De-Demonising the Old Testament

An Investigation of *Azazel*, *Lilith*, *Deber*, *Qeteb* and *Reshef* in the Hebrew Bible

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Declaration

I declare that the present thesis has been composed by me, that it represents my own research, and that it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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ABSTRACT

The subject of demons and demonology has fascinated scholars and non-scholars, ancient and modern alike; it is not surprising that much work has been done on the topic by biblical scholars too.

Chapter 1 places the present study within the existing scholarship showing that the early works on 'OT demonology' were influenced by comparative religion, anthropology, and an increasing interest in Mesopotamian and Canaanite parallels as well as a concern to seek and find vestiges of ancient religious beliefs in the Old Testament.

The consensus of early 20th century scholars regarding what constitutes a 'demon' in the Old Testament has not been challenged by modern scholarship. Chapter 2 shows that biblical scholars still commonly turn to the ancient Near Eastern religions and cultures to explain difficult passages in the Hebrew Bible, to find parallels or the 'original' of difficult terms and concepts.

Since it is generally accepted without challenge that *azazel*, *lilith*, *deber*, *qeteb* and *reshef* are the personal names of 'demons' appearing in the Hebrew Bible, the necessity arises to return to the texts in order to examine each term in its context. The present study seeks to answer the question whether these five terms are names of 'demons' in the Hebrew texts as we have them today.

To accomplish its goal the present study will provide an exegesis based on Close Reading of all the relevant biblical passages in which the terms *azazel* (chapter 3), *lilith* (chapter 4), *deber* (chapter 5), *qeteb* (chapter 6), and *reshef* (chapter 7) appear. Attention is paid to the linguistic, semantic, and structural levels of the texts. The emphasis is on a close examination of the immediate context in order to determine the function (and if possible the meaning) of each term. The reading focuses on determining how the various signals within the text can guide towards meaning, noting how the (implied) poet/author uses the various poetical/rhetorical devices, especially personification, but also parallelism, similes, irony, and mythological elements.

The present study shows that contrary to former and current scholarship there is nothing in the texts to support the view that *azazel*, *lilith*, *deber*, *qeteb* and *reshef* are the names of 'demons'. *Azazel* appears as the personification of the forces of chaos that threaten the order of creation; his role is to stand in contrast to Yahweh. The context requires that *lilith* is regarded as a bird, a night bird being the most plausible explanation of the term. *Deber*, *qeteb* and *reshef* are personifications of destructive forces and appear as agents of Yahweh, members of his 'Angels of Evil' who bring punishment (death) on the people of Israel for disobedience. There is no evidence to suggest that there are mythological figures behind *azazel*, *lilith* or the personifications of *deber* and *qeteb*. In case of *reshef* there is a possible connection to the Semitic deity *Reshef*. However, the mythological motifs are used merely as a poetic device.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Periodicals, Reference Works, Serials

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols, ed. by D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992)
AION	Annali, Institutio Universitario Orientale di Napoli, Nueva Serie
ANET	*Ancient Near Easter Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. by J. B. Pritchard, 3rd edn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969)
AnOr	Analecta orientalia
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AOS	American Oriental Series
ARTU	*An Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit*, J. C. De Moor (Leiden: Brill, 1987)
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Society of Oriental Research*
BDB	*The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: with an appendix containing the Biblical Aramaic*, F. Brown, S. R. Driver and Ch. Briggs, 5th printing (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000)
BHS	*Biblia hebraica stuttgartensia*
Bib	*Biblica*
CAD	*The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, ed. by I. J. Gelb et al. (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1964-)
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
DCH	*Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, 6 vols ed. by D. J. A. Clines (Sheffield Academic Press, 1993-2007)
DDD	*Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. by K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, P. W. van der Horst, 2nd extensively rev. edn, (Leiden: Brill, 1999)
DUL	*A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*, 2 vols, G. del Olmo Lete and J. Sanmartin, transl. by W. G. E. Watson (Leiden: Brill, 2003)
EncJud	*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, C. Roth and G. Wigader eds. in chief, 16 vols (Jerusalem: Keter Publ. House Ltd., 1971-72)
EncRel[1]	*The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 1st edn, M. Eliade, ed. in chief, 16vols (New York: Macmillan, 1987)
EncRel[2]	*Enyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd edn, L. Jones, ed. in chief, 15 vols (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2005)
EQ	*Evangelical Quarterly*
GDS	*Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary*, J. Black and A. Green (London: British Museum Press, 1992)
GELS	*A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint: Chiefly of the Pentateuch and the Twelve Prophets*, Muraoka, T (Louvain: Peeters, 2002)
HALOT	*Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. by L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, study edn, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 2001)

HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
IDB	*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 4vols (New York: Nashville, 1962)
IDBSuppl	*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Supplementary Volume
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society* (New Haven)
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JNWSL	*Journal of North-West Semitic Languages*
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSuppl	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* Supplement Series
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
KTU	*The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and other Places*, M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartin, 2nd enlarged edn (Münster: Ugarit – Verlag, 1995)
NIDOTTE	*New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 5 vols (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1997)
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
Or	*Orientalia*
OTP	Old Testament Pseudepigrapha
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*
RA	*Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie Orientale*
RHR	*Revue de l'histoire des religions*
RS	Ras Shamra
RTU	*Religious Texts from Ugarit*, N. Wyatt, 2nd rev. edn (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002)
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
SSS	Semitic Studies Series
TDOT	*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, rev. edn, ed. by G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, transl. by J. T. Willis, 12 vols (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977-2003)
TGUOS	*Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society*
ThZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
TLOT	*Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2 vols, ed. by E. Jenni and C. Westermann, English transl. by M. E. Biddle (Hendrickson Pub. 1997)
TWOT	*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Bibleworks 6)
UF	*Ugarit-Forschungen*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSuppl	*Vetus Testamentum* Supplement Series
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZA	*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

Bible Versions

CJB	The Complete Jewish Bible (1998)
JPS	Jewish Publication Society OT (1917)
KJV	King James Version
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Massoretic Text
NAU	New American Standard Bible with Codes (1995)
NEB	New English Bible (1970)
NIV	New International Version (1987)
NJB	The New Jerusalem Bible (1985)
P	Peshitta
RSV	Revised Standard Version (1952)
Targ	Targum (Aramaic OT)
Vg	Vulgate

General Abbreviations

Ber.	Berakot
b. Yoma	Babylonian Talmud
Can.	Canaanite
crit. app.	critical apparatus
def. art.	definite article
edn.	edition
esp.	especially
Eth.	Ethiopic
f.	feminine
HB	Hebrew Bible
Heb.	Hebrew
HT	Hebrew Text
impf.	imperfect
JArm.	Jewish Aramaic
MHeb.	Middle Hebrew
Mnd.	Mandean
ms.	manuscript
m. Yoma	mishnah Yoma
Nab	Nabatean
NT	New Testament
OArm.	Old Aramaic
OT	Old Testament
Pehl.	Pehlevi
pf	perfect
pl.	plural
ptcp.	participle
rev.	revised
Sam.	Samaritan

sg.	singular
Syr.	Syriac
transl.	translated
Ug.	Ugaritic
vb.	verb
Yaud.	Yaudi

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTORY REMARKS - PLACE, AIM AND METHOD OF STUDY

1.1 The Place of the present study within existing scholarship

The subject of demons and demonology has fascinated scholars and non-scholars, ancient and modern ones alike; it is not surprising that much work has been done on the topic by biblical scholars too.[1]

The early works on 'OT demonology' were written at the time when comparative religion was popular and anthropology as well as an interest in Mesopotamian and Canaanite parallels was beginning to rise.[2] Biblical scholars commonly turned to ancient Near Eastern religions and cultures to explain difficult passages in the Hebrew Bible, to find parallels or the 'original' of difficult terms and concepts. The concern with the origins of Israelite religion led scholars to seek and find vestiges of ancient religious beliefs in the Old Testament. Since belief in 'evil spirits' was thought to be common in ancient cultures as well as in Jewish tradition, it was argued that such belief must be reflected in the Old Testament as well. Thus terms such as *lilith* and *reshef* which are known as demons or gods in Mesopotamian/Canaanite religion, or *azazel* and *qeteb* which are known as demons in later Jewish tradition were easily identified as 'demons' in the Hebrew Bible. Others, such as *deber*, was 'demonised' by association with *reshef* and *qeteb*, but a Mesopotamian original figure was also sought behind it.[3]

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[1] See Survey of 'OT Demonology' in 1.2 below. It is the view of the present study that the use of the term 'demon' in relation to the Hebrew Bible is problematic (see below 1.2, esp. pp. 10-13). Therefore it shall be used in inverted commas throughout this study when used in reference to the Old Testament.

[2] See for example the works of Witton Davies, Oesterley and Robinson, Langton below; also works by F. Lenormant, *Chaldean Magic: Its Origin and Development,* trans. with considerable additions by the author, by F. Lenormant (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1877); R. Karsten, *The Origins of Religion* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1935); W. Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion. Facts and Theories,* trans. by H. J. Rose, 2nd edn (London: Methuen, 1935); W. Roberstson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites. The Fundamental Institutions,* 3rd edn (London: Ktav, 1969) to mention just a few.

[3] There are many terms that are proposed 'demons of the Old Testament', and some of them are considered to be proper names. See for example 'Proposed demons' by J. K. Kuemmerlin-McLean, p.139 in 'Demons: Old Testament', *ABD*, vol. 2, pp. 138-140. Five terms, *azazel*, *lilith*, *deber*, *qeteb* and *reshef* , have been selected in the present study not only because arguably they are the most well-known 'OT demons', but also because they occur in a variety of texts, both poetical and prose narrative. The investigation of *lilith* in chapter 4 includes a detailed discussion of other terms that are held to be 'demons' in animal form (תַּנִּים, בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה, צִיִּים, אִיִּים and שָׂעִיר) as they are closely

The survey of literature on 'OT demonology' below and the history of research in chapter 2 demonstrate both in general terms and specifically with regard to *azazel*, *lilith*, *deber*, *qeteb* and *reshef* that the consensus of early 20th century scholars has not been challenged by modern scholarship.

1.2 A Survey of 'OT Demonology'

One of the earlier works on this topic is *Magic, Divination and Demonology Among the Hebrews and their Neighbours, Including an Examination of Biblical References and of the Biblical Terms*, by T. Witton Davies,[4] in which the author treats demonology together with magic, divination and necromancy, as he believes them to be 'so closely connected in their character and history, that it is impossible to lay down lines between them which are fixed and exclusive'.[5] Davies recognizes that there are problems with the term 'demonology', e.g. the etymology of the word can be misleading, as its original reference was different from its later usage.[6] However, Davies' own definition of demonology is itself not without problems. He defines it as 'the belief which is a part of advanced animism – that there exist evil spirits which are more or less responsible for the misfortunes which assail men'(p. 7). Thus for Davies 'demons' are equal to evil spirits, and a belief in evil spirits is 'universal' (p. 95). In tracing the origins of belief in (evil) spirits Davies, as other 19th century scholars in general, follows in the footsteps of E. B. Tylor[7] and animism, and his definition arises from comparative religion. Demonology in the Old Testament is treated in five pages as the first part of his chapter III, 'Demonology', followed by the sections on demonology in the Apocrypha, New Testament, Antichrist, Josephus,

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related to the analysis of *lilith*. *Satan* is not included in this study as since P. Day's excellent study, *An Adversary in Heaven: Satan in the Hebrew Bible*, Harvard Semitic Monographs (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), it is generally accepted that the term is not the name of a 'demon' in the Hebrew Bible. Other terms, for example *aluqah* (Prov 30:15) or *robes* (Gen 4:7) could form the subject of future studies.

[4] (London: James Clarke&Co; Leipzig: M. Spirgatis, 1898).

[5] P.1. In a (presumably) later article he seems to have changed his mind at least regarding the connection of magic and demonology, as he states that although there is such a close link between the two that this led many (no reference) to treat them together, 'yet there is a distinction'. See his article 'Magic, Divination, and Demonology among the Semites', *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, 14 no. 4 (1898), 241-251, (p. 244).

[6] We shall come back to this discussion later. See 1.3, pp. 11-13.

[7] *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom,* 4th rev. edn, vols 1 and 2 (London: John Murray, 1903).

pseudepigraphical writings, etc. The title indicates a rather ambitious task yet what follows is little more than a listing of terms which, in the context of the Old Testament, are the 'many indications and survivals' of the 'superstition' of a belief in evil spirits.[8]

Chapter 10 of W.O. E. Oesterley and T. H. Robinson's *Hebrew Religion: Its Origin and Development*[9] deals with demonology as 'further elements in the religious background' of the Hebrews. The authors presume that 'the Hebrews, being Semites, shared with the rest of the race all the beliefs' regarding 'demons'. Although they believe that 'most of the passages in the Old Testament in which demons are referred to belong to comparatively late times', there is a lot of early material preserved in the Hebrew Bible, thus presumably the 'demons' are vestiges of an early belief system. Similarly to Witton Davies, Oesterley and Robinson also trace the belief in 'demons' to animism, 'belief in demons is a development of animistic conceptions.'[10] Oesterley and Robinson's treatment of the subject goes beyond that of Witton Davies; they present a systematic (and longer) discussion. According to them 'demons' in the Old Testament appear in two forms (or can be divided into two classes), theriomorphic, 'demons' in animal form (תַּנִּים, בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה, צִיִּים, אִיִּים and שָׂעִיר, *Azazel*), and anthropomorphic, 'demons' in human form (*Lilith*, *Aluqah*, *Namtar*, and *Qeteb*). The authors stress that although there are not many references to such 'demons' in the Old Testament, 'when considered in the light of Babylonian parallels, they will be found to be significant.'(p. 117)

Their main argument for taking these terms as 'demons' seems to be the similarities they found with Babylonian demonology and later Jewish interpretation. Beside the Mesopotamian parallels Oesterley and Robinson contend that the fact that the names of these 'demons' are mentioned without further explanation 'shows that the name was familiar, therefore traditional' (p.118).

An important work in the treatment of demonology is E. Langton's *Essentials of Demonology, A Study of Jewish and Christian Doctrine Its Origin and*

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[8] *Magic*, pp. 95-100. The work did not receive a positive review in its time. M. Jastrow called it 'a crude piece of work, and 'practically worthless'. See 'T. Witton Davies on Magic, Divination and Demonology', *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, 15 no.3 (1899), 172-173.

[9] 2nd rev. edn (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1937, repr. 1947). The book was first published in 1930; the 2nd edition was reprinted several times, in 1940, 1944 and 1947.

[10] This view is also shared by Langton, see below, p. 4.

Development.[11] The work is part of a series of books by Langton on related subjects.[12] In its time it was considered as the first important treatment of the Biblical beliefs and as a great success. In its Foreword C. Ryder Smith wrote:

> It is remarkable that the subject of Biblical beliefs in this realm has had to wait so long for something more than incidental and sporadic treatment. There was need that the material for its adequate study should be collected and arranged. In several books Dr Edward Langton has set himself the formidable task of dealing with the subjects of angelology and demonology in Hebrew and Christian history. In this volume he has undertaken the presentation of the Biblical phenomena, not in artificial isolation, but in their historical context. He seems to me to have succeeded so well that no one else will need for a long time to attempt the same arduous task.

The book is still used as a reference work by modern scholars.[13]

Essentials of Demonology treats a wide range of subjects, from 'Ancient Semitic Demonology' (ch.1) through 'The Demonology of the Old Testament and Its Expansion in Rabbinic literature' (ch. 2), to the 'The Teaching of Jewish Apocryphal and Apocalyptic Literature' (ch. 5) and 'The Teaching of the New Testament' (ch. 6). Langton also discusses 'The Relation of Jewish to Persian Conceptions' (ch. 3), and 'The Relation of Jewish to Greek conceptions' (ch. 4). His aim is to trace the origins of the demonological beliefs as they appear in the apocryphal literature and the New Testament. He admits that these beliefs 'do not appear in the Old Testament', but nevertheless he proceeds with an examination of the 'Old Testament conceptions' as well as that of Israel's neighbours. [14] It is evident from Langton's study that he believes that, since the Israelites were in close contact with the Arabs, Babylonians, and Assyrians at various points during the course of their histories, the beliefs of these people must have influenced Israelite religion, and thus their demonology is also reflected in the Hebrew Scriptures (i.e. the Old Testament). For

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[11] (London: the Epworth Press, 1949).

[12] For example: *The Ministries of the Angelic Powers: According to the Old Testament and later Jewish Literature*; *Supernatural: The Doctrine of Spirits, Angels, and Demons from the Middle Ages until the Present Time*; *Good and Evil Spirits: A Study of the Jewish and Christian Doctrine, Its Origin and Development*; *Satan: A Study of the Character of Satan through all the Ages*.

[13] For example Kuemmerlin-McLean, pp. 138-140; J. B. Long, 'Demons: An Overview', *EncRel*^{1}, IV, p. 287; W. Stephens, 'Demons: An Overview', *EncRel*^{2}, IV, p. 2281; J. R. Burrelli, 'A Study of Psalm 91 with Special Reference to the Theory that It Was Intended as a Protection Against Demons and Magic' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 1994), p. 172.

[14] 'Introductory Note'.

example, he concludes that the *se'irim* in Lev 17:7, 2 Kings 23:8, and 2 Chron 11:15, are creatures of 'demonic' character since the Arabs, Babylonians and Assyrians 'frequently conceived of demons as assuming the form of animals which haunted ruins and desolate places' and these were 'portrayed as hairy beings'. The *se'irim* in Isa 13:21 and 34:14 must be referring to more than 'mere natural animals' since they are mentioned along with Lilith, and 'we have seen that Lilith appears as a notable demon in Babylonian Demonology' (pp. 39-40). Taking this further, from the fact that other animals (תַּנִּים, בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה, צִיִּים, אִיִּים and אֹחִים) occur together with *lilith* and *se'irim* in Isa 34, Langton deduces that therefore these also must be 'demons'.

> The fact that the animals enumerated above, and which also appear in Isaiah 34:14, include such well-known demonic creatures as the '*Se'irim*' and 'Lilith' leads naturally to the conclusion that all the animals mentioned share the same character. They are conceived to be either demons themselves, as in the case of the serpent in Genesis 3, or they are incarnations of demons. This conclusion is supported by all that we know of the association of animals and demons in Egyptian, Arabian, and Babylonian demonology. (p. 43)

Azazel is treated similarly. Langton points out that Lev16:8 suggests that *azazel* was conceived of as a personal being, and that his dwelling place was in the wilderness like that of the *se'irim*. So in view of Arab and Babylonian beliefs it is natural to conclude that the passage contains an ancient Semitic belief in desert demons, and *Azazel* can be explained as 'a Semitic god of the flocks who was later degraded to the level of a demon under the influence of Yahwism' (pp.43-46).

These earlier works on demonology were written in an era when interest in anthropology was starting to rise, and this can be seen in the various authors' treatment of the definition of 'demon' as well as their use of comparative demonology. In biblical scholarship an interest in Mesopotamian parallels has also left its mark on the work of early 20th century scholars to such an extent that they seem to have been more interested in these parallels than in occurrences in the Old Testament itself. None of the above mentioned authors examined the biblical passages in detail determining how these 'demonic terms' functioned in their contexts, rather they treated the terms on the basis of similarities with Babylonian beliefs. They were concerned with the original author's intent in referring to these 'demons' (e.g. on p. 49 Langton states that the psalmist in Ps 91 must have had *Namtar* in mind when referring to *deber*).

Mesopotamian/ Canaanite similarities seem to be the main factor in opting for a 'demonological' interpretation of these terms in more modern scholarship too. Thus in chapter 4 of his doctoral thesis, entitled 'Demonology, Sorcery, and Apotropaic Practices in the Hebrew Bible', Burrelli[15] argues that in the Old Testament there is evidence of 'a genuine belief in hostile spiritual beings which are unrelated to Yahweh's service' (p. 62). His evidence comes from Gen 4:7 (רֹבֵץ); Lev 16:8, 10, 26 (עֲזָאזֵל); Job 18:12-14b (אֹנוֹ, 'his wickedness', אֵיד , 'calamity', בַּדֵּי, 'disease', and בְּכוֹר מָוֶת ,'the first born of death'); Isa 34:14 (לִילִית, תַּנִּים, בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה, צִיִּים, אִיִּים and שָׂעִיר); Isa 13:21-22 (צִיִּים, אֹחִים, בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה); Isa 23:13 (צִיִּים); Jer 50:39 (צִיִּים, אִיִּים); Zeph 2:14 (קָאַת and קִפֹּד) and Prov 30:15a (עֲלוּקָה). Burrelli simply follows the general consensus, which in Gen 4:7 is to take רֹבֵץ to be a 'demon' 'on the basis of its Akkadian cognate *rābişu*', [16] in Lev 16 עֲזָאזֵל to refer to the desert 'demon' עזזאל.[17] Whereas the animals in Isa 34:11 and 15 he takes to be real ones, those in v. 14 he argues are 'demonic'. His argument is based on general agreement, 'the majority of scholars believe that Lilith, the female night demon of Mesopotamian mythology, or the like, is in the mind of the author.' Although he points out that one must examine each term in turn in order to decide whether they have a 'demonic' nature or not, his argument becomes a circular one and is based on a presupposition. He takes *lilith's* 'demonic' nature for granted, the *sa'ir* is then a 'demon' because of its occurence with *lilith*, and in a similar train of thought, the other animals are also taken as 'demonic' because of their occurence together with the former two.[18]

For Burrelli these passages 'clearly exhibit the living Yahwistic belief in hostile, spirit beings', and he links these 'beings' either directly or indirectly to sin committed by individuals or on a national level (p. 79). Similarly to the earlier scholars, Burrelli seems to be influenced by Mesopotamian parallels and does not examine the terms in their context. He seeks to find the origins of the terms in

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[15] As in n. 13, p. 4.

[16] This was first suggested by F. Lenormant in 1877 but then was taken up by later scholars, e. g. L. Ramaroson, 'A propos de Gn 4,7', *Bib* 49 (1968), 233-237 (esp. p. 234 n. 1); G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC 1 (Waco: Word Books, 1987), p. 105; Burrelli, p. 6, etc.

[17] Pp. 64-66. Here he follows the suggestions of N. Wyatt, 'Atonement Theology in Ugarit and Israel', *UF* 8 (1976), 415-430, and H. Tawil, 'Azazel, the Prince of the Steepe: A Comparative Study', *ZAW* 92 (1980), 43-59, in particular. For discussion see ch. 2.2 and 2.2.1.

[18] Isa 13:22, 23:13; Jer 50:39 and Zeph 2:14 are all traced back to Isa 34:14. See pp. 68-78.

Mesopotamian mythology rather than examine their function in their present context. He accepts the general scholarly view without questioning their validity.

An important reference work in the subject of demonology is *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*.[19] According to reviewers both editions[20] of this work have become 'standards in the world of biblical scholarship'.[21] Indeed, the dictionary is a comprehensive work that includes over 400 entries written by the three editors and leading biblical scholars. However, the editors' claim that the dictionary contains entries on 'all the gods and demons whose names are found in the Bible' (p. xv), as well as the title itself, can be misleading, as it would suggest that all the entries refer to either gods or 'demons' whose names occur in the Bible. It certainly raises the question of the editors'/contributors' definition of 'god' and 'demon'.

The articles follow a common structure; they are generally made up of four sections.[22] The first section discusses the name of the deity/demon and its etymology, the second deals with ancient Near Eastern evidence, the third section surveys the biblical and post-biblical material, and section four contains a bibliography. In general the articles follow the common scholarly view according to which the terms in question refer to 'demons'.

The most recent book on the topic of demonology is *Die Dämonen/Demons*, edited by A. Lange, H. Lichtenberger, and K. F. Diethard Römheld.[23] The volume is the publication of the proceedings of an international symposium organized by the editors on the topic of 'demons' containing thirty-four contributions from scholars in various categories. The articles are grouped into eight sections. The introduction includes general discussion on compositional features of the ancient pantheon and problems with definition (two articles), section two has five articles on demons in Ancient Egypt and the ancient Near East.[24] Sections three, four and five contain

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[19] Ed. by K van den Toorn, B. Becking and P. W. van der Horst, 2nd rev. edn (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999).

[20] First edition was published also by Brill in 1995.

[21] See the reviews by J. M. Sasson in *JAOS* 118 no. 1 (1998), 79-80 and G. A. Rendsburg in *BASOR* 321 (Feb. 2001), 92-93.

[22] The article on *Azazel* has five. The biblical evidence is dealt with in section III, and the post-biblical material in a separate, IV section. Bibliography comes in as section V.

[23] (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

[24] See for example H. Niehr, 'Zur Entstehung von Dämonen in der Religionsgeschichte Israels: Überlegungen zum Weg des Rešep durch die nordwestsemitische Religionsgeschichte', pp. 84-107,

articles relating to 'demons' in ancient Israel and Judah in pre-exilic and exilic (five articles), Persian (four articles) and Hellenistic (six articles) times. Section six has two articles on Greek and Roman demonology. Section seven with eight articles is dedicated to demons in the New Testament and Gnosticism. The final, eighth section contains two articles on demons after the destruction of the Second Temple.

This book is a fascinating read but only a few of the articles are relevant to our discussion. We shall refer here to three: the articles by A. K. Petersen, O. Keel and H. J. Fabry.[25]

Keel argues that there is no dualistic view in the Hebrew Bible; a separate kingdom of good and evil is not yet present. He sees Christian biblical scholars' reading of the Old Testament as biased by New Testament ideas. What we assume by 'evil', he argues, the Old Testament accepts as an integral part of the cosmos. Thus it is Yahweh himself who appears with 'demonic' characteristics in some texts (e.g. Gen 32:27; Exod 4:24-26), and in others the 'evil spirit' comes from him (1 Sam 16:14, רוּחַ־רָעָה מֵאֵת יְהוָה), or the 'lying spirit' is part of his court (1 Kgs 22:22-24, רוּחַ שֶׁקֶר). Only in early Jewish literature did Satan become the centre of a world separate and independent from Yahweh where everything that contradicted the pure moral character of Yahweh could be deposited. However, Keel argues, foreign cults are 'demonised' in the Hebrew Bible (in rare instances great gods such as *Reshef* and *Deber* became integrated into Yahweh's court, as in Hab 3:5).[26]

It is not clear what Keel's position on *Azazel* is, but it seems that he is inclined to see in it a 'demonic' figure. He emphasises that *Azazel* inhabited the desert and as such he was regularly interpreted as a 'demonic' being by rabbinic and modern exegetes alike (p. 223). Following Eissfeldt, Keel finds it possible that a representation of

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dealing with Northwest Semitic Reshef. For a discussion of this article see ch.2, section 2.6.5, pp. 55-56.

[25] Thus the articles by A. K. Petersen, 'The Notion of Demon: Open Questions to a diffuse Concept', pp. 23-41; O. Keel, 'Schwache alttestamentliche Ansätze zur Konstruktion einer stark dualistisch getönten Welt', pp. 211-236, and the first part of H. J. Fabry's article, '"Satan" – Begriff und Wirklichkeit: Untersuchungen zur Dämonologie der alttestamentlichen Weisheitsliteratur', pp. 269-291(esp. pp. 269-272).

[26] Pp. 228-230. Thus following his line of argument, it would seem that since terms that are related to foreign cults refer to 'demons', the other occurrences of *reshef* and *deber* would have to be taken as referring to 'demons'.

Azazel can be found on an ivory cut from Meggido, though this view has been challenged.[27]

It is interesting that while Keel takes most of the animals that appear in Isa 34 (and parallel texts) to refer to real animals which were invoked because of the eerie sound and cry they make, he regards the צִיִּים (but not the אִיִּים)[28] and the שְׂעִירִים as 'demons' probably based on the LXX translation of the terms,[29] and *Lilith* as the night demoness of Mesopotamian origins.

Fabry's view is similar to that of Keel in that he argues that 'demons' in the Old Testament are remnants of an earlier polytheism. He sees various groups (צִיִּים, שְׂעִירִים, שֵׁדִים,[30] אֱלֹהִים,[31] אֱלִילִים and [32]אִטִּים) and individual 'demons' (*Lilith*,[33] *Reshef*,[34] *Qeteb*,[35] and *Deber*[36]) as well as 'demonic animals' (the jackals, ostriches and owls in Isa 13:21-22, 34:13-14; Jer 50:39 and Job 30:29)[37] present in the Old Testament. It is not clear where he classes *Azazel* as he mentions it separately. He writes:

> Der Sündenbock-Ritus ist dem Azazel gewidmet (Lev 16). Dahinter steht wohl ein älterer Kult um einen Gewittergötzen, der im AT jahweisiert, später dann dämonisiert worden ist. (p. 270)

Many of these forms, Fabry argues, are known from Mesopotamian and Canaanite mythology, thus clearly, they are remnants of an old polytheism. Israelite

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[27] See discussion on pp. 224-227.

[28] Though this is not clear. See pp. 220-222.

[29] LXX translates צִיִּים with δαιμονια in Isa 34:14 only; in its other occurrences the word is translated variously ('wild beast' in Isa 13:21; 'idols' in Jer 50:39; 'Ethiopians' in Pss 72:9 and 74:14; and it is missing from Isa 23:13). שְׂעִירִים is translated with δαιμονια in Isa 13:21; with ονοκενταυροι in Isa 34:14; with ματαιοις in Lev 17: 7 and 2 Chron 11:15 where ειδωλοις is also added.

[30] Deut 32:17.

[31] 1 Sam 28:13.

[32] Isa 19:3.

[33] Isa 34:14 and Job 18:15.

[34] Deut 32:24; Hab 3:5 and Ps 78:48.

[35] Deut 32:24; Isa 28:2; Hos 13:14; Ps 91:6.

[36] Hos 13:14 and Hab 3:5.

[37] Besides these he also lists כֶּלֶב, 'dog' in Ps 22:21; נָחָשׁ, 'snake' in Gen 3:1 and Qoh 10:11.

monotheism reduced them to intermediate beings of 'demonic' status in the Old Testament literature, whose chief later becomes Satan.

Petersen's article addresses the question of definition of the concept of 'demon'. He argues that the definition should be extended in terms of function 'in order to include additional notions which for definitional reasons pertaining to the history of scholarship have been left out of scope' (p. 31). Thus for him:

> Demons may signify both gods and lesser spirits. They may denote mediatory beings either benevolent or malevolent in nature. They may designate deceased souls as well as outburst of irrationality in the human world. The concept may be used in a personified and in a depersonified sense. It may connote freedom as well as unfreedom. (p.39)

Petersen sees 'inexhaustible' possibilities of extending the term and claims that if the definition of 'demon' is extended this way,

> … we may not only be able to include all the different applications of the concepts during the course of its history of interpretation. We may also use it as a general religio-historical category that makes it possible to study notions of demons in contexts in which the concept itself does not occur…. The advantage of the chosen definition, however, is its capability of integrating the entire spectre of different uses witnessed by the concept's history of reception. (p. 39)

Petersen's definition reflects the history of reception of the concept of 'demon', but his argument that it can be used to 'study notions of demons in contexts in which the concept itself does not occur' is questionable. Petersen actually points to the problem though not intentionally. Scholars who speak of 'demons' in the Hebrew Bible or of 'OT demonology' in general, work with an understanding of the concept of 'demon' that on the surface appears as defined by Petersen, but below the surface there is a subconscious understanding. This can be seen especially in the case of scholars who start with a definition of 'demon' before turning to discussing individual 'demons' in the Hebrew Bible.[38] They usually start with the Greek word, δαίμων from which the English word, through the Latin *daemon*, derived, pointing to the original notion which from the time of Homer referred to a class of lesser divinities, intermediate beings between the gods and humans (Hesiod included in this class the souls of those who lived in the Golden Age). Then they point out that gradually the term acquired a

[38] For example Keel, pp. 211-212; Petersen, pp. 23-41; *EncRel*^{1}, IV, p. 282; G.J. Riley, 'Demon', in *DDD*, pp. 235-240, esp. pp. 235-236.

more and more negative connotation and in intertestamental literature, the New Testament and early Christian writings it was applied only to 'evil spirits' that cause harm (physical, mental and moral) to humans.[39] Since then the English term 'demon' is used in this entirely negative sense. Today a demon is an *evil* spirit with the emphasis being on evil.[40] For the purposes of the present study 'demon' can be defined as a supernatural evil being that exists or operates independent from Yahweh. Demons cause physical, mental and moral harm. They are not worshipped and do not receive sacrifice.

Some scholars define the term this way,[41] others do not give a definition but their understanding of 'demons' as evil is obvious.[42] The problem therefore is that this word is applied to the Hebrew Bible.[43] Such application carries the danger of imposing ideas, reading into the texts ideas that are not present.[44]

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[39] Petersen has shown how the concept has developed and changed from its original meaning to the usage in Judaism and early Christianity (pp. 23-28; 31-35).

[40] This is clear from the modern definitions. The *Oxford Dictionary of English* (2nd rev. edn, ed. by C. Soanes and A. Stevenson, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 462) defines 'demon' as 'an evil spirit or devil, especially one thought to possess a person or act as a tormentor in hell'. The term is even applied to people in today's usage, thus it can mean 'a cruel, evil, or unmanageable person'. The *Chambers Dictionary* (Edinburgh: Chambers Harrop Publ., 2003), *EncJud*[1] (p.1522) and online dictionaries give the same definition. (See for example Merriam-Webster's Online dictionary, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/demon; www.yourdictionary.com/demon [accessed 2008-04-25]). Beside 'devil' other synonyms usually given are 'fiend'; 'imp'; 'vampire'; 'incubus' and 'monster'. It is not the purpose of the present study to give a different definition of 'demon'.

[41] E.g. Fabry, p. 269; D. R. Hillers, *EncJud*[1], V, p. 1521.

[42] They often use the expression 'evil demon/s'. See for example A. Caquot, 'Sur Quelques *Démons* de L'Ancien Testament (Reshep, Qeteb, Deber)', *Semitica* 6 (1956), 53-68; T. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1969) in reference to *reshef* and *qeteb* (see also 2.5.1; 2.6.5). For G. del Olmo Lete *deber* is a 'demon' or 'evil deity' ('Deber', in DDD, pp.231- 232; see also 2.4, p.33) M. Eszenyei Szeles, *Wrath and Mercy: A Commentary on the Books of Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, International Theological Commentary (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1987), refers to *deber* and *reshef* as oppressive 'horrible demons' in Hab 3:5 (see also 5.2.3, n.62 p 113).

[43] Kuemmerlin-McLean (p. 139) writes that 'The most generally accepted understanding is of demons as "evil spirits" who live in ruins and the desert and are responsible for illness and natural disasters.'

[44] Keel has pointed it out that Christian biblical scholars read the Old Testament biased by New Testament ideas (p. 230), and Petersen admits that 'It is by means of the modern, universal religio-historical category that we may identify ideas of demons in the Hebrew Bible or in the Qumran texts, for instance. The texts themselves do not provide us with the notion.' (p. 29)

1.3 Summary observations and implications

Scholars usually fall into one or both of two categories (though the issue is more complex) regarding what or who constitutes a 'demon' in the Old Testament.

1) On the basis of ancient Near Eastern belief in 'demons' inhabiting desert and desolate places, and the fact that particular animals (e.g. snakes, scorpions, goats, jackals, hyenas, owls, etc.) were associated with 'demons', some Hebrew terms such as *azazel* (goat), *lilith* (owl), תַּנִּים (dragon), בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה (ostrich), צִיִּים, אִיִּים (howling creatures), and שָׂעִיר (goat), etc. are considered as 'demons'. This view can be traced mainly to earlier scholars (Witton Davies, Oesterley, Langton) but some modern ones (Keel, Fabry) also follow this line.[45] In particular, early 20th century scholars (mostly Christian) believed that Hebrew religion would have been similar to other Semitic peoples' religions; therefore Semitic demonology would have been reflected in the Old Testament. However, this understanding is based on Mesopotamian concepts and applied to the Old Testament rather than arising from it.

2) Another general view is that 'demons' are foreign deities that occur in the Hebrew Bible. Thus *deber*, *qeteb* and *reshef* are regarded as ancient Near Eastern gods, vestiges of an ancient polytheism, who out of necessity were turned into 'demons' by the authors of the Hebrew Bible. *Azazel* is also classed in this category by some.[46] This view is based on the LXX translating the Hebrew term *shedim*, which is used in reference to foreign deities, as well as some other problematic terms (e.g. *siyyim* in Isa 13:21; 34:12; Jer 50:39, etc., *se'irim* in Lev17:7; Isa 34:14, etc.) with δαίμων or δαιμόνιον. Since this term from Christian times has acquired the meaning of 'evil spirit', our terms in question are deemed 'demons' in the modern sense of the word.

As mentioned above, the issue of categorising is complex. Later Jewish belief is also an influencing factor as in the case of *azazel*, *qeteb* and *lilith*. However, the use of comparative material, while useful in some aspects, complicates the issue because it raises other questions.[47]

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[45] See above 1.2 and ch.2 History of Research.

[46] E.g. by Langdon,Wyatt, Tawil (see 2.2.1, pp. 19-22). *Lilith* can also be classed here as it is regarded as a 'demon' in the HB because a demon of similar name was known in Mesopotamia. See above 1.2 and also 2.3.

[47] The use of comparative material raises 'the issue of the degree of legitimate comparison possible between cultures separated by language, time, geography, and theology' (Kuemmerlin-McLean, p. 139). The question of the nature of the material being compared also should not be ignored. On

To conclude: the survey of the literature on 'OT demonology' above shows that earlier scholars' concern with the subject was based on Mesopotamian or Canaanite similarities, and it was concerned with tracing the development of Jewish demonology from its origins through the Old Testament to later times. Terms that have been identified by early scholars such as Witton Davies, Oesterley or Langton as 'demons' are still regarded as such by modern scholarship (Burrelli, Keel, Fabry, and others). Mesopotamian, Canaanite or other ancient Near Eastern similarities still play a major role in the identification of 'demons' in the Hebrew Bible.

Previous works on the subject used various methodologies with an emphasis on comparison with ancient Near Eastern and post-biblical Jewish material. Some modern critics also show interest in the formation of the texts with the goal to reconstruct the history of 'demons' in Israelite religion.[48]

The major works proceed from the assumption that the terms referred to were 'demons' in the ancient Near East and /or later, or that they were deities who became 'demonised' by the authors of the Hebrew Bible. However, the use of the term 'demon' in reference to the Hebrew Bible is problematic.[49] Thus the question arises: Can we talk of 'demons' in the Hebrew Bible? Are the terms *azazel*, *lilith*, *deber*, *qeteb* and *reshef* names of 'demons'?

1.4 Aim of present study

As we have learnt from the Survey of 'OT demonology' (1.2) above that it is generally accepted without challenge that the terms *azazel*, *lilith*, *deber*, *qeteb* and

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problems with comparative studies of biblical texts see for example H. M. Barstad, '*Comparare necesse est?* Ancient Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy in a Comparative Perspective' in *Prophecy in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context: Mesopotamian, Biblical, and Arabian Perspectives*, ed. by M. Nissinen, SBL Symposium no 13 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), pp. 1-11. The importance of knowing the genre of the texts one is studying has been emphasised by J. Barton, *Reading the OT: Method in Biblical Study*, 2nd edn (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2006), pp. 5-6; H. M. Barstad, 'Jeremiah as Text. Some Reflections on Genre and Reality in Old Testament prophetic Research', in *Historie og konstruktion: Festskrift til Niels Peter Lemche i anledning af 60 års fødselsdagen den 6. September 2005*, ed. by M. Müller and T. L. Thompson (København: Museum Tusculanums Forlag, 2005), pp. 11-18.

[48] Traditional exegetical methods (e.g. Source Analysis, Form Criticism, Redaction Criticism or Tradition History) have their limits as they aim to reconstruct historical circumstances (e.g. in which the text was produced, the identity or intention of the authors, original audiences, etc.). See for example R. N. Soulen and R. K. Soulen, 'Narrative Criticism' in *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2001) p. 119.

[49] See 1.2 above esp. pp. 10-11.

reshef are the personal names of 'demons' appearing in the Hebrew Bible, the necessity arises to return to the texts in order to examine each term in its context. Other questions such as: 'Are these terms proper names?', 'Are there mythological figures behind them?', 'What is their meaning?', will also be asked.

This study does not question the validity of traditional methods in exegesis, but it argues that since there are so many difficulties attached to the various scholarly approaches to the treatment of 'OT demons', another approach could bring in diverse perspectives. Thus the present study aims to supplement the existing works by taking a different approach. Instead of aiming to reconstruct the history of 'demons' in Israelite religion, its purpose is to allow the Hebrew texts to provide the primary source for understanding how the terms in question function in their contexts.[50]

1.5 Methodological and procedural remarks

To accomplish its goal the present study will provide an exegesis based on Close Reading of all the relevant Hebrew Bible passages in which the terms *azazel*, *lilith, deber*, *qeteb*, and *reshef* appear. This means that attention is paid to the linguistic, semantic, and structural levels of the texts. [51] In the case of terms that occur many times (*deber*, *qeteb* and *reshef*) the aim is to determine their meaning and function from their semantic field[52] and their contexts. When examined closely the texts themselves will present the interpretation of each word. The examination of the semantic field is not possible in the case of *azazel* and *lilith* which only occur once.

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[50] As J. Barton writes: 'Biblical interpreters today tend to agree with structuralist critics that the job of the exegete is to explicate "the text itself", not the reality to which the text is supposed to refer, nor the ideas in the mind of its author.' See *Reading the OT*, pp. 220-222.

[51] Close Reading is the 'distinctive procedure' of New Criticism. New Critics work with the text itself without concerning themselves with external (historical) circumstances. They emphasise the relationship between the ideas expressed in the text and the form of the text, i.e the way the text relates those ideas. New Criticism's concern is not with the author or the author's intent but with the properties of the text. On New Criticism see for example M. H. Abrams, 'New Criticism' in *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 7th edn (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publ., 1999), pp. 180-182; T. K. Beal, K. A. Keefer and T. Linafelt, 'Literary and Structuralist/Postmodernist Approaches Methods' in *Methods of Biblical Interpretation: Excerpted from the Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* ed. by J. H. Hayes (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), pp. 159-167; Barton, *Reading the OT*, pp. 140-197; A. W. Biddle and T. Fulwiler, *Reading, Writing, and the Study of Literature* (New York: Random House, 1989); L. Steven, *Texts and Contexts: Writing About Literature with Critical Theory* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994).

[52] See S. E. Porter, 'Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation' in *Methods of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. by Hayes, pp. 35-40; 'Semantics' and 'Semasiology', in *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, ed. by Soulen, pp. 169-170.

In these cases the emphasis is on a close examination of the immediate context in order to determine the function (and if possible the meaning) of the term. The reading focuses on determining how the various signals within the text can guide towards meaning, focusing on an 'implied' author or poet rather than on an actual/historical one as in the historical methods (also an 'implied reader' is kept in mind). [53] Each text analysis begins by giving a structure.[54] This is followed by a step-by-step analysis of the text noting how the (implied) poet/author uses the various poetical/rhetorical devices, especially personification, but also parallelism, similes, irony, mythological elements, etc.,[55] in order to convey the meaning of the text and ultimately to determine the expected effects of the poems/stories on their audiences (implied readers).[56] The approach is aimed to be inductive, reading the texts without any presuppositions at the outset.[57] The available evidence will first be examined before a conclusion is allowed to emerge from that evidence. It is noted that personification plays an especially important role not only in poetic (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) but also in prose (Leviticus, some of Jeremiah, Exodus, Numbers, etc.) passages. Recognising it aids the understanding of the texts (it has been ignored in most of the Jeremiah and Ezekiel passages), but one has to be careful not to read too much into these personifications (as is usually done in Hosea 13 or Habakkuk 3).

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[53] Narrative criticism is a method which presents itself as an eclectic approach (according to R. N. Soulen and R. K. Soulen it is more a 'focus of enquiry' than a methodology); it makes use of and contributes to Structuralism, Rhetorical and Reader-response criticisms. See 'Narrative Criticism', in *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, pp. 120-121; M. A. Powell, 'Narrative Criticism' in *Methods of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. by Hayes, pp. 169-172; M. A. Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, Guides to Biblical Scholarship, NT Series (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990); S. Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978).

[54] Barton writes: 'Investigating the possibility that there are rhetorical structures in a text raises fresh possibilities of interpretation, and can increase our respect for the biblical writers, who knew much more about how to present a cogent argument than modern critics sometimes credit them with.' See *Reading the OT*, p. 204.

[55] See for ex. J. P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Poetry: An Introductory Guide*, trans. by I. Smit, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); W. G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques*, JSOTSup 26 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995, rev. edn); L. Alonso Schökel, *A Manual of Hebrew Poetics*, Subsidia Biblica 11 (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000); J. P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide*, trans. by I. Smit, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999); R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); A. Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, Bible and Literature series 9 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983).

[56] Powell, 'Narrative Criticism', p. 169.

[57] This would be the ideal approach; however, it cannot be done.

The presence of mythological elements is underlined but it is argued that they are used as a poetical device and cannot be cited as proof for a living belief in demons or other mythical creatures.

1.6 Results of investigation

The present study shows that contrary to former and current scholarship there is nothing in the texts to support the view that *azazel*, *lilith*, *deber*, *qeteb* and *reshef* are the names of 'demons'. There is no evidence to suggest that there are mythological figures behind *azazel*, *lilith* or the personifications of *deber* and *qeteb*. In the case of *reshef* there is a possible connection to the Semitic deity *Reshef*. However, the mythological motifs are used merely as a poetic device.[58]

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[58] For a more detailed version of the results see Main Conclusion.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORY OF RESEARCH OF *AZAZEL*, *LILITH*, *DEBER*, *QETEB* AND *RESHEF*

2.1 Introduction

The Survey of 'OT Demonology' in the previous chapter showed in general that both early 20th century and modern scholars place a great emphasis on Mesopotamian, Canaanite or other ancient Near Eastern similarities in the identification of 'demons' in the Hebrew Bible.[1] They assume that 'OT demons' were 'demons' in the ancient Near East and / or later or that they were deities who became 'demonised' by the authors of the Hebrew Bible. The present chapter takes a closer look at the interpretation of *azazel*, *lilith*, *deber*, *qeteb* and *reshef* to see if the general observations are valid in these specific cases.

2.2 The Interpretation of *azazel*

Interpretations usually follow one of four main lines.

According to the first one עֲזָאזֵל is an abstract noun meaning 'destruction' or 'entire removal'.[2] Hoffman and Hertz[3] also prefer to take it as a Hebrew noun meaning 'complete destruction'. It seems this view may be shared by Wenham too, although it is not entirely clear whether he favours this or the following interpretation.[4] He simply translates לַעֲזָאזֵל as 'for *Azazel*'; '*Azazel*'s lot'; 'to *Azazel*'.

The second interpretation is that *azazel* is the place where the goat was sent. This is based on the midrashic interpretation of אֶרֶץ גְּזֵרָה (inaccessible region) in v. 22 as

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[1] See summary observations in 1.3.

[2] Cf. BDB deriving it from Arabic *'zl*, 'remove' (p. 736: 5799). BDB also gives the possibility of it being the proper name of a spirit haunting the desert or a fallen angel, though indicates that the previous interpretation is preferred. HALOT on the other hand is inclined towards the 'demonological interpretation; see p. 806.

[3] Quoted in G. J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979), p. 234; and in J. E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, WBC 4 (Dallas: Word Books, 1992), p. 222.

[4] Wenham, *Leviticus*, argues that v. 22 is an expansion of what is said in v.10, a region that is cut off, lit. 'a land of cutting off'. If this is so, he argues, Rashi would be justified in taking 'land of cutting off' as interpretative of *azazel*. Depending on how one understands the phrase, a land that is cut off, or a place that cuts off, *azazel* may be taken as either meaning 'rocky' or 'craggy', or alternatively, 'total destruction'. Whichever the choice, for Wenham the main point is the meaning of the ceremony: 'Whether Azazel means the mountain where the goat is destroyed, the sin which is given to destruction, or the evil angel who is given a bribe so that he does not become an accuser, it all comes back to the same basic idea: that sin is exterminated from Israel.' (pp.233- 235)

synonymous with עֲזָאזֵל. Yoma 67b thus understands עֲזָאזֵל as 'a fierce and difficult land', taking the first part of the word as עזז, 'strong, fierce'.[5] G. R. Driver's understanding is similar, also going back to the root עזז but he derives his translation of עֲזָאזֵל as 'jagged rocks, precipice' from the Arabic *'azâzu(n)*, 'rough ground'.[6]

Some scholars, e.g. Snaith and Porter, follow this explanation.[7] However, other scholars find it unacceptable and forced, and even 'laboured'.[8]

The third line of interpretation regards *azazel* as the goat that is sent off, the 'go-away goat'. LXX and Vg took this view, and it was advocated more recently by the anthropologist M. Douglas.[9] Bellinger also renders *azazel* as 'the scapegoat'.[10] This interpretation is based on an understanding of עֲזָאזֵל as a compound of עֵז, 'goat' + אָזַל, 'go, go off', hence 'the go-away goat'.[11]

The fourth view, with a little variation, seems to be the most popular amongst scholars.[12] According to this, *Azazel* is the name of a supernatural being. Most

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[5] BDB 738: 5810; HALOT, p. 808. B. A. Levine, *Leviticus*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989) p. 102; J. Neusner, *The Talmud of Babylonia: An American Translation*, V.C, Yoma chapters 6-8 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), pp. 28-29.

[6] 'Three Technical Terms in the Pentateuch', *JSS* 1 (1956), 97-105.

[7] N. H. Snaith (ed.), *Leviticus and Numbers* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1967), pp. 112-113; J. R. Porter, *Leviticus: A Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 127.

[8] See for example Wyatt, 'Atonement', p. 428; D. P. Wright, *The Disposal of Impurity. Elimination Rites in the Bible and in Hittite and Mesopotamian Literature* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), pp. 21-22 (p. 21) and 'Azazel' in *ABD* 1, pp. 536-537 (p. 536); Hartley, *Leviticus,* pp. 237-238; Levine, *Leviticus*, p. 102.

[9] M. Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); 'The Go-Away Goat', in *The Book of Leviticus: Composition and Reception*, ed. by R. Rendtorff and R. A. Kugler, VT Suppl. (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 121-141.

[10] W. H. Bellinger Jr., *Leviticus and Numbers*, New International Biblical Commentary (USA: Hendrickson Publishers; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2001), p. 99. In a short discussion he notes the other possibilities (deity/spirit, the goat of removal/the goat that departs or a place name) and seems to follow the NIV rendering ('He is to cast lots for the two goats – one lot for the Lord and the other for the scapegoat.'). According to Bellinger, the important thing in the ritual is not the identity of *Azazel* but the function of the scapegoat, which is 'to carry away the sins of the people, a striking and powerful symbol' (p. 103).

[11] J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1991), points out that אזל is Aramaic; it does occur but rarely in Biblical Hebrew, e.g. in Prov 20:14; Job 14:11; see also BDB, p. 1079, 235-236; HALOT, p. 1808. This translation later became the 'scapegoat'. The term apparently was first used in Tyndale's English translation of the Bible in 1530. See B. McLean, 'On the revision of scapegoat terminology', *Numen* 37 no. 2 (1990), 168-173(6), p. 168.

[12] HALOT lists 'a demon of the wilderness' as the first possible meaning, followed by 'God's opponent'; 'an impotent deity' and 'Mot' (p. 806).

commonly, scholars argue that the term is the name of a 'demon'. Scholars usually cite one or more of the following four points in support.[13]

1. The expression לַעֲזָאזֵל is parallel to לַיהוָה, Yahweh being God's personal name, thus requiring that *Azazel* is also the name of a supernatural being;[14]

2. The Hebrew Bible acknowledges that the wilderness is the habitat of 'demons' and 'demonic' creatures (Lev. 17:7; Isa 13:21; 34:14; cf. Matt.12:43; etc.);[15]

3. In intertestamental literature (Book of Enoch) *Azazel* is a fully developed demon;[16]

4. The best explanation for the etymology of the name *Azazel* is that it is a *metathesized* form of *'zz 'l* meaning 'fierce god' or 'angry god'. This relies on ancient Near Eastern parallels. [17]

We shall consider these points in reverse order.

2.2.1 Etymology and the ancient Near East

This interpretation (4 above) is based on the supposition that עֲזָאזֵל was originally עזזאל which has been deliberately altered. This view is held by Cheyne, Wyatt, Delcor, Tawil, D. Wright, and Levine.

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[13] Wenham, *Leviticus*, p. 234; Wright, *Disposal*, pp. 21-22 and 'Azazel', pp. 536-537, list all four.

[14] M. Delcor, 'Le mythe de la chute des anges et de l'origine des géants comme excplication du mal dans le monde dans l'apovalyptique juive Histoire des traditions, *RHR* 190 (1976), 3-53, (p. 35); Hartley, *Leviticus*, p. 238.

[15] Oesterley and Robinson, p. 47; Langton, pp. 45-46; Tawil, pp. 43-45.

[16] Oesterley and Robinson, p. 114; S. H. Langdon, *The Mythology of all Races: Semitic* (Boston: Marshall Jones Company, 1931), V, p. 357; Delcor,, pp. 35-37; L. Grabbe, 'The Scapegoat Tradition: A Study in Early Jewish Interpretation', *JSJ* 18/2 (1987), 152-167, (p. 166); Tawil, pp. 43-45.

[17] Wyatt, 'Atonement', p. 429; Wright, *Disposal*, p. 22; 'Azazel', p. 537.

While Cheyne holds that he was a fallen angel but not a 'demon', [18] others regard him as originally a deity (a god of the flocks) who later became a 'demon'. [19] Scholars identify him variously. For Noth the name 'could hardly be a general description for any "desert demon", but rather that of a 'demonic' being thought of as inhabiting and casting his spell upon a particular wilderness'. [20] Other scholars identify *Azazel* with specific figures. Thus according to Langdon[21] he is the same as Sumerian *Ninamaskug*; Wyatt[22] identifies him with *'Attar*, and Tawil[23] with *Mot*. Thus according to these scholars the term עֲזָאזֵל , best taken as the epithet of a 'demonic' being, could mean 'El is strong';[24] 'angry god' or 'fierce god';[25] 'the mighty one of El';[26] or 'mighty goat'.[27]

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[18] On the one hand T. K. Cheyne, 'Date and Origin of the Ritual of the "Scapegoat" ', *ZAW* 15 (1895), 153-156, argues that *Azazel* was a fallen angel to the Jewish theologians, evil by nature but really 'harmless'. One of the objects of the ritual of the Day of Atonement was to do away with the cult of the *se'irim* by substituting a personal angel, *Azazel*, for the crowd of impersonal and dangerous *se'irim.* Furthermore this view is supported by the form of the name, which in his view was deliberately altered from עזזאל to its present form עֲזָאזֵל out of reverence, to conceal the true derivation of the fallen angel's name. *Azazel* is 'of literary not of popular origin', coming from the same school of speculative students of Scripture where the other names of angels in the later literature come from (pp.154-155). On the other hand Delcor argues that in its present form עֲזָאזֵל is an intentional deformation of עזזאל 'El is strong', which originally would have been a real theophoric name like the names of the other angels of the Book of Enoch and Daniel, such as Raphael, Gabriel, Michael. By this act the Massoretes wanted to ridicule this fallen angel. The LXX eliminated the proper name by rendering the Hebrew word liberally: εἰς τὴν ἀποπομπήν (v.10), εἰς ἄφεσιν (v. 26). However, the context requires a proper name, thus, Delcor argues, the versions cannot be sustained (pp. 35-37). Dr P. Hayman drew my attention to the Peshitta's different spelling (עזזאיל) which might presuppose a Hebrew עזזאל.

[19] Osterley and Robinson, p. 114; Langdon, pp. 9-13; Langton, p. 46; Delcor, pp. 35-37.

[20] M. Noth, *Leviticus: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1965), p. 125. Noth only discusses the 'demon' interpretation, suggesting that sending a gift to *Azazel* would have had to have an apotropaic purpose of warding off the demon, and that this rite was probably earlier than the cleansing and atoning for sins. 'Then the handing over of the goat "to *Azazel*" would be the primary feature, and the burdening of the goat with Israel's sins a later, although still a very primitive, feature.' (p. 125)

[21] Pp. 9-13.

[22] 'Atonement', p. 429.

[23] P. 59. In Wyatt's opinion these are in fact one and the same. See his article 'Attar and the devil', *TGUOS* 25 (1973), 85- 97.

[24] Delcor, p. 35.

[25] Tawil, pp. 57-59; Wright, *Disposal*, p. 22.

[26] Wyatt, 'Atonement', p. 429.

[27] Levine, *Leviticus*, p. 102. He suggests that the word *'ez*, 'goat' is represented in *'aza'zel*, and that this form could have developed through reduplication of the letter *zayin: 'ez-'el*, was pronounced *'ezez'el* and, finally *'aza'zel*.

D. Wright and Milgrom both argue that although *Azazel* is the name of a 'demon', he does not function as one; the priestly writers stripped him of his personality and powers. In Lev 16 he merely designates a place where the impurities and sins of the Israelites were banished to. The survival of the name does not imply an existing belief in such a 'demon'.[28]

These various interpretations are primarily based on scholars' understanding of what the term עֲזָאזֵל means. However, attempts to explain the term's etymology are difficult to accept as they are based on too many uncertainties such as supposed deliberate changing of the form or connection to ancient Near Eastern divine/demonic figures, which often seems artificial. Etymological explanations do not tell us anything about the function of the term in the Hebrew Bible.[29]

There is no ancient Near Eastern evidence for the occurrence of the term *azazel*; yet scholars frequently turn to Ugaritic, Hittite, Mesopotamian and Eblaite texts and rituals to explain the origin of the rite in Lev 16 and thus the figure of *Azazel*.[30] Detailed discussions of these rites can be found in the scholarly works quoted in the note above. These shall not be repeated here; rather we shall reflect on them.

Wyatt uses the Ugaritic text KTU 1.12 i which describes the birth of *šhr* and *qdm*, the so-called two Devourers (*'qqm*).[31] His identification of *Azazel* with 'Attar is based on his hypothesis that the two Devourers are in fact two goats, the twin hypostases of *'Attar* or *'Attar-Mot*.[32] This presents the difficulty that whereas in the Ugaritic text there are two 'goats', the rite in Lev 16 involves only one. Wyatt does not see this as a problem and offers an interesting explanation that is however hard to accept. He explains that of the two goats sacrificed the first could easily be assimilated into Israel's Yahwistic cult, because it duplicated the offering of the bull.

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[28] Wright, *Disposal*, p. 23; 'Azazel', p. 537; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, pp. 1020-1021.

[29] The reliability of etymological evidence has been questioned by J. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 109.

[30] For example Wyatt, 'Atonement', uses Ugaritic material (pp. 415-30); Tawil, Mesopotamian and Ugaritic texts and the Enoch material (pp.43- 59); Wright, *Disposal*, Hittite and Mesopotamian (even some Indian) parallels; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, follows Wright but also uses Rabbinic sources (pp. 44, 1021, 1071-79); I. Zatelli, 'The Origin of the Biblical Scapegoat Ritual: The Evidence of Two Eblaite Texts', *VT* 48 no. 2 (1998), 254-263, uses two Eblaite texts to explain the origins of the scapegoat rituals.

[31] 'Atonement', pp. 415-430.

[32] 'Atonement', pp. 418, 428.

To the second type of sacrifice, however, there was no strict parallel in classical Yahwism. Yet the term לַעֲזָאזֵל, even if it became meaningless, could in fact have been preserved because of its ancient reputation. Wyatt sees this interpretation supported by the parallel account in Num 29:7-11, where only one goat is mentioned, 'and this is the one that is sacrificed: that is, it is the one which could easily be assimilated to classical Yahwistic practice, while of the other there is no longer any hint'. The difficulty for Wyatt lies in the interpretation of the phrase *l'zz'l*, more precisely in the exact significance of the preposition *l*. In his opinion the victim in the scapegoat traditions was the substitute for the god who was killed, i.e. *'Attar*. 'So the expelled goat may be not "to *Azazel*" (or "for *Azazel*" in the same sense), but rather "on behalf of" or "in lieu of Azazel", that is, as a substitute for him.'[33]

Tawil's approach raises even more difficulties as he combines Mesopotamian incantations with Enochic material in order to understand *azazel* in Leviticus 16. We shall consider his arguments in the next section.[34]

D. Wright's work, in which he evaluated the ritual of Lev 16 in light of Hittite and Akkadian sources, comes closest in recognising the significance of *azazel* in the biblical text. He agrees with Tawil's analysis of the Mesopotamian data but does not accept his conclusion about the 'ideas infusing' the scapegoat rite. Although he rightly points out that demonic figures in corresponding rites in the ancient Near East (e.g. Mesopotamia and Anatolia) were treated differently , usually as angry deities or demons who have to be propitiated and appeased by offerings and sacrifices in order to avoid some kind of evil that threatens individuals or humankind, and acknowledges that 'Lev 16 does not speak of *Azazel* in any of these terms: he causes no harm, he receives no offerings (the scapegoat is not a sacrifice), prayers are not made to him. Such a laconic treatment of *Azazel* in view of these other rituals suggests that *Azazel* is not an active being that is due any sort of veneration or attention'; yet he still takes *azazel* to be a 'demon', even if a non-functional one. [35]

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[33] 'Atonement', p. 429.

[34] See 2.2.2 below.

[35] Wright, 'Azazel', p. 537. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, agrees with Wright in his analysis of the Hittite and Mesopotamian sources (pp. 1071-1079).

Zatelli's article draws attention to a purgation rite from Ebla in which a goat is sent towards the steppe of Alini. However, as with the other ancient Near Eastern texts, the differences are more significant than the similarities.[36]

C. Carmichael has criticised scholars (in particular Noth, Zatelli and Wright) who look to the ancient Near East for the origin of the scapegoat ritual.[37] According to him the problem with their approach is the major assumption that 'the biblical ritual has a long and complicated history' but none of them present any detail as to 'how the supposed precedents led to the biblical rite', though Wright 'attempts to find some pointer in the biblical account that might suggest a pre-history' (pp. 167-168). However, Carmichael's approach is also difficult to accept. He claims that it was the 'Levitical lawgiver' who was responsible for the construction of the scapegoat ritual, attributing the 'institution of the Day of Atonement to the legendary Moses' (p. 168). This is only to 'mask the real lawgiver's inventiveness' (p. 169). Like the author of the Book of Jubilees (34: 18) and Maimonides, who linked the Day of Atonement ritual with the story of Joseph (Gen 37), Carmichael argues that the 'Levitical lawgiver' had the story of Joseph in mind (p. 170). What follows is an interesting but rather unconvincing attempt to show that the scapegoat ritual is in fact based on the occasion when Joseph's brothers sought forgiveness for what they had done against Joseph.

2.2.2 Intertestamental Literature: The Book of Enoch

That *azazel* is clearly a demon, the source of all evil in the Book of Enoch, is one of the arguments of scholars in favour of a 'demonological' interpretation.1 Enoch 6-11 seems to contain two separate narratives, one has *Shemihazah* as the chief of the fallen angels, and the other has *Asael*.[38] There are a number of parallels between the *Asael* narrative and Lev 16: 1) the similarity of the name; 2) punishment in the desert; 3) placing of sin on *Asael/Azazel*; 4) healing of the land.

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[36] Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, emphasises the differences between the Mesopotamian and biblical rites (p. 1079).

[37] 'The Origin of the Scapegoat Ritual', *VT* 50/2 (2000), 167-182.

[38] G. W. E. Nickelsburg, 'Apocalyptic and Myth in 1 Enoch 6-11', *JBL* 96/3 (1979), 383-405; Grabbe, 'Scapegoat', pp.152-167; P. D. Hanson, 'Rebellion in Heaven, Azazel, and Euhemeristic heroes in 1 Enoch 6-11, *JBL* 96/2 (1977), 195-233.

The punishment in the desert can be best understood in light of the Mesopotamian incantation series of *utukku lemutti* (Evil Spirits) according to Tawil (p. 43). Further, these texts serve as the basis of understanding the ritual of the Day of Atonement, and enable one to 'better conceive the true demonic nature of *Azazel*' as he is portrayed in the Book of Enoch (pp. 43-59). Tawil finds parallels between the way in which the fallen angel *Azazel* and the demons of the Akkadian magical texts are disposed of.[39]

In light of the Akkadian/Mesopotamian texts Tawil argues that the story in the Book of Enoch must go back to an ancient source. While Tawil's study is valuable in highlighting the parallels between the Enoch material and ancient Mesopotamian magical texts, it does not illuminate the passage in Lev 16.

Despite the parallels and similar expressions between the Enoch narrative and Lev 16, it is debated whether there was any initial connection between them.[40] Grabbe correctly points out that in the Book of Enoch the evil angel is עסאל or עשאל, with a *samek* or a *sin*, and this is not the same as עזאזל with a *zayin*.[41] In some versions of Enoch there seems to be confusion between עסאל and עזאזל.[42] This is due perhaps to the fact that 'by the end of the first century BCE at the latest, the similarity of the name *Asael* with *Azazel* caused it to be linked up with the extensive fall-angels tradition which itself had undergone a lengthy development'.[43] However, that to the Jews of the Second Temple *Azazel* was a demon,[44] does not mean that this must be the case in Leviticus 16.

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[39] He finds the following literal/mythological correspondences (pp. 52-53):
- darkness as a description of the netherworld
- to bind/tie the demon (evil gods)
- to cast/drive the demon to the netherworld (lit. darkness)
- to imprison/shut up the demon in the netherworld (lit. grave)
- to dispatch the demon/substitutionary elements to the steepeland – to dig /open a hole therein

[40] Grabbe, 'Scapegoat', p. 154.

[41] 'Scapegoat', p.153.

[42] See M. A. Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), n. 10 p. 73.

[43] Grabbe, 'Scapegoat', p. 165.

[44] Grabbe, 'Scapegoat', p. 166.

2.2.3 Evidence in the Hebrew Bible (?)

The first two points cited in support of *azazel* as 'demon' use 'evidence' from within the Hebrew Bible.

The argument that the expression לַעֲזָאזֵל is parallel to לַיהוָה, and Yahweh being God's personal name requires that *Azazel* is also the name of a supernatural being, can only be used to point out that עֲזָאזֵל is a parallel term to יהוָה, requiring, if anything, that the former is also the name of a deity. Anything more would be speculation.[45]

The next argument does not provide real support either. Although wilderness and ruins were believed to be the haunting place of demons in ancient religions as well as in later traditions (e.g. Bar 4:35; Tob 8:3; Matt 12: 43; Luke 11:24; Rev 18:2), this cannot be used as proof that the creatures referred to in the above-mentioned passages would be 'demons'. This has to be determined from the context.[46]

2.2.4 Summary *azazel*

All interpretations are based on scholars' attempts to explain the etymology of *azazel*. The most popular view is that it is the name of a 'demon', though there are other possibilities. This view is based on one or more of four arguments. A few scholars point to the parallel expressions לַעֲזָאזֵל and לַיהוָה, the parallelism requiring that both be personal names. The fact that *azazel* is a name, however, does not imply it being a 'demon' i.e. 'evil spirit'.[47] Some scholars also argue that the belief that 'demons' inhabit the desert can be found in the Hebrew Bible (citing Lev 17:7, Isa 13:21, 34:14; cf. Matt 12:43) and since *azazel* is found in the desert therefore it must be a 'demon'/evil spirit. The 'demon' approach by and large is based on attempts to explain the etymology of the term with the help of ancient Near Eastern parallels and/or finding from the ancient Near East similar rites to the one described in Lev 16, and on similarities with the Book Enoch chs 1-6 which features a demon called *Asael* or *Azazel*. These comparisons are valuable in that they highlight various similarities (e.g. between the characters or the rites compared, between the literary works compared, etc.), but at the same time differences should

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[45] See also below 3.2.

[46] See the analysis of Lev 16 below in 3.2, and of Isa 34 in 4.2.2-4.2.3.

[47] Cf. 1.2, p. 11.

also be carefully considered (e.g. cultural, historical, literary genre, etc.). Etymological explanations can be interesting; however, they do not reveal anything about *azazel*'s character or function, and should be treated with caution.

To conclude: to interpret *azazel* most scholars seek to explain its etymology and turn to ancient Near Eastern parallels or the Book of Enoch.

2.3 The interpretation of *lilith* in the Hebrew Bible

Oesterley and Robinson list *lilith* as one of the anthropomorphic 'demons' that appear in the Hebrew Bible, not only in Isa 34:14 but also in Ps 91, as the 'night-terror' (p. 118). Langton also believes that *lilith* in Isa 34:14 is the Babylonian *Lilītu* demon as that is the general consensus based on the similarity of the name and that 'according to rabbinic teaching *Lilith* was the night demon *par excellence*' (pp. 47-48). T. Gaster argues that RSV's rendering of the Hebrew term as 'night-hag' is based on the traditional error of associating the term with 'night' when in fact it is a reference to *Lilith* the Sumerian/Mesopotamian demoness.[48] Modern scholars similarly take the single occurrence in Isa 34:14 to be a reference to the Mesopotamian/Jewish demoness without question, and some even argue that she appears in other passages as well although not named.[49]

The literature on *Lilith* is vast. She inspired not only scholars but poets and painters and even contemporary feminists.[50]

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[48] Gaster (*Myth*, pp. 578-580 and n. 1 and 2, p. 697) as Langton (n. 35, p. 47) before him, follows R. C. Thompson*, Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia: Being Babylonian and Assyrian Incantations against the Demons, Ghouls, Vampires, Hobgoblins, Ghosts, and Kindred Evil Spirits, which Attack Mankind* (London: Luzac, 1903-4), pp. xxiii, xxxvi-xxxviii, who derived Lilith from Sumerian *lil*, 'wind', which term was then adopted by the Babylonians as *lilu* or the feminine form *lilitu*.

[49] Examples include Burrelli, pp. 68-78 (see also above ch.1, pp. 6-7); M. Hutter, 'Lilith' in DDD, pp. 520-521; Keel, 'Schwache', p. 222 and Fabry, p. 270. Fabry sees a reference to *Lilith* in Job 18:15 too. See also p. 9 above. Commentators such as Kaiser, Watts, Brueggemann, Miscall also follow this view. See 4.2.3 and notes.

[50] A very good survey of the history of the development of *Lilith* is found in R. Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess* (New York: Ktav, 1967), pp. 207-245, 318-322. See also Langdon, pp. 361-364; Langton, pp. 16, 47-48; S. Hurwitz, *Lilith, die erste Eva: Eine Studie über dunkle Aspekte der Weiblichkeit* (Zurich: Daimon Verlag, 1980); G. Scholem, 'Lilith', *EncJud*^{l}, XI, pp. 245-249; Hutter, pp. 520-521; T. Gaster, *Myth,* pp. 578- 580; M. Gaster, 'Two Thousand Years of a Charm Against the Child-Stealing Witch', *Folklore* 11 (June, 1900), 129-162; J. Montgomery, 'The Lilith Legend', *The Museum Journal* 4 (1913), 62-65; H. Scwartz, 'Jewish Tales of the Supernatural', *Judaism* 36 (1987), 339-351; R. Lesses, 'Exe(o)rcising Power: Women as Sorceresses, Exorcists, and Demonesses in Babylonian Jewish Society of Late Antiquity', *JAAR* 69 no.2 (2001), 343-375. On Lilith in Qumran see J. M. Baumgarten, 'On the Nature of the Seductress in 4Q184', *Revue de Qumran* 15 (1991-92), 133-143; 'The seductress of Qumran'*, Bible Review* 17 no 5 (2001), 21-23; 42.

The opening lines of Gaines' article are characteristic of the popular view of this demoness.

> For 4000 years Lilith has wandered the earth, figuring in the mythic imaginations of writers, artists and poets. Her dark origins lie in Babylonian demonology, where amulets and incantations were used to counter the sinister powers of this winged spirit who preyed on pregnant women and infants. Lilith next migrated to the world of the ancient Hittites, Egyptians, Israelites and Greeks. She makes a solitary appearance in the Bible, as a wilderness demon shunned by the prophet Isaiah. In the Middle Ages she reappears in Jewish sources as the dreadful first wife of Adam. In the Renaissance, Michelangelo portrayed Lilith as a half-woman, half-serpent, coiled around the Tree of Knowledge. Later, her beauty would captivate the English poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti. "Her enchanted hair", he wrote, "was the first gold". Irish novelist James Joyce cast her as the "patron of abortions." Modern feminists celebrate her bold struggle for independence from Adam. Her name appears as the title of a Jewish women's magazine and a national literacy program. An annual music festival that donates its profits to battered women's shelters and breast cancer research institutes is called the Lilith Fair. (p.12)

2.3.1 *Lilith* in the ancient Near East and post-biblical Judaism

Lilith was possibly derived from *Lilītu* and *Ardat Lili* who were the female counterparts of the male demon, *Lil* in Sumerian demonology,[51] and she possibly appears in Sumerian mythology, in the epic poem of *Gilgamesh and the Huluppu-*

P. S. Alexander, ' "Wrestling Against Wickedness in High Places": Magic in the Worldview of the Qumran Community' in *The Scrolls and the Scriptures: Qumran Fifty Years After*, ed. by S. E. Porter and C. A. Evans (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 318-337; P. S. Alexander, 'The Demonology of the Dead Sea Scrolls' in *The Dead Sea Scrolls After Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment*, ed. by P. W. Flint and J. C. Vanderkam (Leiden: Brill, 1999), II, pp. 335-357. For feminist interpretation of Lilith see e.g. J. Plaskow Goldenberg, 'Epilogue: The Coming Of Lilith' in *Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. by R. Radford Ruether (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), pp. 341-343; J. Weinberg, 'All You Ever Wanted to know about Lilith! Lilith Sources', *Lilith, The Independent Jewish Women's Magazine* (premier issue, Fall 1976). Lilith appears in poems by J. Faust, R. Browning, Dante Gabriel Rosetti and more recently by Enid Dame, Pamela Hadas (J. H. Gaines, 'Seductress, Heroine or Murderer', *Bible Review* 5 vol.17 (2001), 12-20; 43-44. See pp. 18-19 and 43-44; for discussion and reference of these). She is also the heroine in the Scottish writer G. Macdonald, *Lilith: a romance*. In 'Changing Literary Representations of Lilith and the Evolution of a Mythical Heroine' Amy Scerba traces the development of Lilith from mythology and early Jewish texts through the Romantic period, focusing on the influence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti in transforming Lilith the demoness into a feminist heroine. [http://feminism.eserver.org/lilith/] [Accessed 2007-04-26].

[51] See for example R. Thompson, pp. xxiii, xxxvi-xxxviii; S. N. Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology: A Study of Spiritual and Literary Achievement in the Third Millenium B. C.* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1944); *History Begins at Sumer* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1958); *Cradle of Civilization* (Amsterdam: Time-Life, 1969).

Tree, though the translation is not certain as the demoness appearing there is called *Líláke*.[52]

For *Lilith's* next appearance the Burney relief is usually quoted, which also dates from about 2000 BCE. On this we have the representation of a beautiful naked woman with wings and feet of a bird, standing on two lions and flanked by two owls.[53] However, there is no inscription identifying her as *Lilith*, thus such identification is far from certain. Th. Jacobsen has convincingly argued that the figure is rather a representation of Inanna.[54]

On a seventh or eighth century BCE limestone plaque, discovered at Arslan Tash, Syria, we have an incantation to expel child-killing demons. Scholars think that the plaque hung in the house of a pregnant woman and served as protection against the attention of these demons. Traditionally this has been regarded as containing a reference to *Lilith*, but this is only with the addition of a missing *t*.[55] The reading of *ll wyn* 'night and day' instead of *lly*[… Lili[th is equally possible.[56]

Thus far none of the traditionally cited references to *Lilith* can be relied upon as certain. Other references come from post-Biblical sources. Thus it has been argued

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[52] The tablet dates from about 2000 BCE. The *huluppu*-tree, planted and nurtured on the banks of the Euphrates, was uprooted by the South Wind. A wandering goddess found it and planted it in Inanna's garden in Uruk. There she (Inanna) looked after it for ten years with love and care intending to use its wood, once matured, for a throne and bed for herself. However, her plans failed as in the meantime three creatures made their home in the tree. A dragon ('the snake who knows no charm') had set up its nest at the base of the tree, the Zu-bird had placed its young in its crown, and in its midst the demoness Líláke (šab-bi-a ki-sikil-lí-lá-ke) had built her house. Gilgamesh hearing of the goddess' distress came to her aid and slayed the dragon. At this the bird flees with its young to the mountain and the terror-stricken demoness tears down her house and escapes to the desert. See S. N. Kramer, *Gilgames and the Huluppu-Tree: A reconstructed Sumerian Text*, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, Assyriological Studies No. 10 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1938).

[53] Patai, p. 208, and E. G. Kraeling, 'A Unique Babylonian Relief', *BASOR* 67 (1937), 16-18, identify the figure with Lilith.

[54] 'Pictures and Pictorial Language (The Burney Relief)' in *Figurative Language in the Ancient Near East* ed. by M. Mindin (London: Routledge Chapman and Hall, 1997), pp. 1-24.

[55] For a discussion of this incantation see W. A. Albright, 'An Aramean Magical Text in Hebrew From the Seventh century B.C.', *BASOR* 76 (1939), 5-11; T. H. Gaster, 'A Canaanite Magical Text', *Or* 11 (1942), 41-79; H. Torczyner, 'A Hebrew Incantation Against Night-Demons from Biblical Times', *JNES* 6 (1947), 18-29; T. H. Gaster, 'The Magical Inscription from Arslan Tash', *JNES* 6 (1947), 186-188. While Gaster maintains that the inscription is against the 'child-stealing vampire' Lamaštu=Lilith, Torczyner argues that the incantation is directed against the demons of darkness in general.

[56] Hutter, p. 521 cf. Butterweck; Scholem, p. 246.

that she appears in Qumran in 1QIsa[a] [57], 4Q510[58] and possibly 4Q184[59]. The latter is not at all certain; on the one hand it relies on the author's view that in the description of the harlot/seductress there is a strong emphasis on her underworld connections, and on the other hand on the identification of the figure on the Burney relief with Lilith which as we have seen is questioned. Other possible interpretations exist.[60]

In 1QIsa[a] at Isa 34:14 we have לִילִיוֹת, a plural form, and in 4Q510 (// 4Q511), which is probably a sectarian text that contains a list of classes of demons, לִילִית, together with אִיִים and צִיִים, though the latter is uncertain.[61] Alexander argues that *lilith* is used generically in both texts as in Qumran demons were not regarded as male or female. Further he shows that although demonology in Qumran is more developed than in the biblical texts, still 'the demonic world of Qumran is nowhere near as elaborate as the demonic world envisaged in many of the later pagan Greek, Christian and Jewish magical texts'.[62] Thus although there is mention of a לִילִית in Qumran, there is no significant information on the nature of *Lilith*.

References to a demoness who has many names and moves about at night, visiting women in childbirth and strangling their newborn babies is found in the apocryphal work, *The Testament of Solomon,* dating from around the 1st-4th centuries CE. However, there the female demon is called *Obyzouth*. She tells King Solomon that her work is limited to 'killing newborn infants, injuring eyes, condemning mouths, destroying minds, and making bodies feel pain.'[63] In the Talmud the *lilith* appears as a female demon with wings[64] and long hair who presents a danger to men sleeping alone at night.[65] Gaines pointed out that these characteristics are more reminiscent of the Babylonian images of *ardat lili* demons (p. 16).

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[57] Alexander, 'Demonology', p. 336.

[58] Alexander, 'Wrestling', p. 321.

[59] Baumgarten, 'Seductress', pp. 135- 143.

[60] See Baumgarten, 'Seductress', n. 19-21 on p. 138 for references.

[61] Alexander, 'Demonology', n. 8 p. 333.

[62] 'Demonology', p. 336. Qumran demonology shows a marked Enochic influence which cannot be said of the biblical books. On this see Alexander, 'Wrestling', p. 322 and 'Demonology', pp. 337-344.

[63] *Testament of Solomon*, 13:1-4 (OTP). M. Gaster, pp. 158-159; Schwartz, p. 343.

[64] Niddah 24b, in J. Neusner, *The Talmud of Babylonia: An American Translation*, XXXVI.A: Niddah chapters 1-3 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), p. 120.

[65] Erubin 100b, in J. Neusner, *The Talmud of Babylonia: An American Translation*, III.D: Erubin chapters 7-10 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), p. 110.

In Aramaic incantation texts found in Nippur, Babylonia, dating from about 600 CE, these characteristics were attributed to the *lilith*.[66] These texts show that she was regarded as 'the ghostly paramour for men' as well as a special danger for women during their most vulnerable periods. During childbirth the mother and the baby both had to be protected from *lilith* (or *liliths*).[67] According to some of these incantation bowls, she also attacked children, even her own. She was accused of 'striking boys and girls' and according to one text she 'destroys and kills and tears and strangles and eats boys and girls'.[68] Similarly to Qumran, on the incantation bowls *lilith* seems to be a generic term rather than referring to one specific demon. They appear as a combination of the Mesopotamian *lilu/lilitu/ardat lili* succubus/incubus type demons and *Lamaštu*, the child killing demoness.[69]

Lilith as the first wife of Adam appears in post-talmudic literature, in the 8th century *Alphabet of Ben Sira*.[70] Here we find the story of how Lilith had become a child-stealing and strangling demon. It is suggested that she is driven to kill babies in retaliation for God's punishment that every day one hundred of her children would be killed. [71] The ancient *lilith/liliths* gradually developed into *Lilith*, the most feared demon of Judaism, and by the time of Jewish mysticism she acquired a whole new mythological background regarding her birth, her relationship with Adam and even with God in the Zohar and other later Kabbalistic writings.[72]

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[66] Lesses, pp. 343-375. *Lilith* appears in both singular and plural forms together with the male *lili* demons (p. 354).

[67] Patai, pp. 211-217; Gaines, p. 16; Lesses, pp. 354-361.

[68] Lesses, p. 356; Patai, pp. 211-217.

[69] Lesses, p. 356. On *Lamaštu* see for example D. W. Myhrman, 'Die Labartu-Texte', *ZA* 16 (1902), 141-200; F. Thureau-Dangin, 'Rituel et amulettes contre Labartu', *RA* 18 (1921), 161-198; D. R. West, *Some Cults of Greek Goddesses and Female Daemons of Oriental Origin* (Neukirchen Vluyn: Verlag Butzon& Bercker Kevelaer, 1995); p. 252-297; J. Black and A. Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* (*GDS*): *An Illustrated Dictionary* (London: British Museum Press, 1992), pp. 115-116; J. Nougayrol, 'La Lamaštu A Ugarit', *Ugaritica* VI (1969), 393-408.

[70] This anonymous medieval work exists in several versions. Some scholars argue that it is a parody on parts of the Talmud and Midrash, a kind of 'academic burlesque' or even entertainment for rabbinic scholars. See N. Bronznik, 'The Alphabet of Ben Sira' in *Rabbinic Fantasies: Imaginative Narratives from Classical Hebrew Literature*, ed. by David Stern and Mark J. Mirsky, Yale Judaica series XXIX (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 167-202.

[71] M. Gaster, pp. 155- 157; Scholem, p. 246. Gaines has a feminist perspective on this, and writes that ultimately all this was brought on *Lilith* because of Adam (pp.16-20).

[72] On *Lilith* in Kabbalistic writings see Gaines, pp.20, 42-43; Patai, pp. 217-229. Various legends associated *Lilith* with King Solomon (identifying her with the Queen of Sheba), and she appears as the consort of Samael. (Scholem, p. 248)

One form of the *Lilith* legend was inscribed on amulets, and these up until the twentieth century were hung in Jewish houses, in the room where a child was born.[73]

The *Lilith*-legend has parallels in Christian literature from Byzantine and later periods. M. Gaster argued that he could trace its history following the same legend through the ages, from its Mesopotamian beginnings to Greek, Byzantine, Syriac, Slavonic, Romanian and Modern Greek literature. [74] *Lamaštu* and *Lilith* of the ancient eastern cultures were identified with the child-stealing witch of the western cultures. [75]

2.3.2 Summary *lilith*

We have seen that earlier scholars (e.g. T. H. Gaster, M. Gaster, Langton, Oesterley and Robinson, Thompson) as well as modern ones (e.g. Brueggemann, Kaiser, Wildberger, Watts, Burrelli, Miscall, Keel and Fabry) believe that לִילִית in Isa 34:14 is the name of the demoness *Lilith*.[76] It is difficult to understand such a conclusion in view of the lack of supporting arguments other than the mention of the similarity of the Hebrew term לִילִית to the Sumerian/ Mesopotamian *lilītu*/*ardat lîli* demons, and the *Lilith* of later Jewish tradition.

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[73] M. Gaster, pp. 149-150; Montgomery, pp. 64-65.

[74] Pp. 129-162; Montgomery, pp.62-65.

[75] Some scholars argue that in fact it was *Lamaštu* who returned in new form in all the stories about the child-killing demoness. See H. D. Betz, 'Jewish Magic in the Greek Magical Papyri' in *Envisioning Magic* ed. by Schafer, Kippenberg (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 45-63; M. Gaster, W. Burkert, 'Lamashtu, Lamia and Gorgo' in *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 82-87. The following is used in support: 1) the description of *Obyzouth* in *The Testament of Solomon* is identical to the Greek *Gorgon* and *Medusa*, 2) *Lamia's* name is derived from *Lamaštu* (Hutter, pp. 520-521; D. R. West, 'Gello and Lamia: Two Hellenic daemons of Semitic origin', *UF* 23 (1992), 361-368), and this is how some ancient versions of the OT translate the Isa 34:14 passage (e.g. Symmachos and Jerome's Vulgate cf. Hutter, p. 521). 3) Betz further argues that *Gello* (or *Gyllu*) who is known as a powerful demon threatening to kill babies and small children is a development of *Lamaštu* in the Middle Ages (p. 61). Other scholars argue to the contrary and believe that despite the many similarities these demons evolved and developed within their own environment. Thus S. I. Johnston, 'Defining the Dreadful: remarks on the Greek Child-Killing Demon' in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. by M. Meyer and P. Mirecki (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 361-387. There could be truth in both arguments; it is likely that *Lamaštu* had some kind of influence in the development of *Lilith* and the Greek child-killing demons which in turn spread to the west. With diplomatic and trade relations there is an exchange of ideas too. Thus it is not surprising that cultures very often adopt supernatural beings of another and then adapt them to their own environment. On the other hand child-killing demons exist in every culture because they personify universal fears, the risk and dangers of pregnancy, childbirth and infancy to both the mother and child.

[76] NJB, NRS also have *Lilith*.

Lilith had started out more as a type of demon than as a specific one. From the available evidence we saw that the traditionally cited early evidence for her occurrence is uncertain, and up until the end of the Talmudic period the sources mention both *lilith* and *liliths*. It was in the Middle Ages when a demoness *Lilith* with an elaborate mythology emerged.

To conclude: to interpret *lilith* in Isa 34:14 scholars refer to the similarity of the term with the name of a demon known from Mesopotamia and later Jewish belief and seem to ignore the fact that such interpretation does not fit the context.

2.4 History of research on *deber*

T. Witton Davies does not list *deber* (neither *qeteb* nor *reshef*) amongst the 'demons' of the Old Testament. Oesterley and Robinson as well as Langton identify *deber* in Ps 91 with Namtar, 'the pestilence that goes about in the dark', as one of four demons mentioned in the passage.[77]

The title of Caquot's article, 'Sur Quelques *Démons* de L'Ancien Testament (Reshep, Qeteb, Deber)'[78] already reveals how he sees these three terms functioning in the Hebrew Bible. His starting point is that the Old Testament contains vestiges of an ancient Canaanite religion and he seems to be aiming to reconstruct such. The main part of his article is centred on *Reshef*, no doubt because far more material has survived referring to this ancient Semitic deity than to any of the other two (i.e. *Deber* or *Qeteb*). It is this deity that Caquot believes to make an appearance in Hab 3:5 along with *deber*, which, according to him, thus must also be a proper name. He writes: 'Quand on sait que Reshep est le nom d'une divinité sémitique, il n'est rien de plus naturel que de le trouver ici, dans un contexte de couleur nettement mythologique.' (p. 57) Caquot accepts the usual translation of 'plague/pestilence' ('peste') for *deber*, and argues that in this passage one is led to see both *reshef* and *deber* as 'personified symbols of Yahweh's awesome power' (p. 57). But while he looks at all the occurrences of *reshef* and *qeteb* in the Hebrew Bible, he does not discuss *deber* in any detail, only in relation to the other two. Caquot's conclusion is cautious but suggestive. While he asserts that lack of evidence does not allow one to

[77] The others are *Lilith*, referred to as the 'night-terror', *Qeteb*, referred to as 'the destruction that wastes at midday', and the unidentified 'arrow that flies in the daytime' (*Hebrew Religion*, p. 118).

[78] Italics are mine.

claim the existence of a deity *dbr* that the ancient Israelites would have reduced to a subservient role to Yahweh, as they did with *Reshef* and *Qeteb*, he suggests that yet 'We can have an inkling that he is a demonic being, agent of Sheol' (p. 68).

T. H. Gaster writes that similarly to *Reshef*, *Deber* is 'a demonic figure of ancient folklore', and refers to Ps 91:5-6 where it appears in the company of a 'coven of demons'. He is the 'Pestilence that stalks in darkness', and the others are the 'Terror by Night', the 'Arrow that flies by day' (taken to be a reference to *Reshef*), and the 'Destruction that ravages at noon'. Gaster takes the term to mean 'reverse, catastrophe' from Akkadian *dab*/*pāru*, 'thrust back'.[79]

While on the one hand Gaster believes that names of 'demons' occur in the Hebrew Bible, and that this points to a mythological background, nevertheless he cautions when talking about 'OT demonology', stressing that this does not necessarily point to a living belief in 'demons'. These names could simply have survived as 'figures of speech'.[80] On the other hand N. J. Tromp argues that 'there is sufficient evidence to go beyond this stage', and he feels that it is 'justified' to conclude that 'in the OT the personification is more than a petrified form of speech' in the light of the available evidence.[81] The mythological description of death is more than poetical device; he believes that it serves to show death to be a 'personal power'.

Tromp argues that *deber* is one of Death's servants or messengers. Death (Mot) had a number of 'associates', demon helpers who usually came in pairs,[82] thus *deber* and *reshef* appear together in Hab 3:5 and Deut 32:23, and *deber* and *qeteb* in Ps 91:6 and Hos 13:14.[83]

Del Olmo also accepts the usual meaning of 'pestilence' for *deber*, which he believes to be a specific 'Hebrew development'.[84] He notes that: 'Deber is one of the three

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[79] *Myths*, p. 771 and n. 28 p. 853.

[80] IDB I, 818B.

[81] *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament*, Biblica et Orientalia 21 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969), pp. 160-166.

[82] Messengers usually come in pairs in the Ugaritic Baal cycle. See for example N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit* (RTU), 2nd rev. edn (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), p.40 n. 10.

[83] Tromp uses Nicolsky in support who claimed that *dbr* and *qtb* are demonic beings in alliance with Sheol and Death. See Tromp, n 16 p. 163 for reference.

[84] 'Deber', pp. 231- 232. In this he follows CAD ('dibiru' in CAD vol. D, pp. 134-135) and B. Meisner, *Beiträge zum Assyrischen Wörterbuch* vol 1 part I (Chicago: The University of Chicago

proverbial causes of death on a wide scale', perhaps referring to its frequent occurrence with 'war' and 'famine' in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. He also asserts that it occurs in 'a personified sense as a demon or evil deity' in three passages, Hab 3:5; Ps 91:3; cf. Hos 13:14.[85] Similarly, J. Day argues that *deber* occurs personified as Plague in Hab 3:5 because of its parallel position with *Reshef*. He further believes that based on the Eblaite evidence it is possible that a god lies behind this figure.[86] Of the other occurrences of *deber* he discusses Ps 78 and 91, but his focus is on *Reshef*. He takes *deber* as a common noun in the usual sense of 'pestilence' and not as personified.[87]

It seems that, as Caquot and Gaster, del Olmo and Day also come to the conclusion that *deber* is a 'demon'/evil deity because of its occurrence with *reshef*,[88] while for Tromp the association with Death is decisive. In addition Caquot, del Olmo and Day also believe that possibly an Eblaite deity *Dabir* is the mythological figure behind the *deber* of the Hebrew Bible.

2.4.1 *Deber* in the ancient Near East

It is generally agreed that there is a mythological figure behind the *deber* of the Hebrew Bible. As mentioned above, this is generally considered to be *Dabir* from Ebla. However, there are also suggestions that point to Ugarit for a possible link.[89] We shall now consider these.

2.4.1.1 Ebla

The Eblaite tablet TM. 75.G.1464 v. XI 12-18 mentions a deity *Dabir*:

Press, 1931), p. 34; W. von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, band I (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1965), p. 168.

[85] 'Deber', p. 232.

[86] *Yahweh and the gods and goddesses of Canaan*, JSOT Supp 265 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), pp. 200-201 (p. 199).

[87] As above, pp. 199-208, n. 12.

[88] This is also explicitly stated by C. A. Keller, in his commentary on Hab 3:5 in *Nahoum, Habacuc, Sophonie* (Paris: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1971). He writes: 'רשף Fiévre est dans lest textes cananéens un démon ou un dieu de l'enfer,..., et bien que דבר Peste ne soit pas directement attesté comme tel, son association avec רשף suggère que lui aussi est conçu comme un démon...' (p. 171)

[89] Del Olmo, 'Deber', p. 232.

^{d}da-bi-ir dingir ib-la^{ki}	Dabir, god of Ebla

G. Pettinato argues that the title suggests that *Dabir* was a patron god of the city of Ebla.[90] However, F. Pomponio and P. Xella question this hypothesis.[91] They rightly point out that the evidence is not enough to support such an interpretation. Further, they argue that, although an element *da-bir$_5$* appears in onomastics, it is always without the divine determinative. This in fact could be an epithet, not a theonyme. However, the fact that, out of six personal names formed with this element three belonged to non-Eblaites, weakens a hypothesis of *Dabir* being a great protector deity of Ebla (p. 124). This leads Pomponio and Xella to conclude that the only possibility left is to consider *Dabir* 'comme la désignation d'un autre dieu'. Unfortunately, at this point they too engage in speculation; appealing on etymological grounds to the *dbr* in the Hebrew Bible and its association with *Reshef* and *Qeteb*, 'tous des anciens dieux cananéens réduit à l'état d'agents aux orders de YHWH.'(p. 124) On this basis they suggest an identification of *Dabir* with *Rasap* (i.e. *Reshef*), a well-known Eblaite deity.[92]

From the above it is clear that a deity *Dabir* was known in Ebla, his name formed an element in proper names. However, the evidence available at present is too scant to allow any further conclusions regarding the deity's character, nature or association with other divinities.

2.4.1.2 Ugarit

In the Ugaritic texts *dbr* appears in KTU 1.5 vi: 6-7 as *ars dbr*, and in 1.5 v: 17-21 as *bdbr*, in both texts in parallel with *šd šhlmmt*.

KTU 1.5 v: 17-21[93]

k mtt . yšm'. aliyn. b'l.	Aliyan Baal obeyed,
yuhb. 'glt. b dbr. prt	he loved a heifer in *dbr*
b šd. šhlmmt. škb	A (young)cow in the field of *šhlmmt*
'mnh. šb'. l šb'm.	He lay with her seventy-seven times,

[90] *The Archives of Ebla: An Empire Inscribed in Clay* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981), pp. 247, 296.

[91] *Les dieux d'Ebla: Étude analytique des divinités éblaites à l'époque des archives royales du IIIe millénaire* (Münster: Ugarit -Verlag, 1997), pp. 123-124.

[92] On *Reshef* see below 2.6.

[93] Text taken from KTU, p. 24, translation is mine.

tš'ly. ṯmn. l ṯmnym.	(….) eighty-eight times.

Various translations have been offered for *dbr*, as is evident from the summary given by van Zijl.[94] More recently de Moor translated it as 'steppe',[95] and Wyatt as 'pastureland'.[96] Both van Zijl[97] and Sivan[98] believe it to be a place name and prefer to leave it untranslated.

KTU 1.5 vi: 6-7[99]

l n'my arṣ dbr	we arrived to the pleasantness of the land of *dbr*
l ysmt šd šhlmmt	to the beauty of the field of *šhlmmt*

The same translation is given for *dbr* here as above. [100]

It is clear that the meaning of the Ugaritic word is questionable. Its occurrence in parallel with *šd šhlmmt* does not throw much light on it as the meaning of this term in turn is also problematic. *Šd* means 'field', [101] *šhlmmt* is taken by de Moor, Wyatt and Dahood as *šhl mmt*, *šhl* being related on the one hand to either the Arabic *sāhil*, 'shore, coast', or to Syriac *šāh^{e}lā*, 'stream', and *mmt* taken as meaning 'the place of death'. The expression thus translates 'the coastal plain of the realm of death', or 'the steppe by the shore of death' or 'the stream of the realm of death'.[102] On the other hand, Dahood identifies *šhl* with Hebrew שַׁחַל, 'lion', and *mmt* with מָוֶת, thus the

[94] P. J. van Zijl, *Baal: a Study of Texts in Connexion with Baal in the Ugaritic Epics* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Verlag Butzon & Bercker Kevelaer, 1972), pp. 172-173. He groups the translations into four. Some scholars, e.g. Driver, translate 'disease' on the basis of taking the Hebrew *deber* to mean 'pestilence'; others, e.g. Gray, translate 'in the Back of Beyond'. The third group, e.g. Aisleitner, take the word to be cognate with Hebrew *dōber* and give 'pasture', while the fourth group, including Zijl, take *dbr* to be a place name, thus 'Land of Grazing' or 'the land *Dbr'*.

[95] J. C. de Moor, *The Seasonal Pattern in the Ugaritic Myth of Ba'lu: According to the Version of Ilimilku* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Verlag Butzon & Bercker Kevelaer, 1971), pp. 183-186; *An Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit* (ARTU) (Leiden: Brill, 1987), p.78 and n. 377 on that page.

[96] Wyatt, RTU, p. 124 and n. 47.

[97] See n. 94 above.

[98] D. Sivan, *A Grammar of the Ugaritic Language* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 257-258.

[99] As n. 93 above.

[100] E.g. Zijl, pp. 175—177; de Moor, ARTU, p. 79; Wyatt, RTU, p. 126.

[101] DUL, II, pp. 807-809.

[102] See discussion in de Moor, *Seasonal Pattern*, pp. 186-187; Wyatt, RTU, p. 124 n. 48.

expression for him translates as 'field of the lion who slays'.[103] This is deemed unlikely by del Olmo.[104]

The context of the poem is that of the death of Baal, i.e. his journey down into the Nether World. Thus both suggestions, i.e. that *dbr* is a place name and that it is related to the realm of death, are equally possible. Personification, however, is questionable.[105]

2.4.2 Summary *deber*

From the above discussion we can see that it is generally held by scholars that *deber* appears in a personified sense as the name of a 'demon' or evil deity in three places in the Hebrew Bible: Ps 91:5-6, Hos 13:14 and Hab 3:5. The accepted meaning of the term is 'plague' or 'pestilence', and since in Mesopotamian belief diseases were attributed to or personified as demons, early 20th century scholars (Oesterley and Robinson, Langton) identified *deber* in the Hebrew Bible with the Mesopotamian *Namtar*.[106] Modern scholars 'demonised' *deber* because of its association with *reshef*, based on the view that ancient Near Eastern deities appearing in the Hebrew Bible were regarded as 'demons' by the Yahwists. Since a deity *Reshef* was well known in the ancient Near East, a divine figure was also sought for *deber*, and it was found in the Eblaite god *Dabir*.

To conclude: to interpret *deber* scholars look to ancient Near Eastern parallels and/or its occurrence together with *reshef* in two of the usually cited three passages and ignore the examination of the term in the remaining 45 verses (see n. 1 on p. 104).

2.5 History of research on *qeteb*

According to Oesterley and Robinson *Qeteb* is the name of an 'anthropomorphic demon'.[107] Even if the term was not a proper name at the time of the writing of Ps

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[103] M. Dahood, *Ras Shamra Parallels: The Texts from Ugarit and the Hebrew Bible*, An Or 51 (Roma: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1981), pp. 54-55.

[104] 'Deber', p. 232.

[105] Del Olmo, 'Deber', p. 232.

[106] *Namtar* was an underworld deity, bringer of death, sometimes associated with plague. See CAD XI, 248 b.; Riley, p. 237; S. A. Meier, 'Destroyer', DDD, pp. 240-244 (240-241); T. J. Lewis, 'First-Born of Death', DDD, pp.332-335 (333-334).

[107] Along with others such as *Lilith*, *Aluqah* and *Namtar* (pp. 117, 120).

91, it became so later, and it certainly refers to a 'demon' in the psalm according to the writers. The supporting evidence for Oesterly and Robinson comes from the fact that *qeteb* occurs in Deut 32:24 'where the context clearly refers to the activity of demons', that in Hos 13:14 it occurs with *sheol*, that it is apparently parallel with Mesopotamian Nergal, the LXX's reference to a 'midday demon' in Ps 91, and that in rabbinic literature *Qeteb* is the name of a demon (p. 120).

Later Jewish belief and the occurrence together with *deber* are the reasons for Langton to include *qeteb* amongst the 'demons' (pp.49-50).

Caquot looks at all four occurrences of *qeteb* briefly, starting with Deut 32:24, where he argues that *qeteb's* association with *reshef* is significant. *Qeteb meriri* is 'un autre personnage ou personification associé à Reshep'. Caquot finds the 'hesitation' of the ancient versions to translate this term rather 'revelatory' and perhaps due to misinterpretation.[108] Modern translators' rendering of *qeteb* as 'bitter plague' is due to its parallel occurrence with *deber*, e.g. in Hos 13:14. Caquot's treatment of this text is rather short, he simply states that the text 'gains colour' if one recognizes in *deber* and *qeteb* the evil powers, auxiliaries of Sheol and Death (p. 66). He does not elaborate on why he regards them as 'evil powers'. In Ps 91:6 he notes that here *qeteb* appears again in parallel with *deber*. Accepting the usual translation for *deber* as 'pestilence', Caquot argues that a similar meaning could be sought for *qeteb*. However, for him it is Isa 28:2 that sheds the real light on this term. Looking at this passage he asserts that *qeteb* is presented here as a force present and residing in the hurricane. He appears to be following the Targum's interpretation in this.[109] In the light of this passage then Caquot argues that in Ps 91:6 *qeteb* would be the hot wind which is particularly troublesome in the middle of the day.[110] Caquot concludes that *qeteb* is the personification of the evil, parching and suffocating wind which makes

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[108] For example Targ. Onqelos has the general 'evil spirits'; Rashi takes *meriri* as a demon. LXX finds for *qeteb* a term that belongs to 'the most technical medical language', οπισθοτονος, 'the illness that bends backwards', which may be a description of a symptom associated with epilepsy ('Quelques', p.65). For Targ. Onqelos see B. Grossfeld (ed.), *The Targum Onqelos to Deuteronomy*, Aramaic Bible 9 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), pp. 96-97.

[109] Caquot, 'Quelques', p. 67, argues that LXX does not see the term functioning in this way but here the Targum's translation seems the correct one ('as a tempest of hail in a hurricane').

[110] He notes (p. 67) that this interpretation has been suggested by others too (see n. 2 p. 67), and it is supported by the Syriac version ('the wind that blows at midday').

the heat insufferable. It is not surprising that 'this disagreeable reality' was personified as a 'demon'.[111]

Caquot takes this argument further and based on his association with *reshef*, he considers the possibility that behind the 'demon' *qeteb* there is also a deity. 'On peut ainsi discerner sous le démon Qeteb les traits d'un dieu oublié de l'ouragan, c'est-à-dire, encore une fois, d'un "Wetter-gott", et, par là meme, d'un grand dieu.'[112]

Another proponent of the 'demonological' interpretation of *qeteb*, T. Gaster, argues that of the seven 'evils' listed in Deut 32:24 'several of them, such as the "faery arrows", the monstrous Resheph, and the "poisonous plague" can be definitely identified as demons'.[113] Further he thinks that the poet possibly uses the idea of the 'Seven Evil Spirits' from Mesopotamian and later Semitic magical texts. In Ps 91:6 Gaster argues that the '*qeteb* who destroys midday' is 'sunstroke, the demon of the torrid noonday heat in which only "mad dogs and Englishmen" venture abroad.' In his support he cites references by Theocritus, Pliny the Elder, Medieval Greek, Italian, German as well as Eastern European folk belief, and legends.[114] Similarly to Caquot, Gaster does not explain why he regards *qeteb* or *reshef* as 'demons'. His supporting evidence comes from a later time-frame.

Tromp, who has already been referred to, argues that *qeteb*, along with *deber*, is one of Death's 'demon' associates.[115]

Wyatt asserts that 'the term has overtones of a divine name.'[116] Looking at Deut 32 which presents 'the most useful information', Wyatt argues that the passage contains 'a triad of demonic figures, all associated with death'. Behind these 'demons' Wyatt sees three divinities, Mot, taking Hunger to be an epithet of this god, *Reshef*, the well-known Semitic deity, and on the basis of its association with these two, '*Qeteb* appears to be a divine name' too. Thus for Wyatt 'there is no compelling reason not to accept the clearly mythological sense of this passage […]'. Further he argues that

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[111] 'Quelques', p. 67.

[112] Pp. 67-68. See more on this below, 2.5.1.1.

[113] *Myth,* p. 321.

[114] *Myth,* p. 770.

[115] See above, pp. 33-34.

[116] 'Qeteb', in DDD, p. 673.

it is quite plausible, since both *Mot* and *Reshef* were at one point identified with *Nergal*, to suggest such identification for *Qeteb* too.[117]

In Ps 91:6 Wyatt equates *deber* with the Terror, the Arrow (of *Reshef*) with *qeteb*, which then is 'the destruction the god wreaks'. Alternatively, he suggests Terror = Destruction and Arrow = *Deber*.[118] In Hos 13:14 he takes both *deber* and *qeteb* as 'the agents of Death's purposes'. Finally, in Isa 28:2, similarly to Deut 32, Wyatt argues that a number of words should be interpreted mythologically, e.g. *Bārād*, *Mayim*. *Qeteb* seems to be operating through the tempest, and its intended ambiguity is suggested by *śa'ar*, which according to Wyatt points to *śā'îr* (satyr). In the 'tempest metaphor' he sees the combined figures of the 'overwhelming flood-waters' and the 'dart-like effects of hail and heavy rain', this latter reminiscent of 'the arrows of the plague-god'. Ultimately both are seen by Wyatt as 'metaphors for Death and its powers'.[119] He concludes that the four biblical passages 'are allusive rather than strictly informative, but suggest that *Qeteb* is more than a literary figure, living as a spiritual, and highly dangerous, reality in the minds of poets and readers'.

Wyatt's assessment of *qeteb* relies on ancient Near Eastern parallels; his bibliography consists of works from authors who are proponents of the 'demonological' interpretation.

2.5.1 *Qeteb* in the ancient Near East and post-biblical Judaism

One of the reasons for taking *qeteb* as a 'demon' is the argument that the term is a remnant of Mesopotamian or Canaanite religion, the other is that it became the name of a demon in Jewish tradition. We shall now consider these points.

2.5.1.1 Assyria

Ancient Near Eastern evidence regarding *qeteb* is very scant. Caquot refers to a fragment of a treaty between Esarhaddon and Baal, the king of Tyre in around 680 BCE. As was common in the ancient Near East, the treaty ends with a list of deities that are appealed to as witnesses; they are charged with the cursing of the

[117] 'Qeteb', p. 673.

[118] 'Qeteb', p. 674.

[119] 'Qeteb', p. 674.

transgressors of the treaty. The list primarily contains the Assyrian gods, and it contains the phrase:

ba-a- ti ilâni (MEŠ) (d) *qa-ti-ba [….](MEŠ) ina qâta (II)*

nêši a-ki-li [….] ku-nu , which Caquot translates as 'That the gods Bethel and *Qatiba* [make you fall] into the paws of a devouring lion.'

This line follows the invocation of the great gods of sky and earth, the gods of Assyria , Akkad and the Western Semitic Near East ('Transeuphrates'), invoked globally, and after that a series of Tyrian gods. Caquot is only guessing with regard to the nationality of the gods *Bethel* and *Qatiba*. He thinks that they probably belong to the gods of Esarhaddon because they come before the collective call of 'the gods of Assyria and Akkad'. He argues that *Bethel* is a western deity, and *Qatiba* is not a Mesopotamian god. They follow the Seven, who often finish the listing of Assyrian deities. The most probable thing is to regard them as Western Semitic deities. The only certain thing is that they are not gods of Tyre.[120]

Wyatt refers to R. Dussaud who also mentions this deity but only in relation to *Bethel* as 'entité incertaine'. He argues that the reference is possibly a misreading of the line anyway.[121] De Moor states, though he does not support his statement, that such a deity does not exist.[122]

2.5.1.2 Ugarit

There is possibly a single reference in the Ugaritic texts in KTU 1.5 ii 24 to a *qżb*, which according to De Moor is a demon that he translates as 'Sting'.[123] In the *Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language* the word *qżb* is listed as a divine name or possibly the name of a demon, the assumption being based on the definition of Hebrew קטב in HALOT (which in itself is uncertain), and the articles by De Moor[124]

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[120] Caquot, 'Quelques', p. 68.

[121] DINGIR-*a Qa-ti-ba* x^0 *– [xxx]* instead of ^{d}*A-na-ti Ba-a*^{0}*[-a-ti* DINGI]R. MEŠ. See Wyatt, 'Qeteb', p. 673.

[122] 'A goddess *Qatiba*, mentioned by A. Caquot, *Semitica* 6 (1956) 67f. and H. Vorlander, *Mein Gott* (AOAT, 23; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1975) 263, does not exist.' See: 'O Death Where Is Thy Sting?', in *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical and other studies in memory of P. C. Craigie*, ed. by L. Eslinger and G. Taylor, JSOT Supp. 67 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), pp. 99-107, esp. p. 105, n. 15.

[123] De Moor, ARTU, p. 73 n. 343.

[124] Note 122 and 123 above.

and Wyatt[125]. De Moor defines *qżb* as a demon because it is 'an evil demon according to Deut 32:24, Ps 91:6 and especially Hos 13:14.' [126] Wyatt points out that the end of the text of KTU 1.5 ii is broken; he does not translate from l. 23 onward.[127] One broken reference cannot be used as evidence to argue for the existence of a demon *qżb* in Ugarit which would then be used in support of the 'demon' resurfacing in the Hebrew Bible. The argument is a circular one. Ugaritic scholars (like De Moor) argue for *qżb* being a demon based on the presupposition that *qeteb* is a 'demon' in the Hebrew Bible; biblical scholars in turn use the 'Ugaritic evidence' to support their claim that *qeteb* in the Hebrew Bible is a 'demon'.[128]

From the discussion above it is clear that at present there is no ancient Near Eastern evidence that points to the existence of a deity or demon *qtb*/ *qżb*.

2.5.1.3 Post-biblical Judaism

Proponents of the 'demonological' interpretation for *qeteb* often refer to Jewish tradition. Thus seemingly the Targums paraphrased Deut 32:24, so Targum Onqelos translated *qeteb* as 'evil spirits',[129]and the Palestinian Targums likewise.[130]

A description of *qeteb meriri* can be found in the Babylonian Talmud which knows of two *qetebs*, one before noon and one of the afternoon.[131] *Qeteb meriri* 'looks like a ladle turning in the jug of *kamka'*, and along with the other *qeteb* (*yashud zaharaim*, 'destruction that wasteth at noonday', a ref. to Ps 91:6) they operate 'from the first of Tammuz until the sixteenth'.[132] A rather different description of this demon can be

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[125] 'Qeteb', pp. 673-674.

[126] See n. 123 above.

[127] RTU, pp. 119-120.

[128] The argument goes something like this: '*qeteb* is a demon in the HB because there is a demon, *qżb* in Ugarit, which we know is a demon because *qeteb* is a demon in the HB'.

[129] See above n. 107, p. 38. Also *qeteb* in M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2005), p. 1346.

[130] A. Diez Macho, *Neophyti I. Targum Palestinense MS de la Biblioteca Vaticana* (Madrid: CSIC, 1978), V, pp. 275 and 563.

[131] bPesahim 111b, in I. Epstein, ed. *The Babylonian Talmud: Seder Mo 'ed* (London: Soncino Press, 1938), pp. 573-574.

[132] As in n. 131.

found in the Midrash on Psalms.[133] According to this it is 'covered with scale upon scale and with shaggy hair, and he glares with his one eye, and that eye is in the middle of his heart.' Not only the description but the time of its operation is also different in this account. It is powerful 'from the seventeenth day in Tammuz to the ninth day in Ab'.[134] De Moor argues that the one similarity of the two descriptions which connects the demon to hot weather is significant.[135]

De Moor also refers to a Hebrew-Aramaic amulet which contains a *qtb nrqy*.[136] He suggests translating it 'the *qtb* that has been charmed'.[137] Naveh and Shaked, however, leave the line (26) untranslated, and are careful to point out that the whole text of the amulet is obscure; their translation is given with 'great reservation'.[138] However, the amulet dates to late antiquity so even if *qtb nrqy* is a demon then this probably goes back to a Talmudic reference but cannot be taken to reflect on the Old Testament.

2.5.2 Summary *qeteb*

From the above we can see that the general scholarly view is that *qeteb* is the name of a demon in all of its four occurrences in the Hebrew Bible. The term's association with *reshef* (Deut 32:24) and *deber* (Ps 91:5-6, Hos 13:14), also with *mot* and *sheol* (Hos 13:14), and later Jewish tradition which knew of a demon *qeteb* are most commonly cited in support of this view (Oesterly and Robinson, Langton, Caquot, Gaster, Tromp and De Moor). Ancient Near Eastern parallels (Caquot, Gaster, Wyatt, De Moor) and the interpretation of the term by the ancient versions (Oesterley and Robinson, Caquot) are also referred to. Because of its association with *deber*, a

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[133] *The Midrash on Psalms*, trans. by W. G. Braude, 2 vols (New Haven: Yale, 1959), II, pp.102 -107.

[134] This corresponds with the time of activity of demons according to Jewish legend. When going to Mt Sinai, Moses had to pray regularly for protection against demons. With the erection of the Tabernacle, however, they vanished, but not entirely. They could still exercise their power 'within the period from the seventeenth day of Tammuz to the ninth day of Ab'. It is also said that the most dangerous demon was 'Keteb, the sight of whom kills men as well as animals.' This demon 'rolls like a ball'; a similar feature found in the Midrash on Psalms, and it is described as having 'the head of a calf with a single horn on his forehead'. See L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, transl. by P. Radin, 7 vols (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1911), III, p. 186.

[135] 'O Death', p. 102.

[136] Found in J. Naveh and S. Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1985), pp. 55-61.

[137] 'O Death', p. 101.

[138] *Amulets*, p. 58.

similar meaning is sought for *qeteb* too; thus most scholars translate it as plague/pestilence', 'sting', or 'scourge'.[139]

To conclude: scholars usually interpret *qeteb* in the light of its occurrence with *reshef*, *deber*, *mot* and *sheol*, turning to ancient Near Eastern parallels and later Jewish tradition.

2.6 History of research on *reshef*

Reshef was a popular West Semitic deity, attested from the 3rd millennium BCE to the end of the 1st century BCE. His name occurs in Ugaritic, Phoenician, Aramaic,[140] Hebrew,[141] Akkadian, Eblaite[142] and Egyptian.[143] He was worshipped in Syria, Palestine and Egypt. There are various suggestions as to the etymology of the name but there is nothing conclusive. [144] Xella rightly notes that 'all the proposed etymologies are based on what we actually know about the character of this god; therefore, there is a serious risk of circular argument' (p. 701).

We shall consider the deity in its Semitic context before looking at its interpretation in the Hebrew Bible.

2.6.1 Ebla

From the evidence available to us he seems to have been a popular deity; a large part of the city was dedicated to him with a gate named after him. [145] He appears to be a

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[139] The basic meaning of the term is 'pruning' from which other meanings such as 'epidemic', 'disaster' and 'sting' have been derived (HALOT, p. 1092). 'Destruction' is the most commonly given meaning by modern Bible translations. Thus for example CJB in Hos 13:14 and Isa 28:2; JPS in all occurrences; NAU in Ps 91:6; Deut 32:24 and Isa 28:2; NIV in Hos 13:14 and Isa 28:2; NJB in Isa 28:2; RSV in Hos 13:14, Deut 32:24 and Isa 28:2. This is the basic meaning given by BDB, p. 881, too.

[140] As *ršp*.

[141] רשף occurs 7x in the Hebrew Bible, in 1 Chron 7:25; Deut 32:24; Ps 78:48; Hab 3:5; Ps 76: 4; Job 5:7; and Cant 8:6 (see ch. 7). It also occurs in Sir 43:17, and in 11 Q11 V: 4-13.

[142] As *ra-sa-ap*.

[143] As *r-š-p(w)* cf. Xella, 'Resheph', DDD, pp. 700-703 (p.701). W. K. Simpson following Grdseloff, vocalizes it *eršōp*. See 'New Light on the God Reshef, Brief Communications', *JAOS* 73, no. 2 (1953), 86-89, esp. p. 86 n.1, and 'Reshep in Egypt', *Orientalia* 29 (1960), 63-74, esp. p. 70/2.

[144] See summary in Xella, p. 701. HALOT compares the personal name to Sam רשף, 'to inflame' (p. 1297).

[145] L. K. Handy, 'Resheph', in ABD, V, p. 678.

god of the royal necropolis, and also appears as ^{d}*rašap gunum*, '*Reshef* of the garden'. [146] His priests had been attested here and he appeared as a theophoric element in names from Ur III, Mari, Terqa, Hana.[147] It is possible that he was a chtonic god, and we know that he had a consort called Adamma.[148]

Niehr argues that the available documents show clearly that in 3rd millennium BCE Ebla *Reshef* was an underworld and a protector deity, and even though he agrees with Xella in that perhaps 'he was more feared than venerated', he emphasises that the evidence shows that he did not have a clearly negative connotation.[149]

2.6.2 Egypt

The most detailed work collecting the Egyptian evidence on *Reshef* to date is W. J. Fulco's book.[150] His epithets indicate that he was quite popular; however, they only present limited data about his character. He was called: 'great god'; 'lord of the sky'; 'chief of the ennead of gods'; 'he who hearkens to prayer'. [151] It seems that he became popular from the New Kingdom period, probably under the influence of Asiatic immigrants.[152]

His iconography represents an aggressive, warrior god;[153] this is why he was associated with *Seth* in Egypt,[154] and it was in this aspect that Amenhotep II

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[146] Niehr, p. 85.

[147] Xella, p. 701; Niehr, p. 85 also n. 7.

[148] Xella, p. 701; Niehr, p. 85.

[149] He received offerings, his name appears as a theophoric element, a gate was named after him (Niehr, pp. 85-86).

[150] *The Canaanite God Rešep*, American Oriental Series (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1976). See especially ch. I: 'Egyptian Evidence', pp. 1-32. He lists all the relevant literature in the footnotes. See also Caquot, 'Quelques', pp. 54-55; D. Conrad, 'Der Gott Reschef', *ZAW* 83 (1971), 157-183, (pp. 166-168); Niehr, pp. 89-91. For the iconography see I. Cornelius, *The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods Reshef and Ba'al. Late Bronze and Iron Age I Perods (1500-1000 BCE)*, OBO 140 (Freibourg: University Press, 1994); 'The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods Reshef and Baal: A Rejoinder', *JNWSL* 24 (1998), 167-177.

[151] Simpson, 'New light', p. 86 n.2; Fulco, p. 27.

[152] B. Grdseloff showed that his cult was first attested during the 18th dynasty (Simpson, 'New light', p. 86 cf. B. Grdseloff, *Les débuts du culte du Reshef en Égypte*, Cairo, 1942) and this is what most scholars (e.g. Simpson, 'Reshep in Egypt', pp. 65-66; Fulco, p. 30-32; Handy, p.678; Xella, pp. 700-701) follow. Before that time his presence is only attested in one foreign personal name. (Simpson, 'New light', pp. 86-7; 'Reshep in Egypt', p. 66 and n.3; Fulco, p. 30)

[153] According to Xella, *Reshef's* iconography confirms his double (benevolent and dangerous) character. It is not clear what this is based on as he does not support his statement with any evidence.

officially adopted the god as his protector in military campaigns. There is textual and literary evidence that during the Ramesside period (19th and 20th dyn.) he was venerated among the high ranks of society and the common people alike.[155] Nevertheless, despite his popularity with the Ramessides *Reshef* was not assimilated into the Egyptian pantheon, he remained a foreign god, 'a resident alien'.[156]

2.6.3 Ugarit

Reshef appears as a theophoric element in a large number of names at Ugarit[157] yet very little about him can be gleaned from the mythological and epic texts. He appears twice in the *Keret* narrative:[158] in KTU 1.14 i 18-19 as the cause of the death of the king's fifth son, and in KTU 1.15 ii 6 as a guest at the banquet held by *Keret* for the gods. There is not much information we can gather from this narrative, only that *Reshef* was in some way associated with death, and that in spite of causing the death of the king's children, he was important enough to be invited to the banquet along with the assembly of the gods. We also learn that he had the title *zbl*, 'prince'.

However, considering the cultic and ritual texts we get a fuller picture as *Reshef* seems to have played a more important role in these. [159] He was mentioned in all

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[154] Conrad, pp. 166-167; Niehr, p. 90.

[155] There is no evidence that during Amenhotep II's reign *Reshef's* cult would have reached the common people. After his reign occurrences of *Reshef* became scarcer until the Ramesside period when he became more popular and his cult spread. It must be noted however, that his worshippers were mostly Syrians living/working in Egypt. (Simpson, 'Reshep in Egypt', p. 66/2; 71; Xella, p. 701; Fulco, pp. 31-32; Niehr, p. 90).

[156] Handy, p. 678; Fulco, p.66; Simpson, 'Reshep in Egypt', p. 73. There is evidence that *Reshef* was attested in the Ptolemaic and later times (Simpson, 'Reshep in Egypt', p. 69/8; Fulco, p. 32).

[157] Fulco, pp. 34-36 and notes for references.

[158] Cf. S. B. Parker, *The Pre-Biblical Narrative Tradition, Ess*ays *on the Ugaritic Poems Keret and Aqhat*, SBL 24 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), pp. 145-216; *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, SBL Writings form the Ancient World 9 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), pp. 9- 48; Wyatt, RTU, pp. 176-243; G. del Olmo Lete, *Mytos* y *legendas de Canaan*, Fuentes de la Ciencia Binlica 1, (Madrid: Cristiandad, 1981); J.C. de Moor and K. Spronk, 'Problematic Passages in the Legend of Kirtu (I)', *UF* 14 (1982), 153-171; and 'Problematic Passages in the Legend of Kirtu (II)', *UF* 14 (1982), 173-190; D. Pardee, 'Incantations and Rituals', in *The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, gen. ed. W. H. Hallo, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1997), I, pp. 333-343. For more references see e.g. Wyatt, RTU, 'Select bibliography', p. 176; del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion According to the Liturgical Texts of Ugarit*, trans. by W. G. E. Watson (Bethesda: CDL Press, 1999), p. 325 n. 1.

[159] Del Olmo's statistics show that *ršp* is the 4th of 17 deities whom he calls 'the principal gods of the cultic-sacrificial pantheon of Ugarit, those receiving the most offerings' (*Canaanite Religion*, p. 71). Pardee notes that *Reshef* is part of the list of 31 divinities who are beneficiaries of offerings and figure in mythological texts as well as one of 28 who receive offerings and figure as theopohoric elements in anthroponymes (*Les Textes Rituels*, Ras Shamra-Ougarit 12, 2 vols (Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les

three categories of ritual texts,[160] thus he appears as a patron god of the dynasty (KTU 1.105; 1.106); in texts belonging to the category of prayer and magic (KTU 1.78; 1.123; 1.100); and in sacrificial ritual texts (KTU 1.41; 1.87; 1.39). *Reshef* appears in 17 ritual texts,[161] as *ršpm*[162] in another one, and as a composite[163] in a further 5 texts. He appears in the 'canonical' deity lists in Ugarit.[164]

A detailed analysis of the cultic-ritual texts leads to the following conclusion: *Reshef* was a chthonic deity associated with plague and disease. He seems to have played an important role in the royal and funerary cult. Perhaps his status as a dynastic god was due to his association with war, and as such he was a patron god of the kings. He received the *šrp* and *šlmm* sacrifices, but whether this was linked to his 'infernal character' or not is questionable.[165]

In some texts *Reshef* appears with *Anat*; some scholars think this more significant than others. Thus while Fulco writes that *Reshef* is 'frequently listed together stereotypically with *Anat* in various texts that involve groupings of gods',[166] Pardee points out that in fact there are only a handful of instances where they occur together, and even then this is because they both represent the so-called 'third rank' of the Ugaritic pantheon, i.e. the gods who do not belong to El's immediate family circle.[167]

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civilisations, 2000), p. 910). See also J. C. de Moor, 'The Semitic Pantheon of Ugarit', *UF* 2 (1970), 187-228, esp. p. 217.

[160] See del Olmo's division of ritual texts in three categories. According to this we can speak of 1) a pantheon of the palace or patron gods of the dynasty (pp. 58-62); 2) a pantheon of prayer and magic (pp. 36-66); and 3) a pantheon of the sacrificial rituals (pp. 6-71). *Reshef* is mentioned in texts belonging to all of these categories.

[161] KTU 1.39; 1.41; 1.47; 1.78; 1.79; 1.81; 1.87; 1.90; 1.102; 1.103 (+ 1.145); 1.109; 1.118; 1.123; 1.126; 1.148 and 1.168. See Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, p. 988, Appendice 1B.

[162] KTU 1.91.

[163] *ršp 'idrp* in KTU 1.148; *ršp bbt* in KTU 1.105 and 1.171; *ršp gn* in KTU 6.62 and 1.165; *ršp hgb* in KTU 1.90; 1.106; 1.134 and 1.168; *ršp mhbn* in KTU 1.105 and 1.106; *ršp mlk* in KTU 1.105 and *ršp sb'i* in KTU 1.91.

[164] Of this we have two separate copies, KTU 1.118 and 1.47. It is of great importance that an Akkadian copy (RS 20.24) of it also exists because this allows us to relate the Ugaritic names/epithets to their Mesopotamian equivalent. See del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, pp. 71-72; Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, SBL Writings from the Ancient World 10 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2002), pp. 12-13. Del Olmo points out that the value of the Akkadian copy lies in the fact that 'It allows us to determine the "personality", "function", and "attributes" of the Ugaritic gods from their Mesopotamian equivalents, which are better known to us.' (*Canaanite Religion*, p. 72).

[165] See discussion in Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 41-50.

[166] Fulco, p.40.

[167] Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 52-53.

Their common trait is perhaps their association with war.

In the ritual texts *Reshef* appears in various manifestations, these forms might be his epithets and some might refer to his cult centres. He also appears in plural form, as *ršpm*, and this perhaps reflects his multiple manifestations.

One of the most valuable sources of information is RS 20.024, the Akkadian translation of the deity list which identifies *Reshef* with *Nergal*.[168] This is where we can gather the most information regarding the god's character, and which confirms his association with the underworld, epidemics and war. All these characteristics can give him both a positive and a negative aspect: he can be both the cause of illness and invoked to protect against; he can cause destruction as a war god as well as be the protector of his worshippers; he can be the god of the underworld but play an important role as such in the royal funerary cult. The large number of personal names containing his name as a theophoric element would tilt the balance towards the positive aspect. In any case there is nothing in Ugarit that would suggest a demonic character to *Reshef*.[169]

2.6.4 Phoenician and Aramaic evidence

Reshef occurs in several inscriptions in various contexts and locations. These have been discussed by Conrad (pp. 164-165; 174-178), Fulco (pp. 44-55) and Niehr (pp. 91-95). They agree in that *Reshef* seems to have enjoyed a relatively high status in

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[168] *Nergal* was the king of the underworld in Sumerian religion and retained this role in Babylonian and Assyrian religion too. In a Sumerian inscription on the statue of king Kurigalzu, *Nergal* appears as the husband of *Ninisinna* and as the king of the underworld. See ANET, pp. 58-59. In *A Vision of the Nether World* of the Assyrian prince Kumma *Nergal* is described as 'valiant', 'all powerful', and 'the almighty, who vanquishes the evil ones', at whose 'wrathful brilliance' the prince trembled (ANET, pp. 109-110). *Nergal's* other main aspect was god of war but he was also regarded as the god of forest fires, fevers and plagues perhaps due to his identification with *Erra* from the first millennium who was a violent god of similar character. See T. Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness. A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 227; Black and Green, pp. 135-136. *Nergal* also had a positive side. He acted as a personal god (Jacobsen, *Treasures*, pp. 155-157) as well as patron god (in his warrior god aspect) to Assyrian kings. In the Epilogue to the Code of Hammurabi we read of *Nergal*: 'the strong one among the gods', 'the fighter without peer, who achieves victory for me', he burns 'the people of the enemy in his great power like the raging fire of swamp-reeds' (ANET, p. 180). *Nergal* is often mentioned as one of the deities who gives oracles (ANET, pp. 298-300), and as one who is invoked in treaties (ANET, pp. 533, 534, 538, 659). *Nergal's* fierceness thus aids those whom he protects, similar to *Reshef's* role in Egypt. For other studies on the relationship of *Reshef* and *Nergal* see also Conrad, pp. 158- 164 and references given there. It is also worth noting that later (Hellenistic times) *Nergal* was identified with the Greek god *Herakles*, and thus the fact that *Reshef* too was associated with *Herakles*, was not surprising (Fulco, pp. 38-40).

[169] So also Niehr, pp. 88-89.

some of these cultures (e.g. in the pantheon of Zinjirli, at Karatepe), where he appears in a positive role (e.g. Karatepe). His war-like character is evident especially in Cyprus where he was identified with Apollo, the Greek archer god, and where he appears as *ršp-hṣ* which is best understood as 'Reshef of the arrow'. [170]

2.6.5 The interpretation of *reshef*

Because *Reshef* was a well-known deity the occurrence of the term in the Hebrew Bible is taken without question to be a reference to this god. Since foreign deities were 'demonised' in the Hebrew Bible, most scholars argue that *reshef* appears as a 'demon' there.

Interestingly neither Oesterley and Robinson nor Langton treat *reshef* in their discussion of 'OT demonology'. For others the occurrence of this term in several passages in the Hebrew Bible together with *deber* and *qeteb* is the main reason to argue that these latter two are references to 'demons'.

Caquot argues that even though the ancient versions allowed all traces of the proper name, *Reshef*, to be lost (and modern translations likewise), it is possible to reconstruct the ancient divinity by 'discovering' its name elsewhere in the ancient Semitic world (p. 56). In the Hebrew Bible, Caquot argues, *Reshef* is easily recognized as a divine name in Habakkuk 3:5. The context is clearly mythological, thus for Caquot it is natural that both *Reshef* and *Deber* (appearing in parallel) represent divine names, two lesser divinities accompanying Yahweh. Based on other occurrences of *deber* where presumably it refers to plague/pestilence, Caquot is led to regard both *reshef* and *deber* here as 'more or less personified symbols of (Yahweh's) awesome power' (p.57). Even though this interpretation would be supported by the ancient versions, Caquot prefers to take *Reshef* as a secondary deity or 'demon', the two terms seemingly equated by him. 'Il apparaît donc nettement que, dans ce texte, *rešep* désigne bien une divinité secondaire, un démon subordonné à Eloah.' He than conjectures that perhaps the Greek translators considered the text unintelligible or 'embarrassing', which is why they chose to demythologise the text by removing the name of *Reshef*. He believes that the Vulgate was more correct in its interpretation by using the word *diabolus*. Recognizing in the term *reshef* the name of the god emphasises the mythological colour of the text, concludes Caquot (p. 58).

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[170] Fulco, pp. 49-51. Niehr argues that the similar character of the two gods (as gods of the bow as well as sickness and wellbeing) must have been responsible for their identification (p. 93).

He argues similarly in Deuteronomy 32, where 'l'allusion à Reshep … ne paraît pas moins nette' (p. 58). However, while *raab* can only be translated as a common noun, both *Reshef* and *Qeteb Meriri* 'sont des démons appelés par leur nom'. The fact that all the versions (LXX, Aquila, Targ Onqelos and Vg) render the term by 'bird', only proves to Caquot that the versions must have had the image of a winged 'demon' in mind, and that 'ce n'est pas la personification d'un fléau naturel, mais l'être supérieur qui en est responsable représenté ici sous une forme animale qu'il a pu prendre dans l'imagination populaire'(p. 59).

In Job 5:7 the 'sons of *reshef*' are identified as birds. However, Caquot argues that if the image of winged 'demons' inhabiting the space between heaven and earth would be recognized behind this term, the Masoretic text would make more sense. The expression might have been an ancient proverbial one that was still familiar to the redactor of Job but no longer so to the ancient translators, hence the translation of 'birds' (p. 60). He further argues that the association of *reshef* with birds cannot be by accident, but that this is in fact compatible with the representation of him as a winged being (p. 61).

In Psalm 78:48 Caquot argues that *barad* should be changed to *deber* and thus restore the pair *Deber* and *Reshef* as in Habakkuk 3:5. The fact the *reshef* appears in the plural here leads Caquot to suggest translating the term generally as 'demons'. He finds the ancient versions' rendering the term as 'fire' surprising, but using the targum's (of psalms) translation (which is a gloss), 'the *reshefs* of fire', he suggests 'les démons ainsi désignés sont des êtres de feu' (p. 62). In Canticles 8:6, however, Caquot asserts that it is the meaning of 'fire' or 'flames' that should be given to *reshafim*, as it would be difficult to translate a proper name here (p. 63). In Psalm 76:4 the usual rendering is that of 'the flames of the bow' in the sense of 'arrows' but Caquot prefers the translation 'les traits de l'arc', as the image here is more that of lighting bolts than flames (p. 62). He asserts that in both passages the ancient versions are rather vague.

Caquot concludes that it appears from the biblical passages that at least two concrete images have been attached to the term *reshef*, that of the bird and that of the fire. Thanks to the biblical passages, ancient versions and Jewish heritage, Caquot finds it possible to rediscover the characteristics of the 'demon' *Reshef*, which were probably inherited from the ancient deity. Combining all the evidence he argues that it is possible to draw the image of a 'being that inhabits the atmosphere, it is winged, igneous and invested with harmful powers, this latter characteristic is attributable to

his degradation'. Further, it is the image of thunder and lightning that would have been the unique image of *Reshef* to an ancient Israelite.

Caquot seems to contradict himself when on the one hand he asserts that '*Reshef* is only a simple name in the Hebrew Bible of which the ancient versions made an appellative' (p. 53), but on the other hand argues that the Old Testament passages allow us to detect under the name the ancient divinity of atmosphere, master of thunder (similar to *Hadad* or *Baal*) and rain, dispenser of fertility, a great god (p. 64). It is curious as to where he obtains these characteristics of *Reshef* when he says that 'in the ancient documents *Reshef* is only a name' (p.65). There is also no reason given why he regards *Reshef* as a 'demon' while still referring to him as a great or secondary deity. The attribution of malevolence to him in the Hebrew Bible is not supported by the texts there.

T. Gaster argues that *Reshef*, the 'Canaanite god of plague', appears in the mythological passage of Hab 3:5 whose arrows are 'the faery darts of disease and disaster' (*Myth*, p. 670). Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible his name is used by *metonymy* to 'denote various forms of affliction'. Thus he asserts that in Ps 76:3 the arrows are described as '*reshef's* of the bow', which denotes 'satanic shafts'. While in Canticles 8:6 the 'fiery arrows' refer to the 'pangs of love', in Job 5:7 the 'sons of *reshef*' 'is a generic term for demons who hover in the air, in contrast to the "trouble" which seems to sprout out of the very earth' (p. 671). In Deut 32:24 *reshef* appears as one of 'seven evils'. Here the 'monstrous *Reshef*' along with *qeteb* 'can be definitely identified as demons' according to Gaster (p. 321). He does not discuss Psalm 78.

Tromp, similarly to Gaster, emphasises *Reshef*'s association with the underworld especially as his focus is on Death. He argues that the *Reshef* in Deut 32:24 is the personal name for the Semitic deity appearing here with 'personal traits'. However, the verse also shows that *Resheph* 'must be leading a reduced existence: he is overshadowed by Yahweh.' Not surprisingly Tromp takes *ra'ab* in Deut 32:24 to be a reference to Death, as he argues that 'Death sometimes appears in biblical texts under the guise of Hunger or the Hungry One.[171] Since *Reshef* appears here with personal traits, so must *ra'ab*. Tromp is correct in recognising the personification of *ra'ab* and *reshef* in this passage, even if his identification of the former with Death is questionable. However, as we have seen earlier, Tromp goes further and suggests

[171] Tromp, p. 107. This is also Wyatt's understanding of this passage. See above p. 39.

that behind personification there might be a living (even if only folk) belief (pp. 160, 166). He quotes G. A. Barton who writes: 'While but few individual demons can be traced in the canonical literature, the apocryphal writings bear witness to the fact that popular thought abounded with them.'[172] Since in Mesopotamian religion illnesses were regarded as caused by demons, Tromp believes that the case was similar in Israel. Thus *Reshef*, whom he takes primarily to have been the god of plague and pestilence, must function as a 'demon' in the Hebrew Bible.

A contrary view to this is that of Conrad who argues that *Reshef*'s association with disease and underworld are secondary, and emphasises his character as a weather and war god (p. 183). As a weather god he brings rain and thus fertility but he is also terrible in the storm and tempest appearing with hail and lightning. As a war god he is also a protector of his own land and people who fights against their enemy. He strikes with sickness (as that is a natural consequence of war), and punishes the treaty breakers. Because of similar characteristics, especially his association with war, Conrad argues that he is identified with the Mesopotamian *Nergal* (pp. 158-164) and the Egyptian *Seth* (pp. 166-168). Conrad does not discuss *reshef*'s occurrences in the Hebrew Bible.

Fulco strongly disagrees with the view that *Reshef* would have been a weather and fertility god. He maintains that as far as *Reshef* was a chtonic deity he was involved in general with 'the forces of life and death'. However, to regard him as primarily a weather god is 'a misunderstanding of the Old Testament passages' in which the term *reshef* occurs.[173] In Deut 32:24 Fulco, following Caquot, translates both *reshef* and *qeteb* as proper names and considers them 'demons'.[174] In Hab 3:5, also following Caquot (and Vattioni), he considers both *Deber* and *Reshef* as 'mythological figures' (p. 57), and in Job 5:7 he agrees with Caquot's suggestion that the 'sons of *reshef*' should be regarded as winged 'demons'. In accordance with this

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[172] P. 161 quoting G. A. Barton in J. Hastings, eds, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1911), IV, 598 B.

[173] P.71. He argues that the misunderstanding might be partly due to confusion between the 'so-called Hadad-bronzes and the Rešep-bronzes', and partly to some appearances of *Reshef* in passages associated with meteorological phenomena (e.g. Hab 3:5). However, these are very few and *Reshef* appears as a member of Yahweh's escort in a theophany, which 'typically involve(s) dramatic disturbances in the weather' (p. 61).

[174] He also cites Late Hebrew tradition in support (p. 57 n. 305); e.g. M. Jastrow, p. 1502: 'reshef means demons (of the hot season, v. qeteb)' cf. Ber. 5^a (cf. Job 5:7).

interpretation he sees Ps 91:5-6 as a parallel and accepts Dahood's suggestion that the passage 'clearly contains remnants of demonological terminology'. Thus 'it is hard to believe' that the חֵץ יָעוּף is 'not ultimately a reference to Rešep'.[175] Fulco sees another allusion to *Reshef* in Ps 78:48, accepting suggestions to change *barad* to *deber* thus gaining the reading *Deber* and *Reshefs*, who then are 'malevolent spirits accompanying God in his destructive wake'.[176] He argues that both Ps 76:4 and Cant 8:6 demythologised the original image of *Reshef*. Thus in the first passage the term is 'little more than "vicious assault(s) (associated with bow and arrows)"', and in the latter it is a common noun. However, Fulco argues that despite this fact the term's 'roots in mythology are unmistakable'; *reshef* is more than just a 'flame'. 'Love is something like a demon – it grows and takes hold of the lovers, eventually beyond their control' (p. 60). Fulco concludes that:

> … all of the OT passages seem to suggest that Rešep represents some more-or-less uncontrolled cosmic force, typically as a bringer of plague and sudden death, or at least of a seizure beyond control. Like Dionysus in Greek mythology he is a mysterious and dark power, an – in the case of love - ineluctable passion. What we observe in the OT are various degrees of demythologization of this force; sometimes Rešep is a personal figure bringing destruction, sometimes he/it is little more than a metaphor. But even as a metaphor the diverse connotations, when pushed back to their mythological roots, are all quite consonant with the primitive notion of Rešep as a chtonic god, the lord of the underworld and therefore intimately involved with the powers of death, the minion of a superior deity when he appears with his host. (pp. 61-62)

P. Xella in complete agreement with Fulco holds the view that in the Hebrew Bible Reshef is 'a demonized version of an ancient Canaanite god', who is now submitted to Yahweh (pp.700-703). The level of demythologization varies. Sometimes he appears as a terrible and powerful cosmic force (Hab 3:5) and at others his name is only a metaphor (Ps 76:4 and Cant 8:6). Similarly to Tromp, Xella also recognizes the personification of some of the destructive forces sent by Yahweh. Thus in Deut 32:24, he regards both *Qeteb* and *Reshef* as ancient Canaanite gods who are perhaps 'conceived of as flying demons', and in Ps 78:48 *Barad* and *Reshef* are both 'decayed deities…depicted as malevolent spirits which accompany God in his

[175] Fulco, p. 59. This is also the view of Xella, p. 703.

[176] Fulco, p. 59. This was suggested also by Caquot, 'Quelques', p. 61.

destructive action.' He concludes, 'At any rate it is possible to perceive aspects of the personality of an ancient chthonic god, which fits the image of *Resheph* found in the other Semitic cultures.' (p. 703)

Day shares the views of Tromp, Fulco and Xella, and argues that *Reshef*'s association with plague, underworld, arrows and plurality are features that can be found in the Old Testament too.[177] But one wonders whether these characteristics are not imposed on the Old Testament occurrences. Day argues that in Hab 3:5 Yahweh appears accompanied by *deber* and *reshef* who are personifications of 'Plague' and 'Pestilence', and that they 'form as it were angelic or perhaps rather demonic accompaniers of Yahweh'. It is not clear, and Day does not explain, why it is the latter rather than the former. The same question arises in the case of Psalm 78. Day notes that in v. 49 we have a reference to Yahweh's destroying angels, but he takes these to be an allusion to the *reshafim*, 'the *Resheph* demons or "sons of *Resheph*" (Job 5:7) bringing pestilence' (p. 201). It is not clear why these should be taken as 'demons', especially when the context is clear about their identity; they are Yahweh's מִשְׁלַחַת מַלְאֲכֵי רָעִים, 'destroying *angels* (bringers) of evils'.[178]

In Job 5:7 Day follows the interpretation of Gaster, Habel, Gordis, Pope and Clines and argues for a mythological allusion.[179] Thus the בְּנֵי־רֶשֶׁף here are 'the sons of [the underworld demon] Resheph' who bring pestilence (p. 203).

Deut 32:24 might contain another allusion to 'the mythological archer god *Resheph*' on the basis of the reference to arrows in v. 23. However, Day is undecided whether the term here refers simply to an 'impersonal plague' or if there is a 'demonic reference'. He seems inclined towards the latter.

Day agrees with Fulco in that in Cant 8:6 *reshef* is demythologised but still retains a mythological background, and that in Ps 76:4 'the god *Resheph* has been most clearly and totally demythologised'; the divine name simply refers to 'human arrows of war' (pp. 205-206).

Similarly to Fulco and Xella, Day also believes that Ps 91:5-6 contains a further allusion to *Reshef*,[180] and that in this passage he is 'thought of as a plague demon'.[181]

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[177] *Gods and Goddesses*, pp. 197-208 (esp. p. 199).

[178] See discussion of this Psalm in 5.5.10 and 7.4.

[179] For references see Day, *Gods and Goddesses*, p. 202 n. 46.

The most recent treatment of *Reshef* is the article by Niehr, in which he traces the career of the North-West Semitic deity, from Ebla, Ugarit, Egypt, Phoenicia and Syria to Palestine, to see how the transition from god to 'demon' took place.[182]

Although he stresses the importance of an in-depth examination of all evidence, Niehr's treatment is more like a sampling than a detailed analysis especially when it comes to the occurrences of *Reshef* in the Hebrew Bible. From his discussion of the ancient Near Eastern evidence[183] he concludes that the Northwest Semitic god *Reshef* was associated with the royal necropolis (Ebla, Ugarit), with the entrance into the underworld (Ugarit), as well as with epidemic and sickness (Ugarit), but also with the protection against disease (Ebla, Ugarit, Phoenicia). He also comes across as a war and protector deity (Ugarit, Egypt, Phoenicia, Samal). Niehr points out that the god does not appear as a demon in any of these cultures. His statement that the 'demonization' of *Reshef* first appears in the Old Testament (p. 95) is rather surprising, especially as no evidence is listed in support of this claim. Further he argues (p. 97),

> Geht man auf die wenigen alttestamentlichen Angaben zu Rešep ein, so ist zunächst einmal deutlich, dass an keiner alttestamentlichen Stelle mehr ein Gott Rešep genannt wird, sondern Rešep, insofern er überhaupt ein eigenständiges Wesen darstellt, allenfalls als ein Dämon in den Blick kommt.

So then Niehr does not recognize *Reshef* as a deity even if a lesser one alongside Yahweh in Hab 3:5, but argues rather curiously that as in other cases when he is 'the subject of a verb of motion', here too, he comes across as a 'demon'. Further he claims that Yahweh appears here in the classical representation of the war and protector god *Reshef*, a role that he has taken

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[180] For more references to scholars who hold this view see Day, *Gods and Goddesses*, p. 206 n. 58 and p. 207 n. 59.

[181] This is all conjectural. The 'arrow' is not necessarily an allusion to *Reshef*. We have seen elsewhere that Yahweh uses the expression 'my arrows' to refer to his agents of punishments in general (cf. Deut 32:23, 42; Job 6:4; see also Jer 50:14; 51:11; Ezek 5:16; 21:21; Ps 7:13) and that these agents are in many cases identified as his angels. Ps 91:10 supplies another example of this identification (v. 11). The evidence cited by Day (LXX and rabbinic interpretation) is weak. The Targum's 'the arrow of the death angel' supports our, rather than a demonic, interpretation. See Day, *Gods and Goddesses*, p. 207.

[182] See ch 1 n. 24, p. 7 for reference.

[183] Ebla, pp. 85-86; Ugarit, pp. 86-89; Egypt, pp. 89-91; Phoenicia, pp. 91-94; Aramaic Syria, pp. 94 - 95.

over from *Reshef*, reducing the deity to a 'noch auf eine unheilbringende Funktion im Umkreis JHWHS' (p.97).

In Deut 32 and Ps 78, Niehr argues, *Reshef* appears to be threatening humans as well as livestock. That he appears in a plural form in Ps 78 is another sure sign for Niehr that points to *Reshef's* 'demon' status, although in these three texts he is still in a somewhat personalised form. Following Fulco, Day and others, Niehr also believes that while the depersonalisation of *Reshef* is more advanced in Job 5:7, Ps 76 and Cant 8:5, it finally culminates in Psalm 91, 'Die völlige Entpersonalisierung und damnatio memoriae des ehemaligen Gottes Rešep erfolgt dann in Ps 91,5-6…' (p. 98).

2.6.6 Summary *reshef*

From the discussion above we can see that *reshef* in the Hebrew Bible is taken by all scholars to be the name of *Reshef*, a god well known and worshipped throughout the ancient Near East. *Reshef* was associated with plague and the underworld and this is taken by some (e.g. Caquot, T. Gaster, Tromp, Day, Fulco and Xella) as pointing to a demonic character which in turn explains why he appears as a 'demon' in the Old Testament. However, the evidence from Ebla, Egypt, Ugarit, as well as Phoenician and Aramaic cultures suggests that the deity's main characteristic was god of war, and his positive aspects ruled over the negative ones (e.g. Conrad, Niehr).

Scholars take the occurrence of *reshef* in Hab 3:5 (along with *deber*), in Deut 32:24 (with *qeteb*), the 'sons of *reshef*' in Job 5:7 the plural '*reshefs'* in Ps 78: 48 as the appearance of 'Canaanite *Reshef*', now presented as a 'demon' by the authors of the Hebrew Bible. They also generally agree that in Ps 76: 4 and Cant 8:6 the term is completely demythologised.[184]

To conclude: the general consensus regarding *reshef* in the Hebrew Bible is that the term is a reference to the West Semitic deity *Reshef*, known as a plague god in the ancient Near East, and as such it is either a 'demon' or appears demythologised in the texts.

[184] Except T. Gaster who sees the arrows in Ps 76:3 as 'satanic shafts', and Day, who in Cant 8:6 still sees a mythological background.

2.7 Conclusion of history of research of *azazel*, *lilith*, *deber*, *qeteb* and *reshef*

The present chapter has demonstrated that there is a consensus to regard the terms *azazel*, *lilith*, *deber*, *qeteb* and *reshef* as names of 'demons' in the Hebrew Bible. This interpretation is based on the view that these terms are 'demons' because they were either deities (*azazel*, *deber*, *qeteb*, *reshef*) or demons (*azazel*, *lilith*, *qeteb*) in the ancient Near East, and therefore appear 'demonised' in the Hebrew Bible, or they were known demons in later Jewish tradition (*azazel*, *lilith*, *qeteb*) and therefore must have been 'demons' already in the Old Testament, or both.

There is also an underlying assumption that the Hebrew Bible preserves the belief that 'demons' inhabit the desert, and this is also used in the case of *azazel* and *lilith* by some scholars as 'proof' to their 'demonic' nature.

We can conclude from the history of research that in the case of *azazel* it is questionable whether any of the arguments are strong enough to support the demonological interpretation. The reliability of etymological evidence in general has been questioned.[185] Similarly, the significance of ancient Near Eastern material to explain the meaning of the term *azazel* and the rite described in Lev 16 is debatable. The Enoch material should also be treated with caution.[186]

With regard to *lilith* we saw that in the demoness *Lilith* attributes of the ancient *lilītu*/*ardat lîli* demons as well as those of *Lamaštu* were fused and thanks to Jewish mysticism and 19th-20th century poets and painters she became the most popular demon ever. It can easily be understood that anyone familiar with *Lilith*'s name would inevitably think of the demoness as known since medieval times (which to the modern reader is also ancient). Therefore we argue that scholars interpreting Isa 34:14 who see *Lilith* appearing there are reading into the text influenced by their knowledge of the demoness, and are ignoring the context.

The problem with the argument that *deber* is a 'demon' is that it is generally based on a discussion of only three texts and the presupposition that *reshef* with whom it appears in two of these texts, and *qeteb* with whom it appears in one text, are also

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[185] See above 2.2.1. The attempts to explain the etymology of *azazel* have failed to throw light on the origins, character or function of the term. Similarly in the case of *reshef*, proposed etymologies actually start from what is already known of the deity (See Xella, p. 701).

[186] See remarks on problems arising from a comparative approach in 1.2.1 n. 48, p. 12.

'demons'. It also relies on evidence from the ancient Near East which is scant and questionable. The situation is similar with *qeteb* and *reshef* too, with the addition of citing later Jewish belief in the case of *qeteb*. The existence of a mythological figure, a deity or demon *qtb* from Assyria or Ugarit is questionable, and later Jewish belief which knew of a demon called *Qeteb* should be used with caution.[187]

That *reshef* is a 'demon' in the Hebrew Bible is based on the general consensus that it is the name of the known deity *Reshef*, and the view that foreign deities are demonised by the authors of the Hebrew Bible. That a deity called *Reshef* was well known in the ancient Near East is unquestionable but, as we have seen, his association with plague or disease is only one of his aspects. His major characteristic seems to be that of a god of war and protector of kings. Whether it is this deity that lies in the background of the *reshef* in the Hebrew Bible should be determined from the Hebrew texts.

To conclude: because of the many weaknesses in the interpretation of these terms that this chapter has shown, it becomes clear that there is a necessity to take a close look at the Hebrew texts.

[187] Rabbinical literature knows of a demon *qeteb meriri*. See W. H. Worrell, 'The Demon of Noonday and Some Related Ideas', *JAOS* 38 (1918), 160-166. See also 2.5.1.3. above.

CHAPTER 3: *AZAZEL* IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

3.1 Introduction

The term עֲזָאזֵל only occurs four times in three verses in the Hebrew Bible, in Leviticus 16, vv. 8, 10 (2x) and 26. Its precise meaning is unknown, which is why as we have seen (in 2.2) there are various interpretations since antiquity to the present day. The most common is to regard it as the name of a 'demon'. The present chapter questions this view and aims to examine the term in its context, determining (if possible) what is its meaning and function, and whether a mythological figure can be discerned behind it.

3.2 Leviticus 16: 8, 10 and 26

v.8

וְנָתַן אַהֲרֹן עַל־שְׁנֵי הַשְּׂעִירִם גּוֹרָלוֹת גּוֹרָל אֶחָד לַיהוָה וְגוֹרָל אֶחָד לַעֲזָאזֵל׃

v.10

וְהַשָּׂעִיר אֲשֶׁר עָלָה עָלָיו הַגּוֹרָל לַעֲזָאזֵל יָעֳמַד־חַי לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לְכַפֵּר עָלָיו לְשַׁלַּח אֹתוֹ לַעֲזָאזֵל הַמִּדְבָּרָה׃

v.26

וְהַמְשַׁלֵּחַ אֶת־הַשָּׂעִיר לַעֲזָאזֵל יְכַבֵּס בְּגָדָיו וְרָחַץ אֶת־בְּשָׂרוֹ בַּמָּיִם וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן יָבוֹא אֶל־הַמַּחֲנֶה׃

And Aaron shall place on the two goats lots, one lot for Yahweh and the other lot for *azazel*.
And the goat upon which the lot for *azazel* went up shall be presented alive before Yahweh to atone over it from sending it away for *azazel* to the desert.
And the one who sent the goat away for *azazel* shall wash his garments and bathe his body in water and afterwards he shall enter the camp.

The chapter can be divided as follows:[1]

[1] See also F. H. Gorman, *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time and Status in the Priestly Theology* JSOT Supp 91 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), pp. 74-75; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, pp. 1059-1061; Hartley, *Leviticus*, pp. 224-225.

1. Introduction (vv.1-2)
2. Preparations before the ritual
   A. requirements of Aaron (vv. 3-4)
      - his offering v. 3
      - his clothing and ritual bathing v. 4
   B. requirements from the community
      - offering v. 5
3. Presentation of sacrificial animals (vv. 6-10)
   A. bull and ram for Aaron (v. 6)
   B. two goats and ram for community (vv.7-8, 10)
4. The Ritual (vv. 11- 28)
   A. חַטָּאת offering /כִּפֶּר (vv. 11-22)
      - חַטָּאת bull for Aaron – vv. 6, 11-14 / /כִּפֶּר for Aaron and his house
      - חַטָּאת goat for people – vv. 9, 15-16a / /כִּפֶּר for the holy place
      - bull and goat – vv. 16b-19 / /כִּפֶּר for tent and outer altar
      - the goat for Azazel –vv. 10, 20-22 / /כִּפֶּר for people?
   B. Burnt offerings (vv. 23-24)
   C. Concluding actions (vv. 25-28)
5. Conclusion – extension of ritual into the future (vv. 29-34)

The introductory verses (vv. 1- 2) refer to the tragic death of Aaron's sons in chapter 10, and then are followed by instructions given to Aaron regarding the way he is to enter the holy of holies. He is not allowed to enter at any time but only once a year (the exact day is set in v. 29), and only after careful preparations.[2] This suggests that the cause of death of the sons of Aaron could have been entering at improper time or without adequate preparations.[3] Aaron is told to take a young bull for a sin/purification offering (לְחַטָּאת)[4] and a ram for a whole burnt offering (לְעֹלָה)[5] to

[2] Hartley, *Leviticus*, p.234; Bellinger, p.99.

[3] Gorman asserts that their sin might have been the 'confusion of categories', i.e. they brought fire from the 'outside' into 'the realm of the sacred' (p. 65). In any case they doubly polluted the sanctuary, first by entering, and second by their dead bodies. (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, pp. 1011-1012).

[4] The root חטא commonly means 'sin, guilt' in religious contexts in the Semitic languages. Along with פשע and עון it is the most common word for 'sin' in the HB. The root with all its derivatives occurs 593x in the HB and has a broad range of meaning including a basic, non-theological meaning of 'miss/fail' (cf. Judg 20:16; Job 5:24; Prov 8: 36; 19:2). In social and political contexts it can mean 'erring, fault, guilt, offence, crime'. See NIDOTTE, II, pp. 87-93; HALOT, pp. 305-306 חַטָּאת

expiate (כִּפֶּר)[6] for him and his household. He is given specific instructions in v. 4 to wash and as to what to wear. It is interesting to note the prescribed clothing is a lot simpler than what the high-priest would normally wear (cf. Exod 28).[7]

The community presents two goats as a sin/purification offering (לְחַטָּאת) and a ram as a whole burnt offering (לְעֹלָה). Aaron is to present both goats (it is specifically stated both of them) before Yahweh at the entrance of the tent of meeting. From the following verses (8-10) we learn about the procedure with the two goats (which is then picked up again in vv. 15-16 and 20-22). Aaron is to use lots (גּוֹרָלוֹת) to decide which goat is which. Lots were frequently used to discover the

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(155x) or חטאה (7x) can both refer to either 'sin' or 'sin offering'. For a discussion of חַטָּאת as 'sin offering' see NIDOTTE, II, pp. 93-100. Scholars interpret the חַטָּאת offering in Lev 16 variously. Traditionally it was considered as 'sin offering' but according to Milgrom it should be understood as a 'purification offering'. For a detailed discussion of the חַטָּאתoffering see J. Milgrom *Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology*, SJLA 36 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1983); 'Sacrifices and Offerings' in *IDBSup* (1976), pp. 763-771; 'Two kinds of *Hatta't*', *VT* 26 (1976), 333-337; Gorman, pp. 61-103; N. Kiuchi, *The Purification Offering in the Priestly Literature*, JSOT Supp 56 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), pp. 143-161; L. Grabbe, *Leviticus,* OT Guides (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), pp. 34-35.

[5] The root is attested in extra Biblical sources, e.g. in the Ugaritic Aqhat and Keret epics. Although a different term is used for burnt offering, the Ug. vb. *'ly* in the causative is used for offering up incense. In the HB the animal (from the flock or herd or bird) was completely burnt (except its hide which was given to the priests) on the altar. Burnt offerings were in use before the tabernacle system (Gen 8:20) and continued after the construction of the tabernacle at altars and high places (Judg 6:26; 1Sam 7:9-10; 2Sam 24:22-25; 1Kgs 18:38-9; etc.). Since the sanctuary was more than an altar, this system required additional sacrifices (sin and guilt offerings, Lev 4:1-6:7). Because the tabernacle was the place where God was present it needed to be kept holy and purified, the people also had to be pure in order not to defile the sanctuary (Lev 15:31). There are other instances where the burnt offering was used as part of the purification of the sanctuary, e.g. Lev 1:4; 14:18-20; Lev. 9:7. (HALOT, pp.830-831; NIDOTTE, III, pp. 405-409; Grabbe, *Leviticus*, p. 31). On the question of the atoning nature of the burnt offering see summary of views in NIDOTTE, III, pp. 409-412. Major sections of the burnt offering regulations for the tabernacle are Lev 1:3-17; 6:8-13; 7:8; Num 15:1-10.

[6] The verb כפר appears 102x in the HB (92x in the Piel); most of the occurrences are in Exod-Num, but also in Ezek and elsewhere. It is usually derived from either the Akkadian *kuppuru*, 'to wipe off', 'cleanse ritually' or the Arabic *kafara*, 'to cover, hide'. The usual English translation is 'to atone' or 'to expiate' (HALOT, pp. 493-495). However, Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, has argued that this translation is incorrect in most cases. Different meanings predominate, and the term's context as well as other issues (e.g. prepositions attached to it or its semantic field) has to be taken into consideration. Some poetical texts (e.g. Jer 18:23, Isa 27:9) suggest the notion of purging, purifying, and this meaning is supported by the ritual texts (pp. 1079-1084). In Lev 16 the Piel form of the verb occurs 16x (vv. 6, 10, 11, 16, 17 [2x], 18, 20, 24, 27, 30, 32, 33[3x], and 34) most often with עַל־ (6x). Here the concept of *kipper* seems to be directly related to 'uncleanness' or 'sins'. Detailed discussions of the term (with Bibliography) can be found in TLOT, II, pp. 624-635; NIDOTTE, II, pp. 689-709. Also in Kiuchi, pp. 87-109; Gorman, pp. 75-102; Grabbe, *Leviticus*, pp. 40-43; B. A. Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord* (Leiden: Brill, 1974) pp. 55-77; Hartley, *Leviticus*, p. 226.

[7] Noth, pp. 119-121; Hartley, *Leviticus*, pp. 235-236; Bellinger, p. 99; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, pp. 1013-1018; Levine, *Leviticus*, p. 101.

deity's will, so in this case to find out which goat Yahweh is choosing for himself. It is neither the people nor Aaron who makes the decision, they have no way of knowing beforehand which goat is for Yahweh, therefore they have to bring two identical ones and present them to him. The lots convey Yahweh's decision.[8]

The central section of chapter 16 is the description of the ritual in vv.11-28. The purpose of the חַטָּאת sacrifice is to כִּפֶּר for Aaron and his household, for the sanctuary and for the tent and outer altar, and perhaps for the people, though this is not explicitly stated. The ritual is as follows: Aaron presents the חַטָּאת bull and kills it. Then he takes a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before Yahweh and two handfuls of incense and brings them behind the veil. He puts the incense on the coal so that the smoke/cloud would cover the כַּפֹּרֶת. This is perhaps to protect Aaron from the presence of Yahweh. Thus the sanctuary can be a dangerous place if one does not follow rules carefully. Then Aaron takes some of the blood of the bull and sprinkles it with his finger on the front of the כַּפֹּרֶת. He sprinkles some of the blood seven times with his finger before the כַּפֹּרֶת. Then he kills the goat (presumably he comes out from behind the veil to do this) and brings his blood behind the veil and does the same thing as with the bull's blood. The sprinkling of the blood cleanses the sanctuary from the uncleanness of the people's transgression and sins. Then Aaron goes out to the altar and puts some of the bull's and goat's blood around the horns of the altar. With his finger he sprinkles the blood seven times just as he did with the כַּפֹּרֶת.[9]

The bull's and the goat's blood together serve to cleanse and sanctify the altar from the uncleanness (מִטְמְאֹת) of the Israelites.

Verses 20-22 return to v. 10 and the fate of the other goat which is now referred to as the 'living goat', הַשָּׂעִיר הֶחָי. Aaron deals with the goat after he finished the 'כִּפֶּר –act'.[10] This raises the question whether the *azazel* goat rite is separate from or part of the 'כִּפֶּר –act'. It seems to be part of the whole ritual, the חַטָּאת sacrifice, for the following reasons: 1) both goats are חַטָּאת (v.5); 2) Aaron takes his ritual clothing

[8] Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, pp. 1018-1020; Hartley, *Leviticus*, pp. 236-237; Noth, p. 121; Bellinger, p. 99; Levine, *Leviticus*, pp. 101-102.

[9] Noth, pp. 121-124; Levine, *Leviticus*, pp. 103-106; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, pp. 1024-1040; Hartley, *Leviticus*, pp. 239-241; Bellinger, pp. 99-100; Gorman, pp. 75-81.

[10] This expression is borrowed from Gorman, p. 74 onwards.

off and washes himself only after the goat-rite (v.23); and 3) v. 10 states that the goat for *azazel* is to be presented before Yahweh (לְכַפֵּר עָלָיו). Thus vv. 20-22 should be seen also as a 'כִּפֻּר –act'.[11]

Whom is the 'כִּפֻּר –act' for? The most likely candidate would be the people. At first glance it would seem that Aaron by laying both his hands on the head of the goat, was transferring all the guilt of the Israelites from the community to the goat which is then sent away from the community. It would take their sins and uncleanness away, thus cleansing them. However, this interpretation is not without difficulties.[12] It has been argued that the sacrificial animal is a substitute for the offerer. [13] Indeed this view is confirmed by Gen 22:13, where Abraham offered a ram 'in place of his son' (תַּחַת בְּנוֹ) Isaac. In Lev 17:11 we read:

> For the life of the creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you for performing the rite of expiation on the altar for your lives, for blood is what expiates for a life. (NJB)

The sacrificial animal's blood contains its life which is substituted for the human life. The blood not only cleanses but also gives life to the offerer.[14]

There is another question which is: why is the goat sent away into the wilderness to *azazel* and not sacrificed as the other animals? We shall return to this later.

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[11] Jenson also thinks so. He writes: 'But whatever the history of the ritual, an analysis of the present ritual in its several dimensions reveals that the two parts complement one another in a remarkable way.' (See P. P. Jenson, 'The Levitical Sacrificial System' in *Sacrifice in the Bible,* ed. by R. T. Beckwith & M. J. Selmon (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1995), pp. 25-40, (p. 34). Against this view see Noth, pp. 124-126.

[12] Some (e.g. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, pp. 151-152; Levine, *Leviticus*, p. 6) see no significance in the laying of the hands; it would simply be a statement of ownership. This view has been criticised by Wenham as being too simplistic and one that would ignore the significance of the Hebrew term סמך used for the laying of the hands. He argues that the meaning of this term is more complex than simply 'place'; referring to Isa 59:16; Ezek 24:2; 30:6; Amos 5:19, it rather means 'to press'. 'The very action of pressing down on the animal's head suggests an attempt to establish an identity between worshipper and victim.' See Wenham, 'The Theology of Old Testament Sacrifice', in *Sacrifice in the Bible,* ed. by R. T. Beckwith & M. J. Selmon (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1995), pp. 75-87, (p. 79). Although this view seems a little forced (why would 'pressing' signify identification more than 'placing' ?), Wenham is right in pointing out that the placing/pressing of the hand on the animal's head is more significant than simply conveying ownership. Kiuchi, pp. 87-109, has argued that the priest bore the guilt while at the same time cleansing the altar. For a different interpretation see also Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, pp. 1041-1045.

[13] By Wenham and others. See references in Wenham, 'Theology', p. 79 and notes 13, 14.

[14] Kiuchi, p. 109.

In vs. 24-25 Aaron performs the whole burnt offerings, both for himself and for the community. This is described in less detail than the sin offering.

Verses 27-28 are dealing with the aftermath of the offerings. The remains of the bull and goat are to be burnt outside the camp and the person who does it has to cleanse himself. It is not specified that this person has to be Aaron.[15]

The final verses (29-34) not only set the date for this ritual, but extend it into the future. The initial command given to Aaron remains valid for his successors in all times. The phrase לְחֻקַּת עוֹלָם, 'as an eternal statute', is repeated 3 times in vv. 29, 31 and 34, making this explicit.

Let us return now to the term עֲזָאזֵל and see what we learn about it from Leviticus 16.

In verse 8 we have גּוֹרָל אֶחָד לַיהוָה and

וְגוֹרָל אֶחָד לַעֲזָאזֵל

יהוָה being God's personal name, the parallelism suggests that עֲזָאזֵל should be a personal name of a deity too. Further, the fact that the two goats presented were equally of the best quality, since no one knew which would be for Yahweh and which for *Azazel*, seems to support this suggestion.

Both goats were brought before Yahweh, and the casting of the lots was to find out which of the two goats he wanted for himself. Yahweh chose, *Azazel* did not; this suggests that *Azazel* was not a deity on the same level as Yahweh. Even the goat that was to be sent for him was first brought before Yahweh. Yahweh was the overseer of things happening, of the dispatch.

The live goat was sent away for *Azazel* into the desert, so *Azazel*'s dwelling place was the desert. Thus *Azazel* was a lesser supernatural being who lived in the desert.

It is usually argued that since the desert was regarded as the place where 'demons' dwelt, and Lev 17:7 forbids the Israelites to sacrifice to the *se'irim*, thought to be goat-'demons' (satyrs), that *Azazel* must have been one or the chief of these goat-'demons'.[16] In fact there is no basis for such a claim. Demons did not have a cult nor

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[15] Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, pp. 1052-1053; Levine, *Leviticus*, p. 108; Hartley, *Leviticus*, p. 242.

[16] E.g. Jenson, p. 34; Hartley, *Leviticus*, p. 238; Levine, *Leviticus*, pp. 250-253; and see ch.2 section 2.2.1.

did they receive sacrifices. Lev. 17: 7 must have referred to sacrifice to foreign deities. The Hebrew Bible has many references to this.[17] Jenson has argued that the priestly writings' central concern is creation, maintenance and restoration of the ordered world.

> The concern with purity and impurity is in part a concern for maintaining boundaries which must not be transgressed. Otherwise there will be a descent into chaos, disaster and death. From this perspective, sacrifice has a crucial role in maintaining order and restoring equilibrium when that order is disturbed. Both sin and impurity can be understood as generating disorder…[18]

Both goats were presented on behalf of the Israelite community to be their sin offering. Yahweh's goat was slaughtered to atone for the 'uncleanness' (טמא)[19] and 'all the transgressions by sin' (וּמִפִּשְׁעֵיהֶם לְכָל־חַטֹּאתָם) of the Israelites. The use of the same expression for 'transgression by sin' suggests parallelism for 'uncleanness' and 'guilt'. Perhaps the Israelites were guilty of becoming unclean by straying away from Yahweh and turning to other gods (Deut 32:17, 21; Lev 17:7; 1Kgs 16:13, 26; 2Kgs 17:15; Ps 31:6; Jer 2:5; 8:19; 10:8; 16:19; Jonah 2:8, etc.).

Their disobedience made them and the sanctuary unclean; it also brought chaos into the established order. Yahweh cannot dwell amongst impurity, the sanctuary and the people have to be cleansed, chaos unmade and order established.

Through the blood of the sacrificed goat the sanctuary and the people were cleansed. What then was the significance of the second goat? Why was is it sent away into the wilderness to *Azazel* and not sacrificed as the other animals?

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[17] E.g. in Pss 16, 106:37 foreign deities are the object of devotion; also Exod 20: 23, 22:20, 34:15; Lev 17:7; Num 25:2; Deut 32:17; 1Kgs 16:13, 26; 2Kgs 17:15; Ps 31:6; Jer 2:5, 8:19, 10:8, 16:19; Jonah 2:8.

[18] P. 32. Gorman has argued similarly, pp. 99-102.

[19] The verb occurs 163x, the adjective 87x and the noun 36x in the HB with 85% of the occurrences in Lev (85x), Num (23x) and Ezek (30x). Ezekiel (Ezek 20:7, 18, 30f.,43, 22:3f., 23:7, 13, 17, 30, 36:18, 37:23, etc.) sees idolatry and adultery as the main causes of defilement (TLOT, II, p. 495-497), and Lev 18-20 also refers to Israel's religious and moral impurity (the whole land could become impure by bloodshed, following the Canaanite practices, etc.). See HALOT, pp. 375-376; NIDOTTE, II, pp. 365-372. In Lev 10-16 it refers to physical ritual uncleanness (NIDOTTE, II, p. 365) but also to moral impurities (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, p. 1033).

If by laying his hands on the other goat Aaron transferred the 'guilt' (עון)[20] and the 'transgressions by sin' of the Israelites to the goat, this goat would have carried the 'transgressions by sin' outside the camp (Num 5:1-3), away from the sanctuary and from the presence of Yahweh into the desert, the place of death. If the goat was a substitute for the people, its going away into the desert would still symbolise the removal of sins or rather sinners from the holy presence. Thus symbolically the guilty people were both removed from the presence of Yahweh because he cannot tolerate impurity or sin, and cleansed through the blood and thus able to continue in covenant relationship with him.

The significance of *Azazel* is not who he is but what he symbolises. In many ways his role is the opposite of Yahweh's. Like Yahweh, he is a deity, though it is made clear that he does not possess the same power. Yahweh receives sacrifice, *Azazel*'s goat is not a sacrifice;[21] Yahweh dwells in the very centre, the Holy of Holies, *Azazel*'s place is on the outside, the desert; Yahweh's dwelling place is pure, the desert is where all impurities can be found; worshipping Yahweh brings life to his people, following other gods brings death to them. Yahweh establishes order, *Azazel* is the bringer of chaos.

3.3 Conclusion of *azazel*

The analysis of Leviticus 16 leads to the following conclusions: the *azazel* rite forms an integral part of the 'כִּפֶּר –act', the purpose of which is to cleanse and sanctify the altar and the people. 'Guilt' and 'uncleanness' are parallel terms referring to the Israelites' sin: straying away from Yahweh and going after other gods. The blood of the bull and one goat wipes away the people's sin and sanctifies the altar from their 'uncleanness'. The live goat removes their sin and guilt by literally taking it outside of the community, into the desert, away from the sanctuary. The sanctuary represents

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[20] עון means 'sin', 'iniquity' or 'transgression', and it is used predominantly in religious contexts. It occurs 231x in the HB; its plural form might be used as a general term to include all sins against God. Together with חטא and פשע it is the most common term for 'sin'. These three terms occur together 13x in the HB. It is the 'key term' of Lev 16:21-22 according to Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, p. 1043. On this term see HALOT, p. 800; TLOT, II, pp. 862-865; NIDOTTE, III, p. 351.

[21] As argued above the goat is a substitute for the people, who brought chaos by turning away from worshipping Yahweh and following other gods. The sending of the goat into the desert symbolises the establishment of order by containing chaos in its proper place.

the presence of Yahweh, the order of creation, while the desert where *azazel* is found, stands for the chaos that threatens it.

Examining the term *azazel* we have found that its meaning remains unknown. Although the parallelism with Yahweh in v. 8 suggests that it is a proper name of a supernatural being whose place is in the desert, there is nothing to suggest that it would refer to a 'demon' named *Azazel*. Despite the various efforts of scholars to prove otherwise, there is no evidence that a mythological figure was behind this term. *Azazel*'s significance in Lev 16 is its symbolic function. Its role is to stand in contrast to Yahweh and as such it could be argued that it is a personification of the forces of chaos that threaten the order of creation.

CHAPTER 4: *LILITH* IN CONTEXT. AN EXAMINATION OF TERMS RELATED TO IT IN ISAIAH 34 AND OTHER CONTEXTS

4.1 Introduction

The Hebrew term לִילִית is a *hapax legomenon*; it occurs once in Isaiah 34:14. Earlier in 2.3. we have seen that to interpret it scholars refer to the similarity of the term with the name of a demon known from Mesopotamia and post-biblical Jewish belief. This view then leads to taking other terms in the chapter which are difficult to interpret, such as תַּנִּים, בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה, צִיִּים, אִיִּים and שָׂעִיר, to be references to 'demons'as well. Such a view should be challenged as it appears to be circular (these beings are only 'demons' because of their occurrence with לִילִית , etc.), and as it seems to ignore the fact that such an interpretation does not fit the context.

The fact that *lilith* only occurs here in the entire Hebrew Bible presents difficulties as it is not possible to grasp its meaning from other contexts. However, an examination of all the other terms that are related to it in the chapter can aid in the understanding. Thus before any decisive conclusions are made, a careful analysis of all the terms in their contexts is needed.

The present chapter therefore takes a close look at Isaiah 34 aiming to determine whether *lilith* and the other related terms are names of/ references to 'demons', and whether there are any mythological figures behind them.

4.2 Isaiah 34

v. 14

וּפָגְשׁוּ צִיִּים אֶת־אִיִּים וְשָׂעִיר עַל־רֵעֵהוּ יִקְרָא אַךְ־שָׁם הִרְגִּיעָה לִילִית וּמָצְאָה לָהּ מָנוֹחַ׃

And *desert creatures* meet with *hyenas*, and the *wild goat* cries to its companion; yes, there the *night bird* rests, and finds herself a resting place.

Most scholars agree that Isaiah 34 and 35 form a unit and therefore have to be treated together.[1]

[1] See for example the works of J. Barton, *Isaiah 1-39*, OT Guides (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 92-95; O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39: A Commentary*, transl. by R. A Wilson (London: SCM Press, 1974), pp. 351-362; C. R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39,* Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox Press,

Isaiah 34-35 present a conclusion to chapters 28-33, and correspond to chapters 24-27 (which conclude chs 13-23 respectively).[2] The theme of chapter 34 is judgement against the nations, frequently referred to as גּוֹיִם.

The chapter can be divided as follows:

v. 1 Invocation

vv. 2-4 Yahweh's intentions with regard to the nations

- v. 2 Yahweh is angry with the nations therefore he destroys them
- v. 3-4 consequences of destruction with regard to the people (v. 3) and nature (v. 4)

vv. 5-7 The Sword of Yahweh; slaughter of Edom = sacrifice to Yahweh

- v. 5 Sword, being satiated in heaven (referring back to v. 4), descends from there to Edom
- v. 6-7 blood and fat of the slaughtered sacrifices will cover Sword and earth

vv. 8-15 Edom's destruction continued

- v. 8 Yahweh's Day of Vengeance – in Zion's cause
- vv. 9-11 the whole land will lie desolate for generations
- vv.12-15 kingdom turned into desert, the habitat of wild animals (=destruction)

vv. 16-17 Conclusion/ transition

4.2.1 Isaiah 34:1-7

V. 1 is an invocation that is addressed to the nations and the people (גּוֹיִם and לְאֻמִּים), but the second part of the verse implies that it is for all to hear; every living creature of the world, on the face of the earth (תֵּבֵל) and below it (אֶרֶץ) is to listen and witness,[3] and heed what follows.[4]

1993), pp. 236-242 (p. 236); R. E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980; repr. 1987), 271-275 (p. 271); W. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), pp. 268-280 (p. 268); J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* (Gand Rapids: Eerdmans), pp. 606-627 (p. 606); J. D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, WBC 25 (Waco: Word Books, 1987), pp. 1-18; P. D. Miscall, *Isaiah 34-35:Nightmare/A Dream*, JSOT Supp 281 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); J. Goldingay, *Isaiah*, New International Biblical Commentary (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2001), pp. 193-200. Although chapter 35 is not treated in detail in this exegesis, connecting points will be referred to at the relevant passages.

[2] NIV Study Bible, p. 1045 Notes; Oswalt, p. 607.

[3] Kaiser, p. 356. Oswalt disagrees. He maintains that the call is to be sentenced not to be witnesses (p. 608). Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1*-39, also imagines a court case here with Yahweh delivering the 'negative verdict that pertains to all nations' (p. 269).

The following verses give a vivid description of the destruction that is to follow. Vv. 2-4 contain Yahweh's intentions regarding the nations. V. 2 starts with an emphatic כִּי, 'for'. This links vv.1 and 2 together, explaining the preceding call in verse 1, and at the same time emphasising Yahweh's wrath in verse 2. However, we are not told what the cause of Yahweh's fury was. Oswald contends that perhaps there was no need to give a reason; the statement 'to destroy them' (הֶחֱרִימָם) would have been enough to any Hebrew hearer. Although not explicitly stated, we can conjecture from this that the nations must have offended Yahweh in that they have not accepted him.[5] On the other hand, v. 8 might hold a clue as to the reason of Yahweh's anger. Yahweh's day of vengeance against Edom is in the cause of Zion, to uphold his people's strife (NJB: 'lawsuit'). Yahweh fights for his people and he punishes those who are against them. Offending Yahweh's people is ultimately a crime against Yahweh himself.

Yahweh's anger is expressed not with a construct but with a *lamedh*, קֶצֶף לַיהוָה, literally, 'anger to Yahweh'. There are another three similar expressions in the following verses, חֶרֶב לַיהוָה, 'sword for Yahweh' in v.6a, זֶבַח לַיהוָה, 'sacrifice to Yahweh' in v. 6d, and יוֹם נָקָם לַיהוָה, 'day of vengeance to Yahweh' in v. 8a; all of these except the sword in v. 6a also start with כִּי. These expressions emphasize Yahweh's possession more than a simple construct.[6]

Yahweh's fury is expressed by the parallel terms קֶצֶף and חֵמָה, 'wrath' and 'fury', and its all-encompassing quality by the parallel expressions עַל־כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם // עַל־כָּל־צְבָאָם, 'upon all the nations' // 'upon all their armies/hosts'.

Miscall remarks that the absence of any introductory or connective *waws* in v. 2c gives a sense of rapidity to the actions, whereas separating 2c into two shorter cola would 'slow(s) the pace' and the actions would seem more detached from each

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[4] The pair תֵּבֵל and אֶרֶץ occur together also in Isa 18:3 and 24:4. Miscall, *Isaiah 34-35*, makes a similar point (p.28). Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, on the other hand argues that the call has to be taken 'rhetorically', the poet's intended audience is his own people, he means to encourage them by showing them the fate of the nations in contrast to that of the faithful in 35:1-10 (p. 272).This is possible but it is more likely that the poet had a universal audience in his mind since vv. 1-4 talk of a universal judgement.

[5] Oswalt, p. 609; Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 269.

[6] So Miscall, *Isaiah 34-35*, p. 30 and Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, p. 8. Watts, however, claims that these possessive expressions stress Yahweh's divine right, and thus he inserts 'Yahweh has the right to …' in his translation of the respective colas. In agreement with Miscall (p. 30) we see this as unnecessary; the context does not support such a claim.

other.[7] This is possible, but it is also possible to regard נְתָנָם לַטֶּבַח, 'has given them to slaughter', as explanatory of the preceding Hiphil verb הֶחֱרִימָם. If the audience had any doubts about the meaning of the ban, this is now made clear here and in the following vivid description of destruction in verse 3. Not only can we picture the scene but we can almost smell the stench rising up from the corpses. The poet employs our sense of hearing (v.1), seeing and smelling (vv. 2-3).[8] Commentators[9] usually remark that the poet uses holy war terminology in v. 2 (cf. חרם).[10]

The scene of devastation continues; the wounded and slain are cast out (יֻשְׁלַכוּ), the injured are not tended to, the dead are not buried (v. 3ab). The destruction is all-encompassing, from the ground it reaches heavenwards. Even the mountains are soaked with blood (וְנָמַסּוּ הָרִים, v. 3c), and the terrible smell of rotting corpses goes up towards the sky affecting even the 'hosts of heaven'(כָּל־צְבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם, v. 4a). [11] They all rot away (וְנָמַקּוּ, v. 4a), and the heavens are rolled away like a scroll (וְנָגֹלּוּ, v. 4b). The poet uses three Niphal perfect verbs which 'add assonance to the other features binding the section'.[12] The verb form changes in 4c to Qal imperfect, 'and all their host wither' (יִבּוֹל). This notion is emphasised by a further two uses of the same root; נבל appears in the following two similes in different forms, as an infinitive construct (כִּנְבֹל) and as a participle (וּכְנֹבֶלֶת).

v. 4c and all their host withers	וְכָל־צְבָאָם יִבּוֹל
v. 4d like a withering leaf from the vine tree	כִּנְבֹל עָלֶה מִגָּפֶן
v. 4e and like a withering [leaf] from the fig tree.	וּכְנֹבֶלֶת מִתְּאֵנָה׃

Miscall notes that 'withering is a notable image in Isaiah',[13] and that it also prompts one to think of 'similar sounding words'. For example: נְבָלָה, 'foolishness' (9:16; 32:6); נְבֵלָה, 'corpse' (5:25; 26:19); נָבָל, 'fool' (32:5-6); נֵבֶל, 'a jar that can fall

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[7] *Isaiah 34-35*, p. 31.

[8] Miscall, *Isaiah 34-35*, p. 32.

[9] E.g. Watts, p. 9; Brueggemann, p. 269; Clements, p. 272; Kaiser, p. 356, etc.

[10] Cf. Exod 15; Deut 20:10-18; Josh 10:1, 28, 35; 1 Sam 15: 4-33.

[11] כָּל־צְבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם is best taken here as referring to the heavenly bodies, i.e. stars, rather than the 'armies of heaven', i.e. heavenly beings. There is no other reference to them or to why they would deserve punishment. The point here is that the destruction is so overwhelming that it affects not only humans but the elements of nature too.

[12] Miscall, *Isaiah 34-35*, p. 37.

[13] Cf. Isa 1:30; 24:4; 40:7-8; 64:5. See *Isaiah 34-35*, p. 41.

and break' (22:24; 30:14) and a 'harp that can be stilled' (14:11); and נָפַל, 'to fall' (14:12; 21:9). He writes, 'Thus the Hebrew word and root for withering intone a wide variety of other concepts and images: corpses, falling, breaking, fool(ishness), silence, music and hope.' Usually the reference to 'vine and fig tree' is a positive one; we think of a prosperous land (Deut 8:8; 1 Kg 5:5; Mic 4:4; Zech 3:10). It can also be 'an image of destruction when they are removed (Ps 105:33; Jer 5:17).'[14]

After describing a general destruction the poet's attention is now turned towards Edom. Some commentators argue that Edom was a representative of all nations in opposition to Yahweh and thus its fate served as a warning to all such nations.[15] In the previous section destruction moved from earth towards the heaven, which was rolled away and all its hosts withered and fallen. Now the destruction continues on earth again. The sword of Yahweh is personified here as his agent of destruction. In v. 5 Yahweh is the speaker;[16] he declares his agent's work finished in heaven, 'for[17] my Sword was satiated[18] in heaven' (כִּי־רָוְתָה בַשָּׁמַיִם חַרְבִּי), now it descends on Edom (הִנֵּה עַל־אֱדוֹם תֵּרֵד). The Edomites, like the people referred to in v. 2 are 'banned', they are Yahweh's people of *herem*, עַם חֶרְמִי, destined for complete annihilation.[19] Again, no specific reason is given why Yahweh's anger is focused on Edom. However, there might have been historical reasons for the poet's particular focus as most commentators[20] argue, and as the end of v. 5 ('for judgement',[21] לְמִשְׁפָּט) as well as v. 8 seem to suggest.

Edom's destruction is compared to a sacrifice,

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[14] Miscall, *Isaiah 34-35*, p. 45-46.

[15] E.g. Oswalt, p. 610; Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 270; Seitz, p. 238.

[16] BHS suggest emending the 1st p. suffixes to 3rd person but there is no reason for this.

[17] Some commentators (e.g. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 270; Oswalt, p. 609; Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, p. 3) take כי in a temporal sense, 'when my sword…'.

[18] Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, p. 5 adopts Targ's and 1 QIsa [a]'s reading תראה and translates 'is seen'. LXX and Vg read the Qal and have 'is drunk/ satiated'.

[19] Cf. 1 Kgs 20:42; in Isa 10:6 Israel is the 'people of my anger', עַם עֶבְרָתִי.

[20] See for example Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, pp. 10-11; Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 270; Oswalt, pp. 610-611; Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 273.

[21] Miscall, *Isaiah 34-35*, points out that the term מִשְׁפָּט, 'judgement' occurs often in Isa usually in the sense of 'justice' but also in a 'trial' sense in 4:4; 28:6; 41:1; 54:17. He writes: 'in 34:5 it is usually translated "judgement" in a sense that combines the three meanings of the trial, the guilty verdict and the carrying out of the sentence. The violent and bloody context requires this type of understanding, but the sense of justice, of fairness, lingers in the background…' (p. 49).

v. 6d ForYahweh has a sacrifice in Bozra כִּי זֶבַח לַיהוָה בְּבָצְרָה
v. 6e and a great slaughter in the land of Edom וְטֶבַח גָּדוֹל בְּאֶרֶץ אֱדוֹם

The slaughter is depicted with gory details, Yahweh's Sword is covered in blood and fat.

v. 6a The Sword of Yahweh is full with blood חֶרֶב לַיהוָה מָלְאָה דָם
v. 6b became gorged from fat, הֵדַשְּׁנָה מֵחֵלֶב
from blood of lambs and goats; מִדַּם כָּרִים וְעַתּוּדִים
v. 6c from the fat of the kidneys of rams מֵחֵלֶב כִּלְיוֹת אֵילִים

Verse 7 goes on in similar fashion,

v. 7a And the wild oxen go down with them; וְיָרְדוּ רְאֵמִים עִמָּם
v. 7b the young bulls with the mighty ones; וּפָרִים עִם־אַבִּירִים
v. 7c And their land is satiated/drenched from blood וְרָוְתָה אַרְצָם מִדָּם
v. 7d and their dust from fat is gorged. וַעֲפָרָם מֵחֵלֶב יִדְשָׁן׃

The extent of the slaughter is emphasised by repeating the words 'blood' and 'fat', and also by the variety of animals killed. The sacrifice is to be taken both literally and figuratively, nothing and no one is to be left alive in the whole land of Edom. Goldingay has pointed out that 'wild oxen and great bulls are not sacrificial animals' (p. 195). Here they refer to the leaders of the nation. Even the mighty ones are powerless when faced with Yahweh's Sword, the agent of his fury and destruction.

4.2.2 Isaiah 34: 8-13b

As mentioned earlier, v. 8, together with v. 5b, could hold the key to understanding the reason behind Yawheh's fury against the nations in general (v.2) and against Edom in particular (vv. 5b-7, 9-17). They place this section in a legal context. Yahweh destroys Edom in 'judgement' (לְמִשְׁפָּט). 'Vengeance' (נָקָם) and 'recompense/retribution' (שִׁלּוּמִים[22]) also imply that 'there is some justice to be sorted out with Edom'.[23]

[22] Only here in Isa, but see also Deut 32:35 ('vengeance' and 'recompense' together); Hos 9:7 ('days of recompense'); Mic 7:3 ('reward, bribe'); Ps 91: 8 ('reward').

[23] Goldingay, p. 195.

The devastation of the land of Edom continues in vv. 9-15.[24] All the people and their livestock are slaughtered but the destruction does not stop there. Everything has to be razed to the ground. Buildings, living quarters, towns and villages are burned (v. 9-10ab) and left to ruin (v. 13ab), even if there were any people left alive they would not be able to call this place a kingdom anymore (v. 10cd,12). The habitable places are taken over by desert land, the livestock replaced by wild animals and desert creatures (v. 11, 13c-15). This image reminds one of ancient Near Eastern warfare; throughout history nations annihilated other nations, completely destroyed towns, entire kingdoms and civilizations disappeared.[25]

Most commentators see here a parallel to the fate and destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19: 24-29),[26] the brimstone (גָּפְרִית), all the living including vegetation destroyed, smoke rising from the land. Indeed the imagery and vocabulary are similar even if not identical.

The destruction is complete and final. Oswalt argues that in v. 10 'each line begins with a stronger phrase denoting endlessness'.[27] Thus it might seem as a contradiction when we are told that a variety of wild animals come and inhabit the now desolate places. If there is no life, no vegetation, how is it possible that wild animals live there? Oswald argues that as this is poetry, we should not take it literally. However, if we look carefully we can see that the poet purposefully links the images together

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[24] This is the way commentators usually understand the feminine suffixes in v. 9, i.e. 'her wadis', 'her dust', 'her land' refer to Edom's wadis, dust and land. However, Miscall, *Isaiah 34-35*, recently pointed out that Edom is usually referred to with a masc. pronoun whereas Zion, a city is feminine. He divides the verses differently and takes v. 8-9 together, thus the feminine pronouns would be referring to Zion (pp. 58-61).

Yes, a day of vengeance for YHWH, a year of retribution for Zion's case.
Her wadis turn to pitch, and her dust to brimstone.
And her land is burning pitch.

Although Miscall has a point and his interpretation is possible, the context does not support it. Yahweh's anger was turned against Edom, his sword slaughtered the people and domestic animals of the land and now the destruction continues with burning and erasing towns and buildings to the ground, making the land uninhabitable, making the devastation complete.

[25] The Mitanni Empire, the Hittites, Ugarit, Carthage, are just a few examples of once great and soon forgotten empires.

[26] Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 272; Clements, *Isaiah 1*-39, p. 273; Miscall, *Isaiah 34-35*, p. 59; Oswalt, pp. 614-615; Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, p. 12; Kaiser, p. 358. Some liken the destruction to scenery after the devastation by a volcanic eruption (Kaiser, Goldingay) or even after a nuclear bomb (Oswalt, Brueggemann and Goldingay).

[27] P. 614. He also notes that this might be seen in parallel with sacrificial fires in the temple that are to be kept burning all the time (Lev 6:13).

building on the earlier ones and achieving a more intense picture at every stage. There is blood-soaked dust (vv. 3c, 7cd) and earth covered with corpses (v. 3ab). The significance of this image is more than just the fact that there was no one left to bury them. In the ancient Near East it was a form of punishment that bodies were left exposed to the birds and wild animals. Fensham writes that this was the fate for example of those who broke an oath or treaty. 'In the Esarhaddon treaty, the threat is made that the corpse of the transgressor shall be food for eagle and jackal.'[28] In Numbers 25:4 it was the punishment of the Israelite leaders who allowed the people to worship foreign gods to be killed and their bodies left exposed (וְהוֹקַע אוֹתָם לַיהוָה נֶגֶד הַשָּׁמֶשׁ, literally 'hang them for Yahweh in the sun'). Similarly in 2 Samuel 21 when the Gibeonites took their vengeance on the sons of Saul and killed them, it was their intention to leave the bodies exposed (וְהוֹקַעֲנוּם, v. 6) presumably for the birds and wild animals, as in v. 10 we are told that Rizpah, their mother did not allow the birds and the wild animals to touch her sons' bodies.[29]

In our passage there is no one to keep these creatures away. The poet describes in detail how they are free to come and take up residence, and the implication is also that they are free to scavenge the corpses. Thus the Edomites are suffering the ultimate punishment.

The animals of vv. 11 and 13-15 are birds and wild animals that now replace the domesticated ones, goats, lambs, rams and bulls of vv. 6 and 7, that have been slaughtered; they are also desert dwellers (see below) because the landscape has changed from populated areas and lush valleys to burnt out, desolate earth. We have the feeling that creation was unmade as the reference to the initial chaos (קַו־תֹּהוּ וְאַבְנֵי־בֹהוּ) implies in v. 11cd. There are now no people to rule or work and look after the land. Instead of crops it is only thorns and nettles that grow on the land and even on the ruins of former grand buildings (v. 12, 13ab).

In v. 11 we have four (possible) birds: (קָאַת), (קִפּוֹד), (יַנְשׁוּף), and (עֹרֵב) nesting in the now desolate place. The identification of these birds or animals is uncertain.[30]

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[28] F. Charles Fensham, 'The Treaty between Israel and the Gibeonites', *BA* 27 (1964), 96-100, (p.100).

[29] Other examples are: 1 Sam 17:44, 46; 1 Sam 31:10-12; 2 Kgs 10:8; Jer 7:33, 9:22, 16:4; etc. See also ch.5 n. 100 p. 123.

[30] Versions, commentators and Bible translations vary even in translating the same word in different passages. For example BDB's definition for קָאַת is 'a bird, perhaps a pelican or a kind of owl';

4.2.2.1 קָאַת and קִפּוֹד

The קָאַת is usually translated as 'pelican' perhaps because of LXX and Vg's rendering,[31] as the root of the word קא or קיא means 'to vomit',[32] and the pelican was thought to feed its young by regurgitating its food. However, as G. R. Driver has pointed out, this is the way many birds feed their young, it is not sufficient to base the translation on this fact alone.[33] Furthermore other occurrences of קָאַת do not support the 'pelican' translation. קָאַת occurs in Lev 11:18 and its parallel Deut 14:17 in a list of unclean birds that are forbidden to be eaten. It is listed with רָחָם and תִּנְשֶׁמֶת, both of which are variously translated in the Bible versions.[34] Driver has suggested 'osprey' for רָחָם, and 'little owl' for תִּנְשֶׁמֶת. This alone would not rule out translating the word as 'pelican'. However there are two other occurrences of קָאַת, in Zeph 2:14 and in Ps 102: 7, which throw more light on its meaning. In the Zephaniah passage it appears in parallel with קִפּוֹד[35] in a similar context as in Isa 34:11. Vv. 13-15 speak of the destruction of Assyria, and in particular of Nineveh which becomes desolate (שְׁמָמָה) and dry as the desert (צִיָּה כַּמִּדְבָּר).

> Flocks and herds will lie down there, creatures of every kind.
>
> The desert owl (קָאַת) and the screech owl (קִפּוֹד) will roost on her columns (בְּכַפְתֹּרֶיהָ).
>
> Their calls will echo through the windows, rubble will be in the doorways, the beams of cedar will be exposed.
>
> ... What a ruin she has become, a lair for wild beasts!
> All who pass by her scoff and shake their fists. (NIV, vv. 14-15)

Both the קָאַת and the קִפּוֹד (קִפּוּד) are here creatures that dwell in ruined, desolate places.

HALOT is similar (p. 1058); LXX has 'birds' in Isa 34:11, 'pelican' in Lev 11:18, 'cormorant' in Deut 14:17 and 'chameleon' in Zeph 2:14. Similarly RSV has 'hawk' in Isa 34:11; 'pelican' in Lev 11:18 and Deut 14:17; 'vulture' in Zeph 2:14. NJB translates 'pelican' and NIV 'desert owl' in the passages mentioned. The case is similar with the other words.

[31] So JPS; NAS; NAU; NKJ; NJB. In Isa 34:11 LXX has ορνεα, 'birds', but Vg has *onocrotalus*, 'pelican'.

[32] BDB 883: 6958; HALOT 1059: 8215.

[33] 'Birds in the Old Testament: I. Birds in Law', *PEQ* 87 (1955), 5-20 (p. 16).

[34] In Lev 11: 18 and Deut 1:17 we have for רָחָם 'carrion vulture' (RSV; JPS; NAU); 'osprey' (NIV); 'white vulture' (NJB); 'swan' (LXX). For תִּנְשֶׁמֶת 'swan' (KJV); 'white owl' (NIV; NAU); 'horned owl' (CJB; JPS); 'water hen' (RSV); 'ibis' (NJB).

[35] See discussion below p. 77.

In Ps 102 the poet describes his state of distress. In verse 7 he likens himself to the קָאַת מִדְבָּר which appears in parallel with כּוֹס חֳרָבוֹת.

דָּמִיתִי לְקָאַת מִדְבָּר הָיִיתִי כְּכוֹס חֳרָבוֹת׃

I am like a *desert owl*, like an owl among the ruins. (NIV, v. 7)

Here we have a clear association with the desert and ruined desolate places. Pelicans do not live in such an environment, thus Driver's suggestion that the קָאַת is some kind of owl (scops-owl) seems more reasonable.

Beside the above-mentioned Zephaniah passage, קִפּוֹד also occurs in Isa 14:23.[36] It is usually translated as 'hedgehog' or 'porcupine' from the root meaning of קפד Piel 'to roll up'.[37] As in Zeph 2, in Isa 14:23 it also appears in the context of destruction. Here Yahweh declares the destruction of Babylon.

> I will turn her into a place for owls (קִפּוֹד) and into swampland;
>
> I will sweep her with the broom of destruction, declares the Lord Almighty. (NIV, v. 23)

The context of Zeph 2 requires קִפּוֹד appearing in parallel with קָאַת to be some kind of a bird; בְּכַפְתֹּרֶיהָ יָלִינוּ (Zeph 2:14) can hardly refer to a hedgehog lodging on top of a pillar.[38] R. Whitekettle's suggestion of 'ruffed bustard' for קִפּוֹד is followed here.[39]

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[36] The versions also take קִפּוֹז of Isa 34:15 as a variant form of קִפּוֹד. See discussion below in 4.2.3.6.

[37] The meaning of the word is 'hedgehog' in the cognate languages (MHeb., JArm., Sam., Syr., Mnd., Eth.) and the versions translate the word as such. (HALOT, p. 1117). In Zeph 2:14 קִפּוֹד is translated as 'screech owl' (NIV; CJB); 'bittern' (KJV; JPS); 'hedgehog' (RSV and LXX); 'porcupine' (NJB). In Isa 14:23 we have 'owls' (NIV); 'bittern' (KJV; JPS); and 'hedgehog' (LXX; RSV; NJB; NAU; CJB). In Isa 34:11 NIV is back to 'screech owl'; RSV changed to 'porcupine' and CJB to 'hawk'; KJV and JPS kept 'bittern' and LXX, NJB and NAU have 'hedgehog'. It seems that most Bible versions are inconsistent in their translations.

[38] כפתור is a capital of a pillar in Amos 9:1; a knob on a lamp-stand in Exod 25:31,33,34-36; 37:17,19-22 (BDB, 3730, p. 499; HALOT, p. 496).

[39] 'Of Mice and Wren: Terminal Level Taxa in Israelite Zoological Thought', *SJOT* 17 no. 2 (2003), 163-182 (pp.178-179). He argues that Israelite zoological classification (which, he points out, 'as a self-conscious intellectual interest and cognitive method was only found in the priestly thought world', p. 182) distinguished animals according to three main categories of attributes: physical traits, vocalizations, and habitat (p. 175). Desert/wilderness, waste place/ruins are habitats associated with particular aerial animal kinds. He lists all the above discussed birds (pp. 178-179). NIV's translation as 'screech owl/owl' is also possible as it is consistent with the bird's appearance in all the other passages.

4.2.2.2 יַנְשׁוֹף and עֹרֵב

יַנְשׁוֹף occurs in Lev 11:17; Deut 14:16 listed as an unclean bird, and in Isa 34:11. LXX and Vg translate 'ibis' in Isa 34 and Lev 11, but 'swan' in Deut 14 (they use 'ibis' for תִּנְשֶׁמֶת there). The Bible versions vary: NIV has 'great owl' for all three; RSV has 'owl' in Isa 34, 'ibis' in Lev 11, and 'great owl' in Deut 14; KJV, JPS, NAU and CJB have 'owl'/'screech owl' in Isa 34, and 'great owl' in the other two; NJB has 'owl' in Isa 34 and 'barn owl' in Lev 11 and Deut 14. Some kind of owl seems reasonable. Driver's suggestion of 'screech owl' is convincing and we shall therefore follow that.

Finally, the translation of the fourth creature (bird) עֹרֵב is reasonably certain.[40] The versions and Bible translations agree on 'raven' in most of its occurrences, and Driver also suggests 'raven' or 'rook'.

In summary, we have four birds listed in v. 11, the scops-owl, the ruffed bustard, the screech owl, and the raven. However, we have to keep in mind that their identification is uncertain, even when we take all the available information into consideration the best we can do is guess. The point of v. 11 is that these birds can dwell in desert and ruined places. All of them are *raptores*, they eat live prey or carrion.[41]

4.2.3 Isaiah 34: 13c-15

The difficulty of identifying and/or interpreting the animals/creatures of our passage continues in the following verses. In these verses we have again six terms that refer to some kind of creatures; the translation of some of them very much debated. Some commentators argue that the poet illustrates the destruction with images of wild animals and 'demonic' creatures. So Kaiser, Watts, Burrelli, Brueggemann and Miscall regard two or more of the creatures as 'demonic'. They all take לִילִית to be the Mesopotamian demoness or *Lilith* of later Jewish belief[42], and שָׂעִיר as a goat-

[40] Also appears as an unclean bird in Lev 11:15; Deut 14:14; as raven or type of crow in Zeph 2:14; Ps 147:9, Gen 8:7; 1 Kgs 17:4,6; Prov 30:17; Job 38:41; Cant 5:11.

[41] Driver, 'Birds in Law', p. 19. These birds can still be seen by birdwatchers in the Arava valley, north of Eilat, near Kibbutz Lotan, according to http://www.birdingisrael.com [accessed 2007-02-06].

[42] By 'later Jewish' the beliefs of post-biblical and medieval Judaism are meant.

'demon',[43] but they seem to disagree regarding the nature of the צִיִּים and the אִיִּים. Brueggemann takes them as simply animals, 'wildcats' and 'hyenas'; Kaiser regards צִיִּים ('devils') but not אִיִּים ('hyenas') as 'demonic'. Miscall follows Watts and Wildberger and translates them as 'demons' and 'phantoms'. Burrelli is not sure about these two but is inclined towards a 'demonic' interpretation simply because they are listed together with שָׂעִיר and לִילִית.[44]

A close look and examination of all these terms here and in their other contexts is needed. Initially they are left untranslated.

v.13c	and it becomes a dwelling of *tannim*,	וְהָיְתָה נָוֶה תַּנִּים
v.13d	a haunt for *banot ya'anah*.	חָצִיר לִבְנוֹת יַעֲנָה׃
v. 14a	And *syym* meet with *iyym*,	וּפָגְשׁוּ צִיִּים אֶת־אִיִּים
v.14b	And the *sa'ir* cries to its companion,	וְשָׂעִיר עַל־רֵעֵהוּ יִקְרָא
v.14c	yes, there the *lilit* rests,	אַךְ־שָׁם הִרְגִּיעָה לִילִית
v.14d	and finds herself a resting place.	וּמָצְאָה לָהּ מָנוֹחַ׃
v. 15a	There the *qipoz* nests,	שָׁמָּה קִנְּנָה קִפּוֹז
v. 15b	and lays, and hatches, and gathers (her young) under her shadow/wing;	וַתְּמַלֵּט וּבָקְעָה וְדָגְרָה בְּצִלָּהּ
v.15c	yes, there the *dayyot* gather each with its companion.	אַךְ־שָׁם נִקְבְּצוּ דַיּוֹת אִשָּׁה רֵעוּתָהּ׃

4.2.3.1 תַּנִּים

In vv. 13 c and d we have the תַּנִּים and the בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה. The first one of these is the plural of the hypothetical root תן, but according to HALOT the derivation of the substantive is uncertain. The meaning of the word given there is 'jackal' (*canis aureus*, p. 1759). In Isaiah it occurs in 13:22; 35:7; 43:20, and elsewhere in Jer 9:10; 10:22; 14:6; 49:33; 51:37; Mic 1:8; Ps 44:20; Job 30:29; Lam 4:3.

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[43] Curiously Watts understands שָׂעִיר to be a 'demonic' being but translates it as 'wild goat' (*Isaiah 34-66*, p. 13).

[44] Kaiser, pp. 352, 359; Watts, *Isaiah 34-66,*p. 13; Burrelli, pp. 68-73; Miscall, *Isaiah 34-35*, pp. 82-84; Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, pp. 271-272. Burrelli writes: 'The conclusion is that the names mentioned in Isaiah 34:14 refer to beings of a supernatural nature. This is certainly so for שָׂעִיר and לִילִית. צִיִּים and אִיִּים are admittedly uncertain, but the argument that they represent something demonic merely by their placement in the same verse with לִילִית and שָׂעִיר has weight.' (p. 73) This argument is, at best, unconvincing and it is built on the presupposition that the other two terms refer to 'demons' which in itself is questionable.

In Isa 13: 22 תַּנִּים occurs with אִיִּים but in the previous verse we have צִיִּים, [45]אֹחִים, בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה, and שְׂעִירִים. The context is very similar to that of the present chapter where the poet describes the destruction of Babylon. The city's fate is similar to Sodom and Gomorrah's (v. 19), complete destruction; no human habitation will be possible for generations and thus no domestic animals will live there, only wild creatures able to inhabit ruined places. LXX and Vg both have imaginary creatures in mind (ονοκενταυροι and *sirenae*). However, it is more likely that the contrast is between domesticated animals associated with human habitation, and wild creatures associated with ruined places, rather than a mixture of wild animals and 'monsters' (v. 20).

In Isa 35:7 the context is one contrary to the present one; where there was desolation and ruin, life will return in every form, human, plant and animal. There are no other specific creatures mentioned thus the context requires that בִּנְוֵה תַנִּים here be translated as 'in the haunts of howling creatures' in general rather than 'jackals' specifically.[46]

In Isa 43:20 תַּנִּים and בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה appear in parallel with חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה, as animals associated with desert and wasteland (v. 19cd, 20cd). Thus this context indicates that both these animals are wild creatures that live in desert and ruined places.

In all the five Jeremiah passages the word תַּנִּים is associated with destruction leading to desolation and ruined places. In Jer 9:10 Jerusalem is a ruined city where human habitation is not possible, it is a 'haunt for *tannim'*, מְעוֹן תַּנִּים; in 10:22 the towns of Judah are threatened with desolation from the North. The same expression, a 'haunt for *tannim'*, מְעוֹן תַּנִּים, as in the previous passage is used. Similarly in Jer 49:33 and 51:37, Hazor and Babylon respectively become a 'haunt for *tannim'*, מְעוֹן תַּנִּים, because they are a heap of ruins, desolate with no one to live there.

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[45] אֹחִים is a *hapax*, and only occurs here. The meaning given by HALOT (p. 29) is 'howling desert animals', perhaps 'eagle owl' (NJB); but Driver argues that there is no adequate reason for such a translation, rather he suggests 'hyena'. Some Bible translations have 'jackal' (NIV) or simply 'howling creature' (RSV). There is no way of deciding on the correct rendering, either Driver's or RSV's suggestion is preferable to 'jackal', as that appears in the next verse for תַּנִּים.

[46] LXX has ορνεων 'birds'; Vg *dracones*; also KJV: 'dragons'; others mostly 'jackals' (e.g. NIV; RSV; NJB).

In Jer 14:6 'wild donkeys', פְּרָאִים appear in parallel to תַּנִּים. The context is also that of desolation, there is nothing to eat for these wild creaures. Wild donkeys are associated with desert in Jer 2:24 and Job 24:5, and with ruined places in Isa 34:14.[47]

Modern Bible translations agree in their rendering of תַּנִּים as 'jackals',[48] and while Vg consistently offers *draconum*, the LXX translators varied their options, offering δρακοντων, 'dragons' in 9:10; στρουθων, 'ostriches' in 10:22 and 49:33, and simply left it out in 14:6 and 51:37.

In Mic 1:8 we have a new aspect of the תַּנִּים which supports this rendering, a reference to their howling (יִלֵּל) which is likened to the sounds of sorrowful mourning and wailing. 'I will make wailing (אֶעֱשֶׂה מִסְפֵּד) like the *tannim* (כַּתַּנִּים), and lament (וְאֵבֶל) like the *banot ya'anah* (כִּבְנוֹת יַעֲנָה).'[49]

There is no new information from Ps 44:20 (19); the psalmist laments that God had crushed or broken him (them) in the place of *tannim* (בִּמְקוֹם תַּנִּים). The context is again that of destruction, the faithful are being killed because of God and even by God himself.

As in Mic 1:8, in Job 30:29 תַּנִּים appears in parallel with בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה. Job declares: 'I am a brother of *tannim* (אָח הָיִיתִי לְתַנִּים), a companion of *banot ya'anah* (וְרֵעַ לִבְנוֹת יַעֲנָה).' Job enlists and complains about his misfortune, 'mourning' and 'wailing' in v. 31. It appears that in this context as in Micah these creatures figure because of the sound they make. NIV, RSV, NJB, CJB, JPS, and NAU translate 'jackals', KJV and Vg 'dragons' and LXX 'sirens' for *tannim*, and 'ostrich' (RSV, NJB, CJB, JPS, NAU, LXX, Vg) or 'owl' (NIV, KJV) for *banot ya'anah*.

Finally, in Lam 4:3 we have a reference to female תַּנִּים suckling their young and contrasted to 'the daughters of my people (בַּת־עַמִּי) ' who are 'cruel (אַכְזָר) as the ostriches (?) in the wilderness (כַּיְעֵנִים בַּמִּדְבָּר)'.

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[47] Wild donkeys also appear in Ps 104:11 (quenching thirst); Hos 8:9 (wandering alone). Other occurrences are Job 6:5; 11:12; 39:5; Sir 13:18 and Gen 16:12 (man like a wild ass).

[48] NIV; RSV; NJB and others. KJV is consistently translating it as 'dragons' following perhaps the Vg which also renders the term as *draconum* in all the passages mentioned above.

[49] LXX here translates תַּנִּים as 'dragons', δρακοντων, and בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה as 'daughters of sirens', θυγατερων σειρηνων. Vg has *draconum* and *strutionum*. Modern Bible versions have 'jackals' (NIV; RSV; NJB; CJB; JPS; NAU) and owls (NJB, NIV) or ostriches (RSV; CJB; JPS; NAU).

While all the versions agree on the translation of כְּיִעִים בַּמִּדְבָּר as 'ostrich of the desert', there are some interesting suggestions for תַּנִּים here. Vg gives the curious *lamiae*[50], LXX δρακοντες, KJV 'sea monsters' and the other versions simply 'jackals' (NIV, RSV, NJB, CJB, JPS, NAU).

In summary, we can say that תַּנִּים occurs in contexts where reference is made to destruction; they are wild animals (Isa 43:20) that inhabit the desolate and desert places, and in some passages there is reference to the howling sound that they make (Mic1:8; Job 30:29). A general translation of 'howling creatures' or a more specific 'jackals' are both possible depending on what the context requires.

4.2.3.2 בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה

The next creatures, the בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה, are usually translated as 'ostriches' (ancient versions as well as some modern, e.g. RSV, NJB), less frequently as 'owls' (NIV). The literal meaning of the expression is 'daughters of greed'[51] or 'daughters of the wilderness',[52] and because the ostrich is known both to be a greedy bird and to inhabit the deserts of Palestine, the translation of the word as 'ostrich' seemed an obvious choice. In the Hebrew Bible the word occurs in Lev 11:16 and Deut 14:15 (in the singular) in the list of unclean birds,[53] and in the plural in Job 30:29; Isa 13:21; 34:13; 43:20; Jer 50:39; and Mic 1:8. Most frequently it appears with the תַּנִּים (Job 30:29; Isa 13:21-22; 34:13; Mic 1:8); but wild animals in Isa 43:20 and צִיִּים and אִיִּים in Isa 13:21 (as well as אֹחִים and שְׂעִירִים) and Jer 50:39 also occur. All the passages except Jer 50:39 have already been discussed above.

The context of Jer 50:39 is very similar to Isa 13:10-22 (and that of Isa 34). The whole chapter is a message/prophecy about Babylon. The prophet declares Yahweh's word, his sword is coming against/upon the entire city. Babylon's inhabitants, leaders and ordinary people alike, officials, wise men, the false prophets will be killed; her army, warriors (even the foreigners within) and war equipment (horses and chariots) will be destroyed (vv. 35-37). Not only the living are annihilated but

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[50] This is used by Vg for *lilith* in Isa 34:14.

[51] From the Syr. *ya'nā* and *ya' īn*, 'greedy' (HALOT, p. 421 and Driver, 'Birds in Law', p. 12 and p. 12 n. 53).

[52] HALOT, p. 421; Driver, 'Birds in Law', p. 12 and p. 12 n. 54.

[53] LXX ,Vg, RSV, NJB, CJB, JPS and NAU translate 'ostrich'; NIV and KJV have 'owl'.

the city is completely plundered and left empty (v. 37). However, there is more to come, because the place is made completely uninhabitable as the waters dry up (v. 38). The comparison to Sodom and Gomorrah appears here too. As God destroyed ('overthrew') those cities and made it impossible for people to live there (v. 40), so here too, the place will not be inhabited for generations only by some wild creatures who are able to live in ruined and desolate places, לָכֵן יֵשְׁבוּ צִיִּים אֶת־אִיִּים וְיָשְׁבוּ בָהּ בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה (v. 39).

From these passages it is clear that similarly to the תַּנִּים, the בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה, (as well as the צִיִּים and the אִיִּים so far) are creatures that inhabit ruined and desolate places, and they utter wailing cries similar to mourning sounds. These features are not characteristic of ostriches, as Driver has argued, but can be applied to owls. He writes:

> These are all habits of the owls, so that the *bat yaanah* may well be the eagle-owl, a large owl which is found in semi-desert areas covered with scrub, where it rests on bushes during the day and hunts partridges, hares and rodents, by night; in Egypt it inhabits the steep cliff-like sides of mountains and temples whether ruined or intact. In Palestine it occurs more frequently than any other owl except the little owl. ('Birds in Law', p. 13)

LXX translated the expression as 'sirens' (or 'daughters of sirens') in Isa 13:21; Jer 50:39 and Mic 1:8 (while Vg kept to the 'ostriches' in these passages) but as 'ostriches' in the other passages. This, and the fact that they used 'sirens' for the תַּנִּים elsewhere, clearly indicates that the versions were in difficulty translating these terms. As mentioned above, there is no reason to imagine some kind of monsters or mythical creatures in some of the passages but not in others; the contexts are consistent in referring to animals/birds associated with ruined or desert places to contrast them with animals that are associated with human habitation. Thus Driver's suggestion for translating the בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה (followed by KJV and NIV) as 'eagle-owl' is in agreement with all the contexts of the term.

The animal imagery continues in vv. 14-15. The audience can see as well as hear the wild creatures in the description as they take over the ruined places and make it into their home.

4.2.3.3 צִיִּים and אִיִּים

צִיִּים and אִיִּים appear in v. 14a. The first term has 10 occurrences, of which 4 times HALOT derive the word from a hypothetical word of Egyptian origin, *dʾy*, 'river-going ship'.[54] The other 6 occurrences are in: Isa 13:21; 23:13; 34:14; Jer 50:39; Pss 72:9 and 74:14. The second term has 40 occurrences, 37 times its meaning is clearly 'coast, island' or 'shore'; only 3 times (Isa 13:22; 34:14 and Jer 50:39) does it refer to something different.[55] In Isa 34:14 and Jer 50:39 צִיִּים אֶת־אִיִּים appear together in one expression; in Isa 13:22 אִיִּים is parallel to תַּנִּים, but in v. 21 צִיִּים also appears (along with other creatures). As seen in the discussion of the passage earlier,[56] these creatures appear in a context where the poet describes the complete destruction of Babylon. The once proud and arrogant city that was one of the greatest cities of the world is now reduced to the state of Sodom and Gomorrah, so utterly devastated and ruined that not even the nomadic tribes who are used to living in harsh conditions would be able to set their tent up and shepherd their flocks there. In contrast to their flocks appear the different wild animals which would inhabit the ruined palaces and temples. In the places where the presence of sacrificial and domestic animals once meant activity and life, now the presence of these strange scavengers represents devastation and death. There is no need to read into these verses anything mysterious, [57] the meaning of vv. 21-22 is clear. Watts highlights the point very well when he writes:

> Although precise identification of many of the animals mentioned in these verses is difficult, the general sense is clear enough. These are animals which inhabit dark and lonely settings. There is something vaguely ominous about many of them. The mighty city is silent except for the hoots and howls of the night-dwellers. The lovely palaces and mighty fortresses alike have become the home of the jackals and hyenas who can only feed on the carrion left behind when the lions have eaten their fill. How are the mighty fallen! (*Isaiah 1-33*, p. 310)

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[54] In Num 24:24; Isa 33:21; Ezek 30:9; and Dan 11:30 (HALOT, p. 1020).

[55] HALOT, p. 38.

[56] See above.

[57] The presence of 'demons' or 'demonic' animals alongside real ones, as does for example Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, pp. 122-123; Kaiser, pp. 20-21; Burrellli, pp. 73-74.

In a very similar context, in Jer 50:39, צִיִּים, אִיִּים and בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה appear as taking over the ruined and devastated place that once was the mighty Babylon.[58]

The צִיִּים also appear in Isa 23:13 alone in what appears to be a more general sense. The chapter is a prophecy about Tyre, and in v. 13 the poet reminds his audience of Babylon's fate described earlier in ch.13. Babylon had been destroyed, made into a ruin, a place for the wild creatures in ch.13:21-22, here (23:13) represented only by the צִיִּים (וְיִסָּדָהּ לְצִיִּים).[59] There is nothing more specific said about them, the word is usually translated as 'desert creatures' (KJV, NIV, CJB, NAU) or 'wild beasts' (RSV, NJB).[60]

In Ps 72:9 it is more likely that the word refers to humans rather than animals[61] as it appears in parallel with אֹיֵב, 'enemy' in a context describing the characteristics of a great king. He will judge and defend his people, he will be well-known and mighty, his enemies and צִיִּים shall bow down before him. Because of the parallelism with 'enemy', some versions take צִיִּים in a similar sense, thus RSV has 'foes'. Others have a more general translation, 'nomads' (NAS, NAU) or 'desert dwellers' (KJV, NIV, CJB, JPS).[62] Nothing specific can be said about the word, though the context here and the word's other occurrences make the 'desert dwellers' translation the most plausible.

Finally, the last occurrence of צִיִּים is in Ps 74:14 where in vv. 12-17 God is described as a mighty warrior king (with reference to his battle with the Sea and Leviathan, vv. 12-14) as well as one who has power over nature and its forces (vv. 15-17). The translation of the word as 'desert creatures' in v. 14 at first glance would appear contradictory, as it is Leviathan, the creature of the sea, that is fed to the people of the צִיִּים, dwellers/creatures of the desert. However, when we look at the context carefully we see that it fits. We notice that in singing God's praises in vv. 12-17 the psalmist employs not only parallelism but also a series of *merismus* which serve to emphasize the greatness and all-encompassing power of God. Thus God is the one who gives Leviathan, the mighty creature of the *sea* to be food for the צִיִּים ,

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[58] See discussion of the passage above in 4.2.3.2.

[59] On the difficulties of interpreting this passage see for ex. Oswalt, n. 11, p. 426.

[60] LXX and Vg both leave it out; JPS translates 'shipmen'.

[61] NJB translates 'the Beast'.

[62] LXX has Αιθιοπες, 'Ethiopians'.

creatures of the *desert*; he *opens up* (בָּקַעְתָּ) springs and streams (מַעְיָן וָנָחַל), and *dries up* (הוֹבַשְׁתָּ) rivers (נַהֲרוֹת); he rules *day* (לְךָ יוֹם) and *night* (אַף־לְךָ לַיְלָה); he was the one who established *sun* (שֶׁמֶשׁ) and *moon* (מָאוֹר); set the *boundaries* of earth (כָּל־גְּבוּלוֹת אָרֶץ), and made the *seasons* (קַיִץ וָחֹרֶף). God's role and actions are emphasised by a series of Hiphil (3) and Piel (2) verbs and by the emphatic repetition of the personal pronoun, אַתָּה (7 times in 5 verses). Thus we can conclude that although again nothing specific is said about the צִיִּים, from the context it is clear that it refers to some creature whose environment is opposite to that of Leviathan, the creature of the sea.[63] The opposite of sea, a great expanse of water, is lack of water, i.e. desert. Thus the most plausible explanation of צִיִּים here is 'creatures of desert'.[64]

In summary, we can say that צִיִּים and אִיִּים also appear as creatures that live in desert and ruined places. From its parallel occurrences with תַּנִּים and בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה, the אִיִּים are probably also howling creatures; of the צִיִּים all we can say is that they are desert dwellers. The modern translations are consistent with this sense; the ancient versions saw mythical creatures.[65] It is similar with the אִיִּים, where most versions offer 'hyena' and the ancient ones various imaginary creatures.[66]

4.2.3.4 The שָׂעִיר

In v. 14b שָׂעִיר appears which many commentators take to refer to some kind of *satyr*-like 'demon', probably imaginary,[67] although some earlier commentators argued that they were real and were worshipped by the early Israelites as gods or representatives of gods.[68] Furthermore, on the basis of the word's occurrences in

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[63] Miscall, *Isaiah 34-35*, notes that there is a pun in צִיִּים with ציה 'thirsty' (Isa 35:1) which underlines our point (p. 83).

[64] It is interesting to note that similarly to Ps 72:9, the LXX translated the word as Αιθιοψιν, 'Ethiopians'. NIV, RSV, NJB, CJB and NAU understood it as referring to animals/creatures of the desert/wilderness, and KJV and JPS as to the people of the desert.

[65] NIV, RSV and NJB have variations of wild/desert creatures (NJB, CJB and JPS have 'wild cats' in Isa 34 and Jer 50). LXX has 'demons' and 'idols that dwell in the islands' in Isa 34:14 and Jer 50:39 respectively, and Vg has *daemonia* and *dracones* in those passages.

[66] So NIV, RSV and NJB. KJV has 'wild beasts of the islands'. CJB and JPS translate 'jackals/hyenas'. LXX has ονοκενταθροι in Isa 13 and 34 and 'daughters of sirens' in Jer 50; Vg has *onocentauris* in Isa 34, 'howling creatures' in Isa 13 and *fatuis ficariis* in Jer 50.

[67] As the 'satyr' translation suggests. Satyrs were part human and part goat hybrid creatures in Greek mythology.

[68] Oesterley & Robinson, p. 113.

Lev 17:7; 2 Chron 11:15 and possibly 2 Kgs 23: 8 they argue that when Yahweh worship could no longer tolerate worship of other gods, these 'former gods' were reduced to the status of 'demons'.[69]

We now turn to examine the occurrence of the word in the above-mentioned three texts.

4.2.3.4.1 Leviticus 17:7

Lev 17 is the beginning of the section that is usually referred to as The Holiness Code (chs. 17-26), the central idea of which is Israel's holiness as a people.[70] The theme of ch. 17 is blood and its proper handling. After the introduction (vv. 1-2) two main sections can be distinguished. Vv. 3-9 contain laws concerning sacrifice, and vv. 10-16 laws concerning the eating of blood.

Vv. 3-4 declare that sacrificing an ox (שׁוֹר), a lamb (כֶּשֶׂב) or a goat (עֵז) is equal to bloodshed if it is done in the wrong place; the consequence of such unlawful sacrifice is being cut off from the people (וְנִכְרַת הָאִישׁ הַהוּא מִקֶּרֶב עַמּוֹ).[71] Proper (lawful) sacrifice consists of bringing the sacrificial animal to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting in order to present it to Yahweh. Vv. 5 and 7 explain the reason behind introducing this law. Clearly, as they have done often through their history, the Israelites were sacrificing to other gods than Yahweh.[72] Thus the 'wrong place' in fact means sacrificing to the wrong deity. V. 5 spells out that the law was introduced precisely because of this.

v.5

לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יָבִיאוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־זִבְחֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר הֵם זֹבְחִים עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה
וְהֵבִיאָם לַיהוָה אֶל־פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן וְזָבְחוּ זִבְחֵי שְׁלָמִים לַיהוָה אוֹתָם׃

This is in order that the sons of Israel will bring their sacrifices which they sacrifice in the Field, and they will bring them to Yahweh to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, to the priest, and he will sacrifice them to Yahweh as *shelamim* offerings.[73]

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[69] Langton, pp. 39-41; Burrelli, p. 70; etc.

[70] Cf. Lev 19:2. For a different view on the position of Lev 17 see G. Wenham, *Leviticus*, pp. 240-241.

[71] What exactly is the meaning of this expression is not clear.

[72] Exod 34:15, 16; Judg 2:17; 8:27, 33; 2 Kg 23; 2 Chron 11:15; Hos 1-4, 9; Jer 2, 3; Ezek 16; 23; etc.

[73] Scholars disagree regarding the meaning of the *shelamim* offering here. RSV, KJV, CJB, JPS and NAU have 'peace offerings' (so also Noth, p. 128); NIV 'fellowship offerings' (this is the understanding of Bellinger, p. 107, too); NJB 'communion sacrifices'. E. S. Gerstenberger, *Leviticus: A Commentary*, OT Library, trans. by D. W. Stott (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996),

This verse should be read together with v. 7, the first part of which is an expansion on the second/sub clause in v. 5 (אֲשֶׁר הֵם זֹבְחִים עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה).

וְלֹא־יִזְבְּחוּ עוֹד אֶת־זִבְחֵיהֶם לַשְּׂעִירִם אֲשֶׁר הֵם זֹנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם ...

v. 7ab: And they shall no longer sacrifice to the *se'irim*, after/for whom they prostitute themselves…

Clearly the sacrifices that the Israelites were offering to the *se'irim* stand in parallel to the sacrifices they were offering in the Field.[74] The prohibition comes as a consequence of this happening. This suggests that we have here a reference to the Israelites worshipping and sacrificing to foreign deities. This is supported by the use of אֲשֶׁר הֵם זֹנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם, 'for whom they prostitute themselves' (v. 7). The metaphor of playing the harlot is often used in reference to Israel's unfaithfulness to Yahweh.[75] These deities were not necessarily goat-shaped; the word שְׂעִירִים can have other meanings.[76] The context should be the best indicator of the meaning of the word which here is idolatry, hence the need for this law forbidding sacrifice to idols.[77] As the basic meaning of the word שָׂעִיר is 'hairy one', perhaps here we have another term used in a sarcastic or degrading sense that refers to these deities, similar to 'strangers' (זָרִים), 'abominable things' (תּוֹעֵבֹת), '*shedim'* (שֵׁדִים) and 'unknown gods' (אֱלֹהִים לֹא יְדָעוּם) used in Deut 32: 16-17 and elsewhere.[78]

To conclude from this text that the *se'irim* must have been goat-shaped 'demons' or *satyrs* that lived in the desert whom the Israelites were worshipping and to whom they offered sacrifice is reading into the text.[79] There is no evidence to support such a

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has 'meal offerings' (p. 234); and Levine, *Leviticus*, p. 114, and Hartley, *Leviticus*, p. 272, understand it as 'sacrifices of well-being'.

[74] Whether the expression עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה means literally 'in the field' or generally the countryside is difficult to say. It also occurs in Lev 14:7; 2 Sam 11:11, etc.

[75] See examples in n. 73 above.

[76] In Deut 32: 2. See 6.4., p. 198 n. 10.

[77] LXX recognized the context and translated ματαιος 'worthless', 'meaningless'; a term that it uses especially with reference to idols for pagan worship (e.g. Hos 5:11; Jer 2:5; Amos 2:4; Zech 11:17). See Muraoka, GELS , pp. 357-358.

[78] E.g. זָרִים in Pss 44:21; 81:10; Isa 17:10; 43:12; Hos 8:12; תּוֹעֵבֹת in Isa 41:24; 44:19; 2 Kgs 23:13;שֵׁדִים in Ps 106:37.

[79] Noth (p. 131); Hartley (*Leviticus*, p. 272); Levine (*Leviticus*, p. 114) regard the *se'irim* as 'demons' in goat shape (NAS, NAU, CJB and NKJ also translate 'goat demons'; KJV has 'devils'); while Wenham (*Leviticus*, p. 243) and Porter (*Leviticus*, p. 139) regard them as 'demons' who took the form of *satyrs* (also RSV, JPS and NJB). Bellinger's view seems confused, for him v. 7 'prohibits any sacrifice to goat idols or *satyrs*, a kind of demonic figure or alien deity that had some connection with

conclusion. Proponents of such a theory seem to disregard a number of facts that contradict the suggestion. Nowhere in the ancient Near East were demons worshipped, and nowhere did they receive sacrifice. In fact this is one of the major characteristics that differentiate gods and demons.[80] *Satyrs* were imaginary creatures from Greek mythology associated with woodlands not desert, wasteland or fields. N. H. Snaith rightly notes that, 'The whole of this identification of the שְׂעִירִים with goats and satyrs is mistaken. It is due to the introduction of Greek and Roman ideas into a Palestinian environment to which they do not belong.'[81] Snaith goes on to suggest that rather than 'demons', the *se'irim* were 'the rain-gods, the fertility deities, the *baals* of the rain-storms.' This is possible but remains rather conjectural and it is not supported by the text.[82] All we can conclude from Lev 17 is that the Israelites were sacrificing to the שְׂעִירִים, and that the term most likely refers to foreign deities, perhaps used in a satirical sense.

4.2.3.4.2 2 Chronicles 11:15

2 Chron 11 and 12 tell the story of Rehoboam after the Israelite kingdom split, and it should be viewed in parallel with 1 Kgs 12:25 - 14:20. Commentators point out that 2 Chron 11 in fact 'fills the space originally created by the omission of the story of Jeroboam', and that its present place is entirely theological.[83] There are three (new)

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wild goats.' (p. 107) It is not clear whether he equates these terms or cannot make up his mind about the meaning. Earlier scholars like Oesterley & Robinson (pp. 112-113) and Langton (pp. 39-41) recognize that the *satyr* translation is 'misleading', and argue that the *se'irim* were once deities but with the establishment of Yahweh worship later became demonized. Gerstenberger's view is similar. He argues that Lev 17 refers to an ancient custom of sacrificing to 'demons' but at the time of the book's composition this 'demon motif' was no more than 'a historical theme that was hardly still relevant' (p. 237).

[80] See p. 11, also W. Robertson Smith, pp. 119-123; 538-539; *EncJud*[1], p. 1522.

[81] 'The Meaning of שְׂעִירִם', *VT* 25 (1975), 115-118 (p. 118).

[82] Snaith's suggestion is based on a 'fertility-myth' interpretation of the Ugaritic Baal cycle which has now been questioned by several scholars. For the interpretation of the Baal cycle see for example M. S. Smith, 'Interpreting the Baal Cycle', UF 18 (1986), 313-339; *The Ugaritic Baal-cycle: Introduction with Text, Translation and Commentary of KTU 1.1-1.2*, VT Supp. 55 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), I; N. Wyatt, 'Arms and the King: The Earliest Allusions to the Chaoskampf Motif and their Implications for the Interpretation of the Ugaritic and Biblical Traditions', in *'Und Mose schrieb dieses Lied auf': Studien zum Alten Testament und zum Alten Orient*, ed. by M. Dietrich (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1998), pp. 833-882, esp. pp. 848-861.

[83] S. Japhet, *1&2 Chronicles: A Commentary*, OT Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), p. 663. See also H. G. M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles,* New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids : Eerdmans; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1982), pp. 238-245; S. J. De Vries, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), pp. 277-284; S. L. McKenzie, *1-2 Chronicles,*

themes in ch. 11 (noted by all commentators[84]), Rehoboam's building vv. 5-12; religious aspects vv. 13-17; and Rehoboam's family (wives and sons) vv. 18-23. Japhet has pointed out that Jeroboam's story in 1 Kings is also built up around these themes, and that in fact the stories of the two kings represent an antithesis (p. 663).

Chapter 11 presents Rehoboam in a positive light (building work and a large family were considered divine blessing) in contrast to Jeroboam.[85] The emigration of the priests and Levites in vv. 13-17 serves a double purpose. It throws a negative light on Jeroboam and his religious reforms while at the same time it serves to strengthen Rehoboam, a further sign of Yahweh's blessing.[86] The reason for the priests and Levites abandoning their lands and property (אֶת־מִגְרְשֵׁיהֶם וַאֲחֻזָּתָם) was that Jeroboam rejected them. This is expressed by the Hiphil form of the verb זנח (הִזְנִיחָם), usually meaning 'reject', which therefore has a stronger sense than just rejection.[87] Jeroboam cast them out because he had no use for the servants of Yahweh having rejected not only the priests but their god as well.

v. 15 וַיַּעֲמֶד־לוֹ כֹּהֲנִים לַבָּמוֹת וְלַשְּׂעִירִים וְלָעֲגָלִים אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה׃

Jeroboam appointed his own priests to serve 'goats' and 'calves' which he made; these were the false gods he was now following. Commentators usually take the 'calf' as referring to idols (the golden calf idols that Jeroboam made for the people as an alternative for the worship of Yahweh), but frequently understand the שְׂעִירִים as 'demons' ('goat-demons' or 'satyrs').[88] Dillard takes both terms as referring to idols.[89] Regarding the calves he argues that although Jeroboam originally might not

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Abingdon OT Commentaries, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), pp. 260-269; J. A. Thompson, *1,2 Chronicles*, The New American Commentary 9 (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), pp. 252-257; J. M. Myers, *2 Chronicles*, AB (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), pp. 67-71; R. B. Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, WBC 15 (Waco: Word Books, 1987), pp. 90-111.

[84] See n. 83 above.

[85] The Chronicler's omission of 1 Kings 12:20 makes Jeroboam responsible for the northern rebellion.

[86] McKenzie, p. 265; Dillard, p. 97.

[87] HALOT, p. 276.

[88] McKenzie, p. 266; Myers, 2 *Chronicles*, p. 70; Japhet, p. 668; Thompson, *1,2 Chronicles,* p. 255. Williamson, p. 244, notes alternative proposals but retains 'the satyrs' translation (cf. Lev 17:7). He is right to point out that the Chronicler's purpose in adding the reference was to show Jeroboam being in contravention of Lev 17:7.

[89] 'goat and calf idols he had made' (p. 90).

have intended them as idols but simply as pedestals for the 'invisible Yahweh',[90] by the time of the 'later biblical writers/editors' the distinction would have been lost and they would have viewed the calves as idols (pp. 97-98). Dillard seems to point to Egyptian influence in making the calf idols. He writes:

> However, it should be kept in mind that while the Levant does not show evidence of theriomorphic deities, this stricture does not apply to the iconography of Egypt, where deities are routinely portrayed in animal form. The two instances of calf idol production in the Bible occur on the heels of experience in Egypt, at the Exodus (Exod 33) and at Jeroboam's return from exile there. (p. 98)

But what about the 'goats'? Dillard's suggestion, however attractive it may seem, is unsatisfactory as it does not explain the reference to the שְׂעִירִם and their connection to the 'calves'.

It is interesting that the Chronicler adds the reference to the שְׂעִירִם here, which is missing from the later reference in 2 Chron 13:8-9 and also from the account of Jeroboam's cult in 1 Kgs 12. However, in the light of the Chronicler's concern with the Levites, this insertion can easily be understood as an allusion to Lev 17:7.[91] Dillard argues that by doing this the Chronicler 'has enhanced the apostasy of Jeroboam in two ways'; he did not only reject the levitical priests but was also in transgression of the law in Lev 17:7 (p. 97).

We have argued above that the term שְׂעִירִם in Lev 17:7 was used in a derogatory sense to refer to the pagan deities after whom the Israelites went; this makes perfect sense in the present case too. V. 15 is full of the Chronicler's contempt of Jeroboam

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[90] Two questions arise here: first, whether Jeroboam intended the calves as idols or not, and second, the relationship of Jeroboam's calves in 1Kgs 12:26-31 and the 'golden calf' in Exod 32. Both issues are debated by scholars. For a discussion see commentaries, for ex. J. T. Walsh, *1 Kings*, Berit Olam, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996), pp. 171-181; S. J. DeVries, *1 Kings*, WBC 12 (Waco: Word Books, 1985), pp. 160-163; J. Gray, *I & II Kings*: *A Commentary*, 2nd fully rev. edn, OT Library (London: SCM Press, 1970), pp. 315-318; M. Cogan, *1 Kings,* AB (New York: Doubleday, 2001), pp. 357-364. Whatever the original intentions of Jeroboam were, in the text as we have it, he appears as an idolater. Walsh (p. 172) writes that a literary analysis is different form a historical one, and that: 'The Jeroboam we meet in 1 Kings is an idolater and calls his golden calves "gods", even if that depiction defames the historical king.' Walsh argues similarly about the relationship of Exod 32 and 1 Kgs 12; regardless of which text was first, once they are part of a canon the reader cannot read of Jeroboam's calves without making the connection with Aaron's one. Jeroboam compounds his sin of idolatry even more when he presents the calves as the gods 'who brought you up out of Egypt' (cf. Exod 32:4), a title that belongs to Yahweh (p. 173).

[91] This is more so in a literary analysis which deals with the text as we have it. The reader inevitably makes the connection. See n. 90 above.

and his cult. Naturally he refers to the king's abomination in sarcastic tones. LXX uses two terms for שְׂעִירִים here, ειδωλοι, 'idols', and ματαιοι, 'profane things' which is in accordance with this sense.[92]

4.2.3.4.3 2 Kings 23: 8

In this passage the term only appears if we accept the emendation of הַשְּׂעָרִים to שְׂעִירִים .[93]

Chapter 23 is to be read together with the previous one as an account of Josiah's reign and reform,[94] with the reform taking the centre stage. The reform occurs in Josiah's 18th year (22:3),[95] after the finding of the lawbook which many scholars argue was the Book of Deuteronomy.[96] The previous years are not detailed, all we know is that the king walked in the way of David and did not turn away from it (22:2).

Some scholars see Josiah's act as a way of asserting his independence in the face of Assyria's demise and interpret the reform as the expulsion of Assyrian astral deities from the temple.[97] To the contrary, Hobbs claims that Josiah's reform was rather a purging of the cultic practices in Judah and Jerusalem of those Canaanite elements which were introduced by King Manasseh and his son Amon (p. 322). However, this might be too narrow a view as the king's actions are directed against the high places built by Solomon (v. 13), and by Jeroboam (v. 15) as well as the altars of Manasseh (v.12). B. Long sees the material in ch. 23 as falling into a twofold division, with vv.

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[92] Vg has *daemonum* and Tg לשׁידין for שְׂעִירִים but keep 'calves' for עֲגָלִים. There is no reason to regard one as 'demon' but to take the other as referring to an idol. It is more likely that both terms are used to refer to pagan deities in a belittling way; calling them 'goats' and 'calves' does not conjure up an image of powerful deities.

[93] First suggested by Houbigant, Graetz and Hoffman (for reference see Bibliography in J. A. Emerton, ' " The High Places of the Gates" in 2 Kings 23:8', *VT* 44 (1994), 455-467).

[94] T. R. Hobbs, *2 Kings*, WBC 13 (Waco: Word Books, 1985), p. 342; B. O. Long, *2 Kings* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1991), p. 269; M. Cogan and H. Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1988), pp. 277- 281.

[95] Cogan and Tadmor argue that the 'eighteenth year' should not be understood literally; historically Josiah was free to act prior to this date (pp. 296-297).

[96] P. House, *1,2 Kings*, The New American Commentary 8 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), pp. 381-391 (pp. 382-383); Cogan and Tadmor, p. 294. The question of the content of the book and whether it was this content that made Josiah act is still debated. See for example the discussions in House, p. 382; Hobbs, p. 325.

[97] E. g. Nicholson and Bright; quoted in Hobbs, p. 322.

4-9 describing the cleansing of the land and the temple in Jerusalem without specifically mentioning kings ('kings of Judah' referred to only in v. 5 in reference to priests appointed by them), and vv. 10-20 linking the various reform acts to kings, as we have seen above, mentioned by name (p. 273). In any case the emphasis is on the act, and not on the object of the cleansing.

The narrative starts with the king, the priests and the prophets as well as all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem (from the smallest to the greatest) going up to the temple, listening to the king's reading of all the words of the Book of the Covenant, and renewing their covenant with Yahweh (vv. 1-3).

The reform acts are listed in vv. 4- 24. In v. 4 we are told that the king commanded (וַיְצַו) the high-priest, priests and doorkeepers to act (remove things from the temple) whereas in the rest of the account he is presented as the one who acted directly. This was hardly the case, rather he commanded and his orders were carried out (22:3-4; 12; 23:1,4 and 21). However, it was common practice in the ancient Near East that in royal inscriptions all things were attributed to the king personally. It is the king who 'accomplishes great deeds and to him belongs all praise.'[98]

B. Long notes a pattern ('a standard reportorial mold') into which the reform acts fit.

A. verb + object (the actual cultic reform)
B. subordinating word (אֲשֶׁר)
C. a verbal or nominal clause that explains in some way the object of Josiah's action (p. 274)

To these it is possible to add a fourth one - a place is associated with most reform acts, either a place where the items are removed from, or a place where they end up, or both.

D. place associated with reform acts

These places are also often introduced with an אֲשֶׁר, indicating some sort of explanation relating to them.

Thus the following pattern emerges:

[98] B. Long, p. 274. See also royal inscriptions in Egypt, e.g. the Asiatic campaigns of Amenhotep II, Seti I and Ramesses II, ANET, pp. 245-248; 253-258; etc.

Verse	Subject	Verb/action	Object + אֲשֶׁר + description	Place
v. 4	King (*Ordered* high-priest; priests and doorkeepers)	Removed (לְהוֹצִיא)	All things (אֲשֶׁר) made for Baal, Asherah and all host of heaven	From temple of YHWH
		Burnt (וַיִּשְׂרְפֵם)	them	Outside Jerusalem,in the field of Kidron
		Took (וְנָשָׂא)	Their ashes	To Bethel
v.5		Annihilated (וְהִשְׁבִּית)	Priests (אֲשֶׁר) appointed by kings of Judah to serve the above	
v.6		Took (וַיֹּצֵא), burnt (וַיִּשְׂרֹף), ground to powder (וַיָּדֶק לְעָפָר), scattered (וַיִּשְׁלֵךְ)	Ashera pole	From temple of YHWH To outside Jerusalem, Kidron Valley
v.7	King	Tore down (וַיִּתֹּץ)	Quarters of male prostitutes	in the temple (אֲשֶׁר) where women wove for Ashera
v.8	King	Brought (וַיָּבֵא)	All priests	From towns of Judah
		Desecrated (וַיְטַמֵּא)	High-places (אֲשֶׁר) priests burnt incense	from Geba to Beersheba
		Broke down (וְנָתַץ)	Shrines of the Gates אֶת־בָּמוֹת הַשְּׁעָרִים	(אֲשֶׁר) at the entrance of the Gate of Joshua (פֶּתַח שַׁעַר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ)

v.10	King	Desecrated (וְטִמֵּא)	Topheth (אֲשֶׁר) used to sacrifice children in fire to Molech	In the Valley of Ben Hinnom
v.11	King	Removed (וַיַּשְׁבֵּת) Burnt (שָׂרַף בָּאֵשׁ)	Horses (אֲשֶׁר) dedicated to the Sun by kings of Judah Chariots (אֲשֶׁר) dedicated to the Sun	From entrance to temple of YHWH; near (the room of) Nathan Melech אֲשֶׁר בַּפַּרְוָרִים
v.12	King	broke down (נָתַץ) Removed (וַיָּרֶץ) Threw (וְהִשְׁלִיךְ)	Altars (אֲשֶׁר) given by kings of Judah Altars (אֲשֶׁר) given by Manasseh Them Their ashes	(אֲשֶׁר) on the roof, near the upper room of Ahaz In the two courts of temple of YHWH From there Into the Kidron Valley
v.13 v.14	King	Desecrated (טִמֵּא) Smashed (וְשִׁבַּר) Cut down (וַיִּכְרֹת) Filled (their places) with human bones (וַיְמַלֵּא)	High places (אֲשֶׁר) built by Solomon to Astoreth of Sidon, to Chemosh of Moab and to Molech of Ammon Pillars Ashera poles Their places	(אֲשֶׁר 2x) facing Jerusalem, on the south of the Hill of Destruction

v.15	King	Broke down (נָתָץ) Burnt (וַיִּשְׂרֹף) Ground to powder (הֵדַק לְעָפָר) Burnt (וְשָׂרַף)	Altar and high place (אֲשֶׁר) built by Jeroboam Ashera poles	(אֲשֶׁר) in Bethel
v.16	King	Burnt (וַיִּשְׂרֹף) Defiled (וַיְטַמְּאֵהוּ)	Bones on the altar The altar (acc. to the word of YHWH)	Found (וְשָׂרַף) on the mountain
v. 19 v.20	King	Removed (הֵסִיר) Did all that he did in Bethel (וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם כְּכָל־הַמַּעֲשִׂים אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה בְּבֵית־אֵל) Slaughtered (וַיִּזְבַּח) Burnt (וַיִּשְׂרֹף)	Shrines at high places (אֲשֶׁר) built by kings of Israel To them All the priests of the high places Human bones	(אֲשֶׁר) in the cities of Samaria On the altars On the altars
v. 21	King	Commanded (וַיְצַו)	Celebrate Passover to YHWH	In Jerusalem (v.20)
v. 24	King	Exterminated (בִּעֵר)	Mediums, spiritists, household gods and idols, and all the abominations	In Judah and Jerusalem

As mentioned above, the places associated with Josiah's reform acts are often introduced with אֲשֶׁר, indicating that an explanation follows of the particular place against which Josiah's act is directed. This is the case in vv. 7, 8, 11, 12, 13 (2x), 15, 16 and 17. Further in some cases, this explanation consists of giving the precise location (or detailed description) of the particular object. Thus we find where the quarters of the male prostitutes were in v. 7; where the horses dedicated for the Sun were removed from in v. 11; where the altars given by the kings of Judah (broken down in v. 12) were; where the high places built by Solomon in v. 13 were; and finally the exact location of the shrines of the Gates in v. 8, which was at the entrance of the Gate of Joshua.

בָּמוֹת הַשְּׁעָרִים, 'shrines of the gates' or 'high places of the gates' is deemed difficult by commentators; the reading of both terms has been debated, several emendations and interpretetions have been suggested. Thus regarding the first term, Hobbs argues that the difficulty lies in that MT's reading 'presupposes the location of several high places at one gate of the city' (p. 334). However, others have argued that בָּמוֹת should be re-pointed to read as singular בָּמַת.[99] The second term also presents difficulties. There have been some interesting suggestions at interpretaion. Thus H. H. Hirschberg proposed 'the columns of the genitals',[100] and J. Gray 'the shrine of the gate-genii'.[101] However, none of these suggestions are plausible.[102] Many commentators prefer an emendation of הַשְּׁעָרִים 'gates' to שְׂעִירִים 'satyrs'.[103] In fact there is no reason to doubt the correctness of the MT reading here.[104] Most commentators and Bible versions translate 'high places of/at the gates'[105] or 'shrines of/at the gates';[106] and that is consistent with the context in which it occurs. Emerton

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[99] Snaith, 'Meaning', p.116; Emerton, p. 456. LXX and P read the singular, and Targ. can be read either way.Vg supports MT.

[100] 'Some Additional Arabic Etymologies in Old Testament Lexicography', *VT* 11 (1961), 373-385 (p. 381).

[101] He has the Assyrian style guardian deities that stood at the entrances of gates in mind (pp. 730, 735).

[102] See critique of these in Emerton, pp. 457-458.

[103] Oesterley and Robinson, p. 113; Langton, p. 39; NEB reads 'demons' (margin 'satyrs'); Gray following Hoffman, p. 734; Burrelli, p. 70.

[104] See also Snaith, 'Meaning', p. 116. He argues that the shrines were 'relics' of ancient Canaanite worship rather than 'idolatrous shrines after the Northern pattern'.

[105] Hobbs, p. 329; Cogan and Tadmor, p. 279. So also KJV; RSV; NJB; CJB; JPS and NAU.

[106] House, p. 386; also NIV.

has shown that there is evidence of the existence of shrines at gates in Canaanite and Israelite cities, and that there is no need to emend MT's הַשְּׁעָרִים. There is no contradiction between the reference to 'gate' ('the gate of Joshua', the 'gate of the city')[107] in singular and 'gates' (the high places of the gates) in plural as he explains that city gates in ancient Palestine were constructed as a complex consisting of an inner and an outer gate. Thus שַׁעַר in the singular could refer to 'the complex of gateways as a whole',[108] and בָּמוֹת הַשְּׁעָרִים in plural 'may refer to a shrine situated between the two.'[109]

In summary, we can conclude that there is no basis for a demonological interpretation of שְׂעִירִים in Lev 17:7 and 2 Chron 11:15. In both cases the word is better understood as an ironic reference to foreign deities worshipped by the Israelites or their kings, and it reflects the authors' contempt of such practices. In 2 Kgs 23:8 there is no need to emend MT's reading.

The word שָׂעִיר (or שְׂעִירִים) occurs some 75 times in the Hebrew Bible with the meaning of 'goat/goats'.[110] There is no reason to doubt that this is the meaning of the word in Isa 13:21 and 34:14 too. In both cases it appears in a list of real animals, and this meaning is required by the context. Furthermore we have shown that passages that are used to support a 'demonological' interpretation of the word in the two Isaiah texts cannot be used in evidence as the word there refers to pagan deities in an ironic sense and not to 'demons'.

4.2.3.5. לִילִית

G. R. Driver's article 'Lilith',[111] has not gained wide acceptance amongst scholars, although it fits the context of the text, and it presents a plausible explanation of the term. He suggests that the לִילִית is the goat-sucker or night-jar, as this would suit 'both the name and the situation.' He argues that several species of the bird can be found in parts of Egypt and the deserts of Palestine and thus 'such a bird, haunting desert regions, admirably suits the prophet's description of Edom lying in ruins,

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[107] These two probably refer to the same gate according to Emerton, pp. 464-465.

[108] 2 Sam 18:24.

[109] Emerton, pp. 465-466.

[110] HALOT, pp. 1341-1342.

[111] *PEQ* 91 (1959), 55-57.

desolate and deserted.' (p. 56) Driver derives the name of the bird from the root *lwy*, *lyy*, *lwly*, *lyly* either as 'descriptive of its rapidly twisting and turning flight', or as relating to its nocturnal habits (as the Heb. word *laylah*, 'night' also derives from this root).[112] Both these explanations of the bird's name would suit its habits.[113] Driver's suggestion is attractive because it would mean that in vv. 13-15 we have four kinds of animals (תַּנִּים, אִיִּים, צִיִּים and שָׂעִיר) and four kinds of birds (בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה, לִילִית, קִפּוֹז and דַּיּוֹת) listed, all of which inhabit desert and desolate places. In fact the objection to deriving *lilith* from *laylah* refers to deriving the demon *Lilith*'s name from it because of a false folk etymology (*lilith* being a night-demon). However, as we have argued above, in our passage there is no reason to see a 'demon' in a list of real animals, thus the derivation of לִילִית from לילה 'night' becomes possible (cf. Akk. pl. *liliātu* > *lilātu*).

If we look at the parallelism in vv. 13c-15 we can divide the passage into two sections, v. 13c-14b and vv. 14c-15c. Both sections start with a general term (in v. 13c תַּנִּים referring to 'howling creatures' in general (cf. Isa 35:7) and in v. 14c לִילִית, a possibly general term referring to night creatures/ birds) followed by more specific animal/bird names, בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה, צִיִּים and אִיִּים all being howling creatures, and then the קִפּוֹז and דַּיּוֹת, possibly some kind of birds. These are described as making the ruined place into their homes (becomes a dwelling, a haunt // rests, finds a resting place) where they meet with other similar creatures as well as find their own companions and then raise their young. V. 14a is parallel to 15a and 15b expands on the theme (meet – nest – lay – hatch - care for young). Both sections end with a reference to one of the animals meeting its companion (רֵעֵהוּ in v. 14 and רְעוּתָהּ in v. 15), again the second expanding slightly on the first. While the wild goat cries out looking for his companion, the דַּיּוֹת, having found theirs, meet with them.

Thus we can see that the context of our passage supports Driver's suggestion for the interpretation of לִילִית as being a night creature, possibly a bird. However, his suggestion of night-jar or goat-sucker is perhaps going a little far, there is no evidence to support it and, as we have seen, there is no real need for a more specific identification. A general term is all that is required.

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[112] HALOT list the following parallels: Ug. *Ll*; Can. *lēl*; Mo. ללה ; OArm.Yaud. and JArm. לילא; Pehl. Nab. לילי; Eth. *lēlit,* Akk. pl. *liliātu* (p. 528).

[113] Driver, 'Lilith', p. 56.

4.2.3.6 קִפּוֹז and דַּיּוֹת

Finally, there are two creatures in v. 15, קִפּוֹז and דַּיּוֹת. The first one is a *hapax legomenon*. The versions take it as a variant form of קִפּוֹד.[114] BDB suggests 'arrow-snake' which lives in trees, and this has been followed by Watts and some modern versions.[115] 'Owl' has also been suggested.[116] Driver rejects both 'owl' and 'arrow-snake' and suggests 'sand-partridge' which lives in dry and desolate places and which hops (this action is suggested by the root קפז).[117] However, as Burrelli[118] rightly pointed out, there is not enough evidence to allow us a specific identification of the קִפּוֹז, all we can say from the context is that it is a desert bird.

The precise meaning of דַּיּוֹת is also uncertain; it occurs only 3 times in the Hebrew Bible, as an unclean bird in Lev 11:14 and Deut 14:13, and in the present passage. The meaning of the root דאה from which it derives[119] is 'to fly, swoop down on prey',[120] thus some kind of bird of prey can be envisaged. Vulture,[121] kite (black or red kite)[122] and buzzard[123] have been suggested, with 'kite' being the most preferred translation. Black kites in Egypt were useful scavengers and could be found near the

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[114] Thus LXX and Vg offer 'hedgehog', Targ and P 'owl'. See HALOT, p. 1117.

[115] *Isaiah 34-66*, p. 4 and JPS. NJB has 'snake' and NAU 'tree snake'. Kaiser has 'viper' (p. 352).

[116] NIV, RSV; KJV: 'owl'; CJB: 'hoot owl'. Also Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, p, 271 and Oswalt, p. 616.

[117] HALOT, p. 1118. See G. R. Driver, 'Birds in the Old Testament: II Birds in Life', *PEQ* 87 (1955), 129-140 (pp. 135-136). Driver's suggestion is followed by Whitekettle, p. 179. See also discussion in Burrelli, n. 39, p. 69.

[118] As above.

[119] HALOT, p. 207 and also p. 220.

[120] Cf. Deut 28:49; Jer 48:40; 49:22, also Ps 18:11.

[121] LXX in Lev 11:14 and Deut 14:13, but not in Isa 34:15, where it has 'deer' (ελαφος); KJV in all. Oswalt thinks that 'vulture' probably refers to the black kite (p. 617). Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, translates 'vultures' but adds that kite would also fit the context (pp. 4, 6). NJB and CJB in Isa 34:15 but not in the others.

[122] NIV has 'red kite' in Lev and Deut and 'falcons' in Isa; NJB has 'kite' in Lev. RSV, JPS have 'kite' in all three; NAU in Lev and Deut but 'hawks' in Isa 34. Kaiser has 'kite' (p. 359) and so does Whitekettle (p. 179). Driver, 'Birds in Law', suggested 'black kite', and argued that the term would refer to both black and red kites. As the red kite was only a migrant in Palestine, it is unlikely that flying high it would have been distinguishable from the black kite (pp. 10-11).

[123] NJB and CJB in Deut 14:13; Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 271.

dead.[124] Thus kites fit with the context in our passage; after the destruction described here scavenger animals and birds would have had plenty of bodies to feast upon.

Vv. 13c-15 can now be translated thus:

13c And it becomes the dwelling of *howling creatures*,
13d a haunt for *eagle-owls*.
14a And *desert creatures* meet with *hyenas*,
14b and the *wild goat* cries to its companion.
14c Yes, there the *night bird* rests,
14d and finds herself a resting place.
15a There the *desert bird* nests,
15b and lays, and hatches, and gathers (her young)
Under her shadow/wing;
15c yes, there the *kites* gather, each with its companion.

As mentioned above the passage divides into two sections. Vv. 13c-14b culminate the description of the desolation by introducing into the scene new wild creatures, 'another group of inhabitants of this eerie land'.[125] The desolate scene is emphasized in the second section by the repetition of שָׁם, 'there' (3 times), and it is intensified by the addition of אַךְ־, 'yes/indeed' (2 times). This recalls and contrasts with v. 12, וְאֵין־שָׁם מְלוּכָה, 'there is no kingdom', this is what is now in its place.[126]

However, the second section also has a positive image and it points to what follows in ch. 35. The finding of a resting place, nesting, laying and hatching, gathering together all convey a peaceful image and a promise that:

> The desert and the parched land will be glad;
> the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.
> Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom;
> It will rejoice greatly and shout for joy.
> ...
> They will see the glory of the Lord,
> the splendour of our God. (NIV, Isa 35:1-2)

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[124] D. M. Dixon, 'A Note on Some Scavengers of Ancient Egypt', *World Archaeology* 21 no. 2 (1989), 193-197 (p. 195).

[125] Miscall, *Isaiah 34-35*, p. 82.

[126] Miscall, *Isaiah 34-35*, p. 83.

4.2.4 Isaiah 34: 16-17

The two masculine plural imperative verbs in v. 16 (דִּרְשׁוּ and וּקְרָאוּ) address no one in particular, therefore it is directed to everyone in general, in a similar way to the beginning of the poem where all the nations and the earth were called to witness what was said. It is not clear what the poet meant by the Book/scroll of Yahweh; סֵפֶר יְהוָה could refer to a number of things.[127] The important fact is that it is Yahweh's work. The scroll contains everything that has happened, and everything that happened was ordered and carried out by Yahweh: his mouth commanded (כִּי־פִי הוּא צִוָּה); his breath gathered (וְרוּחוֹ הוּא קִבְּצָן); and his hand apportioned (וְיָדוֹ חִלְּקָתָה). Vv. 16b and c (none of these are missing; none is lacking her companion), vv. 17c and d (they possess it for ever; from generation to generation they dwell in it) allude to previous verses. They neatly conclude the immediately preceding section as well as the entire poem. However, besides echoing the desolation of vv. 7-15, they also look forward to the restoration that follows in chapter 35 vv. 1-10.[128]

4.3 Conclusion of *lilith*

In order to determine the significance of the term *lilith* in the Hebrew Bible, whether it is the name of a 'demon' and whether there is a mythological figure behind it, a careful exegesis of Isaiah 34 is required.

It is found that because of the assumption that לִילִית is the 'demoness' *Lilith*, some of the other creatures that also occur in the passage are regarded as 'demonic', whilst

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[127] Oswalt lists four possibilities: 1) it is directed towards later readers with the intent of comparison (this writing vs. facts of their day); 2) this prophecy related to an earlier one (Isa 13:21-22); 3) postexilic interpolation as a proof of the prophecy; 4) literary allusion to a 'Book of Destiny' (pp. 617-618). Miscall, *Isaiah 34-35*, sees it as a 'multilevel image' alluding to the scroll written by Yahweh (Exod 32:32-33); the one written by Moses (Exod 24:4-7); part or the whole of the HB; the Isa scroll (Isa 29:11-12, 18; 30:8), and even the heavens which were rolled up like a scroll in v. 4 of this poem (p. 87).

[128] Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, interprets vv. 16-17 differently, he translates v. 16 thus (p. 4):

Examine Yahweh's scroll and read aloud.
Let nothing be left out.
Let (no line) miss its parallel line.
For Yahweh's mouth commanded (them)
and his Spirit gathered them.

This is an interesting interpretation but it has the disadvantage of missing the allusions to preceding verses presenting more a break than a transition between the two chapters. See also Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, pp. 272-274; Seitz, pp. 238-242; Kaiser, pp. 359-360.

others as real animals. Each term in question was then examined and it was shown that although most of these are difficult to translate exactly, and in many cases only a general designation can be offered, the contexts in which they occur do not support a demonological interpretation for any of them.

Thus in vv. 8-13b the קָאַת and the קִפּוֹד (קִפּוֹד) are creatures that dwell in ruined, desolate places. The suggestions of Driver and Whitekettle for קָאַת as (scops)owl and for קִפּוֹד as 'ruffed bustard' seem reasonable. Similarly the יַנְשׁוֹף and עֹרֵב can be identified as 'screech owl' (Driver) and 'raven' respectively.

The creatures of vv. 13c-15 are the much debated תַּנִּים, בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה, צִיִּים and אִיִּים, שָׂעִיר and לִילִית. The תַּנִּים are wild animals that inhabit the desolate and desert places, and in some passages there is reference to the howling sound that they make (Mic1:8; Job 30:29). A general translation of 'howling creatures' or a more specific 'jackals' are both possible, depending on what the context requires. The general translation of בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה as 'ostriches' is not supported by the texts. As the others before, they too are animals/birds associated with ruined or desert places. Driver's suggestion of 'eagle-owl' fits all the contexts of the term. The צִיִּים and אִיִּים also appear as creatures that live in desert and ruined places. From their parallel occurrences with תַּנִּים and בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה, the אִיִּים are probably howling creatures too. Of the צִיִּים all we can say is that they are desert dwellers. The שָׂעִיר, thought by many to be some kind of *satyr*-like demon in some passages, is best understood in its usual sense as 'goat' (both in Isa 13:21 and 34:14) as it appears in a list of real animals, and this meaning is required by the context.

All these creatures are real animals and birds who inhabit desert and ruined places, some of them scavengers who feast on dead bodies. In Isaiah 34, after the complete destruction of Edom and all its people and livestock, only these wild scavengers would be able to survive. Thus there is nothing to support the view that *lilith* is a 'demoness' or other mythological character. Like the other terms, it also refers to an animal. More specifically, the context requires that לִילִית is regarded as a bird. Some scholars such as Seitz and Clements follow RSV and translate 'night-hag', while Oswalt agrees with NIV's rendering of the word as 'night-bird'.The versions do not offer any light on the matter, LXX has ονοκενταυρος (which is also offered for אִיִּים in Isa 13:12) and Vg *lamia* (also used for תַּנִּים in Lam 4:3). Driver's suggestion that לִילִית is a night bird is found to be the most plausible explanation of term, one that fits the context.

CHAPTER 5: *DEBER* IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

5.1 Introduction

The noun דֶּבֶר occurs in 48 verses in the Hebrew Bible;[1] is usually translated as 'plague' or 'pestilence' and held by some to be the name of a 'demon' in three passages, Psalm 91:5-6, Hosea 13:14 and Habakkuk 3:5 (see 2.4). In chapter 2 it was shown that this view is based on similarities with Mesopotamian religion and the fact that in two of the usually cited three passages the term appears together with *reshef*

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[1] These are: Jer 14:12; 21:6, 7, 9; 24:10; 27:8, 13; 28:8; 29:17, 18; 32:24, 36; 34:17; 38:2; 42:17, 22; 44:13; Ezek 5: 12, 17; 6:11, 12; 7:15; 12:16; 14:19, 21; 28:23; 33:27; 38:22; Exod 5:3; 9:3, 15; Lev 26:25; Num 14:12; Deut 28:21; 2 Sam 24:13, 15; 1 Kgs 8:37; 1 Chr 21:12, 14; 2 Chr 6:28; 7:13; 20:9; Ps 78: 50; Amos 4:10. It is דֶּבֶר in Hab 3:5, דְּבָרֶיךָ in Hos 13:14 and מִדֶּבֶר in Ps 91:3, 6. On top of these there are extra-biblical (Sir 39:9; Sir 40:9; 4Q 285 1:9; 4Q 422 4:6; 4Q Ps a 1.2:1 and 1.3:4) as well as other possible occurrences if emended. Thus according to DCH II: 411 we should consider Jer 9:20 and 9:21; Ps 41:9 (41:8), Ps 107: 20; 1 Sam 4:8 and Ezek 13: 28. In the case of Jer 9:20 it is suggested that דבר be inserted after בְּחַלֹּנֵינוּ 'into our windows', and בָּא 'has entered', deleted. I do not see any reason for doing this; in Jer 9:20 we find a personified death that is climbing/going up through windows. Elsewhere, for ex. in Joel 2:9 there are locusts (likened to a mighty, terrible army), also personified, going through windows like thieves. In Jer 9:21, it is suggested, דַּבֶּר should be emended to דֶּבֶר. True, some Greek texts (Origen, Lucian, Theodotian) read here *deber*= plague (θανατω), and the major LXX mss as well as P omit the word. However, I do not see why the MT should be emended; the Piel impf. verb makes perfect sense in the context (v. 19: 'hear' v. 20: 'speak'), whereas if we change the pointing of דבר we have created another problem, the beginning of the verse would not make sense. Ps 41:9 is difficult and would be worth further investigation. דְּבַר־בְּלִיַּעַל literally means 'a thing/ matter of *beliyya'al*', variously translated as 'a lethal substance', see Dahood, *Psalms 1, 1-50,* AB (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), p. 251; 'a devilish disease', see P.C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, WBC 19 (Waco: Word Books, 1983), p. 318; NIV: 'a vile disease'; NJB: 'a fatal sickness'; RSV: 'a deadly thing'. While it is possible to emend דָּבָר to דֶּבֶר 'plague', it is not necessary. Other occurrences of the expression, e.g. Ps 101:3; Deut 15:9 would not support such emendation. On Belial in the OT see the article by V. Maag, 'Belija'al im Alten Testament', *ThZ* 21 (1965), 287-99; also Tromp, pp. 125-128. The emendation of דְּבָרוֹ 'his word' to 'his plague' in Ps 107:20 is possible (as suggested by Dahood, 'Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography', *Bib* 45 (1964), 393-412, esp. pp. 410-2) but not necessary. There are other instances where דבר functions in a personified sense but without the need to change it. In Ps 147:15 it appears in parallel with אִמְרָתוֹ 'his command', so it clearly carries the meaning 'his word'. See also the comments in L.C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, WBC (Waco: Word Books, 1983), p. 59 n. 20a,b,c. In 1 Sam 4:8, DCH suggests reading בְּמוֹ דֶּבֶר 'with plague', instead of 'in the desert' בַּמִּדְבָּר . So also Dahood, 'Lexicography', pp. 401-2, who explains the prep. במו with reference to Ugaritic. He writes: 'A stylistic quality of the Keret Legend is balancing of the prepositions *b-bm*; *l-lm*; *k-km*; a similar phenomenon would explain the faulty word-division of MT.' The commentaries of R. W. Klein, *1 Samuel*, WBC 10 (Waco: Word Books, 1983), pp. 36-38 and P. K. McCarter, *I Samuel*, AB (Garden City: Doubleday, 1980), pp. 102-109, follow this reading. LXX understood it as και εν τη ερημω 'and in the desert'. NIV, NJB, RSV follow MT. The emendation would also make sense; however, whether it is necessary would need further investigation which lies outside the scope of this study.

and *qeteb*, other supposed 'demons', rather than on an examination of all the texts in which it occurs in the Hebrew Bible.[2]

Therefore the present chapter takes a close look at all the occurences of *deber* aiming to determine its meaning, whether it is the name of a 'demon', and whether there is a mythological figure behind it. The passages generally considered to contain *deber* as a 'demon'/evil deity are examined first, followed by an investigation of the term in the Jeremiah and Ezekiel passages, then its other occurrences.

5.2 Passages generally considered to contain *deber* as a demon

Scholars who argue that deber is a demon or evil deity in the Hebrew Bible usually consider three passages, Psalm 91:5-6; Hosea 13:14 and Habakkuk 3:5. We shall look at these texts first.

5.2.1 Psalm 91: 1 – 6

vv. 1-6

[1] יֹשֵׁב בְּסֵתֶר עֶלְיוֹן בְּצֵל שַׁדַּי יִתְלוֹנָן׃
[2] אֹמַר לַיהוָה מַחְסִי וּמְצוּדָתִי אֱלֹהַי אֶבְטַח־בּוֹ׃
[3] כִּי הוּא יַצִּילְךָ מִפַּח יָקוּשׁ מִדֶּבֶר הַוּוֹת׃
[4] בְּאֶבְרָתוֹ יָסֶךְ לָךְ וְתַחַת־כְּנָפָיו תֶּחְסֶה צִנָּה וְסֹחֵרָה אֲמִתּוֹ׃
[5] לֹא־תִירָא מִפַּחַד לָיְלָה מֵחֵץ יָעוּף יוֹמָם׃
[6] מִדֶּבֶר בָּאֹפֶל יַהֲלֹךְ מִקֶּטֶב יָשׁוּד צָהֳרָיִם׃

v.1.

> Dwelling in the hiding place[3] of *Elyon*, in the shadow[4] of *Shadday*[5] he will spend the night.[6]

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[2] See 2.4 and in particular the summary in 2.4.2.

[3] בְּסֵתֶר 'hiding place' with the purpose of protection, cf. Ps. 27:5; 31:21; 61:5; 1 Sam 20:20; Job 40:21. M. E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, WBC 20 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), pp.446-459, translates 'under the protection' (p. 446); similarly F. L. Hossfeld and E. Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, trans. by L. M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), pp. 426-433, 'in the protection' (p. 426). J. W. Rogerson and J. W. McKay, *Psalms 51-100* (Cambridge: Cambridge Unuiversity Press, 1977), pp. 202-205, 'in the shelter' (p. 202). Also CJB, NAU, NIV and RSV. NJB has 'in the secret place'.

[4] בְּצֵל means 'in the shadow of' but similarly to בְּסֵתֶר it has the connotation of protection (cf. Isa 30:2, 3; 49:2; 51:16; Lam 4:20; Ps 121:5); the two are thus in parallel.

[5] This name of God only occurs twice in the Psalms: Ps 68 and here (Tate, p. 447).

[6] לון means 'to lodge, spend the night'. NIV has 'rest', NJB 'spend your nights', RSV, JPS 'abides'.

v.2.

I will say[7] to *Yahweh*, my shelter, my stronghold: My *God*, I feel safe in you!

v.3.

For it is he who will save you from the *Fowler*'s[8] trap, from *Deber*'s destruction[9].

v.4.

With his wing-feathers[10] he will cover you and beneath his wings you shall seek refuge; shield and buckler[11] is his truth/faithfulness.[12]

v.5.

You shall not be afraid of the *Terror* of the night,[13] of the *Arrow*[14] that flies by day.

v.6.

Of *Deber*[15] who walks in darkness, of *Qeteb*[16] who destroys midday.

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[7] LXX read יאמר here, ερει 'he will say' (BHS crit. app.) RSV has 'he…will say'; NJB 'saying', NIV: 'I will say'. M. Dahood, *Psalms II: 51-100*, AB (Garden City: Doubleday, 1968), pp. 328-334, vocalises the verb as imperative (p. 330). Thus 'say'. See also Tate, p. 447 n. 2a. He and Hossfeld and Zenger (p. 426) maintain MT 'I say'.

[8] The word also occurs in Prov 6:5 and Jer 5:26; in Hos 9:8 it is יָקוּשׁ (cf. Ps 124:7). It is mostly translated as 'fowler', e.g. RSV, NIV, NJB, CJB, Tate, p. 448; Hossfeld and Zenger, p. 426. For a different reading see W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Psalms* (London: The Macmillan Company, 1939), II, pp. 408-409 and Dahood, *Psalms II*, pp. 328-331.

[9] Taking דֶּבֶר as personified here. LXX read λογος. So also Oesterley, 'destructive word' (p. 409), Dahood, *Psalms II*: 'venomous substance' (p. 328), Tate: 'threat of destruction' (p. 448 n. 3c). NAU, NIVand RSV: 'deadly pestilence'; CJB: 'noisome pestilence'; NJB: 'fowler set on destruction'. Taking הַוּוֹת as 'destruction', cf. Pss 52:4; 57:2.

[10] MT has singular but LXX and P read plural here (BHS crit. app.).

[11] סֹחֵרָה is a *hapax legomenon*; the root meaning is 'circle/circumference' (HALOT, p. 750). LXX took it as a verbal form κυκλωσει σε. On וסחרה as (supernatural) protection see further A. A. Macintosh, 'Psalm XCI 4 and the Root סחר', *VT* 23 (1973), pp. 56-62. RSV, JPS have 'shield and buckler'; NJB: 'shield and protection'; NIV: 'shield and rampart'; Dahood, *Psalms II*, 'shield and buckler' (p.328); Tate, 'shield of protection' (p. 448 n. 4d). Oesterley places 'a shield and buckler is his truth' at the end of v. 7 (p. 408).

[12] NJB has 'his constancy', JPS and CJB 'his truth'.

[13] Similar use of 'terror' in Job 15:21; 21:9; 22:10; Cant 3:8 'terror of the night'; Jer 49:5; Lam 3:47. For a different rendering see Dahood, *Psalms II*, 'pack of the night' (p. 331).

[14] 'Arrow' is taken by some to refer to Reshef here. E. g. T. Gaster, *Myth,* p. 770; Dahood, *Psalms II*, p. 331. See also 2.6.5.

[15] JPS, NAU, NIV and RSV; Rogerson and McKay, p. 202, and Hossfeld and Zenger, p. 426, have: 'pestilence'. CJB, NJB, Tate, p. 448 n. 6a, translate 'plague'.

[16] NIV, Hossfeld and Zenger, p. 426, Rogerson and McKay, p. 202 have 'plague'; JPS, NAU, RSV: 'destruction'; CJB, NJB, Tate, p. 446 and Dahood, *Psalm II*, p. 328 have 'scourge'. Oesterley leaves *Qeteb* untranslated; he believes it to be the name of a 'demon' (pp. 408-410). *Qeteb* only occurs elsewhere in Deut 32:24; Isa 28:2 and Hos 13:14. On *qeteb* see ch. 5.

Various questions arise concerning this psalm, for example who is speaking or who is addressed in it, and what is its function? Some believe it to be a royal psalm of trust written by a court poet,[17] others that primarily it was an apotropaic prayer.[18] It has also been argued that its primary purpose is to promote Yahwism against other ancient Near Eastern religions,[19] or that it contains instructions 'given in the context of worship'.[20] More likely it is a 'prayer-oracle of encouragement to trust God for protection and security.'[21]

It appears that the psalm has two main parts, vv. 1-13 and vv. 14-16.[22] The first part is a description of God's protection; vv. 3-13 are addressed to a single person. They describe the various kinds of dangers that God protects the believer from.[23] The second part has God as the speaker. It comes as a reassurance to the previous declaration of faith.

The main point emphasized in the psalm is that God is the one who protects the believer from dangers because he is the most powerful. To illustrate this better, the poet personifies these dangers. Hossfeld and Zenger describe them as 'treacherous', 'monstrous', and 'demonic' (p. 430). Similarly, Tate thinks that the 'psalm reflects a thought world in which the presence of demons, demonical possession, and malignant spirits and powers was considered commonplace' (p. 455). However, this appears to be reading into the text. We shall see below that the psalm itself presents a different interpretation.

Yahweh's introduction is quite dramatic (vv. 1-2). The use of his different names intensifies the parallelism; *Elyon* (עֶלְיוֹן), *Shaddai* (שַׁדַּי) are descriptive, they culminate in his personal name, *Yahweh* (יהוָה) and end with a simple but dramatic statement: 'my God' (אֱלֹהַי). Yahweh's protection is illustrated with various

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[17] Dahood, *Psalms II*, pp. 329-330.

[18] Oesterley, p. 407; Burrelli, p. 150.

[19] C. C. Broyles, *Psalms*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), p. 363.

[20] R. Davidson, *The Vitality of Worship: A Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 303.

[21] Tate, p. 458. On the various interpretations see also pp. 450-453. Hossfeld and Zenger also understand the psalm as an expression of 'personal piety' (p. 429).

[22] Hossfeld and Zenger divide the psalm into three parts, vv. 1-2; 3-13 and 14-16 (pp. 427-428).

[23] Tate, p. 450; Hossfeld and Zenger, p. 430.

powerful images (vv. 3-4) such as the mighty mother-bird whose wings hide and protect at the same time, who is gentle towards its young, i.e. the believers, but fierce and dangerous towards those who try to harm them,[24] shelter and stronghold, shield[25] and buckler.[26]

V. 3 introduces the threats that one faces; the Fowler's trap (פַּח יָקוּשׁ), and *Deber's* destruction (דֶּבֶר הַוּוֹת), could refer to mortal dangers in general. The dangers in vv. 5-6 are presented in parallel: the Terror at night (פַּחַד לַיְלָה) parallels *Deber* in darkness (דֶּבֶר בָּאֹפֶל יַהֲלֹךְ), and the Arrow by day (חֵץ יָעוּף יוֹמָם) parallels *Qeteb* at midday (קֶטֶב יָשׁוּד צָהֳרָיִם). The image of the fowler ensnaring the birds conveys the concept of hunting and warfare,[27] of dangers that one could probably avoid if only there were someone to warn them.[28] *Deber*'s destruction to the contrary represents unavoidable dangers.[29] If *deber* is taken here to refer to infectious disease as elsewhere,[30] then the idea is that such a force was unstoppable. It is only Yahweh who can warn of the dangers or who can prevent/stop the spread of the disease. Vv. 5-9a should be read in parallel with vv. 9b-13, [31] and this suggests that vv. 5-6 should be understood in the light of v. 11. The personified dangerous forces of vv. 5-6 are identified as Yahweh's angels in v. 11. This supports our earlier argument. If *Deber* and *Qeteb* are Yahweh's angels, the destruction they cause is unstoppable by human means, it is only Yahweh who can command his angels (מַלְאָכָיו יְצַוֶּה־לָךְ) and recall them thus stopping the devastation they could cause (v. 11). Instead of

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[24] Cf. Ex 19:4; Deut 32:11; Pss 17:8; 63:8.

[25] Ps 5:12-13.

[26] The many images emphasise the poet's point. See Hossfeld and Zenger, pp. 429-430; Tate, p. 453; A. Curtis, *Psalms*, Epworth Commentaries (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2004), pp. 188-189.

[27] Tate refers to Johnson who suggested that vv. 5-8 allude to perils of war. Tate disagrees with this, and instead he sees v. 7 as referring to the thousands fallen as a result of the 'plague', i.e. disease (p. 455). The present approach is to take v. 7 as referring to the victims fallen by all the four forces mentioned in vv. 5-6. There is no reason to separate out one or the other force. These personified forces are Yahweh's angels (v. 11), his agents who punish the wicked (v. 8) and can threaten the believers.

[28] This can be seen in parallel with v. 13, the lion lying in wait and the serpent attacking unexpectedly are mortally dangerous but possible to avoid. They also belong to the imagery of hunting.

[29] Rogerson and McKay, p. 204; Curtis, p. 189. There is nothing to suggest demonic powers are at work here.

[30] See below 5.3 (in Jeremiah) and 5.5.2 (Exod 9) in particular.

[31] Also Tate, p. 456.

destroying they will protect, watch over the ways of the believer (לִשְׁמָרְךָ בְּכָל־דְּרָכֶיךָ).

The last section, vv. 14-16, underscores Yahweh's promise of protection in the form of Yahweh's answer to the believer's prayer.[32]

The message of this psalm seems to be that all kinds of dangers can threaten even the believer who is not necessarily deserving of punishment. He is faced with danger at all times, day and night, only God can protect him. The emphasis is on God's role as powerful protector but by personifying the dangers the poet's images convey not only a picture of God as protector but also of Yahweh, the mighty warrior who commands an array of powerful warriors (angels), the Fowler, *Deber*, *Qeteb*, the Arrow and Terror. These are all personified dangerous forces that cause death and destruction at the command of Yahweh. There is no need to associate *Deber*'s action with night time and *Qeteb*'s with day time, the reference to night and day is to be taken as a merismus, [33] the point is that the threat is constant, they can strike at any time, only Yahweh knows when. Taking *deber* to mean 'disease' is consistent with both the context here and its other occurrences. *Qeteb* refers to some sort of 'destruction'.

5.2.2 Hosea 13:1- 14:1

v. 14

מִיַּד שְׁאוֹל אֶפְדֵּם מִמָּוֶת אֶגְאָלֵם אֱהִי דְבָרֶיךָ מָוֶת אֱהִי קָטָבְךָ שְׁאוֹל נֹחַם יִסָּתֵר מֵעֵינָי׃

The passage appears to be a literary unit. [34] It describes God's anger against Israel whose guilt seems to have been idol worship. The prophet speaks in vv. 1-3, then vv.

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[32] Hossfeld and Zenger, pp. 431-432; Tate, pp. 457-458; Curtis, p. 190.

[33] Tate, p. 454.

[34] There is disagreement regarding the dividing of this passage. D. K. Stuart, *Hosea – Jonah*, WBC 31 (Waco: Word Books, 1987), takes 13:1 as belonging to the previous passage, 12:1-13:1: 'There is no evidence … of a break in the passage before 13:1. … In 13:2 begins a different accusation …' (p. 187). Similarly H. McKeating, *The Books of Amos, Hosea, and Micah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971) reads 13:1 with ch. 12, but he takes 12:14-13:4 as one unit (pp. 146-147). Most commentators place 13:1 with the rest of the chapter. There is no reason to separate v. 1 from ch. 13 and place it at the end of ch. 12. 12:15 ends the threats against Jacob and Ephraim. 13:1 is better understood in the context of ch. 13; vv. 1-3 form a coherent unit. See also J. L. Mays, *Hosea: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1969), pp. 171-173; F. I. Andersen and D. N. Freedman, *Hosea: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1980), pp. 628-629.

4- 15a contain a speech from Yahweh, and finally in vv. 15b-14:1 the prophet speaks again.

Taking vv. 1-3 as belonging together we see a progression from past (v. 1) to present (v. 2) and future (v. 3).[35] V. 1[36] simply states the reason for God's anger through the example of Ephraim in the past: they were guilty of Baal worship (וַיֶּאְשַׁם בַּבַּעַל) therefore they were punished with the ultimate punishment, death (וַיָּמֹת). V. 2 extends Ephraim's guilt to the whole of Israel; they did not learn, instead the people sinned more and more. Their sin is three-fold:

- Making of idols (of silver; expertly fashioned) מַסֵּכָה
- human sacrifice זֹבְחֵי אָדָם
- kissing of the (calf)idols עֲגָלִים יִשָּׁקוּן

Their present sin will result in punishment; they will be like (v. 3):

- the morning mist/early dew כַּעֲנַן־בֹּקֶר וְכַטַּל מַשְׁכִּים
- chaff swirling from threshing floor כְּמֹץ יְסֹעֵר מִגֹּרֶן
- smoke escaping through a window וּכְעָשָׁן מֵאֲרֻבָּה

all disappearing without leaving a trace. The punishment will be, similarly to Ephraim's fate, annihilation. This is vividly illustrated with the series of similes.

In contrast to Israel's terrible sin, vv. 4-6 (in which Yahweh speaks) describe Yahweh's greatness with reference to the exodus. Yahweh was their god (וְאָנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ), cared for them (lit. 'knew them', יְדַעְתִּיךָ) and pastured them (כְּמַרְעִיתָם) in the desert. Here we have the image of the shepherd, Yahweh, caring for his sheep, the people. But because they turned away from God, the shepherd becomes the wild animal who destroys the sheep. Vv. 7-8 in a further series of similes illustrates this destruction. Yahweh shall be:

- like a lion כְּמוֹ־שָׁחַל
- like a leopard כְּנָמֵר
- like a she-bear כְּדֹב שַׁכּוּל

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[35] Mays, *Hosea*, pp. 171-173; Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, pp. 628-629.

[36] There are various difficulties in translating v. 1, e.g. how to read כְּ, the translation of רָתֵת (which is a *hapax legomenon* in the HB, though it occurs in 1QH 4.33) or נָשָׂא. On the problems of translating v.1 see Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, pp. 626-630; Stuart, pp. 186, 196; H. W. Wolff, *Hosea: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Hosea*, transl. by G. Stansell, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974; 3rd printing 1982), pp. 219-225.

- like a lion (again, but a different word used) כְּלָבִיא
- like a wild animal (in general) חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה

V. 9 is problematic, especially the reading of שִׁחֲתֵךְ. MT reads a 3 msg Piel pf. +2 msg suffix, 'it has destroyed you'. However, in light of the context and the use of the root elsewhere in Hosea (e.g. 11:9, 9:9), the reading אֲשַׁחֵתֵךְ 'I shall destroy you' is preferable.[37] The next phrase, כִּי־בִי בְעֶזְרֶךָ, is also problematic; it can be 'for in me, in your helper' but also 'for against me, against your helper'.[38] The latter makes more sense, it provides an explanation for Yahweh's destroying act.[39] Because Israel turned to other gods therefore she is against Yahweh who shall destroy them, i.e. the people. Yahweh is both Israel's destroyer and helper. It depends on Israel which aspect is to the fore.

After reference to idolatry (vv. 1-2) and pride (v. 6), vv. 10-11 point to yet another act of Israel's stubbornness, their insistence on having a king.[40] Andersen and Freedman suggest that the threat of destruction in vv. 9, 15b and 14:1 could be seen as a response to these manifestations of Israel's 'wilfulness'.[41] However, there is nothing to support this. Punishment for these acts follows immediately after their mention, thus for idolatry (vv. 1-2) in v. 3, for pride (v. 6) in vv. 7-8, and for asking for a king in v. 11b. The threat of destruction in vv. 9; 15b and 14:1 would be best taken in a general sense. The message of the passage is that because of Israel's guilt Yahweh shall destroy them; there is no hope as v. 14c makes it clear.

Vv. 12 and 13 are obscure, the discourse changes to third person; even the identity of the speaker is ambiguous.[42]

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[37] So P; Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, p. 636; Stuart, p. 200; and RSV. NIV has 'you are destroyed'; NJB: 'you have destroyed yourself'.

[38] The preposition בְּ can mean 'against' when it is used with words expressing hostility (BDB 89, II:4; HALOT, p. 104). Examples of such uses can be found in Gen 16:12; Deut 13:10; 1 Sam 5:9; 18:17; Hos 7:14.

[39] LXX and P translated מִי instead of כִּי; so also Stuart, p. 200 and Wolff, *Hosea*, pp. 220-221. There is no reason to emend the text. Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, recognized this but they add 'The sense of the line only emerges if an ellipsis of *pš'* , "to rebel", is recognized' (p. 636). This is also unnecessary; the context makes it clear what is meant by Israel being against Yahweh.

[40] 1 Sam 8. This is one of Hosea's favourite subjects; cf. 8:4; 9:9; 10:9-10. See comments in McKeating, *Amos,* pp. 92-93, 148-149.

[41] *Hosea*, p. 628.

[42] For more detailed discussion see Wolff, *Hosea*, pp. 223, 227-228; Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, pp. 637-639; Stuart, p. 206.

The difficulties continue in v. 14.

v. 14a	מִיַּד שְׁאוֹל אֶפְדֵּם מִמָּוֶת אֶגְאָלֵם
v. 14b	אֱהִי דְבָרֶיךָ מָוֶת אֱהִי קָטָבְךָ שְׁאוֹל
v. 14c	נֹחַם יִסָּתֵר מֵעֵינָי

V. 14 contains many parallelisms. שְׁאוֹל is parallel to מָוֶת 2x, in 14a and b; אֶפְדֵּם is parallel to אֶגְאָלֵם in 14a; דְבָרֶיךָ to קָטָבְךָ in 14b. There are also two chiastic structures in 14a and b:

v. 14a	Sheol	first person verb	שְׁאוֹל	אֶפְדֵּם
	Death	first person verb	מָוֶת	אֶגְאָלֵם
V. 14b	particle+object	Death	דְבָרֶיךָ	מָוֶת
	particle+object	Sheol	קָטָבְךָ	שְׁאוֹל

Sheol and Death are personified here and it is possible to regard *Deber* and *Qeteb* also as such. In this case they appear here as the agents of Mot and Sheol, but ultimately they are all Yahweh's agents of punishment. Yahweh is contemplating whether to leave the Israelites in the power of Death or whether to rescue them.[43] Yahweh's powers are more comprehensive than any of the other gods' because he is the living god who never dies;[44] we see both *Deber* and *Qeteb* as his agents elsewhere.[45] Yahweh would have the power to rescue (פדה) or redeem/ransom (גאל) the people from these sinister forces but chooses not to because of the nature of their guilt. They turned from Yahweh and followed other gods, and this has become the cause of their destruction. We have come full circle to the beginning.

In the context of this passage the four terms, מָוֶת, שְׁאוֹל, דֶּבֶר and קֶטֶב are personified forces of destruction and death; it is in Yahweh's power to use them for his purposes. There is nothing to suggest that any of them would be deities, let alone 'demons'.[46] It is Yahweh who is ultimately responsible for the decision regarding the

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[43] The first difficulty lies in whether to take the two verbs in 14a as interrogative or as statements. NIV, KJV, NKJ, LXX understood them as 'I shall ransom/I shall redeem…'. RSV, NJB, Wolff, *Hosea*, Stuart, Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, rightly chose the interrogative form. The context and especially 14c make it clear that they were meant as poetic questions, Yahweh did not intend to save the Israelites. The form אֱהִי is also difficult. In v. 10 LXX, Vg and Targ attest the interrogative 'where' and the context requires an interrogative here too. For other alternatives see Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, pp. 639-640.

[44] Hos 2:1; Hab 1:12.

[45] E.g. Hab 3:5; Deut 32:24; etc.

[46] Against McKeating, *Amos,* p. 150 and others (see 2.4 and 2.5).

fate of the Israelites. In this passage that fate is destruction. Vv. 15 and 14: 1 describe the devastation stating once more the cause of it: they rebelled (מָרְתָּה) against their god, therefore they will be punished. *Deber* is one of Yahweh's agents of punishment that often occurs personified (see below); here we have *Qeteb* in parallel with it, therefore a similar meaning for the two words is required. Nothing in this passage indicates that disease, i.e. 'plague' or 'pestilence' is referred to; most translations give 'destruction' for *qeteb*, which with 'plague' does not really relay the parallelism.[47] We suggest 'devastation' and 'destruction', a more general translation that points to the result of falling into the power of these agents, which nevertheless captures the nuance of the passage and points out the parallelism between them.

5.2.3 Habakkuk 3: 5

v. 5
לְפָנָיו יֵלֶךְ דָּבֶר וְיֵצֵא רֶשֶׁף לְרַגְלָיו׃

Habakkuk 3 is entitled 'a prayer of the prophet Habakkuk'; it contains his plea to Yahweh for deliverance.[48] It is argued that the chapter forms part of the answer to the question asked in ch. 1, 'Why does God allow the wicked to go unpunished?'[49] The

[47] Usual translations for *deber* in this passage are: 'plague(s)' and for *qeteb* 'destruction' (CJB; JPS; NIV; NJB; RSV). NAU suggests 'thorns' and 'sting', and LXX translates 'punishment' for *deber* and 'sting' for *qeteb*. Vg has 'death' for both.

[48] It is generally recognised that chapter 3 is a difficult text, as F. I. Andersen puts it, 'Almost every word constitutes a problem' (*Habakkuk: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 25 (New York: Doubleday, 2001), p. 268). It is debated whether, because of its distinct literary character and content, the chapter should be regarded as a separate composition from chs 1 and 2, or whether, because of common themes and vocabulary, it should be seen as linked to the rest of the book. The question of the nature of the text is also debated; it has the elements of a hymn, a lament, a song of thanksgiving, a liturgy and a royal psalm, thus it is difficult to classify it by type. For a detailed discussion of these issues see commentaries. For example, R. L. Smith, *Micah – Malachi,* WBC 32 (Waco: Word Books Publishers, 1984), pp. 94-97; 114-115; P. C. Craigie, *The Twelve Prophets* (Edinburgh: St. Andrews Press, 1985), II, pp. 101-102; Eszenyei Szeles, pp. 42-44; J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah: A Commentary* OT Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), pp. 130-149; M. A. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, Berit Olam (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000), II, pp. 478-481; Andersen, pp. 259-261. For textual issues and a reconstructed text see B. Margulis, 'The Psalm of Habakkuk: A Reconstruction and Interpretation', *ZAW* 82 (1970), 400-441; also J. H. Eaton, 'The Origin and Meaning of Habakkuk 3', *ZAW* 76 (1964), 144-171.

[49] R. Smith, p. 115.

prayer (vv. 2-19a) is framed by a title in v. 1, and a colophon in v. 19b. V. 2 is like an abstract of the chapter, it contains a summary of the whole:[50]

v. 2a the prophet has heard of Yahweh's fame	יְהוָה שָׁמַעְתִּי שִׁמְעֶךָ
v. 2b is frightened by Yahweh's deeds	יָרֵאתִי יְהוָה פָּעָלֶךָ
v. 2c he wishes these would be known at the present time,	בְּקֶרֶב שָׁנִים חַיֵּהוּ
v. 2d	בְּקֶרֶב שָׁנִים תּוֹדִיעַ
v. 2e he pleads for mercy	בְּרֹגֶז רַחֵם תִּזְכּוֹר

V. 2a is then expanded in vv. 3-7; the deeds referred to in vv. 2c and 2d are described in detail in vv. 8-15; v.2b is paralleled/expanded in vv. 16a-d, and the plea for mercy in v. 2e is countered with a confession of faith in vv. 16e-19c. [51]

In v. 3 the prophet calls God Eloah (אֱלוֹהַ)[52] and Holy One (וְקָדוֹשׁ)[53] then proceeds to describe his approach in a theophany.[54] Sweeney points out that theophanies usually consist of two basic elements; a description of Yahweh's approach and of the consequent 'natural upheaval'. Reactions of fear or awe usually also follow.[55] The two terms referring to God may also add to the 'awe-inspiring quality of the vision'.[56] God's glory encompasses heaven and earth (v. 3); his splendour is like the sunrise (v. 4).[57]

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[50] Sweeney refers to the verse as 'the introduction to the psalm' defining its basic concerns (*Twelve*, pp. 481-482). Andersen, pp. 273-283 provides a detailed analysis of v. 2. See also Eszenyei, pp. 45-46; Roberts, p. 150; Eaton, 'Origin', pp. 146-147; Margulis, pp. 412-414.

[51] The poem is variously translated in future, present or past tense, depending on whether it is taken to be a prediction of Yahweh's coming in the future (LXX) or a reference to past events (RSV; NIV; JPS; Craigie, *Twelve*, pp. 100-101). Some scholars prefer to use present tense; e.g. Eaton, 'Origin', pp. 144-145, and pp. 164-168 for further discussion on this issue; R. Smith, pp. 112-113 (also NJB); or a mixture, e. g. Roberts, pp. 128-129 (vv. 3-5 present, vv. 6-7 past, etc.). Andersen asserts that 'we can now be confident that all of the core of the poem (vv. 3-15) is intended to be past tense', and points out that this underlines the archaic character of the psalm (p. 264). The present approach is in agreement with Andersen's.

[52] Mostly in Job (41 out of 57 occurrences) but also in Hab 1:11; Deut 32:15, 17; Pss 18:32, 50:22; Prov 30:5.

[53] Isa 31:1.

[54] Examples of theophanies are: Deut 33:2; Judg 5:4-5; Amos 1:2; Mic 1:3-4; Ezek 1:4-28; Pss 68:8-9(7-8), 97:2-5.

[55] *Twelve*, p. 482.

[56] Roberts, p. 151.

[57] Roberts argues that although Habakkuk's description of Yahweh's appearance is in more general terms than his appearance on Mount Sinai in the Exodus tradition, i.e. there is no explicit mention of thunder, lightning, clouds, fire and smoke, nevertheless the verbs and nouns that are used here suggest

Theophanies are usually associated with military imagery; Yahweh defeats the enemies who threaten his creation or his people (vv. 8-15).[58] Here too, we have the image of Yahweh as a warrior king surrounded by his attendants.[59] In v. 5 we read: 'Before him went *Deber*, and *Reshef* followed after him.'

The picture that emerges here is that of a warrior god who is mighty, great, and awe-inspiring, but whose power at the same time can bring destruction (vv. 5-7). Like a general inspecting his army, Yahweh stood (עָמַד) and looked (רָאָה), and his presence and gaze shook the earth, made the nations tremble; mountains and hills crumbled and collapsed (v. 6). The following verse suggests that the mountains and hills here represent the enemies who tremble (יִרְגְּזוּן) and are in anguish (תַּחַת אָוֶן) and distress at the sight of Yahweh.

The context that follows is clearly mythological, and this is why many scholars see v. 5 in this light too. The fact that *Reshef* was a well known Semitic deity would support this supposition.[60] Since *Reshef* is a divine name, the parallelism would require that so is *Deber*. Most scholars take both to be demons that are present with Yahweh to inspire fear. Thus both Caquot and Day opt for this interpretation though they both also say that *deber* and *reshef* appear to be personifications of Yahweh's awesome power. Fulco, Xella and Niehr also take *reshef* here to be a demonised version of the Canaanite god,[61] with Niehr going as far as to claim that Yahweh in this passage has taken over the characteristics of *Reshef* as war god and protector deity.[62] Some commentators have argued similarly,[63] and some simply mention the

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similar imagery. Thus the expression קַרְנַיִם מִיָּדוֹ לוֹ, would refer to lightning bolts emerging from his hand, a standard depiction of Near Eastern storm gods (pp. 152-153). F. Andersen suggests a different interpretation, namely that קַרְנַיִם would be the 'rays' of the sun. This would fit with the reference to sunrise earlier in the verse. However, he warns against reading too much into the sunrise imagery, arguing that 'Poetic comparison of God with the sun is a literary resource, a commonplace, but it is going too far to find behind such language either an original hymn to the sun transferred to Yahweh or traces of an ancient identity of Yahweh and the sun god.' (p. 298)

[58] Sweeney, *Twelve*, p. 482.

[59] R. Smith, p. 116; F. Andersen, p. 303. The verbs יֵלֶךְ and וַיֵּצֵא have military connotations (F. Andersen, p. 307).

[60] See 2.6.

[61] See 2.6.5.

[62]Similarly J. C. de Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism: The Roots of Israelite Monotheism* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990) argues that Yahweh has taken over the function of Baal here (p. 134).

[63] Eszenyei recognises the personification of *deber* and *reshef* but takes these 'heralds' or 'envoys' to refer 'back to the demonic forces in the ancient Canaanite religion, to the power of those horrible

mythological reference.[64] F. Andersen's discussion of verse 5 is especially interesting. He notes that in vv. 3-7 'there is still a high level of mythology or at least a marked use of mythopoeic imagery', and thus v. 5 which is a 'key verse', can be either taken as 'virtually polytheistic' with *Deber* and *Reshef* as real beings, or as 'merely poetic', with *Deber* and *Reshef* as 'personifications of features of God's destructive power.'[65] Andersen draws attention to the similarities with Deut 33:2, another description of a theophany, where he argues that we have the image of the deity 'accompanied by the four prime attendants', four destroyers.[66] He suggests that in Hab 3: 5 too, we have Yahweh surrounded by 'four quasi-divine beings' (p. 306).

Sometimes there is only one destroyer mentioned, in which case it is *deber* (Exod 9:3, 15; Num 14:12, etc.); in other instances there are two (*deber* and *hereb*, Exod 5:3; Ezek 28:23; Amos 4:10; or *hereb* and *ra'ab*, Jer 14:15) or three (commonly *deber*, *hereb* and *ra'ab*, e.g. Lev 26:25; 2 Sam 24:13; 2 Chron 20:9, Jer and Ezek passages[67]). He suggests that 'originally Yahweh's bodyguard consisted of four "holy ones": Sword, Famine, Pestilence, and Plague' with *reshef* occurring less frequently perhaps because of his clear Canaanite association. 'Perhaps *ršp* was lost early from the list because it was more obviously a Canaanite god than the others. The other three survived in the stereotyped lists of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, by whose time the old mythology could be used without danger of polytheism.'[68] Andersen conjectures that 'we can only guess at what the four may have been in the ancient poems whose fragments survive in Deuteronomy 33 and Habakkuk 3', as unlike

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divinities that oppressed mortal human beings with epidemics or with destructive droughts.' According to her the prophet sees them as 'horrible demons' that 'have no independent sphere of influence but are inferior beings who stand to serve Yahweh…' (p. 48) Similarly Eaton believes Reshef to be the 'demonic escort' of Yahweh. To the contrary, J. D. W. Watts, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah* (Cambridge: University Press, 1975) does not think it likely that deber and reshef would be Yahweh's attendants; rather their moving before and behind is scurrying away 'like small animals or insects which scatter at a man's approach' (p. 147).

[64] R. Smith, pp. 114/5a, 116; Sweeney, *Twelve*, p. 484. Margulis notes that real terms, e.g. Teman, Paran, 'heads' or 'bow', etc. mix with 'mythic personages' such as *Reshef* or Yam (p. 437). It is interesting that in his detailed analyses of the text he does not deal with v. 5.

[65] P. 285. It is unclear which option Andersen prefers. However, there is an excellent and very detailed discussion of the poetics of the verse as well as the ancient Near Eastern parallels to it (pp. 285-307).

[66] P. 300. However, his attempt to find *deber* in Deut 33:3 is a little forced.

[67] See below 5.3, 5.4, 5.5.3, and 5.5.6.

[68] Pp. 305-306. Thus, Andersen argues further, Ezekiel's fourth destroyer became the 'wild animals', and Deut 32:24 uses 'natural dangers' instead of 'names of old gods'.

reshef, *hereb*, *ra'ab* or *deber* 'are not attested as Cannanite deities' (p.306). He seems to suggest that since *Deber* and *Reshef* are clearly identified in Hab 3:5, the term *qarnayim*, 'horned ones', might be a reference to the other two. Andersen's suggestion is attractive and better suited to the context than that of those who see *Reshef* and *Deber* as 'demons'. Both *Reshef* and *Deber* appear here as members of Yahweh's retinue, their function is to emphasise Yahweh's awesome power; there is nothing to suggest that they should be regarded as demons. However, we argue that it is unnecessary to try and identify *hereb* and *ra'ab* behind the *qarnayim* as Andersen does. There are not necessarily four attendants in Yahweh's retinue as Andersen has also recognised (pp. 301-302). There can be one, two, three, four, seven or myriads of scourges, arrows, angels/beings (bringers) of evil or holy ones who are always in the service of Yahweh.[69] The parallelism with Deut 33:2-3 suggests that *Deber* and *Reshef* in Hab 3:5 are members of Yahweh's myriads of *qedosim*.

The mythological elements continue in the following verses, vv. 8-15 allude to creation and God's conflict with his enemies. These enemies here are represented by the 'deep' (תְּהוֹם, v. 10), the 'waters' (מַיִם, vv. 10, 15), 'rivers' (נְהָרִים, vv. 8, 9), 'sea' (יָם, vv. 8, 15) or 'the nations' (גּוֹיִם, v. 12; עַם יְנוֹדֵנוּ, v. 16). Yahweh appears in his role as a warrior here too. The reason of his coming is to defeat his enemies.

The prophet's response to God's coming and work is initially fear (v. 16a-d) which is then changed to faith (vv. 16e-19). The answer to the opening question, 'Why does God allow the wicked to go unpunished?' is given in v. 16e through the prophet's affirmation of his conviction that the day (the day of calamity, יוֹם צָרָה) will come when Yahweh will strike down the people who are coming to attack (לַעֲלוֹת לְעַם יְנוֹדֵנוּ).

5.2.4 Summary of *deber* in Hab 3; Hos 13 and Ps 91

Many scholars take these three passages as pointing to a mythological background of the Hebrew Bible. Indeed the Hebrew Bible frequently uses mythological motifs such as God's struggle with the chaos monster, variously identified as *tehom*, deep, *rahab*, *yam*, the sea, *tannin*, the monster, the dragon, etc.; or thunder as the voice of God (Ps 29, e); the stars as armies of the Lord; Death personified (Isa 28:15; Ps 49: 15); the mountain of the gods (Isa 14:13; Ps 48:3); etc. Thus the three passages

[69] See following sections below.

discussed above also 'gather(s) together images applied to the Lord which recall mythical associations.'[70] However, only Hab 3 has clear mythological elements. A word of caution is also needed here. Schökel points out that although there are mythical motifs in it, the Hebrew Bible clearly 'has not admitted myths' ('if we take as models the undoubtedly mythological texts of the ancient NE', p.18). He writes (p. 19):

> The literature of the OT is a developed literature, the result of a long and stable tradition. It is open to foreign influences and well-used to elaborating and re-elaborating earlier or foreign material. For this reason mixed genres are frequent, and many works resist tidy classification. This is why the study of motifs which can transfer to different genres may be just as important as the study of literary genres. And what happens with the myths happens also with folk tales.

Mythological motifs as well as personification and metaphor are poetical devices which the Hebrew poets used frequently and with great art in the Hebrew Bible.[71] We should be cautious in drawing conclusions without considering this fact.[72]

In Ps 91 *deber* appears as one of the personified dangerous forces that cause death and destruction at the command of Yahweh; the others are the Fowler, *Qeteb*, the Arrow and Terror, all presented as Yahweh's angels, an array of powerful warriors. Similarly in Hos 13, it appears along with Mot, Sheol and *Qeteb* as personified forces of destruction and death whom Yahweh uses for his purposes. They are his agents of punishment. In Hab 3 both *Reshef* and *Deber* are members of Yahweh's retinue, their function is to emphasise Yahweh's awesome power.

Clearly in these passages *deber* appears in a personified sense but there is nothing to suggest that it should be regarded as a 'demon'.

5.3 *Deber* in Jeremiah

דֶּבֶר occurs 17 times in the Book of Jeremiah, in the following passages: 14:12; 21: 6, 7, 9; 24;10; 27:8, 13; 28:8; 29:17, 18; 32:24, 36; 34:17; 38:2; 42:17, 22 and 44:13. We shall now turn to examine these.

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[70] Alonso, p. 18.

[71] Alonso, pp. 17-19; 123-125; G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Duckworth, 1980), pp. 219-242. He argues that 'myth is a specialised kind of metaphor' (p. 220). W. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*.

[72] See for ex. the remarks of H. Barstad, 'Sheol', in DDD, pp. 768-770.

5.3.1 Jeremiah 14: 12

v.12

כִּי יָצֻמוּ אֵינֶנִּי שֹׁמֵעַ אֶל־רִנָּתָם וְכִי יַעֲלוּ עֹלָה וּמִנְחָה אֵינֶנִּי רֹצֶם כִּי בַחֶרֶב וּבָרָעָב
וּבַדֶּבֶר אָנֹכִי מְכַלֶּה אוֹתָם׃

Deber occurs in Jer 14:12 in a triad together with 'sword' and 'famine'.

Most scholars take Jer 14:2-15:9 as a unit,[73] and within this 14:10-16 as a prose piece consisting of two judgement oracles (v. 10 and vv. 15-16) and a dialogue between Yahweh and the prophet (vv. 11-14).[74]

The two poems in vv. 2-9 and vv. 17- 22 contain a lament (vv. 2-6 // 17-19b), a confession of the people and supplication for deliverance (vv. 7-9 // 19c-22), and are followed by a response from Yahweh.[75] This is not the expected announcement of deliverance but instead, of judgement.[76]

In v. 7 the people confess their iniquities (עון) and to the fact that they have sinned (חטא) against Yahweh.[77] These same words are repeated in v. 10 in reply to the

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[73] For example J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1980), p. 375; R. E. Clements, *Jeremiah*, Interpretation: Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), p. 89; P. C. Craigie, P. H. Kelley and J. F. Drinkard, Jr, *Jeremiah 1-25*, WBC 26 (Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1991), p. 195. Lundbom regards 14:2 -15:3 as a shorter unit. See *Jeremiah 1-20*, AB 21A (New York: Doubleday, 1999), p. 692. W. Holladay argues most convincingly for the unity of 14:2-15:9, and there is an excellent summary of different scholarly views. See W. L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 1-25*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), pp. 421-422. J. Bright and others (e.g. Skinner, for reference see Holladay, pp. 421-422) regard the text as a collection of separate oracles. See J. Bright, *Jeremiah: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), p. 103. R. P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westmainster Press, 1986) argues that the section is composed of 'a number of discrete units' (p. 307). See also W. McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*: *Introduction and Commentary on Jeremiah 1-25* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986), I, pp. 315-343.

[74] There is disagreement regarding v. 10. According to some (e.g. Bright, McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, Thompson, *Jeremiah*, also NIV and RSV) it is poetry whereas others take it as prose (e.g. Craigie, Kelley & Drinkard, NJB). However, vv. 11-16 are clearly prose.

[75] Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, points out close links between 14:2-6; 14:17-18 and 15:5-9; then 14:7-9 and 14:19-22; as well as 14:10 and 15:1- 4 (p. 423).

[76] Craigie, Kelley & Drinkard, p. 200; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, p. 426.

[77] The acknowledgement of their sins is introduced by כי, and Holladay argues that this should be taken in the sense of 'so' here, rather than the usual 'for' (*Jeremiah 1*, p. 432). The context supports Holladay's suggestion.

people's plea for forgiveness.[78] Yahweh remembers these iniquities (עון) and sins (חטא) and because of them he does not accept the people (lit. 'he is not pleased', לֹא רָצָם) or their plea. The promised severe punishment reflects the gravity of the people's 'iniquities' and 'sins'; their love for wandering and lack of restraint (אָהֲבוּ לָנוּעַ רַגְלֵיהֶם לֹא חָשָׂכוּ), must allude to their wandering after foreign gods.[79] This is confirmed later in v. 20 in another confession of sins. The people acknowledge 'our wickedness' (רִשְׁעֵנוּ); 'the sins of our fathers' (עֲוֹן אֲבוֹתֵינוּ) and that 'we have indeed sinned against you' (כִּי חָטָאנוּ לָךְ).[80] The use of the same words (עון and חטא) connects this verse with vv. 7 and 10.

The context of this announcement of punishment is perhaps a failed attempt of Jeremiah for intercession, because vv. 11 and 12 emphatically declare: 'do not pray on behalf of this people, for their benefit.' Yahweh forbids any attempt of the prophet to intercede on behalf of the people and at the same time declares his resolve to disregard the peoples' attempts to please him. Their confession and their cry will not be heard; their offerings will not be accepted. The expression 'I will not approve them' (אֵינֶנִּי רֹצָם), picks up from v. 10 (לֹא רָצָם) and thus carries the same idea of rejection of the people by Yahweh.[81] Turning from Yahweh to follow other gods (v. 22) is the ultimate sin against him, and therefore the punishment is complete destruction brought about by the 'sword', 'famine' and *deber*, 'for I shall destroy (finish) them through the sword, and through the famine and through the *deber'*, כִּי בַחֶרֶב וּבָרָעָב וּבַדֶּבֶר אָנֹכִי מְכַלֶּה אוֹתָם (v. 12).

Commentators argue that this is a reference to war and its aftermath; famine and plague often followed in the footsteps of wars in ancient times.[82] Thus a translation of *deber* as 'plague' is possible but not certain. Bright's translation as 'disease' is

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[78] The similarities of this verse with Hos 8:13 led some scholars to suggest that it was added from Hosea (Janzen, quoted in McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, p. 321 and Craigie, Kelley & Drinkard, p. 198) or that Jeremiah quoted Hosea (McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, p. 321).

[79] Thompson, *Jeremiah*, p. 382; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, pp. 705-706.

[80] כִּי is used in a similar sense as in v. 7. With Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, p. 438.

[81] Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, p. 434.

[82] Thompson, *Jeremiah*, p. 382. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, refers to the expression 'pestilence and famine' (*loimon kai limon*) found in Plutarch's *de Iside*, p. 390, and Thucydides' description of a plague during the Peloponnesian war in Athens (p. 707).

preferable.[83] 'Sword' and 'famine' appear again together three times, once in v. 13 and twice in v. 15, this time without the third element.[84] The false prophets, who prophesy against the 'sword and famine', will perish by the same 'sword and famine' (v. 15). Holladay points out that two different stems of the verb 'to prophesy' (**נבא**) are used in v. 14, the Niphal and the Hithpael, and suggests that perhaps this was deliberately done by Jeremiah to achieve a 'derogatory' sense for the false prophets' actions as in earlier usage 'the hitpa'el stem of the verb can mean "rave" (1 Sam 18:10)'.[85]

The passage in 15:1-3 is interesting. V. 1 picks up the theme of intercession with a reference to Moses and Samuel. Even these two great prophets would not be able to save the people from punishment.[86] Their sins are so great that nothing and no one can save them. Yahweh sends the people away from his sight, 'send them away from my presence and let them go' (שַׁלַּח מֵעַל־פָּנַי וְיֵצֵאוּ). It is noted that the use of the expression here is an ironic reversal of the exodus event.[87] There Moses was demanding in the name of Yahweh that pharaoh 'let my people go' (שַׁלַּח אֶת־עַמִּי).[88] Here Jeremiah is told to send the people away from Yahweh, to let them go to their doom. In v. 2 the people are allotted (given over) to death, sword, famine and captivity as punishment. This verse is in poetry.

Those for death to death	אֲשֶׁר לַמָּוֶת לַמָּוֶת
and those for the sword to the sword	וַאֲשֶׁר לַחֶרֶב לַחֶרֶב
and those for the famine to the famine	וַאֲשֶׁר לָרָעָב לָרָעָב
and those for the captivity to the captivity	וַאֲשֶׁר לַשִּׁבי לַשִּׁבי

It is argued by some that 'death' here is a substitute for *deber*. For example Holladay writes: 'The parallel in 14:12 has "sword, famine and pestilence," and it is clear that "death" here is a poetic synonym for "pestilence".'[89] Similarly McKane argues that

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[83] P. 103. CJB also translates 'war, famine and disease'. LXX has θανατος,, 'death' for *deber*; so does Targ. Vg has *peste*, 'pestilence'.

[84] On the pair 'sword' and 'famine' see the comments of Holladay in *Jeremiah 1*, p. 435.

[85] *Jeremiah 1*, p. 435.

[86] Cf. Moses' intercession in Exod 32:11-13; 20-34; Num 14:13-19; Samuel's in 1 Sam 7:9; 12:19-25.

[87] Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, pp. 439- 440; Carroll, p. 320.

[88] Exod 5:1; 7:16, 26; 8:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3.

[89] *Jeremiah 1*, p. 440. Also Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, p. 719.

'the view that מות is a synonym of דבר is certainly correct.'[90] Carroll simply translates מות by 'pestilence' but does not explain his choice.[91] The suggestion seems plausible as there are other examples of מות occuring together with famine and/or sword, e.g. in Jeremiah 18:21 and 43:11.[92] Also the fact that LXX and Targ translate *deber* as 'death' would seem to support such suggestion. However, there is nothing in the context of Jeremiah 18:21 that would justify an exchange of מות for דבר, only that there is 'sword' and 'famine' in the same verse (but they do not appear as a triad but separately, and 'sword' occurs twice). However the pair 'sword and famine' appear elsewhere without a third element.[93] Jer 43:11 gives even less support; 'famine' is missing from there, but we have 'captivity' as the third element with 'death' and 'sword'. LXX and Targ translate *deber* as 'death' throughout the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, thus they cannot be used to justify the exchange here.

While some commentators argue that the fourth element seems out of place (as the first three are seen as 'alternative forms of death', while the fourth one is not), and thus see the last cola as secondary, [94] others rightly point out that there is no support in the MT for such a claim.[95] Indeed, regardless of whether the suggestion to substitute *deber* for *mawet* is correct (and as we have seen such is unfounded), the verse makes sense in the wider context of Jeremiah's message regarding the fate of the people of Jerusalem: death or captivity. We shall see in later chapters that the people are told repeatedly that Jerusalem is doomed, that it is against Yahweh's will to stay there, therefore those who disobey him will be punished by death. Those who obey, while still punished by being taken into captivity, at least have the hope of survival. V. 2 looks forward to this message.

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[90] *Jeremiah 1-25*, p. 335.

[91] Pp. 319-320. Similarly Thompson, *Jeremiah*, uses the two words interchangeably (pp. 385 and 387).

[92]Some modern versions seem to presume an identification of מות and דבר. For example in Jer 18:21 the phrase וְאַנְשֵׁיהֶם יִהְיוּ הֲרֻגֵי מָוֶת is translated by CJB as 'let their husbands be slain by disease'; by NJB as: 'let their husbands die of plague'; and by RSV as: 'May their men meet death by pestilence'. In Jer 43:11in the phrase אֲשֶׁר לַמָּוֶת לַמָּוֶת 'death' is translated as 'plague' by NJB and as 'pestilence' by RSV, but CJB has 'death'.

[93] E.g. Jer 5:12; 11:22; 42:16; 44:18, 27; Job 5:20; Isa 51:19; Lam 4:9; etc.

[94] For this reason Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, regards the last cola as a secondary addition (p. 440). Carroll argues for deuteronomistic motifs introduced by a later editor throughout (pp. 307-321). Similarly McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, p. 335.

[95] Craigie, Kelley & Drinkard, p. 204; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, p. 719.

V. 3 is linked to the previous verse by the common element 'sword' and the mention of four forms of punishment. However, rather than expanding on the whole verse it focuses on the consequences of death. The four מִשְׁפָּחוֹת are usually translated as 'destroyers',[96] 'families',[97] or 'scourges'.[98] Holladay notes that the use of this word in the sense of 'kinds of destroyers' is unique in the Hebrew Bible, but that it does occur in the sense of 'species of animals' in Gen 8:19. Clearly, the latter could not be the sense here as the fourth element is not a kind of animal but 'the sword'. The word also carries the sense of punishment. These four 'things' referred to are Yahweh's agents who carry out the punishment,[99] which is even worse than death because it suggests the refusal of proper burial which was feared by the ancients.[100]

The personification of the three elements *deber*, famine and sword is possible here especially if the preposition בְּ־ is taken instrumentally; 'through' them Yahweh destroys.[101] Similarly Death, Sword, Famine and Captivity in 15:2 are abstract nouns personified to convey the prophet's message more emphatically.

5.3.2 Jeremiah 21: 6, 7 and 9

vv. 6-7

וְהִכֵּיתִי אֶת־יוֹשְׁבֵי הָעִיר הַזֹּאת וְאֶת־הָאָדָם וְאֶת־הַבְּהֵמָה בְּדֶבֶר גָּדוֹל יָמֻתוּ׃
[7] וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן נְאֻם־יְהוָה אֶתֵּן אֶת־צִדְקִיָּהוּ מֶלֶךְ־יְהוּדָה וְאֶת־עֲבָדָיו וְאֶת־הָעָם
וְאֶת־הַנִּשְׁאָרִים בָּעִיר הַזֹּאת מִן־הַדֶּבֶר מִן־הַחֶרֶב וּמִן־הָרָעָב בְּיַד נְבוּכַדְרֶאצַּר
מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל וּבְיַד אֹיְבֵיהֶם וּבְיַד מְבַקְשֵׁי נַפְשָׁם וְהִכָּם לְפִי־חֶרֶב לֹא־יָחוֹס עֲלֵיהֶם
וְלֹא יַחְמֹל וְלֹא יְרַחֵם׃

v. 9

הַיֹּשֵׁב בָּעִיר הַזֹּאת יָמוּת בַּחֶרֶב וּבָרָעָב וּבַדָּבֶר וְהַיּוֹצֵא וְנָפַל עַל־הַכַּשְׂדִּים
הַצָּרִים עֲלֵיכֶם(יִחְיֶה) [וְחָיָה] וְהָיְתָה־לּוֹ נַפְשׁוֹ לְשָׁלָל׃

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[96] E.g. NIV; RSV; Craigie, Kelley & Drinkard, p. 197; Carroll, p. 319; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 'kinds of destroyers' (p. 421).

[97] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, p. 718; Craigie, Kelley & Drinkard, refer to Giesebrecht and Volz (p. 204).

[98] CJB. NJB has 'four kinds of thing'; JPS has 'four kinds'.

[99] Elsewhere we have reference to Yahweh's four 'scourges' or 'arrows'. Animals and birds are agents of Yahweh in Num 21:6; Deut 32: 24; Jer 8:17; Hos 13:7-8.

[100] Often a theme in Jeremiah; e.g. 7:33; 8:2; 9:21; 16:3-4, 6; 19:7; 22:18-18. Also in Deut 28:26; Gen 40:19; 1 Sam 17:44-46; 1 Kgs 14:11; 16:4; Isa 18:6; Ezek 39:17-20; Ps 79:1-3. See also ch. 4 n. 29 p. 75. A similar curse is found in the vassal treaties of Esarhaddon. See ANET, pp. 534-541.

[101] See Jer 21 in 5.3.2 below.

Deber occurs three times in this chapter, once on its own and twice in the triad but in varying order.[102] The context is that of judgement; chapters 21-23 contain judgement oracles, both in prose and poetry, against the monarchy and false prophets. It is generally agreed that Jer 21:1-10 is a section in prose.[103] V. 1 is an introduction; Yahweh speaks to Jeremiah in response to King Zedekiah's request. The siege of Jerusalem is about to occur, so the king sends two messengers, Pashhur and Zepheniah to Jeremiah asking him to enquire about Yahweh's intention.[104] The verb in v. 2, דרשׁ, is used with the emphatic particle, נָא־, making the king's plea more forceful. This verb is a technical term referring to seeking the deity in a divine oracle,[105] but here the second part of v. 2 makes it clear that the king is asking for Jeremiah's intercession with Yahweh. It is not the deity's intention the king wants to enquire about but he is hoping for Yahweh's miraculous deliverance, as in past times.[106]

Vv. 3-4 relay Yahweh's answer to Zedekiah through Jeremiah. This is not what the king would have hoped for. Instead of turning back the enemy (וְיַעֲלֶה מֵעָלֵינוּ) Yahweh will cause their own weapons to turn (Hi of סבב) against them. Craigie, Kelley and Drinkard note that v. 4 can be read ambiguously, even the preposition אל carries a double possibility, it can be interpreted either 'to' or 'against' Zedekiah. Further the use of סבב also carries ambiguities.[107] Whether v. 4 is intentionally

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[102] V. 6 has דבר, v. 7a has דבר, חרב and רעב; then v. 7b has חרב again, and v. 9 has חרב, רעב and דבר.

[103] Thompson, *Jeremiah*, p. 466; Craigie, Kelley & Drinkard, pp. 283-289; J. R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, AB 21B (New York: Doubleday, 2004), pp. 94-107; Carroll, p. 404; McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, pp. 491-496; Bright, p. 217. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, writes: 'The passage offers itself as an oracle, … but it is in effect a simple narrative…' (p. 569). There is disagreement amongst commentators as to whether vv. 1-10 form a unity or not. For various treatments of this section see commentaries.

[104] For a discussion of the identity of Passhur and Zepheniah see commentaries n. 103 above.

[105] E.g. Gen 25:22; Exod 18:15; Deut 4:29; 12:5; 1 Sam 9:9; 1 Kgs 22:5, 7-8; 2 Kgs 3:11; 8:8; 22:13; Isa 31:1; 55:6; 65:10; Hos 10:12; Amos 5:4-6; etc.

[106] Exod 34:10; Pss 40:6(5); 72:18; 78:4; 86:10; 96:3. Commentators note that most probably Zedekiah was referring to the successful intercession of Isaiah at the time of the Assyrian siege (by Sennacherib), cf. 2 Kgs 19:35-36; Isa 37:36-37. See Thompson, *Jeremiah*, p. 467; Craigie, Kelley & Drinkard, p. 285; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, p. 100; McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, p. 496; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, p. 571.

[107] Pp. 286-287. Also Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, p. 571. He also notes the unique use of the Hiphil form of the verb סבב in the HB in the sense of reversing the direction of weapons.

ambiguous or not, the following clearly cannot be taken in a positive sense. In v. 5 Yahweh declares that he himself is going to fight against king and people. The use of the personal pronoun with the verb (וְנִלְחַמְתִּי אֲנִי), emphasizes the gravity of the situation. Yahweh is described as the mighty Divine Warrior, fighting with 'outstretched hand and with strong arm' (בְּיָד נְטוּיָה וּבִזְרוֹעַ חֲזָקָה), but here his role is reversed, and this is already anticipated by the reversal of the weapons in the previous verse.[108] The picture is further intensified with the use of three nouns, אַף, חֵמָה, and קֶצֶף גָּדוֹל, 'anger', 'fury' and 'great wrath'. These nouns have the preposition בְּ, and they are usually translated 'in anger', 'in fury' and 'in great wrath'. However, it is possible to take בְּ as indicating instrumentality,[109] Yahweh fighting *with/through* anger, fury and great wrath. Thus these abstract nouns appear personified as Yahweh's warriors fighting alongside him, Anger, Fury and Great Wrath, carrying out his punishment. These are in fact Yahweh's agents named in vv. 6 and 7; קֶצֶף גָּדוֹל appearing as דֶּבֶר גָּדוֹל in v. 6, and אַף and חֵמָה respectively as Sword and Famine in v. 7. Yahweh will strike down the inhabitants of the city *with/through deber*.[110] The verb 'strike down', נכה, usually carries the connotation of smiting to kill or destroy.[111] This, and the verb יָמֻתוּ in one sentence emphasize the completeness of Yahweh's judgement; he means to bring total destruction to Jerusalem. V. 7 expands on this judgement, referring perhaps to events after the siege while vv. 5-6 referred to the time of the siege. The king, his officials and the people, survivors of *Deber*, Sword and Famine, are handed over to Nebuchadrezzar who will show no mercy, pity or compassion.

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[108] Commentators note that this expression might go back to the holy war ideology, but there it is usually 'with strong hand and with outstretched arm' (cf. Deut 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; 26:8; 1 Kg 8:42; 2 Kg 17:36; etc.). The inverted use by Jeremiah signifies judgment not deliverance. See McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, pp. 498-499; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, pp. 571-572; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, p. 102; Craigie, Kelley & Drinkard, p. 287; J. A. Thompson, *Jeremiah*, p. 468.

[109] Cf. 1 Kg 22:28 (Craigie, Kelley & Drinkard, p. 287).

[110] Whatever *deber* means, it is another instrument of Yahweh, taking בְּ instrumentally as in the previous verse. It is meant to be deadly; both humans and animals shall die by it (בְּדֶבֶר גָּדוֹל יָמֻתוּ). Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, notes that the expression 'human and beast' is common in Jeremiah prose, e.g. 7:20; 21:6; 27:5; 31:27; 32:43; 33:10, 12; 36:29; 51:62 (pp. 103; 312).

[111] Gen 4:15; Exod 12:12; 1 Sam 23:2; Jer 26:23; Amos 3:15; etc.

The accumulation of nouns is noteworthy; [112] no doubt it creates a vivid picture and emphasizes the severity of judgement. There are many parallels between v. 6 and 7. The Babylonian king will strike the survivors down (נכה). The same verb is used as in v. 6. There the subject was Yahweh, here it is Nebuchadrezzar; in v. 6 Yahweh's instrument was *deber*, here the king's instrument is the sword (lit. the mouth of the sword), which is usually Yahweh's instrument. The result is the same. Both *deber* and sword bring death.

The oracle in vv. 8-10 is addressed to the people.[113] It is similar to the oracle conveyed to the king's messengers in that it foretells the destruction of Jerusalem and all those who remain there by sword, famine, and *deber*. It is also different because here there is a possibility of survival; Yahweh offers the way of life and the way of death. Staying in the city means disobeying Yahweh, it brings death. Going out and surrendering means obeying Yahweh and thus surviving. This possibility was not given in 14:12; there even repentance could not save the people from judgement.

From the discussion above we can conclude that the usual translation of *deber* as 'plague/pestilence'[114] is possible as the context is that of war/siege, but it is not certain. *Deber*, Sword and Famine appear in parallel with Wrath, Anger and Fury as Yahweh's agents, personifications of his great wrath.[115] This is supported by the portrayal of Yahweh as the Divine Warrior.

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[112] Thompson, *Jeremiah*, p. 468, notes the characteristic use of nouns in threes, which however leaves us with the problem noted by Craigie, Kelley and Drinkard (p. 288) along with other commentators (McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, pp. 500-501; Carroll, p. 409) that the wording of v. 7 seems superfluous. In fact, v. 7 is an expansion and explanation of v. 6 (see above), and it does not need changed. Holladay (*Jeremiah 1*, p. 572) explains Yahweh's judgement as a twofold punishment, first by *deber* and then by sword. Lundbom (*Jeremiah 21-36*, p. 96) notes that v. 7 has an abb'a' structure (4 terms/3 terms/3 terms/4 terms).

[113] Commentators note the similarity to Jer 38:2-3.

[114] Commentaries (see n. 99 above) as well as modern Bible versions and Vg. LXX and Targ have 'death' in v. 6 and 7, and LXX misses the word out in v. 9.

[115] Against McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, who argues that *deber* in v. 6 is merely one of Yahweh's 'defensive weapons', and that בְּדֶבֶר גָּדוֹל יָמֻתוּ is rather an allusion to 2 Kgs 25:1-4. In his opinion the phrase 'does not contribute to the original sense of vv. 4-6' (p. 500).

5.3.3 Jeremiah 24:10

v.10
וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי בָם אֶת־הַחֶרֶב אֶת־הָרָעָב וְאֶת־הַדֶּבֶר עַד־תֻּמָּם מֵעַל הָאֲדָמָה
אֲשֶׁר־נָתַתִּי לָהֶם וְלַאֲבוֹתֵיהֶם :

Jeremiah 24:1-10 is another prose passage.[116] It contains Jeremiah's vision of two fig baskets.[117] One contains good figs and the other bad figs, which cannot be eaten. Yahweh's explanation of the meaning of the two baskets reminds us of the oracle in chapter 21:8-10.[118] The basket of good figs represents the people who are in exile in Babylon, those who chose life in 21:9. The basket containing the bad figs represents those who disobey Yahweh and choose to stay in Jerusalem or flee to Egypt thus hoping to survive. Their hoped for survival in fact means the opposite, their disobedience will bring punishment on them. In v. 10 Yahweh sends (וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי) his agents of destruction, sword, famine and *deber* (אֶת־הַחֶרֶב אֶת־הָרָעָב וְאֶת־הַדֶּבֶר); appearing in the same order as in 21:9. The verb is the same as when Yahweh 'sends' his messengers (angels), and although the three nouns have the object-marker, אֶת, it is possible to take the triad as personified agents of Yahweh.

Beside this triad commentators note the accumulation of several terms frequently found in Jeremiah to describe Judah's imminent doom.[119]

Regarding the translation of the term *deber* we can draw similar conclusions as in the previous chapter.[120]

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[116] On the difficulties of interpreting this passage see e.g. McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, pp. 605-617; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, pp. 654-660; Carroll, pp. 482-488; Craigie, Kelley & Drinkard, pp. 357-361.

[117] Other examples of 'vision reports' are Jer 1:11-12; 1:13-16 in which Yahweh is in dialogue with the prophet (Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, p. 223; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, p. 656).

[118] Carroll, p. 482. Craigie, Kelley & Drinkard note similarities with ch. 18 in terms of form, as well as with Amos 7-8 (p. 357).

[119] E.g. Jer 19:8; 25:9, 11, 18; 29:18; 42:18; 44:6, 8, 12, 22; etc. Thompson, *Jeremiah*, p. 509; Craigie, Kelley & Drinkard, *Jeremiah 1-25*, pp. 360-361; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, pp. 234-235; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, pp. 659-660.

[120] Usual translation for deber is 'plague/pestilence'; so commentaries and modern Bible versions. LXX and Targ have 'death' here, and LXX changes the order of the words, it has 'famine, death and sword'. Probably not relevant.

5.3.4 Jeremiah 27:8, 13 and 28: 8

Jer 27:8

וְהָיָה הַגּוֹי וְהַמַּמְלָכָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יַעַבְדוּ אֹתוֹ אֶת־נְבוּכַדְנֶאצַּר מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִתֵּן אֶת־צַוָּארוֹ בְּעֹל מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל בַּחֶרֶב וּבָרָעָב וּבַדֶּבֶר אֶפְקֹד עַל־הַגּוֹי הַהוּא נְאֻם־יְהוָה עַד־תֻּמִּי אֹתָם בְּיָדוֹ׃

v.13

לָמָּה תָמוּתוּ אַתָּה וְעַמְּךָ בַּחֶרֶב בָּרָעָב וּבַדֶּבֶר כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֶל־הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יַעֲבֹד אֶת־מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל׃

Chapters 27 and 28 are generally taken together, and some commentators also include chapters 24 and 29 to form a unit.[121] These prose narratives reflect Jeremiah's conflict with the false prophets centring on the prediction of a positive outcome of the exile in 597 BC. Yahweh's message is that all people should simply submit to Nebuchadrezzar because that is Yahweh's will. God's authority is stressed by listing a number of his titles (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל), the emphatic use of the personal pronoun **אָנֹכִי** as well as the recounting of his mighty acts of creation in vv. 4-5.[122]

'It is I who have made the earth, and humankind and the beasts that are on the face of the earth…'.[123] Yahweh, the creator of everything has the authority to do with his creation as he pleases. Presently he chooses to give all the lands into the Babylonian king's hands. V. 6 using the same emphatic personal pronoun **אָנֹכִי** stresses that Nabuchadrezzar's present success is from Yahweh, 'And now it is I who have given

[121] Thus G. L. Keown, P. J. Scalise & T. G. Smothers, *Jeremiah 26-52*, WBC 27 (Dallas: Word Books, 1995), pp. 38-59; Bright also holds that chs 27 and 28 should be read together although he regards them as being 'of different literary types' (p. 201). To the contrary, Carroll holds that chs 27 and 28 are 'doublets' and should be read as parallel accounts (p. 530). Holladay, *Jeremiah 2: A Commentary of the Prophet Jeremiah: Chapters 26-52* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), p. 114, and Thompson, *Jeremiah*, pp. 528- 550 discuss chapters 27-29 together, as one literary unit. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, pp. 302-367, argues for a 'Zedekiah Cluster' of narrative prose which includes also ch. 24. For textual difficulties see discussions in Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, pp. 115-16; McKane, *Jeremiah*, pp. 685-694; 709-715; Carroll, pp. 526-529, 538-540.

[122] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, pp. 312-313 points out that creation theology is well documented in Jeremiah, and McKane, *Jeremiah: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*: *Commentary on Jeremiah 26-42* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), II, argues that the creation theology in v. 5 should be compared to ch. 10: 11-13 where it appears in the context of polemic against idolatry (p. 701).

[123] 'Humankind and beasts' with reference to their lack/reappearance is typical Jeremiah language, cf. n. 110 p. 125.

all this land into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, my servant.'[124] The Babylonian king is Yahweh's agent, through him comes either deliverance or death.[125] Thus those who serve him obey Yahweh in doing so, and those who do not serve him disobey Yahweh and therefore will be punished. The 'sword, famine and *deber*' bring punishment (v. 8); they are instruments of destruction in the hands of the servant of Yahweh. Thus ultimate punishment comes from Yahweh. The triad probably represents/refers to the destruction brought on by war (in this case by the Babylonian army) and the calamities that go together with war, famine and infectious disease. Vv. 8 and 13 contain the same message regarding the punishment (the triad appears in exactly the same order) only the audiences were different; the first was delivered to the nations of v. 3 and the second to king Zedekiah.[126] In both verses (8 and 13) all three nouns appear with the definite article. However, a personification is possible, understanding the sword, famine and *deber* as agents of punishments; taking בְּ instrumentally (as in) through them is Yahweh's punishment carried out.

Jer 28: 8

הַנְּבִיאִים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ לְפָנַי וּלְפָנֶיךָ מִן־הָעוֹלָם וַיִּנָּבְאוּ אֶל־אֲרָצוֹת רַבּוֹת
וְעַל־מַמְלָכוֹת גְּדוֹלוֹת לְמִלְחָמָה וּלְרָעָה וּלְדָבֶר׃

The context of the occurrence of *deber* in 28: 8 is similar; Jeremiah's ongoing conflict with false prophets who, contrary to Jeremiah, prophesy that obedience to Nabuchadrezzar is not necessary because Yahweh has broken the yoke of the king of Babylon (28:2). Here Jeremiah is in debate with Hananiah before the king, his priests and the people. Hananiah prophecies that within two years Yahweh will bring back all, the exiled king, people and the temple goods. With this he predicts the end of

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[124] Yahweh appoints Nebuchadrezzar lord not only over the lands but also over the wild animals. Cf. Gen 1:26; Ps 8:8 (7). Keown, Scalise & Smothers point out that wild animals were also one of the dangers of war and its aftermath, and that perhaps the significance of Nebuchadrezzar's lordship over them was that they presented another instrument of punishment that Yahweh put into his hands (v. 8). The wild animals would complement/complete the work of his army (p. 50).

[125] Commentators usually point out the difficulty presented by the term 'my servant' used of Nebuchadrezzar. It is used of Nabuchadrezzar also in Jer 25:9 and 43:10, but nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible of an enemy of Israel. Perhaps Jeremiah's aim was to shock his audience (e.g. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, p. 315), and one should not attribute to it any theological significance. For a discussion of the use of this term see also p. 247; Keown, Scalise & Smothers, p. 50; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, p. 121; McKane, *Jeremiah 26-52*, pp. 700-701; Carroll, pp. 531-532. LXX omits it here as well as in 25:9 and 43:10.

[126] *Deber* in v. 8 is missing from the LXX and it is translated as 'death' in the Targ. Vg has *peste*. V. 13 is entirely missing from LXX. Targ and Vg are the same as in v. 8.

Zedekiah's reign. Keown, Scalise and Smothers argue that in fact elements of Hananiah's prophecy were also found in Jeremiah's message which was the authentic message from Yahweh. The difference between false and true prophecy was not that their timing were different (2 vs 70 years) but that Jeremiah conveyed Yahweh's message to obey the king of Babylon.[127] Those who listened to the false prophets chose to disobey Yahweh.

Jeremiah's response to Hananiah is not in the form of an oracle or another prophecy but as a teaching aimed at everyone listening. Jeremiah seemingly treats Hananiah as an equal when he refers to 'the prophets who were before me and before you' (v. 8),[128] then sets the criteria of a true prophet; the prophecy has to come true.

On first reading of v. 8 it would seem that the prophets of ancient time were all prophets of doom as they spoke of 'war, evil and *deber*' to come against many lands and great kingdoms. However, commentators warn us that this would be misunderstanding Jeremiah's point. More likely he contrasted the earlier prophets of doom to Hananiah's peace prophecy because his own message was closer to theirs.[129] The content of the ancient prophets' message regarding the agents of doom (it is not specified that these are inflicted as punishment) is similar but not the same as Jeremiah's, only the third element, *deber* is the same, the first and second, 'war' and 'evil' are more general terms than 'sword' and 'famine' used by Jeremiah.[130] The three nouns occur here with the preposition לְ־ and no definite article. The preposition has the sense of 'with regard to', 'belonging to', thus it could be argued

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[127] *Jeremiah 26-52,* p. 54.

[128] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, p. 335. Similarly Carroll argues that Hananiah was the 'mirror image' of Jeremiah; their differences were ideological (p. 542).

[129] Thompson, *Jeremiah*, pp. 539-540; Keown, Scalise & Smothers, p. 55; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, p. 336. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, notes that the use of the imperfect ('shall prophesy') instead of the participle ('who prophesies') for prophesying suggests that Jeremiah had particular instances in mind in his own historical context and was not speaking generally. The vast majority of 8th and 7th century prophecies were of judgement (p. 128). So also Carroll, p. 544. McKane, *Jeremiah 26-52*, points to difficulties in interpreting v. 8 (pp. 718-719).

[130] Keown, Scalise & Smothers (p. 55) note that מִלְחָמָה is rarely found in Jeremiah (only in 4:19; 6:4, 23 and 21:4). Some commentators (e.g. Carroll, p. 539) change רָעָה to רָעָב on the basis that the usual triad in Jeremiah is חֶרֶב, רָעָב and דֶּבֶר. However, this is not necessary as all three terms are meant to carry a broader, more general meaning here. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, omits both רָעָה and דֶּבֶר following LXX (p. 125). Lundbom (*Jeremiah 21-36*, p. 335) notes that LXX's omission is perhaps intentional to contrast 'war' and 'peace', while others (McKane, *Jeremiah 26-52*, p. 712) maintain that LXX is original and MT is an expansion. See discusson in McKane, pp. 711-712.

that the prophets prophesied against the lands and kingdoms as belonging to these agents of punishment. A personification of *deber* is possible.

5.3.5 Jeremiah 29:17, 18

vv. 17-18

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת הִנְנִי מְשַׁלֵּחַ בָּם אֶת־הַחֶרֶב אֶת־הָרָעָב וְאֶת־הַדֶּבֶר וְנָתַתִּי
אוֹתָם כַּתְּאֵנִים הַשֹּׁעָרִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תֵאָכַלְנָה מֵרֹעַ׃
18 וְרָדַפְתִּי אַחֲרֵיהֶם בַּחֶרֶב בָּרָעָב וּבַדֶּבֶר וְנָתַתִּים(לְזֵוָעָה[ )לְזַעֲוָה] לְכֹל מַמְלְכוֹת
הָאָרֶץ לְאָלָה וּלְשַׁמָּה וְלִשְׁרֵקָה וּלְחֶרְפָּה בְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר־הִדַּחְתִּים שָׁם׃

This is a prose chapter, consisting of 'letters' between Jerusalem and Babylon.[131] Vv. 1-23 is a narrative reporting the text of a letter from Jeremiah to the exiles.[132] The present approach follows that of Lundbom who identifies four thematic segments within vv. 1-23 which form a chiasmus based on key words and theme as follows:

Vv. 1-3 Introduction

A welfare (שלום) of *Babylon* (vv. 4-9)
B welfare (שלום) of *Jerusalem* (v. 10-14)
B' judgement in *Jerusalem* (vv. 15-19)
A' judgement in *Babylon* (vv. 20-23)[133]

After a concern with welfare (first that of Babylon and those living there, then that of Jerusalem), the theme is judgement. Vv. 15-19 pronounce judgement on those people

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[131] After a lengthy discussion McKane, *Jeremiah 26-52*, concludes that ch. 29 consists of two letters, one written by Jeremiah to the people deported to Babylon, and one written by Shemaiah to Zephaniah (pp. 735-743). Similarly, Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, pp. 137-139, 146-147. Carroll refers to three (p. 555) while Thompson, *Jeremiah*, talks of at least four letters (p. 544); Keown, Scalise & Smothers argue that ch. 29 would be better regarded as a 'prophetic "booklet"', containing a collection of prophetic speeches (pp. 64-66). Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, regards the chapter as a narrative which reports Jeremianic oracles in letter form (pp. 342-346).

[132] Thompson, *Jeremiah*, regards vv. 16-20 as disrupting the flow of the letter (p. 545). The passage is missing from the LXX and some scholars think it should be deleted from the MT preferring the shorter Greek version. Some scholars regard vv. 16-20 as a secondary insertion; so Bright, p. 209; Holladay and McKane. On this issue see discussion in Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, pp. 134-137, 142-143; McKane, *Jeremiah 26-52,* pp. 736-748; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, p. 345.

[133] *Jeremiah 21-36*, p. 347. Against Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, pp. 138-139; Carroll, pp. 555-559; and others, who take v. 15 after v. 20 thus achieving a different structure.

who did not listen to Yahweh's word (v. 19).[134] The passage is reminiscent to the vision of Jeremiah about the good and bad figs in chapter 24,[135] and also brings to mind the judgements pronounced in chapters 14 and 27.

Deber occurs in vv. 17 and 18 in the known triad in exactly the same order. In v. 17 Yahweh 'sends' (מְשַׁלֵּחַ, a Piel ptcp. verb) אֶת־הַחֶרֶב אֶת־הָרָעָב וְאֶת־הַדֶּבֶר, and in v. 18 he 'pursues' (וְרָדַפְתִּי, Qal pf.) the people בַּחֶרֶב בָּרָעָב וּבַדֶּבֶר.[136] The context is similar to the previous ones discussed; these three scourges come from Yahweh as a punishment for disobedience. The context is war, thus a meaning for *deber* as 'plague/pestilence' is possible; some kind of infectious disease following war is preferable.

In v. 17 all three nouns occur with object marker, אֶת־ + definite article + noun, in v. 18 with preposition, בְּ־ + def. art. + noun. A personification of the members of the triad is possible, and would be supported by the verbs used in connection with them.

5.3.6 Jeremiah 32:24, 36

v. 24

הִנֵּה הַסֹּלְלוֹת בָּאוּ הָעִיר לְלָכְדָהּ וְהָעִיר נִתְּנָה בְּיַד הַכַּשְׂדִּים הַנִּלְחָמִים עָלֶיהָ
מִפְּנֵי הַחֶרֶב וְהָרָעָב וְהַדָּבֶר וַאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ הָיָה וְהִנְּךָ רֹאֶה׃

v. 36

וְעַתָּה לָכֵן כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־הָעִיר הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם אֹמְרִים נִתְּנָה
בְּיַד מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל בַּחֶרֶב וּבָרָעָב וּבַדָּבֶר׃

The core of this prose chapter is Jeremiah's concern with the buying of a field in Anathoth from a family member, and the consequent act of signing the deed.[137]

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[134] The accusation that the people did not listen to the prophets (thus to Yahweh's words) occurs often in Jeremiah prose, e.g. 7:25-27; 26:4-5; 35:13-15; 36:1-26; 44:4-5 (Keown, Scalise & Smothers, p. 77; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, p. 357).

[135] Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, notes the reference (p. 142) while Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, sees the reference here to Jeremiah's earlier vision as 'a summary of the oracle in 24:8-10' (p. 356). Carroll allows that the figs metaphor might be derived from 24:1-3 but it is used differently here (p. 562). Others merely point to parallels; thus for example, v. 17a and 18a//24:10; 17b//24:2; 18b//24:9 (Keown, Scalise & Smothers, p. 76).

[136] As mentioned above (n. 32) the passage is missing from LXX; Targ has 'death' and Vg 'pestilence' for *deber* in both verses.

[137] Commentators note that although chronologically this chapter would belong with chs 37-38, its present place is also justified because of the message of salvation that it contains (which is also the main theme of chs 30-31). See Keown, Scalise & Smothers, pp. 149-150; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*,

Jeremiah is confused over the meaning of this action; he does not see the point in the present situation of hopelessness (vv. 24-25). He prays to Yahweh hoping for an explanation. Vv. 16-25 contain Jeremiah's prayer to Yahweh, and vv. 26-44 are Yahweh's answer to his prayer with the hoped for explanation. The prayer is in the centre of the chapter.[138]

The prayer starts with a praise of Yahweh (vv. 16-23),[139] and ends with drawing the deity's attention to the ongoing siege, the outcome of which is certain in Jeremiah's eyes. Yet Yahweh commanded the prophet to make a purchase. Jeremiah does not say explicitly but the question is obvious: in the present circumstance what was the point in such a transaction? Lundbom draws attention to the use of the verb **בּאוּ**; בָּאוּ is a 'prophetic perfect' which shows that 'Jeremiah is certain that the siege will be successful'.[140] The siege ramps/mounds (הַסֹּלְלוֹת) have entered (בָּאוּ) the city to capture (לְלָכְדָהּ) it. The siege mounds appear as personified here, they probably refer to the Babylonian army entering, capturing and destroying the city. Indeed the second half of v. 24 states that 'the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans who are fighting against it'. The destruction is brought about by הַחֶרֶב וְהָרָעָב וְהַדֶּבֶר; these destructive forces are now aiding the Babylonian army. Jeremiah's statement in v. 24 is quoted by Yahweh in v. 36 in his response to the prophet's prayer.[141]

An explanation of and a reason for the destruction is given in Yahweh's answer in vv. 26- 44. The reason is that the people have provoked Yahweh to anger by going after other gods and sacrificing to them. The people's sin is related in detail in vv. 29b-35; they burnt incense to Baal; they gave offerings to other gods; they have done

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p. 499; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, p. 551; Carroll, pp. 618-631 (esp. p. 621); Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, pp. 205-220 and 'Introduction', sect. 22.

[138] For a detailed discussion of ch. 34 see commentaries in note above plus McKane, *Jeremiah*, pp. 836-852 on textual, grammatical and translation issues.

[139] The prophet refers to Yahweh's great power in creation; the expression, לֹא־יִפָּלֵא מִמְּךָ כָּל־דָּבָר, 'nothing is too difficult for you' is taken up by Yahweh in v. 27, הֲמִמֶּנִּי יִפָּלֵא כָּל־דָּבָר, 'is anything too difficult for me?' Many phrases of this praise occur elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible; for example vv. 18-19 remind us of Exod 20:5-6; Deut 5:9-10; v. 20 of Deut 6:22; Neh 9:10; v. 21 of Exod 7:3; Deut 6:22; 7:19; 29:2(3); Pss 78:43; 105:27 (Thompson, *Jeremiah*, pp. 591-592; Keown, Scalise & Smothers, pp. 155-156; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, pp. 511-514; Carroll, p. 625; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, p. 208, 216; McKane, *Jeremiah 26-52*, pp. 843-844).

[140] *Jeremiah 21-36*, p. 514.

[141] Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, p. 209. McKane, *Jeremiah 26-52*, remarks that the use of the triad is 'stereotyped language unskilfully attached to what precedes' (p. 845). This seems an unnecessarily harsh comment.

evil; have provoked Yahweh with their idols; have not listened to teachings but turned their backs; built high places for Baal, sacrificed their sons and daughters to Molech, even set up idols in the Temple of Yahweh. Everyone is guilty ('the people' in v. 29; 'the people of Israel and Judah' and 'the people of Israel' in v. 30; 'this city' in v. 31; 'the people of Israel and Judah'; 'the men of Judah and the people of Jerusalem' in v. 32), people, kings, officials, priests and prophets. This is why they need to be punished. Sword, famine and *deber* are the means by which the city will be given into the hands of the Babylonian king. In both vv. 24 and 36 sword, famine and *deber* appear with the definite article (in v. 36 בְּ + def. art. + noun), and as before it is possible to regard them as personified. They are Yahweh's agents of punishment.

At the end of Yahweh's response there is a promise of salvation, Yahweh will gather the people and bring them back. However, the promise is for a new generation. Punishment is inevitable for those who sinned.

5.3.7 Jeremiah 34:17

v. 17
לָכֵן כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אַתֶּם לֹא־שְׁמַעְתֶּם אֵלַי לִקְרֹא דְרוֹר אִישׁ לְאָחִיו וְאִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ
הִנְנִי קֹרֵא לָכֶם דְּרוֹר נְאֻם־יְהוָה אֶל־הַחֶרֶב אֶל־הַדֶּבֶר וְאֶל־הָרָעָב וְנָתַתִּי אֶתְכֶם
(לְזִוָּעָה[ )לְזַעֲוָה] לְכֹל מַמְלְכוֹת הָאָרֶץ׃

The first part of this chapter contains an oracle against Zedekiah (vv. 1-7). The second, larger part is a prose narrative concerning a covenant between Zedekiah and the people of Jerusalem made to free the Hebrew slaves (vv. 8-22). After first adhering to the covenant, they then went back on it and enslaved the freed men and women again, thus arousing Yahweh's anger. Vv. 8-17a describe the king's and people's actions and vv. 17b-22 proclaim Yahweh's judgement detailing the punishment of the covenant breakers.[142]

[142] Lundbom (*Jeremiah 21-36*, p. 556) distinguishes four oracles within vv. 8-22, each introduced by messenger formulas (v. 13; v. 17a; v. 17b; v. 22). Further he points out that oracle I and II are 'indictment' and oracles III and IV 'judgement'. See also McKane, *Jeremiah 26-52,* pp. 878-884*;* Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, pp. 238-243.

It is variously argued what Zedekiah's intentions were in releasing the slaves; economic, military and religious motivations have been suggested.[143] The text however is not interested in the king's reasons; the emphasis is on the breaking of the covenant. It seems that the decision to release all Hebrew slaves was made in order to show obedience to God's law,[144] perhaps prompted by the present crisis (the Babylonian army and its allies were threatening Jerusalem), and hoping that this act would grant them deliverance. However, as soon as the threat was lifted (v. 21, 22) they were no longer in need of seeking Yahweh's help and regretted their former act, going back on it, thus breaking their covenant and showing disobedience to Yahweh.[145] Disobedience to Yahweh was a serious crime thus the punishment was severe. There is a play on the words in v. 17; Yahweh states that the people have not been obedient (lit. 'you have not listened', לֹא־שְׁמַעְתֶּם) to him in 'proclaiming liberty (לִקְרֹא דְרוֹר) each to his brother and each to his neighbour'. In his turn Yahweh is 'proclaiming liberty' (קֹרֵא לָכֶם דְּרוֹר), to 'sword, *deber* and famine'. The expression קרא דרור is here used ironically; these agents of punishment are free to destroy the disobedient people.

The triad appears here in different order (*deber* comes before famine) but its function is similar to previously discussed passages. They are agents of punishment from Yahweh for the people's disobedience. The following verses make it clear that the punishment is meant to be total destruction (Jerusalem and the cities of Judah will be burnt down, laid to waste, so that no-one can live in them).

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[143] See summary in Keown, Scalise & Smothers, pp. 187-188; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, pp. 238-239; Carroll, pp. 647-650. For a different view see Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, p. 561.

[144] Cf. Exod 21:2-6; Deut 15:12-18. Against Carroll who argues that vv. 8-11 are midrashic, and are different from the law set out in Exod 21:1-11 and Deut 15:12-18 'because that does not contemplate the ending of the bondage but the regulation of the practice' (p. 649). As mentioned above, the emphasis is on the breaking of the law not on which specific law is alluded to.

[145] Thompson, *Jeremiah,* p. 611; Keown, Scalise & Smothers, p. 187. Lundbom (*Jeremiah 21-36,* p. 564) points out that whatever the motive was for the release of the slaves, it is clear from the passage that it was the right action. He writes: 'The fact that the king and the people reneged on the covenant makes it seem as if they did not listen to Yahweh at all, putting their disobedience on the same level as that of earlier generations (v. 14b).'

5.3.8 Jeremiah 38:2

v. 2
כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה הַיֹּשֵׁב בָּעִיר הַזֹּאת יָמוּת בַּחֶרֶב בָּרָעָב וּבַדָּבֶר וְהַיֹּצֵא
אֶל־הַכַּשְׂדִּים(יִחְיֶה) [וְחָיָה] וְהָיְתָה־לּוֹ נַפְשׁוֹ לְשָׁלָל וָחָי׃

Deber occurs in v. 2 together with 'war' and 'famine' in the usual order (sword, famine and deber).[146] The verse is a reference to Jeremiah's prophecy in ch. 21:8-10, and there are also parallels with previous chapters (24:1-10; 27:8, 13; 29:15-19). Jeremiah's message is consistent. Yahweh's wants the people to surrender to Nebuchadrezzar because he is Yahweh's agent; Jerusalem's (and Judah's) destruction is happening because Yahweh wants it to happen. It is punishment for the people's sins. These sins are listed in detail in 32:26-44.

The people's fate is in the hands of the agents of Yahweh. Both salvation and destruction come from him alone and are executed by his agents. Leaving the city means putting themselves in the hands of Nebuchadrezzar (agent of salvation), and it offers hope of survival to the people; staying means giving themselves up to the agents of destruction and certain death.[147]

5.3.9 Jeremiah 42:17, 22 and 44: 13

Jer 42:17
וְיִהְיוּ כָל־הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־שָׂמוּ אֶת־פְּנֵיהֶם לָבוֹא מִצְרַיִם לָגוּר שָׁם יָמוּתוּ בַּחֶרֶב
בָּרָעָב וּבַדָּבֶר וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה לָהֶם שָׂרִיד וּפָלִיט מִפְּנֵי הָרָעָה אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מֵבִיא עֲלֵיהֶם׃
v. 22
וְעַתָּה יָדֹעַ תֵּדְעוּ כִּי בַּחֶרֶב בָּרָעָב וּבַדֶּבֶר תָּמוּתוּ בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר חֲפַצְתֶּם לָבוֹא
לָגוּר שָׁם׃
Jer 44:13
וּפָקַדְתִּי עַל הַיּוֹשְׁבִים בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם כַּאֲשֶׁר פָּקַדְתִּי עַל־יְרוּשָׁלִָ֑ם בַּחֶרֶב בָּרָעָב
וּבַדָּבֶר׃

Chapter 42 refers to the remnant left in Judah who turn to Jeremiah after the crisis caused by Ishmael. His killing Gedaliah who was appointed by the king of Babylon

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[146] *Deber* is missing from the LXX; Targ has 'death' and Vg *peste*.

[147] For a detailed discussion of Jer 38 see commentaries, e.g. Thompson, *Jeremiah*, pp. 635-643; Carroll, pp. 678-681; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, pp. 266-268, 280-287, 289-290; McKane, *Jeremiah 26-52*, pp. 946-971; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37-52: A New Translation with Introduction*, AB 21C (New York: Doubleday, 2004), pp. 4-6; 64-73; Keown, Scalise & Smothers, pp. 219-226.

was an act of treachery.[148] The remnant fears the consequence that the Babylonians would retaliate. It seems that they do not know what to do, so they turn to Jeremiah asking him to enquire of Yahweh, promising that they would obey whatever God's answer would be. However, 41:17 indicates that the people had already decided to go on to Egypt, so 42:1-6 emphasises their treachery.[149]

Yahweh's word to the people through Jeremiah is the same, disobedience just as idolatry (which is the subject of ch. 44) deserves punishment. The triad of 'sword, famine and *deber'* will bring Yahweh's punishment (44:13) on the people, and it is clear that they are meant to bring death. All three verses state 'you/they shall die by…'.[150] As before, the triad represent Yahweh's agents of destruction who carry out punishment which comes from Yahweh.

5.3.10 Summary of occurrences of *deber* in Jeremiah

Examining all the occurrences of *deber* in the Book of Jeremiah the following can be concluded. *Deber* occurs 17x in Jeremiah**,** 15x together with 'sword' and 'famine', 1x in itself (both humans and animals will die of a great *deber*, 21:6) and 1x together with 'war' and 'disaster/evil' (28:8). It has been argued that 'sword, famine and pestilence (*deber*)' is stereotyped Jeremianic language, certainly the triad first appears in Jeremiah 14:12.[151]

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[148] Jer 41:16-18.

[149] Thompson (*Jeremiah*, p. 664) argues that vv. 5-6 present the people as 'making a show of sincerity' by having them affirm three times that they would obey Yahweh's word **אם-טוב ואם-רעה**, 'whether good or whether bad', adding an emphatic **כי**, 'indeed' towards the end of the verse.

[150] *Deber* is missing from LXX in 42:17 and 22; and it is translated by 'by death' in 44:13. Targ has 'death' and Vg *peste* in all three verses. For a detailed discussion of these chapters see commentaries: Thompson, *Jeremiah*, pp. 662-668, 672-682; Carroll, pp. 714-721, 728-733; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, pp. 273-287, 298-306; McKane, *Jeremiah 26-52*, pp.1030-1049, 1068-1095; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37-52*, pp.10-14, 125-138, 151-170; Keown, Scalise & Smothers, pp. 245-253, 259-269.

[151] W. L. Holladay, 'Prototype and Copies: A New Approach to the Poetry-Prose Problem in the Book of Jeremiah', *JBL* 79 (1960), 351-367 has argued that the triad does not occur before Jeremiah, and its frequency in the book points to a strong pattern. Holladay further argues that Jer 15:2 (and perhaps 18:21) is the poetic prototype of this triad, although there 'death' (מָוֶת) replaces *deber* (דֶּבֶר) as a 'poetic synonym'. However, it has to be pointed out that the triad occurs with *deber* in 14:12, prior to 15:2; and the two appear in parallel together in some passages (e.g. Hos 13: 14; Ps 78:50, also poetic passages). This points against identifying one with the other. The triad was also studied by H. Weippert in *Die Prosareden des Jeremiabuches* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1973), pp. 149-191. Hers is a thorough tradition-historical investigation, the most complete study of the form and occurrences of the triad in Jeremiah to date. It includes the history of the motif (pp. 149-180) and an examination of its special contexts. Weippert reaches a similar, although more cautious conclusion, as Holladay,

All of the occurrences of *deber* are in prose passages; in all but two cases (21:6 and 28:8) it occurs with the definite article as 'preposition + definite article + noun', this suggesting that it cannot be a proper noun. Most often it occurs with the preposition בְּ־ (10x)[152] which can be taken instrumentally.

It comes as a punishment from Yahweh for the people's disobedience (usually as a punishment for idolatry), except in two cases where it is the enemy (the Chaldeans/ Babylonians) who takes Jerusalem by the 'sword, famine and *deber*' (32:24 and 32:36), and once where it is a prophecy that it is referred to (28:8, war, disaster and *deber*). However, even in these cases the punishment is ultimately from Yahweh, the Babylonian king and his army are acting as his agents who carry out the punishment. The verbs that occur with *deber* are noteworthy. Most often it is some form of מות, and in these cases the people are the subject of the sentence, they shall die by/through *deber* or '*deber*, sword and famine'.[153] However, in most cases Yahweh is the subject, he 'hands the people over' (lit. 'gives' נתן) ; he 'finishes'(כלה), 'smites'(נכה),'visits' (in order to punish,פקד), 'pursues' (רדף) them; he 'wages war' (לחם) on them, 'brings in' (באו) the evil on them, and he 'sends'(שׁלח) the agents of punishment to bring death to the people. This emphasises the fact that in every instance the punishment comes from Yahweh himself.

A personification of *deber* is most clearly suggested in Jer 21:6, and it is possible, though not certain, in all the other passages.

The usual meaning given to *deber* is 'plague/ pestilence', and this certainly is possible. Wars in the ancient world were often accompanied by famine and disease. Epidemics, the outbreak of infectious diseases, were amongst the greatest killers of the ancient as well as the medieval world. However, Meyers points out that there is a difference between 'pestilence' and 'plague'. [154] One is an 'endemic parasitic disease, that is infections which occur in a community more or less all the time

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asserting that the triad is probably a genuine Jeremianic motif and it is certainly not Deuteronomistic language (p. 191). Contrary to this view some scholars, e.g. McKane, *Jeremiah 26-52*, have argued that the triad is typical Deuteronomistic language (p. 879).

[152] These are: Jer 14:12; 21:9; 27:8, 13; 29:18; 32:36; 38: 2; 42:17, 22; 44:13. 2x it occurs with אֶת־ (24:10 and 29:17); 2x with מִן־ (21:7 and 32:24) and 1x with אֶל־ (34:17).

[153] The 'dying' is expressed by בְּ־ + (ה) + דבר in every instance (21:9; 27:13; 38:2; 42:17; 21:6).

[154] C. Meyers, 'The Roots of Restriction: Women in Early Israel', *BA* 41 no. 3 (1978), 91-103, esp. pp. 95-99.

without much alteration in their effects from year to year or even century to century', the other is an '*abnormal* occurrence of acute infectious disease'. He suggests that *deber* is used to refer to the former, pestilence, and that *maggephah* is used to describe 'plague' (e.g. in Numbers and Exodus).[155] However, in none of the passages discussed in Jeremiah is it specified what kind of disease is meant by *deber* . The emphasis is on it being a deadly force that together with sword (i.e. war) and famine brings total destruction to the people, only occasionally is there a hope of survival. Thus a more general translation such as suggested by Bright, 'disease' seems preferable to pestilence or plague.[156]

5.4 Deber in Ezekiel

The noun *deber* occurs 11x in the Book of Ezekiel in the following passages: 5:12, 17; 6:11, 12; 7:15; 12:16; 14:19,21; 28:23; 33:27 and 38:22. We shall examine these.

5.4.1 Ezekiel 5: 12 and 17

v. 12
שְׁלִשִׁתֵּיךְ בַּדֶּבֶר יָמוּתוּ וּבָרָעָב יִכְלוּ בְתוֹכֵךְ וְהַשְּׁלִשִׁית בַּחֶרֶב יִפְּלוּ סְבִיבוֹתָיִךְ
וְהַשְּׁלִישִׁית לְכָל־רוּחַ אֶזָּרֶה וְחֶרֶב אָרִיק אַחֲרֵיהֶם׃

v. 17
וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם רָעָב וְחַיָּה רָעָה וּשְׁכָלֶךְ וְדֶבֶר וָדָם יַעֲבָר־בָּךְ וְחֶרֶב אָבִיא עָלַיִךְ
אֲנִי יְהוָה דִּבַּרְתִּי׃

Commentators generally regard 3:22-5:17 as a literary unit which follows the pattern common to the book: divine vision, followed by divine speech (3:22-24a and 3:24b-5:17). [157] The section of divine speech consists of several commands; Ezekiel is to

[155] Meyers, 'Roots of Restriction', pp. 95-96. He discusses as examples Num 16: 44-50; 21:6; 11: 1-3; 14:11; 25; Exod 32:35. For the devastating effect of plagues in the ancient Near East see for example the Plague Prayer of Mursilis, ANET, pp. 394-396; Meyers also refers to the Amarna letters (p. 96).

[156] See above p. 121.

[157] M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, AB (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983), p. 4. W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24*, transl. by R. E. Clements, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), takes 3: 16b, 22 – 5:17 as a unit, arguing that 3:16b-21 is a 'redactional insertion' (p. 154), while L. C. Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, WBC 28 (Dallas: Word Books, 1994) regards 3:16-5:17 as one unit, 3:16-21 being 'a divine announcement of Ezekiel's appointment as prophetic watchman and an elaboration of his consequent responsibilities' (p. 55).

perform a series of symbolic actions.[158] He is commanded to go out to the plain where he experiences a theophany (3:22-24); then has to shut himself inside his house, tied up and dumb (3:25-27). Chapter 4 and 5:1-4 depict the prophet enacting a symbolic siege of Jerusalem, lying on his side while eating siege-food bearing the guilt of Israel then Judah, and finally, shaving off and disposing of his hair and beard. This last act points to the end of the siege and depicts the fate of the besieged (v. 2).[159] The shaved off hair is to be divided into three parts:

- 1/3 is to be burned (תַּבְעִיר Hiph. vb.) by fire (בָּאוּר) inside the city (בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר)
- 1/3 is to be striken (תַּכֶּה Hiph. vb.) by sword[160] (בַּחֶרֶב) around the city (סְבִיבוֹתֶיהָ)
- 1/3 is to be scattered (תְּזָרֶה Q. vb.) to the wind (לָרוּחַ) (into all directions) sword unleashed (אָרִיק Hiph. vb.) after them - וְחֶרֶב אָרִיק אַחֲרֵיהֶם

  Some to be hidden away in the folds of the prophet's garment

  A few of these to be burned by fire

This section links to both the preceding and the following sections. The 'city' refers to the city drawn on the clay tablet of 4:1 as well as to the real city of Jerusalem (v. 5).[161] The hair in v.1 represents the people of Jerusalem; the prophet's actions (vv. 1-4) give a grim prediction of their fate as the following verses make it clear (v. 12).

- 1/3 of the people will die (יָמוּתוּ) by *deber* (בַּדֶּבֶר) or perish (יִכְלוּ) by famine (בָּרָעָב) inside the city (בְּתוֹכֵךְ)

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[158] Five, according to Allen: seclusion, 3:24b-27; acting out the siege of Jerusalem, 4:1-3; depicting Israel's guilt, 4:4-8; depicting the cruelty of the siege, 4:9-15; and depicting the fate of the people under siege, 5:1-17 (*Ezekiel 1-19*, p. 55 and 58). However, other commentators speak only of three 'sign-acts'. These are: 1) enacting the siege of the city; 2) bearing the guilt of Israel and Judah by lying on his side and eating unclean food; 3) shaving of the hair (J. Wevers, *Ezekiel*, The Century Bible (London: Thomas Nelson, 1969), p. 64. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, pp. 117-126, and Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, pp. 161-173).

[159] According to R. E. Clements Ezekiel's 'strange mode of preaching' may be explained by his desire to attract an audience before disclosing his message. See *Ezekiel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), p. 23.

[160] D. Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 104 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1991) argues that 'the Book of Ezekiel makes a particular contribution to the sword motif in the Old Testament'. He believes that Ezek 21:13-22 contains the 'Song of the Sword', which has many parallels with the Mesopotamian Poem of Erra (pp. 231-257).

[161] On Jerusalem at the centre of the nations as being 'the navel of the earth', its connection with 38:12 and Mesopotamian parallels of the motif see Bodi, pp. 221-230.

- 1/3 will fall (יִפְּלוּ) by sword (בַּחֶרֶב) outside the walls (סְבִיבוֹתָיִךְ)
- 1/3 will be scattered (אֱזָרֶה) to the winds (in all directions, לְכָל־רוּחַ)- and sword (חֶרֶב) unleashed (אָרִיק) after them - וְחֶרֶב אָרִיק אַחֲרֵיהֶם

The intensity of the prophet's actions is illustrated by the use of three Hiphil verbs in one verse, and its link with v. 12 is clear from the repetition of the same words (חרב, זרה, רוח, סביב,בתוך) and expressions (וְחֶרֶב אָרִיק אַחֲרֵיהֶם). That the destruction that is to befall the people of Jerusalem (and on the whole of Israel) comes as a punishment[162] from Yahweh is made clear in v. 8; Yahweh states: 'behold, I am against you, even I' (הִנְנִי עָלַיִךְ גַּם־אָנִי). Commentators note that the expression הִנְנִי עָלַיִךְ has a threatening meaning in all but one of its occurrences, [163] and similarly, the second phrase, גַּם־אָנִי, usually introduces announcements of punishment.[164] Thus the whole verse has a menacing overtone. The object of the punishment is Jerusalem, and the reason for the punishment is given before the announcement of judgement in the accusation in vv. 5-7, 11. Jerusalem is accused of:

- wickedness (v. 6)
- rebellion against and rejection of Yahweh's laws and decrees (v. 6)
- they are worse than the nations around (v. 7)
- idol worship (v. 9a, 11)

A detailed account of what form the punishment is going to take follows the announcement of punishment in vv. 9b- 10, 12, 14-17. That Jerusalem's guilt is great (תּוֹעֵבֹתָיִךְ[165], 'abominations', i.e. all the sins referred to above) and therefore the punishment is severe is clear from Yahweh's statement in v. 9, 'I shall do to you what I have not done (before) and what I shall (never) do' (וְעָשִׂיתִי בָךְ אֵת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָשִׂיתִי וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר־לֹא־אֵעֶשֶׂה). The Hebrew is striking; the repetition of the same

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[162] The expression עשה משפטים, 'make judgements' is common in the book (e.g. Ezek 24:14; 30:14, 19; 35:11). משפטים, 'judgements' is used here in the sense of 'punishment'. See Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p. 74; Greenberg, *Ezekiel, 1-20*, p. 113; C. R. Biggs, *The Book of Ezekiel* (London: Epworth Press, 1996), p. 18.

[163] Zimmerli points out that the expression occurs 22x in the HB, most frequently in Ezekiel (14x, in 5:8; 13:8, 20; 21:8; 26:3; 28:22; 29:3, 10; 30:22; 34:10; 35:3; 36:9; 38:3; 39:1). There are 6 in Jeremiah (21:13; 23:30-32; 50:31; 51:25) and 2 in Nahum (2:14; 3:5). In Ezek 36:9 the expression has a positive sense, 'I am for you' rather than 'against you' (*Ezekiel 1*, p. 175). K. L. Wong, *The Idea of Retribution in the Book of Ezekiel*, VT Supp (Leiden: Brill, 2001) quoting Humbert (p. 92).

[164] Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, p. 113; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p. 74; Wong, p. 92.

[165] Cf. Deut 7:25; 13:15; 17:4; 32:16.

words (the same verb occurs three times) expresses the threat behind their meaning. V. 9 suggests that a unique punishment is to befall the people. One is reminded of the curses for covenant breakers from Lev 26:29,[166] but whereas there fathers only would eat their children, here the prophet adds a twist and reverses the curse: children will also eat their fathers. However, this is not the end of the punishment, only leading up to more in v. 12. Vv. 14-17 seem to repeat and expand on the punishment described in v. 12. The expressions in vv. 14 and 15 are reminiscent of Jeremiah,[167] but they also remind one of Lev 26:31.[168] Yahweh shall make the people a reproach (חֶרְפָּה), a taunt (וּגְדוּפָה), a warning (מוּסָר) and a horror (וּמְשַׁמָּה) when he makes judgment/ punishes them in anger (בְּאַף), in fury (וּבְחֵמָה) and in furious rebuke (וּבְתֹכְחוֹת חֵמָה). The intensity of Yahweh's anger is expressed through speech in the first person which culminates in the final statement, 'I, Yahweh, have spoken' (אֲנִי יְהוָה דִּבַּרְתִּי).

V. 16 continues to relay Yahweh's punishment. He sends (בְּשַׁלְחִי) his arrows of evil famine (אֶת־חִצֵּי הָרָעָב הָרָעִים) and more and more famine (וְרָעָב אֹסֵף) on them. These are meant to destroy. This is expressed by repetition,

which are for destruction	אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ לְמַשְׁחִית
which I shall send on them to ruin them	אֲשֶׁר־אֲשַׁלַּח אוֹתָם לְשַׁחֶתְכֶם

V. 17a repeats the essence of v. 16, וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם רָעָב. However, it introduces some new elements too; with famine Yahweh sends חַיַּת רָעָה, 'beings of evil', and with *deber* comes also דָּם, 'blood(shed)'. חַיַּת רָעָה is usually translated as 'wild animals/ beasts'[169] or 'evil animals/beasts',[170] with LXX combining the two into 'evil wild beasts' (θηρια πονηρα). This is no doubt because, as it has already been pointed out, this passage echoes Lev 26, and v. 17a Lev 26:22a in particular.

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[166] 'You shall eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters you shall eat.' (Lev 26:29) Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, notes that the reference to cannibalism here appears to be a 'loose citation of Lev. 26:29' (p. 74). Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, takes this further; he argues that Ezekiel 4 and 5 are based on Lev 26:14-39. He writes: 'It is an identical mentality that permeates Ezek 4-5; we note how in particular the threat of Lev 26:25, "I will bring upon you a sword exacting retribution for [breach of] the covenant" is repeatedly picked up in ch. 5: what is in Lev 26 a hypothetical threat ("If you reject my judgements…") is here a sure prediction of coming doom.' (p. 124.) Similarly Wong argues that 'the covenant context serves as the backbone for this oracle' (p. 91).

[167] Jer 24:9; 29:18; 18:16; 19:8.

[168] Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, pp. 115-116; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, pp. 76-77; Wong, pp. 93-94.

[169] NIV, NJB, RSV, Greenberg and Zimmerli.

[170] JPS, Targ and Vg. Allen translates 'vicious animals'.

Lev 26:22a:

וְהִשְׁלַחְתִּי בָכֶם אֶת־חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה וְשִׁכְּלָה אֶתְכֶם

And Ezek 5:17a:

וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם רָעָב וְחַיָּה רָעָה וְשִׁכְּלֶךְ

The similarities are undeniable.[171] However, in Leviticus we have אֶת־חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה as the object of the verb שׁלח, meaning 'wild animals', whereas in Ezek the וְחַיָּה רָעָה is ambiguous. It is possible that this was intentionally so.

Vv. 16-17 also remind one of the poem in Deut 32.[172] Deut 32:22 speaks of Yahweh's great anger (אַף) because of the people's idolatry (they are guilty of the same things as in the present passage); the following verses describe the punishment. Yahweh unleashes his destructive forces, called 'evils' and identified as his 'arrows'in v. 23 (אַסְפֶּה עָלֵימוֹ רָעוֹת חִצַּי אֲכַלֶּה־בָּם).Yahweh's arrows are enlisted as seven destructive forces in Deut 32:24-25a, famine (רָעָב), plague (רֶשֶׁף), bitter scourge (קֶטֶב מְרִירִי), fang of wild animals (שֶׁן־בְּהֵמוֹת), poison of snakes (חֲמַת זוֹחֲלֵי עָפָר), sword (חֶרֶב) and terror (אֵימָה). It is argued in the analysis of Deut 32 that these seven destructive forces are personified and that they represent Yahweh's agents, his angels of evil, i.e. bringers of evils.[173]

Ezek 5:16a reads:

בְּשַׁלְּחִי אֶת־חִצֵּי הָרָעָב הָרָעִים בָּהֶם

v. 17:b:

וְדֶבֶר וָדָם יַעֲבָר־בָּךְ וְחֶרֶב אָבִיא עָלַיִךְ

As often in Jeremiah, we have here *deber*, famine and sword together as agents of punishment, bringers of death and destruction.[174] It is possible that the 'arrows of evil famine' in v. 16 is one of Yahweh's 'evils' or 'arrows' as in Deut 32:23; this way the וְחַיָּה רָעָה would be better understood literally and more generally as 'beings of evil', i.e. 'beings that are bringers of evils', rather than 'wild animals'. Thus רָעָב, דֶּבֶר, דָּם and חֶרֶב are these 'beings of evil', bringers of destruction. The verbs

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[171] Leviticus uses the Hiphil form of the verb שׁלח whereas we have a Piel in Ezekiel.

[172]Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, pp. 116-117; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p. 77, and Wong, p. 94, have also pointed out the similarities.

[173] See discussion of Deut 32 in 6.4.

[174] Allen notes that Ezekiel might have borrowed the triad '*deber*, famine and sword' from Jeremiah, but used it 'rather more freely' (*Ezekiel 1-19*, p. 75).

employed in vv.16 and 17 (שׁלח, שׁכל,עבר) suggest personification, and this is supported by these two verses. Yahweh 'sends' against Israel Famine and Beings of Evil, 'brings in' against them Sword; the nouns although functioning as objects do not have the object marker. Further *Deber* and *Dam* are the subjects of the verb עבר. They pass over the people causing destruction. In v. 12 also through (בְּ is taken instrumentally) these agents the people will die (יָמוּתוּ), fall (יִפְּלוּ) and will be finished off (יִכְלוּ). Therefore I suggest that *Deber* along with *Dam*, Famine and Sword are personified as Yahweh's 'beings of evil'and they function as agents of destruction, bringers of death upon the people as a punishment for their idolatry, the ultimate sin against Yahweh. Regarding the meaning of the word *deber* all we can say with certainty is that it refers to something deadly and destructive. As disease, just as war (sword and bloodshed) and famine, was one of the greatest killers of the ancient world, this meaning for the word is possible.

5.4.2 Ezekiel 6: 11 and 12

vv. 11-12

כֹּה־אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה הַכֵּה בְכַפְּךָ וּרְקַע בְּרַגְלְךָ וֶאֱמָר־אָח אֶל כָּל־תּוֹעֲבוֹת רָעוֹת בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר בַּחֶרֶב בָּרָעָב וּבַדֶּבֶר יִפֹּלוּ׃
הָרָחוֹק בַּדֶּבֶר יָמוּת וְהַקָּרוֹב בַּחֶרֶב יִפּוֹל וְהַנִּשְׁאָר וְהַנָּצוּר בָּרָעָב יָמוּת וְכִלֵּיתִי חֲמָתִי בָּם׃

Chapter 6 is a separate literary unit but its theme (destruction of the land and its people) continues that of chs 4-5.[175] It consists of two prophetic oracles written in poetic style. The first, longer oracle is addressed to the mountains (אֶל־הָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל;

[175] Wevers, pp. 67-68; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p. 182; Clements, *Ezekiel*, p. 26; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, p. 139. He also points out some of the linguistic links between chs 6 and 4-5. For example, Yahweh's bringing of the sword against the people in 6:3 (אֲנִי מֵבִיא עֲלֵיכֶם חֶרֶב) and 5:17 (וְחֶרֶב אָבִי עָלַיִךְ); various forms and derivatives of שׁמם in 6:4 (יֹשֵׁם, 'to be desolate', וְנָשַׁמּוּ; שׁבר, 'to be broken', וְנִשְׁבְּרוּ); 6:6 (יֹשֵׁם, 'to be desolate', תִּישָׁמֵנָה); 6:14 (שְׁמָמָה, 'devastation'; מְשַׁמָּה, 'devastation') and 4:17 (וְנָשַׁמּוּ, 'to be desolate'); 5: 15 (מְשַׁמָּה, 'devastation'). Also 'to spend my (Yahweh's) anger',וְכִלֵּיתִי חֲמָתִי in 6:12, and וְכָלָה אַפִּי in 5:13; as well as the occurrence of the triad חֶרֶב, רָעָב and דֶּבֶר in 6:11 and 5:17.

a rhetoric device),[176] vv. 1-10; the second, shorter one to the people of Israel (בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל), vv. 11-14. The two oracles are linked thematically and linguistically.[177]

V. 3 announces that the sword (חֶרֶב) is being brought against the mountains (meaning the people of Israel) in order to destroy the high places and altars on them, evidence of the people's idolatry. Thus destruction by the sword comes as a punishment for worshipping other gods than Yahweh, the same theme as in the previous chapter.[178] The following verses (vv. 4-7) describe in detail the extent of the destruction, not only the places and items of worship but the people who used them will be destroyed, and entire towns will be wiped out.[179]

Similarly to the first oracle, the second also announces imminent destruction because of Israel's idolatry (כָּל־תּוֹעֲבוֹת רָעוֹת בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל). Punishment this time comes by the sword, famine and *deber*; בַּחֶרֶב בָּרָעָב וּבַדֶּבֶר יִפֹּלוּ (v. 11). V. 12 repeats and expands the message,

the distant (one) will die by *deber*	הָרָחוֹק בַּדֶּבֶר יָמוּת
the near (one) will fall by sword	וְהַקָּרוֹב בַּחֶרֶב יִפּוֹל
those who remain and are preserved will die by famine	וְהַנִּשְׁאָר וְהַנָּצוּר בָּרָעָב יָמוּת

The division of the people to be punished according to three means of punishment reminds us of the distribution of the prophet's hair into thirds and his actions with it in 5:2 and the subsequent explanation of his acts in v. 12. However, there, and in the first oracle (v. 8), there was a remnant left alive, whereas vv. 11-14 here only focus on the severity of the punishment and the completeness of the destruction. Thus in this case too, *deber*,[180] together with sword and famine is an agent of destruction, coming from Yahweh as punishment for the people's idolatry. Through them (again

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[176] On the interpretation of 'mountains of Israel' see Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, pp. 185-186; Wong, pp. 96-97.

[177] Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, pp. 137-138. Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, on the other hand warns that there are also differences 'in perspective' that should not be overlooked (p. 85). This however, does not affect our discussion of the text.

[178] Wong argues that the expression 'mountains of Israel' is used by Ezekiel 'because of its connotation of false worship' (p. 97).

[179] מעשה occurs referring to idols (made by men) in Deut 4:28; 2 Kgs 19:18; Isa 2:8; 17:8; 37:19; 41:29; 57:12; 2 Chr 32:19; Pss 115:4; 135:15; Hos 13:2;14:4; Mic 5:12; Jer 1:16; 10:3, 9; 25:6; 44:8 (BDB, 796; HALOT, 617/5). The verb מחה, 'to wipe out' occurs in the Flood story in Gen 6:7; 7:4, 23 (BDB, 562; HALOT, 568).

[180] In both verses LXX and Targ translate *deber* by 'death', Vg by 'pestilence'.

they appear with בְּ which signals that they are Yahweh's instruments) the people will die (יָמוּת) and fall (יִפְּלוּ). V. 13 gives a picture of complete destruction.[181] Following on from the argument that these agents of destruction were personified in Ezek 5, it is likely that they are personified here too.

5.4.3 Ezekiel 7: 15

v. 15
הַחֶרֶב בַּחוּץ וְהַדֶּבֶר וְהָרָעָב מִבָּיִת אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂדֶה בַּחֶרֶב יָמוּת וַאֲשֶׁר בָּעִיר רָעָב וְדֶבֶר יֹנוּ׃

Although a separate literary unit, the theme of this chapter is very similar to the ones discussed previously; punishment ('the end', קֵץ בָּא הַקֵּץ, v. 3, 6; 'the day', הִנֵּה הַיּוֹם, v. 10,12) is coming because of the sins ('ways', דְּרָכַיִךְ and 'detestable practices', וְתוֹעֲבוֹתַיִךְ, v. 4; 'because of their iniquity/sins', בַּעֲוֹנוֹ , v. 13, i.e. idolatry) of the people. The chapter consists of two oracles, vv. 2-9 and vv. 10-27 with v. 1 introducing both oracles.[182] The oracles are written in poetic style.[183] The common introduction, the style, similar theme and common words link the two oracles together.

The second oracle (vv. 10-27) is lengthy; both Greenberg and Allen regard it as falling into two parts; vv. 10-18 and vv. 19-27 with parallel elements. [184] The oracle starts with a sudden outburst announcing the nearness of the day of doom, presented as the Day of Yahweh; then the end is pictured in parallel scenes:

- pointlessness of trade in vv. 12-13 // pointlessness of wealth in v. 19
- war and destruction in vv. 14-16 // foreign invasion and destruction in vv. 21-24

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[181] For more detailed discussion of the chapter see commentaries; e.g. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, pp. 179-192; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, pp. 129-141; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, pp. 81-92; Clements, *Ezekiel*, 26-28; on the relationship between Ezek 4-6 and Lev 26 see Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, pp. 92-96 and Wong, pp. 95-102.

[182] Commentators vary slightly on the division of the chapter. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, divides it into two sections, vv. 2-4 and 5-27 (p. 210); Wevers (pp. 71-73) ; Greenberg (*Ezekiel 1-20*, p. 157) and Biggs (pp. 21-25) divide it into two, as above, whereas Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, argues for 'three two-part proof sayings' in vv. 2-4, 5-9 and 10-27 (pp. 103-104), and Clements (*Ezekiel*, pp. 29-32) regards the whole as one. This does not affect our discussion as we concentrate on the second oracle, vv. 10-27.

[183] Wevers, p. 71; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, p. 157; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, pp. 97-99. Clements, *Ezekiel*, sets vv. 17-20 as prose (p. 29).

[184] Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, pp. 157-158; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, pp. 103-104.

- general demoralization and mourning in vv. 17-18 // general dismay and confusion in vv. 25-27

There are clues within the oracle as to why the end is coming, as Greenberg puts it, 'the time is ripe for punishment'. He argues that although vv. 10 and 11 are ambiguous and difficult to translate this meaning is clear.[185] Further, vv. 13 and 16 refer to the people's iniquity (וְאִישׁ בַּעֲוֹנוֹ, 'and each according to his iniquity'), and v. 20 makes it clear that what is meant by this 'iniquity' is that they were proud of the beauty of their idols which they themselves made (וּצְבִי עֶדְיוֹ לְגָאוֹן שָׂמָהוּ),[186] but which were detestable things, abominations in Yahweh's eyes (וְצַלְמֵי תוֹעֲבֹתָם שִׁקּוּצֵיהֶם). The people's sin (iniquity) gave rise to Yahweh's wrath (חֲמָתִי) and anger (אַפִּי) resulting in judgement and punishment (vv. 8-9).

As in the previous chapters, the punishment is brought about by Yahweh's agents, חֶרֶב,דֶּבֶר and רָעָב. They appear here personified, as Yahweh's avenging troops. The verse supports personification. The three agents (all appear with the definite article) are the subjects of the verbs, except once when the people are the subject of the verb 'to die', this brought about by the sword (בְּ + def. art. + noun). *Deber* and Famine are the subject of the verb אכל, they devour (literally 'eat') the people who are in the city. Vv. 15 and 23 give us a picture of bloodshed and violence. Everywhere, 'outside'(// in the country), and 'inside' (// in the city), the work of Yahweh's avenging troups is devastating. The passage describes a destruction left by a conquering (foreign) army, killing all living things, plundering and destroying everything on their way (v. 21). The Sword, Famine and *Deber*, Terror (קִפָּדָה[187], v. 25) and Calamity/Disaster (הוָּה עַל־הוָּה[188], v. 26) represent this foreign army[189]

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[185] *Ezekiel 1-20*, p. 149. Also Biggs, p. 23.

[186] Cf. Exod 32:2-4.

[187] This is a *hapax legomenon*. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, argues that this is actually a masc. noun with an archaic unstressed *–a* ending. The Syriac word *q[e]fada*, meaning 'bristling, stiffening (from terror)' helps explain its meaning (p. 155).

[188] In Isa 47:11 הוָּה appears in // with רָעָה. This is the sense also in Job 6:2, 30; Pss 5:10; 38:13; 52:4; 55:12; 91:3 (with reference to *deber*); 94:20; Prov 19:13 (BDB, 217:1942; HALOT, 242). Bodi argues that Ezekiel often uses the 'stylistic device of gradation and amplification of evil and calamity', e.g in 6:12; 7:15; 15:7, and he compares it to Mesopotamian examples (pp. 195-196).

[189] Wevers, p. 76 and Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, p. 154, suggest that Nebuchadrezzar's army is meant here, cf. 30:11-19 (Babylonian army devastating Egypt as a punishment from Yahweh).

who ultimately carry out Yahweh's punishment. The meaning of *deber* can be the same as in the previous chapter.

5.4.4 Ezekiel 12:16 (1-16)

v. 16
וְהוֹתַרְתִּי מֵהֶם אַנְשֵׁי מִסְפָּר מֵחֶרֶב מֵרָעָב וּמִדֶּבֶר לְמַעַן יְסַפְּרוּ
אֶת־כָּל־תּוֹעֲבוֹתֵיהֶם בַּגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר־בָּאוּ שָׁם וְיָדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה׃

Greenberg lays out the passage in poetic form with vv. 8, 10 and 16 being prose insertions;[190] other commentators regard the whole chapter as a prose narrative. [191] *Deber* occurs in v. 16, thus in prose.

The chapter divides into three parts, vv. 1-16, vv. 17-20 and vv. 21-28, each introduced by the formula, וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר.[192] Vv. 1-16 take up the theme of exile illustrated through the prophet's symbolic actions as previously in chs 4-5.[193]

Here the prophet is told to pack up his things and go away to another place, acting out the deportation of the people. Greenberg describes the purpose of these acts as being the same as previously, the prophet wants to 'convince his audience that the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of its inhabitants are inevitable.'[194] His message is to those who are in captivity but who still hope in a speedy return to Jerusalem and trust in the city's strength to withstand the siege.[195] These are frequently referred to as the 'rebellious house', בֵּית־הַמֶּרִי,[196] as in 3:26-27.

There are several other links between this and previous oracles. The scattering to the winds and pursuit by the sword in v. 14 is reminiscent of 5:2 and 12; 'their detestable things', אֶת־כָּל־תּוֹעֲבוֹתֵיהֶם in v. 16 evokes 5:9; because of their idolatry they will

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[190] *Ezekiel 1-20*, pp. 207-208.

[191] Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, pp. 265-275; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, pp. 176-177; Clements, *Ezekiel*, p. 52.

[192] So most commentators; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, sees a bipartite division, taking the two sign-acts in vv. 1-16 and vv. 17-20 together (pp. 174-184).

[193] Wevers, p. 99; Clements, *Ezekiel*, pp. 52-53.

[194] *Ezekiel 1-20*, p. 220.

[195] Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, p. 220; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p.184; contra Clements, *Ezekiel*, pp. 53-54 and Biggs, p. 37.

[196] Ezek 12:2; 9, 25; 17:12; 24:3.

be punished. The agents of punishment, the triad of 'sword, famine and *deber'* is another link to complete the common theme of sin and punishment.[197] However, contrary to chs. 7:10-27 and 6:11-14 where there was no mention of survivors of the punishment, here 'sword, famine and *deber'* will not bring complete destruction; a few shall be spared.[198] The 1st p. sg. Hiphil form of the verb יתר (וְהוֹתַרְתִּי) emphasizes the fact that Yahweh is in control, he commands his agents. He will spare from Sword, Famine and *Deber* (appearing in the form of מִן + noun) a few because he has a purpose for them. There will only be remnants in order to testify to their own sin and to the punishment that always follows.[199] Because of the links and similarities with the other passages it is possible that Sword, Famine and *Deber* are personified here too as the agents of punishment.

5.4.5 Ezekiel 14: 19 and 21

v. 19
אוֹ דֶּבֶר אֲשַׁלַּח אֶל־הָאָרֶץ הַהִיא וְשָׁפַכְתִּי חֲמָתִי עָלֶיהָ בְּדָם לְהַכְרִית מִמֶּנָּה אָדָם וּבְהֵמָה׃

v. 21
כִּי כֹה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה אַף כִּי־אַרְבַּעַת שְׁפָטַי הָרָעִים חֶרֶב וְרָעָב וְחַיָּה רָעָה וְדֶבֶר שִׁלַּחְתִּי אֶל־יְרוּשָׁלַ͏ִם לְהַכְרִית מִמֶּנָּה אָדָם וּבְהֵמָה׃

Chapter 14 contains two oracles, vv. 1-11 and vv. 12-23.[200] *Deber* occurs in vv. 19 and 21 thus our discussion is focused on the second oracle.

According to Allen the passage is a 'proof saying' characterised by a 'comparative style of arguing that moves from theoretical situation to a current concern relating to Jerusalem'.[201]

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[197] Wong argues that the passages discussed above (pp. 196-217) as well as others in Ezekiel (pp. 217-226) are linked by the theme of sin and punishment of Israel.

[198] LXX and Targ translate *deber* as 'death', the Vg as 'pestilence'.

[199] Cf. Ezek 5:3; 6:8. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p. 274, contra Wevers, p. 102. Also Clements, *Ezekiel*, p. 55.

[200] The first part is taken as part of a larger unit 12:21-14:11 (references in Wong n. 126 p. 102), and the oracle in vv. 12-23 to form a literary unit with the following oracle in 15:1-8 (Wong, p. 103; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p. 214).

[201] *Ezekiel 1-19*, p. 214.

Vv. 12-23 seemingly address a hypothetical nation who sin against Yahweh. However, the previous oracle (vv. 1-11) is directed specifically against Israelites who turned to idolatry. This, and the application of disaster to Jerusalem in v. 22 make it clear that all along the prophet had a specific audience in mind, i.e. Israel.[202] Allen argues similarly; he points out that firstly, the presentation of the four scourges are deliberately reminiscent of the curses befalling covenant-breaker Israelites (cf. Lev 26),[203] and secondly, the use of the word **מעל**, 'to act faithlessly', which defines sinning here, is used elsewhere[204] in reference to Israel. [205]

The message of the oracle has two parts. The first part, vv. 12-20, sets out a 'doctrine of retribution' in legal style, the second part (vv. 21-23) is in 'ordinary prophetic style', and it applies the doctrine to Jerusalem.[206]

Vv. 12-20 present four cases in parallel, each following the same pattern.[207]

First, the people's sin and Yahweh's decision to retaliate are stated in the first half of v. 13.

'land that sinned against me to commit an act of faithlessness';	אֶרֶץ כִּי תֶחֱטָא־לִי לִמְעָל־מַעַל
'I stretch my hand against her'	וְנָטִיתִי יָדִי עָלֶיהָ

This is not repeated but is applied to each of the following sections too.

Second, the manner of retaliation is elaborated, the devastation of the four scourges are described in vivid terms.

v. 13 Yahweh sends *famine*	וְהִשְׁלַחְתִּי־בָהּ רָעָב
v. 15 Yahweh sends (causes to pass) *a being of evil*[208]	לוּ־חַיָּה רָעָה אַעֲבִיר

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[202] Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, argues that 14:12-23 is independent of 14:1-11 (p. 312). However, they have a common theme which links them, sin-punishment. The first oracle describes the sin against Yahweh, idolatry; the second relates the punishment that follows. See discussion of previous chapters.

[203] Wong also argues for the parallel with Lev 26 (pp. 103-106), and Wevers points to similarities with Jer 14:19-15:4 (pp. 114-115).

[204] E.g. 2 Chron 26:16-18; 29:19; 36:14; Josh 7:1; Ezek 17:18; Lev 26:40; Num 31:16.

[205] *Ezekiel 1-19*, p. 217. He further argues that 'Though the text shows clear signs of speaking about Israel, the facade of universalism is maintained by mentioning three non-Israelite saints, Noah, Daniel and Job.'

[206] Wevers, p. 114; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, p. 260; Biggs, p. 45.

[207] Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, p. 260; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19,* p. 217; Wevers, pp. 115-116.

v.17 Yahweh brings *sword* חֶרֶב אָבִיא

v.19 Yahweh sends *deber* דֶּבֶר אֲשַׁלַּח

(blood also appears, through blood(shed) Yahweh will pour out his wrath)

The intensity of Yahweh's anger is suggested by the intensive forms of the verbs (three Hiphil and one Piel) used. The destruction that follows is terrible. Yahweh's agents of punishment kill every living thing, human and animal (vv. 13, 17, 19); leave the land childless and desolate (v. 15). That Yahweh takes responsibility for the slaughter is clear from the 1st person verbs that attribute the killing to Yahweh in two cases. In the first and third case (vv. 13 and 17) we have the same phrase repeated, וְהִכְרַתִּי מִמֶּנָּה אָדָם וּבְהֵמָה, 'I shall destroy (from it) man and animal'. In v. 19 the same expression appears with a slight variation suggesting that although Yahweh is ultimately responsible, he carries out the destruction through his agents. This is clear from v. 15 where the Piel verb וְשִׁכְּלָתָּה is a 3rd person feminine singular verb relating the act of 'leaving childless' to the feminine singular noun חַיָּה רָעָה, and from v. 21 where it is stated explicitly that Yahweh sends his four scourges to destroy humans and animals.

Third, the conclusion states the finality of the punishment; not even Noah, Daniel or Job would be able to intercede on behalf of anyone but themselves.

All four cases contain the expression/formula 'declaration of the lord Yahweh', נְאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה (vv. 14, 16, 18 and 20), and except for the first one, they are preceded by a divine oath, 'As I live', חַי־אָנִי. This formula emphasises the fact that Yahweh's decision to destroy the people is final, no one can make him go back on it.

Vv. 21-23 apply the punishment to Jerusalem. Yahweh sends (שִׁלַּחְתִּי) his four agents, lit. 'judgements'[209] (אַרְבַּעַת שְׁפָטַיו הָרָעִים), bringers of evil in the sense of destruction and disaster. These are the same four as introduced in vv. 13, 15, 17 and 19, but in a different order, חֶרֶב וְרָעָב וְחַיָּה רָעָה וָדֶבֶר. The nouns are listed without definite articles. Here the חַיָּה רָעָה appear as one of the four agents not as a general designation of the others.The verbs used in connection with them (וְהִשְׁלַחְתִּי; אַעֲבִיר; אָבִיא; אֲשַׁלַּח) again suggest personification, although Yahweh is the

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[208] Modern Bible translations have 'wild beasts', Vg *bestias pessimas*, 'evil beasts' (also JPS); LXX has θηρια πονηρα, 'evil wild beasts'. Targ similarly to MT has an ambiguous חַיְתָא בִּשְׁתָא.

[209] As in 5:12 שפט is used here in the sense of 'punishment'; thus these four agents are the 'punishers' who carry out the punishment (evil) from Yahweh.

subject and the Hiphil form strongly suggests that he controls or commands them. Their task is to carry out Yahweh's punishment, destroying every living thing, human and animal (לְהַכְרִית מִמֶּנָּה אָדָם וּבְהֵמָה), the expression from v. 19 is repeated here.

The punishment against Jerusalem on the one hand is said to be worse than what has been described earlier; on the other hand it leaves more hope than before. Whereas in vv. 12-20 not even 'sons and daughters' of the three righteous men are spared, v. 22 states that some 'sons and daughters' will be left to survive.

5.4.6 Ezekiel 28:23

v. 23
וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי־בָהּ דֶּבֶר וָדָם בְּחוּצוֹתֶיהָ וְנִפְלַל חָלָל בְּתוֹכָהּ בְּחֶרֶב עָלֶיהָ מִסָּבִיב וְיָדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה׃

The passage of 28:20-26 is different from the ones discussed above as the oracle it contains is directed not against Israel but against one of her enemies, in this case, Sidon.[210] Commentators note the lack of accusation. There is no reason given why Yahweh is against Sidon, there is simply an announcement of punishment.[211] However, as Greenberg rightly argues, the fact that the recognition formula ('they shall know that I am Yahweh') occurs so often, four times in five verses, strongly hints at the oracle's 'chief concern';[212] Yahweh has to be acknowledged as lord of all not only by Israel but by all nations.[213] Although there is no direct accusation of Sidon at the beginning of the oracle, the motive of punishment becomes clear in

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[210] L. C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, WBC 29 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990) characterizes the passage (vv. 20-26) as being a 'literary finale' to the whole chapter as there are obvious links to the preceding part (e.g. the use of the terms יֹשֵׁב and חָלָל). He also argues that the passage echoes earlier as well as later chapters. For example שׂאט recalls 25:6,15; 28:21 recalls 25:2; 28:22 points to 26:3; vv.25-26 are similar to the closing verses of ch. 39; similarities with 34:25-30 and chs 36-37 have also been pointed out (pp. 98-99). Bodi points out that the term שׂאט is unique to Ezek (appears 6x); he uses it consistently to denote the other nations' contempt towards Judah and Israel. See discussion of this term and its Akkadian parallel on pp. 69-81.

[211] Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p. 98; D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 121 n.1; Biggs, p. 88.

[212] M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, AB 22A (New York: Doubleday, 1997), p. 596.

[213] Block, p. 121.

v. 24. The sin of Israel's neighbours, and thus Sidon's, was the show of contempt toward Israel and thus toward her God.

Although the oracle is a short one it contains many shifts in style and content, thus commentators argue that it is made up of a number of short proof sayings.[214]

Vv. 21-22 introduce the oracle with the usual formula as prose; then vv. 22 and 23 present the oracle in poetic form as Yahweh's speech in 1st person. Vv. 24-26 revert to prose again.[215]

v. 22b contain a statement that Yahweh is against Sidon, the following relate the consequences of this fact. Vv. 22c-f are in an abb'a' form.

v. 22c I shall be honoured in your midst	וְנִכְבַּדְתִּי בְּתוֹכֵךְ
v. 22d and they shall know that I am Yahweh	וְיָדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה
v. 22e when I make judgement in her	בַּעֲשׂוֹתִי בָהּ שְׁפָטִים
v. 22f and I shall be holy in her.	וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי בָהּ :
v. 23.a I shall send *deber* and *dam* in her streets	וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי־בָהּ דֶּבֶר וָדָם בִּחוּצוֹתֶיהָ
v. 23b and the slain shall fall in her midst	וְנִפְלַל חָלָל בְּתוֹכָהּ
v. 23c with sword against her round about	בְּחֶרֶב עָלֶיהָ מִסָּבִיב
v. 23d and they shall know that I am Yahweh.	וְיָדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:

The punishment in v. 23 is brought about by Yahweh's agents of death, דֶּבֶר וָדָם, and חֶרֶב. 'Famine' is missing. The cluster of terms connected with warfare (דָּם, חֶרֶב, וְנִפְלַל חָלָל) indicate that the emphasis is on death caused by war, thus for *deber* a more general meaning is required.[216] Modern Bible translations and commentators give 'plague' (NIV, NJB, Greenberg, Allen) or 'pestilence' (JPS, RSV, Wevers, Block). 'Plague', in the general sense of 'plagues of war' is possible. The close connection of the term with דָּם, 'blood', and the following terms make it unlikely that 'pestilence' is meant here. We suggest 'destruction'. Yahweh sends (Piel of שׁלח) his agents to deliver his punishment. It is possible to regard these three agents as personifications of the horrors of war; the use of the verb שׁלח with דֶּבֶר וָדָם without the object marker supports this suggestion.

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[214] E.g. Block, 'a series' (pp. 121-122); Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, 'two' (p. 596); Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, 'a collection' (p. 98); Wevers argues for the 'composite nature' of the section (p. 219).

[215] Block, p. 122.

[216] Both LXX and Targ translate *deber* as usual by 'death'; Vg has *pestilentia*.

5.4.7 Ezekiel 33:27 (33: 23-29)

v. 27

כֹּה־תֹאמַר אֲלֵהֶם כֹּה־אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה חַי־אָנִי אִם־לֹא אֲשֶׁר בֶּחָרְבוֹת בַּחֶרֶב יִפֹּלוּ
וַאֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה לַחַיָּה נְתַתִּיו לְאָכְלוֹ וַאֲשֶׁר בַּמְּצָדוֹת וּבַמְּעָרוֹת בַּדֶּבֶר יָמוּתוּ׃

Most commentators treat chapter 33 as comprising two distinct literary units, vv. 1-20 and vv. 21-33.[217] The second part of the chapter in turn is made up of three parts, vv. 21-22 is an autobiographical note that is followed by two separate oracles, vv. 23-29 and vv. 30-33.[218] *Deber* ocurs in v. 27, thus the discussion will be limited to the first oracle, vv. 23-29.

According to Block the oracle has a 'hybrid' form; it displays the characteristics of both the proof-saying and the dispute oracle.[219] It can be divided as follows: v. 23 introduces the oracle in the usual manner, vv. 24-26 present the accusation, vv. 27-28 pronounce the judgement and finally v. 29 contains the recognition formula.

The issue in the oracle seems to be around the possession of the land.[220] A false hope seemed to have prevailed amongst those who stayed behind in Judah, thinking that this showed God's favour towards them as opposed to God's judgement/rejection of those who were taken into exile. These people did not learn the 'lessons of the exile', argues Allen, that to stay in Jerusalem and in the land of Judah in fact means death.[221] Their false hope shows their lack of understanding and it only evokes

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[217] Wevers, pp. 249-256; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, pp. 179-202; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, pp. 671-692; Block, pp. 234-268, esp. p. 236; Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, pp. 140-154, esp. p. 151. Clements, *Ezekiel*, sees three 'separate passages about Ezekiel's work as a prophet' (p. 151).

[218] Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, regards the two oracles as unrelated (p. 197), while Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, sees rhetorical parallels between them. He also points to a 'larger structuring' of the whole chapter (p. 151).

[219] The characteristics of proof sayings are: motivation (vv. 24-26); pronouncement of judgement (vv. 27-28); recognition formula (v. 29). Those of the disputation oracles are: thesis (through a popular saying, v. 24); dispute (vv. 25-26); counter-thesis (vv. 28-29). See Block, p. 258; Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p. 151; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, pp. 197-198.

[220] Block, p. 259; Biggs, p. 106.

[221] Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p. 153; Biggs, p. 107. This was Jeremiah's message too in 21:8-10; 24:1-10; 27; 28; 29 and 38. Clements' argument is slightly different; he asserts that by their disobedience the people of Jerusalem forfeited their privileged position as the chosen remnant of Israel. This position now belongs to the exiles (*Ezekiel*, p. 153).

contempt from Yahweh towards them.[222] The expression יֹשְׁבֵי הֶחָרְבוֹת הָאֵלֶּה shows this.[223]

The people of Judah use the example of Abraham to justify their hope (cf. Gen 15:7, 8; Exod 6:8). Their reasoning is presented as an *a fortiori* argument.[224]

v. 24

Abraham was only one (person),	אֶחָד הָיָה אַבְרָהָם
yet he possessed the land;	וַיִּירַשׁ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ
but we are many	וַאֲנַחְנוּ רַבִּים
to us the land was given to possess it	לָנוּ נִתְּנָה הָאָרֶץ לְמוֹרָשָׁה׃

There is logic in their reasoning (note the use of the same verb, ירשׁ). However, there is a problem with the people's attitude. Not only are they ignorant of the covenant that Yahweh made with Abraham, as a result of which he received the gift of the land, but they also display great insolence towards Yahweh by 'underestimating the patriarch's significance and overestimating their own'.[225]

The prophet's refutation of the people's argument is introduced by לָכֵן, 'therefore', signalling the importance of what is to follow. Spoken through the prophet's mouth Yahweh's words of accusation come as a series of formal charges.[226] These charges are addressed directly to the people in 2nd plural verb forms (5 masculine and 1 feminine).

v. 25:

you eat over blood[227]	עַל־הַדָּם תֹּאכֵלוּ
you lift up your eyes to your idols	עֵינֵכֶם תִּשְׂאוּ אֶל־גִּלּוּלֵיכֶם
and you shed blood (pour out)	וְדָם תִּשְׁפֹּכוּ

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[222] Block points out that the oracle presents Yahweh's response to the territorial claims not Ezekiel's (p. 259).

[223] Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, takes הָאֵלֶּה to refer to the whole phrase, 'these inhabitants of ruins', rather then to the following word only, 'these ruins' (p. 684). 'These' is missing from the LXX.

[224] Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, p. 684; Block, p. 259.

[225] Block, p. 260.

[226] Block points out that each of these charges is familiar from former prophecies, e.g. chs 5-6, 18 and 22 (p. 261 and n. 112 on that page).

[227] Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, argues convincingly that 'eating over blood' is related to idolatr cf. Lev 19:26 (p. 684).

v. 26

you stand by your swords[228]	עֲמַדְתֶּם עַל־חַרְבְּכֶם
you commit[229] abominations	עֲשִׂיתֶן תּוֹעֵבָה
and each defiles his fellow's wife	וְאִישׁ אֶת־אֵשֶׁת רֵעֵהוּ טִמֵּאתֶם

The people are guilty of: eating over blood and worshipping idols; murder and violence; abominations and adultery. The gravity of the charges is emphasised by the fact that each is addressed twice in parallel expressions (eating over blood // lifting up the eyes to idols; shedding of blood // standing by the sword; committing abominations // defiling each other's wife).

Accusation is followed by announcement of punishment (vv. 27-28). There were three charges against the people, now there is a threefold division of the people about to be punished, and three agents of punishment.

v. 27

those who are in the ruins by sword shall fall; אֲשֶׁר בֶּחָרְבוֹת בַּחֶרֶב יִפֹּלוּ

who is in the field to the *hayya* I shall give to devour (him);

וַאֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה לַחַיָּה נְתַתִּיו לְאָכְלוֹ

those who are in the strongholds and caves by *deber* shall die.

וַאֲשֶׁר בַּמְּצָדוֹת וּבַמְּעָרוֹת בַּדֶּבֶר יָמוּתוּ :

It is interesting to note that the agents of punishment are different from the usual; 'famine' is missing, and *hayya* appears without the usual qualifying 'of evil'. Commentators usually translate it as 'wild animals/beasts',[230] mainly because of its occurrence with הַשָּׂדֶה,[231] and the connection with Lev 26:22, 25.[232] This is possible

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[228] Literally, 'stand on your swords'; an expression that does not occur elsewhere (Block, p. 261 n. 116). Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37* translates 'you live by your swords', taking עמד in the sense of 'exist' (p. 685). Similarly Wevers (p. 255), Block (p. 257) and Allen (*Ezekiel 20-48*, p. 149) interpret the expression as 'you rely on/ resort to your swords'. The context supports such translations. The phrase refers to living violently.

[229] The verb is 2 fem. pl. This, according to Greenberg might be a scribal error (*Ezekiel 21-37*, p. 685). He further argues that the expression עֲשִׂיתֶן תּוֹעֵבָה, 'you commit abominations' here is best taken to refer to 'sexual immorality' (cf. 22:11; Lev 18:26-30) rather than idolatry (as is usual in Ezekiel, e.g. 8:6, 9). Indeed, Greenberg's suggestion is supported by the context here. The charges are presented in parallel expressions; עֲשִׂיתֶן תּוֹעֵבָה, 'you commit abominations' // וְאִישׁ אֶת־אֵשֶׁת רֵעֵהוּ טִמֵּאתֶם , 'and each defiles his fellow's wife', requiring the sense of sexual offence for 'abominations'.

[230] So Wevers, p. 255; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, p. 685; Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p. 153; Block, p. 262, modern Bible versions and Vg. LXX also adds 'of the field'.

[231] Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, p. 685.

(cf. Jer 40:7). However, we suggest a different interpretation, namely that as in previous occurrences (e.g. 5:16-17; 14:15), here too, *hayya* is to be taken in a general sense referring to any of Yahweh's agents, bringers of 'evil'. This suggestion finds support in the way v. 27 is presented. While falling by sword and dying by *deber* have plural subjects, those who are in the ruins and those who are in the strongholds and caves respectively, the subject of the middle phrase is Yahweh himself; the object is also in the singular, 'I shall give *him'* / 'to devour *him'*, as is the recipient, 'to the *hayya* (i.e.my agent)'. The whole phrase is in the singular perhaps because it is to be taken in a general sense. The locations: ruins, field, strongholds and caves emphasise the all-encompassing nature of the punishment, that there is no place where anyone can hide from Yahweh's agents, rather than a link with the instrument of punishment (i.e. field – beasts).[233] These agents of Yahweh are presented here personified, and the emphasis is on the destruction and death that they cause; the nature of the death is secondary. Exodus 5:3 presents the Israelites running into the desert and sacrificing to Yahweh, scared of meeting his two agents, *hereb* and *deber.* These two agents are pursuing the fugitives here too. The translation of *deber* as 'plague/pestilence' is possible but the more general 'disease' is preferable;[234] sword could either stand for war or as in Exod 5:3 for a violent death in general.[235] As argued above, the emphasis is not on the nature but on the fact of death, that these 'beings' are agents of Yahweh and they bring his punishment which is deadly.

5.4.8 Ezekiel 38:22

v. 22
וְנִשְׁפַּטְתִּי אִתּוֹ בְּדֶבֶר וּבְדָם וְגֶשֶׁם שׁוֹטֵף וְאַבְנֵי אֶלְגָּבִישׁ אֵשׁ וְגָפְרִית אַמְטִיר עָלָיו
וְעַל־אֲגַפָּיו וְעַל־עַמִּים רַבִּים אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ׃

The final occurrence of *deber* in Ezekiel is in chapter 38 v. 22.

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[232] Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p. 153.

[233] Contra Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, p. 685.

[234] JPS, RSV and Vg translate 'pestilence'; NJB; NIV; Greenberg; Zimmerli; Allen and Block have 'plague'. LXX and Targ give the more general meaning of 'death'.

[235] See 5.5.1 below.

Chapters 38-39 form a literary unit that is in the form of a prophecy against Gog dealing with the theme of Israel's punishment (in the form of invasion and exile) and her future restoration. The text is extremely complex and scholars disagree as to whether it is made up of several oracles[236] or if it is a single oracle that can be further subdivided.[237] Some scholars characterise this prophetic oracle as (proto-) apocalyptic.[238] However, Block has shown that it does not fit the definition of 'apocalyptic' as given by J. J. Collins.[239] Block argues further that the 'Gog pericope' should be regarded as a 'single powerful proof oracle' consisting of a 'series of fragmentary proof sayings' (p. 428). The oracle is outstanding because of its lively imagery, and this has led Block to warn against a too literal interpretation of it. He argues that the oracle is best regarded as 'a satirical literary cartoon strip'. He writes (p. 431):

> For sheer vividness, imagery, and hyperbole, this oracle has few equals, which cautions against overliteralism in interpretation. One may best appreciate the intention of this text by approaching it as a satirical literary cartoon strip consisting of eight frames.

Block is followed by Rentz.[240] However, we shall attempt to show that to regard this oracle as a satirical writing is missing the author's intention in his use of this imagery.[241]

The oracle is presented in the form of a direct speech by Yahweh, addressing the prophet (38:1-2; 14a; 39:1a; 17a), Gog (38:3-13; 14b-17; 39:1b-5), the birds and wild animals (39:17b-20) and a general audience, i.e. the nations and Israel (38:18-23; 39:6-16; 21-29). After the usual opening formula the prophet is asked to set his

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[236] Seven, according to Taylor and Stuart (based on the number of times the messenger formula is repeated, in 38:3, 10, 14, 17; 39:1, 17, 25); four according to Parunak (quoted in Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p. 202).

[237] Some scholars identify a core and further later additions to the text; thus Wevers reduces the original oracle to 39:1-4, 6, with all the rest being expansions/commentaries on this (see pp. 283-286 esp. p. 286). Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, divides the text into three (original) 'strophes', 38:1-9; 39:1-5 and 17-20 (pp. 296- 299). Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, discusses several scholars' positions, and agrees with Zimmerli in a three-fold division of the oracle (pp. 202-204). Similarly, Biggs, p. 121 and McKeating, *Ezekiel*, OT Guides (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), pp. 117-122. Block follows Odell who has a 'holistic approach' to the text in chs 38-39 (pp. 424-427).

[238] Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p. 210; Craigie, *Ezekiel*, p. 266. See also references in Block, p. 427.

[239] For reference see Block, p. 428 n. 15. Block writes that the symbolic elements are 'a far cry from the elaborate symbolism of Daniel or of the NT book of Revelation' (p. 428).

[240] T. Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel*, VT Supp (Leiden: Brill, 1999), p.117.

[241] See below, p. 162.

face towards Gog and prophesy against him.[242] The identity of Gog has been long debated and no consensus has been reached. [243] However, the emphasis is not on his identity but on the way he is presented, a great and powerful leader[244] with a mighty army[245] and numerous allies.[246] V. 7 starts as a summons to battle, the two imperative verbs (Niphal and Hiphil of כּוּן) give a sense of urgency and at the same time with the addition of a third Niphal verb form (קהל) emphasize the fact that these instructions come fromYahweh; he is in command. We have the vivid image of a great army assembled, all in battle gear, ready to invade, waiting only for the word of command. Thus the delay in v. 8 comes somewhat as a surprise. The time of the attack is uncertain; it only happens 'after many days'(מִיָּמִים רַבִּים) , 'in later years' (בְּאַחֲרִית הַשָּׁנִים). However, the fact that it will happen is sure, 'you shall be mustered'(תִּפָּקֵד), 'you shall go against'(תָּבוֹא אֶל־). The first part of v. 9 makes use of similes ('as a devastation', כַּשֹּׁאָה; 'as a cloud', כֶּעָנָן) and parallelism ('you shall go up', וְעָלִיתָ; 'you shall go in', תָּבוֹא) to illustrate the devastating and all-encompassing nature of the attack ('covering the land', לְכַסּוֹת הָאָרֶץ), while the second part again emphasises the greatness of the invading army ('you, and all your army and the many people with you', אַתָּה וְכָל־אֲגַפֶּיךָ וְעַמִּים רַבִּים אוֹתָךְ).

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[242] Biggs points out that the turning of the prophet *towards* a place/person is a way of expressing Yahweh's opposition towards that place/person, cf. 6:2; 25:2; 28:21 (p. 121). NIV's translation, 'Son of Man, set your face against Gog…' conveys this sense. Indeed, the call to 'prophecy against him' makes it clear that this is the intended meaning.

[243] Most scholars regard Gyges, king of Lydia as being the most probable (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p. 301; Block, p. 433; McKeating, *Ezekiel*, p. 115; Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p. 204) but other possibilities have also been suggested. For a discussion see Zimmerli, pp. 299-302; McKeating, p. 115 and Block, p. 433 n. 31.

[244] The expression נְשִׂיא רֹאשׁ מֶשֶׁךְ וְתֻבָל is also problematic; LXX took רֹאשׁ as a place name and this led to some interesting conjectures (Russia) in trying to identify it. Most scholars agree that it is best to take רֹאשׁ as a common noun referring to נָשִׂיא, and thus the phrase translates, 'prince, chief of Meshech and Tubal'. So Wevers, p. 287*;* Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p. 305; Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p. 199 n. 2a; Biggs, p. 121; P. C. Craigie, *Ezekiel* (Edinburgh: St. Andrews Press, 1983), p. 265; Block, p. 433. Meshech and Tubal appear in Ezek 27:13 in a listing of Tyre's trade partners; in 32:26 among the slain by sword, allies of Egypt. Both are also attested in ANE sources (Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p. 204; Block, pp. 435- 436 and n. 47, 48).

[245] V. 4b describes Gog's army as well dressed (לְבֻשֵׁי מִכְלוֹל) and armed, with horses (סוּסִים) and horsemen (וּפָרָשִׁים), carrying defensive as well as offensive weapons ('buckler and shield',צִנָּה וּמָגֵן , 'sword', חֲרָבוֹת). According to Block the expression כָּל־חֵילֵךְ, 'your entire army' refers not only to the 'inventory of military hardware' of Gog's army but also to his allies (p. 439).

[246] For a discussion on Gog's five allies, פָּרַס כּוּשׁ וּפוּט, גֹּמֶר and בֵּית תּוֹגַרְמָה see commentaries, e.g. Wevers, p. 287; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p. 306; Block, pp. 439-440 and notes.

These verses illustrate Gog and his great army as powerful and feared by many nations, and yet they are mere puppets in Yahweh's hands. They act as and when he commands (vv. 7-8, 9; 15-16). He even puts the thoughts into their minds (vv. 10-12).[247] Gog and his army are instruments of Yahweh.[248]

The object of Gog and his army's attack first appears in v. 8 as 'the mountains of Israel'. It is not named directly at first but is described as a land that was desolate for long but now has recovered from war, a people that returned from exile. People and land seem to be used interchangeably.[249] This reference to the suffering of the people shows Yahweh's caring and compassion, and this also becomes clear later when Yahweh's anger arises as a result of the actual attack on Israel by Gog's army (vv. 18-22). Vv. 11-13 present a resettled nation, living peacefully and oblivious of danger.[250] When they least expect it, the attack will come. The description of the invasion is a summary of vv. 4-9. It is striking that the object of the attack is now referred to explicitly as 'my people Israel', עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל (v. 14, 16) and the land as 'my land', אַרְצִי (v. 16).[251] This may point forward to the coming severe punishment of Gog for attacking Israel. Although Gog and his army acted only as Yahweh's agents their action rouses Yahweh to great anger. This is interesting because this was not the only time that Yahweh used foreign rulers/nations as his agents to punish Israel. Nebuchadrezzar appeared frequently in Jeremiah's prophecies as Yahweh's agent (e.g. 21:7; 'my servant' in 27:6; 32:16-23). Elsewhere we have the Assyrian king.[252] However, perhaps it is significant that in the cases mentioned Yahweh used these foreigners to punish Israel for turning away from him, whereas in the present case there is no mention of Israel sinning against Yahweh and Gog and his army acting as bringers of punishment. Israel had already been punished

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[247] Block asserts that Yahweh directly and deliberately manipulates Gog (p. 438). Also Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p. 205; Craigie, *Ezekiel*, p. 269; Biggs, p. 122. Wevers on the other hand holds that v. 10 presents Gog as the one devising the plan to attack 'defenceless people' (p. 288). Similarly Clements, *Ezekiel*, views vv. 10-16 as unfolding the 'evil plans of Gog' (p. 172). Later however, speaking of 39:1-16, he does confirm that 'Gog's attack is allowed to take place under the hand of God, who is secretly controlling the battle and its outcome.' (p. 175)

[248] Block, p. 444.

[249] Block, p. 444.

[250] This depiction of Israel points to the fulfilment of earlier promises in 34:26-27; 36:10 (Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p. 206; Block, p. 447).

[251] Block, p. 450.

[252] Isa 28: 2. See 6.5.

(was in exile), the description of idyllic life after resettlement suggests that her relationship with Yahweh has been restored. The purpose (expressed by לְמַעַן) of all this becomes clear from v. 16b; through Gog Yahweh shall show his holiness to all the nations,

לְמַעַן דַּעַת הַגּוֹיִם אֹתִי בְּהִקָּדְשִׁי בְךָ לְעֵינֵיהֶם גּוֹג׃

Gog and his army are agents and instruments in Yahweh's hands at the same time.[253] Through their punishment Yahweh's holiness, power and might will be clear to all nations.[254] The punishment parallels the great wrath of Yahweh which is described with emphatic terms and vivid imagery in vv. 18-20, 'my hot anger shall arise' (תַּעֲלֶה חֲמָתִי בְּאַפִּי, v. 18), a great earthquake (רַעַשׁ גָּדוֹל, v. 19) , shall result from 'my zeal and the fire of my wrath' (וּבְקִנְאָתִי בְאֵשׁ־עֶבְרָתִי, v. 19), all living things ('fish of the sea', דְּגֵי הַיָּם, 'birds of the sky', וְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם, 'animals of the field', וְכָל־הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ, 'all creeping things creeping on the earth', וְחַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה עַל־הָאֲדָמָה, 'and all the humans that are on the earth', וְכֹל הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה, v. 20) will tremble at Yahweh's presence (וְרָעֲשׁוּ מִפָּנַי). Not only the living things but nature itself shall be affected by Yahweh's presence (second half of v. 20); mountains shall be thrown down (וְנֶהֶרְסוּ הֶהָרִים), steep places shall fall (וְנָפְלוּ הַמַּדְרֵגוֹת), walls shall fall down to the earth (וְכָל־חוֹמָה לָאָרֶץ תִּפּוֹל).[255] This is the description of the mighty and powerful warrior-king Yahweh who appears now to execute judgement i.e. to punish.[256] It is Yahweh against Gog, Yahweh's warriors:

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[253] Contra Block who writes (p. 451), '...Gog is not actually the agent through whom his (Yahweh's) holiness is manifested; he is the locus of the revelation!' Further, he argues that Gog cannot be Yahweh's agent because he is not commisioned by Yahweh to act as his agent of punishment. 'How could Yahweh announce in one breath that Gog is his agent, and in the next vent his wrath on Gog with such fury?' (pp. 455-456) However, even though Gog is not commisioned to punish Israel, it is clear that he is brought against Israel by Yahweh (v. 16: 'I will bring you against my land...') whether he knows or not that Yahweh pulls his strings, he is still a puppet. Yahweh has a purpose with Gog and his army and their attack on Israel as this serves as a reason for their punishment. Through the punishment Yahweh can manifest his might and glory to all the nations. We can see a parallel in the story of David and the census in 2 Sam 24 where Yahweh incited David to do the census and then punished him for doing it. He sent one of his agents of punishment, *deber*, clearly identified there as an angel. See below, 5.5.6. This theme was also known in the ancient Near East. Renz draws attention to the parallel of the Gog pericope and the Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin. He writes: 'The central idea of both the Cuthean Legend and Ezek 38-39 is that the enemy is defeated by divine intervention and not by human forces. The same gods (or God) who had unleashed the dark forces, destroy(s) them.' (pp. 117-118)

[254] Renz, pp. 119-120.

[255] Isa 2:12-17; 29:6; Ezek 38:19; Zech 14:5, etc.

[256] The Niphal form of the verb is used in the sense of carrying out the sentence (Block, p. 459).

Sword, *Deber* and *Dam*, Rain, Hailstones, Fire and Brimstone, a series of personified natural forces, against the army and all the nations that are with Gog. There can be no question as to the outcome.[257]

V. 22 enlists seven agents through whom the punishment is carried out. The number seven highlights the totality of the punishment,[258] it also reminds us of the seven 'arrows' or 'evils' of Yahweh in Deut 32:24. It is argued there that these forces are personifications. The cosmic scale of the punishment and the reference to 'that day' (i.e. the day of Yahweh) are suggestive of a holy war context,[259] and thus it is easy to regard the agents enlisted here too as personifications of destructive forces, as members of Yahweh's army. Natural elements such as Hail (*barad*) and Mighty Waters also appear as personified destructive forces in Isa 28.[260]

This leads us back to the point made earlier that the text is not a satirical writing. The imagery used serves a clear purpose. Zimmerli characterised the language of this pericope as 'lively', neither prose nor 'tightly controlled speech'. 'Rather it reveals the character of a rhythmical elevated prose, in which there appear two-stress and three-stress lines which occasionally connected in clear parallelism without being linked by fixed laws into a metrically self-contained whole.'[261] We suggest that perhaps it is better to regard this text as poetical; the symbolism, the personifications, similes, parallelisms would fall into place.

It is not possible to determine a specific meaning for *deber*. Along with Sword, *Dam* (bloodshed), Rain and other personified natural forces, it is presented as one of Yahweh's warriors, one of his agents of punishment. A general sense of 'destruction' is suited to the context.

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[257] Clements, *Ezekiel*, is reminded of the account of the defeat of Sennacherib's army outside Jerusalem by the angel of Yahweh in 2 Kings 19:35, and in a broader sense he sees here a description of a final conflict between the forces of good and evil (p. 173).

[258] Block, p. 459.

[259] Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p. 313.

[260] See discussion in 6.5.

[261] *Ezekiel 2*, p. 299.

5.4.9 Summary of occurrences of *deber* in Ezekiel

Examining all the occurences of *deber* in the Book of Ezekiel the following can be concluded. *Deber* occurs 11x in Ezekiel; 5x as the triad known from Jeremiah, *deber*, famine and sword, although the order varies.[262] Contrary to Jeremiah, Ezekiel does not use this triad consistently. In some cases a different element (*dam* in 28:23 and *hayyah* in 33:27) replaces famine. A fourth element appears in 14:19[263] and 21; v. 21 speaks of Yahweh's four dreadful scourges (אַרְבַּעַת שְׁפָטַי הָרָעִים), the fourth being the *hayya ra'ah*. This is commonly translated as 'wild animals' but we have shown that a more literal translation as 'beings of evil' meaning Yahweh's agents who bring destruction upon the people is more suited to the contexts. In 5:17 *dam* appears as the fifth element closely connected to *deber* (וְדֶבֶר וָדָם; it appears also in this form in 28:23 but there as the third element), and in 38:22 it is one of seven forces.

The passages in which *deber* occurs are all prophetic oracles and most of them are written in poetic style.[264] Four times *deber* appears as an absolute noun (5:17; 14:19 and 21; 28:23); in all cases Yahweh 'sends' (שׁלח) it. Most often, however, it appears with the definite article preceded by the preposition בְּ־,[265] in which cases the preposition is taken instrumentally. It is unlikely that the nouns are proper nouns, rather the fact that they appear with, as well as without, the definite article points to the fact that they designate Yahweh's agents who are personified abstract nouns or natural forces. Their 'name' designates their function and does not point to them as individuals.

We have argued for a personification of *deber* and the other agents in all of the passages. This was supported by the verbs related to them and their immediate context. In every case *deber* as an agent of Yahweh brings punishment. Although mostly total destruction is envisaged, the possibility of survival is also introduced. A remnant will be kept (12:16; 14:19, 21). Yahweh's punishment is mostly directed

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[262] In 5:12: '*deber*, famine, sword'; in 6:11 and 12:16: 'sword, famine, *deber*'; in 6:12: '*deber*, sword, famine'; and in 7:15: 'sword, *deber*, famine'.

[263] Strictly speaking in v. 19 *deber* appears alone, but 'famine' in v. 13; *hayyah ra'ah* in v. 15, and 'sword' in v. 17 are connected to it.

[264] So chs 6,7, 12, 28 and possibly 38. Chs 14 and 33 are characterised as 'proof sayings'. Ch. 5 describes the prophet's symbolic actions and relays its interpretation.

[265] 5x as בְּ־ + def. art. + noun (5:12; 6:11, 12: 28:23; 33:27), 1x with the definite article alone (7:15). 1x it appears as בְּ־+ noun (38:22) and 1x with the preposition מִן־ as prep. + noun (12:16).

against Israel but twice other nations are also mentioned as the objects of his wrath: in 28:23 Yahweh speaks against Sidon and in 38:22 against Gog, king of Magog. Here other natural elements also occur, such as torrential rain, hailstones, fire and brimstone, all personified as Yahweh's mighty army.

Some of the verbs that occur with *deber* are the same as in Jeremiah, for example various forms of מות, 'to die'; כלה, 'to finish'; באו, 'to bring in', and שׁלח, 'to send'. Similarly to Jeremiah, here too, when the people are the subject of the sentence, they will die by *deber* (5:12; 6:11, 12; 33:27) and be finished by the other agents. They will also 'fall' (נפל) especially by the sword (5:12; 6:11, 12; 33:27). Contrary to Jeremiah here *deber* also appears as the subject of the sentence; it passes over (עבר, 5:17) and devours (אכל, 7:15) the people. That the activity of these agents is controlled byYahweh is emphasised by the fact that often he is the subject of the verbs; he sends them (וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי) in 5:17; 14:19, 21; 28:23; he causes them to pass (אַעֲבִיר, 14:15) or brings them in (אָבִיא, 5:17; 14:17); he gives the people over to them (נְתַתִּיו, 33:27), judges through them (נִשְׁפַּטְתִּי, 38:22) but also if he so wishes spares (וְהוֹתַרְתִּי, 12:16) the people from them.

The usual translation of *deber* is 'plague/pestilence'. However, and as we argued in the Jeremiah passages, there is nothing to suggest that a specific disease was meant by the term. 'Infectious disease' in general is possible; though a general sense of 'destruction' is more suited to the context especially when it is closely associated with blood(shed), e.g. 5:17; 28:23; or with natural forces, e.g. 38:22.

5.5 Other occurrences of *deber*

There are a further 16 occurrences of *deber* in the Hebrew Bible. These are in Exod 5:3; 9:3, 15; Lev 26:25; Deut 28:21; Num 14:12; 2 Sam 24:13, 15; 1 Kgs 8:37; 1 Chron 21:12, 14; 2 Chron 6:28; 7:13; 29:9; Ps 78: 50 and Amos 4:10. Some of these are parallel passages (2 Sam 24//1Chron 21; 1 Kgs 8// 2 Chron 6) thus these will be discussed together.

5.5.1 Exodus 5:3

v. 3
וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים נִקְרָא עָלֵינוּ נֵלְכָה נָּא דֶּרֶךְ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים בַּמִּדְבָּר וְנִזְבְּחָה לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ פֶּן־יִפְגָּעֵנוּ בַּדֶּבֶר אוֹ בֶחָרֶב׃

Exod 5:1-6:1 is usually regarded as one literary unit.[266] The chapter deals with the first appearance of Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh, their demand and its consequences. The events in this section are building tension and leading up to the mighty acts of Yahweh in 7:8-12:36.[267] After[268] Moses was well received by the elders and the people of Israel in 4:29 we now find him and Aaron appearing in front of Pharaoh. Cassuto suggests that since it is not stated explicitly that Moses and Aaron were sent by Yahweh, perhaps they acted on their own behalf and thus made the situation worse (p. 65). To the contrary, Houtman argues that 'the lack of a specific mandate' from Yahweh was not the point. To him the important issue of the text is the 'execution of instructions' given to Moses in 3:15-22 (p. 461). According to those instructions Moses was to expect that Pharaoh would not listen.

Their request was presented more as a demand than a supplication. Both Moses and Aaron appear confident and sure of themselves, almost arrogant before Pharaoh. Yahweh, the God of Israel says but really he commands (expressed by the Piel imperative of שַׁלַּח) Pharaoh to allow his people to celebrate him in the desert, שַׁלַּח אֶת־עַמִּי וְיָחֹגּוּ לִי בַּמִּדְבָּר (v. 1). Although the request is presented in terms of religion (celebrating a feast), there are deeper issues involved as becomes clearer from the next verse (and as the story unfolds in the following chapters). This is a power struggle between Yahweh and Pharaoh.[269] Pharaoh's reply in v. 2 matches Moses' demand;[270] it is arrogant and dismissive,[271] 'who is Yahweh that I should

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[266] For example, J. I. Durham, *Exodus*, WBC 3 (Waco: Word Books, 1987), pp. 61-71; T. E. Fretheim, *Exodus*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991), pp. 82-88; C. Houtman, *Exodus*, transl. by J. Rebel and S. Woudstra (Kampen: KOK Publishing House, 1993), I, pp. 455-482. He notes that vv. 1-5 are a literary composite (p. 459). W. H. C. Propp, *Exodus 1-18: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1999), pp. 243- 261; C. Meyers, *Exodus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 67- 71. Especially useful is his ch. 2 with suggested readings and Bibliography on Exodus (pp. 21-31). See also U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, transl. by I. Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), pp. 65- 75; R. E. Clements, *Exodus*, Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: University Press, 1972), pp. 32-35.

[267] Durham, p. 66.

[268] Cassuto points out that the opening sentence of 5:1, וְאַחַר בָּאוּ מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן is typical in Canaanite literature (p. 65).

[269] Propp, p. 67; Houtman, p. 462.

[270] The same verb, שַׁלַּח is used as in v. 1.

[271] So Durham, p. 64 and Houtman, p. 462. Cassuto (p. 66) and Clements (*Exodus*, p. 34) explain Pharaoh's reaction stemming from the Egyptian belief that he himself was divine. However, Houtman rightly pointed out that this is 'beside the point' (p. 462)

listen to his voice and send Israel (away)?' (מִי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר אֶשְׁמַע בְּקֹלוֹ לְשַׁלַּח אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל). Pharaoh's statement, 'I do not know Yahweh' (לֹא יָדַעְתִּי אֶת־יְהוָה), is insulting both towards Yahweh himself and the Israelites. It is not that Pharaoh would not have heard of Yahweh but more that he does not acknowledge him or his authority over the Israelites. Therefore his answer is a categoric 'No', 'and moreover,[272] Israel, I shall not send (her away)' (וְגַם אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא אֲשַׁלֵּחַ). Pharaoh will show who has the real authority. Not only does he not permit the Israelites to go and celebrate Yahweh but he also makes their already hard conditions worse.[273] This act will result in a conflict between Moses and the people (v. 20) as well as Moses and Yahweh (vv. 22-23).

V. 3 has Moses and Aaron speaking again, repeating v. 1with several differences. First of all there is a difference in their tone, they sound more apologetic and less arrogant.[274] The demand turns into a request. Also as Pharaoh declared that he does not know Yahweh, they now refer to him as 'the God of the Hebrews' (אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים). They still convey Yahweh's message, only they change tactics.[275] Politely they explain that they are obliged to make the journey into the desert as their God has met with them (עָלֵינוּ נִקְרָא), implying not stating, that he commanded them. These are milder terms than in v. 1, especially the following entreaty (using the cohortative verb form), 'please let us go on a journey'(נֵלְכָה נָּא דֶּרֶךְ). There is another change compared to v. 1. Whereas earlier there was no time limit in the demand, now it is only three days absence that they are asking for. In v. 1 they wanted to 'make a

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[272] וְגַם carries a sense of emphatic explication rather than just a simple addition. See Propp, p. 253; Durham, p. 62; Cassuto, p. 66.

[273] Propp points out that Pharaoh refers to Israel by their name for the last time in 5:2 until their release in 12:31. In between he only refers to them as 'the people' (5:4, 7; 8:4), 'the men' (5:9) or 'you' (8:24; 9:28; 10:10). Propp suggests that this is perhaps to show that he does not recognize their right to be a nation (p. 252).

[274] Durham, p. 64. Cassuto argues that Moses and Aaron did not only change their tone but also whom they represent. Whereas in v. 1 they presented themselves as 'ambassadors of Yahweh', here they appear as the representatives of the people (p. 66). Houtman disagrees. He argues rightly that the context shows that although Pharaoh's reply is harsh, they are not put off by it. They change strategy; they speak politely and explain their request (p. 463). See also Durham; he sees Moses and Aaron as having lost their confidence and now 'begging' Pharaoh (p. 64). Fretheim sees them as showing little creativity in their response, merely repeating almost word by word God's command to them in 3:18, only adding a little 'twist of their own'. He writes: 'They exaggerate God's words, perhaps in the hope that the Pharaoh would be more responsive to such rhetoric (he would lose his slaves!)' (p. 86). Houtman's approach seems the right one.

[275] See note above.

festival to Yahweh' (וְיָחֹגּוּ לִי בַּמִּדְבָּר) , here they are to 'sacrifice to Yahweh' (וְנִזְבְּחָה לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ) . The most important difference that appears between the two versions of request is the introduction of the element of fear. Moses and the people have to sacrifice to Yahweh because if not there are consequences, Yahweh will punish them, he shall encounter[276] them with the *deber* and the 'sword'. Thus the short and abrupt demand in v. 1, 'Thus says Yahweh, God of Israel, send my people to hold a feast for me in the desert!' turns to a longer, polite request in v. 3 that also hints to the background of it, 'The God of the Hebrews called upon us, please let us go on a three day journey into the desert to sacrifice to Yahweh our God, lest he encounters us with the *deber* or the sword.'

Houtman raises the question whether the threat from Yahweh that the Israelites were facing made any impression on Pharaoh.[277] Indeed, one wonders if there was not a hidden threat in Moses' words towards Pharaoh gone unnoticed at the time but coming to fulfilment in the mighty acts of Yahweh.

It is uncertain what exactly is meant by 'encounter through the *deber* or the sword'.[278] As we have seen from our discussion of *deber* in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and as Houtman also correctly points out, it seems that although *deber* is usually translated as 'pestilence',[279] the term refers to epidemic diseases in general rather than one specific disease.[280] In this sense there would have been a threat in the encounter with Yahweh through *deber* also to the Egyptians and Pharaoh himself; infectious diseases would spread from the Israelites to the Egyptians without regard

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[276] **פגע** can be used in the sense of violent confrontation, e.g. Judg 8:21; 15:12; 18:25. The sense here is that of a 'hostile treatment' by Yahweh. See Houtman, p. 464. He argues that translations such as 'hit with' or 'strike with' (e. g. CJB, NIV, NJB, Propp, p. 243) are too weak and do not convey the true sense. He suggests 'cut us down'. Durham translates 'send disaster upon us' (p. 61); Clements, *Exodus*, 'he will attack us' (p. 34); others mostly 'fall upon us' (e.g. Cassuto, p. 67; Meyers following NRSV, p. 49; also JPS; NAU and RSV).

[277] P. 465. He notes that rabbinic literature considered the threat to 'us' as really meaning 'you'.

[278] In Jeremiah Yahweh 'visits' (פקד) the people in order to punish them; it is likely that the 'encounter' is also of similar purpose.

[279] So JPS; NAU; RSV. NJB and CJB have 'plague' and NIV the plural form 'plagues'. LXX and Targ have 'death', Vg has *pestis*. The majority of scholars also translate 'pestilence'; for example, Cassuto, p. 67; Meyers, *Exodus*, p. 49; Clements, *Exodus*, p. 32; Fretheim, p. 86 and Houtman, p. 455. Propp (p. 243) and Durham (p. 61) have 'plague'.

[280] See above 5.3.10 and 5.4.9; also Houtman, p. 464.

to one's social status.[281] Disease was one of the greatest killers of ancient times, and war was another.[282] 'Sword' does not necessarily mean 'war' here, but it can be taken as referring to violent death.[283] As the story unfolds it becomes clear how these threats are realized. The Egyptians are striken by various kinds of diseases; nature, animals and humans are violated.

5.5.2 Exodus 9: 3, 15

v. 3

הִנֵּה יַד־יְהוָה הוֹיָה בְּמִקְנְךָ אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂדֶה בַּסּוּסִים בַּחֲמֹרִים בַּגְּמַלִּים בַּבָּקָר וּבַצֹּאן
דֶּבֶר כָּבֵד מְאֹד׃

v. 15

כִּי עַתָּה שָׁלַחְתִּי אֶת־יָדִי וָאַךְ אוֹתְךָ וְאֶת־עַמְּךָ בַּדָּבֶר וַתִּכָּחֵד מִן־הָאָרֶץ׃

With chapter 5 vv. 1-3 the scene was set for the narrative of the 'ten plagues of Egypt' (7:8 -12:36).[284] Meyers draws attention to the inappropriateness of this expression. He shows that 'the ten plagues' is a post-biblical term and that its use is not supported by either the exodus account or by other biblical references (e.g. Deut 4:34; Pss 78:43-51; 105:26-27; Jer 32:20-21). 'Signs' and/or 'wonders' are better terms and their use is supported by their occurrence in reference to these events.[285] Durham's 'mighty acts' is also to the point.[286]

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[281] Propp, p. 253, and contra Houtman, who argues that the reference to war does not make sense here and that thus 'pestilence or the sword' should not be taken literally. Instead he sees the expression as a *merism*, referring to some 'fearful calamities' (pp. 465-466). However, this cannot be the case. True, *deber* does not refer to one specific disease, but we have seen that it is best to take it to refer to 'infectious disease' in general, and this interpretation fits in most of its occurrences so far. Sword, referring to war or violence (violent death) also occurs elsewhere, e.g. Exod 17:13; 22:24; Lev 26:6-8; Num 14:3, 43; 1 Sam 15:33; 1 Chron 21:12, etc. One cannot help but think of the curses in Lev 26:14-46 and Deut 28:15- 68 that befall those who disobey Yahweh. Both *deber* and sword occur in the list. (Clements, *Exodus*, p. 35)

[282] See n. 82 in 5.3.1 and 5.3.10.

[283] Propp notes that both LXX and the Targs interpret 'sword' as 'murder' (p. 245).

[284] There is disagreement amongst commentators regarding the number of 'plagues' that is mostly related to source analysis. Propp mentions six, seven or eight (pp. 310-321); Meyers, *Exodus*, argues for nine (p. 78). Clements and Durham (see n. 266) follow the traditional ten.

[285] Beside the above mentioned passages 'wonders' appears in Exod 3:20; 4:21; 7:8; 11:9, 10. 'Sign' is used in 4:17; 8:23; 10:1-2. 'Signs and wonders' together are used in 7:3.

[286] P. 116 for example.

As Yahweh promised in 6:1 to Moses, 'and you shall see what I shall do to pharaoh' (עַתָּה תִּרְאֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה לְפַרְעֹה), the acts of his mighty hands[287] are slowly unfolding in Egypt. After an introductory act of magic, the turning of Aaron's staff into a snake (7:10-13), the real strikes begin. The water of the Nile (and all water in Egypt) turned to blood (7:14-24); frogs appeared from everywhere and inundated the living spaces (8: 1-15, וַתַּעַל הַצְּפַרְדֵּעַ וַתְּכַס אֶת־אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם); swarms of gnats (8:16-19) and flies (8:20-32) made life difficult for both humans and animals.[288] The afflictions were becoming more serious and whereas Pharaoh's magicians could also produce the first and the second signs, the afflictions from the third onwards became unmanageable for them and thus they disappeared from the narrative.

Exodus 9:1-7 relates the fifth blow on the Egyptians. This time their livestock is afflicted which has obvious consequences on the people.[289]

V. 1 contains the usual formula,Yahweh sends Moses to Pharaoh to relay his command. 'Go to pharaoh and say to him: thus says Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, send my people to serve (i.e worship) me.' The expression כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים שַׁלַּח אֶת־עַמִּי וְיַעַבְדֻנִי occurs several times throughout the narrative with slight variations.[290] The Israelites' request has changed a little, in 5:1 they asked to 'hold a festival'(חגג), in 5:3 to 'sacrifice'(זבח), and now it has changed to 'serve' (עבד).[291]

Vv. 2-3 warn Pharaoh of the consequences of his stubborness; v. 2 contains the first part of the warning and v. 3 the details of the punishment. If Pharaoh keeps refusing to let the people go, אִם־מָאֵן אַתָּה לְשַׁלֵּחַ, he will experience the hand of Yahweh.

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[287] NIV and NJB are taking בְּיָד חֲזָקָה to be referring to God's hands, even though clearly it is Pharaoh's 'hands' that are referred to. However, there is an allusion in it to 3:19 where the king of Egypt would be compelled by a mighty hand (Yahweh's) to let the Israelites go.

[288] The same word, 'swarm', עָרֹב is used for 'plague' number three (8:17) and four (8:20) with the difference that the fourth one is עָרֹב כָּבֵד, 'great swarm'.

[289] Propp comments that the placing of the fifth plague here gives a 'sense of mounting severity' (p. 320). Indeed, as the narrative progresses the acts of Yahweh affect the Egyptians harder and harder. The annoyances become more serious and finally life-threatening.

[290] 7:16 is the same but adds 'to worship me in the desert'; 7:26; 8:16 do not have 'God of the Hebrews'; 9:13 and 10:3 contain the same expression.

[291] In the other occurrences of the expression (e.g. 7:16; 26; 8:16; 9:13 and 10:3) it is also עבד.

To make the warning more explicit the general reference to 'your cattle that are in the field' is then spelled out in detail: horses, asses, camels, ox and sheep will be affected by a 'very great *deber'*. Thus it is clear from this verse that the 'hand of Yahweh' points to the דֶּבֶר כָּבֵד מְאֹד. The adjective כָּבֵד and the particle מְאֹד emphasise the extent and gravity of the affliction. The usual translation of *deber* in this verse is similar to other occurrences of the term, 'plague'[292] or 'pestilence',[293] but some also suggest 'murrain'[294] or some kind of 'disease'.[295] It is clear from the context that some kind of infectious disease is meant by the word that was expected to strike a great blow on the Egyptians. However, as Clements rightly observed, it is impossible to determine the exact nature of the disease (p. 53). This is not the point or else the fact that it only affected the animals of the Egyptians would not make sense (vv. 6-7).

Deber occurs without any articles or prepositions, and stands in parallel with 'the hand of Yahweh', thus it is possible to regard it personified. In fact the passage makes more sense if we do. That we are told in vv. 6-7 that not one single animal of the Israelites died but that all the livestock of the Egyptians did makes it clear that *deber* was controlled by Yahweh. A disease might not be able to distinguish between Egyptian and Israelite animals, but the agent of Yahweh who carries out his exact orders would.

The next occurrence of *deber* is in v. 13, after the sixth mighty act of Yahweh has failed to change Pharaoh's resolve. This time there is a longer and more intense warning that has been variously explained by scholars.[296] The announcement of Yahweh sending the full force of his 'plagues' onto the Egyptians (v. 14) is pointing to the gradual intensification in severity of the acts of Yahweh that will ultimately culminate in the death of the firstborn.[297] Vv. 14 and 15 are closely linked, they

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[292] NIV; NJB; RSV; Propp, p. 289.

[293] NAU; Vg; Cassuto, p. 111; Clements, *Exodus*, p. 53; Meyers, *Exodus*, p. 78.

[294] JPS.

[295] Durham translates 'epidemic' (p. 116).

[296] For example according to Childs it is 'an explanation of the number of the mighty acts'; or 'an apology for all of the plagues' for Hyatt (cf. Durham, p. 127).

[297] Cassuto, pp. 115-116; Fretheim, p. 124; Meyers, *Exodus*, p. 85.

contain parallel elements as well as v. 15 being explanatory of v. 14.[298] Both verses begin with כִּי + temporal reference followed by Yahweh's statement of performing his mighty act. In both verses this is expressed by the verb שׁלח[299] + אֶת־ and the object. In v. 14 Yahweh states 'For at this time I am sending all my blows'[300] (כִּי בַּפַּעַם הַזֹּאת אֲנִי שֹׁלֵחַ אֶת־כָּל־מַגֵּפֹתַי), and in v. 15, 'For now I will send my hand' (כִּי עַתָּה שָׁלַחְתִּי אֶת־יָדִי). In v. 14 the blows are against 'your heart and your servants and your people', in v. 15 Yahweh smites 'you and your people'. The parallelism between the two verses is clear. Thus אֶת־כָּל־מַגֵּפֹתַי and אֶת־יָדִי are pointing to the same thing, *deber*. Yahweh shall smite Pharaoh and his people through *deber*, and they shall be cut off from all the earth, i.e. the destruction will be complete. Thus yet again we have *deber* referred to as 'the Hand of Yahweh', an agent of Yahweh carrying out his punishment and bringing about complete destruction. It is also referred to as one of the מַגֵּפֹתַי through whom Yahweh intends to teach Pharaoh a lesson,'so that you shall know that there is no one like me in all the earth' (v. 14).The personification is clear in this passage and the obvious link with 5:3 implies that *deber* is best understood there as here, a personification of disease. 'My hand' is a designation of *deber*, as one of Yahweh's most important agents of punishment.

5.5.3 Leviticus 26:25

v. 25

וְהֵבֵאתִי עֲלֵיכֶם חֶרֶב נֹקֶמֶת נְקַם־בְּרִית וְנֶאֱסַפְתֶּם אֶל־עָרֵיכֶם וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי דֶבֶר בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְנִתַּתֶּם בְּיַד־אוֹיֵב׃

[298] Most translations (NIV; RSV; CJB, NAU; NJB) as well as scholars (Cassuto, p. 116; Clements, *Exodus*, p. 55; Fretheim, p. 124; Propp, p. 333; Meyers, *Exodus*, p. 74), take v. 15 in a conditional sense. However, Durham is correct in pointing out that there is nothing in the text to support conditionality. He writes: 'None of the usual terms or circumlocutions of conditional expression are present (cf. GKC…), nor is there anything in the wider context of the account to suggest a conditional sense.' Yahweh states what he is doing and what he intends to do. (p. 127).

[299] In v. 14 the Participle form (שֹׁלֵחַ) is used and in v. 15 the Perfect (שָׁלַחְתִּי).

[300] The plural only occurs here and the word מגפתה is usually translated as 'plague'. However, it also has the sense of affliction from Yahweh; people smitten by Yahweh cf. 1 Sam 4:17; 6:4; 2 Sam 17:9; Ps 106:29. So also Durham, p. 123.

Chapter 26 is the penultimate chapter of the Book of Leviticus. It contains the blessings and curses that Yahweh deals out to those who obey or disobey him. Obedience means following Yahweh's commands and laws (v. 3), disobedience is going against these. V. 1 pinpoints what lies at the heart of the question of obedience/disobedience, namely idol worship. It warns against it. The importance and graveness of this issue is expressed in negative statements which contain a threefold prohibition: 1) 'you shall not make (לֹא־תַעֲשׂוּ) for yourselves idols', אֱלִילִם, lit. 'worthless things' and 'an image', וּפֶסֶל; 2) 'you shall not set up a pillar', וּמַצֵּבָה לֹא־תָקִימוּ; 3) 'you shall not place a carved stone, וְאֶבֶן מַשְׂכִּית לֹא תִתְּנוּ, in your land to bow down before it', לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת עָלֶיהָ. These statements recall the prohibition of making of idols (the same words are used) in Exod 20:4, לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה־לְךָ פֶּסֶל. Clearly the intent of the verse is to reinforce the forbidding of the worship of foreign deities and the use of pagan cult objects.[301]

Then two commands follow in v. 2 as positive statements, 'my Sabbaths you shall keep', אֶת־שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמֹרוּ , and 'my sanctuary you shall fear', וּמִקְדָּשִׁי תִּירָאוּ. This too, is a reminder of the Decalogue in Exod 20:8. These are the keystones of the Covenant (Exod 19-24).[302]

Vv. 3- 13 contain the blessings for those who are loyal to Yahweh and obey his commands and follow the laws. There is a promise of peace and prosperity, and also of military success.[303]

The curses match the blessings, the result of disobedience is the reversal of the blessings. There are five sets of blessings and in response five sets of curses (vv. 16-17, 18-20, 21-22, 23-26, and 27-39) for covenant breakers. [304] This section is larger than the previous one containing the blessings and this suggests that the emphasis is on the consequences of disobedience. Yahweh blesses his people but even more importantly, he punishes them for disloyalty. The severity of the punishments

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[301] Levine, *Leviticus*, p. 181; Porter, *Leviticus*, p. 207; Gerstenberger, pp. 403-404.

[302] Hartley, *Leviticus*, p. 449; J. Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), p. 317; Bellinger, p. 156.

[303] On the blessings see commentaries, Porter, *Leviticus*, pp. 207-211; Levine, *Leviticus*, pp.182-185; Hartley, *Leviticus*, pp. 451-464; Gerstenberger, pp. 406-409; Bellinger, pp. 156-157; Milgrom, *Leviticus*, pp. 317-319.

[304] Gerstenberger, p. 410; Bellinger, p. 157; Milgrom, *Leviticus*, p. 319.

increases with each set.[305] The first set of punishments (vv. 16-17) is terror and disease.[306] The second set (vv. 18-20) shows an increase in intensity, Yahweh will discipline (יסף) the people for their sin (חטאת) seven times. This turns out to be pride (גְּאוֹן עֻזְּכֶם, lit. 'powerful pride') in their land. Their pride leads the Israelites away from Yahweh for they rely on the land for wealth and well-being instead of trusting Yahweh.[307] The punishment matches the sin, the land will not be able to sustain them, Yahweh shall turn the heavens like iron and the earth like bronze.[308] The metaphor refers to a drought and the famine following it.[309]

The third set of curses (vv. 21-22) counters the second half of v. 6 (I will eliminate savage beasts) and v. 9 (I shall make you fruitful) respectively with the punishment of sending wild animals who will make the people childless, וְהִשְׁלַחְתִּי בָכֶם אֶת־חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה וְשִׁכְּלָה אֶתְכֶם. Again there is an increase in intensity: v. 21 states that the punishments will be multiplied seven times over.[310]

The fourth set of curses is included in vv. 23-26. If Israel continues to be hostile to Yahweh and will not learn from his discipline (לֹא תִוָּסְרוּ לִי וַהֲלַכְתֶּם עִמִּי קֶרִי) then Yahweh himself will be hostile to them (walk contrary to them, וְהָלַכְתִּי אַף־אֲנִי עִמָּכֶם בְּקֶרִי). The consequences will be an increased (seven times) punishment, this time consisting of the sword, *deber*, and, although the word 'famine' is not present, the description in v. 26 clearly refers to that ('when I break off your supply of bread...', בְּשִׁבְרִי לָכֶם מַטֵּה־לָחֶם).[311]

V. 25 states explicitly that this punishment comes from the breaking of the covenant (referred to in vv. 1-2). Yahweh says: 'And I will bring on you the sword to avenge

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[305] Porter, *Leviticus*, p. 213; Bellinger, p. 157; Milgrom, *Leviticus,* p. 319;

[306] For detailed analyses see Hartley, *Leviticus*, pp. 464-465; Gerstenberger, pp. 412-414; also Milgrom, *Leviticus*, p. 319; Levine, *Leviticus*, p. 185; Bellinger, p. 157.

[307] Hartley, *Leviticus*, p. 465; Gerstenberger, p. 415. The theme of the people's pride is also found in Ezek 7:24; 24:21; 30:6, 18; 33:28.

[308] In Deut 28:23 the expression is used in reverse order, heavens will be like bronze and the earth like iron. See also Esarhaddon Treaty, ANET, pp.534-541.

[309] Hartley, *Leviticus,* p. 465; Gerstenberger, pp. 415-416; Milgrom, *Leviticus*, p. 320; Levine, *Leviticus*, p. 186.

[310] Hartley, *Leviticus*, p. 465; Levine, *Leviticus*, p. 186; Gerstenberger, pp. 416-417; Milgrom, *Leviticus*, p. 320.

[311] Bellinger, p. 158; Milgrom, *Leviticus*, p. 320; Gerstenberger, p. 418; Porter, *Leviticus*, p. 214.

the breaking of the covenant. When you withdraw into your cities, I will send *deber* among you, and you will be given into enemy hands.'

Deber, along with sword and implicitly famine, is clearly sent by Yahweh as punishment for the breaking of the covenant. *Deber* apears as a noun in the absolute state without the definite article or any prepositions, it is 'sent', שלח, by Yahweh. It is part of the covenant curses, and there is no indication in this passage of them being personified. However, if we take this passage together with its parallel in Deut 28 a different possibility emerges. We shall return to this in our examination of Deut 28.

The last set of curses, intensified yet again seven times, is the most horrid of all. Yahweh shall devastate the land so that the people will resort to cannibalism. Parents will eat the flesh of their own sons and daughters.[312] Finally, Yahweh shall turn his fury against the cause of all problems, the false places of worship (vv. 30-32). These verses illustrate vividly the contempt Yahweh feels towards the idols and the people who used them as well as the destruction resulting from his anger. Yahweh shall destroy (two Hiphil verbs are used, 'I shall destroy', וְהִשְׁמַדְתִּי, and 'I shall cut down', וְהִכְרַתִּי) everything, the high places, בָּמֹתֵיכֶם, the incense-altars, חַמָּנֵיכֶם, and the people. Their dead bodies will be heaped on top of the lifeless bodies of their idols. The use of the same word 'corpse', for both the people's and the idols' remains (פִּגְרֵי גִלּוּלֵיכֶם and פִּגְרֵיכֶם) is ironic and is meant to be insulting.[313] The words used to describe the devastation of the land, 'ruin', חָרְבָּה, 'desolate', שמם , are also used by the prophets in descriptions of the destruction left by war.[314] The curses are leading up to the last punishment, exile. This is the culmination of all.

5.5.4 Deuteronomy 28:21

v. 21
יַדְבֵּק יְהוָה בְּךָ אֶת־הַדָּבֶר עַד כַּלֹּתוֹ אֹתְךָ מֵעַל הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה בָא־שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ׃

[312] This curse is also found in Deut 28:53-57; Isa 49:26; Jer 19:9; Ezek 5:10, and Zech 11:9.

[313] Hartley, *Leviticus*, p. 467.

[314] E.g. Isa 5:17; 44:26; 49:19; Jer 7:34; 25:18; Ezek 5:14, etc.

This text, similarly to Leviticus 26, contains blessings and curses as the consequences of obedience or disobedience regarding the Covenant with Yahweh.[315] There are two main parts. The first, shorter passage describes the blessings that will be awarded for obedience to Yahweh's laws (vv. 1-14).The second part is a much longer text that describes in detail the consequences for disobedience (vv. 15-68).[316]

Christensen has arranged the list of curses in ten prosodic units made up of two five-part structural units, which apparently reflect the ten mighty acts of Yahweh in Exodus 7-11. According to this arrangement the emphases would be on vv. 23-26 (the centre of the first unit), destruction by famine and war, and in vv. 36-37, exile from the land.[317] McConville does not see any logical development in the list of curses, they seem to affect individuals or the people variously.[318] Christensen's arrangement seems a little forced; there is no reason why famine and war would be emphasised as opposed to the other curses. If anything, affliction by disease in various forms occurs the most often (vv. 22, 27, 28, 35). Tigay has observed a chiastic structure of vv. 20-44 which is only a little different from that of Christensen's but it highlights the emphasis of the chapter better. According to this vv. 30-32 are in the centre, which is the undoing of the blessings.[319] It has been noted that the language of the chapter is conditional (vv. 1, 15),[320] the blessings or the

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[315] For detailed discussion of this chapter see commentaries, e.g. P. C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), pp. 334-353; A. D. H. Mayes, *Deuteronomy*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), pp. 348-359; J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, Apollos OT Commentary 5 (Leicester: Apollos, InterVarsity Press, 1988), pp. 397-410; P. D. Miller, *Deuteronomy*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), pp. 193-198; J. H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), pp. 257-275; C. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody: Hendrickson Publ., 1998), pp. 280-283; D. L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10-34:12*, WBC 6B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2002), pp. 664- 703.

[316] Commentators (e.g. McConville, p. 402; Mayes, p. 351; Craigie, pp. 339-340; Christensen, p. 666; see note above) point out that the fact that curses form a much larger portion than the blessings was characteristic of second-millennium Hittite treaties (e.g. treaty between Suppiluliumas and Kurtiwaza, ANET, pp. 205-206). First millennium Assyrian treaties only contained curses, e.g. Esarhaddon's vassal treaties (ANET, pp. 534-541).

[317] Christensen, p. 681. C. Wright also sees the reference to the Exodus events. He argues that negative echoes of the Abrahamic blessing as well as the Exodus deliverance can be found in the curses. The Israelites will suffer the effects of Yahweh's acts and will be led (back) into captivity (p. 282).

[318] McConville, p. 403. To the contrary Miller sees the curses as 'clearly corporate and aimed at the people as a whole' (p. 197).

[319] Tigay, p. 491.

[320] Miller, p. 197; C. Wright, p. 282.

curses are conditional to obedience or disobedience to Yahweh. Loyalty results in countless blessings but disloyalty will undo it all. Therefore it is natural to regard the curses as the undoing of the blessings.

Similarly to Lev 26, the curses include disease, famine, war, and captivity. The introduction to the curses, v. 15 emphasises that all the calamities that are to be enlisted will fall upon on the people if they fail to follow Yahweh's commands and laws. Vv. 16-19 are the reverse of vv. 3-6, giving even more weight to the warning in v. 15. V. 20 states that Yahweh shall send curse, confusion and rebuke on everything that the people's hands touch. The alliteration present in the Hebrew for 'curse', הַמְּאֵרָה, 'confusion', הַמְּהוּמָה, and 'rebuke', הַמִּגְעֶרֶת, is reproduced in English by Tigay's 'curse, confusion and cumbrance' (p. 261). There is also a play on the word שׁלח, Yahweh sends (יְשַׁלַּח) the curses to destroy the people's undertakings (מִשְׁלַח).

Deber occurs in v. 21 among the curses Yahweh will strike the people with if they are disobedient. It is usually taken as one of the diseases that are enlisted in the following verse (v. 22) and translated as pestilence or plague.[321] However, it is more likely that *deber* refers to disease in general as NIV renders it quite liberally, 'The Lord will plague you with diseases…'. Christensen also follows this line of interpretation and sees *deber* as the disease which is responsible for the ones in v. 22. He writes (p. 684): 'The "pestilence" is a severe epidemic of some sort that produces the seven afflictions of the next verse (v. 22).' This interpretation would be consistent with the meaning of *deber* in its other occurrences, and thus the immediate listing of several diseases in v. 22 could be seen as an explanation/expansion of the announcement of *deber* in v. 21.

Looking at the language of the chapter carefully, another possibility presents itself. In v. 2 and v. 15 it is said that the blessings and curses respectively 'will come upon you' (בָּאוּ עָלֶיךָ), and 'overtake you' (וְהִשִּׂיגוּךָ). In v. 21 Yahweh shall make the *deber* cleave/cling, יַדְבֵּק יְהוָה בְּךָ , to the people. *Deber* has the object-marker and the definite article (not a proper noun) but the verb דבק 'cleave, cling, follow closely, join to', is also used figuratively of loyalty, affection[322], for persons being

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[321] NAU, JPS, RSV, Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, p. 341, Tigay, p. 262, translate 'pestilence'; NJB, CJB, McConville, p. 398, 'plague'.

[322] BDB, 179: 1692/2; HALOT, p. 209.

joined together in marriage (Gen 2: 24).[323] The curses in v. 22 'pursue' (וְרָדָפוּךָ) the people, in v. 45 also they 'come upon'(וּבָאוּ עָלֶיךָ), 'pursue and overtake' (וּרְדָפוּךָ וְהִשִּׂיגוּךָ) them. These verbs suggest that the blessings and the curses are personified forces. The verbs used with Yahweh as subject support this suggestion. Repeatedly he 'commands' them, יְצַו יְהוָה (v. 8) 'sends' them, יְשַׁלַּח יְהוָה (v. 20), in the sense of letting them loose.[324] Tigay argues against personifying the blessings and curses in Deuteronomy on the grounds that the book deliberately avoids any suggestion of the existence of supernatural forces independent from Yahweh. He writes:

> However, actual personification is absent in Deuteronomy, which avoids any suggestion of independent supernatural powers in addition to God, such as the Greek spirits of punishment, the Erinyes. Instead, the blessings and curses are merely reified and treated as impersonal forces under God's absolute control, and the verbs express the idea that at God's command the blessings will come to Israel with no struggle on its part and the curses will ensue despite any effort on its part. (p. 258)

However, Tigay's opposition is unfounded. Personifying these forces does not suggest in any way that the author is implying the existence of supernatural beings independent from Yahweh. To the contrary, in each case it is very clear that these forces, personified or not, come from Yahweh. He is in control. [325] Blessing or punishment come from Yahweh, sometimes carried out by his agents. The personification of abstract concepts, natural forces, only aids the audience's understanding of the message the author/poet/ prophet is trying to convey.

5.5.5 Numbers 14:12

v. 12
אַכֶּנּוּ בַדֶּבֶר וְאוֹרִשֶׁנּוּ וְאֶעֱשֶׂה אֹתְךָ לְגוֹי־גָּדוֹל וְעָצוּם מִמֶּנּוּ׃

This chapter follows on the events of the previous. After the spies sent out into Canaan return and report that the promised land, although 'flowing with milk and honey', is populated by powerful people who live in fortified strongholds, the

[323] LXX translates it with προσκολλησαι, προσκολλαομαι meaning 'be united (in marriage)'.

[324] Cf. Deut 32:24.

[325] Miller, p. 196.

Israelites panic (v. 1, the people cry out, וַתִּשָּׂא ... אֶת־קוֹלָם , and weep, וַיִּבְכּוּ) and rebel against Moses and Aaron (v. 2, וַיִּלֹּנוּ).[326] They complain, contemplating even to change their leaders (vv. 3-4). Yahweh then appears (v. 10); he is angry and wants to punish the people (vv. 11-12). This story has many parallels. In fact as G. Wenham shows, Numbers 11-21 is dominated by a series of complaint stories that follow the same pattern.[327] The people's protests in every case prompt punishment (fire in ch. 11; skin disease in ch. 12; plague in 17, snake bites in ch. 21) that only ceases when the people appeal to Moses and he intercedes with Yahweh. However, when the people's complaints are so serious as to be taken as rebellion against Yahweh, the punishment reflects this in its severity.[328] This is the case in the present narrative. The problem with the people's murmuring was not so much that they feared their present situation (i.e. the military might of the Canaanites) but that in so doing they did not trust Yahweh's promise. Their desire to have died in Egypt or in the wilderness (v. 3) shows not only a lack of appreciation of God's saving acts in the Exodus but rejection of his promise to give them the land of Canaan.[329] Further, in wanting to choose another leader for themselves (v. 4), they rejected Yahweh's chosen one, another sign of their rebellion.[330]

In response, Yahweh's judgement matches the people's act of rebellion. He appears ('the glory of Yahweh', כְּבוֹד יְהוָה) to all the Israelites, but he only adresses Moses, showing his rejection of the people who have rejected him (v. 4).[331] The second part

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[326] וַיִּבְכּוּ here is used in the sense of expressing the Israelites' frustration, but elsewhere it can express other kinds of weeping (e.g. joy in Gen 43:30; grief in 1 Sam 1:10; repentance in 2 Kgs 22:19, etc.). See P. Budd, *Numbers*, WBC 5 (Waco: Word Books, 1984), p.155. J. Milgrom, *Numbers*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1990) points out that the use of three verbs instead of the usual one (נתן) in expressing the people's crying out is intentional, in order to 'heighten the effect' (p. 107). Similarly, there are three words for 'people' in vv. 1-2, כָּל־הָעֵדָה, הָעָם, and כֹּל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. This is to emphasise the fact that the whole people were involved in the rebellion. See T. R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 245.

[327] *Numbers*, OT Guides (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 51-52. A similar pattern emerges in chs 11, 12, 17 (English 16) and 21.

[328] Wenham, *Numbers*, p. 51; B. Maarsingh, *Numbers: A Practical Commentary*, Text and Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), pp.47-48.

[329] Bellinger, p. 230; Ashley, p. 246.

[330] Milgrom, *Numbers*, p. 108; Ashley, p. 246. The theme of 'returning to Egypt' is a symbol of Israel's rejection of Yahweh (Budd, p. 155); in Ashley's words it is: 'a synonym for rebellion against God' (p. 247). For example: Deut 17:16; Hos 7:11; Isa 30:1-7; 31:1-3; Jer 2:18, 36; Ezek 17:15.

[331] According to Ashley the point of Yahweh's question is that he is no longer going to tolerate the people's rebellion (p. 254).

of his question in v. 10 refers back to his mighty acts in Egypt. The Israelites seem to have forgotten about all that Yahweh did in order to save them, so now he turns his agents of punishment on the people. Yahweh smote Pharaoh and his people (and livestock) with *deber* in Exod 9: 13 and 15, and now he intends to smite the Israelites with the same punishment, אַכֶּנּוּ בַדֶּבֶר.[332] The connection with the Exod 9 passages is clear, thus the definite article with *deber* ('with/through the *deber*') points to the specific occurrences there. A specific meaning for *deber* is not important here. The point is that the same agent of punishment that was sent by Yahweh to aid the Israelites' escape from Egypt is now turned on them by Yahweh, because they would rather go back to Egypt, from where Yahweh had rescued them.[333]

Moses' interceding saves the people, although they do not escape punishment. Even if they do not die a sudden death, Yahweh disinherits[334] them, they themselves (including Moses) will not enter the promised land (vv. 29-30).

5.5.6 2 Samuel 24:13-15 // 1 Chronicles 21:12-14

2 Sam 24:13

וַיָּבֹא־גָד אֶל־דָּוִד וַיַּגֶּד־לוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הֲתָבוֹא לְךָ שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים רָעָב בְּאַרְצֶךָ
אִם־שְׁלֹשָׁה חֳדָשִׁים נָסְךָ לִפְנֵי־צָרֶיךָ וְהוּא רֹדְפֶךָ וְאִם־הֱיוֹת שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים דֶּבֶר
בְּאַרְצֶךָ עַתָּה דַּע וּרְאֵה מָה־אָשִׁיב שֹׁלְחִי דָּבָר׃

v. 15

וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה דֶּבֶר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל מֵהַבֹּקֶר וְעַד־עֵת מוֹעֵד וַיָּמָת מִן־הָעָם מִדָּן וְעַד־בְּאֵר
שֶׁבַע שִׁבְעִים אֶלֶף אִישׁ׃

1 Chron 21:12

אִם־שָׁלוֹשׁ שָׁנִים רָעָב וְאִם־שְׁלֹשָׁה חֳדָשִׁים נִסְפֶּה מִפְּנֵי־צָרֶיךָ וְחֶרֶב אוֹיְבֶךָ
לְמַשָּׂגֶת וְאִם־שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים חֶרֶב יְהוָה וְדֶבֶר בָּאָרֶץ וּמַלְאַךְ יְהוָה מַשְׁחִית
בְּכָל־גְּבוּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַתָּה רְאֵה מָה־אָשִׁיב אֶת־שֹׁלְחִי דָּבָר׃

v. 14

וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה דֶּבֶר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּפֹּל מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל שִׁבְעִים אֶלֶף אִישׁ׃

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[332] Ashley, p. 255; Bellinger, p. 230.

[333] LXX and Targ translate *deber* by 'death', the modern Bible versions and commentaries give the usual 'plague' (NIV; Maarsingh, p. 48; Bellinger, p. 230) or 'pestilence' (JPS; NAU; NJB; RSV; Budd, p. 148; Ashley, p. 251).

[334] Ashley argues that the word וְאוֹרְשֶׁנּוּ may be taken in the sense of destruction (p. 255). However, it is not necessary to argue for complete destruction here, which is usually connected with *deber*, as *deber* does not actually afflict the people thanks to Moses' intercession.

There are two occurrences of *deber* in 2 Samuel 24, vv. 13 and 15, and two in its parallel, 1 Chron 21, vv. 12 and 14. This is the story of David's census of Israel.[335] It is an intriguing story because the census was wrong in Yahweh's eyes (and David/the people had to be punished for carrying it out), yet it was Yahweh who told/incited (וַיָּסֶת) David to carry out the census in the first place. The reason given is that Yahweh's anger was aroused against Israel, though we are not told what caused his anger.[336] In 1 Chron 21:1 it was *Satan* who inspired David to take the census.[337] In any case David was an instrument of Yahweh's punishment; because of what he did the people were punished. Ultimately it was not David's fault, he was incited to carry out a census.[338] Vv. 1-9 (// 1 Chron 21: 1-7) describe the census.[339] In v. 10 David suddenly realises that he has committed a great sin against Yahweh (חָטָאתִי מְאֹד),[340] and asks for forgiveness.[341] In v. 12 David is presented with three

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[335] Chapter 24 is linked with chapter 21 which is another story of divine anger, its consequences (three years of famine) and appeasement. See S. R. Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel* (Oxford: Calrendon Press, 2nd rev. & enlarged edn, 1913), pp. 372-380, esp. p. 372; P. K. McCarter, Jr., *2 Samuel*, AB (Garden City: Doubleday, 1984), pp. 502-518, esp. p. 509; A. A. Anderson, *2 Samuel*, WBC 11 (Dallas: Word Books), pp. 279-287, esp. p. 281; H. W. Hertzberg, *1 and 2 Samuel: A Commentary*, OT Library, transl. by J. S. Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1964), pp. 408-416, esp. p. 410; W. Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), pp. 350-357, esp. p. 350.

[336] Hertzberg p. 411 and McCarter, *2 Samuel*, p. 508 suggest that it was 'anger for an unknown reason' (both quoting Caspari); Anderson, *2 Samuel*, thinks that some unspecified sin of Israel (cf. 1 Sam 2:25; 2 Sam 16:10-12) was the cause of Yahweh's wrath (p. 284); and Brueggemann, *Samuel*, asserts that whatever the reason, it is this 'unexplained, inexplicable anger of Yahweh that initiates the story' (p. 351).

[337] Hertzberg argues that this was a 'theological vindication of God' which by no means meant a 'theological simplification' (p. 411). On this issue see also commentaries on 1 Chronicles, e.g. J. M. Myers, *1 Chronicles*, AB (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), pp. 143-150, esp. p. 147; R. Braun, *1 Chronicles*, WBC 14 (Waco: Word Books, 1986), pp. 212-227; S. Japhet, pp. 374-375. She argues contrary to the usual scholarly opinion (according to which 1 Chronicles 21 represents the latest stage of development in the figure of Satan as the embodiment of evil), that both theological and linguistic considerations point to the word *satan* serving as a common noun in 1 Chron 21:1 similarly to its other occurrences in 1 Kgs 11:14, 23, 25, or Ps 109:6. It 'refers to "an adversary", who acts against Israel by inciting the king to take the wrong action.' From a literary point of view he is the antithesis of Joab (p. 375). G. N. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10-29*, SB (New York: Doubleday, 2004), pp. 742-764, argues similarly and translates the word as 'an adversary' (p. 742). For *satan* in the Hebrew Bible see P. Day.

[338] Contra J. Mauchline, ed., *1 and 2 Samuel*, New Century Bible (London: Oliphants, 1971), pp. 322-327, who thinks that (apart from v. 1) vv. 2-9 clearly present the census as having been David's idea (p. 322).

[339] Brueggemann, *Samuel*, sees the narrative as a 'lawsuit'; thus vv. 2-9 state the sin and then vv. 10-17 the punishment (p. 351).

[340] McCarter, *2 Samuel*, points out that this sudden change is not explained here. However, the parallel account in 1 Chron 21: 6-7 explains it in a way (p. 510). In Chronicles Joab is presented as 'undermining' David's order by not counting Benjamin and Levi because he did not agree with the

alternative punishments, he is to choose one of them. All three are included in the curses in Deut 28:15-25 and Lev 26:14-46. In this case it was seven years of famine, רָעָב, or three months of killings by pursuing army, נֶסְךָ לִפְנֵי־צָרֶיךָ (sword), or three days of *deber*/disease, דֶּבֶר (v.13). The shortening of the duration of the punishment suggests their intensification,[342] thus *deber* would appear as the most terrible of all.[343] Hertzberg argues that David does not actually choose the form of punishment, he 'merely decides against the second punishment and leaves it to the Lord to decide between the first or the third.'[344] However, we can argue that at least for the reader it is clear what choice he made. David expresses his wish not to fall into the hands of men, וּבְיַד־אָדָם אַל־אֶפֹּלָה, thus rejecting the second form of punishment. But at the same time he wants to be punished by the hand of Yahweh, נִפְּלָה־נָּא בְיַד־יְהוָה. In Exod 9:15 'the hand of Yahweh' was used to point to the sending of *deber* , thus v. 14 here clearly anticipates its coming in the next verse. Whether David consciously chose this form of punishment or not, for the reader it does not come as a surprise. The parallel account in 1 Chronicles 21: 12 supports our argument. There the choices offered to David are: three years of famine, three months suffering the destruction of the sword of the enemy, or three days of the 'sword of Yahweh', i.e. *deber*. It seems that here *deber* is identified as the 'sword of Yahweh', and this becomes in v. 16 the angel of Yahweh with the drawn sword. The sword of the enemy and the sword of Yahweh stand in antithesis.[345] David wants to avoid the sword of the enemy and chooses instead that of Yahweh.

We are told in v. 15 that Yahweh unleashed *deber* on Israel, וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה דֶּבֶר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, and that it killed seventy thousand of the people. What is interesting is that in the following verse (v. 16) we read that the angel stretches his hand towards Jerusalem to destroy it, וַיִּשְׁלַח יָדוֹ הַמַּלְאָךְ יְרוּשָׁלַם לְשַׁחֲתָהּ, and in v. 17 David

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order in the first place. Also, it is only after Yahweh declares the census evil, that David realises his sin (Knoppers, p. 753).

[341] McCarter, *2 Samuel*, points out that the meaning of the verb הַעֲבֶר־נָא is 'transfer', not simply 'take away'. Thus David is asking for his sins to be transferred to someone or something else (p. 511). Anderson, *2 Samuel*, agrees (p. 285).

[342] Hertzberg, p. 413.

[343] So Japhet, p. 382.

[344] P. 413. Also Anderson, *2 Samuel*, p. 285.

[345] Japhet, p. 381.

saw the angel who was smiting the people, בִּרְאֹתוֹ אֶת־הַמַּלְאָךְ הַמַּכֶּה בָעָם. Therefore we suggest that here *deber* is personified as an angel of Yahweh. Angels as instruments of Yahweh's punishment are found elsewhere in the HB. [346] *Deber* in this passage is clearly envisaged as an angel inflicting some kind of punishment; plague is possible but not certain.[347] The word הַמַּגֵּפָה is used in vv. 21 and 25 referring to what the people were suffering from, and it can mean 'plague' as well as 'strike', 'blow' in general.[348]

Deber as the angel of Yahweh is depicted even more dramatically in 1 Chronicles 21:12-16. In v. 12 it is identified as the 'sword of Yahweh' and as 'the angel of Yahweh' destroying all parts of Israel, חֶרֶב יְהוָה וְדֶבֶר בָּאָרֶץ וּמַלְאַךְ יְהוָה מַשְׁחִית בְּכָל־גְּבוּל יִשְׂרָאֵל . When David makes his choice, Yahweh sends (וַיִּתֵּן) *deber* on Israel in v. 14, and in v. 15 he 'sends' an angel to destroy Jerusalem (וַיִּשְׁלַח הָאֱלֹהִים מַלְאָךְ לִירוּשָׁלַם לְהַשְׁחִיתָהּ). The angel is called the destroyer, מַלְאָךְ הַמַּשְׁחִית (v. 15). In v. 16 David saw this angel of Yahweh standing between heaven and earth with drawn sword in his hand, extending it over Jerusalem.

It is clear that Yahweh sent and controlled the angel. In 2 Sam 24: 16 and 1 Chron 21: 15 Yahweh himself orders the angel to withdraw his hands (הֶרֶף יָדֶךָ), even before David prays for the people to be spared; and in 1 Chron 21:27 Yahweh speaks to the angel, and he puts his sword away.[349] Yahweh sends the punishment and it is he who stops it when he determines (cf. 2 Sam 24:15a).[350]

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[346] Angels as instruments of Yahweh's punishment also occur in Exod 33:2; 2 Kgs 19:35; Pss 35:5-6; 78:49.

[347] Mauchline, p. 325; McCarter, *2 Samuel*, p. 511. He points out that some interpreters see a non-Israelite god in the figure of the angel, e.g. *Reshef*. There is no basis for such a suggestion.

[348] See n. 303 in 5.5.2; HALOT, p. 546.

[349] Most Bible versions understand וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה as 'Yahweh commanded/ordered' (CJB; JPS; NAU; NJB and RSV). Also Japhet, p. 371.

[350] 'So Yahweh sent *deber* in Israel from morning until the appointed time…'; וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה דֶּבֶר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל מֵהַבֹּקֶר וְעַד־עֵת מוֹעֵד (2 Sam 24:15).

5.5.7 1 Kings 8:37 and 2 Chronicles 6:28

1 Kgs 8:37
רָעָב כִּי־יִהְיֶה בָאָרֶץ דֶּבֶר כִּי־יִהְיֶה שִׁדָּפוֹן יֵרָקוֹן אַרְבֶּה חָסִיל כִּי יִהְיֶה כִּי
יָצַר־לוֹ אֹיְבוֹ בְּאֶרֶץ שְׁעָרָיו כָּל־נֶגַע כָּל־מַחֲלָה׃

2 Chron 6:28
רָעָב כִּי־יִהְיֶה בָאָרֶץ דֶּבֶר כִּי־יִהְיֶה שִׁדָּפוֹן וְיֵרָקוֹן אַרְבֶּה וְחָסִיל כִּי יִהְיֶה כִּי
יָצַר־לוֹ אוֹיְבָיו בְּאֶרֶץ שְׁעָרָיו כָּל־נֶגַע וְכָל־מַחֲלָה׃

1 Kings 8 describes King Solomon offering praises to Yahweh at the dedication of the completed Temple.[351] The structure of the chapter follows a typical pattern in accordance with similar Mesopotamian ceremonies.[352] It falls into three major parts: vv. 1-13 describe the inauguration of the Temple by the bringing in of the Ark and its placing into the Holy of Holies; vv. 14-61 contain the king's blessing of the assembled people and his prayers to Yahweh; and vv. 62-66 end with celebration. The first and third sections provide the narrative framework for the middle section which contains a complex speech of Solomon.[353] Cogan remarks that Solomon's prayer is 'crafted for maximum effect on the listener', and that it is intended both for Yahweh and for the assembled people (p. 291).

Several themes emerge from the prayer: the promise to David, the concern with the continuity of the dynasty, the centrality of the Temple, exodus and covenant.[354]

Solomon starts with a hymn of praise (vv. 14-21) in which he thanks Yahweh for fulfilling the promise to David (cf. 2 Sam 7). Then he addresses a personal petition to Yahweh asking him to keep the promise regarding the continuation of the dynasty (v. 23-26). Vv. 27-30 present a solution to the problem of Yahweh being transcendent and dwelling on earth in the Temple at the same time. The Temple will be the focal

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[351] For this chapter see commentaries, e.g. DeVries, *1 Kings*, pp. 113-128; Walsh, pp. 108-119; M. J. Mulder, *1 Kings 1-11*, Historical Commentary on the OT (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), I, pp. 375-459; Cogan, pp. 276-293; M. A. Sweeney, *1 & 2 Kings*, OT Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), pp. 125- 137.

[352] Cogan, p. 291; Sweeney, *1 & 2 Kings*, p. 133.

[353] The commentaries differ slightly on the division of the chapter. See n. 351 above for reference.

[354] Scholars identify the 'central' theme variously. For example De Vries, *1 Kings*, argues that Solomon's concern was Yahweh's faithfulness towards the Davidic dynasty (p. 125). Similarly Sweeney, *1 & 2 Kings*, p. 133. Walsh also identifies this theme as the major concern of vv. 14-21 with a second important theme; the Temple is a 'house for the name' of Yahweh (pp. 112-113). For Cogan the central theme is Yahweh's transcendence and his dwelling on earth, i.e. the Temple (p. 291); and for Mulder there are several themes (p. 403).

point toward which the attention of Yahweh and the prayer of the people are directed.[355]

The core of the prayer consists of a series of seven petitions, describing hypothetical situations in which people would turn to Yahweh in/through the Temple.[356] The petitions follow a common pattern. The petitioners (Israelite/ foreign individual or the people) are in need; turn to Yahweh in prayer in the Temple or turn toward the Temple; Yahweh hears the prayer and responds.[357]

The first petition in vv. 31-32 presents a case when two people are in disagreement; have to swear an oath but it is unclear who is right. It appeals to Yahweh to make the truth known.

The second (vv. 33-34), third (vv. 35-36) and fourth (vv. 37-40) petitions presuppose that Israel had sinned in some way against Yahweh and had been punished by the various known forms of punishment (cf. Deut 28 and Lev 26). Vv. 33-34 talk of the punishment in the form of defeat by enemy (בְּהִנָּגֵף ... לִפְנֵי אוֹיֵב); in vv. 35-36 the punishment comes by drought (בְּהֵעָצֵר שָׁמַיִם וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה מָטָר) and vv. 37-40 extend the punishment to all kinds of calamity: famine (רָעָב); *deber* (דֶּבֶר); blight (שִׁדָּפוֹן) or mildew (יֵרָקוֹן), locusts (אַרְבֶּה) or grasshopper (חָסִיל);[358] and every kind of disaster and disease (כָּל־נֶגַע כָּל־מַחֲלָה).[359]

Nothing specific emerges about *deber* from this passage; what is clear is that it is a form of punishment from Yahweh for the Israelites' sin. However, as most of the situations, i.e. the punishments referred to above, link this passage with

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[355] Cogan, p. 292.

[356] According to DeVries, *1 Kings*, there are only five original situations described in the prayer (vv. 31-32; 33-34; 35-36; 37-40; 41-43); the other two are late additions, vv. 44-45 being a repetition of vv.33-34 and vv. 46-53 relating to an exilic background (p.126).

[357] Walsh, p. 114; Mulder, p. 403.

[358] With NAU and NIV. RSV, JPS and NJB have 'caterpillar'. On this word see especially Mulder, pp. 431-432.

[359] DeVries, *1 Kings*, p.126; Walsh, p. 114; Cogan, p. 292; Sweeney, *1 & 2 Kings*, pp. 134-135. For detailed discussion of each verse see Mulder, pp. 419-435.

Deuteronomy 28:15-68 as well as with Leviticus 26:16-39,[360] we can argue that the *deber* referred to in v. 37 is the same as in Deut 28:21 and Lev 26:25.[361]

The fifth petition, vv. 41-43, envisages a prayer from foreign worshippers of Yahweh. DeVries refers to it as 'the most marvellously universalistic passage in the Old Testament' as every foreigner will be heard by Yahweh.[362]

The sixth petition, vv. 44-45 is a prayer for victory before war, and the seventh, vv. 46-51 is a prayer by repentant exiles.

Solomon's prayer of dedication of the Temple has a parallel passage in 2 Chronicles 6:12-42.[363] *Deber* occurs in 2 Chron 6:28 which is (almost) the exact copy of 1 Kgs 8:37 therefore the passage is not discussed separately.[364]

5.5.8 2 Chronicles 7:13

v. 13
הֵן אֶעְצֹר הַשָּׁמַיִם וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה מָטָר וְהֵן־אֲצַוֶּה עַל־הָאֶבְהֹל לֶאֱכוֹל הָאָרֶץ וְאִם־אֲשַׁלַּח דֶּבֶר בְּעַמִּי׃

2 Chronicles 7:12-22 thematically links to the texts discussed above (1 Kgs 8:14-61 and 2 Chron 6:12-42). It is Yahweh's answer to Solomon's prayer. It parallels 1 Kings 9:1-9 but it is a longer text. Vv. 12, 15-16 // 1 Kgs 9:3; vv. 17-22 // 1 Kgs 9:4-9. Vv. 13 and 14 do not appear in the 1 Kgs 9 text.[365] These two verses are a

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[360] Cogan points to the following parallels: v. 33 // Deut 28: 25; v. 35 // Deut 28: 23-24; v. 37 // Deut 28: 21, 22, 27, 35, 38, 39, 42, 59-61; and v. 46 // Deut 28: 36-37, 64-68 (p. 292). See also Sweeney, *1 & 2 Kings*, p. 135. Mulder also links the passage with Amos 4 (p. 431).

[361] Both in 1 Kgs 8:37 and Lev 26:25 *deber* occurs as a noun without articles or prepositions.

[362] *1 Kings*, p. 126.

[363] On this passage see commentaries, e.g. Myers, *2 Chronicles*, pp. 31-38; Dillard, pp. 44-53; S. Japhet, pp. 596-605 (esp. pp. 596-597); Thompson, *1, 2 Chronicles*, pp. 227-231.

[364] Compare 1 Kgs 8:37:

רָעָב כִּי־יִהְיֶה בָאָרֶץ דֶּבֶר כִּי־יִהְיֶה שִׁדָּפוֹן יֵרָקוֹן אַרְבֶּה חָסִיל כִּי יִהְיֶה כִּי יָצַר־לוֹ אֹיְבוֹ בְּאֶרֶץ שְׁעָרָיו כָּל־נֶגַע כָּל־מַחֲלָה׃

and 2 Chron 6: 28:

רָעָב כִּי־יִהְיֶה בָאָרֶץ דֶּבֶר כִּי־יִהְיֶה שִׁדָּפוֹן וְיֵרָקוֹן אַרְבֶּה וְחָסִיל כִּי יִהְיֶה כִּי יָצַר־לוֹ אוֹיְבָיו בְּאֶרֶץ שְׁעָרָיו כָּל־נֶגַע וְכָל־מַחֲלָה׃

[365] Dillard, pp. 55-59; Japhet, pp. 607-609.

summary of Solomon's third and fourth petitions, lack of rain (1 Kgs 8:35-36 // 2 Cron 6:26-27) and affliction by the locusts (חָנָב)[366] and *deber* (1 Kgs 8: 37 // 2 Chron 6:28).[367] From Yahweh's reply (vv. 17-22) the reason for punishment becomes clear: idolatry (this was missing from Solomon's prayer). What was expected of David is required of Solomon too, that is to obey Yahweh's commands and follow his laws. Turning away from him and worshipping other gods means disobedience and breaking of the covenant that brings down Yahweh's wrath and results in severe punishment (as detailed in Deut 28 and Lev 26). God's direct address to Solomon turns toward the people in vv. 19-22. Everything said applies to all of Israel.[368]

5.5.9 2 Chronicles 20:9

v. 9
אִם־תָּבוֹא עָלֵינוּ רָעָה חֶרֶב שְׁפוֹט וְדֶבֶר וְרָעָב נַעַמְדָה לִפְנֵי הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה וּלְפָנֶיךָ כִּי שִׁמְךָ בַּבַּיִת הַזֶּה וְנִזְעַק אֵלֶיךָ מִצָּרָתֵנוּ וְתִשְׁמַע וְתוֹשִׁיעַ׃

Solomon's prayer appears in yet another version and context. Jehoshaphat quotes the prayer of temple-dedication, when Israel is threatened by a vast army approaching from Edom (vv. 1-2). Jehoshaphat panics. Initially he does not take action, his apparent resignation is expressed in v. 12, 'We do not know what to do.'[369] However, he is not completely inactive, he orders a fast throughout the land and turns to Yahweh for help. Jehoshaphat's prayer is an 'emotionally forceful rhetoric'. Its tone is persuasive while trying to convince Yahweh of the necessity of his intervention.[370] His appealing to Solomon's prayer is perhaps because Yahweh had promised to listen to and answer it.[371] He does not quote the prayer in full but only refers to three

[366] A different word is used here for locust than in the parallel passages.

[367] Japhet, p. 615.

[368] Dillard, p. 59; Thompson, *1, 2 Chronicles*, p. 236.

[369] Japhet, p. 787.

[370] Japhet, p. 788. Dillard characterises the prayer as a 'national lament' (p. 156).

[371] Dillard, p. 157.

of 'the evils' (רָעָה) that come against (תָּבוֹא עָלֵינוּ) the people, sword, *deber* and famine, חֶרֶב שְׁפוֹט וְדֶבֶר וְרָעָב.[372]

Sword, famine and *deber* all appear as nouns in the absolute state without definite article or prepositions. They are collectively called 'evils', and it is said that they 'come against' the people, thus paralleling the great army that is also 'coming against you' (בָּא עָלֶיךָ). This is the same expression as used of the blessings and curses 'coming against you' in Deut 28:1 and 15. In light of our argument on Deut 28:15-68, these punitive forces can be seen as personified.

5.5.10 Psalm 78

vv. 49-50

יְשַׁלַּח־בָּם חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ עֶבְרָה וְזַעַם וְצָרָה מִשְׁלַחַת מַלְאֲכֵי רָעִים׃
יְפַלֵּס נָתִיב לְאַפּוֹ לֹא־חָשַׂךְ מִמָּוֶת נַפְשָׁם וְחַיָּתָם לַדֶּבֶר הִסְגִּיר׃

A long psalm of teaching (תּוֹרָה), 78 (Hebrew) lines, 72 verses, it recounts Israel's history, focusing on Israel's deliverance from Egypt and the wandering in the desert. In spite of all Yahweh's miracles, all the great things he had done for the Israelites, they doubted him, deliberately challenged him and turned away from him again and again. They did not remember how God saved them from the oppressor, the Pharaoh of Egypt, forgot the signs and miracles God had given them in Egypt and in the desert.

Some (e.g. BDB) take the occurrence of דֶּבֶר in this psalm to be a reference to the fifth 'plague' in Exod 9:3, therefore to be understood as a 'plague' of the cattle, a murrain. This is true to the extent that we have here a reference to the *deber* of Exodus. However, in our discussion of Exod 9:3 and 15 we have argued that *Deber* can be regarded as personified, and that it appeared in parallel with the Hand of Yahweh. Looking at Ps 78:40-51 carefully we shall see that this interpretation is supported.

In v. 40 the poet goes back to the beginning of his story again (almost as a repetition of vv. 12-16) and recounts in more (but not exact) details the mighty acts of Yahweh in Egypt. Vv.44-48 recount the turning of the water to blood, sending of the

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[372] Japhet asserts that שְׁפוֹט could be taken as a fourth calamity (so RSV) in the light of Ezek 14:21 (p. 791). However, that is unnecessary; as she rightly notes 'the distribution of the conjunctive *waw*' supports the reading 'sword of judgement'.

horseflies, frogs, caterpillars, locusts, hail and frost (which killed the cattle [373]), culminating in v. 51 in the death of the first-born.[374] Vv. 49-50 seems to be a recapitulation of the previous verses, at the same time leading to the final and most terrible act.

The poet uses personification to make his illustration more striking. We are made to feel the heat of Yahweh's burning anger (חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ, v. 49) and see the destroying angels (מַלְאֲכֵי רָעִים), Fury (עֶבְרָה), Anger (זַעַם) and Distress (צָרָה) with drawn-out swords as they swoop down on animals and humans alike.

V. 49 starts with a Piel impf. verb (שָׁלַח). This root is found in מִשְׁלַחַת 'envoy' of angels of evil, emphasizing the fact that they have been sent by Yahweh. מַלְאֲכֵי רָעִים is best understood not as 'evil angels', but as angels, bringers of evil things upon the afflicted.[375]

V. 50 also starts with a Piel impf. verb (יְפַלֵּס). This + נָתִיב 'prepare a path, make way' (an expression that is a *hapax legomenon*) in the light of Hab 3:5 suggest a personification for the following nouns.[376] Yahweh's anger (אַפּוֹ) in the previous verse is represented by עֶבְרָה וָזַעַם וְצָרָה, the מַלְאֲכֵי רָעִים, and here by מָוֶת and דֶּבֶר, Death and *Deber* respectively.[377]

Thus here, as in the 2 Sam 24:13-15 and the parallel 1 Chron 21:12-14 passages we have an occurrence of דֶּבֶר together with the מלאך, suggesting the possibility of *Deber* being one of the מַלְאֲכֵי רָעִים,[378] an instrument of Yahweh.

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[373] Some manuscripts have לדבר instead of לברד in v.48; cf. cattle plague of Exod 9:3 (BHS).

[374] The boils (Exod 9:8-12) and darkness (Exod 10:21-20) are not mentioned.

[375] There are suggestions that מַלְאֲכֵי should be emended to מלאכים (e.g. DCH, V, p.287; BHS crit. app.) but there is no need. Dahood, *Psalms II*, suggests taking the י in מַלְאֲכֵי as 3rd sing. suffix and רָעִים as adjective, thus 'his pestiferous angels' (p. 244).

[376] See also Dahood, *Psalms II*, pp. 244-245.

[377] Other examples where death is personified are: Jer 9:20; Job 28:22; Ps 49:15; Mot and Sheol together in Isa 28:15,18 ; Isa 38:18; Hab 2:5 etc. See also discussion of the other passages relating to *deber*. In Prov 16: 14 we also have מַלְאֲכֵי־מָוֶת, 'angels of death'.

[378] The question of how the term מלאך is used arises. Its basic meaning is 'messenger', though their function is more than simply bearing messages (cf. Josh 6:25; 1 Sam 19:11; Judg 11:12-14; 2 Sam 5:11). The term refers to both human and heavenly messengers; their function is generally the same. (In most cases it refers to angels. See HALOT, pp. 585-586; DCH, V, pp. 285-288). Context must decide. Both HALOT and DCH take the term in the passages we discussed as 'angels'. On the 'angel of Yahweh' see TWOT; DCH, V, pp. 284-289; HALOT, II, pp. 585-586.

5.5.11 Amos 4:10

v. 10
שִׁלַּחְתִּי בָכֶם דֶּבֶר בְּדֶרֶךְ מִצְרַיִם הָרַגְתִּי בַחֶרֶב בַּחוּרֵיכֶם עִם שִׁבְי סוּסֵיכֶם
וָאַעֲלֶה בְּאַשׁ מַחֲנֵיכֶם וּבְאַפְּכֶם וְלֹא־שַׁבְתֶּם עָדַי נְאֻם־יְהוָה׃

Chapter 4 consists of two judgement oracles. Vv. 1-3 are directed against the rich women of the northern capital, Samaria;[379] and then vv. 4-13 introducing a new theme, turn against the whole population.[380] The narrative is concerned with the issue that Israel has not returned to God.[381]

Vv. 4-5 appear as an invitation to the people to continue their sacrificing at two of the major sanctuaries, Bethel and Gilgal.[382] However, its tone is sarcastic; it has been called a 'parody of a priestly torah'.[383] The people are invited to come to these sacred places in order to sin. The verb **פּשׁע** is used twice in different forms. The basic

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[379] So S. M. Paul, *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), pp. 128-136; J. Jeremias, *The Book of Amos: A Commentary*, trans. by D. W. Stott, OT Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), pp. 63-65; J. H. Hayes, *Amos, The Eighth-Century Prophet* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), pp. 138-142. On the other hand F. I. Andersen and D. N. Freedman, *Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1989), p. 419 and J. L. Mays, *Amos: A Commentary*, OT Library (London: SCM Press, 1969), p. 71, argue that because of the mixed gender of the verbs used in the verses it is possible that a general audience was in mind. H. M. Barstad, *The Religious Polemics of Amos*, VTSupp 34 (Leiden : Brill, 1984) argues that chapter 4 forms a coherent speech unit and should be treated as a whole (p. 59).

[380] Paul, pp. 138-156; Jeremias, pp. 65-80; Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, pp. 425-457; Hayes, pp.142-150; Mays, *Amos*, pp. 73-84; H. W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos: A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos*, transl. by H. W. Wolff, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), pp. 208-225.

[381] This is the understanding of most commentators, e.g. Paul, p. 143; Jeremias, p. 69; Mays, *Amos*, p. 77; Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, p. 435; Hayes, p. 146. For a different interpretation see Barstad, *Religious Polemics*, pp. 65-67. He takes the verb **שׁוּב** in the sense of 'to turn to' which has implications for his understanding of the whole chapter.

[382] On Bethel and Gilgal in this passage see Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, pp. 430-432; Hayes, pp. 142-144. For a more comprehensive discussion (including further references) see Barstad, *Religious Polemics*, pp. 47-58.

[383] Quoted in Wolff, *Amos*, p. 211 and Paul, p. 138.

meaning of the verb is 'rebellion'.[384] However, the nature of the transgression is not clear.[385]

In vv. 6-11 we have a description of the various punishments that Yahweh afflicted the Israelites with albeit to no avail.[386] The people have not returned to him.[387] The description of the various calamities refers to past events,[388] and these, besides being punitive, were meant to be pedagogical.[389] However, the fivefold repetition of the expression 'but you did not return to me' at the end of vv. 6, 8, 9, 10 and 11 implies that it did not achieve this purpose. Most commentators note the similarities of this passage to the curses in Lev 26 and Deut 28, as well as to the prayer of Solomon in 1 Kgs 8.[390]

The listing of (seven) afflictions follows a similar pattern. Yahweh describes his punitive acts in first person,

v. 6a and I gave to you	וְגַם־אֲנִי נָתַתִּי לָכֶם
v. 7a and I withheld from you	וְגַם אָנֹכִי מָנַעְתִּי מִכֶּם
v. 9a I smote you	הִכֵּיתִי אֶתְכֶם

[384] HALOT, p. 981. Paul notes that it is used in Amos 1:3-2:3 with reference to 'crimes against humanity' (p. 139). Barstad, *Religious Polemics*, argues that the context of פּשׁע in this passage clearly indicates that it describes the 'participation of the Israelites in the rites performed at Bethel and Gilgal' (p. 56).

[385] On this issue see e.g. Paul, pp. 139-140. He asserts that the prophet is not accusing the people of sacrificing outside Jerusalem nor of sacrificing connected to idolatry. To him the charge reflects the opposition between prophets and priests. Mays, *Amos*, suggests that the prophet's charge against Israel was that the people forgot about Yahweh in their worship, 'The people themselves have displaced the Lord as the central reality of cult.'(p. 77) Similarly, Jeremias, p. 68. Hayes thinks that 'The context indicates that the sacrifices were condemned as another example of the self-indulgence of the ruling establishment.' (p. 145) However, Barstad, *Religious Polemics*, has argued convincingly that the present context as well as others in Amos clearly indicate that the cult practiced at these two sanctuaries were 'non-Yahwistic or strongly Yahwistic/syncretistic' (cf. Amos 5:21-24). This is the most likely possibility; the punishments that are listed in the following verses are always inflicted on the Israelites when they are disobedient to Yahweh, and that usually means turning away from him in favour of other gods.

[386] Contra Barstad, *Religious Polemics*, who argues that the list of vv. 6-11 should be regarded as 'the proofs of a missionary' trying to convince his audience that they should turn to Yahweh rather than follow their old practices (p. 67).

[387] Compare the people's rebellion against Yahweh in Num 14. See 5.5.5 above.

[388] Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, p. 437; Mays, *Amos*, p. 77; Paul,p. 143.

[389] Jeremias, p. 69; Paul, p. 143.

[390] The parallels are most clearly set out in Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, p. 213; Jeremias, pp.70-72; Paul, pp.143, 146-147; Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, p. 440; Hayes, p. 148; Mayes, *Amos*, pp. 79-80; for a contrary view see Barstad, *Religious Polemics*, pp. 61-65.

v. 10a	I sent against you	שִׁלַּחְתִּי בָכֶם
v. 11a	I overthrew you	הָפַכְתִּי בָכֶם

V. 6 refers to famine expressed by the 'euphemistic hapax legomenon',[391] נְקִיּוֹן שִׁנַּיִם, literally 'cleanness of teeth', and the reference to 'lack of food', חֹסֶר לֶחֶם. Its extensiveness is emphasised by two expressions, 'in all your cities', בְּכָל־עָרֵיכֶם, and 'in all your places', בְּכֹל מְקוֹמֹתֵיכֶם .

Vv. 7-8 describe the lack of rain, הַגֶּשֶׁם, i.e. drought. Yahweh withheld the rain at a crucial time (three months before harvest) which meant yet more famine as there would not have been anything to harvest. Paul notes that Yahweh's assertion of sending rain on one city but not on another serves to emphasise the divine nature of the calamity.[392]

In v. 9 we read of the disasters that affect the crops, blight, שִׁדָּפוֹן, mildew, יֵרָקוֹן, in the gardens and vineyards,[393] locusts, גָּזָם in the fig and olive trees.[394]

V. 10 tells us that *deber* was sent amongst the people just as in Egypt, שִׁלַּחְתִּי בָכֶם דֶּבֶר בְּדֶרֶךְ מִצְרָיִם.[395] The use of the verb שִׁלַּחְתִּי (the same verb as often used in connection with *deber*) emphasises the fact that the calamities are sent by Yahweh. Just as in the previous verse, another calamity is referred to in this verse, 'sword'. Sword and *deber* together threatened the Israelites in Exod 5:3 in case they disobeyed Yahweh's command to sacrifice to him (another connection to the Exodus events). The actions of these two agents were deadly, young men and horses alike

[391] Paul, p. 144.

[392] Pp. 144-145. He also notes that drought and famine occur together in Mesopotamian curse lists and literature. For other examples of the motif of lack of rain as a form of punishment see Barstad, *Religious Polemics*, pp. 68-73.

[393] The two words are used together in Deut 28:22; 1 Kgs 8:37 // 2 Chron 6:28; Hag 2:17. Paul notes that the first word 'denotes desiccation caused by the sirocco', and the second 'refers to the brownish yellow withering colour of the grain' (p. 146). See also Mays, *Amos*, p. 79.

[394] Joel 1:4-7.

[395] Some commentators (e.g. Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, p. 443, and Hayes, p. 147) maintain that this *deber* was not the one of Exodus. However, there is no reason to doubt that by mentioning Egypt an allusion was meant here to the Exodus events. So also Paul, p. 147; Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, p. 221. One can also see a connection here to Num 14, where the Israelites were complaining and wanted to return to Egypt. In his anger Yahweh threatened them with the same *deber* as he sent to punish the Egyptians.

were killed; the stench of 'your camp', מַחֲנֵיכֶם, referring to the stench of the dead corpses left in and around the camp.[396]

The calamities intensified gradually until the last one in v. 11 was the most disastrous of them all. The destruction is likened to the devastation of the two cities Sodom and Gomorrah. This expression 'became paradigmatic for the completeness of the destruction.'[397]

In spite of all the severe punishments Israel did not turn from her ways; this fact is emphasised by the five times repetition (at the end of v. 6, 8, 9, 10 and 11) of the same expression, 'yet you have not returned to me, declares the Lord', וְלֹא־שַׁבְתֶּם עָדַי נְאֻם־יְהוָה. V. 12 is an affirmation that all this that has already befallen Israel will again strike them because they have not turned from their ways.[398] A doxology follows in v. 13.[399]

5.5.12 Summary of other occurrences of *deber*

In summary we can say that in all the passages discussed *deber* occurs as a punishment sent from Yahweh. The sending is expressed most frequently by the verb שׁלח (Exod 9:15; Lev 26:25; Ps 78:49-50; Amos 4:10) and also by נתן (2 Sam 24:15; 1 Chron 21: 14). Yahweh is in control, he sends his agents (וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי; וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה), brings them in (וְהֵבֵאתִי, Lev 26:25); encounters (פגע, Exod 5:3) and smites (נכה, Num 14:12) the people through them (this expressed with בְּ־ + def. art. + noun). He will also cause *deber* to cling to the people until it kills them (Deut 28:21).

The personification of *deber* appears clearly in Deut 28; Exod 9; 2 Sam 24 with its parallel in 1 Chron 21, and Ps 78. Since the other passages are connected to either of the first two, it is possible that these passages also contain a personified *deber*. Exod 9 and 2 Sam 24 show a designation of *deber* as 'the hand of Yahweh' and 'Blows' (הַמַּגֵּפָה), reminiscent of Yahweh's evils and arrows. 2 Sam 24, 1 Chron 21 and Ps 78 clearly indicate that it was envisaged as one of Yahweh's angels whose function is to punish.

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[396] Paul, p. 148; Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, p. 443.

[397] Paul, p. 149; Hayes, p. 147. It also occurs in Isa 1:9-10; 13:19; Jer 49:18; 50:40; etc.

[398] Barstad, *Religious Polemics*, p. 59.

[399] On doxologies in Amos see Barstad, *Religious Polemics*, pp. 79-80 and Paul, pp. 152-156.

The meaning of the term is uncertain, ‘destruction’ and in some cases more particularly ‘disease’ is the most likely translation.

5.6 Conclusion of *deber*

In order to determine whether *deber* is the name of a ‘demon’ in the Hebrew Bible the present chapter examined every passage in which the term occurs. The investigation led to the following conclusions:

Although generally translated as ‘plague/pestilence’, *deber* is best understood as meaning in general ‘destruction’, possibly by infectious disease.[400] The term is mostly used in a personified sense as an agent of Yahweh. However, there is no evidence that would point to a mythological figure behind the term, and there is nothing in the texts to support an interpretation that takes *deber* to be referring to a ‘demon’.

Ps 91, Hos 13 and Hab 3 (5.2), the three passages that are used to support this view, present *deber* as a personified dangerous force which brings death and destruction. As such he appears as one of Yahweh’s agents who carries out his punishment or simply emphasises his awesome power as a member of his retinue. Ps 91 presents these agents as Yahweh’s angels. This is also clearly the case in Ps 78 and 2 Sam 24.

In the 17 occurrences in Jeremiah (5.3) it most often appears with ‘sword’ and ‘famine’ (15x), deadly forces that always come as a punishment from Yahweh for the Israelites’ disobedience (mostly idolatry). Although its personification is only clearly suggested in one passage (Jer 21:6), the others also offer this possibility.

In Ezekiel (5.4) also (11x) *deber* occurs as a personified deadly force accompanied by others; often by ‘sword’ and ‘famine’, but other elements such as *dam* (bloodshed) and *hayyah ra‘ah* (beings of evil) also occur. They all are presented as Yahweh’s agents of punishment.

This is also the case in all the other occurrences of the term (5.5). Some passages present the personified *deber* more clearly (Deut 28, Exod 9, 2 Sam 24, Ps 78) than others but there are links between these and the latter passages which suggest that the term could be taken as personified in these too.

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[400] See also summaries in 5.2.4; 5.3.10; 5.4.9 and 5.5.12.

We have argued that when personified, *deber* is one of Yahweh's angels, one of the *malache ra'im*.[401] In fact there is no evidence to suggest that this was one particular angel and that thus *deber* would be a proper noun. It is rather a function. Any of Yahweh's angels could be a *deber*, a bringer of 'disease' or 'destruction' which in most cases results in death.

[401] *Hayyah ra'ah* (Ezek 5:17; 14:15; 33:27;), along with 'arrows' (Deut 32:23; Ezek 5:16), 'blows' (Exod 9:15; 2 Sam 21, 25), 'evils' (Deut 32:23), 'scourges' (Ezek 14:21) should be understood in parallel with the מַלְאֲכֵי רָעִים as other designations for these agents of Yahweh who bring evil upon the people as punishment.

CHAPER 6: *QETEB* IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

6.1. Introduction

קטב occurs 4 times in the Hebrew Bible, in Deut 32:24; Ps 91:6; Hos 13:14 and Isa 28:2.[1] Chapter 2 (2.5) has shown that the general consensus regarding *qeteb* is that it is the name of a 'demon' in the Hebrew Bible. It was also demonstrated that this is based on the term's occurrence with *deber* and *reshef*, also supposedly 'demons', and on scant ancient Near Eastern and post-biblical Jewish material, rather than on a careful reading of the texts.[2] Thus it becomes necessary that any conclusions regarding *qeteb* in the Hebrew Bible should be based on an examination of the Old Testament passages.

The present chapter therefore takes a close look at the passages where *qeteb* occurs in order to determine its meaning, if it is the name of a 'demon', and whether there is a mythological figure behind the texts. Psalm 91 and Hosea 13 have been discussed in detail in the previous chapter (5.2.1 and 5.2.2) thus only a summary of them will be included in the present chapter. Deuteronomy 32 and Isaiah 28 are examined in detail.

6.2 Psalm 91:6

From the analyses of the psalm in the previous chapter we have seen that the dangerous forces that appeared to threaten the believer in vv. 5-6 are best taken as Yahweh's angels referred to in v. 11. The parallelism of vv. 5-9a and vv. 9b-13, as well as other instances of *deber* being clearly identified as one of Yahweh's angels who brings as a punishment, death, destruction, in many instances in the form of disease, support this hypothesis.[3]

We have also argued that *deber* was best taken to mean 'disease' and *qeteb* referring to some form of 'destruction', however, nothing specific can be said about its

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[1] Of these, in Deut 32 it appears in parallel with רֶשֶׁף, in Ps 91 and Hos 13:14 in parallel with דֶּבֶר (in company with שְׁאוֹל and מָוֶת); only in Isa 28:2 does it appear on its own. All of these texts are poetical.

[2] See 2.5.2 and 2.7.

[3] See discussion of Ps 91 in 5.2.1 and summary in 5.2.4.

meaning. Attempts have been made to link *qeteb* to 'sunstroke'[4] or hot weather,[5] on the basis of v. 6 of the psalm. However, as we have seen, the reference to night and day (darkness and midday) does not mean that the forces referred to have to be associated with night or day/midday respectively. *Deber* was nowhere specifically associated with night time activity, and there is no reason to link *qeteb* to midday. A translation such as 'destruction' or 'devastation' would indicate the result of the activity of this agent/angel of Yahweh.

6.3 Hosea 13:14

Similarly to Psalm 91, this passage has also been analysed in detail in the previous chapter.[6] *Qeteb* here appears along with *Deber*, Mot and Sheol, as personified forces of destruction and death. They are Yahweh's agents whom he uses to punish the Israelites because they have turned to the worship of other gods. The punishment as in other similar cases is complete destruction. It has been argued that the passage does not indicate the form of the punishment, only the result, death. Therefore the more general translation of 'devastation' and 'destruction' was suggested as one that points out the parallelism between the two terms.

6.4 Deuteronomy 32: 24

vv. 23-25

אַסְפֶּה עָלֵימוֹ רָעוֹת חִצַּי אֲכַלֶּה־בָּם׃
מְזֵי רָעָב וּלְחֻמֵי רֶשֶׁף וְקֶטֶב מְרִירִי וְשֶׁן־בְּהֵמוֹת אֲשַׁלַּח־בָּם עִם־חֲמַת זֹחֲלֵי עָפָר׃
מִחוּץ תְּשַׁכֵּל־חֶרֶב וּמֵחֲדָרִים אֵימָה גַּם־בָּחוּר גַּם־בְּתוּלָה יוֹנֵק עִם־אִישׁ שֵׂיבָה׃

I shall heap Evils on them,
my Arrows I shall spend on them.

(They shall be) wasted by Famine
and devoured by Plague
and Bitter Scourge,
I shall send the Fang of Wild animals on them
with the Poison of Snakes.

Outside Sword shall destroy,

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[4] T. Gaster, *Myth,* p. 770.

[5] De Moor, 'O Death', p. 101.

[6] See above 5 2.2 and 5.2.4.

and in the chambers Terror
from young man and virgin;
the suckling child with the man of old age.

The Song of Moses bears similarities to some of the other passages we discussed – e.g. v. 11 cf. Psalm 91; vv. 17-21 cf. Hosea 13; vv. 23-25 cf. Jeremiah and Ezekiel passages where sword, famine, disease and wild animals/beings of evil occur together, though here we have *reshef*, 'plague' instead of *deber* , 'disease', as elsewhere. Van der Toorn believes that the passage has much in common with Hab 3:5,[7] and R. Bergey that it is linked (linguistically) to early Isaianic passages (chs 1, 5, 28 and 30).[8] J.G. McConville notes specific analogies with Ps 78.[9]

The poem can be divided as follows:

vv.1-3: Introduction: invocation

vv. 4-14: PAST: Yahweh's faithfulness and Israel's sinfulness

- vv. 4-5: contrasting Yahweh-people
- vv. 6-7: invitation to think back to the beginning
- vv. 8-9: Yahweh became the god of Israel (his people/Jacob)
- vv. 10-14: Yahweh's care for Jacob (i.e. Israel)

vv. 15-18: The people's sin: worship and sacrifice to other gods

vv. 19-25: God's punishment of Israel

- vv. 19-21: sin => anger => punishment
- vv. 22-25: further punishments

vv. 26-27: Yahweh considers suspending Israel's punishment

vv.28-38: FUTURE: Yahweh's punishment of Israel's enemy

- vv. 28-34: description of Israel's enemy
- vv. 35-38: Yahweh's vengeance

vv. 39-42: Yahweh proclaims himself, 'only god', no other beside him

v. 43: Celebration of God's deliverance

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[7] 'The Theology of Demons in Mesopotamia and Israel', in A. Lange, etc. eds, *Die Dämonen*, pp. 61-83 (p. 63).

[8] 'The Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32.1-43) and Isaianic Prophecies: A Case of Early Intertextuality?', *JSOT* 28 (2003), 33-54.

[9] *Deuteronomy*, Apollos OT Commentary 5 (Leicester: Apollos, 2002), pp. 444-462, (esp. p. 452). See also J. H. Tigay, 'Excursus 30', in *Deuteronomy,* JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), pp. 508-513, (esp. p. 511).

Vv. 1-3 and v. 43 frame the poem. It begins with an invocation to heavens and earth to listen and hear the words and teaching of the poet (Moses), and ends in a celebratory tone summoning the nations and his people to rejoice. The *merismus*, הַשָּׁמַיִם… הָאָרֶץ, 'heaven and earth' convey the universality of the teaching; these words are for all to hear. Beside the parallels, 'heaven' and 'earth' are personified; they listen (הַאֲזִינוּ) and hear (וְתִשְׁמַע). The desired effect of the teaching is set out in a beautiful set of four similes (v. 2):

like rain	fall	my teaching	לִקְחִי	יַעֲרֹף כַּמָּטָר
like the dew	drop down	my speech	אִמְרָתִי	תִּזַּל כַּטַּל
like raindrops		on the grass	עֲלֵי־דֶשֶׁא	כִּשְׂעִירִם[10]
like showers		on the herbs	עֲלֵי־עֵשֶׂב	וְכִרְבִיבִים

The next 11 + 4 verses (vv. 4-14 + vv. 15-18) together with 11 + 4 verses (vv. 28- 38 + vv. 39- 42) at the end envelope the middle section of the poem, vv. 19-27.

Vv. 4-14 concentrate on the past, Yahweh's faithfulness is contrasted to Israel's sinfulness. V. 4 describes Yahweh as the Rock (הַצּוּר), God of faithfulness (אֵל אֱמוּנָה), Righteous and Upright (צַדִּיק וְיָשָׁר) whose work is perfect (תָּמִים פָּעֳלוֹ), whose ways are justice (כָּל־דְּרָכָיו מִשְׁפָּט), in whom there is no injustice (וְאֵי עָוֶל). God's righteousness is emphasized here thus Israel's sinfulness stands in greater contrast (v. 5)[11]. In turn, in v. 5 they are described as having acted corruptly (שִׁחֵת), as if they were no children of God (לֹא בָנָיו), perverse and crooked (עִקֵּשׁ וּפִתַלְתֹּל) as opposed to Yahweh who is righteous and upright (v. 4). In v. 6 they are also called brainless (נָבָל) and not-wise (וְלֹא חָכָם). The father and child metaphor is often used to describe the relationship of Yahweh and Israel.[12] It continues in vv. 6-7. The

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[10] It is clear from the context that the word refers to some kind of rain. It is parallel with רְבִיבִים, the meaning of which is 'heavy showers' (HALOT, pp. 1178-1179). N. Snaith argues that this cannot refer to some 'gentle showers' but instead to 'heavy showers which usher in the rains', so in turn שְׂעִירִם must mean 'the storm rain', 'the heavy soaking rain'. He derives the word from the root שׂער II =סער; cf. סערה , 'the storm wind'. See 'Meaning', pp. 115-116. For other possible translations see HALOT, pp. 1341-1342. In any case the point of these similes seems to be to emphasize the desired effect of the teaching. As water (in the form of rain, dew, showers or raindrops; light or heavy rain) is essential for the life and growth of plants, so are the words of this teaching for the life and growth of the people. Water and teaching are both life-giving forces.

[11] On the difficulties concerning the translation of this verse see the commentaries, e.g. Tigay, p. 301; Christensen, pp. 791, 795; McConville, pp. 444, 448; Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, p. 377 n. 15.

[12] Deut 14:1; Exod 4:22; Jer 3:19; 31:8, 20; Isa 43:6; 63:8; Mal 3:17; Hos 2:1, etc.

question in v. 6, 'Is this how you requite Yahweh?', emphasizes the incredibility of Israel's disobedient act. It is also a reminder that God's people ought to be grateful to their maker; they owe him their lives just as a child owes his existence to his father. V. 7 is an invitation to remember things past. Vv. 8-9 relate the apportioning of all the nations; Yahweh chose Jacob as his people. Vv. 10-14 continue to describe Yahweh's care of Jacob. By Jacob all of Israel is meant (v. 16b).

In the next section, four verses (vv. 15-18) tell us exactly what Israel's sin was. In their state of well-being, they forgot their maker, they made him jealous with foreign gods. V. 15 expresses the accusation strikingly with a series of three 2 m. sg. pf verbs:

(v.15a + b) וַיִּשְׁמַן יְשֻׁרוּן וַיִּבְעָט שָׁמַנְתָּ עָבִיתָ כָּשִׂיתָ

Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; you grew fat, you became gross you were gorged!

Jeshurun is Israel's poetic name, used in a positive context in Deut 33:5 and Isa 44:2, it designates her ideal character, *upright one*.[13] Its use here is ironic and serves to emphasise Israel's guilt[14] contrasting her to Yahweh of whom it was used in v. 4 (יָשָׁר). The parallel terms in vv. 16-17 allude to the foreign gods the Israelites turned to and their cult. These foreign gods are called: 'strangers' (זָרִים), 'abominable things' (תּוֹעֵבֹת), *shedim* (שֵׁדִים) and 'unknown gods' (אֱלֹהִים לֹא יְדָעוּם). The term שֵׁדִים is usually translated as 'demons'; it refers to the foreign gods. This is clear from the parallelism between v. 17a and b.

v. 17a	יִזְבְּחוּ לַשֵּׁדִים לֹא אֱלֹהַ
v. 17b	אֱלֹהִים לֹא יְדָעוּם
v. 17c	חֲדָשִׁים מִקָּרֹב בָּאוּ
v. 1 7d	לֹא שְׂעָרוּם אֲבֹתֵיכֶם

The forbidden nature of the Israelites' act is emphasised by the number of the negative לֹא particle, three negations in one sentence.

The middle section, vv. 19-27 describes the result of Israel's apostasy. Vv. 19-25 contain the description of Israel's punishment. Yahweh saw (וַיַּרְא יְהוָה) what the people (his sons and daughters בָּנָיו וּבְנֹתָיו) had done, they made him angry and

[13] HALOT, p. 450; BDB, 449: 3484.

[14] Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, p. 382.

caused him grief (כַּעַס), so he despised them (וַיִּנְאָץ), and decided to turn away from them (turn his face away from them, אַסְתִּירָה פָנַי מֵהֶם, vv.19-20b).

V. 20c and d echo v. 5, God's children are 'a treacherous generation' (דוֹר תַּהְפֻּכֹת), 'children with no faithfulness in them' (בָּנִים לֹא־אֱמֶן בָּם). The contrast between Yahweh and his people is deepened further here. In v. 4 Yahweh was described as a God of faithfulness (אֵל אֱמוּנָה), whereas Israel here is referred to as 'children with no faithfulness in them'.

V. 21 relates how God shall punish Israel in the same manner as they have treated him:

They rouse *Yahweh* to jealousy with no-gods	הֵם קִנְאוּנִי בְלֹא־אֵל
Yahweh rouses *them* to jealousy with no-people	וַאֲנִי אַקְנִיאֵם בְּלֹא־עָם
They caused *Yahweh* grief with their idols	כְּעָסוּנִי בְּהַבְלֵיהֶם
Yahweh causes *them* grief with a foolish nation	וַאֲכְעִיסֵם בְּגוֹי נָבָל [15]

The term for idols, הבלים is pejorative, literally it means 'vapour, breath', and it refers to their emptiness, unreal nature. God shall punish Israel with a foolish nation for they themselves have been foolish (עַם נָבָל in v. 6). The use of the same verbs creates a dramatic effect; it alludes to the 'eye for eye' concept. God's revenge measures up exactly to the people's sin. They committed the greatest sin against Yahweh, therefore his anger is great and their punishment devastating. There is a vivid description of the punishment in vv. 22-25. The fire is a metaphor for Yahweh's anger[16] and it is personified here (v. 22).

It will *burn* to the depths of Sheol	וַתִּיקַד עַד־שְׁאוֹל
It will *devour* the earth and its produce	וַתֹּאכַל אֶרֶץ וִיבֻלָהּ
It will *set fire* to the foundations of the mountains	וַתְּלַהֵט מוֹסְדֵי הָרִים

This thorough destruction is probably brought about by war; the enemy is the no-people, the foolish nation of v. 21c and d. However, Yahweh is determined to unleash (אַסְפֶּה) all his destructive forces: 'evils', רָעוֹת and 'my arrows', חִצַּי, on Israel. Vv. 23-25 enlist seven[17] other forces.[18]

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[15] I have changed the word order of the Hebrew to show clearer the correspondence of the terms.

[16] Cf. Deut 4:24. We have the same expression in Jer 15:14.

[17] Tigay notes that the number seven expresses the comprehensiveness of the destruction (p. 308).

v. 24a	Famine	רָעָב
v. 24b	Plague[19]	רֶשֶׁף
v. 24c	Bitter Scourge[20]	וְקֶטֶב מְרִירִי
v. 24d	Fang of Wild Animals	וְשֶׁן־בְּהֵמוֹת
v. 24e	Poison of Snakes[21]	חֲמַת זֹחֲלֵי עָפָר
v. 25a	Sword	חֶרֶב
v. 25b	Terror[22]	אֵימָה

V. 24 is difficult to translate. The main verb seems to be the Piel imperfect אֲשַׁלַּח the other, a masculine plural Qal passive participle,וּלְחֻמֵי, serves more as an adjective. מְזֵי is a *hapax legomenon*.[23] שׁלח can be taken as referring to the sending of Famine, *Reshef*, *Qeteb*, as well as the Wild Animals and the Snakes. These are the 'Evils' and 'Arrows' referred to in v. 23. The 'sucking out/wasting' by Famine, the 'eating' by *Reshef* and *Qeteb* suggest that these are personified, as are the 'Fang of the Wild Animals' and the 'Poison of Snakes'. In v. 25 Sword, and Terror 'shall make childless/bereave', תְּשַׁכֵּל, yet another Piel imperfect verb, which also points to the personification of these two. Thus in vv. 23-25 we have a series of abstract concepts and objects personified along with a series of Piel or Hiphil verbs (ספה, כלה, שׁלח, שׁכל) that give a vivid illustration and emphasise the intensity and seriousness of the destruction. In Ps 78:49-50 Yahweh's anger was unleashed on the Egyptians as a band of destroying angels, the Angels of Evil; one of these was *Deber*. I suggest that here too, the *Evils* and the *Arrows*, i.e. *Reshef* and *Qeteb* are Yahweh's Angels of Evil as in Ps 78:49-50.[24]

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[18] Famine and disease/*deber* are natural consequences of war and occur frequently together in Jeremiah, Ezekiel. Ezek 14:21 describes sword, famine, evil beings and *deber* as God's four scourges.

[19] RSV, NIV: 'consuming pestilence'; NJB: 'eaten away by plague'; McConville: 'consumed by pestilence'; Tigay and Christensen: 'ravaging plague'. CJB has 'fever'; JPS 'fiery bolt'. LXX has 'birds'. *Reshef* is taken here as 'plague' in a general sense as some kind of calamity.

[20] RSV, NIV have 'deadly plague'; NJB: 'bitter scourge'; CJB: 'bitter defeat'; JPS: 'bitter destruction'; McConville: 'bitter plague'; Tigay and Christensen: 'deadly pestilence'. 'Bitter scourge' (cf. Ezek 14:21) or 'bitter destruction' (cf. Ps 91:6) would both be suitable translations. LXX has οπισθοτονος αωιατος, which even for Caquot can be a misinterpretation (see above 2.5 p. 38). Vg has *morsus*, 'biting, sting'.

[21] Literally: 'crawlers in dust'.

[22] All translate 'terror' (CJB: 'panic'). The term only occurs in 4 other verses: Gen 15:12; Job 30:20; 41:6 and Isa 33:18.

[23] One Heb ms., Cairo Geniza fragments read מזה , 'sucked out, empty' instead (BHS crit.app.)

[24] See 5.6.

The destruction envisaged was a complete one as the two *merisms* in 25c and d illustrate.

'Young man and virgin' (גַּם־בָּחוּר גַּם־בְּתוּלָה), 'suckling child and man of old age' (יוֹנֵק עִם־אִישׁ שֵׂיבָה) were all to perish.

It comes as a surprise then in vv. 26-27 that Yahweh seems to change his mind about punishing Israel. Israel will be saved from total destruction not because Yahweh takes pity on them but because Yahweh wants to protect his own reputation.[25] As the other nations are a foolish people they would not realize that Israel's punishment comes from Yahweh and in it his power is expressed, but they would see it as his weakness. Thus, though Israel deserves the punishment, God decides to let go of it. Instead, he turns on Israel's enemies.

The next section, vv. 28-38 describes the punishment of the other nations. Vv. 28-31 describe the enemy as void of counsel (אֹבַד עֵצוֹת), lacking in understanding (וְאֵין בָּהֶם תְּבוּנָה). If they were wise (לוּ חָכְמוּ) they would understand or see into their future (יָבִינוּ לְאַחֲרִיתָם), meaning that they would realise that their victory was not their own doing but it was Yahweh's will; only with his help could such a thing as one man pursuing a thousand (אֵיכָה יִרְדֹּף אֶחָד אֶלֶף) happen (v. 30). It seems that vv. 28-31 are the words of the poet, an explanation or further elaboration on what God said in the previous verses.[26] From v. 32 on Yahweh speaks again. The enemy will endure the same destiny as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 32). The metaphor of poisoned wine (v. 33) illustrates their fate. Yahweh will take vengeance on the enemy for the way they treated Israel, their day of disaster approaches (כִּי קָרוֹב יוֹם אֵידָם, v. 35).

From v. 36 the focus turns back on Israel. Yahweh will relent (יִתְנֶחָם)[27] from punishing them further after all their suffering.

Vv. 37-39 point out the folly of Israel; they turned away from Yahweh for the sake of gods who accepted their offerings ('ate the fat of their offerings', חֵלֶב זְבָחֵימוֹ יֹאכֵלוּ, 'drank the wine of their libations',יִשְׁתּוּ יֵין נְסִיכָם) but were unable to help

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[25] 1 Sam 12:22.

[26] Tigay: 'The poem interrupts God's words to explain the flawed reasoning that would lead the enemy to misrepresent the facts.' (p. 310)

[27] יִתְנֶחָם is translated variously, RSV and NIV: 'have compassion'; NJB: 'he will take pity'; JPS: 'take revenge for'.

them in return (v. 37, 'where are their gods?', אֵי אֱלֹהֵימוֹ). Calling these idols 'rock' (צוּר) is ironic, as in v. 31, since they seemed unable to rise up and shield Israel (v. 38c and d).

Vv. 39-42 constitute the counterpart of vv. 15-18 where Israel's sin was spelled out, they sacrificed to *shedim*, to no-gods (v. 17), but now they can see that there is no other god beside Yahweh. He is the One, אֲנִי אֲנִי הוּא וְאֵין אֱלֹהִים עִמָּדִי.

He declares his uniqueness in vv. 39-41 and his intentions of punishing Israel's enemies even though he used them as his instruments in punishing Israel. Their punishment will be equal to the one envisaged earlier for Israel; the personification of Sword and Arrows in v. 42 give a vivid picture:

v. 42a	God's Arrows shall *be intoxicated* by blood	אַשְׁכִּיר חִצַּי מִדָּם
v. 42b	his Sword *will devour* flesh	וְחַרְבִּי תֹּאכַל בָּשָׂר

Finally the poem concludes in a celebratory tone. V. 43 is an invocation to all the nations to proclaim Yahweh's deliverance of his people Israel and the punishment of their enemy.[28]

6.5 Isaiah 28:2

v.2

הִנֵּה חָזָק וְאַמִּיץ לַאדֹנָי כְּזֶרֶם בָּרָד שַׂעַר קָטֶב כְּזֶרֶם מַיִם כַּבִּירִים שֹׁטְפִים הִנִּיחַ לָאָרֶץ בְּיָד׃

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[28] Scholars argue that v. 43 in the MT is incomplete and that a Qumran manuscript and the LXX are closer to the original text. MT reads: הַרְנִינוּ גוֹיִם עַמּוֹ כִּי דַם־עֲבָדָיו יִקּוֹם

וְנָקָם יָשִׁיב לְצָרָיו וְכִפֶּר אַדְמָתוֹ עַמּוֹ׃

Qumran text:	LXX:
O heavens, rejoice with Him,	O heavens, rejoice with Him.
Bow to Him, all divinities	Bow to him, all sons of the divine.
For he'll avenge the blood of His sons,	O nations, rejoice with His people
And wreak vengeance on His foes,	And let all angels of the divine
Requite those who reject Him,	strengthen themselves in Him.
And will cleanse His people's land.	

NJB is following this suggestion and has for v.43 a and b the following:

Heavens rejoice with him,
Let all the children of God pay him homage!
Nations, rejoice with his people,
Let God's envoys tell of his power!
For more discussion see Tigay, pp. 513-518.

Behold, the Lord has a Mighty and Strong one,
like a storm of Hail, a tempest of Destruction;
like a storm of Mighty Waters, engulfing,
through (his) hand he throws to the ground.

Isaiah 28 is the first of several poems (8 chapters, possibly 22 poems) on Israel and Judah. Chapter 28 can be divided into 4 parts[29]:

vv. 1-6: oracle against the drunkards of Ephraim (שִׁכֹּרֵי אֶפְרַיִם)
vv. 7-13: oracle against drunken priests and prophets (כֹּהֵן וְנָבִיא)
vv. 14-22: oracle against false counsellors (אַנְשֵׁי לָצוֹן)[30]
vv. 23-29: a parable (אִמְרָתִי//קוֹלִי)

The poem uses the metaphor of drunkards to illustrate the state the Northern Kingdom found itself in (vv.1-6 and vv. 7-13), then turns towards Jerusalem and its leaders (vv. 14-22) in a polemic tone, and ends with a parable of the farmer.

V. 1 begins in the conventional woe-oracle manner with הוֹי , then four pairs of parallels[31] follow:

Crown – fading flower[32]	עֲטֶרֶת[35]	//	וְצִיץ[34]	נֹבֵל[33]		
Pride - beauty of his glory	גְּאוּת[38]	//	צְבִי[37]	תִּפְאַרְתּוֹ[36]		

[29]J. D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, WBC 24 (Waco: Word Books, 1985), p. 362, and Oswalt, pp. 501-504, divide the chapter into three parts: vv. 1-13, vv. 14-22, and vv. 23-29. Kaiser has vv. 1-4; 5-6; 7-13; 14-22 and 23-29 (pp. 236-263). M. J. O'Kane, 'Isaiah 28-33: A Literary and Contextual Analysis', PhD Thesis (Edinburgh, 1989), pp.17-99; Seitz, pp. 209-210, and NJB see four parts, which I also follow.

[30] Prov 1:22; 29:8.

[31] W. H. Irvin, *Isaiah 28-33: Translation with Philological Notes*, Biblica et Orientalia 30 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1977), p. 4.

[32] So NJB; NIV; RSV, HALOT (v.3: 1023) and Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 220. Irvin: 'fading garland'; Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 'drooping blossom'; Oswalt, p. 501, 'fading blossom'.

[33] נבל means 'to wither, decay'; it refers to the decaying of flowers in Is 40:7, and of grass in Ps 37:2 (HALOT v.2: 663; see also O'Kane, p. 21). The phrase צִיץ נֹבֵל also appears in Isa 40:7.

[34] O'Kane, p. 21, notes that both the verb and the noun occur most commonly as part of a simile/image 'to express the fleeting quality of a person's life' (cf. Job 14:2; Ps 72:16; 90:6; 103:15; Isa 40:6-8).

[35] In Isa the noun occurs in 28:1, 3, 5; 62:3; elsewhere in 2 Sam 12:30; Job 19:9; 31:36; Ps 21:4; Jer 13:18; Ezek 16:12; 21:31; 23:42; Prov 4:9; 12:4; 14:24; 16:31; 17:6; Lam 5:16; Zech 6:11, 14.

[36] It is frequently used in Isaiah (of 47 total occurrences in the OT, 18 are in Isa). O'Kane shows that in Isa 1-39 the word has positive connotations only in two instances, in 4:2 and 28:5. The rest of the occurrences (10:12; 13:19; 20:5; 28:1, 4) carry a negative connotation: 'it is a self-proclaimed glory

Ephraim – head of lush valley
Drunkard – struck down by wine

אֶפְרַיִם \\ רֹאשׁ גֵּיא־שְׁמָנִים[39]
שְׁכֹרֵי \\ הֲלוּמֵי יָיִן

The reference to the drunkards of Ephraim and their headdress[40] can be taken literally as directed against a group of drunken people,[41] as well as taken further to point out the 'decadence' of the capital of Ephraim, Samaria.[42] Kaiser sees a double meaning behind the metaphor, in the sense that the drunkenness of Ephraim could refer to 'their complete confusion of belief and blindness to the signs of the times' (p. 205). This is possible as prophetic speeches carry deeper meanings.[43]

In v. 2 we have a scene of storm-imagery which according to most commentators describes Assyria.[44] However, they disagree as to the identity of the person of the 'mighty and strong of the Lord', חָזָק וְאַמִּיץ לַאדֹנָי.[45] חָזָק וְאַמִּיץ is a word-pair,[46] and it refers to Yahweh's agent of destruction. The beginning of the verse with הִנֵּה emphasizes the fact that the 'mighty and strong one' is coming from Yahweh, it is on Yahweh's command and with his authority that the destruction takes place. The force of the destruction is described by two striking similes:

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on the part of the nations and of its nature cannot last. This idea is reinforced in 28:1-4 by the phrase צְבִי תִפְאַרְתּוֹ which precedes the phrase צִיץ נֹבֵל.' (pp. 23-24).

[37] The word usually describes the 'beauty' or 'glory' of the land cf. Jer 3:19; Ezek 20:6, 16; 25:9; 36:20; Dan 8:9; 11:16, 41, 45; but is also used in other contexts (2 Sam 1:19; Isa 4:2; 13:19; 23:9; 24:16).

[38] גְּאוּת means 'majesty, pride', and mostly refers to the majesty of Yahweh (Ps 89:10; 93:1; Isa 12:5; 26:10). Here it is more likely to mean 'pride' as in Ps 17:10.

[39] In Isa 25:6 and 28:1, 4 it refers to luxury. On the difficulties of the last line of v.1 see Irwin, pp. 6-7; also Oswalt, pp. 5-7.

[40] Irwin notes that עֲטֶרֶת … תִפְאַרְתּוֹ 'crown… fading flowers' forms a stereotyped phrase which is separated here, cf. Isa 62:3; Jer 13:18; Ezek 16:12; 23:42; Prov 4:9; 16:31 (pp. 4-5).

[41] Kaiser, p. 239; Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, pp. 220-221.

[42] B. S. Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 205. Also Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, p. 362; Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, pp. 220-221.

[43] A. Gileadi, *The Literary Message of Isaiah* (New York: Hebraeus Press, 1994), p. 19.

[44] P. D. Miscall, *Isaiah* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), p. 73; Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, pp. 362-363; Oswalt, p. 507; Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 221.

[45] Acording to Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, pp. 362-363, it is Shalmaneser (Isa 10:3; 2 Kgs 17:3-6) or Sargon II (2 Kgs 17:6), and to Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, it is Tiglat-Pileser III (p. 221).

[46] Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, cf. study of Laberge of its OT occurrences (p. 362).

like a storm of Hail, a tempest of Destruction כְּזֶרֶם בָּרָד שַׂעַר קֶטֶב[47]
like a storm of Mighty Waters, engulfing … כְּזֶרֶם מַיִם כַּבִּירִים שֹׁטְפִים

Irwin notes the pattern of 'storm…tempest…storm' (זֶרֶם... שַׂעַר ... זֶרֶם) which is lost in most Bible translations (p. 8).[48]

We note the similarity of this passage to Hos 13:7-8; there Yahweh the Shepherd turns against his sheep to destroy them. The series of similes where Yahweh is likened to a lion, a leopard, a she-bear, a lion again and a wild animal, illustrates this destruction. Here, it is the strong and mighty of the Lord, חָזָק וְאַמִּיץ לַאדֹנָי who brings the destruction. Again a series of powerful similes, parallelism and word repetition illustrate this destruction vividly. They give us a sense of overpowering and complete desolation; against such mighty forces one is powerless. The emphasis is on destruction and the poet makes this more striking by personifying, as we have seen elsewhere, the forces that cause it. The parallelism brings this out very well:

חָזָק וְאַמִּיץ לַאדֹנָי
כְּזֶרֶם בָּרָד
שַׂעַר קֶטֶב
כְּזֶרֶם מַיִם כַּבִּירִים

Thus here too, we find *Barad*, *Qeteb* and *Mighty Waters* as personified and as agents of the *Strong and Mighty of the Lord*, who ultimately is also an agent of Yahweh. Their function is to bring destruction which comes as a punishment from Yahweh. There is nothing to support a demonological interpretation of *qeteb* here.[49]

The imagery of vv.1-2 returns in vv. 3-4 with the same phrases/words (עֲטֶרֶת גַּאוּת אֲשֶׁר עַל־רֹאשׁ גֵּיא שְׁמָנִים, שִׁכּוֹרֵי אֶפְרָיִם). Again there is a double meaning beside the literal one. It is clear that by the 'proud garland' of Ephraim's drunkards that will be 'trampled under foot' (תֻּרַמַּסְנָה[50]), it is Samaria that is intended here, and

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[47] See discussion below.

[48] NIV: 'hailstorm…wind…driving rain'; NJB: 'storm…tempest…immense flood'; RSV: 'storm…tempest…storm'.

[49] Contra Caquot, 'Quelques...', pp. 67-68, and others. See above 5.2. The available evidence is not enough to permit us to draw such conclusions as Caquot.

[50] BHS suggests changing the f. pl. form of תֻּרַמַּסְנָה to תֻּרְמַסְנָּה to (sg. energetic) because the pl. form is followed by a sg. עֲטֶרֶת. Irwin, p. 10, and Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, p. 360 n. 3a, prefer the singular energetic form. This is possible since it only means pointing the word differently without changing it,

Jerusalem later in v.18. The city will be destroyed and devoured. O'Kane notes (p. 28) that in Isaiah, 'trampling under foot' (רמס) mostly denotes destruction (cf. 5:5; 10:6; 16:4; 26:6; 28:3, 18; 63:3)[51].

V. 4 repeats the notion of destruction with the simile of the ripe fig. As the first ripe fig (כְּבִכּוּרָה[52]) before the summer, desirable and tempting, is eaten up quickly and 'on site', so the city of Samaria will be devoured suddenly and completely.

In vv. 5-6 the image of Yahweh as crown (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא[53] יִהְיֶה יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת לַעֲטֶרֶת צְבִי וְלִצְפִירַת) is in contrast with the image of Ephraim as crown in vv. 1-4. Yahweh shall be a crown of glory for the remnant of Israel (cf. Isa 4:2) whereas the 'tempest of destruction' brought about by the other nations shall destroy the crown of Ephraim.

Vv. 5-6 can be seen as the key to understanding the whole of chapter 28 as the similes there emphasize the contrast between Yahweh and Ephraim.[54] Vv. 5-6 also form a link between vv. 1-4 and the following verses (7-8). There is disagreement amongst scholars as to whom the phrase וְגַם־אֵלֶּה , 'and these also', in v. 7 refer. It could refer back to the leaders in vv. 1-4, 6 and at the same time to the leaders of Jerusalem in v. 14,[55] or distinctly to the priests and prophets of Jerusalem and not the northerners,[56] but in any case it is clear that the verse links the prophecy of vv. 1-4 to the following one.[57] The theme of drunkenness continues with a detailed description. Repeating the words relating to drunkenness (יַיִן, 'wine', 2x; שֵׁכָר, 'liquor', 3x;

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but it is also possible to take עטרת as a generic noun, singular in form but with plural meaning, 'crown' referring to the leading circles of the city

[51] In most other occurrences of the root the meaning is the same. E.g. 2 Kgs 14:9; 2 Chron 25:18; Ps 7:6; Ezek 26:11; 34:18,19; Dan 8:7,10,13; Mic 7:10.

[52] The word occurs in Isa 28:4; Jer 24:4; Hos 9:10; Mic 7:1. O'Kane notes that 'the first ripe fig is always a simile or metaphor' denoting something desirable (p. 28).

[53] O'Kane notes that the phrase בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא in Isa 28-33 (cf. 28:5; 29:18; 30:23) always introduces a contrast (pp. 29-30). However, Kaiser sees the phrase as no more than simply meaning 'then', referring to the time when the 'tempest of destruction' shall strike Israel (p. 241).

[54] O'Kane, p. 34, and Oswalt, pp. 508-509. Kaiser considers vv. 5-6 separately (pp. 241-242); Childs sees vv. 5-6 as the eschatological reinterpretation of vv. 1-4, possibly added later (p. 206).

[55] Miscall, *Isaiah*, p. 74.

[56] Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 222. Oswalt however, sees the reference to an additional rather than a distinct group (p. 509).

[57] Cf. Kaiser, p. 243; O'Kane, p. 51.

[58]רֹאֶה, 'drink', 1x; פְּלִילִיָּה, 'booze', 1x; [59]שָׁגוּ ,'err', 3x; [60] תָּעוּ, 'stagger', 2x; נִבְלְעוּ, 'swallow up', 1x; פָּקוּ, ' reel', 1x) of the priests and prophets, Yahweh's representatives, the poet achieves a vivid picture of their disgusting state (קִיא, 'vomit'[61], צֹאָה, 'filth'[62]).

The drunkenness of the priests and prophets can be understood figuratively, as the use of the words (שׁגה, תעה) also suggest it refers to their straying away from Yahweh.[63]

Vv. 9-13 is a difficult passage and there are various interpretations.[64] O'Kane argues that the key of the theme of drunkenness and confusion is to be found in the rhetorical question of v. 9a. He writes:

> The rhetorical question in v. 9a is pivotal in interpreting the theme of drunkenness and confusion; with its key verbs, שׁמע, בין, ידע, ירה, it implies that the general confusion is due to a lack of knowledge, understanding and a willingness to hear the word of Yahweh. The question raised in v. 9a is only very gradually resolved in the succeeding chapters. Even though the instruction of Yahweh is

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[58] As MT points it, the word means 'a seer'. It is a *hapax legomenon*. Irwin takes it as a 'substantive from the root ראה 'drink one's fill', a by-root of רוה'. See his discussion, p. 18/d; also the comments of Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, p. 361/7f; O'Kane, p. 41. Irwin's suggestion, followed by Watts is preferable; the parallels require some sort of drink. NJB, NIV, RSV as well as Kaiser, p. 242; Oswalt, p. 503, and Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 222, translate 'vision'.

[59] The basic meaning of שׁגה is 'to go astray, err'. Apart from here, it refers to drunkenness only in Prov 20:1. Elsewhere, e.g. in Job 6:24; 19:4 and Prov 5:23; 20:1; 28:10, it is associated with confusion. See also Irwin, pp. 14-15, who defends the translation 'reel' against Drivers' suggestion of translating it as 'was wrapped up in, addicted to'. Kaiser, pp. 242-245; Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, pp. 359-360; Oswalt, pp. 502-503 and Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, pp. 222-223 also translate 'reel'; so also RSV. NJB has 'confused'; NIV: 'stagger'.

[60] The basic meaning of תעה is also 'stagger, wander, go astray', and it has been challenged by Driver who prefers to translate 'cackled, croaked, guffawed'. Irwin defends the translation 'staggered' (p. 15); Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, p. 359; Kaiser, pp. 242-245; Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, pp. 222-223 follow; so also RSV. Oswalt translates 'wander about' (pp. 502-503). NJB has 'gone astray'; NIV: 'reel'. The verb appears 50x in the OT and mostly it relates to erring in the sense of sinning. In 2 instances (Job 12:25; Isa 19:14) it refers to confusion which is likened to that of a drunk.

[61] Cf. Isa 19:14; Jer 48:26, and קא in Prov 26:11 (noun). The verb occurs in Lev 18:25, 28; Jon 2:10; Job 20:15; Prov 23:8; 25:16; Jer 25:27.

[62] צאה occurs in Isa 4:4; 28:8; 36:12; Deut 23:13; 2 Kgs 18:27; Prov 30:12; and Ezek 4:12.

[63] O'Kane points out that in Isa 3:12, 9:15 תעו and בלעו occur together and used in a metaphorical sense describe the way people are led astray from Yahweh (p. 51).

[64] See for example the commentaries of Oswalt, pp. 509-513; Kaiser, pp. 242-248; Childs, pp. 206-207; Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, pp. 222-225.

> beneficial and productive (28:26), it is nevertheless despised (30:9) and only in 30:20 is the role of Yahweh as teacher truly perceived. (pp. 51-52)

Vv. 14-22 contain another oracle, addressed against אַנְשֵׁי לָצוֹן, 'men of scorning' or 'scoffers'[65] who are taken by most commentators to be the leaders/rulers (מֹשְׁלֵי הָעָם) of Jerusalem.[66] Vs. 14 and 22 form a frame to this section by the occurrence of the noun לָצוֹן in v. 14 and the verb ליץ (hitp .impf.) in v. 22. The scoffers are directly addressed at the beginning and end of the section emphasizing the fact that what lies between the verses, the judgement, is directed against them. They should now (לָכֵן, 'therefore') turn their attention from the drunkards of Ephraim to events that are to take place in Jerusalem, especially Yahweh's actions (v. 16, 21).

The poet describes the scoffers in ironic terms, the words he puts in their mouths are in contrast with Yahweh's words. This unfolds in a chiastic structure in vv. 15-18:[67]

Scoffers' word: v. 15A. Covenant with Death

בְּרִית אֶת־מָוֶת

B. Safety from flood

שׁוֹטֵף כִּי־(עָבַר) [יַעֲבֹר] לֹא יְבוֹאֵנוּ

C. Refuge in Lie

שַׂמְנוּ כָזָב מַחְסֵנוּ וּבַשֶּׁקֶר נִסְתָּרְנוּ

Yahweh's word: v. 16 D. Cornerstone

יִסַּד בְּצִיּוֹן אָבֶן

v. 17 C'. refuge in Lie swept away by hail

וְיָעָה בָּרָד מַחְסֵה כָזָב

B'. No safety from flood

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[65] So NIV, RSV, Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, pp. 365-366 ; Childs, p. 207; Oswalt, p. 516; Kaiser, p. 250. NJB translates 'insolent men'. The noun לָצוֹן occurs in Prov 1:22; 29:8. Prov 21:24 defines the meaning of the word: 'Scoffer is the name of the proud, haughty man who acts with arrogant pride.' (RSV)

[66] So RSV; NIV; NJB; Oswalt; Childs; Kaiser (as above): 'proverb-makers'; Watts: 'speech-makers'; Irwin is trying to include both interpretations with his 'reigning wits' (p. 25). Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, points out the משלים can be understood as coming from either of two roots, from משל II as 'proverb-makers' and from משל I as 'rulers' depending on which interpretation one favours (p. 366 14b). The first would suggest that the oracle was directed against priests and prophets, and the parallel with אַנְשֵׁי לָצוֹן 'scoffers' favours this; the second that it was directed against the ruling princes. The versions seem to have taken the latter choice. It is not impossible that both meanings were intended; by 'leaders of this people' the poet could have referred to both political and religious leaders. See also O'Kane, pp. 59-60 on משל.

[67] I have adapted Irwin's, p. 26. He gives a slightly different structure [C': Refuge in Lie swept away (v.17); A': Covenant with Death cancelled (v.18); B': No safety from flood.] which is not strictly chiastic. He explains: 'The strict chiastic order would demand B'A', but this order is reversed to allow further development of B' in v.19.'

וְסֵתֶר מַיִם יִשְׁטֹפוּ

v. 18 A' Covenant with Death

וְכֻפַּר בְּרִיתְכֶם אֶת־מָוֶת

The scoffers' crime is that they made a covenant with Death and Sheol, Lie and Falsehood.[68] Whether we have here another example of personification of Death and Sheol or a reference to foreign deities is debated. Commentators take their function differently. Kaiser argues that the poet employs personification to point to the scoffers' attitude. He urges caution in interpreting the passage; it should be taken only in a metaphorical sense. The scoffers were behaving as though they had made a treaty with Death and Sheol which had made them immortals.[69] According to Oswalt the passage can be interpreted in two ways: 1) literally, indicating that the leaders turned to idolatry and they 'engaged in sorcery and have entered into agreement with the gods of the underworld: Death (Mot) and Plague (*Reshef*).' 2) The other possibility is that the poet is simply being sarcastic, by their foolish act of not trusting in Yahweh the leaders have (perhaps unknowingly) chosen death.[70]

In v. 17 the justice (מִשְׁקֶלֶת) and righteousness (צְדָקָה), Yahweh's acts, stand in contrast to the lies and falsehood of the previous verses. In the centre of the chiastic structure of vv. 15-18 is Yahweh's laying of the cornerstone (v. 16).[71] This will be a sure foundation (מוּסָד מוּסָּד) for the righteous. However, the wicked, who refused to listen to Yahweh, will experience sheer terror (רַק־זִוָּעָה) at hearing this message (v. 19).

Vv. 21-22 refer to former victories achieved with the help of Yahweh.[72] His role now is reversed, he fights against his own people; זָר מַעֲשֵׂהוּ 'his strange work', and נָכְרִיָּה עֲבֹדָתוֹ, 'his alien task' refer to this reversal.

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[68] Irwin sees Lie and Falsehood as names of Death and Sheol (p. 28). The parallel in v. 15 would support this.

[69] Kaiser, p. 251. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, also sees the use as metaphorical (p. 369). Death, Sheol, Lie and Falsehood are terms referring to Egypt, Judah's treaty-partner. He also mentions the possibility that these terms could refer to Osiris, the Egyptian god of the dead; he could have 'served as the divine guarantor' of the treaty with Egypt.

[70] Oswalt, pp. 516-517.

[71] On the various interpretations of the 'cornerstone' see Kaiser, pp. 253-254; also Oswalt, p. 518.

[72] For example defeating the Philistines on Mt Perazim, cf. 2 Sam 5:17ff; 1 Chron 14:8ff; battle of Gibeon, cf. Josh 10: 9ff.

Vv. 23-29 have the aura of instruction, indeed the section has similarities to wisdom literature.[73] The question remains as to who is addressed in this passage and what is the function of this segment after the condemnation of vv. 14-22?

The fact that the audience is not named here leads Kaiser to doubt that the poem was composed by Isaiah.[74] Whereas Oswalt and Watts identify the addressees with the leaders of the former section,[75] others do not see a particular audience being addressed.[76]

According to Oswalt it is not certain what the function of the passage is (p. 521). It comes as 'a shock' after the quite different tone of vv. 14-22. Kaiser's opinion is similar; he points out that because of its present context, the segment must have a deeper meaning beyond the one apparent at first reading. This 'hidden sense' can be grasped only from examining the relationship of the passage to its context.[77] Oswalt presents us with several possibilities regarding the function of vv. 23-29: 1) it offers hope (similarly to chs 5 and 6); 2) it relates that 'God is not locked into merely one mode of activity. Those foolish leaders who said that the old God was inadequate for a new age did not even understand nature.' 3) It points to God as the true counsellor in contrast to the foolish leaders. Oswalt prefers the last one as this seems to fit the context best (pp. 521-522). Indeed, it emphasizes the importance of God's instructions; they are simple, make sense and bear result. Even a simple farmer who follows Yahweh's teaching/instruction gets the desired results. His labour will bear fruit, whereas the foolish leaders of the nation will only achieve destruction because they were not willing to listen to the divine instruction, instead they made their covenant with Death (v. 14).

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[73] The opening address, הַאֲזִינוּ וְשִׁמְעוּ קוֹלִי, 'Listen and hear my voice…', is conventional in wisdom literature; cf. Job 33:1; 34:2; 37:14; Ps 49:2; Prov 4:1; 7:24. The Hiphil imv. of the verb אזן occurs in prophetic literature as part of the summons to listen, e.g. Jer 13:15; Hos 5:1; Joel 1:2; Isa 1:2; 10:28; 32:9. It is also found introducing the speech of an important person, e.g. Gen 4.23 (Lamech); Num 23:18 (Balaam); Deut 32:1 (Moses); Judg 5:3 (Deborah).

[74] Kaiser, p. 259.

[75] Oswalt, pp. 522-524; Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, p. 375.

[76] E. g. O'Kane, p. 99.

[77] Kaiser, pp. 58-259.

6.6 Conclusion of *qeteb*

From the discussion above we can conclude that there is no one particular word to translate *qeteb*. The contexts suggest some kind of destructive force that comes from Yahweh as a punishment. Therefore the general 'destruction' or 'scourge' have been used here as these best express what it refers to.

De Moor wrote that 'On the sole basis of the Masoretic text of these passages it cannot be decided whether *qtb* was a demon or not.' [78] However, he and some other scholars appeal to the LXX, Midrashic and ancient Near Eastern material in order to prove otherwise.[79] However, we have seen that the ancient Near Eastern material is scant and questionable. The ancient versions cannot be relied on. They are not consistent in their interpretation of the word. For example in Ps 91 both LXX and Vg do not know what to do with *qeteb* (Vg: *ab incursu*, LXX: συμπτωματος), יָשׁוּד צָהֳרָיִם is taken as referring to a 'noonday demon' (*et daemonio meridiano*, και δαιμονιου μεσημβρινου) and not *qeteb*. De Moor thinks that 'the Septuagint presupposes a different Hebrew text in Ps 91:6.'[80] We have seen a similar problem in Deuteronomy 32 too.[81] In Hosea 13 LXX has κεντρον, Vg *morsus*, meaning 'sting' or 'biting'. In Isaiah 28:2 it is not clear how LXX interpreted *qeteb*, Vg has the sense of destruction and Targ (presumably storm-) 'wind'. Although undoubtedly these can be valuable in tracing the development of the term there is no need to bring in outside evidence to illuminate its function in the Hebrew Bible. That becomes clear from the careful examination of all of its occurrences.

In Ps 91 *qeteb* occurs in the company of *Deber*, the Fowler, the Arrow and Terror, all destructive forces, angels of Yahweh, sent to punish or protect according to Yahweh's plan. In Hosea 13 *Qeteb* appears together with *Deber*, Mot and Sheol, bringing destruction as instruments of Yahweh. The destruction depends on Yahweh's decision, so all four of them are inferior to Yahweh and are ultimately his agents.

Psalm 78 suggested a possible interpretation for *Deber* as one of the מַלְאֲכֵי רָעִים, the Angels of Evil; according to Psalm 91 *Qeteb* and *Deber* are both angels of

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[78] 'O Death…', p. 100.

[79] See above 2.5.

[80] 'O Death…', p. 100.

[81] See n. 20 p. 201 above.

Yahweh. Deuteronomy 32 supports this interpretation of *Qeteb* and extends it to *Reshef*. Yahweh sends his Evils (short for his angels of evil), his Arrows, seven of them this time (Famine, Plague, Bitter Scourge, Fang of Wild Animals, Poison of Snakes, Sword and Terror), at others their number varies. There are five in Ps 91, four in Hosea 13, and three in Isaiah 28. Here, although neither *Deber* nor *Reshef* appears with *Qeteb* there are other agents beside him: Barad (Hail) and Mighty Waters. These agents of Yahweh function as forces of destruction, which come from Yahweh as a punishment for turning away from him and turning to other gods.

We can conclude that in all four passages *Qeteb* appears in a personified sense. However, there is nothing to support a demonological interpretation in any of the passages.[82] *Qeteb* appears as an agent of Yahweh, possibly one of his angels of evil. Furthermore, as in the case of *deber*, there is no evidence to suggest that *qeteb* was the name of one particular angel of Yahweh. Any of Yahweh's angels could be a *qeteb*, a 'scourge', a 'bringer of destruction'. There is no evidence that a mythological figure would lie behind the *qeteb* of the texts in the Hebrew Bible.

[82] Contra Caquot, Wyatt, Gaster, Tromp, etc. cf. 2.5.

CHAPTER 7: *RESHEF* IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

7.1 Introduction

There are seven occurrences of רֶשֶׁף in the Hebrew Bible. These are: 1 Chron 7:25; Deut 32: 24; Hab 3:5; Ps 78:48; Ps 76:4; Job 5:7; and Cant 8:6. It appears to be a personal name of uncertain etymology.[1] Indeed in 1 Chron 7:25 *Reshef* is a proper noun, the name of one of Ephraim's descendants.[2] Chapter 2 has shown that the other six occurrences are generally taken to be references to the West Semitic deity *Reshef*, and because of this deity's association with plague in the ancient Near East, the term in the Old Testament is regarded either as a 'demon' or as appearing completely demythologised.[3] However, it was also shown that there is nothing in the ancient Near Eastern evidence that would point to *Reshef* being regarded as a demon, or as an 'evil' deity. His association with plague and disease was only one of his aspects, the major characteristic being that of a god of war and protector of kings.[4] Thus before any conclusions are drawn regarding the term in the Hebrew Bible it is necessary to examine all the texts in which it occurs.

Therefore this chapter takes a close look at the Old Testament passages where *reshef* occurs with the aim to determine the meaning of the term, whether it is the name of a 'demon' and if there is a mythological figure behind it.

7.2 Deuteronomy 32

In our discussion of Deut 32: 23-25 we have argued that *Reshef* was one of Yahweh's Evils and Arrows that he unleashes to punish Israel. The others were Famine,רָעָב , Bitter Scourge, קֶטֶב מְרִירִי, Fang of Wild Animals, שֶׁן־בְּהֵמוֹת, Poison of Snakes, חֲמַת זֹחֲלֵי עָפָר , Sword, חֶרֶב, and Terror, אֵימָה. We have also argued that these forces are best regarded as personified and as Yahweh's angels, the מַלְאֲכֵי רָעִים of Ps 78.[5]

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[1] HALOT, p. 1297.

[2] HALOT, p. 1298.

[3] See 2.6.5. The meaning of the Hebrew term is usually given as 'plague' or 'pestilence'.

[4] See summary in 2.6.6.

[5] For Deut 32 see 6.4.

7.3 Habbakkuk 3

In Hab 3:5 we have a description of a mighty and awe-inspiring Yahweh whose power is destruction. He is described as a thunder-god and a king with his attendants, *Reshef* and *Deber* around him. Both *Reshef* and *Deber* appear here as secondary divine beings, members of Yahweh's retinue. In fact, in light of the previous discussion they can be regarded as two of Yahweh's angels.[6]

7.4 Psalm 78:48

As we have seen above some commentators take דֶּבֶר in Psalm 78:48 to be referring to the fifth plague in Exodus 9:3. However, on closer examination we have found that it is better to take דֶּבֶר as personified and we suggested identifying it with one of the מַלְאֲכֵי רָעִים.[7]

On the other hand it is possible that we do have a reference to the fifth 'plague' in v. 48. In vv. 44-51 with a series of parallel images the poet recounts (quite liberally and not in exact detail) the 'plagues of Egypt' in order to remind the people of what Yahweh had done for them. Vv. 44-48 recount the turning of the water to blood, sending of the horseflies, frogs, caterpillars, locusts,בָּרָד and רִשְׁפִים.בָּרָד is usually translated as 'hail' and רִשְׁפִים here as 'bolts of lightning'[8] to keep the parallelism.

v. 44	Turned	rivers to *blood* // from streams could not drink		
	וַיַּהֲפֹךְ	לְדָם יְאֹרֵיהֶם	//	וְנִזְלֵיהֶם בַּל־יִשְׁתָּיוּן
v. 45	Sent	*flies* that devoured	// *frogs* that devastated	
	יְשַׁלַּח	עָרֹב	//	וּצְפַרְדֵּעַ
v. 46	Gave	crops to *grasshopper* // produce to *locust*		
	וַיִּתֵּן	לֶחָסִיל	//	לָאַרְבֶּה
v. 47	Destroyed	vines by *hail*	// sycamore figs by *sleet*	
	יַהֲרֹג	בַּבָּרָד	//	בַּחֲנָמַל
v. 48	Gave over	cattle to *barad*	// livestock to *reshafim*	
	וַיַּסְגֵּר	לַבָּרָד	//	לָרְשָׁפִים

[6] For Hab 3 see 5.2.3.

[7] For Ps 78 see 5.5.10.

[8] NIV, KJV, RSV and NJB have 'thunderbolts', LXX: 'fire'.

The suggestion to change בָּרָד to דֶּבֶר here makes sense;[9] the parallelism is kept and it culminates in the disease/plagues pair. Thus v. 48 would read:

> He gave over to *deber* their cattle, and their livestock to the *reshafim*. Or
> He gave over to *disease* their cattle and their livestock to *the plagues.*

Caquot and Fulco are both proponents of changing the reading of בָּרָד to דֶּבֶר in v. 48. For Caquot not only is the occurrence of 'hail' in v.48 'surprising', but a change would restore the pair *Deber – Reshef* of Hab 3:5 in this passage too. He regards them both as 'demons', but he goes further and suggests that perhaps *Barad* is a 'demon' too.[10] Fulco does not support this latter proposition but agrees with the former one. For him *Deber* and *Reshefs* are 'malevolent spirits accompanying God in his destructive wake' (p. 59).

In fact we have two possibilities here. Firstly, if we take דֶּבֶר and רְשָׁפִים as common nouns, *deber* would mean the disease that smote the cattle in Egypt and *reshafim* would refer to the destruction in general, the various kinds of 'plagues' that are listed in the verses above. Secondly, the following verses however, indicate that they should be regarded as personified and as members of the Angels of Evil. In this case the devastation in vv. 44-48 can be regarded as their work. They are Yahweh's agents of punishment causing destruction on his command, but there is nothing to suggest that they would be 'malevolent spirits'.

7.5 Psalm 76:4

v. 4

שָׁמָּה שָׁבַר רִשְׁפֵי־קֶשֶׁת מָגֵן וְחֶרֶב וּמִלְחָמָה סֶלָה׃

The psalm can be divided as follows:

V.1: Title
Vv. 2-4: Of the greatness of *Elohim*
- v. 2 His name is known
- v. 3 His dwelling-place is known
- v. 4 His might is known

[9] Cf. BHS crit. app.; Caquot, 'Quelques', pp. 61-62; Fulco, p.59.

[10] 'Quelques', p. 61.

Vv. 5-11: Addressing *Elohim* with praise

- v. 5 *Elohim* is majestic
- Vv. 6-7 His power and might shown in the extent of his destruction
- vv. 8-11 God's anger, judgement results in people's fear and praise

Vv. 12-13: Call to worship God (the One to be feared)

- v.12 calling people to make vows and bring gifts
- v.13 affirming God's power: he is to be feared indeed

Some commentators argue that this is a historic psalm, i.e. it was composed after a specific event.[11] Thematically it is related to Ps 46 and 48.[12]

Verse 1 identifies the psalm as one of the Asaph psalms.[13]

Vv. 2-4 are a song of praise of God (אֱלֹהִים). The poet talks of God in the 3rd person and in general terms, his name and place of presence are known in the whole of Israel.

v. 2a	Elohim is known in *Judah*	נוֹדָע בִּיהוּדָה אֱלֹהִים
v. 2b	his name great in *Israel*	בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל גָּדוֹל שְׁמוֹ
v. 3a	his tent[14] is in *Salem*	בְּשָׁלֵם סֻכּוֹ

[11] This seems to be supported by LXX which adds 'a song for the Assyrian' and thus cf. 2 Kgs 19; Isa 37; also by Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2,* p. 263. A reflection of the Davidic era (cf. A. Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, OT Library (London: SCM Press, 1971), p. 526), as well as a possible victory in Maccabean times (A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1972), II, p. 551) were also suggested. More likely, as Anderson (p. 551) and Tate also point out, the psalm reflects the whole 'salvation-history' of Israel and not one specific event (p. 263).

[12] On the similarities as well as differences see the detailed analysis of Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, pp. 261-262.

[13] A 'song', cf. Pss 18; 45-46; 48; 65-68; 75-76; 83; 87-88; 92; 108. Hossfeld and Zenger point out that of the 12 Asaf psalms only Pss 75, 76 and 83 are 'songs' (*Psalms 2*, p. 264).

[14] Dahood, *Psalms II*, p. 218; Tate, p. 261 and Hossfeld & Zenger, *Psalms 2*: 'his covert/lair'. They argue that סך and מעון / מענה often appear together designating the lion's lair (cf. Job 38:40; Jer 25:38; Ps 10:9; for סך; Am 3:4; Nah 2:13; Ps 104:22 for מענה / מעון as the lion's den; Jer 8:10; 10:22; 49:33; 51:37 as the jackals' den) and thus they argue that 'The psalm … begins with the grating metaphor of YHWH, who has established on Zion his "dwelling" as a "camping place" … in order to lurk there, as a watching lion, awaiting the wicked – and this very metaphor is then further developed in the course of the psalm. From that point of view the two nouns סך and מענה must be translated accordingly, not with "tabernacle/tent" and "abode/dwelling place", but with "hiding place" and "camp".'(pp. 260 and 264-266) In fact, of the examples given only in Job 38:40 do the two words appear together. In all the other examples the lion/jackal is specifically mentioned thus the designation of the words as 'lair/den' is obvious. However in the present psalm there is nothing to suggest that Yahweh as a lion is meant; it is Yahweh the warrior who is the focus of the praise. The context supports the 'tent' / 'dwelling-place' translation.

v. 3b	his dwelling	in *Zion*	וּמְעוֹנָתוֹ בְּצִיּוֹן

V. 4 continues Yahweh's praise turning now to his deeds that reflect a mighty warrior.

v. 4a	there he broke the *reshefs-of-the bow*		שָׁמָּה שִׁבַּר רִשְׁפֵי־קֶשֶׁת
v. 4b		the shields	מָגֵן
		and swords	וְחֶרֶב
		and the battle	וּמִלְחָמָה

The רִשְׁפֵי־קֶשֶׁת here is unique and difficult. The versions did not know what to do with it and are thus rather vague in their translations.[15]

It is usually taken as referring to arrows and is thus rendered accordingly.[16] The Bible versions give 'flashing arrows',[17] or 'lightning flashes of the bow',[18] and the commentators usually follow, some with more liberal translations. Thus Dahood has 'with his thunderbolts he shattered the bow',[19] similarly Weiser, 'the lightnings of the bow'.[20] Although he recognized the mythological dimension of the expression, his translation does not mirror this. Following NIV and RSV, A. Anderson also translates 'flashing arrows' though notes that literally it means 'the flames of the bow', taking thus רֶשֶׁף as meaning 'flames'. Similarly to Weiser, he sees the origins of the metaphor in mythology, i.e. the arrows are the lightnings of the storm god.[21] Caquot thinks that the 'mythological colouration' of the term in itself is not enough to justify the 'lightning' interpretation. He argues that one must know whether the psalm refers to Yahweh's supernatural enemies or historical ones. In the latter case the expression 'would have to mean arrows, the sword and the spear (in a) purely material (sense)'.[22] Caquot himself prefers to translate the expression as 'les traits de

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[15] LXX has τα κρατη, 'the power' of the bow; similarly Vg has *potentias*; P 'the arms of the bow'.

[16] Thus HALOT, p. 1298: 'רִשְׁפֵי־קֶשֶׁת flames (or lightning flashes) from the bow, meaning arrows.'

[17] CJB, NIV and RSV; KJV has 'arrows of the bow' and JPS: 'fiery shafts'.

[18] NJB.

[19] *Psalms II*, p. 217. He takes רִשְׁפֵי as 'an accusative of means', the suffix being that of 'the third person masculine singular following a plural substantive'.

[20] Pp. 524 and 527. He writes: 'In a poetical metaphor the poet speaks of arrows as "lightnings of the bow"; this image probably originated in a mythological conception according to which the lightnings were regarded as the arrows of the god who appeared in the storm-clouds.'

[21] *Psalms*, p. 552.

[22] 'Quelques', p. 62.

l'arc'. Following Anderson, Tate also takes רֶשֶׁף as 'flames';רִשְׁפֵי־קֶשֶׁת for him being 'a poetic reference either to the swiftness of the arrows or to incendiary arrows - probably the latter' (p. 261). Thus he translates the expression as 'the fiery arrow'. More recently Hossfeld and Zenger also translated 'the flashes of the bow' taking it to refer to the 'burning arrows'.[23] Xella translates the expression רִשְׁפֵי־קֶשֶׁת literally as 'the *Resheps* of the bow' and relates it to 'the imagery of the god armed with bow and arrows' (p. 703).

Similarly to the ancient versions, modern commentators do not really know what to do with this expression. Some recognize that there is an underlying mythological element. However, they take this to be a reference to *Reshef*, the god of lightning or thunder. Such interpretation is possible but would not be consistent with the meaning of רֶשֶׁף in other passages which is that of destruction ('plague') of war.[24] The context here is that of a battle and destruction (the words 'sword', 'shield', 'bow' occur in such context). The similarity of this verse to v. 10 of Ps 46 is striking. There too Yahweh breaks (מַשְׁבִּית) the bow (קֶשֶׁת), shatters the spear (וְקִצֵּץ חֲנִית), and burns the shields with fire (עֲגָלוֹת יִשְׂרֹף בָּאֵשׁ). The word 'bow', קֶשֶׁת frequently occurs with 'sword',[25] 'shield' (מָגֵן),[26] 'spear' (כִּידוֹן)[27] or 'arrow' (חֵץ).[28] The expression 'breaking of the bow' occurs in several passages, e.g. Jer 49:35;[29] Hos 1:5;[30] Zec 9:10;[31] (Zec 9:13 bending the bow), all related to war. In some instances we find the (battle) bow personified, as for example in Zec 10:4. There the Bow of Battle (קֶשֶׁת מִלְחָמָה), the Cornerstone (פִּנָּה), and the Tent-peg (יָתֵד) are clearly in parallel with the 'every ruler' (כָּל־נוֹגֵשׂ). In Job 20:24 the 'Bow of Bronze' (קֶשֶׁת נְחוּשָׁה) will cut through the one who flees, and in Job 41: 20 the Son of the Bow (בֶּן־קֶשֶׁת) cannot make one flee.

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[23] *Psalms 2*, pp. 259 and 265. They do not comment on רִשְׁפֵי־קֶשֶׁת.

[24] See discussion of *reshef* in the other passages.

[25] E.g. Isa 21:15.

[26] E.g. Jer 46:9; 2 Chron 17:17.

[27] E.g. Jer 6:23.

[28] E.g. Jer 50:14.

[29] Yahweh shall break the 'bow of Elam' (שֹׁבֵר אֶת־קֶשֶׁת עֵילָם).

[30] Yahweh shall break the 'bow of Israel' (וְשָׁבַרְתִּי אֶת־קֶשֶׁת יִשְׂרָאֵל).

[31] The battle bow will be broken (וְנִכְרְתָה קֶשֶׁת מִלְחָמָה).

I suggest that Bow here is used in parallel with Battle, Sword and Shield as aspects of the Battle. רִשְׁפֵי־קֶשֶׁת, the Plagues-of-the-Bow represent the destruction that follows war. The poet personified them in order to represent both the superhuman and human enemies that threaten Yahweh's people. However, we have seen that these can also be agents that Yahweh uses in order to punish those who deserve it. It is not clear what role they have here, whether they are enemies of God's people or are agents of punishment. Both are possible. Perhaps the poet was purposefully ambiguous.

This double meaning runs through vv. 5-11. The poet addresses God directly and praises him; his majesty and might (v. 5) are shown in the extent of the destruction he causes (v. 6). Yahweh's anger (v. 8) and judgement (v. 9 and 10) can be directed against his people as well as against his people's enemies. The *merismus* heaven-earth (מִשָּׁמַיִם... אֶרֶץ) in v. 9 encompasses everyone. The poet asks (v. 8):

וּמִי־יַעֲמֹד לְפָנֶיךָ מֵאָז אַפֶּךָ, 'who can stand before you when you are angry?'

The result of God's wrath is that everyone fears (vv. 9, 13) and praises him (vv. 11, 12).

God's judgement however also saves (v. 10); he delivers (לְהוֹשִׁיעַ) all the afflicted[32] of the earth (כָּל־עַנְוֵי־אֶרֶץ). We have seen it elsewhere too[33] that God judges, punishes but also saves and delivers those who put their faith in him. In Hosea 2:18(20) God declares:

> In that day I will make a covenant for them
> With the beasts of the field and the birds of the air
> And the creatures that move along the ground.
> Bow and sword and battle
> I will abolish from the land,
> So that all may lie down in safety. (NIV)

The connection of the second half of this verse with v. 4 of Ps 76 is striking. 'Abolishing' the bow, sword and battle is the same as breaking them. In fact the same Hebrew word שׁבר is used in the Hosea passage as in the Psalm.[34] Perhaps the

[32] Cf. Isa 49:13; Ps 9:12; 10:17; 22:24; 72: 4; etc.

[33] See for example the Jeremiah and Ezekiel passages in 5.3 and 5.4.

[34] אֶשְׁבּוֹר in Hos 2:20 and שְׁבַר in Ps 76:4.

idea of making a covenant with the once threatening forces as in the Hosea passage also underlies the saving of the afflicted in the psalm.

Therefore in v. 12 the poet emphatically calls his audience (with a Qal and Piel imperative, as well as a Hiphil verb) to make vows (נִדְּרוּ),[35] and fulfil them (וְשַׁלְּמוּ), to bring offerings (יוֹבִילוּ שַׁי) to God (לַמּוֹרָא// אֱלֹהֵיכֶם); emphasizing his power for the last time:

v. 13a he cuts off the spirit of rulers	יִבְצֹר רוּחַ נְגִידִים
v. 13b he is feared by the kings of the earth	נוֹרָא לְמַלְכֵי־אָרֶץ

From the discussion above we have seen that in this passage *Reshef* appears personified together with other instruments of war, Bow, Battle, Sword and Shield. We suggested translating רִשְׁפֵּי־קֶשֶׁת as Plagues-of -the-Bow, meaning the destruction that is connected or follows a battle, that being destruction in general or the outbreak of infectious diseases that was common after war. The word 'plague' has the advantage of carrying both of these possibilities, especially if there is a mythological figure underlying the word *reshef* here. If such was the case, *Reshef*, in his aspect of war and plague god, would come into mind.

7.6 Job 5:7

v. 7

כִּי־אָדָם לְעָמָל יוּלָּד וּבְנֵי־רֶשֶׁף יַגְבִּיהוּ עוּף׃

The passage can be divided as follows:

Vv. 1-7: There is no help from anyone; one's own foolishness is the cause of one's troubles

v.1: which Holy One (מִקְּדֹשִׁים) could help Job?

vv. 2-5: consequences of foolishness (אֱוִיל)

vv. 6-7: Eliphaz's judgement: Job's troubles must have had a cause

vv. 8 -16: God helps; description of his saving acts

vv. 17 -26: God protects;

v. 27: all this is true

[35] Cf. Judg. 11:39; 2 Sam 15: 7, 8; Jer 44: 25; Jon 1:16. Tate notes that the underlying idea might be of vows having been made in times of danger (p. 265).

Chapter 5 is a continuation of ch. 4; both containing Eliphaz' speech to Job.[36] Eliphaz' response to Job's cry for deliverance at first glance seems a strange comfort to a sufferer. There is no one to help him; he can cry out in vain there is no one to answer him. Which Holy One will he turn to? (v. 1)[37] Some scholars believe that קְדֹשִׁים is an epithet of God and thus the meaning of the phrase would be, who else rather than the Holy One could Job turn to? [38] However, it is more likely that קְדֹשִׁים refers to Yahweh's angels (מַלְאָכָיו), his servants (עֲבָדָיו) of whom ch 4 v. 18 speaks.[39] Perhaps Eliphaz is implying that turning to them (or one of them) would constitute an act of foolishness as they are unable to help Job. (Help can only come from God as we shall see later in the next two sections.) The preposition כִּי at the beginning of v. 2 can be seen to support this.[40]

כִּי־לְאֱוִיל יַהֲרֶג־כָּעַשׂ וּפֹתֶה תָּמִית קִנְאָה׃

For anger destroys the *fool* and jealousy kills the *foolish*.

The verse is well balanced; every verb, subject and object has its parallel:

(vb.)[41]	destroys // kills		תָּמִית // יַהֲרֶג
(subj.)	anger	// jealousy	קִנְאָה // כָּעַשׂ
(obj.)	fool	// foolish	וּפֹתֶה // לְאֱוִיל

The two words, אֱוִיל and פֹּתֶה used for the 'fool' in parallelism[42] as objects are placed first, probably for emphasis.[43]

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[36] For a structural analysis of chs 4-5 see e.g. D. J. A. Clines, *Job 1-20*, WBC 17 (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), pp. 119-120.

[37] E. Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, transl. by H. H. Rowley (London: Thomas Nelson, 1967) places v. 1 after v. 7 and v. 2 after 4:21 (p. 57).

[38] R. Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation and Special Studies* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978), pp. 51-52.

[39] Cf. Hos 11: 12 (12: 1); Zech 14: 5; Dan 4:10, 14, 20; 8:13; Ps 89:7(8). So also M. H. Pope, *Job: Introduction, Translation and Notes*, AB (Garden City: Doubleday, 1973), p. 41/ Notes.

[40] Some take כִּי to be an emphatic particle, 'surely'. E.g. J. E. Hartley, *The Book of Job* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), p. 115 n. 2; J. C. L. Gibson, *Job* (Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1985), p. 43; Gordis, *Job*, p. 52.

[41] P renders the two verbs by the same one, 'kill' (Dhorme, p. 57).

[42] פֹּתֶה is the participle of the verb and not the adjective, and its meaning is determined by the parallel term אֱוִיל. P renders both terms by the same noun, 'madman' (Dhorme, p. 57).

[43] Gordis, *Job*, p. 52; Hartley, *Job*, p. 115.

Many scholars regard this verse as an ancient proverb with the 'foolish' referring to the 'wicked' in general.[44] However, it is also possible that Eliphaz had Job in mind if he considered turning for help to others rather than Yahweh. Vv. 2-5 list the consequences of such foolishness.

v. 3	his house cursed	וְאֶקְוֹב (קבב)[45]
v. 4	his children destroyed – i.e. crushed to dust	וְיִדַּכְּאוּ [46]
	far from deliverance	יִרְחֲקוּ מִיֵּשַׁע
	no one to save/deliver them	וְאֵין מַצִּיל
v. 5	his harvest the hungry devour	קְצִירוֹ רָעֵב יֹאכֵל

A literal translation of v. 5 is very difficult, and there are various attempts.[47]

Vv. 6-7 do not testify of Eliphaz' compassion. He believes that all trouble and hardship must have a cause, they do not appear out of nowhere. The parallel terms of this well-balanced verse emphasize Eliphaz' meaning:

v. 6a	trouble	אָוֶן	did not come out	לֹא־יֵצֵא	from dust	מֵעָפָר
v. 6b	hardship	עָמָל	did not spring up	לֹא־יִצְמַח	from ground	מֵאֲדָמָה

Eliphaz seems to be implying that the cause of suffering lies ultimately in the person who suffers; it is man, i.e. Job himself that is the cause of his own trials and tribulations.

v. 7a	man is born to trouble	כִּי־אָדָם לְעָמָל יוּלָּד
v. 7b	and the *sons of reshef* are flying high	וּבְנֵי־רֶשֶׁף יַגְבִּיהוּ עוּף

This verse, and particularly the phrase 'the *sons of reshef*', is one of the most disputed of Job 5. To some it is an allusion to some flying 'demons', and to others

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[44] N. Whybray, *Job* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), p. 45; Hartley, *Job*, p.117/2; Gordis, *Job*, p. 52; Pope, *Job*, p. 42 cf. Prov. 14:30.

[45] MT has Eliphaz doing the cursing which makes the verse difficult to translate. Some scholars suggest emending the text (cf. LXX taking the verb as passive, 'their habitation was devoured') and reading the verb as passive. E.g. Pope, *Job*, p. 40; so also NIV: 'was cursed'; NJB: 'a curse fell'. Gordis, *Job*, suggests taking וָאֶקְוֹב in a declarative sense and thus: 'I declared cursed' (p. 52). This suggestion is followed by Hartley, *Job*, p. 115. Clines, p. 107 (and notes on p. 114f.) RSV and KJV translate with MT 'I cursed'. MT is preferred because of the parallelism in the verse: וָאֶקְוֹב // רָאִיתִי both 1st sg. verbs. The emphasis is not on who is doing the cursing but on the fact that the foolish person's house is cursed as a result of his foolishness.

[46] Cf. Ps 90:3.

[47] See discussions in Dhorme, pp. 59-60. He inserts 4: 21a between 5:b and c. See also Pope, *Job*, p. 42; Gordis, *Job*, p. 53-54; Clines, pp. 115-116 and 122-123.

simply an ancient saying that has lost its meaning. To Caquot it is both. He regards the בְּנֵי־רֶשֶׁף as 'winged demons inhabiting the space between sky and earth'. He argues that MT thus makes perfect sense; a human being's suffering does not come from earth but from the demons above.[48] Further, Caquot argues that the author of Job here made use of a proverbial saying in which a mythological image had crystallized. This expression would have had meaning to the author but by the time of the later translators its meaning was lost. They did not know who the בְּנֵי־רֶשֶׁף were and translated it as 'birds' probably to fit in with the following verb. This is unlikely. It is clear that the versions have found it difficult to render בְּנֵי־רֶשֶׁף because of its mythological character and thus had altered the expression deliberately, interpreting it variously.[49]

Modern scholars also differ in their understanding of this verse. Thus Dhorme suggests pointing יוּלָּד as יוֹלִד making the verb Hiphil, and thus allowing him to translate v. 7a as 'it is man who engenders trouble'. He then identifies בְּנֵי־רֶשֶׁף as the sons of lightning, i.e. the eagle.[50] Similarly to Dhorme, Gordis also reads the Hiphil form of the verb ילד, thus making man responsible for 'producing' trouble. The בְּנֵי־רֶשֶׁף for him could be referring either to 'the sparks of lightning' or to the West Semitic deity *Reshef*, and thus referring to the 'shafts of the pestilence.' He seems to prefer the first, as he translates the expression, 'the sparks fly upwards'.[51]

While Pope and Hartley, although seeing a mythological reference to the god *Reshef* in the בְּנֵי־רֶשֶׁף, are still undecided, Clines and Whybray definitely think that *Reshef* in his role as god of pestilence is referred to in v. 7b, and so translate it accordingly.[52] Clines and Whybray are right in taking רֶשֶׁף in its meaning of 'plague'/'pestilence' or 'destruction' (cf. Deut. 32:24; Hab 3:5). This is supported by the occurrence in the

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[48] He writes: '…l'homme est né pour souffrir et le malheur vient, non pas de la terre (v. 6), mais des demons qui volent dans le ciel hors de l'atteinte des homes qu'ils accablent.' ('Quelques', p. 60)

[49] As Dhorme points out 1st Targ reads 'sons of the demons' (p. 61). The other versions interpret it variously. 2nd Targ has 'the sparks which shoot from coals of fire'; Greek versions, P and Vg see the name of a bird.

[50] *Job*, pp. 61-62.

[51] *Job*, pp. 44, 55. So also Gibson without commenting on the 'sons of *reshef*' (pp. 44-48).

[52] Pope, *Job*, although giving 'Reshef's sons' as his translation, also thinks rendering the expression as 'flames' make sense (pp. 42-43). Hartley (*Job*, p. 116 n. 12 and p. 119) keeps his options open; he prefers 'sparks' but if the mythological interpretation is accepted he thinks that 'the "sons of Resheph" would be "the plagues" that ascend from the lower world to curse human beings (cf. Deut. 32:24; Hab. 3:5).' Clines has 'sons of Pestilence' (p. 107); and Whybray 'sons of rešep' (p. 46).

next section (vv. 17- 26) of the 'sword', 'famine', 'wild animals', 'six/seven calamities', etc., words that frequently appear together with words referring to destruction. However, they both fail to see the mythological reference as a poetic device and thus impose a demonological interpretation. Hartley sees the 'sons of *Reshef*' as 'underworld demons of pestilence', and Whybray as 'demonic figures associated with' *Reshef*.[53] In fact there is no basis for seeing the בְּנֵי־רֶשֶׁף as 'demons'.

The connection of v. 6b and 7 is made clear by the repetition of עָמָל and the play on the words אֲדָמָה and אָדָם, and if we accept the re-pointing of the verb יוּלָד to read the Hiphil יוֹלִד (as suggested by BHS crit. app. and most scholars), the antithesis also becomes apparent, and Eliphaz' meaning emphasised. Trouble did not spring from earth, for it is man who 'begets' (i.e. causes) trouble. As in many other cases, whenever the Israelites turned away from Yahweh and turned to other gods they brought his punishment down upon themselves. Here too, Eliphaz might be implying that if Job is seeking help from other 'Holy Ones' rather than Yahweh, he would be bringing trouble, i.e. punishment down on himself. Yahweh's punishment was always total destruction carried out by his agents/ angels (his 'Holy Ones') in various forms. His Scourges could be the Sword, Famine, Wild Animals, Plague/Pestilence, etc.

As in Hos 13:14 *Deber* and *Qeteb* appeared along with Mot and Sheol as instruments of the agents of Yahweh, carrying out punishment on His behalf, so here too, we suggest that we should regard the *sons of Reshef* as well as *Reshef*, as agents of Yahweh. His/their function is to bring destruction ('plague') as a punishment from Yahweh.

The above suggestion finds support in the following sections of ch. 5.

In v. 8 Eliphaz makes it clear that the right way is to turn to Yahweh for help as he himself does.

אוּלָם אֲנִי אֶדְרֹשׁ אֶל־אֵל וְאֶל־אֱלֹהִים אָשִׂים דִּבְרָתִי׃

But as for me, I appeal to El, and to Elohim I submit my cause.

[53] Hartley, *Job*, p.142; Whybray, p. 46. So also Xella, p. 703 and Caquot, 'Quelques', pp. 59-62.

The assonance makes v. 8 really very striking. All but the last of nine words begin with an aleph. The play on the names of God אֵל־אֵל; אֱלֹהִים is lost in the translations.

Vv. 9-16 present a conventional doxology. This hymn of praise recounts Yahweh's deeds using the poetical device of parallelism.

The faithful should put their trust in him because:

v. 9a	He makes great things //	עֹשֶׂה גְדֹלוֹת
v. 9b	and wonderful (things);[54]	נִפְלָאוֹת
v. 10a	he gives rain on (the face of) the earth //	הַנֹּתֵן מָטָר עַל־פְּנֵי־אָרֶץ
v. 10b	sends water (on the face of) the open places;[55]	וְשֹׁלֵחַ מַיִם עַל־פְּנֵי חוּצוֹת
v. 11a	he raises the lowly //	לָשׂוּם שְׁפָלִים לְמָרוֹם
v. 11b	and lifts the bereaved;[56]	וְקֹדְרִים שָׂגְבוּ יֶשַׁע
v. 12	he breaks the plots of the crafty;[57] //	מֵפֵר מַחְשְׁבוֹת עֲרוּמִים
v. 13	he ensnares the cunning;	לֹכֵד חֲכָמִים
v. 15a	he saves from the sword[58] //	וַיּוֹשַׁע מֵחֶרֶב
v. 15b	and from the hand of the mighty;	וּמִיַּד חָזָק

It is not clear whether Eliphaz recounts God's acts because he is trying to comfort Job or is perhaps reminding him that Yahweh can reverse his fate (cf. Ps 91).[59]

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[54] Cf. Job 9:10; 37:5; Pss 71:19; 136:4; 145: 6; Deut 10:21, Qoh 43:32; etc. Yahweh's wonders are linked with the exodus in Pss 78:4; 106:22; with other historical acts in Pss 105:5; 106:7; with his creation in Pss 107:24; 135:4. See also Dhorme, p. 63.

[55] Gordis, *Job*, notes that rain was considered a 'wonder' in the ANE cf. Jer 10: 13-16 (p. 56); and Clines that its '*transforming* power' was significant (pp. 144-145). Cf. Job 36:27ff.; 38:25ff.; Pss 104:11; 147:8; Eccl. 43:22. See also Dhorme, pp. 63-64.

[56] Cf. Job 22:29; 36:7b; 1 Sam 2:8; Ps 18:28; 75:8; 113:7-8; 147: 6. Gordis, *Job*, notes that קֹדְרִים does not refer to the mourning ones here (as e.g. Jer 8:21; Ps 35:14) but rather it means 'afflicted, miserable, poverty-stricken' cf. Prov. 22:29; Ps 10:8, 14 and Targ (p. 56). For Targum and other versions of this verse see Dhorme, p. 64.

[57] Gordis, *Job*, notes that עֲרוּמִים has a positive meaning ('prudence') in Prov 1:4; 8:5,12; it can also be used in the sense of 'cunning, crafty' cf. Gen 3:1. See also Isa 32:7; Mic 3:1-3; 7:3 (p. 56).

[58] V. 15a is difficult. Various emendations are suggested. See for ex. Dhorme, pp. 66-67; Gordis, *Job*, p. 57; Hartley, *Job*, p. 120 n. 6; Clines, p. 117. Reading מפי חרב, 'from the mouth (i.e. edge) of the sword' would make most sense as it would parallel מיד חזק, 'from the hand of the mighty' perfectly. It is the personified Sword and Yahweh's mighty one that bring destruction (cf. Isa 28).

[59] Clines, p. 144.

The next section, vv. 17-26 is introduced by הִנֵּה[60], 'behold' thus drawing the reader's attention to what is to follow. One should be happy (אַשְׁרֵי) that God (שַׁדַּי//אֱלוֹהַּ)[61] corrects him/her (יוֹכִחֶנּוּ) and should not reject (אַל־תִּמְאָס) his teaching (v. 17). Then Eliphaz elaborates on what Yahweh's teaching method is like.[62] The poet uses contrasting images as well as parallelism to illustrate it vividly introducing it with two short words: כִּי הוּא, 'for (God) is he who':

v. 18a cause pain/wounds	יַכְאִיב	⇔	but binds up	וְיֶחְבָּשׁ
v. 18b strikes	יִמְחָץ	⇔	his hands heal	תִּרְפֶּינָה

God does not only teach but he delivers, and his saving act has positive consequences.

v. 19 a+b will rescue you יַצִּילֶךָּ therefore evil will not touch you לֹא־יִגַּע בְּךָ רָע

Using the number sequence six/seven (בְּשֵׁשׁ / וּבְשֶׁבַע) heightens the tension in the verse. There are seven calamities/distresses (צָרוֹת)[63] that Yahweh saves from.[64] These remind us of the seven scourges, there called 'evils' (רָעוֹת) and 'my arrows', (חִצַּי) in Deut 32:23-25.[65]

The following verses list these distresses:[66]

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[60] Some suggest deleting it (e.g. LXX, P, Vg, Pope, NIV, NJB do not translate it) but Gordis, *Job*, p. 58; Clines, p. 117, are against this. KJV, RSV, Gibson, p. 49; Hartley, *Job*, p.123, and Whybray, p. 47, keep it and have 'behold'. Dhorme translates 'therefore' (p. 67).

[61] Here the name *Shadday* appears for the first time in Job. There are 48 occurrences in the OT, mostly in Job (30). The etymology is uncertain. LXX renders Παντοκρατωρ, Vg *Domini*, P 'the Mighty'. See discussion in Pope, *Job*, p. 44; Hartley, *Job*, p. 123 n. 1; Clines, *Job 1-20*, p. 149. It is interesting to note that this divine name was also common in the patriarchal narratives (e.g. Gen 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; Exod 6:2-3).

[62] This reminds us of the father-son relationship of Yahweh and Israel, cf. Deut. 32:5-6.

[63] Cf. Job 27: 9. Dhorme, *Job*, notes the use of the Hiphil, יַצִּילֶךָּ with צָרוֹת 'to denote the idea of deliverance from calamity' elsewhere in 1 Sam 26:24; Ps 54:9 (p. 69).

[64] On the number of the calamities see note 66 below.

[65] Compare Ezek. 14:13-20.

[66] Pope, *Job*, remarks that the use of the 'graded numerical idiom' is common in Ugaritic and Hebrew poetry, cf. Amos 1:3-13; 2:1-6; Mic 5:4; Prov 6:16; 30:15, 18, 29; Qoh 11:2; 25:7 (p. 44f/19). Some commentators (e.g. Dhorme, p. 69; Whybray, p. 48) argue that one should not attempt to find exactly six or seven calamities that Yahweh saves from, they are meant to encompass all kinds of evil. Others go to great length to identify exactly seven distresses. For example Gordis, *Job*, enlists the following 'mass disasters': famine, war, fire, flood, drought, rocks, and wild beasts. To find these he identifies חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה with חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ ; finds that רעב and כפן are different kinds of starvation, and takes לְשֹׁד וּלְכָפָן as a hendiadys 'the devastation of drought'; regards שׁוֹט לָשׁוֹן as an ellipsis for שׁוֹט לָשׁוֹן אֵשׁ (hence 'fire'); and שוד as 'flood' (pp. 58-59). On these see the critique of Clines, p. 151. He

1) famine רָעָב (מָוֶת) (v. 20a) // hunger כָּפָן (v. 22a)
2) sword חָרֶב (מִלְחָמָה) (v. 20b)
3) scourge שׁוֹט (לָשׁוֹן) (v. 21a)
4) destruction שֹׁד (v. 21b + 22a)
5) beasts of the earth חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ (v. 22b) // beasts of the field חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה (23b)
6) stones of the field אַבְנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה (v. 23a)[67]
7) poverty (caused by theft/loss of property) (v. 24)
8) loss of children (v. 25)
9) early death (v. 26)

The latter three calamities are alluded to in vv. 24-26 and not spelled out as such. The negation of these disasters carries in itself the blessing that one can expect as a consequence of Yahweh's saving act. Because he delivers (יַצִּילֶךָּ , v. 19) and ransoms (פָּדְךָ , v. 20) from every disaster; and protects (lit. hides, חָבֵא, v. 21) one can have no fear and should not fear any longer (לֹא־תִירָא and אַל־תִּירָא , v. 21+22) , one can laugh (תִּשְׂחָק, v. 22) and even have covenant (בְּרִיתֶךָ , v. 23) and peace (הָשְׁלְמָה־לָּךְ , v. 23) with those that threatened them. The believer will know security (שָׁלוֹם אָהֳלֶךָ , v. 24), prosperity (וּפָקַדְתָּ נָוְךָ וְלֹא תֶחֱטָא , v. 24), will be blessed with countless descendants (רַב זַרְעֶךָ v. 25) and a long life (תָּבוֹא בְכֶלַח אֱלִי־קֶבֶר , v. 26).

Finally v. 27 concludes (in prose) Eliphaz' speech. It is a 'summary appraisal' which 'proffers the final clue to its tonality and purpose.'[68] All that has been said contains not only Eliphaz' words but also the wisdom of others (the 'we' of the verb חקר, 'we examined', חֲקַרְנוּהָ). Now it is up to Job to apply all this to himself, וְאַתָּה דַּע־לָךְ .

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also gives two different sets of seven calamities. However, the point lies not in the number of distresses listed (as Clines also writes: 'The general point is in any case totally unaffected by our ability to determine seven distinct calamities.') but in Yahweh's power to save the believer from them. Yahweh is the only one who commands and controls these forces; they are his angels, the קְדֹשִׁים who act on his behalf.

[67] Stones of the field are not usually listed as one of Yahweh's scourges but it is used in a personified sense in Hab 2:11 (stone will cry out); Zech 3:9 (has seven eyes). It represents danger in Prov 26:27; Num 35:23, and it is deadly (bringer of death i.e. stoning) in a number of other passages, e.g. Lam. 3:53; Ezek 23:47; 2 Chron 10:18; 24:21; 1Kgs 12:18; Lev 24:23. Dhorme referring to Mt 13:5 argues that 'the stones of the field are a real scourge, for they prevent fertility (p. 71/23). And they are precisely one of the means employed to devastate a country that is hostile (2 Kgs 3:19).' Similarly Clines, p. 152. For other interpretation see Gordis, *Job*, pp. 59-60; Hartley, *Job*, p. 124 n. 10.

[68] Clines, p. 153.

7.7 Canticles 8:6

v. 6

שִׂימֵנִי כַחוֹתָם עַל־לִבֶּךָ כַּחוֹתָם עַל־זְרוֹעֶךָ כִּי־עַזָּה כַמָּוֶת אַהֲבָה קָשָׁה כִשְׁאוֹל
קִנְאָה רְשָׁפֶיהָ רִשְׁפֵי אֵשׁ שַׁלְהֶבֶתְיָה׃

Scholars are divided on the issue of the unity of Canticles. A. Brenner is a proponent of the 'verbal interpretation'[69] arguing convincingly for it to be a 'collection of love lyrics' rather than a single poem.[70] Canticles has no narrative unity, any attempt to find a plot is forced.[71] Brenner asserts that the 'subject matter and theme' of this 'anthology of lyrics' is 'sexual love'; its components 'are strung together by various and fairly loose principles of organization.' Such intrepretation implies that 'the text should be taken at face value and interpreted accordingly.'[72]

Here we follow Brenner and the NJB. NJB sees five poems and an epilogue present, the epilogue consisting of ch. 8 vv. 5-7. The poems are not relevant for our purposes thus we shall concentrate on the epilogue in our analysis.

V. 5 is usually taken as the first part being spoken by a chorus/friends and the second part beginning the Beloved's poem about love.

V. 5a: introduction:

מִי זֹאת עֹלָה מִן־הַמִּדְבָּר מִתְרַפֶּקֶת עַל־דּוֹדָהּ

Who is this coming up from the desert leaning on her lover?[73]

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[69] The term in biblical scholarship for the view that Canticles is an anthology of love poetry. See A. Brenner, *The Song of Songs*, OT Guides (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), p. 39.

[70] Brenner, ch. 3.

[71] Brenner, p. 39.

[72] Brenner, pp. 67-68. She allows for the possibility, at least in theory, for a multi-levelled interpretation.

[73] V. 5a is a repetition of v. 3a, but the contexts differ. It is interesting to note that LXX has λελευκανθισμενη, 'made white' instead of מִן־הַמִּדְבָּר, 'from the desert'. Pope argues that this was because of LXX' s concern about the 'black beauty' of 1:5. He writes: 'It seems clear, however, that the deviations from MT were motivated by concern for blanching the black beauty of 1:5.' See M. H. Pope, *Song of Songs: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (Garden City: Doubleday, 1977), p. 662. מִתְרַפֶּקֶת is a *hapax legomenon*, but the root רפק is known in Semitic languages. See Pope, *Song*, pp. 662-663; R. E. Murphy, *The Song of Song: A Commentary on the Book of Canticles or The Song of Songs* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1990), p. 191. An interesting interpretation is given by O. Keel, *The Song of Songs: A Continental Commentary*, transl. by F. J. Gaiser (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), pp. 265-266.

V. 5b: the subject of the verb רפק begins her song about her lover (דּוֹדָהּ) then about love in general.[74]

תַּחַת הַתַּפּוּחַ עוֹרַרְתִּיךָ שָׁמָּה חִבְּלַתְךָ אִמֶּךָ שָׁמָּה חִבְּלָה יְלָדַתְךָ׃

Beneath the apple tree[75] I roused you;[76]
There your mother conceived you;
There she conceived you [and] she gave you birth[77].

Vv. 6-7 are about love:

שִׂימֵנִי כַחוֹתָם עַל־לִבֶּךָ כַּחוֹתָם עַל־זְרוֹעֶךָ כִּי־עַזָּה כַמָּוֶת אַהֲבָה קָשָׁה כִשְׁאוֹל קִנְאָה רְשָׁפֶיהָ רִשְׁפֵי אֵשׁ שַׁלְהֶבֶתְיָה׃

Place me like a seal over your heart,
like a seal on your arm;
for love is as strong as death,
its jealousy unyielding as the
grave.
It burns like blazing fire,
Like a mighty flame. (NIV)

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[74] Keel, *Song*, p. 267, sees no connection between this 'short poem' and the previous or the following lines. 'Neither form nor content has much to do with what goes before (8:5ab), and one can make a connection with what follows (8:6-7) only at a fairly high level of abstraction.' Further he argues that 'this short poem was probably inserted here because of the catchword "awaken" (8:4c).' It is quite possible that he is right, but it is also possible to see connection between these verses (as is done here). It is very difficult to decide what is a right division, since, as Brenner argues, the poems sometimes 'simply "run" into each other to the point of fusion' and at other times 'no principle of association is recognizable.' Here we have perhaps one of the 'extended units that are made up of smaller individual poems'. (Brenner, pp. 15-16).

[75] The apple tree has erotic and mythological associations. See comments in Pope, *Song*, p. 663; Keel, *Song*, commentary on 2:3ab and 5. Here Keel (p. 269) sees it as representing 'the family tree seen from an erotic perspective' (cf. Isa 11:1; Ezek 17). Christian allegorists identified it with the Cross of Christ and the tree of the Garden of Eden. (Pope, *Song*, p. 665)

[76] In MT's reading the woman is the speaker. Some commentators suggest changing the vocalization to read 2nd f. suffixes instead of m. (as P does). Although the MT reading does not seem to support the allegorical interpretations (Israel the bride, Yahweh the bridegroom), commentators such as Pope, Murphy and Keel rightly choose MT as preferable. Pope, *Song*, argues 'that this reading was preserved through centuries of allegorical interpretation suggests that it was so well established and known that it could not be changed but was left for moderns to correct.' (p. 663) Keel, *Song* points out that in the ANE goddesses were often portrayed as the active partners in love relationships (p. 268).

[77] The verb חבל can be used of the woman's labour and childbirth (cf. Isa 13:8; 26:17; Jer 13:21; Hos 13:13) but also of conception (cf. Ps 7:15). Pope, *Song*, writes: 'In the present passage the repetition of the verb could refer to the same phase of the generative process, or to different phases, i.e. to conception in both instances, or travail in both, or to conception in the former instance and travail in the latter. Without knowledge of the affair in question one can only speculate.' (p. 664)

Analysing this verse, there are six poetical phrases.[78] V. 6a and b can be taken together as they say the same thing in parallel and they have the same verb; **שמיני** has a double duty.

v. 6a	Place me as a seal on your heart	שִׂימֵנִי כַחוֹתָם עַל־לִבֶּךָ
v. 6b	as a seal on your arm;	כַּחוֹתָם עַל־זְרוֹעֶךָ

This perhaps refers to the beloved's desire to be physically as close to her lover as a seal would be, which was usually worn on its owner's body under his/her clothes.[79] A seal would also carry the identity of its owner so symbolically it was one with him/her. Thus the beloved's desire would also mean that she wanted to be one with her lover.[80]

v. 6c	For strong as Mot/ Death [is] Love	כִּי־עַזָּה כַמָּוֶת אַהֲבָה
v. 6d	cruel as Sheol [is] Jealousy[81];	קָשָׁה כִשְׁאוֹל קִנְאָה
v. 6e	its plagues [are] Reshefs of Fire[82],	רְשָׁפֶיהָ רִשְׁפֵי אֵשׁ
v. 6f	a Flame of Yahweh[83].	שַׁלְהֶבֶתְיָה

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[78] R. Gordis, *The Song of Songs and Lamentations: A Study, Modern Translation and Commentary*, Revised and Augmented ed. (New York: KTAV Publishing House, INC, 1974), p. 74; Pope, *Song*, p. 653; Murphy, p. 190; Keel, *Song*, p. 270.

[79] Keel, *Song*, points out that seals were of two types, cylinder or stamp seals. Both were worn around the neck on a cord (cf. Gen 38:18); and stamp seals also as a ring (cf. Gen 41:42; Jer 22:24). Both could also be worn on arm bands or on the wrist. Keel thinks that because stamp seals were more abundantly found that 'this poem probably has a stamp seal in mind.' (pp. 271-272)

[80] Contra Pope, *Song*, pp. 666-667, and Keel, *Song*, pp. 272-273. They emphasize the protective nature of seals, functioning as amulets. Murphy recognized the identification aspect (p. 191).

[81] Cf. Num 5:14, 29-30; Prov 6:34; Ezek 16:38; Deut 32:16, 21; Exod 20:5; 43:14; etc. Gordis, *Song*, p. 99; Pope, *Song*, p. 670; Keel, *Song*, p. 275, and NJB translate 'passion'; Murphy, *Song*, p. 190, 'ardor'; KJV, RSV and NIV have 'jealousy'. The word קִנְאָה can be used in other sense as well, e.g. in Qoh 4:4 of envy between neighbours; in Isa 9:6; 37:32; 42:13; 59:17; 63:15; Zech 1:14; 8: 2 of divine fury; in Ps 119:139; Job 5: 2; Isa 37: 32; Prov 14: 30; Ezek 5:13; 16: 38,42; 23: 25; 36: 5, etc., in parallel with anger. However, our interpretation supports translating it as 'jealousy'.

[82] For discussion and a different interpretation of this line see the commentary of Pope, *Song*, p. 670-672. He translates: 'his darts are darts of fire'. Keel, *Song*, has 'its arrows are flaming arrows' (275); Murphy: 'fiery arrows' (p. 191), KJV: 'coals of fire', NIV: 'it burns like blazing fire', NJB: 'flash of fire'. Although Pope and Murphy recognize the allusion to *Reshef*, their translation nor the other ones do justice to the mythological dimension of the text used so skilfully by the Hebrew poet.

[83] Pope regards this as a gloss to רְשָׁפֶיהָ, and so ignores it (*Song*, p. 671). LXX, Vg, KJV, NIV and Keel, *Song*, p. 275, take it as a divine superlative; others (NJB, Gordis, *Song*, p. 99 and Murphy, *Song*, p. 191) recognize the short form of Yahweh's name (cf. Ps 118:5). Pope, *Song*, points out that early interpreters had not 'exploited' the 'alleged occurrence of the Name of God' (p. 672). The expression is difficult. Another possible interpretation is to take 'a flame of Yahweh' as referring to Love rather than *Reshef*(s).

The reason for the beloved's desire to be one with her lover is simply that she loves him in the true sense of the word; loves him until death. The seriousness and gravity of her statement are indeed strongly emphasised by her comparison. In this series of similes we see Love personified, her strength compared to that of Mot. In parallel with Love, Jealousy also appears, her cruelty compared to that of Sheol. When love is tainted by jealousy it can be cruel as it can inspire one to terrible things. Love that lasts until death can bring jealousy forth, and thus it can cause death.[84] It is understandable that the poet talks about her 'plagues'. Jealousy is love's plague; it is deadly and it burns like fire. The poet is deliberately playing on the words. The image of fire, אֵשׁ, implies the association of רְשָׁפֶיהָ with it. The word can be translated as either 'plagues' or 'flames' but possibly both meanings were meant. Both love and jealousy burn like fire, are destroying like the *Reshefs of Fire*, רִשְׁפֵי אֵשׁ (the sons of *Reshef* in Job 5:7 ?). The presence of *Reshef* (or *Reshefs*) is not surprising, though perhaps we would have expected *Deber* or *Qeteb* as Mot and Sheol are also present (cf. Hos 13:14). The fact that they are interchangeable and that here *Reshef* is used in the plural can be explained by our earlier suggestion that in fact *deber*, *qeteb* or *reshef* are not personal names but functions that any of Yahweh's angels/agents can take on.[85] In fact this is made clear by the striking one-word identification of the *Reshefs of Fire* as שַׁלְהֶבֶתְיָה '*a Flame of Yahweh*'. The choice of *reshef* here adds an extra possibility to the poet, the play on the sound שׁ in the last four words.

The mythological dimension gives depth to the meaning of the poem, and it is a poetical device well-loved by the Hebrew poets. Leaving this element out of the translations takes away from the beauty of the poem and does not do justice to the skill of the poet.

v. 7a Great Waters are not able to quench Love מַיִם רַבִּים לֹא יוּכְלוּ לְכַבּוֹת אֶת־הָאַהֲבָה

v. 7b nor Rivers engulf Her וּנְהָרוֹת לֹא יִשְׁטְפוּהָ

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[84] The love-jealousy-death theme is very common in literature and music around the world. See for example W. Shakespeare's *Othello*, F. García Lorca's *Blood Wedding*, or Puccini's *Tosca*, to mention just a few.

[85] See above 5.6 and 6.6.

Fire imagery turns to its opposite, water in v. 7 a and b. Fire's enemies are Great Waters and Rivers. He is overcome by them but Love is stronger because it cannot be destroyed even by these great enemies.[86]

v. 7d if a person would give all the wealth of his house for Love
אִם־יִתֵּן אִישׁ אֶת־כָּל־הוֹן בֵּיתוֹ[87] בָּאַהֲבָה
v. 7e he would be utterly despised. בּוֹז יָבוּזוּ לוֹ

V. 7d and e use yet other imagery. When someone is threatened by something that is very powerful and strong, that person would try to destroy it. When that fails he/she then tries to buy it. Love cannot be destroyed, neither can it be bought. Trying would only bring contempt on one who attempts it. The poet expresses his disgust for such a person. The long build up of 7d (8 words) is contrasted with the short, sharp result in 7e which is striking in the Hebrew but not so clear in the translations.

7.8 Conclusion of *reshef*

Following our discussion of the occurrences of רֶשֶׁף in the Hebrew Bible we can conclude the following: the assumption that *Reshef* appears in the Hebrew Bible as a 'demon' is not supported by the texts.

Of the seven occurrences *Reshef* is once a proper noun, the name of one of Ephraim's descendants. In two passages, Deut 32: 24 and Hab 3:5, it occurs in the singular, and in the other passages in the plural with various associations; as רְשָׁפִים in Ps 78:48; רִשְׁפֵי־קֶשֶׁת in Ps 76: 4; בְּנֵי־רֶשֶׁף in Job 5:7, and רִשְׁפֶּיהָ רִשְׁפֵי אֵשׁ in Cant 8:7. All of these passages are poetical. It was argued that the best interpretation is to regard the term in these passages as personified. In none of the passages does *Reshef(s)* appear alone; it is always accompanied by other destructive forces, who are agents or enemies of Yahweh but always inferior to him. In Deuteronomy 32 *Reshef* is one of seven Evils/Arrows, the Famine, *Qeteb*, Wild Animals, Snakes, Sword and Terror; in Habakkuk 3 together with *Deber* he is one of Yahweh's attendants. Job is similar to Deuteronomy in that here too we have Sword, Famine, Wild Animals, Six/Seven Calamities as well as Stones together with the Sons of *Reshef*. Psalm 78

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[86] Great or Mighty Waters and Rivers are also mythological elements, they are reminiscent of the waters of chaos and Yahweh's battle with them. Cf. Gen 1; Isa 51:9-10; Ps 76:12-14. See also Pope, *Song*, pp. 672-675.

[87] Cf. Prov 6: 31. Also Pope, *Song*, pp. 675-677; Murphy, p. 192; Gordis, *Song*, p. 4:99; Keel, *Song*, p. 276.

lists a number of destructive forces: blood, flies, frogs, grasshoppers, locusts, hail, sleet, as well as the company of Angels of Evils, *Deber*, Fury, Anger and Distress. In Psalm 76 the context is military, thus we have Bow, Shield, Sword and Battle, but the similarities with Hosea 2:18(20) where wild animals, creatures of the ground (snakes?) and birds of the sky also appear allow us to conjecture that perhaps behind the plural of רִשְׁפֵי־קָשֶׁת other destructive forces are also meant.

In Canticles 8 the *Reshefs of Fire* appear with Mot, Sheol, Love and Jealousy, Flame of Yahweh, Mighty Waters and Rivers, again as destructive forces.

In all of the above passages the forces that appear bring destruction and death, they come from Yahweh as a punishment or their purpose is to inspire awe and fear of Yahweh. Through them Yahweh's power is manifested.

In most cases רֶשֶׁף was translated with 'plague' in the sense of a destructive force; this fits all the contexts. In some instances *Reshef* was left untranslated as this reflects the mythological dimension of the texts better. However, even in these cases there is nothing to support a demonological interpretation of *Reshef*. Any arguments to the contrary would be reading into the text. Even though there is a possible connection to the Semitic deity *Reshef*, the mythological motifs in the Old Testament are used merely as a poetic device. Similarly to *Deber* and *Qeteb*, *Reshef* is best regarded as one of Yahweh's Angels of Evil (Ps 78, Deut 32) or Holy Ones (Job 5, Hab 3). As in the case of *Deber* and *Qeteb*, there is no evidence to suggest that *Deber*, *Qeteb* or *Reshef* are used as proper nouns, they are best regarded as functions (to bring destruction) that any of Yahweh's angels could take on.

MAIN CONCLUSION OF INVESTIGATION

This thesis has challenged the common view that *azazel*, *lilith*, *deber*, *qeteb* and *reshef* are names of 'demons' in the Hebrew Bible, claiming that major works on the subject proceed from the assumption that these terms were demons in the ancient Near East and /or later, or that they were deities who became 'demonised' by the authors of the Hebrew Bible. Without questioning the validity of traditional methods in exegesis this thesis supplements the existing works by making an exegetical study of all the texts of the Hebrew Bible in which these five terms occur.

Chapter 1 has placed the present study within the existing scholarship, and has shown that early works on 'OT demonology' were based on Mesopotamian and/or Canaanite parallels, and were concerned with tracing the development of Jewish demonology from its origins through the Old Testament to later times. Terms that early scholars (Witton Davies, Oesterley or Langton, and others) have identified as 'demons', modern scholars still regard as such (Burrelli, Keel, Fabry, and others).

As there are many difficulties in the approaches to the treatment of 'OT demons', and in particular many weaknesses in the interpretation of the terms *azazel*, *lilith*, *deber*, *qeteb* and *reshef*, the research goal of the present study is to take a close look at the Hebrew texts where these five terms occur and to answer the question whether they are names of 'demons' in the Hebrew texts as we have them today.

This aim is achieved through an exegesis based on a Close Reading of all the relevant biblical passages, paying close attention to the linguistic, semantic, and structural levels of the texts. The emphasis is on a close examination of the immediate context in order to determine the function (and where possible the meaning) of each term. Different signals within the texts are noted, especially the use of the various poetical/rhetorical devices: personification, parallelism, similes, irony, and mythological elements.

Before turning to the Hebrew texts where the terms *azazel*, *lilith*, *deber*, *qeteb* and *reshef* occur, Chapter 2 takes a close look at the history of interpretation of these. Here I have demonstrated that the consensus of early 20th century scholars regarding of what constitutes a 'demon' in the Old Testament has not been challenged by more recent scholarship. Biblical scholars still commonly turn to the ancient Near Eastern

religions and cultures to explain difficult passages in the Hebrew Bible, to find parallels or the 'original' of difficult terms and concepts. While comparative material is useful it has be handled carefully as it raises other issues.

The history of research of the term *azazel* shows that though there are various interpretations, the most common is that it is the name of a 'demon'. This interpretation is mainly based on the existence of similar rites in the ancient Near East to the 'scapegoat rite' described in Lev 16, and the fact that a demon named *Asael* or *Azazel* was known in post-biblical literature. However, the validity of this evidence has been questioned. Indeed the rite described in Lev 16 has similarities to Hittite, Mesopotamian and other ancient Near Eastern rites, however, the fact that there are significant differences should not be ignored. Even acknowledging the similarities it is questionable whether these rites can be used to explain the meaning and the function of the term *azazel* in Lev 16. The evidence from the Book of Enoch is also questionable. Its demonology is based on an interpretation of Gen 6:1-4, the fall of angels and the origins of sin which is not present in the Hebrew Bible. It is more likely that similarly to the case of Gen 6:1-4, the story of *Asael/Azazel* in the Book of Enoch is an interpretation and elaboration of Lev 16 based on some similarities.

The history of interpretation of *lilith* shows that to interpret Isa 34:14 scholars refer to the similarity of the term with the name of the demoness *Lilith*, known from ancient Mesopotamia and later Jewish belief. This figure emerged from the fusion of the ancient *lilītu/ardat lîli* demons and Lamaštu, and was made into a well known and 'popular' demon thanks to Jewish mysticism and 19th – 20th century artists. It is understandable that anyone familiar with *Lilith*'s name would inevitably think of the demoness as known since medieval times. Perhaps the interpreters of Isa 34:14 were influenced by their knowledge of this *Lilith*.

The history of research on *deber*, *qeteb* and *reshef* shows that their interpretation as 'demons' is a circular one. The argument that *deber* is a 'demon' is generally based on a discussion of only three texts and the presupposition that *reshef* with whom it appears in two of these texts, and *qeteb* with whom it appears in one text, are also 'demons'. It also relies on evidence from the ancient Near East which is scant and questionable. The situation is similar with *qeteb* and *reshef* too, with the addition of citing later Jewish belief in the case of *qeteb*. The existence of a mythological figure, a deity or demon *qtb* from Assyria or Ugarit is questionable, and later Jewish belief

which knew of a demon called *Qeteb* should be used with caution. That *reshef* is a 'demon' in the Hebrew Bible is based on the general consensus that it is the name of the known deity *Reshef*, and the view that foreign deities are demonised by the authors of the Hebrew Bible. That a deity called *Reshef* was well known in the ancient Near East is unquestionable but, as we have seen, his association with plague or disease is only one of his aspects. His major characteristic seems to be that of a god of war and protector of kings.

The following chapters (3-7) present an exegesis of all the Hebrew texts in which the terms *azazel*, *lilith*, *deber*, *qeteb* and *reshef* occur.

In Chapter 3 *azazel* is examined in its context, Leviticus 16. It is concluded that the *azazel* rite forms an integral part of the 'כִּפֶּר –act', the purpose of which is to cleanse and sanctify the altar and the people. The live goat removes their sin and guilt by literally taking it outside of the community, into the desert, away from the sanctuary. The sanctuary represents the presence of Yahweh, the order of creation, while the desert where *azazel* is found, stands for the chaos that threatens it.

We cannot draw any conclusions regarding the meaning of the term, it remains unknown. The parallelism with Yahweh in v. 8 suggests that it is a proper name of a supernatural being whose place is in the desert. However, there is nothing to suggest that it would refer to a 'demon' named *Azazel*. Despite the various efforts of scholars to prove otherwise, there is no evidence that a mythological figure was behind this term. *Azazel*'s significance in Lev 16 is its symbolic function. *Azazel* appears as the personification of the forces of chaos that threaten the order of creation; his role is to stand in contrast to Yahweh.

In Chapter 4 the term *lilith* is examined together with other difficult-to-interpret terms, that are also believed by some to be references to demons (particularly by their association with *lilith*). It is shown that although most of these are difficult to translate exactly, and in many cases only a general designation can be offered, the contexts in which they occur do not support a demonological interpretation for any of them. They are real animals and birds who inhabit desert and ruined places, some of them scavengers who feast on dead bodies. Like the other terms, לִילִית also refers to an animal, more specifically, a bird. Driver's suggestion that לִילִית is a night bird is found to be the most plausible explanation of term, one that fits the context. In Isaiah 34, after the complete destruction of Edom and all its people and livestock,

only these wild scavengers would be able to survive. Thus there is nothing to support the view that *lilith* or the other terms are 'demons' or other mythological characters.

Chapter 5 examines all the occurrences of *deber*, looking first at the three passages that are generally considered to contain *deber* as a demon, then the occurrences in Jeremiah, Ezekiel and other parts of the Hebrew Bible. It is concluded that Ps 91, Hos 13 and Hab 3, poetical passages, present *deber* as a personified dangerous force which brings death and destruction. As such he appears as one of Yahweh's agents who carries out his punishment or simply emphasises his awesome power as a member of his retinue. In Jeremiah most often it appears with 'sword' and 'famine' (15x), deadly forces that always come as a punishment from Yahweh for the Israelites' disobedience (mostly idolatry). Although its personification is only clearly suggested in one passage (Jer 21:6), the others also offer this possibility. In Ezekiel also (11x) *deber* occurs as a personified deadly force accompanied by others; often by 'sword' and 'famine', but other elements such as *dam* (bloodshed) and *hayyah ra'ah* (beings of evil) also occur. They all are presented as Yahweh's agents of punishment.

This is also the case in all the other occurences of the term. Some passages present the personified *deber* more clearly (Deut 28, Exod 9, 2 Sam 24, Ps 78) than others but there are links between these and the latter passages which suggest that the term should be taken as personified in these too. When personified, *deber* is presented as one of Yahweh's angels (Ps 91, Ps 78 and 2 Sam 24), one of the the *malache ra'im*. In fact there is no evidence to suggest that this was one particular angel and that thus *deber* would be a proper noun. It is rather a function. Any of Yahweh's angels could be a *deber*, a bringer of 'disease' or 'destruction' which in most cases results in death.

In Chapter 6 all the occurrences of *qeteb* are examined. A conclusion similar to the previous chapter is reached. In all four passages *Qeteb* appears in a personified sense, as an agent of Yahweh, possibly one of his angels of evil. However, there is nothing to support a demonological interpretation in any of the passages. Furthermore, as in the case of *deber*, there is no evidence to suggest that *qeteb* was the name of one particular angel of Yahweh. Any of Yahweh's angels could be a *qeteb*, a 'scourge', a 'bringer of destruction'.

The final chapter (7) looks at all the occurrences of *reshef*, and concludes that the assumption that *reshef* appears in the Hebrew Bible as a 'demon' is not supported by the texts. Similarly to *deber* and *qeteb*, *reshef* also appears as a destructive force bringing death or inspiring awe and fear of Yahweh. Similarly to *Deber* and *Qeteb*, *Reshef* is best regarded as one of Yahweh's Angels of Evil (Ps 78, Deut 32) or Holy Ones (Job 5, Hab 3). As in the case of *Deber* and *Qeteb*, there is no evidence to suggest that *Reshef* is used as a proper noun, they are best regarded as functions (to bring destruction) that any of Yahweh's angels could take on. Whereas in the case of *deber* and *qeteb* there was no evidence that a mythological figure would lie behind them in the texts in the Hebrew Bible, with *reshef* there is the possibility of a connection to the Semitic deity *Reshef*. In this case the mythological elements are used as poetic device.

A general thought emerges from this thesis: arguing that biblical authors had demythologised the Hebrew texts in order to 'cover up' the presence of some 'demons' would be denying the skills of the ancient poets/authors who used various poetical devices (parallelism, irony, personification as well as mythology) to convey their message in the most powerful way possible.

It is the hope of the present author that this thesis has made an important and lasting contribution to the exegesis of texts relating to 'OT demonology', leaving the field open for the investigation of further terms. On a methodological level, it is hoped that this study has highlighted the importance of recognising the techniques used by the ancient poets/authors in order to aid understanding. Although in recent years a lot of sudies have been dedicated to the study of biblical imagery and the use of metaphor in particular, biblical scholarship could benefit from further investigation into this area.

APPENDIX I: *RESHEF* IN THE RITUAL TEXTS OF UGARIT

1. KTU 1.39 (RS 1.001) [1] I: 4, 7, 16

This was the first text discovered at Rash Shamra. It is unique in that of the texts discovered so far, this is the only one that contains an independent rite taking place over one day and night. The text lists the various types of sacrifices which were related to the royal funerary cult: *šrp-šlmn, urm, šnpt, pgr. Reshef* receives a ewe (*dqt*) as a holocaust offering (*šrp*) twice (l. 4 and 16), and a ram (*š*) as a peace offering (*šlmm*) once. In l. 4 *Reshef* follows *tkmn wšnm*, in l. 7 he is placed between Anat and the 'family of El (*dr il*), and in l. 16 between *trt* and Anat *hbly.* The fact that *Reshef* appears three times in the same text points to the significance of his role in this type of cult, i.e. royal and funerary.[2]

2. KTU 1.41 (RS 1.003)[3] I:13, 16, 28-29 and KTU 1.87 (RS 18.056)[4] I: 14, 17, 31-32

These two texts are virtual duplicates, and they also almost repeat part of the previous text too.[5] The recipients of the offerings are a group of deities: *b'lt bhtm, inš il, ilš,* and *ilhm.* These (except *ilš*) belong to the cult of palace and the dead and deified kings who became gods of the palace. *Reshef* appears again together with *tkmn wšnm* as the recipient of a ewe (*dqt*) as a burnt-offering (*šrp*), with Anat receiving a ram (*š*), and in the restored lines 28-29, following Šapš, he receives a cow (*gdlt*) as a burnt-offering (*šrp*). Once again *Reshef* appears in a text relating to royal and funerary cult.

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[1] For the text see KTU, p. 74-75; for text, translation and comments see del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, pp. 67-69, 213-217; Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 15- 91; *Ritual and Cult*, pp. 67-69.

[2] Del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, p. 218.

[3] For text see KTU p. 77-79; for text, translation and comments see De Moor, ARTU, pp. 157-165; Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion*, pp. 107-112, 122-125; Pardee, *Texts Rituels*, pp. 143- 213 esp. p. 184-185; *Ritual and Cult*, pp. 56-65.

[4] Cf. KTU, pp. 106-108; Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 469- 478; *Ritual and Cult*, pp. 56-65.

[5] KTU 1.41: 12-19/ KTU 1.87:13-21 // KTU 1.39: 3-10.

3. KTU 1. 47 (RS 1. 017)[6] I: 27 // KTU 1. 118 (RS 24. 264)[7] // (RS 20. 024) // KTU 1.148 (RS 24. 643)[8]

These four texts, though discovered at different times, contain more or less the same list of deities, the so called 'canonical list'. The first two are in Ugaritic, the third is an Akkadian (syllabic) translation, and the fourth contains the key to understanding the texts.[9] The list begins with the supreme deity, *ilib/il/dgn* being his names/titles.[10] The next group consists of seven Baals, or rather a recitation of his names seven times. This is followed by a group of seven deities, headed by *arṣ wšmm*, 'Earth and Heaven', representing the chthonic-astral deities. The next group again consists of seven deities, headed by *ġrm w'mqt*, 'Mountains and Valleys' and then followed by six goddesses. The last group in the two lists has nine deities, whereas KTU 1. 148 has only seven. They are called *il t'đr b'l*, 'the helper gods of Baal'. *Reshef* is found in this group. The Akkadian text identifies him with Nergal. Del Olmo thinks that this list is not hierarchical, in the sense that the order of the deities does not reflect their importance. Therefore that *Reshef* is found in the last group of deities does not imply that he was less important than the preceding gods.[11]

KTU 1.148 has a *ršp idrp* in l. 32, identified with [DINGIR ?] *-it-ri-ib-bi* in the Akkadian text. Pardee remarks that this composite theonym is only attested here and there are two possibilities of interpreting it; it is either a place name or it is an 'attribution exprimée par un nom ou un adjectif'.[12]

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[6] KTU, pp. 83-84; Del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, pp. 71-78; Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 291- 319; *Ritual and Cult*, pp. 12-16.

[7] KTU pp. 132-1333; Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 659-660; *Ritual and Cult*, pp. 12-16.

[8] KTU pp. 145-146; Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 779- 806; *Ritual and Cult*, pp. 12-16.

[9] KTU 1. 148 was a 'liturgical model for the great "Sacrifice to Sapanu"' (del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, p. 71).

[10] On the equation of *il* and *dgn* and for references see del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, p. 74, n. 78.

[11] Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 315-317. Pardee remarks that it is very difficult to relate this text to any mythological ones, though attempts have been made (e.g. by Xella), partly because there are a number of deities that do not appear in mythological texts.

[12] See Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, p. 802 and n. 119, 120.

4. KTU 1.78 (RS 12.061)[13]

There is no agreement as to the interpretation of this short text, which seems to be an astronomical text of some sort. As Pardee remarks, 'this very brief text has caused a great deal of ink to flow because of various attempts to interpret it as reflecting a solar eclipse.'[14] While Wyatt, del Olmo and others follow the eclipse interpretation, Pardee is not convinced of this. Instead he argues that the text refers to 'a repeated sighting of Mars (= *Rašap*) at sundown for six days in a row, after which the planet would no longer have been visible at sundown.'[15]

The reverse of the tablet contains two lines which again can be variously interpreted because of epigraphic uncertainties. Thus according to some it refers to livers being consulted (reading {*kb dm*} at the beginning of line 5), while others interpret it as a request to the governor of the city to appoint specialists who can interpret the sighting. Here are some of the translations;

KTU	**Pardee**	**Del Olmo**	**Wyatt**
1. btt . ym .hdt hyr . 'rbt	*During the six days of the new-moon festival of the month of Hiyyaru,*	At six of the new moon of Hiyyaru	At the sixth (hour) of the first day of Hiyyar the sun set,
špš tgrh	*the sun (Šapšu) set, her*	Šapšu/the sun set(s)	Her attendant being Mars. / The first day of Hiyyar was put to shame: the sun set, her attendant being Mars.
ršp	*gatekeeper being Rasap.*	Her gatekeeper being Rašpu.	
rev.			
5. *kbdm tbqrn*	*The men (?) shall seek out*	Two livers	Livers were

[13] KTU pp. 97-98; Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 416- 427; *Ritual and Cult*, pp. 131-133.

[14] *Ritual and Cult*, p. 131. For a thorough discussion of the text and references to various other interpretations see Pardee, *Textes Rituels* , pp. 416-427 and notes. See also del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, pp. 350-351 and n. 66; Wyatt, RTU, pp. 366-367; Fulco, pp. 39-40.

[15] As note above.

skn	*the governor.*	are/shall be examined; (There is) danger.	examined. / Livers were examined: beware!

I agree with del Olmo's suggestion that this text appears to be a mythological interpretation of an astronomical phenomenon (whether a solar eclipse or a sighting of Mars), [16] hence depicting *Reshef* as the gatekeeper of Šapš. If *Reshef* was regarded as god of the underworld (as his identification with Nergal suggests), seeing Šapš entering through his gates could mean seeing the sun goddess being swallowed up by the underworld deity. Indeed such would support a solar eclipse interpretation.[17]

5. KTU 1.79 (RS 13.006) I. 8[18]

This short text is difficult to interpret because of its state of preservation.[19] Following Pardee's interpretation, we find that a priest called *Ṣitqānu*, assisted by *Ĥasanu*, sacrifices (*dbh*.) a kid and myrrh to *Rašap*. Pardee classifies this text as a rural sacrificial text. The only deity mentioned is *Reshef*.[20] Perhaps this suggests that *Reshef* was not only a royal god but also popular with the people outside the city of Ugarit.[21]

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[16] Del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, pp. 350-351. For references on the various attempts at dating the phenomenon see p. 351 n. 67, and Wyatt, RTU, p. 366.

[17] Pardee identifies *Reshef* with Mars. 'Rašap, as one of the principal deities of the underworld is depicted as opening the gates of the realm to allow the sun to enter. As god of the army (Rasap Saba'i) and of the underworld, *Rašap* may correspond to classical Mars.' (*Ritual and Cult*, p. 133 n. 15). See also Niehr, pp. 87-88.

[18] KTU, p. 98; Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 428-434; *Ritual and Cult*, pp. 119-220.

[19] Pardee (see note above) classifies it as a rural sacrificial text, however KTU seems uncertain whether it is a scribal exercise or a sacrificial list.

[20] Pardee remarks that the offering of a goat is quite unusual in similar texts (*Ritual and Cult*, p. 119).

[21] This is supported by the fact that he is mentioned in relation to sacrifices in the local community. See M. Heltzer, *The Rural Community in Ancient Ugarit* (Wiesbaden: Dr Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1976), pp. 71-74.

6. KTU 1.90 (RS 19.013) l.: 2; 20 // KTU 1.168 (RIH 77/10B+)[22]

These two texts along with some others[23] were found in a palace at Ras Ibn Hani close to Ugarit, probably an alternative royal residence. The 'list of gods in these texts shows a marked dynastic character.'[24] These texts can be classed as belonging to the royal liturgy as the king is 'expressly mentioned as the officiant in the ritual'.

Del Olmo suggests that the offering here might be of atonement or have an apotropaic nature (*ap wnpš / ksp wḥrṣ*).

In both these texts *ršp* appears in a composite form as *ršp h.gb*.[25] Scholars interpret *h.gb* differently. Del Olmo takes it as an offering whereas Pardee sees *ršp h.gb* as a form of *Reshef*. 'Rašap est l'une des divinités qui se manifestent sous plusieurs formes…'[26]

There have been two main etymologies proposed for *h.gb*; 1) Hebrew חגב, 'grasshopper/ locust'; and 2) Arabic *h.āgib*^{un}, 'chamberlain, gatekeeper'. The justification given to the first etymology is that Nergal/*Reshef* is the god of plague and, the locust that devours everything in its way, is a kind of plague. The second suggestion argues that the role of *Reshef* as gatekeeper has already been established in KTU 1.78. Both of these etymologies have difficulties as Pardee points out. For example the main problem with the first one is that nowhere is *Reshef* represented as a grasshopper or locust; with the second that there are no other NW Semitic attestations of this root with similar meaning.

Pardee remarks that it is impossible to decide which if any of these suggestions is the right one. One has also to consider the possibility of *h.gb* being a toponym as is the case with *ršp gn* and *ršp bbt*.[27]

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[22] KTU, pp. 108-109; Del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, pp. 321-323; Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 479-88; *Ritual and Cult*, pp. 72-77.

[23] Those mentioning *Reshef*, are KTU 1.165 and 1.171.

[24] Del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, p. 318.

[25] In KTU 1.90 there is also a *ršp* in l. 20. *ršp h.gb* appears 4x, in KTU 1.90, 1.106, 1.134 and 1.168.

[26] Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, p. 485.

[27] Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 484-485.

7. KTU 1.91 (RS 19.015)[28] I: 11, 15

This administrative text is a cultic record; it is a list of royal rituals (*dbh mlk*). It deals with the quantity of wine to be supplied by the various towns mentioned on the reverse. It also specifies the time of the consumption giving a list of 'royal sacrifices'. The importance of this text lies in the possibility it presents of identifying the rituals it refers to.[29]

Reshef is mentioned in line 11 (in the dual or plural) and then in line 15 with the epithet *sbi, ršp sbi*.

Line 11 reads: *k. t'rbn. ršpm. bt. mlk*

(the sacrifices) for when the *Ršpm* (*Rašapuma*) enter the palace

Line 15 reads: *b. gb. ršp. sbi*

Pardee translates, 'the sacrifices in the sacrificial pit of *Rašap Saba'I*' and del Olmo '(the one) of the *gb*(?) of *Rašpu* of the army'.

Del Olmo takes line 11 to refer to KTU 1.106 because there we also have 'two' *ršpm* mentioned together (lines 1 and 6), and line 15 to refer to KTU 1.105:14ff *([b]gb ršp…*), both having a funerary (and royal) character.[30] However, Pardee is not convinced that the link between the two texts is certain enough to permit us to determine whether the form *ršpm* in line 11 is a dual or a plural form.[31] Both are possible; if the text uses KTU 1.106 where we have the mention of a *ršp h.gb* and *ršp mhbn*, then the dual seems more likely, however, if KTU 1.91 does not allude to the rite of which KTU 1.106 is part of then there is no particular reason to regard the *ršpm* as dual.[32] The plural is equally as possible as we know of several manifestations of *Reshef*. In fact this is the more likely interpretation since we have here a *ršp sbi* , different from the ones in KTU 1.106. Pardee mentions another

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[28] KTU p. 109; del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, pp. 87-88; 255-64; Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 489-519; *Ritual and Cult*, pp. 214-216.

[29] On these rituals see del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, pp. 257-259.

[30] Del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, pp. 261-263.

[31] Pardee, *Testes Rituels*, p. 506.

[32] Pardee, *Testes Rituels*, p. 507.

possible interpretation of the *ršpm*, according to which they would be identified with the Gatarūma;[33] however he does not think this likely.[34]

Pardee agrees with del Olmo that line 15 is part of a rite that is independent from the previous one. He favours taking *ršp sbi* as a composite theophoric name, and the fact that in Ugaritic as in other Semitic languages *s.aba'u* generally has the collective meaning of 'army, crew' suggests that *s.bi* is a divine epithet and so *ršp s.bi* is best translated as '*Reshef* of the army'.[35] Pardee thus argues that this epithet alludes to *Reshef*'s warrior-like character but it remains uncertain what/which 'army' was envisaged.[36]

8. KTU 1.100 (RS 24. 244) (ridding the land of serpents)[37]

The text appears to be a ritual which is concerned with curing snakebite, embedded in a myth that also contains incantatory elements.[38] A mare whose foal had been bitten by a snake appeals to twelve divinities for help. The text has three main parts: 1) request for help eleven times with negative outcome 2) the twelfth request to Horon results in positive outcome 3) marriage negotiations between Horon and the mare. In the first section the appeals are addressed to Šapš who acts as a messenger. Important deities[39] of the Ugaritic pantheon such as: El, Baal, Dagan, Anat and Athtart, Yarih, *Reshef*, Athtart, Zizzu and Kemosh, Milk, Kothar-and-Hasis, Shahar and Shalem are asked for their help, but they seem to be ineffectual. Only the last, Horon brings cure.

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[33] Proposed by Xella. See reference in Pardee, *Testes Rituels*, p. 507 n. 70.

[34] Pardee, *Testes Rituels*, p. 507.

[35] Pardee, *Testes Rituels*, p. 512 and n. 97 there for various translations and their references of *ršp s.bi*.

[36] There is only one mention of a *ršp s.bi* in this text. Niehr also sees the warrior aspect of the god in this and the previous text. He writes: 'Hierdurch wird der Pest- wie auch der Kriegscharacter des Gottes hervorgehoben.' The first part of his comment is intriguing though (p. 88).

[37] Pardee, 'Incantations', pp. 295-298; *Ritual and Cult*, pp. 173-179; del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, pp. 359-371; Wyatt, RTU, pp.378-387.

[38] Wyatt, RTU, p. 378 and Pardee, 'Incantations', p. 295; *Ritual and Cult*, p. 173 see this text as a rite in myth- form, whereas del Olmo classifies it as incantation (*Canaanite Religion*, p. 359).

[39] It is interesting that Horon, who seems to be an important god in exorcistic contexts, is absent from the pantheon lists of KTU 1.47 and parallels. See comment in Wyatt, RTU, p. 384 n. 25, who cautions against drawing rash conclusions, keeping in mind that the evidence we have from Ugarit is only a cross-section of its culture and religion.

An interesting feature of this text is that it connects each of the deities to a place, though some of these (e.g. *Hryt*, *Msd*) are unknown. Thus El at the Source of the rivers, Baal in the heights of Mt. Saphon, Dagan in *Tuttul*,[40] Anat and Athtart in *Inbub*,[41] Yarih in *Lrgt*,[42] *Reshef* in *Bibitta*,[43]Athtart in *Mari*, Zizzu and Kemosh in *Hryt*, Milk in *Athtarat*, Kothar-and-Hasis in *Crete*, Shahar and Shalem in Heaven, and Horon in *Msd*.[44]

This text is similar in some ways to RS 24.251/KTU 1.107[45] which is another mythological incantation[46] dealing with snakebite. The deities involved are virtually the same as in KTU 1.100. The difference is that they are not mentioned in connection to a place name (with the exception of Milk) and that they are listed in pairs.[47] Thus *Reshef* here is paired with Yarih. The question is why? Was Yarih related to the underworld?

9. KTU 1.102 (RS 24. 246)[48] I: 10

The text appears to be a list of names of gods in two parts. Lines 1-14 is simply a list of divine names whereas lines 15-28 are 'sentence names', they are possibly hypostases of two or more divinities.[49] *Reshef* appears in line 10 in company with

[40] Cf. Mari texts (ref. in del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, p. 363 n. 98).

[41] cf. KTU 1.3 iv 34.

[42] cf. KTU 1.24.

[43] It is an unknown place but it occurs in connection with *Reshef* in other cultic texts (KTU 1.105:1; 1.171:3). See also Wyatt, RTU, p. 381 n. 17.

[44] Wyatt translates 'the fortress' (RTU, p. 384). Pardee notes that the common noun may mean 'fortress' but the interpretation of it as a town, though unknown at present, is preferable (*Ritual and Cult*, p. 187 n. 30).

[45] See Wyatt, RTU, pp. 393-394; Pardee, *Ritual and Cult*, pp.179-191; del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, pp. 371-373.

[46] Pardee (cf. Frankfurter) defines it as a *historiola*, 'a text that links myth with magic' (*Ritual and Cult*, p. 167). KTU 1.114; 1.124 and 1.100 are also of the same kind.

[47] There are other differences too, for example Šapš here is more than a messenger, and she plays the main role. Also the serpent's venom is being gathered by the deities and not diluted. These differences however are not relevant for our purposes.

[48] KTU, pp. 116-117; Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 520- 531; *Ritual and Cult*, pp. 19-21; del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, pp. 60-61; 172-76.

[49] For discussion see Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 522-530; *Ritual and Cult*, p. 20.

Yam, Yarih, Kotar, Pidray, Anat Hablay, and others, all chthonic or infernal deities, or else connected to the night, earth and its products.[50]

10. KTU 1.103 + KTU 1.145 (RS 24.247+)[51] l.40

This text attests to the use of teratomancy, i.e. the interpretation of the monstrous forms of animal and human newborns.[52] The various monstrous births foretell disasters that are to befall the land or the king (most lines), as well as good news such as the king shall make peace with the enemy (l. 54); alternatively he shall destroy the enemy/enemy's land (37; 58; 59).[53] The disasters that can strike are: enemy attack, famine, the land being destroyed or the king's succession being under threat, his descendants being destroyed. L.40 relates that if there is a contraction in the foetus' hoof, the lord (king?) shall be attacked by (his?) or he shall confront the guard ('*ḥurādu* –troops'), and his descendants shall be devoured ('consumed')[54] by *Reshef*.[55]

11. KTU 105 (RS 24.249)[56]

In this royal funerary ritual three different manifestations of *Reshef* appear, *ršp mhbn*, *ršp mlk*, and *ršp bbt*. Del Olmo refers to Dietrich – Loretz who regard *mhbn*, *mlk* and *bbt* as 'lexemes denoting place connected with the god Rašpu.' [57] However, Pardee warns against 'automatically' considering the second element of a composite

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[50] Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, p. 530.

[51] KTU, pp. 117-120; del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, pp.353-358; Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 532-564; *Ritual and Cult*, pp. 135-140. KTU as well as del Olmo and Pardee read *ršp* without hesitation in l. 40, whereas Dietrich and Loretz are not so sure. See comment on l. 40 in Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, p. 544.

[52] Teratomancy was already in use in the Old Babylonian period. On Mesopotamian practice see for example M. Stol, *Birth in Babylonia and the Bible: Its Mediterranean Setting* (Groningen: Styx, 2000), pp. 158-170.

[53] In Mesopotamia also the birth of 'monstrous' i.e. malformed babies (animal or human) signalled bad things to come. Therefore they had a ritual in which the sun god Šamaš and the river god were invoked, to rid the person affected of the forecasted evil. See Stol, pp. 165-167.

[54] Pardee, *Ritual and Cult*, p. 140.

[55] Del Olmo and Pardee both rightly take *ršp* as the subject of the verb *ykly*. See *Canaanite Religion*, p. 356 n. 76 and Pardee's comments on l. 39-40 in *Textes Rituels*, p. 558 and notes 237-239.

[56] KTU pp. 121-122; del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, pp. 58-59, 246-247; Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 574 –587; *Ritual and Cult*, pp. 41-43.

[57] *Canaanite Religion*, p. 250 n. 102.

divine name as a toponym. As with *ršp ṣbi*, the second element might be an epithet.[58] In fact the geographical interpretation must remain doubtful because of lack of attestation of the element *mhbn* in other contemporary texts.[59]

Similarly to *mhbn*, it is impossible to determine whether the element *mlk* refers to *Reshef*'s royal status or if it identifies him with the deity *mlk*, or is one of his local manifestations.[60]

Pardee rightly argues that the best explanation of *Reshef* Bibitta is that it is a theophoric name + a toponym, Bibitta being Reshef's Anatolian seat.[61]

12. KTU 1.106 (RS 24.250)[62]

There is no agreement regarding the structure of this text. It is possible that it forms the second part of a larger text, a series of rites covering a two month period, [63] but also that it is a ritual preserved in whole but missing the usual title which would indicate the month to which the ritual is prescribed.[64]

As mentioned earlier, some believe that KTU 1.106 is referred to in KTU 1.91, and the *ršpm* there is taken to point to *ršp h.gb* and *ršp mhbn* in the present text. However, this is unlikely.

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[58] See above. There are also two Arabic roots that could explain the second element in the composite name *ršp mhbn*; these are either √*whb,* 'to give, to be generous', and 'powerful, mighty', or √*hwb,* meaning 'dreaded, feared, respected'. (See Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, p. 580 n. 20 – 22) However, we have to be cautious in relying too much on etymological explanations.

[59] Pardee points out that there is no proof of a link between *Reshef* and the town Mu-ba-a-an in Mari, referred to by Lipinski. See *Textes Rituels*, pp. 580-581and n. 23.

[60] In agreement with Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, p. 582.

[61] *Textes Rituels*, p. 586 and n. 66 on that page cf. KTU 1.100. See also M. L. Barré, '^{d}LAMMA and Rešep at Ugarit: The Hittite Connection', *JAOS* 98 (1978), 465-467, esp. p. 467 n. 32.

[62] KTU p. 122; Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 591-592; *Ritual and Cult*, pp. 53-54; del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, pp. 219-221.

[63] Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 591-592; *Ritual and Cult*, p. 53.

[64] Del Olmo sees the text as a royal funerary ritual of the month of Gannu. For him line 18 indicates what the heading should have been (*Canaanite Religion*, p. 219). Pardee however, disagrees regarding the funerary nature of the text. While for del Olmo two things, i.e. the presence of *yd* 'mausoleum' in l. 17, and of the infernal deities, the *ilm arṣ* in l. 30 indicate that the text is a funerary ritual, Pardee argues that both these arguments are unsatisfactory. The first because of semantic, and the second because of epigraphic reasons. Further he argues that we should examine whether other elements of the text would support del Olmo's interpretation. The presence of *Reshef*, Inasu Ilima and Arsay, chthonic deities does not necessarily indicate a mortuary/funerary character as these are present in other, non-funerary texts as well. (Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 500-501)

Whereas in KTU 1.90 where *ršp h.gb* also occurs, del Olmo suggested a novel interpretation of *h.gb* as a type of offering, here he takes it as an epithet of *Reshef* and translates *ršp h.gb* as 'Rašpu (of the) locust'.[65]

On *ršp mhbn* see comments on the previous text (KTU 105 above).

13. KTU 108 (RS 24.252)[66]

Several deities are invited to participate in a feast/ drinking. Several of them are described in more detail, e.g. lines 6-10 address Anat thus:

> And may Anat the powerful drink,
> the mistress of kingship,
> the mistress of dominion,
> the mistress of high heavens,
> the mistress of the earth.
> And may Anat fly,
> may the kite soar in the high heavens,
> who ate the calf of El,
> drinking [ ] from the horn.[67]

Unfortunately most of lines 14 and 15 are missing thus we do not have anything on *Reshef* apart from his name.

14. KTU 1.109 (RS 24.253)[68] I: 22

The text seems to be a 'sacrificial new-moon ritual' which apparently took place partly in the royal palace and partly in the temple of Baal of Ugarit.[69] Baal seems to be the dominant deity in the text under various manifestations. *Reshef* appears in l. 22 as the recipient of a ram as a peace offering. He is accompanied by the deities Ilib, Dagon, The Helper Deities of Baal, Baal and Anat (l. 19-23).

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[65] *Canaanite Religion*, p. 231.

[66] KTU, pp. 124- 126. On the interpretation and translation of this text see de Moor, ARTU, pp. 187-90; Wyatt, RTU, pp. 395-398; Pardee, *Ritual and Cult*, pp. 192-195. The translations/interpretations of Wyatt and Pardee are similar and quite different from that of de Moor.

[67] Wyatt, RTU, pp. 396-397.

[68] KTU p. 126; del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, pp.273-275; Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 601-614; *Ritual and Cult*, pp. 26-31. The text is related to KTU 1.30 and KTU 1.130.

[69] Del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, p. 272; Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, p. 614.

15. KTU 1.123 (RS 24.271)[70]

Whether this is a prayer or not cannot be said for certain.[71] *šlm* in lines 1-3 and 28-33 is taken as an imperative, therefore all the deities are regarded as objects of the same request for blessing. Underlying we have a deity list which is interesting in that almost all the gods are mentioned as pairs (double deities?). In l. 31' we have *ršp*, followed by *inš ilm*, as in other instances.[72]

16. KTU 1.126 (RS 24.276)[73]

Here we have two occurrences of *Reshef* in a sacrificial ritual text which is so badly damaged that no structural analysis of it is possible. In l. 3' *Reshef* receives a cow (*gdlt*) as sacrifice, and in l. 5' the text is broken. Only the first letter *a'* is visible, and Pardee remarks that no other instances are known where *Reshef* receives a sacrifice beginning with this letter. [74] There are however two instances of *Reshef HGB* receiving a snout and a neck (*ap w npš*),[75] and *Reshef MLK* receiving once a bull and a ram (*alp w š*),[76] but as Pardee points out we cannot say whether one of these sacrifices would be attributed here to *Reshef* or whether the sacrifice is actually intended for another deity.[77]

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[70] KTU pp. 135-136; del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, pp. 63-65; Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 691-706; *Ritual and Cult*, pp. 150-153.

[71] Cf. Pardee, *Ritual and Cult*, p. 150. According to KTU it is a prayer, a liturgy or a scribal exercise (p. 135). Del Olmo lists it under the category of 'prayer-magic' (*Canaanite Religion*, p. 63).

[72] Pardee notes: 'Though *Rasap* is the god of the underworld and the Inasu-Ilima plausibly one of the principal components of the underworld population, the two are not associated as often as one might expect: both entities appear rather often in the ritual texts, but they are placed in immediate proximity only three other times and each time a particular manifestation of *Rasap* is named.' (*Ritual and Cult*, p. 153 n. 9) In KTU 1.105:25'-26' it is *Rasap-Bibitta,* in KTU 1.106:1-2 and 1.134:9'-10' it is *Rasap-Hagab.* Some scholars identify the *inš ilm* and *ršp*, the former being a manifestation of *ršp*. See *Textes Rituels*, p. 705 and n. 90 for references. Niehr sees this text as a reference to *Reshef's* apotropaic character; he is invoked along with other deities to give his blessing (p. 88).

[73] KTU pp. 136-137; del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, p. 24; Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 707-711; *Ritual and Cult*, pp. 39-40.

[74] *Textes Rituels*, p. 708, contra KTU which restores a[lp.

[75] KTU 1.90 and 1.168.

[76] KTU 1.105.

[77] *Textes Rituels*, p. 710.

17. KTU 1.165 (RIH 77/4)[78] + KTU 6.62 (RS 25.318)[79]

In the first text we have one occurrence of *ršp* in l. 2 and one of *ršp gn* in l. 3, which also occurs in the second text. KTU 1.165 is a short and fragmentary text and so we cannot say much about it. Pardee conjectures that here we might have an exit of *ršp gn* at night from the royal palace.[80] KTU 6.62 is a short inscription on a vessel (a terracotta lion head) which identifies it as dedicated to the deity *ršp gn*.[81]

18. KTU 1.171 (RIH 78/16)[82]

Ršp bbt occurs in l. 3 of this royal sacrificial ritual as the recipient of a ram possibly as a *šlmm* sacrifice.[83] The only other known deities in the text are the *inš ilm* (receiving two birds as a šrp? sacrifice), the text is broken thus other divinities remain unknown. Pardee remarks that it has been suggested to restore l. 1 as:

{[k y'rb ršp mh]bn}

which is the entry formula of one of *Reshef*'s manifestations.[84] While it is possible, it is not necessarily the correct restoration.

19. KTU 4. 728 (RS 24.292)[85]

The element *ršp* occurs in l. 8 as part of a theophoric name, *tgršp . b[n]*. Pardee and Bordreuil read *aḥršp* in l.8.

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[78] KTU p. 153; Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 842-843; del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, pp. 261; 318; 323.

[79] KTU p. 510; Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 813-815; *Ritual and Cult*, p. 126.

[80] *Textes Rituels*, p. 843. Pardee takes *ršp gn* to be the subject of the verb *yṣan*.

[81] Pardee, *Textes Rituels* and *Ritual and Cult*, 'Rasap-Guni'; Fulco, '*Rešep* of the garden'. He mentions another text, KTU 4.219 (UT 1088) in which in l. 3 we have a *[l . b]t . ršp . gn*, and he adds: 'However one interprets gn, the context surely implies that *Rešep* had a shrine or temple at Ugarit.' (pp. 43-44) Indeed, that is a reasonable conclusion if the restoration is accepted. Niehr sees the element *gn* as referring to the royal nekropolis (p. 88).

[82] KTU p. 157; Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 872-874; del Olmo, *Canaanite Religion*, argues that this is a fragmentary sacrificial ritual that cannot be reconstructed; its textual information about deities and sacrifices are known from other texts (p. 322).

[83] Lines 6 and 7 suggest a chronological structure for this ritual.

[84] E.g. KTU 1.91 l. 11: k . t'rbn . ršpm . bt . mlk . See Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, p. 874.

[85] KTU p. 465; Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 749-750. This is an administrative text that contains a list of persons who were paying tax in the form of oil to the cult of Baal HLB.

20. KTU 1.82 (RS 15.134)[86] I:3

Reshef appears in l. 3 of this text,

[ ]bt. b'l . hz . ršp. bn . km . yr. klyth . wlbh

This is a difficult text that has not received much attention. De Moor and Spronk argue that it is 'an incantation for a handicapped girl';[87] Caquot agrees with this interpretation though he also points to its mythological character.[88] There is disagreement regarding the translation of line 3. De Moor followed by Caquot take *b'l* as the subject and *hz . ršp* as the object of the verb *yr*, translating it,

[May] Ba'lu [st]op the arrows of Rashpu![89] or

Baal gathered the arrows of Reshef…[90]

Others, like Day and Fulco take *b'l . hz . ršp* as one expression, 'the archer *Reshef*' or 'the lord of the arrows, *Reshef*'.[91]

The rest of the line seems to confirm *Reshef*'s association with illness.

Pay attention when he (Rashpu) shoots at her kidneys and her heart![92] Or,

He aimed as an archer at his kidneys and his heart.[93]

De Moor thinks that 'The "arrows" of *Rashpu* are the plagues and diseases this evil god is sending among mankind.'[94] However, the claim that *Reshef* was an evil deity

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[86] See De Moor, ARTU, p. 176; J. C. de Moor and K. Spronk, 'More on demons in Ugarit', *UF* 16 (1984), 237-250; A. Caquot, ' Un Recueil Ougaritique de Formules Magiques: KTU 1.82', *SEL* 5 (1988), 31-43; Fulco, pp. 49-51. Pardee does not discuss the text. The text was first partially translated by P. J. van Zijl, 'Translation and Discussion of Text 1001:1-2 (RŠ 15.134:1-2)' and 'Translation and Discussion of Text 1001:3-5a (RŠ 15.134:3-5a)', *JNSWL* 2 (1972), 74-85, and 3 (1974), 85-93.

[87] P. 238.

[88] L. 1-2 refer to Baal's struggle with the dragon. 'Recueil', p. 31; also J. Day, 'New Light on the Mythological Background of the Allusion to Resheph in Habakkuk III 5', *VT 29* (1979), 353-354, esp. pp. 353-354.

[89] De Moor and Spronk, p. 239.

[90] Caquot, 'Recueil', p. 34. So also Niehr, p. 97.

[91] Day, 'New Light', p. 354; Fulco, p. 51.

[92] De Moor and Spronk, p. 239; ARTU, p. 176.

[93] Caquot, 'Recueil', p. 34. See also n. 5 on p. 355 in Day, 'New Light' for a (very) brief discussion of van Zijl's interpretation of this line. Day is right that van Zijl's translation involves a 'rather speculative restoration of the text.'

[94]P. 239; ARTU, p. 176 n. 2.

is not supported by this text or by the other available evidence. In fact, that *Reshef* featured as a theophoric element in personal names at Ugarit points to the opposite.[95] He had both a positive and a negative aspect (as did all other gods); he could bring on as well as protect from disease.

Summary

The cultic-ritual texts provide the following information regarding the character of *Reshef* in Ugarit.

Reshef was a chthonic deity associated with plague and disease. He seems to have played an important role in the royal and funerary cult. Perhaps his status as a dynastic god was due to his association with war, and as such he was a patron god of the kings. He received the *šrp* and *šlmm* sacrifices, but whether this was linked to his 'infernal character' or not is questionable.[96]

In some texts *Reshef* appears with Anat. Some scholars think this more significant than others. Thus while Fulco writes that *Reshef* is: 'frequently listed together stereotypically with Anat in various texts that involve groupings of gods',[97] Pardee points out that in fact there are only a handful of instances where they occur together, and even then this is because they both represent the so-called 'third rank' of the Ugaritic pantheon, i.e. the gods who do not belong to El's immediate family circle.[98]

Their common trait is perhaps their association with war.

In the ritual texts *Reshef* appears in various manifestations, these forms might be his epithets and some might refer to his cult centres. He also appears in plural form, as *ršpm*, and this perhaps reflects his multiple manifestations.

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[95] Niehr (p. 87) writes: 'Daneben ist nicht zu übersehen, dass, wie schon in Ebla und in einigen Städten im Euphratgebiet, auch in Ugarit der Gott Rašpu als theophores Element in Personnamen begegnet. Dies deutet in Ugarit auf einen positiven Aspekt des Gottes Rašpu, der nicht nur Krankheit und Tod bringt, sondern auch vor der Krankheit schützen kann, so dass den Gott ein apotropäisches Element yukommt, weshalb er dem Kirtu-Epos zufolge auch zum Hochzeitsmahl eigeladen wird.' For Reshef featuring in personal names see for ex. Fulco, pp. 34-36, and further F. Vattioni, *Il dio Resheph*, AION 15 (1965), 39-74; F. Grödahl, *Die Personennamen der Texts aus Ugarit*, Studia Pohl,1 (Roma: Typis Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae, 1967).

[96] See discussion in Pardee, *Textes Rituels*, pp. 41-50.

[97] P. 40.

[98] *Textes Rituels*, pp. 52-53.

One of the most valuable sources of information is RS 20.024, the Akkadian translation of the deity list which identifies *Reshef* with Nergal. This is where we can gather the most information regarding the god's character, and which confirms his association with the underworld, epidemics and war. All these characteristics can give him both a positive and a negative aspect; he can be both the cause of illness and invoked to protect against; he can cause destruction as a war god as well as be the protector of his worshippers; he can be the god of the underworld but play an important role as such in the royal funerary cult. The large number of personal names containing his name as a theophoric element would tilt the balance towards the positive aspect. In any case there is nothing in Ugarit that would suggest a demonic character to *Reshef*.[99]

[99] So also Niehr, pp. 88-89.

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