

WHERE IS THE PLACE OF DARKNESS?: A METAPHOR ANALYSIS OF
DARKNESS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

by

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ABSTRACT

“Where is the Place of Darkness?: A Metaphor Analysis of Darkness in the Old Testament”

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English speakers use the concept of “darkness” in a number of metaphors to portray a wide variety of experiences from evil to fear to ignorance. These metaphorical connections or entailments are so natural that we can see an image of a dark-clad person in a film or book and usually be correct in assuming that they are at best questionably moral and at worst a villain.

The Old Testament (OT) also employs dark images and dark imagery to various effects. From Job’s description of the underworld in Job 3 to Isaiah’s description of the coming light that will dispel the darkness in Isa 8–9, to the dark paths the wicked trod in Eccl 2:14, the OT uses a number of metaphors of darkness. For most of these examples, it would be easy to assume that the ancient Hebrew writers of the OT were working with the same concepts of darkness that we do today and thus interpret these passages along the same lines as our own modern English metaphors. But such assumptions can and have led to a number of misunderstandings and conflicting interpretations of passages that employ dark images. These miscommunications are most apparent in passages where God’s presence is indicated by darkness like at the Sinai and Temple theophanies (Exod 20:19–20 and 1 Kgs 8:12, respectively) as well as later poetry about God (Ps 97:2).

By combining the theoretical framework of Cognitive Metaphor Theory (CMT), and the methodology of Conceptual Blending (CB), this study will work toward a clearer understanding of how the writers of the OT understood darkness and how that shaped their use of it in their images and imagery of death, captivity, the unknowable, and God. It will be shown that the ancient Hebrew conception and use of darkness centres around three key recurring metaphors—DEATH IS DARKNESS, CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS, and THE UNKNOWN IS DARKNESS—while the metaphor EVIL IS DARKNESS is foreign to the OT. These findings serve to provide greater clarity in interpreting those OT passages that portray God as having a penchant for darkness.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

— Dylan Thomas “Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night”

Having read the phrase, “it was a dark and stormy night,” English-speakers are likely to know what is to follow: perhaps the story of a haunted house, an unstoppable killer, or some other great evil. And what of that evil? It hides in the darkness of shadows, nightfall, deep caves, and fog. When the evil does emerge, it is usually in muted, dark colours. Whether it is Tolkien’s shadowflame Balrog, George Lucas’ Darth Vader, Ridley Scott’s jet black xenomorph, or a generic black robed Grim Reaper, these manifestations of evil in our popular consciousness are nearly always wearing dark colours, if any colours at all.

It is quite unlikely that anyone who has grown up in an English-speaking part of the world today would be *in the dark* regarding any of these cognitive connections between darkness and evil. The closer we look at how we use darkness in our speech, a number of other metaphors are *brought to light*. Not only does darkness represent the evil we fear, but the things we do not know or understand as the two italicized phrases have *illuminated*. English speakers use the concept of “darkness” in a number of metaphors to portray a wide variety of experiences from evil to fear to ignorance. These metaphorical

connections or entailments are so natural and ubiquitous that they can be called “dead” metaphors.¹

The Old Testament (OT) also employs dark images and dark imagery to various effects. From Job’s description of the underworld in Job 3 to Isaiah’s description of the coming light that will dispel the darkness in Isa 8–9, to the dark paths the wicked trod in Eccl 2:14, the OT uses a number of metaphors of darkness. For most of these examples, it would be easy to assume that the ancient Hebrew writers of the OT were working with the same concepts of darkness—with the same set of naturally-assumed dead metaphors—that we do today and thus interpret these passages along the same lines as our own modern English metaphors. But such assumptions can and have led to a number of misunderstandings and conflicting interpretations of passages that employ dark images.

These miscommunications are most apparent in passages where God’s presence is indicated by darkness like at the Sinai and Temple theophanies (Exod 20:19–20 and 1 Kgs 8:12, respectively) as well as later poetry about God (Ps 97:2). A number of times dark themes are employed as a description of or shorthand for God’s presence or action. It is clear from these examples alone that the OT has a different understanding of darkness and its entailments compared to a modern English understanding. When by the writers of the OT speak about God, they do so through metaphors that are more in line with their ancient Near Eastern than our own twenty-first century contexts while also creating novel uses of darkness in both its poetry and visual imagery. As will be shown later, a small number of OT scholars have discussed how the OT is unique in its uses of

¹ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 110–222.

dark metaphors and imagery for its good God. However, what has not carefully been done is to discuss what these dark metaphors mean in their literary context and what that meaning has to say about the OT's understanding of darkness.

By combining the theoretical framework of Cognitive Metaphor Theory (CMT), and the methodology of Conceptual Blending (CB), this study aims to work toward a better understanding of how the writers understood darkness and how that shaped their use of it in their images and imagery of death, captivity, the unknowable, and God. It will be shown that the ancient Hebrew conception and use of darkness centres around three key recurring metaphors—DEATH IS DARKNESS, CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS, and THE UNKNOWN IS DARKNESS—while the metaphor EVIL IS DARKNESS is foreign to the OT. These findings serve to provide greater clarity for interpreting those OT passages that portray God as having a penchant for darkness.

1.1 Delineating Darkness and its Metaphors

In the above section I mention the potential breaks in communication between cultures and their understanding of what entailments are connected to a word or concept. I will be expanding on this concept to a much greater degree in the next chapter of this dissertation, but before darkness can be understood on a metaphorical level, I must first delineate what I mean by “darkness,” what terms will be pertinent to this study, and what counts as a dark metaphor.

One aspect of this dissertation that sets it apart from studies that have come before is its use of CMT and CB over more common methods such as word studies. My interest is not in the semantic domain of dark verbiage but how dark verbiage is used in metaphors in the OT. Throughout this dissertation, I will refer to “dark metaphors” which could easily be misunderstood as metaphors that describe that which is unpleasant or even evil. However, when I refer to “dark metaphors” I am referring to metaphors that have the concept of darkness as the source domain in a metaphor blend. Put another way, my interest lies in metaphors where darkness is used to describe or create “human scale” (more on this later) for more complex ideas.

Corpus approaches to specific (biblical) metaphors are still few and far between and controls for what counts as evidence of a concept (e.g., darkness) are not always well defined. Thankfully biblical scholars have had to hone their methods and controls for determining what counts as evidence of a theme or concept in the Bible. I have chosen to follow the controls laid out by Mark Boda in his introduction to *Return to Me*.²

To begin, an understanding of and sensitivity to the relevant vocabulary in its original language is of course an important first step.³ The most commonly used noun for darkness in the OT is חֹשֶׁךְ. The associated verb, חָשַׁךְ, is found only in the Qal meaning “to be(come) dark” and in the Hiphil meaning “to make dark, darken.” With a number of connected words like חֹשֶׁךְ “darkness,” מְחֹשֶׁךְ “dark place,” and the sole adjectival חָשֵׁךְ “dark,” this is the most common and flexible yet straightforward words for darkness

² Boda, *Return To Me*, 24–32.

³ Boda, *Return To Me*, 25.

across a wide variety of contexts. Most of the 107 instances of חָשֶׁךְ and its related words are found in poetic material and are, as Cornelius puts it, “found to be predominately, if not exclusively, abstract.”⁴ As such, the above definitions convey only a fraction of the words’ full range of meanings as will be shown throughout this dissertation for not only this word but all lexemes for darkness in the OT. The commonly abstract nature of the OT’s use of חָשֶׁךְ also further underscores how important a methodology designed to unpack metaphors is to furthering our understanding of חָשֶׁךְ.

Another clear word for darkness is אָפֶל as well as the related אֶפְלָה and אֶפְלָה which are easily understood as “darkness”—perhaps more specifically the darkness of night.⁵ These words are rather flexibly used to describe all sorts of darkness, whether natural, supernatural, literal, or figurative, but are more often found in poetic sections (exclusively so in the nominative).⁶ One thing that differentiates this word from other words for darkness in the OT is that it is the least likely to be used within the context of clouds.⁷

A third lexeme that will be important for this study is עָרָפֶל. On a basic level this word can be understood as “darkness” but it is also particularly connected to clouds and theophanies.⁸ A lengthier discussion of this word is found in Chapter 6 (§6.2.2).

The fourth key word for this dissertation is צִלְמוֹת. How this word is vocalized and thus interpreted is a topic of significant scholarly debate. The details of said debate are

⁴ Cornelius, “The Theological Significance,” 2.

⁵ Köhler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, sec. אָפֶל.

⁶ Price, “אָפֶל (‘ōpel).”

⁷ Cornelius, “The Theological Significance,” 41.

⁸ Cornelius, “The Theological Significance,” 108.

found in Chapter 3 (§3.1.3) but for now it is worth stating that this word is still significant for the aims of this dissertation.

Second in Boda's suggested controls is a move beyond key terms to all relevant themes related to those terms.⁹ As Lakoff and Johnson point out, the Grim Reaper is a powerful metaphor for death but not always in the most obvious ways: while its skeletal body is clearly evocative of death, its great scythe is less directly tied to death and its dark robes have only become a metaphor for death because of the association with the Reaper.¹⁰ No analysis of English death metaphors would be complete without a discussion of the Grim Reaper, but there are no explicit *lexical* links between the Reaper and death. This underscores the need for this work to extend beyond mere lexemes for darkness to related words and images but deciding how wide of a net to cast is a particularly difficult question to answer. Given the significant sample size of dark metaphors in the OT, I cannot be exhaustive even in my exploration of all verses that use explicit lexemes for darkness. I will at times expand my search to words, phrases, and images that extend beyond explicit references to darkness, but for the sake of keeping this project feasible in size, I have mostly restricted myself to those passages which employ metaphors using words and phrases that are indisputably about darkness.

Relevant to any study of darkness is its antithesis: light. There will be many times in this dissertation that metaphors of darkness must be understood in relation to their opposite metaphors of light and as such the Hebrew word for light, אור, will be of

⁹ Boda, *Return To Me*, 25.

¹⁰ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 250–51.

particular interest. Boda goes on to say that this process of defining what themes are to be counted as relevant is not a linear one but must develop over the course of research. This has turned out to be the case for צל “shadow” and לילה “night.” While shadows are relatively dark compared to their surroundings, צל does not occur directly with words for darkness in the OT and is consistently used positively, often as a beneficial attribute.¹¹ The conceptual background of this consistently positive portrayal of shadows will be discussed in the following chapter (§2.3.2). Likewise, while the night is certainly dark, the two carry radically different sets of entailments and are used in very different metaphors. As this dissertation progresses, more key themes will become apparent as darkness carries with it a wide range of metaphorical entailments such as death, captivity, exile, hiddenness, folly, wisdom, etc. These themes will be dealt with more thoroughly as they come up but are still worth mentioning here and although they are all deserving of their own detailed treatments, I will be restricting myself to how these themes relate to metaphorical uses of darkness in the OT.

1.2 Studies of Darkness as *Tohu Wabohu*

In the beginning, the primordial darkness was formless and void. These two adjectives are an accurate—even if somewhat exaggerated—metaphorical description of biblical scholarship’s interest in the theme of darkness: lacking in structure and relatively empty. First, scholarship on darkness can easily be described as *bohu*—emptiness or void—given the relative paucity of interest in the theme of darkness as it develops in the OT. A

¹¹ Schwab, “צל Šēl,” 375.

glance through the indices of major biblical theological works written in the last two centuries produces very few noteworthy results. The same can be said of many Bible dictionaries such as the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, and the *New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*¹² who have no dedicated entries on darkness and instead refer readers to their entries on light. Despite the recurring nature of the trope, God's close relationship with darkness receives relatively little attention from scholars. Of those that do give a nod to the theme, the majority of these scholars assume, whether due to their own cultural biases or a supposed direct parallel between the OT and its ancient Near Eastern, Persian, or Second Temple contexts, that the OT's view of darkness is fundamentally shaped by a dualistic struggle between good, light, and order on the one side of the struggle versus evil, darkness, and chaos on the other. For instance, Edmond Jacob emphatically stated in his *Theology of the Old Testament* that "Darkness is a power hostile to Yahweh, whose essence is light,"¹³ but Jacob does not consider from where he gained this idea about Yahweh's essential nature.

While darkness receives only a few paragraphs worth of attention in biblical theologies like Jacob's, even those studies that focus directly on themes of darkness in the OT fall prey to the same mistakes. This assumption of ethical/cosmic dualism is apparent in Wendell Willis' conclusion that darkness is merely

The absence of light, a frequent image in both the OT and NT; the NT's usage is highly influenced by the OT. Darkness was present at the beginning, and God's power worked against it in creation (Gen. 1).

¹² Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*; Sakenfeld, *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*.

¹³ Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 140.

Darkness is subsequently a master image for chaos, separation, and death, and a synonym of sin and evil.¹⁴

In this entry on darkness, Willis only mentions this sole reference to Gen 1 from the OT while basing the rest of his argument on a number of Second Temple and NT passages. He provides no rationale for darkness being seen as the absence of light, as an antagonist that works against creation, or as an entity so closely related with chaos and evil.

Likewise, Richard Patterson says that the Scriptural testimony of darkness is “overwhelmingly negative,”¹⁵ but only comes to this conclusion after a discussion focused on ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Persian mythologies to the exclusion of a robust discussion of the biblical witness. Bénédicte Lemmelijn connects darkness with the primordial chaos and a pre-created entity that is separate from and in conflict with God,¹⁶ but, like Patterson, her conclusions are more focused on ancient Near Eastern texts than the OT itself. Michael Fishbane takes the solid findings of his own study of the theme of “night as danger” in three passages from the Old Testament too far and applies his findings “not just in the narratives within [his] limited purview . . . but also in biblical narrative literature as a whole.”¹⁷ Elizabeth Achtemeier directly ties darkness in the OT to *Chaoskampf* and concludes that “Darkness, then, has the nature of evil in the Old Testament because it is opposed to God's will to create the good order of life.”¹⁸ Ryken et al. find darkness guilty by association, accusing it of keeping “some very bad company, made all the more devious by virtue of the concealment of evil activity from ordinary

¹⁴ Willis, “Darkness,” 317; Cf. Ryken et al., eds., “Darkness,” 191–93.

¹⁵ Patterson, “Deliverance from Darkness,” 85.

¹⁶ Lemmelijn, “Light and Darkness,” 555–68.

¹⁷ Fishbane, “The Motif ‘Night as Danger,’” 27.

¹⁸ Achtemeier, “Jesus Christ the Light of the World,” 443.

view.”¹⁹ In her 1963 study of the Bible’s use of light metaphors, Elizabeth Achtemeier concludes that darkness is inherently evil:

Darkness, then, has the nature of evil in the Old Testament because it is opposed to God's will to create the good order of life; and those who are godless or who oppose Yahweh's will are invariably creatures of the dark (as in Ps. 82:15). Thus, the adulterer seeks the harlot “in the twilight, in the evening, at the time of night and darkness” (Prov. 7:8–9). Those who follow their own will and not Yahweh's do their deeds in the dark (Isa. 29:15). Those who worship other gods do so in the gloom (Ezek. 8:12). It is “the dark places of the land” which are “the habitations of violence” (Ps. 74:20). Those who forsake the paths of uprightness walk in the ways of darkness (Prov. 2:13; compare Eccles. 2:14; 5:17).²⁰

I could easily continue with examples but I believe my point has been made: the overwhelming majority of scholars, at least within modern English scholarship, assume the essential nature of darkness in the OT is evil and that references to darkness are generally metaphors for evil.

One of the very few works to discuss the theme of darkness in the OT in a positive way is Samuel Terrien’s *The Elusive Presence*.²¹ Terrien sees darkness as both a “portent of menace and promise” as well as a symbol of both divine presence and hiddenness.²² Terrien does not shy away from discussing the lethality of God’s darkness but instead links it with the lethality yet necessity of God’s presence. By connecting the trope of divine darkness with the notion of *Deus absconditus atque praesens*, Terrien provides an incredibly fruitful avenue for discussions on the OT’s theology of darkness, but beyond his brief discussions of the Sinai and Temple theophanies he does not further

¹⁹ Ryken et al., eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 192.

²⁰ Achtemeier, “Jesus Christ the Light of the World,” 443. All of the verses Achtemeier mentions here will be addressed throughout this dissertation.

²¹ Terrien, *The Elusive Presence*.

²² Terrien, *The Elusive Presence*, 128.

develop this idea. The connections between darkness and creation in Genesis and the Psalter as well as its connection with the theophanies and coming day found within prophetic literature do not receive attention from Terrien.

Questions about Isaiah's treatment of darkness are handled at length by Kang-Ho Kil and Tina Dykesteen Nilsen.²³ Kil's dissertation is more broadly focused on four passages in Isaiah that centre around the contrast of light and darkness. Nilsen's work focuses on the potentially troubling assertion in Isaiah that God is the creator of both light and darkness, good and evil. She argues that this verse proves that darkness is unlikely to have been a pre-created reality, but even if it had been, God is seen as entirely sovereign over it, rather than in conflict against it.²⁴ Not only this, but Nilson also makes a few passing remarks about the metaphorical nature of Isaiah's use of darkness here which beg further elaboration.

The prevalence of darkness in the book of Job has received some noteworthy scholarly attention from scholars such as Cox and Olojede.²⁵ Though Cox is more focused on the motif of darkness in the book of Job as it relates to his curse in Job 3, he does explore the connections between Job's use of darkness and its use in the Genesis creation narrative. Cox sees Job's curse of darkness over the day of his birth as a return to pre-creative chaos.²⁶ To Cox, at least within the context of Job 3, "darkness represents the sombre Chaos, the enemy of God and furthest away from him" and that it is the "balance

²³ Kil, "The Light and Darkness Motif in the Book of Isaiah"; Nilsen, "The Creation of Darkness and Evil."

²⁴ Nilsen, "The Creation of Darkness and Evil."

²⁵ Cox, "The Desire for Oblivion in Job 3"; Olojede, ". . . What of the Night?"

²⁶ Cox, "The Desire for Oblivion in Job 3," 42.

between light and darkness that sustains the balance in Creation itself.”²⁷ Cox’s premise is built on assumptions about theomachic beliefs inherent in the OT as well as assumptions about how the OT authors understood the nature of darkness. Olojede is much more nuanced in her exploration of nocturnal darkness in Job and the Psalter than Cox as she notes the paradoxical nature of darkness being both a danger to humanity as well as “a time of revelation, of fellowship, and of divine activities, which neutralises in a sense the seeming polarity and tension between night and day, between nocturnality and diurnality.”²⁸ Olojede’s article is a foil to Cox’s as she shows the full sovereignty of Yahweh over darkness in Job and the Psalms. Olojede focuses on nocturnal activities, rather than metaphorical uses of darkness and night, how they are being used, and what they mean which, again, begs for further elaboration.

From this void of academic work on darkness also came two dissertations: Allan Coppedge’s 1969 work and Forrest Charles Cornelius’ 1990 work.²⁹ Coppedge’s “Inductive Study” is focused on determining “whether darkness is represented in the Old Testament as a pre-existent force, hostile to God. Or to put the question in another form, to what extent is the Old Testament unique in its view of darkness and dualism?”³⁰ He goes about this goal by providing superbly thorough studies of three Hebrew roots for darkness: אפל, ערפל, and חשך. These word studies are only tangentially interested in providing a more robust definition of these words and are more focused on the question

²⁷ Cox, “The Desire for Oblivion in Job 3,” 43.

²⁸ Olojede, “. . . What of the Night?,” 724.

²⁹ Coppedge, “An Inductive Study”; Cornelius, “The Theological Significance.”

³⁰ Coppedge, “An Inductive Study,” 1–2.

of darkness as a dualistic threat to God. He compares the findings of these word studies to his study of the theme of darkness in other ancient Near Eastern cultures. Coppedge's work is an excellent corrective to the works of scholars like Patterson and Lemmelijn with its robust exploration of the OT text compared to its smaller yet still functional discussion of the text's literary-historical background. Coppedge makes a case against the broader scholarship of his day that assumed direct parallels between the OT and its context.

Coppedge's laser-focused approach of debunking the notion that darkness is part-and-parcel of *Chaoskampf* also makes his study less broadly-applicable for understanding the literary and theological importance of dark themes in the Old Testament. The apologetic value of his study is difficult to overstate but it makes few contributions to understanding why and how the OT authors were using darkness in such a positive way. Another issue in Coppedge's work is his over-reliance on Brown, Driver, and Briggs, both in terms of his research but in their understanding of how words function and are defined. The swath of theological word studies that were in vogue while Coppedge wrote his dissertation all function within an objectivist understanding of language that has come under significant criticism that presumes that meaning is independent of human use.³¹ What Coppedge and others within Biblical Theology's word study movement missed was the fluidity of language, especially metaphorical language. I am by no means advocating for a rejection of objective understandings of meaning and truth in favour of subjectivism, but instead a move toward what Lakoff and Johnson call "experientialism,"

³¹ See Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 195–209.

that is, an understanding of language that recognizes that language does describe things that are indeed external to the person but that language also must interpret these things through a person's own internal logic and experience.³² "Experientialism" in this case focuses on the lived experiences of the ancient Near Eastern context that gave rise to the text of the OT.

The other dedicated study of the OT's use of darkness is Forrest Charles Cornelius' doctoral dissertation. Cornelius' work is far less entangled by a singular focus on dualism than Coppedge's work. This work sought to "evaluate the semantic field of 'dark' terms in the OT in order to determine the role and significance given to the concept of darkness in the OT and its importance within OT theology."³³ Although the bulk of his focus was on the Hebrew root אֲשַׁח, mostly due to its overwhelming presence in the OT canon, Cornelius also covered with sufficient care the most noteworthy examples of other dark words and how they relate to אֲשַׁח. Using an approach that is similar to the one James Barr outlined in his *Comparative Philology*,³⁴ Cornelius sought to better understand the OT's words for darkness "by referring to internal comparison within the Hebrew text (Masoretic text) and cognate studies, where appropriate, with other Semitic languages."³⁵ Much more methodologically and philosophically astute than Coppedge, Cornelius was aware of the dangers of strict objectivism and manages to keep a keen awareness of how the variety of contexts a word can be found in will drastically alter its

³² Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 226–28.

³³ Cornelius, "The Theological Significance," 2.

³⁴ Barr, *Comparative Philology*; see also, Balentine, *The Hidden God*.

³⁵ Cornelius, "The Theological Significance," 8.

meaning and purpose.³⁶ Cornelius' exhaustive work comes to some of the same conclusions as Coppedge about the lack of cosmic dualism found in the OT's depictions of darkness. He found that God is always the cause of dark verbs in the Hiphil, and is nearly always the subject when the words for darkness are the direct objects of sentences and thus concludes that "at no point can any entity other than God be assigned a causative role in relation to darkness."³⁷ Put another way, Cornelius found that God is inherently sovereign over darkness in the OT. Cornelius also wisely distinguished between theophany and epiphany and found that in instances of the former, God is usually shrouded while in the latter, he is more comprehensible and anthropomorphized.³⁸ Cornelius also added a number of new insights along with a much more reliable methodology: his chosen methodology of semantic field analysis brought a much greater degree of fluidity of meaning that takes into consideration a word's immediate context rather than a static definition.³⁹ He summarizes his findings as such:

The roles for darkness have proven varied, at times seemingly denoting positive concepts and at others negative concepts. Yet, throughout, darkness has been identified primarily as a tributary for ideas rather than as their embodiment. For example, in the OT darkness is not evil, but the presence of darkness at times signals the existence of evil due to the predominance of ignorance, the ease of deceit, and the absence of God in such darkness. Therefore, darkness, while often associated with negative images, should be viewed as a neutral phenomenon, albeit a powerful one.⁴⁰

³⁶ Cornelius, "The Theological Significance," 9.

³⁷ Cornelius, "The Theological Significance," 37.

³⁸ Cornelius, "The Theological Significance," 102.

³⁹ Cornelius, "The Theological Significance," 13.

⁴⁰ Cornelius, "The Theological Significance," 160.

Cornelius' work is, again, outstanding, but it is by no means the terminal work on the topic of the OT's treatment of darkness. Although he was methodologically influenced by Balentine's *The Hidden God*, there are some aspects of God's hiddenness that Cornelius does not address such as implied connections between darkness and blindness in many texts. There are also a number of instances when Cornelius assumes darkness is being employed more literally when a closer examination would suggest that its use is more metaphorical. This is particularly strange given Cornelius' openness to figurative uses of darkness: he found early in his study that all but one of the uses of the verbal roots חשך and קדר in the Qal and Hiphil referred to abstract concepts.⁴¹ Since most instances of חשך and קדר are used in the abstract, it follows that a methodology designed for unpacking abstract, metaphorical wording would be a better tool for the job.

Cornelius' distinction between theophany and epiphany is quite enlightening but he could have pursued this thinking a little further to ask why and how these different instances of God's self-revelation involve different metaphors. The Semantic Field methodology that Cornelius employs works sufficiently well, especially when darkness is used in a more straightforward manner, but as he notes "a vast majority of the terms [for darkness] appear in poetic passages, whereas the remainder appear in passages that can be clearly identified as 'elevated prose.'"⁴² Given the poetic and metaphorical nature of most instances of darkness in the OT, it would seem that a methodology designed specifically to treat metaphors would be a more appropriate guiding principle for such a

⁴¹ Cornelius, "The Theological Significance," 22.

⁴² Cornelius, "The Theological Significance," 3.

study. Lastly, and this is of course no fault of Cornelius, his findings did not seem to make much of an impact on scholars. His dissertation was never published and so it is not apparent in any of the secondary literature I have read on this topic. There is still work that needs to be done to remedy the current skewed understanding of darkness in the OT.

The root problems I see in these works is threefold: First, their lack of comprehensiveness is a recurring issue. In these rare instances where scholars do discuss darkness in the OT, it is rarer still that they do so on the basis of the whole OT witness. The only exceptions to this trend are Coppedge and Cornelius but their two studies have fallen prey to the two other recurring issues I have identified.

Second, whether intended or not discussions of OT testimony are often of secondary importance compared to discussions of other ancient Near Eastern religions, Second Temple literature, or New Testament uses of darkness. Despite the work of scholars like Coppedge and Cornelius, most scholars who explore darkness do so by comparing—or in some cases conflating—the OT's use of darkness with that of its ancient Near Eastern background or New Testament foreground. Those that focus on allowing the OT to speak for itself tend to focus on refuting the prior reductionist views. The above examples from this subsection underscore the importance of a more robust exploration of darkness in the Old Testament that is first and foremost dedicated to the text of the OT—not to the exclusion of its historical, intertestamental, or New Testament contexts—but keeping those contexts as useful background rather than the overwhelming foreground.

The third and most important issue with prior approaches to the OT's use of darkness lies in their methodology. Some of the examples discussed above relied on methodologies that could be considered outdated, but of even greater importance is a lack of care given to the highly abstract and metaphorical uses of darkness that comprise the bulk of OT uses of darkness. It is peculiar that while the above scholars—from Cornelius to Achtemeier—recognize darkness' potential for use within metaphors, the methodologies used do not always work well with metaphorical speech and are certainly not focused on understanding metaphors. This discussion of previous explorations of dark themes underscores the need for a methodology that will provide a more thorough and structured understanding of the OT's *uses*—rather than a supposed static *definition*—of darkness. There is a clear need for methodologies that recognize how and why humans use metaphors, and how specific groups of humans understand and describe their lived experiences through metaphors.

To summarize, academic study of darkness in the OT has a number of gaps that need to be filled. None of these works have allowed the OT to be read on its own terms while asking why the authors of the OT employed darkness to speak about God and what those metaphor choices say about the message they were attempting to convey. They lacked the theoretical and methodological framework to properly understand the purpose and meaning of these metaphors. As such, this dissertation seeks to address the relatively formless void of scholarly discussions of darkness by using Cognitive Metaphor Theory (CMT) and Conceptual Blending Theory (CB) as a means to better understand the themes

and meaning of what the Old Testament has to say about darkness and God's relationship with it.

1.3 An Appropriate Methodology for Metaphors

Just as Cornelius was writing his dissertation in the 1990s, a new branch of literary theories was beginning to gain traction among semioticians. Headed by scholars like George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, Mark Turner, Gilles Fauconnier, Raymond Gibbs, Max Black, Zoltán Kövecses, and Eve Sweetser, a new field of theories was beginning to take shape: a set of theories about the origin, nature, and function of metaphors, not as mere figures of speech, but as a primary means for brains to conceptualize the world we live in. Before understanding the details of these theories and their methods, it would at first be prudent to explore whether or not they can be applied to the text of the Bible and how fruitful such studies can be.

In the last decade, the Catholic University of Leuven has become a locus of works that have blended various theories of metaphor with biblical studies and biblical theology to great success. Pierre van Hecke⁴³ and Johan de Joode⁴⁴ have a combined abundance of publications and have also supervised a number of dissertations and publications that have blended metaphor theory and CB.⁴⁵ Since he has written so widely on the subject, I will only describe two widely different approaches to biblical metaphors that van Hecke

⁴³ van Hecke, "(Ab)Using Metaphors"; van Hecke, "Conceptual Blending"; van Hecke, *From Linguistics to Hermeneutics*; van Hecke, *Job 12-14*; van Hecke, *Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible*; van Hecke and Labahn, eds., *Metaphors in the Psalms*.

⁴⁴ de Joode, "The Body and Its Boundaries."

⁴⁵ DiFransico, "Washing Away Sin in Isaiah and Jeremiah"; De Prenter, "Conceptual Blending as an Integrative Approach to Metaphor and Iconography."

has employed. His 2005 monograph, *Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible*, is a collection of fifteen essays that give exemplary studies of various metaphors and approaches to metaphors. In his chapter, van Hecke lays out an approach to analyzing the specific use of a single metaphor through CB using Hos 4:16 as an example. He argues that the key to understanding this passage is determining “what implicit background knowledge is present in the source [stubborn cow] space”⁴⁶ and in order to do that he explores all possible entailments of what being a stubborn cow might include. In his 2012 article, “(Ab)using Metaphors,” van Hecke applies the theories of CMT to suggest that church leaders need to employ healthy and properly-understood metaphors for themselves as a means of combating sexual abuse with the PASTOR IS A SHEPHERD metaphor being his test case. He argues that pastors must understand their role as pastors as shepherds with all the positive and negative biblical entailments that evolve from the profound self-sacrificing care of the shepherd and their direct responsibility for the well-being of the sheep.

Johan de Joode, one of van Hecke’s colleagues at KU Leuven, has also been at the forefront of integrating metaphor theories and biblical studies. He laid out excellent methodological groundwork for selecting and analyzing OT metaphors in his contribution to Klaas Smelik and Karolien Vermeulen’s edited work *Approaches to Literary Readings of Ancient Jewish Writings*.⁴⁷ Since conceptual metaphors are ubiquitous in both text and speech, examining all metaphors in a text quickly becomes an impossibly large task. As

⁴⁶ van Hecke, “Conceptual Blending,” 223.

⁴⁷ de Joode and van Loon, “Selecting and Analyzing Metaphors.”

such de Jooode outlines a system of determining whether or not a metaphor is deliberate and the strength (conventionality versus creativity) of its mappings. Although de Jooode notes intentionality as a criterion for the examination of a metaphor, he provides no controls for determining whether or not a metaphor is intentional and simply states that the author somehow “triggers” metaphorical reflection.⁴⁸

Much closer to home, McMaster Divinity College has already begun to see the efficacy of metaphor analyses through Beth Stovell’s dissertation which was later published in 2014.⁴⁹ Stovell’s approach combines CMT and CB with M. A. K. Halliday’s systemic functional linguistic approach in order to unpack the kingship metaphors employed in John’s Gospel. The scope of Stovell’s work is impressively broad, covering investigations of kingship metaphors in the OT and Second Temple era literature, robust discourse analyses of several passages, Lakoffian domain mapping of kingship metaphors in the Fourth Gospel, discussions of possible intratextual links between metaphors within John, and explorations of how these metaphors contribute to John’s theology and the theology of its readers. Stovell’s is the closest project to my own in terms of its aim and methodology with a few important differences: First, given my focus on the OT, the anthropological and literary backgrounds of my text are quite different; for one, the extra-biblical texts at my disposal are smaller in number. Additionally, direct lines of continuity from extra-biblical sources to the OT are much more difficult to draw in the same way lines of influence can be drawn from the OT to Second Temple literature to the NT.

⁴⁸ de Jooode and van Loon, “Selecting and Analyzing Metaphors,” 50.

⁴⁹ Stovell, *Mapping Metaphorical Discourse in the Fourth Gospel*. Although not at the doctoral level, Tamara Simmonds’ 2013 MTS thesis, “An Ox and Ass in the Cucumber Field” also employed metaphor theory along with frame semantics to great success.

Second, I will not be employing Halliday's systemic functional linguistics as it is outside the purview of this project; I am trying to stay as focused as much as possible on the metaphors.

One final book that has become one of the most important sources of inspiration for my work is Aleksander Gomola's *Conceptual Blending in Early Christian Discourse*.⁵⁰ In this published version of his PhD dissertation, Gomola examines early Christian discourses for a metaphor that is rarely used in the New Testament but eventually became one of the most ubiquitous metaphors for the church: THE CHURCH IS A FLOCK OF SHEEP. Given his goal of being as comprehensive as possible in exploring how a metaphor is used over an entire corpus of literature, his work has proven to be a significant source of inspiration for my own. Given the breadth of texts at my disposal, how Gomola organizes his work thematically and how he explores the *concept* of shepherding rather than specific lexemes will prove to be a valuable reference for my methodology.

The above examples of metaphor work within biblical studies are certainly not exhaustive but they do illustrate a growing scholarly interest in combining metaphor theory and the Bible as well as the great steps forward that these methods have taken in our collective understanding of the passages and themes that have been explored thus far.⁵¹ This brief cross section of recent explorations of various metaphors in the Bible has

⁵⁰ Gomola, *Conceptual Blending in Early Christian Discourse*.

⁵¹ See also, Klingbeil, "Mapping the Literary to the Literal Image"; Jäkel, "How Can Mortal Man Understand the Road He Travels?"; Kotze, "Metaphors and Metonymies for Anger in the Old Testament"; Masson, "Conceiving God"; Masson, *Without Metaphor, No Saving God*; Ross, "David's Spiritual Walls and Conceptual Blending in Psalm 51."

shown the value of metaphor theories in better understanding the Bible. None of these studies are directly parallel with my own, but they provide good examples of the theories and methodologies of metaphor theory being applied to the Bible. With this understanding of the value of metaphor theory to biblical studies, I will now provide a brief overview of this flourishing area of language research,⁵² while more precise details of what methodologies will be employed and what those methodologies involve will be discussed later.

1.3.1 Theories of Metaphor

Most historical overviews of metaphor studies rightly start with Plato and Aristotle. Plato believed poetry and metaphorical speech had no place in his ideal republic. Lakoff and Johnson note the irony in Plato's reliance on an allegory despite his supposed mistrust of passion-inflaming, logic-reducing poetics.⁵³ Aristotle saw metaphor quite differently as he defined metaphor as “. . . the application of a strange (alien, *allotrios*) term either transferred (displaced, *epiphora*) from the genus and applied to the species or from the species and applied to the genus, or from one species to another, or else by analogy.”⁵⁴ He had a very positive opinion of metaphor, praising not just the use of poetry but considered being a “master of metaphor” to be “the greatest thing by far.”⁵⁵

⁵² For a robust exploration of the history of theories of metaphor, see Imre, “Metaphors in Cognitive Linguistics.”

⁵³ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 189.

⁵⁴ Aristotle, *Rhet.*, 1447.

⁵⁵ Aristotle, *Rhet.*, 1410b.

Beyond Aristotle's popularity among the Romantics, it was Plato's view of metaphor that came to prominence with the rise of empiricism. Hobbes and Locke both railed against metaphor's inaccuracy and lack of logic. Using a metaphorical image of a man who has lost his way, Hobbes called metaphors "*ignes fatui*; and reasoning upon them is wandering amongst innumerable absurdities" and goes on to distinguish metaphors from "words proper."⁵⁶ Locke was not any more gracious. Through the use of an anthropomorphization of eloquence, Locke scathingly condemns metaphor:

If we speak of things as they are, we must allow that all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness; all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence has invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgments and so indeed are perfect cheats: and therefore, however laudable or allowable oratory may render them in harangues and popular addresses, they are certainly, in all discourses that pretend to inform or instruct, wholly to be avoided . . .⁵⁷

The empiricists' inability to even critique metaphorical language without its use seems to have gone unnoticed by them. Even so, no alternatives were widely accepted as philosophers of language and rhetoric lost interest in metaphor as it was relegated to only being, as Imre puts it, "a basic 'figure of speech', a trope, trimming ordinary language, taking away monotonousness by 'picturesque' replacements."⁵⁸ It is clear that this false dichotomy between the Platonic view of metaphor as trickery and the Aristotelian view of metaphor as mere flourish requires a third option; a new system of understanding

⁵⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapter 5.

⁵⁷ Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, bk. 3, chapter 10.

⁵⁸ Imre, "Metaphors in Cognitive Linguistics," 72.

metaphor that takes it as a useful means of communicating truthfully was in order. In the last half century a number have ventured to provide such an alternative.

Noam Chomsky can be credited for being the first to renew scholarly interest in metaphor with the publication of his *Language and Mind* in 1972.⁵⁹ From his work spawned new fields of study into generative grammar and cognitive linguistics. Chomsky was still influenced by Descartes' rationalist approach as he did not recognize the important impacts of human perception and bodily experience and so his theories leave much to be desired.⁶⁰

1.3.2 Cognitive Metaphor Theory and Conceptual Blending

Lakoff and Johnson marked a turning point in the scholarly debate about metaphor.⁶¹ Their approach, called Cognitive Metaphor Theory (CMT) argues that metaphors go beyond just language and rhetoric and are extensions of our physical experiences; metaphors do not merely describe reality but they are a cognitive tool that takes the basic material components of our physical reality to describe and understand those realities that are non-physical.⁶² CMT goes beyond simple definitions of figures of speech and is an entire conceptual system. Their theory has shown great promise not just in terms of understanding how we use language, but scholars like Raymond Gibbs and Seana

⁵⁹ Chomsky, *Language and Mind*.

⁶⁰ Imre, "Metaphors in Cognitive Linguistics," 74.

⁶¹ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*.

⁶² Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 193.

Coulson have shown that CMT has both implications for and backing from cognitive psychology.⁶³

Lakoff and Johnson recount that their revolutionary metaphor theory began not long after they had first met and discovered their shared interest in how we understand meaning and metaphorical language. After years of collaborative research, they came to the conclusion that metaphors were not simply figures of speech, but were the verbal cues of complex cognitive processes that guide how we as humans create order out of our experiences. As they put it, “[t]he concept is metaphorically structured, the activity is metaphorically structured, and, consequently, the language is metaphorically structured.”⁶⁴ Their definition of a metaphor as being the act of “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another”⁶⁵ is the outgrowth of their findings that human beings learn to describe what is less common, less concrete, or less familiar, in terms of what is more familiar, concrete, and common. One of the most commonly-cited examples Lakoff and Johnson provide is the metaphor HAPPY IS UP; SAD IS DOWN.⁶⁶ Seemingly universal across languages, people speak of happiness in upward directional terminology such as “I’m feeling *up*. That *boosted* my spirits. My spirits *rose*. You’re in *high* spirits. Thinking about her always gives me a *lift*. . .”⁶⁷ Happiness, being an abstract

⁶³ Gibbs, *The Poetics of Mind*; Gibbs, “Why Cognitive Linguists Should Care More About Empirical Methods”; Gonzalez-Marquez et al., eds., *Methods in Cognitive Linguistics*.

⁶⁴ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 5.

⁶⁵ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 4–5. Although some have tried to parse out the differences between metaphor, simile, synecdoche, anthropomorphism, and other metaphorical parts of speech, Lakoff and Johnson do not differentiate between them, nor do most studies. Likewise, this study will use “metaphor” as a catch-all theory that describes metaphorical language in general.

⁶⁶ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 14.

⁶⁷ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 14..

concept, needs to be grounded in a concrete human experience. This could be due to body language cues such as erect posture being associated with happiness but they go on to show a number of common metaphors that link positive states and experiences with upward directions.

Staying with the uplifting metaphor of HAPPY IS UP, we will parse out some of the jargon associated with CMT. Lakoff and Johnson categorize the parts of a metaphor in terms of domains. In this example, HAPPY is the target domain and UP is the source domain. The source domain is used to “structure” the target domain, that is, map (connect) elements from the source domain to the target domain. More simply put, ideas from the source domain UP are applied to the target domain HAPPINESS in order to better understand the latter. This process inherently involves highlighting some aspects shared by the source and target domain while also hiding those aspects that are inherent in the target domain but not the source domain.⁶⁸ For instance HAPPY IS UP will highlight certain aspects of happiness than would an equally valid metaphor such as HAPPINESS IS LIGHT. Exclaiming to a jovial friend “you’re looking up today” is different than saying “you’re bright and chipper today.” Both metaphors are statements about your friend’s mood, but they highlight and hide different aspects of their exuberance.

Such phenomena of using a simple concept to describe a more complex relationship are ubiquitous across languages, including Biblical Hebrew and its cognates. Job Jindo briefly traces a number of agricultural metaphors used to describe human life in the Old Testament. The specific metaphor for human offspring being a person’s seed (Isa

⁶⁸ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 10–13.

41:8) is also used by Israel's neighbours such as in Akkadian *zēru* (seed) is used to describe descendants and *inbu* (fruit) is used to describe children and offspring.⁶⁹ As such, we can use this biblical metaphor of HUMANS ARE PLANTS as an example of the selective mapping process:

Figure 1.1






Plants (source domain)		Humans (target domain)
Grow		Grow
Reproduce seeds/fruit		Reproduce children
Require water		Require water
Sedentary		Can be sedentary or nomadic
Vulnerable to axe and fire		Mortal
Relatively long lifespan	?	Relatively short lifespan
Flourishing relies on fertile ground	?	Flourishing relies on many factors

Figure 1.1 shows direct correlations between plants and humans in the solid arrows. Metaphors that map these simple correlations can easily be taken for granted or called “dead metaphors” as their metaphorical meaning has become so standard that it has lexicalized. Such examples would include the above example of “Abraham’s seed.” The dashed arrows would include more novel metaphors that map aspects between the source and target domains that are not quite as direct. Examples of such would include God “planting” Israel in the promised land (Jer 24:6), and God “cutting down” (Isa 6:13) and “uprooting” the nation (Jer 13:14). The last two examples indicated by question marks are mappings that are the most novel and the least direct. The wise man in Ps 1 is

⁶⁹ Jindo, “Metaphor Theory and Biblical Texts,” 5–6.

described in ways that suggest God will give him a lifespan comparable to that of a riverside tree, since wisdom ensures prosperity just as fertile ground ensures the prosperity of a fruit tree.

This third example begins to stretch the limits of Lakoff and Johnson's CMT and its ability to analyze more complex, multifaceted metaphors. CMT is focused on two domains and the unidirectional mappings from the source to target domain. But what about when there are multiple source domains that interact with the target domain and each other? It seems difficult to suggest that all metaphors are unidirectional; that our understanding of the direction up is not at least somewhat changed by our understanding of HAPPINESS IS UP. Lakoff and Johnson most certainly set a new standard for how we understand metaphor as an entire conceptual system rather than mere literary flourish, but their contributions are more theoretical than methodological. This is where Conceptual Blending has stepped in to fill in the gaps left by CMT.

Lakoff and Johnson's work has become the foundation for a number of other theories and methodologies. The most noteworthy methodological theory due to its usefulness for exegetical theology has been Turner and Fauconnier's Conceptual Blending theory.⁷⁰ While they built on the foundation set by CMT, Turner and Fauconnier's theory of conceptual blending makes a few key modifications to Lakoff and Johnson's thesis which have been discussed at length by Joseph Grady, Todd Oakley, and Seana Coulson.⁷¹ Grady, Oakley, and Coulson list six key differences between CMT and

⁷⁰ Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*.

⁷¹ Grady et al., "Blending and Metaphor."

CB: domains versus spaces; two domains versus four spaces; emergent structure; on-line processing and entrenchment; basic processes of blending; and the optimality principle unique to CB.⁷² To avoid conflating CB and CMT, it seems wise to understand the former in relation to and in contrast with the latter.

First, while Lakoff and Johnson speak in terms of domains, Turner and Fauconnier see the most basic units of cognitive organization as being “mental spaces” or simply “spaces.” It is in these mental spaces that humans are able to mentally “juggle” ideas that would be otherwise be incompatible.⁷³ These terms are not simply synonymous pieces of jargon, as spaces “represent particular scenarios which are structured by given domains.”⁷⁴ Spaces involve domains, but go beyond them.

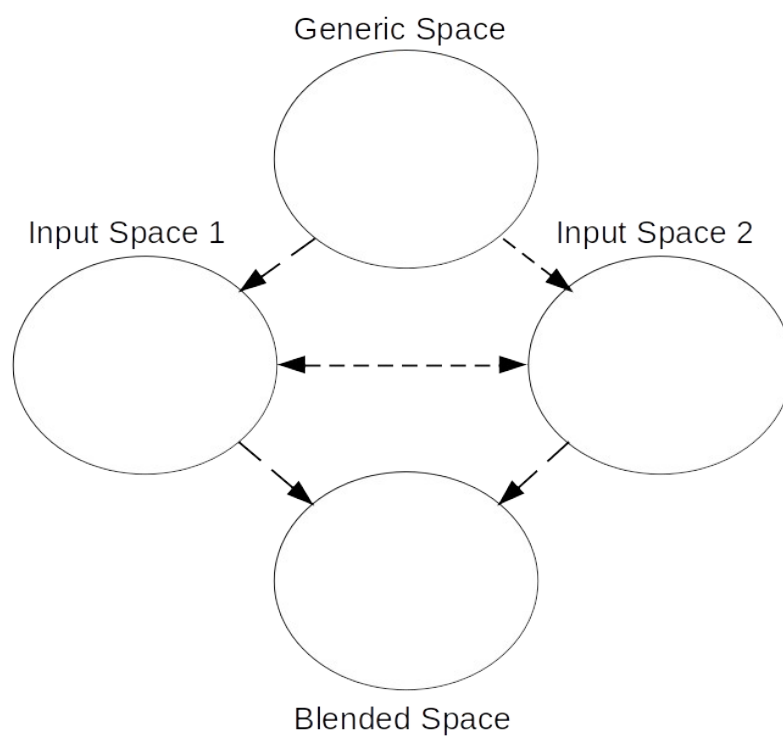
Second, in Fauconnier and Turner’s approach, mental spaces are connected to “frames,” long term memories or knowledge that can be drawn upon for information, and are subject to change as a discourse progresses.⁷⁵ This idea, is best described through a visual illustration:

⁷² Grady et al., “Blending and Metaphor.”

⁷³ Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 30.

⁷⁴ Grady et al., “Blending and Metaphor,” 102.

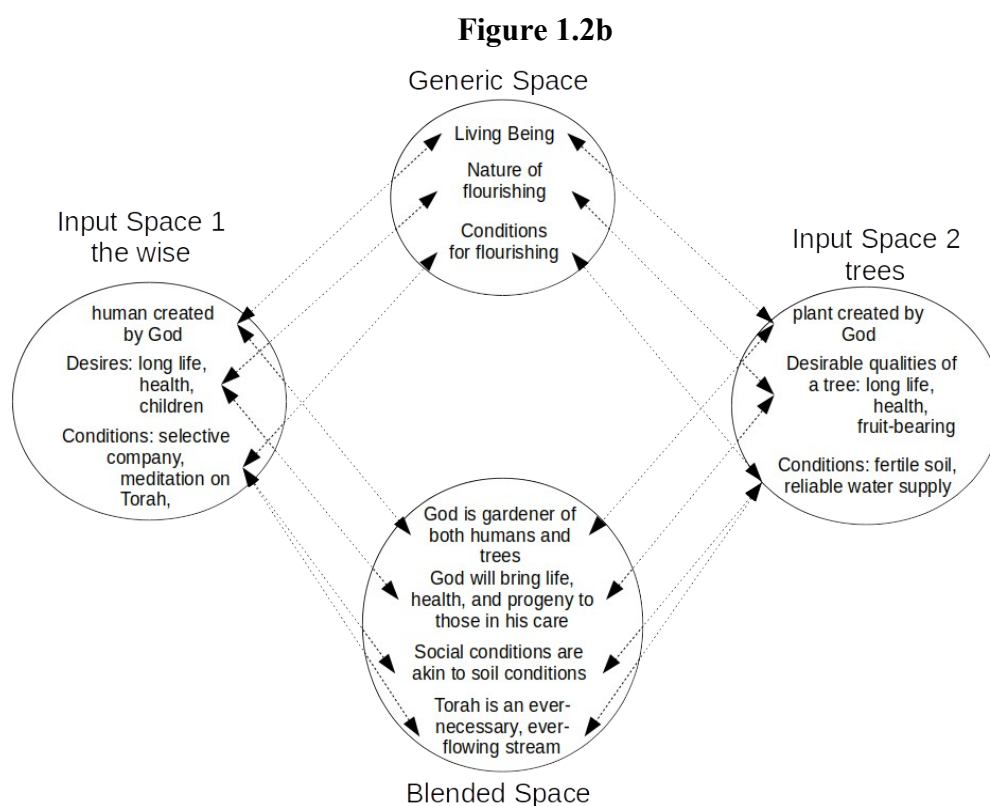
⁷⁵ Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 40.

Figure 1.2a

Here we see the standard mental spaces involved in conceptualizing metaphors according to CB. The two input spaces correspond to the source and target domains of CMT. Instead of there being a linear, unidirectional relationship between the two domains, there is two-way communication (cross-space mapping) between the two.⁷⁶ The generic space guides the metaphor by highlighting lines of continuity between the two input spaces. Finally, the blended space is the final product of metaphor. It is where the new idea emerges out of the connections between the two input spaces and their shared connections with the generic space. This is no mere modification of one domain by another, but the creation of a whole new conceptual space that is greater than the sum of

⁷⁶ Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 41.

its parts as these parts blend. All this jargon can prove to be quite unwieldy so we shall briefly return to the wise person of Ps 1 and apply this method of analysis to its arboreal metaphor.



In the above illustration, we begin with two unlike things: a tree and a wise person. The Psalmist likens the two in an extended metaphor that spans the first half of the psalm. The Psalmist has rather explicitly done most of the work for us in mapping out this metaphor by using poetic devices to signal the generic space between the two input spaces. However, the Psalmist leaves it up to the (presumably wise) reader to create the blended space on their own—to see how the connections in the generic space apply between the two inputs and what new thought reality these blended concepts create. This

example is a fairly simple one with only two input spaces and the entailments quite clearly spelled out for the reader, but this model applies to more complex metaphors with multiple input sources with entailments that are not as explicit.⁷⁷

Third, another benefit of CB over CMT is the former's understanding of emergent structure. While the latter focuses on unidirectional lines of continuity, the former allows for new structures to reveal themselves, most notably from lines of discontinuity.⁷⁸ Grady et al. use the example of "the surgeon is a butcher" to illustrate this concept.⁷⁹ There are no direct lines of continuity between butcher and surgeon that would suggest incompetence or brutality. It is only in the juxtaposition of the methods and goals of these two careers within the blended space that such a connection can emerge.

Although this is not always the case, Lakoff and Johnson tend to focus on the conventional metaphors we live by and take for granted—metaphors with entrenched meanings. The fourth strength of CB that Grady et al. note is its explicit focus on novel metaphors that are less lexicalized. These sorts of metaphors require what Turner and Fauconnier call "on-line processing."⁸⁰ This on-line processing is the subconscious act of creating new spaces of meaning from two other realities. As I will be arguing in this dissertation, the metaphors to describe the dark abode and appearance of God do not rely

⁷⁷ For an example of a mapping of three input sources and their entailments, see De Prenter's example of the Grim Reaper in "Conceptual Blending as an Integrative Approach."

⁷⁸ Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 42.

⁷⁹ Grady et al., "Blending and Metaphor," 103–06.

⁸⁰ Fauconnier and Turner, "Mental Spaces," 312.

on our lexicalized understanding of DARKNESS IS EVIL, but instead are metaphors that are novel—at least to most readers today.⁸¹

The fifth strength of CB is its explicit and categorized processes of blending. Turner and Fauconnier break down the process of conceptual blending into three stages: composition, completion, and elaboration.⁸² The first is simply the mapping of entailments from the input spaces into the blended space with this process increasing in difficulty with the number of input spaces being blended. All entailments are still on the table at this point, even if the metaphor might be absurd if taken literally. Completion is the process of sorting through this web of entailments while also considering any emergent structures that are apparent. At this point the metaphor is essentially “complete” in that it has meaning for us but the process does not stop here at basic comprehension. Instead, the final step, elaboration, is when we are left to our imagination to explore the limits of the metaphor. Returning to our example from Ps 1, the reader is free to take this metaphor further to imagine a great wind buffeting the stable tree or the benefit to others that an abundantly fruit-giving tree might be.

Finally, the sixth distinction adds further specificity to the analysis of metaphors through five “optimality principles” that function as guidelines for mapping which entailments should fit in the blended space and should move to the completion phase of the blending process.⁸³ These principles are:

⁸¹ Cf. De Preter, “Conceptual Blending as an Integrative Approach to Metaphor and Iconography,” 5.

⁸² Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 42–43.

⁸³ Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 309–52.

1. Topology: the actors and actions in the blended space should be involved in comparable actions as in the inputs.
2. Integration: the blended space should form a well-integrated mental picture.
3. Web: the connections between the inputs, the generic space, and the blended space must be closely maintained so that every event in the blend should have corresponding partners in the input spaces.
4. Unpacking: the blend should allow for some degree of reverse-engineering back to the inputs and their connections.
5. Relevance: Every part of the new blend must contribute to the meaning in some way.

In summary, CB is supported by the excellent philosophical-literary-conceptual understanding of metaphor that CMT laid out, expands upon it, and creates the necessary tools and controls for a functioning methodology with which to explore metaphorical speech, thought, and art.⁸⁴ Grady et al. have also shown how the two approaches need not conflict with one another but are most effective when used in tandem: CMT as the philosophical framework, CB as the methodology.

Just as CB builds upon an already solid premise, so have others added new methodological tools while sharpening some of the old ones. There are certain peculiarities in applying CMT to the Bible, especially if done from a confessional

⁸⁴ As De Prenter puts it (“Conceptual Blending,” 2), CMT is “not designed to analyze the structure of such complex conceptualizations in which elements from more than one source domain are mapped onto a target domain.” Instead, “Fauconnier and Turner’s model of ‘Conceptual Blending’—a cognitive approach holding that combining mental images is an essential enterprise of human thought—is a more fruitful approach to analyze such complex metaphoric mappings.”

standpoint as scholars like de Joode, De Prenter, Sweetser, and van Hecke have. The first question is whether or not meaning is transferred back to the source domain/input spaces from the target/blend. This question is absolutely key to this study; if the new reality created by the blend is not designed to affect our understanding of the inputs, then we can learn relatively little about the OT's understanding of either God or darkness on their own from this study. Mary Therese DesCamp and Eve Sweetser briefly discuss this issue in their article on the metaphors we use for God. Although they caution that saying GOD IS FATHER is not the same as saying FATHER IS GOD, as they are in fact separate metaphors,⁸⁵ they remain ambivalent as to whether or not our understanding of GOD IS FATHER should impact our understanding of fatherhood. In order to come to a conclusion on the question of bi-directional source domains, especially when applied to biblical texts about God, Pierce Taylor Hibbs' article and his proposed revelational theory of metaphor is quite helpful.

Hibbs argues that since "language is ultimately rooted in God himself and thus communicates far more than we often imagine," we need an appropriate approach to metaphor and language itself that recognizes the new epistemological reality that Christ, as the Word of God, creates.⁸⁶ Although Hibbs builds his revelational theory of metaphor off of Douglas Berggren's Tension Theory,⁸⁷ a number of his modifications can be applied to other theories of metaphor including those employed by this study especially since

⁸⁵ DesCamp and Sweetser, "Metaphors for God," 221.

⁸⁶ Hibbs, "In the Beginning Was the Word," 77.

⁸⁷ Berggren, "The Use and Abuse of Metaphor, I." Berggren's tension theory is not too different from CMT or CBT but her focus is on how humans create "stereoscopic vision" by keeping two unlike ideas (what CMT would call inputs) in tension that would "produce absurdity" (239) if logically resolved but create an idea that is greater than the sum of its parts if left in the tension of a metaphor.

tension theory and CMT are relatively similar. This new revelational theory begins just as other theories do with a move from standard (central) meanings of individual words to the new realities created by metaphors (marginal meanings) but Hibbs does not end there. Instead, he suggests that we go one step further and recognize that “God can and has revealed himself in creation with metaphors in a way that has the potential to redefine even our central meanings of words.”⁸⁸ Essentially, we must recognize the layers of divine authorship that exist when we read Scripture: God is the source of all words and reality, as well as the inspiration behind the words and reality of the biblical text. Therefore, since God is the double-author of text and reality, Hibbs argues that biblical metaphors must be understood as bidirectional rather than unidirectional as Lakoff and Johnson hold.⁸⁹ Using the metaphor of the Son being the Word of the Father in John 1 as his test case, Hibbs argues that although the primary focus of the metaphor is to describe the Son, this does not preclude the Gospel-writer’s secondary goal of informing us about the nature of communication—both divine and human. He describes this bidirectionality as such:

John is not primarily trying to instruct us about the nature of human words; rather, he is deepening our understanding of the second person of the Trinity. But that does not mean that the bridge built by the metaphor disallows *secondary* traffic in the other direction. That is the beauty of revelation. It reveals *more* than what we expect or imagine. It does not simply deliver the truth; it overwhelms us with it.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Hibbs, “In the Beginning Was the Word,” 87–88.

⁸⁹ Hibbs, “In the Beginning Was the Word,” 91.

⁹⁰ Hibbs, “In the Beginning Was the Word,” 91.

I would add to Hibbs' discussion the following. First, the exegete must recognize the autobiographical nature of the Bible whether in direct statements about God, direct discourse from God, or even speculation about and criticism of God. God holds the unique ability to determine the method and nature of his self-revelation, in both text and event. And so even the physical realities that God has chosen to signal His presence such as smoke, fire, cloud, and darkness are the conscious choices of the divine Author; they are the visual metaphors he has chosen to accompany His self-revelation. Just as an artist chooses what visual metaphors to convey their message, so too does God choose what visual metaphors he uses in his theophanies. As such, there will be no distinction between verbal/textual metaphors of darkness and the experiential/visual metaphors that God chose to employ. Of course this does not matter if the reader does not assume that these theophanies are historical and are simply the product of a human literary community. Even if this is the reader's stance, the underlying principle of authorial intent—whether conscious or unconscious—in metaphor still stands. More on this will have to wait for Chapter 6.

1.4 Illuminating the Path Ahead

With all this in mind, how, on a practical level, will this proposed theory of metaphor play out methodologically in this study? One of the key tenets of CMT is that metaphors are used to make comprehension of complex ideas more attainable, or, in the jargon of CMT, to create human scale. Since God is the most complex subject to be discussed, I

will begin by splitting all of the pertinent examples of darkness in the OT into two groups: First I will cover metaphors that connect darkness with more mundane human experiences. These metaphors are also simple in that they compare darkness with more comprehensible realities such as blindness, danger, and the unknown. With these simpler dark metaphors better understood, I will cover multiplex metaphors that involve three input sources God, darkness, and a third reality that links the two. The findings of the first section will prove to be key in mapping the entailments from the darkness input space.

My dissertation will reflect CB's three stages of the blending process on both a micro- and macro-structural level: composition, completion, and elaboration.⁹¹ On a micro-structural level, I will, of course, be examining specific metaphors in specific verses in a manner similar to that in Figure 1.2b only usually without the complicated diagram and with a much greater level of detail.⁹² As DesCamp and Sweetser did for their study, I will map both the general knowledge that would have been available to the respective biblical audience, as well as specific knowledge gained from the immediate context,⁹³ but I would add to this a mapping of entailments that can be discerned in similar passages within the relevant book, corpus, and broader OT context. This will comprise the composition and completion phases of each discussion of each verse as I weigh the various entailments to determine which is blend that fits best—put another

⁹¹ Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 42–43.

⁹² I will provide diagrams for a few key metaphors throughout but only on occasion. While most metaphorical blends can be described through text well enough, some more complex blends are better understood through the visual aid of a blend diagram such as Fig. 1.2b.

⁹³ DesCamp and Sweetser, “Metaphors for God,” 226.

way, I will be primarily interested in which entailments are being highlighted from the darkness frame and which ones are not to bring the blend to completion. Particularly with verses with unclear, debated, or novel meanings I will then move on to the step of elaboration by discussing how specific metaphors contribute to broader discernible trends and how these trends give us a window into how the writers of the OT understood and interacted with darkness.

On a macro-structural level, my dissertation will also reflect these three stages. In Chapter 2 of this dissertation I will work to “compose” a bank of common entailments that were commonly used by Israel and Judah’s cultural neighbours. Understanding the general knowledge available to the author and his audience will require some level of historical and anthropological work to better understand the physical realities of darkness long before the invention of streetlights, as well as the religious realities of darkness within the OT’s ancient Near Eastern context. As has been discussed much earlier in this chapter, it is a very real danger to get lost in these sorts of studies of comparative culture and to allow the metaphors of Israel’s neighbours to impede our understanding of the metaphors in question. As such, these studies will be as limited as possible and will focus on how the lived experiences of people in the ancient Near East contributed to what Vyvyan Evans calls Idealized Cognitive Models (more on this in the following chapter).⁹⁴ The second and third questions of specific and intratextual knowledge will require careful exegesis of passages rather than mere lexemes.

⁹⁴ Evans, *Cognitive Linguistics an Introduction*, 290; Evans et al., “The Cognitive Linguistics Enterprise,” 13.

After gathering these *possible* entailments in what Turner and Fauconnier call the “composition” phase, I will then move on to completion in Chapters 3 through 5. I will sort through these entailments to determine what entailments are most probable. I will be careful to note any instances of new emergent structures that might become apparent from the entailments.⁹⁵ There might emerge instances where multiple meanings might emerge in the blended space. Rather than posing a problem, such instances will make for even more meaningful discussions in the proceeding step.

From here I will move to CB’s final step of elaboration in Chapter 6. This step is the telos of this project and where metaphorical study can shift into metaphorical theology. At this point I will be able to explore what the source domain has to say about the target domain, that is, what darkness has to say about God. Not only will I move from darkness to God but, following Hibbs’ revelational theory of metaphor and the increased flexibility of Fauconnier and Turner’s method, I will move in the opposite direction of understanding darkness in terms of God’s use of it as the vehicle for self-revelation that He has chosen.

⁹⁵ Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*, 42.

CHAPTER 2: IDEALIZED COGNITIVE MODELS OF DARKNESS IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Darkness fell over the mountain, their faces were overcast.
Shamash, the light of the gods, was overcast by darkness.

Standard myth of Anzu, Tablet II¹

2.1 Idealized Cognitive Models

If I were to tell my toddler that he was walking like an elephant while his younger sister was napping, I would of course be referring to the remarkably thunderous sound his tiny feet produce. In my culture, the elephant is the archetype of a heavy and loud animal, but not every culture sees them as such; in the Indian subcontinent a *gajagāminī* (गजगामिनी), one who walks like an elephant, is a woman who walks gracefully and silently. Or suppose perhaps as a teenager I had called my stepdad an “old ape.” No doubt my dad would have seen this as a (feigned) insult. My dad didn’t appreciate being reminded of his nearly fully-eroded hairline or his sluggish joints, nor did he appreciate being likened to a dumb, dirty, ape. However, were my dad and I Brazilian, such an exclamation of *macaco velho* (old ape) would be a term of endearment that highlights one’s sage wisdom—the shrewdness to know to tip the fruit pot over lest his clenched fist be trapped in its narrow mouth. Similarly, Sarah Dille notes that calling someone a dog can have wildly different meanings depending on the culture—meanings that cannot be understood by simple “scientific studies of canine behavior.”²

¹ Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 213.

² Dille, “The Rock That Gave You Birth,” 38; See Zhou and Liu, “Evolution of Language” for a more in-depth exploration of a similar difference in ICMs that shape zoomorphisms across cultures. It is

These examples, as silly as they are, underscore the importance of trying to understand the conceptual world of cultures that are not our own in order to properly grasp the metaphors that arise from those cultures. Our conceptualization of the world in which we live is not done in a cultural vacuum, and thus the metaphors we use to conceptualize that world are tied to our culture in Idealized Cognitive Models (ICMs).³ These ICMs are “stable mental representations that represent theories about the world.”⁴ These ICMs are specific to their culture just as the above models of apes and elephants are.⁵ Raymond Gibbs cautions that there are no fixed ICMs but instead these models are merely context-dependent temporary representations.⁶ Gibbs’ corrective is valuable but it is still possible to speak in broad strokes about culturally-accepted cognitive models. I am merely working under the assumption that there are culturally-informed cognitive models that inform our encyclopaedic knowledge of a word’s many meanings and aid us in the process of meaning construction.⁷ There are of course plenty of Indian immigrants in Canada and their children who have had to juggle two folk models of elephants and enough American zoo keepers who have seen elephants for the gentle and quiet giants they are, but, broadly speaking most Canadians would understand the zoomorphism as a reference to loud feet. The purpose of this chapter is not to flatten all ancient Near

worth noting that ICMs do not apply solely to metaphorical expressions. A colleague of mine, Jordan Schriver is working on his forthcoming dissertation which is a meta analysis of bi-cultural and bi-lingual individuals and how they process the same words and ideas in different languages. He has found that the same word or idea can have widely differing entailments from culture to culture.

³ Dille (“The Rock That Gave You Birth,” 38) connects Black’s notion of “commonplaces” from his 1962 work *Models and Metaphors* to this idea. Although Black’s work predates CMT, the notion still works. Even so, I will keep to the jargon that is more common to this field.

⁴ Evans et al., “The Cognitive Linguistics Enterprise,” 13.

⁵ Evans, *Cognitive Linguistics an Introduction*, 290.

⁶ Gibbs, “Prototypes in Dynamic Meaning Construal,” 33.

⁷ Evans et al., “The Cognitive Linguistics Enterprise,” 8.

Eastern imagery of darkness into a single stereotypical and lexicalized meaning but to delve into the lives and writings of Israel's neighbours to gain an understanding of any ICMs that seem to develop and what factors may have contributed to those models. This study will touch on a handful of key passages and trends but will be by no means a comprehensive look at all textual, iconographic,⁸ architectural, etc evidences of how ancient Near Eastern people groups perceived darkness. In the end, my focus is on the text of the OT, and so this chapter will function as context rather than pretext. As it will be seen in this chapter and those that follow,

. . . the symbols of light and darkness have implications beyond a simple one-to-one correspondence with an idea. Instead, they are complex blends of imagery which, in particular contexts, may emphasize one syntagmatic reality associated with it over another.⁹

The goal of this chapter is not to re-tread old ground of explaining *what* was written according to its literary-historical context, but instead to discern *why* these dark metaphors were used with regards to the ICMs that gave rise to them. To paraphrase Gomola, while the biblical theologian focuses “on the content of the ideas developed . . . the cognitive linguist will be more interested in the processes underlying their formulations in language.”¹⁰

⁸ This chapter is quite heavily focused on textual evidences from the ancient Near East but this is not due to a disinterest in iconographic representations of darkness. I have made an attempt to track down iconographic representations of darkness from the ancient Near East, but—despite a more recent surge in scholarly interest in iconography—there is a discernible lack of work related to iconographic representations of darkness. Until works on ancient Near Eastern iconographic representations of darkness are published, textual evidences will have to suffice.

⁹ Ross, “Motific Analysis of Isaiah,” 31.

¹⁰ Gomola, *Conceptual Blending in Early Christian Discourse*, sec. 1.1.

2.2 The Daily Darkness of Life in the Ancient Near East

In his exploration of the motif of night spelling danger in the HB, Weston Fields suggests that

the ancient dread of malevolent darkness can be most fully appreciated only by those who have spent time in places without artificial lighting. Deep darkness—*צלמות*—is a metaphor for things evil and feared, not for things good and loved. . . . Evening was the time to make for the safety of the private home, where at least some light from a fire or oil lamp or candle was available. Night was the time to remain within the bounds of this safe haven.¹¹

He goes on to conclude that “public life came to a virtual standstill with the setting of the sun.”¹² The question of the metaphorical uses of darkness will have to wait for the next three chapters but for now we will have to put Fields’ other assertions to the test. From his allegation that there was much light to be found from artificial sources, to his insistence that people were confined to their homes after dark, we will examine first the material evidence then the textual evidence to determine what the regular experiences of darkness were like for people in the ancient Near East.

First and foremost, we must understand that darkness was an unavoidable reality for all people in the ancient Near East. Without glass panelled walls and electric flood lighting, all interior spaces that were not awash with natural sunlight would have been dimly-lit at best—even at midday. This is indicated in KTU 1.4.iii.55 of the Ugaritic Story of King Keret which talks about entering “into the darkness of the tent shrine.”¹³

¹¹ Fields, “Night as Danger,” 22.

¹² Fields, “Night as Danger,” 32.

¹³ Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 198.

The brightest, cheapest, and most reliable source of light was the sun and so buildings had to be built with an awareness of when natural light was available throughout the day and how those lighting patterns would change throughout the year. For instance, Mary Shepperson surveyed the orientation of Mesopotamian temples and showed that Early Dynastic temples tended to have their gates facing North or Northwest, thus away from direct sunlight, but in the second millennium BCE, temples shifted to facing eastward to take advantage of the sunrise.¹⁴ It is important to note, however, that larger buildings such as temples and any underground facilities such as tombs and caves were only so brightly illuminated as the sun's rays could reach and so without large windows, many buildings in the ancient Near East would have only been brightly lit for less than six hours a day. During the other three quarters of the day as well as around corners that did not receive direct sunlight, rooms were either shrouded in darkness or illuminated through artificial means. It is also worth noting that a need for natural light had to be balanced with the need for temperature control through the use of shade.

As soon as the sun began to set over the ancient plains, hills, deserts, and river valleys of the Near East, a number of changes would begin to occur—changes that may seem alien to most modern readers, especially those whose horizons and landscapes differ from the eastern Mediterranean. Most obviously, our visual horizon changes drastically without the sun's light. Our sight shifts from polychromatic to monochromatic, obscuring patterns, symbols, and marks of beauty. Our ability to see at longer distances decreases significantly, especially for those who suffer from a visual stigmatism or night blindness.

¹⁴ Shepperson, "The Rays of Šamaš"; see also, Shepperson, "Planning for the Sun."

Outlines of objects become much more difficult to discern as the previously known becomes unknowable. Gonlin and Nowell note the nocturnal sensory shift includes far more than just sight as the setting sun brings new tactile, auditory, and olfactory experiences.¹⁵ Darkness would bring with it relative quiet as the activities of both humans and farm animals cease to be replaced by the more occasional sounds of owls, bats, and jackals as well as the hum of amphibians and insects. Shifting amounts of light and heat also cause various biological changes in flora which leads to different smells to be perceived by those out in the dark. Darkness, whether nocturnal or just shade, brought with it a reprieve from the hounding heat of the sun but this shift in temperatures could be seen as a double-edged sword as it could lead to hypothermia (see Exod 22:26–27).

After the sun had set, both pauper and prince were almost entirely at the mercy of artificial light sources. While on clearer nights the moon (when in a full or gibbous phases) would provide enough light to see where one might be walking, regular activities were basically prevented without some source of combustion-based illumination. Oil lamps are the first thing that comes to mind when we think of artificial lighting for Israel and its neighbours. Lamps are not only well-attested in scripture (the lighting of the Tabernacle/Temple, Ps 119:105; Prov 6:23; Zech 4, etc), they are also overwhelmingly plentiful among archaeological digs. Despite their ubiquity, their use and efficacy has received relatively little attention. Gonlin and Nowell as well as Galinier et al. recognize that this is part of a broader gap in scholarship of neglecting nighttime activities of past

¹⁵ Gonlin et al., eds., *Archaeology of the Night*, 27.

societies—a gap that has only more recently been gaining scholarly attention from works like Handelman as well as Schnepel and Ben-Ari.¹⁶

Handelman, Schnepel, and Ben-Ari devote their time to Mesoamerican and European populations before the proliferation of electrical lighting but don't focus any attention to the ancient Near East. Thankfully, Meghan Strong's 2018 dissertation on Egyptian lighting is an excellent step in the right direction and provides some very helpful insight into artificial lighting in the ancient world.¹⁷ She creatively blends evidence from written inscriptions, murals, and archaeological remains with her own tests with recreations of period implements and illuminants to fully and viscerally understand artificial lighting in ancient Egypt. Strong's work is focused on artificial lighting in Egypt during the Pharaonic Period and there are some key differences between lighting in Egypt and the Levant, which Strong notes throughout and in Elrasheedy and Schindler's shorter study of Levantine oil lamps.¹⁸

One key question surrounding the use of artificial lighting in the ancient Near East is the question of cost. Particularly in Egypt, the cost of artificial lighting was prohibitively high: while the linen strips needed for the Egyptian style wick-on-a-stick candles were somewhat affordable, the high cost of harvesting and rendering animal fat into tallow to create a suitable illuminant made darkness an unavoidable reality save for the wealthier castes.¹⁹ Conversely, the Levant is a highly fertile area for olive and flax

¹⁶ Galinier et al., "Anthropology of the Night," 819; Gonlin et al., eds., *Archaeology of the Night*, 30; Handelman, "Epilogue"; Schnepel and Ben-Ari, "Introduction."

¹⁷ Strong, "Illuminating the Path of Darkness."

¹⁸ Elrasheedy and Schindler, "Illuminating the Past."

¹⁹ Strong, "Illuminating the Path of Darkness," 87–90.

farming, and so illuminants and wicks (respectively) were much more easy to come by, making oil lamps much more affordable there.²⁰ Despite the disparity in price between the two areas' means of illumination, both the oil lamps and wick-on-a-stick candles burned on average for just shy of an hour with very minimal smoke, mess, or smell if proper illuminants were used (olive oil and animal tallow, respectively).

Lamps and candles are, of course, not the only options available. Although wooden torches of course do not survive in the archaeological record, they do appear in various art forms and were no doubt an option for artificial lighting.²¹ That said, torches are expensive, relatively dangerous, do not last particularly long, and produce a significant amount of heat, especially given their close proximity as they are carried in an already hot climate. There is also the household hearth or open air bonfire that can produce a great deal of both heat and light at the cost of firewood. Such sources of light are easy to produce and maintain, but do not allow for any mobility, thus creating semi-permanent darkened spaces.

The costs of lighting are a burden more easily borne if they are offset by the efficacy of the light produced, but the evidence suggests that artificial lighting in this period left much to be desired. Lighting implements in this time period, whether in Egypt or Palestine, produced meagre amounts of light that was prone to flickering and reduced burn times, especially in windy conditions or if exposed to movement.²² Strong conducted her tests with particularly Egyptian style wick-on-a-stick style lights, but

²⁰ Elrasheedy and Schindler, "Illuminating the Past."

²¹ Strong, "Illuminating the Path of Darkness," 3.

²² Strong, "Illuminating the Path of Darkness," 212.

Elrasheedy and Schindler found very similar results when they tested the sorts of oil lamps that were prevalent in Iron Age Palestine. After they tested various clay lamps, they found that these sorts of lamps could produce light equivalent to one or two modern wax candles and therefore were probably not primarily used for interior lighting.²³

Elrasheedy, Schindler, and Strong all come to the conclusion that artificial lighting, although functional if need be, seems to have been employed more often in religious rituals than for what the former scholars refer to as “blanket illumination” of interior spaces.²⁴

It would be easy to assume given the relative ineffectiveness of artificial lighting that human activity would entirely cease with the setting sun—that the ancients laid down with the sun and rose with the sun—but this is not necessarily the case. Strong found a number of instances that show the importance of night time lighting for a number of funerary and religious rituals in Egypt that would occur after dark. A. R. George has shown that night watchmen were employed to protect Babylonian urban centres from threats both within and without.²⁵ Various feasts and celebrations, whether strictly religious or otherwise would certainly either begin at or extend into the night. Similarly, the social importance and impact of fireside gatherings must not be understated. Even agriculture continued into the night in some cultures such as Early Bronze Age Oman as Smiti Nathan has shown.²⁶ What is potentially most fascinating and is no doubt lost on

²³ Elrasheedy and Schindler, “Illuminating the Past,” 40.

²⁴ Elrasheedy and Schindler, “Illuminating the Past,” 40; Strong, “Illuminating the Path of Darkness,” 54.

²⁵ George, “The Gods Išum and Hengurdanga.”

²⁶ Nathan, “Midnight at the Oasis.”

most modern readers is that long periods of unbroken sleep might have been the exception and not the norm throughout human history. Roger Ekirch has shown that before the dawn of large-scale artificial lighting, pre-modern Europeans' sleep would be naturally segmented with short breaks spent drowsing or pursuing various nocturnal activities.²⁷ A. R. George connects this with the *munattu* (a period of midnight wakefulness) in which Kabti-ilāni-Marduk wrote his poem to the Babylonian fire god Išum thus indicating that similar nighttime activities seem quite plausible in the ancient Near East as well.²⁸ The ancients would have been quite used to being awake after sunset without the convenience of a light switch for all the mundane rhythms of life at night such as after dark poetry writing, sex, stoking of fires, bodily functions, and tending to young children.

Lastly, the people of the ancient Near East would have also been quite well-accustomed to the darkness of night because of their fascination with and need for astronomy.²⁹ While they might have differed in their estimation of the cosmic importance of the heavenly bodies, Israel and its neighbours both put a great deal of importance in tracking their movements across the night's sky. The moon and stars provided an absolutely essential means of tracking the passage of time not just through the night, but also through the seasons. It was only by embracing the darkness of night and peering up that people in ancient times could discern when would be the best time to plant crops, go to war, or prepare for the next festival.

²⁷ Ekirch, *At Day's Close*, 300–311.

²⁸ George, "The Gods Išum and Hengurdanga," 5.

²⁹ Cooley, *Poetic Astronomy in the Ancient Near East*; Imhausen and Steele, eds., *Under One Sky*; Rochberg, *Before Nature*, 193–230; See Steele, ed., *Calendars and Years*.

2.3 Cultural Responses to Darkness

That the people of the ancient Near East were familiar with darkness to a much greater degree than what we are today is quite obvious but the next question is how the ancients responded to the darkness that was such an integral part of their lives. It is here that we will turn our attention to the extant textual evidences we have to how darkness was understood and if there are any discernible trends (ICMs) in how the ancients used dark metaphors. As Fauconnier and Turner note, just as the presence of specific atoms does not predict their merging and what sorts of properties those molecules might possess, so too do various input spaces play out in unpredictable ways.³⁰ We will now explore how the input spaces of darkness with their attendant cultural links play out in real time through the literary record of Egypt, Babylon, Ugarit, Persia, and Greece.

2.3.1 Egypt

To the Egyptians, *kkw/kkwt* (the masculine/feminine forms of darkness, respectively) was one of the primordial elements of creation—separate even from the gods.³¹ Egypt generally understood the pre-creative world as being one of watery chaos, but at Hermopolis, a city in Middle Egypt, it was understood as being “in the infinity, the nothingness, the nowhere and the dark” and it was from this “darkness of Father Nun” that the primeval egg was formed.³² Spell 76 in the Coffin Texts blends the ideas of watery chaos and darkness: “It is I who am Shu, whom Atum created on the day that he

³⁰ Fauconnier and Turner, “Mental Spaces,” 89–90.

³¹ Hallo and Younger, eds., *Context of Scripture*, 1:10.

³² Spells 76 and 79 in Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, 54–55.

evolved . . . out of the Flood, out of the Waters, out of the darkness, out of the lostness.”³³

Light was even seen as the creation of Kuk and Kauket, the primeval gods of darkness.³⁴

Erik Hornung rightly suggests that the narrative purpose of darkness in these creation texts is to underscore how far beyond comprehension the creation of the cosmos was.³⁵ R. T. Rundle Clark comes to a similar conclusion as he argued that darkness was seen as the ultimate limit of humanity’s sight and shows that the Egyptians saw “connecting darkness” as the ultimate boundary.³⁶ Similarly, a hymn found on the tomb of Ramses IX reads “how secret it is when darkness comes / Obscurity which makes the faces unrecognizable.”³⁷ a very clear example of darkness and the unknown being connected in Egyptian thought can be found in the Book of Nut, a Middle Kingdom cosmology: the opening lines of this composition read the “upper side of [the] sky [which came from Nut] exists in uniform darkness, the southern, northern, western and eastern limits of which are unknown . . . (a place) . . . unknown by the gods or akh’s, there being no brightness there.”³⁸

I would suggest that we take Hornung and Clark’s conclusions even further and connect the conceptual metaphor of DARKNESS IS THE UNKNOWABLE to both texts about creation as well as texts about death, as few things are as incomprehensible as that gate through which none ever pass back. There is a very clear connection in Egyptian thought between death and darkness. In the Great Hymns to the Aten, the hymnist laments that at

³³ Hallo and Younger, eds., *Context of Scripture*, 1:10. Cf. Spell 80.

³⁴ Ringgren, “Light and Darkness in Ancient Egyptian Religion,” 142.

³⁵ Hornung, *Licht und Finsternis in der Vorstellungswelt Altägyptens*, 177.

³⁶ Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, 35.

³⁷ Ringgren, “Light and Darkness in Ancient Egyptian Religion,” 145.

³⁸ Hallo and Younger, eds., *Context of Scripture*, 1:5.

the setting of the sun, the “Earth is in darkness as if in death.”³⁹ Similarly, in the Victory Stela of King Piye (2.7), being seized by death is described as “founder[ing] in darkness.”⁴⁰

Othamar Keel attributes the elaborate myths about transformation in the afterlife to an attempt to comprehend and thus gain some semblance of control over that which was wholly imperceptible and unstoppable.⁴¹ This has led Christopher Hays to conclude that “the Egyptians were aware that the afterlife was a mystery into which their eyes could not quite see,” which led them to profound pessimism about the afterlife.⁴² The connection between death, the unknowable, and darkness is seen in a number of funerary texts that speak of how the dead are privy to the knowledge of hidden things and are capable of navigating through darkness, unlike the living.⁴³ In spell 80 of the Coffin Texts, the dead are themselves unknowable as their “front belongs to the darkness, [their] back belongs to the light.”⁴⁴ Although there are clear connections between death, darkness, and the unknown, the ancient Egyptians also saw sleep as a sort of temporary, miniature death that was brought on by the darkness of night. In the “Great Hymn to the Sun,” describes the power of darkness as such:

When your movements vanish and you set in the western horizon, the land is in darkness, in the manner of death. (People), they lie in bedchambers, heads covered up, and one eye does not see its fellow. All their property is robbed, although it is under their heads, and they do not realize it. Every

³⁹ Hallo and Younger, eds., *Context of Scripture*, 1:45.

⁴⁰ Hallo and Younger, eds., *Context of Scripture*, 2:46.

⁴¹ Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 65.

⁴² Hays, *Death in the Iron Age II and in First Isaiah*.

⁴³ Ringgren, “Light and Darkness in Ancient Egyptian Religion,” 143.

⁴⁴ Ringgren, “Light and Darkness in Ancient Egyptian Religion,” 143.

lion is out of its den, all creeping things bite. Darkness gathers, the land is silent. The one who made them is set in his horizon.⁴⁵

The gods of Egypt are sometimes in close connection with darkness but an important underlying question is which entailments are being selected in these metaphorical uses of darkness; did the Egyptians portray their gods as dark to highlight their unknowability or some other aspect of their nature? R. T. Rundle Clark argues that a recurring theme in Egyptian hymnody is praising the gods' ability to perceive through darkness which seems to highlight their omniscience.⁴⁶ The most noteworthy among the Egyptian gods to be associated with darkness is Seth who is paradoxically both the god of the "abode of the blessed," as well as the god of "chaos, darkness and destruction" who undermines Osiris' idyllic order.⁴⁷ Osiris, in turn, becomes the one who conquers darkness by defeating Seth and enduring the primeval darkness of the underworld. Coppedge concludes that Seth is the progenitor of all destruction and perversity in his role as the personification of darkness and drought.⁴⁸ No doubt in at least the case of Seth, darkness has a very close connection to evil but it is still unclear if darkness is evil because Seth is evil or if Seth claims dominion over darkness for his own nefarious purposes. Although Seth's connection with darkness is quite evident, he did not hold a monopoly on it. As was mentioned before, Kuk and Kauket were also gods of darkness. Even Seth's great nemesis, Osiris, is hailed as "the head of the Great House, prince of the

⁴⁵ Meltzer, ed., *Texts from the Amarna Period in Egypt*, 113.

⁴⁶ Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, 35.

⁴⁷ Cornelius, "The Theological Significance of Darkness in the Old Testament," 56–57.

⁴⁸ Coppedge, "An Inductive Study of the Concept of Darkness in the Old Testament," 14. See chapter 95 of *The Book of the Dead*.

night and of thick darkness.”⁴⁹ Re is also said to have power to create darkness by the mere closing of his eyes in the Legend of Isis and the Name of Re.⁵⁰

There is also the great serpent Apep who constantly threatens to swallow the sun’s light and plunge the world into darkness.⁵¹ It is with Apep that the connection between darkness and evil is most likely. Keel removes any potential for nuance when he concludes that “the evening darkness is above all the domain of the monstrous serpent Apophis.”⁵² While Keel is quite unambiguous in his conclusions, it is not entirely clear if Apep desires to bring darkness or if darkness would merely be the outcome if he succeeded in consuming Re. There are also depictions of malevolent supernatural beings that are sometimes depicted as stalking at night,⁵³ but the dark of night was not their sole domain.

2.3.2 Sumer and Babylon

In broad strokes we can see some cultural and religious trends develop in Sumerian and Babylonian attitudes to darkness that are fairly similar to those found in Egypt. One of the strongest similarities is their shared use of darkness to describe death and the afterlife.⁵⁴ In the the poem The Descent of Ishtar to the Underworld (1.108) the abode of death is called a “dark house”—a title also used by Enkidu in the Epic of Gilgamesh to

⁴⁹ Budge and Romer, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, 107.

⁵⁰ Hallo and Younger, eds., *Context of Scripture*, 1:34.

⁵¹ Taylor, *Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt*, 28–29.

⁵² Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 54.

⁵³ Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 53, 77.

⁵⁴ Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, 232–33; Kim, *A Study of the Concept of Light and Darkness in John 3*, 24–25.

describe the same—and “the house where those who enter are deprived of light . . . They see no light, they dwell in darkness.”⁵⁵ Throughout this poem, it is reinforced that the underworld is a place from where no one can return. In his analysis of Old Babylonian omens, Ulla Jeyes found that “nearly 80% of all protases which mention darkness are followed by a death omen.”⁵⁶ Jeyes goes on to conclude that “the diviner used rules of association by which features, such as darkness, dirt and states of captivity, which are connected with the existence in the Underworld, were interpreted as signs of death.”⁵⁷ In the Sumerian incantation text *Udughul*, the evil spirits are told to “Go to [their] darkness, at the base of the netherworld”⁵⁸ and in the Sumerian poem *Edina-Usagake*, the netherworld is referred to as “the dark mountain.”⁵⁹ While darkness is certainly a recurring descriptor of the land of the dead in Mesopotamian literature, so too is light. For instance, in the First Elegy of the Pushkin Museum, Ludingira hopes that Utu (the equivalent of the Akkadian Samas) might turn “the dark place into light, [so that] he will judge your case.”⁶⁰

Another similarity between the Egyptian and Babylonian conceptual worlds of darkness is their use of darkness to describe the realm of the divine although Mesopotamian religions had their own nuance that perhaps seems a bit paradoxical. On the one hand, the gods are clearly seen as beings of immeasurable luminosity. Thavapalan notes that temple names and ceremonial epithets in Babylonia frequently employ terms

⁵⁵ Hallo and Younger, eds., *Context of Scripture*, 1:381.

⁵⁶ Jeyes, “Death and Divination in the Old Babylonian Period,” 112.

⁵⁷ Jeyes, “Death and Divination in the Old Babylonian Period,” 113.

⁵⁸ Katz, *The Image of the Netherworld in the Sumerian Sources*, 225.

⁵⁹ Smith and Pitard, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, 2:713.

⁶⁰ Katz, *The Image of the Netherworld in the Sumerian Sources*, 223.

like ‘radiance’ (Akkadian *melammu*, *šulummatu*), ‘shining’ (*nabāṭu*) and ‘lustrous’ (*ebbu*).⁶¹ Babylonian gods were similarly described using bright words in religious poetry as Adad is “the one who makes lightning flash, who carries [torches?] and flame,” Anu is described as the one who “releases daylight” and Ishtar is the “mighty daughter of the luminary of the night sky.”⁶² George’s study of hymns and spells to Ḫendursanga shows that Babylonian night watchmen saw their patron deity as the one who could illuminate their paths and their sight:

You are the . . . (of) Enki, you are the herald, you are Ḫendursanga, you are the lord with the lovely tiara, you are the doorkeeper of heaven! May the lunar crescent cast moonlight on the street, may it make the ground in the street easy for my footfall! May not evil *udug*, evil *lamma*, evil *galla*, or evil *maškim*-demon obstruct my footfall! May it turn back [behind] me! May it stand aside! Be adjured by Sky, be adjured by Earth! Incantation for a person going along a street.⁶³

Just as the illuminating properties of the gods were praised, so too was their ability to bring darkness. Being under a god’s shadow was considered a great boon to the king and his army just as the shadow cast by a god’s ziggurat was seen as a sign of blessing (not to mention a reprieve from the hot sun).⁶⁴ Outside of the urban sphere, according to the *Enuma Elish*, when the gods have darkened the farmer’s soil, it is a sign of blessing, while the opposite—blanched fields—is a great calamity.⁶⁵ Lastly, ancient Babylonian temples were adorned with dark colours, especially the dark blues of lapis lazuli,⁶⁶ and as Dowd and Hensey posit,

⁶¹ Thavapalan, “Radiant Things for Gods and Men,” 14.

⁶² Thavapalan, “Radiant Things for Gods and Men,” 13.

⁶³ George, “The Gods Išum and Ḫengurdanga,” 6.

⁶⁴ Thavapalan, “Radiant Things for Gods and Men,” 12.

⁶⁵ Stephany, *Enuma Elish*, 81.

⁶⁶ Thavapalan, “Radiant Things for Gods and Men,” 12.

Is it possible that in some cases darkness was not an incidental feature of a site or place but a fundamental feature? Illuminating these sites and monuments, removing artefacts from their repositories, may result in excluding a crucial foundation of that ritual that lay behind the deposition: darkness.⁶⁷

Darkness and light in Sumerian and Babylonian divine imagery is rather ambiguous and nuanced. Likewise, portrayals of darkness are somewhat mixed in other contexts as well. darkness is connected with catastrophe in Sumerian and Babylonian literature like the *Enuma Elish* and the *Epic of Gilgamesh* but it is not always immediately clear how darkness is used in these instances. When Enki protests the plot to destroy humanity via flood, he speaks of how Adad's presence will consume all light and bring about nothing but darkness⁶⁸ which is exactly what happens when the flood arrives as it brings "an unnatural darkness [that] prevailed over the landscape."⁶⁹ In lines 19–20 of an amulet from Arslan Tash (2.86), there is a prayer against flying night demons that are hiding "in the dark chamber,"⁷⁰ however the darkness of night was not the exclusive domain of demons as demons are also described "as hags and robbers, as storms, frost and floods, and especially as animals."⁷¹ The demons prayed against in Tablet XII of *Utukku lemnutu* may have been born in the "dark mountain" but they were raised on the "light mountain."⁷² While darkness is indeed connected with the underworld, the underworld is not opposed to light. In the *Shamash Hymn* (1.117), Shamash the "illuminator of all . . . who makes light the darkness" causes both the gods and

⁶⁷ Dowd and Hensey, eds., *The Archaeology of Darkness*, 3.

⁶⁸ Stephany, *Enuma Elish*, 93.

⁶⁹ Stephany, *Enuma Elish*, 99.

⁷⁰ Hallo and Younger, eds., *Context of Scripture*, 2:223.

⁷¹ Hays, *Death in the Iron Age II and in First Isaiah*, 45–46.

⁷² Heimpel, "The Sun at Night and the Doors of Heaven in Babylonian Texts," 145.

netherworld gods to rejoice at his coming.⁷³ That said, some texts do use darkness as a general metaphor for something unpleasant. In An Assurbanipal Prayer for Mullissu darkness stands for some undetermined source or type of evil: “May evil be driven away daily, lady! May your pleasant [breeze] waft and the darkness be illuminated! In the distress and extremity which oppress me, take my hand!”⁷⁴ Tablets IV and XI of the Gilgamesh epic talk about the land being darkened prior to catastrophe. These instances are good examples of metonymic ICMs⁷⁵ where darkness stands as a representative of a broader concept—in this case an oncoming storm.

The netherworld is also connected with the concept of darkness because of its spatial location. In his quest to save Utnapishtim from the underworld, Gilgamesh must cross the threshold of two mountains (IX.ii.1–4). In Sumerian, the word *kur* here can refer to either a mountain or the netherworld.⁷⁶ Likewise, in the Sumerian poem *Edina-Usagake* Damu’s mother walks alongside him as he is brought to the netherworld, which is called “the dark mountain.”⁷⁷ What it is the sun god does during his nightly journey through the underworld is not clearly laid out in many extant Babylonian sources. Heimpel laments that the two most important sources, Gilgamesh’s journey through the underworld and Marduk’s orders for the sun god in the *Enuma Elish*, are too damaged to provide much information.⁷⁸ That said, there is some information that can be gleaned: in the Old Babylonian “Prayer to the Gods of the Night,” the sun god Shamash enters “his

⁷³ Hallo and Younger, eds., *Context of Scripture*, 1:418.

⁷⁴ Hallo and Younger, eds., *Context of Scripture*, 1:475.

⁷⁵ Evans, *Cognitive Linguistics an Introduction*, 289–90.

⁷⁶ Katz, *The Image of the Netherworld in the Sumerian Sources*, 63.

⁷⁷ Smith and Pitard, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, 2:713.

⁷⁸ Heimpel, “The Sun at Night and the Doors of Heaven in Babylonian Texts,” 127.

chamber” at night which could be understood as a bedchamber where the sun god rests at night—which is the same action taken by Utu.⁷⁹ It is also possible that the sun was understood to have been like a subdued fire under a pot as it travelled through the underworld and would be rekindled by the morning breeze on its way out.⁸⁰ There is also sufficient evidence that the sun god brings light and judgment to the underworld as in the prayer to Shamash (Kar 32:30f).⁸¹ In the end, the relationship between the sun, its light, and the netherworld is difficult to discern as the textual evidence displays a great deal of variance in opinions.⁸²

One final pattern that can be discerned in Babylonian literature as well as in Egyptian literature is how darkness is used metaphorically to describe that which is beyond human sight or understanding. Cornelius found that this is one of the key uses of darkness in Mesopotamian literature.⁸³ An example of this trend can be found in the Sumerian Letter-Prayer of King Sin-Iddinam to Nin-Isina (1.164) wherein the king describes the sickness he was struggling with was “an unlit darkness, not visible to man.”⁸⁴ Another example is in Tablet IX of the Gilgamesh Epic where the hero travelled beyond the mountains of Mashu where the sun sets below the earth—a place that is itself beyond the reach of normal men—the hero is surrounded by a “dense” darkness that “did

⁷⁹ Heimpel, “The Sun at Night and the Doors of Heaven in Babylonian Texts,” 128.

⁸⁰ Heimpel, “The Sun at Night and the Doors of Heaven in Babylonian Texts,” 142.

⁸¹ Heimpel, “The Sun at Night and the Doors of Heaven in Babylonian Texts,” 146.

⁸² Heimpel, “The Sun at Night and the Doors of Heaven in Babylonian Texts,” 150.

⁸³ Cornelius, “The Theological Significance of Darkness in the Old Testament,” 62–64.

⁸⁴ Hallo and Younger, eds., *Context of Scripture*, 1:533.

not allow him to see behind him.”⁸⁵ The Deir ‘Alla plaster inscriptions (2.27) foretell of a coming storm from the goddess Shagar:

Sew up, close up the heavens with dense cloud, That darkness exist there,
not brilliance; Obscurity and not clarity; So that you instill dread in dense
darkness. And—never utter a sound again!⁸⁶

John Healey, Theodore Lewis, and Smith and Pitard have all argued that the sun gods of ancient Mesopotamia functioned as a psychopomp ferrying the dead to the nether world, and thus they were all well-accustomed to its darkness.⁸⁷ Earlier in the story Gilgamesh and Enkidu pray that Humbaba’s face would be darkened⁸⁸ which occurs later when the heroes face the ogre.⁸⁹ This darkening of Humbaba’s face seems to indicate him being blinded or at least having his vision obscured, thus further indicating a connection between darkness and obscurity as the same phrase is used in the Akkadian Poem of the Righteous Sufferer (1.153).⁹⁰ Cornelius’ conclusions about darkness in the ancient Near East are pertinent here:

Thematically, we have found darkness in the midst of mystery in the ANE. Darkness was vital to the makeup of the underworld, the companion of evil, demons and malaise, the content of curses and the source of dread when circumstances or the acts of gods brought on darkness as a reversal of what was expected. However, darkness also aided the peoples of the ANE world to express their feelings and perceptions of the unknown, the sacred, and the things beyond what they perceived as their human limits.⁹¹

⁸⁵ George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*.

⁸⁶ Hallo and Younger, eds., *Context of Scripture*, 2:142–43.

⁸⁷ Healey, “The Sun Deity and the Underworld,” 239–42; Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*, 35–46; Smith and Pitard, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, 2:346–48.

⁸⁸ George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 25.

⁸⁹ George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 42.

⁹⁰ Hallo and Younger, eds., *Context of Scripture*, 1:488.

⁹¹ Cornelius, “The Theological Significance of Darkness in the Old Testament,” 84.

Cornelius' comments here provide a succinct summary of not only his study of the ancient Near East, but my own findings as well.

2.3.3 Syria-Palestine

Closest geographically and culturally to the object of this study are the extant extra-biblical sources from Syria-Palestine. What is unfortunate is that this geographical and cultural closeness is countered by a paucity of relevant extant primary literature combined with the general lack of scholarly interest in darkness that has been observed elsewhere in ancient Near Eastern studies. What follows is a rather brief overview of the scant evidence and scholarly interaction with darkness in Ugaritic, Hittite, and Syrian texts. The findings of this section mostly reinforce what has already been discussed about ancient Near Eastern conceptions and literary uses of darkness.

When speaking of the netherworld, much of the same language that has been discussed above is used in Ugaritic and Hittite texts as well. In the Hittite poem, The Second Soldier's Oath (1.67) twice calls the land of the dead the "dark netherworld."⁹² Likewise, in a Hittite incantation for purifying a house (1.68), the netherworld is also called the "Dark Underworld" in several sections of the incantation.⁹³

There is markedly little description of the netherworld in the Baal Cyc⁹⁴e and what can be discerned must be done from inference. For example, Tsevat has argued that the mountains of the Baal cycle (KTU 1.4 viii.5–12) are the mountains on the horizon

⁹² Hallo and Younger, eds., *Context of Scripture*, 1:167.

⁹³ Hallo and Younger, eds., *Context of Scripture*, 1:169–70.

⁹⁴ Tsevat, "Sun Mountains at Ugarit."

that the sun rises and sets from in a way similar to Sumerian and Babylonian texts.⁹⁵

Wyatt translates KTU 1.4.vii.55 of the Baal cycle as “Look, [Gupan] and Ugar, The Dark One [has obscured] the day,” thus suggesting that Mot was understood as “the Dark One.”⁹⁶ This would align with Babylonian depictions of the gods of the netherworld, but this translation is open for debate given the relative disrepair of this portion of the text. Dennis Pardee instead translates this line as “The sea [is enveloped] in darkness, in obscurity the [highest] peaks . . .”⁹⁷

Similar beliefs about the location of the underworld can be found in Canaanite myths as can be found in Babylonian and Sumerian myths; in the Ugaritic Baal Epic (CAT 1.4 VIII, lines 3–4) the netherworld is found beyond “the twin hills at Earth’s edge.”⁹⁸ Tsevat argues that these twin mountains are a reference to the mountains at the horizon behind which the sun descends in its nightly subterranean journey.⁹⁹ Likewise, the Ugaritic solar deity, Shapash, went on a similar nightly journey through the netherworld as his other ancient Near Eastern counterparts, but his journey was slightly different; rather than resting or judging the dead, Shapash’s journey to the underworld was for the purpose of ferrying souls to it.¹⁰⁰ It is unclear whether this was Shapash’s sole activity during his nightly journey and so we do not know if he also illuminated the dark netherworld.

⁹⁵ Tsevat, “Sun Mountains at Ugarit.”

⁹⁶ Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 111.

⁹⁷ Hallo and Younger, eds., *Context of Scripture*, 1:263.

⁹⁸ Smith and Pitard, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, 2:87.

⁹⁹ Tsevat, “Sun Mountains at Ugarit.”

¹⁰⁰ Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 85.

Beyond the sun gods, the depictions of other gods was rather mixed. Of course Baal is represented with bright flashes of lightning, but he also brings with him dark storm clouds and so his portrayal is somewhat mixed. John Day argues that in *CTA* 6.VI.46ff. (= *KTU* 1.6.VI.47ff) the dragon is an enemy of the sun and therefore an ally of darkness,¹⁰¹ but it is quite unclear how Day comes to this conclusion. Likewise, Day uses *CTA* 6.VI.44ff. (= *KTU* 1.6.VI.45ff) as proof that the sea dragon and darkness are aligned together,¹⁰² but the text in question does not suggest anything of the sort.¹⁰³ In these texts it is clear that the sea dragon was an enemy of the sun god, but that does not necessarily mean that it is an “enemy of the light” and “allied to darkness” as Day suggests¹⁰⁴ as there are other lights in heaven that the dragon does not seek to destroy. Day also assumes that the ancients saw the sun as that which produces daylight which might not be the case. Lemmelijn argues that there is sufficient textual evidence in Ugarit, Sumer, and Egypt that shows that people in the ancient Near East understood that daylight was not dependent on the sun—a pre-solar understanding that appears to have been shared by the writers of the OT in texts such as Gen 1:1–4.¹⁰⁵ One final, rather peculiar example to discuss is the beliefs of the moon-worshipping people of the ancient peoples of Harran in Northern Syria. Julius Lewy and Javier Teixidor have both extensively studied their worship of the moon god Sin and found that to these people the darkness of night brought the coolness they needed for their nocturnal nomadic travel while Sin guided their steps

¹⁰¹ Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea*, 39.

¹⁰² Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea*, 45.

¹⁰³ Smith, “Interpreting the Baal Cycle,” 321.

¹⁰⁴ Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea*, 45.

¹⁰⁵ Lemmelijn, “Light and Darkness,” 556.

with his soft light.¹⁰⁶ These peoples worshipped Sin for his light-giving properties but also lived lives that were quite accustomed to darkness in a way not seen in other ancient Near Eastern cultures.

2.3.4 Persia

Moving further east to Persia, the questions of whether or not and to what degree the culture and religion of the Medo-Persian empire influenced the OT are not met with any easy answers. It is best to start with what is more readily apparent about Persian culture and religion. Zoroastrianism staunchly holds to belief in the innate evilness of darkness. As Edwin Yamauchi summarizes, “All things in creation belong either to one sphere or another . . . Aligned with the Evil Spirit are darkness, night, winter, drought, infertile land, vermin, sickness and death.”¹⁰⁷ Zoroastrianism is deeply dualistic in a number of ways and so Skjærvø suggests that it is best to differentiate between cosmogonic dualism and cosmic dualism.¹⁰⁸ The latter deals with the bifurcation of the world into the physical (life) and metaphysical (thought) while the former describes the conflict between two opposing and primordial forces: “the one good, the other bad; the one causing light and life, the other causing darkness and death.”¹⁰⁹

Boyce draws lines of connections between pre-Zoroastrian Iranian polytheism and the later Zoroastrian beliefs; within the beliefs of pre-Zoroastrian paganism, there were

¹⁰⁶ Lewy, “The Late Assyro-Babylonian Cult of the Moon and Its Culmination at the Time of Nabonidus”; Teixidor, *The Pantheon of Palmyra*.

¹⁰⁷ Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*, 439.

¹⁰⁸ Skjærvø, “Zoroastrian Dualism,” 58.

¹⁰⁹ Skjærvø, “Zoroastrian Dualism,” 58.

myriad evil spirits that were not only dark, but who also went about their evil deeds primarily under the cover of darkness as it was after sunset that their powers were at their zenith.¹¹⁰ For instance, the gods Tistrya and Mithra were tasked with thwarting the evil, nocturnal “pairikiis” spirits: the former “overcomes the pairikiis, he conquers the pairikiis who fall as shooting stars between earth and heaven” (Yt.8.8). The latter is called the “smiter down of pairikiis” (Yt. ro.26). These nocturnal spirits call to mind the “pestilence that stalks in darkness” of Ps 91:6 that Yahweh provides protection from if this pestilence is understood as an evil spirit (more on this verse in §5.1.2).

Persian beliefs about the afterlife are in some ways similar to Semitic and Egyptian beliefs as discussed above but also have some peculiarities. Boyce notes that within the Avesta there are signs that the Persians shared the Vedic hope of a future life in a Paradise of happiness, physical delights, and light;¹¹¹ *Yasna* 16.7 says “We worship the sun-possessing abodes of *aša*, in which dwell the souls of the dead ... the Best Existence (i.e. Paradise) of the followers of *aša* ... (which is) light and affording all comforts.”¹¹² Semitic and Egyptian conceptions of the afterlife were predominated by the *absence* of light and the netherworld’s overwhelming darkness whereas the Persian Paradise is quite the opposite. A dark afterlife in a sort of hell is indeed described in later Persian documents but it’s debatable whether or not this belief can be found in the Rigveda.¹¹³ In the later Zoroastrian document, Religious Judgments (Dadestan-i Denig), the pit of hell, Drugaskan, is described as a place so dark that all who are sent there are as if blind—a

¹¹⁰ Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism, the Early Period*, 86.

¹¹¹ Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism, the Early Period*, 110–11.

¹¹² Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism, the Early Period*, 111.

¹¹³ Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism, the Early Period*, 115.

place described as being sunken, deep, and stinking where all the powers of darkness and evil dwell. Pre-Zoroastrian paganism did include a subterranean afterlife that is more similar to what we see from elsewhere in the Near East. According to Boyce,

The pagan Iranians also conceived, however, of a subterranean kingdom ruled over by “the god who is said to dwell beneath the earth”, who claimed as his subjects those spirits who at death failed to make their way up to the sunny abode of the Ahuras. This dread lord was perhaps the pagan Yima, for his Indian counterpart, Yama, is a lord of death, who seeks out those whose time has come and takes them to his dark realm.¹¹⁴

There are certainly more similarities between the pre-Zoroastrian beliefs of the Iranians and the beliefs of other ancient Near Eastern cultures than between later Zoroastrian beliefs about darkness and those of Israel’s neighbours. While the pre-Zoroastrian netherworld and Zoroastrian Drugaskan are described as dark, the darkness of the latter is probably more due to its connection to the forces of evil and its separation from the life-giving light than its geographical location or unknown nature. As Charles Isbell notes,

Sheol, as its very name implies, was an abode of great uncertainty, a question mark implying Israelite lack of confidence that they knew what came after death. This is the exact opposite of the Zoroastrian doctrine that explains in great detail precisely what happens in the next life, both to the good and to the bad.¹¹⁵

I have discussed Persian beliefs both before and after the widespread adoption of Zoroastrianism as separate belief systems. This is not only to highlight the differences that Zoroastrianism brought with it, but also because there is considerable debate around the degree to which Zoroastrianism has influenced the Old Testament. Scholars like

¹¹⁴ Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism, the Early Period*, 83–84 quoting from Herodotus, VII.114.

¹¹⁵ Isbell, “Zoroastrianism and Biblical Religion,” 151. He goes on to conclude that “The pagan background of this Hebrew imagery is not Persian, but is well known from the Ugaritic texts where death [mot] is one of the gods.”

James Barr staunchly criticize the assumption that Iranian influence *must* be invoked.¹¹⁶

He poses questions about the mechanisms and motivations behind the alleged Zoroastrian influence that he believes should take priority over the “selective” procedure of emphasizing specific, disconnected elements of continuity between Zoroastrian and Jewish/Christian beliefs.¹¹⁷ As he puts it,

It is one thing to make a list of things that seem similar in Judaism and Zoroastrianism—dualism, hell, resurrection, and so on—and quite another to say that the structures and internal dynamics of the two religions are similar. The structural question does not merely ask if both religions have a resurrection, or a hell, or angels, or whatever it may be. Rather, it seeks the reasons within each religion why a resurrection, or a hell, or angels, or dualism, is significant.¹¹⁸

Barr goes on to note the discernible lack of interest in the beliefs or rituals of the Persian kings—especially in Ezra-Nehemiah, Daniel, and Esther that are all so focused on the affairs of those kings.¹¹⁹ This should be unsurprising as Barr notes how the Achaemenids were not interested in spreading Persian culture or religion in the same way the Greeks were.¹²⁰ This is particularly evidenced by the policies of the Achaemenids of granting land and materials for peoples to rebuild temples to non-Persian gods. Charles Isbell, in three separate articles has outlined extensive arguments against the notion that the Old Testament is either pro-Persian propaganda or is at least extensively influenced by Persian—particularly Zoroastrian—thought.¹²¹ He notes that not only is the OT disinterested in the ins and outs of Persian religion and culture, it has also remained

¹¹⁶ Barr, “The Question of Religious Influence,” 206.

¹¹⁷ Barr, “The Question of Religious Influence,” 206.

¹¹⁸ Barr, “The Question of Religious Influence,” 220.

¹¹⁹ Barr, “The Question of Religious Influence,” 209–14.

¹²⁰ Barr, “The Question of Religious Influence,” 218.

¹²¹ Isbell, “Minimalism I”; Isbell, “Minimalism II”; Isbell, “Zoroastrianism and Biblical Religion.”

relatively unaffected by its language. While there are a few Persian loan words in Ezra-Nehemiah, Esther, Daniel, Chronicles, and Tobit, there are none to be found elsewhere in the OT, whereas Egyptian and Mesopotamian loan words can be found throughout.¹²²

An even more foundational issue regarding the possibility of Persian—more specifically, Zoroastrian—influence on the OT is the question of chronology. Beyond the simpler distinction between pre-Zoroastrian Iranian beliefs and Zoroastrian beliefs, Barr also distinguishes the religion of Zoroaster himself, the specific religious beliefs of the Achaemenid emperors, and later forms of Zoroastrianism which reintroduce elements that Zoroaster might have originally tried to stamp out.¹²³ There is some debate as to whether or not the Achaemenids were devout Zoroastrians—to say nothing of how widely-adopted Zoroastrianism was among the general populace. Boyce notes a number of arguments for Cyrus having been a Zoroastrian such as the names of his descendants, similarities between Isaiah's description of Cyrus and Zoroaster's Gāthās, *Y.* 44, and proof of Cyrus' Zoroastrian religious practices.¹²⁴ While Boyce lists a number of common arguments against Cyrus being a Zoroastrian, she has convincing counter-arguments for all of them and in the end makes a rather convincing argument for Cyrus being a Zoroastrian—even if in practice he did not follow Zoroastrian teachings to the exact letter as “his conduct outside Iran appears due to diplomatic pragmatism rather than any lack of personal religious conviction.”¹²⁵ Beyond Cyrus, if Herodotus' description of Xerxes is

¹²² Isbell, “Zoroastrianism and Biblical Religion,” 145.

¹²³ Barr, “The Question of Religious Influence,” 221.

¹²⁴ Boyce, “Achaemenid Religion.”

¹²⁵ Boyce, “Achaemenid Religion.”

rightly taken as polemical, Cyrus' descendants certainly do appear to have adopted Zoroastrian beliefs and practices.¹²⁶

Coming to a definitive conclusion regarding if, when, and to what extent the Achaemenids and their subjects converted to Zoroastrian from Persian paganism is well beyond the scope of this dissertation, and even if such a timeline could be decisively proven, the form and content of that belief would still be up for debate. As Shaked concludes about Iranian influence on the much later Qumran community, "all detailed accounts of any aspect of Zoroastrian theology exist no earlier than in books compiled during the Sassanian period [third–seventh centuries CE] or later, after the Arab conquest of Iran."¹²⁷ If Zoroastrian beliefs were still being solidly defined well after the formation of the OT, it becomes all the more difficult to discern whether a perceived connection between the OT and Zoroastrian is a much later coincidence or is a sign of influence from early Zoroastrian beliefs.

Finally, there is the chronological question of the date of writing for much of the OT. The adoption of Persian loan words is evidence for a post-Exilic dating of some books, and therefore the question of Zoroastrian influence is worth pursuing. However, it is certainly debatable whether or not the rest of the OT was originally written (or conceived in oral form) during the Persian period. The above argument from Barr about the lack of Persian loan words compared the glut of Egyptian and Western Semitic loan words is worth bringing up here again. There is also the wealth of cultural connections

¹²⁶ Boyce, "Achaemenid Religion."

¹²⁷ Shaked, "Qumran and Iran," 443.

with Egyptian, Western Semitic, and Babylonian sources compared to the relative paucity of connections between Zoroastrianism and much of the OT.

In the end, I am inclined to agree with scholars like Barr, Isbell, and Shaked but since this work is focused on cognitive linguistics and not comparative religions, the details of my conclusions regarding this issue have minimal bearing on my approach. Not only this, but the bulk of my work will be in texts that are generally accepted to have minimal if any Zoroastrian influence.

2.3.5 Greece

While there is considerable debate as to what degree Persian paganism and Zoroastrian dualism influenced the writers of the OT, there is even less debate regarding the degree to which Greek culture influenced the writers of the (Protestant) OT. While scholars who argue for widespread Greek cultural influence on the OT are small in number, they have been publishing more regularly in the last two decades and so their views warrant some attention here.

There have been a handful of articles and chapters of edited volumes that have considered possible Greek influences on specific books and texts of the OT. Van Seters was a forerunner of this theory with his article “The Primeval Histories of Greece and Israel Compared”¹²⁸ wherein he pioneered the theory that the writers of OT history were directly influenced by Greek historians. The first and most vocal scholar on the topic has been Niels Peter Lemche with his 1993 article “The Old Testament—a Hellenistic

¹²⁸ Van Seters, “The Primeval Histories of Greece and Israel Compared.”

Book?”¹²⁹ In this longer article, Lemche argues that the OT ought to be dated much later and therefore has undoubtedly been influenced by Greek culture. Gershenson has argued that the cow¹³⁰ and “gadfly” (קֶרֶץ) of Jer 46:20 are drawn from the Seventh Century Greek story of the flight of the Danaides, Io’s descendants, from Egypt back to Argos.¹³¹ Darshan has argued that the post-diluvian genealogical account is based on Greek myths.¹³² Shelton has considered possible Greek tragic and comedic backgrounds for Job but has concluded that Job better fits within Semitic dramatic literature.¹³³ Likewise, Hunter considers possible Greek and Egyptian influences on the Song of Solomon but concludes that the latter connections are both more likely and stronger.¹³⁴ Louden has taken the opposite approach and has considered Hebrew influences on Homer’s work.¹³⁵ As for dedicated works on Greek influences on the OT/Bible, there has been very little work done beyond Bruce Louden’s 2018 monograph, *Greek Myth and the Bible*.¹³⁶ In this work Louden connects a variety of Greek works to the OT from the Odyssey to Hesiod’s Theogony and beyond.

Louden and Lemche display exceptional creativity and breadths of knowledge of both Jewish and Greek literature but this view has struggled to sufficiently prove itself and has not gained much traction. Arguments stemming from Greek-sounding names in

¹²⁹ Lemche, “The Old Testament—a Hellenistic Book?”

¹³⁰ Gershenson translates עֵגְלָה as “cow” but a more accurate translation is “calf” or “heifer” as per HALOT. This more common reading of עֵגְלָה as “calf” causes significant issues for Gershenson’s argument.

¹³¹ Gershenson, “A Greek Myth in Jeremiah.”

¹³² Darshan, “The Biblical Account of the Post-Diluvian Generation.”

¹³³ Shelton, “Making a Drama out of a Crisis?”

¹³⁴ Hunter, “‘Sweet Talk’. Song of Songs and the Traditions of Greek Poetry.”

¹³⁵ Louden, “Agamemnon and the Hebrew Bible.”

¹³⁶ Louden, *Greek Myth and the Bible*.

the OT fail to compete with the glut of Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Persian names and loan words that fill the OT. The lack of attention to historical-critical issues in Louden's work in particular raises serious questions about the historical claims he makes about the origin of the OT. The creativity and persuasiveness of these arguments cannot be questioned as Louden makes a number of very specific connections between disparate texts and weaves an intertextual web that is a feat to behold but, as Baratz points out in his review of Louden's book, "the conviction of L's book relies heavily on what the reader is prepared to admit constitutes proof of cross-cultural influence".¹³⁷ Baratz notes a number of significant flaws in Louden's work—some of which apply to Lemche's work as well: Louden and Lemche fail to prove that resemblance in minor—often surface-level—details are proof of points of contact and not simply the products of chance, the human condition, or a shared ancient Mediterranean bank of experiences.¹³⁸ Baratz goes on to note how Louden's approach to determining what counts as proof of inspiration (always in the direction of Greek to OT I might add) is markedly loose especially compared to what is expected of other authors working with ancient Near Eastern influences on the OT.¹³⁹ Another set of criticisms that can be levied against this view is that Lemche and Louden are forced to ignore the plethora of evidences for an earlier dating of much of the OT from both connections with other ancient Near Eastern works¹⁴⁰ as well as widely-

¹³⁷ Baratz, "What Counts as Proof of Cross-Cultural Influence?," 49.

¹³⁸ Baratz, "What Counts as Proof of Cross-Cultural Influence?," 49–50. Here Baratz notes Walter Burkert's *The Orientalizing Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press) and *Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press) as important resources on the shared cultural pool in the ancient Mediterranean world.

¹³⁹ Baratz, "What Counts as Proof of Cross-Cultural Influence?," 50.

¹⁴⁰ Baratz ("What Counts as Proof of Cross-Cultural Influence?," 50) here notes for example the stronger connections between Moses' nativity story and Sargon's nativity story than Louden's suggested

accepted datings of specific texts based on writing styles.¹⁴¹ One final criticism of this view is simple but has not been proven by this theory's proponents is raised by Steven Holloway: "How likely would it have been for a Hebrew-speaking author to have been exposed to examples of Greek historiography in sixth-century Babylonia?"¹⁴²

Overall, the burden of proof still lies in the hands of those who would argue for widespread Greek influence on the text of the OT to an even greater degree than the above discussion of Zoroastrian influence. As such, I will not be taking as many cues from the findings in this subsection in future chapters beyond potential Greek influences on the philosophy of Ecclesiastes. While I may not be particularly convinced that the OT was heavily influenced by Greek thought and literature, it is still worth noting a few works that have explored ancient Greek understandings of darkness and compare their findings with what was discussed above. I say "a few works" mainly because, as has been discussed earlier, there is minimal scholarly interest in darkness. In the preface to *Light and Darkness in Ancient Greek Myth and Religion*, the editors tell of how their work came about as a result of a discussion among members of the Centre for the Study of Myth and Religion in Greek and Roman Antiquity at Patras University; their discussion was focused on discernible scholarly lacunae where their Centre could turn its focus and found that "one relatively less explored area was the dependence of certain rites, cults,

connections with Euripides' Ion.

¹⁴¹ To this point, Baratz ("What Counts as Proof of Cross-Cultural Influence?," 50) argues how Louden's connection between the Song of Deborah and the tragedy of Hecuba can only be accepted if we also reject the scholarly consensus that the song in Judges 5 is one of the oldest parts of the OT in terms of language and content.

¹⁴² Holloway, "[Review of] Prologue to History: The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis by John van Seters," 150.

narratives and persons upon notions of light and darkness, night and day, brightness and obscurity.”¹⁴³ What follows is an exploration of Greek understandings and literary uses of darkness with special attention given to ways the ancient Greeks were similar or differed from the ancient Near Eastern cultures discussed above. The following overview is certainly not exhaustive, but it does show some similarities between ancient Greece and the ancient Near East as well as some similar debates between scholars of each field.

In the above discussion of Zoroastrian dualism, it could be said with confidence that Zoroastrian dualism saw light as good and darkness as evil. When this topic is discussed by scholars of ancient Greek texts, there seems to be some debate. But as Buxton continues, he shows that this distinction is not so universal. One example of this debate can be found in the discussions of the Erinyes by Mercedes Aguirre and Sebastian Anderson.¹⁴⁴ Aguirre goes to great lengths to show that the evil Erinyes “were connected with darkness” and “are inhabitants of Hades, the world of the dead, which in Homer is a dark world of shadows, never reached by the light of the sun.”¹⁴⁵ Aguirre concludes of the Erinyes that they are “monstrous and sinister creatures” who “alone embody the terrible and frightening darkness of night.”¹⁴⁶ While Aguirre’s portrayal of the Erinyes is quite focused on their evil nature and how that is connected with their dark nature, Anderson takes a very different approach. Anderson focuses his attention on Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* wherein the Erinyes go on a journey from sinister to honoured servants of the Olympian

¹⁴³ Christopoulos et al., eds., *Light and Darkness in Ancient Greek Myth and Religion*, 7.

¹⁴⁴ Aguirre, “Erinyes as Creatures of Darkness”; Anderson, “Journey into Light and Honors in Darkness in Hesiod and Aeschylus.”

¹⁴⁵ Aguirre, “Erinyes as Creatures of Darkness,” 150.

¹⁴⁶ Aguirre, “Erinyes as Creatures of Darkness,” 154.

gods.¹⁴⁷ Despite their significant moral turn, they return to their natural abode “below earth, away from the light of the sun, yet the darkness into which they return is a place of honor and joy.”¹⁴⁸ Anderson concludes that

we see in Hesiod and in Aeschylus a sophisticated conception of cosmic order, one in which Zeus recognizes, accommodates, and incorporates creatures of darkness that would otherwise clash with those in the light. Darkness and the primal creatures who inhabit it are not rejected by Zeus; rather, they are given a proper role in the cosmos.¹⁴⁹

When speaking of the gods, the ancient Greeks were mostly uniform in their description of the gods with good/life gods being connected with the colour white in terms of visual representation, religious rites, and even sacrifice and evil/death gods being represented by the colour black.¹⁵⁰ Brilliant white light is shown to be a common aspect of divine appearances and is a significant aspect of their dwelling place on Mount Olympus throughout Homer’s works.¹⁵¹ According to Constantinidou, not only does light follow divine appearances, this connection is so close that “the sudden appearance of light itself creates ἔκπληξις and fear that are characteristic features of divine appearances.”¹⁵² Conversely, Hades, with the exception of his chariot and his dark blue hair, is scantily described beyond his essential darkness. Zografou argues that Hades’ mysterious portrayal is related to “his quintessential darkness and invisibility.”¹⁵³ In Hesiod’s *Theogony*, Erebus (“Darkness”) is deified as one of the primeval beings who,

¹⁴⁷ Anderson, “Journey into Light and Honors in Darkness in Hesiod and Aeschylus,” 170.

¹⁴⁸ Anderson, “Journey into Light and Honors in Darkness in Hesiod and Aeschylus,” 170.

¹⁴⁹ Anderson, “Journey into Light and Honors in Darkness in Hesiod and Aeschylus,” 165.

¹⁵⁰ Buxton, “The Significance (or Insignificance) of Blackness in Mythological Names,” 17.

¹⁵¹ Constantinidou, “The Light Imagery of Divine Manifestation in Homer.”

¹⁵² Constantinidou, “The Light Imagery of Divine Manifestation in Homer,” 114.

¹⁵³ Zografou, “Constructing the Invisible.”

along with his sister/wife, Nyx, the goddess of night, are birthed directly from Chaos (Hesiod, Th. 124–125).¹⁵⁴

This connection between light and the Olympian gods is certainly a strong one but Buxton notes that this has led many scholars to conclude that this light/dark dichotomy is universal across all gods—an error that he works to correct by providing valuable nuance. Summarizing those who would argue for an ethical dualism of light and darkness in ancient Greek thought, Buxton comes to a sarcastic conclusion, “*Melas* negative, *leukos* positive. It seems, at first sight, so simple.”¹⁵⁵ Buxton finds a number of exceptions to this norm such as a fragment from Aristophanes’ *Daitales* wherein a white dog is offered to Hecate and the dead Patroclus’s white shroud (Il. 18.353).¹⁵⁶ Even Zeus’ portrayals are more nuanced as Homer calls him “Lord of the bright lightning and of the dark cloud” (Il. 22.178).¹⁵⁷

Already alluded to with the god Hades and the Erinyes, the ancient Greek perception of the underworld is quite dark—at least on a visual level. There are a number of similarities between how the Greeks understood the underworld and how it was understood in Ugarit, Sumer, and Egypt. Catherine Cousins found darkness to be the most persistent element in ancient Greek representations of death and the realm of Hades.¹⁵⁸ According to Homer, when somebody dies, their pupils are taken by σκότος “darkness” (Il. 4.461, 526; 6.11). The land of the dead is regularly described with dark

¹⁵⁴ Zografou, “Constructing the Invisible,” 4.

¹⁵⁵ Buxton, “The Significance (or Insignificance) of Blackness in Mythological Names,” 17.

¹⁵⁶ Buxton, “The Significance (or Insignificance) of Blackness in Mythological Names,” 17.

¹⁵⁷ Constantinidou, “The Light Imagery of Divine Manifestation in Homer,” 109.

¹⁵⁸ Cousins, *Le Monde Des Morts*, 125–34.

and watery terminology like “misty darkness” (Il. 15, 190–193; Od. 11, 155)¹⁵⁹ or “beneath the moist darkness” (Homeric Hymn to Demeter, 482; cf. Od. 11, 57),¹⁶⁰ and the creatures that lived near entrances to the netherworld were “enshrouded in mist and darkness” (Od. 11, 14–15).¹⁶¹ The dark creatures of the underworld were so entirely adapted to their dark surroundings that it was particularly difficult for them to survive in the light of the sun as was the case for Cerberus (Dionysius Periegetes, *Orbis terrae descriptio* 788–799).¹⁶² The ancient Greek understanding of the geo-temporal location of the netherworld was quite similar to what has been observed in ancient Egyptian, Canaanite, and Babylonian literature. While different ancient Greek writers differ in specific details, most place Hades beyond the edge of the world—more specifically the sea.¹⁶³ The souls of the dead must first pass the “gate of the sun” (Od. 24. 12) but the sun never passes beyond this gate into Hades except in the case of serious cosmic disorder.¹⁶⁴ Instead of entering into Hades, the sun sleeps in a golden, seaside chamber (Mimnermus, fr. 7) where it sleeps in a winged barque made by Hephaistus before travelling along the ocean from the west and back to the east.¹⁶⁵

Zografou asks a particularly interesting question in his exploration of the connections between darkness and the realm of the dead: why was darkness so frequently used as a descriptor for Hades? This question is not too dissimilar to some of the

¹⁵⁹ Zografou, “Constructing the Invisible,” 3.

¹⁶⁰ Zografou, “Constructing the Invisible,” 5.

¹⁶¹ Zografou, “Constructing the Invisible,” 2.

¹⁶² Zografou, “Constructing the Invisible,” 2–3.

¹⁶³ Marinatos, “Light and Darkness and Archaic Greek Cosmography,” 214; Zografou, “Constructing the Invisible.”

¹⁶⁴ Marinatos, “Light and Darkness and Archaic Greek Cosmography,” 214.

¹⁶⁵ Marinatos, “Light and Darkness and Archaic Greek Cosmography,” 215.

questions being raised by this dissertation and his findings turn out to be quite similar to some of the findings of later chapters of this dissertation. Zografou notes that “Hades,” whether used as the name of the land of the dead, its master, or more simply the grave, is often associated with “the invisible/unknowable, especially in etymological discussions which derive it from privative *a* and *idein*, ‘to see’, and, in a wider sense, ‘to know.’”¹⁶⁶ He argues that “Hades constitutes, *inter alia*, the incarnation of the invisible” and that the “darkness” used to describe the realm and its master are a means of conveying the invisible and unknowable nature of both.¹⁶⁷ This is supported by Hades’ opposite in Apollo who is both the god of light but also the “light of moral and spiritual truth, driving away ignorance and evil.”¹⁶⁸ While I may have been somewhat critical of the hypothesis that the OT was heavily influenced by ancient Greek thought, it is interesting to see scholars of ancient Greek texts come to similar conclusions about ICMs for light, seeing, and knowing versus darkness, blindness, and ignorance. Zografou notes that Greek writers associated visual perception with brightness,¹⁶⁹ and Létoublon discusses the connections between perceptive abilities and cognitive abilities.¹⁷⁰

2.4 Toward Ancient ICMs of Darkness in the Near East

Overall it appears that darkness was seen far more frequently in every day life and far more ambiguously in the written record of the ancient Near East than what is common

¹⁶⁶ Zografou, “Constructing the Invisible,” 7.

¹⁶⁷ Zografou, “Constructing the Invisible,” 1.

¹⁶⁸ Webb, “Greek, Roman, Hebrew, and Byzantine Interpretations of Light and Its Origins,” 157–58.

¹⁶⁹ Zografou, “Constructing the Invisible,” 7.

¹⁷⁰ Létoublon, “To See or Not to See.”

today. Given what was explored in the first half of this chapter, darkness was simply a fact of life rather than something that could be easily overcome. This idea of darkness as something to be conquered is best exemplified in Murray Melbin's article "Night as Frontier" wherein Melbin argues that humanity has been predisposed with occupying darkness such as Euro-Americans sought to expand and occupy western North America. If we take the liberty to modify Melbin's title and premise, we see little to no traces of the metaphor of DARKNESS IS A FRONTIER in the written records of ancient Near Eastern societies. This ICM does not even fit within Zoroastrian beliefs as darkness is no mere impersonal space to be conquered but is an active agent of evil.

Darkness is indeed employed to describe aspects of life that are unpleasant such as death and human finitude, but there is little to indicate that cultures other than Zoroastrian Persia saw darkness as inherently evil or had EVIL IS DARKNESS as part of their conceptual framework. It would be possible to see darkness as a metonymy for calamitous storms, but texts seem to show it more as a portent or consequence of thick clouds. Similarly, darkness has a close connection with death and the afterlife in the ancient Near East but the afterlife's darkness seems to signal something other than evil. Darkness could of course pose a serious danger to people as it was able to obscure any number of threats but darkness itself was not the threat; the darkness that came with Adad's storm clouds was not itself the primary danger faced by humanity, and the afterlife was most certainly not seen as inherently evil in Egypt despite its dark shrouding.

There must have been a different prevailing conceptual metaphor. I would argue the primary conceptual metaphor being used when darkness is employed is DARKNESS IS HIDDENNESS. This metaphor covers the bulk of the examples examined and discussed but also better fits the everyday lives of people in the ancient Near East. Life in the ancient Near East invariably involved darkness whether in nature, at home, or at the local temple.

If this metaphor of DARKNESS IS HIDDENNESS is examined on a cognitive level, children in the ancient Near East would have grown up well-accustomed to darkness but would have also learned from a very early age that darkness limits their ability to perceive, understand, and interact with the world around them. Just as directional metaphors are used to conceptualize complex ideas such as happiness (HAPPINESS IS UP) so too would darkness be inexorably connected with the unknown in the minds of peoples whose access to artificial lighting was shoddy at best, prohibitively costly at worst thus necessitating a life surrounded by darkness. Whereas scientific pursuits today have stripped much of the world of its mystery as well as its dark corners, most of the world remained both veiled behind darkness and beyond the scope of human understanding.

There is of course some degree of variation among the texts discussed here and those that were left out for the sake of brevity and various aspects of the obscurative properties of darkness are highlighted in different texts. That said, the prevailing model among Israel's neighbours beyond Persia is that darkness is closely associated with hiddenness and the limits of human understanding.

This, of course, is a very different ICM than what we normally work with in 21st century, English-speaking societies. This has caused what Kuhn would call incommensurability: using the same words to describe a situation in different ways.¹⁷¹ Over the next three chapters I will work to repair this breakdown in communication and in my last chapter I will gather all of these findings to better understand the complex metaphor GOD IS DARKNESS.

¹⁷¹ Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 200–02.

CHAPTER 3: DESTRUCTION, DEATH, AND DARKNESS

It cannot be seen, cannot be felt,
Cannot be heard, cannot be smelt,
It lies behind stars and under hills,
And empty holes it fills,
It comes first and follows after,
Ends life, kills laughter.

— Gollum in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*

As was shown in the previous chapter, written sources from the ancient Near East used darkness in a variety of ways. But what of the OT and its use of darkness? Darkness is indeed used in passages that centre on disaster and doom, whether as a more general metaphor or metonym—though certainly not to the extent that is often assumed. In the previous two chapters I endeavoured to lay the necessary methodological and historical-cultural foundation upon which chapters three through six can build upon. This foundation will be particularly helpful as I proceed in this chapter where I will explore the recurring metaphor of DEATH IS DARKNESS as seen in the OT followed by an exploration of how darkness, evil, and calamity relate to one another in the OT.

3.1 Darkness is Death

As was briefly alluded to above, there is a discernible trend within scholarship of interpreting references to darkness in the OT as metaphors for death first and foremost. For instance J. Pedersen concludes in his relatively brief exploration of darkness in the OT, “darkness actually becomes the characteristic term for the realm of the dead [in the

OT].”¹ Pedersen is partially correct on this point as will be shown below. However, while the metaphor DEATH IS DARKNESS is certainly one of the most characteristic metaphors for death in the OT, it is not the only way darkness is used metaphorically in the OT. It will be shown that there are indeed a number of instances of the metaphor DEATH IS DARKNESS in the OT but that these instances are often coupled with the metaphor LIFE IS LIGHT to form a contrastive metaphor pairing.

3.1.1 Life is Light, Death is Darkness

A regular aspect of conceptual metaphors is that metaphors—especially metaphors with spatial source domains—will have a contrastive metaphor which together form a metaphor pairing: HAPPY IS UP, SAD IS DOWN; FUTURE IS AHEAD, PAST IS BEHIND; ANGER IS TIGHTNESS, CALM IS LOOSENESS; etc. Before the metaphor DEATH IS DARKNESS can be understood, its positive—and as I will argue, foundational—metaphor LIFE IS LIGHT/A LAMP must be understood first on its own and then in relation to its counterpart.

There are a number of examples throughout the OT of a person or family’s life being likened to a light or a lamp. Block recognizes this metaphor at play in Ezek 32:7–8 which he briefly discusses in a footnote:

Concrete references [to the LIFE IS LIGHT metaphor] include Prov. 31:18; also the extinguishing of altar fire, Lev. 6:5–6. 1 Sam. 3:3 speaks of extinguishing the “the [sic] lamp of God” (*nēr ’ēlōhīm*). Examples of figurative references are 2 Sam. 21:17, where David’s men determine not to let their king accompany them in battle any more lest “the lamp of Israel (*nēr yiśrā’ēl*) be snuffed out; earlier, in 2 Sam. 14:7, the widow of

¹ Pedersen, *Israel, Its Life and Culture*, 464.

Tekoa had complained to David that her coal (*gaḥelet*), viz., her family's future, would be extinguished if her son would be slain.²

There are other examples that have been noted throughout the OT but as this metaphor is not my primary concern, I will not be handling them in a systematic function. What follows will be a brief overview of a handful of examples of this metaphor in order to first determine the prevalence of this more positive metaphor so that its inverse, DEATH IS DARKNESS, can be better understood.

The above quote from Block mentions a few passages from 1 and 2 Samuel and beyond these instances, this metaphor is also found in Kings and Chronicles. In the parallel passages 2 Kgs 8:19 and 2 Chron 21:7, the narrators claim that Yahweh was unwilling to destroy Judah/David's house since he had said he would give a נִיר to him. Depending on how נִיר is vocalized, it can be translated as either "lamp" or "yoke/dominion." Ben Zvi, Hanson, and Sweeney prefer the latter interpretation which relies on a metaphorical understanding of yoke referring to one's field or property (ONE'S PROPERTY IS A FIELD, A FIELD IS THE YOKE THAT PLOWS IT).³ This proposed metaphorical mapping is an extremely complex blend of multiple metaphors that are not altogether clear. It is more likely that the more simple and more prevalent metaphor LIFE IS A LAMP is in mind here. Selman and Boda, both argue an alternative interpretation of the lamp here symbolizing more than just life but the permanence of the Davidic line.⁴ Selman bases his interpretation on Job 18:5, Prov 13:9, and 24:20 which are all to be discussed in

² Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25–48*, 206n44.

³ Ben Zvi, "Once the Lamp Has Been Kindled"; Klein and Hanson, *2 Chronicles*, 304; Sweeney, *I & II Kings*, 320.

⁴ Boda, *1–2 Chronicles*, 336; Selman, *2 Chronicles*, 99.

this chapter as being related to the metaphor pairing LIFE IS LIGHT, DEATH IS DARKNESS. Another issue with the “lamp” interpretation would be the odd choice of using a lamp to speak of permanence; as was discussed in §2.2, lamps in the ancient Near East were anything but permanent whereas the use of a lamp to describe a human life as fragile and limited fits in much more closely with the realities of both artificial illumination and the fragility of life in the ancient world. Since these three “supporting” verses will be shown to support a different metaphor, the issue of short-lived lamps representing permanence, and the prevalence of the metaphor pair LIFE IS LIGHT, DEATH IS DARKNESS, Boda and Selman’s interpretation falls short. The interpretation that fits in best with the context and the use of light imagery in the OT is the one preferred by many scholars: the language here of a lamp is a clear metaphor for the continued life of David’s dynasty.⁵ Taken this way, the permanence (כְּלִי־הַיָּמִים) of this lamp compared to all other short-lived lamps is what is being emphasized here. Those scholars that recognize the metaphor LIGHT IS LIFE in the OT will back up their interpretations often with a few passages from Proverbs and Job so to solidly prove this interpretation of the Kings/Chronicles passages as well as progress the arguments of this dissertation, it seems prudent to move forward to those supporting passages.

Returning again to the sapiential books, Prov 13:9 and 24:20 both use the image of a lamp or light as a symbol for a person’s life. The majority of scholars readily

⁵ Curtis and Madsen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Chronicles*, 414; Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings*, 229.

interpret 13:9⁶ and 24:20⁷ along the lines of the LIFE IS LIGHT, DEATH IS DARKNESS metaphor pairing as I have identified it. Within the majority opinion, there are a few important aspects of the LIFE IS LIGHT, DEATH IS DARKNESS metaphor that commentators have point out. Fox accepts this interpretation with one slight modification: light represents not just a person's life, but the quality of that life and thus darkness connotes misery and premature death.⁸ Murphy notes the appropriateness of using an artificial and fragile source of light in a lamp as a metaphor for a person's life,⁹ and Horne argues that the basis for the LIFE IS LIGHT metaphor is found in Gen 1:2 where life begins with the creation of light.¹⁰

Proverbs 20:20 picks up some of the same language of 2 Kgs 8:19 and 2 Chron 21:7 while also introducing some new ideas. The Kings/Chronicles passages have their focus on the house or dynasty—that is family—of David and this proverb also has its focus on the importance of family, but rather than focus on God's faithfulness to a family, this proverb warns against unfaithfulness to one's family. According to the writer of this proverb, disrespecting one's parents leads to having your lamp snuffed out in complete darkness (יִדְעֶךָ נֵרְךָ בְּאִישׁוֹן חֹשֶׁךְ). The threat of being left in darkness is not unique to this proverb and, as we will see in §5.2.2, darkness is sometimes connected with the metaphor OBFUSCATION IS DARKNESS, but given the direct lexical link with lamp (נֵר) it seems more

⁶ Bellis, *Proverbs*, 133–34; Clifford, *Proverbs*, 138; Horne, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*, 172; Murphy, *Proverbs*, 96–97; Wilson, *Proverbs*, 170.

⁷ Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 751; Murphy, *Proverbs*, 259; Wilson, *Proverbs*, 261.

⁸ Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 564.

⁹ Murphy, *Proverbs*, 96–97.

¹⁰ Horne, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*, 172.

likely that the LIFE IS LIGHT metaphor is what is being evoked here.¹¹ Murphy connects this verse with the capital prohibitions against cursing one's parents in the OT (Exod 21:17; Lev 20:9)¹² which further connects this verse with the LIFE IS A LAMP metaphor as the ending of one's life in capital punishment is likened to the snuffing of a lamp. The blessing of Exod 20:12 promises long life which is the exact opposite of the belligerent one in Prov 20:20 whose life ends prematurely. While the negative metaphor DEATH IS DARKNESS is not explicitly used here, this proverb does seem to imply it or is at least a good indication of the cognitive background of the DEATH IS DARKNESS metaphor.

I will be exploring Job 3 more thoroughly at the end of chapter 5, but for now I will say that vv. 20 and 23 both hinge on the metaphor LIFE IS LIGHT, DEATH IS DARKNESS. Beyond Job 3, the metaphor pairing of LIGHT IS LIFE, DEATH IS DARKNESS is also present in Job 18:6 and 18. These verses are part of Bildad's retort and are connected to 18:5 which describes the snuffing out of the light (אור) of the wicked. In 18:6 Bildad—in a moment of baffling insensitivity to a man who lost his children in a collapsing tent—speaks of how the wicked man's individual lamp is put out and the collective light of his tent will also be darkened. As with the previous verses, the meaning of this verse is quite easy to discern and scholars are rather unified in their interpretation: the snuffing of light means death.¹³ As has been shown, the writers of the OT sometimes conceived of one's life as being like a light, and thus the light of one's tent being metaphorically

¹¹ Clifford, *Proverbs*, 185; Wilson, *Proverbs*, 231.

¹² Murphy, *Proverbs*, 229.

¹³ Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 275; Alden, *Job*, 177; Janzen, *Job*, 129; Konkel, "Job," 123; G. Wilson, *Job*, 288; L. Wilson, *Job*, 93.

representative of the life of one's family, thus creating a complex blend of two metaphors: LIFE IS LIGHT, and TENT IS FAMILY (see Prov 14:11).

Interpretations of v. 18 are not quite as uniform as v. 6. Lindsay Wilson suggests that vv. 17–19 threaten the “fate worse than death” of having one's name and lineage being forgotten.¹⁴ The translators of the NASB chose to clarify this verse by translating תִּבֵּל as “inhabited world.” This interpretation faces a few significant issues: in v. 19 Bildad does not claim that the lineage of the wicked is entirely cut off, but that it is cut off from among his people where he used to live. Verse 17 says that his name is forgotten in the land (אֶרֶץ)—which indicates not only land but specific locations inhabited by specific peoples—as well as in the street—that is, where civilized people meet. Being driven from light to darkness is the same as being torn from one's tent in v. 14 and so the world from whence he is driven is the civilized world. Bildad is here warning of the inevitable exile of the wicked, rather than their outright destruction and is relying on the metaphor WILDERNESS IS DARKNESS which will be discussed below. However, as will be shown below, the metaphors WILDERNESS IS DARKNESS and DEATH IS DARKNESS cannot always be easily separated and the former metaphor might be reliant on the latter. The majority of scholars see the latter metaphor, DEATH IS DARKNESS, being the driving metaphor of this verse.¹⁵ Especially given the reference to the LIFE IS LIGHT metaphor in vv. 5–6, v. 18 is most likely carrying this metaphor forward.¹⁶ Rather than attempt to

¹⁴ L. Wilson, *Job*, 94.

¹⁵ Alden, *Job*, 178; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 191–92; Konkel, “Job,” 124; Kravitz and Olitzky, *The Book of Job*, 112.

¹⁶ Habel, *The Book of Job*, 284; Longman, *Job*, 250.

discredit this well-founded and broadly-accepted view, I would instead argue that Bildad could be playing with the metaphorical flexibility of darkness to suggest both wilderness exile and death (or exile leading to death in the wilderness) are the outcomes of wicked living. It is worth noting that in 18:6 a person's light is found in their tent—a temporary dwelling place for the nomads of the wilderness—rather than an urban house. This is further indication that Bildad is blending both entailments of darkness together in 18:18.

In his defence for a purgative/corrective view of suffering, in Job 33 Elihu claims that trials are designed to correct the wicked so that their life might look to the light (וְחִיתִּי בְּאֹרֶת תְּרָאָה v. 28b) and that they might be illuminated by the light of life (לְאֹרֶת בְּאֹרֶת הַחַיִּים v. 30b). Each of Elihu's uses of the metaphor LIFE IS LIGHT has its own subtle yet noteworthy differences. In v. 28 the act of merely looking upon "the light" is enough to revivify those circling the edge of the pit. In v. 30 Elihu makes it quite clear what he means by this light: it is the light of life/lives/the living (אֹרֶת הַחַיִּים). Not only is light life to Elihu, light is also a way of conceptualizing the source of all life (whether that is God or some other font of life that Elihu does not specify).¹⁷

3.1.2 Darkness and Death

With the prevalence—especially within the wisdom and historical books—of the LIGHT IS LIFE, DEATH IS DARKNESS metaphor pairing established, we can now move on to examples where the LIFE IS LIGHT half of the pairing is not explicitly present. As was discussed in chapter 2, death and darkness are often closely connected in the literature

¹⁷ Habel, *The Book of Job*, 472.

and ritual practices of Israel's neighbours. As I did in the previous chapter, I will examine these uses of DARKNESS IS DEATH to first determine whether or not darkness is indeed being used either as a descriptor of or shorthand for death and then discuss what these verses say about any underlying ICMs that guided the OT writers to use dark terminology to create human scale for death.

The book of Job is where the bulk of verses that connect death and darkness are found. This should come as no surprise given the subject matter and the poet's regular use of dark lexemes. To begin, we will look at Job 10:21–22 where the poet gives the land of the dead a vividly dark description calling it a “land of darkness like thick darkness, like deepest darkness and devoid of order, where light is just like darkness.” At first glance these verses appear to be focused on using darkness as a negative adjective as some have suggested.¹⁸ Newsom argues that while Job wished for death's embrace in chapters 3 and 7, here he is indicating his dread of death with this piling of dark verbiage.¹⁹ Andersen comes to a similar conclusion:

In his first lament, Job expressed envy of the dead, because they could relax. Here, however, he draws little cheer from the prospect of death; for he piles up a heap of gloomy terms, including four different words for darkness, to indicate how dreary Sheol is.²⁰

Newsom and Andersen correctly draw a connection between what is said here and Job's lament in chapter 3 but they do not address how chapter 3—which certainly welcomed death with open arms—was also replete with uses of dark wording. Just as Job described

¹⁸ Kim, “Death and the Afterlife in the Book of Job,” 105.

¹⁹ Newsom, *Job*, 415.

²⁰ Andersen, *Job*, 169.

death in dark ways in chapter 3, so too does he describe death in dark ways here but darkness isn't describing dread in either passage. Why would Job make such obvious references to his previous lament in chapter 3 if he were to shift his focus away from the desirability of death? Death is certainly dreadful, but in both chapters, death is the preferred option over the greater dread of life. This interpretation also assumes that "gloom" is an accurate translation of עִפְתָּה which it most certainly is not. The only other instance of this word is in Amos 4:13 and "gloom" would not work in this context but is yet another synonym for darkness. Likewise, צִלְמוֹת which I have here translated as "deepest darkness," is a particularly problematic word that deserves special attention below.

3.1.3 Excursus: צִלְמוֹת

There have been a number of studies dedicated to the issue of how to best vocalize and translate צִלְמוֹת with a variety of arguments for and against different conclusions. Before sorting through what is uncertain with this word, we will begin with what can be easily agreed upon. First, the traditional understanding of this word is that it comprises a compound word made up of צֶל (shadow) and מוֹת (death) in a construct relationship. This was how the Greek translators of the OT understood this word in most instances and they were followed by subsequent translations thereafter until the Modern period. Second, all 18 instances of this word are found exclusively in poetic material between the prophets,

Psalms, and Job with the greatest concentration in the latter book.²¹ Third, within these poetic sections, צלמות is occasionally used within the context of exile and captivity,²² but is more often than not used within the context of sorrow, death, and the underworld.²³ Fourth, while צלמות is regularly found in parallel with חשך, it never refers to God's dwelling place²⁴ and seems quite unrelated to clouds the way ערפל and אפל are.²⁵ Beyond the first of these four points, there is nothing here to decide conclusively how צלמות is to be understood and while "shadow of death" is the traditional meaning, that does not necessarily mean it is the correct meaning.

The arguments for and against the various possible interpretations of צלמות that have gone on for over a century are easy to get lost in but Michel notes three key issues at play here:

1. The division of the consonants: a) as two words, šl, "shade," or "shelter," and mwt, "death," "Death," as a personification of the god Mot; b) as two words, but this time with mwt understood as indicating the superlative; c) as two words, šlm, "image, face," and mwt, "death" or "Death" (?); so the Vulgate, which has *imago mortis* in Jer 2:6, instead of the usual translation *umbra mortis* . . . d) as one word, šalmût, "darkness," as an absolute noun in the plural with the ending -ût, from a root šlm, with the meaning "dark, black."
2. Vocalization of the various combinations of consonants proposed.
3. The translation and interpretation of the various proposals.²⁶

Michel's overview of the problems related to צלמות provides a helpful grid for understanding this complicated issue. While the solutions to these problems are

²¹ Cohen, "The Basic Meaning of the Term עֲרֵפֶל 'Darkness,'" 290; Niehr, "צִלְמָוֶת Šalmāwet," 397.

²² Niehr, "צִלְמָוֶת Šalmāwet," 399.

²³ Price, "צִלָּל (Šālāl III)."

²⁴ Niehr, "צִלְמָוֶת Šalmāwet," 397.

²⁵ Cornelius, "The Theological Significance," 41.

²⁶ Michel, "Šlmwt, 'Deep Darkness' or 'Shadow of Death,'" 6.

interrelated, Michel's overview will serve as a guide for the following discussion. To begin, the translation "image of death" is not seriously considered to be a viable interpretation of this word. Beyond the one instance in the Vulgate in Jer 2:6, it is not attested elsewhere and does not fit well—if at all—in most contexts.

As for the "traditional" view of translating this word as "shadow of death," while it has received criticism with a few alternate proposals in the last century and a half, it has retained a number of scholars who have defended this view. This view has been defended most stridently by Barr and Michel but each on different grounds.²⁷ Beyond refuting the more popular arguments against the traditional view, Michel's argument is primarily centred around linguistics. He summarizes his main argument down to four key points:

1) the supposed root *šlm* is very rare in Hebrew (or does not even exist at all) and probably does not mean "to be dark, black," but "to be sad;" 2) the pronunciation of *šl* as *šal* is not unusual, but a change from a supposed vocalization of *šlmwt* as *šalmût* to the Masoretic *šalmāwet* is highly unlikely; 3) compound names are not infrequent in Hebrew, Ugaritic and Eblaite; 4) the meaning of *šalmāwet* as "Shadow of Death," or even "Shelter/Protection of Mot," as an epithet of the underworld, is appropriate for most of the 18 occurrences of *šlmwt* and especially for the 10 occurrences of *šlmwt* in Job.²⁸

Michel's first point redirects to Barr's comments in "Philology and Exegesis" which will be discussed later.²⁹ Clines has more directly addressed this question in his article "The Etymology of Hebrew *šalem*." Clines' arguments focus on disproving any connection between *צלם* I, "image" and *צלם* II, "to be dark" on etymological grounds

²⁷ Barr, "Philology and Exegesis"; Michel, "Šlmwt, 'Deep Darkness' or 'Shadow of Death.'"

²⁸ Michel, "Šlmwt, 'Deep Darkness' or 'Shadow of Death,'" 13.

²⁹ Michel, "Šlmwt, 'Deep Darkness' or 'Shadow of Death,'" 1; Cf. Barr, "Philology and Exegesis," 55.

which he argues sufficiently.³⁰ His arguments are certainly persuasive but they do not necessarily rule out the possibility—however slim—that there are two, entirely separate homonyms spelled צלם in Hebrew. What is of greater concern is Clines' point that the interpretation of צלם as “to be dark” presumes a shift in meaning from shadow (צל) to darkness but that such a connection between shadows and darkness is not apparent in Hebrew thought or in other Semitic cultures.³¹ This latter point made by Clines poses a more significant issue for those who would argue that צלמות is an intensified form of צלם II, “darkness,” via the suffix *-ût*.

Michel's third point is argued quite well and shows sufficient evidence that refutes the notion that compound nouns are too rare in Hebrew. Similarly Barr has given evidence of personal and place names being compound words in proper nouns such as “Hadramaut,” “Azmaveth,” and “Azmoth.”³² This same phenomenon has been observed in Ugaritic and Eblaite.³³ If Death is here a reference to the god of that realm, there is plenty of evidence of Hebrew names being a compound noun ending with *-el* or *-yah(u)* to show Yahweh's authority. In line with what was discussed above, to be under something's shadow is often a metaphor for being under their protection or even sphere of influence, and this to be under death's shadow is to be under the power or protection of death.³⁴

³⁰ Clines, “The Etymology of Hebrew *Selem*.”

³¹ Clines, “The Etymology of Hebrew *Selem*,” 21.

³² Barr, “Philology and Exegesis,” 54.

³³ Michel, “*Šlmwt*, ‘Deep Darkness’ or ‘Shadow of Death,’” 7.

³⁴ Michel, “*Šlmwt*, ‘Deep Darkness’ or ‘Shadow of Death,’” 12.

Regarding Michel's fourth points about "shadow of death" being appropriate for most of the 18 occurrences of צלמות, this point is not as much of a boon as Michel suggests. "Shadow of death" certainly does fit quite well in some contexts. Barr notes Job 38:17 as an example where "shadow of death" is more appropriate since צלמות is in parallel with death,³⁵ but parallelism does not prove equivalence. Not only this, death and darkness are conceptually linked in ancient Hebrew thought so "darkness" would also be an appropriate translation. Likewise, Barr argues that "shadow of death" is a better parallel with the *tannin* of Ps 44:20,³⁶ but this only works if we ignore the evidence for the WILDERNESS IS DARKNESS metaphor (see §3.2.3), which he does later for Jer 2:6.³⁷ Barr and others have certainly shown that "shadow of death" does fit in a number of contexts, but they have not proven that "shadow of death" is the *only* interpretation that fits these contexts.

Michel's second point is one of the more persuasive arguments for the traditional view. The hypothesis that צלמות would somehow shift in not only meaning but pronunciation with the *shureq* shifting into a vocalized *waw* with added vowels does seem to be somewhat unlikely.³⁸ Related to this point is the even more persuasive argument that it would be rather improbable that this shift in pronunciation and meaning would have occurred in such a short span of time given how the Greek translators chose σκιά θανάτου for צלמות almost every time. Barr suggests that since Job is traditionally

³⁵ Barr, "Philology and Exegesis," 52.

³⁶ Barr, "Philology and Exegesis," 52.

³⁷ Barr, "Philology and Exegesis," 53.

³⁸ Barr, "Philology and Exegesis," 52.

understood to have been at least completed fairly late and relatively close to the translation of the Old Greek, the final redactor would have likely already understood **צלמות** as “shadow of death.”³⁹ I find this argument to be the most persuasive by far but it is not without its issues as will be discussed below.

The above arguments pose significant issues for competing vocalizations for **צלמות** but there are also a number of convincing arguments in their favour. To recap, the prevailing alternative options for **צלמות** are as words for intense darkness, either as a compound word with **מות** functioning as a superlative, or as a single absolute noun form of **צלם** II in the plural (plural of intensification) with the ending *-ût*. There are some particulars between the arguments for each vocalization but they share the common final interpretation as some form of “darkness” so contextual arguments for “darkness” apply to both. In short, the semantic field for **צלמות** is overwhelmingly if not exclusively in favour of “darkness” as the best translation. Chaim Cohen notes three trends that emerge when the semantic domain of **צלמות** is studied: First, **חשך** and **אפל** in either their verbal or substantive form is attested alongside **צלמות** with five of those instances as the hendiadys **אפל וצלמות** (**חושך/אפל וצלמות**) (Ps 107:10, 14; Job 3:5, 10:21, 28:3); three in synonymous parallelism as the B-word (Isa 9:1; Job 12:22, 34:22); and five within the same context (Jer 13:16; Amos 5:8; Job 24:16–17 [twice], 28:3). Second, there are only five instances where **צלמות** is not used within the context of words related to darkness. Third, **צלמות** also

³⁹ Barr, “Philology and Exegesis,” 52. This is one of Barr’s weaker points for this portion of his argument. Whether the final redactor understood **צלמות** as “shadow of death” or some other meaning is irrelevant to how previous versions of Job were understood and how previous authors who used the word understood it.

regularly occurs both in opposition to אור “light” and בקר “morning” (Isa 9:1; Jer 13:16; Amos 5:8; Job 12:22, 24:16–17 [twice]) as well as in conjunction with אפל (Job 10:21–22, 28:3) and ערפל (Jer 13:16).⁴⁰ Anthony Stone comes to similar conclusions but notes a few particulars. He argues that Amos 5:8; Job 16:16; 24:16–17, and 34:22 as verses that certainly best fit with “darkness,” Isa 9:1–2; Job 3:3–5, 24:17b, 28:3 are best understood as uses of the metaphor DEATH IS DARKNESS (my words), and that in the remaining ten cases, צלמות does not necessarily mean death but can just as easily be seen as a metaphorical use of darkness for death.⁴¹ Following his exploration of the semantic field of צלמות, Stone concludes that

šlmwt can be understood as “darkness” in almost all, if not in all, cases. On the other hand, a meaning related to death may apply in a few cases. To say more would require a more detailed study of some of its occurrences.⁴²

Stone and Cohen do note the connections between צלמות and the domain of death, but this connection is not present in a majority of instances. The connection between darkness and death in Hebrew thought will be made quite clear by the end of this chapter, but I am not the first to note this conceptual connection in reference to צלמות. For instance, D. Winton Thomas took no issue in interpreting צלמות as “darkness” due to what he recognized as “the close connexion in Hebrew thought between death, Sheol, and darkness.”⁴³

⁴⁰ Cohen, “The Meaning of *šlmwt* ‘Darkness,’” 289; Cf. Niehr, “צִלְמוֹת *šalmāwet*,” 397.

⁴¹ Stone, “Does ‘Shadow of Death’ Mean ‘Deep Darkness?’” 55–57; Cf. Cohen, “The Meaning of *šlmwt* ‘Darkness,’” 291–301.

⁴² Stone, “Does ‘Shadow of Death’ Mean ‘Deep Darkness?’” 57.

⁴³ Thomas, “צִלְמוֹת In The Old Testament,” 197.

Scholars who centre their arguments around the semantic field of צלמות tend to conclude that “darkness” is preferred over “shadow of death.”⁴⁴ According to Cohen, the debate should all but cease at this point. Following the “Held method”⁴⁵ of lexical studies, Cohen argues that contextual evidence of a word’s semantic range must be taken independent from and primarily over arguments from etymology and the hypothetical evolution of a word.⁴⁶ Not only is the contextual evidence strongly in favour of “darkness,” the etymological and historical evidences proposed by scholars like Barr are not as conclusive as they argue. It is this hypothetical evolution of צלמות that Cohen takes particular issue with as he is not convinced that Barr—or anyone else for that matter—was able to come to the “total history” of צלמות.⁴⁷ Speaking specifically on the issue of the relatively short gap between the writing of books like Job and the translation of the Old Greek, Cohen notes that “in the present case, it makes little difference to the philologist whether the LXX translated ‘shadow of death’ or ‘darkness’, since the *Vorlage* in either case would be the unvocalized term צלמות.”⁴⁸ Barr also fails to recognize the impetus behind the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek: the loss of Hebrew language comprehension among the diaspora community.

One potential issue with the above arguments—especially those from Cohen—is their reliance on poetic parallelism to establish meaning from context for צלמות. Cohen

⁴⁴ Cohen, “The Meaning of Šlmwt ‘Darkness’”; Cornelius, “The Theological Significance”; Stone, “Does ‘Shadow of Death’ Mean ‘Deep Darkness?’”

⁴⁵ See Cohen, “The ‘Held Method’ for Comparative Semitic Philology.”

⁴⁶ Cohen, “The Meaning of Šlmwt ‘Darkness,’” 289.

⁴⁷ Cohen, “The Meaning of Šlmwt ‘Darkness,’” 288.

⁴⁸ Cohen, “The Meaning of Šlmwt ‘Darkness,’” 301.

considers this evidence from “poetic usage and parallelism” to be “decisive in establishing” this understanding of צלמות.⁴⁹ Barr downplays this evidence since not all instances of צלמות are found in a parallel structure with another word for darkness,⁵⁰ but it would be a stretch to assume that “every occurrence of the word in question will appear in a clear parallelistic structure” as Cohen retorts.⁵¹ Another possible criticism of Cohen’s reliance on parallelistic structures is that he could be accused of falsely equivocating parallel words. Cohen also needs to reckon with Job 38:17 which has “gates of death” (שַׁעַר־מָוֶת) and צלמות in parallel with the latter in the B-position. That said, the close connections between death and darkness in ancient Near Eastern thought provide a sufficient answer to Job 38:17 and since there are so many instances of darkness and צלמות in parallel, there is strong evidence that these various poets saw a connection between more generic terms for darkness and צלמות.

Assuming that one accepts “darkness” as the most accurate domain from contextual evidence, there still remains the question of whether צלמות is to be understood as an absolute plural form of צלם or as a compound word combining צל “shadow” and מות “death” with מות functioning as a superlative. The latter understanding is not the most popular hypothesis but it does have some support. Thomas notes several instances where death is used as a superlative in the Bible (Exod 10:17; Judg 16:16; 1 Sam 4:20; 5:11; 2 Kgs 20:1; Pss 18:5; 55:5; Song 8:6; Isa 53:12; Jonah 4:9) as well as instances

⁴⁹ Cohen, “The Meaning of Šlmwt ‘Darkness,’” 289–90.

⁵⁰ Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament*, 377–78.

⁵¹ Cohen, “The Meaning of Šlmwt ‘Darkness,’” 290.

from Syriac, Arabic, and Greek texts.⁵² Thomas also echoes some of the arguments from scholars like Barr for the possibility of compound words in Hebrew to come to conclusion that there isn't sufficient proof against צלמות being a compound noun.⁵³ The most significant issue with this interpretation is the lack of connection between shadows and darkness in Hebrew and broader Semitic thought as mentioned above.⁵⁴

The more common argument for צלמות being translated as darkness is that it is an abstract construction from an alternate meaning for צלם meaning “be dark” with *-ût* as a suffix. Proponents of this view connect this root to the Akkadian *ṣalāmu*, “be/become black, dark,” *ṣalmu*, “black,” and *ṣulmu*, “blackness” as well as the Ugaritic *ṣlmt*, *ḡlmt*, and *ṣlmt*, “darkness, gloom.”⁵⁵ While Barr and Michel both criticize these etymological connections, Cohen notes Barr's failure to mention any possible connections between צלמות and the Akkadian *ṣalmu* “black” and *ṣālamu* “to be dark.”⁵⁶ While he is incorrect in his assertion that “compound nouns hardly occur in Hebrew,” Eybers makes a persuasive case for the prevalence of abstract nouns with the ending *-ût* found in Hebrew in conjunction with the findings of his etymological study.⁵⁷

Coming to an exact conclusion between צלמות as an absolute noun or a compound noun is inconsequential to the aims of this study but given the lack of connection between darkness and shadows in ancient Semitic thought, the former is certainly the preferred

⁵² Thomas, “צלמות In The Old Testament,” 196–97.

⁵³ Thomas, “צלמות In The Old Testament,” 200.

⁵⁴ Clines, “The Etymology of Hebrew *Ṣelem*,” 21.

⁵⁵ Niehr, “צלמות *Ṣalmāwet*,” 396.

⁵⁶ Cohen, “The Meaning of *Ṣlmwt* ‘Darkness,’” 288.

⁵⁷ Eybers, “The Root *Ṣ-L* in Hebrew Words,” 30.

option. What is more pressing to come to a conclusion on is whether **צלמות** is to be understood as being related to death and its realm or as being related to darkness with death merely being one of its entailments.⁵⁸ The most convincing argument for the traditional view is the one from history but even that argument can be countered, while the contextual evidence is overwhelmingly in favour of the revised view. While the etymological evidence for the revised view has received some criticism, these criticisms are less important if etymological concerns are secondary to contextual evidence. While I have allowed for some flexibility in this dissertation on how I translate **צלמות** and thus interpret the verses where it is found, the evidence does lean toward the revised understanding of **צלמות** as an intense form of darkness. Even in instances where **צלמות** is in close connection with death, this is easily understood as an instance of DEATH IS DARKNESS.

3.1.2 Darkness and Death (Cont'd)

With the issues related to **צלמות** covered, we can now return to the barrage of dark verbiage in Job 10:21–22. To recap, I have chosen to translate this description of the land of the dead, “land of darkness like thick darkness, like deepest darkness and devoid of order, where light is just like darkness.” I cannot fault English translators for wanting to create at least some variety and sense out of this verse given the English language’s lack of synonyms for darkness (a problem I’m acutely aware of as I write this dissertation);

⁵⁸ Seow (Job 1–21, 341–43) argues that there is a dual meaning for **צלמות** which can be taken as either darkness or the netherworld. Stone (“Does ‘Shadow of Death’ Mean ‘Deep Darkness?’,” 54–55) also considers the possibility for dual meanings for **צלמות**.

there must be some sort of conceptual-semantic difference between עִיפָה, אַפֵּל, and צְלָמוֹת but such differences between these and other words for darkness used in the OT are quite difficult to discern apart from the peculiarities of the latter. If these three words are understood all as permutations of the word or concept of darkness, we are left with a fairly puzzling simile: the land of darkness is like (thick) darkness. This repetition is designed to underscore the intensity and severity of the darkness of the land of the dead where even simple dimness is an impenetrable darkness.⁵⁹ Such an interpretation would fit well with the third colon which would take this analogy even further in suggesting that what should be light is darkness and the previous colon that suggests that the land of the dead is one where darkness (אַפֵּל in both the first and third cola of v. 22) is without order, control, or boundaries—thus eliciting an image of pre-creative chaos.⁶⁰ This is a place that is lacking in heavenly luminaries to mark the passage of time and is thus also temporally chaotic and unknowable.⁶¹ Clines argues that this image of un-creation is a reflection of the “perversion of creation” that Job’s life has become.⁶² While this world is certainly beyond the normal created order, the chaotic nature of Sheol is not the main focus of Job’s synonyms for darkness.

A number of scholars have argued that what made the land of the dead so attractive to Job was that it was beyond Yahweh’s horizon. Clines argues that it is this imperceptibility of the realm of death that is what is most desired by Job; he desires that

⁵⁹ Rowley, *The Book of Job*, 105.

⁶⁰ Kravitz and Olitzky, *The Book of Job*, 65.

⁶¹ Janzen, *Job*, 93–94.

⁶² Clines, *Job 1–20*, 251.

his life become shrouded from God's vision for he believes that it is only outside of God's meddling eye that he can hope to find an ounce of relief (v. 20).⁶³ Such an interpretation would allow for us to translate עִפְתָּה as "dim(ness)" which removes the emotional connotations of "gloom," provides some helpful differentiation, and stays within the range of words for darkness. This interpretation finds further evidence from elsewhere in this chapter and the rest of Job. In chapter 3, Job lamented that he had seen the light of day, but in v. 18b he laments that he has been seen by other's eyes. Based on the divine surveillance motif developed in the preceding speeches (1:7; 7:8, 17–22; 10:4, 6, 14), Habel concludes that the dark shadow of Sheol is the only place Job might hide himself from God's all-seeing eye.⁶⁴ Job will again pick up this theme of being hidden in Sheol in 14:13. Given how important and frequent the idea of Job hiding himself from Yahweh's gaze is to his speeches, it is clear from this verse that Job evokes so many synonyms for darkness to describe the afterlife to highlight how it is beyond vision just as anything shrouded in darkness is beyond regular human vision.

The metaphor DEATH IS DARKNESS can also be found as a recurring metaphor in Eliphaz' description of the wicked person's life in Job 15:17–30. In v. 22 darkness is described as a fate from which a person cannot escape and in vv. 23 and 30 it is given a temporal dimension as a time which is fast approaching. Darkness is certainly an important theme in these verses but scholars are not unified in their understanding of what this darkness is referring to. Balentine highlights the peculiarity of "darkness"

⁶³ Clines, *Job 1–20*, 251.

⁶⁴ Habel, *The Book of Job*, 200.

waiting for the wicked, but does not elaborate on what this darkness might refer to.⁶⁵

Likewise, Longman elaborates on this verse describing the darkness of v. 30 as something “that will permanently envelop these people” but does not describe what being enveloped in this darkness means for the wicked.⁶⁶

Édouard Dhorme suggests that this dark day is the eschatological day of the Lord as described by Amos, Joel, and Zephaniah,⁶⁷ but this is highly unlikely; the degree to which eschatology is a focus of this book is debatable,⁶⁸ but in this specific verse the focus is narrowly on the wicked and their near future. Newsom argues quite the opposite: Eliphaz disagrees with the idea of delayed justice for the wicked and instead believes that the wicked suffer even now (“all the days/years”).⁶⁹ Beyond the question of eschatological interests in Job, one key difference between Dhorme and Newsom is how they interpret the timeline of darkness that is before the wicked; that is, there is a key question as to whether darkness is a metaphor for the wicked person’s current sufferings or a metaphor for their coming demise. While the two are certainly not mutually exclusive—as will be discussed below—many scholars focus more on one over the other and others argue that the darkness faced by the wicked is either an exclusively future or present reality.

⁶⁵ Balentine, *Job*, 238.

⁶⁶ Longman, *Job*, 229.

⁶⁷ Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*.

⁶⁸ See Johnson, *Now My Eye Sees You*.

⁶⁹ Newsom, *Job*, 451; See also, Rowley, *The Book of Job*, 138: “The meaning may be that he dreads night, being always afraid that he will not wake up, or he dreads misfortune, being afraid that it will be final. In either case we have a vivid picture of the torments of conscience.”

Norman Habel is an example of scholars who focus on the dread of darkness. He describes these verses as a “portrayal of a man afraid of Darkness.”⁷⁰ To Habel, the litany of threats described in these verses describe what the wicked one fears will become of “all progeny and possessions” which “all appear as living powers of death threatening the wicked.”⁷¹ David Clines suggests that these verses are part of a broader theme of describing suffering in terms of darkness in the OT.⁷² Clines does not provide any proof for the theme/metaphor SUFFERING IS DARKNESS in the OT beyond a reference to Ps 112:4 which is less than helpful in bolstering his case. Again, darkness is certainly not often a pleasant reality in the OT, but Clines’ argument for the existence of a SUFFERING IS DARKNESS metaphor in the OT does not line up with the findings of this study.

Most commentators focus their attention on Job’s use of the DEATH IS DARKNESS metaphor. Alden argues that the darkness of 15:22–23 and 30 carry forward the metaphorical meaning of death just as darkness does in 10:21–22.⁷³ These verses are replete with images of death from “the destroyer” (טַרְיֵן) to the sword to starvation to battle to fire and darkness is the key recurring image of death that ties them all together. But that is not all that is to be said of the darkness of Job 15; while darkness is a powerful and common metaphor for death, it is also shown to be a potent metaphor for fear and dread in vv. 21–24. The repetition of the wicked person’s paranoia brought about by the unexpectedness of his demise bookends these verses. Between his paranoia and the two

⁷⁰ Habel, *The Book of Job*, 250.

⁷¹ Habel, *The Book of Job*, 251.

⁷² Clines, *Job* 1–20, 357–58.

⁷³ Alden, *Job*, 164–65; See also, Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 251–53.

verbs related to knowledge (ידע and אמן), the focus of these verses is how the wicked person is overcome with dread of that which he can't and won't see coming. Since Eliphaz has already established that the wicked dwell in darkness, it is possible that Eliphaz believes that the wicked secretly dread their dark (hidden) lives but dare not attempt to escape or flee (סור , שוב) out of fear of the sword that would inevitably find them.⁷⁴ Rather than see darkness as either a future reality or a present reality for the wicked, scholars like L. Wilson and Andersen argue that darkness is a metaphor for both death and the nagging fear that death could strike at any unknown moment. While the sword and burned up “shoots” (a sign of ongoing life or prosperity) certainly symbolize death, L. Wilson also notes that what is possibly an even greater threat is the sense of foreboding that destruction could be lurking around every corner.⁷⁵ As Konkel puts it, death is like an “assassin which may be lurking anywhere.”⁷⁶ Konkel's image of an assassin—a silent killer that can strike without prior warning—is certainly appropriate here as it is not just that a day of darkness awaits the wicked, but he already lives in a state of darkness as he is overcome with despair.⁷⁷ After weighing the evidence of whether this darkness is a present or future threat for the wicked, Clines rightly comes to the conclusion that it is best to leave this question unresolved as the text seems to do.⁷⁸ The poet of Job 15 seems to be using the metaphorical flexibility of the DARKNESS frame to highlight not only its connections with death but also how darkness conceals threats (see §5.1.2).

⁷⁴ Newsom, *Job*, 451.

⁷⁵ L. Wilson, *Job*, 88; Cf. Andersen, *Job*, 192.

⁷⁶ Konkel, “Job,” 113.

⁷⁷ Clines, *Job 1–20*, 358.

⁷⁸ Clines, *Job 1–20*, 357–58.

Following canonically through Job, the next two verses that connect death and darkness are 17:12 and 13. These verses come with their own interpretive difficulties beyond discerning how they use darkness metaphorically. The first issue with v. 12 is who or what the subject of the verb שִׁים is. Some have suggested Job is referring to his false friends⁷⁹ while others have suggested that the subject is the desires of Job's heart from v. 11b.⁸⁰ The former interpretation seems a bit strange as Job would be accusing his unreliable and unwise friends of feeding him false hope as their words have certainly not been the most hopeful. The latter interpretation would fit much better for a few reasons. First "the desires of my heart" (מוֹרְשֵׁי לִבִּי) of the previous verse would be left as a hanging noun phrase without a connection to v. 11.⁸¹ Second, hope remains a key theme through to the end of the chapter. Third, this would paint a much more complete picture of Job giving into total despair by resenting his own sense of hope that his nightmare would eventually give way to the light of day.

Alongside the question of the subject of v. 12's verbs, it still remains to be determined to what the darkness (חֹשֶׁךְ) of vv. 12 and 13 is referring. On its own, v. 12b could be a parallel elaboration of night and day from v. 12a if the darkness of the following verse is allowed to influence our reading of v. 12b, it is possible instead that darkness is being used as a metonymy for death. Verse 13 makes a very clear connection between שְׂאוֹל and חֹשֶׁךְ with the two in parallel. The parallelism continues into vv. 14 and 16 with further metonymical images of death with the pit, worms, the bars of Sheol, and

⁷⁹ Alden, *Job*, 174; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 186; Longman, *Job*, 243; L. Wilson, *Job*, 280.

⁸⁰ Habel, *The Book of Job*, 279; Janzen, *Job*, 126; Konkel, "Job," 119.

⁸¹ Konkel, "Job," 119.

the dust. So is the darkness of v. 12 Job's present agony or his future in the grave? I would argue both—that the darkness of v. 12 functions as a thematic pivot between vv. 9–11a and 11b–16. The poet of Job is here using the flexibility of dark metaphors to his advantage by using חֹשֶׁךְ as a metonymy for both night and death to connect two different ideas into a single, cohesive rhetorical unit. This underscores just how dire Job's situation has become—that the darkness of death has become more appealing to Job than his current circumstances. As discussed above, the darkness of the grave has become so appealing to Job because he believes it is the only place he can escape Yahweh's meddling gaze.

Another example of this metaphor can possibly be found in Job 20:26. This verse has evaded a conclusive interpretation by many scholars and so it warrants close exploration. The first barrier is how to translate כָּל-חֹשֶׁךְ טָמֹן לְצַפּוֹנָיו. Some translations and commentators see darkness as lying in wait to either pounce on the wicked person's treasures (NIV, NET, L. Wilson, Balentine, Habel, hereafter stream α),⁸² while others see darkness as the treasure itself (ESV, NASB, KJV, Longman, Konkel, hereafter stream β),⁸³ while others still make a more fluid interpretation of their treasures being lost to obscurity (GNT, CEV, NLT, Hartley,⁸⁴ hereafter stream γ):

⁸² Balentine, *Job*, 316; Habel, *The Book of Job*, 319; L. Wilson, *Job*, 100.

⁸³ Konkel, "Job," 136; Longman, *Job*, 270.

⁸⁴ Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 270.

stream α	stream β	stream γ
NIV: “total darkness lies in wait for his treasures”	ESV: “Utter darkness is laid up for his treasures”	CEV: “and what they treasure most will be lost in the dark.”
NET: “Total darkness waits to receive his treasures”	NASB: “Complete darkness is held in reserve for his treasures”	NLT: “Their treasures will be thrown into deepest darkness.”

Since they don’t require changing the indirect object from treasure to darkness, interpretive streams α and β seem to be the most likely in my opinion but this still leaves the question as to whether darkness is being used as a metonymy for prison, death, or folly here. Streams α and β seem to be assuming the DEATH IS DARKNESS or IMPRISONMENT IS DARKNESS metaphors. The poet’s use of צלמות is another grey area for translating and interpreting this verse. Of course “shadow of death” would confirm the death interpretation, but the intensified “deep darkness” would also fit quite well with the preceding כָּל and leave things somewhat ambiguous. As stated above in §3.1.3, I will allow space for either interpretation for צלמות with preference given to “deep darkness.”

With that out of the way, we can look at the possible dark metaphors that are being employed here. First, FOLLY/IGNORANCE IS DARKNESS does not seem to fit this verse very well. Perhaps fools can lie in wait for another’s treasure, but it would be odd for Eliphaz to threaten the fool stealing from another fool. Receiving folly or ignorance as a prize also seems nonsensical. However, it could be argued that the poet of Job is attempting to suggest that the wicked stores his treasures in the dark ignorance or folly as those treasures will inevitably be taken away (v. 28), but this interpretation would only

work with some indirect object finagling as in stream γ . It is safe to say that FOLLY/IGNORANCE IS DARKNESS is not the metaphor being used here.

The question of whether darkness is being used as a metonym for prison or death is much trickier to answer. The idea of death waiting to pounce wouldn't be unique to this passage and certainly fits Eliphaz' belief that we can take nothing with us in death as well as Job's recent experience of death robbing him of everything. It would be a bit strange and certainly unique for imprisonment at the hand of some sort of temple or state official to be here personified as a mugger waiting for a trap to be sprung, but it isn't entirely outside the realm of possibility given the poet's creative use of metaphors in Job. If we understand v. 26 as death/imprisonment lying in wait to plunder the wicked's treasures, this fits in well with 28 which states that the wicked's possessions will be taken away on the day of God's wrath. The day of God's wrath could also be translated as either death or prison as both fit within the retributive theology of Job's friends. Death being the recompense for a life unwisely and wickedly spent as β and γ would read is a staple for the sapiential books (Prov 1:32; 5:5; 7:27; 13:14; 23:14; Job 11:20; 18:13). However, the wicked languishing in prison is certainly not a hallmark of wisdom literature nor does it fit in well with how imprisonment functioned in the ancient Near East as the next chapter of this dissertation will explore. Not only this but Eliphaz seems much more focused on the total demise of the wicked rather than their simple imprisonment. In the end, it seems that the DEATH IS DARKNESS is the metaphor that fits best in this context. With all that

said, following this interpretation, death is what either awaits their treasures after the wicked passes on or death is the only treasure the wicked has to look forward to.

Job 38:17 is the final example of Job using darkness as a metaphor for death. Scholars are quite unified in their understanding of this verse—at least in broad strokes: This verse is part of a larger section that spans chapters 38 and 39 wherein Yahweh bombards Job with a series of rhetorical questions that Job cannot possibly answer positively to. Yahweh moves from different spheres of the cosmos that are well beyond Job’s scope of understanding or even experience.⁸⁵ Hester connects v. 19 to Job’s accusation against God in 12:22 and God’s reverse accusation in 38:2 to show that this verse is a continuation of that reverse accusation designed to show Job’s presumption of any knowledge of light and darkness.⁸⁶ Similarly, v. 17 is an indictment against Job’s assumptions about the realms of the dead that dominate a number of his prior speeches.⁸⁷ Fokkelman notes that the majority of the questions here focus on Job’s knowledge and abilities (“do you know . . . ?” and “can you . . . ?”) and L. Wilson notes the concentration of verbs related to Job’s understanding (revealed, . . . seen, . . . comprehended, . . . know).⁸⁸ It is worth noting that God does not directly speak of the realms of the dead, but merely its gates. If the function of a gate is taken into consideration, Job is doubly ignorant: he cannot comprehend the mechanism that bars his understanding of the realm of the dead, let alone that realm itself. While this verse is indeed about death—or at least the gates that lead to its realm—the main thrust of this passage is on God’s probing

⁸⁵ Alden, *Job*, 348; Longman, *Job*, 425; G. Wilson, *Job*, 615–16; L. Wilson, *Job*, 153.

⁸⁶ Hester, *Job*; Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12*.

⁸⁷ Konkel, “Job,” 221.

⁸⁸ Fokkelman, *The Book of Job in Form*, 202; L. Wilson, *Job*, 153.

questions of Job's ability to perceive things that are clearly beyond him. Whether **צלמות** is taken as a direct reference to death's shadow or is taken as deepest darkness, this verse shows that to the writer of Job, the realm of death was seen as being fully beyond the scope of human understanding. If **צלמות** is understood as a superlative darkness, the metaphorical connection between darkness and the unknowable (THE UNKNOWN IS DARKNESS) especially in relation to darkness as a descriptor of the underworld is made readily apparent.

The writer of Job shares an interest in the absurdity of life with the writer of Ecclesiastes but the latter spends far less time focusing on the absurdity of death. Even so, nearing the end of his exploration of life in the midst of life's vanities, Qohelet considers the brevity of life and uses dark imagery to give scale to human mortality in 11:8. Here Qohelet cautions that his reader ought to remember that the dark days will be many (**וַיִּזְכֹּר אֶת־יְמֵי הַחֹשֶׁךְ כִּי־הִרְבֵּה יְהִי**) but there is some degree of academic debate regarding exactly what (and when) Qohelet meant by days of darkness (**יְמֵי הַחֹשֶׁךְ**). As Dulin notes, it is not fully clear what phase of life or death Qohelet is referring to—or whether he is even speaking of a phase of life and instead talking about the economic, social, or physical downfall of a man.⁸⁹

To begin, there are those scholars who see “darkness” here as a metaphor for times of trial and tribulation. To Eaton, light represents the “goodness of life” and thus darkness speaks of “calamity and trial.”⁹⁰ Noting that the more common interpretation of

⁸⁹ Dulin, “How Sweet Is the Light,” 267.

⁹⁰ Eaton, *Ecclesiastes*, 164.

this darkness is as a metaphor for death, Bartholomew argues that death is used more flexibly in this context as a metaphor for evil “days, oppression, aloneness, abusive rule, and so on” as well as death.⁹¹ I certainly agree that darkness is a rather flexible frame that can carry a number of entailments, but the entailments Bartholomew and Eaton suggest don’t find as much support from elsewhere in the OT as they suggest; the verses that Eaton cites as evidence of light being a sign of blessing against dark sorrow and adversity, Gen 1:3, Job 10:22, and 18:5, do not so solidly prove his conclusion. As will be shown throughout this dissertation and this chapter in particular, darkness is certainly not always a pleasant experience but it does not function as a generic metaphor for trials or suffering in the OT. This interpretation also contradicts a theme that runs throughout Ecclesiastes that life is fraught with often meaningless suffering but, as Fox puts it, “being alive is sweet, even if one's experiences of life are not.”⁹²

The other option is to understand darkness as a reference to old age. Reading this section as an allegory for the waning health of a person’s “twilight years” is certainly one of the more ancient translations.⁹³ This interpretation has stayed relevant today by scholars like Dulin who, despite moving away from explicit allegory, come to many of the same conclusions as previous allegorists have done.⁹⁴ Krueger et al. craft an interesting argument for this interpretation: while Qohelet laments the multitude of dark days, he also recognizes the multitude of *years* of a person’s life.⁹⁵ Beyond the glaring

⁹¹ Bartholomew, *Ecclesiastes*, 466.

⁹² Fox, *Qoheleth and His Contradictions*, 278.

⁹³ Fox, *Ecclesiastes*, 76.

⁹⁴ Dulin, “How Sweet Is the Light.”

⁹⁵ Krueger et al., *Qoheleth*, 196.

issue of the scale of years to days when talking about life and death, Kruger et al. also note that it would be strange for Qohelet to take an interest in the duration of the period after one's death; what difference does it make how long one is dead for?⁹⁶ Despite the persuasiveness of these arguments and the staying power of this interpretation, it does face a few issues: First, Fox describes many of the allegorical connections between these verses and the concept of old age to be "arbitrary . . . without providing a way to control the decoding."⁹⁷ Second, Fox notes that there are a number of elements in this section that do not make particularly good symbols for old age and bodily deterioration.⁹⁸ Third, and building off Fox's previous point, outside of Qohelet, there are no other passages that use the metaphor OLD AGE IS DARK in a way we would today describe someone as living in their "twilight years." It is not impossible that this is the metaphor being used here, but given the lack of other examples throughout the OT, it seems quite unlikely.

The interpretation that is much more consistent with how darkness is used metaphorically used in the OT is understanding the darkness of Eccl 11 as a metaphor for death.⁹⁹ Beyond the greater precedent for the DEATH IS DARKNESS metaphor in the OT, there are also a number of proofs from the context of Eccl 11 that would show that darkness here is a metaphor for death. While it is indeed peculiar that bright years are being compared to dark days, the focus is on the overwhelming multitude of those days.¹⁰⁰ Horne suggests that it is this imbalance of years alive to multitudinous days of

⁹⁶ Kruger et al., *Qoheleth*, 196.

⁹⁷ Fox, *Ecclesiastes*, 76.

⁹⁸ Fox, *Ecclesiastes*, 76.

⁹⁹ Barton, *Ecclesiastes*; Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 183; See also, Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 333.

¹⁰⁰ Horne, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*, 497.

death that is part of Qohelet's broader theme of "live life now" that runs from Eccl 9:1 to 12:8.¹⁰¹ As Fox puts it, "We should remember death so as to appreciate life. Paradoxically, this thought can remind us to seize the very pleasures that (according to 5:19) will divert our thoughts from our demise."¹⁰² There are those scholars who argue that darkness can be read as a metaphor for both death and old age,¹⁰³ but at least in 11:8 it seems more clear that Qohelet is focused on the death is darkness metaphor.¹⁰⁴

3.1.3 Conclusions on Darkness Metaphors and Death in the OT

These examples show three key aspects of dark metaphors for death in the OT: First, these verses show the flexibility of DARKNESS as a source domain for metaphors with entailments such as DEATH, PRISON, and IMPERCEPTIBILITY within the OT—the latter two entailments being the focus of the next two chapters of this dissertation. Second, these verses show how Israel's use of darkness to describe the underworld reflects many of the same uses of darkness to describe the Babylonian, Ugaritic, Egyptian, and pagan Persian underworlds as described in the previous chapter. Third, these verses show the close conceptual links between darkness, death, prison, and the sea that exist in ancient Hebrew thought. These connections will prove to be particularly important for the next chapter of this dissertation. The most important connection for this chapter is with chapter 5 where I will discuss darkness as a metaphor for the unknown. Cornelius comes to a similar

¹⁰¹ Horne, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*, 497.

¹⁰² Fox, *Ecclesiastes*, 75; Cf. Fox, *Qoheleth and His Contradictions*, 279.

¹⁰³ Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 182; Longman, *The Book of Ecclesiastes*, 191.

¹⁰⁴ Fox, *Ecclesiastes*, 75.

conclusion as mine after his survey of dark language used to describe the land of the dead:

The previous examples help us to see that the concept of the underworld in the ancient world, and the OT specifically, meant many things. Most important to underworld conceptions was not the image of hell or judgment, but the notion of a reality that encompassed all that could not be known, and all that could not be seen or experienced. . . This darkness was so pervasive that knowledge, memory, and return to normalcy were all thwarted. The only remedy to this otherwise permanent condition was the authoritative power of יהוה over darkness, a power that could be hopeful or threatening . . .¹⁰⁵

Perhaps rather surprisingly, these relatively few key verses are the only such examples of darkness being used to describe death and the afterlife in the OT and with only a few examples of darkness being used as a metonymy for death. Of the relatively few details of Sheol that are given in the OT, darkness is by far the most consistent element in its description¹⁰⁶ This could be due to the OT having a somewhat underdeveloped eschatology.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps the answer lies in both realities as the former feeds the latter; a lack of literary interest in the land of the dead wouldn't necessitate the formation of a variety of metaphors with which to understand it. There does seem to be sufficient evidence for the LIFE IS LIGHT, DEATH IS DARKNESS metaphor pairing in ancient Hebrew thought and there are good reasons as to why a person's life-force would be given human scale via the sorts of oil lamps that were discussed in the previous chapter

¹⁰⁵ Cornelius, "The Theological Significance," 121.

¹⁰⁶ Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, 76.

¹⁰⁷ See Routledge, "Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament." Routledge notes that this typical view of the OT being ambivalent towards eschatology has persisted up until recent years until scholars like Jon Levenson called this assumption into question. While Routledge and Levenson raise some good points, they perhaps overstate themselves by finding more eschatology than what is readily apparent in the text.

and in great length by Strong.¹⁰⁸ As the inverse of this metaphor, understanding death as the snuffing out of one's life lamp makes perfect sense, but darkness also carries other entailments that are appropriate for death such as its imperceptibility.

3.2 Calamity and/or Evil is Darkness

In the introduction to this dissertation I mentioned how the EVIL IS DARKNESS metaphor is so common in English today: “it was a dark time in my life,” “she was thinking dark thoughts,” “dark deeds are afoot,” etc. In all of these examples, it is abundantly clear to Anglophones that the darkness of these phrases is an indication of something sinister or unpleasant—even immoral. These cognitive connections between darkness and evil go without saying but it is not necessarily the case that these same ICMs exist within ancient Hebrew thought. It will be shown in this subsection that such metaphorical uses of darkness as a shorthand for moral evil are not found in the OT and that uses of darkness as a shorthand for general calamity are not as prevalent as is often assumed. Passages that connect darkness and evil/calamity overwhelmingly use darkness as a metonymy for more specific threats.

3.2.1 Evil Deeds are Dark

Isaiah 5:20 has an interesting little oracle of woe against the self-proclaimed wise men of his day. Here evil is to good as darkness is to light as bitter is to sweet. It is clear that the

¹⁰⁸ Strong, “Illuminating the Path of Darkness.”

speaker is not conflating evil/misfortune and darkness here as some have suggested.¹⁰⁹ It would be difficult to suggest that bitterness is somehow evil and such an interpretation would be a gross misunderstanding of Hebrew parallelism. Instead this triptych of antithetic parallelisms highlights the absurdity of Isaiah's post-truth, post-morality opponents with the light and dark chiaroscuro being just one of these stark merisms. This verse is designed to expose these grifters for their distortion of that which should be readily perceptible; sweet apples to bitter dandelion greens, bright sunlight to the dark of night, and obvious moral distinctions between good and evil or conflating blessing and misfortune. Isaiah uses three contrastive pairings that each rely on a different sense: sight, taste, and ethics/fortunes. Oozing prophetic irony, Isaiah condemns the lack of *perceptive* abilities of those who are wise in their own eyes.¹¹⁰ This interpretation aligns with the connections that Childs draws between this verse and several proverbs about the twisting of speech (17:30) and speech devoid of substance (26:24ff.; 28:24).¹¹¹ As Childs concludes about both Isa 5:20 and these passages from Proverbs, "Such evil dissemblance has severed all connections between words and reality. Yet evil is not good; darkness is not light."¹¹² This example is quite straightforward but is an important first step in interpreting the next two passages.

Still within Isaiah, 45:7 presents an intriguing verse that also contrasts light and darkness but this time in parallel with well-being (שָׁלוֹם) and calamity (רָעָה) all within the

¹⁰⁹ Lemmelijn, "Light and Darkness," 565; Williamson, *Isaiah 1–27*.

¹¹⁰ Hayes, "'A Spirit of Deep Sleep,'" 43.

¹¹¹ Childs, *Isaiah*, 47–48. See also, Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 82.

¹¹² Childs, *Isaiah*, 47–48.

context of God's creative powers. This bold statement from the writer of Isa 45 has caught the eye of a number of scholars such as Michael Deroche, Kang-Ho Kil, and Tina Dykesteen Nilsen who have discussed its possible contradictions with Gen 1:2 as Isaiah seems to suggest that darkness is a pre-creative element as well as the troubling theological and ethical questions raised by this verse.¹¹³ The question of whether or not darkness was a pre-creative element and what that says about God and darkness is an issue that will be addressed in chapter 6 of this dissertation but in summary I conclude that God does seem to coexist with darkness prior to his creation/ordering of the cosmos and this does not prove to be an issue for the writer of Genesis. For now it is best to stay on topic with Isa 45:7 and how it uses and understands darkness.

One common take on this verse is that it is a subversion of Persian dualism that shows that the prophet's God is not confined by good/evil, light/darkness but instead sets their boundaries Himself.¹¹⁴ Despite the popularity of this interpretation, as was discussed in the previous chapter, it is debatable to what degree the ancient Jewish audience, a potential foreign audience, and even Cyrus for that matter understood or even cared about Zoroastrian cosmogonic dualism.¹¹⁵ There is certainly a polemical tone in this passage but the polemic is not directed against the particulars of Zoroastrian belief so much as it is

¹¹³ Deroche, "Isaiah XLV 7 and the Creation of Chaos?"; Kil, "The Light and Darkness Motif in the Book of Isaiah"; Nilsen, "The Creation of Darkness and Evil"; See also van Wolde, "Separation and Creation in Genesis 1 and Psalm 104," 621.

¹¹⁴ Hanson, *Isaiah 40–66*, 102–03; Watts, *Isaiah 34–66*, 157; Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 162; Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 119–201.

¹¹⁵ Nilsen, "The Creation of Darkness and Evil," 23–25; Paul, *Isaiah 40–66*; Smith, *Isaiah 34–66*, 586.

directed against those who believed that Yahweh had been conquered by the Babylonian gods.

Whether relying on connections with Zoroastrian cosmogonic dualism or presumptions about the Hebrew understanding of darkness, some commentators have erroneously assumed that darkness and evil are being equated here. While Westermann correctly notes that this verse focuses on God's sovereignty over everything, he incorrectly assumes that darkness is a metaphor for evil here.¹¹⁶ Edward Young also suggests that evil and darkness are being equated in this passage but Keil and Delitzsch criticize this view as they believe that for Isaiah light and darkness are not "tautological metaphors for evil and good."¹¹⁷ Tucker goes into great detail on the theological (non)issue of this verse:

Does the verse mean to describe the origins of evil as being lodged in God (I make weal and create woe)? Given the context of the discussion, the text would not appear to be working at that level of theological abstraction. We are talking about the commissioning of an unwitting Cyrus, as military adjutant appropriate for the task at hand. . . . How can God dispatch the terrible, violent Chaldeans as any sort of agent or judgment? The answer to that question is not won through theological discussion or sublime reflections on the origins of evil as an independent force either in Habakkuk or here.¹¹⁸

Isaiah is simply using the historical creed that God had once separated light and darkness—thus creating order from chaos—to prove that his God is as sovereign over woe and weal as he is over the passing light and dark of day and night.¹¹⁹ The merism of darkness

¹¹⁶ Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 162.

¹¹⁷ Keil and Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 115; Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 199–200.

¹¹⁸ Tucker, *Isaiah*, 395.

¹¹⁹ Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 323; Paul, *Isaiah 40–66*; Smith, *Isaiah 34–66*, 568; Watts, *Isaiah 34–66*, 157.

and light shows God's sovereignty over the full range of the most fundamental forces of the cosmos to the same degree to which he oversees the fortunes of his people.

There is still another possible interpretation that more narrowly defines how Isaiah is using light and darkness here. As we will discuss in greater length in chapter 4 of this dissertation, Isaiah often uses darkness as a metonymy for imprisonment/exile and light as a metaphor for salvation. Such metaphorical uses for light and darkness would certainly work in this verse.¹²⁰ As Isaiah will state in 45:19 (more on this in the next chapter), Yahweh had spoken plainly as to what their fates would be. Here in 45:7 Isaiah is merely reinforcing that God has the will and power to make good on his threats. Rather than being a polemic against Persian Zoroastrian as Nilsen puts it,

Isa 45:6c–7 . . . is directed to those who believed that the exile showed the superiority of the Babylonian gods over Yhwh. Second Isaiah claims the contrary: Yhwh had declared the exile beforehand, and, being a true god, acts according to the declarations. The exile is a result solely of Yhwh's actions. However, just as Yhwh has the power to create the darkness and the evil of exile, so Yhwh has the power to bring the light and peace of its end.¹²¹

Goldingay comes to a similar conclusion that “light and dark . . . suggest restoration/fulfilment as opposed to depopulation/destruction” and thus the SALVATION IS LIGHT, EXILE IS DARKNESS metaphor pairing is meant to show God's sovereignty over both the Babylonian captivity and the liberation via Cyrus' decree.¹²² While the prevalence of this metaphor pairing has not yet been established in this dissertation, it will be made abundantly clear in the following chapter.

¹²⁰ Nilsen, “The Creation of Darkness and Evil,” 21.

¹²¹ Nilsen, “The Creation of Darkness and Evil,” 21.

¹²² Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40–55*, 270.

Rather than decide on a conclusive choice between darkness and light as a mere merism or the two representing salvation and exile (respectively), it is best to leave both interpretive options open. Both options fit within Second Isaiah's theological aims and while the question of God's sovereignty was an important one in the exilic books, Isaiah does frequently use the SALVATION IS LIGHT, EXILE IS DARKNESS metaphor pairing. Even from Second Isaiah's use of שלום and calamity רע—both words with wide semantic ranges—there is room left for some interpretive flexibility.

Turning now to Job, a potential example of darkness being used metaphorically for evil is in Job 30:26. On first glance this verse would appear to be using the metaphor EVIL IS DARKNESS or DEATH IS DARKNESS as Wilson argues,¹²³ but upon closer reflection this proves to not be the case. While Habel does make a debatable connection between darkness and death in his commentary, he is careful to note that good and evil are less of a moral issue and instead a contrast between “good and bad fortune (as in 2:10) which result from righteous and wicked lives respectively.”¹²⁴ Verse 26 opens with כי which would normally be translated as “for” but most English translations prefer a contrastive “but”—perhaps following the Old Greek's use of δέ which is often translated as such. Either way the conceptual frame of WAITING FOR/EXPECTING HELP would be carried forward from the previous two verses. Other aspects of this frame are added and subtracted between these three verses, but all contain this picture of someone waiting for aid. That is what makes Job's statement all the more jarring; it subverts the expectation

¹²³ L. Wilson, *Job*, 127.

¹²⁴ Habel, *The Book of Job*, 422.

that if you call for help while under a pile of rubble, or are struggling during a bad day that you will indeed be lifted up. In the second line of v. 26—the last to follow this frame—the WAITING frame is modified to waiting for sunrise. The shock is not that Job’s days are nebulously dark, but that Job had waited for help like one waits for sunrise, only to have his fundamental understanding of the processes of the universe to be challenged—like waking up to utter darkness long after when the sun was to rise. This all fits in well with the broader context of chapters 29–31 in which Job contrasts his old life with his current circumstances; he had expected that his faithfulness to God and his righteous treatment of others would garner him at least some blessing, but instead his life has become bitter which has caused him to refuse his friends’ belief that suffering is a punishment for sin.¹²⁵ To circle back to the main focus of this dissertation, Job is indeed using light and darkness as metaphors for good and bad fortune (respectively) but he is doing so within the broader context of analogies of expectation: expecting help in trouble (v. 24), expecting reciprocal empathy (v. 25), and expecting daylight but instead seeing darkness. Therefore, Job 30:26 is not a metaphor for DARKNESS IS EVIL. Rather, it is a metaphor about appropriate expectations being inexplicably dashed.

3.2.2 Calamity is a Dark Place

The above discussion has cast serious doubts on the presence of darkness as a metaphor for morally evil actions in the OT. Moving from deeds to places where evil deeds are done and evil persons dwell, much of the same can be said. It is fairly common in English

¹²⁵ Fokkelman, *The Book of Job in Form*, 278; Kravitz and Olitzky, *The Book of Job*, 179.

to describe a frightening or dangerous place in terms of darkness or shadow: “Auschwitz stands as a dark memorial,” “a dark alleyway,” “don’t drive through the dark parts of town,” etc. Beyond the often racially-motivated connotations of phrases like the latter, the darkness and shadows evoked are easily discernible metaphors. Within the Old Testament there are a handful of examples of places being described as dark but they consistently evoke the darkness frame to highlight the hiddenness of a person, place, or object. As such, a number of verses that some have interpreted using the common English understanding of “dark” places will instead be dealt with in §5.1.2.

3.2.3 The Wilderness is Darkness

While the OT does not share the same entailments of dark places as modern English cultures, there is a small subset of three verses that use darkness to describe a very specific kind of place: the מִדְבָּר—the wilderness or desert. While the metaphor the WILDERNESS IS DARKNESS makes little sense to modern Anglophones, there is some evidence that ancient Near Eastern people groups connected the desert and darkness together. For instance, in the Book of the Dead 175 (1.18), Osiris says “O, Atum, what does it mean that I go to the desert, the Land of Silence, which has no water, has no air, and which is greatly deep, dark, and lacking?”¹²⁶

Two of the four examples of this metaphor are found in Jer 2. In v. 6 the prophet questions what led his forefathers to reject God in favour of worthless things (הֶבֶל) and describes the wilderness they were led through as being one of deserts, pits, drought, and

¹²⁶ Hallo and Younger, eds., *The Context of Scripture*, 1:28.

darkness (צִלְמוֹת). The first three descriptors are quite self-explanatory but the final descriptor is rather interesting. The Greek translation of Jeremiah only serves to further complicate interpretations of this verse as it reads צִלְמוֹת as וְגִלְמוֹדָה (καὶ ἀκάραπῳ)—barren. There is a possibility that there was a misreading of gimel to *tsade* and dalet to *taw*. It is perhaps safest to conclude that this was a choice made by the interpreters rather than a variant in or misreading of their *Vorlage*. This is the conclusion Holladay comes to as he prefers the MT's reading due to the "assonance offered by צִלְמוֹת and its association with its synonyms in similar contexts."¹²⁷ This puts us in the same tricky position as the Greek translators of figuring out why the wilderness is described as dark—put another way, what entailments did the writer have in mind when he included darkness in his list of descriptors of the wilderness?

Keel comes to an interesting conclusion on the connection between darkness and deserts in the OT. He briefly notes

Roads are very poorly marked, if at all. Lack of roads is a characteristic common to the desert (Ps 107:4, 7; cf. 142:6), the sea (Ps 77:19), and the darkness (Job 12:24–23). Perhaps for that reason, Jeremiah describes the desert not only as a land of pits and drought, where no man dwells, but also as a land of darkness (Gen 2:6, 31). He may, however, have in mind the black basalt deserts of Transjordan.¹²⁸

While Keel's suggestion of the black Transjordanian deserts is interesting, there isn't enough in the immediate context to suggest as such. Similarly, Keel's connection between the roadlessness of Sheol and the roadlessness of the desert is difficult to maintain.

Holladay suggests that the connection between darkness and wilderness lies in their

¹²⁷ Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 45.

¹²⁸ Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 76.

shared status as “realms at the edge of God's reach,” citing Ps 107:4–5, 10 as evidence for his hypothesis.¹²⁹ Both Jer 2 and Ps 107 employ some of the same lexemes but the Psalmist does not seem to consider the wilderness to be on any such boundary of God's reach as the Psalmist notes God's effortless help while the people wandered the trackless wastes. Not only this, but Jeremiah's view of the people's time in the wilderness is certainly positive—at least in terms of their covenant faithfulness.¹³⁰

The night does not last any longer in the desert than elsewhere and if anything the lack of trees and buildings for shade would mean sunnier days and starrier nights. Due to the slipperiness of צלמות (see §3.1.3) there are a few possible ways of understanding this final descriptor: first, the deep darkness could be caused by the lack of civilization in the desert (וְלֹא־יֵשֵׁב אָדָם שָׁם) that would provide at least some sources of artificial light at night; second, the prophet could be describing the wilderness as being a place that is close to (the shadow of) death due to its plethora of pits and lack of water sources. A third option is that the WILDERNESS IS DARKNESS is drawing upon the LIFE IS LIGHT, DEATH IS DARKNESS metaphor pairing. Considering the strong contrast between this verse and the way v. 7 describes the “fertile” land of promise, the darkness of the wilderness could be a metaphorical shorthand for how inhospitable to life it is.¹³¹ If צלמות is indeed a portmanteau of shadow and death, this interpretation would be the most apparent, but even without explicit death connotations, this interpretation fits in with what has already been discussed in this chapter. This is perhaps the motivation behind the Greek

¹²⁹ Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 87.

¹³⁰ McKane, *Jeremiah*.

¹³¹ Cornelius, “The Theological Significance,” 117.

translator's choice to substitute צִלְמוֹת for ἀνάγκη to make this metaphor more explicit. While one example does not prove a broadly-accepted ICM, there are a few other examples of this connection between metaphors in the OT.

Much of the same can be said of Ps 44:19 even though מדבר is not specifically used. The Psalmist speaks of how his community has been crushed in the place of either תַּנִּינִים, jackals (i.e. the wilderness), or תַּנִּין, the mythical beast Tannin, and then covered by צִלְמוֹת. Like the previous example, interpretation of this verse is effected by how צִלְמוֹת is translated but problems are further compounded by the confusion surrounding תַּנִּינִים versus תַּנִּין. To start, “jackals” seems to be the more likely word to be used here rather than “Tannin” given the context. Watson argues that the emendation to תַּנִּין is “insupportable” unless Gunkel’s rather dubious rendering of במקום as “instead of, as” is accepted—which very few scholars accept.¹³² Denise Dombkowski Hopkins recognizes that the metaphor ISRAEL IS A FLOCK OF SHEEP is key to this Psalm.¹³³ Interpreting this verse in light of this metaphor, a place of jackals would certainly be a threatening place while the insertion of a mythical sea creature would make for a confusing jumble of imagery.¹³⁴ If the deadliness of the jackals is what is being highlighted in this blend, the צִלְמוֹת of this verse would seem to be a metaphor for death. It is also important to note the movement of reflecting on God’s past works with the Israelites in vv. 1–8 to their current predicaments

¹³² Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 191–92.

¹³³ Hopkins, *Psalms, Books 2–3*, 22.

¹³⁴ DeClaisé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 330. prefer the mythical sea creature but his justification is a bit flimsy and requires some significant liberties with דָּכָה and כִּסָּה: “the singers complain to God that they are being crushed in the sea (suffocated and drowned) and in the second line that they are being covered over (suffocated) with a shadow of death.”

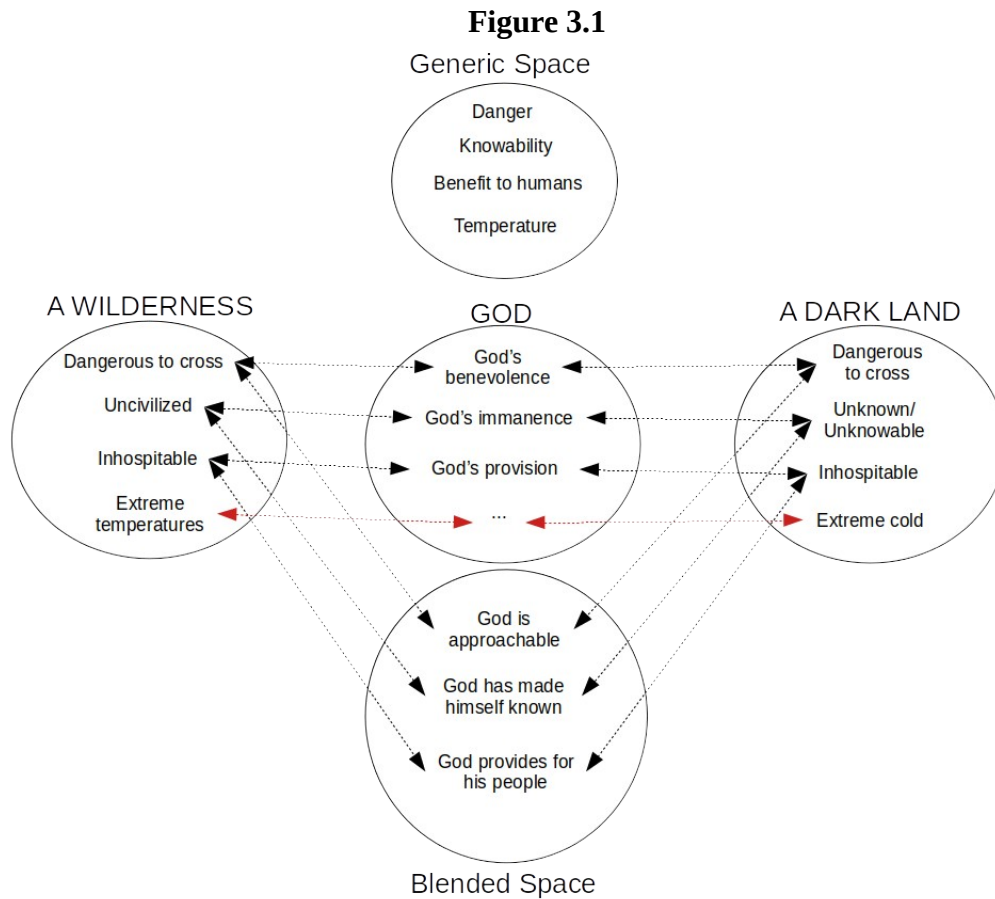
in vv. 9–16 which are a reversal of their history.¹³⁵ As the Psalmist is interpreting the experiences of his community in light of their history, it would make sense that he would make allusions to the wilderness wandering years. Goldingay agrees with this interpretation as he understands the jackals' place as "a total ruin, a place of desolation no longer fit for human habitation and inhabited only by such wild creatures (cf. Isa. 34:13)."¹³⁶ Longman explicitly makes the above proposed connection between the WILDERNESS IS DARKNESS and LIGHT IS LIFE/DEATH IS DARKNESS metaphors as he sums up the Psalmist's petition as such: "They do not deserve to have the land turned into a wasteland (a haunt for jackals) or be deprived of the light of life (deep darkness)."¹³⁷

Jeremiah 2 again uses darkness (אפל in this case) to describe the wilderness in v. 31. The prophet's interrogation against his people and defence of God's goodness continues from the previous verses as Jeremiah now poses the rhetorical question asking when had God ever been like a wilderness or a dark land to his people. Verse 31 has its own bit of textual confusion but one that is equally easy to understand. Here מדבר is in parallel with ארץ מאפליה. The latter phrase is a *hapax legomenon* but it is fairly clear that מאפליה is related to the root אפל and thus is another word for darkness. The prophet brings the two frames of DARKNESS and THE WILDERNESS into his metaphorical blend, each to highlight different entailments. This is best explained through an illustration:

¹³⁵ Hopkins, *Psalms, Books 2–3*, 22.

¹³⁶ Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:68.

¹³⁷ Longman, *Psalms*, 200.



I have included the final entailments of temperature here simply to illustrate that metaphors highlight specific entailments from frames in the blend, but not all entailments. The three sets of entailments that seem most obvious in this blend all contrast strongly with the kind of God that Jeremiah has been advocating in his messages. Rather than create analogies for who God is, he creates disanalogies for who God is not. This particular example underscores the incredible flexibility and brevity of metaphors as Jeremiah is able to communicate a great deal about who God is (not) through this metaphor. Jones sums up these disanalogies as such:

The LORD begins his retort with a somewhat curious metaphor, which nevertheless makes sense. Have I been a wilderness to Israel or a land of thick darkness? The wilderness is the land which yields nothing, it lies under a curse and there is no blessing in it. On the contrary the Lord has been the lavish bestower of nature's goods. The land of thick darkness is the land in which men grope about, distressed and wretched (v. 6), at worst the land of death. In contrast the Lord is a light and life to his people (cf. Isa. 8.22–9.2).¹³⁸

THE WILDERNESS IS DARKNESS may not be the most common metaphor, but this use of darkness does give some potential insights into how the ancient Hebrews understood civilization and the desert. Breytenbach also notices this association between darkness and drought/wilderness but he argues that it is the reverse of a VEGETATION IS LIGHT metaphor (in my words) rather than a CIVILIZATION IS LIGHT metaphor.¹³⁹ Although far too brief and focused solely on Jeremiah, it does provide some more support for the proposed metaphor WILDERNESS IS DARKNESS while also raising some interesting questions about the potential of a VEGETATION IS LIGHT metaphor. One final possibility is that the WILDERNESS IS DARKNESS metaphor could be related to the LIFE IS LIGHT metaphor that was previously discussed. If life is like light, then the desert, a place practically devoid of and indeed hostile to life, would be a place that is metaphorically dark.

3.2.4 Days of Darkness

Using darkness adjectivally to refer to a span of time is fairly commonplace in English: “these are dark times for print media”, “2004 was a dark year in my life”, “It has been a

¹³⁸ Jones, *Jeremiah*, 94.

¹³⁹ Breytenbach, “The Connection Between.”

dark half a century for Leafs fans”, etc. Conversely, such metaphorical uses of darkness to describe a period of or in time are remarkably infrequent in the OT. This could also be due—at least in part—to differing ICMs for darkness and calamity.

The darkest day in the OT is certainly the Day of the Lord as described by prophets like Joel and Amos. A cursory glance of the prophets’ use of darkness in their Day oracles shows that it is not always perfectly clear if the darkness being described is more literal than it is metaphorical—is the darkening a metonymy for clouds, eclipses, and other (super)natural phenomena; is this darkness a metaphor for coming experiences of calamity; mourning, confusion, imprisonment, etc; or is the darkness perhaps representative of a combination of these threats? While the prophets differ in their details of the coming day, many do use darkness as one of their descriptions.

Amos 5 has a number of references to darkness; the first is in v. 8 which focuses on God’s control of the natural cycles of day and night. More noteworthy for this study are vv. 18 and 20. Verses 18–20 are part of a single conceptual unit that berates those foolhardy and hypocritical enough to wish for the Day as this day is twice described as “darkness, and not light.” This day is certainly one not to be desired; Murphy’s law is in full swing for the unfortunate soul who cannot catch a break from surprise attacks from various deadly animals. This all fits in with Amos’ regular subversion of the natural world throughout his book¹⁴⁰ as well as his prior establishment of God’s sovereignty over the cosmos.

¹⁴⁰ Gillingham, ““Who Makes the Morning Darkness.””

Amos' description of the Day of the Lord is certainly an unpleasant one but the question remains concerning how Amos is using darkness here. Gillingham argues quite the opposite as she sees the darkness as literal darkness—that the geopolitical disasters described in Amos will also be accompanied by cosmic upheaval.¹⁴¹ This literal reading would fit better with Amos' oracle in 8:9 and while God's authority over the created order is certainly in focus in the first half of chapter 5, his authority there is over the normal course of nature. Such cosmological and apocalyptic language fits in well enough with the run-ins with dangerous animals that further reinforce God's power over the natural world.

Though lions and snakes generally shroud themselves from their prey under the cover of darkness, bears are not ambush predators and are not strictly nocturnal, so any mappings of predation from the cover of darkness, if they intentionally exist, are not abundantly clear. Although intentional predation does not seem to be in frame here, David Hubbard argues that Amos isn't contrasting light and darkness in terms of good and evil but in terms of clarity/safety and obscurity/danger as

Darkness is the state where clear sight is impossible and, therefore, where danger lurks, where enemies can hide, where pitfalls beckon; it symbolizes unexpected danger, disaster unforeseen (Job. 18:6, 18; La. 3:2). Light, in contrast, depicts clarity of vision, ability to catch the full picture, see the way fully; it connotes safety, security, freedom from fear (cf. Ps. 27:1; Is. 9:2).¹⁴²

If Hubbard's interpretation of Amos 5:18–20 is accepted, this verse would also better fit in discussions of HIDDENNESS IS DARKNESS in chapter 5 of this dissertation as it

¹⁴¹ Gillingham, “Who Makes the Morning Darkness,” 169–70.

¹⁴² Hubbard, *Joel and Amos*, 54.

does not seem to be using darkness as a literary shorthand for disaster but for hiddenness. As much as Hubbard's interpretation would of course be a boon to my argument for that chapter, I will admit that it is not as solidly conclusive as he suggests.

Niehaus takes a different route and connects this verse to its inverse in Isa 9:2 arguing that Amos subverts the people's confidence that they would be exempt from divine wrath.¹⁴³ Rephrased into the language of CMT, Niehaus is essentially arguing that Amos and Isaiah are both using the SALVATION IS LIGHT, IMPRISONMENT IS DARKNESS metaphor pairing but Amos is doing so subversively. I am more inclined to agree with Niehaus than Hubbard but the more significant takeaway from Niehaus' argument is that our understanding of metaphorical uses of light is key to understanding how Amos is using darkness here. Amos is subverting the people's confidence in the light so we must first understand what he meant by light.

As was discussed above the metaphor pairing LIFE IS LIGHT, DEATH IS DARKNESS is certainly apparent in the OT, and the various animal encounters that the proverbial man stumbles upon are most certainly deadly so it is likely that DEATH IS DARKNESS is part of the blend. It is also important to note the movements of the fleeing man from the wilderness to the safety of his home. The lethality of the wilderness—which is itself at times described as being dark in the OT—follows the man wherever he goes. As discussed above, the wilderness is dark because it is inhospitable and because its threats come from all directions. Likewise, the Day of the Lord is dark because of its dark,

¹⁴³ Niehaus, "Amos," 428.

deadly threats that hide in the cover of darkness. The threats are dark in both their lethality and their unavoidability.¹⁴⁴

There is a second set of entailments that Amos could also be highlighting here. Carroll connects the darkness and “gloom” of this verse with the same words used to describe the ninth plague which he contrasts with the of God’s presence and salvation.¹⁴⁵ This interpretation reinforces the above interpretation of darkness and light as metaphors for death/captivity and life/salvation (respectively). But this is not the only entailment that Carroll recognizes in these verses; he also notes the theophanic nature of the language used here to describe the Day of the Lord.¹⁴⁶ While Carroll only highlights the connections between light and Yahweh’s theophanies, there are also important connections between darkness and his presence. These connections are not as apparent in Amos 5:18–20, they are abundantly clear in Zeph 1:15 as will be shown below.

Zephaniah 1:15 shares the same wording as Amos 5:18–20 (as well as Joel 2:2) in the last line of his description of the Day of the Lord, but he brings his own peculiarities as well. In Joel 2:2 the darkness was a metonymy for the shadows cast by the unnatural size of the oncoming army and here too darkness is in close proximity to descriptions of the coming conquest. House and Motyer understand the darkness of Zeph 1:15 to be a reference to pre-creative chaos.¹⁴⁷ House and Motyer’s interpretations rely on the assertion that the most significant inner-biblical connection with the darkness of Zeph 1:15 is with Gen 1:2 but they do not provide sufficient proof for this connection. Baker

¹⁴⁴ Niehaus, “Amos,” 428.

¹⁴⁵ Carroll, *The Book of Amos*, 282.

¹⁴⁶ Carroll, *The Book of Amos*, 280.

¹⁴⁷ House, *Zephaniah*, 75; Motyer, *The Minor Prophets*, 923.

creates a much more convincing argument by connecting the six uses of the word day in vv. 15 and 16 with the six “good” days of creation.¹⁴⁸ Baker’s argument is certainly brilliant and persuasive but faces a few significant issues: First, this interpretation only works if the two uses of יום in v. 14 are ignored. Second, there are no other apparent allusions to creation in vv. 15 and 16 which are much more focused on the imagery of the destruction of cities. The most significant blow to this interpretation is provided in the alternative reading proposed by several other scholars. Gafney, Robertson, Sweeney connects the darkness and cloud of the last line to the cloudy darkness of the various OT theophanies that include clouds and darkness (Exod 19:16, 20:18; Deut 4:11, 5:22; 1 Kgs 8:12/2 Chron 6:1; Nah 1:3; Ps 97:2).¹⁴⁹ Sweeney further connects the darkness of these verses to the Sinai and Jerusalem theophanies via the shared connection of the shophar’s blast (Ex 19:19, 20:18; 1 Chron 15:28).¹⁵⁰ Cornelius argues that the darkness of the Day of the lord oracles was theophanic in nature and was representative of the mysteriousness of both Yahweh’s theophanies and his coming Day.¹⁵¹ Zephaniah’s description includes an expanded vocabulary of darkness over Joel, Amos, and Ezekiel that more closely connects his description of the Day with the Sinai and Temple theophanies. The use of dark metaphors in the Sinai and Temple theophanies will receive dedicated attention in chapter 6 of this dissertation so for now the implications of this interpretation will have to wait until then.

¹⁴⁸ Baker, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 98.

¹⁴⁹ Gafney, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 158; Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 223; Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 100.

¹⁵⁰ Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 100.

¹⁵¹ Cornelius, “The Theological Significance,” 127.

The third prophet to use this same language to describe the Day of the Lord is Joel in 2:2. Hubbard, among a number of other scholars, rightly suggests that we understand the dark and stormy wording of vv. 1–2 as “terms that signify the divine presence in the midst of his people, obscuring all light so that their focus of attention will be on him.”¹⁵² Dillard’s interpretation blends my conclusions about Amos 5:8 as an inversion of the hopes for light of salvation with Hubbard’s theophanic interpretation: while the people hoped for Yahweh’s light of salvation, they are instead met with the darkness of his wrathful presence.¹⁵³

Much of what can be said of the theophanic wording of Joel 2:2 has already been said above in my discussion of Zeph 1:15 and Amos 5:18–20. While this theophanic language is certainly evident, Joel has repurposed this language and imagery to fit the context of the swarm/army imagery he is employing. One question related to the imagery of vv. 2:1–11 that is quite pertinent to the current discussion is how these verses relate to 1:1–14. Barker outlines three general ways commentators see the relation between Joel 1 and 2:¹⁵⁴ those who argue the locusts of chapter 1 are a metaphor for the army of chapter 2,¹⁵⁵ those who argue the swarm and future apocalyptic army are separate entities,¹⁵⁶ and those who argue chapter 2 is just as much about a locust swarm as chapter 1.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² Achtemeier, *Joel*, 317; See also, Barker, *From the Depths of Despair to the Promise of Presence*, 109; Hubbard, *Joel and Amos*, 54.

¹⁵³ Dillard, “Joel,” 271; Cf. Keil and Delitzsch, *Minor Prophets*, 127.

¹⁵⁴ Barker, *From the Depths of Despair to the Promise of Presence*, 112–16.

¹⁵⁵ Achtemeier, *Joel*, 316; Ogden and Deutsch, *Joel & Malachi*, 27; e.g., Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 233.

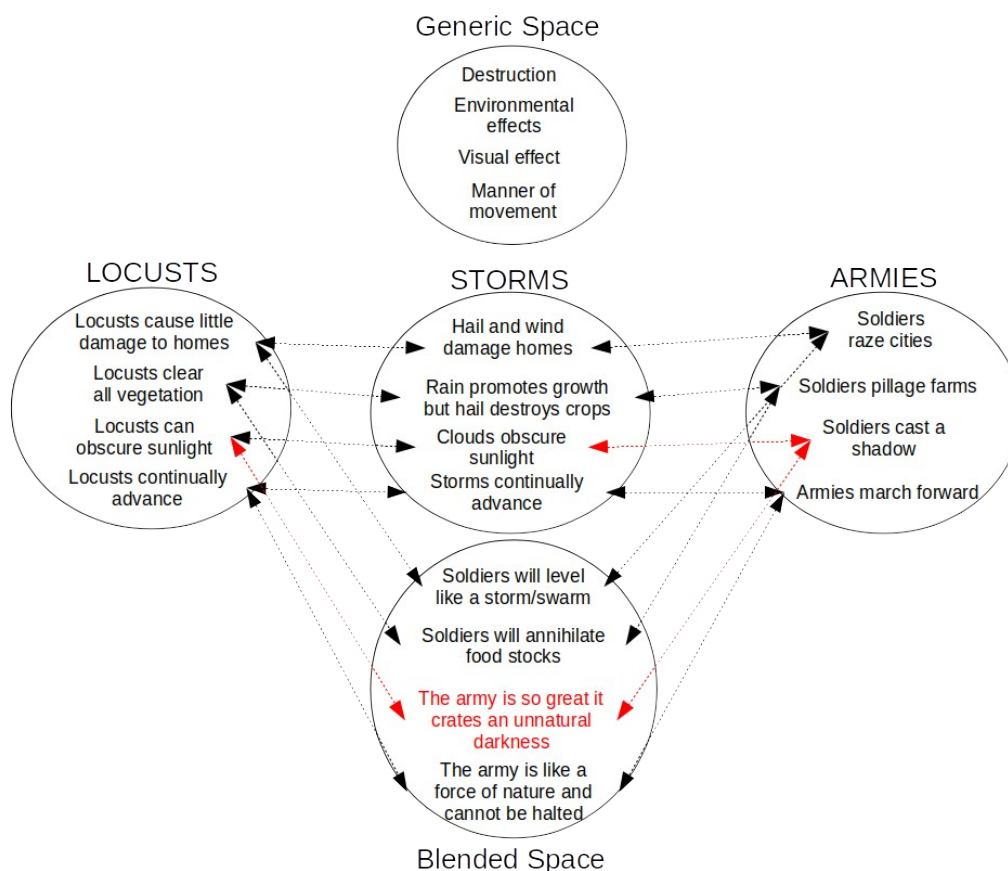
¹⁵⁶ Crenshaw, *Joel*, 118–25; Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, 162–64; Eg. Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 41–42.

¹⁵⁷ Barker, *From the Depths of Despair to the Promise of Presence*, 116; Barton, *Joel and Obadiah*, 70–73; Hubbard, *Joel and Amos*, 59; Eg. Simkins, *Yahweh’s Activity in History and Nature in the Book of Joel*, 163–69.

Barker et al. offer highly persuasive arguments for their interpretation: the swarm/army of 2:1–11 functions in a realistic—even if hyperbolic—manner as locust swarms do.¹⁵⁸ However, I would go one step further and argue that Joel creates a complex blend that continues the previous analogy of locusts and armies while adding a new frame of storms. Adding this new frame to the blend further enhances the novelty of the analogy while highlighting and hiding different entailments than what the previous dual input blend was capable of doing in chapter 1. This is best described through visualization:

¹⁵⁸ Barker, *From the Depths of Despair to the Promise of Presence*, 116; Barton, *Joel and Obadiah*, 70–73.

Figure 3.2



In the above visualization, there are a number of shared entailments between locusts, armies, and storms with the former two being the focus of Joel 1 where a number of other conceptual links are highlighted. What makes this blend so novel is how it highlights a very specific aspect of the blend through the disanalogy between the ability of soldiers to cast a small shadow and nature's ability to darken the land through locusts or storm clouds that is coloured red in Figure 3.1. This signifies something special about this army: It is unnaturally large and advances with the power of a natural disaster, all while disrupting the natural order of night and day.¹⁵⁹ Similar scenes of sky-darkening

¹⁵⁹ Bewer, *Obadiah and Joel*.

swarms have been seen across Africa more recently starting in late 2019.¹⁶⁰ Likewise, Ezekiel (38:9) describes Gog as a storm that covers the land like a cloud. In these examples, people are beset by dark times, but these times are dark because the light is obscured by large, imposing threats.

The question remains as to which elements Joel is blending here: is he creating a more basic blend of storms being calamitous with darkness being its portent? Or is he creating a more elaborate blend between locusts, armies, and storms? As the chapter progresses the prophet moves from metaphor to metaphor, shifting input spaces as he goes from wildfires (v. 3) to a cavalry force (vv. 4–8) to thieves (v. 9), and finally to natural disasters (v. 10). What remains clearly consistent throughout the first ten verses is that these metaphors can just as easily describing an oncoming army as they can (hyperbolically)¹⁶¹ describe a locust swarm.¹⁶² Although the description of the Day of the Lord as being dark happens before this army is explicitly brought into frame (at least in this chapter), “darkness” does not seem to be describing the day as a shorthand for DARKNESS IS CALAMITY nor is it a disjointed reference to God’s theophanies, but instead the day is dark because the invading army makes it so with the imposing physical presence of its overwhelming numbers.

Amos and Joel pick up dark language again in Joel 2:31 and Amos 8:9. In both instances the prophets warn of a day when Yahweh will cause the sun and earth to go dark from most likely from an eclipse. Eclipses in the ancient Near East were seen as

¹⁶⁰ Machemer, “Billions of Locusts Are Swarming East Africa.”

¹⁶¹ Barker, *From the Depths of Despair to the Promise of Presence*, 116; Barton, *Joel and Obadiah*, 70–73.

¹⁶² Simkins, *Yahweh’s Activity in History and Nature in the Book of Joel*, 163–65.

either punishment from the gods or an attempt by nefarious gods or demons to disrupt the order of the cosmos.¹⁶³ The issue is not that the sun and earth go dark as if darkness was itself a threat. The threat is what this darkness represents: a subversion of the natural order of the cosmos. Stuart, in his commentary on Amos 8:9, suggests that this oracle (among others) of daytime darkness is based on, both lexically and theologically, the curse of Deut 28:29 that speaks not just of physical darkness, but mental darkness helplessness/stumbling (as Stuart puts it).¹⁶⁴ This interpretation is an even better fit if we interpret *וְלֹא תִצְלִיחַ אֶת־דְּרֹכֶיךָ* as “and you will not succeed in finding your way.” As we will see quite regularly in chapter 5, interpreting passages that speak of calamitous darkness in terms of its connection with Deut 28:29 is fairly common. Between Deuteronomy in whatever form it existed in that time and other covenant curses from bronze age treaties that used similar language, the use of this language by the prophets is hardly surprising. If we are to read Amos 8:9 in light of Deut 28:29, this verse would be better understood as an example of the COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT IS DARKNESS metaphor that will be discussed in chapter 5. It is not necessary to come to a definitive conclusion over whether COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT IS DARKNESS or DARKNESS IS COSMIC DISORDER is being used here since both entailments fit the context well and both entailments could be being highlighted simultaneously.

¹⁶³ See Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea*, 44–48. In the Ugaritic text KTU 1.6.VI.45-53, the great dragon is shown to the enemy of Shapash, the sun god. This dragon seeks to consume Shapash and plunge the world into darkness.

¹⁶⁴ Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 385

Beyond these examples from Joel, Amos, and Zephaniah that speak of the Day of the Lord, there are a few other examples of dark days in the OT. In Ezek 34:12, the prophet recounts Yahweh's promise to return his scattered flock "from all the places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness." This verse poses an interesting problem: is the day of clouds and thick darkness the day of scattering or the day of gathering? Given the ordering of the sentence, it would be safe to assume that the day of scattering was the dark and cloudy day—a day which Allen suggests is the fall of Jerusalem.¹⁶⁵ The only other place in Ezekiel where God employs darkness is in 32:7–8 wherein God casts darkness upon the land of Egypt. Both passages speak of God's judgment on Israel's enemies and so it is possible to suggest that the darkness in 34:12 is being used as an exit strategy by Yahweh to gather his flock in a similar way to the new Exodus of chapter 32.

The answer to the question of whether this day of darkness is a day of judgment or salvation for Israel is pertinent to this dissertation as Ezekiel is either using darkness as a metonymy for judgment/imprisonment/death or as a metonymy for his salvation through the reprisal of the ninth plague. John Taylor attempts to argue a perplexing combination of these two options. He connects this day of clouds and thick darkness with the day of the Lord as described in Joel 2:2 and Zeph 1:15 but beyond the shared language, both Joel and Zephaniah see this darkness as an overwhelmingly negative aspect of a to-be-dreaded day rather than a day of "salvation and judgment to usher in a

¹⁶⁵ Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, 162; See also, Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 471.

new age of his righteous rule on earth.”¹⁶⁶ Taylor’s interpretation is more in line with the beliefs held by the opponents of Joel, Amos, and Zephaniah which they were attempting to combat yet Taylor also borrows the language that these three minor prophets employed to combat their opponents’ erroneous theology. If we more carefully read this passage alongside those passages from the Minor Prophets, the darkness that Ezekiel describes could certainly fit as the day of God’s judgment on Jerusalem and so Ezekiel could be alluding to those prophets’ dark metaphors. That said, evidence external to Ezekiel should not take precedence over internal evidence from within Ezekiel and so the prophet’s clear rehashing of the ninth’s plague in 32:7–8 seems more likely to be what Ezekiel was referring to here. Here the prophet is extending his neo-Exodus from those living in Egypt to those living abroad in the diaspora and claims that God will accomplish this feat of shepherding under the cover of clouds and darkness—the same sorts of clouds and darkness (ערפל) that were seen at Sinai (more on the Sinai theophany in chapter 6).

3.3 The Darkness of Ps 88

Psalm 88 is replete with references to darkness and death which has led Mays to suggest that death is the sole subject of this lament.¹⁶⁷ Wendland lists what he considers to be all the words and images that are related to death in Ps 88 with references to death in almost every verse including a few that rely on DEATH IS DARKNESS.¹⁶⁸ Obviously the Psalmist himself has not yet passed on to Sheol, but his feelings of being near to Sheol tell us a fair

¹⁶⁶ Taylor, *Ezekiel*, 215.

¹⁶⁷ Mays, *Psalms*, 282; Cf. Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 100.

¹⁶⁸ Wendland, ““Darkness Is My Closest Friend,”” 4.

bit about how he perceived it and his use of dark language to describe it is important not only in our understanding of Sheol but our understanding of darkness as well.¹⁶⁹ Rather than deal with Ps 88 above with other examples of the DEATH IS DARKNESS metaphor, I have chosen to take what has been learned above and apply it to a text that is heavily focused on this metaphor.

The first reference to darkness in Ps 88 is in v. 6 where the Psalmist describes the lowest pit (בְּבוֹר תַּחְתִּיּוֹת) which they find themselves cast into as a dark depth (בְּמַחְשֵׁים בְּמַצְלוֹת). It has been suggested that the deep pit that the Psalmist finds himself in could be taken as a reference to prison (see chapter 4)¹⁷⁰ or perhaps as pit within the sea as מְצוֹלָה is usually used to describe the sea or ocean depths.¹⁷¹ That said, the repetition of obvious references to death in the surrounding verses (Sheol in v. 3, the dead, slain, and grave in v. 5) make it quite clear that the Psalmist's main focus is death and its realm.

Verses 10–12 continue the following DEATH IS DARKNESS as its guiding metaphor and highlights a particular aspect of death's darkness: death is dark because it is beyond the scope of human perception and understanding (more on this in chapter 5). Rather than merely being used as a metonymy for death, as was discussed in chapter 2, the darkness of the realm of the dead in ancient Near Eastern literature is an indication of the afterlife's imperceptibility. Watson similarly notes that the Psalmist here seems to think that the

¹⁶⁹ Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*, 95–96; Tate, *Psalms 50–100*, 405.

¹⁷⁰ Hopkins, *Psalms, Books 2–3*, 358.

¹⁷¹ Tate, *Psalms 50–100*, 396–97.

dead are outside even Yahweh's sphere of interest.¹⁷² As such, this verse is most likely using darkness as a means of creating human scale for the how the dead are forever lost and forgotten. Darkness and forgetfulness are not simply being used synonymously but the second colon builds upon the first; not only is death beyond knowledge, but all previous knowledge of the Psalmist is lost upon his death, thus further isolating him from his peers and his God.

There is one final reference to darkness in Ps 88 and it is particularly difficult to interpret. Verse 18 has left many commentators and translators in the dark with its final colon: מִיָּדַי מְחָשֶׁךְ. The few textual variations on this verse that exist provide little help. The NEB proposes using different vowels for מְחָשֶׁךְ and thus translate it as “deprived me” which fits the parallelism quite well but there isn't sufficient evidence to reject the MT as it makes enough sense and we have little else to go off of.¹⁷³ Broyles argues that this darkness is a reference to death here,¹⁷⁴ which would certainly fit the previous uses of DEATH IS DARKNESS in this psalm but does not match the parallelism of the previous line.¹⁷⁵ Hopkins cautions against reducing the plight of the Psalmist to literal sickness and death as by doing so, commentators have “reduce[d] the metaphors *about* death to literal descriptions and undercut the visceral power of the psalm,” which, to Hopkins, centres

¹⁷² Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 100.

¹⁷³ Bratcher and Reyburn, *A Translator's Handbook on the Book of Psalms*, 769.

¹⁷⁴ Broyles, *Psalms*, 290.

¹⁷⁵ In his commentary, Goldingay (*Psalms*, 2:975) doesn't have any qualms with disconnecting v. 19b from the rest of the verse claiming that it has no syntactical relationship with the previous line. He does not attempt to back this assertion up nor does he interact with the possibility that vv. 19a and b are connected in any way. I believe it is always best to assume continuity unless presented with sufficient evidence to the contrary.

around the Psalmist's sense of abandonment by God and his companions.¹⁷⁶ Tate notes that it is possible to read מִשְׁכָּן as "hiding place" as he does in Ps 74:20.¹⁷⁷ While I would argue against such a definite translation, the HIDDENNESS of the Psalmist's companions is certainly a valid use of the DARKNESS frame. Following this interpretation, the Psalmist would feel that darkness is his last remaining friend with darkness being a metaphor for nothingness or emptiness that is left now that his friends are hidden from him. As God has hidden the Psalmist's friends, he is left with an aching void, here understood as darkness.¹⁷⁸ This would fit well with Southwood's interpretation of this Psalm as a petition made by someone sick and in the forced loneliness of quarantine.¹⁷⁹

One final and certainly grim way of understanding darkness in this verse follows a more literal understanding of DEATH IS DARKNESS—not as a social death but as actual death as it has in the previous verses. The Psalmist's final cry could be akin to Job's desire for death—that his only remaining solace is his coming death—or perhaps the Psalmist is dreading a death that he perceives as being near him in a way more similar to the "dark days" or Eccl 11:8. Given the number of times the Psalmist has employed the DEATH IS DARKNESS metaphor in previous verses, it would be strange that he would suddenly shift his focus here at the end so it is more likely that he is continuing the extended use of darkness as a metaphor for death.

¹⁷⁶ Hopkins, *Psalms, Books 2–3*, 356 (emphasis added).

¹⁷⁷ Tate, *Psalms 50–100*, 398.

¹⁷⁸ Longman, *Psalms*, 321.

¹⁷⁹ Southwood, "Metaphor, Illness, and Identity in Psalms 88 and 102."

3.4 Reflections on Death, Calamity, and Darkness

This chapter has shown that there appears to be few if any examples where darkness is being used metonymically as a shorthand for moral evil, calamity, disaster, or even unpleasantness. What the above examples show is that darkness is sometimes employed in more extended metaphors to enhance a blend that has already been established. We can also see how darkness is occasionally used metonymically to describe storms as well as a few hints toward a possible metaphor for imprisonment which will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

Although darkness is indeed evoked in some unpleasant scenarios by the authors discussed, darkness itself is often just the shadow of a greater problem.¹⁸⁰ These times are described as “dark” because the disasters—clouds, storms, hailstones, etc—made it dark. Lemmelijn comes to fairly similar conclusions about the connections between darkness and calamity in the Old Testament:

The Old Testament itself exhibits little to no vision of any dualistic battle between light and darkness such as the one that would emerge as a religious motif in later eras. Nevertheless, the Old Testament darkness cannot be completely reduced to a purely neutral absence of light. Its qualities are always recognized as being hostile to life, and that is precisely why it is necessary for God to restrain it. In this representation of the creation, Yahweh therefore establishes boundaries in time and space by incorporating the darkness in the rhythmic interchange between day and night. God does not create the darkness, and neither does He eliminate it. He gives it a place in the world order that He establishes, thereby making the darkness an ‘ordered power of chaos,’ both implying and immediately emphasizing that God rules the darkness.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Cornelius, “The Theological Significance of Darkness in the Old Testament,” 122.

¹⁸¹ Lemmelijn, “Light and Darkness,” 558.

The above quote from Lemmelijn reinforces not only my stance on Zoroastrian influences on the OT, but also the differing ICMs guiding Hebrew conceptions of darkness compared to twenty-first century Anglophone conceptions of darkness. While the DEATH IS DARKNESS metaphor is not too foreign to modern English readers, the lack of EVIL IS DARKNESS or DANGER IS DARKNESS in the OT shows a significant cultural gap that is not often considered by interpreters. In the following chapter of this dissertation, I will examine a metaphor of darkness that is certainly most foreign to modern English readers: CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS.

CHAPTER 4: CAPTIVITY, EXILE, AND DARKNESS

Today, let candles shed their radiant greeting;
lo, on our darkness are they not thy light
leading us, haply, to our longed-for meeting?
Thou canst illumine even our darkest night.

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Powers of Good” from *Letters and Papers from Prison*

In the previous chapter we looked at what is regularly assumed to be the most common metaphorical uses of darkness: as metonymies for death, destruction, and evil. After careful examination, a few conclusions can be made. First, the metaphor DEATH IS DARKNESS is indeed prevalent throughout the OT—especially in relation to its inverse, LIFE IS LIGHT. Second, when darkness is used in relation to various calamities, it is almost exclusively used as a metonymy for a bigger issue or is the direct result of another calamity. Third, it was shown that there are no clear-cut verses that use the metaphor EVIL IS DARKNESS. Darkness is not used as a metaphorical shorthand for difficulty and even if darkness does often accompany difficulty in the OT, it is secondary to the main threats. Despite the propensity for many scholars to jump to entailments of chaos, evil, and gloom, when these texts are examined more closely, a different cultural understanding of darkness begins to take shape. The findings of chapter 3 parallel with my findings in chapter two where it was shown that darkness is regularly used as a descriptor and metonym for death in ancient Near Eastern texts.

The ancient Hebrew writers differed in their cognitive models for darkness from modern English speakers not just in terms of what they did not connect with darkness (evil, calamity, chaos) but also in terms of what they *did* connect with darkness. One metaphor that is often overlooked by Anglophone scholars is that of CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS. The metaphor CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS is not one of the more commonly thought of metaphors in the OT yet upon closer examination, this metaphor reoccurs throughout the OT and is particularly important to the Isaianic community. While this chapter will be shorter than chapters 3 or 5, the metaphor CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS is such an important recurring metaphor for the Psalmist and Isaiah, it warrants its own in-depth exploration here. I will begin with an exploration of the conceptual world of imprisonment and captivity in the ancient Near East from what we can glean from Israel's neighbours as well as what is recorded in the OT. From there I will move on to looking at specific examples of darkness functioning as a metonymy for captivity in the OT. Then I will return to the topic of death from the previous chapter to discuss the conceptual connections between captivity and death as well as a few verses that show some flexibility between these two domains.

4.1 The Conceptual Domain of “Prison” in the Ancient Near East

4.1.1 “Prison” Among Israel’s Neighbours

To modern readers, prison and darkness share few, if any conceptual links. Perhaps those with interests in medieval fantasy might think of dark, dingy prisons, but beyond some interpretations of solitary confinement or Soviet gulags in popular media, most people would not connect the two ideas of darkness and prison. This was not always the case as modern versions of captivity are somewhat of an anomaly compared to much of human history. Our modern understanding of using prisons as a form of punitive and corrective justice will be shown to be entirely foreign to people in the ancient Near East. Not only is this form of corrective justice alien to the ancient mind, so too is the very notion of prison as a dedicated space wherein criminals languish foreign.

To begin, it is worth addressing the significant lack of mention of prisons in ancient Near Eastern law codes. While the extant versions of law codes from the ancient Levant generally include what the proper sentencing is for various crimes committed—even broken down by crimes committed *by* different social classes and *to* different classes—what is markedly absent are references to anything resembling prisons or captivity therein. Varying levels of physical punishment abound along with economic and social punishments, but imprisoning the guilty for extended periods of time is simply not in view in ancient Near Eastern law codes. Given the lack of formal requirement of long-term imprisonment in ancient law codes, it seems natural to assume that prisons were not widely in use in the ancient Near East but the answer to the question of prisons in the

ancient Near East is much more complicated than this. I agree with Blumenfeld that we should exercise caution and not jump to conclusions based on arguments from (perceived) silence:

Admittedly, ancient legal codes did not generally provide for captivity as a means of punishment for the commission of criminal offenses. Yet, in practice, there are so many instances of legal punitive captivity recorded in extra-legal sources that I believe one should be cautious before rushing to judgment on the subject.¹

Outside of legal documents we have plenty of documents that discuss captivity in ancient Mesopotamia. These texts should be taken as a much more reliable source for information as they show how justice actually was acted out, rather than how it was recorded in potentially performative law codes. For instance, in the Akkadian “Dialogue of Pessimism” a master discusses whether or not to commit a crime with his slave who replies “the man who commits a crime is either killed, or comes to grief, or is maimed or seized or cast into prison.”² Blumenfeld notes a variety of sources that speak of captivity for a number of crimes including smuggling, theft, bribery, drunkenness, and desertion.³

In more recent years, a series of tablets originating from the Uruk “house of prisoners of war” (*bīt asīrī*) have been translated and published.⁴ They give solid evidence of prison camps during the reign of Rim-Anum in the 18th century BCE but don’t offer much information beyond daily food allowances. There are other documents at our disposal that teach us about what sorts of people were held in captivity. Levavi notes 23

¹ Blumenfeld, “Imprisonment and Forced Detention in the Bible,” 43.

² Blumenfeld, “Imprisonment and Forced Detention in the Bible,” 44.

³ Blumenfeld, “Imprisonment and Forced Detention in the Bible,” 43.

⁴ Rositani, “More Rim-Anum Texts from the Bīt Asīrī”; Rositani, “Some Rīm-Anum Texts from the Bīt Asīrī Kept at the British Museum.”

extant Mesopotamian documents that are focused solely on the release-on-guarantee of prisoners.⁵ Also from Uruk is YOS 7, 97 which records the testimony of a prison warden, Nanāya-aḥu-iddin/Arad-Nabû, against two prisoners, Nargia/Ilu-gabru and Šamaš-bēl-kullati/Lâbâši, who were apprehended after they killed a guard and dug their way out of prison.⁶ This shows us that at least in Babylon, prisons weren't made out of particularly hearty material and were above-ground structures as otherwise metal shears would not have been enough to dig out.⁷

Yuval Levavi's translation and publication of four Middle-Babylonian documents that discuss prison are also important resources in understanding what might land a person in prison. Moussaieff 33 is an account of three convicted of poultry theft against the Kassite king Šagarakti-Šuriaš (1243 BCE) who are consequently imprisoned within the palace.⁸ This text is valuable for a few reasons: first it tells us that captivity is a valid punishment for a crime as serious as stealing from the *royal* chicken coop (*bīt iṣṣurī ša šarri*). Second, we can also discern that the palace was either equipped with dedicated holding cells or at least rooms that could be used as such to house prisoners. Third, captivity was not a private affair, but a public one as it was the royal officials who oversaw the proceedings and the prisoners were kept in the royal palace.⁹ Moussaieff 258 from Šagarakti-Šuriaš' reign tells a particularly interesting story of a woman named *ʾIlsitu* who was imprisoned in lieu of her sister, ʿYā'ūtu, who had escaped prison, and the

⁵ Levavi, "Four Middle-Babylonian Legal Documents Concerning Prison," 101.

⁶ Frahm and Kleber, "A Not-So-Great Escape," 117–18.

⁷ Levavi, "Four Middle-Babylonian Legal Documents Concerning Prison," 100.

⁸ Levavi, "Four Middle-Babylonian Legal Documents Concerning Prison," 88.

⁹ Levavi, "Four Middle-Babylonian Legal Documents Concerning Prison," 100.

only way *ʾl-situ* could be freed indefinitely was if she was able to recapture her sister within an allotment of time.¹⁰ That captivity was a common enough phenomenon in ancient Mesopotamia to have its own formalized legal structures and possibly even dedicated holding cells is fairly clear.

Discerning what prison looked like for the average prisoner is fairly easy to do from the extant sources, so long as they are viewed with a careful eye. These sources were generally written by officials who held all the power so they might have downplayed or been unaware of how poor the conditions of captivity were for the incarcerated. As Frahm and Kleber put it,

The image of a prison depends on the viewer. A citizen who believes in law and order sees it differently than an inmate. In the ancient Near East, Sumerian poets regarded the prison as a divinely authorized institution that would help a culprit undergo a personal transformation in order to become a useful member of society again. The mythological composition “Nungal in the Ekur” portrays the prison as the womb of the goddess Nungal, from which the prisoner emerges reborn. Nungal, the divine prison warden, claims: “My house is built upon pity; I am the mistress who makes men live.” Yet the reality of Mesopotamian prisons was far grimmer than these lofty theological justifications implied. In the Old Babylonian letter *AbB* II, 83, a prison inmate who maintains his innocence writes that he is starving and sick, and calls his place of detention a *bit dannatim*, “house of hardship.”¹¹

Returning to the attempted escapee, Šamaš-bēl-kullati, YOS 7, 77 describes the conditions of his original captivity. While the three escapees above were incarcerated within a palace, this is not the only locale as YOS 7, 88 mentions a royal storehouse (*šutummu*) in Eanna as a place where a prisoner is chained and PBS 2/2 51 and PBS 2/2

¹⁰ Levavi, “Four Middle-Babylonian Legal Documents Concerning Prison,” 92.

¹¹ See also Civil, “On Mesopotamian Jails and Their Lady Warden” for a description of the Nungal Hymn; Frahm and Kleber, “A Not-So-Great Escape,” 109.

55 speak of prisoners kept in a temple.¹² According to Frahm and Kleber's translation, one prisoner was "bound in fetters, he was put to work in the king's cow shed, and his brother Anu-zēru-šubši was held responsible to make sure that the convict not spend his time in the tavern instead."¹³ At the risk of sounding a bit anachronistic, his fate was akin to house arrest with significant community service and a brother for a parole officer. At the temple of Eanna, prisoners served their sentences doing manual labour such as grinding flour for the temple or tanning leather.¹⁴ Since bail protocols specify that prisoners are to have their shackles returned along with prisoners on bail, we can discern that prisoners were allowed to leave the prison at times and that chains were not always mandatory unless they were outside their prison cells.¹⁵

Much of the same could be said of those who dwelt in the house of the prisoners of war (*bīt asīrī*). The Mesha Stela contains the eponymous king's boast that he "cut beams [?] for Qaroh with Israelite captives."¹⁶ The root for *asīrī* can be found in twenty-one different Old Babylonian records listing "captive prisoners of war" and a cognate of *asīrī* in Ugaritic, the root '*a-s-r*' is in a labour force list and in a number of mythological texts, thus showing at a connection between captivity and forced labour.¹⁷ Such was the fate for male prisoners of war, but female prisoners of war, depending on the culture,

¹² Levavi, "Four Middle-Babylonian Legal Documents Concerning Prison," 100.

¹³ Blumenfeld, "Imprisonment and Forced Detention in the Bible," 49; Frahm and Kleber, "A Not-So-Great Escape," 118.

¹⁴ Levavi, "Four Middle-Babylonian Legal Documents Concerning Prison," 100.

¹⁵ Levavi, "Four Middle-Babylonian Legal Documents Concerning Prison," 100.

¹⁶ Blumenfeld, "Imprisonment and Forced Detention in the Bible," 49.

¹⁷ Blumenfeld, "Imprisonment and Forced Detention in the Bible," 49.

were sometimes assigned to forced labour such as the milling of flour, but were also often taken as concubines and other forms of sex slavery.¹⁸

Up to this point, we've been able to paint a fairly clear picture of what prison in ancient Mesopotamia looked like. We can know with some confidence the what and how, with perhaps less certainty as to the why. It is the question of "how long?" that is possibly the most difficult to answer. We have attestations of a variety of prison sentences that were as short as two and a half months for one Nadin-abī and eight months for one Inninzēru-ibni/Ina-tēšī-ēṭir (*TCL* 13,154, *YOS* 7, 152, and *YOS* 7, 146) as well as much longer sentences like that of Nabû-šumu-ukīn, a son of Nebuchadnezzar II who would possibly be renamed Amīl-Marduk, who lamented a lengthy incarceration imposed by his father in his prayer to Marduk.¹⁹ Amīl-Marduk was himself certainly not above imprisoning others. In Moussaieff 30, a tablet dating to the reign of the Kassite king Šagarakti-Šuriaš (1243 BCE), we read of Arad-nubatti's captivity by Amīl-Marduk for letting a prisoner go free. Amīl-Marduk released Arad-nubatti on bail on the condition that he recapture the escapee, Adallal-ša-Nergal, but if "that term expire, and Adallal-ša-Nergal had not been seized and delivered to Amīl-Marduk by the second day (of Ulūlu), Arad-nubatti will be taken back fettered."²⁰ The only time limit that Amīl-Marduk places on Arad-nubatti is the window of opportunity to return Adallal-ša-Nergal—he places no such limits on Arad-nubatti's fetters. This text is admittedly vague, but the threat of indefinite captivity is certainly there.

¹⁸ Feigin, "The Captives in Cuneiform Inscriptions."

¹⁹ Frahm and Kleber, "A Not-So-Great Escape," 116.

²⁰ Levavi, "Four Middle-Babylonian Legal Documents Concerning Prison," 96.

Levavi translates another tablet that gives a much more well-defined prison sentence. Moussaieff 36 from Šagarakti-Šuriaš' reign recounts the story of two burglars, Mušēzib-Nergal and Tukultu, the latter of which was caught and imprisoned. While on trial he cut a bargain saying, "*I am a thief, (but) I will [not] die in prison. Release me! I will pay you five shekel of gold, and I will get Tukultu, my fellow thief, and bring him to you*" which the judge agreed to upon the following stipulation: "The term of Mušēzib-Nergal was set for day x of Adarru. (Should) this term expire and he had not brought the thief and the compensation, *then* Mušēzib-Nergal will be fettered and will not be released."²¹ This tablet makes it clear that the threat of a life sentence was a certain possibility. On the other hand, the Code of Hammurabi (§ 32) requests that captives in the *bīt asīrī* would be redeemed by their cities so as to not languish in prison indefinitely.²² There doesn't seem to be much consistency in the prison terms levied out. In one of the earlier examples, theft from a king resulted in a brief term of forced labour, while Mušēzib-Nergal faced a life sentence for stealing from a private citizen. Nowhere is this unpredictability better exemplified than in the Šumma alu text which reads "If a falcon flies from left to right when the guards bring a man to the palace, his captivity will be long" (CT 40 48: 26–27).²³

Beyond the above examples, most legal documents omit any mention of a duration of the criminal's sentence. I would argue that this is in large part due to the purpose of captivity in ancient Mesopotamia. In other words, incarceration was less about

²¹ Levavi, "Four Middle-Babylonian Legal Documents Concerning Prison," 97.

²² Feigin, "The Captives in Cuneiform Inscriptions," 222.

²³ Levavi, "Four Middle-Babylonian Legal Documents Concerning Prison," 91.

how long one was imprisoned and more about what is accomplished during however long that term lasted. Despite what “Nungal in the Ekur” might claim about the rebirth of criminals, prisons were not seen or used as centres for rehabilitation.²⁴ Levavi summarizes the functions of prisons in the Middle-Babylonian sources: “(1) mean[s] of (psychological/financial) pressure against the prisoner or a related third party, and (2) physical restriction. . . . In the above discussion on the function of captivity, we could not point [to] a single case in which prison was the actual penalty.”²⁵ He later elaborates on this point saying,

Contrary to present times, however, the Middle-Babylonian legal system did not employ prison as a mere punitive act. The most frequent goal of captivity was to create financial and psychological pressure on debtors. In addition, captivity was also used for the simple purpose of physical restriction, e.g., against run-away servile workers, or individuals during their legal process.²⁶

On the topic of financial and psychological pressure, this is why forced labour was employed. Forced labour was a way of making sure that a criminal paid back what was due from whomever he or she had stolen from, or caused harm to. The imprisoned would sometimes be put under the authority and into the service of public officials in order to be put to work.²⁷ On the topic of restriction of movement, we can see a very clear example of this in the Mari letters. Here there are references to periods of detention designed to give the king sufficient time to come to a conclusion about a criminal’s fate (ARM VI 42: 8–10).²⁸

²⁴ van der Toorn, “Prison,” 468.

²⁵ Levavi, “Four Middle-Babylonian Legal Documents Concerning Prison,” 102.

²⁶ Levavi, “Four Middle-Babylonian Legal Documents Concerning Prison,” 104.

²⁷ Feigin, “The Captives in Cuneiform Inscriptions,” 222–23.

²⁸ Pritikin, “Punishment, Prisons, and the Bible,” 749.

For the purposes of the present study, we can glean a handful of key points that will be valuable as we move forward. First, and most basically, imprisonment was certainly a reality in the ancient Near East—further indicating the dissonance between law codes and law practise. Second, at least in Babylon, captivity involved forced labour—usually as a means of paying off one’s debts. Third, there is little in the evidence above to connect prison with darkness on a cognitive level. Prisons were certainly interior spaces during the Middle-Babylonian period which made them inherently dark but not any darker than any other interior space. Prisons were not subterranean and prisoners were taken outside at least to complete their labours. Last, a cognitive connection between prison and death is only present in the case of prisons as temporary holding cells before an execution. While life sentences were certainly a reality, most of the cases in the articles that I read had finite limits corresponding to debts to be paid so people were not close to death in prison the way we will see the writers of the OT describe.

4.1.2 Prison in the Bible

Now seems like an appropriate time to reiterate that there was no ancient Near Eastern monoculture; there were of course lines of continuity but there were also significant changes within the two millennia of Near Eastern cultures pertinent to this study. As will be shown in this section, there is certainly some value in understanding prison in ancient Mesopotamia but the forced detention of people in Israel also functioned differently than it did among other ancient Near Eastern cultures. In order to say anything definitive about

the CAPTIVITY ICM in Israel, we must give primacy to evidences drawn directly from the OT. I will try to keep my focus in this section on more literal descriptions of prison in the OT but of course it is not always easy to draw a perfect line in the sand between literal and figurative in a book as replete with poetry as the OT. As the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* puts it,

in some passages it is difficult to tell whether the reference to prison is literal or metaphorical. For example, David was not strictly in jail when he prayed, “Set me free from my prison, that I may praise your name” (Ps 142:7 NIV), but was no doubt referring to his personal circumstances at the time (compare Ps 66:11; Is 42:22; Zech 9:11). Sometimes prison serves as a ready illustration of anything or anyone that restricts an individual’s freedom. Hence captivity imagery can refer to the wiles of an unscrupulous woman (Eccles 7:26) or to restrictive, unjust practices (Is 58:6) or merely to cutting off one’s own retreat (1 Sam 23:7). It is employed by Ezekiel as part of a larger picture of Israel’s king as a captured lion (Ezek 19:9) . . .²⁹

To begin, what was said of ancient Near Eastern law codes and the absence of prison therein can also be said of biblical law codes. The law codes contained within the Pentateuch are notably detailed in their descriptions of crimes and their punishments, and yet prison is not mentioned as a recompense for any crime, nor are there laws governing the treatment of prisoners (beyond prisoners of war), sentencing terms, construction of prisons, or the like. Perhaps the closest laws to captivity would be the cities of refuge but they don’t parallel modern prisons as will be discussed later.

Despite the lack of laws regarding captivity, prison was certainly a reality in ancient Israel as is even shown within the Pentateuch. Blumenfeld has created a table that

²⁹ Ryken et al., eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 664. Whether you agree with the assertion that David authored the Psalms, it is safe to assume that at least some of the references to imprisonment in the Psalms are figurative. I am not convinced David penned Ps 142, but the Psalmist’s image of imprisonment is no less impactful and significant for this dissertation.

outlines instances of captivity within the OT that I have reproduced below as a birds-eye-view of the verses that will be most important in this section. I have added a fifth column to this chart to show where the accused is held captive. I have also made more detailed notes on the duration of the imprisonment which is indicated in square brackets:

Table 1. Biblical Instances of captivity³⁰

Prisoner	Charge	Sentence	Reference	Place of captivity
Joseph	Attempted Seduction	“Days” / 12 years	Gen 40:4, 41:1	בֵּית שַׂר הַטִּבָּחִים / House of the chief guard
Chief Steward & Baker	Dereliction of duty	“Days”	Gen 40:4	בֵּית שַׂר הַטִּבָּחִים / House of the chief guard
Joseph’s brothers	Spying	3 days [or until Jacob’s youngest could be produced]	Gen 42:17	אֶל-מִשְׁמָר / in captivity
Son of Shelomith	Blasphemy	לְפָרֹשׁ לָהֶם עַל-פִּי יְהוָה / Until/that the will of YHWH be shown to them]	Lev 24:12	בְּמִשְׁמָר / in captivity
Anonymous	Sabbath desecration	[until YHWH’s will had been determined]	Num 15:34	בְּמִשְׁמָר / in captivity
Samson	Enemy Leader	Months	Judg 1:16	בְּבֵית הָאֲסִירִים / in the prison house
Micaiah	False prophecy	[until Ahab returns from battle]	1 Kgs 22:27	בֵּית הַכְּלָא / house of imprisonment
Hoshea	Conspiracy	Undetermined	2 Kgs 17:4	בֵּית כְּלָא / house of imprisonment

³⁰ Adapted from Blumenfeld, “Imprisonment and Forced Detention in the Bible,” 45.

Jehoahaz	Deposed enemy king	Undetermined	2 Kgs 23:33	וַיֹּאסְרוּהוּ / put in bonds
Zedekiah	Deposed rebel king	Life	2 Kgs 25:7; Jer 52:11	וַיֹּאסְרוּהוּ בַּנְחֻשְׁתִּים / bound in bronze (fetters); בְּבֵית־הַפֶּקֶדָּה / in the house of the overseer
Jehoachin	Captive king	37 years	2 Kgs 25:27	מִבֵּית כְּלָא / house of captivity
Jeremiah	False prophecy and/or treason	“Many days”	Jer 37:16, 38:28	In the house of Jonathan the secretary which had been made a house of captivity (לְבֵית הַכְּלָא), בֵּית הַבּוֹר וְאֶל־הַחֲנוּיֹת / house of the pit and the vault; בְּחֶצֶר הַמִּטְרָה / in the court of the guard
Jeremiah	Weakening morale	Undetermined	Jer 38:6	הַבּוֹר מִלְכִּיָּהוּ / the cistern of Malchiah
Hanani	Contempt	Undetermined	2 Chron 16:10	בֵּית הַמֶּהֱפֶכֶת / the house of stocks
Manasseh	Captive king	Brief period	2 Chron 33:11	בַּנְחֻשְׁתִּים / in bronze (fetters)
Jehoiakim	Deposed rebel king	Undetermined	2 Chron 36:6	בַּנְחֻשְׁתִּים / in bronze (fetters)

There are a few trends that we quickly notice from looking at this chart. First, there is a wide variety of reasons for captivity from personal to political, relatively minor to fairly significant. In some instances the captivity was due to unjust causes (Gen 39:20;

Jer 37:18) while other times it was through proper legal channels (2 Kgs 17:4; Ezra 7:26).³¹

Second, there is significant variation in the duration of prison sentences and prison sentences are not always well defined. The anonymous sabbath-breaker of Num 15:34 was only briefly imprisoned while his case was investigated while Joseph's sentence doesn't seem to have a limit. Life sentences are definitely the exception rather than the norm in the OT. It is generally accepted that prison was primarily used as a way of restricting mobility while a case was being examined and before proper sentencing could be carried out. As was the case for the Sabbath-breaker of Num 15, the blaspheming son of Shelomith is imprisoned only because the validity and circumstances of his alleged blasphemy could not be immediately determined. Both men are eventually sentenced to death (more on the connections between death and captivity later) but it is key to note that captivity was merely a step in the judicial process, rather than itself being a punishment.³² In the case of Micaiah, son of Imlah, his prison term was only to last as long as it took to (dis)prove the validity of his prophecy and thus was less a punishment so much as a way of preventing Micaiah's escape. Jones and Scharn argue that even in the case of Joseph's lengthy time in prison, the duration of his captivity seems to have been a clerical error rather than a purposeful life sentence:

Potiphar places him in prison for his supposed infraction (Gen. 39:11–20), but we should be surprised when the authorities do not determine his guilt or innocence in the following scene. Instead, Joseph remains in prison for more than two years (Gen. 40:4; 41:1). This novelty, though, plays a

³¹ Ryken et al., eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 663–64.

³² Jones and Scharn, "Prison and the Bible," 219–20.

literary role in the development of the Joseph narratives. God has been clear about his future (cf. Gen. 37:2–11), but circumstances appear to frustrate God’s plan. From the reader’s perspective, it seems that Joseph will remain in prison without trial.³³

By looking more carefully at the circumstances of the above arrests in Table 1, a possible question arises: was long-term imprisonment a Torah-observant response to crime or is imprisonment subtly coded as a a theologically aberrant response? Pritikin seems to have asked this question as he comes to the following conclusion in his discussion of OT law on prisons:

Jewish criminal law provided for a variety of forms of punishment—including capital punishment, flogging, fines, atonement offerings, and *karet* (spiritual death)—but prisons . . . are either not sanctioned by Jewish law, serve some function other than as a modality of punishment, or are tolerated as a second-best alternative to other forms of punishment.³⁴

Pritikin goes on to note that all instances of indefinite captivity in the OT have in common dubious circumstances surrounding the captivity. Characters like Joseph, Samson, and the later kings of Israel and Judah were all imprisoned by foreigners while Jeremiah and Micaiah were imprisoned by kings and officials who were characterized as being morally corrupt.³⁵ While the Psalmist regularly speaks of his fears and feelings of captivity, they are caused primarily by his enemies who are overwhelmingly characterized as people who acted outside the proper bounds of Torah. Perhaps the only exception to this would

³³ Jones and Scharn, “Prison and the Bible,” 219.

³⁴ Pritikin, “Punishment, Prisons, and the Bible,” 748–49.

³⁵ Pritikin, “Punishment, Prisons, and the Bible,” 749; See also, Jones and Scharn, “Prison and the Bible,” 220: “One might point out that vocabulary related to prison is common in Jer. 32–33, 37–39, where authorities imprison Jeremiah for extended periods of time, but it is best to view Jeremiah as a kind of political prisoner. His experience is not indicative of how prison relates to guilt and punishment. For similar examples in the OT, see 1 Kgs. 22:27; 2 Kgs. 17:4; 23:33, and in the NT, see the gospel stories of John the Baptist (Matt. 14:3–5; Mark 6:17–20) and Peter and Paul in Acts 12:1–4; 16:16–24; 24:24–27.”

be Ezra in 7:26 but it is worth noting that Ezra is functioning within the Persian legal system, rather than an autonomous Jewish system. Other than in Ezra or in the case of talionic reversals in the Psalms, we don't have instances of biblical protagonists calling for the indefinite captivity of others. As will be discussed in the final section of this chapter, the metaphor IMPRISONMENT IS DARKNESS shows up predominantly in texts that look toward or reflect back upon the experiences of the Babylonian captivity.

There is evidence for captivity being a particularly foreign idea to Israel—not so foreign that it was unknown, but alien to their regular customs—if we look at what becomes of Israelite prisoners in foreign prisons. In the case of Samson, he was put to work grinding flour in the house of prisoners (בְּבֵית הָאֲסִירִים, Judg 16:21), which is strikingly similar to the records of the *bīt asīrī* of Babylon and how they put their prisoners to work.³⁶ Similarly, van der Toorn connects the house of prisoners (בְּבֵית־הַפְּקָדִית) or house of the mill (μυλῶνος) in the Greek translation of Jer 52:11 to the Akkadian *bīt ararri*, “house of the miller, mill,” which is mentioned in a number of texts.³⁷ Psalm 107:10–16, Lam 5:13, and Isa 47:2 all speak of forced labour for the exiles as part of their captivity with a particular focus on the grinding of grain. Returning again to Joseph's story, Blumenfeld connects the above information with what we have from extant Egyptian sources and concludes that Joseph's prison sentence was served within a dome-shaped prison-silo-granary building that used foreign captives to grind flour.³⁸

³⁶ Blumenfeld, “Imprisonment and Forced Detention in the Bible,” 49.

³⁷ van der Toorn, “Prison,” 468.

³⁸ Blumenfeld, “Imprisonment and Forced Detention in the Bible,” 53. Blumenfeld comes to this conclusion by connecting the *'asirei hammelekh* / *'asirim* of the Joseph narrative to the specific designation of foreign prisoners in Egypt to forced labour in domed buildings designed for the production of flour

As with the previous section's discussion of ancient Near Eastern prisons, much of this debate revolves around the perceived purpose of captivity. There is some debate over what the purpose of prison was in Israel. Much of this argument boils down to what degree we should base our arguments on parallels with other ancient Near Eastern cultures and how much we should rely on what is written in the OT. From what has been discussed above, if Israel followed suit with its ancient Near Eastern neighbours, prison was a way to pay off financial debts caused by criminal fines via forced labour and that the modern idea of the reformation of criminals was entirely foreign to the Biblical writers.³⁹ Others have looked to the restorative and instructive nature of the cities of refuge⁴⁰ to the humanizing and familiarizing that would have resulted from the temporary debt servitude of those who could not pay criminal fees,⁴¹ to argue that restoration was clearly the main driving force of Pentateuchal laws. While I am inclined to agree with Pritkin's assessment of the aims of the OT laws,⁴² I do not see them as applying directly to captivity in the OT. Barring those instances that were discussed above of captivity at the hands of foreigners and the unfaithful, captivity was designed to be a temporary solution until sentencing of a more long-term, restorative solution could be reached.

The above discussion has shown that prison was most certainly a reality for the characters and writers of the Bible—even if long-term captivity and forced labour were

found within Egyptian documents.

³⁹ van der Toorn, "Prison," 468. It is certainly debatable whether or not the reformation of criminals is a goal of the modern prison system but that is a debate for another day.

⁴⁰ See Pritikin, "Punishment, Prisons, and the Bible," 717.

⁴¹ See Pritikin, "Punishment, Prisons, and the Bible," 767–68.

⁴² It is also worth noting that Pritkin's interpretations are heavily influenced by later Talmudic and Rabbinic thought.

primarily the work of the nations. The above discussion has all been in service of working toward understanding the cognitive associations in the minds of the biblical authors. We have a good grasp of why there are such visceral connections to chains, immobility, slavery, forced labour, and foreign conquest when prisons are evoked in the OT. What hasn't yet been shown is how prison might connect with darkness. To understand this, we must understand what prison literally *looked* like in Israel. The only significant barrier to this is that the biblical witness gives scant information and what information that is given points to a variety of possible places for captivity. Blumenfeld summarizes this issue as such,

Regarding the types of facilities that were used in the seventeen instances of captivity in the Bible, little is known. The reason lies in the fact that there is a total absence of descriptive information provided in the biblical narrative itself. Consequently, biblical translators have generally rendered Hebrew terms associated with captivity, such as *bet hassohar* (Gen. 39:20, etc.), *bet ha'eisur* (Jer. 37:15), *bet hakkel'e* (II K 17:4, 22:27, 25:27; Jer. 37:15), *bet happekuddot* (Jer. 52:11), simply as "prison," which is a mistake that calls for correction. Are the varied Hebrew designations for prison all meant to be understood generically? Surely, the biblical text meant to distinguish differences in type by the use of different Hebrew terms for prison facilities or confinement.⁴³

Despite Blumenfeld's despair, he is either being hyperbolic or is not looking hard enough as there certainly is not a "total absence of descriptive information." There is information to be found, but that information isn't entirely conclusive as prison is described in a number of different—often metaphorical—ways. This has led some scholars like Negev and Gibson to conclude that captivity was done on an *ad hoc* basis and that "no special

⁴³ Blumenfeld, "Imprisonment and Forced Detention in the Bible," 46.

place was set aside for detention.”⁴⁴ If we accept the above conclusions about short-term holding cells in Israel versus long-term forced labour among the nations, it would make sense for there to be a lack of permanent penal infrastructure.

Though prison is at times described as a “house” (בית־משמרת), “prison house” in 2 Sam 20:3; בית האסירים, “house of captives” in Judg 16:21, 25), Kraus argues that the most common structure used for captivity was a cistern (בית אי־מים) as is seen in Jer 38:6 and Zech 9:11.⁴⁵ There is sufficient internal evidence to suggest that cisterns were a common means of imprisoning a convict until sentencing could be passed.⁴⁶ Exodus 12:29, Isa 24:22, Zech 9:11, Lam 3:2–6 all speak of prisons being a cistern or pit. Isaiah 24:21–22 describes Yahweh’s judgment on the nations who will be “gathered as a collection of prisoners into a pit—they are shut up in a dungeon, and after many days, they will be judged.” This verse could not be more clear that at least in Isaiah’s time it was customary to place prisoners in a pit in order to impede their movement. Joseph too was lowered into a desiccated cistern until his fate could be decided by his brothers in Gen 37. The most noteworthy example of a cistern being used as a holding cell is in Jer 38 wherein the prophet is tossed into Malchiah’s pit/cistern (בֹּר). This example is particularly noteworthy for this dissertation as the cistern is described as being not entirely waterless but muddy enough to sink into (cf. Lam 3:53–55).

⁴⁴ Negev and Gibson, eds., *Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land*, 441.

⁴⁵ Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 64. Kraus argued that the Psalms that I will be exploring shortly are part of the form critical category of the “prayer songs of the accused and persecuted” which fed into his interpretation of the dark metaphors in these psalms as metaphors for captivity. I am far less interested in how Kraus came to his conclusions as I am eager to take note of his careful recognition of the CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS metaphor where many other commentators have assumed other metaphors.

⁴⁶ Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 69.

Since cisterns were such a common and seemingly convenient way of housing prisoners for interim periods, it would be wise to better understand what cisterns in the ancient Near East were like so that we can get a better grasp of what sorts of cognitive metaphorical connections would have been made by authors and readers. As a nice refresher from the lack of archaeological and anthropological interest in darkness and a relative lack of extant evidence for what prison looked like in the ancient Near East, we have an overwhelming amount of both evidence and interest in cisterns in the ancient Near East.⁴⁷ Throughout the semi-arid areas of the Near East that do not have year-round freshwater springs or rivers, there have been excavations of not only texts that speak of the use of cisterns but also several excavated cisterns.⁴⁸ A number of cisterns have been found to the north and west of Jerusalem, but the majority of them are open-air pools.⁴⁹ The study by Ore et al. of cisterns in the Negev Highlands spanning from the Middle Bronze to Early Iron age found four types of cisterns: (a) open cisterns dug in soft clayey marl, (b) bell-shaped cisterns (c) small bowl shaped cisterns and (d) roofed cisterns.⁵⁰ It is fairly safe to say that open cisterns were not used as holding cells, but the latter three would all function well for this purpose. These latter three types of cisterns were generally cut out from the native limestone or chalk with the fourth employing a roof

⁴⁷ While I am basically ignorant of the science of agriculture, I have noticed a trend among modern journals that are studying ancient techniques of rainwater collection as a means of combating drought and making more ecologically-sustainable farming practices in more arid regions. I am more than happy to reap the benefits of this growth of archaeological interest in ancient cisterns. See Mays, "Survey of Ancient Water Technologies in Semi-Arid and Arid Regions" and Abdelkhaleq and Ahmed, "Rainwater Harvesting in Ancient Civilizations in Jordan."

⁴⁸ Abdelkhaleq and Ahmed, "Rainwater Harvesting in Ancient Civilizations in Jordan," 85.

⁴⁹ Wilkinson, "Ancient Jerusalem," 39.

⁵⁰ Ore et al., "Ancient Cisterns in the Negev Highlands," 1.

made from excavated chalk or stone.⁵¹ While neither stone is overly difficult to dig through with metal tools, escaping a cistern by digging your way out would be impossibly time-consuming—if even possible at all. While neither limestone or chalk are quite porous enough to allow much sediment to seep in, build up from rainwater sediments would have been inevitable, which would have been the cause of the mud buildup of Jeremiah’s cistern-prison. While cisterns would have certainly been cooler than above-ground ambient temperatures, evaporation was an obvious concern which would have been alleviated by the use of a roof. Since Jeremiah’s cistern remained wet enough to sustain a muddy bottom which would have otherwise dried up more quickly, it is safe to assume that he found himself in a roofed cistern. It cannot be overstated how terrifyingly dark, cold, and uncomfortable the inside of a muddy, roofed cistern would be for Jeremiah or any other prisoner. Such a miserable fate would have no doubt created deeply visceral cognitive connections between prison, darkness, the deep, and even death. Beyond the darkness of a deep cave, crypt, or mine, there would be no place darker than the ancient sensory deprivation tanks that were prison-cisterns. There is clear evidence that the prison frame would have included the imagery of dark, wet, muddy, and inescapable cisterns for the authors and earliest audiences for these texts.

4.2 Captivity and Darkness in the OT

Some might argue that the above discussion of prisons in the ancient Near East and pre-exilic Israel is off-topic from this dissertation, but I believe that the prevalence of this

⁵¹ Ore et al., “Ancient Cisterns in the Negev Highlands,” 1.

metaphor in the OT and its alienness to modern English readers has necessitated its inclusion. The degree to which this metaphor is overlooked by scholars despite being a common and even key metaphor—especially in the Psalms and Isaiah as will be shown below—indicates a need for a better understanding of captivity and the conceptual metaphors that are used to describe it. Of the many works on Isaiah and darkness in the OT read as research for this dissertation, Cornelius’ dissertation is one of the few to recognize the CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS metaphor and study it in much detail.⁵² The following section will proceed much in the same way as chapter 3 but with a focus on the metaphor CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS.

This metaphor occurs in a number of places in the OT with a number of them marked by the phrase “sit/dwell in darkness.” To “sit/dwell in darkness” is a potential idiom for captivity, slavery, and exile but it must first be determined whether or not the instances of this phrase in the OT constitute a discernible trend. I echo the words of Weston W. Fields in his exploration of the motif night as danger:

Although I am focusing on a single motif, it should be marked that a motif in isolation is not important by itself. Its importance transpires in the recurrence in combination with other motifs. Its recurrence may be explicit (i.e., there is literary confirmation of instances of recurrence) or implicit (i.e., there is no surviving instance of recurrence, but its usage leads one to predicate recurrence based on the way it is employed).⁵³

To begin my exploration of this potential idiom, I will first examine Isa 42:7 and 49:9 which both could not be more abundantly clear in their use of “sit in darkness” as a

⁵² Cornelius, “The Theological Significance,” 129–34.

⁵³ Fields, “The Motif ‘Night as Danger’ Associated with Three Biblical Destruction Narratives,”

metaphor for captivity. The majority of scholars would agree that Isa 42:7 and 49:9 are to at least some extent using darkness as a metaphor for imprisonment—whether that imprisonment is literal or figurative.⁵⁴ In 42:7, those who are imprisoned in a dungeon are in parallel with those who sit in darkness which would indicate some form of connection between the two. The repetition of מָן between these two cola shows how closely connected these two lines are. While the BLINDNESS frame is evoked in the first cola, the main frame in focus here is clearly CAPTIVITY. Ross connects the two frames together:

The fact that those whom the Servant leads ‘do not know’ their way (v. 16) likely refers not only to the exiles not imagining their own deliverance, but also from the spiritual blindness resulting from pagan idolatry; the deliverance in view is greater than any expectation as it is both internal and external.⁵⁵

Poulsen, Jones and Scharn also argue that Isaiah is mixing metaphors and instead suggest that the LIGHT here is representative of INSTRUCTION and SALVATION, and thus the DARKNESS is both IGNORANCE and CAPTIVITY (more on the former pairing in the next chapter).⁵⁶ I would agree that Isaiah is likely cleverly mixing dark metaphors. As will be seen in this chapter and the next, Isaiah has a penchant for using darkness to describe blindness and ignorance, as well as captivity.⁵⁷ Likewise, Isaiah’s use of פָּקַח can refer to either the opening of eyes as well as the loosening of fetters.⁵⁸ Isaiah is here highlighting

⁵⁴ Beaulieu, *Behold! My Servant*, 174; Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40–55*, 166; Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40–55*, 166; Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile*, 138–40; Hanson, *Isaiah 40–66*, 47; Poulsen, *God, His Servant, and the Nations in Isaiah 42*, 112; Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 403; Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 100–01.

⁵⁵ See also, Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40–55*, 165; Ross, “Motific Analysis of Isaiah,” 27.

⁵⁶ Jones and Scharn, “Prison and the Bible,” 225; Poulsen, *God, His Servant, and the Nations in Isaiah 42*, 112.

⁵⁷ Nilsen, “The Creation of Darkness and Evil,” 11; Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 403.

⁵⁸ Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile*, 139.

Yahweh's ability to provide salvation from both internal and external threats to human flourishing.⁵⁹ Goldingay would agree but he argues this connection is even closer as "Yhwh's saving action leads into and in the right way (cf. 42.16; 50.10; 51.4–5)."⁶⁰ Salvation and walking in Yahweh's ways can be a bit of a chicken or the egg scenario as they are often linked in a bi-directional causal relationship and both salvation and wisdom are both connected to light metaphors while captivity and ignorance are marked by dark metaphors in Isaiah and beyond.

Isaiah 49:9 shares much of the same language as 42:7 and as such scholars who recognize the metaphor pairing SALVATION IS LIGHT, IMPRISONMENT IS DARKNESS in 42:7 also recognize it in 49:9.⁶¹ Not only is there the shared language of light and darkness, salvation and prison, the phrase "and I form you and make you as a covenant to the people" of 42:6 is identical with 49:8, further indicating that these two passages should be read together.⁶² Here Isaiah speaks of a day when Yahweh will bring salvation to his people (49:8–9). Yahweh's re-settlement plan begins with telling prisoners to come out and those who are in darkness to appear. Both cola are connected to the main verb by a pronoun (ﷲ) thus indicating that these two actions are done together and that those in darkness and the prisoners are either the same or are closely connected. This verse is also particularly interesting for this study as it gives us a glimpse into the cognitive aspects of this metaphor with the vivid picture that Isaiah paints; the prisoners are not simply freed,

⁵⁹ Tucker, *Isaiah*, 369.

⁶⁰ See also, Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 132; Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40–55*, 165.

⁶¹ Beaulieu, *Behold! My Servant*, 174; Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile*, 140.

⁶² Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 213.

but they are *called out* of darkness, showing Isaiah's understanding of prison as an inherently dark place and that coming out of that darkness is an integral aspect of freedom from prison.

Between the two above verses, in Isa 47:5 darkness and silence are used as a metaphors for Daughter Babylon's eventual fate. The judgment vetted out against Babylon is talionic in nature⁶³ and focused on her inevitable reversal of fortunes from most powerful to utterly powerless.⁶⁴ The key question related to this verse is to what is Isaiah referring when he speaks of silence and darkness. Tucker is undecided whether the silent darkness here describes the underworld or those who are unable to bring testimony for their case.⁶⁵ In the previous chapter of this dissertation it was shown that death is darkness is a recurring metaphor within the OT. Elsewhere Sheol is described as a place of silence that is devoid of the sound of praise (Ps 6:5) but it has been shown in Isa 42:7 and 49:9 that is darkness is also a valid metaphor within Second Isaiah. While Baltzer is correct in noting the use of DEATH IS SILENCE/DARKNESS in this passage, read within this verse's broader context there is more going on here.

Recognizing the flexibility of metaphors of silence and darkness in the OT, Goldingay notes that silence can be a reference to being numbed by terror or grief but can also mean death (Pss 31:17; 94:17; 116:17) and darkness is also highly flexible in its

⁶³ Goldingay et al., *Isaiah*, 404.

⁶⁴ Young, (*The Book of Isaiah*, 234) is not fully convinced that this verse is a reference to captivity but he is adamant that this darkness is a reference to how Babylon would be stripped of her spotlight to instead wallow in "the deepest obscurity"—whether that is through prison, being forgotten, or some other form of humiliation.

⁶⁵ Tucker, *Isaiah*, 411.

metaphorical uses ranging from “the opposite of salvation” to death.⁶⁶ Death would have certainly been an appropriate talionic punishment against Babylon but so too would have been bereavement, exile, and imprisonment. Given the flexibility of the DARKNESS frame and Isaiah’s creative use of it, both interpretations of silence and darkness would fit Isaiah’s focus on the reversal of Babylon’s fates. As was mentioned above, this oracle against Daughter Babylon is structured around reversals of Babylon’s fate such as moving from sitting in security (v. 8) to sitting in darkness (v. 5). Motyer focuses his interpretation of this oracle around these lines of reversal from what is to what will eventually be. He notes that Babylon “loses authority (*silence* replaces dictating the rules to others, 5), liberty (the *darkness* of the dungeon, cf. 42:7) and status (*queen*).”⁶⁷ Brueggemann likewise notes how connected this passages is to surrounding oracles that also speak of reversals of power:

When the Babylonian gods are exposed and delegitimated in 46:1–2, 5–7, it follows readily and inevitably that Babylonian political power will promptly be ridiculed and dismissed in chapter 47; the sole purpose of the gods is to lend ideological support and legitimacy to human power. When the gods go, imperial power is seen to be feeble, illusionary, and without creditability.⁶⁸

Read in terms of the aims of 46:1–7, the focus here is not on the killing of Daughter Babylon’s children, but delegitimizing and humiliating her just as Judah’s king was not killed, but imprisoned and humiliated. The manner of her humiliation in vv. 1–3 is key to understanding the silence and darkness of v. 5. Sitting in dust or ash (v. 1) is a regular act

⁶⁶ Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40–55*, 325–26.

⁶⁷ Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 335–36.

⁶⁸ Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 92.

of mourning as is silence; the milling of grain (v. 2) was a standard activity for prisoners in the ancient Near East and the OT as has been shown in §4.1.1 and §4.1.2; and rape and/or sex slavery (v. 3) was a horrible reality for women in times of warfare.⁶⁹ The talionic humiliation that would be visited upon Babylon would reflect the same bereavement, forced labour, and sex slavery that the Judahites had experienced. Circling back to the aims of this dissertation, v. 5 relies on the metaphors MOURNING IS SILENCE and CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS.

These three examples are quite straightforward in their interpretation but their ease of understanding should not make them any less significant. They set a clear precedent for the SALVATION IS LIGHT, IMPRISONMENT IS DARKNESS metaphor pairing—at least within Second Isaiah. Second Isaiah's use of this metaphor is markedly casual as it involves no explanation as to why darkness is a valid metonymy for imprisonment. This would indicate that Isaiah is drawing upon a metaphor that his audience would have been familiar with. It remains to be shown how widespread this metaphor pairing is throughout Isaiah and the rest of the OT but at the very least these three verses are solid evidence that IMPRISONMENT was seen as a valid entailment of the DARKNESS frame for the writer(s) of Second Isaiah.

With these fairly solid examples from Second Isaiah covered, let us look back to Isa 8:22. Part of a longer oracle against the necromancers of his day and the second oracle of chapter 8, here the prophet curses the people who had become so enamoured with necromancers. There is a brief but rather confounding reference to darkness in v. 20

⁶⁹ Hanson, *Isaiah 40–66*, 118.

where Isaiah says that those who do not speak according to Torah have no dawn (אֵין־לֹ (שֶׁחַר). This strange phrase has no other examples in the OT and has nothing in the immediate context to aid in understanding this cryptic metaphor. Motyer recognizes the importance of the light-darkness motif in Isa 6–12 but often does not clarify what the author meant by darkness while only providing occasional definitions that are sometimes contradictory.⁷⁰ This verse might have been equally as confusing to the Greek translators of Isaiah as they read שֶׁחַר (dawn) as שָׁחַד (= δῶρα, gift or bribe) but even this alternate reading is quite opaque. One option is to read this as an expression of the LIGHT IS LIFE, DEATH IS DARKNESS metaphor pairing and thus not having a dawn could indicate that the people would die because of their pursuit of illicit magic.⁷¹ There are some problems with this view: dawn is a return from darkness and not an entering into darkness so unless Isaiah is saying that those who seek out necromancers forfeit hope in a resurrection, the loss of dawn cannot mean death. What it means to have no dawn will have to be drawn from the context as the lack of dawn here is most certainly referring to the darkness that is elaborated upon in the next two verses.⁷²

The scene in v. 21 describes people passing through the land hungry and distressed. The people being brought to distress and hunger could be a reference to the starvation brought about by siege warfare, but since the people are passing through the land (וְעֵבֶר בְּאַרְצָא), it is more likely that Isaiah is talking about the inevitable march of

⁷⁰ Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, chap. 2. For example, Motyer understands the darkness of 8:22 to be a reference to lack of future hope (p. 99), but later argues that darkness is a reference to sin and death in 8:20–22; 9:1–7; and 11:1–16 (p. 116).

⁷¹ Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 143.

⁷² Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 142.

prisoners from Jerusalem into exile. They look upward, not in petition but in contempt of their God-King who they blame for their distress. In v. 22 the people turn their gaze downward to see only “distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish” (*וְהָיָה צָרָה וְחֹשֶׁכַּה*) (*מִעוֹף צוֹקָה*) thus completing the merism of up and down introduced in v. 21—no matter where they look, there is nothing good to be found. Darkness is certainly not a particularly beneficial reality but exactly what is meant by this darkness could be taken a couple of ways. Those that would interpret darkness as a metaphor for death face a key issue: if there is a connection with the lacking dawn of v. 20 or the coming light of 9:2 and if darkness meant death, then light would have to mean a return from death. Later Christian and Jewish interpretations of Isaiah have argued for bodily resurrection but it is quite debatable whether or not the prophet and his community believed in bodily resurrection.

Smith acknowledges that while being banished into darkness could imply being sent into the grave, it is here being used to describe their inevitable punishment via exile, here described as darkness.⁷³ Smith and Tull note the strong parallels between this verse and the description of the people conquered and led into captivity by the Babylonians in 5:30.⁷⁴ If the prisoners of war are being led through the wilderness, this could be an instance of the WILDERNESS IS DARKNESS, but Isaiah’s threats are not of a return to wilderness wandering but of exile. Earlier in chapter 8 Isaiah spoke in vv. 14 and 15 of

⁷³ Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 213.

⁷⁴ Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 213; Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, 187.

stumbling into a trap and being taken (captive) which further reinforces the fact that Isaiah has captivity in mind and not death.

On their own, these evidences for reading 8:20–23 in terms of the CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS metaphor do not create an ironclad case but going beyond chapter 8 and into chapter 9 further reinforces this interpretation. Tull notes that the references to darkness in 8:20–23 are in stark contrast with the “great light” that those who are “in darkness” will see in 9:2 but he is uncertain what the authorial/redactional intention was.⁷⁵ Rather than attempt to understand the darkness of 8:20–23 on their own, it is wise to interpret these verses as a whole with 9:1–2 as there does seem to be some intention—whether on behalf of an author or redactor—to connect these oracles together. There is some debate as to whether what precedes chapter 9 is to be connected, the explicit reference to times gone by as well as the merism created by light and darkness that is carried forward would suggest that these two are to be taken together.⁷⁶ The opening to chapter 9 provides not only salvation from the problems foretold in chapter 8,⁷⁷ and a reversal of the cursing of the necromancers in 8:21,⁷⁸ but also an interpretive key to how that chapter was using darkness.

Probably due more to its interpretation by Matthew in 4:16 than any cultural biases, this verse is often taken to have an exclusively spiritual meaning where salvation is from the darkness of sin. For example, Widyapranawa interprets this saving light as “the light of a new life, the light of glory and of a new hope (Luke 2:32; John 1:5; 8: 12;

⁷⁵ Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, 189.

⁷⁶ See Williamson, *Isaiah 6–12*, 356–62.

⁷⁷ Tucker, *Isaiah*, 119.

⁷⁸ Keil and Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 159.

Isa. 49:6).”⁷⁹ I won’t debate the validity of this spiritual reading in a Christian, New Testament context, but this interpretation is anything but clear from the immediate context here. Widyapranawa relies heavily on a New Testament understanding of light and darkness but does not allow darkness to speak for itself in its own OT context.⁸⁰ While not stated explicitly, such interpretations also assume that Isaiah is using darkness as a shorthand for death, perhaps in part due to Isaiah’s use of צלמות and its traditional interpretation as being related to death. Those who have translated it as “shadow of death” have consequently concluded that Babylon is being equated with Sheol,⁸¹ but, as is discussed in §3.1.3, Williamson is correct to conclude that an abstract noun for darkness is what is best to be understood here.⁸² As he does with Isa 42:7, Goldingay understands darkness as a metaphor for both ignorance and death as well as light as a metaphor for understanding and salvation (presumably from death).⁸³ I appreciate Goldingay’s recognition of the IGNORANCE IS DARKNESS, UNDERSTANDING IS LIGHT metaphor pairing that will be discussed later, but it would not make sense for Isaiah to be using darkness as a metaphor for death in this instance. Such an oracle of redemption from death certainly fits within a Christian interpretive lens, but as was stated above, it does not fit particularly well within First Isaiah.

⁷⁹ Widyapranawa, *Isaiah 1–39*, 52.

⁸⁰ I would venture to suggest that Luke and John would have recognized the captivity is darkness metaphor that Isaiah is using here but they were typologically reading this passage and mixing two metaphors: CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS and SIN IS PRISON. This passage from Isaiah highlights the need for an expansion of this study into the intertestamental period and New Testament but such an expansion will have to wait for another day.

⁸¹ Mercer, “Isaiah 9,” 152; Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaia*, 65.

⁸² Williamson, *Isaiah 6–12*, 363–66.

⁸³ Goldingay, *The Theology of the Book Called Isaiah*, 27.

Ross also argues that Isaiah is mixing metaphors for light and darkness here. He understands the light of 9:2 in terms of the light of תורה from 8:20, thus what dawns upon the people is the truth of God's instruction above the dark (i.e. ignorant/foolish) falsehoods of the necromancers and mediums.⁸⁴ Reworded along the lines of this dissertation, Ross is (partially) interpreting this verse in terms of the KNOWING IS SEEING, IGNORANCE IS DARKNESS metaphor pairing that will be discussed in the next chapter of this dissertation. But Ross does not stop there as he goes on to argue that Isaiah is blending multiple metaphors and is using light and darkness as bridge metaphors to connect Israel's vacillation between folly/idolatry/darkness and wisdom/tōrâ/light with the two possible fates they face of either exile/captivity/darkness or restoration/salvation/light.⁸⁵

Ross' connection to the light of תורה in 8:20 creates a cohesive unit out of these verses that makes interpreting the light of 9:2 in terms of the WISDOM/TORAH IS LIGHT metaphor much easier. What is not quite as clear in Ross' argument is how this light is connected to salvation or how darkness is connected with captivity in this verse. To better understand this latter connection, we must look forward to the next few verses of chapter 9. The light of 9:2–3 is one which breaks the yoke, staff, and rod of those who had oppressed Isaiah's people and has brought a fiery end to the oppressor's armies. The yoke, staff, and rod all have obvious cognitive connections with enslavement and 9:5 clarifies that this slavery is due to their (former) status as prisoners of war. The light

⁸⁴ Ross, "Motific Analysis of Isaiah," 18.

⁸⁵ Ross, "Motific Analysis of Isaiah," 18–19. More on the WISDOM/TORAH IS LIGHT metaphor in chapter 5.

metaphor here is certainly salvific,⁸⁶ but not in the way Widyapranawa assumes. The metaphor SALVATION IS LIGHT is fairly common throughout Isaiah—nowhere more apparent than in chapter 60 as Niranjan Kanmury has shown,⁸⁷ but is also present within extrabiblical sources as well. For instance, within the prologue to Hammurabi’s code, he states that his purpose as king is “to make justice prevail in the land, to abolish the wicked and the evil, to prevent the strong from oppressing the weak, to rise like the sun-god Shamash over all humankind, to illuminate the land.”⁸⁸ Between the evidences within Isaiah and evidences from extrabiblical sources, Roberts concludes that “Darkness is used here as a metaphor for political oppression and injustice, and light is the contrasting metaphor for political release from such oppression.”⁸⁹ Circling back to his work on the SALVATION IS LIGHT metaphor in Third Isaiah, Kanmury combats Christian assumptions that sin and/or death are what Isaiah proclaims salvation from and shows that the salvation (Third) Isaiah preached was from captivity and exile for both Israel and all nations.⁹⁰ Therefore, this light of salvation—at least within this immediate context—is salvation from the darkness of captivity and slavery.

There is further support from other scholars who read the darkness and light of 8:20–9:2 in terms of the CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS, SALVATION IS LIGHT metaphor pairing,⁹¹

⁸⁶ Wenk, “Light,” 172. Wenk goes on to connect this light of salvation to Israel’s role as a light for the nations in 42:6. Although his exploration of the light is salvation metaphor in Isaiah is quite brief and begs for a more dedicated exploration of this metaphor in a later work, it is sufficient to show that Isaiah (along with the wisdom tradition) did see salvation in terms of light metaphors.

⁸⁷ Kanmury, “Light as a Metaphor of Universal and Eternal Salvation in Isaiah 60.”

⁸⁸ Hallo and Younger, eds., *The Context of Scripture*, 1:336.

⁸⁹ Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 148–49.

⁹⁰ Kanmury, “Light as a Metaphor of Universal and Eternal Salvation in Isaiah 60.”

⁹¹ Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1–39*, 82; Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 99.

but these disparate pieces of evidence are much more conclusive when all put together. Reading through this subsection with the CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS, SALVATION IS LIGHT metaphor pairing in mind, a cohesive picture is painted: the lack of dawn in 8:20 would be a loss of hope for release from captivity. 8:21 is an obvious description of the prisoner's march through the wilderness that leads to a narrative nadir in 8:22 where the people can only see despair and imprisonment before them before they are eventually cast into a life of captivity here represented by *וַחֲשֹׁכָה* and *וְאִפְלָה*. The story turns around in 9:2 when there is a reversal of the deportation and captivity that has brought gloom (*מַעֲוֹף*) and anguish (*צִוְקָה*) to the people in 8:22 via a vision of great light that shines on the people in a land of darkness—that is a land of captivity and forced labour (v. 4). Recalling again Ross' interpretation of this subsection as a blending of the metaphor pairs WISDOM/TORAH IS LIGHT, FOLLY/IGNORANCE IS DARKNESS and SALVATION IS LIGHT, CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS, the authorial/redactional intent of 8:20–9:2 was to connect the cause (ignorance of Torah) to the effect (exile) and then connect the exile to Yahweh's eventual salvation which is also represented in terms of light/darkness language. Put in a different way Isa 9:2 works as an interlude that connects chapters 8 and 9 on both a thematic/metaphorical level but also on a theological cause/effect level all using the flexibility of darkness and light metaphors in ancient Hebrew thought.

This metaphor of SALVATION IS LIGHT, CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS is also the crux of Isa 58:6–10. In this lengthy tirade against the people's hollow religious showboating, Isaiah states that it is only after justice for the poor and oppressed is practised that their

light will break out like the sunrise (אֲזִי יִבְקַע כְּשֶׁחֵר אֶרְדָּה), rise in the darkness (וְזָרַח בַּחֹשֶׁךְ), and darkness be as high noon (וְאֶפְלֹתָהּ כְּצַהֲרָיִם). A number of metaphorical uses of light and darkness have already been discussed in this dissertation with metaphors of WISDOM/TORAH IS LIGHT, IGNORANCE/FOLLY IS DARKNESS to be discussed in the next chapter so there are a few interpretive options here. Despite the flexibility of the DARKNESS and LIGHT domains, the SALVATION IS LIGHT, CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS is the clearest interpretation of this passage's use of darkness and light. Childs recognizes the recurring images of release from captivity ("loosen the cords of evil," "untie the straps of the yoke," "letting the oppressed go free," etc) that echo not only Isa 42:6ff and 49:8ff but Amos 5:14; Isa 1:16–17; 33:15, Micah 6:6 but concludes that these connections are "more generated by the reader from the book of Isaiah as a whole than from an intentional authorial reference."⁹² Childs provides no reason as to why the writer(s) of Third Isaiah would have unintentionally made such clear references to earlier material—especially material from within the Isaianic corpus. It is much more likely that these connections were conscious and drew upon the imprisonment imagery of chapters 42 and 49 which includes darkness as an image for imprisonment. Beyond these obvious references to imprisonment within vv. 6–10, it is also important to remember the Persian period context in which Third Isaiah was written. As Westermann notes, this chapter is a "direct repercussion" of the exile and is akin to Deuteronomy's laws of fair treatment of slaves due to their status as freed slaves.⁹³ In essence, Isaiah is saying that the people's

⁹² Childs, *Isaiah*, 478.

⁹³ Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 337.

freedom is contingent on them not throwing their own community members into debt servanthood and prison. One less conclusive but still fascinating proof that darkness here represents imprisonment while light represents freedom is provided by Westermann: he notes that there are strong lexical connections between Isa 58:9–12 and Job 11:13–20 and in particular Isa 58:8 and Job 11:17.⁹⁴ This passage from Job is an important interpretive key for Isa 58 because the list of blessings in Job 11 are the result of repentance following imprisonment in 11:10. It would be safe to assume that the darkness as bright as noontime of Job 11:17 is the undoing of the imprisonment in 11:10 and it is possible that Isaiah is drawing from this material as well as chapters 42 and 49.

With these five passages from Isaiah, there is fairly strong evidence that at least Isaiah and his followers understood imprisonment and exile in terms of darkness. It remains to be seen if the metaphor CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS can be found elsewhere in the OT. While not as frequent in other books as in Isaiah, the metaphor pairing SALVATION IS LIGHT, CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS can be found in a few other places.

Moving on to Lam 3:2, 6, these verses are another interesting example of darkness being used to describe captivity. Taken in isolation, v. 6 appears to be referring to the place of the dead as being darkness but read together as a rhetorical unit, vv. 1–7 are speaking about being imprisoned within the walls of a besieged city. At first Dobbs-Allsopp argues that the focus of these verses is on

isolation, abandonment, and encirclement. The series of verbs used in these lines (being besieged, enveloped, imprisoned, walled about, shut out, and blocked) poignantly articulates the extreme helplessness,

⁹⁴ Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 339.

abandonment, and solitude that are among the chief burdens of suffering and for which there is no way out except from 3 beyond that stands outside the suffered experience.⁹⁵

However, Dobbs-Allsopp assumes that the Lamenters takes a brief detour from his extended metaphor to talk about the realm of the dead once darkness is brought up.⁹⁶ He provides no explanation for this supposed diversion from the ongoing siege metaphors and makes no attempt to connect this verse to its broader context of siege imagery—the rest of which he exegetes quite thoroughly. I do not wish to single out Dobbs-Allsopp as this example is simply one of many examples of commentators assuming that darkness is always a metaphorical shorthand for death.⁹⁷

If we instead understand this verse as being part of the bigger picture of vv. 4–9, a different interpretation is clear—one that shows the poetic brilliance of the Lamenters. In these verses there is a repeated structure of problem→siege imagery: wasting flesh (v. 4)→besieged by tribulation (v. 5), dwelling in darkness (v. 6)→inescapable walls/chains (v. 7), ignored prayers (v. 8)→hemmed in paths (v. 9). It is clear that the ENTRAPMENT/SIEGE frame is the focus of this section,⁹⁸ and thus the darkness described in this verse related to that feeling of claustrophobia. Hens-Piazza believes that this darkness is a description of social isolation or of being “alone in the dark,”⁹⁹ but interpreting this darkness as a metaphor for the experiences of prisoners of war is more likely given the obvious warfare imagery here. While it is true that the Lamenters likens

⁹⁵ Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 112.

⁹⁶ Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 112–13.

⁹⁷ See also, O'Connor, *Lamentations*, 1049.

⁹⁸ Hens-Piazza, *Lamentations*, 42–43.

⁹⁹ Hens-Piazza, *Lamentations*, 43.

his fate to those who had died long before, he is not saying that he is indeed dead but is experiencing something similar to those who had passed. This could easily be a reference to the Lamenters' predecessors who had themselves lived through or died in the midst of a siege. Berlin notes that this word תִּלְאָה in v. 5 is used in Num 20:12 to describe the hardships of slavery in Egypt and again by Neh 9:32 to describe the tribulations under Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia.¹⁰⁰ She concludes that this word has strong undertones of "exile and the hardships on the road to exile (cf. Exod 18:8, where *tēlā'ā* is used for the hardship on the road out of Egypt)."¹⁰¹ Perhaps the long-since-dead that the Lamenters is here referring to are his ancestors who perished in the wilderness. He could also be likening the enclosed nature of the siege to being trapped in a small, cramped, dark tomb like the deceased are.¹⁰² One final option that best connects with the prison frame introduced in the following connected verse is that the Lamenters is describing his scenario as being like a dark, inescapable prison. What connects these interpretive options together is that vv. 2 and 6 must be read within their context in a passage that is clearly talking about the siege and prisoner's march experienced by the Jerusalemite exiles.

Psalm 107 twice refers to darkness in vv. 10 and 14 (השך and צלמות in both verses) in connection with captivity and forced labour. These two verses are quite clearly using the metaphor IMPRISONMENT IS DARKNESS and scholars overwhelmingly accept this

¹⁰⁰ Berlin, *Lamentations*, 90–91.

¹⁰¹ Berlin, *Lamentations*, 90–91.

¹⁰² Berlin, *Lamentations*, 116.

interpretation.¹⁰³ Interpretations of the irons and bonds of these verses range from the Babylonian exile¹⁰⁴ to a more generic image of imprisonment.¹⁰⁵ Given what was discussed in §4.1.1 and §4.1.2, and the strong parallels between this Psalm and Isaiah's description of the Babylonian captivity in 49:9 and 9:2,¹⁰⁶ the former interpretation seems more likely. DeClaissé-Walford et al. understand the cognitive connections between darkness and imprisonment in terms of caves or underground storerooms where prisoners might have been kept.¹⁰⁷ While there are a few connections to the DEATH frame in this passage, they are tied to the primary metaphor of IMPRISONMENT as indications of the diminished freedom and vitality of prisoners.¹⁰⁸ Kartje argues that the hampering of movement in this section is key to the Psalmist's understanding of imprisonment and that the primary metaphor here is LIFE IS A JOURNEY that is here being halted.¹⁰⁹ While Kartje's understanding of the purpose of prison in the ancient Near East mirrors the findings of this dissertation, the LIFE IS A JOURNEY isn't a clear feature of this Psalm as it moves from the afflictions of various people from prisoners to the poor to sailors.

While still in the book of Psalms, Ps 143:3 is another potential example of darkness being a metaphor for imprisonment even if this metaphor is not as clearly stated as Ps 107. At first glance, this verse can be taken as suggesting that sitting in darkness is

¹⁰³ Bergant, *Psalms 73–150*, 45; Broyles, *Psalms*, 333; Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 465; DeClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 617; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:246; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 100; Kartje, *Wisdom Epistemology in the Psalter*, 152; Longman, *Psalms*, 376; Schaefer, *Psalms*, 267; Weiser, *The Psalms*, 687.

¹⁰⁴ McCann, *Psalms*, 1117–18.

¹⁰⁵ Allen, *Psalms. 101–150*, 64.

¹⁰⁶ Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:251.

¹⁰⁷ DeClaissé-Walford et al., *The Book of Psalms*, 622.

¹⁰⁸ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 100.

¹⁰⁹ Kartje, *Wisdom Epistemology in the Psalter*, 152.

an idiom for being dead—whether that death is physical¹¹⁰ or social.¹¹¹ Allen understands the Psalmist's lament as being a hyperbolic response of being on death's door from the constant harassment from his enemies that has left him "in a state of psychological shock and humiliation."¹¹² However, Allen can only come to this conclusion by bypassing the 𐤁 that begins the second subclause; the Psalmist is not himself already dead, but he simply sits in darkness in a manner similar to those who had previously died.

Given the lexical queue "sit in darkness" that has been shown to be used as an indicator for the CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS metaphor, it would be wise to consider whether or not the darkness of this verse is at least partially captivity and not just death. This is the interpretation that H. Schmidt argued. He saw this psalm as describing the period of imprisonment leading up to standing before a trial (*Blutgericht*) and thus sees the darkness of v. 3 being representative of the dungeon wherein the Psalmist languishes.¹¹³ Schmidt argues that the Psalmist's life has not yet been crushed but that this is a potential future reality if the Psalmist's enemy has their way.¹¹⁴ He also notes the prevalence of courtroom language throughout this psalm as it opens to Yahweh as judge over his proceedings as ultimately, "so steht er 'im Gericht' gar nicht den Verleumdungen böser Menschen, sondern einem viel höheren Ankläger gegenüber, und da versagt ihm die Stimme."¹¹⁵ Goldingay, Bratcher, and Reyburn note that the last line of this verse is

¹¹⁰ e.g., Schaefer, *Psalms*, 334.

¹¹¹ Broyles, *Psalms*, 404.

¹¹² Allen, *Psalms. 101–150*, 284.

¹¹³ Schmidt, *Die Psalmen*, 249.

¹¹⁴ Schmidt, *Die Psalmen*, 249.

¹¹⁵ Schmidt, *Die Psalmen*, 249. "He is 'in court'—not against the slander of evil people, but against a much higher accuser, and he is left speechless"

identical to Lam 3:6¹¹⁶ which was determined above to most likely be a reference to imprisonment and not death. Both Kraus and Anderson see both prison and death as viable interpretations of בַּחֲשֵׁכִים¹¹⁷ but Kraus points out that one need not choose between death and captivity as prison was understood as the “sphere of death” as trial is often just a step away from execution.¹¹⁸ Given the prevalence of legal language in this psalm and the use of “sit in darkness,” it is best to understand this darkness as being the darkness of captivity awaiting trial.

One last verse to examine in this chapter is Mic 7:8, This verse is also seen by many commentators as referring to captivity.¹¹⁹ As Dempster has pointed out, there is a progression within this rhetorical unit from “punishment and defeat to rebuilding and restoration to a salvific influence on the nations and finally a focus on a magnificent picture of God!”¹²⁰ Gignilliat takes a slightly different approach to this passage and argues that it is Yahweh’s legal defence (רִיב of 7:9) that is designed counter his own legal dispute from 6:1–8.¹²¹ Either way, the focus here is still the reversal of punishments and the nature of this punishment in v. 8 is falling and sitting in darkness. While נָפַל is sometimes used more generally to describe something physically falling downward (2

¹¹⁶ Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:673; Bratcher and Reyburn, *A Translator’s Handbook*, 1151. I may have called this use of darkness metaphorical, but Bratcher and Reyburn call this the literal reading while disaster/calamity could be taken as the metaphorical reading. I have noted this because I find it an interesting example of how slippery the lines between metaphorical and literal speech can sometimes be. I have thus argued that darkness can function as a metonymy for prison and is thus a form of metaphorical speech but we are not always inclined to notice metonymys as metaphorical speech. See also, McCann, *Psalms*, 1251 who notes further connections to Isa 42:16.

¹¹⁷ Anderson, *Psalms*, 927.

¹¹⁸ Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 537.

¹¹⁹ Barker and Bailey, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 127; Freedman and Andersen, *Micah*, 24e:579; Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 58; Waltke, *Micah*, 434.

¹²⁰ Dempster, *Micah*, 141.

¹²¹ Gignilliat, *Micah*, 224–25.

Sam 14:11; Job 31:22; Prov 26:27), it more often describes someone falling in military combat. This could be taken as an indication that Micah is telling his “enemy” (probably Edom) to not gloat over the deaths of those felled in combat and thus the sitting in darkness that is parallel is likewise about death. That said, if the conquest of Jerusalem is what is in mind here (which it probably is),¹²² interpreting darkness as a metaphor for imprisonment is still appropriate as many Jerusalemites experienced captivity and forced relocation instead of death.

As I argued with the above example from Ps 143:3, given the phrase “sit in darkness” here, we must consider the likelihood that darkness here describes captivity. Waltke briefly toys with interpreting darkness here as a metaphor for blindness citing Isa 42:6–7, 16; and 49:9.¹²³ In the end he concludes that “[d]arkness is a metonymy of adjunct for the anticipated gloomy captivity or captivity . . . As darkness is a metonymy for captivity, light is a metonymy for freedom.” Mays chose to describe the deliverance of Judah as “an *exodus* from darkness to light”¹²⁴ but doesn’t go any further connecting this verse to the dark exodus from slavery into freedom from Israel’s history. Instead he connects this verse to Pss 35:6 and 143:3 as well as Lam 3:2, 6 describing light and darkness as metaphors for hope/guidance and hopelessness/lostness.¹²⁵ While I partially agree with Mays’ interpretation of Ps 35:6 (see §5.2.2), and I appreciate his keen eye for the lexical similarities between these texts, I have discussed the other verses above and

¹²² Shaw, *The Speeches of Micah*, 201.

¹²³ Waltke, *Micah*, 754.

¹²⁴ Mays, *Micah*, 158 (emphasis added).

¹²⁵ Mays, *Micah*, 159.

have found them to be relying on the CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS metaphor.¹²⁶ Another problem with Mays' interpretation is highlighted by McKane: Mays interprets this light as a present, hope-giving reality whereas McKane shows this to be more likely a future salvific act within this context.¹²⁷ As has been discussed above, certainly for Second Isaiah and likely for Micah as well, this light of salvation is salvation from dark captivity in Babylon.

4.3 The Final Verdict on Captivity and Darkness

With the above examples a case has been made for the prevalence of the CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS, SALVATION IS LIGHT metaphor pairing. This isn't the most commonly used dark metaphor in the OT, but its importance—especially for Isaiah—seems to be relatively overlooked even if commentators do recognize it in more obvious examples like Isa 42 and 49. It has also been shown that the bulk of examples of the IMPRISONMENT IS DARKNESS metaphor is marked by the phrase “sit in darkness.” Lastly, the above examples are most likely all using darkness as a metaphor for the imprisonment of exile—that is the state of being a prisoner of war—with the exception of Ps 143:3 and perhaps Micah 7:8. Given the late dating of the texts discussed in this chapter, it is possible that this metaphor was developed later on in Judah's parlance, wasn't popular until the

¹²⁶ Barker and Bailey, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* who both rely on these verses to argue that the darkness of this verse is a metaphor for captivity. See also, Smith-Christopher, *Micah*, 216.

¹²⁷ See also, Barker and Bailey, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 118; McKane, *The Book of Micah*, 219.

experiences of captivity were more widespread among Judahites, or a combination of both.¹²⁸

Thus far my focus has been on dark metaphors in the OT that represent more explicit threats to human life such as DEATH IS DARKNESS and CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS. I have shown connections between these two metaphors in this chapter, but in the following chapter I will discuss the most prevalent and most foundational ICM for DARKNESS with its connections to entailments such as HIDDENNESS, BLINDNESS, IMPERCEPTIBILITY, and IGNORANCE. These entailments have been mentioned briefly throughout the last two chapters and in the following chapter I will discuss them in much greater detail.

¹²⁸ For an example of the development of a metaphor throughout the Bible, see Klingbeil, “Metaphors That Travel and (Almost) Vanish.”

CHAPTER 5: BLINDNESS, OBSCURITY, IMPERCEPTIBILITY, AND DARKNESS

Stars, hide your fires; Let not light see my black and deep desires.

William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*

It is clear from the previous two chapters that the ancient Hebrew understanding of darkness in relation to calamity is certainly different from our own today in the developed world. It was shown in the previous chapter that one of the recurring ICMs that guided metaphorical uses of darkness in Isaiah and also in a few key places in the OT is that of a dark prison. While this metaphor is quite alien to modern English readers, its cognitive basis makes sense when carefully examined. Reflecting further back to chapter 3, the connections between death and darkness were discussed with a few key takeaways: darkness is not itself seen as an existential threat to humans—whether alive or dead—but is merely a useful metaphor for describing the great unknown of the netherworld. The OT's use of dark metaphors and imagery to describe the realm of death shows a degree of similarity between Israel and much of the rest of the ancient Near East and Egypt that also portrayed the land of the dead and the setting sun as one of impassible and wholly opaque darkness. These connections between death, darkness, and imperceptibility were only briefly covered in the previous chapters, but they will take centre stage in the present chapter. What follows will be a more in depth exploration of instances in the OT where DARKNESS is used for its entailments of UNKNOWABILITY, IGNORANCE, BLINDNESS, and MENTAL IMPAIRMENT. Beyond creating a better understanding of the OT's use of darkness

to describe that which is unknown and unknowable, this chapter will also create better clarity as to why darkness is so often used to describe the land of the dead.

To Cornelius, mystery was the “unifying function” of darkness throughout the OT.¹ While I would certainly not go so far as to say that it is a “unifying function” the MYSTERY/UNSEEN/UNKNOWN IS DARKNESS group of metaphors is certainly one of the most important and well-represented uses of darkness in the OT. What is discussed in this chapter is only those verses that focus solely on darkness’ ability to create a sense of mystery/the unknown since chapter 3 dealt with the mystery of death and chapter 6 will explore the mysteriousness of Yahweh’s theophanies. But even with these limits in place, this chapter has the greatest number of verses to explore due simply to the prevalence of this metaphor.

5.1 Darkness Hides Things from our Eyes

Before moving on to more figurative passages that focus on the mental states or abilities of human thinkers (subjective darkness), I will begin with the more grounded category of verses that use darkness to describe that which is unseen, unseeable, or hidden. In some cases, things are purposefully hidden in darkness for more mundane reasons to keep them away from prying hands, while other things are hidden in darkness for more nefarious reasons. In some of the verses to be discussed, darkness and hiddenness are explicitly evoked together while in other instances, the HIDDENNESS frame is implied with the use of DARKNESS as a metonymy for it.

¹Cornelius, “The Theological Significance,” 174–85.

5.1.1 Darkness Obscures Physical Sight

Darkness' ability to obscure things from human sight is at the crux of the ninth plague of darkness in Exod 10. Carol Meyers outlines a number of ways the darkness of this plague have been interpreted: as a precursor of the dark mourning at the midnight hour when the firstborn would be slain, as a precursor to the midnight crossing of the sea, as a reference to the pre-creative chaos of Gen 1, as a polemic against the Egyptian sun god, and as a reference to the dark realm of the dead.² The majority of these interpretations could certainly fit within the broader context of the Pentateuch, within the immediate context of Exodus and on a practical level for the Egyptians suffering under this plague, the threat of darkness was more practical than philosophical or theological. Stuart outlines the many ways in which this darkness threatened the people of Egypt: it made travel impossible, made criminal activity untraceable, was eventually lethal to crops, and was seen as a punishment only able to be wielded by the gods.³ What is peculiar about vv. 21–22 is that this utter darkness (חֹשֶׁךְ-אֲפֹלָה) is tangible (וַיִּמַּשׁ חֹשֶׁךְ). The description of this darkness as חֹשֶׁךְ-אֲפֹלָה in v. 22 is an interesting way of expressing a superlative by combining two synonyms and is thus fairly straightforward.⁴ Conversely, the tactile (מִשַׁשׁ) darkness of v. 21 has been the topic of some debate.⁵ Most scholars simply understand this palpable darkness as a unique turn of phrase that is merely metaphorical or perhaps literal due to some sort of meteorological phenomenon; Hamilton connects the palpable darkness of

²Meyers, *Exodus*, 87–88.

³Stuart, *Exodus*, 214.

⁴Davies, *Exodus 1–18*, 669.

⁵See Davies, *Exodus 1–18*, 668.

Exod 10 with the audible silence of 1 Kgs 19:12 to give precedence for such a strange idiom.⁶ A minority of scholars understand the darkness as either a direct object or an adverb: Johnstone proposes translating this phrase as “so that one may grope in the dark”⁷ while Stuart considers “a darkness that will require groping around” to be the superior translation.⁸ Stuart justifies his position by connecting this with Moses’ outstretched hand and other verses in the OT that speak of people groping in darkness.⁹ This reading is further supported by Judg 16:26 (Qere) where the only other use of this word in the Hiphil is found within the context of Samson groping the pillars of the Philistine temple. Likewise, in Deut 28:28–29 (see §6.2.1 for a deeper study of these verses) Yahweh threatens madness, blindness, and confusion of heart in v. 28 and being reduced to groping (משש) at noon in the same way the blind must grope (משש). Davies allows for such an “inwardly causative” interpretation but prefers treating חשך as an adverb and thus renders the phrase as “and people may grope in darkness.”¹⁰ Whether taken as a causative or as an adverb or even as an adjective for the darkness, the end result for the purposes of this dissertation is that this darkness’ ability to rob people of their ability to see, understand, and interact with the world around them is a key aspect. The key here is that the people are rendered blind and must rely on their sense of touch in order to “see” their surroundings. Again, while a case can be made for connections with Gen 1, theomachy, death, the sun god, etc, the immediate focus in this chapter is how darkness

⁶Hamilton, *Exodus*, 172.

⁷Johnstone, *Exodus 1–19*, 197.

⁸Stuart, *Exodus*, 215.

⁹Stuart, *Exodus*, 215.

¹⁰Davies, *Exodus 1–18*, 668.

made the Egyptians effectively blind by hiding the world from their sense of sight and forcing them to grope around for spatial awareness as Samson would later do.

The clearest examples of darkness being used as a metonymy for hiddenness are found in Isa 45:3 and 19. In v. 3 darkness (חשך) is in parallel with secret places (סתרים) and so we must discern how Second Isaiah understood the relationship between these two words. Some have argued that the dark hiding place of this verse is Babylon but leave it at that.¹¹ While it is likely that Second Isaiah believes that Cyrus will plunder Babylon, it would be strange to suggest that Babylon was considered a “dark” and “hidden” place by the Isaianic community. Instead, these “dark” and “hidden” places within Babylon are the hidden storehouses that Yahweh will open up to Cyrus as remuneration for his services to God.¹² This understanding is made clearer when the previous two verses are kept in mind: Isaiah opens his commissioning oracle to Cyrus by outlining how God would eliminate various barriers to the king’s progress. First political rivals and physical defences are nullified in v. 1, then religious barriers and their defences in v. 2, then in v. 3 God will remove barriers to Cyrus’ economic progress such as where riches are hidden. Tucker connects this verse with v. 3 and suggests that the hidden treasures are the knowledge of God which would be a fascinating blend of metaphors with darkness and knowledge playing double duty as the wisdom that would bring Cyrus true light is itself hidden in darkness.¹³

¹¹Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40–55*, 291; See Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, 19 for a refutation of Goldingay’s interpretation.

¹²Watts, *Isaiah 34–66*, 156.

¹³Tucker, *Isaiah*, 394.

Darkness and סתר are paralleled again in v. 19 where the prophet has a secret place in parallel with a “land of darkness.” Watts suggests that the land of darkness is Sheol and thus Isaiah would be speaking against the practice of necromancy.¹⁴ Young, following Torrey, concludes that Isaiah isn’t here referring to Sheol or the pre-creative darkness of Gen 1 as some have suggested; instead, “the point appears to be to contrast God’s method of revelation with the dark [that is, obscure] practices of the heathen soothsayers.”¹⁵ Given the identical verbal queues, it is more likely that the writer is challenging the reader to compare and contrast the hiddenness of riches with the openness of God’s speeches. Payne and Goldingay conclude, as I have, that darkness connotes hiddenness which is in contrast to the openness with which Yahweh speaks.¹⁶ Given Isaiah’s parallelism between darkness and hiddenness in v. 3, the question posed in v. 15 about God’s hiddenness, and the repeated parallelism between darkness and secrecy in v. 19, the focus of v. 19 is clearly on the openness of Yahweh’s self-revelation. Not only is that revelation readily available, it is also clearly communicated as Isaiah clarifies that Yahweh did not expect his followers to seek him out in the pre-creative and chaotic תהו that he had spoken into at creation.¹⁷ Even if the parallelism of the previous verse is not quite as apparent, it is abundantly clear here that Isaiah is employing the DARKNESS frame in order to highlight its obscurative properties. Not only this, but Isaiah could also

¹⁴Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 246–47; Herbert, *Isaiah 40–66*, 70.

¹⁵Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 212; See also, McKenzie, *Second Isaiah*, 83; Watts, *Isaiah 34–66*, 162; Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 173.

¹⁶Goldingay and Payne, *Isaiah 40–55*.

¹⁷Goldingay and Payne, *Isaiah 40–55*.

be keeping a running theme about the hidden nature of divine wisdom that he solely yet openly reveals.

Similarly, Dan 2:22 also has סֵתֶר and חֹשֶׁךְ in parallel. Rather than showing the openness of God's speech as in Isaiah, Daniel instead uses the metaphor of HIDDENNESS IS DARKNESS to exalt God's ability to perceive what would be otherwise imperceptible to humans. Here God's perfect knowledge is represented as light (נְהִירָא עֲמָהּ שְׂרָא) which has the power to reveal deep and hidden things. Connecting this verse with Job 12:22–24, Sharon Pace notes that this verse is right at home with its wisdom roots that connect wisdom and light but goes beyond this to note that God's wisdom penetrates darkness as it does in Job.¹⁸ She goes on to show how this verse fits in well with the narrative portion of Daniel given this section's focus on God's sovereignty over Babylon's gods who are here shown to be essentially blind while God's gaze is all-seeing.¹⁹ Newsom takes a different angle that focuses on Daniel's wisdom over his Babylonian counterparts but in the end recognizes that darkness here refers to that which is hidden.²⁰ Miller and House combine these two foci and agree with their interpretation of darkness as hiddenness and light as wisdom.²¹

Psalm 139 picks up some of these same themes. In vv. 7–12 the Psalmist, in a spirit of praise rather than Jonah-like rebelliousness, asks where in the known world he could travel to flee God's presence and Spirit. From the heights of heaven to the depths of

¹⁸Pace, *Daniel*, 63–64.

¹⁹Pace, *Daniel*, 64.

²⁰Newsom, *Job*, 73.

²¹See also, House, *Daniel*, 66; Miller, *Daniel*, 70.

Sheol, on the back of a bird to the depths of the ocean, escape is, thankfully, impossible. In vv. 11–12 the Psalmist muses that were he to cover himself in a darkness so potent that it overcame the light of day, even then God’s gaze could pierce it as his vision is so potent that even night as bright as day to him. While vv. 7–10 focus on God’s geographical immanence, 11–12 praise God’s infinite ability to see and understand.²² Brueggemann and Bellinger, following McCann, argue that divine knowledge is the focus of this whole psalm with the repetition of verbs of searching, testing, and especially knowing permeating this psalm.²³ The previous interpretations assume that the Psalmist’s question is a cheery rhetorical one, but Hossfeld, Zenger, and Bergant all see the Psalmist’s question as a genuine desire to escape God’s gaze using darkness’ ability to hide objects.²⁴ Goldingay takes a slightly different approach from the previous interpretations. He understands darkness as a reference to Sheol and suggests that Yahweh is characterized by the realm of light and thus the darkness of Sheol would logically be a good place to hide from his gaze.²⁵ While darkness has been shown to be a recurring metaphor for death in the OT, this is an unnecessary interpretive jump to make that muddies the clearer interpretation of darkness as a metonymy for hiddenness—even if that hiddenness might be in Sheol. This focus on God’s all-seeing gaze continues into v. 13 where the Psalmist’s God has sovereignty over not just the great mystery of the child growing in their mother’s womb but is also sovereign over that person’s whole life even before their first breath. Here darkness and light here are providing human scale for the

²²Briggs and Briggs, *Psalms*; Prinsloo, “The Psalms”; Schaefer, *Psalms*, 325–26.

²³Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 582.

²⁴Bergant, *Psalms 73–150*, 66; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 541.

²⁵Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:632–33.

complex ideas of the unknown and God’s omniscience that is not only concise but also poetically brilliant.

5.1.2 Darkness Obscures Evil

No doubt many who will read the previous chapters will be wondering why I made no mention of the sorts of cloak and dagger deeds that occur under the cover of darkness in the OT. There are most certainly a number of verses that connect darkness with nefarious actions, but none that equate darkness with evil deeds in the same way various English idioms do (e.g., “dark deeds/thoughts”). Rather, the majority of times darkness is used in conjunction with evil deeds is meant to highlight the clandestine nature of those evil deeds and how darkness is often used as a tool to facilitate them by hiding them.

In the OT, a handful of sinful or at least questionable actions are mentioned as being committed under the cover of darkness from espionage (Josh 2:5), to burglary (Job 24:16), to adultery (Prov 7:9), to machinations of evil (Isa 29:15), to idol worship (Ezek 8:12). While there are a number of questionable actions that occur at night in the OT—actions that we would describe as morally “shady”—they are not described using any sort of dark metaphors. Of course some commentators have assumed and/or anachronistically applied such metaphors to texts. For instance, the wicked “rebels against the light” in Job 24:16–17 do not rebel against any sort of moral light but against their diurnal nature to capitalize on the convenience of the night’s ability to mask their deeds.²⁶ It is this subversion of the natural order that connects this verse to its broader context in vv. 13–

²⁶Alden, *Job*, 19; Driver and Gray, *Job*; Kravitz and Olitzky, *The Book of Job*, 148.

17;²⁷ only through undoing their nature as diurnal beings (ie rebelling against the light) can they hide their deeds that also un-create the order of life, property, and marriage.²⁸ Wilson, Kravitz, and Olitzky connect these verses to the broader argument of Job 24 by suggesting that Job's main issue here is that God, whose light reveals darkness and whose gaze pierces it, has allowed evil to go unabated under the cover of night.²⁹

Rather than providing cover for evil as in Job 24:16–17, the darkness in Ps 91:5–6 obscures the natural evil of a plague. A number of scholars have argued that this plague that stalks in darkness is some sort of night demon.³⁰ Such an interpretation seems unlikely given how grounded the rest of this psalm is³¹ and this would also infer that there is also a corresponding day demon. Derek Kidner finds this proposal inconsistent with the focus of this psalm and an unnecessary interpretive leap that isn't grounded within its internal logic; this reading misses the extended merism of night and day, darkness and light that is carried forward from v. 5.³² This interpretation is also a needlessly literal reading of what is more naturally an anthropomorphization of דָּבָר. Rather than opaque references to obscure demons that are only elaborated in later rabbinical works, the focus

²⁷Longman, *Job*, 303.

²⁸Balentine, *Job*, 369; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 235; Longman, *Job*, 303; Newsom, *Job*, 511.

²⁹Kravitz and Olitzky, *The Book of Job*, 148; L. Wilson, *Job*, 110.

³⁰Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, 223; Oesterley, *The Psalms*, 408; Schaefer, *Psalms*, 229; Weiser, *The Psalms*, 608. Here Oesterley claims that this psalm makes “quite obvious” references to demons in later verses, but does not clarify what he means by this. To him, these demons are personified in the (unmentioned) witches in this psalm who are the ones responsible for casting the spells that the Psalmist is countering with his prayer. Oesterley fails to find much proof (if any) for his claims. See also, Bratcher and Reyburn, *A Translator's Handbook on the Book of Psalms*, 803 for a range of interpretations of these supposed night/day demons.

³¹Dunn and Rogerson, eds., (“Psalms”) note how this Psalm fits in well with the Hebrew wisdom tradition and how, like the sapiential tradition, is focused on Yahweh's protection of the righteous. Assuming that this Psalm is part of the wisdom tradition, superstitions of night demons seems out of place within the practical foci of Hebrew wisdom literature.

³²Kidner, *Psalms 73–150*, 86.

in these verses is how threats can come at any time of day but so too does God's protection though the night/day, dark/light merisms.³³ Darkness is most likely not a reference to a demon but it is simply being used to obscure evil, even if obscuring that evil is ineffective. One last note on this psalm is that it is a prime example of shadows being seen as a sign of blessing rather than bane in v. 1 (בְּצֵל שְׁדֵי יְהוֹנוּן).

A good example of darkness obscuring evil is in Isa 29:15. Here the prophet notes the absurdity of evil and its attempts to veil its machinations under the cover of darkness. That the prophet is referring to the mundane darkness of closed-door meetings seems fairly obvious. Wildberger extends the metaphorical entailments of darkness beyond just hiddenness to DEATH: building off the use of darkness in Ps 88:7, he argues that the deeds of the Israelite leadership “thus take place within the region where death rules.”³⁴ Wildberger's interpretation is quite creative but there is not enough in the context of this verse to suggest that Isaiah is employing the DEATH IS DARKNESS metaphor here. Still, Wildberger does make a valuable connection between Isaiah's description of the practical atheism of Israel's leaders and the Psalmist's description of the wicked in 64:6 and 94:7.³⁵ Ross further notes that Isaiah's description of Israel's leaders is reminiscent of his earlier descriptions of those who do not follow Yahweh (8:20–9:2)³⁶—a connection the leaders would have no doubt been aware of and scandalized by. Much of this chapter is focused on the reversing of fates and the subversion of expectations so Isaiah employs an ironic

³³See also, Longman, *Psalms*, 330; Tate, *Psalms 50–100*, 454.

³⁴Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 98.

³⁵Wildberger, *Isaiah 28–39*, 98.

³⁶Ross, “Motific Analysis of Isaiah,” 22.

tone in this verse.³⁷ It is clear that committing “deeds in the dark” makes them unknown but who are they unknown to? Isaiah clearly knows about them—so too does his God. The only ones truly in the dark are the wicked who are unaware of the futility of their attempted subterfuge. In their attempts to hide outside knowledge of their deeds, they themselves have become unknown. The questions the wicked ones pose can either be taken as paranoid ramblings or childish boasts, but either way Isaiah seems to hold the wicked in mockingly low regard.

Psalms 74 has a clever use of darkness that could potentially be using DARKNESS IS HIDDENNESS, the WILDERNESS IS DARKNESS, or perhaps even a combination the two metaphors. In v. 20 the Psalmist pleads with God to remember his covenant for the dark recesses of the land had become filled with mugger’s hideouts. Bratcher and Reyburn believe that these dark places are probably hideouts but they suggest that they could be the dens of thieves and muggers, or even where the righteous are being executed.³⁸ Goldingay understands this clause to be proleptic and translates it as “pastures of violence fill the land so that it has become a land of dark places” but he only does so by understanding darkness here as a reference to “distress, dread, mourning, perplexity, and confusion.”³⁹ Mourning is certainly connected to the colour black but its connections with darkness are generally via קָדָר. Perplexity and confusion are certainly common entailments for the DARKNESS frame as this chapter will argue, but these entailments

³⁷Cornelius (“The Theological Significance of Darkness,” 30) argues that the reversal of light and fates is the primary use of dark nouns when the subject of transitive verbs.

³⁸Bratcher and Reyburn, *A Translator’s Handbook on the Book of Psalms*, 656.

³⁹Goldingay, *Psalms*, 2:644.

don't seem to fit the context in any meaningful way. As for distress and dread, while darkness is certainly not a pleasant thing in the OT, darkness does not seem to be regularly employed as a shorthand for these entailments.

The focus in this verse seems to be the use of darkness as a means of obfuscation, as it would only make sense that the violent would find their dwelling in literally dark places. However, given what was discussed in §3.2.3 with the potential metaphor of THE WILDERNESS IS DARKNESS, the dark places of the land could be referring to the uncivilized wilderness. Perhaps the Psalmist is mixing metaphors as concern is less about urban muggers, and more about highwaymen making travel impossible. Since this Psalm indicates a breakdown in political structures around the Psalmist, it is quite likely that political chaos would exacerbate crime outside of the more heavily patrolled cities.

Darkness is certainly a potent threat to human life in the above examples, but on a practical rather than an ethical level. Darkness is a threat because it makes unknowable what is easily discernible in daylight. As Lemmelijn puts it, “[d]arkness as such is associated with the *unheimliche*—with that which is ‘beyond control.’”⁴⁰ Darkness’s ability to conceal dangers makes it a deadly threat multiplier rather than a threat unto itself.

5.2 Wisdom is Light, Folly is Darkness

In the above discussion darkness was shown to be evoked by the authors of the OT at times to highlight its obscurative properties. This entailment of hiddenness for darkness guides a number of other dark metaphors in the OT. One of these metaphors is

⁴⁰Lemmelijn, “Light and Darkness,” 559.

IGNORANCE/FOLLY IS DARKNESS. Just as darkness can hide physical objects, so too can it obscure knowledge. Just as darkness can be a metonymy for that which is unseen, darkness can also be a metaphor for the unknown.

Christopher Johnson has shown in his study of the cognitive connections between perception frames (SEE, HEAR) and knowledge frames (KNOW, LEARN, UNDERSTAND) among English-speaking children, there is good evidence that we use metaphors such as KNOWING IS SEEING to create human scale for understanding and knowledge. If we look at our own language, we can see how KNOWING IS SEEING. If you *look* more carefully at both the previous sentence and the end of this sentence, you will *see* what I mean. Johnson has studied how visual experience is connected with the acquisition of new mental input in infants and thus sight and cognition are connected to the same vocabulary: “Can you see the kitty? What do you see in the box.”⁴¹ Although I have not found any research studying the metaphor IGNORANCE IS DARKNESS across cultures and languages but it is certainly present in at least English, German, and French idioms such as “he is in the dark,” “*eine dunkle Vorstellungen von etwas haben*,” and “*perdu dans la noirceur*.” Given how ubiquitous the experience of having darkness obscure sight and knowledge is to early human development, it would come as no surprise if this metaphor was just as ubiquitous. It will be shown that the ancient writers of the OT were also guided by this ICM in how they describe ignorance, folly, knowledge, and wisdom.

⁴¹Johnson, “Learnability in the Acquisition of Multiple Senses.”

5.2.1 Wisdom is Light

Just as I did in the previous chapter when I discussed the metaphor pairing LIFE IS LIGHT, DEATH IS DARKNESS, it is worth taking a brief side route to explore the positive counterpart to the FOLLY IS DARKNESS, WISDOM IS LIGHT metaphor pairing. This dissertation is certainly not the first work to recognize the prevalence of the WISDOM IS LIGHT metaphor throughout the OT. For instance, Matthias Wenk notes how

Especially the sapiential books and some of the Psalms reflect the idea that the Torah is ‘light’ and thus brings ‘light’ (orientation and successful living) to a person walking in the ways of the Lord: Sir. 32:16; Ps. 43:3; 119:105; Pr. 418–18[sic]; 6:23; 20:27 (where the LXX states that the $\phi\omega\varsigma$ $\kappa\upsilon\rho\acute{\iota}\omicron\upsilon$ watches over the righteous). This notion is also reflected in Isaiah 51:4, however this time with a universal (‘missiological’) perspective: ‘Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation: The law will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations.’ Hence, the Torah will ultimately become the light for all the world, and through it God’s justice will fill all creation.⁴²

We will not cover all of the verses mentioned above, let alone all possible verses that employ this metaphor, as such a digression would be outside the focus of this study, but we will look at a few key examples. Special consideration will be given for examples where both sides of this metaphor pairing are employed.

To begin, Pss 43:3 and 119:105 are both very clear examples of the wisdom is light metaphor. In the former the Psalmist petitions to God to send light and truth that they might lead him. The Psalmist’s downcast mood and feelings of rejection would indicate along with this verse that the Psalmist was feeling adrift without God’s wise council. Not much can be said of Ps 119:105 that hasn’t already been said. The Psalmist

⁴²Wenk, “Light,” 171.

very plainly states that GOD’S WORD—that is his Torah—IS A LAMP AND A LIGHT. As one of the archetypal wisdom psalms, this grounding of the lofty concept of divine wisdom with a light metaphor fits right in with the wisdom tradition.

Another very clear example of this metaphor is in Isa 2:2–5. With some striking similarities to Isa 60 (more on this verse below), the first five verses of Isa 2 depict the future of Zion as a priestly university metropolis from whence Torah flows and to which the nations flock. In v. 5 Isaiah urges his listeners to walk in Yahweh’s light (וַיֵּלֶכְהָ בְּאוֹר (יְהוָה)). Barker believes that this light is a representation of Yahweh’s presence shining through a sunrise.⁴³ Given the focus of the prior verses on Yahweh’s wise paths (v. 3, LIFE IS A JOURNEY), it is more likely that Yahweh’s light is a metaphor for his Torah and/or wisdom. This is made even more clear as Isaiah goes on to contrast the nations’ future Torah observance with Israel’s present disregard for Torah in vv. 6–8. Isaiah is here creating a complex blend of two separate metaphors. First, is what William Ross has dubbed “YHWH IS A LAMP TO A PATH”⁴⁴ which itself assumes the second metaphor, LIFE IS A JOURNEY. Ross sees this metaphor of TORAH/WISDOM IS LIGHT is an integral aspect of Isaiah’s message that he is here attempting to firmly establish:

Early in Isaiah, then, metaphorical imagery is employed to create, or at least recognize the *symbolic*, although not exclusive, association of light with *tôrâ* in a priestly role. It is notable that this passage unveils, or at least rhetorically establishes, the *symbol* of light. A strict metaphorical image complete with clarifying source domain is therefore not strictly necessary to trigger the concept of *tôrâ* when the light motif is employed.⁴⁵

⁴³Barker, “Isaiah.”

⁴⁴Ross, “Motific Analysis of Isaiah,” 15.

⁴⁵Ross, “Motific Analysis of Isaiah,” 16.

In other words, Isaiah is working to solidify in the minds of his reader a symbolic, metaphorical connection between light, wisdom, and Yahweh's Torah. Although he does not address the possibility of such a connection, given all the examples of the SALVATION IS LIGHT metaphor throughout Isaiah, there is certainly some avenues open to exploration of the connections between Torah, wisdom, light, *and* salvation. As much as such a discussion piques my interest, it will have to wait for a separate work.⁴⁶

One last note on this verse is the idea of Yahweh being a lamp could also change how we interpret Job 19:8, Ps 35:6, and Jer 23:12, at least on an inter-textual level, as possible references to confusion about or perhaps due to a lack of Torah understanding. Ross interprets Isa 2:3 as employing the metaphor "TÔRÂ IS YHWH'S MAP" that builds together with v. 5 give to "form the concept that one walks in YHWH's ways by means of following his *tôrâ* map. Doing so is considered walking in his light."⁴⁷ Following this metaphor, to walk along a dark path is to wander without Yahweh's light-giving Torah map. I am not about to suggest that such an interpretation would work in these three verses from within its immediate context, but this could also be an avenue for later elaboration in a separate work.

5.2.2 Ignorance and Folly are Darkness

Wenk notes a few examples of light representing wisdom in the sapiential books—often in relation to the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor. Not only does light function as a metaphor

⁴⁶Hayes comes close to exploring the opposite of the salvation-wisdom connections in Isaiah. In his article, "'A Spirit of Deep Sleep,'" Hayes explores the connections between divinely-induced blindness/folly (FOLLY IS BLINDNESS/DARKNESS) and divinely-imposed destruction.

⁴⁷Ross, "Motific Analysis of Isaiah," 15–16.

for wisdom in the wisdom books, so too does darkness represent ignorance and folly. This ignorance is often described as darkness upon someone's path just as Yahweh's Torah and wisdom are a lamp upon that life journey.

One such example of light and darkness on a path being contrasted is Job 29:3. Here Job wistfully remembers the days when God illuminated his path as he walked in/through darkness. Again, while it would be possible to apply our modern English understanding of darkness as a shorthand for trouble and light as a shorthand for blessing,⁴⁸ this does not fit with the rest of Job's speech here. He is not remembering God's provision in difficulty, but is remembering when he was at the top of his game (בְּיָמֵי חַרְפִּי) and when he was still a recipient of God's favour.⁴⁹ Alden and Wilson note that Job's security and blessing was the direct result of God's guidance and thus the light of God's wisdom was the source of his prosperity, not a metaphor for that prosperity.⁵⁰ As Job puts it in the following verse, he wishes for a return to the days when he was privy to God's council (סֹד). Considering the close connections with Ps 119:105, the primary metaphor here seems to be GUIDANCE/WISDOM IS LIGHT with darkness functioning as a its antithesis to further reinforce the poet's primary metaphor. Newsom comes to similar conclusions. Although she argues that light metaphorically represents security rather than guidance or wisdom, she does conclude that "[d]arkness represents unseen dangers that cannot be eliminated from the world. But the one who is illumined by Gods light may see and avoid them in contrast to the one whose light is extinguished and so blunders

⁴⁸Habel, *The Book of Job*, 409; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 258.

⁴⁹L. Wilson, *Job*, 122.

⁵⁰Alden, *Job*, 263; L. Wilson, *Job*, 122.

helplessly into danger (18:7–10).”⁵¹ Longman connects this verse with Eccl 2:12–13 and similarly understands darkness as folly while light is wisdom.⁵²

Moving backwards in Job to 19:8, here Job claims that God has “set darkness upon [his] paths” which, in conjunction with the first half of the verse, is referring to the sense that God is actively impeding Job; one cannot traverse a blockade any more than a path shrouded in total darkness and so he feels as if the very progress of his life has been halted. Newsom connects this verse with Lam 3:8–9 and Hos 2:6 where impeded pathways signify losing control of one’s walk in life.⁵³ Newsom is correct in recognizing the use of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY but the issue is not the loss of control but the combined issue of God’s active impeding of his life and God’s passive removal of his guiding wisdom. Habel and Hartley come to the same conclusion that the impassable wall and the dark path symbolize Job’s sense of being trapped in his current misery with no discernible way out.⁵⁴

Another indictment of the wicked that uses darkness to describe ignorance is in Eccl 2:14. Here the wise, who is well-equipped with eyes in his head, is contrasted against the fool who “walks in darkness.” Given the verbal link of walking in darkness between this verse and Isa 9:2 it would be possible to interpret this verse as employing the IMPRISONMENT frame but this interpretation would find no contextual support. Crenshaw understands the darkness that the fool walks in to be death,⁵⁵ but in

⁵¹Newsom, *Job*, 537–38. See also, Lemmelijn, “Light and Darkness,” 564.

⁵²Longman, *Job*, 338.

⁵³Newsom, *Job*, 475.

⁵⁴Habel, *The Book of Job*, 300; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 195.

⁵⁵Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 84.

Ecclesiastes (and the rest of the OT) the absurdity of universal mortality is one of the main foci so it makes no sense that only the fool would die. While the sight of the wise is contrasted by the lack of vision of the fool, here eyes and blindness are clearly being used metaphorically; sight is providing human scale for the more complex idea of wisdom and/or knowledge, while walking in darkness provides human scale for the lack of wisdom, cognitive abilities, proper decision making skills, and forethought of the fool. If WISDOM IS SIGHT, then to the Teacher, the opposite is also true and FOOLISHNESS IS BLINDNESS.⁵⁶ As Garrett puts it, the wise have not only sight but fore-sight to recognize problems before they arise while fools “are always surprised by events that befall them.”⁵⁷ Longman sums up this interpretation succinctly:

The first half of the verse continues the rather bland affirmation of the benefit of wisdom over folly. It also extends the light and darkness analogy but integrates the two very effectively. Wise people walk around with a clear head in a (supposedly) well-lit room. Fools walk around as if blind. The analogy is to life. Wise people can “get on” with the world, but the fool keeps stumbling over obstacles.⁵⁸

Qohelet does not draw this imagery out of thin air but is clearly relying on the wisdom tradition’s use of the WISDOM IS LIGHT, FOLLY IS DARKNESS metaphor pairing. Weeks recognizes this connection between Eccl 2:14 and a number of verses that will be discussed here and concludes that not only is Qohelet drawing upon this tradition but is arguably subverting it: the only thing that the light of wisdom provides is an awareness of one’s eventual fate.⁵⁹

⁵⁶Bartholomew, *Ecclesiastes*, 187–88; Brown, *Ecclesiastes*, 34; Lemmelijn, “Light and Darkness,” 566; Towner, *Ecclesiastes*, 300.

⁵⁷Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 298.

⁵⁸Longman, *The Book of Ecclesiastes*, 86.

⁵⁹Weeks, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, 434.

Psalm 82:5 uses very similar wording as the above examples to describe ignorance as being like walking on a dark path. The psalmist describes the *elohim*—whether gods, earthly rulers, or somewhere in between—as knowing nothing, understanding nothing, and walking in darkness. Schaefer assumes that darkness must be a reference to pre-creative chaos and is thus a metaphor for social ills.⁶⁰ Beyond the needless complexity of SOCIAL DISORDER IS THEOMACHY IS DARKNESS, this mapping isn't at all clear from the context whereas other interpretations of this darkness to find better support from the context. Bratcher and Reyburn disagree with this interpretation and instead believe that this is a darkness “of unrighteousness, corruption, evil, as a result of which all the foundations of the earth are shaken.”⁶¹ Bratcher and Reyburn's interpretation relies solely on the third colon and ignores the first. It is much more obvious and much more common to understand darkness here as a metaphor for ignorance—an ignorance so profound that it shakes the very foundations of order in the world.⁶² Put another way, the *elohim* are not chastised for the profundity of their evil but for the absurdity and banality of their evil. Understanding darkness as ignorance still fits with the shaking of the earth's foundations as it is through wisdom that those foundations were set (Ps 104:24, Prov 3:19). They are not simply trapped in darkness, their willful, obstinate ignorance is represented in the cyclical, imperfect Hitpa'el form of הָלַךְ.⁶³ The Psalmist's use of ignorance and darkness is a particularly ironic critique of the

⁶⁰Schaefer, *Psalms*, 202.

⁶¹Bratcher and Reyburn, *A Translator's Handbook on the Book of Psalms*, 729.

⁶²Broyles, *Psalms*, 276; Estes and Shepherd, *Psalms 73–150*, 35; Longman, *Psalms*, 306; Weiser, *The Psalms*, 560.

⁶³Lemmelijn, “Light and Darkness,” 567–68.

pagan gods; as we covered in chapter 2, the gods of Mesopotamia and Egypt did indeed walk in darkness, but this was understood as an indicator of their omniscience and transcendence. The Psalmist turns this on its head by stripping the gods of both their power and their sentience. Derek Kidner provides a refreshingly new interpretation of this verse as a description of the “plight of the misgoverned and misled, who are ‘destroyed for lack of knowledge’ (Ho. 4:6), and groping for lack of light or of any moral certainties (cf. Is. 59:9ff.).”⁶⁴ Either way, darkness is being employed as a way of conceptualizing ignorance.

A good example of this metaphor is in Ps 35:6. The Psalmist lays out his imprecation against his enemies in vv. 4–6 that culminates in a mental image reminiscent of a modern slasher film; the angel of the Lord, like a machete-wielding terror, pursues the Psalmist’s enemies over a dark and slippery path (cf. Ps 18:33, 36). While being hunted by the Lord’s agents is certainly not something to be desired in this case, it is not something inherently evil;⁶⁵ both Pss 35:6 and 23:6 have an agent of Yahweh pursuing (הִדָּר) someone, but to very different ends. It is also worth noting that the messenger of the Lord is not being called upon to pursue his enemies *into* darkness but along dark paths. Longman, in his commentary on the Psalms notes the Psalmist’s use of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor (in my words).⁶⁶ This would indicate that the obscuring darkness that the Psalmist wishes for his enemies’ lives to be darkened in some way. Looking to this verse’s context, many of the imprecations against the Psalmist’s enemies directly

⁶⁴Kidner, *Psalms* 73–150, 298.

⁶⁵Kidner, *Psalms* 1–72, 160.

⁶⁶Longman, *Psalms*, 172–73.

mirror the attacks the Psalmist suffered at the hands of his abusers, including v. 6.⁶⁷ The desire for Yahweh's messenger to pursue his attackers like a hunter along slippery paths mirrors the cloak and dagger tactics used by the Psalmist's enemies.⁶⁸ In other words, the Psalmist's talionic curse against his enemies is that the unseen dangers that were set against him would come back upon his enemies' heads; that they would not only face dangers but that they would be unaware of those dangers. The use of darkness here is most likely a use of IGNORANCE IS DARKNESS given the focus of vv. 7 and 8 but the DEATH frame is also being evoked in the previous verses. Between the hunting image of רדף in v. 6, the use of nets and pits in v. 7, and the perils of traversing dark, slippery paths, it is unlikely that the Psalmist's enemies will escape unscathed if alive at all. Rather than pick between the DEATH IS DARKNESS or IGNORANCE IS DARKNESS metaphors, it seems more likely that the Psalmist is cleverly relying on the metaphorical flexibility of the DARKNESS frame by using it as a hinge to connect the two frames.⁶⁹

Holladay has argued that Ps 35:6 provided direct inspiration for Jer 23:12 as they share similar themes and even identical wording—in particular the shared imagery of dark, slippery paths for the wicked to traverse.⁷⁰ Given the writer of Jeremiah's familiarity with the Psalter as evidenced by Jer 20:7–18, it is quite possible that he could be drawing inspiration from Ps 35.⁷¹ Rather than the sinner's path being dark *and* slippery as in Ps 35:6, the wicked leaders of Jeremiah's day would face slippery paths *in* darkness

⁶⁷Schaefer, *Psalms*, 87–88.

⁶⁸Longman, *Psalms*, 172–73.

⁶⁹Longman, *Psalms*, 172–73.

⁷⁰See Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 628.

⁷¹Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 628.

in Jer 23:12. That said, the effect is the same: the wicked will be unable to even see how perilous their paths are. While the death frame was certainly obvious in Ps 35, in this example the focus is more on the hidden nature of the dangers. As to what Jeremiah means by path—whether literal or figurative—the prophet is not entirely clear; the prophet’s threat could be seen as either a short-term threat of immediate stumbling as HIDDENNESS IS DARKNESS and thus perils are unknown to the leaders,⁷² or a long-term threat that combines the metaphors LIFE IS A JOURNEY and DARKNESS IS IGNORANCE.⁷³ Since their way will be *like* slippery paths in darkness rather than saying that they will walk on slippery paths, Jeremiah is indicating that their metaphorical way (ie their life) will be as perilous as a slippery, dark road (cf. Prov 4:19 below).⁷⁴ Fretheim argues that Jeremiah’s curse—like that of the Psalmist in Ps 35—is a talionic reversal that brings dark and slippery paths upon men whose on tactics and behaviour could be described as dark and slippery.⁷⁵

Similarly, the Teacher in Prov 4:18–19 explicitly says that “the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.” The darkness of their path is not warned against on moral grounds but because of how their lack of knowledge will be their downfall—here pictured as literally falling down. Schipper connects this verse with the “walking aimlessly” of Deut 28:29, Isa 59:9, and Jer 23:12 as these verses specifically use אַפֵּל rather than a more common form of אפל again showing that the

⁷²McKane (*Jeremiah*), follows Duhm and Rudolph who suggest that the image is that of “wanderers on dangerous mountain paths” but does not connect this to the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY despite this being a natural progression of the image. So too of his interpretation of Jer 13:16.

⁷³Allen, *Jeremiah*, 264–65.

⁷⁴Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 628; Longman, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, 243.

⁷⁵Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 333.

darkness is a consequence of wickedness, rather than a description of it.⁷⁶ Toy agrees with this interpretation as he summarizes vv. 18 and 19 as focusing on the *fortunes* of the wicked and righteous:

These pertain not to his inward moral and religious experiences, but to his outward fate; the reference, as the context shows, is not to the darkening of the intellect and the hardening of the conscience by sin, but to outward uncertainty and misfortunes, such as sudden death and the loss of worldly goods (cf. 1:19, 32; 2:22 etc.).⁷⁷

As the focus of vv. 1–9 was on positive reinforcements for following wisdom, vv. 10–19 focus instead on negative reinforcements against folly and wickedness.⁷⁸ It is not the nature of good and evil that is explored here, but rather their eventual outcomes of fortune and disaster, respectively.⁷⁹ Toy is right to recognize that darkness is not being used as a shorthand for moral corruption, but as a warning of the inevitable and unseen dangers that the wicked are ignorant of. This blend is made even clearer when you consider how these unseen dangers are contrasted against the clear path of the righteous in v. 18. However, Van Leeuwen argues an interesting theological point that perhaps sin and ignorance are not as far off from one another as Toy and I have made them out to be. He argues that

sin is blind, ‘in the dark’ about the path it walks: ‘They do not know what they stumble over.’ This not knowing is an essential part of sin. Folly lives unaware of consequences, of what lied ahead in the path chosen (28:22).

⁷⁶Schipper, *Proverbs 1–15*, 182; See also, Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1–15*, 223.

⁷⁷Toy, *Proverbs*. Toy continues by going back to v. 18 where he interprets the light along these lines: “From the connection the reference is not to the glory of the righteous life, but to its security. The good man walks in safety—his path is clear, and not beset with dangers; the explanation is given in 3:1–26. It is happiness and security from outward evils in this life that is meant.” See also, Clifford and Cox, *Proverbs*, 64.

⁷⁸Wilson, *Proverbs*, 92–93.

⁷⁹Wilson, *Proverbs*, 94.

The young man seduced does not know ‘it will cost him his life.’ (7:23 NRSV; cf. 9:18) The adulterous woman wanders from the path of life and joy (cf Ps 16:11), ‘and she does not know it’ (5:6 NRSV). And those who sin by omission, who deny responsibility for their neighbor, claim, ‘we did not know. . . .’ meanwhile, God knows it and will ‘repay all according to their deeds’ (24:12 NRSV).⁸⁰

Van Leeuwen brings up the BLINDNESS IS DARKNESS metaphor which will be discussed later, and while not explicit in this text, it is an appropriate paraphrase.

Returning again to Jeremiah in 13:16 the prophet warns of a coming darkness that will befall them should the people refuse to start glorifying Yahweh alone. The prophet doesn’t provide a direct object for the Lord’s darkening in either the first or last cola so we are left to assume this darkening is all-encompassing. Martens sees this darkness as referring to imprisonment, but there is not enough within the immediate context here to sufficiently argue this case.⁸¹ Drawing from Prov 4:19, Huey believes that darkness is a symbol of evil, but fails to connect how either verse is using darkness as a shorthand for evil.⁸² That said, Huey does rightly connect this verse with Prov 4:19 which can also be said of the above verses—especially Ps 35:6—that speak of people stumbling on (mountain) paths. Longman comes close to interpreting this darkness according to its entailments of obscuring multiplying and threats noting that “[m]ost moderns living in an age of electric lights have no real experience of deep darkness which can be quite dangerous” but he goes on to suggest that this darkness is referring to the chaos of the pre-creation state.⁸³ The question of theomachy will have to wait until the following

⁸⁰Van Leeuwen, *Proverbs*, 60.

⁸¹Huey, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, 149.

⁸²Huey, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, 149.

⁸³Longman, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, 174.

chapter, but the idea of feet stumbling in pre-creative darkness seems far more complicated than tripping over unseen dangers on a dark footpath. Leslie Allan recognizes this and describes the fate of the false prophets as like a traveller who foolishly continues too late into the evening.⁸⁴

These first three lines are relatively straightforward, but the next line's mention of twilight mountains (הַרֵי נֶשֶׁךְ) infuses a particularly mythical quality to this warning. While it is certainly viable to interpret mountains of twilight as being a metonymy for any time after sunset,⁸⁵ there is a different option available when possible ANE influences are considered. We are unaware of an Israelite mountain range that was named "Twilight" but as §2.3.2 has shown, Judah's neighbours believed that the mountains behind which the sun sets separate the land of the living from the land of the dead. The fate that Jeremiah goes on to describe of double darkness (עֶרְפֶּל and צִלְמוֹת) is remarkably similar to Gilgamesh's description of the land beyond the mountains of Mashu that is densely dark and entirely opaque—so dark that it too requires repetition. While Gilgamesh could not see behind himself, the exiles would face an even greater calamity of being unable to see before their feet—or see any light at all! The ambiguity of צִלְמוֹת is again a stumbling block for interpretation as the case for a mythological reading of "mountains of twilight" would be further enhanced if it meant shadow of death. The prophet-poet steadily ramps up his dark threats from the mundane-yet-deadly threats of darkened paths, to references

⁸⁴Allen, *Jeremiah*, 161.

⁸⁵Gore et al., eds., *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture, Including the Apocrypha*; e.g., McKane, *Jeremiah*; See Smith and Pitard, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, 2:713 for information about the Mesopotamian word KUR (mountain) in relation to the underworld.

to the underworld. Not only does Jeremiah warn of double darkness, he warns of dark paths that are even more deadly than those that Ps 35 and Prov 4 speak of as these dark paths are one-way trip to the land beyond the Twilight Mountains. While a trip across the Twilight Mountains most certainly refers to death, Smith and Pitard argue that the ancient Near Eastern image of the mountains as gates to the netherworld functions as a metaphor for the “inaccessibility of Mot’s abode from the earth”⁸⁶ and thus fits well with the opening line’s warning of opaque darkness.

While speaking of God’s deliverance from the way of evil and its adherents, the writer of Proverbs in 2:13 contrasts the paths of uprightness (ישר) and the ways of darkness (חשך). Schipper brings up two ways of understanding the darkness of the wicked path as either the antithesis of wisdom or is an allusion to death.⁸⁷ While the wicked path certainly leads to premature and sudden death for the wicked, death does not seem to be in frame here. In his commentary, Van Leeuwen contrasts the ways of darkness here and in Proverbs 4:19 and 7:9 with the path of the righteousness in Proverbs 4:18, 6:23, and Ps 119:105.⁸⁸ Rather than assume that darkness is being used as a shorthand for evil or death, it is best to follow the previous examples and understand this verse in light of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor with darkness carrying entailments of IGNORANCE and/or HIDDENNESS.⁸⁹ Bellis understands the metaphorical use of darkness here in a similar way as a metaphor for moral blindness or wilful ignorance.⁹⁰ Toy, in his

⁸⁶Smith and Pitard, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, 2:714.

⁸⁷Schipper, *Proverbs 1–15*, 114.

⁸⁸Van Leeuwen, *Proverbs*, 44.

⁸⁹Van Leeuwen, *Proverbs*, 44.

⁹⁰Bellis, *Proverbs*, 25.

commentary on Proverbs, recognizes the use of the DARKNESS and LIGHT frames as metaphors for folly/danger and wisdom/protection (respectively).⁹¹ Toy also argues that darkness is not the result of the fool's walk as if darkness was an idiom for disaster, but is instead the sphere in which he walks—that is the clandestine nature of his deeds.⁹² This interpretation fits very well with the previous examples discussed here but also better fits the expanded description of the fool's paths in v. 15 as being, in the words of Waltke, “maliciously concealed.”⁹³

Yet again, it should come as little surprise that the metaphorical use of darkness as human scale for ignorance appears in Job—once in 37:19, and again in 38:2. In the former, Elihu says that we humans are unable to draft up our legal case against God “because of darkness” (מִפְּנֵי חֹשֶׁךְ). This literal translation is fairly clear on its own but the CEV's translation seems especially noteworthy: “Tell us what to say to God! Our minds are in the dark, and we don't know how to argue our case.” Lindsay Wilson would agree with this interpretation as he understands this darkness as a metaphor for Job's alleged lack of knowledge.⁹⁴ Even Robert Alden, who consistently argues that references to darkness in Job are metaphors for death, recognizes that this use of darkness is a clear metaphor for ignorance.⁹⁵ Newsom argues for a similar understanding of darkness in this verse and further adds that Elihu contrasts this dark human ignorance with God's bright appearance in vv. 21–22.⁹⁶ This translation fits this verse very well if we assume the

⁹¹Toy, *Job*.

⁹²Toy, *Job*.

⁹³Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1–15*, 182.

⁹⁴L. Wilson, *Job*, 149.

⁹⁵Alden, *Job*, 329.

⁹⁶See also, Konkel, “Job”, 217; Kravitz and Olitzky, *The Book of Job*, 222; Newsom, *Job*, 591.

above idiom of darkened minds in Hebrew is roughly equivalent of having clouded thoughts or being “in the dark” (i.e. ignorant) about a topic. We can also discern this same idiomatic use of IGNORANCE IS DARKNESS in lines 115–18 of Tablet 1 of Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi (“Let me praise the Lord of Wisdom”) which reads,

(My) prayer became like an ever-burning flame,
 My prayer (was) a brawl, like a quarrel.
 I sweetened my lips, (but) they were obscure like darkness,
 I would speak sharply, (but) my conversation (was) a stumbling block.⁹⁷

Here too the darkness of a man makes his prayers ineffectual. This fits the thrust of Elihu’s speech which contrasts God’s transcendence with humanity’s finitude as well as the previous examples of the metaphor IGNORANCE IS DARKNESS in the OT (including the next chapter of Job). What is left vague is the cause of this darkness; are humans inherently dark/ignorant, or does God sufficiently darken himself from us as the *Deus absconditus* as Luther posited.⁹⁸

In Job 38, God opens his rebuke against Job and his friends by asking who has darkened (מְחַשֵּׁךְ) council by ignorant words. To darken (חֲשַׁךְ hiphil) council can be taken two ways. First, God could be accusing Job of muddying the waters of God’s wisdom with his own metaphorically dark ignorance (IGNORANCE IS DARKNESS) as many have interpreted this verse.⁹⁹ Second, God could be accusing Job of veiling God’s true wisdom behind his aberrant theology and thus be combining the first metaphor with that

⁹⁷Hays, *Hidden Riches*, 234. In his discussion of this tablet, Hays notes a number of similarities between this text and the text of Job.

⁹⁸See Rowley, *The Book of Job*, 306.

⁹⁹Alden, *Job*, 344–45; Dell, *Job*; Driver and Gray, *Job*; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 320.

of DARKNESS IS A COVERING.¹⁰⁰ Since the meaning of the hiphil of חָשַׁח is clarified as “words without knowledge,” I would argue that the former interpretation is more appropriate. It is also worth noting that darkening council is not a moral issue; Yahweh is focused on discrediting Job’s logic but not on discounting his moral integrity.¹⁰¹ Job is ignorant of his place in the universe and he is guilty of spreading that ignorance, but not of any moral failing.

Moving on to Job 22:13, we see one of the more intriguing metaphorical uses of darkness in Job. In Eliphaz’ final speech, he accuses Job of diminishing God’s omniscience by putting the question “can [God] judge through the thick darkness?” in Job’s mouth in 22:13. Eliphaz is essentially accusing Job of being a deist or practical atheist (see Pss 10:11; 73:11; Isa 29:15; Jer 23:23–24; Ezek 8:12)—that Job believes that Yahweh’s theophanic darkness and clouds¹⁰² are an impassable barrier between God and man.¹⁰³ Eliphaz’ accusation is particularly bogus as Job explicitly states—rather than questions—God’s ability to perceive through darkness in 12:22.

Since 22:13 and 12:22 are so closely connected, we must first understand that which Eliphaz is responding to. Job 12:13 sets up the themes of wisdom and folly, light and darkness, construction and destruction which run throughout this whole section:

“with him are wisdom and power / to him are forethought (עֲצָה) and understanding/sight

¹⁰⁰Clines, *Job* 38–42, 1096; Guillaume, “Job”. Longman (*Job*, 427) accepts both readings. L. Wilson (*Job*, 151) comes to a conclusion that is a synthesis of the two above options: Job’s theology was not incorrect per-se but it was too “telescopic” in that his theology limited him and his friends to focus solely on Yahweh’s justice.

¹⁰¹Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 491.

¹⁰²Alden, *Job*, 218; Kravitz and Olitzky, *The Book of Job*, 136; L. Wilson, *Job*, 105.

¹⁰³Achtemeier, “Jesus Christ the Light of the World,” 445; Habel, *The Book of Job*, 341; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 329; Newsom, *Job*, 501.

(תְּבוּנָה).” These ideas are expanded upon in the following verse that move from God’s ability to destroy and build up (vv. 12:14–15, 23), discern truth from fiction (v. 16), and subvert conventional power and wisdom (vv. 12:17–21, 24–25). Laid out thematically, there is pattern that emerges with echoes of previous points returning after 12:21. The only problem is v. 22 which speaks of darkness rather than God’s discernment. Verse 22 is a problem for other commentators who consider it outside the flow of Job’s rhetoric.¹⁰⁴

Comparing Job 12:16 and 22, God has ownership over both the misled and those who conned them in v. 16 while God is lauded for his ability to uncover deep, dark things in v. 22. Based solely on the pattern that is apparent, the darkness of v. 22 must be that of either ignorance (vs תוֹשִׁיָּה) or hiddenness (vs שִׁגְגָּה). Both options have solid linguistic connections as well as conceptual connections as we have discerned both metaphors in Job and elsewhere in the OT. Even the final colon of bringing deep darkness (צִלְמוֹת) to light could either be about bringing that which is hidden into visibility (LIGHT IS VISIBILITY) or showing wisdom in the midst of the unknown (LIGHT IS WISDOM). Janzen has suggested that this section is a reply to Zophar’s praise of the hiddenness of God’s wisdom (11:6, 8)¹⁰⁵ thus lending more credence to the former interpretation. If I were forced to pick one interpretation over another, Job is generally more focused on contrasting wisdom and folly than it is speaking about bringing falsehoods to light so I would probably choose the former as the more likely intended meaning but both themes are important recurring themes within Hebrew wisdom literature. In the end, Cornelius is

¹⁰⁴Janzen, *Job*, 103.

¹⁰⁵Janzen, *Job*, 103. Cf. Pope (*Job*, 89) who argues that the darkness here refers to “mysteries.”

correct in concluding that “[d]arkness is utilized in Israelite wisdom to describe what the sages saw as the natural limits on human wisdom, achievement and destiny.”¹⁰⁶

Job 12:25 also has a reference to darkness that can be interpreted in a variety of ways. We will soon discuss examples of people groping in darkness in Deut 28:29 and Job 5:14 as well as those groping like drunkards in Isa 29. In those examples we’ve come to recognize the metaphor COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT IS DARKNESS which is closely related to or perhaps a subset of FOLLY IS DARKNESS—the latter of which has already been seen in this chapter. This further reinforces Job’s rhetoric of showing God’s mastery over both wisdom and power. Understanding darkness here as folly seems to be the clearest interpretation but if we read this verse in conjunction with v. 24, there is a case to be made that Job is using darkness as a metaphor for the wilderness that God banishes the chiefs to. There are strong verbal links between Eliphaz’ speech and Ps 107: Ps 107 has the wicked cast out to “wander in wastes without roads” and their family spread out like an aimless flock of sheep (v. 40–41). This could indicate that the writer of Job 12 potentially had the Psalmist’s wilderness imagery in mind. Again, it is not imperative to select only one as darkness could be pulling double metaphorical duty here as a bridge between the wilderness of v. 24 and the folly of v. 22. By chapter 12 the pen behind Job’s poetry has already proven their ability to blend several metaphors and switch frames from line to line so I would not use this interpretation as hard evidence for how to interpret v. 22, but it does lend some credence to the FOLLY IS DARKNESS interpretation.

¹⁰⁶Cornelius, “The Theological Significance,” 139.

Lemmelijn argues that the images here associated with darkness—depth, death, foolishness, and the wilderness—are all images of chaos and thus this section is focused on the contrast between God and chaos.¹⁰⁷ Admittedly, her conclusion is difficult to argue against as these images all have a close association with chaos in the OT. That said, it seems strange that chaos is not explicitly called out in these verses if it is such a central aspect. These images may be agents of chaos, but the focus here is not on *Chaoskampf* but on God’s supreme sovereignty over power, whether physical, natural, mental, or political. Not only this, but but there is no *Kampf* to speak of. Janzen notes that God is not in conflict with chaos, but Job is frustrated by how God employs these agents of chaos to foil all human attempts to bring order to the world.¹⁰⁸

In Job 22, Eliphaz’ assumptions about his friend may be incorrect, but his rhetoric is on point. Newsom notes how Eliphaz uses the sort of language that will become key to the next chapter—that of God’s dark theophanies—to describe the atheism of the impious:

the shielding dark cloud associated with theophanies (ערפל *’ārāpel*; cf. Exod 20:21; 1 Kgs 8:12; Ps 18:11[12]), the clouds signifying the presence of the divine warrior (cf. Judg 5:4; Ps 18:12[13]), and the heavenly dome formed by God (cf. Prov 8:27; Isa 40:22). Yet the impious exploit different nuances of these images: connotations of obscurity and distance.¹⁰⁹

Without spoiling chapter 6 of this dissertation too much, Newsom is correct in noting the importance of ערפל in Job 22:13 as it is a word that is particularly important for theophanies in the OT. As will be seen in the next chapter (§6.2.2), ערפל often

¹⁰⁷Lemmelijn, “Light and Darkness,” 567.

¹⁰⁸Janzen, *Job*, 103.

¹⁰⁹Newsom, *Job*, 501.

indicates the transcendence and unknowability of God as a being entirely shrouded behind darkness. For now, it is sufficient to say that darkness' ability to obscure sight, whether literal or spiritual, is the focus here in Eliphaz' speech.

Qohelet creates a brilliant blend in 6:3–5 that plays with several frames:

DARKNESS, DEATH, THE GRAVE, THE WOMB,¹¹⁰ and THE UNKNOWN. Here the Teacher grimly determines that the stillborn child is better off than the man who lives a full life with many children. He describes the death of the child as going into darkness (**בָּא וּבְחֹשֶׁךְ** (**יָלַד**) which is certainly a reference to DEATH IS DARKNESS but there is more going on here. The grave and the womb are both literally dark places, but were also figuratively dark to the ancients in that they were beyond the scope of understanding, and so there are very strong connections between these two frames. However, the nature, causes, and even timing of a stillbirth were all a complete and tragic mystery to couples in the ancient Near East—just as they often are today. Not only does the child go into darkness, so too does their name. Since a child would not be given a name until its naming ceremony, the child's name would forever remain unknown and thus covered by darkness which symbolizes forgottenness.¹¹¹ Verse 5 continues to straddle entailments by balancing literal light and darkness with its reference to the sun as well as figuratively dark unknowns. Especially given how v. 5 speaks of both sunlight and a lack of knowledge, the most likely interpretation is the one that takes all of these frames into consideration and recognizes the complex blend that Qohelet creates in these verses. In summation, not

¹¹⁰See Langton, "Job's Attempt to Regain Control."

¹¹¹Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 127.

only does the stillborn child see nothing, they also know nothing. More specifically, they know nothing of the struggles and vanities that go about under a sun it never sees and to the Teacher, it is only through the cessation of consciousness can one find rest and relief.¹¹² The stillborn child is both unknown (without name) and unknowing (without sight).

One final verse to examine is Isa 60:2. In his neo-Exodus of chapter 60, Isaiah speaks of how Yahweh will cast darkness as a covering over all but God's faithful remnant in 60:2 just as he had in Egypt but on a global scale. Young understands this darkness metaphorically as a shorthand for "ignorance, sin, sorrow, destruction, and perdition" that can only be avoided by seeking shelter in Jerusalem.¹¹³ As we have discussed at length, darkness does not seem to be regularly employed as a shorthand for sin, sorrow, destruction, or perdition within the OT and so it is best to not assume that these entailments are in mind here but Young's suggestion that darkness represents ignorance here is worth considering. Lemmelijn likewise argues that darkness is here being used as a shorthand for "ignorance and the unawareness of God" and his Torah.¹¹⁴

To understand the darkness of Isa 60, it would be good to first catalogue the prophet's use of light: Isaiah uses light imagery in these verses to convey a wide range of different metaphors; In vv. 1 and 2, light seems to be a metaphor for God's glory given the close and repeated parallelism, but in v. 3 it is the people's glory that is described as a bright and rising light. In v. 5 the flow of wealth will cause the people to metaphorically

¹¹²Bartholomew, *Ecclesiastes*, 319; Brown, *Ecclesiastes*, 66.

¹¹³Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 444.

¹¹⁴Lemmelijn, "Light and Darkness," 566.

beam (נֹרָא) with delight. It follows then that darkness is the lack of being illuminated by Yahweh's glory. As has been shown above, being illuminated by Yahweh's light is usually a reference to his guiding light on life's path (LIFE IS A JOURNEY, WISDOM IS A LIGHT) and darkness in relation to this is the state of ignorance and foolishness that leaves people wandering aimlessly—whether that wandering is figurative in the above examples or literal as was the case for the Egyptians in Exod 10.

It is also worth noting that these verses also show one of the most commonly used examples of a cognitive metaphor pairing: HAPPY IS UP, SAD IS DOWN. Although she does not use the language of CMT, Lemmelijn notes how central to this section these metaphors are:

It is, furthermore, striking how the positive aspects of light and glory are 'raised up' in each case in this metaphor (stand up, coming upon, shines on, coming to the light), while the negative aspects of darkness and gloom come 'down' and envelop or cover. It is worth noting that we continue to use expressions such as 'feeling down,' 'being de-pressed,' 'hitting rock bottom' or 'being in a dark place' today, all of which intertwine connotations of both darkness and being low.¹¹⁵

This subsection has explored the metaphor IGNORANCE/FOLLY IS DARKNESS and has uncovered a few trends: first, this metaphor is often connected to its counterpart, WISDOM IS LIGHT, in a way similar to the other two metaphor pairings explored in chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation. Second, while the SALVATION IS LIGHT, CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS metaphor pairing was found predominantly in later prophetic material, the WISDOM IS LIGHT, DARKNESS IS FOLLY/IGNORANCE metaphor is centred around OT

¹¹⁵Lemmelijn, "Light and Darkness," 566.

wisdom literature.¹¹⁶ This is of course unsurprising but nonetheless worth noting. Third, about half of the examples discussed here were related to the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor with darkness or light being qualities attached to the path of that journey.

5.3 The Loss of Visual Faculties and the Loss of Mental Faculties

Slightly distinct from the above examples are a handful of verses that use darkness to describe blindness, madness, or some combination of the two. While I will at times attempt to differentiate between the entailments of blindness and madness, the lines are not always clearly drawn between the two. I will begin by discussing passages that more clearly discuss literal visual impairment, move on to verses that use darkness to describe some combination of blindness and loss of mental faculties, and then discuss verses that use darkness as a way to describe what we might today call “clouded thoughts.”

5.3.1 Visual Impairment is Darkness

In 2005, Theodore Steinberg, the then associate editor of *Jewish Bible Quarterly* wrote a brief reflection on darkness wherein he recalls a walk through the Siloam Tunnel with his wife and children:

There was no electric light in the tunnel, and though we forgot to bring a flashlight we found some candles to light our way. About half-way through, our guide told us to blow out the candles! We did, and suddenly it was dark. Heavy, pitch-black darkness. As I fumbled for matches, I thought that once my eyes became used to the darkness I would be able to see something. But that did not happen. There was not the faintest glimmer of light. I held up my fingers a couple of inches from my face but could not see them. It was eerie. Scary.

¹¹⁶Cornelius, “The Theological Significance,” 134–35.

I wondered whether this is what it is like to be blind. A sightless person eventually comes to terms with his sightlessness. He does not expect to see and learns how to cope with the darkness by training other senses, especially touch. But standing in that pitch-black tunnel, we felt the terror of knowing that we were able to see, and yet we could not see. Finally, one of us found a dry match and we managed to re-light the candles. *Vayehee Or*—at last we had some light again.¹¹⁷

There is perhaps no other way a sighted person could conceive of blindness apart from likening it to darkness. Unless a person is blind or has experienced temporary blindness, the idea of (semi-)permanent loss of sight is too foreign to most and thus requires the human scope of metaphors.¹¹⁸ Given the proliferation of maladies such as trachoma and meagre medical aid for people with eye conditions, blindness was as serious and widespread a threat for everyone in the ancient Near East as leprosy.¹¹⁹ This fear, combined with a lack of understanding of blindness, made threats of darkness as a metaphor for blindness a recurring trope for biblical writers.

Isaiah uses dark terminology a few times in chapter 29 as we have already looked at v. 15. Let us now move on to v. 18 which is part of a list of reversals from cursing to blessing. One of those reversals of fate is the eyes of the blind will see out from their dimness (אפל) and darkness (חשך). The blindness of this verse is a reference to those who could neither see nor hear God's words in vv. 11–12.¹²⁰ To Isaiah, the blind do not see

¹¹⁷Steinberg, "Darkness and Light," 131.

¹¹⁸See de Joode, "Metaphor in Biblical Theology" (63–64), where he reminds us of the importance of metaphors for understanding the sensory experiences of others: "How can one now understand metaphors that one has not experienced? Hardly any reader of Job 16,9–14 can claim to have experienced being broken in two or having their kidneys pierced. This is often neglected, yet I think one can imagine what it would feel like to have either one's skin peeled off or to be attacked by a lion. Imagination takes place when I use my embodied knowledge to explore what I have *not* experienced."

¹¹⁹See Laes, *Disabilities and the Disabled in the Roman World*, chap. 3; Trompoukis, "Trachoma in Late Greek Antiquity and the Early Byzantine Periods."

¹²⁰Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 378.

nothingness, but they instead see darkness.¹²¹ The author of Isa 29 was almost certainly a sighted person and so the best way they could describe what the blind saw was to metaphorically liken it to darkness. This example finds a parallel within the Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon which was relatively contemporary to Isaiah's audience (672 BCE). Of the curses listed in this treaty, §40 reads, "May Shamash, the light of heaven and earth, not judge you justly. May he remove your eyesight. Walk about in darkness."¹²² Not only is blindness described as walking in darkness, but we have a god who is normally associated with light given authority over blindness and darkness. The cognitive background for this metaphor is rather obvious: blindness and utter darkness, as Steinberg shows in his story, both cause a state of sightlessness. This is a very simple and straightforward use of darkness as a metaphor for blindness but taking note of this example will be key for later, more complex uses of this metaphor.

Lamentations 5:17 has an interesting example of the above ICM being used to understand and symbolize blindness. As the Lamerter describes the psychosomatic effects of his people's captivity, he speaks of sick hearts and darkened (חשך) eyes. The idea of eyes growing dim (כהה or כלה) within the context of mourning appears in Job 17:7 due to Job's vexation, as well as in Pss 69:3 from waiting on God and 88:9 through sorrow. What separates Lam 5:17 from these other examples is its use of חשך where the other examples use כהה or כלה to speak of the condition of the lamenter's eyes. In the

¹²¹This verse was presumably authored by a seeing person and is a well-meaning even if a bit misguided understanding of a blind person's perception of the world. See Ryneearson, "In the Beginning There Was Darkness."

¹²²Hays, *Hidden Riches*, 174.

examples that use *בהה* or *בלה*, the dimming of eyes is likely a reference to the blurred vision of tear-filled eyes but given the use of *חשך* over words that seem to more traditionally speak of tear-blurred vision,¹²³ and the recurring themes of failure of normal rhythms and functions of life in the surrounding cola,¹²⁴ this verse is instead talking about blindness or perhaps a lack of consciousness. Abner Chou takes the latter interpretation suggesting that the experience of sin and exile has created a deep sense of exhaustion.¹²⁵ Salters takes the former approach of darkened eyes being a reference to blindness as he connects this phrase to Eccl 12:3.¹²⁶ This approach is the preferred one as it finds better backing from elsewhere in the OT whereas Chou's interpretation relies on a debatable translation of *דָּוָה* as "faint."

Eyes are also darkened in Job 16:16 but this verse has a particular quirk. Rather than using *חשך* as the Lamenters do, or *קדר* as the Psalmist and Jeremiah do, Job uses *צלמות*. Again, describing mourning using dark terms is nothing new but this is the only instance where *צלמות* is used to describe eyes. Of course this assumes that *צלמות* is best translated here as darkness rather than shadow of death.¹²⁷ While the second interpretive option is viable, it seems wildly hyperbolic compared to the previous colon as well as the well-attested use of darkness to describe a mourner's eyes in the above verses. In a

¹²³e.g., Longman, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, 582.

¹²⁴Salters, *Lamentations*.

¹²⁵Chou, *Lamentations*.

¹²⁶Salters, *Lamentations*.

¹²⁷Clines, (*Job 1–20*) is certainly in the minority of scholars that interpret *צלמות* as the darkness of death. He suggests that the discernible redness of Job's cheeks is being contrasted against the invisible darkness of death on his eyelids but there is little to prove that there is a contrast between these two cola and Clines fails to recognize the other instances of darkened eyes in the OT as described above. See §3.1.3.

manner similar to the Lament, Job here describes his mourning in terms of the physiological responses of weeping: flushed cheeks and dark, “baggy” eyes.

5.3.2 Blindness, Ignorance, and Darkness

Recalling the introduction to §5.2 and Christopher Johnson’s work on the KNOWING IS SEEING conceptual metaphor, it would follow that blindness and darkness, would function well as metaphors for ignorance. There are few examples that use solely blindness to describe ignorance but there are a greater number that use blindness in conjunction with darkness to describe ignorance.

Isaiah reverses the fates of the exiles in 42:16 who are in “double difficulty” as their darkness is both subjective and objective.¹²⁸ This image is somewhat reminiscent of Ps 35 and Jer 23 but is certainly more positive. Here God will at first simply lead the blind along strange paths, but eventually he will turn their darkness into light. One particular quirk of this verse is that darkness is described as לְפָנֵיהֶם. The preposition could be indicating that the darkness is geographically in front of them but could also suggest that darkness is like a blindfold *over* the faces of the blind. Isaiah here creates an interesting metaphor here of darkness being something that the blind are surrounded by and cannot see through barring God’s miraculous working. The question is whether the servant of Isaiah will lead those who are literally blind or those who are metaphorically so. It is possible that Isaiah is working with the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor with God’s

¹²⁸Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 141.

wisdom leading the people out of ignorance. Motyer interprets this verse as serving double duty by offering hope to both the physically blind and the unwise:

In his ministry the Lord caters for personal incapacity (blind); overcomes ignorance (by ways/‘a road’ they have not known); removes barriers so that there is no hindrance to going forward (turns the darkness into light) nor any cause to stumble (makes the rough places smooth).¹²⁹

Motyer’s interpretation fits well with Isaiah’s motif of physical and spiritual blindness while also allowing the poetry to remain flexible. Motyer’s interpretation is more focused on the physical and spiritual state of those the Servant would rescue but Payne and Goldingay instead focus their interpretation on their political status: while they do not use the same wording as this dissertation, Payne and Goldingay rely on the metaphors EXILE IS DARKNESS and THE WILDERNESS IS DARKNESS as a way of describing the Servant’s power to return the people home.¹³⁰ Both of these approaches are predicated on their own respective understanding of the purpose and foci of the Servant Songs but together they highlight the flexibility of the DARKNESS frame in ancient Hebrew writing. Baltzer has rightly chosen to understand this verse as a hinge between the use of DARKNESS IS IMPRISONMENT of 42:7 and the use of DARKNESS IS IGNORANCE of later verses.¹³¹ Either way, we can see the signs of an ICM of BLINDNESS IS DARKNESS that Isaiah was working with, whether that blindness is physical, mental, spiritual, political, or a combination of these entailments.

¹²⁹Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 325; See also, Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, 414–15.

¹³⁰Goldingay and Payne, *Isaiah 40–55*.

¹³¹Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 146.

A pronouncement of darkness that obscures vision is found in Mic 3:6. Here the prophet uses a clever play on words to speak doom against the people and their mercenary prophets. Mays strangely argues that the threat here is simply that Yahweh would bring night, the setting of the sun, and days growing dark as they were apparently “a series of images for the experience of distress and dereliction.”¹³² Mays goes on to say that the distress that is metaphorically represented by the setting sun would be a loss of divine revelation.¹³³ While the idea that the setting sun was somehow seen as a bad omen in Israel would be difficult to prove, Mays is correct in his second assertion; the threat here is indeed a loss of prophetic visions, but the nocturnal language of this curse is designed to overturn the typical mode of prophetic activity. McKane offers a much more subdued interpretation that understands the setting of the sun as being a reference to the ending of the false prophets’ days of influence and acclaim.¹³⁴

The interpretive key to this verse is the question of when visions occur for the prophets. Micah uses two technical terms for the prophets of his day in vv. 6 and 7: נביאים and חזים. Many commentators will focus on the supposed (see 1 Sam 9:9) distinction between the legitimate prophets (נביאים) whose words from God come as direct words from God and the illegitimate mantic seers (חזים) whose words come through the reading of various physical phenomenon.¹³⁵ Simundson rightly notes that such distinctions do not seem to matter to Micah as “he lumps together all intermediaries in the same

¹³²Mays, *Micah*, 84; See also, Wolff, *Micah*, 103.

¹³³Mays, *Micah*, 84.

¹³⁴McKane, *The Book of Micah*, 107.

¹³⁵Smith, *Micah, Zephaniah, and Nahum*.

condemnation. Whether their gifts of perception, clairvoyance, and predicting the future are legitimate is beside the point.”¹³⁶ Simundson goes on to say that “Micah is less concerned with their method than with their willingness to sell them selves, their skills, and their influence for a price.”¹³⁷ Although I agree with his first point—that their methods may not matter to Micah for whether or not they were worthy of condemnation—I see the timing of their methods as central to Micah’s argument. Prophetic visions quite typically occur at night in the OT, most notably in the case of the dreams and visions of Jacob, Daniel, and Zechariah. Night time visions were at the core of their gift and so taking away their ability to receive visions at night would mark the end of their con.

Micah prophesies a night without vision (חִזוֹן) which leaves which kind of vision—whether spiritual or physical—open to interpretation.¹³⁸ Waltke also toys with the idea of blindness as a consequence for greed-fuelled abuse of divine power as is seen in the blinding (“plung[ing] into darkness” as Waltke puts it) of Samson which is now reflected in the loss of divine sight by these false prophets.¹³⁹ Julia M. O’Brien notes the deep irony of “seers” who are left in the dark which is paralleled by speakers who will be forced to cover their mouths: “Unlike the prophet Micah who ‘saw’ (חָזָה, root *hzh*) the fates of Samaria and Jerusalem (Mic 1:1), these prophets-for-hire will be granted no vision (חִזוֹן, root *hzh*; Mic 3:6).”¹⁴⁰ The next bicola continue this wordplay moving from a typical

¹³⁶Simundson, *Micah*, 558.

¹³⁷Simundson, *Micah*, 558.

¹³⁸See Waltke, “Micah,” 664.

¹³⁹Waltke, “Micah,” 664.

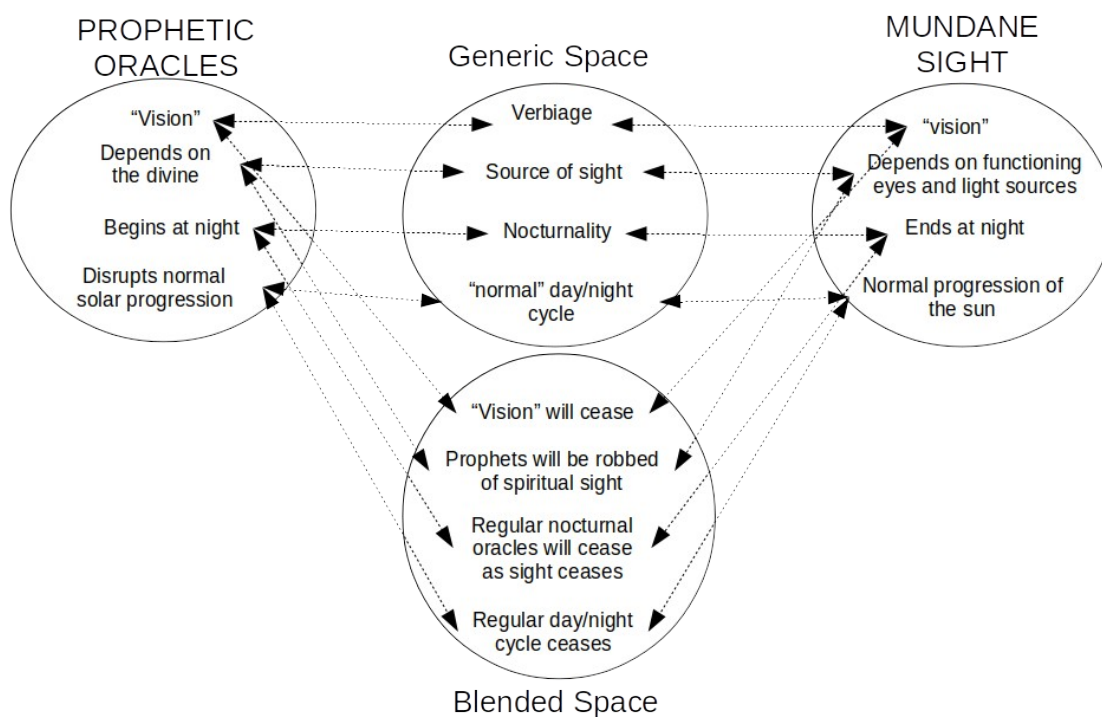
¹⁴⁰See also, Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve*, 548; O’Brien, *Micah*, 30.

setting of the sun to a catastrophic mid-day darkness that hearkens back to Exodus.

Commentators will either choose between the metaphors CALAMITY IS DARKNESS,¹⁴¹ HIDDENNESS IS DARKNESS,¹⁴² and THE NIGHT IS DARKNESS, but I would argue that Micah is mixing the latter two metaphors here with poetic mastery. Micah here creates a brilliant blend that compares and contrasts the frames of SIGHT and ORACLES with BLINDNESS IS DARKNESS being the connecting metaphor between the two that can be further explored with the following illustration:

¹⁴¹Smith (*Micah, Zephaniah, and Nahum*), argues that the two former metaphors are in mind here as “This is not merely a figurative way of saying that the power of prophetic insight and foresight will soon be withdrawn from those who have abused such gifts, but rather a description of the great day of Yahweh (cf. Am. 5:18), which awaits the whole nation.” This verse only has a superficial connection with Amos 5:18 and is focused on the fate of the false prophets rather than the nation’s march toward the day of Yahweh.

¹⁴²Hoyt (*Amos, Jonah, & Micah*) recognizes the obscurative properties of darkness and nightfall but she sadly does not recognize the irony of night time being the typical time for other forms of vision.

Figure 5.1

Micah's oracle plays with the ambiguity of spiritual and physical sight with night and day being opposing times of sight: the darkness of night obscures physical vision¹⁴³ while it normally enables spiritual vision and daytime enables regular sight while hampering spiritual sight.¹⁴⁴ The physical darkness that is normally experienced at night will extend to the spiritual realm for these prophets as a deeply ironic double-reversal as the time of day that is the normal time of spiritual illumination—the night—will instead be as spiritually dark as it is physically dark. Though Simundson does not fully plumb the

¹⁴³This is the angle that Hillers (*Micah*, 46) focuses on in his commentary. It is disappointing that Hillers does not recognize the irony of a "seer" being unable to see and simply interprets this darkness as a threat multiplier as I have done above when discussing Jer 23:12, etc.

¹⁴⁴Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, 371–72.

depth of irony in Micah's pronouncement against the false prophets, his conclusion still stands:

Again, the punishment will fit the crime. They will remain in darkness with no light, no vision, no revelation. Since they have ignored God's authentic word in their efforts to please those who reward them, they will no longer receive a word from God. Prophets with no vision, no revelation, no divine words to convey to the people have lost their reason for being.¹⁴⁵

Barker and Bailey connect this verse with the famine metaphor used by Amos in 8:11 to describe the coming divine silence that would drive the false prophets to both spiritual and physical hunger as their wealthy patrons would be forced to look elsewhere.¹⁴⁶ Wolff suggests a different mixing of metaphors here between WISDOM IS LIGHT and IGNORANCE IS DARKNESS as the prophets and their people will lose out on the light of wisdom and will instead be thrust into the darkness of ignorance.¹⁴⁷ As much as I appreciate Wolff's acknowledgement of the recurring metaphorical use of IGNORANCE IS DARKNESS, given the nocturnal verbiage, I am still more convinced that Micah was focused on highlighting the reversal of the prophets' and seers' methods and times of operation. One last point to bring up about this passage is that there is perhaps yet another level of subversion being employed here. Dempster, relying on the IGNORANCE/FOLLY IS DARKNESS metaphor, suggests that Micah's curse is talionic in nature: the prophets were not "true to their calling to lead people into light, and now they themselves will walk in darkness."¹⁴⁸ Dempster's interpretation certainly does not invalidate the one that I have

¹⁴⁵Simundson, *Micah*, 558.

¹⁴⁶Barker and Bailey, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 78.

¹⁴⁷Wolff, *Micah*, 104.

¹⁴⁸Dempster, *Micah*, 94.

argued for as the two can both be true. This verse highlights the variety of possible uses of darkness as an input source within the OT.

The Psalmist employs similar imprecatory language in 69:23 where he, in a short outburst of loin-shaking curses, wishes that his enemies have “their eyes darkened (דָּשְׁחָם), so that they cannot see.” In v. 3 eyes are also mentioned and are suffering ill effects which leads Tate to connect the two with v. 23 being a talionic reversal of v. 3.¹⁴⁹ Goldingay suggests that the curse of this verse is indeed talionic, but in a very different way. He connects the plotting of the Psalmist’s enemies with those who plot evil in the dark from Isa 29:15 and so a darkness that confounds their machinations both literally (BLINDNESS IS DARKNESS) and figuratively (CONFUSION IS DARKNESS) seems appropriate.¹⁵⁰ The connection to Isa 29:15 seems to be a bit of a stretch but his addition of the CONFUSION IS DARKNESS metaphor certainly fits and allows for some flexibility between literal and figurative blindness. Either way, this verse rather clearly shows the close cognitive connections between darkness and blindness.¹⁵¹

5.3.3 Blindness, Moral Compromise, and Darkness

In §5.1.2 I stated that darkness is not equated with or used as an idiom for moral evil in the OT. While darkness is certainly not used specifically as a metonymy for evil in the OT, Isaiah does use darkness and blindness to describe a sort of moral ignorance or folly

¹⁴⁹Tate, *Psalms 50–100*, 199.

¹⁵⁰Goldingay, *Psalms*, 2:517.

¹⁵¹See also, Kidner, *Psalms 1–72*, 267; Longman, *Psalms*, 265.

in two instances. In Isa 56:10 and 59:9–10 Isaiah describes a wilful ignorance of and refusal to abide by God's standards of right and wrong as a sort of blindness and darkness.

To begin we will examine Isa 56:10. Here the prophet denounces the leaders of his day calling them blind watchmen but this blindness is no mere physical handicap as these leaders are not literal watchmen who rely on literal sight. Oswalt, noting the three mentions of their lack of knowledge, concludes that their blindness is a cognitive issue rather than one of physical vision.¹⁵² Ezekiel 33:7 uses the same metaphor to describe the role of the prophet, and in both instances the watchman's sight is analogous to the leaders' ability to discern threats to Yahwistic orthodoxy. In both instances, the punishment for such wilful ignorance and laxity is quite severe.

Isaiah's use of blindness as a metaphor for moral corruption reoccurs in 59:9–10. Here the prophet laments the lack of justice and righteousness in the land followed by a description of the plight of his audience as people pining for light who can only behold darkness (חֹשֶׁךְ) and who must walk in dimness (אֶפֶסֶל). Goldingay defaults to interpreting light and darkness as images for blessing and calamity as he does for 8:19–9:1, 42:16, 45:7, and 58:8.¹⁵³ The verses that Goldingay uses to support his interpretation are all discussed in this dissertation and do not provide as clear evidence as he assumes.¹⁵⁴

Oswalt rightly connects these verses with 58:10 noting that they are an ironic reversal,

¹⁵²Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 35–36.

¹⁵³Goldingay, *Isaiah 56–66*; See also, Niskanen, *Isaiah 56–66*, 28–29.

¹⁵⁴In §4.2 I devote a large portion of my argument to showing how Isa 8:19–9:1 is centred around the SALVATION IS LIGHT, CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS metaphor pairing and I come to the same conclusion regarding 58:10. Below in §5.3.2 I argue Isaiah is blending the BLINDNESS, IGNORANCE, and DARKNESS frames in 42:16.

but erroneously assumes that light and darkness are being used as metaphors for blessing and cursing (respectively).¹⁵⁵

Looking more carefully at this verse and those around it, it makes more sense to understand the first two lines as being part of the previous verse's argument while the third and fourth lines being a part of the next verse's idea:

The way of peace is unknown to them	8a	דֶּרֶךְ שְׁלוֹם לֹא יָדְעוּ
And there is no justice on their pathways	8b	וְאֵין מִשְׁפָּט בְּמַעְגְּלֹתָם
They have warped their own roads	8c	נִתְּיבוֹתֵיהֶם עִקְשׁוּ לָהֶם
Everyone on their way is ignorant to peace	8d	כָּל דֶּרֶךְ בָּהּ לֹא יָדַע שְׁלוֹם
Therefore justice keeps its distance from us	9a	עַל־כֵּן רָחַק מִשְׁפָּט מִמֶּנּוּ
And righteousness can't catch up to us	9b	וְלֹא תִשְׁיֹגֵנוּ צְדָקָה
We look for light, but behold darkness	9c	נִקְוָה לְאֹר וְהִנֵּה־חֹשֶׁךְ
For brightness but in dimness we walk	9d	לְנִגְהוֹת בְּאַפְלוֹת נִהְלָךְ
We reach for a wall like the blind	10a	נִגְשָׁשָׁה כְּעֹרִים קִיר
And like those without eyes we reach	10b	וְכַאֲיֵן עֵינִים נִגְשָׁשָׁה
We stumble at noon like at twilight	10c	כְּשָׁלְנוּ בְּצַהֲרִים כְּנֹשֶׁף
Among the living, we're as good as dead	10d	בְּאַשְׁמֻנִים כְּמֵתִים

Verse 8 is focused on the metaphorical locations and movements of justice along the roads which finds a fitting conclusion with v. 9a and its lament that justice cannot be found nearby and is not what overtakes (נשג) people along their paths. The “therefore” of v. 9a clearly connects it with what was said previously, but v. 9c's shift in person and

¹⁵⁵Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*., 50.

pattern would indicate that v. 9c signals a new rhetorical unit. Verse 9c shifts both the metaphor as well as the language to a string of lines that begin and end with third person plural Piel imperfect verbs (in bold above). This shift in verbiage also indicates a shift in frames from PLACES to DARKNESS. If we do take v. 9c as being part of a larger thought that is carried to v. 11 which ties the idea back to v. 9a (both having justice and salvation being far from the people), the darkness and dimness of v. 9c makes much more sense if it is a parallel idea with those who grope like the blind in v. 10. Goldingay notices the parallelism of v. 10 but fails to recognize that this parallelism has been carried forward from vv. 9c and 9d.¹⁵⁶ If vv. 9c and 9d are read alongside v. 10 which is quite clearly focused on blindness caused by the poor leadership of Judah's elite, the light that is hoped for is wisdom which is instead met with dark folly (FOLLY IS DARKNESS).¹⁵⁷ As we have already seen a number of times in Isaiah, the prophet is fond of using darkness and blindness as a means of describing folly. They are not literally blind, but they grope *like* those who are blind or eyeless. The darkness of v. 9c is indeed a moral issue, but one of lacking moral vision rather than ominous eclipses or general "dark" evils as Goldingay has argued.

5.3.4 Loss of Sight, Loss of Mind

Just as in English we can say we are "in the dark" about a topic, it has been shown that darkness can also be used as a metaphor for ignorance in the OT. Similarly, in English we

¹⁵⁶Goldingay, *Isaiah 56–66*.

¹⁵⁷Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*.

use words and phrases like “clear thoughts,” “clouded mind,” and “lucid” to speak of a person’s mental state. Lucid is a particularly interesting example as the metaphorical understanding of lucidity referring to sanity has all but overcome its traditional, literal meaning of translucence or luminescence. To English speakers there is a *clear* connection between our ability to see and our ability to comprehend and think clearly. This can also be said of ancient Hebrew thought in a handful of examples from the OT that will be discussed below.

Of those instances of metaphorical darkness that focus on its blinding properties, there is a specific subset of verses where darkness describes cognitive impairment, which is itself sometimes described as a form of blindness. The first example of this is found in the curse of blindness in Deut 28:29. This startling reprisal of the ninth plague of Exod 10:21ff has Israel as the one left to “grope at noonday” but this darkness is perhaps even more severe than the Exodus plague; rather than a perceptible, groping (משש) darkness, this is a blindness and confusion of the heart/mind (ללב) that brings madness. Woods recognizes a chaistic structure to 23–42 with the curse of “madness/blindness/what is seen” finding its parallel in v. 34.¹⁵⁸ It is worth noting that the groping in darkness is not just an ophthalmological issue, but a cognitive issue. The threat in this verse is to remove the people’s ability to think clearly rather than just see clearly and so in this sense, the darkness that they will grope their way through is a darkness that obfuscates rational

¹⁵⁸Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 276.

thought.¹⁵⁹ The writer of Deuteronomy is here creating a complex blend that combines the frames of DARKNESS, BLINDNESS, and COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT.

Zechariah uses similar wording in 12:4 where every horse is struck with panic and blindness while their riders are struck with madness (שגעון). Boda and Hill note the significance of Deuteronomy's curses now being directed not at Israel but at her enemies.¹⁶⁰ In this example blindness and madness are not being equated but this verse does perhaps hint at conceptual connection between mental distress (שגעון and תמרוז) and blindness as they are compared here.

In a similar way to the above verses, Eliphaz in Job 5:14 gives a matter-of-fact lecture on cosmic justice wherein foretells the fate of the wicked who fancy themselves to be clever and crafty: they will find themselves groping in noonday darkness. This verse may seem like an apocalyptic oracle of uncreative chaos that is in a similar vein as the prophets,¹⁶¹ but upon closer examination, this verse is describing something more mundane yet no less devastating. The previous two verses focus on God's fondness of turning wit into folly, intelligence into stupidity—a theme that has carried forward from the first half of Eliphaz' speech in chapter 4.¹⁶² These verses are book-ended with God's interactions with the humble so these verses seem to be a single rhetorical unit. Again, the primary organizing frames are the intelligence of the self-proclaimed wise and how God foils their wisdom. Thus the darkness of v. 14 seems to instead be a darkening of their wit

¹⁵⁹Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 319; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 328.

¹⁶⁰Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, 538; Hill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 241.

¹⁶¹Alden, *Job*, 83.

¹⁶²Habel, *The Book of Job*, 134.

in a way that is similar to Deut 28:29.¹⁶³ Given Eliphaz’ insistence on strict talionic (bordering on ironic) justice, there would be no more appropriate punishment for “wisdom” turned to evil ends than a stupor so severe it leaves the proud groping like a blind man.¹⁶⁴ The modern English idiom of having “clouded thoughts” is reflected—at least on a conceptual level—in this Hebrew idea of having darkened or blinded thoughts.

5.4 The Darkness of Job 3

After the events of Job’s prologue in the first two chapters, Job opens his speeches with unrestrained despair that is spotted throughout with dark images. A number of these dark images rely on the metaphors discussed in this chapter so to not only conclude this chapter as I did with chapter three but also draw together the findings of the previous chapter I will examine the first section of Job 3 in greater detail.

The poet who penned Job has their creative brilliance on full display in this chapter as they balance contrasting themes of night and day, darkness and light, death and birth with all three conceptual pairings creating lengthy extended metaphors with different portions of the curse focusing on specific pairs. Dominating the first 9 verses is Job’s curse against the day and night of either his birth or conception. Day and night is a fairly ubiquitous pairing that is elsewhere used to signal stark contrast and while night is an easily-defined period of time from sunset to sunrise, day is a bit more slippery. Clines is adamant that night here is subject to day which must be a 24-hour period,¹⁶⁵ while

¹⁶³Driver and Gray, *Job*.

¹⁶⁴Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 96; Kravitz and Olitzky, *The Book of Job*, 29–30.

¹⁶⁵Clines, *Job 1–20*, 81.

Newsom argues that Job is cursing the recurring calendar day due to his more stereotyped language compared to Jeremiah's similar curse.¹⁶⁶ Given the absurdity of a curse against personified periods of time that can perish and speak,¹⁶⁷ the poet does not seem to be too interested in strict chronology.¹⁶⁸

Job goes on to curse the day of his birth with darkness in v. 4 by opening with a chilling reversal of God's command in Gen 1:3¹⁶⁹ that might also be call for the same anti-creation curse of Deut 28:29.¹⁷⁰ This connection with Gen 1:3 has fairly clear verbal similarities, and is further reinforced by Job's call for God to no longer shine his light upon that day. Longman focuses on the un-creative power of this curse and argues that darkness is here being used as a metaphor for annihilation.¹⁷¹

As Clines puts it, "if a day is granted no light by God, it remains in the power of darkness, that is, of the chaotic powers presiding over the world in primeval times."¹⁷² Watson goes into great detail debunking the alleged *Chaoskampf* of scholars like Clines, Fishbane, and Gunkel so this interpretation of the dark, watery imagery of Job 3 is not supported.¹⁷³ Allegedly false assumptions of *Chaoskampf* aside, Clines is essentially

¹⁶⁶Newsom, *Job*, 367; See also, Rowley, *The Book of Job*, 44.

¹⁶⁷Not everyone sees the act of cursing the day of your birth as merely performative. For instance, see M. Fishbane "Jeremiah 4:23–6 and Job 3:3–13: A Recovered Use of the Creation Pattern." Curses were certainly believed to have been effective in the OT but the language of Job 3 is almost certainly hyperbolic and rhetorical and so I will treat this chapter as such. Katharine J. Dell (*Job*) is correct in describing the curse of this chapter as "futile" and is a "parody of a curse rather than a curse proper." Regardless, my main points about the nature of the dark metaphors used by the poet of Job still stand.

¹⁶⁸Driver and Gray, *Job*.

¹⁶⁹Clines, *Job* 1–20, 81; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 92; Fishbane, "Jeremiah 4," 151–67; Newsom, *Job*, 366; etc. I am inclined to agree with Cox ("Desire," 40) that the allusions to the creation narratives are "too closely reminiscent . . . to be accidental."

¹⁷⁰Lemmelijn, "Light and Darkness," 563.

¹⁷¹Longman, *Job*, 99–100.

¹⁷²Clines, *Job* 1–20, 84.

¹⁷³Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 319–27.

correct and is backed up by Driver and Gray who understand this darkening of the day as being a way of cursing it to be unreachable by God's light and "affrighted by appalling, preternatural obscurations."¹⁷⁴ Valerie Pettys is the only scholar I have found to notice a remarkable pattern that emerges in this curse: While sixteen jussives "animate" Job's curse, it is the six negatives using **אֵל** and the final negative using **לֹא** that punctuate Job's imprecation and recall the pattern of six days and one day of rest in Gen 1.¹⁷⁵

Newsom offers a fresh interpretation that this curse is a talionic reversal as the light of that day was the cause of Job being forced to see the light of life in v. 16.¹⁷⁶ This fits with the LIGHT IS LIFE metaphor that we saw exemplified in Job in the previous chapter of this dissertation. Essentially, Job wishes that the day that brought him into existence would itself be ripped from existence,¹⁷⁷ or, as Pettys puts it, "Job's lament . . . initiates a remapping of sacred language, conveying a world of opposition, and ushers in the only justice Job can now imagine—destruction."¹⁷⁸ The connection is made even clearer with the opening lines of vv. 5 and 6. Job asks for God to not seek out, inquire of, or simply care about (**דָּרַשׁ**) the day of his birth. Leonard, following Seow, notes how the socio-legal undertones of **דָּרַשׁ** highlight specific entailments of laying legal claim over an ox or sheep (Deut 22:2, Ezek 34:10–11).¹⁷⁹ This legal language continues in the following verse with retake/redeem (**גָּאֵל**) as one would buy back an enslaved relative.¹⁸⁰ The poet is

¹⁷⁴Driver and Gray, *Job*.

¹⁷⁵Pettys, "Let There Be Darkness," 96.

¹⁷⁶Newsom, *Job*, 367.

¹⁷⁷Cox, "The Desire for Oblivion in Job 3," 40.

¹⁷⁸Pettys, "Let There Be Darkness," 95.

¹⁷⁹Leonard, "Let the Day Perish"; Seow, *Job 1–21 Interpretation and Commentary*, 343.

¹⁸⁰Driver and Gray, *Job*; Newsom, *Job*, 367; Rowley, *The Book of Job*, 43.

insinuating that darkness is the light's next-of-kin, possibly hearkening back to the time before light when there only existed darkness or might be an allusion to ancient Near Eastern and especially Egyptian myths of creation being birthed from darkness. Janzen offers a fresh interpretation that combines the creation imagery of Gen 1 with the HIDDENNESS IS DARKNESS metaphor: He argues that that Job cursed his day to be stripped of the light that God had deemed good because he believed it was so irredeemably evil that it must be obscured "from view and from memory."¹⁸¹

The poet shifts from reinforcing God's sovereignty over time, fate, and darkness in vv. 3 and 4 to darkness being personified as its own separate force with a will in vv. 5 and 6. If the darkness were to seize and maintain its grasp on the night, the day would never come, thus causing further disruption of God's ordering of light and darkness, day and night.¹⁸² Job's personification of darkness is in a way similar to Leviathan who is evoked in v. 8 if we understand Leviathan to be a creature similar to Tiamat who perpetually desires to retake that which was once hers (dry land in her case) and who attempted to consume the sun, and thus threatened to plunge the world into darkness.¹⁸³ If we accept Gunkel's proposed emendation of *yam* to *yom* as Cheyne and Horst do,¹⁸⁴ the connections to Tiamat and theomachy are even stronger. The majority of scholars read "sea" instead of "day" and while Dell allows for this reading, she provides an alternative interpretation that would allow "day" to fit into the context of these verses: if the day is

¹⁸¹Janzen, *Job*, 62.

¹⁸²Cox, "The Desire for Oblivion in Job 3," 41.

¹⁸³Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea*, 45–49.

¹⁸⁴Gunkel and Zimmern, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit*, 59; Rowley, *The Book of Job*, 44.

understood as a metonymy for the sun, it is not unusual in the ancient world to understand eclipses as the sun having being temporarily swallowed by monsters such as Tiamat.¹⁸⁵ As Schmidt and Nel summarize Job's response to his situation, "God has plunged him into the world of darkness to such an extent that he would rather—like the evil and wicked—remain and live within a Godless world devoid of chaotic darkness".¹⁸⁶ This connection with ANE mythology makes for a fascinating read and does better connect Job's calls for both darkness and Leviathan, but it does rely on a number of assumptions particularly related to who or what Leviathan is, how to vocalize ים, and the presence of theomachy in the OT. This latter assumption is one that has been questioned already and will be in even greater detail in §6.3.

That the poet of Job made a conscious decision to connect these verses with their theology of creation and justice is quite evident, but these are not the only way the poet employs darkness in these verses. The final line of v. 6 as well as the first line of v. 9 show Job's desire for a dampening of the heavenly luminaries which were terrifying signs of ill omen in the ancient Near East. John Burns connects the desire for the day to be darkened to Mami's desire that the day of the flood be "darken[ed] to obscurity."¹⁸⁷ Some have suggested that darkness (אפל) here refers to Sheol,¹⁸⁸ but there is little in these verses to suggest as such. While death is the focus of the rest of this chapter, it doesn't seem to be in focus in the first nine verses.

¹⁸⁵Dell, *Job*.

¹⁸⁶Schmidt and Nel, "Divine Darkness in the Human Discourses of Job," 135.

¹⁸⁷Burns, "Cursing the Day of Birth," 17.

¹⁸⁸See Clines, *Job 1–20*, 85.

While there are no words for darkness or blackness used beyond v. 9, vv. 16, 20, and 23 all bemoan the light. It is important that the desire in v. 16 is not for darkness but that light had never reached him as a newborn. The same can be said of vv. 20 and 23; Job rhetorically asks why “light” is given to the sufferer. These verses all rely on the metaphor LIFE IS LIGHT as was discussed in the previous chapter. Verse 23 adds a particularly interesting quirk for the purposes of this chapter; Job asks why light is given to the one who is hidden. Following the WISDOM IS LIGHT metaphor, especially within the context of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, Job appears to be lamenting the ironic fate of knowing what lies ahead of you when all that entails is entrapment. To recap, Job’s desire for his own light of life to be snuffed out, but that the day and night of his birth and conception be robbed of not just literal light (how can one rob the night of light?) but of metaphorical light. He wishes that his mother be barren, but also that the nights of his birth and conception be barren and unable to produce either human life or the light of the morning.¹⁸⁹

5.5 Bringing Clarity to Darkness

I have argued in this chapter that one of the core entailments for darkness has been the realm of hiddenness or obscurity. Darkness has been shown to literally hide things as it did in Exod 10:21–22 and Isa 45:3, but more often than not, darkness obscures vision in more figurative ways: it has been shown to obscure evil in Prov 7:9 and Isa 29:15.

Darkness regularly functions as a metaphor that obscures wisdom throughout OT wisdom

¹⁸⁹Leonard, “Let the Day Perish,” 252.

literature such as in Job 29:3 and Eccl 2:14. Darkness is also used as a powerful metaphor for blindness which obscures all vision—whether that vision is literal as in Isa 29:18 or figurative of wisdom in Ps 69:23, morality in Isa 56:10 and 59:9–10, or even lucid thinking in Job 5:14. These examples show the exceptional flexibility of the DARKNESS frame in Hebrew thought but they are all connected to the core conceptual idea of darkness preventing normal vision. The findings of this chapter reinforce some of what was discussed in chapter 3 as I explored the DEATH IS DARKNESS metaphor. It is highly likely that the DEATH IS DARKNESS and THE UNKNOWN IS DARKNESS (via KNOWING IS SEEING) metaphors are related to one another as death is a great mystery to ancient Near Eastern cultures as discussed in chapter 2.

The target domains discussed so far—DEATH, THE WILDERNESS, IGNORANCE, BLINDNESS, etc—have all been rather common and somewhat mundane experiences for the people of the ancient Near East. By understanding how DARKNESS as a source domain is used to highlight different aspects of these target domains, we have not only grown to better understand these target domains but have also discerned some trends in how DARKNESS is used as a source domain. These findings about the source domain of DARKNESS in the OT discussed in this chapter will be key moving forward to discuss a target domain that is far less easily understood and defined: Yahweh.

CHAPTER 6: THE DARK GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Yet, no matter how deeply I go down into myself, my God is dark, and like a webbing
made of a hundred roots that drink in silence.

Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*

Over the last three chapters I have built up a bank of recurring metaphors that use DARKNESS as a source domain. In chapter 3 I examined metaphorical uses of darkness to describe external threats to humanity and found that in the majority of cases, darkness was being used metonymically to describe a separate threat or the wilderness but is never used as a shorthand for evil and appears only to have a connection with death either as a counterpart to the HEALTH IS LIGHT metaphor or as a way of highlighting the unknowability of the realm beyond life which was expanded upon in chapter 4.

In chapter 4 I examined the dark metaphor in the OT that is the most foreign/novel to modern English readers: CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS. It was found that this metaphor is surprisingly common; is often marked by the state of sitting, walking, or dwelling “in darkness;” and is probably based off of cognitive connections with the dark, watery, grave-like cistern-prisons of pre-exilic Israel and Judah. Another important takeaway from this chapter is the prevalence of the metaphor pairing CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS, SALVATION IS LIGHT predominantly in Isaiah but elsewhere in the OT as well.

My longest chapter so far has been chapter 5 wherein I explored darkness’ relation to frames such as PERCEPTION/BLINDNESS, WISDOM/FOLLY, and COGNITION/MORAL COMPROMISE. It was shown that there is a prevailing stream of metaphors that use

darkness as a metaphorical way of describing a lack of sense. This sense could be simply the physical sense of sight, the mental sense of knowledge, or the deeper sense of wisdom. It was shown that this metaphor is prevalent not only within the wisdom tradition but throughout the OT. I explored a number of examples of the WISDOM IS LIGHT metaphor to show how important this metaphor was to the wisdom and prophetic traditions and to better understand how its counterpart, FOLLY IS DARKNESS, is employed by those same traditions. I argued that these metaphors of FOLLY, IGNORANCE, IMPAIRMENT, and BLINDNESS ARE DARKNESS all use the cognitive model of mundane sight to create human scale for more complex ideas about sentience and its limits. This chapter contained by far the greatest number of examples that—despite their unique differences—all relied on this same cognitive model of using the mundane sense of sight as a way to better understand the spiritual “sight” of wisdom.¹ To reiterate, this fits in well with what Johnson found in his study of the cognitive connections between SEEING and KNOWING in the development of English-speaking children.²

The goal of the previous chapters is different from previous works in that I was not aiming to define lexicalized meanings for “darkness,” but instead explore how fluidly the DARKNESS frame is used in various contexts. The categories I created are not ironclad

¹ As Van Hecke puts it in “I Melt Away” (78), “darkness impedes our capacity to see and act and makes us more vulnerable to external danger, it is natural to describe a state of emotional despair or a lack of mental defence against threat in terms of a darkness that surrounds the speaker. This use of the light and distress metaphor is strongly consistent with the conceptualizations of human understanding and control in terms of our visual faculty. In many languages, terms from the semantic domain of sight are being used to speak about cognitive and emotional activities and control. We speak e.g., about ‘seeing a solution’, ‘shutting one’s eyes to problems’, ‘insight in the matter’, ‘having a clear vision for the future’, and examples from other languages can be multiplied. As light is the condition of seeing in a literal way, it also becomes metaphorically the precondition for the cognitive and emotional faculties of mankind.”

² Johnson, “Learnability in the Acquisition of Multiple Senses.”

boxes that specific uses of darkness *must* conform to, but are merely representative of conceptual trends that are evident in the OT. I have attempted to model my approach to categorization after how CMT understands conceptual categorization as prototypical. Rather than creating an airtight set of criteria that fit all scenarios, human beings instead create prototypes around which categories form and create fuzzy boundaries. Masson provides a humorous example: *the Pope is a bachelor*.³ While the Pope does fit the technical limitations of a bachelor being an unmarried man, it would not fit the context of the Pope's position to describe him as such.⁴ The flexibility of metaphorical boundaries was seen time and time again in the previous chapters with some dark metaphors either explicitly blending or being left ambiguous between entailments of DEATH, PRISON, FOLLY, BLINDNESS, IGNORANCE, etc. What I have sought to undertake has been to determine the specific cognitive-linguistic processes—what Gomola likens to a persistent chemical element found in various compounds—that were the foundation for these dark metaphors.⁵

Overall the findings of the previous three chapters have fit fairly well within the OT's ancient Near Eastern context as was explored in chapter 2. While Israel's neighbours were significantly more interested in exploring the nature of death and the underworld, the OT often picks up some of the same dark metaphors of hiddenness and unknowability when talking about the abode of the dead. The OT in particular gives a

³ Masson, "Conceiving God," 141.

⁴ The flexibility and ease with which humans create mental prototypes for conceptual categories is being highlighted time and time again in the field of algorithm based machine learning as even our most advanced AI systems struggle to create useful conceptual prototypes. Rather than creating prototypes with fuzzy boundaries, AIs must create specific rule sets that do not account for contextual variables.

⁵ Gomola, *Conceptual Blending in Early Christian Discourse*, 351.

wide sample of wisdom and prophetic literature to browse for dark metaphors and within these corpora these entailments of HIDDENNESS—whether physical, cognitive, or even moral—reflect how these frames are used in other ancient texts. The most significant lines of discontinuity are found between Israelite and Zoroastrian uses of darkness (and light). The same ethical and cosmic understanding of light and darkness as essentially good and evil (respectively) is simply not present in the OT apart from a few passages that are debatably focused on refuting such cosmogonic dualism.

Expanding our scope to my own context as a twenty-first century Anglophone Canadian, some of these same lines of discontinuity are apparent. While Zoroastrianism may not have had much of a (direct) impact on Anglophone conceptions of darkness, the influence of popular metaphors like DARKNESS IS A FRONTIER and Johannine metaphors of GOD IS LIGHT and EVIL IS DARKNESS have contributed to a radically different understanding of darkness in my own culture compared to that of the OT world. The metaphor prison is darkness is entirely foreign and subsequently unknowingly overlooked by many modern scholars. As Kurt Feyaerts and Lieven Boeve note, metaphorical mappings are “situated in a specific context” which is affected by change over time and thus “many meanings have been expressed by means of the same vocabulary throughout history.”⁶ To restate the purpose of this dissertation as outlined in my introductory chapter, it is essential that we understand these source domains—in this case, DARKNESS—as they were understood in their original cultural contexts in order to understand how they are being used, especially when they are being used to describe God.

⁶ Chilton and Kopytowska, *Religion, Language, and the Human Mind*, 78.

6.1 Imagining God

All of these findings are essential to keep in mind as we progress through this penultimate chapter where I will take what we have learned about the Hebrew concept of darkness and apply it to those passages that use dark images and imagery to describe God. Understanding the simplex metaphors of chapters 3–5 that were generally a blend of one or maybe two frames combined with DARKNESS was essential in order to move on to understand what was meant by the biblical writers when they described Yahweh by evoking the DARKNESS frame.

6.1.1 The Necessity of Metaphors for God

Between the metaphors used by the human authors to understand God and the metaphors used by God to make himself understandable—which are themselves filtered through human perceptions and human, metaphorical language—there is no lack of metaphors for God in the OT. Indeed Brettler emphatically states that “metaphorical language is intrinsic to all God-talk.”⁷ These metaphors each highlight specific entailments in order to say different things about God. Different verses can even use the same frame in different contexts to highlight different aspects of God. For instance, there are a plethora of ways GOD IS A WARRIOR is used in the OT—some are positive while others are negative. Both Pss 23:6 and 35:6 evoke the specific GOD IS A PURSUING WARRIOR metaphor but while in the former the results are positive in the latter the results are disastrous. This leads de Joode to two key conclusions about the nature of divine metaphors in the Bible: First,

⁷ Brettler, *God Is King Understanding an Israelite Metaphor*, 17.

“tradition uses manifold, diverse metaphors for the Godhead thus obviates any static description of the divine and causes our view of God to be continually in motion,” and, second, “God is more than the sum of our metaphors yet God lives in the act of continually challenging self-confirmed metaphors.”⁸

The frequency to which and creative brilliance with which the biblical authors used metaphors to describe Yahweh cannot be overstated. And yet it often goes unstated or at least is downplayed. Despite a metaphor’s ability to create human scale for complex ideas, biblical and theological scholarship has sometimes struggled with the poetic nature of much of the OT over and against the more straightforward didactic material of the NT. Between the relative difficulty of translating and exegeting Hebrew poetry, the philosophical disdain for metaphorical speech as outlined in chapter 1, and the drive for simplified systematic theology, biblical poetry has not always been respected for its unique theological merits and contributions. As Job Jindo puts it, metaphor was simply seen as rhetorical flourish and thus was seen as “expendable and unrelated to the core content of the composition—however engaging it may be, aesthetically or other wise.”⁹

Some have pushed back at this trend of downplaying poetry. Quite ostensibly fed up with the lack of care for poetry among his contemporary Job scholars, H. H. Rowley sarcastically warned against his own more poetic interpretation of Job 3:3, “[t]he prosaic and ultra-logical mind should avoid poetry.”¹⁰ Continuing on from the previous quote, Jindo goes on to say, “metaphor is the very essence of biblical literature. Literary images

⁸ de Joode, “Metaphor in Biblical Theology,” 65.

⁹ Jindo, “Metaphor Theory and Biblical Texts,” 8.

¹⁰ Rowley, *The Book of Job*, 42.

and expressions that appear as metaphors in a literary work can function as conceptual constructs of a poetic reality to orient, or reorient, the perception of the reader.”¹¹ Given the boom in scholarly interest in Hebrew poetry in the latter quarter of the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries as well as the influx of work combining various metaphor theories with biblical studies and biblical theology, we seem to have moved past this phase.

With this new wave of interest in metaphor studies within scholarship, new works are emerging that are seeking to rekindle an interest in metaphor’s place within our speech to and about God—our theology. The most important voice in the discussion of metaphor’s place within theology has been Robert Masson with his book *Without Metaphor, No Saving God: Theology after Cognitive Linguistics*. Masson argues for the absolute necessity of using metaphors, not simply for theological reasons as Aquinas and others have argued, but due to our human need to create human scale for the divine.¹² Essentially, the concept of God is itself too large, let alone the various concepts within theology such as transcendence, immutability, omnipotence, etc. Masson’s approach works whether one assumes “God” is a human, socio-religious construct or if the language used to describe God is human construct used to describe something (or someone) real:

God is not a metaphor. My hypothesis that there is no saving God without metaphor does not deny God's existence. . . . Knowledge of God is

¹¹ Jindo, “Metaphor Theory and Biblical Texts,” 8.

¹² Masson, *Without Metaphor, No Saving God*, 112–15. Masson summarizes his argument into fourteen theses which I will not recount here but are nonetheless worth reading for anyone struggling with accepting his (and subsequently my own) argument for the necessity and appropriateness of metaphorical language for and about God.

genuinely human knowledge. The Christian conception of God is human all the way down.¹³

The majority of talk about the nature, person, abilities, etc of God in the OT is wrapped in metaphors not as simple aesthetic dressing, but as a necessary step in comprehension. As Lakoff and Johnson put it, “an ineffable God requires metaphor not only to be imagined, but to be approached, exhorted, evaded, confronted, struggled with, and loved.”¹⁴ If we accept a confessional reading of the OT, then we must also accept how God even uses source inputs such as rock, fire, parent, and tree in direct speeches about himself such as Deut 32.¹⁵

Janet Soskice’s *Metaphor in Religious Language* is effectively an apologia for the Christian conviction that humans are justified in their use of metaphors in speaking of God, despite our “utter inability to comprehend God.”¹⁶ Similarly, J. Charteris-Black argues that metaphor is necessary not only to describe God’s attributes but also his appearances as well as our own religious experiences as “very few people would claim to have direct personal knowledge of a divine being.”¹⁷ This second quotation would certainly raise eyebrows among Christian scholars who would agree but only in part.

¹³ Masson, *Without Metaphor; No Saving God*, 189.

¹⁴ Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 567.

¹⁵ Although he relies on New Testament examples that are outside the scope of this paper, van Til and Edgar (*An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 124–25) come to a similar conclusion: “When Christ spoke of the vine and the branches, he did not hesitate to use that figure as symbolic of the relation of himself to the church. . . . Christ was the Logos of creation as well as the Logos of redemption. The things of nature were adapted by him to the things of the Spirit. The lower was made for the higher. The lower did not just exist independently of the higher. And because all things are made by God, that is, through the eternal Logos of creation, we too can use symbolism and analogy and know that, though we must always look for the *tertium comparationis* [the third element, the point of comparison, which explains the relation of the symbol to reality] in all symbolism, nevertheless it is at bottom true. Without a revelational foundation all symbolism and all art in general would fall to the ground.”

¹⁶ Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, x.

¹⁷ Charteris-Black, “Metaphor in the Bible,” 174.

They would agree that indeed no one has seen—that is no one has knowledge of (KNOWING IS SEEING)—the Father but the Son since the Father is wholly transcendent. But the Father makes himself comprehensible through the human scale provided by the incarnation as all who have seen (comprehended) the Son have also seen (and comprehended) the Father. The Christian doctrine of the incarnation is built on the belief that humans require proper scale for complex ideas and that Jesus was that fully human scale. The very notion of the incarnation is itself—in a very real sense—a blend between God and humanity: GOD IS JESUS THE HUMAN.

6.1.2 Description, Self-description, Image, and Imagery

In this chapter I will be examining both dark descriptions of Yahweh's presence from passages that are clearly poetic as well as dark theophanies from various narrative portions of the OT. As I move between these passages, I will not be making any distinction between poetic (figurative) and narrative (literal) portrayals of Yahweh that evoke the DARKNESS frame. My decision to do so is not haphazard but is consciously based on a few factors.

First, on a conceptual level, visual images and textual images are functionally the same thing as Jannica de Prenter has shown in her article, "Conceptual Blending as an Integrative Approach to Metaphor and Iconography."¹⁸ While they are focused on *material* images (iconography) and their connections with textual images (metaphors),

¹⁸ De Prenter, "Conceptual Blending as an Integrative Approach to Metaphor and Iconography."

Izzak de Hulster's book *Iconographic Exegesis and Third Isaiah*,¹⁹ and Martin G. Klingbeil's "Mapping the Literary to the Literal Image"²⁰ both argue that visual and textual images originate from the same conceptual mental spaces and can draw from the same conceptual metaphors.²¹ One of the key shared tenets of CMT and CB is that conceptual integration/blending is integral to how humans perceive, understand, and interact with the world. De Prenter, following Zbikowski, contends that the blending process would inevitably occur in not just regular written and spoken language, but also through other forms of expression such as music and art.²² Klingbeil describes similar visual and material images as "sub-domains" that are both drawn from the same conceptual domain.²³ De Hulster describes the phenomenon of conceptual metaphor belonging in text as well as artifact as such:

Metaphor bridges the gap between text and image, it provides pictorial, figurative and illustrative language, expressed in images. It is able to uncover the mental map of a language user group. . . [and] through conceptual metaphor, material, man-made images can contribute to the understanding of figurative verbal images, otherwise known as aesthetic metaphors.²⁴

Some may wonder why I have bothered with an apologetic for the link between textual metaphors and visual metaphors when—beyond those examples discussed in

¹⁹ De Hulster, *Iconographic Exegesis and Third Isaiah*.

²⁰ Klingbeil, "Mapping the Literary to the Literal Image."

²¹ While all three authors rely on CMT to one degree or another, de Prenter is the only to employ the framework of CB rather than CMT as she dealt with metaphorical blends with multiple input sources. De Prenter again shows the superior flexibility of CB over CMT.

²² De Prenter, "Conceptual Blending as an Integrative Approach to Metaphor and Iconography," 5; Zbikowski, "The Cognitive Tango"; Gomola (*Conceptual Blending in Early Christian Discourse*, chapter 1) has also shown how conceptual metaphors form the basis of religious ritual. For example, baptism is a complex blend that combines a number of complex theological ideas/metaphors such as BAPTISM IS WASHING SIN and BAPTISM IS DEATH.

²³ Klingbeil, "Mapping the Literary to the Literal Image," 207.

²⁴ de Hulster, *Iconographic Exegesis and Third Isaiah*, 117.

chapter 2—I am focused solely on written metaphors within the OT. I have done so to address a uniquely confessional problem with this project. If it is assumed that the theophanies in the OT were historical events that were accurately recorded—at least from a human, subjective viewpoint—then the choices made by Yahweh on how he would visually represent himself matter. If we further accept that God’s dark appearances in the OT were indeed a conscious choice, it behooves us to determine the rationale behind that. Returning to the above quote from de Hulster, these dark, God-made images can—and should—contribute to our understanding of the self-target domain: Yahweh.

Whether you accept the historicity of the OT theophanies or not, and assuming that you give the writers of the OT a margin of credit as authors, there was a conscious decision for either Yahweh to portray himself or the authors of the text to portray their god with the use of these dark metaphors and images. Even if a scholar is extremely negative in their estimation of the authorial skill and will of the Hebrew writers, cognitive linguistics does not differentiate between conscious metaphors and unconscious ones. Cognitive linguistics has shown that metaphor works “conventionally, automatically, and unconsciously.”²⁵ The OT authors’ choice of black clouds over a sepia sand, and impassable smoke over bright sunlight to represent their God says something about their conceptions of both Yahweh and darkness, whether or not that choice was made consciously.

As was discussed in my introductory chapter, the majority of scholars in recent centuries have overlooked this dark imagery and these dark images, but contained within

²⁵ Steen, “The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor—Now New and Improved!,” 36.

them is information that has been encoded through metaphor. The following section and subsections will carefully examine the imagery and images of darkness in connection with Yahweh using what we know of the conceptual realm of DARKNESS in the minds of the Hebrew writers and audience.

6.2 Darkness as Yahweh's Implement

The first subset of verses that I will analyze in this chapter are instances where Yahweh puts darkness to use in some way. It will be shown that Yahweh uses darkness in a variety of ways that are described in a variety of ways. What is consistent with them all is that darkness is described as something material and/or tangible rather than as the mere absence of light. I will first look at a handful of verses that more generally rely on the blend DARKNESS IS A SERVANT/TOOL OF YAHWEH followed by a brief section on the blend YAHWEH STANDS UPON DARKNESS.

6.2.1 Yahweh Commands Darkness

The ninth plague of Exod 10:21–29 and its reversal in Deut 28:29 both came up several times in the previous chapters—especially in chapter 5. Whereas in the previous chapters, my main interest was what the threat of darkness represented in the ancient Hebrew mind, in this chapter I would like to re-examine this trope to discern what it meant that God utilized darkness. Yahweh is portrayed in the OT as wielding a number of different weapons and threats from standard arms such as swords, shields, and bows, to less

conventional implements of war such as natural, supernatural, and political phenomena.

There has been plenty of scholarly interest in the topic of Yahweh as the wielder of storms and thunder,²⁶ or Yahweh as a solar deity,²⁷ but relatively little has been said about his use of darkness as either a weapon or a threat.

As was discussed at length in the previous chapter, many curses and reversals that reflect Deut 28:28–29 tend to focus on the profound opacity of darkness. Just as darkness on a slippery path is a threat multiplier in Ps 35:6 and Jer 13:16, the darkness and blindness that Yahweh threatens is itself a multiplication of the threat of the ninth plague. Rather than a darkness that would leave the cursed groping like the blind, this would be a darkness that caused a confusion of the heart/mind.²⁸ In Deut 28:28–29 as well as those verses that would follow it, darkness functions as a foil to the metaphors KNOWLEDGE IS SIGHT and WISDOM IS LIGHT. Taken together, these verses all indicate a discernible trend of believing in a God who has ultimate power over both mundane sight, as well as the cognitive abilities of humans. God’s sovereignty over darkness is shown in several other verses, but for now we will only cover a few.²⁹

²⁶ Dion, “Yhwh as Storm-God and Sun-God”; Gandiya, “Storm-Theophany and the Portrayal of Yahweh as Creator-King in Psalm 104 and in Prophetic and Wisdom Literature”; Smick, “Mythopoetic Language in the Psalms.”

²⁷ Amzallag, “The Material Nature of the Radiance of YHWH and Its Theological Implications”; Dion, “Yhwh as Storm-God and Sun-God”; Laubscher, “Epiphany and Sun Mythology in Zechariah 14”; Smith, “The Near Eastern Background of Solar Language for Yahweh”; Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*; Wiggins, “Yahweh.”

²⁸ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 319.

²⁹ As was noted in my introductory chapter, the dissertations by Coppedge (“Inductive Study”) and Cornelius (“The Theological Significance”) have both sufficiently argued the point of God’s sovereignty over darkness in the HB. I do not wish to retread old ground but the examples I have chosen are merely a sufficient sample. It also bears repeating this fact as the findings of Coppedge and Cornelius seem to have gone relatively ignored by scholars.

The ninth plague of Exod 10:21–29 has already been discussed in §5.1.1 of this dissertation, and instead of retreading that same ground, I will instead examine the Psalmist’s retelling of these events in Ps 105:28. The Psalmist’s retelling of events is in a strange order and it is intriguing that they would choose to open with the plague of darkness. The majority of commentaries focus on the peculiar ordering of the plagues that the Psalmist has chosen³⁰ and do not pay any attention to how darkness is characterized in this Psalm. In this retelling of the plagues, the land is not simply darkened, but darkness is sent (Qal שלח) by God. Earlier in v. 26 the Psalmist recounts how Yahweh had sent (שלח) Moses and Aaron. It is noteworthy that the same verb is used with both darkness and Moses as direct objects in such close succession. This would indicate that darkness is here being metaphorically described as a servant who can be sent about. As Thijs Booij points out, this is not the only psalm to use a metaphor to describe an aspect of the natural world as a servant of Yahweh: Ps 148:8 describes fire, hail, snow, mist, and windstorms all obeying his command.³¹ Booij further connects this psalm to other psalms that mark the immediate obedience of Yahweh’s servants through דָּבָרָה such as Pss 103:20, 107:20, and 147:15–18.³²

Darkness is certainly portrayed as Yahweh’s obedient servant in the first subclause and the second line of v. 28. Depending on how the second subclause, וַיִּשְׁלַח

³⁰ For instance, Clifford (*Psalms 73–150*, 154–55) argues that the ordering is designed to contrast Egypt where first darkness is sent with the desert where light is first shed (v. 39). Grogan (*Psalms*, 177) argues that the placement of darkness at the start was to show Yahweh’s superiority over the Egyptian sun god.

³¹ Booij, “The Role of Darkness in Psalm 105,” 212.

³² Booij, “The Role of Darkness in Psalm 105,” 212.

(hiphil חשך) is understood in relation to its subject, it could highlight either darkness as a separate yet obedient servant or as a direct implement of Yahweh. While it would be easy to assume that the subject of חשך is Yahweh since he was the subject of the previous verse, as Booij notes, this verse follows the same grammatical structure as other passages that speak of the sending of a messenger to complete a task such as Exod 2:5; 2 Kgs 1:9; Ps 107:20; 2 Chron 32:21.³³ In these other examples the grammatical object that is sent (שלח) becomes the subject of the following verb and thus carries out the task that it was sent to complete. The typical language of sending used by the Psalmist here further emphasizes the anthropomorphization of darkness as a dutiful servant. The Psalmist's intention was perhaps to subvert the expectations of his audience. Booij suggests that the Psalmist's intention was "to describe mischief as a power acting in full accordance with YHWH's command."³⁴ While I am a bit cautious to automatically assume that darkness was automatically seen as an agent of chaos, darkness is definitely seen as something that at least hampers human life and by opening his list of plagues with darkness the Psalmist shows God's kingly authority over even the more unpleasant aspects of the natural world (see §2.3.1).

Another particularly famous example of Yahweh's employment of darkness in the OT is the pillar of cloud by the Sea of Reeds which is described as darkness in Exod 14:20 (חשך) and Josh 24:7 (מאפל). While the pillar is first described in Exod 13, it is not described as being dark here—in fact, it receives remarkably little description beyond its

³³ Booij, "The Role of Darkness in Psalm 105," 210–11.

³⁴ Booij, "The Role of Darkness in Psalm 105," 213.

function as a guide and its reliability.³⁵ Conversely, in Josh 24:7 this phenomenon is not described as a pillar but is described solely as darkness that is put between the Israelites and the Egyptians. Duane Garrett notes that one of the main foci of scholarly attention surrounding this story is the mythological origin of the dark yet fiery pillar: from Baal's storm cloud to the image of a war palladium.³⁶ Bruckner and Fretheim suggest that the pillar represents the basic components of creation and suggest that this is an act of creation hearkening back to Gen 1 and 2.³⁷ Garrett goes on to note that the reactions of the characters in the story might suggest that the pillar had a more subtle and less threatening appearance than modern popular portrayals as neither the Egyptians nor the Israelites seem particularly phased by it.³⁸ Between the lack of fanfare in Exod 13, the similarly terse description of the cloud's movement in Exod 14, and the shorter still description of the darkness in Josh 24, there is a conspicuous lack of reaction from either the authors or the characters. While I agree with Garrett that films such as Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments* and Dreamworks' *The Prince of Egypt* have oversensationalized the image of the fiery pillar, the narrator does note that the pillar was an effective deterrent to keep the Egyptians at bay and thus was certainly feared. Garrett suggests that the pillar "did not appear awesome or even supernatural"³⁹ since it is so casually described, but Exodus is rife with supernatural happenings described in fairly

³⁵ Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus*, 385.

³⁶ Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus*, 385.

³⁷ Bruckner, *Exodus*, 133; Fretheim, *Exodus*, 159.

³⁸ Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus*, 385.

³⁹ Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus*, 385.

terse and mundane language from staves polymorphing into snakes to the plagues to the splitting of the Sea of Reeds.

Garrett was correct in suggesting that the pillar's "appearance that was far more subtle" than is often portrayed. While I do not agree with Garrett's downplaying of the wondrous nature of this pillar, the focus in Exod 13–14 and Josh 24 is the function of the pillar, rather than its appearance. The description of the pillar shifts between smoke, cloud, darkness, and fire from passage to passage—with some potentially equating these phenomena while others separate them: In Exod 13:22 there are potentially two pillars—fire for the night and smoke for the day; in Exod 14:20 the darkness and the cloud (וַיְהִי הָעָנָן וְהַחֹשֶׁךְ) are shown as separate entities;⁴⁰ in Josh 24:7 there is only darkness. It would be possible to understand these differences as errors caused by the conflation of conflicting sources, these discrepancies would also be understood as confused attempts at describing something that defied simple explanation. It makes little sense for the cloud and darkness to illuminate (אֹר) the night in 14:20 if that darkness is understood literally, so it is best to understand the description of the pillar as being at least partially metaphorical: Meyers interprets the description of the pillar as containing a visual metaphor—more specifically, a merism of night and day that highlights the ever-present nature of the pillar.⁴¹ Meyers' interpretation assumes that the pillar changes appearance depending on the time of day and fits well with how Exod 13 and 14 emphasize the

⁴⁰ In the Greek version, instead of there being the cloud and the darkness, it reads "gloom and darkness" (σκότος καὶ γνόφος). There are still two separate entities here so my point still stands, but it is strange that the cloud is understood as blackness.

⁴¹ Meyers, *Exodus*, 112.

function of Yahweh's messenger and especially fits how Exod 13 emphasizes its reliability.

Meyers' interpretation works quite well as a way to understand the paradoxical combination of cloud/darkness and fire by which Yahweh's messenger is described as a functional rather than physical reality but function does not necessarily preclude form; the choice of darkness and fire might not have simply been a functional one but might have been intended to convey further information through its visuals. Other merisms to show the totality of its guiding presence could have been chosen, but darkness and fire were chosen. As we have already discussed, darkness was often understood metaphorically as that which is beyond the scope of human comprehension/perception (SEEING IS UNDERSTANDING, DARKNESS IS THE UNKNOWABLE)⁴² not just in the OT but among Israel's neighbours as well. This gives further explanation for the conflicting portrayals of the messenger as something beyond simple physical description. In this sense, the merism extends beyond the presence of the messenger to its perceptibility, as the pillar is described with basic human experiences that are felt in very different ways. Fire is something that normally fully-engages our senses of sight, hearing, smell, and feeling, but darkness and clouds are things that can only ever be seen and felt through change of temperature. Carpenter comes to a fairly similar conclusion that the darkness and the light that accompany the messenger are connected to the PERCEPTION and KNOWLEDGE frames but he applies these metaphors in a unique way: he argues that not

⁴² I would include clouds into the this blend as well. As I have noted several times throughout this dissertation, there is a close cognitive connection between clouds and darkness—particularly אפל—as a more grounded frame than darkness to describe hiddenness.

only did it provide literal guidance to the Israelites, it was also meant to symbolize God's guidance as a light-giving flame, as well as the lack of guidance to the point of bringing confusion caused by the darkness to the Egyptians.⁴³

Up to this point my focus has been on the appearance, function, and metaphorical significance of Yahweh's messenger, but I have yet to address its relationship with Yahweh. While the former questions would have been sufficient for previous chapters, the aim of this chapter is to explore the relationship between Yahweh and darkness. The primary concern when addressing this question is to first ask whether the messenger is to be understood as a manifestation of Yahweh or as a wholly separate entity from Yahweh. Between the two versions of the story that we are discussing here, there is some variation. In Joshua's retelling of the story, the answer is quite clear: darkness can be set or placed (שים) by Yahweh and is thus something separate from him. The darkness is not given any characterization and is simply an inanimate force that Yahweh places as a barrier.

Exodus 13:21–22 describes a closer relationship between Yahweh and the fiery cloud than in the previous example but still describes the two as separate entities. The cloud functions as a vessel from within which Yahweh leads his people. The language of Yahweh being within the pillar foreshadows the Sinai theophany of Exod 19:16–18 where God again works within a pillar of cloud, shadow, and other frightening forces. Utzschneider and Oswalt connect this pillar not only with the fire and darkness of Sinai but also with the burning bush of Exod 3 and argue that all three are fiery manifestations

⁴³ Carpenter, *Exodus*.

of the same messenger.⁴⁴ Whether or not this passage speaks of the pillar as something separate from Yahweh, it is what he has chosen to represent his presence at least visually which shows a closer relation between the two than in the Joshua retelling.

The description of the pillar in Exod 14:19–20 raises important theological questions which prevent easy answers regarding the relationship between the pillar and Yahweh. The first question to answer is whether the unified movements and functions of the pillar and the messenger are to be seen as indicating that they are the same entity, or as separate entities that move in unison. Verse 19 reads “And the messenger of God who was travelling in front of them moved and travelled to the rear, and the pillar of cloud travelled from the front and stopped at the rear.” The grammar of the two main clauses is nearly identical with the messenger of God and the pillar of cloud being the only noteworthy changes between the two. This could be taken as evidence that the two are being equated here. However, if we recall Exod 13:21–22, the pillar and Yahweh are separate yet synchronized in their movements. While the grammar of these two clauses is nearly parallel, we cannot assume that the two noun clauses are intended to be equated. Such a sudden shift into a two line poem in the middle of the narrative is also a bit peculiar so it is best to understand these two clauses as similar yet separate events in the narrative.

The second and certainly more difficult question to answer is the identity of the messenger of God. While often translated as angel, the Hebrew מַלְאָךְ is better translated as messenger. This does not automatically preclude the otherworldly nature of this being,

⁴⁴ Utzschneider and Oswald, *Exodus 1–15*, 318.

but it allows the Hebrew to retain its ambiguity. Terminology aside, it is not always wholly clear in the OT whether the messenger of God is an entity separate from Yahweh or his actual manifestation which has led to some debate. There are four general approaches to questions about the identity of the מלאך: representation theory argues that the מלאך is a sub-divine messenger who speaks/acts on Yahweh's behalf; identity theory argues that at least in most cases the מלאך is a manifestation of Yahweh; the angel-Christ or Logos theory argues a similar point to the identity theory but from a Christian trinitarian angle; and the interpolation theory that argues the מלאך replaces Yahweh in the text for theological reasons such as to not diminish his transcendence.⁴⁵

Returning to Exod 14:19–20, the interpolation theory cannot apply at least in this instance as Yahweh (in v. 21) and the מלאך to say nothing of the many instances where both present.⁴⁶ The differences between the identity theory and the Logos theory are not relevant to my aims here so I will not address them. The most important debate is between the identity and representation theories. One of the key voices that has argued for the identity theory in recent years has been René López.⁴⁷ López' focus is on the book of Judges, namely on determining whether or not the construct מלאך־יהוה is definite or not. In López' estimation, if it can be proved that the LXX was correct in its translation of מלאך־יהוה as *an* angel/messenger of the Lord in Judges, this can be applied more broadly to the rest of the OT. To prove this point, López counters the common arguments for

⁴⁵ Malone, "Distinguishing the Angel of the Lord," 297.

⁴⁶ von Heijne, *The Messenger of the Lord in Early Jewish Interpretations of Genesis*, 49–50.

⁴⁷ López, "Identifying the 'Angel of the Lord' in the Book of Judges."

identity theory by showing cases where human messengers speak in the first person, accept praise on behalf of their masters, and were unharmed after seeing the angel. Malone has outlined a number of flaws in the arguments from López and others who follow the representation theory.⁴⁸ Essentially, Malone shows that López's arguments don't succeed in proving the exclusive validity of his view and at times directly undermine his view in favour of the identity theory.⁴⁹ Malone rightly points out that the possibility that a messenger can speak in the first person on behalf of another is not proof that this is the case in the OT with the מלאך.⁵⁰ Camilla Hélène von Heijne has also pointed out that while messengers in the ancient Near East would speak their message in the first person, they would normally report from where the message came.⁵¹ Finally, López asserts that all who sees Yahweh's face perish and thus since encounters with the מלאך-יהוה are not lethal, this character must not be Yahweh but López fails to consider the many non-lethal theophanies discussed in this chapter and beyond.

Beyond the negative arguments against the representation theory, there is also an overwhelming amount of evidence for the identity theory. In the instances where the מלאך יהוה is present, it functions in a way that is identical to Yahweh himself and even receives worship in a way only befitting of Yahweh in the OT.⁵² There are also enough

⁴⁸ Malone, "Distinguishing the Angel of the Lord."

⁴⁹ Malone, "Distinguishing the Angel of the Lord," 297.

⁵⁰ Malone, "Distinguishing the Angel of the Lord," 302.

⁵¹ von Heijne, *The Messenger of the Lord in Early Jewish Interpretations of Genesis*, 49.

⁵² Fabry et al., "מלאך Mal'ak," 321; Meier, "Angel I [ml'k]," 87–88.

instances where the מלאך is explicitly referred to as Yahweh (Gen 16:13, 48:15–16; Exod 3:4–22; Judg 6:14–24) or when he refers to himself as Yahweh (Gen 31:13; Exod 3:6).⁵³

Within the immediate context of this chapter and the surrounding pillar narratives, there is sufficient evidence to show that—at the very least within this section of Exodus—the מלאך יהוה is to be understood as a manifestation of Yahweh’s presence. In Exod 23:21 Yahweh warns the people to heed his מלאך for Yahweh’s name is in him (כִּי שְׁמִי בְקִרְבּוֹ). While he allows for the possibility that the מלאך was merely granted authority by God, Carpenter is more convinced that the אֱלֹהִים of 23:21 “is a *bēt essentiae*, an indication of essence”, which further suggests that the מלאך and Yahweh are understood as one being in Exodus.⁵⁴ Stuart comes to the same conclusion and argues that the construct nature of מלאך יהוה is an “appositional construct . . . that is, the form of the construct that uses the second word to identify the first” and thus concludes that the “*mal’āk yahweh* is grammatically appositional and best translates as ‘the angel that is Yahweh’ or ‘the Angel Yahweh’ or ‘Angel Yahweh.’”⁵⁵ Fischer notes that given the breadth of

occurrences of the hif’il “to bring to”, which take YHWH as their subject and the land as the object in the Book of Exodus as well as in Deuteronomy, it becomes clear that YHWH is sharing the guiding and protecting role, which he has taken, with his angel. Therefore, one will not find any essential difference between the two; and one may not emphasize too much the change of subjects in v.23; there the angel’s commission covers only the time up to Israel’s arrival in the promised land, whereas YHWH takes it upon him to annihilate viz. to expel the land’s inhabitants

⁵³ Slager, “Who Is the ‘Angel of the Lord?’,” 437.

⁵⁴ Carpenter, *Exodus*.

⁵⁵ Stuart, *Exodus*, 110–11.

(cf. Exod 33:2). Rather, the angel by himself represents God's presence, as v.21 explicitly remarks.⁵⁶

Given the immediate and broader biblical contexts of this passage, the identity of the messenger—at least in this passage—is most likely understood to be Yahweh. It follows then that Yahweh has chosen to represent himself with the image of darkness and fire. There would have been other means for Yahweh to shroud his presence through a sand storm or a blinding white light. He could have not condescended in a physical presence at all. Instead Yahweh and/or the writers of Exodus chose the image of darkness and fire as an appropriate image for his presence. As I will show with further examples below, I believe that darkness was the chosen image because of its entailments of the UNKNOWN and UNKNOWABLE. Darkness was an appropriate image to highlight Yahweh's transcendence and holiness at a time when he was most immanent and tangible. I will expand on this notion further as I examine further examples.

The above examples contribute in small but significant ways to our assessment of the conceptual world of darkness in the minds of the ancient Hebrew writers. In the first example we see the blend DARKNESS IS A SERVANT OF YAHWEH while in the second two we see DARKNESS IS AN OBJECT WHICH GOD USES. Even in the first example, darkness is not so anthropomorphized that we could argue that it was perceived as a separate, *sentient* force from God (let alone one that is antagonistic to him). Despite how unknown and unknowable darkness is in the conceptual world of the OT, it is still quite mundane. This raises the question of why Yahweh is portrayed as using darkness to his ends. This

⁵⁶ Fischer, "Moses and the Exodus-Angel," 85.

of course has implications for debates concerning theomachy and dualism in the OT as Yahweh shows no hesitation in employing darkness and is shown having full sovereignty over it. In the case of the dark, fiery pillar of the latter half of Exodus, darkness functions as an impenetrable wall halting the advance of soldiers, but also arresting vision between Egypt, Israel, and even Yahweh's presence. This latter point of darkness hiding Yahweh's presence will be of particular interest in §6.3.

6.2.2 Excursus: ערפל

The other lexemes related to “darkness” are fairly spread out across chapters 3–5 in this study but instances of ערפל take up the overwhelming bulk of dark verbiage discussed in this chapter. The discernible concentration of this root in theophanic contexts alone should indicate that there is something peculiar about ערפל when compared to other words for darkness in the OT. In his semantic field study, Cornelius found that חשך was flexible in its use in both relatively mundane and theophanic contexts but “ערפל seems to be limited to theophany, and the root אפל is found only in the context of epiphany.”⁵⁷ Since this word is going to be key to the verses discussed below, it would be wise to first discuss any critical issues related to this word.

Price offers a few etymological connections to the root ערף, “to drip, drop;” the Aramaic ערפלָא, Syriac *‘arpel*, and Ugaritic *grpl*, “heavy cloud;” or the less likely Arabic *grp*, “to cover.”⁵⁸ Loader believes that the root *ʿrp* is related to *ʿrb*, “be shadowy” and

⁵⁷ Cornelius, “The Theological Significance of Darkness in the Old Testament,” 108.

⁵⁸ Price, “ערפלָא (‘arāpel).”

Mulder, following Loader, concludes that ערפל must mean “cloudy shade.”⁵⁹ While Price does not take a side in the debate, Köhler and Baumgartner explicitly do not consider any etymological connections presented to be conclusive.⁶⁰

Cohen also avoids getting caught up in the etymology of the word and instead focuses on how the word is used throughout the OT. He notes that the fifteen occurrences of ערפל can be sorted into one of four categories:

a) a general usage of “darkness” (without any specific connection to clouds); b) a specialized usage (sometimes cosmological) referring to God's heavenly presence or abode, conceived in the form of a cloud (without any specific connection to darkness); c) a combination of the first two usages according to which the cloud in usage b is enveloped in darkness; d) a technical weather usage referring to a phenomenon which is apparent in the sky, involving thick clouds and inhibiting sight over a considerable distance, i.e. darkness in the sky or, in modern terminology, “fog.”⁶¹

As was mentioned above, Cornelius found that ערפל was more closely connected with ענן than any other word for darkness in the OT and that these clouds were a regular feature of theophanic contexts in a way that he found in stark contrast with parallel Ugaritic texts.⁶² Throughout his contributions to the NIDOTTE on the OT Hebrew words for darkness, Price regularly focuses on how darkness is a threat to humans and even a moral evil, so the “thick darkness [ערפל] that stands in contrast with God's glory that Isaiah described” proves to be a stumbling block for him and spends as much time

⁵⁹ Loader, “The Concept of Darkness in the Hebrew Root ‘RB/‘RP,” 104; Mulder, “עֲרַפֶּל ‘arāpel,” 371.

⁶⁰ Köhler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, sec. ערפל; Price, “עֲרַפֶּל (‘arāpel).”

⁶¹ Cohen, “The Basic Meaning of the Term עֲרַפֶּל ‘Darkness,’” 7.

⁶² Cornelius, “The Theological Significance of Darkness in the Old Testament,” 103.

speaking of the dangers of ערפל as he does its theophanic significance.⁶³ To Cornelius, it is this connection between theophany and clouds that is integral to properly understanding the meaning of ערפל as a “highly mysterious” darkness.⁶⁴ Mulder comes to the very similar conclusion that ערפל is “both manifestation and representation of the hidden God.”⁶⁵ Apart from these theophanic contexts, Cohen notes on the basis of Job 22:13–14 that without its religious trappings, ערפל seems to indicate some sort of weather phenomenon that obscures vision—a sort of dense fog or low-lying cloud formation like that which rolls off a mountain’s sides.⁶⁶

For the purposes of this dissertation, I will be referring to this word primarily as “darkness” but “cloudy darkness” will also function. There does not appear to be a particularly precise English equivalent that captures this sense of dense, opaque, cloudy darkness. Even so, “darkness” should function as the cloudy entailments of this word are generally quite clear from the contexts discussed below.

6.2.3 Yahweh Stands Upon Darkness

The theme of Yahweh standing upon darkness is not a particularly common one. It only appears in one pair of parallel passages: 2 Sam 22:10–12 and Ps 18:10–12 (11–13 English). To avoid confusion, I will rely on the Hebrew versification as it is identical between both versions. Starting with v. 10, we are introduced to a particularly odd

⁶³ Price, “ערפל (‘arāpel)”; Cf. Mulder (“ערפל ‘arāpel,” 372) who assumed that dark storm clouds would carry “baneful connotations” to a people reliant on rainwater for survival.

⁶⁴ Cornelius, “The Theological Significance of Darkness in the Old Testament,” 42.

⁶⁵ Mulder, “ערפל ‘rāpel,” 374.

⁶⁶ Cohen, “The Basic Meaning of the Term ערפל ‘Darkness,’” 9.

description of darkness being under Yahweh's feet. While v. 12 uses חשך, this verse uses ערפל which is often used to describe the darkness of God's presence but rather than surrounding Yahweh as the חשך of v. 12 does, this ערפל is under his feet. Klingbeil notes Yahweh's spatial movement from high up in the clouds to him riding downward through the cloud cover.⁶⁷ The image of Yahweh standing on dark clouds is further elaborated by the following verse as a cherub and the wind are added to the blend.

There are certainly some strong similarities between this poem and the descriptions of Baal riding upon the clouds and it seems most likely that this trope played a part, whether consciously or not, in the poet's description of Yahweh's saving activity. That said, the poet's use of the GOD/GOD RIDING ON THE CLOUDS blend does not preclude other literary/cultural influences. The most obvious and important influence is the Sinai theophany which the poet clearly evokes in vv. 10 and 11 with Yahweh's presence being marked by fire, smoke, and darkness (ערפל). Firth notes that Hab 3:1–16 and Mic 1:2–7 evoke the Sinai theophany in similar ways to reflect on Yahweh's saving presence.⁶⁸ Firth also notes that the mention of Yahweh riding upon the cherubim is a reference to the cherubim that were on top of the Ark of the Covenant.⁶⁹ Nielsen argues that Sinai isn't evoked simply to underscore Yahweh's power to save, but was included by the editor to elevate David to the same plane as Moses by showing parallels between their experiences.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Martin G Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven*, 70–74.

⁶⁸ Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 518.

⁶⁹ Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 518.

⁷⁰ Nielsen, "Metaphorical Language and Theophany in Psalm 18," 201.

Connected to the above issue is the question of what is meant by the darkness being under Yahweh's feet. In most cases in the OT, being under someone's feet is idiomatic of being under their political authority (2 Sam 22:39; 1 Kgs 5:3; Pss 8:6; 18:36; 47:3), but in the Baal myths, the clouds are under Baal's feet as he rides upon them. Another possible interpretation is that the heavens are bowed low as a ramp for Yahweh to descend (יֵרֵד).⁷¹ The former interpretation has lexical connections with the bowing down of the heavens and a power being placed under his feet, but this interpretation is not reinforced by the context in any way. God's salvific power is what is the focus of these verses, rather than his sovereignty and the only conflict here is between the poet and his enemies, not Yahweh and not the power of darkness and storms. God's power over clouds and storms is complete and unquestioned here,⁷² just as it is in Elihu's description of Yahweh's tent (סֹכֶתוֹ) from which he sends out both storms and judgment in Job 36:27–33. It would certainly be easy to jump to reading this passage in light of the Baal myths. The Baal reading fits especially well with the explicit cloud riding of v. 11 but also fits with the shroud of dark clouds of v. 12 and the thundering of v. 14 as well as the above text from Job. However, by focusing exclusively on reading this passage alongside the Baal myths fails to consider darkness' role in these verses. While v. 12 has darkness and clouds in parallel, v. 10 has the heavens and darkness in parallel; the cognitive connections between darkness and clouds has been noted several times in this

⁷¹ Hoffner, *1 & 2 Samuel*.

⁷² Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 79.

dissertation, but equating darkness and the sky does not fit very well here. This is perhaps why the darkness of v. 10 is so often ignored.

Another weakness of interpretations that focus solely on Baal motifs is that they ignore the clear allusions to the Sinai motif as discussed above.⁷³ The language here is indeed theophanic, but much of the language is evocative of the Sinai theophany more specifically. Here Yahweh descends from the bowed heavens upon a great dark staircase like a God-king descending the steps of his ziggurat or holy mountain (see v. 7). This descent is a continuation of the Sinai motif as God descended in a similar way using similar natural forces to shroud himself and signal his presence such as fire, smoke, clouds, thunder, and darkness (more on the Sinai theophany below).

Whether v. 10 is interpreted in light of the Baal myths, the Sinai theophany, or both, this verse highlights Yahweh's command over darkness. Not only this, but darkness is solidified into something that can be stood upon, rather than as something intangible. Nielsen notes the paradoxical descriptions of Yahweh in this hymn: on the one hand he is personable with a face, nostrils, feet, etc but on the other hand these human features do that which is impossible such as breathing fire and standing upon shadows.⁷⁴ She calls these visual metaphors metonymies for the divine presence and concludes that they "underline that Yahweh relates to places or phenomena in this world without being bound to them or identified with them."⁷⁵

⁷³ Broyles, *Psalms*, 92; Craigie, *Psalms. 1-50*, 174; Grogan, *Psalms*, 66.

⁷⁴ Nielsen, "Metaphorical Language and Theophany in Psalm 18," 203.

⁷⁵ Nielsen, "Metaphorical Language and Theophany in Psalm 18," 207.

Moving on to v. 12, this verse has a few small differences between each version which are shown below with the differences underlined:

Ps 18:12 [13]	2 Sam 22:12
וַיַּשֶׁת׀ הַשָּׁד׀ סְתָרוֹ סְבִיבוֹתָיו סָכְתוֹ הַשְּׁכֶת־מַיִם עָבִי שְׁחָקִים	וַיַּשֶׁת׀ הַשָּׁד׀ סְבִיבוֹתָיו סְכוֹת הַשְּׁרֶת־מַיִם עָבִי שְׁחָקִים
He made darkness <u>his camouflage</u> ⁷⁶ —his yurt ⁷⁷ around himself; <u>dark</u> waters, stormy clouds.	<u>And</u> he made darkness his yurt around himself; <u>gathering</u> ⁷⁸ waters, stormy clouds

This verse is another example of the strong cognitive connections between darkness and clouds. The Psalmist's rendition which reads הַשְּׁכֶת־מַיִם creates a closer connection between these two frames than the 2 Samuel version which reads הַשְּׁרֶת־מַיִם. The graphical similarities between כ to ר could indicate an error in one direction or another, but the improved parallelism created by the use of הַשְּׁכֶת־מַיִם might be evidence of an attempt to smooth out the poetry by the copyists of the Psalter.

This verse has some striking similarities with Ezek 32:6–7 and Job 23:17 with darkness being likened to a physical veil which covers him but this verse adds a novel piece to this blend describing darkness as his yurt (סָכָה) which is elsewhere reflected in Job 36:29. We will discuss the metaphor of darkness being Yahweh's dwelling place in greater detail later, as in this verse, God's presence only temporarily dwells in darkness in

⁷⁶ While cover, veil, or shelter all work as translations of סָתָר, the word is more focused on secrecy than protection like “shelter” or “cover” would connote even if they would fit in better with סָכָה. While the above translation is a bit anachronistic, it better captures the Psalmist's use of the DARKNESS IS HIDDENNESS metaphor.

⁷⁷ סָכָה is usually translated as booth but this word has lost its sense to modern readers. I have chosen to translate it as yurt to show the temporary nature of the סָכָה while also differentiating it with the tent.

⁷⁸ McCarter (*II Samuel*, 466) using evidences from Ugaitic parallels and Rabbinic interpretations interprets this word as “sieve” or “distillation.”

this verse. The Psalmist's description of darkness being Yahweh's סֶתֶר poses an interesting problem for translators trying to make sense of the poetry, but from a cognitive linguistics standpoint, the poet is clearly evoking the DARKNESS IS HIDDENNESS metaphor. The poet's intention is certainly not to simply say that Yahweh's presence is physically dark as in the following verse he goes on to describe that which goes before Yahweh as brightness (נֹגַהּ).

6.3 Yahweh is Found in Darkness

The examples from 6.2 all showed Yahweh in a king-messenger or user-object relationship with darkness. It is one thing to tolerate something enough to put it to use but another thing entirely to closely self identify with it. But there is no sense that Yahweh merely tolerates and reluctantly put darkness to use. Rather, in the OT Yahweh is often portrayed as being surrounded by darkness whether in his descriptions or in his self-descriptions through the visual representations of his theophanies. Rather than appearing as an angel of light (to borrow a New Testament phrase), Yahweh tends to appear in utter darkness—often to the dismay of his onlookers. The prevailing assumptions of theomachy between God and darkness has led many scholars to distance God from darkness; not only is there no darkness found within him, but so too near him. For instance, in his article on light and darkness, Donald Mills gives an overview of instances where God's presence is described as light but provides no such overview for all of the dark portrayals of God's presence.⁷⁹ In this section I will examine those verses that

⁷⁹ Mills, "Light and Darkness."

portray God's dwelling place as dark and his presence as dark to see what is meant by this darkness and then why the authors intended to indicate by describing Yahweh as such.

6.3.1 Yahweh Dwells in Darkness

Without a doubt the most appropriate place to start this section on Yahweh dwelling in darkness would be Gen 1:2. My interest here is the description of the deep waters over which the *רוח אלהים* hovered as being dark (*חשך*). Assuming that the choice to describe the primeval world as being dark was not haphazard but has some sort of intended meaning behind it, we must move beyond focusing solely on comparative religions and examine this choice of imagery to see what is meant by darkness here. Cognitive linguistics is the perfect tool with which to do so.

The first question we must answer here is one of genre. There is some debate as to whether Gen 1 is to be read as a chronological narrative,⁸⁰ a narrative that follows its own internal logic,⁸¹ or something more poetic or impressionistic.⁸² Regardless of how “impressionistic” one considers Gen 1, upon closer examination, v. 2 does display obvious parallelism between vv. 2b and 2c: in v. 2b the darkness is on the face (*על־פְּנֵי*) of the waters and in v. 2c the *רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים* is on the face (*על־פְּנֵי*) of the deep. “Waters” (*מים*) and “deep” (*תְּהוֹם*) are regularly seen in parallel throughout the OT (Ezek 21:4, 15; Jonah 2:6; Hab 3:10; Ps 104:6) which further indicates a parallel structure to these lines.

⁸⁰ Cotter, *Genesis*; Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*; Walton, “Creation in Genesis 1.”

⁸¹ Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-Creation, Re-Creation*, 32.

⁸² Brueggemann, *Genesis*; Wenham, “Genesis.”

Beyond the obvious grammatical parallelism, Wyatt also notes the assonance of repeated gutturals with seven הs and three חs in rapid succession that tie v. 2 together.⁸³ The parallelism apparent in these two lines has gone relatively unnoticed by scholars. Of those commentaries and articles surveyed for this dissertation, only a small handful addressed the possibility of Gen 1:2 being a bi-colon. Nyirenda's history of interpretation of Gen 1:1–3 is conspicuously missing any mention of any scholars who have connected the רוח אלהים to the חשך that both hover over the water in any parallel relationship.⁸⁴ Westermann, along with Skinner and Casuto, notes that the two phrases על־פני תהום and על־פני המים are parallel in terms of their meaning and grammatical structure in how they describe what hovers above: darkness and רוח אלהים.⁸⁵

Despite how infrequently it is recognized by scholars, the parallelism of these two lines would be difficult to dispute. The more pressing question for interpreters is why did writer of Genesis put darkness and רוח אלהים in parallel? Was his intention to pit the two forces against each other or to positively compare them in some way? Westerman nearly allows for the possibility of positively comparing darkness and the רוח אלהים but stops short due to theological qualms with such a positive relationship between dark waters and the רוח. In fact, he makes a very strong case for a comparative parallel relationship between the two but cannot allow such a positive relationship since “if the phrase רוח אלהים is understood as referring to ‘the spirit of God’ then it must be understood as a

⁸³ Wyatt, “The Darkness of Genesis I 2,” 549.

⁸⁴ Nyirenda, “Theological Interpretation and Translation Reception.”

⁸⁵ Westermann, *Genesis I–II*, 106.

contrast.”⁸⁶ Similarly, Mathews recognizes the parallel relationship between the waters and the deep but is sure to keep some distance between the רוח אלהים and the darkness as water “is often portrayed as a threat to life and the people of God. . . . Here, again, Genesis identifies the waters only for what they are, creations subject to the superintendence of God.”⁸⁷ In his study of the poetry of Gen 1:2, T. Anthony Perry notes the synonymy of תהום and מים but considers the repetition of על-פני to be “clumsy” and considers the more straightforward “darkness and the spirit of God were upon the face of the waters” to have been a superior line for the writer to have used.⁸⁸ Walton’s approach is directly tied to his answer to the question of apparent *Chaoskampf* in the Gen 1 creation account and so his arguments will have to wait until that question is addressed. For now, it is sufficient to say that he does not find sufficient reason to seriously consider that darkness and the רוח are being positively compared in some way via parallelism in this verse. Wyatt allows the parallelism to speak for itself by comparing the רוח to the darkness and finds no problem in doing so.⁸⁹ Even if a parallel structure is accepted, it must be determined what this parallelism is attempting to say: is there a contrast/contest between the רוח and the darkness, are they existing in the same space/time, or are they perhaps the same entity? The answer to this question is related to a number of other questions that must first be addressed.

⁸⁶ Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 106.

⁸⁷ Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 133.

⁸⁸ Perry, “A Poetics of Absence,” 5.

⁸⁹ Wyatt, “The Darkness of Genesis I 2.”

One ongoing question for interpreters who are faced with the potential parallelism of this verse is how to interpret רוח. Fretheim acknowledges but moves past the parallelism of v. 2 without issue as he interprets רוח as a wind which is a counterpart element of creation to darkness that appears in this verse and isn't seen again in the story.⁹⁰ Marlowe comes to a similar conclusion and translates v. 2 as "And darkness was [covering] the surface of the deep [seas] // While a wind from Elohim was blowing over the waters"⁹¹ and thus avoids any theological problems. I am not accusing Marlowe and Keck of conveniently sidestepping the issue at hand but their choice to interpret רוח as wind is just that: a choice. It is a choice that not all scholars agree on and one that is certainly pertinent to the aims of this dissertation.⁹² Even taking this verse as a tricolon, the darkness in parallel with רוח provides little help in determining what is meant. Interpreting the רוח as the "wind" of God has been the preferred option of critical scholars in modern times but still some scholars argue for the validity of translating it as "spirit" or "Spirit."

Those scholars that do more deeply consider what רוח means generally centre their arguments on how to interpret מרחפת. Looking at the other two verses that use the verb רחף in Deut 32:11 and Jer 23:9 provides rather conflicting pieces of evidence. The former verse describes the actions of a mother eagle brooding, or flapping its wings (רחף) over its young and thus "to hover" would certainly work here. The latter is part of a

⁹⁰ Fretheim, "Genesis," 343.

⁹¹ Marlowe, "Patterns, Parallels, and Poetics in Genesis 1," 22.

⁹² See May, "The Creation of Light in Genesis 1," 203 for a lengthy overview of the various interpretive options.

lament and describes Jeremiah's shaking (רחף) bones along with a broken heart and a sense of inebriation. It would be very difficult to interpret רחף as anything close to hovering in Jer 23:9 but in both instances, if רחף is interpreted as fluttering or vibrating it would fit all three uses of this word in the OT. A vibrating wind could perhaps be used to describe a chaotic wind which would fit well if we accept the first two lines as descriptions of the primeval chaos as Childs does, but such a description of chaotic winds is nowhere else attested in the OT. Westermann finds no problem with accepting an elsewhere unattested interpretation of רוח אלהים as "wind of God" as he argues that this phrase is nowhere else used with a verb like רחף, but his parameters are far too specific and discount all of the other uses of רוח אלהים throughout the OT that rather obviously refer to the spirit of God as some sort of force from or manifestation of Yahweh.⁹³ Not only this, but one of the two other uses of רחף used to describe divine activity through the metaphor of the mother eagle in Deut 32:11, can be understood as having close parallels with Gen 1:2: both speak of a parental being fluttering/brooding over its nascent creation.

Another option is to understand אלהים as a superlative mightiest/strongest/greatest wind of winds. As I mentioned above, רוח אלהים appears several times throughout the OT and in most cases it is unambiguously seen as being related to the divine in some way.

Wyatt is unconvinced אלהים can be taken as a superlative in this instance as he points out,

it seems unlikely that the writer of Gen. I would allow such a diminution of one of his key terms by its use as a mere superlative. We may perhaps take it as "the wind of God", but the deity who is in total control of the

⁹³ Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 107.

cosmogonic process is surely present, even perhaps in the notionally neutral form of his “wind”, from the beginning.⁹⁴

Mathews comes to a similar conclusion but through different means than Wyatt. He argues that רוח might have been understood more flexibly as containing both meanings—spirit and wind—due to Israel’s experience of the divine winds that parted the waters of the Sea of Reeds just as it did to create the dry land in Gen 1.⁹⁵ Mathews concludes his argument by writing “Whether it is understood as ‘wind’ or ‘Spirit,’ the Hebrews could well appreciate the theology: God was sovereignly superintending the condition of the earth and preparing the way for his creative word.”⁹⁶ A helpful passage to consider would be Zech 6:1–8 where the four רוחות went out from Yahweh’s presence. These divine charioteers not only traverse the winds but are also some sort of spiritual being and thus inhabit both conceptual worlds of wind and spirit. Blenkinsopp connects the רוח over the waters with the רוח that rushes over the waters to reproduce dry land at the end of the flood narrative in Gen 8, thus creating a pattern of creation to un-creation to re-creation.⁹⁷ While Blenkinsopp argues that the רוח is a superlative “mighty wind,”⁹⁸ such a stark distinction need not be made as the re-creative wind in Gen 8 is sent from God to achieve his purposes—a divine wind. That this divine spirit-wind is present in both contexts of (re)creation from a watery state as an act of God in Gen 1:2 and Gen 8:1 suggests that these spirit-winds are connected in the mind of the narrator of Genesis.

⁹⁴ Wyatt, “The Darkness of Genesis I 2,” 546–47.

⁹⁵ Mathews, *Genesis 1–11*, 135–36. See also, Arnold, *Genesis*, 38.

⁹⁶ Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 135–36.

⁹⁷ Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-Creation, Re-Creation*, 33–34.

⁹⁸ Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-Creation, Re-Creation*, 34.

To recap what has been discussed so far, Gen 1:2 has all the markers of Hebrew parallelism contained within a longer passage that is at least elevated prose and at most a poem or hymn. Within this verse the second and third lines are nearly identical cola with darkness and the רוח אלהים in parallel and as has been shown, the רוח אלהים is best understood as the either simply the Spirit/spirit of God or as a divine wind that evokes both frames of wind and spirit. What is still to be determined is the nature of the relationship between the darkness and divine wind that the author of this verse intended: is it a positive relationship, a contrastive relationship, or something else? Again, most scholars are not interested in discussing the poetic nature of Gen 1:2 but are instead more focused on whether or not and how these verses present the creation through theomachy/*Chaoskampf*. While most of the scholars I will discuss below do not interpret v. 2 as poetry, they would agree that there is a contrastive relationship between the darkness and depths of v. 2b and the רוח of v. 2c. As I have consistently noted and cautioned against, while darkness is certainly not an overly positive reality in the minds of the writers of the OT, it is also not inherently evil and so it is unwise to assume that any mention of darkness suggests theomachy.⁹⁹ Some scholars allow darkness to play a more ambivalent role in their interpretations. For instance, Wenham and Mathews both begin their exegeses of v. 2 by noting that darkness often has negative entailments of wickedness, judgment, death, evil, and all that is anti-life but they also both go on to admit that God is often seen in close proximity with darkness and chooses it as the form

⁹⁹ e.g., Fretheim, “Genesis”; Mills, “Light and Darkness.” Here Mills says that “[t]he opposition of ‘light and darkness’ is fundamental to the creation account of Gen 1. God creates light (אור, ‘ôr) to pierce the darkness (חֹשֶׁךְ, ḥôšēk) of the primeval chaos (Gen 1:3) to distinguish light and darkness . . .”.

of his theophanic manifestations.¹⁰⁰ Neither author comes to any conclusion about the nature or meaning of the dark visual metaphor being used here but Mathews does note that darkness cannot be all that bad as “God demonstrates his authority over it by naming it. . . . and it is the Lord who made it as a part of his ‘good’ creation.”¹⁰¹ Other scholars are far less open to the idea of any positive connections between Yahweh and darkness. Waltke and Fredricks contrast the light and land of Gen 1 with the darkness and deep which they say “connote surd [sic] evil.”¹⁰² Skinner focuses his attention on the chaotic elements of v. 2 among which he includes darkness. He further buttresses his argument by connecting this verse with the darkness of Jer 4:23–26 which he argues is an element of chaos.¹⁰³ At the risk of creating a straw man, Westermann’s comments on Gen 1:2 are emblematic of this trend while also opening the door to very specific criticisms:

Darkness is not to be understood as a phenomenon of nature but rather as something sinister. Darkness has different meanings and is related to different situations: [such as] the difference between a darkness which protects existence and a darkness which threatens it, between darkness which is part of the natural order and the darkness of chaos. It is the latter that is intended in Gen 1:2. And so it is not surprising that in many cosmogenies throughout the world darkness precedes creation.¹⁰⁴

It is Westermann’s final point that is most noteworthy as it has been sufficiently countered by John Walton and others. First, there is no theomachy in the text as there is no conflict, no victory, and no enthronement—just mere command and obedience.¹⁰⁵

Second, John Walton raises a number of issues related specifically on Westermann’s

¹⁰⁰ Mathews, *Genesis 1–11*, 132–33; Wenham, “Genesis,” 16.

¹⁰¹ Mathews, *Genesis 1–11*:26, 132–33.

¹⁰² Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*.

¹⁰³ Skinner, *Genesis*, 16–17.

¹⁰⁴ Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 104.

¹⁰⁵ Arnold, *Genesis*, 32; Blenkinsopp, *Creation, Un-Creation, Re-Creation*, 32, 35–39.

conclusion regarding theomachy in Gen 1.¹⁰⁶ One of the most important distinctions Walton makes is between *Chaoskampf*, theomachy, and cosmogony which he argues are too often lumped together and if elements of one of the three are present, scholars have tended to assume that all three are at play.¹⁰⁷ Beyond the Enuma Elish, Walton argues that the only other example of cosmogony through *Chaoskampf* is found in a single line of the Egyptian Instruction of Merikare and that scholars ought to more carefully differentiate these two examples from the more common theme of chaotic forces threatening an already established order within ancient Near Eastern mythologies.¹⁰⁸ He concludes his overview of ancient Near Eastern studies by stating “We have no reason to expect that an ancient Near Eastern cosmogony would feature theomachy. Rather, cosmogony is simply one among many contexts in which theomachy may be employed.”¹⁰⁹

With this properly clarified, we can now return to Gen 1:2 to more carefully discern if either *Chaoskampf* or theomachy are present within the Gen 1 cosmogony. Walton, for one, is quite convinced that there are no signs of theomachy or *Chaoskampf* present in v. 2 or anywhere else in the chapter for that matter. This is most clearly seen in Gen 1:4–5 as both light and darkness are included within God’s created order. Not only this, but neither God nor light triumph over darkness in these verses but instead there is ordering or separation (לדל) of elements into their designated times and purposes. Walton instead argues that Gen 1 is more reflective of ancient Near Eastern temple cosmologies—that is, it shows the typical characteristics of creation being “the giving of functions

¹⁰⁶ Walton, “Creation in Genesis 1.”

¹⁰⁷ Walton, “Creation in Genesis 1,” 49.

¹⁰⁸ Walton, “Creation in Genesis 1,” 50–51.

¹⁰⁹ Walton, “Creation in Genesis 1,” 52.

often in terms of separating, naming, and assigning roles” wherein “[t]emple and cosmos are largely synonymous (homological), each representing an image of the other.”¹¹⁰ If Gen 1 is indeed an ancient Near Eastern temple cosmology as Walton has argued, then the darkness of v. 2 would fit in well not only with the later theophany of Solomon’s day, but also other ancient Near Eastern temples that used light and darkness in calculated ways to show the presence of their deity. There is no indication that it is in conflict with Yahweh in any way. Rather, he seems to be coexisting with darkness quite freely and given his close proximity to the deep in v. 2b, he would have also been at least close to that darkness if not upon or within it. The darkness is materialized as something on or upon the deep in a way quite similar to some of the examples covered in §6.2 which could indicate that Yahweh is hovering/standing upon the darkness (cf. 2 Sam 22:10–13 and Ps 18:9–12). Taken this way, this verse, like those discussed above, would be highlighting God’s sovereignty over darkness, not through *Kampf* but by his mere existence.

Without assuming that there must be conflict between darkness and the divine wind/spirit, the grammar of this verse could really go either way as the ו could easily be translated as “and,” “but,” or even “while.” Wyatt and Blythin both agree that the darkness and the divine wind are meant to be compared in some way. Wyatt says that if we accept אלהים as giving the רוח a divine, rather than simply superlative quality, then the darkness “must also denote a similar quality”¹¹¹ and Blythin similarly concludes “It

¹¹⁰ Walton, “Creation in Genesis 1,” 57.

¹¹¹ Wyatt, “The Darkness of Genesis I 2,” 546–47.

seems clear from the use of the phrase *ruah 'elôhîm* that a genuine attempt was made in the verse to bring the activity of God into positive relationship with the chaos.”¹¹² This is of course the minority position; most of the above examples understand the spirit and the darkness in a contrastive relationship, but there is a very real possibility that the ו can be translated as “and” or “while.” Given the strongly paralleled structure of these two lines, there does seem to be some effort on behalf of the author to have their audience understand these two elements in relation to one another and given the lack of theomachy in Gen 1, conflict between these elements does not seem to be the relationship that the author is suggesting.

The question still remains: what is darkness representing in this verse? Again, most interpreters have interpreted this darkness literally which is the most natural conclusion if this verse is interpreted as a narrative but even if this verse is a narrative, that does preclude the use of figurative language. The deep is not described as simply being dark but darkness is instead upon its face—the darkness does not penetrate or permeate the cosmos, but it is found staying put on top of the waters. The anthropomorphization of the deep combined with the materialization of darkness clearly indicates that the deep is not just being described as physically dark. We must determine what was intended with this conceptual blend that either modifies the spirit or the deep.

Recalling the various recurring metaphors related to darkness and their attendant ICMs from the previous three chapters, some entailments related to the DARKNESS frame fit better here than others. It would be somewhat preposterous to suggest that entailments

¹¹² Blythin, “A Note on Genesis I 2,” 121.

from the PRISON IS DARKNESS, DEATH IS DARKNESS, or FOLLY IS DARKNESS frames are being drawn from here—especially since these metaphors are often found with their counterpart metaphors nearby which are not seen in Gen 1. The closest possible connection to one of these metaphor pairings is the DARKNESS IS FOLLY, WISDOM IS LIGHT pair as much of this chapter is focused on the act of creation which is elsewhere described as God’s wise ordering of the universe (Prov 3:19, Jer 10:12). In this sense, darkness and the spirit of God are not in synonymous parallelism but antithetical as opposing forces of wisdom and chaos/folly vying for control. Such a connection requires a rather complicated web of intertextual links that are certainly artificial and so there does not seem to be much of a connection to these other dark metaphors.

As was determined in chapter 3, EVIL IS DARKNESS is not a particularly common metaphor in ancient Hebrew thought to the point of it being debatable if it would have even been thought of as sensible. I also found no examples of darkness being used as a metonymy for chaos anywhere in the OT. Hopefully recognizing this would assuage the fears of anyone put off by having darkness and the spirit of God in a positive comparison.

With these options eliminated, the only options left are those we discussed in chapter 5. Of all the metaphors that employ darkness that we have explored, the blend THE UNKNOWN/UNKNOWABLE IS DARKNESS seems the most likely. This conclusion is not due simply to a mere process of elimination, but reflects the sense of otherness that pervades this chapter. This sense of otherness persists in the other two instances in Genesis where the *רוּחַ* appears in Gen 2:7 and 8:1—both instances of miraculous divine

action. It is appropriate that such an elusive character would be given human scale through darkness, which is itself difficult to comprehend beyond its essential ability to block knowledge (knowledge is sight). Genesis 1 is notorious for its terse creation narrative that provides frustratingly little information. If the first bit of description of the God of Genesis is marked by his unknowability, this would indicate a conscious effort by the writer of Genesis to keep things mysterious. The רִיחַ is portrayed in purposefully enigmatic ways as a being either shrouded within darkness, or visually represented as darkness. Following what was discussed in chapter 5 about the ways darkness was perceived in Hebrew thought, the darkness of God's רִיחַ is an indication of how mysterious and unknowable it is via THE UNKNOWN/UNKNOWABLE IS DARKNESS.

A very similar instance of Yahweh's presence being dark is in 1 Kgs 8:10–12 which is retold again in 2 Chron 5:13–6:1. The stories are verbatim so to avoid confusion caused by jumping between identical versions I will focus on the version of the story from 1 Kings. In vv. 10 and 11, after the official inauguration of Solomon's temple, a cloud entirely fills the temple, thus driving out its priests. Verse 11 indicates that this cloud was seen as a tangible representation of the glory of Yahweh (כְּבוֹד־יְהוָה). To calm the fears of the onlookers, Solomon begins his speech to the people by reminding the people that Yahweh had said that he would dwell in darkness (לְשֹׁכַן בְּעֲרִפָּל).

While Solomon's claim that God said he would dwell in *darkness* cannot be explicitly corroborated elsewhere in the OT, there are certainly other examples of Yahweh dwelling in darkness so it would make sense that Solomon would want to emulate that in

the building of his temple following the example set by the Tabernacle. There are obvious connections between this passage and Exod 20:21 and 40:34–35. Walter Maier takes note of the definite article before the cloud which he interprets as a clear indication that the narrator was linking this cloud with “*the* cloud . . . from the time of Moses, the exodus, and the wilderness wandering.”¹¹³ This cloud is likely intended to be understood as the same cloud (minus any *explicit* mention of darkness) that filled the Tabernacle in Exod 40:34–35. Both the Sinai and Tabernacle theophanies conclude with the affirmation that Yahweh dwells within the ערפל, the cloudy darkness.¹¹⁴ There is one particularly noteworthy difference between the tangible darkness of these two theophanies; while the darkness of the Sinai theophany was impassable barring invitation, the Temple theophany focuses even more on how impassible the darkness that pervaded the Temple was. In the former example, the people were welcomed in with some cautious limitations but in this example not even the high priest was able to remain. It is also interesting that this darkness filled the Temple, rather than “rising up to the sky” or surrounding the Temple as the cloud did at Sinai and the Red Sea.¹¹⁵

While darkness is part of the image that Solomon creates to describe the Temple theophany, so too is the image of Yahweh “dwelling” (שכן) in the darkness. This begs the question, what does it mean that Yahweh “dwells” in darkness? In most instances שכן is more commonly understood as simply dwelling somewhere as in the land of promise (Gen 26:2), a tent (Job 11:14), or a nest among the trees (Ps 104:12), but with a throne as

¹¹³ Maier, “The Divine Presence Within the Cloud,” 84; Guillaume, “I. and II. Kings.”

¹¹⁴ Kamp, “The Conceptualization of God’s Dwelling Place in 1 Kings 8,” 432.

¹¹⁵ Maier, “The Divine Presence Within the Cloud,” 84.

the subject it more specifically refers to rulership (Judg 4:2; Deut 17:18). There is extra-biblical evidence for this metaphor in two of the Amarna letters: in Letter 187.60, the king of Egypt is told he has “placed (*škn*) his name (in the region of) of Jerusalem forever,” and in AM 188.6–7 the same vassal says the Pharaoh has “placed (*škn*) his name at the rising of the sun and at the setting of the sun.”¹¹⁶ As Sandra L. Richter has thoroughly proven in her published dissertation, the idiom of a name dwelling (*škn*) over a place in north-west Semitic has the metonymical sense of a suzerain ruling over a place.¹¹⁷

The same can be said of Yahweh dwelling within the central shrines of the Tabernacle and Temple. A god’s dwelling place is the place from which they rule, just as a king dwells in his palace and on his throne.¹¹⁸ It is particularly noteworthy that the “Tabernacle,” מִשְׁכָּן is seen as the place where God dwells/rules Israel and the inner shrine of the Temple is the place where God and his name dwell, שֹׁכֵן (Deut 12:11; 16:2, 6, 11). Therefore, it is not just that God dwells in darkness, but he rules from within this darkness—the darkness being both the mundane darkness of the Holy of Holies, but also the supernatural darkness that now pervades the Temple.

But why would Yahweh’s rulership being shrouded in darkness be seen as being such a positive and praise-worthy attribute by Solomon? There is certainly metaphorical significance in the mundane darkness of the Holy of Holies and the supernatural darkness of this theophany, but that significance is all but overlooked by the majority of scholars.

¹¹⁶ Moran, ed., *The Amarna Letters*, 328, 331.

¹¹⁷ Richter, *The Deuteronomistic History and the Name Theology*.

¹¹⁸ Kamp, “The Conceptualization of God’s Dwelling Place in 1 Kings 8,” 435.

Beyond comments on the connections between this theophany and those that preceded it and how this shows divine approval,¹¹⁹ mere divine presence,¹²⁰ or notes on how the darkness was representative of the Holy of Holies,¹²¹ few look beyond these inner-biblical connections to the significance of darkness. While such trends have lessened in recent years, Brueggemann's lament of scholarship's singular focus with regards to this passage still rings true:

Influenced by Noth, historical-critical studies of 1 Kings 8 have generally explained important features of the text's content by formulating theories about the history of the text and its various textual sources. In a sense, the reconstruction of the historical development of the text is viewed as the definitive way of explaining the content.¹²²

Despite a general lack of interest in the metaphorical significance of these verses, there are a few scholars who have looked more deeply at this passage. Just as the splendour of a king's palace and throne are indicative of his power, so too is a god's dwelling place reflective of his character. As was established in §2.3.3, the darkness of ancient Near Eastern temples was no mere accident of technological limitations, but was designed to symbolize various aspects of the temple's deity. Marvin Sweeney interprets this passage in light of ancient Near Eastern temple cosmogonies with the darkness representing the primacy and centrality of the Holy of Holies.¹²³ While Sweeney does give a nod to the other theophanies, he does not connect this passage with the significance of the darkness

¹¹⁹ Maier, "The Divine Presence Within the Cloud," 84; McKenzie, *1 & 2 Chronicles*.

¹²⁰ Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings*.

¹²¹ Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings*, 106.

¹²² Kamp, "The Conceptualization of God's Dwelling Place in 1 Kings 8," 417.

¹²³ Sweeney, *1 & II Kings*, 132.

in those passages. Given the obvious connections between these passages, the darkness of the Temple theophany had best be understood alongside similar theophanies.

The impassability of this dark cloud is key to understanding the visual use of THE UNKNOWN/UNKNOWABLE IS DARKNESS in this passage. That visual metaphor appears to be YAHWEH'S PRESENCE IS IMPERCEPTIBLE DARKNESS. This passage is designed to show both God's sovereignty over the temple and its priesthood, but also Yahweh's otherness at a moment when he was closest to being domesticated. Kamp comes to a similar conclusion; he concludes that the dark description of God's presence is designed to emphasize "an ontological distinction between God and humanity,"¹²⁴ or, in other words, to represent the otherness and imperceptibility of Yahweh. Likewise, Walsh argues that Solomon says that God's abode is in darkness in order to highlight "Yahweh's ultimate freedom" as this darkness in which he has chosen "to dwell is not only the windowless holy of holies deep within the Temple; it is also the obscurity of the cloud of glory in which Yahweh moves as he will, and it is, most of all, the hiddenness of his mystery."¹²⁵

One final example of Yahweh's presence being described as dark is in Ps 97:2. This psalm opens with a somewhat typical call to praise that is atypically directed at the created world rather than humanity. Atypical as this call to praise may be, it fits in with the first 5 verses of this psalm which are heavily focused on the natural world. In v. 2 we are given the reason why the earth and coasts ought to be glad: Yahweh reigns—but from where he reigns is rather peculiar. In contrast with Ps 104:2 where Yahweh is surrounded

¹²⁴ Kamp, "The Conceptualization of God's Dwelling Place in 1 Kings 8," 438.

¹²⁵ Walsh, *1 Kings*, 111.

by light along with weather phenomena, here he reigns from within a mass of clouds and darkness (ערפל). By modern, English sensibilities, this seems like a rather strange vantage point from which a benevolent god would judge the world; a foundation of righteousness certainly fits but cloudy darkness does not seem particularly wholesome if we assume negative frames such as DISASTER and EVIL are the standard entailments for DARKNESS. As the previous chapters have proven, these entailments would not be first on the minds of the ancient Hebrews. Longman's comments on this verse allow for a web of inner-biblical and inter-textual allusions ranging from natural storms, to Baal imagery, to the fiery pillar of the wilderness wanderings as a way of understanding the dark clouds.¹²⁶ Longman does not go into detail discussing these frames and I would argue that there is good evidence for the first and third frames while the assumption of Baal imagery is less likely to be true.

Since the first 5 verses of this psalm are directed at the natural world, there must be something about clouds and darkness that would be a blessing to the natural world and thus worthy to be connected to Yahweh's presence. In the more elevated areas of Judea, farmers relied almost solely on rainfall to water their crops whether through direct precipitation, wadis, or cisterns¹²⁷ as diverting waterways was not as possible as in Babylonia. With this in mind, it would make good sense that clouds would be a sign of blessing and a cause for rejoicing—but this still doesn't answer the question of why darkness would be seen as a blessing unless we understand ערפל as storm clouds (cf. 1

¹²⁶ Longman, *Psalms*, 343.

¹²⁷ Abdelkhaleq and Ahmed, "Rainwater Harvesting in Ancient Civilizations in Jordan."

Kgs 18:45), or the darkened colour of soil once it has been rained on. An interpretation that focuses on the frame of STORMS works well with the conceptual links between darkness and clouds, and the focus of the first five verses on the blessing of the natural world. Yahweh's provisional blessing of rain is likely part of the image here, but it is not the whole image being evoked here.

Moving on to Longman's second suggestion of a possible allusion to the Baal theophanies, there are a few issues with this hypothesis. First, the darkness surrounds Yahweh, rather than providing transport as they do for Baal. Second the lightnings are a portent of his coming, rather than a weapon he wields as Baal does. The most important criticism against reading this text in terms of the Baal theophany is similar to my argument for Ps 18: there are sources *within* the OT that would make a more likely source of inspiration for the Psalmist; the use of darkness and clouds as descriptors of God's presence along with other grand displays of divine power through fire, lightning, and earthquakes all signify generic descriptions of God's presence as we have seen already. It is most likely that darkness and clouds are being used in a way similar to the above examples to highlight the entailments of the HIDDENNESS, OTHERNESS, and UNKNOWABILITY that darkness and Yahweh share. While he does not use the language of cognitive linguistics, Weiser comes to a similar conclusion as he understands the dark cloud as representing "the mystery of [God's] nature and impressively indicat[ing] the threateningly serious character of his appearing."¹²⁸ Taken this way, it is interesting that Yahweh's otherness is immediately contrasted (or perhaps complemented) by his

¹²⁸ Weiser, *The Psalms*, 632.

interactive nature as a king who enacts righteousness and justice. Prinsloo argues that the cosmic displays of these opening verses, in conjunction with the image of Yahweh sitting on his throne, are designed to highlight God's sovereignty over the most impressive yet least understood forces of nature.¹²⁹ Lennox also notes the balancing act that this verse plays between God's transcendence and his immanence:

Paradoxically, God is both hidden and revealed. The righteousness and justice which support His throne (Ps. 97:2) speak of God's revelation of himself through the Law. They speak of a God whose righteousness can be proclaimed and whose glory can be seen (see 97:6, 8).¹³⁰

Lennox's comments on Ps 97 are broadly applicable to the examples discussed above. In his discussion of the Sinai and Temple theophanies, Samuel Terrien describes Yahweh as "*Deus absconditus atque praesens*" with darkness functioning as both a "portent of menace and promise" as well as a symbol of both divine presence and hiddenness.¹³¹ Darkness is the perfect visual metaphor for this complex idea of Yahweh being both immanent and transcendent—his holiness. The pillar was visibly present with the Israelites in the wilderness, but the details of its essential nature remained a dark mystery. The same can be said in the Tabernacle and Temple theophanies as Yahweh's presence is described vividly yet mysteriously.

¹²⁹ Prinsloo, "The Psalms."

¹³⁰ Lennox, *Psalms*, 299.

¹³¹ Terrien, *The Elusive Presence*, 128.

6.3.2 The Darkness of Sinai

The above examples of OT theophanies each had their own particularities and are all noteworthy passages but no story of Yahweh's dark presence has had quite the same staying power as the Sinai theophany. The number of times I have referenced the Sinai theophany throughout this dissertation is a good indication of this story's creative impact. The Sinai theophany has obvious theological significance which resulted in the story's telling and retelling several times throughout the OT, especially within the Pentateuch. Somewhat quizzically, when this story is retold, the darkness of Yahweh's presence is also remembered and was thus a significant part of the story, rather than a simple oddity. To conclude my analysis of biblical texts, I will examine those texts that recall the Sinai theophany and make special mention of the darkness of God's presence.

We will begin with the version that is at least canonically first in Exod 20. To set the stage, let us look at 19:9 where Yahweh warns Moses that he will appear to them בָּעֶבֶךָ הָעָנָן—literally in a cloudy cloud or a thick/dense/stormy cloud which is expanded upon in v. 16 with the addition of thunder and lightning. Like the עָבִי שְׁחָקִים of 2 Sam 22:10–13 and Ps 18:9–12, this intensification of cloudiness by combining two terms that are related to clouds is difficult to translate but simple enough to comprehend on a conceptual level. In Exod 19:18 this cloud becomes smoke like that of a kiln. Pottery kilns require significant amounts of heat in order to properly fire pottery which would require significant fuel and thus would produce significant amounts of concentrated, hot, and

opaque smoke. The clouds are again described in 20:18 as also emanating lighting along with the billowing smoke. Finally, in v. 21, Moses approaches the ערפל where God was.

The authors of this text chose to represent God's presence with some rather frightful imagery that combines fearsome thunderstorms and destructive wildfires that here coexist along with darkness. Of those scholars that do discuss the purpose of Yahweh's dark portrayal in this chapter, many put their focus on the terrifying nature of darkness in combination with the other frightening elements of the Sinai theophany. Bruckner assumes that the darkness of the theophany was in service of the end goal of curbing sin through fear—essentially the aim with these frightful elements was to scare the Israelites straight.¹³² Garrett comes to the same conclusion as he believes “the terrors of the theophany have a redemptive spiritual purpose” namely “to dissuade them from sin.”¹³³ Others come to the slightly different conclusion that the terrible displays of power were indeed meant to strike fear, not of sin but of Yahweh's lethal holiness. For instance, Meyers is correct in saying that the Sinai theophany provides a window into how God's holiness is seen as both a positive and negative quality in Exodus: positive as it shows his worth but negative in the danger he poses to humans.¹³⁴ To Durham and Carpenter, the dark clouds function as a barrier to protect Israel from Yahweh's deadly visage.¹³⁵ The people of Israel clearly perceive this threat and Stuart gives the people the benefit of the

¹³² Bruckner, *Exodus*, 194.

¹³³ Garrett, *A Commentary on Exodus*, 487. Cf. Brown, *The Message of Deuteronomy*, 95.

¹³⁴ Meyers, *Exodus*, 189.

¹³⁵ Carpenter, *Exodus*; Durham, *Exodus*, 304.

doubt by stating that their decision to stay at a distance “was no mere choice of convenience.”¹³⁶

While I admire the concern for maintaining Yahweh’s holiness as argued by scholars like Meyers and Stuart, their arguments contain a few flaws. For one, Stuart erroneously states that “[h]umans cannot survive direct auditory or visual contact with God because of God’s intense power.”¹³⁷ The Old Testament (to say nothing of the New) is rife with examples of human beings coming into direct auditory and/or visual contact with God and his messenger(s). While there are certainly examples of flippant contact with God and representations of his presence leading to death in the OT (1 Sam 5:12; 6:19; 2 Sam 6:6–7; 2 Kgs 15 / 2 Chron 26), it is not inherently lethal to be in contact with God. Fretheim argues that the 2 Samuel text ought not be compared to the present text as Uzzah’s death was immediate and by God’s hand, while prematurely touching the mountain was a capital offense to be dealt out by the people.¹³⁸ Second, Stuart makes much of the frightful elements of the Sinai theophany and suggests that Moses was only able to endure these frightful elements “presumably by special divine grace.”¹³⁹ Stuart seems to assume that such grace was not more broadly extended, but he neglects God’s offer to speak directly to the people in Exod 19:9 and the universal (beyond some preparations) invitation that was extended to the people to ascend the mountain in Exod 19:10–14. Finally, Stuart bases his conclusion about the purpose of the dark cloud on how

¹³⁶ Stuart, *Exodus*, 469.

¹³⁷ Meyers, *Exodus*, 189.

¹³⁸ Fretheim, *Exodus*, 217.

¹³⁹ Stuart, *Exodus*, 468.

it affected and was perceived by the people of Israel.¹⁴⁰ What Stuart fails to remember is that the people of Israel in Exodus are consistently incorrect in nearly all of their conclusions. Yahweh, Moses, and the narrator are the only reliable sources of information in Exodus as the people are proverbially faulty judges of God's nature and character. In Moses' first encounter with a fiery theophany in Exod 3 it is established that the holiness of God's physical presence, spoken voice, and visual appearance do require precautions and reverence but it is also clear that they are not inherently deadly for humans, even for a "bridegroom of blood" (Exod 4:24–26). Moses properly understood this balance of reverence and confidence that his audience did not as they apparently misinterpreted Yahweh's visual metaphors of darkness, clouds, and lightning. This is all the more peculiar when we remember that up to their point they have been well-accustomed to coexisting with a pillar of cloud, smoke, and fire with lightning really being the only novel element. As Malone concludes, "humans cannot live upon seeing God unless God chooses to attenuate the experience"¹⁴¹ which Yahweh has clearly done in this instance. One final criticism of this line of interpretation is that Deut 4:10 explicitly states that it was Yahweh's words that were to motivate the people to avoid sin and there is no mention of the extraordinary signs functioning toward this purpose.

The above interpretations that argue that darkness is a negative motivator from sin or the lethality of God's holiness all fail under closer scrutiny so there must be a better understanding of the significance of the dark cloud. A key to understanding the use of

¹⁴⁰ Stuart, *Exodus*, 469.

¹⁴¹ Malone, "Distinguishing the Angel of the Lord," 309.

darkness at the Sinai theophany is examining the shared set of frames that all elements of the theophany evoke. The descriptions of God's presence on the mountain in Exod 18 and 19 move from several frames—THICK CLOUDS, THICK SMOKE, THUNDERCLOUDS, and DARKNESS—all of which share one key entailment: THE UNKNOWN/UNKNOWABLE. The key here is not that Yahweh has surrounded the mountain with chaotic forces merely as some sort of show of force, but the variety of descriptions given for what surround the mountain all highlight how hidden from view Yahweh was while upon the mountain. Since most commentators are preoccupied with questions of sin and holiness, they do not address the question of why Yahweh is so entirely, actively, and even dangerously hidden from plain view. It seems most likely that the intention of the dark description of Yahweh's presence is to show that perception and knowledge (KNOWING IS SEEING) of God is quite difficult and only available to those allowed into his inner circle (here more literal than figurative). Seeing and/or knowing Yahweh is not lethal, but it is certainly difficult by design.

The darkness of the Sinai theophany is recounted two other times in the Pentateuch: in Deut 4 and 5. The retelling in 4:11–12 is a condensed version of the Exod 20 story that is mostly similar but with a few noteworthy variations. In Deut 4:11 Moses paints a vivid mental picture of the mountain burning with fire that reached the heart of the heavens which is immediately followed by “darkness, cloud, and dark clouds” (חֹשֶׁךְ עָנָן וְעֲרֵפֶל). There is no verb that connects these three nouns to what was said previously so they pose a bit of a problem for interpreters. Various translations have tried

to smooth this over by adding a verb or preposition here or there but I would argue that the most sensible way to handle these three words is to treat them as an aside that further elaborates on the visual scene that was before the people at Sinai: “. . . and the mountain burned with fire to the heart of heaven—darkness, cloud, and opacity.” This interjection of related dark words shows that the author intended to portray Moses at a loss for words to describe what was seen. The lack of English synonyms for darkness is again sorely felt here as we have no easy way to verbally distinguish between *חשך* and *ערפל* but there is also difficulty in distinguishing between *ענן* and *ערפל* beyond noting that *ערפל* has been shown to often be associated with theophanic cloudy darkness.¹⁴²

When comparing this version of the Sinai theophany to Exod 20, the Deuteronomist placed the emphasis of his storytelling on different aspects. Wright goes into considerable detail in comparing the two versions of the story.¹⁴³ He argues that while this theophany was a fully audio-visual experience, it was only the audio that mattered; as he puts it “What really mattered at Sinai, then, was not that there had been a theophanic manifestation of God, but that there had been a verbal revelation of God’s mind and will.”¹⁴⁴ In his discussion of the Sinai theophany, Wenkel synthesizes the various versions of the story and concludes that “an important distinction remains: Moses had a face-to-face *auditory* relationship with YHWH but not a face-to-face *visual*

¹⁴² The ESV’s translation here as “gloom” is a particular pet peeve of mine that I’ve developed during my work on this dissertation. “Gloom” carries obvious entailments of negative emotions rather than just overcast darkness. While fear was certainly a part of the experience of the Sinai theophany, gloomy sadness was not.

¹⁴³ Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 50.

¹⁴⁴ Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 50.

relationship with YHWH.”¹⁴⁵ Wright says this is due to Israel’s position as a people without visual representations of God and whose memory of Yahweh was an oral one passed down through oral/aural transmission.¹⁴⁶ Craigie agrees with Wright and says that this retelling of the Sinai theophany focuses on how there was (according to Craigie) “no physical representation or form of him, but only his voice” since “any attempt to represent God in form would be totally inadequate and misleading.”¹⁴⁷ Wright concludes by stating that to the Israelites “[t]he ear, as the organ of understanding and obedience in relation to the spoken word of God, was more religiously and ethically significant than the eye.”¹⁴⁸

The conclusions made by these scholars about this retelling of the Sinai theophany have some significant errors that are at least partially due to misunderstandings of or presuppositions about the conceptual world of the ancient Hebrews with regards to darkness, seeing, and visual metaphors. The first error to address is the supposed lack of interest in the visual aspects of the Sinai theophany. The text itself contradicts Wright’s conclusion in v. 9 as the sight of the theophany was seen as an integral aspect of memory and obedience. Clearly sight is no less religiously or ethically significant than memory or speech. Not only this, but v. 11 gives a fairly detailed description of the vision which is again reiterated in v. 12. McConville also criticizes Wright’s conclusion that the disembodied nature of God’s voice was an indication that he

¹⁴⁵ Wenkel, *Shining Like the Sun*, 34.

¹⁴⁶ Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 50; c.f. E. W. Nicholson, “The Decalogue as the Direct Address of God.”

¹⁴⁷ Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 134.

¹⁴⁸ Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 50.

was not physically present at Sinai: “[i]nvisibility does not mean absence.”¹⁴⁹ This dissertation has noted that in a majority of examples in the OT, darkness is not seen as the absence of anything, but as its own—sometimes palpable—reality. God may indeed be shrouded in darkness and his voice may come from an unseen source, but darkness does not equate to nothingness in the minds of the writers and original audience of the Old Testament.

The second point that Wright, Nicholson and Craigie argue, that the visual representation of God was inconsequential due to the aniconism of Israel’s worship, is also deeply flawed. These scholars have failed to recognize the power of visual metaphors. Had the intention been to portray Yahweh as wholly transcendent, then there would have been no physical signs at all but simply a disembodied voice. Instead there are very specific and repeated visual elements of the Sinai theophany evoked here. In a way, Wright et al. are half correct in that aniconism is an important aspect of the Sinai theophany, but not in terms of lack of visuals but in terms of what visuals are used. Wyatt would agree as he sees the darkness of Deut 4:11–12 as being “precisely the appropriate medium for the divine voice. It is a figure for invisibility.”¹⁵⁰ Similarly McConville says that the Deut 4 version of the story reaffirms “both God’s transcendence and his immanence.”¹⁵¹ To reiterate, if SEEING IS KNOWING, by hiding himself in the dark, the cloud, and the darkness (חֹשֶׁךְ עָנָן וְעֹרָפָל), Yahweh and/or the Deuteronomist are indicating that Yahweh is unknowable beyond what he lets in or out of his sight- and knowledge-

¹⁴⁹ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 106.

¹⁵⁰ Wyatt, “The Darkness of Genesis I 2,” 548.

¹⁵¹ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 106.

blocking darkness. It is not that Yahweh has no image, thus leaving his image up to dangerous speculation, but his image is represented as something that cannot be seen, comprehended (KNOWING IS SEEING), or reproduced. In this way, the visual metaphor of darkness and cloud further enhances the prohibitions against idolatry.

The last retelling of the Sinai theophany to focus on the image of darkness is Deut 5:22–23. This version of the story carries the same general thrust of the previous two versions but adds its own little subtleties. More so than the previous retellings, this version makes it more clear that Yahweh was himself inside the fire, cloud, and darkness (מתוך האש הענן והערפל)¹⁵² from where he spoke but was not himself the shadow or cloud. As in the previous example, the Deuteronomist confirms the bizarre nature of the ethereal, detached voice of Yahweh, further showing how the darkness was seen as a visual metaphor for God's hiddenness and unknowability. Miller's analysis of the visual metaphors of fire and darkness, while not using the language of CMT, expertly compares the two frames of FIRE and DARKNESS to see what entailments are shared between the two. While he does not go into such great detail in his discussion of chapter 4, Miller carefully unpacks the recurrent visual metaphors of 5:22–23 and he comes to the same conclusions on these verses as I did on the previous verses. Namely, FIRE and DARKNESS carry entailments of etherealness, danger, and the unknowable and thus reinforce the prohibition against idolatry as well as his transcendence.¹⁵³ Woods comes to a similar yet

¹⁵² This further disproves the conclusions made by Wright et al.

¹⁵³ Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 59.

slightly different conclusion; he agrees that darkness is an image of God's transcendence but he argues that fire, as a source of light, indicates that God is indeed knowable:

Thus are held together, as one, hiddenness and revelation, mystery and accessibility, transcendence and immanence, especially as the *fire* of God's presence blazes literally to the 'heart' of the heaven: (cf. v. 36; 29:29; Miller 1990: 59). Also, the use of contrasting colours and images, of light and darkness, would have helped to emphasize the *voice* and *fire* (mentioned seven times: vv. 1, 12, 15, 24, 33, 36 [twice]) of the presence of God, especially as this reaches a climax in both Deuteronomy 4:24, with the description of Yahweh himself as a *consuming fire* and a *jealous* God, and in 5:22–27.¹⁵⁴

In the following verses this is further reinforced and elaborated upon. In v. 24 Moses recalls how the elders were amazed that they were privy to God revealing his glory, greatness, and voice (אֶת־כְּבוֹדוֹ וְאֶת־נִדְרוֹ וְאֶת־קוֹלוֹ) from within the fire. To the elders, Yahweh's fiery, smokey, cloudy darkness was seen as a sign of his glory and greatness. Wenkel makes much of the anthropomorphization of God's "face" as his only visual representation in Exod 33:17–23 and specifically highlights how seeking God's glory is here equated with seeking his face,¹⁵⁵ but Wenkel fails to read this verse more broadly as God's glory is also seen as his dark representation in the cloud and fire. God's presence is not merely his anthropomorphized "face," but also his choice of visual metaphor. While Wenkel ponders why "God chooses to describe himself in language that suggests that his glory can be embodied in its fullness as a face," clearly he has forgotten every other image through which God has chosen to "describe" himself.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ See also, Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, 72; Woods, *Deuteronomy*, 197.

¹⁵⁵ Wenkel, *Shining Like the Sun*, 34.

¹⁵⁶ Wenkel, *Shining Like the Sun*, 34.

6.4 Understanding Darkness and “Understanding” God

This chapter has been the culmination of the work done in the previous four core chapters as the final step in Fauconnier and Turner’s three-stage blending process of *composition*, *completion*, and *elaboration*. In those previous chapters it was my goal to create a framework for understanding the sorts of entailments for darkness which are commonly highlighted by the minds of the OT’s authors—i.e *composition*. It was found that, in broad terms, DARKNESS is usually connected with ideas of death, captivity, and the unknown or unknowable. This was the process of *completion*. With these findings, I was able to *elaborate* through this chapter exploring how these ICMs for darkness might apply to the darker theophanies of the OT. It was found that the most likely entailment that DARKNESS highlights in these contexts was how unknown and unknowable God is. My comments in this chapter on what that means for our interpretation of these verses and our understanding of DARKNESS in ancient Hebrew thought have been relatively short but in the following chapter I will expand upon these ideas and see what new questions arise from the findings of this study.

CHAPTER 7: WHAT WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT DARKNESS

Holy darkness, blessed night,
heaven's answer hidden from our sight.
As we await you, O God of silence,
we embrace your holy night.

Dan Schutte, *Holy Darkness*

Three decades ago, Forrest Charles Cornelius¹ lamented the degree to which scholars of his day made assumptions about the nature of darkness in the OT. Eleven years prior to that work, Allan Coppedge² was himself frustrated with the conflation of Persian dualism with ancient Hebrew perceptions of darkness. Now, fifty and thirty years after their two works, while the arguments based off comparative studies of religion have fallen out of vogue from Coppedge's time and the prevalence of biblical theological word studies of Cornelius' day have waned in popularity, their words continue to go unheeded. Much of the scholarship I have interacted with that has been written in the last fifty years has either conveniently brushed past mentions of darkness in the OT, or has automatically assumed that darkness must refer to either death or evil—often not due to presumed parallels with Zoroastrianism, but seemingly due to an anachronistic and culturally alien understanding of dark metaphors from a modern context.

What I have presented in this dissertation is a fresh way of addressing this compound problem of anachronism mixed with parallelomania related to dark metaphors in the OT: to examine the text through the lens of cognitive linguistics rather than

¹ Cornelius, "The Theological Significance."

² Coppedge, "An Inductive Study."

etymology, word studies, or comparative religions. Instead of focusing my energy on the tools of exegetical word studies, and comparative religions, CMT and CB have been the guiding principles to keep these other lines of scholarship in check and have provided new ways of putting them to use. Rather than simply looking at links between texts across cultures, CMT guides us in how to dig deeper to find the cognitive model that lies behind trends in metaphors across a culture's body of literature. Instead of relying on ossified lexical meanings of words, CB instead guides us to perceive of prototypes that have a variety of context-specific entailments that are either suppressed or highlighted in different blends.

Those blends that have been explored in this study have shown some lines of continuity such as the shared use of the SEEING IS KNOWING blend between ancient Hebrew thought and modern English thought. We have seen how the Hebrew writers used and expanded upon this conceptual metaphor to create the connected blends WISDOM/KNOWLEDGE IS LIGHT, FOLLY/IGNORANCE IS DARKNESS which mirror our own thought patterns: "he's not very bright," "I'm in the dark on that topic," "please enlighten me." Cornelius notes that "Darkness plays its most prominent role in the more abstruse and elevated OT contexts, such as theophany, creation and the underworld"³ and in the same way dark verbiage is used to describe what is beyond our ability to perceive and understand such as "dark matter" and "dark energy."

We have also seen a few very key lines of discontinuity that are essential to recognize for readers of the Hebrew scriptures. First, the OT entirely lacks any concept

³ Cornelius, "The Theological Significance," 160.

close to our own understanding of DARKNESS IS A FRONTIER. Darkness is certainly something from which people are saved, but not something people conquer in the OT. There is an argument to be made for the WILDERNESS IS DARKNESS, but the wilderness is not seen as something to be conquered but as something to be avoided. Second, our conceptual metaphor EVIL IS DARKNESS is also not definitively present in the OT. Evil persons and evil deeds have been shown to have a connection with darkness, but we do not have the sorts of metaphorical idioms or blends that indicate that EVIL was a valid entailment from the DARKNESS frame in the minds of the Hebrew writers. Actions and thoughts can be committed and schemed in the dark, but they are not themselves dark. Third, we have a number of good examples of DARKNESS being used as a source domain for DEATH in a way that highlights how far beyond the scope of human knowledge the realm of the dead is. In modern English speech we can speak of death as “the great unknown” and black colours certainly have entailments of mourning and death, but the ICM behind dark metaphors for death are different between English and ancient Hebrew. The CAPTIVITY IS DARKNESS blend was shown to be both extremely important to Isaiah as well as rather foreign to modern readers. While it makes good sense on a conceptual level once you uncover the archaeological, anthropological, and textual evidences surrounding prisons in the ancient Near East and Israel, this metaphor is not very clear to modern English readers who lack the same conception of dark, wet cistern-prisons. Accordingly, this metaphor is quite regularly overlooked or misunderstood by modern readers—scholars or otherwise.

Just as Coppedge and Cornelius before me warned the scholars of their days, I too encourage scholars to take a more careful and nuanced approach to darkness in the OT. While Coppedge and Cornelius' works had their respective strengths and foci, I have here argued that beyond their findings, we must also take great care in interpreting dark metaphors in the OT according to the conceptual worlds that the ancient Hebrew writers inhabited. This nuanced approach to dark metaphors and images in the OT has a number of implications. In the next three subsections I will conclude my dissertation by discussing implications for how we are to understand Yahweh in light of his dark theophanies, how we are to understand darkness in the OT and as well as any other implications and avenues for future scholarship.

7.1 Mapping Divine Darkness

It does not take much mental effort to discern at least some of the roles Baal fulfilled in the Canaanite pantheon when you look at images of him. With a storm cloud at his feet, and a lightning bolt in his hand, it's fairly apparent that he is a storm god. With a club in his other hand, shining armour on his chest, and the carcass of a dragon hewn in two, Baal must certainly be a great warrior who is not to be trifled with. These visual queues speak a great deal about who Baal was in a form that is far more compact than any epic. While Baal fulfilled other roles within the religious belief system of his followers, it was these two roles that were the most significant and thus those that were featured most prominently in his iconography. His roles as king and storm-bringer were the most

significant as his most defining character traits, but also the traits that were the most significant to those who commissioned, created, and viewed his images.

The choice of setting and paraphernalia in an icon says a lot about the object of the image, the audience of the image, and the creator of that image.⁴ To use a more modern example, modern images of Jesus run the gamut in terms of the clothing, activities, and interactions with others that artists have chosen to portray Jesus with. The perennial (yet well-deserved) punching bag of the “white Jesus” has an implicit message about race that the unironic “black Jesus” paintings are unabashed about. In the screen adaptation of Neil Gaiman’s *American Gods*, one Jesus (there are many in this series) is portrayed as a brown-skinned Central American man who sacrifices himself to protect other migrants, landing in a stereotypical crucifixion pose. On the opposite end of the political spectrum, Jon McNaughton’s painting, “One Nation Under God” shows a white Jesus wielding the American constitution to the joy of working class and historical (white) Americans and to the chagrin of suit-wearing (white) politicians and press. Both of these images of Jesus have something to say about their target domain (Jesus) to their target audiences. It is irrelevant to ask if the choice to portray Jesus as white may have been unconscious or not, as metaphors are automatic and betray our innate biases.

Beyond a few extant examples of questionable orthodoxy, we have few physical icons of Yahweh but we do have plenty of textual descriptions. We have descriptions of how he acts and what he says with only occasional descriptions of what he looks like (or how he wishes to be seen). It should not be taken as coincidence or ignored that Yahweh

⁴ de Hulster, *Iconographic Exegesis and Third Isaiah*, 117.

is portrayed as being surrounded by darkness several times by different authors in different contexts in the relatively few instances where he is visibly seen.

In their book, *Religion, Language, and the Human Mind*, Chilton and Kopytowska argue that CMT provides the prompting to go beyond the question of *what* and *how* source domains and context influence religious icons and beliefs, “but also *why* a specific source domain has been used to map its conceptual structure metaphorically onto the religious target domain.”⁵ As I was going through the above examples I devoted some time already to asking and positing answers to this why question. This is where the biblical and systematic theologian could step in and take the findings of this dissertation and apply it to their work on God and how he was perceived (i.e. given human scope) in the OT. As I lamented in my introductory chapter, biblical theologians have kept silent on the darkness of Yahweh in the OT much to their loss. For a visual metaphor to be so repeated in the OT yet so ignored by scholars is a wrong that ought to be corrected.

The above need for darkness to be a more prominent (or even existent) aspect of biblical theologies is true whether or not the findings of this dissertation are accepted. If my findings about the kinds of dark metaphors used in the OT and what sorts of entailments are at play in the dark portrayals of Yahweh’s presence are accepted, biblical and systematic theologians must also consider these verses when they are discussing the transcendence and holiness of God. Of course “transcendence” is a philosophical term and is not used in the OT. But this ought not be much of a surprise. “Transcendence” is not a particularly practical word. Far more practical is describing Yahweh as “dark” if one

⁵ Chilton and Kopytowska, *Religion, Language, and the Human Mind*, 78.

of the primary ICMs for darkness is that of HIDDENNESS or the UNKNOWN. Yahweh existing beyond the scope of human sight behind a veil of darkness is a brilliant visual metaphor for transcendence that I cannot recall being explored in any biblical or systematic theology but is key to a number of theophanies in the OT.⁶

7.2 Mapping the Divinity of Darkness

As a reminder from chapter 1, one of the key differences between CMT and CB is that the former only allows one-way communication from the source domain to the target domain, while the latter allows two-way mapping. The blended space is greater than the sum of its parts but it also reflects back and alters how those constituent frames are perceived. For instance, in the GRIM REAPER blend, a blend that is designed to create human scale for DEATH, the target domain is modified with three visual frames: a skeleton, black robes, and a scythe. The skeleton is clearly intended to represent death but even if the skeleton is not visible, a tattered, dark robe has become synonymous with death in popular culture from the Ring Wraiths of Middle Earth to even the ghost of Christmas future in *The Muppet Christmas Carol*. This is true too of the scythe which has become so closely connected to death that it is often used by fantasy writers and artists to signal a villain's role as a necromancer. While a scythe may not be used in many practical applications as its use as a farming tool has all but vanished, it remains a powerful image

⁶ For example, in his *Theology of the Psalms* (39-41), Kraus recognizes the hiddenness of Yahweh as a recurring theme in the Psalter, but does not recognize the inexorable connections between darkness and hiddenness in the Psalms.

for death in popular culture. In this way, the scythe's metaphorical mappings have superseded its literal meaning as a simple tool for mowing grass and harvesting grains.

This principle most certainly applies to religious metaphors as well as source domains to not just reveal things about their target domains, but these blends also teach us something about the source domain.⁷ Masson gives a number of examples of how metaphors about God in the Bible also can and should alter our perception of their source domains but his most important and in-depth examination is given to the JESUS IS MESSIAH blend. While Jesus' identity as the messiah is not normally seen as a *metaphorical* blend, Masson argues that we should move beyond this strict dichotomization of literal and figurative language and instead understand that this blend

prompts for a tectonic alteration of the conventional meanings of Messiah, of Jesus' identity, and of God's relation to Israel. This is not a literal mapping of one category to another. Nor is it a metaphorical mapping of attributes from a source domain to a target domain. The mapping works in both directions at once and prompts for a tectonic alteration in how one understands the concepts within the blend. Jesus's life becomes the prototype for understanding the Messianic expectation, while at the same time the Messianic expectation discloses Jesus' true identity. Further, the blend prompts for the revision of the original inputs. The disclosure of a new frame of understanding in which Jesus is the Messiah, radically extends the conventional meaning of the category of Messiah and establishes the crucified carpenter's son from Nazareth as prototype against which all other conceptions are measured.⁸

⁷ de Hulster, *Iconographic Exegesis and Third Isaiah*, 117.

⁸ Masson, "Conceiving God," 149. cf. Masson, *Without Metaphor*, 120: "In the context of cognitive linguistics, to say that something is literally true means that its truth does not entail a cross-domain mapping. 'The mercury went up' is an example of a literal truth, as opposed to 'The temperature is rising' which uses the metaphor MORE IS UP. As Lakoff himself persuasively argues, the latter is no less true than the former. The difference is not in whether the literal or the metaphorical is true, but in how the literal and metaphorical purport to be true. Given the ineffability of God, and the long and complex evolution of the sophisticated and nuanced conceptual blends underlying contemporary thought about God, it would be very surprising to find that any metaphor for God is "literally" true in the very restricted sense given the term "literal" and the very precise conception of "metaphor" as cross-domain mapping in cognitive linguistics."

By portraying darkness as one of many elements at Yahweh's disposal rather than a force he had to contest with, the authors of the OT made some implicit statements about not only about Yahweh's sovereignty over darkness, but also darkness' essentially benign nature. If darkness had been employed by a more mundane human or even semi-divine hero in the OT, it would be easy to dismiss this line of thinking when talking about the nature of darkness in the OT. Yet in the OT God is shown as both wielding darkness and dwelling in the midst of it. As Cornelius found, four out of six uses of the verb *חשך* in the Hiphil have Yahweh as the subject and the remaining two imply this,⁹ while in every instance nouns for darkness function in the accusative position, the subject which acts upon that darkness is God—more specifically Yahweh in all but one instance—and thus Yahweh alone is shown to be the “supreme manipulator of darkness”.¹⁰ This should accordingly colour our perception of darkness in a few ways: First, the OT, at the very least does not portray darkness as an existential threat or negative moral force—the NT might, but the OT most certainly does not.¹¹ Theologians would be wise to not inject a darkness/evil versus light/good dualistic structure into the OT that does not exist there. Second, the OT seems to go beyond simple neutrality towards darkness but at points portrays it positively as a dutiful servant of Yahweh and as a valuable tool at his disposal. In his discussion of the Genesis creation stories, Robert Martin-Achard wisely cautioned that “Le peuple de Yahve s’est intéressé en premier lieu à l’histoire de ses relations avec

⁹ Cornelius, “The Theological Significance,” 24–27.

¹⁰ Cornelius, “The Theological Significance,” 34.

¹¹ Cf. Cornelius, “The Theological Significance,” 173–74.

son Dieu avant de s'interroger sur l'origine du monde."¹² I agree with Martin-Achard but would add that the people of Yahweh were also interested in understanding their relationship with the world that he had created. This does not diminish the reality of darkness as a threat multiplier that one ought to be wary of, but certainly not something to be seen as a great moral evil or force that is opposed to God. Third, and related to the previous point, since neither the darkness is chaos or chaos is darkness blends appear in the OT, we should be cautious to assume instances of *Chaoskampf* every time darkness is present in a text. The findings of this dissertation reinforce Rebecca S. Watson's cautions against assuming the presence of chaos imagery whenever images of water, darkness, or death are present in the OT.¹³ Fourth, the prevalence of the UNKNOWN/UNKNOWABLE IS DARKNESS blend in relation to the theophanies discussed further indicates a need to take seriously not only God's transcendence but also the theological *good* in the unknown and the limits of our understanding. In other words, if the impenetrable darkness of God's presence was seen as his glory in Deut 5, we too should see the limits of our vision/cognition as a good thing.

¹² Martin-Achard, *Permanence De l'Ancien Testament*, 154. "The people of Yahweh were primarily interested in the history of their relationship with their God above any questions of the origins of the world."

¹³ Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*.

7.3 Avenues for Future Scholarship

As thorough as I've tried to be in this study, it is certainly not the last word on darkness in the Bible. Beyond the biblical and systematic theological concerns raised above, this study provides a few other avenues for future study. I will end my work by highlighting a few open doors with a positive eye for the future of integrative studies between cognitive linguistics and biblical studies.

My first hope for future scholarship is for the now three generations of studies of darkness in the OT to take hold and finally clear up some of the misconceptions and presuppositions that have quietly dominated the tragically infrequent discussions of darkness in the OT. There is much that will need to be reconsidered and my hope is that future commentaries especially on Isaiah, Job, and the Psalms will reflect the more nuanced approach to darkness that I have advocated here. Despite my history of scholarship section in chapter 1, I am attempting to remain hopeful for this change. I am not asking that people conform their perceptions of darkness to reflect the OT's conceptual world—as if such a conceptual surgical grafting was even possible; I am simply hopeful that future scholars will be more careful to note the cognitive backgrounds of the ancient Hebrew writers of the OT and how those backgrounds differ from our own—particularly in relation to our understanding and relationship with darkness.

The findings of this dissertation provide ample talking points for discussions about Yahweh's possible identity as a solar deity and could prove fatal to any such

theories. The findings of this study could make for some interesting dialogue with scholars like Dion, Keel, Smick, Smith Taylor, and Wiggins who have studied this issue on a deeper level.¹⁴ This is neither the time nor the place to discuss the level to which the worship of the sun influenced the theology and imagery of the Old Testament, but given the recurring importance of Yahweh's dark appearance in his theophanies, the findings of this study should be addressed by those who would argue that Yahweh was seen as a sun god by many of the writers of the OT.

Another area that deserves more research is how light and darkness are being used in Isaiah as metaphors for wisdom/salvation and folly/imprisonment/exile. More precisely, to what extent wisdom and salvation are connected and thus folly and exile are connected in both the theology and conceptual world of Isaiah. Such a study would also have interesting implications for how some of these verses are then reapplied by the writers of the NT. It would be interesting to examine if the writers of the NT are picking up these same metaphors or are re-contextualizing them by highlighting different entailments of the various frames.

Related to the above avenue for future research, this project cries out for elaboration into the intertestamental period and into the NT. This project is already long and complicated enough but beyond the lines of continuity in the aforementioned applications of Isaiah by the NT writers, there are also obvious lines of discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments. It would be intriguing to track these lines of

¹⁴ Dion, "Yhwh as Storm-God and Sun-God"; Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*; Smick, "Mythopoetic Language in the Psalms"; Smith, "The Near Eastern Background of Solar Language for Yahweh"; Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun*; Wiggins, "Yahweh."

discontinuity in conceptual worlds of darkness throughout the intertestamental period to see how they effected the NT and to see how the NT might itself be better understood in light of its OT and intertestamental background conceptual worlds. But for now such questions will have to wait for another day.

7.4 At Day's End

It is difficult as modern urban-dwellers to understand the magic of the night's darkness. Beyond the reach of artificial yellowish and red glows of city lights, when out in the wilderness with nothing but whatever moon- and star-light the sky will allow to guide you, there is a different kind of darkness to experience. It is of course cold and frightening, but as your eyes and mind become accustomed to the lack of constant glow, you begin to also feel a sense of wonder at and otherness from a world that in the light of day is so familiar. Experiencing the wonder and magic of night requires effort—considerable effort for those living in larger urban environments—but that effort provides perspective that is not otherwise available.

Similarly, this dissertation has necessitated moving past the dark metaphors that we have internalized and taken for granted. By taking the time to understand the darkness of the OT on its own terms, new shapes and images have emerged as our perception of darkness adjusts to its new surroundings. On the one hand images of a dark and inhospitable wilderness and dark, damp prisons came into focus while the evil and chaotic elements of the universe assumed to be metaphorically clothed in darkness were

nowhere to be found. Once fully accustomed to these new understandings of darkness, we were able to see the form of new insights about God's theophanies. God's dark figure was no less terrifying and the more was understood about his darkness the clearer it was that his appearance was an indication of his mysterious and holy nature as a being wholly other—wholly beyond human sight and knowledge. While not the last word to be said about darkness and the Bible, this dissertation has opened up some new paths for research into darkness and pulled back the veil from a series of metaphors that have historically been easily misunderstood.

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