

THE CONCEPT OF BIBLICAL SHEOL WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF
ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN BELIEFS

A thesis presented

by

Ruth Rosenberg

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ABSTRACT

This study sets out to redefine the concept of the biblical nether-world designated שְׁאוֹל, by focusing on the specific contexts within which it is mentioned as well as on the contexts of its semantic equivalents in the Bible. In the course of this study former views are reviewed and modifications suggested on the basis of different interpretations and in the light of new comparative material.

In Chapter 1 previously proposed etymologies of שְׁאוֹל are surveyed and their linguistic and semantic adequacy critically evaluated. This study proposes a semantic development leading from Hebrew/Aramaic שָׁאַל - 'to inquire' > 'to call to account' > and probably 'to punish' as relevant.

Chapter 2 examines the contexts in which the semantic equivalents of Sheol appear. It is demonstrated that the contexts of בֹּרַח - 'pit', a semantic equivalent of Sheol, always imply the realm of divine punishment, while שְׁחַת - 'pit', another semantic equivalent of Sheol, appears in a similar context in all but one instance. This chapter further indicates the similarities between the biblical vocable מוֹת - 'the realm of death', which parallels Sheol, and its Ugaritic counterpart *Môt*. These two concepts share a number of physical attributes. The suggestions conveyed by these attributes, however, are basically different. In Ugaritic literature they symbolize the intrinsic aggressiveness of the realm of *Môt*, but in biblical literature they serve to convey divine retributive

judgement, thus raising a natural power onto an ethical plane. In the case of yet another semantic equivalent of Sheol, ארץ - 'netherworld', there are a number of similarities between the biblical and extra-biblical concepts. Its range of meaning, however, in comparison to biblical Sheol, seems to be both wider and more neutral. While generally having negative denotations, it may appear in neutral and even once in a positive context. Sheol, on the other hand, is attested to in a negative context only, implying divine wrath and judgement.

In Chapter 3 an examination of the contexts in which Sheol proper appears indicates that it is almost exclusively associated with unnatural death. Such a death, implying divine judgement, is further suggested by a literary use of ordeal terminology derived from Babylonian sources. The relationship of this terminology to the biblical אִיָּה - 'catastrophe' has been discussed in an excursus and its Babylonian affinities indicated.

Chapter 4 deals with the descriptive details of Sheol and points out their paucity and vagueness in comparison with extra-biblical accounts of the netherworld. It is shown that most of the physical features of Sheol — cords, snares and fetters — may be explained as conveying the idea of inescapability of divine judgement.

Chapter 5 deals with the ancient Near Eastern notion of 'evil death' as distinguished from natural death, and indicates the relationship between such a death and the denizens of Sheol. The discussion focuses particularly on two groups — Rephaim and Belial. The former are considered in the light of Ugaritic texts. While in both Ugaritic and biblical texts Rephaim are heroic figures, in the Bible the attitude to them seems to be negative and

a polemic vein against a belief in their power may be detected. Part of the explanation for this may be suggested by hints of an ancient myth recounting the unsuccessful rebellion of the Sons of El, among whom the Rephaim may have been numbered. A second group of the dwellers of Sheol are the Belial. This designation is transferred by metonymy from the name of the underworld river to a special category of transgressors — the Belial. These are violators of the basic norms of ethical behavior of Israelite society. These norms are stipulated in the covenant between the Israelite and his fellow man. As a violator of these norms, the Belial merits an 'evil death', and since he cannot be pardoned, he will never rise from Sheol.

The conclusion reached by this study is that the most formative influence on the concept of Sheol on the Bible was the view of God as the divine judge. It was this notion that prescribed the limits of the borrowings from neighboring cultures, entirely precluding a profusion of elements incompatible with the concept of ethical judgement. And it was this notion that accounts for the restriction of descriptive detail of Sheol in the Bible to a bare minimum. The emphasis is on a situation rather than on a locale, the situation of a person under judgement in a place of judgement suggested by the etymology of Sheol — Place of judgement.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible.
AfO	Archiv für Orientforschung. Graz.
AHW	Akkadisches Handwörterbuch. Wiesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz, 1965-1966.
AJSL	American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures. Chicago.
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts. Ed. J. B. Pritchard. 3rd ed. with supplement. Princeton, 1969.
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament. Neukirchen-Vluyn.
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research in Jerusalem and Baghdad. New Haven.
BDB	Brown, F., Driver, S. R., Briggs, C. A. Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972.
CAD	The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. Oriental Institute, Chicago.
CTA	Corpus des Tablettes en Cunéiformes Alphabétiques. Paris, Imprimerie Nationale.
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments. Göttingen.
GB	Gesenius, W., and Buhl, F., Hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament. 17 Aufl. Leipzig, 1915.
HAR	Hebrew Annual Review. Vol. I. Ed. Hayon, D., Division of Hebrew Language and Literature. Ohio State University, 1977.
HTR	Harvard Theological Review. Cambridge (Mass.).
JANES	Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University. New York.
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society. New Haven.
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature. Philadelphia.
JESHO	Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient. Leiden.

- JNES Journal of Near Eastern Studies. Chicago
- JPOS Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society. Leipzig-Jerusalem.
- JRAS Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland. London.
- JSS Journal of Semitic Studies. Manchester.
- KAR Ebeling, E. Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts. Leipzig, 1915-23.
- KAT Kommentar zum Alten Testament. Leipzig.
- KB Koehler, L., and Baumgartner, W. Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros. Leiden, 1953.
- LSS Leipziger Semitische Studien. Leipzig.
- MAoG Mitteilungen der Altorientalischen Gesellschaft. Berlin, Leipzig.
- OTL Old Testament Library.
- PRU III Palais Royal d'Ugarit. Paris, Imprimerie Nationale.
- RA Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale. Paris.
- THw Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament. Bd. I. Ed. Jenni, E., and Westermann, Cl. München, Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1971.
- TW Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament. Ed. Botterweck, G. J., und Ringgren, H. Vols. I-II. Stuttgart, Berlin, Köln, Mainz, 1977.
- UF Ugarit-Forschungen.
- VT Vetus Testamentum.
- WMANT Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testaments. Neukirchen.
- ZA Zeitschrift für Assyriologie.
- ZAW Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft.

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R. R.

Introduction

THE STUDY OF SHEOL

For ancient man death was not the end of life. Death constituted the transition from one mode of existence to another - from earthly life to afterlife in a realm of its own. In the Bible this realm is most commonly designated שְׁאוֹל.

A culture's values are reflected in its conception of this afterworld and a study of these conceptions is therefore revealing. To emphasize the uniqueness of the Old Testament netherworld, biblical scholars have studied the concept of שְׁאוֹל on a comparative basis. The cultures most often considered in earlier studies were those of Greece and Mesopotamia, while more recent studies have drawn upon Egyptian and especially Ugaritic sources.¹ Much of the Mesopotamian data adduced, however, is dated and more recent editions of these texts need be consulted. As for the Ugaritic sources, they too have often been used to point out the similarities between biblical and Canaanite concepts, the differences

1. Reference to alleged parallels in ancient Greek sources abound in the treatises listed in Note 2 p. 2. Babylonian and biblical beliefs were compared by A. Jeremias, "Hölle und Paradies bei den Babyloniern," *Der Alte Orient* (Leipzig, 1903), pp. 3-43; M. Jastrow, *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria* (Boston, 1898), pp. 606f.; P. Jensen, *Die Kosmologie der Babylonier* (Strassburg, 1890); A. Bertholet, "Zu den babylonischen und israelitischen Unterweltvorstellungen," *Festschrift P. Haupt* (Leipzig, 1926), pp. 9-18; W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, Vol. 2 (London, 1964), pp. 210-213. For a comprehensive comparison of Egyptian and biblical notions see J. Zandee, *Death as an Enemy* (Leiden, 1960). The Ugaritic material has been compared to biblical concepts by N. J. Tromp, *Primitive Concepts of Death and the Netherworld in the Old Testament* (Rome, 1969). Comparisons between the two cultures concerning the netherworld are also found in M. Dahood's commentary: *Psalms*, Vols. 1-3 (1962, 1966, 1970).

between the two often being neglected. Accordingly, the present study will include a re-evaluation of some Babylonian and Ugaritic material.²

Both in early and in more recent studies the concept of שְׁאוֹל was commonly discussed within the framework of more general themes connected with death. Its unique characteristic and the specific context of its mention were not sufficiently emphasized. The characteristics of שְׁאוֹל were deduced from treatises focused on such topics as ancestor worship, immortality of the soul or resurrection,³ and discussed mainly to the extent that they were supposed to reflect those beliefs. The nature of שְׁאוֹל was also inadequately defined from another point of view. Guided by the frequent occurrence of שְׁאוֹל paralleled by מוֹת - 'death,' or 'the realm of death,'⁴ scholars assumed semantic equality between the two and was regarded as the common designation of the abode of all the dead, "the meeting house of all the living" (Job 33:23). At the same time these scholars noted that שְׁאוֹל was mainly, if not exclusively, attested to in a specific context: in connection with 'evil death' and the fate of the

2. Since, in older studies, analogy to the Greek culture is of a broad and general nature, it will not be considered in this study; the Egyptian concepts are not directly related to the biblical ones, and will be alluded to but rarely.

3. E.g., J. Frey, *Tod, Seelenglaube und Seelenkult im alten Israel* (Leipzig, 1898); C. Grueneisen, *Der Ahnenkultus und die Urreligion Israels* (Halle, 1900); P. Torge, *Seelenglaube und Unsterblichkeitshoffnung im Alten Testament* (Leipzig, 1909); R. Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life*, English trans. J. P. Smith (Edinburgh and London, 1960); L. Wächter, *Der Tod im Alten Testament* (Stuttgart, 1964), with a comprehensive list of the more general treatises on pp. 206-214.

4. Isa. 28:15, 18, 38:18; Hos. 13:14; Ps. 6:6, 18:6//2 Sam. 22:6, 49:15, 89:49, 116:3; Prov. 5:5, 2:27; Cant. 8:6. In a sequence: Ps. 9:14, 18, 88:4-6; Prov. 23:13-14. Ps 55:6 may also be adduced, but the text in this psalm is not clear.

wicked.⁵ And yet they considered the more general meaning of שׂאֵל to be its normative meaning. But most recent research in poetic parallelism has indicated that the choice of fixed pairs of words in parallel arrangement at best serves to indicate connotative values and not denotation.⁶ The normative meaning of שׂאֵל has therefore to be reconsidered.

It should also be emphasized that the nature of biblical שׂאֵל has often been erroneously elucidated by adduction of post-biblical beliefs. It is true that there is insufficient biblical data to allow us to draw a chronological sequence⁷ of the development of the שׂאֵל concept. Yet in early post-biblical times the notion of afterlife and consequently the nature of שׂאֵל underwent a significant transformation and may not be used to project biblical beliefs.⁸

In the present study, in order to arrive at a more precise meaning of שׂאֵל, greater emphasis will be placed on the specific context in which it and its semantic equivalents appear. An attempt will be made to

5. H. Bueckers, *Die Unsterblichkeitslehre des Weisheitsbuches* (Muenster, 1938), p. 74; A. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels* (Chicago and London, 1963), pp. 184-186; C. Barth, *Die Errettung vom Tode in den individuellen Klage- und Dankliedern des Alten Testaments* (Zollingen, 1947), pp. 144-145; L. Wächter, *op. cit.*, pp. 54, 55, 191.

6. A. B. Lord, "Homer, Perry and Huso," *American Journal of Archeology* 52 (1948) 34-44; A. B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960); P. B. Yoder, "A-B Pairs and Oral Composition in Hebrew Poetry," *VT* 21 (1971), esp. 473, 481.

7. Such attempts have been made by A. Lods, *La croyance à la vie future et le culte des morts dans l'antiquité israélite* (Paris, 1906). More recent attempts are by W. Rudolph, "Amos," *KAT*, Vol. 13, 2 (Güttersloh, 1971), p. 245, and S. Terrien, "Amos and Wisdom," *Israel's Prophetic Heritage*, Festschrift S. Muilenburg, p. 111. The concept of שׂאֵל had best been treated on a phenomenological basis rather than an historic one.

8. In the present study, rarely and only when firmly rooted in the Bible, has an idea been traced to post-biblical times.

establish the frame of reference of the images used in describing לַאֲשֶׁר.
Throughout, the methods used will be inductive rather than deductive.⁹

9. Unless otherwise indicated, biblical quotations are from the Revised Standard Version. Quotations from Job are according to the translation of M. H. Pope, "Job," *The Anchor Bible*, Vol. 15 (Doubleday, 1965). Quotations from the Psalms and Isaiah are according to The Jewish Publication Society of America (Philadelphia, 1972 and 1973, respectively).

Chapter I

שְׁאֵל - PROPOSED ETYMOLOGIES

The special term שְׁאֵל, used in biblical Hebrew to refer to the netherworld and the realm of the dead, does not occur in any other Semitic language.

The substantive שְׁאֵל is attested sixty-five times in the Bible;¹ all but eight² occurrences are in poetic texts. The noun has a qitāl form and is apparently considered to be feminine.³ It appears rarely in defective orthography⁴ and is always used without the article, i.e., as a proper noun.

No consensus has been reached among scholars as to the etymology of שְׁאֵל. The efforts to determine its root and discover its primary meaning can be divided into two main categories:⁵ (a) proposals which derive the

1. The MT שְׁאֵלָה of Isa. 7:11 should be emended to שְׁאֵל according to Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, thus bringing the total to sixty-six.

2. Gen. 37:35, 42:38, 44:29,31; Num. 16:30,33; I King 2:6,9.

3. So Isa. 5:14, 14:9a; Ps. 86:13. Job 26:6 does not prove the contrary since the adjective precedes the noun. Cf. G. R. Driver, "Hebrew Studies," *JRAS* (1948) 164-176. In Isa. 14:9,b,c, however, the subject seems to be masculine.

4. Seven times in BH³: I King. 2:6; Job 17:16; Gen. 37:35, 44:29, 31; Num. 16:30,33. The last five references with h locative.

5. The suggestions offered in Gesenius' *Thesaurus* (Lipsiae, 1829), 1348, which derive שְׁאֵל from Arabic roots, are too precarious to be considered from a linguistic as well as a semantic point of view. The root سول, indicating 'flaccid belly,' is semantically inappropriate; besides, it lacks the medial 'alef. شول, indicating 'scarcity of liquid,' is semantically inappropriate, lacks the medium 'alef, and does not conform according to accepted phonetic correspondence to Hebrew שְׁ.

noun שְׁאוּל from an Akkadian equivalent, and (b) proposals which explain the word by means of a Hebrew root.

a.1. In 1881, Delitzsch referred to an Akkadian noun, *šū'ālu*,⁶ alleged to have the meaning of netherworld, which he claimed to have found in a number of Sumero-Akkadian vocabularies, and which he equated with biblical שְׁאוּל. This deduction, based on erroneous interpretation of the term *šū'ālu*, was soon challenged by Jensen,⁷ but nevertheless enjoyed wide acceptance as a result of which it entered the biblical commentaries.⁸

Although Delitzsch himself abandoned this interpretation, his early proposal can still be found as a possible etymology in a recent monograph dealing with the biblical concept of the netherworld,⁹ and in the current editions of the BDB *Lexicon*.¹⁰ Von Soden, in a recent review article,¹¹ discusses this erroneous interpretation and indicates that the sign *šū* is not the first syllable of the word but a scribal shorthand device

6. F. Delitzsch, *Wo Lag das Paradies* (Leipzig, 1881), p. 121.

7. P. Jensen, *Die Kosmologie der Babylonier* (Strassburg, 1890), pp. 222-24.

8. This etymology was accepted by A. Jeremias, *Die babylonisch-assyrischen Vorstellungen von Leben nach dem Tode* (Leipzig, 1887), 62; M. Jastrow, "The Babylonian Term SU'ĀLU," *AJSL* 14 (1897) 165-170; H. Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos* (Göttingen, 1895), p. 154.

9. N. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Netherworld in the Old Testament* (Rome, 1969), p. 21; henceforth cited as *Primitive Conceptions*.

10. F. Brown, S. Driver and C. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, reprinted with corrections (London, 1972), p. 982 (listed as 'dubious').

11. W. von Soden, "Assyriologische Erwägungen zu einem neuen Buch über die Totenreichvorstellungen im Alten Testament," *UF* 2 (1970) 331-332.

indicating that the word in the right-hand column is identical with that in the left. This etymology is therefore to be rejected.

α.2. Another Akkadian etymology suggested by Albright¹² in 1926 attempts to derive the biblical שְׁאֵל from Akkadian Šu'ara - the abode of Tammuz in the underworld. Albright bases his theory on the common interchange of *r* and *l*. Šu'ara, he claims, is a modification of Šubaru, the name of a town in southern Babylonia and a famous center of the Tammuz cult. Tammuz, god of vegetation, was believed to spend part of his time in the underworld. According to Albright's theory, a general notion of the underworld evolved from the specific cult center in Šubaru. Though later abandoned by Albright himself, this assumption was accepted by Baumgartner, who adduced additional details to substantiate it.¹³ This etymology is also regarded as noteworthy in the recently issued *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*.¹⁴ However, Šu-ba-ri in CT 16 Pl 6, a text upon which Albright based his interpretation, has been shown by Jacobsen to be a corruption of Ku-ba-ri,¹⁵ and therefore this etymology should also be rejected.

12. W. F. Albright, "Mesopotamian Elements in Canaanite Eschatology," *Oriental Studies in Commemoration of Paul Haupt* (Baltimore, 1926), 151-152.

13. W. Baumgartner, "Zur Etymologie von Sheol," *Theologische Zeitschrift* (1946) 233-235.

14. (München, 1976), p. 838 (entry written by G. Gerleman); henceforth cited as *THw*.

15. Th. Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King List: Assyriological Studies* No. 11 (Chicago, 1939), p. 88, n.126. Cf. also I. J. Gelb, *Hurrians and Subarians* (Chicago, 1944), pp. 94ff.

a.3. Jensen¹⁶ connects שָׁלָאן with the common belief, attested both in ancient Babylonia and Egypt, in the nocturnal descent of the sun to the netherworld. He refers to *šilān/šillān*, a noun which appears on a tablet of synonymous words, as parallel to 'sunset': *ši-la-an = ereb d^aSamši*.¹⁷ Jensen suggests that biblical שָׁלָאן derives from Akkadian *Sil(l)ān*. This etymology, which is linguistically plausible as the ending *ān* constitutes a nominal element, is of some interest because of the evidence from Ugarit on the sun's descent to the netherworld, whether as a mythological event¹⁸ or on her regular nocturnal circuit. There is, however, no clear evidence that such a belief is shared in the Bible.¹⁹

b. *Etymologies based on Hebrew roots*

b.1. An etymology for שָׁלָאן suggested by Koehler²⁰ is treated at

16. In a review article in ZA 5 (1890) 131. Cf. A. Jeremias, *Das Alte Testament im Lichte des Alten Orients* (Leipzig, 1906), p. 399, Anm 3. For *šilān* cf. von Soden, *Ahw*, p. 1235(b): "*šilān*, auch *sillan* 'bei Sonnen eintauchen' im Westen." His reference to *šīlu I* 'Vertiefung,' which appears in an omīna text, does not seem applicable here since it refers to a shallow indentation such as is found in the liver of an animal.

17. Published by Scheib, RA 14, p. 167. More recently by A. Draffkorn-Kilmer, JAOS, 83 (1963), 442, line 63.

18. E.g., CTA 3 V 25-26; CTA 4 VIII 21-22; CTA 6 VI 41-48. See also J. de Moor, *The Seasonal Pattern in the Ugaritic Myth of Ba'al*, AOAT 16 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1971), pp. 114, 183-184; M. Tsevat, "Sun Mountains of Ugarit," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 3 (1974) 71-73; S. E. Loewenstamm, "CTA 4 VIII 1-35," *Eretz Israel*, Vol. 14, F. L. Ginsberg Volume, 1978 (Hebrew; English summary, p. 122*).

19. According to Tromp, Job 17:2, a partly unintelligible verse, includes the name of the two hills *tilym* bordering the entrance to the netherworld (CTA 4 VIII 8:4) where the sun descends. He also interprets *wōhmrwtm* in the second colon of v.2 as a dual form of *hmry* referring to the double deep. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions*, pp. 54-55, 144, 185.

20. L. Koehler, "Alttestamentliche Wortforschung: Sh^eōl," *ThZ* 2 (1946) 71-74, elaborated upon by the author in "Problems in the language of the O.T.," *JSS* I (1956) 19-20.

length in the recently published *THW*.²¹ Koehler derives שָׂאֵל from the Hebrew root שִׂאָה. He assumes an ancient form *שִׂאָה/שָׂאֵל with an epenthetic final consonant 'ל', and from this root he derives the nouns שִׂאֵן, שִׂאִיה, and שִׂאָה. "All of these, and also the verb itself, however, if we note its use, must have the heightened sense of a district or domain which is called desolate waste-lying place. This is best expressed by 'No Land.' It means the world ... where are found shadowiness, decay, remoteness from God ... Nothingness."²²

Beside the hypothetical nature of *שִׂאָה > שָׂאֵל, the semantic denotation of שִׂאָה is by no means unequivocal, and the nouns which Koehler lists as derivations denoting "something desolate or devastated" are listed in the standard dictionaries of biblical Hebrew as having disparate meanings. According to Gesenius, שִׂאָה combines the meaning of noise with that of desolation: "שִׂאָה verbindet lärmern und wüste, verwüstet (krachend zusammenstürzen)."²³ It should be stressed, however, that the sense of 'devastation' is derived from only one biblical source, Isa. 6:11. While BDB follow Gesenius' interpretation, they seem to feel that the connotation of noise, *din*, is primary: "Make a din or crash into ruins ... storm, devastation."²⁴ This definition is certainly applicable to שִׂאֵן in Isaiah 17:12 and Jer. 51:55, where the word is used to describe the roar of

21. *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament* (München, 1976), pp. 838-839.

22. Koehler, "Alttestamentliche Wortforschung," p. 20.

23. W. Gesenius in F. Buhl's edition (Leipzig, 1921), p. 796b.

24. BDB (1972).

waves. Probably also the collocation בֹּרַחַן שְׁאֵל (Ps. 40:3), the 'pit of roaring waters' seems more in accord with the watery nature of שְׁאֵל than 'pit of destruction.' Koehler's suggestion, therefore, does not commend itself.

Other attempts to derive שְׁאֵל from a Hebrew root point to various semantic aspects of the meaning of the verb שָׁאַל - 'to ask.'

b.2. Jeremias²⁵ suggests "fordern, zur Entscheidung fordern," hence, שְׁאֵל - "Ort der Entscheidung." This meaning, according to Jeremias, assumed a weaker connotation in biblical Hebrew, connoting "Ort der Ein(for)derung." It is in this sense, Jeremias contends, that the word is used in Hab. 2:5, Prov. 30:16, and Cant. 8:6. However, neither is this proposed meaning for the root שָׁאַל the primary meaning according to biblical evidence, nor is the development from "Ort der Entscheidung" to "Ort der Einforderung" an obvious one. Hab. 2:5 and Prov. 30:15, and probably also Cant. 8:6, will have to be interpreted along different lines, taking into account the Ugaritic description of the realm of Môt, as will be shown later.

b.3. Jastrow's proposal focuses on the meaning 'inquire' for biblical שְׁאֵל, and assigns to it the special connotation of 'religious inquiry,' namely, the inquiry by the living of the dead. He concludes that "there is every reason for the netherworld to describe this function of the dead"; hence, שְׁאֵל - "place of inquiry, a place where an oracle can be obtained."²⁶

25. A. Jeremias, *Die Babylonisch-Assyrischen Vorstellungen vom Leben nach dem Tode* (Leipzig, 1887), pp. 62, 109.

26. M. Jastrow, "The Babylonian term ŠU'ÂLU," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 14 (1897-98) 169-170.

König²⁷ accepted this interpretation in reference to I Sam. 28:7, and Gaster²⁸ called it "the most plausible view" with references to (forbidden) necromantic practices in Deut. 18:11 and I Chron. 10:13, where the root שאל is used in this meaning.

Close investigation of the Hebrew verbs denoting the act of inquiry, however, indicates that the verb דרש rather than שאל is the technical term in biblical Hebrew for necromancy. It is the verb דרש and not שאל which is employed in I Sam. 28:7, the story describing the practice of necromancy by the witch of Endor, which is the passage upon which König based his etymology of שאול. It is noteworthy that Ben Sira, in reference to this passage, uses the verb דרש: "Even after his death he [Samuel] was consulted [= נדרש]." ²⁹ In earlier sources, the root דרש is used wherever necromancy is mentioned. ³⁰ Both of the passages adduced by Gaster to substantiate his assumption that the use of the root שאל in necromancy determined the name for the underworld שאול are considered by Westermann to indicate a late usage reflecting a period when the technical distinction between דרש and שאל was no longer strictly observed. ³¹ But in I Chron. 10:13 the roots דרש and שאל are used side by side and outside

27. E. König, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*³ (Leipzig, 1933), p. 474.

28. T. H. Gaster, in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York-Nashville, 1962), pp. 787-788.

29. Ben Sira 46:20(b).

30. Isaiah 8:19, 19:3.

31. C. Westermann, "Die Begriffe für Fragen und Suchen im Alten Testament," *Kerygma und Dogma* 6 (Göttingen, 1960) 2-30, esp. 23.

the syntactical framework of the verse. The verse is a conflation of I Sam. 28:7 - where שׂוּר is employed - and Deut. 18:11 - where שׂוֹאֵל is employed, as observed by Talmon.³² We are left with only one source in which שׂוֹאֵל is used with necromancy, Deut. 18:11, hardly enough to warrant the conclusion that the verb was ever used as the technical term for this practice.

Even were the assumption that the root שׂוֹאֵל primarily denotes necromancy to be maintained, the association between this practice and שׂוֹאֵל would have been by inference only, since nowhere is שׂוֹאֵל proper explicitly associated with this practice. The spirits are called up from אֶרֶץ - the underworld, the lower regions of the earth - which, as will be indicated below, is a wider and more neutral designation for the realm of the dead than שׂוֹאֵל proper.

b.4. Drawing on another aspect of the meaning of the root שׂוֹאֵל, Albright, having apparently rejected his own earlier proposal discussed above, proposed: "Just as *huršan* meant 'place of ordeal' and 'underworld,' so Canaanite-Hebrew *še'ol* seems to have meant etymologically 'examination, ordeal' and then 'underworld'," i.e., it stems from an originally forensic use.³³ Albright draws attention to the practice of examining the accused on earth as a parallel to the examination of the shades in the underworld.³⁴ A similar association between the root שׂוֹאֵל, in its connotation of 'to interrogate' (and, by extension, the concept 'to put through

32. S. Talmon, "Double Readings in the Masoretic Text," *Textus* I (1960) 164.

33. W. F. Albright, in a review of M. Pope's "El in the Ugaritic Texts," *JBL* 75 (1956) 257.

34. No source reference is given by Albright to illustrate this practice.

an ordeal') and biblical שאל, has been proposed by McCarter in his article on the River Ordeal in the Old Testament.³⁵

Following this line of interpretation it should be noted that there is indeed ample evidence for a technical meaning of the root שאל in a forensic context in biblical Hebrew as well as in the cognate languages. In the Old Testament this meaning is attested in the case of a rebellious city: "You shall investigate and inquire and interrogate [שאל] thoroughly" (Deut. 13:15); in the context of false accusation by malicious witnesses: "Who questions [שאל] me about things I do not know" (Ps. 35:11); in a judicial inquiry: שאלנה (Ezra 5:9-10). In a text from Ugarit, š'lm occurs as the technical name for controllers who have the duty of investigation.³⁶ The use of the root שאל in a similar forensic sense in Akkadian is attested in the Amarna Letters: *sarru^{nu}be-li-ia la-aš-al-ni*, "may the King my lord not call me to account."³⁷ Similarly, in an Akkadian text from Ugarit: "And he who shall annul this gift, may the storm-god, the lord of Mount Casius, interrogate him [*li-iš-al-šu*]."³⁸ Significantly, the verb שאל is mentioned in a passage describing Gilgamesh as judge of the underworld, which is patterned after the procedure of terrestrial judgment:

35. P. K. McCarter, "The River Ordeal in Israelite Literature," *Harvard Theological Review* 66 (1973) 408, n.20.

36. Ch. Virolleaud, *Palais Royal d'Ugarit, II*, text 161:5; cf. O. Eissfeldt, "The Alphabetical Cuneiform Texts from Ras Shamra," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 5 (1960) 32, 45.

37. J. A. Knudson, *Die El-Amarna Tafeln* (Leipzig: Vorderasiatische Bibliothek, 1915), I, No.251:5-6.

38. J. Nougayrol, *Palais Royal d'Ugarit, III*, 16.157.

You stand in the underworld and give final verdict
 Your judgment is not altered, nor is your utterance neglected
 You question [ta-šal], you inquire, you give judgment
 You watch and you put things right.³⁹

c. We propose the development *ša'al* > to call to account > to punish.

In a letter from Iasmah-Addu to a deity dating from the Assyrian domination of Mari, the writer recalls an offender who violated an oath and was punished by the deity: "You learned of it, you called him to account > you punished him [ta-ša-al-šu]." ⁴⁰ This nuance of meaning is even more unequivocal on the reverse side of the same letter. A similar word is employed in a context which mentions the retribution of the addressed deity to *Iahdun-Lim* who destroyed the deity's temple:

Your temple which previous kings [had made] he destroyed
 and built....You went out and punished (?) [ta-ša-al-šu]
 him, and his own servants slew him (ll. 10-12).

Commenting on the word *šâlum* in these contexts, Oppenheim proposes "A meaning 'to reject, forsake, punish' or the like seems to be required by the context."⁴¹ The same verb is attested in two poetic passages where a similar context of retributive justice meted out by a deity seems to

39. N. G. Lambert, "Gilgamesh in Religious, Historical and Omen Texts and the Historicity of Gilgamesh," in *Gilgamesh et sa Légende*, Etudes recueillies par Paul Sorelli, VII, *Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale* (Paris, 1958), 40, line 5. Text by P. Haupt, *Das Babylonische Nimrod Epos*, No. 53.

40. G. Dossin, *Archives Royales de Mari* (Paris, 1949), I, No. 3.14.

41. A. L. Oppenheim, "The Archives of the Palace of Mari. A Review Article," *JNES* 11 (1952) 130; henceforth cited as "Archives."

be implied. In the *Šamaš* Hymn the verb is used in connection with the divine reaction to a dishonest merchant:⁴²

If he demanded repayment before the agreed date there will
be guilt (?) [*iš-ša-al*] upon him. [Cf. CAD A1, 98b: "will
be brought to account.]

The second passage is a prayer to *Ištar* in which a suffering suppliant asks alleviation of his pain caused by the anger of the deity:⁴³

Take his hand that he be not [*iš-ša-al* x(x)] punished (?)
(1. 160).

Concerning this verb Lambert notes: "The form *iš-ša-al* may be presumed to come from *ša'ālu*, but the usual meaning 'ask' seems impossible here." Lambert therefore refers to the above-cited Mari texts as well as to the *Šamaš* Hymn and concludes about the latter: "The line is ambiguous but if it does consist of synonymous parallelism the first verb must indicate something unpleasant."⁴⁴ We propose a semantic development from inquire > call to account > punish. This meaning seems to us also to be implied in two additional Mari texts,⁴⁵ Although given the context of a military activity in which this verb is attested to in these texts, the meaning 'to attack, turn against' proposed by Oppenheim⁴⁶ may be considered primary.

42. W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford, 1960), 132-33, 1.115.

43. W. G. Lambert, "Three Literary Prayers," *AfO* 19 (1960) 53.

44. *Ibid.*

45. G. Dossin, "Benjaminites dans les Texts de Mari," *Mélanges syriens offerts à M. R. Dussaud* (Paris, 1939), 992, 1.20.

46. Ch. F. Jean, *Archives Royales de Mari II. Lettres Diverses* (Paris, 1950), No. 62 rev. 11.15-16. Oppenheim, "Archives," p. 130.

In Aramaic this semantic development is attested in several fifth-century texts where the term for being 'strictly called to account and reprimanded,' according to Driver, is *tšt'z* in Itp^eel.⁴⁷ The sense of 'to punish' was suggested as preferable in these texts by Benveniste.⁴⁸

To appreciate the possible relevance of the root *שאל* denoting 'to interrogate,' 'call to account,' and possibly 'to punish' for the understanding of biblical *שאל* and its etymology, we shall first have to discuss its semantic equivalents and the contexts in which they appear. For it is through examination of the equivalents that the nuances and potential meanings of the word *שאל* itself become clear.

47. G. R. Driver, *Aramaic Documents of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford, 1954), No. 4:3-4, 7:9, 12:8.

48. E. Benveniste, "Éléments perses en Araméen d'Égypte," *Journal asiatique* 242 (1954) 304-305. There is, however, no need to assume a Persian influence on this semantic development.

Chapter 2

THE SEMANTIC EQUIVALENTS OF SHEOL AND THEIR CONTEXTS

I. מוֹת - 'Death,' *The Realm of Death*

A perusal of the fifteen biblical passages in which שְׁאוֹל appears in connection with the noun מוֹת - 'death'¹ reveals that מוֹת only rarely refers to the phenomenon of death as an abstract concept,² serving more often as a spatial concept signifying the realm of death,³ or as the personal name of a specific being - namely, personified death.⁴ The line of demarcation between these two aspects of death, the spatial and the dynamic-personal, is a fluid one in the Bible, and identical descriptive details, recurring in certain variations, serve to characterize both, so that the two concepts partially coalesce. These descriptive details are similar to those employed in Ugaritic myth to characterize Môt - the ruler of the underworld - and his domain. Moreover, a number of distinctive features

1. II Sam. 22:6=Ps. 18:6; Isa. 28:15,18, 38:18; Hos. 13:14 (2x); Hab. 2:5; Pss. 6:6, 49:15, 55:16, 89:49, 116:3; Prov. 15:5, 7:27; Cant. 8:7.

2. E.g., Ps. 89:49.

3. II Sam. 22:6//Ps. 18:6; Pss. 6:6, 116:3; Prov. 5:5, 7:27. The realm of death rather than the abstract phenomenon is also intended in Ps. 9:14 שְׁעַר מוֹת - 'gates of death'; cf. Ps. 107:18; Job 38:17. See also עֶפֶר מוֹת - 'dust of death,' Ps. 22:16, and probably דְּרֹכֵי מוֹת - 'the ways of death,' Prov. 14:12, 16:25, and שָׁחָה אֶל מוֹת - 'to sink down to death,' Prov. 2:18.

4. Isa. 28:15,18, 38:18; Hos. 13:4 (2x); Hab. 2:5; Pss. 49:15 55:15; Cant. 8:7; cf. also personified death in Jer. 21:9 and a reference to his messengers in Prov. 16:14.

which serve to describe the Ugaritic god of the underworld and his peculiar demeanor recur verbatim in the Bible as characterizations of personified מלך or the realm of death.⁵ Only a common literary tradition can account for so great a similarity between the biblical and Ugaritic descriptions. In order to determine to what extent the two cultures shared a common view of the realm of death we shall examine the actual texts in which scholars have noted similarities of form and content.

In the precise instructions issued by Ba'al to his two messengers to the realm of Môt, he includes a detailed description of Môt's domain as well as a warning against its master's characteristic behavior:

- 'idk . 'al . ttn . prn
 'm . ġr . trġzz
 'm . ġr . trmg
 'm . tlm . ġsr . 'arş
 5 š'a . ġr . 'l . ydm
 ħlb . lār . rħtm
 wrd . bt ħp̄tt
 'arş . tspr . by
 rdm . 'arş
 10 'idk . 'al . ttn
 prn . tk . qrth
 hmry . mk . ks'u
 tbth.ħħ . 'ars
 nħlth . vnġr
 15 'nn . 'ilm . 'al
 tqrb . lbn . 'ilm

5. A partial fusion between the realm and its ruler occurs in Ugaritic literature as well, but the fact that death in Ugarit is a deity with well-marked features allows us to differentiate more clearly between the two.

mt . 'al . y'bdkm

k'imr . bph

kl'l'i . btbrn

qnh . tht'an

CTA 4 VIII, 11. 1-20 (ll. 11-14//CTA 5 II 15-16)

(ll. 15f.//CTA 6 II 21-42)

According to this description, the entrance to the netherworld is bordered by two mountains (ll. 1-6). This feature, common to portrayals of the underworld in the ancient Near East⁶ and ancient Greece, was once thought to be represented in the following biblical passage:

רוחי חבלה ימי נזעכו קברים לי
אם לא הָתָלִים עמדי ובהמרוחם חלן עיני

(Job 17:1-2)

which was rendered by Tromp:⁷

My spirit is broken
My days are spent;
It is the grave for me
Indeed the two hills are before me
And my eyes pass the night in the twin miry depths.

Elsewhere, Tromp was even more explicit: "Surely the two nether-world hills are with me."⁸ הָתָלִים was thus identified with *tłm* in the Ugaritic text cited above (l. 4) which is understood as a plural of *tł* 'mount.' While the consonantal MT translation of הָתָלִים into 'underworld hills'

6. The Gilgamesh Epic. Tabl. IX.II.4-5 (*ANET* 88. trans. E. A. Speiser). Cf. Th. H. Gaster, *Thespis* (New York, 1961), pp. 197-198, note c; R. J. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), pp. 79-83, henceforth cited as *The Cosmic Mountain*. For additional bibliography on this feature see J. C. de Moor, *The Seasonal Pattern in the Ugaritic Myth of Ba'lu According to the Version of Ilimilku*, AOAT 16 (Neukirchen-Vluhn, 1971), henceforth cited as *The Seasonal Pattern*.

7. N. J. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions*, p. 55.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 144, 185.

(v.2) seems to agree with קברים 'graves' (v.1), the vocalized MT reads החלילים - usually translated as 'mockers.' Moreover, the verse as a whole is too corrupt to allow any unequivocal conclusion to be drawn as to its meaning.⁹ And although post-biblical literature does refer to underworld mountains,¹⁰ the sole alleged reference, Job 17:2, is too ambiguous to be considered as evidence for a similar notion in a biblical context.¹¹

A typical feature of the realm of Môt, considered by scholars to be similar to biblical שְׂאֵל, is its watery nature. Môt's city (*qrth*) is denoted or qualified in the above quoted text by the word *hmry*.¹² This word, which in another form - *mhmrt* - stands in parallelism to Môt's throat,¹³ was considered to be related to the biblical hapax *mahāmôrôt* (Ps. 140:11). According to one line of interpretation, the biblical noun was etymologically related to Arabic *hamara* - 'to pour down (rain, water)',¹⁴ and thus signified 'watery pits.' Môt's city was rendered accordingly as "Slushy"¹⁵ "miry"¹⁶ "Ooze."¹⁷ An additional feature used in our text to

9. Note the various emendations suggested by BH³ and the different readings of the Peshitta and Vulgate.

10. Enoch:22, 1-14.

11. Similarly, no conclusion can be drawn as to the meaning of בחמרותם (v.2).

12. So also in CTA 5 II 15.

13. CTA 5 I 6-8.

14. G. Widengren, in a review article in VT 4 (1954) 98-99.

15. M. H. Pope, *Job AB* 15 (New York, 1965), p. 73, henceforth cited as *Job*.

16. G. R. Driver, *Canaanite Myth and Legends*, Old Testament Studies 3 (Edinburgh, 1956), p. 137, 159, n.16, henceforth cited as *CML*.

17. F. M. Cross, Jr., *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), p. 117, henceforth cited as *Canaanite Myth*.

describe Môt's abode is: $\text{hh} . 'ar\dot{s} \text{nh}l\dot{t}h$ - literally " hh is the land of his heritage."¹⁸ This vocable has been rendered by Albright on the basis of Akkadian $hahhu$ - 'filth, slaver,' and our line translated accordingly: "Filth the land of his inheritance."¹⁹ Similarly, other scholars render "loathsomeness," "slime."²⁰

A third element in our text which was thought to have a bearing on the watery nature of Môt's realm is $bthptt 'ar\dot{s}$ (ll. 7-8). This word was associated by Virolleaud (*Syria* 12 [1931] 224) with the biblical בית הַחֲפְשִׁית (II King. 15:5; cf. II Chron. 26:21, בית הַחֲפְשִׁית)²¹ and rendered by Albright on the basis of Arabic hbt , 'be low, base, vile,' as "subterranean house, basement."²² Pope further demonstrates the notion of foulness in the Arabic vocable $habuta$ - 'was bad, foul, corrupt.'²³ The idea of baseness in the biblical בית הַחֲפְשִׁית was thought to be further conveyed by its association with חֲפְשִׁי which refers in extra-biblical sources as well as in

18. Cf. CTA 5 II 16.

19. W. F. Albright, "The North Canaanite Poems of Al'êyan Ba'al," JPOS 14 (1934) 162, n.166; henceforth referred to as "Al'êyan Ba'al."

20. J. Gray, *The Legacy of Canaan* (Leiden, 1965), p. 55, n.8; Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, p. 117, respectively.

21. Consonantal $bthptt$ written without word divider was divided by A. Herdner in CTA 4 VIII 4-5 (cf. p. 30, n.5) into $bt hptt$; this division was accepted by most scholars. For a different word division and interpretation see N. J. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions*, p. 158f., and O. Loretz, "Ugaritisch-Hebräisch HB/PT, BT HPTT - HPŠJ, BJT HHPŠJ/WT," UF 8 (1976) 129-131.

22. Albright, "Al'êyan Ba'al," p. 131, n.162.

23. M. H. Pope, "The Word שָׁחַת in Job 9:31," JBL 83 (1964) 277.

the Bible to "a member of one of the lower social orders."²⁴ According to this line of interpretation, which imputes a filthy, putrid nature to the abode of Môt, the Ugaritic text corroborates the information presented by Philo of Byblos, that the name of the Semitic god of Death - Môt - was interpreted by some as meaning 'mud' and by others as designating a 'putrescent, watery mixture.'²⁵ At the same time, it was considered to correspond to the watery nature of biblical שֶׁאוֹל described in a number of passages,²⁶ and in particular to its slimy quality referred to in such epithets as טִיט (Ps. 69:15) or טִיט הִירֶן (Ps. 40:3). However, this line of interpretation concerning the Ugaritic text has not been unanimously accepted, and different interpretations have been proposed for the expressions which were considered to point to the watery nature of the realm of death. Concerning biblical מַדְמַדָּה (Ps. 140:11), it has been shown²⁷ that nothing in the context argues for a relationship with the Arabic root *hmr̥y*, and that the meaning of this noun could more convincingly be gleaned from its post-biblical use. In Ben-Sira 12:16 מַדְמַדָּה denotes the deep pits in which the wicked (in his heart) schemes to trap his fellow. The Greek translation, too, understood the word to mean 'pit,' and the

24. See CAD. H p. 241f. *ḥupšu*; cf. AHW 357. I. Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the Ancient Near East* (New York, 1949), pp. 74-91, and "New Light on the *ḥupšu*," *BASOR* 139 (1955) 9-11. For a comprehensive bibliography see Lohfink, *TWAT*, Vol. III (Bonn/Uppsala, 1978), pp. 123-128.

25. C. Clemen, *Die phönikische Religion nach Philo von Byblos* (Leipzig, 1939), p. 10, 2.

26. 2 Sam. 22:5-6//Ps. 18:5-6; Ps. 88:3-8; Jon. 2:3-7.

27. M. Held, "Pit and Pitfalls in Akkadian and Biblical Hebrew," *JANES* 5 (1973) 188; henceforth cited as "Pit and Pitfalls."

same word figures in the Talmud, where it refers to temporary burial places for criminals executed by the court.²⁸

Ugaritic *mhmr̥t*, balanced by *npš̥* - 'throat [of Môt],' therefore signifies a pit - a cave. Further, the noun *ḥḥ* has been explained by Cassuto²⁹ and Gordon³⁰ by the Hebrew noun *הַחַיִּים* (I Sam. 13:6), signifying caves, clefts in rocks. Albright's interpretation on the basis of Akkadian *ḥaḥḥu* has been challenged by Held,³¹ who argues that Akkadian *ḥaḥḥu* is a medical term which is never attested in any simile or metaphor related to the netherworld, and that it never denotes 'filth' as such but rather 'spittle.' He further argues that since the noun *ḥḥ* appears in the Ugaritic text in synonymous parallelism with *mk* - a stative verb in Hebrew and Aramaic denoting 'to be low, depressed; to sink down,' it must be understood as similar in meaning. Finally, *bt ḥp̥tt* should not be connected with Arabic *ḥbt*, argues Held, since the primary meaning of this root seems to be 'wicked, evil, malicious' and not 'filthy.' Both de Moor and Loewenstamm consider *bt ḥp̥tt* to be related to the expression *בְּמַתִּים חַפְשִׁי* - 'free among the dead' (Ps. 88:5-6) and see the phrase as a euphemistic designation for the netherworld which was, in fact, considered a prison from which no one returns.³²

28. Palestinian Talmud, *Mo'ed Qatan*, I:5(80c).

29. U. Cassuto, *The Goddess Anath* (Jerusalem, 1951), English translation I. Abrahams (1965), p. 154, n.36.

30. C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook*, *Analecta Orientalia* 38. Glossary No. 949.

31. M. Held, "Pit and Pitfalls," p. 188, n.2.

32. See J. C. de Moor, *The Seasonal Pattern*, p. 171; S. E. Loewenstamm, "CTA 4 VIII 1-35," *H. L. Ginsberg Volume*, The Israel Exploration Society, XIV (Jerusalem, 1978), p. 2, n.12 (Hebrew).

This line of interpretation, which underscores the low spatial position of Môt's abode, rather than its watery nature, is more compatible with other designations of Môt's realm - namely, *šd šhlmmt* and *'arṣ dbr*³³ which are (euphemistically?) accompanied by the attributes 'beauty' and 'pleasantness'³⁴ respectively. But consistency is not a criterion by which notions of the underworld should be judged, and the mixing of 'watery' with 'dry, dusty' attributes occurs also in Mesopotamian culture.³⁵ More evidence is needed before conclusions concerning these allusions to Môt's domain and its possible relation to biblical *שאול* can be drawn.

A more definite relation between Môt and his realm and biblical *שאול* can be detected in those biblical passages in which *שאול* is personified and assumes both the features and characteristic behavior of the Ugaritic god of death.

To convey the aggressiveness of the all-consuming power of death, the Ugaritic mythographers describe Môt grabbing his victims with both hands in order to devour them.³⁶ Personification is used also to imply the aggressive nature of his realm. Thus, darkness on earth is explained as though "Špš, the luminary of the gods ... is in the hands [*byd*] of Môt."³⁷ The phrase "to be in the hands of Môt" connotes capture in and

33. CTA 5 V 19-18.

34. CTA 5 VI 29-30. For commentary on the possible meaning of the names see de Moor, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-187, and R. J. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain*, pp. 83-85, nn.57-58.

35. See W. G. Lambert, "Dingir.ŠA.DIB.BA Incantations," *JNES* 33 (1974) 296.

36. CTA 4 VIII 48f. CTA 5 I 20. RS.24.293; for a discussion of these texts see below.

37. CTA 4 VIII 21-22. CTA 6 II 23-24.

by an alien domain.. In several biblical passages a similar connotation is achieved by means of the same personification:

מי גבר יהיה ולא יראה מות ימלט נפשו מיד שאול

What man can live and not see death
can save himself from the clutches [*myd*] of Sheol.
(Ps. 89:49)

אך אלהים יפדה נפשי מיד שאול כי יקחני סלה

But God will ransom me, from the hand of Sheol
will he surely snatch me selah
(Ps. 49:16)³⁸

מיד שאול אפדנו ממות אגאלם אחי דברך מות אחי קטבך שאול

Shall I ransom them from the hands of Sheol
Shall I redeem them from Death
O death where are your plagues
O Sheol where is your destruction [lit. plague].
(Hos. 13:14)

But in the Bible the realm of death seems not only to be opposed to the land of the living but also to its ruler - God. Hence the use of the verb פדה - 'to ransom' - which is used when an alienated object or person is recovered in return for payment. Since God is the redeemer from Sheol, the salvific nature of this act is underscored as well as the hostility of the realm from which redemption is effected.³⁹ In Ugarit, a different relationship between 'El and the realm of death obtains. Môt, the god of death, is commonly qualified by the epithet *bn 'il*, *ydd 'il* - 'the son of 'El,' 'the beloved of 'El.' There is therefore a positive relationship

38. For this translation consult M. Dahood, *Psalms 1-50*, The Anchor Bible 16 (New York, 1966), pp. 301-302; henceforth cited as *Psalms*.

39. This aspect of פדה will be discussed in greater detail below in connection with שדה.

between 'El and Môt. Since 'El, who as the head of the Ugaritic pantheon represents judicious authority, never actively interferes on behalf of a protagonist in his struggle against Môt, it seems that this strife was seen basically in terms of waning and natural death. The descent into the realm of death was therefore without any ethical associations such as are encountered in biblical contexts in connection with שְׁאֵרִל. While this attitude does not render the Ugaritic realm of death less frightful, it does place it in a different frame of reference than the biblical שְׁאֵרִל.

Another feature of Môt, which is also encountered with שְׁאֵרִל, is his voracious appetite. Môt's rapaciousness is notorious. Ba'al warns his messengers not to approach him "Lest he make you like a lamb in his mouth, you be crushed like a kid in his gullet."⁴⁰ Môt's gaping maw is described as encompassing both heaven and earth.⁴¹

[špt . la]rṣ . špt . lšmm	One lip to earth one to heaven
[-----]šn lkbkbm . y'rb	[He stretches his to]ngue to the stars
[b']l bkbḏh . bph jrd .	Ba'al enters his mouth
kḫrr . zt . ybl . 'arṣ wpr	descends into him
'šm	like an olive cake like the
	yield of the earth and trees' fruit.

Môt states that his voracious appetite is as natural with him as the predatory instinct is in wild animals. Just as all beasts are driven by

40. CTA 4 VIII 15-20.

41. CTA 5 II 2-4. The text is reconstructed on the basis of 23.61f. Line 3 on the basis of Isa. 57:4. For translation cf. H. L. Ginsberg, *ANET*, 3rd ed. (Princeton, 1969), p. 138; all subsequent citations are from this edition. Cf. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, p. 117, n.18.

their desires, so, too, is he impelled by his longing to kill:⁴²

As the greed of the lioness for the desert	It is a living being that excites the desire of lions
And the yearning of the dolphin for the seas	
As the buffalo panteth after the pools	
And the hart panteth after the fountains of water	
So is my greed (<i>npš</i>) to kill to kill	
So is my yearning to kill heaps upon heaps	
With my two hands do I eat	
Seven portions they prepare for me	
And a cup they fill for me, as big as a pitcher.	If my seven por- tions are in the bowl if Naharu mixes the cup.

Mot's gluttony is underscored by the fact that he eats with both hands and needs seven portions for a meal, but unlike the animal's appetite, his voraciousness can never be satisfied - *npš ḥsrt bn nšm npš hmlt 'ars* - "my throat lacked people my throat the multitudes of the earth" (CTA 6 II 17).

The nature of biblical שאול is often personified with similar features:

לכן ודחיהב שאול נפשה ופעדה פיה לבלי חק
וירד הדרה והמונה ושאוניה ועלז בה

Therefore Sheol has enlarged its appetite and opened its mouth beyond measure and the nobility of Jerusalem and her multitudes go down her, throng and he who exults in her.
(Isa. 5:14, RSV)

42. Text CTA 5 I 14-22, CTA 4 VIII 48f, and text 4. RS24.293, published in *Ugaritica* 5. The left-hand column follows the translation of U. Cassuto, "Baal and Mot in the Ugaritic Texts," *IEJ* 12 (1962), 80, henceforth cited as "Baal and Mot." The right-hand column follows the translation of J. C. de Moor, "Studies in the New Alphabetic Texts from Ras Shamra," *UF* 1 (1968) 184-185. For a slightly different translation cf. M. H. Pope, "A Little Soul Searching," *Maarav* 1/1, 1978, 27.

ראף כי היין בוגד גבר יהיר ולא ינוה אשר הרחיב כשאול
נפשו והוא כמות ולא ישבע ויאסף אליו כל הגויים ויקבץ
אליו כל העמים⁴³

... The arrogant man shall not abide, his greed is as wide
as Sheol like death, he has never enough, he gathers for
himself all nations and collects as his own all peoples.
(Hab. 2:5, RSV)

שאל ואבדון⁴⁴ לא תשבענה ועיני האדם לא תשבענה

As Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied Man's desire is
insatiable.

(Prov. 27:20; trans. according
to R. B. Y. Scott, *Proverbs*,
AB 18 [New York, 1965])

אלא הנה לא תשבענה ארבע לא אמרו הון
שאול ועדר רחם ארץ לא שבעה מים ואש לא אמרה הון

There are three things that will not be satisfied
Four that will never cry Enough
Sheol, a barren womb, a land short of water
And a fire which never cries Enough.

(Prov. 30:16, trans. according
to Scott, *op. cit.*)

נבלעם כשאול הייב ותמימים כיורדי בור

Let us swallow them up alive, like Sheol
As they tumble whole into the Pit.⁴⁵

(Prov. 1:12, trans. according
to Scott, *op. cit.*)

It is this all-pervasive similarity - in part, uniformity - of the
biblical and Ugaritic portrayal of death which leads us to inquire into
the relationship between the two cultures' understanding and appreciation

43. The Qumran version which deletes the waw and reads לא ישבע כמות seems superior. M. Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark's Monastery*, Vol. I (New Haven, 1950), Plate 5:VIII.

44. Probably אבדון; see BH³.

45. The mouth of שאול is further mentioned in Ps. 141:7.

of death. While the paucity and frequent lack of clarity of the Ugaritic material gives us a rather narrow basis for comparison, even the most tentative attempt reveals certain peculiarities unique to each of the literatures.

The motivating force behind the personification of death in the Ugaritic myth is the awareness of a primeval power operative in the universe that had to be reckoned with. In order to understand the way the universe functioned, the nature of this power had to be described. The task of the mythographers was to translate their intuitive perceptions into vivid concreteness. On this, scholars agree. However, the question of the precise aspect of death which became the object of description is a point of contention. Virolleaud, Dussaud, Gaster and de Moor believe that basically Môt represents an aspect of a seasonal conflict: Môt personified the withering heat of summer and his struggle with Ba'al, god of rain and vegetation, revolved about a seasonal pattern. According to Gordon and Ginsberg, the struggle between the two Gods is not a seasonal one but rather represents a 'sabbatical cycle' - 7 years of alternating drought and fertility.⁴⁶ A third approach, offered by Cassuto, admits that the natural element is part of the myth of Ba'al and Môt, and fits in well with several of its passages,⁴⁷ but maintains that the epic "as a whole must have had a far wider general significance ... that of the awesome clash between the forces of life and existence and the forces of

46. For a detailed description of the above-mentioned opinions and bibliography and references consult de Moor, *The Seasonal Pattern*, pp. 9-28.

47. Notably CTA 6 II 30-37.

death and dissolution ... [and that] in the struggle between these two for the mastery of the world the forces of life are eventually victorious."⁴⁸ Similarly, according to Cross, 'Môt, 'El's dead son, represents the dark chthonic powers which bring sterility, disease, and death. The drama, however, is still a cosmogony, the victory of the god of life."⁴⁹

These approaches, of course, differ primarily in emphasis. According to the 'seasonal' interpretation, the destructiveness on which the mythographers focused was that of an unrelenting natural force (the onslaught of the summer drought), cause of the perennial shrivelling up and withering of vegetation - the power of temporary sterility. The destructive power personified according to the cosmogonic interpretation was wider in scope, and of a more awesome nature - a destructive force encompassing all forms of life which, as a basically chaotic power, represents an alien, less comprehensible and therefore more menacing force. But the common denominator of both interpretations is that the destructiveness in Môt is an innate and intrinsic quality, totally independent in its function and indiscriminate in its object.

Two verses in the Bible present שָׂאֵל in a similar capacity. The first:

As Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied
Man's desire is insatiable
(Prov. 27:20)

appears in a section of 'sentence literature' with a marked secular tendency, and clear affinities to extra-biblical Wisdom literature (according

48. Cassuto, "Baal and Mot," pp. 79, 86.

49. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, p. 116.

to some, direct influence).⁵⁰ The second verse,

There are three which are never satisfied
four which never say 'Enough'!
Sheol, an unopened womb, land short of water
and fire which never says 'Enough'!

(Prov. 30:16; trans.
according to McKane)

appears in a section of graded numerical sayings, most of which deal with natural phenomena and animal life. The verse, which may derive from a riddle,⁵¹ uses a poetic device well known in ancient Near Eastern literature.⁵² In form as well as in content these verses seem to belong to a well-established literary tradition of wisdom literature which ancient Israel shared, but upon which it did not leave its unique mark. Prov. 1-12, however, indicates a typical change in the notion of the ferocity of שׂאול. The chapter belongs to the section of the Book (chap. 1-9) which is commonly recognized as the most typical of biblical 'reformulations' of wisdom dictums. Here, the insatiability of שׂאול is likened to the wicked impulse of the murderer. This characteristic is again transferred from the natural, morally indifferent sphere to the social in Hab. 2:5 -

The arrogant man shall not abide, his greed (נַפְשׁוֹ) is as wide as Sheol; like death he has never enough....

50. Cf. W. McKane, *Proverbs. OTL* (London: SCM Press, 1970), p. 607; and B. Gemser, *Sprüche Salomons. HAT 16* (Tübingen, 1963), pp. 96-97. Verse 1 is dependent upon *The Instructions of Amen-em-Opet*, chapter 18.13, *ANET*, p. 923, trans. J. A. Wilson, Verse 7 on *The Words of Ahiqar*, *ANET*, p. 430, trans. H. L. Ginsberg.

51. Tur Sinai, משלי שלמה (Tel Aviv, 1947), p. 62.

52. W. M. Roth, "The Numerical Sequence X/X+1 in the Old Testament," *VT* 12 (1962), 300-311.

Similarly, the arrogant, godless man in Psalm 73:8-9 is described by means of the features which served to describe the typical demeanor of Môt:⁵³

They scoff and speak with malice, loftily they threaten oppression. [v.9] They set their mouths against the heavens and their tongue struts through the earth.

The most significant modification, however, has occurred in regard to מֹת itself. In Num. 16:29-33⁵⁴ and Isa. 5:14, the innate, independent power of Môt, who opens his mouth to swallow his victims, has become a measure of divine judgment. מֹת does not act of its own accord but only reacts, in submission to God's bidding. The morally indifferent power of Ugaritic myth is clearly channeled and purposefully subjected to ethical considerations. Monotheistic faith, because it could not tolerate any notion of an independent power beside God, and because of its deep-rooted trust in an ethically motivated, judicious ruler of the universe, exerted a formative influence which transformed the original notion of the realm of death,⁵⁵ that the Ugaritic mythographers tried to convey, into an aspect of God's own righteous omnipotence.

53. A possible link to such a transference of meaning may have been suggested by the Ugaritic text CTA 23.6lf - if the interpretation that the 'Beautiful and gracious Gods' who also are characterized by these features of Môt represent a certain act of rebellion against 'El is valid; cf. R. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain*, pp. 166-168.

54. This passage in which מֹת and מֹת interchange is dealt with on pp. 36-37.

55. The force of Môt-ʿz (CTA 6 VI 16-22) is echoed in Cant. 8:6.

II. ארץ - 'Netherworld'

In 1895 Gunkel observed that in a number of biblical verses the noun ארץ denotes 'netherworld' and not, as commonly translated, 'ground' or 'land.'⁵⁶ Gunkel's insight has been corroborated by various biblical scholars who adduced additional occurrences of ארץ in this sense.⁵⁷ A comprehensive list, recently prepared by Dahood, includes twenty-five biblical passages and one post-biblical reference in which ארץ denotes 'netherworld.'⁵⁸ In this denotation, biblical ארץ corresponds to *eršetu*, the noun most frequently employed in Akkadian literature to designate the netherworld.⁵⁹

56. H. Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* (Göttingen, 1895), p. 18, n.1. Gunkel refers to Exod. 15:12; Isa. 14:12, 24:4, 44:23; Ezek. 26:20, 31:18, 32:18,24; Pss. 63:10, 139:15; Eccl. 3:21.

57. E. Dhorme, "Le séjour des morts chez les Babyloniens et les Hébreux," *RB* 4 (1907) 51f., refers to I Sam. 28:13 and Isa. 26:19. *GB* 68 A. sub. 7 refers to Job 10:21. W. Baumgartner, *Die Klagegedichte des Jeremia*, *BZAW* 32 (Giessen, 1917), p. 40, adds Pss. 22:30, 71:20, 143:3; Jon. 2:7, and Ben Sira 51:9.

58. Gen. 2:6; Exod. 15:12; I Sam. 28:11-13; Isa. 26:19, 29:4, 44:23; Jer. 15:7, 17:13; Jon. 2:7; Pss. 7:6, 18:8, 22:30, 41:3, 61:3 [61:10 is erroneously listed for 63:10. R.R.] 71:20, 95:4, 106:17, 141:7, 143:3, 147:6, 148:7; Job 10:21, 12:8, 15:29; Prov. 25:3; Ben Sira 51:9. The reference to Ps. 41:3 in this list is very dubious as it depends on Dahood's controversial ideas about biblical afterlife. The following verses, however, should be added: Isa. 14:9, 21:9 and Obad. 1:3, according to F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman, "The Song of Miriam," *JNES* 14 (1955) 247, n.39; also Ps. 44:26, according to Ch. Barth, *Die Errettung von Tode in den individuellen Klage- und Dankliedern des Alten Testaments* (Zollikon, 1947), p. 84; henceforth cited as *Errettung*.

The suggestions by W. L. Holladay which refer to Exod. 1:10 and Hos. 2:2 seem doubtful; see "'Ereš-Underworld Two More Suggestions," *VT* 19 (1969) 123-124.

59. K. L. Tallqvist, *Sumerisch-akkadische Namen der Totenwelt*, *Studia Orientalia* edidit Societas Orientalis Fennica, V.4 (Helsinki, 1934), pp. 8-11. Henceforth cited as *Namen*. Cf. *CAD* E. 310; *AHW* 245.

A further correspondence between ארץ and *erṣetu* is in their location in cosmic space and in the expressions used to indicate it. Like biblical ארץ, Akkadian *erṣetu* frequently appears without any qualifying attribute, but occasionally its position in relation to other, higher cosmic levels is indicated by the feminine plural, *šaplāti*⁶⁰ - 'the low place,' or by *erṣetu šaplītu* - 'the low land.'⁶¹ A similar combination is found in the Code of Hammurabi: *šapliš ina er-se-tim eṭemmišu mē lišašmi* - "below, in the underworld, may he cause his shade to thirst for water."⁶²

The following biblical verses call to mind the Akkadian idiom:

ושפלת מארץ חדברי ומעפר תשא אמרתך

Then deep from the earth you shall speak,
From low in the dust your words shall come.

(Isa. 29:4)

משפיל רשעיה עדי ארץ

[The Lord] brings the wicked down to the netherworld.

(Ps. 147:6)

Note also:

ותשפלי עד שאול

[You sent your envoys...] down even to Sheol.

(Isa. 57:9; RSV)

60. Tallqvist, *Namen*, pp. 12-13.

61. In a tripartite division in which *erṣetu elītu* - 'the upper earth' refers to the land inhabited by man, *erṣetu qablītu* - 'the middle earth' is the abode of Ea, and *erṣetu šaplītu* - 'the lower earth' is the abode of the Anunnaki - the infernal deities; see Tallqvist, *Namen*, pp. 11-12. Such a cosmic division is not common in the Bible, but may be implied in Job 26:5.

62. R. F. Harper, *The Code of Hammurabi King of Babylon* (London, 1904). Translation followed here is by Th. J. Meek, *ANET*, p. 179 (rev. 27:38-40).

This conception of the netherworld as situated directionally downward made it a counterpole to the heavens. In Akkadian, we read that

*ilū ša šamē ana šamē itelū ilū ša er-se-tim ana
er-ṣ-tim iterbū*

the gods of heaven went up to heaven, the gods of
the netherworld went into the netherworld.⁶³

The same counter-parallelism between שמים - 'heaven, sky' and ארץ - 'netherworld' also occurs in the Bible, as will be indicated below.

Finally, the descent to the netherworld is often described by means of the verb *arādu* - 'to descend,' e.g., *Ištar ana erṣeti ūrid ul ilā* - "Ishtar has gone down into the netherworld and has not come up." The same verb is also employed for Nergal's descent into the netherworld, or a man's descent into the netherworld in his dream.⁶⁴ While the expression ירד ארץ is not found in the Bible, various combinations imply its existence:

(Ezek. 32:18)	והורדו ... אל ארץ תחתיות את יורדי בור
(Ezek. 32:24)	אשר ירדו עדלים לארץ תחתיות
(Eccl. 3:21)	... ורדו תבונה הירדת היא למטה לארץ

These expressions are parallel to the Akkadian idiom and to a number of biblical idioms such as: ירד שאול - 'to go down into Sheol' (Num. 16:30, Job 7:9), ירד שחת - 'to go down into the pit' (Ps. 30:10, Job 33:24), ירד - 'to go down into the pit' (Isa. 38:18, Ezek. 26:20), ירד דומה - 'to

63. Text (4R 28 No. 2:19) and translation according to CAD E., p. 310.

64. For references see CAD A2 aradu Ic, p. 216. For discussion, the study by Y. Avishur, *Pairs of Words in the Bible and Ancient Semitic Literature*, Part 2, Chap. 1, note 128, forthcoming in the AOAT series (Kevelaer/Neukirchen-Vluyn).

go down into [the land of] silence' (Ps. 115:17). Similarly, the ascent from ארץ - 'netherworld' is described in the Bible by means of the verb עלה (I Sam. 28, v. 11, twice in hiphil and twice - vss. 13,14 - in qal). Note also *ûl-tu er-še-ti u-še-la-an-ni* - "from the netherworld he raised me up,"⁶⁵ which is parallel to such biblical expressions as: ומתהורמות הארץ תשוב תעלני - "You will raise me up from the depths of the earth/netherworld" (Ps. 71:20).

In what follows, the features of biblical ארץ/netherworld will be outlined and its Ugaritic affinities indicated. The purpose of doing so is to reveal, through a comparison of this concept with שאול, that the two - though overlapping - are not entirely synonymous.

A marked affinity can be detected between biblical ארץ and the cognate concept in Ugaritic literature, 'arṣ - netherworld,⁶⁶ expressed in several verbal idioms and in certain descriptive details associated with ארץ/'arṣ that are common to both literatures: El, upon hearing of Ba'al's death, expresses his grief in an idiomatic expression: 'atr b'ḷ and b'arṣ - "after Ba'al shall I go down to the netherworld,"⁶⁷ which is similar to biblical ירד ארץ and resembles Jacob's expression of grief, כי ארל - "I shall go down to sheol to my son in mourning" (Gen. 37:55). A similar expression - *tspr byrdm 'arṣ* - "you will be counted

65. RS 25.460:41, published in *Ugaritica* 5

66. For a list of references see Driver, *CML*, p. 135B. For correction of and addition to this list see Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions*, p. 7, n.10.

67. A similar expression is voiced by 'Anat, *CTA* 6 I 7-8.

among those who go down into the earth"⁶⁸ is parallel to נחשבתִי עִם יורְדֵי - "I am numbered with those who go down to the pit" (Ps. 88:5). Note also the expression 'il kyrdm 'arṣ - "El is like those who go down into the netherworld."⁶⁹

The spatial location of 'arṣ - 'netherworld' in the cosmic structure is indicated in Ugaritic literature by its balance with *thmt* - 'depth' or *ym* - 'sea' and counterbalance with *šmm* - 'sky, heaven':

špt l'arṣ špt lšmm	A lip to earth a lip to heaven
wl'rb bphm	and there verily enter into their mouth
'ṣr šmm wdg bym	birds of heaven and fish of the sea.
	(CTA 23.62-63)

If the above-quoted lines, describing the voracious appetite of two divine beings, are read according to a chiasitic arrangement - then 'arṣ parallels *ym* - 'sea' and counterbalances *šmm*. An analogous arrangement appears in Job 12:7-8 -

וארְלֹכַם שְׂאֵל נָא בַּחַמּוֹת וְתִרְךָ וְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיְגִד לְךָ
אִם שִׁיָּה לְאַרְץ וְתִרְךָ וַיִּסְפְּרוּ לְךָ דְּגֵי הַיָּם

Now ask the beasts they will teach you the birds of the
sky will tell you,
Or speak to the earth [netherworld] it will teach you,
the fish of the sea will tell you.

A similar juxtaposition of 'arṣ and *šmm* in Ugaritic appears in the

68. CTA 4 VIII 8-9; CTA 5 V 15-16. Note also text RS 34:126 (obv. 1.21-22) for the association of *rd* and *spl* with 'arṣ probably denoting netherworld. (Published by A. Caquot, *Annuaire du Collège de France* 75 [1975/76] 427-429.)

69. RS.24.258 published in *Ugaritica* 5, pp. 545-547, interpreted according to J. C. de Moor, "Studies in the new alphabetic texts from Ras Shamra I," *UF* 1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1969) 167-169, 174; henceforth cited as "New Alphabetical Texts."

description of the entrance to the netherworld, which is described as an entrance into the maw of Môt, god of death:

[špt l'a]rs špt lšmm
[-----]šn lkbkm

[A lip to ear]th a lip to heaven
[and to]ngue to the stars
(CTA 5 II 2, restored
after CTA 23:61)

and in the following text:⁷⁰

tant smm 'm 'ars

The murmur of heaven with the
netherworld

thmt 'm kkbkm

of the deep with the stars
(CTA 3 III_c 21-22)

The same cosmological polarity is conveyed in a letter from El-Amarna:⁷¹

šumma nitelli ana šamê / ša-me-ma
šumma nurrad ina er-se-te
û rēšu-nu / ru-šu-nu i-na ka-te-ka

Even though we were to go up to heaven
[even] if we were to go down to the netherworld
our head is in your hand.

In the Bible, too, ארץ-netherworld is counterbalanced by שמים-sky-heaven:

איך נפלת משמים היכל בן עוזר
נגדעת לארץ חולש על גוים

How are you fallen from heaven O Luminous one, son of Dawn!
How are you felled to earth O vanquisher of nations!
(Isa. 14:12)

רבי שמים כי עשה ה' הריעו ותחיות ארץ

Sing O heavens, for the Lord has done it:
shout O depths of the earth:

(Isa. 44:23)

שמים לרום וארץ לעמק ולב מלכים אין חקר

As the heavens for height, and the netherworld for depth,
so the mind of kings is unsearchable.

(Prov. 25:3)

70. For a discussion of the chiasitic arrangement see M. Dahood, "Ugaritic Hebrew Syntax and Style," *UF* 1 (1969) 25.

71. J. A. Knudzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln* (Leipzig, 1915), No. 264, 11.15-19.

These examples, and those previously quoted from Akkadian literature, indicate that Israel shared the ancient Near Eastern conception of the structure of the universe and the literary tradition of expressing cosmic polarity by means of antithetical parallelism. A further correspondence between biblical ארץ-netherworld and Ugaritic 'arṣ is the association with תהום - 'the deep':

אשר הראתני צרות רבות ורעות תשוב תחיני
ומתחמור הארץ תשוב תעלני

You who have made me undergo many troubles and misfortunes
will revive me again and raise me from the depth of the
earth [netherworld].

(Ps. 71:20)

The watery nature of ארץ-'arṣ is somewhat incompatible with an additional characteristic feature which is associated with both biblical ארץ and Ugaritic 'arṣ - namely, the dust of the netherworld. References to the dust of the netherworld appear in biblical poetry as part of a standard usage in which ארץ is correlated with עפר in synonymous parallelism. The word pair occurs fourteen times in the Bible,⁷² and usually refers to terrestrial//earth//ground//dust, but in four verses where ארץ denotes netherworld and עפר the dust of the netherworld.⁷³ The same word pair occurs in Ugaritic in connection with 'ground//dust'⁷⁴ and with 'netherworld//

72. For references and discussion see U. Cassuto, *Tarbiz* 14 (1942) 1 (Hebrew); S. Gevirtz, "The Ugaritic Parallel to Jeremiah 8:23," *JNES* 22 (1961) 43; Y. Avishur, *The Construct State of Synonyms in Biblical Rhetoric* (Jerusalem, 1977; Hebrew; English summary), pp. 39-40; henceforth cited as *Biblical Rhetoric*.

73. Isa. 29:4; Pss. 7:6, 22:30, 44:26. Cf. H. H. Ridderbos, "'pr Staub des Totenortes," *OTS* 5 (1948) 174-178.

74. For references consult L. R. Fisher, ed., *Ras Shamra Parallels* Vol. I, *Analecta Orientalia* 49 (Rome, 1972), II §67, pp. 124-125; henceforth cited as *RSP*. See also Gevirtz, *loc. cit.*

dust of the netherworld,' e.g.:

nt'n b'arṣ 'by wb'pr qm 'hk

We planted my foes in the netherworld and in
the dust those who rose up against your brother,
(CTA 10 II 24-25;
cf. RS.34.126 1.22)

which is reminiscent of the biblical verse

יִרְדָּף אוֹיֵב נַפְשִׁי וַיִּשָּׁג וַיִּרְמַס לְאַרְץ חַיִּי וּרְבוּדִי לַעֲפָר יִשְׁכֵּן, סֵלָה

Then let the enemy pursue and overtake me, let him trample
my life to the ground [netherworld] and lay my body in the
dust.

(Ps. 7:6)

Further similarities between biblical אֶרֶץ and Ugaritic concepts of the netherworld may be seen in the description in which personified אֶרֶץ opens its mouth to receive the Egyptians (Ex. 15:12) and in another passage (Num. 16:30-32) on Dathan and Abiram. This last episode, which is recorded four times in the Bible, uses fixed terminology also employed in Ugaritic epics to describe the descent into the realm of Death - literally, into the gullet of the god of death - Môt:⁷⁵

וַתִּפְתָּה הָאֲרֶץ אֶת פִּיהָ וַתִּבְלַע אֹתָם וְאֶת בְּתֵיהֶם
וְאֶת כָּל הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר לְקֶרֶחַ וְאֶת כָּל הָרֶכֶשׁ

And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up with
their households and all the men that belonged to Korah
and all their goods....

(Num. 16:32;
cf. 26:10)

... אֲשֶׁר פָּצְתָה הָאֲרֶץ אֶת פִּיהָ וַתִּבְלַעַם וְאֶת בְּתֵיהֶם וְאֶת אֲהֻלֵּיהֶם....

75. For elaboration on this feature cf. pp. 22-25.

... how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up
with their households their tents....

(Deut. 11:6)

וּתְפַתְּחָהּ⁷⁶ אֶרֶץ וּתְבַלַּע דָּחָן וּתִגַּם עַל עֵדָה אֲבִירָם

The earth opened up and swallowed Dathan closed over the
party of Abiram

(Ps. 106:17)

In Num. 16:30 the noun אֶרֶץ is substituted by אֲדָמָה in a similar formula-
tion:

... וּפְצָתָהּ הָאֲדָמָה אֶת פִּיהָ וּבִלְעָה אוֹתָם

... and the ground (אֲדָמָה) opens its mouth and swallows
them up.

An identical phrase is used in connection with the death of Cain:

וְעַתָּה אֲרֹר אֹתָהּ מִן הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר פָּצְתָהּ אֶת פִּיהָ לִקְחַת אֶת דַּמִּי אֶחָיִךְ מִיָּדְךָ

And now you are cursed from the ground (אֲדָמָה) which has
opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your
hand.

(Gen. 4:11)

The last two verses indicate that אֲדָמָה, like its synonym אֶרֶץ, also
denotes netherworld.⁷⁷ If this interpretation is accepted, it may point
to yet another link with Ugaritic culture, where a chthonic deity, 'dm,
is probably the equivalent of 'arṣay - "the one of the netherworld."⁷⁸

76. Reading תְּפַתְּחָהּ with the ancient versions instead of MT תְּפַתְּחָהּ.

77. So U. Cassuto, in his *Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, trans. I. Abrahams (Jerusalem, 1961), pp. 219-220. See S. Loewenstamm and J. Blau, *Thesaurus I* (Jerusalem, 1957), p. 32, for this possible meaning of אֲדָמָה denoting 'netherworld.'

78. M. Dahood ("Hebrew Ugaritic Lexicography," *Biblica* 44 [1963] 292) draws attention to the Hebrew noun אֲדָמָה, which in several biblical passages denotes, according to the author, 'earth, steppe.' He accordingly

This threatening nature of אֶדֹם/אֶרֶץ in the Bible, described in terms identical to those used to convey the destructiveness of the Ugaritic realm of death, indicates the essential similarity between the concept of the netherworld in both cultures. But the very passage (Num. 16) in which the similarity to the Ugaritic concept is found also includes a distinction: The biblical writer takes pains to emphasize that God's opening up of the netherworld in this particular manner was an *ad hoc* creation by God for a punitive purpose, and not, as in Ugaritic literature, an innate trait of the netherworld. Thus, the autonomous, essentially alien nature of the netherworld as a counterforce to the powers of life is minimized in the biblical description: in Num. 16, the netherworld merely acts at God's bidding, and has completely renounced the fierce independence that characterizes it in the Ugaritic epics.⁷⁹ One cannot but detect a polemic undertone here on the part of the Biblical narrator,⁸⁰

interprets the name אֶדֹם in II Sam. 6:10 as 'abd-'edôm - 'the servant of Edom' - the theophoric element in this name referring to a chthonic deity. This deity, written 'itum in the Leiden Magical Papyrus, is the wife of Rashpu who is identified with Nergal (see A. Mussart, *The Leiden Magical Papyrus* (Leiden, 1954), I, 343 & I, 345 col.5.7, pp. 17, 65). Since Nergal's consort, Allatu, is identified with one of Baal's wives, Arsay - 'the one of the netherworld' (see F. M. Cross, *HTR* 55 [1962] 247) in the Ugaritic pantheon (see J. Nougayrol, "RS 20.24. Pantheon d'Ugarit," *Ugaritica* 5, 44-45, line 22: ^dal-la-tum//[a]rṣ(y)), it seems that 'edôm is her equivalent. Cf. W. F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (New York, 1968), p. 140. For another possible reference to this deity see H. P. Müller, "Die phönizische Grabinschrift aus dem Zypern-Museum KAI30 und die Formgeschichte des nord-west-semitischen Epitaphs," *ZA* 65 (1975) 112-113; henceforth cited as "Phönizische Grabinschrift."

79. A similar phenomenon may be observed in the reaction of the netherworld and the sea in Exod. 15:8,10,12.

80. Chapter 16 in the Book of Numbers is of a composite nature in which a Priestly account of the rebellion of Korah has been combined with an epic source dealing with the rebellion of Dathan and Abiram (Deut. 11:6

intended to divest the netherworld of all intrinsic potency. The Deuteronomist, too, uses this episode as an illustration of "the discipline of the Lord. his greatness, his mighty hand" (Deut. 11:2), albeit without polemical overtones.

Thus, all the descriptive details discussed above, that serve to qualify both Ugaritic *'arṣ* and Biblical ארץ, are also to be found in connection with שאול. The opening of the mouth of שאול to swallow up its victims and the verbal idioms which describe both the descent into שאול and the ascent from it have been discussed in the previous paragraph. The dust mentioned in connection with Biblical ארץ and Ugaritic *'arṣ* is also associated with שאול (Job 17:16), though again this feature is somewhat incompatible with the conception of שאול as being located, like ארץ/*'arṣ* in "the midst of the seas" "in the deep" (Jon. 2:3-6).

Like biblical ארץ and Ugaritic *'arṣ*, שאול serves to signify the

and Ps. 106:17 indicate the independence of the epic source from the Korah episode); cf. J. Liver, "Korah, Dathan and Abiram," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 8 (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1961) 180-217. While the motif of the opening up of the netherworld belongs to the epic source, it is here suggested that the phrase וְאִם בְּרִיאָה יִבְרָא ה' - "But if the Lord creates something new" (Num. 16:30a) stems from the Priestly hand which combined the two stories. This phrase betrays the difficulty encountered by the Priestly writer in integrating the essentially chaotic and independent realm of the netherworld into the harmonious cosmic order of his world view.

Contrary to extra-biblical cosmologies, the netherworld was not mentioned in the Priestly creation account and hence was not considered as an integral part of the cosmos. The common idiom בָּרָא - 'to create,' which is used in the Priestly creation account to convey both the sovereign will of the Creator and the novelty of his creation, is similarly employed in our passage to emphasize both the compliance of this realm with the sovereign will of God and the unprecedented nature of this event. (Note the nominal form בְּרִיאָה - 'creation,' a hapax legomenon used to underscore the uniqueness of the phenomenon.)

lowest region of cosmic space, beside its common designation as the abode of the dead:

שאל לך אות מעתה ה' אלהיך העמק שאלה⁸¹ או הגבה למעלה

Ask a sign of the Lord your God, let it be as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven.

(Isa. 7:11)

כי אש קדחה באפי ותיקד עד שאול תחתית

For a fire is kindled by my anger and it burns to the depth of Sheol.

(Deut. 32:22)

The location of שאול at the farthest reaches of the universe is further underscored by antithetical parallelism in which שאול counterbalances שמים - 'sky, heaven':

אם יחחרו בשאול משם ידי תקחם ואם יעלו השמים משם אורידם

Though they dig into Sheol from there shall my hand take them. Though they climb up to heaven I will bring them down.
(Amos 9:2)

אם אסק שמים שם אתה ואציע שאול הנך

If I ascend to heaven thou art there. If I make my bed in Sheol you are there too.

(Ps. 139:8)

גבהי⁸² שמים מה תפעל עמקה משאול מה תדע

81. MT שאלה should be emended to שאלה according to the reading of Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion.

82. MT reads גבהי - "the heights of heaven/deeper than Sheol." Jerome V reads גבהה משמים - "higher than heaven" - thus making the two lines conform. Dahood suggests to shift the proclitic element m - (from, that) to the end of the preceding word where its function should be considered as the enclitic emphatic particle. M. Dahood, "Northwest Semitic Philology and Job," *The Bible in Current Catholic Thought*, ed. J. L. McKenzie (New York, 1962), p. 57f.

The heights of heaven, what can you do
Deeper than Sheol how can you know

(Job 11:8)

In their capacity as designations of cosmic space, ארץ and שאול are apparently employed interchangeably. Even when denoting the abode of the dead the two concepts show so marked an affinity that an actual identity of the concepts would seem to suggest itself. However, a closer examination of the contexts in which the two words occur implies that despite all the affinity between them they do not entirely coincide.

But before turning to the contexts in which ארץ occurs, a brief comment on the combination of the term ארץ with the qualifying element תחתיות/תחתית. First we must examine the contention that the plural form ארץ תחתיות is an intensive plural⁸³ meaning "the lowest parts of the netherworld" and that in this form the term implies the existence of distinct realms in the netherworld. It should be noted that Ezekiel uses the singular ארץ תחתית⁸⁴ and the plural form ארץ תחתיות⁸⁵ indiscriminately in the same context. Most conspicuously, he uses the singular and plural forms alternatively to describe the fate of the same nation - Egypt.⁸⁶ The distribution of the plural form, תחתיות ארץ, which occurs in Isa.

83. So N. J. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions*, pp. 180-183, esp. 182, and others.

84. Chap. 31:14,16,18.

85. Chaps. 26:20, 32:18,24.

86. Cf. chap. 31:14,16,18 to chap. 32:18. Note, however, that according to BH⁵ 8MSS the Peshitta and T. have a singular form in 32:18. These may represent a tendency to harmonize the passage with the singular form in chap. 31. The singular form is also attested in 9MSS, LXX, Peshitta and T. in 32:24, in which case they represent a variant reading.

44:23, Ps. 63:10, 139:15, seems to point to late Hebrew usage.⁸⁷ Note also:

	(Deut. 32:22)	שארל תחתית
	(Ps. 86:13)	שארל תחתיה
versus	(Ben Sira 51:6 _c)	שארל תחתירות

The plural form may therefore represent a stylistic preference of late Hebrew,⁸⁸ without implying any difference in meaning from the singular. Ezekiel's vacillation between the singular and plural forms may represent an intermediate stage in this transition. Secondly, a distinction should be drawn between *ארץ תחתית/ות* and *תחתירות ארץ*.⁸⁹ The former is a specific term for the abode of the dead, and occurs only in Ezekiel in the chapters indicated above, where it is juxtaposed with *ארץ הייט* - 'the land of the living' (Ezek. 26:20, 32:24). The latter term, *תחתירות ארץ/הארץ*, designates the lower regions in cosmic space - the netherworld in the broadest sense. As such, it may on occasion also refer to the abode of the dead (Ps. 63:10) but it is not limited to this meaning as an examination of its context will indicate.

87. Psalm 63:4 contains the verb *שבח* - 'to praise' which is common in Aramaic and late Hebrew but is not attested in pre-exilic Biblical prose and occurs only four times in Pss. 106:47, 117:14, 145:4, 147:12, all of which contain typical late-Hebrew linguistic features. Cf. A. Hurvitz, *The Transition Period in Biblical Hebrew* (Jerusalem, 1972), pp. 70-108, esp. pp. 88-91, 171, 175. Psalm 139 contains three Aramaisms: *מלה* (v.4), *אסך* (v.8), *הקטל* (v.19) which renders it suspect of late composition.

88. Cf. R. Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew, Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose*, Harvard Semitic Monographs (Montana, 1976), pp. 40-43.

89. So A. Ehrlich, *Randglossen zur Hebräischen Bibel*, vol. 5 (Leipzig, 1912), p. 103; cf. W. Zimmerli, *Ezechiel. BK 3* (Neukirchen, 1969), pp. 612-622.

According to the Yahwistic account of creation, אֵרֶץ - the cosmic netherworld - is the region where the vital sources of fertility reside, and from which issues the primordial river which nourishes the surface of the earth (Gen. 2:6).⁹⁰ In several poetic and wisdom texts, this cosmic netherworld is described as "mother earth" where human life, too, was created as in a mother's womb:⁹¹

My frame was not concealed from You
when I was shaped in a hidden place
knit together in the recesses of the earth [תַּחֲתֵי אֲרֶץ]
Your eyes saw my unformed limbs
they were all recorded in Your book
in due time they were formed
to the very last one of them.

(Ps. 139:15-16)

And it is into this womb-like netherworld that man departs at the time of his death: "Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked shall I return there" (Job 1:20). This idea is explained and elaborated upon in Ben Sira (40:1):

Great hardship God has allotted
A heavy yoke upon Adam's sons
From the day he comes out his mother's womb
To the day he returns to the mother of all life.

The netherworld is therefore the place to which the spirit of the

90. For this meaning of Hebrew 'ēd cf. W. F. Albright, "The Babylonian Matter in the Predeuteronomistic Primeval History (JE) in Gen. 1-11," *JBL* 58 (1939) 102-103; for a slightly different view see E. A. Speiser, "'ed in the Story of Creation," *BAOR* 140 (1955) 9-11.

91. The netherworld is also considered the womb from which the sea came gushing forth at the time of creation (Job 38:8). In a proto-apocalyptic passage, the netherworld is described as giving birth to the Rephaim (Isa. 26:19).

dead descends⁹² and whence it is invoked.⁹³ This realm belongs initially to the order of cosmic creation⁹⁴ and is referred to as one of the component parts of the universe that bear witness to the greatness of God as Creator-King:

For the Lord is a great God
the great King of all divine beings
In His hand are the depth of the earth (מחקרי ארץ)
the peaks of the mountains are His
His is the sea, He made it
and the land, which His hands fashioned.

(Ps. 95:3-5)

More distinctly, as an integral part of creation, תחתיות ארץ are called upon to join in praise and rejoice along with the entire world as they witness the saving acts of God in redeeming his chosen people:

Sing O heavens for the Lord has done it
Shout O depths of the earth [תחתיות ארץ]
break forth into singing O mountains
O forest and every tree in it.
For the Lord has redeemed Jacob
and will be glorified in Israel.

(Isa. 44:23; RSV)

Since, as indicated above, the nether regions were also considered to be inhabited by the departed, ארץ/תחתיות ארץ naturally also developed negative connotations. Prompted by its location deep in the furthestmost recesses of the universe, shrouded in ominous darkness, it became a symbol for abject misery both in Israel and in other cultures with a similar view of its location. Thus, the persecuted, feeling his vital forces on

92. Isa. 29:4, and, in a polemic context, Eccl. 3:21.

93. I Sam. 28:13. Note that in all biblical references the spirit of the dead (אֱלֹהִים, אֹרֶב) is associated with ארץ and not with שְׁאוֹל.

94. In the Priestly cosmogonic account as mentioned previously, all references to the netherworld are conspicuously absent.

the wane, describes his dire condition as though he already resides in the netherworld:

My foe hounded me
he crushed me to the ground [literally: netherworld]
he made me dwell in darkness
like those long dead.

(Ps. 143:3; cf. Ps. 7:6)

In Israel, as in other ancient Near Eastern cultures, death did not mean total annihilation. However, in biblical faith more than in other cultures, it did constitute the total denial of religious and worldly values. For this reason, the realm of death was conceived as a place fit for the wicked, and particularly for those who suffered untimely death, as this was considered a punitive measure meted out by God:

The Lord gives courage to the lowly
and brings the wicked down to the dust [משפיל רשעים עדי ארץ]
(Ps. 147:6; cf. Isa. 14:12)

May those who seek to destroy my life
enter the depths of the earth (יבאו בתחתיות הארץ)
(Ps. 63:10)

The idea apparently also forms the background of Jer. 17:13 -

מקוה ישראל ה' כל עזביו יבשו
יסורי (Q וסורי) בארץ יכתבו ...
כי עזבו מים היום את ה'.

Yahweh, thou hope of Israel
They'll be ashamed all who leave thee [or: 'which leave thee']
They'll be writ in the earth who forsake thee [or: 'who
forsake him']
For they've left the fountain of living water.⁹⁵

95. This interpretation follows the Q and the evidence of a number of MSS which read וְסוּרֵי for MT יְסוּרֵי. Note also M. Dahood, "The Metaphor in Jer. 17,3," *Biblica* 48 (1967) 109-110.

"Writ in the earth. [netherworld]" means to be destined to die (prematurely). The background of this verse is the belief that all life is recorded in heavenly books (Ps. 139:16) and is of fixed duration. A person destined to live is "recorded for life" (Isa. 4:3); to be blotted out from the divine book (Exod. 32:32) means to die prematurely in retribution for sin (v.33). The wish expressed in Ps. 69:29, "May they [i.e., the guilty] be erased from the book of life and not be inscribed with the righteous" is parallel in meaning to Jer. 17:13, "They will be writ in the earth [nether-world] who forsake thee."

Biblical faith imparts no heroic dimensions to any form of death, nor was religious value as yet attached to it. Its negative aspect, therefore, could not be counter-balanced by any system of values which transcended the values of terrestrial life, nor could it be mitigated by a reflective attitude. But the view of the nether regions of the earth (ארץ/ארץ תחתיות) as an integral part of the universe and of its created order could, on occasion, also confer a more neutral aspect to the abode of the dead which formed part of it. Consequently, the departure to the infernal regions could be considered as a "natural return" to the source of all being. A positive aspect of the land of the departed seems to be conveyed in the following passage:

אכלו וישתדדו כל דשני ארץ
לפניו יורעו כל יורדי עפר
ונפשו לא חיה
(Ps. 22:30)

Various translations have been offered to this verse, which has been preserved in divergent formulations in the ancient versions and a number of MSS:⁹⁶

All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship
 All they that go down to the dust shall bow before him
 and none can keep alive his own soul.

(KJ)

Yea, to him shall all the proud of the earth bow
 before him shall bow all who go down to the dust
 and he who cannot keep himself alive.

(RSV)

Nur vor ihm sollen niederfallen die in der Unterwelt schlafen
 vor ihm das Knie beugen die hinabfahren in dem Staub
 die leblosen Seelen sollen seinen Arm ehren.

(H. Gunkel)

Indeed to him shall bow down all those who sleep in
 the netherworld [later translation: 'the fat ones
 of the netherworld' - see note 96]

Before him shall bend the knee all who have gone down
 to the mud

For the Victor himself restores to life.

(M. Dahood)

Although the meaning of *ישני ארץ* is not clear, and the emendation *ישני ארץ* not certain, the parallelism between *יורדי עפר* and *ישני ארץ* seems to point to a netherworldly meaning for *ארץ* in this verse. The passage thus

96. For details see BH³. The reading *אך לו* instead of MT *אכלו* suggested by BH³ is followed by most commentators. The expression *ישני ארץ* - lit. 'the fat ones of the earth' was originally analyzed by M. Dahood, *Psalms I AB 16* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), p. 143, as *dī* - relative pronoun as in Ugaritic and Aramaic and a syncopated form *šēnē* < *yēšēnē* - 'those who sleep.' The emendation to *ישני ארץ*, which is followed by many commentators, although it has no support in the ancient versions, agrees with the context and is analogous to *ישני אדמה עפר* in Dan. 12:2 (probably a conflation of two variant readings: *ישני אדמה* and *ישני עפר*; cf. S. Talmon, "Double Readings in the MT," *Textus* I [1960] 167-168).

Apparently reconsidering this explication of the text, Dahood later changed his rendition of the expression *ישני ארץ* on the basis of Ugaritic evidence, and rendered the expression literally, "the fat ones of the earth" - referring to the denizens of the netherworld who are sated by the deity Mot; see "Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography," *Biblica* 53 (1972) 397. But his interpretation of *'arṣ* in CTA 4 VII 52 as 'netherworld' seems erroneous; cf. C. H. Gordon, *UL* 37; J. C. deMoor, *The Seasonal Pattern*, p. 164, and others.

describes those who have departed into the netherworld and the coming generations (cf. Ps. 78:4) as joining in the universal acknowledgment and the reconfirmation of God as absolute ruler-King. Such a statement concerning the netherworld is admittedly an isolated case and is in conflict with other biblical statements in which the dead are referred to as those who can no longer praise God (Pss. 6:5, 30:9, 115:7). But since the nether regions (אֲרִיץ/תַּחְתִּיּוֹת אֲרִיץ) are addressed similarly in at least two more biblical passages (Isa. 44:23; Ps. 95:3-5), which have been discussed above, this verse should not be emended to conform with other biblical texts; rather, its uniqueness should be recognized.

In conclusion, corresponding to the various functions attributed to the nether regions, אֲרִיץ/תַּחְתִּיּוֹת אֲרִיץ comprises a varied spectrum of connotations. The basic notion of אֲרִיץ 'netherworld' as a constituent part of the cosmic order occasionally influenced the notion of אֲרִיץ as the abode of the dead, reducing its inherent negative character to a more neutral one, denoting the place to which all mankind goes. Only once, but significantly, is אֲרִיץ used to refer to the abode of the dead in a positive context.

שָׁמַיִל does not share this wide scope of meaning. In its denotation as the abode of the dead, it is never attested in any but a negative context. Even as cosmic space, שָׁמַיִל rarely occurs in a neutral connotation (Isa. 7:11) and never in a positive one. The context in which שָׁמַיִל appears as cosmic space seems somehow different from that of אֲרִיץ in the same capacity. The occurrence in Job 26:6 may indicate the difference. God is described here (vv.5-14) in language charged with imagery drawn from the mythological battle of the divine warrior, as exerting his power

against his adversaries - the representatives of chaos. Before he could create the universe and establish his dominion ('וּדְרָךְ,' v.14), ים, רָהַב, and נַחֲשׁ בְרִיָּה had to be vanquished. The diction employed in this chapter belongs to the stock vocabulary of ancient Hebrew epic, which describes the battle and final submission of Sea to God the Creator.⁹⁷ It is also attested in Ugaritic myth, especially in the Ba'al Yamm-Nahar cycle and its variant, the slaying of Lotan (biblical Leviathan), where 'Anat (CTA 3 III 34-39) and probably Ba'al (CTA 5 I 1-5) figure as chief protagonists.⁹⁸ Job 26 also contains allusions to the Mesopotamian creation myth.⁹⁹ In this context, שְׂאוּל figures as follows:

עֶדוֹם שְׂאוּל נִגְדָּר וְאֵין כְּסוּת לְאִבְדוֹן
Naked is Sheol before him, perdition has no cover.
(26:6)

The expression "עֶדוֹם ... וְאֵין כְּסוּת" recurs in Job 24:7, where it serves to describe the vulnerability of the poor, semi-outcast, savage desert dweller. שְׂאוּל therefore is vulnerable before God, and seems to share to a certain degree the fate of the other chaotic powers subject to divine wrath. Note the laying-bare of the foundations of the sea (II Sam. 22:16 = Ps. 18:16; cf. Hab. 3:13).

97. For the epithets נַחֲשׁ בְרִיָּה, רָהַב, ים, and the verbs גָּעַר - 'to roar, rebuke,' מָדַץ - 'to smite,' רָגַע - 'to quell,' הָלַל - 'to pierce (by weapon),' as part of an epic tradition, see U. Cassuto, "שִׁירַת הָעִלְיָלָה," *Qneset* 8 (1943-44), 121-142, and *The Goddess Anath*, English trans. I. Abrahams (Jerusalem: 1971), pp. 18-52.

98. For the verbs גָּעַר, מָדַץ and probably also הָלַל in Ugaritic myths cf. Ugaritic glossaries.

99. For details cf. G. Fohrer, *Das Buch Hiob*, KAT 16 (Gütersloh, 1963), pp. 385, and M. Pope, *Job*, AB 15 (New York, 1965), pp. 164-167.

שְׁאוֹל וְאַבְדּוֹן נִגְדוּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֵל כִּי לִבּוֹת בְּנֵי אָדָם

Sheol and Abaddon¹⁰⁰ lie open before the Lord
how much more the hearts of men.

[Prov. 15:11]

Even Sheol is under His scrutiny - which seems to imply not only God's omnipotence and omnipresence, but also, by logical induction, his ability to bring the nether regions under his control. Likewise, it is more than divine omniscience which is conveyed in the following verses which deal with שְׁאוֹל:

Where can I escape from your spirit, where can I flee from your presence If I descend to Sheol you are there ... if I say 'surely darkness will conceal me, night will provide me with cover': Darkness is not dark for you, night is as light as day, darkness and light are the same.

(Ps. 139:7-12)

Here, again, it is God's discerning scrutiny that watches over Sheol. If God reaches down to it - it is again in the image of the warrior transferred from the mythological to the social sphere, that he does so:¹⁰¹

כִּי אֵשׁ קִדְחָהּ בְּאַפִּי וְחִיקְדָּהּ עַד שְׁאוֹל תַּחְתִּית

For a fire is kindled by my anger and it burns to the depth of Sheol.

(Deut. 32:20)

Thus we conclude that contrary to אֶרֶץ - 'netherworld' which, in its capacity as cosmic space, seems to be associated in biblical context with

100. Abaddon is synonymous to שְׁאוֹל. For the form of syndetic parataxis as a rhetorical device see Avishur, *Biblical Rhetoric*, p. 113.

101. For a similar expression concerning תַּחְתִּית רַבָּה see D. Hillers, "Amos 7:4 and Ancient Parallels," *CBQ* 26 (1964) 221-225, and generally P. D. Miller, "Fire in the Mythology of Canaan and Israel," *CBQ* 27 (1965) 256-261.

the order of creation, שְׂאֵרִל as a spatial concept seems to be associated with the chaotic aspect of the nether regions. It constitutes a realm which had to be turned by God into cosmic space. These associations may have been a contributive factor which influenced the concept of אֶרֶץ and שְׂאֵרִל as the abode of the dead. While the former may also be seen as a neutral place of return and is attested once with a positive connotation, the latter is attested in a negative connotation only. This aspect of שְׂאֵרִל will be pursued further as we turn to additional semantic equivalents of the noun.

III. שְׂחַת - "Pit, netherworld"

The substantive שְׂחַת, denoting pit/netherworld, is attested twenty times in the Bible.¹⁰² All occurrences are in poetic texts, predominantly in the Individual Lament and its corollary - the Thanksgiving Psalm.¹⁰³

שְׂחַת is mentioned once in synonymous parallelism with שְׂאֵרִל (Ps. 16:10), twice in consecutive sequence with it (Job 17:13-14; Isa. 38:17-18), and four times in non-consecutive sequence in which שְׂאֵרִל along with two other synonyms of the netherworld, בֹּרֶךְ and אֶרֶץ, are mentioned (Jon. 2:3-7; Ps. 30:4-10, 49:9-16, 55:16-24). The parallelism between שְׂחַת and שְׂאֵרִל is further indicated by the fact that both are said to be located in "the

102. Isa. 38:17, 51:14; Ezek. 28:8; Jon. 2:7; Pss. 9:16, 16:10, 30:10, 49:10, 55:24, 94:13, 103:4; Prov. 28:10; Job 9:31, 17:14, 33:18, 22, 24, 28, 30.

103. For the inclusion of Isa. 38:10-20 in the category of Thanksgiving Psalms see J. Begrich, *Der Psalm des Hiskiah* (Göttingen, 1926), pp. 2-3; Cl. Westermann, *The Praise of God in the Psalms*, trans. K. R. Crim (Virginia, 1965), pp. 102f., further modifies this category of Psalms and includes Isa. 38:10-20; Jon. 2:2-9; Job 33:26-28 in a category he calls "The Declarative Psalm of Praise of the Individual."

heart of the seas" (Jon. 2:3-4; Ezek. 28:8).

There are almost no attributes attached to שחַת which could elucidate its connotation. The combination שחַת בלי in Isa. 38:17 is not clear.¹⁰⁴ Perles' emendation to שחַת בליעל¹⁰⁵ is a conjecture, but it is noteworthy that such a combination is attested in Akkadian with the noun *ḫaltu* which, as will be indicated below, is equivalent to Hebrew שחַת. The line in Akkadian reads: "I heaped up my people in the narrow pit from which there is no coming up"¹⁰⁶ - which is equivalent to Hebrew שחַת בליעל. This emendation, while ingenious, has no support in the ancient versions which treated בלי as a privative element and derived שחַת from a verbal root שחַת denoting 'corruption, annihilation.' In order to make sense of this difficult verse, the ancient translators reversed the word order and offered the following translations: The Septuagint: "without annihilation"; the Targum to the Prophets: "[so that my soul] should not be corrupted"; the Peshitta: "so that you should not be corrupted in the place of corruption." בלי is probably a verbal noun from the root בלה (which in Qal means 'to become worn out,' in Piel - 'consume away'), denoting disintegration. This is the only attestation of בלי as a noun.

The only other combination in which שחַת is attested is שחַת באר in

104. IQIsa^a 38:17 has שחַת כלה. Kutscher assumes that the scribe may have been influenced by the Hebrew verb כלה - 'to annihilate' - and thus changed the text. See E. Y. Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the ISAIAH Scroll* (Jerusalem, 1959), p. 187.

105. Perles, *Analekten zur Textkritik des Alten Testaments* (Munich, 1895), p. 30.

106. E. Ebeling, "Bruchstücke eines politischen Propaganda Gedichtes einer Assyrischen Kanzlei," *MAOG* 12/2 (1938), col. 4.36; English trans. according to *CAD H*, p. 143 a-b; henceforth cited as Ebeling, *MAOG* 12/2.

Ps. 55:24. בֹּאֵר in biblical Hebrew, as in Akkadian, denotes not only 'well, cistern' but also 'pit, hole.'¹⁰⁷ שְׁחַת and בֹּאֵר are therefore synonyms. The combination of two synonyms in the construct state is a stylistic device which aims at poetic exaggeration¹⁰⁸ and offers no qualification of the noun שְׁחַת which might help to define its meaning.

The etymology of שְׁחַת is also problematical. The commonly advanced derivation of שְׁחַת from a verbal root שָׁחַ - meaning 'to sink down,' with a t'-afformative analogous to נָחַ > נָחַ,¹⁰⁹ has recently been questioned. The very existence of such a root is considered doubtful by Held, who indicated that in each of the seven alleged attestations of the root שָׁחַ the verbal form may be parsed more convincingly from other roots.¹¹⁰ Recently the etymological equation between Hebrew שְׁחַת and Akkadian *ḥaštu/ḥaltu*, which also denotes 'pit/netherworld,' has been indicated by von Soden.¹¹¹ *Ḥaštu(m)* is equated in lexical texts with *šuttatu(m)* and this pair corresponds to Hebrew שְׁחַת/שְׁחָה not only in denoting 'netherworld' but also in the verbal idioms employed with it. Furthermore, the contexts in

107. M. Held, "Pits and Pitfalls in Akkadian and Biblical Hebrew," *JANES* 5 (1973) 176, n.36; henceforth cited as "Pits and Pitfalls."

108. This stylistic phenomenon has been discussed by Y. Avishur, *The Construct State of Synonyms in Biblical Rhetoric* (Jerusalem, 1977; Hebrew with English summary), esp. p. 61.

109. So in the standard lexica: *GB*, p. 821; *BDB*, p. 1001; *KBP*, p. 963b.

110. M. Held, "Pits and Pitfalls," pp. 176-181; for Ps. 42:6,7,12 and Ps. 43:5, תַּשְׁחִיחֵנִי, Held suggests שָׁחַ - 'be low,' or שָׁחַ - 'to complain, muse.' Ps. 44:26 - שָׁחַ - from שָׁחַ - the verb revocalized to שָׁחַ. Lam. 3:20; the Q *tašḥāḥ* is to be derived from שָׁחַ. Or, according to the K., *tašḥāḥ* should be derived from שָׁחַ. Prov. 2:18 - the reading offered is *šōḥēḥ* from שָׁחַ (for details and argumentation consult the above-mentioned article).

111. W. von Soden, *AHw*, p. 334b.

which *שָׁחַת* and Akkadian *ḥaštu/haltu* are attested indicate a similarity that may yield some insight as to the concepts associated with the terms. We turn therefore to their examination.

The verbs employed with *שָׁחַת* are *כָּרַח* (Ps. 94:13) and *חָפַר* (Ps. 35:7), both meaning 'to dig' (a pit). The descent to the pit/netherworld is expressed by means of the following verbs: *הוֹרִיד/יָרַד* - 'to descend, cause to descend' (Ezek. 28:8; Ps. 30:10, 55:24; Job 33:24), *מָוַת* - 'to die' or 'go down dying' (Isa. 51:14), *רָאָה* - 'to experience,' lit. 'to see (the pit)' (Ps. 16:10; 49:10), *קָרַב* - 'to draw near' (Job 33:22), *עָבַר* - 'to pass through' (Job 33:28). The rescue from the pit/netherworld is expressed by means of the verbs: *הָעִלָּה* - 'to bring up' (Jon. 2:7), *הָשִׁיב* - 'bring back from' (Job 33:30), *פָּדָה*, *גָּאֹל* - 'redeem, save' (Ps. 103:4 and Job 33:28, respectively), and *חָסַךְ* - 'to spare, hold back' (Job 33:18).¹¹² The rescue from the pit/netherworld is expressed in Akkadian by *ina ba-āš-ti šū-lū[ū]*, which is parallel to *הָעִלָּה מִשְׁחַת* (Jon. 2:7).¹¹³

A number of the verbal idioms which, as has been indicated above, were employed with *שָׁחַת* are also used in connection with *שְׂאוּל*: the verb *הוֹרִיד/יָרַד לְשָׁחַת* is employed also with *שְׂאוּל* (Gen. 42:38, 44:29; Isa. 14:5; I Sam. 2:6; Ezek. 31:8; Job 7:10); *הָעִלָּה מִשְׁחַת* is paralleled by *הָעִלָּה מִשְׂאוּל* (Ps. 30:4); *קָרַב לְשָׁחַת* is synonymous with *נָגַע* (cf. Isa. 5:8) which is

112. The verb *חָשַׁק* - to covet - which in Isa. 38:14 is employed with *שָׁחַת*, should be emended to *חָסַךְ* - according to the version of the LXX, Vulg. and in correspondence with Job 33:18. Note also Ps. 78:50 where *חָסַךְ* is employed in a similar context, and Ben Sira 51:2(b), where *חָסַךְ* is employed with *שָׁחַת*.

113. E. Reiner, *Šurpu. AfO. Beiheft 11* (Graz, 1958), IV, 43-44; henceforth cited as *Šurpu*.

employed with שָׁאֵל (Ps. 88:4). The noun עֹפָר - dust is associated with שָׁחַת (Ps. 30:10) and שָׁאֵל (Jon. 17:16), as well as the noun מַגְגָּז - maggots (Job 17:14; Isa. 14:11). The equation of שָׁחַת and שָׁאֵל is therefore evident. From the verbal idioms the spatial location of שָׁחַת may be inferred as a place deep below.

The verbs פָּדָה (Job 33:28) and גָּאֵל (Ps. 103:4) which are employed with שָׁחַת are more complex in meaning and may therefore reflect upon the nature of שָׁחַת. The verb פָּדָה - to ransom - is originally a technical term which describes the legal procedure by which an alienated object or person is recovered in return for payment.¹¹⁴ The connotation of the verb differs from the more neutral קָנָה - 'to buy,' by implying not only a change of ownership but also a transfer into a more positive position. This meaning is especially evident when human property is involved. In religious contexts, where God is the redeemer, this aspect is even more pronounced; since the person is redeemed not only from an incurred status but from a state of affliction. The legal aspect of the act of redemption therefore recedes and the charitable, salvific motivation moves to the fore. But what lends the act of redemption its special poignancy is the fact that it is effected from a situation or surroundings which constitute a threatening potency: "For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed [פָּדָה] you from the house of bondage" (Mic. 6:4). To imply both the hostile nature and the threatening power exerted by the sphere from which redemption is effected, the Bible frequently employs the expression

114. The following summary is partially based on the observations of J. J. Stamm, *Erlösen und Vergeben im Alten Testament* (Munich, 1940), pp. 1-6; henceforth cited as *Erlösen*.

פדה מכף/פדה מיד - 'to redeem from the hand of':

ופדהיך מכף עדיצים	Jer. 15:21
כי פדה ה' את יעקב וגאלו מיד הזק ממנו	Jer. 31:11
מיד שאל אפדם	Hos. 13:14
פדך מידי ... הרב	Job 5:20
ומיד עדיצים תפדוני	Job 6:23

The verb גאל is employed either in the context of original ownership - in the case of inanimate property - or of kinship, when a human being is concerned. It therefore connotes the restitution of a natural state in its widest implication, and stresses the obligatory nature of the act. גאל, which is attested only in Hebrew, is a more emotionally charged concept than פדה, which is attested in similar use in other Semitic languages,¹¹⁵ and underscores the special relationship between the redeemer and the redeemed.

While it must be admitted that in poetic language the semantic distinction between פדה and גאל has disappeared and the original denotation of the two verbs somewhat faded, their occurrence still serves to invoke the associations that stem from their original meaning. Thus, while העלה פדה משהח implies merely the spatial ascent from a lower region, גאל משהח reflect upon the alien nature of the domain and its threatening potency.

Further information as to the connotation of שחח may be gained by comparing the context in which Akkadian *haštu/haltu* and biblical שחח are attested. Akkadian *haštu*, which, as has been indicated above,¹¹⁶ is the

115. For references see *THw*, II, 389-390.

116. See p. 53, n.111.

etymological and semantic equivalent of biblical בית , is attested once in a lexical text as "the house for the offering to the dead" and may, in another text, have the meaning of "grave."¹¹⁷

The literary texts are more explicit in articulating the conceptions that were associated with *ḥaštu*. In a passage of *Ludlul Bêl Nemeqi*, the righteous sufferer complains:

My family treats me as an alien
the pit [*ḥaštum*] awaits anyone who speaks well of me ...
For [him] ... who says God bless you, death comes at
the gallop.¹¹⁸

In this context, untimely death is associated with *ḥaštum*. In *The Babylonian Theodicy* the just sufferer complains that sin is not duly punished. This complaint is answered by a pious friend: "For the crime [lit. 'as retribution for the crime'] which the lion committed the pitfall awaits him." The commentary on this line reads as follows: "*ḥa-âš-tu: eršetim^{tim}: ana muḥḥi ḤAŠ : ša-ga-šû.*" *Ḥaštum* means *eršetim* (netherworld) because *ḤAŠ* means 'to murder.'¹¹⁹ This is probably a popular etymology, but it may nevertheless indicate the belief that *ḥaštum* was associated with violent death - the text certainly reflects the association of being consigned to the pit (*ḥaštum*) with retribution for sin.

There are additional texts in which untimely, violent death is associated with being consigned to *ḥaštu*. Thus, Tiglatpileser boasts about his dealings with his enemies: *ana ḥal-te ukînšunuma ziqīqīš um-mi -*

118. W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford, 1960) *Ludlul Bêl Nemeqi*, I, 92-93, 96.

119. *Ibid.* *The Babylonian Theodicy*, 64-65.

"I put (my enemies) into a pit and reduced (them) to nothing."¹²⁰ In the Tukulti Ninurta epic, the Babylonian king admits to his crime in violating a treaty and describes the ensuing catastrophe which he brought upon his people: *ana pašūqti ḥal-ti ša la elē ukimmi[r]* - "I heaped up (my people) in the narrow pit from which there is no coming up."¹²¹ The association of violent death and *ḥaštu* is further indicated by the idiomatic expression in which *ḥaštu* is balanced by *karāšu*, which denotes catastrophe,¹²² annihilation, slaughter. In an incantation to Marduk, the penitent asks the deity to exercise his power and save him: *ina ḥa-āš-ti šu lu[ú]* - "to pull out from a pit," *ina KA ka-ra-še-e e-te-ru* - "to rescue from the throes of catastrophe."¹²³ In *Ludlul Bêl Nemeqi*, the rescue from the pit by divine mercy is described: [*ina ḥa-št*] *i e kim-an ni* - "he rescued me (from the pit), [*ina ka-ra*] *še-e id[kan]*^{an} *ni* - "he summoned me from destruction" [xxx] *ina hu-bur iš-du-da-an-ni* - "he pulled me from the Hubur river."¹²⁴ The Hubur river refers to the waters of death but also to the river ordeal.¹²⁵

120. E. Weidner, "Die Feldzüge und Bauten Tiglatpileasers," *AfO* 18 (1957/58) 349, 10; English trans. according to *CAD* H, p. 143b.

121. E. Ebeling, *MAOS* 12/2, Col. IV 36; English trans. according to *CAD* H, p. 143a-b.

122. *Karāšu* is used for the destruction wrought by the flood both in Gilgames XI 173 and Atrahasis, III vi.10, VIII[10]. I owe this reference to W. W. Hallo, "Antediluvian Cities," *JCS* 23 (1970), n.74.

123. *Šurpu* IV, 43-44.

124. *Ludlul Bêl Nemeqi*, IV, 5, 6 [for restoration and similar context see *Ludlul*, IV, 35-36; W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford, 1960), p. 58].

125. W. Röllig, *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*, Vol. 4 (Berlin, NY, 1974-75), p. 478f.

In accordance with the developed guilt consciousness in the Babylonian culture,¹²⁶ catastrophe, untimely death, and annihilation were not considered accidental, nor were they attributed to the arbitrary willfulness of a deity, but rather to a divine retributive measure provoked by human transgression. The following will exemplify this causal relationship. In a prayer to Ishtar, the penitent confesses:¹²⁷

I have been remiss, I have sinned, I have acted profanely.... I have trespassed in ignorance and transgressed your ordinance.... Save him from the mouth of destruction [*pa-iš ka-ra-ši*].

Similarly, in a prayer to Marduk:¹²⁸

Your slave is cast into the mouth of destruction [*ina pi-i ka-ra-še-e*]. Take away your punishment, rescue him from the morass.

Thus it seems that the thematic sequence in which the rescue from the pit (*haštu*) is mentioned in *Šurpu* is not accidental:

It rests with you Marduk to keep safe and sound...
to rescue from sin
to wipe out crime
to raise from the sick[bed]
to rescue from trouble
to forgive sin
to save from hardship
to pull out from a pit [*ha-áš-ti*]
to rescue from the throes of catastrophe [*KA ka-ra-še-e*]

126. A. Falkenstein and W. von Soden, *Sumerische und Akkadische Hymnen und Gebete* (Stuttgart, 1953), pp. 36, 45, 55.

127. W. G. Lambert, "Three Literary Prayers of the Babylonians," *AfO* 19 (1959), 51, lines 67, 69; henceforth cited as "Literary Prayers."

128. *Ibid.*, p. 59, lines 153-154.

Note the similarity to Ps. 103:2-4 -

- 2 Bless the Lord O my soul
and do not forget all His bounties
- 3 He forgives all your sins
heals all your diseases
- 4 He redeems your life from the pit [שחת]....

There is thus a marked coincidence in Akkadian literature between untimely death and being consigned to *ḥaštu*. The causal relationship that the Akkadians assumed between this kind of death and human transgression implied that the descent into *ḥaštu* was effected by divine wrath, and the rescue from it by divine mercy. This coincidence is noteworthy since a similar nexus obtains in biblical literature.¹²⁹

As the following passages will illustrate, being consigned to שחת is attested to in the Bible in a specific context which almost exclusively deals with divine retribution for human sin:

For you O God will bring them down to the
nethermost pit [באר שחת]
those murderous treacherous men
they shall not live out half their days....

(Ps. 55:24)

God of vengeance Lord
God of vengeance appear
Give the arrogant their deserts
How long shall the wicked O Lord

129. There may be a mention of a similar concept to Akkadian *ḥaštu* in Ugaritic literature. In CTA 16 I 14f - the term *ḥšt* is paralleled by *bt*. These lines are rendered by de Moor:

How could we enter your tomb willingly
even your vault on our own account?

J. C. de Moor, "Studies in the New Alphabetic Texts from Ras Shamra I," *UF* 1 (1969), 171, and notes 27-29. De Moor's rendition of the passage is problematic, but his understanding of *ḥšt* as connected with Akkadian *ḥaštu* may be valid.

How long shall the wicked exult
 Shall they utter insolent speech
 Shall all evildoers vaunt themselves
 They crush your people...
 They afflict your very own
 They kill the widow and the stranger
 They murder the fatherless
 Thinking the Lord does not see it...
 The God of Jacob does not pay heed
 ... until a pit [שחת] is dug for the wicked.

(Ps. 94:1-7, 13b)

Arrogance is also mentioned as the guilt of the Prince of Tyre (Ezek. 28:2) and since in his hubris he arrogated divine (or El's) prerogatives he was consigned to שחת (v.8). Conversely, the deliverance from שחת is associated with forgiveness of sin:

He forgives all your sins
 heals all your diseases
 He redeems your life from the pit [שחת]
 surrounds you with steadfast love and mercy.

(Ps. 103:3-4)

... You saved my life from the pit of
 destruction [שחת בלי]
 for you have cast behind your back all my offenses.

(Isa. 38:17:b,c)

O Lord my God
 I cried out to you and you healed me
 O Lord you brought me up from Še'ol
 preserved me from going down into the Pit [שחת]...
 For He is angry but a moment
 and when He is pleased there is life
 I called to you O Lord
 to my Lord I made appeal
 what is to be gained from my death [lit. - blood]
 from my descent into the Pit [שחת]...
 You undid my sackcloth and girded me with joy.

(Ps. 30:3,4,6,9,10,12b)

In the last psalm the guilt consciousness of the suppliant is attested indirectly by referring to his sackcloth which is a sign of mourning and penitence, and by the awareness that he must have had provoked divine

anger to be chastised with severe illness. In this psalm, as was the case in those previously quoted, rescue from the pit is attributed to divine magnanimity. It was because his trust in this divine quality was frustrated that Job was induced to the bitter conclusion:¹³⁰

I am already found guilty why should I struggle in vain
 Were I to scrub myself with soapwort, cleanse my hands
 with lye
 You would douse me in the pit [שִׁחָה] and my clothes would
 abhor me
 He is not, like me, a man whom I could challenge, let us
 go to court together.

(Job 9:29-32)

And it is in an attempt to refute this allegation by Job that Elihu most fully articulates the belief that being consigned to the pit [שִׁחָה] is due to a just divine judgment. In Chapter 33 a description is given of the subtle ways in which God chastises the transgressor with an aim to redeem him from premature death. The fate of the sinner, if unheeding the divine warning, is determined at a heavenly court presided over by God. While recounting the ways of divine discipline, the rescue from the pit is described four times. Since this passage (vv.13-30) supplies us with details concerning the various beliefs associated with the notion of the pit, it merits full quotation:

- 13 Why do you charge him
 That he answers none of your words
- 14 God may speak in one way
 Or another, and one not perceive it.
- 15 In a dream a vision of the night
 When slumber falls on men

130. The translation followed here is by M. H. Pope, "Job," but for the noun שִׁחָה in verse 31, which is rendered by Pope as "filth" and is here translated according to its common meaning by "pit."

- As they sleep upon their bed
 16 Then he opens men's ears
 Terrifies them with warning¹³¹
 17 To deter man from evil¹³²
 To keep man from pride¹³³
 18 To spare his soul from the pit [שחת]
 His life from crossing the Channel¹³⁴
 19 Or one may be chastened on a bed of pain
 With ceaseless agony in his bones
 20 Till his soul loathes food
 His appetite choice dishes
 21 His flesh wastes from sight
 And his bare bones are seen
 22 His soul draws near the Pit [שחת]
 His life to waters of Death¹³⁵
 23 Unless he have by him an angel
 A spokesman one out of thousand
 To tell the man's uprightness
 24 To have pity on him and say
 Spare¹³⁶ him from going down to the Pit [שחת]
 I have found him a ransom
 25 His flesh becomes plump as a boy's
 He returns to the days of his youth
 26 He prays to God and he accepts him
 He sees his face with joy
 He announces to men his salvation
 27 He sings before men and says

131. Reading *mar'im* - 'visions' with the LXX, instead of MT *mōsārām* and vocalizing the verb *yehittēm* - 'he terrifies them' rather than MT *yahtōm* - 'he seals.'

132. MT *ma'āseh* should be emended to *mimma'āsehū*, the first *m* dropped out by haplography as did the final *w*. By implication - 'his deed' denotes here 'his evil deed.'

133. Reading according to BH³.

134. As to MT *šelaḥ* - E. Dhorme suggested the equation with Akkadian *šiliḫtu*, denoting 'channel': E. Dhorme, *Livre de Job* (Paris, 1926), pp. 452-453. This interpretation is followed by Pope, "Job," p. 218; M. Tsevat, "The Canaanite God Šālah," *VT* 4 (195r) 43-45; D. Leibel, "'br bšlh," *Tarbiz* 33 (1964) 225-227, and "An Addendum to 'br bšlh," *ibid.*, 405; H. Yallon, "Comments to D. Leibel's Article 'br bšlh," *ibid.*, 403-405. For a different view, see M. Held, "Pit and Pitfalls," p. 174.

135. MT *memītīm* - 'killers.' Pope, "Job," suggests *lēmē-māwet-mō* with enclitic emphatic particle.

136. פִּדְיוֹן of the MT does not occur elsewhere and should be emended to פְּדִיָּה according to v.28, the Peshitta, Targum II, and probably 11 Qtg Job which has *pšhy*. Cf. M. Sokoloff, *The Targum to Job from Qumran Cave XI* (Tel-Aviv, 1979), p. 72.

- I sinned and perverted the right
 Yet he did not fully requite me
 28 He saved my soul from the Pit [שְׁחַת] [שְׁחַת]
 And my life sees the light
 29 All those things God does
 Twice or thrice with a man
 30 To turn back his soul from the Pit [שְׁחַת] [שְׁחַת]
 To light him with the light of life.

(Job 33:13-30)

In this passage, Elihu underscores the idea that it is human transgression which brings man to the verge of the pit and the final aim of the divine measures taken to deter man from evil is therefore "to spare his soul from the pit, his life [lit. 'soul'] from crossing the channel" (v.18). The nature of שְׁחַת as a place of punishment is evident in this passage and is further conveyed by the reference to the "crossing of the channel" which, as has been maintained by several scholars, points to the "infernal stream," "the water of judgment."¹³⁷ In the ensuing divine judgment scene (vv.23-26) which is patterned after the common procedure of litigation in a terrestrial court,¹³⁸ the verdict of being consigned to the pit is revoked after an appeal by an angelic intercessor¹³⁹ and the offer of ransom money. This judgment scene articulates most explicitly what has been implied by many a Lament of the Individual, namely, that שְׁחַת is a place meant for the transgressor.

137. Cf. p. 63, note 134.

138. So interpreted by H. Richter, *Studien zu Hiob* (Berlin, 1959), p. 115. N. Johansson, *Paraklētoi: Vorstellungen von Fürsprechern für die Menschen vor Gott in der alttestamentlichen Religion im Spätjudentum und Urchristentum* (Lund, 1940), pp. 27, 43, 47.

139. For the function of the angelic intercessor cf. N. Johansson, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-47; S. Mowinckel, "Hiob's gō'ēl und Zeuge im Himmel," *Vom Alten Testament* (Marti Festschrift), ed. K. Budde (Giessen, 1925), pp. 207-212.

Psalm 49, a wisdom psalm which reflects on the transitory nature of wealth, may however contain a passage in which *שְׁחַת* is the final destination of every man, a place from which no mortal can redeem himself no matter how rich he may be (vv.8-10). The passage, however, contains many textual difficulties which render its precise meaning uncertain:

- (6) למה אירא בימי רע עון עקבי יסובני
 (7) הבטחים על חילם וברב עשים יתהללו
 (8) אח¹⁴⁰ לא פדה יפדה איש לא יתן לאלהים כפרו
 (9) ויקר פדיון נפשם יחדל לעולם
 (10) ויחי עוד לנצח לא יראה שְׁחַת.

In time of trouble, why should I fear
 the encompassing evil of my deceivers
 men who trust in their riches
 who glory in their great wealth
 Ah, it cannot redeem a man
 or pay his ransom to God
 the price of life is too high
 and so man ceases to be forever
 Shall he live eternally
 and never see the grave [lit. שְׁחַת]

(Ps. 49:6-10)

Whether the object of the verb *פדה* is the accrued wealth or man himself, or else a fellow-man who offers the ransom money (so according to MT) does not change the central theme of the psalm - the inadequacy of human means to rescue from death. What is of greater consequence for understanding the psalmist's intention is whether vv.8-10 refer to death as a general fate, as is the common understanding of the commentators, or

140. Most commentators follow the version preserved in 8 MSS and substitute *אח* - 'alas' for MT *אח* - 'brother.' If this reading is preferred, the object of the verb *פדה* becomes somewhat problematic. The object could be either the wealth mentioned in v.7 or else Man himself in which case the verb *יפדה* (in qal) would have to be changed to *יפדה* (in nipl). For a comprehensive summary of the divergent exegetical approaches to this passage cf. H. Gros, "Selbst- oder Fremderlösung. Überlegung zu Psalm 49 8-10," *Festschrift E. Ziegler. Forschung zur Bibel* 2 (1972), pp. 65-70.

whether the psalmist has a particular kind of death in mind. In other words, is it the inevitable fate of man to descend to לְאֵדָם or is it only in some specific situation that man cannot redeem himself from being consigned to it. Close analysis of the vocabulary and of the cultic setting in which the psalm is used may reveal the latter to be the case.

The commentators who understand vv. 8-10 to point to human fate in general base their interpretation on the common meaning of כֶּסֶף in biblical Hebrew. The following renditions of v.8 are offered according to this line of interpretation:

- (a) "Yet man cannot redeem himself nor give ransom to God for his life."¹⁴¹
- (b) "A brother can by no means redeem a man, he cannot give to God a ransom for him."¹⁴²
- (c) "Ah, it [i.e., wealth] cannot redeem a man or pay his ransom to God."¹⁴³

Verse 9 is commonly considered a gloss due to its uncertain relation to the context of the passage from the point of view both of syntax and content. LXX's reading נַפְשׁוֹ (v.9a) - 'his soul' is usually preferred to MT נַפְשָׁם - 'their soul,' and this pronominal suffix understood as an

141. M. Battenwieser, *The Psalms* (Chicago, 1937), p. 645; henceforth cited as Battenwieser. Similarly, C. A. Briggs, *The Book of Psalms*, I.C.C. (Edinburgh, 1969; reprint of the 1906 edition), p. 405; henceforth cited as Briggs; H. J. Kraus, *Psalmen*, BK 15 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1960), p. 362.

142. A. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, 4th ed. (Chicago, 1963), p. 184, following the MT.

143. JPS, p. 49.

objective genitive. The object of the verb לִּדְוֹל (v.9b) is, according to this interpretation, man, and the verb is translated accordingly 'to cease' thus yielding: "the price of life is too high and so man ceases to be forever" (*JPS*). According to another interpretation, the object of לִּדְוֹל is the effort of redemption, the verb is translated accordingly 'to desist' and the verse rendered:¹⁴⁴

For the redemption of their soul[s] is too costly
and he must desist from it forever.

Verse 10 is considered to be the conclusion of the preceding reflections on the inability of man or his wealth to redeem him from death: "Shall he live forever and never see the grave [lit. שְׂחַת]" (*JPS*); "That he may live forever and not behold the engulfing pit" (Buttenwieser). "The pit" is consequently understood as the final destination of all mankind.

A different interpretation proposed here, which construes the passage as pointing to a specific kind of death - namely, that of the wealthy wicked¹⁴⁵ mentioned in vv.6-7 - is based on the following considerations:

a. Besides the common meaning of אִישׁ - 'man,' there is also a specific meaning of this noun attested in biblical Hebrew, i.e., a man of special rank due to his valiance (I Sam. 26:15; I King.2:2) or to his social status (II Sam. 16:18). In II Sam. 16:18, אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל constitutes the 'body politic' in counterdistinction to the commoners, הָעָם ; he belongs to 'the highborn.'¹⁴⁶ Our psalmist clearly has a specific meaning of אִישׁ

144. A. Heidel, *op. cit.*; Briggs, p. 408.

145. For this meaning of עֶקֶבִי cf. Jer. 17:9.

146. So according to Buttenwieser, p. 647, n.3; cf. II Sam. 20:2.

in mind since he distinguishes between בְּנֵי אָדָם and בְּנֵי אִישׁ in verse 3,¹⁴⁷ the former he identifies according to the chiastic arrangement of the verse, with the poor, the latter with the wealthy. The deceivers from whose machinations the psalmist suffers are described as "men who trust in their riches, who glory in their wealth" (v.7). The major theme of the psalm is to point to the contrast between the fate of the wicked and the poet's own fate. To underscore this contrast the poet uses identical phraseology to describe both fates:

(v.8 according to MSS)

אֵךְ לֹא פָדָה יִפְדֶּה אִישׁ

(v.16)

אֵךְ אֱלֹפִים יִפְדֶּה נַפְשִׁי

The juxtaposition between the poet and his adversaries who have earlier been identified as "men who trust in their riches" (v.7) secures the meaning of אִישׁ in its special denotation in v.8 and tallies with its denotation in v.3.

b. The verb פָּדָה and especially the phrase נַפֶּשׁ - 'to redeem a soul' (vv.8-9) through כֶּסֶף - 'ransom money' is used in the Bible in the context of redeeming a life which has been forfeited.¹⁴⁸ The forensic connotation of offering ransom money in such a case, reminiscent of Job 33:24, is attested in a Babylonian prayer in a liturgic setting which may elucidate our passage. In a prayer to Marduk, the penitent (or a priest who intercedes on his behalf) prays to the deity:¹⁴⁹

147. Cf. Ps. 62:10.

148. Exod. 21:30; Prov. 6:32-35; Job 33:24. Note also I Sam. 14:45. For different connotations in the Priestly Documents cf. J. J. Stamm, *Erlösen*, pp. 12-13.

149. W. G. Lambert, "Literary Prayers," p. 59.

- 153 Your slave is cast into the mouth of destruction
 154 Take away your punishment, rescue him from the morass...
 Receive his present take his ransom.

From the above-quoted text it becomes evident that the ransom money was offered in a specific cultic setting as a propitiatory measure, believed to be efficacious in mollifying divine wrath, and resorted to in time of dire need when untimely death seemed imminent. It seems that this specific situation is referred to by the author of Psalm 49 when he expresses his doubt concerning the efficacy of this religious practice. In order to underscore the futility of human initiative in saving a life forfeited, the psalmist juxtaposes this effort to the sovereign resolution of God who alone can save at will: "But God will ransom me, from the hand of Še'ol will he surely take me"¹⁵⁰ (v.16). But the polarity aimed at in this psalm is the contradistinction between the fate of the wealthy wicked and the fate of the psalmist, rather than between human limitation and divine omnipotence. If the idea that the psalmist wishes to convey is that, contrary to common belief, no sinner can redeem himself by means of ransom money, then the meaning of שְׁאוֹל in v.10 tallies with its meaning elsewhere in Psalms and denotes a place where the wicked are destined to be consigned.¹⁵¹ This interpretation, more than the one previously mentioned, takes into consideration the consistency with which the psalmist uses his terminology and follows more closely the drift of the major theme

150. On the emphasizing denotation of the particle "kī" in v.16, cf. Ps. 128:2; for the parallel syntactic phenomenon in Ugaritic - C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Grammar* (Rome, 1940), p. 54. The stichometric division of v.16 should shift MT 'atnah accordingly.

151. So also Briggs, p. 408.

as expressed by the structure of the psalm. However, due to the uncertainty concerning the object of the verbs *יָדַל* and *יָדַל* in vv. 9 and 10, respectively, this interpretation ought to be considered plausible rather than conclusive. But for Psalm 49, the connotation of *שְׁחַת* in the Bible is uniformly the final destination of the wicked. The kind of death associated with being consigned to *שְׁחַת* is always premature and often violent. Thus, a common nexus is attested: guilt consciousness, fear of untimely death which is combined with the fear of being consigned to *שְׁחַת*. This nexus between human transgression, divine judgment, and being consigned to *שְׁחַת* poses the question of whether a negative connotation is innate to the noun, and the word is therefore employed to designate the fate of the wicked, or whether *שְׁחַת* is a neutral term - the abode of all the dead - and the special context of human guilt and divine judgment in which *שְׁחַת* is mentioned is determined by the literary genres in which it is most frequently attested, namely, the Individual Lament, Psalms of Petition, and the Thanksgiving Psalm of the Individual in which these themes constitute the major motifs. This second possibility ought to be considered, since in Ps. 49:10, as discussed above, *שְׁחַת* may have a more general meaning, and in view of the fact that the noun *שְׁחַת* is attested only in these specific literary genres.

It is noteworthy that the descent to *שְׁחַת* is never attested in a context in which natural and peaceful death is described. Natural death was accepted by biblical man with a kind of sober resignation, and no hope to elude it was nurtured. The grave - the final abode of all mankind - is never attested in the Bible in connection with one of the idiomatic verbal phrases which are employed to express the hope of escape from

שָׁחַת such as הֶעֱלָה - 'to bring up,' פָּדָה - 'to ransom,' גָּאֵל - 'to redeem,' הִשְׁךְ - 'to spare,' הָשִׁב - 'to turn back.' There was no turning back from natural death, and the grave, as a human destination, is conspicuously devoid of negative connotations in the Bible, and often contemplated with composure:

You will come in full vigor to the grave
Like a sheaf of corn in its season.

(Job 5:26)

The family grave in particular was a place one hope to go once one's life had peacefully come to an end (II Sam. 19:38). One could nostalgically recall the burial-place of one's ancestors (Neh. 2:3) since to reach it was a sign of divine grace (II King. 22:20). It is therefore inaccurate to translate biblical שָׁחַת as 'grave,' as is so often done. Moreover, there are passages in which a specific connotation, diametrically opposed to the one discussed, seems to be inherent in the noun שָׁחַת: "You will not let your faithful one see the pit [שָׁחַת]" (Ps. 16:10). Since biblical man resigned himself to the limitations set upon mankind by creation and did not aspire to immortality, and since the hope of resurrection was yet beyond his historic horizon, this verse could have but one meaning: "You [God] will not let your faithful die an untimely, evil death."¹⁵² The same interpretation is valid for Deutero-Isa.:¹⁵³ לֹא יָמוּת

152. Psalm 16:10 exerted a formative influence on early Christianity (cf. Acts 2:27:b and 13:35) since it was believed to contain a reference to resurrection. But this understanding is a post-biblical development. Cf. H. W. Boers, "Psalm 16 and the Historical Origin of the Christian Faith," *ZNW* 59 (1968), 105-110, for discussion and additional bibliography.

153. Translation by H. L. Ginsberg, "The Book of Isaiah," *JPS* (1973).

תָּשָׁל - "He is not cut down and slain" (Isa. 51:14). The verse is part of an oracle of salvation, "a proclamation of release," to the nation in distress, offered as a divine response to a Community Lament.¹⁵⁴ In these verses a specific denotation of תָּשָׁל as a place of evil death is inherent in the noun itself, and it seems therefore plausible that this meaning determined the choice of the specific term both in Deutero-Isa. and in the Psalms when the context was one of untimely death, whether feared by the worshiper or wished upon his enemy.

The Septuagint translators apparently derived the noun תָּשָׁל from the root תָּשָׁל meaning 'to corrupt, spoil, ruin,' and when not paraphrasing according to the context,¹⁵⁵ translated תָּשָׁל by φθορά¹⁵⁶ δολαφθορά¹⁵⁷ καταφθορά¹⁵⁸ - meaning 'destruction, ruin, cessation of existence,' and by ἀπόλλυμι¹⁵⁹ ἀπώλεα¹⁶⁰ meaning 'destruction.' This derivation should not simply be considered an "erroneous derivation."¹⁶¹ The problem is a more complex one. The notion of 'destruction,' 'corruption,' etc. could have been suggested to the Greek translators by the negative aspect of

155. Job 9:31 - ῥύπος - 'filth, dirt,' 33:18,22,24,30 - θάνατος - 'death'; Ps. 7:16, 94:13; Prov. 26,7 - βόθρος, βόθυνος - 'hole.'

156. Jon. 2:7; Ps. 103:4.

157. Ezek. 19:48; Ps. 9:15, 16:10, 30:10, 35:7, 55:24; Job 17:14, 33:28.

158. Ps. 49:10.

159. Isa. 38:17.

160. Ezek. 28:8.

161. So S. Jellicoe, "Hebrew Greek Equivalents for the Netherworld, Its Milieu and Inhabitants in the Old Testament," *Textus* 8 (1973) 18.

שָׁחַת, which, as we have indicated above, was implied in the Bible. Especially such a verse as Job 17:4, which describes שָׁחַת as a place of physical disintegration, could have prompted their translation. The Greek translation could thus be part of the pervasive post-biblical exegetical tradition which, according to contemporary religious motivations, further developed connotations already latent in the biblical concept.¹⁶² Both the Targum and Peshitta follow the same exegetical tradition and frequently render שָׁחַת by חבלא - 'destruction.'¹⁶³ The use of שָׁחַת in the Qumran literature may represent yet another stage in this exegetical tradition, underscoring particularly in such combinations as בְּנֵי שָׁחַת - 'sons of šaḥat'¹⁶⁴ the negative aspect both from a spatial and from a moral point of view which, as proposed above, was already implied in the biblical term.

In conclusion, שָׁחַת - the semantic equivalent of biblical שְׂאוֹל - is used predominantly to describe the ultimate destination of the wicked who died prematurely.

162. A religious reinterpretation of שָׁחַת according to new contemporary religious notions and anticipation is suggested by A. Schmitt, "Ps. 16,8-11 als Zeugnis der Auferstehung in der Apg." *Biblische Zeitschrift* 17 (1973) 229-248.

163. Cf. Targum to Isa. 51:4; Ezek. 28:8; Jon. 2:7. Peshitta to Isa. 38:17, 51:14; Ezek. 28:8; Jon. 2:7; Ps. 16:10, 49:10, 103:4; Job 17:14, 33:18, 22, 24, 28, 30.

164. See R. E. Murphy, "Šaḥat in the Qumran Literature," *Biblica* 39 (1958) 61-66.

IV. בּוֹר - "Pit, netherworld"

The noun בּוֹר - 'pit' occurs twenty-two times in the Bible. All occurrences are in poetic texts which, with the exception of one wisdom text, belong to the genres of the Individual Lament, the Lament for the Dead combined with a Taunt song, and Thanksgiving Psalms.¹⁶⁵ בּוֹר is balanced six times with שְׂאוֹל¹⁶⁶ and like the latter always appears without the article.

As to the exact meaning of בּוֹר, Gensenius suggests 'grave.' He systematically explains all combinations in which בּוֹר is attested as referring to the grave, and explicitly rejects the meaning 'netherworld.'¹⁶⁷ His interpretation is followed by BDB, who translate בּוֹר into "pit of [the] grave."¹⁶⁸

But the meaning 'grave' for בּוֹר does not fit the context in which

165. בּוֹר is attested in the Individual Laments in Isa. 38:18; Pss. 28:1, 88:5,7, 143:7. Since בֹּאֵר may also refer to the pit and thus be similar to בּוֹר, two more references may be obtained from Pss. 55:24, 69:16; both belong to the category of the Individual Lament; cf. Held, "Pit and Pitfalls," p. 176, n.35. Isa. 14:15; Ezek. 26:20(2x), 31:14,16, 32:18,24,25,29,30 are a compound form. Although Isa. 14:4b-21 formally belongs to the Lament for the Dead genre and employs its diction, it constitutes a 'mock dirge' expressing relief and joy rather than grief. A similar situation obtains in Ezek. 26:17-21 and 32:1-16. The former is a lament on Tyre, the latter a lament on the King of Egypt, both employ typical lament diction although the sentiment is that of divine judgment and not grief over the deceased. Ch. 31 in Ezek., although not called a lament, anticipates in vv. 14-18 the lament over the King of Egypt elaborated in Ch.32 by employing identical diction. בּוֹר is attested in the following Thanksgiving Psalms: Pss. 30:4, 40:3; Lam. 3:53,55. C. Westermann, *Praise of God*, p. 102, calls this category "The Declarative Psalm of Praise of the Individual." Wisdom text: Prov. 1:12.

166. Isa. 14:15, 38:18; Ezek. 31:16; Pss. 30:4, 88:4; Prov. 1:12.

167. GB. 89(3).

168. BDB, 92(4).

the noun occurs and is not congruent with several descriptive details that qualify it. The inadequacy of the meaning 'grave' may be indicated by the forced, and sometimes inconsistent, interpretations that Tromp had to resort to in his attempt to maintain the meaning 'grave' throughout. We will consider a few of his interpretations:¹⁶⁹

There can be no reasonable doubt now as to bôr meaning "grave" (bôr is balanced by šahat in Ps 7:16 see also Ps 55:24) this interpretation is imperative in Isa. 14:19 '...who go down to the stones of the pit.' Vincent remarks how well this queer expression corresponds to palpable facts: in Palestine dead were found buried on a bed of stones (H. Vincent Canaan 270)... It is clear now that Lam. 3:43 [should be corrected to 53. R.R.] must refer to a custom different from the one found in Isa. 14... but certainly bôr in Lam. 3 bears on the grave:

They flung me alive into the pit
and cast stones on me
Water closed over my head
I said: 'I am lost.'

The waters here suggest a deeper understanding of this verse: the psalmist feels himself in Sheol, and the first two cola are to be understood as referring to a lamentable situation.

Commenting on the combination בור ודחיתות in the next verse and in Ps.

88:7, Tromp writes: "... bôr itself is a certain name of the nether-world."¹⁷⁰

As indicated above,¹⁷¹ שְׁהוֹת does not refer to the grave but to the netherworld. The expression אבני בור - 'the stones of the pit' should probably be emended to אדני בור - 'the lowest, least desirable place in the underworld.'¹⁷² Furthermore, the meaning 'grave' for בור does not

169. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions*, p. 67.

170. *Ibid.*, p. 183.

171. Cf. pp. 70, 71.

172. The Vulgate reads this verse: *ad fundamenta lacu*. That Jerome probably had before him אדני rather than MT אבני is suggested

accord with the various references to water associated with בֹּרַר. Beside the passage in Lam. 3:54 referred to by Tromp, בֹּרַר is balanced by מַצְלִיחַ in Ps. 88:7. Again in Ps. 40:3, the association with water is indicated by the combination בֹּרַר שֶׁאֵין which should be rendered 'miry pit',¹⁷³ since the expression is balanced by טִיט חִיּוֹן - 'slimy clay.' שֶׁאֵין in biblical Hebrew generally implies noise, and in particular the roar of waves.¹⁷⁴ These watery images belong to the description of the netherworld which is located "in the heart of the seas," and do not fit the description of a terrestrial grave.

Finally, the difficulty of the equation בֹּרַר=grave can be illustrated by the context in which בֹּרַר is attested in Ezek. chapters 26 and 32. In chapter 26:20, יורדי בֹּרַר - 'those who descend [or who have descended] into the pit' is balanced by תַּחְתִּיּוֹת אֶרֶץ - 'netherworld,' which is further described in this verse as the dwelling place of people who are long dead

by B. Kedar-Kopfstein, "Divergent Hebrew Readings in Jerome's Isaiah," *Textus* 4 (1964) 187. H. L. Ginsberg, "Reflexes of Sargon in Isaiah after 715 B.C.E.," *JAOS* 88 (1968) 52, n.33 (henceforth cited as "Reflexes of Sargon") also prefers אֶדְנִי over אֲדָנִי in view of the 'lowest pit' in Isa. 14:15. A variant of T. preserved in Qimhi's commentary (ed. L. Finkelstein) on our verse - לְסִיפֵי (גֹּבַב בֵּית) אֲבִדְנָא - may support the reading אֶדְנִי if סִיפֵי is a miswritten סִיפֵי. Cf. S. Talmon, "Aspects of the Textual Transmission of the Bible in the Light of Qumran Manuscripts," *Textus* 5 (1964) 102, n.16.

A different rendition of this phrase is offered by Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (New York, 1968), p. 141, n.80, who construes it as 'el 'ebe - 'the manes,' dead spirits of ancestors, a plural of 'El'eb, the patron of ancestor-worship. But the numerous text emendations that this rendition entails render it highly hypothetical.

173. So translated in *The Book of Psalms*, JPS, *loc. cit.*

174. Isa. 17:12,13; Ps. 65:8. The roar of "many waters" and personified sea.

(עם עולם). In chapter 32:23, Assyria is described as destined to die an ignominious death: executed, slain by the sword, her multitudes are consigned to a special place, *אשר נתנו קברתיה בירכתי בור* - "whose graves are set in the recesses of the pit." Were we to translate *בור* here into 'grave,' the verse would read: "Whose graves are set in the recesses of the grave." Moreover, *ירכתי בור* in this verse is a quotation from Isa. 14:15, the only other instance in which the phrase occurs, and there the expression is balanced by *שאול*.

Ezek. 32:23 is admittedly a difficult text. The relationship between the grave and the netherworld in this entire chapter is no clear, and various commentators have observed that a certain merging of the two concepts has taken place. Driver offers a partial solution to this difficulty.¹⁷⁵ He distinguishes between *קברתיה* (a plural form of *קבר* - 'grave' that occurs only in v.23 discussed above) and *קברתה* - 'burial' in the same verse (used collectively for buried ones and which Driver renders "round about are her buried ones, all of them slain"). This word recurs in v.24 and, according to Driver, should be restored in v.25 where the defective writing of *קברתה* favors this rendition, and in v.26 where this reading has the support of the Septuagint and the Peshitta. But some difficulties in understanding Ezekiel's vision of the netherworld still remain: his description of the 'ancient people' who went down to the netherworld with 'ancient ruins' (ch.26:20) and the references to 'burials' in the underworld in ch.32 are unique to Ezekiel and can by no means be

175. G. R. Driver, "Ezekiel: Linguistic and Textual Problems," *Biblica* 35 (1954), 301.

considered normative for biblical belief. And yet, the rendition 'nether-world' for בֹּרַר in these chapters offers a more satisfactory explanation than 'grave.'

More in accord with biblical evidence is Gunkel's comment concerning the meaning of בֹּרַר in the Psalms: "Zisterne dann der Ort da die Toten wohnen. Der Bedeutungsübergang erfolgt nicht über die Bedeutung 'Grab' was das Wort niemals bezeichnet."¹⁷⁶ Gunkel's interpretation also accords with the verbal idiom יורדי בֹּרַר - 'those who descend, or those who have descended into the pit' which is balanced five times by אֶרֶץ תַּחְתִּיּוֹת/אֶרֶץ תַּחְתִּיּוֹת and six times by שְׁאוֹל¹⁷⁷ where the reference is clearly to the netherworld and not to the grave. This verbal idiom יורדי בֹּרַר seems to be a stereotyped phrase similar in form and content to ירד שְׁאוֹל - 'descent into še'ol' (Ps. 55:16; Job 7:9), ירד שָׁחַת - 'descent into šahat' (Job 33:24) and ירד עָפָר - 'descent into the dust' (Ps. 22:30). The expression יורדי בֹּרַר עַתָּה נִחְשָׁבְתִּי עִנִּי - "I am reckoned among those who go down to the pit" (Ps. 88:5) is to be compared with a similar expression in Ugaritic literature: *tspr byrdm arṣ* - "You will be counted among those who go down into the earth,"¹⁷⁸ referring to Ba'al's descent into the netherworld - the domain of Môt.

The particular form of the phrase יורדי בֹּרַר should probably be

176. H. Gunkel, *Die Psalmen. GHAT* (Göttingen, 1926), p. 121. This interpretation is followed by H. J. Kraus, *Psalmen BK 15/1* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1972), p. 230.

177. אֶרֶץ תַּחְתִּיּוֹת: Ezek. 31:14, 16. אֶרֶץ תַּחְתִּיּוֹת: Ezek. 26:20, 32:18, 24. שְׁאוֹל: Isa. 14:15, 38:18; Ezek. 31:16; Pss. 30:4, 88:4; Prov. 1:12.

178. CTA 4 VIII, 8-9. Cf. *Ras Shamra Parallels*, Vol. I, ed. L. R. Fisher, *Analecta Orientalia* 49 (Rome, 1972), p. 27.

understood in most cases as expressing a past action, 'those who have descended,' rather than 'those who descend' into the pit.¹⁷⁹ This meaning is implied in the following texts, where the parallel expression refers not to dying people but to those who are already in the realm of the dead: In Ps. 88:5 *יורדי בור* is paralleled by *מתים* - 'the dead' (v.6); in Ps. 143:7 it is paralleled by *מתי עולם* - 'those long dead' (v.3); and in Ezek. 26:20 it is paralleled by *עם עולם* - 'the people of old' (v.20).

In order to elucidate the concepts that are associated with this expression in particular and with *בור* in general, we turn to examine the contexts in which they occur.

The contexts in which *בור* - 'pit/netherworld/' occurs imply that being consigned to the pit does not simply mean to die, but rather to be doomed to die prematurely by divine judgment and wrath:

O Lord hear my prayer
 give ear to my plea as You are faithful
 answer me as You are beneficent.
 Do not enter into judgment with Your servant....
 Do not hide Your face from me
 or I shall become like those who descend [descended?]
 into the Pit [*עם ירדי בור*] (Ps. 143:1,2b,7bc)

You have put me at the bottom of the Pit¹⁸⁰ [*בור תחתיות*]
 in the darkest places in the depth.
 Your fury lies heavy upon me
 You afflict me with all your breakers....

179. For the participle referring to the past tense cf. Jon. 5:6; Jer. 28:4; Ezek. 32:23, 39:10.

180. Whether the plural in *בור תחתיות* - lit. 'lowest pit' - refers to an intensified form, as suggested by Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions*, p. 69, n.216, cannot be determined with certainty. Note that this form which occurs once more in Lam. 3:55 is used there interchangeably with *בור* (ch. 3:55), without a qualifier.

Your fury overwhelms me Your terrors destroy me
 They swirl about me like waters all day long
 they circle me on every side.

(Ps. 88, vv.7-8, 17-18)

Just as consignment to the pit is a direct result of divine anger,
 so is the rescue from it an indication of the abatement of divine wrath
 and a sign of mercy:

O Lord You brought me up from Sheol preserved me from
 going down into the Pit [בֹּרַךְ] ...

For He is angry but a moment and when He is pleased
 there is life.

(Ps. 30:4,6)

... He inclined toward me and heeded my cry
 He lifted me out of the miry pit the slimy clay.

(Ps. 40:2b,3ab)

Contemplating the reason for the divine anger which consigned him
 to the pit, the psalmist concludes, "my iniquities caught up with me"
 (ps. 40:13). Other psalmists indicate the same causal relationship
 between being consigned to the pit and sin:

O Lord ... do not disregard me for if You hold aloof
 from me I shall be like those gone down into the
 Pit....¹⁸¹

Do not count me¹⁸¹ with the wicked and evildoers.

(Ps. 28:1,3)

Cf. Isa. 38:17,18.

The nature of the offense is usually not specified. In one instance it
 may refer to the sin of overweening confidence (Ps. 30:8);¹⁸² in two

181. MT ... אל תמשכני עִם - lit means 'do not drag me off.' Dahood renders: "do not rank me," equating עִם מַשָּׁךְ with מַשָּׁךְ יָדוֹ אֶת לְרֹצְצִים - "He associated with scoffers" (Hos. 7:5). Based on an unpublished suggestion by Albright.

182. Cf. Ps. 10:6. So also H. L. Ginsberg, "Psalms and Inscriptions

other psalms the expression that qualifies the divine anger may enable us to determine the nature of the sin that caused it:

... Do not hide Your face from me or I shall
become like those who descend into the Pit.

(Ps. 143:7)

When You hid Your face I was terrified ...
what is to be gained from my death from my
descent into the Pit.

(Ps. 30:8b,10)

The expression 'to hide the face' has been defined by Friedman as "Yahweh's response to betrayal of his covenant":¹⁸³ "... mastîr pānîm thus stands beside active divine chastisement as an additional and more terrifying dimension of YHWH's response to Israel's infidelity."¹⁸⁴ Although betrayal of the divine covenant is not explicitly mentioned in our texts, it seems to be implicit in the specific terminology that the psalmists employ in describing the abject condition of those who have been consigned to the pit, and in their plea for deliverance and restoration of the relationship between God and man.

זכרתי ימינה מקדם הגיתי בכל פעליך במעשה ידיך אשוחח
אל חסדך פניך ממני ונמשלתי עם ירדתי בור
השמיעני בבקר חסדך כי כך במחתי ...
למען שמך ה' תחיני בצדקתך תוציא מצרה נפשי
ובחסדך תצמית איבי

of Petition and Acknowledgment," *Louis Ginsberg Jubilee Volume* (New York, 1945) 167.

183. R. E. Friedman, "The Biblical Expression Mastîr Pānîm," *Hebrew Annual Review* I (1977) 147.

184. *Ibid.*, 142. The psalms referred to here are not treated in Friedman's article but he claims that the meaning of the phrase "remains remarkably consistent in all its contexts so that mastîr pānîm acquires the status of a formulaic expression and perhaps even of a terminus technicus."

Then I thought of the days of old I rehearsed all
 Your deeds
 Do not hide Your face from me or I shall become like
 those who descend into the Pit
 Let me learn of Your faithfulness by daybreak for
 in You I trust.
 For the sake of Your name O Lord preserve me as You
 are beneficent
 Free me from distress as You are faithful
 put an end to my foes....
 (Ps. 143:5,7b,8,11,12)

מה בצע בדמי בידחי אל שחת¹⁸⁵ היורד עפר היגיד אמיתך.

What is to be gained from my blood from my descent
 into the Pit
 Can dust praise You can it declare Your faithfulness.
 (Ps. 30:10)

Note also the similar vocabulary in connection with יורדי בור:

לא ישברו יורדי בור אל אמתך

They who descended into the pit do not hope for Your
 faithfulness.
 (Isa. 38:18)

היספר בקבר חסדך אמרנתך באבדון
 היודע בזושך פלאך וצדקתך באיץ נשיה

Is Your faithful care recounted in the grave
 Your constancy in the place of perdition
 Are Your wonders made known in [the place of]
 darkness
 Your beneficent deeds in the land of oblivion.
 (Ps. 88:12-13)

While an occasional isolated use in a liturgical context of terms such as פלאך וצדקתך, אמתך, חסדך - to indicate God's 'faithfulness,' 'beneficent deeds,' 'loving kindness' and 'steadfast love' would not necessarily suggest covenant terminology, the implications here are more clearly defined. The accumulation within one organized complex of terms which specifically

185. The synonym for שחת - בור - is mentioned in Ps. 30:4.

denote covenant relations and covenant faith indicates that it is this meaning that the above-quoted psalmists have in mind.¹⁸⁶

To sum up - in the Individual Lament Psalms "to become like those who have descended into the Pit" (Pss. 28:1, 143:7) is equivalent to being "ranked with the wicked" (Ps. 28:3), treated as one of those "treacherous people who have no regard for the deeds of God" (Ps. 28:5) and are judged and punished for violating the covenant.

In one particular case, in Ps. 88:5,6, consignment to the pit is associated with another typical form of divine judgment - death by the sword:

I am numbered with those who have descended
into the Pit....
like the slain that lie in the grave.

The concurrence of this particular kind of death, the descent into the pit, and of divine judgment, is a major motif in a number of additional texts: in the mock-dirge over the 'King of Babylon' (Isa. 14:4-121),¹⁸⁷

186. The following terms mentioned in our psalms and in Isa. 38:18 have specific covenant denotation: חסד (Pss. 88:12, 143:8,12), see N. Glueck, *Hesed in the Bible*, trans. A. Gottschalk (Cincinnati, 1967).

אמת/אמן (Pss. 30:10, 88:12), cf. Deut. 32:4,21; I Kings 3:6; Isa. 38:3; II Chron. 31:20.

פעלך/מעשה ידיך in Ps. 88:13 equals in meaning פלאך/צדקך in Ps. 143:5 referring to the saving acts in history through which God reveals his loyalty to the covenant. Cf. G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, I, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (Edinburgh/London, 1963), pp. 373-383, 449.

זכרתי ימים מקדם in Ps. 143:5; cf. the identical terminology within a context referring to redemptive history in Ps. 77:6,7,12,13. See B. S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel*, Studies in Biblical Theology 37 (London, 1962), 60-65.

187. For the historical identification of the 'King of Babylon' cf. H. L. Ginsberg, "Reflexes of Sargon," pp. 49-52.

in Ezekiel's Laments over the prince of Tyre (ch.26), the King of Egypt (chs.31, 32:1-21,31-32), the kings of Assyria (ch.32:22-23), Elam (ch. 32:24-25) and Meshech-Tubal (ch. 32:26-28).

The divine punishment inflicted on the 'King of Babylon' was meted out in retribution for his extreme cruelty in his dealings with the nations he conquered (14:5-8,17,20) as well as for his hubris, arrogating to himself divine prerogatives (vv.13-14).¹⁸⁸ The prophet describes in detail the shameful death visited on the King, who was

Left lying unburied¹⁸⁹ like loathsome carrion¹⁹⁰
like a trampled corpse in the clothing¹⁹¹ of the slain
gashed by the sword who descend to the depths of
the Pit.¹⁹²

(v.9a,b,c,d)

The final horror of this punishment is indicated by the fact that the

188. These verses probably contain an allusion to an ancient myth whose details are not known. Articles on this problem include: M. Dahood, "Punic hkkbm'1 and Isa.14,13," *Orientalia*, NS.34 (1965), 170-172; J. W. McKay, "Helel and the Dawn Goddess: A Re-examination of the Myth in Isaiah 14.12-15," *VT* 20 (1970) 451-464; P. C. Craigie, "Helel, Athtar and Phaeton," (Jes.14,12-15) *ZAW* 85 (1973) 223-225; O. Loretz, "Der Kanaanäischer Mythos vom Sturz des Saḥar-Sohnes Hēlēl (Jes.14,12-15)," *UF* 8 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1976), pp. 133-136.

189. Translation and verse order according to Ginsberg, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

190. According to a variant reading in the LXX, Aquila, and Jerome, MT נָצַר should be read נָצַל, which, in post-biblical Hebrew, means 'decomposing dead flesh.'

191. Reading בלבוש for MT לבוש due to haplography.

192. Divergent readings of v.11b may contain yet another indication of the shameful death of the King: IQIs^a reads הָמִית נְבִלָתָךְ instead of MT הָמִית נְבִלֶיךָ. The Targum agrees with IQIs^a. The Vulgate points the first word of MT הָמִית which probably indicates a similar reading to IQIs^a.

King is not united in burial with his peers - the dead kings who had preceded him (v.20). Denied proper burial, the King is doomed to restlessness in afterlife.

There are marked similarities between Ezekiel's Laments for the above-mentioned kings and princes and the Mock-Dirge of Isaiah. All the kings (but for Edom) have committed similar crimes, "spreading terror in the land of the living." In addition, the Kings of Egypt and of Tyre (cf. ch.28) are both charged with the sin of hubris. And finally, the kings and princes share a common fate of shameful death, the details of which are reiterated by Ezekiel for each and every king in schematized, monotonous repetition. The kings are all חללים הנפלים בחרב - "slain by the sword" - a phrase which refers not only to death on the battlefield but also to execution by divine judgment.¹⁹³ The shameful death is underscored by Ezekiel in describing their descent to the netherworld as ערלים - 'uncircumcised,' which denotes a particularly ignominious kind of death,¹⁹⁴ and in referring to תחתית/תחתיות - 'the low part of the

193. For this interpretation see O. Eissfeldt, "Schwerterschlagene bei Hesekiel," *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy*, ed. H. H. Rowley (Edinburgh, 1950), pp. 73-81.

194. This term should not be understood literally, since there is evidence that the Egyptians, Phoenicians and probably the Edomites too did practice circumcision. Cf. J. Sasson, "Circumcision in the Ancient Near East," *JBL* 85 (1966) 473-476, and W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, BK 13 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1969), pp. 785-786. According to A. Lods, "La mort des incirconcis," *Comptes rendus l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* (Paris, 1943) 271-283, this term refers to a kind of death which in Israelite society was considered especially ignominious because of the importance of circumcision for national identity. Thus, an uncircumcised Israelite, according to Lods, was not only excommunicated during his lifetime, but was severed from his kin after death by being denied burial in the family grave. The fate particularly affected children who died before the rite of circumcision was performed.

netherworld' - as the proper destination for these slain kings. The constant conjunction¹⁹⁵ of חללים, עדלים, and ארץ תחתיות with יורדי בור extends the ignominy to this concept as well. It becomes clear that descent into the pit designates not merely death, but death of a particularly shameful kind.¹⁹⁶

O. Eissfeldt, noting the frequent parallelism in Ezekiel between "the slain by the sword" and מות עדלים, extended the category of people who were considered to have died a shameful death to include those "slain by the sword" (*op. cit.*). A different interpretation for the term מות עדלים is offered by H. J. Van Dijk, *Ezekiel's Prophecy on Tyre, Biblica et Orientalia* (Rome, 1968), p. 113: on the basis of I Sam. 18:25,27, where Saul is represented asking a hundred foreskins (ʿorlôt) of the Philistines as a dowry from David, the author interprets the term "the death of the castrated." (Van Dijk refers to M. Dahood as the source of this interpretation.) The common denominator of these various interpretations is the understanding of the phrase מות עדלים as connoting a particularly shameful death.

195. Ezek. 26:20(24), 31:14,16, 32:18,24,25, 29,30.

196. Three more (rare) equivalents of Sheol: אבדון, דומיה, נשיה, are discussed in the chapter on the descriptive details of Sheol.

Chapter 3

THE CONTEXT OF SHEOL

When Jacob was led to believe that his favorite son had died a violent death, he despaired and would not be consoled:

All his sons and all his daughters rose
up to comfort him; but he refused to be
comforted and said: No I shall go down
to Sheol to my son mourning....

[Gen. 37:35]

When it seemed that the life of another favorite son might be in danger,
he responded in similar vein:

If harm should befall him on the journey
that you are to make, you would bring
down my grey hairs with sorrow to Sheol.

[Gen. 42:38]

With but slight variation this last phrase recurs two more times in this narrative:

If you take this one also from me, and
harm befall him, you will bring down my
grey hairs in sorrow to Sheol.

[Gen. 44:29]

When he sees that the lad is not with us, he
will die; and your servants will bring down
the grey hairs of your servant our father
with sorrow to Sheol.

[Gen. 44:31]

But when at long last Jacob is reunited with his lost son and his longing
is at rest, his readiness to die is expressed as follows:

Now let me die, since I have seen your face
and know that you are still alive.

[Gen. 46:30]

In this context Sheol is conspicuously absent.

The discriminate use of Sheol indicates a clear distinction between natural and unnatural death. This distinction is not limited to the above-mentioned narrative-cycle but is maintained throughout the Bible. Whenever death is due to unnatural causes, Sheol is mentioned; whenever death occurs in the course of nature, Sheol does not appear.¹ As the rebellion of Korah Dathan and Abiram indicates, those who descend to Sheol do not "die the common death of all men" nor are they "visited by the fate of all men" (Num. 16:29). Their death is always premature and often violent:

As when the earth is cleft and broken up
... bones are scattered at the mouth of Sheol.
[Ps. 140:7]

The form of death often associated with Sheol is "the death of the transfixed by the sword" - מִמִּוְתֵי חֶלֶל - (Ezek. 28:17). In Ezekiel, to "go down to Sheol" virtually means to join "those who are slain by the sword."² This sort of death was considered particularly ignoble when met with on the battlefield;³ there, denial of decent interment may turn the dead into "loathsome carrion...a trampled corpse in the clothing of slain gashed by the sword" (Isa. 14:19). The violent nature of death associated

1. The texts that seem to indicate otherwise, e.g., I Kings 2:6, Ps. 89:49, Eccl. 9:10, are discussed on p. 234f.

2. This form of death is mentioned 19 times in connection with Sheol. It appears in Prov. 7:26, Ps. 88:6, and is particularly frequent in Ezek. chaps. 31:14,18 and 14 times in chap. 32. Isa. 14:19 contains a variant - "gashed by the sword" - מִטַּעַנֵי חֶרֶב.

3. Ezek. 32:24,25,30. See discussion on p. 85 and notes 193, 194.

with Sheol is also conveyed by the phrase "to bring down with blood to Sheol,"⁴ and implied by the verbs that describe this particular kind of death: to "be felled" (Isa. 14:12), "swept away," "beaten down" (Isa. 28:17,18), "cut down" (Ezek. 31:12), "broken" (Ezek. 32:28). This is an untimely death "in the noontide" of one's days.⁵

Even when descent into Sheol is caused by illness, the biblical writers underscore the fact that this is not illness which affects man in the course of nature. Since any serious disruption of the natural order of things was considered divine decree, all such deaths were understood as His direct intervention.⁶ Untimely "evil death" was believed to be due to God's retributive measure. As a result, a sufferer remanded to Sheol of necessity was suspect of transgression or considered outright wicked. This is explicit in a number of texts:

Heat consumes the snow
Sheol those who have sinned.⁷
[Job 24:19]

They [the wicked] pass their days in
prosperity and quickly⁸ go to Sheol.
[Job 21:13]

4. I Kings 2:9. Cf. Ps. 30:10, Prov. 1:11-12.

5. Isa. 38:10. "בְּדַמִּי יָמִי" has not been satisfactorily explained but the parallel part of the verse "for the rest of my days" conveys this general meaning. Cf. Pss. 55:24, 102:24,25.

6. On Isa. 38 see S. Talmon, "Textual Study of the Bible," *Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), pp. 330-331. The explanation offered in this article may also be applied to Hos. 13:14. See also Pss. 6:5, 30:7-8, 31:7,9-11, 88:8,10,15-18, where it is made clear that it is not ordinary illness that the poet has in mind.

7. Concerning the textual problems of this verse see G. Fohrer, *Hiob* 337.

8. For a different rendition of רָגַל - denoting 'death' or 'perdition'

The Lord has made Himself known
 He works judgment
 the wicked man is snared by his own
 devices
 Let the wicked return to[/be in?] Sheol.
[Ps. 9:17-18]

O Lord, let me not be disappointed when I
 call You
 let the wicked be disappointed
 let them be silenced in Sheol.
[Ps. 31:18]

Such is the fate of those who are self-
 confident
 the end of those pleased with their own speech.
 Sheeplike they head for Sheol
 with death as their shepherd.
 The upright shall rule over them at daybreak
 and their form shall waste away in Sheol....
 But God will redeem my life from the clutches
 of Sheol
 for He will take me. Selah.
[Ps. 49:14-16]

Let Him incite death against them
 may they go down alive into Sheol
 For where they dwell
 there evil is.
[Ps. 55:16]

In all the passages cited above, "death" is to be understood as evil,
 premature death which leads the wicked to Sheol.

A clear distinction marking Sheol as a place for the wicked seems
 also to be indicated in two extra-biblical passages. The first example
 is from Ben Sira:⁹

on the basis of Ps. 30:6, 6:11, and probably also Num. 16:21 as well as
 UT 67:11-2, see M. Dahood, *Psalms I*, AB 16, p. 182. This meaning is pre-
 served in the LXX's translation of $\gamma\lambda\gamma$ as "destroy" in various biblical
 passages. See I. L. Seeligman, *VTS I* (1953), p. 169, n.2. This rendi-
 tion also supports our premise that Sheol is a place for the wicked.

9. The translation, but for the last line, is from *The Ben Sira
 Scroll from Masada*, Y. Yadin, Israel Exploration Society (1965). Our

Fear not Death thy destiny
 Remember former and latter [share it]
 with thee
 This is the span of all [flesh from Go]d
 [and how canst thou withstand the decree of
 the Most Hig[h]
 be it for ten, a hundred or a thousand years
 He who is often reproved [descends] into
 She[ol] alive.

The second text is an Aramaic papyrus of the fifth century B.C. Although fragmentary, its overall theme seems clear. The text concerns Bar Puneš who, having rendered a meritorious service, was rewarded by the king.¹⁰

Line 15 reads:

... וגרמך לא יחתוך שאול

... and your bones shall not go down to Sheol.

This formulation may be of precatory intent and as such has its antecedents in the Bible.

The hope that the devout can, and indeed will, be spared from Sheol is variously expressed in the Bible. The Wisdom Literature, true to its optimistic pragmatism, indicates the ways to achieve the former, while the Psalms dwell on the latter:

Do not hesitate to discipline a youth
 Though you beat him with a stick, he
 will not die
 Indeed you should beat him with a stick

translation of the last line is based on the Hebrew Language Acad. 1973 edition, and takes into account the meaning of אִישׁ חֲרוּכָחוּת in Prov. 29:1.

10. According to A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford, 1923), pp. 179-181. Cowley's rendition 'grave' for שאול is unwarranted. Aramaic גרמך - 'bones' may be a reference to the body or understood literally (cf. Ps. 141:7, Ezek. 32:27).

And so save his life from Sheol.

[Prov. 15:24; trans.
R.B.Y. Scott, AB 18]

The path of life leads upwards for the
enlightened

Taking him ever farther from Sheol below.

[Prov. 15:24; trans.
ibid.]

For You will not abandon me to Sheol
or let Your faithful one see the Pit.
You will teach me the path of life....

[Ps. 16:10,11a]

Teach me Your way, O Lord
I will walk in your truth
let my heart be undivided in the worship
of You....

For Your steadfast love toward me is great
You save me from the depth of Sheol.

[Ps. 86:11,13]

The belief that if the "torments of Sheol overtook" the devout "the death of His faithful ones is grievous in the Lord's sight" (Ps. 116:3b, 15) was a deep conviction of the Psalmists. Even Job, who in his bitterness despaired of being saved from Sheol:

A cloud evaporates and vanishes
so he that goes down to Sheol does not
come up

[Job 7:9]

expressed the hope that his stay there would be temporary, until God's indignation would pass and his sins forgiven:

O that You would hide me in Sheol
Conceal me till Your anger pass
Then set me a time and remember me...
then You would not count my steps
nor be alert to my sins
My guilt would be sealed in a bundle
You would coat over my iniquity.

[Job 14:13,16,17]

In this, as in most biblical passages, consignment to Sheol is a direct result of previous sin and rescue a sign of forgiveness or of the culprit's vindication. The notion that "God brings down to Sheol and brings up from it" (1 Sam. 2:6) is reiterated in the Bible not so much to stress divine omnipotence as to manifest His righteousness as a judge. Therefore remand to Sheol is often preceded by the particle כִּי - 'because, since' and the clause then specifies the various sins.¹¹ Or else, the particle עַל כֵּן/כֵּן - 'therefore' is mentioned. This particle is an introductory formula in the Covenant Lawsuit which marks the transition from description of sin to verdict.¹² Conversely, redemption from Sheol results from remission of Sin:

For Thou has cast all my sins behind
Thy back.

[Isa. 38:17]

He rescued me because He was pleased
with me
The Lord rewarded me according to my merit.
He requited the cleanness of my hands
for I have kept to the ways of my God
for I am mindful of all His rules.
I have not disregarded His laws
I have been blameless toward Him
and I have guarded myself against sinning....

[Ps. 18:20b-24//
2 Sam. 22:20b-24]

The association between divine judgment¹³ and being consigned to

11. Num. 16:30; Isa. 14:20, 28:15; Ezek. 32:25,26,27; Ps. 55:16.

12. See H. B. Huffmon, "The Covenant Lawsuit in the Prophets," *JBL* 78 (1959) 285-295; see Isa. 5:14, 28:16-17.

13. In the Psalms in which the protagonist is tormented by human adversaries and their machinations bring him to the gates of Sheol - it

Sheol is a marked feature in the Psalms and the poet often describes his plight and deliverance by means of forensic terminology:

For You uphold my right and claim
enthroned as righteous judge.
The Lord abides forever
He has set up His throne for judgment
it is He who will judge the world with
righteousness
rule the peoples with equity....
The Lord has made Himself known
He works judgment.
Let the wicked be in Sheol
all the nations who ignore God
Rise O Lord
Let not men have power
let the nations be judged in Your presence.
[Ps. 9:5,8,9,17,18,20]

This passage contains most of the pertinent terms. The root שפוט is attested 6 times in this passage both in verbal and nominal forms (v.5, 8, 10, 17, 20); צדק twice (v.10, 5); דיין twice (v.5, 9); and מישרים (v.9). The term "Rise, O Lord" - קומה ה' (v.20) also has a forensic meaning, "arise for judgment."¹⁴ Similar terminology is used in Ps. 42/43 in a plea for rescue from engulfing waters which, as will be indicated below, serve to qualify Sheol:

שפוטני אלהים וריבה ריבי

Vindicate me O God, Champion my cause
[Ps. 43:1]

is made clear that it was God's anger that lay at the core of their success or allowed the situation to deteriorate (e.g., Ps. 69:27).

14. The use of the verb קום is attested in Ps. 7:7; 35:2; 74:22; 76:10. For a comprehensive list of this verb in the Bible and discussion of its use in forensic context see *Thw* II, 638-639, and B. Gemser, "The RĪB-Or Controversy Pattern in Hebrew Mentality," *Supp. VT* 3 (1960) 123; henceforth cited as "RĪb."

In Psalm 69 the poet is beset by similar waters (v.2-3, 15-16). He protests his innocence (v.5) and pleads with God as in a court of justice: "You know my folly, my guilty deeds are not hidden from you" (v.6). In Psalm 6 two more terms with a forensic connection occur:

O Lord do not punish me (חִיכִיחֲנִי) in anger
do not chastise me (חִיסְרֵנִי) in fury
Have mercy on me (חַנּוּנִי) O Lord for I languish
heal me O Lord for my bones shake with terror.
[Ps. 6:23]

Various shades of meanings of the root יָחַן are attested in the Bible, but scholars agree that the basic meaning of the root is a forensic one.¹⁵ The verb employed in this psalm in pleading divine forgiveness, "חַנּוּנִי," is most commonly attested in the Psalms where rescue from Sheol is requested.¹⁶ The use of this particular term is of interest. Though not strictly a legal term, it is often used in a context conveying mitigation of the severity of divine judgment. In this context, the absolute sovereignty of the divine decision is always stressed: "The verb יָחַן had as its fundamental sense the bestowal of kindness which cannot be claimed. יָחַן is the unmerited favor bestowed through altruism of a superior....When used of God יָחַן shows how unrestricted by any condition is this condescending favor of Yahweh, who is not morally bound either to give or to

15. For a list of sources and discussion see H. J. Boecker, *Redeformen des Rechtslebens im Alten Testament* (Neukirchen, 1970), 44-45; I. L. Seeligmann, "Zur Terminologie für das Gerichtsverfahren im Wortschatz des Biblischen Hebräisch," *Festschrift W. Baumgartner, SVT 16* (1967) 266-268; Kraus, "Psalmen," p. 47; Gemser, "Rîb," pp. 124-125.

16. Both in verbal and nominal forms: Pss. 6:10; 9:14; 30:9,11; 55:2; 86:3,6,16; 116:1,5; 140:7.

withhold."¹⁷ Since in the Psalms under discussion admission of sin is a common motif and remand to Sheol the most severe of divine punishments, the act of bestowing חן indicates the extent of divine grace.

In a number of psalms in which the suppliant pleads for divine grace he also asks for a sign of forgiveness:

Turn to me and have mercy on me (לַחַיִּי)
 Show me a sign (אֵימָנָה) of Your favor.
 [Ps. 86:16a,17]

Such a sign was also sought by Hezekiah when promised rescue from death.¹⁸

In other passages it seems that divine verdict had been reached and a certain "sign" given:

The Lord has made Himself known
 He worked judgment.
 [Ps. 9:17]

Whether such "sign" assumed the form of an oracular response obtained in a cultic setting and mediated by a priest,¹⁹ or was originally announced in a night vision or dream and in later periods proclaimed by a prophet²⁰ cannot be decided with certainty. But in whatever form it may have been

17. E. R. Dalglisch, *Psalms Fifty One* (Leiden, 1962), p. 83. To the bibliography cited add *Thw* I, pp. 587-597, and *Tw*, pp. 23-39.

18. 1 Sam. 38:22 and 2 King. 20:8. For the textual problems of this verse see S. Talmon, "Textual Study of the Bible," p. 330.

19. J. Begrich, "Das priesterliche Heilsorakel," *ZAW* 52 (1934), 81-92. H. J. Zobel, "Das Gebet um Abwendung der Not und seine Erhörung in den Klageliedern des Alten Testament und in der Inschrift des Königs Zakir von Hamat," *VT* 21 (1971), 98, 99.

20. J. C. Greenfield, "The Zakir Inscription and the Danklied," *Proceedings of the Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Vol. I (Jerusalem, 1971), 174-191.

obtained, it was considered a divine verdict in matters of life and death and therefore may account for the sudden shift from utter despair to hope in a number of psalms.²¹ Of special interest for our discussion is the fact that such divine verdict was anticipated in the morning hours:

Hear my voice O Lord at daybreak
at daybreak I plead before You and wait
[Ps. 5:4]

Let me hear of Your faithfulness at
daybreak.
[Ps. 143:8]

I look to the Lord
I look to Him
I await His word
I am more eager for the Lord
than watchmen for the morning
watchmen for the morning.
[Ps. 130:5,6]

While the morning hours are typical for divine deliverance,²² morning is also the time when both heavenly and earthly courts of justice convene.²³ The concentration of legal terminology in the psalms seems to be deliberate and an essential part of the message to be conveyed. Metaphoric interpretation of the legal terminology, as suggested by Gemser, is misleading and should be rejected.²⁴

21. G. von Rad, "'Gerechtigkeit' und 'Leben' in der Kultsprache der Psalmen," *Festschrift A. Bertholet* (Tübingen, 1950) 418-437. For a different view see F. Heiler, *Prayer* (English trans. and eds. S. McComb, J. Park, 1932), pp. 260-264.

22. J. Ziegler, "Die Hilfe Gottes 'am Morgen,'" *Festschrift F. Notscher* (Bonn, 1950), pp. 281-288.

23. E.g., Jerem. 22:12; Zeph. 3:3. For the heavenly court see Frymer-Kensky, "Ordeal," pp. 524-535.

24. Gemser, "Rîb," p. 128. Note: "Metaphor is traditionally taken to be the most fundamental form of figurative language. Figurative

The legal terminology used in the psalms has its counterpart in Babylonian prayers. The phrase "judge my judgment, decide my decisions" is often employed in appeals for succor from various God-sent afflictions.²⁵ The use of this terminology indicates that illness, demonic influence, or a malformed *izbu* could be objectivised as an adversary in a legal dispute which God was asked to adjudicate.

The interpretation of the terms מִשְׁפָּט and דִּין in the psalms as well as in their Babylonian counterpart as connoting a more general meaning - 'to help, rescue,' as suggested by Gamper,²⁶ is also unacceptable. Gamper supports the latter by arguing that in ancient times the function of a judge was more that of a modern attorney pleading his suppliant's case. However, our present knowledge of ancient judicial systems is too scanty to allow for such deductions. It would be more adequate to accept the forensic terminology in the psalms in its literal meaning, i.e., as divine judgment.

The water images may provide further aid in connecting Sheol with the idea of judgment. When the Psalmists who composed Laments of the

language is language which does not mean what it says," T. Hawks, *Metaphor* (London, 1972), p. 1.

25. W. Mayer, *Untersuchungen zur Formensprache der Babylonischen 'Gebetsbeschwörungen'* (Rome, 1976), 221-225, esp. 222. See also J. Laessøe, *Studies in the Assyrian Ritual and Series bit rimki* (Copenhagen, 1955), pp. 86-89; T. Jacobsen, "Ancient Mesopotamian Religion. The Central Concerns," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 107 (1963) 480, n.22. For a discussion of the use of forensic terminology in Babylonian prayers and source indication of the various texts see A. Gamper, *Gott als Richter in Mesopotamien und im Alten Testament* (Innsbruck, 1966), pp. 82-100.

26. Gamper, *ibid.*, p. 94f.

Individual attempt to describe the descent of the worshipper into Sheol or to emphasize the fear of this descent, they use expressions which describe immersion or drowning in water. Furthermore, rescue of the individual from Sheol in the Thanksgiving psalms is described with the aid of images depicting an ascent from water. These descriptions are also found in psalms in which the worshipping individual is a king (or in psalms written for him). In these psalms the distress described is not the distress of the individual but is on a national scale. These images are also found in clearly communal laments and national Thanksgiving psalms. Actually, the water images constitute the most common descriptio-
 tional element in connection with the concept of Sheol, or the deadly terror which is connected with this concept.

The majority of commentators consider the most plausible explanation of this phenomenon to be based on ancient cosmography according to which the earth is surrounded by water and floats on seas and rivers.²⁷ Whoever leaves the land of the living to descend into Sheol, located "in the heart of the seas" (Jon. 2:4), of necessity, therefore, crosses a watery passage. This concept of the cosmos, it was further argued, was not uniquely Israelite, and parallels may be found in ancient cultures.²⁸ Such passage from the land of the living to the world of the dead was considered normative for all mortals:

27. E.g., Gen. 1:6-10; Isa. 40:22; Pss. 24:2, 104:3,6-9, 136:6; Prov. 8:27-28; Job 26:10, 38:8-11.

28. For the Mesopotamian sources see Frymer-Kensky, "Ordeal," pp. 596-604. For Egyptian: S. Morenz, *Ägyptische Religion* (Stuttgart, 1960), pp. 180f.

Our fathers in fact give up and go the way
of death. It is an old saying that they cross
the river Hubur.²⁹

But in those cultures in which the departure to the world of the dead was described as a water passage the reference was to a journey across, or a voyage down a certain body of water. For this purpose model boats were supplied among other funeral appurtenances and various means provided to induce the ferryman of the netherworld to grant safe passage.³⁰ The Psalms, however, mention drowning, which the ancients commonly considered an unnatural passage into the world of the dead. Such a fate was wished upon demonic forces and reserved for certain human sinners.³¹ The water images mentioned in connection with Sheol therefore cannot be explained as referring to conventional passage to the land of the dead. In addition, some of the verbs which describe the action of the waters upon the sufferer are not, as will be indicated below, the verbs commonly found in other biblical descriptions of water. Also unique is the intervention of the Lord in the action of the water. All these taken together create the impression that the intention of the Psalmist was other than to describe the usual departure to the netherworld. The uniqueness of these images, therefore, merits further study.

29. W. G. Lambert, *BWL*, p. 71.

30. D. O. Edzard, *Wörterbuch der Mythologie* (Stuttgart, 1965), 132.

31. Such a fate was wished upon demons, witches, or people accused of slander. In order to bring about their drowning, model boats were placed upside down in the water; see O. R. Gurney, "A Tablet of Incantations Against Slander," *Iraq* 22 (1960) 221-227; Z. Abush, "Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Literature. Texts and Studies. Part I: The Nature of Maqlu," *JNES* 33 (1974) 260 and note 32. The overturned boats were also meant to prevent the return of the deceased's spirit to the land of the living.

In the Myth and Ritual School the centrality of the water images in relation to Sheol was emphasized, but their explanation is unacceptable on many counts. The Myth and Ritual School explains the water images within the framework of the Sacral Kingship theory which surmises that they represent the chaotic waters into which the king must descend and which he must overcome in a ritual battle. According to this School, the king figures in a cultic drama associated with the New Year's festival in three capacities: (a) as humiliated sufferer, (b) as ritual warrior in combat against the chaotic life-and-order threatening powers, and (c) as temporary detainee of the underworld, held in death-slumber. In these capacities the king was considered to symbolize on the one hand the fluctuation of the powers of nature according to a seasonal pattern. The king's sojourn in the netherworld paralleled the barren dryness in nature. His awakening from the death-slumber symbolized quickening to new life of the dormant natural powers. On the other hand, the humiliation and suffering were believed to represent the struggle for the re-establishment of cosmic order over and against the threatening chaotic powers. Of the many psalms to which the above-mentioned interpretation has been applied we will focus only on those containing water images.³² Two of these, Psalms 69 and 88, are central to such a discussion for they contain elaborate water images. These psalms are devoid of any explicit references or implicit allusions that would permit us to assume that the protagonist is a king.³³ On the contrary, the details mentioned in these

32. Pss. 18,40,42,66,69,88,116,124,144. No full-scale criticism of the school's tenets is intended. The discussion will be limited to the points that have direct bearing on the present study.

33. Only in Psalms 18 and 144 is the protagonist a king.

psalms, such as the accused's protestation of innocence of theft in Ps. 69:5, or the feeling of being a social outcast lamented in Ps. 88:9, preclude such an interpretation. And yet, Ahlström advocated a royal background for these psalms. He maintained that only a king would thus plead with his God and demand to be rescued from the realm of the dead.³⁴ This argument is surprising indeed, coming from a scholar well versed in Near Eastern liturgical literature.

There is, in addition, a latent ambiguity in the School's theory of the relationship between the role of the king and that of the Godhead in the postulated cultic drama. While Johnson insists that the king, although considered "a potent extension of the divine personality," is no more than a "vice regent in the service of the King,"³⁵ other exponents of the School's theory claim that "God is embodied in the king."³⁶ The vacillation between representing the king as God's suffering servant on the one hand and on the other hand as the embodiment of the suffering deity, impersonated in a cultic drama, can be found within the writings of one and the same author (Ahlström, *Psalms 89*, pp. 146-51). But if the king is identified with the Godhead in the annual struggle for the establishment or re-establishment of cosmic order, how are we to understand the sufferer's current appeal for divine succor in these psalms? And, if God himself is in the netherworld, who is it who finally effects the redemption from it?

34. G.W. Ahlström, *Psalms 89* (Lund, 1959) 145-146, commenting on Ps. 88.

35. A. R. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel* (Cardiff, 1967) 16 and 120, respectively,

36. I. E. Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* (Uppsala, 1943), p. 163.

The contention³⁷ that God rescues himself and thus paves the way for the rescue of the king severely strains any logic. Furthermore, the suffering of the protagonist in these psalms offers no basis whatsoever for understanding the prayers in terms of the waning powers of nature or the struggle between order and chaos. Rather, the issue in the Psalms (Pss. 18, 69, 88) is a purely moral one and he who emerges from Sheol is not the victorious but the righteous man who has been vindicated, or the penitent who has been pardoned by his gracious God.

Concerning the water images, two decisive points have been overlooked by the Myth and Ritual exponents. The water epithets that describe the chaotic element in the Bible belong to a definite literary tradition which employs stereotyped phrases, some of them in fixed sequences bearing a marked resemblance to those employed in Ugaritic literature.³⁸ However, the many water images employed in the Psalms in connection with Sheol do not belong to this tradition.³⁹ Moreover, the waters are not represented as opposed to God, but are considered his implement in meting out

37. G. Widengren, *Sakrales Königtum im Alten Testament* (Stuttgart, 1955), p. 66f.

38. These phrases have been commented upon by Cassuto: א.ד. קאסוטו, "שירה עברית ושירה כנענית", *כנסת לזכר ביאליק ח. חל אביב תשג-ד*.

39. The following combinations occur in connection with Sheol: מים (Ps. 69:2, 88:18; Jon. 2:6), מים רבים (Pss. 18:17//2 Sam. 22:17, 32:6, 144:7), שבלת מים (Ps. 69:13), מעמקי מים (Ps. 69:3,15), מצולה (Ps. 69:16; cf. Ps. 88:7), יוץ מצולה (Ps. 69:3), גלים/משברים (Pss. 42:8, 88:8; Jon. 2:5), צנור יך (Ps. 42:8), שוט שוטף (Jes. 28:15), שבלת (Ps. 69:3), תהום (Jon. 2:6; Ps. 42:8), נחל (Ps. 18:5//2 Sam. 22:5), נהר (Jon. 2:4), באר (Ps. 69:16), טיט (Ps. 69:15), טיט היוך (Ps. 40:3). Of these, the vocables מים, תהום, & מצולה appear in both contexts but are the more general and neutral terms for a body of water, whereas the special combinations that signify the chaotic waters are not represented here.

punishment.⁴⁰ Had the protagonist's appeal for rescue from Sheol been in any way symbolic or reminiscent of the divine battle with the primordial waters, mention of this event would have been expected. Certainly, as often encountered in biblical descriptions of dire need, the past victory over the chaotic waters could have served as a model for future rescue⁴¹ from Sheol and a source of hope. But this event is neither explicitly mentioned in the psalms under discussion or implicitly alluded to. And yet many commentators accepted the interpretation that the water images associated with Sheol refer to chaotic waters, although they did not follow the "ritual" interpretation of these psalms in any other detail.

An alternative interpretation of the water images proposed by opponents of the Myth and Ritual School as well as by others divested them of all mythological garb and saw in them natural images reflecting actual experience. According to Bernhardt,⁴² the reason for choosing water images associated with the sea (Pss. 69 and 88), the flood (Ps. 69), the morass (Pss. 40 and 69), raging waters (Ps. 124) and torrents (Pss. 18, 42, and 69) to describe the awesomeness of the realm of the dead was that the Israelites became a partially land-locked people. Since any sea voyage was frightful for them, they chose elements of this experience to express their fundamental terror of death. This approach was extended to include

40. Pss. 42:8, 88:8; Jon. 2:5.

41. E.g., Isa. 51:9-10; Pss. 74:13-15, 89:10-11.

42. K. H. Bernhardt, *Das Problem der altorientalischen Königsideologie im Alten Testament* (Leiden, 1961), 278, followed by L. Wächter, *Der Tod im Alten Testament* (Stuttgart, 1967), 46-48; W. Rudolph, "Jonah," *KAT* 13/2 (Gütersloh, 1971), 351-354.

other water images which, according to Bernhardt, reflect the special climatic conditions in the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea, where sudden storms could endanger human life. Yet comparison of the water images with the one biblical description which seems to reflect an actual sea voyage, Ps. 107, points to the inadequacy of this approach:

Others go down to the sea in ships
 ply their trade in the mighty waters;
 they have seen the works of the Lord
 and His wonders in the deep.
 By His word He raised a storm wind
 that made the waves surge
 Mounting up to the heaven
 plunging down to the abyss
 disgorging their misery
 they reeled and staggered like a drunken man
 all their skill to no avail.
 In their adversity they cried to the Lord
 and He saved them from their troubles.
 He made the storm subside
 the waves were stilled.

[Ps. 107:23-29]

This impressionistic description seems to convey real experience. At any rate, the words of the author and the method of his description bear the stamp of imaginative individuality. By contrast, the water descriptions in the Psalms, though numerous, are written in formularized style, varied only by slight differences. In several of these psalms, it is obvious that the protagonist's plight is due to the direct intervention of God. In two, Psalms 42 and 88, as well as in the prayer inserted into the book of Jonah (chap.2:3-10), the waters constitute a divine punitive measure. In two additional prayers, Psalms 40 and 69, similar images are mentioned. In these four psalms, therefore, explicit references are made to divine judgment by water. The mode of judgment, however, especially its vocabulary, bears no affinity to the literary traditions

that describe the classical divine judgment by water in the Bible. Neither the story of the Deluge (Gen. 6) nor the Song of the Sea (Exod. 15:1-18) seem to have served as the prototype for these descriptions.⁴³

On the other hand, as we indicated, the water images do not seem to reflect spontaneous impressions, or bear the stamps of creative imagination of individual poets. Rather, they seem to show the fixity of a literary tradition that employs stereotyped phrases. Such a literary tendency usually points to a specific frame of reference the nature of which should be investigated.

Albright⁴⁴ has suggested a connection between the concept of biblical Sheol and that of the Mesopotamian river ordeal, but he never elaborated on it, nor did he base his argument on the water images.

More recent research of the text that Albright alluded to in drawing his comparison between the Mesopotamian river ordeal and biblical Sheol (KAR 143 + duplicates) indicates that its interpretation has to be revised. Frymer-Kensky, in her study of the ordeal (pp. 431-449), indicated that it is by no means certain that the scene dealt with in this text does, indeed, refer to an actual ordeal.

A direct link between the water images in the Psalms under discussion and the concept of the judicial ordeal known from the cuneiform documents has recently been proposed by McCarter in "The River Ordeal in

43. For a recent analysis of the Song of the Sea, cf. F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, pp. 121-144.

44. *JBL* 75 (1956) 257.

Israelite Literature."⁴⁵ McCarter puts forth a two-part theory: He offers an explication of a number of our psalms against a proposed "conceptual backdrop of judgment by river ordeal,"⁴⁶ and he further suggests a re-interpretation of several biblical passages which contain the concept *צָרָה*, usually rendered by 'calamity, distress,' as explicit references to the river ordeal.⁴⁷ McCarter's basic assumption merits serious consideration; however, much of his reasoning does not bear up under close scrutiny. We shall therefore discuss his article in some detail.

McCarter states that the above-mentioned psalms share a common motif which "clearly presupposes a situation of judgment by water."⁴⁸ This motif comprises 3-4 elements: (a) the psalmist is beset by raging waters, (b) he is surrounded by accusers, (c) he protests his innocence and his reliance upon God, and he beseeches God to deliver him. In those psalms which also describe a previous instance of God's salvation, a fourth element may be added: (d) the psalmist is drawn out of the waters and set in a safe place. On further inspection, however, we discover that these elements are not to be found in most of the seven psalms singled out by McCarter. The Psalm of Jonah (Jon. 2:3-10) does not contain any mention of an accuser or an accusation, neither is there any protestation of innocence nor use of terminology which would indicate the

45. P. K. McCarter, "The River Ordeal in Israelite Literature," *HTR* 66 (1973) 403-412.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 403. The psalms so interpreted are Pss. 18 (=2 Sam. 22), 66, 69, 88, 124, 144, as well as Jon. 2.

47. Job 21:17,30; 31:23; Ps. 18:19; Deut. 32:35.

48. McCarter, *op. cit.*, pp. 403, 404.

juridical frame of reference one would expect in a poem allegedly dealing with an ordeal. The river ordeal may be defined as a juridical procedure, used to determine guilt or innocence; thus, the absence of accusation, protestation of innocence, and other legal terminology renders McCarter's contention that the Psalm of Jonah is one of the "parade examples of the motif in question"⁴⁹ very doubtful. The only element that the psalm does contain is an extended description of the suppliant's being surrounded by water. Similarly, Psalm 88 contains neither mention of a personal accuser, protestation of innocence, nor legal terminology of any kind, nor is any rescue described. The poet in this psalm has incurred divine wrath and suffers from loneliness, the deprivation of human company imposed upon him by an angry God. The results of the "covering of God's face," a concept discussed previously, and the ensuing suffering are described in this poem, as in the other psalms listed by McCarter, by means of water images. It is precisely this absence of enemies and of the consciousness of guilt - usually encountered in the Lament of the Individual - that both early and recent commentators have noted as being unique to the Psalm of Jonah and Psalm 88.⁵⁰ Again, in Psalm 144, no mention is made of an accusation. The psalm does speak of adversaries, but they are explicitly referred to as *בְּנֵי נֹכַח* - 'foreigners' (vs.7, 11). This is a royal psalm of thanksgiving to God who trains the hands of the King for battle (v.1), rescues him from the deadly sword (v.10), and

49. *Ibid.*, p. 404.

50. Gunkel, *Psalmen*, p. 382; Kraus, *B.K.*, p. 608; for Jonah, Wolff, *B.K.*, p. 104.

"gives victory to Kings" (v.10). Apart from the psalmist's plea "save me from the mighty waters" (v.7), none of the other elements mentioned by McCarter are present in this poem. The adversary in Ps. 124 is once again not a personal accuser; he seems, rather, to be a political ruler. This psalm, too, lacks all reference to an accusation or protestation of innocence, and shows no evidence of a legal background. The one element that links this psalm with the others under discussion is the water imagery by which the calamity caused by the political (?) adversaries is described. A similar situation seems to be the background of Psalm 66: "You have let men ride over us" (v.12) is commonly understood as a reference to political distress, and is considered by some commentators to refer to a specific (but not further described) situation, and by others to be of a more general, representative nature.

In conclusion, out of 7 psalms which McCarter supposed to contain "all or most" of four elements which together comprise the conceptual backdrop of the ordeal, none contain all four. One (Ps. 18 = 2 Sam. 22), while it contains three, speaks of the adversaries of a king rather than of the legal accusers of an individual: five times in the psalm אֹיְבִים = 'enemies' are mentioned; these are explicitly defined as בְּנֵי נָכַר = 'foreigners' (vs.45, 46, 49), as מְרִיבֵי עַמִּי = 'contenders with my people,' as קָמִי = 'those who rebel against me' (v.41), and שֹׂנְאֵי = 'those who hate me' (v.41). Even חָמָס = 'violence' (2 Sam. 22:3) and אִישׁ חָמָס = 'man of violence' (v.40) are too general to be considered as referring to a personal accuser.⁵¹ It would also appear strange to imagine the King as one

51. For the meaning of חָמָס see *ThW*, 583-587; *T.W.*, 1050-1061.

of the litigants in a judicial ordeal. Psalm 69 is the only other psalm which contains three of the elements listed by McCarter and in which a legal frame of reference is indicated (v.5; for discussion see below). The other five psalms all contain one element only - the description of the distress by means of water images. It is precisely against the variety of literary forms - two Royal Psalms of Thanksgiving (Pss. 18 = 2 Sam. 22, 144), two National Laments (Pss. 66,124), two Laments of the Individual (Pss. 69,88), and a Psalm of Thanks giving (Jon. 2) - and the diversity of distress referred to, that the uniformity of the water images by which the distress is described is impressed upon us.

As to the method McCarter employs, it is doubtful whether valid conclusions could be reached concerning the presence of a "conceptual backdrop of an ordeal" in biblical literature without any attempt to precisely determine the salient features which constitute such a backdrop. The only appropriate starting point for comparison would be a fully substantiated, detailed acquaintance with the river ordeal and the terminology associated with it. While it should not be expected of a poetic passage to reflect precisely all of the conditions present in the legal situation, certainly if these conditions are not even known, neither the legal situation nor its metaphoric use can possibly be identified. Similarly, literary use of technical terms can only be ascertained insofar as the original expressions are known. It must be admitted that at the time McCarter's article was written no comprehensive study of the judicial ordeal - which might aid in establishing these characteristics - was available. A more precise comparison between the biblical passages which allegedly deal with an ordeal and the cuneiform documents which actually refer to one is

therefore needed. Such a comparison has been facilitated by a recent exhaustive study which includes all the extant Ancient Near Eastern documents referring to the judicial ordeal.⁵² Beside discussion of the legal and religious significance of the ordeal, the societal prerequisites for its institution and its historic and geographic distribution, the study offers a meticulous analysis of the various legal cases that were subjected to trial by ordeal. The study further comprises a survey of the major forms of the ordeal, adduces all the available information as to the legal procedures involved and, what is of particular importance, establishes the specific terminology employed in connection with an ordeal. Although, as stated in this study, "it is sometimes difficult to find general patterns for the occasion of ordeals since their application seems to have varied from period to period and from region to region," it does become clear that appeal to the supernatural for direct intervention was no casual matter and that ordeals were used in "a very limited number of otherwise insoluble cases." The nature of the legal problem for which solution was sought by means of an ordeal was that of a formal accusation of a major offense which, because of its commonly covert nature, could not be proven by means of the conventional modes of proof to which legal courts have recourse. The offense was perceived as endangering the entire society, and therefore an immediate answer, backed by the highest authority

52. Tikva Simone Frymer-Kensky, "The Judicial Ordeal in the Ancient Near East" (unpublished dissertation, Yale University, May 1977). Henceforth cited as Frymer-Kensky, "Ordeal." I wish to thank Dr. Frymer-Kensky for making her dissertation available to me, allowing me to quote from it, and for graciously offering me her time to discuss various points.

and thus acceptable to all, was needed. The classical cases subjected to ordeals were those of witchcraft which, due to its anti-social nature, was considered a threat to society, treason, habitual or night theft, and - in those societies where they were considered offenses against the social order - adultery and murder.⁵³

Considered against the background of specific occasions upon which ordeals were evoked, the biblical passages under discussion lack the details that would justify the (even tentative) conclusion that a similar situation obtains in them. On the contrary, the absence of any formal indictment in six of the seven psalms indicates that their setting is not a legal one. Even in Ps. 69, where a forensic background is indicated by reference to "enemies without cause," and false accusation of theft (v.5), their mere mention does not immediately imply an ordeal, which has to be used only in specific cases of theft.⁵⁴ It thus seems unwarranted to assume such a background in Ps. 69 without further support from additional references or the presence of specific ordeal-terminology.⁵⁵

A comparison of the several biblical passages in which the term אִיד allegedly occurs "with the explicit meaning 'river ordeal',"⁵⁶ with the

53. Citations are from Frymer-Kensky, "Ordeal," pp. 52-57, 501-409. Other cases which illustrate the function of the ordeal as the protector of social order are those that involve property disputes in societies with strong land-holding corporate groups or, as in Hittite documents, offenses that involve the purity of the king (*op. cit.*, 234f., 514).

54. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

55. For which see *ibid.*, pp. 489-95.

56. McCarter, "River Ordeal," p. 403.

actual specific background of a juridical ordeal in the Ancient Near East leads to the same negative conclusion. McCarter arrives at an ordeal denotation for biblical נָיִד by identifying this noun with biblical נָיִד (Gen. 2:6, Job 36:27) which, following Dhorme's suggestion,⁵⁷ has been interpreted as 'cosmic river.' In a number of biblical passages, McCarter maintains, נָיִד refers to the cosmic river in its function as judge in an ordeal. It should be noted in passing that Dhorme's suggestion is not without problems, since there is some evidence that the Sumerian *íd* - 'River,' here representing the cosmic river, started with a guttural rather than an *aleph*. Concerning the initial sound of ^dID, Dr. Frymer-Kensky comments:

A comparison of Hebrew *hideqel* = נָיִדֶקֶל with Sumerian *idiglat* leads to a suspicion that the initial vocable of Sumerian *id* might be a rough breathing or some similar sound to Hebrew *het*. This seems supported by the possible relation of the name of the city of Hit with Accadian *iddu* (ittu) = bitumen, and ultimately with the Sumerian *id* and *idki*.⁵⁸

Although this evidence is not conclusive, it should be noted. As to the offenses mentioned in those biblical passages which contain the נָיִד concept and which lead McCarter to assume an ordeal background they are couched in rather general terms: רָשָׁע and רָע both denote 'evil'⁵⁹ in

57. P. Dhorme, "L'Arbre de vérité et l'arbre de vie," *RB* 4 (1907) 274; cf. also E. Sachsse, "Der jahwistische Schöpfungsbericht," *ZAW* 3/4 (1921) 281; W. F. Albright, "The Babylonian Matter in the Pre-deuteronomic Primeval History (JE) in Gen. 1-11," *JBL* 58 (1939) 102-103; E. A. Speiser, "'ed in the Story of Creation," *BASOR* 140 (1955) 9-11.

58. Frymer-Kensky, "Ordeal," 482-83. See also the bibliography cited on p. 534, Nos. 7, 8. S. Cohen, "Studies in Sumerian Lexicography," *Kramer AV AOAT* 25, p. 99, n.10; B. Landsberger, "Lexikalisches Archiv," *ZA* 41 (1933) 226, n.2, and *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, Vol. III, p. 187.

59. Job 21:17, 30.

general, and are too vague to allow any precise definition, let alone an assumption that they refer to specific offenses grave enough to warrant a test by ordeal. The text of Job 31:23, which is more explicit in describing the evil that evoked an אֵיךְ, refers to the resort to violence in dealing with an orphan, a social offense which is too conventional to be considered a capital crime and be remanded to an ordeal.

Beside his reliance on a notion of the ordeal too vague and imprecise to serve as evidence to back up his basic contention, McCarter's interpretation of the biblical texts in which אֵיךְ supposedly has the explicit meaning of 'river ordeal' is untenable. The following example will illustrate his exegetical method: Job 21:17 -

כמה נר רשעים ידעך
ויבא עליהם אידם
חבלים יחלק באפו

is rendered by McCarter:⁶⁰

How often is the property of the wicked confiscated
And their ordeal goes over them?
(How often) does he distribute lots in his anger?

In order to establish the background of a river ordeal, McCarter argues as follows: the second law in the Code of Hammurapi mentions the confiscation of the property of the convicted party. By substituting the vocable נֵר - 'lamp, candle' in our verse for נֵיר/נֶר - meaning '(landed) property,' McCarter claims "the same result is reflected here."⁶¹ But

60. McCarter, "River Ordeal," p. 410.

61. *Ibid.*

while the rendition of נִיר/נֶר as '(landed) property,' suggested by Hanson,⁶² offers a new understanding for a number of biblical verses,⁶³ its introduction in our verse is unacceptable for more than one reason. McCarter fails to appreciate the fact that נֶר רָשָׁעִים - lit. 'the candle or lamp of the wicked' - is a stereotyped phrase commonly used in Wisdom Literature to indicate the life and fortunes of the wicked. Extinguishing the light signifies a life prematurely cut short:

אור צדיקים יִשְׁמַח וְנֶר רָשָׁעִים יִדְעַךְ

The light of just men shines brightly⁶⁴
But the lamp of the wicked will be extinguished.
(Prov. 13:9)

כִּי לֹא תִהְיֶה אַחֲרֵית לֶרֶע וְנֶר רָשָׁעִים יִדְעַךְ

For the bad man has nothing to look forward to
And the lamp of the wicked will go out.
(Prov. 24:20)

Also:

מִקֵּלֶל אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ יִדְעַךְ נֶר בְּאִישׁוֹן חָשֶׁךְ

One who curses his father and his mother
His lamp will go out in the darkness.
(Prov. 20:20)

And finally:

גַּם אִרְרָא רָשָׁעִים יִדְעַךְ וְלֹא יִגַּח שְׂבִיב אִשׁוֹ
אִרְרָא חָשֶׁךְ בְּאַחֲלֹו וְנֶר עָלָיו יִדְעַךְ

62. P. D. Hanson, "The Song of Heshbon and David's Nîr," *HTR* 61 (1968) 297-320 (cited by McCarter).

63. Num. 21:30; 1 King. 11:29-39, 15:4; 2 King. 8:16-19.

64. Trans. R. B. Y. Scott, "Proverbs," *AB* 18, ad loc. For substantiation of rendering the verb שָׁמַח by 'shine brightly' see J. C. Greenfield, "Lexicographical Notes II," *HUCA* 30 (1953) 141-50.

The light of the wicked is put out
 The flame of his fire does not shine
 The light of his tent grows dark
 His lamp above him goes out.

(Job 18:5-6)

This idiomatic use has its roots both in the empiric reality of everyday life, where the shining lamp signifies the inhabited home and connotes peaceful family life (Jer. 25:10), and in the more reflective conception of the light as the source of being. Hence, light is the symbol of life in general (Job. 3:20; Pss. 36:10, 56:14), and the lamp of the human soul in particular (Prov. 20:24).⁶⁵

The structure of the speech cycles in the Book of Job may also serve to indicate the meaning of נֵר רָשָׁעִים in Job 21:17. While Job is here answering Zophar's speech (ch. 20), he also addresses himself to a previous comment by Bildad, challenging the truth of the latter's description of the fate of the wicked by means of the snuffed-out lamp - repeated twice for emphasis (ch. 18:5-6).⁶⁶ That Job is indeed here using the phrase in its conventional meaning can further be proved by the context in which it appears in ch. 21:17. True to Wisdom Literature's didactic tendency, Job underscores the idea he wishes to drive home by the conventional means of reiteration. But whereas Bildad used synonymous parallelism to describe the fate of the wicked, Job employs another stock epithet used throughout the Bible⁶⁷ to describe the fleeting fortunes of the

65. For an elaboration of the life-light darkness-death motif see the chapter dealing with the descriptive details of שְׂאֵרָה.

66. Pope, "Job," AB 145; esp. G. Fohrer, *Das Buch Hiob*, KAT 16, p. 340.

67. See Pss. 1:4, 35:5; Isa. 17:13, 29:5; Hos. 13:3.

wicked: the wind-blown chaff which here both complements and underscores the image of the snuffed-out lamp:

How often is the wicked's lamp snuffed...
That they become as straw in the wind
Like chaff the storm snatches away.

(Job 21:18, 18)

There can therefore be no doubt as to the meaning of נר רשעים in this verse. Further, McCarter never reveals his basis for rendering the familiar verb דעך, which is four times associated in the Bible with נר - 'lamp/candle' and which in these as well as in all other attestations⁶⁸ means 'be extinguished, quenched, go out,'⁶⁹ by 'confiscated.'

Finally, חבל is not attested in the Bible in the abstract meaning of 'destiny' nor could this vocable without any additional qualification refer to 'just destinies' as proposed by McCarter.⁷⁰

In conclusion, the projection of a river ordeal into the text by ascribing unattested and unverified meanings to otherwise well-defined biblical expressions must be rejected. Another point should be mentioned. McCarter rightly deems the derivation of Hebrew אִיד from Arabic 'wd - 'be curved, bent,' proposed by the lexica, to be unsatisfactory. But an alternative proposal, if it is to be seriously considered, ought to take more thorough account of the attestations of this vocable in the Bible.

Though McCarter's methods of biblical text analysis are unacceptable and his extra-biblical supportive data insufficient, his basic assumption

68. Isa. 43:17; Prov. 13:9, 20:20, 24:20; Job 18:5,6; Ps. 118:12.

69. BDB 15; cf. *ThW*, 122.

70. McCarter, "River Ordeal," p. 410; for חבל see recently *ThW*, pp. 699-706.

of an association between the water images in the psalms and an ordeal merits further investigation. His additional premise, that the ordeal concept gradually assumed broader connotation is also worth probing. And finally, the possible connection between the biblical עִדּוּ and the Accadian *edû* should be examined anew.

The ordeal background of literary texts should be traced on the basis of the judicial ordeal terminology established by Frymer-Kensky.⁷¹ Indeed, Frymer-Kensky found ordeal terminology in Mesopotamian literary texts as well. By extending her findings to additional Babylonian texts it is possible to relate their frame of reference to biblical prayers.⁷²

In this work, several Babylonian prayers will be analyzed in accordance with ordeal terminology and it will be proposed that they may have served as the inspirational source of the Biblical Psalmists.

In three recently re-edited Babylonian literary prayers,⁷³ two of which are addressed to Marduk and one to Nabû, a common theme is elaborated on at considerable length. A suppliant in a situation of extreme

71. Frymer-Kensky, "Ordeal."

72. The present hypothesis concerning the connection between the Israelite Psalms and the Akkadian prayers was independently posited in our study. It is, however, the basic and exhaustive research by Frymer-Kensky in ordeal texts and especially the ordeal terminology which provided the basis for the present proposal.

73. W. G. Lambert, "Three Literary Prayers to the Babylonians," *AfO* 19 (1959-60) 47-66. The texts discussed here are the Prayers to Marduk No. 1 and No. 2. (The Prayer to Ištar which also appears in this article is only alluded to in our discussion.) The texts will be referred to by name, number, and line. The third prayer discussed here was re-edited by W. von Soden, "Der Grosse Hymnus an Nabû," *ZA* 61 (1971) 44-71; henceforth cited as Nabû. Both Lambert and von Soden also discuss the literary genre and proposed date of the prayers.

distress, understood by him to be the result of divine punishment, appeals for mercy and deliverance. These liturgical compositions⁷⁴ seem to be of a penitential nature, and although not formally of the *eršahunga* type⁷⁵ (a prayer intended to appease the heart of an angry god), they do seem to share some features of this literary genre.⁷⁶ In the hymnic address in the three prayers the deities evoked are apostrophized with similar storm epithets which convey their awe-inspiring might: in the Prayer to Marduk, No. 1, "your stare is...a massive flood" (lines 5, 7), "an onslaught of the fire god" (lines 6, 8), [you have raged in your fury] amid [the seas the far away....Daily the surging waters (*e-du-û*)]....The flood (*a-gu-û*) raised" (lines 41-46). In the Prayer to Marduk, No. 2, the god is referred to as a "furious wind" (line 84) and a "dark cloud" and is compared to "the flood of the battle-turmoil of the sea" (line 43). The Prayer to Nabû contains similar descriptions and here, too, the deity's fury is likened to "fire" (lines 21, 33) and his "look of anger" to a "cloud" (lines 25, 27). Nabû himself is predicated as "a billowing sea"

74. The liturgical setting of these prayers is not known. The length of the prayers, their artful style, and predilection for rare words render their use in an actual cultic setting dubious. They may have been composed by learned poets for a learned audience, and considered as "literature in the highest sense." Lambert, *Prayers* 47; cf. von Soden, *Nabû* 48.

75. On this literary genre see E. R. Dalglish, *Psalm Fifty One* (Leiden, 1962) 21-34.

76. Cf. M. J. Seux, *Hymnes et Prières aux Dieux de Babylonie et d'Assyrie* (Paris, 1976), p. 19. Note also Marduk No. 1, lines 1, 207 and Marduk No. 2, lines 71ff.; Nabû 21-34, 37, 39, 40. For discussion see Seux, *ibid.*, pp. 19-20, 70-71, 172-173, 181; henceforth cited as *Hymnes*.

(lines 9, 11).⁷⁷ There is no doubt in the mind of the suppliants that it was the anger of the deity which caused the various afflictions mentioned in the prayers in question. The Prayer to Marduk, No. 2, is rather fragmentary at the point at which the prayer strikes a personal note (lines 73-93), but, clearly, the suppliant suffers in consequence of the divine "wrath," "fury," and a certain "penalty" (line 73). The Prayer to Nabû describes the suppliant as being subjected to "want [and] moaning" (line 46) and "diminishing vitality" (line 191). At the brink of annihilation (line 51) he is "bellowing terribly like a bull at a butcher's knife" (line 57).⁷⁸ In the Prayer to Marduk, No. 1, a divinely inflicted illness (malaria?) is the major source of the suppliant's misery (lines 125-130), and ensuing fear and sleepless exhaustion. A subsequent appeal for mercy, which follows in each of the three prayers, implores the god to waive the penalty and relieve the suppliant's wretched condition. However, in all three prayers this condition is uniformly described in terms of similar water images despite the differing modes of affliction which have previously been recounted in each of the prayers:

- 47 "Nabû, zorngehaltiger, du zürntest jetzt gegen deinen Knecht
 48] darauf legten sich auf ihn Mangel (und) Seufzen.
 49 Im gewaltigen Wogen schwall liegt er, und die Flut schlägt über ihm
 zusammen
 (49 *ina gi-riš e-d-e na-di-ma a-gu-ú e-liš it-ta[k-kip]*)

77. The hymnic addresses in these prayers are preserved in fragmentary form, but there is no doubt as to the wording of the various storm epithets and their use as metaphors for divine anger.

78. The sufferer may also have been harassed by demons (line 58).

- 50 das Ufer ist fern von ihm, weit ab von ihm liegt das Trockene.
 51 Er verging schier im Garn der Nachstellungen, das einen Gewaltigen
 abschneiden konnte;
 52 er legte sich nieder im Morast, wurd gehalten im Schlamm.
 (52 *it-ta-tiḷ ina na-ri-iṭ-ṭu kali ina ru-šum-du*)
 53 Fasse seine Hand, dass nicht zu Boden geworfen werde dein Knecht.
 54 beseitige seine Schuld,⁷⁹ erhebe ihn aus dem Morast
 55 Nabû, fasse seine Hand, dass nicht zu Boden geworfen werde dein
 Knecht
 56 beseitige seine Schuld, erhebe ihn aus dem Morast!....
 173 Löse seine Fessel, zerbrich [seine] ket[te]"⁸⁰ (Nabû lines 47-56,
 173) "Take him by the hand, absolve him from his guilt
 Banish from him malaria (?) and sleeplessness
 Your slave is cast into the mouth of destruction/catastrophe (*pi-i ka-ra-
 še-e*)
 Take away your punishment, rescue him from the morass (*na-ri-ṭi*)
 [...]...his fetter, undo his bonds
 Cause him to beam...." (Marduk No. 1, lines 151-156)
 "Take away, Lord, his guilt, waive his penalty
 His mouth has confessed the sin which he committed
 Lift him out of the mighty surging waters.

79. *šēr-tuš* is understood by Lambert to refer to punishment in parallel expressions.

80. For reasons indicated below, line 173 is considered as part of the nexus under discussion.

(lit.: from the heart of) *lib-bi e-de-e ra-b[u]-ti....*" (Marduk No. 2, lines 73-75)

An additional occurrence of similar water images in an identical context is attested to in "A Prayer to Every God":⁸¹

"O my lord do not cast thy servant down

He is plunged into the waters of a swamp, take him by the hand (*ina me-e ru-šum-ti na-di*)⁸²

The sin which I have done turn into goodness" (Prayer to Every God, lines 54-56)

In these prayers several elements combine to form a recurring nexus. The sense of the imminence of the sufferer's death throes⁸³ is conveyed through a description of being cast into surging waters and/or into a morass by an angry god. For the first water image the texts employ the vocable *edû* which is paralleled once by its semantic equivalent *agû*;⁸⁴ *nāritu* is used for the second water image, once paralleled by its semantic equivalent *rušumdu/tu*⁸⁵ and once replaced by it.⁸⁶ Secondly, the appeal for succor (figuratively expressed, as often in Babylonian prayers,

81. ANET, 391-392, translated by F. J. Stevens.

82. Original text cited according to S. Langdon, *Babylonian Penitential Psalms* (Paris, 1927), p. 43, line 38.

83. Nabû, line 51, and von Soden's comment on p. 63. Marduk (1), lines 63, 65, 142-144, 157.

84. Nabû, line 49, for *agû* - "flood water, current, wave, destructive flooding," see *CAD A.*, 157-158.

85. Nabû, line 52 for *nāritu* = *rušumdu* see *AHW*, 747.

86. A Prayer to Every God, line 55.

by the phrase "take him by the hand") is addressed to the deity with decided emphasis on his merciful character, while the plea for rescue from the waters is a concomitant of a plea for mitigation of punishment and remission of sin. Finally, the rescue involves the undoing of fetters.⁸⁷ The meaning of the elements and the significance of their combination becomes clear in the Prayer to Marduk, No. 1, in the section which precedes the above-mentioned description: "They took him with gloomy face, bringing him to the place of judgment/His arms were bound in your gate of punishment/As he explains to you his responsibility or ignorance" (Marduk [1], lines 142-144).

The phrase *āš-riš di-ni* (line 141) "to the place of judgment" is reminiscent of a similar expression in the cuneiform commentary to Ludlul III:1, as has been observed by Lambert.⁸⁸ The line in the commentary reads: "*i-na i-te-e d^dnāri a-šar de-en niši^{meš} ib-bir-ru i-te-e d^dnāri ħur-šā-an*: beside the River, where the judgment of the people is decided, on the shores of the ^dRiver-ħuršān."⁸⁹ This similarity led Lambert to conclude that the phrase in the Prayer to Marduk "apparently refers to the same institution and makes clear that it is the river ordeal. Apparently, then, the river ordeal had a religious as well as a legal application."⁹⁰ The line which follows in the commentary to Ludlul and refers to the vindication of the culprit as a result of the ordeal seems also to

87. This motif recurs also in Marduk (1), lines 60-61.

88. Lambert, Prayers 58.

89. Lambert, *EWL*, 54-55, text k 3291, rev: 1.

90. Lambert, Prayers 58.

have a bearing on the explication of the Marduk prayer: "Half my body was stricken, but I was freed from the fetters, [*slave ma*]rk-fetters."⁹¹ The removal of fetters also occurs, as observed above, in the Prayer to Marduk, No. 1 (lines 60-61, 155), and in the Prayer to Nabû (line 173), since the removal of fetters seems to have been mentioned in two texts in connection with the river ordeal,⁹² it is possible to take the undoing of fetters literally, as referring to a certain practice connected with the ordeal and thus connoting in the Prayer to Marduk the wish for the exoneration of the sufferer: "take away his punishment, rescue him from the morass...his fetters, undo his bonds" (Marduk [1] lines 154-155; cf. 60-61). A different interpretation of the fetters in an ordeal context is equally possible. In order to indicate conviction by the river, Sumerian literary texts employ *šu..ri-ri*, a standard verb for describing the action of the neckstock and one which denotes to "clamp down" or "enclose"⁹³ and

91. Text k 3291, rev: m. We followed the translation by R. D. Biggs in *ANET*, p. 600, which, based on the reading proposed by R. Borger in *JCS* 18, p. 52, seems to be superior to the one proposed by Lambert in *BWL*, p. 55.

92. The meaning of the fetters in these texts is not entirely clear. The first text (*FLP* 37), an old Sumerian text of the Sargonid period edited by Frymer-Kensky, "Ordeal," pp. 78-79, was written on a tablet that may have been worn around the neck and seems to contain a reference to an ordeal by means of which an individual was proven free of all claims upon him. The editor suggests that the tablet may have been worn to counteract a permanent slave mark. Cf. *op. cit.*, pp. 460-461. The second document (Text 6NT566) seems to be a legal or administrative text from Nippur. In lines 21-22 an ordeal is mentioned in which, according to the interpretation offered by W. Hallo, an individual swims a certain distance and then tries to get out of his fetters. Frymer-Kensky cites this interpretation of the text alongside her own differing rendition (*op. cit.*, pp. 114-120).

93. For a discussion of this term see A. Falkenstein, *ZA* 49, 117f. and Å. Sjöberg, *AfO* 24, 30 and line 31.

may be construed as a description of the culprit's physically being held back by the waters, i.e., his beginning to sink. The Hymn to Meslamtea and Lugalgirra also describes this action of ordeal waters:⁹⁴

The two of them are kings of the river
the Ilurugu which acquits the righteous (makes the righteous shine)
they enclose the evil man like wooden [fettters].

(p. 143:2-4)

Similar phraseology is employed in a hymn to Nungal⁹⁵ in which the Ekur temple serves as a place of judgment and a site for the river ordeal:

"Ekur, house of the gods, huge neckstock of heaven and earth (line 2)
Raging sea which mounts high, flood which rises high....(line 4)
House, trap which lies in wait for the evil, which makes the body of the wicked tremble. (line 5)
House, net whose fine meshes are skillfully woven, which gathers people as booty. (line 6)
House, watching the righteous and the evil man, out of his hand the bad one cannot escape. (line 7)
House, river of the Ordeal (Ilurugu) who does not kill the just (but) tires the evil man." (line 8)

Thus the Sumerian phrase conveys, in figurative language, the meaning inherent in the verb *kašādu* "to catch," the Old Babylonian technical term for conviction by the river ordeal, and in the verb *kalû* "to detain, hold back" which in the Nuzi texts is employed in connection with conviction by ordeal.⁹⁶ This verb appears in a text from Ugarit which seems to refer to

94. Edited by Å. W. Sjöberg, *Orient. Suec.* 19-20, 142-144.

95. Å. W. Sjöberg, "Nungal in the Ekur," *Afo* 24 (1973) 19-46, and T. Frymer, "The Nungal-Hymn and the Ekur Prison," *JESHO* Vol. 20, 1 (1977) 78-89.

96. For a discussion of these terms see Frymer-Kensky, "Ordeal," 102, 491-492. The Nuz term is discussed on pp. 257-258.

an ordeal.⁹⁷ Furthermore, this last term is used in the present hymn to Nabû, in which the sufferer's plight is described as being "cast into the mighty waves" (line 49), "held back (*ka-li*) in the slime" (line 52). The notion that the Nabû prayer concerns an ordeal that the sufferer must endure is further supported by the descriptive details of his plight: "The shore is far from him, in a far away distance the dry land" (line 50). Moreover, this verse seems to embody another feature of the ordeal since there is some evidence that the river ordeal may have involved swimming a specific distance from the shore. There is also a statement, albeit in a fragmentary context, that an innocent party in an ordeal was able to reach the banks of the river.⁹⁸ The verb *ka-li* may therefore be understood here in its specific river-ordeal denotation.

Two additional phrases which occur in the Prayer to Marduk, No. 1, as part of the conceptual sequence in question also point, in a varying extent, to an ordeal context:

Your slave is cast into the mouth of destruction (*pi-i ka-ra-še-e*)
 Take away your punishment, rescue him from the morass
 [...] his fetter, undo his bonds.
 Cause [him] to beam (*nu-um-m[ir-šú]*).

(Marduk [1], lines 153-156)

In Sumerian, the term *pi-i ka-ra-še-e* "mouth of destruction/catastrophe"

97. This text, *PL* 106, is an Akkadian-Hurrian bilingual published by Nougayrol in *PRU* III, pp. 311-333 and seems to be a wisdom text dealing with the observance of oaths, guilt, and perhaps also ordeals. A tentative reading of the pertinent line (3) is offered by Frymer-Kensky, "The one who swears at the river and is held back (*ka-li*) he is liable for his life (?)" (*ibid.*, 250). For a different reading, cf. Lambert, *BWL*, 116 and 117.

98. The texts that refer to swimming in what seems to be an ordeal context are *The Ur* III, text 6NT566 discussed by Frymer-Kensky, "Ordeal," pp. 113-120 and 529-530, and CT XLVI 45 discussed on p. 530.

is *ka-garaša* and appears in a number of literary texts as a descriptive phrase for the river ordeal,⁹⁹ most notably in the above-mentioned Nungal Hymn (line 96f.) which comprises a detailed description of the procedure of the ordeal in connection with this term:

My great Sheriff Nin-Dimgul stretches forth her arm
 In the 'Mouth of Penalty' she does not...the man, she does not
 destroy him
 She snatches that man from the 'Mouth of catastrophe.'
 He is brought in (or they bring him in) to my 'house of life'
 I place him under guard.

Here the sheriff of Nungal, the divine mooring pole, snatches the culprit out of the river and brings him to Nungal for the further disposition of his case, a description which indicates, probably in figurative language, according to Frymer-Kensky, the common procedure of the river ordeal in ancient Mesopotamia.¹⁰⁰

The second term, "cause him to beam," used in the Prayer to Marduk (1, line 156) as well as in the Hymn to Nabû (line 212), may refer not only to the restoration of the sufferer and his general well-being, but may also imply, more specifically, his acquittal at the ordeal. Such an interpretation is prompted by the common description, in the Mesopotamian legal and religious literary texts, of describing acquittal by means of

99. For a discussion of *ka-garaša/garaša*, see Frymer-Kensky, "Ordeal," 431, 550, 556-557, where source references and additional bibliography are cited. Note also the occurrence of the same phrase in a similar context in the Prayer to Ištar, AfO 19 (1959-60), line 163.

100. Frymer, "The Nungal Hymn," pp. 84-85, "Ordeal," 103ff. The association of the rescue from the "mouth of catastrophe/destruction" with the rescue from the "pit" in the texts cited on pp. 60, 60 of our study lends further support to our contention that the "pit" - Akkadian *ḫašti* and Hebrew תַּיִת - do not merely connote "grave" or "underworld," but denote the underworld as a place of punishment.

verbs which denote cleansing, and legal innocence by metaphors of the burnishing of silver and/or gold. This descriptive language is also used as technical terms for acquittal in the context of ordeals. Thus the action of the river in its capacity as judge (the river-ordeal referred to by the term Ilurugu) is described: "your core is the Ilurugu which acquits the righteous (lit. - 'makes the righteous shine')"¹⁰¹ "You (Asarluhi as Ilurugu) make the just man shine like silver"¹⁰² "The upri[ght man] you make shine like gold."¹⁰³ The phrase in the Marduk prayer and Nabû hymn may therefore be a variant, conveying the same idea and thus placing these passages in a legal context.

We conclude therefore that in light of these references the judgment of the sufferer in the Prayer to Marduk, No. 1 (line 142), was associated with the concept of the ordeal, and that the plea "rescue him from the morass" (line 154) which appears in counterparallelism to being "cast into the mouth of catastrophe/destruction" should be understood within this frame of reference. This interpretation receives additional support from the occurrence of the same plea in an identical context in the hymn to Nabû (lines 54, 56) where the divine punishment of being "cast into surging waters, surrounded by the flood and detained by the swamp/slime" (lines 49, 52) is again associated with terminology specific to the ordeal. The recurrence of a variant phrase, "He is plunged into the waters of a swamp" as a description of divine punishment in the Prayer to Every God (line 54),

101. Text TCS III 32: 264 discussed by Frymer-Kensky, "Ordeal," pp. 97-98.

102. Text UET VI 69: 5-6 discussed by Frymer-Kensky, "Ordeal," P. 98.

103. Text OECTI, III 11-14 discussed in *ibid.*, p. 101; cf. also p. 493.

would seem to imply that these water epithets constituted a literary cliché for an ordeal in the literary prayers. However, while the conceptual framework of these water images has thus been clarified, it is not certain whether the allusions to an ordeal in these prayers are to be understood literally or metaphorically. Although Lambert assumes that an actual ordeal forms the background of the Ludlul section mentioned above, details such as the mention of fetters he does not interpret literally.¹⁰⁴ On the basis of additional instances of fetters mentioned in connection with ordeal texts and calumnies against the sufferer in the Ludlul section (lines 84-97), Frymer-Kensky considers a literal meaning of the ordeal mentioned in this text as well as in the Prayer to Marduk (1). Alternatively she would interpret the ordeal as a metaphor for a purification ceremony at the river in which the sufferer is vindicated. Concerning these texts she concludes: "the sufferer undergoes some form of 'judgment' at the river and although this may not actually be an ordeal the terminology used to discuss it is evocative of the ordeal and this connection to the ordeal was understood and made explicit by the writer of the commentary to Ludlul."¹⁰⁵ In her study Frymer-Kensky dealt only with the Prayer to Marduk, No. 1, and the Ludlul section, but her observations may be developed with the aid of additional references to this mode of religious "judgment."¹⁰⁶ To be sure, the Hymn to Nabû and the Prayer

104. W. G. Lambert, *BWL*, 24.

105. Frymer-Kensky, "Ordeal," 431.

106. I had an opportunity to discuss the additional texts with Dr. Frymer-Kensky and get her view on their possible reference. The elaboration, however, is my own as is the responsibility for the content.

to Every God do not allow us to determine with any certainty whether an actual ordeal-like ceremony formed part of the exoneration procedure of the sufferer, since both texts contain many lacunae. But they do indicate the way in which the sufferer understood his situation to relate to an ordeal judgment. In the Nabû hymn, as in the other literary texts under discussion, the sufferer has no doubt that his misery is divine retribution for some transgression on his part. Although his admission of his own sinfulness is couched in rather general terms (lines 54-56), his consciousness of guilt is pervasive, and he acknowledges the justice of the divine punishment. Convinced of his own guilt, the poet of the hymn describes his condition in terms of the fate of the guilty party in an ordeal: the waters close over his head; he is about to drown and cannot reach the shore; the slimy waters detain him. All of these details, as discussed above, are direct indications of an indictment in an ordeal judgment. It is noteworthy, however, that the verb employed in all of these literary texts in connection with the water images is not *šalû* "to plunge," the standard verb applied to ordeals, but *nadû* "to throw." According to Frymer-Kensky, this is "a term used with water when indicating the form of punishment which involved being cast into the waters."¹⁰⁷ This form of "judgment," therefore, although based on the notion of judicial ordeal and generally evoking its terminology, changes the judicial setting and shifts the center of gravity. The "religious ordeal" in our texts is not intended to decide between the claims of the two opposing parties, but rather to bring the "case" of a guilt-ridden mortal before

107. Frymer-Kensky, "Ordeal," 528.

the judgment of his God.¹⁰⁸ After all, the suppliant in all the texts under discussion has already admitted his sin, no tension is focused on the test and its outcome of guilt or innocence. Rather, tension mounts around the question of whether the angered god will relent "on the edge of punishment."¹⁰⁹ In accordance with this shift of interest the deity is not addressed primarily in his capacity of impartial arbitrator and discerning judge, but as a god: "Who pities like a father...who knows how to pardon in the face of guilt...to waive the penalty and spare distress."¹¹⁰ The recurring apostrophes of the deities in these texts use terms such as gods of "Grace" and "Mercy." These modifications raise the question of why explicit ordeal terminology was used at all in a setting twice removed from an actual situation of an ordeal judgment. If these prayers were indeed based upon an ordeal-like purification ceremony, the use of such terminology would be self-explanatory. Yet even if no such ceremony was the *Sitz-im-Leben* of these prayers, the evocation of ordeal terminology may be accounted for. The very form of a judgment by ordeal inspired terror not only in the heart of the offenders, but also in society as a whole although this kind of judgment was ultimately beneficial to the maintenance of law and order, in that same society. For this

108. The Prayer to Marduk (1) claims mankind's basic ignorance of the divine will as a mitigating circumstance (lines 104-112); cf. Prayer to Every God (lines 51-53).

109. Marduk (1) lines 13, 15, as translated by Frymer-Kensky, "Ordeal," 429, as an alternative to Lambert's rendition "in the face of guilt" (*AfO* 19, 56).

110. Marduk (1) lines 17, 150, 171-172, 201, 203, 206; Nabû, lines 99, 206, 208; Prayer to Every God 39; Marduk (2) line 31.

reason, the ordeal is mentioned along with afflictions and neurotic illnesses in religio-magical Neo-Assyrian lists.¹¹¹ Similarly in the prayers distress and overwhelming fear are prominent features of the sufferer's plight. The literary tradition of employing ordeal terminology in penitential prayers to describe the predicament of a sufferer may have evolved because of the emotional similarity between the two situations. Then, as was often the case in ancient cultures, the poet perceived this similarity as a complete identity of situations. An even closer connection between the situation of the sufferer in the prayers and the culprit in an ordeal suggests itself if we consider the nature of the bodies of water commonly associated with the ordeal in Mesopotamian cultures. An actual earthly river could be seen at the same time as the cosmic ^dID or the Ilurugu river, which were envisaged as flowing at the edge of the world and forming a link with the netherworld.¹¹² And the river Ħubur, the classical underworld river, also figures occasionally as an ordeal river with explicit ordeal terminology.¹¹³ We may also understand the term *ka-gāra sā* - mouth of hell/catastrophe - of the ordeal.¹¹⁴ The ordeal river therefore by its very nature provided access to the underworld so that this form of trial gave the culprit a foretaste of death not only

111. The texts are BRM.IV.20, edited by Ungnad, "Besprechungskunst und Astrologie in Babylonien," *AfO* 14 (1941-44) 258f., and "Incantation of the Maqlû Type" published by Lambert in *AfO* 18 (1958) 288-299. For discussion cf. Frymer-Kensky, "Ordeal," 424-427.

112. See Frymer-Kensky, "Ordeal," pp. 583-584, 587f.

113. The Samas Hymn, lines 61-62. W. G. Lambert, *BWL*, p. 128, and comment on p. 319. For a different interpretation of the verb *taru* indicating loss in an ordeal, see Frymer-Kensky, "Ordeal," pp. 385-387, 462, 492, 532-533.

114. See T. S. Frymer, "The Nungal Hymn," pp. 84-85; "Ordeal," pp. 595-596.

because it imperilled him and was potentially fatal. The analogy between the situation of the sufferer in these penitential prayers and the culprit in an ordeal may therefore be drawn on several counts. His guilt-ridden conscience led the sufferer to perceive his grave situation as punishment incurred for his overt sins or unwitting transgression. Like the culprit in an ordeal he is *in extremis*, exposed to the severe judgment of his god exemplified in the media of the trial. His rescue is totally dependent on a last-minute intervention of divine will. The poignancy of his plight and the urgency of his case are thus made palpable with ordeal terminology.¹¹⁵

In four psalms and the prayer in Jonah 2:3-10, the reality of death is conveyed by means of water images. The reason for distress may vary but the water images are quite similar, and sometimes even identical.¹¹⁶ Three of the psalms, 42/43, 69, and 88, belong, according to Gunkel's classification, to the category of Lament of the Individual,¹¹⁷ while Ps. 40:1-12 and Jon. 2:3-10 belong to the category of Thanksgiving Psalms of the Individual.¹¹⁸ In Ps. 88 it is reasonable to assume that the source

115. Pre-logic way of thinking in which resembling phenomena coalesce seems to have been an important factor in describing moral distress in terms of an ordeal. On this way of thinking cf. E. Cassirer, *Die Begriffsformen Mythischen Denkens* (Leipzig, 1922); H. and H. A. Frankfort, J. A. Wilson, T. Jacobsen, *Before Philosophy* (Chicago, 1963), p. 21.

116. The water images that describe Sheol in Jon. 2:4 recor verbatim in Ps. 42:8, though Sheol is not mentioned in the latter. Pss. 88 and 69 contain similar water images though Sheol is mentioned only in the former. We therefore consider these images as descriptive of Sheol.

117. H. Gunkel, *Einleitung in die Psalmen* (Göttingen, 1933), p. 172.

118. *Ibid.*, p. 265. For a more detailed sub-division see below.

of distress is illness (v. 16), and this prayer is considered one of the typical examples of the category of prayers of which illness is the subject.¹¹⁹ In Ps. 42/43,¹²⁰ the source of distress is oppression by an enemy (42:10; 43:2) and on the basis of the analogy¹²¹ to the taunting question "Where is your God?" (42:4, 11), we should assume that the reference is to a foreign enemy. In Ps. 69, on the other hand, it emerges that the enemies are from among his own people and the expressions which appear in v.5, "Those who hate me without reason, my enemies without cause, must I restore what I have not stolen?" may indicate that the subject is false witnesses and the Psalm is considered a typical Psalm of an Accused Man.¹²² The Psalms of Thanksgiving do not specify the cause of the misfortune from which the worshipper is rescued. In the Psalm in Jonah, the Psalmist has no more than a generalization: "I called to the Lord out of my distress" (Jon. 2:3), and in Ps. 40 it is mentioned only that the Psalmist understands the Lord's answering his cry for help as an act of "righteousness."

119. For this genre see K. Seybold, *Das Gebet des Kranken im Alten Testament* (Stuttgart, 1973).

120. For the unity of Ps. 42 and 43 see H. Gunkel, *Die Psalmen* (Göttingen, 1926), p. 179, and H. J. Kraus, *Psalmen*, Bk.15/1 (Neukirchen, 1978), 472. Their conclusion has been commonly accepted.

121. Pss. 79:10, 115:2.

122. H. Schmidt, "Das Gebet des Angeklagten im Alten Testament," *BZAW* 49 (1928) 32ff. However, the enemies mentioned in vv. 10, 22-28 cannot be identified with any certainty. The problem of the identity of the 'enemies' in the Book of Psalms has not yet been satisfactorily solved despite various attempts at their identification. For a recent survey of the proposed solutions see H. J. Kraus, *Psalmen*, 15.1, pp. 112-117. While the sufferings of the Psalmists seem to be schematized and described, like those of the Babylonian worshiper, in stylized form, these Psalms nonetheless have different emphases from each other. In Psalms 42/43, 69, and 88, it seems that the Psalmist suffers from a more specific source of distress, as indicated above.

While the reasons for distress are various in the Psalms which we have mentioned, in descriptions of the distressed state of the Psalmists the water images recur either in word-for-word repetitions or with only slight variations. We get the impression that this is a literary tradition preserved in fixed formulae and set phrases:

For You didst cast me into the deep
into the heart of the seas
and the flood was round about me
all Your breakers and waves passed
over me....

The waters closed in over me
the deep was round about me....

[Jon. 2:4,6]

ותשליכני מצולה
בלבב ימים
ונחור יסבבני
כל משבריך וגליך עלי
עברו....
אפפוני מים עד נפש
תהום יסובבני

...Deep calls to deep
in the roar of Your cataracts
all Your breakers and waves passed
over me....

[Ps. 42:8]

תהום אל תהום קורא
לקול צנורִיך
כל משבריך וגליך עלי
עברו....

You have put me at the bottom of the Pit
You have put me in the depth
Your fury lies heavy upon me
You afflict me with all your breakers
Your fury overwhelms me
Your terror destroys me
They swirl about me like waters all
day long
They encircle me on every side.

[Ps. 88:7,8]

שתני בבור תחתיות
במחשבים במצלות
עלי סמכה ימתך
וכל משבריך עניה סלה
עלי עברו חרוניך
בעותיך צמתחני
סבוני כמים כל היום
הקיפו עלי יחד

Deliver me O God
for the waters have reached my neck
I am sinking into the slimy deep
and find no foothold
I have come into the watery depth
the flood sweeps me away....
Rescue me from the mire
let me not sink
let me be rescued from my enemies
and from the watery depth
let the flood waters not sweep me away
let the deep not swallow me
Let the mouth of the well not close over me.

[Ps. 69:2,3,15,16]

הרשיעני אלהים
כי באו מים עד נפש
טבעתי ביון מצולה
ואין מעמד
באתי במעמקי מים
ושבלת שטפתי....
הצילני מטיט
ואל אטבעה
אנצלה משנאי
וממעמקי מים
אל השטפני שבלת
ואל תבלעני מצולה
ואל תאטור עלי באר פיה

He lifted me out of the miry pit
the slimy clay....

ויעלני מבור שאון
משיט הירון....

[Ps. 40:3]

Like the sufferer in the Babylonian prayers, the biblical protagonist describes himself as cast into the waters by an angry God.¹²³ As in the prayer to Nabû,¹²⁴ waves and breakers surround him¹²⁵ and he is about to drown.¹²⁶ Also, as in the prayer to Nabû,¹²⁷ this plight is paralleled by that of being cast into the morass.¹²⁸ The last image served in all the Babylonian prayers under discussion to indicate the occurrence of a religious ordeal.

Within the biblical context, the formulation of overwhelming divine fury¹²⁹ in terms of waves and breakers needs special comment. In biblical poetic texts breakers and waves usually are an integral constituent of the chaotic waters, hostile to creation and defying its Creator. They must constantly be subdued and held at bay.¹³⁰ In the psalm under discussion, however, the waves and breakers appear associated with God in the genitive case:

123. Jon. 2:4, or being put into the waters, Ps. 88:7.

124. Line 49.

125. Jon. 2:4; Pss. 42:8, 88:8.

126. Jon. 2:4,6; Pss. 69:2b,15.

127. Lines 52-56.

128. Ps. 40:3, 69:2b,16.

129. Especially Ps. 88:8,16,17.

130. Isa. 51:15; Jer. 5:22, 31:35; Job 38:11; Pss. 89:10, 93:4. Once waves are mentioned as a result of a divine stormy wind (Ps. 107:25,29).

Jon. 2:4 —	כל משברִיך וגליך עלי עברו
Ps. 42:8 —	כל משברִיך וגליך עלי עברו
Ps. 88:8 —	עלי סמכה חמתך וכל משברִיך עניח סלה

In the hymnic introduction to the Babylonian prayers these same furious elements are used to illustrate the divine power of the respective gods, and may consequently also serve as a mode of their wrath. In the Bible, the close association of the waves and breakers with God is limited to the above-mentioned texts. This leads us to suggest probable derivation from the Babylonian source. The biblical passages, like their Babylonian counterparts, abound in verbs underscoring the encircling power of the waters:

Jon. 2:4 —	תהום יסובבני, נהר יסובבני
Ps. 88:18 —	סבוני כמיון, הקיפו ¹³¹ עלי יחד

One verb in particular merits further elucidation. In Ps. 88:8, the verb ענה in its usual denotation 'to afflict, humiliate' cannot be readily applied to water. Most commentators realizing this difficulty resorted to emendation of the text.¹³² However, the need for such an emendation is obviated if we consider the Arabic *عنى* 'became captive, was in a state of confinement'¹³³ as related in meaning to a Hebrew verb ענה*, which, in a transitive meaning, denoted 'to confine, bind, shackle (in fetters).' This verb seems to be represented in the following verses:

131. The last-mentioned verb also occurs in the prayer to Nabû, line 49.

132. For a summary of the various attempts see Kraus, *Psalmen*, Bd. 15, 772.

133. E. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (London, 1874), 2178b.

ענו בכבל רגלו באה נפשו

His feet were shackled by fetters
an iron [collar] was put on his neck.
[Ps. 105:18]

כי יחרו [יתרי] פתח ויענני...

His [or: my] cord he opened and
shackled me with...
[Job 30:11]

במה נוטל לו ואסרנוהו לענותו...

...By what means we may prevail
against him that we may bind him
[so as] to shackle him [rather than
to afflict him].
[Jud. 16:6]

ותחל לענותו

And she began to shackle him.
[Jud. 16:19]

In each of the quoted verses 'to shackle, bind' renders a more precise meaning than the commonly suggested 'to afflict,' which constitutes a deviation from the concrete meaning of the verb suggested by the context. There also seems to be a verbal noun עֲנִי denoting 'shackles, fetters': "But if they be bound in manacles, held in the cords of fetters" (Job 36:8), rather than 'cords of affliction.' Note also the counterpart of this verse - "...(He) broke their neckstocks" (v.14). We therefore suggest to render Ps. 88:8 "Your fury lies heavy upon me, You shackled (me) with all your breakers."¹³⁴

134. The Arabic vocable was suggested by D. W. Thomas, *The Text of the Revised Psalter* (London, 1965), 45, as an explication of Ps. 107:10. To my knowledge he has not otherwise elaborated on his suggestion. N. J. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions*, pp. 65-66, extends this meaning to Ps. 88:8 but renders the verse "Thou entanglest me in all Thy breakers."

The probability of such an interpretation which would bring the biblical imagery very close to that of the Babylonian prayers gains some support from an additional biblical passage in which this specific imagery recurs in a context in which the waters are associated with שׂאול and figure as a divine punitive measure: in Isa. 28:14 the prophet quotes the mock-statement made by the spiritual leaders of Jerusalem who scoff at the possibility of being subjected to divine punishment by referring to a covenant made with death and Sheol which would safeguard their impunity:

לכן שמעו דבר ה' אנשי לצון, משלי העם הזה אשר
בירושלם. כי אמרתם: כרתנו ברית את מות וענו שאול
עשינו הזה, שיט (שומ ק') כי עבר (יעבר ק') לא יבואנו...

Therefore hear the word of the Lord
you scoffers who rule this people
in Jerusalem
Because you have said 'we have made
a covenant with death and with Sheol
we have an agreement when the over-
flowing waters shall pass it shall not
come unto us....

To this cynical statement the prophet offers the following rebuttal:

I shall make justice the line and
righteousness the plummet and hail
will sweep away the refuge of lies
and water will overwhelm (מיה ישמפר)
the shelter. Then your covenant with
death will be annulled¹³⁵ and your
agreement with Sheol will not stand
when the overflowing water (שנמ שומת)
shall pass through, you shall be
trodden down by it....Now therefore

135. The verb *wekuppar* has customarily been emended to read *wetupar* - 'will be annulled,' a verb frequently connected with treaties. But as Levine has recently argued, this verb which means 'to erase' may be retained in a treaty context because it too signifies 'to nullify.' B. S. Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord* (Leiden, 1974), p. 61.

do not scoff lest your shackles (מוסריכם)
 [lit. 'neckstock'] be strong.
 [Isa. 28:17,18,22]

The shackles are not previously mentioned in this context and they may be accounted for if we assume that they were associated with the notion of the overflowing waters.¹³⁶

In conclusion: the similarity between the water imagery in the Babylonian and biblical prayers is too striking to be incidental. May we therefore presume that the biblical imagery derived from the Babylonian prayers? Secondly, may we assume that the Psalmists were familiar with the concept of religious ordeal?

As to the first question, there has been renewed demand for reappraisal of the relationship between the Liturgical literature of the two cultures.¹³⁷ Recent comparative studies have indeed indicated marked similarities not only in religious concepts but also in their verbal

136. We translated the noun שרץ by 'overflowing water' instead of the common rendition 'scourge' for the following reasons: the verb שטף which is associated with it always refers to the flow of a liquid substance and could not reasonably be applied to 'whip' or 'scourge.' Neither does 'whip' or the more abstract 'scourge' fit the context which explicitly refers to the elements let loose in a tempest. We derive the meaning of the Hebrew vocable from Arabic سوط meaning 'flood' for which see J. Barth, "שרץ שטף," ZAW 33 (1913) 306-307 and ZAW 34 (1914) 69, who refers to a similar use of this vocable in the Koran 89:12 where it is used as a punishment of God and the verb 'to pour' attached to it leaves no doubt as to its meaning. The similar noun is attested to in Ethiopic, *ibid.* For additional corroboration of this interpretation from the Targum and medieval commentators cf. S. Poznanski, "Zu שרץ שטף," ZAW 36 (1916) 119-120. For a different view, defending the translation 'whip,' see H. Gese, "Die Strömende Geißel des Hadad und Jes. 28:15 und 18," *Galling Festschrift* (Tübingen, 1970), 127-134. Shackles as a descriptive part of Sheol will be discussed below.

137. W. W. Hallo, "Individual Prayer in Sumerian: The Continuity of a Tradition," *JAOS* 88 (1968), esp. 71-82.

expressions.¹³⁸ Concentrating on one genre of Liturgy, Dalglish¹³⁹ concluded:

There are many striking similarities between the Sumero-Accadian and the Hebrew psalms of lamentation. These include a similarity of literary types and component themes, rhythm and parallelism, phraseology and idiom, and religious thought and cultic provenance. This community has been accounted for in several ways....The most likely theory to account for the similarities as well as the differences between the Sumero-Accadian and Hebrew psalms of lamentation presents three major posits: (1) a proto-Semitic inheritance common to both cultures; (2) a probable Babylonian influence, direct or indirect, upon the Hebrew psalm of lamentation, and (3) the creative genius of Israel's religion and of the originality of her psalmists.

The second proposition seems to be the more probable; especially so since in the prayers under study direct analogy, additional to the water images, is evidenced. In the prayer to Marduk No. 1, identical terms to those encountered in the Bible are employed in pleading for divine succor:

What profit is there in one who is like clay	What profit is there in my blood
A living slave reverences his lord.	When I go down to the pit
What can dead dust give to a god. ¹⁴⁰	Shall the dust praise Thee
[Marduk 1, 67-69]	Shall it declare Thy truth. [Ps. 30:10; KJV 30:9]

Taking into consideration all the above, familiarity seems obvious,

138. ש.נ. קרמר, מ. וינפלד, "הספרות השומרית וספר תהלים - מבא למחקר - מבא למחקר", בית מקרא, א' נר. 8-24; ב' נר. 136-160, ירושלים (תשל"ד).

139. E. R. Dalglish, *Psalm Fifty One* (Leiden, 1962), 250, 254. For the first position see further W. F. Albright, "The Psalm of Habakkuk," *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy*, ed. H. H. Rowley (London, 1950), p. 4. The second position seems to us to be the more plausible.

140. Translation of line 69 follows the rendition by M. J. Seux, "Hymnes," p. 175. For similar ideas in the Bible see Isa. 38:18,19; Pss. 6:6, 88:11. For further similarities note also the description of the deity bestowing fertility in Prayer to Marduk No. 2, lines 5-28, and Ps. 104:10-14.

and as a result derivation possible. As to the water images, do they denote a religious ordeal in the Bible as well?

While the concept of a river ordeal seems to have been known in this cultural area,¹⁴¹ there is no direct evidence for it in the biblical literature. And yet the following passages may support the contention that the biblical writers were familiar with the notion of a religious judgment by water, for which no specific technical term is attested to, but which was referred to by the above discussed terms שׁוּמַט and שׁוּמַט שׁוּמַט, and by the term מֵיִם רַבִּים.

In Psalm 32, a penitent who experienced divine forgiveness of his sins describes the way in which the devout may be saved from divine judgment:

Then I acknowledged my sin to You
I did not cover up my guilt
I resolved 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord'
And You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah.
Therefore let every faithful man pray to You
Upon discovering [his sin]
[Others: In a time when you may be found]
That the rushing mighty waters (מֵיִם רַבִּים)
Not overtake him.

[Ps. 32:5-6]

The many-faceted connotations of the term מֵיִם רַבִּים - 'many waters' have often been indicated.¹⁴² Less observed in these discussions, for infrequently attested in the Bible, is the function of the 'many waters'

141. See p. 126, n.97. However, the title 'Judge River' encountered in Ugaritic mythological texts would seem to be an honorific title, as the parallelism to 'Prince Sea' indicates, rather than a reference to the function of the River as Judge.

142. H. G. May, "Some Cosmic Connotations of Mayim Rabbîm, 'Many Waters'," *JBL* 74 (1955) 9-21.

as a divine tool in meting out punishment. When serving in this capacity, their role as an insurgent element is reversed; no longer hostile to the Creator,¹⁴³ his chosen people,¹⁴⁴ or a devout individual,¹⁴⁵ they are turned against God's enemies in the form of a destructive flood,¹⁴⁶ or withhold their nurturing powers.¹⁴⁷ As God's penal agents the 'many waters' may also appear as part of the divine storm theophany, paralleled by wind and hail, i.e., the weapons of the Divine Warrior fighting his enemies.¹⁴⁸ Flooding waters, by their very nature, tend to be indiscriminate. In the Bible their judicious use by a discerning judge became symbolic of divine justice. It was precisely the absence of God's righteousness that Job lamented using this imagery:

He would crush with a tempest
and multiply my wounds without cause....
When the raging flood (שׁוּט) slays
suddenly,
He mocks the despair of the innocent.
[Job 9:17,23]

But neither the occasional despair of a Job nor the arrogant "scoffers" (Isa. 28) could shake the basic biblical tenet "Destruction is decreed, over flowing with righteousness" - כליון חרוץ שׁוּטף צמקה (Isa. 10:22)

143. E.g., Hab. 3:15; Pss. 29:3, 77:20, 93:4.

144. Isa. 17:12-14; Ps. 124:3-5.

145. Pss. 18:17//2 Sam. 22:17, 144:7. Cf. Isa. 43:2.

146. Ezek. 26:19 (probably also 27:26).

147. Ezek. 31:15.

148. Isa. 17:12,13; see also מִיַּם רַבִּיּוֹת // מִיַּם לְבִירִים in v.12 and in 28:2. Cf. Ezek. 1:24 & 43:2. Note also the שֹׁטף in Nah. 1:8 and Daniel 9:26, 11:22.

The idea of judgment by water is elaborated on in the Bible in the context of a catastrophe designated by אִי־ד. The relationship between biblical אִי־ד and Babylonian *edû* - 'a catastrophic onrush of water' is of special interest for our study since *edû* is referred to in the prayer to Nabû as referring to a religious ordeal and believed to be a punishment evoked by an angry God. A detailed discussion of this concept is therefore in order. Since we wish to pursue further, but along different lines, the assumption of a possible relationship of the concept of an ordeal to the water images in the psalms and the notion of biblical אִי־ד, we turn to a definition and discussion of the term אִי־ד.

Excursus - the nature of the אִי־ד-catastrophe

The vocable אִי־ד is attested twenty-four times in the Bible.¹⁴⁹ It always occurs without the definite article, and seventeen times contains a pre-nominal suffix.¹⁵⁰ Except for Exek. 35:5, the term appears only in poetic passages. אִי־ד is paralleled in the Bible by צָרָה¹⁵¹ and רָעָה¹⁵² - 'calamity,' 'distress,' 'disaster,' and it is by this rather broad sense that the term is defined in the standard lexica.¹⁵³ The predicate

149. Deut. 32:35; 2 Sam. 22:19 = Ps. 18:19; Jer. 18:17, 46:21, 48:16, 49:8,32; Ezek. 35:5; Obad. 13(3x); Prov. 1:26,27, 6:15, 17:5, 24:22, 27:10; Job 18:12, 21:17,30, 30:12, 31:3,23.

150. 1 masc. sing. 2 Sam. 22:19 = Ps. 18:19. 2 masc. sing. Prov. 27:10. 2 masc. pl. Prov. 1:26,27. 3 masc. sing. Jer. 18:17, 46:21, 49:39; Deut. 32:35; Obad. 13.

151. Prov. 1:27; Obad. 12-14.

152. Jer. 48:16; Obad. 13.

153. BDB, p. 15, "distress," "calamity." KB, p. 36, "not occasional but final calamity." *Thesaurus*, p. 90, "disaster," "collapse," "ruin." Cf. also *Thw.*, 122-25.

associated with אָיִד is usually the verb בָּרָא - 'to come' in Qal¹⁵⁴ or in Hiph;¹⁵⁵ once the cognate verb אָמַא is used (Prov. 1:27), and once the verb קוּם - 'to rise' in Qal (Prov. 24:22).

The object of עֲוֹן in Wisdom Literature, where the term occurs twelve times, is always an individual, and - but for two instances in which the term occurs in an unspecified context¹⁵⁶ - it is the wicked, or allegedly wicked, upon whom עֲוֹן is inflicted. In Deut. 32:35 and in late prophetic texts the term refers to the evil fate of a nation - either Israel¹⁵⁷ or her enemies¹⁵⁸ - brought about by the anger of God. In 2 Sam. 22:19 (= Ps. 18:19) the term refers to the calamity that befalls an individual, in this case a royal protagonist.

The catastrophe referred to by נִסָּה, whether applied to an individual as in Wisdom Literature or to a nation as in Deut. and late prophecy, is usually a measure of divine retribution. It is a severe measure meted out in an eruption of anger which strikes without warning and results in total destruction:

Therefore shall his [the villain's] calamity [צָרָה]
 come suddenly
 Suddenly shall he be broken without remedy.
 (KJV. Prov. 6:15)

Since, from the point of view of the victim, the occurrence of the disaster is unpredictable, it is rendered all the more frightening:

For God's calamity [כִּסָּף] is a dread to me
I could not withstand its terror.

(Pope Job 31:23)

But from the divine point of view the disaster is premeditated:

For he sends(?) his feet into a net and he walks upon a snare. The trap shall grip his heel, the bands tighten on him. The snare is laid for him in the ground and a trap for him in the way. Horrors frighten him on every side and chase him at his heels. His strength is hunger bitten and calamity [כִּסָּף] is ready for his rib....His roots dry up beneath and his branches wither above. His memory perishes from the earth and he has no name in the street. He is thrust from light into darkness and driven out of the world....They that come after him shall be astonished at his day and horror seized them that were before him. Surely such are the dwellings of the ungodly. Such is the place of him who knows not God.

(Job 18:8-21)

The totality of destruction and the horror it evokes among contemporary witnesses and future generations lends the punitive measure manifested in the כִּסָּף a paradigmatic character. As a result of the notion of divine predetermination and careful planning inherent in it, this concept became an apt mode to express divine retributive justice in dealing with the fate of nations on a historic scale in terms of a רִיב - 'a divine covenant lawsuit.'¹⁵⁹

Is not this laid up in store with me,
and sealed up among my treasures?

159. See G. E. Wright, "The Law-suit of God. A Form-Critical Study of Deut. 32," *Israel's Prophetic Heritage*, ed. B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson (New York, 1962), pp. 26-67. B. Gemser, "The רִיב - or controversy-pattern in Hebrew Mentality," *SVT* 3 (1960) 120-137.

To me belongs vengeance and recompense;
 their [Israel's] foot shall slide in due time:
 For the day of their calamity [אִידם] is at hand,
 and the things that shall come upon them make haste.
 (Deut. 32:35. KJV)

It was thus that אִיד was employed by the later prophets to describe the catastrophic events of the years 587-586 that engulfed both Israel and her enemies.¹⁶⁰ In this context אִיד became a technical term for a time of calling to account, for the day of visitation:

משפט... אל ארץ המישור // איד מואב (Jer. 48:16,21)

and punishment:

עת פקדתם // יום אִילה (Jer. 47:21)

עת פקדתיו // אִיד עשר (Jer. 49:8)

עת עון קץ // אִידם (Ezek. 35:5)

The tangible manner in which an אִיד manifests itself may be gleaned from the similes by which אִיד is described.¹⁶¹ Three times אִיד is likened to a storm; designated סופה, שואה and קדים.

בבא כשואה פחדתם ואידכם כסופה יאתה...

When panic strikes you like a squall wind
 And disaster [אִידכם] falls on you like a gale
 (Prov. 1:27; trans.
 according to R.B.Y.
 Scott, AB, 18, ad loc.)

...ויפלו עלי ארהות אידם...
 כפרץ רחב יאתיו תחת שאה התגלגלו...

160. In reference to Isarel: Jer. 18:17; Ezek. 35:5; Obad. 13(3x).
 Egypt: Jer. 46:21. Moab: Jer. 48:16; Edom: 48:8. Kedar: 49:32.

161. The vocable פִּיד used in parallelism to אִיד (Prov. 24:22) is not clear and the other parallel vocable נֶכֶר (Job 31:3; Obad. 12) merely adds a notion of a strange occurrence. Cf. Isa. 28:21.

They¹⁶² come upon me as a wide breaking in of waters¹⁶³
Amid¹⁶⁴ a tempest they roll on.

(KJV. Job 30:12,14)

כִּנְחָה קָדִים אֶפִּיעַם לִפְנֵי אֲרִיב עֶדְף וְלֹא פָנִים
אֲרֹאם בְּיוֹם אִידֵם

Like a wind from the east I will drive them before
the foe. My back and not my face I will show them on
their day of disaster [בְּיוֹם אִידֵם]

(Jer. 18:17)

The "wind from the east" in biblical contexts is not merely a
natural phenomenon but is considered a direct agent of the Lord,¹⁶⁵ usu-
ally in a punitive capacity:

יָבֹא קָדִים רוּחַ ה' מִמִּדְבָּר עֲלֶיהָ
וְיִבֹשׁ מְקוֹרֶיהָ מִחֶרֶב מַעֲיֵנֶהּ הוּא יִשְׁסֶה אֶרֶץ כָּל כְּלֵי חַמְדָּהּ

The east wind the wind of the Lord shall come
from the desert and his spring shall become dry
and his fountain shall be dried up, he shall
spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels.

(Hos. 13:15)

הִגָּה בְּרוּחוֹ הַקָּשָׁה בְּיוֹם קָדִים

He removed them with his fierce blast in the day
of the east wind.

(1 Sam. 27:8)

A similar notion of a destructive storm seems to be implied in Deut. 32:

162. In these passages the wicked act as divine agents.

163. For this rendition of פָּרַץ cf. 2 Sam. 5:20 = 1 Chr. 14:11; Job 28:4; Jud. 5:17.

164. Trans. according to Pope.

165. Note also the alternation between the prose version of the crossing of the Reed Sea which has רוּחַ קָדִים (Exod. 14:21) and the poetic version which has רוּחַ אֶפֶס (Exod. 15:8). Similarly in Num. 11:31 it is the "divine wind" which brings the quail versus Ps. 78:26 where the "east wind" is referred to in the same context.

34-35 -

הלא הוא כמס עמדי
 חתום בארצותי
 לי נקם ושלם
 לעת תמוט רגלם
 כי קרוב יום אידם

Is this not stored up with me
 Sealed up in my storehouses
 For the day¹⁶⁶ of vindication and requital
 For the time when their feet will slip
 For the day of their calamity is at hand.

The heavenly storehouse is attested as holding the elements, especially the winds (Jer. 10:13 = 51:17; Ps. 135:7) in store for a time of divine punishment. At the appointed time of judgment, the divine storehouse opens, freeing the Lord's agents to carry out His punishment:

פתח ה' את ארצו ויצא את כלי זעמו

The Lord has opened his armory and brought out
 the weapons of his wrath.

(Jer. 30:25)

The אִיד - catastrophe in Deut. 32:34-35 may therefore refer to a storm, a notion further conveyed by the results of the onslaught:

Like a wind from the east I will drive them
 before the foe.

(Jer. 18:17)

To the winds I will scatter these clipped
 temple men.

(Jer. 49:32)

They [the wicked] became as straw in the wind
 Like chaff the storm snatches away.

(Job 21:18)

166. Reading ליום with LXX.

Dispelling my dignity like a wind.

(Job 30:15)

You lift me up and mount me on the wind
You toss me about with a tempest.

(Job 30:22)

The divine rage that induces the אֵי - catastrophe, in accord with the storm motif, is termed אַף - 'anger' (Job 21:17), שֹׁאֵף - 'welling up' (Job 31:23), and עֲבִירָה - 'over-flow,' 'outburst of fury' (Job 21:30).

Another feature of the אֵי - catastrophe also in accord with the nature of a storm is the onrush of waters. Thus, Job describes the onslaught of אֵי: "They came upon me as a wide breaking in of waters" (Job 30:14; KJV) and the poet of the Royal Psalm of Thanksgiving describes as his personal אֵי his being immersed in "many waters" - a concept that has been discussed above. Finally, a number of recurrent images which are employed to describe the initial stage of the impending catastrophe may also, by implication, refer to a storm, namely, "cord/s," "shackles," "bridle," and various forms of traps.

כִּי יִתְּרוּ פֶתַח וַיַּעֲנֵנִי וְרֶסֶן מִפְּנֵי שִׁלְחָו

His [Q = my] cord he opened and shackled¹⁶⁷ me with
and the bridle they cast on¹⁶⁸ to my face.

(Job 30:11)

The Ketib and Qere versions differ on whether Job's punishment is to be attributed to God (K) or to his agents, the wicked (Q). The Q has the

167. For this meaning of the verb עָנָה see p. 137.

168. For this meaning of the particle 'מ in Hebrew see N. Sarna, "The Interchange of the Prepositions Beth and Min in Biblical Hebrew," *JBL* 78 (1959) 310-16. For רֶסֶן in the context of a storm see Isa. 30:28.

support of biblical passages in which the trap set for the innocent is considered a typical scheme of the wicked (Ps. 35:8; Prov. 3:25), but the following passage indicates that the trap imagery is intrinsic to the אִיד-catastrophe as such:

כי שלח ברשת ברגליו ועל שבכה יתהלך
 ואחז בעקב פה יחזק עליו צמים
 ממון בארץ חבלו ומלכותו עלי נתיב
 סביב בעתוהו בלחות והפריצוהו לרגליו
 יהי רעב אונר ואִיד נכון לצלעו

For he sends(?) his feet into a net and he walks
 into a snare
 The trap shall grip his heel, the bands tighten on him
 The snare is laid for him in the ground and a trap for
 him in the way
 Horrors frighten him on every side and chase him at
 his heels
 His strength is hunger bitten and calamity [אִיד] is
 ready for his rib.

(Job 18:7-12)

It should be noted that the 'snare' and the 'trap' are closely associated with the Mesopotamian storm deity *Enlil* = "Lord Storm." Commenting on *Enlil*, Jacobsen makes the following observations:¹⁶⁹

In the storm a brooding violence and destructiveness in Enlil finds expression...because Enlil is force, there lie hid in the dark depths of his soul both violence and wildness...suddenly and unpredictably the hidden violence in him may break forth...a scattering of all life and of all life's meaning. Therefore man can never be fully at ease with Enlil but feels a lurking fear which finds expression frequently in the hymns

What has he planned?...
 What is in my father's heart
 What is in Enlil's holy mind
 What has he planned against me
 in his holy mind?

169. *The Treasures of Darkness* (London: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 101.

A net he spread: the net of an enemy
A snare he set, the snare of an enemy....¹⁷⁰

In view of the well-attested trap imagery associated with the storm and the אִי-catastrophe, it seems that the LXX version of Job 21:17c which reads חבלים יחזיקום באפו - "cords are holding them [due to the Lord's] anger" is to be preferred to MT חבלים יחלק באפו - "cords [or lots] he portioned out in anger" which makes no clear sense in the context of the passage. The trap imagery may be further explained by the notion that the storm which underlies the אִי- catastrophe is envisaged as coming from all directions at once, as explicitly stated by Jeremiah:

מכל עבריו אביא את אידם נאם ה'

From all directions their doom I will bring sayeth
the Lord.

(Jer. 49:32)

In conclusion, אִי in the Bible denotes a catastrophe which amounts to total destruction and which commonly manifests itself in the form of an engulfing storm, occasionally accompanied by an onrush of waters. In Wisdom and Psalmodic Literature the אִי always pertains to the fate of an individual and is commonly understood as a divine punitive measure which strikes without warning. The notion of divine premeditation in bringing about the אִי-catastrophe, which is implied in some¹⁷¹ of the Wisdom texts, is underscored in Deut. 32:35 and late prophecy where the אִי-catastrophe becomes a technical term for "a time of reckoning" יום פקודה,

170. KAR No. 375. II.1-6. *Before Philosophy* (1963), 197. Cf. Jacobsen.

172. Job 18:12; 31:2-3.

an historic turning point in which the fate of Israel or her enemies is determined.

It should be noted that there are additional passages in the book of Job which describe a storm as a measure of divine retribution for moral transgressions and which contain the same elements as an אֵיד-catastrophe although the term אֵיד is not explicitly mentioned in them:

תשיגהו כמים בלהות לילה גנבתו סופה
ישאחו קדים וילך ישעדהו ממקומו
וישלק עליו ולא יחמל מידו ברח יברח
ישפק עלימו כפימו וישק עליו ממקומו

Terrors take hold of him as waters
a tempest stealeth him away in the night
The east wind carrieth him away and he deporteth
and as a storm hurleth him out of his place
For God shall cast upon him and not spare
he would fain flee out of his hand
Men shall clap their hands at him
and shall hiss him out of his place.
(Job 27:20-23 KJV)

עלכן סביבותיך פחים ויבהלך פחד פתאם
או חשך לא תראה ושפעת מים תבסך

Therefore snares are round about thee
and sudden fear troubleth thee
A darkness that thou canst not see
and abundance of waters cover thee.
(Job 22:11)

In these clusters of images, identical to those of the אֵיד-catastrophe, the element of water is more pronounced than in the previously discussed אֵיד texts and it seems therefore that this element - though not always elaborated upon - forms an integral part of the stock imagery. This element of water associated with the אֵיד concept is similar in meaning and semantic range with Akkadian *edû*. This noun, contrary to Speiser's¹⁷²

172. E. A. Speiser, "'Ed in the Story of Creation," *BASOR* 140 (1955) 9-11, esp. p. 10; cf. M. Saebø, "Die hebräische Nomina 'ed und 'ed," *Studia Theologica* 24 (1970) 130-141 for a critical appreciation of Speiser's article.

interpretation, is defined in the Akkadian lexica as "onrush of water," "high water," "The phenomenon referred to by *edû* is a rare and catastrophic event, as against *mīlu*, the annual high water."¹⁷³ Von Soden similarly defines *edû* as "[bedrohliche] Wasserflut, Wogenschwall."¹⁷³ The Akkadian vocable, as indicated by the lexica, may refer also to a wind-tossed sea which hits a collective body such as a town or an individual.

What is the frame of reference of the *אֵל* concept? The last-mentioned body of waters *שַׁפְעַת מַיִם* (Job 22:11) recurs in Job 38:

Knowest thou the ordinances [Pope translates: "statutes,"
"rule"] of heaven
Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth
Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds that
abundance of waters [*שַׁפְעַת מַיִם*] may cover thee
Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go and
say unto thee, Here we are.

(Job 38:33-35. KJV)

While the context of Job 38:34 does not enable us to determine whether reference is made to the seasonal rains, as seems to be implied in "the rule of heaven" (v.33), or whether *שַׁפְעַת מַיִם* refers to a more stormy event, as suggested by the lightning in the following verse (35), it does help us to understand the frame of reference of the terrifying experience in Job 22:11, a flow of waters associated with storm clouds. The natural phenomenon of streaming waters emanating from storm clouds is variously attested in the Bible in a mythopoeic sense as part of a divine storm theophany, the aim and function of which seems to constitute the possible matrix of the *אֵל* concept under discussion. A short outline

173. CAD E. 35, 36.

174. AHw, 187.

of the former is therefore in order. In a number of poetic texts in the Bible, the theophany is described by means of imagery which, both in form and content, is sufficiently recurrent to have led scholars to recognize in it a specific literary "Gattung."¹⁷⁵ Psalm 18 v.8-16 = 2 Sam. 22:8-16 clearly represents the salient components of this storm theophany. Similar descriptions of theophanies are known from the Ancient Near East.¹⁷⁶ The most marked affinities with the biblical descriptions are attested in Babylonian and especially in Ugaritic literature. In Babylonian literature it is the Storm God *Adad* whose theophany is described in language that bears striking resemblance to the biblical descriptions.¹⁷⁷ But even more pronounced similarities may be found in the Hymns to *Marduk*.¹⁷⁸ *Marduk* assimilates features of other deities, among them that of a storm god,¹⁷⁹ in which capacity he appears in the cosmogonic battle with *Tiāmat*.¹⁸⁰ This myth may be of West Semitic origin.¹⁸¹ The closest relationship to

175. For a discussion of this Gattung and the pertinent texts see J. Jeremias, *Theophanie, Die Geschichte Einer Alttestamentliche Gattung*, WMANT 10 (1965); henceforth cited as "Theophanie."

176. See Jeremias, "Theophanie," pp. 73-90, for the pertinent examples.

177. E.g., the Adad Hymn IV R.28 No.2 translated by H. Zimmern, *Babylonische Hymnen und Gebete in Auswahl* (Leipzig, 1905), p. 12; cf. St. Langdon, *Babylonian Penitential Psalms* (Paris, 1927), p. 32.

178. Text - K.3351. E. E. Ebeling, *Die Akkadische Gebetserie "Handerhebung"* (Berlin, 1953), p. 94.

179. See Th. Jacobsen, *Before Philosophy*, pp. 189, 193-194.

180. Enūma eliš IV 39ff.

181. Jacobsen, "The Battle of Marduk and Tiamat," JAOS 88 (1968) 104-108.

biblical storm theophanies, however, is attested in Ugaritic literature in those texts which describe *Baʿl* as a storm god.¹⁸² Both in the extra-biblical and biblical storm theophanies, the fierce winds, storm clouds, thunder, bolts of lightning, hail, and the onrush of waters constitute the entourage of the deity, which he uses as weapons in his capacity as Divine Warrior. A well-known context in which the use of these weapons is described in Babylonia is the cosmogonic struggle of *Marduk* with the chaotic powers represented by *Tiāmat* and her helpers. Similarly in the Bible the concept of God as the Divine Warrior was originally associated with a cosmogonic battle against the chaotic powers represented by *Yamm*, also referred to by the designations of *Rahab*, *Tannīn* and *Leviathan*. In Ugarit, conflicts between *Baʿl* and *Môt*, and between *Baʿl* and *Yamm* or *Lôtān*, may similarly refer to a cosmogonic context. However, the concept of God as the Divine Warrior¹⁸³ in a cosmogonic context is not attested in the Bible as a 'self-sufficient' motif but is associated with other, mainly historical scenes in which the Divine Warrior is depicted as manifesting his prowess against human enemies. These themes range from the Exodus-Conquest theme through other Holy War themes of the early Israelite league. They are also attested in later historical events in which the Divine Warrior comes to the aid of his chosen King and/or nation, and finally culminate in proto-apocalyptic and apocalyptic war-theophanies

182. E.g., *CAD*.4 V:68-71; *CAD*.4 VII:25-48.

183. For a discussion of this concept in the Bible see F. M. Cross, 'The Divine Warrior in Israel's Early Cult,' *Biblical Motifs: Origins and Transfigurations*, ed. A. Altmann (Cambridge, Mass., 1966), pp. 11-30; *Canaanite Myth*, esp. pp. 91-11, 155-177; P. D. Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973).

against the foreign nations who, by oppressing Israel, have become His enemies.¹⁸⁴ Conversely, the motif of the Divine Warrior is attested in contexts in which the adversary is either the chosen nation itself or its leaders who, by reneging on His covenant, become His enemy or, on rare occasions, an individual who has transgressed His laws. As the center of gravity shifts from the cosmogonic to the social scene, the nature of the Divine Warrior becomes more complex and the aspect of God as Divine Judge becomes associated with the former concept and often moves to the foreground.¹⁸⁵ This underscoring of the idea of judgment in these contexts is due to the tendency of the biblical writer to view every tension and rift between the divine and social sphere in socio-ethical terms. It is in the דָּיָן -catastrophe that the divine mode of revelation in a storm and the notion of the Divine Judge is most poignantly combined. The דָּיָן -catastrophe therefore seems to be a facet of the storm theophany in which the notion of the Divine Judge, inherent in the literary Gattung, became crystallized. The inner relationship between the Divine Warrior motif and the דָּיָן concept may also be implied by another phenomenon. The chronological distribution of the concept of דָּיָן in the various books of

184. For a discussion of the various themes associated with the notion of the Divine Warrior see F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, esp. pp. 91-111. For a different emphasis concerning these themes and their association with the Divine Warrior concept see J. Jeremias, *Theophanie*, pp. 118-50.

185. This may be interpreted as a combination of two distinct concepts, originally associated with two different deities such as Ba'al the Storm God and El - a deity associated with the social sphere, offering decrees, entering in covenant with certain groups of people, and thus accounting for the element of judgment. On the other hand, it may be an extension of a mythic pattern in which the heroic figure which conquers the chaotic power and establishes an orderly cosmos is also responsible for establishing and guarding social order.

the Bible roughly coincides with that of the Divine Warrior motif: both are attested in early poetry and enjoy a resurgence of popularity in late biblical texts.¹⁸⁶ However, the centrality of the notion of God as Divine Judge in the אֵל concept brought about a number of modifications, both in the function of the storm as a divine tool and in its literary presentation.¹⁸⁷ The aim of the אֵל being a punitive rather than an

186. But for the occurrence of אֵל in Proverbs, which cannot be dated with any assurance, the אֵל concept is used in early poetry - Psalm 18 = 2 Sam. 22 and Deut. 32 of the tenth and ninth centuries BC, respectively - and again in late prophecy - Jer. chs. 18, 46, 48, 49, Ezek. 35, and Obad. - of the last part of the seventh and sixth centuries, and Job (chs. 18, 21, 30, 31), also presumably to be dated to the sixth century BC.

187. The closest ties of the אֵל concept with its proposed matrix, the storm theophany, is indicated in Deut. 32:35 where the divine (tools of) vengeance are described as "stored up," "sealed" in His heavenly treasures - the common habitat of the elements unleashed in a storm - until the opportune time for the אֵל. The vengeance of the Lord is then described in vivid colors as it materialized in a battle scene (vv.40-42). Job 36:27, כִּי יִגְרַע נִמְסִי מִיָּד יִזְקוּ מִטָּר לְאָדָם, "[He] diminishes drops of water, distills rain for his אֵל" seems to us to be another instance where the storm is closely associated with the concept under discussion. This verse is commonly associated with Gen. 2:6, the only other place in the Bible where אֵל is attested in a defective spelling. Most commentators understand אֵל in Gen. as a designation for "underground flow of water" on the analogy of Akkadian *id* (cf. E. A. Speiser, "'Ed in the Story of Creation," *BASOR* 140 [1955] 9-11). Job 36:27 is considered to constitute the cosmic counterpart of the subterranean אֵל and thus refer to the heavenly reservoir of water. But it should be noted that 50 MSS in Kennicott codices read אֵל for MT אֵל in this verse, and the plene spelling is also attested in the Talmud where this verse is cited (Pal. Tal., Shebi'it, IV, 10). Also from the point of view of context, אֵל is to be preferred since Job 36:27ff serves as an introduction to Job 37, where a detailed description of a storm is given. Moreover, v.27 contains a typical description of the way God prepares the downpour for an אֵל. v.27(b) deals with the process of distilling water which is a familiar phrase often associated with the clouds in the capacity of a sieve. Cf. S. I. Feigen, "The Heavenly Sieve," *JNES* 9 (1950) 40-43. Verse 27(a) describes the initial stage of a storm preparation, when the waters in the storm-cloud, which are otherwise described as "stored up," "sealed" or "bound" ["He binds the water in nimbus but the clouds burst not with the burden," Job 26:8; trans. Pope] are diminished at the appropriate time for an אֵל. Note also that in v.29ff these various elements are described as means to judge nations for good or evil.

aggressive military act, the divine weapons - the natural elements - are represented more sparingly and wielded more discriminately. As a result, the vividness of the presentation of the storm is toned down and the descriptive details recede. Consequently, the מלחמה -catastrophe tends on occasion to become an abstract designation for a day of visitation, a general term for a calamity.¹⁸⁸ But no linear development from the concrete to the abstract is attested, and one may find the מלחמה concept both in various degrees of abstraction and in its concrete manifestation as a storm used side by side within the writings of one prophet.¹⁸⁹ There are rather various modes or stages of adaptation. The biblical poet who inserted the Divine Warrior motif into the context of a Royal Psalm of Thanksgiving (2 Sam. 22:8-16 = Ps. 18:8-16) left the storm imagery intact in all its pristine force. But since the divine struggle was used as a frame of reference for divine omnipotence in a social rather than a cosmological context, and the composite text¹⁹⁰ of the psalm no longer focused on the all-out contest of power for dominion but rather on divine chastisement of the defiant, elaborate insistence on the discriminate nature of God in His dealings with His adherents and adversaries was appended (vv.22-29) to the storm theophany. Thus, by implication, the devastating divine force manifested in the storm is balanced, and an appropriate

188. Jer. 48:16, 49:8; Ezek. 35:5; Prov. 17:5, 27:10; Job 31:3, 23; Obad. 13.

189. Cf. Jer. 18:17 to Jer. 48:16, 49:8, 49:32.

190. 2 Sam. 22:8-16 = Ps. 18:8-16 may be an independent poetic composition secondarily introduced into the psalm. Cf. Jeremias, *Theophanie*, pp. 3-4, 129; F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, esp. p. 158.

background is created for the poet's succor by a just God at the time of his נִיֵּן . In other biblical texts of similar composite nature, this tendency is made more explicit by reference to a discriminate use of the storm weapons themselves, even in the climax of the storm.¹⁹¹ Another modification brought about by the same tendency results, as has been observed above, in a restricted representation of the storm elements. In its original setting, the unleashed power of a storm is most effective in a concerted onslaught of its various elements which are used by the Divine Warrior to intimidate his enemies to the point of petrifying fear. The authors of the composite judgment scene, however, while they do employ the mode of a storm to convey both the intensity of the divine wrath and the unrelenting nature of His punishment, are also interested in evoking an edifying experience and may therefore content themselves with a description of the effects of one storm element only, while other storm elements are merely hinted at or not mentioned at all. Thus, they focus on the blast of the wind only in occasional נִיֵּן texts,¹⁹² or on the element of lightning and fire in a related punitive storm theophany.¹⁹³ A similar case in point, and one which was at the center of our field of interest, concerned the element of water.

191. E.g., Nah. 1:2(b), 3(2), 7, 8; Hab. 3:13; Ps. 144:6.

192. Jer. 18:17; Prov. 1:27.

193. Isa. 66:15; Ps. 50:3.

Chapter 4

THE DESCRIPTIVE DETAILS OF SHEOL

The descriptive details of Sheol found in the Bible are few, and present an incomplete mental image. Their scantiness is most conspicuous when compared with the descriptions found in Egyptian and Babylonian literature. In Egypt, the concept of the Realm of the Dead became so intricate that a special genre of mortuary literature had to be devised to serve as 'guides to the beyond.' These 'guides' contain illustrations, maps, and ground-plans to help the dead along the mazes and labyrinths of the underworld.¹ The Babylonian descriptions of the underworld are less detailed than those of the Egyptians, but nevertheless convey a vivid image of the physical and spiritual conditions prevailing there.² By comparison, the

1. For literature, see H. Grapow, "Jenseitsführer," in B. Spuler, *Handbuch der Orientalistik* (Leiden, 1952), I₂; and J. Kees, *Totenglauben und Jenseitsvorstellungen der alten Ägypter* (Berlin, 1956₂), 287-302. Additional descriptive details may be found in C. E. Sander-Hansen, *Der Begriff des Todes bei den Ägyptern* (Kopenhagen, 1942); S. Morenz, "Alt-ägyptischer Totenglaube im Rahmen der Struktur ägyptischer Religion," *Forschungen und Fortschritte*, 41. Heft 2, 48-54; J. Zandee, *Death as an Enemy according to Ancient Egyptian Conceptions* (Leiden, 1960); E. Hornung, *Altägyptische Höllenvorstellung* (Berlin, 1968). See also the paragraph "Mortuary Texts: Life after Death," in *ANET*, pp. 32-36, trans. J. A. Wilson.

2. For the Babylonian concept of the netherworld see E. Ebeling, *Tod und Leben nach der Vorstellungen der Babylonier* (Berlin & Leipzig, 1931); A. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels* (Chicago/London, 1963₄); S. N. Kramer, "Death and Netherworld according to the Sumerians," *Iraq* 22 (1960) 59-68; A. Shaffer, *Sumerian Sources of Tablet XII of the Epic of Gilgamesh* (dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1963); K. Tallqvist, *Sumerisch-akkadische Namen der Totenwelt* (Helsinki, 1934); T. Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*.

Pertinent texts from Sumerian literature are: "The Death of Gilgamesh," "Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld," *ANET* 50-57, trans. S. N. Kramer. Also: S. N. Kramer, *Two Elegies in a Pushkin Museum Tablet*

biblical Sheol is vague and insubstantial. As in other ancient cultures, its location in space may be inferred from its juxtaposition to other cosmic entities: opposite the sky,³ "lower than the earth,"⁴ "in the heart of the seas" (Jon. 2:4). But a more specific site is not mentioned. In contrast to other ancient cultures in which 'openings' to the underworld are associated with major cult centers or linked to sites of extraordinary natural phenomena, "the mouth of Sheol"⁵ remains unanchored, the geography and topography of Sheol unknown.⁶

In a paragraph on the World of the Dead, Pedersen relates the concept of Sheol to three "non-worlds"⁷ - the grave, the desert land, and the ocean.⁸ This view exerted a formative influence on subsequent scholars

(Moscow: Oriental Literature Publishing House, 1960). Akkadian pertinent texts are: "Nergal and Ereshkigal," trans. E. A. Speiser; "Nergal and Ereshkigal - Additions," trans. A. K. Grayson, *ANET*, 103-104, 507-512, respectively; "Descent of Ishtar to the Netherworld," "A Vision of the Nether World," trans. E. A. Speiser, *ANET*, 106-109, 109-110, respectively. In the following discussion the Mesopotamian parallels to biblical concepts will be referred to as *ANET* by page and line.

3. See pp. 39-41, above.

4. Isa. 57:9, and pp. 30-31, above.

5. See pp. 22-24, above.

5. The קַצְבֵּי הָהָרִים in Jon. 2:7, commonly translated "bottom of the mountains" (ICC) or "roots of the mountains" (RSV) are not topographical references (see Qimche's commentary equating קַצְבֵּי with קֶץ, and 1 King. 6:24-25; also Targum Jonathan 'לַעֲקֹרֵי טוֹרֵי'א) - they are but a measure of Sheol's depth. According to the ancients, the primordial mountains, in the midst of the sea, represented the very foundations of the cosmos; cf. Pss. 18:8, 46:3.

7. J. Pedersen, *Israel Its Life and Culture*, I-II (London, 1964), 5th ed., p. 464.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 462-463.

and was reiterated in practically every treatise dealing with the subject. Pedersen's premise, however, does not bear up under close examination. While the concept of the underworld is associated both in Egyptian and in Babylonian cultures with the desert,⁹ there is not a single verse in the Bible that connects Sheol proper with this realm. As for the grave, Pedersen claims "Sheol is the entirety into which all graves are merged. Where there is grave there is Sheol and where there is Sheol there is grave...the 'Ur' grave is Sheol."¹⁰ This contention, too, cannot be substantiated, for all the author's (somewhat bedazzling) phraseology. Here, again, Pedersen may have been influenced by extra-biblical beliefs. In ancient Egypt, the grave formed a veritable continuum with the underworld,¹¹ and in Mesopotamian culture the grave was sometimes thought to constitute an access to the underworld, since the spirits of the dead and the demons were believed to emerge from it.¹² But in the Bible the concept of the grave and of Sheol or its semantic equivalents were consistently kept apart.¹³ It is only in Ezekiel (32:17-32) that the concepts of Sheol and grave merge in a visionary description. But this description cannot be considered normative for biblical belief since the prophet describes a

9. For the Egyptian culture see Zondee, *Death as an Enemy*, pp. 92-93; for Mesopotamian culture: Tallqvist, *Namen der Totenwelt*, pp. 17-22.

10. Pedersen, *op. cit.*, p. 462.

11. See H. Bonnet, *Reallexikon der ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte* (1952), 257-260.

12. Tallqvist, *Namen der Totenwelt*, 2. The equation between netherworld and grave appears only in Syllabars and the author doubts whether they reflect actual usage.

13. See pp. 70-71 above.

vision of a unique, catastrophic event in which all the kings who had previously spread terror "in the land of the living" are slain and descend to Sheol with their entourages, where they now dwell surrounded by their burials(?) (see discussion on pp. 77, 83-85). Beside Ezekiel there is an additional verse (Ps. 88:5) which also refers to the slain and which is mentioned in sequence with Sheol. Given the fact that these concepts basically belong to a similar frame of reference, it is remarkable how consistently the Bible keeps them apart, and no concept of 'Ur' grave is attested in the Bible. Finally, while it is true that the ocean, especially as representing the primeval waters, is considered also as the realm of Sheol, we indicated above that not all the water images associated with Sheol were meant to reflect a chaotic nature ascribed to Sheol. The passage in Ezekiel 26:19-20, considered by Pedersen as the prime example of his contention, where all three "non-worlds" allegedly merge to form the concept of Sheol, is in fact conditioned by the specific topic described there. The "many waters" conjured up to destroy Tyre are a reversal of the previous state (v.17): "...inhabited of sea-faring men, the renowned city, which wast strong in the sea, she and her inhabitants, which cause their terror to be on all that haunt it." And to underscore her utter destruction the prophet uses a simile "like eternal ruins" and not because desolation or ruins are indicative of Sheol.

There are but two structural elements associated with Sheol, "gates of Sheol" (Isa, 38:10)¹⁴ and "bars"¹⁵ (in a sequence with Sheol; Jon.

14. Cf. שַׁעַר מוֹת - 'gates of death' Pss. 9:14, 107:18; Job 38:17. Gates in connection with the underworld are variously attested. For the Egyptian concept see J. Zondee, *Death as an Enemy*, pp. 114-125; for the

2:4-7). These bare details do not add up to the "house," "city" or "country" common to the netherworld concepts of the neighboring countries.¹⁶

Nor does "life" in Sheol bear any semblance to life on earth. The Egyptian mortuary literature often describes the "land of eternity" as an ideal place, where life's pleasures abound and none of its imperfections prevail. In Babylonian literature the netherworld is on occasion described as resembling life in a city-state with elaborate social stratification and a body of officials to run the complex social organization. It is a place teeming with boisterous life, a place where feasts are prepared for the gods, bread is baked, oxen slaughtered, beer brewed, and where the incidental conversation of the gods among themselves enlivens the whole scene and makes it a familiar clime.¹⁷

In Sheol, the analogy to life on earth appears in only one verse

Mesopotamian concept see *ANET* 54 1.73, 55 1.116 and parallels, 103 1.51f., 107 1.11 and parallels, 508 1.18.

15. בְּדֵי שְׁאוֹל in Job 17:16a rendered by RSV "bars of Sheol" is probably a contraction of בְּיָד - 'in the hands (power) of.' See M. H. Pope, "Job," *AB* 15, 122, and bibliography cited there for Ugaritic parallels.

16. For the concept of the netherworld as a house, see K. Tallqvist, *Namen der Toterwelt*, pp. 7, 25, 34-37; *ANET* 104 1.4-5, 7-9; 107 1.7-9. All the biblical references adduced by Tromp, in which בֵּית allegedly refers to the netherworld, speak of the tomb and not of the netherworld. The combination בֵּית עוֹלָם (Eccl. 12:5), which is also found in Palmyrene, Phoenician, Aramaic, and Syriac, refers to the tomb as "family grave." See N. J. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions*, pp. 77-79, and bibliography cited. In fact, Job 17:13 indicates that Sheol was not thought of as a house. For the netherworld as a city in Ugarit see CTA 4 VIII 1.11 and p. 14 above. For Mesopotamia - Tallqvist, *op. cit.*, p. 15; A. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic*, pp. 172-173 and note 123. Tromp, though featuring a paragraph describing Sheol as a "city" adduces not a single biblical verse in which Sheol is so described (*ibid.*, pp. 152-156). For the netherworld as country, see Tallqvist, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-17; *ANET* 54 1.82; 107 1.1, 12, 41.

17. See *ANET*, pp. 507ff.

(Isa. 14:9), where kings are described as rising from their thrones, and may be regarded as vestigial at best. The biblical narrator is more anxious to convey the lethargy of Sheol:

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with
your might; for there is no work or thought or
knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are
going.

[Ecc1. 9:10]

This characteristic of Sheol is also reflected by its synonyms דומה - '[land of] silence',¹⁸ ארץ נשיה - 'land of oblivion' (Ps. 88:13), and אבדון - '[place of] perdition'.¹⁹ Here the meaning 'fullness of life' as the Israelites saw it, reflected in the special relationship with God, is denied:

For there is no praise of You among the dead;
in Sheol, who can acclaim You?

[Ps. 6:6]

What is to be gained from my death,
from my descent into the pit?
can dust praise You?
can it declare Your faithfulness?

[Ps. 30:10]

Do You work wonders for the dead?
do the shades rise to praise You?
is Your faithful care recounted in the grave,
Your constancy in the place of perdition?
are Your wonders made known in the underworld
[lit. 'darkness'],
Your beneficent deeds in the land of oblivion?

[Ps. 88:11-13]

18. Ps. 31:18; cf. Pss. 94:17, 115:17. For the netherworld as a domain of silence, see Zandee, *op. cit.*, 93-94; E. Hornung, *Höllenvorstellungen*, p. 15, n.1.

19. Prov. 15:11 and probably also 27:20; Ps. 88:12; Job 26:6, 28:22, 31:12.

For it is not Sheol that praises You,
 not [the land of] Death that extols You;
 nor do they who descend into the pit
 hope for Your grace;
 the living, only the living
 give thanks to You....

[Isa. 38:18-19; trans. JPS]

But not only the positive aspects of Sheol are denied; the negative aspects are also held at bay. Of the physical constituents of Sheol: dust, darkness, and water, also found in extra-biblical concepts of the netherworld²⁰ - the first is not elaborated upon and the two others are uniquely treated. In the Bible, as in extra-biblical sources, darkness is part of the environment of the dead - "My foe...made me dwell in darkness like those long dead" (Ps. 143:3//Thren. 3:6).²¹ It is opposed to light, ergo, "life" and of chaotic nature.²² But at this point the Bible differs, and is unique in its stand on the mythological powers allotted

20. For the dust as an element of the netherworld see *ANET* 53 1.45 and parallel lines; 107 1.8, 11. A. Shaffer, *Sumerian Sources of Tablet XII of the Epic of Gilgamesh* (English trans. p. 166 1.95). The dust is associated with Sheol in Job 17:16 and appears in association with the dead in Isa. 26:19; Pss. 7:6, 22:30; Job 21:26, and probably also 40:13; Dan. 12:2. For discussion see p. 35 and note 73 above. For darkness in Egyptian mortuary literature see Zandee, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-91; Sander-Hansen, *Der Begriff des Todes*, pp. 13-14; for Mesopotamia - *ANET* 50 1.27; 107 11.4, 7, 9, 39.

21. Cf. Pss. 88:7,13, 139:8-12; Job 10:21, 38:17.

22. The life = light equation is variously attested in the Bible, e.g., Ps. 56:14; Job 3:20, 33:28, and common also to other cultures. For elaboration on the concept of light and darkness in the Bible see S. Aalen, *Die Begriffe "Licht" und "Finsterniss" im Alten Testament, im Spätjudentum und in Rabbinismus* (Oslo, 1951). For Mesopotamian culture: W. von Soden, "Licht und Finsterness in der sumerischen und babylonisch-assyrischen Religion," *Studium Generale* 13 (1960) 647-653. The Egyptian concepts of light and darkness are treated by E. Hornung, "Licht und Finsterness in der Vorstellungswelt Altägyptens," *Studium Generale* 18 (1965) 73-83, and in "Chaotische Bereiche in der geordneten Welt," *ZÄS* 81 (1956) 28-32.

darkness. Great pains were taken to divest it of its potency. Fragmentized into night (Gen. 1:4-5, 18), it becomes a tool of God, at His command (Exod. 10:21; Amos 8:9; Ps. 104:20). No longer independent, it is his creation (Isa. 45:7) and permeated by Him (Ps. 139:12). The end result is darkness de-mythologized and reduced to a mere physical state (Job 10:21). Although given a specific domain (Job 38:19), it can no longer serve as a haunt for demons and alien powers, so abundant in extra-biblical and post-biblical descriptions. By association, and uniquely so, biblical Sheol (except for one instance)²³ is also bereft of demonic powers. On the other hand, Sheol is itself personified (Isa. 14:9) and bears demonic features. The gaping maw, voracious appetite, and grasping hands of Sheol have been discussed above, and the similarity of these features to those of Ugaritic Môt indicated.²⁴ Of similar forcefulness and aggressive power are the waters associated with Sheol.²⁵

The cords/breakers of Death²⁷ חבלֵי מוֹת/משַׁבְּרֵי מוֹת²⁶ אֶפְרֹנִי
encompassed me

23. Hosea 13:14. On the meaning of דָּבַר and קֶטֶב see J. Blau,

24. See pp. 22-25 above.

25. The text of 2 Sam. 22 seems to have preserved more archaic orthographic and linguistic features. For discussion as well as the above-cited translation see F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman, *Studies in Ancient Yahwistic Poetry* (Montana, 1975), pp. 125-130, 141-144.

26. The verb אֶפַּף, which in the Bible is attested to only in poetic sections (Jon. 2:6, Pss. 40:13, 116:3), is rendered according to context as connoting an encircling movement. The Mari texts, in which this verb is apparently attested to (see CAD A II.166; AHW 57) are too fragmentary to afford additional information.

27. Cross-Freedman prefer the 2 Sam. 22 version of 'breakers' in v.5 to 'cords' in Ps. 18. But see Ps. 116:3 and the support of the Septuagint as well as an Akkadian parallel to be discussed below.

The torrents of Belial over-
whelmed me

ונהלי בליעל יבעתוני

The cords of Sheol surrounded me

זבלי שאול סבבוני

The traps of Death confronted me

קדמוני מקשי מות

[Ps. 18:5,6//2 Sam. 22:5,6]

In Ps. 18 the "cords of Death" are paralleled by the "torrents of Belial" - lit. "[a place from which] none arises." These torrents seem to belong to the category of underworld rivers whose name, indicative of their nature, reflects also the character of the real to which they belong. This biblical river is reminiscent of the Mesopotamian underworld river *i7-kur-ra*, defined as "man consuming river."²⁸ In Ps. 116:3 similar imagery to that of Ps. 18//2 Sam. 22 occurs:

The bonds of death encompassed me

אפפוני הבלי מות

The torments(?) of Sheol overtook me

ומצרי שאול מצאוני

The "cords of Death" are reminiscent of the "snares of death"²⁹ and the "nets" and various "fetters" associated with death.³⁰ In view of these items of hunting gear associated with death, it is probably that מצרי (v.3) should be rendered according to Akkadian *ṣerretu* - 'nose-rope, halter, lead rope (to direct an animal or a prisoner).'³¹ This rendition seems preferable to "straits of Sheol" (ICC) or "pangs of Sheol" (RSV),

28. H. Behrens, *Enlil und Ninlil*. Studia Pohl. Series Maior (Rome, 1978), pp. 216 1.93, 217 1.94, trans. p. 224, discussion pp. 192-195. Note also the names of the ferryman of the underworld rivers: "Kill do not Spare," (Kensky, *Ordeal*, p. 583), and "Remove Hastily" (ANET 109).

29. Prov. 13:14, 14:27.

30. Eccl. 7:26.

31. CAD S, pp. 134-135.

for it balances חבלי מות in the same verse, agrees better with the concrete connotation of the verb מצא, and is aptly counterbalanced by the description of the deliverance: פתחת מוסרי - "You opened my fetters" (v.16) (lit. 'neckstock'). This term also constitutes a semantic equivalent to חבלי שאול (Ps. 18:6//2 Sam. 22:6) and is in accord with hunting images associated with death and its personified realm. The use of this specific imagery in connection with death is not unique to Israelite culture, but recurs quite often in ancient Near Eastern texts when the writers wished to convey the sly onslaught of death's attack or the cunning of his demoniacal agents. In Akkadian literature the decree of Nergal, God of war and pestilence, traps his victims in a net.³² An Egyptian spell clearly conveys this aspect:³³

Spell in order to escape the net. Oh catcher,
who catches. O catcher, who catches his prey...
do not catch me with this net of your...do not
trap me in your snares...the floats of which
reach heaven and the weights to the earth.

But it should be noted that since entrapment in nets and snares affords no escape, they are often used as tools by gods in judicial capacities:³⁴

He who [has transgressed] the bounds of Shamash...
may the snare, the curse of Shamash overthrow him

32. J. Bollenrücher, *Gebet und Hymnen an Nergal* (Leipzig, 1904), 36. For a recent discussion of the net-trapping motif in Akkadian and biblical literature see L. Wächter, *Der Tod im Alten Testament* (Stuttgart, 1967), 35-44. See especially Eccl. 7:26.

33. E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Dead* (London, 1898), 153A. For elaboration see J. Zandee, *Death as an Enemy*, 21-24, 226-234.

34. Etana, Neo-Assyrian Version C₂ 1.12,14 and C₃ 1.10, respectively; trans. E. A. Speiser, *ANET*, 116 a & b.

and catch him....Verily O Shamash
[wide earth]. They snare is the [far away] sky.

We cited above the imagery that intended to convey the role of justice carried out by the Ekur temple in designating it "mighty pillory of the cosmos," "a snare," "a finely wrought net which captures people as booty."³⁵ In the Bible, too, God uses the net and snare especially in punishing the violators of his covenant³⁶ as well as in the course of more general judicial procedure:

You have tried us, O God, refining us, as one refines silver. You have caught us in a net, caught us in trammels.³⁷ You have let men ride over us, we have endured fire and water.

[Ps. 66:10-12]

We may therefore ask whether the "snares of Sheol" made tangible by engulfing waters are not meant to convey an additional aspect - namely, that of divine judgment. That this may indeed be the case is promoted by the following considerations. A Babylonian parallel to the imagery used in Ps. 18//2 Sam. 22 and Ps. 116 which also employs similar terminology suggests that this idea was associated with the image of fetters:

Out of Your judgment the fetters of fierce
death are spread out.³⁸

35. Text published by Å. Sjöberg in *AfO*.24 (1974) 19-46. Translation followed here is by T. S. Frymer, "The Nergal-Hymn and Ekur Prison," *JESHO* 20 (1977) 78-79, esp. p. 89.

36. Isa. 8:14-15. Especially Ezek. 12:13, 17:19-20, Cf. Hos. 7:12; Isa. 24:16-18. For use of the net in curses against treaty violation see D. Hillers, *Treaty Curses*,

37. This rendition of מַרְקָה by JPS is based on Arabic عَوْق. See Lane I.5.2198f.

38. E. Ebeling, "Beschwörung gegen den Feind und den bösen Blick

But this idea, encountered sporadically in the Babylonian culture, was central to biblical faith. We indicated above that in biblical faith Sheol assumes its aggressive power mainly in the context of divine punishment and its potency is imparted at His bidding. We also noticed that the mortal plight of the psalmist and plea for rescue from the engulfing waters were clearly set within a context of divine retributive justice. It seems, therefore, that the water images which were meant to convey a religious ordeal and those which seem to be part of the underworlds scenery coalesce in conveying divine judgment. At least this idea is a constituent part of their meaning. A similar case of reinterpretation may be related to biblical underworld river בליעל (2 Sam. 22:5; Ps. 18:5). A similar river is referred to in the Babylonian Address of Marduk to the Demons: "May the stream (?) of the great underworld hold you back" (W. G. Lambert, *Afo*, 17, p. 117, 1.32). The concept of בליעל in biblical writing was extended to a type of sinner whose grave offense, as will be discussed below, prevents him from being rescued from the underworld.

aus dem Zweistromlande," *ArOr* 17/1 (1949) 183. For discussion: G. R. Castellino, "Mesopotamian Parallels to Some Passages of the Psalms," *Festschrift W. Zimmerli* (Göttingen, 1977), 60-62.

Chapter 5

THE DENIZENS OF SHEOL AND THE CONCEPT OF 'EVIL DEATH'

The normative view concerning the nature of Sheol in treatises dealing with the subject maintains that "Sheol is the shadowy insubstantial underworld, the destination of all, good and bad without discrimination."¹ This premise is based on those poetic sections in which Sheol is paralleled by death.² Considering the fact that Sheol is mentioned far more often in other contexts with more specific intent, such generalization is not justified. Actually, the discrepancy between this generalization and the scanty evidence supporting it did not elude the scholars. This led some to assume that the concept of Sheol had been transformed in its development, though this was never traced. Others formulated statements in what amounts to contradictory terms. Both tendencies are illustrated in the following examples:

Viewed from the world of light all the deceased form a common realm because they are essentially subject to the same conditions. This common realm the Israelites call Sheol or the netherworld....Everyone who dies goes to Sheol.³

The darkness...abides with sinners and men of evil, for they themselves belong to the world of Sheol. 'The sinners shall return into Sheol' it is said (Ps. 9:18) for there they belong. According as Sheol more and

1. J. Gray, "I and II Kings," *OTL*. (Great Britain, 1964), 99.

2. See Introduction, p. ii, note 3.

3. J. Pedersen, *Israel. Its Life and Culture*, Vol. II (London, 1964), pp. 460, 461.

more becomes the concentration of evil, all sin must tend toward Sheol, because it belongs to its world.⁴

The common Hebrew designation for the place of the dead is Sheol....It denotes the subterranean spirit world, the grave, the state or condition of death, and the brink of death or the like.⁵

And contrarily:

And as regards Sheol in particular, we have evidence that it, in the signification of the subterranean realm of the spirits, applies to the habitation of the sould of the wicked only (Ps. 49). Contrariwise, there is no passage which proves that Sheol was ever employed as a designation for the gathering place of the departed spirits of the godly.⁶

Obviously, reappraisal of the biblical texts is in order.

Indeed, who are the denizens of Sheol? Given the wide range of literary forms and diverse contexts in which Sheol appears, the approach must be a quantitative one.

Four times does the Bible mention a disciplined way of life as counterparallel to being remanded to Sheol.⁷ Explicitly it is ten times stated that the wicked are remanded to Sheol,⁸ and may be so inferred

4. *Ibid.*, p. 465.

5. A. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*. (Chicago, 1965), p. 173.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 184.

7. Ps. 16:10-11; Prov. 9:3-15, 15:24, 23:13; probably also in 5:6.

8. Num. 16:21-26, 30; Hos. 13:12-14; Isa. 5:8-14, 14:5-9; Ezek. 32:27; Pss. 9:18, 31:18, 49:15, 55:16; Job 21:7-13; probably also Job 24:19.

eight more times.⁹ Eighteen times is it explicitly mentioned that those who descend to Sheol die a violent death, by the sword,¹⁰ and three more times they die "in blood."¹¹ In four instances those who are remanded to Sheol descend there alive.¹² Five times severe affliction is the cause.¹³ Twice intense anguish is mentioned,¹⁴ once mourning¹⁵ and twice 'evil' appears.¹⁶ In all instances the common denominator is premature death.

In previous sections we indicated that the semantic equivalents of Sheol, שְׁחַד and בֹּרַר, were also associated with premature death, its causes similar to those specified above.¹⁷ This, then, is not the common fate of all mankind.

Additional support for this contention may be adduced upon analysis of the notion of 'evil death' held by ancient man. The Ancients acquiesced in death as "the way of all the earth" (Jos. 23:14; 1 King. 2:2),

9. Pss. 18:18, 49:15-16; Isa. 38:18; Jon. 2:4; Job 14:13; Prov. 5:5, 7:27, 9:18.

10. Isa. 14:19; Ezek. 31:17,18, 32:20,21,22,23,24,25,26,28,29(2x), 31; Prov. 7:21; Ps. 88:4-6.

11. 1 King. 2:9; Ps. 30:4-10; Prov. 1:12.

12. Num. 16:29; Isa. 5:14; Ps. 55:16; Prov. 1:12.

13. Isa. 38:10,11; Pss. 6:3-4, 30:3, 31:8, 88:16-17.

14. Gen. 42:38, 44:31.

15. Gen. 37:35.

16. Gen. 44:29, Ps. 88:4.

17. We indicated previously that out of 20 instances (p. 51) in which שְׁחַד is mentioned, it is associated 19 times with premature death caused by divine punishment (pp. 60, 69, 70, 73). All 22 occurrences of בֹּרַר appear in such a context (pp. 74, 79, 83-86).

provided it occurred as the end of a life of full measure. This is conveyed by the biblical blessing "מספר ימיך אמלא," "I will fulfill the number of your days" (Exod. 23:26). It is also evident in the death of the patriarchs: "ויגוע וימת אברהם בשיבה/זקן ושבע ויאסף אל-עמיו" ^{טובה} often described as 'dying at a happy ripe age, old and full of years, he was gathered to his kin.'¹⁸ Obviously, the narrator considered this a harmonious end to a life come full circle, consummated upon saturation.

"The length of days" was predestined and of divine decree, according to both the ancient Israelites (Ps. 139:13-16) and their neighbors.¹⁹ Though fixed²⁰ and recorded in divine ledgers, a person's "length of days" was at times subject to change - extended (Isa. 38:5) or cut short.²¹ Such decisions, however, were not arbitrarily reached, for not only human destiny but also human deeds were recorded in the divine books:

Then those who feared the Lord spoke with one another;
the Lord heeded and heard them, and a book of remembrances
was written before Him of those who feared the Lord and
thought on His name....On the day when I act I will spare
them as a man who spares his son who serves him.
[Mal. 3:16,17b]²²

18. Gen. 25:8. Trans. according to E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, AB 1 (1964). This formulaic expression recurs in shorter form in Gen. 25:17, 35:29, 49:29,33; Num. 20:24, 27:13, 31:2; Deut. 32:50; Judg. 2:10, and will be discussed below.

19. For ancient Egyptian views see M. Morenz and D. Müller, *Untersuchungen zur Rolle des Schicksals in der ägyptischen Religion* (Berlin, 1960). Babylonian views will be discussed below.

20. Predestination is much more pronounced in post-biblical literature; cf. Jubilees 5:17.

21. Isa. 38:10-12; Pss. 89:46, 102:24,25.

22. Hezekiah substantiates his plea for reversal of the divine decree by claiming to have "walked before" Yahwe "in truth and wholeheartedly"

...but at that time your people shall be delivered,
everyone whose name shall be found written in the
book.

[Dan. 12:1]

Conversely, the sinners, but only the sinners, would be erased:

May they have no acquittal from Thee.
Let them be blotted out of the book of the living;
let them not be enrolled among the righteous.

[Ps. 69:27b,28; RSV]

Note also the dialogue between Moses and God:

But now if thou wilt forgive their sin - and if not,
blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou
has written. But the Lord said to Moses: Whoever
has sinned against me him will I blot out of my book.

[Exod. 32:32,33]

Obliteration from 'the book of the living'²³ was tantamount to being
"written in the netherworld" (Jer. 17:13). Both in Israel and in Mesopo-
tamia, divine bookkeeping was believed executed in the manner and pre-
cision of a court of law:²⁴

The court sat in judgment
and books were opened.

[Dan. 7:10b]

In the House of Dust...[lives] Ereshkigal,
Queen of the Netherworld [and Belit-]şeri,
recorder of the netherworld, kneels before her.

(Isa. 38:3), i.e., loyally; for which see M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, p. 76f.

23. Cf. also Ps. 109:13.

24. On the pervasive influence of this belief see E. A. Speiser, "Census and Ritual Expiation in Mari and Israel," in *Oriental and Biblical Studies* (Philadelphia, 1967), pp. 171-186, whence the above translation is taken.

[She holds a tablet] and reads out to her.

[Gilg. VII.4.49-52]

The Annunaki, the great gods, foregather.
Mammetum, maker of fate, with them the fates
decree. Death and life they determine. [But]
death its days are not revealed.

[Gilg. X.6.36-39]

To fit these rigid molds, sudden death had to be justified. Such death, both in Israel and Mesopotamia, was considered "not according to fate," "not according to the appointed day/time." In a Neo-Assyrian ritual this idea is thus conveyed:²⁵

The Annunaki who have fixed the boundaries [of the life] of NN now are leading him on the road to the Land of No Return, his personal god and goddess have disregarded his day and fate/natural death.

This same notion is expressed in the Historical Prism Inscription of Ashurbanipal:²⁶

On a day [lit.: days] not appointed by fate, death became hostile to him. Amid mourning he began to reach his end [and] seep away. His feet no longer stood in the land of the living [lit.: life]. That same year his life came to an end; he went to his dismal fate.

Similarly, the violent death of Ur-Namu, who died on the battlefield, is referred to as change of original fate:²⁷

An altered his holy word: Enlil deceitfully changed his fate decree.

25. E. Reiner, "Fortune Telling in Mesopotamia," *JNES* 19 (1960) trans. 26, Text 32. The variant trans. 'day and fate' is by M. Tsevat, "Studies in the Book of Samuel," *HUCA* 32 (1961) 200.

26. A. C. Piepkorn, *Historical Prism Inscriptions of Ashurbanipal I* (Chicago, 1933), Col. 4, 11. 55-58, pp. 58-59.

Hence the prayer to Nabu, the heavenly scribe:²⁸

On your unchangeable tablet which established the boundaries of heaven and earth, proclaim length of days for me, inscribe long life.

In the Bible, similar expressions are found which distinguish between 'timely' and 'untimely' death, but here the idea of retributive justice underlying the change of fate is somewhat more emphasized:

Behold, it is written before me:
'I will not keep silent but I will repay.'

[Isa. 65:6]

And David said, 'As the Lord lives the Lord will smite him; or his day shall come to die [יָמוֹר יָבוֹא]; or he shall go down into battle and perish.'

[1 Sam. 26:10]

Be not wicked overmuch, neither be a fool; why should you die before your time [בְּלֹא עֵתָךְ]?

[Ecc1. 7:17]

Note also אֲשֶׁר קִשְׁטוּ וְלֹא עָת - usually translated "snatched away before their time" (Job 22:16)²⁹ and בְּלֹא יוֹמָו - "not at his appointed day" (Job 15:32).

Particularly relevant to our study is the formulation of unnatural death in Num. 16:29,30:

אִם כְּמוֹת כָּל הָאָדָם יִמְתּוּן אֱלֹהִים וּפְקֻדָּתוֹ כָּל הָאָדָם יִפְקֹד
עֲלֵיהֶם לֹא ה' שְׁלַחְנִי וְאַתָּה בְּרִיָּאָה יִבְצָא ה' וּפְצַתָּהּ הָאָדָמָה
אֶת פִּיהָ וּבִלְעָה אֶתָּה וְאֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר לָהֶם וַיִּרְדּוּ חַיִּים שְׂאֵלָה
וַיִּדְעוּם כִּי נֹאצְרוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה אֶת ה'.

28. VAB. 4. 100 ii. 23-25, cited according to S. Paul, "Heavenly Tablets and the Book of Life," *JANESCU* 5 (1973) 346, and ns. 10 and 11 where additional sources are cited.

29. See J. C. Greenfield, "Scripture and Inscription: The Literary and Rhetorical Element in Some Early Phoenician Inscriptions," *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of W. F. Albright*, ed. H. Goedicke (Baltimore, 1971), p. 260 and notes 25, 26; henceforth cited as "Scripture."

If these men die the common death of all men, or if they are visited by the fate of all men, then the Lord has not sent me: But if the Lord creates something new, and the ground opens its mouth, and swallows them up, with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, then you shall know that these men have despised the Lord.

The Hebrew vocable פקד has been proved equivalent to the Akkadian *šāmu*, often used with *šimatu* 'fate' to denote 'the decree of fate,' and *paqādu* appears as a variant of *šāmu* in this meaning.³⁰ In Num 16:29,30 'unnatural death' not 'in accordance with the fate of all men' remands the rebels to Sheol.

Even when not violent, 'premature' death is always conveyed as forced, according to the verbs used in this context both in the Bible and in extra-biblical texts. The feeling is one of severance. In the Phoenician funerary inscription of 'Ešmun'azor, the untimely death of the king is conveyed thus:³¹

I was snatched away
before my time.

נגזלת כל עמי

Similar expressions occur in the Bible:

You have cut short the

הקצרת ימי עלומי

30. W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Atrahasis. The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (1969), p. 58:220. For discussion: מ' וינפלד, עלילה, הבריאה אנומה אליש. תרגום והערות. ירושלים תשל"ג, עמ' 4, העצה 1

31. H. Donner and W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*. Wiesbaden (1966), No. 14:2,3; henceforth cited as KAI and document number. For the date see J. B. Peckham, *The Development of the Late Phoenician Scripts* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 76-101, esp. p. 87. For recent discussion: J. C. Greenfield, "Scripture," pp. 259-265; Y. Avishur, *Phoenician Inscriptions and the Bible* (Jerusalem, 1979), Vol. II, 181-195; as well as S. Gevirtz, "West Semitic Curses and the Problems of the Origins of Hebrew Law," *VT* 11 (1961) 149-150.

days of his youth.

[Ps. 89:46]

He drained my strength in
mid-course

ענה בדרך בחי
קצר ימי

He shortened my days

אמר אלי אל תעלני

I say, 'O my God, do not
take me away

בחצי ימי

in the middle of my life.'

[Ps. 102:24-25]

He was cut off from the
land of the living

כי נגזר מארץ חיים

[Isa. 53:8]

They [the slain] are cut off
from your core.

והמה מידך נגזר

[Ps. 88:6]³²

Like a weaver I have rolled
up my life,

קפדתי כאורג חיי

He cuts me off from the loom.

מדלה יבצעני

[Isa. 38:12]

The most severe form of premature death is designated by the verb

- 'to be cut off/cut out'

That person shall be cut
out of his people/kin.

ונכרתה הנפש ההיא
מקרב עמה

[Num. 15:30]

which always refers to premature death at the hand of God.³³

In extra-biblical sources, sudden death which nipped life's potential

32. Note also Ps. 31:23a נגרוני and Greenfield's comment (*ibid.*, p. 20). The untimely death wished upon the violators of the grave of 'Ešmun'azor is described by the verbal form קצרת which apparently denotes 'being cut off' for which compare II Kings 10:32; KAI 14:9/10; and Greenfield, "Scripture," p. 264.

33. For discussion see M. Tsevat, "Studies in the Books of Samuel," *HUCA* 32 (1961) 191-216; W. Zimmerli, "Die Eigenart der prophetischen Rede des Ezechiel," *ZAW* 6 (1954) 1-26.

in the bud was considered 'evil death,' *mūtu lem-nu*,³⁴ מות רע,³⁵ מות לוח,³⁶ an 'odious' death - יהבאשור ממתה,³⁷ an 'evil end' - סוף ביש.³⁸ In the Bible several word combinations with רע - 'evil' are used³⁹ thus. Such death was regarded by ancient man as an 'intensive' kind of death,⁴⁰ different from natural death not only in form but also in quality and in its far-reaching consequences for afterlife.⁴¹ The boastful words of Assurbanipal concerning his dealings with his enemy:⁴²

I did not grant any burial to his body but I made him even more dead than before as I cut off his head.

should not be taken as a mere figure of speech. They should rather be

34. This kind of death is evoked by Sin as punishment. M. Streck, *Assurbanipal* (Leipzig, 1916) 32.III.124. Cited according to CAD.I.123a, where this kind of 'evil death' is understood as referring to "a terrible disease."

35. Evoked in the name of ŠHR, NKL and NŠK on a potential grave disturber, Sîn-zēra-ibni. KAI.225.10. For this meaning of לוח see G. R. Driver, *Aramaic Documents of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford, 1954), 19b.

36. Ben Sira 28:24(21); M. Z. Sebal (Jerusalem, 1972).

37. Evoked in the name of the same deities as above in the same context, on the funerary inscription of GBR. KAI.226.9/10.

38. N. Avigad, *Beth She'arim*, Vol. 3, Catacomb 12 (Jerusalem, 1971), p. 171.

39. E.g., Gen. 43:29. See further below.

40. For the biblical notion of an 'intensified' form of death see L. Wächter, *Der Tod im Alten Testament: Verschärfte Formen des Todes* (Stuttgart, 1964), pp. 171-180. For Mesopotamia: H. Hirsch, "Den Toten zu beleben," *AfO*.22 (1968/69) 50 and 55. For Egypt: J. Zandee, *Death as an Enemy*, p. 18f.

41. Whether this applies also to Israelite belief will be discussed below.

42. Streck, *Assurbanipal*.62.VII, 45-47.

regarded as belief in 'intensified' death.

The tangible forms assumed by 'evil death' in the Bible are quite similar to those found in the literature of the neighboring cultures, but different emphasis may also be detected. A typical form is that of uncommon illness. Not only does such illness differ from that due to natural causes⁴³ or old age,⁴⁴ both considered 'bearable,'⁴⁵ but it also differs from such illness considered a measure of divine chastisement. The latter, though straining the relationship with God, did not sever it; therefore rehabilitation could be anticipated:

When he commits iniquity, I will chastise him with
the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men,
[נִגְעֵי בְנֵי אָדָם] but I will not take my steadfast love
from him.

[2 Sam. 7:14]

This privilege was not reserved for the dynastic house of David, but any man "may be chastened on a bed of pain with ceaseless agony in his bones.... He prays to God and He accepts him.... All these things God does twice or thrice over with a man" (Job 33:19,26,29). There is, however, a divinely inflicted disease, often designated by 'תַּחֲלוּאִים',⁴⁶ which, when further qualified by 'evil' - תַּחֲלוּאִים רָעִים⁴⁷ - was considered without cure.⁴⁸ It

43. E.g., Hosea 7:5; Prov. 13:12.

44. 1 Kings 15:23; 2 Kings 13:14.

45. Jer. 10:19.

46. Deut. 29:21 (note also the piel of חָלָה in this verse). Jer. 14:18, 16:4; 2 Chron. 21:19; probably also Ps. 103:3.

47. 2 Chron. 21:19.

48. For רָע = 'without cure' see 2 Chron. 21:18; cf. שָׁחִין which was

was inflicted as part of a divine curse upon violation of covenant.⁴⁹ Such illness was also accompanied by severance of relationships between man and God. This is designated in the Bible by 'הסתר פניה' - covering of the (divine) face.⁵⁰ In such a context, no pardon was granted, the intent being total annihilation (Deut. 29:19). A special term was coined for this kind of death: ממותי וחלואים - the death of illness (Jer. 16:4) using the intens. pl.⁵¹ An additional feature of this 'evil disease' is given in Deuteronomy (28:59): והפלא ה' את מכותיך - "The Lord will make thy plague wonderful," i.e., beyond human ken.⁵² This aspect of 'evil disease' is elaborated on in the epilogue to the Code of Hammurabi, where the term 'evil disease' is used in context of divine curse:⁵³

May Ninkarrak, the daughter of Anum, my advocate in Ekur, inflict upon him in his body a grievous malady, an evil disease, a serious injury which never heals, whose nature no physician knows, which he cannot allay with bandages, which like a deadly bite cannot be rooted out.

In three of the five Psalms⁵⁴ in which affliction brings the psalmist

considered curable (Lev. 13:18; 2 Kings 20:7//Isa. 38:21). However, עֲחִיךָ רָע (Job 2:7) is qualified in Deut. 28:35 as incurable.

49. Deut. 18:15. חֲלָיִים רָעִים = 'evil diseases' seem to be a variant; cf. Deut. 28:59 with 29:21.

50. Deut. 31:16-18. For a discussion of this term see p. 81 and note

51. For which see G. K. 124c.

52. Ps. 131:1; Prov. 30:18; Job 42:3.

53. The Code of Hammurabi, Rev.28, 1.50ff. Trans. T. J. Meek, *ANET* 180.

54. Pss. 6, 30, 31, 69, 88.

to the brink of Sheol - the extent of divine wrath is that described by הסתר פנים.⁵⁵ Severance of divine care is emphasized two more times by the verbs which denote being 'cut off.'⁵⁶ The illness which is said to have "sated the soul with evil" (Ps. 88:3) also seems to be of the exceptional kind discussed above, both in severity and bewildering nature:

Heal me, O Lord, for my bones shake with terror,
My whole being is stricken with terror.
[Ps. 6:3b,4a]

I have become the butt of my neighbors;
a horror to my friends;
those who see me on the street avoid me.
I hear the whispering of many,
a terror on every side.
[Ps. 31:12,14]

You make my companions shun me,
You make me abhorrent to them;
I suffer your terrors wherever I turn;
Your terrors destroy me.
[Ps. 88:9,16b,17b]

The Bible makes an additional distinction between 'evil disease' and natural illness. In 1 Kings 15:23, Asa's illness, apparently associated with old age, is thus described by the Chronicler:

They buried him in the tomb which he had hewn for himself in the city of David. They laid him on a bier which had been filled with various kinds of spices prepared by the perfumers' art, and they made a very great fire in his honor.
[2 Chron. 16:13]

On the other hand, Yehoram, punished by הזלזלים רעים (2 Chron. 21:19), was denied this ritual -

55. Ps. 30:8; 69:18, 88:15.

56. Ps. 88:6 and presumably also 31:23.

His people made no fire in his honor, like the fires made for his fathers. They buried him in the City of David but not in the Tombs of the Kings.

[2 Chron. 21:19,20]

Whether the Chronicler is drawing on historical sources at his disposal or tendentiously rewriting history for purposes of religious edification cannot be determined. The distinction he makes concerning ritual interment is, however, significant. The observance of funerary ritual was considered of great importance by Israel's neighbors. A recently edited Hymn to Utu⁵⁷ seems to indicate that admission to the realm of the dead was granted upon proof that all funerary rites had been performed in accordance with accepted norms. Other texts indicate that performance of funerary rites conditioned the quality of the afterlife of the deceased; their neglect relegated the dead to an inferior position.⁵⁸ The burning of incense, part of the royal funerary cult, is mentioned in a stele of Nabonidus, and was regarded a pious duty.⁵⁹ The exact significance of the burning of aromatics is not known; it may have been an act of sacrificial immolation, or meant to provide a proper setting for a meal.⁶⁰ Neither is it clear whether it was invested similar meaning by the

57. M. E. Cohen, "Another Utu Hymn," *ZA* 67 (1977) 1-19.

58. A. Shaffer, *Sumerian Sources of Tablet XII of the Epic of Gilgamesh* (University microfilms, 1963).

59. M. Bayliss, "The Cult of the Dead Kin in Assyria and Babylonia," *Iraq* 35 (1973) 123-124, where the text of this stele is discussed. The pertinent line reads: "...abundant offerings of sweet smelling incense as a regular due [were offered every month]"; trans. according to *ibid.*, p. 124.

60. So in a non-funerary context, R. Caplice, *The Akkadian Namburbi Texts: An Introduction* (Los Angeles, 1974), pp. 10-11.

Israelites. This rite must, however, have been of major importance in the Bible since it is mentioned as the climax of a reassuring prophecy:⁶¹

Only heed the word of Yahweh, O Zedekiah, King of Judah! This is what Yahweh has said of you: You shall not die by the sword. You shall die peacefully. And as spices were burned for your ancestors, the Kings who preceded you, so shall they burn spices for you and bewail you, crying 'Ah, Lord!' Truly that is a promise, and I myself have made it - Yahweh's word.

[Jer. 34:5. Trans. according to J. Bright, AB 21]

A second form of 'evil death' which looms large in the Bible and is often associated with Sheol is that of those slain by the sword. Again, a special term was coined for this death, similar to that for 'evil illness,' using the same intensive grammatical form: מִמּוֹתַי חָלָל - 'the death of the slain [lit.: transfixed]' (Ezek. 28:8). We have previously indicated that death of this kind was considered especially ignoble,⁶² an example par excellence of divine retributive punishment:

...Yahweh has indicated the nations;
Is about to judge all flesh;
The wicked he'll give to the sword -
Word of Yahweh?
This is what Yahweh of Hosts has said:
'Ah look! Disaster proceeding [רעה יוצאת]
From nation to nation,
A great tempest churning
From the earth's farthest bounds.
Those slain by Yahweh on that day will reach
from one end of the earth to the other.

61. This ritual may also have been referred to in a non-royal context in Amos 6:10; the text, however, is not entirely clear.

62. For a detailed discussion see pp. 76, 78, 84-86 and notes 192 and 193 of the present study.

They will not be lamented, or collected, or
buried but will be like so much dung to
fertilize the soil.

[Jer. 25:31-33. Trans.
J. Bright, AB 21]

For by fire will the Lord execute judgment,
And by His sword, upon all flesh;
And those slain by the Lord shall be many.

[Isa. 66:16]

Often, the slain abandoned on the battlefield were not accorded proper burial, and were denied interment rituals. The shades of these uncared-for dead, according to the Mesopotamians, troubled the living. A recently-published Old Babylonian text⁶³ indicates that a (special? or regular?) ceremony was conducted in which "[any] soldier who fell while on his Lord's service [1. 33] [and] all humanity from the East to the West who have no one to care for them or to call their names [11. 36f,38]" were invoked among the ancestors of Hammurabi to participate in a funerary meal - the *kispu*. The purpose of this ceremony was probably to placate the shades, prevent the potential harm they could wreak, and induce them to bestow their blessing. Both in the Bible and in the Mesopotamian cultural sphere, to be left unburied - the corpse "food for all birds of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth" (Deut. 28:26) - was a dire threat, a curse often invoked upon treaty violators. This threat as well as the malediction "And they shall not be gathered / they shall not be lamented, or buried, they shall be as dung on the surface of the ground"

63. The text is B.M.80328, published and commented on by J. J. Finkelstein, "The Genealogy of the Hammurapi Dynasty," *JCS* 20 (1966) 95-118. A slightly different interpretation of the text is offered by W. G. Lambert, "Another Look at Hammurabi's Ancestors," *JCS* 22 (1968) 1-2. The translation cited and interpretation followed is of the latter.

(Jer. 8:2, 16:4, 25:33) recurs time and again in the Bible. It is attested at times in fixed formulaic phrasing, influenced by extra-biblical treaty terminology adopted by the Deuteronomic school, or else in free variations.⁶⁴ Again, the significance of this threat in biblical thought can be deduced from the fact that it usually constitutes the climax of the malediction.⁶⁵ Again the question arises: was this of bearing on the afterlife? Note the stele that Absalom erected "for he said, 'I have no son to keep my name in remembrance'" (2 Sam. 18:18b).

Finally, untimely death may be caused through excessive grief:

...וימאן להתנחם ויאמר כי ארד אל בני אבל שאלה

...he refused to be comforted and said 'No I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning.'

[Gen. 37:35]

...והורדחם את שיבתי ביגון שאלה

...You would bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to Sheol.

[Gen. 42:38, 44:31]

והורדחם את שיבתי ברעה שאלה

You will bring down my grey hairs in evil to Sheol.

[Gen. 44:29]

Both רעה - 'evil' and יגון - 'sorrow' are also mentioned in Psalms as causing the descent to Sheol (Pss. 88:3 and 31:11,18, respectively).

64. Pertinent texts are 1 Sam. 17:46, Isa. 5:25; Jerem. 7:33, 9:21, 15:3, 16:4-6, 25:33; Ps. 83:11. For a discussion of the relationship between biblical formulations and extra-biblical treaty terminology see M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, pp. 118, 119n, 122n, 138-140, where distinction is also made between Deuteronomic and non-Deuteronomic formulations.

65. Whether this fate was also believed to influence the afterlife of the Israelite will be discussed below.

The three categories of 'evil death' that have been discussed above are also the main causes that remand the Israelite to Sheol. Does this cause of death also affect the afterlife of the Israelite? The question is a pertinent one in view of the changes in funerary rites accompanying 'evil death.' It is of special interest to pursue this question further, considering that among Israel's neighbors, especially Mesopotamia, persons who died an evil death belonged to a special category. They constituted a group of embittered spirits which did not remain in the underworld, but returned as restive spirits to haunt the living. Their afterlife was qualitatively different from that of the well-attended dead, deceased due to natural causes.⁶⁶

In the Bible vestigial beliefs concerning the spirit of the dead may be encountered - but no haunting spirits are mentioned.⁶⁷ There seems

66. For 'catalogues' of such spirits, compiled for incantations aimed at their exorcising, see A. Falkenstein, *Die Haupttypen der Sumerischen Beschwörung* (Leipzig, 1931); E. Ebeling, *Tod und Leben* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1931), p. 144f.; R. C. Thompson, *The Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia*, Vol. I (London, 1903); G. Castellino, "Rituals and Prayers against appearing Ghosts," *Orientalia* 24 (1955) 240-274; S. Lackenbacher, "Note sur l'Ardat-Lilî," *Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale* 65 (197), 119-129. The biblical categories of the dead who died an 'evil death' are reflected in these 'catalogues'; the slain by the sword (Thompson, p. 31; Castellino, p. 245); the one who died through excessive grief and affliction (Lackenbacher, p. 129, trans.).

67. The potency of the spirit of the dead is implied by its designation אֱלֹהִים (1 Sam. 28:13; Isa. 8:19); note also that זִמְזִי אֱלֹהֵיהֶן (Num. 25:2) alternates with זִמְזִי מַתִּים (Ps. 106:28). Ex. 22:19 may also refer to the spirit of the dead. The Bible attests to a belief that the spirits could be invoked and information obtained through them concerning the future. This belief, ridiculed by Isaiah (8:20), must have been popular in view of the recurrent prohibitions of necromancy (Lev. 19:31, 20:6,27; Deut. 18:11. Cf. 2 Kings 21:6, 23:24). Israel is also familiar with the mortuary cult of her neighbors and practiced some of her own (Deut. 26:14). However, the spirits of the dead are never described in a positive capacity as bestowing fecundity, nor are they ever described as harmful. There

to be one point concerning the fate of those dying an evil death at which the Mesopotamian and Israelite viewpoints coincide. On a *kudurru* stone the following curse is inscribed:⁶⁸

May his corpse not be buried in the earth, may his ghost not join the ghosts of his relatives.

And in a curse against a witch:⁶⁹

Utu der Richter von Himmel und Erde möge ihr ein schlimmes [Ur]teil sprechen
Nergal der Herr der Unterwelt wird ihren [To]ten-geist nicht zu dem To[tengeistern] rechnen.

These two maledictions call to mind the biblical phrases: וַיֵּאָסֶף - "he slept with his fathers" as well as the punishment of karet - וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַזֹּאת מֵעַמִּיהָ - "this person shall be sundered from his kin." Upon further examination of meaning and context, these phrases may be used to additionally support relatedness between Israelite and Mesopotamian beliefs.⁷⁰

is, however, awareness of the prohibition against disturbing their rest (designated by the verb רָגַז; see 1 Sam. 28:15, Isa. 14:9), lest they become vengeful. Note the LXX version of 1 Sam. 28:19, which may indicate punishment: 'וַיִּמָּחַר אֹתָהּ וּבָנֶיהָ בְּרֹפְלִים.' Post-biblical literature is familiar with the concept of the restive spirit; significantly, it is the spirit of a sinner.

68. CAD.E 398/9.

69. C. Wilcke, "Sumerische literarische Texte in Manchester und Liverpool," *AfO* 24 (1973) 12, 11.36-39.

70. The phrases 'וַיֵּאָסֶף אֶל עַמִּיהוּ' and 'וַיֵּשֶׁב עִם אֲבוֹתָיו' have been treated in the following articles: B. Alfrink, "L'Expression 'וַיֵּשֶׁב עִם אֲבוֹתָיו'," *Oudtestamentische Studien* 2 (1943) 106-118; *idem.*, "L'Expression 'וַיֵּאָסֶף אֶל עַמִּיהוּ'," *Oudtestamentische Studien* 5 (1945) 118-131; G. R. Driver, "Plurima Mortis Imago," *Studies and Essays in Honor of A. A. Neuman* (Leiden, 1962) pp. 138-143; E. J. Smit, "Death and Burial Formulas in Kings and Chronicles Relating to the Kings of Judah," *Proceedings of the Ninth Meeting of Die*

The primary connotation of עַם indicates kinship relation. Secondly, it refers to "the extended family...people in the sense of a larger but fundamentally consanguineous body."⁷¹ The plural עַמִּים indicates the archaic social unit of the "Kultgemeinschaft." Distinction is made via the three consecutive waws (Gen. 25:8,9, 35:28) between dying, being gathered to one's kind, and being buried. Being gathered to one's kin is not dependent on burial in a family tomb, for it is mentioned in connection with Abraham who was interred in a newly purchased cave (Gen. 25:9-10) and not in an ancestral tomb. This phrase, in abbreviated form, is used in connection with the death of Aaron (Num. 20:24) who died in the wilderness (Num. 32:39) and with that of Moses (Num. 27:13) who was interred in a lonely grave whose location "no man knows" (Deut. 34:6). The phrase is, however, connected with the manner in which a person died. In its complete form it is preceded by exact indication of the respective person's span of life and is followed by the summational comment "dying at a happy ripe age, old and full of years he was gathered to his kin" (Gen. 25:8,9). Even when of shorter form, the context makes it clear that the person reached a ripe age. The phrase $\text{וַיֵּאָסֶף עַל עַמּוֹ}$, used for the Patriarchs, Moses and Aaron, who were considered representative of their generation, conveys an ideal natural death.

Where was this gathering place? It is never specified in space, but this much is clear: it is never jointly mentioned with Sheol.

Oudtestamentiese Wergemeenskap in Suid-Afrika (1966) 177-183. Citations will be referred to by author's name.

71. E. A. Speiser, "People and Nation of Israel," *JBL* 79, 159.

Correspondingly, in the more than sixty biblical passages in which Sheol is mentioned, it is never portrayed as a peaceful ancestral gathering place. This is even more explicit in the context in which the variant phrase - וישכב עם אבותיו - is used. The phrase וישכב עם אבותיו is most commonly used when summarizing a king's reign upon his demise. In recording the death of eighteen kings of Israel this expression is used to describe the death of only nine.⁷² The selective use is deliberate: the expression is omitted in cases of unnatural death. This procedure is repeated in recording the death of the Judean kings: five omissions⁷³ for those who died unnaturally from a list of twelve kings. The Bible's differentiation seems to be consequential. Natural death is accompanied by unification with kin and Sheol is never mentioned. In counterpart, evil death is followed by sundrance from all kin. Evil death in the Bible also results in delegation to Sheol, which is never described as an ancestral meeting place. Though undefined in space, the conceptual distinction between the two is always evident.

Among the denizens of Sheol the רפאים are mentioned.⁷⁴ The meaning of this vocable, as well as its relation to רפאים as the designation of

72. For tables illustrating this fact and source references, see Alfrink, pp. 110-111, and Driver, p. 138, who also explains the only exception to the rule, namely, by pointing to the variant versions in Chronicles and LXX which omit this formula (p. 140).

73. The phrase is also omitted concerning יהואחז (2 Kings 23:24), probably because he was no longer the official king.

74. 1 Sam. 14:9; Job 26:5-6; Ps. 88:11. In Isa. 26:19 they are associated with ארץ, signifying 'netherworld,' and, as in v.14, paralleled by מוֹת. In Prov. 2:18 they are associated with מוֹת, the 'realm of death.'

an ancient people who inhabited parts of Canaan and Transjordan⁷⁵ has been the subject of many scholarly treatises. This research received new impetus from the discovery of Ugaritic texts in which the word *rp'm* occurs. The history of research and the various interpretive approaches have been conveniently surveyed by L'Heureux⁷⁶ and will therefore not be repeated here. Our discussion will be limited to the points on which we differ in opinion or emphasis from previous studies. It will focus on the biblical Rephaim and refer to extra-biblical texts only where a direct bearing on the biblical data seems provable.

While the standard dictionaries distinguish between Rephaim I as a designation for the shades of the dead and Rephaim II as referring to an ancient people, both earlier and recent commentators usually try to connect the two. Opinions differ, however, as to which meaning is to be considered original and which a secondary development. One view, commonly held prior to the discovery of the Ugaritic texts, traced the etymology of Rephaim I to the root *רפח* - 'to be slack, weak,' considered most appropriate for the feeble existence of the shades. The secondary

75. Gen. 14:5, 15:20; Deut. 2:10-11, 20-21, 3:11,13; Josh. 12:4, 13:12, 17:15. See also "Valley of the Rephaim," 2 Sam. 5:18,22//1 Chron. 14:9, 2 Sam. 23:13; Josh. 15:8, 18:6; 1 Sam. 17:5.

76. C. E. L'Heureux, *Rank among the Canaanite Gods El, Ba'al and the Rephaim* (Montana, 1979), pp. 111-223, esp. pp. 111-127; henceforth cited as *Rank*. To bibliography add: E. Lipinski, "Ditanu," *Studies in Bible and the Ancient Near East* S. E. Loewenstamm Festschrift; Jerusalem, 1978), pp. 91-110; W. T. Pitard, "The Ugaritic Funerary Text RS34.126," *BASOR* 232 (1978) 65-75; A. Caquot, "La tablette RS24.252 et la question des rephaim ougaritiques," *Syria* 53, 295-304; M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, J. Sanmartin, "Die Ugaritischen Totengeister RPU(M) und die Biblischen Rephaim," *UF* 8, 45-52. The last five items came to my attention after completion of the bibliography for this study and are therefore not listed there.

meaning, that of Rephaim II, was thought to have evolved due to the presence of gigantic megalithic structures, mainly in Transjordan, regarded as the graves of the aboriginal inhabitants. The enormous size of these graves, the haunt of the spirits of the dead 'of old,' led later generations to assume that their builders must have been giants. Thus, the meaning of Rephaim I was extended to the early inhabitants of Transjordan and part of Canaan - Rephaim II, in the sense of an ethnicon.⁷⁷

The occurrence of *rp'm* in Ugaritic texts in a context unrelated to the world of the dead⁷⁸ led most scholars to abandon the previously proposed etymology. A recent proposal, according to which **rapi'u*, a stative formation with intransitive meaning, designates a hale condition,⁷⁹ is elaborated on by L'Heureux⁸⁰ in connection with both Ugaritic and biblical Rephaim. He states that in Ugaritic texts this descriptive term was applicable to gods as an appellative or could become the epithet of a given god (e.g., El). It is also applied to an elite group of chariot

77. For a summary of the various views on the subject prior to the discovery of the Ugaritic texts see P. Karge, *Rephaim: Die vorge-schichtliche Kultur Palästinas und Phöniziens* (Paderborn, 1925; unrevised reprint of 1917), pp. 644-645. See also C. Steuernagel, *Deuteronomium*, HKAT (Göttingen, 1923), p. 57. S. R. Driver, *Deuteronomy*, ICC (Edinburgh, 1896), p. 40. After their first mention all commentaries will be referred to by the author's name only.

78. For all the pertinent Ugaritic texts see L'Heureux, *Rank*, 129-199, where text analysis is included.

79. F. M. Cross, in his article נא in TWAT, I (Stuttgart, 1979), Col. 163.

80. L'Heureux, *Rank*, pp. 116-118, where the problem of the Hebrew vocalization of רפאים is also discussed.

warriors, the *rpi arš*,⁸¹ whose association with the divine sphere is explained by L'Heureux as being caused "either because of the feeling that certain elite human beings participate in the world of the gods or, more specifically, because a certain group was felt to have a special relationship with a god whose name or epithet was *rapi'u*."⁸² This group, L'Heureux further maintains, has its heavenly counterpart in the *rp'm* of CTA 20-22, which serve as a prototype for and legitimation of the earthly institution.⁸³ The heavenly *rp'm* are not divine "in a secondary or derived fashion,"⁸⁴ but the term *ilnym* by which the word is paralleled⁸⁵ expresses their full divinity. *Rp'm* as a reference to the dead is the latest link in this chain of meanings; it evolved, according to L'Heureux, via the notion of "heroes" implied in the term, which was first applied to living or divine heroes and then to dead heroes.⁸⁶ The notion of an elite group of warriors, it is claimed, left its mark in the biblical concept of the Rephaim as a pre-historic ethnic group. Revolving around traditions

81. CTA 15.3, 2-4, 13-15. For discussion see *ibid.*, 201-204, 218-223.

82. *Ibid.*, 222. In this connection note the author's elaboration on the concept of the *marzēah*, pp. 206-212, and the association of the *rpi arš* with it, pp. 218-221.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 205.

84. Scholars have attributed various degrees of divinity to the Ugaritic *rp'm*; 'semi-gods,' 'deified dead,' 'sacral functionaries' - considered divine in view of their cultic role. For a survey of the several views see *ibid.*, esp. pp. 111-122.

85. See also CTA 6.6, 44-49.

86. *Ibid.*, pp. 221-222. It should be noted that L'Heureux tends to underestimate the signification of *rp'm* as a designation of the dead, especially in CTA 6.6, 44-49.

about Og, King of Bashan, and influenced by speculations on the megalithic structures, the idea of a gigantic pre-historic people, among them the Rephaim, crystallized. The survival of a warrior guild whose patron was רפאים seems to have some bearing on this.⁸⁷ Finally, biblical 'Rephaim,' designating shades of the dead, first referred to an aristocracy among the dead (Isa. 14:9); later the term was 'democratized' and applied to the shades of all the dead.

These interpretations of the biblical Rephaim, as well as of the postulated relationship between Rephaim I and Rephaim II, seem to need some modification. In order to evaluate properly the information yielded by the pertinent texts, greater emphasis should be laid on the nature of the documents and their intent.

First, the assumption that Rephaim II constitutes an ethnonicon should be re-examined. In Genesis 14:5-7, the Rephaim are among those defeated by coalition of foreign kings. While the background of this chapter is not known and the very names of the invading kings are enigmatic,⁸⁸ the way the various participants in the battle are mentioned is significant for our problem. The four invading kings are mentioned by name and country (v.1). The coalition of the local kings are mentioned by name and, true to the prevailing historical conditions in Canaan, as rulers of their respective city-states (v.2). The defeated party constitutes two

87. L'Heureux, *Rank*, pp. 221-222, and *idem*, "The *yēlîdê hārāpā* - A Cultic Association of Warriors," *BASOR* 221 (1976), 83-85.

88. For discussion, see J. E. Emerton, "Some False Clues in the Study of Gen. XIV," *VT* 21 (1971) 24-74, and "The Riddle of Genesis XIV," *ibid.*, 403-439.

groups; in one, חרִי, אַמְרִי, עַמְלִקִי are mentioned with the respective places of their defeat (vv.5-7). Preceding them are רַפְאִים, זֻזִים, and אֵימִים, also mentioned with the respective places of their defeat (v.5). On the one hand, we have well-defined entities: rulers of countries, city-states and a group of three entities all having a gentilic ending, i.e., representing ethnic groups. The group of Rephaim, Emim, and Zuzim, on the other hand, are not so defined. This becomes even more conspicuous if we turn to Gen. 15:19-21, where the Rephaim are mentioned as one of the ten nations of Canaan that Israel is to dispossess according to the covenant with Abraham. All nine nations are mentioned with a gentilic but for the Rephaim.⁸⁹ The sources of information concerning the Rephaim cannot be established, or their historical validity ascertained. There is nevertheless some agreement among scholars as to when these narrative traditions crystallized as well as their possible intent. In Genesis 14 the invasion episode is linked to the episode concerning the blessing of Melchizedek by the figure of Abraham, who appears in both incidents. The Melchizedek episode contains details which have led scholars to attribute it to the time of David.⁹⁰ It has been suggested that its purpose was to authenticate the claim of Jerusalem to a central position among the Israelite cult centers, while Abraham's successful intervention against

89. The name of the Rephaim is omitted in LXX, but, even if considered secondary, no adaptation was made to harmonize this entry with the entire list.

90. Salem in v.18 is mentioned again in Ps. 76:3 in parallelism to Zion, and is thus associated with Jerusalem. For the association of Melchizedek with the Davidic dynasty see Ps. 110:5. In addition, the "King's Vale" in v.17 is anachronistic in this chapter. This place, mentioned again in 2 Sam. 18:18, is close to Jerusalem (so Josephus, *Antiq.* VII,x,3 = §243).

the invaders was meant to substantiate the right to the land from El-paran to Damascus on both sides of the Jordan.⁹¹ Genesis 15 is also thought to reflect the historical conditions of the Davidic empire. The divine promise of land made to Abraham and his descendants "...from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates" (Gen. 15:18) represents the aspirations of the Davidic empire.⁹²

The list of nations included in the blessing of Abraham may also reflect Davidic times. The Kenites and Kenizzites were tribal groups of the Negev, whose absorption by the tribe of Judah had been completed by the time of David.⁹³ The last entry in the list, the Jebusites (v.21), fixes the *terminus ad quem* of the compilation to David's conquest of Jebus. According to a commonly held view, the line-up of these peoples in the comprehensive list of those destined to be dispossessed served to legitimize the seizure of land in Davidic times. However, the list as such, comprising ten entries, may represent a typological pattern rather than historical reality.⁹⁴ Such lists may contain fictitious entries for the sake of comprehensiveness⁹⁵ and the Rephaim, suspect on other grounds,

91. See B. Mazar, "The Historical Background of the Book of Genesis," *JNES* 28 (1964) 74-75.

92. R. E. Clements, *Abraham and David* (Illinois, 1967), 21f, 38f, 47, esp. 60-63.

93. The Kadmonim are not known from any other list and are commonly associated with Bene Kedem of Gen. 29:1, lit. "easterners."

94. See T. Ishida, "The Structure and Historical Implications of the Lists of Pre-Israelite Nations," *Biblica* 60 (1979) 461-490.

95. The list of ten entries, representing a typological pattern, is known from the ideal "Ahnentafel" which has sometimes proven to contain fictitious entries in order to conform to a well-established literary tradition. Such compilations are known from extra-biblical sources

may have been such a fictitious entry; hence one cannot deduce conclusively from their occurrence in this list that they represent a proper ethnic element.

The context in which the Rephaim appear in Deut. 2:11,20 seems to cast further doubt on the ethnic denotation of the term. Included in the instruction not to trespass on the borders of Moab and Ammon is the following information about the pre-history of the respective countries:

The Emim lived in it beforehand, a people great and many and as tall as the Anakim. Like the Anakim they too are known as Rephaim, and the Moabites call them Emim.

[Deut. 2:10,11]

That is also known as the land of Rephaim; Rephaim lived in it beforehand, and the Ammonites call them Zamzummim, a people great, many and as tall as the Anakim, and Yahweh destroyed them before them and they dispossessed them and settled in stead of them.

[Deut. 2:20,21]

An additional note on the Rephaim is included in the description of the Kingdom of Og:

...for only Og, the King of Bashan, was left of the remnant of the Rephaim, see his bed was a bed of iron, is it not in Rabbah, nine cubits was the length thereof and four cubits the breadth of it....

[Deut. 3:11]

The data concerning the pre-history of Moab and Ammon is commonly regarded

and similar techniques seem to have been employed in both literatures by the official royal scribes. See A. Malamat, "King Lists of the Old Babylonian Period and Biblical Genealogies," *JAOS* 88 (1968) 169-171. Although the list of nations in Gen. 15:19-21 is different in kind from those discussed by Malamat, it too is an official royal document, apparently from the same time. It stems from the same scribal circles and serves a similar purpose in presenting an all-inclusive background to legitimize royal actions. Similar techniques may therefore have been employed.

as 'antiquarian' or 'learned glosses' by a 'later hand,'⁹⁶ but this view ignores the fact that these verses are couched in typical Deuteronomic phraseology⁹⁷ and constitute an integral part of the prologue's conceptual framework. Sumner, in his article on Israel's encounter with Moab and Ammon, indicates that "these notices provide the logic behind Yahweh's instructions not to take the lands, and are surely just as original as the instructions themselves."⁹⁸ In fact, they provide more than that. In the marked political atmosphere that permeates the prologue, as well as the entire book, in the "very pressing concern with Israel's existence over against foreign nations"⁹⁹ these sections provide not only a justification, by way of analogy, for the dispossession of certain peoples and honoring the borders of others - but the very *raison d'être* for Israel's national being. As has been elucidated by Dahl,¹⁰⁰ a certain universality

96. S. R. Driver, *Deuteronomy* (1896), 36, 40; C. Steuernagel, *Deuteronomium* (1923), 57; A. C. Welch, *Deuteronomy* (1932), 174-176; G. von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, trans. D. Barton (Great Britain, 1966), 42; J. L. McKenzie, "The Historical Prologue of Deuteronomy," *4th World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Vol. I (Jerusalem, 1967).

97. The adjectives גדול ורב ורם constitute a combination of two frequently encountered phrases in Deuteronomy; lit. /גדולים רבים/ עם גדול ורם (cf. Deut. 1:28, 4:38, 7:1, 9:2a, 11:23). See Driver, *Deuteronomy*, p. 23; M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, p. 343. Note the different description in Num. 13:28a. The verb ירש, too, is typical of the Deuteronomic style which consistently avoids the use of the verb גרש - 'drive out' found in other sources, which denotes a more arbitrary aspect of the conquest.

98. W. A. Sumner, "Israel's Encounter with Edom, Moab, Ammon, Sihon, and Og According to the Deuteronomist," *VT* 8 (1968) 220f.

99. G. von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy* (London, 1953), trans. D. Stalker, p. 59.

100. N. A. Dahl, *Das Volk Gottes* (Darmstadt, 1963), p. 26. See also M. Weinfeld, "The Awakening of Israel's National Consciousness in the Seventh Century BC," *Oz le David* (1964), p. 406f.

is presupposed by the idea of election. And it is precisely at a time when Israel's national consciousness become problematic and its national existence threatened that its awareness both of the similarity of its fate to that of other nations as well as its uniqueness within the divine plan of history is emphasized. Viewed in this context, the Rephaim constitute a relevant element. They figure in the divine design in which everything is patterned according to a preconceived plan. Whatever happened in Israel's encounter with the indigenous population of Canaan has its analogy in the history of the surrounding nations; they all acted "as Israel did unto the land of his possession" (v.12). Thus, Israel's dispossession of the peoples of Canaan is analogous to the dispossession of the Rephaim of Moab and Ammon on the one hand, and to the similar treatment of the Horites by Seir and of the Avvim by Caphtor on the other. Thus, both stylistically and conceptually, the notices concerning the Rephaim are part of the Deuteronomic prologue and whatever information they were meant to yield must be gleaned from the general drift and intent of the text.

Two notices which the Deuteronomist appended to his mention of the Rephaim - and to them only, of all other nations mentioned in his stylized rewriting of historical events - should guide us in determining whether he indeed meant to introduce them as an ethnic group. First, the note stating that the Moabites refer to the Rephaim as Emim (v.11) and to the Ammonim as Zamzummim (v.20). Had the Deuteronomist been referring to an ethnonym proper, one would have expected only minor phonetic changes in the term 'Rephaim,' given the linguistic similarities between biblical Hebrew and, say, what is known of Moabite. The term Emim, and also

Zamzummim,¹⁰¹ strike one more as a (descriptive?) epithet¹⁰² or as an appellative employed in the respective languages in reference to the Rephaim. Note, however, that in Gen. 14:5 Rephaim, Zuzzim, and Emim are treated as three different entities and it is only the Deuteronomist who combines them. The Deuteronomist is also unique in comparing the Rephaim to the 'Anaqim (vv.11, 21).¹⁰³ Although biblical information concerning the latter is equivocal, certain details associated with them are suggestive of the motive underlying the Deuteronomist's comparison of the two and thus reflect his understanding of the term Rephaim.

We turn first to the data found in extra-Deuteronomic sources. The 'Anaqim were encountered by the spies on their tour of Canaan, in the region of Hebron. They are mentioned three times in the story,¹⁰⁴ always as a special entity apart from the other inhabitants met by the spies. While they shared with the rest of the indigenous population the feature

101. Genesis Apkr. 21:29 inserted a superlinear ם over the medial ז of Gen. 14:5 זזים and substitutes בעמון for MT בזהם.

102. The suggestion by Driver and many others to explain these terms by Hebrew (!) etymologies, derived from Hebrew אִימָה - 'terror' and זִמְזִם - 'whisper, murmur' (p. 40) is gratuitous. The Deuteronomist explicitly refers to these designations as Moabite and Ammonite, and not as Hebrew terms. Other such references on the part of the Deuteronomist (chap. 3:9) may be verified by extra-biblical data and indicate that he is well versed and precise in such matters. Moreover, though Hebrew may be very similar to Moabite (the Ammonite data are too sparse to allow one to draw any conclusions), too little is known about the vocabulary of the latter to justify explanation of this Moabite term through a Hebrew etymology.

103. The use of the imperfect יִזְעַבּוּ implies the frequentative force of a custom, but although mention of Rephaim and 'Anaqim recurs in the Bible, they are never so equated outside the Deuteronomic historical work.

104. Num. 13:22, 28, 33.

of grand and intimidating stature, they were singled out by the spies as a deterrent to military invasion of the land.¹⁰⁵ Scholars often regard them as a product of popular or mythic lore, which tends to cast the ancient races in a heroic mold.¹⁰⁶ But the enormous stature of parts of this population is not necessarily a figment of ancient man's imagination. Both biblical prophetic literature unconnected with this conquest tradition¹⁰⁷ and extra-biblical literature¹⁰⁸ mention the gigantic size of the inhabitants of the region of Syria-Palestine. While all these sources admittedly use hyperbolic language, they may yet be based on historic facts. The three names of the 'Anaqim, חלמי, ששי, אַחִימָן, also seem to be genuine Hurrite names of this period.¹⁰⁹ The historicity of the biblical 'Anaqim could be further maintained if their postulated connection with the Iy-'anaq mentioned in the Egyptian execration texts of Asiatic princes could be proved valid.¹¹⁰ Although the extra-biblical texts do not shed much light on the 'Anaqim, and the biblical data are too scanty to provide a clear picture, there are cumulative indications that seem to point in a certain direction; one can thus draw certain conclusions regarding their

105. Always mentioned last in the climactic description of the dangers of the land.

106. G. E. Wright, "Troglodites and Giants in Palestine," *JBL* 57 (1938) 307f.

107. Amos 2:9.

108. Papyrus Anastasi I. Anet 477.

109. E. Lipinski, "'Anaq - Kiryat 'Arba' - Hebron et ses Sanctuaires Tribaux," *VT* 24 (1974) 41-55, esp. 44, and bibliography cited.

110. K. Sethe, *Die Ächtung feindlicher Fürsten, Völker und Dinge auf altägyptischen Tongefässcherben des Mittleren Reiches* (Berlin, 1926).

nature. According to the conquest traditions, the 'Anaqim differ from other segments of the population in their structural organization. They are designated ¹¹¹יְלִידֵי הָעֵנֶק, ¹¹²בְּנֵי עֵנֶק/הָעֵנֶק and their region, Hebron, is traced to ¹¹³אֲבִי הָעֵנֶק/הָעֵנֶק. The occurrence of the name with the definite article ¹¹⁴אֲבִי הָעֵנֶק indicates that 'Anaq was probably not considered a proper name but rather an appellative. ¹¹⁵ Biblical יָלִיד never designates lineage in its genealogical sense, but a dependent social status. It occurs in the construct state with three determinatives, ¹¹⁶הַרְפָּה/(רְפָאִים), ¹¹⁷חַנִּיכִי and ¹¹⁸גִּבּוֹרִים. The combination ¹¹⁹יְלִידֵי בֵיתוֹ in Gen. 14:14 is of particular interest, for in that context it serves to qualify the term ¹²⁰חַנִּיכִי, an Egyptian loan word for 'armed retainers,' and this term recurs in the above-mentioned Egyptian execration texts in connection with Iy-'anaq. The term ¹²¹יְלִידֵי הַרְפָּה also seems to connote military prowess, since it describes the opponents of David's elite warrior group of ¹²²גִּבּוֹרִים. The ¹²³יְלִידֵי הַרְפָּה are associated with the Philistines and their gigantic stature is conveyed by the size of their weapons. ¹²⁴Goliath (1 Sam. 17:4-52)

111. Num. 13:22,28; Jos. 15:14b.

112. Num. 13:33; Deut. 9:2; Jos. 15:14; Jud. 1:20. Note also ¹²⁵בְּנֵי עֵנֶקִים in Deut. 1:28, 9:2.

113. Jos. 15:13/Jos. 21:11. Note also ¹²⁶הָאָדָם הַגָּדוֹל בְּעֵנֶקִיָּה Jos. 14:15.

114. Also Jos. 11:21.

115. The relationship to Hebrew עֵנֶק - 'necklace' is not clear.

116. See F. Willeson, "The Yālid in Hebrew Society," *Studia Theologica* 12 (1958) 192-210.

117. T. Lambdin, "Egyptian Loan Words in the Old Testament," *JAOS* 73 (1953) 150.

118. 2 Sam. 21:16-22; cf. 23:18.

seems to have belonged to this group of professional warriors.¹¹⁹ The Deuteronomist's report (Jos. 11:21,22) that all 'Anaqim have been annihilated but for those residing in the Philistine towns of Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod¹²⁰ may provide a further link between 'Anaqim, יְלִידֵי חֶרֶפָה, and professional warriors.

The martial aspect of the 'Anaqim is also stressed by their association with Nephilim (Num. 13:33) who are described in Gen. 6:4 as "the heroes of old," אֲנָשֵׁי שֵׁם - "men of renown."¹²¹ That it indeed is this martial aspect of the 'Anaqim which the Deuteronomist wishes to convey in his recurrent use of the term may be deduced from the fact that he singles them out to exemplify invincibility:

Hear, O Israel; you are to pass over the Jordan this day, to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourselves, cities great and fortified up to heaven, a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know and of whom you have heard it said "Who can stand before the sons of Anak?"

[Deut. 9:1-2. RSV]

The subjugation of the 'Anaqim through divine aid is used by the

119. 2 Sam. 21:19.

120. The Septuagint version which reads שְׂאִרִית עֲנָקִים - "the remnant of 'Anaqim" in connection with the town of Ashdod for MT שְׂאִרִית עֲמָקִים (Jer. 47:5), and which is commonly preferred by commentators, should be rejected. MT עֲמָקִים should be rendered 'force, vigor, strength' on the basis of Accadian *emūqu* and Ugaritic *mq*. Cf. Job 39:21, where it is paralleled by כֹּחַ. The Targum to Jerem., which renders our verse שְׂאִר חֹקְפֶהוֹן, confirms the proposed rendition.

121. Note that אֲנָשֵׁי שֵׁם in biblical context is usually paralleled by גְּבוּרֵי חַיִּל (1 Chron. 5:24, 12:30; cf. v.38). Both in biblical and extra-biblical contexts 'to make one's self a name' means to gain renown through a special act of heroism or more generally the ability to vanquish enemies. For a discussion of the biblical term see M. Weinfeld, "Awakening of National Consciousness," *Oz le David*, 399-400. For extra-biblical sources: Gilgamesh, Yale Tablet, Col. 5, 11.7, 31-33. I. G. Dossin, *ARM* I, 69, 13-16.

Deuteronomist as a telling precedent indicative of the determination by which God carries out His plans in history. In this rousing military oration (Deut. 9:1-6) 'actualizing' past events, he wishes both to retain the freshness of Israel's gratitude for the divine aid as well as to stimulate its active participation in His redemptive history. It fully accords with the national fervor of the Josianic period in which the Deuteronomist wrote, and sought to inspire confidence for future warlike endeavors.¹²²

The Deuteronomist's remarks concerning the nature of the 'Anaqim were therefore meant to satisfy neither his 'antiquarian' nor his 'learned' interests but to emphasize his national feelings and theological views. And it is his emphasis on the nature of the 'Anaqim that should guide us in the explication of his remark that "Rephaim too are counted/reckoned as 'Anaqim" (chap. 2:11). This equation points to similar characteristics and indicates that the Deuteronomist conceived of the Rephaim primarily as heroic figures. The impression gained from Chapter 2:10-11, 20-21, that he may also have considered them to constitute a quasi-ethnic group, seems to derive from the previously-mentioned aim of the Deuteronomist to make Israel's dispossession of the indigenous population fully analogous to that carried out by neighboring Moab and Ammon. This, however, seems to be an artificial construction.¹²³ Although the mention of Emim, Zuzim,

122. For the nature and aim of the military orations in the Book of Deuteronomy see M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford, 1972), pp. 42ff.

123. The Deuteronomist may well have drawn upon the royal archives for his material concerning the mention of Rephaim as a quasi-ethnicon, such as is found in chapters 14 and 15 in Genesis, and whose nature we discussed above.

and Rephaim in Gen. 14, each with their respective geographic localities, apparently contains some genuine information, their combination in Deuteronomy with the two former serving as different designations for the latter seems to us to be a secondary use of this source.¹²⁴

The contention that Rephaim primarily denoted heroic figures receives some further support from Isa. 14:9 and Ezek. 32:19-22,27. In all these passages reference is made to the denizens of the netherworld. In Isa. 14:9 the term 'Rephaim' is paralleled by עֲזָרָי אֶרֶץ - literally the 'rams of the land.' The latter designation has been shown to refer to the 'heroes, princes of the land.'¹²⁵ In Ezek. 32 Egypt is remanded to the netherworld, met there with taunting remarks by certain heroes designated as אֱלֵי גִבּוֹרִים (v.21). The MT of these verses (19-22) seems to have preserved a corrupt text and commentators usually follow the Septuagint version which rearranges these verses as follows:¹²⁶

v.18 Son of Man, wail over the pomp of Egypt and send it down [...] to the netherworld to those who go down to the pit

v.21 The godlike heroes [אֱלֵי גִבּוֹרִים] shall speak to it out of the midst of Sheol [...]. Whom do you surpass in

124. Neither does the mention of geographical names which include the term Rephaim (Deut. 3:13; Josh. 12:4, 13:12, 15:8, 18:6; 2 Sam. 5:18// 1 Chr. 14:9; 2 Sam. 23:13; Isa. 17:5) necessarily imply that the latter constitute an ethnicon. It could merely indicate that Rephaim lived there long enough to lend their name to these places.

125. For a detailed discussion of Isa. 14:9-22?23 see p. 242f. of the present study.

126. Although our rendition of אֱלֵי גִבּוֹרִים and נַעֲמָה differs from that of Eichrodt, the English translation of his book renders the text close enough to be followed here. W. Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, trans. C. Quin (from the German edition of 1965-66; Great Britain, 1970), p. 435.

beauty? [ממי נעמח]. Go down and be laid with the
v.19 uncircumcised.

The collocation גבורים אלי is rendered by Miller as "the rams [i.e., chiefs] of the mighty men."¹²⁷ In view of the frequent parallelism in the Bible of אלים and עוזדים, the גבורים אלי of Ezekiel may be considered a variant of Isa. 14:9 אחודי ארץ which in turn parallels רפאים (*ibid.*).¹²⁸

In view of this meeting in the netherworld between the heroes slain on the battlefield and those already there, we again prefer the Septuagint and Peshitta version of Ezek. 32:27 which does not contain the negation at the beginning of the verse of MT. We consider this verse to be a further elaboration on the major theme of this chapter - the shameful death of the nations slain on the battlefield and their ignoble fate in the netherworld. We thus read verses 27, 28:

וישכבו את גבורים נפלים מעולם¹²⁹ אשר ירדו שאול בכלי
מלחמתם ויתנו חרבותם תחת ראשיהם ויהי עונותם על
עצמותם כי חתית גבורים בארץ חיים. ואחז בתוך עדלים
תשכר ותשכר את חללי חרב.

127. P. D. Miller, "Animal Names as Designations in Ugaritic and Hebrew," *UF* 2, p. 182.

128. A further similarity between Isa. 14 and Ezek. 32 may be detected in the taunt 'ממי נעמח.' This phrase is usually rendered on the basis of Hebrew נעם as 'pleasant' or 'beautiful.' Note, however, Ugaritic *n'm* in text RS 17.120:1, which implies a general condition of health and is best rendered by 'vigor.' Note also *naim* in Papyrus Anastasi I, which is applied to a *maryannu mahir* after slaying a lion, i.e., after performing an act of heroism. The rhetorical question in Ezekiel may therefore, similar to Isa. 14:10-11, mock the haughtiness and high aspirations of the once-great nation, by pointing to its shameful end. For further similarities between Isa. 14 and Ezek. 32 see pp. 243-245 of the present study.

129. Thus the Septuagint and Old Latin version.

And they lie with the fallen mighty men of old who went down to Sheol with their weapons of war, whose swords were laid under their heads and whose iniquities are upon their bones; for the terror of the mighty men was in the land of the living. So you shall be broken and lie among the uncircumcised with those who are slain by the sword.

Most commentators understand the consonantal text גבורים נפלים מעולם to contain an explicit or covert reference to the Nephilim of Gen. 6:4.¹³⁰ From the recurrent interlocked variants הגבורים אשר מעולם//הנפלים (Gen. 6:4), בני ענק מן הנפלים//הנפילים (Num. 13:33), ענקים//רפאים (Deut. 2:11, 20,21), נפלים מעולם//גבורים (Ezek. 32:27; Septuagint version), we may infer that biblical רפאים denote 'heroes.'

The heroic aspect imparted to the Rephaim as shades of the dead, and to the living בני הרפה, if indeed they prove to be the living counterparts of the former, is reminiscent of extra-biblical *rp'm*. But the similarity between the two may be maintained only on a general level. Upon closer examination fundamental differences assert themselves.

A clearly marked association between the heroic figures designated *rp'm* and the divine sphere is evident in several of the Ugaritic texts. *Rp'm* appear in parallelism with *ilnym* - 'gods' or 'semi-gods.'¹³¹ They are invited to divine banquets, in particular to the *marzēah* of El,¹³² to which they arrive riding their chariots.¹³³ They are designated *mhr b'ḷ*

130. For a discussion of this association and the meaning of Nephilim see C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, BKAT (Neukirchen, 1974), pp. 491-512, esp. p. 511.

131. CTA 6.6.45; CTA 20.B.1-2, 21.A.1-4, and may be restored also in CTA 22.A.3-6. See also the Latin-Punic bilingual KAI 117.

132. CTA 20.B.21A. For *mrz'y* see O. Eissfeldt, "Kultvereine in Ugarit," *Ugaritica* 6 (1971), 187-195. CTA 22B.

133. CTA 20B4, 22a, 2223 (partially restored).

and *mhr 'nt*, 'warriors of Ba'1' and 'warriors of Anat,'¹³⁴ and are mentioned together with the retainers, *hyl*, and princes who share the company of the gods.¹³⁵ In the Bible, on the other hand, no direct association between Rephaim and the divine sphere is attested. This is noteworthy since God is often designated 'ה' צבאות - 'the Lord of Hosts,' who rides his cloud-chariot in Ba'1-like fashion (2 Sam. 22:11/Ps. 18:11) and is surrounded by angels described as גבורי חיל - 'mighty warriors' (Ps. 103:20). "God's chariots are myriads upon myriads, thousands upon thousand his charioteers"¹³⁶ (Ps. 68:18), but Rephaim are never mentioned in such contexts. A certain relationship between the Rephaim and the divine sphere may be postulated only by indirect inference from the biblical association between Rephaim > 'Anaqim > Nephilim, and the designation of the latter as בני אלהים - 'sons of God' (Gen. 6:4).

The lack of association between biblical Rephaim and the divine sphere is even more conspicuous when Rephaim are mentioned as shades of the dead. This is remarkable since belief in the deified shadows of the dead - designated 'אלהים' - is attested in the Bible. Although prophetic circles were critical of such belief (Isa. 8:19), there existed among Israel a cult of dead kin, prevalent enough to necessitate prohibitive

134. CTA 21B.22b.

135. CTA 22B. The stock epithet of Dan'el, *mt rpi*, seems to be an honorific title of heroic connotation on the basis of its parallel, *g̃zr mt hrnm̃y* - 'the hero man of hrnm̃y' (placing the person so designated under the special patronage of the deity *rp*'?).

136. See A. F. Rainey, "The Military Personnel of Ugarit," *JNES* 24 (1965) 22-23, for שׁנאן, which may be rendered 'charioteers' or 'bowmen.'

legislation.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, the valuation of Rephaim as shades of the dead seems to be fundamentally different from that of *rp'm* in extra-biblical literature.

A pertinent Ugaritic text is the description of the status of Krt: *mid rm krt btk rpi arš bphr qbš dtn* - 'may Keret be greatly exalted among the *rpi arš* in the assembly of *dtm*' (/ *ddn* in RS.34.126).¹³⁸ If *dtm* is taken as meaning 'warrior',¹³⁹ rather than being a tribal eponym or clan-ancestor as some assume,¹⁴⁰ and *rpi arš*, the parallel line is a reference to the shades of the dead,¹⁴¹ a certain rank of distinction is implied in the term *rp'*. To join the *rp'm* after death seems to be a beneficial condition, as evidenced in two Phoenician sepulchral inscriptions. The inscriptions comprise the following curses, wished down upon potential disturbers of these royal graves:

Whoever you are who might find this sarcophagus
don't, don't open it and don't disturb me....
But if you do open it and if you do disturb me
may [you] not have any seed among the living and
under the sun or resting place together with the
shades [*'l y<k>n l<k> zr' bhyt tbt šm(8)š wškb*
't rp'm].¹⁴²

137. Lev. 19:31, 20:27, Deut. 18:11, 1 Sam. 28:9.

138. CTA 15.3.2-4; 15.3.13-15.

139. Accadian *da-at-nu* is paralleled by *qarrādu* - 'heroes,' see A. Draffkorn-Kilmer, "The First Tablet of malku-šarru," *JAOS* 83 (1963) 435.

140. S. B. Parker, "The Marriage Blessing in Israel and Ugaritic Literature," *JBL* 95 (1976) 28-29; M. Astour, "A North Mesopotamian Locale of the Keret Epic?" *UF* 6 (1973) 35-37; E. Lipinski, "Ditanu," *S. E. Loewenstamm Festschrift* (Jerusalem, 1978) 91-110; and others.

141. Contrary to L'Heureux, *Rank*, 201-204, and others.

142. KAI 13 7/8.

Whoever you are, ruler and [ordinary] man, may he not open this resting-place....

...for any ruler and any man who shall open this resting-place...may they not have a resting-place with the shades [*l ykn lm mškb 't rp'm*] may they not be buried in a grave, and may they not have son and seed to take their place....¹⁴³

According to L'Heureux,¹⁴⁴ "These texts preserve the nuance that the *rp'm* are an aristocracy among the dead, as in RS 34.126. In other biblical texts, the term has become democratized and applied to the shades of all the dead." If indeed the *rp'm* initially constituted an 'aristocracy among the dead' it seems that the concept had already been 'democratized' in these inscriptions to the degree that potentially every one could join them after death. Otherwise the curse addressed to 'ruler and [ordinary] man' alike could not have served as a deterrent to the commoner. The deeply rooted belief in the efficacy of curses suggests that these were not casually formulated. Moreover, it is doubtful whether such a process of 'democratization' may be postulated for either biblical or extra-biblical beliefs. It seems rather that upon death every deceased was believed to acquire a 'larger than life' image, and supernatural powers were attributed to him; his words were considered more potent even when he was only approaching the hour of his death (Gen. 49:1ff.; Deut. 33:1ff.). Every dead therefore became אלהים - 'a god' and every kinship group turned for advice to its own ancestor-god. Note that in the

143. KAI 14:8.

144. C. E. L'Heureux, *Rank*, 222; cf. R. Dussaud, *Les Découvertes de Ras Shamra (Ugarit) et l'Ancien Testament*, end ed. (Paris, 1941), p. 187.

following verses מתיים parallels אלהים as such:

הלא עם אל אלהיו ידרוש
(Isa. 8:19) בעד החיים אל המתים

וחקראן לעם לזבחי אלהיהן ויאכל העם וישתחו לאלהיהן
(Num. 24:2-3) ויצמד ישראל לבעל פעור.

ויצמדו לבעל פעור ויאכלו זבחי מתים (Ps. 106:28)

Note also that in the above-mentioned curse to "have a resting place with *rp'm*" is mentioned in line with being "buried in a grave" and having "son and seed" to take one's place. Having 'a resting place with *rp'm*' thus seems to connote the very same idea conveyed in the previously discussed phrases, וישכב עם אבותיו, נאסף אל עמיו, implying no more than being granted a natural and proper afterlife, which, according to ancient man's belief, entailed being granted god-like and hero-like features.

While in these extra-biblical texts joining the *rp'm* is a desirable fate, it is not so in the Bible. One detects an ironic tone in the following verse:

אדם תועה מדרך השכל בקהל רפאים ינוח

A man who wanders from the way of understanding will
come to rest in the company of the Rephaim.

[Prov. 21:16; KJ]

The attitude of ridicule is even more pronounced in the following verses on the seductions of an adultress:

'Whoever is simple, let him turn in here'
And to him who is without sense she says
'Stolen water is sweet and bread eaten in
secret is pleasant'

But he does not know that Rephaim are there,
that the guests are in the depth of Sheol.

[Prov. 8:18; cf. 2:18]

But it is not only the unheeding simpleton or the one who strays from rational behavior who is destined to "rest in the company of Rephaim." Diametrically contrary to the Phoenician inscriptions, it is he who has been 'cast out of his grave,' 'trodden underfoot,' who 'is not united with his ancestors,' 'his descendants unnamed,' his sons 'slaughtered,' who is not met with by the Rephaim (Isa. 14:19-21).

An outright polemical attitude concerning the belief in Rephaim and their efficacy may be detected in the Bible. This again is in contrast to extra-biblical attitudes. In a recently published text from Ugarit, *rp'm* were invoked, among other deceased ancestors, in order to bestow their blessing upon the town of Ugarit and its royal dynasty.¹⁴⁵ This text, as has been noted by commentators,¹⁴⁶ seems to be related to the royal *kispu* ritual, but the occasion of its performance is not entirely clear. A *kispu* ritual was performed on fixed dates, on either the first or sixteenth of the month, and was meant to supply the deceased with food offerings and water libations to satisfy their needs and secure their blessings for state and royal dynasty. There seems to have been a *kispu* ritual not only for the deceased ancestors but also for "[any] soldier who fell while on his lord's service" and for "all humanity, from the

145. Text RS.34.126, published by A. Caquot in *Annuaire du Collège de France* 75 (1975-76) 427-429.

146. The text has been discussed by J. C. de Moor, "Rāpi'uma-Rephaim," *ZAW* 88 (1976) 333-336, 341-346; M. Pope, "Notes on the Rephaim Texts from Ugarit," *Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences* 19 (1977) 177-182; C. E. L'Heureux, *Rank*, 187-192; W. T. Pitard, "The Ugaritic Funerary Text, RS.34.126," *BASOR* 232, 65-75. A privately published study by T. H. Gaster mentioned by Pope (*op. cit.*, p. 182, n.92) was unavailable to me.

East to the West, who have no one to care for them or to call their names."¹⁴⁷ Apart from these, special *kispu* offerings were also known, involving commoners as well as kings. These were performed at times when misfortune befell an individual, a state, or a royal dynasty, and were aimed at placating vengeful spirits of the dead. While it cannot be established with certainty, it seems to us that the Ugaritic text under discussion belongs to this last category. This assumption is based on the copious weeping mentioned in lines 14-16 and on line 17 which contains the vocable 'dmt in what seems to be a liturgical repetition "'dmt.w 'dmt." We consider this vocable to be equivalent to Hebrew מַחֵי מָחַי¹⁴⁸ and Accadian *adi-māṭi*¹⁴⁹ - 'how long?' which occurs in biblical as well as Accadian prayers. This is a formulaic expression, attested both in royal and individual laments, introduced as a plea for mercy and usually constituting the climax of the lamentation. If this interpretation is accepted, the *rp'i* 'a[rš] mentioned in lines 2 and 9, the various *rp'* [a] in lines 4-5, and the *rp'm qdmym* in line 8 are invoked in order to be placated and finally to bestow their blessing and thus restore 'peace' to Ugarit and the royal dynasty of Hammurapi. At any rate, this text is an

147. Text BM.80328 11.33, 37f, 38. This text has been published and discussed by J. J. Finkelstein, "The Genealogy of the Hammurapi Dynasty," *JCS* 20 (1966) 95-118. Cf. W. G. Lambert, "Another Look at Hammurabi's Ancestors," *JCS* 22 (1968) 1-2. For the *kispu* offering see M. Bayliss, "The Cult of Dead Kin in Assyria and Babylonia," *Iraq* 35, 115-125.

148. Pss. 74:10, 79:5, 80:5, 89:47. For a non-liturgical use of this phrase see Isa. 6:11. For discussion see H. Gunkel, *Einleitung in die Psalmen* (Göttingen, 1966), p. 127.

149. For discussion as well as source indications of this expression in Accadian prayers see E. R. Dalglisch, *Psalms Fifty One* (Leiden, 1962), pp. 27-28 and note 40.

appeal for their help and it is hoped that their good-will will be enlisted together with that of the more recently deceased ancestors.¹⁵⁰

In the Bible no power at all - benevolent or malevolent - is attributed to the Rephaim. Although the Bible is apparently familiar with extra-biblical beliefs concerning the *rp'm*, it denies the efficacy of the Rephaim. It claims that they are no more potent than all other dead who, once dead, will not rise any more. They have absolutely no part in divinely-planned history:

Do you work wonders for the dead?
Do the shades [רפאים] rise to praise you?
[Ps. 88:11]

The polemic against the Rephaim and against power being attributed to them is most explicit in Isa. 26:13-14, 19. In this proto-apocalyptic passage the belief in God, the invocation of His name only, is pledged in what seems a liturgical formulation:

O Lord our God. Other lords besides Thee have ruled
over us, but Thy name alone we acknowledge.
[v.13]

Contrasted with this acknowledgement is the disavowal of any potency to the Rephaim:

The dead will not live
The Rephaim will not rise.
[v.14]

150. The term *rp'm qdmym* (1.8) seems to be a collective term comprising the more ancient 'heroic' ancestors while the subsequent names in this list (11.11-12) point to more recent royal ancestors. The former term is reminiscent of *עם עולם* in Ezek. 26:20, which, in view of the often-encountered parallelism between *עולם* and *קדם* may be a variant of the Ugaritic term.

Chapter 26 of Isaiah is, admittedly, beset with many difficulties for which no satisfactory solution has as yet been offered. The sequence of ideas is not at all clear and the chapter seems to be of a rather composite nature. Yet a tension may be detected in verses 13 and 14 between two opposing beliefs. In these verses belief in the resurrection of the dead and the ability of the Rephaim to rise from the dead is denied, and belief in the exclusiveness of divine help and sovereignty is underscored. This may well be a facet of the biblical polemic with the belief in the deified dead, אֱלֹהִים, and their potency. Even when resorting to ridicule, the biblical writer must have felt the vitality, hence the potential danger to stark monotheism, emanating from the belief he wished in this manner to reject.

The vehemence of the verdict against the Rephaim:

Thou hast visited them with destruction and wiped
out all remembrance of them.

[v.14]

may indicate that more is involved than polemic against a rival belief. Perhaps also faint echoes of an ancient myth, concerning the rebellion of the "sons of God" (Gen. 6:4) whose pattern can no longer be reconstructed on the basis of biblical data, but which is hinted at time and again in various biblical contexts, may have some bearing on the problem of the Rephaim.

Concerning the "sons of God," designated Nephilim and "heroes of old" (Gen. 6:4), E. A. Speiser draws attention to the Hittite mythological cycle which recounts in bloodthirsty and morbid detail the primeval wars between Titans and gods which, familiar to much of the ancient world, must

have been known to the author of Genesis 6:4. Speiser concludes that "it is evident moreover from the tenor of the Hebrew account that its author was highly critical of the subject matter..." and that "the present position of the fragment immediately before the account of the flood...emerges as a moral indictment and thereby a motive to the forthcoming disaster."¹⁵¹ We may add that the critical attitude of the author to the "sons of God" may be further deduced from his introductory phrase 'בִּימֵי הָהֵם' - 'in those days.' This seems to be a formulaic expression which, when used in the Bible for a past event, always points to its negative character.¹⁵² Thus, a latent sin is attributed to the sons of God in Gen. 6:4, which becomes more explicit (although by no means entirely clear) in the divine aspirations of a certain Helel ben Shachar (Isa. 14:12-14). More such hints are encountered in the Bible, and the above discussed sequence of sons of God = heroes of old = Nephilim = 'Anaqim = Rephaim may suggest that all these references are allusions to the same mythological cycle which recounts the rebellion and subsequent fall of the sons of God (or El).

The recurrence of the root נפל in various verbal and nominal forms in these verses may echo the myth of this rebellion and its inevitable result:

הַנְּפִלִים הָיוּ בָאָרֶץ בִּימֵי הָהֵם וְגַם אַחֲרֵי כֵן אֲשֶׁר יִבְאוּ בְנֵי
הָאֱלֹהִים אֶל בָּנוֹת הָאָדָם וְיִלְדוּ לָהֶם הֵמָּה הַגִּבּוֹרִים אֲשֶׁר מֵעוֹלָם
אֲנָשֵׁי הָשָׁם.

[Gen. 6:4]

151. E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, AB.1.46.

152. See esp. Judg. 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25; 1 Sam. 3:1, 28:1; 2 Kings 10:32, 15:37, 20:1//2 Chron. 32:24; Ezek. 38:17; Dan. 10:2.

איך נפלת משמים הלל בן שחר... ואתה אמרת השמים אעלה
אעלה על במתי עב אדמה לעליון: אך אל שאול תורד אל
ירכתי בור.

[Isa. 14:12-15]

וישכבו את גבורים נפלים מעלם אשר ירדו שאול בכלי מלחמתם
ויתנו את הרבותם תחת ראשיהם ויהי עונותם על עצמותם כי
חתית גבורים בארץ חיים.

[Ezek. 32:27; Septuagint]

[Isa. 26:19] וארץ רפאים תפיל.

This may be the sin of the fallen heroes¹⁵³ mentioned in Ezek. 32:27.

This myth may also explain why Rephaim were encountered in Sheol and, finally, why people who died ignoble deaths were believed to share their fate.

The nature of Sheol may be indirectly indicated by yet another group, that category of people which seems to constitute its potential denizens: בני/אנשי/איש-בליעל.¹⁵⁴

The ancient versions understood Belial to connote 'evil' in a rather general sense and rendered the term by 'lawlessness,' 'sacrilege,' or 'iniquity' in accordance with the various contexts. Their renditions are for that reason not of much help for establishing the proper denotations of this term.¹⁵⁵ An explication which was widely accepted both by former

153. The sin of the fallen "sons of God/heroes of old" is a prominent feature in post-biblical literature. See D. Dimant, "The Fallen Angels in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Apocryphal and Pseudoepigraphical Books related to Them" (unpublished dissertation, Jerusalem, 1974).

154. The term בליעל occurs 27 times in the Bible: Deut. 13:14, 15:9; Jud. 19:22, 20:13; 1 Sam. 1:16, 2:12, 10:27, 25:17, 25, 30:22; 2 Sam. 16:7, 20:1, 22:5, 23:6; 1 King. 21:10, 13 (2); Nah. 1:11, 2:1; Pss. 18:5, 41:9, 101:3; Prov. 6:12, 16:27, 19:28; Job 34:18; 2 Chron. 13:7. It predominantly serves to qualify a human being, human thought or intention. For simplicity it will henceforth be spelled 'Belial.'

155. For details see D. W. Thomas, "בליעל in the Old Testament," *Biblical and Patristic Studies in Memory of R. P. Casey* (1963), 11-12.

and by more recent commentators understands the vocable to be a compound form composed of a privative element, בלי, plus a verbal noun derived from the verb יעל, which in Hiphil denotes 'to be of avail,' 'helpful.' Thus, בליעל = 'worthless.'¹⁵⁶ However, this verbal noun is a purely hypothetical postulation and is nowhere attested in biblical Hebrew or in any of the cognate languages.¹⁵⁷ More probable is another interpretation which understands the term as a combination of יעלה + בלי, יעל being an apocopated (imperfect) and renders the term '[who] will not come up [again]' - from the netherworld. This interpretation is derived from the Babylonian euphemism for the netherworld - 'land of no return',¹⁵⁸ - and from the similarly described biblical שאול (Job 7:9); Belial is accordingly rendered as 'hellion.'¹⁵⁹

The relation between Belial and the Babylonian-biblical descriptions of the netherworld has yet another aspect. Besides serving as a human characterization, the term Belial is also employed as a description for the underworld rivers associated with Sheol (2 Sam. 22:5//Ps. 18:5). As previously indicated, a conceptual counterpart to these rivers is found in Mesopotamian underworld topography. In both cultures the intimidating

156. Gesenius, *Thesaurus* (1829), 209. BDB.116. KB.130. J. Gray, *I and II Kings* (Great Britain, 1970), p. 441, and many others.

157. For additional interpretative proposals of similar hypothetical character see G. R. Driver, "Hebrew Notes," *ZAW* 52 (1934) 51-56; N. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions*, pp. 125-128, and the summary of Otzen in *TWAT* (1973), pp. 654-658.

158. K. Tallqvist, *Namen der Totenwelt*, p. 15f.

159. For early scholars see T. K. Cheyne, *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (1899), Vol. I, pp. 525-526; F. Baethgen, *Die Psalmen*, HAT (1892), p. 51. For more recent studies: F. M. Cross, D. N. Freedman, "A Royal Psalm of Thanksgiving," *JBL* 72 (1953) 22; S. Jellicoe, "Hebrew-Greek Equivalents for the Netherworld," *Textus* 8 (1973) 5.

character suggested by their name is underscored by the imagery of entrapment associated with them. Both in Babylonian and in biblical prayers penitent supplication is made for rescue from the clutches of the underworld and its lethal rivers. In the Bible, however, an even-handed and gracious God is believed to preside over Sheol and to check its inherent aggressiveness; and hope for such rescue is the predominant motif:

1 Sam. 2:6	ה' מוריד שאול ויעל
Ps. 16:10	לא תעזוב נפשי לשאול
Jon. 2:3	ויענני מבטן שאול
Ps. 49:16	יפדה נפשי מיד שאול
Ps. 49:13	הצלת נפשי מיד שאול
Ps. 86:13	והצלת נפשי משאול תחתיה
Job 14:13	מי יתן בשאול תצפינני...תשית לי חק ותזכרני

And since שחת is synonymous to Sheol, the following verses are also relevant:

Job 33:18	רחשך נפשו מני שחת
Isa. 51:14	ולא ימות לשחת
Ps. 103:4,14	הגואל משחת חייך
Job 33:28	פדה נפשי מעבור בשחת
Job 33:30	להשיב נפשי מני שחת
Jon. 2:7	תעל משחת חיי
Ps. 16:10	לא תתן חסידיך לראות שחת

Not everyone, however, was deserving of divine mercy and rescue. The unworthy, we suggest, were the people designated בליעל בני בליעל, אנשים בני בליעל. The term בן/בני in this phrase is not taken to mean

'son/sons,' which would be redundant in a phrase which already has אנשים to designate 'people,'¹⁶⁰ but rather in its meaning 'worthy of [a verdict]'/ 'deserving the penalty of...', as in the formulation בן מות - 'worthy of the penalty of death' or בן חבלות - 'deserving the penalty of being beaten/flogged' (Deut. 25:2). The בני בליעל are therefore those deserving a penalty of not 'coming up' from Sheol,¹⁶¹ which, according to the context in which Sheol usually appears in the Bible, amounts to 'not being rescued from premature and unnatural death.' This indeed is their fate in the Bible.

Who are the people designated בני בליעל? They obviously are sinners. But the studies devoted to elucidating this term which describe Belial as "a very wicked man"¹⁶² are hardly specific enough, whereas such definitions as "what fundamentally works as dissolutatory, destructive, chaotic - Belial constitutes what is arch evil...", "Contrary to God and the fundamental regulations concerning social life,"¹⁶³ may be further refined. At first the various malefactions designated an act of Belial seem to constitute a rather heterogeneous body of transgressions. Upon closer examination a common denominator as to the nature of the sin and

160. E.g., Jud. 19:22, 20:13; 1 King. 21:10,13. Many commentators therefore suggest the elision of one of the two vocables. But the above-mentioned interpretation requires no text emendation.

161. The term may be a double-entendre, referring to both the realm of the netherworld and the person who deserves to be confined there.

162. Joüon, "Belija'al," *Biblica* 5 (1925) 183.

163. V. Maag, "Belija'al im Alten Testament," *ThZ* 21 (1965) 295, and 294; D. W. Thomas, "בליעל in the Old Testament," pp. 11-19.

the mode of punishment emerges. Moreover, a number of terms which serve to qualify the sin of Belial may be considered as ramifications of one basic concept - that of breach of covenant.

When David, then a fugitive captain in the wilderness of Paran, sent his retainers to Nabal on the occasion of the shearing of sheep festivities, he enjoined them to offer a salutation to Nabal:

Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and
peace be to all that you have.

[1 Sam. 25:6-7]

and to request as token of his hospitality a supply of food. This David fully expected, having previously protected Nabal's shepherds "by night and by day" (v.16). Nabal, however, spurned his request. His malefaction, termed an act of בן בליעל, is further qualified as "returning evil for good" - וישב לי רעה תחת טובה (v.21), as פשע, as bringing upon himself רעה, and as נבלה. These terms need further elucidation. The term פשע in biblical Hebrew denoted 'breach of covenant,' precisely what Nabal was seen to be guilty of, for according to ancient Near Eastern norms of hospitality, the host-guest relationship was a binding covenant entailing specific obligations.¹⁶⁴ This background justifies the seemingly extreme measures planned by David, and carried out by God, in retaliation for Nabal's abuse. To "return evil for good" is no simple offense. It is breach of covenant, in this case between protector and protected.

Recent research in treaty terminology has established that the term *tbt* in Sefire treaties is a legal term meaning "friendship, good relations

164. For elaboration see A. Draffkorn, "How Was Queen Ereshkigal Tricked? A New Interpretation of the Descent of Ishtar," *UF* 3 (1971) 299-309.

with specific reference to the amity established by treaty."¹⁶⁵ A similar legal usage has been discerned in Accadian *tubtu/tubu/tābūtu*. The Hebrew term *tōb* - טוב in various forms occurs with a similar technical meaning in covenantal context.¹⁶⁶ It should be noted that the term טוב or טובה has its negative counterpart in the term רעה. It is therefore suggested that the term רעה/רע be considered not as connoting evil in a general sense but as denoting a specific act in the framework of a covenantal relationship. The term רע/רעה alludes either to seditious activity such as inciting to political rebellion against the overlord or qualifies an act that aims at or results in a breach of covenant through violation of one of its specified stipulations. The term may also refer to the conditions created as a result of such a breach of covenant. This meaning of רע/רעה may be discerned in biblical usage where the term appears as a counter-parallel to טוב/טובה in a covenantal context,¹⁶⁷ or when the context otherwise clearly indicates a covenantal background.¹⁶⁸ This

165. W. L. Moran, "A Note on the Treaty Terminology of the Sefire Stelas," *JNES* 22 (1963) 173-176.

166. Deut. 23:7; 2 Sam. 2:6. For discussion: D. Hillers, "A Note on Some Treaty Terminology in the O.T.," *EASOR* No.176 (1964) 46-47; also 2 Sam. 7:28; 1 King. 12:7, and possibly 2 King. 25:28; 2 Chron. 24:16. For further discussion see A. Malamat, "Organs of Statecraft in the Israelite Monarchy," *BA* 28 (1965) 64; see also 1 Sam. 25:30; Jer. 33:14, and, for discussion, M. Weinfeld, "עצת הזקנים לרחבעם," *Lešonenu* 36, 10-13, 85-105.

167. The following source indication is not exhaustive and merely indicates a number of representative examples: Gen. 26:28,29; Jos. 23:15, 16, 24:19-21; Jud. 9:16,56; Jer. 4:22.

168. E.g., Deut. 17:2,5; 1 Sam. 12:24,25; 2 Sam. 19:8. Note הִנֵּן בְּרֵעֲתֶךָ (2 Sam. 15:8). The stereotyped phrase וַיַּעַשׂ הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי ה' occurring more than forty times in the historical framework of the Book of Kings should therefore be rendered "he did what constituted a breach of covenant in the eyes [valuation] of the Lord" since it invariably involves the worship of other gods.

more specific usage of רע/רעה has its parallel in Aramaic מלך להית¹⁶⁹ - 'bad words'¹⁷⁰ and in Hittite *idaluṣ memiiaṣ*.¹⁷¹ It is therefore significant that in the Bible the term Belial is balanced eight times by רעה¹⁷² and in the chapter under discussion this term appears seven times in counter-parallelism to the 'house' (dynasty) of David, which will be established in a lasting covenant with God.

The nature of the 'evil' committed by a Belial is further defined by the term 'נבלה' which parallels it in our chapter (v.24) as well as in Judges (19:23,24, 20:13). An act of 'נבלה' is a breach of the basic social behavioral norms of a given society. The formulaic expression which recurs time and again in the Bible, עשה נבלה בישראל, is probably a legal expression which signifies an act which "ought not be done," (Gen. 34:7), one which violates tenets of behavior considered normative in a given society and which also serve to set that society off from other social groups.¹⁷³ The specific norms of behavior which distinguished Israel from other nations, it should be noted, were also considered to be

169. KAI 26.A.1.9 - counter-balanced by נעט - a technical term for covenant relationship; see M. Weinfeld, *Lešonenu* 36, pp. 84-91.

170. J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire*, III, 1-4; H. L. Ginsberg, *JAOS* 59 (1939) 105; J. C. Greenfield, *Acta Orientalia* 29 (1965) 8-9; M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, p. 93, m.11, p. 96, m.6.

171. J. Friedrich, *MVAG* 34 (1930).

172. Jud. 19:22,23 (cf. 20:3,6), 20:13; 1 Sam. 30:22; 2 Sam. 16:7, 8; Prov. 16:27; Nah. 1:11.

173. See M. Noth, *The History of Israel* (New York, 1958), pp. 103-105; A. Philis, "Nebalah," *VT* 25 (1975) 237-241. On the term נבל see W. M. Roth, "NBL," *VT* 10 (1960) 394-409; R. A. Bennett, "Wisdom Motifs in Psalm 14=53: nābāl and 'ēṣāh," *BASOR* 220 (1975) 15-21.

the specific stipulations of the covenant between God and His people. The violation of such norms was not only believed to disrupt the orderly functioning of social life, it was also felt to constitute a threat to the very foundations of society. It was therefore a matter of communal responsibility to eradicate the violator so as to "purge the evil from among you" - ובעדת הרע מקרבך.

The violator of such basic norms of behavior is in the Bible called Belial. The recurrent covenant terminology in these texts indicates the nature of the transgression, as does the punishment - which is invariably death, and often described as the typical death sentence reserved for the violators of covenant. The gravity of the offense is indicated by the fact that it cannot be atoned for.

An incident similar to the Nabal story is encountered in Jud. 19-20: the offense is again breach of the covenant "of brothers,"¹⁷⁴ which is to offer protection and food. The violators are designated בני בליעל (19:22), their act נבלה בישראל (19:22) נבלה (20:6,20) and רעה (19:23, 20:3). A delegation of representatives of all the tribes of Israel (20:12) approaches the tribe of Benjamin, whence came the malefactors, with a formal accusation: מה הרעה הזאת אשר נהיתה בכם (20:12) and a formal demand of 'handing over' the transgressors: תנו את האנשים בני בליעל.¹⁷⁵ The verdict is death, in order to "purge the evil from Israel" (20:12). Upon failure to

174. J. Priest, "The Covenant of Brothers," *JBL* 84 (1965) 400ff.

175. This demand to 'hand over' the malefactor was the legal formula used by representatives of the community in such instances. It recurs in connection with בני בליעל (1 Sam. 10:27) in 1 Sam. 11:12. See H. Boecker, *Redeformen des Rechtslebens im Alten Testament* (Neukirchen, 1970), pp. 24ff.

comply, all-out war is decreed. The story makes it clear that it was divine intervention that brought the 'evil' upon the tribe of Benjamin (20:28,34,35). This transgression has its classical prototype in the sin of Sodom and Gomorah (Gen. 19:1-29), where a similar offense is designated by the verb לע (v.7) and the punishment is conceived of "as the classic punishment of breach of covenant with the deity."¹⁷⁶

Another instance of an 'evil,' a "thought of Belial," is to refuse a loan to a needy "brother" (Deut. 15:2,3,79). That this is a betrayal of kinship obligation is conveyed by the formulation of the Deuteronomist who introduces the term אחיך - 'your brother,' not found in the JE and P sources which deal with these laws.¹⁷⁷ The sin והיה בך חטא - 'you will incur sin' (v.10) is equivalent to ונשא עונו - 'he will bear his iniquity' which, in the P source, denotes a sin that cannot be atoned for.¹⁷⁸ Yet the violation of kinship covenant in this transgression is part of a larger breach, that of the divine covenant. The land is God's property; man was merely entrusted with the use of it and cannot dispose of it as private property. To deny aid because of calculations of loss and gain related to the sabbatical year amounts to disregard of the true ownership of the land, which is the Lord's. In terms of the covenant relationship, this constitutes abuse of the rights of the overlord.

An additional betrayal of the basic 'brotherhood' among men is

176. For this interpretation see M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, pp. 111-112.

177. S. R. Driver, *Deuteronomy*, ICC (Edinburg, 1895), p. 175f.

178. See W. Zimmerli, "Die Eigenart der prophetischen Rede des Ezechiel," *ZAW* 66 (1954) 9f.

connected with the sin of bearing false witness, designated in the Bible as עד בליעל (Prov. 19:28). בני בליעל is also the term used to characterize the false witnesses in the Naboth story [1 King. 21:10,13(2x)].¹⁷⁹ False testimony in court, which could affect a man's life, impair his freedom, and endanger his life, was of special concern to ancient society, as can be deduced from the requent mention of its potential danger in both biblical and extra-biblical literature.¹⁸⁰ The fact that prohibition against it was included in the Ten Commandments lends it paradigmatic importance as a potential disrupter of orderly communal life. This is also underscored by the special way in which this offense is envisaged in the biblical context. The offense is committed against a fellow-man, רֵעַ - literally 'your friend' (Exod. 20:13; Deut. 5:17), which Deuteronomy later underscores by twice substituting the noun אֲחִיךָ for רֵעַ (Deut. 19:18,19). The offense thus constitutes a breach of amity. Since God is not only the guarantor of the covenant, but also a party to it, the offense is a composite one - against fellow-man, the covenant community, but also an affront to God. The false witness has thus to be "purged from among the community" (Deut. 19:19).

179. The Septuagint, which is commonly considered to have preserved the superior text, retains Belial only in v.10. It is doubtful that the designation בני בליעל for the witnesses is part of the actual wording of the royal decree. It seems rather to belong to the critical valuation of the trial by the narrator, who seems to be the Deuteronomist. For discussion see O. Steck, *Überlieferung und Zeitgeschichte in der Elia Erzählung* (Neukirchen, 1968), pp. 32-77. To her arguments add the linguistic criteria: the phrase סֵר לְזַעַף (v.4) is found only once more in the Bible, in a typical Deuteronomy passage: 1 King. 20:43.

180. Note the equivalent term עַד חָמָס (Deut. 19:15; Exod. 23:1; Pss. 27:12, 35:11) and the frequent equation חָמָס = דָּם in the Bible: Hab. 2:8, 17; Jer. 51:35; Ps. 72:14.

The composite nature of an offense designated בליעל may also be inferred from the fact that an act of high treason is described in sacral terms - i.e., as a violation of a sacred covenant, much as an act of idol-worship is described in the same terms as an act of high treason, as the following examples indicate.

Kingship in Israel was seen as a covenant between God and king. Accordingly, the unwillingness of some to accept the king as a savior designated by God was considered an act of Belial. 1 Kings 10:27 further qualifies their sin: the verb בזה - 'to abuse' which in the Bible denotes breach of covenant. The community had to expunge these people and, using the legal expression we encounter in similar circumstances, demanded that they be 'handed over.' These Belial, granted an amnesty on the occasion of a divinely-assisted victory, are the only ones to have avoided death as the penalty for their violation. A person who incited to rebellion against the king was considered a man of Belial (2 Sam. 20:1) and put to death. From the point of view of a loyalist to the House of Saul, David, who inherited his place, was a 'man of Belial' deserving the 'evil' that befell him when his son rebelled against him (2 Sam. 15:7). All these cases of high treason were also considered betrayal of the Lord who installed the king by covenant. It is therefore noteworthy that the term Belial occurs as a counterforce to covenant relationship in counter parallelism to the description of ideal kingship,¹⁸¹ - ideal, i.e., everlasting

181. Ps. 101 is a *Fürstenspiegel* describing the behavioral norms of the ideal king in terms of 'covenant loyalty' to God - as opposed to the behavior of Belial.

dynasty and everlasting royal covenant¹⁸² - or even as counter-parallelism to 'king' as such.¹⁸³

Conversely, political terminology, including the term Belial, is used to describe an act of religious treason (Deut. 13:12-14). This is described as instigated by men 'sons of Belial.' These malefactors instigate to worship foreign gods, described as אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדַעְתֶּם, i.e., "Gods which you do not know." According to recent elucidation of the term יָדַע,¹⁸⁴ this means gods to which one is not bound in covenant relationship, i.e., gods which have no legitimate claim on one. Although this transgression is a religious one, it has political implications¹⁸⁵ and is described in terms analogous to those employed in Hittite, Aramean, and Neo-Assyrian political treaties which deal with political conspiracy and seditious activity among vassals sworn to loyalty by oath. The punishment, too, corresponds in form and content to that meted out to a rebellious city, namely, "put the inhabitants to the sword."¹⁸⁶

Finally, the violation of divine covenant is also implied in the sin of the sons of Eli, whose abuse of the sacral ordinances caused them to be designated 'sons of Belial' (1 Sam. 2:12). Their sin is qualified

182. 2 Sam. 22:5-6; note also 1 Sam. 25, where the everlasting Davidic dynasty is counter-paralleled by the fate of Nabal "the man of Belial."

183. Job 34:17

184. H. B. Huffmon, "The Treaty Background of Hebrew Yāda'," *BASOR* 181 (1966) 31-37.

185. So already F. Horst, *Das Privilegerecht Jahwes* (1930), p. 19; M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, pp. 92-100.

186. J. C. Greenfield, "Studies in West Semitic Inscriptions," I *Acta Orientalia*, 29, p. 5.

as 'לֹא יָדְעוּ אֱלֹהִים' - 'they did not know God.' As already indicated, the term יָדַע belongs to treaty terminology and denotes recognition of the treaty stipulations as binding.¹⁸⁷ In Israel, the technical treaty terminology was transferred from the suzerain-vassal relationship to the Yahweh-servant relationship. The same degree of unconditional loyalty and appropriate behavior was, however, expected. Moreover, the knowledge of the covenant stipulations was especially impressed upon priestly officials since instruction in the law - i.e., stipulations of the divine covenant - was considered a priestly responsibility (Mal. 2:7). Their abuses are again seen in terms of covenant violation designated by the verbs בָּזָז and נָאץ, both of which are attested in the Bible in this meaning.¹⁸⁸ The sin of the sons of Eli therefore could not be expiated, and their punishment is the epitome of evil death, the death of Karet.¹⁸⁹

The specific meaning of Belial as characterizing those who transgress against the covenant must have been a live tradition in the early pre-Christian era, and may have contributed to the selection of the term itself (or Beliar)¹⁹⁰ to designate, in the sectarian literature of the Dead Sea

187. H. B. Huffmon, *BASOR* 181 (1966) 31-37.

188. Numb. 15:30,31, 16:59; Ezek. 17:16,18,19. נָאץ Numb. 16:30; Deut. 31:20, 32:19; Isa. 1:4, 5:24; Jer. 14:21, Neh. 9:18,26.

189. See M. Tsevat, "Studies in the Book of Samuel I," *HUCA* 32 (1961) 191-216.

190. The importance of the term Belial as a central concept both in the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha and sectarian writings has been emphasized by O. Flusser (*Bulletin of the Israel Exploration Society*, Vol. 17 [1952/53], p. 30); cf. Y. Yadin, *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 232-234; henceforth: DSW. The connotation of Belial varies in this literature. While DSW uses Belial as a symbol of all the forces of Darkness opposed to the Sons of

Scrolls as well as in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, those factions among the people of Israel who were considered מְשִׁיעֵי בְרִית - 'offenders against the covenant' (Dan. 11:32) as well as Israel's chief enemies among the gentiles.

The connotation of Belial as a counterforce to the covenant is underscored by the idea, reiterated in this literature, that Belial is powerless to harm those who observe the Law.¹⁹¹ (God Himself urges the Sons of Light to keep His covenant as a protective means in their struggle with Belial who tries to seduce them to forsake the covenant.) According to the *Discipline Scroll*, those who were excluded from the sect and did not participate in the annual oath of faithfulness to the Divine Covenant were designated "the lot of Belial"¹⁹² upon whom an annual curse was invoked. The writers of this literature believed that all the calamities that befell them were to be attributed to the 'dominion of Belial,' but

Light (note the similar usage in 2 Cor. 6:14-15), the author of the Thanksgiving Scholl uses this term to denote a more limited range of evil. Cf. *The Thanksgiving Scroll*, ed. Y. Licht (Jerusalem, 1957), Chapter 2, 20, 10, 4, 13, 4, 28, 3. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to trace the various shades of meaning assumed by Belial in this literature, nor can the question be answered whether the shifts in meaning reflect different emphases of different sectarian authors, or whether they indicate a development in meaning from a defiant tendency within man to an objectified and personified spirit of evil created by God (mainly in the Book of Jubilees and The Testament of the Twelve Tribes) towards a principle of evil in a dualistic world view. Suffice it to note that the term Belial, in this literature, whether used in its more limited sense or in a broader one, serves to designate the antinomy of the observer of the covenant which, besides the new sectarian interpretation, was also considered to be a continuation of the covenant made with the patriarchs, or a renewal of it in the spirit of Jer. 31:31.

191. DSW 14.8-10. Test.Reuben. 4,11.

192. The Rule Scroll, ed. Y. Licht (Jerusalem, 1965), chapters 1, 16-21, 2.2-5, 19.5; DSW 14.9; CDC 4, 12-13; Asc.Is. 2, 8.

they also hoped that after a period of struggle, aided by angelic power but mainly due to divine judgment, Belial would be brought to eternal destruction.

It is here suggested that the identical skein composed of the term Belial, the notion of violation of covenant, and the idea of divine judgment resulting in eternal condemnation is not a new idea of the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and Sectarian literature. What is encountered of it in that literature is an elaboration, a development lending broader social, national and cosmic dimensions to a nexus that in O.T. literature was comprised of conventional transgression and retributive judgment on a personal scale.

Biblical Belial as a transgressor of the basic tenets of moral and religious belief was unworthy of divine grace; therefore, when remanded to Sheol, could not hope to come up. Indirectly, this again suggests that Sheol is not the place for all the dead, but rather only for the sinners.¹⁹³

There are, however, several verses in which Sheol is not associated with 'evil death,' and seems to have a more general meaning denoting the abode of all the dead without moral distinction. Such seems to be the purport of Sheol in Eccl. 9:10 -

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with
your might; for there is no work or thought

193. It may well be that the term Belial originated in Wisdom Literature which concerned itself with norms of behavior. Its frequent occurrence in Deuteronomy and in writings inspired by this school should not surprise us in view of the influence of sapiential literature on this school. And it seems that it is due to the Deuteronomistic school that Belial assumed its more complex connotation relating the term to the idea of covenant violation, which is a basic theme of this school.

or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol to which you are going.

This counsel is addressed to mankind in general, the implication being that Sheol is the final destination of all. But the import of this verse derives from Ecclesiastes' world view, according to which "one fate comes to all" without moral differentiation. It is precisely this absolute lack of retribution in life or death which is considered the source of evil:

But all this I laid to heart, examining it all,
how the righteous and the wise and their deeds
are in the hand of God...since one fate comes to
all, to the righteous and the wicked, to the good
and the evil, to the clean and unclean, to him who
sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As is
the good man so is the sinner and he who swears is
as he who shuns an oath. This is an evil in all
that is done under the sun that one fate comes to all,
also the hearts of men are full of evil and madness
is in their hearts while they live, and after that
they go to the dead.

[Ecc1. 9:1,3]

This passage, which directly precedes the comment on Sheol, delineates Ecclesiastes' specific world view, and no conclusions of a more general nature pertaining to Sheol may be drawn.

In Ps. 89 Sheol appears in a context which seems to refer explicitly to the destination of all mortals:

מי גבר יחיה ולא יראה מות
ימלט נפשו מיד שאול

What man can live and not see death,
Can save himself from the clutches of Sheol?

[Ps. 89:49]

The tenor of this passage is set in the previous verse, whose meaning is decisive for an understanding of the whole section:

זכור אני מה הלד¹⁹⁴
על מה שרא בראח כל בני אדם

I remember how short my life is;
Why should you have created man in vain?

This rendition of the verse is commonly accepted by commentators. The idea expressed in the second colon, however, is unique, and this has not eluded Gunkel.¹⁹⁵ Nowhere else in the Bible do we find the notion that, since human life is of limited duration, the very creation of man is futile. Neither, to my knowledge, is such a view expressed in extra-biblical Near Eastern literature. Ancient man conceived of the whole created world as final, acquiescing in this divine decree.¹⁹⁶ Though he may, at times, have resented his fate and found it hard to accept,¹⁹⁷ it was considered normative for man, as it was for all the rest of creation.¹⁹⁸ The novelty of the idea allegedly expressed in v.48 does not discredit it; it may simply be unique testimony to an otherwise unattested view.

194. The frequent vacillation in the MSS between הלד and חלד may justify the assumption of the Rabbinic exegetes that we are dealing with one term only which, due to metathesis, is represented in two forms, much like שלמה/שמלה and כשב/כש. See BH³ and the discussion in D. W. Thomas, "Some Observations on the Hebrew Root חלד," *SVT* 4 (1957) 8-16.

195. H. Gunkel, *Die Psalmen* (Göttingen, 1976), p. 395. Although he does not elaborate on the verse, he does mark it as "auffallend."

196. For Ugarit, see CTA 16:I.3-4, CTA 17.VI.34-38. For the biblical view see Jos. 23:14//1 King. 2:2; 2 Sam. 14:14; Ps. 82:7.

197. So in the Epic of Gilgamesh. For source reference and discussion see H. Frankfort *et al.*, *Before Philosophy* (Great Britain, 1963), 223-227.

198. Especially so in Egypt, for which see: C. E. Sander-Hansen, *Der Begriff des Todes bei den Agyptern*, p. 20f. In the Bible, the fact that only the fruit of the Tree of Life was to impart immortality to man implies that initially he was not meant to be immortal.

There are, however, other considerations which must be taken into account if one wishes to determine the psalmist's intention.

First, a remark concerning the connotation of שוא. This vocable does not primarily denote futility. Its basic meaning is falseness. This is close to the meaning of the parallel vocables in Arabic and Ethiopic: to be evil, base,¹⁹⁹ and it is most commonly balanced by שקר and כזב.²⁰⁰ The alleged meaning 'in vain' is problematic. Even in the few passages where such a connotation may be valid, it is a secondary meaning which seems to have evolved via the meaning 'false.' An action or intent which had failed to produce the desired result was regarded as though it had been implemented falsely. Note:

[Ps. 127:1] אִם ה' לֹא יִשְׁמֵר עִיר שְׂוֹא שֶׁקֶד שׁוֹמֵר

and the variant formulation

אֵךְ לִשְׁקֹר שִׁמְרָתִי אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר לִזְה...
וַיֵּשֶׁב לִי רַעַת וְהָיָה טוֹבָה

[1 Sam. 25:21]

In order to convey the idea of futility proper, the Bible usually uses the words רִיקָם or הֶבֶל. The modern rendition 'in vain' of the biblical שוא may well have originated in the Latin translation of this vocable by *vanus*, *vanitas*.²⁰¹ The exact meaning of שוא that the psalmist wished to convey may be further elucidated by tracing the main ideas of the verse. The introduction זָכַר אֲנִי (usually emended to זָכַר אֲדָנִי), followed

199. BDB 996.

200. So J. F. A. Sawyer in *Thw*, 882-884.

201. *Ibid.*, 884.

by a description of human transience, is a common motif in biblical pleas aimed at assuaging divine wrath.²⁰² Combined with the emphasis on the transience of human life and man's physical frailty is a plea for re-evaluation of his sin. The plea for leniency is based either on the basic insignificance of human transgressions, considered undeserving of divine attention, or on the claim of moral impotence as inherent in man.²⁰³ According to the Bible, sinfulness was lodged in man's heart "from his youth" (Gen. 8:21), even from the womb:

The wicked are estranged from the womb;^a
They go astray as soon as they are born,
speaking lies.

[Ps. 58:4]

He is a sinner at the very inception of life (Ps. 51:7):

Who can bring a clean thing out of an
unclean? Not one....

[Job 14:4]

What is man, that he should be clean,
And he that is born of woman, that he
should be righteous?

[Job 15:4]

However, in the Bible God is intimately associated with the fashioning of every stage of human life:

Thou didst form my inward parts,
Thou didst cover me in my mother's womb.

[Ps. 139:13]

202. E.g., Ps. 103:14,15; Job 7:7, 10:9.

203. For an elaboration of this theme in biblical and extra-biblical prayers see E. R. Daglish, *Psalms Fifty One*, pp. 118-138.

Your hands molded and made me....
 Did You not pour me out as milk,
 Curdle me as like cheese,
 Clothe me with skin and flesh,
 Knit me with bones and sinews?

[Job 10:8, 10]

Is it not possible, then, to consider God - rather than man - as responsible for man's moral impotence? The idea is a bold one, but not without parallels in biblical²⁰⁴ and extra-biblical literature:

God is [ever] in His success
 Man is [ever] in his failure....
 Say not I have no crime
 Nor labour to seek strife.
 Crime belongeth to God,
 it is scaled with his finger.²⁰⁵

Ps. 89:48,49 should be rendered accordingly:

O remember how short my life is;
 Why should you have created every man
 to sin²⁰⁶
 What man can live and not see death,
 Can save himself from the clutches
 of Sheol?

Thus, the contention that man is morally impotent because he was created a sinner could induce the creator to consider the extenuating circumstances and pacify His wrath (v.47). The claim that man was created "in vain" would seem to have no direct bearing on the plea. In our rendering, however, there would also be a close correspondence between

204. See 1 Kings 18:37.

205. F. L. Griffith, "The Teaching of Amenophis the Son of Kanakht," *JEA* 12 (1926) 216; for discussion, see p. 217.

206. Rendering MT *לֹא־אֱנִי* as elliptical for *לֹא־אֱנִי*. Note also the combination *לֹא־אֱנִי* - 'false men' (Ps. 26:4; Job 11:11).

48a and 48b, 48b and 49b conveying the idea that no short-lived mortal can hope to elude death, nor a man created to sin - Sheol. Verse 49, accordingly, balances the generic term מָוֶת with the specific term שְׁאוֹל, a structural device which is quite common in biblical poetry.

The above interpretation of vv.48,49 cannot be considered conclusive. It is, however, in better agreement with the common drift of ideas in both biblical and ancient Near East prayers than the usual rendition of these verses.

By implication, certain other verses may also point to Sheol as a place for all mankind. In his "legacy of blood vengeance," David enjoins Solomon not to spare the lives of Joab and Shimei. Concerning the former, he instructs his son: "...do not let his gray head go down to Sheol in peace" (1 Kings 2:5), and as to the latter: "Therefore hold him not guiltless...and you shall bring his gray head down with blood to Sheol" (1 Kings 2:9). It might be inferred from these verses that there is a way of 'going down to Sheol in peace,' which David wanted to deny the two malefactors. The intent of the verses, however, is different. The object of both injunctions is retribution for a grave offense, committed not only against the king but also against sacrocanct social norms. The basic aim underlying the act of retribution is, therefore, to restore harmonious order.

In general, retaliation constitutes restitution, 'measure for measure' punishment. This is most explicit in the *talion* penalty:

Pay them according to their deeds,
their malicious acts;
According to their handiwork pay them,
give them their just deserts.

[Ps. 28:4]

In order to underscore the 'measure for measure' idea, the Bible commonly repeats the same vocable for both offense and punishment. This is sometimes done in a chiasitic arrangement, for retribution restores the original situation - in a negative way. The verbal correspondence between the description of the crime and its punishment is not a mere stylistic device, but a means to create a link, via the power of the spoken word, between two initially unrelated phenomena - the offense and the intended punishment:

According to the numbers of the days in which
you spied out the land, forty days, for every
day a year you shall bear your iniquity, forty
years....

[Numb. 14:34]

Viewed in this light, the formulation of the injunction against Joab becomes clear. Because he "...murdered, avenged in time of *peace* blood which had been shed in war," he is not to "go down to Sheol in *peace*." Thus, his offense against the Davidic dynasty is counteracted and harmony is restored:

To David and his descendants and to his house
and to his throne there shall be *peace* from the
Lord for ever more.

[1 Kings 3:33]

The same correspondence holds in the case of Shimei. Here, however, it is less explicit, only because both David and Solomon refrain from repeating the curse which is the object of the retaliation. When the curse is reinserted, the verbal correspondence between crime and punishment becomes evident. In the curse, David is designated "a man of blood," his plight said to be a vengeance for "the blood of the house of Saul,"

and his ruin caused by *עָוֶל* - evil (2 Sam. 16:5). For a curse to be rendered impotent, it must be counteracted by a blessing (Judg. 17:2) and its harmful invective reverses measure for measure. This is precisely the goal of David's injunction and the ensuing punishment by Solomon. Since Shimei cursed David as "a man of *blood*," visited by the guilt of "all the *blood* of the house of Saul" and ruined by his own "*evil*," he shall be brought down "with *blood* to Sheol." Thus, the Lord "will bring back the *evil*" (v.14) upon his own head. "But King Solomon shall be *blessed* and the throne of David shall be established" (*ibid.*, v.45).

The formulations of 1 Kings 2:6,9 are therefore indicative of the nature of the intended punishment but not of the nature of Sheol.

Finally, in Isa. 14:9 Sheol is described as a place where congregate "all who were leaders of the earth...all who were kings of the nations." They all greet the newcomers with the words: "You too have become as weak as we. You have become like us." The common understanding of this verse is that the shades of former kings and leaders/heroes point mockingly to the mortality of the arrogant king who aspired to scale the heavens. According to this rendition, "weak" refers to the enfeebled condition of the dead. The Hebrew text, however, has *חָלִית*,²⁰⁷ which means literally 'to be made ill.' Although one could naturally have expected to find in the Bible a more general use of the vocable *חָלַה*, connoting weakness, the fact is that biblical usage indicates a strict adherence

207. The use of the Pu'al with this verb in MT is a hapax, replaced in 1QIsa^a by the Qal stem for which see P. Wernberg-Møller, "Studies in the Defective Spelling in the Isaiah-Scroll of St. Mark's Monastery," *JES* 3 (1958) 250 and note 1.

to the denotation of illness. While severe illness may give a person a foretaste of death (Ps. 30:3-4), death could not be - and indeed is not - designated by illness.²⁰⁸ The biblical MT חָלַל is therefore suspect in this passage. The reading חָלַל - 'you have been transfixed by the sword' would be more appropriate to the context. This is in agreement with the description in v.19: "...You were left lying unburied...in the clothing of slain gashed by the sword" and also with the historic fate of the king who was killed in a war.²⁰⁹ Moreover, this interpretation would emphasize the discrepancy between the king's lofty aspirations and his actual fate much more than the previous interpretation, since to die by the sword and to be left unburied was the most ignoble of deaths. It would follow, however, that the kings and leaders/heroes who greet the Assyrian king have suffered an equally shameful death. Who are they? According to history, the fate of the Assyrian king was unique. The oldest commentary on our passages seems to be Ezekiel, Ch. 32.²¹⁰ The general similarity between Isa. 14 and Ezek. 32 has often been pointed out.²¹¹ Even more: Ezek. 32 seems to be stylistically dependent on Isa. 14. Describing the

208. In the Egyptian religion, where such a notion is attested, all references to death as illness are connected with the myth of Osiris, in which the God's illness is a major theme. See Sander-Hansen, *Der Begriff des Todes bei den Ägyptern*, pp. 14-17.

209. For identification of 'the King of Babylon' with Sargon see H. L. Ginsberg, "Isaiah in the Light of History," *Conservative Judaism* 22 (1967) 13f. H. Tadmor, "The 'Sin of Sargon'," *Eretz Israel* 5 (1958) 154-158 (Hebrew).

210. Add also Chapter 26:20 and 31:16.

211. W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* (Neukirchen, 1969), p. 281. W. Eichrodt, *Ezekiel* (Great Britain, 1970), p. 438.

shameful death of the king of Assur, Isaiah point to his fate in the netherworld, where he is assigned a unique place - בִּירְכָחִי בֹרַר - 'in the lowest pit.' Isaiah deviates here from the common biblical phrase יִרְדֵּי בֹרַר which, though connoting shameful death, he apparently considered not severe enough for the unique fate of the king. Ezekiel, describing the shameful fate of seven kings in the netherworld, monotonously repeats יִרְדֵּי בֹרַר²¹² eight times, except in one instance, the fate of the king of Assur, where he uses Isaiah's variation יִרְכָחִי בֹרַר. The use of this phrase within the context of Ezekiel's vision cannot be justified on grounds of specific intent, since it is contrary to the general tenor of the description according to which the shameful fate of all seven kings is equal in all details. Ezekiel's use of יִרְכָחִי בֹרַר therefore seems to indicate a literary dependence on Isaiah's description of the Assyrian king's fate. The similarity between the Isaianic description and the vision of Ezekiel can be demonstrated on four more counts. The sin of the king of Assyria (Isa. 14:4-8, 16-17) is similar to that of all the kings who died a shameful death - they all spread "terror in the land of the living." Their punishment was death by the sword. All of the slain kings are relegated to Sheol; there they encounter the heroes (Ezek. 32:21) "of old" whom they join in a shameful death (v.27). There is no doubt, therefore, that Ezekiel patterned his description on that of Isaiah, and that he understood the exclamation of the kings and heroes in Sheol in Isa. 14:10 as "You too have been slain like us" rather than "You too have become weak/enfeebled like us." Moreover, Ezekiel must have understood the phrase "like us" literally, i.e., the similarity lay in their being accorded a

212. 26:20 (2x), 31:16, 32:18,24,25,29,30.

shameful death. These kings and heroes are "an eternal people," "of old" (Ezek. 26:20, 32:27), i.e., they seem to belong to the sphere of ancient lore more than to ancient history. Their fate, however, was considered paradigmatic and therefore was associated by both prophets with historical events in order to present a moral. The nature of Sheol, whether in the Isaianic description or in that of Ezekiel, is therefore in no way different from its nature in other biblical passages.

The interpretations offered above are by no means to be considered conclusive, but as best probable. Nevertheless, even if they be entirely or partially rejected, on the grounds that in the above-mentioned verses Sheol does connote the meeting place of all the dead, it would still be safe to conclude that the specific meaning of Sheol - as a place for the wicked - is normative for biblical usage.

Conclusion

GOD AND SHEOL - THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

From what has been said until now, Sheol emerges as a rather composite concept and it is evident that in shaping it biblical writers often drew upon neighboring cultures. Biblical ideas are indeed eclectically derivative, but, as has been observed,¹

The real quality of any civilization is shown less perhaps by its indigenous products than by the way in which it constantly grafts new shoots onto its own trunk, to stimulate further growth and to achieve richer and more differentiated products.... This means that a living culture allows the borrowed elements to develop to the extent that they are adaptable to and blend with its native forces, but resists with all its power their over-luxuriant growth.

The question which must be asked refers to the nature of these "native forces," for it is clear that a determined selectivity asserts itself in what was borrowed and assimilated in the Bible, and that the "grafts" were not allowed to grow and develop but seem rather to have been stunted in their growth. While beliefs associated with the after-life are a major constituent of the religious worldview of the neighboring cultures, and their descriptions of the realm of the dead are elaborate and rich in detail,² the contours of biblical Sheol are vague

1. H. Gibb, "The Influence of Islamic Culture on Medieval Europe," *BJRL* 38 (1955/6) 86, 87.

2. This is true of the Babylonian and especially of the Egyptian cultures. The extant relevant texts suggest that Canaanite culture, too, had a vivid view of the realm of the dead. However, the material is too sparse to yield a picture of the nature of the afterlife.

and insubstantial and it itself is inconsequential for the major tenets of biblical religious belief. The concept of Sheol is a derivative of other biblical beliefs; it does not have formative influence on them.

That the biblical notion of the realm of the dead was rather rudimentary was noticed by scholars and explained as a consequence of the biblical concept of God as "the God of the living and not of the dead... the God who made the heavens and the earth but not Sheol....He is not really present in death for all of Him is life...between Yahweh and the dead relationships are as it were non-existent."³ These and similar statements which insist on the "this sidedness" of monotheistic faith⁴ go beyond the evidence of the biblical texts. That God is "not God of the dead, but of the living" is nowhere stated in the Old Testament. This categorical statement, found in the New Testament (Mk. 12:27) is, as will be indicated below, a new emphasis prompted by specific historical conditions with which post-biblical faith had to cope. While the Old Testament describes the realm of the dead as permitting no opportunity for a meaningful relationship with God, such as is expressed for the Israelite by recital of His praise and loving kindness and salvific deeds,⁵ not all communication between God and man was conceived as severed at death. Nor was Sheol a place outside His domain. Rather, it was a place

3. R. Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life* (London, 1960), 41, 42, 45, 50.

4. F. Beisser, "Tod und Sünde," *Kerygma und Dogma* 24 (1978), 1-6; W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (London, 1964), Vol. 2, p. 218f.; G. Fohrer, "Das Geschick des Menschen nach dem Tod im Alten Testament," *Kerygma und Dogma* 14 (1968) 249, 254.

5. Isa. 38:18; Pss. 6:6, 30:10, 88:11-13, 115:17.

laid bare before Him (Job 26:6), ever under His watchful eye, within the reach of His arm (Amos 9:2), permeated with His omnipotence (Ps. 139:8-10).

Although, in the Bible, no mystical communion with His immediate presence was anticipated after death, He was conceived of as gathering the spirits of the departed to Himself (Job 34:14; Eccl. 12:7), taking an interest in the agonized worry of the long dead ancestral Mother Rachel and comforting her (Jer. 31:15f.), and that "His kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead" (Ruth 2:20). The stark dichotomy between the God of the living and the dead seems therefore to be more an artifact of scholarship than an article of biblical faith, and cannot account for the specific nature of Sheol.

The biblical concept of God as Judge seems to have exerted a more direct influence on the concept of Sheol. Corollary to the basic need of Israelite faith to conceive of God as judge, the alogical tabu-ridden God-Man relationship was translated into personal undogmatic relationship governed by clearly defined and easily comprehensible ethical norms. This, it seems, was that "native force" behind the selective "borrowing" which rejected as much as it assimilated in forging its image of Sheol. It was this "force" which eschewed the commonly encountered demonic features of the realm of the dead as not befitting a rational and ethically motivated judge. It was this same "force" which checked the initially aggressive features of the realm of Môt, which it "borrowed" from Canaanite culture, by making them subservient to His will and an instrument of His justice (e.g., Numb. 16:30f; Isa. 5:14). The very same need led to the "borrowing" of Babylonian imagery to convey in the terms of a religious ordeal

the plight of the person remanded to Sheol. But since the dramatic tension focused on whether the divine judge would relent, and the transgressor be pardoned, there was no room for the bizarre and monstrous elements so often encountered in underworld descriptions of the neighboring cultures. Attention was not paid to the locale and it remained largely undefined. As a result, Sheol became suggestive more of a condition than of a place; of a state of being under divine judgment - as implied by its name.

In emphasizing the personal and ethical nature of the divine judge, biblical faith, more than any of the neighboring cultures, became exposed to the problematics of theodicy. This assumed special urgency in the period of the Second Commonwealth, when in the wake of religious persecution the righteous and devout were subjected to severe suffering and untimely death. In view of the martyrdom of the righteous, untimely death could no longer be viewed as a sign of divine judgment. The certainty of the righteousness of divine retribution came under severe strain and a pressing need to vindicate divine retributive justice arose. New dimensions had to be suggested that would somehow account for the 'evil' untimely death of the righteous. It seems most probable that the statements which try so emphatically to dissociate between God and death were formulated in the wake of the religious persecutions of these times

Because God made not death,
Neither delighted he when the living perish.
For he created all things that they may
have being.

[Wisdom of Solomon 1:13,14]

But the righteous though he die before his
time will be at rest.

For honorable old age is not that which
standeth in length of time.

[Ibid., 4:7]

The insistence in Mark 12:27, in the context of a discussion on resurrection, that "He is not God of the dead but of the living" may be yet another reflection of this period's quest for new answers to justify the ways of God with man. This insistence on God as "not God of the dead" occurs together with the idea of resurrection which counters the injustice of the untimely death of the righteous (Mark 12:18-27). In connection with it a belief in a new divine judgment appeared as corrective to untimely and evil death which could no longer be fitted in the traditional pattern.

It is significant for our study to trace the way in which the new idea of resurrection took root. In its germinative stage it is encountered in Ezek. 37:1-14 -

Behold I will open your graves and raise you from your graves. O my people: I will bring you home into the land of Israel: And you shall know that I am the Lord when I open your graves and raise you from your graves O my people. And I shall put my spirit in you and you shall live....

In a more pronounced manner the idea is expressed in Daniel (12:2):

And there shall be a time of trouble such as never has been...but at that time you people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

The new idea of resurrection of the dead is associated in these passages with the two conventional resting places of the dead: the grave

(Ezek.) and the earth/dust (Daniel).⁶ These, we indicated, were viewed by biblical man with an air of neutrality and the new idea could therefore easily and most naturally be attached to them. It is noteworthy that resurrection did not attach itself to the concept of Sheol. This, we suggest, was due to the fact that the new hope, which vindicated the martyred dead and which buttressed anew faith in the justice of God, could not be associated with a place of negative connotation. Sheol as Gehenna with its intricate compartments, divisions, and sub-divisions is a later development. As a place of the wicked, however, its modest antecedent is found in the Bible.

6. The MT אדמה עפר (v.2) is probably a conflated text of two divergent readings.

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