, to say nothing of Isaiah, should have taken an alliance with Edom so seriously. Against this it may be urged that the prophets' attitude toward alliances was inconsistent. Isaiah encouraged Hezekiah to stand against Sennacherib, and thus tacitly gave his approval to Hezekiah's being in league with other nations. Ezekiel (17:11–21) plainly felt that a treaty with Babylon should be kept. While the prophets in general opposed foreign alliances, it does not follow that they felt a foreign nation was free to violate an

128. Op. cit., 100; he adds references to the specific treaties.

129. An analogous appeal to the text of a treaty is made by Cicero in his defense of Balbus: "Who does not know that a treaty was struck with all the Latins in the consulship of Spurius Cassius and Postumus Cominius, which not so long ago we remember was engraved and written out upon a column of bronze standing behind the Rostra?" *Pro Balbo* 23, 53, quoted in H. Bengtson, *Die Staatsverträge des Altertums II: Die Verträge der griechisch-römischen Welt von 700 bis 338 v. Chr.* (Munich and Berlin, 1962), 24; the translation is that of R. Gardner, *Cicero: The Speeches . . .*, Loeb Classical Library (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1958), 699.

oath taken in Yahweh's name, once it had been sworn. Thus there can be no objection to the above interpretation of Isa 34:16 from this side.

In conclusion, it may be regarded as certain that in this instance a prophet pronounces doom on a nation in terms which occur as a curse in a treaty, and clearly refers to a treaty as the source for his imagery.

The following may be cited as further examples of the prophets' use of this same imagery: Isa 13:19–22 (a doom-oracle on Babylon); Zeph 2:13–15 (doom-oracle on Ashur and Nineveh); and Jer 50:39 (doom-oracle on Babylon). These, with Isa 34, are the most extensive Old Testament instances; and may be regarded as free variations on a single theme, though there is recurrence of details of description in each.

The following are briefer descriptions of a city as a dwelling of animals; many contain the phrase *mē'ōn tannīm* "a dwelling of jackals": Isa 17:1–2 (against Damascus); Isa 27:10 (against Israel); Isa 32:14 (against Israel); Jer 10:22 (concerning Judah); Jer 49:33 (against Hazor); Jer 51:37 (against Babylon); Ezek 25:5 (against Ammon).¹³⁰ In Jer 9:9–10 the same theme is used in a little lament over Jerusalem, which has, however, the force of a threat.¹³¹

Following a suggestion made by Rudolph (ad Jer 26:18), one should add to this number Mic 3:12, quoted in Jer 26:18 *wyršlm 'yyn thyh whr hbyt lbmwt y'r* "And Jerusalem shall be heaps of ruins, and the temple-hill (shall belong) to the beasts of the forest." The usual translation, "high-places of a forest" or "wooded heights," is not impossible, but it does involve grammatical and conceptual difficulties. The plural *bāmôt* of the Massoretic Text is difficult to reconcile with the single "temple-hill," and many commentators have been led to choose the easier reading implied by the singular in the Septuagint's *alsos* (*bāmat*). Furthermore, to say that a place will become "wooded heights" (as J. M. P. Smith puts it, "like the summit of Mt. Carmel")¹³² is the exact opposite of the ordinary curse or prophetic threat; usually the prophecy is that a place will become a waste where nothing grows, or that noxious weeds, thorns, etc., will grow over it.

As Rudolph has pointed out, "beasts of the forest" is paralleled in Mic 5:7 *kē'aryēh bēbahāmôt ya'ar kikēpār bē'edre šō'n* "Like a lion among the beasts of the forest; like a young lion among the flocks of sheep." (Taken by itself, this *bhmwt y'r* of Mic 5:7 could conceivably mean "wooded heights," preserving an archaic form of *bāmāh*, but the parallelism with "flocks" makes it certain that the expression refers to

130. Cf. also Mal 1:3 and Isa 23:13, where *BH³ lšydnyim* for *lšyym* is gratuitous.

131. Cf. Rudolph ad loc.

132. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Micah, ICC* (New York, 1911), 81.

animals.) The construct plural of *bēhēmāh* is ordinarily *bahāmôt*, which is probably historical spelling for what was pronounced *bâmôt* (from **bahimot* > **bahmôt*). *bmwt* would then simply be the phonetic spelling of the word and need not be emended to *bhmt* (so Rudolph). Compare the parallel development of **bahmatu* > *bâmāh* / *bômāh* “high place” (which is probably etymologically related to *bēhēmāh*).¹³³ The preservation of the long *â* may be due to the retention of *ah* until after the *â* > *ô* shift had taken place. On the existence of two forms of the same word, one fuller and one shorter, compare *rē^hhû* (common) and *rē^hô* (Jer 6:21 and the Siloam inscription lines 2, 3, 4). Cross and Freedman, who discuss this example, point out: “This is one of the many small differences between the common tongue and the literary language of the time. Older, fuller forms are preserved (and restored) in the literary texts (i.e. the Bible), while the shorter forms, involving syncope of weak consonants and the loss of final vowels are preserved in the matter of fact language of the surviving contemporary texts.”¹³⁴ The presence of the unusual spelling *bmwt* in both Micah and Jeremiah may be due to chance, but is more likely to be explained as the result of collation and correction: at some time after the two books had been gathered into the corpus of the Prophets, one passage was made to agree with the other, since Jeremiah was quoting Micah. If this interpretation is correct, there are many conceptual parallels to the passage in the materials collected above, especially such verses as Jer 9:10, 51:37, where *gallîm* “heaps” is paralleled by *mē^hôn tannîm* “the dwelling of jackals.”

2. Devouring animals

Several treaty-curses state that ravenous wild animals will be brought upon a land as punishment. Thus *Sf I A* 30–32: “May the gods send every sort of devourer against Arpad and against its people! [May the mo]uth of a snake [eat], the mouth of a scorpion, the mouth of a bear, the mouth of a panther. And may a moth and a louse and a [. . . become] toward it the throat of a serpent!”¹³⁵

Sf II A 9, though fragmentary, clearly contains a very similar curse, but adds the lion to the list of predators: “[And may] the mouth of a

133. See W. F. Albright, “The High Place in Ancient Palestine,” *VTS IV* (1956), 255, where other examples are given.

134. F. M. Cross, Jr. and D. N. Freedman, *Early Hebrew Orthography: A Study of the Epigraphic Evidence* (Baltimore, 1952), 50 note 28.

135. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire I and II,” *JAOS* LXXXI (1961), 181, 185; see his notes for discussion of the difficulties of the passage. The translation “bear” for *dbhh* is uncertain, though probably preferable to Dupont-Sommer’s “bee” (reading *dbrh*). The last phrase *‘lh qq btn* is most difficult.

lion [eat] and the mouth of [a . . .] and the mouth of a panther” Compare *Baal* rev. iv 6–7: “May Bethel and Anath Bethel put you at the mercy of a devouring lion.”

This type of curse occurs in Lev 26:22: “Then I will send among you wild animals, which will make you bereft of children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number and your ways desolate.” This has its counterpart in the list of blessings (26:6): “And I will remove the wild animals from the land.” Deut 28 contains several parallels to this curse, none especially close (38, 39, 42).

The doom-oracle in Jer 5:6 offers a particularly fine parallel:

Therefore a lion from the forest shall smite them;
 a desert wolf shall ravage them.
 A panther is watching over their cities;
 everyone who leaves them shall be torn in pieces.

This verse is sometimes taken as figurative, and the animals are considered metaphor for the enemies of Judah.¹³⁶ This possibility cannot be ruled out, but no enemy is named here or in the surrounding verses, and with the background of the treaty-curses in mind, it seems more likely that the prophet meant these words literally.¹³⁷

Jer 8:17 is a similar parallel: “For behold I will send among you venomous snakes, against which there is no incantation. They shall bite you, without any healing.”¹³⁸ Once again, there is nothing in the context which demands that these words be taken in a figurative sense.

In other places it seems that the prophets use the theme of destruction by wild animals metaphorically: this or that enemy, or God, is pictured as a beast or as some sort of vermin. There are, of course, other sources for the animal imagery in the prophets. It was a common and natural thing, for example, to compare an enemy to a lion. But certain passages may legitimately be regarded as parallels to treaty-curses involving animals. Thus Hos 13:7–8:

And I (God) will be like a lion to them.
 like a panther I will lower along the way.

136. So, e.g. Rudolph ad loc.

137. Hugo Gressmann, *Der Ursprung der israelitischen-jüdischen Eschatologie* (Göttingen, 1905), 89 argues convincingly that this passage is to be taken literally. It may be recalled that bears were sent as a response to Elisha’s curse on the children (2 Kgs 2:24) and that “Yahweh sent lions” to attack the new settlers in what had formerly been Israel (2 Kgs 17:25–26).

138. Following Septuagint *aniata* (*mibbēli gēhôt*) for the text and translation of the last phrase, as suggested in *BH*³ ad loc.

I will fall on them like a she-bear bereft of her cubs,¹³⁹
 and I will rip open their vitals.
 I will devour them there like a lioness,
 a wild beast which rends them.

The curious comparison of God to a moth in Hos 5:12: "I will be like a moth (*āš*) to Ephraim, and like rot to the house of Judah," is illuminated by the occurrence of the moth (*ss*) among the predators in *Sf I A* 31, with which one may also compare Isa 51:8: "For the moth (*āš*) will eat them like a garment, and the clothes moth (*sās*) consume them like wool." A similar image may be present also in Gilgamesh Epic XII 93–94.

The summary threat in Deut 32:24 deserves quotation: "The teeth of animals I shall send upon them, with venom of creatures that crawl in the dust." Compare also Lam 3:10–11: "He (God) is to me a bear lying in wait, a lion in hiding. He turned me from my path and tore me in pieces." Other possible parallels occur in Isa 5:29–30 (the enemy as a lion); Isa 7:18 (enemies as fly and bee); Isa 14:29 (snake); Isa 15:9 ("A lion for those of Moab who escape"); Isa 56:9 ("All wild animals, come to devour"); Jer 2:14–15 (lion); Jer 4:7 (lion); Jer 12:9 ("all the wild animals"); Jer 48:40 (eagle); 49:22 (eagle); 49:19 (lion); 50:44 (lion); Hos 5:14 (God as a lion); Hab 1:8 (enemy as panther and desert wolves).¹⁴⁰

Note also the blessing in Isa 35:9: "There shall be no lion there, and no violent beast shall come up upon it." Compare Hos 2:20: "And on that day I will make a covenant for them with the wild animals and the birds of the sky and the creatures that creep on the ground."¹⁴¹

3. Removal of joyful sounds

The removal of joyful sounds from a land occurs as a curse in *Sf I A* 29: *wʿl yšmʿ ql knr bʿrpd wbʿmh* "Nor may the sound of the lyre be heard in Arpad and among its people." Dupont-Sommer already called attention to the parallel in the Ashurnirari treaty rev. iv 19: "May his peasant in the field sing no work-song (*alāla*)."

139. Compare the reaction of Gilgamesh to Enkidu's death: "Like an eagle he circles around him, like a lioness forced to abandon her whelps he keeps on wandering back and forth" (restored from *JCS* VIII 93:13–15, VIII II 18–20).

140. Cf. Karl Elliger, "Das Ende der 'Abendwölfe'," in *Festschrift Alfred Bertholet*, ed. W. Baumgartner et al. (Tübingen, 1950), 158–75.

141. Isa 11:6–10 is not closely related to this group of treaty-curses; as Gressmann has pointed out, the picture there of a transformation of the nature of animals goes back to an ancient concept of paradise. But it is incorrect for Gressmann to read a transformation of animal nature into Hos 2:20, in order to make it fit the same mold as Isa 11, as he does in his *Ursprung*, 194–200.

Parallels in Akkadian texts are numerous. In describing a ruined city, Esarhaddon's letter to the god Ashur states: "No merry-maker enters its streets; no musician is met there."¹⁴² Similarly, from the annals of Ashurbanipal: "I deprived their fields of the noise of men, the treading of oxen and sheep, and the sound of the glad worksong."¹⁴³ In the *Era Epic* occurs this threat: "The sound of the work-song in the field I will confuse."¹⁴⁴ Compare also *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* I 101–2: "They have excluded the work-song from my fields, And silenced my city like an enemy city."¹⁴⁵

A related treaty-curse is *Esar* 437–39: "May she (the Lady-of-the-gods) deprive your nurses of the cries of infants in streets and squares," which has a close parallel in the *Era Epic*: "I will deprive the nurse of the cry of babe and infant."¹⁴⁶

Dupont-Sommer cited Ezek 26:13 as a biblical parallel: "And I will put an end to the sound of your songs, and the sound of your lyres shall be heard no more" (*qôl kinnôrayik lô' yîššāma' ʿôd*). To this may be added the phrases which recur in stereotyped form in Jeremiah's sermons (7:34; 16:9; 25:10; 33:11): "I will make to cease from the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem the sound of joy and the sound of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride." Compare also Lam 5:14–15; Amos 8:10. See also F. C. Fensham, *ZAW* LXXV (1963), 171–72.

4. Removal of the sound of the millstones

This curse is treated apart from those immediately above in order to call attention to the close parallel. *Esar* 443–45 states: "May there be no noise of millstone and oven in your houses. May you experience a constant lack of grain for grinding." In one list of the joyful sounds which the Lord will make to cease Jeremiah includes: "And I will remove from them . . . the sound of the millstones . . ." (25:10).

5. To become a prostitute

Two separate curses deal with prostitution, and are grouped together here as numbers 5 and 6. The first occurs in *AshN* rev. v 9–11: "Then

142. *AJO* Beiheft 9, p. 107 Rand 1.

143. *VAB* VII, pp. 56–59 (Rassam Cylinder vi) lines 101–3. Streck points out the Old Testament parallel.

144. In the new fragment published by R. Borger and W. G. Lambert, "Ein neuer Era-Text aus Ninive (K 9956 + 79–7–8, 18)," *Orientalia* N. S. XXVII (1958), 141, and 146 note 3, where other occurrences of *alāla* and discussions of its meaning are listed. Cf. A. L. Oppenheim's long discussion and collection of examples, "Assyriological Gleanings IV," *BASOR* 103 (Oct., 1946), 11–14. Other passages with *alāla* apud *CAD* vol A1, sub voce.

145. W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford, 1960), 36.

146. Borger and Lambert, "Ein neuer Era-Text," 141 I line 2.

may the aforesaid indeed become a prostitute, and his warriors women. May they receive their hire like a prostitute in the square of their city. May land after land draw near to them.”

The prophets very frequently use imagery having to do with prostitution, most often to describe the sin of the people rather than its punishment. However, there are passages in which the harlot figure is used in a doom-oracle, as a threat. Amos thus curses Amaziah (7:17): “Your wife shall be a prostitute in the city.” Isa 23:15–18 contains a parallel to the curse. After a little taunt-song on the forgotten harlot, the prophet continues (17): “And at the end of seventy years Yahweh will visit (i.e. punish) Tyre and she shall return to her hire. She shall play the prostitute with all the kingdoms of the world on the face of the earth.” The proceeds will go to the Lord (18). The point of the oracle is this: Tyre will be destroyed for a long period of time, after which she will become a prostitute again, but now an old drab, and what she does make will be given up to Yahweh. There is no need to see in *pqd* here any favorable sense; becoming a harlot is not a blessing.¹⁴⁷

6. To be stripped like a prostitute

Sf I A 40–41 may refer to the punishment of a prostitute: [*w'yk zy t'*] (41) [*rr z*][*n[yh]*] *kn y'rrn nšy mt^{ol} wnšy 'qrh wnšy r[bwh . . .]* “[And just as a pros]ti[tute is stripped naked] so may Mati^oel be stripped naked, and the wives of his offspring and the wives of [his] no[bles].”

The above restoration and translation differs from previous interpretations. Dupont-Sommer read the text thus: [*w'yk zy y'*] (41) [*bd z*][*n[h]*] *kn y'bdn* etc. “[Et de même que sert ce]lui-[ci] qu'ainsi servent les femmes de Mati^oel . . .” But he noted that the independent use of the demonstrative *znh* is somewhat odd and disagrees with the preceding phrases.¹⁴⁸ An additional, and serious, objection is pointed out by Fitzmyer: *'bd* does not have the meaning “to serve, be a slave” in Aramaic.¹⁴⁹

Fitzmyer follows Hans Bauer in reading the verb as *'rr*, not *'bd*: “Only the tops of the letters *bd* are preserved and they could just as easily be read *rr*.” Fitzmyer, again following Bauer, quotes the parallel in Nahum 3:5 and the practice of the Assyrian kings in favor of reading here the idea of stripping. He retains *znh* “this,” however, and with it the difficulty discussed by Dupont-Sommer. The writer would retain, in essentials, the restoration of Fitzmyer and Bauer, but read *znyh* “a prostitute.”

147. In Gilgamesh VII iii 6–22 (*ANET* 86) Enkidu curses the prostitute, and the sense of his words seems to be that she should become a rejected, forgotten old drab. The lines are badly damaged, however, and this interpretation is uncertain.

148. “Les Inscriptions . . . (Stèles I et II),” 18, 58.

149. *Op. cit.*, 201.

There seems to be room for the extra consonant, from an examination of the photograph and copy in Dupont-Sommer's edition. The gender of the restored form of *ʿrr* must then be changed to feminine *tʿrr*. In view of the state of the text, this restoration and translation can only be regarded as a plausible conjecture, but it has the advantage of eliminating the difficult independent *znh*, and, as will be shown below, fits better with the parallel already suggested (Nahum 3:5) and with other Old Testament passages. If the writer's interpretation is correct, one cannot be certain that any ritual action accompanied this curse. Conceivably a figurine may have been stripped, or this may be a curse without accompanying rite. Even if the writer's interpretation is only approximately correct, the biblical parallels for punishment by stripping are still valid.

Jeremiah threatens Judah as follows (13:26–27): “Yea, I myself will lift your skirts over your face and your pudenda will be seen, your adulteries and your bestial cries (lit., “whinnings”), your lewd harlotry . . . !” In Ezekiel's two detailed discourses on the harlotry of Judah, part of the doom in each case is stripping naked (16:37–38; 23:10, 29). “Plead with your (prostitute) mother,” says Hosea, “lest I strip her naked and make her as on the day she was born” (2:5); he adds later: “Now I will lay bare her pudenda before the eyes of her lovers” (2:12). Nahum 3:5 describes Nineveh as a graceful and enchanting courtesan, and threatens: “I will lift your skirts up over your face, and nations shall see your nakedness, and kingdoms your pudenda.”

In the following passages the same punishment is described, but not specifically for the sin of prostitution: Isa 3:17 (doom-oracle on the women of Israel; prostitution is implied); Isa 47:3 (against Babylon) and Jer 13:22 (against Judah). Compare also Lam 1:8.

7. *Breaking of weapons*

An exceptionally common curse is that the god may break a man's weapons, usually the bow. Thus *Sf I A* 38–39: “Just as (this) bow and these arrows are broken, so may ʿAnahita and Hadad break [the bow of Mati⁹el] and the bow of his nobles.”

Numerous parallels in Akkadian texts have been pointed out by Weidner, Fitzmyer, and others. For example, *Baal* rev. iv 18: “May Astarte break your bow in fierce battle.” Nearly identical is Esarhaddon 543; compare also 573–75: “May they break your bow May they reverse the direction of the bow in your hand.” A curse similar to these occurs already in the Code of Hammurabi, rev. xxviii 3–4. In the Hittite Soldiers' Oath an arrow is broken in a ritual curse (*ANET* 354).¹⁵⁰

150. The following selection of references indicates the popularity of this curse: *BBS* p. 23 iii 16; p. 47 iv 21–22 (boundary-stones); J. R. Kupper, *Correspondence de Kibri-Dagan*, *ARM* III (Paris, 1950), no. 15, lines 7–8 (18th century B.C.E.,

Biblical parallels, some of which were pointed out by Fitzmyer,¹⁵¹ are fairly numerous. Thus Jer 49:35: “Behold, I will break the bow of Elam”; 51:56; Ezek 39:3: “I will knock your bow out of your left hand, and I will make your arrows fall from your right hand” (oracle against Gog); Hos 1:5: “I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.” Compare also 1 Sam 2:4; Hos 2:20; Zech 9:10; Ps 46:10; 76:4.

8. *Breaking the scepter*

Much similar to the foregoing is the curse from the Shamshi-Adad treaty, 22: “May X, . . . of the gods, break his sceptre (staff).” This is paralleled in the Code of Hammurabi, rev. xxvi 45–51: “May the mighty Anum, the father of the gods, . . . break his sceptre” (trans. Meek, *ANET* 179).

A similar curse occurs in a Ugaritic poetic couplet (*UM* text 129, 17–18; 49 vi 28–29), *lyhpk.ksa.mlkk lytbr.ḥt.mtpṭk* “He (El) will overturn your royal throne. He will break your judicial sceptre.” This is very closely paralleled in the Ahiiram inscription (10th century B.C.E.): *thtsp.ḥtr.mšpṭh.thtpk.ks’.mlkh* “May his judicial sceptre be snatched away.¹⁵² May his royal throne be overturned.”

These are paralleled in Isa 14:5 (taunt-song on the king of Babylon) “Yahweh has broken the staff of the wicked, the sceptre of rulers”; Jer 48:17 (a taunt on Moab): “How the mighty staff is broken, the glorious sceptre”; and in Isa 9:3: “The staff of his oppressor you have broken, as on the day of Midian.” Compare also Isa 14:29 and Zech 10:11. Ps 89:45, corrupt in its present form, seems to contain the same picture: note the parallelism of throne and sceptre, as in the Ugaritic example quoted above (see the note in *BH*³). Cf. also Ecclesiasticus 32:23 (Heb.).

9. *Dry breasts*

Dry breasts figure in a treaty-curse in *Sf I A* 21–24: “And should seven nur[ses] anoint [their breasts and]¹⁵³ nurse a young boy, may he not

a letter); D. J. Wiseman, *The Alalakh Tablets* (London, 1953), p. 25 no. 1, line 17 (18th century B.C.E.); *AKA* p. 107, line 80 (inscription of Tiglath-Pileser I); *AKA* p. 172, lines 19–21 (inscription of Ashurnasirpal); *AJO* Beiheft 9, p. 44 line 75 (inscription of Esarhaddon); *VAB* VII pp. 322–23, line 5; pp. 194–95, line 25 (inscriptions of Ashurbanipal); Hans Hirsch, “Die Inschriften der Könige von Agade,” *AJO* XX (1963), 43, lines 36–44 (inscription of Sargon of Akkad); 45, 47–55; 46, 22–30.

151. Op. cit., 200.

152. On the meaning of *hsp* here see S. J. Gevirtz, “West-Semitic Curses and the Problem of the Origins of Hebrew Law,” *VT* XI (1961), 147 note 2, where other Akkadian parallels are listed.

153. Read *ymšh[n šdyhn w]yhyqn* etc. The restoration is that of Dupont-Sommer, who explains: “. . . en frottant leurs mamelles d’huile ordinaire on

have his fill; and should seven mares suckle a colt, may it not be sa[ted; and should seven] cows give suck to a calf, may it not have its fill; and should seven ewes suckle a lamb, [may it not be sa]ted.”

Ashurbanipal's annals refer to the same curse: “(The gods) inflicted quickly upon them (all) the curses written down in their treaties. Even when the camel foals, the donkey foals, calves or lambs would suckle seven times on their dams, they could not satisfy their stomachs with milk.”¹⁵⁴ In the *Era Epic* IV 121, in a series of curses uttered by Era, the god says: “I will make the breast dry up, so that the baby shall not live.”

Dupont-Sommer has pointed out the biblical parallels, the most striking is Hos 9:14 (a doom-oracle on Ephraim): “Give them, O Yahweh—what will you give? Give them a womb that makes (them) childless and dry breasts!” He adds Lam 4:3–4: “Even the jackals extend the breast and give suck to their young, (But) the daughter of my people is cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness. The tongue of the suckling cleaves to the roof of his mouth from thirst.” There is a corresponding blessing in Gen 49:25: “Blessings of breasts and womb.”

10. To eat the flesh of sons and daughters

Famine is a common treaty-curse, but so general and obvious in nature that the parallels are not collected here. However, one characteristic description of the famine, that those cursed may eat the flesh of their sons and daughters, is formulated in such striking terms that it is justifiable to gather the counterparts in the Bible. Note, however, that 2 Kgs 6:24–31 describes a siege of Samaria during which such cannibalism actually occurred, and there are similar references in Akkadian and Egyptian literature.¹⁵⁵

This curse occurs in *AshN* rev. iv 10–11: “May they eat the flesh of their sons (and) their daughters and may it taste as good to them as the flesh of a ram or sheep.” The Esarhaddon treaty contains a number of variations on this theme. “A mother [will close her door]¹⁵⁶ against her own daughter. In your hunger eat the flesh of your sons. Let one eat the

aromatisée, les femmes pensaient sans doute obtenir un lait plus abondant,” op. cit., 39. Dupont-Sommer offers no parallels for this belief. Perhaps the explanation is more prosaic; this is a common practice of nursing mothers to prevent soreness, cracking, etc.

154. *VAB* VII, pp. 76–79, lines 65–67; cf. *ANET* 300.

155. A. L. Oppenheim, “‘Siege-Documents’ from Nippur,” *Iraq* XVII (1955), 69–89 has gathered materials on the sale of children into slavery during severe famine. On p. 79, note 34 he lists references to cannibalism in Near Eastern documents.

156. [The copies diverge in this passage. We have followed 50A (pl. 40), with restorations from 27 (pl. 7). W. G. Lambert.] The mother closes the door

flesh of another, let one clothe himself with another's skin" (448–50). "Just as this sheep is cut up and the flesh of her young is put in her mouth, so may he give to you to eat in your hunger [the flesh of your wives (?)], the flesh of your brothers, of your sons, and of your daughters" (547–50). "Just as you do not eat . . . [] while still alive, may you eat, while you are still alive, your own flesh and the flesh of your wives, your sons, and your daughters . . ." (570–72). This curse is also referred to, along with other treaty-curses, in Ashurbanipal's annals.¹⁵⁷

The classic version of this curse, unsurpassed for shocking detail, is in Deut 28:53–57. A more restrained form occurs in Lev 26:29. Prophetic parallels begin with Isa 9:19–20: "They do not spare one another. One devours on the right but is still hungry; then consumes on the left but is not satisfied. They eat one another's flesh."¹⁵⁸ A closer parallel is Jer 19:9: "And I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters. Each shall eat another's flesh." Ezek 5:10 is also very much like the treaty curse: "Therefore fathers shall eat sons in thy midst, and sons shall eat their fathers." Compare also Lam 4:10; Zech 11:9; and Isa 49:26: "And I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh, and they shall drink their own blood like sweet wine."

11. Ravishing of wives

The curse in *Esar* 428–29: "May Venus, the brightest of the stars, make your spouses lie in the lap of your enemy before your eyes," is, to this writer's knowledge, unparalleled in other curse lists, but a Hebrew prophet does use similar terms in pronouncing judgment on David after the king had taken Bathsheba and caused her husband's murder: "Behold I shall raise up evil out of your own family, and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to another, and he will lie with your wives publicly, in broad daylight" (2 Sam 12:11). It will be recalled that Absalom, acting on Ahithophel's advice, carried out this act (2 Sam 16:20–22). The resemblance may be accidental, but it is close.

Jer 8:10 offers another parallel: "Therefore I will give their wives to others." Compare also Job's curse (31:10): "Then let others bow down upon her (my wife)." (Compare F. C. Fensham, *ZAW* LXXV [1963], 170.)

12. Contaminated water

Esar 521–22: "May Ea, king of the Apsû, the lord of the deep, give you contaminated water to drink; may he fill you with dropsy," has three possible parallels in Jeremiah. Jer 23:15, a typical short doom-oracle,

to keep her daughter out of the house during time of famine; Oppenheim lists numerous parallels in Sumerian and Akkadian literature, op. cit., 76.

157. *VAB* VII, loc. cit.

158. Reading $r^{\zeta}w$ instead of $z\bar{e}r\acute{o}'\acute{o}$, with *BH*³.

directed against the false prophets, states: "Behold I will make them eat wormwood, and give them poisonous water (*mê rôʔs*) to drink." Jer 9:14 is identical, but directed against the people, and Jer 8:14 presents only the last phrase ("He has given us poisonous water to drink"). In this case it is difficult to see how the prophet's threat could have been derived from experience of calamity. Press has explained these oracles as related to the ordeal described in Num 5, according to which a woman accused of infidelity is required to drink of holy water mixed with dust from the floor of the tabernacle.¹⁵⁹ This is, however, unsatisfactory, since the purpose of the ordeal is not that of punishing one known to be guilty, but of determining whether guilt exists. In the oracles of Jeremiah the guilt of prophets and people has already been announced in the indictments (23:13-14; 9:12-13), and the eating and drinking are the punishment. It is thus more consistent with the situation to seek the background of Jeremiah's words in a curse. On the other hand, the parallel is perhaps not close enough to support the deductions one would have to draw if the Mesopotamian curse and the passages in Jeremiah are related. For it seems that this sort of curse could only arise in connection with a god like Ea, "king of the Apsû, the lord of the deep." We know of no god with exactly this nature and function in Canaanite mythology, and the implication would be that the Israelite threat was adopted directly from a Mesopotamian source.

13. *The incurable wound*

The two curses that follow are closely related in content and may be discussed together; *Baal* rev. iv 3-4: "May Gula, the great physician, . . . your . . ., bring upon your body a persistent wound"; *Esar* 643-45: "When your enemy runs you through may there be no honey, oil, *zinzaru'u* or cedar resin available to put on your wound."

In the maledictions at the end of the Code of Hammurabi occurs this ancient parallel: "May Ninkarrak, daughter of Anum, who speaks well of me in Ekur, bring on his limbs a severe malady, an evil plague, a festering wound, which does not get better, which no physician understands or can cure by bandages, and which, like the sting of death, cannot be got rid of. May he continue to lament over his (lost) manhood until his life is extinguished" (rev. xxviii 50-69).¹⁶⁰

Imagery resembling this curse is extremely common in the prophets; the people (of Israel and other nations) is addressed as a single person whose body is smitten with an incurable wound, or with a wound which

159. Richard Press, "Das Ordal im alten Israel, I," *ZAW LI* (N. F. X) (1933), 122-26.

160. Cf. *Afo* Beiheft 9, p. 99, lines 40-41 "I smote him with an incurable wound."

is not treated. Isa 1:5–6: “Why are you being smitten again? (Because) you keep on rebelling!¹⁶¹ The whole head is sick and the whole heart is weak. From the sole of the foot to the head there is no healthy spot (but only) gash and welt and festering wound. They are not pressed out, or bound up, or softened with oil.” Jeremiah is especially fond of this theme; Jer 8:22 is a familiar poetic treatment: “Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Then why has no healing arisen for the daughter of my people?” Compare also Jer 10:19; 14:17; 14:19: “Why have you smitten us, with no healing for us? We wait for peace, but there is no good; for a time of healing, but behold terror.” The theme turns up in one of the famous “confessions” (15:18): “Why has my pain become constant, and my wound incurable, refusing to be healed?” Jer 30:12–13 is particularly close in thought to the treaty-curses: “Your hurt is incurable, your wound is critical. There is none to plead your cause (?), (no) cure for the running sore,¹⁶² no healing for you.” Compare also 30:15 (lacking in the Septuagint); 46:11: “Go up to Gilead and take balm, virgin daughter of Egypt! In vain you multiply cures; there is no healing for you”; and 51:8–9.

161. This translation of Isa 1:5 is based on the following considerations. A fairly common literary device in the Bible consists of these parts: (1) a description of the punishment that has come over a land; (2) a question: Why has this happened? (3) the answer: because they have broken the covenant, rebelled, etc. W. L. Moran calls attention to three biblical examples, Deut 29:22–28; 1 Kgs 9:8–9; Jer 22:8–9 and to the same commonplace in Ashurbanipal’s annals, *VAB* VII p. 79 lines 68–73 (cf. *ANET* 300); see his “The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy,” *CBQ* XXV (1963), 83–84. To this list one may add Jer 2:14–19; 9:11; 13:22; 16:10–13. As Moran observes, the form merits a separate study. Here it is sufficient to point out that it is not uncommon, and that its elements are present in Isa 1:5. “Why” is the ordinary meaning of *‘al mäh*; cf. Deut 29:23 for its use in this same literary form. G. B. Gray, *Isaiah, ICC* (Edinburgh, 1912), ad loc. already argued convincingly against a rendering commonly adopted since the Vulgate’s “super quo percutiam vos ultra,” “On what (part of the body) will ye yet be smitten, etc.” But Gray’s own: “Wherefore will ye be smitten, etc.” unnecessarily imports a modal idea into *tukkû* and is rather strained. “Why are you being smitten again?” has the merit of being a more literal rendering of the Hebrew. “(Because) you keep on rebelling!” provides the answer. The transition is abrupt, but no more so than in another example of this same dialogue form, Jer 13:22: “And if you say to yourself, ‘Why did all this happen to me?’—for the abundance of your iniquity your skirts have been raised, etc.” (*maddûa‘ qērâ’ûni ’ēlleh bērab ’āwônēk niġlû šūlayik*). The following lines (Isa 1:5b–6) expand the picture of punishment suggested in *tukkû*.

162. On *māzôr* “running sore” from *zûr* “to flow” see now Mitchell Dahood, “Philological Notes on Jer 18:14–15,” *ZAW* LXXIV (1962) Heft 2, 207–9.

Further parallels in prophetic literature are: Ezek 30:21; Hos 5:13; Mic 1:9; Nah 3:19. This theme is frequently reversed to form a prophecy of weal; e.g. Isa 58:8; Jer 30:17; 33:6.

14. *Warriors become women*

Two related curses in the Ashurnirari treaty express the same idea: Mati'ilu's warriors will lose their virility and become women: "May his warriors become women" (rev. v 9); "As for the men, may the Mistress of Women take away their bow" (rev. v 12-13). (In this context, the loss of the bow means loss of masculinity, as parallels will show.)

Ishtar is described as having power to do this in an Old Babylonian prayer: "It is within your (power), Ishtar, to change men into women and women into men."¹⁶³ The goddess is represented elsewhere as saying: "[I change] the man into a woman; [I change] the woman to a man. I adorn the man as a woman; I adorn the woman as a man."¹⁶⁴ The following petition occurs in a Hittite prayer to Ishtar: "Furthermore, grind away from the men manliness, potency (?) (and) health; take away their swords, bows, arrows, daggers, and bring them into the Hatti-land; then put into their hand the distaff and mirror (??) of a woman and clothe them as women . . ." ¹⁶⁵ The Hittite Soldiers' Oath indicates that such a curse might be accompanied by a ritual: "They bring the garments of a woman, a distaff and a mirror, they break an arrow and you speak as follows: 'Is not this that you see here garments of a woman? We have them here for (the ceremony of taking) the oath. Whoever breaks these oaths and does evil to the king (and) the queen (and) the princes, let these oaths change him from a man into a woman! Let them change his troops into women, let them dress them in the fashion of women and cover their heads with a length of cloth! Let them break the bows, arrows (and) clubs in their hands and [let them put] in their hands distaff and mirror!'" (Trans. Goetze, *ANET* 354). F. Sommer also cites the *Era*

163. Trans. *CAD* vol. Z, 110b.

164. Paul Haupt, *Akkadische and sumerische Keilschrifttexte*, AB I (Leipzig, 1881), p. 130 lines 47-54. W. G. Lambert compares also [x-x-p]at zik-ri ana sin-niš a sin-niš-tú ana zik-r[i] "who . . . man into woman and woman into man," a designation of Ishtar, cf. S. H. Langdon, "Hymn in Paragraphs to Ishtar as the Belit of Nippur," *AJK* I (1923), p. 22, line 19 (corrected and restored from unpublished materials), cf. A. Sjöberg, *Or* XXXIII (1964), 108 n. 1.

165. Text in F. Sommer, "Ein hethitisches Gebet," *ZA* XXXIII (1921), p. 98 lines 25-29. The translation here follows the German version of J. Friedrich, *AO* 25 Heft 2 (1925), 21-22: "Ferner mahle den Männern Mannheit, Geschlechtskraft (?) (und) Gesundheit weg; (ihre) Schwerter, Bogen, Pfeile, Dolch(e) nimm und bringe sie her ins Land Chatti; ihnen aber lege in die Hand die Spindel und den Spiegel (??) der Frau und Kleide sie weiblich . . ."

Epic iv 55–56: “. . . the male prostitutes and sodomites, whom Ishtar, in order to make the people reverent, had turned from men into women.” Finally, compare also a curse from one of Esarhaddon’s inscriptions: “May Ishtar, mistress of battle and conflict, turn his masculinity into femininity and set him bound at the feet of his enemy.”¹⁶⁶

The closest biblical parallel is in Jer 50:35–38, a portion of an oracle on Babylon, each verse of which begins “A sword on —.” In this vehement series of maledictions occurs the line: “A sword on his horses and chariots, and on all the conglomeration of peoples¹⁶⁷ in her midst, and may they become women!” Jer 51:30, another portion of the same diatribe against Babylon, uses the same image: “The warriors of Babylon have stopped fighting, they sit in the fortresses. Their manly prowess has vanished; they have become women.” (Note the play on the words *nāšētāh* and *nāšīm*.) Compare also Isa 19:16: “On that day the Egyptians (lit., Egypt) shall be like women”; and Nahum 3:13: “Behold your people have become women in your midst” (a taunt on Assyria).

The use of “woman” as a simile for “weakness, cowardice” is a natural one (male readers will agree), and perhaps the parallels are accidental. On the other hand, Jer 50:37 bears a very close resemblance to the treaty-curse.

A further parallel which deserves mention is found in 2 Sam 3:29, though in this case the resemblance is to a feature not present in the extant treaties, but in the Hittite curses listed above. This verse contains the curse which David pronounced on Joab and his line after Joab had killed Abner: “. . . and may the house of David never be without a man having gonorrhoea, or a leper, or one who holds a spindle (*maḥāzīq bap̄pelek*) . . .” Ever since the Septuagint’s *kratān skutalēs* “one who holds a staff” the last phrase has been interpreted by some as referring to an infirm man who must walk with a stick, but, as S. R. Driver has shown, *pelek* originally means “spindle-whorl,” and while the word may have been used for the whole spindle, there is no evidence that it ever was used for “staff.” Driver explains: “David’s words are an imprecation that Joab may always count among his descendants—not brave warriors, but—men

166. *AJO* Beiheft 9, p. 99 rev. 55–56.

167. The Hebrew word is *‘ereb* (so *BH*³; some editions have given the pointing *‘ereb*) and its meaning is uncertain here and in its other occurrences (both of which are doubtful), 1 Kgs 10:15; Jer 25:24. It has been regarded as a secondary form of *‘ereb*, and is so translated here, but it must be said that in this context one would expect the word to denote some kind of military personnel; perhaps it has the connotation “foreign mercenaries.” Friedrich Delitzsch explained the word, in all its biblical uses, as related to Akkadian *Urbi* “Arabians,” *Wo lag das Paradies?* (Leipzig, 1881), 305–6.

fit only for the occupations of women. Comp. how ‘Hercules with the distaff’ was the type of unmanly feebleness among the Greeks.”¹⁶⁸ The parallels in extra-biblical curses listed above offer further support for an interpretation of David’s malediction as referring to effeminacy, and further evidence for a connection between Israelite curses and those of her neighbors.

15. No burial

A curse which occurs three times in the Esarhaddon treaty states that the oath-breaker will not receive proper burial, but be eaten by animals; 426–27: “May he give your flesh to the vulture (and) jackal to devour” (or “‘eagle’ and vulture”); 483–84: “May the earth not receive your corpses; may your . . . be in the belly of dogs and pigs”; 451–52: “May dogs and pigs eat your flesh; may your [ghost] have no guardian to pour libations of water.”

In *Maqlû* IV 42–44; VIII 85–89 this curse is invoked by a magic act. A *kudurru* contains the curse: “May Ninurta, the lord of boundarystones, remove his son, who libates water for him!”¹⁶⁹ “May his corpse drop and have no one to bury it,” is another version.¹⁷⁰ Esarhaddon tells of carrying this out on his enemies: “I let the jackals (or, vultures) eat the corpses of their warriors by not burying them.”¹⁷¹

This is an extremely common curse or threat in the Old Testament. It occurs in typical form in Deut 28:26: “And may your corpse be food for all the birds of the heavens and for the beasts of the earth, with none to frighten (them) away.”

The closest prophetic parallels are in Jeremiah, the most important being Jer 34:20: “And their corpses shall be food for the birds of the heavens and for the beasts of the earth.” In this case the context is perhaps significant. The verse stands in the oracle which Jeremiah delivered after king and people had broken their covenant to release the Hebrew slaves.

In this speech, as was shown above (pp. 139–40 [orgn. 25–26]), Jeremiah uses one threat which was simply a repetition of a curse they had used to seal the covenant. This suggests that the prophecy of no burial may also have been one of the curses used in concluding the covenant.

168. *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel*, 2nd revised ed. (Oxford, 1913), in loc. Essentially the same interpretation was advanced already by Otto Thenius and Max Löhr, *Die Bücher Samuels*, *KeH* (Leipzig, 1898), in loc.

169. *BBS* p. 47 iv 19–20; cf. p. 62 ii 14–19; 24–25.

170. *BBS* p. 127 vi 54–55.

171. *AfO* Beiheft 9, p. 58, line 6. Certain of the parallels cited here are pointed out by F. C. Fensham, *ZAW* LXXV (1963), 161–63.

This curse is usually quite stereotyped, containing typically these ideas: (1) the body will be unburied; (2) it will be food for bird and beast; (3) it will be like refuse on the face of the earth. It occurs in 1 Kgs 14:11 (oracle of Ahijah the Shilonite against Jeroboam); 16:4 (oracle of Jehu son of Hanani against Baasha); 21:24 (oracle of Elijah against Ahab and Jezebel); 2 Kgs 9:10, 36 (an unnamed prophet, against Jezebel); Isa 5:25; Jer 7:33; 8:2; 9:21; 14:16; 16:4; 16:6; 22:19; 25:33; 36:30; Ezek 39:17–20; Ps 79:2–3; 83:11. The number of occurrences in Jeremiah is remarkable, especially as contrasted with the few (and not especially close) parallels in the rest of prophetic literature. Following Rudolph's adaptation of Mowinckel's division of Jeremiah into sources, five of the ten occurrences are in the prose speeches in "Deuteronomic" language (Source C), three are in Source A (Jeremiah's oracles in prose and poetry), one in Source B (the biography by Baruch), and one is dismissed as a later addition.¹⁷²

Compare also 1 Sam 17:43–46, where both Goliath and David employ the terms of this curse, and Gen 40:19.

16. *Like a bird in a trap*

The image of an enemy laying a trap, or that of being caught in the trap of troubles, sin, and the like, is commonplace enough in Hebrew literature to suggest that there is no need to assume that the image originated as a curse. On the other hand, the occurrences of this image in doom-oracles may be included here, since its employment in maledictions may have influenced the prophets' use of it.

The simile occurs in *Esar* 582–84: "Just as a bird is caught in a . . . , so may your brothers (and) your sons put you in the hands of your avenger." The same image is common in the annals of the Assyrian kings,¹⁷³ and occurs in the *Era Epic* IV 18–19: "As for those inhabitants of Babylon—they are the bird and you are their decoy; into the net you forced them, caught them, destroyed them, O warrior Era."

The context in which a parallel to this curse occurs in Ezek 17 is especially suggestive. Verses 15–21 are an indictment of Judah for having broken a treaty with Babylon. Verses 19 and 20 state: "Therefore this is what Yahweh says: 'As I live, my oath (lit., curse) which he despised,

172. On the composition of Jeremiah see also John Bright, "The Date of the Prose Sermons of Jeremiah," *JBL* LXX (1951), 15–35. Bright includes this malediction as one of the "characteristic expressions of the prose sermons of Jeremiah," p. 31, no. 16.

173. See, e.g., *AJO* Beiheft 9, p. 58, lines 12–18, or the famous simile referring to Hezekiah in Jerusalem, "like a bird in a cage," Luckenbill, *op. cit.*, p. 33 (Oriental Institute Prism Inscription iii 27). A spell in *Maqlû* II, 162–73 involves a bird-snare; cf. III 161–63.

and my covenant, which he broke—I will bring it on his head! And I will spread out my net over him, and he will be caught in my snare.”

Jer 50:24 threatens Babylon with destruction thus: “I have set a (fowler’s) snare for you and you were caught, too, O Babylon, and you did not know it!” Hos 7:12 is a clear parallel: “As they go I will spread over them my net; like a bird of the heavens I will bring them down.” The following also bear a general resemblance: Josh 23:13; Isa 8:14; 28:13; Jer 48:43, 44.

17. Flood

The treaty-curse which calls for flooding of the infidel’s land has close Old Testament parallels in comparisons of a conqueror to a deluge. The image is not unusual or particularly striking, and perhaps the parallels are accidental, but they are at least worth listing. It may be pointed out that flood metaphors would have occurred more naturally to residents of Mesopotamia, where destructive inundations were part of common experience, than to residents of Palestine–Syria. A curse having to do with a flood occurs in two places in the Esarhaddon treaty; 488–89: “May a flood, an irresistible deluge, come up from the earth and devastate you,” and 442: “[May] the gods [. . .] your land with a mighty flood.”

In Esarhaddon’s annals, Enlil curses Babylon with a terrible curse, and a flood destroys the city.¹⁷⁴ “Like a deluge” (*abūbiš, abūbāniš*) is a fairly common simile for the onrush of the king in the Assyrian royal inscriptions.¹⁷⁵

The doom-oracle which begins in Isa 8:7 contains a similar idea: “And therefore Yahweh is bringing up against you the mighty and abundant waters of the Euphrates—the king of Assyria and all his glory—and it will rise over all its channels and overflow all its banks, and it will sweep over Judah, flooding as it goes. It will reach up to the neck, and its branches will be outspread (over) the whole breadth of the land.”¹⁷⁶ Jeremiah echoes this picture in an oracle on Philistia (47:2): “Behold, waters are rising from the north and they will grow into an overflowing stream, and overflow the land with all that fills it, the city with those who dwell in it.”

On the other hand, other passages clearly suggest that the Egyptian inundation was the inspiration for the Hebrew poet’s imagery, for example, Jer 46:7–8, where the Egyptian host is pictured as flooding the

174. *A/O Beiheft* 9, p. 13 Episode 5 Fassung b: B, p. 14 Episode 7.

175. See, e.g., *A/O Beiheft* 9, p. 32 line 12, p. 48 line 69, p. 65 line 10. Cf. von Soden, *Handwörterbuch*, sub voce.

176. The last line is difficult; here *-k ṣmnw ʔl* has been omitted from the end of the verse, since perhaps it belongs with the following as an introduction, or is a vertical dittography from the end of v. 10 *ky ṣmnw ʔl*.

land like the Nile. A similar source seems to be indicated for Amos 8:8. In many other places, as recognized since Gunkel's *Schöpfung und Chaos* and now confirmed by much new evidence, Old Testament flood-imagery is ultimately derived from myths of a god's combat with primeval waters. Thus treaty-curses are certainly not the only source for the prophets' threats of a flood, but it remains possible that they have made some contribution.

18. Lack of men

The curse contained in *Sf I A 24* has so far resisted all attempts at translation and interpretation. It is possible, however, that the key to its understanding is partly provided by a passage in Isaiah, and thus it is discussed here.¹⁷⁷ The text reads: *wšb' bkth yhkn bšt lhm w'l yhrgn*. Fitzmyer translates: "And should seven hens go looking for food, may they not kill (anything)!" He is, however, less than convinced that this rendering, based on that of Dupont-Sommer, is correct.

The reading [i.e., *bkth*] is certain, and is explained by Dupont-Sommer as related to later Aramaic 'abbakâ and Syriac *bakkâ* "cock" having, however, a double fem. ending, *-t, -âh*, and meaning hen. The parallels which he offers for the double fem. ending are all derived from plural nouns in Hebrew. If he assumes that *bkth* is plural, why should it be emphatic when used with a cardinal (all the others are absolute)? It seems that we have an abs. sg. fem. But what is the root and the meaning? The idea of hens killing is also puzzling.¹⁷⁸

Fitzmyer is concerned about the grammatical difficulty involved in *bkth* "hens"; he might also have pointed out the chronological difficulty. The domestic fowl was not introduced in large numbers to the Near East and Europe until the Persian period,¹⁷⁹ and even if hens were sporadically imported before that time—they had long been raised in India—they would not have been present in sufficient quantity to figure in an 8th-century curse, since curses—without exception, apparently—were meant to be a serious threat to a man's life and well-being.

177. The main lines of the interpretation given here were suggested to the writer by Prof. Wm. F. Albright, who also placed at my disposal his notes on the passage. The writer is grateful to Prof. Albright for permission to use these materials; of course I alone am responsible for any errors or shortcomings in the discussion of this passage.

178. Fitzmyer, *Sf I and II*, 195.

179. The earliest certain artistic representation of a cock is on the well-known seal of Jaazaniah from Tell en-Nasbeh (about 600 B.C.E.); see W. F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine* (Baltimore, 1961), 217–18. See also W. S. McCullough s.v. Fowl, *IDB II*.

Perhaps then the word *bkth* should be read *bnth* “his daughters” (so Bauer). Dupont-Sommer says of this word: “La lecture de ces 4 lettres est tout à fait sûre.”¹⁸⁰ If this is so, the error was that of the original stonemason, who confused *k* and *n*, which in this period, are roughly similar in form. On the other hand, the photograph of the stele would seem to permit reading either *k* or *n* here—the stone seems to be damaged—but inspection of the stone itself would be necessary to settle the question.

Reading *bnth* would permit a translation: “And may his seven daughters go looking for food, but not seduce (anyone).”

Both Dupont-Sommer and Fitzmyer make the point that in this line, to judge from the preceding context, we expect the name of some small animal. But this does not rule out the possibility of a shift to “daughters”; lists of curses are not distinguished for logical progression of thought. Furthermore, the theme of dry breasts is plainly not continued into this line, so why should we expect the curse to be closely related to the group that precedes it? The fact that it contains the number seven adequately accounts for its having been placed with the preceding one.

bnth eliminates the grammatical difficulties present in *bkth*; *h* in this case is the 3 m. s. suffix, referring to Mati^oel. An exact parallel to this portion of the curse is provided by a malediction from Tell Halaf: “Whoever erases (my) name and puts (his) name, may he burn his 7 sons before Adad, may he release his 7 daughters as prostitutes for Ishtar.”¹⁸¹ For the rest of the clause (*yhkn bšt lh̄m*), the explanation of Dupont-Sommer may be retained; note the parallel in Numbers 11:8.

yhrgn is to be interpreted as causative (Haphel, normal in Sefire) from a root *rgg*. The root is common in Syriac, where the Peal means “to desire, covet, lust”; the Palpel, “to make to long, rouse desires, yearnings” (Payne-Smith s.v.). An even closer parallel is provided by Targumic *šargēg*, “to entice, lead astray,” which is a Shafel causative of *rgg*, with precisely the sense required in the Sefire passage.¹⁸² Compare also

180. Op. cit., p. 40.

181. Text first published by B. Meissner, “Die Keilschrifttexte auf den steinernen Orthostaten und Statuen aus dem Tell Halaf,” *AJO* Beiheft 1 (Berlin, 1933), 72–73; cf. W. F. Albright, “The Date of the Kapara Period at Gozan (Tell Halaf),” *AnSt* VI (1956), 75–85.

182. See M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim* . . . (London, New York, 1903), sub voce for citations. Borrowing of Shafel’s into Aramaic is common enough (cf. Biblical Aramaic *šaklāl*, *šēzīb*, etc.) that this form *šargēg* need not be explained as a “Parel of *rgg*” (!) with Jastrow.

In Ugaritic (2 *Aqht* vi 34–35) occurs what may be the same word: *al tšrgn. ybtlm. dm. lǧzr šrgk. h̄hm* (?). If the forms *tšrgn* and *šrgk* are understood as Shafel imperfect and infinitive construct respectively from *rgg*, the lines may be re-

Akkadian *ruggugu*, which in the Gilgamesh Epic XI 210 has the meaning “to deceive.”

If line 24 is translated as suggested here, it is related to both the Tell Halaf inscription quoted above and to Isa 4:1, in different ways. The idea of the Tell Halaf curse is that a man’s seven daughters shall become prostitutes. Isa 4:1 states: “And seven women will take hold of one man on that day, saying: ‘We will eat our own food, and clothe ourselves with our own clothing. Just let us be called by your name; take away our shame.’” The doom-oracle depicts the shortage of men in the coming day of punishment. *Sf I A 24* means, as rendered above, that Mati^oel’s daughters will become prostitutes in order to earn a living—and not make a go of it! The ironic twist is comparable to Deut 28:68: “There you will try to sell yourselves to your enemies as male and female slaves, and no one will buy you!”

This interpretation of the Sefire curse is not completely certain, for it involves (apparently) a minor emendation of the text, but it is more plausible than any of the other proposals offered so far.

19. Sodom and Gomorrah

The curse treated here and the one described in section 20 below do not occur in the treaties, and thus are not strictly comparable to the

dered: “Do not seduce me, O Virgin, for to a hero your seducing is loathesome.” C. H. Gordon translates the word “to lie” and assumes a root *šrg*, to which he compares Arabic *šaraja* “to lie” (*UM Glossary* no. 1887). This etymology may be disregarded, since this rare Arabic word, which also means “to plait,” is plainly a loan-word from Aramaic *srg/šrg* “to interweave, entangle.” (As Prof. Georg Krotkoff has pointed out to me, words meaning “to lie” are often etymologically related to words meaning “to twist, twine, put together” and the like.) There are many examples of the abnormal correspondence: Arabic *š* = Aramaic *s*, due to late borrowing of words into Arabic; see S. Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter im arabischen* (Leiden, 1886), 101–2.

On the other hand, there is also an Arabic *šaraja*, which according to Lane may mean “to lie,” as well as “to mix” (Fraenkel, p. 173 “verflechten”), which corresponds to Aramaic *srg*, Hebrew *šrg* “be intertwined.” This could be the etymology of Ugaritic *šrg*, if we assume a semantic development “to twine together” > “to lie.” From the presence of the suffix on *tšrgn* one is inclined to think that the verb is transitive and that the suffix represents the direct object. This would favor explaining it as “cause me to go astray” (from *rgg*) rather than as “lie (to) me.” The latter requires an interpretation of the suffix as dative, and to judge from the use of *kzb/kdb* in Hebrew and Aramaic, which never takes an object suffix, “to lie to” requires a preposition (*yakzibēni* Job 24:25 means “[who] will prove me a liar?”). Unless *tšrgn* is an energetic form, it seems likely that the Ugaritic forms must be interpreted as from *rgg*, but since the evidence is ambiguous, it is best disregarded.

preceding examples. They are included because it is possible that they represent curses which were traditional within Israel. If so, their use by the prophets is relevant to this study.

The first of these curses is that a land (city, man) should become like Sodom and Gomorrah, the cities which the Lord overthrew. This malediction is referred to in Deut 29:22, not the earliest biblical example, but one of the most suggestive because of the context in which it stands, quoted here in full (19–28):

(If a man willfully transgresses the covenant) Yahweh will refuse to forgive him, because then the anger and jealousy of Yahweh would smoke against that man, and all the curses written in this book would descend (lit., couch) upon him, and Yahweh would wipe out his name from under the heavens. And Yahweh would single him out for evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant written in this book of the law. And the next generation, your sons, who will arise after you, and any foreigner who comes from a distant land, will see the afflictions of that land and all the sicknesses with which Yahweh has infected it—brimstone and salt, all its ground a burning waste, that is not sown, and does not put out shoots, and on which no green thing grows, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which Yahweh overthrew in his anger and wrath—then all nations will say: “Why did Yahweh do this to this land? Why this great burning anger?” Then they will say: “Because they forsook the covenant of Yahweh, the god of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt, and went and served other gods and bowed down to them—gods which they did not know and which he did not allot to them—the anger of Yahweh was kindled against that land to bring upon it all the curses written in this book.”

The context makes clear that the condition of the land is the result of the curses of the covenant, and suggests that the terms describing the state of the land, including the reference to Sodom and Gomorrah, were taken from curses.¹⁸³

Sodom and Gomorrah are, to the prophets, a stock comparison for wickedness,¹⁸⁴ but more often the parade example for sudden destruction. Thus Isa 1:9: “If Yahweh Sebaoth had not left us a very small

183. On the form of this passage, see n. 161 above.

184. So already in what is probably the oldest biblical reference to Sodom and Gomorrah, Deut 32:32 (on the date of Deut 32 see W. F. Albright, “Some Remarks on the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy XXXII,” *VT IX* [1959], 339–46 and Otto Eissfeldt, “Das Lied des Mose Deuteronomium 32, 1–43 und das Lehrgedicht Asaphs Psalm 78 samt einer Analyse der Umgebung des Mose-Liedes,” *SAL, Phil.-hist. Klasse CIV, Heft 5* [1958], 41–43). Cf. Isa 1:10; 3:9; Jer 23:14; Ezek 16 passim; and Lam 4:6.

remnant, we would have been like Sodom, we would have resembled Gomorrah.”¹⁸⁵ Jeremiah uses the Sodom and Gomorrah comparison in a ringing curse on the man¹⁸⁶ who announced the prophet’s birth (20:16): “Let that man be like the cities which the Lord overthrew without pity.” Realization that this was a traditional curse helps eliminate some of the seeming incongruity in the comparison. An oracle against Edom in Jer 49:17–18 contains the same expression: “And Edom shall be a waste . . . like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighbors.” The long oracle on Babylon includes this threat along with another which we have identified as a parallel to a treaty-curse: “Therefore wild beasts shall dwell (there) with jackals, and ostriches shall live in it. And it shall never be inhabited again, and none shall dwell there forever and ever—just like God’s overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah” (50:39–40). Hosea 11:8, whether the sense of the passage is judgment or grace,¹⁸⁷ uses the same picture: “How (gladly) will I surrender you, O Ephraim, Will I hand you over, O Israel! How (gladly) will I make you like Admah, Will I deal with you like Zeboiim!” (neighbors of Sodom and Gomorrah, destroyed at the same time). In a list of punishments already inflicted on the land (famine, drought, blight, pestilence) Amos includes also: “I overthrew some of you as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah” (4:11). Zeph 2:9 threatens Moab and Ammon in the same way: “Therefore, as I live, says Yahweh Sebaoth, the God of Israel, Moab shall be like Sodom and the Ammonites like Gomorrah; a patch of nettles and a pit of salt, and a waste forevermore.” Lam 4:6 contains the same comparison.

The number of these occurrences is remarkable, as is their wide distribution. No other event in the patriarchal narratives is mentioned so often by the prophets! One could explain the situation simply by saying that the story of Sodom’s fall was well known and that therefore the prophets referred to it. But does this adequately explain why the references are so frequent? It seems more likely that the fate of Sodom and

185. *šdôm* should probably be read in place of *zârîm* in Isa 1:7; so most commentators and *BH*³.

186. Some have conjectured that instead of זָרִים “man” we should read *yôm* “day.” See Rudolph ad loc. for details. To my mind the emendation offers just as many logical difficulties as the Massoretic text (how can a day be like ruined cities?) and, a more basic objection, it presupposes that a curse must conform to our idea of logic.

187. Most commentators have taken the passage as referring to a change of heart on the part of Yahweh, and translate something like: “How can I (possibly) give you up, etc.” G. S. Glanzman, “Two Notes: Am. 3,15 and Os. 11, 8–9,” *CBQ* XXIII (1961), 230–33, has convincingly defended the opposite view, and his translation is employed here.

Gomorrah not only furnished the subject of a story but also the material for a traditional curse. Quite literally these cities “became a curse.” The occurrences in the prophets would then provide further evidence that the prophets used traditional maledictions, though in this case one could not say with certainty “treaty-curses.”

20. *Passers-by will shudder*

An extraordinarily common cliché in the prophets occurs in descriptions of a ruined city or land; all those who pass by, the prophets say will be appalled, shudder, hiss, nod the head, or wave the hand in horror and derision. The evidence suggests that this may have been used as a curse, and that this may account for its popularity with the prophets. It is attested in Lev 26:32: “And I will make the land (so) desolate that your enemies, who will live in it, will be appalled at it.” It occurs also in 1 Kgs 9:6–9 (repeated in 2 Chron 7:19–22):

If you go and serve other gods and bow down to them, then I will cut Israel off from the land which I gave them, and the house which I consecrated to my name I will hurl¹⁸⁸ out of my presence, and Israel shall become a proverb and a laughingstock among all nations and this house shall become heaps of ruins;¹⁸⁹ everyone who passes by it will be appalled and hiss. They will say, “Why did Yahweh do these things to this house?” And they will say, “Because they forsook Yahweh their God.”

In Jer 19:7–9 this “passer-by” curse occurs in a series of expressions identified in this chapter as parallels to treaty-curses:

And I will give their dead bodies as food to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth. And I will make this city a desolation and a butt of hissing. Everyone who passes by it will be appalled and hiss at all its wounds. And I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and their daughters—each will eat another’s flesh—in the oppressive siege which their enemies and those that seek their life will inflict upon them.

In Jer 49:17–18 the “passer-by” curse is linked with the Sodom and Gomorrah curse.

In Zeph 2:13–15, Nineveh is described as a dwelling of wild animals, and then the oracle closes: “How she has become a desolation, a lair of beasts! Everyone who passes by her hisses and shakes his fist.” Jer 51:37 is similar: “And Babylon shall become heaps of ruins, a lair of beasts, an object of horror and a butt of hissing, with no inhabitants.” Other examples of this commonplace are Jer 18:16; 25:9, 18; 29:18; 50:13; Ezek 26:16; 27:35–36; 28:19; Mic 6:16; Lam 2:16; 2 Chron 29:8.

188. Cf. *BH*³ ad loc.

189. Cf. *BH*³ ad loc.

Leaving the principal conclusion for last, we may make the following preliminary observations on the basis of the materials presented above.

a. The Sefire treaties (I and II), for their size, provide the most and the closest parallels to the Old Testament. This is inevitably a somewhat subjective judgment, since the nature of the evidence makes any kind of rigorous statistical study impossible. (F. C. Fensham [ZAW LXXV (1963), 156] draws the same conclusion.) If the conclusion is correct, it presents a reasonable picture; those treaties which are closest to the Old Testament in language and in geographic provenience are also closest in ideas and expressions.

b. The expressions contained in treaty-curses and their antecedents also occur in other compositions, most frequently and strikingly in the historical texts of Ashurbanipal and Esarhaddon and in the *Era Epic* (a first-millennium composition). There are also parallels in other texts, however, and there are no doubt more which have escaped this writer's notice. It would be incorrect to say that parallels occur just everywhere in Akkadian literature, but it also seems that the genre "curses" was not rigidly fenced off from the rest of the literature, but that the writers of lists of curses, epic compositions, hymns, annals, magical texts, and so on, drew on the same stock of traditional maledictions.

c. Of the prophetic books, Jeremiah contains by far the most numerous and impressive parallels to treaty-curses. Hosea and Isa 1-39 also offer a relatively high number. Once again, strict statistical measurement is not possible or advisable.

d. A large number of the biblical parallels are in the oracles against foreign nations. In this writer's opinion, the number is high in proportion to the bulk of the material. Between one-third and one-half of the passages listed in this chapter as parallels are from the foreign-nation oracles, and many of these are among the closest parallels. Again, it lies in the nature of the evidence that this estimate can only be an approximate one.

This study is principally concerned with finding an answer to the question: did the prophets in their doom-oracles use ideas and expressions borrowed from treaty-curses? If our interpretation of Isa 34:16 is correct, we can say that here and in Jer 34:18 a prophet did so, and deliberately. As far as the rest of the parallels are concerned, it would be premature to give a positive answer to the question as framed above. The picture presented by the materials gathered here is one of considerable complexity, more than is implied by the question as stated. It does seem that some conclusions can be drawn. In the first place, the prophets did employ much traditional material in composing their threats of doom. This is not a new idea by any means, but it is worth pointing out

that the parallels gathered here fully support it. Secondly, this inherited material in the prophets is related to the Israelite tradition of curses as preserved in Deut 28 and Lev 26. Thirdly, these Israelite maledictions resemble, at many points, curses from Akkadian and Aramaic treaties. None of the parallels looks like simple copying, but the possibility of influence of treaty-curses on Israelite literature, or of mutual influence, or of dependence on common sources, cannot be disregarded. After all, we possess only a relatively small body of treaty-curses, and of these only a portion are useful for comparative purposes; in view of this the number of parallels to expressions in the prophets is impressive.

On the other hand, without further evidence and study we cannot say how much the influence of Akkadian literature (in the broadest sense) or of the idioms of the spoken language is responsible for the parallels. Then, too, we would expect the Canaanites and Aramaeans to have played a role as intermediaries in an exchange of ideas and expressions between Israel and Mesopotamia, but our knowledge of Canaanite and Aramaean literature and legal practice is far too meagre to enable us to do more than guess about this matter. Where we do possess some information from this quarter (see above, no. 8), it shows that it would be dangerous to draw too simple a picture of the relations involved. Furthermore, even if we must assume some sort of genetic relation between treaty-curses and elements in biblical literature, we cannot say, on the basis of evidence presented so far (except in two cases), whether the prophets in using these maledictions were conscious of their source or not. Nor can we define a historical period when the borrowing, if any, took place.

Though the parallels, by themselves, do not provide a clear and positive answer to the central question with which this study is concerned, other kinds of evidence may permit a somewhat more definite conclusion on certain matters. These additional considerations will be taken up in the next chapter.

V. Additional Considerations and Conclusions

In this chapter the nature of the ancient treaty and the extent of its use will be discussed briefly, since consideration of these aspects may permit us to advance somewhat beyond the tentative conclusions reached at the end of the preceding chapter.

1. The nature of the treaty

a. For our purpose it is important to observe first of all that the treaty was essentially an international legal form. Unlike those literary and legal forms which were developed to serve one society, the treaty by

its very nature reached across national boundaries. Our earliest written international agreements are from Mesopotamia, but in the course of time the idea and in part the form spread widely.

b. Secondly, the ancient treaty was a public document. Copies of treaties were distributed, preserved, and published. As would be expected, all of the partners involved were required to have a copy of the treaty.¹⁹⁰ Ordinarily these copies were deposited in the temple of the national god, at least according to provisions in the early treaties.¹⁹¹ To judge from their form, the Sefire treaties seem to have been intended for public display, not merely for deposit in archives, but this does not rule out the possibility that they were originally erected in connection with a sanctuary. Provision is made in the early treaties for public reading before the king and his people or the king and his nobles, either twice or three times a year. Korošec suggests various purposes for this practice: to acquaint illiterate vassals with treaty stipulations, to remind them of their duty, and to enhance the prestige of the vassal-king among his nobles.¹⁹² Since the curses of these treaties regularly include the king, his family, his nobles, his people, etc., it may be suggested that a further purpose was that of keeping before their eyes the penalty for rebellion. Most of the extant treaties are in Akkadian or Hittite, and there is no way of telling for certain whether the treaties were read to Aramaeans or Canaanites in these languages or whether they were translated for the occasion into the local tongue. On the basis of the Sefire treaties it may be assumed that treaties between Aramaeans used Aramaic (if Bir-Gaʿyah was an Aramaean), and perhaps other states in Palestine-Syria also used Aramaic, or one of the Canaanite dialects. The triumph of Aramaic as the language of diplomacy in the late Assyrian and Persian periods suggests that quite early the Assyrian conquerors began to conduct dealings with subject peoples in Aramaic.¹⁹³

2. *The extensive use of treaties*

a. *Extra-biblical evidence*

There can be little doubt that formal international agreements were by no means uncommon from the early second millennium B.C.E. down

190. Viktor Korošec, *Hethitische Staatsverträge: Ein Beitrag zu ihrer juristischen Wertung* (Leipzig, 1931), 100–1; cf. D. J. Wiseman, “The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon,” *Iraq* XX (1958), 4.

191. Korošec, op. cit., 101.

192. Op. cit., 101–2.

193. See André Dupont-Sommer, *Les Araméens* (Paris, 1949), 84–98. Along with other evidence, Dupont-Sommer calls attention to 9th–8th-century Assyrian monuments depicting Aramaean scribes at work in the Assyrian chancellery.

to the fall of the Neo-Babylonian empire. Munn-Rankin has gathered references to treaties in the Mari texts,¹⁹⁴ and Mercer lists those from the Amarna letters.¹⁹⁵ Numerous treaties from the second millennium have survived, and extant treaties from the first millennium, though fewer in number, touch nearly all parts of the Assyrian empire. The latter pacts were used to define relations between Assyria and powers both great and small, to confer grants of land, and to bind minor states in league against their overlord. Within the nation of Assyria itself a type of treaty was used to assure the loyalty of the nation to the ruler or his successor.

The annals of the Assyrian kings richly supplement and confirm the impression given by the treaties themselves: the treaty was one of the commonest tools of Assyrian statecraft. Anton Moortgat sums up the situation thus: "Kaum je sind so viele Verträge geschlossen worden, kaum je so viele Treueide geschworen und gebrochen worden."¹⁹⁶ He is referring to the ninth century B.C.E., but his words apply just as well to the two succeeding centuries. Often the existence of a sworn treaty provided a theoretical religious justification for Assyrian military activity against a rebellious vassal.

b. Biblical evidence

Within Israel the treaty was also common; *bērit* is used to designate formal agreements establishing quite a wide range of relations.¹⁹⁷ The word is used of an agreement between two powers of equal status (1 Kgs 5:26, Solomon with Hiram of Tyre); of a capitulation (formalizing the surrender of Ben-Hadad to Ahab, 1 Kgs 20:32–34); of a military alliance against a common enemy (Asa with Ben-Hadad against Baasha, 1 Kgs 15:16–20); of the loyalty-oath of army officers and people, offered to a new king (2 Kgs 11:4–12, 17; cf. 2 Chron 23:1–11); and of an agreement introducing a new ordinance (Jer 34:8–10, Zedekiah's covenant with the people to free the slaves.)¹⁹⁸

c. The treaty (covenant) as an element in the religion of Israel

The fact that Israel believed herself joined to Yahweh by a covenant (treaty) is important for our study for two reasons. First of all,

194. J. M. Munn-Rankin, "Diplomacy in Western Asia in the Early Second Millennium B.C.E.," *Iraq* XVIII (1956), 68–110.

195. Samuel Mercer, *The Oath in Babylonian and Assyrian Literature* (Paris, 1912), 21–22.

196. See Alexander Scharff and Anton Moortgat, *Ägypten und Vorderasien im Altertum* (Munich, c. 1950), 401.

197. For a more detailed survey, see G. Mendenhall in *IDB* s.v. covenant.

198. Cf. G. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," *BA* XVII (1954), 66.

it indicates another means by which treaty-curses could have entered Israelite literature and survived there. Secondly, it suggests why the prophets would have used such maledictions: since Israel had broken the covenant, the prophet proclaims that the covenant-curses will overtake her. The great difficulty in making use of this fact lies in the lack of any general agreement as to when this idea of a covenant entered Israelite religion, and how important it was. But before this difficulty is discussed, it is in place to point out the area of agreement that does exist. All will agree that the idea of a covenant between Israel and Yahweh is present in fully developed form by 621 B.C.E., the date of Josiah's reform.¹⁹⁹ It was thus present to influence Jeremiah and all succeeding prophets. This minimal agreement among Old Testament scholars on what might be called the eponymous idea of their discipline is not particularly impressive, but we may make use of it for our purposes by saying that from the time of Jeremiah on the prophets would have known curses connected with the covenant between Israel and Yahweh. The presence of this covenant as a fundamental feature of Israel's faith would also have provided a thoroughly adequate motive for the deliberate and conscious use of treaty-curses in prophetic preaching, beginning with Jeremiah.

Can we assume that the eighth-century prophets would have had an equal opportunity to learn curses connected with a religious covenant, and the same motive for using them? One thing must impress any student of the question: Wellhausen, Kraetzschmar, and now Whitley, who argue that the covenant idea was a late outgrowth of certain ideas of the prophets, are all obliged to eliminate passages in the eighth-century prophets which mention this covenant as late additions.²⁰⁰ One can hardly escape the conclusion that this treatment of the evidence is in each case due to the need to make the facts fit a preconceived notion. Those who do not share their preconceptions will agree that a covenant between Yahweh and Israel is referred to already by Hosea. Admittedly these early references are infrequent, but this is not a really serious problem, for the idea is often present where the word "covenant" is

199. Even Wellhausen stresses this: "Seit dem feierlichen und folgenreichen Akte, durch den Josia dieses Gesetz einführt, scheint die Idee der Bundesschlussung zwischen Jahve und Israel in den Mittelpunkt der religiösen Reflexion gerückt zu sein; sie herrscht im Deuteronomium, bei Jeremias, Ezechiel, in Isa. 40-66, Lev. 17-26, and am meisten im Vierbundesbuche." *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*, 4th ed. (Berlin, 1895), 424-25.

200. Wellhausen, loc. cit.; Richard Kraetzschmar, *Die Bundesvorstellung im Alten Testament in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Marburg, 1896), 72-73, 114-15; C. F. Whitley, "Covenant and Commandment in Israel," *JNES* XXII (1963), 38-39.

absent.²⁰¹ Then too, as Eichrodt points out, the idea of a covenant with God is present already in the oldest documents of the Pentateuch.²⁰² It seems that this much ought to be conceded by all, and this is perhaps enough for our purpose, which is to indicate that even the earliest prophets knew of a religious covenant and its curses. Those who—like the present writer—are impressed by the arguments advanced by Mendenhall and Baltzer for the antiquity of the covenant with Yahweh,²⁰³ or by the studies of Alt and Noth which have stressed the creative character of the pre-monarchic period and the necessity of assuming a covenant framework for Israel's earliest laws,²⁰⁴ or by the presence of a "covenant-lawsuit" pattern in the archaic "Song of Moses" (Deut 32),²⁰⁵ will be willing to go much farther along this line.²⁰⁶

At least by the beginning of literary prophecy, then, the Israelites believed themselves to be bound to Yahweh by covenant. This relation was kept before their eyes by periodic recital of the covenant and by an occasional ceremony of covenant-renewal. For the former we have the testimony of Deut 31:9–13, which provides for an assembly of the people every seven years for the purpose of reading the written covenant to them. The Deuteronomic form of this prescription is certainly late, and one may doubt that it was ever carried out in just the manner prescribed, but, as Alt has pointed out, the passage is best understood as resting on an old tradition of public recitation of laws.²⁰⁷ Mendenhall has collected other passages which indicate that the historical part of the covenant and its stipulations were to be published, recalled, and

201. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms," 72–73.

202. Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, Vol. I, trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia, 1961), 36 note 2.

203. See above, ch. I, pp. 1–2.

204. Martin Noth, *Das System der zwölf Stämme Israels* (Stuttgart, 1930); Albrecht Alt, "Die Ursprünge des israelitischen Rechts," in *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, I (Munich, 1953), 278–332; Noth, "Die sachlichen Voraussetzungen der vorexilischen Gesetze," *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (Munich, 1957), 23–81, especially p. 58: "Nach alttestamentlicher Überlieferung gelten also die Gesetze im Rahmen einer vorausgegebenen, durch den 'Bund' begründeten Ordnung der Dinge, die im sakralen Verband der zwölf israelitischen Stämme eine feste Form gefunden hat."

205. On the date of Deut 32 see the references in n. 184 above.

206. There is already evidence that some are going too far. Thus Artur Weiser is ready to explain most of the Psalter as composed for use at a yearly covenant-festival—which has approximately the same ontological status as the Israelite New Year's Festival. See his *The Psalms: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, 1962, trans. H. Hartwell from *Die Psalmen, ATD*, 5th ed.), 23–52. Cf. the review by J. A. Sanders, *JBL* LXXXII (1963), 127.

207. "Die Ursprünge . . .," 325–28.

taught to the young (Deut 26:1–11; 27; Josh 8:30–35; Deut 6:20–25) and has also called attention to the requirement that all male Israelites “appear before the Lord” three times a year (Deut 16:16; Ex 34:23).²⁰⁸ Concerning actual covenant-renewal, opinions differ. Some scholars argue for a yearly renewal,²⁰⁹ others reckon with renewal every seven years,²¹⁰ and others simply allow for an occasional covenant-renewal without specifying the intervals at which this took place.²¹¹ Several early covenant-renewal ceremonies are mentioned in the Old Testament (2 Chron 15; 29:10).

If the prophets of all periods knew the terms of the covenant with Yahweh, they knew the curses associated with the covenant as well, for these, an essential part of the covenant between men,²¹² were also commonly attached to the covenant with God. Deut 28 and Lev 26 are late examples of lists of curses attached as sanctions to the stipulations of a religious covenant, but as was shown in section III, they contain much old material, and there can be no question that the association of curses with the covenant rests on older practices. An offhand statement like that in Joshua 8:34, referring to Joshua’s reading of the covenant: “He read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse,” indicates that the connection of blessing and curse with the covenant was well enough known to call for no explanation to an ancient Israelite. The horrified reaction of king Josiah to the reading of the newly-discovered “book of the law” (2 Kgs 22:11) was caused by the curses attached to it (v. 19), as Mendenhall has pointed out.²¹³

To sum up, the treaty was by nature an international and public legal form. It was in common use for a variety of purposes and originated long before the founding of Israel; within Israel it persisted down to the Babylonian exile. Before the beginning of literary prophecy this legal form was adopted by Israelites as a way of defining their relation to Yahweh. In doing this they retained many features of the international covenant, including the curses and the practice of giving the pact wide publicity.

208. *IDB* I, 720.

209. Weiser, loc. cit.

210. Noth, op. cit., 54.

211. Mendenhall, “Covenant Forms,” 67.

212. There is explicit evidence that curses were also attached to Hebrew treaties or covenants. See e.g. Hos 10:4: “With empty curses (*ʾālôt šāwʾ*) (they) make a covenant.” Cf. the substitution of *ʾālāh* “curse” by metonymy for “oath” or “covenant,” Gen 26:28 (J); Ezek 17:19; Deut 29:13; Neh 10:30. For further references see Johannes Pedersen, *Der Eid bei den Semiten. Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Orients*, 3. Heft (Strassburg, 1914), 112–14.

213. “Covenant Forms,” 73–74.

All of these rather obvious things are emphasized here in order to indicate that in all periods of Israel's early history there existed channels through which treaty-curses may easily have entered the stream of Israelite literature. There is abundant evidence to support such a statement quite apart from the existence of parallels in ideas and expressions. When these two separate bodies of evidence, the parallels and the repeated opportunities for borrowing, are combined, it seems to this writer that we should conclude that the prophets did use treaty-curses (covenant-curses) as a basis for some of their doom-oracles. Such a conclusion is further supported by the fact that in two cases (Jer 34:18 and Isa 34:16) we have explicit evidence that the prophets employed treaty-curses, and by the other parallels in form and content between the treaties and the Old Testament already pointed out by others.²¹⁴

This conclusion is intended only as a simple statement of one aspect of what must have been a complex process; the writer does not mean to deny that other factors had a share in bringing about the parallels which have been collected above. In all likelihood there was mutual influence; it is quite reasonable to suppose that some of the curses in the Esarhaddon treaty, for example, may be based on Canaanite or Aramaic originals, since this treaty is written in the Assyrian dialect, which was not normally used for literature, and since many of its curses are not traditional Mesopotamian maledictions. Then too, as stated at the end of the preceding section, it is likely that the Canaanites and Aramaeans played a part as transmitters of traditional curses between Mesopotamia and Israel, though we have little direct evidence for such a statement outside of the Sefire treaties.

To what extent was the influence of other Mesopotamian literature responsible for the parallels which we have noted? As pointed out above, there are many parallels to treaty-curses in other Mesopotamian texts. There was a body of traditional curses on which any writer might draw. The maledictions at the end of *kudurru's* and other inscriptions, intended to prevent destruction of the document, are often the same as the curses by the gods found in treaties. Simile or ritual curses turn up in magical texts, where they are directed against demons or witches. Writers of epics and annals put traditional maledictions into the mouth of a god who is uttering threats,²¹⁵ or use phrases derived from curses to describe the ruin which rebellious vassals bring on themselves.²¹⁶ Thus

214. See above, ch. I pp. 108-12 [orgn. 1-5] for references.

215. So, e.g., in the *Era Epic* IV 95-103, 121; R. Borger and W. G. Lambert, "Ein neuer Era-Text aus Ninive (K 9956 + 79-7-8, 18)," *Or* XXVII (1958), 141.

216. The clearest example of this is in the passage from the annals of Ashurbanipal, quoted repeatedly above (*VAB* VII, 76-79 ix 53-73; trans. *ANET*

what we have called “treaty-curses” are for the most part simply traditional maledictions which happen to occur in treaties. Yet even so it seems that, assuming that we have to do with cultural borrowing and influence, we must still conclude that the treaties played a special role in transmitting certain ideas and expressions between Israel and her neighbors. We do not have any evidence that the Israelites at any period had direct knowledge of the other kinds of texts listed here, or any special reason for borrowing from them. This does not mean that the possibility of such knowledge can be ruled out, but it does indicate the contrast to the case of the treaties, for we do know that the Israelites

299–300); the writer describes how the Arabs ate the flesh of their sons and daughters, how the young animals suckled seven times on their dams without being satisfied, and this description follows on the statement: “The gods quickly inflicted on them all the curses written down in their treaties.” It seems quite clear that the language of treaties was very much in the annalist’s mind as he wrote. This is not the only case where the Assyrian historians seem to have been influenced by terminology associated with treaties, and it is even possible to reconstruct what might be called a “covenant-theology” from the annals of Sargon II and his successors. Treaty-breach is often described as sin: “He sinned against my treaty” (*ina a-di-ia iḫ-tu-u* from an inscription of Ashurbanipal, R. Campbell Thompson and M. E. L. Mallowan, “The British Museum Excavations at Nineveh, 1931–32,” *AAA* XX [1933], pp. 85, 94, line 108). Or it is said that a vassal “did not fear the oath by the great gods” (*VAB* VII, 68–69 line 50; cf. Ezek 17:16, 18, 19: “As I live, my oath (lit., curse) which he despised, etc.”). There is frequent reference to the fact that rebels trusted in something other than the gods—their own might, an ally, their situation—whereas the Assyrian king trusted only in the gods: “Merodach-baladan . . . put his trust in the Salt Sea and the mighty waves, and broke the treaty, the oath by the great gods” (A. G. Lie, *The Inscriptions of Sargon II King of Assyria* [Paris, 1929], 42–43 lines 263–65). Punishment may be described as follows: “The curse (*māmitu*) of the god Ashur overtook them, for they had sinned against the treaty of the great gods” (*VAB* VII 12–13 lines 132–33). An inscription of Esarhaddon (*AfO* Beiheft 9, p. 103, lines 8–24) contains a fine confession of sin by a repentant vassal. In this case the Assyrian king did not relent, but in other instances he might show a rebel mercy, described as forgiveness of sins; see Lie, *op. cit.*, pp. 14–15 lines 88–89: “I forgave the sins of Ullusunu.” Many more examples might be given; the basic idea is very early, appearing already in texts from Mari (cited by E. A. Speiser in *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East*, ed. R. C. Dentan [New Haven, 1955], 57). This sketch is meant only to suggest one reason for the appearance of parallels to treaty-curses in the annals. It may also be suggested that if this “Deuteronomic” view of history led the Assyrian annalists to use traditional curses, this constitutes a further illustration of the process which, in this writer’s opinion, led the prophets to use curses associated with the covenant. In both cases similar motives led to similar results.

in all periods concluded treaties with their neighbors, and that treaty-curses were part of the language of international diplomacy.

One final hypothesis deserves consideration, namely, that both the treaty-curses and their Old Testament parallels simply reflect idioms in popular speech. Some of these maledictions may have been stock phrases already in the parent tongue which lies behind the Semitic languages; the parallels would then be due, not to a literary relation, but to descent from a common ancestor. G. K. Chesterton says somewhere that there are more far-fetched metaphors in a coster's curse than in a sonnet by Keats, and certain of the phrases with which we are concerned, however literary and artificial they may seem, may have been part of the vocabulary of the common man. It is difficult to deal with this explanation for two related reasons. In the first place, few studies devoted to collection of the idioms, stock similes, and set phrases of various Semitic languages have been undertaken.²¹⁷ Secondly, we have only written records of ancient Semitic speech, and can never be sure to what extent these documents reflect idiomatic popular speech, and to what extent an artificial literary language. But although this hypothesis can neither be proved nor refuted, it must be considered as a possibility, and introduces a further element of uncertainty into the conclusions drawn here.

It is plain that new evidence might seriously modify the picture presented here, but on the basis of available evidence the writer would offer the following provisional conclusions:

1. The parallels between treaty-curses and passages in the Old Testament are not accidental, but are principally due to the fact that throughout her early history up to the exile, Israel shared with her neighbors a common legal form, the treaty, and that this form was adopted as a basic element in Israel's religion.

2. The prophets often used the traditional threats associated with the covenant when pronouncing doom on the people.

3. Probably in many cases they used these curses deliberately, conscious of their association with the covenant, since the prophets twice refer to treaty-curses as the source of their oracle (Jer 34:18 and Isa 34:16) and since in general it can hardly have escaped the notice of the prophets that what they were saying was related to the curses of the covenant. These statements necessarily come short of doing justice to what must have been a complex process involving mutual influence

217. An early study of this sort is that of P. Dhorme, "L'emploi métaphorique des noms de parties du corps en hébreu et en akkadien," *RB* XXIX (1920), 465-506; XXX (1921), 374-99; 517-40; XXXI (1922), 215-33; 489-547; XXXII (1923), 185-212.

over a long period of time, but in view of continuing discovery of ancient documents, it is reasonable to expect that new evidence will some day clarify and supplement this picture.

If these main conclusions are essentially correct, their significance for Old Testament studies may be summed up as follows:

1. Our ideas of the origins of Israelite eschatology are somewhat modified. If the covenant idea is an ancient element in Israelite religion, then blessing and curse, or to use other terms, an eschatology involving salvation and doom, is equally ancient. Certain specific themes are shown to go back to treaty-curses.

2. The importance of the covenant idea to the prophets needs to be restudied, since in quite a number of places where the prophetic books, especially Hosea and Isaiah 1–39, do not explicitly mention “covenant” they nevertheless use expressions with parallels in treaty-curses.

3. Questions as to the nature and purpose of the oracles on foreign nations are raised by the fact that a high proportion of expressions with parallels in treaty-curses occurs in them. Does this mean that these expressions have become stock phrases which a prophet might use against anyone? Or is the implication present in some cases that these nations have broken treaties with Israel?

It is evident that treatment of these questions lies outside the scope of this investigation, since each touches on much-disputed problems of considerable complexity. This preliminary study has achieved its goal if it has called attention to a fruitful approach to study of the prophetic preaching of doom, well summarized by Isa 24:5–6:

“They have transgressed the laws,
violated the statutes,
broken the everlasting covenant.
Therefore a curse devours the land.”

A Note on Some Treaty Terminology in the Old Testament

W. L. Moran has recently shown that the term *tbt'* in the Sefire treaties refers to "the amity established by treaty." He demonstrates this on the basis of terminology concerning treaties in Akkadian texts, especially *tūbtu u sulummū*, "friendship and peace," used only where a treaty of friendship is involved, and *tābūta (tābutta) epēšu*, "to make (a treaty of) friendship."¹ This same terminology seems to illuminate several passages in the Old Testament.

The first is Deut 23:7, which stands in a context of prescriptions concerning future relations with Moab and Ammon (23:4-7). No Moabite or Ammonite is ever to be admitted to the congregation of Yahweh, because of their hostility to Israel on her march to the Promised Land. Verse 7 goes on to say, as we must now understand it: "You shall never, as long as you live, seek (a treaty of) friendship and peace with them." *Šēlōmām wētōbātām* is the precise equivalent of the Akkadian combination *tūbtu u sulummū* (for references see Moran's article). "Seek" (*dāraš*) is the equivalent in sense of Akkadian *bu'ū* in passages from the Amarna letters cited by Moran, EA 4:15 and 17:51 (which is quoted here): *aḫiya tābūta ittiya libi'i*, "May my brother seek (a treaty of) friendship with me." It is no surprise to find this bit of precise treaty terminology in the book of Deuteronomy, for in both details of vocabulary and in general spirit it is, as Moran has said, "the biblical document *par excellence* of the covenant."² Ezra 9:12 is a quotation of Deut 23:7, but it is difficult to tell whether the precise implication of the treaty terminology was understood by the writer of the later passage.

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1. "A Note on the Treaty Terminology of the Sefire Stelas," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* XXII (1963), 173-76.

2. W. L. Moran, "The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* XXV (1963), p. 82. Moran's own article provides considerable support for his statement; he lists other recent works pointing to the same conclusion in note 34 to page 82.

The second passage illuminated by treaty terminology is 2 Sam 2:6. David blesses the men of Jabesh-Gilead for having shown loyalty to their lord, Saul, by burying him. Then he says, as we may now translate: "Now may Yahweh treat you with steadfast loyalty, and I also would make this (same) treaty of friendship with you, because you have done this thing. So now be resolute and behave like men, for your overlord Saul is dead, and Judah has anointed *me* to be their king." The key terms are: *'ešēh 'ittēkem haṭṭōbāh hazzōt*, which corresponds in sense to Akkadian *ṭābūta epēšu*, meaning "to make friendship by treaty," as Moran explains. Evidently the demonstrative *hazzōt* is used here because David is seeking to maintain the same relation that prevailed in the days of Saul. This is also implied by the statement: Saul is dead and I am king now; David wishes to take Saul's place as suzerain of Jabesh-Gilead. Since treaties did not automatically continue in force when a new king took the throne, it was necessary for David actively to seek a renewal of the pact.³

3. See George E. Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Pittsburgh, 1955), p. 41.

Rite:
*Ceremonies of Law and
 Treaty in the Ancient Near East*

The usefulness of the term *rite* is that it expresses in a compressed way one aspect of the relation of religion and law. It is defined in *Black's Law Dictionary* as "duly and formally, legally, properly, technically."¹ Another definition is given by Lewis and Short: "According to religious ceremonies or observances; . . . with due religious observance or rites, according to religious usage."² Even if it is not difficult to see how the one sense arose out of the other, the existence of a word that means variously "legally" and "according to religious ceremonies" may suggest that, when one looks at law and religion together, it may be appropriate to adopt an approach to their relation from the side of ritual or ceremony.

As far as I know, this is not the usual approach. When scholars in branches of Near Eastern studies have tried to explain the nature of religion or law, or of the two of them together, it has usually been done from a more philosophical point of view and at a very fundamental level, disregarding minutiae of a formal sort. The legal material discussed tends to be from statutes, not from documents. The best known attempt of this kind is the influential brief study *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East* by George Mendenhall. He begins by drawing a distinction between value systems and ways of putting those systems into effect, between legal policy and legal techniques, with religious obligation—expressed in the idea of a covenant between God and his people—the source of community policy in law.³ Mendenhall sharpens the basic contrast in his later essay "Religion and Politics as

Reprinted from *Religion and Law: Biblical–Judaic and Islamic Perspectives* (eds. E. B. Firmage, B. G. Weiss, and J. W. Welch; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 351–64.

1. Henry Campbell Black, *Black's Law Dictionary* (4th ed.; St. Paul, MN: West, 1951) 1491.

2. Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1879).

3. (Pittsburgh: Biblical Colloquium, 1955) 3–5 and passim.

Reciprocals,” where the essential contrasts between religious covenant and law are expressed in a concise chart.⁴ In his own way, the Assyriologist J. J. Finkelstein also stresses “fundamental assumptions” about the law that prevailed in Mesopotamia—underlying principles that Finkelstein calls “conceptual postulates.”⁵ Ancient laws about the classic case of the goring ox are said to “arise out of, and reflect, a cosmological outlook,” which Finkelstein proceeds to delineate. The Old Testament scholar Albrecht Alt went at the problem of the nature of law in the ancient world in a different way: by studying the way individual statutes are formulated in ancient collections of laws, resulting in a sharp distinction between apodictic and casuistic law, which in turn were supposed to be characteristic, respectively, of ancient Israel and of her rival Canaan.⁶ Whatever the validity of Alt’s views, he is clearly more interested in fundamental attitudes about law and their expression in statutes than in the history of legal ceremonies and instruments.

Without wishing to challenge the usefulness of these more profound approaches to ancient law and religion, I will take an alternate route, beginning with the use of ceremonies or rituals in ancient legal life, including the making of treaties. Perhaps a view from this side will enrich or clarify the conception of (a) the intricate way in which ancient law related to the sphere of the gods and (b) human concern for ritual.

Anthropologists are in dispute about a satisfactory definition of *ritual* or *ceremony*.⁷ My understanding of ritual—a working understanding—is close to that of Victor Turner: “prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical beings or powers.”⁸ I prefer to use ceremony as a

4. “Toward a Biography of God: Religion and Politics as Reciprocals,” *The Tenth Generation: The Origins of the Biblical Tradition* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1973) 200.

5. *The Ox That Gored*, ed. Maria Ellis (Transactions of the American Philological Society, 1981) 5, 39. See also his “The Goring Ox: Some Historical Perspectives on Deodands, Forfeitures, Wrongful Death, and the Western Notion of Sovereignty,” *Temple Law Quarterly* 46 (1973) 169–290.

6. “The Origins of Israelite Law,” *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion* (trans. R. A. Wilson; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968) 101–71; originally *Die Ursprünge des israelitischen Rechtes* (Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, Philologisch-historische Klasse, 86/1; Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1934).

7. See, for example, the discussion by Jack Goody, “Against Ritual,” *Secular Ritual* (ed. Sally F. Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff; Assen/Amsterdam: van Gorcum, 1977) 25–35.

8. *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1967) 19.

broader term, not restricted to the religious realm; a ceremony, in my usage, will not necessarily have “reference to beliefs in mystical beings or powers.”⁹ I understand Turner’s “prescribed formal behavior” to include both words and actions. In the broadest sense, any of the formalities of the law, including merely verbal behavior such as the drafting and witnessing of an instrument in traditional stereotyped language, may be regarded as ceremonial behavior, so in part I will discuss the formulary of ancient Near Eastern law; but I shall take as my starting point those formalities involving some kind of action by the participants. With reference to the actions and gestures performed in ceremonies, writers on this subject frequently use the term “symbolic.” For Barbara Myerhoff this seems to be the essence of a ceremonial act: “rituals can be distinguished from custom and mere habit by their utilization of symbols.”¹⁰ A part of my discussion will question the total appropriateness of the terms symbol and symbolic in these contexts. My selection of illustrative material on ceremonies of law will come mostly from the Hebrew Bible and the Aramaic papyri from Upper Egypt; on the side of treaty and covenant I will discuss Dennis McCarthy’s application of the word symbolic to the Semitic terminology used for treaty making and show that ceremony has a performative role in covenant, as it did in legal ritual.

Performative Ritual in the Aramaic Papyri

The Elephantine papyri are for the most part the miscellaneous papers of a colony of Jewish mercenary soldiers in the service of the Persian king stationed at Elephantine, an island by Syene (Assuan) in Upper Egypt.¹¹ Among the dozens of papyri are many legal documents: conveyances of property, contracts of various kinds, documents relating to loans and the settlement of renunciation of claims, marriage contracts, affidavits, and documents of manumission. Since all fall within the fifth century B.C.E., these are toward the end of the flourishing period of ancient Near Eastern law, rather than the beginning of it. Not

9. This is the usage advocated by Mary Gluckmann and Max Gluckman, “On Drama, and Games and Athletic Contests,” *Secular Ritual*, 227–43.

10. “We Don’t Wrap Herring in a Printed Page: Fusion, Fictions, and Continuity in Secular Ritual,” *Secular Ritual*, 199; the whole discussion on pp. 199–200 is valuable.

11. The recently published papyri from Saqqara, evidently not far removed from the Elephantine papyri in date, contain many legal documents (the editor lists eighteen), but they are on the whole much more fragmentary than the Elephantine papyri and hence more difficult to interpret. In addition, they reflect a non-Jewish community. They do not seem to challenge the general picture of the relation of law and religion drawn here. See J. B. Segal, *Aramaic Texts from North Saqqara* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1983).

long after the time of these documents, Alexander's conquest of the Near East inaugurated a radically different set of political conditions, so that ancient legal traditions either disappeared or survived only in a different setting.

Although these documents are late, they may claim unusual interest because they seem to be closer to real law than the older "codes" of laws and similar materials that have so often been the focus of attention in discussions of law and religion. In most cases there is no reason to doubt that the terms of these contracts would have been enforced by the court (the Persian governor and his associates) in case a dispute arose. However, there is some justification for doubting whether certain provisions were really valid. Thus Reuven Yaron, one of the principal and pioneer students of the legal aspects of these texts, expresses doubt about the enforceability of clauses in a legal document that asserts its own genuineness and condemns divergent documents as forgeries: "We should like to know what force a court would give to such a clause."¹² On the whole, however, the Elephantine documents are close to the law in the sense of what the courts *do*. In contrast to the so-called codes of law, which were almost never cited in court, these documents would have been introduced in court to decide, for example, whether Yehoyishma really owned the house where she was living, or whether the woman Tamut was slave or free.

On examination, this sizable body of legal material contains little by way of ceremony or religious ritual, in the sense in which these terms are used here. Presently I will qualify that statement and deal with exceptions, but as a generalization it is true. The law of the Aramaic papyri is secular and mundane. These mercenary soldiers were Jews of some sort, greatly concerned about their temple and its service, but there is little mingling of religion with their legal life. They buy and sell houses and movable property, sell or free slaves, marry or enter other important contracts, all without much reference to religion and with little use of any ceremonial observances other than the preparation of the proper written forms. The law appears here as autonomous and competent to achieve its goal of regulating practically all kinds of human affairs.¹³

The one ceremonial and religious observance referred to rather often is the taking of an oath. One fragmentary papyrus records the

12. Reuven Yaron, *Introduction to the Law of the Aramaic Papyri* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961) 29–30.

13. On the "striving of the law for independence and autonomy" in various historical periods see Edgar Bodenheimer, *Jurisprudence: The Philosophy and Method of the Law* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1962) 173–74.

kind of oath sworn: “Oath of Menahem b. Shallum b. Hodaviah . . . by Ya’u the god, by the temple and by ‘Anathya’u, and spoke to him saying”¹⁴ Another document shows the setting of the oath in court procedure. A certain Dargman had laid claim to land owned by one Mahseiah; the case came before the Persian judge Damidata and his fellow judges. The judge made the present owner, Mahseiah, take an oath by Ya’u (his god), which he did. The court then compelled Dargman to abandon his claim in a “deed of renunciation”: “You have sworn to me by Ya’u, and have satisfied my mind about this land.”¹⁵ As Yaron notes, all the references to oaths at Elephantine are to oaths of clearance, as distinguished from promissory oaths.¹⁶

These oaths, for all their invocation of various divine names, do not seriously alter the picture of an autonomous, secular law; indeed, the employment of the oath may be thought to reinforce that picture. At certain points the legal system confronted an inability to act on the basis of ordinary evidence, but was unwilling simply to abandon all hope of regulating affairs and hence had to resort to ceremony and religion. This is not allowed to get out of hand, however, for the oath is ordered by the judge, evidently taken in his presence, written up in a legal document, and assented to by the plaintiff. In short, ceremony and rite appear here as legal techniques. As stated at the outset, it probably has been more common to think of religion, including the idea of covenant with God, as stating broad policy, and of law as a lower order of thing, consisting of techniques for carrying policy into effect. But the use of oath at Elephantine may be viewed as showing this view turned upside down, with an independent and competent legal sphere achieving its ends, if necessary, by resort to religion as a device.

At this point it seems useful to illustrate the same situation in ancient Israel. In the midst of other legal material, the biblical writer turns his attention to unsolved homicide: the case of a person found slain in the open country, with the identity of the slayer unknown (Deuteronomy 21). Obviously this might have been a serious threat to the peace of the community, but it is also obvious that the law could not deal with the situation in ordinary ways. So resort is had to ritual. The elders of the town closest to the corpse take a heifer and ceremonially break its neck beside running water; they then wash their hands over the heifer and formally assert their innocence. Looking aside from the question

14. A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.E.* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923; repr. Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1967) no. 44, lines 1–4.

15. *Ibid.*, no. 6, lines 11–12.

16. Yaron, *Law of the Aramaic Papyri*, 32.

of how this ceremony fits with Israelite practices for purging away guilt, I note that this case again illustrates that ritual might be a technique for filling in gaps in the law. As Moshe Weinfeld notes, the ritual act is not carried out by priests, although they are present, but by the elders and judges (magistrates); the ceremony is clearly thought of as part of legal life, not part of ordinary sacrificial praxis.¹⁷

Returning to Elephantine legal documents, I find them at first reading to be relatively austere, practically devoid of the color and liveliness of ceremony, with a language totally adapted to the mundane affairs it embodies—a conclusion that must be modified somewhat when the phrases and clauses of the formulary are subjected to historical and comparative study. Yohanan Muffs has shown that practically every feature of the Aramaic legal language at Elephantine is descended from antecedents in cuneiform law.¹⁸ The closest relative, not surprisingly, is the law of the Neo-Assyrian empire, the political power that was dominant when the Aramaic language advanced to the status of being the official language of the empire. But the history stretches far back beyond that, so that individual features of this legal system may be traced back through Aramaic texts to Akkadian documents, and beyond that to Sumerian forms of speech. This great antiquity of important parts of Elephantine law certainly calls for notice; in addition, another feature emerges from historical study. Mere words and phrases at Elephantine turn out to be allusions to what were in earlier times ceremonial acts connected with the law: postures and gestures and comings and goings that were as binding in law as the verbal forms that accompanied them or later replaced them.

With respect to the antiquity of the formulary used in Elephantine, it would be interesting to inquire seriously and in detail whether the oldest private law as a whole had the same nature as the laws of Elephantine, that is, autonomous, secular, striving for universality, and employing rituals of any kind only sparingly and for well-defined purposes. Such an inquiry is impossible here, both because it is largely in the province of cuneiform studies and because the discussion would have to take in the many complexities arising out of varying local traditions and out of the cultivation in different places of ritual practices not met with at Elephantine (such as the ordeal, the sacred lot, and the conduct of legal

17. *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomical School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972) 210–11.

18. *Studies in the Aramaic Legal Papyri from Elephantine* (Studia et Documenta ad iura Orientis Antiqui pertinentia 8; Leiden: Brill, 1969; repr. New York: KTAV, 1973).

matters by so-called “temple judges” in sacred places).¹⁹ All the same, it would appear from the summary discussions of cuneiform specialists that the formulary developed at an early stage, for cuneiform law remained substantially the same throughout the long history and wide extent of Mesopotamian civilization.²⁰ If correct, such an observation is perhaps deserving of emphasis, especially for biblical scholars, who may be accustomed to leaving the documentary side of law out of account, because of the differing nature of the legal material in the Bible.

Leaving this question aside, I pursue the second observation made above, namely, that the documents from Elephantine contain references to formal ritual acts, even if the reference has become only metaphorical. The general form of these Aramaic documents is of a first-person oral declaration before witnesses: “On such and such a date A said to B, ‘I have come to thy house, etc.’ This was written at the dictation of A. Witnesses thereto: C, D, E, etc.” Within this subjective framework, whose antecedents in cuneiform law Muffs has traced, occur references to ceremonial acts by the speaker or other parties to the agreement. For example, the most elaborate of the known Aramaic marriage contracts reads:

I have come to thy house and asked of thee the woman Yehoyishma (by name), thy sister, for marriage. And thou didst give her to me. She is my wife and I am her husband from this day forth unto forever. And I have given thee as the *mohar* of thy sister Yehoyishma silver [1 karsh]. It has gone in to thee [and thy heart is satisfied there]with.²¹

Whether or not the acts referred to were really carried out as late as fifth-century B.C.E. Egypt (they certainly were at some earlier time,

19. Muffs, *ibid.*, 12, notes that earlier interpreters of the Elephantine Aramaic legal documents approached them from the vantage of later legal traditions, such as Talmudic law, or as a self-contained entity (e.g., Yaron); his own approach, the Assyriological, is the only one that commends itself for my present purpose. See Arnold Walther, *Das altbabylonische Gerichtswesen* (Leipziger Semitistische Studien 6/4–6; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1917) on temple judges. In his view the temple judges were not actually clergy; from a time earlier than the first dynasty of Babylon the administration of law was almost entirely out of the hands of priests, except for administration of some oaths.

20. For example, A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1964) 280–81; note Oppenheim’s judgment on the persistence of the essentials of the formulary: “Radical changes in style occur rarely and only in marginal or late text groups” (p. 281).

21. Emil G. Kraeling, ed., *The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri: New Documents of the Fifth Century B.C.E. from the Jewish Colony at Elephantine* (New Haven: Yale University, 1953; repr. Salem, NH: Arno, 1969) no. 7, lines 3–5.

before the formulary was fixed), there were prescribed ceremonial steps in getting married: the visit by the bridegroom to the father or male relative's house, the formal asking for the woman in marriage, the father's assent, the declaration by the groom, and the presentation of the *mohar*. Even the superficially abstract terms used in sale contracts turn out, on detailed examination, to have a more colorful background. In other kinds of documents, a phrase that may be rendered "we have renounced claim to . . ." had to do originally with the physical removal of a former owner from property once his; as Muffs notes, at Nuzi "the seller lifts his foot from his property and places the foot of the buyer in its place."²² There are other gestures of distancing oneself (Akkadian *ireteq*, Aramaic *rhq*). Possibly, too, the statement by the seller "my heart is satisfied" with the price of some property may go back to a more gestural, concrete situation where payment was originally made in grain to be consumed by the seller.²³ When Meshullam freed his slave Tepmet, he said: "You are freed from shadow to sunlight . . . you are freed unto God."²⁴ This unexpectedly vivid bit of phraseology has its explanation in a whole cycle of gestures, words, and ceremonies of manumission in the ancient Near East, which consistently associate manumission with passage from darkness to light. In some localities it also involves anointing a slave's head with oil, facing him toward the sun, and "cleansing his forehead."²⁵ Since, at Elephantine and elsewhere, the language of legal documents contains only historical allusions to these ceremonies, I conclude that in Near Eastern law there was a general movement away from acted-out ceremony to written-out verbal formulas.

Even in this regard, however, it is important not to misinterpret the earlier ceremonies. In my opinion, Muffs does so when he says of Elephantine: "Many metaphorical terms seem to be terminological metamorphoses of early symbolic-magical actions"; or, with reference to sales of land, "All of these symbolic gestures magically effectuate the severing of old ties and claims and the creation of new ones."²⁶ In reality there is nothing magical about these rituals, and it misses the mark to call them symbolic. A much more useful term is the one coined by the

22. Muffs, *Aramaic Legal Papyri from Elephantine*, 21.

23. *Ibid.*, 110–11.

24. Author's own translation of Kraeling, *Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri*, no. 5, lines 9–10.

25. The exact sense of the last phrase is not well understood. On facing the sun see Muffs, *Aramaic Legal Papyri from Elephantine*, 110, and Delbert R. Hillers, "Berit 'am: 'Emancipation of the People,'" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 97 (1978) 175–82.

26. Muffs, *Aramaic Legal Papyri from Elephantine*, 110 and 21.

British philosopher John L. Austin: performative. Austin's pioneering discussion of this aspect of human communication had to do primarily with speech—with “performative utterances”—but his first example was of a ritual combining word and action: the christening of a ship (“I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth”), surely accompanied by the traditional bottle-smashing.²⁷ Austin's point about this kind of speech—and I would say, ritual—was that it actually accomplishes what it states. The naming of the ship is not a separate act from the ritual; you name a ship exactly by saying “I name this ship X.” In English the words “now” and “hereby” often accompany performatives, which typically take the form of a first-person singular in present tense.

To apply this to my subject, I would improve on Muffs's way of putting it by saying that the early rites lying behind later Aramaic terms are performative; publicly and ritually removing the foot from property you once owned, as the same sort of thing others did in the same circumstances, did not symbolize the renouncing of a claim, it was the renunciation. It was not magic, it was business, and it was legal.²⁸

There is a linguistic aspect of this that cannot be dealt with fully here, but may be mentioned. Just as in English one most typically casts performative utterances as first-person singular presents, so in various Semitic languages there are characteristic tenses used: the preterit in Akkadian and the perfect in Arabic, Hebrew, and Aramaic.²⁹ In these cases, instead of the normal rendering of a verb in past tense, it is

27. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (2d ed.; ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1962).

28. The anthropologist S. J. Tambiah treats this subject, ritual as performative, but his discussion seems to miss the point. He contrasts ritual (magical) acts, which are performative, with “scientific activity” as having “positive” or “creative” meaning but not being subject to verification. But whatever the case may be with a magical act, it is obviously possible to verify whether a ritual was performed, and hence in appropriate cases whether a ship has been named, a house sold, or a man married. See S. J. Tambiah, “Form and Meaning of Magical Acts: A Point of View,” *Modes of Thought* (ed. Robin Horton and Ruth Finnegan; London: Faber and Faber, 1973) 199–229.

29. See Wolfgang Heimpel and Gabriella Guidi, “Der Koinzidenzfall im Akkadischen” (*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* supplement 1; Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1969) 148–52, and Werner Mayer, *Untersuchungen zur Formensprache der babylonischen “Gebetsbeschwörungen”* (Studia Pohl: Series Maior 5; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1976); the latter contains a lengthy discussion of “Der Koinzidenzfall im Akkadischen” (pp. 183–201) and includes many examples from other Semitic languages, with references to previous scholarly discussions. (These works were called to my attention by my colleague, Dr. Jerrold S. Cooper.) The present writer's forthcoming discussion of Hebrew performatives will carry the study farther in that area. Muffs shows some awareness of

necessary to translate as a present, for example, "I divorce [*šm't*] Ašor my husband."³⁰ Therefore, perfects involved in the originally gestural performatives of sale and quittance must be translated as "I hereby give . . ." or "We hereby renounce claim . . ."; this in turn reflects on the nature of these ceremonial acts. My conclusion is simply that even if in ancient law there is a movement away from accomplishing things by gestures, this is not deeply significant of a fundamental change in attitude, but more of a recognition of the convenience of literate ways of doing things. To use the terminology of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, it is improbable that this is evidence for a movement from the prelogical to the logical; what is attested is a change from the preliterate to the literate.

Ceremony in Ancient Near Eastern Treaties

The making of treaties in the ancient Near East leaves the sphere of what is strictly legal, for the treaty or covenant apparently depended much less on any existing social group for its enforcement than was true in the case of a legal contract. It often was intended to create a new social grouping and appealed to celestial powers as witnesses and enforcers. Treaties and the religious covenants modeled after them also made a rather rich and free use of ceremonies and gestures. The best known of these is the slaying of a selected animal, giving rise to Semitic phrases such as *kārat bērit* (Hebrew) or *gēzar 'ādāyya'* (Aramaic), which have close counterparts in the classical languages (*horkia temnein*; *foedus icere* or *foedus ferire*). Other treaty ceremonies include eating together, drinking from the same cup, and mutual anointing with oil.³¹ Even though the treaty and covenant area of ancient political and religious life is something rather different from legal life, at the same time, the use of ceremonies in the one may clarify or modify views in the other area.

Dennis McCarthy has written extensively about treaty and covenant; I take his views as the focus of attention here, not because of their vulnerability but, on the contrary, because he has written expertly and intelligently about the rites surrounding ancient treaties. In McCarthy's presentation the word *symbolic* recurs frequently. Thus the Sinai

this use of the perfect tense in Aramaic (*Aramaic Legal Papyri from Elephantine*, 32 n. 2).

30. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri*, no. 15, line 23.

31. See the vassal treaties of Esarhaddon: "(if) you establish this treaty before the gods who are placed (as witnesses), and swear by the laden table, by drinking from the cup, by the glow of fire, by water and oil, by touching one another's breast . . ." (§13; trans. Erica Reiner, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* [ed. J. B. Pritchard; 3d ed.; Princeton: Princeton University, 1969] 536).

covenant is said to have been “a relationship based on various symbolic rites enacting union.”³²

McCarthy proceeds from this point of view to draw a significant contrast between Hittite treaties and later Syrian and Assyrian treaty usage, where a much greater emphasis is placed on “substitution rites”—rites in which the swearer of an oath is identified with various animals or objects that are ceremonially destroyed or mutilated, the idea being that the swearer will be treated so in the event he or she plays false. The purpose of these vivid ceremonies is said to be psychological, working through the oath-takers’ religious fears: “The rites are simply a form of curse, made graphic and acted out so as to impress the mind more and to be more effective.” These rites, most commonly that of killing an animal, “accompanied” covenant-making. The Semites, especially, put an emphasis on the rite over against the word, the latter being characteristic of the Hittites. In McCarthy’s view: “We have then, two sub-groups in the treaty family, the Hittite with its historical section, and the Syrian-Assyrian with its curses and substitution rites.”³³

A. Leo Oppenheim is more outspoken on this subject than McCarthy. What I politely call covenant ceremonies Oppenheim calls “primitive and ritualistic practices” meant “to illustrate, in a crude way, the fate of any offender.” They correspond to magical practices, and are “primitive” and “barbaric.”³⁴

This conception that the rite of slaughter in covenant-making is essentially symbolic leads McCarthy into a rather lengthy discussion of what the blood might symbolize. He takes issue with E. Bickerman, who held that the blood is a divine element released when the victim is slain thereby giving a special force of mystic communion to the contrasting parties and their union.³⁵ In my own opinion, McCarthy’s views on this point are better founded than those of Bickerman, but this kind of argument runs the danger of missing the point that arises from comparing treaty practice to legal practice.

Legal practice too, as shown above, at times involved ceremonies: eating, anointing, making of gestures, and pronouncing of words. But these are in this context primarily performative or operative—not symbolic. For example, to set a slave facing the sun and to anoint him within that impressive ceremony might well invite reflection on the

32. Dennis J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant* (Analecta Biblica 21a; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1978) 15.

33. *Ibid.*, 92, 151.

34. *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 285.

35. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 94; Bickerman, “Couper une alliance,” *Archives d’histoire du droit oriental* 5 (1950/51) 133–56.

symbolism involved, but the practical and overriding point was that the ceremony did something: it made a person free. And the ordinary slave might well have been content with a mere document giving the verbal equivalent of the rite.

It seems to me that ordinary treaty rites must be understood in the same way, especially the most common of them—killing an animal in an act of self-cursing. This is very old and widespread, extending beyond the Semitic-speaking world. Like a ceremony of marriage or a formula of sale, it fulfilled a need that societies felt repeatedly: to join separate groups together for certain purposes and to have a mutually recognized act to do this. Other attested covenant rites would have functioned the same way: as performative ceremonies to achieve important social goals. If in certain areas, ceremonies (always *accompanied* by words in any case) are wholly and partly replaced by verbal formulas, this is not surprising, in view of parallel developments in the law. It may be questioned whether this represents any fundamental conceptual shift. It would be equally unsurprising to find a metonymic shift in the development of the idiom: to *cut* a covenant.³⁶ A comparable development is found in Akkadian expressions having to do with *kanāku* ‘to seal’. Although the verb originally refers to a physical act, it comes to refer to the social or legal reality brought about by the ceremonial act, hence ‘to give or receive under seal, to transfer property by means of a sealed document.’ An example cited by the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* is “the field which my father gave with a sealed document to his daughter.”³⁷ This signals the strong possibility that the phrase ‘cut a covenant’, superficially so pregnant with symbolic meaning, is instead a very faded metaphor.

I argue, then, that just as there is a good deal of unity in the ancient Near Eastern legal formulary over the ages and in widespread areas, so treaty forms constitute, in McCarthy’s phrase, “a basic unity.”³⁸ If so, then perhaps in this sphere also the presence or absence of acted-out ceremonies does not signal a fundamentally different way of proceeding.

36. On this, see the somewhat labored discussion of McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 91–92.

37. *eqlu ša PN abua ik-nu-ku-ma ana mārtišu iddinu* (*The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1956–], vol. K, p. 141). The verb also comes to mean ‘to obtain a sealed document from a debtor’.

38. “The Treaties: A Basic Unity” is the title of an extensive section (pp. 122–40) of McCarthy’s monograph. Gene M. Tucker, “Covenant Forms and Contract Forms,” *Vetus Testamentum* 15 (1965) 487–503, draws a sharp distinction between the forms of contracts and covenants, but this valid distinction does not rule out resemblances in other respects, such as the existence of a standard form.

To sum up, I argue that ceremonies should not be thought of as accompanying, or reinforcing, the making of treaties and covenants, but as operative, performative elements. And, while maintaining a distinction between treaty and law, I would stress more strongly than has been done certain elements and developments that they have in common. If everyday law appears from the beginning as something rational and mundane (appealing to ceremony and religion as only one of its techniques), then the sphere of treaty-making is not altogether different.

In my student days, I remember being amused by a reference to the ancient Babylonians' love for legal red tape. Now I take a different view. An important element in the first growth of civilization, its spread, and its endurance, was the development of forms of law, documentary or ceremonial, which must have made an enormous contribution to order and stability in human affairs.³⁹ The Hebrew Bible itself contains a unique tribute to legal forms and rites in the book of Jeremiah, a passage that I call (with a little exaggeration), a "hymn to a conveyance." At the very end of Israelite national life under her own king, with Nebuchadnezzar's army surrounding Jerusalem, the prophet Jeremiah bought a field in order to keep it in the family:

And I bought the field at Anathoth from Hanamel my cousin, and weighed out the money to him, seventeen shekels of silver. I signed the deed, sealed it, got witnesses, and weighed the money on scales. Then I took the sealed deed of purchase, containing the terms and conditions, and the open copy, and I gave the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah son of Mahseiah, in the presence of Hanamel my cousin, in the presence of the witnesses who signed the deed of purchase, and in the presence of all the Jews who were sitting in the court of the guard. I charged Baruch in their presence, saying, "Thus says the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel: 'Take these deeds, both this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware vessel, that they may last for a long time.' For thus says the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel: 'Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land.'" (Jer 32:9–15)

The description is detailed enough (approaching the tedious) to allow the conclusion that this was done *rite*—formally and legally—even with the sort of double document that contemporary legal practice required. Oddly but appropriately, prophetic vision for the restored society of the future takes the form of hope for a revival of legal routine.

39. Moore and Myerhoff stress the ordering function of ritual in their introduction to *Secular Ritual*: "collective ritual can be seen as an especially dramatic attempt to bring some particular part of life firmly and definitely into orderly control" (p. 3). This seems to apply in an even stronger way to the forms and ceremonies of law.

PART III

*Starting Points:
Ugarit, Hermopolis,
and Palmyra*

The Bow of Aqhat: The Meaning of a Mythological Theme

Those passages in the Aqhat epic which deal with the bow of Aqhat are among the clearest and most coherent portions of the preserved text.¹ Most translators would agree on at least the essential points² of the following summary of the sequence of events.

Someone, presumably the craftsman-god Kothar, has promised the wise patriarch Danel a bow. Danel is sitting one day as a judge at the city gate, when he sees Kothar coming, bringing a bow and arrows. Danel and his wife hurriedly prepare to entertain the divine guest. Kothar arrives and presents Danel with the bow and arrows, then dines with them and departs. Danel presents the wonderful bow to his son, Aqhat. There is a break in the text, and from the damaged portion which follows it is only certain that the goddess Anath, while dining, sees the bow and covets it. She offers Aqhat gold and silver for it, but he refuses, suggesting that she could have Kothar make her one just like it. Next she offers him immortality, the life of a god, but he spurns this also, accusing her of lying and (apparently) suggesting that she as a female has no business with a bow anyway. She is thoroughly incensed, and flies off to the father of the gods, El. She slanders Aqhat before El, and wins his grudging permission to do as she pleases. From a much-damaged section it seems that she pretends to make up with Aqhat and

Reprinted with permission from *Orient and Occident* (ed. H. A. Hoffner, Jr.; Kevelaer: Butzon and Bercker / Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1973) 71–80.

1. Throughout this paper I take Aqht to consist of *CTA* 17, 18, and 19 (*UT*: 2 Aqht, 3 Aqht, and 1 Aqht) and disregard *CTA* 20, 21, and 22 (*UT* 121, 122, 123, and 124), whose connection to the Aqhat epic is obscure and problematic.

2. It seems necessary to comment only on the understanding of *l* in *lḥwy* (18 IV 27), *l.ahw* (19 I 16), *l[ḥwy]* (18 IV 13) which is assumed in the present discussion. As rendered by Ginsberg (*ANET*, 152–53) and others, the *l* in each case is positive, so that Anath and Yatpan seem to be predicting the resurrection of Aqhat each time they discuss his death. It seems preferable to take this as negative (so C. H. Gordon) in each case, yielding a parallel (19 I 15–16) *mḥš* || *lahw* and (18 IV 13) *tmḥš* || *l[ḥwy]* “slay || not let live.” For *l* + *ḥwy* = “kill” cf. Ex 22:17; Deut 20:16 etc.; cf. also *ḥym* || *blmt* (17 VI 26–27).

leads him on a hunt near a place called Abelim. After a long lacuna, we find her securing the cooperation of a henchman, Yatpan, in a plot on Aqhat's life. As Aqhat is dining, eagles will soar over his head, and among the eagles will be Anath and Yatpan; Yatpan will smite and kill him. They carry out this plot; after the murder Anath weeps, and seems to say (the passage is damaged) that she did it just for his bow. On the next tablet the bow is mentioned again, in a mutilated context; it seems to have been broken. The bow receives its final mention in a frightfully obscure passage, from which we can make out only that Anath (or Yatpan?) killed him just for the bow, and says—such are the ambiguities of Ugaritic—that the bow has been (or has not been) or should be (or should not be) given to her. The rest of the extant text is taken up with telling how Danel and his daughter Paghat learn of the murder, and set about avenging it.

Despite the relative intelligibility of this episode concerning the bow, there is still disagreement on two important points in its interpretation: the motivation of the characters, especially the Virgin Anath, and the relation of this story to other Near Eastern and classical tales. As will become apparent the two problems are related. Only the main lines in the history of interpretation of this episode will be reviewed here, for the sake of clarity.

One popular line of interpretation has been to see in the encounter between Anath and Aqhat a seduction scene. Anath is furious because Aqhat refuses, hence she kills him. De Vaux, in 1937, shortly after publication of the text, saw in Aqhat the story of a young hunter to whom the love of a goddess proves fatal, and he adduced as a parallel the story of Eshmun and Astronoe as related in Damascius, and the Adonis legend.³ W. F. Albright seconded this opinion with customary vigor: "It is perfectly clear that Aqhat . . . has unwittingly aroused the passionate desire of the goddess Anath, because of his strength and beauty. Like Bitis and Joseph in Egypt, like Eshmun and Kombabos in Syria, like Gilgamesh in Babylonia, the chaste hero spurns the advances of the goddess of love and war. A more characteristic specimen of Near-Eastern mythology would be hard to find."⁴

H. L. Ginsberg threw cold water on this notion in an influential article the next year. Aqhat did not die because the goddess was "love-lorn;" it was the bow which aroused the cupidity of Anath in her character as fierce warrior-goddess. Ginsberg argued that sensuality and fecundity

3. Roland de Vaux, Review of Virolleaud, *La légende phénicienne de Danel* (1936), *RB* 46 (1937), 441.

4. *BASOR*, No. 94 (Apr., 1944), 34. Cf. also H. Stocks, *ZDMG* 97 (1943), 126 n. 1 for similar views.

are not prominent attributes of Anath; she is “beautiful, youthful, girlish, vigorous, hoydenish, bellicose, even vicious . . . but not . . . voluptuous and reproductive.”⁵ Since on examination there is nothing in the text which says that Anath tried to seduce Aqhat, Ginsberg’s argument was hard to meet. In an article of 1949 reviewing interpretation of the Aqhat myth, Andrée Herdner accepted Ginsberg’s case as proven,⁶ and in 1949 de Vaux withdrew his earlier idea and agreed with Ginsberg.⁷

Ginsberg’s refutation of the seduction theory, however convincing it may be on the negative side, cannot be considered a completely satisfying exegesis. Ginsberg does not take into account the parallels to other tales which de Vaux and Albright had noticed. Even if one concedes that Aqhat, unlike these other stories, does not speak of a seduction, there remain features which are strikingly similar. Even if de Vaux and Albright were mistaken in detail, they seem to have grasped something important which Ginsberg leaves out of account. Furthermore, Anath’s cupidity and her frustrated wrath are not perhaps completely accounted for by stressing her bellicose nature. If there is one thing clear from the story, it is that she wants Aqhat’s bow; she does not just want a bow, nor would she be content with one just like his. Would the goddess of war necessarily take that line? Several interpreters have framed theories, elaborating on Ginsberg, to account for her motives more fully. Driver, who is in general very pessimistic about our chances of understanding the epic, argued very briefly that the magic bow would have made Aqhat equal to a god, hence Anath’s envy.⁸ In his *Thespis*, T. H. Gaster developed a similar idea at greater length. Aqhat is the story of “. . . how a mortal huntsman challenged the supremacy of the goddess of the chase and how his subsequent execution for this impiety caused infertility upon earth.”⁹ Elaborating on this, Gaster would have it that the bow of Aqhat is a divine bow “withdrawn from a stock which the artisan god Kothar was carrying to the gods.”¹⁰ Anath would

5. *BASOR*, No. 97 (Feb., 1945), 3–10; quotation from page 9. Cf. also part II of the article, *BASOR*, No. 98 (Apr., 1945), 15–23 esp. p. 19.

6. *Syria* 26 (1949), 6.

7. *RB* 56 (1949), 310 n. 3.

8. G. R. Driver, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (1956), 8.

9. Revised edition (1961), 320.

10. *Thespis*, 341. At another level of his complicated and nuanced reading of the text, Gaster argues that Aqhat is an astral myth, a version of the Orion story, and that the bow episode is designed to account for certain celestial phenomena of the summer months, the Bow being a constellation. The arguments used to prove this, involving a combination of classical myth and Mesopotamian astronomical lore, seem ingenious and unconvincing to me, but in any case Gaster himself also tries to explain the motives of the characters in Aqhat apart from

not desire an ordinary bow, since she presumably already possessed a divine one; she is trying to recover a lost divine weapon. By its very fullness Gaster's explication points to a weakness in the argument; none of this is actually there in the text. To sum up, the course of scholarly discussion of the bow episode in *Aqhat* has not yet led to a completely satisfying conclusion.

A new line of approach, the one to be carried farther here, was suggested by Harry Hoffner in an article: "Symbols for Masculinity and Femininity."¹¹ Hoffner was primarily concerned with the use of these symbols in rituals, and so alludes to literary texts, among them *Aqhat*, only in passing. The bow in *Aqhat* is "a masculine symbol." This, as will be shown below, is an insight of fundamental importance. Hoffner's further comments on *Aqhat* unfortunately seem to veer off at once from the promising path struck in the original insight into the symbolic value of the bow.¹² It is this line of interpretation which invites our further consideration.

I. *The Bow of Aqhat*

That the bow is a common, practically unequivocal symbol of masculinity in ancient Near Eastern texts is sufficiently established by passages quoted in Hoffner's article, and in the present writer's collection of curses on the theme "Warriors become women."¹³ One may add to the familiar Ps 127:4-5 ("Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, etc.") another biblical passage, where "bow" seems to be a metaphor for masculinity, specifically sexual prowess, Job 29:20. Job is wishing he were in his prime again: *wəqāštī bēyādī tahālîp* "when my bow was ever new in my hand." Note too that, whereas Hoffner holds that the bow becomes a masculine symbol simply because war is a masculine activity, the phallic symbolism of the arrow is rather obvious. It is in fact confirmed by an ancient text called to my attention by J. J. Roberts, Ben Sira (*Ecclesiasticus*) 26:12. The sage is warning about the evils of a "headstrong daugh-

astronomy, so that it seems permissible at present to bypass his astronomical arguments.

11. Subtitle "Their Use in Ancient Near Eastern Sympathetic Magic Rituals," *JBL* 85 (1966), 326-34. *Aqhat* is discussed at 330.

12. Hoffner calls the bow episode in *Aqhat* a "mythological context with no sexual associations" and asserts that "the goddess seeks the bow, not to secure for herself male sexual powers, but rather to enhance her 'quasimale' bellicose attributes." As to the first statement, how can a "masculine symbol" have "no sexual associations"? As to the second—a sheerly ad hoc explanation—see the following discussion.

13. D. R. Hillers, *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* (1964), 66-68.

ter." "As a thirsty wayfarer opens his mouth and drinks from any water near him, so will she sit in front of every post and open her quiver to the arrow" (RSV; Gk. *kai enanti belous anoixei pharetran*). The bow itself, and the quiver, are explicitly sexual symbols in a Mesopotamian potency incantation, one of the ŠĀ.ZI.GA texts: "May the [qu]iver not become e[mp]t[y], may the bow not be slack!"¹⁴ In the accompanying ritual, and in several other ŠĀ.ZI.GA rituals, instructions are given for the making of model bows to be used in potency rites. To sum up, there is ample proof that bow and arrows are symbols for masculinity.

A less obvious but for our purpose more important point is that the goddess of love and war is explicitly described, in a number of texts, as the one who takes away men's bows, that is, who changes men into women. The point is of such importance for Aqhat as to justify quotation of the texts, some of which were not cited in Hoffner's study.¹⁵ From an 8th-century treaty we have this curse: "As for the men, may the Mistress of Women take away their bow."¹⁶ From an Old Babylonian prayer: "It is within your (power), Ishtar, to change men into women and women into men."¹⁷ The goddess herself is quoted: "[I change] the man into a woman. . ." ¹⁸The *Era Epic* iv 55–56 refers to ". . . the male prostitutes and sodomites, whom Ishtar, in order to make the people reverent, had turned from men into women."¹⁹ From a curse in one of Esarhaddon's inscriptions: "May Ishtar, mistress of battle and conflict, turn his masculinity into femininity and set him bound at the feet of his enemy."²⁰ When the Hittites wish to destroy the prowess of their enemies, they appeal in ritual and prayer to Ishtar of Nineveh: "Take from (their) men masculinity, prowess, robust health, swords (?), battleaxes, bows, arrows, and dagger(s)! And bring them to Hatti! Place in their hand the spindle and mirror of a woman! Dress them as women!"²¹ In sum, we have, not just the bow as a symbol for masculine prowess, but a whole complex of symbols parallel to the episode of Aqhat under consideration: the terrible goddess of love and war who may confront a virile and capable man and take away his bow, rob him

14. Robert D. Biggs, *ŠĀ.ZI.GA: Ancient Mesopotamian Potency Incantations* (1967), 37, No. 18, lines 3'–4'.

15. [Not cited were those in which no bow or arrows are mentioned. —Ed. (=H. A. Hoffner, Jr.; this editorial note appeared in the original publication.)]

16. Hillers, *Treaty-Curses*, 66–67.

17. *Op. cit.*, 66.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Op. cit.*, 67.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Hoffner, *JBL* 85, 331.

of his manliness. That most of the texts cited explicitly refer to Ishtar, whereas the Ugaritic epic is concerned with Anath, is not an insuperable obstacle in the way of using the texts cited to elucidate Aqhat. There is a sufficient similarity in conception between Ishtar and Anath to justify the connection.²² Like Ishtar, Anath is beautiful²³ and sexy;²⁴ that she is also a ferocious warrior is the most obvious part of her character. An Egyptian text adds explicit evidence for the transvestite nature of Anath; she is called “. . . Anat the divine, thou the victorious, woman acting as a warrior, clad as men and girl as women.”²⁵

To sum up, at a literal level Aqhat tells of a young man who loses his bow and his life at the hands of the goddess of love and war; at a symbolic level, a sexual meaning is present. Recognition of this last point is important for clarifying the relation of Aqhat to other myths with a similar plot.

II. The Mythological Theme

The term “theme” is used here to describe a narrative pattern which can be abstracted from a number of concrete examples embodying a variety of the pattern. None of the individual concrete examples includes all the elements which make up the full ideal theme. In fact, a considerable part of the interest in this sort of study is to notice which elements are present or absent or distorted in a given story. Aqhat, for instance, is eccentric in interesting ways. Note that the group of parallels cited is doubtless far from exhaustive even if one thinks only of Near Eastern and classical literature. It is not the writer’s intention to suggest any historical connection between what are presented here as various forms of the same theme, or story. It is not at all unlikely that historical connections might account for some of the resemblances, for example, between Aqhat and Gilgamesh, but on the one hand there is no direct evidence which could raise such suggestions above the level of speculation, and on the other hand, fundamental traits of human sexual psychology might be responsible for recurrence of similar motifs.

22. [d]ŠTAR is employed as logogram for Anat in Elkunirša Myth. Cf. Hoffner, *RHA* 76 (1965), 5–16. —Ed. (=H. A. Hoffner, Jr.)]

23. *CTA* 14 (*UT I Krt*) 146, 292–93.

24. *CTA* 11 (*UT 132*), 1–7.

25. The translation is that of A.H. Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum*, Third Series, Vol. 1, Text (1935), 63 (Papyrus VII, Verso I, 12–II, 1). See also Rainer Stadelmann, *Syrisch-Palästinensische Gottheiten in Ägypten*, Probleme der Ägyptologie, Vol. 5 (Leiden, 1967), 131–33. [Cited already by Hoffner, *JBL* 85 (1966), 334 n. 54. —Ed. (=H. A. Hoffner, Jr.)]

Since not all the tales I regard as parallel to Aqhat are widely known, I will first briefly summarize the essentials of the plot of the stories of Adonis, of Attis, of Stratonice and Kombabos, of Eshmun and Asatronoe, of Anubis and Bata, and of the Ishtar episode in Gilgamesh. Thereafter I will discuss the essential theme common to all, and the details found in varying treatments of the theme.

Leaving aside stories of the birth of Adonis, we turn directly to versions of his love and death.²⁶ In all versions he is the favorite of the goddess of love: Aphrodite, Venus, or in Pseudo-Melito, Balti of Gebal, and in Theodore bar Koni, Balti, also called Estra (presumably a corruption of Astarte). All versions agree that he died a violent death. That made classic by Ovid, who followed Alexandrian predecessors, and attested in many other authors and artistic representations, is that he was killed by a boar (*Metamorphoses*, x 708–16). This version is at least as old as Apollodorus (iii 182ff.; 2nd century B.C.E.), but just how much older it may be is uncertain. In other, less well-known versions, Adonis is killed by Persephone, or the muses, for grievances against Aphrodite. In Nonnos of Pamphilus (5th century C.E.), Pseudo-Melito, and Theodore bar Koni, he is killed by the love-goddess's jealous husband, Hephaestos. In an eccentric tale preserved in Suidas, Apollo transformed himself into a boar and killed the handsome youth.

The story of Attis also exists in various versions;²⁷ again that of Ovid is best known (*Fasti*, iv 223–44). Attis, a handsome Phrygian boy, was beloved by Cybele. He promised fidelity to her, and to remain a chaste boy forever. But he broke his vow, and she drove him mad, so that in the end he emasculated himself. In a Phrygian version reconstructed by Hepding the wonderfully fair Attis is loved by the androgynous monster Agdistis, who interferes just when Attis is about to be wed and sets the wedding party all raving mad. Attis himself runs beneath a pine-tree and emasculates himself. In a Lydian version, Attis, a Phrygian, was born without sexual powers. When he grew up he moved to Lydia where he initiated the people into the cult of the Great Mother. She so loved him that Zeus became jealous and sent a boar which killed many Lydians and Attis himself. Herodotus (5th century B.C.E.) shows the antiquity of the Attis story and of the death through a boar; he transforms elements of the legend into a tale of the Lydian royal house: Croesus' son Atys is tragically killed on a boar-hunt by a Phrygian whom Croesus had offered hospitality.

26. For details see W. W. Graf Baudissin, *Adonis und Esmun* (Leipzig, 1911) and Wahib Atallah, *Adonis dans la littérature et l'art grecs* (1966).

27. For details see Hugo Hepding, *Attis, seine Mythen und sein Kult* (1903) and cf. M. J. Vermaseren, *The Legend of Attis in Greek and Roman Art* (1966).

Lucian's story of Stratonice and Kombabos is told in *De Syria Dea* 19–27. Stratonice, wife of the king of Assyria, is bidden in a dream to build a temple of Juno in Hierapolis (Bambyce). Her husband sends her with a great company of builders and soldiers, and gives command to a young and very handsome man, Kombabos, to watch over her. Kombabos is very afraid, for he is young and she is fair, so he emasculates himself, puts his member in a little pot with honey and spices, and commits the pot to the king to keep. In Hierapolis, Stratonice falls madly in love with him, but he resists, until finally he must tell her the truth. They continue to keep company and are accused before the king. Summoned by the king, Kombabos proved his innocence and the king gives him gold and vengeance on his slanderers. Kombabos then finished the temple, and his image in bronze is set up in the sanctuary, “in shape like a woman, but dressed like a man.” His best friends also geld themselves, out of sympathy, or others say, Hera put it in men's minds to do so, so he need not mourn alone. The custom survives until this day.

The tale of Eshmun and Astronoe is told only by Damascius, as transmitted in Photius' *Bibliotheca* (Migne, PG, Tomus CIII cols. 1303–4).²⁸ “He (Eshmun) being exceeding fair of face and an admirable young man to look at, was beloved, as the story goes, by Astronoe, a Phoenician goddess, the mother of the gods. He used to go hunting in the wooded glades. Once he saw the goddess lying in wait for him, and fled. She gave chase and had just about caught him, when he cut off his own sexual organ with an axe. She, grieved at this, called the youth Paian, and restored the warmth of life to him and made him a god, called by the Phoenicians Eshmun on account of the warmth of life.”

The Egyptian New Kingdom story of Anubis and Bata, the “Story of Two Brothers,” is long and full of details; only the barest essentials can be retold here.²⁹ It is presented as a tale about mortals, but from the names Anubis and Bata, both names of gods, and from other evidence it seems to have been originally a tale about gods. Two brothers lived together, the younger, Bata, as a man of all work for the older, Anubis. The older brother's wife tried to seduce him, but he refused her, and she in revenge accused him to his brother. His brother pursued him with a spear, but miraculously a river full of crocodiles appears between them. The younger man swears to his brother that he is innocent and to confirm his oath cuts off his phallus and throws it into the river. After a complicated series of episodes the story reaches a happy ending.

Only those elements of the Gilgamesh Epic need be recalled which are related in theme to the mythological pattern being considered. Gil-

28. Cf. Baudissin, *Adonis und Esmun*, 339–40.

29. See *ANET*, 23–25, and literature cited there.

gamesh (at the beginning of Tablet VI; *ANET* 83–85) has washed and adorned himself after his victory over the monster H̄umbaba. Ishtar sees his beauty, and offers rich gifts if he will be her husband. Gilgamesh refuses in a lengthy tirade, in which he recites her cruelties to her former lovers. Ishtar is enraged and flees off to heaven, where she bullies Anu into making the Bull of Heaven to ravage the earth. But Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu kill the Bull of Heaven, and Enkidu tears off its right thigh and tosses it in her face.

As stated above, more stories might have been included (e.g. Actaeon, Hippolytus and Phaedra, Joseph),³⁰ but these should suffice to permit statement of the essential theme, and comparative study of some details. The basic theme involves the man to whom the attentions of the goddess of love—the embodiment of all that is feminine—prove fatal or at least harmful. Gilgamesh departs farthest from this pattern in that he, the mature hero, is triumphant, not defeated. Otherwise all embody the same pattern. Several have transferred it to the human level, so that the fatal female is not a goddess, but this does not obscure the theme, it only de-mythologizes it.

Details will now be examined, to call attention both to resemblances and divergences. The confrontation of the male by the female is usually depicted as a sexual approach. This is true of all the versions quoted above except for Aqhat. Only in Aqhat is the goddess's initial approach so undisguisedly hostile and threatening. The sexual theme is present (discounting the broken passage *CTA* 18 124) in symbolic form, but only emasculation is stressed.

The male is almost always a young man—only Gilgamesh seems to be different—hence this seems to possess considerable importance. In many of the tales, of course, his youthful beauty serves to explain the goddess's ardor, but especially in view of Aqhat, there seems to be more involved. It seems important that he be shown as immature and inexperienced compared to the older and wiler woman.

The youth is a hunter in a significant number of the stories. This is true of some versions of the Adonis and Attis stories, and in Eshmun and Astronoe, and in Aqhat. The reason for this feature is most obvious in Aqhat, where it permits very natural and obvious use of the bow symbol. It seems probable that in the other stories hunting symbolizes and emphasizes the masculine character of the hero.

The hero resists in most versions of the theme, in one fashion or another. In Gilgamesh and Aqhat, where the approach of the goddess is soon felt to be threatening, the hero's resistance is well motivated. In

30. [Cf. also the Elkunirša myth, where ʿAnat solicits then assaults Baʿl. —Ed. (=H. A. Hoffner, Jr.)]

other stories, the youth initially consents, and becomes her lover, but is subsequently unfaithful. In two cases where the story is transferred to a completely human plane, the resistance motif is rationalized and moralized: Kombabos and Bata resist because she is a married lady, the wife of the hero's brother or overlord. This seems from one point of view an obviously secondary development, less primitive than the versions which more openly represent the feminine as a threat to man. But from another point of view, the incest motif introduced in the Bata story may represent a genuine and important component of the sexual tension which gives rise to this sort of tale.

It is interesting to consider the degree to which the goddess is made responsible for the death of the hero, or for seeking his death in cases where he escapes. There is least uniformity here. Instead there is a continuum running all the way from the classical Adonis myth, where there is not the slightest explicit ascription of blame to the goddess, through the version where it is her jealous husband who kills the youth, through the version where the goddess herself causes his death out of jealousy or vengeance for some slight, to Aqhat and Gilgamesh, where she is presented as hostile, deceptive, and threatening to man from the beginning. As a representative of the theme under discussion, the Adonis story in Ovid's telling seems very tame and Aqhat by contrast much bolder and more open. On reflection, however, the Adonis story is perhaps only more subtle.

Emasculation is a feature of a significant number of the stories; it is present as a major feature of Attis stories, in Eshmun and Stratonice, in Anubis and Bata, and in the Kombabos story. It is in Aqhat, under the symbol of the bow, and it is hinted at in versions of the Adonis story. In Ovid, the boar gores Adonis in the groin (*totosque sub inguine dentes abdidit*; as Shakespeare renders it, "And nuzzling in his flank, the loving swine / Sheath'd unaware the tusk in his soft groin"). The wound in Adonis' thigh, familiar from artistic representations, may be taken as the pictorial counterpart of a euphemism.³¹ In view of the persistence of this motif, it is scarcely correct to suppose that it is an aetiological intrusion, intended to account for the existence of castrated priests,³² or to assume that where it occurs, in Eshmun and Astronoe for instance, it has been borrowed from the Attis myth.³³ It comes close to being an essential, constant feature of the theme.

31. In Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* Book XIV Sir Perceval nearly yields to temptation in the form of a beautiful woman. Saved in the nick of time, he punishes himself: "and therewith he rooff himself thorow the thygh."

32. So J. G. Frazer, *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, 3rd ed. (London, 1914) I, 265.

33. So Baudissin, *Adonis and Esmun*, 340.

Death through the agency of a beast is present in various versions of the Attis and Adonis myths (the boar); in Gilgamesh (the Bull of Heaven); and in Aqhat (the eagles). This seems worth pointing out, though the significance is not clear to me.³⁴ The goddess Anath is closely associated with eagles, which play a role in her murder plot. This is clear from the story itself (*CTA* 18 iv 21 "Among the eagles I will soar") and seems to be indicated by her title in a recently-published text *di.dit.rhbt* "who flies on soaring wings" (*Ugaritica* V 2:8).³⁵

The resurrection of the slain youth is not a universal feature. Eshmun is said to have been revived, but otherwise, if we consider only the tales and leave out of account the cult which may have been connected with the myth, the stories end with the tragic death. It is therefore unwarranted to conclude, as some have done, that the incompletely preserved story of Aqhat must originally have ended with his restoration to life.

III. The Meaning of the Theme

As a preliminary to a statement of the meaning of this mythological theme, note that I do not wish to suggest that the explanation to be proposed will serve as a key to everything in mythology. On the contrary, it seems to me axiomatic that there is no single key to everything in mythology, and that we must distrust any universalist principle.³⁶ Beyond a certain point the more a theory explains, the less credible it becomes. Doubtless some myths, or episodes in myths, arise out of rituals, others are nature myths, or are motivated by concern over social structure, or by astronomy, or by intellectual curiosity, and so on. Whatever in ancient man's life was a significant source of tension, of malaise, could be a source of myth.

The theme which concerns us seems to arise from psychological tension, particularly male sexual tension. The mythological theme springs from man's experience of woman as attractive, yet threatening to his

34. The boar in the Adonis myth has been explained by Frazer, *ibid.*, as aetiology of a food-taboo, but this seems hardly sufficient to explain all the occurrences.

35. [In Elkunirša 'Anat transforms herself into a *hapupi*-bird (owl or hoo-poe?) and flies into the desert. —Ed. (=H. A. Hoffner, Jr.)]

36. This view is well argued at various points in G. S. Kirk, *Myth: Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures* (1971). Something similar was argued by W.F. Albright in an early article, "Historical and Mythical Elements in the Story of Joseph," *JBL* 37 (1918), 111: "No one brush will suffice to reproduce the variegated coloring of Truth." Though Albright later rejected much in it, his paper is still of value in consideration of the mythological theme discussed here.

sexuality and his life. We cannot go altogether wrong in mythology, if we occasionally take things at face value. If our story is of rain and crops, we may suppose it to be a nature myth, but if it is of an attractive, menacing woman, of castration and death, then we ought with equal alacrity to recognize that this is a human-nature myth.

There is sufficient evidence outside of myths to show that ancient man was intensely concerned about problems of his potency and his sexuality. Hoffner quite aptly cites the extant Hittite potency incantations in this connection;³⁷ Biggs's edition of the ŠÀ.ZI.GA texts amply proves that the mind of the ancient Babylonian was not totally preoccupied with whether the grain would rise again. The self-mutilation of the devotees of the great goddess, the pathetic, transvestite Galli, shows, at least for Hellenistic times, the pathological form of the sexual tension which in less extreme form worked on the minds of the mythographers. The essential rightness of the present reading of the bow episode in Aqhat seems to me to be demonstrated by the recurrence of the same theme in so much later misogynist literature. Katherine M. Rogers, in *The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature*, sums up the stereotype: "Woman is mindless and heartless, but all-powerful; sexual involvement with her is irresistible, but dreadfully dangerous; man had better defend himself by attacking her before she attacks him; yet, no matter what he does, she will survive him because of her animal insensitivity and unawareness of morals."³⁸

It must be left to the professional psychologist or psychiatrist to go farther into the springs of human nature which give rise to this mythological theme. Beyond this point the philologist runs too great a risk of dilettantism. In fact, one may justly ask whether a Semitic philologist has any business exploring this aspect of mythology at all. Cer-

37. *JBL* 85, 326 n. 3.

38. (Seattle and London, 1966), 252. Note also Gilbert Highet's discussion of Catullus' *Attis*, in *Poets in a Landscape* (1957) 26, where, after treating the surface meaning of the poem, he continues: "But it has another hidden significance, which has not been noticed. That is that it is a translation into mythical terms of Catullus's relation to Clodia. It is the desperate complaint of a young man who was once happy and normal, but who has been seized and dominated by a female demon. The demon does not stand for comfort and satisfaction, not even for the ecstasies of sexual fulfilment. She is a primitive spirit, living in dark jungles and served by fierce animals. The man can have no peaceful and balanced relationship with her. Although she is feminine and he is (or was) masculine, he must be utterly subservient to her. Her aim is to take away his manhood, to destroy him and yet to keep him alive as a slave and a symbol of her power. (In his farewell poem to Clodia, written much later, Catullus said she treated all her lovers in the same way, 'leaving their loins limp,' almost unmanning them.)"

tainly some psychiatrists and theoreticians of mythology have a wider perspective, and offer more penetrating insights into mythology, than is possible for someone who starts from the narrow base of an acquaintance with Ugaritic myths in the original. There are, I believe, two considerations which help justify such a venture outside one's proper field as the present. The first is that a philologist may occasionally offer some control to the more speculative postulations of thinkers in other disciplines. That is perhaps true in the present case. What a speculative psychiatrist like Erich Neumann, for instance, might have said about the figure of Anath and the bow episode in Aqhat, to judge from his extant writings,³⁹ finds explicit confirmation in Near Eastern texts. The second contribution a philologist may hope to make in this field is to help break down a kind of unexamined orthodoxy which has grown up in the study of Near Eastern mythology⁴⁰ and more particularly, in biblical studies. Scholars in biblical studies inevitably reflect on the nature of myth, one principal motive being their desire to compare Israelite thought with the thought of contemporary polytheism. In this interesting area, however, the theory of myth which prevails is practically unrelieved Frazer. In the popular and influential work on Near Eastern religion and mythology of Henri Frankfort and others, *Before Philosophy*, myths are presented as ". . . natural phenomena . . . conceived in terms of human experience."⁴¹ Here nature is not taken to include man's own nature, but is rather the material world, or even the rural landscape as opposed to urban life.⁴² In another influential work, G. Ernest Wright's *The Old Testament against Its Environment*,

39. See, for instance, *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, Bollingen Series XLIII (Princeton, 1954), 39-101.

40. Ugaritic mythology is so widely held to be concerned with fertility that G. S. Kirk, *Myth*, 223, rates Canaanite myths as uninteresting in comparison to Greek, for "the Canaanite merely repeat *ad nauseam* the themes of succession and the disappearance of fertility." Wolfgang Helck, *Betrachtungen zur grossen Göttin und den ihr verbundenen Gottheiten*, Religion und Kultur der alten Mittelmeerwelt in Parallelforschungen, Band 2 (Munich and Vienna, 1971), deserves credit for stressing that the great goddess represents aggressive sexuality. At the same time, one may criticize Helck's one-sidedness, in refusing to recognize motherly traits and fecundity as part of the conception of the goddess he not only seems to neglect some of the evidence, but misses the point that ancient man, like man since, experienced ambivalent feelings about the feminine. Moreover, his derivation of fear of the female from a hypothetical stage of society where the sexes ran in separate bands seems implausible at best.

41. Henri Frankfort, Mrs. H. A. Frankfort, J. A. Wilson, and Thorkild Jacobsen, *Before Philosophy* (1949), 12.

42. *Op. cit.*, 238.

polytheism is presented entirely as arising from “ancient man’s experience of power and force in nature”—nature understood as made up of thunderstorms, the sky, the stars, the earth, and so on through the macrocosm with the microcosm, man, left out of account.⁴³ A similar criticism may be leveled against the view of myth presented in Brevard Childs’s *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament*. Although Childs alludes to “psychological stimuli” as a source for myth alongside “impressions from nature,” in the development of his work the psychological avenue is left unexplored.⁴⁴ Such a narrowing of one’s notion of what myth may be about is in danger of underestimating the spiritual concerns of ancient man, and distorts the relation between the thought of ancient polytheism and Israelite thought.

IV. *The Meaning of the Aqhat Epic*

Enough has already been said about the writer’s interpretation of one episode within the Aqhat epic. At this point it would be in place to give some account of how a new understanding of the bow episode would affect interpretation of the epic as a whole, in so far as that is possible in view of the fragmentary state of the text. The writer prefers to defer this discussion. One would have to take up the question of whether the epic is in any important way concerned about fertility, or a seasonal cycle of fertility and infertility, and this would in turn involve giving attention to the same question about Attis and Adonis and the rest, a process which would unduly lengthen this paper. Leaving that major question aside, one may nevertheless point out that also in other episodes the epic is concerned with sexuality and the feminine. The first preserved episode depicts the patriarch Danel’s anguish over his sterility, his lack of a son and heir, a problem in the sexual sphere. In the final tablet of the three which make up the epic as we have it, after the death of Aqhat a new character makes an appearance, Aqhat’s sister Paghat (the name means, apparently, “girl, maid”). Her stock epithets, in so far as we understand them, stress her knowledge of astrology, and the fact that she is able correctly to interpret the meaning of the vultures over her father’s house is consistent with seeing her as a wise-woman, someone skilled in divination. This is not, of course, enough to make her a full-fledged Athena figure, yet it is legitimate to point out the contrast to the irrational, violent Anath. The end of the preserved story is especially interesting. Paghat sets out saying: “I’ll slay the slayer of my brother,” and to do this she arms herself as a warrior.

43. *Studies in Biblical Theology*, No. 2 (London, 1950), 17.

44. *Studies in Biblical Theology*, No. 27 (Naperville, Illinois, 1960), 17.

(The preserved text is unclear as to just how she is clothed; one line asserts that she clothes herself as a man, *CTA* 19 IV 206; another seems to have her put on woman's clothing over it, 208.) Before we find out if she succeeds in killing her brother's murderer, the text breaks off, but if we assume, as most have, that she does, there is a nice balance in the feminine types presented in Aqhat. One is the Virgin Anath, deceiving, violent, emasculating, the one who turns a man into a woman; opposing her and perhaps victorious in the end is Paghat, the sister, wise, compassionate, and loyal, who turns herself into a man in the cause of justice.⁴⁵

45. Neumann, *Origins and History*, 201–2 has, a good discussion of this feminine type.

*A Proposal for a
Difficult Line in Keret*
lm ank ksp

H. L. Ginsberg's translation of *lm ank ksp* and the lines that follow (*KTU* 1.14 III 33ff. and parallel in VI 17ff.) begins: "What need have I of silver and yellow-glittering gold . . ." ¹ This is representative of a kind of scholarly consensus about the meaning of this line and certainly not far from the general sense of the Ugaritic words. ²

Yet there is a difficulty in explaining the syntax of *lm ank ksp*, though most translators do not point to it. Gordon offers this discussion in his *Ugaritic Textbook*, par. 13.82 (p. 127): "*lm ank* 'why I?' expresses the idea 'what have I to do with? what need have I of?'" This offers no explanation of the route from the interrogative "why?" to the resulting sense of the clause, and no account of how *ksp* "silver," and the rest of the list of goods offered, connect with the first words syntactically. Moreover, the construction involved seems to be genuinely unparalleled, in Ugaritic texts, or in the Hebrew bible. ³

The sense is "I have silver, etc.," taking *lm ank ksp* as a clause consisting of 1) preposition plus suffix of the 1st person singular and enclitic *mem*, 2) the independent personal pronoun of the 1st singular, and 3)

1. In James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University, 1955) 144, 145.

2. I have not seen any translation of this passage which diverges significantly from that of Ginsberg; very much the same sense is reflected by Gordon, Driver, Gray, Coogan, del Olmo Lete, Caquot, Snycer and Herdner.

3. Attention has been called to Gen 25:22 in this connection, but this is a verbal rather than a real parallel. The sense of the words of Rebekah, whatever it is, is not like Keret (see Westermann BK, and especially Skinner ICC, for details). Note the caution of the NJV at this point: "If so, why do I exist?" with footnote: "Meaning of Hb. uncertain." The author is indebted to Prof. Randall Garr for calling my attention to other parallels to the Keret passage which have been suggested by some (Garr does not find them convincing). Both, Gen 25:32 and 27:46, are fundamentally unlike Keret in that no independent personal pronoun is involved, so that no apparent syntactic anomaly is present.

the (compound) subject of the verbless clause, *ksp* and what follows in the list. This is complemented by the demand which follows (in the exchange of communiques with King *Pbl*, “Instead, give what I don’t have in my house” *pd.in.bbty.ttn* (KTU 1.14 VI 21–22). This understanding of the grammar of the line involves difficulties also; those that occur to me will be pointed out below. Not all can be resolved readily, but even so, there is enough real advantage in the proposal made here to justify advancing it, with appropriate conciseness.

The strongest evidence for this sense, not totally different from the one commonly accepted, is probably in the parallels that can then be cited. A fine specimen, embodying a similar pattern of offer and refusal, is in Ps 50, which reads in part (vv 8–13):

I will not accept any bull from your house,
 or he-goats from your pens.
 Because I own all the forest animals (*kî-lî kol-ḥaytô yāʿar*)
 the beasts on a thousand hills.⁴

 I own the world (*kî-lî tēbēl*) and everything in it.

In the Egyptian tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor, the castaway offers rich gifts to the serpent who confronts him, only to be rebuffed: “You are rich in myrrh and all kinds of incense. But I am the lord of Punt, and myrrh is my very own. That *knw*-oil you spoke of sending, it abounds on this island.”⁵ In Keret this offer/refusal pattern coincides with the topos: the incomparable value of love, as in Song of Songs 8:7: “If a man offered all his wealth for love, / He would be laughed to scorn” (NJV).⁶

The grammatical analysis of *lm ank ksp* proposed in the translation “I have silver” involves some elements which are routine in Semitic grammar. Thus *lî X* in the sense of ‘I have’ is readily paralleled in Ugaritic and biblical Hebrew. For Keret, note *dšbʿ [a]hm lh* “which had seven brothers.” Compare, as one example for biblical Hebrew, Exod 19:5: “For the whole world is mine” (*ky ly kl hʾrṣ*).

4. Sense of phrase uncertain.

5. See Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California, c. 1973) 211–15; citation from p. 214.

6. A parallel to the topos in Krt, very close in many respects, is found in the Sumerian text called “The Marriage of Martu.” The key passage is cited and translated by Jacob Klein: “Numuṣda, rejoicing over Martu, / Presents him silver – he accepts not, / Presents him precious stones – he accepts not . . . (saying): [‘Your silver – whither does it lead], your precious stones – whither do they lead? / I, [Martu], would (rather) marry your daughter!’” “The ‘Bane’ of Humanity: A Lifespan of One Hundred Twenty Years,” *Acta Sumerologica* 12 (1990) 57–70 (citation from 60).

Also the construction with a pronominal suffix followed (and emphasized) by the corresponding independent personal pronoun is well-known in Semitic, and is attested specifically in Ugaritic. The pattern is common in Arabic and Hebrew. In colloquial Arabic *hada ili ana* means “this is mine.” For biblical Hebrew, note I Sam 25:25 *by ʾny* “upon me”; I Kg 1:26 *wly ʾny . . . lʾ qrʾ* “and he didn’t invite *me!*” For Ugaritic, note *šmk at ygrš* “Your name is Yagrush.”

The morphology, or phonology, and orthography of a presumed **lī-mi ʾanāku* ‘I have’ is more difficult to account for. One would rather expect ‘to me’ to be *ly*, as is elsewhere the case in Ugaritic, and with a following *-m*, **lym*. Since there are no especially precise Ugaritic parallels (perhaps in part because enclitic *-m* after a pronominal suffix is itself rare⁷), a phonetic explanation that leads from **liya-mali* to **lī-mali* is bound to be *ad hoc*.⁸ It seems better to assert that the syntactic difficulties of other explanations for *lm ank* are so great as to justify a solution which involves a phonetic problem, which may only be a phonetic unknown.⁹

7. J. Tropper (*Ugaritische Grammatik* [Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2000] §41.32) lists the following likely cases of a pronominal suffix followed by enclitic *-m*: *asr-k-m* “your captive” (*KTU* 1.2.I.37 [// *ʿbd-k*]); *ah-y-m* “my brother” (*KTU* 1.6.VI.10, 14); *nps-h-m* “his life” (*KTU* 1.19.II.39); *b-h-m* “in/from it” (*KTU* 1.19.III.39); *y l-k-m* “woe to you” (*KTU* 1.19.III.46). Prof. W. Randall Garr also suggests the possibility of the difficult *yblhm* “he pours it” in *KTU* 1.4.I.37 (in a letter to DRH, 11/27/90). D. Pardee entertains the possibility of understanding the form as a verbal noun with a singular pronominal suffix and enclitic *-m* (*lyabāluhumal*, “The Baʿlu Myth” in *COS* I, 256, n. 128). — Ed. FWD-A

8. In a private communication (12/30/90), Prof. John Huehnergard cogently refutes explanations I had suggested in a version sent to him, and then offers a plausible sequence of development, in line with principles stated in his *Ugaritic Vocabulary in Syllabic Transcription* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), pp. 280ff., but prudently labels it “ad hoc.” *Editor’s note*: Though the sequence *iya*, a triphthong, is normally stable in Ugaritic (Huehnergard, *Ugaritic Vocabulary*, 291f.; Tropper, *Ugaritische Grammatik* §33.322.2), Tropper lists among his possible exceptions *rʾh* “his shepherd” /*rāʿû-hu*/ < **rāʿiyu-hu* (*KTU* 4.391).

9. I must express thanks for bibliographic suggestions, encouragement, and critical counsel to all the following: Professors W. Randall Garr, Wayne Pitard, and John Huehnergard, and Dr. Esther Flückiger. Responsibility for errors and shortcomings is the author’s own.

Redemption in Letters 6 and 2 from Hermopolis

Since the admirable first edition of the Aramaic letters from Hermopolis by E. Bresciani and M. Kamil,¹ of 1966, an impressive number of further studies have advanced understanding of this family archive.² Because the letters deal with sometimes intricate personal relations and business affairs and because we lack direct information as to the context in which they were written, it is not surprising that some problems of interpretation remain. The present reconstruction and explanation of Letter 6, as closely related to Letter 2, attempts to relate items in the vocabulary of these letters to legal terms and practices in ancient Israel, Syria, and Mesopotamia. Whatever the result in the present case, such an approach has proved fruitful in other studies of Aramaic papyri from this period, and it is not surprising that texts from Ras Shamra, in Ugaritic and Akkadian, will be cited as important sources for the subject which, in my view, is dealt with in these Aramaic letters, the redemption of persons seized for debt. No doubt such use of materials from Ras Shamra will be thought routine, even mandatory. That this is so, however, is due to the dedicated efforts of those who have made knowledge of ancient Ugarit possible, especially Prof. Claude F. A. Schaeffer, and it is a pleasure to recall here our debt to him.

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1. *Le lettere aramaiche di Hermopoli*, Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche, Serie VIII, Vol. XII (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1966).

2. Bibliography is given in Bezael Porten and Jonas Greenfield, "Hermopolis Letter 6," *Israel Oriental Studies* IV (1974), 14 n. Porten and Greenfield's own study is the most comprehensive treatment of letter 6; their translation in *Jews of Elephantine and Aramaeans of Syene* (Jerusalem: Akademon, Hebrew University, 1974) does not differ from that in the longer treatment (I am indebted to Prof. Joseph Fitzmyer for a copy of this collection for students). Works on the letters referred to herein by the author's name include Milik: J. T. Milik, "Les papyrus araméens d'Hermoupolis et les cultes syro-phéniciens en Égypte perse," *Biblica* XLVIII (1967), 546–622; Grelot: P. Grelot, *Documents araméens d'Égypte* (Paris: Cerf, 1972).

Redemption of persons seized for debt is not otherwise attested in Aramaic documents from Egypt, so before proceeding to an explanation of our Hermopolis texts it may be well to sketch briefly the nature of such a procedure, which has been discussed most fully by Yaron.³ Seizure for debt, implied in many texts, is explicitly provided for in an edict of Hattusilis III directed to Niqmepa of Ugarit, respecting the merchants of Ura. “And if the men of Ugarit have (borrowed) the money of the men of Ura and cannot repay it, the king of Ugarit shall deliver that man, with his wife and children, over to the men of Ura, the merchants.”⁴ Note that not only the debtor himself, but also his family, are subject to seizure; such is the case also in Hermopolis Letter 6. Akkadian texts collected by Yaron deal with redemption, for which Akkadian texts use the terms *paṭāru* “redeem” and *šūšū* “bring out, release”; an important Ugaritic text illustrates a possible procedure. This is a document issued under the royal seal: “From this day forth, Ewirkal has redeemed (*pdy*) Agdn son of Nrgn (six other persons are named). Now Ewirkal has redeemed them from the people of Beirut for one hundred shekels of silver. They are not liable to (*pay*) *unuššu* until they have repaid the money of Ewirkal; then they shall return to their *unuššu*.”⁵ Note here that those redeemed are not set free absolutely; the redeemer acquires a claim to repayment, validated by a document, which precedes even their obligation to the king. A similar situation, I propose, is involved in the Hermopolis letters.

In advance of my reconstructed text and translation of Letter 6, note that the calculation by Porten and Greenfield of the extent of the missing portions of the letter, based on the stereotyped closing formula occurring in line 10, is assumed here as a fundamental guideline, and has been carefully observed.⁶ In lines 3 through 10, 11 to 13 letters and spaces are supplied; the shorter gaps in lines 1 and 2 are restored with 9 letters and spaces. Line 11, the address, presents a problem, but the solution is sought within the limit set by Porten and Greenfield.

As a further preliminary, the following rendering of Letter 2, lines 4 through 7, is given, following the reading and rendering of H. Donner for the key word *wpdt* (line 5).⁷ “Now, see, the sum of money which I

3. Reuven Yaron, “Redemption of Persons in the Ancient Near East,” *Revue internationale des droits de l’antiquité* VI (1959), 155–76.

4. *PRU* IV, p. 104: RS 17.130 11.25–31.

5. *PRU* II, 6, pp. 18–19: RS 16.191 + 272 (UT 1006).

6. Porten and Greenfield, pp. 16–17.

7. “Bemerkungen zum Verständnis zweier aramäischer Briefe aus Hermopolis,” in *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. Hans Goedicke (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins, 1971), 75–85. Donner is cor-

had at my disposal I gave,⁸ and I redeemed Banitsar son of Tabi, sister of Nabushe, 6 sheqels and a half in silver zuzes. Now send word to Tabi and let her send you wool for her share, equal to one silver sheqel.” This letter is sent by Makkibanit to Syene, to his “sister” Tashi.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. ʔl ʔhity tby mn [ʔhky bnts]r brkthy lpth zy | To my sister Tabi from [your brother Banitsa]r. I bless you by Ptah that |
| 2. yḥwny ʔpyky bš[lm wʔp br]y šʔl šlmky | he may show me your face in he[alth. And also my son] sends greetings. |
| 3. wkʕt yhb m[kbnt br psmny] ḥtnh zy nbšh ksp | Now Ma[kkibanit son of Psami], father-in-law of Nabushe, paid |
| 4. š III III wzawz [ksp zaw wʔzL] wʔpqny ʔnh wby | six shekels and a half [in silver zuzes and went] and got me free, me and my son, |
| 5. wktbt lh ʔ[why spr ʔzy] wzbyny ʕmr kzy tmṭ | and I wrote him [a document] con[cerning it. So go] and buy wool as much as you |
| 6. h ydky w ʔw[šryhw lšy s]wn hkw kspḥ zy hwh | can and se[nd it to Tabi at S]yene. See, the money that he had he |
| 7. bydh yhb ʔ[ty nbšh wmk]bnt šʔln šlmky | gave f[or me. Nabushe and Makki]banit send greetings, |
| 8. wšlm trw [—wk]ʕt šlm bntsr tnh | and also to Taru [and . . . N]ow Banitsar is safe here |
| 9. wbrh ʔl t[spw lh wkʕt] ʔnhn bʕn ʔp | and so is his son. Do not be [concerned for him. Now] we are looking for a boat |
| 10. wytwnh lkn l[šlmky šḥt s]prh zn | to bring him to you. [I have sent] this [le]tter in [greetings to you.] |
| 11. ʔl ʔmy [tby bntsr br] srh ʔp ybl | To my mother [Tabi (from) Banitsar son of] Sarah. To be delivered to Luxor. |
| (alternate for line 11): | (or: |
| 11. ʔl ʔmy [tby mn bnt]srh ʔp ybl | from Banit]sarah) |

Commentary

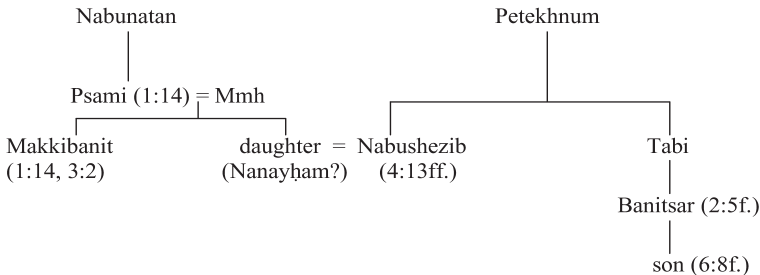
Line 1 and following: According to line 11, the letter is sent to “my mother.” Since within the free usage of the salutations of these letters we need not necessarily take the “sister” of line 1 literally, it is natural to entertain the idea of making the sender of this letter Banitsar, who is called “son of Tabi, sister of Nabushe,” in letter 2:5–6. No doubt this idea has occurred provisionally to many, and Milik adopted such a restoration, but Grelot dismissed it with objections which have perhaps been decisive with others who do not even mention it as a possibility. Noting

rect, in my opinion, in his view that *pdy* is possible in an Aramaic letter even though the Aramaic term for “redeem” in later texts seems always to be *prq*. We need not assume absolute uniformity in Aramaic use in this early period, and there seems to be no early use of *prq* to contradict use of *pdy* here; moreover, the Hermopolis papyri show other unusual vocabulary. Father Joseph A. Fitzmyer calls my attention to use of *pdyh* and *pdy* as proper names.

8. The difficult form *nttn* has been understood in this way by various students of Letter 2; some such sense seems clearly intended though the form seems incapable of explanation as it stands.

that there is no objection to a reading of “Banitsar” as far as length is concerned, (as Grelot supposed) we may for the moment postpone further objections and consider possible advantages. Chief of these is a gain in simplicity. Thus only one son of Tabi, Banitsar, now figures in the correspondence. The sender of Letter 6 has with him a son (not named); this son is “gotten out” along with him. Banitsar of lines 8–9 has a son (not named). No coincidence or duplication is involved if these figures are the same.

3. Psami is the father-in-law of Nabushe, an idea entertained by Grelot, p. 146. This filiation is not required by the evidence of the correspondence, but is permitted, cf. Letter 4:13. A schematic reconstruction illustrates the relations involved:



4. Six and a half shekels is, of course, precisely the sum involved in Letter 2, which favors identifying the two transactions. *w²zl*: This restoration is chosen over others possible (*w²th*, *wqm*), on the basis of the manumission document BMAP 5:4 *ʔzt šbqtky* “I have gone and released thee.” *w²pqny*: this term, explained only in an elaborate ad hoc way by Porten and Greenfield, is actually a technical term for securing release from detention, the semantic equivalent of Akkadian *šūšū* which, as Yaron points out, occurs with and substitutes for *paṭāru* “to redeem.” Yaron also noted briefly that use of Hebrew *hōšī* in connection with the deliverance from Egypt might sometimes be a technical legal term.⁹ An interesting usage in this connection is Exod 6:6: (JPS version) “I will free you (*hōšēʔtī*) from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from their bondage. I will redeem you (*wēgāʔaltī*) with an outstretched arm.” Here, as regularly when the Targums translate *hōšī* in parallel to *pdh* or *g²l*, they use the Afel of *npq*, exactly the form in this letter.

7. Restoration of an *ʿayin* seems permitted by the traces. “[Nabushe and Makki]banit”: The same pair who wrote to Tabi and Taru in Letter 5 now send greetings to these same “sisters,” and assume the role of send-

9. Yaron, “Redemption,” pp. 165–66, n. 15.

ers of the letter, so that they refer to Banitsar in the third person, adding their assurance that he and his son are safe. This switch in the sender of the letter is unusual; something similar takes place, however, in Letter 5, where there is oscillation between a singular and plural sender, and singular and plural referring to the “sisters” who are recipients.

11. To obtain the normal numbers of letters to fit the lacuna, it has been preferred to suppose the omission of the preposition *mn* before the name of the sender; for this phenomenon see Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.E.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), Nos. 21:11; 37:17; 38:12; 39:5; 40:5. The alternate reconstruction supposes an alternate form of the sender’s name: *bntsrh*; since the name is so far unexplained, however, one cannot safely conjecture what an alternate form might be.

*Analyzing the Abominable:
Our Understanding of
Canaanite Religion*

Two statements about the study of Canaanite religion may be regarded as commonly accepted. The first is that Biblical scholars have a special reason to be interested in Canaanite religion and are specially qualified to deal with it. The second is that since the recovery of Ugaritic a little over fifty years ago our understanding of Canaanite religion has advanced notably. Both of these commonplace observations are true in important ways, of course, but I wish today to suggest that they need qualification. In other important ways Biblical scholars have proved singularly ill-suited to deal with the subject, with the paradoxical result that in some ways the new Ugaritic discoveries have proved an embarrassment to our understanding of Canaanite religion. At the least these observations seem to call for consideration, in the hope that even if, as I believe, a negative evaluation of our progress to date is necessary, the outcome may be a better conception of how we might achieve more satisfactory results.

Let me first state briefly the case for supposing that Biblical scholars should have a special interest in the brand of polytheism practiced by Israel's ancient predecessors and neighbors, the Canaanites. Why is it that so much of the serious writing about Canaanite religion has been done by Jewish or Christian scholars, whose first training was in Bible studies, whose aptitude is for ancient Hebrew, whose time and efforts have been committed to elucidating the Hebrew Scriptures, and whose audience, like themselves, have the Bible as their principal entry to the ancient past?

Such a state of affairs is comprehensible and unremarkable. The Bible is still an important source of knowledge about Canaanite religion; the memory of Baal and Asherah lived on in its pages after those who might be called the constituents of these deities had all perished. The language and poetic style of the newer sources, the

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Ugaritic texts, irresistibly attract students of early Hebrew literature by the unmistakable resemblances to the language of the Bible. The words and the very conceptions of Biblical religion often come from the rival religion or were framed with reference to it. Elaboration of these points is probably unnecessary: the Canaanite religion is commonly and in a sense appropriately studied and explained by Jewish and Christian Biblical scholars.

The term "Canaanite" is used at this point to mean the Bronze Age inhabitants of Syria-Palestine and their cultural successors in the Iron Age. In such a context it is obvious that the hundreds of religious texts from Ras Shamra, ancient Ugarit, have enormously enriched our hitherto scanty sources of knowledge. Small wonder that Biblical scholars have turned eagerly to incorporating this new material into their reconstruction of the Canaanite religion.

Why, then, should any dissatisfaction arise over such a state of affairs? Because our picture of this alien ancient faith is drawn by those who are committed in advance to finding it inferior, puerile, barbarous, retarded, or shocking. My lecture title "Analyzing the Abominable" was intended to be catchy, but it has the serious purpose of suggesting that in this case scholars may have been patiently and elaborately analyzing an ancient belief-system in order to reach the inevitable and foregone conclusion that it is an abomination.

My discussion of this suggestion will follow the following outline: after a brief look at the dual background of our prejudices in this matter, I will treat the possible consequences of those prejudices, in the way they make it hard to define the field of study and lead to a profitless comparative study—a kind of *mano a mano* between Israel and Canaan. Under this last head I will review especially the contributions of Albright, Kaufmann, Wright, Cross, and Gottwald. In conclusion I will attempt to suggest some potentially more fruitful approaches to the study of Canaanite religion.

There are two ancient sources of our prejudices in the matter of the Canaanites. One has already been mentioned and need scarcely be dealt with in detail. Jews and Christians who pay allegiance to the Biblical view of ancient history will be strongly inclined to cast the Canaanites in the role of villains. The second source that feeds our dislikes is classical: the conviction that the Near East is, for the westerner, something alien, backward, and a little obscene, is also a Greek and Roman one. Juvenal, the satirist of the early 2nd century, was not the first Roman to find the Orient disgusting, but his words may serve to validate the antiquity of our prejudice. The indignant poet addresses fellow-citizens in a Rome running out of Romans:

... I cannot, citizens, stomach
 A Greek-struck Rome. Yet what fraction of these sweepings
 Derives, in fact, from Greece? For years now Syrian
 Orontes has poured its sewerage into our native Tiber—
 Its lingo and manners, its flutes, its outlandish harps
 With their transverse strings, its native tambourines,
 And the whores who hang out round the race-course.¹

This is an all-embracing expression of disdain for things Syrian. A Roman view specifically of the Syrian religion may be found in Apuleius' novella *The Golden Ass* (a Greek version by someone else also exists). This work is, it may be observed, one of our more extensive sources for the Syrian or Canaanite religion from classical times. The hero, Lucius, has been transformed by sorcery into an ass, and as such is bought by a stranger. "He was an old eunuch, nearly bald, with what grayish hair he had still left dangling in long curls on his neck: one of the scum that turns the Great Goddess of Syria into a beggar-woman, hawking her along the roads from town to town to the accompaniment of cymbals and castanets."² After this the eunuch introduces the donkey to the entourage of the goddess, "a set of disgusting young eunuch priests,"³ transsexuals—*puellae*—who dress up as such the next day, pass through the countryside, and perform an orgiastic dance involving gashing themselves with knives. They end up "prophesying," as if filled by the spirit of the goddess.

Edward Said, in his much discussed book *Orientalism*, supplies a broader view of the phenomenon touched on here, that is, the formation of a distinctive Western stereotype of the Orient, but even the few passages briefly cited above may serve to characterize an ancient version of this state of mind. In passing, note that Said discovers in the 19th-century novelist Flaubert "an almost uniform association between the Orient and sex."⁴ As the lecture proceeds, you may, if you like, watch this association, evident in Juvenal and Apuleius (as well as in Horace and Vergil⁵), reappear in the writings of some modern scholars. Ancient

1. Juvenal, iii 60–65, translated by Peter Green, *Juvenal: The Sixteen Satires* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England, 1974); quoted by permission of the publisher.

2. Apuleius, Book 8, 24, translated by Robert Graves, *The Transformations of Lucius, Otherwise Known as the Golden Ass* (New York, 1951), p. 187; quoted by permission of the publisher.

3. Graves, p. 88.

4. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1979), p. 188.

5. Horace, *Sermones*, I, ii 1–2 gives us all together *ambubaiarum collegia, phar-mocopolae, mendici, mimae, balatrones, hoc genus omne*, rendered thus by Smith Palmer Bovie: "The Syrian Society of Fastidious Flutists and Dancers, the Neigh-

antipathy to Canaanite culture and religion was only intensified by the ensuing dominance of the Judeo-Christian religion, which had arisen in conflict with polytheism and which had to struggle for centuries to assert a monotheistic faith. Although the Canaanite religion continued to be studied as part of Biblical learning, it was only as a foil to what was true and right. The epigraph to a renowned 17th-century treatise on the Canaanite religion, John Selden's *De dis syris* (first edition London, 1617), expresses the attitude succinctly (Selden quotes Lactantius):

Primus Sapientiae gradus est, FALSA intelligere

"A first step toward wisdom is to understand things that are false."

We may now turn to see how we moderns have been "understanding things that are false," or, in terms used here, "analyzing the abominable." The first observation must be that there is a problem of defining the subject "Canaanite religion" and the sources to be used in its reconstruction. This problem is related to our approach to the subject from the Biblical side. Before the discoveries at Ras Shamra, the Biblical references to the gods of Canaan were our oldest source of knowledge, and the subject tended to be defined with reference to them. Writings from classical times would be drawn on as they related to, and filled in, this picture. Thus the *Phoenician History* of Philo of Byblos, written about 100 C.E. and transmitted by Eusebius, and the treatise *On the Syrian Goddess* from about 200 C.E., attributed to the satirist Lucian, were utilized also for the more ancient Near Eastern period. Many other briefer references to the Canaanite religion, from Hellenistic, Roman, or even early Christian times, were drawn in. One could not in fairness quarrel with this rather indiscriminate lumping together of bits from widely scattered times and places—from the 10th century B.C.E. to perhaps the 4th century C.E., and from Syria to North Africa—for the evidence was scanty and difficult of interpretation. Recovery of ancient Phoenician inscriptions, or Canaanite religious materials in Egyptian texts, added to available data, but the great change came with the publication, since 1930, of the hundreds of religious texts from Ras Shamra, ancient Ugarit, greatly surpassing in quantity, antiquity, and clarity anything previously known. W. F. Albright described the new situation succinctly: "[We can no longer adequately survey the religious background of early Israel

borhood Druggists, the Mendicant Priests / Organized for Cybele, Strip-Teasers United, the Pitchmen— / Everyone of this sort" (*The Satires and Epistles of Horace* [Chicago and London, 1959], p. 39; quoted by permission of the publisher). Horace pointedly uses loanwords for the girl-flutists and the drug-pushers. The *Copa*, a poem doubtfully attributed to Vergil, vividly depicts in the beginning lines *a copa surisca caput Graeca redimita mitella, / crispum sub crotalo docta movere latus* (which is best translated into motion).

without a brief sketch of] the religion of the Canaanites of Phoenicia and Palestine as we now know it from the alphabetic texts of Ugarit, supplemented by sporadic archaeological finds.”⁶

But a real shift to this point of view has not occurred. Permit me to begin with an extreme case, a caricature of method, which like other caricatures may bring out unmistakably the real features of what is distorts. The German Old Testament interpreter Hans Walter Wolff, baffled like others before him by the problems that surround Hosea's marriage, adopts the point of view that Gomer, the prophet's bride, could be called an *ʿeshet zēnūnim* because she had taken part in a widespread Canaanite sexual rite in which a maid's virginity was offered to the god, that is, to a stranger who comes to the sanctuary. The existence of this interesting practice among the Canaanite contemporaries of Hosea (8th century B.C.E.) is demonstrated by references to Herodotus, a Greek historian of the 5th century writing about Babylon, not about Canaan; to Lucian, an anti-religious satirist of around 200 C.E.; to the post-Biblical Jewish composition called *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Judah 12:2), referring to the Amorites; and to St. Augustine (*De civitate Dei*, iv 10) of the 5th century C.E.!⁷ Well, any stick will do to beat a dog, or, since we are speaking of religious teachings, any stigma will do to beat a dogma. Start by positing a rather reprehensible sexual practice (remember Juvenal and Lucian), then foist it upon the Canaanites by quoting authorities, none of whom are contemporary with Hosea, all of whom are hostile, and two of whom are not even writing about the Canaanites. A caricature, as stated, but note the outlines. The starting point is some Biblical problem or concern, and from there much of the rest follows: the identifications of the Canaanite religion and of our sources of knowledge are defined by the Biblical jumping-off place. Ugaritic sources are not employed because they say nothing about the matter. This may serve us as the introduction of a leitmotif: “Ugarit-as-embarrassment,” to reappear elsewhere, as in connection with human sacrifice and orgiastic sexual rites. As John Gray ventured to remark, “the licentious rites of imitative magic . . . , incidentally, are not conspicuously in evidence in the Canaanite myths of the fertility cult.”⁸

The problem of human sacrifice or specifically of child-sacrifice provides a more serious though less extreme illustration of the methodological problem under discussion. W. F. Albright treated the subject under

6. *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Garden City, N.Y., 1957), p. 230. [Editor's note: The quotation from Albright may have been accidentally abbreviated in the original publication, thus the complete sentence is provided above.]

7. Wolff, *Dodekapropheten 1: Hosea (Biblischer Kommentar, XIV/1)*, 2. Auflage (Neukirchen, 1965), pp. 13–15.

8. “Social Aspects of Canaanite Religion,” *VTS* 15 (1966), 192.

the head "Some Aspects of Canaanite Religious Practice," together with ritual prostitution. Human sacrifice is said to be attested as a Canaanite religious practice by many Biblical allusions and by Roman descriptions of a Carthaginian custom, as also by indirect references to human sacrifice and the witness of Philo of Byblos. Rather delicately, Albright notes: "The extent to which human sacrifice was practiced among the Canaanites has not been clarified by the discoveries at Ugarit, which nowhere appear to mention it at all."⁹ In sum, we confront references to human sacrifice in the Bible and apparently illuminating evidence from North Africa, but no literary or archaeological evidence for such a thing from Phoenicia or Syria. Reversing our point of view, we could say that we would have no problem in this matter if we started from Ugaritic evidence. Our customary approach, from the Biblical side, is not necessarily wrong, but is shown to be problematic.

The scholars whose work is reviewed briefly below, Albright, Kaufmann, Wright, Cross, and Gottwald, have all contributed in important ways to advancing the discussion of the Canaanite religion, and there is an inevitable but regrettable distortion involved in isolating aspects of their larger works for criticism. Yet they share a common approach: the Canaanite religion is treated from a comparative and often eristic standpoint, as source, or foil, or adversary, for the really important faith, that of Israel. There is much overlap in their viewpoints, of course, but we might characterize Albright as involved in trouble with time. His view of man's religious history is that of a progress over the ages, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*. On this scale, the word for the Canaanite religion is "primitive." In this view he was anticipated by, to name just one person, Franz Cumont, in his classic work *Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism*, a series of lectures delivered in 1905. "Semitic paganism," Cumont writes, "had retained a stock of very primitive ideas and some aboriginal nature worship."¹⁰ Such were the cult of high places, of mountains and streams, of sacred stones and animals, and beyond this, human sacrifice and sacred prostitution. Such practices come from a "barbarous past" and reflect "the savagery that had created them." (Canaanite) "religion, which had sacrificed the lives of the men and the honor of the women to the divinity, had . . . remained on the moral level of unsocial and sanguinary tribes."¹¹

W. F. Albright echoes Cumont at many points but writes after the Ugaritic discoveries, and thus can add that the newfound Canaanite

9. *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (Baltimore, 1953), pp. 92-93.

10. "Authorized translation" (first published in 1911, and reprinted in New York), p. 116.

11. *Oriental Religions*, p. 119.

myths likewise “reflect . . . primitive barbarity.”¹² The pantheon is said to show “extraordinary fluidity of personality and function . . . Physical relationship and even sex change with disconcerting ease” (to Albright these are the marks of a primitive stage of development). Those names of deities which have a plain sense, such as Baal (“Lord”) and Mot (“Death”), show that the Canaanite religion was “in this respect, at least, more primitive and nearer its fountainhead than the others.”¹³ In passing, we may note that the sexual side is touched on, disparagingly, as in the observation that Canaanite goddesses “always appear naked in Egyptian portrayals of this age, in striking contrast to the modestly garbed native Egyptian goddesses.”¹⁴

Such a characterization of the Canaanite religion as primitive turns out on examination to be vague, possibly inaccurate, inconsistent in application, and finally a rather dubious way of justifying the course of our religious history. “Primitive” is vague because in so many cases what is primitive or not in a religious system must be a matter of aspect, of the way that those inside or outside a religious community view beliefs or rites, such as circumcision or the Christian Eucharist. “Primitive” as applied by Albright to the Canaanite religion is in some cases possibly inaccurate, as in the matter of the divine names with an obvious meaning. That this is especially primitive is not demonstrated with any rigor, nor that it is especially characteristic of ancient Canaan. In the ancient Egyptian religion there are a number of deities with such names, either major figures such as Amun (“the hidden one”) and Sakhmet (“the mighty one”), or less prominent figures such as all the primeval deities, Nun, Huk, Kuk, and the like.¹⁵ Names of this sort can be turned up among the Romans and elsewhere, at various points of their religious history, in a proportion that seems to me not unlike the frequency of such names in the Canaanite pantheon.¹⁶ Albright’s view is also open to the objection that we seem to have no way of telling the extent to which a religious group is *conscious* of the etymology of a given divine name. Then too our etymologies of Ugaritic god-names are often only plausible and not certain, as for instance, *Athiratu*.

A paradoxical aspect of this stigmatization of Canaan as primitive is that some things about the primitive are felt to be good: simplicity, in-

12. *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, p. 70.

13. *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, p. 71.

14. *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, p. 233.

15. See Erik Hornung, *The One and the Many: Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt*, translated by John Baines (Ithaca, N.Y., 1982), p. 66.

16. See Georg Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer*, 2nd ed. (Munich, 1912), *passim*, and consult the table of contents for discussion of the names of *di indigetes*, *di novensides*, and “Personifikationen abstrakter Begriffe.”

tegrity, and energy. Albright's solution is to give Israel the childlike role at this point, leaving Canaan sophisticated and decadent. "Against the emotional ecstasy of orgiastic Canaanite rites there came no answering echo from the stern code of Israelite morality. Where the Canaanites were sophisticated, the Israelites were harsh with the cruel simplicity of nomads; where the Canaanites gloated with sadistic glee, the Israelites turned away in shocked reaction against the brutalities of an oversophisticated culture."¹⁷ By this time, if not sooner, we will have understood how "primitive" and such like terms are used in this game—not so much to express facts as to offer an evaluation. What may be described as primitive, barbaric, and savage in Canaan is thereby inferior, and if ancient Israel—or Rome, in a similar confrontation—rejected, defeated, and suppressed it, they were in the right.

The title of Yehezkel Kaufmann's great work is *Toledot ha-'emunah hay-yisra'elit* (1937–56), translated and abridged by Moshe Greenberg as *The Religion of Israel* (New York, 1972). In neither the Hebrew nor the English title is there any mention of Canaan, but in fact Kaufmann is much given to a contrastive method, so that Israelite monotheism is constantly set off against Canaanite polytheism. In dealing with paganism, Kaufmann does not offer the sort of catalogue of deities which scholars have frequently prepared,¹⁸ but attempts to locate a fundamental, underlying idea. This turns out to be "the idea that there exists a realm of being prior to the gods and above them, upon which the gods depend, and whose decrees they must obey."¹⁹ The Ugaritic discoveries were very recent at the time when Kaufmann wrote, but he embraced these too in his conception of paganism: "Of their generations and interrelationships, we now have first-hand evidence in the myths that have been uncovered at Ras Shamra Ugarit. The deities of Ras Shamra are a community of husbands and wives, fathers and sons, brothers and sisters, who contend with each other, build each other houses, sacrifice, make banquets, and so forth. Their pagan mark is that they are born."²⁰ From this view of the gods as dependent on what lies outside them, as originating in a separate world-stuff, come conceptions of the possibility of mixing the divine with the human and a

17. *The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra* (New York and Evanston, 1963), p. 35.

18. Listing and discussion of deities and mythological themes is, of course, very useful, but the presentation is inevitably atomistic. The best compilation of this sort is by Marvin H. Pope and Wolfgang Röllig, in *Wörterbuch der Mythologie*, ed. H. W. Haussig, 1. Abteilung, Band I (Stuttgart, 1965), but many treatments of "the Religion of the Canaanites" are essentially similar.

19. *Religion of Israel*, p. 21.

20. *Religion of Israel*, p. 26.

ready theory of magic, which is an invocation of “self-operating forces that are independent of the gods.”²¹ The God of Israel is, of course, utterly different just on this point, for the Bible lacks “the fundamental myth of paganism: the theogony,” and God is “in short, nonmythological.” This is the essence of Israelite religion, and that which sets it apart from all forms of paganism.”²² The last words seem to me very revealing, and as I pass now to criticism of Kaufmann’s views I wish to repeat them: “. . . sets it apart from *all forms of paganism*.” Dignified and profound as Kaufmann’s view of paganism may be, it is radically deficient, because he is not interested in Canaanite paganism or any concrete pagan community, but in all paganism, everywhere in the world. Lest this seem an exaggerated statement, note his references to the paganism of the Australian aborigines, the American Indians, and the Aztecs,²³ or his statement that it is really Hinduism and Buddhism that express with “unparalleled clarity” the point that he is making about paganism.²⁴ Such a cosmic view shows that Kaufmann’s work is really more philosophical or theological than historical.

Closer contact with empirical evidence for the Canaanite religion raised difficulties for such sweeping generalizations. “The pagan conceives of the gods as powers embodied in nature,” we read,²⁵ but is this true of El, for example, a principal deity? Not prominently identified with any natural force, or deriving from any (at Ugarit), he is paternal, aged, wise, just, and compassionate—a picture more obviously related to roles in human society than to “nature.” Kothar, the Canaanite counterpart of the Mesopotamian Ea, is the craftsman god, most readily thought of as a projection into the divine sphere of aspects of civilization, not of untamed nature. Such a confrontation of Kaufmann’s views with actually attested features of the Canaanite religion might be extended further, but misses the point somewhat, for his real concern is not with specifics of this religion but with a rather remote level of abstraction.²⁶

21. *Religion of Israel*, p. 41.

22. *Religion of Israel*, p. 60.

23. *Religion of Israel*, pp. 29, 30–31, 54.

24. *Religion of Israel*, p. 39.

25. *Religion of Israel*, p. 8.

26. Kaufmann’s use of an abstract definition of polytheism seems to me to encounter the criticism leveled by the anthropologist Spiro against such a procedure in a different area: “A second difficulty is encountered when real definitions are of the kind that stipulate what the definer takes to be the ‘essential nature’ of some entity. Since the notion of ‘essential nature’ is always vague and almost non-empirical, such definitions are scientifically useless.” Melford E.

The views of G. Ernest Wright on the Canaanite religion resemble those of Kaufmann in many ways, for description of the foreign religion is part of a presentation of the faith of Israel in a drama of polytheism versus monotheism. But Wright's approach has considerable originality, since it presents the Canaanite religion as resembling a variety of Presbyterian Christianity. This suggestion of mine may be explained as follows: in Wright's view, the gods of ancient polytheism were originally and primarily powers of nature. Even as they were, in Wright's words, "increasingly socialized and responsible for the growing complexity of civilized life, few of the gods were able completely to shake off those hidden depths of violence inherent in the non-moral nature in which they arose."²⁷ The polytheist attempted to come to terms with such powerful and unpredictable powers. He lived in a world where "the emphasis is upon order, harmony, and integration. The worlds of society, nature, and the gods interpenetrate in such a way that the status quo is the focus of attention. The aim of the gods is to preserve the established order, and the whole cultic and social life of man is primarily an integration with the sacrosanct economy of the world."²⁸ ". . . All polytheisms tend to be religions of the status quo."²⁹

In contrast to this stands the God of Israel, for whom "history rather than nature was the primary sphere of . . . revelation."³⁰ He is a "God Who Acts," to cite the title of another of Wright's influential books. Metaphors derived from nature are seldom applied to Him, His primary relation being to history and human society.

To take Wright totally at face-value would be a mistake. The ancient drama, the clash between Canaan and Israel, was in large part a projection backward of a clash in Wright's time and life. A characteristic form of Christian theology has been systematic presentation of Christian teaching in a series of logically arranged and interrelated abstract statements. About two hundred years ago some scholars who felt dissatisfaction with this dogmatic approach pioneered in what was called "Biblical theology," a pursuit intended to reflect the variety and liveliness of Biblical teaching which they felt systematic theology left out. This Biblical theology movement took many turns over the years, but

Spiro, "Religion: Problems of Definition and Explanation," in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Barton (New York and Washington, 1966), pp. 85-126 (quotation from p. 86).

27. G. Ernest Wright, *The Old Testament Against Its Environment* (London, 1950), p. 18.

28. *The Old Testament*, p. 44.

29. *The Old Testament*, p. 45.

30. *The Old Testament*, p. 26.

Ernest Wright still wrestled with the original problem. In *God Who Acts*, he cites a Presbyterian confession of faith: "There is but one living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense," and so on for about a page. This is, Wright says, "cold, abstract, and tight," separating us from the active, vivid, existential nature of God, whose nature is "taught us by the narration of what He has done."³¹

There is such a complete parallel between the modern theological struggle in which Wright was engaged and his conception of the ancient battle of Israel's God with the gods of Canaan, that we cannot avoid wondering whether an ancient pantheon is here being made a pawn in a modern intellectual game. Of course Wright, who draws very heavily on Thorkild Jacobsen for many of his conceptions, says many true things about ancient religion, but his presentation is suspiciously engaged.

None of the above-mentioned scholars has presented a full-scale discussion of the Canaanite religion, and the views of Frank Cross on the subject are especially brief and scattered. Such is the interest of his thoughts, however, that they deserve consideration here. Cross criticizes "the tendency of scholars to overlook or suppress continuities between the early religion of Israel and the Canaanite . . . culture from which it emerged," singling out Kaufmann as one who conceived of the religion of Israel "as a unique or isolated phenomenon, radically or wholly discontinuous with its environment."³² This suggests at least the possibility of a sympathetic evaluation of the Canaanite religion, and indeed much in Cross's work is of this nature, as in the treatment of the deity El in relation to the God of Israel. In other respects, however, we seem to be back on the *Irrwege* of his predecessors. In the treatment of "El and the God of the Fathers," the focus is the God of Israel, and predictably around such a center Cross is able to assemble a most disparate body of evidence: the Nabataean inscriptions exploited already by Alt, the Cappadocian data studied by Lewy, Tannit inscriptions from North Africa, Baal Hamon texts from the same area, and the Biblical divine name Shaddai. This is mixed with liberal quotation of Ugaritic texts, but the mixing does not produce any coherent picture of this aspect of the Canaanite religion. As noticed in others, Cross's procedure is contrastive, often recalling Wright's work: "Characteristic of the religion of Israel is a perennial and unrelaxed tension between the

31. G. Ernest Wright, *God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital* (London, 1952), pp. 109-10.

32. Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), p. vii.

mythic and the historical.”³³ The characteristic form of expression for Israel is said to have been the epic “rather than the Canaanite cosmogonic myth,” an expression used by Cross to denote myth concerned with “primordial events,” and “static structures of meaning.” Such a contrast seems capricious in its selection of what is significant in either Canaanite or Israelite religion. Elements in the Bible of no small importance, such as Genesis 1, seem to be concerned with “primordial events” and “static structures of meaning,” if you wish to put it that way. And it is far from obvious that at Ugarit there was any dominating preoccupation with cosmogony. I simply fail to see any evidence at all for Cross’s assertion that “the great cosmogonic myths of Mesopotamia and Canaan were associated with the central rites of the cult and as such are of much greater importance than the theogonic myths for our understanding of ancient, mythopoeic religion.”³⁴ In Cross’s vocabulary “theogony” refers to a succession of generations of gods; “cosmogony” to creation emerging from a conflict between old gods and a younger generation of gods. The cosmogony is supposed to be “a libretto to the rites of the cult.”³⁵ The “olden gods” belong to both theogony and cosmogony. But the support for such a view of Canaanite religion in general—of none too solid a character in itself³⁶—is derived from the lists of divine witnesses in Anatolian treaties and what we could call the “late-late show,” Eusebius and Damascius.³⁷ Against this choice of a center for Canaanite religion we may set the attested diversity visible in Ugaritic texts: god-lists arranged on neither theogonic nor cosmogonic principles, but by cultic rank (with many vagaries), or by theological principles, or geographically, or in ways that baffle us; and the obvious prominence not just of myths of various sorts, but also of rituals, divination, and prayer. For that matter, it is easier to find in Ugaritic texts something like “Hebrew epic” than it is to find cosmogonic myths. The criticism I have advanced repeatedly above seems in the end to fit Cross’s work as well, namely, that he presents the Canaanite religion only for the sake of adverse comparison with the Biblical faith, on the

33. *Canaanite Myth*, p. viii.

34. “The ‘Olden Gods’ in Ancient Near Eastern Creation Myths,” in *Magnalia Dei* (G. Ernest Wright Volume) (Garden City, N.Y., 1976), p. 322.

35. “‘Olden Gods,’” p. 329.

36. Michael Barre has shown that Cross misinterprets the sense and significance of ancient terms meaning literally “former gods” and the like. See *The God-List in the Treaty between Hannibal and Philip V of Macedonia* (Baltimore and London, 1983), pp. 27–29.

37. Cf. Lynn Clapham, “Mythopoeic Antecedents of the Biblical World-View and Their Transformation in Early Israelite Thought,” in *Magnalia Dei*, p. 113.

basis of a narrowly and one might say privately defined selection of mythological texts.

So far “Yahweh vs. the gods of Canaan” has been presented to us by scholars as a battle above the clouds, removed from human and earthly concerns. The Canaanite religion is a religion without a society. Refreshingly, Norman Gottwald, in his *The Tribes of Yahweh* and his more recent essay in the Mendenhall *Festschrift*,³⁸ seems about to challenge this prevailing conception, which is so at odds with Durkheim’s assumption that “when we commence the study of primitive religions, it is with the assurance that they hold to reality and express it,” and his premise that “religion is something eminently social.”³⁹ Gottwald sensibly asserts of Israel and Canaan that “this was not an abstract contest of ideas, but a social struggle with high stakes and without any absolute arbiter.”⁴⁰ But although Gottwald’s view of early Israel may in some respects be challenging and revolutionary, it is not necessary to study in detail his massive volume to realize that at bottom he is not much different from his predecessors when it comes to the subject of the Canaanite religion. Gottwald too is in fact “absolute arbiter,” in advance. Canaan and Israel are seen in a “social structural polarization,”⁴¹ in which Canaan provided “complementary needful resistance” to Israel,⁴² a “needful foil.” John Selden, who felt with Lactantius that the first step to wisdom is to know what is false, would be comfortable with the thought. In Gottwald only a surface change has been effected, to a kind of materialism in which Israel stands for authentic peasant revolutionary values and the Canaanites for everything opposite, the vices implicit in a repressive hierarchical class society. Since the Israelite religion provided support to the good society, Canaanite religion is left with nothing to do but support an evil society. Gottwald is anything but dispassionate on this subject, as in his discussion of modern “symbol systems claiming to be based on ‘Biblical faith.’” These are the ones that

blur the intersection of social process and human freedom—by talking fuzzy nonsense, by isolating us in our private souls, by positing ‘unseen’

38. Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh* (Maryknoll, N.Y., 1979); “Two Models for the Origins of Ancient Israel: Social Revolution or Frontier Development,” in *The Quest For the Kingdom of God: Studies in Honor of George E. Mendenhall*, edited by H. B. Huffmon, F. A. Spina, and A. R. W. Green (Winona Lake, Ind., 1983), pp. 5–24.

39. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, translated by J. W. Swaim (London, ca. 1915), II, 10.

40. Gottwald, “Two Models,” p. 23.

41. “Two Models,” p. 7.

42. “Two Models,” p. 23.

worlds to compensate for the actual world we fear to see, by conditioning us to compete for many small favors instead of cooperating for a few big gains, by cultivating mood and sentiment in place of vision and passion, by instilling resignation in the name of sweetness and sacrifice, by persuading us to accept the humanly unacceptable and to desist from changing what is manifestly changeable, by confirming our fixations to the past and our venturelessness toward the future, by decrying power while feasting in its benefits—all such symbol systems, however venerable and psychically convenient, are bad dreams to be awakened from, cloying relics to be cast away, cruel fetters to be struck off. They are, in a word, the Canaanite idols that Israel smashed when it smashed the Canaanite kings.⁴³

At this point we may turn to a positive discussion of how our understanding of the Canaanite religion might be improved, leaving any summary of the above mentioned negative review to be incorporated in it. The suggestions that I make are meant seriously, but of course in the spirit of topics for discussion rather than fixed convictions. First, in treating the Canaanite religion we should make one period and place the center, and my choice would be Ugarit in the Late Bronze Age. The previous discussion has suggested how unsatisfactory it can be to assemble a collage of bits from Ilmilku to Augustine, the resulting picture being incoherent and probably unfair. We need first an analysis, as true and many-sided as we can achieve, of what was done and said at one place and time. Ugarit commends itself for this purpose because the evidence from there is relatively abundant and comes to us in a definite social and historical context. Again, previous discussion has perhaps demonstrated how the Bible, with its scanty, ambiguous, and often biased or undatable allusions to the Canaanite religion, makes a bad beginning point. So also the Punic religion is not as well documented, from the literary side, as Ugaritic, and is remote in time and location. Classical period sources, especially Lucian and Philo of Byblos, should perhaps be deemphasized and treated as evidence for religion in their own (Roman) period, and not used to fill in presumed gaps in earlier periods.

My second suggestion is closely related to the first. It would be more fruitful to approach the Canaanite religion from a wider variety of viewpoints, deemphasizing the theological comparison to Biblical religion and the diachronic aspects, and stressing the synchronic, especially psychological and social aspects. To commit a slight tautology, the Canaanite religion was the religion of the Canaanites—a real historical people organized in societies of certain kinds, and having religion as a

43. *Tribes of Yahweh*, pp. 708–9.

means toward certain social goals. That aspect of the matter has been very largely lost in the treatment given the Canaanite religion by Biblical scholars. A fixed heavenward gaze is in this case a *déformation professionnelle*. The classical historian Arnaldo Momigliano noticed a quality of that sort in two famous historians of the early church, Harnack and Troeltsch: "Though both . . . were well aware that the Church was a society competing with the society of the Roman empire, they remained theologians to the end. They were more interested in the idea of Christianity than in Christians."⁴⁴ We should probably get more interested in the Canaanites.

A program of study of the Canaanite religion in a dominantly Canaanite society would provide an almost automatic correction to the preoccupation with its resemblance to the Biblical religion. I would suppose that researchers along these lines would soon confront a dearth of evidence from Ugarit itself, and would then be compelled to turn to the Hittites or the Babylonians for possible functional equivalents of Ugaritic phenomena, as in the study of the god-lists, the omen-texts, the implements of the cult, and so on. On the other side, it is not too much to hope that then the very late survivals of the Canaanite religion might be more easily incorporated into the general picture, and relegated to their proper place. Time will not permit the development of the following suggestion, but I may mention it. We may also in the end achieve a more just conception of what was involved in the clash between Canaanite polytheism and Israelite monotheism, and a better explanation of why the Canaanite religion that we find in the Bible seems in some ways so different from the religion of ancient Ugarit.

44. "Christianity and the Decline of the Roman Empire," in *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, edited by Arnaldo Momigliano (Oxford, 1963), p. 6.

Palmyrene Aramaic Inscriptions and the Old Testament, especially Amos 2:8

I. Palmyrene Aramaic Inscriptions and the Old Testament

The use of extra-biblical materials to explain or illuminate the biblical text is by now commonplace, yet each body of non-canonical texts that we turn to, as biblical scholars, presents individual problems and possibilities. My subject is Palmyrene Aramaic inscriptions and the Old Testament, and, though I wish to present in detail a proposal for Amos 2:8, I would like to set this in a larger context, and treat it as representative of some of the issues that arise in using Palmyrene Aramaic texts in interpreting portions of the Hebrew Bible and Hebrew lexicon.

There are two distinct modes in which Old Testament scholars may deal with Palmyrene Aramaic material, as with other extra-biblical texts. The first is this, that ancient non-biblical texts may sometimes be decisive for our understanding of a biblical word or passage. The second, and perhaps more common situation is this, that they may be of interest as illustrative or illuminating.

In a recent article, rich in detail, in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Peter T. Daniels treats the story of the decipherment of Palmyrene Aramaic.¹ In the 1750's Swinton and Barthélemy published independent solutions to the problem of the then-unknown Palmyrene script. Hence their achievement stands at the beginning of the series of first readings of ancient Near Eastern writing systems, and merits the name Daniels gives it, "The First Decipherment."

It is disappointing to find that Daniels, in an otherwise praiseworthy attempt to assign due proportion to the intellectual achievement of Barthélemy and Swinton, includes the unfortunate phrase "Palmyrene is not a language of major importance for cultural or linguistic history," explaining in a note "Only a few texts of nonstereotypical content and any length are known, principally the so-called Tariff."² What Daniels

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1. Daniels, "Shewing of Hard Sentences and Dissolving of Doubts': The First Decipherment," *JAOS* 108 (1988) 419–36.

2. Daniels, p. 435 and n. 76.

calls “Palmyrene” in these dismissive sentences was, of course, the principal language of a rich city that for a brief time aspired to be the center of the Roman empire. To our day Palmyra remains a site of great cultural and art-historical importance. The texts are not as stereotypical as Daniels describes them, and as far as linguistic history is concerned, though no one would, I suppose, think of treating “Palmyrene” in isolation, it is part of Aramaic and as such not devoid of interest even grammatically, while the words of its lexicon might be called, in the phrase of Baudelaire, “. . . les bijoux perdus de l’antique Palmyre.”³

Old Testament scholarship has maintained a more just estimate of the value of Palmyrene Aramaic texts. Already Gesenius, in his *Thesaurus* (of 1835–58) mentions the decipherment,⁴ though too little had been published by then to permit any extensive citation of the texts. Subsequent Hebrew lexicographers have made full and frequent reference to Palmyrene Aramaic as part of Semitic vocabulary bearing on Hebrew words. A spot check of a recent and invaluable instrument of research, the third edition of the Koehler–Baumgartner *Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament*,⁵ reveals that the compilers seem to have missed nothing of consequence available to them. Evidently they have profited from the *Dictionnaire* of Jean and Hoftijzer,⁶ moreover, occasionally Palmyrene Aramaic evidence is cited that cannot derive from that source. Also the eminent scholars who have published and studied the Palmyrene Aramaic texts, thus Chabot, Starcky, Ingholt, and many others, have had an eye toward the relevance of their texts for the Bible.⁷

The pitfalls present in using Palmyrene Aramaic for biblical interpretation are obvious. The texts are late, post Old Testament by centuries

3. “Bénédiction,” *Les Fleurs du Mal*.

4. *Guilielmi Gesenii Thesaurus philologicus criticus linguae hebraeae et chaldaee veteris Testamenti* (Leipzig: Vogel, 1835–58).

5. (Leiden: Brill, 1967–).

6. Charles-F. Jean and Jacob Hoftijzer, *Dictionnaire des inscriptions sémitiques de l’ouest* (DISO) (Leiden: Brill, 1965).

7. H. L. Ginsberg, for example, assigned major importance to Palmyrene Aramaic evidence in his “Psalms and Inscriptions of Petition and Acknowledgment,” in *Louis Ginsberg Jubilee Volume*, I (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1945) 159–71. Very recently Palmyrene Aramaic material is used by Mark S. Smith in “The Invocation of Deceased Ancestors in Psalm 49:12c,” *JBL* 112 (1993) 105–7; he cites P. Joüon, “Glanes palmyréniennes,” *Syr* 19 (1938) 99–103 and Michael O’Connor, “The Grammar of Finding Your Way in Palmyrene Aramaic and the Problem of Diction in Ancient West Semitic Inscriptions,” in *Fucus: A Semitic/Afrasian Gathering in Remembrance of Albert Ehrman*, ed. Y. L. Arbeitman (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1988) 353–69.

and even in many cases post New Testament. (Something over 2500 Palmyrene Aramaic texts have been published, the great bulk being from the first three centuries of the common era.) There is evidence of Jewish presence at Palmyra, some in the texts themselves and more in the historical and archaeological contexts.⁸ Still more evident in the language and social context of Palmyrene Aramaic texts is the strong Hellenistic and even Roman influence.

These factors need to be borne in mind, but from another point of view, we do not, or should not, use any extra-biblical evidence uncritically. Though this is not the kind of thing one can seriously measure, perhaps more grievous interpretive sins have been committed in use of Ugaritic materials, despite their antiquity, than in use of Palmyrene Aramaic evidence.

What is the promise held out by Palmyrene Aramaic texts? They are in a language closely related to biblical Hebrew. Many are dated, and many come from a context that can be known with considerable precision, in several senses. First, all the texts fit within a rather well-known and well-understood society, and second, we often know exactly where a given text comes from: it is carved at such-and-such a place in a temple or tomb, it accompanies this or that statue or bas-relief, it labels such-and-such an object. The Palmyrene Aramaic texts have the virtue common to much epigraphic material of not coming to us through a complicated history of textual transmission.⁹ Moreover, in this rather extensive corpus, it is usually true that multiple examples of a given type of text occur, permitting knowledge of the range of variation within the genre. The texts are late, compared to other "Ancient Near Eastern Texts," but the vocabulary and phraseology often can be shown to continue ancient usages. We sometimes can point to Ugaritic counterparts of important religious terms at Palmyra, and in legal language, there are abundant parallels to the cuneiform legal tradition, as shown most recently in the work of Eleonora Cussini.¹⁰ To digress slightly, the legal or quasi-legal materials from Palmyra are practically unique,¹¹ for they provide a view of the law regulating the sale of tomb property. This makes

8. See L. Díez Merino, "Influencias judía y cristiana en los signos e inscripciones palmirenas," *Studia Biblica Franciscana Liber Annuus* 21 (1971) 76-148.

9. This statement must be qualified at least as far as the Tariff is concerned, whose origin and composition present complicated problems of analysis in spite of the rather simple situation described in the initial lines.

10. "The Aramaic Law of Sale and the Cuneiform Legal Tradition," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The Johns Hopkins University, 1992.

11. Compare also the roughly contemporary materials in Nabataean Aramaic, as studied by Jonas Greenfield, "meḥqārīm b'munn'ḥê mišpāt bik'tōbōt

a distinct contribution to the general picture of ancient Near Eastern law, and for biblical scholars is not without relevance for understanding the transaction told of in Gen 23.

To turn to the major point stated at the outset, there are two different modes in which Palmyrene Aramaic texts may affect our reading of biblical words and texts. Occasionally, the Aramaic is decisive for determining the sense of an uncertain Hebrew word. This is the case with *ḥammān*, which as definitively demonstrated by Drijvers means “chapel, shrine,”¹² not “sun-pillar.”¹³ In something of the same way, Palmyrene Aramaic evidence is of decisive importance for understanding the institution—evidently well-known to the prophets—referred to by the rare biblical term *marzēāḥ*. In this case, a good deal of other ancient evidence plays a role along with the rich body of information found in Palmyrene Aramaic texts. Since these biblical Hebrew terms, whose meaning was lost or obscured over the centuries, are more than lexical curiosities, the importance of Palmyrene Aramaic evidence is plain. In addition, these cases point to the very limited nature of our evidence for the whole of ancient Hebrew vocabulary, and for the meaning of the mere fraction of the once-extant lexicon which is actually attested in the canonical corpus. A recent careful study, as close to scientific as possible in this area, puts “the reading vocabulary of the average high school graduate” (American) at 80,000 words.¹⁴ This figure permits us to form at least some kind of estimate—a humbling one—of what remains to us of the total ancient Hebrew vocabulary.

In a second kind of situation, Palmyrene Aramaic evidence may be not so much decisive and crucial as interesting, illustrative, illuminating. One might identify as a desideratum for our field an extended separate work, covering the whole biblical Hebrew lexicon, modeled on what

haq-qeber han-nābāṭīyōt”, *Sēfer Zikkārōn l’-Ḥanōk Yālōn* (Henoch Yalon Memorial Volume) (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan University, 1974) 64–83.

12. Han J. W. Drijvers, “Aramaic *ḥmn*’ and Hebrew *ḥmn*: Their Meaning and Root,” *JSS* 33 (1988) 165–79; note also, for the important Ugaritic cognate, G. del Olmo Lete, “La ‘capilla’ o ‘templete’ (*ḥmn*) del culto ugarítico,” *Aula Orientalis* 2 (1984) 277–80. It is irrelevant, but amusing and somehow typical of the occasionally tortuous paths of philology, that Palmyrene Aramaic evidence first led Elliger, Ingholt and others to a wrong sense, “incense altar,” which has found its way into the lexicons.

13. So the lexicon of Brown-Driver-Briggs, giving an interpretation that goes back at least as far as Rashi.

14. George A. Miller, “How School Children Learn Words,” *CSL Report* 7 Oct., 1986 (Princeton: Cognitive Science Laboratory) 1–16. Citation from p. 7. According to Miller, all dictionaries under-represent important vocabulary elements: proper nouns, acronyms, and multiword phrases.

was carried out for biblical Aramaic by E. Vogt, in his *Lexicon linguae aramaicae Veteris Testamenti documentis antiquis illustratum*. It is the last phrase that describes Vogt's unusual contribution. He includes not only the rare cases where cruxes are solved by Aramaic evidence, but also interesting and illuminating parallels providing, ready to hand, a broader linguistic context in which a biblical word or phrase may be read. If something of this sort were to be carried through for the biblical Hebrew vocabulary, Palmyrene Aramaic evidence would call for inclusion. This could start at the grammatical, even phonological level, with mention, for example, of the elision of the preposition *b* in a phrase such as **bēbet*.¹⁵ At the level of syntax, or pronominal usage, Palmyrene Aramaic evidence gives striking parallels to Hebrew *bo'ākā* "as one goes, in the direction of."¹⁶ Palmyrene Aramaic could be cited, more fully than is done in existing dictionaries, at points too numerous to be listed in detail, but which may be exemplified in use of the Palmyrene Aramaic cognate of Hebrew *maṣṣēbāh* in the sense "sculpture, bas-relief."¹⁷ It is interesting also to note the use at Palmyra of what is etymologically a divine name ʾštr as a common noun "goddess."¹⁸

II. Amos 2:8

Amos 2:8 may serve as a brief concrete example of the dual role Palmyrene Aramaic inscriptions may play, either as determining the sense of an Old Testament passage, or as providing an illuminating background for our reading. In this verse, the phrase *wēyēn ʿānūšīm yištū bēt ʾēlōhēhem* has not been explained in a way which commands the assent of all. In the light of Palmyrene Aramaic we may, I propose, translate: ". . . they drink the wine of the treasury in the houses of their gods."

15. For biblical Hebrew, see *bayit* and *petah*, and the grammars and lexicons; for Palmyrene Aramaic, note C. Dunant, *Le sanctuaire de Baalshamin à Palmyre*, Bibliotheca Helvetica Romana (Rome: Institut Suisse de Rom, 1971) text no. 45 lines 11–13, with the Greek translation.

16. "The Grammar of Finding Your Way . . ." (above, n. 7).

17. In spite of the large number of recent studies devoted to *maṣṣēbāh*, it seems that the Palmyrene evidence is not sufficiently taken into account; see, for example, the lengthy study of the term by J. Gamberoni s.v. "*Maṣṣēbāh*," *TWAT*, Vol. IV.

18. Thus *Pštr[tʿ]* ʾštrʿ *tbtʿ* "to Astar[te], the good goddess," J. Cantineau, "Textes palmyréniens provenant de la fouille du temple de Bêl," *Syr* 12 (1931) text no. 13 line 3; and *bʿltk* ʾštrʿ "Baaltak, the goddess" op. cit., text no. 12 line 4; this Aramaic usage parallels, and perhaps derives from, Akkadian use of the divine name Ishtar in the sense "goddess"; see S. Kaufman, *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic*, Assyriological Studies 19 (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press) p. 60.

Alternately, less word-for-word: “They drink wine at the expense of the treasury,” that is, “at public expense.”

Although the general sense of the larger passage in which this text stands has always been clear, most students of Amos will probably acknowledge the problems of detail that abound in comprehending the exact nature of the sins which the prophet here denounces. As to the phrase *yên ‘ānûšîm*, “the wine of ‘*ānûšîm*,” though there is a generally, or at least widely, accepted translation, “the wine of those who are fined,” the explanation of the Hebrew phrase is the subject of debate.

According to Shalom Paul, whose commentary at this point is representative and typical,¹⁹ it is best to explain *‘ānûšîm* as a passive participle, parallel to *ḥābûlîm* in the preceding line, and to translate “the wine of those who are fined,” that is, “Wine obtained from fines, by extracting fines from the poor.” However plausible, this is ad hoc, in that it involves the hypothetical reconstruction of a practice of which we know nothing from other texts.

Paul reports a divergent opinion, found for example in the commentary of Rudolph.²⁰ According to Rudolph, *‘ānûšîm* may indeed be a passive participle, but probably is rather a substantive in this case, an abstract noun of the same type as *mēgûrîm* “state of sojourning,” or *nē‘ûrîm* “youth.” This grammatical hypothesis is, in my opinion, rendered still more plausible by the comparative evidence to be adduced presently; note however that Rudolph’s understanding of the sense of *‘ānûšîm* is close to that conventionally held.²¹

Since Amos uses the term *marzēāḥ* (6:7) for the luxurious feasting of the rich Israelites, which he condemns, the Palmyrene evidence for the nature of the *marzēāḥ*, the symposium, far from being slighted, has

19. Amos, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress), 1991.

20. W. Rudolph, *Joel – Amos – Obadja – Jona, Kommentar zum Alten Testament*, Band XIII 2 (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1971).

21. Rudolph translates: «oder trinken Wein aus Eintreibungen in ihren Gotteshäuren». [“And they drink wine from extortions in the houses of their gods”]. Rudolph finds confirmation of his explanation in the Septuagint’s reading *ek sykophantiōn* “aus falscher Anklage” [“from false accusations”] or “aus Erpressungen” [“from extortions”], and in the Targum *ḥamar ‘unsā’*, “Wein von Beschlagnehmung” [“wine from confiscation”]. In Rudolph’s opinion, the Greek translation and the Targum are correct in that here it is not a matter of taxes or fines according to law, but of extraordinary and unjust extortions. Compare the view of Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, Anchor Bible 24A (New York: Doubleday, 1989) p. 321: The *‘nš* may mean “punish” in the sense of a legitimate punishment (Deut 22:19); Amos does not make clear one aspect of the problem: whether the act was a sin because this wine was not to be drunk in the sacred place, or whether because the fine was unjust (Prov 17:26).

often been exploited by interpreters of Amos. Indeed, this is sometimes overdone, and an overly lurid and imaginative picture of the *marzēāh* institution is painted.²²

It seems not to have been noticed, however, that at Palmyra, where the *marzēāh* flourished, an Aramaic term cognate to Amos's *ʿanūšim* often appears in texts and contexts having to do with the symposium. The term is *ʿnwšt*, which has the sense "treasury" and is used both of the civic treasury²³ and of the treasury of various gods, that is, various temple treasuries, thus: *ʿnwšt[t] dy bl* "the treasu[ry] of Bel."²⁴ We have reference to the personnel, or officials, of the treasury, as in CIS 3994 (cited above) and in *ʿnwš ʿnwšt* "the personnel of the treasury."²⁵ There is also the related abstract word: "term in office of treasurer": *bʿnwšt PN wPN*, found in the text previously cited (CIS 3994 line 3).

An association of "treasury" and the symposium, the sacred drinking party, becomes evident from the evidence of certain tesserae. The Palmyrene tesserae are little tokens, usually of terra-cotta, which served as admission-tickets to the sacred banquets. Not all contain a text but many have a brief inscription. Some refer specifically to measures of wine to which the guest is entitled. That wine was a central part of the banquet may be seen from explicit mention in other, lengthier inscriptions,²⁶

22. Thus Hans M. Barstad, *The Religious Polemics of Amos*, VTS 34 (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 33–36, with the "*marzēāh* Hostess."

23. Thus in *ʿbdt mdyntʿ lbryk šmh lʿlmʿ mn ksp ʿnwšt* (four personal names) "The City made (this) for (the god) Blessed-Be-His-Name-Forever out of public funds, in the terms as treasurer of (personal names)," text CIS 3994 lines 1–7. This inscription occurs in practically identical form in three altars; it is in part a bilingual, having in the Greek the term *argyrotamiōn* "terms as treasurer," corresponding to *ʿnwšt*.

24. H. Ingholt, H. Seyrig, and J. Starcky, *Recueil des tessères de Palmyre, Institut Français d'Archéologie de Beyrouth, Bibliothèque archéologie et historique* (Paris: Geuthner, 1955) no. 36 (hereafter cited as RTP).

25. J. Cantineau, *Inventaire des inscriptions de Palmyre*, Publications de Musée de Damas; Fascicules I–IX (Beyrouth: Institut Français d'archéologie de Beyrouth, 1930–36) fasc. 9 text no. 12 line 3.

26. H. Ingholt, "Un nouveau thiase à Palmyre," *Syr* 7 (1926) pp. 128–41; the Palmyrene Aramaic text is: (1) *[by]rh tšry šnt 5.100+40+10+5* / (2) *brbnwt mrzħwt yrhy ʿgrpʿ yrhy* / (3) *ydyʿbl ʿgʿ yʿt dy šmšm ʿlhyʿ wytb ʿl* / (4) *qsmʿ štʿ klh wʿsq ħmrʿ ʿtyqʿ* / (5) *lkmryʿ štʿ klh mn byth wħmr bzqyn* / (6) *lʿ ʿyty mn mʿrbʿ dkyryn sbrykyn* / (7) *prtncs wmlkwsʿ bnwhy wʿgylw ktwbʿ zby br šʿdʿ dy hwʿ ʿl bt dwdʿ* / (8) *wyrħbwłʿ mmzgnʿ wmsyʿnʿ klhwn* (Partial rendering:) "In the month of Tishri, the year 555 [A.D. 243], in the term as symposiarch of Yarhay Agrippa (son of) Yarhay Yediabol (son of) Oga (son of) Yaut, who served the gods and presided over the allotment (or: divination) for the whole year, and served old wine to the priests,

and also from the title for the symposium which occurs on various tesserae as a synonym for *marzēāḥ*, that is, *ʿgn*. This word, originally “crater, mixing vessel” (attested in this sense in Palmyrene²⁷ as elsewhere in Semitic) develops the sense “symposium.”

Other tesserae mention the institution or person who is sponsoring the feast, thus for a civic banquet (RTP 8): *krkʿ* / *ʿnwštʿ*, “the city / the treasury.” For a temple banquet *ʿnwš[t]ʿ dy bl* (RTP 36): “the treasury of (the god) Bel.” The sense of these compressed, telegraphic references to the treasury is “at the expense of the treasury,” which is completely explicit in the dedicatory inscription on an altar [*ʿlʿtʿdh mn kšp ʿnwš[t]ʿ*] “This altar (was made) at treasury expense”;²⁸ compare the inscriptions on three related altars cited above, CIS 3994. Architectural and inscriptional evidence from the site unite in demonstrating another point of contact with the phraseology of Amos 2:8. The symposium at Palmyra, the *marzēāḥ* or *ʿgn*, was usually held in the temples, the “house(s) of their gods” (*byt* in Amos).

The *marzēāḥ* was not something peculiar to Palmyra or new in the Hellenistic-Roman era, for some form of the institution, with the terminology related to it, goes back as far as the second millennium, as we know from Ugaritic texts. Other later texts, for example Nabataean inscriptions, inform us of the wide diffusion of the institution. With this in mind we may suggest that the phrase of Amos 2:8 as translated here: “they drink wine at treasury expense in the houses of their gods,” would have been a completely comprehensible and accurate description of what people did in fact do at Palmyra. This practice is likely to have been what Amos refers to, and denounces, in eighth-century Israel.

To digress briefly before summing up, it is interesting to compare an expression in a Hebrew letter from Arad. This is found in text number 1 in Aharoni’s *Ketobot Arad*.²⁹ The text begins “To Eliashib. Now, give wine to the Kittiyim . . .” Lines 9–10 say *myyn hʿgnt.ttn* “Give of the wine of the *ʿgnt*.” Since an *ʿaggān* is a crater, not a storage vessel, Aharoni reasons that *yyn hʿgnt* refers to a special kind of wine, citing Song of Songs 7:3. The Palmyrene evidence suggests that *ʿgnt* here has the derived sense “festive banquet, symposium.” Aharoni seems to be correct

for a whole year, from his own house, and did not bring wine in skins from the west . . .”

27. D. Schlumberger, *La Palmyrène du nord-ouest* (Paris: Geuthner, 1951) text 21 a:1 *ʿgnʿ* “. . . (this) crater” [text damaged, but apparently a dedication, inscribed on a large stone crater].

28. J. Starcky, *MUSJ* 28 (1949–50) 45–58; text is no. 3, p. 56.

29. Y. Aharoni, *Kʿtōbōt ʿarād* (Arad Inscriptions) (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1975), p. 12.

in concluding that as the writer of the Arad letter explains the specific kind of flour (*qmh*) to be given to the Kittiyim, so here he defines the quality of wine.³⁰ It is improbable that he is telling Eliashib how to serve the wine.³¹ Palmyrene evidence, and the broad span of evidence for the *marzēāh*, permits the interpretation: “give them symposium wine,” the best wine, not the worst and cheapest.

An extended treatment of connected issues in understanding the phrase from Amos treated here, in its immediate context and within the whole book, would be desirable if this study were intended to be a thorough treatment of Amos 2:8. The detail discussed, however, may by itself suffice to make the principal point announced at the outset, namely, that there are two modes of use of Palmyrene Aramaic evidence. Amos 2:8 may exemplify the first possibility, it may be, as the present writer proposes, a case where Palmyrene Aramaic evidence is decisive for understanding a biblical locution. But failing that, it would show that consultation of Palmyrene evidence retains a value of a different sort. That is, it is illuminating and interesting to read the line in Amos “documentis antiquis illustrate,” with Palmyrene Aramaic passages at hand.

30. Aharoni, *K'tōbōt ʿarād*, p. 14.

31. Aharoni cites a translation by W. F. Albright, “serve the wine in punch bowls.”

Palmyrene Aramaic Inscriptions and the Bible

The Aramaic inscriptions from Palmyra are a sizable corpus of ancient texts which have at times been employed with profit for the interpretation and illumination of biblical texts, and which continue to constitute a valuable resource. A more detailed exposition of this assertion is given in this author's "Palmyrene Aramaic Inscriptions and the [Old Testament], especially Amos 2:8,"¹ which may be consulted as the introduction to this article, a series of three notes continuing this general topic, touching: (A) the name *yhwh* 'lhym in Genesis 2-3; (B) Abraham's purchase of tomb property, and (C) the biblical Hebrew terms for "goddess."²

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1. *ZAH* 8 (1995) 55-62. [Editor's note: This article is republished in this volume as Chapter 17. In the citation provided above, Hillers erroneously referred to the title of the previous publication as "Palmyrene Aramaic Inscriptions and the Bible, especially Amos 2:8"; the error is corrected here.]

2. Abbreviations used: *BS III* = C. Dunant, *Le sanctuaire de Baalshamin à Palmyre: Vol. III: Les inscriptions*, Bibliotheca Helvetica Romana (Rome: Institut Suisse de Rome, 1971); *CIS* always refers to one part of *Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum: Pars secunda, Tomus III: Inscriptiones palmyrenae*; *Inv* = *Inventaire des inscriptions de Palmyre* (Fascicles 1-12, various editors and publishers, since 1930); *NRSV* = *New Revised Standard Version*; *NJV* = *New Jewish Version*, i.e. *Tanakh—The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1988); *PAT* = D. Hillers and E. Cusini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1996); *RSP* = M. Gawlikowski, *Recueil d'inscriptions palmyréniennes provenant de fouilles syriennes et polonaises récentes à Palmyre* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale and C. Klincksieck, 1974); *RTP* = H. Ingholt, H. Seyrig, and J. Starcky, *Recueil des tessères de Palmyre*, Institut Français d'Archéologie de Beyrouth. Bibliothèque archéologique et historique (Paris: Geuthner, 1955).

A. Genesis 2–3 “The God Yahweh and the Naked Couple”

Since its beginning, Pentateuchal criticism, with its abandonment of the idea of authorship by Moses in favor of a discrimination of various sources (of later date), has depended heavily on the pattern of the names for the deity in the first five books of the canon. A small, but troublesome anomaly in the more or less clear pattern of divine names that can be observed is the combination of two names usually kept apart, *yhwh* and *ʾlhym*. This dual title *yhwh ʾlhym* is prominent in the first narrative portion, the creation and paradise story of Genesis 2 and 3. There is good reason to think that this is a passage that comes from the “Yahwist,” one of the principal sources distinguished by critics. So scholars have had to seek some kind of explanation for the unusual combination, since elsewhere the “Yahwist” uses just the so-called Tetragrammaton.

The problem remains unresolved in the sense that after more than a century of Pentateuchal source-criticism, there is no agreed-on explanation. For a delineation of the issues involved I have profited much from the concise but thorough and judicious survey by S. Japhet.³ The distribution of the phrase *yhwh ʾlhym* in the Bible is “distinctive,” in Japhet’s term. Ignoring the predictable textual variations found in various manuscripts and editions, which are not numerous or serious, and on which one may consult Japhet’s detailed treatment, *yhwh ʾlhym* (or *hʾlhym*) is found twenty times in the “Yahwistic” Eden story, twelve times in Chronicles, and nine times elsewhere, including the one other occurrence in the Pentateuch, Exodus 9:30. Usually the word *ʾlhym* is without the article, but we find *yhwh hʾlhym* in 1 Chron 22:1, 19; 2 Chron 32:16.

It is impossible, and I hope unnecessary for the present purpose, to review all the explanations given by scholars for the unusual combination. Probably very much in the minority are those who, like Cassuto, have tried to explain the combination of names as conveying a particular, definable sense.⁴ In Cassuto’s case, his discussion of the divine names in this passage is only part of his pervasive rejection of source criticism; throughout the Pentateuch he wishes to find not a different source, but a different religious sense, which is signaled by the choice of *yhwh* or *ʾlhym*. Unless, then, one would wish to follow his major contention, his explanation of *yhwh ʾlhym* in Genesis 2 and 3 cannot be persuasive.

3. *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought*, Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums 9, transl. A. Barber (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1989) especially the section “YHWH Elohim,” pp. 37–41. Another useful summary is that of C. Westermann, *Genesis*, BK I/1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1974) 270–71.

4. U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1961).

This possibility having, then, been generally rejected, many scholars have been led to explain the double name as in one way or another the result of a process of editing, either in that sources have been combined, or that a Yahwistic source has suffered the addition, over time, of the name *ʾlhym* after the original Tetragrammaton.

A minor offshoot, something of an oddity, is represented by Speiser, who, following Tur-Sinai, wished to compare use of *ʾlhym* here to use of the determinative *preceding* (not following) divine names in cuneiform writing. This is ingenious, but otherwise seems to me to have merit perhaps only in this, that as a desperate resort it points to the inadequacy of previous explanations.⁵

Before proceeding to the possible contribution of epigraphic evidence, note that Japhet, who discusses *yhwʾ ʾlhym* in the context of a broader review titled “The Names of God,” does not find that this double title is somehow inauthentic; instead she concludes: “The usage in Chronicles may indicate that the epithet was no innovation.”⁶ This restrained judgment contrasts favorably with the sweeping and somewhat incautious pessimism of Westermann’s initial summary statement: “The designation of God as *yhwʾ ʾlhym* presents considerable difficulties, beginning with how to explain the grammar of the combination and running on to the question of authorship.”⁷

The contribution which Palmyrene texts offer to this discussion is this: a combination such as “the god Yahweh,” *yhwʾ ʾlhym*, is well-attested in texts of considerable antiquity, from Palmyra and elsewhere. At Palmyra, there are abundant examples following the pattern: “(Divine Name), the god.” This occurs in both singular, and (after two or more divine names) in plural. Thus: *lbʾlsmn ʾlhʾ* “to Baalshamin, the god” or “to the god Baalshamin”;⁸ *lhrtʾ wlnny wlršp ʾlhyʾ* “to Herta and Nanay and Reshef, the gods.”⁹ Dozens of examples could be added.

5. Prof. William Hallo, the distinguished Assyriologist, in oral comment on this paper, called my attention to ambiguities and peculiarities in the interpretation of the DINGIR sign, ordinarily a determinative, in ancient Akkadian royal titles and elsewhere. These problems are best pursued by Assyriologists, and seem to me to constitute at most a possible qualification of what is said in this paragraph.

6. Japhet, *Ideology*, 41.

7. Westermann, *Genesis*, 270: “Die Gottesbezeichnung *yhwʾ ʾlhym* bietet erhebliche Schwierigkeiten, angefangen von dem grammatischen Verständnis der Zusammensetzung bis hin zu der Frage des Autors.”

8. *BS III* 18:3 = *PAT* 0174:3.

9. J. Cantineau, “Tadmorea (suite),” *Syr* 17 (1936) 267–355; p. 268, text no. 17 line 6.

The Aramaic inscriptions from Hatra, which belong to the same major phase of Aramaic as Palmyrene, contribute examples as well. To cite but one in extenso: *dkyr wbyrk qdm bšmyn ʾlhʾ* “May PN be remembered and blessed before Baashamin the god.”¹⁰ From approximately the same period is the Old Syriac inscription from Edessa, a dedication of a statue, with this phrase *lsyn ʾlhʾ* “for Sin, the god.”¹¹

Such a locution is even older than appears from these “Middle Aramaic” texts, and by curious chance occurs also with the name *yhw* (presumably pronounced approximately *yāhû*), an alternate form of *yhwḥ*; this shorter form is familiar from use in biblical personal names such as *yirmēyāhû* (Jeremiah). In the famous appeal by the Jews of Elephantine, after the destruction of their temple, we find not only the name of an Egyptian deity written *ḥnwḅ ʾlhʾ* “Khnum, the god” but also, several times, *yhw ʾlhʾ* “Yahu, the god”; the dual name, or combination of name and title, occurs in another text as well.¹²

These phrases found in extra-biblical Aramaic texts are, in my opinion, the formal equivalent of *yhwḥ ʾlḥym* in spite of a difference in detail, that is, that in the Aramaic form we regularly have the article following the noun “god,” whereas more commonly in the Bible one finds the form *ʾlḥym*, without the definite article. Bearing in mind, at the outset, that the use of the “status determinatus” of Aramaic is not completely equivalent to use of the article in biblical Hebrew,¹³ it is significant that the use of *ʾlḥym* or *hʾlḥym* in the Bible, where this is both a common noun and at other times a proper name, a divine name, presents a situation that is not neatly compartmentalized; there is inconsistency in use with or without the article, or, to put it another way, these categories overlap. In this connection it is particularly significant that *yhwḥ hʾlḥym*, with article, *does* occur in the passages noted already by Japhet in her discussion and cited above: 1 Chron 22:1, 19; 2 Chron 32:16. It is interesting

10. B. Aggoula, *Inventaire des inscriptions hatréennes*, Institut Français d’archéologie du proche-orient, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique tome CXXXIX (Paris: Geuthner, 1991), pp. 18–19, no. 23 line 1; cf. also pp. 21–22, no. 26 line 2; pp. 58–59, no. 82 lines 3–4. Numbers of the edition of Vattioni are, for the texts cited above, the same; see F. Vattioni, *Le iscrizioni di atra*, Istituto orientale di Napoli, Supplemento n. 28 agli Annali, vol. 41 (1981), fasc. 3.

11. Conveniently available in the collection of H. J. W. Drijvers, *Old-Syriac (Edessian) inscriptions* (Leyden, Brill, 1972); phrase cited is p. 10, no. 14 line 3.

12. B. Porten and A. Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt: Newly Copied, Edited and Translated into Hebrew and English*, Vol 1: *Letters* (Jerusalem; Hebrew University, 1986); texts cited here are A4.7 (= Cowley 30) line 5; lines 6, 24, 26; and A4.10 (= Cowley 33) line 8.

13. It is possibly relevant that the Greek usually translates *yhwḥ ʾlḥym* by *kyrios ho theos*, with the article.

to note that in 1 Chron 22:1 the full phrase is: *byt yhw h'lym . . . wmbh l'lh lysr'l* “the house (i.e. temple) of YHWH the god . . . and altar for offerings, of Israel”; compare Elephantine *'gwr' zy yhw 'lh'*, “the temple of Yahu, the god” and the common occurrence in Palmyrene of *DN* (Name of deity) *'lh'* “DN, the god,” in connection with dedications of shrines and altars.¹⁴ To cite one example in full: *'wt' 'ln qrbw PN wPN lb'šmn 'lh'* “PN and PN offered these altars to Baalshamin, the god” (*BS III* 24 = *PAT* 0180:1-3).

In addition to the three biblical passages cited above as attesting the combination *yhw h'lym* there are three others which deserve citation. Japhet did not overlook these, but lists them only in a footnote; in her opinion these three (1 Sam 6:20; Neh 8:6; 9:7) are not the same as her three sure examples, but rather show use of *yhw 'lym* as what she calls “a general term.”¹⁵ But such a designation is obviously vague in the extreme as a linguistic description. Instead, these passages confirm and then extend the overlap of biblical and extra-biblical usage. Nehemiah 9:7 is just *'attāh hū' yhw hā'ēlōhīm* “You are the LORD God” in the traditional English rendering; in that advanced here: “You are the god Yahweh.” Neh 8:6 adds an epithet: “Ezra blessed *yhw hā'ēlōhīm hag-gādōl* Yahweh, the great god.” Compare the inscriptional use of the extended pattern: 1) Deity Name, 2) *'lh'* and 3) epithet, as *šdrp' 'lh' ṭb'* “to Shadrappa, the good god” (*CIS* 3972:3 = *PAT* 0318) or *'zyzw 'lh' ṭb' wrhmn'* (*CIS* 3974:2-3 = *PAT* 0320) “. . . Azizu, the good and merciful god.” Many, many more could be cited. Semantically close to the *yhw hā'ēlōhīm hag-gādōl* of Neh 8:6 is *bl 'lh' rb'* “Bel, the great god” in a Palmyrene inscription (J. Cantineau, “Tadmorea,” *Syr* 14 [1933] p. 177 line 4 [Tad 3] = *PAT* 2756).

In conclusion, the biblical combination *yhw 'lym* is not grammatically difficult, and not artificial, in the sense that it is a mechanical or unidiomatic creation that came about in the course of redaction or transmission of the texts where it stands. In a given instance, of course, its presence in the text may indeed result from deliberate redaction, but even if that is sometimes the case, the redactors resorted to a genuine, existing form of divine title, one which is attested in documents of considerable antiquity.

In my opinion, the use of *yhw 'lym* in the creation and paradise story of the Yahwist is motivated; it reflects an intention or need on

14. *BS III* 1 = *PAT* 0158; *BS III* 3 = *PAT* 0160; *BS III* 10 = *PAT* 0167; *BS III* 18 = *PAT* 0174; *BS III* 24 = *PAT* 0180; *CIS* 3983 = *PAT* 0329, and so on—many other instances could be cited.

15. Japhet, *Ideology*, 38, note 88, citing M. Segal, *Tarbiz* 9 (1937-38) 129 note 1.

the part of the original narrator. We may suppose that this story-teller shared the tradition, reflected in the inscriptions, of frequently adding an identifier “(the) god” after the name of a deity. Where not just custom, in a polytheistic world this would have been partly reverential, and partly parallel, for divine names, to the inclusion of an identifier after a human name, e.g. “So-and-so, the butcher”—which approaches being a surname, as “So-and-so Butcher.”¹⁶ This practise would also have served to clarify matters in a world which men shared with gods to the extent that men and gods occasionally even had the same names.¹⁷

We may also reasonably suppose that the repeated and concentrated use of *yhw* *ʾlhym* in Genesis 2–3 is partly due to the work of transmitters and editors of the text, with motives having to do with fitting this story with the foregoing, with the rest of Genesis, and indeed, with Israelite religion. I would not wish to maintain that *every* recurrence of the term is original. But if provisionally we may accept the insight that the sense started out as “the god Yahweh,” we may proceed to a rereading of the story.

For readers not acquainted with that line of study which connects the myth of Genesis 2–3 to other Near Eastern myths, I wish to emphasize that by no means all of what is stated in the following pages is new. On the contrary, most of it is prepared for in the detailed studies of others. Building on these, my brief retelling, foregoing elaborate foot-noting, is meant to stress an angle of approach opened by the new evidence introduced in this essay. The reader will understand, too, that I hope only to make a sensible contribution to an ongoing conversation about this story, and have no illusions about having the the final word on the subject!

It seems useful to provide at the outset a summary of the way the story will be read. The garden is the primordial garden of the gods, especially of Yahweh. Man is made to work there, to spare the gods the labor. Man is created mortal, from the start. The snake tells the truth and

16. In the Palmyrene inscriptions, a name may of course be followed by a whole series of patronymics, but in not a few cases a name is followed, not by a patronymic, but by a common noun, providing either a gentilic, a military rank, a civic or religious title, or the name of a profession. Examples of these categories, which sometimes overlap, are: *PN tdmwryʾ qstʾ* “PN, the Palmyrene, the archer”; similarly: *PN qstʾ*; *PN hptyn* “PN, centurion’s servant”; *PN grmtws* “PN, the scribe”; *PN ʾpklʾ dy ʿzyzw ʾlhʾ* “PN, apkalla (a kind of priest) of the god Azizu”; *PN krwzʾ* “PN, the herald”; *PN ʾmnʾ* “PN, the craftsman”; *PN tḅh* “the butcher (or: cook)”; *PN mksʾ* “PN, the tax-collector.” For precise references, see the “Glossary” in PAT.

17. J. Teixidor, “Remarques sur l’onomastique palmyrénienne,” *Studi epigrafici e linguistici* 8 (1991) 213–23, especially 217–18.

the god Yahweh lies. The story has nothing much to do with sex, and a lot to do with clothing. The eating of the fruit represents a gain, but an ambiguous one, and the false step which incurs the fear of the god Yahweh and expulsion from the garden is a mutual step by man and woman, with the order of action and dramatis personae: snake, woman, man dictated by the narrative desire to reach a climax, culminating in the curse on the man.

The garden is the primordial garden of the gods. The geography is mythical, with the source of all earthly rivers coming from the midst of the garden, giving rise to the four great rivers of the world. The puzzling mention of the gold and precious substances in connection with one river is an allusion to a theme that is prominent in the description of “Eden, the garden of the gods,” (Hebrew: *bē‘eden gan ‘elôhîm*) in Ezekiel 28:18, part of a chapter as fascinating as it is textually and linguistically difficult.¹⁸

In the garden of the god Yahweh, the first man is set to work. The presupposition is an original situation like that plaintively depicted at the start of Atra-hasis: “When the gods like men bore the work and suffered the toil.”¹⁹ Everything in the story implies that man is made mortal, subject to death: he is made out of the ground, and the story climaxes in a revelation of what he is, not a change of what he is: “For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” *kî ‘āpār ‘attāh wē‘el ‘āpār tāšûb*. Compare Job 1:21: “Naked I came out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there.” “Dust” is in the scriptures practically an unequivocal metaphor for death.²⁰

18. The Hebrew text seems to say that the primordial man of Ezekiel lives “on the holy mountain” amidst what are called (translating etymologically) “stones of fire” (*‘abnê ‘eš*—perhaps the sense is “artificial gems”; cf. Ugaritic *abn šrp*). The phrase *gan hā‘elôhîm* has a tantalizing echo in a grammatically puzzling Palmyrene reference to a sanctuary as *gnt’ ‘līm* (*BS III* 45:12). The Aramaic is: *w’hd bgnt’ ‘lym* “and one in the sacred garden” and whatever the grammar of that Aramaic phrase may be, some such translation is justified by the Greek version of the same inscription: [*e*]n hierōi alsei “in the sacred grove”; see also J. T. Milik, *Dédicaces faites par des dieux (Palmyre, Hatra, Tyr) et des thiasés sémitiques à l’époque romaine*, Recherches d’épigraphie proche-orientale I (Paris: Geuthner, 1972) 4–8; Milik restores *gnt[’ ‘lym]* in another Palmyrene text, *Inv* 11 80:6 = *PAT* 1505; note also *RSP* 162:4 *gnt’ dy mtq[đšt’]* “the conse[crated(?) garden” = *PAT* 1944.

19. W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Atra-ḥasis, The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969). The translation of Lambert and Millard for Tab I i lines 1–2 is given above; the Akkadian is: *i-nu-ma i-lu a-wi-lum ub-lu du-ul-lu is-bi-lu šu-up-ši-[i]k-ka*.

20. See D. Hillers, “Dust: Some Aspects of Old Testament Imagery,” in *Love and Death in the Ancient Near East*, edd. J. Marks and R.M. Good (Guilford, Conn.: Four Quarters, 1987 [Marvin Pope volume]) 105–9.

The snake tells the truth throughout: the man and woman do not die, and their eyes are opened; they become like gods in their knowledge and consciousness. For readers with any shred of orthodoxy left in them, whether Christian or Jewish, or even with a cherished memory of what was learned in religious instruction, it may be disconcerting to confront the corollary: the god Yahweh lied when he said they would die, and concealed the truth about the real effect of the fruit of the forbidden tree. This necessary conclusion is if not upsetting then apt to create suspicion also for readers of this ancient sacred book who, free of any theological concern, will ask whether such a story about the god of ancient Israel is thinkable within their sacred literature?

It is well to recall, with such a concern in mind, that there are other rather appalling statements about Yahweh in the Bible. In these chapters, Genesis 2 and 3, we are within a collection of tales which have a special character. O. Eissfeldt separated it from other Pentateuchal strands, calling it "L," for "Laienquelle," the "Lay source," which he deems "particularly crude and archaic." This is a cycle where (in the Tower of Babel story) "Yahweh is anxious about his power."²¹ J. Goldin, the well-known professor of Midrash, once summed up for me, in conversation, the aim of midrash as being: ". . . to domesticate the god of Israel." In Genesis 2–3 we meet a god who is not so domesticated.

The story has much to do with being clothed as opposed to being naked. The first state of man is not so much one of innocence as of ignorance. His nakedness is a sign that he is like the other animals. Nudity in this story is not in the first place a symbol of a state of sexual development or experience. He was naked because he did not know any better—what has passed so long as the story of "the Fall" is the story of a rise.

The god Yahweh himself is not a male Greek god, proud in the magnificence of his human torso. This is a Near Eastern god, and like kings and important people, the gods (with certain exceptions) wear clothes. Thus we must conceive of Yahweh as walking in his garden to enjoy the cool part of the day, lightly clothed perhaps, but not naked!

Even if we did not have all the artistic depictions of gods recovered by archaeology, we would reach the same end through textual evidence within the Bible. In Isaiah 6, the "train" of God's robe "fills the temple." In the late book Daniel, the Ancient of Days wears "clothing as white as snow" (Dan 7:9). On the opposite side, there was an abhorrence of exposure within ancient Israel, reflected often in the law codes and in the prophets. We recall, too, the Gilgamesh epic, where an important part of the civilizing process for the savage-man, Enkidu, was (in the

21. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, trans. P. R. Ackroyd (New York: Harper & Row, c. 1965) 194–99.

Old Babylonian version) getting some clothes. The prostitute “pulled off (her) clothing; With one (piece) she clothed him.”²²

Not incidentally, attention to the origin of an important feature of human society, in this case clothing, is continued in other parts of the primordial story. In the line of Cain we have a technogony of some detail. Already in these preceding chapters we may detect the view that the origin of clothing preceded the first domestication of animals, metallurgy, and music.²³

If we reread the story from 2:25–3:11, we note how prominent the theme “naked vs. clothed” is, culminating in the accusing question of the angry god who stands before the naked couple: “Who told you that you were naked?”

I do not wish to limit the implications of Genesis 2 and 3. It may be suggestive of all kinds of things, including sex. But, one may argue, it is not sexuality that set man apart from the gods or animals. Everything and everyone had sex, from beasts to gods, in polytheistic conceptions of the world. This turns up, of course, in early stories of Genesis, where we read that the gods, not content with their own kind, so to speak, had intercourse with human women: “. . . the gods saw that the human women were good-looking, and took as wives anyone they chose” (Genesis 6:1 and especially 4).

Like Barr, I hold that a main focus of the story is how man lost a chance for immortality by becoming like a god.²⁴ Another major feature, the one stressed here, is that the gain and loss are summed up in the contrast “naked” as opposed to “clothed.” Since the tale is about origins, about an event at the beginning, we are right to read it as in-

22. The translation is that of E. A. Speiser, in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. J. B. Pritchard (Princeton: Princeton University, 1955) 77 lines 27–28.

23. See R. Oden, Jr., “Grace or Status? Yahweh’s Clothing of the First Humans,” *The Bible without Theology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, c. 1987) 96, on the invention of clothing as part of a technogony. Oden aptly compares the *Phoenician History* of Philo of Byblos, where in a section on the development of the arts of civilization, a culture hero is said to have discovered skin clothing. The whole essay (92–105) is worth consulting on the detail of the clothing of Adam and Eve in the exegetical tradition (I am grateful to Prof. Kyle McCarter for calling my attention to Oden’s work). Focused on this detail, Oden reaches a conclusion opposite to my own: the clothing “is an authoritative marking of the pair as beings who belong to a sphere distinct from the divine.”

24. J. Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality* (Minneapolis: Fortress, c. 1992) 66. Though I agree with Barr’s principal thesis, a smile is irresistible when Barr verges on speculation about what we might call the “private life of Adam and Eve” in saying: “In my judgment it is far more natural to understand that the human pair did make love in the Garden of Eden.”

tended to speak, in a sense, of universals of human life; yet we must not overlook that the story is culturally determined, that here a Near Eastern or Israelite attitude toward the naked body shapes the telling.

My reading of the Garden of Eden story is, at least in intention, independent of the question of dating of the story, or of source-critical considerations, that is, of the JEDP terminology that is the stock in trade of students of the Pentateuch. Ideally, reading and comprehension precedes such questions. But since, in my opinion, the reading advanced here turns out to have implications for pentateuchal origins, let me sketch an opinion on this subject.

Some contemporaries think that the origin of the earliest sources of the Pentateuch was in a national “epic,” in the sense of an extensive poetic composition from very early in Israel’s history as a people. There is a certain *a priori* plausibility in some form of such a view, since verse was the common and socially prized medium for long and unified narrative. Moreover, since 1930 we have possessed impressive examples of such narrative poems in the Late Bronze epics from Ugarit. It is also common for scholars to regard certain poems, such as the Song of Deborah and some others, as the very earliest elements in the Bible. The general view is expressed in the title of F. Cross’s *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* and in its content;²⁵ the continuity of biblical narrative and an earlier poetic narrative form is stressed in S. Parker’s treatment of Ugaritic stories under the title *The Pre-biblical Narrative Tradition*.²⁶

The problem is that the stories of Genesis, notably those which deal with the primeval time, are nothing like that: they are typically short, folk-like, and not notably unified, and are, astonishingly, prose. Whenever or however it happened, it is more plausible to suppose that a popular narrative form, the brief prose tale, underwent a process of collection and elevation to higher status, through incorporation into the body of literary works that the Israelite elite thought worth preservation and study. If something like that happened, as I suppose it did, the eventual canonization did not mean that the “milk of the word” was homogenized. The tales were not reduced to an insipid orthodoxy.

B. Abraham’s Purchase of Tomb Property

The tale of how Abraham bought a burial-place for Sarah at Machpelah (Gen 23) is clear enough so that modern readers can follow it, and even appreciate its charm. Even so, close students of Genesis have not

25. *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1973).

26. *The Pre-biblical Narrative Tradition: Essays on the Ugaritic Poems Keret and Aqhat* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989).

been wrong in perceiving problems in this account. The very expansiveness and richness of detail leads to questions, at least for the reader who is separated from the social and historical context in which the story was written. Why are we given so much detail here, and what do the individual elements mean? Why does Abraham behave and speak in just the way he does, and what are the motives of the “Hittites” with whom he deals?

In expounding the story of this legal transaction, commentators have done their best to exploit what is now known of ancient Near Eastern law. In 1953, an important phase in these researches was initiated by M. Lehmann, who attempted to show that the background of the story was to be sought in ancient Hittite law.²⁷ In the time since, this hypothesis has called forth responses and objections from other students of ancient law, who by now have brought evidence contesting, and refuting Lehmann’s claim that there is some specific link between the legal situation presupposed by Gen 23 and Hittite law. Where these scholars have advanced a positive view of their own, it has been in favor of seeing a resemblance between elements in Gen 23 and the Neo-Babylonian “dialogue” document of sale.²⁸ In some cases, a dominant interest of students of legal aspects of the chapter has been historical rather than expository, that is, the problem of the “Patriarchal Period” or the historicity of the Abraham has been the point at issue, so that the legal background is discussed, but not fully exploited for a reading of the narrative.²⁹

The early study (1971) by R. Westbrook, reprinted unchanged as chapter one of his *Property and Family in Biblical Law* of 1991, deserves separate mention at this point, less perhaps for its conclusions than for the wealth of suggestive detail and observation it contains.³⁰ Westbrook concedes that there is a good deal to be said for the “dialogue document” theory, but prefers to see in the narrative the pattern of a

27. “Abraham’s Purchase of Machpelah and Hittite Law,” *BASOR* no. 129 (Aug., 1953) 15–18.

28. Notable contributions to the discussion are H. Petschow, “Die neubabylonische Zwiesgesprächsurkunde und Genesis 23,” *JCS* 19 (1965) 103–20, and G. Tucker, “The Legal Background of Genesis 23,” *JBL* 85 (1966) 77–84. For further bibliographic detail, see C. Westermann, *Genesis*, BK I/2 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1974) 455–56, with references also to previous bibliographic sections of the commentary.

29. Thus notably J. van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University, 1975) 98–101; the historical problem is foremost also in other treatments.

30. *Property and the Family in Biblical Law*, JSOT Supplement Series 113 (1991) 24–35, reprinted from *Israel Law Review* 6 (1971) 209–25.

“double transfer” legal device characteristic of legal practice in certain areas during the second-millennium B.C.E. His interest is, in the end, in the date of the narrative and the historical background presupposed. In my opinion, the evidence Westbrook advances, from Ugarit and elsewhere, is unconvincing, and the sensible principle he announces: “It is not to be expected that the narrative form of Genesis 23 . . . will conform to the tight juristic dialogue document” (p. 31) seems to undercut much in his own argument.

The outcome of this body of intense research is somewhat disappointing for the reader of Gen 23, for it seems that little more than a broad generalization is justified. Westermann’s summary, which seems to me fair enough, is this: the extra-biblical parallels show that the sale in Gen 23 is depicted in a way that is in general consonant with both the usages and the atmosphere of ancient Near Eastern legal transactions, but that one should not think that any specific model was followed.³¹ Modern commentators, then, may seem to have no better recourse than some form of the old explanation, that this story of protracted negotiations contains a good deal of exaggerated “oriental” courtesy.

The inscriptions from tombs at Palmyra introduce fresh evidence to the discussion, both because they supply details of legal terminology and because they deal specifically with the making of tombs and the sale of tomb property. In the following discussion I draw on the researches of Dr. E. Cussini, summed up in “The Aramaic Law of Sale and the Cuneiform Legal Tradition.”³² I am indebted to this work both as a collection and analysis of Near Eastern legal materials, and as a stimulus for my reconsideration of Gen 23. Responsibility for the conclusions I draw about biblical matters is, of course, my own.

Acquisition of a piece of property is central to the narrative in Genesis 23.³³ Many parallels in detail to ancient sale-documents confirm this, as the work of previous students of the subject shows.

The corpus of Aramaic inscriptions and Aramaic-Greek bilinguals from Palmyra provides a considerable number of texts that give information on the peculiar legal considerations involved in building a tomb

31. Westermann, *Genesis*, 455–56.

32. Ph.D. dissertation, The Johns Hopkins University, 1992.

33. The assertion that *ʾhzh* here means something other than transfer of land, and refers instead only to a right to use of land, deserves mention, but does not seem to be based on extensive consideration of Near Eastern legal evidence; this is the view of G. Gerlemann, “Nutzrecht und Wohnrecht: Zur Bedeutung von אֲחֻזָּה and נִזְחֻלָּה,” *ZAW* 89 (1977) 313–25. A statement such as this about Abraham: “Er wird durch den Handel mit den Leuten von Hebron kein kanaanäischer Grundstückbesitzer” is perhaps provocative, but does not seem to be demonstrated.

and in selling tomb property.³⁴ This, rather than the broader topic of sale of real property, is central to understanding of the biblical narrative. The point not to be missed in Gen 23 is that Abraham wants, and finally gets, “tomb property” (*ʔhzt qbr*).

In general, the history of various societies ancient and modern leads us to expect that burial places may be a special kind of property. The truth of the American proverbial dictum: “As difficult as moving a cemetery” is confirmed repeatedly, whenever a city of our time feels the need to make some other use of what has been a burial ground. This arises from strongly held notions of sacredness and permanence associated with burial of the dead. As an illustration from ancient times (not related to Palmyrene practice!), in Roman legal collections, such as the Institutes of Justinian, one finds that certain things belong to no one (*nullius autem sunt res*):—*res sacrae et religiosae et sanctae*, and that one way of making a place “religiosum,” that is, sacred to the gods of the netherworld, is by burying a corpse in it.³⁵ In actual practice, as epigraphic evidence shows, the Romans did buy and sell property which was “religiosum” through burial, but judging from the legal statements, this kind of transaction seems to have been somewhat irregular, a gray area, where economic necessity was in conflict with important social and religious tenets.³⁶

At Palmyra, the texts having to do with the foundation, that is, creation of tombs, use terms in part comparable to conventional legal terminology such as the following: the tomb is “made” and “built” by an individual, at his expense, for himself and his descendants (sometimes specifically restricted to male descendants), “forever.” However, the special status of the tomb, in the intention of the creator, is marked in some cases by use of the verb “consecrate,” either of part of the tomb or of all

34. In addition to Cussini’s “Aramaic Law of Sale,” note that a convenient ordered collection of relevant texts, under the main categories “Fondation” and “Cession,” follows the detailed treatment of Palmyrene tombs in M. Gawlikowski, *Monuments funéraires de Palmyre*, Travaux du Centre d’archéologie méditerranéenne de l’Académie Polonaise des Sciences, 9 (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe [PWN—Editions Scientifiques de Pologne], 1970).

35. J. A. C. Thomas, *The Institutes of Justinian: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Cape Town: Juta, 1975) citations from 65–66; Thomas writes (75): “Res religiosae were, in pagan times, those of the di manes, at all times, in effect, sepulchres and burial places.” Cf. Francis de Zulueta, *The Institutes of Gaius*, Part I (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946) Book II, 2, 4–9.

36. See J. Crook, *Law and Life of Rome* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1967; paperback ed. 1984) especially 133–38, on the ambiguities and contradictions concerning *sepulchra*.

of it,³⁷ and conversely, unused niches are sometimes designated as “profane, unconsecrated” (*šhymʿ*).³⁸ There are sometimes explicit provisions against any future alienation of the tomb.³⁹ The special religious conception of a tomb is indicated explicitly in one case by a curse on any person who “opens” the burial; the protection of the tomb from violation in this way was widespread in antiquity, and was presumably widespread at Palmyra. Even construction of the temple to Baalshamin was interrupted for a time by encounter of an old tomb. This seems to account for the special inscription honoring an individual who “opened” the tomb and thus, we may deduce, enabled work to proceed.⁴⁰ Moreover, in the grave of one Abdastor a curse is invoked against anyone who sells (*zbn*) something or other appertaining to the tomb (the specific sense of the term used, *ʿrb*, is obscure; if it does not refer to a part of the property, perhaps the prohibition is against any legal transaction concerning the tomb, giving it as security).⁴¹

From the same tombs at Palmyra comes abundant evidence that, pressed by necessity in years after the construction of an elaborate

37. See for example [*qbr*]ʿ *dnh bnʿ wʿqdš PN* “PN built and consecrated this [tomb]” *CIS* 4162:1, Gk *aphierōsen* = *PAT* 0514; cf. the bilingual *CIS* 4214:1 = *PAT* 0570 with *ʿqdšt* “I consecrated” // Greek *aphierōsa*; *ʿksdrʿ mqlbʿ* . . . *mqdš* “the exedra opposite . . . is consecrated,” H. Ingholt, “Two Unpublished Tombs from the Southwest Necropolis of Palmyra, Syria,” *Near Eastern Numismatics, Iconography, Epigraphy and History: Studies in Honor of George C. Miles*, ed. D. K. Kouymjian (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1974) p. 38 line 2 = *PAT* 2727; *gwmhyn trn bryyn ymnyyn mqdšyn* “two outer consecrated niches on the right,” Ingholt, “Inscriptions and Sculptures from Palmyra II,” *Berytus* 5 (1938) p. 124 (21 II):2–3 = *PAT* 0095. As Prof. Gawlikowski pointed out to me (oral communication), the use of some form of *qdš* at Palmyra is not especially common, in view of the great number of burial inscriptions. All the same, the evidence cited is perhaps to establish that the notion of “consecration” was part of the conception of a proper burial-place.

38. Of about six or seven examples, I cite H. Ingholt, “Inscriptions and Sculptures from Palmyra I,” *Berytus* 3 (1935) 96:2–3 = *PAT* 0047: *šʿr ʿksdrʿ šhymʿ* “the rest of the unconsecrated exedra.”

39. Thus *CIS* 4214 = *PAT* 0570, *CIS* 4215 = *PAT* 0571.

40. *BS III* 60:2, 5 = *PAT* 0208.

41. The text is H. Ingholt, “Inscriptions and Sculptures from Palmyra II,” *Berytus* 5 (1938) p. 133 = *PAT* 0097; see also J. T. Milik, “Les papyrus araméens d’Hermoupolis et les cultes syro-phéniciens en Égypte perse,” *Biblica* 48 (1967) 550 and footnote 2: “gage, caution, hypothèque”; so also the definition in C.-F. Jean & J. Hoftijzer, *Dictionnaire des inscriptions sémitiques de l’Ouest* (Leiden: Brill, 1965), and in J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

family burial place, the heirs of the founder did after all sell parts of the tombs, also to those who were not relatives. The “cession” texts in the tombs, probably excerpts from fuller official archival texts, use enough of legal form to show that these sales were approximately on a level with transfer of any real property.⁴² Yet perhaps the frequent resort to terms other than *zbn* “to sell”—especially reference to “partnership”—is at times a legal fiction, betraying a sense that these sales required treatment as something of a circumvention of a different set of norms.

This body of evidence for the special status of an *ʔhzt qbr*, a tomb property, yields an improved understanding of the course of the narrative in Genesis 23. At the beginning, Abraham announces what he wants: tomb property. The Hittites, who understand the implications of his request, make a counter-offer: permission to bury his wife’s body in any of their tombs—generous and courteous, but less than what the patriarch is asking for. (The story presupposes that the Hittites have, already prepared, family tombs suited for multiple burials.) Abraham makes his desire still more explicit, the hypogeum (Hebrew *mʕrh*; Palmyrene *mʕrtʔ*) of Ephron and the ground around it, referring to “full price” (v. 9).⁴³ The counter-offer is again generous, this time grant of the land, but still short of what Abraham wants, which is a purchase with payment. Finally the terms are agreed on, the money is paid,⁴⁴ even its quality is described, and the hypogeum and the ground in which it was excavated passed legally (v. 17: *qm*) to Abraham, and he buried Sarah there. This last act resolves the situation set up at the beginning of the narrative, by the death of Sarah; at the same time, this is a consummation of the legal and social act; by carrying out the burial in the tomb Abraham has made it “consecrated,” and thus sealed its special status. Significantly, the legal term *qm* is repeated in the summary sentence (v. 20), and also the phrase I take to be central: “tomb property” (*ʔhzt qbr*).

42. See Cussini, “Aramaic Law of Sale,” for details.

43. On “full price” see Westbrook, *Property and the Family*, 25: “. . . the formula ‘to give for money’ exists as a standard expression for ‘to sell’ in Akkadian (*ana kaspim nadānum*) and almost certainly also in Hebrew, and a fortiori Abraham’s statement *bksp mlʔ ytnnh ly* in v. 9 can refer to nothing else. It recalls the formula *ana šimim gamrim* in contracts of sale in Akkadian and *bedamin gemarin* in the contracts of Bar Kokhba.”

44. Westbrook, *Property and the Family* (27–28) observes acutely: “It is noteworthy that many other passages in the Bible concerning purchase of property take care to mention that it was for a money price, even giving the exact price, although it is of no apparent significance for understanding the story. Of particular significance are two passages recounting the purchase of land from a pagan for the purpose of erecting a holy structure. In Gen. 33:19, Jacob buys land for a hundred *qšyth*. He intends to build an altar Moreover, *the land is to serve later as the grave for the bones of Joseph* . . . (emphasis mine, DRH).

We may sum up the outcome of introducing evidence from Palmyrene tomb inscriptions in this way. Genesis 23 is the story of how Abraham acquires a special kind of property, secured to him and his heirs both by religion and by law.

Not only the cosmogonic chapters of Genesis, but also much in the later chapters about the patriarchs is part of the primordial and creative period for Israelite society, where existing institutions and arrangements of life are grounded in an earlier order by charter stories.

Bronislaw Malinowski, a pioneer of modern anthropology, formulated in a classic way the idea that myth functions in society as a *charter* for the society's fundamental structures and institutions. Even though he focuses on only one aspect of myth, his words are cited here as indicating a valid way of conceiving the nature of Genesis 23, and of many other stories of the patriarchs.

Myth, as a statement of primeval reality which still lives in present-day life and as a justification by precedent, supplies a retrospective pattern of moral values, sociological order, and magical belief.

The function of myth, briefly, is to strengthen tradition and endow it with a greater value and prestige by tracing it back to a higher, better, more supernatural reality of initial events.⁴⁵

C. "Goddess" in Biblical Hebrew

In the lexicon of biblical Hebrew, for "god, deity" we have, most commonly, *ʾlhm*, but for "goddess" there is nothing generally recognized as a corresponding term. There are, however, various relevant words which come in for consideration in this connection: *ʾāšērāh* and *ʿāštōret* or plural *ʿāštārōt*. This note is intended to state at some length what the relevant Palmyrene evidence is for a term "goddess," and then to consider how several biblical passages are clarified when seen from this vantage-point. This, in turn, contributes to observations concerning certain other divine names in the Bible.

In Palmyrene Aramaic the Semitic name of an ancient goddess appears in a variety of phonetic realizations, reflecting a long and variegated religious and linguistic history. Thus as names of a deity or deities we find both *ʿštr* "Ashtart" and *ʿtrʿth* "Atargatis," deriving in different ways from older Northwest Semitic forms.⁴⁶ From Akkadian *ištar*

45. "Myth in Primitive Society," in *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1954; reprint of essay of 1926) 146.

46. For *ʿštr* see e.g. *lbl wlbʿšmn [wlʿglbw lwm]kbl wlʿštr wlnmsys wlʿrsw wlʿbgl ʿlhy tbyʿ [wskryʿ]* "for DN . . . and for Ashtart and for DN . . . , the good and generous gods" *Inv* 12 55:2-3 = *PAT* 1568; *lʿštr[t] ʿštrʿ tblʿ* "for Astarte, the good goddess," J. Cantineau, "Textes palmyréniens provenant de la fouille du temple

“Ishtar” we have in Palmyrene a somewhat uncertain attestation of a form derived from the Assyrian dialect $\text{ʔs}[t]r$ ⁴⁷ and several occurrences of ʔštr .⁴⁸ The phonetic value of š in this case is uncertain, but to judge from ordinary Palmyrene spelling, the letter probably reflects phonetic $[\text{š}]$ rather than $[\text{s}]$ (spelled with the ambiguous letter $\text{š}/\text{s}$).⁴⁹

As in Akkadian, so in Palmyrene the proper name ʔštr comes to be used also as a common noun meaning “goddess.” Use of ʔštr , etc., in the sense “goddess” is unmistakable especially when it follows the name of another deity and is modified by the adjective $\text{tb}ʔ$ “good,” as in $\text{l}^{\text{štr}}[\text{t}ʔ]$ $\text{ʔštr}ʔ \text{tb}ʔ$ “. . . to Astar[te], the good goddess . . .”⁵⁰ This is the feminine counterpart of a locution common in masculine form, used of male deities, thus $\text{lšdrp}ʔ \text{ʔlh}ʔ \text{tb}ʔ$ “. . . to Shadrapa, the good god . . .,”⁵¹ which occurs also in the plural: “in honor of DN and DN (this name is feminine: $\text{ʔlt} = \text{ʔAllat}$) and DN, the good gods . . .” $\text{ʔlhy}ʔ \text{tby}ʔ$.⁵²

The hypothetical $\text{*ʔlht}ʔ$ “goddess” would not be unexpected in Palmyrene; such a feminine counterpart to masculine $\text{ʔlh}ʔ$ “god” occurs, e.g., in approximately contemporary Nabataean Aramaic.⁵³ On the basis of present evidence we could set up a paradigm of this sort for Palmyrene:

m. sg.	‘god’	$\text{ʔlh}ʔ$
f. sg.	‘goddess’	$\text{ʔštr}ʔ / \text{*ʔlht}ʔ$
pl.	‘gods’	$\text{ʔlhy}n$ (abs.); $\text{ʔlhy}ʔ$ (emphatic)

de Bêl,” *Syr* 12 (1931) p. 134 (no. 13):2–3 = *PAT* 2751. On tr^{th} Atargatis see e.g. $\text{lmk}[\text{l}] \text{wgd} \text{tyny} \text{wl}^{\text{tr}^{\text{th}}} \text{ʔlh}[\text{y}ʔ] \text{tb}[\text{y}ʔ]$ “to DN and DN and to Atargatis, [the] good god[s]” *CIS* 3927:4–5 = *PAT* 0273.

47. On $\text{ʔstr}ʔ$, either Istar (variant of Ishtar, name of deity) or “goddess” (common noun) see $\text{ʔs}[t]rʔ$, *CIS* 3985:1 = *PAT* 0331 (see also Cantineau’s remarks to this text, *Inv* 6 1); the context is very broken, but the ending *aleph* (ʔ) suggests perhaps a common noun.

48. There is also a single occurrence of a divine name ʔštrbd , *RTP* 198 = *PAT* 2198; see note of A. Caquot, *RTP*, p. 181 and J. Hoftijzer, *Religio Aramaica: Godsdienstige Verschijnselen in Aramese Teksten*, MEOL, XVI (Leiden: Ex Oriente Lux, 1968) 45.

49. For this phenomenon, see Jean Cantineau, *Grammaire du palmyrénien épigraphique* (Cairo: Imprimerie de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1935) 41–43.

50. J. Cantineau, “Textes palmyréniens provenant de la fouille du temple de Bêl,” *Syr* 12 (1931) p. 134 (no. 13):3 = *PAT* 2751.

51. *CIS* 3972:3 = *PAT* 0318.

52. *CIS* 3955:7 = *PAT* 0301.

53. See e.g. M. Savignac, “Chronique: ‘Notes de voyage—Le sanctuaire d’Allat a Iram,’” *RB* 6 (1932) 405–22; inscription p. 411 line 1: $\text{d}ʔ \text{ʔlt} \text{ʔlht}ʔ \text{d}[\text{y}] \text{bšr}ʔ$ “This is Allat, goddess w[ho] is in Bosra” or “goddess of Bosra.”

Though the attestation within this Aramaic dialect of the sense “goddess” for a term that is also in use as a divine name, “Ishtar,” is clear, the phenomenon is scarcely singular or remarkable in itself; as noted, this semantic development is well-attested within Akkadian. It is not improbable to suppose that Akkadian has influenced Palmyrene usage in this instance, even though we must think of an inner-Aramaic development which had recourse to an originally foreign term to fill a slot in the paradigm, or replace a native word which had stood in that slot.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, the Palmyrene Aramaic evidence does make its own contribution. It provides evidence that a development from what was originally a divine name to a common noun “goddess” took place also in Northwest Semitic as well as in Akkadian. Hebrew dictionaries need not confine themselves to listing, under *‘āštorēt*, only Akkadian *ilāni u ištarāt*.⁵⁵

To turn to individual passages, the starting point will be 1 Samuel 7:3–4; from which discussion passes to Judges 3:7, drawing on the related verses Judges 2:11–13 and 10:6.

In 1 Sam 7, the prophet Samuel addresses the people, telling them: “If with your whole heart you would return to YHWH” *hāšīrū ʔet ʔēlohē han-nēkār mittōkēkem wēhā-‘āštārōt* “remove the foreign gods from your midst, and *hā-‘āštārōt*” (that is “the goddesses,” or: “the foreign goddesses”). This is repeated, in an interestingly different form, when the people carry out the command of the prophet (v. 4). “So the Israelites removed *ʔet-hab-bē‘ālīm wēʔet-hā-‘āštārōt* “the gods and goddesses.” These provisional translations are meant to summarize the point of view to be argued in the succeeding discussion.

Such translations as given here are not commonly accepted. A sample may suffice. Vulgate: *auferte deos alienos de medio vestri Baalim et Astaroth* (this involves a conflation of variants as well). *NRSV* (= *New Revised*

54. See S. Kaufman, *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic*, Assyriological Studies 19 (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1974) 60, where Akkadian influence is said to be likely, though not certain. Kaufman also cites, in brief, evidence for forms of *istra* “goddess” in Mandaic and Syriac. That the Palmyrene development is due to Akkadian influence is rendered especially probable by the phonetic phenomena in Palmyrene, where an inner-Aramaic development from **ttrt* would have resulted in **ttrt* (compare the commonly attested deity name *ttrh*) or, with Canaanite influence, the attested form *ʔstrt*. See also J. Teixidor, *The Pantheon of Palmyra*, Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l’empire romain (Leiden: Brill, 1979) 60–61.

55. Akkadian evidence is cited already in the Brown-Driver-Briggs *Lexicon (BDB)*. For Biblical Hebrew this lexicon notes that the name of the goddess Ashtoreth is used, not only as the name of a specific deity, but in plural *‘āštārōt* also “of various local goddesses”; in these cases it is usually paralleled by *ba‘al* in singular or plural.

Standard Version): “. . . put away the foreign gods and the Astartes from among you.” *NJV (New Jewish Version)*): “. . . put away the alien gods and the Ashtaroth from your midst.” Also *Today’s English Version (TEV)* and the *New International Version (NIV)* follow traditional lines. *Parola di Dio* (a recent Italian version) has: “gli idoli della dea Astarte e tutte le altre divinità” (reversing the order).

A spot check suggests that even recent commentaries are disappointing in this regard. Thus, to cite a recent full German work, the commentary of Stoebe: “. . . dann entfernt aus eurer Mitte die fremde Götzen . . .” The goddesses are banished altogether, as a later addition to the text.⁵⁶ In the extensive and recent Anchor Bible commentary on Samuel, McCarter, like Stoebe, is soon diverted into text-critical matters at this point. Basing his version on a Septuagint variant reading *ta alšē* “the groves,” he ends up with “. . . you must remove the foreign gods from among you, as well as the Asherim.”⁵⁷

Here, instead, is a point where Palmyrene evidence, together with Akkadian evidence long available and recognized in some fashion (as in *BDB*, see note 10 above), helps us recognize a biblical Hebrew idiom: “foreign gods and goddesses.” The construction of the phrase is of a common type, a construct chain with a compound first element, split (^ʔ*ēlohē han-nēkār* . . . *wēhāʿaštārôt*.), so that the *rectum* (*han-nēkār*) modifies both, but follows the first noun, while the second has the definite article. This could be reduced, without violence to Hebrew grammar, by omitting the modifier and the article; the resulting ^{*}*ēlohīm wēʿaštārôt* being the semantic equivalent of Akkadian *ilāni u ištarāt*.

Before turning to another passage, we may glean more from this context. In describing the fulfillment of this command, we have in the following verse (40) the alternate expression: “So Israel put away the foreign gods and goddesses” (*hab-bēʿālīm wēhāʿaštārôt*). The pair *bēʿālīm* . . . *ʿaštārôt* occurs several times in biblical Hebrew texts, but once again translators and commentators do not go far enough. *bēʿālīm* here, and probably in other cases, means “foreign gods”; it is the equivalent of ^ʔ*ēlohē han-nēkār* in the earlier verse. If it is not idle to speculate as to why the pairing *hab-bēʿālīm—hāʿaštārôt* is more common than ^ʔ*ēlohē han-nēkār* . . . *wēhāʿaštārôt* of v. 3, one might propose that since ^ʔ*ēlohīm* by itself may have the sense “god (of Israel), God,” there was a pressure within this semantic field for insertion of an alternate term in the masculine slot of the paradigm comprising terms for “foreign god”:

56. H.J. Stoebe, *Das Erste Buch Samuelis*, KAT (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1973) 167–68.

57. P. K. McCarter, Jr., *I Samuel*, AB (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1980) 140–41.

m. sg.	'god'	<i>ba'al</i> (e.g. Judges 2:13)
f. sg.	*'goddess'	* <i>štrt</i>
m. & common pl.	'gods'	<i>Bē'alīm</i> (e.g. 1 Kg 18:18; Hos 2:19) ¹
f. pl.	'goddesses'	<i>štārôt</i>

1. "I will remove the names of the foreign gods from her mouth; and their names will no longer be mentioned."

Of course, another explicit term covering this whole range was *'ēlohê X*, with X = name of a city, a foreign people, *han-nēkār*, etc.

From this same passage, 1 Sam 7, we may also note the reading of the Septuagint at verse 3, where instead of *hā'aštārôt* the Greek *ta alsē* implies a Vorlage *h'šrym* "the *asherah*'s." Without following McCarter in preferring this as a reading, we may nevertheless note, in anticipation of evidence to follow, that there is in the Bible a certain amount of interchange between the (originally) divine names Asherah and Astarte, and perhaps also in use of either in the sense 'goddess.'

The next passage is Judges 3:7, with its parallels in Judges. The Israelites ". . . worshipped *hab-bē'alīm* and *hā-'āšrôt* (the foreign gods and goddesses)."⁵⁸ To supplement this, from Judges, note that at 2:11 we are told "they worshipped *hab-bē'alīm* (foreign gods)," and still more revealingly, in Judges 10:6 ". . . they worshipped *'et hab-bē'alīm wē'et hā'aštārôt* (foreign gods and goddesses)." This general heading is then continued by a more specific listing:⁵⁹ "the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines." References elsewhere to the specific goddess Ashtoreth as "deity of the Sidonians" (1 Kg 11:5, 33; 2 Kg 23:13) support the notion that here in Judges 10:6 the plural forms are general terms, a heading that precedes more specific designations.

If the point just made is cogent, then again the translations and commentators come short of exactness in giving the sense;⁶⁰ various translations give us *Baalim et Astaroth* and *Baalim et Astaroth* (Vulgate);⁶¹ *gli idoli di Baal e di Asera, gli idoli di Baal e di Astarte* (*Parola di Dio*); ". . . the Baals and the Asherahs, the Baals and the Astartes" (*NRSV*); ". . . the Baalim and the Asheroth," "the Baalim," "Baal and the Ashtaroth" (*NJV*).

58. Note the variant of several Hebrew manuscripts, also implied in Syriac and Vulgate: *hā'aštārôt*.

59. Not unlike the group of nations indicted by God in Amos 1:3–2:3.

60. I have consulted, as recent and extensive, R. Boling, *Judges*, AB (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975) 74, 80, 191.

61. [*Editor's note*: The repetition of "*Baalim et Astaroth* and *Baalim et Astaroth*" appears to be erroneous, but it appears this way in the original article.]

Bits of evidence have already been cited that point to a possible development from a divine name *ʾāšērāh* to a common noun “goddess.” In this connection 2 Chron 24:18 is of interest: “. . . they worshipped *hā-ʾāšērīm* and *hā-ʾāšabbīm* “the goddesses and the foreign abominations (a contemptuous term substituting for the more neutral *ʾēlohē han-nēkār* “foreign gods”).

Note also, as part of the general background, that in Hebrew as in some other languages, names of a whole variety of deities develop into common nouns, commonly designating commodities or activities with which the deity was believed to be associated. *ʿāštārôt* is also a common noun, something like “sheep-breeding,” and quite a few others can be named, in Hebrew, in Akkadian, and in other languages.⁶² It is not out of the question, then, that a semantic development that took place for *ʿāštārôt* or *ʿāštoret* could have been repeated with *ʾāšērāh*, as indeed is attested for the masculine *baʿal*.⁶³

Many scholars have wanted to explain the uses of *bēʿālīm* and *ʿāštārôt* and similar cases from the religious situation, seeing in the background of these names something especially Canaanite. As an alternate to these various views, this phenomenon may be seen as a linguistic process, one that need not have had, at least initially, any profound connection with Israel’s religion.

62. W. F. Albright collects a good number in his *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1946) 162–63, 220 note 115.

63. I am indebted to Prof. Baruch Halpern for sending me several relevant articles of his own, especially his “The Baal (and the Asherah) in Seventh-Century Judah: YHWH’s Retainers Retired,” in *Konsequente Traditionsgeschichte: Festschrift für Klaus Baltzer*, edd. R. Barthelmus, T. Krüger, and H. Utzschneider, *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 126 (Freiburg, Universitätsverlag, 1993) 115–52; Halpern carries out a close grammatical analysis of some divine names treated here, and his work should be consulted as a supplement to the discussion offered here. Consult also his “‘Brisker Pipes than Poetry’: The Development of Israelite Monotheism,” in *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel*, edd. J. Neusner and B. Levine (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 77–115.

PART IV

Grinding at Grammar

Observations on Syntax and Meter in Lamentations

The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch, by Francis I. Andersen,¹ is an exceptionally significant step forward in Hebrew syntax. Andersen reaches important new conclusions concerning word order in verbless clauses, showing that varieties of word order are associated with differences in the semantic relation between subject and predicate, in the relation of a clause to other clauses, and so on. The study is commendably explicit and thorough; all the verbless clauses in the Pentateuch are studied and classified.

Andersen's monograph is therefore a good basis for comparative study of syntax. The present investigation is devoted to the book of Lamentations, a work which may claim interest because it is datable within rather narrow limits, in the view of most scholars, and because it is very widely acknowledged to be poetry and to exhibit a particular meter, labeled "Qinah meter" by Budde, in its first four chapters. In the first part of this paper, the verbless clauses in Lamentations are compared with those of the Pentateuch as classified by Andersen in his recent monograph. In the second part, the order of postverbal elements in verbal clauses are compared with the patterns of order in Genesis, as classified by Andersen in an unpublished work.² The intention is to find answers to these questions: Are there differences in the syntax of this poetic work as compared with a large body of mostly prose material? If the poetic text departs from the norm, does it do so in conformity with a particular metrical or rhythmic pattern?

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1. *JBL* Monograph Series, Vol. XIV (New York and Nashville, 1970).

2. "Studies in Hebrew Syntax," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1960. I am grateful to Professor Andersen for permitting me to make reference to this work.

Verbless Clauses in Lamentations

The present writer has attempted to follow Andersen's model as closely as possible in separating "verbless clauses" from other types. Sentences with quasi verbal elements such as *yēš* and *ʿōd* have not been included.³ In addition, some strings that are possibly verbless clauses have been omitted as being too dubious textually to permit analysis. These are 1:12a (*lō' . . . derek*); 2:4ab (*niššāb yēminō*). 4:13 is understood as joined to 4:14; in any case, it is not a verbless clause, since it does not apparently contain any predication. In 3:19 and 3:26, certain emendations would yield verbless clauses, but other solutions to the textual problems might also be proposed; so these examples have not been included. In the following cases, where there is no textual problem, strings have been omitted as not constituting clauses, since they do not seem to contain a subject and predicate: 2:15c (*kēlilat yôpî māsôs lēkōl hā'āres*); 3:23 (*hādāšim labbēqārīm*); 4:15 (*tāmē'*).

Two related problems arise in poetic lines where parallelism is present. First, in parallelism, a verb may be expressed in the first colon and omitted from the second. The second colon is then formally "verbless," but is not so in sense, since the verbal predicate must be understood also in the second colon; or else the whole line is to be read as a single verbal clause of unusual structure. On this basis, 5:2 (*bāttēnū lēnokrīm*) and 1:20 (*babbayit kammāwet*) have been omitted; the latter is also suspect textually. 5:3 (*'im-mōtēnū kē'almānōt*) is problematic: should one supply a form of *hāyāh* as in the first colon? This example has been included as a verbless clause here. The second problem arises where a poetic line can be interpreted either as one verbless clause with a compound element or as two separate clauses, assuming ellipsis of some element or elements in the second. The three lines of this sort have all been interpreted here as containing two verbless clauses.

There are 31 verbless clauses in Lamentations. Almost all agree with the rules as stated by Andersen. The following exemplify his rule 1, that the order is S(subject)–P(predicate) in uses of identification, where both S and P are definite: 2:15c; 2:16c; 3:24; 3:63. In 3:24 (*helqī Yhwh*), however, it is difficult to be certain as to which is subject and which is predicate.

Rule 3, that the order is P–S in a clause of classification, where P is indefinite relative to S, is exemplified in 1:22ca; 2:13c; 3:10 (twice); 3:25 (twice); 4:7b. Rule 5, that the order is S–P when the predicate is a participle, is exemplified in 1:4 (four times); 1:11 (twice). Five other verb-

3. Andersen, *Hebrew Verbless Clause*, p. 23, para. 10, does not include *'ayyēh*, "where?" in the list of quasi verbals, or in the list of interrogatives he gives elsewhere. On the basis of form, it presumably belongs with the quasi verbals; hence Lam 2:12ab is not included here.

less clauses in Lamentations are of the sort where P is a prepositional phrase, for which no rules as to normal order are framed by Andersen (see pp. 49–50 of his monograph): 1:9a; 2:9b; 3:62; 5:3; 5:16.⁴

One example is clearly abnormal (though not unparalleled in Andersen's corpus), a case where a participial predicate precedes the subject: 1:21a (*kî ne'ēnāhāh 'ānî*). Possible explanations for such abnormal ordering are given by Andersen on page 48 of his book.

One other verbless clause calls for special comment: 1:18 (*ṣaddîq hû' Yhwh*). This might be taken as a sentence of classification, with normal order (P–S): “He, Yahweh, is righteous.” But if so, one must take *hû'* to be the subject, and *Yhwh* as in apposition to *hû'*. The only parallel for such an unusual apposition seems to be Ezek 33:8, and it is neither exactly the same as the present case nor beyond question textually. An alternate analysis would be to take *ṣaddîq* as the subject, resumed by the pleonastic pronoun *hû'*. On this line, one would also have to assume that *ṣaddîq*, though without the article, is definite, since it is almost equally unparalleled for an indefinite subject to be resumed by a pleonastic pronoun.⁵ The line would mean: “The righteous one [in this issue] is Yahweh, because I [the other party] defied his command.” Perhaps Lamentations at this point preserves older poetic practice, in which the definite article is seldom used; note that *ṣaddîq* is the first word in a stanza that must begin with *ṣade*. A rather close parallel is Is 9:14: *zāqēn ûnēšû' pānim hû' hārô's wēnābî' mōreh šeqer hû' hazzānāb*, “[The] elder and [the] honored man is the head / And [the] prophet who teaches falsehood is the tail.” If this latter analysis of Lam 1:18 is correct, the clause fits Andersen's rule 2, according to which a pleonastic pronoun comes before the predicate in a clause of identification.

To sum up, Andersen's description proves to fit word order in the verbless clauses of Lamentations very well. There is no evidence that the author or authors practiced any greater freedom than did the writers of the Pentateuch. Though the body of clauses for comparison is small, it does contain examples of all the principal rules in Andersen's study.

The Order of Sentence Elements Following the Verb in Lamentations

In many verbal sentences in Hebrew, two or more sentence elements follow the verb. These may be an independent pronoun serving as sub-

4. The proper classification of *'ōy*, “Woe!” is uncertain to me. On the basis of Prov 23:29, where it is clearly a nominal, I have understood it to be the noun subject of a verbless clause in 5:16.

5. In Prov 10:18 and 28:24, however, a formally indefinite subject is resumed by *hû'*.

ject, a nominal subject, a nominal direct object, and so on. In a portion of his unpublished work *Studies in Hebrew Syntax*, Andersen has tabulated the order of these sentence elements relative to each other, and gives a matrix showing the order normally followed.⁶ Only a small percentage of sentences depart from this normal order. It is to be hoped that Andersen will soon publish a study of the Hebrew verbal sentence; in advance of that, the present writer will cite certain of the data from Andersen's work for comparative purposes, since there is no similar body of tabulated data available and since, as the reader will readily see, the evidence cited is factual and not dependent on any particular theory as to Hebrew syntax. In Genesis, where a verb is followed by both a nominal subject (NSubj) and a prepositional phrase modifying the verb (PrPh), the nominal subject precedes. This is true in 115 of the 122 examples in the book. Where a verb is followed by a nominal direct object (DObj) and a prepositional phrase, the direct object precedes. The pattern is followed in 92 of 103 sentences in Genesis.

In Lamentations there are 32 verbal sentences with a nominal subject and a prepositional phrase following the verb. In 21 of these, the order is the one normally found in Genesis: V-NSubj-PrPh.⁷ In 11, the order is the opposite: V-PrPh-NSubj.⁸ Though several of the sentences are rather difficult and hence uncertain, the general picture is clear: a much higher proportion of sentences—about one-third of the total—show abnormal order than is true in Genesis.

A similar picture is presented in the second case. There are 26 verbal sentences in Lamentations in which both a nominal direct object and a prepositional phrase follow the verb. In 15 cases, the order is that normally found in Genesis: V-DObj-PrPh.⁹ In 11 cases, the abnormal order occurs: V-PrPh-DObj.¹⁰ Though the order of other sorts of post-verbal elements might also be tabulated, the number of examples in Lamentations seems too small to permit any conclusions. The above two types are the most common, and occur sufficiently often to show a marked contrast to the situation in Genesis.

Andersen's tabulation for Genesis showed that verbal sentences with more than two postverbal sentence elements follow the same pattern as those with two, though there was a somewhat higher proportion of

6. See *Studies in Hebrew Syntax*, Table V, pp. 308-11.

7. 1:3a; 1:5a; 1:6b; 1:10a; 1:12c; 1:17a; 1:20b; 1:22a; 2:5a; 3:18; 3:39; 3:48; 3:50; 3:54; 4:1b; 4:6a; 4:7a; 4:8b; 4:9a; 4:14a; 4:19a.

8. 1:1b; 1:6a; 1:16b; 2:9a; 2:11a; 2:20c; 2:22b; 3:17; 3:31; 4:8a; 5:15.

9. 1:13a; 2:1c; 2:4a; 2:8b; 2:9c; 2:10c; 2:15b; 3:1; 3:9; 3:27; 3:56; 4:11b; 4:18a; 5:9; 5:21.

10. 2:2b; 2:3a; 2:4c; 2:5c; 2:6a; 2:6c; 2:7b; 3:13; 3:16; 3:29; 3:53.

sentences with abnormal order (345 of 409 exhibited normal patterns). In Lamentations, only 7 of 24 sentences of this sort show “normal” order, while 17 are abnormal.¹¹ In Genesis, the nominal subject ordinarily precedes the nominal direct object, and the latter precedes any adverbial prepositional phrase which is present. Most of the sentences from Lamentations which are classified here as abnormal show some departure from this pattern.

One hypothesis which suggests itself almost inevitably is that these syntactic abnormalities in Lamentations have to do with meter. The whole book is poetry, and ever since K. Budde’s “Das hebräische Klage- lied” (1882),¹² most scholars have recognized that the dominant metrical form in Lamentations chapters 1–4 is a line in which the second of two parallel cola is shorter than the first, whether one prefers to call this a Qinah verse, a “fiver” (Fünfer),¹³ or a “brachycatalectic” line of some sort.¹⁴ Though not all the lines are of this type, many are. Even though the norms of this kind of verse have not been defined with any great precision, it may be possible to determine whether or not some clear relation between meter and syntax exists. Specifically, we may ask whether the poet adopts abnormal order only or primarily when the meter demands it—that is, to achieve the unbalanced line characteristic of chapters 1–4.

This seems not to be so. Of the 11 cases of the abnormal order V–PrPh–Subj, five¹⁵ constitute only a single poetic colon, not a whole line, and therefore the Qinah meter seems unaffected even if the elements are reversed. Thus, for example, 2:9a, *tābē‘û bā’āres šē‘āreyhā* seems to work just as well if we make it **tābē‘û šē‘āreyhā bā’āres*. In four other examples (1:6a; 2:20c; 2:22b; 3:31), which cover a whole poetic line, metrical relations do not seem to be disturbed if we change to normal prose order, thus 2:20c: *‘im yēhārēg bēmiqdaš ‘ādōnāy kōhēn wēnābi’* goes as well as **‘im yēhārēg kōhēn wēnābi’ bēmiqdaš ‘ādōnāy*. Only in 2

11. Normal: 1:11b; 1:14c; 1:15b; 1:17c; 2:19c; 3:41; 4:4a. Abnormal: 1:15a; 2:1a; 2:1b; 2:3b; 2:6b; 2:10c; 2:15a; 2:16a; 2:18b; 2:19b; 2:21a; 2:22a; 3:44; 3:46; 3:52; 4:10b; 4:17a.

12. ZAW 2, 1–52.

13. E. Sievers’ term, *Metrische Studien I: Studien zur hebräischen Metrik*, Erster Teil (Leipzig, 1901), pp. 116, 120–23.

14. So already J. Ley, *Grundzüge des Rhythmus, des Vers- und Strophenbaues in der hebräischen Poesie* (Halle, 1875), pp. 51–53. He also used the term “elegiac pentameter.” Similarly, G. Hölscher, “Elemente arabischer, syrischer und hebräischer Metrik,” *BZAW* 34 (1920), 98–101; and S. Mowinckel, “Zum Problem der hebräischen Metrik,” *Festschrift für Alfred Bertholet* (Tübingen, 1950), pp. 391–93.

15. 2:9a; 2:11a; 3:17 (textually uncertain); 4:8a; 5:15.

cases of 11 would the normal prose order seem difficult from the standpoint of Qinah meter: 1:1b and 1:16b.

Similarly, 8 of the 11 cases of the unusual order V-PrPh-DObj would seem metrically acceptable if the normal prose order were restored. Five of them comprise only a single colon (2:4c; 2:6a [textually very uncertain]; 3:16; 3:29; 3:53), and the others (2:5c; 2:6c; 2:7b) would still give a Qinah verse if the postverbal elements were transposed. Only 2:2b; 3:13; and perhaps 2:3a seem rather difficult metrically if transposed.¹⁶

It is of course possible that greater refinement of our metrical conceptions would show a correlation between metrical form and the order of postverbal sentence elements, but the evidence gathered here does not show any apparent relation. Though we must conclude that the author or authors were freer in this aspect of syntax than were the writers of Genesis, we cannot readily explain their practice as related to meter. One factor can be singled out, however, as involved in a good many cases of abnormal ordering. This is the tendency, already noted by Andersen with reference to Genesis,¹⁷ to put markedly long elements last, regardless of syntactic function. Compound elements also tend to stand last.

Of the 22 examples of abnormal order cited above, the following nine sentences illustrate this tendency: 1:1b; 1:16b; 2:2b; 2:3a; 2:5c; 2:6c; 2:7b; 2:20c; 3:13. A preference for putting long or compound postverbal elements last in the sentence is especially noticeable in sentences with three or more postverbal elements. Note, for instance, 2:1b: *hišlik miššamayim ʾereš tipʾeret yiśrāʾēl*, where the long direct object is put last. Compare 2:6b: *šikkah Yhwh bēšiyôn mōʿed wēšabbāt*. The compound direct object is last, whereas in normal prose order the prepositional phrase *bēšiyôn* would be last. In a similar way, this tendency is observable in 2:1a; 2:3b; 2:10c; 2:15a; 2:16a; 2:18b; 2:19b; 2:21a; 3:44; 3:46; 3:55; 4:10b. Though judgment in this sort of question is inevitably somewhat subjective, it does seem that this type of patterning emphasizes the caesura in these lines, and also yields a second colon which is sufficiently long to fit the common metrical pattern of the poems. This seems especially clear in the four cases of V-PrPh-DObj-NSubj (2:10c; 2:15a; 2:16a; 3:46), where placing the subject last strongly emphasizes the division of the line into cola.

16. Sentences with normal order include some that apparently must have this order to fit the meter—e.g., 1:3a—and (more commonly) some that could just as well have had the reverse order—e.g., 3:18.

17. *Studies in Hebrew Syntax*, pp. 373–79; 400–401.

Delocutive Verbs in Biblical Hebrew

The term “delocutive” was coined by Professor Émile Benveniste in his contribution to *Mélanges Spitzer*, which had the title “Les verbes délocutifs.”¹ Unlike most new linguistic terms, “delocutive,” as explained and applied by its inventor, seems apt and useful, perhaps even necessary. Nothing else serves as well to describe an uncommon but well-defined type of verb which occurs in a number of the Indo-European languages, and which probably could be found, in small numbers, in many of the languages of the world. This paper will attempt to show that the new term is useful in classifying certain verbs in biblical Hebrew which have hitherto been forced into other categories.

Benveniste’s first example serves to explain the meaning he attaches to “delocutive,” and to show the need for such a terms. He points out that Latin *salutare* is indeed related to the noun *salus*, but that it is not an ordinary denominative, “. . . for the *salus* which serves as the base for *salutare* is not the vocable *salus*, but the wish *salus*! Thus *salutare* does not mean ‘*salutem alicui efficere*,’ but ‘“*salutem*” *alicui dicere*’; not ‘bring about someone’s welfare’ but ‘to say “Hail.”’” Thus one must relate *salutare*, not to *salus* as a nominal (*signe nominal*), but to *salus* as a locution in discourse; in other words, *salutare* is related, not to the notion of *salus*, but to the formula ‘*salus*’.² This is perhaps sufficient to explain the term “delocutive” and to illustrate its utility. Benveniste’s other examples make it still more clear that we must recognize this type of derivation as a distinct linguistic phenomenon, and that his coinage “delocutive” covers the situation admirably. English “to hail” and “to welcome” are familiar examples. Nonce words of this sort are fairly common; “Don’t sweetheart me” is a relatively recent example.

A pair of especially clear examples of delocutive verbs in Hebrew is *hišdīqlšiddēq* and *hiršīa*³, “to say someone is in the right,” and “to say someone is in the wrong,” respectively. These have, of course, ordinarily

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1. (1958), pp. 57–63; the essay is reprinted in É. Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Editions Gallimard, 1966), pp. 277–85.

2. Op. cit., pp. 277–78. The translation is the writer’s own.

been explained as cases of the “declarative” or “estimative” piel or hiphil, and later it will be necessary to set forth objections to this traditional classification. It seems best first to present the positive reasons for calling these verbs delocutives. It may be noted, however, that the very fact that grammarians have been led to set up a separate category for these verbs and a very few others shows that they are unusual. *šiddēq* and *hišdīq* do not mean “to make someone just” or “to behave justly” as one might expect from the analogy of such words as *gādāl* (vb., qal), *gādōl* (adj.) with related piel *giddēl* and hiphil *higdīl*. As all agree, *šiddēq* and *hišdīq* mean “to say that a person is in the right.”

Following the line of thought which Benveniste’s study suggests, one soon discovers a related locution. It is the form of words which was used in announcing a judicial decision but used also in pronouncing on the rights and wrongs of other situations. Thus Pharaoh says to Moses (Exod 9:27): *Yhwh haššadīq waʾānī wēʿammī hārēšāʿim* (Yahweh is in the right and I and my people are in the wrong”).³ Similarly 1 Sam 24:18; 2 Kings 10:9; Jer 12:1; Ps 119:137; Lam 1:18; Ezra 9:15; Neh 9:33; 2 Chron 12:6. When Exod 9:27 is compared to a passage such as Deut 25:1 *wēhišdīqū ʾet-haššadīq wēhīršīʿū ʾet-hārāšāʿ*,⁴ the parallel between the locution and the verbs *hišdīq* and *hīršīaʿ* is plain, and makes it sufficiently likely that the verbs are derived from the locution. Still more striking, however, is the evidence supplied by a pair of proverbs expressing the same thought, a condemnation of injustice in judgment. Prov 17:15 uses the verbal forms: *mašdīq rāšāʿ ūmaršīaʿ šaddīq tōʿabat yhwh gam-šēnēhem* (“He who decides for the man in the wrong, and he who decides against the man in the right⁵—both are an abomination to Yahweh”). Prov 24:24 quotes the formula directly: *ʾōmēr lērāšāʿ šaddīq ʾattāh yiqqēbūhū ʿammīm* (“He who says to the man in the wrong, ‘You are in the right’—people will curse him”).

Another clear example is *ʾiššēr* (“to pronounce happy, felicitate”). This is related to the formula *ʾašrē* PN (“Happy is so-and-so”). It can

3. Hans Jochen Boecker, *Redeformen des Rechtslebens im Alten Testament* (Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament, XIV), pp. 122–43, discusses these *Urteilsformulierungen*, but does not deal in a significant way with the linguistic problem.

4. Cf. 1 Kings 8:32 and 2 Chron 6:23 for similar summations of the judge’s task.

5. These rather cumbersome renderings of *hišdīq* and *hīršīaʿ* are used here to avoid such words as “acquit, condemn, wicked, innocent, guilty,” etc., all of which imply that the case in question was what we would call a criminal case, or at least one involving moral wrong. Note also that although the explanation of *hišdīq* as delocutive might have some importance for biblical theology, that aspect of the question will not be dealt with here.

hardly be anything other than delocutive, since there is no semantic relation between the qal ʾšr (“to march”) and this piel, nor any convenient adjective to which the piel verb might be related as a derivative. ʾiššēr means “to say ʾāsrê to someone.”

By now it is clear why a category “delocutive verbs” is better than a category “declarative” or “estimative” piel or hiphil. A category “declarative piel” does not account for a case like ʾiššēr , because “declarative piel” implies a qal, or an adjective, which denotes the quality so that the piel can mean “to call a person X” or “consider a person X.” In this case there is no such qal or adjective, and in fact the major grammars do not class ʾiššēr as declarative piel. But this is to overlook the genuine resemblance between ʾiššēr and šiddēq and points to a flaw in the traditional classification.

A more basic objection is that a category “declarative piel/hiphil” puts the blame, so to speak, in the wrong place. The declarative function is sought in the conjugation, at the grammatical level, rather than in the peculiar use of particular words, at the lexical level. The student of the language is led to think that this sense “to call someone something” is produced by putting the verb in the hiphil or piel, in somewhat the same way that the causative or transitive sense of *hilbiš* arises from its being a hiphil. In some grammars it is not merely implied, but explicitly stated, that the declarative sense is related to the causative,⁶ or even that it is a mere subvariety of the causative.⁷ It is not evident, however, that there is any logical connection between the causative or factitive and the so-called declarative. On this point, it is sufficient to recall the wicked man of the proverbs cited above, the *rāšāʿ*. To improve his character, make him righteous (causative) would be an admirable thing; to declare him righteous is an abomination to the Lord! To account for the fact that the verbs dealt with here are piels or hiphils, it is sufficient to point out that these conjugations are very commonly used to form denominative verbs, and that is what we are dealing with in this case. The peculiar sense “to say that someone is such-and-such” arises from the fact that these are not ordinary denominatives, but a subclass based on certain fixed locutions. Thus the term “delocutive” has the real advantage of explaining certain lexical peculiarities which the traditional terminology only labels in an inadequate and misleading fashion.

Three other legal terms in biblical Hebrew, sometimes classed as declarative piels, are also best understood as delocutive verbs. *Ṭihēr* (“to

6. Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley, §53c; Paul Joüon, *Grammaire de l'hébreu biblique*, §54d.

7. F. E. König, *Historisch-kritisches Lehrgebäude der hebräischen Sprache*, I, pp. 187, 207.

declare ritually pure”) and *ṭimmē*⁷ (“to declare ritually impure”) correspond in the sphere of ritual law to *hiṣḏîq* and *hîršîa*⁸ in civil law. They are probably derived from the formulas which the priests employed in pronouncing judgment on doubtful cases submitted to them. In the case of *ṭihēr* we do not seem to have an actual direct quotation of the formula, but the way the instructions to priests given in Lev 13 are phrased makes it likely that the priests would say *ṭāhôr hû*⁹ (“It is pure”). At any rate, this phrase recurs in the instructions, a typical example being Lev 13:17: “And the priest shall examine him: if the blemish has turned white, the priest shall pronounce it pure (*wēṭihēr hakkōhēn*); he is pure (*ṭāhôr hû*).” Similar uses of *ṭāhôr hû*⁹ recur throughout the chapter, and the counterpart, *ṭāmē*⁷ *hû*⁹, is used again and again in the same section. In the case of the latter, however, we seem to have direct quotation of the formula, in two varieties, in Hag 2:13–14: “Haggai said, ‘If something defiled by contact with a corpse touches any of these will it be impure? (*hāyîṭmā*)’ And the priests replied: ‘It will be impure (*yîṭmā*).’ Then Haggai said: ‘That is how this people, this nation is before me (oracle of Yahweh), and that is how all the work of their hands is, and that which they offer here: it is unclean (*ṭāmē*⁷ *hû*⁹).’” It is significant that *ṭihēr* also means “to purify” and *ṭimmē*⁷ “to defile.” These are, so to speak, the normal piels, and their existence helps make clear the need for referring to the judicial formulas to explain the senses “to declare pure/impure.”

Niqqāh (“to pronounce innocent”) is similarly delocutive, the locution being once again a legal or semilegal formula, the form for disclaiming responsibility, as in 2 Sam 14:9: “On me and on my father’s house is the guilt, and the king and his dynasty are free of responsibility (*wēhammelek wēkis’ō nāqî*).” Compare Gen 44:10; Exod 21:28; Deut 24:5; 2 Sam 3:28; Josh 2:19.

Of those verbs which the present writer has found commonly cited as “declarative” piel or hiphil, only the single form *wayya*⁹*qšēnî* (“will declare me perverse,” Job 9:20) does not admit of explanation as delocutive. Not only is there no locution **iqqāš hû*⁹ in the preserved corpus of ancient Hebrew, but it seems unlikely that any such phrase existed as a recurring fixed formula in the language. The present writer prefers to leave this case unexplained.⁸ It can scarcely be regarded as a sufficient basis for a grammatical category “declarative hiphil.”

Brockelmann finds “declarative” intensives and causatives not only in Hebrew, but also in Arabic.⁹ It might be of interest for an Arabist

8. Possibly it exemplifies analogic extension from *hiṣḏîq* and *hîršîa*⁸; note that *yaršî*⁹*ēnî* is its parallel counterpart in this poetic line from Job.

9. *Grundriss*, I, pp. 509, 527.

to reexamine the examples he cites, but the present writer will not undertake the task. It is not claimed here that there is no such thing as a declarative conjugation in all of Semitic, but only that this is not a useful or apt term as it has been applied to biblical Hebrew. It will also be left to interested specialists to see whether delocutive verbs have developed in other Semitic languages, though it is perfectly clear without extensive investigation that there are Arabic examples. Brockelmann lists—as denominatives—*kabbara* (“to say ‘Allah akbar’”) and *sallama* (“to say *as-salâm* ‘alaykum, greet”)¹⁰ and Moshe Singer has called the writer’s attention to a number of others: *šabbaḥa*, *sabbaḥa*, *basmala*, etc.

Another Hebrew verb, *bērēk* (“to bless”), suggests itself for consideration as possibly delocutive, in view of the very common locution *bārūk* PN (“Blessed be so-and-so”). Especially some of the uses of this verb in postbiblical Hebrew might be regarded as delocutive. Thus, in the form *nēbārēk*, used as an invitation to pray, and followed by a prayer beginning: *bārūk ’attāh*, the sense could be understood as “Let us say, Blessed art Thou.” But the situation is complicated by the presence of the noun *bērākāh*, which may have figured in the derivation, and by the state of affairs with respect to this verb in other Semitic languages, where it also exhibits peculiarities. Rather than run the risk of obscuring the main point made here, the writer prefers to defer further discussion of *bērēk*.¹¹

10. As my colleague, Georg Krotkoff, has pointed out to me, it is significant that the object of *sallama* is marked by the preposition *‘alā*; the preposition from the formula of greeting has been embodied in the verbal sentence.

11. Mr. Moshe Singer has supplied the writer with a sizable list of delocutive verbs from later Hebrew, and perhaps other biblical examples could be discovered as well. The present paper is intended to be suggestive rather than exhaustive.

Hôy and Hôy-Oracles: A Neglected Syntactic Aspect

The particle *hôy*, which occurs about fifty times in Biblical Hebrew, has been the subject of much recent discussion, including one monograph, by W. Janzen,¹ yet many aspects of its meaning and usage still remain debated. Readers may consult Janzen for an extended review of the literature; that given below is meant only to illustrate the variety of opinions on one point: the presence or absence of a vocative element after the particle *hôy*.

In an influential article, E. Gerstenberger² associated what he called the "Woe Oracles of the Prophets" with popular ethos or popular wisdom, and just as he found in wisdom an impersonal pronouncement of disapproval on evildoers, so he noted the participles which often follow on *hôy* and suggested they be translated: "Woe (comes upon) one who is doing such and such." He referred to "the impersonal classification and enumeration of misdeeds introduced by the woe-formula . . ." Direct address is lacking, in his opinion; where the initial third person is followed by second person, this has resulted from the juxtaposition of two disparate forms. This point of view influenced H. W. Wolff, who wrote: "The person threatened with the woe is never addressed; he is never characterized by a name, but always only by his deed."³

Gunther Wanke offered sharp criticism of Gerstenberger's view that *hôy*-speeches are at home in wisdom literature, by separating *ʾôy* and *hôy* sharply and by showing that *hôy* never occurs in wisdom literature. Yet on the matter of direct address he is of one mind with Gerstenberger; he stresses the impersonality and indirectness of the *hôy*-speeches in the prophets.⁴

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1. *Mourning Cry and Woe Oracle* (BZAW 125; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972).
2. "The Woe-Oracles of the Prophets," *JBL* 81 (1962) 249–63.
3. *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (Theologische Bücherei 22; Munich: Kaiser, 1964) 16.
4. "ʾwy und hwy," *ZAW* 78 (1966) 15–18.

The main contention of R. J. Clifford,⁵ that *hōy* was originally a cry associated with the funeral lament, is picked up and elaborated by Janzen in a treatment which surpasses all others in completeness.⁶ Aside from the connection to funeral laments, which is much elaborated, Janzen's work brings a turn away from others' stress of the impersonal, indirect nature of prophetic *hōy*-speeches. In his view, *hōy* is often followed by the vocative, a view he grounds (a) comparatively, with an attempt to identify similar particles in other languages, especially Ugaritic; (b) grammatically, identifying the definite article on participles following *hōy* as a vocative marker; and especially (c) form-critically: the funeral lament contained an element of address to the dead, and this direct address is carried over elsewhere.⁷

Janzen's main contention has won some followers. H. J. Zobel⁸ and H.-J. Kraus⁹ accept the notion that *hōy* originally had to do with funerals. Yet Kraus disagrees sharply with Janzen over the idea of direct address following *hōy*: ". . . in *hōy*-speeches precisely an addressee is lacking."¹⁰

Those experienced in biblical and Hebrew studies will doubtless feel that this is one of those problems where a clear solution is lacking, not for want of industry or skill on the part of scholars, but because of the nature of our evidence. Yet perhaps some gain may be made by studying the *hōy*-passages in the light of the syntax of the vocative in Semitic, especially the syntax of relative clauses modifying the vocative.

In Classical Arabic, in relative clauses referring to a first- or second-person element, the retrospective pronoun is usually in the first or second person, though fairly often the third person occurs, e.g., *'innī mru'un fī hudhaylīn nāsīruhu* "I am a man whose helper is among the Hudhaylites."¹¹ In relative clauses after a vocative, it is this construction with the third person which dominates.¹² According to Brockelmann,¹³

5. "The Use of HÔY in the Prophets," *CBQ* 28 (1966) 458-64.

6. *Mourning Cry and Woe Oracle*.

7. *Ibid.*, 13, 19, 21-23.

8. "*hōy*" in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* (Bd. II; eds. G. J. Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1977) 382-88; in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Vol. III; trans. D. Green et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 359-64.

9. "*hōy* als profetische Leichenklage über das eigene Volk im 8. Jahrhundert," *ZAW* 85 (1973) 15-46.

10. *Ibid.*, 46.

11. H. Reckendorf, *Arabische Syntax* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1921) 424.

12. *Ibid.*, 444.

13. *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen. II. Syntax* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1913 [Rpt., 1961, Hildesheim: Olms]) 589.

in the older language this usage is the only one followed, thus: *yā ʾayyuhā ʾladhīna ʾamanū* “O you believers.”

Hebrew grammarians have noted the same construction in Biblical Hebrew: pronominal elements referring back to a vocative are in the third person. Micah 1:2, quoted in part in 1 Kgs 22:28 (cf. 2 Chr 18:27), contains two examples: *šim ʿú ʿammîm kullām haqšîbî ʿereš ûmēlōʾāh*. Compare also Isa 44:23, *yaʿar wēkol ʿeš bô* “O forests with all your trees” (JPS); and Isa 54:1, *ronnî ʿaqārâ lōʾ yālādâ*.

The last example to be quoted here, Isa 22:16–17a, is especially instructive.

*mah-llēkā pōh ûmi lēkā pōh
ki ḥašabtâ llēkā pōh qāber
ḥōšēbî mārôm qibrô
ḥōqēqî basselaʿ miškān lô
hinnēh yhw̄h mētaltēkā*

What have you here, and whom have you here,
That you have hewn out a tomb for yourself here?—
O you who have hewn your tomb on high;
O you who have hollowed out for yourself an abode in the cliff!
The Lord is about to shake you . . . (after JPS).

This passage has been quoted to show 1) the unmistakable vocative elements; 2) the switch to modifiers with third-person pronominal elements; 3) a reversion to second-person pronouns.

Some other biblical verses showing this peculiarity of the vocative are Ezek 21:30; Isa 47:8a; and possibly 2 Kgs 9:31. Somewhat longer examples are rather common, thus Ps 18:50–51 (note *malkô* etc.); Ps 104:3, 4, 6, 7, 13; and, from the prophets (not including *hōy*-oracles), Amos 4:1–3; Obad 3–4; Mic 3:9–12; 7:18–20; Isa 44:1; 65:11; Jer 5:21–22; 49:4–5.

In the light of this usage, some *hōy*-oracles appear in a new light. The second-person elements which come in sooner or later in many of them have been thought to be secondary. In many cases it seems altogether more plausible to suppose that a vocative element comes right after the *hōy* and pronouns referring back to this are for a time in third person in keeping with ancient usage; explicitly second-person forms reassert themselves later. In other words, the pattern is like that of Isa 22:16–17, cited above. A fair example, of some length, is Isa 10:1–3.

*hōy ḥaḥoqēqîm ḥiqqē ʾāwen
ûmēkattēbîm ʿāmāl kittēbû
lēḥattôt middîn dallîm*

*wēligzōl mišpaṭ ʿānîyê ʿammî
 lîhyôt ʾalmānôt šēlālām
 wēʾet yētômîm yābōzzû
 ûmāh taʿāsû lēyôm pēquddā*

Ha! You who write out evil writs
 And compose iniquitous documents,
 To subvert the cause of the poor,
 To rob of their rights the needy of my people;
 That widows may be your spoil,
 And fatherless children your booty!
 What will you do on the day of punishment . . . ? (after JPS)

Several shorter examples showing a similar switch from third person, following what may be regarded as a vocative, to second person (or vice versa) may be quoted.

*hōy maggiʿē bayit bēbayit
 sādeh bēšādeh yaqrîbû
 ʿad ʾepes maqôm
 wēhûsabtem lēbaddēkem bēqereb hāʾāreṣ* Isa 5:8

*hōy šôdēd wēʾattāh lôʾ šādûd
 ûbôgēd wēlôʾ bāgēdû bô* Isa 33:1

*hōy kol sāmēʾ lēkû lammayim
 waʾāšer ʾen lô kasep lēkû
 šibrû etc.* Isa 55:1

For other examples see Isa 1:4–5; 30:1–3; Jer 22:13–15; 23:1–2; Ezek 34:2–3; Amos 6:1–2; Mic 2:1–3; Hab 2:6–7, 9–10, 15–16.

Several conclusions may be offered. First, it seems possible to understand the syntax of a significant number of *hōy*-oracles in a rather new way, with a vocative at the beginning and direct address continued throughout. As noted above, a form-critical or source-critical way of explaining the syntax of these oracles is available. The present writer does not claim to have refuted that explanation but does propose that the present view is preferable, as being based on a known feature of Hebrew (and Arabic) syntax and as simpler. If the view presented here is correct, a good deal of what has been written about the “impersonal” character of these oracles must be abandoned, of course.

Second, questions as to the life-situation of *hōy* and *hōy*-speeches are affected. If a good many of these speeches contain direct address, it is difficult to connect them with a supposedly impersonal wisdom. Furthermore, recognition of a prominent vocative element would seem to tie these speeches more closely to other elements of address in the

prophets such as *šim'û* 'hear ye' and to loosen any special tie to funeral laments.

Complexities and problems remain: the relation to *'ôy* and the construction *hôy 'al*; the number of cases where a *hôy*-speech is continued in third-person without any direct address being present (Isa 17:12-14; 31:1-3); or where a *hôy*-passage could contain direct address, but no threat to the evildoers follows (Isa 5:11-12; 5:18-23). Some of these complexities and problems might yield to further study, but it seems clear that usage of *hôy* is not simple and uniform.

Some Performative Utterances in the Bible

The useful grammatical category “performative utterance” is by now well established in discussion of certain constructions in the Semitic languages, including Biblical Hebrew. Much of the history of discussion of this special verbal use has been traced by Dennis Pardee and Robert Whiting,¹ and a list of “performative utterances” in Biblical Hebrew is included in an extensive excursus on the subject by the Assyriologist Werner Mayer.² Waltke and O’Connor’s *Biblical Hebrew Syntax* contains a brief discussion of performatives under the rubric “instantaneous perfective” and gives several biblical examples.³

To speak of some utterances as “performatives” (or an approximately equivalent term) is thus an accepted, and already almost venerable, part of Semitic syntactic description, so that in this paper I will provide only a brief introduction to the subject, taking the philosopher Austin’s work as a starting point, and stating my reasons for preferring “performative” to some other terms that have been used. But since identification of

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1. “Aspects of Epistolary Verbal Usage in Ugaritic and Akkadian” by Dennis Pardee and Robert M. Whiting, was read by Pardee at the 31st Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, July, 1984; in its unpublished version, this paper was kindly put at my disposal by John Huehnergard. It is now published, with the same title, in *BSO(A)S* 50 (1987) 1–31. Note also Pardee’s earlier note, “The ‘Epistolary Perfect’ in Hebrew Letters,” *Biblische Notizen* 22 (1983) 34–40.

2. Werner Mayer, *Untersuchungen zur Formensprache der babylonischen “Gebetsbeschwörungen”* (Studia Pohl: Series Maior 5; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1976).

3. Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990) §30.5.1d (pp. 488–89). The present writer is indebted to O’Connor for critical reading of an earlier draft of this paper, and for calling his attention to some relevant works.

individual cases in Biblical Hebrew is at times problematic, as is the case also in a living language such as English, I will devote the main part of the present paper to a list of biblical examples that seem to me rather good candidates for being understood as performatives; these will be, for the most part, those where Bible versions, ancient or modern, have been led to translate the clause in question using an unusual tense equivalent. Some of these are not found on Mayer's list; for those that are, the evidence cited briefly here may provide a kind of independent confirmation of the plausibility of his identification. In all cases, my description of the clauses as "performatives" is meant as an exegetical suggestion, a possibility to be considered seriously by future interpreters or translators, but without any claim to finality. Since performatives are often used in a ritual setting of some sort, I hope this essay may also constitute a salute to Prof. Jacob Milgrom's long and fruitful dedication to study of ancient rites.

The philosopher J. L. Austin introduced the phrase *performative utterances* in lectures delivered in the 1950s.⁴ He used the term *performative utterance* to describe what seemed to be a special kind of sentence, which he defined and whose qualities and subspecies he proceeded to investigate. Somewhat disconcertingly, he ended by questioning whether *performatives* (the short form of the term) are actually a special class of utterances at all.

The issues raised have occupied philosophers, semioticians, and literary critics since, in various ways,⁵ but for Semitic linguistics it seems useful to stick to Austin's original delineation of a performative, however problematic the philosophical foundation.⁶

4. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (2d ed.; ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), the William James Lectures for 1955; "Performative Utterances," in Austin's *Philosophical Papers* (2d ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1970) 233–52, a BBC broadcast of 1956; idem, "Performative–Constative," in *The Philosophy of Language* (ed. J. R. Searle; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) 13–22, with references to previous publications (originally a lecture, in French, of 1958).

5. The literature on performatives is vast; see Stephen C. Levinson, *Pragmatics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), index under "performative hypothesis," "performative prefix," "performative verbs," "performatives," and (appropriately) "performadox." For the impact on literary criticism, see Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982) 110–34.

6. Émile Benveniste (*Problèmes de linguistique générale* [Paris: Gallimard, 1966] 269–76) argues for the validity of Austin's original distinction and its utility within linguistics.

Austin distinguished performative utterances from ordinary declarative sentences in this way. They are pronouncements where the uttering of the sentence is not a *description* of an action, but itself the *doing* of an action, or part of the doing of an action. One of his examples (now apparently classic) is of the christening of a ship. "I name this ship the *Queen Elizabeth*" actually accomplishes what it states, given, of course, the proper ritual circumstances. "I bet you it will rain tomorrow" is a further example, and illustrates the ordinary grammatical form of an explicit performative in English: the first-person singular of the present tense. Terms such as *now* or *hereby* may accompany performatives, as in "You are hereby authorized to pay," which incidentally exemplifies the transformation of a performative into a second-person passive. Performatives may usefully be contrasted with *constatives*, ordinary descriptions of events ("it is raining").

In German discussion of Semitic languages the terminology preferred for labeling what in English usage is a *performative* is *Koinzidenz* and *Koinzidenzfall* (thus, for example, Brockelmann, von Soden, Heimpel and Guidi, and Werner Mayer⁷). It is not strictly necessary, for the purpose of this paper, to decide on the merits of these rival terminologies, but it may be pointed out that there is a certain confusion in some older (and more recent) Semitic grammars about what is involved in this use of language, and that *coincidence* and similar terms may contribute to the degree of misunderstanding that exists. Thus when Joüon says, "Le qatal s'emploie pour une action instantanée qui, s'accomplissant à l'instant même de la parole, est censée appartenir au passé,"⁸ he misses the point that the action is not something separate from the speech act but consists of the speech act. The rather unclear formulations of Williams on the subject seem to encounter the same objections.⁹ The same might be said of Brockelmann's designation of certain perfects as expressing ". . . den Zusammenfall (Koinzidenz) zwischen Aussage und Vollzug der Handlung."¹⁰ In any case, it seems to the present writer that

7. Carl Brockelmann, *Hebräische Syntax* (Neukirchen Kreis Moers: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, 1956) 40; W. von Soden, *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik* (AnOr 33; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1952) 104, §80c; Wolfgang Heimpel and Gabriella Guidi, "Der Koinzidenzfall im Akkadischen," *XVII Deutscher Orientalistentag: Vorträge* (ed. Wolfgang Voigt; ZDMG Supplementa 1; Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1969) 148–52; Mayer, *Untersuchungen*.

8. Paul Joüon, *Grammaire de l'Hébreu biblique* (2d ed.; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1947) 298, §112f.

9. Ronald J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline* (2d ed.; Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1976) 30.

10. Brockelmann, *Hebräische Syntax*, 40.

the term *performative* is preferable for application to Biblical Hebrew.¹¹ Koschmieder's *Effektivus*, which he used along with *Koinzidenz*, seems to have carried much the same idea as *performative*.¹²

Older major grammars of Biblical Hebrew have already gathered many examples of performatives, but, of course, without using that term or stating with sufficient clarity what it is that sets these utterances apart.¹³ See, for example, the sentences gathered in GKC.¹⁴ In treating "performative utterances" in Biblical Hebrew, then, I am in part suggesting little more than a relabeling of portions of existing grammars and giving a somewhat different and perhaps more adequate description of phenomena in the language already recognized and set apart.

Beyond this, performatives should be recognized in some cases not so far noticed in the grammars, though in the nature of the subject no attempt can be made at a definitive, exhaustive listing. To press beyond the group of explicit performatives of the easily recognizable type would be to encounter the philosophical difficulties already pondered by Austin.

In the interest of brevity, the procedure followed here will be to cite Hebrew verbs, usually in the first-person singular perfect, in alphabetic order by roots, as they occur in various biblical contexts. In the interest of economy, the full Hebrew sentence or larger context is omitted, as is indication of vowels. In almost all the examples cited, some translation, ancient or modern, has recognized that the perfect is being used in a present sense. Hence in giving a translation of the relevant portion of the biblical passage, the present writer is usually able to cite an existing version that illustrates his own understanding of the sentence as a per-

11. The term performative has already been used in English by Robert Lawton. See Pardee and Whiting, "Aspects of Epistolary Verbal Usage," 24; Lawton says, in his review of Dennis Pardee's, *Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Letters*, *Bib* 65 (1984) 267: "If one wants to give them a name, the linguistic category 'performatives' should be used, and they should be designated 'performative perfects.'" (Lawton credits Norbert Lohfink with suggesting the terms to him.)

12. Erwin Koschmieder, *Zeitbezug und Sprache: Ein Beitrag zur Aspekt- und Tempusfrage* (Wissenschaftliche Grundfragen 11; Leipzig and Berlin: Teubner, 1929) and his other pioneering contributions, bibliography in Pardee and Whiting, "Aspects of Epistolary Verbal Usage."

13. Explanations for the phenomenon tend to be needlessly and improbably psychological, thus from GKC §106i: (The perfect is used) "in direct narration to express actions which, although really only in the process of accomplishment, are nevertheless meant to be represented as already accomplished in the mind of the speaker."

14. GKC §§16i and 106m. See also Joüon, *Grammaire de l'Hébreu biblique*, §112f; Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 30.

formative utterance. Individual cases are not argued in detail; in every case the reader may supply this rubric: "In this case the sentence does not refer to a past act but to an action in the present that is accomplished, at least in part, by the speaker's pronouncement of the utterance under appropriate circumstances." Several cases that seem to call for lengthier treatment have been reserved for the end, out of alphabetic order. The indication "Mayer" is given in parentheses after individual passages that are identified by Mayer as examples of *Koinzidenzfall*; note that his list contains also a good many other passages.

ʾmrty

Ps 31:15 [31:14]: "I say, Thou art my God" (RSV; cf. NJPSV, NAB, NEB), and others (Mayer).¹⁵

Ps 140:7 [140:6]: "I say to the Lord, 'You are my God'" (TEV) (Mayer).

Ps 142:6 [142:5]: "I say, 'Thou art my refuge'" (RSV; cf. NJPSV, NEB) (Mayer).

bhṛty

Hag 2:23: "You are my choice" (my translation; English versions—idiotomatically—use present perfect here, as RSV, "I have chosen you," but the sense is of an act accomplished at the time of the announcement; note NEB, "It is you that I have chosen"; cf. TEV).

Ps 84:11 [84:10] "I would rather be a doorkeeper" (RSV; cf. AV, NJPSV, NAB, TEV).

brknw

Ps 129:8: "We bless you" (AV; cf. RSV and other modern versions) (Mayer).

dmyty

Cant 1:9: "I compare you" (RSV; cf. NEB, NAB).

hrpty

1 Sam 17:10: "I defy the armies of Israel" (AV; cf. RSV, NJPSV, "I herewith defy"; NEB, "Here and now I defy"; NAB, TEV, "Here and now I challenge" (Mayer).

15. Abbreviations for Bible translations are RSV = Revised Standard Version; NJPSV = New Jewish Publication Society Version; NAB = New American Bible; NEB = New English Bible; TEV = Today's English; AV = Authorized Version (King James); LXX = Septuagint; Vg = Vulgate.

m'sty

1 Sam 16:7: "I reject him" (of Eliab, David's brother; NEB; others all seen to give some sort of past tense, but the action lies in the present).

Amos 5:21: *šn'ty m'sty ḥgykm* "I hate, I despise your feast days" (AV; cf. RSV, NJPSV, NEB, TEV).¹⁶

hgdy

Deut 30:18: *anagellō soi*, LXX; *praedico* Vg; "I denounce unto you this day" (AV and similarly modern versions; note TEV, "I warn you here and now") (Mayer).

ns'ty

Gen 19:21: "Behold, I grant you this favor also" (RSV; cf. NJPSV, NEB, NAB, TEV).

Ezek 44:12: "I . . . solemnly swear" (TEV; others seem to miss the point that the oath is simultaneous with the pronouncement of these words, not prior to it).

ntty

Gen 9:13: *tithēmi*, LXX; cf. Vg *ponam*; "I do set my bow in the cloud" (AV; cf. RSV, NEB, NAB, TEV). In this case there may be a nonverbal action as well; the performative utterance is really complete only with the following clause: the bow is set up "to be a sign." Making it a sign is accomplished by the verbal utterance (Mayer).

Gen 41:41: *idou kathistēmi se sēmeron*, etc., LXX; "I hereby give you authority over the whole land of Egypt" (NEB; cf. NJPSV, NAB, TEV).

Jer 1:9: "Herewith I put my words in your mouth" (NJPSV; cf. NEB, NAB, TEV) (Mayer).

h'brty

Zech 3:4: "I hereby take away your iniquity" (my translation).

16. The use of what may be a verb expressing emotion, namely *'hb*, here complicates matters somewhat, since such verbs as 'love', 'hate', and the like have their own peculiarities of tense usage in Hebrew, as has long been known. See, for example, the discussion of Koschmieder, *Zeitbezug und Sprache*, 64. But it is not necessarily the case that in all uses of 'love' and 'hate' a purely emotional state is described, and occasionally an act of decision seems to be described: 'I declare loyalty to' or 'I declare enmity towards'. See the discussion of Exod 21:5 below, and literature cited there (see pp. 764–65).

h'ydy

Deut 4:26 (very similar is 30:19): *diamarturomai*, LXX; *invoco*, Vg; "I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day" (AV; cf. RSV, NJPSV, NEB, "I summon," NAB, TEV) (Mayer).

Jer 42:19: "Know well, then—for I warn you this day" (NJPSV; cf. TEV, NEB).

ʕbty

2 Chr 12:5: "So I am abandoning you to Shishak" (NJPSV; cf. NEB, "Therefore I now abandon you"; LXX future) (Mayer).

Jer 12:7: *ʕbty ʔt byty ntšty ʔt nhly nty ydydw nšy bkp ʔwybyh* 'I abandon my house, cast off my heritage; The beloved of my soul I deliver into the hand of her foes'. Thus NAB. Though all other translations consulted give some sort of past tense here, it seems preferable to take this as a present, a statement that announces and thereby achieves God's renunciation of his property; the last term is chosen to call attention to the possible resemblance to formal legal act of quitting property, an act of alienation. Note the apparent correspondence of *ʕb* and *ntn* to Aramaic *rhq* and *yhb* in documents of sale and gift, as studied by Yochanan Muffs.¹⁷

hpqdy

Jer 1:10 "See, I appoint you this day" (NJPSV; cf. NEB, NAB, TEV) (Mayer).

šwyty

Josh 8:8 "These are your orders" (NEB; cf. NAB, TEV). A passive transformation (to second singular perfect *Pual šwth*) is attested in Gen 45:19, if the text is correct: "You are commanded" (RSV footnote ["Heb"]); cf. NJPSV, "And you are bidden").

17. Yochanan Muffs, *Studies in the Aramaic Legal Papyri from Elephantine* (Studia et documenta ad Iura orientis antiquae pertinentia 8; Leiden: Brill, 1969); consult the index under *rhq* and *yhb*. For an example, note p. 48 citing Kraeling, *Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri* 3 (=B3.4 [pp. 64–67] in Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni, *Aramaic Documents from Egypt, 2: Contracts* [Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1989]), lines 10–11 *zbn wyhbn lk wrhqn mnh* 'We hereby sell and transfer it to you and we remove ourselves from it' (my translation). On Elephantine legal terminology, see also Jonas Greenfield, "Aramaic Studies and the Bible," *Congress Volume, Vienna 1980* (ed. J. A. Emerton; VTSup 32; Leiden: Brill, 1981) 110–30.

hqđšty

Judg 17:3: “I consecrate the silver to the Lord” (RSV; cf. NJPSV, “I herewith consecrate”; NEB, “I now solemnly dedicate”; TEV).

1 Kgs 9:3: “I consecrate this house” (NJPSV; cf. TEV).

šʔlty

Prov 30:7: *duo aitoumai*, LXX; “Two things I ask of thee” (RSV; cf. NJPSV, NEB, NAB).

šlh̄ty

1 Kgs 15:19 = 2 Chr 16:3: “I am sending to you a present” (RSV; cf. NJPSV, NEB, NAB) (Mayer).

2 Kgs 5:6: “With this letter I am sending” (NAB; cf. NEB) (Mayer).

2 Chr 2:12: “Now I am sending you a skillful and intelligent man” (NJPSV; cf. NEB, NAB, TEV) (Mayer).

Two final examples are perhaps of more than routine interest.

In Ps 2:6, 7, the passage concerning adoption of the king,¹⁸ it seems not to have been recognized that more than one performative is present, though several translations give partial recognition to this, and render part of the verse with present tenses, not past. The text reads: *wʔny nskty mlky ʔ sywn hr qđšy ʔsprh ʔ l hq yhw̄h ʔmr ʔly bny ʔth hywm yldtyk*. Translated rather heavily, to make clear the point of view advocated here, the verses are: “‘I, for my part, hereby appoint my king on Zion, my holy mountain.’ I will tell of Yahweh’s decree. He said to me ‘You are my son; here and now I beget you.’” The translation of the NEB, ‘This day I become your father’, seems close to recognizing a performative here; TEV is very similar. To illustrate a point of Austin’s, that performatives are not restricted to one grammatical sentence type, note that here ‘you are my son’, a verbless clause in the Hebrew, is a performative utterance.

In Exod 21:5, *ʔhbty ʔt ʔdny* ‘I love my master . . .’ should probably be considered a performative, even though the perfect of *ʔhb* is explicable simply from the general usage of this verb and other verbs expressing emotions. It perhaps qualifies as a performative because this is a declaration of loyalty, not simply a description of emotions, and it is a significant part of a legal transaction, initiating a rite of perpetual enslavement. We should understand it as the equivalent of something like: ‘I hereby pledge my allegiance to my master, wife, and children; I do not wish to be freed’. It is useful at this point to look at some usages in the Aramaic of the Elephantine papyri. In several marriage documents, the possibility is envisaged that at some future time one partner will divorce

18. See Shalom Paul, “Adoption Formulae,” *Maarav* 2 (1980) 173–86.

the other. This is expressed in this form: *wt'mr šn't l'shūr b'ly*¹⁹ '(And if she should) say: I divorce (or "hate") my husband Aschor'. The proper translation of *šn't* is, however, uncertain. For present purposes, it is perhaps sufficient to note initially that, whatever the sense, the perfect tense in Aramaic must be rendered by an English present, and this may be a sign that we are dealing with a performative. The translation 'divorce', given already by Cowley, was defended by Rabinowitz and Yaron,²⁰ who noted that divorce money was called *kšp šn'h*. Recently Raymond Westbrook, though he notes evidence from cuneiform sources that might be thought to support a sense 'divorce', has argued that 'hate' is in these documents an addition to the actual divorce formula. 'Hate' expresses the idea of a guilty motivation, indicating that this divorce is for purely subjective reasons.²¹ It seems to the present writer that we must at least leave open the question as to the proper translation of *šn't* in these texts, and if 'divorce' is a defensible understanding, the linguistic form would seem even more clearly to be a performative.²²

In conclusion, I wish to call attention to the possibility that we have to do with a performative utterance in the petition of the Lord's Prayer about forgiveness. Here the version of St. Matthew (6:12) uses a Greek perfect (*aphēkamen*), while the parallel in St. Luke (11:4) has a present (*aphiomen*). If we suppose that the Semitic that lies behind these versions

19. Translation of A. Cowley in his *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.E.* (Osnabrück: Zeller, 1967; reprint of the 1923 ed.), no. 15, line 23; cf. the husband's utterance, line 27: 'I divorce my wife Miptachiah'.

20. J. J. Rabinowitz, "Marriage Contracts in Ancient Egypt in the Light of Jewish Sources," *HTR* 46 (1953) 91–97; Reuven Yaron, *Introduction to the Law of the Aramaic Papyri* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961) 54–55.

21. R. Westbrook, "The Prohibition on Restoration of Marriage in Deuteronomy 24:1–4," in *Studies in Bible* (ed. Sara Japhet; ScrHier 31; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1986) 399–403.

22. In response to Westbrook's argument, which deserves to be studied in his own statement of it, one may venture to raise some questions. In a legal declaration, if the so-called "operative" formula (in this case the "operative divorce formula") is "omitted but implied," might one not assume that the expressly stated formula (in this case "I hate") has taken on an operative function? To put it another way, what else in the text "implies" the operative divorce formula? In linguistic or rhetorical instead of legal terms, may we not think here of a metonymic transfer, that is, that one aspect of the whole picture ('hate') has come to stand for what it is often associated with? In all the cases where 'hate' occurs by itself, in Akkadian or Aramaic texts, must we really mentally supply a different, absent term, 'divorce', or a formula of divorce? Are these legal texts really missing an important operative formula? Such questions touch, however, on major assumptions in Westbrook's approach to ancient law and cannot really be pursued here.

had a perfect verb form, appropriate to a performative, then the divergence in the Greek texts would be readily explicable: Matthew follows the grammatical form, while Luke comes closer to giving the sense. The original sense of the performative, however, would not have been a general present, 'as we (regularly) forgive', but rather 'as we hereby forgive', implying a ceremonial context of forgiveness. Jeremias gives approximately this explanation of the tense used in the (hypothetical) original form, but perhaps the term *performative* and the associated concept explain the linguistic form more economically and precisely than the older terminology from Semitic grammar that Jeremias employs.²³

23. Joachim Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus* (SBT, 2d series, 6; Naperville, Ill.: Allenson, 1967) 92–93; this essay translated by John Reumann from "Das Vater-Unser im Lichte der neueren Forschung," reprinted in Joachim Jeremias, *Abba* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966) 152–71 (passage cited below is from pp. 159–60). Jeremias says that Matthew's past tense form reflects, in the Semitic, "a *perfection praesans*," a 'present perfect', which refers to an action occurring here and now (*eine hier und jetzt eintretende Handlung*). The correct translation of the Matthaean form would therefore run, 'as we also herewith forgive our debtors' (*wie auch wir hiermit denen vergeben, die uns etwas schuldig sind*). Jeremias views Luke's present tense as somehow an accommodation to Greek tense usage. (I am indebted to Mr. Raymond Pennoyer for calling my attention to Jeremias's treatment of these passages in Matthew and Luke).

This article was completed January 1, 1990.

Appendix A

List of Publications by Delbert R. Hillers

1958

1. "An Historical Survey of Old Testament Theology since 1922," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 29: 571-94; 664-77.

1963

2. "Revelation 13:18 and a Scroll from Murabba'at," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 170 (Apr.): 65.

1964

3. "An Alphabetic Cuneiform Tablet from Taanach (TT 433)," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 173 (Feb.): 45-50.
4. "A Note on Some Treaty Terminology in the Old Testament," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 176 (Dec.): 46-47. (Reprinted in this volume as Chapter 11, pp. 186-87.)
5. "Amos 7, 4 and Ancient Parallels," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 26: 221-25.
6. *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets*. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute. (Reprinted in this volume as Chapter 10, pp. 97-189.)

1965

7. "A Convention in Hebrew Literature, the Reaction to Bad News," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 77: 86-90. (Reprinted in this volume as Chapter 2, pp. 29-33.)
8. "A Note on Judges 5, 8a," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 27: 124-26.
9. Review, M. Pope, *Job* (Anchor Bible). *Interpretation* 19: 465-68.

1966

10. Review, J. Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll of Qumran Cave 11*. *American Journal of Archaeology* 70: 290.

1967

11. "Delocutive Verbs in Biblical Hebrew," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 86: 320-24. (Reprinted in this volume as Chapter 20, pp. 283-87.)
12. Review, G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. II, trans. D. Stalker (Literature Survey). *Lutheran World/Lutherische Rundschau*, 219.
13. Review, A. Jirku, *Der Mythos der Kanaanäer*. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 86: 338-39.

1968

14. "Ritual Procession of the Ark and Ps 132," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 30: 48-55.

15. Review, N. Glueck, *Hesed in the Bible*, trans. A. Gottschalk. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 30: 260–61.
16. Review, J. Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament*. *Lutheran World/Lutherische Rundschau*, 148.

1969

17. *Covenant: the History of a Biblical Idea*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
18. Review, T. Vriezen, *The Religion of Ancient Israel*. *Interpretation* 23: 237–38.
19. Review, E. Jenni, *Das hebräische Piel*. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88: 212–14.
20. Review, M. Sznycer, *Les passages puniques en transcription latine dans le Poenulus de Plaute*. *American Journal of Philology* 90: 381–83.
21. Review, E. Masson, *Recherches sur les plus anciens emprunts sémitiques en Grec*. *American Journal of Philology* 90: 499–500.

1970

22. “Ugaritic *šnpt* ‘Wave-offering,’” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 198 (Apr.): 42.
23. “Paul W. Lapp in Memoriam,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 199 (Oct.): 2–4.
24. “A Reading in the Beth-Shemesh Tablet,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 199 (Oct.): 66.
25. “Fifty years of the Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 200 (Dec.): 3–7.
26. “Additional Note,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 200 (Dec.): 18.
27. “The Goddess with the Tambourine,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 41: 606–19.
28. Review, Various books in “Some Books Recently Received,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 197 (Feb.): 53–55.
29. Review, Various books in “Some Books Recently Received (Cont.),” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 198 (Apr.): 43–46.
30. Review, W. Schottroff, *Der Altisraelitische Fluchspruch*. *Biblica* 51: 432–35.
31. Review, F. Gröndahl, *Die Personennamen der Texte aus Ugarit*. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 29: 298–300.

1971

32. “A Hebrew Cognate of *unuššu/unt* in Is 33:8,” *Harvard Theological Review* 64: 257–59.
33. “Burial,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 4. Jerusalem: Encyclopaedia Judaica, and New York: Macmillan. Cols. 1515–16.
34. “Cistern,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 5. Cols. 578–79.
35. “Demons, Demonology,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 5. Cols. 1521–26.
36. “The Roads to Zion Mourn (Lam 1:4),” *Perspective* 12: 121–33. [Essays in Memory of Paul W. Lapp.] (Reprinted in this volume as Chapter 3, pp. 34–44.)
37. Review, Various books in “Some Recent Books (Cont.),” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 203 (Oct.): 45–46.

1972

38. "mškn 'Temple' in Inscriptions from Hatra," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 207 (Oct.): 54-56.
39. "Paḥad yīṣḥāq," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91: 90-92.
40. *Lamentations* (Anchor Bible). Garden City, NY: Doubleday. Second, revised edition, 1992.
41. Review, Various books in "Book Notices," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 206 (Apr.): 48-50.
42. Review, Various books in "Book Notices," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 207 (Oct.): 57-58.

1973

43. "The Bow of Aqht: The Meaning of a Mythological Theme," in *Orient and Occident* (Cyrus Gordon Volume), ed. H. A. Hoffner, Jr. Kevelaer: Butzon and Bercker, and Neukirchen-Vluyn, Neukirchener. Pp. 71-80. (Reprinted in this volume as Chapter 13, pp. 220-21.)
44. Review, G. Buchanan, *The Consequences of the Covenant*. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 32: 346-47.
45. Review, M. Weippert, *The Settlement of the Israelite Tribes in Palestine*, trans. J. Martin. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 92: 446.
46. Review, R. Whybray, *The Heavenly Counsellor in Isaiach xl 13-14*. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 32: 346.

1974

47. "Observations on Syntax and Meter in Lamentations," in *A Light unto My Path: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Jacob M. Myers*, edd. H. Bream, R. Heim, and C. Moore. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Pp. 265-70. (Reprinted in this volume as Chapter 19, pp. 277-82.)
48. "Syrian and Palestinian Religions," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition. Pp. 966-70.
49. (edited) *Discoveries in the Wādi ed-Dāliyah*, by Paul W. Lapp, Nancy Lapp, et al. (Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research).
50. Review, M. Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament*. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 33: 264-65.

1976

51. "Homeric Dictated Texts: A Reexamination of Some Near Eastern Evidence," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 80: 19-23. (With Marsh H. McCall, Jr.) (Reprinted in this volume as Chapter 4, pp. 45-49.)

1977

52. Review, L. Viganò, *Nomi e titoli di YHWH alla luce del semitico del Nord-ovest*. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 39: 576-77.

1978

53. "A Study of Psalm 148," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 40: 323-34. (Reprinted in this volume as Chapter 5, pp. 50-60.)
54. "Bērit 'ām: 'Emancipation of the People'." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 97: 175-82.

55. Review, D. Christensen, *Transformations of the War Oracle in Old Testament Prophecy*. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 40: 89–91.

1979

56. “Albright, William F.,” *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Biographical Supplement, Vol. 18. New York: Free Press. Pp. 10–12.
57. “Redemption in Letters 6 and 2 from Hermopolis,” *Ugarit-Forschungen* 11 (Schaeffer Volume): 379–82. (Reprinted in this volume as Chapter 15, pp. 225–29.)
58. Review, M. Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 41: 127–28.
59. Review, H. Gottlieb, *A Study on the Text of Lamentations*. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 41: 630–31.

1980

60. Review, J. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions*, vol. I (1973 reprint), *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 100: 177–78.
61. Review, M. Goshen-Gottstein, *Syriac Manuscripts in the Harvard College Library: A Catalogue*. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 42: 236.

1982

62. Review, H. Wolff, *Micah the Prophet*. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 44: 502–3.
63. Review, G. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 44: 118–19.

1983

64. “History and Poetry in Lamentations,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 10: 155–61. [Essays in Honor of Alfred von Rohr Sauer]
65. “Hôy and Hôy-Oracles: A Neglected Syntactic Aspect,” in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman*, edd. C. Meyers and M. O’Connor. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns. Pp. 185–88. (Reprinted in this volume as Chapter 21, pp. 288–92.)
66. “Imperial Dream: Text and Sense of Mic 5:4b–5,” in *The Quest for the Kingdom of God: Studies in Honor of George E. Mendenhall*, edd. H. Huffmon, F. Spina, and A. Green. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns. Pp. 137–39.
67. “The Effective Simile in Biblical Literature,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103: 181–85. [Samuel Noah Kramer Issue.] (Reprinted in this volume as Chapter 7, pp. 69–76.)
68. Review, M. Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East*. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103: 672.
69. Review, L. Epszstein, *La justice sociale dans le proche-orient ancien et le peuple de la Bible*. *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 20: 112.

1984

70. *Micah* (Hermeneia). Philadelphia: Fortress.
71. Review, A. Brenner, *Colour Terms in the Old Testament*. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 104: 767–68.
72. Review, Ralph L. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*. *Hebrew Studies* 25: 214.

1985

73. "A Difficult Curse in Aqht (19[1 Aqht] 3.152-154)," in *Biblical and Related Studies Presented to Samuel Iwry*, edd. S. Morschauer and A. Kort. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns. Pp. 105-7.
74. "Analyzing the Abominable: Our Understanding of Canaanite Religion," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 75: 253-69. (Reprinted in this volume as Chapter 16, pp. 230-44.)
75. Review, P. Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant. Journal of Biblical Literature* 104: 117-18.

1986

76. Review, John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament. Jewish Quarterly Review* 77: 73.

1987

77. "Covenant," *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade. Vol. 4. New York: Macmillan, and London: Collier Macmillan. Pp. 133-37.
78. "Dust: Some Aspects of Old Testament Imagery," in *Love and Death in the Ancient Near East*, edd. John Marks and R. M. Good. Guilford, CN: Four Quarters (Marvin Pope volume). Pp. 105-9. (Reprinted in this volume as Chapter 8, pp. 77-87.)
79. Review, Ernest W. Nicholson, *God and His People: Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament. Theology Today* 44: 271-72.

1988

80. Review, Walter A. Maier III, *Asherah: Extrabiblical Evidence. Journal of Biblical Literature* 107: 531-32.

1989

81. "Byblos," *International Encyclopedia of Communications*, vol. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. 219-20.
82. "William F. Albright as a Philologist," in *The Scholarship of William Foxwell Albright: An Appraisal*, ed. Gus W. Van Beek. Harvard Semitic Studies 33. Atlanta, GA: Scholars. Pp. 45-59.

1990

83. "Rite: Ceremonies of Law and Treaty in the Ancient Near East," in *Religion and Law: Biblical-Judaic and Islamic Perspectives*, edd. E. B. Firmage, B. G. Weiss, and J. W. Welch. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns. Pp. 351-64. (Reprinted in this volume as Chapter 12, pp. 192-204.)

1992

84. "Lamentations, Book of," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. New York: Doubleday. Vol. 4. Pp. 137-41.
85. "Micah, Book of," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. New York: Doubleday. Vol. 4 Pp.807-10.
86. "Two Readings in the Caravan Inscription Dunant, Baalshamin, No.45," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 286 (May): 35-37. (With Eleonora Cussini)

87. Review, Luciano Canfora, Mario Liverani, and Carlo Zaccagnini, *I trattati nel mondo antico: Forma, ideologia, funzione. Journal of the American Oriental Society* 112: 683–84.
88. *Lamentations* (Anchor Bible). Second, revised edition, Garden City, NY: Doubleday [first edition 1972].
- 1993**
89. “The Lamentations of Jeremiah,” in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, edd. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan. New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 419–20.
- 1995**
90. “Palmyrene Aramaic Inscriptions and the Old Testament, especially Amos 2:8,” *Zeitschrift für Althebraistik* 8: 55–62. (Reprinted in this volume as Chapter 17, pp. 245–53.)
91. “Some Performative Utterances in Biblical Hebrew,” in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, edd. David P. Wright, David Noel Freedman, and Avi Hurvitz. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns. Pp. 757–66. (Reprinted in this volume as Chapter 22, pp. 293–302.)
92. Review, Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt*, vol. 3, *Literature, Accounts, Lists. Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 57: 361–63.
93. “Notes on Palmyrene Aramaic Texts,” *ARAM* 7: 73–88.
- 1996**
94. *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. (With Eleonora Cussini)
- 1998**
95. “Two Notes on the Decameron (III vii 42–43 and VIII vii 64, IX v 48),” *Modern Language Notes* 113: 186–91. (Reprinted in this volume as Chapter 9, pp. 88–94.)
96. “Palmyrene Aramaic Inscriptions and the Bible,” *Zeitschrift für Althebraistik* 11: 32–49. (Reprinted in this volume as Chapter 18, pp. 254–74.)
97. “Foreword” to *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, by Albert Schweitzer. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins. Pp. ix–xiv.
- 2014**
98. *Poets Before Homer: Collected Essays on Ancient Literature*, ed. F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.
99. “‘Poets Before Homer’: Archaeology and the Western Literary Tradition,” in *Poets Before Homer: Collected Essays on Ancient Literature*, ed. F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns. [W. F. Albright Lecture at the Johns Hopkins University, 1992.] Pp. 1–25.
100. “*Salamalecchi*: Formulas of Greeting and ‘Salute Jerusalem’ (Ps 122:6–9),” in *Poets Before Homer: Collected Essays on Ancient Literature*, ed. F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns. Pp. 61–68.
101. “A Proposal for a Difficult Line in Keret: *lm ank ksp*,” in *Poets Before Homer: Collected Essays on Ancient Literature*, ed. F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns. Pp. 222–24.

Appendix B

Doctoral Dissertations Directed at the Johns Hopkins University

1966

1. Thomas McDaniel, "Philological Studies in Lamentations." Published as "Philological Studies in Lamentations. I," *Biblica* 49 (1968) 27-53; "Philological Studies in Lamentations. II," *Biblica* 49 (1968) 199-220.

1967

2. Simon Parker, "Studies in the Grammar of Ugaritic Prose Texts."

1968

3. J. K. Stark, "Personal Names in Palmyrene Inscriptions." Published as *Personal Names in Palmyrene Inscriptions*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1971.

1970

4. Thomas Jackson, "Words in Parallelism in Old Testament Poetry."

1972

5. James Rimbach, "Animal Imagery in the Old Testament."

1973

6. David Thompson, "The Order of Adverbial Modifiers in Genesis and Proverbs: A Study in the Syntax of Hebrew Poetry."
7. Ivan Trujillo, "The Ugaritic Ritual for a Sacrificial Meal Honoring the Good Gods (Text CTA: 23)."
8. David Bryan, "Texts Relating to the Marzeah: A Study of an Ancient Semitic Institution."

1974

9. David Burke, "The Poetry of Baruch: A Reconstruction and Analysis of the Original Hebrew Text of Baruch 3:9-5:9." Published as *The Poetry of Baruch: A Reconstruction and Analysis of the Original Hebrew Text of Baruch 3:9-5:9*. Society of Biblical Literature, Septuagint and Cognate Studies, No. 10. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982.
10. James Lindenberger, "The Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar." Published as *The Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar*. The Johns Hopkins University Near Eastern Studies. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983.

1978

11. Michael Barré, "The God-List in the Treaty between Hannibal and Philip V of Macedonia." Published as *The God-List in the Treaty between Hannibal and Philip V of Macedonia: A Study in Light of the Ancient Near Eastern*

Treaty Tradition. The Johns Hopkins University Near Eastern Studies. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983.

12. Suzanne Richard, "The End of the Early Bronze Age in Palestine/Transjordan: A Study of the Post-EB III Cultural Complex." Some of her results published as "Toward a Consensus of Opinion on the End of the Early Bronze Age in Palestine-Transjordan," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 237 (1980) 5–34.

1981

13. Robert Owens, "The Genesis and Exodus Citations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage." Published as *The Genesis and Exodus Citations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage*. Monographs of the Peshitta Institute, Leiden, vol. 3. Leiden: Brill, 1983.

1982

14. Rick Marrs, "The *šyry-hm šwt* (Psalms 120–134): A Philological and Stylistic Analysis."

1992

15. F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "Weep, O Daughter of Zion: A Study of the City-Lament Genre in the Hebrew Bible." Published as *Weep, O Daughter of Zion: A Study of the City-Lament Genre in the Hebrew Bible*. Biblica et orientalia. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1993.
16. Eleonora Cussini, "The Aramaic Law of Sale and the Cuneiform Legal Tradition."

1993

17. William R. Scott, "The Booths of Ancient Israel's Autumn Festival." Published as *The Booths of Ancient Israel's Autumn Festival*. BIBAL Dissertation Series 4. North Richland Hills, TX: D. & F. Scott Publishing, 1997.

1996

18. Tawny Holm, "A Biblical Story-Collection: Daniel 1–6." Published as *Of Courtiers and Kings: The Biblical Daniel Narratives and Ancient Near Eastern Story-Collections*. Explorations in Ancient Near Eastern Civilizations 1. Winoona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013.

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POETS BEFORE HOMER

“WHAT IS THE MOST INTERESTING and impressive sort of archaeological object from the ancient Near East? . . . I would invite you to think about artifacts recovered by archaeology that are . . . more insubstantial even than a lacy papyrus. I refer to things made of words. I am not thinking of texts, exactly, but to the building blocks of which literary texts are made, to traditional metaphors and similes, to traditional topics in poetry and prose, to the devices of form and content which were the stock in trade of poets.” This is from the title essay of this volume which collects and reprints many of Delbert R. Hillers’s most important published essays and articles, his long out-of-print *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets*, and three previously unpublished essays, including the aforementioned “Poets Before Homer: Archaeology and the Western Literary Tradition.” Hillers gave the latter as the 1992 William Foxwell Albright Lecture at The Johns Hopkins University and in it uses Ernst Robert Curtius’s *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, with its “topological” method, as a model for exploring the connections of the most ancient Near Eastern literatures (including the Bible) to later Western literature. Though one of his latest pieces of writing, “Poets Before Homer” represents, as Hillers himself recognized, a fairly clear statement of what he had been doing in much of his earlier scholarship and the volume collects the best of this earlier scholarship. Most of these essays work themselves out from a particular passage, theme, topos, image, or grammatical issue, and gain their interpretive vantage point by reading said passage, etc. comparatively, whether in light of relevant ancient Near Eastern and/or more recent European literary parallels or with reference to some more theoretical interest, such as modern linguistic theory. Hillers’s habit of mind ran toward the particular, toward the individual detail. His genius—if this word may be used—was in his capacity to seize upon one aspect of some larger entity, problem, or topic, to work it through, thoroughly and, as often as not, decisively, all the while resisting the temptation to take up the larger, perhaps un(re)solvable complex of which the detail or problem was but a part. The worked example is the Hillersian trademark—*exemplum* followed by *moralisatio*—and *Poets Before Homer* collects all of his best.



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